

## Prophets – Fighters for the justice of God

### Tasks

1. Work out the specifics for biblical prophets.
2. Do some research (on the internet or in a library) on the "option for the poor" and make notes about your findings.
3. Amos is regarded as a so-called "prophet of doom". Explain what this means. .
4. Discuss which "prophets of doom" exist nowadays. Describe their significance for our society and their acceptance in society.

In the colloquial context, prophets are often mentioned in the same breath or in connection with fortune-tellers or seers and thus primarily as people who look into the future. However, this view fails to recognise the essential significance of prophets in a biblical context. For in the Bible, prophecy is first and foremost always a statement on the time, both with regard to unsuccessful and successful lives. Prophets take a critical look at the present, naming current conditions and the resulting possible consequences for the future. As such, prophecy is certainly characterised by a look into the future, but always starting from the present and referring to it.

The political explosiveness of the prophets became clear in the context of the socio-historical interpretation of the Bible. In particular, the theology of liberation originating from Latin America made it clear that many of the prophets stood up for the oppressed; their experience of God is characterised by God's justice, which is equipped with a special regard to the socially marginalised, excluded or disadvantaged people. In this context, the term "option for the poor" was coined.

### Prophet Amos

A typical representative of these prophets is Amos. Amos was a cattle farmer and sycamore planter by birth (1:1; 7:14) from Tekoa, south of the city of Bethlehem. Towards the end of the reign of the politically and economically extremely successful King Jeroboam II in the 8th century BC (3:3-8; 7:15) he was sent to the Northern kingdom of Israel as a prophet of divine appointment. He worked there for a short time until his expulsion at the sanctuary of Bet-El (House of God). The main accusation made by this oldest prophet of the Scriptures was directed against the conditions in the state, in the administration, in the judiciary and in the economy, which were unworthy of the people of God. Because the upper classes were degrading the people of lower origin and insecure social status to mere objects of their desire for gain, power and pleasure and thus break the "law of God", Amos proclaims God's death sentence for the kingdom of Israel. Amos rejects a worship of God that is limited to worship and service as contrary to the divine will (5:21-26). For Amos, God is so much a "God for mankind" that inhumanity and the violation of fundamental human rights entail divine judgement not only for the people of Israel as God's people, but also for all peoples of the world (1:3 - 2:3). Amos announces a "day of the Lord" that will "bring darkness and not light" (5:18 - 20). Only those who follow the divine will and place justice and righteousness at the centre of their actions have a future. In the eyes of Amos, however, this is only a small "remnant" that will be saved (5:15)