

SHALL NOT THE LAND TREMBLE

This 8-week study will take a look at the Prophets Hosea and Amos. As a necessary part of this study, we will delve into the world of the 8th century before Christ in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. No knowledge of these Old Testament prophets is assumed.

ISRAEL IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

In the 8th century B.C. Israel was a divided nation, with the Northern Kingdom encompassing the lands of ten of the tribes of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, with its capital, Jerusalem, took in the lands of two tribes. The Northern Kingdom experienced its greatest time of prosperity ever during this century under the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.). Syria was waning and Assyria remained weak during the 40 years of Jeroboam's reign. During this time, his kingdom amassed wealth and extended their territories. In the words of Abraham Heschel in his book, *The Prophets*, there was "splendor in the land, elegance in the cities and might in the palaces."

Many in both kingdoms of Israel attributed their economic and military prosperity to God's blessing, the Lord's special favor showered in Israel as God's people. On the death of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom experiences political turmoil and begins to creep toward anarchy. Before the close of the century, the Northern Kingdom falls to the Assyrian Empire (in 721 B.C.).

PROPHETS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

While the rich of Israel get richer, the poor and needy are abused. The prophets find the Word of God burning in the hearts and they must speak out against injustice. As Heschel explains, "To us, injustice is injurious to the welfare of the people; to the prophets it is a deathblow to existence: to us, an episode; to them, a catastrophe, a

threat to the world...The prophet disdains those for whom God's presence is comfort and security; to him it is a challenge, an incessant demand...The prophet's word is a scream in the night. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven." Heschel also reminds us that "Few are guilty, all are responsible."

AMOS LEAVES HIS SYCAMORE TREES

Amos declares that he is neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but a dresser of sycamore trees. There was a prophetic office in Israel, a guild of those who speak for God. Amos was not from this group. He was in fact not even from the Northern Kingdom, but from Judah. God compelled Amos to leave all he knew to travel to the Northern Kingdom and prophesy of impending doom if the people did not return to the Lord their God.

Amos cried out against the neighboring countries as well as the Northern Kingdom itself for their reliance on military might rather than God, their social injustice, and their outward acts of piety which did not reflect the thoughts of their hearts. He was expelled from the temple at Bethel, and may have at that time returned to Israel to write down the prophetic oracles.

HOSEA AND A DRAMA IN THE STREETS

Hosea closely followed behind Amos, but he was a native rather than an outside agitator. The times had changed from Amos to Hosea as Assyria was on the rise as a military power. Within 14 years of the death of Jeroboam II, four kings are assassinated. The Northern Kingdom is sliding toward anarchy. The Prophet Hosea lives out his prophecy, living out the story of Israel's unfaithfulness to the one God. Hosea marries a prostitute, Gomer, who remains unfaithful to Hosea. Hosea is called to remain faithful to his wife in spite of how she treats him. Hosea's ministry embodies God's ongoing love for Israel. The theme of Hosea's dire warnings is God's compassionate and redeeming love that can't let go of Israel.



AN OVERVIEW

Here is an overview of the sections to be covered each of the eight weeks. Reading the text ahead of the class is helpful, not essential.

Week	Passage	General Topic
1	Amos 1:1, Hosea 1:1	The 8th century before Christ
2	Amos 1-4	For 3 transgressions and for 4
3	Hosea 1-3	Unfaithfulness—a 1/2 reet drama
4	Amos 5-6	The Death of Israel
5	Hosea 4-8	Self-destruction
6	Amos 7-9	Visions and the End
7	Hosea 9-11	A History of Infidelity
8	Hosea 12-14	Indignement and Blessing

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 OF THE PROPHETS
 HOSEA AND AMOS