

Amos 7:7-15^{iv} and Psalm 85^v

This is what the LORD God showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'" And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

^{iv} About Amos 7:7-15

Amos is the first of the prophets whose words have come down to us in a separate book. Although he was from Judah his mission was to the northern kingdom of Israel about the years 760–750 B.C. when, under Jeroboam II, the kingdom was at the height of its prosperity. Its wealth and power rested, however, upon injustice.

Today's reading follows the third of five visions (7:1-9:6) of the Lord's judgment upon the people. In response to the first and second visions, Amos had interceded for the people and God had relented, but now the condition of the nation is made so evident Amos cannot plead for them. By the Lord's measure, they are irrevocably warped (2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 34:11).

Today's reading describes what happens when Amos incurs the anger of Amaziah, the representative of civil religion, for attacking the king, and he is told to ply his trade

elsewhere. Amos answers that he is not a 'professional' prophet. He does not make his living at it (1 Samuel 9:6-10), nor is he a member of the guild of prophets (2 Kings 2:3; 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Kings 22:6). He is merely a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees. This seasonal occupation meant puncturing the fig-like fruit, food only for the poor, so that it would grow large enough to eat. Rather, Amos has been constrained by the Lord to speak God's word. (3:8b).

▼ Psalm 85:8-13▼

I will listen to what the LORD God is saying, *
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to him.
Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, *
that his glory may dwell in our land.
Mercy and truth have met together; *
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Truth shall spring up from the earth, *
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, *
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness shall go before him, *
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.