

PART 4 THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

It is advisable first to read the Preface in Part 1, also the Introduction to the Minor Prophets which precedes the Study on Hosea and to read each book prior to studying it. The section on each prophet is a complete Bible Study. Only a brief summary of the words of *The Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed.

AMOS

INTRODUCTION

Amos prophesied in the middle of the 8th century B.C. during the reigns of Uzziah (Azariah) and Jeroboam 11, kings of Judah and Israel respectively. The prophet was a contemporary of Jonah and Hosea. These were times of great national prosperity in Israel but also of complacency; the people having rejected the Lord, forgotten His Covenant and their miraculous rescue from slavery in Egypt. During the following centuries many prophets, seers and men of God had warned the people but they had never listened. The prophet Amos came from Tekoa, a small place to the south of Jerusalem. Although, he was a herdsman from Judah, he was sent by God to pronounce judgement on the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos was a faithful servant of the Lord and immediately obeyed the call to deliver an unwelcome message. The sins of idolatry, immorality and social injustice abounded - hence the reasons why Amos was sent to prophesy to Israel, although his words applied to Judah and Jerusalem as well. *The Voice of the Lord*, through Amos, condemned the shrine at Bethel and the gross wickedness of king and people. In opposition to Zion, Bethel was the centre of idol worship in the Northern Kingdom; sometimes called Ephraim - or Samaria, the name of the capital city. Although, Amos predicted imminent and dreadful divine judgement, he also gave God's promise in the End Times of Israel's restoration and blessing. This is the golden line throughout the Old Testament when Messiah would rule all nations, God dwelling with His people.



THE LORD'S JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS

Read Amos Chapter 1

The Lord roars out of Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem.

Amos 1: 2a

The Voice of the Lord, as Amos began his ministry in Israel, roared out first to the surrounding nations – Damascus of Aram (modern Syria), Gaza - Philistine city, Tyre (chief Phoenician trading city), Edom, Ammon, Moab and lastly to Judah and Israel. The prophecies are all similarly worded but with different sins given as reasons for the coming judgement of each nation and for the destruction of their fortresses (strongholds or cities). These judgements on the N. Kingdom's enemy neighbours were well received in Samaria; unlike the later condemnation Amos predicted against Israel's own transgressions.

Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza and for four, (means many sins)

I will not reverse the punishment of it or revoke My word.

I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza which shall devour its strongholds.

Amos 1: 6a, 7

The oracle against Philistia with its five cities was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar.

For three transgressions of Edom (descendants of Esau) and for four, I will not reverse the punishment of it or revoke My word, because he pursued his brother Jacob (Israel) with the sword, casting off all pity.

Amos 1: 11

All these pagan nations, including Moab (Amos 2: 1 – 3), had sinned in the sight of the Lord but, unlike the Chosen People, had not received the revelation of God's holy Law.

THE LORD'S JUDGEMENT OF HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

Read Amos 2: 4 - 16

Amos, having spoken the word of the Lord to Israel's enemies, proceeded to give God's coming stern judgement to His Chosen People. Both kingdoms had forsaken God's Law for the worship of the false gods of the surrounding nations. Holy living had given way to immorality, social injustice, greed and the oppression of the poor.

The Lord roared like a lion but in reality He was their Refuge and Shepherd.

Amos 2: 5

The moral deterioration and idolatry in the Northern Kingdom of Israel were even greater than in Judah. The kings of Israel did much evil in the sight of the Lord.

Amos 2: 6

The Children of Israel had forgotten that it was God Almighty Who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt and given them the land of Canaan. The people had become ungrateful for God's many blessings in Canaan, the Promised Land. The Lord had given them Prophets who were ignored, persecuted and told not to prophesy. In the day of divine judgement there would be no escape, for Israel had sinned greatly in oppressing the needy and especially for profaning the name of the Lord.

Is this not true, O you children of Israel?

Amos 2: 11b

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;

They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not;

They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not;

neither can they make a sound with their throats.

They who make idols are like them; so are all who trust in and lean on them.

Psalm 115: 4 - 8, (135: 15 - 18)

Read Amos Chapter 3

As God's mouthpiece, Amos predicted the punishment of Israel and the destruction of the pagan altars at Bethel.

HEAR THIS word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel.

Amos 3: 1a

Amos 3: 2

Amos 3: 3

Amos 3: 7

The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

Amos 3: 8b

Amos 3: 10

ISRAEL DID NOT RETURN TO THE LORD

Read Amos Chapter 4

Even the women were rebuked for their opulent lives and lack of regard for the poor. The people's sacrifices and tithes were a matter of ritual and not offered from the heart.

Not only did the Lord God Almighty send prophets to warn the people of the coming judgement, but also times of drought, famine, pests and plagues; causing the Lord to utter these repeated words:

Yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord.

Amos 4: 6, 8, 9, 10, 11

As Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel will be destroyed.

Amos 4: 12

The One Who created the heavens and the earth and understands the thoughts of all mankind -

The Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name!

Amos 4: 13b

A LAMENT FOR ISRAEL

Read Amos Chapter 5

Amos lamented the coming destruction of the house of Israel for, unlike the Lord God Almighty, their idols had no power. Amos called the people to repent of their idol worship, to seek the Lord and return to Him.

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:

Seek Me and you shall live!

Amos 5: 4

The people brought their sacrifices to Bethel and other shrines, even though the Lord had designated the Jerusalem Temple as the only place for His worship.

Seek not the golden calf at Bethel nor enter into idolatrous Gilgal, and pass not over to the idols of Beersheba.

Amos 5: 5a

Seek Him Who made the cluster of stars called the Pleiades and the constellation Orion.

Amos 5: 8a

(God) Who made the constellations, the Bear, Orion and the cluster of the Pleiades.

(Job 9: 9)



Amos 5: 14

The words of this continued Lament for the many sins of Israel caused wailing and mourning throughout the land. However, in their complacency as God's Chosen People, they merely longed for the *Day of the Lord* - but that day would for them be a day of darkness and woe.

God despised their insincere sacrificial offerings and religious festivals with the sound of harps and songs in their worship of idols.

Amos 5: 24

Amos 5: 27

WORDS OF WOE AGAINST ISRAEL

Read Amos Chapter 6

Woe to the complacent in Israel, the Chosen People, who live in luxurious ease and consider themselves favoured above the other nations.

Amos 6: 8

There was no longer any justice in the courts or the fruit of righteousness in the land.

For behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel.

Amos 6: 14a

This word was fulfilled when Assyria invaded Israel from one end of the country to the other; the people taken captive and finally exiled in 722 B.C.

FIVE VISIONS FROM THE LORD

Read Amos 7: 1 - 9

On receiving visions of punishments by locusts and fire, Amos prayed twice, asking the Lord to forgive Israel - so small: and the Lord relented.

It shall not take place, said the Lord.

Amos 7: 3, 6



On seeing the third vision of the Lord standing on a wall with a mason's plumb line in His hand, there was no relenting; for Israel was not true to the Lord. Israel was like a badly built and crooked wall.

Behold, I am setting a plumb line as standard in the midst of My people Israel.

I will not pass by and spare them any more (the door of mercy is shut). Amos 7: 8b

Then, will the idol shrines be destroyed and My sword raised against the house of Jeroboam. He was the first to rule in Israel and the king who set up the golden calf shrine at Bethel.

Amos 7: 9

AMOS AND AMAZIAH, THE PRIEST OF BETHEL

Read Amos 7: 10 - 17

Amaziah, the priest of Bethel's golden calf in a message to King Jeroboam¹¹, complained about Amos and his prophetic word that the king's dynasty would die by the sword. It was during the reign of Jeroboam 11 that Amos arrived in Israel to give God's judgement. Amaziah rebuked Amos for prophesying at Bethel, the kings' sanctuary, and told the prophet to stop and return to Judah.

(James 5: 10)

Amos replied to Amaziah's complaints with these words –

I was no prophet by profession! Neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees and a gatherer of sycamore figs. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said to me,

Go, prophesy to My people Israel.

Amos 7: 14, 15

The Voice of the Lord, then spoke through Amos dreadful words against Amaziah's family, his wife, his sons and daughters; and to Amaziah -

You shall die in an unclean land (pagan) and Israel will go into exile, away from their native land.

Amos 7: 17b

The Lord always gives prior warnings of His judgements; and about a half century later the words of Amos finally came true.

THE BASKET OF RIPE FRUIT

Read Amos Chapter 8

Amos received his 4th vision, for Israel was ripe for judgement. The nation would no longer be spared, because there was continued robbing of the poor, also cheating, bribery and deceitful practices in trade.



Then, there will be wailing and no songs in the Temple. It would be a time of bitter mourning as for an only son. There would be death in the land and *The Voice of the Lord* would be silent.

Amos 8: 11

People would seek the word of the Lord from one end of the land to the other but never find it. In that day, the idols of Samaria and Dan in the north and Beersheba in the extreme south, would fall and be no more.

THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL

Read Amos 9: 1 - 10

In his last and 5th vision, Amos saw the Lord, the Almighty, standing by the altar commanding the Temple thresholds to be shaken and the pillars struck down. (The Jerusalem Temple was the probable site of this vision for there was no temple at Bethel). There would be no escape for the people, the vision illustrating Israel's imminent destruction. The Israelites, although the Chosen People brought out of Egypt, were now no more favoured than the Cushites and other peoples *moved* to other regions. The ten tribes of Israel soon to be scattered among the nations never returned to the Promised Land; unlike the people of Judah.

Today they are known as the Lost Tribes of Israel.

All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, the evil shall not overtake us.

Amos 9: 10

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Read Amos 9: 11 - 15

In God's mercy and according to His everlasting promise to David, the house of Jacob would not be completely destroyed. A time would come when God's exiled people from Judea would return.



Amos 9: 11

Amos ended his prophetic mission with the Lord's message, in the days to come, of Messianic hope and fruitful blessings for restored Israel and those who bear His name.

Amos 9: 15

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