

A PERSONAL
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

AMOS

SHARON CRAVENS

Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, 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. This book records the prophecies of Amos, who is identified as a herdman or shepherd of Tekoa, a small town about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. The NIV commentary made note that the Hebrew indicates that he probably was a breeder and supplier of sheep and cattle. In doing a word search on *Amos*, I found that he also identified himself as a “gatherer of sycamore fruit” (7:14). More often than not we find that God chooses the most unlikely of candidates to serve Him as prophets. Amos prophesied during the reigns of King Uzziah in Judah and King Jeroboam, the son of Joash, in Israel. In fact, his prophecies began in a specific timeframe—“two years before the earthquake.” Evidently, Israel experienced a huge earthquake in ancient times that served as a reference in time for years to come due to its extreme impact on the nation, and according to scripture, will experience a few more in the last seven years before Jesus comes back to establish His kingdom on earth.

An apparent worldwide quake with the opening of the 6th seal judgment:
Rev. 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Rev. 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Rev. 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Rev. 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains....

When the two witnesses are resurrected 3.5 days after their death:

Rev. 11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

As part of the 7th bowl judgment:

Rev. 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.

Rev. 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

They were still talking about this earthquake over 200 years later as detailed in the prophecies of Zechariah.

Zech. 14:5 And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee.

Point is made that his message pertained mainly to Israel, not Judah.

Amos 1:2 And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

It's almost like the prophet was setting up his word picture. Just like the earthquake struck suddenly and destructively, YHWH is going to roar from Zion in judgment. When He strikes, it will strike fear in everyone—from the shepherds in the fields and valleys to the top of Mount Carmel. As you continue to read through the first couple of chapters, it becomes clear that the prophet gets the attention of the people by first declaring judgment on the surrounding nations, but circles in until the focus is directly on Israel.

Amos 1:3 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

Amos 1:4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

Amos 1:5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

“for three...and for four” – Although I could find nothing definitive, the consensus seem to be that this is an idiom that simply pictures continual sin.

(2/09) I came across a note by Bob Utley (www.freebiblecommentary.org) that was interesting in reference to this expression. “Also the numbers three and four equals seven, which is another Old Testament way to show completeness; the sins of these nations were full/complete.”

Amos first delivers God's message concerning Damascus, the capital of Syria. They will face judgment because of their treatment of the people in Gilead, the general land area east of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. (2/09) It is basically the land area that is today known as the Golan Heights.

Grain was beaten or threshed to separate the grain from waste product of the plant, and this is the word picture of Syria's treatment of the people of Israel that lived in this region. Being threshed with instruments of iron would indicate extremely harsh treatment. According to 2Kings, Hazael and Benhadad made reference to father and the son that succeeded him as king.

2Kings 13:3 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all *their* days.

“Sending fire” is a picture of coming judgment that will destroy the palaces of the king. Destruction will extend to the plain of Aven and the house of Eden. The end result would be that the people would be taken captive to Kir. 2Kings records the fulfillment of this prophecy.

2Kings 16:9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of it* captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

This action by Assyria was actually in response to a plea for help from Ahaz, King of Judah, against a joint attack by Israel and Syria. The prophet Isaiah also prophesied concerning this event.

Is. 7:8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

Is. 7:9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Amos 1:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom:

Amos 1:7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

Amos 1:8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet now delivers a prophecy of judgment to come against Gaza, representing the territory of the Philistines, and included what we know today as the Gaza Strip. The Philistines were perpetual enemies of God's people.

Reference is made in 2Chronicles of their capturing some of the cities of Israel.

According to this prophecy, they sold their captives for profit to the Edomites.

2Chr. 28:18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

The wall of a city was its primary defense. When God sends His fire of judgment, it will be no protection for the palaces of the Philistines. Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron were three other of the primary Philistine cities. The prophet is declaring that God's judgment will prove to be the demise of the Philistine nation. Zephaniah also prophesied the destruction of the Philistines.

Zeph. 2:4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

Zeph. 2:5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

Amos 1:9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

Amos 1:10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

The prophet now turns his message toward Tyre. Tyre had initially been an ally of Israel in the time of King David and had supplied much of the material that was used in the building of David's palace and the temple.

2Sam. 5:11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.

1Kings 5:5-8 And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is* not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: *and* I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

At some point they broke their covenant of friendship. They also took captives and sold them for profit. They too would experience the fire of God's judgment and their palaces destroyed. History reveals this prophecy to have been fulfilled by the attack of Alexander the Great.

In my studies of Isaiah (see journal on chapter 23) and Ezekiel (see journal on chapters 26-28), there were much more detailed passages declaring judgment against Tyre. One thing that stood out from those passages was that the destruction of Tyre would have a great impact on the nations since it seemed to be the center of trade in the Mediterranean world. Another thing that stood out was the strong influence that Satan had upon its ruler.

Amos 1:11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

Amos 1:12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

The focus of God's message is now directed to Edom, which was located in part of the area that is known today as Jordan adjacent to the southern part of Israel. The Edomites were kinsman of the Israelites as descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. They were constantly looking to cause harm to Israel. "He kept his wrath forever" seems to reference a jealousy that began with Esau. Even though Esau made peace with Jacob, his descendants seem to have carried a grudge throughout their history. They had absolutely no brotherly love for one another. God is declaring that Edom will experience the fire of His judgment and the destruction of their seat of power also.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel also prophesied judgment for Edom.

Jer. 49:17-18 Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD, **no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.**

Ezek. 25:12-14 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; **I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it;** and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.

Emphasis is made that the destruction of Edom will be complete.

Amos 1:13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

Amos 1:14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

Amos 1:15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

The prophet's message is now directed toward Ammon, which is the region to the north of Edom that borders Gilead. They too were kinsman of Israel as descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. They were so ruthless in their greed for more land that they even killed pregnant women by ripping open their stomachs.

It seems that from the earliest times, men have imagined and inflicted the most horrendous acts against their fellowman. From the Assyrians skinning people alive to those who would sacrifice their children to false gods burning them alive to the Ammonites ripping apart pregnant women to Nero burning Christians alive as candles to Hitler's awful crematoriums. I just don't get it. What possible satisfaction does that give one? I'm convinced it has to be demonically inspired.

God declares that the fire of His judgment is coming upon the wall of Rabbah, which seems to have been the main city of Ammon. Their destruction is pictured as coming like a sudden, powerful whirlwind or tornado. The end result will be that their king and his princes are taken captive. Three prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zephaniah pronounced God's judgment against Ammon as well.

Jer. 49:2-3 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for **their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together.**

Ezek. 25:3-7 And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my

sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couchingplace for flocks: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped *thine* hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and **I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries:** I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

Zeph. 2:8-10 I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified *themselves* against their border. Therefore *as* I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, **Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation:** the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the LORD of hosts.

Ezekiel adds that God was angered by their delight in the destruction of Israel and the captivity of Judah. Zephaniah indicates that their destruction will be complete. Zephaniah also emphasizes that their actions against Israel were a result of their desire to dishonor God.