

• *A divided nation*

The nation of Israel was established firmly through the exploits of king David just after 1000 BC. Israel's third king, Solomon, enjoyed a period of peace, inheriting the benefits achieved by his father David. But disaster struck the nation after Solomon's death when the nation divided into two. There was Judah in the south, and 'northern' Israel.

• *Amos and his time*

The prophet Amos preached about two centuries later at a time when two powerful kings were ruling the two nations. Uzziah (779–740) ruled Judah, and Jeroboam II (783–743) was king of northern Israel. Four things ought to be known about this period.

- (i) Both in the north and the south these were days of economic stability.
- (ii) They were also days of military danger. The Assyrians to the north were ambitious to extend their territory.
- (iii) They were days of social injustice.
- (iv) They were days of religious idolatry.

• *Kings and prophets*

Alongside the kings were the prophets. Perhaps the first writing prophet was Obadiah in the 840s BC. Next may have been Joel in the days of Joash of Judah (835–796 BC). Jonah lived in the eighth century. Amos' short period of preaching was at about 760 BC or maybe earlier. Hosea was his contemporary. The prophets' writings are mainly their sermons to the nations of Israel, Judah, and their neighbours.

• *A title*

In the book of Amos, first of all we have a title.

'The words of Amos, who was one of the sheep-raisers from Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash the king of Israel, two years before the earthquake'. ¹

¹ 1:1

• *The theme*

Next we have the theme of this section of Amos:

*'And he said:
"Yahweh has roared like a lion from Zion,
and from Jerusalem He has given forth his word, and the
pastures of the shepherds are in mourning,
and the peak of Carmel is withered."¹*

¹ 1:2

• *A message to eight nations*

In 1:3–2:16 Amos develops his point, presenting God's message to eight nations.

1. God takes notice of all the nations as well as of Israel

1. God takes notice of all the nations as well as of Israel. God is God of the whole universe and not merely the God of Israel or of the church. So in Amos 1:3 to 2:16 we notice that God not only addresses Israel and Judah, He has something to say about the surrounding nations as well. There are messages for Syria ¹, Philistia ², Tyre ³, Edom ⁴, Ammon ⁵, Moab ⁶, Judah ⁷ and then Israel ⁸.

- ¹ 1:3–5
- ² 1:6–8
- ³ 1:9–10
- ⁴ 1:11–12
- ⁵ 1:13–15
- ⁶ 2:1–3
- ⁷ 2:4–5
- ⁸ 2:6–16

2. God's message to the nations was and still is a message of anger.

• **God's anger against sin and evil**

2. God's message to the nations was and still is a message of anger. In these chapters God is presented like a roaring lion about to pounce upon the nations and devour them. The word 'roar' is the same as the one used in Judges 14:5 when a lion attempted to leap upon Samson. God gets angry with sin. He can destroy rulers ^{¶1} and buildings ^{¶2} and cities. ^{¶3} He can send whole communities into exile. ^{¶4} There is such a thing as the anger of God against sin. God's anger is His reaction to what is evil. This is why the world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. *'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who hold down the truth in unrighteousness'*. ^{¶5} Many people try to avoid talking about the wrath of God. But the wrath of God is a fact of the Bible. For those with eyes to see it is a fact today. God hates sin and reveals His wrath against it in the events that are going on all around us. God responds to sin with indignation, with animosity, with determination to punish. God's wrath is His holy hatred of sin; it is His revulsion, His determination to act and wipe out sin from His universe. His wrath is seen (for those who can see it) in pestilence, ^{¶6} in military devastation ^{¶7}, in drought ^{¶8}, in plagues. ^{¶9}

¶1 1:4
¶2 1:4
¶3 1:5

¶4 1:5
¶5 Romans 1:18

¶6 see Ezekiel 14:19
¶7 Ezekiel 5:15
¶8 Deuteronomy 11:17

¶9 2 Samuel 24:1ff

• **Jesus' anger against sin**

When the Pharisees did not want a man healed on the Sabbath, Jesus *'looked over them with anger, deeply grieved at the hardness of their hearts'*. ^{¶1} It was not bad temper; it was Jesus' powerful angry grief at the callous sinfulness of the human race. He gazed with distressed outrage towards those men who did not wish a fellow human being to come to relief and comfort. And when we see Jesus like this we see the Father. This is the wrath of God against sin.

¶1 Mark 3:5

• **From Zion**

God's anger comes out of Zion. Amos says 'Yahweh has roared like a lion from Zion ... from Jerusalem...'. The temple was in Jerusalem. Inside the temple was the place where God revealed His holiness. The ark inside the temple was like a throne. Today God's throne is only in heaven but in Amos' day there was a symbol of it in Jerusalem. *'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven...'* Our God is 'Yahweh' – the God who saves by the blood of a lamb. But He is also a roaring lion who hates sin and will pounce upon it sooner or later.

• **From heaven**

• **God's anger touches the entire land**

When God gets angry, His anger touches everything.. From the low grasslands to the highest peaks, God's anger is over the entire land.

'The pastures of the shepherds are in mourning, and the top of Carmel is withered' ^{¶1}

¶1 1:2

• **God's patience can discontinue**

God's patience can discontinue. We must notice the precise way God speaks.

*'This is what Yahweh has said:
"For three transgressions by Damascus,
and especially for four,
I will not reverse my decision..."'* ^{¶1}

¶1 1:3

This *'three transgressions... and especially for four'* is a way of saying that God is very patient but eventually His patience can discontinue. A nation sins; God is patient. The nation sins again; God is still patient. The nation sins a third time; God is getting vexed. He determines that He will not be patient much longer. Then the nation sins a fourth time. It is enough. God is now

¶1 see 1:2; 3:4a

¶2 see 3:4b

determined to act. He makes up His mind and will not change it. Sometimes sin gets so bad and so persistent, God's patience runs out. God says, I will not reverse My decision. If I understand 3:4 rightly (see the exposition further ahead) the 'fourth transgression' has not been committed yet. The lion is roaring ¹ but the prey has not yet been taken. ² There is opportunity for repentance, but if the third transgression becomes the fourth transgression, the lion will not be roaring. He will growling contentedly over the dead meat.

• **God's anger with Damascus**

What makes God angry with Damascus is their unjust violence. 'I will not reverse my decision', says God...

'...because they threshed Gilead with iron sledges.' ¹

¹ 1:3

The Aramean state with its capital at Damascus had savagely attacked the area in Israel called Gilead. 'Threshing' seems to be a metaphor for savage treatment. Hazael the king of Damascus had treated people wickedly. It was as if he had laid people on the ground and driven over them with threshing tractors! God hates needless violence, and will eventually act against it.

"So I will send fire against the house of Hazael, and it will consume the citadels of Ben-Hadad. ¹ And I will break the gate-bar of Damascus, and I will cut off the sovereign from Biq'at-Awen, and the sceptre-wielder from Beth-Eden – and the Aramean people will go into exile to Qir." Yahweh has spoken! ²

¹ 1:4

² 1:5

• **Royal line exterminated and the people exiled**

God will punish the capital city, Damascus. The fire of His holiness will exterminate the royal line of Hazael in the state of Aram. The fortresses will be destroyed. The capital city will be broken into. The king will be removed from the palace at Biq'at-Awen. The province of Beth-Eden will no longer have a ruler. The Aramean people will go into exile to Qir, where they came from originally. No one knows where Qir is but Amos' prophecy was fulfilled a few years later. ¹ The word of God was fulfilled but Amos had given them warning.

¹ see 2 Kings 16:9

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
<p><i>These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below</i></p>		
<p>Slices for the Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<p>Slices for Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<p>Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations
<p>To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk Details of the availability of <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk</p>		