

• *God's judgement on the nations*

Amos continues to portray the roars of the roaring lion, about to pounce upon the nations surrounding Israel. Amos looks around at the nations near Israel and announces God's judgement against them. Damascus was condemned for its inhumane treatment of Gilead. ¹ In 1:6–10 two more nations are addressed.

¹ 1:3

The Philistines

What makes God angry with the Philistines is their using people for profit. Philistines were condemned for kidnapping whole communities in order to sell them as slaves. Moving from the north-east (Aram) to the south-west (Philistia) Amos next addresses Gaza, the mightiest Philistine town, and three other Philistine towns (Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron).

• *Condemned for using people for profit*

*"This is what Yahweh has said:
"For three transgressions by Gaza,
and especially for four, I will not reverse my decision.
Because they took into captivity an entire community,
to hand them over to Edom." ¹*

¹ 1:6

There had been times when the Philistines had attacked Israel with the purpose of carrying off whole villages as slaves (as the Amalekites did to Ziklag in 1 Samuel 30:1–2). This would probably be part of an organised effort on the part of Israel's enemies.

• *To be judged soon*

God will soon act in judgement against the Philistines.

*"So I will send fire against the walls of Gaza,
and it will consume its citadels. And I will cut off the
sovereign from Ashdod, and the one who wields the
sceptre I will cut off from Ashkelon;
and I will bring back my hand against Ekron, and the
Philistines will perish even to the
remnant." My Lord Yahweh has spoken! ¹*

¹ 1:7-8

God's punishment would be to wipe out of existence the defences of the city. The king would die. The population would be wiped out. Let us apply what Amos says to ourselves.

1. *The sacredness of people disregarded*

1. **The wickedness Amos mentions is a matter of disregarding the sacredness of people.** The Philistines were using people as things, disregarding the sufferings that were involved in slavery. They were putting commerce and profit above compassion and mercy. Part of the wickedness of the human race is our ingrained habit of self-centredness. So preoccupied do men and women become with our own interests and our own advantage, we begin to disregard altogether the claims of entire communities, ignoring what others are going through while we get what we want. We all are self-centred in this way to a lesser or greater degree. But it makes God angry.

2. An irreversible decision of judgement

2. **When God's anger is roused, He may take against us an irreversible decision of judgement.** *'For three transgressions . . . and especially for four, I will not reverse my decision'*. There comes a point when God is so roused to anger, after He has been patient for so long, that He eventually says *'I will not reverse my decision'*. Once a decision of this nature has been taken, God's judgement cannot be stopped.

3. Eventual extermination

3. **God's anger expresses itself in eventual extermination.** The words here clearly speak of some kind of annihilation. *'I will send fire against the walls of Gaza, and it will consume its citadels'*. ^{□1} *'Consuming fire'* clearly leaves nothing remaining. The Philistines *'perish even to the remnant'*. Not the slightest remainder of their community will be allowed to survive.

□1 1:7

The Phoenicians

The next community to be addressed is the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians are condemned for disregarding the claims of brotherhood. Amos is moving to address the coastal region north of Israel where Tyre was their capital city.

- **Condemned for disregarding the claims of brotherhood**

*'This is what Yahweh has said:
"For three transgressions by Tyre,
and especially for four, I will not reverse my
decision.
Because they handed over an entire captivity to
Edom,
and did not remember the covenant of brothers."^{□1}
So I will send fire against the wall of Tyre,
and it will consume its citadels."^{□2}*

□1 1:9

□2 1:10

- **Slave trading**

The Phoenicians also were involved in slave-trading. The accusation is similar to the one aimed at the Philistines. Perhaps the Philistines were the raiders taking the captives, and the Phoenicians were the middlemen 'handing over' the slaves to those who wanted to buy them. Tyre was well-known for buying slaves ^{□1} and selling them for a profit.

□1 see
Ezekiel 27:13

- **Covenant ignored**

A particular evil was that the Phoenicians *'did not remember the covenant of brothers'*. Tyre had made a treaty with a nearby nation. There was a treaty between Solomon and Tyre many years before ^{□1}. A similar treaty had obviously been made with a nearby nation and so a 'brotherhood' had come into being between the two nations. But then Tyre betrayed all its promises and *'did not remember the covenant of brothers'*, actually invading the brother nation in order to sell captives into slavery.

□1 see 1
Kings 5:12

2. God is pleased when nations develop brotherly relationships

1. **God is pleased when nations develop brotherly relationships.** The 'covenant of brothers' obviously was pleasing to God. Nations ought to be concerned about each other. Each country needs to look not only to its own interests but also to the interests and concerns of surrounding nations. It is good when nations become interdependent so that they are motivated to keep the peace internationally as well as within their own borders. International friendship between countries pleases God – as Amos lets us know. It is not that there is any kind of salvation in international peace. Far from it. The nations can be complacent and prosperous despite serious evils within their midst. But peace is worth seeking. It is not a way of salvation, but it is worth having nevertheless.

2. God takes seriously the wickedness of betraying a brotherly relationship

2. God takes seriously the wickedness of betraying any kind of brotherly relationship. Brotherly relationships within the nations may be a fragile and feeble bond in an unsaved world, but Amos makes it clear that God looks for such brotherliness and is angered when it is ruptured by disloyalty and betrayal. The Phoenicians betrayed a country with whom they were in treaty-relationship. God will destroy Tyre as a result. *'So I will send fire against the wall of Tyre, and it will consume Tyre's citadels'*. The continuation of a society depends on God's will. Sin is likely to be punished by extermination. Tyre eventually ceased to exist. Tyre's fortified wall could not withstand the divine fire.



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