

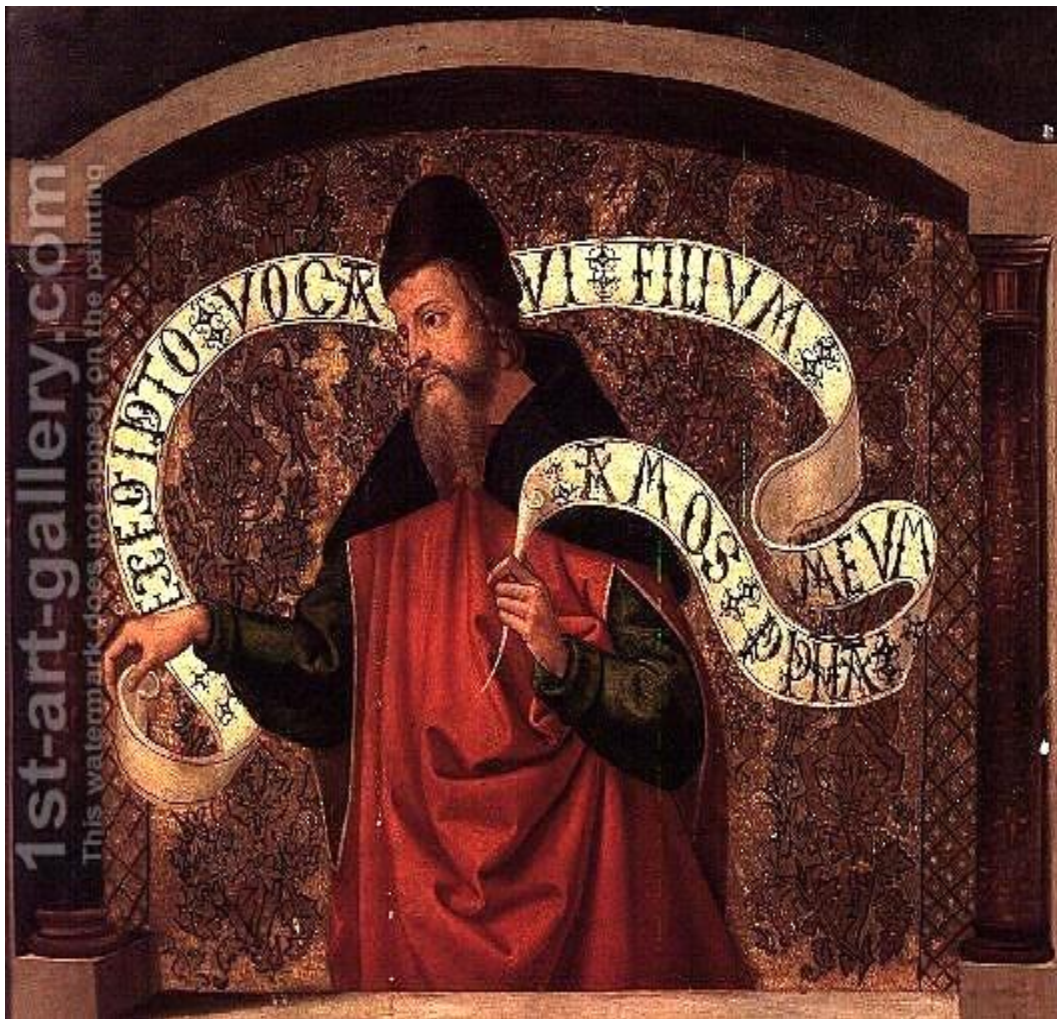
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# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**OLD TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 30**

**AMOS**



**The Prophet Amos by Juan de Borgona**

## SUMMARY

The prophet Amos lived among a group of shepherds in Tekoa, a small town approximately ten miles south of Jerusalem. Amos made clear in his writings that he did not come from a family of prophets, nor did he even consider himself one.

Rather, he was a grower of sycamore figs as well as a shepherd. Amos's connection to the simple life of the people made its way into the center of his prophecies, as he showed a heart for the oppressed and the voiceless in the world.

Amos prophesied two years before the earthquake, just before the halfway point of the eighth century BC, during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, king of Israel. Their reigns overlapped for fifteen years, from 767 BC to 753 BC.

Though he came from the southern kingdom of Judah, Amos delivered his prophecy against the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations, leading to some resistance from the prideful Israelites.

Jeroboam's reign had been quite profitable for the northern kingdom, at least in a material sense. However, the moral decay that also occurred at that time counteracted any positives from the material growth.

Amos was fed up. While most of the prophets interspersed redemption and restoration in their prophecies against Israel and Judah, Amos devoted only the final five verses of his prophecy for such consolation.

Prior to that, God's word through Amos was directed against the privileged people of Israel, a people who had no love for their neighbor, who took advantage of others, and who only looked out for their own concerns.

More than almost any other book of Scripture, the book of Amos holds God's people accountable for their ill-treatment of others. It repeatedly points out the failure of the people to fully embrace God's idea of justice.

They were selling off needy people for goods, taking advantage of the helpless, oppressing the poor, and the men were using women immorally. Drunk on their own economic success and intent on strengthening their financial position, the people had lost the concept of caring for one another; Amos rebuked them because he saw in that lifestyle evidence that Israel had forgotten God.

With the people of Israel in the north enjoying an almost unparalleled time of success, God decided to call a quiet shepherd and farmer to travel from his home in the less sinful south and carry a message of judgment to the Israelites. The people in the north used Amos's status as a foreigner as an excuse to ignore his message of judgment for a multiplicity of sins.

However, while their outer lives gleamed with the rays of success, their inner lives sank into a pit of moral decay. Rather than seeking out opportunities to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly, they embraced their arrogance, idolatry, self-righteousness, and materialism.

## SUMMARY Continued

Amos communicated God's utter disdain for the hypocritical lives of His people. His prophecy concludes with only a brief glimpse of restoration, and even that is directed to Judah, rather than the northern kingdom of Israel.

**Chapter 1:** Amos is a sheep breeder of Tekoa – a simple farmer with no prophetic or theological training. He lived in the days of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel. The Lord roars from Zion; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and top of Carmel (in Israel, where Elijah confronted the priests of Baal) withers.

The people of Damascus shall go captive to Kir in Assyria, because they have threshed Gilead with iron. Judgment against Gaza and Tyre, because they delivered God's people to the Edomites. Edom will be punished because of its pitiless anger. Ammon will be punished, because it killed pregnant women in Gilead.

The king of the Ammonites will be taken captive. In each instance, the rhetorical formula that introduces judgment is 'For three transgressions of [x], and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.'

**Chapter 2:** Moab will be destroyed with fire, and its princes slain, because it burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. Judah will be sent fire, because their lies have led them astray. Israel will be punished for its sins against the righteous, poor and humble.

The Lord vanquished the Amorites so the Israelites could occupy their Canaanite land, and the Israelites responded by giving wine to Nazirites and forbidding people from prophesying. The most courageous of men shall flee naked in the day of judgment.

**Chapter 3:** The children of Israel have not fulfilled their responsibilities as God's chosen people. A calamity in a city will be undeniably the doing of the Lord. The Egyptians and Philistines are invited to the mountains of Samaria as witnesses of the punishment of Israel. Israel will be conquered and exiled. The altars of Bethel will be destroyed.

**Chapter 4:** Women referred to as the cows of Bashan oppress the needy and demand wine from their husbands. They will be taken away with fishhooks (the Assyrians used to lead people by hooks driven through the lower lip).

Sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal are in vain. Rain will be withheld. All teeth shall be bread because of lack of bread. Israel will suffer blight and mildew. God asserts himself the former of mountains and the creator of winds.

**Chapter 5:** The virgin of Israel has fallen, its people will be taken captive. The Lord who made the stars invites Israel to seek Him, but not in the vain places of sacrifice such as Gilgal, Bathel and Beersheba.

Israel perverts justice and treads down the poor. There will be wailing and woe in the day of the Lord. Feast days, sacred assemblies and sacrifices are dismissed.

**Chapter 6:** Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria! Woe to those who live lives of luxury, lying on beds of ivory.

## SUMMARY Continued

When a relative of one of the dead comes to burn the corpses, should he find one person still alive, that person will not permit him to mention the name of the Lord for fear that the Lord will turn his wrath on him. Justice has been turned to gall, and righteousness to wormwood.

**Chapter 7:** Amos sees a vision of locusts, and a vision of fire; in both instances, the Lord is deaf to Amos' entreaties that Jacob may be spared. There is a further vision of a plumb line (to see if Israel are 'straight' by God's standard).

Amaziah, a priest of Bethel, speaks against Amos. Amos replies that he is a mere sheep breeder. The Lord decrees Amaziah's punishment – his wife shall be a harlot, your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword, you shall die in a defiled land.

**Chapter 8:** Amos has a vision of summer fruit – the end has come on Israel. (The time for summer fruit is short, and so presumably is the time left for Israel.) Dishonesty and cheating the poor is rebuked. The sky will be darkened, and feasts turned to mourning. A famine shall afflict the land.

**Chapter 9:** Amos has a vision of the Lord at the temple, supervising the work of destruction. Judgment is totally inescapable. The Lord will sift the house of Israel, as grain is sifted in a sieve. Those who think they will be unaffected by the calamity will die by the sword.

The tabernacle of David will be repaired and restored, however. The captives of Israel will be restored, and fruit and wine shall be abundant. Israel will be planted in the land, and no longer pulled up.

# THE BOOK OF AMOS

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

**2:4** *Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have despised the law of the Lord, And have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, Lies which their fathers followed.*

**2:5** *But I will send a fire upon Judah, And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.*

**4:13** For behold, He who forms mountains, And creates the wind, Who declares to man what his thought is, And makes the morning darkness, Who treads the high places of the earth-- The Lord God of hosts is His name.

**5:14** Seek good and not evil, That you may live; So the Lord God of hosts will be with you, As you have spoken.

**5:15** Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

## CHARACTER Definitions

**AMOS** - Was one of the Twelve Minor Prophets. An older contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, Amos was active c. 760–755 BCE during the reign of Jeroboam II (786–746 BCE). He was from the southern Kingdom of Judah but preached in the northern Kingdom of Israel.

Amos wrote at a time of relative peace and prosperity but also of neglect of GOD's laws. He spoke against an increased disparity between the very wealthy and the very poor. His major themes of social justice, God's omnipotence, and divine judgment became staples of prophecy. The Book of Amos is attributed to him.

Before becoming a prophet, Amos was a sheep herder and a sycamore fig farmer. Amos' prior professions and his claim I am not a prophet nor a son of a prophet indicate that Amos was not from the school of prophets, which Amos claims makes him a true prophet.

Amos' declaration marks a turning-point in the development of Old Testament prophecy. It is not mere chance that Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and almost all of the prophets who are more than unknown personages to whom a few prophetic speeches are ascribed, give first of all the story of their special calling.

All of them thereby seek to protest against the suspicion that they are professional prophets, because the latter discredited themselves by flattering national vanities and ignoring the misdeeds of prominent men.

The Bible speaks of his ministry and prophecies concluding around 762, two years before the earthquake that is spoken of in Amos 1:1, "...two years before the earthquake."

The prophet Zechariah likely was referencing this same earthquake several centuries later. From Zechariah 14:5, "And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah."

Despite being from the southern kingdom of Judah Amos' prophetic message was aimed at the Northern Kingdom of Israel, particularly the cities of Samaria and Bethel.

Jeroboam II (c. 781–741 BCE), ruler of the Northern kingdom, had rapidly conquered Syria, Moab, and Ammon, and thereby extended his dominions from the source of the Orontes on the north to the Dead Sea on the south.

The whole northern empire of Solomon thus practically restored had enjoyed a long period of peace and security marked by a revival of artistic and commercial development. Social corruption and the oppression of the poor and helpless were prevalent.

Many availed themselves of the throngs which attended the sacred festivals to indulge in immoderate enjoyment and tumultuous revelry. Others, carried away by the free association with heathen peoples which resulted from conquest or commercial contact, went so far as to fuse with the Lord's worship that of pagan deities.

## CHARACTERS Continued

Amos is the first of the prophets to write down the messages he has received. He has always been admired for the purity of his language, his beauty of diction, and his poetic art. In all these respects he is Isaiah's spiritual progenitor.

What we know of Amos derives solely from the book that he himself authored. This makes it hard to know who the historical Amos truly was. Amos felt himself called to preach in Bethel, where there was a royal sanctuary, and there to announce the fall of the reigning dynasty and of the northern kingdom.

But he is denounced by the head priest Amaziah to King Jeroboam II and is advised to leave the kingdom. There is no reason to doubt that he was forced to leave the northern kingdom and to return to his native country.

Being thus prevented from bringing his message to an end, and from reaching the ear of those to whom he was sent, he had recourse to writing. If they could not hear his messages, they could read them, and if his contemporaries refused to do so, following generations might still profit by them.

No earlier instance of a literary prophet is known; but the example he gave was followed by others in an almost unbroken succession. It cannot be proved that Hosea knew the book of Amos, though there is no reason to doubt that he was acquainted with the latter's work and experiences.

It is certain that Isaiah knew his book, for he follows and even imitates him in his early speeches. Cheyne concludes that Amos wrote the record of his prophetic work at Jerusalem, after his expulsion from the northern kingdom, and that he committed it to a circle of faithful followers residing there.

The apocryphal work *The Lives of the Prophets* records that Amos was killed by the son of Amaziah, priest of Bethel. It further states that before he died, Amos made his way back to his homeland and was buried there.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

766 BC

The Words of Amos

Amos 1 - 9

**MAP REFERENCES**

**Amos  
to the  
Nations**

