

# Amos and the Prophets

## Week One: *Dabar Adonai*

### What is a Prophet?

- No single definition: prophets might tell riddles (2 Samuel 12), deliver messages (Judges 6:8), find lost donkeys (1 Samuel 9), see visions (Numbers 12:6), performer street theater (Isaiah 20), or harass street performers (Jeremiah 20). The common thread is a claim of divine authority.
- Deuteronomy warns Israel always to compare the words of one claiming to speak for God to the content of the Torah of God (Deuteronomy 13). False prophets are always a possibility.
- The phrase *dabar adonai* has a range of connotations (you saw this one coming, didn't you?) from “the word of YHWH” to “YHWH's business” to “the things of YHWH.”
- Each prophet communicates the *dabar adonai* in manners fitting to his background and mission.

### Amos 1:1: Introduction to the Book

- Note that the *dabar* here is not heard but seen and that Amos is not a professional prophet.

### Amos 1:2-8: Oracles Against Neighboring Kingdoms

- Verse two is a general introduction to the body of chapters one and two—YHWH is MAD.
- What are the crimes of Damascus and the subsequent punishments? Why three and four crimes?
- Against which nations is Amos prophesying in this passage? Why doesn't he leave this to their gods?

### Amos 1:9-15: Oracles Against Bigger Kingdoms

- What patterns are you noticing in these oracles?
- Who seems to be the big dog among these kingdoms?
- What will God not do for three and for four in each sequence? (translation check)

### Amos 2:1-5: Oracles Against Moab and Judah (the Southern Kingdom)

- Remember that the twelve tribes comprise two rival kingdoms during Amos's career.
- What does 2:1 say about the status of kingdoms in God's eyes?
- What do verses 4 and 5 say about Judah's status among the nations?
- What does this turn in the oracle series say about the history of Jerusalem?

### Amos 2:6-11: An Oracle Against Israel (the Northern Kingdom)

- Verses 6-8 have to do with merciless lending practices that were common in the ancient world. What does YHWH have to say about people who practice such loans?
- When you think of Israel or Judah as earning divine wrath, what crimes do you generally imagine? Are any of those missing here? Are any of the crimes Amos lists not on your first-impression list?
- What is the force of verses 9-11? For what purpose does Amos/God rehearse these parts of Israel's history here? In what ways might they connect to the crimes of Israel?

### Amos 2:12-16: The Hopeless Future of the Unfaithful

- What sorts of offenses has Israel committed in verse 12? How do they relate to those in verses 6-8? What sorts of differences are there?
- What kinds of disaster is Amos prophesying in verses 14-16?

### Implications

- No nation, not even the descendants of Abraham, are exempt from divine calls for justice.
- No nation, even those who do not recognize YHWH as God, get away with brutality and treachery.
- YHWH cares about all facets of human life, from the ritual to the economic to the political, and no enormity escapes the eyes of YHWH.