



AN **8-WEEK** BIBLE  
STUDY EXPERIENCE

# THE ROAR OF JUSTICE

HEARING GOD'S  
RELENTLESS CALL IN THE  
BOOK OF AMOS

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# WEEK 1

## THE LION ROARS

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God  
he created them; male and female he created them.*

GENESIS 1:27

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### GROUP SESSION INTRODUCTION

The introductory verse of the book of Amos is jam-packed with rich information that sets us in the sandy soils of the ancient Near East. In the very next verse, we experience the vivid imagery of a lion roaring and all of creation responding.

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 was king of Israel.

He said:

“The LORD roars from Zion  
and thunders from Jerusalem;  
the pastures of the shepherds dry up,  
and the top of Carmel withers.” (Amos 1:1-2)

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes and show us wonderful things in this portion of Scripture. More than informed, help us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds by the power of your Spirit, in Jesus’ name, amen. (from Psalm 119:18 and Romans 12:2)

### SCRIPTURE

Read aloud Amos 1:1–2:5.



#### VIDEO

Watch this week’s video.



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## GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What fears do you have about reading the prophets? Have you studied a prophetic book before, either major or minor? Discuss any experience you have had with the prophets as a genre of Scripture.
2. A prophet's role brought a great compulsion to speak God's words—what difficulties might they have faced in calling people to repentance?
3. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we are reminded that all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for training in righteousness. How are you hoping to be instructed through the prophet Amos?
4. Of the common obstacles to reading the book of Amos, which challenge resonates most with you: the perception of God as wrathful, the difficulty of the text, the relevance to today, or the co-opting of the word *justice*?
5. The prophet Amos depicts the Lord as a lion roaring in response to injustice—to crimes against those made in his image—not only in Israel but in the nations of the world. How does knowing this affect how you think about his wrath and about his justice?
6. In Jeremiah 9:24, God describes himself as “the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth” (ESV). Do you tend to think of God's justice more as in the past, present day, or time to come? Explain why. How does Jeremiah 9:24 support or challenge how you think of God's justice?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Spend some time praying for one another's growth if you're in a group, or for yourself if you're doing this study on your own. Consider what you hope to gain, and ask the Lord to help you grow in that way.





3. What phrase does the prophet Amos use before addressing each nation to let us know that it is the Lord who is speaking?

4. What phrase do we hear the Lord repeat?

5. What other words or themes do you see repeated?

6. Consider the number of times the Lord uses the personal pronoun *I* in saying “I will.” How does this aid your thinking about his involvement in his world?



7. How does the language of “transgressions” and “punishment” confirm how you think about God? How does it challenge your thinking?

## REFLECT

How have you seen the heart of God in your observations?

## DAY 2

### WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN? PART 1

*For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent.  
Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom.*

AMOS 1:6

## PRAY

Lord, would you awaken my ears to hear truth as you lead me through your Word? You are perfect wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Please impart all of these by your Spirit today, in Jesus’ name, amen. (from Proverbs 9:10)

## READ

Amos 1:1–2:5



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## DEFINING OUR TERMS

What is *justice*?

***Justice* in its most basic meaning is about treating people equitably, giving people what they are due.**

Justice in its most basic meaning is about treating people equitably, giving people what they are due, whether punishment, protection, or care. It involves punishment for wrongdoing (retributive justice), but also defending the rights (restorative justice) of the poor and needy—often in Scripture named as the orphans, widows, and immigrants. It is helpful to know that *justice* and *righteousness* are often used in close connection with one another throughout Scripture, at the very least suggesting that doing justice is the expected work of the righteous.

While the judgments on the nations in the book of Amos are certainly retributive in nature, the whole of Scripture deals with restorative justice far more. In understanding the judgments named in this portion of Scripture, we learn what makes the “Lion” roar—what makes the Lord angry and his judgments imminent. And in learning what makes him angry, we also learn what he values, what he is passionate about. We discover that while these judgments may seem harsh, at their core they are God’s fierce assertion of the dignity and value of all human life, his unwavering care for those made in his image.

The judgments in the book of Amos represent each nation’s disordered love for itself or excessive desire for its own gain at the expense of the dignity and value of all human life. Such excessive desires can be categorized in a word—*idol*.

What is an *idol*?

**An *idol* is anything used as a functional savior and pursued apart from Yahweh (Israel’s covenant God) to satisfy a person’s or people’s longings.**

An *idol*<sup>1</sup> is anything used as a functional savior and pursued apart from Yahweh (Israel’s covenant God) to satisfy a person’s or people’s longings. The deep idols of our hearts can be thought of as being part of the following categories.



- **Idol of power**—An excessive desire for significance achieved through success, winning, and influence.
- **Idol of control**—An excessive desire for certainty that leads one to attempt to control themselves, their environment, and others around them.
- **Idol of approval**—An excessive desire to please, to get affirmation and acceptance from relationships.
- **Idol of comfort**—An excessive desire for avoidance of pain or stress by seeking freedom from responsibilities, expectations, or anything that might feel unpleasant.

## READING THE PROPHETS WELL: ORACLES

**Oracles** are the legal proceedings of the one true Righteous Judge against an erring people.

The judgments of God recorded in the books of the Prophets (both major and minor) are often presented in literary devices called **oracles**. Oracles are the legal proceedings of the one true Righteous Judge against an erring people. These devices usually begin with a phrase such as “Thus says the Lord,” intended to

highlight the fact that the prophet is speaking the very words of Yahweh, Israel’s covenant God. We will refer to such a phrase as a *prophetic formula*. The judgments against the nations establish that Yahweh is not only the Righteous Judge of Israel, but of all creation.

The structure of the oracles in the book of Amos are very distinct, and if understood will aid our understanding of the charges being brought against the nations and the nature of their coming judgment. Let’s look at the oracle concerning Damascus in Amos 1:3-5 as an example:

**Prophetic formula:** “*This is what the LORD says.*” This phrase makes it clear that the Prophet Amos is speaking the words he was given by the Lord.

“*For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent.*” This refrain is a statement of the fullness of Damascus’ sin and the certainty of God’s coming judgment.

**Charge:** “*Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth.*” The charge describes the specific way the nation has violated God’s law.

**Judgment:** “*I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden.*” The judgments are Yahweh’s personal statements of retributive justice—how he will judge the actions of the nation.

**Resulting Conditions:** “*The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir.*” These are the resulting conditions from Yahweh’s judgments.

**Closing Prophetic Formula:** “*Says the LORD.*” This statement acts almost as a closing quotation mark indicating the end of the Lord’s very words spoken through his prophet. You may notice that some oracles will not have a closing prophetic formula.

## COMPLETE THE CHART

Complete the first three sections of the chart for the nations named in Amos 1:6-10. The first one is done for you. Take time to locate each nation on the map of Israel and her neighbors to understand where they were located in relation to Israel. Leave the last column blank for now. We will complete it in a later lesson.

## EXAMINE

1. How do the details given in the introductory verse shape your understanding of Amos's prophecy as an actual historical event?

Chart for oracles of judgment of the nations in Amos 1:6-10

<i>Nation being Accused</i> "For three sins of . . ."	<i>Charge Against Them</i> "Because they have . . ."	<i>Judgment Given</i> "So I [the LORD] will . . ."
<b>DAMASCUS</b> (Amos 1:3-5)	Threshed Gilead with sledges of iron	Send a fire upon the house of Hazael; break the gate-bar of Damascus; cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven
<b>GAZA</b> (Amos 1:6-8)		Send fire on the walls of Gaza; destroy the kings of Ashdod and Ashkelon; turn my hand against Ekron
<b>TYRE</b> (Amos 1:9-10)	Sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood	
<b>EDOM</b> (Amos 1:11-12)	Pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked	Send fire on Teman
<b>AMMON</b> (Amos 1:13-15)	Ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders	
<b>MOAB</b> (Amos 2:1-3)		Send fire on Moab; destroy her ruler and kill all her officials with him
<b>JUDAH</b> (Amos 2:4-5)	Rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees; been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed	

2. How might Amos's ministering in a different area than where he lived have been helpful for him? How might it have been a disadvantage?

<i>Resulting Conditions</i>	<i>Idols Being Confronted</i>
Strongholds of Ben-Hadad devoured; inhabitants cut off; the king and people of Syria will go into exile to Kir	Power, Control
Fortresses of Gaza consumed by fire; death of all the Philistines	
Fortresses of Tyre consumed by fire	
Fortresses of Rabbah consumed amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day; her king and officials will go into exile together	
Fortresses of Keriath consumed; Moab will go down in great tumult amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet	
Fortresses of Jerusalem consumed	





**Map of Israel and neighbors**

*Use the first four columns of the oracles of judgment chart to answer the remaining questions.*

1. Nearly all charges against the nations involve crimes against humanity. What common theme do you see in the charges against the nations?

2. Consider the resulting conditions column on the oracles of judgment chart. What is significant about what gets consumed by fire?

## REFLECT

Consider which crimes against humanity provoke a strong response for you. Now consider the crimes against humanity for which you could easily change the channel. What does your emotion reveal about what you value highly or value less so?

## DAY 3

### WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN? PART 2

*For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent.  
Because she sold whole communities of captives to  
Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood.*

AMOS 1:9

## PRAY

Lord, because perfect wisdom is yours alone, would you impart wisdom as we study your Word? Teach us who you are such that our reverence for you informs how we show up in your world, amen. (from Proverbs 9:10)

## READ

Amos 1:1–2:5



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## COMPLETE THE CHART

Complete the last four sections of the oracles of judgment chart for the nations named in Amos 1:11–2:5. The first one is done for you. Take time to locate each nation on the map of Israel to understand where they were located in relation to Israel. Leave the last column blank for now. We will complete it in a later lesson.

Chart for oracles of judgment of the nations in Amos 1:11–2:5


<i>Nation being Accused</i> "For three sins of . . ."	<i>Charge Against Them</i> "Because they have . . ."	<i>Judgment Given</i> "So I [the LORD] will . . ."
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## EXAMINE

1. Considering the low social status of shepherds, how might Amos's occupation have affected his message?

<i>Resulting Conditions</i>	<i>Idols Being Confronted</i>
Strongholds of Ben-Hadad devoured; inhabitants cut off; the king and people of Syria will go into exile to Kir	Power, Control
Fortresses of Gaza consumed by fire; death of all the Philistines	
Fortresses of Tyre consumed by fire	
Fortresses of Rabbah consumed amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day; her king and officials will go into exile together	
Fortresses of Keriath consumed; Moab will go down in great tumult amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet	
Fortresses of Jerusalem consumed	



- 
2. Using the oracles of judgment chart, compare Judah's judgment to that of the other nations. How are the charges against Judah different from those against the other nations? What does it say about the relationship of God's law to righteous living? What does it suggest about the seriousness of idolatry?
  
  3. Use the definition of *idols* given on day two to complete the last column of the oracles of judgment chart. Consider the charge brought against each nation and determine what idol might be informing the behavior. The first one is completed for you.

## REFLECT

As you learn about the oracles against the nations, what kind of charges do you think Amos might bring against twenty-first century people living in the United States? What idols would he confront?



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