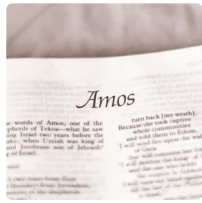


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Amos 1 - 2



Amos - Steve Gregg

In this study, Steve Gregg delves into the book of Amos in the first prophetic period. Amos was a sheep herder and horticulturalist who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel. The book of Amos consists of three sermons and five visions, which predict judgment and destruction for the sins committed by Damascus, Gilead, Tyre, and Moab. Through use of repetition and rhetorical questions, Amos seeks to gain the audience's attention and spur them into seeking the Lord and living a good life.

Transcript

This morning, we are going to be studying the book of Amos. I expect that this will take two sessions to cover. We are not studying the minor prophets in the order that they appear in our Bible.

Partly that's because, well, mostly that's because they don't appear in our Bible in a chronological order. They appear in a somewhat different kind of order. I told you when we were studying the book of Jonah that there were basically three periods of prophecy in Israel's history in which written documents were produced which have been preserved as part of our Bible.

There were, of course, prophets at other times besides these three periods, but the prophets of those times did not leave us written works, at least not like the ones we have here. I should qualify that because we do have evidence that prophets like Nathan and Gad and Shemaiah and some of these prophets who were contemporaries with David and with Solomon, that these men must have made written accounts of the historical period in which they lived because those writings seem to have been the sources for the writing of the books of Kings and Chronicles. They are quoted.

The books of Kings and Chronicles make reference to the Chronicles written by Nathan and Gad, so there must be other writing prophets whose writings have not been preserved for us in their original form but have been incorporated into compilations which we know as the books of Kings and Chronicles and Samuel also, the books of

Samuel. But in our Bibles, those books that have been passed down to us from the pen of an actual prophet come from three basic periods. One is the period of about the time of the fall of Samaria, or prior to it, looking forward to it.

Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, fell in 721 B.C., and prior to that, God sent certain prophets. He sent prophets to the northern kingdom itself and also to the southern kingdom, which also was threatened by the same menace, Assyria, that conquered Samaria. Actually, Assyria did not conquer Jerusalem, but it did threaten Jerusalem, and so there were prophets sent to both of these kingdoms at that time.

We might call this the Assyrian period, because at that time the kingdom of Assyria was the dominant world empire and the great threat to the smaller nations like Judah and Israel and Assyria and all the others around them. That is the first prophetic period. The second prophetic period, as I pointed out, was about 100 years later, about the time where God was threatening to destroy Judah, the southern kingdom.

This was after the northern kingdom had fallen. The southern kingdom fell in 586 B.C. Prior to that, God sent several prophets, including Jeremiah and Habakkuk and Zephaniah. These prophets were not sent to the northern kingdom because there was no northern kingdom at that time, only the southern kingdom.

This period was when the ascendant power or the dominant power in the world was Babylon. We could call that, and sometimes scholars do call that, the Babylonian period. The first group of prophets came during the Assyrian period, the second group during the Babylonian period, and the last group are what we would call post-exilic, because they are after the Babylonian exile, after that period of 70 years that the Jews spent enslaving Babylon.

There were three other prophets sent, and they were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. They belong to a different period. After the fall of Babylon, we could call it the Persian period, because Babylon has now been displaced as the leading empire of the world by the Persian empire.

The pre-periods of prophetic writing that have produced the books that we call the books of the prophets in our Bible are respectively the Assyrian period, the Babylonian period and the Persian period. That is describing those periods from a secular political point of view. We might call them, if we wanted to give them more of a religious designation, two basic categories, pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets.

Of the pre-exilic prophets, we have two classes, those that prophesied prior to the fall of Samaria and the northern kingdom, and those that prophesied prior to the fall of Jerusalem, the southern kingdom. Right now we are dealing with prophets of that first period. In the northern kingdom, there were at least three prophets who wrote books for us.

They were prophets to Samaria and to the northern kingdom of Israel. One of those was Jonah. We studied his book yesterday.

We don't know how much prophesying he did in the northern kingdom, but it is made very clear that he did prophesy concerning Israel about the restoration of certain territories which was fulfilled through King Jeroboam II. Also more well known is the story of how Jonah was sent to the Assyrian empire, to the capital Nineveh, and prophesied its doom and was used by God to bring about the repentance of that capital city of the Assyrians. Probably, through that, he managed to forestall the judgment on his own people, because Nineveh, having repented of their violence and of their wickedness, was not so much disposed to go and do the acts of cruelty that they later would do, when at a later date they would come against Samaria and destroy the northern kingdom.

So Jonah was one of these prophets of the first period in the northern kingdom. Also we have, at the same time, contemporary with him were Amos and Hosea, both of them also in the northern kingdom. These three prophets were contemporaries, Jonah, Amos, and Hosea.

They are not linked in the arrangement of the books in our Bible. In the minor prophets of our Bible, the first one to be given is Hosea for some reason, Joel is given next, and then Amos and Obadiah, and Jonah is considerably late in the listing. But he was probably one of the earliest of these prophets, and Amos also was.

And so what we're doing in our studies, we're studying, first of all, those prophets of the first period, and firstly, those who prophesied to the northern kingdom. It was the northern kingdom of Israel that was mostly endangered at this period of time, and so the prophets to that kingdom had a very urgent message to them. After we studied those, Jonah, Amos, and Hosea, which prophesied to the northern kingdom at that time, we'll then turn to those prophets who were contemporary, prophesied to the southern kingdom at the same period of time, which would include Joel and Micah.

And of course, we know at the same time Isaiah was prophesied, but was already dealt with him as a major prophet. Amos wrote us a book of nine chapters. It's a short book.

That's why these are called minor prophets, because they're shorter books, not because their message is of lesser importance than those of the books that we call the major prophets, but simply because of their relative size. Isaiah has 66 chapters, Jeremiah has 52 chapters, Ezekiel has 48 chapters. These are called major prophets.

Daniel only has 12 chapters, but they're long chapters, and it's treated as a major prophet, too. But the minor prophets are all considerably shorter, and while the major prophets frequently ministered over a protracted period of time, 40, 50 years, Isaiah prophesied for about 50 years and through the reigns of four kings. Jeremiah prophesied for about 40 years through the period of five kings, or five, the last five kings of Judah.

That's why they're major. That's why they wrote so much material. Their ministry was protracted.

It was lengthy, several decades long, and messaged to several different kings through that generation that they lived in. But prophets like Amos often just had a single prophetic mission. Amos prophesied only during the reign of Jeroboam II, the second Jeroboam, who was king in Israel, and as near as we can tell, he had a brief ministry.

He was not a native of the northern kingdom. This is interesting because God did raise up native prophets in the northern kingdom, like Hosea and like Jonah, and like even before that, Elijah and Elisha were natives of the northern kingdom. But Amos was not a native of that.

He was from Judah, the southern kingdom. And as far as we know, he's the only prophet from the southern kingdom who was sent against the northern kingdom. He was a cross-cultural international missionary.

He went from his own country to preach to another country. Now, of course, we know that there were other international missionaries. Jonah was one to Nineveh, so was Nahum, and Obadiah was a prophet to the Edomites.

But as far as we know, there's only one prophet sent from the region of Jerusalem up to the northern kingdom to prophesy against Samaria and Bethel, the religious and civil capitals of the northern kingdom. Now, I like Amos. I have a special place in my heart for Amos because he was not a clergyman.

He wasn't trained through the regular seminaries that many of the prophets came through. He wasn't of a ruling class, either. Isaiah had royal blood in him.

He was a cousin to the kings of Judah. Isaiah was a statesman and a man of high rank in society. Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Zechariah were all priests, and therefore of a significant ruling class also.

Amos was just a shepherd and a native horticulturalist. He took care of sycamore fig trees, a particular kind of fruit that needs to be pinched or pierced at a certain point of its ripening or it won't ripen properly, and therefore it's a kind of fruit that requires a lot of attention. He describes himself in chapter 7 as a tender of sycamore fruit.

This is a reference to sycamore figs, which actually were not native to the area that he was in. He apparently was a migrant farm worker in the southern kingdom. He lived in a place called Tekoa, which is a village about six miles south of Bethlehem, down in the wilderness areas of Judah, about ten or eleven miles south of Jerusalem.

Tekoa, about ten or eleven miles south of Jerusalem and six miles south of Bethlehem. He was not a city dweller at all. He was a very rural kind of a person, a migrant farm

worker.

Seasonally he probably hired himself out to help in the process of piercing these sycamore figs so that they'd ripen properly on the trees. It had to be done at a particular time of the year. He probably needed a lot of labor for that short season, and that's part of what he did for a living.

He also apparently had some flocks of his own or someone else's that he tended, sheep. So he was just a rural guy, not a prophet, and God called him from his regular occupation to go and prophesy in the big city, and not only the big city of his own people, but the big city of a different nation, the northern kingdom of Israel. He prophesied, it would seem, both in Samaria and in Bethel.

Samaria was the capital, as you know, of the northern kingdom, and Bethel was the capital of the false religion of the northern kingdom, where the golden calf was. There were two golden calves, one at Bethel and one at Dan. Dan was so far in the north of Israel, in the more unpopulated regions, that the majority of the important people in the northern kingdom went to Bethel, including the king, who worshipped the golden calf at Bethel.

So the altar at Bethel was the site of some of Amos' prophecies. But you know, there were schools of the prophets in those days. There were what some people call prophetic guilds.

These had been established by Samuel many generations earlier, and each generation, apparently, there was a leading prophet who supervised these younger prophets. Exactly how they learned or what they learned, we're not sure, but they were usually referred to as the sons of the prophets. And it would appear that many, maybe most, of the prophets that are in our Bible were members of these prophetic guilds.

Amos lived only shortly after the death of Elisha. Elisha, in his day, had been the leader of the prophetic guilds, and before him, Elijah had been. We're not sure which prophet in the northern kingdom was the head of the prophetic guilds after the death of Elisha.

It may have been Jonah. Jonah was contemporary with the latter part of Elisha's ministry. It may have been Hosea.

But it certainly wasn't Amos. Amos didn't even live in the right country to come from these schools. He was from the south, and he was not theologically trained under any prophets.

He says in chapter 7, I was not a prophet or the son of a prophet. I was just a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore fruit, and the Lord called me to go prophesy. Now, the reason I say I really like him is because, in his case, we can see very clearly that theological education is not necessary to be a servant of God.

And that is a fact that many people have lost sight of today. There are many churches that would not even consider an untrained candidate for the pastor. It was apparently very uncommon, even in those days, for a man who was not from the prophetic schools to come and preach.

The priest of the high place in Bethel assumed that Amos was a professional prophet, because apparently most prophets were professional. You'll notice, if you turn to chapter 7, that this man Amaziah, who was the priest at Bethel, he said to Amos, in verses 12 and 13, Amos chapter 7, verses 12 and 13, Amaziah said to Amos, Go, you thief, flee to the land of Judah. In other words, go home.

We don't want you in this country. Go back to where you came from. There eat bread and there prophesy.

The reference to eating bread refers to the fact that most people paid the prophets for their ministry. They prophesied for bread. So he's saying, let your own people support you.

Let your own people pay you for your ministry. We don't want you here. Never again prophesy at Bethel, for it's the king's sanctuary and his royal residence.

So Amaziah assumed that Amos was like the rest of the prophets, that he was a professional, and that he prophesied for food, or for his support. But Amos makes it clear in the verses that followed that that wasn't his background at all. In other words, this man didn't ever plan on going into the ministry.

He didn't have aspirations of being a spiritual leader. He had chosen as his vocation a very humble and close to the earth, practical kind of a skill, but God just called him sovereign to leave that, at least temporarily. Now, we don't know if he remained a prophet the rest of his life, because we only have the record of one prophetic mission, as we've seen in this book.

But God called him away from that and made him one of the mightiest prophets to the northern kingdom. I say mightiest because I think there's tremendous power in his message. He's, I think, a very good speaker, a very good preacher, although he's apparently uneducated compared to some of the other prophets.

And yet he stands as an example of a layman, a man without theological training that has the anointing of God and the word of God, and clearly with the authority of God. You will find that the prophet does his repetition a great deal. Repetition can be an evidence that a preacher is unprepared.

If a man takes the time to prepare, he can often, in his preparation, eliminate the need for repetition. I myself speak with very little preparation and therefore a great deal of repetition. But repetition can be an evidence of unpreparedness or it can be an evidence

of a desire to emphasize a point.

And there are several cases where there's a very obvious recurrent repetition in his style. The first two chapters, for example, contain four burdens or four brief prophecies against certain cities or certain kingdoms. They all begin with the exact same phrase.

If you'll notice in verse three, for example, chapter one, he says, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not turn away its punishment. And that tells what their greatest sin was. And then he says in verse four, I will send fire into the house of Hazeal, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.

Now this expression, I will send fire unto the house and it will devour the palaces of, is also part of each one of these burdens. They all begin with the statement, for three transgressions and for four, of so and so. I will not turn away its punishment.

Then he'll tell what their sin is and then he'll say, therefore, I will send fire on blank and it shall devour the palaces of blank. In other words, this is a form that he fills in the blanks as they apply to each individual case, but it's a repetitious form. You'll see the same in verse six, the next burden for three transgressions of Gaza and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.

He gives the reason and then he says in verse seven, but I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour its palaces. Verse nine, we have the third case of that for three transgressions of Tyre and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, gives the reason. And then in verse 10, but I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre, which shall devour its palaces.

And in the fourth instance, verse 11, for three transgressions of Edom and for four, I will turn away. I will not turn away its punishment after giving the reason he says in verse 12, but I will send fire upon Teman, which will devour the palaces of Bosra. Verse 13, we have the fifth case of this for three transgressions of the people of Ammon and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.

And after giving the reason in verse 14, he says, but I will kindle fire in the wall of Rabah, which shall devour its palaces. And we have three more cases, just like that in chapter two, chapter two, verse one. The same thing I said about Moab in verse four, the same thing I said about Judah and in verse six, Israel.

So we see a tremendous amount of repetition of the same exact words. This is for the sake of building suspense, perhaps in a way, I mean, you can tell this, uh, and I'm going to show symmetry. Basically what he's trying to show is that all these nations are pretty much in the same boat and almost the exact same thing can be said about all of them, even though each of them has its own particular sin that stands out in God's mind as making right for judgment.

Yet there's a sense in which they're all alike and therefore the exact same can be used of them. Now, when he says for three transgressions and for four, we need to understand that that's kind of a Hebraism, an idiom that we might not realize its meaning. First off, from our Western way of thinking, we would as well, he says for three and four, first of all, it seems like you can't make up your mind how many he's talking about.

Is it three or four? Secondly, we would expect in the following points to list out three or four sins because he says for three transgressions and for four, then you'd expect him to tell what these three or four are. As a matter of fact, he never does that. He gives basically one chief sin of each group that he addresses and he doesn't mention three or four of them.

Now it's very unlikely that each of these kingdoms has exactly the same number of sins, even though in every case he says for three transgressions and for four. In all likelihood, we have two different principles of Hebrew writing that are incorporated here. One is that sometimes a Hebrew writer will say something like this, for three, no four, or for six, no seven things.

And what they're saying is, this is not a comprehensive list. Offhand, I can think of six, but if I think a little longer, I can think of seven. Presumably if I think longer, I can think of more.

Yeah. And you find this, for instance, in the Proverbs quite a bit. There are three things that are too wonderful for me.

Yea, four. You know, six things the Lord hates. Yea, seven are an abomination to him.

This kind of expression is not uncommon in the Hebrew poetry. And Amos, by saying for three, well, for four, come to think of it, he is simply saying, this is not in any sense a comprehensive list. There's a number of sins, and the longer I think about it, the more of them I can add to the list.

I can think of four, I can think of three, no, four. And you know, the idea is, I'm not giving an exact number here, but just basically, I'm giving an inexact number. And that kind of way of speaking is found elsewhere.

But also, you can see that three and four combined makes seven. And seven, to the Jewish mind, was the number of completeness. And therefore, to say for three transgressions and for four, might suggest three plus four makes seven, and therefore, just for the total number of transgressions, the judgments coming on them, not because of a particular number of transgressions so much as just the total depravity, the total sinfulness of the people is bringing this judgment upon them.

At any rate, we can see it's a repetitious device that he uses. And that's only one case of many in the book of Amos where we see his desire to use repetition. For example,

another instance is found in chapter four.

In chapter four, verses six, you might want to just write your number down. Verses six, eight, nine, ten, and eleven. That's all the verses between six and eleven except for verse seven.

Chapter four, verses six, eight, nine, ten, and eleven. We find occurring in each of these verses at the end of them, this statement, Yet you have not returned to me, says the Lord. In each of these cases, God tells them something he has done to them.

Some judge, temporal judgment that's already been brought upon them, which was like a warning shot fired over their heads, saying, you know, stop or I'll shoot. But they don't stop. They've been slapped on the wrist in a number of ways.

They've been chastened. But none of these things are really the big thing that's coming down. Each of them is intended to get the people's attention so that they might cease and desist and not have to fall to the great judgment that is going to come.

Each time he gives some description of something God has done to them. Famine, drought, and other agricultural problems that come upon them. Yet each time he says, Yet you have not returned to me, says the Lord, repetitiously.

Yet you have not returned to me. Yet you have not returned to me. Yet you have not returned to me.

Another case of repetition in his style of writing. In another case, chapter five, in verse four and six, chapter five, verses four and six, both verses, he says, Seek the Lord and live or seek me and live. And down in verse fourteen, he says, Seek good and not evil, that you may live.

So in these three places, he stresses that there's a need to seek so that they might live. In two of the cases, it's the Lord they're told to seek. In the third case, they need to seek good and not evil.

But he points out that living or surviving is going to be based on what they seek. And we see that construction three times in this one chapter. Seek me and live.

Seek the Lord and live. Seek good and not evil, that you may live. Repetitious.

There's two other scriptures that come to my mind. I've just dug these up from reading last night. And if I study more carefully, I might be able to give more examples.

Another case of repetition we find is in chapter eight and verse eight. He says, Shall the land not tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the river, heave and subside like the river of Eden. If you'll take a look over at chapter nine in verse five, you'll find essentially the same statement, almost spadam.

The Lord God of hosts who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell there mourn. All of it shall swell like the river and subside like the river of Egypt. The same expressions.

Again, this is less frequent. It's only twice we have that repetition. But we see that taken together with the other cases that Amos is a man who used repetition.

Repetition is a good mnemonic device that aids the memory. Jesus used it, for instance, in the Beatitudes. Blessed are, blessed are, blessed are, blessed are, for they, for they, for they, for they.

Using the same construction to make several statements, because the repetition gives less for a person to have to retain in his mind. I mean, he could say all the same thoughts. There's eight Beatitudes, for example, in Master Thought.

He could give all the same thoughts in totally different ways of expressing them, and there would be so much more to remember. But if you just remember the basic structure, blessed are, for they, then you can just supply in each case the blanks, and there's less to remember. It's also the case that you can sort of remember all the things that have the same beginning a little easier.

You can categorize things in your mind. It's just a memory device. It's helpful, and also we know for a fact, probably more than it was known in those days, just because of studies that have been done by learning behavior specialists and so forth, that we don't really remember things we hear only once very well.

We only remember a very small percentage. But if we hear it a second time, a larger percentage is retained. If we hear the same thing a third time, the percentage increases.

And I don't remember the percentages, but it increases incrementally each time you hear the same thing repeated. And repetition is really what good teachers do use, even though, as I said, sometimes it's just a sign of not being well-prepared. Many times it's deliberate, because it helps things to stick in the mind.

After you've read through the Book of Amish, you'll probably never forget the expression for three transgressions and for four, because you'll read it eight times in the space of two chapters. As far as filling in the gaps, if that was your interest, you could probably memorize the other parts, too, more easily because of the parts that all the statements have in common. Let me point out another thing about his style that's kind of interesting.

He has a fondness for rhetorical questions. Now, a rhetorical question is a question that doesn't really require an answer. The answer is self-evident.

Rhetoric, which is, of course, the word from which rhetorical comes from, rhetoric is the

art of argument. And therefore, a rhetorical question is a question that is not so much asked because information has been sought, but it's a part of your argument. You ask a question, the answer to which is so self-evident that it doesn't need to be specifically answered, but the answer to it, which everyone knows, becomes part of your argument.

You ever heard anyone say, does a fish swim? Is the Pope a Catholic? You ever heard those expressions? What they mean is, what you've asked me is so self-evident that everybody knows the answer. You say, hey, you know, you want to, are you going to such and such a place tonight? You're going to go to a big band concert? Someone said, well, is the Pope a Catholic? And maybe you don't know people who use those expressions. I've heard people use those kinds of expressions.

That's a rhetorical question. The fact is, the answer to that is, of course, yes, the Pope is a Catholic. And the answer to your question is obviously yes, too.

In other words, the question doesn't necessarily relate directly to what you're saying, except that its answer is thought to be so axiomatic, so obvious, that it's suggesting that the question you're asking doesn't even need to be asked. Of course I'm going. I mean, what else would I do? How could the answer be anything other than yes? And that's the force of rhetorical questions of this kind.

Amos asks a series of these in at least two different passages. Chapter two, if you'll notice, verses three through seven, or three through six. He gives a whole set of these kinds of questions.

Chapter three, verses three through six, it says, can two walk together unless they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth where there's been no trap laid for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in the city, will not the people be afraid? If there's calamity in the city, will not the Lord have done it? Most of these questions have an obvious no for an answer. And he's saying, just as it's obvious that two people can't walk together unless they're agreed, just as it's quite obvious that a lion doesn't roar unless it's spotted its prey, and that a bird doesn't fall into a snare unless someone has first set a snare for it, so it also should be obvious that there's calamity in the city, it's Lord's doing. That's just a way of arguing by the use of, as they're called, rhetorical questions.

Another instance of this in Amos is in chapter six, in verse twelve. He says, do horses run on rocks? In those days, they usually would try to avoid running their horses on rocks because they'd shatter their hooves. They still would avoid it if they don't have shoes on.

Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? Do you plow on rocks with oxen? Some manuscripts say, do people plow the sea with oxen? At any rate, the obvious answer to both is no. And then he makes the point that, but you have turned

justice into gall and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood. In other words, just as people have enough common sense not to plow on rocks or to run their horses on rocks, they ought to have enough common sense not to pervert justice.

But he's basically saying, apparently you don't have so much common sense as that. So these are some elements of his style that we will find, the way he likes to talk. We'll also find a lot of cases, or at least some cases, where he uses illustrations from his own shepherding experience, it would seem, where he shows a pastoral or shepherd's perspective about things.

For example, one of the first things he says in verse 2 of chapter 1 is, the Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem, the pastors of the shepherds are mourning and the top of Carmel withers. Now he speaks of the Lord roaring like a lion, and God is compared to a lion a number of other places in the book of Amos too. And of course to a shepherd, the roar of a lion was caused to be alert, to warn the sheep or to keep the sheep safe.

And a danger is present to the sheep. And this is a reference to Amos' own experience probably on many occasions living down in the region of the wilderness of Judah. There were a lot of lions down there, and as a shepherd, if he heard a lion roar, he'd take notice, because there was a danger to the flocks.

And there's a sense in which he was sent as a shepherd to the people of Israel to warn them that there's a danger, namely the danger of judgment from God. God, like a lion, was roaring, and the sheep were in danger. They didn't find a place of safety, which was in this case to be a place of obedience to God.

We find other cases where he makes use of similar kinds of imagery. I'm trying to think of where all those places are right now. Chapter 3, verse 4, we already read in one of those rhetorical questions, he says, Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den if he's caught nothing? Many times the things that the lions had caught were one of the sheep.

And he was very familiar with that fact, and you can see that in verse 12 also of chapter 3. Chapter 3, verse 12, he says, As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs and a piece of an ear, in other words, after the lion has devoured the lamb, and the shepherd can only retrieve so much of the leg or an ear of the sheep he sought to rescue, so shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria. In other words, there's not very much left of them. But he uses an illustration that was no doubt very familiar to him as a professional shepherd.

A lion has captured one of the sheep, and he's not able to save it. All he can get back is a small remnant. So we can see his rural upbringing and experience reflected in the way that he describes certain things.

We'll also see a lot of other cases where he refers to agricultural awareness. One of his visions is of ripe fruit, and of course one of his occupations was the helping of fruit to ripen by piercing it. And there's quite a bit, actually, of concern for the agricultural situation.

Many references to God afflicting the nation of Israel in that particular realm. And as an agricultural worker himself, he'd be very close to this concern. What I'd like to do is tell you, first of all, what the outline of the book is.

It's quite simple, quite a simple outline. And then I'd like to actually read through the book, making very few comments, and then I want to go back again, the second time over the book, maybe in our next session. I'm not sure that we'll get to it in this session.

But in going over it again, after having read it out loud together, I'd like to go through and pick out some of the recurring thoughts that we have seen in it. Just like Isaiah or any of the prophets, you'll find recurring motifs in Amos, and I'd like to point some of those out after we've covered the book from beginning to end. All right.

I will make a few comments, too, as we go through. I won't just read it without comment all the way through, but I won't make all the comments that I want to eventually make on this initial reading. Let me give you the outline.

Chapters one and two would be part one of the book. And this contains, as I think I mentioned, eight burdens. I could just call part one eight burdens, mostly very brief burdens.

And they take up chapters one and two. Then the next section, part two, we could call three sermons, because it contains three sermons. And those three sermons are in chapters three through six.

Part three is five visions. And that really takes up the rest of the book. Chapter seven through nine.

Although the last part of chapter nine might be considered a different thought, the last few verses of chapter nine speak of the Messianic Age. I don't think there's any prophet in our Bible that neglects to make some mention of the Messianic Age, although Amos' main concern is not with the Messianic Age, it seems. There is no prophet, including Amos, who omits any reference.

The last few verses from about verse 11 of chapter nine on predict the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the true Israel of God. So, like all of the prophets, he has a gloom and doom message, but it's followed by a message of hope, ultimate restoration, ultimate good from God for his people. But that section three, or part three of the book, chapter seven through nine, is called five visions, because he has five short visions.

In the middle of that, right in the middle of those five visions, in chapter seven, verses 10 through 17, we have a historical parenthesis. In the course of reading these five visions he had, he interrupts it. After the third vision, he interrupts with a historical narrative.

It's the only historical narrative in the whole book. Verses 10 through 17 of chapter seven. There, we read part of it already, the priest of Bethel rebukes him and tells him to go home and reports on him to the king, Jeroboam, and says, this guy is sowing strife among the people, the land can't bear his words.

Then Amos rebukes the priest of Bethel and pronounces a particular judgment on him. That is sort of an interruption in the five visions at the end of the book, right about the middle of it. I would just refer to that as a historical parenthesis.

Okay, now that's how the book is laid out, as we shall see as we go through it. The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. Now, this earthquake was apparently quite a significant one.

There's no mention of this earthquake in the historical books of the Old Testament, but it is mentioned again in another prophet 200 years after this time, so it was quite an earthquake. It was remembered with fear two centuries later, probably something like the great San Francisco earthquake, or maybe worse. It occurred during the reign of Uzziah, and Zechariah makes reference to it 200 years later in Zechariah 14, verse 5, where it's predicting, I think, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and he talks about how you will flee as they fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah.

So the memory of that earthquake 200 years earlier was still vivid in the memory, at least in the historical knowledge of the people of Zechariah's time, Zechariah 14, 5. So it was two years before this earthquake that Amos appeared, and perhaps the reason he mentions that is because he apparently wrote a book afterwards. I mean, obviously, he wrote a book in light of the fact that the earthquake had happened, and yet he says that the prophecies that are in the book, he actually uttered two years before that, and no doubt he's saying that to imply that the earthquake was simply God's way of saying that what he had said two years earlier was correct. He made these threats two years earlier, and then God confirmed it with an earthquake.

Now, since we don't have any reference to this earthquake in the historical books of the Bible, we can't be quite certain when it happened, except that we're told both in Zechariah and here that it was in the reign of Uzziah. According to Josephus, whose works, of course, are not inspired, but he is one of the leading Jewish historians from which we get secular information about the history of Israel, Josephus said that this earthquake occurred in connection with Uzziah getting leprosy. We are told in the historical books of the Bible that Uzziah did get leprosy in the latter part of his reign.

He lived the latter years of his reign in seclusion because of it, and his son Jotham was co-regent with him in those later years of his reign. But if it is so, as Josephus says, that this earthquake happened when Uzziah got leprosy, that would put it in the year 749 or 751 B.C. That may not be a major concern for you, but it does give us a clear date for the writing of this book, or for the prophecies of this book. If this earthquake, as Josephus says, occurred at the time when Uzziah got leprosy, then it would have been in the year 749 or 751 B.C., and of course, the prophecies were out two years before that.

In less than 20 years from the time that this prophecy was given, part of its fulfillment happened. Because in the year 734 B.C., the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III, whom we read of in the Bible, though not in this book, we don't have him named in this book, but Tiglath-Pileser III was the king of Assyria, and in the year 734 B.C., less than 20 years after these prophecies were uttered, he came and took into captivity a great number of people from Israel and from the surrounding nations. Many of these things prophesied in these burdens in chapters 1 and 2 on these surrounding nations occurred and were fulfilled within 20 years at the time that he prophesied it through this captivity by Tiglath-Pileser.

And then only shortly after that, what would it be, 11 or 12 years later, in 722 B.C., we know that Samaria fell to the king of Assyria also. So it was about 20 years or less after the time that these prophecies were uttered that a number of them were fulfilled, and of course, the ultimate fulfillment of the downfall of Samaria was within about 30 or 35 years of the time that he prophesied. So these prophecies were not far-range prophecies.

They occurred within the same generation. The same generation that heard Amos was able to see them fulfilled. Okay, so he mentions that this was during the reign of Jeroboam, that is Jeroboam II, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Verse 2, and he said, The Lord roars from Zion, and his voice from Jerusalem. The pastors of the shepherds mourn, and atop of Carmel withers. It is possible that this statement of God roaring from Zion and his voice from Jerusalem is actually a prediction of the earthquake.

Now, I don't know if that's true or not, but earthquakes kind of rumble and roar. And it may be that two years before the earthquake, Amos was predicting that God was going to rumble and roar. Down in the southern kingdom.

Now, most of the prophecies, in fact, the vast majority of what Amos has to say is to the northern kingdom, not the southern kingdom. But here he mentions Zion, and he mentions Jerusalem, which is the southern kingdom, which is apparently also where the earthquake took place, since it is said to be in the reign of Uzziah, who was the king of the southern kingdom. It was apparently an earthquake in the south.

And it may well be that Amos prefaces his other prophecies with this statement in order to say, well, this earthquake that was experienced in Jerusalem and in Judea was simply God's way of roaring and threatening. A lion roars when it's about ready to pounce on its prey. And God has shaken the place up and roared from Zion, and you people in the northern kingdom ought to pay attention, because this is not so far removed from you, geographically speaking.

It is also clear that the northern kingdom has ceased to seek the Lord in Jerusalem. That was true at the very beginning of the kingdom. The first Jeroboam had set up the golden calf in Bethel and Dan in order to prevent his people in the northern kingdom from going down to Jerusalem and to the temple there and worshipping God there.

And Amos may be stating that this is sort of a rebuke to the people of the northern kingdom, that God's word comes from Jerusalem, not from Bethel, not from Samaria, not from Dan. God roars from Zion. He utters his voice from Jerusalem, and this could be seen as sort of a way of rebuking them for cutting themselves off from the true worship of God and from seeking him and from really hearing his voice, because they cut themselves off from Jerusalem, which is where he speaks from.

And certainly most of the prophets that God sent were prophets in Jerusalem and Judea. At any rate, he mentions this first. He mentions the pasture of the shepherds are mourning, probably because of the devastation and the burning and the drought and so forth that took place in connection with God's judgment on it.

And so he says, even Carmel, which is renowned for its vegetation and its beauty and its flowers and its fruitfulness and so forth. And he says, even Carmel, which is renowned for its vegetation and its beauty and its flowers and its fruitfulness and so forth. And so he says, even Carmel, which is renowned for its vegetation and its flowers and its fruitfulness and so forth.

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And so he says, even Carmel, which is renowned for its vegetation and its fruitfulness and so forth. And so he says, even Carmel, which is renowned for its vegetation and its fruitfulness and so forth. Once by Nebuchadnezzar, as from Sunday Ezekiel you know, Nebuchadnezzar was not able to ultimately conquer the city.

He did burn down the palaces and so forth on the mainland, but Tyre also had an island that the people retreated to for safety. And it wasn't until considerably later, about 300 and some odd years before Christ, that Alexander the Great actually conquered both the mainland and the island fortress of Tyre and brought that city to its end. We have more detailed prophecies about that in Ezekiel.

We don't have much detail here, only a statement on some fire upon the wall of Tyre and devour its palaces. That did happen, Alexander the Great ultimately did that. Which, if you'll notice, the three burdens given so far are progressively further ranged in their fulfillment from each other.

The first one against Damascus was fulfilled in about 50 years. The one against the Philistines was fulfilled considerably later in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. And now the third one, later still, in the days of Alexander the Great.

Although it doesn't necessarily continue to follow that trend to have more and more long-range predictions in these eight burdens. The fourth one is in verse 11. Now here again we have a situation where war between this nation and Israel was more offensive to God because there was a brotherhood that should have been recognized there.

Edom, of course, were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. Therefore, Edom was ethnically related to the Jews. And yet there was a continual, as he says, a perpetual anger, a continual hostility, many wars between them.

No pity, no love for those brothers. And this was never relented of by the Edomites. He kept his wrath forever.

Therefore, because he never really changed his ways, judgment is to come. Byron Timon and Bozer both mentioned in verse 12 are major cities of the ancient Edomite kingdom. And so those two cities were named as those that will be destroyed.

They were destroyed, we studied this earlier when we were studying Jeremiah chapter 49, and also the book of Obadiah. In Jeremiah 49 and also the book of Obadiah we have a description of the destruction of the Edomites. This occurred later still.

The Edomites became extinct in the days of Christ or shortly after, before 70 AD. So far each of the prophecies has had a more far-range fulfillment. The first was actually quite short-range, and then the period of Nebuchadnezzar, then the period of Alexander the Great, then the period of Christ.

So has been the trend so far. Verse 13. This is our fifth burden.

For the three transgressions of the people of Ammon and for Thoth, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Reba, and it shall devour its palaces. Amid shouting in the day of battle, and the tempest in the day of the whirlwind, their kings shall go into captivity, he and his princes together.

Now this one comes back to a more short-range fulfillment. This was fulfilled by the Assyrians, the Ammonites, and also the Moabites, who were closely related to each other. Both of them descended from Lot.

The Moabites are mentioned next in chapter 2, verse 1. They were destroyed along with Israel by the Assyrians. Now, the crime of the Ammonites here is that there was apparently a time when in order to enlarge their territory, they decided to take it by force from some of the Jews of Gilead on the east side of the Jordan. And they didn't just do it through normal warfare, they engaged in a brutal form of genocide, which not only slew the men and so forth, but they actually disemboweled women and so forth, and wiped out even the babies.

This is a horrible crime, and for this reason, God is going to wipe them out. And he did. They are wiped out.

There's reference in verse 15 to their king. Actually, in the Hebrew, the word king there is Milcom, which is the name of their principal god. The principal god of the Ammonites was called Milcom.

M-I-L-C-O-M. And you might put down, if you're reading notes about this, 1 Kings 11.33. There we are told that the chief god of the Ammonites was Milcom, and we're also told that Chemosh was the chief god of the Moabites. And in the same verse, and we read of Chemosh, in the burden against Moab is the next burden.

So, king there in verse 15 is in the Hebrew, Milcom, a reference not to their earthly king, but to their god that they worship. Milcom should go into captivity. And his princes together.

Princes probably here means priests. Not because of the Hebrew word, but simply by the figure of speech. Milcom, the idol that was worshipped by the Ammonites, is described as their king, the one they submit to.

The priests of Milcom are described as his princes. There is another occasion where that kind of language is used in Isaiah, who is, of course, contemporary with English. In Isaiah 43, in verse 28, we read, Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary.

Well, the princes of the sanctuary were probably the priests. The princes didn't labor in the sanctuary. They had a different realm.

Those who labored in the sanctuary were the priests. But Isaiah makes reference to the princes of the sanctuary. The rulers of God's temple are referred to as princes.

Probably the rulers or the priests of Milcom's temple are referred to as the princes there in verse 15 of chapter 1 of Amos. So, he's talking about the deity that they worship. Their idol, Milcom, will go into captivity to the Assyrians, and so will the priests who minister to him.

The sixth verse is in chapter 2, verse 1-3. It says, For three transgressions of Moab, and for four I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kiriath.

Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet sounds, and I will cut off the judge from its midst, and slay all its princes with him, says the Lord. It's obvious that this is talking about a military overthrow of Moab, which also took place along with Ammon, which we just described, by the Assyrians. But some comments can be made about this crime.

Because he, in verse 1, burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. There's not full agreement, apparently, among commentaries on this, those who have written the notes for the NIV Study Bible field, that this is a reference to taking the bones of the king of Edom out of the grave and burning them in contempt, which was in those days considered to be a really nasty thing to do, because to deprive a person of a decent burial was considered to further deprive him of dignity even after his death. So they think that what has happened here is that at some point, the Moabites took the bones of the king of Edom out of the grave and burned them, showing utter contempt for the Edomite king.

Actually, whether that happened or not, I'm not sure. It hardly seems like the kind of crime that God would judge a nation for, though. I mean, worse crimes can be imagined.

However, there is an instance mentioned in 2 Kings 3, which is probably what is referred to here. And it is a horrible crime that the Moabites did. In 2 Kings 3, we're told there was a battle The Moabites rebelled against Israel.

They had served King Jehoshaphat for a period of time, and they rebelled. I'm sorry, King Jehoram. And Jehoshaphat was involved in this, too.

King Jehoram of Israel went out to fight against the Moabites, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was with him, because the Moabites had rebelled against him. Well, in verse 26, 2 Kings 3, 26 and following, it says, And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too intense for him, he took with him 700 men who drew the sword to break through to the king of Edom. Now, the Edomites were also helping out Jehoram and Jehoshaphat here, so they were confederate with the kings of Israel and Judah on this occasion, the Edomites were.

And the king of Moab broke through to the king of Edom, tried to break through to him, but could not. Then he took his eldest son, who would have reigned in his place, and offered him with a burnt offering on the wall. Now, it's not clear there from 2 Kings 3, 27, whose eldest son this was, but in light of what Amos says, it's probable that the oldest son of the king of Edom was captured in this attempt.

The king of Moab tried to break through and capture the king of Edom. He was unable to do so, but he captured his son. And in order to ward off the army outside, he publicly burned on an altar the son of the king of Edom who was to reign in his place.

Who could, by way of figure of speech, be called the king of Edom himself since he was to be the next king. And that may be what Amos is referring to, this atrocity of the Moabites capturing this prince and burning him as a public spectacle. Amos says they burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.

And my feeling is that that's what Amos is referring to here, as the great offense against

God that will bring this judgment upon Moab. Now, when we get to chapter 2, verse 4, we have a prophecy against Judah, the southern kingdom. Now this is getting a lot closer to home.

All the nations mentioned before have been Gentile enemies of Israel. Now he comes to the Jewish enemies of Israel. Now Judah and Israel were not always enemies, at least not always extremely hostile, but most of the time there was no friendship between them.

But this is getting a little closer to home, a judgment against Judah. Still, the people listening to Amos could say, yeah, well these people are bad Jews, because these are the people of Judah, they really deserve something too. And so he still probably doesn't put their guard up when he begins to speak against Judah, his own nation probably.

He was from Judah. And he says, for three transgressions of Judah and for four, they will not turn away as punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord and have not kept his commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies after which their fathers walked.

But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. We know that that was not fulfilled until 586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the walls of Jerusalem and burned the palaces of Jerusalem. But one thing I'd like you to notice about this, it's very different from the other burdens.

In one significant aspect, the first six burdens against Gentiles, the crimes that are named against them are crimes of inhumanity. In other words, common decency has been violated. None of the heathen nations are said to be judged because they broke God's laws.

They weren't under covenant with God. They didn't have God's love. But they were held accountable for knowing what common decency was.

Because everyone has an inbred conscience of right and wrong. And we can say that even though the Gentiles were not aware of God's laws, they were still held accountable for their inhumanity to their fellow man. They did things that would have gone against the conscience of any decent person.

And so the crimes that have been named so far have simply been crimes of general injustice and inhumanity. But now we get very specific. The people of Judah are culpable for a more particular reason.

They've broken covenant with God. They have broken His laws which were entrusted to them. They've not kept His commandments.

They've despised the laws of the Lord. He doesn't name a specific sin for Judah in this case. It's bad enough just to say they've broken His laws.

Any of His laws. Because they were under covenant to keep His laws. And so we see it's a different kind of offense that Judah is blamed for.

They've broken covenant with God. The other nations had no covenant to break but they just did nasty things. And God would judge them for those nasty things.

But Judah was really culpable because they knew the law of God and didn't keep it. And therefore destruction is pronounced. The last of these burdens which occupies the rest of chapter 2 is against Israel.

He finally comes around to his main point. All the listeners have said, yeah, yeah, yeah, to everything he's said so far. But now he turns on them and says, well, it's exactly the same with you people.

You're no better. So he says in verse 6, that says, The Lord for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor.

They pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go into the same girl to defile my holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God.

Now you might not be able to understand exactly what all of these complaints boil down to, but I'll go through each of them and try to explain what the problem is here. He gave a long list of crimes of the people of Israel. In fact, he gives seven.

Three and four. And here they are. First of all, some of them are parallel to each other.

They sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. This probably refers to the official judgments made in their courts. The poor and the righteous were always vulnerable to unjust judges.

The poor, because they couldn't bribe the judge. The righteous, because the judges always had the wicked on their side. The wicked who were men of no principle who would bribe the judges.

Righteous people wouldn't bribe the judges and the poor couldn't. Therefore, those two classes of people were in trouble. Whenever they had a legal case, whenever someone was exploiting them or taking advantage of robbing them, they really could never get justice from the court.

They were sold down the river by the judge because the judge would take a bribe. Now, he mentions they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals indicates that the judges were quite willing to pervert justice, whether they got silver for it in

terms of the bribe they received, or even if it was something like a pair of sandals. They'd sell their integrity for a very low price.

They had so low a commitment, so little interest in doing what's right, that if anyone offered them anything, even such a minor thing as a pair of sandals, they'd be glad to pervert justice against the poor person. That is to say, they're not perverting justice just because they're tempted by great bribes. They do it for a small bribe.

They just don't care about justice at all. And that's one of the... That's the first thing he says. In verse 7, he says, They pant after the dust of the earth, which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble.

Now, they pant after the dust of the earth, which is on the head of the poor. Why is there reference to dust on the head? Apparently, this means that they're in mourning. People would throw dust on their heads when they're in mourning.

Probably it's a reference to people who've lost their husbands or fathers, the widows and the orphans. And they're still... Even while they're still mourning the death of their wage earner or their family, these people have become particularly vulnerable because they don't have a male-headed household to stand up for them against their oppressors in society. And you know that the prophets often spoke up for the orphans and the widows because they were usually being exploited.

While these people are still in the process of mourning the death of the man of the house, already these people are moving in on their estate, trying to take it from them. And they want everything, even the dust that's on their heads. They're going to leave nothing.

They're going to steal these people clean. They pant after the possessions, even the dust on the head for the mourners. And they don't even wait until the funeral's over.

As soon as the wage earner's gone and the protector of the household, the vultures come in. They start trying to take away everything they have. Remember, Jesus accused the Pharisees of this devouring widows' houses.

Well, it's not an isolated case where a prophet would speak like this. Almost all the prophets complain that once justice has been perverted in the courts, then those who are unprincipled move in and try to take advantage of the poor, the fatherless, the widows, and try to basically get their stuff from them. And that's what was happening here.

They pervert the way of the humble. It's not exactly clear how that is. I mean, that's fairly general, what that means.

When it says, A man and his father go into the same girl, in verse 7, to defile my holy

name, this might refer to the fact that there was temple prostitution in the temples of Baal and of Astarte in the northern kingdom, and that even though the law of Moses forbade that a man and a woman, I'm sorry, that a man and his son marry the same woman, or obviously sleep with the same woman, that that was nonetheless going. This was worse than ordinary prostitution. This was prostitution where a man and his son were sharing the same girl.

I mean, now, prostitution is bad enough, even if the man is a different girl. But this is seen as a total perversion, because first of all, in God's mind, sexual relations are to be confined to the relationship of marriage. And it was very strongly stressed in the law of Moses that a man could not marry his daughter-in-law, that is, his son's wife, and a son could not marry his mother-in-law, or his mother, which would be his father's wife.

So God had expressed a particular forbidding, even though polygamy, and even incest, well, incest was forbidden at that time, not before that, but polygamy seems to have been somewhat tolerated in the law of Moses, and yet, even in that case, it was wrong for a woman to share two men, and especially a man and his son, which just shows that the perversion is passed down from father to son in the same household. It might also refer, not to the temple prostitutes, but even to a household servant girl who is just used as a household prostitute for the men of the house. At any rate, it's a very disgusting thing that it's said to be happening.

Sexual immorality was one of the crimes that God was going to judge them for. He says, They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in flesh. The law of Moses said that if you happen to take the cloak of a poor man as a pledge for a loan, or as collateral for a loan, you have to give it back to him at night, because it's all he has to sleep in.

But here we have them keeping it at night, sleeping on it themselves. They've taken a man's clothes for a pledge, which is the last thing a man would give. He'd have to be very poor and have nothing else to give if he gave his clothes.

And yet, though they've taken the poor man's clothes, they don't give them back at night like God told them to. God commanded this in Exodus 22, 26, and also Deuteronomy 24, verses 12 and 13. He commanded that they not keep the pledge to the poor man in his clothes overnight, and yet it says they do.

They lie down by every altar. That is, they're still playing at religion, but all the while they're laying down on ill-gotten gains. They're breaking God's laws and taking advantage of the poor.

And it says, They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. The wine of the condemned, it's not clear what that means. It might mean that this wine has been purchased by ill-gotten gains, by people that have been condemned wrongly in the courts because they've taken bribes against them or whatever.

Or it might refer to the wine that was set aside for condemned criminals to give them some relief at the time of their execution. You might remember in Proverbs 31, 6, King Lemuel's mother says, Give wine to those who are perishing and strong drink to those who are in a misery. And we know that when Jesus was on the cross, when he said, I thirst, they offered him wine or vinegar, bad wine, to relieve him, which he refused.

But that's mentioned in John 19, 28-29. There may have been certain wine that was set aside to relieve the agony of condemned criminals who were put to death, but these people didn't care to relieve the agony of such people, so they just drank it themselves in the house of their God. The wine of the condemned could refer to that.

At any rate, God goes on in verse 9, Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite and the Canaanites before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks, yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt and led you 40 years through the wilderness to possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazarites.

Is it not so, O you children of Israel, says the Lord? But you gave the Nazarites wine to drink, which of course they were forbidden to drink, the Nazarites, and you commanded the prophets saying, Do not prophesy. Now, in other words, God gave them some righteous people among them to be an influence for righteous prophets. He raised up some of his sons to prophesy to him, some Nazarites to set a standard of separation to God, and all they want to do is pervert these people, to distract them from their divine mission, to tell the Nazarites to compromise themselves by drinking wine, and the prophets to compromise their word by not speaking the word of the Lord.

These people didn't want to hear the word of the Lord, they didn't want the influence of righteousness that God sent them, even though God had done many wonderful things for them, taking them out of Egypt, giving them the land of the Amorites, and even privileging them with words from God, Nazarites, and prophets to be an influence for righteousness among them, but they only wanted to pervert that influence and rid themselves of the conviction that it brought. So they tried to compromise the prophets and the Nazarites, and probably succeeded in most cases. Verse 13, Behold, I am weighed down by you, God is weary of bearing these people, like a cart is weighed down that is full of sheaves.

Therefore, flight shall perish from the swift, the strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself, he shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift at foot shall not deliver himself, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself, the most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day, says the Lord. There will be no escape from God's judgment. He's sick of bearing with them.

He's weighed down like a cart that's overloaded with grain, and therefore he's going to

send a judgment that will not be able to be escaped from. Now we're going to take a break.