

Author/Audience

The Book of Amos was written in or around the first half of the eighth century. God used Amos, a quiet man who tended cattle and was a Herder, as his mouthpiece to warn Israel and Judah of their missteps in keeping the covenant. Israel was experiencing prosperity and some of the people were doing very well. Amos spoke against immorality, decadence, and power- hunger landowners. Those who mistreated the poor people and took away the little that they had to pay some kind of debt. This kind of treatment kept the people in debt without an end. Amos spoke against injustice (2:7). He opposed the elites and spoke against their unrighteousness.

Amos used the phrase “Thus say the Lord: For three transgressions of (City) and for four, I will not revoke the punishment.”

- 1 – What does that mean for each city Amos spoke about?
- 2 – When did God call Amos to be his prophet?
- 3 – Did God send his people to other lands because of the sins of the elitist?

History/Geography

Although Amos lived and worked in Judah, Amos was a prophet to both Israel and Judah. God used Amos to denounce the way both Judah and Israel were living. With some in splendor and majesty and some worn down and in squaller. From Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammonites, Moab, and Judah to Israel. Amos delivered the words from God as a devastating blow to the cities and their peoples (1:3 – 3:15). In the end the Lord had spoken.

- 1 – Did the other countries that surrounded Israel and Judah fall?
- 2 – I perused a map and saw that these cities are in proximity to each other. Being that these people did not know Israel and Judah’s God, why does he bottle them all up and punish them along with Israel and Judah?

3 – Do these extreme punishments put Israel and Judah back in favor with God?

Language/literary features

God's anger burned highly for those who sinned against Him, even those who lived in other cities were not exempted from His wrath. God is holding everyone accountable, why? He has a formal and loving covenant with His people Israel. I think the other nations deserve the punishment the same punishment as those who broke the covenant with God. "Fallen no more to rise, is maiden Israel; forsaken on her land with no one to raise her up. (5:3). This is where the blame should be. God said, seek me and live two times, or He will... He is talking to Israel and Judah. It appears that the Lord is giving Israel a chance to make their plight better, but not totally free from God's punishment. Israel did wrong to its own people. God had a big problem with that. He goes on to say that Israel befell the poor and righteous people by taking bribes and selling them off. In 5:14-15, The Lord of Hosts is giving them a way out by turning to Him and away from their evil ways. God spoke of hate and despise. God hated what looked like appeasement when he said, "I hate and despise your festivals and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies (5:21)." I believe that God knew their hearts and Israelites were putting on a show that had no meaning whatsoever.

1 – Why does God hold out hope to his people and then take it back?

Culture

I find it very interesting and would like to have lived in one of the finer countries. They lounge on couches to eat. They drink wine (or so it seems) for water. They sing songs and anoint themselves with expensive oil. If that stands true, I would have liked to visit and experience that whole existence. I also found it funny when a person who burned bodies asked, “shall I say to someone in the innermost parts of the house, “is anyone else with you? The answer came back, “No! Then the relative shall say, Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord (6:9-10).” It was comical, but not funny if this was indeed the way things went. How do you say that if you are of Jewish ancestry? The Israelites were to pray to God a few times a day. I want to believe that even those who were rich and powerful called on the name of the Lord at some point throughout the day.

Theology

In the seventh chapter, I surmise that God was telling Amos what he planned to do to the house of Israel. From eating grass (7:2-3, to a shower of fire, 7:4-5, to a plumb line 7:7-9,) God planned to do away with Israel in horrible fashions, but Amos begged God to have mercy on Israel and Judah and God relented to Amos and did not do what He had planned. That showed God’s compassion in place of despair and Amos’s beseeching hope for Israel.

In chapter nine, the Lord’s heart was hardened, and he planned to wipe Israel from the face of the earth and leave no one alive, but God said, that which was fallen will be rebuilt and repaired by Israel and all the nations who are called by the Lord’s name will prosper (9:1-10). This showed judgment and restoration for the people of Israel and Judah.

Structure/Organization

The structure and organization in this book are sketchy to me because it moves from one horror scene to the next. I understand that God was angry with Israel and Judah, but Amos does not give detailed information on what Israel did, and why they took that road was a speed bump for me. The structure is built from all that God had said he would do, but in the end, he determined to spare the house of Israel and other nations that know God's name. In this section, what God says and what he ultimately goes hand in hand. Some of the details that were given I did not understand. For instance, 1:13. says "because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead in order to enlarge their territory." I do not understand that logic. Although I am sure that the people of that time did understand the flowery language. It is God's right to give and take away all that he chooses. He may end lives, in order to save lives, which is another of God's many privileges. Only the triune God can accomplish what he sets out to do for the good of his people.

Message

The Mighty Hand of God.

Broken Covenant and Its Consequences.

Thus, Saith The Lord.