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OT655  
Introductory Analysis

1. According to the very first words of the book of Amos, “The words of Amos”, this implies that the author is indeed Amos himself. He identifies himself as a sheep breeder (which he also mentions in 7:14-15), and from Tekoa. In 7:14, he also describes himself as “tender of sycamore fruit”. After doing some digging, I found out that sycamore trees bear fruit that are smaller and considered to be not as good. This makes me wonder why Amos describes himself in this way, and if it had more than just a literal meaning? When it comes to the audience, Amos was called to minister to Israel, which is touched upon in 7:14. There is also a hint of speaking to Judah as well (highlighted in multiple verses such as 2:4). The date could potentially be inferred from the first verse as well, where it states “which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake”.
2. As mentioned in the first answer, I would like to understand more about the sycamore reference. Though it may be a minor detail, I’ve always realized that the small details matter more than one can initially imagine. One of the things I appreciate about the historical aspect of this story is the status and position of the people of Israel prior to the appearance of Amos. They were rich, prosperous, and had plenty of stability. Israel didn’t enjoy many periods like this over the years. They were consistently in an up and down state. But as noted in 4:1-3, they were experiencing the blessings of the Lord. But this always begs the question as to how Israel even got to this point? Was the issue about the way His people acted, or more in defense of the people that were being cheated? It was touched on briefly, but would be great to know more about the background of Israel’s prosperity.
3. Throughout my reading of the book of Amos, one thing that was clear is his use of repetition. This was very visible from the beginning of the book when looking at verses 3-5. The repetition shows Amos’ desire to drive the points of interest home, into the stubborn heads of God’s people. Any time I see repetition, I always question why it is used. I always am quick to believe that the emphasized points are important and serve a purpose. I don’t believe there is any difference to that here. One thing that I wonder as God continues to warn His people of essentially the same thing, is whether or not He potentially gets more and more upset, or less and less patient. It’s hard sometimes to wonder what God intends considering that His foolishness surpasses the wisdom of man.  
Additionally, Amos has a pattern of identifying their crimes in parallel to the covenant which God made. I am not sure if this was to emphasize just how bad their sins were, or to remind them of what God is seeking from them or not. Nonetheless, Amos continually based all of his prophecies on the word of God. I don’t know how beneficial it would have been considering this was being relayed to a people that was already unwilling to listen and acknowledge the word of God in the first place.
4. The culture during the time of Amos didn’t seem as hectic or busy as it was during the time of other prophets. It seemed more that Amos was making an effort to connect different classes of people. As one can imagine, Amos challenged the norm of the culture of the time with his

actions which caused an uproar at the time. He urged the people to realize that sins were not just a matter of serving false gods or intermingling with people that didn't serve God. He wanted them to understand that what God expected of them did include treating one another with respect and love. This concept of love is omnipresent in the bible considering that God Himself is love.

5. The main idea being discussed in Amos is the idea of social justice. As mentioned in the second bullet point, I think the question of what God is defending/attacking is a talking point. Is He upset about the fact that those better off were acting as they did, or defending those that were being mistreated? Nonetheless, social justice seems to be at the heart of this story. Even then, there are hints that God's frustration goes beyond just His people. One can be tempted to wonder if seeing how God reacted through Amos, is it possible that God is upset at the current state of the world where similar actions are happening.
6. Overall, the book itself is very short and relatively easy to follow. Most of the prophets (or anyone who God used to speak to His people) always followed a pretty similar overall structure/pattern. Amos first begins by discussing why God is preparing to punish the people. Amos took his time to outline all of the reasons as to why God was ready to pass judgment. Afterwards, Amos then began to mention why God was mad. Amos spent his sweet time speaking to the people relaying God's frustration. He didn't mince words, but it was clear that the people didn't treat Amos too well and didn't take too kindly to what was said. Lastly, Amos finished off this book by providing the people with hope. As mad and upset as God can be, He will always be willing to provide hope for the people. Amos made clear that God's current anger would not stay forever and can be subdued.
7. I believe that the following three statements sum up the book of Amos well:
  - a. "The internal relationship amongst God's people"
  - b. "Social issues do not escape God's eyes"
  - c. "God's expectations is not only in what is considered *spiritual*, but also in the political world"