

Amos

Chapter 7

Warning Visions

This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2 When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, "O Lord GOD, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" 3 The LORD relented concerning this: "It shall not be," said the LORD. 4 This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, the Lord GOD was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. 5 Then I said, "O Lord GOD, please cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" 6 The LORD relented concerning this: "This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD. 7 This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; 9 the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

7:1 *showed me.* Introduces reports of visions that convey God's message through things seen as well as heard (see vv. 4, 7; 8:1; cf. 9:1). (CSB)

Description of a vision, a direct revelation from the Lord. Amos was able to see exactly how the land would be judged. (TLSB)

locusts. Cf. 4:9; Joel 1:4. (CSB)

The time of the grasshoppers' coming, therefore, was very unfortunate, since the first crop had been delivered as the law required, and the second crop was bound to be ruined. (Kretzmann)

latter growth. Crops brought forth by late spring rains. Amos saw that an agricultural catastrophe was in the offing, since both the early grain crop (then maturing) and the second crop (just sprouting) would be destroyed by the locust swarm (see note, Jl 1:4). (TLSB)

king's mowings. The king had already exercised his royal prerogative of taking the first reaping. Consequently, nothing was left for the people but famine. (TLSB)

latter crop. The growth that came up in the fields after the grains and early hay were harvested. On these the flocks and herds pastured until the summer drought stopped all growth (cf. 1Ki 18:5). (CSB)

7:2 *How ... stand?* Mass starvation would afflict all the people. (CSB)

Jacob. Israel. (CSB)

so small. Powerless to withstand the calamity. Amos makes no appeal to the Lord's covenant with Israel—perhaps because Israel's unfaithfulness had removed all right to such an appeal. (CSB)

Amos earnestly intercedes for Israel, pleading that the nation is too weak and poor to survive such a crop failure. This is ironic, since the prophet also criticized the people for their greed and materialism (e.g.,

4:1; 6:4–7). The only hope that Amos’s appeal might succeed is God’s compassionate nature (Ex 34:6–7). Cf Gn 18:22–33. (TLSB)

7:3 *the LORD relented.* In response to the prophetic intercession (cf. Ge 20:7)—but forgiveness is not offered. (CSB)

Remarkably, the Lord answers the prophet’s intercessory prayer by agreeing to spare Israel. (TLSB)

It shall not be. History shows that Israel’s punishment was postponed rather than forever averted. Sadly, the people’s obstinacy eventually did them in (2Ki 17:6–18). (TLSB)

7:4 *great deep.* Probably the Mediterranean Sea. (CSB)

The Lord’s smoldering anger was ready to send an even more severe judgment, a fire so intense that it would scorch everything, even drying up the subterranean springs. Cf Dt 32:22; Am 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5. (TLSB)

land. Lit. “portion,” probably referring to the promised land or, more precisely, to everything growing on the land (cf. Joel 1:19). (CSB)

7:5 *please cease!* Intercession echoing that described in v 2. Previously, a reprieve was given (v 3). However, the people’s sinfulness forced Amos to appeal to the Lord’s mercy again, this time in order to stave off fiery judgment. (TLSB)

7:7–15 In order to see that Gospel in God’s call to Amos, it is important to remember God’s reason in sending him to speak: even at this late date, God still desires that his people repent and that he may heal them with forgiveness. Toward this end, God’s heart is revealed in the verses immediately prior to our pericope. Twice in 7:1–6, God declares impending punishment, and twice he relents. Only when Israel refuses to acknowledge that it is “small” (7:2, 5) before him does God’s judgment become final. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:7 Israel is compared to a wall built true to plumb—what she should have been, after all the Lord had done for her. (CSB)

7:8–9 In vv. 1–6 God proposed wholesale punishments amounting to total destruction, but relented at Amos’s prayer—though without promise of forgiveness. Now the Lord is no longer open to such intercession (cf. Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1). (CSB)

Israel. The context makes clear that this refers to the Northern Kingdom, Israel (see also v 10), and not to the entire people of Israel, God’s chosen people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:7–8 *the Lord was standing.* The Lord revealed Himself to Amos in physical fashion during this series of visions. (TLSB)

plumb line. Builder’s tool used to determine a straight, vertical line. In this comparison, the wall represents Israel. Though the Lord originally set up Israel to be right and true, the nation has become crooked and warped. Israel needs to be re-measured by the Lord’s plumb line, since only then can things be set right. (TLSB)

7:8 *plumb line*. God's people had been "built" (v. 7) according to God's standards. They were expected to be true to those standards, but were completely out of plumb when tested (cf. 2Ki 21:13). (CSB)

'anak, a plumb line. The word is used only in these two verses in Amos. Nevertheless, there is no difficulty in the translation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

my people. Here, for the first time in the book of Amos, the Lord calls Israel "my people" (see v. 15; 8:2; 9:10, 14). (CSB)

I will never again pass by them. He was determined not to show lenience any longer. (Kretzmann)

7:9 *high places ... sanctuaries ... house*. The centers of religious and political pretension and of self-righteous pride would be wiped out. (CSB)

Worship sites scattered around the Northern Kingdom. (TLSB)

Isaac. Israel's (Jacob's) father, a way of referring to Israel found only in Amos (see v. 16). (CSB)

Likely references to Bethel and Dan. See notes, 3:14, 15; 4:4–5. Through Moses, the Lord had warned the people about the consequences of illicit worship (Lv 26:27–33). (TLSB)

Jeroboam. The oracles of chs. 1–6 were spoken to the leading people of Israel and Samaria as a whole; here Amos names one man, the king. (CSB)

Prophecy reveals that the breakaway dynastic line of the Northern Kingdom would be ended by invading enemies. Historically, this was fulfilled when Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, was assassinated. (TLSB)

7:1–9 By means of symbolic visions involving locusts, fire, and a plumb line, the Lord warns His people that He will punish their apostasy. However, these visions, Amos's repeated intercessions on behalf of the people, and God's forbearance did not result in repentance. People today are just as slow to heed God's Word and are equally intractable in their bad behavior. We, too, would be irretrievably lost and eternally condemned were it not for Christ and His forgiveness. • "Grant us, O Father, that we may also be Your heavenly children. Teach us to think only of our souls and of our heavenly inheritance that our temporal fatherland and earthly lot may not deceive, hold, and hinder us or turn us altogether into children of this world, that we may say with a good and real reason, 'Our heavenly Father,' and may truly be Your heavenly children. Amen." (Luth, *TLWA*, p 294) (TLSB)

Amos Accused

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. **11** For thus Amos has said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land." **12** And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, **13** but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." **14** Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I was[a] no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. **15** But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' **16** Now therefore hear the word of the LORD. You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.' **17** Therefore thus says the LORD: "Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land."

7:10,13 Bethel, a town near the southern border of the Northern Kingdom. Here, Jeroboam I had built a new sanctuary after the split from Judah, so that the people of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) would not have to go to Jerusalem (in Judah, the Southern Kingdom) to worship. The non-Levitical priests in charge of this temple quickly fell into Baalism. The Jeroboam mentioned in this text is Jeroboam II, who reigned in the first half of the eighth century BC. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:10 Amaziah's words summarize Amos's message. (CSB)

Amaziah the priest is slandering Amos. He takes what Amos has to say and changes it slightly (compare verses 9 and 11). (CSB)

Priest of Jeroboam's sanctuary at Bethel. (TLSB)

priest of Bethel. This expression was found on a seal from a temple to Yahweh at Dor. (TLSB)

conspired. Amaziah charges Amos with inciting insurrection and so overthrowing the dynasty ruling Israel. Apparently, Amos's message was getting through, for Amaziah protests that the land "is not able to bear all his words." (TLSB)

Jeroboam. That is, his "house" (v. 9), the king's name also representing his dynasty. (CSB)

7:11 *will die.* Jeroboam died naturally (2Ki 14:29), but his son and successor Zechariah (2Ki 15:8) was assassinated (2Ki 15:10). (CSB)

Jeroboam shall die by the sword. Amaziah probably refers to the oracle appearing in v 9. (TLSB)

exile. Amos clearly threatened the nation with this punishment many times (4:2-3; 5:5, 26-27; 6:7; 9:4). (TLSB)

7:12 *seer.* Amaziah dismissed Amos as a prophet for hire whom he need not take seriously. (CSB)

Underlines the visionary nature of the oracles in vv 7-9. By calling Amos a "seer," Amaziah implicitly recognizes his prophetic gift. (TLSB)

Amaziah and Amos should have been partners because they both were to represent the Lord. A seer was sometimes called a star gazer and not someone to be taken seriously. Seers were often hired to tell what kings and others wanted to hear. (CSB)

GO BACK TO THE LAND OF JUDAH – Amaziah indirectly threatens Amos by commanding him to go back to where he came from (cf 1:1). (TLSB)

"Flee away to the land of Judah." Amos was from the town of Tekoa (1:1), a town south of Bethlehem, in the Southern Kingdom. He had gone to the north, to Israel, to prophesy in response to God's call (v 15). These words of Amaziah then mean, "Go back to where you came from." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:13 *never again prophesy at Bethel.* Amaziah stops short of forbidding Amos from prophesying altogether. Instead, he forbids Amos from preaching in territories ruled by Jeroboam; he cannot deny that Amos is a true prophet. (TLSB)

king's sanctuary. Amaziah served the king in Samaria, not Israel's heavenly King; hence he would not allow a prophetic word to be spoken against Jeroboam or his realm at the royal chapel. (CSB)

a temple of the kingdom. Amaziah makes Bethel the "king's sanctuary" rather than the Lord's house. (TLSB)

The chief place for the cult ordained by the king for his entire kingdom. His argument was that for this reason it was altogether improper for Amos to continue his threatening sayings. (Kretzmann)

7:14 *a prophet nor a prophet's son.* Amos denied any previous connection with the prophets or their disciples. No one had hired him to come and announce judgment on Jeroboam and Israel. (CSB)

Amos became a prophet in the same way as so many others—apart from his own initiative or will. Many of Israel's prophets resisted and tried to get out of their calls when the Lord unexpectedly came to them with a charge for mission (Ex 3:1–4:17; Is 6:1–7; Jer 1:4–10; Jnh 1:1–3). The OT contains no account about a true prophet taking the task upon himself. Gregory of Nazianzus: "None can see or enter into the Kingdom, except he be born again of the Spirit, and be cleansed from the first birth . . . by which every one singly is created anew. This Spirit, for He is most wise and most loving, if He takes possession of a shepherd makes him a Psalmist . . . if he possess a goatherd[er] and scraper of sycamore fruit, He makes him a Prophet" (NPNF 2 7:384). (TLSB)

"I was no prophet . . . but I was a herdsman." ESV has the footnote "or am." The two clauses are verbless in Hebrew, therefore not giving (grammatically) the tense. S In the next verse, however, Amos says God "took" (clearly past tense) him from following the flock and told him to "prophesy." Since God told Amos to prophesy, it seems impossible for him to say that he is no prophet. The main text of the ESV is preferable. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

He was not born to that honor nor did he attend any school of the prophets. (Kretzmann)

herdsman. The Hebrew uses a different word here—one not found elsewhere in OT. The Hebrew for this word is, however, related to a word for "cattle," suggesting that Amos may also have tended cattle. (CSB)

sycamore figs. A large tree, yielding fig-like fruit as well as useful timber. To ensure good fruit, the gardener had to slit the top of each fig—which may be the procedure referred to by the obscure Hebrew word here rendered "took care of." (CSB)

Amos readily admits he was not originally a prophet, nor did he come from a family or school of prophets (cf 1Sm 19:19–24; 2Ki 2:1–22). Rather, he engaged in an agricultural vocation, both as a herdsman and as one who scraped the fruit of fig trees in order to hasten their ripening (still practiced today). (TLSB)

7:15 *following.* The Hebrew for which stresses the location of the shepherd rather than his activity. (CSB)

the LORD took me. Cf 2Sm 7:8, David's call. (TLSB)

Go. Amos was in Bethel because God had sent him to prophesy there. (CSB)

Amos had nothing that humanly would recommend him for this job. But God told him to go and that was enough. (CSB)

Like David, Amos was commanded to leave one flock (his family's herd) and tend another (God's people, Israel). (TLSB)

7:16 *Do not prophesy.* Cf. 2:12. (CSB)

Notice the contrast in the twin commands spoken by Amaziah in v. 12 and the Lord in vv 15-16. (TLSB)

7:17 Amos turned to condemn the priest personally. (CSB)

prostitute. With the exile of Amaziah, the death of his children and the loss of the family estate, Amaziah's wife would be reduced to prostitution to survive. (CSB)

Amos responds to Amaziah's command that he stop prophesying by making some of his most horrifying predictions. Wives will be forced into prostitution, and Israel's children will be killed by merciless enemies. This prediction was fulfilled when the Assyrians invaded. (TLSB)

Your land. Amaziah's private estate would be divided up and given to others. (CSB)

measuring line. Assyrians would take possession of Israel's land and parcel it out as they saw fit. (TLSB)

unclean country. Where his ceremonial purity as a priest would be defiled. (CSB)

Amaziah (and the people he represents) face a bleak future in exile (TLSB)

And Israel ... its land. Amos repeats—verbatim in the Hebrew—the last two lines of Amaziah's earlier summary of Amos's message (v. 11). (CSB)

With people who are unwittingly caught in the meshes of a false religion one may have patience, but the leaders of false religions must be rebuked with all severity, for it is their leadership which results in the loss of souls, and the leaders are rightly held responsible. (Kretzmann)

7:10–17 When Amaziah the priest rebukes Amos and orders him out of Israel, the prophet responds by uttering some of his most chilling words of judgment. Amos does so with good reason for, on top of all their other sins, the people of Israel have now dared to openly despise the prophetic word even as it is being spoken to them. This scenario reminds us just how dangerous it is to ignore God's Word and to defy those sent to call us to repentance. Though guilty ourselves of similar failings, we take comfort in Christ's loyalty and unbounded forgiveness. His death has paid the debt of our rebellion, and His resurrection assures us that even as He lives, so also shall we. • Lord, we know that we should fear and love You so that we do not despise preaching and Your Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it. For Jesus' sake, open our hearts and move our wills to do this, dear heavenly Father. Amen. (TLSB)