The Presence of the Covenant Motif in Amos 1:2-2:16

Reinaldo W. Siqueira
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations

Part of the Biblical Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/143

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
Thank you for your interest in the Andrews University Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
THE PRESENCE OF THE COVENANT MOTIF
IN AMOS 1:2-2:16

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Reinaldo W. Siqueira
May 1996
THE PRESENCE OF THE COVENANT MOTIF

IN AMOS 1:2-2:16

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Reinaldo W. Siqueira

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Richard M. Davidson
Faculty Adviser,
J. N. Andrews Professor of
Old Testament Interpretation

Jacques B. Doukhan
Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament
Exegesis

Roy E. Gane
Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near
Eastern Languages

Leona G. Running
Professor of Biblical Languages, Emerita

Jeffrey J. Niebuhr
Professor of Old Testament Studies
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Randall W. Younker
Director of Ph.D./Th.D. Programs

Werner K. Vyhmeister
Dean, SPG Theological Seminary

May 21, 1996
Date approved
ABSTRACT

THE PRESENCE OF THE COVENANT MOTIF
IN AMOS 1:2-2:16

by
Reinaldo W. Siqueira

Adviser: Richard M. Davidson
Title: THE PRESENCE OF THE COVENANT MOTIF IN AMOS 1:2-2:16

Name of researcher: Reinaldo W. Siqueira

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.

Dated completed: May 1996

The presence and use of the OT covenant(s) in the book of Amos has been a highly debated issue for the last century among OT scholars. The dissertation attempts to address this issue through an exegetical study of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1:2-2:16. This pericope of Amos was chosen because it has played a central role in the argumentation that denies the existence of any notion of covenant in the book.

Chapter 1 introduces the controversy that surrounds the issue of the presence or absence of covenant in Amos, while chapter 2 surveys the scholarly debate and the ideas advanced in the last hundred years.

The exegetical study of Amos 1:2-2:16 begins in chapter 3. This literary pericope is situated within the historical and literary contexts of the book of Amos. These two contexts evidence a tension between salvation and judgment that points to the dimension of "blessings and curses" of the Mosaic covenant.

The specific literary features of Amos 1:2-2:16 are examined in chapter 4. The first
seven oracles of the series are seen to be typical oracles of judgment, while the oracle against Israel is a sweeping covenant lawsuit that undoubtedly points back to the Mosaic covenant.

Chapter 5 analyzes the terminology and themes that are related to God, the prophet, and the nations in Amos 1:2-2:16. Elements of four OT covenants are evidenced through this analysis. God is YHWH—the creator of the universe and Sovereign of the world (universal/Noahic covenant); Israel's covenant God (Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants); the One who dwells in Jerusalem (Davidic covenant). The prophet is YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator (Mosaic covenant). The foreign nations are judged for transgressions of universal laws of God (universal/Noahic covenant), while Judah and Israel are judged for transgressions of the Mosaic law (Mosaic covenant).

The exegetical study of Amos 1:2-2:16 evidenced a substantial presence and use of the covenant motif in this series of oracles. Four OT covenants (universal/Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic) are interrelated in the series. The Davidic and Abrahamic covenants provide the general background of the oracles. The universal/Noahic and Mosaic covenants account for the specifics of each oracle.
To my wife Débora

and to our two sons—Matheus and João André,

who are the reason I can exclaim

(Genesis 33:11)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................. vi

Chapter
1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem and Justification for the Study .................. 1
   Purpose and Scope of the Study ....................................................... 3
   Methodology ....................................................................................... 6

2. SURVEY OF LITERATURE .................................................................. 8
   Covenant and the Book/Prophecies of Amos .................................. 10
   The Discussion Prior to the 1950s .................................................. 10
   Covenant as a Late Development .................................................. 10
   Covenant as an Early Development .............................................. 14
   The Discussion from the 1950s to the Present ............................... 20
   Covenant as an Early Development .............................................. 21
   Covenant as a Late Development .................................................. 28
   Covenant and the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 ........... 33
   Arguments in Favor of Covenant ................................................... 33
   Arguments Against Covenant ....................................................... 42
   Summary ............................................................................................ 45

3. COVENANT ELEMENTS EVIDENCED BY THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXTS OF THE BOOK OF AMOS ....................... 48
   The Historical Context ...................................................................... 48
   General Historical Circumstances at the Time of Uzziah and Jeroboam ............................................................... 50
   Proposals on the Historical Circumstances at the Time of Amos's Preaching ............................................................. 52
   Apogee of Jeroboam's Reign ......................................................... 53
   Final Years of Jeroboam: Decline and Trouble ............................... 54
   Extended Period of Time: From Weakness to Power .................... 56
   Evaluation of the Proposals ............................................................ 58
   The Literary Context ......................................................................... 64
   Literary Genre .................................................................................. 65
   Literary Forms and Literary Devices ............................................. 65
   The Literary Structure of Amos ....................................................... 67
   The "Classical" Three-Part Structure .............................................. 67
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABRL</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfO</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>Allgemeine Geschichte in Einzeldarstellungen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALHR</td>
<td>American Lectures on the History of Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANE</td>
<td>Ancient Near East, or Ancient Near Eastern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alten Orient und Altes Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSDDS</td>
<td>Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVTR</td>
<td>Aufsätze und Vorträge zur Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCL</td>
<td>Bible Commentary for Laymen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETL</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BibSem</td>
<td>The Biblical Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJS</td>
<td>Brown Judaic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Bibal Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BO</td>
<td>Biblica et Orientalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRev</td>
<td><em>Bible Review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td><em>Bibliotheca Sacra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td><em>The Bible Translator</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVC</td>
<td><em>Bible et Vie Chrétienne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beilage zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWANT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaTh</td>
<td>Cahiers Théologiques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cambridge Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td><em>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Constructive Bible Studies, College Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td><em>A Dictionary of the Bible</em>, ed. J. Hastings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS</td>
<td><em>Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSB</td>
<td>Daily Study Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>The Dead Sea Scrolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Epworth Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EeV</td>
<td><em>Esprit et Vie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHS.T</td>
<td>Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23: Theologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td><em>Eretz-Israel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC</td>
<td>Epworth Preacher's Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Épim.</td>
<td>Épiméthée, Essais Philosophiques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET</td>
<td>Études Bibliques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETR</td>
<td>Études Théologiques et Religieuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERCEW</td>
<td>Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EvTh</td>
<td><em>Evangelische Theologie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpB</td>
<td>The Expositor's Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exped</td>
<td>Expedition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FKJ</td>
<td>Faith, Knowledge, Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FontL</td>
<td>The Fontana Library: Theology and Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHKAT</td>
<td>Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPT</td>
<td>Growing Points in Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTS</td>
<td>Gettysburg Theological Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTW</td>
<td>Grundriss der Theologische Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBT</td>
<td>Horizons in Biblical Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HeTr</td>
<td>Helps for Translators (Series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HeyM</td>
<td>Heytrop Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HT</td>
<td>Harper Torchbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>The International Critical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interp.</td>
<td>Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Theological Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITQ</td>
<td>Irish Theological Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAGNES</td>
<td>Journal of the Association of Graduate Near Eastern Students, UC Berkeley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL.MS</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeev</td>
<td>Jeevadhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbr.</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAT</td>
<td>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KHCAT</td>
<td>Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPG</td>
<td>Knox Preaching Guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBC</td>
<td>Layman's Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBI</td>
<td>Library of Biblical Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBS</td>
<td>The Library of Biblical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LeDiv</td>
<td>Lectio Divina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint Version of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBE</td>
<td>Monumenta Biblica et Ecclesiastica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHCU</td>
<td>Monographs of the Hebrew Union College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRS</td>
<td>Mission de Ras Shamra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>Manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Massoretic Text of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEBib</td>
<td>Die Neue Echter Bibel: Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJB</td>
<td>New Jerusalem Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBO</td>
<td>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTG</td>
<td>Old Testament Guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>The Old Testament Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTS</td>
<td>Oudtestamentische Studiën</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesh</td>
<td>Peshitta (Syriac) Version of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFTUG</td>
<td>Publications de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université de Genève</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUPCM.T</td>
<td>Publicaciones de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid. Serie I. Estudios, 30. Teología</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue Biblique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RivB</td>
<td>Rivista Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGG1</td>
<td>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1st ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGG2</td>
<td>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2d ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Religious Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSR</td>
<td>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL</td>
<td>Revue Théologique de Louvain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTP</td>
<td>Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV</td>
<td>Religiongeschichtliche Volksbücher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Subsidia Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLMS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLSP</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBSS</td>
<td>Shield Bible, Study Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT</td>
<td>Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ScEs</td>
<td>Science et Esprit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sem</td>
<td>Semitica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHI</td>
<td>Seminars in the History of Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJLA</td>
<td>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLBA</td>
<td>The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOTSMS</td>
<td>Society for the Old Testament Study Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Slovak Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Saggi di Storia Antica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWJT</td>
<td>Southwestern Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Tyndale Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Torch Bible Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBii</td>
<td>Theologische Bücherei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDNT</td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDOT</td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFS</td>
<td>Texts for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tg</td>
<td>Targum Jonathan (to the Prophets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT</td>
<td>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Them</td>
<td>Themelios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThS</td>
<td>Theologische Studien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLZ</td>
<td>Theologische Literaturzeitung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMs</td>
<td>Typewritten manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOB</td>
<td>Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTC</td>
<td>Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Text for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWAT</td>
<td>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWOT</td>
<td>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAT</td>
<td>Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafel. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE</td>
<td>Vox Evangelica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOT</td>
<td>The Voices of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSaLAT</td>
<td>Verbum Salutis. Ancien Testament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VT Vetus Testamentum

VTS Vetus Testamentum Supplements

VKVAW.L Verhandelingen van der Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van Belgie. Klasse der Letteren

WBC Word Biblical Commentary

WCB World Christian Books

WEC Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary

WMANT Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament

YNER Yale Near Eastern Researches

ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie

ZAW Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

ZTK Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Amos is usually held to be the first of the so-called "classical prophets," and his book is considered to be the first representative of a new phase in the history of Israelite prophecy, that of the "writing prophets." As such, the book of Amos has become a reference point in the theological discussion for the last century.¹

Among the many issues raised in this debate, one can find the theme of the OT covenants. Is there covenant in the book of Amos? Did the prophet Amos know anything about it? If he did, why did he never use the word רֵעַ ("covenant") in reference to God's relationship with Israel, or make clear reference to it in his indictments of that nation's sins?

Statement of the Problem and Justification for the Study

Different and opposing answers have been given to the questions above, and biblical scholarship is highly divided on the issue. For many scholars, the absence of the term רֵעַ ("covenant") in the book, with the meaning of a divine covenant,² is a clear proof that such a concept did not exist in the time of Amos. For them, the theological concept of a divine covenant can be found only from the Deuteronomic literature.


²The term appears once, in Amos 1:9, but seems to refer to a political treaty between Tyre and Israel. Cf. below, 222-223.
(presumably dated to the seventh century B.C.) onward, therefore, much later than Amos, who preached in the first half of the eighth century B.C. Many other scholars, however, argue that the mere absence of the term כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant"), meaning a divine covenant, is not enough to deny the existence of the concept by the time of Amos. For them, its existence is made clear in many other ways, like the usage of some other specific covenant terminology, the prophet's reference to covenant law, the structure of his speeches, and a number of other features that betray a covenant background.2

The debate against and in favor of the presence of covenant in the book of Amos has produced a significant amount of literature, but there is a remarkable paucity, up to this time, of extensive studies dedicated exclusively to this issue in Amos. The present dissertation seemed justified, therefore, first by the present need for more extensive studies


3See the survey of literature below for an overview of these publications.

dedicated exclusively to this issue, and second by the implications that the findings of such studies have on the understanding of the book of Amos and of its message.

**Purpose and Scope of the Study**

The purpose of the present research is to search for an answer to the basic question of whether or not covenant exists in the book of Amos. In order to achieve this goal, it focused on the series of oracles found in the first two chapters of the book of Amos, usually known as the "Oracles Against the Nations."

This series of oracles has proved to be a good battleground for the discussion on the question of the covenant. This is true because the series allows for the comparison of the prophetic usage of many themes and specific terminology in reference to God's own people (Judah and Israel), and to the foreign nations that surrounded them (Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and Edom). The similarity in form and structure between these eight oracles, and their composition as a unified whole, makes that comparison highly significant, since the text itself evidences the internal interrelationship between the oracles and requires the understanding of one to be in rapport and/or contrast with the others.

The "Oracles Against the Nations" has then become a key element in the discussion about the presence of the covenant in the book of Amos, especially for those who do not recognize any element of the OT covenants in the book. It has usually been argued that Israel is condemned on the same basis that God condemns any other nations (i.e., some universal principle that can be applied to any nation, or even to any human being). Therefore it has nothing to do with covenant. In Amos, God deals with Israel in the same way He deals with any other nation. These oracles are then taken, together with the absence of the term הַעֲבָדִין ("covenant") with a religious meaning, as one of the strongest
evidences that the concept of covenant was not yet part of the religious faith of Israel in the time of Amos.¹

The inquiry of this dissertation is limited to the detection of OT covenant elements in that series of oracles through an exegetical study of the text of Amos 1-2. By covenant elements are understood terminology, themes, literary features (such as structure of a passage or the form of a speech), etc., that are intrinsically connected and used elsewhere within the context of OT covenants.

There is no attempt to develop a possible covenant theology for this prophetic pericope, or for the entire book. Such an enterprise would take the present dissertation well beyond its scope, and is worthy of a dissertation on its own.

The present research does not, as well, present an extended study on the OT covenant elements that were detected through this exegetical study. Although such a detailed study would be highly suitable in order to provide the reader with a clear understanding of their covenantal character, this too would take the present dissertation well beyond its scope, in view of the extent and complexity of the subject. Furthermore, there exist already a number detailed studies on practically all the elements of OT covenants. References then are made to these studies, in order to provide the reader with the possibility to further advance in the study of each specific subject.

No preliminary study is done either on the different OT covenants, or on the concept of כְּנֶבֶן ("covenant") in the OT. The reader is invited to refer to the abundant literature on these topics.² No general survey on the debate concerning the concept of covenant in the biblical literature is undertaken.

¹See the details on the discussion of this issue in the survey of literature, below, 10-13, 28-45.

biblical covenant in modern scholarship is offered either. Such a survey was already
provided satisfactorily and thoroughly in a number of studies dedicated specifically to this
issue.¹

¹See Dennis J. McCarthy, Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions
(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 1-89; Ernest W. Nicholson, "Covenant in a Century of
Study Since Wellhausen," OTS 24 (1986): 54-69; idem, God and His People: Covenant
and theology," Bib 53 (1972): 110-121; Gottfried Quell, "Διονυσίων. A. The Old Testament
Human Destiny (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1968); Delbert R. Hillers,
Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea, SHI (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969);
Klaus Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian
Writings, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Moshe Weinfeld,
"Covenant," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1st printing (1971), 5:1012-1027; idem, "ברית
ברית," TDOT (1975), 1:253-279; idem, "ברית—Covenant vs. Obligation," Bib 56
88 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976); Wolfgang Roth and Rosemary R. Ruether, The
Liberating Bond: Covenants—Biblical and Contemporary (New York: Friendship
Press, 1978); William Dyrness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove:
InterVarsity Press, 1979), 113-141; O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants
(Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980); Elmer B. Smick,
"ברית (brh), ברית (berit)," TWOT (1980), 1:128-130; Ernest Kutsch, "Bund I. Alten
Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie (1981), 7:397-403; idem, "ברית berit
Verpflichtung," THAT (1984), 1:339-352; Paul Kalluveettil, Declaration and Covenant:
A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the
Ancient Near East, AnBib, no. 88 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982); William J.
Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants (Nashville:
Thomas Nelson, 1984); Thomas Edward McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise: A
Theology of the Old Testament Covenants (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House,
1985); Hayim Tadmor, "Alleanza e dipendenza nell'antica Mesopotamia e in Israele:
terminologia e prassi," in Istituto Gramsci. Seminario di antichistica: I trattati nel
mondo antico. Forma, ideologia, funzione, ed. L. Canfora, M. Liverani, and C.
Zaccagnini, SSA, no. 2 (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1990), 17-36; George E.
Methodology

In the present investigation, it is assumed that the message of the book of Amos is rooted in the semantic, syntactical, and literary features present in the text of the book itself. The issue of the existence of OT covenant elements in the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 is addressed through a close reading of the text, in its present canonical form. The present study is not concerned therefore with the question of the historical development of the prophetic text, and does not address the issue of the presence of OT covenant elements in that series of oracles from that perspective.

The present inquiry into the prophetic material is carried on by means of an exegetical study of these oracles, with a focus on the terminology, clauses, themes, literary patterns, and structures that might convey, or have been claimed to convey, elements that pertain intrinsically to the domain of OT covenants. All English translations of foreign words and biblical texts in this dissertation are the author's own.

As a background, a succinct survey of scholarly debate on the issue of the present study is provided in chapter 2. This survey focuses especially on the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 and its related matters. Chapter 3 investigates that series of oracles in its relationship to the historical and literary contexts of the book of Amos. It explores the implications that the historical circumstances of the prophetic ministry of Amos and the general literary issues of the book, especially its literary structure, might have on the present research.

Chapter 4 deals with the problems that concern the delimitation of the pericope, the textual variants to the present MT text of Amos 1-2, the literary structure of the "Oracles Against the Nations," and the literary form of the oracles that compose that series. Here again, possible implications from the issues covered in this chapter are explored. Chapter 5 examines the terminology, phraseology, and themes which appear in the series of oracles of Amos 1-2 that seem to convey specific elements that belong to the domain of OT
covenants. The exegetical analysis of this chapter focuses on the terms, phrases, and themes that are related to the three entities of Amos 1-2: God, the prophet, and the nations.

The final chapter brings the present research to a conclusion. It summarizes the findings made throughout the exegetical study developed in the previous chapters, and tries to draw the implications that these findings might have on the discussion concerning the presence of covenant elements in the first two chapters of the book, as well as for the book of Amos and for the preaching of that prophet.

It is my hope that the present study will shed more light on such a debated issue, and that at the end it may become a source of stimulus for further research on the book of Amos and its relationship to OT covenants.
CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The present survey is divided into two parts: First, it covers the general debate on the question of the presence of covenant in the book and/or the preaching of the prophet Amos. This first step seems indispensable for understanding the specific debate on the "Oracles Against the Nations," since this debate is a reflection of this most general view. Second, the survey focuses with more detail on the specific arguments concerning the "Oracles Against the Nations" themselves.

The first part of the survey is itself divided into two sections: First, it covers the discussion prior to the publication of George E. Mendenhall's views in the 1950s, and then the discussion after it. Mendenhall was chosen as the reference point in view of the paramount importance of his contribution to the actual state of affairs of the discussion on the nature of covenant.1

Besides this macrochronological division, each section is divided into two subsections. The section covering the debate prior to the 1950s surveys first those scholars who do not recognize covenant in the book of Amos because of the alleged late development of the covenant idea, and then it surveys those who do recognize the early existence of the covenant in ancient Israel. The section on the debate after the 1950s first surveys those who recognize covenant as an early development in the Israelite religion, and

---

1See McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 10; and Nicholson, *God and His People*, 56.
then those who deny it. This subdivision basically follows the historical development of the theological debate on the question of the covenant in modern biblical scholarship. As is seen below, prior to the 1950s the debate started with the strong emphasis on the late origin of the covenant concept in the religion of Israel given by Bernhard Duhm and Julius Wellhausen during the 1870s. This emphasis was then opposed by a number of scholars who reacted not only against Duhm's and Wellhausen's views, but also against a number of other scholars who maintained a late origin for the OT covenant concept. From the 1950s onward, the debate has been focused on the strong emphasis given to the early origin of the OT covenant on the basis of the comparative studies between the OT covenants and the ANE treaties that started with Mendenhall. This later emphasis, however, has been strongly opposed by a number of scholars who have revitalized much of the earlier view on the late origin of the OT covenant, and have given to it a new impetus in the last decades. Each subsection is organized into groups of scholars who approached the problem in similar ways. A chronological sequence is observed.

The survey of literature provided here has shortcomings, the main one of which is the fact that it does not do full justice to each individual author and the richness of his thought. It does, however, have the advantage of delineating tendencies, landmarks on the discussion, and the main players in the theological debate, providing thereby, it is hoped, a more understandable overview to the reader.

The second part of this chapter, covering the issue of the covenant in the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2, follows only a topical approach. It groups the different views on the issue under the general classification of those in favor and those against the presence of covenant in that series of oracles.

---

Covenant and the Book/Prophecies of Amos

The Discussion Prior to the 1950s

Covenant as a Late Development

During the 1870s, two German scholars, Bernhard Duhm and Julius Wellhausen, catalyzing much of the current historical-critical views of the epoch,1 published two fundamental studies2 that provided the great initial stimulus for the modern debate on the covenant in the religion of Israel, as well as in the book of Amos. The influence of their views cannot be underestimated, especially because the last decades have seen a renewed support and rehabilitation of their views.3

Bernhard Duhm considered that Amos broke away from the ancient natural and magical understanding of religion of his people, and preached a new religion based on morality and universalism, which Duhm called "ethical idealism." He further maintained that Amos made no reference to a divine Law or a divine covenant, indeed he knew nothing about it, though his preaching had a direct influence on the development of such concepts by the time of King Josiah in the seventh century B.C.4 Similarly, Wellhausen emphasized the revolutionary character of the preaching of Amos and his opposition to the old religious

---

1Especially pertinent to the theme of this research are Ewald's emphasis on the prophets as inspired revolutionaries and Graf's thesis that the Law was later than the prophets. See Heinrich Ewald, Die Propheten des alten Bundes, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Adolph Krabbe, 1840-1841); and Karl H. Graf, Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments: Zwei historisch-kritische Untersuchungen (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1866).

2Bernhard Duhm, Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1875); Julius Wellhausen, Geschichte Israels (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878).

3See Nicholson, God and His People, 81-83.

understanding of a natural bond between God and His people. Amos, and the biblical prophets who followed him, founded a new religion—"ethical monotheism." From the preaching of the classical prophets, of whom Amos was the first representative, an entirely new concept arose in Israel—the concept of covenant as the expression of God's relationship with His people. The early "writing prophets," however, were unacquainted with such a technical usage of the term מִיתָכָה ("covenant"); they never used it in their preaching, for it was only from the time of Josiah onward that this term was used with such a meaning.

For both of them, therefore, no covenant can be found in the message of the prophet Amos. The main argument is the Deuteronomic origin of the concept. They also strongly emphasized that the late origin of the idea of covenant in ancient Israel is evidenced by the absence of the word מִיתָכָה ("covenant") with the meaning of a divine covenant in the book of Amos. If there is any element in the book that seems to point to covenant (e.g., the reference to מִיתָכָה ("law, instruction") and מִיתָכָה ("statutes") in the oracle against Judah in Amos 2:4), these are not part of the authentic sayings of the prophet but are later additions to the book from the Deuteronomic or Priestly times.

---

1This natural bond for Wellhausen meant a kind of totemism. For him, the early Israelites believed that they had a blood relationship with God, they were literally the children of God, and somehow shared in the divine nature. See the discussion about this point in McCarthy, Old Testament Covenant, 1.

2Reference here is made to the English translation: Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Israel, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies, with a preface by Robertson Smith (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885), 417-419; see also the reprint of his article "Israel," in ibid., 469-474.

3Duhm, Theologie der Propheten, 196-197; idem, Twelve Prophets, 58; idem, Israels Propheten, 96-97; Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 417-418; idem, Die Kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt, 4th ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 71-72. 120.
Bernhard Stade, Richard R. Cripps, Robert H. Pfeiffer, and Israel I. Mattuck basically argued in a similar way, keeping up this line of argumentation down to the 1950s.¹

A different approach was taken by Richard Kraetzschmar in the 1890s. He argued that כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant"), meaning "a divine promise" or a "unilateral pledge," a form of guarantee for the divine favor and help, can be found in the oldest forms of the Israelite religion. The divine כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant") with Abraham (in Gen 15), David (in 2 Sam 23), Israel (in Exod 20:1-17; 34:10-28), and Levi (Deut 33:9) are good examples of it. Here one has a "unilateral pledge," a "divine promise," which reassures God's favor without imposing on the human recipient any obligation. However, the full theological concept of כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant") as a covenant relationship between God and Israel with mutual rights and obligations is Deuteronomic. This change in the meaning of כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant") occurred under the influence of the preaching of the eighth-century prophets. As for Amos, he made no usage at all of any notion of a divine כְּנֶגֶד ("covenant"), but he based his preaching on the divine deeds of salvation, the deliverance from Egypt, and the moral responsibility that they impose on the benefited party, Israel.² Kraetzschmar's views were seconded very closely by Hans Schmidt in the beginning of the twentieth century. For Schmidt, however,


Amos never makes reference to a divine בְּרִיָּה ("covenant") because, for him, God was a just and moral God from whom one needs no pledge or promise of favor, as a guarantee.¹

A third approach was taken by George A. Smith, W. Nowack, and Hermann Gunkel by the beginning of the twentieth century. They maintained the Deuteronomic origin of the covenant concept and Amos's complete ignorance of it, but they vehemently opposed any notion of Amos as an innovator, the creator of a new ethical, moral religion. For them, Amos was a reformer, preaching old values that had been forgotten. These old values, however, were those based on common sense, on universal moral principles known to all men. What is new with the prophet Amos is the unprecedented emphasis he gives to morality.²

By the 1940s, Norman Snaith and William A. Irwin also addressed the question in a different way. For them, in the sources J and E the word בְּרִיָּה ("covenant"), when referring to God and Israel, meant nothing more than the henotheistic view that each nation should adore and serve only its god. In that sense the relationship between YHWH and Israel was not different from that between Chemosh and Moab. It is only from the Deuteronomist onward that one has the distinctive Hebrew idea of covenant. This change was influenced directly by the preaching of the eighth-century prophets, starting with Amos, but evidently, as it did not exist at his time, it had no place in his preaching.³

---


Covenant as an Early Development

On the opposite side of the debate, a number of scholars defended an early origin for the covenant concept, and its basic importance for the message of the book of Amos.

In the beginning of the 1880s, W. Robertson Smith advanced the thesis that practice precedes theory, and that religious institutions precede their theoretical formulation. Therefore, the reality of the covenant would precede its theological formulation. In Israel, there was an artificial brotherhood, a union of tribes of different origins. Such a brotherhood could only be maintained through a covenant. YHWH was a God of a confederation, and His relationship to Israel was not natural but ethical, established through a covenant. The Decalogue was the basic document of the Israelite religion. Amos did not claim any new truth, but he preached on the basis of concepts of justice and morality that were characteristic of the religion of his people, and he gave a fresh and powerful application to these old forgotten truths.¹

This sociological understanding of the function of covenant in the formation of Israel found a powerful advocate in Max Weber. Like Smith, Weber maintained that Israel was from its beginning an "outbound confederation" of tribes of different origins. The מִשְׁתַּחַת ("covenant") among these tribes was also a confederate covenant with God Himself, and not only a fraternization among partners placed under the protection of a god, as witnessed elsewhere. The Levites were the main agents of the development of the covenant law and traditions through the centuries, and the prophets were the main guardians of such traditions. The Torah is always the completely self-evident presupposition of all prophecy;

it is seldom explicitly referred to because it went without saying. It is with such a
background that the preaching of the prophets like Amos must be understood. In the מִשְׁמֶרֶת ("covenant") one finds the basis for both the doom and hope present in Amos's preaching,
for God is not only the God of wrath and revenge, but also the God of grace and
forgiveness.¹

The case for the sociological dimension of the covenant in early Israel was further
strengthened by the publication of Martin Noth's hypothesis on the amphictyonic nature of
the Israelite federation.² Weber's and Noth's views became, for many scholars, a very
reasonable way of understanding the socioreligious context of the covenant between God
and Israel.

A remarkable contribution, with a sociological focus, is found in André Neher's
study on Amos. Neher emphasized not only the importance of the covenant's function in
society, but, above all, the social revolution it reflected. Once liberated from slavery in
Egypt, the Israelites aspired to a socioreligious equality between all men, which is well
expressed by the Sinaitic covenant. Human "universalism" and "egalitarianism" were then
introduced into the realms of religion and society. The prophet Amos insisted all the time
upon this social revolution, especially in his defense of the poor and the weak, the ones
usually forgotten by society.³

¹Weber's views were first published in a series of articles in the 1917-1919 issues of
the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialforschung, and subsequently published as a
book, in 1921, under the title Das antike Judentum. Reference is here made to the
Martindale (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), 75-89, 118-124, 130-138, 277-278, 295,
297-311, 317-318; see also idem, The Sociology of Religion, trans. E. Fischoff,
introduction by T. Parsons (Boston: Beacon, 1963), 16, 80-81, 247.

²Martin Noth, Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer,
1930; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966); idem, The History of
Israel (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 85-137; idem, Gesammelte Studien zum

³André Neher, Amos: Contribution à l'étude du prophétisme. Thèse principale
pour le doctorat ès lettres présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de
Strasbourg (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1950), 34-81; idem, L'essence du

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A different approach in the recognition of covenant in the book of Amos was provided by Rudolf Kittel by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. Kittel reevaluated the data of J and E, and argued that the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant give clear evidence for the historical reality and antiquity of the Mosaic covenant. He further argued that the recent findings of ANE laws have made evident the fundamental importance of law, justice, and morality in the ANE world from well before the time of Moses. Therefore, the notion of the Mosaic covenant standing at the beginning of Israelite history is fully vindicated by the internal evidence of the biblical text and by the external evidence of the archeological findings. Amos is an heir of this Mosaic religion. He preached against Israel's sins and proclaimed the divine judgments on the basis of this old Israelite religion. Amos, however, pushed the Mosaic religion to its purest and most complete expression. A. B. Davidson, William Rainey Harper, Emil Kautzsch, and Albert C. Knudson argued in a similar way for the antiquity of the Mosaic covenant, as evidenced by the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant, and for its importance in the preaching of the prophet Amos.

---


A third and different approach was provided by Stanley Leathes. He classified a series of direct quotations and references to the Pentateuchal material in Amos and the other prophets, especially to material from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He then contended that the prophets could not have preceded Law and covenant since they were all well acquainted with them.¹

Another approach was presented by Karl Budde by the end of the nineteenth century. For Budde, the Mosaic covenant was in its origin an alliance between the Kenites and the Israelites. It is, however, rightly called a covenant with YHWH, because the Israelites also turned to a new religion, the worship of YHWH, the mountain-God of the Kenites. Amos emphasized the importance of this initial choice in the history of his people. For the prophet, however, it was YHWH who freely chose Israel, and it followed that "obligation" on the part of Israel was the complement of such privilege. For Amos, God was as free to reject and punish the Israelites, if they did not perform His will, as He was free when He chose them.²

A new and very influential approach came from the field of Form Criticism and its new interest in the cult as the ground of origin and the background of Israelite traditions. One of the key contributions of this new trend came from Sigmund Mowinckel during the 1920s. Especially pertinent to the subject of the present research are his views on the centrality of the covenant-renewal ceremony during the New Year Festival, and the role played by the temple prophet on such occasions. For Mowinckel, every year the divine covenant with Israel was renewed through a cultic drama. The temple prophet had an important part in such drama; he proclaimed YHWH's coming, His will and commandments, the covenant's promises and conditions. He rebuked the people for their


transgressions, pronounced judgment, and exhorted the masses to be faithful and keep the covenant. It was from these cultic prophets that the classical prophetic movement arose, with prophets like Amos. They became the heirs and keepers of the Yahwistic traditions in face of the increasing Canaanization of Israel's religion. They would appear in the cultic festival, condemn the cult, pronounce judgment, and announce YHWH's coming to judge and punish the unfaithful people.1

Following Mowinckel's ideas, many scholars analyzed the message of the prophet Amos against a cultic background, and found there a support for the prophet's use of covenant traditions.2 Some went a step further and saw in Amos a cultic prophet or a temple official.3 Especially interesting, in this sense, is Ernst Wurthwein's contribution. For him, Amos was initially a cultic prophet who became a prophet of doom, because he realized that Israel had violated the covenant's stipulations and had severed its relationship with YHWH.4

---


Another important approach also appeared during the 1920s. With the revival of OT theology, the idea that the religion of Israel was not a natural religion, but rather a religion of "election," based on historical events, gained a new and widespread acceptance. Covenant and election became a necessary background for the study of the biblical literature. Scholars like Eduard König, Johannes Hempel, Kurt Galling, Artur Weiser, Ernst Sellin, and Ludwig Koehler underlined the importance of the covenant tradition in the message of Amos.¹

One of the most influential contributions of this new direction in scholarship came from Walther Eichrodt. Eichrodt saw the covenant as the central theme and the unifying principle of the OT. Even where the covenant is not explicitly mentioned, its spiritual premises are present. By the time of the "classical prophets," however, due to the influence of the Canaanite religions, the covenant was understood as an external relationship with God, a religion of "Do ut des," in which the divine gift was bound to the reciprocating human performance. In order to oppose such dead formalism, prophets like Amos stressed the personal note in the relationship with YHWH, with ideas like honesty, love, and surrender, and avoided the concept of covenant that was so misunderstood. The

concept of covenant, however, is fundamental for the understanding of Amos's ministry and message.¹

The Discussion from the 1950s to the Present

In 1954, George E. Mendenhall published two articles about law and covenant in ancient Israel. By exploring their similarities with the Hittite suzerainty treaties, Mendenhall came to the conclusion that the Sinaitic covenant could belong only to the second half of the second millennium B.C., as the exclusive parallels with Hittite treaties indicated. He also elaborated on the historical development of the covenant in ancient Israel. For him, during the monarchy, the early Sinaitic covenant tradition was abandoned in favor of a covenant understanding centered in the Abrahamic-Davidic covenant, with its emphasis on the sustainment of the political state. The eighth-century prophets preached against such abandonment of the old covenant tradition and law. They, however, did not directly use the theme of the covenant in their preaching, probably because in their time the normative idea of covenant was understood only in the monarchical sense. Their message, nevertheless, is in complete harmony and reflects the basic structures of the Mosaic covenant.²

The publication of Mendenhall's views gave a new and considerable impetus to the study of the ANE treaties and the biblical covenant between YHWH and Israel. The phenomenal increase in literature on the topic shows how much covenant became one of the top issues on the theological agenda. Covenant became a top issue also in the studies on the book of Amos.


Covenant as an Early Development

Since the 1960s up to very recent publications, numerous scholars have been calling attention to a series of terminologies and literary patterns in the book of Amos that are very similar to those found in the ANE treaties.

In 1961, James Muilenburg pointed to the treaty/covenant basis of the ethical terminology in Amos. Then, shortly afterward, G. Ernest Wright and F. Charles Fensham stressed the prophet's use of the "rib"-pattern within the same context. Fensham further remarked on the use of the "blessing and curse" pattern and the "protection clause" in the book.1

Since the 1960s, a large number of scholars have recognized a covenant background in the book on the basis of the prophet's use of the "rib"-pattern,2 and in his

---


use of a specific treaty/covenant terminology. Particularly interesting in this sense are the recent commentaries on Amos by Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, and by Jeffrey Niehaus, as well as Mendenhall's most recent article on covenant. Andersen and Freedman made constant reference to the treaty background of the book, to treaty terminology, and to patterns like the "rib." Niehaus saw in the "rib"-pattern the main feature of the book. For him, the entire book is actually structured around that pattern. He


also pointed out a series of terminologies that belong to the covenant/treaty background.\(^1\)

Finally, George E. Mendenhall, in a joint article with Gary A. Herion, defended the covenant background of prophets, like Amos, on the ground of their use of the "rib" or "lawsuit" pattern, and on the ground of their call to obedience and repentance on the basis of the acts of God in the past, in a very close parallelism to the Hittite treaties.\(^2\)

Despite the great emphasis given to the covenant terminology and patterns in these last decades, the argumentation in favor of the existence of covenant in the book of Amos has not been restricted to that dimension only. Some new arguments have been advanced, and much of the old argumentation prior to Mendenhall has maintained a strong foothold in OT scholarship.

As before Mendenhall, one can see an argumentation in favor of a covenant background on the basis of:

1. The covenant as one of the fundamental ancient traditions, as attested by the OT (Erling Hammershaimb, J. A. Motyer, Robert B. Coote, and James Ward gave special emphasis to it.)\(^3\)

2. Amos's references to Pentateuchal material (Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Douglas Stuart elaborated extensively on Amos's use of the covenant's blessings and


\(^{2}\)Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1190-1191.

curses from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Stanley Lewis Bushey, David Easter, Thomas Edward McComiskey, and Thomas J. Finley emphasized Amos's references to dispositions of the Mosaic Law and to the Pentateuchal picture of Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH.)


---


A new argumentation in favor of covenant can be seen in the emphasis on the use of the "apodictic laws" by Amos. Robert Bach, exploring Alt's classification of the Israelite laws into "casuistic" and "apodictic," observed that the only parallel to Amos' accusations are found in the "apodictic laws" of the Pentateuch. He concluded, therefore, that Amos was closely connected with the Israelite covenant tradition expressed by these laws.

Another novelty was the increasing focus on the prophets as "covenant mediators." The prophets would be the continuators of the Mosaic office, as indicated by Deut 18:15-22. Amos as a "covenant mediator" based his preaching on the old Israelite law and covenant, condemned Israel's sins, prayed for forgiveness, announced the divine judgment, called to repentance, and prophesied about the future beyond the judgment.


Hans-Joachim Kraus, John Marsh, Henning Graf Reventlow, James Muilenburg, Walter Zimmerli, James Limburg, and many others gave strong emphasis to this idea.1

An interesting new tendency, observed in the last decades, is the growing recognition by a number of scholars that Amos did not use only one tradition, whether covenant or something else, but that he is indebted to the rich faith of ancient Israel and drew from a variety of traditions that composed his own intellectual and cultural background. So, in 1962, Samuel Terrien remarked that Amos used wisdom, covenant, 


Some scholars, like Jeffrey Niehaus ("Amos," 321-322), reserve the usage of the term "covenant mediator" only to those personages who actually "mediated" a covenant between God and man (e.g., Moses). The prophets are basically referred to as YHWH's messengers (Niehaus refers to Amos as "covenant-lawsuit messenger," since for him this is primarily the function of the prophets in the OT; cf. idem, 316). Their search for accuracy points to the pressing need for more clear and precise terminology in the field of OT studies. In the discussion on the prophet, undertaken in chap. 5 (see below, 201-216), however, the term "covenant mediator" is used in reference to Amos. Though the prophet Amos was first of all YHWH's messenger (most of the time, he delivered YHWH's messenger to Israel), he went beyond that dimension. In Amos 5, the prophet exhorted the people to seek YHWH so that they could live and avoid destruction. In Amos 7, he interceded with YHWH in favor of Israel, and YHWH relented twice from His intended judgments. These two other pictures of Amos are important elements of the book's theology on the prophet's role and ministry. In this study, therefore, "covenant mediator" is used not in the sense of someone who "arbitrates, moderates, negotiates," or "settles" a covenant (like the case of Moses); but in the sense of an "intermediary" between the Lord of the covenant and His people, one who "intervenes, intercedes" between the two parties.
and legal traditions in his preaching.\textsuperscript{1} A complex background for the book of Amos, which includes the covenant tradition, has been argued by scholars like James K. West, Jean-Luc Vesco, Joseph Jensen, A. S. van der Woude, David Allan Hubbard, Gary V. Smith, Gerhard F. Hasel, and Shalom M. Paul.\textsuperscript{2}

Another interesting approach to the question was introduced by Paul R. House in his study of the Twelve Minor Prophets. House focused on some literary bonds in order to demonstrate that the books of the Twelve Minor Prophets were indeed built into a literary unity in the biblical canon. He went on to demonstrate that many times a theme is introduced in one prophetic book, and then it is carried on and developed into details in the books that follow. For House, the themes that structure and unite the sequence of the twelve prophetic books are those of sin, punishment, and restoration. The use of common terminology and the treatment of identical themes, especially at the beginning and at the end of a book, provide the link between that book and those that precede and follow it. The first six prophetic books (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah) are especially


focused on the question of the covenant and the cosmic nature of sin. The next three
(Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah) capture the essence of covenantal and cosmic
punishment. The last three (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) relate the possibility of
restoration, both covenantal and cosmic. House argued further that the themes of sin,
punishment, and restoration can also be perceived in the development of a common and
progressive plot throughout the twelve books, and in the characterization of the personages
that are part of the literary drama. In order to understand the message of the book of
Amos, contended House, one must relate it to Hosea’s introduction of the sins of Israel and
the breach of her covenant with YHWH, as well as to Joel’s development of these themes
coupled with his presentation of the cosmic sin of the nations.1

Covenant as a Late
Development

Notwithstanding the growing recognition of a covenant background in the book of
Amos in recent biblical scholarship, the last decades have also seen an increasing number
of scholars arriving at very contrary conclusions. Indeed, the views expressed earlier by
Duhm, Wellhausen, and others have received a renewed support and rehabilitation.

In 1961, Robert H. Pfeiffer published his study on the religion of the OT, stating
that every mention of the covenant between YHWH and Israel is later than 621 B.C. (i.e.,
after the time when the Book of the Law was found in the temple during the reign of King
Josiah). He further argued that no ethical religion can be found in Israel prior to the prophet
Amos. The prophet Amos did not preach on the basis of any divine commandment, since
none was known at his time. He however denounced Israel’s wickedness on the basis of
what, according to ancient tradition, was right and beneficial to the family, clan, tribe, and
nation.2

1Paul R. House, The Unity of the Twelve, JSOTSup, no. 97 (Sheffield: Almond

2Robert H. Pfeiffer, Religion in the Old Testament: The History of a Spiritual
A strong defense of the Deuteronomic origin of the covenant concept in Israel came from Lothar Perlitt and Ernst Kutsch. For both of these scholars, covenant is a theological concept created by the Deuteronomic movement as a response to the theological crises and spiritual need of a people shaken by the destruction of their nation and the ensuing exile. The response was the notion of a divine נְבֵרֵי ("covenant") that had been broken, and on account of which they were now suffering the curses inherent in it. Their studies further argued that prior to the Deuteronomic material one cannot find the word נְבֵרֵי ("covenant") being used in a theological sense.\(^1\) As for the problem of covenant in the book of Amos, Perlitt argues that the prophet Amos never uses the word נְבֵרֵי ("covenant"), and all attempts to find covenant in the book are in face of the absence of the word itself. For Perlitt, Amos preached a new message that the prophet believed he had received from YHWH.\(^2\) For Kutsch, all the passages in Amos that have a covenant connotation, such as Amos 1:9, 2:4, etc., are late additions to the original message.\(^3\)

Perlitt's and Kutsch's studies had such a strong impact on biblical scholarship\(^4\) that some scholars who previously had supported a covenant background for the book revised their views and later maintained a very different opinion. Ronald E. Clements in 1965 made an extensive defense of the covenant cultic background of the prophets. In 1975, however, he forcefully advocated the idea that not covenant but the divine call, the message that the prophet believed to have received from YHWH, and some early traditions were the

---

\(^1\) Perlitt, *Bundestheologie*, 1-128; Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz*, 51-152. See also idem, "Bund I," 398-399; idem, "נְבֵרֵי b*rît ," 341, 344-345, 350-351.


\(^3\) Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz*, 53, 74, 79, 95.

\(^4\) This impact can be verified when a scholar of the stature of Martin-Achard, reviewing them, said that now one ought to review all that has been said about covenant in biblical and dogmatic theology. See Robert Martin-Achard, "Trois ouvrages sur l'alliance dans l'Ancien Testament," *RTP* 110 (1978): 299.
basis of Amos's preaching.¹ George W. Ramsey in 1970 defended Amos's covenant background on the basis of the prophet's use of the "rib"-pattern. In 1981, nevertheless, he argued that the covenant concept became common only in the Deuteronomic literature, and any similarity with the ANE treaties can be explained as a rhetorical device.²

A strong case for the revolutionary and innovative character of the preaching of Amos was made by C. F. Whitley, J. Vermeylen, and Ernest W. Nicholson. For them, Amos decidedly broke with the ancient traditions of Israel and preached a new understanding of religion. For Whitley, Amos went to preach to Israel because God sent him (Amos 7:15), and because God revealed to him His secret (Amos 3:7). The "Word of YHWH," preached by Amos, was in direct conflict with Israel's old established religious traditions. Whitley further specified that Amos conceived Yahweh's relationship with Israel in terms of human relationship rather than covenant.³ As for Vermeylen and Nicholson, they emphasized the prophet's breaking away from the common mythological understanding of religion that Israel shared with all the other peoples of ANE. Amos and the other eighth-century prophets would be then the first to have preached a moral and ethical religion, and from their preaching the covenant concept later emerged in Israel.⁴

A renewed appeal to Amos's usage of universal and natural laws, as the basis of his indictments, can be seen in A. G. Auld's commentary on Amos.⁵ It also received some


⁵A. G. Auld, Amos, OTG (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 74. 78.
support in John Barton's study on the "Oracle Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2. Barton, however, elaborated further on the possibility that Amos was not speaking exactly of universal principles known to men of all times, but more specifically, he was referring to "international customary laws," some kind of code of conduct expected to be observed in time of war, a code that was accepted and endorsed by the nations of ANE. The notion of customary laws was also elaborated by John H. Hayes. For Hayes, Amos did not draw his accusations of Israel's, or any other nation's, sins from any specific collection of OT laws. The prophet seems to refer, however, to what can be called Israelite customary law and morality as well as international customary laws. There is no evidence in the book of Amos that the relationship between YHWH and Israel was understood in terms of covenant theology at the time.

A remarkable contribution to the issue of covenant in the book of Amos came from Hans Walter Wolff. He argued that in order to establish Amos's intellectual background, it is necessary first of all to identify what is original and what are late additions to the book. When he did so, he noticed that in the "authentic" passages there is no reference to law, covenant, and even to the Exodus tradition, but there is an abundance of themes, expressions, and forms that are related to the wisdom literature. Wolff maintained that the prophet Amos himself believed that his preaching was based on the divine call and the

1 John Barton, Amos's Oracles Against the Nations, SOTSMS, no. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 42-43.

2 Ibid., 43-45, 51-61.

message he received from above, and not on a tradition. As one analyzes his message, however, it is evident that clan wisdom is the actual background of his preaching.¹

Anthony Phillips also pointed to a wisdom background for the book of Amos. This position shows a remarkable shift from his previous statements in 1970 in which he defended the idea that Amos's announcement of God's judgment was based on the covenant and on the Decalogue. Later, he argued that Amos's indictments reflect, not the Decalogue or the covenant, but court wisdom, probably that of the Davidic state.²

Max E. Polley went in another direction. He interpreted the book of Amos in the light of the Davidic royal theology. For him, Amos condemned the northern kingdom and the neighboring nations for their abandonment of the status of vassals of Judah, which was imposed on them under the Davidic empire.³

Finally, among the increasing numbers of scholars who have recognized a complex cultural background of the book of Amos, there is a sizable number who do not consider covenant to be a part of it. Paul-Eugène Dion, J. Alberto Soggin, Hans M. Barstad, Robert Martin-Achard, Norman K. Gottwald, Harry Mowvley, and Bruce E. Willoughby


have recognized a variety of backgrounds in the book, like wisdom, royal theology, universal morality, election theology, Exodus tradition, customary laws, etc., but not covenant.¹

Covenant and the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2

The general survey above already touched many essential points relevant for the more specific discussion concerning the "Oracles Against the Nations." The present succinct survey is focused on the specific question of the relationship of the covenant concept and the oracles that compose the first two chapters of the book of Amos. The specifics of the argumentation in favor of or against covenant provide the starting point for the discussion of the topic in the chapters that follow.²

Arguments in Favor of Covenant

A number of scholars have argued that the basis of the oracles of judgment against the foreign nations in Amos is to be found in the Israelite concept of covenant. The argumentation can be classified in three categories: First, the oracles are based on some specific covenant concepts; second, oracles against foreign nations were part of the Israelite


covenant cultic ritual; third, condemnation of the sins of foreign peoples is a logical extension of the Israelite covenant ethics.

The first argumentation, the existence of specific covenant concepts in the series, has been advanced on different grounds. Some scholars have identified in Amos 1-2 a confluence of concepts from the Noahic and the Mosaic covenants. For them, the Noahic covenant is evidenced by: the concept of God as the universal God, the Creator and the Sustainer of the cosmic order (as evidenced in the oracles of Amos 1-2, as well as in Amos 4:13, 5:8, 9:5-7 // Gen. 9:8-17); the characteristic terminology יָּדָם ("family") and אֵד ("brother") found in the book (Amos 1:9, 11; 3:1-2 // Gen 9:5; 10:5, 20, 31-32); the basic legal disposition for the respect of the human being and of his life (which is seemingly the main point in the oracles of Amos 1:3-2:3 // Gen 9:5). The רָאָי ("rebellion, transgression") of the nations is understood as a rebellion against the lordship of God through the transgression of His basic commandment for the entire humankind—the respect for life, for the fellow human being. The Mosaic covenant is evidenced by: the evocation of the Law of YHWH and His statutes (Amos 2:4); the prophetic denunciation of Judah's and Israel's transgressions of this covenant law (Amos 2:4, 6-8); and by the recital of YHWH's saving acts of the Exodus, the sojourn in the desert, and the gift of the promised land (Amos 2:9-11). The רָאָי ("rebellion, transgression") of Judah and Israel is understood as a rebellion against their covenant God, and as a breach of the covenant that YHWH established with the people of Israel on Sinai.¹

Some other scholars have also drawn together the notions of a universal covenant and the Mosaic covenant, but on different grounds. The transgression of YHWH's covenant law, by both Judah and Israel, is usually seen as the decisive evidence for the Mosaic covenant. The arguments for a universal covenant differ, however. Roy L. Honeycutt, for example, spoke of a universal "covenant" with the nations on the basis of a

¹See, e.g., Neher, Amos, 65-81; Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 29-32, 82-87; Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., Interpreting the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 75-76; Niehaus, "Amos," 340-341, 354, 361-371.
universal conscience under which all men are responsible before God.⁴ Jakob Jocz referred to a common moral law that underlies all humanity, which is embedded in the universe and governs all life.² Douglas Stuart, for his part, argued that the implicit notion of a universal covenant found in the oracles is based on the assumption that there is only one God, YHWH, who has power over the whole earth, and whose righteousness will not tolerate unrighteousness on the part of any nation.³ Jim Hiner, Jr., in his thesis on the "Oracles Against the Nations," especially stressed the specific covenant connotations of the term רָעָב ("rebellion, transgression"), which is used for both God's people (Judah and Israel) and the foreign nations. He further argued for the existence of a universal covenant in the book on the basis of: the theological themes that seem to denote such a covenant (e.g., the universal sovereignty of God); the fact that in the book of Amos, God's relationship with the nations and with Judah/Israel are always set in parallel, indicating that a certain kind of covenantal relationship existed with the foreign nations too; and finally, the existence of the concept of a universal covenant in the other eighth-century prophets Hosea and Isaiah (Hos 6:7; Isa 24:5).⁴

Paul R. House, following his working thesis on the intentional sequence of the Minor Prophets and their theological interconnections, argued that Amos 1-2 takes over the

---

¹For Honeycutt, this universal responsibility and accountability to God is a corollary of the Divine creative activity and His providential care over all, as Amos 9:7 makes clear. The sins of the foreign nations are therefore against the common standards of morality which are inherent in the conscience of all human beings. See Roy L. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message: An Expository Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1963), 20-21, 31-36.

²Jocz specially emphasized that one is not to equate this moral universal law with a "natural law." The notion of a "natural law" is more a Greek than a biblical concept. The Bible understands the implanted laws within creation not mechanically, as if they were the results of impersonal principles. The basic law that governs all existence is of a personal and covenantal nature; it expresses God's eternal faithfulness to His creation. This moral universal law is the justification for the judgments against foreign nations in Amos. See Jocz, *Covenant*, 36-37.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
theological themes introduced by Hosea (breach of the Sinai covenant) and Joel (cosmic sins of the nations). The nations are judged for the breach of the universal covenant of God with the human race (as in Joel, God is presented as the world sovereign), while Judah and Israel are condemned for the breach of their special covenant with God (as in Hosea, their relationship with God is presented in terms of the spouse/parent imagery, cf. Amos 3:1-2).1

The covenant background of the series in Amos 1-2 was also defended by a number of scholars on the basis of the prophetic usage of the "rib"-pattern, as an evidence that these oracles were built into a covenant lawsuit.2 Emphasis has also been given to the usage of covenant curses in the judgments pronounced against the nations, and to specific ANE treaty terminology, such as רֵיחַ ("brother") or רֶאָסִי ("rebellion, transgression"). Covenant curses and treaty terminology are usually seen as a definitive proof that Amos was reasoning and speaking from inside the context of covenant.3 Appeal has also been made to the apparent connection between certain transgressions denounced by Amos, especially those in the oracle against Israel, and some explicit dispositions of the ancient Israelite covenant law.4 The role of the prophet as a "covenant mediator," a function that in

1 House, Unity of the Twelve, 77-79, 133-135.
4 See, e.g., Bach, "Gottesrecht," 28-34; Zimmerli, Law and the Prophets, 68; Boyle, "Covenant Lawsuit," 350; Bergren, Prophets and the Law, 204-207.
itself already reveals the covenantal context of the oracles in Amos 1-2, has also been stressed.¹

For some scholars, the idea of covenant is to be found only in relationship to Judah and Israel. For them, the other nations in the series were judged solely on the basis of principles of universal morality,² international laws,³ or on the basis of the breach of their treaty obligation as fellow vassals to the Davidic king.⁴

For William J. Dumbrell, the Davidic covenant is behind the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2. The book of Amos starts with a note on the Davidic covenant theology, when in Amos 1:2 it is said that YHWH "roars from Zion." The list of the nations in Amos 1-2 concerns only those nations that once were part of the Davidic empire. The book then concludes with an oracle on the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and kingdom (Amos 9:11-12).⁵

For Robert B. Coote, only the oracle against Israel was really pronounced by the prophet Amos. The idea of covenant appears to be the immediate source of Amos's concept of justice. All the other oracles in the series are later additions to the original speech of the prophet, in order to actualize the prophetic message as time went by.⁶


²See, e.g., Harper, Amos and Hosea, cxviii; Hammershaimb, Amos, 21-22; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 35-47; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 88-90; Finley, Amos, 117, 133-134, 138-139, 158.


⁴See, e.g., Wilhelm Vischer, "Amos, citoyen de Téqoa," ETR 50 (1975): 144; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 26-27; and Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 128.

⁵Dumbrell, Covenant, 154.

⁶Coote, Amos, 66-70, 112-115; see also Doorly, Prophet of Justice, 53-55, 57-59 (similar view to Coote's). For Coote, the oracles against Aram, Philistia, Ammon, and Moab were added by the time of Hezekiah or Josiah in the seventh century B.C. (what he calls the B stage). The oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah were added in the sixth century B.C., near the end of the Babylonian exile or shortly thereafter (what he calls the C stage). The B stage was a Judean addition to the message of Israel in order to admonish
The second argumentation, the cultic interpretation of the oracles, usually proposes that the prophet Amos used a conventional form of cultic oracle against enemy nations. Speeches against other nations were not uncommon in the ANE world. They were an expression of nationalism, since they implied salvation for one nation by the destruction or punishment of her adversaries. In Israel, these oracles are believed to have been part of the cultic covenant tradition. YHWH, the covenant God, would rise up and destroy the enemy nations in order to bring salvation to His people Israel. Amos would then have used this traditional form to begin his oracles, speaking to the multitude gathered for a religious festival in the Northern Kingdom. He innovated, however, when he added the covenant people to the list of cursed nations, and mentioned punishment over the entire Israelite nation instead of only over the sinners among the people.

Ernst Würthwein maintained that Amos 1:3-2:3 came from the early time of the life of Amos, when the prophet was a regular cultic prophet. Amos, then, pronounced salvation to his people through oracles of judgment against foreign nations. Only later in his life, when he realized the situation of Israel, he became a prophet of doom and added the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6-16).²

A. Bentzen compared the oracles in Amos 1-2 with the Egyptian execration texts, and found a number of similarities between them. Especially important, in this sense, is the way the Egyptian priest would jump from one point of the compass to the other in his execrations of the surrounding nations and finally would finish by addressing the sinners Judah in view of the destruction of the northern kingdom and call to repentance from her sins (Amos 3:1-2 and the call to repentance and exhortation to do justice belong to this stage). The C stage gives a rational reason for the destruction of Judah (oracle against Judah, but also 9:7), it also pronounces a judgment upon Tyre and Edom, for the fierce opposition they made against Israel in postexilic times. This stage also tries to provide some hope for the future, by presenting the promise of a remnant and the oracle of restoration in Amos 9:8-15.


among Egypt's own people. Amos's puzzling order of nations in the oracles, with a climax on Israel, makes sense in the light of these texts. The innovation in Amos is that the prophet pronounced judgment over the entire Israelite nation and not over the sinners only.¹

Henning Graf Reventlow asserted that Amos was consciously using forms of oracular delivery that had their origin in the covenant cult. Amos was fulfilling the role of the prophet of the covenant when he pronounced the "Oracles Against the Nations."² John D. W. Watts connected the oracles of Amos 1-2 to the ritual drama of the annual festival of the enthronement of YHWH and its related ceremony of renewal of the Davidic kingship and covenant.³

James M. Ward conducted an interesting inquiry into the arguments in favor of the cultic background of these oracles. He supported Bentzen's conclusions on the affinities between the oracles of Amos and the execration texts of Egypt. He, however, went further and showed some striking parallels between some curses and some terminology of the ANE treaties and that of the "Oracles Against the Nations," like the injunction that the transgressor's scepter be removed and his weapons broken (Amos 1:5, 8; 2:3), and the phrases "covenant of brotherhood" and "his brother" (Amos 1:9, 11). For Ward, the pronouncement of the treaty curses and judgment could well have taken place in a cultic context.

He also pointed out that parallels exist between the oracles of Amos and the early Israelite ritual and cultic practices. The tribal blessing (Gen 49; Deut 33; and Judg 5) with its serial oracular utterance, and its usage of blessing and curses, bears some resemblance to the series in Amos 1-2. The narrative of the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod 7:14-12:42) seems to betray a ritual celebration from which the oracles against the foreign nations may have been derived.

¹Bentzen, "Ritual Background," 89-98.
²Reventlow, Amt des Propheten, 56-75.
³Watts, Basic Patterns, 134-135.
have developed. The practice of the רָפָא ("ban") and the consultation of diviners, which are associated with the holy war in Israel, also seem to provide precedents for the "Oracles Against the Nations." In this context prophets were consulted about the outcome of a projected battle and about divine instructions for its conduct (1 Sam 28:6, 15-19; 1 Kgs 20:13-14; 22:5-28). Ward then concluded that it was not difficult to imagine the development of a liturgy concerning foreign nations from these well-attested practices.

The story of Balaam and his oracles concerning the destinies of Moabites, Edomites, Amalekites, Kenites, Philistines, and Israelites (Num 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-24) provides an early example of a prophetic oracular activity with great resemblance to the series of oracles in Amos 1-2. Balaam's oracles are described explicitly as ritual acts, a fact that, for Ward, is highly significant for the inquiry of the cultic background of Amos 1-2.

Ward also remarked that an enumeration of usually six or seven foreign nations appears regularly in a number of passages with covenantal contexts. Many of these passages, for the author, are explicitly liturgical, like the ritual of the annual pilgrimage festivals (e.g., Exod 23:14-23) or the ceremony of covenant-renewal in Josh 24. Amos 1-2 lists six foreign nations plus Judah and Israel, in a remarkable similarity to these early liturgical lists.

Finally, Ward pointed out that the book of Psalms provides some evidence for the ritual use of oracles against foreign nations under the monarchy. He enumerated a number of psalms, among them Pss 2, 89, and 82. Ps 2, probably a coronation psalm for the Davidic king, has an oracular decree on the king's dominion over the nations (Ps 2:7-11). Ps 89 contains a promise about the Davidic rulership over the nations "from the sea to the rivers," that is, from the Mediterranean (or the Red Sea) to the Tigris and Euphrates (Ps 89:25). This territory comprises just those nations enumerated in Amos 1-2. Ps 82 provides the closest parallel to the oracles against foreign nations among the Hebrew
psalms. This psalm has an actual sentence against the world's rulers, delivered in oracular form (Ps 82:6-8). The motive for judgment in Ps 82 is similar to the one in Amos 1-2; it concerns the afflictions inflicted by the powerful ones over weak human beings (Ps 82:2-5).

Ward concluded that there is plenty of evidence for the cultic background of the "Oracles Against the Nations," though no actual liturgy of the preexilic Israelite cult can be pinpointed as the one the prophet Amos used. Amos seems rather to have composed a unique literary creation with affinities with the broad cultic forms widely used in Israel and in the ANE in general.¹

The third argumentation, the logical extension of the Israelite covenant ethics, suggests that Amos understood that the moral principles that were binding on the covenant people were also binding on the nations. The prophet seems to reason by analogy. YHWH has moral demands over His covenant people, but YHWH is also the Lord of all the nations on earth (Amos 9:7), hence the moral demands of YHWH are also binding on these nations. Scholars such as Abraham J. Heschel, Arvid S. Kapelrud, F. Charles


More elaboration on the question of a cultic background of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2 and their connection to covenant can be seen in Fensham, "Clauses of Protection," 142-143; Honeycutt, Amos, 14; Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, 40-44; Allen, "Amos," 49; Charles Hauret, Amos et Osée, VSal.AT, no. 5 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970), 19, 39-40; West, Introduction, 244; McKeating, Amos, 14; and Amsler, "Amos," 169-170.

Some scholars like Koch and Gottwald accept the parallel between the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos and the Egyptian execration texts, but see no connection to covenant but only to the Israelite cult ritual. See Koch, Amos, 1:250-251; 2:72-73; and Norman K. Gottwald, All the Kingdoms of the Earth: Israelite Prophecy and International Relations in the Ancient Near East (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 103-104; idem, Hebrew Bible, 353.
Arguments Against Covenant

A number of other scholars, however, have not recognized any hint of covenant in the "Oracles Against the Nations." Their propositions for the background of that series of oracles have been the following: first, the prophet's concept of a universal morality; second, the international customary laws of the ANE world; third, the treaty stipulations of the Davidic empire; fourth, no theological background whatever, for these oracles were only a rhetorical device.

Those who advocate the concept of a universal morality usually explore the prophet's concept of God as an ethical and universal God. Since YHWH is the God who controls all the nations (Amos 9:7), He requires from them, and from every human being, obedience to His universal ethical principles. For some, the ethical requirements of God, preached by Amos, represent a complete revolution and departure from the mystical and ceremonial understanding of religion in the ancient world, including Israel. For others, James Luther Mays also supports the idea of an analogical reasoning on the part of the prophet Amos. For him, however, Amos does not start the analogy from the Israelite obligations to the Law of God; these were binding only for Israel. For the other nations, Amos would have held them responsible on the basis of the common morality of the time. For Mays, the logical extension made by Amos was that since YHWH was Lord over Israel and reinforced His covenant law upon them, in the same way He reinforced the common standards of morality over the nations, since He was the Lord and Master of their history. See Mays, Amos, 27-28.


James Luther Mays also supports the idea of an analogical reasoning on the part of the prophet Amos. For him, however, Amos does not start the analogy from the Israelite obligations to the Law of God; these were binding only for Israel. For the other nations, Amos would have held them responsible on the basis of the common morality of the time. For Mays, the logical extension made by Amos was that since YHWH was Lord over Israel and reinforced His covenant law upon them, in the same way He reinforced the common standards of morality over the nations, since He was the Lord and Master of their history. See Mays, Amos, 27-28.

2See Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 471-473; and Pfeiffer, Introduction, 580-581.
however, these principles are nothing new but universal moral precepts that could be recognized by any rational human being.¹

On this line of thought, Paul-Eugène Dion made an interesting observation about the resemblance between the moral standards in Amos and what for him is the Elohistic concept of ה’ (“fear of God”). This concept refers to unwritten moral rules, valid both for foreigners and for the Israelites, either as individuals or as a nation. It does not refer to any covenant or law, but is guaranteed and required by God.²

For Hans W. Wolff, the universal morality of Amos is based on the wisdom background of the prophet. Wolff points out to the numerical sayings ("for three . . . and four . . .") and to the frequent use of the term יְהוָה (which is frequent in Proverbs but rare in the Pentateuch) as clear indications of such background.³

A second group of scholars advocates the view that the background of the prophet’s accusations is to be found in ANE’s international customary law. Like the preceding universalistic view, one speaks here of common moral precepts with universal application. But while those with the universalistic view maintain that these precepts were derived, for Amos, from a righteous and just universal God, and should therefore be recognized by all, those who maintain the view of an international customary law are usually not concerned with the origin of this morality. For them, Amos speaks of precepts


³Wolff, Joel and Amos, 148-149, 152-153.
already recognized by all, Israelites and foreigners altogether. The prophet Amos are
transgressions of principles that are part of the conventional morality of any civilized
nation, which God backs up with severe sanctions. The prophet Amos, therefore, does not
denounce sins that the Israelites and their neighbors could not recognize as such. They are
condemned for failing to follow the dictates of their own conscience, and of the standard
morality of their culture.¹

For John Barton, this interpretation provides a better rationale for the oracles than
the other propositions, since Amos would not claim anything that could not be recognized
by non-Israelites. In support of this view, Barton analyzed some few examples of ANE
international conventions expressed in the international laws ratified in the form of treaties;
through conventions not legally ratified, found in letters mainly from Egypt and Mari; and
through unilaterally accepted norms of international conduct found in the Greek, Israeliite,
and Hittite world. He concluded that these examples show that the kind of international
law that he and others appeal to is not unattested in the ancient world.²

John H. Hayes, supporting the international customary-law background, noticed
that in the ANE treaties the gods were evoked, not as the sources of the stipulations of the
treaty, but as guarantors of the obligations and the avengers of infringements. YHWH, in
the "Oracles Against the Nations," seems to fulfill this same function.³

A third group of scholars denies any connotation of universalism or broad
international meaning for the oracles. They remark that the nations mentioned in Amos 1-2
are only those that once were part of the Davidic empire (2 Sam 8-12), or were in its sphere
of influence (like Tyre, 2 Sam 5:11, 1 Kgs 5:1; 9:13). They were therefore part of the
"Greater Israel," and were tied to each other by ties of "brotherhood" (Amos 1:9, 11).

¹See Barton, Amos's Oracles, 43-45; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 25;
Hayes, Amos, 58-59; Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 17.

²Barton, Amos's Oracles, 43-45, 51-61. See also idem, "Oracles Against the

³Hayes, Amos, 59.
which is typical treaty terminology. These nations became vassals of the suzerain Davidic king and owed allegiance to this king and also to YHWH. Their wars and cruel crimes against each other were a breach of their treaty stipulations, and ultimately, a rebellion (מֵאָם) against YHWH. As in Ps 2, the Davidic kingship and suzerainty over the surrounding nations gave to YHWH the authority and the right to judge and punish them.¹ The position of these scholars, however, should not be confused with that of William J. Dumbrell.² The emphasis here is not on the Davidic covenant but on the breach of treaty stipulations imposed by David, which have not much to do with the Davidic covenant itself.

A fourth group of scholars denied that the oracles regarding the foreign nations had any significance in themselves for the prophet Amos. They were rather used as a rhetorical device, to catch the attention and the understanding of the public and lead them to the oracle against Israel. It is therefore nonsense to search for any theological or logical background to the oracles, besides the one of preparing the atmosphere for the indictment of Israel. Amos's concern was only about Israel and not about any other nation.³

Summary
This survey of literature has evidenced that there is a deep division within OT scholarship regarding the presence of covenant in the book of Amos, as well as in the "Oracles Against the Nations" that comprise the first two chapters of that book. Indeed, the


²See above, 37.

disagreement could not be greater, and the last decades of debate have not simplified the matter, but rather have made it more complex.

A brief summary of some of the leading scholars, in the last twenty years, who have written biblical commentaries on Amos shows how diversified the question has become. Some, like John Hayes, see no evidence at all of covenant, neither in the "Oracles Against the Nations," nor in the rest of the book.¹ Others, like Hans W. Wolff, perceive no covenant in the authentic sayings of Amos, but recognize covenant in the late Deuteronomistic and Priestly additions to the book, as in the oracle against Judah (Amos 2:4-5), in the historical recital of Amos 2:9-12, or in the series of covenant curses in Amos 4:6-11.² Still others, like Gary Smith, discern some covenant ideas at certain points of the oracles in Amos 1-2, as well as in the rest of the book, but most of the time it remains in the background.³ Others, like Andersen and Freedman, detect a good amount of covenant language and theology in the oracles and the book, and consider covenant to be essential for their understanding.⁴ Finally, scholars like Douglas Stuart and Jeffrey Niehaus see covenant as the basic issue in the "Oracles Against the Nations" and in the entire book.⁵

The situation is similar when one looks to those authors who have recently addressed the issue in books and articles: Gottwald, for example, finds no evidence for covenant;⁶ others, like Kutsch and Clements, strongly oppose any covenant notion in Amos; the few passages that seem to point to it, like Amos 2:4, are later additions;⁷ some,

¹Hayes, Amos, 38.
²Wolff, Joel and Amos, 102, 159-160, 163-164, 212-215.
³Gary Smith, Amos, 71.
⁴Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 231-232, 236, 297-333, 381-382, etc.
⁶Gottwald, Hebrew Bible, 357-358.
like McCarthy and Jensen, recognize no direct reference to covenant in the oracles of Amos 1-2, or in the book, but accept covenant as a presupposition to Amos's preaching; others, like Vesco and van der Woude, see covenant as one of the important elements of the message of Amos; finally, some scholars, like Seilhamer and Snyder, defend covenant as the main theological concept of the book, and of the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations."3

How does one evaluate the opposing views of modern scholarship? Is there covenant or not? The close scrutiny of the "Oracles Against the Nations," in the next chapters, tries to reach some answers that could allow not only an objective evaluation of the divergent views reigning in today's OT scholarship, but, above all, a clear answer to the question concerning the presence (or absence) of OT covenant(s) in these prophetic oracles.

3Seilhamer, "Role of Covenant," 435-448; Snyder, "Law," 158-165.
CHAPTER 3

COVENANT ELEMENTS EVIDENCED BY THE HISTORICAL
AND LITERARY CONTEXTS OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

This chapter starts the inquiry into the question of the presence of OT covenant elements in the oracles of Amos 1-2 by situating these oracles inside the historical context of the prophetic ministry of Amos, and inside the general literary context of the book. Special attention is given to the different proposals advanced in these two domains by OT scholarship in the last decades. These proposals are surveyed and evaluated in an attempt to determine the most probable historical and literary contexts for the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2.

The implications of the study of these two contexts are seen to be of great relevance to the discussion of the present dissertation. Three important OT covenant elements are evidenced in this chapter: The theme of the "promised land" of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants; the Davidic rulership over the extension of this territory; and the elements of "blessing and curse" evidenced by the tension between salvation and judgment that is characteristic to both the historical and the literary contexts of the book of Amos.

The Historical Context

The first verse of the book of Amos indicates that the prophet preached in the time of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the time of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. Both of these kings enjoyed very long reigns. Uzziah probably reigned during the period 792-
740 B.C., and Jeroboam between 793/2-753/2 B.C. The first twenty-four years of Uzziah's reign overlapped with the last twenty-four years of his father Amaziah. Therefore, it would not be until 767 B.C. that he began his sole rulership over Judah. Later, for the last ten years of his kingship, his son Jotham seems to have been co-regent with him (750-740 B.C.). As for Jeroboam, he was probably co-regent with his father for the first eleven years (793-782 B.C.). His sole reign would then have started in 782 B.C., and lasted until his death in 753 B.C. when his son Zechariah replaced him.

If the information in Amos 1:1 is to be understood as a reference to the overlapping period when both kings, Uzziah and Jeroboam, were the sole regents in their countries, then Amos's ministry would have occurred sometime between the years 767-753 B.C.

A reference is also made in Amos 1:1 to an earthquake. It is stated that Amos had either preached, or concluded his preaching, two years before this earthquake. It was such a violent earthquake that it became famous in the history of Israel (cf. Zech 14:5). Evidences of a violent earthquake, dating to the eighth century B.C., have been found in the archaeological excavations of Hazor (Stratum VI), Beer-Sheba (Stratum III), and Gezer (Macalister's Towers VI and VII). Though it is difficult to establish the exact date of this earthquake, it has been suggested that sometime around 760 B.C. seems to be a good...
possibility.\footnote{If this dating is correct, the decade of the 760s B.C. is a fair candidate for the
time of the preaching of Amos.}

General Historical Circumstances at the
Time of Uzziah and Jeroboam

The time of Uzziah and Jeroboam was a period of great prosperity and conquest for
both Judah and Israel. Indeed, some scholars have called it a kind of "golden" or "silver
age" of Israelite history, second in glory only to the time of David and Solomon.\footnote{\textit{Noth, History of Israel}, 248-249; Yohanan Aharoni, \textit{The Land of the Bible}: A
King, \textit{Amos}, 30-31; Paul, \textit{Amos}, 1; Hasel, \textit{Understanding}, 12.}

The biblical account of the reign of these two kings reflects such a situation. In
2 Chr 26 it is reported that Uzziah gained control over all the southern region of Palestine.
He established his military power over the Philistines, the Arabs, the Meunites, and the
Ammonites. He rebuilt the commercial port of Eilat (Eilot), and had an aggressive building
program both in Jerusalem and in the desert. It is further asserted that he had large herds of
cattle and many laborers to cultivate the land, for he loved husbandry. Finally, reference is
made to his powerful army, well equipped with war machines. Uzziah's name became
famous and powerful (2 Chr 26:8,15). It is also specified that he had the spiritual direction
of a prophet named Zechariah, for most of the days of his life. As long as he sought
\textit{YHWH}, God made him prosper (2 Chr 26:5).

\footnote{\textit{See Yigael Yadin, Hazor: The Head of All Those People (Joshua 11:10) with a
The biblical report is much more concise for Jeroboam. In 2 Kgs 14:23-29 it is recorded that he reestablished the borders of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of Arabah, and that he reconquered Damascus and Hamath. His victories were prophesied by the prophet Jonah, and were a direct sign of the work of YHWH in favor of Israel (2 Kgs 14:25). Though the biblical account is brief, Jeroboam's Israel was probably more powerful than Uzziah's Judah. An apparent state of peace reigned between Israel and Judah, and some kind of coalition and cooperation may have existed between them. 1

Together, Uzziah and Jeroboam reestablished power over the same area originally controlled in the kingdom of David and Solomon. The major trade routes of the region were under the Israelite-Judaic control, and the two kingdoms enjoyed such a time of prosperity as never experienced since the times of Solomon.

The archaeological evidence from the period of these two kings corroborates the scene of prosperity and expansion depicted in the Bible. 2 In the northern kingdom of Israel, for example, there is evidence of flourishing cities, like Samaria (Strata V-VI), Megiddo (Stratum III), and Hazor (Stratum VI), with a considerable number of large public buildings and storehouses. The use of hewn stone, or ashlar masonry, is well attested in Samaria. This fact shows the widespread utilization of this fine technique in that period. All these constructions, which necessitated large investments of capital, attest to a flourishing economy. Luxury and wealth are evidenced in the more than 500 fragments of ivory inlays found in Samaria, most of which probably come from the eighth century B.C.

Evidences for the territorial expansions and building activities of Uzziah, for example, seem to be attested by the construction of large forts on the borders of the

1 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 21-22.

southern kingdom and at strategic highway junctions. Large forts have been discovered at Kadesh-Barnea (the border of the Negev, on the "way of Shur"), at Tell 'Arad, at Khirbet Ghazze (five miles southeast of Tell 'Arad, near the starting point of the "way of Edom"), and on the road between Azekah and Tell el-Judeideh. The pottery found at these forts seems to indicate that they were not built before the eighth century B.C.

The probability of the historical reality of the expansion and prosperity of Judah and Israel in the first half of the eighth century B.C. is further strengthened by the study of the international situation of the epoch. There was a political vacuum in the Syro-Palestinian arena. The Syrian military power, which under Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad had overpowered Israel for many decades, was no longer dominant since it was crushed by the Assyrians by the end of the ninth century B.C. Egypt, in the south, had long since ceased being a power in the political play of the region. The frightful Assyria was then concerned with its own problems. It was engulfed in a series of internal revolts, and was suffering constant menace from the growing power of the Urartu kingdom to the north. This political vacuum could well have provided the chance for the expansion and progress that are observed in the reigns of both Uzziah and Jeroboam.  

Proposals on the Historical Circumstances at the Time of Amos's Preaching

Though it is agreed by most scholars that the time of these two kings was generally marked by military victories and prosperity, there has been divergence of opinion concerning the exact historical situation at the time of the preaching of Amos. Three different views are usually proposed. The first one maintains that the prophet preached during a time of relative peace and prosperity, probably during the apogee of Jeroboam's

---

reign; the second, that it was rather during the final years of Jeroboam, amid decline and trouble; the third, that the prophet preached over a very extended period of time, going from a time when Israel had not yet achieved any considerable power to the zenith of its conquest and prosperity.

**Apogee of Jeroboam's Reign**

The most commonly held view among biblical scholars is that the book of Amos describes the very positive and prosperous situation of the northern kingdom of Israel. Merchants reaped great profits (Amos 8:4-6). The privileged classes had grown richer and more prosperous. They had built summer and winter houses for themselves, and had luxuriously furnished them (Amos 3:12,15; 6:4). They enjoyed an indolent, indulgent life with plenty of food and wine, and had no anxiety about their future (4:1-2; 6:1-6). There was also an intense attitude of piety among them (Amos 4:5). Crowds would come to the religious shrines, bringing with them a great number of offerings, tithes, and sacrifices (Amos 4:4-5; 5:5, 21-23). They were proud and confident in their power as a nation (Amos 6:13), and there was a general conviction that YHWH, the God of Hosts, was with them (Amos 5:14). There was a widespread eschatological expectation for a still brighter, glorious, and final future centered around the "day of YHWH" (Amos 5:18).

The other side of the coin was dark, however. Immorality and syncretism were rampant (Amos 2:7-8; 3:14; 4:4; 5:5, 26; 8:14). The Israelite leaders, and those who had power and influence in society, like the rich, had become pitiless toward the poor, the needy, and the afflicted. To become still richer, they exploited the lower class mercilessly (Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:10-12; 8:4-6). In order to promote their own interest, they controlled

---

and perverted the legal system in their favor (Amos 2:7; 5:7,10,12; 6:12). They showed no concern for the "ruin of Joseph" (Amos 6:6).

**Final Years of Jeroboam: Decline and Trouble**

Some scholars, however, disagree with the view described above, and have proposed another situation for the preaching of Amos. In 1965, Simon Cohen maintained that Amos preached in a moment when Jeroboam's power was declining steadily and Israel was facing some international crises with her Syro-Palestinian neighbors.1 His views have been well accepted by some scholars, such as Hans W. Wolff, J. Alberto Soggin, and John H. Hayes.2 For Cohen, the accusations of war crimes against Damascus and Ammon, in the first chapter of Amos, denote the recent reconquest of Gilead by the joint forces of the Syrians and the Ammonites.3 Cohen also draws attention to another indication of a contemporary warfare situation in Amos 4:10, where it is mentioned that God slew their young men by the sword, took captive their horses, and made the stench of their camp rise into their nostrils. He believes that these words indicate war, and one in which Israel was not very successful.4

Still additional evidence can also be found in the reference to a "remnant of Joseph" in Amos 5:15. Remnant there does not imply a "saving remnant," but instead, the pitiful number left over after a destructive warfare.5 The confident words, found in Amos 6:13, would refer to an Israeliite victory in a counterattack against the Syrian and Ammonite forces. The prophet makes a pun with the names of the cities the Israelites reconquered to

---


3Cohen, "Political Background," 155-156.

4Ibid., 156.

5Ibid.
indicate that their confidence was based on nothing. Cohen suggests that the difficult situation Israel was living in made pressing the desire for the "day of YHWH" (Amos 5:18), the day when God would save them from their enemies. 

Cohen finds further support for his views in the premise that the fortunes of Israel, since the time Jehu put his kingdom under the protection of the Assyrian Empire in 842 B.C., were always linked to those of Assyria. From 842 to 806 B.C., for example, Assyria was more concerned with the east and with its own internal civil dissensions than with the western boundaries of the imperium. Because of that, it was not able to exert any pressure on Syria, and the consequence was that Israel suffered some thirty years of humiliation at the hands of Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad.

After 806 B.C., the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari III made a series of campaigns to the west, reestablished his protectorate over the Syro-Palestinian states, and imposed a heavy defeat upon the Syrians. This was a golden opportunity for Israel, who took immediate advantage of it. This time corresponds to the time of Jehoash's conquest and the first part of the reign of Jeroboam, when Israel reconquered its lost territories and reestablished the ancient boundaries of the kingdom.

Between 782 and 745 B.C., however, some of the most disastrous years of Assyrian history occurred. The Assyrians had to struggle with the emerging power of Urartu to the north. The Assyrian Empire was afflicted with internal revolts and pestilence. It became impoverished and dispirited; it could not pay attention to international affairs. With this relief from Assyrian pressure, it would be natural for Syria to recover herself and try to expand again to the south and to the west. With Ammon as a willing ally, it would again attempt to recover Bashan and Gilead from Israel. The war that ensued was long, with alternate victories for both sides. It was fought within the borders that Jeroboam had

---

1Ibid.

2Ibid., 156-157.
restored to Israel. This situation of war between Syria, Ammon, and Israel is, for Cohen, essentially the state of affairs that is reflected in the words of Amos.¹

Extended Period of Time: From Weakness to Power

A third view has been proposed by Menahem Haran. For him, the prophet Amos preached over a very extended period of time. Some oracles in the book belong to the beginning of Jeroboam's reign, when Israel was still of little political force; others belong to the apogee of Jeroboam's power, which, for Haran, was attained only in the final years of his reign.²

Haran offers the following analysis of the history of Israel in the time of Amos's ministry: By the end of the ninth and beginning of the eighth century B.C., both Israel and Syria, as well as most of the Syro-Palestinian states, became subject to the Assyrian power through Adad-Nirari III.³ By the end of Adad-Nirari III's kingship, the Assyrian hold on the southern part of the region became weaker, and this allowed the recovery by Joash (the father of Jeroboam) of some Israelite cities, which had been conquered by the Arameans.⁴ This Israelite recovery, however, did not yet encompass the Trans-jordanian region. The recovery of that area was accomplished only by Jeroboam, who restored all the territories to which Israel laid claim.⁵ This restoration was motivated by the prophetic promises uttered by the prophet Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25). There was in Israel, by this time, an atmosphere of irredentism inspiring nationalistic feelings which, in its turn, stimulated prophecies of redemption.⁶

¹Ibid., 157-159.
³Ibid., 267-270.
⁴Ibid., 270-271.
⁵Ibid., 271.
⁶Ibid., 271-272.
For Haran, this same atmosphere of irredentism is found in Amos's oracles against the nations, which he dates to the early days of Jeroboam's reign. Trans-jordan had not yet been brought under Israelite control. The prophet Amos, starting with a stereotyped form of oracle of salvation, predicted the destruction of the nation's enemies. For Haran, Amos 1:2-2:6 is one of the earliest of Amos's oracles. It was uttered before the height of the power of Jeroboam, as is evidenced by the fact that Damascus is depicted as a great and powerful kingdom, and still free from Israelite dominion (Amos 1:3-5). The Arameans were still maintaining a cruel control over Gilead. From this time also came the first three visions of Amos (Amos 7:1-9; 8:1-3), in which Israel is referred to as being "so small" (7:2, 5). For Haran, "small" meant the time when Israel had not yet reached the status of a powerful nation under Jeroboam.

Haran further argues that Jeroboam's territorial expansions could happen only when the Assyrian power was too weak to intervene in the central and southern Syrian region. For Haran, according to the Assyrian eponym lists, Assyria still maintained western campaigns in some parts of Syria until the reign of Assur-Dan III. It was only in the reign of Assur-Nirari V (which Haran dates to 755-745 B.C.) that military campaigns cease to be mentioned at all. Hence, for Haran, it was probably by this time (he dates Jeroboam's reign to 789/7-748/7 B.C.) that Israel expanded into southern and central Syria.

From this later time came most of the actual oracles of the book of Amos. Haran remarks that the shift in the theological background between the early oracles (such as Amos 1:2-2:6) and the late oracles (Amos 2:7-6:14; 8:4-14) is a further support for his dating of the prophecies of Amos. The first oracles were nationalistic and condemned the

---

1Ibid., 272-277.
2Ibid., 278.
3Ibid., 278-279.
4Ibid., 279-284.
other nations for crimes they committed against Israel. The later oracles were concerned with moral issues, problems inside the nation of Israel. In these late oracles one finds that the Israelite dominion was now extending to Lebo Hamath (Amos 6:14). For Haran then, the ministry of Amos was spread over a fairly extensive period of time, yet all restricted to the time span of Jeroboam.¹

Evaluation of the Proposals

As seen by the diverse views on the historical circumstances at the times of Amos's preaching, the data in the book can be interpreted in different ways, yielding divergent results. Though it is difficult to determine the exact moment(s) in which Amos preached, caution must be exercised regarding the presupposition that the book reflects only historical facts or context contemporary to the prophet. Some of the historical indicators used above in the reconstruction of the historical setting of the book may well refer to events earlier than, rather than contemporary to, the time of Amos.

References to warfare with Syria in the oracle against Damascus (Amos 1:3), and to military catastrophe in Amos 4:10-11, for example, may well refer to the horrible times Israel endured under the Syrian power during the second half of the ninth and the beginning of the eighth centuries B.C. The book of 2 Kings depicts well this time in the narratives concerning Elisha and in the accounts of the kingship of Jehu and Jehoahaz. In this sense, it is interesting to remark that in the book of Amos the כְּנַף ("rebellions, transgressions") of Damascus are clearly considered in terms of Hazael and Ben-Hadad, the Syrian kings of this earlier time. In Amos 1:4, references are made to the "house of Hazael" and to the "fortresses of Ben-Hadad." This is the only time outside the historical

¹Ibid., 277-278.
accounts of the books of Kings and Chronicles that a reference is made to Hazael, and one of two times that a reference is made to Ben-Hadad.¹

Amos's condemnation of Damascus for having "threshed Gilead with sledges of iron" (עֲפָרָתָם בְּרֹכֵס נַבָּרָי עַרַּי אֵשֶׁר יָדָעָה) can also be understood as referring to late ninth- and early eighth-century B.C. events. The prophetic accusation may well refer to the violent and bloody conquests that Hazael and Ben-Hadad inflicted on Israel. Actually, 2 Kgs 13:7 uses similar language when describing Ben-Hadad's utter destruction of Jehoahaz's army.²

¹ The other reference to Ben-Hadad, outside Kings and Chronicles, is found in Jer 49:27, also in an oracle of judgment against Damascus. The sentence is a close parallel to that found in Amos. The name Ben-Hadad was borne by several kings of Damascus in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., two or perhaps three of whom are mentioned in the books of Kings (1 Kgs 15:18; 20:1-34; 2 Kgs 6:24; 8:7; 13:3, 24) — cf. R. A. Bowman, "Ben-Hadad," IDB (1962), 1:381-382; and Wayne T. Pitard, "Ben-Hadad," ABD (1992), 1:663-665. The parallelism in Amos 1:4 between the "house of Hazael" and the "fortresses of Ben-Hadad" seems to indicate that, at least here in Amos, Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael is referred to.

The plagues and the military catastrophes of Amos 4 may also be a reference to incidents that happened at least a century earlier. The stories of Elijah and Elisha portray the many different means (famine, drought, pestilence, military defeat, etc.) by which God tried to call Israel back to Him, but without success.

The frequent usage of the verb הָשָׂבָע ("to return") in the "Oracles Against the Nations" may be seen as a further indication that the ninth and early eighth centuries B.C. should be taken as one of the possible backgrounds to these oracles. Amos's usage of this verb seems to establish a direct connection to the prophecy of Jonah in 2 Kgs 14 and to the historical background depicted in that passage.

In the brief historical account of the kingship of Jeroboam in the book of 2 Kings, it is recorded that Jeroboam restored (שׂבָע) the borders of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of Arabah "according to the word of YHWH, God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher (or Jonah son of Amittai the prophet, who was from Gath Hepher)" (2 Kgs 14:25). In vs. 26, it is stated that YHWH had seen the great suffering of Israel and therefore decided to act in her favor. In the historical sequence of 2 Kings, this great suffering was the dreadful situation the Israelites were experiencing in consequence of violent attacks, defeats, and harsh treatment imposed on them by Hazael and by his son Ben-Hadad. God saw the misery of His people and that there was no "helper" to deliver them. In the continuation, in vs. 27, it is further stated that at that time YHWH had not yet spoken about blotting out the name of Israel from under the heavens, and that He therefore saved them through Jeroboam son of Joash.

The situation described in 2 Kgs 14 could very well be the context of the prophecies of Amos. First, there is the terrible situation of suffering and pain that Israel had been enduring for decades under the hand of Syrian power. Then comes YHWH's intervention in favor of His people. YHWH sends the prophet Jonah who pronounces prophecies of salvation with promises of not only deliverance from the enemies' power,
but also of restoration of the former glory of Israel. This restoration was undoubtedly expressed by the usage of בָּאָדָה ("return") in the hiphil ("to restore"), as 2 Kgs 14:25 indicates. YHWH used Jeroboam to accomplish His promises. It is further specified that up to this time YHWH had not yet spoken of destroying Israel because of her sins.

Eschatological expectations might have been very high during the time the prophecies of Jonah were being fulfilled, and Jeroboam was going from conquest to conquest. People might well have had a high expectation for the "day of YHWH," when the final victory and power would be attained; the day when the former glory of the Davidic/Solomonic kingdom would belong to Israel again, and Israel would have control over the total extent of the land promised originally to Abraham and to the Israelites in the Exodus, the area of the "Greater Israel." The "day of YHWH" was therefore expected to be a day of great light for Israel, as is attested in Amos 5:18-20. People could well feel very secure as they saw the prophecies being fulfilled, the victories being won, and they started enjoying the material prosperity that followed the growth of power and the proliferation of trade, as Amos 6 seems to point out. They could be very certain that indeed YHWH was with them (Amos 5:14) and that no evil would reach them (Amos 9:10).

Within this context, Amos's preaching attacked the basic foundations of this hopeful eschatological mood. He could very well have started his preaching with the "Oracles Against the Nations," in which he used repeatedly the verb בָּאָדָה ("return"). This verb is used in a very ambiguous way, which may be intentional, in a form of "Janus parallelism," as proposed by Anthony R. Ceresko. This kind of parallelism is a poetic device in which a single word is used with two different meanings: one meaning paralleling what precedes, and the other meaning what follows. In that sense, the verb would first deny the realization of the popular expectation for the soon restoration of the Davidic empire in all its power and glory; and second, it would affirm the inevitability of the divine

---

1Cf. Gen 15:18-21; Exod 23:31; Num 13:21; 34:1-10; Deut 11:24; Josh 13:5. See how this entire region is described as "all Israel" in days of David and Solomon in 2 Sam 8:1-15; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 18:1-14; 2 Chr 7:8; 9:26.
Judgment described in the sentences that follow. The so-much-expected "day of YHWH" would not be a day of light and glory, but of darkness, the day of the inescapable divine judgment upon Israel (Amos 5:18-20).

To those who were feeling secure in their new-found prosperity and opulence, and were reassured by their recent military conquests (Lo Debar and Karnaim), Amos announced that what they should expect is the total reversal of what was prophesied by Jonah. YHWH was raising up a nation that would afflict Israel from "Lebo Hamath to the brook of Arabah" (Amos 6:1,13-14).

To those who unquestionably shouted "YHWH is with us," the prophet prophesied the utter destruction of Israel. He then invited the people to seek YHWH and live, to "seek good and not evil" and then YHWH would be with them, as they were saying, and perhaps He would have mercy on the remnant of Joseph (Amos 5:1-15).

1See the brief but interesting discussion on this parallelism in Anthony R. Ceresko, "Janus Parallelism in Amos's 'Oracles Against the Nations' (Amos 1:3-2:16)," JBL 113 (1994): 485-490. See also the recent article by Paul R. Noble, "I Will Not Bring 'It' Back' (Amos 1:3): A Deliberately Ambiguous Oracle?" ExpT 106 (1994-1995): 105-109. Though not referring at all to the occurrence of "Janus parallelism" in the series, Noble comes very close to the same idea when he argues that the deliberate ambiguity of נָּשָׁ֣בָה ("return") seems to imply both the reference to the restoration of the Davidic empire (implicit in the beginning of the book, but explicitly stated at the end, in Amos 9:11-15) and to the inevitable judgment of YHWH described in Amos 1-2.

The suffix pronoun נָּשָׁ֣בָה ("him/it") that is attached to the verb נָּשָׁ֣בָה ("return") is quite ambiguous also. It can refer to a number of different things in the oracles (e.g., the voice of YHWH, the sins of the nation [collective sense], the nation itself [nation referred to as a people, hence masculine], or the judgment of YHWH), and is probably referring to more than one of them. See the discussion in the appendix below, 300-301.

The context of the restoration of the Davidic empire is made evident by the restricted scope of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2. As Andersen and Freedman (Amos, 27) have remarked, there is not in Amos 1-2 the universal scope which many scholars have proposed, but only eight nations are addressed there, and then only the nations that once were involved in or were part of the Davidic/Solomonic empire. This context was also remarked by Mauchile, "Implicit Signs," 288-289; Koch, Prophets, 68-69; Dumbrell, Covenant, 154; Barré, "I' sybnw," 622-623; and Polley, Amos, 66, among others.

The hiphil of נָּשָׁ֣בָה ("return") is used more than once in the OT with the meaning of revoking God's work (cf., e.g., Num 23:20; Job 9:12; 11:10; Isa 14:27; 43:13). In this sense, YHWH affirms that because of the תַּעֲכֵֽבָּתָּֽו ("rebellions, transgressions") of each nation in the series, His judgment against that nation would not be revoked.
To those who were convinced that no evil would reach and overtake them, the prophetic message was that surely the eyes of the Lord YHWH were upon Israel to destroy her from the face of the earth, though He would not totally destroy the House of Jacob. But all the sinners among the people, who were so reassured, would perish on the day of YHWH's judgment of the nation (Amos 9:8-10).

As for the final, expected restoration of the Davidic kingdom, it would happen only "in that day," only after YHWH's judgment upon Israel, and after He had exiled them among the nations (Amos 9:8-15). Days would come when YHWH would bring back His people (notice the use of וְָז ["return"] in Amos 9:14) from the exile and establish them in their land and bless them exceedingly.

The context of security and confidence for the future, against which Amos seems to be preaching throughout his book, does not seem to support the historical reconstruction proposed by Simon Cohen. A context in which Israel was losing its power, had already suffered heavy defeats, lost Gilead, and was now waiting for deliverance of her enemies through a miraculous Divine intervention in the "day of YHWH" does not account for the secure, positive, and hopeful atmosphere that appears throughout the book. Further, as remarked above, the references to war and military defeat seem to be better accounted for by the historical situation of the second half of the ninth and the beginning of the eighth centuries B.C.

Menahem Haran's proposal for a lengthy prophetic ministry for Amos (in which the prophet predicted some early nationalistic oracles of salvation for Israel when Jeroboam was still powerless, and much later, oracles of judgment when the king had attained the height of his power and dominion, and when sin became rampant) goes against some direct indications in the book that Amos's ministry was rather short. Amos 1:1 introduces the book stating that these are "the words of Amos which he saw 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." The adverbial phrase "two years before the earthquake" leaves the reader with the general impression that Amos's ministry had not lasted for much time. Indeed, it seems that he had received the divine message and delivered it in this timetable—"two years before the earthquake."

A short ministry is also the general impression left from reading the historical section of Amos 7:10-17. In his confrontation with the priest Amaziah, Amos does not indicate an elaborate and lengthy ministry as a prophet, but rather a short and direct compliance to the divine command. He who was not a prophet was taken from behind his flock by YHWH and was commanded to go and prophesy against Israel with a precise and direct message, and that was actually what he was doing (Amos 7:14-15).

So, if credit is to be given to the book's own data, it is hard to support Haran's view. A lengthy prophetic ministry, which suffered transformation in its focus and message as the times and the circumstances changed, does not agree with the book's own internal data.

Andersen and Freedman are probably right when they suggest that Amos's preaching occurred during a time when Jeroboam's power was steadily growing but had not yet reached its zenith.1 This suggestion seems to do more justice to all the elements found in the book.

The Literary Context

The book of Amos represents one of the finest examples of prophetic literature with regard to the artistry of its language. It has been claimed that "no prophet surpasses him [Amos] in the combination of purity, clarity, and versatility that characterize his language."2

---

1 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 21-23, 246-250, 592-593.
2 Mays, Amos, 6.
Literary Genre

The book is composed of a series of prophetic speeches/oracles, through which Amos conveys the divine message he received. Two exceptions to this are the introduction in Amos 1:1 and the historical narrative in Amos 7:10-17. Even so, these two sections are closely related to the oracular material of the rest of the book. Amos 1:1 introduces the "words of Amos" (אֲמוֹס הַמִּסְרָא) that follow in Amos 1:2-9:15. The narrative in Amos 7:10-17 reports the reaction of the priest Amaziah to one of the oracles of the prophet, and the resulting dialogue between this priest and Amos (which ends in an oracle of judgment addressed to Amaziah).¹

Extensive use is made of both prose and poetry throughout the book. Pure prose can be found in the introduction of the book and in the vision reports, while pure poetry is found in passages like the four hymnic pieces of the book (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 8:9; and 9:5-6). Many times, however, prose and poetry are blended together in the same section, as in the narrative in Amos 7:10-17 (which is prose in the description of the event and poetry in the prophet's answer to the priest Amaziah), or in the series of oracles against the nations in Amos 1-2 (which is usually poetry, but is prose in the description of the historical acts of God in favor of Israel in Amos 2:9-13).²

Literary Forms and Literary Devices

A great variety of literary forms and literary devices are found in the series of oracles that constitute this short book. They are used with unmistakable skill in order to convey the prophetic message.³

¹Amaziah reacted against the message of the second vision of Amos, especially against the prophet's assertion that YHWH would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword (Amos 7:9).

²For a more detailed discussion on the usage of prose and poetry in the book of Amos, see Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 144-149.

The major literary form is the **oracle of judgment.** These oracles usually denounce the sins of the people or individuals in Israel (and also of some foreign nations), and announce the coming divine judgment upon them (1:3-2:16; 3:1-2, 9-11; 4:1-3; 5:7, 10-12, 16-17; 6:1-8, 13-14; 7:16-17; 8:4-7). Sometimes, they just announce the forthcoming doom (3:12-15; 5:3; 6:9-11; 8:9-14; 9:9-10).

The divine origin of these oracles is many times conveyed by the usage of *messenger formulae,* either by the introductory **"thus says YHWH"** (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:12; 5:16; 7:17), by the concluding formula **"says YHWH"** (1:5, 8, 15; 2:3; 5:17, 27), or by the oracular formula **"oracle of YHWH"** (2:11, 16; 3:10, 15; 4:3; 6:8, 14; 9:7, 8). On occasion the prophet introduces the divine message through an **oath formula,** **"[The Lord YHWH] YHWH has sworn by . . . "**—4:2; 6:8; 8:7). Sometimes he uses the **proclamation formula,** **"Hear this word!" or "Hear this!"**—3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4), to command the attention of his public.

The theme of divine judgment is further treated in the book through other literary forms: **visions reports,** usually starting with the formula **"Thus the Lord YHWH showed me"**—7:1-3, 4-6, 7-9; 8:1-2), but also with the expression **"I saw"**—9:1-4); **woe-sayings,** starting with **"Woe!"**—5:18; 6:1); **dirge or lamentation,** also called **qinah** (from the Hebrew **"Woe!"**—5:1-2); reports of **God's past judgments** (4:6-11); **disputation questions** (3:3-8; 5:25-26; 6:12; 9:7); and **admonitions** (4:4-5).

The book, however, does not contain only judgment. Calls to repentance with a promise for the future are found in the **admonitions** of 5:4-6, 14-15, 23-24. The book ends with an **oracle of salvation** concerning Israel and the nations in 9:11-15. The divine origin of these calls and oracles is also indicated by the usage of the *messenger formulae.*

---


---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Four hymn stanzas (4:13; 5:8-9; 8:9; 9:5-6) are found interwoven with the prophetic oracles in the book. These extol YHWH as the Creator and Master of the universe.

As for the literary devices, one can detect the usage of metaphor, metonymy, numeric sayings, allusion, merism, hyperbole, ellipsis, synecdoche, irony, climax, repetition, rhetoric questions, punning, exclamations, symbols, alliteration, rhythm, etc.1 They abound in the book, and they show the vivid imagery and striking force of the prophetic message.

The Literary Structure of Amos

How all the oracles, with their distinctive literary forms and devices, are organized in the book has been the subject of much discussion. Many proposals have been advanced by a number of scholars, and they are surveyed and evaluated below in view of the importance that the literary structure of the book has on the understanding of the prophetic material. A case is made for a general chiastic structure that sets the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 in direct relationship with the oracles of Amos 8:4-9:15. The close interrelationship between these two sections of the book is essential for the understanding of three key OT elements highlighted in this chapter: The recovery of the promised land, the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom, and the tension between salvation and judgment.

The "Classical" Three-Part Structure

The most widespread view is that three distinctive sections can be recognized in the book. The first one, comprising chapters 1 and 2, is composed of the series of the

---

1For a full list and study of the literary devices used in Amos see Chávez, Modelo de oratória, 63-111.
"Oracles Against the Nations," which culminate with the oracle against Israel. The second section, comprising the next four chapters (Amos 3-6), is composed of a variety of oracles against Israel. The final section embraces chaps. 7 to 9. It contains a series of five vision reports, to which were added some oracles and a biographical narrative (Amos 7:10-17).

While some scholars have argued that, besides the three very large divisions indicated above, very little structuring and organization can be detected in the way the oracles were grouped in the book, others have pointed out a very clear structure in the organization of the prophetic material.\textsuperscript{2}


\textsuperscript{2}The discussion has addressed mainly the second (Amos 3-6) and third (Amos 7-9) sections of the book. It is natural that this happened, since the first section (Amos 1-2) is in itself a homogeneous unity and therefore says little about how different oracles were organized in the book.

Hammershaimb (Amos, 14) argues that the prophetic material in Amos was not organized in any consistent and systematic plan. In the third section (Amos 7-9), e.g., he finds the oracle that starts in 8:4 to be out of context. It opens with a "Hear this!" and therefore belongs to the series of oracles of the second section (Amos 3-6) which also starts with the same proclamation formula. The narrative of the conflict between prophet and the priest Amaziah should have been placed at the end of the book, marking thereby the end of the prophetic activities, and not in the middle of the series of vision reports. The TOB (Amos et Osée, 14) maintains that the oracles in Amos 3-6 have been grouped without any precise order. Rudolph (Amos, 100-101) sees some structuring of the second section into two subsections: the first one composed by 3 oracles starting with "Hear this!" (3:1; 4:1;
5:1); and the second one by four oracles starting with "Woe!" (5:7; 5:18; 6:1; 6:13). For him, no specific structuring can be observed in the third section (Amos 7-9). It is a conglomerate of different oracles built around an original series of visions and the narrative of the prophet's conflict with the priest Amaziah. Martin-Achard (Amos, 56), after surveying the present discussion on formation of the book of Amos, concludes that there is a scholarly agreement that the book of Amos, in its actual structure, presents a certain disorder, above all in its second (Amos 3-6) and third (Amos 7-9) sections.

Spreafico ("Amos," 147-176) conducts a detailed study of the structure of each specific oracle in the book, showing their exquisite and well-worked-out structure. The organization of these oracles into three sections follows a pattern of progression in the prophetic preaching. In Amos 1-2, the proclamation of the divine word is characterized by the verb נָאָה ("to say"); in Amos 3-6 by the summons to listen to that word נָאָה הַלֶּדֶת ("Hear this word which . . ."); and in Amos 7-9 by the verb נָאָה ("to see"). The prophet first proclaims the word of God, then he invites others to listen to it, and he finishes by seeing it.

Gary Smith (Amos, 7-8) maintains that the structure of the larger and smaller segments, the frequent thematic connections, and the rhetorical bridge between points draw the book together as a reasonably unified whole. In Amos 1-2, the constant repetition of structural markers (the messenger formula, "thus says YHWH"); the indictment, "for three transgressions and for four, I will not vacillate . . . because you have . . ."; the punishment clause, "therefore I will send fire upon . . ."; the concluding formula, "says YHWH") keeps the whole together. Amos 3-6 is marked by the introductory summons to "hear" (3:1, 9, 13; 4:1; 5:1) and the introductory "woe" (5:18; 6:1). The thematic continuity between these oracles is, however, a stronger force than a regular pattern for each one of them. Charges against perversion of justice and excessive luxury, and predictions of defeat and exile are recurring themes. The last section, Amos 7-9, is structured around the visions. They start with the distinctive introduction "thus the Lord YHWH showed me." The three last visions (7:7-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-4) have expanded statements derived from key thoughts within the visions. Amos 7:10-17, and 9:7-10 are disputes that arose because the message of the visions was rejected.

Chisholm (Minor Prophets, 72-73) points out the phenomenon of "wrapping around," used to delimit and organize the sections. In the second section, chaps. 3 and 6 correspond to each other. Both employ the remnant motif in the negative sense (3:12; 6:9-10); both emphasize the arrogant complacency of the sinful people (3:11; 6:6:1-3, 8, 13), the social injustice and oppression (3:9-10; 6:3, 12), and the luxurious living (3:12, 15; 6:4-6); chap. 3 starts with a reference to the Exodus, the event that set Israel's salvation history in motion (3:1), and chap. 6 finishes with the reversal of the most recent event of that history (6:14, cf. 2 Kgs 14:25). In the third section, chaps. 7 and 9 correspond to each other. Chap. 7 ends with Israel's exile from its land (7:17), while chap. 9 ends with Israel permanently restored to it (9:15); in 7:9 the high places of Israel are destroyed (תרגום), while in 9:14 the ruined cities (תרגום) would be rebuilt; in 7:9 the Lord rises (תרגום) against Jeroboam with a sword, while in 9:11 He will restore (תרגום) David's dynasty.

For Niehaus ("Amos," 318-320, 328), the book of Amos has a purposeful structure. Since Amos is a covenant-lawsuit messenger, his book has taken the form of covenant-lawsuit addresses. For him, the covenant-lawsuit form governs to a large degree the structure of the book. This governing of the book's structure, however, does not mean for Niehaus that the book was patterned as one lawsuit from the beginning to the end. It means rather that each one of the three sections of the book is basically influenced by the lawsuit form and its characteristic style. First, Amos 1-2 is a lengthy poem of judgment.
Four/Five-Part Structure

Fairly similar to the view of the three-part structure, just described, are the proposals of L. Monloubou, Norman Gottwald, Stephen Dempster, David Allan Hubbard, and Shalom Paul. The sole difference is that these scholars usually consider the introduction (Amos 1:1-2) and the conclusion (Amos 9:7-15) of the book to constitute a section in themselves. Hence, their proposals normally result in a four/five-part structure.

composed of eight covenant-lawsuit oracles against chief nations bordering Israel, and against Israel itself. Second, Amos 3-6 is composed of three covenant lawsuits (3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-17), followed by ancillary oracles of exile and judgment. Finally, Amos 7-9 comprises a series of five visions, followed by longer or shorter explanations, and interrupted by an autobiographical account of Amos's confrontation with the priest Amaziah. The autobiographical account in this section displays the characteristic shift between the third-person to first-person report that is common in the covenant-lawsuit form.

1L. Monloubou, "Amos," DBS (1972), 8:708. For Monloubou, the book is divided into four sections: 1-2; 3-6; 7:1-9:10; and 9:11-15. The ensemble of oracles in the book has no specific order, though some old organization can be seen in the visions (Amos 7:1-9:4).

Gottwald (Hebrew Bible, 353) proposes a four-part structure for the book: the Oracles Against Nations (Amos 1-2); a collection of judgment speeches against the Northern Kingdom (Amos 3-6); a sequence of vision reports interrupted by a narrative report and further judgment speeches (Amos 7:1-9:6); a conclusion with a threat of total destruction, which is softened by the assurance of protection to the righteous individuals, and then is expanded into a promise of national restoration (Amos 9:7-15).


For Hubbard (Joel and Amos, 118-119), the book has five parts: Introduction (Amos 1:1-2); Oracles Against the Nations (Amos 1:3-2:16); Oracles of Judgment Against Israel (Amos 3:1-6:14); Vision Reports (Amos 7:1-9:10); and Conclusion (Amos 9:11-15).

Paul (Amos, 6-7) writes of a well-organized structure arranged according to common literary genres. It starts, after the superscription and introductory motto (Amos 1:1-2), with the stereotypically structured and concatenously patterned "Oracles Against the Nations" (Amos 1:3-2:16). The next section (Amos 3:1-5:17) is formally grouped together by the introductory phrase "Hear this word" (Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1). These oracles are characterized by the reprimands and reproofs that focus on the ethical and moral sins of the affluent and upper classes of Samaria. Next comes two "woe" oracles (Amos 5:18-27; 6:1-7). Then follows a series of five visions (Amos 7:1-3, 4-5, 7-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-4), interrupted with a biographical narrative (Amos 7:10-17) and a collection of independent oracles that enlarges upon the theme of judgment (Amos 8:4-14; 9:7-10). The final literary
Various Proposals

James Luther Mays, however, goes in a distinctive direction. For him, there are three types of material in the book: sayings spoken by the prophet, first-person narratives told by the prophet, and a third-person account about the prophet. There are a few bits of other kinds of material that are scattered throughout the book (introduction in 1:1; hymnic sections in 1:2, 4:13, 5:8-9, 8:8?, 9:5-6; wisdom observation in 5:13). The prophetic material is organized into five sections: first, one large block of sayings (1:3-6:14); second, a section of four vision reports with a third-person narrative set in between (7:1-8:3); third, a group of sayings (8:4-14); fourth, a fifth vision report (9:1-6); and fifth, a final sayings sequence (9:7-15).

Douglas Stuart outlines three broad parts in the structure of the book: first, a group of oracles with no special organizational principle in 1:2-6:14; second, a group of visions with related narratives in 7:1-8:3; third, a final group of oracles in 8:4-9:15. For him, the book of Amos shows a very basic structuring of the oracles, probably for preservation, but no thematic and chronological sequence is observed.

Robert Gordis also divides the book into three parts. First, one has an early collection of sayings (Amos 1:1-7:9). This collection is composed of a great judgment on the nations (Amos 1-2); three prophecies beginning with "hear this word" (Amos 3:1-5:6); three denunciations starting with "woe" (Amos 5:7; 5:18; 6:1); and three visions beginning with "thus the Lord showed me" (7:1-9). The second part corresponds to the historical material on the prophet in 7:10-17. The third part is the second collection of sayings found in Amos 8-9. This final part contains two visions, one beginning with "thus the Lord

unit (Amos 9:11-15) contains a prophecy of comfort and consolation, blessing and salvation, describing the glorious future of Israel. Paul, surprisingly, seems to have skipped the oracles found in Amos 6:8-14, since there is no mention of these verses in his description of the structure of the book, nor where they fit in.

1 Mays, Amos, 12.

2 Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 286-288.
showed me" (Amos 8:1) and the other with "I saw" (9:1); a prophecy starting with "Hear!" (Amos 8:4); and material introduced by the clauses "it shall come to pass on that day" (Amos 8:9), and "behold, days are coming" (8:11; 9:13). For Gordis, the organization of the book betrays the way the prophecies were collected. The historical material concerning Amos's conflict with the priest Amaziah is the conclusion of the early, original collection of prophetic sayings. Later, when additional (supposedly Amosian) prophecies were discovered, they were simply appended to the already existing prophetic book.¹

For J. A. Motyer, Amos divided his book into three main parts by returning at the end of each part to some thought to which he gave prominence at the beginning. The first part (Amos 1:2-3:8) is bracketed between two references to a roaring lion (Amos 1:2; 3:8). The second part (Amos 3:9-6:14) is bracketed by the key ideas of "an adversary surrounding the land" in Amos 3:11, and the advancing enemy in Amos 6:14; by the overthrowing of houses in Amos 3:15, and the destruction of luxury houses in Amos 6:11. The final part (Amos 7:1-9:15) starts with visions of total calamity which, in answer to prayer, the Lord undertakes not to implement (Amos 7:3,6). Amos concludes this section with a discriminating judgment, the destruction of all complacent sinners (Amos 9:10) and the unbroken bliss of the Messianic kingdom (Amos 9:11-15).²


²Motyer, Day of the Lion, 25, 77, 150.

³Marsh, Amos, 31-33.
oracles against Israel; Amos 7:1-8:3, four visionary encounters with God; Amos 8:4-9:15, final collection of sayings.1

Klaus Koch and his collaborators have pointed out a four/five-part structuring in the book. For them, the hymns, the calls to listen, and the expression תָּמָּת הָדָּר (“in that day, oracle of YHWH”) are key elements in the book’s structure. So one can discern, first, a superscription in Amos 1:1; second, the first large section of the book starting in Amos 1:2 with a hymn to Zion and closing in 2:16 with תָּמָּת הָדָּר (“in that day, oracle of YHWH”); third, a section in Amos 3:1-4:13 introduced by “hear this word which . . .” and concluded by an hymn in 4:13; fourth, another section introduced by “hear this word which . . .” in 5:1 and concluded by a hymn in 9:5-6; finally, a postscript in 9:7-15. For these scholars, the actual form of the book is not the work of Amos himself, but of a later Judean “composer” who gave a literary shape to the Amosian tradition, which had been preserved in oral form. The postscript in 9:7-15 is considered by Koch and his collaborators as a later addition to the literary work of this Judean “composer.”2

Roy F. Melugin accepts many of the suggestions of Koch and his team, but recognizes another structure in the book: first, the superscription in Amos 1:1; second, the Zion-hymn in Amos 1:2; third, the series of oracles against foreign nations culminating in an oracle against Israel (Amos 1:3-2:16); third, a group of utterances in chaps. 3-6 divided

---

1 Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 79-80.

2 Klaus Koch and Collaborators, Amos. Untersucht mit den Methoden einer Strukturalen Formgeschichte, AOAT, no. 30 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1976), 2:105-120.
into two groups (Amos 3-4 and 5-6); fourth, the vision reports in Amos 7:1-9:4 concluded by a hymn in Amos 9:5-6; finally, the conclusion in 9:7-15.2

Artur Weiser goes to great lengths to show that the book of Amos is divided into two parts, according to their different literary forms. First, one has the "Book of Speeches," the words of Amos in Amos 1:2-6:14; then, the "Book of Visions" in Amos 7-9. This dual division of the book is already indicated in the introduction of the book in Amos 1:1 "Words of Amos which he saw ...."3 John Watts and Adri van der Wal propose the same dual division of words and visions.4

Claude Coulot arrives at the same dual division of the book. For him, however, Amos 1-6 is characterized by oracles against the nations and against Israel with no biographical or autobiographical material, while Amos 7-9 is basically composed of biographical material. The two large sections of the book are organized into a pattern of 1-2/2-1 as follows: the first section has Amos 1:1-2 as the title, followed by one poem of judgment of the nations (Amos 1:3-2:16), which in turn is followed by two oracles of similar structure (Amos 3:1-4:13), then one unit in chiastic structure (Amos 5:1-17), then two maledictions built around the same outline. The second section has two visions with the same structure in Amos 7:1-6, then one vision with a particular composition (Amos 7:7-

---

1 Amos 3-4 is addressed to the "sons of Israel" (two utterances, each one starting with "Hear this word," Amos 3:1; 4:1). The second group of utterances (Amos 5-6) is composed of speeches against the "house of Israel," and begins with "Hear this word" in Amos 5:1.


17), followed by two visions with the same schema (Amos 8:1-9:10), and is concluded by the final unit of Amos 9:11-15.1

No Overall Structure at All

There are those, however, who do not discern any structure in the book, and avoid dividing it into sections. James M. Ward maintains that one can discern only one long composition in the book, Amos 1:1-2:16 (i.e., the oracles concerning the nations). An extended literary unity is also found in the series of visions in Amos 7:1-9 and 8:1-3. The remaining oracles are quite brief and seemingly independent of one another. No overall design of the book is discernible.2

Though Andersen and Freedman divide the book of Amos into a series of three books ("Book of Doom," Amos 1-4; "Book of Woe," Amos 5-6; and "Book of Visions," Amos 7:1-9:6) and an epilogue (Amos 9:7-15) in their commentary on Amos, they have made clear that this division does not represent any intentional structuring in the book but is used in their commentary only for convenience, in order to facilitate the reference to the prophetic material. They do not see any strict, overall structure that organizes the book from beginning to end. Yet, they do not consider the book of Amos to be a collection of prophetic oracles without any organization. There are some well-organized sections, like the "Book of Visions" (Amos 7:1-9:6). It is clearly delimited and organized, it follows a plan, but it also possesses a number of materials that do not seem to belong. The oracles against eight nations in Amos 1-2 are also a well organized section, but it is difficult to decide where it ends. The refrain in Amos 3:8 seems to repeat Amos 1:2 and make of Amos 1:2-3:8 a unity. The plague reports in Amos 4:6-11 are another well organized section, as is the "Book of Woes" in Amos 5-6. But "Woes" are not limited to chaps. 5 and 6 of Amos; they begin in Amos 2:7 and reappear in 8:4, 14. In conclusion, they


2Ward, Amos, Hosea, 3.
affirm, the whole book exhibits the same compositional techniques: there are assemblages of similar material, and sometimes clear transitions from one part to the next; there is also continuity across these breaks.¹

Chiastic Structure

A new avenue on the discussion of the literary structure of the book of Amos opened with the publication, in 1977, of Jan de Waard’s article on the chiastic structure of Amos 5:1-17.² Since then, it has stirred up some interest on the usage of this pattern in the book of Amos. Two years later, de Waard, together with William A. Smalley, published a study of the question in an appendix of the Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Amos.³ In their study, the authors paid special attention to the recurrence of themes with the same meaning throughout the book. They then arrived at the conclusion that “Amos is made up of messages and groups of messages which are balanced against each other in the first and last halves of the book.”⁴ They identified twenty units in Amos, and proposed the following chiastic structure for the entire book:⁵

A Prologue: the prophet 1:1-2a
B The power of God to punish [hymn] 1:2b
A Prologue: the prophet 1:3-3:2
B The power of God to punish [hymn] 3:3-4:3
C Israel’s special guilt among the nations 4:4-12
(B¹ The power of God to create [hymn]) 4:13
F Lament for Israel 5:1-3
G Seek God and avoid destruction 5:4-6)
H Warning to sinners 5:7
B¹ I The power of God to create [hymn] 5:8
J THE LORD IS HIS NAME

¹Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 9-10, 12-18.
⁴De Waard and Smalley, Translator’s, 189; Smalley, “Recursion,” 120.
⁵De Waard and Smalley, Translator’s, 192; Smalley, “Recursion,” 122.
Not long after, William H. Shea presented a paper at the 1981 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in which he also proposed a chiastic structure for the whole prophetic book. Besides noticing the recurrence of similar themes between the balanced parts of the book, Shea also dealt in more detail with the occurrence of similar terminology in these parts. He proposed a division of Amos into six balanced sections, with two extra blocks of intervening materials, which he named X and Y. His proposed structure can be presented as follows:

A. Peripheral Block
   1. Damascus (1:3-5)
   2. Gaza (1:6-8)
   3. Tyre (1:9-10)
   4. Edom (1:11-12)
   5. Ammon (1:13-15)
   6. Moab (2:1-3)
   7. Judah (2:4-5)
   8. Israel (2:6-16)

[X. Intervening Materials
   A. From Egypt (3:1-2)
   B. Prophetic Imperative (3:3-8)
   C. Nations Summoned (3:9-12)
   D. Temple Smitten (3:13-14)]

B. Intermediate Block
   A. Noblewomen (4:1-3)
   B. Bethel and Gilgal, Religious (4:4-5)
   C. 5 Past Judgments
      1. Famine (4:6)

---


2Ibid., 20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
2. Drought (4:7-8)
3. Pestilence (4:9)
4. War (4:10)
5. Fire (4:11-12)
D. CREATOR HYMN I (4:13)

C. Central Chiasm Ch. 5A
A. Lament (5:1-3)
B. Chiastic Toponyms (5:4-6)
   Bethel-Gilgal-Beersheba-Gilgal-Bethel
C. Indictment (5:7)

D. CREATOR HYMN II (5:8-9)
C'. Indictment (5:10-13)
B'. Chiastic Appeal (5:14-15)
   good-evil-evil-good
A'. Lament (5:16-17)

C'. Central Chiasm Ch. 5B (3 Chiastic Sequences)
A. Day of the Lord (5:18)
B. Bear (5:19a)
B'. Serpent (5:19b)
A'. Day of the Lord (5:20)

A. Feasts (5:21)
B. Sacrifice (5:22a)
B'. Sacrifice (5:22b)
A'. Feasts (5:23)

A. Exile (5:25)
B. Idol 1 (5:26a)
B'. Idol 2 (5:26b)
A'. Exile (5:27)

B'. Intermediate Block
A. Noblemen (6:1-12)
B. Lo-Debar & Karnaim, Political (6:13-14)
C. 5 Future Judgments
   1. Pestilence (7:1-3)
   2. Drought (7:4-6)
   3. Plumb Line (7:7-9)

[Y. Intervening Material
   Prophetic Biography (7:10-17)]

4. Summer Fruit (8:1-3)

[Y. Intervening Material
   A. Indictment (8:4-6)
   B. Dark Day of the Lord (8:7-10)
   C. Famine for Yahweh's Word (8:11-12)
   D. Thirst from Idol Gods (8:13-14)]
5. Temple Earthquake (9:1-4)
D. CREATOR HYMN III (9:5-6)

A'. Peripheral Block: Final Oracles (9:7-15)
1. Ethiopians (9:7a)
2. (from) Egypt (9:7b)
3. Philistines (9:7c)
4. Syrians (9:7d)
5. Judah (9:11)
6. Edom (9:12)
7. Israel (9:13-15)

In his 1990 commentary on the book of Amos, Thomas J. Finley recognized the classical tripartite division in the book of Amos (Amos 1-2, 3-6, 7-9), but he also proposed a "nice chiastic or inverted structure to the book," displayed as follows:

A. Judgment of the Land (1:2)
B. Judgment of the Nations (1:3-2:3)
C. Judgment of Judah and Israel (2:4-9:10)

C'. Restoration of Judah and Israel (9:11)
B'. Restoration of the Nations (9:12)
A'. Restoration of the Land (9:13-15)

More recently, David A. Dorsey has published a study in which he reexamines the literary architecture of Amos. Dorsey identifies seven units in the book (1-2; 3; 4; 5:1-17; 5:18-6:14; 7:1-8:3; 8:4-9:15) by paying special attention to oral/aural structuring techniques. He has especially singled out the introductory and concluding formulas, like "says YHWH", "listen to this word", and "oracle of YHWH". He also pays attention to the unity of form and/or content in each new section. After discussing the delimitation of each unit and its internal structure, he notices that there exist numerous lexical and thematic correspondences that link opposite units into an overall symmetrical chiastic structure of A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A'.

---

1 Finley, Amos, 116-121.
The units A (Amos 1-2) and A' (Amos 8:4-9:15) are the only ones in which YHWH's dealings with Syria, Philistia, and Edom are addressed (Amos 1:3-8, 11-12; 9:7, 17). Both units list seven sins of the wealthy (Amos 2:6-8; 8:4-6). In A, the wealthy are condemned because "they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6); in A', they are condemned because "they buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes" (Amos 8:6). In A, the wealthy are "those who trample (ךָפֵר) the head of the poor" (Amos 2:7); while in A', they are "those who trample (ךָפֵר) the needy" (Amos 8:4). The verb פָּרַשׁ ("to crush, to trample") occurs only here in Amos. Both units portray the impossibility of escape from the coming judgment (Amos 2:14-16; 9:1-4). The expression יָּשָׁר אֵל ("will not escape") occurs three times in Amos 2:14-15, and once in Amos 9:1 and nowhere else in the book. The root מֵא ("to flee") occurs twice in Amos 2:14-15 and twice in Amos 9:1. YHWH's assertion in Amos 2:10, "I brought you out of Egypt," is repeated almost verbatim in Amos 9:7, "did I not bring you up out of Egypt?" YHWH's threat that "the people of Aram will go into exile to Kir" in Amos 1:5 has its reflex in Amos 9:7, "I brought Aram from Kir." The reference to the "top of Carmel" (ךָּרְמָל) occurs only in Amos 1:2 and in Amos 9:3 and nowhere else in the book. Other correspondences between A and A' include references to "drinking wine" (Amos 2:8,12; 9:13-14); planting/uprooting (Amos 2:9; 9:14-15), and the "sword" (Amos 1:11; 9:4,10).1

The units B (Amos 3) and B' (Amos 7:1-8:3) also correspond, although the linkage is not as extensively developed. Both focus on the prophet and the responsibility and importance of prophesying. The series of rhetorical questions in Amos 3:3-8 culminates with the stress on the prophetic call and compulsion to prophesy (Amos 3:7-8). Likewise, the narrative in Amos 7:10-17 centers upon the validity of Amos's responsibility and compulsion to prophesy. Another possible correspondence involves Amos's prediction of the destruction of the altar of Bethel and the royal "houses" of Israel in Amos 3:13-15,

---

1Ibid., 325-326.
which seems to be mirrored in Amos 7:9, when the prophet declares at Bethel that "the sanctuaries will be laid waste" and the Lord "will rise against the house of Jeroboam."¹

The third (C — Amos 4) and fifth (C' — Amos 5:18-6:14) units are more rigorously linked. The C unit is addressed to "the cows of Bashan who are in the mountain of Samaria" (Amos 4:1), i.e., the wealthy women of Samaria; while C' is addressed to "those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria" (Amos 6:1), i.e., the wealthy men of Samaria. Both units condemn the wealthy aristocrats for idle drinking (Amos 4:1; 6:6). Unit C declares that the wealthy women will go into exile (Amos 4:3), while C' does the same in reference to the wealthy men (Amos 6:7). Both of them will be exiled in the direction of Damascus (Amos 4:3; 5:27). Both units depict graphically the empty religious activities of the people, with references to sacrifices and offerings that were rejected by YHWH (Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-23). In C, these are activities that Israel "loves" to do (Amos 4:5); in C', these are activities that YHWH "hates" and "despises" (Amos 5:21). In C, YHWH turns the morning into darkness (Amos 4:13); in C', the "day of YHWH" will be a day of darkness, not light (Amos 5:18,20). The dramatic declaration ("the Lord YHWH has sworn by His . . ."), occurs in both units (Amos 4:2; 6:8).²

The D unit (Amos 5:1-17) stands alone at the center of the book. Its main theme is the call to repentance, which in itself is arranged in a chiasm (A. Lamentation over fallen Israel, vss. 1-3; B. Call to repentance, vss. 4-6a; C. Warning and condemnation, vss. 6b-7; D. Hymn to YHWH's power, vss. 8-9; C'. Warning and condemnation, vss. 10-13; B'. Call to repentance, vss. 14-15; A'. Coming lamentation, vss. 16-17).³

Dorsey's proposition could be diagrammed as follows:

¹Ibid., 326.
²Ibid., 326-327.
³Ibid., 313-314, 327.
A Unit: Amos 1-2

**Lexical and Thematic Links:**

A. "Top of Carmel" (1:2)
B. References to Syria, Philistia, and Edom (1:3-8, 11-12)
   B.1 "Aram Will Go to Exile to Kir" (1:5)
C. "The Sword" (1:11)
D. Seven Sins of the Wealthy (2:6-8)
   D.1 "They Sell the Righteous for Silver, and the Needy for a Pair of Shoes" (2:6)
   D.2 "Those Who Trample the Head of the Poor" (2:7)
E. "I Brought You Out of Egypt" (2:10)
F. Drinking Wine (2:8, 12)
G. Impossibility to Escape God's Judgment (2:14-15)
   G.1 Three times 'will not escape', (2:14-15)
   G.2 Two times the root מָיִל, "to flee," (2:14-15)
H. Planting/Uprooting (2:9)

B Unit: Amos 3

**Lexical and Thematic Links:**

A. Prophet's Call and Compulsion to Prophesy (3:3-8)
B. Destruction of Bethel and of the Royal "Houses" (3:13-15)

C Unit: Amos 4

**Lexical and Thematic Links:**

B. Condemnation for Idle Drinking (4:1)
C. The Declaration יְהֹוָה יִשָּׁב אֵל, "the Lord YHWH has sworn by His..." (4:2)
D. Wealthy Women Will Go Into Exile (4:3)
E. Their Exile Is in the Direction of Damascus (4:3)
F. Empty Religious Activities of Israel, Rejection of Sacrifices and Offerings (4:4-5)
G. Israel "Loves" Its Religious Activities (4:5)
H. YHWH Turns the Morning Into Darkness (4:13)

D Unit: Amos 5:1-17

**Central Chiasm**

A. Lamentation Over Fallen Israel (5:1-3)
B. Call to Repentance (5:4-6a)
   C. Warning and Condemnation (5:6b-7)
   D. Hymn to YHWH's Power (5:8-9)
   C'. Warning and Condemnation (5:10-13)
B'. Call to Repentance (5:14-15)
A'. Coming Lamentation (5:16-17)

C' Unit: Amos 5:18-6:14

**Lexical and Thematic Links:**

A'. "Those Who Feel Secure [Men] in the Mountain of Samaria" (6:1)
B'. Condemnation for Idle Drinking (6:6)
C'. The Declaration יְהֹוָה יִשָּׁב אֵל, "the Lord
YHWH has sworn by His . . . ." (4:2)
D'. Wealthy Men Will Go Into Exile (6:7)
E'. Their Exile Is in the Direction of Damascus (5:27)
F’. Empty Religious Activities of Israel,
   Rejection of Sacrifices and Offerings (5:21-23)
G’. YHWH “Hates” and “Despises” Israel’s
   Religious Activities (5:21)
H’. The Day of YHWH Will Be Darkness, Not Light (5:18, 20)

B' Unit: Amos 7:1-8:3
Lexical and Thematic Links:
A’. Prophet’s Call and Compulsion to Prophecy (7:10-17)
B’. Destruction of the Sanctuaries of Israel and
   of the Royal House of Jeroboam (7:9-12)

A' Unit: Amos 8:4-9:15
Lexical and Thematic Links:
A’. “Top of Carmel” (9:3)
B’. References to Syria, Philistia, and Edom (9:7, 12)
   B.1 “I Brought Aram From Kir” (9:7)
C’. “The Sword” (9:4, 10)
D’. Seven Sins of the Wealthy (8:4-6)
   D.1 “They Buy the Poor for Silver, and the
   Needy for a Pair of Shoes” (8:6)
   D’.2 “Those Who Trample the Needy” (8:4)
E’. “Did I Not Bring You Up Out of Egypt?” (9:7)
F’. Drinking Wine (9:13-14)
G’. Impossibility to Escape God’s Judgment (9:1-4)
   G.1 בּוֹרָא יָשָׁר, “will not escape,” (9:1)
   G’.2 Two times the root בּוֹרָא, “to flee,” (9:1)
H’. Planting/Uprooting (9:14-15)

Still, very recently, Paul B. Noble has recognized another structure in Amos.¹ For
him, the book of Amos consists of a superscription (1:1) plus three main parts (1:2-3:8;
3:9-6:14; and 7:1-9:15). Contrary to the views above that discern an overall chiastic
parallelism in the book, Noble sees it only in the central part (3:9-6:14). His structure
follows what he calls “structural parallelism and thematic correspondence,” and can be
presented as follows:²

²Ibid., 210-211, 218, 223, 225.
Superscription (1:1)

Part I: YHWH's Word to the Nations (1:2-3:8)
A. Introductory (thematic) motto (1:2)
B. Israel among the nations
   1. Oracles concerning the nations (1:3-2:16)
   2. A Theological reflection upon these oracles (3:1-2)
C. Israel, YHWH, and prophecy (3:3-8)

Part II: A Palistrophic Judgment Oracle (3:9-6:14)
A. Introductory oracles (3:9-14[sic])
   x. Israel vis-à-vis the foreign nations (3:9-11)
   y. An image of ruin (3:12)
   z. The devastation of Israel (3:13-15)
B. Heartless indolence in Samaria (4:1-3)
C. Rejection of Israel's cult (4:4-5)
D. The final judgment (4:6-12)
   E. Lamentations for Israel (5:1-3)
   F. Seek YHWH! (5:4-6)
   G. The corruption of justice (5:7, 10)
   H. Hymn to YHWH (5:8-9)
   G'. The corruption of justice (5:11-13)
   F'. Seek YHWH! (5:14-15)
   E'. Lamentations for Israel (5:16-17)
D'. The final judgment (5:18-20)
C'. Rejection of Israel's cult (5:21-27)
B'. Heartless indolence in Samaria (6:1, 3-7)
A'. Concluding oracles (6:2, 8-14)
   x'. Israel vis-à-vis the foreign nations (6:2, 8)
   y'. An image of ruin (6:9-10)
   z'. The devastation of Israel (6:11-14)

Part III: The Annihilation and Reconstitution of Israel (7:1-9:15)
A. Four judgment visions (7:1-8:14)
B. Israel annihilated (9:1-10)
   1. The fifth vision complex (9:1-4)
   2. A hymn to YHWH (9:5-6)
   3. Israel among the nations (9:7-10)
C. Israel reconstituted (9:11-15)

Evaluation of the Proposals

The overview of the scholarly discussion on the structure of the book of Amos clearly indicates that there is a variety of views on how the prophetic material is organized in the book. Though a great majority of scholars support the "classical" tripartite division of the book, no consensus exists on the issue, and as seen, a variety of opposing views exist on the subject. Which one does justice to the book is an impending question.
The opinions that divide the book of Amos into three, four, or five parts are based mainly on the grouping of similar literary forms and/or themes in each specific section. In this sense, Amos 1-2 makes a natural unit, since it is constituted basically by oracles against nations. Amos 3-6 is another section, because one finds there mainly oracles of judgment against Israel. Amos 7-9 forms a third section, because of the predominance of vision reports.

Though there is much logic and strength in this way of dividing and organizing the book, there remains a basic problem in that literary forms and themes are not restricted to a specific, determinate section. An oracle starting with the proclamation formula "Hear this!" (which is a characteristic of Amos 3-6) appears also in the final section of Amos 7-9 (Amos 8:4-7). Hymn stanzas appear in these two sections also (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 8:9; 9:5-6). The biographic narrative in Amos 7:10-17 is considered to be "intrusive," for it breaks down what seems to be a nice sequence of vision reports. The oracle of salvation, in Amos 9:11-15, seems to be contrary to the general tone of judgment of the final section, and of the book itself.

Hence, some scholars like Robert Martin-Achard, James M. Ward, Francis I. Andersen, David Noel Freedman, and others have avoided speaking of an overall structure, because of these "bridges" between the sections. Others have tried to propose a different structure, which could avoid the complications of the widespread "traditional" view. One of the best attempts is probably that of Claude Coulot with its two-part division and its 1-2-1-2 sequence.

The realization that the "bridges" between the sections may, after all, not be really a problem, but rather an indication of the interrelationship between these sections, opened the door for the recognition of the usage of chiastic parallelism at the level of the general structure of the book. The studies of de Waard, Smalley, Shea, Finley, Dorsey, and Noble have demonstrated that what had been considered by some as "intrusive" and "misplaced"

---

1Cf. above, 67-69, 75-76.
actually have a harmonious function in the overall structure of the book. This argument gains strength in view of the pervasiveness of parallelism as a structuring principle in biblical literature, and its usage as a common device for giving form to otherwise loosely connected sayings and stories, as Smalley has emphasized.¹

A chiastic structure seems therefore to account better for all the elements in the book of Amos, and to elucidate many areas where OT scholarship has an open question. Once it is realized that chiasm holds the key for the understanding of the structure of the book, and it is recognized how much the works of de Waard, Smalley, Shea, Finley, Dorsey, and Noble have helped to perceive it, there remains the question: Which of the proposals advanced above represents the probable structure of the book?

The analysis of Dorsey seems to take into best consideration the elements of the text. First, the author tried to delimit the constituent sections of the book, according to the textual indications of opening and closing of a section. He also discussed the cohesiveness of each unit, either by form or by content. Later, he pointed out the unique terminology and themes that draw corresponding sections together. The chiastic structure presented by Dorsey seems, at the same time, well balanced and not as "exact" as the ones proposed by de Waard and Smalley, and by Shea.

De Ward and Smalley's proposal is based fundamentally on a thematic parallelism, as they stated. But in order to achieve a "perfect" correspondence between the opposing parts, they needed to break down some clear unities, like Amos 1:2. They needed further to have the proclamation formula "hear this!" (3:1; 4:1) closing a section instead of opening it, which is dubious in view of its usage in the book. They also finished with a hymnic piece in Amos 4:13 that is unparalleled in the general overall structure of the book. It can only find its match in a lower level, in the structure of a subdivision of the book.²

¹Smalley, "Recursion," 125.

²For de Waard and Smalley, the book of Amos can be divided into three main parts, Amos 1-5:3; 5:4-15; 5:16-9:15. Each part is in itself a chiasm. The hymn of 4:13 is balanced by the hymn in 1:2b in the specific structure of the first part. See de Waard and
Shea's proposal pays attention both to thematic parallelism and to parallelism in terminology and expressions. Still, a strict and exact parallelism could not be achieved, and he has to accept the presence of the "intervening materials" X and Y, which are not exactly in parallel with each other.

Finley's suggestion is based on the parallelism of such broad themes (as judgment over the Land, nations, and Israel) that, although it indicates a possible broad movement of thoughts in the book, it can hardly represent its structure. He does not deal with the interaction of the different sections of the books, nor with their specific lexical and thematic parallelism.

Noble's analysis forces some elements in the text of the book in order to achieve the desired result. His precise chiastic structure of the central part (Amos 3:9-6:14) is attained only after deleting Amos 4:13 and transposing Amos 5:8-9 to follow Amos 5:10, and Amos 6:2 to follow Amos 6:7. Here again, the present form of the text of the book militates against a strict and exact parallelism. Furthermore, Noble completely overlooked the very unique parallelism of themes and terminology that exists between the opening and concluding chapters of the book, as has been demonstrated in the works of de Waard, Smalley, Shea, and Dorsey.

The literary elements of the book of Amos seemingly point to an overall chiastic structure. This structure, however, does not seem to be an exact and precise parallelism, such as the ones proposed by de Waard, Smalley, and Shea. It does not seem to cover only a part of the text, as suggested by Noble, nor to be perceptible only in a "broad" sense, as projected by Finley. The analysis of Dorsey seems then to provide the more cautious and at the same time the more realistic analysis of the prophetic material. Each of

---

Noble considered this to be "minor textual emendations," and justified his procedure on the premise that these problematic verses are probably the work of a later redactor who himself was unaware of the precise structure of the section, and therefore unwittingly disrupted the original sequence. See Noble, "Literary Structure," 215-217.
the seven units he found in the text has its own structure, and the overall chiastic structure of the book is built, not so much through a precise, "strict" parallelism, but through the unique occurrence of themes, key words, and expressions in the corresponding sections.

Elements of the OT Covenants from the Historical and Literary Contexts of Amos

The study of the historical context of Amos pointed out that the prophet probably preached in a time of high eschatological expectations and euphoria in Israel. The early prophecies of Jonah about the restoration of the ancient borders of Israel were being fulfilled, and there was a high expectation for the "day of YHWH." In that day, the ultimate victory would be won, the earlier glory of the Davidic/Solomonic kingdom be restored, and Israel would become the first of the nations. It was seemingly within this context that Amos came and predicted the judgments found in the first two chapters of his book. The expectations for enduring power and glory would not be fulfilled, but on the contrary, YHWH was about to bring a sweeping and devastating judgment upon all those nations that once were part of the Davidic kingdom, or were closely associated with it (the case of Tyre/Phoenicia). The expected power and glory that the Israelites were looking for would happen only in a more distant future, only after YHWH had exerted His judgments against His people. Then He would restore the Davidic kingdom and bestow upon Israel and the other nations great blessings and prosperity.

The study of the literary context of Amos proposed that the book was organized into a chiastic structure (A. Amos 1-2; B. Amos 3; C. Amos 4; D. Amos 5:1-17; C'. Amos 5:18-6:14; B'. Amos 7:1-8:3; A'. Amos 8:4-9:15) that brings the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 in close relationship to the closing set of oracles in the book in Amos 8:4-9:15. This structure of the book highlights therefore also the key elements discovered in the study of the historical context of the preaching of Amos. The prediction of judgment over all the nations of Syro-Palestine in Amos 1-2, with its denial of the expected enduring
glory and power for Israel, is contrasted with the prediction in Amos 9:11-15 of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom and the great prosperity that would follow.

This understanding of the historical and literary contexts of Amos highlights three important elements that point out the domain of the OT covenants. The first two elements listed below are only mentioned here and are addressed at length in chapter 5; only the third element is fully addressed now. These three elements are:

1. The question of the restoration of the ancient borders of Israel is of essential importance for the understanding of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2. The extension of these borders, evidenced by the list of nations in Amos 1-2 and by the catchphrase "from Lebo Hamath to the Sea/Brook of Arabah" (2 Kgs 14:25; Amos 6:14), speaks of the totality of the land promised to Abraham in covenant, and to the Israelites in their Exodus from Egypt. The totality of this area became part of Israel during the reign of David and was many times designated in the OT as "all Israel" (2 Sam 8:1-15; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 18:1-14; 2 Chr 7:8; 9:26). The issue of the restoration of the borders of Israel, that seems so prominent in Amos 1-2, points therefore to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants.1

2. The issue of the restoration of the Israelite power and control over the entire region of Syro-Palestine points also to the importance of the Davidic covenant in Amos. All the nations listed in Amos 1-2 were part of the Davidic kingdom, or were a close ally of David (the case of Tyre/Phoenicia). Amos denies the popular hope of his time, and points out that what the Israelites were expecting for would happen only when YHWH would reestablish the Davidic kingdom. The Davidic rulership and authority over all the nations of Syro-Palestine are described in the OT not only as a consequence of the military

---

1See below, 217-220, for a discussion on the role of the "promised land" in Amos 1-2, and how it points to the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants.
conquests of David (2 Sam 8:1-15; 1 Chr 18:1-14), but also as one of the elements of the covenant between YHWH and David (Ps 89:26[25]).

3. The historical and literary contexts of Amos point to a remarkable tension between salvation and judgment in this prophetic book. The understanding of the oracles of Amos 1-2 in connection with the prophecies of restoration of Jonah in 2 Kgs 14:25 contrasts the "word of YHWH" spoken by Jonah, predicting salvation and YHWH's favor to the Israelite nation, and the "word of YHWH" spoken by Amos. There is clearly a tension between salvation (Jonah) and judgment (Amos) when one tries to understand the prophetic words of Amos in what seems to be its historical context.

This tension between salvation and judgment is also evident in the overall structure of Amos. The chiastic structure of the book draws close ties between the oracles of judgment in Amos 1-2 and the oracles found in Amos 8:4-9:15. This chiastic structure brings the oracles of judgment against Israel and her neighbors, in Amos 1-2, in contrast and relationship with the oracles of salvation in Amos 9:11-15. The denial of the near restoration of the Davidic kingdom, in Amos 1-2, is then paralleled by the prediction that it will happen within an eschatological context, after Israel has endured YHWH's coming judgments (Amos 9:8-15). Judgment and salvation are then set in a tension that encircles the entire message of the book.

How should one understand the tension between salvation and judgment, or judgment and salvation, that seems evident from the study of the historical and literary

---

1See below, 173-179, 216-228, for a discussion on all the elements in Amos 1-2 that point to the Davidic covenant.

2The interconnection between the first and last oracles of the book is further demonstrated by the intimate relationship that exists between the statement of Amos 1:2 and the prophecy in Amos 9:13. Amos 1:2's description of YHWH as roaring from Zion is followed by the series of oracles of judgment against foreign nations. Amos 9:13 says that the mountains will overflow with sweet wine as one of the eschatological promises of YHWH. Elsewhere in the OT, and especially in the last chapter of Joel, identical prophecies form a single unit. They share identical terminology and themes with the prophetic words that appear at the beginning and at the end of the book of Amos. Cf. below, 98-102, 165-173, for a more detailed discussion.
contexts of the book of Amos? Should one suppose that Amos was in a polemic against
Jonah, opposing his prophecies and contradicting them, as was suggested by Eissfeldt?¹
Or was it actually Jonah who was opposing the prophecies of Amos, as Andersen and
Freedman proposed?² Could a prophet like Amos, who has predicted a certain and
unavoidable judgment, also predict salvation? Are the oracles of Amos 9:11-15 an integral
part of the prophetic message, or are they to be considered only as a later addition to it?

Many modern scholars can hardly reconcile the book’s tension between judgment
and salvation, and therefore either deny the authenticity of those oracles that denote any
hope for the future, or minimize their importance in the message of the prophet.³ The
hypothesis of a polemic between the prophets Jonah and Amos apparently betrays also the
difficulty in conciliating what seem to be contradictory messages of two recognized
prophets of YHWH.

Klaus Koch touches an important point on the problem when he remarks that much
of the modern difficulty in dealing with the tension between judgment and salvation
depends more on questions related to our modern logic and dogmatic principles than to the
world of ideas of the prophet.⁴ That world of ideas has been discussed at length by


³James Luther Mays (*Amos*, 9) represents well those who recognize only doom in the
message of Amos when he states that: "The oracles that derive from Amos offer no hope
for any other future to Jeroboam's Israel. The prophet did not speak of any time beyond
the judgment. Occasionally he exhorts his audience, but his few imperatives offer no real
alternative. They are rather derisive (4.4f.), or lead up to the inevitable announcement of
punishment (5.4f.), or simply serve to state the way of obedience that the doomed have
long since deserted (5.14f., 24). The nation’s death is so certain that Amos sings its
funeral dirge (5.1f.)." See also Rudolf Smend, "Das Nein des Amos," *EvTh* 23 (1963):

⁴Others, however, have opposed such a view and have defended the authenticity of the
final oracles of the book. See, e.g., Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 5-9; Gary Smith,
*Amos*, 277-280; Paul, *Amos*, 289; and the overview of the debate in Hasel,
*Understanding*, 105-120.

⁵Koch, *Prophets*, 69-70.
Abraham J. Heschel, who has shown that salvation and judgment, love and wrath, compassion and justice, blessing and punishment may seem conflicting realities to us, but are intrinsically interrelated with one another in the OT. These different ideas are tied together by the biblical concept of covenant, which translates in the OT the full range of the different aspects of the divine pathos in God’s relationship with men and with His people Israel.

This tension is part of the structure of OT covenant and reflects the dimension of blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant. It belongs therefore to the basic principles that are part of the covenantal relationship between YHWH and His people. It reflects YHWH’s gracious attitude toward people, His quest for mutual relationship, the stipulations that form the basis of that relationship, and the blessings and curses that are tied to the observance of these stipulations and to the maintenance of the covenantal relationship.

It was evidently on these lines that the biblical historian/s presented the events of the time of the prophet Amos, as well as the ministry of the prophets of YHWH. The historical report of the books of Kings sees the succession of divine acts of judgment and salvation as founded on God’s covenant with His people. It was because of His covenant with the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), for example, that YHWH delivered northern Israel from the Syrian oppression through the hands of Jehoash and of his son Jeroboam (2 Kgs 13:23; 14:25-27) at the time of Amos. It was because of Israel’s persistent sins against YHWH, her open rebellion and breach of her covenant with Him, that the nation

---

2Ibid., 229-231.
was destroyed and deported from her homeland by the Assyrian power, as a result of the
direct action of YHWH against His people (2 Kgs 17:7-23), as was predicted by the
prophets.

The biblical concept of covenant provides then the necessary structure in which the
tension between judgment and salvation can be understood and harmonized. The prophetic
messages of Jonah and Amos need not be understood as conflicting one against the other.
Amos's announcement of judgment does not invalidate his call to repentance and prediction
of salvation.¹ It is apparent, therefore, that much of the present difficulty in handling and
understanding the prophetic literature and its message, in its totality, lies in the modern
dismissal of the importance of the OT covenant concept for the understanding of the biblical
text.

Even if one does not recognize the early origin of the concept of covenant in the
religion of Israel, he would inevitably need to acknowledge with Ronald E. Clements that
"in spite of the admitted silence of the eighth-century prophets about Yahweh's covenant
with Israel, it was within a framework of covenant theology and ideas that the main lines of
this traditional portrait of the prophet came to be drawn."² The study of the historical and
literary contexts of the book of Amos essentially confirms that premise. Accordingly, in
the light of the present form of the book and of its biblical framework, the "Oracles
Against the Nations" can only be understood inside a covenantal context.

Summary

The study of the historical context of Amos argues for the need to understand the
"Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2 against the background of Jonah's prophecies
of restoration of the ancient borders of Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25). These prophecies seem to

¹On the contrary, as Samuel Amsler remarked, the decisive prophetic prediction of a
divine judgment seems to represent YHWH's last-moment call to His wayward people. It
seems to imply in itself a last-minute appeal before calamity strikes. Cf. Samuel Amsler,

²Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 56.
be at the source of the euphoric expectation for the restoration of the Judean/Israelite power over the entire region of Syro-Palestine, that is, over all those nations that were once part of the Davidic/Solomonic empire (an area otherwise known as the "Greater Israel"). Within this context, the prophecies of Amos come as a denial of the popular expectations for enduring power and glory in the near future of Israel. The prophet made clear that what was about to come over Israel was not the expected power and glory for that nation, but destruction and judgment because of Israel's aberrant sins and open rebellion against YHWH. He also made clear that what the people were so eagerly looking for would happen only with the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, a restoration that would happen only after Israel and her neighbors had endured the divine judgment predicted by the prophet.

The study of the literary context of the book of Amos evidences the importance of the general structure of the book for the understanding of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2. It is seen that the general structure of the book brings into close relationship the prophetic oracles of Amos 1-2 with those of Amos 8:4-9:15. The announcement of judgment against Israel and her neighbors is contrasted with the prediction of restoration of the Davidic kingdom in the final oracles of the book, which would be followed by abundant blessings and prosperity for Israel and the other nations.

This understanding of the historical and literary contexts of Amos brings forth three important elements that pertain to the domain of the OT covenants. First, it speaks of the area of the "Greater Israel," the area encompassing the total extension of the promised land of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, and which became part of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon. There seems to have existed, by the time of Amos, a high expectation of recovery of the totality of this area by God's people. Second, the Davidic covenant seems to stand behind both the denial of the restoration of the "Greater Israel," in Amos 1-2, as well as in the prophecies of salvation and restoration in Amos 9. Finally,
both the historical and the literary contexts of the prophecies of Amos 1-2 evidence a tension between oracles of salvation and oracles of judgment. This tension is seen to be part of the structure of the OT covenant(s) and to reflect the dimension of blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant.
CHAPTER 4

COVENANT ELEMENTS EVIDENCED BY THE STRUCTURE AND LITERARY FORM OF THE "ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS" OF AMOS 1-2

As a continuation of the inquiry into the question of the presence of OT covenant elements in "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2, the present chapter explores the general features of this pericope. First, the questions concerning the delimitation of the literary unit are treated, in order to establish the exact scope of the pericope to be studied. Second, the Hebrew text of Amos 1:2-2:16 is presented, and a translation and evaluation of this text are provided. The intention here is to supply the reader with an easy reference to the basis of the study of this dissertation and to establish its actual content. Finally, the questions related to the literary structure of the pericope and the form of its oracles are addressed. These two last issues are seen to be of great importance for the discussion on the question of covenant in Amos 1:2-2:16, insofar as they evidence the centrality of the covenant lawsuit that YHWH raises against the nation of northern Israel.

Delimitation of the Pericope

Eight nations are addressed in the series of oracles of Amos 1-2: Damascus/Aram (Amos 1:3-5); Gaza/Philistia (Amos 1:6-8); Tyre/Phoenicia (Amos 1:9-10); Edom (Amos 1:11-12); Ammon (1:13-15); Moab (Amos 2:1-3); Judah (Amos 2:4-5); and Israel (Amos...
2:6-16). Although the first three oracles address first of all the leading city-state of the respective country, the country in its totality seems to be concerned also.1

These eight oracles were constructed into a consistent literary unity. The precise delimitation of this unit, however, has been the subject of much discussion. Questions have been raised concerning its exact beginning and end. Does Amos 1:2 belong to the pericope and serve as its introduction? Is the oracle against Israel part of the "Oracles Against the Nations," serving as its conclusion? Does the pericope include part of Amos 3 also?

For a number of scholars, the pericope of the "Oracles Against the Nations" is a closed unity of oracles, marked by the same introduction and conclusion, and which share basically the same structure. The series starts in Amos 1:3 with the first occurrence of the introductory refrain אֲשֶׁר יִ֥הְיֶה ("thus says YHWH") and closes in Amos 2:16 with the oracular formula יִֽהְיֶה ("oracle of YHWH"). These oracles are marked by the common use of the messenger formula אֲשֶׁר יִ֥הְיֶה ("thus says YHWH"); followed by the general indictment וַיֹּסְרוּ אֱלוֹהֵֽי [nation] וַיִּשְׁפְּרֵֽנֵי ("for three acts of rebellion/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not return it"); then by a specific indictment,

1This can be seen by the references to the valley of Aven, Beth-Eden, and to the entire people of Aram (Amos 1:5), that appears in the oracle against Damascus, and through the references to Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and to the Philistine people in general, in the oracle against Gaza.

As for the oracle against Tyre, there is no reference to Sidon, Byblos, or any other Phoenician city, or to the Phoenician people in general. One might then question whether the oracle addresses all of Phoenicia. Tyre is usually referred to, in OT, as the leading Phoenician city, and the others usually come in a secondary and ancillary position, if ever mentioned at all (cf. 1 Kgs 5:20[6] where the Sidonians are considered subjects of Hiram, who otherwise is designated only as king of Tyre; Isa 23, where in an oracle addressed to Tyre, Sidon is considered as part of the Tyrian kingdom; and Ezek 26-28, where Sidon, Arvad, Gebal [Byblos] are mentioned in an oracle against Tyre [Ezek 27:8-9]).

Tyre's supremacy over the other Phoenician cities is also evident in the ANE literature from the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. In the Assyrian inscription of that time which speaks of the Phoenician coastal cities, Tyre is always mentioned first, while references to Sidon and Biblos practically disappear. See discussion in H. J. Katzenstein, The History of Tyre: From the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C.E. (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1973), 132-135, 160-161, 168-169, 193-219; and H. J. Katzenstein and Douglas R. Edwards, "Tyre," ABD (1992), 6:688.
introduced by the preposition ב ("for, because"), and by the announcement of the divine judgment usually introduced by the theme of sending or setting fire—א ראתו יִנָּרְנֵה ("I will send/set fire"). They are, sometimes, concluded by the formula יִנָּר אָלֵי ("says YHWH").

Other scholars, however, consider Amos 1:2 to be an integral part of the "Oracles Against the Nations." The main argument in favor of this view is the parallel passages found in Joel 4:16(3:16) and Jer 25:30. In these variant formulations, the roaring of YHWH, that convulses nature, comes to initiate or culminate His announcement of judgment against foreign nations. Amos 1:2 should, therefore, be understood in the same sense. It is the introduction to the impending divine judgment described in Amos 1:3-2:16.

A close look into the passages of Joel and Jeremiah seems to provide strong support for that proposition. First of all, these two passages are the only ones in the OT that share an almost identical formulation with Amos 1:2. Second, they are intimately

---

1See Neher, Amos, 12, 59-67; Marsh, Amos, 36; Kelley, Amos, 30; Mays, Amos, 21; Hammersshaimb, Amos, 19; McKeaning, Amos, 13; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 122, 124, 135-144; Yair Hoffmann, קֶּסְעֵי נַעַר הָעָנָב [The Prophecies Against Foreign Nations in the Bible] (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1977), 155; Amssler, "Amos," 169; Peter C. Craigie, Twelve Prophets, vol. 1, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Jonah, DSB (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 123-126; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 13; Martin-Achard, Amos, 59; Meir Weiss, The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 195; Soggin, Amos, 28-30; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 300, 308-309; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 85; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 126; Gary Smith, Amos, 17; Mowvley, Amos, 12; Niehaus, "Amos," 338, 340.


Klaus Koch and Collaborators (Amos, 2:67), and John Hayes (Amos, 65-66) also defend Amos 1:2 as part of the "Oracles Against the Nations," but on other grounds. They argue that Amos 1:2 sets the stage for the oracles by introducing YHWH and His action of judgment. Furthermore, the "it" which YHWH will not recall in 1:3-2:16 is His "voice" (ברק) which was blasted forth from Zion with withering force.

3Amos 1:2

עָנָב יִנָּרְנֵה הָאָלֵי נַעַר יִנָּר אָלֵי
related to oracles of judgment against foreign nations. Joel 4[3] speaks of an eschatological day, the "Day of the Lord," when YHWH would congregate all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat and judge them all. At that time, He would deliver and restore His people Israel. In this oracle, the prophet specially mentions the foreign peoples of Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, Edom, and the "nations around," for crimes committed against God's people.

Jer 25 says that YHWH has a הָלַשׁ ("case, dispute, lawsuit"—Jer 25:31) with all the inhabitants of the earth, and that He will judge all flesh, and as result, the wicked will be given to the sword. This oracle of judgment was preceded by the oracle of the "cup of God's wrath" (Jer 25:15-29). In this oracle the prophet was ordered to take a cup of the wine of wrath (symbol of God's judgment by the sword) from the hand of YHWH and give it to drink to all the nations to which God would send him. The prophet enumerates a long list, starting with the people of Jerusalem and those of the cities of Judah. He then continues with the people of Egypt, and goes on enumerating the land of Uz, the

("And he said:
YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither, and the top of the Carmel dries up")

Joel 4:16

("And YHWH will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will utter His voice; heavens and earth will tremble. But YHWH will be a refuge to His people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel")

Jer 25:30

("As for you, you will prophesy against them all these words, and you will say to them: YHWH will roar from on high, and from His holy place He will utter His voice; He will roar mightily against His fold/pasturage, He will shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth")
Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, and faraway peoples like Dedan, Tema, Arabia, Media, Elam, etc. They all were obliged to drink, for they all would be destroyed by the sword. It is against this group of people that the prophet is commanded to prophesy in Jer 25:30.

From a survey of their inner context, it is evident that the only two other passages in the OT that parallel Amos 1:2 are indeed closely connected with a divine judgment against foreign nations. In Jeremiah, as in Amos, even God's own people were also subject to that judgment.

Third, there are other parallel points between these passages and Amos 1-2. Some of the crimes of Judah's neighbors in Joel echo those condemned in Amos. Conquering land and selling people as slaves, uprooting people from their homeland and sending them far away, exploiting the weak (a young boy given into prostitution, a young girl sold for wine)—this list of crimes bears some resemblance to that of Amos. In Joel, however, it is clearly specified that they were committed against Judah, while in Amos it is not clear that God's people (Israel or Judah) were always involved. In Joel and Amos, the roaring of YHWH results in the convulsion of nature. In Joel the earth and the sky are shaken (Joel 4:16b), while in Amos the shepherds' pastures and the top of Carmel wither (Amos 1:2b). In Jer 25:30, as Meir Weiss pointed out, the reference to YHWH's fold/pasturage (רֵעָה) seems to echo the reference to the shepherds' pastures (*רְעֹת) in Amos 1:2. Furthermore, the reference to a "shout like those who tread grapes" (רַגְזה תֵּתַר) in Jeremiah may have some connection with the reference to Carmel (רָם כָּרְמֶל) in Amos 1:2. The word רְמָה ("Carmel") and יְרֵשׁ ("shout") are intimately interrelated in Isa 16:10 and Jer 48:33, in an oracle of judgment against Moab. Another interesting feature in Jer 25 is that the kings of the nations are designated as "shepherds" (כָּרְמֶל) and their countries as their pastures (רְעֹת and רֵעָה) in

---

Weiss, Bible from Within, 236-237.
vss. 34-37, which may also be a parallel to the הַרְבּוֹת הַנְּפֶלֶת ("the pasture of the shepherds") in Amos 1:2.¹

Finally, there are more than just some echoes between the last chapter of Joel and the prophecies of the book of Amos. Joel's reference to the "day of the Lord," as a day of judgment, of darkness and not of light (Joel 4:14-15, cf. also Joel 2:1-2, 10-11) is very similar to Amos's description of the same theme (Amos 5:18-10), employing identical terminology. Furthermore, Joel 4:1, 18 echo very closely Amos 9:13b-14a, which are part of the concluding prophecies of the book of Amos.² In reading the Hebrew text, in the present order of the Hebrew Bible, the impression given is that the book of Amos would have been structured around these three topics found in the last chapter of Joel (judgment of the nations related to the phrase "YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem he utters His voice"—Joel 4:16//Amos 1:2; the "day of the Lord"—Joel 4:14-15//Amos 5:18-20; and the promises of restoration—Joel 4:1,18//Amos 9:13-14).³

¹The Tg translated הַרְבּוֹת הַנְּפֶלֶת ("the pasture of the shepherds") by מְשִׁיאֵי בָּלֶמֶן ("the dwelling places of the kings"), understanding the reference to shepherds in Amos as a metaphor for the kings of the nations.

²Interesting parallels are found between these two passages:

Joel 4:1a[3:1a] ... וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת אַמְתָּה וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת יַעֲקֹב וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת יְהוֹ שֶׁבֶט יִשְׂרָאֵל ("For, behold, in these days and in that time when I will restore the fortunes of Judah and of Jerusalem ..."

Joel 4:18a[3:18a] ... וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת אַמְתָּה וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת יַעֲקֹב וְיָבָא בָּאָרְזֹת יְהוֹ שֶׁבֶט יִשְׂרָאֵל ("And it will be in that day that the mountains will drip sweet wine and the hills will flow with milk ..."

Amos 9:13 ... וְיִתְמַכֵּה הַיָּמִים הָזִּים אֶל סְבָדִים אֶל שְׁלֹשָׁה פָּסְעִים וְשֶׁבֶט יִשְׂרָאֵל ("Behold, days are coming, oracle of YHWH... and the mountains will drip sweet wine and every hill will melt..."

Amos 9:14a ... וְיִתְמַכֵּה הַיָּמִים הָזִים אֶל שְׁלֹשָׁה פָּסְעִים וְשֶׁבֶט יִשְׂרָאֵל ("and I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel..."

³Wilhelm Rudolph (Amos, 103) suggested that the placement of Amos after Joel in the order of the twelve prophets is probably because Amos was considered as a large-range commentary to Joel 4.

Paul R. House (Unity of the Twelve, 63-81) has argued that the structure of the Twelve Minor Prophets is intrinsically interwoven, as already shown in the survey of
In view of the many close parallels between the oracles found in Amos 1-2, Joel 4, and Jer 25, it seems quite reasonable, at least, to consider that these oracles represent a particular form of oracles of judgment against nations, whether against foreign nations only (Joel), or against foreign nations, Israel, and Judah (Amos and Jeremiah). In this case, the oracle in Amos 1:2 is to be considered as an integral part of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2.

The second major question concerning the delimitation of the pericope involves the oracle against Israel. Is it part of the "Oracles Against the Nations," as is usually maintained, or is it an independent unit? Scholars like William R. Harper, Jack P. Lewis, and Rex Mason have also noticed parallels between the last chapter of Joel and the beginning and conclusion of Amos. Their conclusion is usually that the prophets seem to have made usage of a common "stock" of prophetic oracles, which was adapted to their immediate situation. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 206; and Rex Mason, Zechariah, Habakkuk, Joel, OTG (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 119. House's study on the Minor Prophets, however, has pushed the question to a new light, and one should ask if the parallel usage of expressions, themes, and phrases may not indicate more than just individual usage of a common material.

1See Snaith, Amos, 1:21; Cripps, Amos, 117; Mays, Amos, 26; Hammershaimb, Amos, 21; Rudolph, Amos, 118; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 135; Craigie, Twelve Prophets, 127-128; Martin-Achard, Amos, 126, 132; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 308; Limburg, Hosea-Michah, 87-93; Hayes, Amos, 55; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 206; Gary Smith, Amos, 34; Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 15; Niehaus, "Amos," 340; Paul, Amos, 13-15.
John Barton, A. G. Auld, and David Allen Hubbard have favored the second possibility. They recognize a literary unity only in Amos 1:3-2:5, as the symmetry of the arrangement and the formal similarities of the first seven oracles indicate. For them, the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6-16) forms a distinct unit by itself. It starts with the same introductory formula, but abandons the strict formulation of the previous oracles after the first sentence and then follows its own pattern. The first seven oracles would then serve as an introduction to the oracle against Israel.

It is obvious that the oracle against Israel does not follow the strict structure of the previous seven oracles; but does this fact provide enough ground for its exclusion from the "Oracles Against the Nations"? In this matter, it would be good to remind oneself of the insightful remarks made by Wilhelm Rudolph some decades ago. In criticizing the quest, by some scholars, for absolute uniformity in the "Oracles Against the Nations," he observed that Form Criticism goes beyond its competence when it puts the prophet in a straitjacket. How can a modern scholar determine that the prophet could not deviate any step from a rigid diagram? How can such a scholar establish that the prophet could not

---


2While it does have the common introductory formula, נָתַן רְשָׁם ה ("thus says YHWH"), and the general motivation, נָתַן לָהֶם נִנְפָּר לְעַמָּה ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation], and for four, I will not restore/return her/it"), the strict similarities stop here. The specific motivation for the judgment is still introduced by לָם ("for"), but it is much longer and more specific than in the previous oracles (Amos 2:6b-8). Then it is followed by a recital of God's gracious provision in the history of Israel (Amos 2:9-12), which has no parallels in the oracles that precede it. The pronouncement of judgment is not constructed around the theme of a devouring fire, with destruction and exile, but around what seems to be a reference to an earthquake and its destructive power (Amos 2:13-16). Finally, the concluding formula is not נָתַן רְשָׁם ("says YHWH") but נָתַן רְשָׁם ("oracle of YHWH").


4Rudolph quotes in a footnote the remarks of Principal Lofthouse found in Cripps, *Book of Amos*, 282: "It is not probable that any Hebrew prophet wrote with the fear of the standards of German literary criticism before his eyes." Cf. Rudolph, *Amos*, 119, n. 3.
retain a certain personal freedom while working inside a general framework? For Rudolph, the prophet Amos does not standardize, and the first seven oracles themselves prove it, since they are not exactly identical one to the other. The variations inside the oracle against Israel, therefore, should not be taken as a proof that the oracle does not belong to the series (the similar elements that this oracle shares in common with the preceding oracles are evidence that it does belong to the series), but rather as an evidence of the prophet's freedom and creativity.¹

In discussing the same problem, Gary Smith observed that total uniformity is not found in any other prophetic literary genre and should not be expected in the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations." For him, variation within formal structures enables the prophet to create emphasis, to build structure into a pattern, to make comparison, and to break monotony.²

A further interesting remark was made by Shalom Paul in his commentary on Amos.³ Paul comments on the issue in the same line of thought of Rudolph and Smith, but he goes one step further. In referring to a study by Yitshaq Avishur on the forms of repetition of numbers, which indicate wholeness in the Bible (numbers 3, 7, and 10),⁴ Shalom Paul observed that it is not uncommon that a stereotypic pattern is broken when it reaches its climax or its conclusion. A good example of this phenomenon can be seen in Gen 1, in the Creation account. The account in Gen 1 is formulated with a recurrent final refrain at the end of each of the first six days. The pattern is broken, however, when the account reaches its culminating point in the seventh day. So, too, the seven oracles in Amos 1:3-2:5 (with all their internal variants) are ordered according to a preconceived

¹Ibid., 118-119.
²Gary Smith, Amos, 41-42.
³Paul, Amos, 22-27, 76-77.
pattern, which is deliberately broken when the climax of the prophecy is reached in the oracle against Israel.¹

One could also take the example of the Creation account in Gen 1 in order to substantiate further the argumentation for the existence of great variation in form inside a general framework. The accounts of the first, second, fourth, and fifth days contain only one announcement of the divine word trnbn ("and God said"), while the third and fifth days contain two and three announcements, respectively, and the account of the seventh day contains none. The approval formula □tens . . .  ten ("and [God] saw that it was good") appears once in the accounts of the first, fourth, and fifth days; twice in the accounts of the third and sixth days; and not at all in the second and seventh days. The refrain □nìn ("and it was so") appears once in the accounts of the second and fourth days; twice in the third day; and does not appear in the first, fifth, sixth, and seventh days. The divine act of giving names appears in the accounts of the first, second, and third days, but is absent in the rest. The divine action of blessing appears only in the accounts of the fifth, sixth, and seventh days. These, and many other elements, which provide for a rich variation inside the account of Gen 1, are important ingredients in the chapter. In no way do they indicate that the individual accounts should be taken as independent units in themselves. Variation here is used, as Gary Smith has said in reference to Amos, "to create emphasis, to build structure into a pattern, to make comparison, and to break monotony."²

The fact that the oracle against Israel is part of the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" seems strongly indicated by the common introductory formula, □nìn ("thus says YHWH"), and by the same general motivation, [nation] □nìn ("thus says YHWH")．

¹Paul, Amos, 76-77.

*b* ("for three acts of rebellion/transgressions of [nation], and for four, I will not restore/return her/it"), which this oracle shares in common with the seven preceding oracles. As David A. Dorsey has pointed out,¹ this fact in itself already provides a very strong indication of the cohesiveness of the entire unit in Amos 1:2-2:16. To the listener of the prophet there would be no doubt that when the prophet started speaking against Israel, he was continuing the series of oracles that was being pronounced until then. The cohesiveness of the series is also made clear by the fact that the prophet denounces Israel for some sins, and that he pronounces a judgment upon the nation. This is what he has been doing all along concerning the other nations.

Again, as Dorsey remarked,² the unique features found in the oracle against Israel highlight the special place the northern nation occupies in the series. The listener easily could come to the conclusion that Israel was the main target of the prophet, and that the series has reached its final climax with that nation.³

As is seen later,⁴ the variation in the form of the oracle against Israel is a purposeful one, not only to convey climax, but also to convey a specific message. While the first seven oracles were cast in the form of oracles of judgment, the eighth is a lawsuit. In the address to his target audience, Amos (or YHWH, to be more precise) not only pronounced judgment upon the Israelite nation, but also engaged himself in a lawsuit with the people of Israel.

A still different division of the unit in Amos 1:2-2:16 was proposed by J. A. Motyer.⁵ For him, there is a literary unit in Amos 1:3-2:3 that concerns the foreign nations

---


²Ibid.

³Cf. also Shalom Paul's detailed elaboration on the oracle against Israel as the climax of the series. Paul, Amos, 22-24, 76-77.

⁴Cf. below, 141-148.

⁵Motyer, Day of the Lion, 36-37, 49-51.
and another unit in Amos 2:4-3:2 concerning Judah and Israel. He suggests that Amos organized his preaching on the basis of human relationships as they appear to the Divine Observer. First, the prophet addressed the neighboring heathen who did not know God, and then the elected people who knew God and were therefore much more accountable to Him than the others, as Amos 3:1-2 indicates.

Motyer's position, however, seems difficult to sustain due to the fact that the common patterning of the oracles and the cohesiveness of the themes they deal with argue against a division based solely on a people's relationship with God. The indicators, both in form and content, show that these oracles form an overall unit that cannot be divided into two distinct pericopes.

Finally some scholars, like Rolland E. Wolfe, Victor Maag, Jan de Waard, and William A. Smalley, include Amos 3:1-2 as part of the pericope. De Waard and Smalley have especially developed the argumentation for seeing Amos 3:1-2 as the conclusion of the series of "Oracles Against the Nations." For them, the formula נְאֵרָּא אֶל֖וּ שָׁה ("listen to this word") begins the last segment of the section of Amos 1:3-3:2, which deals with Israel's special guilt among the nations. They pointed out other instances when, for them, this formula is used at the beginning of a concluding section (in Amos 4:1 it would start the last segment of Amos 3:3-4:3, which is about the prophet's role and commission; and in Amos 7:16 it would start the last segment of the Amaziah episode in Amos 7:1-8:3, which deals with the prophet's own experiences). They further argued that Amos 3:1-2, in itself, parallels the entire Amos 1:2-2:16 in an inverse order. The prophet started addressing God's people (both Judah and Israel), the last ones in Amos 1-2; then made references to all the families of the earth, paralleled in Amos 1-2 by the six foreign nations.

1 Rolland Emerson Wolfe, Meet Amos and Hosea, the Prophets of Israel (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 12-19; Viktor Maag, Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 4-13; de Waard and Smalley, Translator's, 193, 200-201; Smalley, "Recursion," 123.

2 De Waard and Smalley, Translator's, 193; Smalley, "Recursion," 123.
mentioned there; then concluded with a word of judgment, which parallels the word of judgment in Amos 1:2.1

The main objection to the proposal above is that the formula "listen to this word," in Amos 3:1, seems to introduce a new section rather than to close the previous one. The formula occurs many times in the prophets as a standard introduction to their message.2 It is frequently found at the beginning of a literary unit, though it is not restricted to this usage, as Yair Hoffmann has demonstrated.3 It can also be found in the middle of a literary unit, as a device designated to create the impression of a new beginning; or at the beginning of a quotation, no matter when the quotation appears in the unit.4 In Amos 3, however, it seems to start a new literary unit, for it provides a major break from the regular pattern of the "Oracles Against the Nations," as David A. Dorsey has pointed out.5 The breaking of the pattern is so pronounced that an audience could easily perceive a new beginning. The prophetic call to listen seems to be also the most common device to introduce a new literary unit in the book of Amos, as it appears at the beginning of four of the seven units of the book.6 The impression of a new beginning is heightened by usage of the formula "oracle of YHWH" in Amos 2:16. This

---

1De Waard and Smalley, Translator's, 200-201.
2See, e.g., Isa 1:2; 7:13; 36:13; 49:1; 51:1; Jer 7:2; 10:1; 11:1; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:2; Ezek 13:2; 25:3; Hos 5:1; Joel 1:2; Mic 1:2; 3:1; 6:1.
4Ibid., 163-167.
5Dorsey, "Literary Architecture," 308-310.
6These units are: Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-12; 5:1-17; 8:4-9:15. The other three units that do not start with the call to listen are Amos 1:2-2:16, which starts with a consecutive form of "to say, speak"; Amos 5:18-6:14, which starts with the woe formula "woe!"; and Amos 7:1-8:3, which starts with a formula of a vision report "thus the Lord YHWH showed me." Cf. ibid., 306-323 for a detailed discussion.
The oracular formula is frequently used to mark the conclusion of a prophetic discourse in the OT, as it seems to be the case here.

In summary, there is a cluster of aurally-oriented indications that signal that the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" stops at Amos 2:16, and that a new unit starts at Amos 3:1. Since, as already discussed above, the series seems to start at Amos 1:2, it can then be said that the pericope known as "Oracles Against the Nations" encompasses the verses found in Amos 1:2-2:16.

The MT Text of Amos 1:2-2:16

The present research into the text of Amos 1:2-2:16 is based on the MT text as it appears in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The full Hebrew text is provided with an English translation that incorporates most of the insights into the text gained throughout the dissertation. Only a concise evaluation of this text is made here, while a detailed study of the MT text of Amos 1:2-2:16 and its main textual variants and some modern emendations is supplied as an appendix to this dissertation.

1Cf. Isa 3:15; 54:17; Jer 1:19; 12:17; 15:9; 32:44; 49:6; Ezek 12:28; 14:11, 23; 15:8; 24:14; 32:32; 39:29; Hos 11:11; Obad 4; Hag 2:9; Zech 3:10. The formula however is not restricted to the conclusion of a prophetic saying or discourse, and it is also used in the midst of it, as a reminder of the divine speaker. See, e.g., Isa 1:24; 14:22; 17:3; 19:4; 30:1; 55:8; Jer 2:9; 17:24; 31:33; Ezek 11:8; Joel 2:12; Obad 8; Mic 4:6; Zeph 1:10. It can also be used at the beginning of a oracle, introducing the divine message; see e.g., Jer 4:9; 5:18; 7:32; 8:1; 9:25; 16:14; 19:6; 30:8; Amos 9:13. For more discussion and a bibliography on this formula, see Leonard J. Coppes, "נָּעַמ (n’äm) Utterance," TWOT (1980), 2:541-542; D. Vetter, "נָּעַמ n’äm Ausspruch," THAT (1984), 2:1-3; H. Eising, "נָּעַמ, " TWAT (1986), 5:119-123.

2The next time this oracular formula appears again in the book is in Amos 3:15, just prior to another call to listen in Amos 4:1. This call in chap. 4 corresponds to the beginning of the third literary unit of the book, i.e., Amos 4:1-12.

1:2 And he said:

"YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither(1), and the top of the Carmel dries up."

3 Thus says YHWH:

"For three rebellions/transgressions(b) of Damascus, and for four, I will not restore/return(e) herxit; for they threshed Gilead with sledges of iron."

4 So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, and it will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad.

5 I will break the bar of Damascus; I will destroy the inhabitants/ruler(d) from Biq'at-Awen and the one holding the scepter from Beth-Eden; the people of Aram will go into exile to Qir," says YHWH.

6 Thus says YHWH:

"For three rebellions/transgressions(b) of Gaza, and for four, I will not restore/return(e) her/it; for they took into exile an entire population in order to deliver them over to Edom.

7 So I will send fire upon the walls(e) of Gaza, and it will consume her fortresses.

8 I will destroy the inhabitants/ruler(d) from Ashdod and the one holding the scepter from Askelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines will perish."

says the Lord YHWH.

9 Thus says YHWH:

"For three rebellions/transgressions(b) of Tyre, and for four, I will not restore/return(e) her/it; for they delivered over an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brothers."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
10 So I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre, and it will consume her fortresses."

11 Thus says YHWH: "For three rebellions/ transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not restore/return him; for he pursued his brother with the sword and destroyed his womenfolk: his anger tore perpetually and his wrath kept forever.

12 So I will send fire upon Teman, and it will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."

13 Thus says YHWH: "For three rebellions/ transgressions of Ammonites, and for four, I will not restore/return them; for they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend their borders."

14 So I will set fire on the walls of Rabbah and it will consume her fortresses, amid alarm in the day of battle, amid storm in the day of tempest.

15 Their king will go into exile, he and his princes together," says YHWH.

2:1 Thus says YHWH: "For three rebellions/ transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not restore/return him; for he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

2 So I will send fire upon Moab and it will consume the fortresses of Kerioth, and Moab will die amid uproar, amid alarm, amid sound of trumpet.

3 I will destroy the judge from its midst and I will slay all its princes with him," says YHWH.
Thus says YHWH:

"For three rebellions/transgressions (b) of Judah, and for four, I will not restore/return (c) her/it; for they despised the Law of YHWH and His statutes they did not keep. Their lies led them astray, the ones which their fathers went after.

So I will send fire upon Judah, and it will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem."

Thus says YHWH:

"For three rebellions/transgressions (b) of Israel, and for four, I will not restore/return (c) her/it; for they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.

They that pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the powerless and turn aside the way of the humble. Every (d) man and his father go to the Girl (d) in order to profane My Holy Name.

Upon garments taken in pledge, they stretch out beside every altar, and wine of those who have been fined, they drink in the house of their gods (d).

Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was as the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks. I destroyed his fruit above, and his roots bellow.

And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the desert, to possess the land of the Amorite.

And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not so, children of Israel?"

Oracle of YHWH.

"But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and unto the prophets you commanded them, saying: 'Do not prophesy.'"
Thus, I am making it shake/cleaved underneath you, as a cart shakes/cleaves when it is full of cut grain.

Flight will fail the swift, the strong will not strengthen his power, the warrior will not save his life, the archer will not stand, the swift of foot will not save himself, the horseman will not save his life, and the stout of heart among the warriors will flee naked on that day."

Oracle of YHWH.

Notes on the English Translation

(a) The root בָּנָה here may mean either "to mourn" (בָּנָה I) or "wither, dry up" (בָּנָה II).

(b) The word בָּנָה may mean acts of rebellion or transgression of some specific norm(s).1

(c) בָּנָה seems to be used here in a "Janus parallelism," referring at the same time both to the nation addressed in the oracle (hence, "restore her/them/him"), as well as to the divine judgment that follows (hence, "return it").2

(d) בָּנָה may refer either to the inhabitants of the area specified in the oracle, in a collective sense, or to its Aramean ruler, in parallelism with the בָּנָה ("one holding the scepter") of the next colon.

(e) בָּנָה taken here in a collective sense, hence "walls."

(f) The suffix is translated "him" here in order to agree with the usage of the third masculine singular in the oracle.

(g) בָּנָה understood here as speaking of "womenfolk" (as in בָּנָה בָּנָה ["a young woman or two"] of Judg 5:30) instead of "compassions" (בָּנָה ), as it is usually translated. Shalom Paul has discussed at length the issue, showing the difficulties in

---

1See discussion below, 228-235.

2See above, 61-62.
maintaining the common understanding, since the piel רקרא (“to destroy, wipe out”) is totally unattested in connection with human emotions.1

(b) The suffix masculine singular taken as collective for רקס (“Ammonites”), hence "them."

(i) מ here seems to imply the distributive idea, hence "every man" instead of "a man."2

(i) מ taken as a reference to a specific idol and not to "a maiden, girl" in general.3

(i) מ translated as referring to idols and not to YHWH.4

(m) The verb מ is an hapax legomenon whose meaning is uncertain. The only thing sure about it is that its meaning can express a phenomenon, a kind of action, that can be related to a cart loaded with grain. There is a growing tendency to see in the imagery of a loaded cart a metaphor for an earthquake. As a cart loaded with newly cut grain could shake, groan, and even split open, so would YHWH shake the earth and cleave it beneath the Israelites, in His judgment against that nation.5

1Paul, Amos, 64-65. See especially his reference to the Semitic cognate word for "young woman" in the Moabite רקר and Ugaritic רם.

   The LXX has קא עָלָה מִתָּרָא (or מָתָרָא) ם רֶמֶץ ("and he harmed womb/s [or 'mother/s'] upon the earth/land"), seemingly reading in רקר the substantive מַר (“womb”), which is also a possibility. The addition of מ רֶמֶץ ("upon the earth/land") seems to point out that LXX probably understood this verse on the light of the oracle against Ammon, and saw in the verse a reference to pregnant women rather than to women in general.

2See discussion below, 270.

3See discussion below, 269-270.

4See discussion below, 273.

For the most part, the Hebrew text of MT in the book of Amos is well preserved and contains a very small number of problematic passages. In Amos 1:2-2:16, only in two occurrences could a strong case be made in favor of a variant reading represented in the ancient versions. The first one is Amos 2:7, for the reading of נַפַּס (“to crush”) instead of MT נַפַּס (“to gasp/pant for” or “to snap/set traps”), on the basis of LXX τὰ πατοῦντα (“the ones treading/trampling”), Tg MS Berlin Or fol 2 ῥὰτρὰ (“who crush/pulverize”), and Pesh ḫαך, ḫאך (“who tread down/trample”). The second one is Amos 2:15, for the reading of the nihal נַפַּס (“he will be saved”) instead of the piel נַפַּס (“he will save [himself/his soul]”) on the basis of the passive form found in LXX (δικαστεῖται ["he will be saved”]), Tg (אֲרָאֶה/אֶרָא אֱה ["he will be saved”]), and Pesh (אַדַּא, נִטְפֵּס ["he will be saved”]). In these two cases, however, the MT provides a good and logical text, which can, with good probability, still represent the original reading of the text. No emendation is then proposed to the text of MT. As Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman had already noticed, "no serious alternative" could be found to it.

The Literary Structure

Three elements have generally attracted scholarly attention in the discussion on the structure of the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations": The geographical location of the nations referred to; their interrelationship in terms of blood ties; and some specific literary connections between the oracles on the basis of similar catchwords, phrases, and ideas.

---


2See the appendix below, 313-317, 320-321. See the entire appendix for a detailed discussion on the main variants to the MT text of Amos 1:2-2:16, and on some modern textual emendations to this text.

3Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 139.
Geographical Location

An emphasis, by some scholars, on the geographical location of the nations gained a certain momentum after the publication of A. Bentzen's ideas on the background of the "Oracles Against the Nations." He proposed that it reflects a religious ritual similar to that of the Egyptian execration texts.\(^1\) In pronouncing judgment upon the Syro-Palestinian nations, the prophet Amos jumps from one corner of the map to the other, as is done in the Egyptian execration texts. He starts with the northeast (Aram), then jumps to the southwest (land of the Philistines), next the northwest (Phoenicia), then goes to the southeast (Edom, Ammon, Moab); and finally he strikes at the center (Judah and Israel).\(^2\) Bentzen's suggestion, which has been accepted by a number of scholars,\(^3\) yields a crisscross pattern (a kind of chiastic pattern on the basis of the geographical progression of the series) in which Judah and Israel are at the center of all:

\[
\begin{align*}
3. & \text{Tyre (Amos 1:9-10)} & 1. & \text{Aram (Amos 1:3-5)} \\
8. & \text{Israel (Amos 2:6-16)} & 7. & \text{Judah (Amos 2:4-5)} \\
2. & \text{Philistia (Amos 1:6-8)} & 4/5/6. & \text{Edom, Ammon, Moab (Amos 1:11-2:3)}
\end{align*}
\]

The Interrelationship Between the Nations

The interrelationship between the nations that is addressed in the series of oracles has attracted the attention of some scholars. Wilhelm Rudolph noticed that the first three nations (Aram, Philistia, and Phoenicia), which were addressed through references to their leading cities, were unrelated genetically with Israel, while the next four (Edom, Ammon, Moab) were.

\(^1\)Bentzen, "Ritual Background," 85-99.

\(^2\)Ibid., 90-91.

\(^3\)See Kapelrud, Central Ideas, 19-20; Hammershaimb, Amos, 21; McKeating, Amos, 14; Koch and Collaborators, Amos, 1:246-247, 2:73; Spreafico, "Amos," 150-151; Amsler, "Amos," 171; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 16.
Moab, Judah) are related to Israel by blood ties. This denotes, for Rudolph, a 3 + 4 (= 7) structure, a numerical pattern that is constantly repeated in the introduction of each oracle. The prophet's intention was to draw closer and closer to Israel, in order to arrive at the inexorable climax, the condemnation of Israel itself, in the final oracle of the series.

Ambrogio Spreafico and Thomas J. Finley favorably viewed Rudolph's proposal, although they contended that the interrelationship of these nations represents only one of the elements upon which the structure of the passage was built. Rudolph's 3 + 4 pattern can be schematized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Damascus (Syria)</th>
<th>Edom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gaza (Philistia)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tyre (Phoenicia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unrelated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1 Climax: Israel

Unrelated

Roy L. Honneycutt also stressed the element of relationship, not between the nations themselves but between the eight nations of the series and God. For him, the series was built in concentric circles: first the prophet addressed the nations outside the boundary of God's special revelatory process that were around Israel (in an encircling movement); then he closes up the small circle of those that are inside this boundary, first Judah and finally Israel, his target. This represents a 6+2 pattern that can be schematized as shown in fig. 1:

---

1Rudolph, *Amos*, 123, 128-129.
2Ibid.
3Spreafico, "Amos," 151; Finley, *Amos*, 136. Spreafico stressed mainly the geographical progression of the oracles with its crisscross pattern, but he also agreed that there is a progression in relationship as the prophet gets closer and closer to Israel. Finley considered that Rudolph's suggestion is to be combined with Shalom Paul's remarks on the concatenous pattern of the series.
Literary Connection

The third element, the literary connection between the oracles, commands the attention of a good number of scholars today. Shalom Paul pointed out the concatenous pattern on which the "Oracles Against the Nations" were apparently built. For him, each oracle was tied together to the next one through similar catchwords, phrases, and ideas, common only to the two units in the series contiguous to one another.¹

The oracle against Damascus was tied to the oracles against Gaza and the other Philistine cities through the common sentence אֹֽהֲנָ֖ם תָּֽיְנוֹת מִֽצְרִים מִֽצְרִים יִֽשָּׁרְאֵֽל מָזַֽהֲבוּת מִֽצְרִים ("I will destroy the inhabitants/ruler from ... and the one holding the scepter from . . .") which occurs in vss. 5 and 8 of Amos 1. The oracle against the Philistine cities and the oracle against Tyre were tied together through the reference of delivering a large population in exile to Edom in vss. 6 and 9. Tyre and Edom were related through the common reference to "brother" in vss. 9 and 11; Edom and Ammon, through the reference to crimes committed by the "sword" (implied in the oracle against Ammon), especially in reference to atrocities committed against women (רֹאשׁוֹת in vs. 11 translated as "his womenfolk"). Another possible connection between Edom and Ammon may be found in the "sound" link between שָׁתִים ("sword") in vs. 11 and מָרֵיא ("to extend") in vs. 13. Ammon and Moab

were related through the common reference to "battle cries" (赧々) and kings and princes in vss. 14-15 of chap. 1 and vss. 1-3 in chap. 2. The oracle against Judah is not interconnected with any other, and likewise the oracle against Israel. A climax seems to have been reached in the oracle against Judah, since it was not connected with any other, and since it is the seventh one (number seven in the OT represents totality, climax, completion). The prophet, however, added the real climax, the oracle against Israel, probably catching his audience by surprise, for they could have believed that he was finished after the seventh oracle. Amos uses the alternative pattern of 7 + 1, which Paul argued was also common in the OT and in ANE.1 Thomas J. Finley and David A. Dorsey supported Shalom Paul's conclusions.2 James Limburg also argued for a 7 + 1 pattern in the series on the basis of his own investigation of the usage of such a pattern in the book of Amos.3 The 7 + 1 pattern proposed by Shalom Paul can be represented as follows:

1Ibid., 22-24.
3James W. Limburg, "Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos," JBL 106 (1987): 220-222; idem, Hosea-Micah, 90. The other examples Limburg pointed out are: seven rhetorical questions in Amos 3:3-7, followed by the climax in vs. 8: "the lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?"; the list of seven verbs in the imperative or its equivalent in Amos 4:4-5 (come, transgress, multiply, bring, offer, proclaim, publish) succeeded by the punch line "for so you love to do, O People of Israel!"; the list of seven verbs in the first person with □ ("you" plural) suffix forms (I gave you, I withheld from you, I smote you, I sent among you, I slew ... your young men, I made a stench go up in your camp, I overthrew some of you) in Amos 4:6-12, after which comes the climactic saying "therefore, thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"; the call for justice in Amos 5:21-24, which lists seven things the Lord does not like (feasts, solemn assemblies, burnt offerings, cereal offerings, peace offerings, noise of songs, melody of harps) and then concludes with the call "but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"; the customary actions of the people described, in Amos 6:4-6, by seven verbs (lie, stretch, eat, sing, invent, drink, anoint) followed by the climactic statement "but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph"; the list of seven punishing acts of the Lord (I will slay, my hand shall take, I will bring them down, I will search out, I will take them, I will command, I will command), in Amos 9:1-4, which is concluded by the general statement "I will set my eyes upon them for evil and not for good."
An important contribution to the discussion on the literary connection between the oracles of Amos 1-2 was made by James M. Ward. He noticed that the eight oracles in Amos 1-2 can be classified into two types: Type A and Type B. Type A oracles have an emphasis on the divine judgment. The indictment in these oracles is composed of one line in Hebrew (or two lines, if one takes the phrase "for three... and for four..." as part of the indictment and not only as an introductory formula as Ward does), while the judgment has three lines. Type B oracles have an emphasis on the divine indictment. Here the
indictment has two lines (or three lines, for the same reason as above), while the punishment has only one line. According to this criterion, one can observe that the oracles in Amos 1-2 were grouped in the following pairs: Aram and Philistia (type A); Tyre and Edom (type B); Ammon and Moab (type A); Judah and Israel (type B). The last oracle, the one against Israel, represents for Ward an expanded type B in which the indictment was very much enlarged. This provides a pattern of AA-BB-AA-BB for the series. Ward’s proposal was well accepted by scholars such as John Hayes, Francis I. Andersen, David N. Freedman, and Gary V. Smith. It can be schematized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern A</th>
<th>Pattern B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Damascus (1:3-5)</td>
<td>3. Tyre (1:9-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Philistia (1:6-8)</td>
<td>4. Edom (1:11-12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duane L. Christensen argued for a 3 + 4 structure in which there are three pairs of oracles with identical prosodic structure (Aram-Philistia, Tyre-Edom, Ammon-Moab), followed by an oracle against Israel that contains a fourfold indictment (while the other oracles contain only one indictment). In order to achieve a strict poetic balance between the pairs, and to arrive at the number of three pairs followed by the oracle against Israel, Christensen needed to cut out all that he considered to be textual conflation and expansion in the oracles, and to eliminate the oracle against Judah from the series.

---

Oracle Against Aram-Damascus (1:3-5)

[1:1:1] Indictment: "They threshed Gilead with threshers"
Announcement of Punishment:
[1:1] I will send fire to consume them
[1:1] I will remove their rulers
[1:1] I will return the people of Aram to Kir

Oracle Against Philistia (1:6-8)

[1:1:1] Indictment: "They exiled an ally"
Announcement of Punishment:
[1:1] I will send fire to consume them
[1:1] I will remove their rulers
[1:1] I will destroy what remains of Philistia

Oracle Against Tyre (1:9-10)

[1:1:1:1] Indictment: "They violated the 'covenant of brothers'"
[1:1] Punishment: I will send fire to consume them

Oracle Against Edom (1:11-12)

[1:1::1:1] Indictment: "He violated his kinship obligations"
[1:1] Punishment: I will send fire to consume them

Oracle Against Ammon (1:13-15)

[1:1:1] Indictment: "They ripped open pregnant women of Gilead"
Announcement of Punishment:
[1:1] I will send fire to consume them
[1:1::1:1] Ammon will be defeated and go to exile

Oracle Against Moab (2:1-3)

[1:1:1] Indictment: "He burned a human sacrifice to a demon"
Announcement of Punishment:
[1:1] I will send fire to consume them
[1:1::1:1] Moab will be defeated and decimated

Oracle Against Israel (2:6-16)

1. Indictment (vss. 6-8): They have perverted justice by
   1:1:1:1/1:1:1:1 Enslaving the poor
   [prose] Committing promiscuous intercourse with bond servants
   [1:1] Abusing the right of pledge and fines

2. Recitation of Magnalis Dei (vss. 9-11)
   [prose] The Exodus: I brought you out of Egypt and through
   the wilderness
   [1:1] The “Judges”: I raised up prophets and Nazirites
   [rubric] “Is it not so, O people of Israel?”

3. Indictment Resumed (vs. 12): You have rejected the authority and the power
   of YHWH
   [1:1:1] You corrupted the Nazirites and silenced the prophets

4. Announcement of Judgment (vss. 13-16)
   [1:1:1] I will make a “shaking (?)”
   [2(1:1:1)] Israel will panic at the theophany of the Divine Warrior
   [prose] “the bravest of her warriors will flee naked in that day”

Another interesting contribution was made by Jan de Waard and William A.
Smalley. For them, the series was built into a chiastic structure covering Amos 1:2-3:2, in
which the balancing parts treat the same themes.1 Their structure was organized as
follows:

A. Word Spoken Against You
   1:2

B. Families of the Earth
   Damascus
   Gaza
   Tyre
   Edom
   Ammon
   Moab
   1:3-2:3

C. Family Brought Up From Egypt
   Judah
   Israel
   2:4-11a

D. Oh Sons of Israel
   2:11b

---

1De Waard and Smalley, Translator’s, 200-201.
Paul R. Noble also organized the series according to its themes. He further added the insights presented by James Ward on the two patterns of oracles of the series (which Noble designated as long [L] and short [S]). He also followed Andersen and Freedman's suggestion that the oracle against Israel consists of only Amos 2:6-8, and that Amos 2:9-12 concerns both Judah and Israel. Contrary to Andersen and Freedman, however, who have considered Amos 2:13-16 as referring also to both Israel and Judah, Noble applied the final verses of the series to all eight nations addressed in Amos 1-2.¹ He proposed the following structure:

Oracles Concerning the Nations (Amos 1:3-2:16)
  a. Concerning the non-Yahwistic nations (1:3-2:3)
     Aram (1:3-5)                              [L]
     Philistia (1:6-8)                          [L]
     Tyre (1:9-10)                              [S]
     Edom (1:11-12)                            [S]
     Ammon (1:13-15)                            [L]
     Moab (2:1-3)                               [L]
  b. Concerning the Yahwistic Nations (2:4-13[sic])
     Judah (2:4-5)
     Israel (2:6-8)
     "Classic" Israel (2:9-12)
  c. Concerning all the nations (2:13-16)

For Moisés Chávez, the series was built into a pattern of seven, being that Judah and Israel are to be taken as one nation for God, under the covenant stipulations.¹ For Charles Hauret, Amos 1-2 is built on the basis of the plain juxtaposition of oracles constructed in a similar fashion.²

A Combination of Many Patterns

Finally, there is the proposal that the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" reflects many different patterns based on geographical, relational, and literary criteria. Andrew E. Steinmann argued for four interlocking patterns that can be observed in the series. First, in a geographical progression, the nations alternate between those that border Israel and those that border Judah. As they alternate, they move closer to Israel and Judah's common border (Damascus and Tyre were on Israel's extreme northern border; Gaza and Edom were on Judah's extreme southern border; Ammon was further south on Israel's eastern flank; Moab was further north on Judah's eastern flank; Judah and Israel shared a common border). The second pattern concerns the manner in which the nations were addressed: the first three, by their leading city-states (Damascus, Gaza, Tyre); the next three, by their national identities (Edom, Ammon, Moab); Judah and Israel were addressed as nations with a special relationship with YHWH. The third pattern correspond to the balancing pairs of oracles (as shown by Ward above), according to their emphasis on either indictment or punishment. The fourth and final pattern is the concatenous chain which extends over the first six oracles of the series, but leaves Judah and Israel out, indicating thereby the special character of these two nations.³

¹Chávez, *Modelo de oratória*, 40. Thomas J. Finley (*Amos*, 136) also expressed a similar view, as one of the possibilities for the structure of the series.


Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman also recognized a multiplicity of patterns in Amos 1-2. The main patterns they observed were: (1) the $3/3 + 1 = 4$ pattern (3 oracles against a leading city [Damascus, Gaza, Tyre]; 4 oracles against nations [Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah] before the concluding oracle against Israel); (2) the sequence of the balanced pairs of oracles, according to Ward's presentation, which results in an AA-BB-AA-BB pattern; (3) a $7 + 1$ pattern, on the basis of the ancient tradition of seven local enemies of Israel with the addition of an eighth oracle, the one against Israel itself.

**Evaluation of the Proposals**

The crisscross pattern provided by the geographical progression has suffered the criticism of a number of scholars. Hans W. Wolff criticized the comparison between the "Oracles Against the Nations" and the Egyptian execration texts by showing that there are profound differences between them. These differences are such that they argue against any influence by an ancient execration ritual, even if indirectly, upon the oracles in Amos 1-2.

3. Ibid., 210-211, 214, 218. Andersen and Freedman remarked that a tradition of seven enemy nations goes back to the ancient traditions of the conquest in which the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan were identified as seven nations (cf. Deut 7:1). Judah is included among the seven enemy nations for geopolitical necessity, for, in dealing with the neighbors of Israel, Amos could not bypass Judah.

4. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 145-147. The differences pointed out by Wolff are:

   (1) The form of the texts cannot be compared at all. The execration texts are merely a list of names (of princes, cities, countries, evil powers); they scarcely exhibit a complete sentence, much less complex oracles such as those that appear in Amos 1-2.

   (2) The sequence of the names in the execration texts is considered to be determined by the compass directions. The arrangement is supposed to have magical significance. In the Egyptian execration texts, it always follows the sequence south-north-west-east, a sequence that cannot be found in Amos (which is northeast-southwest-northwest-southeast). Above all, however, no magical conception of the compass points seems to be behind the sequence in the lists. The study of Hans Wolfgang Helck (*Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* [Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1962], 62-63) has shown that the sequence of names accords rather with the lines of the trade routes. The sequence of places is determined not by magical conceptions, therefore, but by the pattern of road connections.

   (3) The reason for the Egyptian execration texts is obvious: those named endanger
Meir Weiss also criticized the alleged relationship between the Egyptian execration texts and Amos's "Oracles Against the Nations." He showed that the order south (Nubians)-north (Asiatics)-west (Libyans)-Egypt (as the last) is always the conventional sequence in which these nations are listed in all Egyptian documents, magical or otherwise. He further noticed that the sequence above is only the natural expression of the Egyptian system of orientation in general, always starting at the south and then going north, as it is the way the Nile flows. Hence, the sequence of the nations in Amos has nothing to do with the geographical sequence of the Egyptian documents. In Amos, the sequence of the nations constitutes a unique expression, particular to the personal intent of the prophet. For Weiss, the only common feature between the text in Amos and the Egyptian execration texts is that, in these two sources, the order in which the nations are enumerated therein was not determined by any ritual or literary pattern.

For James Nogalski, the attractive geographical crisscross pattern is complicated by the sequence of the oracles against Edom, Ammon, and Moab, which are usually Egyptian interests. Potential and actual rebels and antagonistic forces, at home and abroad, are to be expurgated. This single, self-evident purpose is made manifest by the general, summarizing notices on rebellion given in the conclusion, after the list of names. In contrast to this, specific crimes are named in each oracle in Amos. Moreover, the crimes are not presented as violations of Israelite political interest, but as violations of YHWH's will.

(4) Similarly, the threat against the native population (the Israelites) is also of a wholly different sort than that in the execration texts. It is YHWH's will, rather than the interest of the political establishment, which is decisive. Furthermore, in Egypt, only individual domestic rebels and destructive powers are exorcised, just as are the foreign ones. But in Amos, all Israel stands under the threat, without any possibility of escape (Amos 2:14-16). This clearly indicates how completely different are the representative presuppositions and intentions of the two sets of texts.

(5) Finally, the perspectives on the functions of the human actions and of the deity are completely different in Amos and in the Egyptian execration texts. In the ritual of execration, humans attempt to shape the course of world events. Amos announces the sovereign activity of YHWH. In Egypt, only occasionally were various gods explicitly invoked and pressed into service; other gods were themselves the target of execrations. In Israel, YHWH's omnipotent actions are announced to the people; His word alone governs Israel and foreign nations alike.

considered the "southeast" corner in the crisscross. Why is Edom, the southernmost of the three, mentioned first, followed by Ammon, the northernmost, and finally Moab, which lies in the middle? Such vacillation in the sequence, argued Nogalski, complicates the pattern unnecessarily if the sequence was intentional.\(^1\)

The arguments raised above strongly contradict any notion that the series of oracles in Amos 1-2 was influenced by, or even actually constituted, a ceremonial ritual of execration of Israel's enemies. The fact remains, however, that there is a sequence in the series. Is it intentional, or is it fortuitous? The complicating factor is the sequence of the oracles against Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Andrew E. Steinmann's suggestion seems to have answered the problem in the most satisfactory way, up to this time. The reference point for the geographical progression was the geographical position of both Israel and Judah. The sequence in the oracles represented a movement of progressive closing up to their common border.\(^2\) Edom represented the extreme southeastern border of Judah, in opposition to Tyre in the extreme northwestern border of Israel. Then the prophet moved to the east flank of the two nations with Ammon at the east/southeast of Israel, and Moab at the east of Judah, reaching thereby the common border between Israel and Judah.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 90-91. Nogalski further argued that if a geographical pattern should be sought, a more consistent pattern could be reached if the oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah were removed from the series. This would provide a northeast (Damascus)-southwest (Gaza)-southeast (Ammon, Moab)-northwest (Israel) pattern.

One could ask Nogalski, however, what his reference point is. While one understands that Damascus is northeast of Israel, Gaza southwest, Ammon and Moab southeast, Israel herself is northwest of what? Probably the author implies a sequence of geographical movement, but even so his classification of Israel lacks precision. Furthermore, the removal of three oracles (considered as secondary on the basis of arguments highly debatable) destroys what seems to be a clear intention of the text: the inclusion of all the nations in Syro-Palestine.

\(^2\)Steinmann, "Order," 687.

\(^3\)Something similar was proposed by Kaufmann, only his suggestion was that the sequence was based on an alternative listing of Israel's and Judah's enemies respectively. Hence first the Arameans, the classical foes of Israel; then the Philistines, the foes of Judah; later the Phoenicians, the enemies of Israel; followed by Edomites, the enemies of Judah; then the Ammonites, the enemies of Israel; and finally Moab, enemies of Judah.
As for the patterns proposed on the basis of the interrelationship between the nations, as Rudolph suggests, they seem to provide a good general impression of the movement of getting closer and closer to Israel. One cannot, however, stretch much further than a general impression. Indeed, if the intention was a progressive movement towards Israel, why does Edom come before Ammon and Moab, since it has closer ties to Israel than these other two nations? Would not a more logical sequence be Ammon-Moab-Edom-Judah? As for Honeycutt’s pattern, the effect of encircling Israel, getting closer to this nation, seems to be evident in the text. The criteria of God’s revelation or nonrevelation to a nation can be supported by the direct reference to the Law of YHWH in the oracles against Judah, and the references to specific stipulations of this Law and to the prophetic ministry in the oracle against Israel.

The patterns based on the literary connection seek textual evidence for the structuring of the passage. Among these, the patterns proposed by Duane L. Christensen, Jan de Ward, and William A. Smalley offer some interesting ideas, but seem to rest on shaky ground. Christensen’s precise prosodic structure can be attained only after a deep reworking of the text. He cuts out what he considers to be “additions” to a supposed original text, and eliminates one entire oracle (against Judah). The basic problem with his structure lies here, for the classification of the material in Amos as secondary, or a later addition, is a highly debatable matter, with no agreement within biblical scholarship. While some, like Hans W. Wolff, James L. Mays, Robert B. Coote, and Alberto Soggin, consider the book of Amos as a result of a long redactional process, with a multiplicity of layers added during centuries of reworking the prophetic material, others like Wilhelm Rudolph, Francis I. Andersen, David Noel Freedman, Gary V. Smith, and Shalom Paul

The point that is common between Steinmann’s and Kaufmann’s proposals is that both take Israel and Judah as the reference point for the progression. Cf. discussion on Kaufmann’s views in Paul, Amos, 12.

Wolff, Joel and Amos, 106-113; Mays, Amos, 12-14; Coote, Amos, 1-134; Soggin, Amos, 15-18.
argue that the totality or almost the totality of the book is original, and probably comes from
the hand of the prophet Amos himself, or from someone else very close to him.1 This puts
a question mark in Christensen's prosodic structure. It can work only in the restructured
series of oracles suggested by him, but it does not work at all in the text itself as it stands
now.

The chiastic structure proposed by Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley has its
weakness in the fact that it is based solely on resemblance of themes without a convincing
terminological parallelism to support it. For example, in A and A' ("word spoken against
you") there is no occurrence of any single key term common to both sections. The
treatment of Israel as "you" appears in A' but not in A. It is far from certain that A (Amos
1:2) should be restricted to Israel only, as A' is (in Am. 3:2, children of Israel refers to
both Israel and Judah). On the contrary, Amos 1:2 seems to refer to all the nations that
appear in the series in Amos 1-2. Finally, the only common point between A (Amos 1:2)
and A' (Amos 3:2c) is that both speak of a divine judgment. Since the theme of a divine
judgment appears throughout the book, it can hardly constitute any ground to establish a
parallelism. Ward and Smalley's proposal can be questioned further on the basis of their
delimitation of the pericope. As already seen in the discussion of the topic,2 Amos 3:1-2
seems rather to belong to another literary unit and not to the series of the "Oracles Against
the Nations."

Paul R. Noble's structure is highly questionable in its suggestion that Amos 2:9-16
is not part of the oracle against Israel, and in its further subdivision of these verses in Amos
2:9-12, as addressing the "Classic" Israel, and Amos 2:13-16, as referring to all the eight
nations of Amos 1-2. His argument is based mainly on two points: (1) that the historical
recital of vss. 9-12 describes events that were part of the history of both Judah and Israel,

1Rudolph, Amos, 100-103; Hayes, Amos, 39; Andersen and Freedman, Amos,
141-144; Gary Smith, Amos, 19-21, 40-42, 76-79, 101-103, 118, 139-141, 160, 183,

2See above, 107-109.
hence they are not restricted only to the northern kingdom of Israel; (2) that Amos 2:13–16

can not be related with the oracle against Israel once the intervening material of vss. 9–12

had already closed the section that addressed Israel only and had widened the scope of the

prophetic words. Since these final verses make no reference to any nation, city, or

geographical location, contrary to what was commonly done before, it seems preferable to

understand them as applicable to all the nations of the series.

Noble's arguments cannot stand, however. More than once, OT prophets would

speak of the common past of "Classic Israel" when addressing only northern Israel or

Judah. Hosea, for example, would speak to Ephraim (northern Israel) and say that "like

grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first

season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-Peor, and consecrated themselves to

Baal" (Hos 9:10). There is no hint that Hosea was also addressing Judah in this oracle.
The same seems to be true in Hos 11:1, where the prophet speaks again to Ephraim

(northern Israel) and says "when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called

My son." In Hos 13:4–6, the prophet recalls again YHWH's gracious acts of the Exodus

in an oracle addressed to northern Israel. The same happens concerning Judah: prophets

would speak specifically to that nation and recall the common history of "Classic Israel"

cf., e.g., Isa 1:2; 5:1-7; 11:24-27; Jer 2:1-3; 7:21-34; 11:1-8; etc.). There seems to be no

reason to deny that in Amos 2:9-12 the prophet Amos could be speaking to northern Israel

only. This impression is ratified by the usage of the first and second persons in these

verses. It is evident that the "you" in these verses refers to the audience of the prophet,
those who were actually listening to him speak (i.e., people from northern Israel). As is

seen below, this direct dialogue between YHWH and the prophet's audience is quite

important in the specific structure of the oracle against Israel, and is one of the evidences

that this oracle was presented in the form of a lawsuit. The historical recital of Amos
2:9-11, therefore, belongs intrinsically to that oracle and brings it to a new dimension not observed in the previous ones.

Since the historical recital is not an "intervening material," but an important part of the structure of the oracle, it cannot be used as an argument to establish the view that the judgments of Amos 2:13-16 are not related to the indictments of Amos 2:6-8. Rather, as is seen below, the judgments pronounced in Amos 2:13-16 are intentionally cast against the background of YHWH's gracious acts in favor of Israel, and they form the final and conclusive section of the lawsuit. The fact that these judgments do not conform to the pattern used in the previous oracles is a poor argument against their connection with the oracle against Israel. It has already been remarked that variation and deviation of a common pattern are a frequent method in the OT to indicate climax, and that they are another important characteristic of the oracle against Israel.¹

The proposition of Moisés Chávez, to take the series as a pattern of seven (by considering Judah and Israel as one nation only, under the covenant stipulations), goes against the clear indication that they are taken as two separate entities in the series, by having two separate oracles. As for Charles Hauret's suggestion, the studies surveyed above on the structure of Amos 1-2 demonstrate that there is much more in the text than just a plain juxtaposition of oracles constructed in a similar fashion.

Shalom Paul's observation that the first six oracles are especially bound together by the concatenation of some specific catchwords touches an important element in the study of the structure of the pericope. The oracles against Judah and against Israel are in a certain sense isolated from the first six oracles, inasmuch as they are not interconnected with the others through some common catchwords. This can be taken as evidence that they play the role of climax in the series. First Judah would represent the climax in a series of seven.

¹Cf. above, 103-106.
only to be followed by the real climax, the oracle against Israel. This is a 7 + 1 pattern that, as James Limburg has demonstrated, is quite frequent in the book of Amos.¹

The problematic point in Paul’s suggestion is the connection between the oracle against Edom and the oracle against Ammon. Contrary to what occurs between the other oracles, there is no exact word or phrase linking these two. Paul resorts to a conceptual connection of crimes committed by the sword against women. Is this connection reasonable? Why should one accept a conceptual connection when the constant principle that applied for all the others was the linking through similar catchwords and phrases?

Paul’s suggestion of a conceptual linking seems to be much stronger when one pays more attention to the “sound” links in connection with the “meaning” links. As was already pointed out by Paul, there seems to be a connection between יָדָם (“by the sword”) and יָדָם (“his womenfolk”) in the oracle against Edom, and נָור (“pregnant women”) and נָור (“to extend”) in the oracle against Ammon. There are close ties in sound and form between יָדָם (“by the sword”) and נָור (“to extend”), suggesting that the act of extending his territories by Ammon was done by the sword, as Paul proposed. A close correspondence in sound and form, and even in meaning, can also be seen between יָדָם (“his womenfolk”) and נָר (“pregnant women”). Notice the usage of the labial ו ("w") and מ ("m") in the two passages (מ ["m"] just precedes נ ("w") as the last letter of the infinitive with the third masculine plural suffix נוים ["they ripped open"]), as well as lingual ר ("r"), and the gutturals ה ("h") and ה ("h"). More important still is the fact that נור (or נור) basically means womb, with the derivative meaning of mercy, compassion, woman, and that the crime of Ammon of ripping open pregnant women concerns directly the womb of these women. Hence, both “meaning” and “sound” links favor the proposition of Paul concerning the connection between the oracles against Edom and Ammon.

The application of Paul's suggestion on interconnection between the oracles through specific catchwords or phrases brings out an even more complex picture than the one he presented. Besides the linking of each oracle to the next one in a concatenous chain, which points to the patterns of 7 (or 6 + 1) and 7 + 1, as remarked above, there are other specific connections between the oracles that seem to indicate the usage of other patterns (3 + 4; 3 + 1; etc.) inside the series, as is seen below.

A pattern of 7 + 1 seems to come out also from the remarks of James M. Ward on the pairing of the oracles in groups of the same kind, A or B. In favor of Ward's proposal, one could remark further that the type A oracles share the concluding formula "says YHWH," while type B do not (Ward pointed it out but did not develop the idea much). Contrary to his interpretation, however, it seems rather difficult to defend that the oracle against Israel is to be considered as a B type (oracles with an emphasis on the divine indictment). The oracle against Israel does not only have a much enlarged indictment as compared with all the previous ones in the series, but it also possesses new elements that are not found elsewhere, as the historical review of vss. 9-11 and the dialogue interchange between God and Israel. It further has two oracular formulae "oracle of YHWH" that do not appear in any other oracle. In view of the profound difference between the oracle against Israel and the other oracles in the series of the B type (Tyre, Edom, Judah), it seems better to consider the last oracle of the series in Amos 1-2 as of a different type in itself, one that could be called the C type (to differentiate it from the A and B types proposed by Ward). The claim for the uniqueness of the oracle against Israel is supported by the study on the form of the oracles, to be undertaken next.\(^1\) One can see that while the first seven oracles reflect the form of an oracle of judgment, the oracle against Israel reflects the form of a lawsuit. By correcting Ward's suggestion in what concerns the oracle against Israel, one can perceive again a 7 + 1 pattern in the series, structured under the criterion of

\(^1\)Cf. below, 141-150.
grouping the oracles into pairs of the same kind (A or B). The pattern would be as following: AA-BB-AA-B-C.

Finally, Andrew E. Steinmann, Francis I. Andersen, and David N. Freedman have contributed an important insight into the structure of the pericope by remarking that more than one pattern can be perceived in the series. The pattern of the geographical progression seems to have been accounted for satisfactorily by Steinmann. The crisscross pattern is evident, with the focus on Judah and Israel. A 3+4 (or 3/3+1 = 4) pattern followed by a final oracle seems also to come up from the series through the fact that the first three oracles address the nations by their leading cities (Damascus, Gaza, Tyre) while the next four refer to them as national entities (Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah), before the series concludes with Israel itself. For the other patterns they pointed out (i.e., the balancing pairs of oracles of types A and B; and the 7+1 pattern), their value has already been considered in the previous paragraphs.

A question could be raised, however, if the multiplicity of patterns is a reality in the text, or is it the artificial result of modern principles of literary studies? On this concern, the conclusions of the study by Yitshaq Avishur, on the repetition of numbers that indicate wholeness (3, 7, and 10) in the OT and other ANE literature, seem illuminating. He noticed that when one of the two higher figures (7 or 10) is used as a pattern for wholeness, a repetition of the smaller number patterns (3 and 7 in case of 10; 3 in case of 7) usually appears in the passage. To these numbers of wholeness is usually added 1, as a way to indicate climax (3 + 1 = 4; 6 [3 + 3] + 1 = 7; 7 [3 + 4 (3 + 1)] + 1 = 8; 10 [3 + 3 + 3 + 1; or 3 + 7] + 1 = 11). Avishur supported his arguments by a large number of examples, both in biblical and nonbiblical literature.²

---

1 Avishur, “וזה” [Patterns], 2-3.
2 Ibid., 3-55.
Following Avishur's remarks, the interplay in Amos 1-2 seems to be between patterns of 3 and 7 in their many possible combinations. A unique connection can be perceived between the introductory verse of Amos 1:2 and the oracle against Judah in the reference to צְרִיָּהוֹ ("Jerusalem"). This repetition of "Jerusalem" could have been understood by the audience as a refrain indicating that the series reached its end with the oracle against Judah, which would represent a pattern of 7 or 6 + 1, only to hear the series continue with the oracle against Israel. A 3 + 1 pattern, for example, is used in the geographical progression, since the alternation is between three neighbors of Israel and three of Judah, to finally conclude with these two nations. A 3 + 1 pattern can be seen through the catchword צְרִיָּהוֹ ("Edom") that appears in four of the first six oracles of the series (Gaza, Tyre, Edom and Moab). The only two oracles in which Edom is not mentioned (Damascus and Ammon) are interconnected through the word צָרָה ("Gilead"). The 3 + 1 pattern can be perceived in the usage of the concluding formula אלֶה ה' ("says YHWH") which appears in four oracles (Damascus, Gaza, Ammon, Moab), and a pattern of 3 can be seen in the expression ...ויהיה אגרפנ ("I will destroy . . . from . . ."), which appears in the oracles against Damascus, Gaza, and Moab. A 3 + 1 pattern can also be discerned between the oracles against Damascus, Gaza, Ammon, and Moab, since they all have judgment pronounced directly against their kings or leaders ("the one holding the scepter" in the oracles against Damascus and Gaza; the "king" and "his princes" in the oracle against Ammon; the "judge" and "his princes" in the oracle against Moab). A 3 + 4 pattern (or 3 // 3 + 1 = 4) is seen in the way the nations are addressed (leading cities, or national entities), which would have its climax in Judah, but is then followed by a second climax with the oracle against Israel. A 6 (3 + 3) + 2 (1 + 1) pattern can be seen in the sequence of six oracles against foreign nations followed by 2 oracles against God's elected people, being that the first three nations are not related by blood with Judah and Israel while the last three are. A 6 (3 + 3) + 1 = 7 pattern can be discerned in the pairing of the

1Ibid., 12-13.
oracle of the same type, and in the concatenous chain that unites the first six oracles and leaves the seventh out. Here again Judah would be the first climax, only to be followed by the second and real climax of the series, the oracle against Israel, indicating therefore a 7 + 1 pattern. The 7 + 1 pattern is also evidenced by the usage of judgment form for the first seven oracles in the series followed by a lawsuit form for the oracle against Israel. A pattern 7 + 1 is also perceived in the series through the recurrence of elements that are common to all the oracles and which make of them a unified and organized series, that is: the introductory formula רַבַּה רְאָה יִבְרָאֵל ("thus says YHWH"); the introduction to the general indictment by כָּל [nation] אֶל הַשְּׁאָבָה ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/it"); the preposition לְפָנָי ("for, because") introducing the specific indictment; the announcement of judgment introduced by the theme of sending or setting fire—לָא רָאוָה ("I will send/set fire"), followed by the reference to the destruction of the fortifications—לָא הִמָּה ("and will consume the fortresses").

The Structure of the "Oracles Against the Nations"

On the basis of the remarks above, the overall structure of the passage seems to follow a 7 + 1 pattern, as evidenced by the sequence of elements common to them all, by the concatenous chain of catchwords, by the pairing of oracles of the same type, and by the form of the oracles in the series. In the combination of all these elements, an A-A'-B-B'-C-C'-D-E pattern can be proposed, in which the first six oracles are grouped into pairs (although interconnections exist between the pairs) with the oracles against Judah and Israel standing alone, as the first climax and as the real climax of the series, respectively. The structure can be schematized as follows:
Introduction (Amos 1:2): "YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem
He utters His voice"

A. Oracle Against Damascus (Amos 1:3-5): Type A
1) The introductory formula ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: "for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation]
and for four I will not restore/return her/it";
3) Indictment (one line): "for they threshed Gilead with sledges of iron";
4) The announcement of judgment (three lines/three divine actions and one
verb describing the consequence on the people):
   a. ...
   b. ...
   c. ...
5) Concluding formula: ("says YHWH").

A'. Oracle Against Gaza (Amos 1:6-8): Type A
1) The introductory formula ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: "for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation]
and for four I will not restore/return her/it";
3) Indictment (one line): "for they took into exile an entire population in order to
deliver them to Edom";
4) The announcement of judgment (three lines/three divine actions and one
verb describing the consequence on the people):
   a. ...
   b. ...
   c. ...
5) Concluding formula: ("says the Lord YHWH").

B. Oracle Against Tyre (Amos 1:9-10): Type B
1) The introductory formula ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: "for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation]
and for four I will not restore/return her/it";
3) Indictment (one line/two actions of Tyre):
   a1. ...
   a2. ...
4) The announcement of judgment (one line/one divine action):
B. Oracle Against Edom (Amos 1:11-12): Type B
1) The introductory formula מִלְחָמָה דְּמַיָּה ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה [nation] ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/him");
3) Indictment (two lines/four actions of Edom):
   a1. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("and destroyed his womenfolk");
   b1. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("and his wrath kept forever");
4) The announcement of judgment (one line/one divine action):
   a. ... מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("I will send fire . . . and it will consume the fortresses . . .");

C. Oracle Against Ammon (Amos 1:13-15): Type A
1) The introductory formula מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה [nation] ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/him");
3) Indictment (one line):
   a. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("for they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend their borders");
4) The announcement of judgment (three lines/one divine action, one line describing the situation of war, and one verb describing the consequence on the king and his princes):
   a. ... מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("I will kindle a fire . . . and it will consume the fortresses . . .");
   b. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("amid alarm in the day of battle, amid storm in the day of tempest");
   c. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ ("and their king will go into exile, he and his princes together");
5) Concluding formula: מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ ("says YHWH").

C. Oracle Against Moab (Amos 2:1-3): Type A
1) The introductory formula מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("thus says YHWH");
2) The general indictment: מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה [nation] ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/him");
3) Indictment (one line):
   a. מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("for he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime");
4) The announcement of judgment (three lines/one divine action, one line describing the situation of war, and two verbs describing the divine action against Moab's ruler/judge and her princes):
   a. ... מִלְכָּא תְֻלֹּשׁ טְרֹעְה ("I will send fire . . . and it will consume the fortresses . . .");
consume the fortresses . . . ”);

b. “and Moab will die amid uproar, amid alarm, amid sound of the trumpet”;

c. “I will destroy the judge from its midst, and I will slay all its princes with him”;

5) Concluding formula: ידוהי הנע (“says YHWH”).

D. Oracle Against Judah (Amos 2:4-5): Type B
1) The introductory formula ידוהי הנע (“thus says YHWH”);
2) The general indictment: הבשא אילע אבר אלע [nation] (“for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/it”);
3) Indictment (two lines/three actions of Judah) introduced by הב (“for”):
   a1. “for they despised the Law of YHWH”;
   a2. “and His statutes they did not keep”;
   b. “and their lies led them astray, the ones which their fathers went after”;
4) The announcement of judgment (one line/one divine action):
   a. “I will send fire . . . and it will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem”.

E. Oracle Against Israel (Amos 2:6-16): Unique Type
1) The introductory formula ידוהי הנע (“thus says YHWH”);
2) The general indictment: הבשא אילע אבר אלע [nation] (“for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/it”);
3) Indictment (four lines/seven verbs describing the actions of Israel):
   a. “for they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals”;
   b1. “they that pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the powerless”;
   b2. “(and turn aside the way of the humble)”;
   c1. “every man and his father go to the Girl”;
   c2. “(in order to profane My holy name)”;
   d1. “upon garments taken in pledge they stretch out beside every altar”;
   d2. “(and wine of those who have been fined they drink in the house of their gods)”;
4) Historical recital (lists five past actions of God in favor of the nation):
   a. . . . (“Yet I destroyed . . .”);
   b. . . . (“and I destroyed . . .”);
   c. . . . (“and I brought . . .”);
d. ... דַּעַּגְאָה ("and I led .");

Concluding question: אֶעְבְּדֵהוּ בַּעֲבוֹדָתָה ("is this not so, children of Israel?");

5) Oracular formula הַנּוֹרָא ("oracle of YHWH");

6) Final Indictment Against Israel (one line/two charges):
   a1. ... צִכְלְתָא אָכָל אֲשֶׁר-
       ("but you made the Nazirites drink wine")
   a2. ... אָכָל אֵלָה לָכֶם ("and unto the prophets you commanded them, saying:
       'Do not prophesy.");

7) Announcement of judgment (one divine action, followed by description
   of the result of the judgment in seven verbs):
   a. Divine action: ... יְהוָה אָכָל אֹז ("Thus, I am making it shake...");
   b. Description of judgment:
      b.1. ... בָּא אֶל אָכֶל ("flight will fail the swift");
      b.2. ... יְהוָה אָכָל אֵלָה ("the strong will not strengthen his power");
      b.3. ... לֹא אֶל אָכֶל ("the warrior will not save his life")
      b.4. ... לֹא אֶל אָכֶל ("the archer will not stand");
      b.5. ... לֹא אֶל אָכֶל ("the swift of foot will not save himself");
      b.6. ... לֹא אֶל אָכֶל ("the horseman will not save his life");
      b.7. ... לֹא אֶל אָכֶל ("the stout of heart among the warriors will flee
       naked on that day");

8) Oracular formula הַנּוֹרָא ("oracle of YHWH").

Inside this overall structure there are smaller patterns, like 3+1, 3+4, 6+1, as has
already been observed.

The Literary Form of the Oracles

The first seven oracles found in Amos 1:2-2:16 display, in general, the typical form
of an oracle of judgment. They all possess the three basic elements that characterize this
form: an opening formula (here יְהוָה אָכָל אֹז—"thus says YHWH"), followed by an
indictment (charge of guilt against an individual/group/nation), concluded by an
announcement of judgment.1

1Claus Westermann, Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech, trans. H. C. White
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 142-161, 169-176; Mays, Amos, 5; Wolff, Joel
and Amos, 92, 98, 135-139; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 213.

Since these oracles address foreign nations, they can also be classified more
specifically as belonging to the form of the "Oracles of Judgment Against Foreign
Nations." There had been discussion, however, if this later form should be considered as
an "oracle of judgment," since, for many scholars, when this kind of oracle was originally

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
As already seen before, the general structure of the first seven oracles of the series was constructed around five common elements:

1. The introductory formula הנר ירה יוהי ("thus says YHWH") marking the beginning of each oracle in Amos 1:3a, 6a, 9a, 11a, 13a; 2:1a, 4a

2. The general indictment: עיניו על [nation] הפרעה 
("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/him") in Amos 1:3b, 6b, 9b, 11b, 13b; 2:1b, 4b

3. A specific indictment, introduced also by the preposition על ("for, because") in Amos 1:3c, 6c, 9c, 11c, 13c; 2:1c, 4c

4. The announcement of judgment: the divine punitive acts are introduced by the theme of sending or setting fire — הנר ירה יוהי ("I will send/set fire"), which would destroy the fortifications of the respective nation — וינר ירה יוהי ("and will consume the fortresses") in Amos 1:4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 14-15; 2:2-3, 5

5. The concluding formula הנר ירה יוהי ("says YHWH") which appears in Amos 1:5, 8, 13; 2:3. The oracle against Philistia (Amos 1:6-8) has הנר יוהי הפרא ("Lord YHWH") instead

pronounced (either in a war situation or in the cult) they implied salvation for Israel through the destruction of her enemies. Westermann, e.g., classified the oracles in Amos 1:3-2:3 as belonging to the line of "salvation-speeches." He followed Ernst Würthwein, proposing that these oracles were pronounced earlier as a salvation prophecy by Amos, and were later transformed into judgment prophecy by the addition of the oracle against Israel (see Westermann, Basic Forms, 204-205; and Würthwein, "Amos-Studien," 35-40). Others, not recognizing such a dramatic transformation of an earlier oracle of salvation, proposed nevertheless that the prophet Amos has adapted an earlier form of oracle predicting destruction of foreign enemies (therefore salvation to Israel) into a new form of "oracle of judgment" in which Israel was also included (see Christensen, Prophecy and War, 71; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 147-148; Amsler, "Amos," 169-170; Gary Smith, Amos, 7; Paul, Amos, 10-11). Yair Hoffmann, however, has challenged the basic presupposition that an oracle of judgment against a foreign nation essentially implies salvation for Israel. He presented some examples of classical oracles of that type which do not have any connotation of salvation for the Israelite nation, but rather implied judgment for her also (see Yair Hoffmann, "From Oracle to Prophecy: The Growth, Crystallization and Disintegration of a Biblical Gattung," JNSL 10 [1982]: 79-80; also idem, תרבויות [Prophecies], i-iv, 114-117, 124-125, 129-131).

Despite the divergent views of the original purpose and character of the oracles against foreign nations, it is quite clear that Amos 1-2 speaks of judgment both for the nations and for Judah and Israel.
of only יוהו ("YHWH"). The concluding formula is absent in the oracles against Tyre (Amos 1:9-10), Edom (Amos 1:11-12) and Judah (Amos 2:4-5).

The form of the oracle against Israel differs significantly from the form of previous oracles in the series. Its internal structure was outlined as follows:

1. It starts with the introductory formula וְעַל יְהוָה ("thus says YHWH")—Amos 2:6a.

2. It is followed by the general indictment: [nation] 'בַּתּוֹ הָאֲכַלְכֵּיתָה ("for three rebellions/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not restore/return her/it")—Amos 2:6b.

3. It has the specific indictment, introduced by the preposition 'לָע ("for, because"), but that is much longer—Amos 2:6c-8. Four, or seven, charges were raised against Israel (the number depends if one counts them on the basis of the actions/verbs or not), while usually between one and three were made against the first seven nations.

4. It is the only one to have a historical recital of God's past actions in favor of the nation. This recital, in Amos 2:9-11, is built around the usage of the first person pronoun 'י ("I") preceded by a ' ("and/but"), and by the employment of verbs in the first person singular describing the divine actions in Israel's favor. It concludes with the question מַאֲמִית ("is this not so, children of Israel?").

5. The oracular formula יֵכַל יְהוָה ("oracle of YHWH") closes the historical recital in Amos 2:11.

6. Another specific indictment is raised against Israel in Amos 2:12, with one, or two (depending on the way one counts), new charge(s).

7. The announcement of judgment, Amos 2:13-16, is introduced by 'יוֹ הָאֲכַל ("thus, I") followed by the description of the divine judgment against Israel in Amos 2:13. Seven verbs develop further the description of such judgment in Amos 2:14-16.
8. The announcement of judgment closes with the oracular formula \( \text{oracle of YHWH} \) in Amos 2:16.

The new elements that appear in the oracle against Israel have been a source of much debate among scholars. Some have considered vss. 9-16 to be either an intrusive late addition to the original oracle, or a new literary unit in itself. Others, however, view the new elements either as a breaking of the established pattern, or as a simple expansion of the form observed in the first seven oracles, used to indicate that the prophet has reached the climax of the series, and is addressing his target audience.

In a close scrutiny of these specific elements, one does not need to consider them problematic, or a later expansion, either as a new section or a new oracle. Moreover, they seem to indicate much more than a simple expansion or break of the form used in the previous oracles. As Page H. Kelley and Walter Vogels have already recognized, the new

---

1 Wolfe (Meet Amos, 16-17) excluded vss. 9-16 from the oracle and added Amos 3:1-2 as a part of it; Snaith (Amos, 2:36, 42, 47-48, 51-52) considered the oracle against Israel to be comprised of only vss. 6-12, which he divided into three distinctive sections (vss. 6-7a; 7b-8; 9-12). For him, Amos 2:13-16 is a completely new oracle; for Joseph Blenkinsopp (A History of Prophecy in Israel: From Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983], 88-89, 96), the historical reproach (vss. 9-12) breaks the usually immediate link between the indictment (vss. 6-8) and the verdict (vss. 13-16); Coote (Amos, 11-2, 32-36, 58-59, 70-73) considered the historical recital (vss. 9-12) to be a later addition (Deuteronomist) to the original oracle of the prophet Amos; for Barstad ("Religious Polemics," 15) the section that starts in vs. 9 is relatively independent from Amos 2:6-8; Andersen and Freedman (Amos, 307, 324-327) regard the oracle against Israel as corresponding only to vss. 6-8. Vs. 9 onward starts a new series of oracles, which do not even belong to the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations," but to a series of oracles against the whole of Israel that starts in Amos 2:9 and goes down to Amos 3:8; Noble ("Literary Structure," 218-223) follows pretty closely the views of Andersen and Freedman, only that he still viewed Amos 2:9-16 as part of the series of oracles concerning the nations. For him, Amos 2:9-12 concerns the "Classic Israel," i.e., Judah and Israel, while Amos 2:12-16 is an oracle of judgment pronounced against all the eight nations addressed in the series.

2 See Kapelrud, Central Ideas, 30; Hauret, Amos et Osée, 32-33; Mays, Amos, 44; Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 97; Rudolph, Amos, 118-119; Vollmer, Geschichtliche Rückblicke, 23; Koch and Collaborators, Amos, 2:68; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 141-143; Amsler, "Amos," 179-180; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 21; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 90-91; Chisholm, Minor Prophets, 75; Gary Smith, Amos, 75; Paul, Amos, 76.
elements found in the oracle against Israel make it a good example of a "real lawsuit or trial."\(^1\)

The specific form used here corresponds to the lawsuit that involves the speech of the judge, and not the one, which is usually evoked when speaking of lawsuit form, that involves the speech of a plaintiff.\(^2\) Both lawsuit forms were described in detail by Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich in their study on the Psalms,\(^3\) and were conveniently outlined in English by Herbert B. Huffmon.\(^4\) The usage of the lawsuit form

---

\(^1\)Kelley, *Amos*, 41; Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant*, 85. Cf. Buis, "Formulaires," 410, who also recognized a lawsuit in Amos 2:5-16. These three authors, however, have not elaborated much on the precise form of the lawsuit found in the oracle against Israel. As will be seen, the form here in Amos does not involve the speech of a plaintiff, which is the most common form of lawsuit evoked by biblical scholars, but rather the more forgotten form of a lawsuit built around the speech of a judge.

Some scholars have seen the entire series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" as a lawsuit (cf., e.g., B. Genser, "The Rib- or Controversy-Pattera in Hebrew Mentality," *VTS* 3 [1955]: 129, 133; Rust, *Covenant*, 43; and Niehaus, "Amos," 318-319). The study of the form of the oracles in the series contradicts such a view. Only the oracle against Israel possesses the elements of a lawsuit, while the others follow the form of an oracle of judgment.

Others have recognized a lawsuit only in the historical recital of Amos 2:9-12 (cf., e.g., Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 326; and Paul, *Amos*, 87). This view is countered by the fact that the lawsuit seems to correspond to the entire oracle against Israel, for only then all the elements pertaining to that form (judge’s lawsuit) can be perceived.

\(^2\)In discussing Amos 3:9-12, Lawrence Sinclair ("Courtroom Motif," 352) pointed out the usage of the judge’s lawsuit form in the book of Amos. Jeffrey Niehaus ("Amos," 318) introduced the discussion on covenant lawsuit in Amos by stressing mainly this specific lawsuit form.


\(^4\)Hebert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959): 285-286. The forms are as follows:

**First Form: Plaintiff**

1. A Description of the Scene of Judgment
2. The Speech of the Plaintiff
   A. Heaven and Earth Are Appointed Judges
   B. Summons to the Defendant (or Judges)
   C. Address in the Second Person to the Defendant
      1. Accusation in Question Form to the Defendant
involving a judge would explain the absence of the appeals addressed to natural elements, like heaven and earth, to serve as judges or witness. The lawsuit in Amos 2:6-16 could then be outlined in the following way:

I. Description of the Scene of Judgment: Amos 1:2

II. The Speech of the Judge: Amos 2:6-16

A. Address to the Defendant

1. Accusation: Amos 2:6-8 (four/seven transgressions)
2. Historical Recital: Amos 2:9-11a (God's goodness as revealed in Exodus-Conquest-divine guidance)

3. Question and Oracular Formula: Amos 2:11b

B. Pronouncement of Guilt: Amos 2:12

C. Sentence: Amos 2:13-16

Questions could be raised concerning the description of the judgment scene, as presented above. Why should Amos 1:2, a verse so far removed from Amos 2:6-16, be taken as the introduction of the lawsuit? The procedure seems justified, however, by the

2. Refutation of the Defendant's Possible Arguments

3. Specific Indictment

Second Form: Judge

I. A Description of the Scene of Judgment

II. The Speech by the Judge

A. Address to the Defendant

1. Reproach (based on the accusation)
2. Statement (usually in the third person) that the Accused Has No Defense

B. Pronouncement of Guilt

C. Sentence (in second or third person)

Appeals to natural elements are very common in the form involving a plaintiff party, and it became a kind of standard feature in the identification of lawsuit forms for some scholars. By concentrating on the lawsuit form involving a plaintiff, these scholars, however, seem to have completely overlooked the second form (involving a judge) in their study of the lawsuit form in the prophets. An example of it can be seen in Julien Harvey's study in which he makes no reference to it, as well as any reference to lawsuit forms in the book of Amos. Cf. Julien Harvey, "Le 'Rib-Pattern', requisitoire prophétique sur la rupture de l'alliance," *Bib* 43 (1962): 172-196.
fact that by introducing the whole series of the "Oracles Against the Nations," Amos 1:2 is also the introductory reference to which each oracle refers back.2

Another question could concern the pronouncement of guilt. Is Amos 2:12 a "pronouncement of guilt," or is it only another indictment to be added to the list already mentioned in Amos 2:6-8? It seems clear that the charges raised in Amos 2:12 are to be taken as part of the divine indictment pronounced against Israel. But they appear to imply a little more than just that. The charges in Amos 2:12 are set in contrast with the final reference to the divine providence in favor of Israel, found in Amos 2:11a (the raising of prophets and Nazirites among the people). If God, in His grace for Israel, has raised Nazirites and prophets from among the children of Israel, Israel, on its side however, has obliged the Nazirites to drink wine (obliging them thereby to break their Nazirite vows, cf. Num 6:1-6) and has forbidden the prophet to prophesy. These actions seem to symbolize the state of utter rebellion against YHWH reached by the nation. They persecuted those who wanted to dedicate their lives to YHWH, the Nazirites, and interdicted YHWH's commissioned representatives, the prophets, to speak to them, rejecting thereby His

1On Amos 1:2, as the introduction to the "Oracles Against the Nations," see above, 98-102.

2Meir Weiss (Bible from Within, 219) argued against any notion that Amos 1:2 is describing a judgment scene. In his analysis of the verse, he proposed that it speaks about YHWH's revelation, and not of judgment at all. Weiss's analysis, while bringing forth interesting ideas concerning this verse, seems to be too narrow and a bit contradictory in itself. He stressed too much the specifics of Amos 1:2 and its parallel passages (Joel 4:16, and Jer 25:30), at the expense of the many parallels and explicit connections between these passages, which outnumber the differences. Weiss, e.g., did recognize that the imagery in Joel and Jeremiah refers to a divine judgment against the nations or against Israel (ibid., 229, 236-237), but denied any notion of judgment in Amos 1:2 (ibid., 230, 238-240).

In the discussion on the relationship between Amos 1:2 and the oracles of Amos 1:3-2:16 (cf. above, 98-102), it was seen that there are many and strong connections (judgment against the nations, similar metaphor, identical terminology and themes, etc.) between the passages in Amos, Joel, and Jeremiah. Should the exegete overlook these connections, and stress only their specific differences? It is true that each passage has its own context, and deals with some specific problems, but does it imply a denial of their interconnection, or at least of their value in shedding light upon each other? When specific imagery, like that of Amos 1:2, occurs so few times in OT, is it really wise to overlook its parallels elsewhere in OT, and analyze it only on the basis of its inner context, as Weiss proposes?
sovereignty over them. This amounts to the ultimate rebellion that leads to the
pronouncement of the judgment against the nation. The culminating character of the
charges in Amos 2:12 is also evidenced by the structure of 7+1, which abounds in the
book. The prophet brings against Israel seven charges in vss. 6-8, and culminates with the
last one in vs. 12. It corresponds well to a final declaration of guilt; the utter rejection of
YHWH's lordship was made against the full knowledge of all that God has done for Israel
(as implied in the question "Is this not so, children of Israel?" of vs. 11).

The mechanics of the lawsuit help one to understand well the form observed in the
oracle against Israel, and elucidate the reason why this oracle is different from all the
others. In a purposeful way, the prophet pronounced oracles of judgment against the first
seven nations, but engaged himself in a lawsuit with those who were listening to him, the
people of northern Israel (the pattern 7+1 again). YHWH enters into a dialogue with Israel
(notice the usage of first and second person pronouns and verbs in vss. 9-13, a fact that
indicates a dialogue). This dialogue (in form of lawsuit) shows that northern Israel was the
target of the series, for it was to them that YHWH was speaking.

Elements of the Covenants from the Structure
and Literary Form of the "Oracles Against
the Nations" of Amos 1-2

The study of the literary structure of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2
evidenced the general pattern of 7+1 for the overall structure of the passage, as well as a
number of other patterns that combine different aspects of that series of oracles. The
structure of the pericope has its climax in a sweeping lawsuit against northern Israel, and
evidences that this last oracle of the series was the main concern of the prophetic address.

1Cf. the discussion below, 274-275.

2Two charges, to make the Nazirites to drink wine and forbid the prophets to
 prophesy, but which can be taken as referring to the same basic problem: The utter rejection
 of YHWH's ways and of His Lordship over them.
The usage of the lawsuit form in the series points unmistakably to the OT covenants, more specifically to the Mosaic covenant. The very elements that transform the oracle against Israel from an oracle of judgment into a lawsuit are the evidences of it. The historical recital of Amos 2:9-11 is clearly a reminiscence of the traditional historical prologue to the OT covenantal formulations. Indeed, such a historical recital (cast in the form of a divine direct speech using the pronoun ע"ה ["I"], reminding Israel of YHWH's action of taking them out of Egypt, the guidance in the wilderness, and the gift of the land of Canaan) usually appears in the OT inside passages dealing with the covenant (e.g., Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6; 8:14-16; Josh 24:17-18; Jer 11:4-8; 31:32; 34:13; Hos 2:16-17[14-15]; 12:10-14[9-13]; 13:4-5).

The historical recital sets the lawsuit within the context of covenant, indicating that the lawsuit here in Amos is what is usually called a "covenant lawsuit" or "covenant rib." This historical recital also shows striking similarities in form and function with the historical prologue of the Hittite Suzerain treaties, and therefore seems to indicate that the prophetic lawsuit reflects a lawsuit of the vassal type, cf. Harvey, "Rib-Pattern," 184-196; idem, Le plaidoyer prophétique contre Israël après les ruptures de l'alliance. Étude d'une formule littéraire de l'Ancient Testament, Studia, no. 22 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 85-169; Weinfeld, "Ancient Near Eastern Patterns," 187-188; Niehaus, Amos," 318-319.

See also the discussion on the close parallels between the OT covenant and the Hittite treaties in Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 58-70; idem, "Covenant," 714-715; Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1180-1188; Hillers, Covenant, 29-71; Buis, Notion d'alliance, 105-120; Weinfeld, "Covenant," 1014-1018; idem, "ת"ם יבירה," 266-269.

Some scholars, like Hans M. Bartad, do not recognize any connection between the prophetic "lawsuit" and the OT covenant (cf. Bartad, "Religious Polemics," 65). For them, the striking similarities between the prophetic message and the Deuteronomic covenant theology are probably due to the fact that, in several aspects, the prophets were the forerunners of the Deuteronomists. Hence, it was the Deuteronomists who incorporated the elements characteristic of the prophetic preaching in their theology of covenant, and not vice-versa. This view, however, can hardly explain how the preaching of the eighth-century prophets and the theology of the so-called "Deuteronomists" are characterized by some specific elements that are characteristic only of treaties that preceded them by hundreds of years. The historical prologue or recital with its appeal for gratitude in view of the Suzerain's grace and favor is one of these elements. It is a basic element of the Mosaic covenant, and can be observed elsewhere only in the Hittite treaties of the Late
The deeds of Israel are contrasted with YHWH's merciful acts in history that were the very foundation of the existence of that nation, and of her relationship and responsibility towards Him. As George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion remarked, this recall of the divine deeds in the history of Israel "presupposes that a covenant relationship had existed and was now being abrogated by the behavior of those subject to it," for:

the most constant (and specifically biblical) motif shared by the old covenant and the later prophets is the inseparable link between the receipt of past benefits and the consequent obligations binding upon the recipients. The rib form is entirely dependent upon this motif. Insofar as it makes appeal to one's sense of gratitude and obligation as a basis for (re-)establishing a covenant bond, the rib exhibits an ideological matrix similar to that of the LB suzerainty treaties. 1

Furthermore, it is seen in chapter 5 that the very nature of the acts for which Israel was indicted and of the judgments pronounced against that nation evidence the covenantal character of the prophetic lawsuit of Amos 2:6-16. In Amos, as well as in other prophetic books, YHWH summons "His people to court and accuses them of having broken His covenant—the Law!" As for the judgments, they "are viewed as curses for breaking the covenant." 2

Summary

The study of the limits of the pericope known as "Oracles Against the Nations" showed that this literary unit encompasses the verses found in Amos 1:2-2:16. The confirmation that Amos 1:2 and 2:6-16 are part of this prophetic pericope was seen to be of essential importance to the discussion on the presence of covenant elements in that series of Bronze Age, hence some five to seven hundred years before the classical prophets and the "Deuteronomistic" theologians. The historical prologue is not part of the treaties of the first millennium B.C. See the discussion of this issue in Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1180-1188; and also in Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?" BAR 21, no. 2 (1995): 53-56, who also shows that the Patriarchal covenants of Genesis find their parallel only in treaties of the early second millennium B.C.

1Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1191.

oracles, since these verses are the essential components of the covenant lawsuit raised by YHWH against northern Israel.

The study of the pericope evidenced a multiplicity of literary patterns inside an overall structure of $7 + 1$. This literary structure was built into a crescendo intended to reach its climax in the oracle against Israel. This structure shows that northern Israel was all along the goal of the prophetic speech in Amos 1-2. This intentional movement toward a climax is also evidenced by the literary form of the oracles that compose this pericope. While the first seven oracles possess the typical form of an oracle of judgment, the final oracle of the series was built into a sweeping divine lawsuit against the nation of northern Israel. This lawsuit inserts the final oracle of the series into a deep covenantal context, and becomes one of the strongest evidences for the usage of OT covenant elements in the first two chapters of Amos.
CHAPTER 5

ELEMENTS OF THE OT COVENANTS IN THE TERMINOLOGY, PHRASEOLOGY, AND THEMES OF THE "ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS" OF AMOS 1-2

This chapter focuses on the analysis of words, phrases, and themes in the "Oracles Against the Nations" which have been claimed to or may convey elements that pertain to the OT covenants. This analysis is structured around the three entities of that series of oracles: God, the prophet, and the eight nations that were addressed. The terminology, phraseology, and themes that are related to these entities are investigated and their possible relationship to the OT covenants evaluated.

God

Most of the book of Amos is cast in the form of direct speech, in which God speaks to His people. It is God who actually pronounces judgment, calls people to repentance, makes promises for the future. YHWH is present from beginning to end in the book and every prophetic message is connected to Him.

The centrality of the person of God in Amos is also expressed by the constant occurrence of divine names throughout the book. Ten different names or titles are used for God in the Massoretic text of Amos, for a total of eighty-six occurrences of them in the book. More than anybody else, the person of God is being addressed and referred to in Amos.
YHWH

God is referred to primarily by the divine name of יְهوָה ("YHWH"), which appears eighty-one times. In fifty-two occurrences, it stands alone, while in twenty-nine, it appears in compound names.¹ The high frequency of the name YHWH in itself conveys the importance of that name for the message of the book. Indeed, the divine name יְוהֵיה ("YHWH") not only occurs frequently throughout the book, but it also actually opens the prophetic message in Amos 1:2, closes it in Amos 9:15, and constitutes the very center of the entire literary structure of the book in the declaration יְהֹוָה ("YHWH is His Name!") of Amos 5:8.²

The divine name יְוהֵיה ("YHWH") is of crucial importance for the study of the "Oracles Against the Nations." It occurs fifteen times as such (Amos 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 2:1, 3, 4[2x], 6, 11, 16), and once in the compound name יְהֹוָהוֹ ("the Lord YHWH") in Amos 1:8. It opens the series of the oracles in Amos 1:2, and closes it in Amos 2:16. Every aspect of the series is essentially related to Him.

For some, like Carl G. Howie, J. A. Motyer, William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, Frederich W. Bush, Thomas Edward McComiskey, and Jeffrey Niehaus, Amos's frequent usage of the name YHWH is one of the evidences that the prophet was using the early Israelite covenant traditions in his preaching to northern Israel. The name YHWH points back to the Exodus context, and speaks of God's redemptive and covenantal

¹Dempster ("Lord," 175) presented the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52x</td>
<td>יְהֹוהֵיה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19x</td>
<td>יְהֹוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x</td>
<td>יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x</td>
<td>יְהֹוָהוֹ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>יְהוָה יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>יְהוָה יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86x</td>
<td>יְהוָה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²See above, 79-88, for the discussion on the literary structure of the book. See also de Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 176; and Dempster, "Lord," 184.
concerns. YHWH is the God bound with Israel by a covenant. YHWH is His covenant name, and it represents the character by which He dealt and continues to deal with His people.1

Others, however, have expressed a very different view on the subject. For Hans Walter Wolff, when Amos speaks of YHWH, he avoids all theological concept. The prophet makes no reference to YHWH's faithfulness, righteousness, covenant, or law. Amos does not make use of the Yahwistic traditions. He is laconic and quite independent from the traditions of the salvation history. When Amos does refer to these traditions (e.g., the destruction of the Amorites in Amos 2:9, the election from all the families of the earth in Amos 3:2, and the bringing up from Egypt in Amos 9:7), he does so only with the sole purpose of demonstrating Israel's guilt, and not to develop any theological elaboration on YHWH. The prophet Amos is much more strongly determinated by his own personal experience with God than by any Yahwistic tradition. The prophet's words are a new message, which he believed he had received directly from God.2

Klaus Koch, on his side, has proposed a more attenuated view. For him, YHWH in Amos is closely associated with many traditions of the Israelite salvation history. The Exodus, the gift of the land, the Davidic kingdom, for example, are directly related to Him in the book. But there is no reference to the covenant in Sinai, or to any divine law.3

Gary Smith did recognize some covenant elements in the book of Amos, but as for the divine name YHWH, it is not connected to the covenant in the book. In Amos, YHWH is connected to the title "God of Hosts" (8 times) which is identical to the appellation "YHWH of Hosts" that appears in Amos 9:5, and 267 other times in the Old Testament.

---


The connection here is with the war motif (YHWH is the commander-in-chief of military forces, YHWH is great in power and might), and not with the covenant.¹

For Rolland E. Wolfe, Amos reversed the popular understanding and views on YHWH. Up to the time of the prophet, the Hebrew people believed that YHWH was intimately related to them through the unbreakable covenant made at Sinai, and through the divine promises made to Abraham. They were the chosen people. Amos swept all this away when he proclaimed that the relationship of the nation with YHWH rested on moral principles. For Amos, the idea that YHWH had chosen the Hebrew people as His favorites was an Israelite illusion. Whatever people fulfills His ethical demands is YHWH’s chosen people. YHWH shows no partiality among the nations; He displays equal solicitude for all.²

Is the divine name YHWH in Amos 1-2 related to covenant or not? Are there any covenant elements in the words, phrases, or themes that are associated with the divine name יְהֹוָה (“YHWH”) in that series of oracles? What connections does the divine name יְהֹוָה (“YHWH”) evoke in the “Oracles Against the Nations”?

YHWH, the Roaring Lion, the Thundering God, and the Prophetic Word

The first statement about יְהֹוָה (“YHWH”) in the “Oracles Against the Nations” is found in Amos 1:2:

"וַיֹּאמֵר יְהוָה רֹאשָׁה מִזְיְנָה וְמִזְיָנָה / זֹעַת בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / וּרְאֵבָה בָּנָי מִזְיֶה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / "וַיֹּאמֵר יְהוָה רֹאשָׁה מִזְיָנָה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / "וַיֹּאמֵר יְהוָה רֹאשָׁה מִזְיָנָה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / וְנִשְׁמַח בָּנָי מִזְיָנָה / מֵעַבֵּד לְבָנָי תִּמְנֵה / ("and he said: YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice, the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither and the top of the Carmel dries up")

¹Gary Smith, Amos, 10.
²Wolfe, Meet Amos, 67-68.
This prophetic statement highlights three facts about YHWH: First, His action—YHWH "roars" (אַחֲרָה) and "utters His voice" (יְרַע); second, the location from which He is acting—"from Zion" (הַיְרוּשָׁלַיִם), "from Jerusalem" (כִּיְרוֹעָה); third, the consequence of His action: "the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither and the top of the Carmel dries up." It is seen in the study that follows that this statement on YHWH, which opens the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2, encapsulates in itself all the other elements that are related to YHWH in that series.

This verse has been the subject of much discussion. Some scholars consider it to be simply a metaphor of judgment. It is commonly argued that the imagery of a roaring lion, or of a blasting thunder, evokes the idea of God executing, or about to execute, an act of judgment. Therefore the metaphor is well fitted to introduce the message of the prophet Amos.¹

Others have stressed that Amos 1:2 represents basically a standard cultic phraseology commonly used in hymns and in execration oracles in the temple of Jerusalem. They usually quote parallel language found in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 18:14[13] and 50:1-6), in Joel 4[3]:16, Jer 25:10, and in the Egyptian execution texts.²

Others see in it a description of a theophany of YHWH as a divine warrior, whether inside the context of the Israelite cult or not. Parallels from some OT theophanies and from ANE mythological literature are frequently presented in support of this interpretation. In these parallels the voice of God, or of a deity, is compared to the roar of a lion, and/or to

¹Snaith, Amos, 2:11; ibid., Amos, Hosea, 12-13; Kelley, Amos, 30; Rudolph, Amos, 116; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 31; Martin-Achard and Re'em, God's People, 13-14; Hayes, Amos, 63-64; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 126; Finley, Amos, 131; Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 13.

²Bentzen, "Ritual Background," 95-96; Watts, Vision and Prophecy, 77; Kapelrud, Central Ideas, 17-20; Georges Farr, "The Language of Amos, Popular or Cultic?" VT 16 (1966): 313-314; Hans Gottlieb, "Amos und Jerusalem," VT 17 (1967): 452-453. The connection with the Egyptian execration texts is proposed not on the basis of similar expressions found in these texts, but rather on the reasoning that Amos 1:2 is directly related with the rest of the "Oracles Against the Nations," which, in its turn, has many parallels with the execrations from Egypt.
the noise of a thunder, that produces devastation in the cosmos. Some scholars, however, have emphasized the divine-warrior imagery in the verse without stressing it as a theophany.

---


Among the theophanies in the OT, Deut 33:2, Judg 5:4-5, Ps 68:8-9[7-8], Mic 1:3-4, and Hab 3:3-15 are usually referred to. Among the parallels in the ANE literature mention is made of such examples as:


5. A Sumerian hymn to King Ur-Ninurta (CT xxxvi:42-43) in which the king is described with attributes of a god: "Against your enemies you roar from on high like a storm; may your thunder, like a heavy cloud, crush the country which rebels against you." Cf. A. Falkenstein, "Sumerische religiöse Texte," *ZA* 49 (1950): 108-109.

---

2Polley, *Amos*, 58; Chisholm, *Minor Prophets*, 77. Polley highlights the vocabulary of the entire series of the "Oracles Against the Nations" that indicates the context of war (e.g., "shouting" [1:4; 2:2], "tempest" [1:14], "whirlwind" [1:14], "sound
There are those who see in Amos 1:2 only a liturgical introduction to the book of Amos. For them, this verse was added to the book much later as an overture to the liturgical reading of the Amos traditions. By confessing the devastating force of YHWH's voice, the verse sums up the message of the prophet at the same time that it provides a grand opening to the reading of the prophetic text.¹

Douglas Stuart proposed that Amos 1:2 should be taken as a "curse announcement," i.e., an announcement that a curse (or curses) of the Mosaic covenant is now about to be enforced by YHWH via the type of punishment that the curse calls for. The imagery of the lion suggests that the covenant curse of harm from wild animals (Lev 26:22; Deut 32:24) was to be carried out by YHWH Himself. Stuart sees also a futility curse (Lev 26:16, 20; Deut 28:20, 29-31, 33, 38-41) in the reference to the thunder of YHWH's voice. Thunder is usually related to rain, a blessing, but the result of YHWH's thunder is drought and not rain. The drought presented in the verse is also another covenant curse in itself (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22-24).²

A number of other scholars maintain that Amos 1:2 must be understood primarily in its relationship with Amos 3:8, the other passage in the book that refers to YHWH roaring as a lion. In this context, Amos 1:2 is a reference to God's revelation. The stress is on His voice, on the act of communicating, of speaking, of letting His voice be heard in order to communicate a message, the message of the coming judgment. The metaphors used for YHWH's revelation (roar, thunder, drought) are intended in order to provoke a deep sense of trumpet" [2:2], judgment by fire [1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5]). Chisholm argues that ancient rulers would often compare themselves to a raging lion in order to emphasize their courage and prowess on the battlefield. The imagery of a roaring lion would then picture YHWH as a mighty warrior-king who is capable of annihilating His enemies.


²Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 300-301.
reaction on the part of those who hear His voice, for YHWH here speaks not with "a still small voice" but with violence, fury, and wrath.¹

What does Amos 1:2 actually mean? What are the elements related to YHWH that this verse evokes?

The verb רָעָה ("to roar") usually refers to the roaring of a lion (Judg 14:5; Ps 22:14[13]; Isa 5:29; Ezek 22:25), but is also used in the OT as a metaphor for the action of YHWH, of foes (Ps 74:4), and of a thunder (Job 37:4). The verbal expression בָּרָעָה יְרוּע ("to utter a voice"), in the OT, appears many times in the context of a thunderstorm, as a reference to a thunder (2 Sam 22:14; Pss 18:14[13]; 77:18; 104:7), and as such it can be translated as "to thunder." But it is also used in order to convey the idea of uttering one's voice loudly, with no connection whatever with a thunderstorm (Prov 1:20; 8:1; Jer 48:34). Both expressions, רָעָה ("to roar") and בָּרָעָה יְרוּע ("to utter a voice/to thunder"), are used synonymously in the OT, as in Jer 2:15 (reference to a lion's roar) and in Job 37:4 (reference to thunder).

In the book of Amos, these verbs appear again in chap. 3. In vs. 4 of this chapter, the prophet asks two rhetorical questions built around the imagery of a roaring lion. The actions of the lion are expressed both by רָעָה ("to roar") and by בָּרָעָה יְרוּע ("to utter a voice"). The reference here is only to the roar of a lion. Amos asks if a lion ever roars (רָעָה) in the forest if he has no prey, and if he ever cries out (בָּרָעָה יְרוּע) from his den if he has not caught something. Three points are underlined in this verse: the subject (the lion) and his action ("roar" רָעָה, "cries out" בָּרָעָה יְרוּע); the location in which the action is performed ("in the

¹Neher, Amos, 10-14; Myers, Amos, 104; Heschel, Prophets, 29, 437; Coote, Amos, 59-60; Craigie, Twelve Prophets, 126; Weiss, Bible from Within, 206, 219; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 85-86; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 219; Gary Smith, Amos, 26-27.
forest" [ץֹּרַן], "from his den" [בָּרֹעַ], and the reason for his action (he has a prey [יְתָן], he has caught something [צֶּלֶפֶה]).

The imagery in vs. 4 comes very close to the metaphor in Amos 1:2. The presentation of the subject, his action, and the place of his action parallels that of Amos 1:2. In this sense, YHWH in Amos 1:2 can be understood as a lion roaring from His dwelling place. But no reason is stressed in Amos 1:2 for the divine action, as it is in Amos 3:4 for

The circumstances described in the verse have been interpreted in different ways. Some scholars consider that the lion's roar comes only after he has killed the prey. One of their main arguments for this is the contention that lions hunt silently, and never roar until they have made their catch in order to not frighten away the prey. Cf. Mays, Amos, 60-61; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 185; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 29; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 324; Hayes, Amos, 125; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 148.

Others, on the contrary, maintain that vs. 4 speaks only of a pouncing lion that is about to catch its prey. It is usually argued that it is a well-established fact that the lion gives a loud roar only when it pounces over its victim in order to paralyze it with terror. Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 10, Minor Prophets, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 260-261; Soggin, Amos, 58; Gary Smith, Amos, 108.

Others assert that the verse speaks of a lion roaring in two different circumstances. First, he roars in the forest when he has located and confronted his prey and he is pouncing upon it to make a kill. Second, he roars from his den when he is consuming, or has already consumed, the prey. Cf. van Hoonacker, Petits prophètes, 226; Harper, Amos and Hosea, 69-70; Snaith, Amos, 2:58; Neher, Amos, 17; Cripps, Amos, 153-154; Hammershaimb, Amos, 58; Hauret, Amos et Osée, 45; Paul, Amos, 110.

Any way one takes it, it is good to bear in mind that in the OT lions roar before, during, and after the kill, or at any other time, as Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman have remarked. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 395. Lions roar when they are hungry (Ps 104:20-21), in confronting a prey (Judg 14:5), before they seize a prey (Is 5:29), while tearing a prey (Ezek 22:25), and after tearing their kill (Ps 22:14 [13]). If the behavior of lions at the time of Amos was similar to that of the African lion of today, the biblical picture is quite consistent. African lions roar in many and different circumstances as: when walking alone; while demarcating territory; as a way to communicate between themselves; at mating; when feeding, or before feeding; after high contentious encounters; occasionally before attacking in order to cause a stampede; just after having caught a prey; or even for no evident reason whatsoever. Cf. C. A. W. Guggisberg, Simba: The Life of the Lion (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1963), 65-67, 110-111; George B. Schaller, The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator-Prey Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 104-110; Judith A. Rudnai, The Social Life of the Lion: A Study of the Behavior of Wild Lions (Panthera Leo Masaica [Newmann]) in the Nairobi National Park, Kenya (Wallingford, PA: Washington Square East Publishers, 1973), 55-58.
the lion's. Rather, Amos 1:2 speaks of the result of the action of YHWH, and not of its reason. When YHWH roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem, "the pastures of the shepherds mourn/dry up and the top of the Carmel withers."

The stress on the result, instead of on the reason, appears also in Amos 3, when the prophet fully develops the metaphor of YHWH as a roaring lion in vs. 8:

("the lion has roared who will not fear the Lord YHWH has spoken who will not prophesy?")

In Amos 3:8, the parallel drawn between YHWH and the roaring lion is focused on the result of roaring. When a lion roars, he produces fear; when YHWH speaks, He produces prophecy. The shift from reason to result stresses the point that there is an intention for YHWH to roar. This intention was already made plain in vs. 7 of this same chapter: "for the Lord YHWH will do nothing, without revealing His secret to His servants, the prophets." The divine purpose in doing so is not that the prophets acquire knowledge of the divine actions for their own sake, but rather that they might announce them loudly and clearly. The prophetic voice is YHWH's roar, the roar of the approaching divine lion.

By understanding Amos 1:2 on the basis of the use of the same metaphor in Amos 3, there are some clear resemblances, as well as differences, between YHWH and a roaring lion. Like the lion, YHWH roars mightily from His dwelling place. But unlike it, YHWH roars not because He is doing or has already performed His destructive act, rather the contrary: YHWH roars well before He does something. He roars in order to alarm those whom He will destroy. YHWH roars through the prophetic voice, announcing His secrets through the instrumentality of the prophets.

An organic link exists then between the metaphor and the prophetic message. In "Oracles Against the Nations," the roar of YHWH (... יְהוָה מְעַמֵּל יְהוָה [YHWH roars from
Zion ...]) would actually be what He says through the prophet in the verses that follow (the ... רדס י"ע ["thus says YHWH ... "]), hence the entire series of oracles. In this sense, YHWH is not at all like a roaring lion that is attacking or has already attacked his prey.

YHWH roars well before He attacks His victims; He lets them know He is coming. He is not a pouncing lion, nor a lion who is devouring its prey, but rather an "announcing" lion, who roars mightily and loudly through the prophetic word, and lets the prey know well in advance that He is coming, and approaching with sure steps.

The imagery of YHWH roaring as a lion also appears in Hos 11:10, in a prophetic oracle concerning Israel's restoration from exile. In vs. 10, YHWH roars (י"ע) as a lion when He comes to save His people. The imagery seems to imply judgment upon the nations (Assyria and Egypt are especially highlighted in the passage) as YHWH is saving and gathering His dispersed people among them. The result of God's action is a complete change of attitude on the part of Israel. From walking away from YHWH and worshiping idols (vs. 2) they will walk after YHWH (vs. 10), an idiom that expresses faithful service and worship of God. Their disdain and indifference for God's merciful acts in the Exodus and in their history (vss. 1, 3-4) will become a fearful and humble submission to YHWH (expressed by the verb רדס ["to tremble"], vss. 10-11). They who were dispersed into exile (vss. 5-7) will come out and be restored to their own homes (vss. 11).

In Job 37:4 one finds another reference to the roar of God. The passage, however, does not refer to God as YHWH but as El (א"ל ["God"]), and therefore is not as directly associated with the present discussion as the passages above. It should, nevertheless, be taken into consideration, since it is the only other passage in the OT, besides the ones already mentioned and the passages in Joel 4:16 and Jer 25:30 (to be discussed below), that refers to God as roaring (verb י"ע). In it, Elihu speaks of the voice of El that "thunders" (י"ע) after a lightning, when He "thunders" (י"ע) His voice in the midst of a storm. The verb י"ע ("to roar") comes here not as a reference to a roaring lion, but to thunder in a
thunderstorm. The imagery of a powerful storm, with its lightnings and thunders, is used to describe the might and glory of God and His powerful acts in nature (vss. 5-21). Such divine glory and power are especially referred to in the context of God's rulership over humankind ("peoples/nations" [כָּנָנִי]). Previously, in Job 36:31-33, God was presented as One providing for men's needs, and also as judging them for their iniquity. Then, it is stated that the contemplation of God's majestic acts of judgment produces fear and awe in the human being (הָאֹאַר הָאָרָעָה "Indeed, at this my heart trembles and leaps out of its place"), Job 37:1). So, here again, the verb רוּם ("to roar") is associated with God, with His judgments upon peoples/nations, and with fear (רָוֵע ["to tremble"], רָפֵת ["to leap"]). There is no association, however, with a roaring lion, but rather with a thunderstorm and the noise of the thunder that follows a bolt of lightning.

The metaphor of a thunderstorm for the mighty acts of God appears again in 2 Sam 22 and in Ps 18. In them, one finds a psalm of praise by David for the divine deliverance from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. In vs. 14, David says that "YHWH thundered (הוּר) from heaven," and that "the Most High uttered His voice" (הוּר וָדָע). Here again, the metaphor of the thunder for the voice of YHWH is used, now in association with the verbal expression ℚי והוּר ("to utter His voice"), which is the second verb used for the voice of God in Amos 1:2. The psalm uses the imagery of YHWH coming in a storm to save His servant David from his enemies (vss. 10-20). God brings salvation to David (vss. 17-37), but judgment upon his enemies (vss. 38-46), which included both his own people Israel and foreign nations (vss. 44-46). Reference is also made to the dwelling place of God. In vs. 7, God hears David's cry for help "from His temple" (יהוה וָדָע), and in vs. 14, YHWH thunders "from heaven" (יהוה וָדָע). The manifestation of God convulses the elements (the earth reeled and rocked, the foundation of the heavens trembled and quaked, the channels of the sea were seen and the foundations of the world were laid bare—vss. 8, 16). Also pertinent to the understanding of the metaphor
in Amos are the references to righteousness, faithfulness to God, the keeping of God's commandments, deliverance of the humble from the exploitation of his oppressors, found in vss. 21-28, elements that are very prominent in the "Oracles Against the Nations." Quite relevant also is the conclusion of the psalm in vs. 51, in which YHWH is praised for His salvation and for His steadfast love (iqrr) to His anointed king, David, and to his seed forever. Thus the psalm concludes with a note on the Davidic covenant theology.

In Ps 46, God is praised as the refuge and strength of His people. The psalm contrasts the peace and security God brings to His people with the turmoil and judgment He brings upon the nations. Vs. 7[6] speaks of God as uttering His voice (לְוָע לְוָע) in response to the menace of the nations. Many elements are important here for the understanding of the metaphor in Amos 1:2. The uttering of God's voice comes within the context of a divine judgment against the nations (vss. 7[6], 9-11[8-10]). It convulses the elements (the earth changes and melts, the mountains shake and tremble, the waters roar and foam—vss. 3-4[2-3], 7[6]). There is again a reference to God's dwelling place (the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High—vss. 5-6[4-5]). There is no clear identification of God "uttering His voice" with either the roar of a lion or with a thunder in this psalm. Very interesting is the proclamation "YHWH of Hosts is with us!" in vss. 8[7] and 12[11], which is the kind of proclamation presupposed in Amos 5:14.

Ps 68:34[33] also speaks of God as uttering His voice (לְוָע לְוָע) in a context of salvation for God's people and judgment against the nations. The psalm usually refers to God as אֱלֹהִים ("God"), but the divine names לֹוָה ("Lord") and יְהוָה ("YHWH") appear in vss. 5[4], 17-19[16-18], 20-21[19-20], 23[22], and 27[26]. Many points in this psalm are relevant to the study of Amos 1:2.1 God is sung as the protector, helper, and savior of the fatherless, the widows, the desolate, the prisoners, the needy, and of Israel (vss. 6-10[5-9], 20-24[19-23]), and also as the avenger and judge of the wicked, the rebellious, the

---

1This psalm is usually considered as one of the most difficult to interpret in the OT. See a summary of the discussion of its "almost legendary" difficulties in Marvin E. Tate, Psalms 51-100, WBC, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 170-175.
kings of armies, and the peoples (vss. 3[2], 7[6], 13-15[12-14], 22-24[21-23], 31-32[30-31]). Mention is made of the Exodus and God's guidance in the desert (vss. 8-11[7-10]). References to God's dwelling place occupy a very important place: His holy habitation (vs. 6[5]); the mountain of God (vs. 18-19[17-18]); God's sanctuary, the temple of Jerusalem, the heavens (vss. 25[24], 30[29], 35-36[34-35]). The actions of God affect the elements in nature (the earth quakes, Sinai quakes, the heavens poured down rain and snow—vss. 9[8], 15[14]). So, here again, one finds the reference to God "uttering His voice" associated with salvation for His people, judgment for the enemies (the wicked, the nations), emphasis on God's dwelling place, and the effects of God's actions in nature. Relevant also are the presentation of YHWH as the protector and helper of the powerless and the needy, and the emphasis on YHWH's acts in the history of His people.

In Joel 2 there is a description of the "day of YHWH" (another important element in Amos, cf. Amos 5:18-20). Joel describes this day as a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day when a powerful army (of locusts) attacks and destroys the land (vss. 1-9). The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining (vs. 10). In the front of this army (which is God's), YHWH "utters His voice" (יְרַמֵּשׁ לְאָדָם מִזְרַע), for His host is exceedingly great and powerful to accomplish His word (vs. 11). The judgment described here is proclaimed not against a foreign people, but against Zion, against the holy mountain itself (vs. 1). The imagery evoked in the uttering of YHWH's voice is that of a cry of war, it is the order to attack from the commander-in-chief at the head of his army. Again, the elements of nature are shaken by the actions of God. God's holy mountain, Zion, is also mentioned, but the mighty voice of YHWH does not come from it but against it.

One of the closest parallels to Amos 1:2, in the OT, appears again in Joel. In chap. 4[3], vs. 16, one reads:
("And YHWH will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will utter His voice; heavens and earth will tremble. But YHWH will be a refuge to His people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel ")

The context in Joel 4[3] is that of the eschatological "day of YHWH." The "day of YHWH," which in chap. 2 was a day of judgment against God's people, now becomes a day of salvation and deliverance. It is a day of judgment for the nations. YHWH gathers all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat and there He enters into judgment with them all on account of His people Israel (vss. 1-16). The prophet makes special reference to Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom, but he also speaks of the nations around (vss. 4, 11-12, 19). YHWH will put in His sickle and harvest them, and He will tread them as one who treads grapes in a wine press that is full (vs. 13). The element of nature are shaken by the manifestation of God (3:3-4 [2:30-31]; 4:15). In the midst of His fiery manifestation and judgment against the nations, YHWH will be a refuge to His people, a fortress for the children of Israel (vs. 16). It is from Jerusalem, from Zion, that He acts: His dwelling place is there, and to Jerusalem and to Zion He will bring His people (3:5 [2:32]; 4:1,16-17,21). YHWH will abundantly bless Jerusalem and Judah; the mountains will drip sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk, all stream beds will flow with water (vss. 17-20); but Egypt and Edom will become a desolation, a desert, for the violence done to God's people (vs. 19).

As in Amos 1-2, Joel 4[3] uses an identical formulation for YHWH roaring from Zion, and relates it to judgment against the nations. The crimes for which the nations are condemned in Joel parallel very closely to some of the accusations found in the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos (especially slavery trade and exploitation of the weak, Joel 4[3]: 2-3, 6). Joel's evocation of the "day of the YHWH" is quite relevant also, since the eschatological expectations associated with that day are an important element for the
understanding of Amos and his message. The prediction of the eschatological blessings of Joel 4[3]:18 is part of the concluding promises of the book of Amos (Amos 9:13). Another very interesting feature can be seen in vss. 2-8 of Joel 4[3]. God's speech to the nations there seems to have been cast into a "lawsuit" form. As it is the case with the oracle against Israel in Amos 2, the form here involves the speech of the judge, and could be sketched as following:

I. Description of the Scene of Judgment: 4:2a
II. The Speech of the Judge:
   A. Address to the defendant
      1. Reproach (based on accusation): 4:2b-3
      2. Statement that the accused has no defense: 4:4
   III. Pronouncement of Guilt: 4:5-6
   IV. Sentence: 4:7-8

What is remarkable here is that in Joel and in Amos the metaphor of YHWH roaring from Zion and uttering His voice from Jerusalem is related both with oracles of judgment against the nations and also with a lawsuit against a nation, or nations. In Joel 4 the lawsuit introduces the pericope (vss. 2-8), then follow oracles of judgment against the nations (vss. 9-16), concluded by the proclamation that YHWH roars from Zion, which in vs. 16 means judgment for the nations and salvation for Israel. After that follow the promises of eschatological blessing (vss. 17-21). In Amos the order is reversed. The pericope of the "Oracles Against the Nations" opens with the metaphor of YHWH roaring from Zion (Amos 1:2), then follows the series of oracles against nations (1:3-2:16), which concludes with a lawsuit not against the foreign nations but against Israel. The promises of eschatological blessing come only at the end of the book, only after a series of oracles that describe the terrible and definitive judgment YHWH was bringing upon His people. It is

1See above, 61-63, 101.

2For more discussion on Joel 4[3]:1-8 as a lawsuit see Wolff, Joel and Amos, 76-77; Raymond Brian Dillard, "Joel," in Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary, vol. 1, Hosea, Joel, Amos, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 300.
only after destruction of the nation, and exile of the survivors, that YHWH would bring them back and bless them with an abundance never seen before.

The last passage to be considered in connection with the imagery of YHWH roaring from Zion is Jer 25:30. Together with Joel 4[3]:16, it bears the closest resemblance to Amos 1:2:

"As for you, you will prophesy against them all these words, and you will say to them: YHWH will roar from on high, and from His holy place He will utter His voice; He will roar mightily against His fold/pasturage, He will shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth"

Here, the prophet Jeremiah is commanded to prophesy against the nations that were just referred to in the previous prophecy of the “Cup of God’s Wrath” (vss. 15-29). The scope is universal, the prophecy is addressed against YHWH’s own fold (Judah) and against all the inhabitants of the earth.

The pericope of Jer 25:30-38 shares very unique features with Amos 1-2. First the reference to YHWH roaring and uttering his voice closely parallels Amos 1:2. As in Amos 3, the imagery evokes a fierce lion (Jer 25:30, 38). The roar of YHWH is also compared to the shouts of those “who tread grapes,” a kind of association that already appeared in Joel 4[3]:13. YHWH’s action is further presented as a “violent storm” (ימים חורף) that destroys the land. In his description of the destruction of the mighty storm of YHWH, Jeremiah especially addresses the kings of the nations to be destroyed (vss. 36-37). He refers to them as “shepherds” (בְּנֵי צְבָא), “lords of the flocks” (מָשָׂא וּנְסָי), and to their kingdom as “their pasturage” (בְּנֵי צְבָא), “peaceful pastures” (בְּנֵי צְבָא). This language closely resembles that of Amos 1:2 when it speaks of the “pastures of the shepherds”

---

1 Judah, Egypt, Uz, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, the kingdoms of the lands across the sea, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia, the peoples of the desert, Zimri, Elam, Media, and Babylon—all the kingdoms that were near and far away, indeed all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.
It also parallels the special emphasis given to the kings of the nations throughout the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2.

In Jeremiah, as in Amos, YHWH roars from His dwelling place, here referred to as "from on high" (אֵלֶּה) and "from His holy place" (יָהַנְיָה). The reference seemingly speaks of the heavens as the dwelling place of YHWH, but some reference to Jerusalem may also be implied, since previously in vs. 29 Jerusalem was called "the city upon which My Name is called."

Finally, YHWH's roar is cast into the context of a "lawsuit." In vs. 31, it is stated that YHWH has a "lawsuit," "a dispute" (תִּבְרַע) "against the nations" (תָּנָכָה), a "controversy" (נִשָּׁב) "against all flesh" (נֶחֱלֹה). There is not, however, a fully developed "lawsuit" process like the ones found in Joel 4[3] (against some foreign nations) and in Amos 2 (against Israel), but the "lawsuit" here is just referred to.1

Other interesting elements in Jer 25 are the reference to YHWH bringing disaster/evil (רֹעַ) upon a city (רֹעֲם), in vs. 29, and the statement that "flight will perish/fail from" (פָּרַר יַעַל בְּכָר) the shepherds, in vs. 35. The idea of YHWH bringing disaster/evil upon a city closely parallels Amos 3:6. The parallel is much more remarkable because Jeremiah and Amos are the only two books in the OT where the specific act of YHWH in bringing, or doing, disaster/evil (רֹעַ) is combined specifically with the word city (רֹעֲם).2

---

1A clear "lawsuit" form can be found, however, in the prophetic address to Judah in the beginning of the chapter (vss. 1-11), in a pericope that is intrinsically related to Jer 25:15-38. Here again, the "lawsuit" follows the form involving the speech of a judge:

I. Description of the Scene of Judgment: vss. 1-2
II. The Speech of the Judge:
   A. Address to the Defendant
      1. Reproach (Based on Accusation): vss. 3-6
      2. Statement that the Accused has no Defense: vs. 7
III. Pronouncement of Guilt: vs. 7
IV. Sentence: vss. 8-11

2Cf. Jer 19:15; 21:10; 25:29; 39:16; and Amos 3:6. The idea of YHWH "doing," "bringing," "accumulating" "disaster/evil" (רֹעַ) does appear in many other places in the OT (cf., e.g., Exod 32:14; Deut 32:23; 1 Sam 6:9; 1 Kgs 14:10; 2 Kgs 6:33; Is 45:7; Job 2:10; Dan 9:14), but the specific association with the word "city" (רֹעֲם), in the same sentence, is found only in Jeremiah and Amos.
As for the statement that "flight will perish/fail from" (_flight will perish/fail from_ the shepherds), it also provides a close parallel between Jeremiah and Amos. The word "flight" (_flight will perish/fail from_) occurs only eight times in the OT (2 Sam 22:3; Job 11:20; Pss 59:17[16]; 142:5[4]; Jer 16:19; 25:35; 46:5; Amos 2:14); of these, only three times in the expression "flight will perish/fail from"—Ps 142:5[4]; Jer 25:35; Amos 2:14; and once as _flight perished from_—Job 11:20. Only in Jer 25 and Amos 2 does the expression appear in the context of an oracle of judgment. As was the case in Joel, these unique connections show how close Jeremiah and Amos are, and how important each is for the understanding of the other.¹

The investigation of all the passages in the OT in which YHWH's action is described as roaring (_roaring_) and/or uttering His voice (_uttering His voice_) yields the following results:

1. The metaphor of Amos 1:2 was first of all developed inside the book of Amos itself in chapter 3. Accordingly, the roar of YHWH and the uttering of His voice can be understood as the roar of a lion that is approaching, announcing that he is coming for destruction. This roar is equated with the prophetic voice that announces YHWH's plan before He performs it. In this sense, the roar of YHWH in Amos 1:2 should be understood as equal to the series of eight oracles that form the series in Amos 1-2. This link also highlights not only the message and its content, but also the means by which this message is transmitted (the prophet), which, as is seen below, in itself already translates an important element of the OT covenant.

2. Joel 4[3]:16 and Jer 25:30 are the two closest parallels to Amos 1:2 in OT. Both passages have a number of very specific connections with the "Oracles Against the

¹See the discussion on the literary affinities between Amos and Jeremiah in Zeev Weisman, "_Makhrêt ha-Mishnêh ba-Masei_ Šem ha-Rimdhêh mishpati 'al Yuḇer Shem ha-Rimdhêh_" ["Stylistic Parallels in Amos and Jeremiah. Their Implications for the Composition of Amos"] _Shnaton_ 1 (1975): 129-149, xxiii. Although one does not need to agree with his conclusions concerning the composition of Amos (for Weisman, the editor of the book of Amos was quite familiar, if not actively involved, with the composition of Jeremiah's prophecies), the list of unique parallels between the two books, presented by him, is quite interesting.
"Nations" in Amos 1-2, as well as with the rest of the book of Amos. As in Amos 1:2, these two passages are related to a divine lawsuit. The study of the lawsuit in Amos has shown that it was addressed against northern Israel, and that it is fundamentally based on the Mosaic covenant. The lawsuit in Joel had a larger scope; it was raised against a number of foreign nations that neighbored Israel (Tyre and Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, Edom, and the nations around), and the reason for it was the wrong they did to God's people Israel (Joel 4[3]:2-6). In Jeremiah, the scope of the lawsuit was universal: the roar of YHWH would reach the ends of the earth; His דְּרֵא ("lawsuit, dispute") was against all the nations, against all flesh (Jer 25:31). The reason for that lawsuit was also universal: the oracle speaks in general terms of their wickedness, injustice (ДЕ, Jer 25:31).

In Joel, the Mosaic covenant appears to stand behind the lawsuit found in chap. 4 of this book. The themes of the restoration of God's people from their captivity, judgment against those nations who took them into exile, and the abundant blessings that will follow the restoration, that appear so prominently in this chapter, are basic articles of the promises of restoration blessings of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut 30:1-9). As in this covenant, they are intimately related in Joel with the themes of repentance and turning of the people to God (Joel 2:12-27). The universal scope of the lawsuit of Jeremiah, however, calls for a more universal basis for the judgment against all flesh depicted in the chap. 25 of that book. Can this universal aspect of the lawsuit in Jeremiah be related to, or better still, represent an element, or elements, of the OT covenant(s)?

3. A number of other passages in the OT (2 Sam 22:14; Job 37:4; Pss 18:14[13]; 46:7[6]; 68:34[33]; Hos 11:10; Joel 2:11) also make usage of the imagery of God either roaring (ךְֵֽרֶף) or uttering His voice (ךְֵֽרֶף). They evoke the metaphor either of a roaring lion, or of a thunderstorm. They are all related with the notion of a divine judgment against the nations. Usually the metaphor is used to express salvation for God's people and

---

1See the discussion on the literary correspondence between Joel 2:12-27 and 4[3]:1-21 in Finley, Amos, 13-14. See also, for the covenant background of the message of Joel 4, Wolf, Joel and Amos, 82; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, xli-xlir, 228-229: 265-271.
judgment for their enemies, but it is also used to express God's judgment against His own people. In the context of judgment represented by these passages, Job 37:4 appears to be of special interest. As it is the only passage that is not inscribed inside the dialectic of "God's people versus its enemies/nations," it could probably be taken as representative of the basic concept behind the metaphor. The metaphor in Job is based on God's power as the Creator and the Ruler of humankind (Job 36-37). As Creator and Ruler, He provides for men's needs (Job 36:31) but also brings judgment upon them for their iniquity (Job 36:33). He is great in justice and righteousness (Job 37:23) and therefore men fear Him (Job 37:24). If Job represents the basic concept behind the metaphor, then God's authority to judge the nations and peoples is based on the fact that He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that He is righteous and does not accept iniquity. This could probably be seen as the basis of the universal lawsuit of Jeremiah 25, and, as seen below, the basis also of the indictments raised against the foreign nations in Amos. It will be seen that this concept of God as Creator and Ruler of the universe is intrinsically related to the OT notion of a universal covenant between YHWH and mankind.  

4. Remarkable and highly relevant is the association of this metaphor of YHWH roaring and uttering His voice with the themes of the Exodus (Ps 68:8-11[7-10]; Hos 11:1//Amos 2:9-11); idol worship (Hos 11:2//Amos 2:4, 7-8); the presentation of YHWH as the helper and protector of the righteous, of the humble, and the oppressed (2 Sam 22:21-28; Pss 18:21-28[20-27]; 68:6-10[5-9], 20-24[19-23]//Amos 2:6-8); the kind of judgment YHWH brings upon the nations/wicked (usually associated with destruction and convulsion of nature and its elements—2 Sam 22:8, 16; Pss 18:8[7], 16[15]; 46:3-4[2-3], 7[6]; 68:9[8], 15[14]; Joel 2:1-10); and the allusions to elements pertaining to the Davidic covenant theology (2 Sam 22:44-51; Ps 18:44-51[43-50]//Amos 1:2; 9:11-12). Especially salient are the recurring references to YHWH's dwelling place; usually mention is made of the temple at Jerusalem, of mount Zion, and of the city of Jerusalem (2 Sam 22:7; Pss

---

1Cf. below, 238-254.
but there are references also to the heavens, to His dwelling "above" (2 Sam 22:14; Ps 18:14[13]).

These themes are of great importance to the discussion of covenantal elements in the oracles of Amos 1-2. The covenantal aspect of the historical recall of YHWH's acts in the Exodus and in the history of the Israelite nation was already discussed in the previous chapter, and is addressed again below. The question of idol worship, and the emphasis given to YHWH's protection of the righteous and the needy, is dealt with further on when dealing with the specific indictments raised against the nations, especially against Judah and Israel. The study of the nature of the divine judgments against the nations is also undertaken further on in this chapter. As for the elements of the Davidic theology, and especially the emphasis on Jerusalem as the dwelling place of YHWH, they are the subject of the section that follows.

**YHWH and the Davidic Covenant**

A special emphasis is given in Amos 1:2 to the locative "from Zion" and "from Jerusalem." This emphasis is evidenced by their placement before the verbs "to roar" and "to utter His voice," translating thereby a special stress on these places.

The references to Zion and to Jerusalem in Amos 1:2 are usually understood as adverbial phrases, indicating the place from which YHWH roars and utters His voice. Scholars such as Siegfried Wagner, John H. Hayes, Francis I. Andersen, and David Noel Freedman, however, have understood them as a title, as adjectives to the proper name

---

1Cf. above, 148-150, and below, 197-199.
2Cf. below, 255-275.
3Cf. below, 189-197.
YHWH. For them, in the beginning of his oracles, Amos makes clear to everyone that it is the YHWH of Zion and of Jerusalem who is speaking, and not any other deity.¹

Andersen and Freedman have especially developed this argument. For them, the syntax of the sentence (subject+locative+verb) indicates that the locatives "from Zion" and "from Jerusalem" must be understood as attributes modifying YHWH, and not as adverbs indicating the place from which YHWH speak. The entire phrase "YHWH from Zion" is the subject of the verb "to roar." Elsewhere in OT, when the adverbial sense is meant, the locative is closely related to the verb and not to the subject, as in 2 Sam 22:14 and Ps 18:14[13], which have verb+locative+subject.² They further argue that in the religion of Israel’s neighbors it was common to have a god identified by his/her shrine or main city of residence, as “Baal of Sidon,” “Baal of Lebanon,” “Baal from Saphon,” and “Baalat of Byblos.” These designations were used as personal names for these deities. Andersen and Freedman built their argument further on the inscriptions discovered in the Israelite-Judean eighth-century B.C. settlement at Quntillet ‘Ajrud, in the northern border of Sinai.³ In these inscriptions, references are made to YHWH šmrn, and YHWH tmn, which they translate as "YHWH of Samaria,"⁴ and "YHWH of Teman," showing that the custom of designating a god by his shrine was common in Israel in the time of Amos. For them, יְהֹוָהַמְּרֶא ("YHWH from/of Zion") as a title for God occurs in many passages in the OT (e.g., Pss 128:5, 134:3, and 135:21). "YHWH from/of Zion" as a title parallels other titles

---

¹Wagner, "Überlieferung," 660; Hayes, Amos, 63-64; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 224-225.

²ותל עֲלֹהֵי יְהֹוָה ("YHWH thunders from the heavens, and the Most High utters His voice").


⁴Naveh ("Graffiti," 28) disputes the translation of YHWH šmrn by "YHWH of Samaria (somron )," and reads there rather "YHWH, our gardian (somrénu )."
for the Divinity such as "the One dwelling in Jerusalem" in Ps 135:21, "YHWH from/of Sinai" in Deut 33:2, and "the One of Sinai" in Judg 5:5.1

The problem with seeing "from Zion" or "from Jerusalem" as a title for YHWH is that it works well with the first phrase "from Zion," which immediately follows the name of God, but it does not work with the second one, "from Jerusalem." This second phrase is preceded only by a conjunctive waw, and clearly denotes an adverbial phrase and not an attribute of YHWH. The two locatives are in strict parallel in Amos 1:2, and evidently they exercise the same syntactical function in the sentence. It is remarkable that in their argumentation, Andersen and Freedman mention only the phrase "from Zion," and do not discuss at all the second locative "from Jerusalem." It is also remarkable that in the translation they provide for this verse, they render the second locative as adverbial and not as an attributive,2 showing thereby the difficulty of applying their suggestion to both of them. The strict parallelism of the verse seems to demand therefore that both "from Zion" and "from Jerusalem" be understood as adverbial phrases, indicating the place from which YHWH exercises His action.

A good number of scholars have understood the special emphasis given to the adverbial phrases "from Zion" and "from Jerusalem" as an indication of Amos’s polemic against the northern shrines of Israel, and as a vindication of the Jerusalem temple and of Zion/Jerusalem as the sole place for the dwelling of YHWH.3 For some, such an emphasis

1Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 224-225.

2Ibid., 218. They translate Amos 1:2 as follows:
"And he said:
Yahweh—from Zion has roared,
and from Jerusalem has given forth his voice;
and the pastures of the shepherds are in mourning,
and the peak of the Carmel is withered."

3Neher, Amos, 13; Watts, Vision and Prophecy, 77; Delcor, "Amos," 190; Kapelrud, Central Ideas, 18; Gottlieb, "Amos," 452-453; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 29; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 301; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 26; Polley, Amos, 109-110.
has such strong tones that it denotes a late addition to the book under the influence of late Judaic/Jerusalemic influence, or even of the Deuteronomic theology and its emphasis on Jerusalem as the only dwelling place of YHWH and the only legitimate place for His cult.¹

For others, however, the views on the centrality of Jerusalem and on its uniqueness as the dwelling place of YHWH are the common Judaic perspective of the time of Amos (e.g., the emphasis it receives in Isaiah),² and/or the current theological tradition since the time David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.³

Do these adverbial phrases denote any covenantal idea, as Samuel Amsler clearly claims they do,⁴ or, as it is so often implicit in the argument of those who see in this verse a piece of Deuteronomic theology?⁵

The history of how Jerusalem became Israel's religious center *par excellence* is explicitly delineated in the OT. The genesis of such a development is related in the biblical text to David's conquest of that city and to his move to make of it not only the political capital, but also the religious center of his kingdom. Of fundamental importance was


5They usually see Amos 1:2 as reflecting Deut 12:5's exhortation to seek YHWH only in the place where He would choose to put His name and make of it His habitation. This verse is central to the Deuteronomic covenant theology, and therefore, indicates the late origin of Amos 1:2. Cf. Werner Schmidt, "Deuteronomistische Redaktion," 171-172; Fohrer, "Σιών," 309-310; and Coote, *Amos*, 52-53.
David's act of bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. The details of these events are presented in 2 Sam 5-6.

Although fundamental for the understanding of the development of the religious importance of Jerusalem in the OT, David's political and religious decisions are not enough to explain, and above all to validate, the election of Jerusalem as YHWH's dwelling place in the eyes of David's contemporary countrymen. As Roland de Vaux and others have perceived, it is the divine oracle delivered by the prophet Nathan in 2 Sam 7, with its promise of an eternal dynasty to David in conjunction with the erection of the Temple in Jerusalem, that will provide the basis for the development of the religious traditions related to Jerusalem.¹

YHWH's covenant with David and the divine election of Jerusalem as YHWH's dwelling place were since then interrelated, and one was understood in conjunction with the other.² These two key elements were frequently highlighted in Solomon's speech and prayer for the dedication of the Temple in 1 Kgs 8. They come over and over again in passages such as 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 36; and Pss 2:6; 78:67-71; 132. Is there, however, any connection between the references to Zion and Jerusalem in Amos 1:2 and the Davidic covenant?

For some, like Martin Noth and Roland de Vaux, there is no connection between the two of them in the book of Amos. They stressed that this point is made clear by the fact


that no reference is made to David when the prophet speaks of Zion and Jerusalem, and also there is no reference to Zion and Jerusalem when the restoration of the Davidic kingdom is addressed in the last chapter of the book. For these scholars, in Amos and the other preexilic prophets, Jerusalem is seen only as the shrine of YHWH's sanctuary. Due to the corruption of the Davidic lineage and the loss of their power and influence, there occurred a dissociation of the two concepts (the Davidic covenant and the election of Jerusalem) once so intimately associated. In the preexilic prophets, these two concepts were simply not brought into relationship with each other.¹

Two important points militate against these conclusions, however. First, the list of nations addressed in the oracles in Amos 1-2, and the study of the historical circumstances in the time of Amos, indicate that these oracles were cast against the background of a strong expectation for the restoration of the Davidic empire.² Second, the structure of the book draws into a close relationship the elements of the book of Amos that are specifically related to the Davidic covenant.³

The prophecies of Amos, as they are organized in the book now, start with YHWH roaring from Zion, uttering His voice from Jerusalem in a series of oracles of judgments against the nations that once were part of the Davidic/Solomonic kingdom, or were closely associated with it (the case of Tyre). In the chapters that follow the "Oracles Against the Nations," there are a number of very negative oracles addressed mainly against the northern shrines and against those who worship at them (Amos 3:14; 4:4-5; 5:4-6; 7:9; 8:3, 14; 9:1). It is important to remember that the biblical history traces the origin of these shrines, and the subsequent apostasy of northern Israel, back to the attempt of Jeroboam to restrain the people from going up and worshiping in Jerusalem, for he was afraid that their hearts would turn back to the house of David (1 Kgs 12:26-33). The basic elements of true

¹Noth, "Jerusalem," 139-141; de Vaux, "Jérusalem," 492-494.
²Cf. above, 60-63.
³Cf. above, 173-179.
worship of YHWH, sanctuary/ies, and kingship that appear in 1 Kgs 12 are intimately interconnected in the prophecies of Amos, and form an important aspect of his message.1 Finally, the book of Amos concludes with a pericope that speaks of the restoration of the Davidic kingship and kingdom over all Israel, over the remnant of Edom and over all the nations called by the name of YHWH (Amos 9:11-12). This pericope is closely tied in the general structure of the book to the introductory "Oracles Against the Nations."

The brief survey above shows that fundamental elements of the OT Davidic covenant theology (i.e., Davidic kingship, Jerusalem as YHWH's dwelling place, and the true worship of YHWH) form a continuous thread throughout the entire prophetic book. Furthermore, the book opens and closes with prophetic oracles concerning the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. One could conclude, therefore, that the reference to Zion and Jerusalem in Amos 1:2 does evoke YHWH's covenant with David, which is one of the key elements of the prophecies of Amos.2 Noth's and de Vaux's remarks seem to miss this important connection because they take the reference to Jerusalem as the dwelling place of YHWH and the prediction of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom in isolation, and not in their interrelationship to each other and to the rest of the book.3

1 Amos 7:9-12 also makes clear the close interrelationship between both the religious institutions of northern Israel and the northern Israelite kingship.


3 The same criticism can be raised against their treatment of these themes in the other preexilic prophets. They isolate each theme so much that they fail to see any connection between Jerusalem as the dwelling of YHWH and the promises of the Davidic covenant, even in such a book as Isaiah!
Amos 1:2 concludes with the results of YHWH's roar: "the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither and the top of the Carmel dries up." The imagery evoked here has been usually understood in terms of a drought. The roar of YHWH seems then to produce a devastating drought that affects everything in the region, from the "pastures of the shepherds" (lowland or desert regions) to the "top of the Carmel" (highlands or luxuriant forests).

Some scholars, however, have understood it in a different way. For John D. W. Watts and J. A. Motyer, it is a question here of the judgment of fire that is referred to repeatedly in the "Oracles Against the Nations" (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5).

Wilhelm Rudolph interpreted the end of Amos 1:2 as describing the result of the earthquake referred to in Amos 1:1, and again in the beginning of vs. 2 in the reference to the roar/thunder of YHWH. The "pastures of the shepherds" mourn (ךָֹּּם), because the shepherds fled in terror, abandoning them. The top of the Carmel "is ashamed" (reading שָׁאָם ["to be ashamed"], and not שָׂאָם ["to dry up"]), because it can offer no protection in face of the earthquake.

For Meir Weiss, the world's reaction to the revelation of YHWH is the theme in question. God acts, He "roars . . . utters His voice"; the world reacts, "the pastures of the shepherds mourn/wither . . . the top of the Carmel dries up." With God's revelation the existent becomes nonexistent. The action of God is an active one: voice, expression of life. The reaction of the world is passive: death, silence. The Lord is not seen; we only hear that He is. The world is not heard; we only see that it is not.

Gary V. Smith understood it to be just an illustration of the devastation produced by YHWH, and

---

1 See Mays, Amos, 22; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 125; Soggin, Amos, 29; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 300-301; Hayes, Amos, 65; Chisholm, Minor Prophets, 76-77; Paul, Amos, 38-42; Niehaus, "Amos," 338.

2 Watts, Vision and Prophecy, 77; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 29.

3 Rudolph, Amos, 115-116.

4 Weiss, Bible from Within, 219; 221.
remarked further that lack of rain is not a central theme in Amos.¹ For Thomas J. Finley, the imagery of a devastating drought is used only figuratively, as a hyperbole, for the destruction that will be produced by the Assyrian army.²

One of the main reasons for these alternative interpretations is that little or no connection is seen between a drought and the roaring/uttering of YHWH's voice. It is argued that a roar, or a thunder, does not produce drought; hence the verse speaks of something else.³ This argumentation is built upon the need for logic between cause and effect. The need for such logic is however doubtful in the literary field. As Meir Weiss remarked, the power and artistic beauty of many literary pieces, even of today, reside often in the "lack of logic," in its self-contradictory meaning and characteristics unacceptable to reason.⁴ More important, however, is the fact that the association between roar/thunder and drought is not uncommon in the ANE,⁵ and the prophet's audience might have understood the metaphor in that sense.

Some scholars have recognized in Amos 1:2b a reference to the covenant curse of drought in the Mosaic covenant (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22-24).⁶ Douglas Stuart went a step

---

¹Gary Smith, *Amos*, 27.
²Finley, *Amos*, 131.
³Not all however argue on these lines. Watts, Motyer, and Weiss do not base their interpretation on such supposedly logical and irreconcilable conflicts.
⁴Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 202-203.
⁵Cf. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 193; Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 214; and Paul, *Amos*, 41. In the Babylonian Fable of the Fox (MS b = VAT 13836) a dispute between the dog, the fox, and the wolf is described. In the midst of this dispute, the dog praises his own strength by comparing himself to a lion and by saying that his bellow causes the mountains and the rivers to dry up. It is described as follows:

"The Dog opened his mouth as he bayed, fearful to them was his bellow, their hearts were so overcome that they secreted gall. 'My strength is overpowering, I am the claw of the Zél-bird, a very lion. My legs run faster than winged birds, at my terrible bellow the mountains and rivers dry up [etanabbala]."

further and recognized in the verse not only a reference to the curse of drought but also to a futility curse. He argued that the thunder of YHWH (חָרֲעֶה יְהוֹה ["He utters His voice"]) is usually related to rain and fertility, but in Amos 1:2 it produces drought. Hence, instead of an expected rain, those who hear YHWH thundering will receive drought. This unexpected result points to the futility curse (Lev 26:16, 20; Deut 28:20, 29, 30-31, 33, 38-41).¹

Is the description of the results of the roar of YHWH in Amos 1:2b a reference to the curses of the Mosaic covenant? The language of the final part of this verse is quite peculiar; the terms are rare, thereby opening the door for much speculation on what they really mean.² In the OT, the expression כ*ניירך נָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") as such appears only in Amos 1:2. A singular, undeterminate form כ*ניירך נָא ("pasture of shepherds") appears once in Jer 33:12. The expression כ*ניירך נָא כַּרְמֵל ("the top/head of Carmel") is equally rare, occurring only three times in the OT (1 Kgs 18:42; Amos 1:2; 9:3). The verbs כ*ניירך נָא ("to mourn/dry up") and כ*ניירך נָא ("to dry up, wither") occur only three times also in association to one another (Amos 1:2; Jer 12:4; 23:10). What do they refer to?

כ*ניירך נָא כַּרְמֵל ("the pastures of the shepherds")

The expression כ*ניירך נָא ("pasture of shepherds") in Jer 33:12 appears in the context of a prophecy of salvation, which speaks about the restoration of Judah and Israel from their exile (vs. 7), under the reign of the promised Davidic king, the righteous Branch (vss. 14-26). The expression כ*ניירך נָא ("pasture of shepherds") does not refer to the pasturages,

¹Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 300-301.

²See Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 207-216, for a survey of the different proposals. See also Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 226-229, for whom the rare terms used here are intended in order to take the reader between the boundaries of the geographical and the cosmical, of reality and myth.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
grazing fields, located in the wilderness. It is rather a reference to the cities and villages of Judah, the places where shepherds actually live.

Few other passages in the OT bring the two terms, כָּשֵׁר ("shepherds") and כָּרָה; ("pasture"), together, especially in the context of a prophetic oracle. Besides Amos 1:2 and the passage above in Jer 33:2, only Jer 23:1-8; 25:34-37; Ezek 34; and Zeph 2:6 do so.

In Jer 23:1-8, one finds an oracle that pronounces a woe and a judgment (vss. 1-2) against the "shepherds" (כָּשֵׁר) of God's people (i.e. its leaders), for having destroyed and scattered YHWH's flock (His people) instead of taking care of it. The rest of the oracle speaks about salvation (vss. 3-8), about how YHWH would gather the remnant of His flock from all the countries to which they were scattered, and would bring them back to "their own fold/pasture" (כָּרָה), to "their own land" (כָּרָה), vss. 3 and 8. YHWH would set over them "shepherds" (כָּשֵׁר) who would take care of them, and above all, He would raise up the David king, the righteous Branch, who would reign over His people (vss. 4-6). Here in this verse, the shepherds are the political and religious leaders of God's people, and the "fold/pasture" (כָּרָה) is the land of Israel.

In Jer 25, one is back to a chapter that shares many common elements with Amos 1-2. In vss. 34-37 of this chapter, YHWH addresses the kings/governors of the nations as "shepherds" (כָּשֵׁר), as "the lords of the flock" (כָּשֵׁר וְרָדָה), and admonishes them to "wail" (רֹעַ), and to "cry out" (עַל), for YHWH was destroying/devastating (דָּרָה) "their pasture" (כָּרָה), their "peaceful folds/pastures" (כָּרָה נַעַל). Here again, the term כָּשֵׁר ("shepherds") is used in reference to the leaders of a nation, and כָּרָה ("pasture") to indicate the nations. Furthermore, in vs. 30, YHWH roars against "His fold" (כָּרָה), i.e. His people Judah.

In Ezek 34, the leaders of God's people are again addressed as "shepherds" (כָּשֵׁר), and are indicted for not taking care of God's people, and for having ruled over them with force and harshness. Because of them, YHWH's flock was scattered all over the face of

1Cf. above, 168-173.
the earth, and became food for all kinds of beasts. God, Himself, would then search for His sheep, and gathered them from all over into their own land (אֶרֶץ), into the mountains of Israel, which would be "their own pasture" (אֶרֶץ), vss. 13-14. YHWH would be their God, and David their "shepherd" ( ngộֹדֵד), vss. 23-24. Here again, the nation's leaders are referred to as נְבֵית ("shepherds") and the land of Israel as בֵּית ("pasture").

In Zeph 2:6, one finds an oracle of judgment against the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. These cities would be destroyed and become a desolated and uninhabited place, a place of "pastures with caves for shepherds" (הָרִיסֵי בָּהָר). The association here between "shepherds" (נְבֵית) and "fold/pasture" (בֵּית) evokes the basic meaning of a place where shepherds would take their flocks to graze.

In the quest for the understanding of the expression נְבֵית נְבֵית ("the pastures of the shepherds"), special attention should also be given to the use of the expression נְבֵית נְבֵית ("the pastures of the desert"), which some consider to be the form from which the rare נְבֵית נְבֵית ("pasture of shepherds") is derived. It is used six times in the OT, twice in Jeremiah (9:9[10]; 23:10), three times in Joel (1:19-20; 2:22), and once in the Psalms (65:13[12]).

In Jer 9:9, YHWH is described as taking up "weeping and wailing" (יָכַר וְיָבֵל) over "the mountains" (הֵרָה) and "lament" (יִכְרֵא) over "the pastures of the desert" (נֶבֶן נֶבֶן), because they are laid waste and nobody passes through, the noise of cattle is not heard on them, and both birds and beasts have fled from them. Clearly, the reference in this passage is to the pastures of the wilderness in the plain sense. Remarkable for the understanding of Amos 1:2 is the usage in parallelism of "the mountains" (הֵרָה) and "the pastures of the desert" (נֶבֶן נֶבֶן), and the theme of lamentation and weeping because of their destruction.

Jer 23:10 is quite close to Amos 1:2, and is treated again below in reference to its usage of יָכַר ("to mourn/dry up") and יָכַר ("to dry up, wither"). In this verse, the prophet Jeremiah states that "the land" (גֹּמֶר) "mourns/withers" (יָכַר), and "the pastures of the

---

1Cf. Paul, Amos, 40.
“desert” (דָּבָר) "dry up" (יָשָׁב) because of the "curse" (כִּרְעָה). The reason for the curse is the wickedness of the prophets and the priests of Judah. Here too, the reference seems to be to the pastures in the wilderness of Judah.

In Joel 1:19-20, the reference to "the pastures of the desert" (דָּבָר עַרְבָּא) appears twice. These verses speak of a "fire" (חֶם) that devours "the pastures of the desert" (דָּבָר עַרְבָּא), and of a "flame" (סָרָת) that burns all "the trees of the field" (גּוֹלֶל עַל). The reference again is to the wilderness of Judah; the fire and the flame are actually a reference to a plague of locusts of which Joel 1 speaks, and reference is also made in the chapter to weeping and lamentation (vss. 5, 8, 11, 13-14, 18, 20) because of the desolation and destruction of the land.

The last two occurrences of the "pastures of the desert" (דָּבָר עַרְבָּא), Joel 2:22 and Ps 65:13[12], are set in another tone. Joel 2:22 speaks of the restoration of the land of Judah that will follow the repentance of God's people. YHWH would pour down abundant rain upon the land, and "the pastures of the desert" (דָּבָר עַרְבָּא) would become green, and the land would produce an abundance of grain and fruit. The land, the beasts, and the people are conjured to fear not, but rather rejoice and be glad. In Ps 65:13[12], praises are given to God who crowns the year with bounty by bringing abundant rain upon the land. "The pastures of the desert" (דָּבָר עַרְבָּא) drip, the "hills" (מִקְצֶה) gird themselves with joy. The reference again is to the wilderness in the land of Judah (probably of the entire Israel in the Psalm).

(there/that is "the top/head of Carmel")

As already stated, the expression as such appears again only in 1 Kgs 18:42 and Amos 9:3. The book of 1 Kings speaks of the "top/head of Carmel" as the place where Elijah went to pray for rain. The exact location here referred to cannot be identified with precision. The place of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal is commonly
identified with El-Muhraka (i.e., "place of burning"), a platform just below the summit on the southern edge, some sixteen hundred feet above sea level, with the brook Kishon (Nahr el-Muqatta') below. The "top/head of Carmel" could then be the summit just above this platform.

In Amos 9:3, the top of Carmel is referred to as one of the places in which people could not hide themselves from the judgments of YHWH. In the verse, the "top/head of Carmel" (בֵּית הָנָבָא) is set in parallel with the "bottom of the sea" (יָבוֹא). Francis F. Andersen and David N. Freedman suggested that the reference to the "top of the Carmel" here implies a mythical, legendary place, since it is associated in the verse with the Sheol, heavens, bottom of the sea, and the sea serpent. The plain meaning of the mountainous range in northern Israel is quite possible, however, as is indicated by the similar polarity between the Carmel mountain and the sea in Jer 46:18. This verse in Jeremiah compares the superiority of Nebuchadnezzar over the pharaoh of Egypt to the towering position of Mount Tabor in relation to neighboring terrain and that of Mount Carmel in relation to the sea. The close proximity of the Carmel range to the sea, or probably more exactly the fact that the northern promontory (470 ft./143 m.) rises sharply from the sea shore, seems to be behind the reference to Mount Carmel in polarity with the sea in Jeremiah. The "top/head of Carmel" and the "bottom of the sea" indicate two opposite extremes, one high above and the other down below. This same polarity can be the case in Amos 9:3, and there would be no need therefore to resort to a mythological understanding of the verse.

---


2 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 837.

3 The text reads "and like Carmel by the sea" (גָּזַע לָךְ בַּנָּבָא).
The association of these two verbs together, as already mentioned, appears again only in Jer 12:4 and 23:10 in the OT. Jer 12:4 belongs to a prayer in which Jeremiah asks God how long would the wicked prosper and the treacherous thrive. The prayer ends with the questions: "How long will the land (ם"נ) mourn/wither (ל"כ) and the grass of every field (ם"נםו ל"כ) dry up (ל"כ)?" The imagery here evokes a wilderness that suffers and withers because of the wickedness of the people.

As for Jer 23:10, as seen above, the verse is part of an oracle that condemns the prophets and the priests of Judah for their wickedness. Because of the "curse" (כ"כ), "the land" (ם"נ) "mourns/withers" (ל"כ), and "the pastures of the desert" (גא"כ ל"כ) "dry up" (ל"כ). The language and imagery of the verse are really close to that of Amos 1:2b, and it is quite remarkable that the description of a drought is brought in relationship to the "curse" (כ"כ) element.

The elements of mourning and wailing, drought and desolation, are many times evoked in oracles of judgment. The passages studied above of Jer 9:9; 23:10; 25:34-37; Joel 1:5, 8, 11, 13-14, 18, 20 are evidences of that. The contrary is also true: gladness and rejoicing, fertility and abundance are related to the oracles of salvation (Joel 2:22, Ps 65:13[12]; see also Isa 35:1-2).

The study of the passages that use expressions similar or closely related to those of Amos 1:2b thus yields the following results:

1. ל"כ ל"כ ("the pastures of the shepherds"): "Shepherd" (ל"כ) and "pasture" (ל"כ) are usually used, in the prophetic oracles of the OT, in a figurative sense, as a reference to the leaders of a country/people, to a country, or to a people itself. The closest expression found in the OT, ל"כ ל"כ ("pasture of shepherds") in Jer 33:12, is used as a reference to the cities and villages of Judah. The parallel expression, ל"כ ל"כ ("the pastures of the desert"), however, is usually used in reference to pasturage, grazing fields,
found in the wilderness of Israel. The elements of wailing and mourning, destruction and drought, are evoked both in the passages that speak of countries, and in those that refer to pastures in the wilderness. "Mountains" (רַכְל) and "hills" (רַמָּיִם) are used in parallel to קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the desert"), in Jer 9:9 and in Ps 65:13[12], thus resembling the parallelism between בֵּית רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") and בַּיָּת הָרָעָב ("the top/head of Carmel") in Amos 1:2. Jer 23:10 uses עַרְבָּן רָאָא ("the pastures of the desert") in association with בֵּית רָאָא ("to mourn/wither") and יָשָׁב ("to dry up, wither").

In view of all these data, what does קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") refer to? To countries, to peoples, or to pasturages in the wilderness? The language is definitely related to the passages that speak of קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the desert") and apparently derives from it. The fact, however, that Amos 1:2 uses the rare קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds"), instead of the most common expression קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the desert"), could be taken as an indicator that Amos 1:2b is concerned more with countries and peoples than with the grazing fields of the wilderness. The widespread figurative usage of "shepherd" (רְאוּע) and "pasture" (רָאָא), pointed out above, corroborates such a conclusion.1 Placed at the introduction of the "Oracles Against the Nations," קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") points to the nations and their leaders to be addressed in these oracles.

2. בֵּית רָאָא ("the top/head of Carmel"): This rare expression usually indicates some high elevation in the Carmel range. Its parallelism with קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") in Amos 1:2, however, argues for a figurative understanding of the expression in this verse, apparently as a reference to the Israelite nation herself, which is the goal and climax of the series of oracles in Amos 1-2.2

---

1Arvid S. Kapelrud already argued for the figurative meaning of קְנֵי רָאָא ("the pastures of the shepherds") a few decades ago. See Kapelrud, CENTRAL IDEAS, 19.

2Ibid. Kapelrud, however, sees the reference to the "top of the Carmel" as applying to the king of northern Israel instead of to Israel herself.
3. נַעֲרָה ("to mourn/dry up") and נַעֲשָׁה ("to dry up, wither"): Mourning and withering are actions commonly evoked in oracles that speak of the judgment of God against nations and individuals. Jer 23:10 brings in an interesting dimension by relating these verbs of distress to the element of "curse" (נַעֲשָׁה) when it states that it was because of the "curse" (נַעֲשָׁה) that the "land" (נַעֲשָׁה) "mourns/wITHERS" (נַעֲשָׁה), and "the pastures of the desert" (נַעֲשָׁה) "dry up" (נַעֲשָׁה).

The term נַעֲשָׁה ("curse") basically conveys the idea of the pronunciation of a conditional curse. In the OT, it appears in legal contexts as a pronunciation of a "curse" (נַעֲשָׁה) upon a guilty party in order to punish him for a wrongdoing already done, or in order to prevent him from doing it. It also appears in the context of ratification of treaties, as an "oath" taken by one of the parties, or by both parties involved, as a form of self-cursing against unfaithfulness to the treaty dispositions, or as a "curse" pronounced by the overlord upon his vassal in case of infidelity to the treaty. In a similar way, נַעֲשָׁה, either as "curse" or "oath," plays an important role in the covenant between YHWH and Israel. In Deut 29:19[20], נַעֲשָׁה ("curse") refers back to all the curses written in that book that would fall upon those of stubborn heart, who would not pay attention to the commands of YHWH's covenant and think in themselves that nothing would happen to them. The term נַעֲשָׁה ("curse, oath") could be used as a synonym to נַעֲשָׁה ("covenant"), as in Deut 29:18[19] and

1 In Judg 17:2, Micah returns the pieces of silver which he had stolen from his mother, because she had pronounced a curse upon the thief. In Num 5:11-31, a law prescribes that a man who is suspicious of the fidelity of his wife should bring her to the priest, who would pronounce a curse upon her and make her drink "the water of bitterness," while offering a sacrifice to God. If she were guilty, the curse would take effect and make her body swell and her thigh to fall away (vs. 22). In 1 Sam 14:24, Saul places his people under a curse, so that they would not stop to eat instead of pursuing their enemies until the evening.

2 Gen 26:28; Ezek 17:13, 16, 18; Hos 10:4.
in the hendiadys of Deut 29:11[12], 13[14] ("to enter into a covenant and a curse"; "to make a covenant and a curse").

Does the "curse" (בּוּבֵק) in Jer 23:10 imply a covenant curse? The close parallel found in Isa 24:4-6 points in that direction, as Herbert Chanan Brichto remarked:

("the earth mourns/dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the highest of the people of the earth waste away. The earth is defiled beneath its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, they have changed the statute, they have broken the eternal covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.")

This passage in Isaiah has many pertinent parallels not only to Jer 23, but also to other passages that speak of YHWH's judgment against the nations, including Amos 1-2. The passage is set in a universal context; it speaks of YHWH's judgment against the nations of the world, and against God's people themselves. One of the important


3Ibid., 36. Brichto pointed out some close parallels in terminology and imagery such as: Isa 24:4 רַסְכַּהוּ ("the earth mourns/dries up") // Jer 23:10 רַסְכַּהוּ ("the earth mourns/dries up"); Isa 24:5 רַסְכַּהוּ ("is defiled") // Jer 23:11 רַסְכַּהוּ ("are defiled"); Isa 24:4 רַסְכַּה ("the earth withers"), רַסְכַּהוּ ("the world withers") // Jer 23:10 רַסְכַּה ("the pastures of the desert wither"); common reference to the transgressions of the leaders of the people; and reference to the inexorable working of the בּוּבֵק ("curse"), invoked to guard the covenant's inviolability.

4As John D. W. Watts demonstrated (Isaiah 1-33, WBC, vol. 24 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985], 310-311, 320-322), there is no need to consider this passage as a part of a late apocalyptic composition inserted very late in the prophetic corpus of the book of
contributions of this verse to the discussion on the "Oracles Against the Nations" in the OT is the introduction of the notion of an "eternal covenant" (םייחל ידיב). The nations are condemned for having broken this covenant and transgressed against its commandments and dispositions. The covenant in question seemingly refers back to God's covenant with Noah (Gen 9), as the constant usage of the universal terminology and themes of this covenant in the passage indicates. Another important contribution of this passage in Isaiah is its development of the role that the "curse" (כ"א) plays in the context of YHWH's judgment against the nations.

The element of "curse" (כ"א) is an important one in the OT covenant(s), and especially relevant in the Mosaic covenant. As seen above, this element is also present in the context of judgment against the nations in Isa 24 and in Jer 23:10, this latter verse being

Isaiah (those who argue for a late date have proposed dates from the sixth to the third centuries B.C., some even the second century B.C.; see the survey of the discussion in Dan Gilbert Johnson, "Devastation and Restoration: A Compositional Study of Isaiah 24-27" [Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985], 1-15).

The passage itself follows the flow of the prophetic presentation of YHWH's judgment against the nations through the instrumentality of the Assyrian power, "the rod of His anger" (Isa 10:5), presented in chaps. 10-23 of Isaiah. The themes and terminology of chaps. 10-23 appear again in chap. 24, showing thereby their interconnection and relationship. The "whole earth" (הארה) would be destroyed (Isa 10:23; 13:5 // 24:3-6, 19-20), and the "world" (העולם) punished for its evil and would become a desert (Isa 13:11: 14:17, 21 // 24:4). The "cities" (かれים, בלשון) of the world (העולם) would be destroyed and lie in ruins (14:17, 21, 31; 17:1-2, 9 // 24:10, 12). "Man" (יהוה, אדם) would perish on the land, and become few and scarce (Isa 13:12 // 24:6); the inhabitants of the earth would be punished for their sins (Isa 18:3 // 24:1, 5, 6). The Assyrian power would bring utter destruction to all the regions of the Ancient Near East. All the nations and the important cities of the region would be devastated, among them Israel, Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Sidon, Tyre, and others.

one of the closest parallels to Amos 1:2b in the OT. This close parallelism between the Isaiah passage and Amos and Jeremiah would then argue for seeing the references to mourning/drying up of the pastures of the shepherds and the withering of the top of Carmel as related to the action of the OT covenant curse/s.

If the action of a covenant curse is described in Amos 1:2b, then what curse is in question here? Is it the curse of drought from the Mosaic covenant, as suggested by Stuart, Chisholm, and Niehaus? Is there also question of a futility curse in the verse, as Stuart proposed?

Though the verbs ἔκακον ("to mourn/dry up") and ἀνέκακον ("to dry up, wither") describe a situation of drought and devastation, it is questionable that the cause of such a situation is the lack of rain, as is the case in the covenant curse of drought (Lev 26:19 and Deut 28:22-24). The passages that are closely related to Amos 1:2 use these verbs, or their close parallels, in order to describe rather a devastation produced by war, by the sword (Jer 9:9(10)-16(17); 12:4, 12-13; 25:31-38). Sometimes, this war imagery is metaphorically referred to as a scorching fire that comes from YHWH and consumes the world, the nations, and their people (Isa 24:6; Joel 1:19-2:11). In this context, Amos 1:2 would not speak of the curse of drought, but of war and fire.

As for the futility curse, it is much less convincing that Amos 1:2 has anything to do with it. The study of the imagery of YHWH roaring as a lion and uttering His voice from Zion/Jerusalem has shown that it is used to convey the idea of YHWH's judgment against nations, peoples, and even individuals. It has little connection with actual rain and fertility of the land. Therefore, Douglas Stuart's suggestion of a hint of futility curses in

---

1Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 300-301; Chisholm, Minor Prophets, 76-77; Niehaus, "Amos," 338.

2Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 301.

3Cf. above, 155-173.
the verse (drought, instead of an expected rain)\(^1\) seems unsubstantiated by the biblical texts. Furthermore, the passages that deal with the futility curses (Lev 26:16, 20; Deut 28:29, 30-31, 33, 38-41) are very specific. They deal with the lack of success in whatever a man would do. The focus of these curses is the total failure of the human actions and dedicated efforts.\(^2\) Unexpected drought is not part of the futility curses. Furthermore, the curse of drought is not connected to an unsuccessful human action, as the futility curses are, but to the direct act of God (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22-4): YHWH would turn the sky above like iron, and the ground below like bronze; He would turn the rain of the country into dust and powder, and make such dust come down from heaven upon the accursed ones.

The language of Amos 1:2b most likely evokes the destruction by war or by a fierce fire from YHWH. This gives support then to the suggestions of John D. W. Watts and J. A. Motyer ("judgment of fire"),\(^3\) Gary V. Smith ("devastation by YHWH"),\(^4\) and Thomas J. Finley ("destruction by an army").\(^5\)

The theme of a devastation by war and fire would then be introduced in Amos 1:2b, to be developed thoroughly in Amos 1-2 by the recurring reference to YHWH's judgment by fire (יָשָׁע́ יָפֵר נְבוֹת ["I will send/set fire"]—Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5), and by a number of terms that speak of warfare (deposition of kings and rulers, destruction of the population, exile, shouting in the day of battle, sound of trumpet, etc.). The divine

\(^1\)Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 300-301.

\(^2\)He would sow his seeds, but his enemies would eat it; he would work hard, but his land would not yield fruit; he would pledge to marry a woman, but someone else would take her; he would build a house, but would not live in it; he would plant a vineyard, but would not enjoy its fruit; his cattle would be killed before him, but he would not eat of them; he would have olive trees, but would not use their oil; he would have sons and daughters, but he would not keep them.

\(^3\)Watts, *Vision and Prophecy*, 77; Motyer, *Day of the Lion*, 29.

\(^4\)Gary Smith, *Amos*, 27.

\(^5\)Finley, *Amos*, 131.
judgment by fire and the destruction by warfare are drawn together in Amos 1-2, and seem to speak of the same unique reality of judgment by YHWH.1

The study of the expressions אֲנָשִׁיָּה ("send fire") and אָרָה יִרְאָה ("set fire"), in the OT, confirms the conclusions derived from the parallel passages of Amos 1:2b. Many times, these verbal expressions speak of the destruction of cities, land, and countries through fire/s set up by an army in a context of war.2 They are used also, as in Amos 1-2, to speak about the direct action of YHWH, of His judgment by fire, in a metaphorical reference to a destructive war that will take place under the direct divine command.3

Many of the passages that speak of YHWH’s judgment by fire relate it directly to the Mosaic covenant and its curses. Hos 8:1 charges Judah and Israel for having broken YHWH’s covenant (הָעֵדֶת) and transgressed His law (הָרְאָה). At the end of the oracle (vs. 14) judgment is pronounced against them in the same way it is pronounced repeatedly throughout the “Oracles Against the Nations” in Amos 1-2:

neššōh-nō’āḇ niḇḇōḇ ("and I will send fire in its cities and it shall destroy its fortresses")

Jer 11:16 says that YHWH, with a "great roaring sound" (הִנְגָּז יִרְאָה מִיָּה), would "set fire" (אָרָה יִרְאָה) to Judah, and destroy her. The beginning of the chapter introduces the reason for YHWH’s judgment of fire: they were cursed because they broke the covenant YHWH established with them when He brought them out of Egypt (vss. 1-8). The connection of curse for the breach of covenant and the judgment of fire can also be seen in


2For אֲנָשִׁיָּה ("send fire") see: Judg 1:8; 20:48; Ps 74:7; 2 Kgs 8:12. For אָרָה יִרְאָה ("set fire"): Josh 8:8, 19; Judg 9:49; Isa 9:10-11[11-12], 17[18]; Jer 2:14-15; 32:29; 43:12; 49:2; 51:30, 56, 58; Neh 1:3; 2:17.

passages such as Jer 17:27 and Lam 4:11. This interconnection is clearly stated in 2 Kgs 22:13, 17. These verses stress the "wrath of YHWH" (יהוה, רעה), which would be "set on fire" (אש, אש) against God's people, for they have not listened to the words written in the book of the law of YHWH.

All these passages refer back to Pentateuchal sections such as Deut 29:26-27(27-28), which state that because of the transgression of YHWH's covenant the "anger of YHWH" (יהוה, נא) would "burn" (אש) against the land of Israel, and bring upon her all the curses written in the book of YHWH's law; or Deut 32:22, which speaks of a fire that is kindled by YHWH's anger, a fire that devours the depths of Sheol, the earth, and its produce, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. This verse in Deuteronomy appears in one of the classic examples of a covenant lawsuit in the OT (Deut 32:1-25),2 and its presentation of the curse of fire, in vs. 22, brings forth the connection between two key elements in Amos 1-2, i.e., lawsuit of God and judgment by fire.3

---

1For a study on the theme of the "wrath/anger of YHWH," see Jan Bergman and Elsie Johnson, "היהוה 'anaph; יהוה 'aph (זא'am, זא'aph, chemah, charah, 'abhar, qatsaph, raghaz)," TDOT (1974), 1:348-360; and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck, "היהוה chēmāh," TDOT (1980), 4:462-465. See especially their treatment of the breach of YHWH's covenant as the most important reason for the manifestation of the divine wrath, and fire as the most common expression of this wrath (Bergman and Johnson, "היהוה 'anaph," 357-358; Schunck, "היהוה chēmāh," 464).

2See Wright, "Lawsuit of God," 26-67; Harvey, Plaidoyer prophétique, 31-36.

3In view of the connection between covenant curse, judgment by fire/warfare, and lawsuit by God, it seems difficult to see with Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman (Amos, 239) the destructive fire of YHWH in Amos 1-2 as a cosmic mythical destroyer, a mythic being (a messenger) not much different from the fire gods (Nushku, Erra, Ishtum) of the neighboring nations. As they noticed, the reference to "fire" in Amos parallels very closely in style the reference to the destructive pestilence in Amos 4:10 which, as Wolff demonstrated (Joel and Amos, 213), is an unmistakable reference to the covenant curses of Lev 26 and Deut 28.

It is true that fire as a supernatural agent of destruction of the gods occurs many times in the ANE mythology (cf. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel," CBQ 27 [1965]: 256-261; Paul, Amos, 49). The way Amos and the other passages surveyed above deal with that theme, however, points to its usage inside the context of covenant curses, instead of a mythological understanding of this theme.
This connection between the curse of judgment by fire and a lawsuit effected by God appears clearly in the second vision of the prophet Amos, reported in Amos 7:4-6. In this vision a reference is made to a שָׁקֶר בְּרָאָה ("judgment by fire") that devours the great deep and the fields. Here, the בְּרָאָה ("dispute, lawsuit, judgment") is directly connected with שָׁקֶר ("fire"), making explicit the implicit connection that exists between them in Amos 1-2. The language in Amos 7 points clearly to the background of the covenant curses of Deuteronomy. The expression is strikingly close to that of Deut 32:22, which refers to the fire from YHWH that devours the depths of Sheol.

Another reference to a judgment of fire from YHWH appears in Amos 5:6. In this verse, the prophet admonishes the people to seek YHWH and live, "lest He flare up like a fire" (שָׁקֶר שָׁקֶר וָאָר) and consume the house of Joseph and the cultic center of Bethel, with nobody being able to extinguish such a fire. Here again, it is a question of the devastation and destruction of the country by YHWH. The connection between this judgment by fire from YHWH and the covenant curse of the Mosaic covenant is substantiated in Amos 5 by the fact that covenant curses are constantly referred to in the verses that precede as well as in those that follow Amos 5:6.  

1For more discussion on this subject, see Limburg, "Amos 7:4," 346-349; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 208-209; Finley, Amos, 284-286; Paul, Amos, 230-231; and Niehaus, "Amos," 454.

2For the meaning of "to burn, flare up" for the verb שָׁקֶר see Hayim Tawil, "Hebrew תָּשָּׁרָא, Akkadian esēru/sušuru: A Lexicographical Note." JBL 95 (1976): 405-413; and Paul, Amos, 165.

3Amos 5:6 is preceded by a long list of plagues (hunger, drought, crop failure, locusts, pestilence, sword, overthrow), in Amos 4, that clearly reflects the covenant curses of both Lev 26 and Deut 28. In Amos 5, references are made to the curses of death and destruction in a war (vss. 2, 16-17); decimation of an army (vs. 3); exile (vss. 5, 27); harm from wild animals (vs. 19). The language of covenant curse is so strong that Hans W. Wolff (Joel and Amos, 213, 240), drawing graphic parallels between these passages and Lev 26 and Deut 28, rejected them as authentically from Amos. For him, the evident connection of these passages with the covenant curses shows that these are late additions to the book of Amos, from the time of Josiah onward, when, for him, the concept of covenant was developed in Israel.
Besides the reference to YHWH's judgment by fire, some of the other warfare terminology found in the announcements of judgment of the oracles in Amos 1-2 seem also to point to the context of covenant curses. The people of Aram were to be exiled back to their original home (Amos 1:5), paralleling a similar threat concerning Israel's return to Egypt in the curse of Deut 28:68 (see also Hos 8:13). The exile of the king and the princes of Ammon (Amos 1:15) parallels the curse of Deut 28:36 concerning Israel. The description of despair and of impossibility of escape used in the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:14-16) seems to reflect the curses of Lev 26:17, 36 and Deut 28:25; 32:30.1

In conclusion, it can be said that the announcement of the judgment by YHWH against the eight nations of the series speaks of the judgment by fire/war, which is one of the curses of the Mosaic covenant. This divine judgment is introduced in Amos 1:2 by the terms כָּרָתָן ("to mourn/dry up") and כָּרֹן ("to dry up, wither") and is developed throughout the series in the recurring announcement of judgment by the refrain חַם יַעֲרֵה יָרָה ("I will send/set fire") and by the general description of warfare found in these oracles.

YHWH, the God of the Exodus and of the Conquest

The study of the passages that parallel Amos 1:2 has demonstrated that the metaphor of YHWH roaring and uttering His voice from His dwelling place was often associated with references to the historical actions of YHWH in favor of His people, especially to the events of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan. This is also the case in Amos 1-2, with its historical recital of YHWH's past actions in favor of Israel in Amos 2:9-12.

This recital clearly emphasizes that YHWH, who was speaking through the prophet, was the God of the Exodus and of the conquest of the Promised Land. As already seen in the previous chapter, this historical recital is a reminiscence of the traditional

historical prologue to the OT covenant formulations, and usually appears only inside texts concerned with the covenant.¹

YHWH's recall of His actions of destroying the Amorites in order to make Israel inherit the land of Canaan, of bringing Israel out of Egypt and guiding them through the wilderness, speaks of some of the basic promises made in the Abrahamic covenant, ² which became the very core and heart of the Mosaic covenant.³

The recalling of these divine acts, built around a direct divine speech that uses prominently the pronoun "I," is always tied to the two elements above: The fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers that occurred in the Exodus and became the basis for the covenant between YHWH and Israel at Sinai.⁴

YHWH of Amos 2:9-12 is then the same God that in Exod 3 appeared to Moses and sent him to the land of Egypt, in order to bring the children out of their servitude and to lead them to the land that He promised to their fathers. He is "YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and God of Jacob," who declared to Israel through Moses: "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:17); and who later introduced His covenant with them by saying: "I am YHWH your God who made you come out

---

¹Cf. above, 148-150.


³Exod 19:3-6; 20:2; 23:20-33; 33:1-3; 34:10-16; Deut 1:21; 6:1-3; 7:1-11:32; 31:16-23; Josh 5:1-9; 24:1-18; etc.

⁴Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6; 8:14-16; Josh 24:17-18; Judg 6:8; 1 Sam 10:18; Ps 81:11; Jer 11:4-8; 31:32; 34:13; Hos 2:16-17[14-15]; 12:10-14[9-13]; 13:4-5.
(.navigateTo) from the land of Egypt, from the house of servitude" (Exod 20:2). He is Israel's covenant God.¹

YHWH in Amos 1-2 and the OT Covenants

From the investigation on the connections that the divine name הוהי ("YHWH") evokes in the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2, it can be said that:

1. Amos's usage of the divine name indicates that he does not come preaching a new God, a God unknown, or never heard of before by the Israelites. It is from inside that he comes, from the perspective of the Israelite faith. The sole usage of the name הוהי ("YHWH") does, automatically and unquestionably, draw a link with the past; it presupposes a history of the knowledge of that God, and certain established ideas and beliefs about Him.

2. The concept of YHWH in Amos 1-2 is deeply attached to the theme of Jerusalem as His dwelling place (Amos 1:2). This notion points to an element of the Davidic covenant, a covenant that is further evidenced in the series, and in the book of Amos, by the background of the strong expectation for the restoration of the Davidic empire, by the list of nations that were addressed in Amos 1-2, by the structure of the book that relates the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2 with the prophecies of restoration of the

Davidic kingdom in Amos 9, and by religious polemic against the cultic shrines of northern Israel.

3. The metaphor of YHWH roaring and uttering His voice from His dwelling place evokes the ideas of divine judgment and its announcement through the prophetic voice. The role of the prophet as YHWH's spokesman is highlighted. This role, as is seen in the next section, points out to the function of the prophet as YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator, which is an element of the Mosaic covenant.

4. Judgment is the basic theme related to YHWH in Amos 1-2. The study of the way YHWH exercises His judgments in these chapters argues for the view that was basically expressed in terms of the covenant curses of divine fire and war, which in the OT are described in the Mosaic covenant.

5. The theme of a divine lawsuit is an important element not only in Amos, but also in the other two passages (Jer 25 and Joel 4[3]) that more closely parallel Amos 1-2 in the OT. This confirms the importance of the lawsuit form for a good understanding of the “Oracles Against the Nations” in Amos, and the implications that this form conveys for the discussion on the presence of covenantal elements in that series of oracles.

6. YHWH does not bring judgment only against His people, nor does He enter into a lawsuit against them only. His authority and interests reach far beyond the borders of Israel. This study of the passages parallel to Amos 1:2 has demonstrated the fundamental importance of the concept of YHWH as Creator and Ruler of the universe. YHWH has authority over all the nations of the world and over every human being, and therefore is the source of blessings and judgment for them all. Passages such as Jer 23:10 and Isa 24:4-6 relate these universal concepts of God and of His authority over mankind with the concept of a universal covenant and the covenantal element of curse. These concepts are also seen
to be of fundamental importance for the understanding of the divine judgments against the foreign nations in Amos 1-2.\(^1\)

7. The presentation of YHWH's historical acts of salvation in favor of Israel in Amos 2:9-12 has an explicit connection with the fulfillment of the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant, which became part of the core of the covenant between YHWH and Israel at Sinai (elsewhere in the book, this connection between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants is explicitly presented by the prophet Amos in chap. 3:1-2, a passage that is discussed further on).\(^2\) It has been seen that this historical recital positively indicates that the YHWH of Amos 1-2 is indeed Israel's covenant God.

The conclusions reached above give support then to the views of those scholars who have recognized the covenantal connotations of the divine name YHWH in Amos 1:2-2:16.\(^3\) They argue against those, like Hans Walter Wolff, Klaus Koch, and Gary Smith, who see no connection at all between YHWH and the OT covenant elements in Amos 1-2. They surely go against Rolland E. Wolfe's conclusions, for the preaching of Amos seems to be essentially founded on the ideas and concepts that were part of Israel's understanding and belief of her God. Hence, it seems right to say for Amos 1-2 that YHWH is God's covenant name, and it represents the character by which He dealt and continues to deal with His people.

**The Prophet**

YHWH does not speak directly to His people in Amos 1-2; His message is conveyed by His prophet, who introduces it through the formula רָאָשׁ הַ דְּהָי ("thus says..."

---

\(^1\)See below, 223-228, for more discussion on the importance of the concept of YHWH as the God of the universe for the understanding of Amos 1-2.

\(^2\)Cf. below, 226-227.

\(^3\)Cf. above, 153-154.
YHWH"). This formulaic introduction to each oracle in the series brings to the forefront the function of the prophet as YHWH’s messenger.

The view of the prophet as YHWH’s messenger has been overwhelmingly accepted in biblical scholarship. A discordant voice, however, can be found in John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East: Oral and Written Communications in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures: Communicators and Communiques in Context,* BJS, no. 169 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989). First, Greene analyzed the role messengers played in the ANE world and verified that they were an integral part of the ANE political and social life (ibid., 133-135). But in analyzing the biblical material on the prophets he concluded that “there is no evidence available to demonstrate or maintain steadfastly on form-critical or any other grounds that the speech of a prophet was a speech of a messenger, or that the prophet was a messenger, and that he and his audience understood him to have been such” (ibid., 256). In order to arrive at such a bold conclusion, Greene considered that all which is usually regarded as characteristic of the role of a messenger in OT prophecy (such as: the designation of a prophet as messenger, e.g., Hag 1:13; Mal 3:1; and 2 Chr 36:15-16; the technical usage of verbs that indicate YHWH’s commission to the prophet as messenger, such as ר Parenthood [“to send”] and מ Parenthood [“to go”], e.g., Isa 6:8-9; Jer 26:12; Ezek 2:2, 4; Amos 7:15; Jonah 1:2; the usage of the messenger formula “thus says YHWH;” the participation of the prophets in the council of YHWH, e.g., 1 Kgs 22:17; Isa 6:1-13; and Jer 23:18; etc.), either belonged to a context other than the one of a commissioned transmission of a message (Greene suggests contexts such as oracular consultation of God, or the prophet’s participation in part of the Israelite cultic service), or as being added much later to the original words of the prophets, under the influence of some late theological thinking, such as the Deuteronomistic theology (ibid., 147-204). When all this is taken into consideration, and one concentrates on what is the indisputable prophetic material, according to Greene, then one can observe a great variety of prophetic speeches that show very little similarity to the more homogeneous form and content of the messages transmitted by the ANE messengers (ibid., 256-257, 260-266).

Greene’s conclusions are highly questionable, mainly because they can stand only on his reconstruction of what he considers to be original to the prophets and what is not. This is a highly debatable issue with no consensus in biblical scholarship. In the case of Amos, e.g., opinions go from those who are willing to exclude very large sections of the book from the original words of the prophet (i.e., Hans W. Wolff, James Luther Mays, Robert B. Coote, and J. Alberto Soggin) to those who consider that the book almost in its entirety, if not even all of it, comes from Amos himself (i.e., Wilhelm Rudolph, John H. Hayes, Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, and Shalom M. Paul).

In his quest for an exact match between the form and content of the ANE literature and the prophetic material in the OT (once the “late additions” are taken out), Greene seems to overlook the fact that it should be expected that differences would appear. OT prophets, as messengers from God to men, were transmitting a message totally different from the messages that are common between man and his fellow (though a great similarity exists, in form at least, between the message of YHWH to His people, and that of a suzerain to his vassal, or that of a king to his people; cf. Harvey, *Plaidoyer prophétique,* 145-150; Holladay, "Assyrian Statecraft," 31-32; G. Ernest Wright, "The Faith of Israel," in *The Interpreter’s Bible,* ed. George A. Buttrick et al. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980], 1:355).

Furthermore, the variety of the prophetic message can be taken as an argument in
The introductory phrase "thus says PN . . ." occurs many times in the OT (some 464 times). It usually prefaces a message being delivered to someone by a third party, very often by a commissioned messenger. Therefore, it is usually called the messenger formula. In OT, it occurs for the first time in Gen 32:5, a passage in which Jacob instructed his messengers in what they should deliver to his brother Esau, when Jacob was returning from Haran to Canaan. His message was prefaced by a "thus says your servant Jacob . . .". As Claus Westermann remarked, "the formula authorizes the message, which is repeated by the messenger before the addressee, to be the word of the sender, corresponding, therefore to the signature in our letter form." The usage of this introductory formula is well attested not only in the OT but also throughout the ANE world over a long period of time.

The words contained in the oracle of Amos 1-2 are the words of YHWH, not of Amos. This is continually stressed by the repetition of the messenger formula in the favor of, instead of against, the role of the prophet as messenger. As Samuel A. Meier remarked: "The stereotyped Sumerian and Akkadian formulas provide much information, but their static nature and longevity over two millennia make one suspicious of their correspondence to reality. . . . The biblical literature, due to its variety, spontaneity and total lack of adherence to any consistent forms (even 'Thus says PN' is more often than not omitted and on one occasion occurs twice), may provide the best insight into actual messenger performance. Only here is the messenger found giving greetings." See Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*, HSM, no. 45 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 190-191. The variety of prophetic message and of the different ways it was delivered may be an argument in favor of it, instead of against it, after all!

If all the elements found in the present text of the OT are taken into consideration, it seems rather difficult to deny that the prophets in Israel functioned as YHWH's messengers, as the following studies demonstrate: James F. Ross, "The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 98-107; and Muilenburg, "'Office' of the Prophet," 127-150.

1Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 100.

beginning of each single oracle in these chapters, as well as by the formulas נִירָיָא יְהֹוָה ("says YHWH") and נִירָיָא יְהֹוָה ("oracle of YHWH") in Amos 1:5, 8, 15; 2:3, 16.1

Such an emphasis on YHWH’s authorship gives little support to John H. Hayes’s contention that this kind of introductory formula should rather be understood as an "attributive" formula, meaning that what the prophet was trying to say was "I, as a prophet, believe that this is what Yahweh would say," or "if Yahweh spoke directly on the issue at hand, this is what Yahweh would say." 2 As James M. Ward puts it, "the book of Amos is entirely controlled by the concept—the reality—of the word of God, not merely in substance, in the way that the Bible as a whole might be said to be the Word of God, but also in form. . . . The role of the prophet appears here to have been the oral delivery of messages from Yahweh to the leaders of the Israelite kingdom." 3 Or as Douglas Stuart states it, "the prophets considered themselves servants of God, vehicles through whom God himself spoke," and "as regards the prophets, their prophecy was in fact God’s prophecy; and their [the prophets’] self-understanding depended on his [God’s] self-revelation." 4

1The divine authorship of the words spoken by the prophet is further stressed throughout the book by the repeated employment of the above formulas, as well as by the formula נִירָיָא יְהֹוָה יָאכֵל עָשָׂה כִּי ("hear this word which YHWH has spoken"), in Amos 3:1 (or in its abbreviated form in 4:1; 5:1), and by the constant usage of the direct speech in the book, with the first person referring to YHWH. Against Amaziah’s charges, in Amos 7:11, that Amos was conspiring against Jeroboam (כִּי יְיָהוֹ יָמָנוּ וְאֵלָה ("for thus says Amos")), the prophet responds that his prophecies were not his own but YHWH’s and promptly exclaims in reaction: נִירָיָא יְהֹוָה יָאכֵל עָשָׂה כִּי ("now then listen to the word of YHWH").

2Hayes, Amos, 69. A somehow similar idea was presented by other authors such as Harry Mowvley (Amos & Hosea, 18) and Erling Hammershaimb (Amos, 22). For them, the prophet’s emphasis on YHWH speaking translates not the actual divine speech itself, but the idea that the prophet speaks with the authority of God and in the name of YHWH.

3Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 18-19.

4Stuart, "Prophet’s Self Understanding," 9, 14.
The first occurrence of the *messenger formula* in the OT, in the context of a person being sent by YHWH with a specific message to someone else, occurs in Exod 4:22, in the commission YHWH gave to Moses to go and say to Pharaoh "let My son go that he may serve Me." Moses used this formula many times, most of it in his addresses to Pharaoh (Exod 5:1; 7:17, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3), but also while speaking to the people of Israel (Exod 11:4), or to a part of the people (Exod 32:27).

The presentation of Moses as the first one to ever use the *messenger formula* in the name of YHWH is part of a very important OT notion that is fundamental for the understanding of the role and figure of prophets in Israel: Moses is the prophet *par excellence*, and the other prophets are the continuators of his ministry. The attachment of the prophetic ministry to Moses is made quite clear in the declaration of Hos 12:13 that it was by "a prophet" that YHWH brought Israel up from Egypt, and that by "a prophet" Israel was preserved. This is especially stressed in the references to Moses as prophet in Deut 34:10 ("and there has not risen a prophet since then in Israel like Moses"), and above all in Deut 18:15-19 with its promise that YHWH would raise up a prophet like Moses through whom the people would be able to hear YHWH.

The context in which that promise is made is very instructive for the understanding of the prophetic ministry in OT. In Deut 18:9-14, Israel is instructed that there should not be among them someone who practices divination, or a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. They should not give heed to such people, as the nations of Canaan were used to doing, for it was an abomination to YHWH, and because of it He was driving them out before Israel. Then comes the promise of vs. 15, that YHWH would raise up a prophet like Moses and the people should heed him. The need for such a prophet is explained in the text on the basis of the events that happened in Sinai-Horeb, when the people asked that YHWH not speak directly to them, but to Moses, and then Moses would tell them the word of God. Again,
vs. 18 repeats the promise that YHWH would raise up for the people a prophet like Moses, and it states further that He would put His words in the prophet's mouth, and the prophet would speak to the people all that YHWH had commanded him.

Many central concepts on the role of the prophets are stressed in Deut 18. First of all, it is YHWH who raises up a prophet. This point is also made evident in the reports of divine call and commission to the prophetic ministry, starting with Moses (Exod 3-4) and continued in the report of calls of many other prophets (e.g., 1 Sam 3; Isa 6; Jer 1; Ezek 2; Amos 7:14-15; Jonah 1:1-2). Second, YHWH would put His words in the prophet's mouth, and he would speak all that God commanded him to (cf. Exod 4:10-17; 7:1-2; 8:1-5; 16, 20-23; etc., for Moses; 1 Sam 3:13-14; 8:7-18; 2 Sam 7:4-17; Isa 6:9; 7:3-9; Jer 2:1-3; 3:12-20; 7:1-15; etc., for other prophets). Third, there was a need for a prophet, because YHWH did no longer speak directly to the people (Deut 18:16-17).

The context of YHWH's first call to a prophet is totally interrelated with that of His covenant with His people: The call and commission of Moses is related to the fulfillment of the promises of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 3:6, 15-17; 6:2-8); Moses' role as intermediary between God and the people is well fixed in the context of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod 20:18-19; Deut 5:2-5, 22-33; 15:16-18).

The prophet's role hence is that of YHWH's messenger to man, communicating to those to whom he is sent that which YHWH has commanded him to say. But he is also a mediator in the covenant between God and His people, performing the most different tasks that YHWH would require from him in that function, whether the transmission of the divine words and laws, exhortation, calls to repentance, reprehension of sins, pronouncement of judgment, etc.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\)For more discussion on the prophets as continuators of the Mosaic office (YHWH's messengers and covenant mediators), see Muilenburg, "'Office' of the Prophet," 139-150; Marsh, Amos, 14-16; Schultz, Prophets Speak, 20-21; Brightup, "Northern Origins," 220-221; Boyle, "Covenant Lawsuit," 345-347; Raitt, "Summons to Repentance," 42; Stuart, "Prophets' Self Understanding," 16; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 87-88.
Does the figure of the prophet in the book of Amos follow this picture of YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator according to the Mosaic example? As already stated above, the usage of the messenger formula in itself seems to point in that direction. This seems also to be the view that is developed in other verses of the series of the "Oracles Against the Nations," as well as in the rest of the book.

In the historical recital of Amos 2:9-11, the fifth and final act of YHWH's grace to Israel was: אֹסְפָה לְבָנָיו לְנַזִּירֵיהֶם וּלָכְתָרֵיהֶם ("and I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for nazirites"). The usage of the hiphil of אָסַף (אסף ["to raise up, appoint, install, entrust with a commission, establish, provide"]) in reference to spiritual and political leaders is not uncommon in the OT. The connection with prophets, however, points to the promise in Deut 18:15, 18, which is one of the two other instances that the sentence אָסַף בַּר ("to raise a prophet") is connected with YHWH.

The statement on the raising up of the Nazirites, in association with the prophets, as one of the gracious acts of YHWH to His people is unique to the book of Amos. Nazirites are never mentioned in any other prophetic literature. Though puzzling (see efforts to explain the reference to this group in Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 318-319; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 331-332; and Paul, *Amos*, 92-93), references to Nazirites are in accord with the context of Exodus and the conquest of Canaan which dominates this section of the historical recitation of Amos 2:9-12. Num 6, with its regulations on the Nazirite vow and practice, is reported in the context of the many laws Israel received from YHWH during her sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai. Other clear references to a nazir are found in Judg 13:5, 7 and 16:17 (the story of Samson) besides Amos 2:11-12 (Hannah's promise in 1 Sam 1:11 is very probably a reference to the Nazirite vow, though the word itself was never used in connection with Samuel).

The nazir was a symbol of total consecration to YHWH. Amos presents the Nazirites' existence in Israel not only as the result of the exercise of the free will of those who want to dedicate themselves to God, but above all as a result of YHWH's working in the midst of Israel. As Andor Szabó ("Textual Problems," 503) remarked, their inclusion with the prophets may be due to the simple fact that they actually were, with the prophets, the target of a religious persecution and oppression, as Amos 2:12 indicates. This religious oppression may well be an event that was occurring in the days of Amos, or else it may refer to some early persecution of those who kept themselves faithful to the ancient religion of Israel, such as in the times of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:29-19:18; 2 Kgs 9:4-10). Amos 2:12 may well portray details unknown elsewhere of this religious persecution that included also the Nazirites.

See, e.g., YHWH's raising up of judges (Judg 2:16, 18); saviors (Judg 3:9, 15); priests (1 Sam 2:35); and kings (1 Kgs 14:14; Jer 23:4-5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23; Mic 5:4; Zech 11:16).
in the OT. The other two passages, Amos 2:11 and Jer 29:15, ought to be understood on the basis of the one in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy has the promise, while Amos and Jeremiah seem to be references to the fulfillment of this promise.¹

This reference in Amos to YHWH's raising up of prophets points so directly to Deut 18:15-19 that a number of scholars consider it to be a late Deuteronomistic addition, on the basis of their views on the late origin of Deuteronomy and of its theology.² It depicts the prophets in the light of Deut 18's picture of the prophetic office.

Israel's injunction גַּן גַּן ("do not prophesy") to the prophets, reported in Amos 2:12, also relates to Deuteronomy's picture of the prophet of YHWH. By silencing the prophets, they silenced the source of communication between YHWH and His people, as Shalom Paul remarks.³ The prophets, as such a source, were the very heart of the promise found in Deut 18. Furthermore, Israel's rejection of the prophetic ministry and of their message is one of the central themes in the biblical report of the nation's rejection of YHWH's lordship and of His covenant with them (cf. 1 Kgs 13:4; 18:4, 13; 19:10, 14; 22:26-27; 2 Kgs 1:9-15; 6:31; Jer 2:30; 18:18; 20:10; 26:7-24; etc.; but especially 2 Kgs

¹Jer 29:15 speaks about the Israelites in exile who were claiming that "YHWH has raised up prophets for us in Babylon," in a reference to some false prophets who were proclaiming a quick end to Babylonian exile and a nearby restoration of the people to their land. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Israelite leaders and people who were living in Babylon, denouncing the words of such men as lies, and making clear the declaration of YHWH: "I did not send them." The words of these false prophets would not come true, and instead of a quick restoration, Israel would stay seventy years in captivity.

All the themes evoked above have a close relationship with those of Deut 18:15-19. YHWH's promise of raising up prophets as a means to know His words and will, found in these verses, is followed by a caution against false prophets (vvss. 20-22). These false prophets would claim to be speaking in YHWH's name, but they would indeed be speaking presumptuously. Their words would never come true.

²Werner Schmidt, "Deuteronomistische Redaktion," 181-182; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 170; Coote, Amos, 71; Soggin, Amos, 51.

³Paul, Amos, 94.
17:13-19, where the theme is well developed, and Isa 30:10-11, Mic 2:6, and Jer 11:21, where similar injunctions to Amos 2:12 "do not prophesy" appear.\(^1\)

Further on in the book of Amos, it is stated that YHWH reveals His "council, plan, deliberation, secret" (דִּבֶּר) to "His servants the prophets" (eousהָשָׁם הַנּוֹסָא) before He accomplishes it (Amos 3:7). The focus again comes back to the prophets as the channel of communication between YHWH and His people, for when YHWH speaks, the prophet who receives His revelation can but prophesy (Amos 3:8).

The prophets as "the servants of YHWH" enjoy an intimate relationship with YHWH; to them is YHWH's דִּבֶּר ("council, plan, deliberation, secret") revealed.\(^2\) This statement in Amos 3:7 can be understood either in the sense that the prophet participates in the heavenly council of YHWH, being therefore aware of His plans, and charged with proclaiming them as YHWH's official messenger (1 Kgs 22:19-23; Isa 6; Jer 23:18-22);\(^3\) or that he receives a private communication from God, as YHWH's intimate friend, and is sent by Him to make it known to others, as God's personal messenger (e.g., YHWH's

\(^1\)Here again, some consider this verse as a late addition to the original words of the prophet because of the centrality of these themes in what they regard to be the Deuteronomistic theology and its interpretation of the prophecy in Israel. See Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 51-52; Dion, "Message moral," 30; and Wolff, Joel and Amos, 171, among others.

\(^2\)The word דִּבֶּר ("council, plan, deliberation, secret") is used in the OT in reference to a friendly or confidential sharing (Job 19:19; Pss 55:15[14]; 111:1; Jer 6:11; 15:17), to a council in which plans are made or counsel is taken (Gen 49:6; Prov 15:22; Ezek 13:9), and to the plan or secret itself (Pss 64:3[2]; 83:4[3]; Prov 11:13; 20:19; 25:9). Many times, it is quite difficult to determine what is the exact meaning of the word in the passage, since any, or more than one, of them may be suitable to the context. The word is used in reference to YHWH's heavenly council, to His personal and intimate friendship, and to His confidential plans and secrets (Job 15:8; 29:4; Pss 25:14; 89:8[7]; Prov 3:22; Jer 23:18, 22). For a detailed discussion see, M. Sæbø, "דִּבֶּר sod Geheimnis," THAT (1984), 2:144-148; and Heinz-Joseph Fabry, "דִּבֶּר sod," TWAT (1986), 5:775-782.

\(^3\)Allen, "Amos," 42-44; Mays, Amos, 62; Stuart, "Prophets' Self Understanding," 10; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 399-400; Gary Smith, Amos, 110; Watts, "Images of Yahweh," 136-137.
revelation and commission to Moses, Samuel, Amos, is presented as being private instead of in a council; cf. Exod 3-4; 1 Sam 3, and Amos 7).\(^1\)

In Ps 25:14, the יִדְרִיָּה ("council, plan, deliberation, secret") of YHWH is set in parallel with His יִרְאֵה ("covenant"); both are for those who fear Him. Prov 3:32-33 states that יִדְרִיָּה ("council, plan, deliberation, secret") of YHWH is for the righteous, as it is His blessing, while His יִרְאֵה ("curse") is for the perverse. The language is covenantal, appealing to the covenant's blessing and curse, as the usage of the word יִרְאֵה ("curse") indicates (cf. Deut 28:20; Mal 2:2; 3:9). These two passages point out that the participation in, or receiving a revelation from, YHWH's יִדְרִיָּה ("council, plan, deliberation, secret") can well be one aspect of the covenantal relationship between YHWH and men.\(^2\)

The designation "servant of YHWH" was first applied to Abraham (Gen 26:24), who was also the first to be designated a prophet (Gen 20:7), and was especially used for Moses more than anybody else in the OT (Exod 14:31; Deut 34:5, 10; Josh 1:1-2, 7, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4-5; 2 Kgs 18:12; 2 Chr 1:3; 24:6). Both men enjoyed a close relationship with YHWH, received special revelations of YHWH's plans (Gen 18:17-21; Exod 3:7-10; 6:1-8; 7:1-5, 14-19, etc.), and were allowed to intercede and take part in the decisions taken by YHWH (Gen 18:23-32; Exod 32:9-14; 33:12-17; Num 14:13-20; etc.). These texts are deeply embedded in a covenantal context, for even Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah occurs inside the context of God's covenant with him (Gen 18:18).

Furthermore, the actual expression מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו ("His servants [YHWH's] the prophets") is quite a technical one, being usually used in the OT in references to the prophets as the special envoys of YHWH, His messengers, sent to proclaim YHWH's

---


\(^2\) See Weinfeld, "מַעֲשֵׂה בֵּרִית," 256-257.
message of judgment against unfaithful Israel, to call her back from her apostasy, to urge
the people to return to YHWH, to keep His commandments, and to be faithful to their
covenant with God, so that YHWH could save them from the oncoming destruction (2 Kgs
17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Zech 1:6; Dan 9:6; Ezra
9:11). That line of prophets, as "servants of YHWH," was seen in the light of the
prophetic ministry of Moses, as is evidenced by passages such as Jer 7:25 and Ezra 9:11,
which trace it back to the time of the Exodus from Egypt, indeed to Moses himself. Here
again, the prophets are seen as YHWH's messengers, and the covenant mediators between
God and His people.1

The picture of the prophet as YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator, which is
evidenced in Amos 1-2, is further corroborated by the close parallelism in form between
Amos's exhortations found in chap. 5 and exhortations of the Covenant Mediator
elsewhere in the OT.2

1 Again, many scholars consider this verse as a late addition to the book of Amos
from the time of the Deuteronomistic editing of the early prophetic material of Israel.
Walter Zimmerli, e.g., calls the expression "His servants the prophets" a Deuteronomic
"cliché." See W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God, SBT, no. 20
(Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 22; and also Mays, Amos, 61-62; Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 42-49; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 181; Coote, Amos, 69-70: Amsler, "Amos,"
188; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 29; Soggin, Amos, 58; Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 38-39.

A. G. Auld even considers Amos 3:7 to be much younger than it is usually
considered by the scholars above. He calls it a "post-deuteronomistic" addition, since the
phrase is quite common in parts that he considers to be very late in the books of 2 Kings
and Jeremiah, as well as in the books of Zechariah, Ezra, and Daniel. Cf. Auld, Amos,
30-31.

Others, however, defend the authenticity of the verse, saying that it is well rooted in
the biblical concept of prophecy, as evidenced in the early traditions about Moses (Josh
1:1-5), Samuel (1 Sam 3:9-10), and Elijah (1 Kgs 18:36-43). For these scholars, the
parallel between this text and what is considered Deuteronomistic passages would not
prove anything more than a shared perspective and a common vocabulary. Cf.
Hammershaimb, Amos, 59-60; Hayes, Amos, 126-127; Gary Smith, Amos, 102-103;
Paul, Amos, 112-113.

2 See the exhortations of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Elijah in passages such as
Exod 19:5-6; Deut 28:1-5; Josh 24:20; 1 Sam 7:3; and 1 Kgs 18:21.

It has been usually common, among a number of scholars, to consider the form of
the exhortations in Amos 5 as an imitation, a parody, of a priestly torah, the kind of
was built basically around a protasis ("if you do this") and an apodosis ("then this will happen"). The right choice would bring blessing and the wrong choice, curse. Claus Westermann has remarked that the sequence in Amos 5:6 of an exhortation ("seek

instructions the Israelites were used to receiving in the cultic shrines directly from the priests. The form would involve basically an instruction given in the imperative mood ("do this," or "don't do that"), followed by a causative concluding statement ("because," "for" this or that reason), as it appears in passages such as Lev 7:22-25; 19:5-8; Deut 14:4-8, 21 (for the discussion of the form see Wolff, Joel and Amos, 211-212). Cf. Mays, Amos, 87; Amsler, "Amos," 206; Koch, Prophets, 1:51-52; Martin-Achard, Amos, 101, 153; Polley, Amos, 110-111; Rolf Rendtorff, The Old Testament: An Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), 221.

Although there are some connecting points between the exhortations in Amos 5 and the so-called priestly torah, there are some basic differences between the two of them. A basic difference can be found in the motivation used by Amos in his exhortations. The prophet stresses the future possibility of judgment or forgiveness/salvation depending on the choice of the people. This stress on a conditional future is not found in the so-called priestly torah, but is the very mark of the covenantal exhortations of choice between blessings and curses.

Other scholars maintain that the exhortations found in the chapter are parts of a funeral song, an elegy (nō̂p) that is sung by the prophet concerning Israel, as the first verses of Amos 5 indicate. Cf. Motyer, Day of the Lion, 108; and Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 344. It is questionable, however, if the entire section of Amos 5:1-17 should be considered as a funeral song, or if the dirge is limited to the opening and closing verses (vss. 1-3, 16-17) of the section. The fact that many different forms appear in this section (funeral song, exhortation, hymnic passages, etc.) argues for the last possibility. That seems to be the conclusion indicated also by the chiastic structure of the section (see de Ward, "Chiastic Structure," 176). The subsections that correspond to each other, both in form and in theme, are set in parallel, and the element of lamentation seems to be restricted to vss. 1-3 and 16-17.

A detailed study of the form of the exhortations in Amos 5 was conducted by A. Vanlier Hunter, who proposed to see in Amos 5:6 a parody of a cultic lament. For Hunter, Amos ironically imitates the form of laments sung during cultic ceremonies. He especially builds up his case upon the close resemblance existing between Ps 7:2b-3 and Amos 5:6 in their usage of the nō̂p ("lest"), cū ("like"), and nō̂pā ("with none to") clauses. See, A. Vanlier Hunter, Seek the Lord! A Study of the Meaning and Function of the Exhortations in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Zephaniah (Baltimore: St. Mary's Seminary & University, 1982), 73, 77-78. The problem with Hunter's proposal is that he does not take into consideration three other passages in the OT (Ps 50:22; Jer 4:3-4; 21:12) that bear a much closer resemblance to Amos 5:6 than Ps 7:2-3. These passages point more to the usage of exhortations founded in the covenant than to a cultic lament. These three passages not only make use of the nō̂p ("lest"), cū ("like"), and nō̂pā ("with none to") clauses, but also convey a direct speech of YHWH to men, as in Amos 5 (while in Ps 7 it is a question of a speech of the psalmist directed to God). The two passages in Jeremiah make use of the messenger formula nō̂p, cū nō̂pā ("thus says YHWH") as in Amos 5:4-6.

1Raitt, "Summons to Repentance," 40-42.
YHWH!"), followed by a conditional promise ("and live"), and by a conditional threat ("lest He flare up like a fire"), parallels Deuteronomy with its conditional sentences of warning or exhortation, as well as with its imperatives and conditional proclamation of salvation.1

Another close similarity between the figure of the prophet in Amos, and Moses as YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator, can be seen in the vision reports of Amos 7. In response to the first two revelations of YHWH's judgment against His people, the prophet interceded in favor of Israel (vss. 2 and 5) and YHWH ננ ("repented") and did not execute His judgments (vss. 3 and 6). Over a century ago, E. W. Hengstenberg remarked on the close affinity between the language of Amos and that of Moses in Exod 32:9-14 and Num 14:11-19.2 Moses's plea ננ ("please forgive"), in Num 14:19, is paralleled by Amos's ננ ("please forgive") in Amos 7:2.3 The sentence on the repentance of YHWH, ננ ננ ננ ("YHWH repented concerning this"), in Amos 7:2, corresponds to Exod 32:14's ננ ננ ננ ("and YHWH repented of the evil"). But above all, remarked Hengstenberg, "is the agreement in the whole—the threatening of judgment by the Lord, and its being averted at the intercession of the prophet."4

This "agreement in the whole," however, is much more striking than at first glance. Very surprisingly, as David Noel Freedman remarked, Amos and Moses are the only two

---

1Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1991), 237-239. In this study Westermann dealt not only with Amos 5:6 but also with a number of other passages in the Minor Prophets that have this same basic form (as Hos 10:12a, 12b; 12:6, 9; Joel 2:12-14; Amos 5:14-15; Zeph 2:3; Zech 1:1-6; 6:15b; 8:14-17; Mal 3:6-12).


3These are the only two occurrences of the imperative ננ ("forgive") followed by the particle ננ ("please") in OT. The verb ננ ("to forgive"), involving YHWH and His people, is always used within the covenant context; cf. Exod 34:9; Num 15:25-26; Deut 29:19[20]; 1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Chr 6:21, 25, 27, 30, 39; 7:14; Jer 5:1, 7; 31:34; 33:8; 36:3; 50:20; Dan 9:19.

4Ibid.
persons in the entire OT who intercede with YHWH, in face of His imminent judgment against His people, and have success in their efforts. This puts Amos in line with Moses, not only in his role as messenger of YHWH to His people, or as a covenant mediator who admonishes the people over their sins and calls them to repentance and to return to YHWH and His covenant, but also in the role of one who pleads with YHWH to forgive His people, in the full light of the Mosaic figure.

The last statement on prophets in the book is found in the interchange between Amos and Bethel's priest Amaziah in Amos 7:12-17. Amaziah sternly tells Amos, whom he calls מַפֵי ("seer"), to go back to Judah, and there eat his bread and prophesy, and that he should never again prophesy in Bethel (vs. 12-13). To this Amos responds that he was not a prophet, nor a son of the prophets, but a herdsman, a dresser of sycamore trees, but

1Freedman remarked that there are three types of records of YHWH's repenting in the OT: First, sometimes He repents spontaneously, on the basis of an event, like His repentance for having created humanity in Gen 6 (there is positive spontaneous repentance too [one could mention here, though the author does not refer to it, 2 Sam 24:16, e.g., when YHWH repents of the destruction He was bringing over the people of Jerusalem on account of David's sin]); second, YHWH repents when people repent first, as in the case of the city of Nineveh in the book of Jonah; third, YHWH repents when a prophet intervenes, and the only recorded cases in the Bible are those of Moses and Amos. See David Noel Freedman, "Other Than Moses . . . Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?" BRev 1, no. 4 (1985): 57-58. For a more detailed discussion, see Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 638-679.

2For more discussion on Amos as a covenant mediator interceding for Israel, see Boyle, "Covenant Lawsuit," 346-347; Seilhamer, Prophets and Prophecy, 47-49; Stuart, "Prophets' Self Understanding," 13; Paul, Amos, 3-4; Niehaus, "Amos," 451-452. See also Brueggemann, "Intercessory Formula," 385-399; and Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 114, 206-207, for further discussion on the covenantal connotation of the passage, with special reference to the way Amos uses the name Jacob, the verb עָסָק ("stand"), and the word תּוֹג ("small") in his intercession.

3The fact that Amaziah calls Amos מַפֵי ("seer") does not necessarily imply a derogatory meaning. The title is in itself perfectly legitimate. It is used, e.g., in 2 Sam 24:11; 1 Chr 21:9; 2 Chr 29:25, for Gad who is also called נָבִי ("prophet") in 1 Sam 22:5. Indeed, in 1 Sam 24:11 both titles are used for him. In 2 Kgs 17:13, e.g., it is stated that YHWH spoke to Israel through "every prophet נָבִי and every seer מַפֵי," clearly setting both of them in parallel. Amaziah's address to Amos as מַפֵי ("seer") may be due to the fact that their conflict came in the context of a vision report, as Shalom Paul remarked (Paul, Amos, 240). For more discussion on the word מַפֵי ("seer"), see Alfred Jepsen, מַפֵי chāzāh; מַפֵי chōzeh; מַפֵי chāzōn," TDOT (1980), 4:280-290.
YHWH took him from behind the flock, and said to him: "go, prophesy to My people Israel" (vss. 14-15).1

Amos's answer corresponds to Amaziah's words point by point. Against Amaziah's "go" there is YHWH's "go"; against his interdiction to prophesy there is YHWH's order to prophesy; against his recommendation of making a living out of prophecy in Judah but not in Israel, Amos answered that he is not a professional prophet and that he lives from something else, but if he prophesies is because YHWH has commanded him to do so. The points highlighted in their dialogue are the same already discussed in Amos 2:11-12 and 3:7-8:2 Amos is the kind of prophet raised (כּוּנ) by YHWH, who faithfully obeys the divine command to prophesy and lets Israel know about YHWH's "plans" (תְּנִיס), even in face of strong opposition and interdiction of doing so. The figure of the prophet here continues therefore with that which has been presented throughout the book.

Finally, in looking at the entire book of Amos, one sees the prophet preaching judgment (Amos 1:2-9:10), as well as salvation (Amos 9:11-15), calling Israel back to YHWH, and exhorting her to live according to His laws (Amos 5:4-6; 14-15, 24); considering YHWH's people (Israel and Judah) as one and addressing both of them (Amos

---

1These verses in Amos are among the most disputed in the book. Some scholars propose that Amos’s answer to Amaziah is a way of saying that he “is not” a prophet; others prefer to see it as a way of affirming that he indeed “is” a prophet; still others, as a way of expressing that he “was not” a prophet before, but that he “is” one now; etc. (cf. the overview of the debate in Martin-Achard, Amos, 17-37; Hayes, Amos, 235-236; Hasel, Understanding, 41-47; and Paul, Amos, 243-249).

Much of the debate has been focused on the interpretation of what נָשָׂא ("prophet") means, and in the tense of the verb "to be" that is implied in the nominal sentence of vs. 14. The parallelism between the answer of Amos and the words of Amaziah, however, seems to make explicit that Amos is making clear to Amaziah that he was not someone living out of prophecy, as the priest insinuates. His profession was completely other. If he prophesies, it is not for bread, but because YHWH commanded him so, and he could not disobey the divine word. See Wolff, Joel and Amos, 313-314; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 57; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 789-790; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 214-216; Finley, Amos, 292-293; Niehaus, "Amos," 462-463.

2See above, 161, 205-211.
2:4-16; 3:1-2; 4:1; 6:1; 9:7, 11), and predicting their restoration under the Davidic rulership (Amos 1:2; 9:11). All these, according to Ronald E. Clements, are the distinctive characteristics of the prophets not only as YHWH's messengers, but also as the spokesmen, the mediators, of the covenant between YHWH and His people. It seems undeniable, therefore, that the book of Amos presents the prophet, his ministry, and his message under the light of YHWH's covenant with His people.

The Nations

Eight nations are addressed in the series of oracles in Amos 1-2. The first three are referred to by their leading cities (Damascus [Aram]; Gaza [Philistia]; Tyre [Phoenicia]), and the last five by their national identities (Edom; Ammon; Moab; Judah; Israel). The inclusion of foreign nations in the prophetic address, side by side with Judah and Israel, has been the subject of much debate in the studies of the book of Amos, as the survey of literature has already demonstrated. Many consider it to be a clear evidence of Amos's understanding of YHWH as a universal God, One who has influenced the history of every nation on earth, and to whom all are accountable. This understanding of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos, however, seems improbable in view of the fact that Amos 1-2 addresses only eight specific nations and not all the nations of the earth, as already remarked in the discussion on the historical background of Amos. This does not

---

1Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 56-57. For Clements, this presentation of the prophets evidences the late reinterpretation of their ministry and the editing of their prophecies under the influence of the Deuteronomistic theology and its views on YHWH's covenant with Israel.

2Cf. above, 96-97, for the discussion on this point.

3Cf. above, 33-45.

4Cf. above, 34-35, 42-43.

5Cf. above, 61-62.
mean that Amos did not consider YHWH as being the God of the entire universe, the Ruler over all the earth and its inhabitants—other passages in the book make this clear. It does seem to point in another direction for the reason why these specific nations were included with Judah and Israel in the series of oracles.

In the discussion on the historical background of the prophecies of Amos, much of the message of the book was set against the context of the recovery of the ancient borders of Israel in the days of King Jeroboam, according to the word of YHWH through the prophet Jonah as reported in 2 Kgs 14:25. This restoration implied the recovery of the borders of the ancient Davidic/Solomonic empire, which included all the region located between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Such a restoration became a reality under the reign of Jeroboam, in the northern kingdom of Israel, and Uzziah, in the southern kingdom of Judah, though for only a short period of time. It was proposed that Amos preached during a time when the prophecies of restoration were being fulfilled, and Israel (as well as Judah) was going from victory to victory, but had not yet attained the zenith of her power. Hence, expectations were very high, the people were certain that YHWH was with them and that no evil would reach them. They looked forward to the "day of YHWH" when Israel finally would reach the glory and power of the days of old, and be at the head of all the nations of the earth.3

As seen in chapter 3, "restoration" appears well to have been the very key word of the time, as the use of the hiphil of אָדַן (אָדַן ["to restore"]) in 2 Kgs 14:25 seems to

1E.g.: the hymnic passages in the book; the reference to all the families of the earth in Amos 3:2; the declarations on the power and authority of YHWH in raising up a foreign nation against Israel (Amos 6:14); in inflicting plagues on Egypt (Amos 4:10); in destroying Sodom and Gomorrah (Amos 4:11); on His influence on the history of the Ethiopians, Syrians, and Philistines (Amos 9:7); etc.

2Cf. above, 50-52.

3With all the other major powers in the ANE (Egypt and Assyria, especially) being extremely weak in those days, the recovery of the glory of the Davidic/Solomonic empire would have made Israel and Judah the great powers of the region at the time. Cf. above, 50-52.
indicate. In this sense, Amos 1-2 attacks the basis of this euphoric expectation when the prophet systematically uses the same verb to express the inevitable judgment of YHWH against all the nations that were included within the borders of the ancient Davidic/Solomonic empire, or that were intimately related with it (Tyre), and were to be part again of the "Greater Israel."\(^1\)

Understood in this way, the list of nations in Amos 1-2 points to the Davidic/Solomonic empire,\(^2\) and especially to the extension of the total area of this empire.\(^3\) This touches the question of the land, more precisely of the land promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21), reaffirmed as YHWH's gift to Israel in the Mosaic covenant (Exod 23:31; Deut 11:24), and realized as such in the Davidic kingdom, as part of YHWH's covenant with David and his lineage (Ps 89:26[25]). The description of the extent of the Davidic/Solomonic empire (2 Sam 8:1-15; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 18:1-13; 2 Chr 7:8; 9:26) corresponds to it so well, that some view the Davidic/Solomonic empire as the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham;\(^4\) while others see the covenant with Abraham as a theological justification for the Davidic kingship and its territorial expansions.\(^5\)

---

1Cf. above, 60-63, for the discussion on the use of the hiphil of זָרַד (זָרַד: ["to restore"]) in Amos 1-2.

2The Davidic/Solomonic empire's background for the series of oracles in Amos 1-2 has been noted by scholars such as Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 107-110; Mauchline, "Implicit Signs." 286-292; Christensen, Prophecy and War, 55-72; Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 61; Vischer, "Amos," 144; Koch, Prophets, 1:68-69; Dumbrell, Covenant, 154; Barré, "I' sybnw," 622-623; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 27, 206-207; Polley, Amos, 66-74.

3Note the reference to all the region comprised between Lebo Hamath, in the north, and the border with Egypt, in the south, as "all Israel" in 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; and 2 Chr 7:8.

4Mendenhall, "Covenant," 718; Dyrness, Themes, 120-121; Elmer A. Martens, God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology, with a foreword by Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 100-101; Dumbrell, Covenant, 50-51, 149, 151, 153-154, 163; McComiskey, Covenants of Promise, 42-43.

5Philip J. Calderone, Dynastic Oracle and Suzerainty Treaty: 2 Samuel 7, 8-16, Logos, no. 1 (Manila: Loyola House of Studies, 1966), 46; Ronald E. Clements, Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for the Israelite Tradition, SBT, second
The concept of the "promised land" is closely intertwined with covenant in the OT. This land belongs to YHWH and is His gift to His elected ones, guaranteed by formal covenant. It is the place where He dispenses covenant blessings. Faithfulness to YHWH and obedience to His stipulations are required in order to retain the possession of the land and the enjoyment of YHWH's blessings. Rebellion and disobedience result in the enactment of the curses written in the covenant. Persistent rebellion, even in face of YHWH's judgments, will result in the destruction of the nation, and in the expulsion of the people from the land. Forgiveness and restoration are implied in the people's return to the land and the renewal of YHWH's blessings upon them.\(^1\)

These covenantal connotations of the land appear throughout the book of Amos. First, as proposed here, YHWH speaks to the nations comprised within the territory of the "promised land" (Amos 1-2). Second, this land is presented as a gift from YHWH to His people, given to them after the Exodus from Egypt (Amos 2:10). Third, because of Israel's rebellion and unfaithfulness to YHWH, she was punished with many divine judgments that directly affected the people and the land (judgments that recall the covenant curses: famine, drought, pestilence, military defeats, decimation of the people by enemy forces, destruction of the land by fire and warfare, etc.—Amos 1:4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 14; 2:2-3, 5, 13-16; 3:11; 4:6-12; 5:2-3, 6, 16-20; 6:8-14; 7:1, 4, 9, 17; 8:3, 8-14; 9:1-4, 8-10). Fourth, exile from the land follows YHWH's destruction of the nations as such (Amos 1:5,

---

8, 15; 2:2; 4:2-3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:17). Finally, YHWH's restoration of His people implies their return to the "promised land" and abundant blessings bestowed upon them and upon the land (Amos 9:11-15).

The fact that, in the general structure of the book (A. Amos 1-2; B. Amos 3; C. Amos 4; D. Amos 5:1-17; C'. Amos 5:18-6:14; B'. Amos 7:1-8:3; A'. Amos 8:4-9:15), the oracles of Amos 1-2 are set in parallel with those in Amos 8:4-9:15 reinforces these conclusions even further. It strengthens the argument that the restoration of the Davidic empire was indeed the background theme of the first two chapters of the book. While it is denied in Amos 1-2, it is promised in Amos 9:11-15, but with the explicit indication that it will happen only after YHWH has exercised His judgments upon all the nations of the region as predicted (Amos 9:8-10). The denial of the expectations for the restoration of the Davidic empire is also evident in Amos 6:14. There, in contrast with the prophecies of restoration of the ancient borders of Israel "from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of Arabah" in 2 Kgs 14:25, Amos declares that YHWH would raise a nation against His people that would oppress them from "Lebo Hamath to the Brook of Arabah."

The recognition of the Davidic empire as the background of the "Oracles Against the Nations" in Amos 1-2 has been criticized on the grounds that: First, there is no substantial proof that Israel, even during the age of David and Solomon, ruled over all the states enumerated in Amos 1:3-2:5, in spite of such claims in the OT. Second, Tyre was never part of the Davidic empire, hence, it is questionable that the other nations were

---

1See Janzen, "Land," 149.

2Cf. above, 79-83, 85-88, for the discussion on the overall chiastic structure of the book of Amos.

3Though in 2 Kings it is a question of the Sea of Arabah, while in Amos 6:14 of the Brook of Arabah, both references seem to speak of the same area; cf. Wolff, Joel and Amos, 289; Hayes, Amos, 192-193; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 585-588; Paul, Amos, 221. Lebo Hamath appears repeatedly as the northern border of the "promised land" and of the Davidic/Solomonic empire (Num 13:21; 34:8; Josh 13:5; Judg 3:3; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 2 Chr 7:8; Ezek 47:20; 48:1). The desert of Arabah is another important landmark of the borders of Israel (Deut 1:7; 3:17; 4:49; Josh 11:16; 12:3; 15:6; 18:18).
evoked in the oracles because of their past relationship to this empire. Third, Amos considers YHWH as the sovereign over all the nations of the earth and not only over those of the Davidic empire. Fourth, this interpretation is overloaded with covenantal connotations, and it is highly questionable that the prophet Amos thought even of Israel’s relationship with YHWH to be covenantal, much less that of the other nations in the series.1

The fact that the OT does claim that David and Solomon ruled over the entire area described in Amos 1-2 (cf. 2 Sam 8; 1 Kgs 4:21, 24; 8:65-66; etc.) makes irrelevant the first criticism above. Amos preached within the context of the Israelite belief and faith, and not according to today’s uncertainties and questions on the historical reality of the biblical claims. Furthermore, the limitations of our data and knowledge of this biblical period should make one cautious when opposing and denying the biblical claim.2

The inclusion of Tyre among the group of nations of Amos 1-2 does not necessarily deny that the list points back to the Davidic/Solomonic empire. To the contrary, this can be seen as an argument in its favor. It is precisely in connection with Tyre, a nation that was not a vassal to David but rather a political partner, that the prophet speaks of a נָּ֨אָרָ֗יו רַעֲם (“covenant/treaty of brothers”). This is a unique expression that is not attested

---

1See Hayes, Amos, 57-58; Noble, "Israel," 58-61.

2New archeological findings may well substantiate the biblical point of view after all. Cf., e.g., the Aramaic stele fragment found at Tel Dan, apparently from the ninth century B.C., that mentions the "house of David." The stele seems to commemorate a victory of the Arameans over Israel and Judah. See Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," IEJ 43 (1993): 81-98; Zev Radovan, "'David' Found at Dan," BAR 20 (1994): 26-39. See also André Lemaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," BAR 20, no. 3 (1994): 30-37, for the occurrence of "house of David" in the Mesha stele.

These are the first attestations of the name of David and of a reference to his royal house in an ancient inscription outside the Bible. As Lemaire puts it, they come "no doubt to the chagrin of those modern scholars who maintain that nothing in the Bible before the Babylonian exile can lay claim to any historical accuracy" (ibid., 31-32).
either in the OT or in the ANE literature. The closest parallel is probably the "brotherhood" between Judah and Israel mentioned in Zech 11:14.1

The concept of "brotherhood," however, was an important one in the political world of treaties in the ANE and in Ancient Greece. The term ahhuțu ("brotherhood") was a term for treaty in the Hittite world,2 and terms such as φιλία ("affection, friendship, brotherhood") and φιλότητα ("friendship, love, affection, brotherhood") were usually used in conjunction with συμμαχία ("alliance") and ὀρθόν ("oath, pledge, treaty") in Greek literature and politics.3 "Brotherhood" was usually used to refer to a relationship between parties of equal status. In a parity treaty, the contracting parties would often call themselves "brothers." Vassals to the same suzerain also used to refer to each other as "brothers." Even a vassal and his suzerain could sometimes be referred to as "brothers," though such usage was not frequent.4

In this sense, the expression רַבַּה רְבִית ("covenant/treaty of brothers") seems to refer to Tyre's political relationship to Israel established during the reign of David and Solomon. That a treaty existed between these two nations, and that it was considered in terms of "brotherhood," can be seen in the OT passages that refer to it (2 Sam 5:11; 1 Kgs 14:259; idem, "The Common Heritage of Covenantal Traditions in the Ancient World," in Istituto Gramsci. Seminario di antichistica: I trattati nel mondo antico. Forma, ideologia, funzione, ed. L. Canfora, M. Liverani, and C. Zaccagnini, SSA, no. 2 (Rome: "L’Erma" di Bretschneider, 1990), 178.

2See, e.g., the use of this term in the treaty between Hattusilis III and his Babylonian counterpart Kadasman-Enil (cf. Elmar Edel, "Die Abfassungszeit des Briefes KBo I 10 (Hattušil—Kadasman-Elil) und seine Bedeutung für die Chronologie Ramses’ II," JCS 12 [1958]: 131-132).

3See, e.g., the description of political treaties of friendship in the Iliad, 3.73, 94, 256, 353 (cf. John Priest, "OPKIA in the Iliad and Consideration of a Recent Theory," JNES 33 [1964]: 48-56).


5:15[1], 26[12]; 9:13; 1 Chr 14:1). In 1 Kgs 15:26[12], it is plainly stated that a treaty was established between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre. This treaty was clearly a parity treaty, as Hiram’s appellation of Solomon as בָּן (“brother”) in 1 Kgs 9:13 indicates, and as the historical report of mutual friendship and cooperation between the two nations points out. This treaty relationship between Solomon and Hiram seems to be a continuation of the treaty relationship already existing between David and the Phoenician king, as is indicated by the use of the verb רָעָה (“to love”) to define the relationship between Solomon’s father and Hiram (1 Kgs 5:15[1]).

Does the view that Amos 1-2 concerns the Davidic empire, in its relationship to both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, fail to recognize that the prophet envisioned YHWH’s sovereignty to be universal, extending well beyond the domain of David’s empire (Amos 9:7), as the third objection above sustains?

There is no contradiction, in the OT, between the concept of YHWH’s universal sovereignty and His covenants with Abraham and David. Quite the contrary—both the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants are set in the OT in clear connection with YHWH’s universal sovereignty over the nations, and over every person.

The biblical report sets the Abrahamic covenant against the background of the origins of the nations. Gen 10 traces all the nations of the world back to the three sons of Noah, and describes the location of their land on earth. Gen 11 declares that it was YHWH

---

1 This has been the position of most commentators on Amos. See a survey of the question in Priest, "Covenant," 400-406; Soggin, Amos, 38-40; Martin-Achard, Amos, 136-137; Hayes, Amos, 87-89; Paul, Amos, 61; Niehaus, "Amos," 348-349.

This seems to be the best interpretation of the expression שָׁנֶה תֹּהֵן ("covenant/treaty of brothers") in Amos 1:9, in view of the terminology of international treaties in the ANE and of the biblical data on the treaty relationship between Israel and Tyre. All this, together with the accentuated Davidic context of Amos 1-2, makes it difficult to sustain the other interpretations of this rare expression, such as: universal brotherhood of mankind (see discussion in Vogels, Universal Covenant, 31-32); political treaty between the Phoenician cities (Honeycutt, Amos, 24); bond of kinship between Israel and Edom, as a paradigm of the legal consanguineous bond that unites kinsmen (Wolff, Joel and Amos, 159); treaty definition of the political status of Israel and Tyre as brother vassals to Assyria (see considerations on this position in Hayes, Amos, 89).
who dispersed them over all the face of the earth, in an act of judgment against them. This same chapter introduces Abraham (Abram) and his family. Then, Gen 12:1-3 reports how God made of Abraham a touchstone by which other men would either be blessed or cursed by God. It declares that through him all the families of the earth, previously described in Gen 10, would be blessed. The call of Abraham, with its promise of a posterity and of a land, is presented in the biblical narrative as YHWH's provision for the salvation and blessing of the dispersed mankind.¹

The nations are also integrated into the Davidic covenant. The universal scope of this covenant seems already to be hinted at in the enigmatic sentence נֵזֶקָה וּתְרָפֵם ("and this is the law/instruction for man/mankind") found in 2 Sam 7:19 (cf. also 1 Chr 17:17). This phrase refers back to the promise of continuity of the Davidic house, which was earlier expressed in vs. 12 as a "seed after you that will come forth from your loins," terms that closely parallel the promises made to Abraham.² In his prayer of thanksgiving, David seems to recognize in YHWH's promises a renewal of the Abrahamic promises, and, as in the case of Abraham, God's provision for the entire mankind.³ This interpretation of


²The expression נֵזֶקָה וּתְרָפֵם ("your seed after you") occurs in the OT only in the promises to Abraham in Gen 17:1-16 (4 times); in the confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob in Gen 35:12 and 48:4; and in the promise to David in 2 Sam 7:12 and 1 Chr 17:11. The qualitative sentence נֹהֲדָה וּנְדָחָה ("that will come forth from your loins") occurs only in connection with Abraham (Gen 15:4) and David (1 Sam 7:12).

³That David recognized YHWH's promises to him to be in continuity with, or as a renewal of, the promises previously made to Abraham, as well as to Israel, can be seen in the quasi quotations of these promises in 2 Sam 7: great name (2 Sam 7:9 // Gen 12:2); of a seed (2 Sam 7:12 // Gen 15:4, 17:7-10); to be YHWH's son (2 Sam 7:14 // Exod 4:2); a lineage of kings (2 Sam 7:12-16 // Gen 17:6; 49:10); a land, a secure place for Israel (2 Sam 7:10 // Gen 12:1; 15:18-20; Deut 11:24-25; Josh 1:4-5); to be their God and they the people of YHWH (2 Sam 7:23, 24 // Gen 17:7-8; 28:21; Exod 6:7; 29:45; Lev 11:45; 22:33; etc.). See discussion in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," in The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis, ed. John H. Skilton, Milton C. Fisher, and Leslie W. Sloat (N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 308-310.
"and this is the law/instruction for man/mankind") is supported by the Akkadian cognate terit nise ("oracle/instruction for man"), an expression that refers to an oracle that establishes the destiny of men, a decree concerning humanity in general.¹

The theme of the universal reach of the Davidic kingship and covenant is quite developed in the Psalms. Ps 2 speaks of the submission of the nations to the Davidic king enthroned by YHWH on Mount Zion. This same point is also stressed in Ps 18:44-51[43-50]; 45:6[5]; 72:8-11; 89:26-28[25-27]; 110. YHWH's purpose to bless entire mankind through the royal lineage of David is explicitly stated in Ps 72:17. This verse declares that the nations will bless themselves/be blessed (והם תבשׁו) in the Davidic king. This statement parallels directly the one made to Abraham in Gen 12:3 and 22:18 concerning his promised seed.²

The universal character of the Davidic kingship and covenant is also emphasized in some prophetic books. In Isaiah, the "root of Jesse" will reign and judge all the peoples (Isa 9:2-7; 11-12). He is called the "servant of YHWH," and is said to bring justice to the nations, and serve as a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles (Isa 42:1-7). He will be YHWH's witness to them, their leader and commander (Isa 55:3-5). In Mic 5:2-4,


²Elsewhere in the OT, the expression ב תבשׁו ("they will bless themselves/be blessed in"), referring to the nations, occurs only in the reaffirmation of the Abrahamic promises to Isaac and Jacob in Gen 26:4 and 28:14, and in the statement in Jer 4:2 that the nations would bless themselves/be blessed in YHWH when Israel would return to YHWH and walk in faithfulness with Him. In all these passages, the idea of Abraham's promised seed as the channel of blessing for all the nations of the world is quite clear.
a Davidic king will come from Bethlehem Ephrathah and he will have a power that will reach the ends of the earth. Zech 9:9-10 speaks of the coming king of Israel, who would command peace to the nations, and whose dominion would extend to the ends of the earth.¹

The argument does not hold, therefore, that Amos's concept of the universal sovereignty of YHWH militates against the view that the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants lie behind the list of nations in Amos 1-2.

This argument is further debilitated by the fact that the book of Amos does bring the concept of universal sovereignty of YHWH in connection with His covenant with Abraham and David elsewhere in the book. In Amos 3:1-2, YHWH addresses the entire עם אנה ("family") that He brought from Egypt, hence both Judah and Israel, saying that only them He knew "from all the families of the earth" (האלהים אשו לארץ ולכל משפחות). This expression kommt ("all the families of the earth") occurs only three times in the OT—once here in Amos and the other two in the book of Genesis: (1) in Gen 12:3, in YHWH's affirmation that "all the families of the earth" would be blessed in Abraham; and (2) in Gen 28:4, in the reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant and promise with Jacob and his descendants. The election of Israel is therefore connected in Amos 3:1-2 with both the Exodus from Egypt and the Abrahamic covenant.² It further sets the election of Israel in universal terms by evoking the context of Gen 10-12, where the description of the "families


²See Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 322; Paul, Amos, 101; Niehaus, "Amos," 375. Hans Walter Wolff's view (Joel and Amos, 177) that here עם אנה ("family") means only "clan," "a division of a tribe," and has nothing to do with the passages in Genesis, stands on shaky ground in view of the rarity of the entire expression עם אנה ("all the families of the earth"), and of the unique relationship it conveys between Amos and Genesis. The connection between the election of Israel with the Exodus event and the Abrahamic covenant is nothing but the clear biblical claim; cf. Exod 3:6-17; 6:2-8, etc.
of the earth" is found (Gen 10), and the special election of Abraham and his family is described.

This same context seems to be the background of Amos 9:7. The Exodus from Egypt is evoked by the standard formula (I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt). Israel is also set in the perspectives of the other nations, here Cush, Philistia, and Aram, and the point is made for the universal character of YHWH, as the God of entire mankind. YHWH's sovereignty over nations is related in Amos 9 to His character as Creator, as the hymnic passage of Amos 9:5-6, that just precedes vs. 7 in the chapter, makes clear. In Amos, YHWH is the Creator of the universe and of man (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6), and as such He has complete control over nature (Amos 4:6-13; 5:8-9; 7:1-6; 8:8-10; 9:2-6, 13-15) and over the nations of this world (Amos 1-2; 3:1, 9-11; 4:11; 6:1-2, 14; 9:4, 7-12). This emphasis on YHWH as Creator and Lord of the entire world points back to Gen 1-12, to the universal background of the history of the Israelite nation, of her election, and her meaning in the world.

This universal perspective of YHWH's sovereignty is brought into relationship also to the Davidic covenant. The general picture of the book of Amos on YHWH and His sovereignty over the entire world does not contradict then the view that both the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants are at the background of the series of oracles in Amos 1-2.

As for the last objection against the view above (i.e., that it is overloaded with covenantal connotations, while it is highly questionable that the prophet Amos ever thought

---

1 The biblical texts that set Israel in association with the other nations of the world (e.g., Gen 10-12; 1 Chr 1-2; Ps 87; Isa 11-24; 43; 45-47; Jer 46-49; Ezek 26-31; 38-39; Nahum; Zeph 2-3) always emphasize the principle that it is YHWH who controls, directs, and judges them. Henceforth, YHWH is the God of the entire world, and over every man and nation, even if He is not recognized so by them. The book of Amos holds then the basic principle of the universal power and authority of YHWH, in respect to His relationship with the nations of the world.

2 For more discussion on the relationship between Amos and Gen 1-12 see Neher, Amos, 34-67; André Feuillet, "L'universalisme et l'alliance dans la religion d'Amos," BVC 17 (1957): 17-29; Gottwald, All the Kingdoms, 118-119; Vogels, Universal Covenant, 73-82.
in terms of covenant, even in reference to Israel, and much less to any other nation), this is
the subject of this dissertation, and the conclusions reached here speak for themselves.

If the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants stand at the background of the series of
oracles in Amos 1-2, a question can be raised as to how they are related to the charges
found in these oracles. Do these charges presuppose the Davidic and Abrahamic
covenants, or are they related to something else?

The כִּזְנֵי ("Rebellions, Transgressions")
of the Nations in Amos 1-2

In a consistent manner, it is made clear in Amos 1-2 that YHWH brings judgment
over the eight nations in the series because of their כִּזְנֵי ("rebellions, transgressions").
Each nation is charged with some specific wrongdoing/s that is particular to her. All
wrongdoings are classified by the text as כִּזְנ ("rebellion, transgression"), which is a
central term in the vocabulary of the book of Amos. It appears ten times as a plural noun
(Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:14; 5:12), and twice as a verb (two occurrences in
Amos 4:4).

The term כִּזְנ ("rebellion, transgression") is used ninety-three times in the OT,
while the verb כִּזְנ ("to rebel, transgress") appears forty times.1 It seems to have the basic
meaning of "rebellion, revolt," and as such, it is many times used as a verb, but also as a
noun (Ezek 21:29[24]), to express the action of a nation that rebels against its suzerain, or
against a dominant power (e.g., northern Israel against the house of David, 1 Kgs 12:19; 2
Chr 10:19; Moab against Israel, 2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5, 7; Edom against Judah, 2 Kgs 8:20, 22; 2
Chr 21:8, 10; Judah against Babylon, Ezek 21:29[24]; implied in Prov 28:2 that a
rebellious nation is always changing its rulers).

1See Abraham Even-Shoshan, ed., A New Concordance of the Bible: Thesaurus
of the Language of the Bible, Hebrew and Aramaic Roots, Words, Proper Names,
Phrases and Synonyms, 2d ed. (Jerusalem: "Kiryat Sefer" Publishing House, 1990), 966-
967.
The term, however, has a quite large semantic range and is used in a number of different ways. The overview of its usage in the OT yields the following meanings in passages other than those above:

1. "Rebellion" seems to be the meaning in God's admonition to Israel, in Exod 23:21, that she should be careful, obey His Angel, and not provoke him. It also seems to be the meaning in the references to a subject vis-à-vis his king, as in the case of David and Saul (1 Sam 24:12) and in that of Abigail and David (1 Sam 25:28), though meanings such as "wrongdoing, evil, transgression" are also a possibility. This latter possibility is indicated by David's usage of רמ"ג ("rebellion, transgression") in parallel with רע ("evil, harm, wickedness, crime") and in connection with the verb עונ ("to miss, sin, offend, be guilty") in 1 Sam 24:12.

2. "Rebellion" is evidently not the meaning of ומן in passages that speak of a wrong done between a man and his fellowman, between two persons of equal social standing. In Gen 31:36, Jacob asks his father-in-law what is his ומן ("wrong, fault, offense") and what is his רע ("sin, fault"), on account of which he is pursuing him. Neither is "rebellion" the meaning in Gen 50:17 (Joseph's brothers' request for forgiveness of the wrong they did to him early in his life); Exod 22:8[9] (where ומן refers to robbery or loss of someone else's animal or belonging; it could then be translated as "illegal possession" or "breach of trust"); nor in many occurrences of the word in the book of Proverbs, in which meanings such as "wrong, offense, sin, transgression" seem preferable (Prov 10:12, 19; 12:13; 17:9, 19; 18:19; 19:11; 28:21, 24; 29:6, 16, 22).

3. "Rebellion" seems to be a good translation for passages that speak of a people, a nation, or its rulers, vis-à-vis God (1 Kgs 8:50; Ps 89:33[32]; Isa 1:2; 24:20; 43:25, 27; 44:22; 46:8; 48:8; 50:1; 53:8; 58:1; 66:24; Jer 2:8, 29; 3:13; Lam 1:5, 14, 22; 3:42; Ezek

---

1David was not king yet when he met with Abigail, but it is clear in the text that she addressed him as such (by referring to herself as "servant," and to him as "lord" and as "prince/sovereign [עֹז] over Israel," and by reminding him of YHWH's promises to make him king; cf. 1 Sam 28-31).
2:3; 14:11; 33:10; 37:23; 39:24; Hos 7:13; Mic 1:5, 13; 3:8; 7:18; Zeph 3:11), although translations such as "sin" and "transgression" are possible in many of these passages, as evidenced by: the parallelism with ṣəwā ("sin, fault"—in Isa 24:30; 43:25; 44:22; 58:1; Ezek 33:10; Mic 1:5, 13; 3:8), and ṭ̄ ("sin, offense"—in Ps 89:33[32]; Isa 50:1; Mic 7:18); the parallelism between the verb ṣ̄ ("to miss, sin, offend") and ṣ̄ (probably then, "transgress, sin, offend") in Isa 43:27; the usage of ṭ̄ ("sin, offense") as a complement to ṣ̄ (here again then "transgress, sin, offend") in Jer 3:13 and 33:8; the usage of the noun ṣ̄ ("rebellion, transgression") as a complement to the verb ṣ̄ ("defile, profane, become unclean") in Ezek 14:11 and 37:23, or as a parallel to ṣ̄ ("uncleanness, impurity, defilement") in Ezek 39:24.

4. The situation becomes more complex when ṣ̄ ("rebellion, transgression") is used in reference to an act of an individual, or group of individuals, against God. The word ṣ̄ ("rebellion, transgression") and the verbal forms of ṣ̄ ("to rebel, transgress") are many times so closely associated with a variety of other concepts that the basic meaning of "rebellion" is far from certain. Indeed, it is often difficult to discern a difference in nuance and meaning between it and the other words and verbs with which ṣ̄ ("to rebel, transgress") is associated, such as: ṭ̄ ("sin, offense") in Exod 34:7; Lev 16:21; Num 14:18; Pss 32:5; 65:4[3]; 107:17; Job 7:21; 13:23; 14:17; 31:33; 33:9; Isa 53:5; 59:12; Ezek 18:22, 28, 30-31; Dan 9:24; ṣ̄ ("to miss, sin, offend") in Ps 51:15; Job 8:4; 35:6; Isa 1:28; 43:27; ṣ̄ ("sin, fault") in Lev 16:16, 21; Josh 24:19; Pss 25:7; 32:5; 51:5; Job 34:37; Isa 59:12; Dan 9:24; ṣ̄ ("sin") in Ps 32:1; ṣ̄ ("sin") in Exod 34:7; ṣ̄ ("fault, sin") in Isa 53:12; ṣ̄ ("uncleanness, impurity, defilement") in Lev 16:16; ṣ̄ ("falsehood, lie, deception") in Isa 57:4; ṣ̄ ("guilt, wrong, injustice") in Ezek 33:12, and ṣ̄ ("guilty, impious, transgressor") in Ps 37:38; Prov 29:16.

"Rebellion" seems to be the clear meaning in passages such as Ps 5:11; Isa 59:13; Jer 5:6; and Ezek 20:38.
Finally, the word סרה seems to refer to a sacrificial offering in Mic 6:7, and most likely should be translated as "sin-offering."¹

The rich connotations of the word סרה ("rebellion, transgression") and of the verb סרה ("to rebel, transgress") warn the exegete against a too strict definition and narrow view of it. It certainly does not warrant the view that they always imply the idea of "rebellion" or "revolt," as some scholars claim,² on one side; nor that they always have a moral-ethical,³ or a religious,⁴ connotation when associated with the terms such as סרה ("sin, fault"), סרה ("fault, sin"), and סרה ("sin, offense"), on the other side.⁵

The Meaning of סרה ("Rebellion, Transgression") in Amos 1-2

The term in itself then allows for a large spectrum of possible meanings. It can cover wrongs committed within the personal (man-man, on a private, personal level), social (man-man, within the larger context of society), political (subject-king, nation-nation), and religious (man-God, nation/s-God) spheres. Because of the variety of possible meanings for the word, scholars have been able to justify their different views on


²Fishbane, "Treaty Background," 317; Koch, Prophets, 1:61-62, 69, 75-76; Barré, "l'šybin", 618; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 231, 278.

³Paul, Amos, 45.


⁵The association of סרה ("rebellion, transgression") with סרה ("sin, fault"), and סרה ("sin, offense") in Ezek 21:29[24], e.g., seems to refer only to Judah's political acts of revolt and rebellion against Babylon, in spite of the oaths of fidelity she took towards her Mesopotamian suzerain.
the basis of one of the biblical connotations of the term. The following interpretations of ἁμαρτία ("rebellion, transgression") have usually been proposed:

1. "Rebellion" against YHWH:
   a. In a religious sense—by breach of His universal covenant with mankind (foreign nations)¹ and of the Sinaitic covenant (Judah and Israel). The emphasis here is on covenant, which is considered as a fundamental element in God's relationship with humanity and with Israel.²
   
   b. In a religious sense—by transgression of God's Law, which is binding for all the nations of the world, as it is for Israel, since YHWH is the sovereign King and Lord of the entire world and all its nations. Israel is indicted for infractions of the Law that have a religious-moral-ethical nature, because of her covenant relationship with YHWH. The foreign nations, however, are held accountable, on the Law's moral-ethical grounds, for acts of barbarity and atrocities against fellow nations and individuals.³
   
   c. In a religious and political sense—by the nations' breach of their allegiance to YHWH and other treaty stipulations, which were imposed on them by David when they became part of his empire; and by Judah and Israel's breach of the Sinaitic covenant with YHWH.⁴

---

¹The breach of God's universal covenant is by the transgression of the basic disposition of God's universal covenant with mankind, i.e., the respect for the human being and his life.


⁴Vischer, "Amos," 144-145, 152-154; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 26-27; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 128-129. Andersen and Freedman, as well as Hubbard, also included in their analysis of the wrongs of the nations the concept of violation of a "natural law," or common standards of the day.
d. Primarily political, with its derived religious sense—by violations of the treaty stipulations. Usually considered to be the stipulations imposed on them by David and Solomon. Through warfare between themselves, and crimes committed against common people, these nations, here included Israel, were breaking the terms of the treaties of "brotherhood" (Amos 1:9, 11) sworn between themselves, and of vassalage to the Davidic king and to YHWH. Amos uses ἀδίκημα ("rebellion, transgression") here in the same way as it is used to speak of the rebellion of Israel, Moab, and Edom against the Davidic house and its rulership in 1 Kgs 12:19 and 2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5, 7; 8:20, 22.1

2. "Sin," in a moral-religious sense:
   a. By the transgression of God's Law, which has a universal validity for the nations, in its moral and ethical aspects, and is especially applicable to Israel in all the dimensions of the Mosaic covenant.2
   
   b. By the transgression of universal principles of morality and justice. For the nations, these principles are written in the consciousness of every person, and are part of the universal morality of mankind; for Israel, they are explicitly presented in the Law of God.3

3. "Transgression," "crime," in a social-legal sense:

---

1 Koch, Prophets, 1:69, 75-76; Barre, "l' ἀδίκημα," 619-620, 622-624; Polley, Amos, 69-70. For Howard R. Macy, however, any war between nations was seen by Amos as a breach of the "brotherhood" that unites them as co-vassals to YHWH, since the prophet considered YHWH to be the Suzerain of every nation of the world. Cf. Macy, "Legal Metaphor," 57-58.

2 Heschel, Prophets, 31-32; Kapeirud, Central Ideas, 22, 27-31, 67-68; McKeating, Amos, 14, 22; Finley, Amos, 138-139; House, Unity of the Twelve, 77-79, 133-135.

3 George Smith, Book of the Twelve, 134-135; Harper, Amos and Hosea, cxviii-cxxiv; Wolfe, Meet Amos, 18; Honeycutt, Amos, 20-22, 31-36; Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 69; idem, Amos, Hosea, 4-9; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 35-57; Easter, "Theology of Amos," 57-61; Noble, "Israel," 65, 69-74.
a. By violation of customary laws. The crimes referred to in Amos 1-2 are considered violations of moral standards that were commonly recognized as valid among the peoples and nations of the time. These standards could well have been a kind of international customary law. The implementation of this kind of law was many times part of the international treaties signed between different nations. In these treaties, the gods of the contractual parties were presented as the guarantors of the obligations prescribed in the treaty, as well as the avengers of infringements of these stipulations. The prophet Amos would have then considered YHWH, on these lines of belief, as the guardian not only of the Israelite customary law, but also of the international customary law between the nations.

b. By atrocities committed against society and against the personal rights of people. The prophet accuses the nations and Israel on standards of right and wrong developed through wisdom circles (either in the clan, or in the royal court), and practiced through legal exercise in the community, or through the legal prerogatives of the king in Israel. The usage of ἁμαρτία ("rebellion, transgression") in the book of Proverbs (Prov 10:12, 19; 12:13; 17:9, 19; 18:19; 19:11; 28:2, 13, 21, 24; 29:16, 22) is especially emphasized by those who defend this interpretation. Amos considers these standards to be universal, and sees YHWH applying them to everybody. For the prophet, they are God's universal will, His universal "law."

1 John Barton proposed three types of international customary laws: "International laws proper"; "agreed international conventions not legally ratified"; and "unilaterally accepted norms of international conduct." See Barton, *Amos's Oracles*, 52-59.


The richness and openness of text of the "Oracles Against the Nations" give occasion to this multiplicity of interpretations. By the usage of a complex term such as יָּרְשָׁהוּא ("rebellion, transgression"), and by the fact that the text describes only the subject of the יָּרְשָׁהוּא ("rebellion, transgression") and the הָעַד ("rebellion, transgression") itself, but leaves unclear who is the object of it (YHWH, a nation, individuals?), the door is left open.

It can be that this openness is intentional, so that more than one meaning would be conveyed in the text, in order to present an all-inclusive message. A "crime" committed by a specific nation could then have been understood to be a "sin" also, that in itself translates the idea of "rebellion." In any sense, our modern distinctions between what is secular and what is religious do not exist in the OT. Both realms are so tightly interrelated in the OT that caution is in order in any proposal that translates today's marked dichotomy in these spheres.1

The Description of יָּרְשָׁהוּא ("Rebellion, Transgression") in Amos 1-2

Amos 1-2 clearly describes the יָּרְשָׁהוּא ("rebellion, transgression") of each nation. The list is as following:

1. Damascus/Aram (Amos 1:3):

על יִשְּׂרָאֵל נָבָא יְהֹוָה לֹא יִרְשָׁהוּא
("for they threshed Gilead with sledges of iron")

2. Gaza/Philistia (Amos 1:6):

על יִשְּׂרָאֵל נָבָא יְהֹוָה לֹא יִרְשָׁהוּא
("for they took into exile an entire population in order to deliver them over to Edom")

3. Tyre/Phoenicia (Amos 1:9):

על יִשְּׂרָאֵל נָבָא יְהֹוָה לֹא יִרְשָׁהוּא לֹא יִרְשָׁהוּא לֹא יִרְשָׁהוּא
("for they delivered over an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brothers")

As Westermann declared, "In the Old Testament sin and crime are differentiated neither by terminology nor otherwise ... no theologically established distinction exists between the two." See Claus Westermann, Elements of Old Testament Theology, trans. D. W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 119.
4. Edom (Amos 1:11):

"for he pursued his brother with the sword and destroyed his womenfolk"

5. Ammon (Amos 1:13):

"for they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend their border"

6. Moab (Amos 2:1):

"for he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime"

7. Judah (Amos 2:4):

"for they despised the Law of YHWH and His statutes they did not keep"

8. Israel (Amos 2:6-8, 12):

"for they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals"

"they that pant after the dust of the earth [which is] on the head of the powerless and turn aside the way of the humble"

"every man and his father go to the Girl in order to profane My Holy Name"

"and upon garments taken in pledge they stretch out beside every altar"
The first six oracles (Damascus/Aram; Gaza/Philistia; Tyre/Phoenicia; Edom; Ammon; and Moab) put an emphasis on acts of cruelty committed against people in a context of warfare. The references to "threshing" a land and its inhabitants, exiling a large number of people, selling a conquered people as slaves, persecuting another nation with the sword, killing of young and pregnant women, attempts to enlarge one's borders, etc., all point to the context of war between these nations. But, interestingly enough, what is condemned in these oracles is not so much the waging of war in itself, but the excesses committed in it, the cruelty and inhumane treatment of human beings.

As for Judah, her גווניק ("rebellion, transgression") is described essentially in religious terms. What is condemned is the nation's unfaithfulness to YHWH, her disrespect for His laws, and her apostasy through idolatry.

The גווניק ("rebellion, transgression") of Israel is characterized by the socioreligious wrongs committed by the wealthy and powerful upper class of this nation at the time. The righteous, the poor, the defenseless, the insignificant small people in Israel, were exploited and sold into slavery by their affluent fellow citizens. This violence against the common people was deeply related to idolatrous practices. Northern Israelites were condemned by their worship of "the Girl," and by the use of the fruit of their extortions in their idolatrous worship and religious practices. Finally, the inhabitants of northern Israel were held guilty for an open rejection of YHWH. They intentionally opposed YHWH's gracious provision in their favor, persecuted those who wanted to consecrate themselves to God (the Nazirites), and forbade YHWH's prophets to prophesy.
Are the charges raised against the foreign nations, Judah, and Israel related to covenant? Do they betray any element of the OT covenant(s)? If there is covenant: What kind of covenant is evoked? Is there only one covenant, or is there more? What is the nature of the covenantal elements found in Amos 1-2?

The נָאָב ("Rebellion, Transgression") of the Foreign Nations in Amos 1-2 and YHWH's Universal Covenant

Before addressing this question directly, one point must be addressed that has influenced a great deal of the modern research on the subject. It has been the concern of many scholars to find a common standard that could be acceptable to the prophet, to his audience, and to foreign nations as well. For them, only on the basis of some widely recognized principles could Amos indict nations that have no knowledge of YHWH and of His word. With this intention, proposals such as international law, international treaties, common universal principles, wisdom principles of protection of life, etc., have been made. This concern betrays our modern preoccupation in finding a good rationale, one that could be acceptable to all parties. The danger of this kind of search is that one can finish with ideas that are completely foreign to the biblical book and to the OT. In indicting the eight nations in Amos 1-2, the prophet clearly comes from YHWH's point of view. It is from the divine perspective that the foreign nations are indicted, whether they recognize the validity of His grounds for it or not (a transgressor might easily deny the validity of a norm, a principle, a law or a treaty).

The universal character of the indictments in Amos 1:3-2:3

In the book of Amos, YHWH's authority for judging anyone is especially tied to the fact that He is the Creator of the entire universe and of all its inhabitants. It was already

---

1See the expressions of this concern, e.g., in Hayes, "Oracles Against the Nations," 186-189; idem, Amos, 56-59; Barton, Amos's Oracles, 5-7, 43-50; and Gary Smith, Amos, 33.
seen, in the discussion of Amos 1:2, that the metaphor of YHWH roaring and uttering His voice from His dwelling place evoked the concepts of YHWH as Creator and Sovereign of the entire universe.¹ YHWH's authority over the nations and over mankind is furthermore well established by the hymnic passages of the book of Amos (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6). These passages draw a close connection between YHWH as Creator and as Judge of mankind.² YHWH's authority to judge is also connected to His sovereignty and control over all the nations of the world (Amos 2:9-10; 3:1-2; 4:11; 6:14; 9:7-10).³ Both aspects, YHWH's authority as Creator and as the world's Sovereign, are brought together in Amos 9:5-10.⁴

This concept of YHWH as the Creator of the entire world and the Judge of every man and nation reflects back the basic ideas presented in Gen 1-11, as Norman K. Gottwald remarked.⁵ Here again, the book seems to be based on the biblical concept of the origins of the world, of man, and of the nations,⁶ in its presentation of YHWH's judgment against them. Coming from such a background, there would be no doubt or conflict in the

¹Cf. above, 162-163, 171-172.


⁵Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms*, 118-119.

⁶It was seen that Gen 1-12 stands behind the words of Amos 3:1-2 in respect to the theme of the election of Israel from among "all the families of the earth." Cf. above, 226-227.
mind of the prophet concerning YHWH's authority to judge anyone, whatever their origin and their knowledge of YHWH.¹

From the biblical point of view, as Harry M. Orlinsky remarks, foreign nations were judged by YHWH on the basis of two kinds of crimes: transgressions against the so-called Noahide laws, which may be called crimes against natural law or humanity; and crimes committed against YHWH Himself or against Israel, His chosen people.²

For what kind of crimes are the foreign nations condemned in Amos 1-2? Do they involve transgressions of the Noahide laws, or are they related to crimes committed directly against YHWH and the elected people?

It is evident that Israel was the wronged party in the cases of Damascus/Aram, Tyre/Phoenicia, Edom, and Ammon. However, the national origin of the "entire population" deported by Gaza/Philistia is unclear, and in the case of Moab, the wronged party is Edom and not Israel at all.

Some scholars, like Ernst Würthwein, André Neher, Yehezkel Kaufmann, and Menahem Haran, considered that all the war crimes of Israel's neighbors, denounced in

---

¹YHWH's universal authority to judge was well established long before the time of Amos in the narratives of the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3); Cain's murder of Abel (Gen 4); the Flood (Gen 6-8); and the Tower of Babel (Gen 11). See the discussion on these accounts and their importance for the understanding of the biblical religion and faith, in Martens, God's Design, 25-31; Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 17-31.


The Noahide laws are described in Gen 9:1-7 and involved: The divine mandate "to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth," imposed by YHWH upon man (Gen 9:1, 7); mankind's mastery over the world and the animal kingdom (Gen 9:2); the regulation of the consumption of animal creatures as food, with the requirement for respect of their life (Gen 9:3-4); the interdiction of killing a fellow human being (Gen 9:5), followed by the formulation of the judicial/penal disposition "whosoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen 9:6). See the discussion on the Noahide laws in Neher, Amos, 65; Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 30; and Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 109-125.
Amos 1:3-2:3, were committed against God's elected people.\(^1\) The "entire population" deported by Gaza/Philistia is understood as referring to the Israelites, which is very probable (cf. Joel 4[3]:4-6). Their arguments differ, however, in reference to the crime of Moab. Würthwein and Haran considered the crime of Moab as committed against Israel insofar as Edom is Israel's brother (Amos 1:11; cf. also Num 20:14; Deut 2:4, 8; 23:7; and Obad 10). The crime against Edom is then considered as a crime against Israel also.\(^2\) For Kaufmann, the crime of Moab was probably committed during the war between that nation and the coalition formed by northern Israel, Judah and Edom, reported in 2 Kgs 3. Edom was then an Israelite vassal, and the act committed against this nation occurred within the context of Moab's rebellion and war against Israel.\(^3\) For Neher, the burning of the "bones of the king of Edom" is an idiomatic expression meaning the burning of the cadavers of the people killed by the king of Edom in a military attack against Israel.\(^4\)

Even if one understands the crime of Moab in one of the ways argued above, there remains the fact, however, that the description of the רָעָתָנ ("rebellions, transgressions") of the foreign nations in Amos 1:3-2:3 possesses certain marked characteristics that underline first of all their "universal" and more generalized character. First, the text usually avoids clearly identifying the national origin of those who suffered the wrongs described. Second, the emphasis of the text is on the human being and the question of extreme cruelty committed against him or her in the context of war: the threshing of Gilead, i.e., the cruel and violent destruction of that land and its population; the deportation of an entire population from their land in order to sell them as slaves; the cruel, pitiless use of the sword to kill people; the violent and cruel killing of young women; the ripping open of the


\(^3\)Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, 364.

\(^4\)Neher, Amos, 52-53, 61.
wombs of pregnant women; the burning of bones of a dead person in an act of desecration and wrath. This emphasis is conveyed in the text by the fact that the description of the barbaric acts follows immediately the preposition "for, because of" that introduces the reason, the ("rebellion, transgression"), for which each nation is being judged by YHWH. When political aspects are clearly presented, like Tyre/Phoenicia's breach of the "covenant of brothers" and Ammon's fight to enlarge his border, they come in a secondary position.

The emphasis on the human being is so strong in the text of Amos that scholars such as André Neher and Yehezkel Kaufmann, though relating all the crimes of the foreign nations to Israel, recognized the "universal" character of the indictments in Amos 1:3-2:3. For Neher, they are transgressions of the Noahide law that concern the respect for the human being and his life. For Kaufmann, whenever God's judgment falls upon the nations, specific gross sins are the cause: murder, sexual immorality, oppression of strangers, inhuman cruelty. In His indictment of the crimes of the foreign nations in Amos 1-2, YHWH exercises His power of judgment for the sake of the same kind of crimes for which He destroyed most of humanity in Gen 6-7, Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19, and the Canaanites in the conquest of Canaan by Israel (Lev 18; 20).

This emphasis militates against the essentially political interpretation of the ("rebellion, transgression") of these nations proposed by Howard R. Macy, Michael L. Barré, Max E. Polley, and others. The first concern in the oracles is what a nation has done to a group of people, or to certain individuals, keeping up with the humanitarian focus observed throughout the book of Amos. Though, as already discussed in detail, the series of oracles in Amos 1-2 concerns solely eight nations that were once part of, or associated with, the Davidic empire and therefore are not universal in scope, the indictments brought

---

1Ibid., 62-67.
2Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, 365-366.
3Cf. above, 233-234.
against these nations are "universal" in character insofar as they are mainly concerned with the fate of human beings within the political conflicts between these nations. This noticeable humanitarian aspect is what has led many scholars to speak about the universality of YHWH's Law, of natural law, universal principles of morality and justice, customary laws practiced among the ANE nations, and/or widespread standards of right and wrong based on the common wisdom shared among these nations.¹

A critique of the "universal" interpretations based on customary laws, and on common wisdom

Some of these "universal" interpretations are highly problematic, however. The interpretations that put too much weight on common standards of right and wrong shared throughout the ANE, through common customary laws and standard wisdom principles, for example, often overlook the fact that many of the practices mentioned in Amos 1-2 were common among the nations of ANE. It is far from certain that every people, and especially those of the nation that committed the wrong, would recognize and agree with the condemnations of the prophet. Especially in context of war, common principles practiced in the day-by-day life are usually forgotten and broken, and above all hardly considered as applicable to an enemy people.²

The utter destruction of a land and its population, evoked by the imagery of threshing with sledges of iron, was not uncommon.³ Taking people captive and selling


²For the lack of regulations and accepted mores in the practice of warfare between the nations of the ANE, see the fine survey of Odd Palmer Heilskov Jordal, "Ethics of Punishment and Warfare Among the Ancient Nations Surrounding Israel" (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1951), 38-73. For an insightful discussion on how barbarism has been the general rule in warfare from ancient times to our present days, despite even some modern efforts to set "acceptable" rules for war, see F. J. P. Veale, Advance to Barbarism (Appleton, WI: C. C. Nelson, 1953), especially pp. 22-40 that deal with the ANE.

³Cf. above, 59.
them as slaves was a profitable business widely practiced in the ANE world.¹ Merciless killing of the female population of a country and especially the barbaric execution of pregnant women were sometimes features of warfare, and became a cliché, in ANE, for a war of total extermination.² The Bible itself gives a number of examples of this (2 Kgs 8:7; 15:16; 2 Chr 36:17; Isa 13:16, 18; Lam 2:21; Hos 10:14; 13:16). A Middle-Assyrian hymn composed to extol the conquest of Tiglathpileser I (ca. 1114-1076 B.C.) records that he slit the wombs of pregnant women, pulled out the eyes of children, and cut the throats of strong men.³ A Neo-Babylonian lament cries over the sight of the ripping of mothers' wombs.⁴

Desecration of tombs and destruction of the bones of an enemy were also practiced in a demonstration of total wrath and disrespect for the opponent. In a report of a lengthy and bitter war with the Elamites, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, noted the extreme measures he took after his victory over the enemy. He seized properties, looted their palaces, destroyed their temples, killed their leaders, deported their citizens, and in addition he removed the bones of his enemies' past rulers, carried them off to Assyria and smashed them in Nineveh.⁵ The destruction of the bones of an enemy is another example of total war, where there is little respect for individuals. The act of Moab can be understood along these same lines. The expression "burning something to lime" appears elsewhere in the OT only in Isa 33:12, and is applied to the act of YHWH's judgment against the peoples, when


⁵See the transcription of these texts in Hayes, *Amos*, 99.
the sinners will be entirely annihilated by His consuming breath. Moab’s action then can be seen as a manifestation of an act of extreme wrath and fury, a violent action. It can also denote an act of extreme disrespect, for the expression in Amos 2:1 may imply that Moab not only burned it, but reduced it to lime with the purpose of using it as such.¹

The acts condemned in Amos 1:3-2:3 were not uncommon in the ANE world. They were even a source of pride for those who perpetrated them, the very sign of their victory and humiliation of the enemy. They were, however, the source of lament, shame, and desolation for those who suffered them. It seems rather difficult then to evoke common customary laws, or standard international principles of wisdom, that could establish a pattern of action of right and wrong that would be considered valid by all the parties involved in a military conflict.

In Amos, as in all the other prophets that pronounced judgment against foreign nations,² the nations are considered responsible before YHWH, whether they recognize it or not. YHWH would not accept their attitude of contempt in regard to human beings and human life, manifested in the usage of violence without measure in their warfare.

The universality of YHWH’s Law

The divine attitude above toward the nations of the world brings to the forefront the question of the universality of YHWH’s Law, especially of the moral-ethical aspects of the

¹The preposition ‘ב can be understood as "for," indicating the purpose for which the action was done. Moab then would have burned the bones of the king of Edom "for" lime, in order to obtain lime. Such an understanding of the verse already appears in Tg: יָבֹלֶד אֱוֹדָם וַיִּבָּשֵׂשׂ שָׂטָר בַּבָּשֵׂשׂ ("for he burned the bones of the king of Edom and plastered his house [with] them, like lime").

²Cf. the oracles against foreign nations in Isa 2:12-22; 10:14-34; 11:14-16; 13-23; 33-34; 47; Jer 25:15-38; 27:1-11; 46-51; Ezek 25-32; 35; 38-39; Joel 4[3]:1-17; Obadiah; Jonah 3:4; Mic 7:16-17; Nahum; Hab 2:6-20; Zeph 2:1-3:8; Hag 2:22-23; Zech 9:1-8; Mal 1:2-5. Time and again in these oracles the pride and insolence of these nations are condemned, as well as their corruption, love of violence and wrong, and their complete disdain for the will of YHWH and His standards of righteousness and goodness. See Hayes, "Oracles Against the Nations," 173-291; Macy, "Legal Metaphor," 37-58; Vogels, God’s Universal Covenant, 82-90.
Law that gives it a universal validity. Here again, Gen 1-11 seems to form the foundation of the prophetic view. This is evidenced by the association of the concepts of YHWH as Creator, Sovereign, and Lawgiver. These concepts are fundamentally established in the first chapters of the book of Genesis. God's creative activity, in Gen 1-2, not only brought the universe and all its inhabitants into existence, but also established the laws of their function and place in His creation. The laws of nature were established by YHWH, and nature responded in obedience to His commandments (Gen 1:1-31; 6:17; 7:13-8:5, 13-14, 21-22; Pss 33:6, 9; 147:15-18; 148:8; Isa 48:3; etc.). Man also was subject to YHWH's laws, and since the beginning he was given specific commandments regulating his relationship with God (submission and obedience—Gen 1:28-30; 2:16-17; 3:11, 16-19; 4:3-7; 6:13-7:9; 8:15-18; 9:1-17), with his fellow man (equality of all human beings, respect for man and for his life, sexual relations/marriage—Gen 1:26-28; 2:18, 20-24; 3:16; 4:7, 9-15; 5:1-2; 9:5-7, 18-10:32), and with the created world (rulership, work, food—Gen 1:26-29; 2:15-16, 19-20, 3:17-19, 23; 9:1-5, 7). The transgression of these established laws brought a divine judgment upon the violator (Gen 3:16-19; 4:10-12; 6:5-7, 11-13, 17; 7:4, 10-24; 11:5-9). YHWH as the Creator, and the Sovereign over entire mankind, has all the right to impose on them His rules, require their obedience, and punish their transgression.1

The biblical theme of the universal responsibility of mankind to do what is right has led a number of scholars to speak of the existence of "natural laws" in the OT.2 These "natural laws" are usually understood to be a set of universal principles of right and wrong

---


inherently written in the heart and conscience of every human being; or else, ethical-moral standards that can be obtained through reason, by reflecting on the created world and on man's ordinary experience.\(^1\) The natural origin of these "natural laws" is usually stressed over against the supernatural origin of the Mosaic Law, given through special revelation to Israel.\(^2\)

Such, however, is not the view of the OT. As remarked above, even the laws that regulate natural phenomena are presented in Gen 1:1-2:3 as commanded and established by God. They are not "naturally" inherent to nature, as part of its intrinsic substance. The same is true for the laws that regulate human beings; they are explicitly "commanded," they were established by God since the beginning and were communicated to man through the divine word. In no sense were they left to be formulated by human speculation.

**YHWH's universal covenant with mankind**

The universal laws that regulate both nature and humankind are then not "natural," as the term is usually understood, but "divine."\(^3\) As Jakob Jocz remarked, these laws are not understood in the OT mechanically, as if they were impersonal principles implanted in nature and in the human mind, but rather they possess a personal and covenantal nature; they are part of YHWH's covenant with man and His creation.\(^4\) Indeed, as Jacques Ellul observed:

\(^1\)See a summary of different definitions of "natural law" in Johnson, "Natural-Law," 198-199.


\(^3\)See the criticism of "natural law," as it is understood philosophically, as an independent reality inherent in nature and in man, in Jacques Ellul, *The Theological Foundation of Law*, trans. Marguerite Wieser (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 60-74.

\(^4\)Jocz, *Covenant*, 36.
The act of God that establishes law is precisely the covenant. We might say it is God's righteousness in motion. What seemingly had no relationship whatsoever with human law, like a rule established in heaven, like a purely mystical event, now is related to man's situation. The covenant is a kind of a bridge between God's righteousness and the earth. It is one of the links between divine law and human law. At the same time in the covenant the nucleus of human law becomes concrete and visible. This in no way gives support to a theory of natural law since law is strictly "supranatural."¹

The universal laws of YHWH speak then of a universal covenant, a theme that appears a number of times explicitly spelled out in some passages of the OT.

The first clear presentation of a universal covenant in the OT appears in Gen 9:1-17, in Noah's covenant. YHWH's covenant with Noah is the most universal there can be. It included not only Noah and his family, hence all humanity, but also every living creature on earth (Gen 9:9-10, 16). The central concern of this covenant is the preservation of life. This concern is expressed in YHWH's promises: of never again destroying all flesh by bringing a flood upon the earth (Gen 8:21; 9:11-15); of maintaining the regularity of the seasons, of the cold and heat, of the day and night (Gen 8:22); and of never again cursing the ground because of man (Gen 8:21). The concern for the preservation of life is also present in the renewal of man's lordship over the animals (Gen 9:2), in the commandment of not eating flesh with its blood (Gen 9:4), and in the interdiction of bloodshed either by beast or by man (Gen 9:5-6). These provisions made it possible for man to fulfill YHWH's commandment to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1, 7, 18-19). Being a covenant with entire mankind, every man and nation (the list of the nations of the world follows in Gen 10) is bound to it, according to the biblical text.² The positioning of the account of Noah's covenant just before the beginning of the particular history of Abraham and of Israel provides the wider context in which this particular history

¹Ellul, Theological Foundation, 58-59.

²For more discussion on Noah's covenant, see Buis, Notion d'alliance, 50-52; Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 29-31; Dumbrell, Covenant, 11-46; Robert Murray, Cosmic Covenant, 32-35, 101-103.
takes its meaning and function. Noah's covenant provides a fundamental key through which later theological developments of the OT were intended to be understood.¹

In the book of Hosea, YHWH's covenant with Israel is twice set in parallel with the divine universal covenant with mankind. In the first instance, in Hos 2:18-22, one of the promises of the restoration of the nation and of the renewal of their covenant with God was related with the promise that YHWH would make a covenant with the נֵר הָאֹרֶץ ("beast of the field"), the נֵר הָאָרֶץ ("birds of the sky"), and the נֵר הָאֲרֵץ ("creeping creatures of the ground"), in order to bring peace and prosperity to His people (Hos 2:20[18]). This covenant recalls Noah's covenant (Gen 9:8-17), the only other occurrence in the OT of a divine covenant in which the animal world is included too; indeed, with almost the same class of animals described in Hosea.² YHWH's covenant with the animals in favor of His people had as its main concern a peaceful relationship between man and these animals for the preservation of life, a very central theme of the covenant in Gen 9 (vs. 2).

In the second case, in Hos 6:7, where Israel's transgression of her covenant with YHWH is compared with Adam's transgression of an original covenant between God and man. This comparison implies the belief that the first man, Adam, lived in a special covenant relationship with God that was broken by sin. W. J. Dumbrell has argued in detail for the existence of such a notion in Gen 1-3, especially as it is expressed by the themes of the divine image and man's kingship over nature, the rest of the seventh day, the


²Gen 9:10 speaks of "all living creatures" among the נֵר ("birds"), the נֵר ("livestock"), the נֵר ("beasts of the earth"), indeed "every living creature" that came from the ark with Noah. For the discussion of the correspondence between the covenant in Hos 2:20[18] and the Noahide covenant, see Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 32; and Robert Murray, Cosmic Covenant, 30-32.
goal of communion with God, the divine demand of obedience and its breach. Above it all, however, Dumbrell sees the strongest evidence for such a concept in the fact that in Gen 6:17-18 and 9:1-17, Noah's covenant lacks the terminology characteristic of covenant initiation. Central to Dumbrell's argumentation is the fact that the expression תָּקֵק אָסְרָה ("to establish/confirm a covenant") is consistently used in reference to Noah's covenant in Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17. This expression always appears in contexts where the focus is on the perpetuation of a covenant that was already in vigor, and does not refer to the establishment of a new covenant (e.g., Gen 17:7, 19, 21; Exod 6:4; Lev 26:9; Deut 8:18; 2 Kgs 23:3). Noah's covenant is presented as a renewal and a confirmation of the commitment and role that YHWH bestowed upon Adam.

The evocation of Adam in a covenant context in Hosea argues then for the notion of a universal covenant between mankind and God. In Isaiah, one can find two other references to YHWH's universal covenant. First, Isa 24:5, contains a very explicit reference. The context of the passage speaks of a universal judgment in which YHWH would lay waste the earth and destroy its inhabitants with fire (vss. 1, 6). The reason given for this global judgment is that the inhabitants of the earth have ἔφαγεν τὰ νόμιμα ("transgressed the laws"), πρόκειται στήρεσιν ("violated the statutes"), and

---

1 Dumbrell, Covenant, 33-39.

2 Ibid., 11-33. More recently, Jeffrey Niehaus has elaborated on the striking similarities between the Creation account of Gen 1:1-2:3 and the ANE treaties of the second millennium B.C. In his study, he shows how the OT understanding of God's relationship with man since the beginning is deeply covenantal. Cf., Jeffrey Niehaus, God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 143-153.

3 Many scholars emend the text of Hos 6:7 and read "at/in Adam," understanding that the prophet speaks of a town where some breach of the covenant occurred. Douglas Stuart (Hosea-Jonah, 110-111) reads כָּבָשׁ as "like dirt," meaning that Israel has walked over YHWH's covenant as they walk over the dirt. See, however, the arguments in favor of reading the proper name "Adam" in Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 33; McComiskey, Covenants of Promise, 214-216; idem, "Hosea," in Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary, vol. I, Hosea, Joel, Amos, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 95.
This passage in Isaiah is highly important for the discussion on Amos 1-2, as was seen above. Many parallel expressions and themes occur here and in Amos that elucidate the subject of judgment against the nations in both books. Isa 24 comes as the conclusion of the series of oracles against the nations in the preceding chapters. It shares some very specific points with Amos 1:2, like the usage of יָשֹׁפַת ("to mourn/dry up") to describe the desolation and destruction (vss. 4, 7) caused by YHWH's judgment of fire (vs. 6), and the emphasis on Zion and Jerusalem as YHWH's dwelling place (vs. 23). Isa 24:5 speaks of laws, statutes, and of an eternal covenant that the inhabitants of the world have broken. Because of this universal transgression, "the earth lies polluted under its inhabitants" (vs. 5a). The question of pollution of the land by its inhabitants is tied in the OT to either bloodshed (Num 35:33-34; Ps 106:38) or prostitution/idolatry (Jer 3:1-2, 9; 23:10-11). The breach of the universal covenant in Isa 24 then could be due to one of these actions, or to both of them. Here again, Isa 24 sheds light on Amos 1-2, where violent bloodshed is the main reason for the divine judgment against foreign nations. The entire context of Isa 24 refers back to Gen 1-11, as is further evidenced by the unique reference to the opening of "windows of heaven" to pour out judgment upon mankind (vs. 18; Gen 7:11; 8:2). The breach of the eternal covenant of YHWH and the transgression of His laws and statutes for mankind, that the book of Isaiah speaks of, are then to be seen in connection with the laws and covenant presented in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

Second, in Isa 54:9-10, the new covenant that YHWH will establish with Israel is clearly compared with the covenant that He established with Noah after the Flood. As YHWH has promised to Noah never to destroy all of humanity again by a flood, so He

---

1 Cf. above, 190-192.

2 See the discussion in Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 33-34; Robert Murray, Cosmic Covenant, 16-26; Gray, Isaiah I-XXXIX, 182-184; Watts, Isaiah I-33, 315-322; Oswalt, Isaiah, 446.
promises now never again to be angry and rebuke Israel. This new covenant is also tied with YHWH's covenant with Abraham (Isa 54:1-3) and David (Isa 55:3).  

Another reference to YHWH's universal covenant with mankind is found in Jer 33:20-25, where YHWH guarantees that His promises of restoration will be fulfilled and that His covenant with David and with the Levites will stand. For this purpose, YHWH evokes His unchangeable covenant of the day and night ("My covenant of the day and My covenant of the night"). This covenant implies the security of the continuation of day and night (vs. 20) and the laws that govern this sequence (vs. 25, "the statutes of heaven and earth"). This covenant of the day and night points back to the original universal covenant of creation, when these laws were established (Gen 1:3-5), and above all to Noah's covenant, in which the stability of this sequence occupies a very important place (Gen 8:22).

YHWH's universal covenant with mankind may also be the subject of Zech 11:10's mention of YHWH's "covenant with all the peoples" ("My covenant which I have made with all the peoples"). If understood in this sense, this would be another reference to Noah's covenant and its central concern for the protection of human life. YHWH's act of breaking His covenant, in Zechariah, is symbolized by the breaking of the staff "kindness." This implied the cessation of the divine restraining action among the nations of the world. This divine action was holding in check world powers that could inflict a widespread destruction among all peoples. Once the...
covenant was broken, YHWH would allow the rulers of the earth to slaughter and destroy at will (vs. 6). The text, however, is a difficult one and different interpretations are possible (e.g., that it refers to YHWH's covenant with Israel, or to a covenant with the nations for the sake of Israel's protection).

The biblical view of YHWH as Creator, Sovereign, Lawgiver, and a God in covenant with His creation, and especially with mankind, argues strongly for a covenantal basis for the indictments in Amos against the foreign nations. This basis seems much more solid than the evocations of international treaties, customary laws, common standards of right and wrong provided by the ANE wisdom, etc. Isa 24, in particular, strongly argues in this direction, since it not only clearly presents the notion of a universal covenant but also associates with it some key terminology and themes that are essential to Amos 1-2.

Coming from inside the biblical context, then, André Neher's old, and often spurned, contention for Noah's covenant as the background for the indictments of the foreign nations in Amos seems to stand on quite firm ground. Moreover, L. Dequeker's

---

1For such an understanding of this prophecy of Zechariah, see Vogels, God's Universal Covenant, 35-36; and David L. Petersen, Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1995), 90-98.

2Carol L. and Eric M. Meyer, e.g., proposed that נְפָיִים ("all the peoples") refers to Israel and not to national groups as is usually the case in OT. In order to substantiate their interpretation, they quote passages such as Isaac's blessing that "peoples" would serve Jacob (Gen 27:29), God's promise that Jacob would become a "company of peoples" (Gen 48:4), and Jacob's prediction that the obedience of the "peoples" would belong to Judah (Gen 49:10), which they understand as referring to the tribes of Israel and not to other nations. See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB, vol. 25c (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 268-271. This interpretation is, however, dubious, since the passages in Genesis seem to be reaffirmations of the universal extent of the promises that YHWH once made to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 17:2-6).

For the view of a covenant with the nations for the sake of Israel, see Kenneth L. Barker, "Zechariah," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 7, Daniel-Minor Prophets, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 677.

3Neher argued that the "berith noahidique" ("Noahide covenant") is the only key for the interpretation of the universalism of Amos. See full discussion in Neher, Amos, 49-67.
request for more attention and serious consideration for the meaning and importance of Noah’s covenant for the understanding of biblical theology is still as timely today as it was some twenty years ago.¹

The נָשָׁה ("Rebellion, Transgression")

of Judah and the Mosaic Covenant

The נָשָׁה ("rebellion, transgression") of Judah is presented through a very distinctive vocabulary that pertains to the domain of the OT covenant between YHWH and Israel.² Indeed, the language is so strongly covenantal that many scholars consider the oracle against Judah to be a late addition to the original series in Amos 1-2, because of its supposedly Deuteronomistic phraseology and theology.³ There has not been much opposition, therefore, in recognizing covenantal connotations in the oracle, either by those who consider covenant to be an early element in the Israelite religion, or by those who consider it to be late.⁴

¹Dequeker, "Noah and Israel," 115-116, 125-129.


⁴John H. Hayes represents one of the few voices that does not recognize any covenantal trace in the oracle against Judah. For him, the prophet Amos is addressing the ethical-political problem of Judah’s political submission to Israel. Hayes argues that Judah has been submitted to Israel since the time of the Israelite king Omri (ca. 879 B.C.) to the time of Pekah (ca. 734 B.C.). Amos criticized this long policy of submission, a policy that was not shared by all southerners and that certainly was not consistent with the Davidic ideology. In this light, Hayes understands the נָשָׁה ("the law of YHWH") as a political instruction, given by YHWH through a prophet as in Isa 1:10; 5:24; 30:9, and the
The divine indictment against Judah first holds her guilty for rejecting the Law of YHWH, and not keeping His statutes (Amos 2:4). In Isa 5:24, God's people are held guilty for the same reason. The phraseology is almost identical to that of Amos, and it is the only other place in the OT where the verb מַעֲרִס ("to reject") and the expression נְאֵרָה, נְבֵא ("the Law of YHWH") occur together.¹

This reference to the rejection of the Law of YHWH in Isaiah comes as a concluding remark for the series of woes that follow the "Song of the Vineyard" in Isa 5. In these woes, the sins of God's people are detailed and spelled out. There are great similarities between chap. 5 in Isaiah and the description of the sins of God's people in the book of Amos. The wrongs denounced in both Isa 5 and in Amos are practically identical.² They also share the themes of YHWH's judgment by fire,³ and His use of mighty foreign nations in order to accomplish His punishment that will include the utter destruction of the nation, the killing of a large part of the population, and the exile of most

¹It reads: 'one בָּרִיסָר תַּנְיָר רְכָּנַי מְרַנְיִר ("for they rejected the Law of YHWH of Hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel").

²The divine complaint for the lack of "justice" and "righteousness" (Isa 5:7 // Amos 5:24; 6:12); the rapacious accumulation of wealth and properties (Isa 5:8-9 // Amos 2:7; 3:15; 5:11; 6:11); the drunkenness, revelry, and lavish living of a corrupted high class (Isa 5:11-12 // Amos 4:1-3; 6:4-7); the perversion of justice, oppression of the innocent, and rampant wickedness of the upper class (Isa 5:18-23 // Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:7, 10-12; 6:12; 8:6).

³Isa 5:24-25 // Amos 1:2, 4, 7, 10, 14; 2:2, 5; 7:4.
of the survivors. Similar also is the theme of darkness instead of light in the day of YHWH's judgment, and the use of the imagery of roaring lions.

All these similarities may indicate that the indictment for rejecting the Law of YHWH in Amos could refer not only to religious sins and idolatry, as it is usually considered among biblical scholars, but also to the kind of injustice and violence that Isaiah, a contemporary of Amos, describes as occurring in the midst of the Judean society.

Furthermore, the close parallelism between the Law of YHWH and His statutes, in the text of Amos, seems to point to the legal body of laws and instructions that was at the foundation of YHWH's covenant with His people. Indeed, YHWH's Law and His statutes are always associated in a covenantal context, and refer especially to the Law that YHWH gave to Israel through Moses. This association argues against more general interpretations of the Law as divine instruction given through a prophetic oracle, or through a cultic instruction by the priests. Only by dissociating the two terms above, and by analyzing them independently from one another, can one find support for these views.

---

1 Isa 5:26-30 // Amos 1:2-2:16; 3:11; 6:14; etc.
2 Isa 5:30 // Amos 5:20.
3 Isa 5:29-30 // Amos 1:2
4 Typical are assertions such as James Luther Mays that the oracle against Judah has only a "theological" concern and that it focuses only on religious wrongs. Cf. Mays, Amos, 42.
6 This implication for the identification of Law ("Law") and statute ("statute") in Amos 2:4 was already emphasized by Harper, Amos and Hosea, 45; Cripps, Amos, 284; Mays, Amos, 41-42; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 138-139, among others.
7 See, e.g., the propositions of Myers, Book of Amos, 109-110; Kapelrud, Central Ideas, 29-30; Hammershaimb, Amos, 44; Hayes, Amos, 104.
The association of הָרִים ("to keep") and הָרָ[..] "statutes") is also essentially covenantal. Outside Amos, it occurs in contexts that speak of the covenant between YHWH and His people, and the statutes of that covenant given by YHWH through Moses.¹

The divine indictment continued by referring to the practice of idolatry in Judah. The false gods are designated as the בָּטַע ("lies") after which their fathers went. This interpretation is the most common and widespread one.² Some scholars, however, have challenged such an understanding. They usually remark that: (1) the usage of בָּטַע ("lies") for idols is hypothetical, since it occurs only here in Amos; (2) the word "lies" can refer to false prophecy or wrong teaching (Num 23:19; Ps 89:34[33], 36[35]; Ezek 13:6-9); and (3) the subject of the hiphil נַעֲרָה ("to lead astray") is usually human (e.g., wicked leaders or false prophets [political leaders—2 Kgs 21:9; 2 Chr 33:9; Isa 3:12; 9:15; Jer 50:6; false prophets—Jer 23:30-32; Ezek 13:10; Mic 3:5]) who were the usual opponents of YHWH's true prophets; hence, there could be here a synecdoche where "lies" stand for both the false prophecies or crooked leadership, and for the false prophets or the wicked leaders themselves.³

¹E.g., Exod 15:26; Deut 4:5-6, 8-9, 40; 5:1, 31-32; 6:1-3, 17, 24-25; 7:11-12; 11:32; 12:1; 16:12; 17:19; 26:16-17; 1 Kgs 8:58, 61; 9:4; 2 Kgs 17:37; 1 Chr 22:13; 29:18-19; 2 Chr 7:17; 33:8; 34:31; Neh 1:7; 10:30; Pss 105:45; 119:5, 8; Ezek 36:27; Mal 3:7.

²LXX already clearly understood Amos 2:4 in this sense, reading καὶ ἐπλάνησεν αὐτοῖς τὰ μάταια αὐτῶν, ἀ ἐποίησαν, οἷς ἐξηκολουθήσαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν ("and their idols led them astray, the ones which they made, those which their fathers followed"). The term τὰ μάταια ("what is worthless, empty, idols") also refers to idols, e.g., in 3[1] Kgs 16:13, 26; 4[2] Kgs 17:15; Jer 2:5; 8:19; 10:3, 15; 28[51]:18; Zech 10:2; 11:17, translating the plural of words such as בֵּית ("worthless, pagan god, idol") and בֵּית ("breath, nothingness, void, idol").

³Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 302-306; Gary Smith, Amos, 80. For Hayes (Amos, 103), בָּטַע ("lies") means political plans and activities, as in Isa 28:15-17 and Hos 7:13 and 12:1.
These observations bring up some interesting points, and offer an alternative interpretation to the divine charge in Amos 2:4. The "classical" understanding, however, still makes good sense in the light of the totality of the verse.

First, although the subject of the hiphil "to lead astray" is usually human, there are other passages in the OT in which some abstract ideas are said to lead astray a person, or a people. Job 15:31 states that the man who believes in "worthless, vain, deceit, idol") is "led astray" (nan). Prov 12:26 declares that the "the way of wicked men") "will lead them astray" (ccn). In Hos 4:12, YHWH complains that His people consult wooden idols, and are answered by a stick of wood, and that this "spirit of prostitution" (crrct rrn) "led them astray" (rtsrn). There is no reason therefore why Amos could not use the same imagery when speaking of idols and the practice of idolatry among God's people.

Furthermore, the use of the expression "to go after" in conjunction with other gods, idols, occurs very frequently in the OT. The evocation of the sin of idolatry of the "fathers," in the prophetic indictment of God's people, was not uncommon. The expression in itself is heavily charged with covenantal connotation. YHWH requires that His people to follow after Him (Deut 13:3; 1 Kgs 18:21). The expression translates the idea of covenantal fidelity (2 Chr 34:31), not only in the OT, but also in the ANE world of political treaties.

---


Finally, it was common to use cacophemistic words in order to refer to idols and false gods in the OT. Hence, the usage of רָמָה ("lies") for idols in Amos 2:4 is not surprising. It can probably be the meaning of the word in Pss 4:3[2] and 40:5[4] too.

Taking into consideration the totality of the indictment in Amos 2:4, with its specific terms and general thinking, a connection could be made between this verse and passages such as 1 Kgs 11:4-13 (the apostasy of Solomon by following other gods in his old age, and not keeping the commandments of YHWH), and 18:18-21 (Elijah confronting the apostasy of Israel under Ahab). But above all, the closest connection with Amos seems to be 2 Kgs 17:7-23, where almost every term of Amos 2:4 is present, and the theological thinking is very close to that in Amos. The close connection between Amos 2:4-5 and the passages like the ones above makes clear that the actions condemned in the oracle against Judah represent a breach of the covenant established between YHWH and His people, and because of this breach, YHWH was bringing judgment against His people (cf. 1 Kgs 11:11; 2 Kgs 17:15, 18-20).

Gary V. Smith and David Allan Hubbard were probably right when they remarked that in the oracle against Judah, the way was specially prepared for the indictment against Israel. By focusing on the transgression of YHWH's Law and on the problem of idolatry, the way was set for the sweeping covenant lawsuit raised against the people of the northern tribes.

---

1See Paul, Amos, 75. Notice the common usage of derisive words when referring to idols in OT: בְּמַעַל ("breath, nothingness, void, vanity") in Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; Jer 2:5; רָמָה ("lie, falsehood, deception") in Jer 10:14-15; יָד ("worthless, vain, deceit") in Ps 31:7[6]; Jer 18:15; חָלַל ("insignificant, worthless") in Lev 19:4; 26:1; Isa 2:8, 18, 20; 10:10-11; 19:1, 3; Hab 2:18; רָפָה ("deceit, delusion") in Isa 66:3; רָמָה ("abomination, a detestable thing") in Deut 32:16; Isa 44:19; רָמָה ("something abominable, detestable") in 1 Kgs 11:5; 2 Kgs 23:24; יד (probably "pellets of dung, droppings") in Lev 26:30; Deut 29:16; 1 Kgs 15:12; 21:26; 2 Kgs 17:12; 21:11-21; Ezek 6:4-44:12 (ca. 40 times); יד ("nothingness, emptiness") in Isa 41:24, 29; etc.


3Gary Smith, Amos, 81; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 139-140.
The הבש ("Rebellion, Transgression") of Israel and the Mosaic Covenant

The covenantal character of the oracle against Israel is made plain by its covenant lawsuit form, as already remarked. Now, the description of the הבש ("rebellion, transgression") of that nation seems to provide further evidence for other elements of the OT covenant(s) in that oracle. The core of the discussion has been whether Israel’s הבש ("rebellion, transgression") was related or not to YHWH’s covenant Law given to His people.

A number of scholars advocate the idea that the acts condemned in the oracle of Amos 2:6-16 are transgressions of some specific stipulations of the Mosaic Law, implying thereby a breach of the Mosaic covenant. Some are even more specific, arguing that Amos condemns only transgressions of “apodictic” laws, the kind of laws that were at the very center of Israel’s covenant with YHWH. Other scholars, however, have opposed

1Cf. above, 148-150, 197-201.


3Bach, "Gottesrecht," 28-34; Bergren, Prophets and the Law, 181-185, 204-220.
such a view, maintaining that there is no clear connection between the wrongs denounced in Amos and the Mosaic Law, or any other kind of covenant law. For them, Amos does not quote any law code, nor make any explicit reference to it. He condemns what is plain to the eye, wrongs against the established order of society, against standard morality and common good sense.¹

The first indictment, 'בָּלָּהְכֶן נֶאוֹרָה יָשָּׁרָה מַעְבָּרָה ("for they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals"), has been usually interpreted in two different ways: Some interpreters relate it to the bribing of judges;² while others, to the selling of debtors, or of innocent powerless people, into slavery by the powerful ones in society.³

The first interpretation above focuses on terms that seem to translate a legal process. The term יָשָּׁרָה ("righteous") is understood in a forensic sense, as referring to an innocent person, unjustly condemned by corrupt judges who have been taking bribes from the guilty party. The dual נֶאוֹרָה ("a pair of sandals") is interpreted either as an idiom used in the transfer of property in a court situation (Ruth 4:1-10), thus indicating that Israel's judges were receiving not only money (מִלָּה) but also land for their "services," or more literally, as an indication of the price, or object, for the sake of which the judges were


²See, e.g., Cripps, Amos, 140; Honeycutt, Amos, 37-38; Hammershaimb, Amos, 46-47; Craigie, Twelve Prophets, 142; and Soggin, Amos, 47-48.

³See, e.g., Harper, Amos and Hosea, 49; Mays, Amos, 45-46; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 316-317; Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 142; Gary Smith, Amos, 82-83; Finley, Amos, 163; and Paul, Amos, 77.
disposed to pervert their decisions. The Israelites were then accused of "selling out" justice (due to the innocent, to the poor) for the sake of money and gain.

The strength of this interpretation lies in the close parallelism that this indictment has with the one in Amos 5:12. This latter verse speaks of the יִצְבָּאוֹת ("rebellions, transgressions") of the Israelites, refers to the people as oppressors of the "righteous" (יָרֵדִים), and as ones that "turn aside" (נֹשְּׁבָה) "the poor" (נָרִיצָת) at the gate. All of these are key terms in Amos 2:6, and they seem therefore to argue for a similar understanding for both verses. The verse in Amos 5:12 further specifies that the Israelites of the time were a people "used to taking bribes" (נֹשְּׁבָה נָרִיצָת) in their administration of justice. Hence, the reference to "selling" the righteous and the poor in Amos 2:16 could be addressing the same problem.

The corruption of the legal system in ancient Israel and Judah, associated with the practice of bribing, was a chronic problem addressed not only by Amos but also by a number of other biblical prophets (Isa 1:23; 3:14-15; 5:23; 10:1-2; Jer 5:28; 22:3; Ezek 22:29; Mic 3:9-11; 7:3). This reality was an open transgression of the biblical laws that forbade the miscarriage of justice against the poor and needy in favor of the wealthy and powerful in Israelite society. Laws such as those of Exod 23:6-8; Lev 19:15; and Deut 16:18-20 interdicted such practices. The main concern of these laws is the same that lies behind the texts in Amos: the just exercise of the law for everyone in Israel. Very relevant,

---

1The context of the passage is clearly judicial. Previously in vs. 7, the Israelites of the time were indicted for turning justice to wormwood and for casting righteousness down to the ground. In vs. 10, they were characterized as hating those who reproved the injustice practiced at the gate, and despising the ones who speak with integrity. In vs. 15, יהוה summons His people to hate evil and love good, and to establish justice at the gate. All this makes clear that the dispensation of "justice" (צדק) at the gate (ותם), the courtroom of the time (Deut 21:19-20; 22:15; 25:7; Ruth 4:1-12; Job 29:7-17; Prov 22:22-23), was the main concern of these verses in Amos 5.

2The hiphil הָנַגֵּת ("to turn aside") does not appear in Amos 2:6 but in the beginning of the next verse (Amos 2:7). It can be understood, however, as expressing a continuation of the thought started in Amos 2:6, being therefore closely connected with the first statement of the prophet.
however, is Exod 23:6-8, for in it the key terms בדיק ("poor"), מושק ("righteous one"), and the hiphil רצק ("to turn aside") appear together in a law intended to regulate the administration of justice to these classes of people and to forbid the acceptance of bribes by those empowered to judge in Israel.

The main objection that has been raised against the view above is that nowhere else in the OT is the verb נמכר ("to sell") employed in conjunction with the idea of bribing a judge, or with that of judges "selling" innocent people by giving a crooked verdict for the sake of money. Many times, however, this verb is used in reference to the selling of a needy person in contexts of debt and slavery (Exod 21:7-8; Lev 25:39-40; Deut 15:12-14).¹

The usage of נמכר ("to sell") in the contexts above is seen by many as one of the strongest arguments in favor of the view that the practice of selling innocent and powerless people into slavery is the issue here in Amos. This could be understood in the sense that unscrupulous creditors would force an innocent debtor (the מושק ("righteous one")) to be sold as a slave, on false charges of owing money, and a poor debtor (the בדיק ("poor")), for the sake of an insignificant debt (לנמכרה מתנים ["for the sake of a pair of sandals"]). It could also be understood in the sense that perverse businessmen were actually selling innocent and powerless Israelites as slaves for the sake of money (לנךכאת בכסף ["for silver"]), and even in exchange for objects such as a pair of sandals or its corresponding monetary value.

This understanding seems to find support in the parallel passage of Amos 8:6, in which the prophet condemns the Israelite for גהנה למכרה מתנים ("buying the powerless for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals"). The focus of Amos 8:4-8 is the crooked and dissolute business practices of the Israelite upper class, which included traffic in human beings. The difference here is that they are accused not for "selling," but rather for "buying" the powerless and the poor among them. The objective is again

¹A number of scholars have raised this objection. See, e.g., Gary Smith, *Amos*, 82; Finley, *Amos*, 163; and Paul, *Amos*, 77.
monetary gain, as the repetition of the expressions נָּשָׁבָה ("for silver") and נִקְנָה ("for a pair of sandals") indicates. The passage does not only parallel Amos 2:6 on the level of common terminology, but it also belongs to the section that corresponds to the indictment of Israel in Amos 2:6-16 in the general structure of the book. They can then be seen as complementary, and the usage of נָּשָׁבָה ("to sell") in Amos 2:6, and of נִקְנָה ("to buy") in Amos 8:6 as intentional, in order to convey the idea of the complete traffic in powerless human beings practiced at the time.

An illustration of the practice of reducing a fellow Israelite into slavery, either for the sake of an unpaid dept or of financial profit, can be seen in the story of the widow who asked Elisha for help against a creditor who would come to take her boys as slaves on account of her deceased husband's unpaid debt (2 Kgs 4:1-7). It can also be seen in Jer 34:8-16 and Neh 5:3-12, which speak of the enslaving of a significant number of poor people to their fellow Judean citizens.

Ancient OT laws did not forbid an Israelite to have a slave from among his fellow countrymen. This practice was, however, strictly regulated by the laws pertaining to the sabbatical year and the Jubilee (Exod 21:2-11; Lev 25:39-43, 47-55; Deut 15:12-18). They were to be set free either in the sabbatical year, or in the jubilee. They were to be provided with some financial help when released, and in the Jubilee, they would recover all the property that they had received in inheritance from their family. The enslavement of a fellow Israelite would then be usually temporary, and he should not be treated as a common slave but rather like a hired worker.

All these laws abound in vocabulary and themes that are relevant to the topic in Amos 2 and 8. The verbs נָּשָׁבָה ("to sell") and נִקְנָה ("to buy"), in reference to an Israelite...
person, appear there frequently (Exod 21:2, 7; Lev 25:39, 42, 47-48, 50; Deut 15:12). Also focal was the question of the impoverished Israelite and the way the affluent ones should deal with them (Lev 25:25-28, 35-39, 43, 47, 53; Deut 15:7-11). Slavery was then presented as a temporary remedy for financial crises, and it should be dealt with in compassion and consideration. Fundamental was the principle that all Israelites were servants of YHWH, for He brought them out of Egypt; therefore no Israelite should be sold as a slave, and the powerful ones in Israelite society should not rule over their poor countrymen ruthlessly (Lev 25:42-43; Deut 15:15).

Reality, however, was quite different. As the later passages of Jer 34:8-16 and Neh 5:3-12 depict, these laws were not obeyed at all, and the treatment was ruthless that a needy and poor person received from the hands of affluent compatriots. Amos 2:6 and 8:6 seem then to be condemning the same kind of wicked practice that became widespread among God's people.

The practice of selling a fellow innocent Israelite for no reason whatever but for pure business, for profit and gain, was strictly forbidden in OT. It was to be punished with death (Exod 21:16; Deut 24:7). These laws envisaged the case of kidnapping someone with the objective of selling him as a slave. The case in Amos most probably did not involve such an open and direct action; rather, as already hinted by Amos 5:12, it involved the manipulation of the legal system in favor of the perpetrator. It was more subtle, and kept a façade of legality. The principle of not "selling" a fellow countryman for profit remains, however.

The two views above, the corruption of the legal system through bribes and the selling of poor people into slavery for the sake of an unpaid debt or for pure profit, need not to be exclusive of each other. As Andersen and Freedman put it, the passages in Amos 2:6-8, 5:12, and 8:4-6 all have vocabulary in common, and each helps to clarify the other. In order to succeed in their crimes, the oppressors needed both the power and the audacity.
to break the basic laws of Israelite society and the money and influence to bribe judges and subvert the legal system in their favor.\footnote{Andersen and Freedman, \textit{Amos}, 308-309.} The commercial and economical oppression and exploitation of the poor and powerless, legalized by a corrupt legal system, become more clear as one advances through the divine charges raised against Israel.

In the second indictment raised against Israel, YHWH refers to the Israelites as \textit{אֶפֶן הַגּוֹיִם} ("they that pant after the dust of the earth [which is] on the head of the powerless and turn aside the way of the humble"). This indictment seems to refer to the extreme avarice of the Israelite elite who were spoiling the poor of all their possessions. The sentence is a hyperbole; the wealthy are presented as panting even after the dust that the poor and powerless people was throwing upon their heads, as a sign of mourning and despair, after they had lost everything to their powerful fellow countrymen.\footnote{Cf. below, 313-317, for the discussion on the different interpretations of this difficult verse, and for the reason for maintaining the reading \textit{‘הַפְּנִימִים} ("the ones panting") for this verse.}

The second part of the indictment seems to focus on the corruption of the legal system in Israel, thereby indicating that the unscrupulous actions of the wealthy were taken under the umbrella of the law. The parallel usage of the hiphil רָצַח ("to turn aside") in Amos 5:12, in conjunction with a description of the deep state of corruption of justice and widespread manipulation of the courts by the powerful and wealthy people to their own advantage, argues in that direction, as already seen above.\footnote{See also the usage of the same verb in the description of the perversion of justice in 1 Sam 8:3 and Job 24:4.} It is against this oppressing situation that the prophet raises his voice in Amos 8:4 saying: \textit{הַפְּנִימִים הַפְּנִימִים, הַפְּנִימִים} ("the ones panting").
fTR—ijji ("hear this, you who pant after the poor, in order to exterminate the wretched people of the land"). The emphasis in Amos 8:4-6 is on the immoral commercial practices of the Israelite businessmen, which were intended to reduce the poor class to the most utter misery or financial insolvency, so that they could buy them as slaves.

The state of affairs described in Amos 2:7; 5:12; and 8:4-6 was also graphically depicted by Isaiah and Micah (Isa 1:23; 3:14-15; 5:8, 23; 10:1-2; Mic 2:1-2; 3:1-4, 9-11; 7:3), two contemporaries of Amos. Quite relevant in these prophets' writings are the descriptions of the Israelite leaders and affluent people taking houses and fields from the poor, oppressing them, depriving them of their inheritance, and "consuming them" as one consumes an animal for food and for profit (Isa 5:8; Mic 2:1-2; 3:1-4). All of this was connected with a corrupt handling of justice and perversion of the legal system.

The Israelite upper class was then transgressing some basic dispositions of the OT laws that were intended to protect the poor people and guarantee them justice. Laws such as those of Exod 22:21-27; 23:10-11; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; 24:19-22; 25:1-55; and Deut 15:1-11; 23:19-20 were intended to prevent a poor Israelite from falling into deep misery; to give him a new opportunity to redress his life every sabbatical and, especially, jubilee year; and to avoid a spirit of oppression and exploitation over the weak and needy, by promoting compassion, help, and forgiveness. It is clear from the words of Amos that the

1 Qere יִמַּעַל ("hear this, you who pant after the poor").

2 The meaning here is similar to the one in Amos 2:7, meaning those who pant after what belongs to the poor. Most commentators, however, render this verb as "the ones who crush" reading בִּלְתִי ("to crush") instead of בִּלְתִי ("to gasp, pant," or "to snap, set traps").

3 The infinitive construct with waw בֵּיתִי has been usually translated without the meaning of purpose, only as a continuation of the preceding participle ("and who exterminate"), according to similar occurrences in OT, as in Ps 104:21 and Jer 44:19. Cf. Paul Joüon, A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, trans. and rev. T. Muraoka, SB, no. 14 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991), 2:§124p. The construction can have the meaning of purpose, however, expressing the idea of the intention of the act that preceded it; cf. E. Kautzsch, ed., Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, 2d English ed. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), §114p. Examples of it can be seen in Lev 10:9-10, 1 Chr 6:34[49], Neh 8:13, and Jer 17:10.
wealthy and powerful in Israel, at the time, were not at all observing these laws. The spirit that prevailed was one of greed, oppression, wicked exploitation, and hardness of heart.

Especially relevant to the second indictment against Israel are the laws that speak against the perversion of justice (Exod 23:1-3, 6-8; Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16-17; 10:17-19; 16:18-20; 24:17; 25:1), especially in their usage of the hiphil רָעַנְּנָה ("to turn aside") in the same sense that it is used in Amos 2:7 and 5:12. It forbade the Israelite to "turn aside" (רָעַנְּנָה) the justice (כָּשָׁר) due to the poor and needy (Exod 23:2, 6; Deut 16:19; 24:17). Indeed, one who did so was declared to be a cursed person (Deut 27:19). Also relevant to the indictments in Amos 2:7, 5:12 and 8:4 are the laws in Lev 19:35-37 which associate together the questions of perversion of justice and of the crooked business practices of changing weights, measures, balances, etc., in a close parallel to Amos 8:4-6 (cf. also Deut 25:13-16).

The third indictment, anom nun ron ("every man and his father go to the girl in order to profane My Holy Name"), is an enigmatic verse that has been interpreted in different ways. It has usually been understood as referring to some sexual activity of both a man and his father with the same maidservant,1 cultic prostitute,2 or young unmarried woman.3 Some understand the verse as speaking of a man forcing his daughter-in-law to have sexual relationships with him.4 Hans M. Barstad has argued that there is no notion of sexual relationship in the verse, but that it speaks of the hostess of the

---

1See, e.g., Bach, "Gottesrecht," 30-33; Mays, Amos, 46; Hauret, Amos et Osée, 34; Rudolph, Amos, 142-143; Amsler, "Amos," 181; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 22; Limburg, Hosea-Micah, 91; Hayes, Amos, 112; Gary Smith, Amos, 85; Finley, Amos, 167.

2See, e.g., Snaith, Amos, 2:42-43; Cripps, Amos, 142; Neher, Amos, 55; Hammershaimb, Amos, 48-49; Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 136; Motyer, Day of the Lion, 58-59; Soggin, Amos, 48.

3See, e.g., Wolff, Joel and Amos, 167; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 317; Paul, Amos, 81-83; Niehaus, "Amos," 366-367.

4See, e.g., Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 142; Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 33.
sacred meal of the so-called marzeah association, which was connected with idolatrous cult and worship.¹

Depending on one's understanding of the transgression in focus here, the following OT laws have been understood to be in the background of the indictment: the laws intended to protect a female slave from sexual abuse by her master (Exod 21:7-11; Lev 19:20-23); the laws that prohibit sexual relationship between a man and a woman who belongs to his father, or between a man and his daughter-in-law (Lev 18:7-8, 15; 20:11-12; Deut 22:30; 27:20); the law forbidding the practice of sacred prostitution in Israel (Deut 23:17-18); the laws intended to safeguard the very personhood of a young woman and her potential marriageability (Exod 22:16-17; Deut 22:23-29); or the laws against idolatry (Exod 20:2-6, 23; 22:19; 23:13, 24; 34:11-17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deut 5:6-10; 6:14-15; 12:2-5, 29-13:1[12:32]; 16:21-22; 17:2-7).

Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman have made a remark that seems to be highly significant for understanding the charge raised here against the Israelites. The usage of the definite article -rr with the word רֵעָה ("girl") indicates that it was a question of a specific and well-known personage.² In Amos 8:14, a female deity is introduced by the name אִשָּׁמָה ("Ashmat Shomron"), that may probably be "the Girl" of Amos 2:7.³ The goddess Ashmah is also mentioned in 2 Kgs 17:30, as one of the gods worshiped by the nations that the Assyrians settled in Samaria in the place of the Israelites. The reference


²Most scholars do not comment on the presence of the definite article in the text, but usually adopt one of the following possibilities: It could be a case of a "generic article," also called "imperfect determination," which is used in conjunction with something that is not determinate in the consciousness of the writer and can only be translated in English by the indefinite "a" (cf. Snaith, Amos, 2:42); as an article with demonstrative force, meaning "the same girl" (cf. Neher, Amos, 55); or an article defining the individuals of a class, hence "the girl" stands for young unmarried women in general (cf. Hammershaimb, Amos, 48; Paul, Amos, 82-83). Cf. Kautzsch, Gesenius', §126; and Joüon, Grammar, 2:§137, for the syntax of the definite article. All of these are possible readings: however, the plain meaning of the article can be retained in the text, as shown above.

³Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 318.
in Amos 8:14 that the Israelites used to swear in the name of this goddess, and of other
gods too, implies the idea of worship and cult of these gods.¹

This interpretation seems plausible in view of the following:

1. The reference to the worship of a female deity in Amos 8:14, a verse that
belongs to the section (Amos 8:4-9:15) that parallels Amos 1-2 in the general structure of
the book.

2. The parallel usage of the references to members of God's people, their "fathers,"
and to the verb תָּנָא ("to go") in a context of idolatry in Amos 2:4.

3. By the fact that the expression רָעָב וּֽאַבֵּן ("a man and his father") does not
exactly express the idea of "a son and his father," or "father and son," as it is usually
rendered, but rather the distributive idea of "every man," meaning "every man and his
father," involving then every Israelite. This kind of inclusive reference, in which there is
an allusion to אב ("father"), is many times used in the OT to refer to the practice of idolatry
by the Israelites and by their ancestors (as is the case in Amos 2:4, and also in Deut 13:7;
28:36, 64; Jer 44:3; 44:7).²

4. The final remark in the indictment תָּנָא וּֽאַבֵּן ("in order to profane My
Holy Name") is an expression that belongs especially to the cultic and sacral domain,³ and
is used elsewhere in conjunction with idolatry (Lev 18:21; 20:3; Ezek 20:39; 36:20-23).

5. Finally, there is the reference to a idolatrous cult in Amos 2:8.

Understood in this context, the third indictment raised against Israel involves
blatant idolatry. If one takes the preposition תָּנָא ("in order") here to mean a willful

¹See discussion on the goddess Ashmah in Barstad, "Religious Polemics," 144-
181.

²For more discussion on the distributive idea related to אב ("man"), see Andersen
and Freedman, Amos, 318.

³The actions described as profaning the name of YHWH included reneging on an
oath sworn in His name (Lev 19:12; Jer 34:16), sacrificing children to Molek (Lev 18:21;
20:3), idolatry (Ezek 20:39; 36:20-23), actions forbidden to priests (Lev 21:6), the use of
things dedicated to YHWH (Lev 22:2), and the offering of improper animals as sacrifice
(Lev 22:32).
intention, then the idolatrous worship of "the Girl" was conducted in an act of open rebellion against YHWH. It would then translate the same spirit noted further in the oracle in vs. 12, where the Israelites were accused of intentionally interdicting YHWH's prophets to prophesy, and of forcing the Nazirites to break their religious vows of consecration to YHWH.

If then idolatry is the main focus of this indictment, the OT laws forbidding the worship of other gods than YHWH can be seen as the background of this indictment (cf. Exod 20:2-6, 23; 22:19; 23:13, 24; 34:11-17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deut 5:6-10; 6:14-15; 12:2-5, 29-13:1[12:32]; 16:21-22; 17:2-7).

The fourth indictment against the Israelites brings together the elements of both the economical oppression of the poor and the religious idolatry of northern Israel.

The first part of the indictment continues the condemnation of the Israelites for the ruthless treatment of the poor and weak. The practice of taking a garment as a pledge for an assumed loan was regulated by some specific laws that were intended to mitigate the results of such a practice. Amos uses here the same verb, בָּדָה ("to take in pledge, to exact a pledge"), that appears in these laws (Exod 22:26-27 and Deut 24:10-13, 17).

J. Milgrom and Shalom M. Paul have demonstrated that בָּדָה ("to take in pledge, to exact a pledge") applies more to a pledge, a distraint, that is taken when the loan fails to be

---

1Respect and consideration should be shown to the debtor; the one making the loan could not enter the debtor's house in order to take his pledge. He should wait outside, and the one in debt would take the pledge to him (Deut 24:10-11). If the debtor were a poor person, the "cloak, mantle" (עָדָה) taken in pledge should be returned to him in the evening, so that he could cover himself during the night (Exod 22:26-27; Deut 24:12-13). In case of a widow, her "garment" (עָדָה) could not be taken from her as a pledge (Deut 24:17).
paid and the debt is defaulted,¹ than to a pledge taken as security at the making of the loan, as some commentators interpret it.² Passages such as Job 22:6; 24:3-4, 9 and Ezek 18:10-13, 18 shed light upon the indictment in Amos as far as their usage of the לֹאַל (“to take in pledge, to exact a pledge”) comes into the same context of oppression and ruthless treatment of the poor, perversion of the legal system, crooked business practices, and financial exploitation of the underprivileged people, etc.

To take someone’s garment as a pledge was legal, and passages such as Prov 20:16 and 27:13 advise one to do so in case of high-risk loans, but what Amos denounces again is the brutal usage of the law, a law that was intended to promote compassion, consideration, and a spirit of helpfulness from the rich and powerful toward their underprivileged peers. Furthermore, and very probably so, Amos may also be denouncing the unjust usage of these legal dispositions. Earlier in the oracle, the prophet reproved the manipulations of the legal system in favor of the wealthy, intended in order to strip the poor of all their goods. In this light, as in Job 22:6, the pledges denounced by Amos may have been taken unjustly, and people may have been deprived of their clothes for no lawful reason whatever.

The condemnation of the spirit of harsh treatment and unjust exploitation of the poor seems to continue in the reference to the אָשָׁם ("wine of those who were fined"). The verb אָשָׁם ("to fine") is used in the legal texts of the OT in two precise contexts: (1) it refers to a fine imposed on someone by the husband of a pregnant woman, who was hurt in a fight and suffered miscarriage by that person, according to what is decided by the

¹They especially compare the biblical practice with that reported in the ANE laws, mortgage documents, letters, etc. Cf. Jacob Milgrom, Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance, SJLA, no. 18 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 95-98; and Paul, Amos, 83-86. See also Honeycutt, Amos, 40; Hauret, Amos et Osée, 35; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, God's People, 22; and Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 320, for a similar view.

²See, e.g., Kelley, Amos, 44; Ward, Amos & Isaiah, 136; Limburg (1988), Hosea-Micah, 91; Chisholm, Minor Prophets, 82; and Mowvley, Amos & Hosea, 34.
judges (Exod 21:22); and (2) to a fine of one hundred shekels to be paid by a man who falsely slandered the girl he just married, and whom he wants to get rid of, by saying that she was not a virgin (Deut 22:19). These two cases seem hardly to the point in Amos 2:8. The use of the same verb in Proverbs, however, seems to indicate that people were fined for many other reasons too (Prov 17:26; 21:11; 22:3; 27:12), but the passages do not specify which. In any case, the reason for the fine in Amos cannot be known; it is probably related to the condemnation of an innocent and powerless party in a crooked judicial process. In Amos 4:1, the drinking of wine is connected with the oppression of the powerless and poor, and in Amos 6:6 with the indifference of the Israelite high class for the ruin of Joseph (= Israel), and with their dedication to banqueting and participating in cultic feasts.

These cultic feasts seem to be in focus in Amos 2:8 also. In Amos 6:7, these feasts are called כְּרַפְּאוֹת מַרְצָא ("cultic feast of the sprawling ones"), or the marzeah, a religious confraternity dedicated to one god, whose members belonged to the wealthier class in society, and which held sacred banquets that lasted many days. These social and religious ceremonies involved lying down, drinking wine, eating, playing music, etc. (Amos 6:4-6). Jer 16:5, 8, the only other passage in the OT where the word מַרְצָא ("cultic feast, marzeah") appears, indicates that it was also related to the mourning for the dead. The institution of the marzeah is well attested throughout the ANE for a period of more than fifteen hundred years.1

The activities described in Amos 2:8 may well have been related to a marzeah feast. There is the description of stretching out beside every altar, and that of drinking wine. That this feasting was associated with idolatry is indicated by the reference to the כְּרַפְּאֹת עֵיִן ("the house of their gods"), an expression that occurs only two more times in the OT and always indicates a pagan temple (Judg 9:27; 1 Chr 10:10).

---

1See description in Barstad, "Religious Polemics." 125-142; Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 566-569; Paul, Amos, 210-212.
Oppression of the poor, abuse of the legal dispositions for their own profit, mixed with an open and blatant idolatry, were acts that transgressed many of the basic dispositions of the Israelite laws, as already noted above, and were apparently perpetrated in an open rebellion against YHWH.

This spirit of open rebellion is the subject of the fifth and last indictment against Israel, found in Amos 2:12, אַהֲרֵנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲנָשָׁי לֹא בֶּזֶזֶר הֶדְקִין אֶל מַעַלַּהְם ("but you made the Nazirites drink wine, and the prophets you commanded, saying: 'Do not prophesy.'"). As already seen in the discussion of the lawsuit form of the oracle against Israel, this indictment functions as the "pronouncement of guilt" in the lawsuit structure. It seems to represent the ultimate state of rebellion reached by the nation, in which those who wanted to dedicate their lives to YHWH (the Nazirites) were persecuted, and His commissioned spokesmen, the prophets, were silenced.¹

The actions referred to in this indictment come in contrast with YHWH's own action of raising up prophets and Nazirites in the midst of His people, as an act of His grace toward them (Amos 2:11). The language refers to the laws on Nazirite practice in Num 6, and to the instructions concerning the prophetic office in Deut 18. To oblige the Nazirites to drink wine equates to making them break their vows of consecration, observed according to the law in Num 6:1-4. To forbid the prophets to speak implied the silencing of the special source of communication between YHWH and His people, clearly specified in Deut 18. The accusation, however, goes beyond the simple statement of a transgression of the Law; it speaks of an open rebellion, which translated itself into the religious persecution and oppression of those who identified themselves with YHWH. As already noted, the prophet might have been speaking of something that was happening in his days, or of some earlier religious persecution, like the one that occurred in the times of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:29-19:8; 2 Kgs 9:4-10). This spirit of rebellion and rejection of

¹Cf. above, 147-148.
YHWH's lordship over the nation is always associated with the breach of their covenant with Him in the OT.¹

According to this survey of the indictments against Israel, it appears that OT laws stand at the background of these accusations. This understanding of the prophetic words, however, has been challenged by a number of scholars. They usually remark that the prophet never quotes verbatim any law, and that he does not mention anywhere that it was because of the transgression of OT laws that Israel was being indicted. They rather consider that Amos condemns what he sees, ad hoc, the kind of evil that everybody would recognize as wrong and that anyone would consider to be reprehensible, according to common moral standards shared by all at that time. Wisdom is usually evoked as the most probable background for the moral principles defended by the prophet.²

The basic weakness of the position above resides in its quest for verbatim quotation of OT laws as the decisive evidence that the prophet had these laws in mind. More than often, however, laws were referred to implicitly rather then explicitly. As Douglas Stuart remarked:

(1) No ancient law codes were ever cited precisely in court cases or prophetic oracles anywhere in the ancient world. "Chapter-and-verse" citation of legal formulations or precedents is strictly a modern legal development. (2) The Old Testament prophets do refer to the Mosaic law in all sort of ways, and rather constantly, but largely periphrasically and paraenetically as opposed to verbatim.³

The Babylonian legal system provides a good example for the first point made by Stuart. In the classical study on the Babylonian laws by G. R. Driver and John C. Miles, it had already been stated some decades ago that "there is not a single case in the thousands of legal documents and reports which have been preserved in which reference is made to the

¹Cf. above, 208-209.

²See Brightup, "Northern Origins," 235-239; Wolff, Amos the Prophet, 54, 70-76; idem, Joel and Amos, 102, 168; Dion, "Message moral," 14-20, 26, 31-34.

wording of the text of the Laws."¹ Explicit references to OT laws do occur in the OT, however, and more than once some precise laws are directly evoked, and sometimes even quoted (cf. 2 Kgs 14:6; 2 Chr 25:4; Ezra 9:11; Neh 8:14; 13:1; Jer 17:21-22; Ezek 18:1-32; 22:6-12). Nevertheless, the number of implicit references exceeds by far the number of the explicit ones, as Michael Fishbane has demonstrated in his detailed study on the biblical interpretation and usage of Pentateuchal laws throughout the OT.²

The argument in favor of OT laws is further strengthened by the form of the oracle itself. The lawsuit form is fundamentally connected with the Israelite judiciary system and its legal procedures. That connection makes the transgression of laws a basic and recurring theme in this literary form.³ This point is made plain by the close parallelism that unites Amos 2:6-8, 5:12, and 8:4-6. As seen above, the accusations against Israel had a special concern with the perversion of the legal system, evidenced by the transgression and/or abuse of the laws that should guide that system in Israel. Besides, in Amos 8:4-6, a passage that structurally and thematically corresponds to Amos 2:6-8, the same wrongs denounced in chap. 2 are associated with the themes of the new moon and the sabbath. The religious observance of the new moon and sabbath is intimately related to the domain of the Israelite law, and seems therefore to add a further witness to the legal substratum of the prophetic indictments.


²Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 91-440. See especially pp. 292-317 that deal with the theme of the Law in the prophetic literature.

³See the discussion on the connection of the lawsuit form and the courtroom procedures in Harvey, "Rib-Pattern," 173-174, 176; Westermann, Basic Forms, 133-136, 199-200; and Limburg, "Lawsuit of God," 97-100.
The accumulation of specific themes and terminology in Amos 2:6-8, 12, already discussed above, points so strongly to the domain of law, that even a scholar such as Hans Walter Wolff, who emphasizes above all the wisdom background of the prophecies of Amos, had to recognize that Amos was concerned mainly with the legal protection of the oppressed people, and that at least some parallels to the prophetic accusations are found primarily only in the Israelite legal tradition.\(^1\) It is remarkable, on these lines, that texts such as Job 22:2-9, 24:1-4, and Ezek 18, which share many of the same themes and terminology with Amos 2:6-8, present these actions as transgressions of the laws of YHWH.\(^2\)

The evocation of law may not be as implicit as it is usually thought in the oracle against Israel. As already remarked above, the references to the "Law of YHWH and His statutes" and to the problem of idolatry in the oracle against Judah may serve as an introduction to the themes that dominate the divine lawsuit against Israel. If so understood, the explicit reference to OT laws can be found in the verses that just preceded the oracle against Israel.

\(^1\)Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 165-168. Wolff evidences a certain "duality" in dealing with the subject. This "duality" shows the difficulties of his position on clan wisdom, not law, as standing behind the prophetic words. In his concluding remarks on Amos 2:6-8, he claims that the accusations of Amos find "only certain conceptual parallels in the older legal tradition" (ibid., 168). In discussing the question of the sale of a debtor into slavery, however, he can find a basis for the prophetic accusation only in the laws that regulate that practice (ibid., 165). On the accusation against perversion of justice, he speaks of the kind of instructions found in the apodictic laws of the Book of the Covenant (ibid., 166). On the question of the protection of a young woman against sexual abuse, he says that "we have here in Amos is, in effect, a radicalizing of the apodictic stipulation in Lev 18:15" (ibid., 167). On the subject of garments taken in pledge, he declares that "the legal tradition in the Pentateuch shows more clearly than the wisdom material the nature of the injustice Amos has in mind" (ibid.). Thus he finds a stronger basis for most of the prophetic accusations he surveys in the ancient laws of Israel than in texts that would speak of clan wisdom.

\(^2\)In Job, these actions are contrasted with Job's claim of keeping the ways of God and not departing from the "commandment of His lips" (מְשֵׁר יָפֵת); see Job 23:11-12. In Ezekiel, the man who does not commit any of these wrongs is called "righteous" (תָּמִי), one who does "judgment and justice" (יָרֵעַ וֹפוּה). Concerning him, YHWH states that he "walks in My statutes and keeps My judgments" (יָשָׁב בִּשׁעָתֵי ה', וֹפוּה). Concerning him, YHWH states that he "walks in My statutes and keeps My judgments" (יָשָׁב בִּשׁעָתֵי ה', וֹפוּה); see Ezek 18:9, 17, 19, 21.
Finally, there is the understanding of the prophetic indictments in the light of their relationship to the rest of the OT, in its present form. Since the concern of this study is with the present text of the "Oracles Against the Nations," this relationship is also relevant for the discussion. As Otto Kaiser remarked not long ago, when one takes the canonical text of the OT and interprets the prophetic message accordingly, it is undeniable that Amos and the other prophets "were preaching obedience in the Law," and that "they admonished the people to follow its path."1

OT laws seem to stand therefore at the background of the prophetic indictments against Israel. Are these laws related to covenant, however? Some scholars prefer to relate them to wisdom, instead of covenant.2 They argue that laws are to be understood as the ultimate formulation of the fundamental principles of wisdom that organize and structure a specific society. They are intended to preserve the social structure and its good order. In that light, they argue for the wisdom foundation of the legal principles that are evoked in the text of Amos 2:6-8.3

The main objection against such a view, however, is that the OT consistently presents the law within a covenant context. As Bruce C. Birch remarked regarding the narrative context of OT legal material: "The narrative context makes clear that for Israel all law receives its authority from the belief that it has been divinely revealed as a part of the solemn covenant established by God with Israel and agreed to by Israel at Sinai."4

---


2 For a brief, but highly instructive exposition of these ideas, see Gerstenberger, "Covenant and Commandment," 38-51.


4 Birch, Let Justice, 158. For some comprehensive discussion on the intrinsic relationship between law and covenant, see Walther Eichrodt, "Covenant and Law: Thoughts on Recent Discussion," Interp 20 (1966): 309-314; Rogers, "Covenant," 141
Furthermore, the covenantal nature of the laws evoked in the indictment against Israel seems to be clearly evidenced by the fact that the prophetic oracle of Amos 2:6-16 brings the transgression of laws into relationship with the recital of YHWH's gracious acts in the history of Israel (the Exodus from Egypt, the gift of the land of Canaan, the raising up of prophets and Nazirites), and to a pronouncement of judgment that reflects the curses of the Mosaic covenant. This association is unquestionably covenantal; it reflects the structure of the Mosaic covenant and the place of the laws within that covenant.  

Summary

God was seen to be consistently referred to in Amos 1:2-2:16 by the divine name YHWH, a name that in itself is deeply related to the domain of the OT covenants. From the onset of the oracles, YHWH is attached to the theme of Jerusalem as His dwelling place (Amos 1:2). This connection represents a basic element of the OT Davidic covenant. The nature of the judgments pronounced by God against the eight nations addressed in Amos 1-2 points to the domain of the OT covenant curses, especially to the OT covenant curses of judgment by fire and war. YHWH in Amos 1:2-2:16 brings judgment not only upon His elected people, but also upon foreign nations. His authority

1For the discussion on the historical recital of Amos 2:9-11, see above, 148-150, 197-201. On the question of the relationship between the judgment of Amos 2:13-16 and the curses of the Mosaic covenant, see above, 197.

2See the discussion in Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 57-60; idem, "Covenant," 714-715, 718-720; Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1190-1191; Weinfeld, "תֶּבֶית" 266-268; idem, "Common Heritage," 182-189; Bergren, Prophets and the Law, 91-106; Buis, Notion d'alliance, 105-122; Gunneweg, Understanding, 131-138; Zimmerli, Law and the Prophets, 55-60; Dyrness, Themes, 113-126.
and interests are presented in Amos as reaching far beyond the borders of Israel. He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and as such He has authority over every nation and over every human being. These universal concepts of God and His authority were seen to be intrinsically connected with the OT concept of a universal covenant between God and His creation. In the first two chapters of Amos, God engages Himself in a lawsuit against the nation of northern Israel. This lawsuit is founded upon His covenant with the children of Israel, and recalls YHWH's historical acts of salvation in their favor that became the foundation of this covenant.

As for the prophet Amos, he is basically presented in Amos 1:2-2:16 as YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator. This picture of the prophet is quite consistent throughout the entire book, and was seen to be patterned after the promise of Deut 18:15-19 (a passage that is directly evoked in Amos 2:11).

The list of the eight nations addressed in Amos 1-2 was seen to point to the geographical area of the "promised land" of the Abrahamic covenant that became part of Israel only during the Davidic/Solomonic era. The Davidic rulership over all this region became an important element of the Davidic covenant, and was seen to provide the general background for the series of oracles in Amos 1:2-2:16. While the Davidic covenant seems to stand as the general background of these oracles, the study of the "rebellions, transgressions" of each nation points out that the divine indictments of these nations are related either to the notion of a universal covenant (the first six nations of the series), or to the Mosaic covenant (Judah and Israel). The foreign nations (Damascus [Aram]; Gaza [Philistia]; Tyre [Phoenicia]; Edom; Ammon; Moab) were condemned for extreme cruelty practiced against human beings in the context of warfare. These condemnations were seen to be better understood within the context of the requirement for the respect for the human
being and his life that is part of the OT concept of a universal covenant between God and His creation. Judah and Israel were condemned for the transgression of the Mosaic law, the revealed law that was at the basis of YHWH's covenant with His elected people.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Findings

At the outset of this dissertation, the basic questions concerning the presence and use of OT covenant(s) in the book of Amos were posed: Is there covenant in the book of Amos? Did the prophet Amos know anything about it? If he did, why did he never use the word יִתְנֶּה ("covenant") in reference to God's relationship with Israel, or make clear reference to it in his indictments of that nation's sins?

The exegetical study of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1:2-2:16, undertaken in this dissertation, allows for a positive answer to the first two questions above: Yes, there is covenant in the book of Amos, and the prophet Amos seems to have been well aware of it. This positive answer is based on the following findings:

1. The strong tension between salvation and judgment that encircles the entire book and message of Amos. This tension has been a problematic and conflicting issue for many modern scholars. It was argued, however, that such tension was part of the structure of the OT covenant(s) ("blessings and curses"), and represented one of the basic principles of the covenantal relationship between YHWH and His people. In the series of oracles of Amos 1-2, this tension was evidenced: First, by Amos's denial of the popular expectation for an imminent restoration of the Davidic empire (expressed by the repetition of the catchword סְכִים אֲשֶׁר [I will not restore/return her/it" in these chapters], an expectation that seemingly was based on the promises of restoration made previously by the prophet Jonah (also built around the use of the verb רָבָא ["to restore"], cf. 2 Kgs 14:25). Second, by
Amos’s predictions that this restoration would happen in the eschatological day (Amos 9:11-15), after YHWH had punished His people and exiled them from their land, in the day when “I [YHWH] will restore the fortunes of My people Israel” (Amos 9:14).

2. The fact that the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6-16) was built in the form of a covenant lawsuit. The covenantal character of this lawsuit was seen to be clearly evidenced by the historical recital of Amos 2:9-11. This recital points back to the historical prologue of the Mosaic covenant, and elsewhere in the OT usually only appears in texts that deal with the covenant of YHWH with Israel. This covenant lawsuit was intended to be the climax of the prophetic series of oracles of Amos 1-2, evidencing a 7+1 pattern in which seven oracles of judgment are followed by a covenant lawsuit that culminates and concludes the series. The covenant lawsuit of Amos 2:6-16 was seen to be one of the clearest evidences of the use of the OT covenant in Amos.

3. The divine name YHWH, a name that in itself is charged with deep covenantal connotations in the OT. This was seen to be the case also in the first two chapters of Amos. In Amos 1:2, YHWH is emphatically related to Jerusalem, His dwelling place, a theme that pertains to the Davidic covenant. Throughout the series of oracles of Amos 1-2, YHWH is presented as bringing judgment against the eight nations of that series. The language used recalls the curses of divine fire and destruction by war that are described in details in the OT in the Mosaic covenant. YHWH closes the prophetic series of Amos 1-2 with a lawsuit against part of His own people (northern Israel). In the dialogue between Him and His audience, He reminds them that He was the God of the Exodus, the One who took them out of Egypt and gave them the land of Canaan. He was YHWH, Israel’s covenant God. YHWH, however, did not address only His elected people in Amos 1-2. Besides Judah and Israel, He spoke of judgment against six other nations in the Syro-Palestinian region. Insofar as YHWH’s relationship with these nations and His ability to judge and punish them are at stake, it was argued that the biblical concept of YHWH as
Creator and Ruler of the universe was essential. This concept is very prominent in the book of Amos (as evidenced in the hymnic passages of that book), as well as in many of the closest parallels to Amos 1-2 elsewhere in the OT. It was shown that in some of these parallel passages, the concept of YHWH as Creator and Ruler of the universe was closely associated with the idea of a universal covenant, a covenant which is fully expressed in YHWH's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, and should probably be recognized as one of the backgrounds of the words of the prophet Amos too. The conclusions reached by the exegetical study of the terms, phrases, and themes related to God in Amos 1-2 argued that important elements of four biblical covenants (i.e. the universal/Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants) were connected with YHWH in that series of oracles.

4. The book's understanding of the prophet and of his mission as YHWH's messenger and covenant mediator. That understanding of the prophetic office was seen to be founded basically on the description of the prophetic office of Deut 18. The prophetic word of Amos directly makes the connection with this chapter in Deuteronomy when it claims in Amos 2:11 that it was YHWH who raised (trprs) prophets among the Israelites. This unique idiom clearly pointed back to the divine promise in Deuteronomy, and set the understanding of the prophetic ministry in Amos under the light of Moses's ministry as servant of YHWH, His spokesman, and mediator with His people. The book's identification of the prophetic ministry with Moses's was shown to be evident also in the use of the messenger formula הנומא נאם נאוב ("thus says YHWH"). It was seen to be evident also in other parts of the book, such as in Amos 3:7-8 (the prophets as servants of YHWH, and as ones participating in His דמוד ["council, plan, deliberation, secret"]); 5:5-6, 14 (the prophet as a covenant mediator, calling and exhorting his people to repentance); 7:2-6 (the prophet as covenant mediator, interceding with God for forgiveness, in a unique parallelism with Moses in the entire OT); and 7:12-17 (and its presentation of the prophetic call and commission). It could be said, therefore, that the person and ministry of the
prophet in Amos 1-2, as well as in the rest of the book, speak directly to the description of this office in the Mosaic covenant.

5. The list of nations addressed in Amos 1-2. The geographical area occupied by these eight nations (Damascus/Aram, Gaza/Philistia, Tyre/Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel) corresponds to the area of the land first promised to Abraham in covenant (Gen 15:28). This promise was reconfirmed to the Israelites in the Mosaic covenant (Exod 23:31; Num 13:21; 34:1-10; Deut 11:24), and became a reality in the days of David and Solomon, when the Davidic empire covered the region of Syro-Palestine, and the foreign nations of the region became part of the “Greater Israel” (2 Sam 8:1-5; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 18:1-14; 2 Chr 7:8; 9:26). The Israelite dominion over the totality of this area became a key element of the Davidic covenant (Ps 89:26[25]), and is clearly evidenced in Amos both in the denial of its imminent restoration in Amos 1-2 as well as in the final promises of the restoration of the Davidic rulership and power over this entire region in the eschatological future (Amos 9:11-12). It was argued then that the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants seem to provide the general background for the “Oracles Against the Nations” in the book of Amos.

6. The nature of the כְּעִצָּбал (“rebellions, transgressions”) of the foreign nations in Amos 1-2. These nations were indicted for extreme cruelty and disrespect for human life, usually manifested through cruel killing of people and the enslaving and commerce of human beings. They were waging wars of total extermination; they attempted to destroy or enslave entire populations. YHWH condemned their attitude and warfare practices, and He was therefore about to punish them for their cruelty. It was argued, in regard to the foreign nations, that both the text of Amos and the OT as a whole naturally recognized YHWH’s authority to judge and punish any nation on the basis of His role as Creator, Ruler of the universe, and its Judge. It was contended that YHWH as the God of the universe had established laws for every human being, and required obedience to these laws. Furthermore, that these laws were part of His covenant with entire mankind and the rest of
His creation. In this sense, the nations too are subject to YHWH and bound to Him in covenant, even if they would not recognize or be aware of it. This universal covenant, with its specific requirement for humaneness and respect for the human being and his life, is presented in the OT in detail in the Noahic covenant of Gen 9, but it can be traced back as far as Creation and YHWH's interaction with the first human beings in the first chapters of Genesis. It was claimed, therefore, that the requirement for the respect of the human being and his life, which is part of the Noahic covenant (or of YHWH's universal covenant with mankind), should preferably be seen as the background of the divine indictments against the foreign nations in Amos 1-2.

7. The nature of the "rebellions, transgressions" of Judah and Israel. The "rebellions, transgressions" of God's people are presented in Amos 2:4-16 as transgressions of the divine Law that was revealed to Israel during YHWH's covenant with them at Sinai. They involved transgressions of basic dispositions of the Israelite covenant laws, laws that were intended to protect the poor and humble people from exploitation and injustice, as well as from a harsh and inhuman life. They also involved an abject idolatry connected with the wicked exploitation of the poor and an insatiable thirst for financial gain. For Israel, her "rebellions, transgressions" culminated in an open rebellion against YHWH, manifested by the interdiction to the prophets (YHWH's commissioned messengers) of prophesying (hence, to speak the divine word to them), and by the persecution of those among them who wanted to consecrate their lives to God (the Nazirites). It was seen that both the oracles against Judah and Israel speak of the Mosaic covenant, and find their rationale within the covenantal relationship stipulated in it.

The findings of this dissertation can be schematized as shown in table 1. The sequence in the table covers first the two covenants that provide the general background to the series (Abrahamic and Davidic), then the two others that supply the specific basis for the indictments raised against Israel and her neighbors (Mosaic and universal/Noahic):
TABLE 1
OT COVENANT ELEMENTS IN AMOS 1:2-2:16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covenant</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Evidenced by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrahamic and Davidic covenants</td>
<td>&quot;Promised land,&quot; and Davidic kingdom</td>
<td>The list of nations in Amos 1-2 (they occupied the area of the land promised to Abraham and to the Israelites [Gen 15:28; Exod 23:31; Num 13:21; 34:1-10; Deut 11:24] which became part of Israel only during the reigns of David and Solomon [2 Sam 8:1-5; 1 Kgs 8:65; 1 Chr 13:5; 18:1-14; 2 Chr 7:8; 9:26]) The context of restoration of the borders of the Davidic/Solomonic empire (2 Kgs 14:25; Amos 1-2; cf. also 6:14; and 9:11-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Dwelling in and judging from Jerusalem (Amos 1:2) The God of the Exodus and of the election of Abraham and Israel (Amos 2:9-10; cf. also 3:1-2; 9:7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosaic covenant</td>
<td>&quot;Blessing and curse&quot;</td>
<td>Tension between salvation and judgment (in the historical and literary contexts of Amos) The description of YHWH's judgment in terms of the covenant curses of divine fire and war (Amos 1:2, 4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 14-15, 2:2-3, 5, 13-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Covenant lawsuit&quot;</td>
<td>The literary form of the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenant</td>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>Evidenced by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mosaic covenant)</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>The God of the Exodus and of the election of Abraham and Israel (Amos 2:9-10; cf. also 3:1-2; 9:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenant curses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Punishing Judah and Israel through the covenant curses of divine fire and war (Amos 2:5, 13-16; cf. also Amos 5:3, 6; 6:14; and 7:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The prophet as YHWH's</td>
<td></td>
<td>The usage of the messenger formula &quot;thus says YHWH&quot; by Amos (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>messenger and covenant mediator</td>
<td></td>
<td>The description of the prophetic ministry in accordance with the promise of Deut 18:15-19 and the Pentateuchal picture of Moses as YHWH's prophet and covenant mediator (Amos 2:11; cf. also 3:7-8; 5:4-7, 14-15; 7:2-3, 5-6, 12-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaitic Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>The nature of the genera (&quot;rebellions, transgressions&quot;) of Judah and Israel in Amos 2:4-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal/Noahic covenant</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Creator of the universe, Sovereign over the entire world and nature, Judge of all the nations (Amos 1:2-2:16; cf. also 3:1-2, 9-11; 4:6-13; 5:8-9; 6:1-2, 14; 7:1-6; 8:8-10; 9:4-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal law of respect for</td>
<td></td>
<td>The nature of the genera (&quot;rebellions, transgressions&quot;) the six foreign nations in Amos 1:3-2:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the human being and his life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covenant</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Evidenced by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Universal/Noahic covenant)</td>
<td>Covenant curses</td>
<td>Punishing the nations through the covenant curses of divine fire and war (Amos 1:2, 4-5, 7-8, 10, 12, 14-15; 2:2-3; cf. Isa 24:4-6 and Jer 23:10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Implications

The results reached in this dissertation are full of implications for the understanding of the book of Amos and of its theology, among them:

1. They confirm what has been stressed by a number of scholars in the last decades: it is an untenable position to make the word תֵּבָּר ("covenant") the sole criterion for the detection of covenant elements and traditions in a biblical text. The abundant usage of a number of other elements of OT covenants has demonstrated the importance of covenant for the prophetic message in Amos 1-2.\(^1\) As Mendenhall had affirmed some

\(^1\) A number of scholars have tried to give a reasonable answer to the question why Amos never used the word תֵּבָּר ("covenant"), with a religious meaning. Despite their best efforts, however, their proposals remain only educated guesses. Amos's exact reason(s) will probably never be known. See, e.g., the suggestions that:


(2) Because it was misappropriated by kingship theology in Israel, an understanding of the covenant that the prophets opposed, in Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 70-72;
decades ago, "the most frequent word for 'covenant' (286 occurrences) is אֲרֵּצָת, but there are numerous references to covenants and covenant relationships where this term does not occur."1

2. They not only give support to the view that OT covenants were part of one of the theological components of the preaching of Amos, but also that they played a fundamental role in it. The entire series of oracles in Amos 1-2 was shown to be intrinsically connected with a number of specific elements that pertain to the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants. This result argues against those scholars who downplay, or completely deny, the importance of OT covenants for the understanding of the prophetic message of Amos.

3. They evidence that elements of four OT covenants (universal/Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic) were interwoven together into a unified whole. This fact speaks against the view that the classical prophets were the defenders of the old Israelite covenant traditions (i.e., Mosaic covenant) over against the appropriation of the covenant theology by the Davidic kingship and the political structure of the kingdom (which became then the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants).2 The Davidic covenant was seen to be of fundamental importance for the "Oracles Against the Nations," and a constitutive part of the prophetic message of the book of Amos.

(3) Because the term אֲרֵצָת ("covenant") obscured the prophet's conception of the relationship between God and Israel, in view of the inherent legalism in the idea of "covenant," in Heaton, Old Testament Prophets, 63.

1Mendenhall, "Covenant," 715. This has been fully demonstrated not only by Mendenhall in the following pages of this same article, but also by a good number of studies that have shown the wide semantic and thematic range covered by the OT concept of covenant. See, e.g., Hillers, Covenant, 120-142; Baltzer, Covenant Formulary, 9-93; Weinfield, אָרֵצָת Berith, 256-278; idem, "Common Heritage," 176-191; Buis, Notion d'alliance, 15-192; Kalluveettil, Declaration and Covenant, 5-213; Tadmor, "Alleanza e dipendenza," 18-36.

2See the elaboration of this view in Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 70-75; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, "Sinaibund und Davidsbund," VT 10 (1960): 335-341; Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1187-1192.
4. The interweaving of elements of four OT covenants in Amos 1-2 argues for the view of a basic unity between the different covenants in the OT. This view maintains the biblical picture of the different OT covenants and of their interrelationship. Each successive covenant builds upon the other, and is set in the context of the previous one. Accordingly, the covenants of God are one, and despite their different emphasis and specific characteristics, they are all united in the OT around God's redemptive purpose for mankind.1

5. Covenant plays then a key role in the book's picture of God's relationship with both the foreign nations and His elected people. The exegetical study of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos has evidenced some common covenantal elements shared by all the nations involved in that series of oracles, as well as some specific elements that differentiate them:

   a. Common elements:

      i. All the eight nations of the series are intrinsically related to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants insofar as they belong to the area of the "promised land" and were related to the Davidic empire as part of the "Greater Israel."

      ii. They are all considered to be subject to the Davidic rulership. This element of the Davidic covenant was seen to be part of YHWH's provision for the redemption of mankind (2 Sam 7:19), together with the election of Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:1-3).

      iii. All the eight nations are considered as subject to YHWH, and responsible before Him for their acts. YHWH is the Creator and Sovereign

---

1See the discussion for the unity of OT covenants in Roth and Reuther, Liberating Bond, 20-32; Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 27-52; Levenson, Sinai and Zion, 187-217; and McComiskey, Covenants of Promise, 139-211. Levenson's study deals only with the interrelationship between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, but it is highly relevant to the discussion of the unity of OT covenants insofar as it demonstrates the intrinsic unity between these two covenants that are considered by some scholars as opposing one another.
of the entire universe (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 8:8-9; 9:5-6), the One who guides
the history of every nation (Amos 9:7). Every nation is under His
authority and receives from Him either blessing or judgment according to
their deeds (Amos 1-2; 9:11-15).

iv. All the eight nations endure the same kind of judgment from
YHWH. The divine judgment over all these nations reflects the language of
the curses described in the Mosaic covenant: Destruction by divine fire and
war; exile of a population back to their place of origin; deportation of kings
and princes; complete defeat in front of an enemy, with no possible escape
(Lev 26:17, 36; Deut 28:25, 36, 68; 29:26-27[27-28]; 32:22, 30). Amos
concurs then with other passages of the OT that apply the covenant curses
not only to the elected people, but also to foreign nations (cf., e.g., Jer
23:10 and Isa 24:4-6).

b. The difference between the foreign nations and Judah and Israel:

i. The six foreign nations in Amos 1-2 are judged for transgressions
of universal laws of respect for the human being and his life that belong to
the domain of YHWH's universal/Noahic covenant with mankind.

ii. Judah and Israel, however, are judged for transgressions of the
Mosaic law, the law that was revealed to Israel as part of her covenant with
YHWH at Sinai. This law is explicitly evoked in the oracle against Judah
(Amos 2:4), and is evidenced by the enumeration of specific sins of Israel
(Amos 2:6-8, 12).

iii. Only the elected people are called into account on the basis of
YHWH's gracious acts in their history, the acts that became the foundation
of their relationship with God (Amos 2:6-12). In the series of the "Oracles
Against the Nations," actually, this line of divine argumentation is
addressed only to northern Israel. This does not mean that Amos excluded
Judah from the sacred history of God's people; well to the contrary, when YHWH resumes the same line of argumentation in Amos 3:1-2, He addresses "the entire family" which He brought up from Egypt, that is, both Judah and Israel. The reason why YHWH addresses only northern Israel in Amos 2:9-12 certainly is due to the fact that northern Israelites were the actual audience of the prophet, and it was specifically with them that YHWH was engaging Himself in a covenant lawsuit at that moment.1 Amos 3:1-2 makes clear that while God's people was then divided into two nations, they were but one people in the eyes of God.

iv. In Amos 2:6-12 and 3:1-2, YHWH evokes both the Exodus and the election of Abraham and his seed as the foundational events in the history of His relationship with His people. This historical recall establishes in the book the essential difference between Israel and the other nations. While, in Amos, every nation is subjected to YHWH and must obey His universal laws because He is the God of the universe, the Creator, the Sovereign of all nations, the One who guides their history, the One who blesses or judges them; Israel (Judah and northern Israel) is the only nation that enjoyed a close relationship with Him. This relationship is expressed in Amos 2:4-16 in terms of YHWH's specific actions in the Israelite history, His election of Israel from among all the other families of the earth through Abraham, and His requirement of their obedience to His revealed Law. In Amos 3:1, this relationship is summarized by the verb יִדְעָ ("to know"), a verb that expresses the unique and intimate covenantal relationship between YHWH and His people.

1Cf. above, 131-132, for the discussion on how frequently OT prophets would evoke the common past of the entire Israel (Judah and northern Israel) when addressing only one of the two nations into which God's people were divided.
6. The results of the present investigation reveal then a rich and elaborated presence of OT covenantal elements in the text of the "Oracles Against the Nations" of Amos 1-2. The scope of this study, however, has been limited to the first two chapters of the book and was focused basically upon the question of the existence of OT covenant elements in this prophetic pericope. The results reached here can but be circumspect in their conclusions. Further extensive studies are in order for the other chapters of Amos. These studies would undoubtedly clarify still further the role and importance of OT covenants for the message of Amos, and would help to delimit the theology of covenant in the book. The results reached so far, however, demonstrate the strong presence of elements of the OT covenants in the book of Amos. This presence is indeed so strong that even scholars who recognize only a late origin for the concept of covenant in Israel see themselves obliged to acknowledge its presence in the present text of the book. As Ronald E. Clements admitted:

In all of this we must certainly accept that, in spite of the admitted silence of the eighth-century prophets about Yahweh's covenant with Israel, it was within a framework of covenant theology and ideas that the main lines of this traditional portrait of the prophet came to be drawn. In spite of the many tensions and inconsistencies which this involved the circles that preserved the traditions of the prophets and their preaching viewed them against a background of covenant ideas which set their preaching in a markedly new light. The immediate historical background has been supplemented with a much wider range of material regarding Israel's origin and vocation which had come to be regarded as necessary and relevant. The preaching of the prophets was given a deeper dimension, and this dimension is broadly summed up in the main lines of Deuteronomic covenant theology.¹

One can question, however, the necessity of seeing the presence of these elements of OT covenants only as the result of the redactional process of the book. First, the question of a long redactional history for the text of the book of Amos is a highly uncertain issue. Gary V. Smith has analyzed one by one the reasons usually evoked in support of that view, and has demonstrated that none of them imposes itself. There is no strong

¹Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 56.
reason to deny the integrity and originality of the text of Amos. Second, the text of Amos 1-2 evidences a good number of elements of OT covenants. Furthermore, these elements are used not only sporadically here and there, but are essential to the message of the "Oracles Against the Nations." Third, the antiquity of OT covenants seems to be convincingly demonstrated by the unique parallel between these covenants and their contemporary ANE treaties. The treaty form, which so closely parallels the OT covenant form, is one of the best attested literary forms in the ANE world. It can be observed even in documents from the third millennium B.C. It can be rightly asked then, on what basis OT's claims for the centrality of covenant since the beginnings of the Israelite religion can be denied, if the ANE contemporary literature evidences the existence of so closely similar literary forms (the treaties) in the cultures that surrounded Israel.

In commenting on the revival of Wellhausen's ideas among the recent biblical scholarship that denies the early origin of the concept of covenant in the religion of Israel, Kenneth A. Kitchen made a pertinent remark on the implications of the ANE witness in

---


favor of the early origin of the OT covenants, which seems to be a fitting concluding remark for the present dissertation:

As we prepare to enter our third millennium the future course of the discussion of covenant, law and treaty in the Old Testament would be altered for the better by moving the focus back, not to the nineteenth century AD but to the second millennium BC where a much more secure base exists for the evaluation of these biblical texts.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Kitchen, "Fall and Rise," 135.
APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF MAIN TEXTUAL VARIANTS AND OF SOME EMENDATIONS TO THE MT TEXT OF AMOS 1:2-2:16

The study of the present dissertation was based on the Hebrew Massoretic text (MT) of Amos 1:2-2:16, as it appears in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.¹ No emendation was proposed to this text for, as stated before, "no serious alternative" could be found to it.² The issue of the "best" text of Amos 1:2-2:16 was felt to be of fundamental importance, since it had a direct impact on the results of the exegetical study of this pericope. A text different from the one found in MT could yield different results. Hence, there was a need to evaluate the reading of this text vis-à-vis the variant readings found in other ancient translations of the OT. Only then could the exegesis of the text of Amos 1:2-2:16 be founded on a solid basis, and the results of this exegesis be trustworthy.

The analysis of the text of Amos 1:2-2:16 was added here, as an appendix to the dissertation, because of its highly technical nature that could be cumbersome for many readers. It does evidence, however, the basis of my choice of MT in its integrity, and at the same time provides the reader with special interest in textual criticism the opportunity to evaluate my choice.

¹Elliger and Rudolph, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, 1015-1018.
²Cf. above, 115.
The discussion below of the MT text of Amos 1:2-2:16 takes into consideration the so-called primary versions of the Old Testament, that is, the Septuagint (LXX), the Targums (Tg), and the Peshitta (Pesh). The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were also taken into consideration whenever applicable. No claim is made here to a detailed and extensive analysis of all the variants found in MT, LXX, Tg, Pesh, and DSS. The primary concern is on the variants that have a meaningful implication to the reading and understanding of the text of Amos.

Text: Amos 1:3

1. In Amos 1:3a, LXX has καὶ εἶπεν Κύριος ("and the Lord said") for MT τὸ λέγει Κύριος ("this says the Lord") found in the next oracles (Amos 1:6, 9, 11, etc.). Tg reads: יָדָיו יָדָיו ("thus says YHWH"), Pesh has: יָדָיו יָדָיו, ḫknhn 'emar māryā' ("thus says the

The secondary versions of the Old Testament—the Old Latin, the Vulgate, the Coptic, the Ethiopic, the Armenian, and the Arabic versions—are not addressed in this study. A careful analysis of all these versions would take the present study well beyond its scope, and is actually an enterprise worthy of a dissertation in itself. For more information on these versions, see, Ernst Würthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992).


For the Dead Sea scrolls, it was used the edition on the Minor Prophets by Luis Vegas Montaner, ed., Biblia del Mar Muerto: Profetas Menores. Edición crítica según Manuscritos Hebreos procedentes del Mar Muerto, Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" de la Biblia Poliglota Matriense, no. 29 (Madrid: Instituto "Arias Montano," C.S.I.C., 1980). More recent publications have not added anything new on Amos over that which is presented by Montaner (the 1990 edition of the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll by Emmanuel Tov, in the series Discoveries in the Judean Desert, vol. 8, does not contain any material on Amos).
Lord”), and in DSS (5QAmos), the beginning of the line is missing, but one can still read: הָדָא ("[ ] says YHWH").

The reading of MT is usually maintained by modern scholars, who only refer to the variant reading of LXX to inform the reader of its existence. The rendering of the Qal perfect of כָּמַה ("to speak, to say") first by a second aorist active indicative (כָּמַה ["said"]), and then later by a present active indicative (לֶּהֶה ["says"]), is not problematic; it occurs many times in the book. Both renderings are grammatically correct.

More serious questions arise, however, concerning the rendering of כָּמַה כָּמַה ("thus says") by כָּמַה כָּמַה ("and [the Lord] said"). While the conjunction (כָּמַה) followed by the aorist (כָּמַה) is normally used to translate the consecutive forms of the verb כָּמַה, כָּמַה can hardly be translated by כָּמַה, and the present active of לֶּהֶה is the usual form used to translate the Qal perfect in the book. Did the LXX translator(s) have a manuscript with

---

1 Cf., e.g., Wolff, Joel and Amos, 128; Koch and Collaborators, Amos, 1:106-107; Soggin, Amos, 32; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 306.

2 In Amos 7:2-3, 5-6, 15-17; 8:2-3.

3 See Kautzsch, Gesenius', § 106a-l; and Joüon, Grammar, 2:§ 112c-f.

4 Amos 1:2; 6:10; 7:2, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15; 8:2: 9:1. Once it is used to translate a conjunctive + Qal imperative in Amos 3:9, but usually it translates the common Hebrew introduction to direct speech: כָּמַה ("and he said:"); כָּמַה ("and I said:"); כָּמַה ("and he will say:").


6 Amos 1:5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15; 2:1, 3, 4, 6; 3:11, 12; 5:3, 4, 16, 27; 7:3, 6, 11, 17; 8:14; 9:15. לֶּהֶה כָּמַה כָּמַה ("says the Lord") is LXX frequent rendering of the prophetic formula כָּמַה כָּמַה כָּמַה ("says/said YHWH"). See ibid., 2:868-871.
Even if this were the case, the actual reading of MT imposes itself much more strongly. First of all, because the formula תָּֽהֶרֶךְ יָֽהֵהָנָּא ("thus says YHWH") is intentionally intended to start every single oracle of the pericope of the "Oracles Against the Nations." Its absence in Amos 1:3 would break the clear poetic structure around which the oracles were constructed. Second, because both Tg and Pesh support the MT reading, and DSS (SQAmos), though fragmentary, seems also to have the same reading. There is, therefore, no strong reason to doubt the actual reading of MT.

2. In Amos 1:3b, Tg, Pesh and some manuscripts of LXX have a third masculine plural pronoun instead of the third masculine singular found in the MT תָּֽהֶרֶךְ יָֽהֵהָן ("I will not return/restore it"). Some other manuscripts of LXX have a third feminine singular pronoun. Finally, the majority of the LXX manuscripts have a third masculine singular pronoun, like MT. DSS (SQAmos) does not contain this part of Amos 1:3.

Here again, the MT reading is usually maintained by a great majority of scholars. They usually observe the variant readings found in the ancient versions, but contend that

---

1The reading וַיָּאָהֵהָנָא seems to be unanimous, since no variant reading was detected by Ziegler in any manuscript of LXX. See Ziegler, Duodecim Prophetae, 181.

2The Tg reads: יָֽהֵהָנָא אֵלֶה ("I shall not let them go/forgive them"); the Pesh: מַלְאַךְ יָֽהֵהָנָא לָא הָפַךְ מֵאָלֶה, ("I will not turn/return/restore them"); the LXX MSS belonging to the Lucianic subgroup III (MSS 46-86 [in its original reading]-711), MS 87 (corrected text) and 68 read: οὐκ ἀποστραφήσωμαι αὐτούς ("I shall not turn them away/turn them back").

3MSS belonging to the Lucianic L' family (MSS 22-36-48-51-62-147-719-763) and MS 233 have: οὐκ ἀποστραφήσωμαι αὐτήν ("I shall not turn it [fem.] away/turn it [fem.] back").

4These manuscripts read therefore: οὐκ ἀποστραφήσωμαι αὐτόν ("I shall not turn it [masc.] away/turn it [masc.] back").
the evidence for the third person masculine singular is very strong, as it is seen in the majority of MSS of LXX.¹

The multiplicity of renderings present in the ancient versions seems to be a good example of the translators' attempts to clarify the meaning of the Hebrew expression, as Wilhelm Rudolph remarked.² The suffix pronoun ὦ, ("him/it") could have been understood in the collective sense as referring, for example, to the people of Damascus, or to their sins. This idea of plurality would then have been made explicit by Tg, Pesh, and some manuscripts of LXX. Some seem to have understood ὦ, ("him/it") as referring to something that would be masculine in Hebrew but feminine in Greek. The voice of YHWH in Amos 1:2 could be a good candidate in this case. The Hebrew ῥῆρ ("voice") is masculine, while the Greek φωνή ("voice") is feminine, and it makes good sense in the context. The third masculine singular in the majority of the LXX manuscripts accords with the MT text, but narrows the choice in Greek. ἀυτὸν ("him/it") can be understood in the collective sense, or as referring to a preceding masculine singular word. It cannot refer to words like φωνή ("voice") or ἁλομέτρια ("sin, impiety, disloyalty"), which in Hebrew (emoth and עב respectively) are reasonable possibilities. Since the variants of the Hebrew ὦ, ("him/it") seem to be a question of interpretation of the original text, there is no good reason to emend the MT text here, or elsewhere in the series where the same expression appears (Amos 1:6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

3. In Amos 1:3c, most of the LXX manuscripts have the reading τὰς ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσας τῶν ἐν Γαλαάδ ("the pregnant women of those [the inhabitants who were] in Gilead")³ for MT ἡγαστρὶ ("Gilead"). This LXX reading is apparently supported by DSS.

¹Cf., e.g., Harper, Amos and Hosea, 13; Snaith, Amos, 2:14-15; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 128; Rudolph, Amos, 124, 126; Koch and Collaborators, Amos, 1:106-107; Gary Smith, Amos, 38.

²Rudolph, Amos, 126.

³The Lucanian group L' (MSS 22-36-46-48-51-86[in text]-711-719-763) has γαλααδιτῶν ("Gileadites") instead of ἐν Γαλαάδ ("in Gilead"), reading "the pregnant women of the Gileadites."
(5QAmos), which has the fragmentary reading (工作岗位) (302) (apparently, "pregnant 
women [מִיָּה] of Gilead"). Symmachus has תָּמֶשׂ גָּלָאָד ("Gilead"), as the direct object in 
the sentence. Tg reads רִשִּׁי אֶת עְשָׁר יְבִּירֵי, ("the inhabitants of the land of Gilead"). Pesh has 
מְגַלֶּד, "Gilead").

The reference to the pregnant women found in LXX, and apparently also in DSS, 
is usually considered to be an insertion in the original text under the influence of the parallel 
passage in Amos 1:13.¹ For Norman H. Snaith, however, MT is too short, as if two 
words have been dropped from it. For him, the LXX reading restores the metrical balance 
of the sentence, thought it is probably only a repetition of Amos 1:13.² Douglas Stuart also 
considered MT to be metrically too short, a fact that evidences a haplography. For him, 
some scribe has jumped over the portion of the text that is found in LXX and DSS. He 
进一步 argued that the direct-object marker תָּמֶשׂ, in MT, is probably the corrupt remnant of 
an original תָּמֶשׂ ("pregnant women"). He, therefore, defended that the reference to the 
pregnant women is original and that MT must be emended accordingly.³

By taking into consideration the witness of the other ancient versions, one sees that 
MT text is supported by the reading of Pesh, as well as by the rendering of Symmachus in 
LXX. Tg seems to support MT too, since it appears to be making explicit what is 
understood in the terse construction of MT. The readings of LXX and DSS differ 
substantially nevertheless. Do they reflect another Hebrew text? This is always a 
possibility, but their texts might also be an example of internal textual harmonization, based 
on Amos 1:13.

¹Cf. Harper, Amos and Hosea, 14; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 129; Amsler, "Amos," 
171; Soggin, Amos, 33; Gary Smith, Amos, 38.
²Snaith, Amos, 2:16.
In the analysis of the evidence, extreme care is always necessary before dismissing MT too promptly in favor of LXX and DSS readings. First, because the DSS manuscript (SQAmos) is too fragmentary to provide a solid basis for the discussion. One cannot assert the quality of this manuscript as a reliable witness of an early, original Hebrew text, since so little of it has survived. Second, one can feel a certain uneasiness in LXX’s translation of the final part of Amos 1:3. LXX rendering of the entire sentence (ἀνθ’ ὄν ἐπιρείζουν πρῶσιν σιδηροῖς τάς ἐν γαστρὶ ἑχούσας τῶν ἐν Γαλαάδ ["because they saw with saws of iron the pregnant women of those in Gilead’]) of the Hebrew ῥυσαν □πρη ῥάβσαν ἔν ταξι ἑπτά ηὐκράντας ἐν τῆς Ἰσραήλ ("for they threshed Gilead with sledges of iron") seems to depict an effort to understand the imagery evoked in the text. As was seen above, the imagery of "threshing," with the meaning of destroying people and nations, was well used in the ANE by the time of Amos. The MT text of Amos preserves, hence, an ancient Semitic idiom that might have been difficult to understand centuries later, when the Hebrew original was being translated into Greek. If this was the case, one can then imagine that the translator, in his struggle to understand the text, might well have been influenced by Amos 1:13, where Ammon is accused for having "ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead" (יִגְרְשׁוּ אִמֵּי אָרְכֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל).²

Text: Amos 1:8

In Amos 1:8, most MSS of LXX have only κύριος ("Lord") for MT μν. τῷ μῷ ("Lord YHWH"). Some MSS of the Catena group of LXX have κύριος κύριος ("Lord Lord").³ Tg has אֲדֹ נוֹ הוֹן ("YHWH God"). Pesh has אֲלֹהֵי אֵשׁ, מָאֵר מָאָרָאָא

¹Cf. above, 59.

²Notice LXX’s unanimous rendering: ἀνθ’ ὄν ἀνέσχεζον τάς ἐν γαστρὶ ἑχούσας τῶν Γαλαάδι τῶν ("because they ripped open the pregnant women of the Gileadites").

³The Catena group C (87-91-490) and the MSS 68 and 613.
("Lord of Lords"). DSS (Mur88) seems to have ("Lord [Y]H[WH]?") which would correspond to the MT text.

On the basis of the most common reading of LXX, BHS proposes that ("Lord") should be deleted from the text of MT. A number of scholars follow this same reasoning.1 Hans W. Wolff proposed that the compound name נְצֵי יְהוָה ("Lord YHWH"), in MT, represents a expansion of the single name יְהוָה ("YHWH") yet unknown to LXX.2 J. Alberto Soggin built upon Wolff’s remarks and suggested that this late addition of ("Lord") is probably a prelude to the perpetual Qere for the tetragrammaton.3 Douglas Stuart maintained MT reading, but remarked that ("Lord") may be secondary since it is not reflected in LXX.4 Other scholars, however, consider that MT maintains the original reading of the text. For William Rainey Harper, Lord YHWH is the most common designation for God in Amos, and there is no reason to delete it here.5 Victor Maag also saw no justification in deleting it.6 For William Rudolph, the reason why LXX omits ("Lord") is uncertain; probably it is due to a haplography in LXX of the double designation κύριος κύριος ("Lord Lord").7

The proposal to delete ("Lord") seems to stretch the evidence too far. The translator of the LXX might have rendered the double designation for God by κύριος ("Lord") only. Many times the compound name נְצֵי יְהוָה ("Lord YHWH") is rendered by a single name for God in LXX, usually by κύριος ("Lord")—the most frequent; or by

---


2Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 130.

3Soggin, *Amos*, 35.


θεός ("God"); or δεσπότης ("Master"). Other compound names of God, like ὡμων όμοιον ("YHWH God"), were also frequently translated by one divine name only. In Amos, out of the twenty occurrences of ὡμων ("Lord YHWH") in MT, eleven times LXX has κύριος ("Lord").

In view of the frequency by which LXX renders compound names of God by a single name, the BHS proposal seems unfounded. The case for the reading of MT is further strengthened by the fact that the double designation for God is found in some MSS of LXX Catena group, in Tg, and in Pesh. One should further notice that LXX itself renders seven times ὡμων ("Lord YHWH") by κύριος ὁ θεός ("Lord God") in Amos (Amos 3:7, 8, 11, 13; 4:5; 9:5, 8); and twice by the vocative κύριε κύριε ("Lord Lord," in Amos 7:2, 5). Contrary to Wolff's contention, it seems that the compound name of God, ὡμων ("Lord YHWH"), was well known to LXX.

Text: Amos 1:11

1) In Amos 1:11, the Pesh reads מִשְׁמַרְכָּה לֹ rtl ָאָלָם וַעָלָם, wantar k'tlam rogezeh, ("and he kept his anger forever"), for MT דְּמַוְת נַפְלָה מָשֶׁךְ ("and his anger tore forever").
Most MSS of LXX have καὶ ἠρπασαν εἰς μαρτύριον φόβου αὐτοῦ ("and he seized his shivering fear as a witness"). LXX Catena group C (MSS 87-91-490) and the Catena MS 68 read καὶ ἠτόμασαν (ἠτόμασα MS 68) εἰς μαρτύριον φόβου αὐτοῦ ("and he prepared [I prepared MS 68] his shivering fear as a witness"). Aquila has καὶ ἐθηρευσεν εἰς τοὺς αἰώνιας ἐν ὑπερφήν αὐτοῦ ("and he catches/hunts forever in his anger"), while Symmachus reads καὶ ἤργευσεν αἰώνιος ἐν ὑπερφήν αὐτοῦ ("and he catches/hunts

---

2Gen 2:4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 19, 21; 3:22; Exod 9:30.
3Amos 1:8; 3:7, 8, 11, 13, 4:2, 5, 5:3; 6:3; 7:1, 2, 4(2x), 5, 6; 8:1, 9, 11; 9:5, 8.
4Amos 1:8; 4:2; 5:3; 6:3; 7:1, 4(2x), 6; 8:1, 9, 11.
forever in his anger"). Tg has יֵשָׁכֵל לְעֹד ("his anger killed/destroyed forever"). DSS (Mur88) contains only the last word of the sentence, שַׁא ("his anger").

On the basis of the Pesh reading, some scholars propose to emend the Hebrew text by replacing the verb יִגְדַּה ("tear into pieces") by דַּבָּד ("keep, guard"). This is also the proposal of the critical apparatus of BHS. The emendation would yield the reading דַּבָּד לְעֹד ("and he kept his anger forever"). The advantages of such a reading are: first, it makes of Edom the subject of the action, as is the case in the two preceding verbs in the verse; and second, it seems to improve the poetic parallelism in the bicolon that ends the verse, since דַּבָּד ("keep, guard") is a close parallel to יֵתֹּֽֽשָׁף ("watch, keep, guard"), the verb in the next colon.

Others, however, prefer to maintain the MT reading. Hans W. Wolff made a strong defense of reading with יִגְדַּה ("tear into pieces") pointing out that, first, LXX reading supports MT; second, MT text has a parallel in Job 16:9; third, "he kept his anger" is not attested as such elsewhere in the OT but only postulated; and fourth, the syntactical

---

1 MS v seems to be the only one to have this vocalization. MSS f, z, Urbínates 1, Berlin Or fol 2, and the Antwerp Polyglot read יֶטֶשֶׁכָל לְעֹ; MS c and the First and Second Rabbic Bibles have יֶטֶשֶׁכָל לְעֹ; the London Polyglot and the Miqraot Gedolot vocalize יֶטֶשֶׁכָל לְעֹ. There is no basic difference in meaning, all different vocalizations can be translated as "he/it killed/destroyed." There is no implication also for the vorlage of Tg. See the discussion in Dominique Barthélémy et al., Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament, tome 3, Ézéchiel, Daniel et les 12 Prophètes, OBO, no. 50/3 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1992), 642 (the references here to the readings of the MSS Urbínates 1, Berlin Or fol 2, the Antwerp Polyglot, the London Polyglot, and the Miqraot Gedolot, are based on the material presented by Barthélémy).

2 Cf. Snaith, Amos, 2:26-27; Maag, Text, 7; Robinson, Amos, 13; Amsler, "Amos," 175; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 304, 307.

3 Stuart (Hosea-Jonah, 304) maintains "his anger" as subject and translates: "his anger has been always alert."

4 Cf. Cripps, Amos, 131; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 130; Rudolph, Amos, 127; Soggin, Amos, 41; Gary Smith, Amos, 39; Barthélémy, Critique textuelle, 642-643.
break (the transition to the imperfect consecutive) supports the unemended text by signaling a change in subject.¹

The support of LXX for MT עָפַר ("tear into pieces"), evoked by Wolff, is only partial, however. On one side, the verbs used by most MSS of LXX, by Aquila and by Symmachus, are closer in meaning to the verb in MT than to the proposed emendation עִכְּבוּת ("keep, guard"),² and seem thereby to support MT. On the other side, עָשָׂה ("his anger") in these versions is clearly understood to be a verbal complement and not the subject of the action, supporting hence the reading of Pesh.

The real strong support to MT comes from the fact that the idiomatic phrase עָשָׂה עָפַר ("his anger tears"), which makes of "anger" the subject of the verb "to tear into pieces," is not only attested elsewhere in the OT (Job 16:9; 18:4), but is also supported by Tg הָרַכְבּ הָעֲפַר ("his anger killed/destroyed forever"). On this basis, the text of MT seems able to stand on its own, and does not need to be emended.

2. The last sentence of Amos 1:11 is rendered in LXX by καὶ τὸ ὀρμημα αὐτοῦ ἐφύλαξεν εἰς νῦν ("and he kept his violent impulse forever"); in Symmachus by καὶ τὴν μὴν αὐτοῦ ἐφύλαξεν ἦσας τέλος ("and he kept his wrath till the end"); in Theodotion by καὶ τὴν ὀργὴν αὐτοῦ διετήρησεν εἰς τέλος ("and he maintained his anger to the end"), and in Pesh by בָּאֲשֶׁר לָדָּלֵךְ, וּפָקְדֶה נַטַּר לְעָלֶמֶן ("and his wrath he kept forever"). MT, however, has נָשְׂא עָפַר נְאֵון ("and his wrath kept forever"). Tg reads similarly to MT נָשְׂא עָפַר נְאֵון ("and his anger/passion kept forever"). DSS (Mur88) contains only the beginning of the sentence.³

¹Wolff, Joel and Amos, 130.

²LXX ἀφράζω ("snatch away, seize, plunder") evokes the action of a wild animal, or of a thief, that suddenly seizes something and carries it away. Aquila ἡρεέω ("hunt, catch") and Symmachus ὑρεέω ("catch, take by hunting") also convey the idea of a predatory action.

³נָשְׂא עָפַר ("his wrath").
On the basis of the readings of LXX, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Pesh, BHS proposes to emend the final sentence into רֶאֶשׁ תֵּשׁוֹב ("and he kept his wrath forever"). A number of scholars highly favor this emendation of the text.1

Others, like C. F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, William R. Harper, and Wilhelm Rudolph,2 understand the verb as the third person masculine singular רֶאֶשׁ ("he kept") followed by a third person feminine suffix pronoun הוא ("her/it") referring back to תֵּשׁוֹב ("his anger"). The suffix does not have the usual mappiq (it is הוא here) because of the retraction of the accent before a following stressed syllable, a phenomenon usually designated as נ'סיג'ה.3 The translation of the sentence would be then "as for his wrath, he kept it forever."

Some other scholars, however, also maintaining MT text as it is, read in the verbal form a third person feminine singular.4 They assert that the peculiar vocalization of רֶאֶשׁ, instead of the normal רֶאֶשׁ ("she kept/keeps"), can also be accounted as a case of נ'סיג'ה, or receding accent. They argue, furthermore, against the addition of the preposition ב ("for") in front of הוא. The form with the preposition is the most common one found in the OT, but הוא without the preposition is also found three other times in the OT.5

Besides the two remarks above, made in defense of the MT text and of the reading of the verb as a third person feminine singular, it could be stressed that the entire construction רֶאֶשׁ תֵּשׁוֹב ("and his wrath keeps forever") is in parallelism with the previous one, תֵּשׁוֹב רֶאֶשׁ ("and his anger tore forever"). Since רֶאֶשׁ ("anger") is the

---

1Cf. Snaith, Amos, 2:27; Maag, Text, 7; Robinson, Amos, 13; Amsler, "Amos," 175.

2Keil and Delitzsch, Minor Prophets, 248; Harper, Amos and Hosea, 33-34; Rudolph, Amos, 127.

3The stress moved backward (from the ultima to the penultima syllable), in order to avoid a conflict with the stress found in the first syllable of the next word. Cf. Kautzsch, Gesenius', § 29e, 58g; Joüon, Grammar, § 31c, 61i.

4Wolff, Joel and Amos, 130-131: Soggin, Amos, 41; Gary Smith, Amos, 38-39.

5Pss 13:2; 16:11; 74:3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
subject of the verb, the parallelism between the two colons favors כִּים ("wrath") as the subject of כָּבָּד ("to keep").

There seems, therefore, to be no good reason to emend the text here either. The reading of the verb as a third feminine singular seems preferable, also, in view of the parallelism with the previous sentence. The variant readings found in LXX, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Pesh could thus represent the effort of a translator(s) to render simple a more rare and difficult sentence construction in Hebrew.

Text: Amos 1:15

In Amos 1:15a, some MSS of LXX,1 Aquila, Symmachus, and the Pesh read a proper name, "Melkom,"2 for MT כִּים ("their king"). The MT reading is supported by most MSS of LXX, which has of βασιλεῖς αὐτής ("her kings"), and by Tg, which reads כִּים ("their king"). DSS (Mur88) does not help much in the discussion, since its consonantal text, כִּים, can be taken either as meaning "their king" or as the proper name "Milkom" (the god of the Ammonites).

The reading "their king" is usually maintained by the majority of scholars.3 They usually view the reading of the proper name "Melkom" as an influence of other prophetic texts, such as Jer 49:3 and Zeph 1:5, upon the understanding of the text of Amos of some ancient translator(s). Alberto Soggin did not take a decisive position on the issue and offered the two readings as a possibility.4 Émile Puech, however, made a forceful defense of the reading of the proper name "Melkom" as the original one. For him, the MT reading

---
1The Lucianic group L' (MSS 22-36-48-51-62-147-719-763) and the margin of the Lucianic MS 407.
2In Greek Μελχομ, in Syriac ملکم, Melkūm.
3Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, Minor Prophets, 249; Harper, Amos and Hosea, 37; Snaith, Amos, 2:29; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 131-132; Rudolph, Amos, 127; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 305. 307; Gary Smith, Amos, 37, 39; Barthélémy, Critique textuelle, 643-644.
4Soggin, Amos, 43.
represents the difficulty of the later scribes in understanding the reference to the exile of a god. "How can a god be exiled with his people?" was the problem that these scribes faced. This practice (the statue of the god was taken into exile) was well established, however, in the ANE world by the time of the prophets, as is evidenced in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 49:3). By not understanding this imagery, the later scribes read "their king" instead of "Milkom." The reading of the proper name is also favored by Duane L. Christensen, but he does not elaborate much on the subject.

The consonantal Hebrew text can be read either way, as mentioned above in reference to DSS. On what basis is the reading "their king" preferable to "Milkom"? Dominique Barthélemy, in his discussion of this section in Amos, pointed out that the reading "their king" fits better the immediate context of the oracle. In Amos 1:13 the pronoun suffix כ, ("them/their") was used twice in reference to the Ammonites, and this might well be the case here also. Furthermore, the deposition of a nation's ruler(s) was one of the focuses of some previous oracles, such as the oracle against Aram and the one against the Philistines (Amos 1:5, 8). This might well be the issue here also. Finally, "their king" is the most usual rendering, since MT, the great majority of LXX MSS, and Tg read it in this way.

Despite Puech's defense of the reading "Melkom" as the original one, it seems that the reading of the proper name reflects the influence of other parallel prophecies against Ammon, especially Jer 49, rather than an original reading. Such an influence can be detected in the verse by the fact that both LXX and Pesh also speak of Ammonite priests as

---

2Christensen, "Prosodic Structure," 432.
3Barthélemy, _Critique textuelle_, 644.
going into exile, while MT and Tg make no reference whatsoever to these classes of people and to their fate. 1 Reference to priests going to exile, however, is found in Jer 49:3.

Text: Amos 2:2

In Amos 2:2d, some few MSS of MT read "and amid sound of trumpet" instead of the most current "amid sound of trumpet". LXX has καὶ μετὰ φωνῆς σαλπιγγος ("and with sound of trumpet"), and Pesh ʾאֶזְרֵיאֵל. LXX, waḥqālāʿ ḏeṣīpūrāʿ, ("and amid the sound of the trumpet"). Tg also does not have the conjunctive ָּ ("and"), reading נֵּבֶר ("amid the sound of the trumpet"). As for DSS (Mur88), the last fragments to survive on Amos 2 have only the first verse (hence, no more references to DSS are made).

In view of the reading of the few MSS of MT, LXX, and Pesh, BHS proposes that a conjunctive ָּ ("and") should be supplied in the text. Few scholars commented on this issue. For Theodore H. Robinson the conjunction should be supplied, 2 while for Wolff, the bare apposition is in accord with the style in Amos 1:14. 3

There is not any compelling need to supply a conjunctive ָּ ("and") here in the text. A conjunctive ָּ ("and") is also missing in Amos 1:14b (which has adverbial expressions similar to that of Amos 2:2d) and in 2:16 (whose bicolon has a rhythm close to that of 2:2cd, where the first colon starts with a conjunctive ָּ ["and"], while the second has two phrases apposed one to the other). As Wolff remarked, the terse reading of MT is in line with the style of Amos. In this sense the few MSS of MT, LXX, and Pesh seem to be harmonizing the text by providing the conjunction "and."

---

1In Amos 1:15b, LXX has οἱ ἱερεῖς αὐτῶν ("their priests"), and Pesh has ἠτατόμποτ, ὡκύμραῳ, ("and his priests"), instead of the plain נָּ ("he") in MT, a pronoun that refers back to the previously mentioned "their king" in the verse. Tg has נָּ ("he"), like MT, and DSS (Mur88) is missing in this section.

2Robinson, Amos, 15.

3Wolff, Joel and Amos, 132.
Text: Amos 2:3

In Amos 2:3, LXX Lucanian group L’ (MSS 22-36-48-51-62-147-719-763) has ἐξ αὐτοῦ (“from him”) instead of MT אֶפְרַיִם (“from her/its midst”); and the Lucanian group L (MSS 22-36-48-51-719), plus MSS 62 and 86 (in the margin), has ἀρχοντας αὐτοῦ (“his princes/authorities”) for MT רָעִים (“her princes”). The majority of the MSS of LXX read ἐξ αὐτῆς (“from her”) and ἀρχοντας αὐτῆς (“her princes/authorities”). Tg has בֶּן (“from her midst”) and נאם (“her princes/officers”). Pesh, however, reads masculine for both instances: מֶנָּה, men gaweh, (“from his midst”); רָעִים, rawrūbānawhi, (“his princes/nobles”).

On the basis of the reading of the Lucanian MSS mentioned above, BHS proposes that the Hebrew text should be emended in order to read masculine, hence, בֶּן (“from his midst”) and נאם (“his princes”). BHS’s suggestion is maintained by some scholars, like Victor Maag.1 Others, like Theodore H. Robinson, Hans W. Wolff, and Douglas Stuart, emended only נאם (“her princes”) to נאם (“his princes”), and read נאם (“from his midst”) instead of בֶּן (“from her midst”).2 Others, like Wilhelm Rudolph and Gary Smith, defended the feminine forms on the basis that Moab is here referred to as land (feminine) and not as people (masculine).3 Still others, like Samuel Amsler and Alberto Soggin, maintained the feminine on the basis that the suffixes here refer back to the city of Kerioth (feminine), which was just previously mentioned in vs. 2.4

The feminine suffixes in MT are not problematic at all, and there is no compelling reason to emend the text. The suffix most probably refers to Moab, the name of a country, and of a people (though it can also refer back to the city of Kerioth, as suggested by Amsler.

---

1Maag, Text, 5, 7.
2Robinson, Amos, 15; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 132-133; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 305, 307.
3Rudolph, Amos, 128; Gary Smith, Amos, 37, 39.
4Amsler, "Amos," 177; Soggin, Amos, 45.
and Soggin). Names of countries are usually taken as feminine in the OT (usually in the sense of the name of the land, the nation), but they are also many times treated as masculine (usually with the meaning of the name of the people, a national name). Both genders would fit well the context in Amos, but the use of the feminine seems purposeful in the text. It avoids the idea that the possessive would refer back to the king, just mentioned in the previous sentence, and makes clear thereby that the country of Moab (or the city of Kerioth) is intended here.

Text: Amos 2:7

In Amos 2:7, LXX has τὰ πατοῦντα ("the ones treading/trampling") for MT רָאִי ("the ones gasping/panting for," or "the ones snapping/setting traps"). The majority of the MSS of Tg have גִּפּוּנָי ("who despise"), but one MS (Berlin Or fol 2) has קַפְּךָ "חָצַו ("the ones treading/trampling upon the dust of the earth and they oppress the head of the poor [literally: they strike with the fist at the head of the poor]").

Most of the MSS of the Lucianic group L (MSS 22-36-48-51-62-147-719-763), the Lucianic MS 407, the Catena group C (MSS 87-91-490), and the Catena MS 68 have τῶν πατοῦντων ("of those treading/trampling"). The Lucianic group UI (MSS 46-86-711) has τῶν καταπατοῦντων ("of those trampling down").

Most of the MSS read τὰ πατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῶν χοῦν τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκονδύλικον εἰς κεφαλὰς πτωχῶν ("the ones treading/trampling upon the dust of the earth and they oppress the head of the poor [literally: they strike with the fist at the head of the poor]"").

MSS 5, c, f, z, and the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, have ἀσβέσθη ("as the dust") instead of ἔρημος ("in the dust").

The Antwerp Polyglot Bible also has Ἰσραήλ ("of Israel") after ἀσβέσθη ("of the earth").

The First Rabbinic Bible does not have ἴδιον ("head"), reading only "the poor" instead of "the head of the poor" at the end of the sentence.

The Second Rabbinic Bible has ἴδιον ("of [is] the head") instead of only ἴδιον ("head").

MS c has ἱππός ("a/the poor") instead of ἱππός ἴδιον ("the head of the poor").
the reading יִשָּׁמֶשׁ ("who crush/pulverize").¹ Pesh reads יִשָּׁמֶשׁ, dešayyesin ("who tread down/trample").²

On the basis of the reading of LXX, BHS proposes that one should read the verb יִשָּׁמֶשׁ ("to crush")³ instead of the verb יִשְׁפַּת ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps") indicated by the Massoretic vocalization. The text would then read "the ones crushing, upon the dust of the earth, the head of the poor." This reading is followed by a great majority of scholars.⁴ A few, like C. F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, Victor Maag, Thomas Edward McCormiskey, and Dominique Barthélemy, defended the reading of יִשָּׁמֶשׁ ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps"), and interpreted the sentence as referring to the extreme avarice of the wealthy Israelite elite. They usually translated the sentence as "they gasp after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor."⁵

The strength of reading the consonantal יִשָּׁמֶשׁ as a participle of יִשָּׁמֶשׁ ("to crush") instead of יִשְׁפַּת ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps") is the support of the Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic (directly indicated in one MS by the cognate יִשְׁפַּת ["to crush/pulverize"], but not so clear with the more common יִשְׁפֵּית ["to despise/reject"] ) renderings of this verb. It should be noticed, however, that LXX תַּאֲנַיַּיִת ("the ones treading/trampling") and Pesh יִשָּׁמֶשׁ, dešayyesin ("who tread down/trample") do not refer to the people who were oppressing the poor, and trampling/treading upon their heads, but they refer back to the

¹This MS is not mentioned in Sperber, Bible in Aramaic, 3:418, but is referred to in Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 682.

²For יִשָּׁמֶשׁ, dešayyesin 'al 'aprā' de'arā' wameqappehin lemeskene' ("who tread down/trample upon the dust of the earth, and are beating [on the head] the poor").

³ יִשָּׁמֶשׁ ("the ones crushing").

⁴Cf. Harper, Amos and Hosea, 50; Cripps, Amos, 140-141; Snaith, Amos, 2:39-40; Robinson, Amos, 16; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 133; Rudolph, Amos, 137-138; Amsler, "Amos," 179; Soggin, Amos, 48; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 306-307; Gary Smith, Amos, 73-74.

⁵Keil and Delitzsch, Minor Prophets, 253; Maag, Text, 6, 11; McCormiskey, "Amos," 296; Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 684.
poor people themselves. LXX and Pesh have a completely different syntactical construction than MT: τὰ πατοῦντα ("the ones treading/trampling") and מים יים, dedayyešīn, ("who tread down/trample") describe the needy, the poor people (πένητα ["the poor/needy one"], meskene ["the poor"]) which, in Amos 2:6, were sold for the sake of a pair of sandals. ¹ They are the ones who tread/trample in the dust of the earth. So, in LXX and Pesh, Amos 2:7a continues the description of the oppressed poor people that started in the previous verse. This syntactical construction is completely contrary to the syntax of the Hebrew text, whether vocalized or not. Amos 2:7 is constructed in a specific parallelism, in which the subject of the verbs is clearly to be identified with the oppressor, not the oppressed (and much less the sandals, as suggested by Snaith). To make the poor people (or the sandals) the subject of ṣawon makes no sense when one gets down to the prepositional phrase ṣawon ẓeḇḵō ("on the head of the poor").

LXX and the Pesh apparently saw this problem, and then provided for an extra verb (ἐκονδουλίζον ["they strike with the fist"], ṣmekpehšān ["beating on the head"]) to make the connection back to the oppressor, as Barthélemy remarked.² In view of what seems to be a reworking of the text by LXX and Pesh, one should be cautious in jumping too quickly from their inner textual context into the Hebrew text, and making of them the key for the understanding of this latter.

The witness of Tg MS Berlin Or fol 2, however, seems to provide a more solid basis for the reading of ṣaw I ("to crush") in ṣawon, since this MS has the Aramaic cognate ṣaš ("to crush/pulverize") for the verse. This reading in Tg further preserved the same syntactical construction of MT, making of the oppressor the subject of the action, and the poor people the object of it. But here again, caution should be taken. There are signs that the readings of this verse in Tg represent more an effort of interpretation of the Hebrew text.

¹Norman H. Snaith (Amos, 2:40) suggests that the participle of the verb "to tread down" in LXX refers back to the sandals of the poor, instead of the poor themselves, hence the sandals "which trample the dust of the earth."

²Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 682.
than simply a plain witness of it. This is apparent in the way Tg handles the prepositions. The לָעַּבְשׁ ("over, upon") before אֹז ("dust") is replaced either by בּ ("in, at") or כ ("as"). The ב ("in, at") before רֵע ("head") usually disappears. These changes in the prepositions may indicate a "smoothing out" of the original text, in order to render it more understandable to the reader. In this sense, רָע ("to crush/ pulverize") may also be an interpretation.

There still, therefore, is the possibility that the verb רַע ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps") preserves the correct reading of the text. The basic problem with this reading, however, is that in the OT רַע ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps") usually commands a complement in the accusative (a direct object with no preposition), and only once (Eccl 1:5) commands a complement introduced by the preposition ל ("toward, into"). In Amos 2:7, רַע אָרְבָּא ("on the head of the poor") is usually understood to be the complement of the verb. This prepositional phrase indicates a complement in a locative dative ("on the head of"), and would then be contrary to the normal usage of the verb. Furthermore, it renders difficult the reading of the verse. It is not surprising then that the preposition ב ("in, on, at") is usually deleted from the Hebrew text, or simply ignored in some translations.¹

One possible solution is to take רַע אָרְבָּא ("upon the dust of the earth") as the complement of רַע ("to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps"), and אָרְבָּא אָרְבָּא ("on the head of the poor") as an adverbial phrase modifying this verbal complement, as is suggested by Keil, Delitzsch, and Barthélemy. The verse could then be translated as "the ones panting

---

¹As seen in the rendering of Tg, and as required in the suggestion of BHS and of those scholars who follow the same line of thought for the verse. Many modern English translations of the Bible simply ignore the preposition, usually considering the text to be obscure, and leave it untranslated. Cf. Amos 2:7 in RSV, NRSV, NAB, NEB, NJB.

In the entry רַע II ("crush, trample upon"), a hypothetical form of רַע ("bruise, snap at, crush"), of the Gesenius' Lexicon it is remarked the following concerning Amos 2:7: "in any case del. ב after "crush." Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 983.
for the dust of the earth [which is] on the head of the poor." This is also the rendering of the verse in the English Bibles of KJV, NKJV, and RV. Amos 2:7a would then be a hyperbole translating the extreme avarice of the Israelite elite who were spoiling the poor of all their goods, and would not stop until they got it all. They would desire even the dust that a poor person was throwing upon his head, as a sign of mourning and despair, after having lost all his possessions. Barthélemy argued in favor of that interpretation, noticing that it preserves all the elements in the verse, and that it is further supported by the fact that "(upon, over") is highly interchangeable in the OT with "(toward, into)", a preposition that, as seen above, can be commanded by the verb "(to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps").

Finally, this usage of "(to gasp/pant for" or "snap/set traps") expressing the idea of someone desiring ardently for something that belongs to someone else, and consequently taking it over, is not unique to Amos 2:7. In Job 5:1-5, Eliphaz describes a fool that has suddenly been cursed and starts losing all his possessions. In vs. 5, he declares that the hungry eats his harvest, and that the thirsty pants (desires) after his wealth, with the intent of taking it over.

Text: Amos 2:8

In Amos 2:8, LXX has καὶ ἡμέτερα ("and the garments") for MT "("and upon garments"). Aquila and Symmachus have καὶ ἐπὶ ἡμέτερα ("and upon garments"), Theodotian reads καὶ ἐπὶ ἡμέτερα ("and upon garments"). Tg has מַעֲרַת ("and upon couches"), and Pesh "al khabša' ("and upon garments").

On the basis of the reading of LXX, BHS proposes that the preposition "("upon, over") should be deleted, and the emended text should read "("and garments"). A number of scholars follow this emendation, and remark that the preposition "("upon, over") does not fit the syntax of the verse, since " ("garments") is to be taken as the

---

1Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 684.
direct object of the verb ἔκβαλεν ("extend, stretch out, spread out, incline, bend down, turn aside, mislead, etc."). In other cases, however, maintain the preposition and defend that the verb is reflexive, not transitive.

LXX stands alone in the witness for the absence of the preposition ἐπί ("upon, over"). From the witness of the other versions, there is more reason to maintain the preposition than to delete it. It should be further remarked that LXX translates Amos 2:8a in a very peculiar way. By probably reading ἐπείθον ("cords") for MT ἐπεστάλασσον ("taken in pledge"), LXX renders the text as follows: καὶ τὰ ἰμάτια αὐτῶν δεσμεύοντες σχοινίοις παραπτάσματα ἑποίον ἐξόμενα τοῦ θυσιαστήριου ("and binding together their garments [the poor's] with ropes, they [the rich] make curtains for around the altar"). This peculiar translation raises still more questions on the value of using the absence of the preposition in LXX as the basis to delete it in MT.

A probably stronger reason for deleting the preposition would be the syntax of the phrase. Hans W. Wolff expressed the thought of many other scholars when he remarked that the hiphil of ἔκβαλε ("extend, stretch out, spread out, incline, bend down, turn aside, mislead, etc.") is used elsewhere in the OT transitively ("to spread/stretch out something"), and not "for human beings who 'stretch themselves out'" (reflexive usage). The preposition before δέσμα ("garments") should therefore be deleted, since "garments" is to be taken as the object of the verb.

The problem with such reasoning is that it is questionable that δέσμα ("garments") should be taken as a direct object. As seen in the other versions, all take it to be an

---

1 Cf. Harper, Amos and Hosea, 52; Snaith, Amos, 2:44-46; Robinson, Amos, 16; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 134.

2 Cf. Cripps, Amos, 142; Maag, Text, 6, 12; Rudolph, Amos, 137, 139; Amsler, "Amos," 179; Soggin, Amos, 48-49; Gary Smith, Amos, 74.

3 A probable way by which LXX might have arrived at this peculiar reading is by reading a major stop after ἐπείθον (LXX "ropes"). The Hebrew text could then have been understood as: "and over garments, ropes, they stretch around every altar."

4 Wolff, Joel and Amos, 134.
adverbial phrase, indicating the place in which the action was performed, rather than the object that suffered that action. Further, it is not so sure that the hiphil of נָעַל ("extend, stretch out, spread out, incline, bend down, turn aside, mislead, etc.") is used only transitively and never with a reflexive meaning. In Hos 11:4, this verbal form is clearly used with a reflexive intransitive meaning. The verse describes God speaking about Israel and saying: "I [God] bent/inclined Myself [כֵּנָּה] to him [Israel] and fed him." Interestingly enough, contrary to his remarks on Amos 2:8, Wolff accepted the reflexive meaning of the hiphil of נָעַל in Hosea. Reflexive meaning seems to be the case also in Isa 30:11 and Job 23:11. There is no reason, therefore, that in Amos 2:8 the meaning of the verb could not be "to bend (oneself), to incline, to stretch out."

Text: Amos 2:9

In Amos 2:9, several MSS of MT read כָּרֹת תָּאָשׁ ("from before you") instead of כָּרֹת תָּאָשׁ ("from before them"). LXX unanimously has ἐκ προσώπου αὐτῶν ("from before them"). Some MSS of Tg (MSS c, v) have נָעַל תָּאָשׁ ("from before you") and others (MSS 5, f, z; and Tg printed editions of the First and the Second Rabbinic Bible, and the Antwerp Polyglot Bible) have נָעַל תָּאָשׁ ("from before them"). Pesh unanimously reads מְנֶן קֱדִי מַדָּמָהָהָהָה ("from before them").

BHS, on the basis of the reading of these several MSS of MT, suggests the reading כָּרֹת תָּאָשׁ ("from before you") instead of כָּרֹת תָּאָשׁ ("from before them"). Few scholars comment on the issue. Theodore H. Robinson and Wilhelm Rudolph preferred the second person suffix, while Hans W. Wolff and Gary Smith preferred the third person.

---

Though the change into a second person masculine plural suffix makes good sense in the context,¹ the textual evidence of the ancient versions strongly supports the third person masculine plural. It is easy to understand why some MSS of MT and Tg would replace the third person masculine suffix for a second person masculine plural, in view of the usage of the second person from vs. 10 onwards. The third person in vs. 9 may however be intended as a way to highlight the connection and the contrast between the accusations of vss. 6-8, and the section that reminds of God’s past gracious acts that starts in vs. 9, as Gary Smith has pointed out.² Especially important in this contrast are the last accusation in vs. 8 (“and wine of those who have been fined, they drink in the house of their [italics mine] god/gods”) and the beginning of vs. 9 (“yet I destroyed the Amorites from before them [italics mine]”).

Text: Amos 2:15

In Am. 2:15, a passive form is found in both LXX, Tg, and Pesh³ for MT’s first occurrence of the piel רכז אול (“[he] will not save [himself/his soul]”).

On the basis of the reading of these versions, BHS proposes to read in the text the niphal form ל"כ אול (“[he] will not be saved”). A number of scholars maintain this same position,⁴ while others, like Hans W. Wolff, Wilhelm Rudolph, and Gary Smith, preserve the piel of MT.⁵

¹Vs. 9 opens a new subsection inside the oracle against Israel. The prophet reminds the people of God’s past acts of salvation in their favor. This subsection starts at vs. 9 and goes through vs. 11. From vs. 10 onward the prophet addresses his audience only in the second person masculine plural.

²Gary Smith, Amos, 75.

³LXX: οὐ μὴ διασώσῃ (“[he] will not be saved”); Tg: בורא אול/ברא אול (“[he] will not be saved”); and Pesh: נגד אול, la’netpese’ (“[he] will not be saved”).

⁴Cf. Harper, Amos and Hosea, 60; Maag, Text, 6, 8; Robinson, Amos, 18; Amsler, “Amos,” 180; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 306, 307.

⁵Wolff, Joel and Amos, 135; Rudolph, Amos, 138, 140; Gary Smith, Amos, 74-75.
The witness of the ancient versions provides a strong reason to read a niphal form instead of a piel in this particular instance. The consonantal Hebrew text provides for both possibilities, and evidently the ancient versions recognize there a passive. There is still the possibility, however, that MT provides the correct reading. The sentence can be taken as elliptical, being that מטפף ("his soul, life"), which appears at the end of the next clause, would be understood to be the complement of the present clause too.  

Various Misreadings of LXX

In a number of passages, LXX seems to misread the Hebrew text, providing a variant rendering that is clearly inferior to the one of MT. In these cases, the MT reading is supported by the other ancient versions. Some of the more remarkable examples are the following:

1. In Amos 1:5 and 1:9, LXX reads the proper name Σαλωμών ("Solomon") instead of MT נַעַל ("full, complete"), rendering the reference to the deportation of an entire population into a reference to a deportation of Solomon.

2. In Amos 1:11, LXX has εἰς μαρτυρίον ("for a witness") instead of MT παρά ("forever"), probably reading in the consonantal text παρά ("for a witness").

3. In Amos 2:11, LXX has εἰς ἁγιάσμιον ("for sanctification") instead of MT παρά ("for Nazirites") probably reading παρά ("consecration, ordination") instead of παρά ("Nazir").  

1 So Rudolph, Amos, 140.

2 Wolff, Joel and Amos, 134.

3 MS c has לְמִדֵי ("as teachers").
4. In Amos 2:16, LXX apparently misreads Hebrew יָשָׁפֵן ("and [the] strong") by אָמַס ("and he will find"), and has the construction εὑρήσει τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ("he will find/who finds his heart") for MT יָשָׁפֵן ("one strong/valiant [in] his heart").

Some Modern Emendations of the Text

Finally, a number of emendations in the text are usually proposed by some scholars that do not have any support in the ancient versions. These emendations are based rather on the modern reconstructions of what they consider to be the original text of Amos. A quick survey of these proposals can be found in the apparatus of BHS; a good survey of the reasoning behind them can be found in Hans W. Wolff's commentary on Amos. The main suggestions are the following:

1. In Amos 1:5, a recommendation is made to transpose the sentence שֵׁבַח יִשְׂרָאֵל ("and I will break the bar of Damascus") to after יַעֲבֹד אֵדֶן ("from Beth-Eden").

2. In Amos 1:9, it is suggested to read רָבָא ("to Aram") instead of רַבָּא ("to Edom"). In this verse also, the question is raised if the hemistich רָבָא רַבְּא ("and they did not remember the covenant of brothers/brotherhood") should not be deleted from the text.

3. In Amos 2:1, the question is raised if the name of the Edomite king, whose bones were burned, was not dropped out from the text.

4. In Amos 2:2, it is proposed to read לִבְנָה ("in the wall/walls of Moab," or "in Qir of Moab") instead of לַבָּי ("in Moab"). In this same verse, it is proposed to read סִירָה ("her fortresses") instead of סֶרֹת ("the fortresses of Kerioth").

5. In Amos 2:4-5, it is suggested that these verses are a late addition to the original text of the prophecy, and should therefore be deleted.

1 Wolff, Joel and Amos, 135.
2 Ibid., 128-135.
6. In Amos 2:7, the question is raised if the whole phrase נָמָּה ("upon the dust of the earth in") is not a late addition also. The same question is made concerning the entire second part of this verse, from יָהָב יָרָא ("and a man and his father") down to שָׁמַי ("name of My holiness/My holy name").

7. In Amos 2:8, יְהָב יָרָא ("the house of their gods/god") is also questioned as a late addition, as is the entire sentence in Amos 2:14 from יָהָב יָרָא ("and a hero") to יִשָּׁמַי ("his soul"), and the sentence from יַכְו ("and the quick") to the first מִשָּׁמַי ("[he] will save") in Amos 2:15, as well as the phrase מַעֲרֹת מִשָּׁמַי ("in that day") in Amos 2:16.

The textual emendations above are usually based on present concepts of metrical symmetry, consistence, and historical theological developments. Extreme caution should be exercised, however, for the modern scholar can finish by imposing too much of his own perspective on the biblical text, without a solid basis for it. A good example can be seen in Wolff’s suggestion to emend the text in Amos 1:14. He suggests that instead of יָהָב יָרָא ("and I will set fire") one should read יָהָב יָרָא ("and I will send fire") in order to conform with all the other statements of judgment by fire in the series of oracles of Amos 1-2.1 Wolff’s search for conformity, however, goes against the explicit testimony, not only of MT, but also of the other ancient versions, which attest a different verb in Amos 1:14 that corroborates the verb יָהָב יָרָא ("to set") instead of יָהָב יָרָא ("to send").2

1Wolff, Joel and Amos, 131.

2LXX has καὶ ἀνάφω πῦρ ("and I will kindle a fire") in Amos 1:14, instead of the usual καὶ ἐξαποθελῶ πῦρ ("and I will send out fire").

Tg has מַעֲרֹת מִשָּׁמַי ("and I will kindle a fire") instead of the customary מַעֲרָה מֵאֶשׁ ("and I will send a fire") of the other verses.

Pesh has כָּבַל מֵאֶשׁ, לְשֹׁבַן מִשָּׁמַי ("I will set fire to") instead of the habitual כָּבַל מֵאֶשׁ, לְשֹׁבַן מִשָּׁמַי ("I will send fire").
BIBLIOGRAPHY


1When an author has more than one work, entries are arranged chronologically rather than alphabetically.

324


Finley, Thomas J. *Joel, Amos, Obadiah.* The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1990.


Hoffmann, Yair. [The Prophecies Against Foreign Nations in the Bible]. Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1977.


________. The Religion of the People of Israel. Translated by R. C. Micklem. New York: Macmillan, 1925.


________. The Prophetic Movement in Israel. New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1921.


Steger, Carlos A. "Amos and the Covenant, 1990." TMs, Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.


