

**Israel** -- 2:6-16. Amos was really sent to Bethel to preach to Israel. The judgment upon the surrounding nations was only incidental. True, yes, and informative, but now Amos really begins to preach!

And we can almost see the crowd growing quieter and shifting restlessly on their feet. Amos charges them with some serious sins: 1) foreclosing on mortgages on the poor; 2) taking and giving bribes to pervert justice for the poor; 3) they didn't mind seeing the poor in misery; 4) religious prostitution of such a hideous nature that the father and son went in unto the same woman; 4) not returning pledge garments; 5) and drinking wine which had been (refined) fermented.

When the Amorites in the land before them became this wicked, God cast them out and gave their land to Israel (cf. Joshua's time), verse 9. Through they were like a strong oak with great height and deep roots, God destroyed them. [Q-12] What is the subtle message for Israel?

Amos then enumerates the blessings God had given them (READ vv. 10-12) but Israel had perverted them. The prophets and Nazirites that would have been good examples to follow were discouraged and forbidden.

Notice verse 13, how Israel was to be punished. We have a similar expression, sometimes we say "I feel like I have been run over by a \_\_\_\_\_." Amos says to them, "you're going to feel like you've been run over with a loaded cart!

"Your mighty army can't defend you. Your soldiers will throw down their weapons and run!" (Read vv. 15-16).

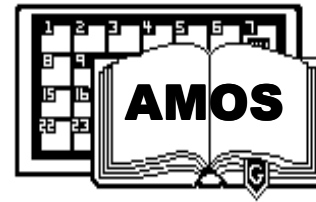
[Q-13] Can a mighty military or economic power stand against God if he is ready for that nation to be humbled?

[Q-14] Where then does a nation's strength lie?

### Some Lessons

1. From Amos chapters 1 and 2 we see that all the nations of the world are responsible to Almighty God for their actions.
2. Inhumanity to man is a sin before God. Even in war there's a limit to the cruelty that can be inflicted upon an innocent civilian population. And when these are God's people that guilty nation can fully expect retribution.
3. God will not hold covenant-breakers guiltless, whether it be individuals or nations.
4. We should show proper respect for the dead.
5. It is a sin to receive great blessings from the Lord and not be grateful for them (2:9-10).
6. The people to whom the Word of the Lord has been given will be held guilty if they reject it (2:4).

-- Windell Gann



# AMOS

## Lesson # 2

### GOD RULES OVER THE NATIONS -- Amos 1 & 2

#### The Setting

During the reign of Jeroboam II the northern kingdom of Israel reached its pinnacle of power, wealth, and luxury. But it was steeped in political corruption and religious decay. Amos, a shepherd without any previous experience as a prophet, is called by the Lord to go to Bethel and prophesy against Israel. [Q-1] Where was Amos from and why might this cause the people to be unreceptive to his message?

#### Amos' Beginning

[Q-2] Arriving at Bethel, the religious capital of Israel, Amos first reminds the people that the Lord's vengeance will ROAR from \_\_\_\_\_; that is, from \_\_\_\_\_, and not from Bethel where they had their altar to the golden calf (1:2). This is Amos' diplomatic way of reminding them of the proper place where God could be found and worshipped.

[Q-2] When the Lord ROARS (like a lion leaping on his prey) what will happen to the pastures and the top of Carmel? (1:2)

The Carmel area, known for its fertile gardens, would be at God's mercy. The truth that God controls the crops is every evident in this book.

Before lighting into Israel and denouncing their sins Amos begins by telling of God's coming judgment upon the nations surrounding Israel. We can imagine the people stopping to listen to this street prophet as he tells of God's vengeance upon their enemies. Getting caught up in his spell, we can almost hear the "*Amens!*" from the crowd as he announces doom for Syria, the Philistines, and the Edomites.

We can see the crowd growing around the preacher and their intense interest in his message, for it deals with their enemies. As we survey Amos' message we realize that he started preaching about those nations farthest away and to the north. Next he talks about the Philistines to the south, then about Tyre, a little closer to the north, then the Edomites to the southeast. Slowly he draws a cricle around

Israel talking about all their surrounding enemies and their evils and how God will bring them to judgment for their crimes.

Amos then comes to mention God's judgment on Judah in chapter 2. We can see the people looking at each other and saying, "Why this prophet is from Judah! and he's preaching at them! Say on, brother!!"

But then finally, and this is where Amos was headed all along, he gets to *Israel* and God's judgment on her!

Now we can almost hear a pin drop! Now Amos has stopped preaching and started meddling. Their mouths drop open as he castigates them for their social and religious sins.

The plan of the book of Amos is as follows:

1. Chapter 1 - 2 -- his message about foreign nations.
2. Chapter 3 - 6 -- three sermons to Israel
3. Chapter 7 - 9 -- five visions of God's coming judgment.

In this lesson we want to survey Amos' message to the surrounding nations and see some important truths for us today. We will notice that: 1) God is concerned about all the nations of the world; 2) He is in control of their successes and failures; 3) And there are some evils that are especially abominable to Him.

[Q-3] First, look ahead into chapters 1 and 2 and see what nations Amos talks about and notice their position on the map and their direction from Israel:

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1) 1:3 _____ | 4) 1:11 _____ |
| 2) 1:6 _____ | 5) 1:13 _____ |
| 3) 1:9 _____ | 6) 2:1 _____  |

**Damascus** -- 1:3-5. The phrase "*for three transgressions, yea for four*" was a poetic way of signifying that their measure of guilt was more than full. Three transgressions would have been enough to warrant judgment, four makes it beyond question that God will punish them.

Damascus was the chief city of Syria and stands for the entire nation. There were constant wars with Syria and they had recently dealt heavy blows on the Israelites on the eastern side of Jordan.

[Q-4] What was the particular sin mentioned in v. 3? \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
They had literally *threshed* and mangled the bodies of prisoners under threshing sledges studded with iron spikes. Inhumanity to man is sin. Even in war there is a limit to the cruelty that can be inflicted upon the innocent civilian population. And when these are God's people that nation can fully expect a heavy retribution.

In verse 5 God would break the bars that secure the gate of Damascus and they would go into Assyrian captivity.

**Gaza** -- 1:6-8. One of the chief cities of the Philistines. They had been engaged in slave trade, selling whole communities which they captured to Edom and others.

[Q-5] What lesson is there for us?

**Tyre** -- 1:9-10. Phoenicia lay on the coast to the north west of Israel. [Q-6] What did they not remember? 1:9 \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
From Solomon's time Tyre had trade and peace treaties with them, but now they had become covenant-breakers. They also had become agents for slave trade.

[Q-7] Is there a lesson about nations keeping treaties they sign? Is not God a witness to such promises and pledges also?

**Edom** -- 1:11-12. The Edomites were a cousin nation to Israel. [Q-8] Do you remember their ancestry?

Possessing a hateful, angry attitude, they pursued almost continually a course of violent war with Israel.

[Q-9] Can "nations" develop bad attitudes? What creates and sustains such national feelings of hostility, hate, anger, revenge?

**Ammon** -- 1:13-15. [Q-10] From whom did the Ammonites descend? \_\_

----- [Q-11] Of what kind of brutality were they guilty? \_\_\_\_\_

----- [Q-12] What had been the motive behind their aggression?

**Moab** -- 2:1-3. The action of the Moabites for which God was going to bring retribution suggests that we should have a proper regard for the dead. People don't like to think about death today nor mediate upon its reality. They don't want to think about eternity ... and judgment. So they flouted respect for the dead. In most parts of the nation we have fewer people attending funerals today than ever before. And drivers are showing less respect for funeral processions, etc.

**Judah** -- 2:4-5. As Amos mentions Judah we can imagine the people continued to say "**Yeah!**" to Amos' message. For the Hebrews were divided North and South (Israel and Judah) and situations altered between peace and war between them.

[Q-11] What had Judah rejected? Why could the other nations not be charged with this same specific sin?

The "*lies*" their fathers followed was idolatry. These are "gods" which are not-God, but "*lies*."