

Book of Amos

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The book of Amos is one of the prophetic books (Nevi'im) canonized in the Hebrew Bible. It is one of twelve "Minor" or shorter prophetic books, which in the Jewish Tanakh appear together as a single "Book of the Twelve," whereas they are twelve separate books in the Christian Old Testament. The book of Amos consists of 9 chapters associated with the words and actions of a Judean prophet named Amos. Amos is identified as a pastoralist and agriculturalist from Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah, whom Yahweh called to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel around the year 760 BCE (1:1; 7:14-15). There is no historical evidence concerning this person outside of the book of Amos. The book claims that the reason Amos was commissioned as a prophet was to warn the Israelites about how their abuses of social justice and their wrongheaded and hypocritical worship practices are going to lead to severe punishment from Yahweh. The sayings and events described in the book appear to take place within a short time period (perhaps no more than a year) during the mid-8th century BCE. The punishment predicted by the prophet Amos has a long tradition of being interpreted as referring to Israel's defeat and exile at the hands of the Neo-Assyrian empire in 721 BCE, but the book never refers to this event explicitly. The book of Amos was originally written in Hebrew, but in its oldest forms it has been preserved in slightly different versions: the Masoretic Text in Hebrew and the Septuagint in Greek. Both of these traditions are attested at Qumran, suggesting that the text of the book of Amos had not been finalized by the first century BCE. Many scholars suggest that parts of the book can be traced back to an 8th-century BCE prophet, but the book as a literary product is mostly the work of later Judean editors, including some belonging to the Deuteronomistic school of thought. The text consists mostly of poetic oracles presented as the words of Yahweh spoken through the prophet Amos, but there are also a few short prose extracts (e.g. Amos 7:10-17).



Date Range: 760 BCE - 100 BCE

Region: Ancient Israel and Judah

Region tags: Levant, Israel, Palestine, Judah

Ancient Israel and Judah

Status of Readership:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources and Corpora

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Göran Eidevall, Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Yale University Press, 2017.
- Source 2: M. Daniel Carroll R., The Book of Amos. Eerdmans, 2020.

General Variables

Materiality

Methods of Composition

— Written



Inked

— with Ink

Medium upon which the text is written/incised

— Papyrus

Notes: The earliest extant manuscripts containing text from the book of Amos are written in ink on papyrus or parchment.

Was the material modified before the writing or incising process?

— Physical preparation

Was the text modified before the writing or incising process?

— Other [specify]: It must have sometimes been edited, based on the differences between extant versions of the book of Amos.

Location

Is the text stored in a specific location?

[Note at which point in time, for reference, if known; select all that apply]

— Field doesn't know

Notes: There are multiple copies and versions of the oldest manuscripts of the book of Amos, so it is not possible to answer this question for all of them.

Is the location where the text stored accompanied by iconography or images?

— Field doesn't know

Is the area where the text is stored accompanied by an-iconic images?

— Field doesn't know

Production & Intended Audience

Production

Is the production of the text funded by the polity?

– Field doesn't know

Is the text considered official religious scripture?

– Yes

Notes: The concept of a scriptural canon is anachronistic for the period in which the book of Amos is set (8th century BCE), but the book was widely accepted as part of the Jewish scriptural canon from the first century CE onwards. Its presentation of much of its material as the words of Yahweh suggests a self-conception as sacred text. Today, different Jewish and Christian traditions use scripture in different ways.

↳ Is there a culture of oral recitation?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there a story associated with the origins of scripture?

– Yes

↳ Revealed by a high god?

– Yes

↳ Revealed by other supernatural being?

– No

↳ Inspired by high god?

– Yes

↳ Inspired by other supernatural being?

– No

↳ Originated from divine or semi-divine human beings?

– No

↳ Originated from non-divine human being?

– Yes

↳ Are the scriptures alterable?

– No

Notes: The text's presentation of itself as the words of Yahweh suggests that it is not alterable, but the existence of diverse manuscript traditions indicate that it was, in fact, altered until the first century BCE or CE.

↳ Are there formal institutions (i.e. institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders) for interpreting scriptures?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There is no mention of these in the book of Amos, and scholarly models concerning their existence and nature during the period in which the book of Amos was most likely written and edited is largely conjectural.

↳ Is there a select group of people trained in transmitting the scriptures?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there a codified canon of scriptures?

– Yes

Notes: The concept of canon did not exist until after the book of Amos was completed, but for most religious groups that accept the book of Amos as part of their scriptural canon, the canon is now closed.

↳ Can the canon be altered or added to?

– No

↳ Are additional commentaries part of the canon as it is currently understood?

– No

Written in distinctly religious/sacred language?

– No

Intended Audience

What is the estimated number of people considered to be the audience of the text

This should be the total number of people who would serve as the intended audience for the text.

– Field doesn't know

Does the Religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members?

– No

Notes: The book of Amos does not indicate such an activity, but some later readers of the book have engaged in this.

Are there clear reformist movements?

(Reformism, as in not proselytizing to potential new conservative, but "conversion" - or rather, reform - to the "correct interpretation"?)

— No

Is the text in question employed in ritual practice?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Scholars do not know how the book of Amos (or parts of it) may have been used when it was first written or spoken. Later religious communities who held it to be scripture employed it in ritual practices in various ways, e.g. reading it aloud during religious services.

Is there material significance to the text?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: The text itself does not indicate that it has any material significance. Later religious communities may have attributed material significance to the versions of the text they used.

Context and Content of the Text (Beliefs and Practices)

Context

Is the text itself accompanied by art?

— No

Are there multiple versions of the text?

— Yes



Are multiple versions viewed as proper?

— Yes

Notes: The text of the book of Amos used by most Jews and Christians today is based on the Masoretic Text, but evidence from Qumran reveals that the community there used texts attesting to both the Greek and Hebrew versions of the book of Amos, suggesting they were comfortable with both traditions existing side by side.



If multiple versions are proper, is there a differentiation among versions by any means?

— Field doesn't know

- ↳ Is there debate about which version is proper?
 - Field doesn't know

Is the text part of a collection of texts?

– Yes

- ↳ Is there a sense of canonization?
 - Yes

Notes: There is no mention of canonization within the text of the book of Amos itself because this is an anachronistic concept, but the book became part of the canon of Jewish scripture in the first century CE and seems to have been considered part of the canon of "the prophets" and a collection (scroll) containing the twelve minor prophets prior to this.

- ↳ How is the authority established?
 - Field doesn't know

Notes: This question is not possible to answer using a yes/no system!

- ↳ Can the canon be altered or added to?
 - No

- ↳ Have major debates shifted the sense of the place of the text with respect to the larger canon?
 - Yes

Notes: The Christian canon places the prophetic texts at the end of the Hebrew Bible in order to position them as pointing towards the coming of Christ in the New Testament.

- ↳ Is the text part of a series of volumes?
 - No

If the text is not explicitly scripture, is it part of another important literary tradition?

– No

Content

Is the text - or does the text include - a ritual list, manual, bibliography, index, or vocabulary?
(Select all that apply)

– Other [specify]: None of these

Are there lineages or a single lineage established by the text?

– No

Does the text express a formal legal code?

– No

Notes: It suggests that there is one, but it does not express it in detail.

Formulating a specifically religious calendar?

– No

Notes: It refers briefly to the religious calendar, but does not formulate it

Beliefs

Is a spirit-body distinction present in the text?

– No

Is belief in an afterlife indicated in the text?

– No

Is belief in reincarnation in this world specified in the text?

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses dicated in the text?

– No

Does the text indicate if co-sacrifices should be present in burials?

– No

Does the text specify grave goods for burial?

– No

Are formal burials present in the text?

– No

Are there practices that have funerary associations presented in the text?

– No

Are supernatural beings present in the text?

– Yes

↳ A supreme high-god is present

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic or described in anthropomorphic terms

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity

– No

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld)

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god)

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites

– No

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites

– No

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good

– No

↳ Other features of the supreme high god

– Specify: Several times in the book of Amos, Yahweh is described using the imagery of a lion (e.g. 1:2)

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world

– Yes

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- ↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region
 - Yes
 - Notes: It seems to be, but this is never stated explicitly.
- ↳ Knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)
 - Yes
- ↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)
 - Yes
- ↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)
 - Yes
- ↳ Knows basic character (personal essence)
 - Yes
- ↳ Knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)
 - Field doesn't know
 - Notes: Yahweh knows the futures of various Levantine nations and the future of individuals (such as Amaziah in 7:17), but it is unclear whether he knows the future actions of every individual.
- ↳ Has other knowledge of this world
 - Yes
- ↳ Has deliberate causal efficacy in the world
 - Yes

- ↳ Can reward
 - Yes
- ↳ Can punish
 - Yes
- ↳ Indirect causal efficacy in the world
 - Yes
- ↳ Exhibits positive emotion
 - Field doesn't know
 - Notes: There is nothing in the book to suggest Yahweh does not do this, but there are no examples of him doing it, either.
- ↳ Exhibits negative emotion
 - Yes
- ↳ Possesses Hunger?
 - No
- ↳ Can be hurt?
 - No
- ↳ Can be tricked?
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can be imprisoned?
 - No
- ↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural being other than the high god?
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature
 - Specify: Yahweh appears to be located in Zion in the book of Amos (1:2), but his knowledge and ability to communicate extend supernaturally beyond this.
- ↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life

– Yes

↳ In dreams

– Field doesn't know

Notes: This doesn't happen in the book of Amos, but there is nothing to suggest that it can't

↳ In trance possession

– No

↳ Through divination practices

– No

↳ Only through religious specialists

– Yes

↳ Only through monarch

– No

↳ Other form of communication with living

– Yes

Notes: Indirect communication through legal/covenant tradition

↳ Does the text make communication with supreme high-god possible?

– No

Previously human spirits are present

– No

Non-human supernatural beings are present

– No

Does the text attest to a pantheon of supernatural beings?

– No

Are mixed human-divine beings present according to the text?

– No

Is there a supernatural being that is physically present in the/as a result of the text?

– No

Are other categories of beings present?

– Other [specify]: None of these

Does the text guide divination practices?

– No

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present in the text?

– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular

– Yes

↳ Do expectations of ritual offerings play a role in supernatural monitoring?

– Yes

↳ Libations?

– Yes

↳ Food?

– Yes

↳ Animal sacrifice?

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifice?

– No

↳ Sacred objects?

– No

↳ Daily life objects?

– No

↳ Other?

–Specify: No

↳ Supernatural being care about taboos

– Yes

↳ Food

– No

Notes: Not mentioned in Amos

↳ Sacred space(s)

– Yes

↳ Sacred object(s)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about other

– Yes

Notes: Sexual taboos (2:7)

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex

– Yes

↳ Adultery

– No

↳ Incest

– Field doesn't know

Notes: This may be what lies behind the accusation in Amos 2:7 that "father and son go in to the same girl" (see Leviticus 18)

↳ Taboo about close blood relations (beyond incest) [e.g. from same clan group, village, settlement, so forth].

– No

↳ Specifies taboo regarding power relations (i.e. defines what constitutes abusive behavior)

– Field doesn't know

Notes: This also may be what lies behind Amos 2:7, as it may be linked to men having intercourse with their slave women/girls.

↳ Does worship/veneration include sex acts/references?

– No

↳ Other sexual practices

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about lying

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Not mentioned in Amos

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting

– Field doesn't know
Notes: Not mentioned

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk
– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders
– Field doesn't know
Notes: Not mentioned

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping
– Field doesn't know
Notes: Not mentioned

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists
– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene
– Field doesn't know
Notes: Not mentioned

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect the maintenance of the place?
– Field doesn't know
Notes: Not mentioned

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment in the text?

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is not explicitly mentioned, but context suggests it the Neo-Assyrian empire is implied

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known?

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence?

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce group norms?

– Yes

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness?

– Yes

↳ Done randomly

– No

↳ Other

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife?

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime?

– Yes

↳ Highly emphasized by the religious group?

– Yes

↳ Consists of bad luck?

– No

- ↳ Political failure?
 - Yes
- ↳ Defeat in battle?
 - Yes
- ↳ Crop failure or bad weather?
 - No
- ↳ Disaster on journeys?
 - No
- ↳ Mild sensory displeasure?
 - No
- ↳ Extreme sensory displeasure?
 - Yes
- ↳ Sickness or illness?
 - No
- ↳ Impaired reproduction?
 - No
- ↳ Back luck visited on descendants?
 - No
- ↳ Other?
 - Specify: Exile from homeland

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards in the text?

– Yes

- ↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known?
 - No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife?

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime?

– Yes

↳ Highly emphasized?

– No

↳ Consists of good luck?

– No

↳ Consists of political success or power?

– Yes

↳ Consists of success in battle?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It's implied based on the concept of political independence and the collective memory of Israel's settlement in Canaan

↳ Consists of peace or social stability?

– Yes

↳ Consists of healthy crops or good weather?

– Yes

↳ Consists of success on journeys?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants?

– Yes

↳ Other?

– Specify: Restoration of Davidic kingship and homeland (Amos 9:11-15)

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present in the text?

– Yes

↳ Is the messiah's whereabouts or time of coming known?

– No

↳ Is the messiah's purpose known?

– Yes

↳ Messiah is a political figure who restores political rule

– Yes

↳ Messiah is a priestly figure who restores religious traditions

– No

Is an eschatology present in the text?

– Yes

↳ Eschaton is in this lifetime

– Yes

↳ At specified time in future

– No

↳ At unspecified time in near future

– No

↳ At unspecified time in distant future

– Yes

↳ At some other time [specify]

– No

↳ Adherents need to perform specific tasks to bring about World's end

– No

↳ Divine judgment event

– Yes

↳ Restoration of the world

– Yes

↳ Start of a new temporal cycle

– Field doesn't know

↳ Establishment of new political system

– Yes

↳ Establishment of new religious system

– No

↳ Will anyone survive the eschaton?

– Yes

↳ All religious in-group members will survive

– No

↳ A subset of the religion in-group members will survive

– Yes

↳ All members of the sample region will survive

– No

↳ Everyone in the world will survive the eschaton

– No

Norms & Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the text?

– Yes

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious text?

– Yes

↳ What is the nature of this distinction?

– Strongly present & highlighted

↳ Are specifically moral norms prescribed by the text?

– Yes

↳ Specifically moral norms are implicitly linked to vague metaphysical concepts

– Yes

↳ Moral norms are explicitly linked to vague metaphysical entities

– Yes

↳ Linked to impersonal cosmic order (e.g. karma)

– No

↳ Linked in some way to an anthropomorphic being

– No

↳ Specifically moral norms are linked explicitly to commands of anthropomorphic being

– No

↳ Specifically moral norms are have no (sic: have no?) special connection to the metaphysical

– No

- ↳ Moral norms apply to (select all that apply)
 - All individuals within contemporary world

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the text?

– Yes

- ↳ Honesty/trustworthiness/integrity
 - Yes
- ↳ Courage (in battle)
 - No
- ↳ Courage (generic)
 - No
- ↳ Compassion/empathy/kindness/benevolence
 - Yes
- ↳ Mercy/forgiveness/tolerance
 - Yes
- ↳ Generosity/charity
 - Yes
- ↳ Selflessness/selfless giving
 - Yes
- ↳ Righteousness/moral rectitude
 - Yes
- ↳ Ritual purity/ritual adherence/abstention from sources of impurity
 - Yes
- ↳ Respectfulness/courtesy

– No

↳ Familial obedience/filial piety

– No

↳ Fidelity/loyalty

– Yes

↳ Cooperation

– No

↳ Independence/creativity/freedom

– No

↳ Moderation/frugality

– Yes

↳ Forbearance/fortitude/patience

– No

↳ Diligence/self-discipline/excellence

– No

↳ Assertiveness/decisiveness/confidence/initiative

– No

↳ Strength (physical)

– No

↳ Power/status/nobility

– No

↳ Humility/modesty

– No

↳ Contentment/serenity/equanimity

– No

↳ Joyfulness/enthusiasm/cheerfulness

– No

↳ Optimism/hope

– No

↳ Gratitude/thankfulness

– No

↳ Reverence/awe/wonder

– Yes

↳ Faith/belief/trust/devotion

– Yes

↳ Wisdom/understanding

– Yes

↳ Discernment/intelligence

– No

↳ Beauty/attractiveness

– No

↳ Cleanliness (physical)/orderliness

– No

↳ Other important virtues

– No

Advocacy of Practices

Does the text require celibacy (full sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence)?

– Yes



Monogamy (males)

– Field doesn't know



Monogamy (females)

– Field doesn't know



Other sexual constraints (males)

– Yes

Notes: Father and son should not "go in to the same girl" (2:7), possibly because this was considered incest according to Leviticus 18



Other sexual constraints (females)

– Field doesn't know

Does the text require castration?

– No

Does the text require fasting?

– Yes

Does the text require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods)?

– Field doesn't know

Does the text require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations?

– No

Does the text require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of adults?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of children?

– No

Does the text require self-sacrifice (suicide)?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of property/valuable items?

– Yes

Does the text require sacrifice of time (e.g. attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.)?

– Yes

Does the text require physical risk taking?

– No

Does the text require accepting ethical precepts?

– Yes

Does the text require marginalization by out-group members?

– No

Does the text require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household)?

– No

Does the text require participation in large-scale rituals?

– Yes

↳ On average, how many participants gather in one location?
– Field doesn't know

↳ Interval of time between performances (in hours)
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks?
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks?
– Field doesn't know

↳ Does participation entail synchronic practices?
– Yes

↳ Is there use of intoxicants?
– No

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present as indicated in the text?
– No

Does the text employ fictive kinship terminology?
– Yes

↳ Fictive kinship terminology is universal?
– No

↳ Fictive kinship terminology is widespread?
– Yes

↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon?
– No

Does the text include elements that are intended to be entertaining?
– No

Does the text specify sacrifices, offerings, and maintenance of a sacred space?
– No

Institutions & Production Environment of Text

Society & Institutions

Society of religious group that produced the text is best characterized as:
– A Faith Elect

Are there specific elements of society that have controlled the reproduction of the text?
– A Segmentary Lineage

Are there specific elements of society involved with the destruction of the text?

– Other

Notes: Text was not destroyed

Welfare

Does the text specify institutionalized famine relief?

– No

Does the text specify institutionalized poverty relief?

– No

Does the text specify institutionalized care for elderly & infirm?

– No

Other forms of welfare?

– Yes

Notes: The text advocates for the welfare of the vulnerable, but not specifically on an institutional level

Education

Are there formal educational institutions available for teaching the text?

– Field doesn't know

Are there formal educational institutions specified according to the text?

– No

Does the text make provisions for non-religious education?

– No

Does the text restrict education to religious professionals?

– No

Does the text restrict education among religious professionals?

– No

Is education gendered according to the text?

– No

Is education gendered with respect to this text and larger textual tradition?

– Yes

Does the text specify teaching relationships or ratios? (i.e.: 1:20; 1:1)

– No

Are there specific relationships to teachers that are advocated by the text?

– No

Are there worldly rewards/benefits to education according to the text specified by the text itself?

– No

Bureaucracy

Is bureaucracy regulated by this text?

– No

Public Works

Does the text detail interaction with public works?

– No

Taxation

Does the text specify forms of taxation?

– No

Warfare

Does the text mention warfare?

– Yes



Does the text dictate how to control an institutionalized military?

– No

↳ Does the text restrict/advocate for participation in exogenous military organizations?
– No

↳ Does the text celebrate/bemoan protection/subjugation by an exogenous military force?
– Yes

Food Production

Does the text mentioned food production/disbursement?

– Yes

↳ Does the text in question dictate how the religious group in question provide food for themselves?
– No

↳ Does the text celebrate/restrict food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question?
– No

↳ Which of the follow are forms of ritual food production [choose all that apply]?
– Pastoralism