

Jasmine Young | Amos | Introductory Analysis | January 29, 2023

1. **Author/audience:** what questions do you have about the author and audience?

The author appears to be a prophet, but unlike my preunderstanding of the role of the prophet the audience appears to be the broader population of Israel and its inhabitants, rather than a singular king or leader. I'm curious of Amos' origin and calling. Is the audience truly all of Israel? Would this text had been read aloud or distributed? Is there a shift in audience in chapters 7 and 8 where the visions and sayings get very specific?

Also, Amos is introduced as a sheepbreeder (1:1) and I am curious to know more about his story and the context of the sheepbreeder in his day, particularly as he's admitted to having no prophetic lineage.

2. **History/geography:** what historical or geographical references do you wish you knew more about and why?

I am stricken by the references to the nearby civilizations and their militaries, etc. in Chapter 1. I would like to know more about why these cities were referenced (e.g. does the order or admittance/omission bear significance in this writing?) Geographically I am generally familiar with the setting of the ANE. Specifically for Amos, I am curious if unique geographies existed in this area.

3. **Language/literary features:** what strikes you as curious about the language used (for example: repetition, figures of speech, literary conventions)? What questions do you have about the original Hebrew?

The repetition of the strife God held toward Israel's enemies is an interesting literary feature. Also God's use words here is critically severe at times, which surprised me for a portion of the reading, until one continues to read on about God's offer of redemption.

There are some references I don't understand. In the judgement on the nations we see repeatedly "and for four" (1:3, 1:6, 1:9 and so on).

I like the use of repetitious question and response in chapter 3. I also find the imagery throughout the book very vivid.

4. **Culture:** where are there references to cultural things that intrigue you? What do you wish you knew about the cultural background so you could understand the context better?

I would like to better understand the nature of the transgressions being charged to the nations. For example, is 1:3 militant in nature? Is 1:6 about slavery or pillage? Is 2:7 a cultural reference to something stated metaphorically? I also want to better understand how the role of the prophet is received at this day and time in Israel's history.

There are also several references to female characteristics which describing the nations. I'd like to review the cultural context which made these references stand out (e.g. 5:2).

5. **Theology:** where is there conflict or tension between theological themes (ex. despair/hope, judgment/restoration)?

I could hear clear conflicts of judgement and redemption in the passage. There is a clear shift in 5:5 toward repentance, and again in 5:16 toward judgment. We also see redemption in the vision of the locusts and of fire, in verses 7:3 and 7:6. Israel's judgment appears to be coming due to their mistreatment of those in need, 8:4 for example. Chapter 9 repeats this pattern, seeing destruction, 9:8 and seeing restoration, 9:11. Aside from these, the thematic lace between the charges to the nations and to Israel is *injustice*, particularly injustices toward the poor and needy (e.g., 2:6, 4:1).

6. **Structure/organization:** how easily does the book "flow," in your opinion? Where are there "seams" or "speed bumps" you "trip" over? Where are there indications of organization?

I find the reading a bit challenging overall. Though one can deduce a central message, the passages don't necessarily 'build' to such message naturally. As these are a series of oracles one might imagine that the original audience found them more natural to hear than we do today. The judgment to the nations vs the judgment to Israel vary quite a bit in specificity. I imagine there is a poetic or other literary context at play which supports the longer dialogue against Israel. I also find that it pivots from a call to repentance 5:4, back to tones of destruction, 5:18, and again to restoration in 9:11. The waves of emotions are palpable, but it makes a conclusion more elusive.

7. **Message:** what are 3 different one-sentence titles for the book that capture what you think is the central message?

Amos is a declaration of God's judgement for those who abuse His grace.

Amos is a declaration of God's intolerance for injustice.

Amos is a warning to the church that injustice has no place in the kingdom of God.