

Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?

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

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Robert Chisholm analyzes the historical setting and literary structure of Amos 1:1–2:16, where God calls a lay shepherd from Judah to pronounce judgment upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. Dr. Chisholm demonstrates how Amos employs a masterful rhetorical entrapment strategy by delivering judgment oracles against six neighboring foreign nations and Judah before unexpectedly zeroing in on Israel as the primary target of God's coming wrath. The lesson emphasizes that foreign nations are held accountable for violating universal moral standards under the Noahic mandate, while Israel and Judah are judged for transgressing the Mosaic covenant. Ultimately, Amos transforms Israel's popular expectations of a triumphant "Day of the Lord" into an announcement of impending divine warfare and exile.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Book of Amos and Historical Context (Amos 1:1)

A. Title and Speaker Overview

1. Speaker: Dr. Robert Chisholm
2. Series: Amos: The Lion Has Roared, Who Will Not Fear?
3. Session 1A: A Prophet Entraps His Audience (Amos 1:1–2:16)
4. Place in the Canon: Third book of the Minor Prophets / "The Twelve"

B. Historical and Political Setting

1. Kings in Power: Co-regencies and independent rulers
 - a. Uzziah, King of Judah (independent rule: 767–740 BC)
 - b. Jeroboam II, King of Israel (independent rule: 782–753 BC)
 - c. Overlapping historical window of ministry: ~767–753 BC
2. Geopolitical Climate (~760 BC)
 - a. Temporary decline of Assyrian dominance before Tiglath-Pileser III (745 BC)
 - b. Period of material prosperity and national security for Israel and Judah

C. The Prophet's Profile and Divine Authority

1. Background: Shephelah layman, herdsman, and vinedresser from Tekoa (Judah)
2. Calling: Non-professional prophet crossing southern border into the Northern Kingdom
3. Sign of Authority: Ministry occurred two years before "the earthquake" (~760 BC)
 - a. Near Eastern perspective: Earthquakes as divine omens and manifestations of judgment
 - b. Fulfillment confirms Amos's divine commission and impending theophanic judgment

II. The Proclamation of Divine Judgment (Amos 1:2)

A. Theophanic Motif: The Roaring Lion

1. "The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem"
2. Significance of Zion: God's throne is in Jerusalem, not Israel's northern shrines
3. Idiom of "giving his voice": Divine warrior thundering for war

B. Universal Impact of God's Judgment

1. Desolation of lush agricultural regions (pastures of shepherds, top of Mount Carmel)
2. Connection to Mosaic Covenant: Prophets as covenant enforcement officers
 - a. Application of covenant curses from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28
 - b. Drought as a specific covenantal sign of divine curse and lawbreaking

III. The Rhetorical Entrapment Strategy (Amos 1:3–2:5)

A. The Israelite Expectations of the "Day of the Lord"

1. Popular assumption: Swift divine victory, light, and national salvation over enemies
2. Historical context: Prosperity under Jeroboam II inspired false confidence

B. Numerical Formula and Legal Basis

1. Formula: "For three sins... even for four" (Numerical saying idiom from Wisdom literature)
2. Legal basis for foreign judgment: Violation of the Noahic Mandate (Genesis 9, Isaiah 24)
 - a. Universal moral requirement to respect the image of God in humanity
 - b. Crime as pesha (rebellion against divine authority)

C. Oracles Against Outright Foreigners (Amos 1:3–10)

1. Damascus / Arameans (Amos 1:3–5)
 - a. Crime: Cruel warfare ("threshed Gilead with iron sledges")
 - b. Judgment: Consuming fire upon royal houses (Hazeel, Ben-Hadad), destruction of city gates, and exile to Kir
2. Gaza / Philistines (Amos 1:6–8)
 - a. Crime: Kidnapping and slave trade of whole communities to Edom
 - b. Judgment: Destructive fire on major cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron)
3. Tyre / Phoenicians (Amos 1:9–10)
 - a. Crime: Slave trade to Edom and violation of a covenant/treaty of brotherhood
 - b. Judgment: Consuming fire upon the walls and fortresses of Tyre

D. Oracles Against Distant Relatives (Amos 1:11–2:3)

1. Edom (Amos 1:11–12)
 - a. Progenitor: Esau
 - b. Crime: Unchecked anger and sword violence against brother Israel
 - c. Judgment: Divine fire on Teman and Bozrah
2. Ammon (Amos 1:13–15)
 - a. Progenitor: Lot
 - b. Crime: Atrocities in Gilead (ripping open pregnant women for territorial expansion)
 - c. Judgment: War cries, violent storm winds on Rabbah, and exile of leaders
3. Moab (Amos 2:1–3)
 - a. Progenitor: Lot

b. Crime: Tomb desecration (burning the bones of Edom's king to lime)

c. Judgment: Tumult in battle, destruction of rulers, and fire on Kerioth

E. Oracle Against the Brother: Judah (Amos 2:4–5)

1. Position: Seventh oracle in the series (symbolizing completion/culmination)

2. Crime: Transgression of the Mosaic covenant (rejecting God's law and following idols/lies)

3. Judgment: Consuming fire upon the fortresses of Jerusalem

IV. The Climax: Target Zeroed on Israel (Amos 2:6–16)

A. The Structural Plot Twist

1. Eighth oracle: Exceeds expectation (7+1 pattern) to deliver the ultimate blow

2. Shift from cheering audience to condemned target

B. Reversal of the Day of the Lord

1. Rejection of Israel's false security and hypocritical complacency

2. Transition from a day of salvation to an inescapable day of darkness, judgment, and exile