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C0902 – January 14, 2009 – Amos 1:1-2:16 – Amos Sets The Trap

Let's open our Bibles to Amos 1. Remember, we're not teaching these in the canonical order, there are all kinds of different orders people have placed these in. I'm just teaching these chronologically. The earliest was Obadiah, then Joel, then Jonah, this book really comes on the heels of Jonah, these guys were contemporaries, they may have crossed paths, we don't know for sure but certainly Jonah's prophetic ministry in the northern kingdom set up the economic prosperity they were enjoying at the time and it also delayed the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom because that generation of Assyria repented and that means that for the time being Assyria is not a threat, they were in a kingdom building phase, Assyria was a kingdom on the rise and will be the threat in about 30 years but at this point they are not a threat and so the northern kingdom was enjoying peace and prosperity. That's when Amos comes with this message.

One of the first things you realize as you look at Amos 1 is there's a literary structure, that structure extends into chapter 2 and that's a very important structure. We want to come back to that tonight after we deal with verse 1 and 2. Verse 1 gives us the author, his vocation, the audience, the kings of the southern and northern kingdom at the time and a significant geophysical event that happened two years after his vision that serves as an omen of divine judgment. Let's read verses 1-2 to get the information then we'll come back and detail it out.

Verse 1, The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. ²He said, "The LORD roars from Zion And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn,

And the summit of Carmel dries up.” So evidently we’re in for a prophecy of judgment, that’s the main message.

Let’s start with the author, his name is Amos, his name means “burden” and like all the prophets their name sums up the theme of their prophetic ministry. When we studied Jonah, Jonah means “dove” and to the Hebrew mind the dove was a flighty little bird and the Book of Jonah is about His flight from God. Jonah was a flighty little prophet. Joel means “YHWH is God,” and the emphasis there is that there are no other gods, there’s only one God, YHWH, and to demonstrate this Joel presents the theme of the Day of the Lord which is the day of God’s judgment when he calls all nature forces as well as angelic beings to demonstrate His absolute sovereignty and rights over the cosmos. We could show more of these but I think we’ve sufficiently shown that each of the prophets’ names is a summary of his message or his ministry. In line with that Amos means “burden” and he carries a burdensome prophecy against the house of Israel.

As we said last week he was a prophet, a mouthpiece of God and one of God’s prosecuting attorneys in the Suzerainty-vassal treaty of the Mosaic Law. But his prophetic ministry was unique in at least two ways. For one, he prophesied to the northern kingdom but he’s from the southern kingdom. This is absolutely unique to Amos, every other prophet who prophesied in the northern kingdom was from the northern kingdom and vice versa, prophets, while they would say words about the other kingdom, normally prophesied to their own kingdom. The second uniqueness is that apparently this was his only assignment, he was not from the schools of the prophets, he did not prophecy on and off over a period of years, it’s a single gig, you’ve heard of a one hit wonder and then the group disappears off the screen, so it was for Amos, one prophetic stint and that was it.

Verse 1 doesn’t tell us much about Amos, he doesn’t give us his genealogy, all we know is his vocation and his hometown. So let’s look at these and see what we can learn. He has three vocations. The first vocation listed here is a shepherd, but the word is *noqed* and signifies a “sheepbreeder.” In other words he was not just a shepherd, he owned his own herd of sheep. Turn to Amos 7, verse 14, for the other two vocations, both related to being a breeder, they’re all agricultural jobs, he was a man of the field, a man of the wilderness, a rancher type. Verse 14, “Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am

not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.” In other words, prophet wasn’t my profession, he’s not denying that He’s been sent to prophesy, he’s denying that he was a prophet by vocation. Instead he says, I’m a herdsman which is a *boqer* which is a “cattleman” or a “shepherd,” in verse 15 it says he followed the flock, so we gather he raised his own sheep and he was also their shepherd. And I’m a grower of sycamore figs. This is a strange phrase, it literally says, “a nipper of sycamore figs.” A fig nipper. Now what in the world is this? There’s a lot of speculation but in the region where Amos led his sheep, and I’ll show you the terrain in a minute, I’ve got some pictures of the Tekoa region, and there’s not much there, it’s a rocky desert wilderness, so during a part of the year they had to trek down toward the Dead Sea, the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below sea level, and that’s the surface of the thing, the bottom of it is 2,600 feet below sea level, so you have a rapid decline in elevation from Tekoa which sits up on the mountainous ridge line that runs north and south through Israel and as you go east toward the Dead Sea you have lots of sub-environments along the way. One of those environments about 600 feet below sea level are the oasis regions along the Dead Sea. Places like Jericho, Ein Gedi, Qumran, this was the elevation suitable for these sycamore trees. And these sycamore which are not exactly like the North American sycamore but really something more like a mulberry, they grow these figs. Now the figs were not exactly the most desirable food but during one period of the year this was the best thing going, there literally was nothing else going, and as a shepherd you’ve got to feed your flock so they’d descend down to the regions of these sycamore groves to feed their flocks these figs. The problem was these figs were owned by farmers and so they had a little fee you had to pay if you wanted these for your flock, and that was you had to nip their figs. One of the problems with these figs was they didn’t quite ripen so you had to stick a thin sharp object into the fig to release some of the juice and it would ooze out and cause the fig to ripen, then they were worth eating. That would be nipping the fig. So he says “I’m a nipper of sycamore figs,” and he did that to feed his flock during the off season up near Tekoa. So he has three agricultural professions; he’s a breeder, a shepherd and a fig nipper. We’d basically say he was a rancher type. Some people have made him out to be a hillbilly or modern day cowboy. I don’t know if that’s very accurate. I think that’s going too far. But it is true that he worked outdoors, he lived a rugged lifestyle, he worked with plants and animals.

Now let's look at where he was from. Verse 1 tells us he was from Tekoa. Tekoa was a small town about 12 miles south of Jerusalem, you can see that Bethlehem was another nearby town. It's about 6 miles away. It was west of the Dead Sea in a region called the northern Negev. Here's a picture of the area from just south of Bethlehem, which gives you an idea of the terrain. You can see immediately this is not the Garden of Eden. This is the upper region of Israel's Negev desert. This was the region David, the shepherd boy worked in, he kept his father's sheep. He was from the town of Bethlehem, shepherding was popular in this region, Tekoa and Bethlehem were both shepherd towns. What these pictures can do for you is really make Ps 23 come alive. Ps 23 is one of the most famous songs in the entire OT. David composed it as a shepherd who was out in this terrain leading his sheep, trying to get them to water, trying to keep them safe from the dangers and he saw the spiritual parallels because the Lord leads us, the Lord satisfies our spiritual thirst, the Lord keeps us safe from dangers, the OT is very rich in this way and you can see from these men's environment they had a lot of spiritual insight. They took the terrain God created and they worked and when they looked at that they didn't just stop at the physical terrain, they looked past that to the spiritual terrain they had to walk. Let me point out some of these for you. Look at these hills, you get up close to these and they're pretty steep, you see this hill has these circular trails all along the side of it, that's where the shepherds still walk their sheep and goats today and the Hebrew has a word for this, it's the words of Ps 23 "the paths of righteousness" *magal tsedeq*, he leads me on the paths of righteousness, these are the paths, the Hebrew words means in the literal "circles of correct navigation," He leads me in the circles of correct navigation." And that had a lot of meaning to these shepherds because if you slip on one of these things it's adios, you're going way down and you're probably going to fall into another phrase from Ps 23 the "valley of the shadow of death." In other words, at the base of these you often had a cliff that went down into a valley below and the sun caused a shadow to cast over the edge. That's where you die down there and David is saying the Lord leads you along these paths and He keeps gives you sure footing and keeps you safe from death. And the spiritual import of this is that the Lord directs our steps, keeps us safe as we walk through a dangerous world, we face trials of many kinds but the Lord helps us through. So this had a very powerful meaning to shepherders like Amos, literally it was everyday, "Lord direct my steps, lead me to still waters, my life is in Your hands, keep me on the circular path of rightness because if

I fall off I'm dead." That's the background of Amos, he was a rugged man of the wilderness who God called out of the shepherding community of Tekoa for a single prophetic mission to the northern kingdom.

Alright, the third thing we see in verse 1 is the audience, who is the bulk of his prophecy aimed at? They are visions concerning Israel, and for those of you who don't know, in 931BC the kingdom of Israel divided, ten tribes went to the north and two tribes went to the south. From that point forward, Israel refers not to the twelve tribes but only to the ten in the north and the two in the south are known as Judah. So since he was from Judean territory he was probably of the tribe of Judah. Yet his prophecy is addressed to the northern kingdom and it's going to be delivered in Bethel, just north of Jerusalem, one of the two central religious shrines Jeroboam I set up back in 931 when the kingdom divided.

Then he gives us in v 1 the general time period, there were two kings ruling at the time, it was in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. The reason he says Jeroboam was the son of Joash is to distinguish this Jeroboam from the first Jeroboam who was son of Nebat. There's no reason to say anything like that of Uzziah because there's only one Uzziah who ruled as king of Judah. Now when did these two kings rule, we don't want to go into a full scale chronology here, we don't have enough information to do that, we just have a few markers. Uzziah, he was co-regent with his father Amaziah from 792–767BC and ruled independently from 767–740BC. Jeroboam II was a co-regent with his father Joash from 793–782BC and ruled independently from 782–753BC. Since only Uzziah and Jeroboam are mentioned in the introduction it is likely that Amos' mission to Israel and the earthquake which followed occurred between 767–753BC.ⁱ

Let's turn to 2 Kings 14 to get some background on these two kings. This passage discusses both kings; you can turn to Chronicles if you want to get more on Uzziah. I'm not too interested in Uzziah at this point because the prophecy is directed at Jeroboam and Israel. 2 Kings 14:21, "All the people of Judah took Azariah," that's another name for Uzziah, you might have that mentioned in your margin if you have a study Bible, Azariah is Uzziah, "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. ²²He built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers." Basically Uzziah's career if you

follow it in the Chronicles of the kings is one of success at first because he sought the Lord and then one of failure because he became prideful, he ends up dying a leper because he went into the Temple to offer incense and that was a no, no because he was a king not a priest and the Lord struck him with leprosy.

In verse 23 we come to Jeroboam, let's look at his career. "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel became king in Samaria, *and reigned* forty-one years. ²⁴He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin." In other words he went right along with what Jeroboam I instituted two centuries earlier, the worship of the golden calf at Dan and Bethel, the non-Levitical priest system, the false feast days, it was all following the Egyptian style of worship that Jeroboam I had brought in two centuries ago. It persisted and he didn't turn the people away from that. But verse 25, here's some good news. "He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. ²⁶For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, *which was* very bitter; for there was neither bond nor free, nor was there any helper for Israel. ²⁷The LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash." So there was economic prosperity during this period due to the border enlargements, we saw that last week, this was the golden era of the northern kingdom.

Turn back to Amos 1, there's one more note here on the date of Amos' prophecy that gives us some insight. You've got the reign of Uzziah and Jeroboam II and one other event that help with the date of the book. And the close of verse 1 says this all happened **two years before the earthquake**. Now, there were many earthquakes in Israel. Why is this one pulled out as significant? They were having an earthquake every other year. Turn to Zech 14. If you ever noticed on the map of Israel there's a line of mountains running north-south in Israel. Jerusalem sits smack dab along those mountains and that's why you always read in the NT, "they went up to Jerusalem," because no matter which direction your coming from it's up to Jerusalem. Why are those mountains there? Well the reason basically has to do with the Syrian-African Rift Valley, also called the Great Rift Valley. This

is one of the most fantastic geological features in the world. It's 3,700 miles long and goes from Syria to the north all the way to central Africa in the south. That's why the Dead Sea is so low in elevation and so deep. It's literally like someone took a knife and cut a deep fracture in the earth. There are lakes in Africa over 4,500 feet deep, some of the deepest lakes on earth sit in this rift valley, and whenever you have that of course you have earthquakes nearby. Well apparently a significant earthquake happened two years after Amos prophesied, the significance of that is it was an omen of divine judgment. The way the ancient Israelites interpreted earthquakes and other strange geophysical or atmospheric phenomena was as a sign that God was going to judge and so it's God's way of confirming to Israel what was said by Amos, it's God's way of confirming his prophets. Now in Zech 14:4-5, this gives you the scale of this earthquake, verse 4 is the second coming of Jesus Christ, see if you can catch the comparison. "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south." That's a massive geophysical event which just shows you the second coming of Christ is not a quiet event, it's not a ooey-goey feeling, it's accompanied by high energy geophysical catastrophes in the earth's crust, verse 5, "You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!" And so this earthquake in Uzziah's day caused widespread panic and this was remembered in Israeli history, not only in Zechariah's day but we have the 1st century Jewish historian, Josephus, giving an account of this. He does something interesting, he connects Uzziah's attempt to go into the Temple and offer incense as the thing that sets off this earthquake, in other words, God was seriously unhappy about this in Josephus' eyes, "While Uzziah was in this state, and making preparations [for futurity], he was corrupted in his mind by pride, and became insolent, and this on account of that abundance which he had of things that will soon perish, and despised that power which is of eternal duration (which consisted in piety towards God, and in the observation of his laws); so he fell by occasion of the good success of his affairs, and was carried headlong into those sins of his father, which the splendor of that prosperity he enjoyed, and the glorious actions he had done, led him into, while he was not able to govern himself well about them. Accordingly, when a remarkable

day was come, and a general festival was to be celebrated, he put on the holy garment, and went into the temple to offer incense to God upon the golden altar, which he was prohibited to do by Azariah the high priest, who had fourscore priests with him, and who told him that it was not lawful for him to offer sacrifice, and that “none besides the posterity of Aaron were permitted so to do.” And when they cried out, that he must go out of the temple, and not transgress against God, he was wroth at them, and threatened to kill them, unless they would hold their peace. In the meantime, a great earthquake shook the ground,^d and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king’s face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately; and before the city, at a place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and rolled itself four furlongs, and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king’s gardens, were spoiled by the obstruction.”ⁱⁱ And it goes on to describe how he had leprosy the rest of his days and died. So, we have extra-biblical account of this, contrary to the liberal who always attacks the Bible as just an ancient religious book. So Amos wrote ~762BC, the earthquake occurred two years later, ~760BC.

Verse 2, He said, “The LORD roars from Zion And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds’ pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up.” The LORD is pictured as a lion roaring. When a lion roars it leaps on its prey. Here the whole land is His prey. The shepherds pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up and that’s a figure of speech called merism. A merism is like the phrase “lock stock and barrel,” when we say that we’re referring to parts of the gun but the parts stand for the whole. Well Amos mentions two parts of the land, they refer to the whole, lock, stock and barrel, the whole land will face agricultural devastation because they’ve violated the Mosaic Contract, Lev 26 and Deut 28.

Now we want to shift gears and get into the literary structure of chapters 1-2. A ten year old can see there’s a structure here. So let’s observe some of the structure then we’ll come back and work with the significance of the structure, that’s the hard part. What is Amos trying to accomplish with this technique? You always want to pay attention to structure. The Holy Spirit embeds structure because He wants to get something across. Some passages of the Bible, such as Gen 1:1-2:4 are highly structured, the Lord said, the Lord did, the Lord called, evening and morning, that’s a strict structure and

it's there for a purpose; don't skip by that, if you do you'll miss the import. It's always there for you to think about and so we want to think about the structure of Amos 1-2. This is one of the clearest examples of a prophetic technique used by the writing prophets. We want to see if we can unearth this technique 28 centuries later.

Starting in verse 3, just skim down, what jumps out at you? For example take verse 3, 6, 9, 11. What do you see? "Thus says the Lord..." that's an introductory formula, it continues in verse 13, 2:1, 2:4 and 2:6. Every time the Lord introduces a new section it starts with those words. What else do you see in those same verses as you skim down that's a part of that formula? The most obvious thing people see is the formula "For three transgressions and for four." You see that in verse 3, Verse 6, "For three transgressions of Tyre and for four." Verse 9, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four." This goes on and on, take chapter 2:6, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four." That might be an important formula, what does it mean "for three transgressions and for four," that's a formula used by the prophets called the x/x+1 formula. Amos is following a prophetic pattern, this was common among the prophets, so we want to come back to that, analyze that more carefully. What else do you see here if we compare these sections, hopefully your Bible has them sectioned off. In verse 3, 6, 9, again, what do you see that's the same? "I will not revoke it's punishment," that is the city or nations punishment and then a reason is given. Why? "Because..." of something they did. See that phrase, drop down to verse 6, "I will not revoke it's punishment, Because they deported an entire population." Come down to verse 11, I will not revoke it's punishment, Because he pursued his brother with the sword," you see it again in verses 13, 2:1, 2:1, 2:4, 2:6. It's absolutely consistent. City after city after city you have this structure. So you have a nation indicted and then the charges are given.

But there's more, let's go to some different verses, compare verse 4 with 7 and 10. How would you classify these statements? What are these declarations of? The judgments. What else do you notice about all the judgments, what are the common elements in all the judgments as you go through verses 4, 7, 10, 12, 14; every verse that starts with the word "So." 2:2; 2:5? So I will do what? I will send **fire** and **consume** what? **your citadels**, that's their military fortresses. You can go through each cities judgment and it's always the fire

and the citadels, the warning of military defeat. Extensive and devastating military defeat is coming on all these nations from some foreign power.

So let's put this together, if you were to outline each of these sections how would you do it? We're going back to grade school now, if you can remember how to outline. Let's just mark off the sections first, what's the first section in chapter 1. vv 3-5, then vv 6-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-15; chapter 2:1-3, 4-5 and then Israel, 6-actually to 16, the rest of the chapter. Now let's just go back to the first one, Damascus and outline it, let's get the pattern because this is where the pattern is established. And we'll give a heading to each section in the pattern. You get the number of headings by looking at the transition words. For example look at verse 4, let's do Damascus together.

³Thus says the LORD,

“For three transgressions of Damascus and for four
Indictment

I will not revoke its *punishment*,

Because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron.

Charges

⁴“So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael
And it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad.

⁵“I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven,
Judgment

And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden;

So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir,”

Says the LORD.

Because, that's a transition word, there's some reason Damascus is Indicted. Damascus or the people of Damascus did something. Here they “threshed Gilead with implements of iron.” That's the Charge. God is charging with this sin. So we have Damascus indicted, then Damascus is charged, those are two headings, then what does it say, verse 4, “**So** I will...” and this is the Judgment, this is what the Lord is going to do to Damascus because of what she had done. That's just a sample of the pattern, but the pattern follows in each section. That's how you want to outline them. You can fill in the details later. We're just trying to get the overall structure of these sections. So let's put some headings on these three sections we see over and over and over.

First, we have the Indictment, city 1 is Indicted, then the Charges, city 1 is Charged, and finally the Judgment, city 1 is given a Judgment. And this goes on for city 2, city 3 and so forth. It's a consistent pattern of

- I. Indictment
- II. Charges
- III. Judgment

or is it? Does this fit for every section, or is there a difference, oh and by the way, count the sections, count the cities, count them as a Jew, numbers are important to Jews, so let's count starting in chapter 1:4, Damascus, that's one, verse 6, Gaza, city two, verse 9, Tyre, verse 11, Edom, that's four, verse 13, Moab, chapter 2:1, Ammon, 2:4, Judah, that's seven. Is seven an important number in Jewish thought. Seven days of creation, seven is the number of completion, on the seventh day what does Genesis say? God had finished, all the work, He had completed the universe. So in the Jewish mind as they hear this, Amos reaches the seventh nation, it's Judah, this is the end. They must be listening with extreme pleasure; these are all their surrounding enemies. Think psychologically what's going on with these people, they're hearing this message of judgment against all their enemies, first, three foreign enemy powers, Damascus, Gaza and Tyre, then three blood relative enemies; Edom, Ammon and Moab and seventh, the capstone of it all, their sister kingdom enemy, Judah. Put yourself in their shoes, you're an American what nations would love to get rid of America. Probably most of them. But Iran would have to be at the top of the list, Ahmadinejad, you think he likes America? We're the great Satan, that's how he refers to us, Russia, who is aligned with Iran, they don't like us, Putin is a dictatorial and oppressive ruler, we could add most of the Arab countries. These are our sworn enemies. Now, assume someone legitimate came with an analysis that the Iranians, the Russians and the Arab countries were going to be wiped off the map and here's why. Do you think our country would enjoy hearing about the defeat of our greatest enemies and the future security and stability of our nation? That's what Amos is doing, he's on the doorsteps of the king pronouncing God's judgment on all their enemies. Shalom Paul writes, Amos' "captive northern audience, who must have been enjoying every minute of it, would psychologically be in a state of mind which would lead them to believe that he had reached his climax with his fulmination against Judah." But the surprise is that the seventh nation listed is not the last, there's an eighth.

They did not expect this. You know what this is called, this is called entrapment. How do you trap an animal? You lure it in, you draw it in, you put some bait out there. The animal moves in very cautiously, it checks its surroundings, it sees no threat so it takes the bait, but the second he does the trap springs and he's caught. What's going on here? What is Amos doing? The exact same thing. He's luring them in. He's grabbing the attention of the northern kingdom. And now that he's got all the press right there, the media is recording every word. And they think, "Oh, this Amos is great, pronouncing military doom on all our surrounding enemies, we're about to enjoy even greater economic prosperity, we're going to be the superpower in the region, this is great," and then the spring traps in 2:6 and he pronounces doom on them. This is called entrapment and the OT prophets use this on occasion, a very effective tool of communication.

So why does he start with seven foreign nations before he gets to Israel? No other prophet ever does this anywhere in the entire OT. They always start with Israel or Judah and then move to address foreign powers. But Amos is just the reverse; this is an absolutely unique structure. He goes at the foreign nations first and then Israel. What is he doing? I suggest he's setting a trap, he's ensnaring them. Shalom Paul again explains, "The minute he continued his eighth and unexpected oracle...they would have been taken completely unawares, and Amos, who delighted over and over again in making use of surprise endings, would have forcefully and compellingly made his final indictment." So the structure that a ten year old can see here, the point of that after careful analysis is that it's a trap.

So having compared these sections, we've said you see this similar structure over and over and over, Indictment, Charges, Judgment...Indictment, Charges, Judgment. Every nation has this. But now we want to look at the contrasts between the first seven sections and the eighth, Israel. We've said that was a surprise, they didn't expect that. But look at 2:6, everything starts off the same, but does it follow the same pattern? What do you see here that you don't see in the other sections. Let's read verses 9-11. **"Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height *was* like the height of cedars And he *was* strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below. ¹⁰"It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And I led you in the wilderness forty years That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite. ¹¹"Then I raised**

up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?” declares the LORD. Do you read anything like this in the other sections? What is this? The Lord is reciting what He'd done for them. And yet still they were rejecting Him. What else do you notice that's different than the prior sections? Notice the amount of content. There's a whole lot more said against Israel than the other nations. What point is that making if I give two or three verses to the other nations and four times that to the nation Israel? What does that communicate? That Israel's guilt exceeds all the others, that "Yeah, those nations are in trouble," but Israel is in the worst trouble of all. And this was totally unexpected, they did not see this coming, when he sprung the trap they were like a deer in the headlights, they were caught and they couldn't move and while he had a captive audience he unleashed a fury of God's judgment on them.

That is a very effective technique Amos is using and we just wanted to start drawing that out tonight, looking at the strategy of this sheepbreeder from Tekoa. This man is not a goofball, he brilliantly draws them in, "Oh yes Israel, the foreign powers that hate you are coming under judgment," and once he'd drawn them in, he sprung this trap, "But you Israel have surpassed them all, you Israel will be the primary object of the Lord's judgment." So it's a literary structure of entrapment and that's the main idea of chapters 1-2. There had been grace, every one of these nations had enjoyed a period of grace but the day of grace doesn't go on forever, there comes a time when the day of grace is over and judgment comes. God lowers the boom. Every nation in these chapters had reached that point, they had filled up the measure of their iniquity but Israel had exceeded them all. She was the worst of all and her Suzerain was bent. To get them to hear this message Amos had to use the strategy of entrapment.

Alright, next week we'll get into the details, that's an overview.

ⁱ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006).

^d This account of an earthquake at Jerusalem, at the very same time when Uzziah usurped the priest's office, and went into the sanctuary to burn incense, and of the consequences of the earthquake, is entirely wanting in our

other copies, though it be exceeding like to a prophecy of Jeremiah, now in Zech. 14:4–5; in which prophecy mention is made of “fleeing from that earthquake, as they fled from this earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah;” so that there seems to have been some considerable resemblance between these historical and prophetic earthquakes.

ⁱⁱ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged*, Includes Index. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987), Ant 9.221-227.

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