



Handout for week of 7-9-18 Mark 6:7-13 & Amos 7: 12-15

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Stone, Naomi. [A Divine Drop](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Speaking our Truth from a Deeper Place](#)

[https://newmelleray.org/Homily\\_Library](https://newmelleray.org/Homily_Library)

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Amos 7: 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos: 'O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; 13 but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.' 14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah: 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees; 15 and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said unto me: Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.

#### COMMENTARY:

Today's scripture gives us the prophet Amos. In the only biographical moment in the nine chapter book, we see the prophet being evicted from Bethel, in Israel. Amos isn't from Israel, the northern of the two kingdoms. He is from Judea. He is told to return to his own place. Today we see Amos arrested and accused of trespassing. It is a diversion from what he is trying to tell them. The priest Amaziah, director of the shrine and temple at Bethel, is trying to keep Amos marginalized, and mute his message. He shifts the issue to trespassing. He also accuses him of being professional prophet. Amos denies this. He does not prophesy

for pay, but has been called by God for a special purpose. Israel cannot continue on the path it has lately chosen. It needs to take more seriously its responsibilities to its people. Its leaders can no longer indulge themselves and ignore their people, or they will soon have to pay. The wolf, whose cohorts are covered in purple and gold, is at the gate. Pg. 101. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005.

#### Israel Becomes "Religion" with Move to Universal God

The concept began to change in the 800s BCE. The Assyrians, desiring hegemony over the world, gave impetus to the very idea of a single, unified world, an idea that transplanted itself into an emerging Israel and was transformed into a spiritual concept. It was such an idea that the prophet Amos (c. 751 BCE) adapted when he asserted that God was not just the God of the Israelites, but of all people, of the whole world. Amos concluded that if the Jews were faithless, God could rescind the covenant made with the Jews and give it to another people, assuming the other people accepted God's commandments. Amos, of course, preached a fidelity to the covenant that would ensure God's continuing favor. The startled Israelites heard from the prophet that their God was independent of them and could exist without them if they did not adhere to God's commandments. Amos, the first universalist, could not fully comprehend the implications of his own interpretation. He believed God could enter into only one covenant at a time rather than entering simultaneous covenants. Also, Amos could not conceive of Israel worshipping God outside the land of Israel.

Amos's disciple Isaiah (c. 740-700 BCE), also noting Assyrian power, concluded that it, like Israel, was susceptible to God's ethical teachings. This was a vital step for Jewish universalism, for a critical connection had been made. Isaiah concluded that if God is God of the whole world, not just Israel, and if God had revealed divine laws at Mount Sinai, then it follows that those laws must apply not just to Israel, but to the whole world. One of the defining moments of Jewish history was the exile of Jews from the land of Israel in 586 BCE. The exile had many significant effects. It destroyed the tribal structure of the Israelites. The severing of national identity from the overall identity of the people made the religious elements of the people paramount. The rabbinate based on scholarship replaced the priesthood based on lineage; synagogues and academies replaced the Temple; and Torah study and prayer replaced sacrifices. The Israelites, a national people, became Jews, the followers of a religion.

#### Portable God Means Gentiles Outside of Israel Can Adopt Jewish Religion

At some point, the prophet Jeremiah sent a letter to the Babylonian exiles telling them to pray for the welfare of their settlement in Babylon. The revolutionary theological change was that Jeremiah, altering the views of Amos and Hosea, argued that God could be worshipped outside the land of Israel.

Such an insight about God transformed not only the theological views of the Israelites, but their view of gentiles living outside the Holy Land. Just as the concept of a "portable God" made it possible for Israelites to retain their identity outside their promised land, so, too, did such a concept of God allow for gentiles living outside the land to join the people, not by moving to the land of Israel, but by adopting the religious views of the Jews. Non-Jews could join the Jewish people by worshipping God, by renouncing their pagan ways, and by accepting new beliefs