

The Attackers: Shepherd Leaders: Amos: the Jewish King Evaluation Report Uses David as the Standard, 1 Kgs 15:11; Amos's Ministry to Northern Kingdom, 761–759 B.C.; Book of Amos Written in 759 B.C.; Book Contains Musical Structure; Amos Composes a Requiem: Verse 2 is the Kyrie: "The Lion roars from Zion": Jesus Christ Initiates the First Cycle of Discipline; Capstick Describes How Lions Attack Their Prey

33. During the time of the divided kingdom there were only five rulers who received a passing grade from the Lord.
35. The Lord's critique of these and other kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms may be regarded as KERs: King Evaluation Report.
36. The monarchs of the Northern Kingdom are compared with Jeroboam I with a comment similar to this one:

1 Kings 15:34 - Baasha \bā'-a-sha\ did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

37. The Northern Kingdom had 19 kings, 18 of which received a negative KER. Shallum \shāl'-um\ was the only exception. Reason? He reigned only four weeks before being assassinated by Menahem \mēn'-a-hēm\ (2 Kings 15:13–14).
38. The Southern Kingdom had five kings with positive KERs: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah. These all followed in the steps of David, for example, Asa's KER is recorded in:

1 Kings 15:11 - Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father.¹

v. 12 - He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols which his fathers² had made.

39. The honorable reigns of these five helped sustain the Southern Kingdom. Judgment was to fall on the Northern Kingdom first, but not without adequate warnings from many prophets who forecasted its impending fall, notably Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos.
40. The Book of Amos was written around 759 B.C. Its warnings were directed toward the degenerate Northern Kingdom, although the surrounding nations receive some attention.
41. The degeneracy was wide-spread, including every facet of society. The eight stages of reversionism working in concert among the Israeli people resulted in involvement in syncretic religions – a combination of the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations that surrounded the Northern Kingdom.
42. Grace before judgment has always been the policy of God toward His people. He always warns before He disciplines.
43. It is typical for God to grant client nations a forty-year grace period before imposing the five cycles of discipline.

¹ "This word, besides its natural sense of progenitor (Genesis 19:31), has a number of other meanings, as: (1) Any ancestor, near or remote (1 Kings 15:11). (2) Founder, i.e., the first ancestor of a tribe or nation (Genesis 10:21). (3) Benefactor, as doing good and providing for others as a father (Job 19:16). (4) Teacher, from the idea of parental instruction (1 Samuel 10:12)" (Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. [Chicago: Moody Press, 1966], 346–47).

² Rehoboam and Abijam (1 Kings 14:31–15:1–3).

44. Such was the case for the Northern Kingdom; Amos began his ministry in 761 B.C. and forty years later in 721 B.C. Israel fell to the Assyrian army under Shalmaneser III.
45. The underlying principle that emerges in the Book of Amos is that the Pivot is always preserved. The Lord may shake a nation to its foundations through the five cycles of discipline, but through it all the Pivot remains encapsulated.
46. Amos was the prophet selected by God to warn the Northern Kingdom about this coming judgment. He did not write his prophecy and then go to the Northern Kingdom and deliver a speech.
47. Amos traveled all over the kingdom spending months at selected locations proclaiming his warnings of coming judgment.
48. When he returned to Tekoa, Amos was inspired by God to commit his prophecies to writing.

Amos 1:1 - The report of Amos from Tekoa, a sheep herdsman, and that which he prophesied 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. (CTL)

49. The timing of the public ministry of Amos is interesting because of the forty-year grace period before judgment. Shalmaneser III and his Assyrian army conquered Israel in 721 B.C., so this means Amos's ministry must have begun forty years before.

50. This excerpt sheds light on this timeframe:

The phrase "two years before the earthquake" (1:1) limits the date of the prophecy to a narrow period, perhaps no more than a year and probably much shorter than that. It is difficult to find an exact time in which Amos's mission would fit. Several possibilities may, however, be noted. Jotham, Uzziah's son, acceded to the regency of Judah when Uzziah was stricken with leprosy (c. 750 B.C.). That 1:1 mentions only Uzziah and not Jotham may point to a time before Jotham's accession.

This would support a date before 750 B.C. for the northern ministry of Amos. If the superscription reflects this, Amos would have delivered his oracles before 750 B.C. The earthquake referred to in 1:1 may have occurred around 760 B.C., according to excavations at Hazor (Y. Yadin et al, *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations*, 1956 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960], pp. 24, 26, 36–37).

In light of these things, it seems best to place the prophetic ministry of Amos sometime before 760 B.C. This is consonant with the narrow scope of the superscription (1:1).³

49. Therefore the date of Amos's speaking ministry occurred around 761 B.C. and lasted for about two years. The writing of the prophecy can therefore be placed at around 759 B.C.
50. Under the mandate to write, Amos composes a requiem mass for the Northern Kingdom. Hebrew hymnology is seen throughout the book, specifically in 1:2, just noted, which functions as the Kyrie: "The Lord Roars from Zion."

³ McComiskey, 7:275.

Amos 1:2 - And He said, "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem: and the habitations [**pastures**] of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither. (KJV)

51. This verse begins with the opening lines of an ancient Hebrew military hymn. These hymns had a consistent formula:
 - (1) The divine name stands at the head of the first segment. It is meaningful to note that in a Hebrew sentence there is a fixed word order: the verb comes first and the subject of the verb follows. A normal reading would be, "He roars, the Lord." Thus Amos emphasizes the divine name by placing it first. This was also customary in the ancient military hymns.
 - (2) The place of Yahweh's departure is introduced by the word "from."
 - (3) The effect of His coming is portrayed by descriptive verbal forms, i.e., the dried up pastures and withered Carmel.
 - (4) Phenomena of nature are the subjects of the verbs. Here it is divinely induced drought.
52. The roaring is that of a lion. The phrase "utters His voice" in the King James Version is the Hebrew idiom for thunder. The entire thrust of Amos's message is expressed in this verse.
53. An interesting theory among biblical scholars suggests that the heavily liturgical nature of Amos indicates the prophet went to the palace of Jeroboam II accompanied by a chorus and this entire passage was presented in choral form.
52. This may be taken with a grain of salt. Yet it is noteworthy that not only does the Book of Amos take on a significant hymnic style in verse two, but also 21 of the 28 vowel sounds in verse two are long.
53. By the use of alliteration, repetition of sounds, and onomatopoeia, the vocal imitation of a sound, there is the suggestion of rolling thunder:

Amos 1:2 - *Ye-ya-mar YHWH me-siy-yon e-sha-ag Ye-ru-sha-la-yim e-na-than qol wa-a-bal lu-ne-weth ha-ro-yim we-bash rosh kar-mel.*

54. The word "roar" – **לִשְׁעַר (sha'ag)** – the noise made by a lion in the midst of an attack.
 - (1) When a lion stalks its prey, the victim never knows it is too late until he hears the roar of his captor.
 - (2) A lion patiently waits until its victim is well within range of a short, rapid charge. When he roars, the outcome is no longer in doubt.
 - (3) Having chosen a victim, a lion will usually stick with his choice, no matter how many other animals are within easy reach.
 - (4) The charge of a lion occurs in this typical sequence: **(a)** a quick jerk of the tail tuft, **(b)** a paralyzing roar, and **(c)** a low, incredibly fast charge which can cover a hundred yards in just over three seconds.
55. In verse two, we see all three of these characteristics regarding the Lord's chastisement of Israel:

- (1) A quick jerk of the tail tuft. This indicates that the lion has made the volitional decision to charge. Once the tail tuft jerks, the rest is sure to follow.

Such is the case with the phrase, “And He said.” Once the Lord decided to speak through the prophet, the rest is sure to follow.

- (2) The paralyzing roar. Once the lion roars, the outcome is no longer in doubt. Jesus Christ is described as charging from Mount Zion with a mighty roar of judgment.
- (3) The incredibly fast charge. The lion, once committed, covers the ground between volition and target with blinding speed. Once the Lord decides to execute judgment, the results are terrible and swift.

56. Peter Hathaway Capstick was a professional big-game hunter in Central Africa, now retired. He has written books on his experiences as a guide for big- game hunters. Here is an excerpt from his chapter “Lion” in his book *Death in the Long Grass*:

... contributing to a lion's dangerousness is the combination of his speed and strength and the small target he offers in a frontal charge. If I had to pick a common trait of all dangerous game, besides the fact that they can kill you, it would have to be that they are all so unbelievably fast. In times of stress their movements are virtually nothing but blurs, a very unnerving fact at a time when you yourself are probably scared witless.

A typical charge by a lion from sixty feet takes a blinking of an eye. Add to this the blood-curdling vocal display that accompanies the rush, and you will see why there have been many men who never even got a shot off, let alone a winner. Many lion charges are successful because, considering the velocity, the gunner doesn't hold a low enough lead factor. Also, the anatomy of a lion is such that he has no skull above the eyebrows, usually just a mass of fatty tissue and mane. (p. 50)

Lions do very odd things to otherwise stable, sober people. I had a client in Zambia once, who shall go unnamed, who had a great chance at a lion that was very well known in the area, a tremendous black-maned monster called the Mwangwalala lion. As lions go, he was a real beaut, well over nine feet and with an anthracite neckpiece that grew down to his cuticles.

We were checking a bait one morning when I caught a movement out of the corner of an eye and saw this lion walking sedately across a small dambo,⁴ of flat, as casually as you please. (pp. 56–57)

⁴ “Dambo is a word used for a class of complex shallow wetlands in central, southern and eastern Africa, particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe. They may be substantially dry at the end of the dry season. The definition “Dambo is a word used for a class of complex shallow wetlands in central, southern and eastern Africa, particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe. They may be substantially dry at the end of the dry season. The definition for scientific purposes has been proposed as “seasonally waterlogged, predominantly grass covered, depressions bordering headwater drainage lines” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dambo#cite_note-Mackel-20).

I told the gentleman to please place a large hole in it with all dispatch, and he got into shooting position. Five times he worked the bolt of his .338 custom Mauser, but the lion did not fall. In fact, he hardly hurried his stately exit after a disdainful glance at us. My client was doing everything right except for one minor item: he had forgotten to pull the trigger. As the saying goes, I kid you not. He was positive he was firing the rifle, in fact, became furious at me when I told him he had merely worked the bolt of the action. Only when I picked up the unfired cartridges and gave them back to him did he believe me. In the excitement he was *positive* he was actually shooting at the lion, and to this day I suspect he wonders if I pulled some sort of a practical joke.

Another hunter friend of mine reports that, upon seeing his first lion at close range, his client threw away his rifle and ran like a lunatic straight after the big cat. The lion, fortunately, wasn't having any, although what might have happened if the client had caught him might have made interesting reading.

I don't know about you, but I still get a funny feeling in the pit of my stomach when I flip on the Late Show and see the poor old MGM bloke doing his thing. Even though most African lions are afraid of man on general principles, Africa is a mind-bogglingly big place, and it's going to be some time before you can bet the beer money that the next lion you bump into won't be the wrong one.⁵ (p. 57)

⁵ Peter Hathaway Capstick, *Death in the Long Grass* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 50, 56–57.