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JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL

AMOS 3-6 READ AS A UNITY

BY

J. BLAIR WILGUS

s0679407

Ph.D.

The University of Edinburgh

School of Divinity

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I, J. Blair Wilgus, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 79,000 words in length, has been written by me; that it is the record of work carried out by me; and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

J. Blair Wilgus

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No work is ever the product of one person's efforts, and certainly this one was no different. It would never have become reality without the help and suggestions of many supportive friends and colleagues. My biggest thanks go to my supervisor, Professor Hans Barstad. He has challenged and stretched me numerous ways and given me confidence in my own ability to read the text. I am indebted to him for his valuable supervision.

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Without doubt there will be errors, omissions and over-simplifications, for which I take absolute responsibility, as is customary, while hoping that the rest of the material will be enough to stimulate insights and new trains of thought into the future of Amos studies.

ABSTRACT

The last 100 years have seen biblical studies practically dominated by diachronic/historical methodologies, Amos studies have a long tradition of being read within a diachronic framework. The result of this has been an unfortunate fragmentation of the text. Within the last 40 years or so there has been a resurgence of literary studies that treat the text wholistically. Nevertheless, in research that has been done in literary studies a divergence with regard to the structure of the book as well as the function and meaning of some of its units still exists. For this reason it is necessary to approach the problem from a fresh perspective.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the literary unity of Amos 3-6. In my work I show not only the legitimacy, but also the superiority of a synchronic reading of Amos 3-6 when reading the text as a whole. The book of Amos enjoys perhaps the most scholarly interest among all of the twelve prophets, which has resulted in a large body of secondary literature. Within the book of Amos, chapters 3-6 provide a closed unit which contains the major message of the book. For this reason, these four chapters afford a suitable text to apply my reading as well as a platform on which to dialogue with secondary sources.

The methodology used in this thesis is a close reading of the present form of the Masoretic Text. A major part of the work is structural analysis. Through the analysis I was able to identify meaningful units that I used for my reading of the text. In this reading I looked at keywords and semantic fields, themes, repetition, parallelism, imagery, speakers and addressees, rhetorical techniques and the overall flow of the text.

In my study I have shown how Amos 3-6 should be divided into three independent yet closely related units: Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13 and 5:1-6:14. Recognition of the structure and craftsmanship of the text draws out the singular message of Amos 3-6; that Israel could no longer avoid Yahweh's judgment for their oppression of the poor. Even if my main conclusion is similar both to scholars who work in diachronic as well as synchronic studies, my conclusion treats the entirety of Amos 3-6 and concludes that all units within it are vital to the whole and contribute to this message of judgment. My thesis offers a solution to the fragmentary text resultant from diachronic methods as well as a corrective to synchronic readings that inadequately structure the book, resulting in an unsatisfactory overall picture of the structure and meaning of Amos 3-6.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	<i>The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> . Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979.
BHK	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> . Edited by R. Kittel. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1905-1906, and many later editions.
BHQ	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta: The Twelve Minor Prophets</i> . Edited by Anthony Gelston. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010.
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. 5 th rev. ed., Edited by A. Schenker. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–
ESV	English Standard Version
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2 nd ed. Oxford, 1910.
HALOT	L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under

the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.

<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBC	Interpretation - A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
K&D	C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, <i>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</i> . Translated by J. Martin et al. 25 vols. Edinburgh, 1857–1878. Reprint, 10 vols., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
KJV	King James Version
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>

SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>SwJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TTE</i>	<i>The Theological Educator</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the literary unity of the present form of Amos 3-6 as found in the Masoretic Text. In my work I show not only the legitimacy, but also the superiority of a synchronic reading of Amos 3-6 when reading the text as a whole.

The book of Amos enjoys perhaps the most scholarly interest among all of the twelve prophets. The importance the book of Amos has as “the first of the writing prophets,” the theme of the day of the Lord, and Amos as the prophet of social justice are just some of the issues that have drawn scholars to this prophetic book and have resulted in a large body of secondary literature.

When I wanted to study the book of Amos I started out with the commonly accepted tripartite division of the book into Amos 1-2, 3-6 and 7-9. It was my intention to study the whole book of Amos. However, due to the complexity of the problems involved when dealing with such a large text I chose to treat Amos 3-6 alone, since this unit of the book exhibits the rhetorical nature of the rest of the book, a majority of the themes, as well as the consistent message found in the book as a whole.

Overview of the Book

Amos 1-2 is a list of seven oracles of judgment against nations outside of Israel. Then, surprisingly, the judgment turns against Israel in an eighth oracle. The extended accusation of Israel’s sins and the recounting of Yahweh’s providential actions on Israel’s behalf make it evident that this is the focus of the oracles. The first seven oracles were intended to lull Israel into a false sense of security only to be violently shocked when judgment turns to Israel itself. Amos 7-9 is primarily an account of five visions the prophet received from Yahweh. The first two visions show Yahweh relenting from judgment due to the intercession of the prophet, a theme Israel would have been familiar with. However, in the third and fourth vision Yahweh promises to no longer be swayed from his intended course of judgment. Israel will one day feel the wrath of Yahweh, though the visions are still a picture of the future. Then, in the fifth vision, the prophet seems to stumble upon a judgment in progress. It is no longer a picture of the future, judgment has come and none shall escape it.

Amos 3-6 is perhaps the pinnacle of the rhetorical craftsmanship of the book. It consists of three first person sayings of the prophet which embody the message of

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the wrath of Yahweh building into a complete, unavoidable crescendo of judgment. It contains rhetorical questions that prevent the audience from denying the prophet's authority to speak the words of Yahweh. It sarcastically ridicules Israel's cultic practices and their unwarranted self confidence in their relationship with Yahweh. It parodies their luxurious lifestyle and condemns them for their oppression of the poor. Furthermore, Amos 3-6 is a tightly woven unit, demonstrating the unity and craftsmanship of the book of Amos as a whole.

Methodology

Biblical studies have seen accepted methodological approaches rise and fall over the past century and a half. Since the introduction of the literary-critical period and the work of Wellhausen, the dominant approach to study of biblical books has been historical-critical (diachronic). The last forty years have seen a return to literary (synchronic) approaches to the text. At present, both methodologies are in common use, with some scholars advocating an either/or mentality and others recognizing the validity of both.

The method employed in my reading of Amos 3-6 is a close reading of the text with weight on structural analysis and rhetorical technique. I view Amos as a work of literature. I read the Hebrew text and make observations on grammar, style, syntax, content, structure, keywords and semantic fields, themes, repetition, parallelism, imagery, speakers and addressees, rhetorical techniques, and the overall flow of the text. A major part of the work is structural analysis. I spend a great deal of time initially determining the structure of the text because structure is the way into the text and the indicator of meaningful units.

This is a textual and exegetical study. I give priority to exegesis of the present form of the text and evaluate historical critical conclusions based upon it. What I have found is that oddities, unevenness and seams, which diachronic methods suggest indicate the processes behind the text, can be evaluated in light of the wholistic reading I have arrived at and explained through attention to their literary role in the text.

The dichotomy between synchronic and diachronic studies is well known.¹ My approach to the text is not to prove one method right or wrong, but an

¹ Diachronic approaches have been the norm for decades but with a rise in interest in synchronic studies, discussions are taking place over whether one is superior to the other. Within the synchronic circle, Moberly argues for a literary (or synchronic) reading before a critical (or

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investigative approach to see if a literary, or close reading, offers a coherently unified text.² Noble has made a fine point in his claim that a text which is a well-integrated, coherent whole infringes upon those who suggest a text requires a diachronic explanation for its current form.³ However, my interaction with the text is as a piece of literature. I clearly accept the usefulness of continued use of diachronic methods of study. My method of approach to the text is simply located within the synchronic field of study.⁴ Powell suggests the major differences between literary criticism and historical criticism are that literary criticism: 1) focuses on the finished form of the text; 2) emphasizes the unity of the text as a whole; 3) views the text as an end in itself; and 4) is based on communication models of speech-act theory.”⁵ The reason I find it is necessary to locate my approach within a synchronic field of study is because diachronic methods have dominated biblical studies and I feel that more synchronic works will bring balance to the field.

While my own approach to the text is within the literary method, I dialogue with scholars who work diachronically. Dialogue between synchronic and diachronic scholars is necessary and fruitful. We are forced to present the best possible case for our point of view when demonstrating its validity to those who are disinclined to agree with us. Similarly, scholarly positions will be scrutinized for weaknesses and

diachronic) reading. R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, 22 (JSOTSup; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 22-27. Noble offers a mediating approach, suggesting both are necessary, though the nature of synchronic studies places restrictions upon the type of diachronic conclusions it can be synthesized with (i.e., quotation theory v. resource theory). Paul R. Noble, “Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,” *Literature and Theology* 7 (1993): 142.

² Noble shows a synchronic reading of Amos 7-8 and then examines the implications of his reading for the redaction history of the text. His methodology insists each text must be approached both synchronically and diachronically, though in the case of Amos 7-8 he determines the present form of the text is “so smooth that there is virtually no evidence for a reconstruction to be based upon.” Paul R. Noble, “Amos and Amaziah in Context: Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Amos 7-8,” *CBQ* 60 (1998): 439.

³ Noble, “Amos and Amaziah,” 425.

⁴ This is in agreement with Barton who suggests “all of the methods . . . have something in them, but none of them is the ‘correct’ method which scholars are seeking.” John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Darton: Longman and Todd Ltd., 1996), 5. Of the three interests Barton suggests at are at work in propelling wholistic approaches to Old Testament study (canon criticism, literary criticism, and a disillusion with traditional historical criticism), my approach comes out of literary criticism and attempts to “approach the biblical text in much the same spirit that one would approach a modern novel, reading it as a finished product.” John Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 185-187.

⁵ Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 7-9.

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incongruence by those who are in a different methodological camp. Thus, dialogue between synchronic and diachronic scholars promotes responsible scholarship.⁶

Final form literary study is not a new or sensational approach. My contribution is a reading which treats all texts within Amos 3-6 as part of the literary craftsmanship of the unit and shows that such a reading is superior to fragmentary readings and presents a text that is unified, coherent, and demonstrates a high degree of literary craftsmanship. Even if my main conclusion is similar both to scholars who work in diachronic as well as synchronic studies, my reading treats the entirety of Amos 3-6 and concludes that all units within it are vital to the whole and contribute to this message of judgment.⁷ My thesis offers a solution to the fragmentary text resultant from diachronic methods as well as a corrective to synchronic readings that inadequately structure the book, resulting in an unsatisfactory overall picture of the structure and meaning of Amos 3-6.

A few further comments are in order regarding final form. Loader offered a thoughtful argument that “there is no such thing as ‘the’ final text of the Old Testament.”⁸ In this article he points out several flaws in the idea of ‘the’ final form of the Old Testament.⁹ Loader argues that the idea of ‘The’ final form of the text; 1) implies an a-historical approach; 2) necessitates the belief that the Hebrew text as it is currently pointed is authoritative over earlier texts which are pointed differently or not at all; 3) undermines the task of textual criticism by adopting a text at one stage in its formation; 4) means that glosses (early changes to the text) can become part of the text; 5) is challenged by ketib/qere, which indicate that the Masoretes recognized that one form of the text was final enough not to be changed but not final enough to be accepted; 6) means that Masoretic paragraph divisions and interpretive signs must be accepted as part of ‘The’ final form; 7) means that scribal additions must be

⁶ For a useful example of modern dialogue between synchronic and diachronic methodologies see, Johannes C. de Moor, ed., *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, OtSt 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁷ For a survey of scholars who have been especially influential in my work on the book of Amos see Chapter 1: History of Research.

⁸ James Alfred Loader, “The Finality of the Old Testament ‘Final Text’,” *OTE* 15 (2002): 739-753.

⁹ I will continue to refer to Loader’s argument against ‘the’ final form by using a capital ‘The.’ Loader himself does not use this manner of identification however I find it helpful in distinguishing between his position and my own, as well as partially showing why I continue to use this phrase despite his remarks.

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accepted as part of ‘The’ final form; and 8) is nonsensical considering the process of canonisation and the multiple ‘final’ canons that occurred in this process.¹⁰

The backbone of Loader’s argument seems to be a backlash against a single, final, authoritative text; a text that is to be preferred above all others and that is to be the sole focus of any and all scholarly dialogue and interest. His second conclusion suggests that “the difference between ‘literary’ and ‘historical’ readings is one of degree, not of essence.”¹¹ Loader is correct; that synchronic and diachronic approaches both approach a text that is historical. However, his comments that historical-critical readings are no less aesthetic than any other and that literary readings can only seemingly avoid the historical dimension betray what seems to be diachronic resentment of synchronic methodology. I readily engage diachronic scholars in my thesis and hope that my own conclusion regarding the literary cohesion of the text will be engaged with by diachronic scholars. In fact, very few synchronic scholars would deny the progression of the text as Loader points out.

Loader notes the different focus of literary methods provides different and fresh insights into the text. This different focus should be encouraged instead of chained to diachronic studies as Loader seems to want to do. It is thanks to Loader that I have tried to avoid the term “final” and attempt to use the phrase “present” form of the text. This likely will not satisfy his criticisms, but it seems his criticisms are a reaction against synchronic methods just as some synchronic scholars seem to act in retaliation to diachronic studies.

Loader’s points regarding glosses and Masoretic/scribal notes provide the opportunity for me to clarify my use of the text. I use the present form of the text and attempt to treat this text as it is found unless there is cause not to. The Masoretes were, to some extent, also interpreters. I accept their pointing of the text unless it seems corrupt or too difficult. In many cases, the Masoretes themselves noted these instances. Their remarks are to be found in the Masorah parva and the Masorah magna. Since it is their interpretation of the text, it is open for acceptance or rejection, as are their paragraph divisions, scribal additions and glosses.¹²

¹⁰ For an overview of these and other Masoretic practices see Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (trans. E. J. Revell; The Society of Biblical Literature Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), especially pgs. 80-122.

¹¹ Loader, “Finality,” 751.

¹² I discuss the difficulties with Masoretic sense divisions below.

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There is a difference between belief in Loader's 'The' final form of the text and my own use of the text. Loader is arguing against the claim that a certain form of the text is authoritative over against other forms of the text, and that this is done in an unexamined manner. I do not use the present form of the text out of a theological commitment, I do not fail to notice the multiplicity of possible final texts I could work with, nor am I claiming that BHS is authoritative over these other texts. My reliance on the present form of the text refers to the BHS and is done for purely conventional reasons, much like the use of BHK of earlier generations of scholars. Only rarely do I deviate from the text, and then only when the text is corrupt or difficult to understand. I am not help captive by the text simply because I use the present form.

And it is significant to note that whereas Loader denies the existence of "The" final form of the text, Carroll and Noble both utilize the opposite approach. Carroll points out that the "decision to adopt an approach focusing on the received text is no longer a novel one."¹³ With regard to a description of the 'final form of the text,' Noble differentiates between an interest in a "literary-aesthetic interest" and "concerns of canon criticism."¹⁴ My own interest in the text of Amos 3-6 is from a literary-aesthetic point of view and my focus on the present form of the text is borne out of that focus.

One final word on the text I have chosen is in regard to the relatively new field called delimitation criticism. Delimitation criticism has as its goal the delimitation of the biblical texts based on Masoretic and pre-Masoretic textual markers rather than modern criteria.¹⁵ Delimitation critics see other scholars as dividing the text based on "content and theme, certain expressions which the interpreter sees as 'keywords,' or the presumed characteristics of a certain literary genre," and that scholars' own preunderstanding colors their division of the text.¹⁶

In contrast, delimitation criticism believes that text division was part of, or very close to, the original writing down of a text, due to the large degree of unity

¹³ Mark Daniel Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin-American Perspective* (JSOTSup 132; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 149.

¹⁴ Noble, "Synchronic and Diachronic," 131.

¹⁵ Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Introduction to the Series Pericope," in *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship* (Pericope 1; ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), 2.

¹⁶ Korpel, "Introduction," 2.

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seen between delimitation of multiple manuscript traditions.¹⁷ Coupled with a belief that unit delimitation contributes much to the interpretation of a passage, delimitation critics believe that scholars, both synchronic and diachronic, must follow, or dialogue with, the ancient unit delimiters of the text.¹⁸

However, in this statement there is a hint of difficulty. Korpel, in her introduction to the series *Pericope*, which publishes the results of delimitation criticism, frequently concedes that following ancient delimitation markers is not an infallible science. She recognizes that delimitation markers were not followed at all times, and that the nature of some markers contributed to their disappearance over time.¹⁹ She concludes with a plea, which is the backbone of the *Pericope* project, that “critical evaluation of a mass of data from as many ancient manuscripts and as many traditions as possible” must be evaluated in order to draw a hypothesis about what the ‘original’ division of a text might have been.²⁰

In fairness, Korpel admits this imperfection because it is the exception to the rule. However, her constant need to state the difficulty, as well as her plea for scholars to begin working on the project of comparing and analyzing manuscripts, does highlight the problem with immediately integrating this criticism. Furthermore, when addressing the methodology of delimiting paragraphs, which she admits have been transmitted rather negligently, Korpel suggests parallelism, enjambment of strophes, and thematic continuity can provide further testimony when evaluating discrepancies between manuscript traditions.²¹ These are practices which scholars outside of delimitation criticism use when delimiting the text. Thus, this thesis will ignore the pleas of delimitation critics for the present time. This is not due to a rejection of their claims. Instead, it is recognition that the immense task they are calling for lies outside the bounds of this thesis. Meindert Dijkstra has begun working on the text of Amos from a delimitation critical perspective and, while he has made much progress in collecting data and beginning to draw conclusions, he

¹⁷ Korpel, “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁸ Korpel, “Introduction,” 1, 17.

¹⁹ Korpel, “Introduction,” 5, 10, 11, 16, 17, 23, 24, 35, 36, 37, 45, 49.

²⁰ Korpel, “Introduction,” 19.

²¹ Korpel, “Introduction,” 45-46.

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still recognizes the perplexing nature of distinguishing between *petuhot* and *setumot* and recognizes that he is raising questions as well as answers.²²

One important characteristic of the book of Amos is its strong rhetorical nature. In my thesis I frequently use the term “rhetorical.” In literary studies this term most often means persuasive speech or writing, i.e., that which is designed to persuade an audience.²³ While certain portions of the book of Amos certainly use rhetoric to persuade (Amos 3:3-8 for example) my use of the term rhetoric follows in the footsteps of Muilenburg, who defined rhetoric as,

“ . . . understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.”²⁴

Muilenburg proposes two concerns of the rhetorical critic: 1) “to define the limits or scope of the literary unit, to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends;” and 2) “to recognize the structure of a composition and to discern the configuration of its component parts . . . and to note the various rhetorical devices that are employed for marking . . . the sequence and movement of the periscope, and . . . the shifts or breaks in the development of the writer’s thought.”²⁵

While the methodology employed in this thesis is not rhetorical criticism, I have certainly been influenced by Muilenburg’s contributions, and his emphasis on the literary craftsmanship of the text. My methodology flows out of this, though it also incorporates a great deal of formalism’s close reading and attention to themes, imagery, plot, and treatment of the text as a whole.

²² Meindert Dijkstra, “Unit Delimitation and Interpretation in the Book of Amos,” in *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablets* (Pericope 5; ed. Marjo Korpel and Josef Oesch; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005), 114, 116, 128, 132. For a comparison between delimitation criticism’s reading of the sense division in Amos and the structural observation of this thesis, compare Appendix 1: Outline of the Book of Amos with Dijkstra’s Appendix A, which notes how Hebrew manuscripts delimit the book of Amos. Dijkstra, “Unit Delimitation,” 133-134.

²³ M. H. Abrams, “Rhetoric,” in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), 268.

²⁴ James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 8.

²⁵ Muilenburg, “Form Criticism,” 8-10. For a useful survey of more recent research on rhetorical criticism see Phyllis Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994). See also, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Recent Currents in Research on the Prophetic Literature,” *ExpTim* 119 (2008): 166.

CHAPTER 1. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

A significant portion of new works published on the book of Amos in the last twenty years have utilized a synchronic methodology. Nevertheless, many diachronic approaches are still being produced. The current state of Amos studies owes a great debt to Julius Wellhausen. In *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt*, Wellhausen describes Amos 9:8-18 as “Rosen und Lavendel statt Blut und Eisel.”²⁶ With this observation, Wellhausen simply notes that the end of the book of Amos, with its shift to the future restoration of Israel, is radically different from the unavoidable judgment and destruction that have occupied the rest of the book.

Literary criticism has been a credible method of biblical studies since the 1970s.²⁷ While some would describe literary studies as “text based” methods, this definition is insufficient, not to mention deceiving. Diachronic studies that investigate form, source, redaction, and historical setting of the text do so based on material found in the text, so it is a misnomer to suggest that literary approaches are text based in a way that diachronic methods are not. The difference, though, can perhaps be highlighted by describing literary methods as concerned with the text as a whole (as opposed to the pre-text units) and with a tendency towards interpretation.²⁸

It is clear that both of these approaches are highly important and will stay with us into the future. In this chapter I have provided a brief survey of modern scholarly works on the book of Amos. This presentation moves from diachronic into synchronic approaches. The section that follows will briefly survey some of the key diachronic studies of the book of Amos, beginning with form critical and redaction history approaches (Mays, Wolff, Watts, and Jeremias), followed by text

²⁶ Julius Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten: übersetzt und erklärt* (4th ed.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 96. Clifford examines Wellhausen’s use of Amos within his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. He notes that Wellhausen’s use of the book of Amos provides an avenue into determining Wellhausen’s possible presuppositions as well as showcasing the lasting significance of his work. Hywel Clifford, “Amos in Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena*,” in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation* (LHB/OTS 536; ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Andrew Mein; New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2011), 141-156.

²⁷ Paul House suggests literary criticism became a force with the publication of James Muilenburg’s SBL address in 1969, though noting that literary approaches existed long before this. Paul R. House, “The Rise and Current Status of Literary Criticism of the Old Testament,” in *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 2; ed. Paul R. House; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 4-7.

²⁸ Paul R. House, “Amos and Literary Criticism,” *RevExp* 92 (1995): 175-179. It should be noted that structuralism and deconstruction, as House labels them, have only slight emphases on interpretation.

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oriented/received text approaches (Andersen & Freedman and Paul), before moving into literary approaches (Noble, Carroll R., and House).²⁹

1.1. James Luther Mays

Writing in 1969, J. L. Mays attributes a large portion of the book of Amos to the prophet himself.³⁰ As is quite common, Mays views the message of the prophet as singularly one of judgment, with not offer of hope.³¹ He says very little about the overall structure of the book as it now stands, suggesting that it is primarily a collections of speeches,³² though there are primarily three distinct types of material in the book: sayings spoken by the prophet (1:3-6:14; 8:4-14; 9:7-15), first-person narratives told by the prophet (7:1-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-6), and a third-person narrative about the prophet (7:10-17), as well as other smaller types of material such as the title (1:1), hymnic poetry (1:2; 4:13; 5:8f.; 9:5f.; 8:8?), and a wisdom style observation (5:13).³³

According to Mays, the prophet Amos was responsible for the oracles against the nations of Aram, Philistia, Ammon, Moab and Israel, and the visions in 7:1-9 and 8:1-3. A disciple or group of disciples is responsible for the composition and insertion of the narrative of 7:10-17, the composition of the sayings of 3:1-6:14, and the insertion of 8:4-9:10.³⁴ Mays attributes the majority of the present form of the book to this first body of collectors. After them, the book was redacted and expanded in the cultic community of Jerusalem, adding the hymns, 1:2, and possibly 8:8. During the exile, the Deuteronomists added 1:1; 3:7 and the oracles against Tyre, Edom and Judah. The post-exilic community added 9:11-15.³⁵ Mays recounts his

²⁹ For more on recent research on the book of Amos see, James Luther Mays, "Words About the Words of Amos: Recent Study of the Book of Amos," *Interpretation* 13 (1959). P. H. Kelley, "Contemporary Study of Amos and Prophetism," *RevExp* 63 (1966). J. J. M. Roberts, "Recent Trends in the Study of Amos," *ResQ* 13 (1970). John F. Craghan, "The Prophet Amos in Recent Literature," *BTB* 2 (1972). Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 294-295. John H. Hayes, *Amos, the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times & His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 28-39.

³⁰ James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 12.

³¹ Mays, *Amos*, 6-12.

³² Mays, *Amos*, 4.

³³ Mays, *Amos*, 12.

³⁴ Mays, *Amos*, 13. Mays does admit it is possible that the prophet Amos collected and recorded small groups of his own sayings.

³⁵ Mays, *Amos*, 14.

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reconstruction of the formulation of the book of Amos only after admitting that it is merely a suggestion of the outline of the stages, and that any reconstruction “would have to be conjectural in a large part.”³⁶

1.2. Hans Walter Wolff

Hans Walter Wolff is perhaps the most recognized commentators on Amos due to his proposal of six “strata” of in the text of Amos. Due to the importance Wolff’s work still has on Amos studies today, it is useful to present not only the six strata he sees in the text but also a list of the texts which fall into each strata. In this way, the full effect of Wolff’s treatment of the text can be clearly seen.

The first stratum Wolff sees in the book of Amos is words spoken by the prophet himself.³⁷ This layer can broadly be limited to Amos 3-6, though Wolff suggests it is specifically Amos 4:4-5; 5:7, 10-11, 18-26; and 6:12 that are exclusively the words of the prophet in what he calls “free witness speech,” speech in which Yahweh is spoken of only in the third person. Other texts, such as Amos 3:1a + 2, 9-11, 12b $\alpha^2\beta$ -15; 4:1-3; 5:1-3, 12 + 16-17; 6:13-14 are introduced by the prophet Amos before presenting an oracle of Yahweh. Finally, texts including Amos 3:12; 5:4-5, 21-24 + 27; and possibly 6:8 are isolated sayings containing pure oracles of Yahweh.

Wolff’s second strata traces the visions of Amos 7:1-8; 8:1-2; and 9:1-4 to the prophet Amos and links the oracles against the nations to this strata as well, labeling this stage of redaction as “the transmission of the cycles” (*die Zyklenniederschrift*).³⁸ While these texts are traced back to the prophet himself, Wolff suggests their literary uniformity, which he contrasts with the loose and unordered nature of Amos 3-6, testifies to a more advanced stage of literary development.³⁹

According to Wolff, the third stratum in the redaction of the book of Amos is attributed to disciples of the prophet. The primary texts attributed to this group

³⁶ Mays, *Amos*, 13.

³⁷ Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 2: Joel und Amos* (Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament 14/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: 1969), 130. This commentary was translated into English and published in the *Hermeneia* series. Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

³⁸ Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 130.

³⁹ Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 130-131.

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include a portion of Amos 1:1⁴⁰ and 7:9-17. Other texts included in this group are Amos 5:5a, 13, 14-15; 6:2, 6b; 8:4-7, 8, 9-10, 13-14; 9:7, 8a, and 9-10. These conclusions are based on what Wolff calls the “*abweichende Sprache*” of the *Amosschule*, language and style that are not used in the undisputed speech of the prophet.⁴¹ Wolff dated the activity of the school between 760-730 B.C.E. and located this activity in Judah,⁴² though some (one) in the school was attributed with witnessing the conflict between Amos and Amaziah in Bethel.⁴³

Wolff’s fourth stratum in the book of Amos stems from Josiah’s destruction of Bethel and reflects the sentiment of anti-Bethel redactors. Texts belonging to this redaction layer include Amos 1:2; 3:14b α , 4:6-13; 5:6, 8-9; 9:1, 5-6⁴⁴ and are evidenced by attachment to the catchwords “Bethel” and “altar.”⁴⁵

The fifth layer in Wolff’s reading of the book of Amos is a Deuteronomistic layer. Texts which fall into this category include 1:1b β , 9-12; 2:4-5, 10-12; 3:1b, 3:7; 6:1a α ; 8:11-12.⁴⁶ While the fourth layer of redaction was identified through certain catch words, the Deuteronomistic layer is linked to sentences or semantic fields,⁴⁷ though Wolff was careful to point out that this school was “too canny” (*weit umsichtiger*) to target only Judah or Jerusalem in their critique on contemporary practice.⁴⁸

Wolff’s final layer of redaction is refers to the postexilic period and the salvific eschatology common to this period. This layer consists of Amos 5:22a α ; 6:5; 9:8b and 11-15, the texts which offer any degree of hope for the future, since, according to Wolff, outside of this redaction layer Yahweh’s entire message is a sentence of death (*Todesurteil*).⁴⁹

⁴⁰ Specifically, “. . . concerning Israel, which he viewed two years before the earthquake.”

⁴¹ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 132.

⁴² Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 134.

⁴³ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 131.

⁴⁴ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 135-137.

⁴⁵ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 135.

⁴⁶ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 137-138. Wolff is uncertain as to whether Amos 8:11-12 belong to the Deuteronomistic layer or to the Old School of Amos layer of redaction as the text exhibits elements of both.

⁴⁷ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 138.

⁴⁸ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 137.

⁴⁹ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 138.

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Table 1 shows how Wolff's six strata in the book of Amos are visualized.⁵⁰ This is helpful to see since it highlights a criticism which scholars using a synchronic method raise against diachronic studies, namely that the text rarely provides enough evidence to support the very specific theories of redaction proposed by scholars.⁵¹

Table 1

Stratum 1	Stratum 2	Stratum 3	Stratum 4	Stratum 5	Stratum 6
	1:1a	1:1b		1:1bβ	
			1:2		
	1:3-8				
				1:9-12	
	1:13-2:3				
				2:4-5	
	2:6-9				
				2:10-12	
	2:13-16				
3:1a				3:1b	
3:2-6					
				3:7	
3:8-4:5			3:14bα		
			4:6-13		
5:1-5		5:5a			
			5:6		
5:7					
			5:8-9		
5:10-12					
		5:13-15			

⁵⁰ The majority of this material was gathered from the section "*Die Entstehung des Buches*" in his commentary. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 129-138. Where this section of the commentary avoided labeling texts explicitly, the appropriate section of the commentary was consulted. Further, Table 1 accounts for the majority of Wolff's observations. However, redaction layers are often smaller than can be easily graphed here. This chart documents the majority of Wolff's observations, though some are not included due to the minute nature and location of their placement in the text. Paul also omits such references for the same reason. Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 6 footnote 12. Additionally, Wolff occasionally notes that a specific text may belong to one or another redaction layer, or its provenance is uncertain. In these cases, Wolff's final decision alone is charted instead of also noting alternate possibilities.

⁵¹ Bright admits his criticism is not with Wolff's clarity, reasoning or competence as an exegete, but rather with his overall approach to the formation of the book. John Bright, "A New View of Amos," *Interpretation* 25 (1971): 356. Many commentators quote Bright's criticism of Wolff, "But do the tools at our disposal really allow us anything like the precision in describing this process that we find here?" Bright, "New View," 357.

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5:16-24					5:22α
			5:25-26		
6:1				6:1α	
		6:2			
6:3-6a		6:6b			
6:7-8					
		6:9-11a			
6:11b-14					
	7:1-8				
		7:9-17			
	8:1-2				
		8:3-10			
				8:11-12	
		8:13-14			
	9:1-4				
			9:5-6		
		9:7-8a			9:8b
		9:9-10			
					9:11-15

What Table 1 shows is the fragmentation that occurs when a text is analyzed as Wolff does. It is this type of segmentation that forms a core reason for this thesis; can the book of Amos be read as a unity?⁵²

1.3. John D. W. Watts

John Watts wrote extensively on the prophets from the 50's to the 90's, focusing heavily on the book of Amos.⁵³ Watts uses a form- and redaction criticism methodologies in his works to show the development of the text. His first treatment of the development of the text was written before Wolff's influential commentary. Watts proposed that within the book of Amos, three collections of prophecies can be

⁵² Melugin suggests a limitation of Wolff's study is "his lack of attention to the structure and meaning of the book in its final form." Roy F. Melugin, "The Formation of Amos: An Analysis of Exegetical Method," *SBLSP* 13 (1978): 375.

⁵³ John D. W. Watts, "Amos: Across Fifty Years of Study," *RevExp* 92 (1995).

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distinguished by identifying their separate forms; Amos 1-6 (words or oracles of Amos), 7-9 (autobiographical accounts) and 7:10-17 (biographical narrative).⁵⁴

Watts uses this same approach in his focused analysis of Amos 4:1-5.⁵⁵ In this article, written after Wolff's commentary, Watts affirms five of Wolff's six strata within the text, making no differentiation between Wolff's first and second strata.⁵⁶ Similarly, Watts examines the background of the hymns in the book of Amos.⁵⁷

Watts is also concerned with the historical character of the prophet Amos.⁵⁸ In these articles his aim is to investigate the background and person of the biblical prophet. To be sure, Watts is able to fill several articles and draw several conclusions about the prophet Amos from a small number of texts that actually describe him, though he is cautious when discussing ideology of the prophet.⁵⁹ Watts' interest in the prophet stems from the fact that we know so little about him, and he attempts to glean as much from the text as possible, though his interest in these articles is in genuinely learning about the historical person rather than describing the prophet in an attempt to then discern what the prophet could/did contribute to the final text of the book bearing his name.

Watts also interacts with the message and meaning of the book of Amos. In these settings his interest is in the final, or whole, form of the text. Here, Watts reads the book of Amos for its contribution to our knowledge of "the Day of the Lord"⁶⁰

⁵⁴ John D. W. Watts, "The Origin of the Book of Amos," *The Expository Times* 66 (1955): 109-112. Watts holds that the book of Amos consists of two books incorporated into one; Amos 1-6 and 7-9.

⁵⁵ John D. W. Watts, "A Critical Analysis of Amos 4:1ff," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1972 Proceedings* (ed. L. C. McGaughey; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972).

⁵⁶ Watts, "Critical Analysis," 497. Watts reviews Wolff's commentary, noting its methodology and discussing it in relation to two other commentaries. Unfortunately, Watts does not critically interact with Wolff to much extent, though it is obvious that Watts looks with favor on the commentary's approach, methodology and conclusions. John D. W. Watts, "Commentaries on Amos - A Review," *RelSRev* 7 (1981).

⁵⁷ John D. W. Watts, "An Old Hymn Preserved in the Book of Amos," *JNES* 15 (1956): 33-39.

⁵⁸ This is seen in at least three articles. John D. W. Watts, "Amos, the Man," *RevExp* 63 (1966): 387-392. John D. W. Watts, "What Kind of Prophet Was Amos?," in *Vision and Prophecy in Amos* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 29-58. John D. W. Watts, "Amos - The Man and His Message," *SwJT* 9 (1966): 21-26.

⁵⁹ Watts, "What Kind of Prophet Was Amos?," 49.

⁶⁰ John D. W. Watts, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos* (Faculty Lectures, Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüsçhlikon/Zh; Leiden: Brill, 1958), 68-84.

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and mines the prophets in general for their primary metaphors for Yahweh.⁶¹ Both articles treat the theme itself, with no attention to developments of the theme or how portions of the text of Amos contribute competing or undeveloped ideas. Thus, while Watts comfortably utilizes diachronic methods in approaching the text, also shows himself capable of reading the text wholistically at times.

1.4. Jörg Jeremias

Jörg Jeremias utilizes an approach very similar to that of Wolff, though his conclusions are slightly different. He notes that no “attentive reader” can fail to notice the “artistic composition” of the oldest (layer) of the book of Amos.⁶² According to Jeremias there were two main redactions of the book of Amos; the first edition (*die Erst-Ausgabe*) of the book, which came about after the fall of Samaria, was expanded about a century later during the time of Jeremiah. It then went through its defining formation after the fall of Jerusalem, in the exilic/early post-exilic period. The text of the book as it is now is the product of the (late-) postexilic period.⁶³ Interestingly, Jeremias openly admits one of the significant weaknesses of his approach, that it is dependent upon hypothetical and uncertain reconstruction.⁶⁴

The artistic composition of the oldest form of the book of Amos is seen in the framing of the book with the OAN⁶⁵ and the visions; parallel superscriptions in Amos 3:1 and 5:1, labeling the first half as divine speech and the second as prophetic; concentric organization in 5:17, including two offers of hope between declarations of Israel’s sin and coming death; and the linear organization of 5:18-27 and 6 and the concentric organization of 3:9-4:3 and 6 around chapter 5.⁶⁶

⁶¹ John D. W. Watts, “Images of Yahweh: God in the Prophets,” in *Studies in Old Testament Theology* (ed. Robert L. Jr. Hubbard, Robert K. Johnston, and Robert P. Meye; Dallas: Word, 1992).

⁶² Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Amos* (ATD 24/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), XIX.

⁶³ Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XIX.

⁶⁴ “Allerdings läßt sich die soeben dargestellte Botschaft des Amos nur auf dem Wege komplizierter und vielfach nur hypothetischer Rekonstruktion gewinnen.” Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XIX. “Jedes Zurücktasten in frühere Schichten des Buches, geschweige denn bis zur mündlichen Rede des Amos, ist notwendigerweise mit einem (im einzelnen unterschiedlichen) Grad an Unsicherheit belastet.” Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XXII.

⁶⁵ In this thesis, OAN refers only to the oracles against the nations found in Amos 1:3-2:16 which contain eight oracles of judgment against eight different nations. When I use the full phrase “oracles against the nations” this is where it is necessary to refer to the form as it appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

⁶⁶ Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XIX-XX.

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Jeremias then posits how this old book of Amos was modified theologically. Differences between Jeremias and Wolff include; texts which were directed against limited groups were recast to address the whole people of God; the inclusion of Hoseanic language and “intellectual world” (*Gedankenwelt*) in the words of Amos;⁶⁷ texts that offer more hope are the work of tridents; and Bethel critiques are either part of the Deuteronomistic redaction or an exilic liturgical layer.⁶⁸

Jeremias’ treatment of the text is in some ways helpful and in other ways less so. His commentary rearranges verses he thinks are out of order and uses a smaller font when commenting on exilic and post-exilic redaction layers. Jeremias does not give the same level of detail about which texts fit in which redaction layer in his introduction as Wolff does so this feature makes some of his conclusions easily observable. However, it also makes Jeremias’ conclusions an integral part of the text when reading his commentary, making it more difficult to compare his recreation of the text with the present form of the book of Amos while also inhibiting a smooth reading of his commentary.

1.5. Tchavdar S. Hadjiev

Tchavdar Hadjiev is a contemporary proponent of redaction critical methods and the book of Amos. His 2007 Oxford thesis under H. G. M. Williamson on the composition and redaction of the book of Amos was published by de Gruyter in 2009.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Elsewhere Jeremias goes on to say that Hoseanic influence on the book of Amos is not limited to additions or redactional layers, positing that the book of Amos never existed in any form devoid of Hoseanic influence. Jörg Jeremias, “The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 235; ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 177.

⁶⁸ Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XX-XXII. Jeremias’ reconstruction suffers not only from the normal criticisms levelled by synchronic scholars, but also from his own honesty. Jeremias explains, “Allerdings läßt sich die soeben dargestellte Botschaft des Amos nur auf dem Wege komplizierter und vielfach nur hypothetischer Rekonstruktion gewinnen.” Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XIX. And later, “Jedes Zurücktasten in frühere Schichten des Buches, geschweige denn bis zur mündlichen Rede des Amos, ist notwendigerweise mit einem (im einzelnen unterschiedlichen) Grad an Unsicherheit belastet.” Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XXII.

⁶⁹ Tchavdar S. Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos* (BZAW 393; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009). His methodology can also be seen in his 2008 article where he demonstrates how the original meanings of Amos 3:12 and 9:9-10 changed upon their insertion into the prophetic book. Tchavdar S. Hadjiev, “The Context as Means of Redactional Reinterpretation in the Book of Amos,” *JThS* 59 (2008): 655-668.

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Hadjiev proposes that the book of Amos was composed of a single scroll that was expanded and then redacted. Amos 4:1-6:7 composed the first version of what Hadjiev calls the “repentance scroll,” composed between 733-722 BC as a call for Israel to repent. This portion of Amos 3-6 exhibits a strong concentric composition arranged in three layers, dealing with lack of justice and righteousness, cultic criticism and the lifestyle of the aristocracy.⁷⁰ Sometime between 722-701 BC, Amos 3:9-15 and 6:8-14 are added to the first version of the repentance scroll, adding reference to Judah and criticism of the arrogance and security of the ruling class.⁷¹

Separate from the repentance scroll is what Hadjiev calls the “polemical scroll,” composed likely between 734-732 BC or shortly before 722 BC.⁷² The polemical scroll was composed of five OAN, 9:7; 3:3-8, five visions, 9:9-10 and the narrative of 7:10-17, organized in that order. This text begins with the reason for judgment and continues by eradicating any and all hope Israel may have had that they would avoid judgment.

Hadjiev tentatively suggests the two scrolls were combined in Judah, sometime in the 7th century. It was the composer who moved 9:7, composed 3:1a, 2, and inserted 1:2; 9:5-6 and the hymns.⁷³ Hadjiev differs from Wolff, Jeremias and others by positing only one redaction layer in the book, after its initial composition.⁷⁴ This redaction took place during the exilic period, specifically, in the 6th century but after 586 BC, and in Judah.⁷⁵ It was this redaction that inserted the oracles against Tyre, Edom and Judah, added 2:7b, 10-12; transferred the narrative to after the third vision, composed 7:9, 8:3-14; and 9:7-15.⁷⁶

While Hadjiev utilizes a redaction-critical methodology, he only identifies approximately forty-four interpolated verses: 1:2, 9-12; 2:4-5, 7b, 10-12; 3:1-2; 4:13; 5:8-9, 15, 25-27; 6:1a α , 6b β , 2 (possibly 6:9-10); 7:9-17; 8:3-14; and 9:5-6.⁷⁷ This is due to Hadjiev’s examination of seven criteria used by scholars for identifying

⁷⁰ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 183-187.

⁷¹ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 187-190.

⁷² Hadjiev, *Composition*, 193-198.

⁷³ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 198-200.

⁷⁴ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 208.

⁷⁵ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 204-207.

⁷⁶ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 201.

⁷⁷ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 179.

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redactional intervention; literary breaks, later linguistic and theological influences, thematic tensions, later historical situations, unusual style and ideas, literary dependence on later passages, and the presence of different structures.⁷⁸ Hadjiev cautions against using these criteria individually and indiscriminately, thus leading to his own redactional evaluation of the text which is less grandiose than others. Additionally, he suggests that the high degree of diversity that exists in the redactional hypotheses of Amos scholars is due to “careless handling of redactional methods.”⁷⁹ The methodology employed by Hadjiev means that much of his text is devoted to disagreeing with, or modifying, current trends within redaction critical approaches. While his approach is methodical and cautious, Hadjiev can still only suggest that it “enters the realms of probability.”⁸⁰

1.6. Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman

The Anchor Bible commentary on the book of Amos is a standard in modern scholarship on the book.⁸¹ Andersen and Freedman’s work is a massive tome that includes a 150 page introduction to the book of Amos, and translation, notes, and comments on each text unit of the book. The authors outline the book of Amos into four main units: The Book of Doom (1:1-4:13), The Book of Woes (5:1-6:14), The Book of Visions (7:1-9:6), and an Epilogue (9:7-15).⁸²

Andersen and Freedman are concerned with the literary form of the book of Amos “as a finished, though not necessarily perfect, product.” As a result, they are reluctant to emend, or comment on, an emended text.⁸³ Instead of suggesting contradictory messages in the text are attributed to different layers, they suggest changes in the posture and policy of the prophet are attributed to his personal development over the course of his career.⁸⁴ Likewise, though Andersen and

⁷⁸ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 25-38.

⁷⁹ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 40.

⁸⁰ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 40.

⁸¹ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*.

⁸² Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, xxv-xlii.

⁸³ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 3.

⁸⁴ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 5. Andersen and Freedman recognize “one master hand,” whether that is Amos himself or one of his disciples. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 5. They also suggest, “Amos himself had a major hand in the selection and organization of his messages into something fairly close to the book we now have.” Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 24. See also their comments on Amos 9:7-15 where difficult passages are attributed either to Amos or within the lifetime of people who knew him. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 894.

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Freedman constructed a chain of events encompassing Amos' five visions, the plagues, the encounter with Amaziah, and his shift in the hope of salvation of Israel into a loose chronological order, they do recognize that the presentation of these elements in the received text is literary, not chronological.⁸⁵

Andersen and Freedman are highly critical of traditional critical views. Their criticism are based on four foundations of the "old criticism" as they apply to the unity of the book of Amos; 1) the "advanced" cosmic theology of the hymns is primal, not late, 2) the roots of eschatological thinking are also ancient, 3) it has not been demonstrated that (apparently) fulfilled prophecies could only have been composed after the events *we* identify as their fulfillment, and 4) early prophets were versatile verbal craftsmen.⁸⁶ Not only do the authors have reservations regarding the conclusions of historical-critical studies, they ask different questions of the text. For example, regarding critical views on the originality of the hymns in the book of Amos, Andersen and Freedman say, "The question then remains *not* what did such hymns do when they were sung in the cult, but what are these pieces now doing in the book of Amos?"⁸⁷ Their intent is not to look behind the text, but to interact with the historical text.

When comparing my own view with that of Andersen and Freedman, a starting point can be found in their statement regarding their two main reasons for deviating from traditional criticism's view of the layers in the text.

First is the cumulative demonstration of the *literary coherence* of all the diverse ingredients in the whole assemblage, which is more than an assemblage; it is a highly structured unity. Second is the diverse and divergent (even apparently contradictory, sometimes) points of view we account for as reflecting successive phases in the prophet's career, which underwent quite substantial changes in both inner perception and declared messages.⁸⁸

In my view, the "diverse and divergent points of view" are not evidence of "growth" on the part of the prophet but an integral part of the rhetorical flow and meaning of the text as a whole.

Andersen and Freedman view the shift from the positive "Seek good and not evil," to the serious but not hopeless plagues and first two visions, to the inevitability

⁸⁵ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 8-9.

⁸⁶ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 144.

⁸⁷ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 5.

⁸⁸ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 144, italics original.

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of the last three visions, and then to the positive end in the epilogue to denote development in the life of the prophet.⁸⁹ They correctly note that Amos' career does not unfold chronologically in the book.⁹⁰ However, this does seem at odds with their opposition to recreate the text of the original words of the prophet. Their acknowledgment that "the man and prophet is unknown outside of this small book"⁹¹ and their disdain for searching for the original words of the prophet seem to be at odds with their ability to assign chronological order to the oracles, visions and narrative of the book. The authors suggest that the period of time covered by the book of Amos is approximately 30 years and that the dichotomy between judgment and hope passages are due to developments in the prophet's career.⁹²

I disagree with the view that the text as it now stands presents a prophet who grows over the course of his career. It is my view that the text as it now stands presents strong literary coherence, and elements which Andersen and Freedman suggest display growth on the part of the prophet should be read as deliberate and thoughtful parts of that coherent whole.

1.7. Shalom M. Paul

Shalom Paul writes the second commentary on the Book of Amos in the *Hermeneia* series, though with significant differences from the commentary in the same series by Wolff. To begin with, Paul attributes virtually the entire text of the book of Amos to the prophet himself,⁹³ though he says little about how these units, which originated with the prophet, were compiled into the text we now have. Paul's overall structure of the book consists of the OAN, oracles in 3:1-5:17, two woe oracles in 5:18-6:7, five visions interspersed with a narrative and independent oracles (7:1-9:10) and a final unit (9:11-15).⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 6-7.

⁹⁰ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 7.

⁹¹ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 24.

⁹² Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 7, 22.

⁹³ His explanation for this conclusion is that "almost all of the arguments for the later interpolations and redactions, including a Deuteronomistic one, are shown to be based on fragile foundations and inconclusive evidence." Paul, *Amos*, 6. Paul does, however, recognize one or two minor exceptions; the doxology in Amos 5:1-17 for example. Paul, *Amos*, 168-169.

⁹⁴ Paul, *Amos*, 6-7.

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Paul does not describe his methodology to a great extent, though he admits to using “literary form-critical analysis” in substantiating the authenticity of the OAN,⁹⁵ and later looks at the OAN from “a literary point of view,” noting their internal and structural variations.⁹⁶ His conclusion that the pericope of the OAN should be attributed to the prophet Amos ends noting the poetic devices and rhetorical skill of the prophet.⁹⁷ This perspective seems to be the norm for Paul’s interaction with incongruities in the text of Amos, and helps identify his methodology within the framework of rhetorical criticism.

His article on the literary pattern of Amos 1:3-2:3 is a good example of Paul’s approach to handling the text. He begins by describing the problem, surveying the opinions of scholars, and then highlights a literary feature of the text that solves the problem. Paul demonstrates his ability to dialogue with the historical context of the text, but his solutions to difficulties generally involve attention to rhetorical features within the text. For instance,

It is the main point of this paper to demonstrate that any other ordering is simply out of the question because of an internal *literary* order which weaves the various units into a coherent whole.⁹⁸

Paul closes his article with both a conclusion and a perspective shared by this thesis:

. . . whether one explains such a sequential concatenous pattern as being comprised of originally independent units (of varying dates) welded together by Amos or by a later editor, or as a single literary composite, the process of internal associative reasoning provides the key to its final interrelationship.⁹⁹

In a later article Paul returns to the authenticity of the OAN, offering “additional *literary criteria* in order to demonstrate the *basic unity* and *originality* of these oracles.”¹⁰⁰ These “additional literary criteria” take the form of historical

⁹⁵ Paul, *Amos*, 24.

⁹⁶ Paul, *Amos*, 24-27.

⁹⁷ Paul, *Amos*, 27.

⁹⁸ Shalom M. Paul, “Amos 1:3-2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 400-401, italics original.

⁹⁹ Paul, “Amos 1:3-2:3,” 403.

¹⁰⁰ Shalom M. Paul, “A Literary Reinvestigation of the Oracles Against the Nations of Amos,” in *De la Tôrah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut catholique de Paris, octobre 1979* (ed. J. Doré, P. Grelot, and M. Carrez; Paris: Desclée, 1981), 189, italics mine. This sounds very similar to another article in which he states, “The purpose of this study is to highlight the *literary artistry* of this unit, in addition to commenting on pertinent lexical and contextual matters.” Shalom M. Paul, “Amos 3:3-8: The Irresistible Sequence of Cause and Effect,” in *Hebrew Annual Review. Volume 7. 1983*.

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observations,¹⁰¹ reflection on style,¹⁰² and what seems to be a predisposition towards Amosean authorship or authenticity.¹⁰³

Paul utilizes multiple tools in his analysis of the text of Amos. He is adept at using cognate languages to solve difficulties in interpretation of the Hebrew text of the book of Amos. His comments on texts which are frequently emended by commentators typically involve Paul's survey of secondary material, analysis of scholarly opinion, examination of cognate terms and/or examination of Hebrew grammar, frequently arriving at a solution without recourse to emendation or proposing redaction.¹⁰⁴

While Paul's methodology is different from that in this thesis with his historical interest, there are still some similarities. For instance, he pays much more attention to small units of text than I do. His commentary devotes very little space to the structure of the book of Amos as a whole.¹⁰⁵ Much more important to Paul is a

Biblical and Other Studies in Honor of Robert Gordis (ed. Reuben Ahroni; Columbus: Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Languages & Literatures, Ohio State University, 1983), 204, italics mine.

¹⁰¹ Paul points out that in the oracle against the Philistines, the common critique against its originality is the absence of mention of Gath, thus the oracle must have been composed after its destruction in 712 BCE. However, Paul points out that Sargon II also destroyed Ekron and Ashdod, making their presence in this oracle odd if the redaction critical argument is used to explain the absence of Gath. Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3," 189-190.

¹⁰² Paul frequently refers back to his previous article on Amos 1:2-2:3 for support concerning the literary style of the OAN. In the latter article he states, ". . . the basic argument itself that if there is so much similar, any variation from the scheme necessarily and obviously reveals a later hand, must be decisively rejected." Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3," 192.

¹⁰³ It is hard to say whether his commitment to Amosean authorship informs his reading of the text or his reading of the text informs his commitment to Amosean authorship. What can be stated is that Paul does not easily bow the knee to theories of redaction, stating clearly that, "there is no reason on chronological or other grounds to deny the authenticity of the passage [Amos 1:6-8] to Amos." Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3," 190.

¹⁰⁴ This is clearly seen in Shalom M. Paul, "Fishing Imagery in Amos 4:2," *JBL* 97 (1978). See also, Shalom M. Paul, "Two Cognate Semitic Terms for Mating and Copulation," *VT* 32 (1982). Paul remarks with regard to Amos 5:9, "There is no compelling reason, therefore, to support any emendation or change here." Paul, *Amos*, 170.

¹⁰⁵ Prior to less than one page of sketching an overview of the book of Amos, Paul states, "The book itself is a composite of independent collections with a well-organized structure arranged according to common literary genres." Paul, *Amos*, 6-7. Andersen and Freedman devote significant space to the topic in their introduction, discussing the "ingredients" of the book, how units come together as a whole, and, in their overview of the contents of the book, they continue to engage the structure and relation of the units within the book as a whole. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos* (AB 24A; London: Doubleday, 1989), 12-18, 23-73. The fact that Paul devotes so little space to the structure of the book of Amos is only significant in light of the fact that redaction critical studies devote significant space to overviews of the book, noting not how the book is structured, but providing examinations of the way units within the book contribute to its final picture and how the book looked at different stages. Paul's belief in Amosean originality makes the absence of extended discussion on the structure of the book as a whole rather perplexing.

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discussion of the literary nature and genre of smaller units of texts. Paul is quick to notice allusions to previous or later material and chiasms and inclusio. His attention to the literary craftsmanship of the text is invaluable. However, this thesis adds to Paul's focus on the small units an examination of how these units come together to form a wholistic unit.

1.8. Paul R. Noble

Paul Noble shows an approach to the book of Amos quite close to my own.¹⁰⁶ He states emphatically that,

. . . every study of a text makes some assumptions about its character; thus even within synchronic and diachronic studies are asking quite different questions they cannot ignore each other, because they are asking their questions of *the same text*.¹⁰⁷

Noble argues for the validity of diachronic approaches in biblical studies but concludes that a synchronic reading is more satisfactory for reading the book of Amos. Thus, in his examination of Amos 7-8, he approaches the text first using a literary approach to the text. He outlines the structure of the text, then devotes his attention to the content, flow and function of the units within Amos 7-8. He then analyzes several historical-critical conclusions regarding the text of Amos 7-8 in light of the literary analysis he just proposed, concluding that a synchronic analysis of the text disproves the foundation upon which diachronic studies are based.

The majority of Noble's articles, however, address the text alone, without engaging the synchronic/diachronic debate. In each instance, Noble proposes a structure of the text in order to correctly discern its meaning.¹⁰⁸ He consistently uses terminology such as "each unit can be fully understood only through relating it to its palistropic counterpart,"¹⁰⁹ and, "the key to understanding these verses is given by their literary structure."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Noble suggests "if the present form of the text arose through a superficial stitching together of disparate documents, it is unlikely that studying the meaning of this passage as a whole would yield significant results." Noble, "Amos and Amaziah," 424.

¹⁰⁷ Noble, "Synchronic and Diachronic," 132, italics original.

¹⁰⁸ Paul R. Noble, "Amos' Absolute 'No'," *VT* 47 (1997): 331. Paul R. Noble, "The Remnant in Amos 3-6: A Prophetic Paradox," *HBT* 19 (1997): 122-123. Paul R. Noble, "Israel Among the Nations," *HBT* 15 (1993): 67-68.

¹⁰⁹ Noble, "Remnant," 122.

¹¹⁰ Noble, "Amos' Absolute 'No'," 331.

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Noble's methodology is not exclusively synchronic however. In his examination of the literary structure of the book of Amos he begins examining the text of Amos 3:9-6:14, establishing the units within this text and noting parallels between units and interplay of themes.¹¹¹ Once he has established the text, units and functions, he notes three textual emendations that he cannot explain through recourse to the text alone. At this point he turns to a slightly diachronic approach to see if a solution can be found.¹¹² However, he does not use diachronic methods nearly as much as he uses a synchronic approach. It seems as if Noble identifies texts that cause a problem for his structure and thematic analysis and turns to alternative means of rectifying the problem. In the case of Amos 4:13, this means deletion. In the case of Amos 5:8-9 and 6:2 it simply involves transposing the verse(s) to a later point in the text.¹¹³ This illustrates Noble's approach quite succinctly. He approaches the text first, attempting to identify structure, form, function and meaning. Only when the text itself cannot supply the answers does he resort to diachronic approaches to answer the question. While Noble seems to have a preference for synchronic/literary methods and how they answer textual infelicities, he is very clear that synchronic and diachronic studies cannot ignore each other¹¹⁴ and that priority can be given to neither approach.¹¹⁵

I have learned a lot from Paul Noble, however, his approach is not without difficulties. To begin with, he divides the book of Amos into 1:2-3:8; 3:9-6:14; and 7:1-9:15.¹¹⁶ This is in part due to my second criticism; his chiastic ordering of the text within Amos 3:9-6:14. Should Noble include material prior to Amos 3:9 in the middle section of the book of Amos it would mean that his chiasm would have to include material after Amos 6:14.¹¹⁷ I do not agree with Noble's methodology regarding these conclusions, simply the conclusions themselves. However, he does

¹¹¹ Noble suggests the diversity of views regarding the structure of the book of Amos is due to "insufficient attention" given to the criteria upon which structural delineations are made. Paul R. Noble, "The Literary Structure of Amos: A Thematic Analysis," *JBL* 114 (1995): 209. An example of Noble's own use of what he defines as 'formal criteria' can be seen in Paul R. Noble, "The Function of n'm Yhwh in Amos," *ZAW* 108 (1996).

¹¹² Noble, "Literary Structure," 215.

¹¹³ Noble, "Literary Structure," 215-216.

¹¹⁴ Noble, Amos and Amaziah," 425.

¹¹⁵ Noble, "Synchronic and Diachronic," 142.

¹¹⁶ Noble, "Literary Structure," 210.

¹¹⁷ Noble, "Literary Structure," 217-218.

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make three emendations to the text (deleting Amos 4:13 and moving Amos 5:8-9 and 6:2 to different places in the text).¹¹⁸ These are made because the presence of these verses interferes with the flow of his chiasm. While that is certainly reason enough to devote special attention to the verses in question, I believe Noble sacrifices the text in favor of his chiasm. These issues will be dealt with in more detail at appropriate points in this thesis.

1.9. M. Daniel Carroll R.

M. Daniel Carroll R. has written much on the book of Amos, in both monograph and article form. Aligning his own book with the methodology of Andersen and Freedman, Carroll describes their commentary as utilizing,

. . . not a method that ignores historical settings and influences or that disregards the possible development of the canonical text of Amos. Rather, their textual study is grounded both in the practical admission of disagreements among critics and the arbitrariness of some more traditional approaches, as well as in an appreciation of the literariness of the prophetic piece.¹¹⁹

Carroll describes his methodology as “poetics,”¹²⁰ which,

. . . is committed to studying the biblical texts as literature according to literary principles. In actual practice, poetics observes not only structural markers and rhetorical devices, but also (and here it moves beyond rhetorical criticism) analyzes, for example, characterization and point of view.¹²¹

It would be remiss, however, to mention Carroll’s works without noting his affinity for the Latin-American context. This dialogue between the book of Amos and the Latin-American context is of at least minor import in four of Carroll’s works.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Noble, “Literary Structure,” 215.

¹¹⁹ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 152.

¹²⁰ House says Carroll’s “poetics” sounds very much like formalism. House, *Amos and Literary Criticism*, 180.

¹²¹ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 154. Carroll notes that poetics is associated with scholars such as Robert Alter, Adele Berlin, Meir Sternberg and Harold Fisch.

¹²² Carroll R., *Contexts*. Mark Daniel Carroll R., “Reflecting on War and Utopia in the Book of Amos: The Relevance of a Literary Reading of the Prophetic Text for Central America,” in *Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 200; ed. Mark Daniel Carroll R., David J. A. Clines, and G. Henton Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). Mark Daniel Carroll R., “God and His People in the Nations’ History: A Contextualised Reading of Amos 1-2,” *TynBul* 47 (1996). Mark Daniel Carroll R., “Seeking the Virtues Among the Prophets: The Book of Amos as a Test Case,” *Ex Auditu* 17 (2001). In another article, Carroll describes how we read the text, noting, “We bring to the biblical text our own values and judgments and combine these with our trawling of texts, in order to arrive at something approximating to an intelligent interpretation of the text. It cannot be otherwise. Ideally we attempt a ‘fusion of horizons’. That is, we allow for both the horizon of the text and our own horizon

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However, rather than attempt to reconstruct the history of the text or the system against which the prophets decried, Carroll pays primary attention to the “text as text.”¹²³ He criticizes works that focus primarily on shape, adding that attention must also focus on vocabulary, style and structure.¹²⁴ The text of Amos 3-6 is examined with an eye to discover how these elements communicate the world of the text. Once Carroll determines how the prophetic text functions in its own context, he turns to examining how it can function in the Latin-American context.

Carroll approaches the text in a similar manner to what is found in this thesis. While his works frequently have a background question relating to ethics, Carroll is honest in his attention to the text, mentioning possible interpretations of culture or setting while clarifying what can and cannot be explicitly drawn from the text.¹²⁵

With regard to his handling of Amos 3-6, Carroll divides the text into Amos 3:1-4:3; 4:4-13; 5:1-6:14,¹²⁶ with further differences including reading 5:18-27 and 6:1-14 as chiasms.¹²⁷ Criticism of his structure of the text will be found at the appropriate place in this thesis. While he finds more evidence or possibility of syncretism than this thesis allows,¹²⁸ Carroll does acknowledge that the text condemns oppression of the powerless,¹²⁹ that popular religious zeal does not

to come together to constitute the interpretation. Hence, in best reader-response terms we recognize where we are located in our own world and allow those values to shape how we read texts.” Mark Daniel Carroll R., “Is Humour Also Among the Prophets?,” in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 92; ed. Yehuda T. Radday and Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 188-189.

¹²³ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 311.

¹²⁴ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 178.

¹²⁵ For instance, he notes that the specifics such as location and nature of ‘every altar’ in Amos 2:8 cannot be defined, though the situation which allowed the actions of Israel’s OAN cannot be interpreted as anything other than oppression of the powerless. Mark Daniel Carroll R., “‘For So You Love to Do’: Probing Popular Religion in the Book of Amos,” in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions From the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 299; ed. Mark Daniel Carroll R.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 174.

¹²⁶ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 181-273. Carroll divides the book into Amos 1:2-2:16; 3:1-6:14 and 7:1-9:15. Mark Daniel Carroll R., “Amos,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 691.

¹²⁷ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 241, 254.

¹²⁸ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 273.

¹²⁹ Carroll R., “So You Love,” 182.

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compensate for social atrocities,¹³⁰ and that judgment will come against every segment of society.¹³¹

1.10. Paul R. House

Paul House suggests that literary criticism is “particularly able to demonstrate the unity of single books” as well as for “exploring the possible areas of unity in groups of books” such as the prophets.¹³² In addition to several articles he has two monographs of his own to demonstrate this ability; *The Unity of the Twelve* demonstrates his methodology applied to a group of books, and *Zephaniah – A Prophetic Drama* demonstrates his methodology applied to a single book.

House is also quite open and precise about the literary methodology he uses. Both his *Zephaniah* commentary and his monograph on the Book of the Twelve feature extended surveys of methods employed in biblical studies, express dissatisfaction with the ability of historical-critical methods to treat a text as a whole, then survey literary methods to show where biblical studies should turn.¹³³ He is a strong advocate for formalistic methodology. He demonstrates a formalistic approach in his treatment of *Zephaniah*,¹³⁴ *Jeremiah*¹³⁵ and the Book of the Twelve,¹³⁶ and commends its use and potential when contemplating the future of biblical studies, suggesting it “offers the best literary methodology for Old Testament studies.”¹³⁷

According to House,

Formalistic analyses normally begin with a close reading of the text in question. Such artistic aspects as themes, motifs, plots, characterization, setting, imagery and point of view are scrutinized so what the text says and how it says it can emerge. Once the individual parts have been examined, the whole piece is then better understood. Every creative work is a whole made up of parts, but that wholeness must be kept primary lest the overarching beauty of a text disappear.

¹³⁰ Carroll R., “So You Love,” 182.

¹³¹ Carroll R., “So You Love,” 178, 182.

¹³² Paul R. House, *Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup 97; Sheffield: Almond, 1990), 29.

¹³³ House, *Unity*, 9-30. Paul R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* (JSOTSup 69; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 10-17.

¹³⁴ House, *Zephaniah*.

¹³⁵ Paul R. House, “Plot, Prophecy and Jeremiah,” *JETS* 36 (1993):297-306.

¹³⁶ House, *Unity*.

¹³⁷ House “Amos and Literary Criticism,” 92, 177.

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At no time should the formalistic close reading cause the disintegration of the literature it seeks to illuminate. Thus, formalism dissects texts in order to achieve a unified picture of those texts.¹³⁸

Formalism as practiced by House is slightly different than the formalism found in American literary studies referred to as the New Criticism.¹³⁹ For a start, New Critics “believe each work exists as a significant entity regardless of how it relates to other literature.”¹⁴⁰ This means genre analyses is largely ignored in New Criticism. House, in contrast, recognizes the small step it takes to move from formalism, with its attentiveness to the form and substance of a literary work, to comparing these elements to other literary works, thus comparing generic elements.¹⁴¹

House himself utilizes a rather systematic approach in his treatment of the text. In *Unity of the Twelve*, he examines the book through genre, structure, plot, characterization, and point of view.¹⁴² His *Zephaniah* work begins with an examination of genre criticism, then engages a close reading of the text, and closes with a blending of the two, showing how the elements surveyed in his close reading indicate what genre *Zephaniah* can be classified as. House’s close reading involves an examination of the structure, plot, characterization, themes, point of view, and time sequence. The similarity between the elements of House’s close reading in *Zephaniah* and his examination of the Book of the Twelve can likely be explained in a slight difference in terminology. House uses “formalism” and “close reading” almost indistinguishable, even using the term “formalistic close reading.”¹⁴³ This is perhaps the best way to describe House’s method, and is a blending of formalism, as described above, with two presuppositions described below.

In both *Unity of the Twelve* and *Zephaniah – A Prophetic Drama*, House clearly states two presuppositions; “the text itself is valuable aside from its historical

¹³⁸ House, *Unity*, 32.

¹³⁹ House also briefly suggests caution when discussing formalism due to different schools and varying methodologies. House, “Rise and Current Status,” 13.

¹⁴⁰ House, *Zephaniah*, 27.

¹⁴¹ House, *Zephaniah*, 27.

¹⁴² House defines point of view as “the process of discovering who tells a story, how it is told, how accurately it is told, and with what amount of knowledge and understanding it unfolds.” House, *Unity*, 221.

¹⁴³ House, *Unity*, 32.

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background,” and the text is a unity.¹⁴⁴ First addressing the issue of the unity of the text, House’s method begins with the received text advocated by canon criticism, noting that the important question is not “how the books came to be arranged as they are, but how they are to be understood as they now appear.”¹⁴⁵ However, he does not rely heavily on canon criticism. Instead, he begins with the canonical text and moves quickly into literary methods,¹⁴⁶ suggesting that canonical scholars “often use their findings to get behind the text to the history of the literature,” while literary critics avoid this tendency.¹⁴⁷

This leads to House’s presupposition regarding the text as valuable apart from its historical background. House suggests literary scholars treat the “text as it now exists,” often ignoring matters of authorship, date, redaction or historical setting.¹⁴⁸ House himself does not reject historical-critical contributions. His discussion of the implied author of the Book of the Twelve places the composition of the book in the post-exilic period, so his treatment is not entirely without historical context.¹⁴⁹ However, his work is largely without historical attention due to his belief that when “historical judgments are mixed with literary comments both areas can suffer.”¹⁵⁰ In surveying literary methodologies, House praises James Watts’ commentary on Isaiah, suggesting Watts makes “tremendous contributions to literary works on the prophets,” and demonstrates “unity, theological clarity, and character development” that will hopefully be continued in other work on the prophets.¹⁵¹ Despite this praise, House criticizes Watts for making too many historical statements in what is otherwise a literary-critical analysis, suggesting “It is not really necessary to make declarations about date and redaction when the main focus of a study is to demonstrate the unified nature of Isaiah.”¹⁵² Given the historical-critical conclusion regarding the redaction of the book of Isaiah, this statement is significant in outlining House’s methodology.

¹⁴⁴ House, *Zephaniah*, 20. See also, House, *Unity*, 34.

¹⁴⁵ House, *Unity*, 30.

¹⁴⁶ House, *Unity*, 31.

¹⁴⁷ House, *Unity*, 30-31.

¹⁴⁸ House, *Unity*, 27.

¹⁴⁹ House, *Unity*, 227.

¹⁵⁰ House, *Unity*, 27.

¹⁵¹ House, *Unity*, 27-28. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC 24; Dallas: Word, 1985).

¹⁵² House, *Unity*, 27.

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This perspective is further illustrated in his work on Zephaniah where he virtually ignores historical issues. Discussing the issue of first and second person speech in Zephaniah, House cites Kapelrud, who argues that the divergence in voices does not necessitate belief in two redactional layers in the text. House avoids engaging the issue of redaction in the text and instead engages Kapelrud over the issue of whether the difference in voice is significant for understanding the structure of the book.¹⁵³ Similarly, after identifying Zephaniah as a prophetic drama, House admits that problems about date or staging may arise when the text is approached through historical studies. These issues, however, are brushed aside as irrelevant by House, since what is important is that “the written, literary, fixed, canonical text of Zephaniah reflects classical dramatic principles, and that it is only from the text that generic classification can be made.”¹⁵⁴

However, House is not entirely opposed to diachronic methods or their contribution to understanding the world behind the text. In his *Old Testament Theology* he says “it is appropriate to note the individual prophecies’ historical setting, structural details and thematic emphases” when considering the canonical whole of the Book of the Twelve.¹⁵⁵ Thus, historical placement plays a role, albeit a small one, in House’s Old Testament theology. With regard to the book of Amos, he briefly describes the prophet as a contemporary of Hosea, identifies the time of his prophecy as about 760 B.C., and identifies him as a prophet to the northern kingdom three to four decades before the Assyrian conquest.¹⁵⁶

This is something he ignores in *The Unity of the Twelve*. However, the reason for this is likely because his treatment of the twelve in his Old Testament theology is intended to describe God as one who keeps his promises. In that work House presents the Book of the Twelve as composed of twelve individual books written over a period of three hundred years which together support and expand the theological views of the major prophets, as well as demonstrate fulfilment of some of their earlier prophecies.¹⁵⁷ In *Unity of the Twelve* House does not discard historical-critical conclusions. Instead, since his goal is demonstrating the literary unity of the

¹⁵³ House, *Zephaniah*, 57.

¹⁵⁴ House, *Zephaniah*, 106.

¹⁵⁵ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 347.

¹⁵⁶ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 358.

¹⁵⁷ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 347

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Twelve as they exist canonically, House only rarely engages historical issues, and then to point out the inadequacy of the approach in order to demonstrate the usefulness of his own.¹⁵⁸

One difference between the methodology of House and that found in this thesis is in regard to House's presupposition that the text is a unity. House begins stating this presupposition, and then argues that unity can be seen in literary themes and elements stretching through the text. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the text functions as a literary unity. While House assumes the unity of the text and moves from there into an investigation of broad literary themes and elements that testify to that unity, this thesis works methodically through the text, verse by verse, highlighting literary themes and elements as they occur. Further, this thesis devotes considerably more time to interacting with diachronic conclusions, especially with regard to structure of the text. House works with larger units of text (the Book of the Twelve and the book of Zephaniah) whereas this thesis treats only one section of the book of Amos. Still, to my knowledge, House's formalistic close reading is the most similar treatment of the text to that found in this thesis.

1.11. Conclusion to History of Research

The last 100 years have seen biblical studies practically dominated by diachronic/historical methodologies. The above chapter has surveyed the works of several influential scholars writing on the book of Amos. The first half of the chapter surveyed those who employ a diachronic methodology in their approach to the book. Wolff's five stages of development have certainly attained a significant level of acceptance within critical circles. However, it is still obvious that there is a great deal of disagreement regarding which texts belong to which level of redaction, how much of the text can be attributed to the prophet Amos, and most of all, how the book as a whole functions structurally and thematically. These areas of disagreement are closely related.

While diachronic scholars recognize units of text which appear to them to be incongruous and move on from this point, the fact that they themselves recognize that there is a degree of hypothesizing in their approach makes their conclusions regarding the structure and theology of the text questionable as well. While

¹⁵⁸ This can easily be seen in his treatment of the canonical ordering of the Twelve, for which there exists no chronological explanation. House, *Unity*, 63-67.

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diachronic studies offer valuable conclusions and are necessary to our understanding of the text, this approach does warrant caution. Bright is right to question whether we have the tools at our disposal to propose a process to which we have no direct access.¹⁵⁹ Methods which attempt to recreate the original text or discover the stages of redaction or oral history of an ancient text will always be hypotheses, albeit some more convincing than others.

Within the last 40 years there has been a resurgence of literary studies that treat the text as a whole. Nevertheless, in research that has been done in synchronic studies, a divergence with regard to the structure of the book as well as the function and meaning of some of its units still exists. Given the various views in this area, it is clear that yet another contribution towards a wholistic reading of the text is warranted.

Addressing the text as a literary unit avoids hypothesizing about textual layers and the pre-history of the text. However, as the survey above has shown, synchronic studies of the book of Amos are also not unanimously aligned in how they view the text. Some rely on emendations more than others and each seems to have a slightly different outline of the text, which then affects their understanding of the function and message of the book as a whole. As has been mentioned above, scholars utilizing a synchronic methodology approach the text in a manner quite similar to that found in this thesis. Areas of disagreement primarily center on the correct structure of the text, which in turn highlights recurring themes and establishes the overall message and meaning of the text as it now stands.

As has been shown above, diachronic studies involve a significant amount of hypothesizing about the prehistory of the text and often focus on the theology and/or message of a reconstructed text and the reasons the text was redacted. It also is much more comfortable emending or deleting words and phrases and rearranging the text. The result of this has been an unfortunate fragmentation of the text.

Synchronic approaches read the text as a unity as I do in my own thesis. However, there still exists much disagreement within synchronic studies regarding the structure of the book of Amos. This leads to a less satisfactory understanding of the way units work together towards presenting the message of the book. Incorrectly

¹⁵⁹ Bright, "New View," 357.

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understanding the structure of Amos 3-6 lessens the impact of the author's literary craftsmanship and creates difficulties in correctly identifying the message of the text.

While my own work seeks to show the legitimacy of a synchronic approach to the book of Amos, it also serves as a corrective to other synchronic studies. I present important new insights that acknowledge the way the text utilizes themes, repetition, chiasm, inclusio, and other rhetorical devices to display the overall structure of Amos 3-6. This attention to structure contributes to a better understanding of the meaning and message of the text unit of Amos 3-6.

CHAPTER 2: OPPRESSION AND JUDGMENT (AMOS 3:1-15)

In this chapter I will begin to explain how Amos 3-6 can be read as a unity. I will first establish that the book of Amos is composed of three units; Amos 1-2, 3-6, and 7-9. I will then demonstrate how Amos 3-6 is separated into three units of Amos 3:1-5; 4:1-13 and 5:1-6:14. This structure of the book is based primarily on the content of the text and formulaic phrases that work as delimiters.

Once the structure of Amos 3-6 is ascertained I will show how Amos 3:1-15 should be understood structurally. I will examine the occurrences of *שמע* in the chapter, identify speakers and addressees and investigate the wider context to establish that Amos 3 is composed of five smaller units; Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-10, 11-12 and 13-15.

Establishing the structure of Amos 3 will allow an effective and fluid exegesis of the chapter and will reveal the meaning of the text, craftsmanship of its composition and themes and parallels that run throughout the book, showing that the chapter must be understood to function as a whole, yet also as part of a unified text.

2.1. Amos 3-6: Structural Observations

In the following section I will establish the primary divisions of the text with which I will be working for the rest of the thesis. I will first examine types of speech and material in the book to provide an initial division of the book of Amos into three large sections of Amos 1-2; 3-6 and 7-9. I will then examine the root *שמע* and, more importantly, the imperative *שמעו* for its delimiting character in Amos 3-6 which forms the basis for my division of Amos 3-6 into the three units of Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13 and 5-6.

The three main types of material in the book of Amos are: 1) the OAN of 1:3-2:16; 2) the sayings of the prophet (3:1-6:14; 8:4-14), and 3) the five visions accounts (7:1-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-6).¹⁶⁰ In addition to this, commentators notice the third-

¹⁶⁰ Wolff is very nuanced in his presentation of the language of the book of Amos, suggesting there are three clearly distinguishable types of speech in the book: messenger formula (*die Botenformel*), free witness speech (*die freie Zeugenrede*), and vision reports (*die Visionsberichte*). Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 109-114.

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person account of Amos' encounter with Amaziah (7:10-17), the title of the book (1:1), and what appears to be hymnic poetry (1.2; 4.13; 5.8-9; 8:8; 9.5-6).¹⁶¹

It is necessary at the beginning to present an initial overview of the book, from which an analysis of the structure can begin. The units of material above, as well as widespread scholarly opinion, suggest that, at the very least, Amos may be divided into three main units:¹⁶²

1. Oracles Against the Nations (Amos 1-2)
2. First Person Sayings of the Prophet (Amos 3-6)
3. Visions of the Prophet (Amos 7-9)

In my reading I divide Amos 3-6 into three smaller units of Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-6:14.¹⁶³ These divisions are based on the literary structure of the text

¹⁶¹ For commentators' descriptions on forms used in the book of Amos see: Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 12-18. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 285-286. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 109-121. Mays, *Amos*, 12. See also, Katharine J. Dell, "The Misuse of Forms in Amos," *VT* 45 (1995): 53-59.

¹⁶² The discussion concerning the book's structure and text units is by no means unified. Carroll lists almost four pages of works devoted to the composition, structure and literary style of Amos and this only covers works published between 1995 and 2000. Mark Daniel Carroll R., *Amos - The Prophet & His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 114-118. Bramer also quickly outlines the different structural approaches to the book of Amos with his final conclusion being that divisions of Amos are not immediately evident. Stephen J. Bramer, "Analysis of the Structure of Amos," *BSac* 156 (1999).

Jeremias, Hammershaimb, Möller and Soggin all agree on some form of the threefold division of the book of Amos into chapters 1-2, 3-6, and 7-9. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, XIX-XX. Erling Hammershaimb, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (trans. John Sturdy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 13. Karl Möller, "'Hear This Word Against You': A Fresh Look at the Arrangement and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Book of Amos," *VT* 50 (2000): 500. J. Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos: A Translation and Commentary* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1987).

Divergent voices can be found in Noble, "Literary Structure," 209-210. He points out many divergences, then argues for another structure himself (Amos 1:2-3:8; 3:9-6:14; 7:1-9:15). Limburg divides the book into five sections (1:1-2; 1:3-2:16; 3:1-6:14; 7:1-8:3; 8:4-9:15). James Limburg, *Hosea-Micah* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 79-81. Andersen and Freedman divide the book into five sections as well, though they are content to call it three main sections with a heading and a conclusion (1:1-2; 1:3-4:13; 5:1-6:17; 7:1-9:6; 9:7-15). Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 25-26. Wal's findings are radically different from those proposed in this paper. Adri van der Wal, "The Structure of Amos," *JSOT* (1983): 233.

¹⁶³ As demonstrated in footnote 162, there is no consensus concerning the structure of the book of Amos. However, even if accepting chapters 3-6 of Amos are a unit, unity between scholars still does not exist. Gordis recognizes Amos 3:1; 4:1; and 5:1 as beginning three addresses but sees the third consisting only of Amos 5:1-6. Amos 5:7-6:14 are divided into a section consisting of three "woes," a division this thesis accepts, though as a subdivision within the unit of Amos 5:1-6:14. Robert Gordis, "The Composition and Structure of Amos," in *Poets, Prophets & Sages: Essays in Biblical Interpretation* (4; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 217. Paul follows the same structure, though proposing only two "woes." Paul, *Amos*, 6-7. Though his overall approach is discussed elsewhere, this thesis agrees with Limburgh that within the unit of Amos 3-6, the three

and the rhetorical features therein. This middle section of the book of Amos also illuminates and develops many key themes of the book, and these are woven into the individual units in such a way as to necessitate their structural cohesion as here defined.

In seeking to determine whether the book of Amos can function as a unified whole I have spent some time trying to identify the overall structure of the book. Many scholars ignore what I believe to be important structural markers in favour of, among other things, chiasm or *inclusio*,¹⁶⁴ numerical patterns,¹⁶⁵ or thematic content.¹⁶⁶ Most scholars do divide the book into Amos 1-2; 3-6 and 7-9,¹⁶⁷ and most also agree with de Waard's chiastic structure of Amos 5:1-17,¹⁶⁸ though the odd dissenter can always be found.¹⁶⁹

However, even though most scholars recognize Amos 3-6 as a unit, there is little agreement as to how these three chapters should be further subdivided.¹⁷⁰ It is for this reason that an examination of the use of שמעו in the book of Amos is helpful in delimiting the structure of the book. שמעו is a significant starting place for an

distinct units are 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-6:14. Limburg, "Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos," 217.

¹⁶⁴ R. Bryan Widbin, "Center Structure in the Center Oracles of Amos," in *Go to the Land I Will Show You: Studies in Honor of Dwight W. Young* (ed. Joseph E. Coleson and Victor H. Matthews; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996). Noble, "Literary Structure." Wal, "Structure."

¹⁶⁵ Loren F. Bliese, "The Key Word "Name" and Patterns with 26 in the Structure of Amos," *BT* 54 (2003). Limburg, "Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos."

¹⁶⁶ Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos: 3:1- 4:13," *VT* 21 (1971). Walter Brueggemann, "Amos IV 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship," *VT* 15 (1965).

¹⁶⁷ House notes this general consensus among scholars though he notes the division as Amos 1-2; 3-6; 7:1-9:10; and 9:11-15. House, "Amos and Literary Criticism," 181.

¹⁶⁸ Jan de Waard, "The Chiastic Structure of Amos V 1-17," *VT* 27 (1977).

¹⁶⁹ Gordis and Mays wrote on the structure before the publication of de Waard's article so their lack of agreement can hardly be called dissent. Gordis, "Composition and Structure." Mays, *Amos*. Noble's grouping of 3:1-8 with chapters 1-2 in order to justify his chiasm of 3:9-6:14 is, however, very guilty in this respect. Noble, "Literary Structure," 210. In defence of his chiasm Noble must engage all those who divide the text differently. He accounts for the diversity of views of the structure of Amos to two factors: 1) "Formal criteria, such as introductory and closing formulas, have been given much greater prominence than they merit," and 2) "Literary criteria, such as palistrophic structuring and *inclusios*, have often been employed too loosely and impressionistically." Noble, "Literary Structure," 209.

¹⁷⁰ Gordis recognizes Amos 3:1; 4:1; and 5:1 as beginning three addresses but sees the third consisting only of Amos 5:1-6. Amos 5:7-6:14 are divided into a section consisting of three "woes," a division this thesis accepts, though as a subdivision within the unit of Amos 5:1-6:14. Gordis, "Composition and Structure," 217. Though his final conclusions are not completely endorsed, this paper agrees with Limburg that within the unit of Amos 3-6, the three distinct units are 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-6:14. Limburg, "Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos," 217.

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examination of structural delimiters in Amos 3-6 because it is the opening imperative in the new section of Amos 3-6 and it occurs regularly and prominently throughout Amos 3-6.

The imperative שמעו occurs eight times (Amos 3:1, 9, 13; 4:1, 5; 5:1; 7:16; 8:4) out of the root's ten total occurrences in the book of Amos (3:1, 9, 13; 4:1, 5; 5:1, 23; 7:16; 8:4, 11). Of the ten occurrences, five are *qal* imperative masculine plural verbs (Amos 3:1, 13; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4), two are *hiphil* imperative masculine plural (Amos 3:9; 4:5), one is a *qal* imperfect 1st common singular (Amos 5:23), one is *qal* imperative masculine singular (Amos 7:16) and one is a *qal* infinitive construct (Amos 8:11). Only two are not imperatives (Amos 5:23; 8:11), and only two of the imperatives are not *qal* (Amos 3:9; 4:5). It will be helpful to begin an examination of שמעו within these groupings.

The most common form of שמעו in the book of Amos is the *qal* imperative masculine plural (Amos 3:1, 13; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4). Of these occurrences, Amos 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 all feature a slight variation of the phrase שמעו את־הדבר הזה.¹⁷¹ In each of these verses, the text opens with שמעו rather than prefacing the word of Yahweh with something like the ועתה seen in Amos 7:16. These three texts will be examined first before returning to the remaining occurrences. However another phenomenon within the book of Amos must first be examined.

The outline of the book of Amos proposed in this thesis consists of three major units: Amos 1-2, 3-6 and 7-9. Each of these units has its own formulaic phrase that is repeated in various places.¹⁷² In Amos 1-2, each oracle begins with the phrase, “Thus said Yahweh, ‘For three transgressions of *X* and for four, I will not turn/revoke it,’” (כה אמר יהוה על־שלשה פשעי ____ ועל־ארבעה לא אשיבנו). While the

¹⁷¹ Amos 5:1 omits the direct object marker את. This is the only variation within this set phrase though difference in the material following it will be discussed below.

¹⁷² Möller notes what he calls “introductory markers,” “chain markers,” and “closing markers.” Karl Möller, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos* (JSOTSup 372; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 102. His findings are similar to my own in that he recognizes the שמעו את־הדבר הזה of Amos 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 and the שמעו־זאת of Amos 8:4 as delimiters, as well as the כה הראני אדני יהוה והנה of Amos 7:1-8:3 and the כה הראני והנה in Amos 9:3. Instead of the full כה אמר יהוה על־שלשה פשעי ____ ועל־ארבעה לא אשיבנו in Amos 1-2, he recognizes only כה הראני והנה as a marker. Likewise, he recognizes the two occurrences of הוי as markers but does not recognize the נשבע, thus Amos 6 contains two woe oracles rather than two woe oracles and an oath as proposed in this thesis.

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phrase **כה אמר יהוה** is found elsewhere in the book of Amos, this entire phrase which opens each oracle is not used outside of Amos 1-2.

The message of Amos 7-9 is the final destruction of Israel, and this is chiefly illustrated through the five visions of the prophet (Amos 7:1-3, 4-6, 7-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-4). These five visions do not make up the bulk of the text in Amos 7-9 but they do illustrate the point of the book of Amos thus far; that destruction is coming and Yahweh will not turn from it. And like the oracles in Amos 1-2, a formulaic phrase is used in this section of the book of Amos that is not found elsewhere in the book. Visions one, two and four all open with the phrase, “This is what the Lord Yahweh caused me to see, behold . . .” (**כה הראני יהוה והנה**). The third vision varies slightly in its formula by saying, “This is what he caused me to see, behold . . .” (**כה הראני** (והנה)).

The introduction of the visions in a formulaic manner is expected, almost necessary, based on the formulaic use of **שמעו את־הדבר הזה** in Amos 3-6 and **כה אמר** **כה הראני אדני יהוה** in Amos 1-2. The **כה הראני אדני יהוה** which begins the first two visions appears to follow in the pattern established by these previous formulas. This phrase is not repeated verbatim in each of the five visions, however the phrase is only changed in the third vision (Amos 7:7), which removes the divine name, and in the fifth, which is further shortened.¹⁷³ There is a rationale for this divergence.

The first two visions begin formulaically. When the third vision is recounted it begins merely **כה הראני**. But by this point these two words already conjure the image of **אדני יהוה** showing the Amos vision as in the previous two accounts. Additionally, the vision which the unidentified, though obviously recognizable, third party showed Amos involved **אדני** standing on a wall. It cannot be argued that the divine name was omitted because it featured in the vision itself since the second vision features **אדני יהוה** in the formulaic opening as well as in the vision itself. There is, however, a rhetorical manner in which to explain this difference.

The return to the formulaic opening in the fourth vision clues us in to the explanation. The fourth vision follows Amos 7:10-17, the interrupting narrative

¹⁷³ Watts suggests that there is a common formula behind all five visions of Amos. Watts, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos*, 30. This formula consists of 1) the introduction, which he says is identical in four and similar in the fifth vision, 2) the body, which contains what is seen, heard and meant in the visions, and 3) a final section which indicates “the prophet’s role and God’s attitude which remains.”

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about Amos' encounter with Amaziah, thus the full formulaic opening is necessary to pull the audience back to where they were before the interjection.¹⁷⁴ The third vision followed two previous visions which both opened with the formulaic **כה הראני אדני יהוה**. By starting slightly differently vision three differentiates itself from the first two visions, immediately notifying the reader that this vision is something new, while remaining close enough to the formula to still seem formulaic as well as leave no doubt that Yahweh is the author of the vision. However, after the interrupting narrative about Amos and Amaziah, the full formulaic opening was necessary in order to regain the full attention of the audience and to draw them back into the narrative account of his visions.

One more observation merits attention. When Yahweh asks Amos what he has seen in the second vision (Amos 8:2), the verb is a *qal* imperfect 3ms by itself. However, in the third vision this same verb is followed by **יהוה** as the subject and **אלי** to identify Amos as the dative object, both of which are absent in the fourth vision. This means that though the formulaic opening in the third vision is less "clear" (i.e., characters are not identified), the recounting of Yahweh's question is clearer. In addition, in both visions Amos responds with a brief answer of what he saw and then Yahweh "interprets" the vision. However, in the third vision, **אדני** interprets the vision while in the fourth vision **יהוה** interprets it. The fact that the formulaic opening is not the same in the third vision when compared to the other three seems to indicate this is an example of variations which exist within patterns in the book of Amos.¹⁷⁵

The fifth vision is significantly different from the previous four. Whereas the previous visions featured the full formulaic **כה הראני אדני יהוה**, Amos 9:1 opens simply with "I saw the Lord . . ." (**ראיתי את־אדני**). Once again, this deviation is for stylistic purposes. The progression from visions one and two to visions three and four illustrates Yahweh's movement from foretelling judgment that he is later talked out of to foretelling judgment that will not be revoked.

Vision five comes very near the end of the book of Amos. In this vision, the prophet sees Yahweh beginning to carry out the judgment he has been promising not just from the beginning of the visions but from the beginning of the book. Use of the

¹⁷⁴ For more on interjections by the prophet in the book of Amos see 2.4. Amos 3:3-8: The Prophet's Interjection.

¹⁷⁵ See 3.4. Amos 4:6-11: Israel Would not Return to Yahweh for more on variation within patterns in the book of Amos.

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formulaic כה הראני אדני יהוה would indicate Yahweh was again showing the prophet a vision of the future. However this shortened ראייתי indicates the time for words is past.

The root word in all four visions is ראה. In visions one through four it is a *hiphil* perfect third masculine singular with a first common suffix. In vision five it is a *qal* perfect first common singular. ראה occurs nine times in the book of Amos (Amos 3:9; 6:2; 7:2, 4, 7, 8; 8:1, 2; 9:1) and only two of these instances are outside of the visions of the prophet. In Amos 3:9, Ashdod and Egypt are commanded to look at the tumults within Samaria. In Amos 6:2, the citizens of Zion and Samaria were commanded to look at other nations and compare themselves with them. Outside of these two instances where the verb is plural and the subject is a nation(s), ראה is in the context of a vision of the prophet. When it occurs in Amos 9:1, though the opening vision formula is abbreviated, it is obviously still a vision. However, the abbreviated formula seems to indicate the final progression of judgment. The first two visions involved dialogue between Yahweh and the prophet. In the second two visions, though there is dialogue, part of that dialogue involves Yahweh promising not to turn away from judgment. Finally, the fifth vision begins rather abruptly, almost as if the prophet stumbled upon the sight of Yahweh carrying out his judgment. There is no introduction to the vision, no dialogue between Yahweh and the prophet, and there is no stopping the judgment the prophet observes. Judgment is here. Thus the deviation in the formula within the visions, especially in vision five, can easily be explained once one has the flow of the text in mind.

Having examined the formulas within the first and last units of the book of Amos it is now time to examine the שמעו את-הדבר הזה formula in Amos 3-6.¹⁷⁶ The opening words of Amos 3 begin with this phrase.¹⁷⁷ In and of itself, this does not constitute a formula, much less a demarcation identifier. However, were כה אמר יהוה ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו or כה הראני אדני יהוה or על-שלשה פשעי ____ to appear merely once in each of their respective units neither would they be labelled formulaic or

¹⁷⁶ This discussion will focus primarily on the formula. Discussions over the context of each occurrence as well as some specific criticisms of my division of the text will take place in the Structural Observations sections of the appropriate chapter of this thesis.

¹⁷⁷ Useful for this discussion is the fact that Amos 3:1 is the first occasion of the formula, and also the only occasion where the audience is commanded to hear the word “which Yahweh spoke.” From this point on שמעו את-הדבר הזה is used to introduce Yahweh’s word, but he is not named, nor does he need to be. This identification of Yahweh as the speaker in the first vision is reminiscent of the absence of that identification in vision three discussed above.

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demarcation identifiers. Repetition is a key element in formulaic patterns, and this at key places in order to label the formula as a structural demarcator. Both are true with the שמעו את־הדבר הזה formula in Amos 3-6.

The only variation within this formula is the removal of the direct object marker את in Amos 5:1, which does not in any way obscure or cast doubt on the phrase as formulaic. In addition, in each occurrence of the phrase it comes at a breaking point in the text and is intricately tied to the unit that follows, as will be shown below in the case of Amos 3:1, 13-15 and 5:1, 16-17.

Furthermore, this identification of the three units comprising Amos 3-6 does not rest entirely upon the opening word or words of each unit. While the four first person sayings of Amos (Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-6:14; 8:4-14) all begin with the imperative שמעו, these texts have a further unifying characteristic. If the opening portions of these sayings are examined next to one another, three common elements can be seen: a call to attention, the identification of the addressee(s), and a further clarification of the identity or reason for judgment. Only after these elements does the word or oracle of Yahweh follow. This is illustrated most clearly in Amos 3:1-2. After 1) the call to attention (שמעו את־הדבר הזה), 2) the audience is identified as בני ישראל and 3) the audience is further clarified as “the whole family which [Yahweh] brought up from Egypt.” Finally, 4) the actual word from Yahweh follows. Since Amos 3:2a is simply a repetition of 3:1b, the word of Yahweh begins with על־כן in Amos 3:2c.

This pattern occurs also in Amos 4. After 1) the call to attention (שמעו הדבר הזה), 2) the audience is identified as the “cows of Bashan which are on Mt. Samaria,” and 3) the audience is further clarified as “those oppressing the weak, those crushing the needy, those saying to their lords/husbands ‘Bring and we will drink.’” Finally, 4) the actual word of Yahweh begins with נשבע in Amos 4:2.¹⁷⁸ In Amos 5, after 1)

In examining prophetic genres and speech, Tucker sees virtually the same structure to Amos 4:1-3 that I have proposed here. Gene M. Tucker, “Prophetic Speech,” *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 40. Verse one is called an elaborated call to attention and is outlined below. Tucker also sees the word of Yahweh begin in Amos 4:2.

- A) The call itself (“Hear this word”)
- B) Addressees (“cows of Bashan”)
- C) Designation of addressees
 - 1. By location (“who are in the mountain of Samaria”)
 - 2. By activity: accusations as reasons for punishment
 - a. Their injustice against the poor and needy
 - b. Their arrogance, demonstrated by a citation of their words

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the call to attention (שמעו את־הדבר הזה), 2) the audience is identified as בית ישראל and 3) the audience is further clarified as בתולת ישראל. Finally, 4) the actual word is introduced with כי כה אמר אדני in Amos 5:3.

With three very definite units within the book of Amos (Amos 1-2, 3-6, 7-9) and with a very obvious formula in Amos 1-2 and Amos 7-9, it is obvious that the שמעו את־הדבר הזה formula of Amos 3-6 should also be seen as a structural delimiter dividing this unit into Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13 and 5:1-6:14.¹⁷⁹

Returning now to the discussion of the occurrences of שמע in the book of Amos, there are two more *qal* imperative masculine plural occurrences to examine; Amos 3:13 and 8:4. These two verses feature the same conjugation of שמע as found in the formulaic phrases in Amos 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 but without the rest of the phrase.

Amos 3 features three out of the ten total occurrences of שמע in the book of Amos and the function of this word within that chapter will be examined in the following section of the thesis.

The occurrence of שמע in Amos 8:4 is closely related to the function of the narrative in 7:10-17 and the prophet's defence of his ministry in Amos 3:3-8.¹⁸⁰ The presence of the narrative in Amos 7:10-17 appears to interrupt the flow of the visions. It may be argued that it would not cause such an interruption were the narrative found between the second and third vision. In this place at least it could perhaps function as the pinnacle of a chiasm. Where it stands, however, it seems to prohibit a balance in the text. Without the narrative, the visions could be seen to progress in an A, A', B, B' structure.

However, a willingness to find meaning in the structure of the book shows that the narrative has an intended function between the third and fourth vision. The narrative operates as an interjection crafted to come to a heightened point in the series of visions and designed to make protest at the third vision futile.¹⁸¹ After the narrative the prophet returns to the fourth visions.

¹⁷⁹ The division of Amos 5-6 will be discussed in 4.1. Amos 5:1-6:14: Structural Observations.

¹⁸⁰ For comments on the function of Amos 3:3-8 see 2.4. Amos 3:3-8: The Prophet's Interjection.

¹⁸¹ Noble notes the narrative gives only so much detail as is necessary before moving on, making historical questions posed to it relatively futile. Though his interpretation of the purpose of the narrative is to justify Yahweh's judgment on political and religious institutions he is correct in noting

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Amos 8:4 functions in a similar manner. The visions of the prophet in Amos 7-9 are both the focus of this unit as well as a rhetorical tool to move the message of the book towards its conclusion. Amos 8:4-14 interrupt visions four and five but in so doing, provides one final explanation for what is about to come. As described above, the description of Israel in verses 4-6 sounds very similar to the descriptions found in the opening of Amos 3, 4 and 5. Likewise, the opening שמעו־זאת is just enough of a reminder of שמעו את־הדבר הזה to make this opening a call to attention. Yahweh's promise to never forget any of Israel's actions in Amos 8:7 comes just after his promise to never again "pass over them" in Amos 7:8 and 8:2. Finally, the foreboding promise that one day Israel would no longer hear the words of Yahweh closes the unit. Effectively, Amos 8:4-14 heightens the suspense built by visions one through four into a crescendo that is vision 5. The שמעו־זאת of Amos 8:4 is a minor structural delimiter that depends upon the major delimiter of שמעו את־הדבר הזה.

And just as the opening of Amos 3, 4 and 5 feature a call to attention, identification and then clarification of the audience and finally a word of Yahweh, Amos 8:4-14 opens in a similar fashion. The call to attention is shortened to שמעו־זאת, and 2) the audience is identified over the rest of 8:4-6 in much the same manner as they are identified in Amos 4:1. Though Amos 8:4-14 does not have what could be considered a further clarification of the audience as in the other three instances, its extended initial identification of the audience does provide an extended description of the audience as do the other three first person sayings. Thus, 4) Yahweh's word is introduced in 8:7 with נשבע just as it is in Amos 4:2.

The two *hiphil* imperatives (Amos 3:9; 4:5) mean "proclaim," and thus function differently than the imperatives commanding the audience to listen. Just as שמעו־זאת depends upon שמעו את־הדבר הזה for its force, so too does Amos 3:9. Its function with the structure of Amos 3 will be examined below. For now it will be sufficient to say that it follows a prophetic interjection and is a minor structural delimiter in Amos 3, thus the force of the formulaic שמעו את־הדבר הזה is at least partially effective in calling the audience back to attention. The *hiphil* imperative in Amos 4:5 carries no function as a delimiter and appears in the middle of a unit.

The two non-imperative forms do not seem to have delimiting functions in the text though their use of שמע is dependent upon the repetition of the word

that the narrative functions for a purpose in this particular location in the text and is not misplaced. Noble, "Amos and Amaziah," 431-432.

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elsewhere in the book of Amos. In Amos 5:23 Yahweh uses the *qal* imperfect to say he will not listen to Israel's music. The *qal* infinitive construct in Amos 8:11 describes the famine Israel will soon feel: a famine where no one *hears* the word of Yahweh. This is a parody on the use of שמע consistent throughout the book of Amos, since all other occurrences of the word introduce a word of Yahweh. The emphasis of this message immediately prior to the fifth vision is significant. Amos is about to tell his final vision, one of total destruction, and he introduces it with the words, "Listen, for one day you may try to hear Yahweh but he will be done speaking to you." Additionally, the sin of Israel is again reiterated with a further "I will certainly never forget any of their deeds" (אם-אשכח לנצח כל-מעשיהם) as a reminder of why the judgment of vision five is coming.

Likewise, the masculine singular *qal* imperative in Amos 7:16 has no delimiting function. It occurs within the narrative of Amos 7:10-17, and while it introduces a word of Yahweh, as do several of the occurrences of שמע in the book of Amos, its context and function are different. The שמע is introduced with ועתה, thus not only does it occur within a narrative, it immediately looks different from the messenger speeches in Amos 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1. And similar to the non-imperative forms just discussed, the function of the שמע in Amos 7:16 depends upon the repetition of שמעו את-הדבר הזה elsewhere in the book, as has been discussed above.

Thus, the formulaic use of שמעו את-הדבר הזה functions as a structural delimiter in Amos 3-6. In addition, at several places within Amos 3-6 and in Amos 8:4, the text capitalizes upon the emphasis placed upon this phrase and uses forms of שמע alone as a structural delimiter.

Summary of 2.1

As has been demonstrated above, the book of Amos can be confidently divided into three major units of Amos 1-2, 3-6 and 7-9. This division can be seen in the content of these sections (OAN in Amos 1-2, saying of the prophet in Amos 3-6, and vision accounts in Amos 7-9) as well as in the delimiting formulas that occur in each section (ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו) _____ ושעני _____ in Amos 1-2, שמעו את-הדבר הזה in Amos 3-6, and כה הראני אדני יהוה in Amos 7-9).

From this, Amos 3-6 can be divided into three smaller units of Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-6:14. These divisions are made based on the delineating nature of the שמעו את-הדבר הזה formula as well as the similar opening structure of each of the texts.

2.2. Amos 3:1-15: Structural Observations

In this section I will provide the literary structure of Amos 3 through recognition of the delimiting functions of שמע, attention to speakers and addressees, imperatives and the wider context. The identification of Egypt and Ashdod as rhetorical figures will help confirm that Yahweh is the speaker and Israel is the addressee in Amos 3:1-2, 9-15. This will conclude in a final outline of the chapter into Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15.

Amos 3:1-15 is the first unit of three within Amos 3-6. These four chapters are dominated by first person speech of the prophet to Israel in the genre of sermonic/direct address.¹⁸² It stands out from Amos 1:3-2:16 which consist of the OAN as well as from 7:1-9:15 which are centered on Amos' five visions. Amos 3 immediately follows the opening words of doom in Amos 1-2.

The third chapter begins with the formulaic שמעו את־הדבר הזה, which has been shown to indicate division throughout Amos 3-6. Because of this the, root שמע also carries some delineating characteristics, which can be seen most clearly in Amos 3. The verb occurs in Amos 3:1, 9 and 13, and indicates divisions in the chapter in much the same way שמעו את־הדבר הזה indicates divisions in Amos 3-6. Following these markers, Amos 3 can be divided into Amos 3:1-8, 9-12 and 13-15, though it is immediately evident further division is necessary. Since grammar and syntax offer no further suggestions, one must turn to the content of the chapter for clues. The different voices in the text provide a useful starting place.¹⁸³

As we can see from the text, the speakers and addressees in Amos 3 are not immediately evident. The audience in the first two verses of the chapter is obviously Israel. The difficulty is in discerning the speaker. The verse begins speaking of Yahweh in the third person but shifts to first person speech half-way through. The speaker shifts to the prophet in Amos 3:3-8, though the audience is most likely still

¹⁸² Wolff calls this "free witness-speech" (*die freie Zeugenrede*) since it is devoid of formulas that indicate Yahweh is the speaker and refers to Yahweh in the third person. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 110-111.

¹⁸³ Gitay notes, "A rhetorical analysis of the various units into which form-critical studies divide 3:1-15 suggests that the units are mutually related, each to the other and each to the whole, and therefore are part of a single discourse. Yehoshua Gitay, "A Study of Amos' Art of Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1-15," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 295. While identifying speakers and addressees proves difficult, it should not be supposed that this testifies to disunity in the text. Rather, identification of speakers and addressees illuminates the relatedness of the units within Amos 3 as is shown below.

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Israel, since this section appears to be the prophet's justification to his audience for prophesying.

Establishing the speaker and audience in Amos 3:9-15 requires effort as well. There is no introduction of Yahweh in Amos 3:9 as there is in Amos 3:1 and the text barely gives any indication that the speaker is/may be different than the speaker in Amos 3:3-8. However, the content of Amos 3:9 suggests that the speaker is again Yahweh, since the speaker commands his addressee to proclaim a message over the nations of Ashdod and Egypt.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, the speaker refers to Samaria as if it were a third party who is not present, thus the speaker is probably not the prophet. The formula **נאם יְהוָה** occurs in Amos 3:10, which confirms the speaker is Yahweh.¹⁸⁵

From here one might easily propose that since Israel has been the addressee thus far it continues to be the addressee for the rest of the chapter. However this is not the extent of the problem, for the content of Amos 3:9-10 and 13-15 raises another issue: Israel is not only referred to in the third person, but it appears as if the nations of Ashdod and Egypt are being addressed. While this is not implausible, it does require establishing who is being told to summon these two nations.

If Israel is the addressee in these texts then the repetitive shift in person is confusing and the reader is left puzzling over the logistics of Israel being commanded to call witnesses against itself. If Ashdod and Egypt are the addressee in these texts then confusion surrounds the task of deciphering at exactly which point the nations are being addressed and when they are no longer being addressed and the reader must explain who calls the nations to testify against Israel. Finally, if the prophet is the addressee in these texts and is commanded to call the two nations as witnesses then confusion surrounds the rapid shift in who is being addressed in the chapter and the reader is left puzzling over the continuity of the unit.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Wolff suggests the speaker in Amos 3:9 is the prophet. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 229. For the difficulties in his interpretation see my comments below in footnote 186.

¹⁸⁵ The **נאם יְהוָה** formula occurs 21 times in the book of Amos (Amos 2:11,16; 3:10,13,15; 4:3,5,6,8,9,10,11; 6:8,14; 8:3,9,11; 9:7,8,12,13). Only in three of these instances does it not occur immediately or relatively near first-person divine speech (Amos 3:10; 4:3 and perhaps 4:5). Further, the two instances in chapter 4 can possibly be overruled due to the fact that 7 of 21 occurrences of the formula occur in this chapter and all but two occur within first-person divine speech, testifying to the inclusion of these other two occurrences. Thus, the formula in Amos 3:10 would then be the only occurrence of this formula outside of a first-person divine speech pattern in the book, an odd phenomena and reason enough to warrant its inclusion in the group with the others.

¹⁸⁶ Wolff, suggests the speaker in Amos 3:9 and 13 is the prophet. In Amos 3:9 he suggests the addressees are foreign diplomats in Samaria. He also suggests the addressees in 3:13 change, and

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Therefore, before the chapter can be correctly outlined and the meaning of the text established, the speakers and addressees must first be identified since their ambiguity inhibits identifying text units. Identifying changes in speakers and addressees will aid in marking textual divisions in the text, and thus isolating units of thought and the flow of the text. Additionally, in identifying speakers and addressees with the intention of isolating text units, one actually identifies an important rhetorical function of the text as well.

When seeking to identify speakers and addressees in Amos 3 through the use of verbal forms, the most logical choice may be to look at imperatives, since Amos 3:9 and 13 begin with forms of the same imperative that is formulaic throughout the book. The book of Amos contains 41 imperatives, all occurring between Amos 3:1 and 9:1.¹⁸⁷ Of the 41 imperatives 28 are masculine plural.¹⁸⁸ Oddities arise in two of these verses. Amos 4:1 and 8:4 feature the same masculine plural imperative we have come to expect when the prophet begins a new speech to Israel (Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4), however in these two instances the audience is more specific, or smaller, than the nation as a whole. Of the 41 imperatives, the remaining 13 are masculine singular (Amos 4:1, 12; 5:23; 7:2, 5, 12³, 15², 16; 9:1²). Again, oddities arise in two of these verses. Amos 4:12 and 5:23 both feature masculine singular imperatives addressed to the whole nation.

Of the 28 masculine plural imperatives, in each instance outside the verses under question (Amos 3:9, 13) the speaker is always Yahweh and the addressee is always Israel.¹⁸⁹ Only eight of the 28 are not explicitly directed towards the nation as

this time the text is addressed to “other” foreigners living in Samaria. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 230-231, 237-238. Wolff’s attempt to read this text as if it is an historical account requires him to make assumptions and draw conclusions that are very speculative. However his desire to determine who the text is addressed to is correct, and will be addressed below.

¹⁸⁷ Amos 3:1, 9⁴, 13²; 4:1², 4⁴, 5², 12; 5:1, 4², 6², 14, 15³, 23; 6:2⁴; 7:2, 5, 12³, 15², 16; 8:4; 9:1².

¹⁸⁸ Amos 3:1, 9⁴, 13²; 4:1, 4⁴, 5²; 5:1, 4², 6², 14, 15³; 6:2⁴; 8:4.

¹⁸⁹ Several comments may be made here. The imperative in Amos 3:1 sounds mediated, beginning with a third person reference to Yahweh but ending with Yahweh speaking of himself in the first person. The imperative in Amos 4:1 is directed against the “cows of Bashan” though this can easily be understood as referring to Israel as a whole. The imperatives in Amos 5:4 are introduced with the phrase *כי בה אמר יהוה*, but the imperative *דרש* carries a 1cs suffix, giving the verse a sense of mediation again. Similarly, the imperatives in Amos 5:6, 14, 15 all sound as if they are mediated, each speaking of Yahweh in the third person.

Many interpretations exist regarding the addressee of the imperatives in 3:9 and 13. Bokovoy argues for the divine council as audience, based partly on the use of masculine plural imperatives in Amos 3. David E. Bokovoy, “שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב”: Invoking the Council as

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a whole (Amos 3:9⁴,13²; 4:1; 8:4). Of these eight, two are implicitly directed at the whole nation *pars pro toto* (Amos 4:1; 8:4), leaving six which appear within a command to the nation as a whole though directed to Ashdod and Egypt. Therefore it is reasonable to say all the masculine plural imperatives in the book of Amos occur within the speech of Yahweh to Israel.

However, there are two instances which cause a problem for this statement; Amos 4:1 and 8:4. In Amos 4:1, Yahweh commands the פרות הבשן אשר בהר שמרון (cows of Bashan who are on the hill of Samaria) to listen to his word. Likewise, in Amos 8:4 Yahweh commands השאפים אביון ולשבית ענוי-ארץ (those trampling the needy and destroying the poor of the earth) to do the same. These two occurrences of the masculine plural imperative should be understood to speak to Israel as a whole, as they occur in the formulaic expression שמעו את-הדבר הזה. The fact that the imperative in Amos 4:1 is masculine and not feminine, though it is addressed to wealthy women, could suggest that it actually addresses the nation as a whole, as in its other formulaic occurrences in the book, rather than merely at a select group of women.¹⁹⁰ However, this supposition is based more on assumption than anything else. If the prophet wanted to address the whole nation with this comment there seems to be no reason why he could not have addressed them with the feminine plural imperative since he was already addressing them as females. Had he used the feminine plural imperative there would still be widespread agreement that his accusation was directed against the whole nation. Therefore, it seems more likely that Amos 4:1 uses a masculine plural form because it is formulaic, not because it was necessary in order to specify that the comment is directed to the nation rather than just the women.

Similarly, the focused imperative on those oppressing the needy and poor in Amos 8:4 should be understood as referring to the entire nation since that is their sin, espoused continually throughout the book.¹⁹¹ The description of the infractions of

Witnesses in Amos 3:13,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 41. While his argument is compelling, even he admits it is an improvable hypothesis. Moreover, agreement or disagreement with this hypothesis does not influence an understanding of the text, which focuses on the message and not the messenger. This is noted by Mays who says the summons serve as a “rhetorical device to provoke the attention of an audience,” and that this rhetorical device creates “the atmosphere of legal proceedings,” an issue that will be discussed in 2.7.1. Courtroom Imagery in Amos 3. See also Mays, *Amos*, 68.

¹⁹⁰ See my discussion of the cows of Bashan as an image for the whole of Israel in 3.2. Amos 4:1-3: The Cows of Bashan.

¹⁹¹ See 2.3.1. Oppression Language in the Book of Amos and Table 1 for a chart showing oppression verbs and subjects of oppression.

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both “the cows of Bashan” in Amos 4:1 and the oppressors in Amos 8:4 are typical of the infractions levelled against the nation of Israel as a whole throughout the book of Amos. Therefore, though Amos 4:1 and 8:4 contain masculine plural imperatives that are specifically directed towards sub groups of Israel, the message of the verses betrays the fact that they are still being directed against Israel *pars pro toto*.

Returning to my investigation of imperatives in the book of Amos, of the 41 imperatives in the book, 13 are masculine singular.¹⁹² Of the 13 singular imperatives in the book of Amos, only two do not indicate direct speech from one individual to another.¹⁹³ As a whole, these imperatives stand out as occurrences when Yahweh is speaking to someone other than Israel or when someone other than Yahweh is speaking. A wife speaks to her husband in Amos 4:1. Yahweh speaks to the prophet in Amos 7:15 and 9:1. The prophet speaks to Yahweh in Amos 7:2 and 5. Amaziah speaks to the prophet in Amos 7:12 and the prophet speaks to Amaziah in Amos 7:16.

Amos 4:12 and 5:23 are different from the other addresses not only because they are found when one individual addresses a plural audience, but also because the subject is Yahweh and the audience is Israel, being addressed in the singular. If 11 out of 13 masculine singular imperatives indicate one individual speaking to another and all 28 masculine plural imperatives occur within the confines of Yahweh speaking to Israel, why are there two lone occurrences of Yahweh speaking to Israel using the singular?

The imperatives in Amos 4:12 and 5:23 are also different because they are not part of a recurring formula. In Amos 4:6-11 Yahweh recounts five plagues or punishments he sent against the nation of Israel, all of which failed at bringing about the repentance of Israel. It is in response to these failures, לִכְן, that Amos 4:12-13 conclude the chapter.¹⁹⁴ Though the entire chapter refers to the nation using the 2mp suffix, Amos 4:12 suddenly shifts to using the singular (אֶעֱשֶׂה-לְךָ and אֱלֹהֶיךָ), identifying the object of Yahweh’s wrath with a 2ms suffix twice and with a 2fs suffix once (אֶעֱשֶׂה-לְךָ). While the sudden shift in person might appear odd, the singular to refer to the whole nation and the feminine suffix to refer to Israel are not.

¹⁹² Amos 4:1, 12; 5:23; 7:2, 5, 12³, 15², 16; 9:1².

¹⁹³ Amos 4:12; 5:23.

¹⁹⁴ See 3.5. Amos 4:12-13: Yahweh’s Future Actions Towards Israel.

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Amos 3:11 uses the second feminine singular to refer to Israel three times and Amos 3:14 uses the third masculine singular to refer to Israel.

Amos 5:23 is different as well. Amos 5:18-27 is a woe aimed at correcting Israel's unwarranted self confidence, with strong connections to Amos 5:7, 10-13. Throughout this woe oracle the second person masculine plural is used to refer to Israel, including in Amos 5:22 and 5:25. However, in Amos 5:23 the imperative is masculine singular and the two suffixes (נבליך and שריך) are masculine singular as well.¹⁹⁵

The recognition that most imperatives are masculine plural and occur when Yahweh speaks to Israel complemented by the fact that most masculine singular imperatives indicate either a different speaker or audience do not contradict what one would expect when reading the text. This expectation is helpful when reading Amos 3 because of the difficulty in understanding the speaker and addressee(s) in Amos 3:9, 13. However, as the above argument has shown, there are holes in the argument when using imperatives to “prove” the position that Yahweh is the speaker and Israel is the addressee in Amos 3:9-10, 13-15. The occurrences that contradict the norm have been shown to differ due to either stylistic readings or standard incongruence and do not differ due to any need for the opposite gender or number. Therefore, these protruding examples also prevent this argument from being decided based on grammar alone. They can be used as support for this argument, but they cannot prove

¹⁹⁵ Paul suggests, in his discussion on both Amos 4:12 and 5:23, that this switch from plural to singular indicates that Yahweh's accusation is now “addressed individually to each member of the nation.” Paul, *Amos*, 285. Two problems arise with this position. First, Paul himself argues for upholding the MT based on agreement from the versions. However, he follows by adding that “the transition from the plural to the singular need no longer be considered so anomalous because multiple examples exist throughout prophetic literature.” Paul, *Amos*, 191 footnote 36. He is right to note that this phenomenon occurs regularly. However, the fact that this occurs on a widespread basis in such a way as to call attention to itself furthers the argument that these changes in gender and number cannot be understood to occur as a rational part of the argument. Puzzlingly though, Paul uses it for just that reason. He recognizes that this is a widespread phenomenon, thus admitting his knowledge of the irrationality of the incongruence, then bases an argument on this incongruence (i.e., now Yahweh is speaking to Israel as individuals).

Second, there is nothing in the context to suggest that this interpretation is correct. Both the context surrounding Amos 4:12 and 5:23 are more supportive of a plural reading of the singular suffixes. Paul's reading is forced on the text. In Amos 4:12 it involves reading a singular address to a collective body. One struggles to come up with instances where this is elsewhere the case, and Paul suggests none in his own defence. And the tone of Amos 5:23 is so similar to 5:22 that a different issue arises when 5:22 is understood to speak to the nation as a whole and then 5:23 is understood to shift to individuals.

it. So as is usually the case, each instance of difficulty must be examined based on its own merits and decided on its context.

Since grammatical analysis offers no strong solution towards identifying speakers and addressees in Amos 3, we simply have to look at a wider context. Nowhere else in Amos are nations, or any other entities, called to testify; however, the command to “strike the capitals” in Amos 9:1 is very similar phraseology to the command to “proclaim to the strongholds” in 3:9 in that no addressee is specified in either passage and the reader is hard pressed to imagine who could realistically be given such an order.

The problem of discerning the addressee in both passages is solved when one recognizes the force of the imperatives are in Israel’s hearing the message of the command rather than in someone actually being commanded to “proclaim” or to “strike.” The imperatives are not actual commands. Yahweh is not commanding Israel or the prophet to journey to Ashdod and Egypt with this message. Instead, the command to proclaim to Ashdod and Egypt is a rhetorical one. It is spoken *as if* a messenger is being sent to these foreign nations, but Israel is the actual audience. The intent is that Israel would hear that Yahweh is looking to raise up a nation to send his judgment on Israel¹⁹⁶ Therefore, the dialogue in Amos 3:9-10, 13-15 that appears to be directed towards Ashdod and Egypt should be understood as hypothetically spoken to those nations in such a way that Israel could overhear them being called to testify against itself. Israel is the real addressee and should be able to read the writing on the wall.

For this reason, the easiest reading, and the one which makes the most sense, is the one which sees Yahweh as the speaker and Israel as the addressee in Amos 3:1-2, 9-15. The third parties (Ashdod and Egypt) should be understood only for the rhetorical function they lend to the text. Their inclusion in the dialogue serves only to emphasize Yahweh’s message to Israel. This understanding of the speakers and addressees suggests the following outline:¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Mays say that Amos “Pretends to issue summons to heralds” in “a highly dramatic and ironic method of commanding the attention of his listeners.” Mays, *Amos*, 63. However, he also points out Amos 3:9-11 was addressed to “prominent citizens of Samaria,” whereas I argue that this address to the fat cows of Bashan is something of a sarcastic mocking of the entire nation of Israel. Mays, *Amos*, 63.

¹⁹⁷ This division differs slightly from the common division of Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-11, 12, 13-15. See Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 212-240. Möller, though accepting that of Amos 3 is a single discourse, still outlines it along the typical form-critical units of vv. 1-2, 3-8, 9-11, 12, 13-15. Möller,

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3:1-2	Yahweh's Reckoning
3:3-8	The Prophet's Interjection
3:9-10	Proclaim the Injustice of Israel ¹⁹⁸
3:11-12	Judgment Against Israel
3:13-15	Yahweh's Reckoning

In the above outline, Amos 3:1-2, 9-10 and 13-15 stand together while 3:3-8 and 11-12 are indented. This is simply to show the emphasis of the שמע verbs in the chapter. It has already been shown that שמע functions to delineate units in the book of Amos. In chapter three it has a similar function and this outline seeks to give שמע pride of place just as it has in the text. While the outline shows the repetition of שמע in the chapter, it fails to show the inclusio around פקד. This root occurs only in verb form in Amos and only three times. It occurs once in Amos 3:2 and twice in Amos 3:14 creating an inclusio in this chapter of judgment against Israel. Amos 3 begins and ends with a reckoning against Israel. This reckoning is introduced in Amos 3:2 with the implication that the evil about to come will be sent by Yahweh. Amos 3:3-8 assures the readers that “evil” does not happen unless Yahweh causes it, and the words the prophet is now speaking are Yahweh’s proclamation that evil is about to happen.

Both 3:1-2 and 13-15 begin with the *qal* imperative and feature all three uses of פקד in the book (Amos 3:2,14²), emphasizing the coming judgment. The inclusio in Amos 3 emphasises the moral depravity of the nation of Israel. This depravity is described as the inability to do right and is described in such a way that pagan nations around them would recognize this depravity. Furthermore, Amos 3 begins and ends with a word of punishment on the nation. However, it is only in the climax of this chiasm that any type of charge is levelled against Israel. Additionally, all

“Hear This Word,” 502. Cf. Anderson and Freedman split the chapter into two almost equal parts; Amos 3:1-8, 9-15. The two halves are then divided at the same points described above. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 371-372. Gitay disagrees with form criticism’s conclusion that these are five independent units and uses a (classical) rhetorical analysis to show the units are part of a single discourse. Gitay, “Amos’ Art of Speech,” 294-295.

¹⁹⁸ One further complication is the fact that Amos 3:1-2 and 3:14-15 contain 1cs verbs which identify Yahweh as the speaker. However Amos 3:9-10 contain no such indicators, though based on the argument above, this need not harm the proposed structure.

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nouns describing the guilt of Israel and the reason for Yahweh's judgment take place in 3:1-2, 9-10, and 13-15.

Parallels within 3:3-8 and 11-12 are not overtly evident. The prophet's interjection in Amos 3:3-8 begins and ends with mention of a lion (אריה) while Amos 3:12 ends by likening Israel's chance of survival to a shepherd rescuing parts of a lamb from a lion (ארי). But perhaps the strongest argument for a parallel between Amos 3:3-8 and 3:11-12 is that these two sections stand out from the surrounding sections by their direct address to Israel. In Amos 3:3-8, the prophet directly addresses Israel, which sets the unit apart from 3:1-2 and 3:9-10. In Amos 3:11-12 Yahweh directly addresses Israel which is different from Amos 3:9-10 and 3:13-15, which are addressed to a rhetorical audience.¹⁹⁹

Summary of 2.2.

In the above section I have produced the literary structure of Amos 3. The occurrences of שמע in Amos 3 immediately help divide the chapter, though further division is necessary. Looking beyond this delimiter, it becomes obvious that the speakers and addressees are not immediately evident and must be identified before the chapter can be further divided. In order to determine the speakers and addressees imperatives are singled out as the most likely path to solving this puzzle, and while they provide some guidelines, they provide no definitive answers.

In looking then at the wider context, texts addressed to Ashdod and Egypt are understood as rhetorical speeches designed to alert Israel to impending doom. These nations are not literally the addressees. Thus, Yahweh can be identified as the speaker and Israel as the addressee in Amos 3:1-2, 9-15. Further examination within this understanding provides a five part structure of Amos 3; Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-15. This outline is the basis for the continued examination of the chapter.

¹⁹⁹ Some have suggested the text be read as two halves; Amos 3:1-8, 9-15, with the division following the rhetorical questions in 3:3-8. Anderson and Freedman divide the chapter into these two halves and then subdivide the halves into the traditional five parts discussed in footnote 197. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 369-372. This position still has the support of שמע beginning both Amos 3:1-8 and 9-15 but it does not take into consideration the third occurrence of שמע in 3:13 much less the consistent courtroom imagery present in Amos 3:1-2, 9-10 and 13-15. Therefore, it is much more appropriate to understand the chapter as described in the outline above.

2.3. Amos 3:1-2: Israel will be Called to Account

In what follows I will demonstrate how the opening unit of Amos 3 establishes both the judgmental message of the chapter as well as the grounds for that judgment. The inclusion around פקד will reinforce my tripartite division of Amos 3-6 as well as connect Amos 3 to the conclusion of the book.

The message of Amos 3 begins seven words into the first verse when the word of Yahweh is spoken “against” Israel. This word continues by highlighting the close relationship that existed between Yahweh and Israel in the past before the revelation that Yahweh intends to reckon all Israel’s sins upon Israel.²⁰⁰ Mention of Yahweh’s guidance during Israel’s escape from Egypt lends itself to the idea that Yahweh will be counting against Israel their sins from the very beginning.

In the book of Amos, the root פקד occurs only in Amos 3:2 and twice in 3:14 and forms an inclusio of judgment in the chapter. While the chapter begins and ends with the reckoning of Yahweh, its use in Amos 3:2 simply mentions the reckoning, while 3:14 actually begins to describe it. However, 3:2 does make clear that this reckoning comes as a result of, or at least in relationship to the fact that Israel stands in a unique relationship with Yahweh.²⁰¹ This is important to notice due to the words of Amos 9:7. Amos 3:1 says Yahweh is speaking against all those he brought out of Egypt, however in 9:7 Yahweh says just as he brought Israel out of Egypt, he also brought the Philistines out of Caphtor and the Syrians out of Kir. What sets Israel apart is not that Yahweh has acted providentially on Israel’s behalf, but that Yahweh has known (ידע) them in a way he has not known any other people.

²⁰⁰ Paul notes that it is unique that Israel is called to account for *all* of her infractions [ital. original]. Paul, *Amos*, 102. It is questionable whether this should be read literally. However, the root פקד and its derivatives do draw the picture of a manager settling accounts. BDB 823-824. Likewise, McComiskey examines the collocation על פקד as it occurs in judgment sayings and notes that it may be translated with “attend to” or “visit upon” but not “punish for.” Thomas Edward McComiskey, “Prophetic Irony in Hosea 1.4: A Study of the Collocation על פקד and its Implications for the Fall of Jehu’s Dynasty,” *JSOT* 58 (1993): 97. A much more pertinent question is not whether Israel will be called to task for all her sins, but whether the reckoning the other seven nations received in the OAN was any less comprehensive. This will be addressed to some degree by my comments on the destruction of fortresses in 2.6. Amos 3:11-12: Israel Will be Plundered.

²⁰¹ In Amos 3:1 Yahweh say, “Hear the word I’m speaking against the whole family I led out of Egypt.” Amos 3:2 is the word, with 3:2a being the grounds for judgment (“you only have I known”) and 3:2b stating the judgment (“I will reckon all your transgressions against you”). It is על-כן in 3:2b that establishes the unique relationship of Israel as the ground for Yahweh’s judgment. Andersen and Freeman interpret 3:2 as “. . . I have given you more attention than any other people; therefore I expect more from you than from them. I will punish you more than them. Amos 3:2 is thus related to chaps. 1-2, but moves to a new point.” Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 382.

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While the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is an integral reason for judgment, it is not the sole reason. Instead, Israel's oppression of the poor is at the heart of the message of the book of Amos as well as a primary cause for Yahweh's anger. The offences of Israel are first mentioned in Amos 3:2 with Yahweh's mention of Israel's sins/iniquities.

Summary of 2.3.

The opening words of Amos 3 establish the tone of the chapter and base the judgment of the chapter on the past relationship between Yahweh and Israel. While an explicit identification of Israel's sins is not given in this opening indictment, the *inclusio* in Amos 3:2, 14 around פקד ties the chapter together as well as emphasizes judgment is certainly coming. Furthermore, Yahweh's admission that he has known Israel in a special way is brought up in Amos 9:7 with Yahweh's proclamation that he has aided nations other than Israel, thus tying this chapter to the conclusion of the book.

2.3.1. Oppression Language in the Book of Amos

In the following section of this thesis I survey oppression language in the book of Amos in order to understand the accusations brought against Israel in Amos 3. This is accomplished through examination of key words in the semantic field of oppression, attention to the context and meaning of oppression texts and an evaluation of this theme throughout the book of Amos.

The message of Amos 3 is entirely negative. From the opening promise of a reckoning through the closing promise of destruction of cult and lifestyle, destruction is everywhere. The only reprieve in the chapter is in 3:3-8, where the prophet justifies his words, and even that unit upholds the tension of the chapter. Chapter 3 of Amos gives very little reason for the coming judgment. It says Israel will be punished for its "iniquities" (3:2) and that it is full of "tumults" and "oppressions" (3:9). Amos 3:10 seems to be the closest Amos 3 comes to giving a reason for the judgment. Here Israel is described as "not knowing how to do right" and as "storing up violence and destruction." Finally, verse 10 says Israel will be punished for their "transgressions." The most concrete reason given in the chapter is that Israel does not know how to do right. However, most of the "reasons" are merely nouns that describe the existence of sins or reasons for judgment.

Chapter three also finds the occurrence of several oppression words which occur nowhere else in the book of Amos. עון (iniquity, guilt) occurs only in 3:2.

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עשוקים (oppression, extortion) occurs only in 3:9, though the verb occurs in Amos 4:1. However, פשע occurs in all eight of the OAN as well as in 3:14; 4:4²; and 5:12. Due to the limited description of Israel's offences in Amos 3, in order to determine its nature this terminology should first be examined from the broader context of the book, rather than just chapter three.

The judgment that befalls the kingdom of Israel in the book of Amos is in response to Israel's פשע (transgression).²⁰² This word occurs in each of the OAN and then several times throughout the book. Its use in the OAN serves to introduce the specific sins of each nation. The specific transgressions of Israel in Amos 2:6-8 involve selling (מכר) the righteous (צדיק) and needy (אביון) for material gain. They trample (שארף) the poor (דלים) and turn aside (נטה) the afflicted (ענו).²⁰³ Israel lies down next to every altar on "garments taken in pledge" (על-בגדים חבלים) and they drink the wine of those fined (יין ענושים ישתו) in the house of their God.²⁰⁴

²⁰² "Transgression" (פשע) is found in Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6; 3:14; 4:4,4; and 5:12.

Amos 3:2 features "sin/iniquity" (עון) in a similar fashion as "transgression," however in the book of Amos it is only used in this verse and it is not in a context that lists any of Israel's sins. See also, HALOT 3:981-982. DCH 6:793-795.

²⁰³ Amos 2:7b is a contested text in Amos studies. The issue is translating and understanding הנערה. There is virtual unanimity that it should be translated as "girl," or some variant thereof, just as there is virtual unanimity that the offense recounted is sexual in nature. However, there is little consensus regarding what exact sin father and son were guilty of committing with her. Moughtin-Mumby surveys the spectrum of scholarly views. Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and his Father Go to Naarah in Order to Defile My Holy Name!': Rereading Amos 2.6-8," in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation* (LHB/OTS 536; ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Andrew Mein; New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2011), 61-69. See also, Hans M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Am 2,7B-8; 4,1-13; 5,1-27; 6,4-7; 8,14* (VTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 11-36.

Moughtin-Mumby argues that many difficulties in Amos 2:7b can be avoided if הנערה is instead translated as the place name Naarah, also found in Joshua 16:7 and 1 Chronicles 7:28. Chiefly, the "mysterious woman" is no longer a puzzle, nor are discussions about translating ילכו אל with sexual connotations. Moughtin-Mumby, "Man and his Father," 61ff. Furthermore, removing the sexual connotation from הנערה removes a significant portion of McLaughlin's argument that Amos 2:7c-8 is not a marzeah festival as well as removing the weakest portion of Barstad's argument that it is. Moughtin-Mumby, "Man and his Father," 73-82. See also, John L. McLaughlin, *The Marzeah in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence* (VTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 122-126. The strongest part of Moughtin-Mumby's argument, however, is that removing the sexual connotations of Amos 2:7 allows a consistent description of social exploitation of the poor, a theme both Barstad and McLaughlin recognize but fail to adequately uphold. For these reasons, it seems best to agree with Moughtin-Mumby that Amos 2:7b describes father and son going to a marzeah festival, sinful because of the luxurious lifestyle this pictured in the face of oppression of the poor.

²⁰⁴ Tiemeyer suggests that Amos 2:8 is addressed to priests due to their close association with altars and use of the phrase "the house of their God." Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: Post-Exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood*, 19 (FAT II; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 137-139. As she demonstrates, prophetic criticism of priestly abuse of the poor is

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Amos 3:14 contains no specifics about Israel's sins in its use of **פשע**. However, its two occurrences in Amos 4:4 are interesting because in this, and the following verses, Yahweh correlates Israel's sacrifices, tithes, freewill and thanksgiving offerings with **פשע**. In Amos 5:12 **פשע** is paralleled with **חטא** (sin) to describe Israel as being hostile (**צָרַר**) to the righteous, taking (**לָקַח**) a bribe or ransom (**כַּפֶּר**), and turning aside (**נָטָה**) the poor (**אֲבִיּוֹן**).

The above description is a brief overview of Israel's sin as described in the book of Amos.²⁰⁵ Most numerous is the book's attention to the way in which the poor, righteous and weak are treated. Within this category may be included a condemnation of greed or want for material gain. Though not explicitly stated, Amos 2:6, 8; 3:15; 5:11-12; 6:4-6; and 8:4-6 describe Israel as being motivated by greed. Upon closer examination, this is the main offence of Israel since their transgressions seem to be a lack of concern for the needy in their quest for riches. This would explain the book's description of Yahweh's disdain for cultic practice when coupled with incorrect social values.²⁰⁶

We will now turn our attention more specifically towards descriptions of oppression itself. **עֲשָׂק** and its derivatives occur only twice in the book of Amos, in Amos 3:9 and 4:1. In 3:9 **עֲשׂוּקִים** (oppressions) are paralleled with **מְהוּמָה** (tumults). The verse describes Assyria and Egypt standing on the mountains of Samaria looking down upon Israel in order to see their "tumults" and "oppression." Amos 3:10 then vaguely describes Israel's sin by saying they do not know how to do right (**-עֲשׂוּת**)

attested in the Hebrew Bible. However, I am uncertain whether Amos 2:8 explicitly singles out the priestly class.

My main point of contention with her position is not with her argument. Rather, it is with the lack of explicit identification of the priests in light of the fact that the oracle against Israel in Amos 2:6-16 lists offences in verses 6-8, yet it is only verse 8 that presumably targets the priesthood. Additionally, Amos 2:6 is very similar to the offences in Amos 8:4, which does not appear to be addressed to the priesthood. I find it difficult to interpret Amos 2:8 as directed against priests when the accusations around it do not specify an audience other than Israel. I also think that the cultic imagery can be understood as juxtaposing Israel's unwarranted self confidence with their oppression and luxurious living, thus explaining images of the cult without recourse to an exclusively priestly audience. Furthermore, I have argued in 2.2. Amos 3:1-15: Structural Observation, the accusations of the prophet are addressed to the nation as a whole. Tiemeyer does acknowledge the larger context of the OAN against Israel "probably addresses the rich and influential layers" of society, however I think the nation of Israel as a whole is a plausible and more consistent audience than a segment of that society, both here and in the book of Amos as a whole.

²⁰⁵ See Appendix 2: Oppression Words in Amos for a break down of the oppressed groups and oppression verbs in Amos.

²⁰⁶ See 4.3. Amos 5:18-27: Israel's Unwarranted Self Confidence, specifically my comments on Amos 5:21-24.

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נבחה), further describing this as storing up (אצר) violence (חמס) and destruction (שד). Amos 4:1 describes Israel²⁰⁷ as oppressing (עשק) the weak (דלים) and crushing (רצץ) the poor (אביון). The book gives little or no description of those doing the oppression, so one must assume this oppression is widespread enough that there is no need to point out the guilty parties.²⁰⁸

Some texts in Amos describe what may be understood as luxurious living.²⁰⁹ Amos 3:15 describes one way in which Yahweh will punish Israel for its פשע. It involves the destruction of what looks like luxurious living. This is done through the destruction of the winter house (בית-החרף), the summer house (בית הקיץ), houses of ivory (בתי השן) and great houses (בתים רבים). Amos 5:11-12 describe Israel as trampling (בשס) the weak (דל) and taking (לקח) portions of his grain (משאת-בר). As a result of this action, Yahweh describes the material possessions Israel has but will not be able to enjoy: cut stone houses (בתי גזית) and pleasing vineyards (כרמי-חמד).

Similarly, Amos 6:4-6 describe a luxurious lifestyle that is condemned. Israel is reclining (שכב) on beds of ivory (מטות שן), lounging (סרוח) on couches (ערשותם), eating lambs and calves, singing idly (פרט), drinking wine in bowls, and anointing themselves with oil. This luxurious lifestyle is not condemned in and of itself but because it comes at the price of oppressing the poor. It is significant to make this distinction in order to clarify that the condemnation of the luxurious lifestyle of Israel found in the book of Amos is not promoting poverty as a way of life, nor is it condemning luxury in and of itself. Instead, the consistent picture the text of Amos paints is one in which riches are obtained at the expense of the poor and/or down-trodden. To say more than this would be to read more into the text. However, this point must be emphasized because of its prominence in the condemnations of Israel found in the book.

²⁰⁷ Amos 4:1 actually describes the cows of Bashan, assumed to be wives of rich lords. See my comments in 3.2. Amos 4:1-3: The Cows of Bashan.

²⁰⁸ Outside of addressees being identified by their transgressions and by nation in the OAN and in various places in the rest of the book only Amos 4:1 and 6:1 identify an audience, both of which are wealthy groups. Since this lifestyle is the focus of most of the judgment in the book of Amos it is hard to propose that these two verses clarify the addressees of Yahweh's wrath. See also 3.2. Amos 4:1-3: The Cows of Bashan.

²⁰⁹ For more see Appendix 2: Oppression Words in Amos. Coote describes this aspect of Yahweh's announcement against Israel as revelry. Robert B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 36-39.

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The book of Amos contains an interesting parallel centered on the word שונא (hate). In Amos 5:10 Israel is described as hating (שונא) the one reproving (יכח) and abhorring (תעב) the one speaking soundly (תמים). The next occurrence of “hate” comes in Amos 5:15 with the call to hate evil, love good, and establish justice (משפט). Following the description of Israel’s hatred of the just in Amos 5:10, the text describes Israel’s treatment of the weak, righteous, and poor, and mentions their material possessions and transgressions and sins. The text then warns the prudent (שכל) person by saying, “It is an evil time” (כי עת רעה היא). Amos 5:14 commands the reader to seek (דרש) good (טוב) not evil (רע).²¹⁰

Amos 5:15 follows saying hate (שונא) evil and love good. However, Amos 5:15 adds a commission to establish (יצג) justice (משפט) to the equation. The description in the short unit contains uses of words for the oppressed throughout the book; transgression, and sin, and good and evil. Though Amos 5:15 features justice as something to be established and does not describe Israel as unjust, Amos 5:7 describes Israel as turning (הפך) justice to bitterness (לענה) and Amos 6:12 describes them as turning justice to poison (ראש). Justice never occurs in the context with transgression, sin or oppression but its use still suggests that the oppressive behaviour of Israel can be termed “unjust.”

The subjects of the oppressive behaviour in Amos fall into two categories. The most often mentioned oppression verbs are those that perhaps cannot fight for themselves. These include the poor (אביון), weak (דלים), and afflicted (ענו). With this group of people, words such as “acquire” (קנה), “trample” (בשס/שאף), and “crush” (רצץ) are used. The marginalized are bought, sold and abused. The second group of oppressed subjects are the righteous and justice, to which could be added “the one who reproves” (מוכיח) and “the one speaking the truth” (דבר תמים) and. The verbs (צור and שונא) used of these subjects do not suppose as much of a physical oppression and include showing hostility towards someone and hatred.²¹¹

It is obvious why Amos is referred to as the prophet of social justice. The majority of his accusations show his concern for the poor and downtrodden. This is a concern that pervades the book and operates as a unifying theme. It is such a

²¹⁰ דרש also features repeated use in Amos chapter 5. Amos 5:4 and 6 both command Israel to seek Yahweh in order to live while verse 6 commands that she not seek Bethel.

²¹¹ Perhaps these subjects should be part of another theological theme. Rather than oppression, they may fit better in a theme with an emphasis such as “unrighteousness.”

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consistent theme that nothing else competes as either a more popular message or as a stronger unifier for the book

Summary of 2.3.1.

In this section I have determined the nature of oppression in the book of Amos, thus shedding light on the accusations brought against Israel in Amos 3. While some words for oppression (עוֹן, עֲשׂוּקִים) occur only in Amos 3 and shed no light on the nature of Israel's oppression, פֶּשַׁע occurs in the OAN as well as Amos 3, 4 and 5, providing an understanding of its meaning in Amos 3.

Israel is repeatedly charged with violent oppression of two groups of people; the poor and the righteous. Additionally, this oppression is committed in order to fund Israel's luxurious lifestyle. Not only does the book of Amos describe Israel's oppression and greed, it also describes Israel's hatred for that which highlights their misdeeds. The frequency and consistency in the language and description of Israel's oppression in the book of Amos signify its priority in the message of the book and likewise serves to unite texts from Amos 1-9.

2.4. Amos 3:3-8: The Prophet's Interjection

In the following section I will examine the text of Amos 3:3-8 in order to ascertain the nature and purpose of this unit which appears so different from the text surrounding it. I will examine the progression of the rhetorical questions to determine their function as a unit and then establish how this unit contributes the structure and purpose of Amos 3:1-15 as a whole.

Though Amos 3:3-8 has been labelled "The Prophet's Interjection" in my outline of the book they still retain the tenor of judgment found in the words of Yahweh in 3:1-2.²¹² The series of cause and effect questions are designed to move the audience to accept the prophet's divinely inspired message, that same message is not entirely absent from the questions themselves. After his opening words of doom in Amos 3:1-2, the prophet here gives support for his authority to do so.

The unit is composed of seven questions in rapid succession (3:3-6), one explanatory sentence (3:7), and two final questions (3:8). The first five questions (3:3-5) all use the interrogative *he*. These questions all describe situations where the

²¹² See Appendix 1: Outline of the Book of Amos.

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outcome would be readily accepted by anyone in the same situation. The next two questions (3:6) open with the interrogative particle **אִם** and continue describing similar circumstances.

Together, all seven questions require a negative answer and, through their rhetorical flow, establish that without certain events, other events are impossible. The climax of these questions is the realization that evil does not happen in a city unless Yahweh has caused it.

Amos 3:7 changes both topic and style. The verse is a statement claiming Yahweh does nothing without sharing his plans with his prophets. In Amos 3:8 the unit returns to two final rhetorical questions which draw the conclusions of 3:3-6 and 3:7 together into one ultimate conclusion and the revelation of the goal of the prophet's interjection.²¹³

Opening by questioning who can avoid fear upon hearing a lion's roar, the text returns to the function of Amos 3:3-6, reminding the listener that some events bring about other events.²¹⁴ This is immediately followed with the concluding question which states that one must prophecy when Yahweh speaks.

The message and craftsmanship of Amos 3:8 are intricate. To begin with, the prophet is effectively declaring that he has heard the words he is speaking from Yahweh and has no choice but to proclaim judgment on Israel. Further, each question begins with the subject rather than the verb, thus equating Yahweh's speech with the lion's roar as well as emphasizing that the message the prophet brings is Yahweh's. Yahweh has spoken and the prophet must now prophecy. The vivid pictures of Amos 3:3-6, along with the rapid progression of the rhetorical questions, with which no audience can argue, effectually silence any retort to Amos' "previous" or

²¹³ Gitay suggests the purpose of this series of questions is to convince the audience that civil disaster comes from Yahweh, a fact which he suggests Israel knew at one time but had subsequently forgotten. Gitay, "Amos' Art of Speech," 296. I think he is missing an important part of these questions. Amos 3:6cd move from the natural to the supernatural in order to prepare for the prophet's real focus, found in 3:8. It was known that events on earth were caused by Yahweh, which is why the prophet could conclude that his ministry was just one more example of this phenomenon, thus Israel must heed the prophet's words since they did not originate from the prophet himself but from Yahweh.

²¹⁴ Nahkola examines leonine imagery and concludes that while it is obvious, it is still significant that the lion is primarily a powerful threat rather than a symbol of royalty. Aulikki Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing: Lion, Bear and Snake in Amos 5:19," in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation* (LHB/OTS 536; ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Andrew Mein; New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2011), 99-101.

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“forthcoming” words of judgment.²¹⁵ The audience has no choice but to be convinced.

Finally, the image of Yahweh as a lion in Amos 3:8 concludes an image begun in Amos 3:4 when the lion roars in the forest, thus concluding the unit similar to the way it opened.²¹⁶ It further reminds the reader of how the book itself opened in Amos 1:2 and the image of Yahweh roaring from Zion. Thus, Amos 3:3-8 is a tightly constructed unit by itself while it also links back to the opening of the book, suggesting that just as Amos 3-6 exhibits a high degree of literary craftsmanship, this craftsmanship extends outside the borders of Amos 3-6 alone.

Not only is Amos 3:3-8 a tightly crafted unit on its own, it also demonstrates the craftsmanship of the chapter as well. Amos 3:3-8 is the first instance of the prophet’s interjections at crucial parts of his message.²¹⁷ While the speaker and message of 3:3-8 are totally different from 3:1-2, this is done with a purpose. Following the OAN, Amos 3 is the first direct address of the prophet and his opening words (3:1-2) are grim, such that one could imagine the crowd beginning to murmur.

At this point, the prophet could continue his message with 3:9-10, which would fuel the fire of discontent in his audience, or he could quell it, which is exactly

²¹⁵ Jeremias suggests, “V. 1 kündigt das Gotteswort des Amos an, V. 2 benennt es, und die Verse 3-8 legitimieren es. Die Inklusion zwischen V.1a [„ . . . das Wort, das Jahwe gegen euch geredet hat“] und V. 8 [„hat Jahwe geredet . . .“] zeigt, daß mit V. 8 eine gewisse erste Gedankenabrundung erreicht ist.” (Verse 1 announces the word of God from Amos, verse 2 names it, and verses 3-8 legitimize it. The inclusio between verse 1a [“ . . . the word which Yahweh has spoken against you”] and vers 8 [“Jahweh has spoken . . .”] shows that a certain rounding off of thought is attained.) Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 31.

²¹⁶ Contra Andersen and Freedman, Amos 3:8 does not function as an inclusio with Amos 1:2. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 216, 264. This is akin to finding an inclusio between רעה in Amos 1:2 and 3:12. Similarity does not equal inclusio. The אשׁ in 3:8 seems to function primarily in relationship with the אשׁ in 3:4. Reading Amos 1:2 and 3:8 as an inclusio overshadows the relationship between 3:4 and 8. It is certainly hard to describe the roar of the lion as a “theme” in Amos since it only occurs in 3:4, 8 and perhaps in 1:2. However, the term “inclusio” is not only inadequate, it is also incorrect. Certainly, inclusios end with a repetition of a word or phrase they began with. However, they also enclose a unit, and Andersen and Freedman’s suggestion that 1:2 and 3:8 is an inclusio ignores the fact that 3:8 is in the middle of a larger unit. See my comments on the structure of Amos 3 below. This discussion is not arguing against the lion’s roar as an important image for Amos, since it obviously is. Instead, it is simply arguing against assigning it unnecessary pride of place. Rather than call Amos 1:2 and 3:8 an inclusio, Paul simply points out their similar vocabulary but continues to point out more connections between 1:1 and 1:2 than between 1:2 and 3:8. Paul, *Amos*, 37. This is a much more accurate position.

²¹⁷ See also Amos 5:8-9; 7:10-17; 8:4-14 and appropriate comments in this thesis.

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what 3:3-8 accomplishes.²¹⁸ The prophet steps back from his word of judgment against Yahweh's people to ask them a series of rhetorical questions designed to draw them back into an attentive audience as well as to establish his own authority to say such things. However this is not a digression since he retains the mood of impending judgment through the use of images such as the roar of a lion, the snap of a snare and the destruction of a city.²¹⁹ This metaphor regarding disaster in a city is perhaps most ominous. Though no word of explicit, widespread destruction has yet been uttered in Amos 3 the tone is most definitely negative.²²⁰

The metaphor of a horn blown in a city and disaster falling are primarily designed to move the audience into giving ear to the prophet's words but one can hardly deny that the affirmation which declares disaster is a result of Yahweh's action will remain in the minds of the audience as the book progresses. Likewise, the imagery in Amos 3:8 comparing a lion's roar eliciting fear to Yahweh's word requiring one to prophecy must be allowed not only to give authenticity to Amos' message, but also to an identification in the minds of the audience of Yahweh with a lion's roar, i.e. one worthy of fear. Thus, the message of judgment in Amos 3:3-8 is implicit rather than explicit, so that the prophet's message is validated while at the same time the audience is still held in the tight suspense of a word of judgment.

Summary of 2.4.

The above section of this thesis shows the coherent nature and rhetorical flow of Amos 3:3-8. This unit of the text is the first instance of interjections in the book of Amos and demonstrates the skilful craftsmanship of the text. The series of rhetorical questions is fabulously precise, granting the audience no room to argue with the prophet's goal; to establish the divine origin of his message. In accomplishing this task, the text uses vivid imagery which solidifies Amos 3:3-8 as a unit by itself while also showing ties to imagery in Amos 1:1-2.

²¹⁸ Paul says Amos 3:3-8 makes it "useless for the populace to demand or even threaten [Amos] to remain silent." Paul, "Amos 3:3-8," 217.

²¹⁹ Though his argument seems to suppose verbal inspiration, A.S. Super is astute to the fact that Amos uses concrete images from the world around his listeners to enunciate his message of fear, insecurity and uncertainty. A. S. Super, "Figures of Comparison in the Book of Amos," *Semitics* 3 (1973): 77-78.

²²⁰ Until this point, the only word of judgment is in the OAN against Israel when Yahweh promised to press Israel down as a laden cart and their military forces would not escape. It is an obvious word of judgment, but one significantly less than the words of judgment passed against the other seven nations.

2.5. Amos 3:9-10: Nations Witness Israel's Sin

In what follows I will show the function of Amos 3:9-10 as well as establish the beginning and end of the unit and its place in the chapter.

The prophet began his speech with inciting language against Israel and, in the interest of keeping his audience's attention, was forced to briefly state his source of authority. He now returns to his original message through another use of the *שמע* imperative.

The rhetorical nature of Ashdod and Egypt has been discussed above. Much attention was spent attempting to identify figures in Amos 3 with the conclusion that Ashdod and Egypt were not "real" figures, rather a rhetorical device. The function of this device was to show the immanent nature of Yahweh's judgment. Though Yahweh has known only Israel among all the nations he now invites outsiders to observe the sins of his people. This invitation to look is tantamount to an invitation to attack, and since the invitation originates from Yahweh himself, Ashdod and Egypt stand on the threshold of carrying out Yahweh's judgment on Israel. Admittedly, the figures are merely rhetorical; however the mere presence of foreigners on the hills overlooking Israel's cities is a sign of imminent danger.

It is worth noting that it is in this section where outsiders are called to evaluate Israel that this is also the most specific mention of Israel's sins in Amos 3. To be sure, the offences listed are not tremendously specific. Israel is described as full of tumults (*מהומת*) and oppression (*עשוקים*), not knowing how to do right (*נבח*) and storing up violence (*חמס*) and destruction (*שד*) in their fortresses. So while the accusations may not be very specific, they are the only accusations in the chapter and they feature words common in the description of Israel throughout Amos.

The end of this third unit of Amos 3 could end at 3:10a with *נאם־יהוה*. This would place the mention of fortresses in 3:10b in the same unit as the plundering of the fortresses in 3:11 and *נאם־יהוה* could act as a structural indicator as it frequently does. However, while this reading may have some positive elements to commend it, it has three main detractors. To begin with, the content of Amos 3:10b closer fits with 3:9-10a. Amos 3:9 opens with a proclamation to the fortresses of Ashdod and Egypt, thus the fortresses of Israel are a fitting point of attention. Second, the *לכן* of 3:11 is a strong indicator of a textual division. Finally, the content of the message of Amos 3:9-10 is the infractions of Israel, while the content of 3:11-12 is their resulting punishments. Were 3:10b be grouped with 3:11-12 this arrangement would

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be confused. Therefore, it seems best to view the נאם־יהוה of 3:10 as functioning similarly to its occurrence in 2:11. Neither functions as a delimiter.

Summary of 2.5.

The above unit shows the function of Amos 3:9-10 in the context of Amos 3. The שׁמע imperative brings the text away from the prophet's interjection in Amos 3:3-8 and back to the topic of impending doom for Israel. It envisions foreign nations evaluating Israel's tumults and oppression and contains the most descriptive list of Israel's sins in the chapter. As a unit, Amos 3:9-10 establishes the reason for judgment, building the case for what will follow in the unit to come.

2.6. Amos 3:11-12: Israel Will be Plundered

Below I will determine the nature of judgment about to befall Israel. Amos 3:11-12 is the first description of judgment against Israel after the OAN. I will decipher the meaning of the puzzling Hebrew in Amos 3:12 and compare the fate of Israel's fortresses in 3:11 with that of the fortresses in the OAN. Together, these conclusions will give a vivid picture of the destruction awaiting Israel.

This fourth unit of Amos 3 follows closely on the heels of Amos 3:9-10. Amos 3:1-2 announces that judgment is coming. After the interjection of 3:3-8, Amos 3:9-10 presents the offences of Israel. Now, in Amos 3:11-12, the text moves to describing the nature of the announced judgment. Amos 3:11 is the first time in the book the prophet makes mention of destruction at the hands of an invading foe.²²¹ The result is that Israel will be stripped of its strength and its fortresses will be plundered. It is perhaps fitting that the first text indicating destruction by a foreign enemy is also the first text describing the effects of judgment on Israel's fortresses.

The extent of this destruction to come is described in Amos 3:12. The Hebrew is unclear, as is its meaning, but it most likely refers to Ex. 22:9-12, where a shepherd must produce the remnants of a sheep devoured by wild animals to prove his own innocence. The "remnant" is not useable and is useless for all but absolving the shepherd of guilt. The image here is similar. Israel will be all but eradicated. The irony of 3:12 is in what remnants Israel will be able to rescue. They will escape with pieces of furniture, presumably that which is important to them, just as sheep are

²²¹ Texts which suggest destruction will come at the hands of an outside enemy are Amos 3:11; 4:2-3; 5:3.

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what is important to shepherds. Even in such a damning word of judgment the prophet is sarcastic in his criticism of Israel's luxurious lifestyle.

The word of judgment in 3:11-12 is unmistakable. What 3:3-8 lacks in explicitness, 3:11-12 delivers unequivocally. An agent of Yahweh's destruction enters the scene, despite remaining anonymous. The enemy will bring down Israel's strength and plunder its strongholds. The destruction wrought will be such that "evidence" will have to be brought to explain their sudden and complete disappearance.

The complete, or almost complete, destruction pictured in the OAN is followed by Amos 3. The question that follows is, relative to the destruction in the OAN is the destruction in chapter 3 the same, intensified, or slackened? When one reads the OAN against the nation of Israel, one can hardly come away with any opinion other than that the nation will be completely destroyed. The fact that "those mighty in heart" will run away naked (Amos 2:16) does not lend itself to a literal interpretation suggestive of a remnant. Amos 2:13-16 is a picture of complete destruction.

Amos 3:12 contains difficult Hebrew as well as a *hapax legomenon*. The difficulties surround understanding different parts of **הישבים בשמרון בפאת ובדמשק ערש**. Most scholars are agreed that the aim of this verse is a comparison between the useless pieces of a sheep that a shepherd saves after it had been butchered by a lion and the useless remains of Israel after Yahweh's judgment falls. Whether the reference is to a piece of a couch and a part of a bed leg, fine fabric, or the headrest of a bed is ultimately inconsequential to correctly understanding the word of judgment.²²²

²²² Rabinowitz and Moeller specifically address the issues with understanding **ובדמשק**, both suggesting **ובדמשק** be split into two separate words, **ובד משק**, thus the phrase reads "a piece of a leg of a bed." Their reading is the basis for my own treatment of the text. Isaac Rabinowitz, "The Crux at Amos III 12," *VT* 11 (1961): 228-231. Henry R. Moeller, "Ambiguity at Amos 3:12," *BT* 15 (1964): 31-34. Many recognize that this cannot be a reference to Damascus and its fine linen due to spelling and the complexity of interpreting the rest of the verse were this the intended meaning. Paul, *Amos*, 121-122. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 234. Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 62. Carroll R., *Contexts*, 197 footnote 3. Despite the accepted recognition of this fact, Mays, Stuart and Andersen and Freedman still accept some form of "Damascus/damask." Mays, *Amos*, 66-67. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 327-328. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 408-410. Wolff and Jeremias both emend **ובדמשק**, each slightly differently, and end with the headboard (*Kopfstick*) or head rest (*Kopfstütze*) of the bed. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 234-236. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 38, 41-42.

Of interest in understanding the picture painted in Amos 3:12 is the translation of the preposition ב prefixed to פֶּאֶת in the final line. There are three main ways to translate this relationship. 1) The entire clause הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשִׁמְרוֹן בְּפֶאֶת מִטָּה וּבְדַמְשֶׁק עָרֶשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.²²³ Thus, the sons of Israel are further described as “those dwelling in Samaria on pieces of furniture.” The difficulty with this is the obvious image of Israel being saved as a shepherd “saves” a devoured sheep is ignored. 2) The ב can function as a *beth-comitantiæ*, indicating those in Samaria escape with/carrying broken pieces of furniture.²²⁴ Thus, “sons of Israel” is the antecedent of those dwelling in Samaria and in their escape they bring along the broken pieces of furniture. However, similar to the first option, the difficulty is again that the image of Israel “saved” is lost, in favor of an image of Israel “saving” furniture. 3) Finally, the ב can also function as a *beth-essentiæ*, indicating those in Samaria will escape as/in the form of broken pieces of furniture.²²⁵ Again, “sons of Israel” is the antecedent of those dwelling in Samaria but this time נֶצַל is described by the broken pieces of furniture. Only in this translation is the image of a shepherd snatching pieces of a lamb carried over to the “salvation” of Israel.

All three translations attempt to highlight the luxurious lifestyle of Samaria. However, it is the third option that shows both a grammatical and a contextual solution to this problem. The destruction of Israel is the primary emphasis while the luxurious lifestyle of those in Samaria is the subtle backdrop.

The difficulty of translating Amos 3:12 notwithstanding, this verse can hardly be heard to offer hope of a remnant.²²⁶ Though the verses which describe the coming judgment in Amos 3 are fewer and less emphatic than those in the OAN against

²²³ So Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 235. Mays, *Amos*, 66-68. Duane E. Garrett, *Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible: Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 98.

²²⁴ So Paul, *Amos*, 120. James R. Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 77-78. For the *beth-comitantiæ* see Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 281.

²²⁵ So Rabinowitz, *Crux*, 229. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 409. Stuart, *Hoseah-Jonah*, 331. Waard and Smalley effectually translate the ב in this manner, though they take considerable pains to show the emphasis is on the uselessness of the pieces of furniture and that this is not an indication of salvation or rescue for Samaria. Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 72-73. See also Joüon §133c.

²²⁶ King suggest that Amos 3:12 does indicate that a small portion of Israel would be saved by use of this proverb about a shepherd and a lamb. Philip J. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah - An Archaeological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 129.

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Israel, this is perhaps not important. That Israel will be “delivered/snatched” (נצל) in Amos 3:12 should not be interpreted to mean there will be a surviving remnant.²²⁷ While some of Israel may actually survive, the focus of this word of Yahweh is that there will be nothing of any substance that will escape his coming wrath.²²⁸ While remnant literally means “what is left of a community after it undergoes a catastrophe,”²²⁹ remnant theology includes the idea that the survival of the remnant is due to “the redemptive activity of the Yahweh of Israel,”²³⁰ an element that is totally absent in Amos 3. The survivors who live in Amos 3:12 do so with no explicit help from Yahweh and for no explicit redemptive purpose. They can hardly be called a remnant, thus Amos 3:12 offers no hope for Israel to escape destruction.

However, the complete destruction of Israel’s fortresses in the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6-16) is strangely absent. Of the eight OAN in Amos 1-2, all but the oracles against Israel and Ammon feature the formulaic phrase, “I will send fire against . . .” (ושלחתי אש ב), and the OAN against Ammon changes the phrase slightly to, “I will set fire to . . .” (והצתי אש ב). The object of the fire ranges from a city’s wall (חומה, Amos 1:7, 10, 14), to a city itself (Amos 1:12; 2:2), to fortresses of a king/dynasty or a city (Amos 1:4; 2:5).

In six of these instances, this phrase is immediately followed with the conclusion that the fire will devour fortresses. In the three occasions where fire is sent at a wall (Amos 1:7, 10, 14) the following phrase is “It will devour its fortresses,” (ואכלה ארמנותיה). In the remaining four instances the phrase is “It will devour,” (ואכלה ארמנות) and then specifies the target. When the target of the fire was the palace of a king or dynasty (Hazeal, Amos 1:4) the fire destroyed another king

²²⁷ Noble, among others, sees the concept of “remnant” in Amos, however even he does not consider 3:12 as a remnant that is important to the nation of Israel. Noble, “Remnant,” 124-125. See also, HALOT 2:717. DCH 5:741-744. Others are cautious when suggesting the verse offers hope for a remnant.

²²⁸ Paul makes explicit that the remnant which exists “is not a remnant in the positive sense,” and “is meaningless for Israel’s national existence.” Paul, Amos, 120 footnote 57. There may still be a degree of ambiguity whether this verse should be understood to give hope of a remnant or whether “snatch up/deliver” (נצל) is used sarcastically. However, the only other use of נצל in Amos comes in 4:11 where Yahweh describes his attempts to draw Israel back to himself. In this light, it is more probable that the element of Israel that is “delivered” is not as useless as the bits of lamb, though the metaphor is still vivid.

²²⁹ Lester V. Meyer, “Remnant,” ABD, 5:669.

²³⁰ J. C. Campbell, “God’s People and the Remnant,” *SJT* 3 (1950): 79.

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(Ben-Hadad).²³¹ When the fire targeted a city, it devoured the fortresses of another city (Amos 1:12; 2:2, 5), and when the fire is sent against a wall, it devours the fortresses of that city (Amos 1:7, 10, 14).

Thus, while there is some variety in the fire sent against fortresses there is much more uniformity. What is most obvious, however, is the absence of this formulaic word of judgment in the oracle against Israel. The fact that Israel's fortresses are not devoured is, however, not confined to Amos 1-2. There are three references to Israel's fortresses in Amos 3-6 and none end with their destruction.²³²

Of the three references to Israel's fortresses, only two feel the wrath of Yahweh, though they are still not devoured or destroyed. The closest Israel's fortresses come to destruction is in Amos 6:8. Here, Yahweh declares that he abhors (תאב) the pride of Jacob and hates (שנא) his fortresses and thus he swears (שבט) to deliver up, or exile (סגר), everything in the city. Amos 3:11 is a direct address from Yahweh to Israel in which he tells Israel of the enemy which will enact Yahweh's justice. This enemy will bring down (ירד) Israel's strength (עז) and plunder (בזז) its fortresses (Amos 3:11).²³³

There can be no doubt that Israel's fortresses, and thus Israel itself, will feel the wrath of Yahweh. However, not only do Israel's fortresses avoid the consuming fire seen in the OAN, all that can be confidently stated about the fortresses is that their treasures will be taken, which is far less tragic than destruction. Further, in the OAN, Israel's fortresses avoid mention completely. In Amos 3:11, the word that Israel's fortresses will be plundered is immediately followed by Yahweh's puzzling promise in Amos 3:12 that Israel will escape the coming disaster with/as fragments of furniture similar to a shepherd salvaging bits of a lamb that was eaten by a lion. Luxurious living is obviously the target in Amos 3:11-12. Israel's fortresses are

²³¹ For Hazael and Ben-Hadad as references to dynasties instead of kings see Paul, *Amos*, 50-51.

²³² There are 12 occurrences of ארמנות in the book of Amos. Seven are in the OAN (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5) and each refers to fortresses of a different nation. There are five occurrences of ארמנות in Amos 3-6. Two occurrences refer to the fortresses of Ashdod and Egypt (Amos 3:9²) and are the object of a proclamation, not a judgment. The remaining three occurrences of ארמנות refer to the fortresses of Israel. In Amos 3:9, attention is drawn to Israel's fortresses as part of a proclamation to Ashdod and Egypt. Finally, the fortresses of Israel begin to feel Yahweh's wrath in Amos 3:11 and 6:8.

²³³ Linville notes the fact that Israel's fortresses are not devoured in the OAN and suggests Amos 3:11 is that judgment finally received. Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 65, 77.

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plundered, drawing attention to that which was procured through oppression of the poor (3:9-10) and when Samaria is plundered, its citizens flee with what little creature comforts they can carry.

Whereas in the OAN the destruction carried out on the fortresses was complete, signifying the total destruction of the offending nation, the judgment carried out on Israel's fortresses is directed against the contents of the fortresses alone. This could signify judgment merely against the oppression that according to Amos 3:10 filled the fortress with treasure. However, the sarcasm found in the description of Samaritans fleeing with furniture they had "rescued" in Amos 3:12 makes Israel's luxurious lifestyle as much a reason for judgment as oppression. Taking this understanding to Amos 6:8 shows Yahweh's hatred for all the sins Israel is charged with in the book of Amos. "The pride of Jacob" refers to Israel's unwarranted self confidence and its fortresses refer to its oppression and luxurious living.²³⁴

Recognizing that fortresses symbolise the oppression of Israel in Amos 3:11 and 6:8, it remains to determine whether there is any significance in the fact that they are not destroyed in these verses nor mentioned in the OAN. To begin with, the fortresses in the OAN seem to simply refer to just what they are, strongholds or fortifications against attack. The crimes committed by the other nations in the OAN are military in nature rather than social, as in the case of Israel.²³⁵ This would suggest that the destruction of the strongholds by fire from Yahweh is simply an image for the defeat that will come at the hands of an enemy who will no doubt be ordained by Yahweh. Destruction of the strongholds in Amos 1-2 refers to national defeat due to each nation's military atrocities.

While Israel's defeat at the hands of an outside enemy is foretold in several places in Amos 3-9, this destruction is not due to military atrocities on Israel's part, nor do Israel's fortresses have simply a literal meaning. Therefore, it is not troublesome that Israel's fortresses are not consumed in the OAN against Israel since this would confuse the purpose to which the images of Israel's fortresses are used in Amos 3:11 and 6:8.

²³⁴ See 4.5. Amos 6:8-14: Yahweh's Hatred Brings Destruction for my explanation of the pride of Jacob.

²³⁵ John Barton, *Amos's Oracles Against the Nations* (SOTSMS 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3, 19-21. Judah's crime is purely religious.

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Nor does the absence of the destruction of Israel's fortresses provide a glimmer of hope for the nation. Texts such as Amos 2:13-16; 3:13-15; and 5:18-20 leave little doubt that judgment will be unavoidable. Israel's fortresses in Amos 3:11 and 6:8 symbolize wealth gained through oppression of the poor. Thus the book of Amos is clear that the fruits of Israel's oppression will be taken from them in addition to the fact that they will be taken into exile. The degree of punishment in Amos 3 is complete, though the force of this proclamation is less intense than the OAN which precede it.

Summary of 2.6.

The above discussion has shown the unavoidable destruction that awaits Israel at the hands of an anonymous foreign army. In promising their defeat, Yahweh mocks Israel for their excessive care for material pleasures by comparing their salvaged furniture to salvaged bits of a devoured lamb. This is not, however, a glimmer of hope for Israel. Judgment will come and it will be devastating.

Amos 3:11 features the first mention of the fate of Israel's fortresses, an event that is missing from the OAN against Israel in Amos 2:6-16. While every other nation prophesied against in Amos 1-2 had their fortresses devoured by fire, Israel's fortresses escaped mention. In Amos 3 Israel's fortresses are mentioned but, instead of being destroyed, they are plundered. The second mention of Yahweh's wrath against Israel's fortresses is in Amos 6:8 where, along with everything in the city, they will be "given up."

While this punishment against the fortresses looks less severe than that received by the other seven nations in the OAN, this is not so. The nations in the OAN were guilty of military atrocities thus their military stronghold was destroyed. Israel was guilty of oppressing the poor, the proceeds of which were stored in their fortresses. The plundering of Israel's fortresses symbolizes judgment against this oppression. That Israel will be judged, exiled and destroyed is evident from several passages in the book. The fate of its strongholds is used not to signify its defeat but Yahweh's judgment against what is stored in them and the practices which filled them. Thus, the judgment against Israel in Amos 3:11-12 is primarily one which targets their oppression of the poor.

2.7. Amos 3:13-15: Yahweh Describes his Reckoning

In the following section I will examine Yahweh's final word of judgment against Israel in Amos 3 and show how his words of reckoning against the altar,

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horns and houses signify his condemnation of Israel's cult and lifestyle. I will also examine the theme of Israel's luxurious lifestyle as it occurs in the book of Amos and as a partner to the theme of oppression.

The unit of Amos 3:13-15 draws the chapter neatly to a close. The reckoning mentioned in Amos 3:1-2 is finally described in 3:13-15. Amos 3:13 calls for a message to be proclaimed in Israel so that they might be warned.²³⁶ Verses 14-15 contain the message; on the day of Yahweh's reckoning against Israel he will call the altars to account, the horns of the altar will be cut off and houses will be destroyed. What must be deciphered is the relationship between these three events (reckoning against the altar, severing of the horns, and the destruction of the houses) and what they reveal about Yahweh's reckoning against Israel.

It seems fairly obvious that the severing of the horns is the result of Yahweh's פקד against the altar. Therefore, Yahweh's פקד against Israel, as described in Amos 3, will include the severing of the horns of the altar and the destruction of many houses. To determine the reason for cutting the horns off the altar one must observe their use in the cult since no biblical texts divulge their reason or function and very few describe their use.

Texts such as Exodus 21:13-14, I Kings 1:50ff and 2:28ff describe the horns of the altar as providing sanctuary though this function is most likely peripheral and related to the function of the altar itself. The nearest explanation for why the horns would be cut off is to refer back to texts describing the חטאת (sin offering). This sacrifice, which effected the purification of the temple/tabernacle among other things, was unique among the sacrifices due to the way the blood was manipulated. In this sacrifice alone, some of the blood applied to the horns of the altar after some had been sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary. Noth suggests sprinkling the blood consecrated it so that when it was applied to the horns it "would have the expiatory effect essential for the sin offering."²³⁷ Hartley suggests that "daubing the extremities of the altar with blood cleansed the entire altar."²³⁸ Carroll R. suggests the horns of the altar represent strength and/or a place of refuge, both of which will

²³⁶ For the translation of Amos 3:13 and "Hear and warn" see my comments in 2.7.1. Courtroom Imagery in Amos 3.

²³⁷ Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1965), 38.

²³⁸ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), 60.

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be taken away.²³⁹ Mays suggests cutting the horns off the altar means it would be deconsecrated, which would bring the cult to an end.²⁴⁰ Wolff notes the horns of the altar are a place of asylum but proposes that Yahweh himself destroys this place of refuge due to Israel's crimes.²⁴¹ Paul says the destruction of the altar meant "the end of the sanctuary, immunity, and expiation for the people."²⁴²

Perhaps merely saying the altar will be destroyed is too vague. This seems to be another rhetorical device of the prophet designed to say, "The altar cannot be purified, therefore the temple/community cannot be a dwelling place for Yahweh. The special relationship between Yahweh and Israel is coming to an end." For now it will suffice to understand this judgment as saying the altar will be destroyed, thus affecting an end to Israel's cult and security, and putting an end to their relationship with Yahweh. Amos 3:14 only speaks of the destruction of the altar, i.e. the cult, with no word on the state of the rest of Israel. The last verse of the chapter completes Yahweh's warning.

Amos 3:15 relates the destruction of houses, both summer, winter, ivory and large houses.²⁴³ Houses feel the brunt of Yahweh's wrath on two occasions in the book of Amos. In Amos 3:15, houses are destroyed, while in 5:11 houses are built but not lived in. In both cases, the types of houses are mentioned. The picture that arises is that of wealthy individuals with multiple houses (summer and winter), exquisite houses (ivory), enormous houses (great houses), and impressive houses (made of cut stone). In both verses the emphasis seems to be on the lifestyle embodied in the ownership of these houses, not the houses themselves.²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Carroll R., *Contexts*, 200-201.

²⁴⁰ Mays, *Amos*, 70.

²⁴¹ Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 239.

²⁴² Paul, *Amos*, 124.

²⁴³ The word בית is found 27 times in Amos. Twelve of these occurrences it is used in construct with Israel/Jacob/Joseph to refer to the collective people of Israel (3:13; 5:1,3,4,5,25; 6:1,14; 7:10,16; 9:8,9) It is used twice to refer to the house of an individual (1:4; 7:9) and twice to refer to the temple (2:8; 7:13). Six uses simply refer to a house with no added connotations (5:19; 6:9,10²,11²). The remaining five uses emphasize the extravagant nature of the house in question (3:15⁴; 5:11).

²⁴⁴ Amos 5:11 places the punishment of not living in the stone houses in parallel with not enjoying the beautiful vineyards planted. Both of these punishments are handed down because of the way the poor were being treated. At other points in the book it is evident that it is the unjust treatment of the poor that funds the luxurious lifestyle under condemnation.

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Amos 3:15 is thus a condemnation against wealthy/luxurious living that is judged, in the overall context of the book, in relationship to the poor. This is evident in Amos 3 in that the charges against Israel are due to oppression, while punishment strikes its cult and lifestyle.

The luxurious lifestyle of the rich is a theme running throughout the book of Amos. Amos does not speak against wealth or fine living in and of itself. Instead, his comments on Israel's luxurious lifestyle always go hand-in-hand with their oppression of the poor. This is most evident in three texts, Amos 2:8, 5:11 and 4:1. In Amos 2:8 Israel is accused of reclining by every altar on garments taken in pledge and drinking wine bought with fines they imposed. Both actions feature Israel enjoying a sort of high life at the expense of the poor.²⁴⁵

Similarly, Amos 5:11 parallels oppression and luxurious living. Here Yahweh says that though Israel has built stone houses and nice vineyards they will neither live in the houses nor drink the wine they received as a result of taxing the poor.²⁴⁶ The implication is again that Israel is living a comfortable life through oppression of the poor and Yahweh is displeased.²⁴⁷ A third text, Amos 4:1, also describes

²⁴⁵ While no commentary ignores the obvious oppression described in Amos 2:8, the tendency is to focus attention on "garments taken in pledge" (על-בגדים חבלים), and the cultural significance and illegality of this action rather than the final picture it paints of Israel. Andersen and Freedman say nothing about Israel drinking wine, though they briefly mention the meaning of ענש (punish, fine) and devote almost two pages to the grammar, cultural significance, and meaning of pledged garments. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 319-321. Wolff and Stuart both note that Israel was accused of financing their "drinking binges" (die Trinkgelagen), though both scholars say very little about this verse other than that Israel was oppressing the poor in a way prohibited by the law. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 204. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 317. Paul accurately notes the irony in the text of the laws being broken in front of the altar, and devotes more attention to the issue of יין ענושים (wines obtained by fines), though his overall presentation is the irony of oppression in the midst of the cult. Paul, *Amos*, 86-87. Only Mays and Jeremias interpret the text as callously as it should be. Mays notes that the legal customs of Israel had been "displaced by a crass commercial spirit," and that the courts were used to make profit for the strong. Mays, *Amos*, 47-48. Jeremias states that at issue in 2:8 was not the issue of profit, but the luxury of the "righteous" (*der Luxus der Gläubiger*). Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 23.

²⁴⁶ Hillers identifies this text as a "futility curse," consisting of a protasis (activity) and an apodosis (frustration of the activity). Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr 16; Rome: E Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1964), 28-29.

²⁴⁷ Several scholars recognize that this is an allusion to Deuteronomy 28:30, 39 and Zephaniah 1:13. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 348. Paul, *Amos*, 173. Mays, *Amos*, 94. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 291. Paul notes that this curse is reversed in Amos 9:14 while Andersen and Freedman note that it was promised in Deuteronomy 6:10-11, reversed in Amos 5:11, then restored in Amos 9:14. Paul, *Amos*, 173. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 501. However, discussion about the fact that the lifestyle enjoyed by the rich was provided by their taxation and oppression of the poor is typically brief or overlooked by all commentators in favor of discussion about taxation, imprecation, and intertextual allusions or dependence.

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oppression of the poor in the same context as luxurious living. The cows of Bashan are accused of three offences, defrauding the poor, robbing the needy and commanding their lords to bring them drink. Admittedly the connection is not as evident as in the first two examples, but the progression from robbing the poor to what appears to be cavalier drinking cannot be ignored. Oppression and a luxurious lifestyle go hand in hand in the book of Amos.²⁴⁸

In addition to these three texts there are four more texts that also make a connection between luxurious living and oppression in the book of Amos, 2:6; 3:12; 6:4-6 and 8:4-6. Amos 6:4-6 presents a long list of activities describing Israel's luxurious lifestyle. The description ends with the accusation that despite Israel's comfortable lifestyle they are not concerned with the ruin of Joseph. While this text does not specify that Israel's lifestyle was funded by oppression, it does describe Israel as being solely focused on this comfortable lifestyle with no concern for the destruction that was to come as a result of their actions. So once again, the lifestyle itself is not condemned but it cannot be examined apart from the other activities, namely oppression, of which Israel was guilty.

As has been pointed out above, Amos 3:9-10 identify the fortresses of Israel with the fruits of Israel's oppression. The claim in Amos 3:12 that Israel will flee with pieces of furniture, another testament to their obsession with their comfortable lifestyle, is not part of the same unit that discusses oppression. However, the לִבָּן in Amos 3:11 shows that 3:11-12 follow directly on from 3:9-10. Similarly, in 3:10 Israel is accused of storing the results of their oppression in their strongholds and

²⁴⁸ Andersen and Freedman make virtually no comment on the offences of the cows, focusing instead on the identity of the cows and the significance of their address to "their lords." Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 421-422. Wolff recognizes the oppression and the hedonistic nature (*das genußsüchtige Wesen*) of the cows but makes no connection between the two. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 244. Stuart also ignores the connection between oppression and luxurious living, commenting that the guilt of the cows was due to their irresponsibility towards their inferiors and their superiors. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 332. Mays starts to recognize the connection when he says the cows nagged for "wealth to support their indolent dalliance." Mays, *Amos*, 72. McLaughlin agrees with Barstad that Amos 4:1 refers to the *marzēah*, though correctly stipulating that the prophet does not call it a *marzēah* because his primary concern was highlighting the injustice which provided the luxury to participate in the festival. McLaughlin, *Marzeah*, 119. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 42-44. Jeremias, Paul and Carroll R. all recognize the use of oppression to provide for the lifestyle of the cows, with Carroll R. phrasing it succinctly, "enjoyment is grounded in extortion and that satiation ignores suffering." Carroll R., *Contexts*, 201. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 44. Paul, *Amos*, 129. Ackerman proposes those participating in the marzeah festival were property owners who could afford to participate because of their oppression of the poor, thus the marzeah festivals were condemned not as "religious apostasy, but as social abomination." Susan Ackerman, "A Marzeah in Ezekiel 8:7-13?" *HTR* 82 (1989): 279.

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these strongholds will be plundered in 3:11, thus the idea of oppression is very much in mind when 3:12 attacks Israel's luxurious living.

The final two texts, Amos 2:6 and 8:4-6, are very similar. Amos 2:6 opens the OAN against Israel and describes Israel as selling the righteous and needy, just before moving into a description of their luxurious living in 2:8. Likewise, Amos 8:4-6 describes Israel as using dishonest business practices to increase their wealth and this time buying the poor and needy instead of selling them.

Two points are thus obvious in examining the theme of luxurious living in the book of Amos. First, luxurious living was an offence but only because Israel was living this way at the expense of, or through the exploitation of the poor. Second, this is a theme which stretches throughout the entire book. It first appears in the OAN, finds its strongest concentration in Amos 3-6, but is also found in Amos 7-9.²⁴⁹ The theme of luxurious living is then intricately tied to the book's theme of oppression in such a way that one cannot view one without the other. In the book of Amos, luxurious living is condemned because it comes only through oppression of the poor. Just as the theme of oppression unites the book of Amos, so does the theme of luxurious living.

The question that must now be addressed is how this condemnation fits into the day of reckoning proclaimed in Amos 3:13-15. Specifically, does 3:15 describe an actual destruction of houses meaning simply the fruits of the unjust practices described throughout the book or does it hint at widespread destruction and/or judgment against the whole nation of Israel? It certainly has hints of destruction against the whole nation, and this is found elsewhere in the book as well.²⁵⁰

It is important not to jump immediately into a literal reading of what has so far been primarily rhetorical imagery. Just as the severing of the horns incorporated what the horns were used for in order to speak against the cult, this word against the

²⁴⁹ Super draws on the descriptions running throughout the book of Amos to describe Israel as “. . . these overstuffed villains, husbands of the pampered fat cows of Bashan, who live in houses of ivory, lie down cynically beside the altars and cover themselves with these pledged garments while they guzzle wine bought with their ill-gotten gains.” Super, “Figures of Comparison,” 78-79. This description is in line with my own reading of the text in that it views Israel as the target of all words of judgment in the book of Amos. Likewise, it shows the close ties between oppression and luxurious living.

²⁵⁰ Texts such as Amos 3:12 and 5:23 suggest widespread destruction though texts such as Amos 5:10-12 and 6:1-7 suggest punishment directed primarily at a guilty segment of the population.

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houses should be understood to refer to something bigger than itself: the luxurious lifestyle of Israel's elite.

There can be no doubt that this reckoning will not be a pleasant one. The difficulty lies in determining whether this chapter serves as a warning with the intent of drawing Israel to repentance or whether it is a promise of immanent doom. Two factors should be considered. First, nothing in the chapter suggests that Israel should have cause to hope that judgment may be averted. Other chapters may contain what appear to be loopholes in the message of doom in the book; however Amos 3 remains emphatically pessimistic with regard to the future of Israel. The chapter sees only judgment for Israel. It is only when one looks for hope despite the obvious sense of the text that arguments such as "the purpose of prophecy" arise. If Yahweh sends a prophet to his people to tell them of judgment to come this must either be because 1) Yahweh wants to give them the opportunity to repent, or 2) Yahweh is somehow glorified or justified in the judgment he sends, regardless of the response of the people. Amos 4:6-11 certainly fits in category 1. Amos 3 seems more likely to fall under category 2. In the context of the book as a whole, it is clear that this judgment will at some point come to an end and that the judgment has a redemptive purpose. However, Amos 3 specifically, as well as the context of the book as a whole, does not present much that could be called hope, at least as far as avoiding this judgment.

Second, the rhetorical inclusion of Ashdod and Egypt lends certain finality to the reckoning. Had Yahweh simply addressed Israel, it would have been easier to "assume" that this was a message with a degree of leniency in it. As it is the inclusion of outside nations, rhetorical or not, solidifies the promised judgment.²⁵¹ Ashdod and Egypt have been summoned. The problem is no longer just between Israel and Yahweh, thus it will be harder to avert judgment.

Summary of 2.7.

The above reading shows that Amos 3:13-15 draws the chapter to a close by once again passing judgment on Israel's oppression. Yahweh's promise to cut off the horns of the altar signifies an end to Israel's cultic efficacy and security, and thus an

²⁵¹ Situations of domestic disturbances illustrate this point. An enraged/abused spouse may threaten to phone the authorities in the attempt to pacify the other. However, once the authorities have been phoned, they will respond, regardless of whether tempers have subsided.

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end to its relationship with Yahweh. Likewise, Yahweh's promise to destroy houses shows his condemnation of Israel's luxurious living. While the chapter has shown accusations against Israel's oppression, its punishment targets Israel's cult and lifestyle.

I also highlight the theme of luxurious living in the book of Amos. Israel's oppression of the poor is constantly seen in the context of luxurious living and Israel's main concern throughout the book is their own lifestyle. While luxurious living is often judged in the book, it is done so due to oppression of the poor which provides the funds for such a lifestyle. The theme of luxurious living is tied so closely to the theme of oppression that the two can be equally used to unify the book of Amos as a whole. The book of Amos, and Amos 3, condemn Israel's oppression and luxurious lifestyle, thus judgment is unavoidable.

2.7.1. Courtroom Imagery in Amos 3

The following section will examine the imagery present in Amos 3 to demonstrate its courtroom connections. Courtroom characters will be identified in the chapter, vocabulary will be noted and the implications of a courtroom setting for the chapter will be drawn.

It has been shown above that the tone of the whole of Amos 3 is decidedly negative with no possibility of hope. This conclusion is further supported by recognition of courtroom imagery in the text and the implications this brings. That Amos 3 contains courtroom imagery or an element of lawsuit language is evident both in specific words used as well as in the imagery of the text itself.²⁵² The chapter begins with an almost incontrovertible charge being levelled against Israel. Evidence is produced via Yahweh's testimony. Most convincing is the command for the third party, the nations of Ashdod and Egypt, to observe the validity of Yahweh's charges. The summons to the defendant occurs in Amos 3:1 and 3:2 contains the refutation of the defendant's possible arguments. The pronouncement of guilt against Israel occurs

²⁵² The discussion of covenant lawsuit should be well known. A study of Amos 3 will inevitably encounter this discussion; however the issue of covenant is beyond the bounds of this thesis, though discussions of lawsuit or courtroom imagery will likely overlap discussions of covenant lawsuit.

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in Amos 3:9d, with their specific indictments following in 3:10.²⁵³ The chapter ends with Israel's sentence in Amos 3:14-15.²⁵⁴

In noting the many words used in ריב patterns, Gemser mentions the imperative of ידע as an "expression for summoning," which is found in Amos 3:13.²⁵⁵ He also lists the participle of ידע as an indicator of a witness that saw an event.²⁵⁶ The verbal form occurs in Amos 3:2 with much the same function.

It is nearly impossible to resist reading Amos 3 as a courtroom scene based on verses 9 and 13 when Ashdod and Egypt are called to examine Israel's acts of cruelty and then testify against it. In point of fact, the characters in the courtroom can be found within the chapter. Yahweh acts as plaintiff when he "speaks against" (דבר עליכם) Israel in verse 1. Yahweh's statement that he has "known" only Israel in 3:1 may serve as an indicator that he is a witness in the court case as well. When he promises to "reckon against them" (אפקד עליכם) in 3:2 (cf. 3:14f), Yahweh then acts as judge.²⁵⁷ Throughout the chapter Israel is described as the defendant, evidenced by the charges brought against it (3:1-2, 9-10, 14). Additionally, the (rhetorical) nations of Ashdod and Egypt in 3:9 function as witnesses as well.

Part of Israel's pain in this chapter is hearing these foreign nations being called in as witnesses against itself. Israel's relationship with Yahweh is no longer a

²⁵³ Ramsay suggests Amos 3:10-11 is a "judgment speech," a form of formal Hebrew court proceedings where the accuser gave charges against the accused in the third person and then the court gave the decision directly to the accused. George W. Ramsey, "Speech-Forms in Hebrew Law and Prophetic Oracles," *JBL* 96 (1977): 54-55. Sinclair briefly looks at Amos 3:1-2 and 3:9-12 in light of the courtroom motif and while he agrees there is courtroom imagery here, his treatment seems to force the text into agreeing with a pattern of judgment outlined by Gunkel. Lawrence A. Sinclair, "The Courtroom Motif in the Book of Amos," *JBL* 85 (1966).

²⁵⁴ The approach of Huffmon differs from that of Boyle who groups chapters 3-4 of Amos together as one unit in an attempt to "disclose the structure of the covenant lawsuit as it appears in the canonical book." However, this involves ignoring major textual indicators in the pursuit. Boyle, "Covenant Lawsuit." Huffmon's approach begins noting the elements of covenant lawsuit forms, and then notes where they occur in chapter three, rather than attempting to force a specific form onto the text. Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959).

²⁵⁵ B. Gemser, "The RĪB- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (VTSup 3; ed. Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 123.

²⁵⁶ Gemser, "RĪB- or Controversy-Pattern," 124.

²⁵⁷ Gemser also notes, "As there is no sharp distinction between judges and witnesses, it is often not clear in which capacity the members of the tribunal are summoned to act." Gemser, "RĪB- or Controversy-Pattern," 124. De Roche also acknowledges Yahweh's ability to act as both plaintiff and judge, though it is done within his argument to abandon the terms "prophetic/covenant lawsuit." Michael de Roche, "Yahweh's RĪB Against Israel: A Reassessment of the So-Called "Prophetic Lawsuit" in the Preexilic Prophets," *JBL* 102 (1983): 572-573.

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private matter between it and Yahweh, now there is an “arbiter” or witness who listens to evidence presented by Yahweh.²⁵⁸ The gavel has fallen and Yahweh’s judgment is final.

The closing proclamation in Amos 3:13-15 opens with what several translations render as “Hear and testify” against Israel.²⁵⁹ The *hiphil* of עָוֶד frequently carries the meaning of testifying or being called to testify, however it can also mean to warn someone.²⁶⁰ Its use in Amos 3:13 seems most in line with the idea of giving warning. The object of this testimony is a word of warning regarding Yahweh’s coming judgment; it is not testimony that brings about the judgment.²⁶¹ Witnesses are being called to hear Yahweh’s message of judgment and warn Israel of what will happen should they continue. However, it is hard to ignore the courtroom imagery of this word regardless of the fact that it does not here carry the meaning of formal testimony of a witness.

The words of the prophet in Amos 3:3-8 and 3:11-12 also do not appear to have any relation to courtroom imagery.²⁶² However they are not entirely out of place where they stand and both have a function. It is useful to point out at this time a phenomenon that is repeated in the book of Amos. Several times, when the message of the prophet is particularly harsh, the text features an interjection that serves to lend support or authority to his words. When noting the speaker in the units of Amos 3 the first person words of the prophet in Amos 3:3-8 come as an interruption to the word of doom that begins the chapter. This interruption should not be understood to disrupt the message or flow of the direct speech. In Amos 3, the rhetorical questions serve to testify to the prophet’s authority to proclaim this message and authenticate the message as coming from Yahweh himself. At this point, the prophet continues

²⁵⁸ Huffmon, following Edouard Cuq, suggests the purpose of the witness may have been to ensure the Judge, Yahweh, would not change his verdict at a later time. Huffmon, “Covenant Lawsuit,” 293.

²⁵⁹ Both the NIV and the NASB translate this as “against the house of Jacob.” The KJV translates it as “in the house of Jacob.” All three translate עָוֶד as “testify.”

²⁶⁰ This meaning can be seen in texts such as Deuteronomy 8:19; Jeremiah 6:10 and Zechariah 3:6. See also, DCH 6:287-288. HALOT 2:795:796.

²⁶¹ Such as in 1 Kings 21:10, 13.

²⁶² As Huffmon shows, the covenant lawsuit form frequently carried accusations in the form of questions. Huffmon, “Covenant Lawsuit,” 285. Though the rhetorical questioning in Amos 3:3-8 should not be considered part of courtroom imagery on this feature alone, its style is not foreign to this type of literature.

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with his picture of the courtroom. The nations of Ashdod and Egypt are introduced and Israel's future begins to look grim.

Additionally, Amos 3:11-12 seems to be an interjection that serves not to lend support or authority, but to threaten. The interjecting material in Amos 3:11-12 introduces the anonymous foreign nation who will work as Yahweh's hand of justice in 3:13-15. Yahweh's judgment will not take the form of plague, famine or other natural disaster. Instead, it will come at the hands of a foreign people, the highest indignity.

So while the material in Amos 3:3-8, 11-12 seem to interrupt the flow of the judgment speech, they actually supplement it. After 3:3-8, Amos is allowed to continue speaking uninterrupted, and Amos 3:11-12 introduces the shadowy character that is alluded to in the closing courtroom scene.

Several elements in Amos 3 have been highlighted to show the overall tone of judgment in the chapter, and each element certainly does pronounce this judgment. However, with the added awareness that these elements take place within a larger framework of a courtroom should make that tone of judgment all the more emphatic. The elements of judgment such as Yahweh's coming reckoning against Israel notwithstanding their unique relationship with Yahweh, the ominous imagery, foreign nations standing on its hills and plundering its strongholds, and Yahweh's destruction of cult and lifestyle are only intensified when placed within the framework of a formal legal setting with judge, plaintiff, and witnesses. This is not a casual complaint, it is an official and serious word from Yahweh against Israel set and phrased in such a way that it cannot be ignored.

Summary of 2.7.1.

In the above I have demonstrated how the image of a courtroom pervades Amos 3. Characters such as the defendant, plaintiff, witnesses and judge can all be identified. Charges are brought against Israel and judgment is passed. External arbiters are present as threatening enforcers. Furthermore, some vocabulary in the chapter is cited as common in courtroom setting texts. Likewise, the interjecting material in Amos 3:3-8, 11-12, while not part of the courtroom imagery, do not detract from the setting but support and maintain its tone. Judgment is certainly the message of Amos 3 but recognition of the courtroom setting makes this tone even more ominous.

2.8. Conclusion to Chapter 2

In chapter two, I have demonstrated the validity of a tripartite division of the book of Amos into Amos 1-2, 3-6, 7-9. This is based on the material in these sections as well as delimiting formulas present in each unit (כה אמר יהוה על-שלשה פשעי ____ in Amos 1-2, ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו in Amos 1-2, שמעו את-הדבר הזה in Amos 3-6, and כה הראני אדני יהוה in Amos 7-9). From this, Amos 3-6 can be divided into three smaller units of Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-6:14. These divisions are made based on the delineating nature of the שמעו את-הדבר הזה formula as well as the similar opening structure of each of the texts.

This division of the book of Amos allowed Amos 3 to be examined as a unit in itself. The delimiting nature of שמע in Amos 3 allowed for a preliminary division of the chapter but attention to speakers and addressees, imperatives and the wider context was necessary in order to further divide the chapter into its respective units. This examination led to the division of Amos 3 into Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15.

The extended examination of the structure of the book of Amos, Amos 3-6 and finally Amos 3 was necessary in order to enable a more effective and fluid exegesis of the chapter. Amos 3 is concerned with only one thing: proclaiming the coming judgment against unjust Israel. Two main and closely related elements in this chapter support this reading. The first element is the three-fold use of פקד in 3:2,¹⁴ along with the overarching message of judgment in 3:1-2, 11-12, 13-15. The second element is the rhetorical use of courtroom imagery to enunciate the word of judgment. This examination of the message of judgment and the courtroom imagery contributes to the final conclusion that the message of Amos 3 is one of complete doom for Israel. The above discussion shows the overall craftsmanship which exists in Amos 3. The chapter carries a foreboding tone throughout. It begins and ends with the promise that Yahweh will “reckon” (פקד) Israel’s sins against them. The words of the prophet in 3:3-8, though justifying his authority, continue to carry on the theme of impending doom.

Amos 3 also introduces the reader to the artistic qualities of the text. Through attention to speakers we are able to divide the chapter into five smaller units and we see the beginning of the use of interjections in the book of Amos. The text uses the rhetorical figures of Ashdod and Egypt to draw the audience into silence and instill fear, and courtroom imagery throughout adds a further dimension to the prophesied judgment.

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Finally, the chapter provides a continuation of the theme of oppression throughout the book. Words for oppression began in the OAN and, though they are sparse in Amos 3, the chapter continues to carry this theme. Interestingly, Amos 3 is concerned more with judgment for these offences than it is with describing them. The chapter closes with a judgment against both the lifestyle and the cult of Israel, followed by a doxology praising Yahweh who is creator and judge.

The theme of judgment is prominent in this chapter but themes of luxurious living and oppression can also be seen and all have already been shown to be unifying themes for the book as a whole. This examination of Amos 3 has highlighted the foreboding message of the word of Yahweh against Israel. The rhetorical composition of the chapter advances this word, the courtroom imagery gives weight to the message and the virtual absence of any respite from judgment makes Amos 3 a dark and oppressive day for its audience. A day of judgment is coming against Israel for which there is no escape. The interplay between text units and rhetorical structuring forces the reader to approach the chapter as a whole rather than as individual units. It is only through reading the chapter as a single unit that its smaller units can function to their fullest extent. And an awareness of the function of these smaller units with the chapter shows the inter-connectedness of Amos 3 with Amos 3-6 as well as the book as a whole.

CHAPTER 3: REJECTION AND EXILE (AMOS 4:1-13)

In this chapter I will show how Amos 4:1-13 functions as a complete literary unit. Each of the four sub-units in the chapter are essential to the form and function of the whole and each has connections to the rest of the chapter, to Amos 3-6 and to the book as a whole. Furthermore, I will highlight the primary message of Amos 4; that Yahweh will judge Israel because she has rejected him. Israel's rejection is two-fold, they oppressed the poor to fund their luxurious lifestyle (4:1) and they rejected Yahweh's attempts to draw Israel back to him (4:6-11). Likewise, the texts show Yahweh's two-fold judgment on Israel. Yahweh is already rejecting Israel's cultic practice (4:4-5) and he promises to send more plagues (4:12) of which exile will certainly be one (4:2-3).

3.1. Amos 4:1-13: Structural Observations

In this introduction to Amos 4, I will deal with structure and content issues that aid in delineating an outline of the chapter. Amos 4 contains several indicators that help identify units and find the structure of the chapter. These indicators include the formulaic use of *שמעו את־הדבר הזה* in Amos 4:1, the repetition of *ולא־שבתם עדי* in 4:6-11, and the *לכן* in 4:12. In addition to these indicators, the content of much of the chapter indicates where smaller text units begin and end. Content indicators include the declaration of exile in 4:2-3, the cultic theme in 4:4-5 and Yahweh's repeated judgment on Israel in 4:6-11. After noting these indicators I will present an outline of the text that best accounts for the content and structure of the text and allows for Amos 4 to be correctly examined and exegeted.

Amos 4 begins with the imperative *שמעו את־הדבר הזה*, whose occurrence consistently signifies divisions in Amos 3-6. Since there are no other occurrences of *שמע* in Amos 4, as there are in Amos 3, this occurrence only serves to demarcate the start of Amos 4. The *שמעו את־הדבר הזה* of Amos 5:1 demarcates the beginning of the next unit, thus the end of Amos 4:1-13.

Outside of this indicator, the reader next identifies the repetition of *ולא־שבתם עדי* in 4:6-11. The content of this section is Yahweh recounting his judgment on Israel in the past, and is set apart from the rest of the chapter. However, the entire phrase should not be understood to indicate division or end of thought. Certainly the phrase *ולא־שבתם עדי* only occurs in the book of Amos in 4:6, 8, 9, 10 and 11, and in each of these instances it is immediately followed by *נאמ־ייהוה*.

REJECTION AND EXILE (AMOS 4:1-13)

However, the word נאם occurs 21 times in the book of Amos (Amos 2:11, 16; 3:10, 13, 15; 4:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; 6:8, 14; 8:3, 9, 11; 9:7, 8, 12, 13) and the phrase נאם־יהוה occurs 16 times (Amos 2:11, 16; 3:10, 15; 4:3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; 6:8, 14; 9:7, 8, 12, 13), though the remaining five occurrences only differ due to the insertion of אדני between נאם and יהוה (Amos 3:13; 4:5; 8:3, 9, 11). While the phrase ולא־שבתם occurs five times in chapter 4 (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11), נאם־יהוה occurs seven times (Amos 4:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). While נאם־יהוה עדי ולא־שבתם occurs only within the unit of 4:6-11 (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11), נאם־יהוה concludes two additional sections of the chapter (Amos 4:1-3, 4-5). For this reason, the place of נאם־יהוה should be evaluated for its function in the chapter as a whole whereas ולא־שבתם עדי functions only within Amos 4:6-11.

As was stated above, Amos 4:1-3 is an introduction to the whole of Amos 4 in the same way as 3:1-2; 5:1-3 and 8:4-6 introduce their respective units.²⁶³ The שמעו את־הדבר הזה establishes 4:1 as a new unit, independent from 3:1-13, though this is a contested issue in Amos studies. Several scholars group Amos 4:1-3 with a unit begun earlier. Hadjiev understands the unit to be 3:1-4:3 and divides this into 3:1-3, 3-8, 9-15, and 4:1-3.²⁶⁴ Boyle does not structure the unit (3:1-4:13) in outline form. Instead, since she is examining the covenant lawsuit form, she identifies elements of the covenant lawsuit and indicates which verses of Amos 3:1-4:13 correspond to each element. She does not account for each verse in this unit but she does note that Amos 3:1-4:3 corresponds to the “Call to witness to hear and testify,” indicating that this text should be understood as a single unit.²⁶⁵ Achtemeier sees a covenant context in Amos’ message with the repetitions of Adonai Elohim Sebaoth being significant. For this reason she groups Amos 3:13-4:13 as a unit divided into 3:13-15; 4:1-3, and 4:4-13.²⁶⁶ Stuart, Jeremias and Andersen and Freedman understand Amos 3:9-4:3 as oracles against Samaria though their divisions are all different. Stuart divides the unit into Amos 3:9-11, 12, 13-15; 4:1-3.²⁶⁷ Jeremias

²⁶³ For a full treatment on this topic see 2.1. Amos 3-6: Structural Observations.

²⁶⁴ Hadjiev, *Composition*, 140-147.

²⁶⁵ Boyle, “Covenant Lawsuit,” 342-349.

²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets* (NIBCOT 1; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 167.

²⁶⁷ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 329.

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divides the unit into Amos 3:9-11, 12-15; 4:1-3.²⁶⁸ Andersen and Freedman divide the text into Amos 3:9-12, 13-15; 4:1-3.²⁶⁹ Brueggemann states no position on the issue but treats Amos 4:4-13 with no regard for 4:1-3.²⁷⁰ Though grouping Amos 3:9-4:3 does have support from many scholars, their lack of unity in dividing the text further simply shows that their conclusion is not self evident. Furthermore, Jeremias suggests that the late addition of Amos 3:13-15 creates an *inclusio* with 3:2, causing Amos 4:1 to appear to be a new unit.²⁷¹ Andersen and Freedman treat Amos 4:1-3 with 3:9-15 as oracles against Samaria but in their introduction to Amos 4 they group 4:1-3 and 4:4-5 together as charges against two groups of people, and continue to outline the chapter as I have done in this thesis.²⁷² Both of these concessions, coming from scholars who are not in total agreement with my delimitation of Amos 4, give weight to my understanding of the text.

Admittedly, there is some disconnect between the content of 4:1-3 and 4:4-5, and perhaps some disconnect between 4:1-3 and 3:13-15.²⁷³ However, grouping 4:1-3 with the content before it is a step in the wrong direction. Amos 4:4-5 cannot begin a new unit. It is too abrupt and specifies no audience. To create a division here is to create a larger problem than separating Amos 4:1-3 from 3:9-15. It is perhaps helpful to note again Amos' use of linking material. Just as Amos 2:6-16 links the OAN with the rest of the book, though remaining firmly inside the unit of 1:3-2:16, so Amos 4:1-3 must be viewed. It can be closely related to the destruction of chapter three in a way that binds the two chapters together. However, Andersen and Freedman's chiasm of 3:9-4:3 is unsatisfactory, separating 3:9-15 from the rest of chapter three and ignoring the *inclusio* of 3:1-2 and 13-15.

²⁶⁸ Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 39-46.

²⁶⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 401-425.

²⁷⁰ Brueggemann, "Amos IV 4-13," 1-15.

²⁷¹ Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 39. Jeremias does suggest that the "Hear this word" of Amos 4:1 did not originally introduce larger collections like in Amos 3:1 and 5:1.

²⁷² Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 412.

²⁷³ Williams perhaps overstates the case by saying that 4:1-3 is "far removed" from both 3:13-15 as well as 4:4-5. A. J. Williams, "A Further Suggestion About Amos 4:1-3," *VT* 29 (1979): 206. While Paul remains one of the few supporters of Amos 4:1 beginning a new section the same way 3:1 and 5:1 do, he still makes an unnecessary disconnect between 4:1-3 and 4:4-13. Paul, *Amos*, 128-138.

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Some scholars propose that Amos 3:1-2 or even Amos 3-6 are part of the oracle against Israel. Noble divides the book of Amos into Amos 1:2-3:8; 3:9-6:14 and 7:1-9:15.²⁷⁴ I strongly disagree that there is a structural connection between the OAN against Israel (Amos 2:6-16) and the material that follows. The שמעו את־הדבר הזה formula firmly sets Amos 3-6 apart from the OAN just as the visions of Amos 7-9 are separate structurally from Amos 3-6. However, the length of the OAN against Israel as well as the focus on Israel as opposed to the other nations for the duration of the book of Amos is a strong argument in favour of the position that the penultimate oracle in the OAN is Judah in order to build confidence in an Israelite audience which is then shattered when that focus turns to Israel. The message of the OAN against Israel certainly continues for the rest of the book, so in that sense I can agree that Amos 3-9 is in some way a continuation of the OAN against Israel. However, due to the form-critical category of oracles against the nations as well as the variance in the rest of the text of the book of Amos, I find it difficult to understand or describe the material that follows Amos 2:6-16 as part of the OAN against Israel.

The שמעו את־הדבר הזה of Amos 4:1 begins the unit and נאם־יהוה is the indicator of the end of this and other units within the chapter. Throughout the chapter this phrase indicates the end of every thought except the last, and this is most likely due to the hymnic nature of 4:13. Therefore, as a preliminary guideline, one may look at the text between the נאם־יהוה occurrences and evaluate them in determining the structure of the chapter.

Dividing the text along these lines provides the following outline and shows the purposeful structure of Amos 4.

1. Introduction to Coming Judgment (4:1-3)
2. Cultic Ritual Rejected (4:4-5)
3. Yahweh's Attempts at Restoration Rejected (4:6-11)
 - a. Plague of hunger (4:6)
 - b. Plague of drought (4:7-8)
 - c. Plague on crops (4:9)
 - d. Plague of disease (4:10)
 - e. Plague of destruction (4:11)

²⁷⁴ Noble, "Literary Structure," 210.

4. Introduction to Yahweh Who Will Judge (4:12-13)

Summary of 3.1.

This outline shows the craftsmanship of Amos 4. The opening unit introduces the audience and the coming judgment. The concluding unit promises more judgment and introduces Yahweh who will pass this judgment. The two middle units are connected by their similar message of rejection and both contribute to the chapter as a whole by giving further reasons for the judgment. Therefore, Amos 4:1-13 must be viewed as a single unit whose individual units combine to create a structural whole and a unified message.

3.2. Amos 4:1-3: The Cows of Bashan

Over the next few pages I will examine Amos 4:1-3. My examination will show that “cows of Bashan” is a synecdoche for Israel as a whole, that Israel is accused of oppressing the righteous, poor, needy and afflicted in order to live a luxurious lifestyle, and that social justice is a very serious offence in the eyes of Yahweh.

It was introduced above that the opening address of Amos 4, along with that of Amos 3 and 5, is formulaic. Amos 4:1 is a call to attention and identification of the audience, building towards the word of Yahweh in 4:2. The intended audience is addressed and identified, garnering their attention and announcing their offence. The text then moves to the word of judgment.

As has also been mentioned above, the themes of judgment and oppression are closely related. There are two verbs of oppression in the whole of Amos 4; עשק and רצץ, and both are participial forms. The only occurrence of these roots in Amos is in Amos 4:1. Examined individually, עשק has financial implications. The verb is used 37 times in the Hebrew Bible, primarily in the Psalms, wisdom and prophetic texts.²⁷⁵ Its occurrences in Leviticus help define the nature of oppression. Lev. 5:20-26 sets forth the means of restitution when someone incurs guilt through acting deceitfully (כחש) towards his neighbor with regard to a deposit or a pledge, through

²⁷⁵ Leviticus 5:21, 23; 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14; 28:29, 33; 1 Samuel 12:3, 4; 1 Chronicles 16:21; Job 10:3; 40:23; Psalms 72:4; 103:6; 105:14; 119:121, 122; 146:7; Proverbs 14:31; 22:16; 28:3, 17; Ecclesiastes 4:1²; Isaiah 23:12; 52:4; Jeremiah 7:6; 21:12; 50:33; Ezekiel 18:18; 22:29²; Hosea 5:11; 12:8; Amos 4:1; Micah 2:2; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5. See also, HALOT 2:897. DCH 6:619-621.

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robbery (גזל), through oppression (עשק), or by lying (בזש) about finding something that does not belong to him. The picture is at the very least one of ill-gotten gain. The active nature of עשק coupled with the fact that its parallel is withholding a pledge and robbery suggests עשק carries the connotation of profiting at someone else's expense. Similarly, in Lev. 19:13, עשק is paralleled with robbery (גזל) but also of not paying a worker at the end of the day. Here the connotation shifts from a neighbor defrauding his equal to an employer extorting his worker. In Proverbs עשק is committed against the דלים (Proverbs 14:31; 22:16; 28:13). Three times in the prophets, עשק is committed against, or commanded not to be committed against, a group who cannot defend themselves. In Jeremiah 7:6 it is the alien (גר), orphan (יתום), and widow (אלמנה). In Ezek. 22:29 it is the needy (עני), poor (אביון) and the alien (גר). In Zechariah 7:10 it is the widow (אלמנה), the orphan (יתום), the alien (גר) and the needy (עני). עשק is used in parallel with theft (גזל) in Jeremiah 21:12, Ezekiel 18:18; 22:29 and Micah 2:2. More examples can be given but a picture is becoming clear: while עשק certainly means "to profit from that which is not your own," in the prophets it carries the added characteristic of those who have taken from those who do not have.

Comparatively, רצץ is used 20 times in the Hebrew Bible and carries two distinct but related meanings.²⁷⁶ To begin with, רצץ means literally "to crush/break" such as when a woman dropped a millstone on Ahimelech's head (Judges 9:53) or when a bowl or wheel breaks (Ecclesiastes 12:6). In the context of oppression, רצץ is used as it is in Job 20:19, the poor are רצץ and abandoned (עזב). Thus, רצץ does not describe the method or manner of the oppression. Instead, it describes how the oppression is felt by the afflicted party.

Examined together, the two words occur together only five times in the Hebrew Bible.²⁷⁷ When they occur together עשק always precedes רצץ. In the two occurrences in 1 Samuel, the prophet defends that he has not taken unfairly what was

²⁷⁶ Genesis 25:22; Deuteronomy 28:33; Judges 9:53; 10:8; 1 Samuel 12:3, 4; 2 Kings. 18:21; 23:12 (with emendation); 2 Chronicles 16:10; Job 20:19; Psalms 74:14; Ecclesiastes 12:6²; Isaiah 36:6; 42:3, 4; 58:6; Ezekiel 29:7; Hosea 5:11; Amos 4:1. See also, HALOT 3:1285-1286.

²⁷⁷ Deuteronomy 28:33; 1 Samuel 12:3, 4; Hosea 5:11; and Amos 4:1. Additionally, these are the only times the two words are found in the wider context of one another. Whereas some of the adjectives referring to the oppressed might not be parallel to one another, they are still in the general context of a longer text about oppression. עשק and רצץ are normally found on their own except for these five instances where they are parallel with one another.

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not his, most likely through means of his office. Deuteronomy and Hosea feature the words describing judgment to come, with Deuteronomy foretelling oppression by an outside enemy while Hosea simply speaks the coming judgment on Israel at the hand of Yahweh. Even the few times the two words appear together does not provide a consistent enough picture to define the exact type of oppression taking place. The context of Amos lends itself towards reading the occurrences in 4:1 as financial oppression or extortion. Samuel's speech in 1 Sam 12 allows this translation, though would not necessitate it. The uses in Hosea and Deuteronomy are not as helpful. Though Hosea 5:10 speaks of moving boundary stones, both texts are sufficiently vague enough that the exact nature of the oppression cannot be precisely defined. It seems the most that can be said regarding the translation of עשק is that it means to "oppress, exploit," frequently within the context of debt repayment.²⁷⁸

Amos 4:1 uses עשק and רצץ in parallel due to their inclusion in the semantic field of oppression.²⁷⁹ Translating one or both simply as "oppress" reduces their impact. Therefore, Amos 4:1 should be translated in a way that describes the cows "extorting" the דלים and "crushing" the אביונים. The parallelism between extorting and crushing certainly shows the severe nature of the oppression.

The charges of oppression are each begun with a feminine plural absolute participle. These charges of oppression are not the only charges levelled against the cows. Just as they are described as "extorting" and "crushing," they are also described as "saying." More specifically, they command their "lords" to bring that they might drink.²⁸⁰ The nature of this accusation differs from the previous charges. While the previous charges describe oppression of the poor, something that could be understood as sin, this final charge simply describes their relationship with their husbands/lords. While one could argue that this kind of commanding attitude was unacceptable in Israelite culture, it would be difficult to argue that it was wrong in the way oppression of the poor was. It therefore seems more reasonable to understand this "charge" as simply a description of the social lives of the cows.

²⁷⁸ HALOT 2:897.

²⁷⁹ Hanks lists twenty words in the semantic field of oppression. Thomas D. Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World: The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression* (trans. James C. Dekker; Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 3-40.

²⁸⁰ The Hebrew speech of the cows to their lords in Amos 4:1 actually contains the first person plural, "Bring that *we* might drink."

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Regardless of the irony of a concubine/woman/wife commanding her lord/husband, the force of this description seems to be the lavish lifestyle in comparison with their oppression of the poor which undoubtedly funded that same lifestyle. Since there is no legal or religious imperative against women ordering men, or against consumption of alcohol, or even against enjoying the luxuries of life/Yahweh's blessings, it seems that Amos 4:1 should not be read as independent charges against the cows, but instead as an overall picture that is in all ways unacceptable to Yahweh: these cows are extorting the weak, crushing the poor, and all the while living in the lap of luxury. The picture is not of those oppressing others out of the "necessity" to live, rather of those oppressing due to a desire for a luxurious lifestyle and with complete disregard for the poor.

This brings us to the identification of the oppressed in Amos 4:1. The oppressed are described as דל and אביון. דל occurs 48 times in the Hebrew Bible, 27 of which are in Job, Psalms and Proverbs.²⁸¹ It is hard to place a specific definition on the word since it appears in different contexts. The most common rendering for דל is in a parallel relationship with either אביון (1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 72:13; 82:4; 113:7; Proverbs 14:31; Isaiah 14:30; 25:4; Amos 4:1; 8:6) or עני/ענו (Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 22:22; Isaiah 10:2; 11:4; 26:6; Zephaniah 3:12), or contrast with "wealthy" (עשיר, Ruth 3:10; Proverbs 10:15; 28:11). These uses suggest a meaning such as "poor." Alternatively, דל is also found parallel with אלמנה (Job 31:16; Isaiah 10:2) and יתום (Psalm 82:3; Isaiah 10:2), while it is contrasted with "noble" (שוע, Job 34:19) and "great" (גדול, Leviticus 19:15), indicating a translation such as "weak" or "lowly." The most common choice, based on usage, is "poor," though the evidence for "weak" or "lowly" cannot be ignored. Finally, Psalm 82:3 provides a mediating possibility. Here, the Psalmist describes Yahweh pronouncing judgment on those who judge the דל, יתום, ענו, and רוש (be poor). While דל most commonly refers to the poor, one can certainly argue that the word can carry the meaning of both "poor" and

²⁸¹ Genesis 41:19; Exodus 23:3; 30:15; Leviticus 14:21; 19:15; Judges 6:15; Ruth 3:10; 1 Samuel 2:8; 2 Samuel 3:1; 13:4; Job 5:16; 20:10, 19; 31:16; 34:19, 28; Psalms 41:2; 72:13; 82:3, 4; 113:7; Proverbs 10:15; 14:31; 19:4, 17; 21:13; 22:9, 16, 22²; 28:3, 8, 11, 15; 29:7, 14; Isaiah 10:2; 11:4; 14:30; 25:4, 26:6; Jeremiah 5:4; 39:10; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:6; Zephaniah 3:12. See also, HALOT 1:221-222. DCH 2:437-438.

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“lowly,” as both Psalm 82:3 and the usage in Amos suggest.²⁸² Table 2 shows the interchangeability of oppression words in Amos.

Likewise, אביון occurs 61 times in the Hebrew Bible, with 33 occurrences in Job, Psalms and Proverbs and 17 occurrences in the prophets.²⁸³ While דל is most commonly paralleled with אביון, אביון is most commonly paralleled with עני/ענו²⁸⁴ and then with דל. אביון is also paralleled with words indicating the weak, such as יתום (Jeremiah 5:28) צדיק (Amos 2:6; 5:12), לא ידעתי (stranger, Job 29:16), and אין-עזר לו (those with no helper, Psalm 72:12). אביון features far fewer occurrences of contrasting nouns as well; עשר (rich, Psalm 49:3); עושק (oppressor, Psalm 72:4) and כילי (scoundrel, Isaiah 32:7). And while אביון seems to indicate the financially less fortunate with far more regularity than דל, Job 31:12-22 shows that אביון is part of a wider semantic field which includes דל, אלמנה, אם (mother), יתום, as well as those with no clothes. In light of the above it seems appropriate to suggest that אביון means “poor” with an emphasis on lack of funds²⁸⁵ and דל means “poor” with a tendency to highlight the accompanying low social status, though both are often used interchangeably, as is seen below. These definitions help finish the picture of the oppression in Amos 4:1. The cows are extorting the “poor” and crushing the “weak.”

There are, however, four main nouns for the oppressed in Amos; דל, אביון, עני/ענו, and צדיק. It appears as if the four nouns are almost all synonyms for a segment of society. Table 2 shows the seven verses where one of the four nouns of the oppressed occurs.

²⁸² Domeris’ translation of דלים as “poor peasants” perhaps betrays his agenda and he seems to be reading something into the text. William Robert Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants* (LHB/OTS 466; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 15.

²⁸³ Exodus 23:6, 11; Deuteronomy 15:4, 7², 9, 11²; 24:11; 1 Samuel 2:8; Esther 9:22; Job 5:15; 24:4, 14; 29:16; 30:25; 31:19; Psalms 9:19; 12:6; 35:10; 37:14; 40:18; 49:3; 69:34; 70:6; 72:4, 12, 13²; 74:21; 82:4; 86:1; 107:41; 109:16, 22, 31; 112:9; 113:7; 132:15; 140:13; Proverbs 14:31; 30:14; 31:9, 20; Isaiah 14:30; 25:4; 29:19; 32:7; 41:17; Jeremiah 2:34; 5:28; 20:13; 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4, 6. See also, HALOT 1:5. DCH 1:104-105.

²⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 15:11; 24:14; Job 24:4, 14; Psalms 9:18; 12:6; 35:10; 37:14; 40:18; 70:6; 72:4, 12; 74:21; 86:1; 109:16, 22; 140:13; Proverbs 30:14; 31:9, 20; Isaiah 32:7; 41:17; Jeremiah 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Amos 8:4.

²⁸⁵ Once again, Domeris’ description of the אביונים as “those in economic need” who are not in nearly as bad a situation as the דלים but not much better seems based as much on his own bias as the text. Domeris, *Touching the Heart*, 14.

Table 2: Uses of Four Oppressed Adjectives in Amos

2:6	על-מכרם בכסף צדיק ואביון בעבור נעלים
2:7	השאפים על-עפר-ארץ בראש דלים ודרך עניים יטו
4:1	העשקום דלים הרצעות אביונים
5:11	לכן יען בושסכם על-דל ומשאת-בר ממנו
5:12	צרי צדיק לקחי כפר ואביונים בשאר הטו
8:4	השאפים אביון ולשבית עני-ארץ
8:6	לקנות צדיק לקחי כפר ואביון בעבור נעלים

This segment of society is described using the terms interchangeably. The primary example of this is in Amos 2:6 and Amos 8:6. In one the oppressed are bought, in the other the oppressed are sold. This difference is inconsequential. What is of consequence is that in an otherwise identical verse, דלים is exchanged for צדיק. Examining the interchange of these oppressed adjectives one notices that only once does one of them occur on its own. דל occurs with no other oppressed adjective in Amos 5:11, in all other verses where one of the oppressed adjectives occurs, another is nearby, frequently in parallel. Table 3 shows the interchangeability of the different adjectives in Amos.

Table 3: Oppressed Adjectives in the Book of Amos

צדיק	Parallel with	אביון	Amos 2:6
צדיק	Exchanged for	דלים	Amos 2:6 and 8:6
דלים	Parallel with	עני/ענו	Amos 2:7
דלים	Parallel with	אביון	Amos 4:1
עני/ענו	Parallel with	אביון	Amos 8:4

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This interchangeability indicates that one should not look for significance in which oppression adjective occurs in a specific verse. The oppressed in Amos are all righteous (צדיק), poor (דלים), needy (אביון), and afflicted (ענו).²⁸⁶

At this point it becomes possible to investigate more thoroughly just who is perpetrating these atrocities in Amos 4:1. The object of the verse is פרות הבשן אשר בהר שמרון. Much has been written on the identity of the cows of Bashan. It is widely accepted that this verse is directed towards the wealthy women of Samaria due to the feminine פרות as well as the three feminine participles discussed above. Attention is drawn to the geographical area of Bashan, its cows, as well as its fertile land. There is virtual unanimity that this image paints a picture of the upper class women of Samaria.²⁸⁷

However, two points need to be clarified. First, how shall the reader understand the cows in relation to the nation of Israel as a whole? Secondly, in what way does identifying the cows with rich women function within the rest of Amos 4:1? There are three primary reasons for understanding the cows of Bashan as a synecdoche for Israel as a whole. First, understanding this image as referring only to the women of Samaria constricts the text. The immediate referent of the cows of Bashan as described in Amos 4:1 is certainly the women of Samaria. This is evident partially in the high number of feminine participles in the verse and partially with the description that the cows command their lords/husbands to bring them drink. Though there is widespread agreement that the cows refer to the rich women of Samaria, this does not exclude also understanding the image as an address to Israel as a whole.²⁸⁸ If cows can be a euphemism for the women of Samaria, then the women of Samaria can be a synecdoche for Israel as a whole.

²⁸⁶ צדיק is only used in parallel with אביון, however, it's interchangeability with דלים creates the possibility for it to be paralleled with the nouns דלים is paralleled with.

²⁸⁷ See Terence Kleven, "The Cows of Bashan: A Single Metaphor at Amos 4:1-3," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 215-227. See also Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 336. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 44. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 243. Paul, *Amos*, 128-129. Likewise, referring to the women of Samaria was not an insult as Bashan was noted for its lush grazing land and beautiful, well fed cattle. Mays, *Amos*, 72.

²⁸⁸ The reason the term "cows of Bashan" should not be understood immediately as referring to Israel as a whole instead of as first to the rich women of Samaria is due to the description that they command their lords to bring that they might drink. The image of the rich women of Samaria

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The reason for understanding the cows as a synecdoche for Israel is due to the strong similarities in the offences, punishment and formula of Amos 4:1-3 and the rest of the charges against Israel in the book of Amos. It has been shown above that the charges against the cows in Amos 4:1 are very similar to the charges of oppression throughout Amos 3-6. Likewise, it has been shown above that the formulaic opening of Amos 4:1 is almost verbatim to the openings in Amos 3:1; 5:1 and 8:4. And while the specifics of the judgment in Amos 4:2-3 are not repeated elsewhere, the idea of exile is very common in the book of Amos.²⁸⁹ These similarities alone are enough to suggest that the cows of Bashan would be understood as a synecdoche for Israel as a whole.²⁹⁰

The second reason the cows should be understood as a synecdoche for Israel is because Amos 4:4-5 requires this understanding. There is no pronouncement of guilt in Amos 4:4-5 and the offences for which Israel is condemned in this text are assumed to be the same as those described in Amos 4:1.²⁹¹

Finally, an examination of the direct addresses in the book of Amos suggests that Israel as a whole should be understood as the audience in Amos 4:1.²⁹² Amos 4:1 is one of four addresses of the prophet. Amos 3:1 and 5:1 are directed against בני ישראל and בית ישראל respectively. Amos 8:4 is directed against השאפים אביון ולשביא ענוי-ארץ. Of the four שמעו imperatives in Amos, two are directed against the nation as a whole (Amos 3:1; 5:1), one is directed against oppressors in general (Amos 8:4), and one is directed against a specific group of oppressors (Amos 4:1). Interestingly, despite the fact that social injustice is the charge brought against Israel through the course of the book, the two שמעו imperatives that name ישראל do not mention any

²⁸⁹ Exile is promised in Amos 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; 9:4. Only in Amos 5:27; 6:7 and 9:4 are these promises directed against Israel.

²⁹⁰ Contrary to the view put forth in this thesis, Jeremias believes Amos 3:9-4:3 is a text unit. However, he understands Amos 3:1-8 to address Israel as a whole, and this governs the way in which the following units (Amos 3:12-15 and 4:1-3) are understood. Though they accuse specific groups of people they must be understood “under the auspices” (*unter dem Vorzeichen*) of Amos 3:1-8 and 4:6-13, and thus as if addressed to Israel as a whole. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 39. See also Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 261.

²⁹¹ For more on how Amos 4:4-5 depends on Amos 4:1-3 see 3.3. Amos 4:4-5: Yahweh Rejects Israel’s Cult.

²⁹² Though he suggests פרות is a term indicating the Canaanite cult, Barstad is in agreement that the address is directed at “the whole of the Samaritan people, or the whole of the northern realm, for that sake.” Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 40 footnote 22, 42-43.

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oppression. Likewise, the two שמעו imperatives that mention oppression do not level their charges at as broad an audience as Israel as a whole. It seems that this can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, all of Israel is the audience in all four imperatives. This means Amos 3:1 and 5:1, which address Israel and proclaim judgment without a list of offences, lend their addressees to 4:1 and 8:4, and adopt the charges found in these verses as reasons for their own judgment. The second option is that the addressees who are charged with a specific offence (the oppressors of 4:1 and 8:4) are the addressees in all four imperatives. This means that when Amos 3:1 and 5:1 refer to Israel they are really only addressing the sinful oppressors within their midst.²⁹³

Theoretically both options are possible. The second option allows for a gracious Yahweh and opens the door for a remnant to survive the judgment. The first option, however, appears to be more in line with the rest of the book. Yes, all of Israel will be judged but that is because all of Israel is characterized by the oppressive nature found in Amos 3:1 and 5:1.²⁹⁴ The only problem with the option suggesting all of Israel is the audience is that if all of Israel is oppressing, then who is left for them to oppress? One need not understand the widespread judgment of Amos, if indeed it is widespread, as necessarily precluding the idea of a remnant. While I do not find any strong evidence for a remnant in Amos this does not preclude hope. What can be stated is that the text reads as if all of Israel is guilty of oppression and social injustice and will be judged.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ A third option is that the two texts which are addressed to specific groups refer to these groups only, while the two texts which address Israel refer to Israel as a whole. Though this presents an easy way of interpreting these texts at face value, it fails ultimately. Israel is the object of accusations of oppression throughout the book. To claim that certain texts which have a slightly more specific audience while levelling the same charges ignores the function of the address. See also the brief comments on addressees in 2.2. Amos 3:1-15: Structural Observations.

²⁹⁴ Noble claims texts such as Amos 3:12; 4:12; 5:2, and 9:9 suggest that the coming judgment was not restricted to a particular section of Israelite society. Noble, "Amos' Absolute 'No'," 336-337.

²⁹⁵ Achtemeier recognizes the image of the cows as Amos' attack on the "women-symbols and what they represent," suggesting they represent sins that both male and female are guilty of. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 198. Limburg proposes that the similarity between the addresses in Amos 4:1 and 8:4-8 suggests that conditions in Israel are the responsibility of women and men. Limburg, *Hosea-Micah*, 100. While it may be excessive to emphasize the gender of the addressees in this manner, it is certainly helpful to note that the text does not place full responsibility for Israel's state of affairs on either gender. Limburg is correct to point out that Israel's problems are spread across society. Likewise, Blenkinsopp notes the transition with the book of Amos towards prophetic

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Since the cows are understood as referring to Israel as a whole, how does this work within the context of Amos 4:1? The fact that the cows refer to the nation as a whole should not overshadow the image of fat cows living off the luxurious grass we find at the start of the verse. The image is used to refer to Israel for a reason. The verse begins and ends with luxurious living, first the cows of Bashan, then the wives commanding their lords. In the middle of this are two occasions of oppression. Amos 4:1 is thus an inclusio:

Luxurious living
Oppression
Oppression
Luxurious living

Further, this gives context to the description of luxurious living. It is condemned always in the context of the poor and/or their oppression. Either Israel is prospering at the expense of their poor or it is prospering while also disregarding their poor. Either way, the picture Amos 4:1 paints of the reason for Yahweh's judgment against Israel involves both oppression and luxurious living.

While charges are found only in the first verse of Amos 4, words of doom and ominous statements are found throughout. The most explicit is found in Amos 4:2-3. The use of שבע (swear) in 4:2 serves as an emphatic introduction. שבע is found four times in Amos (Amos 4:2; 6:8; 8:7, 14).²⁹⁶ In Amos 4:2 יהוה אדני יהוה swears by his holiness (בקדשו) that the cows of Bashan will go into exile immediately after describing their oppressive acts. In 6:8 יהוה אדני יהוה swears by himself (בנפשו) that he will deliver up the city and its inhabitants. Amos 6:8 is an oath against Israel that follows the woe of 6:1-7 which describes the luxurious lifestyle of Israel despite their imminent demise.²⁹⁷ In Amos 8:7 יהוה אדני swears by the pride of Jacob (בגאון יעקב) that

addresses targeting the entire people rather than simply the king. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (rev. and enl. ed.; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 73.

²⁹⁶ Its occurrence in Amos 8:14 is different from its first three occurrences in the book. There it is used in the description of "those swearing by the guilt of Samaria." Its occurrence in 8:14 is a *niphal* participle whereas the first three occurrences are *niphal* perfect 3ms. Additionally, the participle in Amos 8:14 is substantival, and is thus the subject itself, whereas in the other three occurrences Yahweh is the subject. Thus, the three occurrences of Yahweh as the subject of שבע in Amos are particularly noteworthy.

²⁹⁷ For more on the oath nature of Amos 6:8 see 4.5. Amos 6:8-14 below.

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he will not forget any of their deeds, with the previously mentioned deeds being, again, the pursuit of financial gain at the peril of the poor and needy. Descriptions of the destruction of the land follow. The pattern in Amos, beginning with 4:2, is that when Yahweh swears it is in response to the unjust social practices of Israel.

This pattern, however, says more about Yahweh than it does about the meaning or function of שבע. In Amos, the social injustice of Israel consistently prompts Yahweh to make oaths, on himself, his holiness and on the pride of Jacob. This indicates both the degree of anger on the part of Yahweh as well as the finality of his promise of judgment.²⁹⁸ Amos 3 hinted at the idea of exile with mention of an adversary around the land and Ashdod and Egypt overlooking the nation. Amos 4 opens with exile being explicitly stated, vividly described, and with the use of שבע, its occurrence is categorical, though partially undefined.

The content of Yahweh's oath begins with a reference to time. The phrase ימים באים עליכם establishes the ominous tone immediately. ימים באים is found 20 times in the Hebrew Bible, most frequently in Jeremiah.²⁹⁹ Of the 20 occurrences, four times it is used in the OAN of Jeremiah to prophesy coming judgment against Moab, Ammon and Babylon (Jeremiah 48:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52). In 1 Sam. 2:31 it is used in Yahweh's promise to judge Eli for his sins and the sins of his sons. Both 2 Kings 20:17 and Isaiah 39:6 narrate the same story about Isaiah prophesying against Hezekiah for showing his treasures to the King of Babylon. The remaining thirteen occurrences of ימים באים are directed against Israel. Of these, only five use ימים באים to introduce a word of judgment (Jeremiah 7:32; 9:24; 19:6; Amos 4:2; 8:11). The other eight occurrences foretell a coming restoration of the land, a return from exile or a coming new covenant (Jeremiah 16:14; 23:5, 7; 30:3; 31:27, 31; 33:14; Amos 9:13).

It should be noted, however, that these eight times when ימים באים precedes a message of hope for the future still occur after some form of judgment. That is, ימים

²⁹⁸ While an oath in general does not indicate anger, in all three instances in Amos, Yahweh's oath is that he will judge Israel. This is indicative of anger at their social actions.

²⁹⁹ 1 Samuel 2:31; 2 Kings 20:17; Isaiah 39:6; Jeremiah 7:32; 9:24; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 30:3; 31:27, 31; 33:14; 48:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13. In addition to these texts there is a possible occurrence in Jeremiah 31:38. (In the apparatus of BHS, Rudolph suggests that, due to its occurrence as a *qere* in multiple manuscripts and versions, the ימים should be read here as a *qere* as well.)

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בָּאִים is always surrounded by judgment. Either it foretells judgment to come or it foretells a time when judgment will be over. In Amos, twice it introduces future judgment (Amos 4:2; 8:11) and once it introduces future restoration (Amos 9:13).³⁰⁰ This use in Amos, that יָמִים בָּאִים foretells judgment and the restoration of judgment is also similar to the use of שׁוֹב in the book of Amos. Because Israel would not turn to Yahweh, Yahweh will not turn from judgment. However, once that judgment has run its course, Yahweh will restore his people.³⁰¹

The last half of Amos 4:2 is difficult to translate and much has been written arguing for one interpretation or another.³⁰² For the purposes of this thesis, Paul's argument and conclusion are accepted and this final portion of Amos 4:2 is interpreted as "and you will be transported in baskets and the very last one of you in fishermen's pots."³⁰³ The image is one of Israel helpless before their captors and carried away. This idea is continued in 4:3 when the captives will be led out through breeches in the walls, so many of which the captives will be led straight out of the city no matter where in the city they are.

The destination to which Israel will be moved is unmentioned. The text says after they are herded through the breeches הַשְּׁלֶכְתֶּנָּה הַהַרְמוּנָה. Under question is the meaning and location of the *hapax legomenon* הַהַרְמוּנָה. Many theories abound regarding whether or how this word should be emended to render it comprehensible. No theory has widespread acceptance and at this point it is best to keep in mind that Amos never names the enemy who will be responsible for Israel's exile so it seems unusual that הַהַרְמוּנָה would be the one instance of clarity on the subject.³⁰⁴ This

³⁰⁰ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 422.

³⁰¹ For more see 3.4. Amos 4:6-11: Israel Would not Return to Yahweh below.

³⁰² Andersen and Freedman survey the different possible interpretations and emendations. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 422-424.

³⁰³ Paul, "Fishing Imagery," 190. Rather than enter into this discussion I simply direct the reader to Paul's article which surveys the literature and proposes the most viable translation. This will not occupy a large part of my discussion simply because the effect of any of the different translations of Amos 4:2 still results in Israel being led into exile/judgment, regardless of whether this is by hook or basket.

³⁰⁴ Paul notes that discussions on the word can be divided into two groups. Some interpret it as a place name and others emend it to refer to a non-geographical location. Paul, *Amos*, 135-136. Regarding a place name, Harmon is the most popular suggestion. David Noel Freedman and Francis I. Andersen, "Harmon in Amos 4:3," *BASOR* 198 (1970): 41. Stuart lists possible emendations. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 333. However, even Wolff, who favors the Harmon reading, recognizes that Amos never mentions the enemy Yahweh will use to deliver his judgment. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 245.

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question can be answered more satisfactorily when attention is focused on השלכתנה. The word can refer to throwing out dead bodies or to exile. Paul correctly identifies the latter as more in line with the tone of the book as well as Amos 4:1-3.³⁰⁵

Summary of 3.2.

As this first unit within Amos 4 ends we have been given a clear picture of the violent oppression going on by those enjoying a carefree, luxurious lifestyle. The function of this unit is to call the audience to attention, and is begun with the formulaic opening found in each of the three units of the tripartite division of the book of Amos. The unit, addressed to the cows of Bashan, accuses them of oppression and luxurious living, two themes that are consistently grouped together in the book of Amos. The oppressed in Amos 4:1 are defined through recourse to terminology throughout the book as encompassing those that are righteous, poor, needy and afflicted. Similarly, though the text is addressed to the “cows of Bashan,” the wider context of the book makes it clear that this is a synecdoche for Israel as a whole. The nation is guilty. The emphatic oath of Yahweh indicates the high value placed upon just social practices. As a result of Israel’s actions Yahweh’s judgment will take the shape of exile, another consistent promise in the book of Amos. Thus, Amos 4:1-3 is not only essential to the structure and message of Amos chapter four, but is likewise an integral part of the structure and message of chapter 3-6 as well as the book as a whole.

3.3. Amos 4:4-5: Yahweh Rejects Israel’s Cult

The following section of this chapter will show that Amos 4:4-5 is a direct continuation of Amos 4:1-3 and not the beginning of a new unit. While Amos 4:4-5 is primarily concerned with cultic practice, it will be shown that this text is not a polemic against the northern cult. Instead, both the form and content of the unit tell us that Yahweh has ceased to be affected by the cult. Israel’s cultic practices are futile because Yahweh has rejected them.

Amos 4 takes an unusual turn with its transition in Amos 4:4-5. Whereas 4:1-3 have focused on reasons for punishment and punishment itself, 4:4-5 abruptly switches to a focus on cultic ritual. Additionally, while 4:1-3 used figures of speech

³⁰⁵ Paul, *Amos*, 135-136.

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in describing the cows and the method of their capture, 4:4-5 employs heavy sarcasm, a noted change from the previous. These are certainly factors involved in grouping Amos 4:1-3 with the end of Amos 3 rather than the 3:1-15 and 4:1-13 proposed in this thesis.³⁰⁶

While the imperatives at the beginning of 4:4 are not formulaic, nor do they intrinsically signify a new unit, they do carry a certain degree of emphasis that aids in establishing this as a new unit. More noticeable, though, is the similar content in these two verses. Mention of sacrifices (זבחים), tithes (מעשרת), a thank offering (תודה) and freewill offerings (נדבות) place these two verses firmly in the context of the cult. What is interesting in this unit is its condemnation of the cult with no reservations.³⁰⁷ This is not a diatribe against the rich alone.³⁰⁸

A common view is that Amos 4:1 is addressed to a select group, whether a group of rich women in particular or a wider group of generally wealthy people, but with Amos 4:4-5 the audience shifts to the people of Israel as a whole.³⁰⁹ These scholars rightly read Amos 4:4-5 as if Israel as a whole were the audience. However, they ignore the relationship between Amos 4:1-3 and 4:4-5.³¹⁰ The difficulty with this view is that if Amos 4:4-5 is against all Israel because of their social offences (פשע), why should 4:2-3 be read as if it was directed only to the wealthy women? There is no pronouncement of guilt in 4:4-5 and commentators who hold this view

³⁰⁶ Andersen and Freedman regard Amos 2:9-3:8, 3:9-4:3 and 4:4-13 as the final three units in Amos 1-4. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 30-43. Jeremias considers Amos 3:9-4:3 a unit composed of three oracles against Samaria. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 38. Stuart considers Amos 3:9-4:3 as four (3:9-11; 3:12; 3:13-15; 4:1-3) subsections of an integrated whole. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 329. Carroll R. regards Amos 3:1-4:3 as the first of five units in Amos 3-6, dividing 3:1-4:3 into 3:1-8 and 3:9-4:3 and dividing this final unit the same way that Stuart does. Carroll R., *Contexts*, 182-205.

³⁰⁷ Carroll R. points out that the text of Amos describes Israel's worship as Yahwistic in tone and highlights 4:4-5; 5:4-6, 21-27 "all underscore the divine rejection of the entire nation's religion" rather than just that of a select group(s) within the nation. Carroll R., "So You Love," 178. Paul states the judgment is "not restricted to the upper classes of northern Israel but is directed against the entire population en masse." Paul, *Amos*, 138. See also, Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 48.

³⁰⁸ Carroll claims, "In other words, from the perspective of the text, both those privileged by social or economic station as well as the masses go to the same holy places and join together in the same cult. Even if agendas and motivations differ, all are part of a shared religious life and rhythm that Yahweh abhors and will judge at a terrible cost." Carroll R., "So You Love," 178.

³⁰⁹ K&D 10: 270. See also, Paul, *Amos*, 128, 138. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 48.

³¹⁰ While Jeremias recognizes that the address to the cows of Bashan should be understood as against Israel as a whole, he still sees Amos 4:4-5 as beginning an entirely new theme, and with new addressees, it is decidedly separate from Amos 4:1-3. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 48.

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assume the sins Israel is being judged for in 4:4-5 are the same as those of the cows of Bashan in 4:1.³¹¹ The sarcasm obviously present in 4:4-5 is reason enough to suggest that the direct address to the cows of Bashan in 4:1 could very well be a parody of all of Israel. The social sins of Israel elsewhere in the book are similar to those levelled in Amos 4:1. It seems easiest to read the text as if 4:4-5 directly follows 4:1-3 in every way, the audience is still the fat cows and the fat cows are Israel.

Beyond rhetorical and content reasons, 4:4-5 cannot stand without 4:1-3. Should Amos 4:3 end a unit, 4:4 does not have “what is necessary” to begin a major new unit. Both 4:4 and 4:6 start so abruptly they can only be understood as part of the wider context of the chapter.³¹² Not only is the *נאם־יהוה* at the end of 4:5 helpful in delineating the conclusion of this unit, but the content of this and the following unit are so different that one could hardly confuse the transition.³¹³

Mention of Bethel is informative though it also introduces an element of difficulty. That Bethel was a cultic site is evident from biblical texts the reader will be familiar with.³¹⁴ However, difficulty arises upon noting that the Hebrew Bible never describes what kinds of rituals were practiced at Bethel. Since Jeroboam I was

³¹¹ Part of the issue is that some read Amos 4:1-3 as the conclusion of the unit prior. Van der Wal divides the book of Amos into Amos 1-6 and 7-9, the four units of Amos 1-6 are Amos 1:2-3:8; 3:9-4:3; 4:4-5:6; 5:7-6:12. Wal, “Structure,” 109-110. Likewise, both Andersen and Freedman and Stuart group Amos 3:9-4:3 together under the rubric of messages for Israel/Samaria. “The Annihilation of the Wicked. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 401-425. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 326-333.

³¹² Möller notes Amos 4:4 begins “Without any transition or introduction.” Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 262.

³¹³ Jeremias, who reads Amos 3:9-4:3 as a collection of Samaria oracles, suggests “O people of Israel” (*ihr Israeliten*) in Amos 4:5 is the address which identifies the audience as different from the audience of Amos 3:9-4:3. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 48. Jeremias’ comments are puzzling regarding the relation of the units within Amos 3:9-4:13. He describes the appending of Amos 4:4-13 to Amos 3:9-13 as “seamless” (*nahtlos*). He mentions this in reference to the lack of transitions rather than to a smooth or uniform movement. However, his use of *anderseits* to describe the clear distinction of Amos 4:4-13 as distinct from the previous material indicates he views the transition from Amos 4:3 to 4:4 as, in some sense, smooth or uniform. Likewise, his statement that Amos 4:4-5 and 4:6-13 are “an indissoluble literary unit” (*eine unlösliche literarische Einheit*) seems at odds with his agreement with form-critical conclusions about the different nature of the two units. One is said to derive “probably from Amos himself” and the other coming “most likely” from the exilic or early post-exilic period. It seems to me that the seamless manner in which “I for my part” of 4:6, 7 and the “for so you love to do” of 4:5 rely on each other, as well as the thematic interplay of Yahweh’s rejection of Israel’s cult and Israel’s rejection of Yahweh’s advances make speculation about the independent origin of the two units suspect.

³¹⁴ See Genesis 12:8; 31:13; 35:1ff; 1 Kings 12:25ff; 2 Kings 2:3.

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said to place a golden calf at Dan and Bethel to prevent Israelites from journeying to Jerusalem to sacrifice (I Kg. 12:25-33) it is safe to assume sacrifices were offered at these locations similar to those offered in Jerusalem. The parallel which is drawn between Bethel and Gilgal is unusual, for although Gilgal had cultic significance, it is unclear as to how, when or why sacrifices were offered here.³¹⁵ What can be deduced from the text of Amos is that Bethel was not only a cultic center for sacrifice but also the royal cultic center (Amos 7:10-17). The fact that Gilgal is parallel with Bethel would indicate that the two were quite similar in their practice.³¹⁶

Exactly what this practice was is initially described as **פשע**. In Amos, **פשע** occurs 10 times as a noun (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:14; 5:12) and twice as a verb (Amos 4:4²). Its occurrences as a noun are useful for understanding its use as a verb. The root's primary usage in Amos is in the OAN as part of the opening formula **על-שלשה פשעי-_____ ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו**. It is the **פשע** that brought Yahweh's punishment in the OAN. There, the **פשע** consisted primarily of war crimes and social injustices. Outside of the OAN, as a noun **פשע** is used only twice in Amos; 3:14 and 5:12. In 3:14 Yahweh begins to foretell his judgment on Israel. This judgment, which will destroy both Israel's socially luxurious lifestyle as well as its cultic efficacy, is described as Yahweh "reckoning Israel's **פשע** against it." Again, **פשע** warrants judgment, however, recognizing the inclusio between 3:2 and 3:14 with **פקד** highlights that **פשע** is paralleled with **עון**, a noun word used 233 times in the Hebrew Bible and most commonly means "iniquity."³¹⁷ In 5:12, once again Yahweh's judgment will come as a result of the **פשע** of Israel, though here the **פשע** are described as oppression of the poor. While the **פשע** do not mention a luxurious lifestyle the judgment targets stone houses and beautiful vineyards so it is reasonable to believe luxurious living was also in view due to the common pairing of oppression and luxurious living in the book of Amos. And similar to 3:14, **פשע** in 5:12 is parallel

³¹⁵ Hosea speaks as if sacrifices were offered in Gilgal in Hosea 12:11.

³¹⁶ Bethel was established as a sanctuary through by association with the lives of Abraham and Jacob and is the second most mentioned place name in the HB (next to Jerusalem). Harold Brodsky, "Bethel (Place)," ABD, 1:710. Gilgal was the site of many important events in the history of Israel, including their circumcision after entering the Promised Land and where Saul was made king. Wade R. Kotter, "Gilgal (Place)," ABD, 2:1022.

³¹⁷ HALOT 6:307.

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with חטא, a word that helps define it. חטא as a verb is found over 238 times in the Hebrew Bible and carries the meaning “sin” or “incur guilt.”³¹⁸

In Amos then, all occurrences of פשע as a noun carry the idea of an action worthy of judgment. Transitioning to an examination of פשע as a verb in Amos, it would be surprising to find that it carried a radically different meaning from its use as a noun.³¹⁹ In the imperatives of Amos 4:4, פשע should therefore be understood to command action that is offensive to Yahweh. In light of the uses of פשע in Amos, it is likely that in Amos 4:4 the term should retain a more generic meaning rather than referring to specific actions. The פשעים of the foreign nations were mostly war crimes. The פשע of Judah was religious apostasy. The פשע of Israel was oppression of the poor. The diversity of actions which פשע is used to describe testify to its own meaning as “sin” or “transgression.”³²⁰ In Amos 4:4, the imperative should be understood to command Israel to go to Bethel and Gilgal and rebel (generically), rather than commanding them to go to these locations and engage in the specific actions of oppression elsewhere in Amos described as פשעים.

The frequency that Israel was commanded to offer the זבה and מעשר is puzzling, though it need not be so. Amos 4:4-5 is blatantly sarcastic from the first two lines. That a prophet would speak positively about Bethel and Gilgal has already been shown to be improbable. That a prophet would encourage Israel towards פשע is incredulous and can only be explained with sarcasm.³²¹ This explanation finds

³¹⁸ HALOT 3:194.

³¹⁹ Barstad proposed that in Amos 4, פשע is “a technical term for the participation of the Israelites in non-Yahwistic or Yahwistic/syncretistic rites.” Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 57. Both the aim and method of Barstad’s work are different from the present study. Despite this caveat, Barstad examines פשע in light of the context only of Amos chapter four and other prophets. Limiting an examination of פשע in Amos simply to its two verbal occurrences will certainly allow such a translation as Barstad proposes. However, to do so requires one to ignore the ten nominal forms which are crucial to the message of the book as a whole and formulaic in the first of the tripartite divisions. Paradoxically, of the 15 prophetic texts Barstad mentions as support for his reading (Isaiah 1:2; 43:27; 46:8; 48:8; 59:13; 66:24; Jeremiah 2:8, 29; 3:13; 33:8; Ezekiel 2:3; 18:31; 20:38; Hosea 14:10; Zephaniah 3:11), nine use the phrase בי פשע to indicate the פשע are actions committed against Yahweh, an element missing from the occurrences in Amos 4 and one that renders Barstad’s interpretation cumbersome, if not difficult (Isaiah 1:2; 43:27; 66:24; Jeremiah 2:8, 29; 33:8; Ezekiel 2:3; 20:38; Zephaniah 3:11).

³²⁰ HALOT 6:792.

³²¹ For imperatives used sarcastically see IBHS §34.4b. Paul notes two possibilities for translating לבקר, 1) every morning, 2) on the morning after one’s arrival at the sanctuary. He also

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support in the climactic parallelism created when הרבו is added to פשע.³²² The imperative to come to Bethel and Gilgal is equally insincere. Yahweh is not granting Israel permission to engage in their sinful cult, he is labelling it sinful.³²³

Moving past a discussion of which day to offer sacrifices, in Amos 4:5 one finds the same climactic parallelism and sarcasm. While the sarcasm and parallelism in Amos 4:4 are more pronounced, they are not absent in 4:5. The sarcasm in the first two line of Amos 4:4 is in describing Israel's cultic activity as פשע. In the second line the sarcasm revolves around frequency of Israel's observance of the cult. The indicator of sarcasm is found in the second line of 4:5 with the imperative השמיעו. Commentators readily engage with the nature and legitimacy of the cultic practices in this verse as well,³²⁴ though the chief emphasis of the text is shown by the redundancy and asyndeton of השמיעו. Both features alert the reader that, once again, Yahweh is "commanding" practices Israel was already fulfilling and infusing this command with a degree of sarcasm.³²⁵

notes two possibilities for translating לשלשת ימים, 1) every three days, 2) on the third day. Paul, *Amos*, 140. The second of each suggestion are unattested practices which appear to have been suggested due to the excessiveness of the first option.

³²² Andersen and Freedman suggest the first two verbs of Amos 4:4 are to be taken together with both proper nouns, thus, "Come to Bethel and rebel at Gilgal." The final two words of the 4:4b are a general statement referring to the activity at both locations, thus, "rebel repeatedly!" Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 427-428. The meaning of their reading of the text is not far from my own even though I read Amos 4:4ab as two 3 : 3 bicolons, which they argue against, in favour of a 2 + 2 + 2 tricola. Their concern is that reading the verse as a bicola suggests that the prophet is saying transgressions were worse at Gilgal than at Bethel. However, it is not necessary to read the verse as a tricola in order to recognize this.

Furthermore, Andersen and Freedman read Amos 4:5ab as a 2 + 2 + 2 tricola as well, thus, "Burn sacrifices without leaven, thank offerings – and announce, freewill offerings – proclaim." Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 427, 429. It is much more effective to read the two lines (4ab and 5ab) as bicola where the second half intensifies the first, thus paralleling each other, thus, "Come to Bethel and transgress, to Gilgal and multiply [your] transgressions. Burn a thank offering of leavened bread, and proclaim thank offerings – loudly." However, both readings are agreed that the unit is sarcastic and targets Israel's futile cultic practices.

³²³ While the two texts are unrelated, Amos 3:9 features a rhetorical imperative to proclaim to Ashdod and Egypt, a command which is also rhetorical rather than literal. For my comments on the rhetorical nature of the imperatives in Amos 3:9 see the relevant portions of 2.2. Amos 3:1-15: Structural Observation above.

³²⁴ Despite describing it as a mock call to worship, Andersen and Freedman say this is a specific pronouncement against a particular national celebration. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434. See also, Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 199. Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 69-70. Mays, *Amos*, 75. Paul, *Amos*, 141. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 338.

³²⁵ Achtemeier either does not notice or does not comment upon the sarcasm of Amos 4:4-5. Furthermore, she interprets these verses to mean that when Israel offers sacrifices and tithes they are

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This sarcasm is nowhere more evident than in the closing words of the unit, “For this you love” (כי כן אהבתם).³²⁶ The closing sentence highlights what very well may have been excessive practice of cultic ritual, though this is certainly speculation. This would involve an emphasis on “love.” Similarly, it highlights the emphasis on ritual as opposed to social aspects of Yahwistic religion. This would involve emphasis on “this,” and is less speculative than the first suggestion, though there is no reason they both couldn’t be true. Finally, emphasis on “you” signifies Israel loves their cult rather than, or more than, Yahweh does.

The closing line of the unit seems to show the main goal of the text: to highlight the inefficacy of Israel’s worship. Though the text does not explicitly say their cultic practice was futile, it is Yahweh who speaks, he describes their practices as פֶּשַׁע, and he is highly sarcastic. Compounding this is the next unit (4:6-11) where Yahweh describes the inefficacy of his own attempts at drawing Israel to repentance, a tragic comparison. Therefore, discussions about whether or not tithes were offered every three days miss the function and message of the text.

Additionally, the sarcastic nature of the text makes it very likely that Amos 4:4cd should not be taken literally at all. Amos 4:4-5 is composed of three, two line units, a concluding declaration and the divine speech formula. Each of the three, two line units uses climactic parallelism which imbues the text with sarcasm. “Come to Bethel and transgress” is intensified with “Come to Gilgal and multiply [your] transgressions.” “Burn a thank offering of leavened bread” is intensified with “Declare a freewill offering, loudly!”³²⁷ The obvious intensification and sarcasm of

rebellious against God and that the frequency of their offerings described in the text were literal as well. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 199. Her comments throughout her coverage of Amos 4:4-5 indicate that she interprets this text rather literally. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 198-200. Most commentators, however, do recognize the sarcasm of the unit. See Carroll R., *Contexts*, 206. Paul, *Amos*, 140. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 337. Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 262-268.

³²⁶ Möller notes that this “highly ironic” statement corresponds with the references to “your sacrifices” and “your tithes” earlier in the unit. Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 265.

³²⁷ The Hebrew of Amos 5:5b literally translates, “Declare a freewill offering. Proclaim [them]!” As was discussed above, the use of השמיעו is redundant and asyndetic. A literal translation is cumbersome in English and struggles to convey the same rhetorical intensification in a poetic style. Some scholars translate this verse literally. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 427. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 54. Mays, *Amos*, 73. Others adopt a more fluid translation like that offered here. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 334. Paul, *Amos*, 137. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 46. Wolff’s German translation is “recht laut! (very loudly) while the English translation of his commentary is “loud-and-clear.” Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 247. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 209.

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the two units suggests that, despite the uncertainty of the meaning of לבקר and לשלשת ימים, the sarcasm of Amos 4:4cd is more than likely exaggerating the frequency rather than literally describing it.

It should be pointed out, however, that Yahweh's sarcasm regarding Israel's cultic practices is the beginning of an important theme in Amos 3-6; Israel's unwarranted self confidence. This was perhaps hinted at in Amos 3:1-2 with the special relationship shared between Yahweh and Israel; however, it is becoming clearer at this point. In contrast with most other prophetic books, the book of Amos does not describe Israel as wildly syncretistic. While the sarcastic comments regarding the frequency of Israel's sacrifices and offerings in Amos 4:4-5 cannot be taken as a literal picture of their practices, it is almost doubtless that Israel was keeping the cult. Thus, Amos 3 establishes the unique relationship Israel has with God, Amos 4 mocks them for their adherence to it, and Amos 5:18-27 will continue to develop this theme.

One very legitimate question that can be posed to Amos 4:4-5 is whether this is a polemic against the northern cult. That Amos was from Judah is stated in the opening verses of the book and in the narrative as well (7:12). It would be hard to say that a southern prophet in the north would not have strong objections to the northern cult. The suggestion that Amos 4:4-5 is a polemic against a syncretistic or non-Yahwistic northern cult does not fit with a reading of Amos 4:4-5 or the book of Amos as a whole.³²⁸ In order to sustain such an interpretation it seems several features must necessarily be found in the text in order to justify this claim about Amos' words against the northern cult.

To begin with, the prophet must speak against the cult. This might seem like a redundant criterion but it is worthwhile to mention, especially for application in the book of Amos. Texts in Amos that directly relate to the cult are limited to Amos 2:8; 3:14; 4:4-5, and 5:5-6, 21-23. The texts are all critical of the northern cult in some way but a closer reading suggests something less than polemical. The first two of the texts say very little at all. Amos 2:8 describes Israel as mixing their luxurious

³²⁸ Barstad argues in his monograph that Amos was a prophet of Yahweh that fought against Israel's worship of other deities. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 10. In the text under question, he suggests the term פרות is a reference to the Canaanite cult, that פשע is a technical term for the Israelite participation in non-Yahwistic rites, that the whole of Amos 4:1-12 is concerned with anti-Canaanite cults, and that Amos 4:6-11 is a missionary act by the prophet. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 37-75.

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lifestyle with the temple while Amos 3:14 says that in Yahweh's judgment of Israel he will destroy the altar of Bethel. We have just examined the sarcastic nature of Amos 4:4-5 and while this text says nothing explicitly negative about the northern cult, the focus on the two cultic sites along with a sarcastic tone that undoubtedly says "this is unacceptable/displeasing" is effectively against the cult. Amos 5:5-6 is similar. Though it does not explicitly speak against the cult, it contrasts the cultic centers of Bethel and Gilgal (and Beersheba) against seeking Yahweh. It additionally promises destruction will fall upon Bethel and Gilgal. Amos 5:21-23 is the strongest criticism against Israel's cult. Here Yahweh clearly expresses his hatred for Israel's festivals, assemblies, offerings, hymns and music. Whereas the criticism of Israel's cult in Amos 4:4-5 is portrayed via sarcasm, here it is clearly articulated. Additionally, Amos 5:26 contains one of two possible references to deities other than Yahweh that Israel might have been worshipping.³²⁹

The prophet undeniably criticizes the cult of Israel but some clarifications need to be made. Most importantly, the closest the prophet comes to specifically pronouncing judgment on northern cultic practice is in promising that cultic centers will be destroyed or go into exile. This is significantly different from judgment passed on social sins throughout the book where judgment comes *because* of the social practices. The sense of the judgment that is passed against the cultic sites is that they will be destroyed to show Israel that Yahweh is punishing them. This is nowhere as clear as in Amos 5:21-25. In a text that criticizes the core of Israelite cultic practice there is nowhere to be found a word such as פשע or חטא. Yahweh does not declare these activities wrong, *per se*, simply that he will pay them no mind. And this is immediately followed by his desire for justice and righteousness. This is not a criticism of the cult as much as it is a criticism of the false sense of security Israel found in the practice of the cult.³³⁰ This reading fits with Amos 3:14; 4:4-5; 5:5-6 and 5:21-23. Amos 2:8 takes place in the northern shrine and next to an altar but the

³²⁹ Barstad argues Amos 5:26 and 8:14 are the only two passages in the book of Amos where deities other than Yahweh are named. He views the text of 5:26 to be corrupt but suggests 8:14 reveals the names of the goddess Ashima, mentions the god of Dan, and names the god *drk* of Beersheba. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 143-201. Paul, however, offers an explanation of the text in which all three accusations refer to aberrant Yahwistic worship. Paul, *Amos*, 268-272.

³³⁰ This is also the issue with the day of the Lord where Israel's security in this day is challenged. In Amos, judgment never happens *because* of worship, it always happens because of social sins.

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text is about social sin instead of cultic practice. The locations “beside every altar” and “in the house of their Yahweh” highlight Israel’s confidence in their cultic practice in the face of their social oppression, which is very much in line with the above reading.³³¹ Therefore, the only text in Amos that appears to judge the cult is Amos 5:26, and this is not criticism of Israel’s illegitimate worship in the north instead of Jerusalem, it is part of a rhetorical question to illustrate that cult alone was not enough to please Yahweh.³³²

The message of Amos is directed against the nation of Israel.³³³ In order for Amos’ words to be considered a southern polemic against the north there should be

³³¹ Paul notes that the irony of Amos 2:8 is that in the places of worship, Israel acts contrary to the commands of their God. Paul, *Amos*, 87. Mays says the text suggests that Israel felt no incongruity between their oppression of the poor and their worshipping God with feasting and sacrifice. Mays, *Amos*, 47. It is common, however, to miss this irony. Stuart interprets this text literally to suggest that it was religious people who were oppressing the poor, that their worship was heterodox, and implying Canaanite influence. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 317. Andersen and Freedman view the text similarly, suggesting that it implies priests were culprits or accessories and that it points to apostasy among the official prophets and priests. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 322. Achtemeier says little about the parallel of oppression and cultic location other than to suggest this is syncretistic worship. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 185.

³³² For an explanation of this reading see 4.3. Amos 5:18-27.

³³³ McConville argues that one element of the book of Amos that has been overlooked by most scholars is the concept of Israel. While most are satisfied to understand the words of the prophet as directed against Israel as opposed to Judah, McConville suggests that the book, especially the narrative of Amos 7:10-17 and the visions, consistently challenges these popular notions and instead presents an image of the people of Yahweh as the whole, historic people of Israel. J. Gordon McConville, ““How Can Jacob Stand? He is so Small!” (Amos 7:2): The Prophetic Word and the Re-Imaging of Israel,” in *Israel’s Prophets and Israel’s Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes* (LHB/OTS; ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan Bishop Moore; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 147-149.

To be sure, I think McConville would admit that a re-imagining of Israel is not the chief aim of the book of Amos, though he does point out the incongruity of the prophet’s origin vs. his place of proclamation is second among that which the book is known for. McConville’s thesis is well argued, though I believe it begs a question: would a northern or southern audience have understood the prophet’s words this way? The place names are almost primarily in the north, as are the location and characters of the only narrative in the book. And while McConville recognizes the issue in the narrative is about how Amos’ calling relates to Israel, he makes this a discussion about the nature of Israel rather than about the authority of a southerner in the north. The close ties between the narrative and the third vision are highlighted, but, for McConville, these ties indicate the narrative has been “forged into a redactional unit with [the visions].” McConville overlooks the consistent use of surprise in the book of Amos and the manner in which it is used to lend authority to the message of the prophet (i.e., the OAN against the nations which culminates in the OAN against Israel, the rhetorical questions lending authority to the prophet in Amos 3:3-8, and most importantly, the narrative which comes at an important place in the sequence of visions).

Furthermore, the results of McConville’s study are not radically different from the results of my thesis. Historical-critical scholars frequently assign anti-Judah material in the book of Amos to later additions. Likewise, personal names such as Isaac and Jacob, which could have reference to the whole of the people of Israel, are often understood to refer only to the Israel and not Judah. However,

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more in his words than simply criticism of the northern cult.³³⁴ However, positive mention of Jerusalem or the south is entirely absent from Amos' words. On the contrary, the south, when it arises in the book of Amos, is either spoken of negatively or it is equated with the north. The foremost example is the OAN against Judah in 2:4-5, so at the outset it is not entirely pro-Judah or anti-Israel.³³⁵ Similarly, in Amos 3:2 Yahweh promises to judge the whole family that came out of Egypt. Amos also spoke against Beersheba, the cultic site in the south of Judah (5:5).³³⁶ Additionally,

since I make no such claims regarding the exclusivity of the prophecies against Israel, I am satisfied to recognize moments where the words of the prophet call the southern kingdom to account. I find McConville's argument extremely thought provoking but cannot respond to all his points. It must be sufficient, then, to disagree based on the above and I remain convinced that the majority of the references to Israel and personal names in the book of Amos refer to locations in the north, though I am in agreement with his thesis regarding the image of Israel in Amos 9.

³³⁴ Koch is absolutely correct when he asks, "But how was a North Israelite listener supposed to associate the call to 'seek Yahweh' with Jerusalem, without any further explanation?" Klaus Koch, *The Prophets 1: The Assyrian Period* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1978), 54.

³³⁵ It is widely believed that the oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah are later additions, thus accounting for the anti-Judah element of the book. Barton, *Amos's Oracles Against the Nations*, 22-24. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 170-171. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 16-17, 28-29. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 27-28, 42-44. Reventlow add the oracle against the Philistines to this list. Henning Graf Reventlow, *Das Amt des Propheten bei Amos* (FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 58. Paul discusses the reasons behind rejecting the oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah and adequately argues for accepting them as original. Paul, *Amos*, 17-27. Debating the originality of these oracles is outside the aims of this thesis. However, Paul's argument highlights the literary craftsmanship of the OAN and also notes the importance of variation within themes and styles within the book of Amos. This is something that I have touched on in 3.4. Amos 4:6-11: Israel Would not Return to Yahweh.

³³⁶ There is a certain tradition that Beersheba was a pilgrimage site for northern Israelites. Wolff suggests mention of Beersheba is an addition inserted by those of the "old school of Amos," citing 1 Kings 19:3-4 and 1 Samuel 8:2 as evidence that Beersheba was a pilgrimage site for northern Israelites. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 133-134, 281. Stuart also suggests this was a pilgrimage destination, citing 2 Kings 23:8, as does Achtemeier. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 346. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 203. Mays cites patriarchal texts highlighting the importance of the town as the reason for pilgrimages. Mays, *Amos*, 88. Paul also mentions Beersheba as a pilgrimage destination based on the evidence of Amos 5:5 (though he does list texts that show its patriarchal importance). Paul, *Amos*, 163.

It is interesting that texts such as these are used as support for the idea that northern Israelites made pilgrimages to Beersheba since none of the texts make any reference to such a trip. Instead, they simply affirm that Beersheba was a site of patriarchal importance and cultic significance. The idea of this as a pilgrimage destination seems to have arisen simply from the admonition *not* to cross over to Beersheba in Amos 5:5, with the assumption that based on this admonition, this practice must have been a somewhat regular practice.

Rather than continue to use this assumptive interpretation, it seems best to speak about Beersheba as Amos 5:5 does. This text is a rejection of Israel's assurance in their cult as opposed to assurance in faithfully following Yahweh's commands. Within this context, Beersheba is a cultic site that would have been known, and perhaps even visited, by northern Israelites. The importance, however, is the site rather than the action. Amos 5:5 speaks against faith in the cultic sites (much like Amos 4:4-5 speaks against faith in cultic ritual) rather than describes Israelite pilgrimage practices.

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Amos 6:1 uses Zion in parallel with Samaria as worthy of judgment and 3:1-2 says Yahweh is going to call the “whole family which he brought out of Egypt” to account for their sins.³³⁷ Finally, Amos refers to Israel with the patriarchal names of Israel, Jacob and Isaac, names that certainly viewed Israel as part of the same family as Judah. Amos 4:6-11 works as Yahweh’s attempt to draw Israel to repent. It does not work as Yahweh’s attempt to move Israel to give up false places of worship and shift focus back to Jerusalem.

The closest Amos comes to suggesting Israel should return to worship in Jerusalem as Yahweh “intended” is in 9:11 when Yahweh promises to “raise up the fallen booth of David.” It is hard to view this as a promise about only the nation of Israel and not Judah as well, despite mentions of breeches in 9:11 recalling breeches in 4:3. However, since it is a prophecy about northern and southern kingdoms, it also means the southern kingdom will have suffered ruin. It therefore seems unfounded to view Amos words against Israel’s cult as a polemic against the northern cult. To be sure, the prophet is critical of Israel’s cult, however, this should not be misconstrued as southern ideology. That the prophet should prophesy against Israel’s religious practice, in light of their unjust social actions, is not unusual, nor does it necessarily translate as a polemic against the north. This is strengthened when one notices the few negative references to Judah in the book. Most importantly, though, is the context of Amos 4. Therefore, the significance of Bethel and Gilgal in 4:2 is simply that this was where cult was practiced and not that this was a polemic against the north.

Finally, the key to correctly understand Amos 4:4-5 seems to be **כִּי כֵן אֶהְבֵּתֶם**. Amos 4:4-5 is arranged into three bicola, each utilizing climactic parallelism and sarcasm to describe Israel’s practice of their cult. The final line of the unit is a single colon, breaking the pattern of the two parallel lines. The reason for this is that this single line summarizes the reason for Yahweh’s sarcasm in the previous six lines. Without this closing line, Amos 4:4-5 would be three bicola directing sarcasm at Israel’s cult with no explanation. Albeit, Amos 4:6-11 could most likely aid in understanding the focus on Israel’s pointless cult in Amos 4:4-5 but the final line

³³⁷ The occurrence of “Zion” in the woe oracle of Amos 6 is much debated. Wolff has a description of the debate though his conclusion is that use of Zion is a later addition, a conclusion I disagree with. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 314-316. Paul’s brief interaction with the discussion is much more satisfactory. Paul, *Amos*, 199-200.

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makes this statement undeniable. Its inclusion shifts the sarcasm from the cult itself to Israel's irrational faith in it, highlighting the futility of cultic practice in light of social justice.³³⁸ Israel practices the cult for its own gain. Yahweh is not appeased by it.

Summary of 3.3.

As I have demonstrated in the above, Amos 4:4-5 is the direct continuation of Amos 4:1-3. While some scholars see 4:4 as the beginning of a new unit in Amos, theirs is a less satisfactory reading. Instead, Amos 4:4-5 continues from 4:1-3; it is addressed to the same audience and continues giving more reasons for the exile promised immediately prior. The unit is chiefly concerned with the cult. It is decidedly sarcastic and features climactic parallelism, both factors which tell the reader that though Amos 4:4-5 is focused solely on the cult, the unit is not interested in a literal description of Israelite cultic practice. Instead, by labelling cultic practices *פֶּשַׁע* and sarcastically commanding such an abnormally frequent occurrence of the rites, the text highlights the futility of the action, which is the heart of the message of Amos 4:4-5 and begins to introduce the theme of Israel's unwarranted self confidence. Furthermore, the suggestion that this is a polemic against the northern cult indicates has been rejected since the necessary ingredients of such a view are absent from this text as well as from the whole of the book. Finally, the unit flows neatly, continuing to build upon the tight structure of the chapter as well as continuing the theme found elsewhere that religious practice is not, by itself, sufficient for the people of Yahweh. According to the message of Amos 4:4-5, Israel's cultic practices were futile.

3.4. Amos 4:6-11: Israel Would not Return to Yahweh

In this section of my thesis I will demonstrate the significance of Amos 4:6-11 to Amos 4 as well as to the book of Amos as a whole. Through the closing refrain, "You did not return to me," in each of the five plagues, Amos 4:6-11 provides the second half to the opening refrain, "I will not turn from it," in each of the oracles in Amos 1-2. Yahweh will not turn from his decision to judge because Israel and the

³³⁸ Hadjiev discusses the issue of Amos' words as a southern polemic in his redaction critical work. However, on this issue he refutes the claim through a "plain reading of the text" very similar to my own methodology. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 17-19.

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nations did not heed his attempts at restoration. Furthermore, I will show that the theme of “turning/returning” in the book of Amos is not complete until its occurrence in Amos 9:14. The theme of שׁוּב thus serves as a necessary text for a coherent understanding of Amos 4 as well as a necessary ingredient in understanding the message of the book as a whole.

Amos 4:6-11 is without doubt a single unit. The reader can quickly identify the repetition of וְלֹא־שָׁבְתֶם עַד־יָנֹאֵם־יְהוָה. The content of this section is Yahweh’s recounting of his judgment on Israel in the past and is set apart from the rest of the chapter. This text consists of five descriptions of times Yahweh sent disaster upon Israel. Each of the five descriptions ends with Yahweh’s statement וְלֹא־שָׁבְתֶם עַד־יָנֹאֵם־יְהוָה (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11), and each is closed with יָנֹאֵם־יְהוָה, which is common to this chapter of Amos (Amos 4:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

Amos 4:6-11 consists of Yahweh’s recounting of a series of five plagues he sent against Israel. This need not be five literal plagues or five plagues in rapid, or any, succession. The progression in severity may indicate simply that Yahweh judged in the past to no avail. Plagues one and two both open with an introduction which is omitted from the last three plagues. Amos 4:6 begins with וְגַם־אֲנִי and 4:7 begins with וְגַם אֲנִכִי. This גַּם can refer to two things; either to Yahweh’s judgment in 4:2-3 or Israel’s worship in 4:4-5. The strength of referring גַּם back to 4:2-3 is that it forms a link between the actions of Yahweh in the chapter. Thus “I will send you into exile (4:2-3) just as I sent plagues upon you (4:6-11).” However, this requires forcing the connection whereas the connection to 4:4-5 is easier, closer in proximity, and more likely. Amos 4:4-5 emphasises frequency and futility in Israel’s cultic practices while Amos 4:6-11 emphasizes the frequency and futility of Yahweh’s attempts at drawing Israel back to himself.

Semantically, גַּם follows no strict rules that indicate to what it must refer in Amos 4. Labuschagne argues the primary purpose of גַּם was to emphasize, not to add, though this meaning was displaced by the use of גַּם to indicate addition.³³⁹ Amos 4:6 and 7 is hard to construe when understanding גַּם as a particle denoting

³³⁹ C. J. Labuschagne, “The Emphasizing Particle *gam* and its Connotations,” in *Studia biblica et semitica Theodoro Christiano Vriezen: qui munere professoris theologiae per XXV annos functus est, ab amicis, collegis, discipulis dedicata* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1966), 203. See also HALOT 1:195-196.

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addition, though the emphatic use works quite well.³⁴⁰ The emphatic function applied to 4:6 and 7 would appear something like “I on the other hand” and emphasize that the actions of 4:6 and 7, and thus 4:6-11, were caused by none other than Yahweh. Thus, ׀ג in Amos 4:6 and 7 function primarily to emphasize the switch from Israel acting to Yahweh acting.³⁴¹ This seems to be important since not just the first plague but the first two make this distinction. After that it seems as if the text has made it evident that the subject is Yahweh.

This emphatic switch to Yahweh as subject has the added effect of firmly connecting 4:4-5 with 4:6-11. The emphasis on Yahweh as speaker highlights the switch, making the two units function as two halves of a whole. Recognizing the separate yet connected nature of this unit, it is now possible to look at the overall structure and content of Amos 4:6-11. As was noted above, the phrase ׀לא־שבתם עדי is an obvious marker. It concludes each of the five plagues and indicates that Yahweh’s purpose in sending them was redemptive not punitive.³⁴² This phrase is the key idea of this unit, evidenced by the fact that it is the only consistent element in each of the five plagues and gives some hint at the reason for the plagues.

Similarities between the five plagues include first common singular verbs beginning each plague, followed by a preposition with a second masculine plural suffix.³⁴³ All verbs of actions perpetrated by Yahweh are first common singular and the object of these verbs is always second masculine plural. There are no unusual shifts in gender or number in this section.

³⁴⁰ Labuschagne concludes that though the primary function of ׀ג (emphasis) was weakened by the development of the secondary meaning (addition), ׀ג always retained its meaning as a particle of emphasis. Labuschagne, “Emphasizing Particle,” 203.

³⁴¹ Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 278. Paul, *Amos*, 141-142.

³⁴² Noble, “Function of n’ m Yhwh,” 624. Noble’s chief aim in this article is to note that the function of ׀גא־יְהוָה in Amos is intended to emphasize important material, though he admits not all occurrences can be accounted for. His argument is not entirely convincing, though his perception of the redemptive nature of the punishments is entirely correct. Paul says the purpose of the curses of 4:6-11 is the restoration of Israel, though noting that the punishments themselves are punitive and retributive. Paul, *Amos*, 141, 143.

³⁴³ Amos 4:9 has the verb followed by the second masculine plural suffix attached to the direct object marker rather than a preposition.

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The first plague (4:6) is described as “cleanness of teeth” (נקיון שנים).³⁴⁴ Parallelism with “lack of bread” (הסר לחם) defines this plague as a famine. One notable feature of this plague is that the famine struck all Israel’s cities and/or places. This is in contrast with the drought of 4:7 striking some cities and not others. Additionally, the description of the plagues gets more specific following this first plague. Amos 4:6 simply states that Yahweh struck Israel with widespread famine. There is no description of the manner in which this came about or the reaction to it, as we find in the other plagues.

The second plague (4:7-8) is a drought. This plague has a longer description than any other plague in this series. Not only was the drought sent prior to the harvest but it was inconsistent as well. One city received rain and another did not. Populations of cities are described as staggering to another city to find water but even upon doing so are not satisfied.

The difference between 4:6 and 4:7-8 immediately tells the reader that, though 4:6-11 are a unit consisting of five past plagues,³⁴⁵ the five plagues are not uniformly recounted, nor is there parallelism between the five plagues other than the two phrases discussed earlier. Just as the OAN, similar as they are, exhibit a

³⁴⁴ Both Wolff and Paul comment on the uniqueness of this phrase, with Paul calling it “euphemistic *hapax legomenon*.” Paul, *Amos*, 144. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 260. The parallelism in this verse is very strict and the unit is short, making it almost certainly poetry. Both Wolff and de Waard note the alternation between prose and poetry in Amos 4:6-11, with prose becoming predominate towards the end of the unit. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 250. Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley, *A Handbook on the Book of Amos* (Help for Translators; New York: United Bible Societies, 1979), 85. Maag, however, asks a valid question when he asks whether some of these units might be elevated prose rather than poetry. Victor Maag, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), 21.

Regardless of whether some of the plagues are poetic and others are not, each plague begins with a first person singular perfect verb (except for the introductory וַגַּם אֲנֹכִי of Amos 4:6 and 7, which are then followed by this same first person singular form), and each plague ends with the same refrain. Wolff notes this irregularity and compares the plagues with the OAN (of which he believes only five are original to the prophet Amos) and the five visions and determines the plagues differ in style from other oracles in the book of Amos. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 250-251. This seems arbitrary due to the fact that Wolff has already eliminated three of the oracles in the OAN from consideration. Further, it seems Wolff is holding the text of Amos to very rigid style guidelines. According to his view, a text must be either poetic or prose, oracles should be the same length, tight structure in the OAN should be duplicated in the oracles of Amos 4:6-11, oracles must always announce judgment therefore the accusations of the plagues are odd, and the prophet’s criticism of Israel must always be for the same reason. This need for the entire text of the book of Amos to fit into neat compartments has negative effects on Wolff’s conclusions.

³⁴⁵ Paul divides 4:6-11 into seven plagues, discussed below. Anderson and Freedman concede there may be as many as seven plagues. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 447.

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significant amount of variety, so too does 4:6-11. Even in areas where a unit exhibits strong thematic or stylistic uniformity the reader should not expect boring repetition nor should s/he judge the absence of this externally imposed uniformity to be immediate evidence of multiple sources.³⁴⁶ Instead, one should view the elements that are different along with the elements that are uniform and read the differences as intended variations within a pattern, with the idea of a “pattern” being loose but intentional.

The third plague (4:9) destroyed the crops. שדפון is the scorching of the crops.³⁴⁷ ירקון is a discoloration or disease of plants.³⁴⁸ Finally, גזם (locusts)³⁴⁹ devoured Israel’s produce הרבות (repeatedly).³⁵⁰ The fourth plague (4:10) is widespread death.³⁵¹ This comes as a result of both “pestilence” (דבר) and “sword” (חרב). Though the pestilence is directed against a second masculine plural preposition, the sword is directed against “your young men” (בחוריכם) as well as “your captured horses” (שבי סוסיכם). However, since the pestilence is described as

³⁴⁶ In reference to וגם־אני Wolff says “*Alte Amosworte finden wir nie so miteinander [sic] verbunden.*” (We never find old words of Amos joined together thusly.) Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 251. Thus, 4:6-11 is from a redactor based on the וגם־אני formula and the fact that Amos is supposedly unfamiliar with the theme of returning to Yahweh from a foreign deity. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 260. Wolff’s conclusion is built on two shaky premises. First, Amos doesn’t use וגם־אני *outside of* 4:6 and וגם as a device to connect oracles *outside of* 4:6, 7. Amos is quite familiar with varying a theme and not following patterns rigidly. The fact that the text here features a slight difference does not disqualify it from being original, especially in such a diverse text as the book of Amos. Second, Amos 4:6-11 is not about a return to Yahweh from worshipping a foreign deity. Wolff’s conclusion that שוב and עד are used only in Hosea and the Deuteronomist to refer to the return from foreign deities to Yahweh is irrelevant in this context. Immediately prior to 4:6-11 Yahweh mocks Israel’s own Yahwistic cult practices. There is nothing in the immediate context of Amos 4 that suggests Israel was worshipping foreign deities.

³⁴⁷ HALOT 4:1423.

³⁴⁸ HALOT 2:440-441.

³⁴⁹ HALOT 1:187.

³⁵⁰ Paul divides Amos 4:9 into two plagues, blast and locust. Paul, *Amos*, 146-147. While there is a technical difference between blight and locust, Paul’s division suffers from two major flaws. First, and most importantly, separating 4:6-11 into seven instead of five plagues ignores both the fivefold division of the unit evidenced by נאם־יהוה as well as the common recipient of the blight and locust. Secondly, Paul is content to call שדפון and ירקון “blast” despite the different nature of these plagues. If the structure of 4:6-11 is not a factor in identifying the different plagues, 4:9 should then be divided into three separate plagues rather than simply two.

³⁵¹ Paul divides Amos 4:10 into two plagues, pestilence and war. Paul, *Amos*, 147-148. Once again, outside of the objections to his division listed above, this distinction ignores the common theme of widespread death of humans and animals.

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occurring בדרך מצרים (in the same way as in Egypt)³⁵² it need not be understood as a pestilence plaguing only humans. With this in mind, both the pestilence and the war are responsible for widespread death of both Israelites and their animals.

The fifth plague (4:11) does not lend itself to explicit literal identification.³⁵³ The use of the verb הפך in Amos primarily means to “turn,” almost with the connotation of turning upside down or in the completely opposite direction (Amos 4:11; 5:7, 8; 6:12; 8:10). In Amos 5:7 it indicates a turn from justice into bitterness and in Amos 5:8 a turn from blackness into dawn. In Amos 6:12 it is a turn from justice into poison and in 8:10 a turn from religious feasts into mourning. However, the context of Amos 4:11 requires a slightly different understanding. The image of what Yahweh did to Sodom and Gomorrah guide the reader into reading the הפך of 4:11 as “overturn” or “overthrow.” Either word correctly recognizes the root meaning of “turn (upside down)” as well as its use in the rest of the book of Amos.

The image of Yahweh’s action against Sodom and Gomorrah should be the guiding image for understanding the nuance of הפך in 4:11 and, thus, the nature of what Yahweh did in this fifth plague. It seems clear that there is a progression in the severity of the plagues so the הפך of 4:11 must be more severe than the pestilence and war of 4:10. However, in the wake of this הפך, Israel is described as באוד מצל משרפה (a log snatched from a fire). Whereas the miserable remains of the sheep in Amos 3:12 signifies the complete nature of judgment, this image of a stick snatched from the fire does indeed indicate that judgment was not complete, though it gives the impression that the judgment was stopped only just in time.³⁵⁴

It is necessary to give some attention to the order and progression of the plagues. The first was famine, then drought, then destruction of crops, then death and

³⁵² The fifth plague against the Egyptians was a דבר which killed livestock. See Exodus 9:2-3. Andersen and Freedman suggest this reference to Egypt means Israel must have suffered a military defeat in Egypt. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 443. As will be discussed below, this account of the plagues likely does not refer to explicit historical events.

³⁵³ Paul defines it as an earthquake. Paul, *Amos*, 148-149. Andersen and Freedman suggest the possibility it could be either an earthquake or a fire. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 447. Wolff suggests it refers to the 721 destruction of Israel. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 261-262. Jeremias suggests it refers to the 586 destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 53. All these interpretations seek to interpret הפך as if it referred to a single, significant, historical event.

³⁵⁴ See Zechariah 3:2 for the image of a log snatched from a fire indicating survival rather than destruction. The text in Zechariah says, אוד מצל מאש, using אש rather than שרפה.

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finally widespread destruction. It is worth noting that there are no indicators as to time or order of the plagues.³⁵⁵ There is, however, a degree of intensification.³⁵⁶ The first plague is simply hunger with little description of method or extent. The second is thirst but it is described as being both divinely sporadic as well as detrimental to the harvest. The drought is described mainly as a lack of water with Israelites wandering from town to town looking for water. The search for water is the dominant image in this plague and it looks only slightly more severe than the first were it not for the description that the drought comes three weeks before the harvest, effectively destroying all the crops. While this could certainly be intended simply to suggest the drought came at the worst possible time, it does mean that the first three plagues target Israel's food supply, the first is simply hunger, possibly indicating a lower than normal harvest. The second is a drought three months before the harvest indicating an almost complete loss of crops. Finally, the third is blight, mildew and locusts, targeting gardens, vineyards and fig and olive trees. Thus, the first three plagues target some, then most, and finally all sources of food.

Despite the complete lack of food (and water) in the first three plagues, death is mentioned for the first time in the fourth plague of pestilence and sword. The first three plagues recount Yahweh refraining from providing for Israel. The fourth plague introduces pestilence sent from heaven and, presumably, an external foe wielding the sword. Yahweh has moved from withdrawing provision to sending calamity and

³⁵⁵ That a drought three months before the harvest comes second after famine suggests there may be more to the plagues than simply recounting of a series of events.

³⁵⁶ Reventlow and Mays deny any progression in the plagues. Reventlow says, *In dem Abschnitt V. 6-11 herrscht dagegen das vollkommene Gleichmaß, fast die Monotonie.* (In the section of v. 6-11, however, there is perfect symmetry, almost monotonie.) Mays, who suggests there is "no perceptible development in the sections, no heightening of the disasters' intensity," and says the effect of the sequence comes instead through the repetition of disaster. Mays, *Amos*, 78. Though Mays correctly points out that these were events typical to that time in Syria-Palestine and Israel had to have experienced them in the past in order for Yahweh's declaration that he had caused them to have any meaning. Mays, *Amos*, 78. Some do not notice or mention the progression or relationship of the plagues to each other. Paul, *Amos*, 141-143. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 444-447. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 257-258.

Others, however, do note the progression in the plagues. See Carroll R., *Contexts*, 211. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 52-53. James L. Crenshaw, "'A Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity' (Am. 4:6-12; Isa. 9:7-10:4, 5:25-29)," *Semitics* 1 (1970): 31.

It is much more common for scholars to devote the majority of their time noting comparisons between the plagues in Amos 4 to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Hadjiev gives the most comprehensive coverage of this approach. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 148-160. See also, Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 200-201. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 336-339.

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destruction. Finally, he sends total destruction. Whereas the first three plagues are connected by the degree of food production destroyed, the last two plagues are connected by their attention to acts of Yahweh in Israel's past. The plagues of Egypt, though terrible, did not destroy that nation. Yahweh's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was utter and complete. In Amos 4:11, only being "snatched from the fire" prevented Israel from that same level of destruction. Despite small differences between the length and description of the five plagues it is obvious that they fit together structurally and thematically. Following this examination it is also obvious that the ordering of the plagues is deliberate and is due to the symbolic progression of the judgment rather than to necessarily actual historical events.³⁵⁷

Having examined the progression in the plagues it is appropriate to turn our attention to the refrain echoed in each. All five plagues conclude with Yahweh's declaration "But you did not return to me" (ולא־שבתם עדי). The repetition of this phrase after the progression of each plague identifies Yahweh's purpose in the plagues as redemptive. The use of שוב in Amos 4 is reminiscent of the OAN. It is likely that Yahweh's failed attempts to get Israel to return in Amos 4 are the reason for Yahweh's firm decision not to turn from his course of judgment in the oracles.³⁵⁸ Or, to put it chronologically as the book presents it, Yahweh will not turn from his decision to judge because Israel did not heed his offer of repentance. This decision on Yahweh's part is echoed in the third and fourth visions with his "I will not pass over them any longer" (לא־אוסִיף עוד עבור לוי). Yahweh's judgment is rooted in Israel's refusal to return.

This judgment will not be thwarted, but it will have an end. The primary uses of שוב in Amos are in the OAN (1:3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) and in chapter four (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Outside of these two units, in the book of Amos שוב only occurs in 9:14. There, at the close of the book, Yahweh promises to turn around the captivity

³⁵⁷ Jeremias recognizes that the sequence of plagues is not to be understood historically, they are not the experiences of just one generation, and there are no experiences that correspond exactly to this sequence of plagues. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 52. It is odd when he turns from this symbolic reading of Amos 4:6-10 to suggest that 4:11 refers to the 586 B.C.E destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 53.

³⁵⁸ More specifically, Yahweh's decision not to turn in his oracle against Israel is due to Israel's failure to עדי שבתם. However, Amos 9:7 testifies to Yahweh's providential care for other nations. Yahweh's decision not to turn from punishing Israel is due to Israel's failure to return to him. This scenario is quite possible for Yahweh's decision not to turn from punishing the other nations in the oracles, though this claim is most definitely beyond the scope of the text of Amos.

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of his people. This final use of שׁוּב does not, then, stand out as abnormal from Yahweh's insistence that judgment will come. Instead, it confirms that the reason for Yahweh's judgment is redemptive, as it is in Amos 4:6-11. Only after punishment has come will Yahweh restore his people.

Summary of 3.4.

Amos 4:6-11 is closely related to 4:4-5. The נִגַּם emphasizes Yahweh as speaker and the unit contrasts Israel's futile cultic practice of 4:4-5 with Yahweh's futile attempts at restoration. The five plagues show a progression in severity though they do not carry any indication as to time so they cannot be placed in any literal relationship to one another. The plagues move from the destruction of some, then most, and finally all of Israel's food sources, death comes with pestilence and sword, and finally the fifth vision narrates almost total destruction. As has been seen elsewhere in the book, patterns such as these plagues are loose but intentional. The unifying element to each of the plagues is the closing refrain "But you did not return to me" (וְלֹא־שָׁבַתֶּם עִדִּי), which identifies Yahweh's purpose in the plagues as redemptive. The use of שׁוּב here and in the OAN (1:3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) form a strong bond, explaining that Yahweh will not turn from his decision to judge because Israel (and the nations) did not heed his attempts at their restoration. However, the final occurrence of שׁוּב in Amos shows that, though Yahweh will not turn from sending judgment, once that judgment has come, Yahweh will restore his people. Amos 4:6-11 therefore contributes a valuable function to the book of Amos. Chapter four would be fragmentary without it and the theme of turn/return that currently exists in the book of Amos would be marginal at best were it not for Amos 4:6-11. Therefore, this single unit is necessary both for the function of this one chapter as well as for the message of the book as a whole.

3.5. Amos 4:12-13: Yahweh's Future Actions Towards Israel

Over the next few pages I will show that Amos 4:12-13 are best understood as an independent unit from Amos 4:6-11 and taken together, function as a conclusion to the entire chapter of Amos 4. Yahweh's promise of "more of the same" following Amos 4:6-11 along with the inclusio between 4:2, 13 show these two verses serve to neatly tie the entire chapter together in both form and content.

The final two verses of Amos 4 are more difficult. The Hebrew of 4:12 is difficult and its meaning is not entirely clear. Amos 4:13 is the first of three

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doxologies in the book, leaving the interpreter to determine what its function and place are in the text. Additionally, it is not immediately evident whether or how the two verses are connected with one another and how 4:12 or 4:12-13 function and relate to 4:6-11 and the rest of the chapter.

Most commentators are in agreement that Amos 4:12-13 are to be included in the unit begun in Amos 4:6.³⁵⁹ The difficulty in treating the text comes from the לִכְן which obviously links the verse to 4:6-11 coupled with the radically different form and content of 4:12-13 from 4:6-11.

The use of the particle לִכְן throughout Amos typically ends units (Amos 4:12; 5:16; 6:7; 7:17) as well as introduces Yahweh's response to Israel (Amos 3:11; 4:12; 5:11, 16; 6:7). Of the seven times לִכְן is used in Amos (Amos 3:11; 4:12; 5:11, 13, 16; 6:7; 7:17) it is part of the phrase לִכְן כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה (Amos 3:11; 5:16; 7:17)³⁶⁰ and four times it is followed by the word כֹּה (Amos 3:11; 4:12; 5:16; 7:17). Its use in 4:12; 5:13 and 7:17 indicate that it should signal an introduction of a threat of Yahweh based on past actions. It introduces a conclusion and is based on/due to events that precede it.

It remains only to decide whether the לִכְן concludes the whole chapter or just 4:6-11. Yahweh has sent five punishments against Israel in progressive severity and despite the indeterminate nature of the fifth punishment, Israel still did not return to Yahweh. The לִכְן is a more than fitting conclusion to the five fold וְלֹא-שָׁבְתָם עָדִי. Israel never responded to Yahweh, therefore something will follow.

However, reading לִכְן and 4:12(-13) as a conclusion simply to 4:6-11 rather than a "big picture" reading of Amos 4:1-13 looks rather piecemeal. The chapter would simply be a combination of three independent units, two of which seem to work together, whilst the first (4:1-3) stands alone and the last (4:11-12) is tacked clumsily on the end of the third.

The difficulty is that 4:12-13 stands out as being separate from 4:6-11. Even if 4:12 is considered on its own it does not seem to fit entirely as the conclusion to

³⁵⁹ Paul, *Amos*, 137ff. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 198. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 247ff. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 46ff. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 333ff. Andersen and Freedman treat Amos 4:12 and 4:13 each as separate units and note that they, along with 4:6-11, are only loosely connected. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 448.

³⁶⁰ Amos 3:11 inserts אָדִי before יְהוָה.

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4:6-11. The repetition of **עדי ולא-שבתם** and **נאם-יהוה** are suspiciously absent from 4:12, 13, and while one could begin to argue why they do not belong after 4:12 or 13, the presence of **עדי ולא-שבתם** only in 4:6-11 is a very strong indicator that these verses are a unit unto themselves. Additionally, the lack of **נאם-יהוה** in 4:12 or 13 despite its inclusion in each of the other units of the chapter suggests that something new is happening here.

The opening of 4:12 immediately sets it apart from 4:6-11. Amos 4:11 ends with the expected **נאם-יהוה** but 4:12 does not begin with the first person verb common to the plague reports. Instead, it begins with **לכן כה**, a combination which is found four times in Amos (3:11; 4:12; 5:16; 7:17). In 3:11; 4:12 and 7:17 the phrase clearly follows a list of sins and introduces a word of judgment. Its occurrence in 5:16 is slightly different. Here, the phrase does not immediately follow a list of sins but this is due to the chiasmic format of 5:1-17. A list of sins still precedes **לכן כה** (5:7, 10), but they are separated from the words of judgment by three verses.

I draw out these similarities initially because there is a major difference between the four instances of **לכן כה**. The occurrences in Amos 3:11; 5:16 and 7:17 are all part of a speech formula. In Amos 5:16 and 7:17 the full phrase is **לכן-כה אמר יהוה** and Amos 3:11 adds **אדני** before **יהוה**. Therefore, Amos 4:12 stands out as the only of the four occurrences that does not introduce speech of Yahweh. There are two responses to this observation. First, each section in Amos 4 prior to 4:12 ends with **נאם-יהוה** and the speech from 4:6 onwards has been first person on the part of Yahweh. This gives the **לכן כה** of 4:12 the same effect as the other speech formulas.

Second, the **לכן כה** of 4:12 follows the format of the speech formulas of 3:11 and 7:17.³⁶¹ Despite the fact that the **לכן כה** of 4:12 is not a full speech formula, it functions exactly the same by following a list of sins and introducing a word of judgment. Thus, while the **לכן כה** of Amos 4:12 has a significant difference from the three mentioned speech formulas in Amos, it should not be divorced from them when evaluating its function at the end of Amos 4.

One final point when examining the use of **לכן כה** in Amos is its function in closing units. Since **לכן** always transitions from sins to judgment it frequently

³⁶¹ It is especially interesting to note that the speech formula of 7:17 is mediated by Amos. Amos 7:16 says “So now, hear the word of Yahweh.” Even in second hand recounting, this speech formula still follows a list of offences followed by an introduction of a word of judgment.

concludes units, though these can be large or small units. Thus, the short narrative of Amos' encounter is concluded with לכן plus the speech formula, as is the longer chiasm of 5:1-17. The two occurrences in Amos 5:11 and 13 are slightly different. In this unit of 5:10-13 the text moves back and forth from sin (5:10) to לכן plus sin plus judgment (5:11) to sins (5:12) and concludes with לכן plus judgment (5:13). Only the לכן of 5:11 does not match a strict pattern found elsewhere, and as we have seen and will continue to see, in Amos the patterns are general guidelines, not exact models.

Thus, when evaluating Amos 4:12 for its relation to the text around it we should be aware of the general pattern of לכן as concluding both smaller and larger units. Since Amos 4:6-11 consists of five plagues each concluding with ולא־שבתם עדי נאם־יהוה, Amos 4:12 must be understood as a separate unit and its place in the larger unit of the chapter suggests it concludes all of Amos 4 rather than simply 4:6-11.

Before evaluating the relationship of 4:12 to 4:13 we must first look at the content of 4:12. This is not an easy task. The לכן places 4:12 in an important place for interpreting Amos 4, but opinions are still varied due to the difficult composition of the verse. Repetition of the vocative ישראל and the verb עשה has prompted some scholars to delete phrases from the verse because translation is difficult or cumbersome.³⁶² Despite these difficulties there is some agreement regarding how the verse should be translated.³⁶³ Where commentators disagree with this translation centers around deciphering the referents of כה and זאת, and can thus significantly affect the verse as a whole.

The ambiguity of the demonstratives כה and זאת and their referents make interpretations vague or assumptive. It seems there are four ways of interpreting the כה of 4:12:³⁶⁴ 1) it refers to a symbolic act such as a gesture or motion,³⁶⁵ 2) it refers

³⁶² Paul says the verse may be in perfect order and does not need deletion or reordering. Paul, *Amos*, 150.

³⁶³ Several commentators and the NASB all translate the verse similarly. NASB says, "Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel." Paul, *Amos*, 137. Mays, *Amos*, 77.

³⁶⁴ There is widespread agreement that כה cannot refer to the punishments in the previous paragraphs nor to the future punishments of the next chapter. Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 91.

³⁶⁵ De Waard suggests that it most likely refers to some threatening gesture or something the first hearers could see. Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 91. Paul agrees. Paul, *Amos*, 150.

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to a misfortune that has already occurred; 3) it refers to the judgment that is alluded to later in 4:12; or 4) it refers to the previous material, namely, to the punishments of 4:6-11.³⁶⁶

The second interpretation is merely a variation of the first. In order for the audience to understand that a specific misfortune was being referred to, some gesture or motion would be necessary, thus the two interpretations can be discussed together. It is primarily due to the difficulty or ambiguity in the Hebrew of 4:12 that prompts scholars to explain this verse through a symbolic gesture or a past misfortune. 'If the answer cannot be found in the text then it must rely on something outside of the text.' I find this reasoning no less ambiguous. Proposing a solution that cannot be verified seems more of a hypothesis than an interpretation, especially when the answer can be found in the text, as shown below.

These explanations beg multiple questions. First, why would speech which required visual or referential explanation be preserved without some explanation? If the saying came from Amos or his disciples, it seems more than likely that either, in the process of recounting the event (for if it involved a gesture then this was a speech to a crowd) for preservation, they would have added some explanation. If the saying came from later redactors then either they would have had to deliberately insert this saying without a referent or they used a source, at which point the above applies. It is not sufficient to propose that this text requires extra textual information without also explaining why this information was not included in the text. Second, given that Amos 4:12 is most likely poetry,³⁶⁷ and given Amos' literary style, is it not more likely that this verse should be understood by considerations from within the text rather than from without?³⁶⁸ Thus, there are significant reasons to avoid looking outside the text for an explanation of 4:12.

³⁶⁶ Jeremias sees three possible interpretations due to grouping de Waard's last two interpretations into one option and suggests it refers back to the destruction of Jerusalem in 4:11. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 54. Andersen and Freedman suggest it refers back to the series of plagues in 4:6-11. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 449-450. Wolff suggests it refers to Josiah's destruction of the altar at Bethel. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 262.

³⁶⁷ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 337.

³⁶⁸ The Hebrew of 4:12 is admittedly difficult and this is the main reason scholars look for interpretations that involve extra-textual information. De Waard and Smalley say all commentators agree that נָזַח cannot refer to the punishments of 4:6-11 and כֹּה does not refer to the future events of the opening of chapter five. Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 91. Keil states כֹּה אֵעָשֶׂה cannot refer

So it remains to examine the last two interpretations; does the כה refer to the judgment referred to in the second half of 4:12 or to that described in 4:6-11? The predominant use of כה in the Hebrew Bible is in connection with speech formulas (כה אמר), and in these instances, כה refers to what follows. In the book of Amos, כה is found twenty times. Fifteen times it is part of a divine (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:11, 12; 5:3, 4, 16; 7:17) or human (Amos 7:11) speech formula, which point to what follows. Four times כה is used with ראה to introduce the visions (Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1). The one unique occurrence of כה in the book of Amos is here in 4:12 where it occurs in the phrase לכן כה אעשה לך ישראל עקב כי־זאת אעשה לך. Paul notes the phrase כה אעשה לך is reminiscent of the oath-curse formula כה יעשה־לי אלהים.³⁶⁹ Lehmann says כה and ככה almost always refer to empirical demonstrations.³⁷⁰ While no physical act, such as in 1 Samuel 11:7, is found in Amos 4:12, the plagues of Amos 4:6-11 stand as the logical referent and the use in Amos 4:12 is similar to that of Jeremiah 5:13, suggesting that while decidedly separate from 4:6-11, Amos 4:12 begins by threatening “more of the same.”

At this point it seems good to address a translation issue. It is common to translate אעשה in 4:12 as “I will do,” and the clause is translated “Thus I will do to you, O Israel.”³⁷¹ This practice aids in promoting the confusion surrounding the verse. While עשה signifies action, translating it as “do” in Amos 4:12 has two major weaknesses; first the double occurrence of אעשה poses a unique problem. To

backwards because Amos always uses לכן כה to introduce what is about to ensue and allusion to 4:6-11 is precluded by the future אעשה. He also proposes the זאת refers back to the כה. K&D 10:276. Others are not so convinced. Mays suggests כה points forwards and זאת points backward. Mays, *Amos*, 81. Stuart says the כה indicates what is to come will be similar to what has happened in 4:6-11. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 339. Andersen and Freedman agree, also treating זאת as referring to the same thing. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 450.

³⁶⁹ Paul, *Amos*, 150. Lehmann examines this oath formula and suggests כה אעשה לך, though fragmentary, is synonymous with the full form of the curse “כה יעשה לְ ___ ה' וכה יוסיף ___” (May God incessantly do thus unto X, if/unless he does thus . . .). Manfred R. Lehmann, “Biblical Oaths,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 81-82. The full form of the curse can be found in Ruth 1:17; 1 Samuel 3:17; 20:13; 2 Samuel 3:9, 35; 19:14; 1 Kings 2:23; 19:2; 20:10; 2 Kings 6:31. The abbreviated form of the curse can be seen in 1 Samuel 11:7 and Jeremiah 5:13.

³⁷⁰ Lehmann, “Biblical Oaths,” 81.

³⁷¹ See also, HALOT 2:889-892. DCH 6:569-602.

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translate עשה as “do” for both occurrences makes the verse puzzling.³⁷² However, one cannot easily suggest that אעשה be translated differently when the two occurrences are so close together.³⁷³ Second, while translating the imperfect as future can indicate אעשה refers to a one time single action (“Thus I will do to you”),³⁷⁴ this poses a problem because this results in the view that 4:12 refers to one, big or final judgment.³⁷⁵ When referring to future events, the *yiqtol* form is used mainly to express future time with no indication of the aspect of the action.³⁷⁶ The aspect, whether one time, repetitive, instant or durative, can be indicated by the verb itself or by context.³⁷⁷ In the case of אעשה and Amos 4:12, the verse should be translated as future.³⁷⁸

³⁷² This translation can be found in the ESV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and NRSV (among others), i.e. “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” as found in the NRSV.

³⁷³ The NJPS translates Amos 4:12ab, “Assuredly, because I am doing that to you, even so will I act toward you, O Israel.” Use of the verb “act” and the participle “doing” attempts to capture the meaning of the text, however using two different English translations for the same Hebrew word is unnecessary and perhaps confusing. Additionally, this translation rearranges the verse, putting Amos 4:12b before 4:12a.

³⁷⁴ Contra Andersen and Freedman who translate אעשה as preterite, “Thus have I done to you.” Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 450.

³⁷⁵ Crenshaw suggests 4:12 refers to one final punishment. James L. Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice: The Doxologies of Amos and Related Texts in the Old Testament* (SBLDS 24; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 119. See also, Paul, *Amos*, 151.

³⁷⁶ Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (trans. T. Muraoka; Subsidia Biblica 27; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), §113b.

³⁷⁷ Joüon, *Grammar*, §111cde.

³⁷⁸ With regard to the past, Joüon says the time value of the *yiqtol* form is only derived from the context. Joüon, *Grammar*, §113e. Thus אעשה should be considered future unless context suggests otherwise. The difficulty with translating Amos 4:12 as preterite is that, while Yahweh’s actions in Amos 4:6-11 took place in the past, Amos 4:12 is promising his action in the future. The לכן should adequately differentiate the past actions of 4:6-11 from the future promise of Amos 4:12. Furthermore, the threat that is present if אעשה is considered a future verb is significantly muted when it is understood as preterite. Consider, “Because I have done this to you, prepare to meet your God” (preterite) versus “Because I will continue to act this way towards you, prepare to meet your God” (future). While the context of Amos 4:6-11 is past tense, the context of the threat in 4:12 requires a future verb. The majority of scholars also translate the verbs in Amos 4:12 as future. K&D 10:275-276. Paul, *Amos*, 137. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 262. Mays, *Amos*, 77. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 47. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 200. Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 74. Stuart suggests the first אעשה is future while the second is past durative, thus “Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, because this is what I have already been doing to you.” Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 335-336. He suggests this removes the repetitiveness of the verse, a fact which causes some scholars to suggest the second half of the verse should be deleted. While his translation and further comments suggest he understands Yahweh’s promise as future and continual, I see no need to understand אעשה in any way other than future tense.

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Considering these issues, it is best to interpret עשה here as “act.”³⁷⁹ This renders the opening phrase as, “Therefore (because of your continued refusal to return to me) thus/this is how I will continue to act towards you, O Israel.” Israel’s continued rejection of Yahweh will not result in one final punishment. Rather, it will result in the continuation of these acts on the part of Yahweh until ולא־שבתם עדי is no longer the result. The emphasis is not on the punishments as much as it is on the nature of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel until Israel repents. However this is not a call to repentance as much as it is a promise of more judgment, albeit with repentance as the goal.

Amos 4:12b introduces what will be the result of Yahweh’s promise in 4:12a. Amos 4:12a says “Because you have not returned to me despite my efforts (לכן), I am going to continue to act that way towards you.”³⁸⁰ Amos 4:12b continues, “Because I am going to continue to act like that towards you . . .” with the result being found in 4:12c. Amos 4:12a is a complete thought. Amos 4:12b is incomplete. It builds on the thought of 4:12a but the line itself is an incomplete thought. The final line of 4:12 is straight forward as far as translation is concerned, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,” and carries an ominous tone. The difficulty is in understanding in what way Israel was to prepare or what type of meeting to expect.³⁸¹ The preceding text proves

³⁷⁹ “Act” may not be an acceptable literal translation of עשה but it captures the idea of Yahweh’s words in 4:12. A forward looking “do” insinuates a single punishment while a backwards looking “thus” and an imperfect “do” indicates an indefinite continuation of the past actions. Thus, Yahweh will continue to “act” in this manner in the future.

³⁸⁰ In Amos, זאת/זה refers to something previous in all but their occurrences in the four שמעו הדיבר־הזה formulas. Amos 4:12 is the only use of כן in the book of Amos. Without an explicit covenant context in Amos 4 or a contextual use of כן in the whole book, there seems to be no reason to suppose a covenantal meaning in this verse. Additionally, the discussion of כה above should make it very clear that the context of the verse is the continued punishments levelled against Israel in the manner of 4:6-11. Therefore, the “meeting” Israel is to “prepare” for is more of the punishments of 4:6-11. Boyle divides this verse into what she calls a judgment sentence (4:12a) and a summons to prepare for its execution (4:12bc). Boyle, “Covenant Lawsuit,” 357. While her language comes from her reading of covenant in 3:1-4:13, which I do not find, her understanding of the function of 4:12 and its relation to the preceding verses is accurate. Owens similarly recognizes that this is a word of judgment though without recourse to a covenant context. John Joseph Owens, “Exegetical Studies in the Book of Amos,” *RevExp* 63 (1966): 435.

³⁸¹ Brueggemann suggests Israel is called to prepare for a covenant renewal ceremony but Paul correctly rejects this based on the pattern in Amos 3-6 of ending with the threat of exile, noting the only other occurrence in the Hebrew Bible of the imperative הכן is Ezekiel 38:7 where Israel is called to prepare for battle. Brueggemann, “Amos IV 4-13,” 2. Paul, *Amos*, 151 and footnote 119.

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most helpful. As has been described above, Amos 4:12 does not foretell a single, final means of judgment. It is promising more plagues until Israel repents, and 4:12c is simply stating that their next “encounter” with Yahweh is inevitable.

Following this ominous announcement, the text turns to the first of three doxologies found in the book of Amos (4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6). Literature dealing with the doxologies is profuse and will not be duplicated here.³⁸² Much of this discussion centers on dating the doxologies and whether they were later insertions into the text. My interest in the doxologies in this work is simply in their style, content and placement in the text.

At first glance one will notice the doxology in 4:13 is the only of the three doxologies that begins with **כִּי הִנֵּה**. The phrase **כִּי הִנֵּה** occurs a total of forty-three times in the whole of the Hebrew Bible.³⁸³ Of the thirty-three occurrences of **כִּי הִנֵּה** in the prophets, eleven are in the context of a future restoration of God’s people³⁸⁴ and twenty-two are in the context of coming judgment, whether of Israel, Judah or another nation.³⁸⁵ The phrase only occurs five times in the book of Amos (Amos 4:2, 13; 6:11, 14; 9:9). In Amos 6:11 it occurs in the context of an oath, begun in 6:8, and introduces the destruction of houses and in 6:14 it introduces the idea of a nation being fashioned to destroy Israel. In 9:9 the phrase introduces the sieve-like judgement that will result in the destruction of all sinners among Israel, and in Amos 4:2 it introduces Yahweh’s oath that Israel will go into exile. The final occurrence is in Amos 4:13 where it introduces a doxology. This use is odd in that instead of introducing a future event it introduces Yahweh. However, the oddity of the use in 4:13 is resolved if it is paired with the other occurrence of the phrase in Amos 4. The **לֹכֵן** of Amos 4:12 refers to the failure of Israel to return to Yahweh despite his attempts (Amos 4:6-11) and the **כִּה** refers back to Yahweh’s judgment on Israel in

³⁸² See especially, Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation*. See also, Watts, “Old Hymn,” 34-40. Rick W. Byargeon, “The Doxologies of Amos: A Study of Their Structure and Theology,” *TTE* 52 (1995): 47-56. Thomas Edward McComiskey, “The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos: A Study of Form-Critical Methodology,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 139-157.

³⁸³ 1 Samuel 27:8; Psalms 11:2; 48:5; 59:4; 73:27; 83:3; 92:10²; Song of Songs 2:11; Isaiah 3:1; 26:21; 60:2; 66:15; Jeremiah 25:29; 30:3; 34:7; 49:15; 50:9; Ezekiel 30:9; Hosea 9:6; Joel 4:1; Amos 4:2, 13; 6:11; 9:9; Micah 1:3; Zecariah 3:9; 11:16; Malachi 3:19.

³⁸⁴ Isaiah 60:2; 65:17, 18; Jeremiah 30:3, 10; 46:27; Ezekiel 36:9; Joel 4:1; Zec 2:14; 3:8, 9.

³⁸⁵ Isaiah 3:1; 26:21; 66:15; Jeremiah 1:5; 8:17; 25:29; 34:7; 45:5; 49:15; 50:9; Ezekiel 30:9; Hosea 9:6; Amos 4:2, 13; 6:11, 14; 9:9; Micah 1:3; Habbakuk 1:6; Zech. 2:13; 11:16; Malachi 3:19.

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these verses. Simply put, the function of Amos 4:12 is to tell how the future of Israel's relationship with Yahweh will look, therefore the **כי הנה** of 4:13 stands closely in parallel with the **כי הנה** of 4:2. Amos 4:13 introduces the God who will judge Israel.

The participial forms of the doxology in 4:13 are common to all three doxologies in the book.³⁸⁶ The verse gives a list of attributes before identifying at the very end exactly to whom they refer. There is some overlap between the doxologies but in 4:13 the characteristics listed describe the one “forming the hills, creating the wind, declaring his thoughts to mankind, making dawn into darkness and treading on the high places of the earth.”

Reading the whole of Amos 4 together, Amos 4:13 certainly stands out as different from what goes before. This difference is not as pronounced as may be at first glance. Three factors contribute to accepting 4:13 as it stands: 1) its function as conclusion to Amos 4; 2) its part in a three-fold hymn in the whole of Amos; and 3) its use of the introductory **כי הנה**.

To begin with, and perhaps most importantly, this hymn is an apt conclusion to Amos 4. The text, which began with a brief accusation, has dealt primarily with punishment, from the promise of exile and scoffing at a futile cult, to what appears to be a long history of punishments designed to be redemptive. At the end of this chapter, Amos 4:12 says that these punishments will continue to be the norm for Yahweh's relationship with Israel. The chapter could conceivably end here but that would seem very abrupt.³⁸⁷ The single difficulty with this hymn as the conclusion to Amos 4 is the absence of **נאם-יהוה**, a phrase prominent throughout the chapter (Amos 4:3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). This absence is not unexplainable. Noble argues the **נאם-יהוה** formulas in Amos serve to call attention to surrounding material primarily due to its

³⁸⁶ All verbal forms in 4:13 are participles, 5:8-9 feature three verbs that are not participles and 9:5-6 feature six. All three finite verbs in 5:8-9 continue the relative clause they are part of, as do three of the six finite verbs in 9:5-6. Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, §37.7.2a. For a discussion of the doxologies in Amos 4 and 5 see the appropriate sections of this thesis.

³⁸⁷ Almost all text units of Amos have some concluding comment. Most prominent is **נאם-יהוה**, found after each OAN, the end of Amos 3, throughout Amos 4, the end of Amos 6, after the fourth vision and throughout Amos 9, including the end of that chapter and the book. The formula **אמר יהוה** is found notably at 5:17 and after the first two visions. The only sections outside Amos 4:12-13 without some concluding statement are Amos 6:1-7 and 8:4-14.

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unexpected nature.³⁸⁸ While his overall argument may not be entirely convincing, he at least highlights the degree of “surprising” material in Amos 4. Is it any surprise, then that a chapter so full of “surprising” material, of punishments promised on behalf of Yahweh, that the chapter concludes with a hymnic affirmation of who Yahweh is? One may even wonder how else this chapter could end were it not for this hymn.

Context is not a conclusive reason for accepting the place of 4:13. The fact that the hymn in 4:13 functions perfectly at the conclusion of the chapter would be slightly suspect were this the only hymn located within the book of Amos. There are, in fact, two other hymns in Amos, both fulfilling a similar function in their respective locations. Thus, rather than simply one hymnic passage appearing randomly in the middle of the book of Amos there are three such hymns, all appearing at strategic places for specific purposes, central to the function of the text.

Finally, Amos 4:13 is different from the other hymnic sections of Amos in that it begins with the introductory **כי הנה**. Whereas the other hymns simply begin with their participial praises, Amos 4:13 introduces, and in so doing, links the hymn with 4:12.³⁸⁹ The significance of this **כי הנה** is its use throughout Amos. The demonstrative **הנה** features throughout Amos (Amos 2:13; 4:2, 13, 6:11, 14; 7:1², 4, 7, 8; 8:1, 11; 9:8, 9, 13) and the phrase **כי הנה** is found five times (Amos 4:2, 13; 6:11, 14; 9:9). The hymn is introduced in the style of the rest of the book. What is more, Amos 4:1 lists Israel’s sins. There is then an *inclusio* between 4:2 and 4:12 around **כי הנה** and one between 4:1 and 4:13 around **הר** (mountain). Yahweh’s promise of exile is introduced with this phrase in 4:2 and Yahweh’s promise of continued punishment is concluded with it as well in 4:13. It is more than legitimate to say that the hymn of 4:13 belongs where it is in both form and function.³⁹⁰

It remains then to briefly discuss the content of this first hymn. The first two descriptions of Yahweh feature him “forming the hills/mountains” (**יוצר הרים**) and “creating the wind” (**ברא רוח**). The artistry in these descriptions includes utilizing the

³⁸⁸ Noble, “Function of n’ m Yhwh,” 623.

³⁸⁹ So Wolff and Paul. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 254. Paul, *Amos*, 153 footnote 139.

³⁹⁰ Auld says if the doxologies are additions then they are good ones, due to the appropriateness of their location and function. A. Graeme Auld, *Amos* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 76.

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semantic field of creation and conveying both the mighty and mysterious works of creation.³⁹¹ The hymn shifts to Yahweh's interaction with mankind with the phrase מגיד לאדם מה-שחו. The difficulties with this phrase are two-fold. First, the noun שֶׁחַ is a *hapax legomenon*. Scholars have widely agreed that it is related to שִׁיחַ and have translated it as "thought."³⁹² The second difficulty is that grammatically, the third masculine singular suffix on שחו in 4:13 can refer either to Yahweh or to man. Again, it is widely agreed that despite the ambiguity, the suffix refers to Yahweh.³⁹³ Clarifying these issues shows the hymn as praising Yahweh as one who interacts personally with mankind.

The hymn then turns to a variation of the creation theme by praising Yahweh as the one who sustains the universe, namely, in changing the darkness to dawn. The difference between this description and the first two is that the first two praise Yahweh for his creation in the past while this praises him for his ongoing hand in sustaining the created order. The final description of Yahweh in the doxology praises him as one who treads on the high places of the earth (דרך על-במתי ארץ). In the Hebrew Bible, the noun במה is most often used to refer to pagan altars or holy places. Here, however, it simply refers to something akin to lofty mountain peaks.³⁹⁴ The emphasis is on Yahweh's sovereignty over creation. Thus, the hymn opens praising Yahweh twice as creator, then twice as interacting with creation (mankind

³⁹¹ עשה is used later in the verse so that it includes "form" (יצר), "create" (ברא) and "make" (עשה).

³⁹² Mowinckel shows that the meaning of שיח is "thought," though the difference between "thought" and "plan" is very small. Sigmund Mowinckel, "The Verb śiach and the Nouns śiach, śichā," *ST* 15 (1961). See also HALOT 4:1314, 1319-1321.

³⁹³ There is discussion regarding whether שחו means Yahweh declares his own thoughts to man or declares man's thoughts to man. Hammershaimb suggests the latter while Wolff and most other scholars suggest the former. Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 75. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 264. Paul states there is no satisfactory explanation, describes both positions and suggests that both interpretations praise God for his contact with mankind. Paul, *Amos*, 154-155. It seems most likely that the doxology praises Yahweh for declaring his own thoughts to man, in parallel with Amos 3:7 and the idea that the prophet's words come from Yahweh. Andersen and Freedman's translation of לאדם as "Adam" rather than "man" in order to prevent the misconception that Yahweh reveals his thoughts to mankind in general is puzzling, especially since they think it complicates the line to make it mean Yahweh reports his thoughts to mankind through the prophets. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 456.

³⁹⁴ In Amos 7:9 במה is parallel with מקדש so there its connotation is cultic, non-Yahwistic. The same usage can be found in Deuteronomy 32:13.

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then nature), and finishes praising him as sovereign over creation. As a conclusion to the message of punishment in Amos 4, the hymn of 4:13 solidifies Yahweh's right to administer this punishment. As if in agreement, the name of the deity is lengthened from chapter four's typical יהוה into יהוה אלהי-צבאות, adding a degree of solemnity and finality to what has gone before.³⁹⁵

Summary of 3.5.

Though there are difficulties regarding how to group 4:12-13 with the other units of 4:1-11, these final verses are best understood as an independent unit from 4:6-11. While the לִכְן כֹּה of 4:12 has the punishments of 4:6-11 in mind, these final two verses serve as a conclusion to the whole chapter, not simply to the list of punishments in 4:6-11. Additionally, verse 12 can be understood by itself, with no recourse to a supposed event or hand gesture, to promise that Yahweh will continue to “act” towards Israel in the same manner as he did in 4:6-11 until Israel ceases to reject his attempts at restoration. Because Yahweh's intentions are redemptive, and because of this promise, Israel must prepare to “meet” their god, as he will certainly send further plagues. Amos 4:13 is one of three doxologies in the book of Amos. With כִּי הִנֵּה the text transitions from promise of future plagues to Yahweh who will send them. The doxology praises Yahweh as creator, as interacting with creation, and finally as sovereign over creation. Yahweh's right to administer the judgments previously described and promised is firmly solidified through the doxology, thus its location at the close of chapter four has an important function in drawing the message of the chapter to a close. The only charge levelled against Israel in Amos 4 is found in verses 1-3. With the inclusio around כִּי הִנֵּה in 4:2, 13, there can be no doubt that 4:1-3 open a new unit instead of closing the unit of Amos 3. The final two verses of Amos 4 are a fitting and powerful conclusion to the chapter and its promise of future plagues from Yahweh ties the text to Amos 6 as well as the visions in Amos 7-8.

³⁹⁵ For a discussion of the names of the deity in Amos see: Stephen Dempster, “The Lord Is His Name: A Study of the Distribution of the Names and Titles of God in the Book of Amos,” *RB* 98 (1991).

3.6. Conclusion to Chapter 3

This second message Amos gives to Israel is decidedly negative and carries an overt message of judgment. It has a rhetorical flow that is quite intriguing and even sarcastic in places. The text is quite easily divided into four smaller units through attention to repetitions and content in the text. The opening introduction (4:1-3) addresses the cows of Bashan, Israel, as the audience and is concluded in the final unit (4:12-13). The two middle units (4:4-5, 6-11) provide the main reasons for the judgment promised in the intro and conclusion. The text is easily divided and the rhetorical structuring and flow give the chapter strong cohesion as a single unit as well as strong ties to themes and material throughout the book of Amos.

Amos 4:1-3 opens with an address to Israel, describing them as oppressing those who cannot defend themselves in order to fund Israel's luxurious lifestyle. The text begins with the formulaic opening found also in Amos 3:1 and 5:1. The themes of oppression and luxurious living are not continued for the rest of the chapter though the two themes are common in the book of Amos and are consistently intertwined. The book of Amos describes the oppressed as righteous, poor, needy and afflicted and this unit portrays Israel as virtually unconcerned with the demise of the poor in order to live the lifestyle they desire. Yahweh's oath shows the priority he places on just social practices. Exile is to be Israel's punishment, a common theme in the book of Amos. Thus, Amos 4:1-3 is not only essential to the structure and message of Amos chapter four, but is likewise an integral part of the structure and message of chapter 3-6 as well as the book as a whole.

Amos 4:4-5 is a direct continuation of 4:1-3. The text addresses the same audience and is overtly sarcastic. Yahweh addresses Israel's cultic practices but the unit is not concerned about a literal description of tithes and sacrifices, rather, through its sarcasm it highlights the futility of the cult to please Yahweh in and of itself and begins to develop the theme of Israel's unwarranted self confidence. The meaning of this unit is clear, Yahweh requires more than ritual, a theme which is found several times in the book of Amos. Yahweh's rejection of the cult is the foundation for the unit which follows.

While Amos 4:4-5 described Yahweh's rejection of Israel's cult, 4:6-11 describes Israel's rejection of Yahweh's past attempts at restoring Israel to himself. The unit features five plagues that grow in severity from the destruction of some, then most, then Israel's entire food source, then death by pestilence and sword, and ends with Israel's almost complete destruction. The refrain "But you did not return to

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me” (ולא־שבתם עדי) identifies Yahweh’s purpose in the plagues as redemptive. The use of שׁוּב here and in the visions (7:8; 8:2) form a strong bond, explaining that Yahweh will not turn from his decision to judge because Israel did not heed his attempts at their restoration. The message of rejection in 4:6-11 perfectly balances the rejection of 4:4-5 and the two units together provide the reason for the judgment promised in 4:1-3, 12-13 as well as connecting the chapter to the OAN as well as the visions and the restoration of chapter 9.

The final unit in this text is Amos 4:12-13. Though 4:12 has the plagues of 4:6-11 in mind, it is certainly the conclusion to the chapter as a whole rather than simply to 4:6-11. Yahweh’s promise is that he will continue his behaviour, described in 4:6-11, into the future until Israel ceases rejecting his advances. For this reason, Israel can prepare to continue having these encounters. The chapter concludes with the first of three doxologies in the book of Amos. The text transitions from the promise of future plagues to the god who will send them. Yahweh is praised as creator, as interacting with creation, and finally as sovereign over creation. The location of this doxology at the conclusion of the chapter is flawless in the way it establishes Yahweh as having the authority and ability to administer the past and promised judgments. These final verses draw the chapter to a close, tie the unit together as a coherent and unified whole, as well as containing elements which recur in Amos 6 and the visions of Amos 7-8. Thus, Amos 4 is flawlessly crafted. Each unit is necessary in order for the chapter to function as a whole and each unit contributes to themes and messages of the book of Amos.

CHAPTER 4: COMPLETE DESTRUCTION AWAITS (AMOS 5-6)

In chapter four I will show that Amos 5-6 is composed of four units (Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7, 8-14). The structure, rhetorical flow and message of Amos 5-6 is internally consistent and has a clear function within the wider picture of Amos 3-6. The message of judgment on oppression, luxurious living and unwarranted self confidence that has been constant through Amos 3-4 continues into Amos 5-6.

Moreover, I intend to demonstrate how the four units work together, even if each of them has strong structural elements. Further, I will show how the four units (Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7, 8-14), each with strong structural elements (chiasm, woe oracle and oath), work together despite their apparent dichotomy to develop the theme of judgment on Israel from lament to total destruction. Comparing Amos 5:18-6:14 with Amos 5:1-17 shows that the text is united in theme, has a similar structure, and when combined with the final three units, Amos 5-6 shows a progression of judgment ending in crescendo.

4.1. Amos 5:1-6:14: Structural Observations

In the following section I will show that Amos 5-6 should be read as a single unit. This will be based on the formulaic **שמעו את־הדבר הזה** as well as the content of Amos 5-6.

Attention has already been drawn to the repetitive use of **שמעו** in the book of Amos, as well as its function as a division marker. Amos 5:1 begins with **שמעו הזה את־הדבר הזה**, virtually the exact wording found in Amos 3:1 and 4:1, indicating Amos 5:1 begins a new text unit just as 3:1 and 4:1 do. However, where this text unit ends is not as clearly defined as the first two first person speeches. There is no formulaic use of **שמעו את־הדבר הזה** following 5:1 to indicate the beginning of the next unit. **שמעו את־הדבר הזה** not only indicates the beginning of units in Amos but, in doing so, also shows the previous unit has ended. This is why it is difficult to agree on where the unit which began in 5:1 ends. It is clear with the opening phrase of Amos 7:1, “Thus the Lord Yahweh caused me to see” (**כה הראני אדני יהוה**), that this begins a new text unit. What must be answered is whether the unit that began in Amos 5:1 ended earlier than 6:14.

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The first reason to accept Amos 5-6 as one unit is the pattern present throughout the first person sayings of using *שמעו את־הדבר הזה*. Amos 7:1 begins the visions of the prophet, giving the threefold division of the book into the OAN (1:3-2:16), the first person sayings (3:1-6:14), and the visions (7:1-9:15). If the unit beginning in Amos 5:1 does not carry through to the end of chapter six then one must explain why this center unit of texts (Amos 3:1-6:14) suddenly departs from its recurring pattern. Amos 3:1-15 is a unit. Amos 4:1-13 is a unit. Both begin with *שמעו הזה* and conclude where the next *שמעו את־הדבר הזה* begins.³⁹⁶ There would be no difficulty in proposing that 5:1-17 is the next unit since it is in fact quite closed by nature of the chiasm. The difficulty is in explaining why the text suddenly departs from its established pattern in the first person narratives of starting units with *שמעו את־הדבר הזה*. If the unit begun in 5:1 ends before 6:14 then the unit that follows should theoretically begin with *שמעו את־הדבר הזה* as well.

Secondly, as will be shown below, Amos 5:18-6:14 directly relates to the material in Amos 5:1-17. If there is a major text break between Amos 5:17 and 7:1 then it effectively separates what appears to be a single train of thought. Therefore, despite the apparent dissimilarities between 5:1-17 and 5:18-6:14, Amos 5:1-17 must be read in the wider context of chapters 5-6.

4.2. Amos 5:1-17: Lament over Israel

In what follows I will examine the chiasm of Amos 5:1-17 in order to demonstrate its validity and unifying characteristics within Amos 3-6. I will show how it continues the theme of oppression, offers the first concrete offer of mercy, and utilizes the tool of interjection in proclaiming judgment on Israel

Amos 5:1-17 is widely recognized as a unit by itself.³⁹⁷ Though there is much debate over how the chiasm should be formatted, scholars are agreed that literary patterning exists in this unit.³⁹⁸ This thesis supports the following chiasm.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ For a more detailed treatment of my division of Amos 3-6 see 2.1. Amos 3-6: Structural Observations.

³⁹⁷ There is widespread agreement on Amos 5:1-17 as a text unit. See especially, Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 170-177. Tromp proposes a very different composition of Amos 5:7-13 involving an A, B, A', C, A', D structure. N. Tromp, "Amos V 1-17. Towards a Stylistic and Rhetorical Analysis," in *Prophets, Worship and Theodicy: Studies in Prophetism, Biblical Theology*

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- A Lament/prediction of disaster (5:1-3)
- B Seek Yahweh and live (5:4-6)
- C Injustice of Israel (5:7)⁴⁰⁰
- D Doxology (5:8-9)
- C' Injustice of Israel (5:10-13)
- B' Seek good and live (5:14-15)
- A' Prediction of mourning after disaster (5:16-17)

This chiasm shows the progression of thought in the first unit of Amos 5-6. Amos 5:1-3, 16-17 bookend the lament. The chiasm begins and ends with mourning.

Linguistically, the phrase **כה אמר** and the idea of lamentation (**נהי** and **קינה**) link Amos 5:1-3 with 5:16-17.⁴⁰¹ Despite the small differences, these pictures identify the two verses as parallel units.⁴⁰² In addition, Amos 5:3 conjures an image of Israel as militarily confident. Amos 4:4-5 ridicules Israel's false security in cultic rites that

and Structural and Rhetorical Analysis and on the Place of Music in Worship (OtSt 23; ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 67.

³⁹⁸ De Waard's article devotes specific attention to the structure of the chiasm in Amos 5:1-17, however this paper does not agree with the D, E, D' part of his proposal, which seems to place an over emphasis on **יהוה שמו**. His reasoning is that 5:8d disturbs the sequence of the hymn. This is true, and it certainly appears that **יהוה שמו** could be the pinnacle based on rhetorical use alone. However, de Waard is correct to point out the difficulties in finding a parallel between 5:8abc and 5:9. Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 173-174. Wicke is perhaps too simplistic when describing 5:8abc as a hymn and 5:9 as thanksgiving. Donald W. Wicke, "Two Perspectives (Amos 5:1-17)," *CurTM* 13 (1986): 93.

³⁹⁹ Jeremias uses this chiasm, accrediting it to de Waard, although de Waard's treatment of Amos 5:8-9 is slightly more complex. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 62.

⁴⁰⁰ Wolff, among others, suggests that **היי** has been lost from the beginning of this verse, identifying it as another woe-oracle. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 269 note 7. Gordis follows suit, causing him to see the speech starting in Amos 5:1 end in 5:6 with the beginning of three woe-oracles (Amos 5:7-17; 5:18-27; 6:1-14). Gordis, "Composition and Structure," 217. Though reading Amos 5:7 as a woe oracle is possible considering the plural participle, the text as it stands is preferred because the introduction of a woe-oracle at this point detracts from the chiastic form. Jeremias suggests that "*Schon um dieses durchsichtigen Aufbaus willen besteht keinerlei Grund für den willkürlichen Einsatz eines weiteren „Wehe“ in 5,7 . . .*" (This transparent structure already eliminates all grounds for the arbitrary use of another "Woe" in 5:7. . .) Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 61 footnote 9. See also, Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 80.

⁴⁰¹ De Waard notes that Amos 5:3 is difficult to place with 5:1-2 but more difficult to place with 5:4ff. Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 171-172.

⁴⁰² Some differences exist between Amos 5:3 and Amos 5:16. 5:3 begins **כי כה אמר אדני יהוה** while 5:16 begins **לכן כה-אמר יהוה אלהי צבאות אדני** omitting **כי** and substituting it with **לכן**. Additionally, the divine title is lengthened in 5:16.

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they believed endeared Yahweh to his people. This false sense of security is seen again in 5:18-20 and 21-25 when Israel is mistaken in its belief that the day of the Lord would be something to look forward to, and then again when their cultic rituals are mocked. This false confidence is found again in 6:1 with the description of Israel as carefree (שאנן) and confident (בטח). This theme of confidence, which ties 5:1-3 to chapter four as well as later units in chapters 5-6, is countered in 5:2-3 with destruction and 5:16-17 with widespread destruction. Amos 5:1-3 and 16-17 open and close the chiasm with a dismal picture but the parallels with other parts of Amos show that it is a key part of a larger whole, which is Amos 3-6.

Amos 5:4-6, 14-15 feature the word דרש (seek) and both use יוסף to refer to Israel.⁴⁰³ Additionally both offer Israel at least the chance for mercy. The double imperative דרשוני וחי (seek me and live) should not be understood as a command to “live.” The first imperative functions as a condition, the second as a promise. Likewise, the use of אולי in Amos 5:15 suggests “that a return to justice might promote the chances of divine mercy.”⁴⁰⁴ Finally, Amos 5:15 features the only use in the book of Amos of שארית (remnant), used to refer to Israel. Furthermore, 5:4-6 and 5:14-15 feature what may be called chiasms within the larger chiasm.⁴⁰⁵ In 5:4-6 the text looks like this:

Seek and Live
Bethel
Gilgal
Beer-Sheba
Gilgal
Bethel
Seek and Live

In 5:14-15 the text looks like this:

Seek Good
Not Evil

⁴⁰³ The use of the name Joseph to describe Israel is found only three times in Amos (5:6,15; 6:6), two of which are found in Amos 5:4-6 and 14-15. Its use in 6:6 will be discussed below.

⁴⁰⁴ Reimer points out that, while in some cases אולי means the speaker is counting on God acting according to his spoken word, in Amos 5:15 it is used to suggest that Yahweh may act counter to his spoken word. David J. Reimer, “An Overlooked Term in Old Testament Theology - Perhaps,” in *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E.W. Nicholson* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salters; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 336-337.

⁴⁰⁵ Waard, “Chiastic Structure,” 172.

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Hate Evil

Love Good

The similar structure and content of these two units emphasize their relation to one another.

Amos 5:7 and 10-13 describe the injustice of Israel and give its punishment. The most common shared element in this unit is that this section of the chiasm is the only time in Amos 5:1-17 the sins of Israel are proclaimed. Amos 5:7 and 10 list Israel's transgressions in participial form common to other texts which do the same (Amos 2:7-8; 3:10; 4:1; 6:4-6; 8:4). Here, Israel is accused of turning justice to wormwood, discarding righteousness, hating those who correct what is said at the gate and loathing truthful speakers. Israel hates both the principles of justice and righteousness as well as those who practice them.

Amos 5:11-12 turn from the sins of Israel to their punishment, but first accuse Israel of taxing the poor. The punishment to follow will be a denial of the luxurious lifestyle they have acquired as a result. The houses they built will not be lived in and the wine from their vineyards will not be drunk, at least not by Israel. This punishment is concluded with a further list of transgressions, called **פּשְׁעִים** and **חַטָּאת**. Israel is an enemy of the righteous as in Amos 5:7, and they turn aside the needy as in Amos 5:11.

Amos 5:13 closes the unit with a puzzling statement due to disputed Hebrew roots. The verse is commonly translated "Assuredly, at such a time the prudent man keeps silent, for it is an evil time."⁴⁰⁶ The words translated "prudent" (**מִשְׁכִּיל**) and "keeps silent" (**יָדַם**) are crucial for a correct understanding of this verse.⁴⁰⁷ While most commentators translate **מִשְׁכִּיל** as "prudent/wise," Smith and Jackson both suggest it should not be understood in a wisdom context, and should be translated "prosperous" as found in at least a dozen instances in the HB.⁴⁰⁸ In a similar manner,

⁴⁰⁶ Amos 5:13, NJPS.

⁴⁰⁷ Paul translates these as "the prudent moan." Paul, *Amos*, 158. Andersen and Freedman suggests "the wise keep silent." Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 503. Wolff and Mays translates these as "the prudent keep silent." Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 272. Mays, *Amos*, 96.

⁴⁰⁸ Smith cites Deuteronomy 29:8; Joshua 1:7, 8; 1 Samuel 18:5, 14, 15; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 18:7 [sic]; Proverbs 17:8; Isaiah 52:13; Jeremiah 10:21; 20:11; 23:5. Gary V. Smith, "Amos 5:13: The Deadly Silence of the Prosperous," *JBL* 107 (1988): 291 footnote 9. Jackson omits Isaiah 52:13 and Jeremiah 10:21 but adds Jeremiah 50:9 and Job 34:27. Jared J. Jackson, "Amos 5,13 Contextually Understood," *ZAW* 98 (1986): 435 footnote 9.

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דָּמָה should be understood as derived from דָּמָה (to groan), a homonymous root of דָּמָה (to keep silent).⁴⁰⁹ Thus, Amos 5:13 should be translated, “Therefore, the prosperous person will wail at that time, for it is an evil time.”⁴¹⁰ This means Amos 5:13 is not a radical shift from the material before and after it. The judgment that falls in Amos 5:10-12 falls upon the prosperous; exactly those who wail in Amos 5:13, ending on the expected mournful note. Furthermore, the wailing of the prosperous in 5:13 resounds with the lament heard in Amos 5:16-17.⁴¹¹

Within this very somber accusation and prophesied judgment, however, foreshadows a later promise. The promise in Amos 5:11 that Israel will build houses but not live in them and plant vineyards but not drink their wine is reversed in Amos 9:14. The conclusion of the book of Amos hears Yahweh promise to restore Israel; not only will they rebuild ruined cities and live in them and plant vineyards and drink their wine, but they will also plow gardens and eat their fruit. Further, Yahweh ends by promising to never again exile his people.

Much discussion surrounds the way in which Amos 5:8-9 seems to interrupt 5:7, 10.⁴¹² It has already been observed that the text of Amos uses the literary technique of interjection at several places. In a book with such skilful crafting, it seems odd to propose that the text looks as if 5:8-9 are out of place without first considering whether this placement could have been intentional.⁴¹³ Assuming, then,

⁴⁰⁹ Paul, *Amos*, 175-176. Jackson, “Amos5,13,” 435.

⁴¹⁰ See also, Jackson, “Amos 5,13,” 435.

⁴¹¹ It is odd that Smith does not cite the work of Jackson since Jackson first proposes translating מְשָׁכִיל as “prosperous.” Smith suggests that the “silence” shown by the prosperous is a result of judgment leading to death. Smith, “Deadly Silence,” 291. Thus, his conclusion about how Amos 5:13 fits into the context of Amos 5:12ff is not radically different from Jackson’s.

⁴¹² Wolff notes that the connection between Amos 5:7 and 10 “ought to be so obvious” (*dürfte so deutlich sein*) that their separation is attributed to the only thing that can explain it, a scribal error. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 273. Paul agrees, saying almost all commentators believe the doxology of Amos 5:8-9 interrupts Amos 5:7, 10., noting Amos 5:10 is the continuation of 5:7. However, he also points out that Amos 5:8-9 was added at this point likely because of the catchphrase לֹא הָפֵךְ לִי in 5:7. Paul, *Amos*, 167.

⁴¹³ This is obviously based on the assumption that the text is preserved as it should be. My response to this criticism is two-fold. First, I think it is the duty of the scholar to first approach a text as if this assumption were true unless or until it can be shown otherwise. The mere observation that Amos 5:8-9 looks out of place by one verse does not seem to be sufficient evidence to warrant rearranging the text without first answering why or how a mistake this obvious could have been made. Second, in a book showing such a high degree of literary craftsmanship and intentionality, and in a

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that this “interruption” is intentional, one must ask what the purpose for this placement is. A prime example for interjection in Amos can be found in Amos 3.⁴¹⁴ Amos 3:3-8 seems to be the prophet’s justification of his words, a common element in prophetic texts, though here it interrupts the message of judgment in order to quell an audience that could at this point begin to reject the word of judgment. Once his place to speak is affirmed the prophet returns to the word of judgment.

While the setting of Amos 5:8-9 is not exactly the same as in chapter three, it seems that the function is similar, both in location within the text (interrupting a word of judgment and then returning to that word) as well as function (interjection to lend authority to the word being spoken). This is a literary technique employed in the book of Amos and it is used in what is otherwise accepted to be a clearly structured unit. It seems best to read the text as it is received rather than to rearrange it.

The hymn of Amos 5:8-9 is the pinnacle of this chiasm. The participles in the doxology compare to the participles in Amos 5:7, 10, 12-13.⁴¹⁵ The subject matter of the two verses, however, obviously sets them apart from the surrounding units. The function of the doxology in 5:8-9 is the same as Amos 4:13, to establish or proclaim Yahweh as sovereign at the point in the text where judgment takes place.

Examining the entire chiasm, one notices that it functions progressively. In Amos 5:1-3, 14-15 Yahweh says there will be widespread destruction of fighting forces and mourning and wailing presumably due to the judgment he will inflict. Amos 5:4-6, 10-13 say that despite this Israel is to seek Yahweh and not its cultic centers, suggesting that whatever destruction has already come is not as bad as what will come should Israel not seek Yahweh. Amos 5:7 and 10-13 describe those who do not seek Yahweh, and the judgment that will befall them. Finally, Amos 5:8-9 exalts Yahweh as sovereign over creation and humanity, establishing him as capable and willing to punish those who do not seek him.

unit dependant upon the exact placement of parallel stitches, it seems highly questionable to propose that, a) this wasn’t intentional, or b) this was a mistake.

⁴¹⁴ For more see 2.4. Amos 3:3-8.

⁴¹⁵ Four of the seven verbs in the doxology are masculine singular participles.

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One difference between Amos 5:4-6 and 5:14-15 is the degree of possibility that Yahweh may allow those who seek him to live. Amos 5:4-6 presents the mercy of Yahweh as fairly reliable. The פן in 5:6 suggests if Israel does not seek Yahweh, he will “break out like a fire.” Additionally, the imperative of חיה suggests that life is assured following their obedience to “seek.” However, 5:14-15 adds the search for “good” as opposed to “evil” as well as “hatred” of evil, “love” of good and the establishment of justice in the gate as part of Israel’s duty. Additionally, the imperative of חיה is now simply an imperfect and Amos 5:15 features אולי, suggesting Yahweh’s response is not as dependable as it was in 5:4-6.

This difference in the possibility of salvation should not be viewed as conflict in the text. Instead, this is yet another example of progression of judgment and variation in patterns. Amos 4:6-12 shows that Yahweh’s goal in judgment is redemptive. Amos 5:4-6 is the first text where an offer of redemption is made. The shift from promise to possibility between Amos 5:4-6 and 5:14-15 gives an element of urgency to this offer as it appears to be fading.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ Hadjiev suggests the אולי of Amos 5:15 is more cautious than the optimism found in Amos 5:4-6 as well as 5:14. While he is correct that the inclusion of אולי in the exhortation adds an element of uncertainty that was previously absent, Hadjiev attributes this to a different audience and a later historical period for this verse. This is based on 1) the idea of a remnant suggesting some judgment has already come, and 2) the difference between the confident promise in Amos 5:6 and the cautionary one in Amos 5:16. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 165.

Neither factor, however, necessitates attributing Amos 5:16 to a different audience or a later period. As has already been discussed, the message of the book of Amos is that judgment is coming against Israel (Amos 4:1-3), this judgment is for redemptive purposes (Amos 4:6-11) and this judgment will come to an end and Israel will one day be restored (Amos 9:11-15). To speak as if this judgment has already begun and only a remnant remains does not mean such is literally the case (as in the visions which likely do not refer to explicit historical events).

Furthermore, Hadjiev’s later comments provide a suitable argument against his suggestion that a change in certainty indicate a different audience and time. He proposes, citing Amos [5]:4-6, 14, 21-23 and 4:6-11, that repentance was an expectation of the prophet’s ministry. He explains the emphasis on judgment in the book as hyperbole intended to shock the prophet’s hearers into making the right decision, and suggests that no reasonable person could announce that the end is near unless repentance could change that. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 191-192.

Given these two arguments, used by Hadjiev himself, it seems acceptable to suppose that the promise of mercy offered in Amos 5:4-6, which fades into merely a possibility in Amos 5:14-15 is also a rhetorical device designed to tell the audience that the time in which they had to repent was rapidly shrinking. Anderson comments, “There is always the possibility that people will listen and turn from their evil ways, and there is always the possibility that Yahweh will be gracious.” Brevard W. Anderson, *The Eighth Century Prophets* (London: SPCK, 1978), 30-31. This reading fits well with the rhetorical style as well as the message of the book of Amos as a whole.

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Considered as a whole, Amos 5:1-17 is high in literary craftsmanship and cannot be discounted as a unit. Even the odd positioning of the doxology following 5:7 instead of after 5:10 should not detract from the unity of the chiasm as it was almost certainly done for literary reasons. The chiasm opens Amos 5-6 with a tight, clear picture of what has been said already in Amos 3 and 4.

Summary of 4.2.

In the above section I have demonstrated how the chiastic form of Amos 5:1-17 unites the text, contains the theme of Israel's oppression of the poor, and shows Yahweh's judgment to have a redemptive purpose, and utilizes the rhetorical tool of interjection as found elsewhere in Amos 3-6. I have also demonstrated how Amos 5:1-17 contains the only explicit offer of mercy in the book of Amos, though even this is tempered with the inevitability of coming judgment. The chiasm contains linguistic, thematic, and rhetorical ties to texts throughout the book of Amos and its style and content show it to be a unified text with characteristics that unify the units around it.

4.3. Amos 5:18-27: Israel's Unwarranted Self Confidence

In the following unit I will show that though Amos 5:18-27 appears to address two separate topics (the day of the Lord and Israel's cultic practices) it is instead a single unit addressing Israel's unwarranted self confidence. I will show how within this text there are strong echoes of themes, exhortations, and vocabulary from elsewhere in Amos 3-6.

The chiasm in Amos 5:1-17 is immediately followed with three short oracles. Amos 5:18 begins a new section with its use of הוי (woe), identifying this as a woe-oracle, and continuing through to 5:27. The chiasm in 5:1-17 opened with קינה (dirge) and closed with מספד (lament), הו (woe), אבל (mourning), and נהי (lament). It is appropriate that the following unit opens with, and is identified as, a woe oracle.

The woe itself is merely the first word of the verse. After this the oracle sets right in addressing Israel as those desiring the day of the Lord. This woe oracle can be divided into two halves, the first (5:18-20) is devoted to the day of the Lord. The

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concept of the *יום יהוה* is much debated. This occurrence in Amos is believed to be the first use of the term, though its origins probably predate the text, as is evidenced in the prophet's own use.⁴¹⁷ His words to Israel betray the fact that the day of the Lord was something the people looked forward to. For this reason it is likely that it referred to some idea of Yahweh's victory over Israel's enemies in battle. In the context of the prophet's continual rejection of Israel's self confidence, the concept likely had the connotation of Yahweh destroying Israel's enemies or those who would do them harm.⁴¹⁸

The prophet immediately sets about destroying this concept, first with a question and then with a correction of their misperception. Israel thought the day of the Lord would be "light;" a joyous or victorious occasion, but the prophet corrects this by explaining that it would, in fact, be "darkness." He illustrates this point through the use of an encounter in which a man flees a lion only to be attacked by a bear or bitten by a snake. The illustration is designed to show how one might think he was safe only to find the exact opposite is the case. The text then returns to the topic of conversation and reiterates that the day of the Lord will not be light, as Israel thought, but absolute and total darkness. The unit itself sounds similar to Amos 3:3-8. There the prophet uses rhetorical questions to justify his authority to proclaim his message. While Amos 5:19 is a scenario rather than a rhetorical question, the two units share the use of animals and their actions to make a resounding point.⁴¹⁹

The unit features a noticeable shift in Amos 5:21. The topic changes from the day of the Lord to Israel's cultic practices. Several scholars divide Amos 5:18-27

⁴¹⁷ Literature on the day of the Lord is abundant and its origins are debated, though most agree it originated prior to its use in Amos. This thesis will only treat the concept as it is used in the book of Amos. For more on the origin and development of the theme see C. van Leeuwen, "The Prophecy of the *YOM YHWH* in Amos V 18-20," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis* (OstSt 19; ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 1974). See also Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord' - Reconsidered," *HUCA* 37 (1966). Yair Hoffman, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," *ZAW* 93 (1981).

⁴¹⁸ Smelik suggest the use of the phrase in Amos 5:18-20 suggests "those longing for the day of the lord" refers to false prophets who would always give a positive message that Yahweh would defeat Israel's enemies. His suggestion is simply conjecture and he offers no evidence for this view. Therefore, it seems much more consistent to continue reading this text as if it were addressed to all of Israel. K. A. D. Smelik, "The Meaning of Amos V 18-20," *VT* 36 (1986).

⁴¹⁹ Though not enough to suggest a strong connection, 5:9 features one of four uses of the lion in Amos (*אריה*: 3:12; 5:9 and *אריה*: 3:4, 8).

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into two or more units. This is done due to the switch to first-person speech in 5:21,⁴²⁰ as well as the change in topic from the day of the Lord in 5:18-20 to cultic practice in 5:21-27.⁴²¹ While content delineations can certainly be made, the text should still be read as a single unit. Separating the text after Amos 5:20 is especially flawed since if 5:18-20 are read as an independent unit then the word against the day of the Lord is barely more than a warning and there is no explanation for this warning.⁴²² Furthermore, the transition between person; from second person in 5:18-20 to first person in 5:24 to second person in 5:25-26 to first person in 5:17, is not surprising considering the nature of the content (judgment/direct address to divine speech to rhetorical question to divine speech).⁴²³ Regardless of the history of the oracles, it is obvious that Amos 5:18-27 must be read as a single unit in order to function properly and convey the message of judgment adequately.

Just as Amos 5:18-20 sounds similar to Amos 3:3-8, so Amos 5:21-27 sounds similar to Amos 4:4-5. The two units feature virtually all the cultic vocabulary in the entire book of Amos.⁴²⁴ The only overlap in vocabulary between the two texts is the

⁴²⁰ Wolff says Amos 5:21ff. is in contrast with 5:18-20 (*Stilistisch heben sich 21ff. von 18-20 durch den Übergang zur 1. Person der Jahwerede ab.*) due to the first person divine speech of 5:21-27. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 304.

⁴²¹ Mays, Achtemeier and Andersen and Freedman divide Amos 5:10-27 into three units; 5:18-20, 21-24, and 25-27. Mays says very little about his reasons. Thematic content seems to be the primary reason, though first person speech is mentioned. Mays, *Amos*, 102-113. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 519-537. Kapelrud treats Amos 5:18-27 as a single unit though this is based on his conclusion that the day of the Lord was a cultic event and thus part of the cultic discussion in Amos 5:21-27. Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo: I Kommissjon hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1956), 71-75. Andersen and Freedman suggest 5:21-27 is a direct speech of Yahweh, albeit with two main sections and each with subsections. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 523. Achtemeier does not address the issue of individual oracles or structure but she also divides Amos 5:18-27 into the three units. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 209-212. Soggin also does not explain his separation of the text, though it appears to be based on content. Soggin, *Prophet Amos*, 93-101. Paul explicitly says Amos 5:21-27 is not a continuation of Amos 5:18-20 though he gives no reason for this statement and explains that they are linked by the theme of contrast and dramatic reversal. Paul, *Amos*, 188.

⁴²² Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 353.

⁴²³ Jeremias says that Amos 5:18-20 and 5:21-27 are a “unified written text” (*einheitlicher schriftlicher Text*) and are intended to be read together. This is due to the seamless and transition free connection of the two units as well as their similar structure to Amos 6. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 75.

⁴²⁴ Cultic vocabulary in Amos includes: חג (festival, 5:21; 8:10), עצרה (assembly, 5:21), עלה (burnt offering, 5:21), מנחה (offering, 5:22, 25), שלם (peace offering, 5:22), זבח (sacrifice, 4:4; 5:25), מעשר (tithe, 4:4), תודה (thank offering, 4:5), נדבה (free will offering, 4:5). In the context of 5:21-27 it is perhaps necessary to also include mention of: שיר (song, 5:23; 6:5), זמרה (music, 5:23).

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use of זָבַח (sacrifice) in both 4:4 and 5:25, however both content and general attitude in both texts are the same. In Amos 4:4-5 Israel is mocked for its futile practice of the cult while in Amos 5:21-25 Yahweh expresses his deep disdain for their cultic practice.

Other parts of Amos 5:21-27 are reminiscent of different texts in the book of Amos as well. The word שָׂנֵא occurs four times in the book of Amos, all in Amos 5-6 (Amos 5:10, 15, 21; 6:8). In 5:10 it is used to describe Israel's attitude towards the just in society and again in 5:15 as an exhortation to hate evil and love good. Following this use in 5:21, the final use is in Amos 6:8 where Yahweh expresses his hatred for the fortresses of Israel. More emphatic is the use in Amos 5:21 of מָאֵס to show Yahweh's rejection of Israel's cult since this was the word used to describe Judah's rejection of the teaching of Yahweh in Amos 2:4. Once again, Yahweh's response to Israel is proportionate to Israel's response to him.

Similarly, the exhortation in Amos 5:24 to laud justice and righteousness is repeated in Amos 5-6. Amos 5:7 and 6:12 both condemn Israel for their lack of deference to these virtues while in 5:24 they are shown the attitude towards these virtues that Yahweh desires. The important point to note is that in the context of 5:21-27 Yahweh is placing justice and righteousness higher on the list than cultic ritual. There has been a consistent message throughout the book of Amos that Yahweh wants justice and righteousness and the absence of these virtues makes Israel's sacrifices worthless. Should virtue be restored it is possible that Yahweh would not continue his rejection of the cult, though the text does not say this explicitly.⁴²⁵

The two halves of this unit are noticeably different. Paul specifically separates Amos 5:21-27 from 18-20 as a different unit.⁴²⁶ Though the two groups

⁴²⁵ This idea is found in Amos 5:15 when Israel is told that "perhaps" Yahweh will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

⁴²⁶ Paul claims that Amos 5:21-27 was originally an independent oracle and is linked to 5:18-20 by the common theme of contrast and dramatic reversal. Paul, *Amos*, 188 footnote 1. He notes 5:18-20 are the words of the prophet and 5:21-27 are the words of the Lord, though he notes both units highlight a reversal of popular beliefs and both attack two major pillars of popular theology. Paul, *Amos*, 182.

Additionally, a shift in person is not uncommon in Amos. Amos 3:1 features an opening by the prophet which switches to divine speech mid-sentence, though Paul suggests 3:1b is secondary.

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have separate topics, their theme is the same. If Amos 5:18-20 was at one time separate from 5:21-27 it has been placed here together as one. Amos 5:18-20 attempts to correct an incorrect hope or trust in יום יהוה. The oracle contradicts the belief that the day of the Lord was a “light” or happy affair. Instead, it is called “dark” and “gloomy.” Similarly, Amos 5:21-27 depicts Yahweh’s rejection of various cultic practices with the implication that the negative effects of the day of the Lord will not be avoided merely because cultic ritual is being observed. Both topics aim at correcting Israel’s unwarranted self confidence in יום יהוה as well as in their cultic practice. Cultic ritual without social justice was not enough to please Yahweh. Israel had to act like Yahweh’s chosen people to receive his blessing.

Amos 5:26 comes as somewhat of a shock to the reader since, in most English translations, it appears to be the first real accusation of idolatry in the book.⁴²⁷ The idea that Israel might be worshipping other gods is not shocking in and

Paul, *Amos*, 100. Paul also understands the shift from second person plural in 5:21-22 to singular imperative in 5:23-27 as intentional. Paul, *Amos*, 191. Given the close link between 5:18-20 and 5:21-27 around contrasting popular beliefs, the fact that the speaker shifts from the prophet to Yahweh should not indicate a new unit. The content of the two halves is too similar to read them as independent of one another. The fact that the speaker changes does not warrant dividing the text at this point.

Wolff’s reason for separating the text at this point is the shift to first person speech of Yahweh. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 304. Though this is certainly enough to warrant suspicion of my claim, the two units function as a whole when read together as one. Additionally, Harper notes that Amos 5:18-6:14 “consists of three triple strophes, each strophe of the nine contains six lines.” William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905), 128. The text as a whole, as well as the content within, support treating Amos 5:18-27 as a single unit.

⁴²⁷ Many English translations (NIV, NASB, NKJV) render 5:26 similar to “You have lifted up . . .” indicating that Israel’s exile is at least partially due to the false gods they are currently worshipping.

That this is an accusation of idolatry is the most common scholarly opinion. Barstad gives an honest examination of what can and cannot be stated about the gods Sikkuth and Kiyun, concluding that the verse refers to non-Yahwistic worship of gods, most likely during the time of the prophet Amos, one of whom we cannot be sure of his identity. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 118-126. Paul discusses the issue arguing that there is no need to resort to emendation or redaction to explain the mention of these gods in an eighth century document. Paul, *Amos*, 194-198. Others that consider this a redaction and/or accusation of idolatry include; Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 81. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 212. Stanley Gevirtz, “A New Look at an Old Crux: Amos 5:26,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 267-276. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 355-356. Mays suggests Amos 5:26 is a prophecy of how Israel will be forced to worship other deities once in exile. Mays, *Amos*, 112. Soggin views this as a Deuteronomistic addition but agrees that the threat is that in exile Israel will be forced to worship and participate in non-Yahwistic worship. Soggin, *Prophet Amos*, 101. Hadjiev, while arguing that Amos 5:25-27 is a later editorial insertion and that the idolatry of 5:26 refers to the present, still recognizes that the rhetorical

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of itself, however this has not been an accusation levelled yet in the book of Amos and this one verse hardly accounts for the expected prophetic response were it actually the case.⁴²⁸ However, the Hebrew is not at all definite and the sense of the verse depends on the translation of וּנְשֵׂאתֶם and whether it is translated as past or future.⁴²⁹

De Waard and Smalley suggest that understanding how Amos 5:26 relates to verse 25 depends entirely on the verb that begins verse 26. There are three possible ways it can be understood:⁴³⁰

- 1) The verb is past and parallel to the verb in verse 25. (“Did you offer sacrifices and worship/carry other gods?”)⁴³¹

question of 5:25 expects a negative answer and that 5:26 is a question that continues from 5:25. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 166-169.

⁴²⁸ The foreignness of the accusation is what prompts Andersen and Freedman to suggest verse 26 “does not seem to have a direct relation with the rest of the book.” Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 530-533. Barstad believes Amos 5:26 is the most difficult passage in the whole book of Amos. This is due both to the difficulty in identifying the deities as well as deciphering whether it has past, present or future meaning. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 119.

⁴²⁹ The verb in Amos 5:25 is הִגַּשְׂתֶּם, a *qatal* verb. Amos 5:26 begins with וּנְשֵׂאתֶם. The issue is how to understand the *weqatal* of 5:26. Typically, a *qatal* verb would be followed by a *wayyiqtol* to continue reference to the past. In order to talk about the future, a *yiqtol* verb would be followed by *weqatal* verb(s). However, it needs to be recognized that *waw*-conversives do not always adhere to strict rules. Thus, Paul calls וּנְשֵׂאתֶם the perfect consecutive future based on Gesenius, though Gesenius gives two options. Paul, *Amos*, 194. GKC §112x, rr. Carroll says it should be taken as future with 5:27 and both understood as *waw* consecutive + perfect. Carroll R., *Contexts*, 251.

Just as *qatal* + *weqatal* can be understood to refer to the future, the *weqatal* can operate in the past if the situation has been situated thus. In these instances, the *weqatal* only expresses repeated or durative action, the tense is provided by the preceding past tense verb. Joüon §119uv. See also, Garrett, *Amos*, 174-175. See also Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, §32.2.3e. Furthermore, in Amos 5:26 וּנְשֵׂאתֶם serves to indicate past continual action, thus highlighting that which was offensive. The verse closes with a final *qatal* verb indicating past action (עָשִׂיתֶם). Translating וּנְשֵׂאתֶם as future does not respect the context of Amos 5:25-26.

⁴³⁰ De Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 121-122.

⁴³¹ De Waard and Smalley agree that Israel would have answered the single rhetorical question in the negative but the force of the rhetorical question is that Yahweh was implying that while they hadn't worshipped other gods in the wilderness, they were doing so now. While the negative answer of Israel is implied, so is Yahweh's follow-up statement, “But now you do, and I am going to take you into exile. . . .” Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 122. While Waard and Smalley supply an implied answer just as I do, I must disagree with the answer they supply. Amos 5:26 would be the only accusation of idolatry in the book and by showing that this is a rhetorical question instead of an accusation, de Waard and Smalley remove the explicit accusation of idolatry and then propose that it is implied. Amos 5:26 would be shocking enough as it is if it is understood as an accusation

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- 2) The verb is past but contrasts and answers verse 25 (“Did you offer sacrifices? No! But you worshipped/carried other gods.”).
- 3) The verb is future and is parallel with verse 27 (“I will send you into exile and you will carry other gods.”)

De Waard and Smalley point out that option 2 has rightly been abandoned, leaving only two viable alternatives. Furthermore, they suggest that if historical and theological arguments are ignored, the grammatical evidence alone favors interpreting וַיִּשְׂאֲתֶם as past tense.⁴³² So the past tense of 5:25 is continued in 5:26, and as Wolff points out, the interrogative nature of verse 25 should be continued.⁴³³

At this point the text can be read two ways. It can be two independent questions (Did you offer me sacrifices? And did you carry your gods?) or one single question (Did you offer me sacrifices and/while carrying your gods?). Assuming Israel did not offer sacrifices in the wilderness and the text should be read as two separate questions how would they have responded? If they affirmed they had not offered sacrifices but did worship other gods then the questions do not serve any

since it is alone in making this claim. To remove this claim but suggest it is implied places an enormous burden of proof on de Waard and Smalley to show why, in a text that does not accuse Israel of idolatry, they think this is the obvious implied accusation.

⁴³² Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 121-122. Though it is perhaps an introductory Hebrew handbook, Garrett has the best examination of Amos 5:26, examining the Hebrew as well as fitting the verse in its context. He agrees with de Waard’s preference for a past tense understanding of 5:26 though differs by not suggesting that this means Israel was worshipping other gods at the time of Amos’ words, a position I agree with. Garrett, *Amos*, 174-175.

Interestingly, Wolff interprets the verb as past tense and does not, at this point, accuse Israel of worshipping other gods, while Paul interprets the verb as future and understands it to say Israel was worshipping other gods. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 265-266. Paul, *Amos*, 194-198. Andersen and Freedman suggest that the simplest explanation is that verse 26 can be read with either 25 or 27, that attaching it to verse 25 is plausible, but that attaching it to 27 is most likely. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 535.

⁴³³ Wolff also suggests that וַיִּשְׂאֲתֶם should be repointed to וַיִּשְׂאֲתֶם if it is to have a future tense. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 310. Jeremias says the understanding of the versions as well as the claim later in the text that Israel made the gods for themselves both stand in contrast to a future understanding of וַיִּשְׂאֲתֶם (*Dagegen steht nicht nur die Auffassung sämtlicher Vrs., sondern auch die Auffassung der letzten Ergänzung des Textes selber [„... die ihr euch gemacht habt“].*). Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 74. Hadjiev notes the possibility of translating the verse as past (indicating wilderness idolatry) or future (suggesting Israel will be forced into idolatry in exile) but opts for translating the verse as past tense in line with 5:25, though with the implication that Israel are idolatrous in the present. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 166-167.

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reasonable purpose and also suggest Israel's present judgment is in some way due to their sin in the wilderness. Much more realistic is if they answered in the negative to both questions, which would serve to emphasize the prophet's point that sacrifices alone do not please Yahweh.

Assuming Israel did offer sacrifices in the wilderness and the text should be read as two separate questions how would they have responded? In this case if Israel answered both questions in the affirmative the questions would be similar to the prophet's charge that sacrifices are unacceptable when paired with incorrect practice but it would also again suggest Israel's present judgment is in some way due to their sin in the wilderness. Much more realistic is if they affirmed they had sacrificed in the wilderness but had not worshipped other gods. This would emphasize that sacrifices should not be paired with actions that do not please Yahweh. Despite the fact that it acknowledges some behaviour is not pleasing to Yahweh, it still affirms the cult to a degree that seems at odds with Yahweh's rejection of it in 5:21-24. Thus, if the text should be read as two separate questions then the questions function best if Israel did not actually offer sacrifices in the wilderness and answered both questions in the negative.

However, if we read the text as one single question (Did you offer sacrifices while you were at the same time worshipping other gods?) then Israel must have answered this in the negative since a positive answer suffers from the same faults mentioned above. This would also fit with the prophet's message that sacrifices should not be paired with actions that do not please Yahweh. The benefit of this reading is that it actually serves to explain Yahweh's rejection of the cult in Amos 5:21-24 and functions similar to Yahweh's rejection of the cult in 4:4-5. Yahweh's criticism of the cult in Amos 4:4-5 is partnered with his attempts to restore Israel in 4:6-11. It is not an outright rejection of the cult but an attempt to show Israel that despite their continued practice of the cult, they were not following Yahweh.

If Amos 5:25-26 is read as a single question that Israel answers in the negative then Yahweh is effectively saying, "You would not mix worshipping me with worshipping other gods but you have mixed worshipping me with oppressing the poor." Granted, oppressing the poor is not present in this unit but it seems easiest to understand this abrupt shift to talk of idolatry as an exaggerated example to illustrate the offence Yahweh takes at Israel's treatment of the poor, as evidenced throughout the book. The unit immediately prior to Amos 5:26 is the chiasm of 5:1-

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17. The climax of the chiasm is the doxology (5:8-9), praising Yahweh for creating Pleiades and Orion, astral bodies. On either side of the doxology (5:7, 10-13) are accusations of Israel as rejecting justice and righteousness and oppressing the poor. Therefore, it does not seem forced to conclude that Amos 5:18-27 should have this in mind and that the justice and righteousness mentioned in 5:24 should refer to oppression, even if indirectly.

Thus Amos 5:26 is not an accusation of idolatry at all. As was shown above, Yahweh is asking a single rhetorical question: “Did you offer sacrifices and at the same time worship other gods?” Israel’s (implied) answer is “no,” thus highlighting the fact that certain behaviours do not mix with correct Yahwistic worship.

Amos 5:25-26 actually follows the theme of 5:21-24 very closely. Yahweh rejects Israel’s cultic because Israel is overly confident in its efficacy regardless of their unjust social practices. Yahweh’s rejection of the cult testifies to Israel’s confidence in it. Amos 5:25-26 it is a comparison of Israel’s current oppression of the poor while still practicing Yahwistic worship with the idea of worshipping Yahweh and other gods at the same time. Yahweh uses the obviously ridiculous example of syncretism to show that oppression has no place within Israel’s worship and life. At this point the woe oracle closes with Yahweh’s promise of exile. The text is deliberately vague regarding the destination of the exiles, stating only that it will be beyond Damascus.⁴³⁴

Summary of 4.3.

In this section I have demonstrated that the woe oracle of Amos 5:18-27 is one unit rather than two. This is based upon the introductory הוי in Amos 5:18 which does not occur again until Amos 6:1 as well as the fact that Amos 5:18-20 and 5:21-27, though addressing seemingly different topics (the day of the Lord and Israel’s cultic practices), are in fact both addressing Israel’s unwarranted self confidence and pronouncing judgment on Israel their lack of concern for true Yahwistic worship, which requires more than faithful cultic practice (justice and righteousness). Amos

⁴³⁴ While most scholars recognize that this statement does not specifically refer to Assyria, Paul points out that Israel’s borders reached as far as Damascus so this promise states that Israel will be taken beyond her borders. Paul, *Amos*, 198. This fits with the lack of specification in the book regarding the nation Yahweh will use to enact his judgment throughout the book.

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5:25-26, which is widely agreed to be an accusation of idolatry, is instead an equation of Israel's oppression of the poor with idolatry. Additionally, I have shown how the unit of Amos 5:18-27 contains strong echoes of themes, exhortations, and vocabulary from elsewhere in Amos 3-6. Thus, Amos 5:18-27, while containing links to earlier units in the book, propels the theme of unwarranted self-confidence and judgment on Israel's oppression to an even higher level.

4.4. Amos 6:1-7: Israel's Indifference to its own Demise

In the following unit I will examine the woe oracle of Amos 6:1-7 and demonstrate the internal unity of the text, its direct relationship to Amos 5:18-27, and its connection to the message of judgment in the rest of the book of Amos.

Amos 6:1-7 begins with הוֹי as well, though this unit does not feature a shift to first person speech as does the first woe oracle. Amos 6:1-7 attacks two characteristic attitudes; self confidence and luxurious living. In 5:18-27 the prophet says "You think X but the opposite is really the case." The audience may ask why the day of Yahweh is darkness not light or why Yahweh is not pleased with their offerings but the text does not explicitly answer. In 6:1-7 the prophet says "You think X but the opposite is really the case and this is why." This will be examined below.

The oracle begins with two parallel lines identifying the audience as "those at ease in Zion and those confident on the hill of Samaria." After the initial הוֹי both lines open with a participle, both lines are directed against those living in their capitol,⁴³⁵ and both describe their audience as possessing a degree of confidence that will later be shown to be unfounded, thus making Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 very similar in theme and style.

The audience is further described as "those distinguished among the leading nations and to whom the house of Israel comes," again highlighting their arrogance

⁴³⁵ There is significant discussion regarding whether Zion is original, given the mission of the prophet to the north, as stated in Amos 1:1. Paul is right to point out the prophet's earlier criticism of both pagan nations as well as Judah in the OAN. Paul, *Amos*, 199-200. Roberts suggests there is a concept of a single Davidic state in the book of Amos, thus the mention of Zion need not be questioned, though as this is not the focus of his article he does not investigate the idea to the degree McConville does. J. J. M. Roberts, "Amos 6:1-7," in *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honour of Bernhard W. Anderson* (JSOTSup 37; ed. James T. Butler, Edgar W. Conrad, and Ben C. Ollenburger; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 157, 160. See also, McConville, "How Can Jacob Stand."

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by describing these citizens as they no doubt perceived themselves. Amos 6:2 tells Israel to look upon three kingdoms and judge whether or not Israel is greater than they are. The text does not explicitly say that these kingdoms were destroyed though it certainly makes a degree of sense to interpret this word as if they had been. In that case the text would indicate three great kingdoms that had been destroyed, thus Israel should not think herself above such a downfall.⁴³⁶

However, it must be made clear that the text does not explicitly say these kingdoms had been destroyed.⁴³⁷ What can be said is that Israel is to compare herself to these kingdoms. The text would even indicate that these kingdoms were still flourishing since Israel is to judge whether they are greater in size and prosperity (טוב), a fact that would be moot were the kingdoms already destroyed.

This puzzle in Amos 6:2 can be overcome if we appeal to the use of sarcasm in the text. A string of imperatives was last found in Amos 5:4-5, a highly sarcastic text which “commanded” Israel to keep offering sacrifices which they thought would save them. This unit highlighted actions Israel was engaged in and mocked them for it. Amos 6:2 is quite similar. Here the text mocks what the notable citizens of Zion and Samaria were themselves saying.⁴³⁸ The text does not repeat their exact words. Instead, it uses questions to highlight answers Israel would already have had. The questions ask Israel to repeat statements they had presumably already made. Amos 6:2 is a continuation of the description of Israel begun in 6:1.

At Amos 6:3 the woe returns to using participles to describe its audience. They are described as “pushing away a day of evil” and “bringing near a seat of

⁴³⁶ It is an accepted view that Amos 6:2 is a later addition for both literary and historical reasons. Indeed, Paul says this view is almost unanimous and Hadjiev gives an extensive list of scholars holding this view. Paul, *Amos*, 201. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 170 footnote 143. Paul surveys the historical issues of the verse, rejecting the notion that the text must be from a later date though not entirely answering the question of what historical reference the text implies. Paul, *Amos*, 201-204. Hadjiev examines the historical and the literary reasons for a redactional view. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 170-173. Hadjiev’s literary reasons for rejecting Amos 6:2 are that if the verse is removed, Amos 6:1 flows seamlessly into 6:3 and that the inclusion of Hamath in 6:2 and 6:14 seems suspicious. Both reasons can be ignored on the grounds of question begging.

⁴³⁷ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 558.

⁴³⁸ See Mays, *Amos*, 115. Carroll says, “Whatever the exact historical referent in 6.2, the point is that this is what *Israel believed* and proclaimed in its nationalistic pride.” Carroll R., *Contexts*, 256-257.

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violence.”⁴³⁹ Reading this in light of the verses that follow, “pushing away a day of evil” most likely means that they ignore impending doom in favour of living a luxurious and carefree lifestyle (6:4-6), while “bringing near a seat of violence” refers to the resultant judgment that is coming due to their lack of concern (6:7).

This lack of concern is described in the next three verses. The leaders are described as being sprawled out on ivory beds and couches, feasting on lambs and calves, humming idle tunes, drinking excessively and anointing themselves with finest oils. This description, along with the use of the word מְרִיחָה in Amos 6:7b, have marked this text as a description of the *marzēah* institution, a festival connected to one or more deities (though it was not a cultic institution), attended by those with upper class social standing, and regularly involving the consumption of alcohol.⁴⁴⁰ A discussion of *marzēah* is not possible here. What is necessary is the observation that the text does not criticize the *marzēah* practices, rather the indifferent attitude of Israel toward its own demise. That Israel should be guilty of lack of concern for its own demise is an odd reason for which to be punished. If this attitude is understood as referring to Israel’s practice of oppressing the lower classes to fund their own luxurious living then not only does the statement make much more sense, it also aligns with the message of the book. Israel was oppressing the less fortunate to fund their own lifestyle with no concern for the repercussions. It is this attitude which the text consistently speaks against, not the luxurious lifestyle itself.⁴⁴¹

As a result, the distinguished among the leading (רֵאשִׁית) nation who anoint themselves with the choicest (רֵאשִׁית) oils will as a result be taken into exile. The irony is the fact that these notables will lead, or be at the head (בְּרֵאשׁ), of those

⁴³⁹ The Hebrew of 6:3 is uncertain. המְנִידִים is a *piel* participle of נָדָה, a word which occurs in the Hebrew Bible only here and in Isaiah 66:5 and means to “push away.” שִׁבְתָּהּ is more difficult to translate because its root is not agreed upon. Some suggest it is a substantive of יָשַׁב (sit), others that it is the substantive of שָׁבַת (cease). Thus, the line could accuse Israel of drawing near a seat/rule of violence or of bringing about a violent end. Both Paul and Wolff agree that the Hebrew is uncertain but in any case the leaders are at fault for bringing about violence. Paul, *Amos*, 205. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 316, 319-320.

⁴⁴⁰ McLaughlin, *Marzeah*, 65-79. For more on *marzēah* in the book of Amos see McLaughlin, *Marzeah*, 80-128.

⁴⁴¹ The actions of Israel here remind the reader of the use of מָטָה and עָרַשׁ in Amos 3:12. Both passages mock Israel for their exaggeratedly luxurious lifestyle.

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marching into captivity. This inclusio ties 6:1-7 together and ends the same way 5:18-27 does, with the promise of exile.

Summary of 4.4.

In the above unit I have shown that Amos 6:1-7 is a woe oracle chiefly concerned with pronouncing judgment on Israel's unwarranted self confidence and luxurious lifestyle. The opening הוֹי and the closing threat of exile show Amos 6:1-7 is a parallel unit to Amos 5:18-27 which opened and closed the same way. Judgment against Israel's self confidence and luxurious lifestyle ties the unit not only to Amos 5:18-27 but to the consistent message of judgment in every chapter of the book of Amos.

4.5. Amos 6:8-14: Yahweh's Hatred Brings Destruction

In the section below I will demonstrate the internal coherence of Amos 6:8-14 as well as its intensification of the judgment found in Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7. I will also examine the message of Amos 6:8-14 in relation to that of the previous two messages in order to evaluate the contribution this unit makes to Amos 5-6 as a whole.

The final text unit within Amos 5-6 is Amos 6:8-14. Harper recognizes this as an oath, intensified from the preceding woe-oracles.⁴⁴² The intensification from woe to oath is appropriate considering the content of this final oracle. The first two oracles have promised exile (Amos 5:27; 6:7). This text promises the death of those who remain (Amos 6:9) and the ruination of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh (Amos 6:10). The hatred (שנא) and abhorrence (מאס) towards Israel's cultic obedience found in Amos 5:21 are here expressed as loathing (תאב) and hatred (שנא) towards the pride of Jacob and his strongholds, symbols of Israel's offences throughout the book (Amos 6:8).

While many view Amos 6:8 as the beginning of a new section there is still disagreement regarding how 6:8-14 should be viewed structurally.⁴⁴³ It seems fairly

⁴⁴² Harper, *Commentary*, 128.

⁴⁴³ Paul treats this as two units, as does Jeremias; 6:8-11, 12-14. Paul, *Amos. Jeremias, Der Prophet*, 89-93. Wolff treats it as three, as does Mays; 6:8-11, 12, 13-14. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*,

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obvious that the divine oath separates 6:8 from the preceding woe oracle. Contra those who would divide 6:8-14 into separate units, it is best to view these verses as a single unit. Three different forms present in Amos 6:8-14; oath (6:8), prose (6:9-10, 14) and poetry (6:11-13). Stuart is correct when he admits that though the unity of Amos 6:8-14 is not obvious and is ultimately improvable, “an overall thematic consistency” links the unit together.⁴⁴⁴

Of the different proposed structures of this unit, especially flawed is viewing 6:14 as a single unit, such as Andersen and Freedman. This ignores the direct relationship between Israel rejoicing over their defeat of Lo-dabar and Karnaim and their subsequent demise.⁴⁴⁵ The text of Amos 6:8-14 poses challenges for the interpreter. It is widely regarded as a collection of oracles,⁴⁴⁶ though once again, scholars are divided over what verses belong to which oracle.⁴⁴⁷ Still, there is much to commend this as a unified text. Amos 6:8 and 14 both contain the phrase נאם־יהוה אלהי צבאות, creating an inclusio on the text.⁴⁴⁸ The repetition of בית (house) in Amos 6:9-11 serves to link these verses together. The poetic parallelism in Amos 6:12-14 links these verses together.⁴⁴⁹ And the rhetorical flow of the unit accommodates all parts of the text. The overarching judgment of judgment is facilitated with divine

324-336. Mays, *Amos*, 117-123. Andersen and Freedman find a different three part format; 6:8-10, 11-13, 14. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 569-590.

⁴⁴⁴ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 362.

⁴⁴⁵ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 583. Andersen and Freedman treat Amos 6:9-14 unusually. They divide the text into 6:8-10, 11-13, 14. They treat Amos 6:14 by itself, due primarily to the fact that it is a prophetic oracle concerning the future. However, they repeatedly draw connections between 6:13 and 14 in their treatment of both verses. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 581-590.

⁴⁴⁶ Hadjiev briefly presents those who view this as a collection of oracles. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 175-176.

⁴⁴⁷ Wolf and Jeremias suggests five separate fragments: 6:8, 9-10, 11, 12, and 13-14. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 325-326, 330, 332. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 89-93. Mays suggests 6:8-11, 12, and 13-14. Mays, *Amos*, 117-123. Paul suggests it is composed of two literary units; 6:8-11 and 6:12-14. Paul, *Amos*, 213-221.

⁴⁴⁸ Amos 6:14 has הצבאות.

⁴⁴⁹ Parallelisms include horses (סוסים) and oxen (בפרים), justice (משפט) and righteousness (צדקה), poisonous plant (ראש) and bitterness (לענה), those rejoicing (השמחים) and those saying (האמרים), Lo-dabar (לא דהר) and Karnaim (קרנים), and Lebo-Hamath (לבוז חמת) and the Wadi Arabah (נחל הערבה).

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oath, picture of the aftermath, rhetorical question and prophecy of judgment. The text as it is presents a unified message of judgment in a rhetorically convincing manner.

Amos 6:8 opens with an oath followed by **נאם־יהוה אלהי צבאות**. NJPS relocates the second line to the end of the verse so that it follows the contents of the oath. This ignores the function of the line as well as of the whole unit. Amos 6:8-14 is an oath, thus intensified from the two woe oracles that precede it. The placement of this phrase after the oath formula but prior to the oath itself makes the oath intensely emphatic. It sets Yahweh firmly as the speaker and as sovereign, calling him first **יהוה אדני** then **יהוה אלהי צבאות**. The intensification of the oath is matched by the intensification of the name of Yahweh, a fact that aids the oath, since in this case Yahweh swears by himself. The text leaves no doubt exactly who it is that is making this oath.⁴⁵⁰

The oath itself should not be understood as referring to Yahweh's abhorrence and hatred.⁴⁵¹ Certainly the two lines about hatred and abhorrence are part of the oath, however they should be viewed as reasons for the stern nature of the oath rather than what Yahweh actually vows. This is supported by comparison with the two other oaths of Yahweh in the book of Amos (4:2; 8:7). Yahweh's oath in Amos 4:2 is in response to the cows of Bashan and he swears they will be taken into exile. In Amos 8:7, in response to a description of the corrupt business practices of Israel, Yahweh swears to never forget their deeds. Yahweh's oaths promise future actions, not present states of mind. The abhorrence and hatred are part of the emphatic opening of Amos 6:8-14. These same emotions were part of Israel's sin in Amos 5:10. Their use to describe Yahweh sets the tone for the rest of this oracle. It opens with an oath, emphatically names Yahweh as "authorizing" it, declares his most vehement feelings towards Israel, and then gives his promised action: total destruction.

⁴⁵⁰ For the conclusion that when Yahweh swears in the book of Amos it is in response to unjust social practices of Israel see 3.2. Amos 4:1-3: The Cows of Bashan.

⁴⁵¹ Wolff and Paul say Yahweh's oath is that he hates and abhors, with Paul adding that the deliverance of the city is forthcoming punishment after the oath. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 326-327. Paul, *Amos*, 213-214.

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Yahweh's statement of his anger is directed against the pride of Jacob and its fortresses. It is quite clear that these two objects are parallel with the terms of abhorrence (מְחַצֵּב) and hatred (שֹׂנֵא). Thus, the pride of Jacob and its fortresses seem to be related. It has been shown above that Israel's fortresses symbolize its oppression and luxurious living.⁴⁵² Yahweh's judgment against Israel's fortresses is directed against the place where Israel stored the fruits of their oppression and is judgment against that oppression and the lifestyle that accompanied and motivated it.

How "the pride of Jacob" relates to Israel's fortresses and what they symbolize is not immediately clear. In the book of Amos, the word גִּאוֹן is used only here and in Amos 8:7 and both times it is part of the phrase גִּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב, implying a kind of arrogance on the part of Israel. This arrogance has been seen in what I have termed Israel's "unwarranted self confidence," found in Amos 4:4-5; 5:18-26; and 6:1-6.⁴⁵³ In both cases it follows a description of Israel's atrocious social ethics. In Amos 6:8 it follows the two woe oracles which depict Israel's arrogant self-confidence and luxurious lifestyle. In Amos 8:7 it follows a long list of oppressions.

It is common for scholars to interpret the pride of Jacob as confidence in military conquests.⁴⁵⁴ It is certainly easy to interpret these two phrases in Amos 6:8 as referring exclusively to military confidence, especially considering Amos 6:13. However, given Israel's history, military victories were believed to be a result of their relationship with Yahweh and his actions on their behalf. Thus, Israel's confidence in battle and in the security of their cities seems to be a category of their confidence in Yahweh's safekeeping as a result of their keeping the cult.

It is for this reason that the accusation in Amos 6:13 is so shocking. Israel is described as claiming their victory over Karnaim was won by their own might. Paul comments that this refers to a victory without divine aid but it is unlikely, given

⁴⁵² See section 2.6. Amos 3:11-12: Israel Will be Plundered.

⁴⁵³ See my comments in 2.6. Amos 3:11-12: Israel Will be Plundered, and 4.3. Amos 5:18-27: Israel's Unwarranted Self Confidence.

⁴⁵⁴ Wolff and Paul include this in their list of what they believe the term means while Stuart says Amos 6:13 makes it clear this is that the term means exclusively. Andersen and Freedman suggest the fortifications in Amos 6:8 suggest the pride of Jacob refers to confidence in the security of their city. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 327. Paul, *Amos*, 213. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 363. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 571.

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Israel's attention to the cult in Amos 4:4-5, that they said or believed this explicitly. More probable is that they rejoiced in their victory without attributing it to Yahweh, which is essentially the same thing but does not require an explicit vocalization of victory without the aid of Yahweh, something that would appear odd given the context of the book of Amos and the charges therein.

Thus, the two reasons for Yahweh's anger in Amos 6:8 are Israel's unfounded self-confidence in their cultic efficacy and in the oppression and luxurious lifestyle embodied in their fortresses. This is a fitting opening to this oath as well as the conclusion to Amos 5-6. Israel's sins throughout the book of Amos are summarized in these two terms. Additionally, they are both the focus of the previous two woe oracles. Amos 5:18-27 focuses almost entirely on Israel's unwarranted self confidence while Amos 6:1-7 opens with this confidence and closes with their luxurious lifestyle. It is appropriate that this final oath, an intensification of the previous woe oracles, opens by stating Yahweh's hatred for Israel's actions stated immediately prior as well as throughout the book.

Amos 6:9 is reminiscent of Amos 5:3 where only ten percent of Israel's fighting forces escape destruction, ending with only ten out of one hundred surviving. Here, ten people are in a house and they all perish. The judgment in this oath is intensified to complete destruction. The oath continues in verse ten, though the Hebrew is difficult. A grammatical discussion is unnecessary since most scholars agree that דוד means "paternal uncle"⁴⁵⁵ and מסרף refers to one who in some way takes care of the remains of the deceased.⁴⁵⁶

Amos 6:9 foretells that all in a house will die. Verse ten describes what happens after their death. There are two people clearing the deceased out of their house and they have a conversation culminating in the statement, "Hush, for we must not swear by the name of Yahweh."⁴⁵⁷ It is not entirely clear why this statement was

⁴⁵⁵ HALOT 1:215. DCH 2:423.

⁴⁵⁶ Paul, *Amos*, 215-216. Mays, *Amos*, 119. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 215. Hammershaimb, *Amos*, 103. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 327. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 572-574. For an brief overview of the discussion regarding the complexities of מסרף, see HALOT 2:770.

⁴⁵⁷ For הזכיר בשם as "swearing by the name of a deity" see Willem F. Smelik, "The Use of הזכיר בשם in Classical Hebrew: Josh 23:7; Isa 48:1; Amos 6:10; Ps 20:8; 4Q504 III 4; 1QS 6:27," *JBL* 118 (1999). Smelik suggests the term in Amos 6:10 refers to "swearing in a blasphemous manner" due

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made but there is general agreement⁴⁵⁸ that to utter Yahweh's name would be to draw his attention, and thus to call upon oneself his judgment. This is a terrible state to be in. This unit has strong similarities with mourning (as in 5:1, 16-17), yet in this time of mourning, to call upon the name of Yahweh would only result in further destruction. Just as the deaths of Amos 5:23 are heightened, so too is the mourning of Amos 5:1, 16-17.

Amos 6:11 begins to describe something of the nature of this judgment. At Yahweh's command both the great and the small houses will be destroyed. With the mention of large and small houses the reader is reminded of Amos 3:15. This is likely intentional due not only to mention of house sizes but also to the use of **נכה** (strike down) in both verses. However, the point of this image is self contained. The merism of large and small houses continues the theme of this unit, that destruction will be complete. Nothing and no one shall escape it.

With Amos 6:12 the unit begins to set up the final charge and resultant punishment of the unit. The verse begins with a bicola consisting of two rhetorical questions. The questions of whether a horse can gallop on rocks or whether oxen can plough them serves to describe action which realistically cannot or would not happen.⁴⁵⁹ This is countered with a description of Israel as turning justice into a poisonous herb and righteousness into wormwood/bitterness. Some actions should be

to Yahweh's destruction of an entire family." His proposal is fairly convincing however, in the case of Amos 6:10, he only considers the options of blasphemously swearing or "making mention" whereas I think the idea of mourning is certainly present. Additionally, while the idea of cursing due to sorrow that Yahweh had killed an entire family is plausible, the dialogue between the two people in the house is clumsy as it is and it seems this would only make it more so.

⁴⁵⁸ Paul, *Amos*, 216. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, 215. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 364. Mays, *Amos*, 119-120. Jeremias, *Der Prophet*, 91. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten*, 328. Andersen and Freedman suggest it may indicate that it was forbidden to invoke the blessing of Yahweh on those who had died. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 574. Carroll suggests the command to be quiet is not out of fear of Yahweh's return or out of despair, but arises out of defiance, showing there will be no end to Israel's rebellion. Carroll R., *Contexts*, 266.

⁴⁵⁹ The Hebrew of 6:12a is admittedly obscure. Despite the popular view of dividing **בבקר ים** (with oxen) into **ים בבקר** (the sea with an ox), I prefer leaving the text as it is and using the object from the first question as the object of the second, primarily because it retains the assonance of **סוסים** and **בבקר ים**, a feature which is most likely intentional in a short, poetic bicola such as this. Paul comments on oxen ploughing the sea but lists this translation as another suggested proposal without agreeing or disagreeing with it. Paul, *Amos*, 218-219. This is likely because either translation preserves the rhetorical sense of the questions.

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obviously beyond the scope of the imaginable, such as horses galloping across rocky terrain or oxen ploughing it. Israel's behaviour and attitude towards justice and righteousness should be equally easy to image, however the opposite is the case. Instead of respect or reverence with regard to these virtues, Israel had turned them to poison and bitterness, which is to say Israel treated them as if they were poisonous and bitter. This imagery once again refers back to Amos 5:1-17, specifically 5:7 and its words against those turning justice to wormwood/bitterness, but also Amos 5:10 and Israel's feelings towards those who act justly.

Amos 6:13 is the final description of Israel in this unit and it reiterates the theme of 5:18-27 and 6:1-7, unwarranted self-confidence. The verse describes Israel's confidence regarding their past conquest of **לֹא דָבָר** and **קַרְנַיִם**, though there is sarcasm in Amos' description. This is the only occurrence where **לֹא דָבָר** is pointed this way and it carries the innuendo of "nothing."⁴⁶⁰ Israel's happiness over the defeat of Lo-dabar was "meaningless." In light of this parody, the excitement over Karnaim (meaning "horns or "Double Horn" and thus a symbol of strength) is muted. Additionally, that Israel claimed to have done so "by their own strength", or without giving glory to Yahweh, highlights arrogance to an extreme degree.

This arrogance will not last, however. Yahweh promises to raise up a nation that will oppress Israel from their northernmost border to their southernmost. All of Israel will be overrun. The unit ends with an inclusio. **נֹאֲמֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת** here, just as in Amos 6:8, occurs in the middle of the verse, interrupting the speech of Yahweh.⁴⁶¹ In 6:8 the divine title interrupted the speech to emphasize that Yahweh was swearing by "himself." In 6:14 the divine title interrupts to emphasize Yahweh is **אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת**, a military title to accompany his organization of a military campaign against Israel.

Amos 6:8-14 is a neatly structured unit. It opens with an inclusio that ties the unit together and that is cleverly designed to support the texts around it despite interrupting Yahweh's speech. The two previous units (Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7) had

⁴⁶⁰ For variant spellings, geographical and historical information on **לֹא דָבָר** see Paul, *Amos*, 219-220.

⁴⁶¹ Amos 6:8 does not have the definite article.

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Israel's self confidence as their primary topic. That topic arose in 6:8-14 however the primary topic of this unit is the immanent and complete judgment about to fall on Israel due to this arrogance along with Israel's oppression of the poor. This change in topic from the previous units, as well as from woe oracle to oath, is an intentional shift in a unified text. The parallels, links and connections between 6:8-14 and 5:1-17, 18-27 and 6:1-7 are such that this shift in the final unit should be viewed as the climactic conclusion rather than a sudden departure.

Summary of 4.5.

In the above section I have demonstrated the coherence of Amos 6:8-14 despite the interspersed of oath, prose, and poetry in the unit and the lack of an opening הוי as found in the previous two units. The opening נשבט identifies this text as an oath, intensifying the message of judgment of the previous units.

This observation is validated by an examination of the message of the unit. Whereas Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 have focused on the reasons for judgment (oppression and luxurious living) and ended with promise exile, Amos 6:8-14 opens by pronouncing Yahweh's hatred for Israel's sins and then intensifies the degree of judgment mentioned earlier.

The unit features an inclusio around גאם־יהוה אלהי הצבאות, signifying its identity as a unit. It ends with the threat of exile just as the previous two units, and it features themes, variation on themes, and rhetorical techniques linking it closely with the rest of Amos 3-6.

4.6. The Relation of Amos 5:18-6:14 to Amos 5:1-17

In the following unit I will demonstrate that Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14 are not four separate units, nor are Amos 5:18- 6:14 a series of three related units separate from Amos 5:1-17. Instead, I will show that the four units are closely related, share the same message, and together function to draw Amos 3-6 to a conclusion, ending in a crescendo of judgment.

In my tripartite division of Amos 3-6, Amos 3:1-15 and 4:1-13 are clearly single units. Amos 5-6 is significantly longer than the previous two and the final three units are similar in form to each other and different in form from Amos 5:1-17. However when the contents of each of the sections of Amos 5:1-17 are examined in

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light of Amos 5:18-6:14 many similarities arise. The lament Yahweh proclaims in 5:1, 16-17 is eerily equated with kinsmen burning incense in 6:10. Additionally, the numeric devastation of all but one tenth prophesied in Amos 5:3 is paralleled with the death of all ten men that remain in a house in Amos 6:9.

Another notable similarity is the names Israel is called by. Of the thirty uses of **ישראל** in Amos (1:1²; 2:6, 11; 3:1, 12, 14; 4:5, 12²; 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 25; 6:1, 14; 7:8, 9, 10², 11, 15, 16, 17; 8:2; 9:7², 9, 14), seven simply use the name **ישראל** (1:1; 4:12²; 7:11, 16, 17; 9:7), five use **בני ישראל** (2:11; 3:1, 12; 4:5; 9:7), and four use **עמי ישראל** (7:8, 15; 8:2; 9:14). The predominant phrase, however, is **בית ישראל**, which occurs eight times in the book (5:1, 3, 4, 25; 6:1, 14; 7:10; 9:9). In Amos 5-6 it occurs three times in the opening chiasm, once in each of the woe oracles and once in the final oath.⁴⁶²

Furthermore, in Amos 5:6 Israel is instructed to seek Yahweh in order to prevent him from breaking out against **בית יוסף**. In Amos 5:15 Israel is instructed to hate evil, love good and establish justice because if they did, perhaps Yahweh would be gracious to **שארית יוסף** (the remnant of Joseph). The name Joseph is used only three times in the book of Amos. These two occurrences in Amos 5:6, 16 and in Amos 6:6 where Israel is criticized for not being grieved concerning the ruin of Joseph (**על-שבר יוסף**).

Finally, Amos 5:7, 10-13 highlight one of the most prominent themes throughout the book of Amos: oppression. This text features one of the most graphic lists of Israel's oppression of the weak, poor and righteous, through the use of eight verbs of oppression. It is appropriate, then, that in the first woe oracle Yahweh rejects ten nouns with cultic significance.⁴⁶³ This contrast between Israel's offences

⁴⁶² Amaziah uses this title in Amos 7:10 to describe the location where Amos prophesies to King Jeroboam. In Amos 9:9 Yahweh says he will shake "the house of Israel" as a sieve.

⁴⁶³ Oppression verbs in 5:7, 10-13 consist of: **הפך** (turn aside, Amos 5:7), **נח** (cast down, 5:7), **שנא** (hate, 5:10), **תעב** (abhor, 5:10), **בשס** (trample, 5:11), **לקח** (take, 5:11,12), **צרר** (afflict, 5:12), **נטא** (turn aside, 5:12).

Cultic nouns in the first woe consist of: **יום יהוה** (day of the Lord, 5:18,18,20), **חג** (festival, 5:21), **עצרה** (assembly, 5:21), **עלה** (burn offering, 5:22), **מנחה** (gift offering, 5:22,25), **שלם** (peace offering, 5:22), **שיר** (song, 5:23), **נבל** (harp, 5:23), **זבח** (sacrifice, 5:25), **צלם** (image, 5:26).

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and Yahweh's rejection of the cult is solidified in the emotions expressed by Israel and Yahweh. In Amos 5:10 Israel is described as שונא (hating) the one judging in the gate and תעב (abhorring) the one speaking truth. In Amos 5:21, Yahweh says he תאב (loathes) and שונא (hates) Israel's feasts.

As was stated earlier, Amos 5-6 features the opening שמעו את־הדבר הזה formula but there is discussion regarding where the unit ends. It is clear 5:1-17 is a chiasm, 5:18-24 and 6:1-7 are woe oracles, and 6:8-14 is a concluding oath. What remains is to determine how, if at all, these four units fit or function as a whole. This is accomplished through examining thematic and linguistic similarities and differences between the four units.

Amos 5:4-5, 14-15 have very strong ties to Amos 6:1-7. Most recognizable is the exhortation to *not* go to Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba found in Amos 5:4-5. These place names make up a sort of chiasm in 5:4-5 which leads into the same sort of chiasm of seeking good v. evil in 5:14-15. These parallel chiasms make the place names of 5:4-5 very prominent. It is then hard to ignore the three place names in Amos 6:2. However, while Israel is advised not to go to Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba, in 6:1-7 they are told to go to Calneh, Hamath and Gath. Admittedly, in 5:4-5 the toponyms form a chiasm so that Bethel and Gilgal are repeated, a feature absent in 6:2. These units are not intended to be mirror images or exact opposites of one another. They are, however, closely intertwined, evident even more in the reasons Yahweh gives. Israel is to avoid the towns in 5:4-5 because of the impending destruction coming on them, presumably due to their behaviour, which Israel was being urged to avoid. Conversely, Israel is told to go to the locations in 6:2 and in examining these locations judge herself against them. Both sets are used for their comparative function, one negative, the other positive.

Several scholars treat Amos 5:18-20 as separate from Amos 5:21-27.⁴⁶⁴ Instead, it has been shown above that attention should be paid to Amos 5:18-27 as a whole because they have the same message: Israel cannot feel confident, whether in the day of the Lord or in correct cultic practice. The reason they cannot feel confident is found in Amos 5:7, 10-13 which show the reason the day of the Lord

⁴⁶⁴ For more on this discussion see 4.3. Amos 5:18-27: Israel's Unwarranted Self Confidence.

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will be disaster for Israel and why Yahweh is not accepting their cultic obedience: they have lost his compassion for the poor, weak and righteous. The use of the woe oracles to interpret the chiasm shows that Amos 5-6 is designed to destroy the unwarranted self confidence of Israel.

Summary of 4.6.

In the above section I have shown the interrelationship of the four units (Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14) which comprise Amos 5-6. These four units are closely linked and work together to bring the message of judgment against Israel, which was begun in Amos 2:6. Amos 5:18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14 share themes (oppression, luxurious living, and exile), form (woe oracle and oath), and structure (inclusio), and are obviously related. Comparing these three units with Amos 5:1-17 shows that though it does not share the same form as the final three units, it is united in theme, has a similar structure (inclusio v chiasm), and when combined with the final three units, Amos 5-6 shows a progression of judgment ending in crescendo.

4.7. Conclusion to Chapter 4

Amos 5-6 is the third unit in my tripartite division of Amos 3-6. In chapter four I have shown that Amos 5-6 should be read as a single unit despite the lack of a formulaic *שמעו את־הדבר הזה* indicating the start of the next unit. Amos 5-6 is composed of four separate units; Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14.

The first unit in Amos 5-6 is a chiasm (5:1-17) which contains linguistic and rhetorical allusions and connections to texts throughout the book of Amos. The style and content of Amos 5:1-17 show it to be a unified text with characteristics that unify the texts around it. The chiasm contains the theme of Israel's oppression of the poor, and shows Yahweh's judgment to have a redemptive purpose. The chiasm opens and closes with lament and woe, though this is tempered by two offers to "seek Yahweh and live." In this text Israel is portrayed as illegitimately self-confident (5:3), oppressive (5:7, 10-11a, 12), and using the fruits of oppression for their luxurious lifestyle (5:11b). For this Yahweh promises there will be destruction and mourning.

The three units that follow the chiasm (Amos 5:18-27; 6:1-7, 8-14) continue these themes as well. Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 are woe oracles introduced with *הוי* and concluded with the threat of exile. The first woe oracle (Amos 5:18-27), though addressing two seemingly different topics (the day of the Lord and Israel's

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cultic practices), addresses Israel's unwarranted self confidence and pronounces judgment on Israel for it.

The second woe oracle (Amos 6:1-7) is chiefly concerned with pronouncing judgment on Israel's unwarranted self confidence but adds the luxurious lifestyle of Israel to its list of transgressions. The opening הוֹי and closing promise of exile, along with the message of the two units, show that Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 are parallel units.

The final unit of Amos 5-6 is Amos 6:8-14. The opening נִשְׁבַּע identifies this text as an oath, intensifying the message of judgment of the previous woe oracles. Despite the diversity of genres in Amos 6:8-14, the unit is a cohesive whole, featuring an inclusio around נִאֲמַרְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת, signifying its identity as a unit. Additionally, the message of the unit is similar to that of the previous woe oracles and chiasm, but whereas the woe oracles have focused on the reasons for judgment (oppression and luxurious living) and ended with promise exile, Amos 6:8-14 opens by pronouncing Yahweh's hatred for Israel's sins and then intensifies the degree of judgment mentioned earlier. The unit ends with the threat of exile just as the previous two oracles, and it features themes and rhetorical techniques linking it closely with the rest of Amos 3-6.

While Amos 5-6 is composed of four smaller units, I have shown their interrelationship to each other and to the rest of Amos 3-6. Amos 5:18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14 share themes (oppression, luxurious living, and exile), form (woe oracle and oath), and structure (inclusio), and are obviously related. Comparing these three units with Amos 5:1-17 shows that though it does not share the same form as the final three units, it is united in theme, has a similar structure (inclusio v chiasm), and when combined with the final three units, Amos 5-6 shows a progression of judgment ending in crescendo.

Most importantly is the progression Amos 5-6 brings to the message of judgment in the book of Amos. Within Amos 5:1-17 is found the first possibility of mercy in the book. However, the following units move away from this. The two woe oracles move from the lament in Amos 5:1-17 to the promise of exile. Then, Amos 6:8-14 moves from exile to the total destruction of everything and everyone in the land. The themes of Amos 5-6 and the book of Amos as a whole remain constant but the judgment escalates. Thus, the structure, rhetorical flow and message of Amos 5-6

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shows the unit to be internally consistent and demonstrates its function within Amos 3-6.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have demonstrated the literary craftsmanship and unity of Amos 3-6. The reason for my examination of the structure and literary units of the text is that a proper understanding of how the text functions is essential to understanding its meaning. I began by highlighting the pattern of formulaic phrases in each of the three units of the book of Amos. Amos 1-2 is characterized by the phrase **ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו** _____ **על-שלשה פשעי** **כה אמר יהוה** which occurs in each of the eight oracles (Amos 1:3-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-15; 2:1-3, 4-5, 6-16). Amos 3-6 is structured with **שמעו את-הדבר הזה** which opens each of the three first person speeches in this unit (Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5-6). Finally, Amos 7-9 is characterized by the phrase **כה הראני אדני יהוה**, which opens each of the first four visions (Amos 7:1-3, 4-6, 7-9; and 8:1-3) and a variation also opens the final vision (Amos 9:1-6). Thus, the book of Amos consists of three units; Amos 1-2, 3-6 and 7-9.

Having established that Amos 3-6 is a single unit, I then demonstrated the tripartite division of this text into Amos 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5-6. This division was based primarily on the opening formula **שמעו את-הדבר הזה**. In addition, it was demonstrated that each of the units in Amos 3-6 share a similar formula of address. First, each begins with a call to attention, which is the formulaic phrase used to identify the three units. Second, each gives an initial identification of the addressee(s) targeted. Then there is a further clarification of the identity of the addressee(s) which often takes the form of the reason for the coming judgment. Finally, the word or oracle of Yahweh follows by delineating the judgment to come. Thus, within Amos 3-6 are three similarly formatted units.

Amos 3:1-15 consists of five units; Amos 3:1-2, 3-8, 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15. This chapter is concerned with only one thing: proclaiming the coming judgment against unjust Israel. Israel is accused of **פשע** and **עון** but no specifics are given regarding what they had done, though the theme of luxurious living is introduced. Instead, the chapter contains an *inclusio* around Yahweh's **פקד**, opening and closing with the promise of a reckoning. Considering also the courtroom imagery that is spread through the chapter shows that Amos 3 is solely concerned not about describing Israel's sin but with making very clear that judgment is coming.

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In the examination of Amos 3 I have shown the artistic qualities of the text and rhetorical techniques that are highlighted in all three units of Amos 3-6. Amos 3:3-8, introduces the tool of interjection, found elsewhere in Amos 3-6 and is used following a surprising message of judgment in order to regain control of an unhappy audience. Likewise, the rhetorical figures of Ashdod and Egypt are used to instil fear in Israel through the prospect of an enemy surveying their cities.

While Amos 3 says very little about the nature of Israel's guilt, it prompts an investigation into this issue. Words for oppression begin in the OAN and, though they are sparse in Amos 3, the chapter continues to carry this theme. Interestingly, Amos 3 is concerned more with judgment for these offences than it is with describing them. And while judgment is the prominent message in Amos 3, themes of luxurious living and oppression can also be found.

This examination of Amos 3 has highlighted the foreboding message of the word of Yahweh against Israel. The rhetorical composition of the chapter advances this word, the courtroom imagery gives weight to the message and the virtual absence of any respite from judgment makes Amos 3 a dark and oppressive day for its audience. A day of judgment is coming against Israel for which there is no escape. With its strong emphasis on judgment and opening and closing lament, Amos 3 is a fitting opening to the first person sayings of the book.

From this word which is heavy in promised judgment but light on accusations follows Amos 4:1-14. This chapter is composed of four units; Amos 4:1-3, 4-5, 6-11, and 12-13. Amos 4:1-3 is the only unit which describes Israel's sins. Using the moniker "the cows of Bashan," Amos 4:1 charges Israel with oppression and luxurious living. What is more, Israel as virtually unconcerned with the demise of the poor in order to live the lifestyle they desire, thus exile is to be their punishment. While Amos 3 merely closed with the threat of exile, Amos 4 opens and closes with it.

At this point, Amos 4 adds Yahweh's rejection of Israel's cult. This unit is solely interested in Israel's cultic practices but instead of a literal description it offers a sarcastic mockery. Introducing the theme of Israel's unwarranted self confidence, Amos 4:4-5 essentially tells Israel their sacrifices and offerings are meaningless to Yahweh. The meaning of this unit is clear, Yahweh requires more than ritual, a

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theme which is found several times in the book of Amos. Additionally, Yahweh's rejection of the cult in 4:4-5 is the foundation for the unit which follows.

While Amos 4:4-5 described Yahweh's rejection of Israel's cult, 4:6-11 describes Israel's rejection of Yahweh's past attempts at restoring Israel to himself. The unit features five plagues whose severity grows with each account. The refrain "But you did not return to me" (ולא־שבתם עדי) identifies Yahweh's purpose in the plagues as redemptive. The message of rejection in 4:6-11 perfectly balances the rejection of 4:4-5 and the two units together provide the reason for the judgment promised in 4:1-3, 12-13 as well as connecting the chapter to the OAN and the visions as well as the restoration of Amos 9:11-15.

Amos 4:12-13 is the conclusion to the whole chapter. Yahweh promises that he will continue his behaviour, described in 4:6-11, into the future until Israel ceases rejecting his advances. For this reason, Israel can prepare to continue having these encounters. The chapter concludes with the first of three doxologies in the book of Amos. The text transitions from the promise of future plagues to the god who will send them. The location of this doxology at the conclusion of the chapter is flawless in the manner in which it establishes Yahweh as having the authority and ability to administer the past and promised judgments. These final verses draw the chapter to a close, tie the unit together as a coherent and unified whole, as well as containing elements which recur in Amos 6 and the visions of Amos 7-8. Each unit is necessary in order for the chapter to function as a whole and each unit contributes to themes and messages of the book of Amos.

Amos 5-6 is the final unit my tripartite division of Amos 3-6. It is composed of Amos 5:1-17, 18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14. This is evidenced by the chiasm of Amos 5:1-17, the woe oracles of 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 and the oath of 6:8-14.

Amos 5:1-17 contains the theme of Israel's oppression of the poor, and shows Yahweh's judgment to have a redemptive purpose. The chiasm opens and closes with lament and woe, though this is tempered by two offers to "seek Yahweh and live." This offer of mercy, however, is apparently fleeting, suggesting that should Israel desire redemption they had better act quickly.

The three units that follow the chiasm (Amos 5:18-27; 6:1-7 and 6:8-14) continue these themes as well. Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 are woe oracles and each concludes with the threat of exile. The first woe oracle (Amos 5:18-27), though

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addressing two seemingly different topics (the day of the Lord and Israel's cultic practices), addresses Israel's unwarranted self confidence and pronounces judgment on Israel for it. The second woe oracle (Amos 6:1-7) is chiefly concerned with pronouncing judgment on Israel's unwarranted self confidence but adds the luxurious lifestyle of Israel to its list of transgressions. The opening הוי and closing promise of exile, along with the message of the two units, show that Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-7 are parallel units.

The final unit of Amos 5-6 is Amos 6:8-14. The opening נשבֵע identifies this text as an oath, intensifying the message of judgment from the previous woe oracles though the message of the unit is similar to that of the previous woe oracles and chiasm. Amos 6:8-14 opens by pronouncing Yahweh's hatred for Israel's sins and then intensifies the degree of judgment mentioned earlier. The unit ends with the threat of exile just as the previous two oracles, and it features themes and rhetorical techniques linking it closely with the rest of Amos 3-6.

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Most importantly is the progression Amos 5-6 brings to the message of judgment in the book of Amos. Within Amos 5:1-17 is found the first possibility of mercy in the book. However, the following units move away from this. The two woe oracles move from 5:1-17's lament to the promise of exile. Then, Amos 6:8-14 moves from exile to the total destruction of everything and everyone in the land. The themes of Amos 5-6 and the book of Amos as a whole remain constant but the judgment escalates. Thus, the structure, rhetorical flow and message of Amos 5-6 shows the unit to be internally consistent and demonstrates its function within Amos 3-6.

The text of Amos 3-6 exhibits an overall craftsmanship. Units work together to form a coherent whole that, should cola or bi-cola be removed, would no longer

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function as a readable or functional text. There is unquestionable intended meaning in the text as it stands. Rhetorical devices such as interjection, chiasm and inclusio, and rhetorical questions bring together the smallest individual units into a whole.

In addition to rhetorical devices, the three chapters are virtually united in their treatment of certain themes. Israel is portrayed as possessing unfounded self confidence, most likely due to a misunderstanding of the efficacy of their cultic practice. It is severely oppressive of the poor and this in order to provide for a luxurious lifestyle with no regard for the effects their oppression has on the poor. As a result, Yahweh promises judgment will fall on one and all. Destruction, mourning and exile will all be unavoidable. The united presentation of Amos 3-6 presents the message of judgment on Israel with fantastic precision.

Finally, the three units in Amos 3-6 present a superb progression of accusation and judgment. Amos 3 pronounces judgment though it gives hardly any reason for it. Lament and grief are promised but little more is alluded to. Amos 4 is very explicit about the reason for Yahweh's judgment but it also adds Yahweh's rejection of Israel's cult, indicating Israel had no way to make amends. And instead of mourning, Amos 4 opens and closes with the threat of exile.

In Amos 5-6 this progression reaches its crescendo. All the elements of judgment from Amos 3-4 are found in the chiasm of 5:1-17. The text offers mercy to those that seek Yahweh but this is suddenly turned into simply a possibility of mercy. With this shock, the text moves into two woe oracles that repeatedly emphasize Israel's unwarranted self confidence. The special relationship Israel thought it had with Yahweh is not more. Finally, the text ends with Yahweh's oath that the destruction to come will be complete and inescapable.

Thus, Amos 3-6 moves from lament, to accusation, loss of relationship and exile, to absolute destruction. This pattern is also developed in the visions of Amos 7-9 where Yahweh is at first persuaded to refrain from judging Israel, then he promises to refrain no longer, and finally his judgment is being carried out. The progression of judgment in the book of Amos begins with Yahweh oppressing Israel in Amos 1-2, continues to Yahweh promising complete destruction by the end of Amos 3-6, and concludes with Yahweh carrying out that complete judgment at the end of the visions. The promise of future salvation in Amos 9:11-15 is not surprising however. It has been foreshadowed in the redemptive purposes of Yahweh's plagues

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in Amos 4:6-11 and made explicit in Amos 5:4-6 and 14-15. And these texts cannot be questioned due to their integral role in the rhetorical flow of their respective chapters.

When Amos 3-6 is examined as a single unit and the rhetorical flow of the sections are viewed together it presents a clear progression of judgment. In addition, the progression of judgment that takes place in Amos 3-6 is necessary for the progression of judgment that takes place over the course of the book of Amos. In this way, only when Amos 3-6 is read as a unity can the rhetorical function of the book of Amos be seen, and only then can the meaning of this text be adequately understood.

Appendix 1: Outline of the Book of Amos

Amos 1-2	Oracles Against the Nations			
1:1-2	Intro			
1:3-2:16	OAN			
	1:3-5	OAN Aram	1:6-8	OAN Philistia
	1:9-10	OAN Phoenicia	1:11-12	OAN Edom
	1:13-15	OAN Ammon	2:1-3	OAN Moab
	2:4-5	OAN Judah	2:6-16	OAN Israel
Amos 3-6	First Person Sayings of the Prophet			
3:1-15	Judgment Against Israel			
	3:1-2	Yahweh's Reckoning		
	3:3-8	The Prophet's Interjection		
	3:9-10	Proclaim the Injustice of Israel		
	3:11-12	Judgment Against Israel		
	3:13-15	Yahweh's Reckoning		
4:1-13	Reason for Judgment			
	4:1-3	Introduction to Coming Judgment		
	4:4-4:5	Cultic Ritual Rejected		
	4:6-11	Yahweh's Attempts at Restoration Rejected		
	4:12-13	Introduction to Yahweh Who Will Judge		
5:1-6:14	Rejection of Israel's Overconfidence			
5:1-17	Injustice Brings Judgment			
	5:1-3	Lament/prediction of disaster		
	5:4-6	Seek Yahweh and Live		
	5:7	Injustice of Israel		
	5:8-9	Doxology		
	5:10-13	Injustice of Israel		
	5:14-15	Seek Good and Live		
	5:16-17	Prediction of Mourning after Disaster		
5:18-27	Oppression in Israel			
6:1-7	Seek Yahweh and Live			
6:8-14	Lament over Judgment			
Amos 7-9	Visions of the Prophet			
7:1-3	Vision 1			
7:4-6	Vision 2			
7:7-9	Vision 3			
7:10-17	Confrontation with Amaziah			
8:1-3	Vision 4			
8:4-14	Warning to Listen			
9:1-6	Vision 5			
9:7-15	Conclusion			

Appendix 2: Oppression Words in Amos

	Needy (אביון)	Low, weak (דלים)	Afflicted (ענו)	Righteous (צדיק)	Justice (משפט)	Reproving one (יבח)	Truthful one (דבר תמים)
Sell (מכר)	2:6			2:6			
Crush (רצץ)	4:1						
Turn aside (נטה)	5:12		2:7				
Trample (שאף)	8:4	2:7					
Acquire (קנה)	8:6	8:6					
Oppress (עשק)		4:1					
Trample (בשם)		5:11					
Take (לקח)		5:11					
Destroy (שבת)			8:4				
Show hostility (צרר)				5:12			
Throw (נח)				5:7			
Overturn (הפך)				6:12	5:7; 6:12		
Hatred (שנא / תעב)						5:10	5:10

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