

AMOS 1:1 – 2

1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2

And he said:

“The Lord roars from Zion
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
and the top of Carmel withers.”

Introduction

The Lord roars!

This intro gives many important details about this prophesy:
 * The prophet is Amos (he is not a professional prophet) and he is from Judah
 * These are the things he saw concerning Israel.
 * It took place during the reign of king Uzziah and Jeroboam.

Syn. Parallelism:
 The Lord roars/
 makes voice known from his holy city

The Lord roars from Mount Zion (in Judah) and the top of Mount Carmel (in Israel) withers!

Syn. Parallelism/Merism:
 From the pastures to the hill tops (all nature) there is mourning and withering

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NOTES:

1:1 – 2

Amos was from **Tekoa**, a small farming village about 10 miles south of Jerusalem and 5 miles south of Bethlehem, within the tribal territory of Judah. The location in the Judean hill country, on the edge of the wilderness, made it difficult for farming. Tekoa was also a strategic military outpost due to its high elevation and proximity to the wilderness. It is mentioned in 2 Samuel 14:2, where Joab sends a wise woman from Tekoa, and in 2 Chronicles 20:20. Despite being from Judah, Amos was sent to prophesy primarily to Israel, making him a southern outsider addressing a northern audience.

Amos tells us that his prophetic ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. **Uzziah** (or Azariah) reigned from 791–740 BC for 52 years (including a co-regency with his father Amaziah until around 767 BC). He was a strong military leader who won battles against surrounding nations and was also skilled in organization and administration, strengthening Judah’s economy. However, his arrogance led to God’s judgment—he attempted to burn incense in the temple (a priestly duty) and was struck with leprosy as a punishment (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26). **Jeroboam II** reigned in Israel from 793–753 BC (his sole reign likely beginning around 782 BC). He was a military leader who expanded Israel’s borders and brought economic prosperity through war tributes and trade routes. However, he continued in idolatry and the sins of Jeroboam I, allowing

corruption and injustice to flourish (2 Kings 14:23-29). The reigns of these two kings were marked by military success and economic prosperity but also moral and spiritual decline.

Taking the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II into account, along with the mention of the *earthquake*, Amos' ministry is usually dated to the mid-eighth century BC, often around 760–762 BC. The earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 was a major event that was still remembered generations later, as reflected in Zechariah 14:5. Many scholars place the date of this earthquake around 760 BC.

Lions were among the most feared predators in the biblical world and posed a real threat to travelers in ancient Israel. Their roars could be heard from miles away and often signaled an imminent attack. In Genesis 49:9, the lion is used as a symbol of power and authority. Other biblical texts, such as Joel 3:16, Hosea 11:10, and Jeremiah 25:30, also reference lions in connection with divine communication. In the Ancient Near East, lions were also associated with kingship and power, making the image even more striking.

Mount Carmel, located on the northern coast of Israel, was known for its fertile land, vineyards, olive groves, and pasturelands. Because of its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea, it received plentiful rainfall and was considered one of the most prosperous regions of Israel. The mention of Carmel withering is significant because it contrasts one of Israel's most fertile lands with the coming destruction—if even Carmel will wither, no place will be safe.

EXPLANATION:

¶1: INTRODUCTION: THE LORD ROARS (1:1 – 2)

The Prophet and His Calling

These first verses provide the necessary background and set the theme for the book. Amos stands at a pivotal moment in biblical history as one of the earliest prophets whose message was preserved in written form. His book marks the beginning of a prophetic tradition that would profoundly shape Israel's understanding of God's will and character. Unlike other Ancient Near Eastern nations, which often recorded royal decrees or temple hymns, Israel's prophetic books uniquely preserve God's direct word to His people, delivered through chosen messengers.

The opening verse introduces Amos and his role in this prophetic work. The book consists of the words of Amos, a collection of his prophetic messages, which may have been written down by Amos himself or preserved by his disciples. Though these are his words, they originate from what he saw—a divine revelation, not personal opinions or reflections. Amos does not speak from his own initiative but as one compelled by the vision of God. The structure of the book suggests that his prophetic ministry began with visions (which will become prominent in the second half of the book) and was then accompanied by his public preaching. This reflects the broader pattern of biblical revelation—God speaks, His prophets respond, and their words are recorded as Scripture so that future generations might hear and obey.

We know little about Amos outside this book. He was from Tekoa, a small town in Judah, located south of Jerusalem. He describes himself as a sheep-farmer—a term that suggests he was not merely a shepherd but possibly a breeder of sheep or an overseer of shepherds. His background implies that he was not a religious leader or a professional prophet but rather a man of the land, called unexpectedly to a divine mission. This calling reinforces a biblical theme: God often chooses ordinary people for extraordinary purposes, ensuring that the authority of their message is clearly from Him, not from human credentials.

Historical Setting and Authority of the Message

Though Amos was from Judah, his primary audience was the Northern Kingdom of Israel. His ministry occurred during the reigns of King Jeroboam II (Israel) and Uzziah (Judah). This places his preaching a few years before 760 BC, as he tells us it was spoken two years before the earthquake—a major seismic event estimated to have occurred around 760 BC. This earthquake was so significant

that it was still referenced two centuries later in Zechariah 14:5. The mention of the earthquake does more than help date Amos's ministry. It also adds weight to his message. In light of Deuteronomy 18, a prophet whose words prove true must be taken seriously. Amos may have come from an ordinary background, but he was no false alarm. His warnings were not empty threats, and Israel must listen carefully to what he says.

The Lord Roars: A Warning of Coming Judgment

The second verse functions as a thematic introduction to the book, summarizing the core message of Amos. Several of the images in these verses will return throughout the book: in chapter 3, God roars like a lion, in chapter 4, the land withers, and in chapters 5 and 8, mourning becomes a key theme. These opening lines foreshadow the coming judgment and the urgency of the prophet's message.

Yahweh, the great warrior, comes from His residence in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is where He has set His name and the place where He has authorized His people to worship Him. Unlike the sanctuaries in Israel, which had become corrupt, Yahweh's dwelling remains the true place of worship. His coming from Zion is significant—it signals that He is not fighting on behalf of His people but against them. This immediately raises a key question: What has provoked Yahweh's anger? The rest of the book will answer this.

The passage begins with Yahweh's name, signaling that this book is fundamentally about God—His message, His character, and His actions. The first description of Yahweh is that He roars from Zion. The lion, the largest predator in the biblical world, was a real danger to travelers and shepherds in ancient Israel. The roar of a lion was a signal of imminent attack, a warning that the lion was about to strike. This image of God as a roaring lion is found elsewhere in Scripture, including Joel 3:16, Hosea 11:10, and Jeremiah 25:30. In these passages, God's roar signifies His coming judgment. For Amos, this signals that God is no longer merely calling to His people—He is now roaring in warning, about to act.

Alongside the image of the lion, Yahweh's voice is also described in terms of a powerful storm. In biblical tradition, storms often accompany divine revelation—God revealed Himself to Israel through a storm at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), and in Psalm 29, His voice is compared to thunder that shakes the earth. Storms also symbolize God's power over chaos, as seen in Job 38, where God speaks from the whirlwind. Here in Amos, God's storm does not bring blessing but destruction—the land withers before Him.

The impact of Yahweh's coming is devastating. The pastures of the shepherds dry up, and Mount Carmel withers. The pastures represent the agricultural livelihood of the people, which will suffer under divine judgment. This image would have been especially vivid for Amos, a shepherd himself. Mount Carmel, one of the most fertile regions in Israel, was known for its vineyards, olive groves, and rich pastures. Its name means "vineyard of God," and its flourishing land symbolized Israel's prosperity. The fact that even Carmel will wither is a powerful declaration—if the most fertile land in the nation cannot withstand God's judgment, then nothing can.

This verse also highlights a crucial biblical truth: the wickedness of the people does not only affect them but also the land itself. In biblical theology, sin is not merely an individual or national problem—it is a cosmic disorder that disrupts creation itself. The curses in Deuteronomy 28 warned that covenant unfaithfulness would result in drought, famine, and barrenness. Similarly, Isaiah 24:4-6 speaks of the earth mourning and withering because of humanity's rebellion against God. The land suffers when the people sin, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity and creation. Amos' message makes it clear: when injustice and idolatry abound, all creation groans under the weight of judgment.

APPLICATION: DISCIPLESHIP AND SERVICE

God calls ordinary people to carry out His extraordinary purposes. Amos was not a professional prophet or a religious leader—he was a shepherd, likely well-respected in his community but not

someone the world would have expected God to use. Yet, God's call is not based on human qualifications but on His own purposes. This should encourage us—if God calls us to something, He will equip us. But it also challenges us to be open to hearing God's truth from unexpected sources. The people of Israel may have dismissed Amos because of his background, but God had chosen him to bring His word.

- How is God calling you to serve Him, even in ways you may not feel qualified for? What would it look like to trust Him in obedience?
- Are you open to hearing God's truth from unexpected people? Are there voices you may be ignoring because they challenge you?

God is not silent or distant; He enters into history and speaks to His people. Amos received his message in a real time and place—during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, just before a great earthquake. This reminds us that God continues to reveal Himself—through His Word, His Spirit, and through those He sends to speak on His behalf. The question is not whether God is speaking but whether we are listening.

- In what ways can you be more attentive to God's voice today? How can you cultivate a heart that is ready to listen and respond?

The roar of the lion in Amos' vision is a warning that God's judgment is near. His words will not fail—what He speaks will come to pass. The people of Israel lived in prosperity, but their security was false; their land and livelihood would soon wither under God's judgment. This passage reminds us that God's word is not to be taken lightly—His promises and His warnings alike are certain.

- How does knowing that God's word is always fulfilled—His promises and His warnings—shape your faith? How does it challenge you to take His warnings seriously?

The withering land in Amos' vision highlights a sobering reality: sin affects not just individuals but the entire world around us. The people's rebellion did not only bring judgment upon themselves—it impacted the land, the pastures, and even Mount Carmel, one of the most fertile places in Israel. In the biblical story, human sin brings disorder and suffering, while faithfulness to God brings life and flourishing.

- How do your actions—both individually and collectively—impact the world around you? How can you live in a way that reflects God's justice, righteousness, and care for His creation?