

# Preaching of Prophets I

The *Nevi'im*, especially the Latter Prophets; Book of the Twelve—Assyrian Period; Amos, the shepherd from Tekoa; Amos' book: prophecies, sermons to Israel, and visions.

Amos 1–9.

## The *Nevi'im*, especially the Latter Prophets

- One of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*)
  - Remember the other sections are Law (*Torah*) and Writings (*Ketuvim*)
- ***Nevi'im*** – Technically “the prophets”
  - **Former Prophets**: mostly historical books, although prophets are major characters—the “Deuteronomistic History,” which includes Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings
  - **Latter Prophets**: most of the “literary” prophetic books
    - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel,
    - The Book of Twelve (more below): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
      - Notice that Jonah made the prophetic books, unlike Daniel, which is in the *Ketuvim*
  - The title “Latter Prophets” is misleading—they appear later in the *Nevi'im* section, but **most of them are contemporaneous with the narrative of Kings**

## What is meant by biblical “prophecy?”

- Not exclusively the sense of “**predicting the future**”
- Not yet—or not clearly—the New Testament and Book of Mormon sense of “**the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus**” (see Revelation 19:10)
- Rather, in the Hebrew Bible prophecy is **the message declared by a recognized (we would say authorized) prophet**—that is, **divinely inspired prediction, instruction, or exhortation**
  - Biblical prophets **analyzed political, social, and religious policies and practices in light of YHWH’s demands of loyalty, faith in him, and social justice** (see Bandstra, 210)
- A Prophet is a **Messenger (Hebrew malak) and a Mediator**
  - On mediator, see Abraham intervening for the righteous in Sodom, Moses for the children of Israel after the Golden Calf incident
  - **In these roles, Christians see a prophet as a type of Christ**
- A prophet was a **navi’**, from the Hebrew root “to call” → a prophet both “**was called**” and he “**called out**”
  - The Greek term *prophētēs* can mean both “speak before” and “speak in behalf of”
  - Often characterized by the expression, “**Thus says YHWH**”

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## Prophetic Books

- As works of literature, prophetic books are aggregate, edited books
  - Contain **prophetic oracles or pronouncements**, usually **poetic** that probably go back to the original prophet
  - **Other poetic units, including songs, prayers, laments**
  - **Autobiographical sketches** in which the prophets tell about themselves and especially about their calls
    - These “**call stories**” are an important subgenre (cf. Isaiah 6, 1 Nephi 1)
  - Are often **collected or put in a narrative framework** by the prophet himself, his disciples, or later editors
    - Note third-person narratives about the prophets
- **Parallels with other biblical works**
  - Many, especially Jeremiah, reflect the theological perspective of DH
  - Some, especially Hosea from the north, have similarities to the so-called “Elohists” school of parts of the *Torah*
  - Ezekiel is very much in the priestly tradition
- **Controlling themes**
  - God in history, covenant traditions (Mosaic and Davidic), faith and worship, prophetic callings, future

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## Book of the Twelve—Assyrian Period

- Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi have been grouped together since the earliest biblical collections
  - Augustine first called them “the minor prophets,” but this has *more to do with length than importance or content*
- Datings of some of the prophetic books differ, but they can be placed in period
  - **Assyrian** (c. 850–625, 607 Nineveh falls)
    - To or in the north: Amos, Hosea
    - In the south: Micah, Isaiah
  - **Babylonian** (c. 625–538 B.C.)
    - Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Obadiah, [Second Isaiah]
  - **Persian** (538–330 B.C.)
    - [Third Isaiah], Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

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## Amos

- The oldest Hebrew prophet with a book named after him (unless Jonah was slightly older)
  - prophesied in the days of **Jeroboam II of Israel**, while **Uzziah was king of Judah**—both were outwardly prosperous in the eighth century (700's B.C.)
  - An older contemporary of **Hosea** and **Isaiah**
- **‘Āmōs** means “burden bearer”
  - A prophetic oracle against a people or place is often called “a burden”
- From Tekoa in Judah, just south of Bethlehem, but **called to preach in Israel**
- **A shepherd and a tender of sycamore fig trees**



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# Amos' Book

- **Amos' words to eighth century Israel**
- Later re-shaping, possibly editions, by those acting in the tradition of Amos
  - Note the third-person narratives *about* Amos rather than *by* him
- Themes
  - an angry YHWH who roars *from Jerusalem* and speaks *against the northern kingdom*
  - Demands **social justice** in a time of unprecedented prosperity but also economic inequality in Israel
- Structure
  - **The Author and Theme of the Book (1:1–2)**
  - **The Prophecies of Amos against the Nations (1:3–2:16)**
  - **Sermons of Amos against Israel (3:1–6:14)**
  - **Six Visions of Amos (7:1–9:15)**

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## Prophecies of Amos against the Nations (1:3–2:16)

- **Puts YHWH and his prophet on a super-national level**, involving Judah and Israel's neighbors as well as the "chosen peoples" (cf. Elijah, Elisha, Jonah)
- **In a rhetorical order that would have taken Judah and Israel by surprise**
  - Concerning Damascus (1:3–5)
  - Concerning Philistia (1:6–8)
  - Concerning Tyre (1:9–10)
  - Concerning Edom (1:11–12)
  - Concerning Ammon (1:13–15)
  - Concerning Moab (2:1–3)
  - **Concerning Judah (2:4–5)**
  - **Concerning Israel (2:6–16)**
- **"For three transgressions and for four . . ."**
  - Indefinite but finally a decisive number of transgressions forces the Lord to act
  - Heathen nations break international rules of conduct, **but Judah and Israel break the standards of the Lord!**

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## Sermons of Amos against Israel (3:1–6:14)

- **The Doom of Israel (3:1–15)**
  - Note the list of rhetorical questions demonstrating that every effect has a cause (3:3–6, 8)
  - Important for LDS exegesis: **“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”** (3:7)
  - The rich store “violence and robbery” in their winter and summer palaces (3:10, 15)
- **The Depravity of Israel (4:1–13)**
  - **“kine of Bashan”** the Lord rebukes the rich, well-fed women of Samaria (4:1–3)
  - Natural disasters have not brought Israel to repentance, so they will meet the Lord in judgment
  - Note hymn fragment praising YHWH (5:13)
- **A Dirge over Israel (5:1–6:14)**
  - The ruin of Israel in coming judgment (5:1–17)
    - **Ethical admonition in 5:14–15**
  - The rebuke of religious people (5:18–27)
    - misunderstanding **“the Day of the Lord”** (5:18–20)
    - **conduct more important than ritual** (5:21–27)
  - The reprimand of the entire nation (6:1–14)

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## Six Visions of Amos (7:1–9:15)

- **1. A Vision of Devouring Locusts (7:1–3)**
- **2. A Vision of Fire (7:4–6)**
- **3. A Vision of a Plumb Line (7:7–9)**
- An Historical Interlude: **Opposition from Amaziah, the Priest of Bethel (7:10–17)**
  - Note “Amos’ call” in 7:15
- **4. A Vision of a Basket of Summer Fruit (8:1–14)**
  - Involves a pun on *gayitz* (summer fruit) and *qetz* (the end)
  - A famine of hearing the word of the Lord (8:11–12)
- **5. A Vision of the Lord Judging (9:1–10)**
  - Note his care for other nations besides Israel in 9:7
- **6. A Vision of Future Blessing: Kingdom of David Restored (9:11–15)**
  - Book ends on a good note!

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