

Amos Introduction

Amos is the third prophet in Trey Asar. Amos contains nine perakim.

Overview

Amos' prophecy not only addresses Am Yisrael but also the surrounding nations of Tyre, Edom, Syria, Philistia, Edom, Amon and Moav. The role of the prophet was not only for the Jewish people but for the nations of the world as well. Amos also gives rebuke to the kingdom of Yehudah for not keeping the laws of the Torah and the ten tribes of Yisrael for committing the three most severe sins, being filled with moral corruption and decadence. Amos urged the nation to do teshuva because it's never too late to come close to Hashem, no matter what you may have done in your life.

Last but not least, Amos prophesied about the great and ultimate redemption, about the ingathering of the exiles and (Amos 8:11) *when there will be a hunger in the world, it won't be for bread and it won't be for water. People will be starving and thirsting for the word of God.*

Historical Background

Amos lived approximately 250 years prior to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and approximately 100 years prior to the exile of the ten tribes of Yisrael from Eretz Yisrael, during the reign of Uzziah, king of Yehudah and Yeravam ben Yoash, the king of Yisrael. During this time period both Syria and Assyria were weakening and on the decline. King Yeravam of Yisrael had taken advantage of this opportunity and was able to increase the wealth and commerce of the nation. This was a time of great material success and wealth. The ten tribes of Yisrael had beautiful landscaping with new homes beautifully furnished, summer homes and winter homes, lots of food and fancy wines. In fact, Amos compared the women, who were alcoholics, to fat cows.

While material wealth is a wonderful thing, it needs to be coupled and infused with spiritual success. The ten tribes at that time had "forgotten" about God and trusted in their own abilities. The nation had become corrupt. There was no justice in the land. The judges had been blinded by bribes. The poor had become poorer, exploited, and even sold into slavery at times.

Pessachim 87B brings that Amos was a contemporary of Hoshea, who was his rebbe, Yeshaya and Micha. **Alshich Hakadosh** brings that Amos was also Yeshaya Hanavi's rebbe.

Amos was ultimately killed by Uzziah, king of Yehudah.

Amos

Amos' father is not mentioned in the writing of Amos' name.

Vayikra Rabba 6:20 brings a disagreement on whether or not a prophet whose father's name is not mentioned was either the son of a prophet or not. **R' Yochanan** held that when a prophet's father's name is mentioned, it means that he was the son of a prophet. If his father's name is not mentioned then he was not the son of a prophet. However, the Chachamim disagreed. The fact that the father's name is not mentioned does not mean that the father was not a prophet, and Amos' father was, in fact, a prophet.

The Chachamim learn this from Amos himself. In Amos 7:14, Amos says about himself *"I am not a prophet nor am I the son of a prophet."* The Chachamim explain that we know for a fact that Amos was a prophet, so therefore, if Amos wasn't telling the truth about himself, it must be that he also wasn't telling the truth about his father. Therefore, we can conclude that Amos was the son of a prophet. And just because a navi was written about, without his father's name appended to his, doesn't mean that he wasn't the son of a prophet.

Chazal try to positively identify what tribe Amos was from by his home town: Amos came from the town of Tekoah. However, the exact location of Tekoah is unclear. **Divrei Hayomim Beis 11:5,6** records the town of Tekoah in the territory of Yehudah, which would mean that Amos came from the tribe of Yehudah. However, the gemarah in **Menachos 85B** and the **Radak** here in Amos explain that the town of Tekoah was in the Galil, which indicates that Amos is from the tribe of Asher. [The gemarah learns this from the story in Shmuel Beis, perek 14, when Yoav sent the wise Aishes Tekoah to Dovid Hamelech to rebuke him.

Ramad Walli and the **Alshich Hakodesh** both note that the fact that Amos came from Tekoah indicates his great wisdom and spiritual stature, as the Aishes Tekoah, too, had come from there.

Amos, a Simple Prophet.

Passuk aleph in Amos states that Amos was a shepherd.

The Rambam in **Guide to the Perplexed, 32:2** seems to say that prophecy can only come upon a person who is naturally gifted or endowed with strong physical, emotional, and mental capabilities to receive and interpret prophecy, or to those who have a refined character through Torah study and working on their character.

Alternatively, there's an amazing **Abarbanel** that goes to town on the Rambam, and uses Amos as proof against the Rambam. Passuk aleph describes Amos as a simple herdsman whom Hashem had chosen to become a prophet. It was not because of Amos' mental prowess or physical strength that he was chosen, but because Hashem chooses whomever He sees fit to become a prophet. The Abarbanel then

accuses the Rambam of “falling prey” to the philosophers and the false notion that prophecy is predominantly a physical phenomenon that occurs after one perfects his body and soul.

However, the **Malbim** explains how ultimately both opinions are correct. What the Rambam held regarding one working towards prophecy is true for a prophet who receives prophecy only relevant to his own life, and not to the rest of the world. Because prophecy is an open miracle, God wouldn't bestow prophecy on a simple, regular person for no reason. On the other hand, what the Abarbanel held is also true. When Hashem has a specific reason to grant a simple, regular person prophecy for the need of the generation or a future generation, then Hashem gives that man prophecy. God can do whatever He pleases, as he did in the case of Amos.

Alshich Hakodesh on pasuk aleph explains: Amos was a simple shepherd who reached his lofty levels of prophecy through doing hisbodedus in the fields. So, too, each and every single one of us can reach amazing levels of spirituality by increasing our personal prayers to Hashem, using our own words to talk to God about anything in one's life.

Nedarim 38A: Amos was extremely wealthy from his cattle.

The Name Amos

Vaykira Rabba 10:2 brings that Amos was called Amos, which means to stutter, because Amos had a stutter. Perhaps he can be compared to Moshe Rabbeinu who also had a speech impediment because he was so elevated. It's as if he wasn't part of this world and therefore found it difficult to speak.

Ramad Walli explains that the name Amos comes from the word masa or amsa, meaning burden. Amos had taken on the burden of bringing the world to a greater tikun by bringing back the members of Yisrael to do teshuva from ra l'tov, from good to bad.

As we learn Amos, let us merit the fulfillment of the great words of Amos with the completion of the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael, with the continuation of the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael, as Amos predicted over 2,000 years ago, as it says in Amos 9:14: "They will rebuild the destroyed cities and inhabit them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine. I will settle them in their land. They will never again be uprooted from the land I have given them", says God your Lord.

