

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

Session 6: Amos 7:1-8:3 Judgment is Inescapable (A)

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

1) Abstract:

In his lecture, **Dr. Robert Chisholm examines** Amos 7:1-8:3, a passage from the biblical book of Amos, emphasizing the **inescapability of judgment** while also highlighting God's ultimate plan for restoration. He **breaks down this section** into three distinct visions and a narrative interlude where **Amos confronts a priest** named Amaziah. Chisholm explains that the first two visions, depicting locusts and fire, showcase God's **patience and willingness to relent** when Amos intercedes, contrasting with the third vision of a plumb line, which signifies **unavoidable judgment** due to Israel's moral crookedness. The discussion also **explores the concept of corporate responsibility**, explaining how the sins of individuals, like the priest Amaziah, can lead to consequences for their families and communities, as depicted in various biblical narratives. The lecture concludes by underscoring that while God is merciful, **He will ultimately allow the consequences** of sin to manifest, often through external means like the Assyrians.

2) Briefing Document:

Briefing Document: Amos 7:1-8:3 - Judgment Is Inescapable

Source: Excerpts from "Chisholm_Amos_Ses06.pdf" - Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear? Session 6 (A): Amos 7:1-8:3, Judgment Is Inescapable.

Overview: This session of Dr. Robert Chisholm's teaching on the book of Amos focuses on Amos 7:1-8:3, emphasizing the overarching theme that "Judgment Is Inescapable" (p. 1). This section, along with chapters 8 and most of 9, forms a

unified thematic unit. While the book has been "very negative" concerning judgment, it will conclude on a "positive note" (p. 1) with God's commitment to His promises despite human sin and discipline.

Key Sections and Themes:

1. Thematic Overview of Amos 7-9:10:

- **Central Theme:** Judgment is inescapable (p. 1).
- **Book's Ending:** Amos concludes with a "happy ending" (Amos 9:11-15), demonstrating God's faithfulness to His promises (to Abraham, David) despite the people's sin and impending exile (p. 1). This shows God has not abandoned His plan.

2. Structure of Amos 7:1-8:3: Dr. Chisholm divides this section into three main parts:

- **Three Visions (7:1-9):** Entitled "The Three Little Pigs Reversed" (p. 2).
- **Prophet Meets Priest (7:10-17):** This recounts the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah.
- **Fourth Vision (8:1-3):** Described as "a symbolic still life" (p. 2).

3. The Three Visions (Amos 7:1-9) - "The Three Little Pigs Reversed":

- **Narrative Structure:** Chisholm highlights the "paneled structure" (p. 2) common in oral literature (fairy tales like "Three Little Pigs," "Three Billy Goats Gruff," and biblical narratives like Samuel's call or Elijah and the captains). This structure involves repetition with intensification and significant changes culminating in the final panel (p. 2-3).
- **Purpose of Oral Literature:** The Bible, fundamentally oral literature, uses this dramatic structure to "emphasize both his patience and his justice" (p. 5).
- **Vision 1: Locusts (7:1-3):Description:** The Lord shows Amos a vision of "swarms of locusts" (p. 5) devastating crops after the king's share had been harvested.

- **Amos's Plea:** Amos cries out, "Forgive them, Lord, just forgive them. How can Jacob survive? He is so small" (p. 5). This demonstrates Amos's recognition of their wrongdoing but also his compassion for their vulnerability.
- **God's Response:** "The Lord relented" (p. 5). Chisholm prefers "relented" over "changed his mind" to emphasize God's consistent plan and character, not a lack of foreknowledge.
- **Contingent Prophecy:** This relenting illustrates that prophecies are often contingent, even if not explicitly stated as "if you don't repent" (p. 5). God desires repentance, as seen with Jonah and the Ninevites, and Jesus' desire for Jerusalem (p. 6).
- **Vision 2: Fire (7:4-6):Description:** The Lord shows Amos "judgment by fire" (p. 6), more devastating than locusts, drying up "the great deep" and devouring the land.
- **Amos's Plea:** Amos cries out, "Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop. How can Jacob survive? He's so small" (p. 7). This time, the plea changes from "forgive" to "stop," indicating Amos's deepening emotional identification with the people's suffering rather than God's justice (p. 7).
- **God's Response:** "The Lord relented" (p. 7).
- **God's Immutability and Mercy:** Chisholm explains that God's relenting aligns with His immutability, which means He is "unchangeable in his mercy and his patience. He will immutably be open to letting people repent" (p. 7-8).
- **Vision 3: Plumb Line (7:7-9):Description:** The Lord stands by a wall "built true to plumb with a plumb line in his hand" (p. 8). There is no action in this vision; it's a "still life" designed for reflection.
- **God's Declaration:** The Lord declares, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people, Israel. I will spare them no longer" (p. 8).
- **No Relenting:** This is the crucial change in the third panel; God will no longer relent.
- **Symbolism:** The "wall" represents the people of Israel, and the plumb line reveals that they "don't measure up to my standard" and are "like a crooked wall" (p. 8-9).

- **Amos's Shift in Perspective:** This vision forces Amos to return to "the Lord's view of things" and understand the necessity of judgment, moving him away from solely empathizing with the objects of judgment (p. 9).

4. Prophet Meets Priest (Amos 7:10-17):

- **Biographical Account:** This section is a third-person biographical account, possibly inserted later (p. 9), which "explains why the Lord needs to bring judgment" (p. 9).
- **Amaziah's Accusation (7:10-13):** Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (a "royal sanctuary," not the Lord's sanctuary, reflecting his allegiance to the king), sends a message to King Jeroboam II, accusing Amos of "raising a conspiracy" (p. 9).
- **"Fake News":** Amaziah distorts Amos's prophecy, claiming Amos said "Jeroboam will die by the sword" (p. 9), omitting the divine agency and implying a coup. However, he correctly states that Amos prophesied "Israel will surely go into exile" (p. 10).
- **Amaziah's Command:** Amaziah tells Amos, "Get out, you seer... Earn your bread there [Judah] and do your prophesying there. But don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, which of course means the house of God... Because this is the king's sanctuary... and the temple of the kingdom" (p. 10).
- **Elevation of King over God:** Chisholm emphasizes that Amaziah has "all but substituted the king for the Lord" and "elevated the king over the Lord" (p. 10), reflecting the core problem of the Northern Kingdom. This mirrors the Elijah story where the king's messengers assert royal authority over the prophet (p. 3).
- **Amos's Response (7:14-17): Divine Calling:** Amos clarifies, "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet... But I was a shepherd. And I also took care of sycamore fig trees... But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel" (p. 11). He asserts his divine calling over human professional status.

- **Compulsion to Prophecy:** Amos invokes his earlier statement, "the lion has roared. Who can but prophesy?" (p. 11), indicating he is compelled by God to speak.
- **Amaziah's Judgment (7:16-17):** Due to Amaziah's opposition and elevation of the king above God, severe corporate judgment is pronounced against him and his family: "Your wife will become a prostitute in the city. And your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured up, measured, and divided up. And you yourself will die in a pagan country" (p. 12).
- **Irony for a Priest:** The most ironic aspect is that a priest, concerned with ritual cleanness, will die in an "unclean country" (p. 12).

5. Corporate Responsibility in the Old Testament:

- **Individual vs. Corporate Thinking:** Chisholm addresses the common Western individualistic mindset that struggles with corporate judgment ("Why should his wife have to suffer for what he did? And why should his children have to suffer because of what he did?") (p. 12-13).
- **Biblical Evidence:** He cites Joel Kaminsky's work on corporate responsibility in the Hebrew Bible, providing examples:
- **Achan's Sin (Joshua):** Achan's theft of plunder from Jericho led to Israel's defeat at Ai and the execution of Achan, his children, and animals (p. 13). God viewed Israel "corporately" and the sin of one person impacted the whole nation (p. 13). The children's inclusion is seen as "taking away the blessings that I did give you" due to Achan's greed (p. 14).
- **Adam's Sin:** Paul teaches that Adam's sin negatively impacted "the entire race that comes from him" (p. 14).
- **Saul's Failure (Samuel):** Saul's failure to wipe out the Amalekites resulted in a famine and the execution of seven of his offspring to appease the Gibeonites (p. 14). There is "no indication that they were in on what Saul did, but they have to pay the price because the Lord is dealing with them corporately as a as a community" (p. 14).

- **Modern Illustrations of Corporate Thinking: Sports Teams:** Chisholm uses examples from baseball (mental errors affecting the whole team, running laps for collective mistakes) and the Chicago Bulls (individual players like Ewing and Barkley not getting championship rings because they weren't part of the winning *team*) to illustrate how corporate responsibility operates in real life (p. 14-16).
- **Corporate Bankruptcy:** A good individual employee loses their job when the entire corporation goes bankrupt (p. 15).
- **God's Sovereignty:** God, as the "sovereign god," chooses when to judge corporately or individually (p. 15).
- **God's "Protection Withdrawn":** The judgment on Amaziah and his family is not God directly inflicting harm, but rather God "taking away my protection" and allowing the "Assyrians come through and do what the Assyrians do" (p. 16). Their sin brings these consequences upon them, and God uses the Assyrians as a "means of judgment" (p. 16).

3) Study Guide:

Amos 7:1-8:3: Judgment Is Inescapable

Study Guide

I. Overview of Amos 7-9

- **Central Theme:** Judgment is inescapable (Amos 7:1-9:10).
- **Contrast:** Despite the pervasive negative theme of judgment, the book of Amos concludes on a positive note (Amos 9:11-15), titled "A Happy Ending," emphasizing God's commitment to His promises (to Abraham and David) despite His people's sin and discipline.
- **Structure of Chapter 7 and 8:1-3:** This section forms a unified subunit centered on a series of visions.

II. The Three Visions (Amos 7:1-9) – "The Three Little Pigs Reversed"

- **Paneled Structure:** This section employs a narrative structure common in oral literature (e.g., "The Three Little Pigs," "Three Billy Goats Gruff," the story of Samuel's calling, Elijah and the captains).
- **Characteristics:** Repetition across panels, intensification, and significant changes/culmination in the final panel.
- **Biblical Application:** This structure emphasizes God's patience and justice. His patience allows for opportunities to repent, while His justice ensures judgment if repentance does not occur.
- **Vision 1: Locusts (Amos 7:1-3)Description:** The Lord prepares a swarm of locusts after the king's share of crops has been harvested, threatening the late crops.
- **Amos's Plea:** "Forgive them, Lord! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!"
- **God's Response:** The Lord "relented" (Hebrew: *salak*). This demonstrates God's willingness to withhold judgment in response to intercession, highlighting the contingent nature of prophecy.
- **Vision 2: Fire (Amos 7:4-6)Description:** The Sovereign Lord calls for judgment by fire, which dries up the great deep and devours the land, more devastating than locusts.
- **Amos's Plea:** "Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!" (Hebrew: *stop/cease*). This shows a shift in Amos's emotional response, focusing solely on the devastation and empathizing with the people.
- **God's Response:** The Lord "relented." This further emphasizes God's patience and immutability in mercy, showing He is always open to repentance.
- **Vision 3: Plumb Line (Amos 7:7-9)Description:** The Lord stands by a wall built true to plumb, holding a plumb line. Unlike previous visions, there's no action or unfolding judgment initially. The wall is implied to be crooked.
- **Amos's Observation:** Amos focuses on the plumb line, recognizing the implication for the crooked wall (representing Israel).

- **God's Declaration:** "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer."
- **Outcome:** No relenting. Judgment is declared inescapable. The high places of Isaac and sanctuaries of Israel will be destroyed, and the Lord will rise against the house of Jeroboam.
- **Shift in Perspective:** God forces Amos to shift from empathy for the judged to understanding God's perspective and the necessity of judgment due to Israel's failure to meet His standards (covenant).

III. Prophet Meets Priest (Amos 7:10-17)

- **Context:** This is a biographical account (Amos referred to in the third person), possibly inserted later, and serves to explain *why* judgment is inescapable.
- **Amaziah's Accusation (7:10-13): Identity:** Amaziah is the priest of Bethel, a royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom.
- **Message to Jeroboam II:** He accuses Amos of conspiracy, claiming Amos said "Jeroboam will die by the sword" (a distortion, as Amos said God would rise against the "house of Jeroboam," implying divine action, not a coup). He also correctly states that Israel will go into exile.
- **Command to Amos:** "Get out, you seer! Go back to Judah, earn your bread there, and do your prophesying there. But don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."
- **Amaziah's Motivation:** He elevates the king and the kingdom's authority above the Lord, highlighting the systemic corruption and injustice in the Northern Kingdom.
- **Amos's Response (7:14-17): Denial of Professionalism:** "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet; I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore fig trees." Amos was a common man, called directly by God from agriculture, emphasizing his divine commission and lack of personal gain.
- **Divine Compulsion:** "But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel.'" Amos acts under divine compulsion, not human will or financial incentive.

- **Reiteration of Earlier Accusations:** Amos connects Amaziah's command to "not prophesy" with the earlier accusations against the Northern Kingdom for silencing prophets.
- **Prophecy Against Amaziah:** Amos delivers a harsh personal judgment from the Lord:
 - His wife will become a prostitute in the city.
 - His sons and daughters will fall by the sword.
 - His land will be measured and divided up.
 - He will die in a pagan, unclean country.
 - Israel will surely go into exile.
- **Corporate Responsibility in the Old Testament: Principle:** God sometimes judges the group for the sin of one person (e.g., Achan, Saul and the Gibeonites).
- **Explanation:** Sin contaminates the community; God views them as a unity. The consequences of individual sin can impact the whole, and God may remove His protection, allowing the natural consequences of a fallen world to occur.
- **Contemporary Analogies:** Sports teams (mental errors affecting the whole team), corporate bankruptcy (good employees losing jobs due to company failure), professional sports teams (individual players receiving championship rings based on team performance).
- **Conclusion:** The judgment on Amaziah's family is a direct consequence of his opposition to God's prophet and his elevation of the king over God, and God allowing the Assyrian invasion to bring these natural consequences.

IV. Fourth Vision (Amos 8:1-3) – "Symbolic Still Life" (Briefly mentioned as continuation)

- This vision is explicitly stated to be the fourth in the sequence and will be discussed further in the next lecture.

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the overarching theme of Amos chapters 7, 8, and most of 9, according to Dr. Chisholm?
2. How does the book of Amos ultimately conclude, contrasting with its dominant theme?
3. Explain the concept of a "paneled structure" in oral literature, as described in the lecture, and provide one biblical example given besides Amos.
4. In the first vision (locusts), what was Amos's plea to the Lord, and how did the Lord respond?
5. How did Amos's plea change in the second vision (fire) compared to the first, and what does this change reveal about his emotional state?
6. Describe the key elements of the third vision (plumb line) and its significance regarding God's decision to spare Israel no longer.
7. Who was Amaziah, and what was his primary accusation against Amos when he sent a message to King Jeroboam?
8. What was Amaziah's underlying motivation for telling Amos not to prophesy at Bethel?
9. How did Amos respond to Amaziah's accusation regarding his profession, and what point was he trying to make?
10. Explain the concept of "corporate responsibility" as it applies to God's judgment on Amaziah's family, providing one example from the Old Testament mentioned in the lecture.

Answer Key

1. The overarching theme of Amos chapters 7, 8, and most of 9 is that judgment is inescapable. This theme emphasizes the certainty of divine retribution for Israel's sins, though opportunities for repentance were offered.
2. Despite the pervasive negative theme of judgment, the book of Amos concludes on a positive note in chapter 9, verses 11-15. This "happy ending"

emphasizes God's unwavering commitment to His covenant promises to Abraham and David, signifying a future restoration.

3. A paneled structure in oral literature involves a series of repeated panels or episodes, often three or four, with an intensification leading to a significant culmination or change in the final panel. An example is Samuel's calling, where the Lord calls him multiple times before Eli discerns it's God.
4. In the first vision (locusts), Amos cried out, "Forgive them, Lord! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!" In response, the Lord relented, choosing not to bring the announced judgment, illustrating the contingent nature of some prophecies.
5. In the second vision (fire), Amos's plea changed from "forgive" to "stop/cease." This reveals his intense emotional engagement and compassion, as he focused entirely on the devastating consequences for his people rather than their guilt.
6. In the third vision, the Lord stood by a wall with a plumb line, signifying that Israel (the wall) was crooked and did not meet God's standard. The significance is that God declared He would "spare them no longer," indicating that judgment was now certain and unavoidable.
7. Amaziah was the priest of Bethel, a royal sanctuary in the Northern Kingdom. His primary accusation to King Jeroboam was that Amos was raising a conspiracy against the king by prophesying his death and Israel's exile.
8. Amaziah's underlying motivation for silencing Amos was his elevation of the king's authority and the kingdom's interests above the Lord's. He viewed Bethel as the "king's sanctuary" and "temple of the kingdom," prioritizing human power over divine will.
9. Amos responded by stating, "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet; I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore fig trees." He was emphasizing that his prophecy was not a profession he chose or was trained for, but a divine calling from God Himself.
10. Corporate responsibility means that God sometimes judges a group or community for the sin of one individual, as the sin contaminates the whole.

An example given was Achan's sin, which led to the defeat of Israelite men in battle and the execution of Achan's children along with him.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze how the "paneled structure" of the first three visions in Amos 7 serves to emphasize both God's patience and His justice. Discuss the specific changes in Amos's intercession and God's response across these visions, and explain the theological significance of the final vision's lack of relenting.
2. Examine the conflict between Amos and Amaziah in Amos 7:10-17. Discuss Amaziah's motivations for opposing Amos and how his understanding of authority contrasts with Amos's. What does this encounter reveal about the spiritual and political state of the Northern Kingdom?
3. The lecture discusses the concept of "corporate responsibility" in the Old Testament, particularly in relation to the judgment on Amaziah's family. Explain this theological concept in detail, using biblical examples provided in the lecture (Achan, Saul/Gibeonites). How does understanding corporate responsibility challenge modern individualistic thinking?
4. Trace the progression of Amos's emotional and theological understanding of judgment through the first three visions. How does the Lord "force him to get a proper perspective on things" by the third vision, and what implications does this have for how prophets should view God's judgment?
5. Discuss the significance of Amos's self-identification as "neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet" in his response to Amaziah. How does this statement validate his prophetic authority and underscore the nature of his calling, contrasting him with professional or false prophets?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amos:** An eighth-century BCE prophet from Tekoa in Judah, called by God to prophesy primarily against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. His name means "burden-bearer."
- **Amaziah:** The priest of Bethel, a royal sanctuary in the Northern Kingdom, who directly confronted Amos and attempted to silence him.

- **Bethel:** A significant religious and political center in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, serving as a royal sanctuary where King Jeroboam II worshipped.
- **Corporate Responsibility:** A theological concept in the Hebrew Bible where God sometimes judges an entire group or community for the sin of an individual within that group, or blesses a group for an individual's righteousness. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of the community before God.
- **Galo Yigleh:** A Hebrew phrase meaning "surely go into exile," used by Amaziah to quote Amos's prophecy and also reiterated in the judgment against Amaziah himself, highlighting the certainty of the exile.
- **Immutability:** The theological doctrine that God is unchangeable in His character, nature, and divine attributes. The lecture clarifies that this does not preclude God from "relenting" in His announced judgments when people repent, as His mercy and patience are immutable.
- **Jacob:** Often used as a poetic name for Israel, referring to the people of the Northern Kingdom.
- **Jeroboam II:** The king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the time of Amos's prophecy, under whom the kingdom experienced prosperity but also severe social injustice and religious apostasy.
- **Judgment Is Inescapable:** The overriding theme of Amos chapters 7-9, emphasizing the certainty of God's impending judgment upon Israel due to their unrepentant sin.
- **Paneled Structure:** A narrative literary device, common in oral literature, characterized by repetition of events or themes across multiple "panels" or episodes, with an intensification leading to a significant culmination or change in the final panel.
- **Plumb Line:** A tool used to determine if a wall is perfectly vertical or "true to plumb." In Amos's third vision, it symbolizes God's standard of righteousness against which Israel is measured and found to be crooked, leading to inescapable judgment.

- **Prophecy (Contingent):** A prophecy whose fulfillment is dependent upon a condition, often human response (e.g., repentance). The Lord's relenting in the first two visions illustrates this concept.
- **Relented:** (Hebrew: *salak*, also associated with *nicham*) Describes God's action of withdrawing a threatened judgment or changing a course of action previously announced. This term highlights God's patience and willingness to respond to human repentance or intercession.
- **Rigamarole:** A lengthy, complicated, and often tedious procedure or story, distinct from the paneled structure which has a more defined and culminating progression.
- **Royal Sanctuary:** A religious site supported and often controlled by the king, serving the interests of the monarchy as much as, or more than, the worship of God. Bethel is described as such.
- **Seer:** (Hebrew: *ro'eh*) An archaic term for a prophet, one who "sees" visions or receives divine revelation. Amaziah uses this term derogatorily toward Amos.
- **Sycamore Fig Trees:** Trees whose fruit required special cultivation (piercing to ripen them), indicating Amos's work as a "vine dresser" or agricultural laborer before his prophetic calling.
- **Tekoa:** Amos's hometown, located in Judah (the Southern Kingdom), emphasizing that he was a prophet sent from the south to the north.
- **Unclean Country (Temeyah):** A land outside of Israel, considered ritually impure by Jewish law. The prophecy that Amaziah would die in such a place was a severe curse for a priest who dealt with ritual purity.

4) FAQs:

1. What is the overarching theme of Amos chapters 7-9, and how does it relate to the rest of the book?

The overarching theme of Amos chapters 7-9, specifically through chapter 9, verse 10, is that "judgment is inescapable." While this theme has appeared earlier in the

book, it becomes the central focus of this concluding section. However, the book of Amos is unique in that it ends on a positive note, despite the preceding negative pronouncements of judgment. This positive ending, found in Amos chapter 9, verses 11-15, signifies that even though God disciplines his people and sends them into exile due to their sin, He has not abandoned His plan or His promises made to Abraham and David. Therefore, judgment is inevitable for unrepentant sin, but God's ultimate faithfulness and commitment to His covenant endure, leading to a "happy ending" of restoration.

2. How do the initial visions in Amos 7 function, and what literary device do they employ?

The initial visions in Amos 7 (verses 1-9) function as a "reversal" of the "Three Little Pigs" motif, or a "paneled structure." In typical paneled stories like "The Three Little Pigs" or "Three Billy Goats Gruff," there's a progression of challenges, with an eventual escape or salvation in the final panel. However, in Amos's visions, judgment is threatened in the first two instances (locusts and fire), and the Lord "relents" at Amos's intercession. But in the third vision (the plumb line), judgment becomes unavoidable, signaling that God will "spare them no longer." This literary structure, common in oral literature, is used to build intensity, emphasize God's patience in offering opportunities for repentance, and ultimately underscore the inevitability of His justice when repentance is withheld.

3. What is the significance of the shift in Amos's intercession across the first three visions?

In the first vision (locusts), Amos cries out for God to "forgive" the people, acknowledging their wrongdoing and the appropriateness of judgment, but pleading for mercy due to their smallness. In the second vision (fire), Amos's plea shifts to "stop," indicating a heightened emotional response and a focus solely on the devastating consequences for the people, empathizing with the objects of judgment rather than the judge. However, in the third vision (the plumb line), there is no intercession from Amos. The Lord, instead of showing a "moving picture" that elicits emotion, presents a static image of a crooked wall and declares, "I will spare them no longer." This forces Amos to shift his perspective back to God's view, understanding that the people do not measure up to God's standards and that judgment is a necessary consequence of their unrepentant sin.

4. What does the encounter between Amos and Amaziah reveal about the spiritual state of the Northern Kingdom?

The encounter between Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reveals a profound spiritual corruption within the Northern Kingdom, particularly among its leadership. Amaziah's accusation that Amos is raising a conspiracy and his command to "Do not prophesy anymore at Bethel" expose his distorted priorities. Amaziah views Bethel as "the king's sanctuary" and "the temple of the kingdom" rather than "the house of God." This shows he has elevated the king's authority and royal power above the Lord's. He represents a system where the worshiper (the king) takes precedence over the God being worshipped. This encounter underscores the very reasons for God's impending judgment – the widespread injustice and the leadership's rejection of God's true prophets and His divine authority.

5. What is the significance of Amos's declaration, "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet"?

Amos's declaration, "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet... But I was a shepherd. And I also took care of sycamore fig trees," is highly significant. It refutes Amaziah's accusation that Amos is a professional prophet, "in it for the money," or part of an established prophetic guild ("son of a prophet"). Instead, Amos asserts that he was directly called by the Lord from his ordinary life in agriculture to prophesy to Israel. This emphasizes that his message is not his own, nor is it driven by personal gain, but it is a divine mandate from God. His reluctance to prophesy is overcome by the compelling command of the Lord, similar to "the lion has roared, who can but prophesy?" This highlights his prophetic authenticity and the inescapable nature of the divine call.

6. What is the nature of the judgment pronounced upon Amaziah, and why is it so severe?

The judgment pronounced upon Amaziah is extremely severe and deeply ironic, tailored to his identity as a priest who elevated the king above God. His wife will become a prostitute in the city, his sons and daughters will fall by the sword, his land will be measured and divided up, and he himself will die in a "pagan country," literally an "unclean country." This is particularly devastating for a priest, whose life is dedicated to distinguishing between ritually clean and unclean. His wife's profanation and his own death in an unclean land are a direct consequence of his

opposition to God's prophet and his subversion of divine authority for royal power. The severity reflects that his actions brought a curse upon his own family, aligning with the concept of corporate responsibility in the Old Testament.

7. How does the concept of "corporate responsibility" or "corporate solidarity" explain God's judgment in the Old Testament, particularly as seen in the judgment on Amaziah's family?

The concept of "corporate responsibility" or "corporate solidarity" is crucial for understanding God's judgment in the Old Testament. This perspective, as described by scholar Joel Kaminsky, asserts that God sometimes judges a group or community for the sin of an individual. Examples like Achan's sin leading to the defeat at Ai and the death of his family, or Saul's sin leading to a famine and the execution of his offspring, illustrate that the actions of one person can have profound negative consequences for the entire collective, particularly the family unit. In Amaziah's case, his extreme sin of defying God's prophet and elevating the king's authority over God's leads to the suffering of his wife and children. This is not seen as God unjustly punishing innocents, but rather as God withdrawing His protection and allowing the natural, severe consequences of sin to fall upon the entire family unit, which was seen as an extension of the individual in that cultural context. It teaches that individual actions can impact the collective, and sometimes God operates in a way that allows the blessings (like family and land) given to a person to be taken away due to their sin.

8. How does the speaker address the modern Western perspective on individual vs. corporate responsibility in light of Old Testament narratives?

The speaker directly addresses the modern Western, individualistic perspective which struggles to comprehend corporate responsibility, particularly when it appears to punish "innocent" family members for the sins of an individual. He argues that while modern society primarily thinks individually, the Old Testament clearly demonstrates God operating corporately in many instances. He uses contemporary analogies, such as a sports team where one player's mental error can lead to the entire team running laps, or a corporation going bankrupt, impacting all employees regardless of individual performance. These examples illustrate that even in modern contexts, collective consequences for individual actions are understood. The speaker emphasizes that God, as the sovereign ruler, chooses

when to apply corporate judgment, and it often functions as a demonstration of the severe impact of sin, where God withdraws His protection and allows the natural, devastating consequences to unfold upon the collective unit (family, nation) connected to the offender. Ultimately, the blame rests with the individual who brought such consequences upon their own kin through their disobedience.