

# Amos 7:14-17

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-7/amos-714-17/>

*Amos responds to Amaziah the priest by telling him that he is not a professional prophet. Instead, he is a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs who is called by the LORD to proclaim a prophetic message. Amos proceeds to predict judgment on Amaziah and his family, and on the nation Israel.*

This section provides the reader with Amos's response to Amaziah, the priest. After hearing Amos's prophecy concerning God's judgment upon the religious structures of the nation Israel and their king, Amaziah sent a letter to King Jeroboam II to tell him that Amos had conspired against him. He then asked Amos to return to Judah and cease prophesying in Bethel because Bethel is a sanctuary of the king, his royal residence (Amos 7:10–13). In this section, Amos replied to Amaziah, saying, *I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet.*

As explained in the previous section, prophetic work in Israel included the right to receive an honorarium, a fee given as payment for a service. Someone receiving a fee for his prophetic ministry would be classified as a professional *prophet*. But Amos said that he was not one of those professional prophets. In fact, Amos clarified his profession prior to becoming a *prophet* in the very next statement where he said: *I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.*

The first occupation (*herdsman*) has to do with breeding sheep and raising cattle. This lines up well with the assertion that “Amos was among the shepherders from Tekoa” (Amos 1:1). The second occupation (*a grower of sycamore figs*) has to do with dressing sycamore trees. This entails slitting the sycamore figs while they were still on the trees to hasten the ripening process. Amos likely did that for additional income.

Amos told Amaziah that while he was breeding his sheep, raising his cattle, and dressing sycamore trees, the LORD called him to proclaim a message: *The Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, Go prophesy to My people Israel.* God called Israel ‘My people’ because He had a covenant relationship with them.

Despite Israel's sins and rebellion, the LORD still loved them and cared for them. He was still their Suzerain/Ruler and would always honor the covenant He made with Israel (Exodus 19:8). So, He sent Amos to Israel to warn them of His impending judgment and to urge individuals to repent and live (Amos 5:4). Amos told Amaziah and his audience that he left his professional job as herdsman and grower of sycamore figs to obey the voice of the LORD. This is an amazing testimony that ought to have blunted the priest Amaziah's apparent calculation that this was simply a ploy by Amos.

Having clarified his divine prophetic call, Amos proceeded to prophesy directly against Amaziah and his family. He first invited Amaziah to *hear the word of the Lord* before he proclaimed his message of judgment. In doing so, Amos made it clear that his message did not come from him. Rather, it was *the word of the LORD* and that is why Amaziah needed to *hear* it since it would

surely come to pass. Then, Amos declared, *you are saying, 'You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.'* The phrase *the house of Isaac* is used to represent the northern kingdom of Israel.

Amaziah had told Amos to stop prophesying against the northern kingdom of Israel. He had asked him to go back to Judah to earn his living there and prophesy there (vv. 10–13). But Amos was not intimidated by Amaziah's actions. Rather, he boldly continued to proclaim God's word. And because Amaziah had tried to stop God's plan, Amos proclaimed a fivefold malediction against Amaziah and his immediate family circle in the name of the LORD.

The first malediction was leveled against Amaziah's wife: *Your wife will become a harlot in the city.* Amaziah's wife would become a prostitute as part of the judgment of the LORD. Next in line were Amaziah's children: *your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword.* This implied that an army would invade Israel's land, and Amaziah's children would die violent deaths.

The third curse concerned Amaziah's land: *Your land will be parceled up by a measuring line,* meaning that his land would be divided up and given to other people. And concerning Amaziah himself, Amos stated, *and you yourself will die upon unclean soil.*

The phrase *unclean soil* likely refers to any foreign soil where the Suzerain or Ruler God was not present. In the book of Hosea, for instance, the prophet pronounced judgment on the idolatrous Israel, saying, "They will not remain in the LORD's land, but Ephraim [or Israel] will return to Egypt, and in Assyria they will eat unclean food" (Hosea 9:3).

The fifth malediction concerned the nation Israel as a whole: *Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.* This statement is intensive in Hebrew and expresses the certainty of Israel's captivity. It would surely happen because the people of God had sinned grievously against the LORD. This last prophecy will occur in roughly thirty years, as Assyria conquered Israel and took it into captivity in 722 BC.

## **Biblical Text**

**<sup>14</sup> Then Amos replied to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. <sup>15</sup> But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.' <sup>16</sup> Now hear the word of the Lord: you are saying, 'You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.' <sup>17</sup> Therefore, thus says the Lord, 'Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.**