

Book of Amos

Chapter 1:1-2:3

Chapter 1:1-15

*The words of Amos, who was among the **shepherders** from **Tekoa**, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of **Uzziah king of Judah**, and in the days of **Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.***

Shepherders > (Strong's) a spotter (of sheep or cattle), i.e. the owner or tender (who thus marks them)

J. Vernon McGee > An unusual word is used here which means that he was the herdsman of a peculiar breed of desert sheep. They were a scrub stock, but they grew long wool because of the cold in the wintertime.

Tekoa > (J. Vernon McGee) Tekoa is located on a hilly ridge which overlooks a frightful desert wilderness that continues down to the very edge of the Dead Sea. Wild animals howl by night, and by day the only thing you can see are spots here and there which indicate the remains of the camps of the Bedouins. There is nothing but the blackened ground left by these nomads and vagabonds of the desert who moved through that area. Dr. Adam Smith said, "The men of Tekoa look out upon a desolate and haggard world." Today the nation Israel has constructed a modern highway along the Dead Sea that leads to Masada. The highway comes back through Arad and up through Hebron and Bethlehem, but it never gets near Tekoa because Tekoa is over in that wilderness. I'm sure most of you have never heard of it for, even in its heyday, Tekoa was never more than a wide place in the road. It was a whistle-stop, a jumping-off place. The name Tekoa means "a camping ground." It was really only a country crossroads out on the frontier.

Uzziah ... Jeroboam > See the "Kings" Poster

Two years before the earthquake > (Barnes) This earthquake must plainly have been one of the greatest, since it was vividly in people's memories in the time of Zechariah, and Amos speaks of it as "the earthquake." The earthquakes of the east, like that of Lisbon, destroy whole cities. In one, a little before the birth of our Lord, "some ten thousand were buried under the ruined houses." This terrific earthquake (for as such Zechariah describes it) was one of the preludes of that displeasure of God, which Amos foretold.

Please see the Zechariah passage on the next page ... and the attachment at the end of this lesson

Zechariah 14:5 > ⁵ *You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!*

Who was Amos? > Let's take a look at **Amos 7:10-17**

Grower > (Strong's) > to pinch sycamore figs (a process necessary to ripen them)

Bible.org > The work of Amos in connection with the fig trees was to prick the figs, "a fruit that must be punctured or slit shortly before ripening to be edible."

² *He said, "The LORD roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; and the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up."*

Barnes > Rising 1,200 feet above the sea, it stands out "like some guardian of its native strand;" yet withal, it was rich with every variety of beauty, flower, fruit, and tree. It is almost always called "the Carmel," "the rich garden-ground." From its neighborhood to the sea, heavy dews nightly supply it with an ever-renewed freshness, so that in mid-summer it is green and flowery. Travelers describe it, as "quite green, its top covered with firs and oaks, lower down with olives and laurels, and everywhere excellently watered."

³ *Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron. ⁴ "So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael and it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad. ⁵ "I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden; so the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir," Says the LORD.*

For three transgressions ... > (Weirsbe) > A Jewish idiom that means "an indefinite number that has finally come to an end"

Clarke > These expressions of three and four, so often repeated in this chapter, mean repetition, abundance, and any thing that goes towards excess. Very, very exceedingly; and so it was used among the ancient Greek and Latin poets.

Threshed > (Bible.org) > This could even refer to actual methods of torture where a device like a sledge with iron prongs or knives was used on prisoners, or as Ryrie says in his footnote--the huge sledges were literally dragged over the enemies to crush them.

Hazael ... Ben-Hadad > We first see Hazael in *I Kings 19:15*. The prophecy about him is found in *II Kings 8:7-13*. That prophecy is fulfilled in *II Kings 13*. Amos' prophecy is from the Lord and his anger at the atrocities performed by Hazael



⁶ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of **Gaza** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they deported an entire population to deliver it up to **Edom**.
⁷ "So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza and it will consume her citadels. ⁸ "I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him who holds the scepter, from **Ashkelon**; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish," says the Lord GOD.

⁹ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of **Tyre** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they delivered up an entire population to **Edom** and did not remember the covenant of **brotherhood**. ¹⁰ "So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels."

Brotherhood > Just a few of the treaties between Tyre and Israel are recorded in the following passages > *II Samuel 5:11, 12; I Kings 5:1, 7-11*



¹¹ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever. ¹² "So I will send fire upon Teman and it will consume the citadels of Bozrah."

¹³ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of the sons of **Ammon** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders. ¹⁴ "So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume her citadels amid war cries on the day of battle, and a storm on the day of tempest. ¹⁵ "Their king will go into exile, He and his princes together," says the LORD.

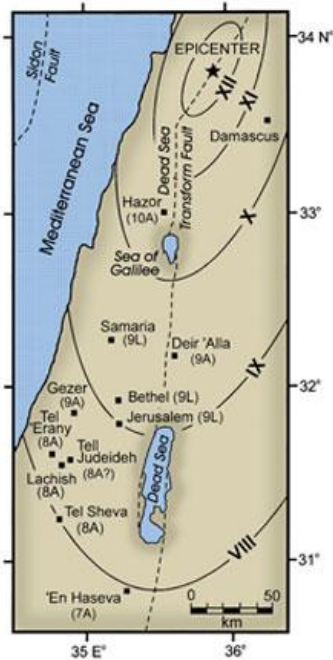
Chapter 2:1-3

¹ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of **Moab** and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. ² "So I will send fire upon Moab And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; and Moab will die amid tumult, With war cries and the sound of a trumpet. ³ "I will also cut off the judge from her midst and slay all her princes with him," says the LORD.

BY STEVEN A. AUSTIN, PH.D. *
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 01, 2010

An Ancient Earthquake

The Kings of Israel and Judah ruled during the period of time designated as the Iron Age by archaeologists. Widely separated archaeological excavations in the countries of Israel and Jordan contain late Iron Age (Iron IIb) architecture bearing damage from a great earthquake. Masonry walls best display the earthquake's effects, especially those with broken ashlar or



Map showing the locations of damaged cities and the earthquake's probable epicenter.

displaced rows of stones, walls that are still standing but are leaning or bowed, and collapsed walls with large sections still lying course-on-course.

Earthquake evidence is seen prominently at Hazor, Israel's largest ancient city. In excavations beginning in 1955 by archaeologist Yigael Yadin, twenty-two successive cities were discovered to have been built on top of each other. Excavations in Hazor's Stratum VI revealed tilted walls, inclined pillars, and collapsed houses. In the Iron Age building called "Ya'el's House" within Stratum VI, objects of daily use were found beneath the fallen ceiling. General southward collapse within Stratum VI argues that the earthquake waves were propagated from the north. After more than 50 years of excavations at Hazor, earthquake damage continues to be revealed in even some of the strongest architecture.

The city of Gezer was also severely shaken. The outer wall of the city shows hewn stones weighing tons that have been cracked and displaced several inches off their foundation. The lower part of the wall was displaced outward (away from the city), whereas the upper part of the wall fell inward (toward the city) still lying course-on-course. This indicates that the wall collapsed suddenly.

A Magnitude 8 Event

Earthquake debris at six sites (Hazor, Deir 'Alla, Gezer, Lachish, Tell Judeideh, and 'En Haseva) is tightly confined stratigraphically to the middle of the eighth century B.C., with dating errors of ~30 years. So, the evidence points to a single large regional earthquake that occurred about 750 B.C. The accompanying map displays the site intensity (Modified Mercalli Intensity from archaeology or literature) and lines of equal intensity of shaking (isoseismals).

The epicenter was clearly north of present-day Israel, as indicated by the southward decrease in degree of damage at archaeological sites in Israel and Jordan. The epicenter was likely in Lebanon on the plate boundary called the Dead Sea transform fault. A large area of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah was shaken to inflict "general damage" to well-built structures. The distance from the epicenter (north of Israel) to the region of "significant

damage" to well-built structures was at least 175 kilometers, but could have been as much as 300 kilometers.

Using the pattern and the intensity of damage through the region of the earthquake, the earthquake's magnitude can be estimated. Through a process known as scaling, the damage areas of smaller historic earthquakes of known magnitude are used to scale upward to estimate the area of damage and magnitude of the regional earthquake. Based on this method, the earthquake in question was at least magnitude 7.8, but more likely was 8.2. This magnitude 8 event of 750 B.C. appears to be the largest yet documented on the Dead Sea transform fault zone during the last four millennia. The Dead Sea transform fault likely ruptured along more than 400 kilometers as the ground shook violently for over 90 seconds! The urban panic created by this earthquake would have been legendary.

Scriptural References

In the mid-eighth century B.C., a shepherd-farmer named Amos of Tekoa delivered an extraordinary speech at the Temple of the Golden Calf in the city of Bethel in the northern kingdom of Israel just "two years before the earthquake". Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II was king of Israel. Amos spoke of the land being shaken (8:8), houses being smashed (6:11), altars being cracked (3:14), and even the Temple at Bethel being struck and collapsing (9:1). The prophet's repeated contemporary references to the earthquake's effects is why it bears his name.

Amos' Earthquake impacted Hebrew literature immensely. After the gigantic earthquake, no Hebrew prophet could predict a divine visitation in judgment without alluding to an earthquake. Just a few years after the earthquake, Isaiah wrote about the "Day of the Lord" when everything lofty and exalted will be abased at the time when the Lord "arise to shake terribly the earth" (Isaiah 2:19, 21). Then, Isaiah saw the Lord in a temple shaken by an earthquake (Isaiah 6:4).

Joel repeats the motto of Amos: "The Lord also will roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem," and adds the seismic theophany imagery "the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3:16; compare Amos 1:2). After describing a future earthquake and panic during the "Day of the Lord" at Messiah's coming to the Mount of Olives, Zechariah says, "Yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah" (Zechariah 14:5). The panic caused by Amos' Earthquake must have been the topic of legend in Jerusalem, because Zechariah asked his readers to recall that terrifying event 230 years later.

The author of Hebrews asks us to keep in mind the coming cosmic shakedown that will finally usher in the future "kingdom which cannot be moved" (Hebrews 12:28). In light of God's marvelous promises to those who believe, "let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."