

The Book of Amos

Fall, 2020

Overview

- Who was Amos?
- What was happening in Palestine at the time?
- Major themes in this prophecy
- An approach to the book of Amos

Who was Amos?

- All of our information about Amos comes from this book.
- He was a shepherd and sycamore/fig tree cultivator.
- He lived during the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah.
- The implication is that he only prophesied for a short period of time, perhaps one or two years, maybe less.
- “What little we know of Amos, then, we know mainly through his message. His words from God, not his person, were the concern of those who preserved his oracles.” — Stuart, 285

What was happening in Palestine at the time?

- Divided kingdom
- Continued the sins of Jeroboam I.
- Socio-Economic Situation
 - A time of peace and prosperity
 - Increased trade led to the rise of a merchant class and expanded poverty in rural areas.

Major Themes in Amos

- Judgment
- Geography
- Justice/Injustice

Mishpat means acquitting or punishing every person on the merits of the case, regardless of race or social status. Anyone who does the same wrong should be given the same penalty ... It also means to give people their rights ... *Mishpat* then, is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care ... Over and over again, *mishpat* describes taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor—those who have been called “the quartet of the vulnerable” (p. 3).

In premodern, agrarian societies, these four groups had no social power. They lived at subsistence level and were only days from starvation if there was any famine, invasion, or even minor social unrest. Today this quartet would be expanded to include the refugee, the migrant worker, the homeless, and many single parents and elderly people (p. 4).

The *mishpat*, or justness, of a society, according to the Bible, is evaluated by how it treats these groups. Any neglect shown to the needs of the members of this quartet is not called merely a lack of mercy or charity, but a violation of justice, of *mishpat*. God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to “do justice”
(p. 4)

... the Bible says that God is the defender of the poor; it never says he is the defender of the rich. And while some texts call for justice for members of the well-off classes as well, the calls to render justice to the poor outnumber such passages by a hundred to one (p. 6).

In short, since most of the people who are downtrodden by abusive power are those who had little power to begin with, God gives them particular attention and has a special place in his heart for them. He says: Speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute ...” [Proverbs 31:8] (p. 8).

If God's character includes a zeal for justice that leads him to have the tenderest love and closest involvement with the socially weak, then what should God's people be like? They must be people who are likewise passionately concerned for the weak and vulnerable (p. 8).

Major Themes in Amos

- Judgment
- Geography
- Justice/Injustice
- **Hypocrisy/Syncretism**
- **Idolatry**

An Approach to Amos

- Applying principles
- Focus on revelation of God's character
- Focus on applying biblical justice and true worship in our present day situation.