

Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?

Session 1: A Prophet Entraps His Audience (Amos 1:1-2:16) (A)

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs – NotebookLM AI

1) Abstract:

Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture series, "Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?", focuses on the biblical Book of Amos, specifically the initial chapters (1:1-2:16). Chisholm **introduces Amos as a "minor prophet" and a layman from Judah** who ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel between 767 and 753 BC, just two years before a significant earthquake. He explains Amos's **prophecy of judgment against various nations**, starting with "outright foreigners" like the Arameans, Philistines, and Phoenicians, then moving to "distant relatives" such as the Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites. The lecture highlights **Amos's rhetorical strategy of "entrapping his audience"** by initially pronouncing judgment on nations hostile to Israel, building anticipation before revealing that Israel itself is the primary target of divine judgment for violating Mosaic law, in contrast to other nations who primarily violated the Noahic mandate. Chisholm **analyzes the "three sins, even for four" literary device** used to emphasize the severity of each nation's transgression, often related to inhumane acts or disregard for fundamental human dignity and covenantal agreements.

2) Briefing Document:

Amos: The Prophet Entraps His Audience (Amos 1:1-2:16) - Study Guide

I. Introduction to the Book of Amos

- **Pronunciation:** Amos (Anglicized from Hebrew "Amos")
- **Placement:** Third of the twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos)

- **Approach:** Verse-by-verse, section-by-section study, emphasizing important principles.

II. Historical Context (Amos 1:1)

- **Prophet's Background:** Amos was a "herdsman of Tekoa" and also a "vinedresser" (Ch. 7).
- Not a professional prophet or "son of a prophet."
- A "layman" called by the Lord, testifying to divine authority.
- From Tekoa, south of Jerusalem (Judah), prophesying to the Northern Kingdom (Israel). His message would be unpopular.
- **Regnal Dates:** Uzziah was King of Judah (independent rule: 767-740 BC).
- Jeroboam II (son of Jehoash) was King of Israel (independent rule: 782-753 BC).
- Amos's ministry window: 767-753 BC (when both were independent rulers).
- **The Earthquake:** Amos prophesied "two years before the earthquake."
- Archaeological evidence for a significant earthquake at Hazor around 760 BC.
- Cultural significance: Not a natural occurrence, but an "omen of judgment" from the divine realm.
- Connects to Amos's message: "the Lord is going to come and shake the earth" (Ch. 8-9), confirming his prophecy. The earthquake signaled God's impending judgment.
- **Assyrian Context:** During Amos's time (c. 760 BC), Assyria was not a major factor.
- This was a period of prosperity for Israel and Judah.
- Assyrian power would be re-established in 745 BC by Tiglath-Pileser III.
- Amos's prophecy *precedes* and *predicts* this resurgence and its implications for Israel and Judah.

III. Theological Foundations (Amos 1:2)

- **The Lord Roars from Zion:** "Roars" is a verb often used for lions; the Lord is depicted as a lion.
- "Zion" is a poetic name for Jerusalem.
- Significance: The Lord's authority and dwelling place are in Jerusalem (Judah), not the northern kingdom's shrines.
- Imagery: The Lord acts as a warrior bringing judgment, leading to drought ("pastures...dry up," "Carmel withers").
- **Prophets and the Law:** Prophets are not "innovators" contrary to the Law, but "messengers from the covenant Lord."
- They are familiar with Moses's Law and accuse the people of breaking it.
- Judgment speeches correlate with "covenant curses" found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 (e.g., drought as a sign of curse, Deuteronomy 28:23-24).
- Amos announces that Israel has broken God's law and will experience these curses.

IV. The Prophetic Structure: "A Prophet Entraps His Audience" (Amos 1:3-2:16)

- **Background to the Strategy:** Northern Kingdom (Israel) was experiencing prosperity and anticipating a "Day of the Lord."
- Their expectation: The Day of the Lord would be a day of light, salvation, and victory against enemies.
- Amos's rhetorical device: Starts with judgments on surrounding nations, getting Israel's approval, before turning the judgment on them.
- **The Oracle Series: Outright Foreigners Go Up in Smoke (1:3-10):** Nations: Arameans (Damascus/Syria), Philistines (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron), Phoenicians (Tyre).
- Israelites would cheer these judgments as these were traditional enemies.
- **Distant Relatives Go Up in Smoke (1:11-2:3):** Nations: Edomites (descendants of Esau), Ammonites (descendants of Lot), Moabites (descendants of Lot).

- Though "distant relatives," these nations often had hostile relationships with Israel/Judah.
- **A Brother Goes Up in Smoke (2:4-5):** Nation: Judah (southern kingdom).
- Significance of Judah as "number seven" (completeness/culmination) in the list. Israel would still cheer, seeing it as the final judgment before their own salvation.
- **Zeroing in on the Primary Target (2:6-16):** Nation: Israel (Northern Kingdom).
- **The "Shocking Surprise":** Israel is the *eighth* oracle (X, X+1 formula: seven, yay, eight), signifying *they* are the ultimate target.
- Amos's message: The Day of the Lord for Israel will be "a day of darkness and judgment," not light and salvation. This would be highly unpopular.

V. Analysis of Specific Oracles: The "Three Sins...Even For Four" Formula

- **Literary Device:** "For three sins of X, even for four, I will not relent."
- Numerical sayings (Proverbs 30).
- Indicates that the list of sins corresponds to the second number (e.g., four sins for "even for four").
- The "fourth" (or final) sin is often emphasized as the main point.
- Subtle hint: When fewer than the expected number of crimes are listed, it signals that the *primary target* (Israel) will have a more extensive list of transgressions.
- **The Term "Pesha":**
- Translated as "sins" or "transgression."
- Refers to "rebellion against authority," not just sin against God.
- Implies God's authority over all nations, even those who didn't recognize Him (they had their own deities).
- **Background for Gentile Sins: The Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9):**

- The Lord's expectation that all Noah's descendants (all peoples) respect the "image of God" in fellow human beings.
- Violation of this mandate (e.g., murder, mass violence) is seen as rebellion against God's authority.
- This is distinct from Judah/Israel, who are judged by the Mosaic Law.
- **Oracle Details (Selected Examples):**
- **Damascus (Arameans - 1:3-5):**
 - **Accusation:** "Threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth" (cruel treatment/military violence, violation of Noahic mandate). *Only one crime listed, not four, a subtle signal.*
 - **Judgment:** Fire on Hazael's house, consumption of Ben-Hadad's fortresses, broken gates of Damascus, destruction of rulers, exile to Kir (their place of origin, reversing their history).
- **Gaza (Philistines - 1:6-8):**
 - **Accusation:** "Took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom" (kidnapping and slave trade, disrespect for image of God). *Only one crime listed, not four.*
 - **Judgment:** Fire on Gaza's walls, destruction of rulers in major Philistine cities (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron), end of Philistines.
 - *Sidebar:* Amos's message challenges the biblical defense of certain forms of slavery (specifically, kidnapping).
- **Tyre (Phoenicians - 1:9-10):**
 - **Accusation:** "Sold whole communities of captives to Edom" and "disregarding a treaty of brotherhood" (slave trade, treaty violation). *Two crimes, not four.*
 - **Judgment:** Fire on Tyre's walls, consumption of fortresses. (Historical fulfillment later, not by Assyrians initially).
- **Edom (1:11-12):**

- **Accusation:** "Pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land," "anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked" (military violence, internal hatred). *Two crimes, not four, though presented with emphasis.*
- **Judgment:** Fire on Teman, consumption of Bozrah's fortresses.
- **Ammon (1:13-15):**
- **Accusation:** "Ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders" (mass violence, murder, potential genocide motivated by greed). *One crime, not four.*
- **Judgment:** Fire on Raba, war cries, violent winds, exile of king and officials.
- **Moab (2:1-3):**
- **Accusation:** "Burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king" (tomb desecration, extreme disrespect for the dead/image of God). *One crime, not four.*
- **Judgment:** Fire on Kiriath, tumult, war cries, trumpet blasts, destruction of ruler and officials.
- **Judah (2:4-5):**
- **Accusation:** "Rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees," "led astray by their lies/false gods" (violation of Mosaic Law, idolatry/false prophecy). *Two crimes, not four.*
- **Judgment:** Fire on Judah, consumption of Jerusalem's fortresses.
- *Key shift:* Judgment based on *Mosaic Law*, not Noahic Mandate. Israel still expects this to be the end of the judgment list.
- **Israel (2:6-16):**
- *Anticipated:* This is the eighth oracle, the "shocking surprise" and primary target.
- *Not yet detailed in this session, but hinted that they will have more than four crimes.*
- *The Day of the Lord will be for them a day of darkness and judgment.*

VI. Conclusion to the Section

- The rhetorical trap: Amos builds audience anticipation for judgment on their enemies, only to spring the trap and reveal Israel as the ultimate target.
- The understated hints (fewer than four crimes for other nations) reinforce that the main accusation is yet to come.

Quiz: Ten Short-Answer Questions

1. Describe Amos's background and profession as presented in the text. How does this background lend authority to his prophetic calling?
2. Identify the two kings whose reigns define the period of Amos's prophecy and state their respective kingdoms. What specific window does the text identify for Amos's ministry?
3. Explain the cultural significance of the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1. How does it relate to Amos's prophetic message?
4. According to the teaching, how do the prophets relate to the Mosaic Law? What do they accuse the people of, and what prophetic theme is connected to these accusations?
5. What was the prevailing understanding of the "Day of the Lord" among the Northern Kingdom (Israelites) when Amos began his ministry?
6. Explain the rhetorical strategy Amos uses by beginning his prophecies with judgments against surrounding nations. What effect was this intended to have on his initial audience?
7. Identify three groups of nations targeted in Amos's initial judgment oracles, as categorized by the speaker. Provide one example nation for each group.
8. What is the significance of Judah being the seventh nation in Amos's judgment series? What does the "seven, yay, eight" formula reveal about the *true* primary target?
9. Explain the meaning and significance of the Hebrew term "Pesha" as it is used in Amos's judgment oracles against foreign nations.

10. How does the "Noahic Mandate" (Genesis 9) serve as the background for God's judgment on the foreign nations in Amos, as explained by the speaker?

Answer Key

1. Amos was a herdsman from Tekoa and also a vinedresser, not a professional prophet or from a prophetic lineage. This "layman" status, coupled with his willingness to prophesy an unpopular message to the Northern Kingdom while being from Judah, emphasizes that his calling must have come directly from the Lord, thus testifying to his divine authority.
2. Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, King of Judah, and Jeroboam II, King of Israel. The specific window for Amos's ministry, when both were independent rulers, is identified as 767 to 753 BC.
3. In the Near Eastern culture of Amos's time, an earthquake was not seen as a natural occurrence but as an "omen of judgment" from the divine realm. The earthquake, occurring two years after Amos's prophecy, confirmed his message that "the Lord is going to come and shake the earth," signaling that God was on the move to bring judgment.
4. The prophets are seen not as innovators but as "messengers from the covenant Lord," deeply familiar with Moses's Law. They accuse the people of breaking the law, and their announcements of judgment (like drought, famine, exile) are linked to the "covenant curses" outlined in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.
5. The Northern Kingdom expected the "Day of the Lord" to be a glorious day of intervention on their behalf. They anticipated that the Lord would defeat their enemies, bring them victory on the battlefield, provide security, and usher in a time of salvation and renewed life for them.
6. Amos uses a rhetorical device to "entrap" his audience. By starting with oracles of judgment against their traditional enemies and distant relatives, he gains their attention and approval, making them cheer for the coming judgments. This sets them up for the "plot twist" where the judgment is then turned on them.

7. The three groups of nations are: "Outright Foreigners" (e.g., Arameans/Damascus, Philistines, Phoenicians/Tyre), "Distant Relatives" (e.g., Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites), and "A Brother" (Judah).
8. Judah being the seventh nation in the list signifies completeness or culmination, leading Israel to believe that they would be spared and their enemies defeated. However, the "seven, yay, eight" (X, X+1) formula reveals a shocking surprise: Israel is the eighth oracle, indicating they are the ultimate, primary target of God's judgment.
9. "Pesha" (translated as sins/transgression) refers specifically to "rebellion against authority." In the context of the foreign nations, it implies their rebellion against God's authority over them, even though they did not recognize the God of Israel but had their own deities.
10. The Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9) is the background for God's judgment on the foreign nations because it established a universal requirement for all descendants of Noah (all peoples) to respect the "image of God" in their fellow human beings. The nations' sins—such as mass violence, kidnapping, or tomb desecration—are seen as violations of this fundamental principle against harming human life.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss how Amos uses historical context and rhetorical strategy to "entrap" his audience. Analyze the progression of his judgment oracles (outright foreigners, distant relatives, Judah, and Israel) and explain why this particular order is crucial to his overall message.
2. Compare and contrast the basis for God's judgment on the foreign nations with His judgment on Judah and Israel, as presented in the text. What theological principle underpins the accusations against the non-Israelite peoples, and how does this differ for the covenant people?
3. Analyze the significance of the "three sins...even for four" numerical saying in Amos's oracles. How does the speaker suggest this formula hints at Amos's ultimate target, and what might be the rhetorical effect of listing fewer than four crimes for the initial nations?

4. Examine the concept of the "Day of the Lord" as understood by Israel in Amos's time versus Amos's redefinition of it for them. How does Amos's prophecy challenge their prevailing expectations, and what does this reveal about the nature of divine judgment?
5. Select three specific accusations made against foreign nations in Amos 1-2 (e.g., Damascus, Gaza, Moab). For each, explain the nature of the crime, the specific judgment announced, and how the speaker connects it to a broader theological principle (e.g., the Noahic Mandate, respect for human life).

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amos:** A prophet from Tekoa, Judah, called by God to prophesy primarily to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was a herdsman and vinedresser, not a professional prophet.
- **Assyrians:** A powerful ancient Near Eastern empire. During Amos's ministry, they were not a major factor, but Amos's prophecy anticipates their re-emergence as a dominant force and instrument of God's judgment (re-established power in 745 BC by Tiglath-Pileser III).
- **Beth-eden:** A place name mentioned in the oracle against Damascus, possibly meaning "house of pleasantness" or associated with an Aramean region (Beit Adini); ironically, it faces destruction.
- **Bethel:** A significant religious shrine in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, where Amos encounters opposition from the priest.
- **Berit Olam:** A Hebrew term meaning "perpetual covenant" or "lasting treaty," referenced in Isaiah 24, which the speaker connects to the Noahic Mandate as a covenantal relationship God has with all humanity.
- **Carmel:** A well-wooded, fertile region mentioned in Amos 1:2, whose withering symbolizes the drought and destruction resulting from God's judgment.
- **Covenant Curses:** Threatened judgments found in Mosaic Law (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28) that God would bring upon His people if they disobeyed His commands. The prophets announce these curses will be enacted due to Israel's breaking of the Law.

- **Damascus:** The capital city of the Aramean kingdom (Syria), an outright foreign nation targeted by Amos's first judgment oracle.
- **Day of the Lord:** In the Old Testament, an idiom rooted in ancient Near Eastern warfare, referring to a time when a mighty warrior king would swiftly defeat his enemies. Israel expected it as a day of salvation for them, but Amos redefines it as a day of darkness and judgment for Israel.
- **Deuteronomy 28:** A chapter in the Mosaic Law that lists blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, often referenced by prophets when announcing judgments like drought and famine.
- **Earthquake (c. 760 BC):** A historically significant natural disaster referenced in Amos 1:1, understood culturally as an omen of divine judgment and seen as confirmation of Amos's prophecies.
- **Edomites:** Descendants of Esau (Jacob's brother), considered "distant relatives" but often enemies of Israel and Judah, targeted by Amos's oracles.
- **Gilead:** An Israelite region east of the Jordan River that suffered cruel treatment from foreign nations (Arameans "threshing" them, Ammonites "ripping open pregnant women").
- **Hazael:** An Aramean king, whose "house" or dynasty is targeted for destruction in Amos's oracle against Damascus.
- **Jeroboam II:** King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (782-753 BC) during Amos's ministry. His reign was a period of relative prosperity for Israel.
- **Judah:** The Southern Kingdom, considered a "brother" to Israel in Amos's oracles. Its judgment is based on its rejection of the Mosaic Law.
- **Kir:** A place identified as the origin of the Arameans, to which they will be exiled, symbolizing a reversal of their history.
- **Leviticus 26:** A chapter in the Mosaic Law detailing covenant blessings and curses, similar to Deuteronomy 28, which prophets drew upon for their judgment speeches.
- **Minor Prophets (The Twelve):** A collection of twelve shorter prophetic books in the Old Testament canon, of which Amos is the third.

- **Moabites:** Descendants of Lot, considered "distant relatives," who are judged for extreme disrespect for human dignity, specifically burning the bones of Edom's king (tomb desecration).
- **Mosaic Law:** The body of laws given to Moses by God, forming the basis of the covenant with Israel and Judah. Their judgment in Amos is explicitly tied to their violation of this law.
- **Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9):** God's covenant with Noah and his descendants (all humanity), which includes the command to respect the "image of God" in fellow human beings and not to murder. The speaker argues this mandate is the basis for God's judgment on the foreign nations in Amos.
- **Numerical Sayings (X, X+1):** A literary device used in Amos (e.g., "three sins...even for four," "seven, yay, eight") to indicate a list where the second number is the operative one, often emphasizing the final item or signaling a surprise.
- **Parity Treaties:** Treaties in the ancient Near East where two nations treated each other as equals ("brothers"), as opposed to a suzerain-vassal relationship. Tyre is accused of disregarding such a treaty.
- **Pesha:** A Hebrew word translated as "sins" or "transgression," specifically implying "rebellion against authority." In Amos, it signifies the nations' rebellion against God's universal authority.
- **Philistines:** A group of people living on the southwestern coast of the Levant, traditional enemies of Israel, whose major cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron) are targeted for judgment.
- **Raba:** A major city in Ammon targeted for destruction in Amos's oracle against the Ammonites.
- **Tekoa:** A town south of Jerusalem in Judah, Amos's hometown. His origin from Judah makes his prophecy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel particularly significant and unpopular.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God, often accompanied by natural phenomena like earth-shaking, as described in the Old Testament when the Lord comes for judgment or battle.

- **Three Sins...Even for Four:** A numerical saying used in Amos's judgment oracles, signaling a list of offenses corresponding to the second number (e.g., four sins), with the fourth often being the most significant or emphasized.
- **Threshing Sledge:** An agricultural tool with sharp teeth used to separate grain from husks. Used metaphorically in Amos to describe the cruel treatment inflicted by the Arameans on the people of Gilead.
- **Tiglath-Pileser III:** An Assyrian king (reign 745-727 BC) who re-established Assyrian power in the West, fulfilling Amos's implicit predictions of future judgment.
- **Tomb Desecration:** The act of violating a grave or tomb, considered a grave insult and lack of respect for the deceased in ancient Near Eastern culture, forming the basis for Moab's judgment.
- **Tyre:** A major Phoenician city on the coast north of Israel, known for seafaring and trade, judged for engaging in slave trade and violating a "treaty of brotherhood."
- **Uzziah:** King of Judah (767-740 BC) during Amos's ministry.
- **Valley of Avin (or Valley of Wickedness):** A geographical location mentioned in the oracle against Damascus, implying a region characterized by wickedness due to Aramean actions.
- **Zion:** A poetic name for Jerusalem, indicating that the Lord's authority and judgment originate from Judah, not the northern kingdom's cultic sites.

3) Study Guide:

Amos: The Prophet Entraps His Audience (Amos 1:1-2:16) - Study Guide

I. Introduction to the Book of Amos

- **Pronunciation:** Amos (Anglicized from Hebrew "Amos")
- **Placement:** Third of the twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos)
- **Speaker:** Dr. Robert Chisholm

- **Approach:** Verse-by-verse, section-by-section analysis, summarizing important principles.

II. Historical Context (Amos 1:1-2)

- **Prophet's Background:** Name: Amos
- **Occupation:** Shepherd, vinedresser (not a professional prophet)
- **Hometown:** Tekoa (south of Jerusalem, in Judah)
- **Audience:** Primarily the Northern Kingdom (Israel), making his message unpopular with authorities.
- **Calling:** His background as a layman from Judah prophesying in Israel testifies to a divine calling.
- **Time Period:** Judah's King: Uzziah (independent rule 767-740 BC)
- **Israel's King:** Jeroboam II (independent rule 782-753 BC)
- **Ministry Window:** 767-753 BC (overlap of independent rule)
- **Key Event:** Two years before "the earthquake" (estimated 760 BC, archaeological evidence at Hazor).
- **Significance of Earthquake:** Not a natural occurrence, but an omen of divine judgment, confirming Amos's prophecy.
- **Theophany Motif:** Earth-shaking often accompanies God's appearance for judgment in the Old Testament.
- **Assyrian Context:** Not a major factor during Amos's ministry (unlike the 800s BC).
- Assyria would re-establish power in the West under Tiglath-Pileser III (745 BC), fulfilling Amos's predictions of coming trouble.
- **National Prosperity:** Both Judah and Israel were flourishing, making Amos's message of judgment unexpected and unpopular.
- **Theological Foundation (Amos 1:2):** "The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem."

- **Imagery:** Lion roaring, thundering, warrior coming to battle.
- **Location:** God's authority is rooted in Jerusalem/Zion, not northern Israelite shrines.
- **Result:** Pastures dry up, Carmel withers (imagery of drought).
- **Connection to Mosaic Law:** Prophets are not innovators but messengers of the covenant Lord, familiar with Moses' law.
- **Judgment Speeches:** Correlate with broken laws and "covenant curses" (e.g., Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28).
- **Drought:** A specific covenant curse signaling God's judgment (Deuteronomy 28:23-24).

III. The Prophetic Entrapment (Amos 1:3-2:16)

- **Overall Strategy:** Amos begins by denouncing foreign nations, gradually moving closer to Israel, entrapping his audience into agreement before revealing Israel is the primary target.
1. **Structure of Judgment Oracles: Outright Foreigners Go Up in Smoke** (Amos 1:3-10): Arameans (Damascus), Philistines (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron), Phoenicians (Tyre).
 2. **Distant Relatives Go Up in Smoke** (Amos 1:11-2:3): Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites.
 3. **A Brother Goes Up in Smoke** (Amos 2:4-5): Judah.
 4. **Zeroing in on the Primary Target** (Amos 2:6-16): Israel.
- **"Day of the Lord" Misconception: Israel's Expectation:** A day of light, salvation, victory over enemies, security, and renewed life.
 - **Amos's Revelation:** For Israel, it will be a day of darkness and judgment.
 - **Rhetorical Device:** X, X+1 formula (e.g., "for three sins... even for four")
 - **Meaning:** Implies a list of items corresponding to the second number, with the last item often emphasized.

- **Significance of "Seven, Yay, Eight":** Completeness (seven), followed by a shocking surprise (eight, which is Israel).
- **Thematic Basis for Foreign Judgments: *Pesha* and the Noahic Mandate**
"Pesha": Translated "sins," but signifies rebellion against authority (often God's authority).
- **Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9):** God's universal covenant with Noah and his descendants (all humanity).
- Requirement to respect the "image of God" in fellow human beings (e.g., prohibition against murder).
- Nations, though not under Mosaic Law, are accountable for violating this foundational mandate on a national/mass scale.
- **Contrast with Judah/Israel:** Their judgment is based on violating the Mosaic Law.

IV. Specific Judgment Oracles (Detailed Analysis)

- **Damascus (Arameans) - Amos 1:3-5:X, X+1:** "For three sins... even for four" – *only one crime listed*.
- **Crime:** "Threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth" (metaphorical for cruel treatment/violence in war, violating Noahic mandate).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Hazael's house (royalty/leadership), broken gate of Damascus (defense), destruction of kings/rulers, exile to Kir (reversal of their origin story).
- **Significance of one crime:** Signals that Aram is not the primary target, streamlining for more important messages later.
- **Gaza (Philistines) - Amos 1:6-8:Crime:** "Took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom" (kidnapping and slave trade – direct violation of Noahic mandate).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Gaza's walls, destruction of kings/scepters in major Philistine cities (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron), last of Philistines dead.

- **Tyre (Phoenicians) - Amos 1:9-10:Crime:** "Sold whole communities of captives to Edom" (kidnapping and slave trade) AND "disregarding a treaty of brotherhood" (violation of parity treaty).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Tyre's walls.
- **Edom (Amos 1:11-12):Crime:** "Pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land," "anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked" (military violence, consistent hatred against Judah/Israel, Esau's descendants).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Teman and Bozrah (locations within Edom).
- **Ammon (Amos 1:13-15):Crime:** "Ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders" (mass violence, murder, bordering on genocide, motivated by greed/expansion).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Raba (major city), war cries, violent winds (symbol of divine judgment), king and officials exiled.
- **Moab (Amos 2:1-3):Crime:** "Burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king" (tomb desecration – ultimate disrespect for the dead/image of God, violating Noahic mandate).
- **Judgment:** Fire on Kirioth, tumult, war cries, trumpet blast, destruction of ruler and officials.
- **Judah (Amos 2:4-5):Placement:** Seventh in the list (completeness, expected climax for the audience).
- **Crime:** "Rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees," "led astray by their lies" (idolatry or false prophecy). *Moves beyond Noahic mandate to Mosaic Law.*
- **Judgment:** Fire on Judah, consuming Jerusalem's fortresses.
- **Audience Expectation:** Israel cheers, believing this is the final judgment before their "Day of the Lord."
- **Israel (Amos 2:6-16):Placement:** Eighth oracle ("seven, yay, eight" formula) – the shocking, primary target.

- **Revelation:** The Day of the Lord for Israel will be darkness and judgment, not light and salvation. (Crimes will be detailed later).

Quiz: Ten Short-Answer Questions

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was Amos's background and profession, and how did this influence the reception of his message in the Northern Kingdom?
2. During whose reigns did Amos prophesy, and what was the approximate timeframe of his ministry?
3. Explain the significance of the "earthquake" mentioned in Amos 1:1 in the context of ancient Near Eastern culture and Amos's prophecy.
4. How does Dr. Chisholm explain the prophets' relationship to Moses' law, and what specific types of judgment are linked to it in Amos?
5. What was the common expectation of the "Day of the Lord" among the people of Israel, and how did Amos challenge this expectation?
6. Describe the "prophet entraps his audience" rhetorical strategy used by Amos in chapters 1-2.
7. Explain the "X, X plus one" numerical saying formula (e.g., "for three sins... even for four") and its purpose in the judgment oracles.
8. What is *Pesha*, and how does Dr. Chisholm connect the sins of the foreign nations to the Noahic Mandate?
9. Identify two specific crimes of the foreign nations (excluding Judah and Israel) and explain how they violated the Noahic Mandate.
10. What is the significance of Judah being the seventh nation listed in Amos's judgment oracles, and what plot twist immediately follows?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Amos was a shepherd and vinedresser from Tekoa in Judah, not a professional prophet. His background as a layman from Judah delivering an unwelcome message of judgment to the Northern Kingdom of Israel

highlighted that his calling was divinely ordained, as no one would undertake such a task on their own.

2. Amos prophesied during the independent reigns of King Uzziah of Judah (767-740 BC) and King Jeroboam II of Israel (782-753 BC). This gives a ministry window for Amos between 767 BC and 753 BC.
3. In the ancient Near East, an earthquake was not seen as a natural occurrence but as an omen of divine judgment, linked to the Lord's "theophany" or appearance for battle. The earthquake two years after Amos prophesied served as a confirmation of his message, signaling God's readiness to bring judgment.
4. Dr. Chisholm states that prophets are not innovators but messengers of the covenant Lord who are very familiar with Moses' law. Their judgment speeches accuse people of breaking this law and announce "covenant curses" found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, such as drought, famine, and exile.
5. The people of Israel anticipated the "Day of the Lord" as a glorious time when God would intervene on their behalf, defeat their enemies, and bring salvation, security, and renewed life. Amos challenged this by declaring that for Israel, it would be a day of darkness and judgment.
6. Amos entrapped his audience by starting his prophecy with judgments against Israel's foreign enemies (Arameans, Philistines, Phoenicians), then moving to distant relatives (Edom, Ammon, Moab), and finally their rival (Judah). This led the Israelite audience to cheer, expecting their enemies' downfall, before Amos revealed they were the primary target.
7. The "X, X plus one" formula (e.g., "for three sins... even for four") is a numerical saying where the second number indicates the expected number of items in a list. Often, the last item in the list is emphasized. In Amos, the consistent listing of fewer crimes than the formula suggests for foreign nations subtly signals they are not the main focus.
8. *Pesha* refers to sin as rebellion against authority. Dr. Chisholm argues that the foreign nations, although not under Mosaic Law, rebelled against God's authority by violating the Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9). This mandate requires

all humanity to respect the image of God in their fellow human beings, particularly by refraining from mass murder and cruel treatment.

9. The Philistines "took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom," which is kidnapping and slave trade, directly disrespecting human life. The Ammonites "ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead," an act of mass violence and murder that borders on genocide, clearly violating the mandate to respect human life.
10. Judah's position as the seventh nation signifies completeness or the culmination of the judgment, leading the Israelite audience to believe they were the final target. The immediate plot twist is the shocking eighth oracle, which reveals that Israel, the Northern Kingdom, is the primary and ultimate target of God's judgment.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss how the historical context of Amos's ministry, including the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II and the Assyrian power vacuum, sets the stage for his message. How did the prosperity of the Northern Kingdom influence their perception of the "Day of the Lord" and Amos's challenge to that view?
2. Analyze Amos's "prophet entraps his audience" rhetorical strategy throughout Amos 1:3-2:16. Trace the progression of the judgment oracles and explain how the numerical sayings and the "seven, yea, eight" formula contribute to this strategy.
3. Explain Dr. Chisholm's interpretation of *pesh'a* and the Noahic Mandate as the basis for God's judgment on the foreign nations. Provide specific examples from the text to illustrate how these nations violated this mandate and differentiate it from the basis of judgment for Judah and Israel.
4. Examine the imagery and symbolism used in Amos 1:1-2 (e.g., "lion has roared," "earthquake," "drying up pastures"). How do these initial verses establish the themes of divine authority, judgment, and the consequences of rebellion, foreshadowing the rest of the book?
5. Compare and contrast the types of crimes committed by the "outright foreigners" and "distant relatives" in Amos 1:3-2:3 with the crimes attributed

to Judah in Amos 2:4-5. What does this shift in the nature of the accusation reveal about God's expectations for His covenant people versus the broader nations?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amos:** The prophet whose book is being studied; a layman from Tekoa (Judah) called by God to prophesy primarily to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- **Minor Prophets (The Twelve):** A collection of twelve shorter prophetic books in the Old Testament, of which Amos is the third.
- **Tekoa:** Amos's hometown, located south of Jerusalem in Judah.
- **Uzziah:** King of Judah during Amos's ministry (independent rule 767-740 BC).
- **Jeroboam II:** King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during Amos's ministry (independent rule 782-753 BC), under whom Israel experienced prosperity.
- **The Earthquake (ca. 760 BC):** A historically significant earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1, understood in the ancient Near East as an omen of divine judgment and confirmation of Amos's prophecy.
- **Assyria/Assyrians:** A major Mesopotamian empire. Though not dominant during Amos's early ministry, their re-emergence under Tiglath-Pileser III (745 BC) would be the instrument of God's judgment predicted by Amos.
- **Tiglath-Pileser III:** The Assyrian king who re-established Assyrian power in the West, fulfilling Amos's prophecies of coming trouble for Israel and Judah.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation to humankind of God. In the Old Testament, often accompanied by earth-shaking motifs when God appears for judgment or battle.
- **Zion/Jerusalem:** Poetic names for the capital city of Judah, significant because Amos emphasizes God's authority emanating from there, not from northern Israelite shrines.
- **Covenant Curses:** Threatened judgments found in Mosaic Law (e.g., Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28) that would befall Israel if they broke their covenant with God. Prophets like Amos announce these curses as a consequence of national sin.

- **Day of the Lord:** An Old Testament idiom rooted in ancient Near Eastern warfare, referring to a "day" when a mighty warrior king would swiftly and decisively defeat his enemies. For Israel, it was expected to be a day of salvation, but Amos redefines it as a day of darkness and judgment for them.
- **X, X+1 Formula (e.g., "three sins... even for four"):** A numerical literary device used in the ancient Near East (and in Proverbs 30), where the second number indicates the expected number of items in a list, often emphasizing the final point. In Amos, the discrepancy often signals streamlining and the true target.
- **Pesha:** A Hebrew word translated as "sins" in Amos 1:3, but specifically denotes rebellion against authority. Dr. Chisholm applies this to the nations' rebellion against God's universal authority.
- **Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9):** A universal covenant established by God with Noah and all his descendants (all humanity). It includes the command to be fruitful and multiply and, crucially, to respect the "image of God" in fellow human beings, particularly by refraining from murder and mass violence. This mandate is presented as the basis for God's judgment on the foreign nations in Amos.
- **Gilead:** A region east of the Jordan River, populated by Israelites, which suffered cruel treatment from the Arameans and Ammonites, as mentioned in Amos's oracles.
- **Damascus:** The capital city of the Aramean kingdom, targeted in Amos's first judgment oracle.
- **Philistines:** A people group living on the southwest coast of Canaan, whose cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath) are condemned by Amos for their slave trade.
- **Tyre:** A major Phoenician city known for seafaring and trade, condemned by Amos for slave trade and violating a "treaty of brotherhood."
- **Edom:** Descendants of Esau (Jacob's brother), condemned for their perpetual anger and military violence against their "brother" (Judah/Israel), and for purchasing slaves.

- **Ammonites:** Descendants of Lot, condemned for ripping open pregnant women of Gilead to expand their borders.
- **Moabites:** Descendants of Lot, condemned for burning the bones of Edom's king, an act of tomb desecration.
- **Judah:** The Southern Kingdom, considered a "brother" to Israel, condemned for rejecting the Mosaic Law and being led astray by "lies" (idolatry or false prophecy). It is the seventh nation in Amos's list.
- **Israel (Northern Kingdom):** The primary target of Amos's prophecy; the eighth nation in his list, signifying the shocking plot twist that God's judgment would fall most heavily on them.

4) FAQs:

Who was Amos and when did he prophesy?

Amos was a prophet from Tekoa, a town south of Jerusalem in Judah, but he primarily ministered and prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was not a professional prophet, but rather a herdsman and vinedresser, a layman called by the Lord. His ministry occurred during a period of relative prosperity for both Judah and Israel, specifically between 767 and 753 BC, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II was king of Israel. His prophecy also notably occurred two years before a major earthquake around 760 BC, an event that served as an omen of divine judgment and validated Amos's message.

What was the historical and political context of Amos's prophecy?

Amos prophesied during a time when both Judah and Israel were flourishing, experiencing relative peace and prosperity. The Assyrian Empire, which had previously dominated the region in the 9th century, was not a major factor at this specific time. However, Amos's message foreshadowed the re-establishment of Assyrian power that would occur around 745 BC under Tiglath-Pileser III, signaling impending trouble and judgment for both kingdoms. This context highlights the irony of Amos's message, as he predicted judgment during a period of perceived security.

What is the "Day of the Lord" and how did the people of Israel misunderstand it?

In the Old Testament, the "Day of the Lord" is an idiom rooted in ancient Near Eastern military practices, referring to a mighty warrior-king's day of decisive victory over his enemies. The people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel anticipated the "Day of the Lord" as a glorious time when God would intervene on their behalf, defeat their enemies, and bring about salvation, security, and renewed life for them. However, Amos dramatically redefines this expectation, revealing that for Israel, the "Day of the Lord" would be a "day of darkness and judgment" against them, not a day of light and salvation.

How did Amos "entrap" his audience with his judgment oracles?

Amos uses a rhetorical device to entrap his audience in the Northern Kingdom. He begins by pronouncing judgment against surrounding "outright foreigner" nations (Arameans, Philistines, Phoenicians), then moves to "distant relatives" (Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites), and finally to Judah. The Israelites would have cheered these initial pronouncements, seeing God's judgment against their enemies. The inclusion of Judah as the seventh oracle, often signifying completeness, would have further solidified their expectation that they were exempt from judgment. However, the shocking plot twist comes with an eighth oracle, against Israel itself, revealing that they are the primary target of God's judgment.

What is the significance of the "three sins, even for four" formula in Amos's judgment oracles?

The formula "for three sins... even for four" (or "X, yay, X plus one") is a numerical saying common in ancient Near Eastern literature, including Proverbs. It suggests that while there may be several transgressions, the focus and emphasis are on the fourth, culminating offense. However, in Amos's oracles against the foreign nations, he often lists fewer than four distinct crimes, or combines them in a way that suggests a streamlined, less detailed accusation. This technique subtly signals that these nations are not Amos's primary target, building anticipation for a more extensive accusation against the ultimate recipient of judgment, Israel.

What is the basis for God's judgment against the foreign nations in Amos?

The basis for God's judgment against the foreign nations in Amos is their violation of the "Noahic mandate," specifically the commandment to respect the image of God in fellow human beings. This mandate, established with Noah in Genesis 9, prohibits

murder and extends to all of humanity as descendants of Noah. The specific crimes mentioned for these nations (e.g., cruel treatment in war, kidnapping and slave trade, tomb desecration, ripping open pregnant women) are all presented as acts of rebellion against God's authority and a profound disrespect for human life and dignity.

How does the basis of judgment change when Amos addresses Judah and Israel?

While the foreign nations are judged for violating the Noahic mandate, Judah and Israel are judged for breaking the Mosaic Law. This distinction is crucial because Judah and Israel were specifically given God's law through Moses and were therefore held to a higher standard of accountability. The accusations against Judah include rejecting the law of the Lord, not keeping His decrees, and being led astray by "lies" (possibly false gods or prophets). For Israel, the comprehensive list of sins, to be detailed later in the book, will similarly align with their covenant responsibilities under the Mosaic Law.

What recurring theme or punishment is prevalent in the judgment oracles against the foreign nations?

A consistent theme in the judgment oracles against the foreign nations is the Lord's declaration, "I will send fire," often specified to consume fortresses or walls of their major cities. This imagery of fire represents ultimate destruction and serves as a powerful symbol of divine judgment. This consistent punishment highlights the severity and certainty of God's impending judgment upon these nations for their transgressions, particularly their violent and inhumane acts.