Stuart, Douglas K. Hosea-Jonah. Vol 31. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word, 1987. 274-320.

Constable, Thomas L. Notes on Amos. Soniclight.com. 2023 Edition.

There were two general things that were new and fascinating to me in reading this section on Amos. The first was to learn how little we know for certain about the person and ministry of Amos. We know nothing more of Amos than what we can learn in the book of Amos. "His life span, family life, etc. are all untold." (p. 283)

While the title gives a time frame of ministry, scholars cannot know for certain the exact timing of his ministry. The earthquake mentioned in verse 1 cannot be dated with certainty. (p. 296) Constable states in his notes that Zechariah referred to an earthquake during the reign of Uzziah (Zech 14:5). Josephus also wrote that an earthquake occurred when Uzziah entered the temple and was struck with leprosy (2 Chron 26: 16-20). Constable notes however that this may simply be Jewish folklore. (Constables notes, p.1). Although we can't be sure, Douglas Stuart does conclude, the title in verse 1 "is probably enough evidence to fix Amos' preaching not earlier that 767. And the latest date would be 742, since the latest date for the earthquake would have been 740, the end of Uzziah's reign and Amos' words preceded it by two years. " (p. 297).

His exact span of prophesying is not known. While Amos' words are dated in some measure to the two years which preceded the earthquake in Uzziah's reign, "It cannot be concluded from the phrasing of the title (v.1), however, that all of his oracles were received and delivered in that one year." (p. 298)

We know that Amos was a resident of the southern kingdom but primarily delivered a message to the residents of the northern kingdom. "Exactly why and how God called him to preach across national boundaries is simply not knowable on the evidence." (p. 283)

Amos is identified in the superscription as a cattle raiser/breeder and later in the book Amos identifies himself (7:14) as a large cattle breeder, "suggesting that he may have dealt in sheep, goats, cows, and oxen. Whether he was the owner of such a business, or merely an employee, cannot be known."(p. 298).

The second thing that was compelling to me was the literary genius of the first two chapters of the book. Douglas Stuart suggests (p. 308) that Amos uses this general format for all of the oracles:

1. The messenger introduction ("This is what Yahweh said")
2. Certainty of deserved punishment.
3. Evidence (specification of crimes).
4. Announcement of curse (punishment).
5. A concluding formula ("Yahweh said" or "oracle of Yahweh).

This parallels Dr. Mack's suggestion (video) of a standardized format for each oracle:

1. Intro, "Thus says YHWH"
2. Statement of nations sins

3. Statement of coming punishment by fire
4. Specific details of YHWH's upcoming judgment upon the nation

Although Amos may have been a sheepherder and farmer, he was a skilled writer who wrote a book with an elaborate structure.

One question that was not answered by my reading concerns the superscription in verse 1 which states "the words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he SAW concerning Israel…" (v 1) Were these actual visions Amos was having?