

Amos 7:10-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-7/amos-710-13/>

The priest Amaziah hears Amos's visions and tries to intimidate him into leaving Israel. He asks Amos to return to Judah and cease prophesying in Bethel because Bethel is a sanctuary of the king.

This section describes a dramatic confrontation that took place between Amaziah, the priest at the Bethel sanctuary, and the prophet Amos. No sooner had the prophet finished declaring his vision concerning God's judgment upon the religious structures of the nation Israel and their king, then *Amaziah, the priest of Bethel*, tried to stop him from prophesying against Israel.

In his attempt to stop the prophet's ministry in Israel, *Amaziah sent word to Jeroboam II king of Israel and said, Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel.* To conspire against someone is to team up with another person to plot against him to defeat him in some ways. In our context, the priest falsely told King Jeroboam II that Amos had plotted against him to have him removed or executed. The plot of Amaziah might have counted on having the king hear about the plot or conspiracy so that he would become upset and defend his throne by killing Amos or by sending him into exile.

To convince the king to accept his false report, Amaziah said, *the land is unable to endure all his [Amos's] words.* That is, the country could not tolerate the prophecies of Amos any longer because they would cause distress and trouble among the nation. Then Amaziah explained to the king what Amos said: *Jeroboam will die by the sword.* The statement of the religious leader was false and undocumented. The prophet did not say that Jeroboam II would *die by the sword.* He had said that "God would rise up against the house [or dynasty] of Jeroboam with the sword" (Amos 7:9). In fact, the book of Kings tells us that "Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel" (2 Kings 14:29). So, the priest likely twisted Amos's words to make him appear as a political threat to King Jeroboam II. But the text clearly shows that Amos's intention was merely to report a divine message of judgment against Israel, its shrines, and its dynasty.

Amaziah also reported to the king that Amos predicted that Israel would certainly go from its land into exile. This report is true and documented in this chapter and elsewhere in the book (Amos 4:2-3; 5:5; 26-27; 6:7; 9:4). What the priest omitted, however, was the rationale for Israel's future exile. The LORD would send His covenant people into exile because they constantly violated His covenantal laws, and such punishment was clearly spelled out as covenant remedies to which the people had agreed (Exodus 19:8).

Israel had broken the Ten Commandments, and the enacting regulations of the Ten Commandments as recorded in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Leviticus 26:14-39; Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The covenant law clearly spelled out the consequences Israel would endure for breaking the covenant. Therefore, God would be just, as He always is, when He judged His people.

Having presented his concerns to the king, the priest Amaziah turned his attention to Amos and addressed him as “seer,” a name often applied to the prophets because of the visions they could “see” about the future that God granted to them (2 Samuel 24:11). He urged Amos to go, *flee away to the land of Judah*. Amaziah was anxious to send Amos back to *Judah*, his homeland, because he wanted no trouble from him. He commanded Amos to go back to *Judah*, *eat his bread there and do his prophesying there*. Judah was the southern kingdom that remained loyal to the house of David, after the ten northern tribes of Israel broke away from Judah (and Benjamin) during the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:16-19).

In ancient Israel, prophetic work included the right to receive an honorarium, a fee given as payment for a service. This is how a prophet would gain *bread to eat*. According to the prophet Micah, false prophets would preach messages of peace when they had “something to bite with their teeth” (i.e. they were paid) but would declare “holy war” against anyone who put “nothing in their mouths” (i.e. did not pay them) (Micah 3:5; Ezekiel 13:19). These false prophets were not prophesying God’s message, but were “pay to play.”

It seems Amaziah the priest considered Amos as one of these hucksters, and is bent on relocating Amos to a place that wants to hear this message. Amaziah the priest sought to dismiss Amos from having influence in Israel, asking him to return to Judah, his geographical point of origin, and there eat his honorarium of *bread*. Perhaps the priest reasoned that Amos’s message against Israel would have been welcomed in his hometown since the message was against the northern kingdom of Israel.

The priest reasoned that Amos’s message was disruptive to Israel. It does not seem that Amaziah the priest considered the possibility that Amos’s prophecy might be true, and Israel needed to repent.

That the priest Amaziah and his behavior seems political rather than spiritual might have a basis in Israel’s history. Since Israel’s first king Jeroboam I “made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi,” Amaziah’s appointment could have been made primarily based on political considerations rather than tribal lineage, as was the case with the Levites (1 Kings 12:32). That might explain why he did not seem concerned about the spiritual condition of Israel, or the message of Amos, but rather made a political calculation regarding Amos and his message.

Amaziah commanded Amos to *prophesy no longer at Bethel*. He gave the reasons why he forbade Amos to prophesy *at Bethel: for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence*. This implied that Amos needed to show respect or reverence for *Bethel*. For Amaziah, *Bethel* belonged to King Jeroboam II because it was established by Jeroboam I (931 –910 BC) as one of the places for the royal sanctuaries in Israel—the other one being in Dan (1 Kings 12:29).

These sanctuaries were to serve as alternative worship sites for the people of Israel to preclude them from going to Jerusalem to worship the LORD (1 Kings 12:26–30). The alternative worship sites began in rebellion against trusting God and following His commands and here continued in that same vein. Israel desires a God that will support what they desire rather than following their Suzerain Ruler’s ways in obedience to His commands (which are given for their

benefit). God makes clear to Amos that this practice will soon come to an end. Assyria will exile Israel in roughly thirty more years.

Biblical Text

¹⁰ Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent *word* to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words. ¹¹ For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’” ¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! ¹³ But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.