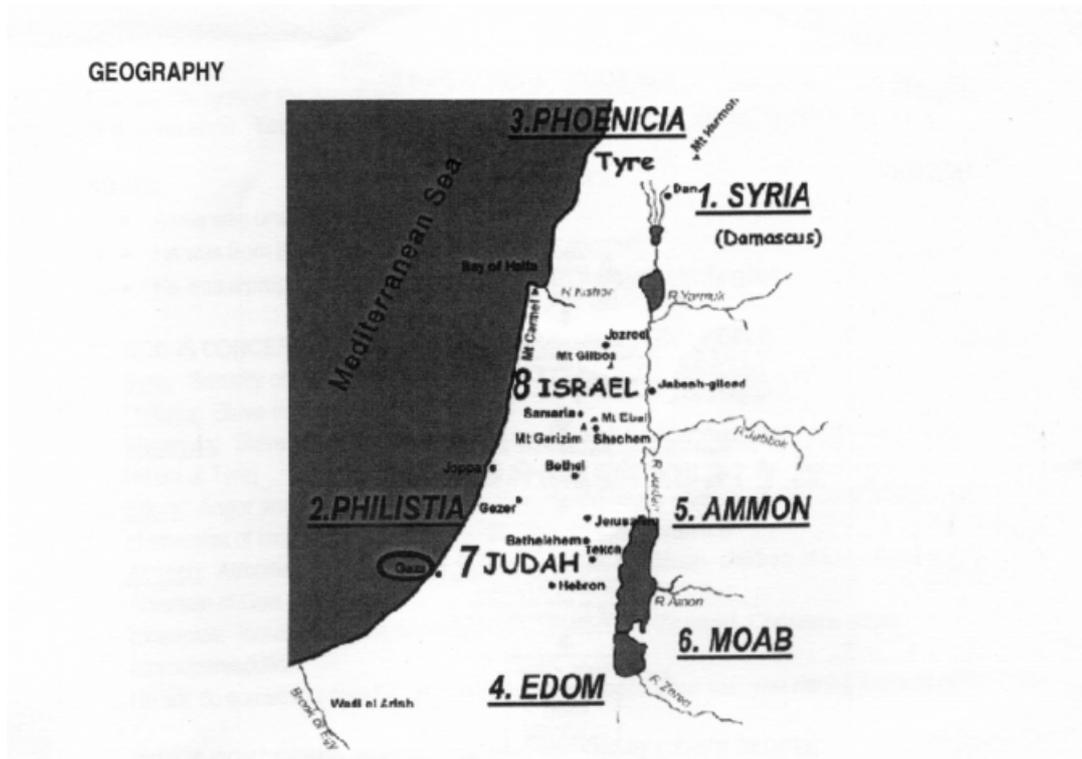


Sermon Topic: The Book of Amos, Part 1 by Rev Dr Lorna Khoo
 Sermon Text: Amos 1-2; 3:1-2; 9:7-8

History (see pdf file)



¹ The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. ² He said: “The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers.”

- Amos was one of the minor prophets
- Amos was from the Kingdom of Judah (a Southerner), however he was a prophet to the Kingdom of Israel (Northern Kingdom)
- When God speaks, He speaks across countries and political boundaries

[SYRIA] ³ This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent. **Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth,** ⁴ I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. ⁵ I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,” says the LORD.

- Over and over again, Syria has brutally mowed and crushed the people of Israel

[PHILISTIA] ⁶ *This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent. **Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom,** ⁷ I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. ⁸ I will destroy the king^[d] of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines are dead,” says the Sovereign LORD.*

- Over and over again, Philistia has captured Israelite communities and sold them to Edom as slaves

[PHOENICIA] ⁹ *This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent. **Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood,** ¹⁰ I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses.”*

- Phoenicians were sea traders, and they were well known for selling cloth that was dyed a Tyrian purple and selling wood from the cedars of Lebanon.
- King Solomon had a treaty with the King of Tyre: Temple in Jerusalem was built with timber and other resources, including expert manpower, from there. Yet instead of being friends with Israel, the people of Phoenicia were engaged in a slave trade that involved enslaving Israelites.

[EDOM] ¹¹ *This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. **Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked,** ¹² I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah.”*

- Edom heads the list of enemies of Israel (ref. Psalm 83: 5-8). However they are related to the people of Israel - The Edomites are descendants of Esau, the elder twin brother of Jacob. They are Issac’s sons and Abraham’s grandsons
- This generational enmity stems from the fact that they never forgot that Jacob stole the birthright of Esau, thus enabling Jacob to become the leader of the family instead
- The Israelites appealed to the King of Edom for safe passage through his land as they went into Canaan. Edom refused. Rather than wage war, the Israelites detoured around the country.
- Over the years, the Edomites kept waging war against the Israelites. While Israel managed to subjugate them during King Saul and King David’s time and Edom became a vassal state, they continually revolted against Israel and got involved in the slave trade [that operated via caravans and by sea. Phoenicia, Philistia sold their Israelite captives to Edom]

[AMMON] ¹³ *This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. **Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders,** ¹⁴ I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. ¹⁵ Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together,” says the LORD.*

- The people of Ammon were also related to the people of Israel. After Lot (who was Abraham's nephew) and his daughters were rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's daughters committed incest with him to get children (ref Gen 19:37-38). The children's names were Ammon and Moab.
- There was historical antagonism between the Israelites and the Ammonites. While they came under Israelite rule, there were uprisings, incursions nonetheless. They committed atrocities against defenseless pregnant Israelite women.

[MOAB] *This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent.*

Because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king, ²I will send fire on Moab that will consume the fortresses of Kerioth. Moab will go down in great tumult amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet. ³I will destroy her ruler and kill all her officials with him," says the LORD. (Amos 2:v 1-2)

- The Moabites desecrated the bones of the King of Edom, seeking to deny him the afterlife. God is not just concerned about how others treat His people, but how people treat each other.
- Moab and Ammon were related to each other [both came from Lot] as well as Edom (all of them descended from Terah, Abraham's father)
- While the Edomites were enemies of Israel, God commanded Israel that "you shall not abhor an Edomite; for he is your brother: you shall not abhor an Egyptian; because you were a stranger in Egypt" (Deut 23:7)

1. God is concerned about how people treat His people.

- Syria : Brutality of war against the **Israelites**
- Philistia : Slave trade of **Israelites** to Edom
- Phoenicia : slave trade of **Israelites** to Edom, ignoring the brotherhood treaty
- Edom : Anger and rage against the **Israelites** leading to killing of Israelites
- Ammon : Atrocities against **Israel's** women
- God is concerned with how the Jews were treated in World War Two (ref. Gen 12:2-3). The Lord loves Israel and He has a destiny for Israel.
- There is a difference between Judaism and Zionism: Judaism describes the Jewish faith, a belief in the same God we believe in. Zionism is a political position defining the philosophy behind an exclusive Jewish state which is the physical and spiritual homeland meant exclusively for the Jewish people. This is debatable and not shared by all – ie. Not all Jews or Christians are Zionists!]
- God is concerned about Christians under attack/persecution and He will do something about it.
- **[Question: What application can you derive from here?]**

2. God is concerned about how people treat other people.

- Moab – Desecration of **Edom's** dead
- Regardless of creed/race: We must be concerned and do something about injustice. Modern examples: Treatment of Palestinians; Rohingyas
- 'Break my heart for what breaks yours': Listen to their stories. Find ways to help rebuild their dignity (eg. Get involved with NGO work – Eg. Rohingya Women Development Network; School of Rainbow Love)
- **[Question: What application can you derive from here?]**

3. If you are related by blood or by covenants, honor that relationship.

- Phoenicia had a treaty with Israel. Ammon, Moab and Edom were also related to Israel.
- With Christian relatives and those we are linked by godly ties to (other denominations that confess Christ) as we are all part of God's family. Eg. Ecumenical Healing Service - building bridges between denominations
- With other Singaporeans regardless of race, language or religion. We should be sensitive and aware of how our behavior affects others Eg. By the language we choose to speak
- **[Question: What application can you derive from here?]**

4. Privilege and Responsibility: What makes you think you are so special?

[JUDAH – Amos' own country] ⁴ *This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent. Because **they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed,** ⁵ I will send fire on Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem."*

[ISRAEL] ⁶ *This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. **They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.⁷ They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name.⁸ They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines.***

- Their sins: Perversion of Justice; Oppression of the poor; Temple Prostitution; Worship of Idols (Judah); Disobedience (Judah)

⁹ *"Yet I destroyed the Amorites before them, though they were tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks. I destroyed their fruit above and their roots below. ¹⁰ I brought you up out of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness to give you the land of the Amorites. ¹¹ "I also raised up prophets from among your children and Nazirites from among your youths. Is this not true, people of Israel?" declares the LORD.*

¹² *"But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy. ¹³ "Now then, I*
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will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. ¹⁴ The swift will not escape, the strong will not muster their strength, and the warrior will not save his life.¹⁵ The archer will not stand his ground, the fleet-footed soldier will not get away, and the horseman will not save his life.¹⁶ Even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day," declares the LORD.

Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the LORD has spoken against you—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: ² "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins." - Amos 3: v1-2

"Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? ⁸ "Surely the eyes of the Sovereign LORD are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Yet I will not totally destroy the descendants of Jacob," declares the LORD. - Amos 9: v7-8

- They were CHOSEN, SAVED, GIVEN IDENTITY and POSSESSIONS AND RESOURCES. Likewise we too have been chosen, saved, given an identity and are spiritually fed.
- Yet, examples of such sins exist in our society:
 - Perversion of Justice → Oppression of Migrants/Helpers [Eg. Abusing domestic workers]
 - Oppression of the poor → Class divide perpetuated [Eg. talking down to people. We need to make the choice to treat them with greater honour]
 - Temple Prostitution → Pornography [the church is not exempt from this problem]
 - Worship of Idols → Worship of \$ [everything viewed in dollars and cents, in transactional terms, even volunteering. What kind of values are we passing on?]
 - Disobedience → Willful sins of commission and willful sins of omission
- It is a wake- up call for all of us. It is not a comforting message, but it is a strengthening message for us to be His people, in His world.
- ***[Question: Are we living lives God wants us to live? What changes do I have to make in my own life?]***