

Amos 1:1-2

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Amos receives God's revelation concerning Israel during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel.

The prophecy of Amos begins with a title verse which provides the reader with some historical background of the prophet and of the book. Amos, whose name probably means “burden-bearer,” *was among the shepherders from Tekoa*. The place named *Tekoa* was a small town in Judah, located about five miles southeast of Bethlehem on the edge of the Judean desert (2 Chron. 11:6).

It was there in Tekoa that *Amos* received *the divine words which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel*. The term *vision* is a technical term used for one form of divine revelation. The verb “to envision” can be translated as “to see” or “to perceive.” What the prophet saw concerned Israel, the northern kingdom with its ten tribes. It will be recalled that during the reigns of King David and King Solomon, Israel was united. The northern and southern tribes shared a king in common (2 Sam 3:10; 19:11–15, 43; 24:1–9; 1 Kgs 1:35). However, following Solomon’s death the united monarchy collapsed because his son and successor, Rehoboam, rejected the advice of the elders who asked him to lighten Solomon’s policies of taxation and forced labor.

In other words, they asked for a tax reduction. Since Rehoboam refused to reduce their burden at the time, “Israel departed to their tents... None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David” (1 Kings 12:16–20). This means the northern ten tribes, called Israel, no longer followed the heirs of David. When Rehoboam sent his revenue collector to the ten northern tribes of Israel, they killed him, but God informed Rehoboam through the prophet Shemaiah that this split was His will, so the king should not retaliate, thus avoiding a civil war (1 Kings 12:18, 22). Since then, the kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (along with the tribe of Benjamin). Each nation had its own king. Amos is prophesying during the reign of *Uzziah* king of Judah. At the same time *Uzziah* was reigning in Judah, *Jeroboam son of Joash* was reigning in *Israel*.

Amos received divine revelation during a special time in Israel’s history. In Amos’s days, both Israel and Judah enjoyed a period of material prosperity and political stability. Previously, the Arameans had attacked Israel but had been weakened when King Adad-nirary III of Assyria captured the capital city of Syria (Damascus) in 800 BC. Moreover, Egypt was declining, and Assyria started losing power after defeating Damascus. Thus, Israel and Judah remained undisturbed for quite some time.

Unfortunately, during this time of wealth and peace, those in Israel plunged into religious apostasy, social injustice, and gross immorality. It was during this period that the LORD commanded Amos to travel to the northern kingdom of Israel to warn them of the upcoming

judgment. In this case God sent a prophet from the kingdom of Judah to warn those living in the kingdom of Israel. This indicates that to God they are still His people.

This commission of Amos took place *two years before the earthquake*, an event which archaeologists date between 765 to 760 BC. This agrees with the prophet Zechariah's remembrance of the earthquake, that it happened "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah" (Zechariah 14:5). Such an event must have had a big impact on the ancient peoples because it was remembered many years later. Perhaps it was also regarded as a sign of God's judgment.

In verse 2, the prophet described the powerful voice of God: *The Lord roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem He utters His voice*. The verb *to roar* means to utter a deep and prolonged cry, and is normally used of a lion that lies in wait for its prey (Amos 3:4; Judges 14:5). However, the verb is used here to describe the LORD's majestic power as well as His anger against Israel. The place called *Zion* is a mountain located on the eastern side of *Jerusalem*, the capital city of Judah. In this verse, *Zion and Jerusalem* are used synonymously to explain the location where Amos heard God's voice.

As a result of God roaring *from Zion and Jerusalem, the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up*. Jerusalem was in the territory of Judah. Carmel was in the territory of Israel. It is a mountainous ridge extending about 20 miles along the Mediterranean Sea and jutting southeast into the fertile Jezreel Valley. It is a fertile land with abundant woods, flowers, and vineyards. But God's powerful voice of judgment would cause a devastating drought, from *the shepherds' pasture grounds to the summit of Carmel*. This drought is evidence of God's judgment. A similar judgment is described in Deuteronomy 28:23–24.

Biblical Text

¹The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he saw *in visions* concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

**² And he said,
"The Lord roars from Zion,
And from Jerusalem He utters His voice;
And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn,
And the summit of Carmel dries up."**