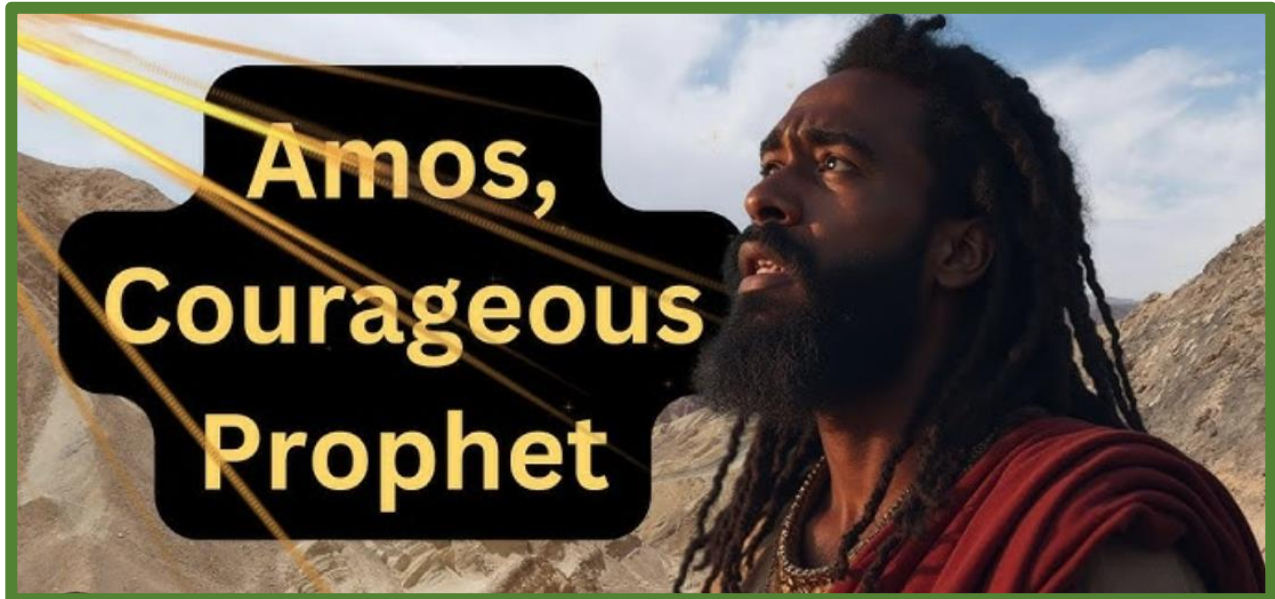


28 June 2026

## Amos, Courageous Prophet

**Lesson Text:** Amos 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15



**Key Text:** *And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, 'Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.—(Amos 7:15NIV)*

### Lesson Aims

**After participating in this lesson, we will be able to:**

1. Summarize the message Amos brought to Israel.
2. Compare the call and ministry of Amos to other prophets of Israel and Judah.
3. Propose a way to strengthen courage for giving witness to God's justice.

## Lesson Text

### Amos 1:1; 2:6-16; 3:7-8; 7:10-15

1 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash[a] was king of Israel.

#### 2:11-12

**11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?” saith the Lord.**

12 “But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, ‘Prophesy not.’

**13 “Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.**

14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself.

**15 Neither shall he stand that handled the bow, and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rides the horse deliver himself.**

16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,” saith the Lord.

#### 3:7-8

**7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, unless He revealed His secret unto His servants the prophets.**

8 The lion hath roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken! Who can but prophesy?

#### 7:10-15

**10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.**

11 For thus Amos saith, ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.’”

**12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, “O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there.**

**13** But prophesy not again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the king's court."

**14** Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

**15** And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, 'Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.'

### **Introduction**

A church member loved and hated building block towers with the kids. It was fun to see how tall they could build the towers, but it could be frustrating when their advice was ignored. The member would often suggest, "Let's make sure we build a big base." However, their building buddies were more interested in reaching the sky as quickly as possible. They are thinking about stability. Their co-architects were more interested in originality. The result was always the same; the tower would come crashing down to shouts of glee. Maybe the point for the kids was to see it fall more than to build it tall, after all?

It fascinates that while kids love imitating adults, they also love doing things their own way. The kids in the nursery did not want building advice; they wanted to take their own approach. Adults can easily adopt a similar mindset regarding various matters. We often assume that we are in the right and feel we don't need anyone else's input, so we ignore the voices and words of those who can offer guidance. The stakes are low when building block towers for children, but the stakes are much higher in real life. Whose words will we heed?

### **Lesson Context**

The book of Amos is one of 12 entries in the section of the Bible known as the Minor Prophets. These books are not "minor" in message; they are "minor" only in length when compared with the "major" (more chapters) prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Amos preached in the northern kingdom of Israel in about 755 BC. He ministered during a period of economic prosperity (3:15; 6:4–6). The national borders had been extended significantly through military campaigns (2 Kings 14:23–28). All this resulted in excessive pride and injustice among the people (Amos 6:8, 12–13).

Despite material wealth, the kingdom was in spiritual decline. The people practiced idolatrous worship at national shrines in the cities of Dan, Bethel, and Gilgal (Amos 4:4; 5:5, 26; 8:14; compare 1 Kings 12:28–30). The people silenced voices that challenged their practices (Amos 2:11). Again, the question is: Whose words will be heeded?

## Who

Amos identifies himself as being one of the shepherds of Tekoa. This statement raises two interesting points. Tekoa is a small town in the southern kingdom of Judah, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. However, Amos primarily preaches in the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos 3:9–15; 4:1–5; 5:1; 7:10–17) and only occasionally addresses the southern kingdom of Judah (2:4–5; 6:1).

Because of the rarity of the underlying Hebrew word translated shepherds, his occupation is difficult to interpret. This word appears only one other time in the Bible, describing Mesha, king of Moab (2 Kings 3:4). The translation there is “raised sheep,” indicating a man of considerable means. The Hebrew term, therefore, seems to indicate not a poor shepherd but possibly a sheep breeder, likely with significant resources.

## When

Amos’s ministry was during the reign of Uzziah the king of Judah in the eighth century BC. Amos adds a second historical marker: two years before the earthquake, also mentioned by the prophet Zechariah, who lived several decades later ([Zechariah 14:5](#)). Some have dated the earthquake to 760 BC. However, more important than the exact date is the image of an earthquake coming just two years after Amos’s preaching. At several points, Amos uses the imagery of an earthquake to describe God’s coming judgment (Amos 3:14–15; 6:11; 8:8; 9:1, 5, 9).

## Raising Prophets

God speaks in the first person, highlighting two ways he has blessed and cared for Israel. God references other blessings he has shown Israel (Amos 2:9–10).

The mention of Nazirites is somewhat surprising, they are not commonly cited as examples of God’s care. Instructions are given in Numbers 6:1–21 for those who wish to make “a vow of dedication to the Lord” as Nazirites. They are not to drink fermented beverages, cut their hair, consume anything that comes from a vine, or be in the presence of a dead body. Samson is known as a Nazirite ([Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17](#)), and another possible example of someone who may have taken the Nazirite vow is Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11).

There are likely two reasons why God identifies Nazirites in this context. First, their austere lifestyle stands in stark contrast to the luxurious yet sinful practices of oppression and injustice (see Amos 2:8; 4:1; 6:4–6). Second, the Nazirites had consecrated themselves to the Lord. Therefore, they contrast the people of Israel, who lived in a manner that contradicts their confession of the Lord as their God.

The Lord guided the people with a succession of prophets and has provided Nazirites as examples of consecration. The people of Israel, however, have abused or ignored them.

## **A Divine Plan**

God's track record shows that he gives people many chances to repent before his holy nature requires retributive and corrective action (2 Peter 3:9). In Old Testament times, he voices those opportunities either personally, through an angel, or through his servants the prophets (2 Kings 17:13; Jeremiah 7:25; 25: 4; etc.). In New Testament times, he conveys those opportunities through his Son (Hebrews 1:1–2). Offenders in either era try to stop that message by silencing the messengers (examples: Jeremiah 38:6; Acts 4:18).

## **Dutiful Proclamation**

The inevitability of the Lord's word of judgment. Lions typically roar after they have captured prey, not before (Amos 3:4). Thus, the image of a roaring lion associated with the Lord's speech is a terrifying prediction of impending judgment. Who will not fear, indeed! This word imagery reflects the Lord's roar described in Amos 1:2, which occurs right before a series of accusations directed at the surrounding nations, as well as Judah and Israel.

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## **Struggle**

In [Amos 7:1–9](#), the Lord shows Amos three visions of judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel. After each of the first two, Amos intercedes, and the Lord relents. After the third vision, however, the Lord leaves no room for intercession; he will indeed destroy the religious sites where Israel worshiped pagan deities (compare Amos 3:14; 4:4–5; 5:4–6). The Lord promises, “With my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam” (7:9). Judgment is coming.

## **The Conspiracy**

Challenging those in power can be risky but is exactly what Amos has been doing. Because of this, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel and a member of the powerful group, feels threatened and decides to report his concerns to the king of Israel. Throughout the book of Amos, there has been growing tension between God sending prophets and how Israel responds—or does not respond—to them (Amos 1:1–2; 2:11; 3:1–8). This tension reaches its peak in Amos 7:10–17, where there is a battle over who has the right credentials. The verse we are looking at now shows the beginning of the argument between Amaziah and Amos. After Israel split into two kingdoms in 930 BC, Bethel became an important sanctuary. The first king of the northern kingdom, also named Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:1–24), chose Bethel as a place of worship instead of Jerusalem (12:26–33). Bethel is about 10 miles north of Jerusalem. Amos mentions Bethel many times, which shows how much idolatry was present there (Amos 3:14; 4:4–5; 5:5–6; 7:13).

## The Challenge

Some scholars think Amaziah insults Amos by calling him a seer instead of a prophet. But this seems unlikely, since both terms are often used together in the Bible (example: 2 Samuel 24:11). [Seer](#) is the older term (1 Samuel 9:9). Because Amaziah does not recognize God as the source of Amos's message, calling him a seer here is probably meant sarcastically.

When Amaziah talks about eating bread, he may be suggesting that Amos is prophesying just to make money (compare Micah 3:11; Acts 16:16–20; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Timothy 6:5). He says, “Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.” Bethel is under Amaziah's control, and he wants Amos to stop interfering. Amaziah mentions the king's authority twice. What stands out in both his report to Jeroboam and his challenge to Amos is that he never mentions God. He does not question Amos's message or his role as God's spokesperson, nor does he deny Amos's accusations of sin. Amaziah's main concern is protecting his own interests.

## The Charge

Now we reach the second part of the exchange between Amos and Amaziah. Amos starts by explaining what he does for a living. He says he is not the son of a prophet, which means he does not come from a prophetic school like those mentioned in 1 Samuel 19:18–21 and 2 Kings 2:3; 4:38; 6:1–2; 9:1.

This suggests he speaks on his own and is not tied to any group or person. Amos's background is in farming. The word for shepherd here is different from the one in Amos 1:1 and is very rare; this is the only place in the Old Testament where this Hebrew word appears. The Greek version, the [Septuagint](#), also uses a rare word. It likely means someone who looks after livestock. Using these two rare words together may show that Amos was a businessman. He also took care of sycamore-fig trees, which adds to his experience. These trees were common in the area in ancient times ([1 Kings 10:27](#); [1 Chronicles 27:28](#); [Luke 19:4](#)). Amos does not need to prophesy to earn money, since he already has his own job.

Amos does not want to be a prophet. He is not trying to speak out against Amaziah, Jeroboam, or the people of northern Israel. Instead, God called Amos and told him to deliver a message. Amos 7:14 shows that he was not motivated by money. It is also clear that Amos is not acting as a political agitator. He is speaking for God. This makes Amaziah's opposition to Amos even more serious. Amaziah is not just resisting one prophet or a group of prophets; he is standing against the Lord, the God of Israel. Since Amaziah represents his king and the people of northern Israel, their rejection of Amos's words is really a rejection of God's message.

## **Conclusion**

The people did not listen to Amos. Not long after his ministry ended, Assyria started invading Israel and nearby areas. Less than 40 years later, in 722 BC, northern Israel was conquered and its people were exiled (2 Kings 17). Like other prophets, Amos gave a clear choice: repent or face destruction. Most prophets had their warnings ignored, except for Jonah (see Jonah 3). Jeroboam and Amaziah believed God supported them because their nation was prosperous and religious. Amos challenged this belief, warning of judgment, calling for repentance, and offering hope.

Today, it seems obvious to us that we are reading God's words in Amos, since we know how the story ends. But at the time, it was hard to tell who was truly speaking for God. This is still a challenge, which is why Jesus warns his followers about false teachers (Matthew 7:15; 24:24). We should test what we hear against Scripture (compare Revelation 22:18–19). Amos also gives us another way to tell true teachers from false ones: look at their motivation. What does the teacher stand to gain? Amos and Amaziah had very different motives. Amos risked his life by speaking out against the religious, economic, and political norms, questioning whether God approved of Israel's actions and beliefs. In ancient times, criticizing a holy place could even lead to death (see Jeremiah 26:1–15).

In contrast, Amaziah was mainly worried about losing his position and the stability he enjoyed. The New Testament also warns about these issues (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:1–2). For us today, Amos's story invites us to think about how we respond to God's word. Are we open to listening? Will we accept God's challenge? Are we so attached to our own religious, economic, or political comfort that we refuse to consider anything that questions it? God's willingness to speak to us shows his grace. He wants to connect with us. Will we listen?

## **Take Aways**

## **Closing Prayer**



## Daily Bible Readings\*

(\*Liturgical Color: Green (Life, growth, and hope))

**Monday: The Sovereign Roar and the Call to Justice:** [Amos 1:1-2; 5:14-24](#)

**Focus:** Amos is called away from his rural life in Judah to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel. He begins by declaring that God demands justice and righteousness over empty religious rituals.

**Tuesday: The Sins of the Wealthy:** [Amos 4:1-5; 6:1-7](#)

**Focus:** Amos fiercely calls out the wealthy elite who exploit the poor, oppress the needy, and live in luxurious self-indulgence while ignoring societal decay.

**Wednesday: The Visions of Locusts and Fire:** [Amos 7:1-6](#)

**Focus:** God reveals visions of impending destruction (locusts and fire). Showing his dutiful and compassionate heart, Amos intercedes, pleading for God to spare the vulnerable nation, and God relents

**Thursday: The Plumb Line of God's Holiness:** [Amos 7:7-9](#)

**Focus:** God shows Amos a vision of a plumb line. Just as a plumb line ensures a wall is perfectly straight, God uses His absolute standard of holiness and justice to measure Israel's crookedness.

**Friday: Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition:** [Amos 7:10-17](#)

**Focus:** Amaziah, a corrupt priest at Bethel, tries to silence Amos and orders him to go back to Judah to earn a living. Amos courageously stands his ground, declaring that God specifically called him from his shepherding duties and prophesies Amaziah's downfall.

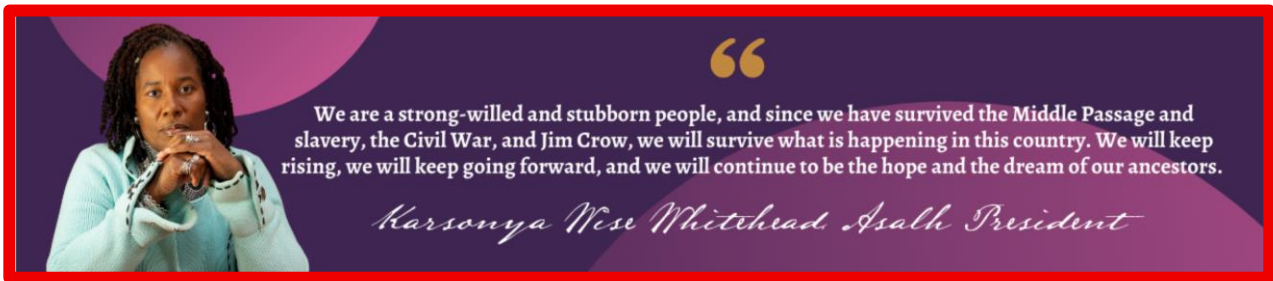
**Saturday: Dishonesty and the "Famine of the Word":** [Amos 8:4-14](#)

**Focus:** Amos condemns business leaders who cheat the poor with dishonest scales and rush the Sabbath just to get back to making money. He warns of a coming spiritual famine—a time when people will search for the word of the God but will not find it.

**Sunday: The Promise of Restoration:** [Amos 9:11-15](#)

**Focus:** Though he is a prophet of doom and judgment, Amos concludes with a beautiful message of hope. God promises to restore the fallen house of David, bringing ultimate renewal, flourishing, and permanent security.

## BLACK HISTORY



### How Black Americans Co-opted the Fourth of July

By: [Livia Gershon](#) July 3, 2020



*After the Civil War, white southerners saw the Fourth of July as a celebration of Confederate defeat. Black southerners saw opportunities.*

The meaning of the Fourth of July has changed over time and place. In the years after the Civil War, historian [Brian D. Page](#) explains, it became a holiday celebrated mainly by Black residents in Memphis.

Mr. Page starts his account in June 1862, when U.S. forces took control of Memphis. Many formerly enslaved Black people soon moved into the city, and the Black population grew from 3,882 in 1860 to 15,525 in 1870. The Army stationed Black soldiers in Memphis, which upset many white residents. In 1866, the *Memphis Daily Avalanche* claimed that having Black soldiers there “corrupts the whole Negro population of the South; it puts before their eyes a picture of their race, which raises their expectations above all reason and discontents them with the plain tasks of labor.”

For many white residents in Memphis, the Fourth of July became linked to the Confederacy’s defeat and the presence of Black soldiers. In 1869, a local newspaper noted that the holiday was celebrated “only by our [Germans](#) and our colored citizens.”

For Black Americans, the Fourth of July took on a new meaning. In 1852, Frederick Douglass gave a well-known speech that compared the promise of Independence Day to the reality of slavery. After gaining freedom, many Black people hoped they could finally claim the rights promised by the Declaration of Independence.

According to Page, the first Black Fourth of July celebration in Memphis happened in 1866, only two months after white mobs killed forty-six African Americans in the Memphis massacre. Every year, mutual aid groups like the Sons of Ham and the Daughters of Zion organized events with traditional Black American activities, including barbecue and late-night dancing. These celebrations attracted thousands of people from Memphis and nearby areas.

The July 4 parades included bands, groups from the mutual aid societies with their own flags, banners, and special clothing, and military groups like the M’Clellan guards. Sometimes, women marched separately from men or rode in carriages.

Page notes that both leaders and participants, including many day laborers, housekeepers, other low-wage workers, and professionals, valued order and formal dress. He writes, “The attention to order and appearance in these celebrations was as much a self-conscious attempt to gain respect in society as it was a reflection of the standards of contemporary celebrations.” Most parades were held outside Black neighborhoods to show participants’ equal rights to the city center. In 1878, one parade featured the M’Clellan guards in a military drill. At Independence Day picnics, speakers encouraged African Americans to help build churches and schools and to claim the rights promised by the Declaration of Independence.

In the 1870s, the political climate shifted when the federal government ended Reconstruction, and Memphis leaders dissolved the city's charter, reducing Black voting power. By the 1890s, white southerners had started celebrating the Fourth of July again. However, Page explains for Black Memphis residents, it “once again became a far-off promise of equality as the words of the Declaration of Independence were voiced but proved to have little meaning in the Jim Crow South.”

### **Association for the Study of African American Life and History**

The mission of the ASALH® is to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community. Established on September 9, 1915, by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, we are the Founders of Black History Month and carry forth the work of our founder, the Father of Black History. We continue his legacy of speaking a fundamental truth to the world—that Africans and peoples of African descent are makers of history and co-workers in what W. E. B. Du Bois called, “The Kingdom of Culture.” ASALH is in short, the nexus between the Ivory Tower and the global public.



*The Negro Historical Association with Carter Woodson (with bow tie) seated next to Mary Church Terrell (in white) in front row, center, of this portrait (1925). Source: Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives, Howard University, Washington DC*

We are in the final stages of organizing the Northern Virginia Branch. Interested, contact: *Deac Joe Boutte, Bro Harvey Woodson, or Rev Gillis M. Taylor.*

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