
AMOS 1: 1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Amos, the third of the minor prophets, was, it is said, of the little town of Tekoa, in the tribe of Judah, about four leagues southward of Jerusalem. There is no good proof, however, that he was a native of this place; but only that he retired thither when he was driven from Beth-el, which was in the kingdom of the ten tribes. It is very probable that he was born within the territories of Israel, and that his mission was directed principally to this kingdom.

As he was prophesying in Beth-el, where the golden calves were, in the reign of Jeroboam the second, about the year of the world 3217; before the birth of Jesus Christ, 783; before the vulgar era, 787; Amaziah, the high priest of Beth-el, accused him before King Jeroboam, saying, "Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." Amaziah said therefore unto Amos, "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court."

Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock; and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now, therefore, hear thou the word of the Lord; Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land, and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land."

After this the prophet retired into the kingdom of Judah, and dwelt in the town of Tekoa, where he continued to prophesy. He complains in many places of the violence offered him by endeavoring to oblige him to silence, and bitterly exclaims against the disorders of Israel.

He began to prophesy the second year before the earthquake, which happened in the reign of King Uzziah; and which Josephus, with most of the ancient and modern commentators, refers to this prince's usurpation of the priest's office, when he attempted to offer incense to the Lord.

The first of his prophecies, in order of time, are those of the seventh chapter. The others he pronounced in the town of Tekoa, whither he retired. His two first chapters are against Damascus, the Philistines, Tyrians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, the kingdom of Judah, and that of the ten tribes. The evils with which he threatens them refer to the times of Shalmaneser, Tiglath-pileser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar, who did so much mischief to these provinces, and at last led the Israelites into captivity.

He foretold the misfortunes into which the kingdom of Israel should fall after the death of Jeroboam the Second, who was then living. He foretold the death of King Zechariah; the invasion of the lands belonging to Israel by Pul and Tiglath-pileser, kings of Assyria; and speaks of the captivity of the ten tribes, and of their return into their own country. He makes sharp invectives against the sins of Israel; against their effeminacy and avarice, their harshness to the poor, the splendor of their buildings, and the delicacy of their tables. He reproves the people of Israel for going to Beth-el, Dan,

Gilgal, and Beer-sheba, which were the most famous pilgrimages of the country; and for swearing by the gods of these places.

The time and manner of his death are not known. Some old authors relate that Amaziah, priest of Beth-el, whom we have spoken of, provoked by the discourses of the prophet, had his teeth broken in order to silence him. Others say that Hosea, or Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, struck him with a stake upon the temples, and knocked him down, and almost killed him; that in this condition he was carried to Tekoa, where he died, and was buried with his fathers. This is the account these authors give us. On the contrary, it is the opinion of others, that he prophesied a long time at Tekoa after the adventure he had with Amaziah: and the prophet taking no notice of the ill treatment which he is said to have received from Uzziah, his silence is no argument that he suffered nothing from him.

St. Jerome observes, that there is nothing great and sublime in the style of Amos. He applies these words of St. Paul to him, rude in speech, though not in knowledge. He says farther, that as every one chooses to speak of his own art, Amos generally makes use of comparisons taken from the country life wherein he had been brought up. St. Austin shows that there was a certain kind of eloquence in the sacred writers, directed by the spirit of wisdom, and so proportioned to the nature of the things they treated of, that even they who accuse them of rusticity and unpoliteness in their way of writing, could not choose a style more suitable, were they to have spoken on the same subject, to the same persons, and in the same circumstances.

Bishop Lowth is not satisfied with the judgment of St. Jerome. His authority, says the learned prelate, has occasioned many commentators to represent this prophet as entirely rude, void of eloquence, and wanting in all the embellishments of style; whereas any one who reads him with due attention will find him, though a herdsman, not a whit behind the very chiefest prophets; almost equal to the greatest in the loftiness of his sentiments; and not inferior to any in the splendor of his diction, and the elegance of his composition. And it, is well observed, that the same heavenly Spirit which inspired Isaiah and Daniel in the palace, inspired David and Amos in their shepherds' tents; always choosing proper interpreters of his will, and sometimes perfecting praise even out of the mouths of babes: at one time using the eloquence of some; at another, making others eloquent to subserve his great purposes. See Calmet and Dodd.

Archbishop Newcome speaks also justly of this prophet: "Amos borrows many images from the scenes in which he was engaged; but he introduces them with skill, and gives them tone and dignity by the eloquence and grandeur of his manner. We shall find in him many affecting and pathetic, many elegant and sublime, passages. No prophet has more magnificently described the Deity; or more gravely rebuked the luxurious: or reproved injustice and oppression with greater warmth, and a more generous indignation. He is a prophet on whose model a preacher may safely form his style and manner in luxurious and profligate times."

This chapter denounces judgments against the nations bordering on Palestine, enemies to the Jews, viz., the Syrians, Amo 1:1-5; Philistines, Amo 1:6-8; Tyrians, Amo 1:9, Amo 1:10; Edomites, Amo 1:11, Amo 1:12; and Ammonites, Amo 1:13-15. The same judgments were predicted by other prophets, and fulfilled, partly by the kings of Assyria, and partly by those of Babylon; though, like many other prophecies, they had their accomplishment by degrees, and at different periods. The prophecy against the Syrians, whose capital was Damascus, was fulfilled by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria; see 2Kgs 16:9. The prophecy against Gaza of the Philistines was accomplished by Hezekiah, 2Kgs 18:8; by Pharaoh, Jer 47:1; and by Alexander the Great; see Quintus Curtius, lib. 4. c. 6. The prophecy against Ashdod was fulfilled by Uzziah, 2Chr 26:6; and that against Ashkelon by Pharaoh, Jer 47:5. All Syria was also subdued by Pharaoh-necho; and again by Nebuchadnezzar, who also took Tyre, as did

afterwards Alexander. Nebuchadnezzar also subdued the Edomites, Jer 25:9, Jer 25:21; Jer 27:3, Jer 27:6. Judas Maccabeus routed the remains of them, 1 Maccabees 5:3; and Hyrcanus brought them under entire subjection. The Ammonites were likewise conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. The earthquake, which the prophet takes for his era, is perhaps referred to in Zac 14:5, and also in Isa 5:25. Josephus ascribes it to Uzziah's invasion of the priestly office; see 2Chr 26:16.

Verse 1

The words of Amos - This person and the father of Isaiah, though named alike in our translation, were as different in their names as in their persons. The father of Isaiah, אִמּוֹץ Amots; the prophet before us, עֲמוֹס Amos. The first, aleph, mem, vau, tsaddi; the second, ain, mem, vau, samech. For some account of this prophet see the introduction.

Among the herdmen - He seems to have been among the very lowest orders of life, a herdsman, one who tended the flocks of others in the open fields, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. Of whatever species this was, whether a kind of fig, it is evident that it was wild fruit; and he probably collected it for his own subsistence, or to dispose of either for the service of his employer, or to increase his scanty wages.

Before the earthquake - Probably the same as that referred to Zac 14:5, if הרעש haraash do not mean some popular tumult.

AMOS 1: 2 He said: "the LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds will mourn, and the top of Carmel will wither."

Verse 2

The Lord will roar from Zion - It is a pity that our translators had not followed the hemistich form of the Hebrew: -

Jehovah from Zion shall roar,

And from Jerusalem shall give forth his voice;

And the pleasant dwellings of the shepherds shall mourn,

And the top of mount Carmel shall wither.

Carmel was a very fruitful mountain in the tribe of Judah, Jos 15:56; Isa 35:2.

This introduction was natural in the mouth of a herdsman who was familiar with the roaring of lions, the bellowing of bulls, and the lowing of kine. The roaring of the lion in the forest is one of the most terrific sounds in nature; when near, it strikes terror into the heart of both man and beast.

AMOS 1: 3 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Damascus, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron;

Verse 3

For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four - These expressions of three and four, so often repeated in this chapter, mean repetition, abundance, and any thing that goes towards excess. Very, very exceedingly; and so it was used among the ancient Greek and Latin poets. See the passionate exclamation of Ulysses, in the storm, *Odyss.*, lib. v., ver. 306: - Τρις μακαρες Δαναοι και τετρακις, οἱ τοτ' ολοντο Τροιη εν ευρειη, χαριν Ατρειδησι φερωντες. "Thrice happy Greeks! and four times who were slain

In Atreus' cause, upon the Trojan plain."

Which words Virgil translates, and puts in the mouth of his hero in similar circumstances, *Aen.* 1:93.

Extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra:

Ingemit; et, duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas,

Talia voce refert: O terque quaterque beatif

Queis ante ora patrum Trojae sub moenibus altis

Contigit oppetere. "Struck with unusual fright, the Trojan chief

With lifted hands and eyes invokes relief.

And thrice, and four times happy those, he cried,

That under Ilion's walls before their parents died."

Dryden.

On the words, O terque quaterque, Servius makes this remark, "Hoc est saepias; finitus numerous pro infinito." "O thrice and four times, that is, very often, a finite number for an infinite." Other poets use the same form of expression. So Seneca in *Hippolyt.*, Act. 2:694.

O ter quaterque prospero fato dati,

Quos hausit, et peremit, et leto dedit

Odium dolusque! "O thrice and four times happy were the men

Whom hate devoured, and fraud, hard pressing on,

Gave as a prey to death."

And so the ancient oracle quoted by Pausanias *Achaic.*, lib. vii., c. 6: Τρις μακαρες κεινοι και τετρακις ανδρες εσονται; "Those men shall be thrice and four times happy."

These quotations are sufficient to show that this form of speech is neither unfrequent nor inelegant, being employed by the most correct writers of antiquity.

Damascus was the capital of Syria.

AMOS 1: 4 but I will send a fire into the house of Hazeal, and it will devour the palaces of Ben Hadad.

Verse 4

Ben-hadad - He was son and successor of Hazael. See the cruelties which they exercised upon the Israelites, 2Kgs 10:32; 2Kgs 13:7, etc., and see especially 2Kgs 8:12, where these cruelties are predicted. The fire threatened here is the war so successfully carried on against the Syrians by Jeroboam II., in which he took Damascus and Hamath, and reconquered all the ancient possessions of Israel. See 2Kgs 14:25, 2Kgs 14:26, 2Kgs 14:28.

AMOS 1: 5 I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity to Kir," says the LORD.

Verse 5

The bar of Damascus - The gates, whose long traverse bars, running from wall to wall, were their strength. I will throw it open; and the gates were forced, and the city taken, as above.

The plain of Aven - the house of Eden - These are names, says Bochart, of the valley of Damascus. The plain of Aven, or Birkath-Aven, Calmet says, is a city of Syria, at present called Baal-Bek, and by the Greeks Heliopolis; and is situated at the end of that long valley which extends from south to north, between Libanus and Anti-Libanus.

The people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir - Kir is supposed to be the country of Cyrene in Albania, on the river Cyrus, which empties itself into the Caspian Sea. The fulfilment of this prophecy may be seen in 2Kgs 16:1-9.

AMOS 1: 6 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Gaza, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they carried away captive the whole community, to deliver them up to Edom;

Verse 6

They carried away captive - Gaza is well known to have been one of the five lordships of the Philistines; it lay on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, near to Egypt. Erkon, Ashdod, and Ashkelon, were other signories of the same people, which are here equally threatened with Gaza. The captivity mentioned here may refer to inroads and incursions made by the Philistines in times of peace. See 2Chr 21:16. The margin reads, an entire captivity. They took all away; none of them afterwards returned.

AMOS 1: 7 but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it will devour its palaces.

AMOS 1: 8 I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn my hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines will perish," says the Lord the LORD.

AMOS 1: 9 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Tyre, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they delivered up the whole community to Edom, and didn't remember the brotherly covenant;

Verse 9

Tyrus - See an ample description of this place, and of its desolation and final ruin, in the notes on Ezekiel 26-28 (note).

The brotherly covenant - This possibly refers to the very friendly league made between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, 1Kgs 5:12; but some contend that the brotherly covenant refers to the consanguinity between the Jews and Edomites. The Tyrians, in exercising cruelties upon these, did it, in effect, on the Jews, with whom they were connected by the most intimate ties of kindred; the two people having descended from the two brothers, Jacob and Esau. See Calmet.

AMOS 1: 10 but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it will devour its palaces."

Verse 10

I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus - The destructive fire or siege by Nebuchadnezzar, which lasted thirteen years, and ended in the destruction of this ancient city; see on Eze 26:7-14 (note), as above. It was finally ruined by Alexander, and is now only a place for a few poor fishermen to spread their nets upon.

AMOS 1: 11 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Edom, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger raged continually, and he kept his wrath forever;

Verse 11

For three transgressions of Edom - That the Edomites (notwithstanding what Calmet observes above of the brotherly covenant) were always implacable enemies of the Jews, is well known; but most probably that which the prophet has in view was the part they took in distressing the Jews when Jerusalem was besieged, and finally taken, by the Chaldeans. See Oba 1:11-14; Eze 25:12; Eze 35:5; Psa 137:7.

AMOS 1: 12 but I will send a fire on Teman, and it will devour the palaces of Bozrah."

Verse 12

Teman - Bozrah - Principal cities of Idumea.

AMOS 1: 13 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they have ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border.

Verse 13

The children of Ammon - The country of the Ammonites lay to the east of Jordan, in the neighborhood of Gilead. Rabbah was its capital.

Because they have ripped up - This refers to some barbarous transaction well known in the time of this prophet, but of which we have no distinct mention in the sacred historians.

AMOS 1: 14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it will devour its palaces, with shouting in the day of battle, with a storm in the day of the whirlwind;

Verse 14

With shouting in the day of battle - They shall be totally subdued. This was done by Nebuchadnezzar. See Jer 27:3, Jer 27:6.

AMOS 1: 15 and their king will go into captivity, he and his princes together," says the LORD.

Verse 15

Their king shall go into captivity - Probably מלכּם malcham should be Milcom, who was a chief god of the Ammonites; and the following words, he and his princes, may refer to the body of his priesthood. See 1Kgs 11:33 (note). All these countries were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar.