



A Study of
Amos & Hosea

**IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN
PUBLIC THEOLOGY**

Isaac Boaheng (PhD)

Foreword by: Prof. Bill Domeris

 Noyam

A Study of Amos And Hosea: Implications for African Public Theology

ISAAC BOAHENG (PhD)

Department of Theology,
Christian Service University College, Kumasi (Ghana);
Research Fellow, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies
University of the Free State, South Africa;

Foreword by: Prof. Bill Domeris



A STUDY OF AMOS AND HOSEA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC THEOLOGY

ISAAC BOAHENG

Copyright © 2024 Noyam

ISBN 978-9988-9389-1-8

DOI: 10.38159/npub.eb2024401

Published in Ghana by Noyam

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

For further information or permission, contact:

Noyam – info@noyam.org

Tel: +23353142920

DEDICATION

To my mother, Mad. Mary Ampomah and father (posthumously),

Mr. Noah Nti

To my wife, Mrs. Gloria Boaheng and children, Christian,
Benedict, Julia, Kalix and Myjiloy.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been a labor of love, collaboration, and intellectual exchange, made possible by the support and contributions of numerous individuals and institutions whom I am deeply grateful for.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the prophets themselves, Amos and Hosea, whose timeless messages continue to inspire and challenge generations across the ages.

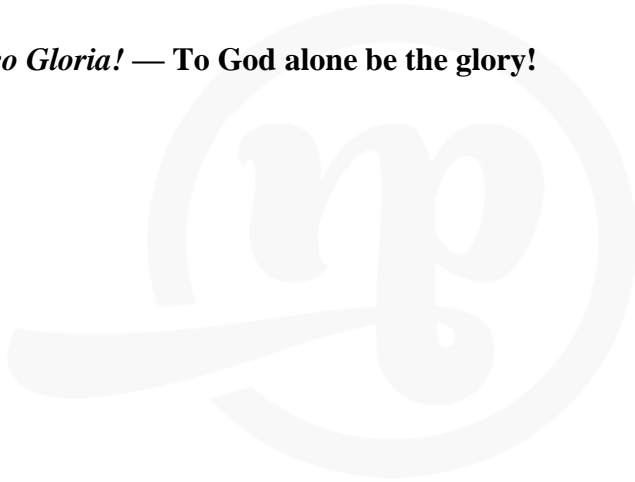
I am immensely thankful to my academic mentors and advisors, whose guidance, wisdom, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey. Your insights have shaped my thinking and enriched the content of this book in immeasurable ways. In this regard, I owe a huge gratitude to Prof. Frederick Mawusi Amevenku for his mentorship. I am extremely grateful to The Reverend Professor Bill Domeris, Former Professor of Old Testament at the University of the Witwatersrand and now a Senior Academic at The South African Theological Seminary (Johannesburg), for writing the foreword to this publication after reviewing it. I also thank my family and friends in the various institutions in which I have been privileged to be part of.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family and friends for their unwavering support, understanding, and patience during the writing process. Your love and encouragement sustained me through the challenges and triumphs of this endeavor. Reverends

Ebenezer Asibu-Dazie Jnr., Isaac Nyanful, Isaac Oduro-Boateng, Jonathan Amankwaa Oppong, Kwadwo Antwi, Paul Appiah, Paul Asante Bonnah, and Evelyn Ayisi Mensah, I salute you all!

Lastly, I express my gratitude to the staff of Noyam, editors, and reviewers who helped bring this book to fruition. Your dedication to academic excellence and commitment to advancing scholarly discourse are truly commendable.

***Soli Deo Gloria!* — To God alone be the glory!**



FOREWORD

The study of the prophets Amos and Hosea offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of the Hebrew Bible. These two men of God responded to the crises of the eighth century in very different ways. Amos called for justice and mercy, especially with regard to the poor and needy while Hosea called for purity and faithfulness in respect of their worship of Yahweh. Both men served in the northern kingdom of Israel against the backdrop of the looming Assyrian threat.

In this book, Isaac Boaheng, one of our emerging young African scholars, supplies a solid guide to the reading and study of the two prophets, allowing the reader to understand these two books in their social and historical contexts. At the same time, the reader is equipped to relate these books to their own contexts and contemporary challenges. My prayer is that this work will encourage other young scholars from Africa to conduct similar research to facilitate an encounter between theology and the society.

Enjoy therefore the journey and learn from the wisdom and theological insights of two of the greatest writers among the prophets.

*Reverend Professor Bill Domeris,
Former Professor of Old Testament –*

*University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
Senior Academic - The South African Theological Seminary,
Johannesburg, South Africa.*



PREFACE

In the ever-evolving landscape of theological discourse, the intersection of ancient texts and contemporary issues remains a perennial focal point. It is within this dynamic space that *A Study of Amos and Hosea: Implications for African Public Theology* finds its resonance and purpose. Amidst the complexities of modern African society, the prophetic messages of Amos and Hosea reverberate with a timeless urgency. Rooted in the socio-political contexts of their time, these prophets courageously spoke truth to power, denouncing injustice, oppression, and moral decay. Their impassioned pleas for social justice and ethical renewal resonate with striking parallels to the contemporary African experience.

The book is organized in eight chapters. The first chapter focuses on how prophecy emerged and developed in ancient Israel. The next three chapters deal with the background and theology of Amos which centers around the Yahweh's justice and righteousness. Chapters Five to Seven bring out the message of Hosea within his religious, economic, cultural and political contexts. Finally, the study draws out lessons for African public theology in areas such as politics, economics, and environmental care.

The book is written in simple English to facilitate comprehension. It is my hope that this book will serve as a catalyst for dialogue, introspection, and social engagement. May the

prophetic voices of Amos and Hosea continue to challenge and inspire us as we strive towards the realization of a more just, compassionate, and equitable society.

ISAAC BOAHENG (PhD)

19TH APRIL, 2024

SUNYANI, GHANA



CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
FOREWORD.....	vi
PREFACE	viii
CONTENTS	x
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCING BIBLICAL PROPHECY	1
Pre-monarchical Prophets	1
Pre-classical (non-writing) Prophets.....	2
Classical (writing) Prophets.....	4
Conclusion	6
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF AMOS	8
Uniqueness of Amos.....	8
Amos the Prophet and His Calling	10
Authorship and Composition of the Book of Amos	15
Structure of the Book of Amos	23
Literary Features in Amos	28
Conclusion	35
Review Exercises.....	36
CHAPTER THREE.....	37
CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN THE BOOK OF AMOS.....	37
Historico-Political Context	37
Socio-Economic Context.....	42
Religious Context	49
Conclusion	52
Review Exercises.....	53
CHAPTER FOUR.....	54
THEOLOGY OF AMOS.....	54
The Sovereignty of Yahweh	54

Ethical Monotheism.....	59
Sin.....	64
Covenant.....	71
The Day of Yahweh.....	76
Justice.....	79
Judgment.....	91
Future Restoration.....	97
Conclusion.....	103
Review Exercises.....	104
CHAPTER FIVE.....	106
INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF HOSEA.....	106
Author and Date.....	106
Audience and Purpose.....	109
Hosea the Prophet.....	111
Structure of the Book of Hosea.....	113
Literary Features in the Book Hosea.....	114
Hosea’s Marriage.....	116
The symbolic names of Hosea’s children.....	121
Conclusion.....	127
Review Exercises.....	127
CHAPTER SIX.....	128
CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN THE BOOK OF HOSEA.....	128
Historico-Political Context.....	128
Socio-economic Context.....	130
Religious Context.....	131
Conclusion.....	135
Review Exercises.....	136
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	137
THEOLOGY OF HOSEA.....	137
Covenant.....	137
Sin.....	147
Judgment.....	154
Eschatological Restoration.....	158

Conclusion	166
Review Exercises	166
CHAPTER EIGHT	168
IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC THEOLOGY	168
Defining Public Theology	168
Political life	170
The Church	173
Financial Ethics	179
Environment Ethics	180
Conclusion	183
CONCLUDING REMARKS	184
ADDITIONAL REVIEW EXERCISE	186
SUBJECT INDEX	191
BIBLIOGRAPHY	195
ABOUT AUTHOR	204

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING BIBLICAL PROPHECY

The history of Israel is a powerful testimony to the precision as well as the importance of prophecy. In this chapter, the study focuses on how the act of prophecy emerged and developed in ancient Israel. Three major epochs in the development of prophecy in ancient Israel will be examined, namely, the pre-monarchical period, the pre-classical period and the classical period.

Pre-monarchical Prophets

The origins of biblical prophecy could be traced to the protoevangelium in the Garden of Eden following humanity's fall (see Gen 3:15).¹ Old Testament (hereafter OT) historians also mention people such as Enoch (Gen 5:22; Jude 4); Abraham (Gen 15; 20:7); Moses (Deut 34:10; Hos 12:13); Aaron (Exod 7:1); Miriam (Exod 15:20; Mic 6:4); Eldad, Medad, and the seventy Elders (Exod 24:9-11; Num 11:24-29); and Deborah (Judg 4:4-5) as pre-monarchal prophets who experienced divine revelations and auditions.²

¹ Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, Fourth printing, 1972), 27.

² Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007). 808.

Commenting on the prophetic role of these persons, Wilson says “The biblical traditions about some of them do not deal primarily with their prophetic activities, and except in the case of Moses, it is not obvious why these figures were regarded as prophets at all.”³ Most of these people were given prophetic roles to play but were not actually called into the office of a prophet. In this era, the Spirit of God revealed himself exclusively through national leaders such as Moses, Joshua, or (judges like) Deborah.⁴ The prophetic office did not receive much prominence in the ancient Jewish society until the ministry of Samuel and the institution of the monarchy.

Pre-classical (non-writing) Prophets

The period of the ministry of Samuel coincided with both the emergence of chieftaincy and prophetic institutions in ancient Israel. In this period, God revealed Himself through two kinds of leaders, namely, the king (2 Sam 7:12-17) and the prophet.⁵ The king was however expected to listen to what God told him through

³ Robert R. Wilson, “Early Israelite Prophecy” in James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (eds.), *Interpreting the Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 2.

⁴ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 808.

⁵ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 808.

the prophet. However, God also spoke directly to the king in some cases, only that He gave priority to the word of the prophet.⁶

The account of Samuel's choice of Saul as king of Israel gives us the first appearance of the prophets as a group. They are depicted as a group of people who came down from a sanctuary, accompanied by musical instruments like flute, timbrel and harp, and responding to this abundant musical tune with ecstatic cries (1 Sam 10:5-6). Yahweh's spirit came suddenly upon Saul, transforming him (1 Sam 10:6 ff.) and provoking great fury in him (1 Sam 11:6). The contagious nature of the ecstasy made Saul also prophesy when he saw them (1 Sam 10:10-13). Ecstatic frenzy is also recorded of Saul (1 Sam 19:18-24), but whether or not Saul's actions can be considered typical of the prophets is debatable. It seems however that prophecy in ancient Israel was ecstatic in nature.

The pre-classical or former prophets lived in the tenth and ninth century BCE, advising the kings and helping them to discern the will of God. They do not have their oracles recorded in their names; what we have are stories about their activities. They organized themselves in bands [at Gilgal (1 Sam 10:5-13); Ramah (1 Sam 19:18-24); Bethel (2 Kings 2:3); Jericho (2 Kings 2:5)] and

⁶ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 808.

worked miracles and great wonders. (eg. Elijah and Elisha are wonder-workers, cf. 1 Kings 18) Examples of pre-classical prophets are Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha.

Classical (writing) Prophets

Prophets who lived in the 8th century and beyond are referred to as the latter prophets, the writing prophets, or the classical prophets. The prophetic books contain two main materials, namely prophetic oracles (the speeches given by the prophets, often in poetry prose narratives, either autobiographical, in which the prophet describes his own experiences, or biographical (in which details of the prophet's career are recounted by others). They include the lengthy books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel referred to as the **Major Prophets**, and the shorter books of Hosea through to Malachi, the twelve **Minor Prophets**. Classical prophets may fall under three categories according to biblical chronology: pre-exilic prophets: Amos, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Isaiah (chs 1-39), Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk; prophets of the exile: Ezekiel and deuterio-(or second) Isaiah (chs 40-55), and Lamentations; and post-exilic prophets: trito-(or third) Isaiah (chs 56-66), Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah.

The twelve short OT books that start from Hosea and conclude with Malachi are referred to as the Minor Prophets. The

Book of the Twelve Prophets was originally on one parchment roll because of the brevity of the text and together formed one Book of the 24 Books of Hebrew Scriptures. These books are not designated “Minor” because they are less important than the Major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel⁷) but because they are much shorter. The Major and Minor Prophets basically deal with the same issues. They are actually quoted by the Major Prophets (see for example, Jer 26:18). The Minor Prophets were extremely patriotic and denounced political and moral corruption. The information on these prophets is scanty as compared to the Major Prophets.

The present study examines two Minor Prophets, namely, Amos and Hosea. The book of Amos is the third of the Twelve Minor Prophets in the *Tanak* and the second in the Greek Septuagint tradition, yet Amos is the earliest of these prophets,⁸ even ministering a little earlier than Hosea whose book comes first in the arrangement of Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. The books of Amos and Hosea (treated in this volume) go well together, not only because one follows the other chronologically, but also because one supplements the other logically, the two giving a

⁷ Daniel is more of Apocalyptic literature than prophetic.

⁸ John Mauchline, “Hosea” in George Arthur Buttrick (ed), *The Interpreter’s Bible vol. 6*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 553.

totality of expression in the light of which each receives a clearer understanding.

These two books are related in that they are both pre-exilic books containing God's final warnings to Israel just a few decades before Assyria conquered them. However, Hosea, unlike Amos, does not look back to Israel's early history by turning the basic traditions of the deliverance (9:7 cf. 3:1ff.) and settlement (12:9) against Israel as much as he does for the tradition of a war waged by Yahweh on behalf of Israel into an announcement of war against Israel (2:13ff). Again, Amos avoids quoting Yahweh word-for-word as Hosea does. Hosea was from the North while Amos was from the south. Amos focuses on God's unapproachable righteousness which forms the basis of judging the exploitation of the poor. Hosea, on the other hand, focuses on God's unfailing love for which reason He will restore His people after judging them.

Conclusion

This brief introductory chapter has explored how the prophetic ministry began and developed in the religious life of ancient Israel. The discussions in this chapter underline the relevance of the prophetic ministry to the study of the history of Israel and the religious life of its people. In the chapters that follow, the study examines various aspects of the books of Amos and Hosea, and

THIS COPY IS NOT FOR SALE

finally, concludes with the implications of the messages of these prophets for the African society.



CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF AMOS

The book of Amos has attracted scholarly attention for decades for its emphasis on social justice. In the present world where sin abounds and people seek justice but do not find it, Amos offers us great lessons that are worth-exploring. However, the message of Amos did not come out in a vacuum. Amos delivered his message against a specific background, a proper understanding of which will enhance one's understanding of his message. The next two chapters give us the relevant introduction required for a better appreciation of the prophet's message.

Uniqueness of Amos

The book of Amos is unique for (at least) the following reasons.⁹ First of all, Amos is the first literary collection of prophetic oracles preserved in Israel as a separate book.¹⁰ This means that although many prophets lived before him, it was Amos' prophetic ministry that was first to be documented in a separate book named after a

⁹ What follow have been gleaned from Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1996), np (Pdf)

¹⁰ Werner H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction* Translated by Matthew J. O'connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 195. See also David J. Zucker, *The Bible's Prophets: An Introduction for Christians and Jews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 151.

prophet. Prophets who ministered earlier only had the records of their activities embodied in oral traditions and in the general history of the nation, not in separate books of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is most likely that other prophetic figures learned the collection and preservation of oracles from Amos and his disciples. Amos, however, acknowledges the divine guidance experienced by the early prophets (2:11).

Secondly, unlike the early non-writing prophets who were professional members of prophetic guilds and people who mostly earned their daily bread from their prophetic activities, Amos had no connection with prophetic bands or guilds (7:14–15). Since Amos worked hard to earn his living and came from a place where people had to work very hard to make ends meet, he was disgusted to see people in the Northern Kingdom who became wealthy not through hard work but through corruption, injustice and the exploitation of the poor.

Thirdly, the means by which Amos received his message differs from those of the early prophets. Whereas the early prophets received their message basically through ecstatic behavior and the Spirit falling upon them (1Sam 10:9-13), Amos received his message mainly through visions (7:7–9).

Furthermore, the early prophets devoted their entire lives to the prophetic profession, but Amos prophesied for God for only a

limited period. He was given a message for the people and after delivering it, he went back to resume his normal life. For this reason, one may consider Amos as one who was given a prophetic role to play rather than being called to be a prophet for life.

Again, the early prophets directed most of their messages to individuals especially rulers, but Amos' message was basically for nations. Amos' message is actually a form of judgment speech to nations rather than individuals (see chps 1-2).

In addition, Amos' message is more radical than any message Israel had heard before his time. Unlike, the early prophets who simply exposed sin and called people to repentance, Amos makes the point that God will definitely bring Israel's life to an end (8:2) because the only thing the corrupt nation deserves is to be wiped out. With this background, I now proceed to consider discussing Amos himself.

Amos the Prophet and His Calling

The prophet's name, Amos, means 'burden-bearer' or "load-carrier."¹¹ His hometown, Tekoa, was about five miles South of

¹¹ T. L. Constable, *Notes on Amos*. Sonic Light (2016): [http:// www.soniclight.com/](http://www.soniclight.com/) Accessed 2/11/2015.2015:np

Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem in Judah.¹² Of Tekoa, Brooke Peters Church writes:

It was a rough, wild region on the roof of the world. The horizons were so wide that one seemed to look down even on the mountains of Moab across the Jordan Valley to the east. Dawn and sunset were so sudden as to seem like daily miracles. At night one sat with one's head among the stars, everything still except the call of the night bird or the cry of the jackal or lion making his kill.¹³

Amos lived in the first half of the eighth century during the reigns King Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753 BCE) and King Uzziah of Judah (792-740 BCE).¹⁴ His prophetic ministry began precisely two years before “the earthquake” (1:1). Since the peaceful times in Israel lasted until 745 BCE,¹⁵ Amos must have prophesied before 745 BCE. Archaeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria have confirmed the earthquake mentioned in 1:1 and have dated it 760

¹² H. A. Ironside, *The Minor Prophets: An Ironside Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 95.

¹³ Brooke Peters Church, *The Private Lives of the Prophets and The Times In Which They Lived* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1953), 65.

¹⁴ Chad Brand, Eric Mitchell (eds), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 191.

¹⁵ John Barton, *Old Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

BC.¹⁶ In view of this, one may conclude that Amos ministered in about 762 BCE. Therefore, Amos was a contemporary of other eighth-century prophets like Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah.

Amos might have had some education because he was able to write his oracles in well-formed Hebrew verse and there were times he “used types of sayings that are really at home in the non-prophetic sphere, such as the funeral lament (5:1–2) and numerical proverb (1:3).”¹⁷ If on the other hand, he is not the one who wrote his oracles, then he might have employed a brilliant scribe in the documentation.

About his calling, Amos “tells us that he neither was born into the goodly company of prophets nor chose that calling himself”.¹⁸ Regarding career, we gather from the book that Amos was a farmer and a shepherd. He was shepherding his flock and dressing his sycamore fruit when he received the divine call to go and prophesy unto God’s people (7:14-15).¹⁹ The word *noqed* translated as “shepherd” can also mean “sheep-raiser,” “sheep-dealer,” “sheep-tender,” or simply “sheep-breeder”.²⁰ One could

¹⁶ Yadin et al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960), 36-37.

¹⁷ Barton, *Old Testament Theology*, 52.

¹⁸ Ironside, *The Minor Prophets*, 95.

¹⁹ Ironside, *The Minor Prophets*, 95-96.

²⁰ See William L. Holladay, *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids-Leiden: Eerdmans-E J Brill, 1988), 245.

therefore infer that Amos owned a large flock which he took care of and depended upon economically. Michael L. Barre argues that Amos' task at the farm was to "puncture the immature fruit to make it turn sweet."²¹

Amos wasted no time but responded promptly to God's call, left all that he was doing and began proclaiming God's message to the people far away into the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria. Even though he was from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Amos was called to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, especially at the sanctuary of Bethel.²² His profession and acquaintance with nature informed his imagery (2:13; 3:4-5, 8, 12; 4:1; 5:11, 17, 19; 6:12; 7:1-2, 4, 14; 8:1; 9:9). The book also demonstrates Amos' acquaintance with some traditions of Israel, such as those concerning Sodom and Gomorah (4:11); the plagues in Egypt (4:10); the Exodus (2:10; 3:1; 9:7); the forty years in the desert (5:25); the conquest of the land (2:9); and David's musical activity (6:5) as well as psalmic doxologies (4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6).

While many commentators think Amos was from the Southern Kingdom, there is also a contention that he had a northern

²¹ Michael L. Barre, "Amos" In The New Jerome Bible Commentary edited by Raymond E. Brown (London: Society of St. Paul, 2011), 209.

²² See Barre, "Amos", 209.

origin because his ministry was concentrated in the north (in cities such as Bethel and Samaria). One such theory contends that there was a Tekoa in the Northern Kingdom where Amos lived, though no other historical reference is made to this city.²³ This theory is buttressed by the absence of sycamores in the region of Tekoa (since they grow only at lower altitudes) and their presence at some points in the North.²⁴ Another view is that Amos began as a shepherd and grower of sycamore fruit in the North, took up his mission there, and retired to the city of Tekoa only when the leaders excommunicated him from the Northern Kingdom due to his harsh doom and gloom oracles. This contention is based on the assumption that Tekoa's high altitude could not support the cultivation of figs, and so it is likely that his farming activities took him away from his home town for a while and he only returned to it later.²⁵

Another aspect of Amos' life that needs attention is his relation with cultic and wisdom traditions. H. G. Reventlow argues that Amos was a cultic prophet whose ministry was rooted in the covenant renewal festival.²⁶ This position finds support in his ministry at cult centers (cf. 7:10-14), as well as his familiarity with

²³ See Barre, "Amos", 209

²⁴ See Barre, "Amos", 209

²⁵ See Barre, "Amos", 209

²⁶ As cited by Barre, "Amos", 209.

cultic language (4:4; 5:4-5, 14). Another scholar S. Terrein has established a close link between the wisdom tradition and the prophet.²⁷ No matter one's position what is clear is that Amos was familiar with the folk wisdom of his time.

Authorship and Composition of the Book of Amos

Like many other books of the Bible, the authorship of the book of Amos has been a subject of scholarly debate for a long time. Various views have been expressed about the authorship of the book, some of which are examined below. The first position holds that the book was authored by Amos himself.²⁸ R. Gordis, for example, contends that, "Barring minor additions, the book [of Amos] is the authentic works of Amos."²⁹ Such a contention is not only drawn from the analysis of the message and the style of writing of the book but also from the first verse of the book: "The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa." Supporting Gordis' view, McComiskey suggests that "the consonant of Amos' message with eighth-century milieu and his vividly forthright style of writing make it difficult to think

²⁷ As cited by Barre, "Amos", 209.

²⁸ T E McComiskey, "Amos" in F E Gaebelin (ed.), *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 270.

²⁹ R. Gordis, *Poets, prophets and sages: essays in biblical interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 225.

otherwise; and, in a more-simple way, the superscription of the book (1:1) attributes the work to Amos.”³⁰

Stanley N. Rosenbaum also believes that the book of Amos was written by Amos.³¹ Advancing his position, Rosenbaum calls attention to the fact that the book “contains so many strange spellings, forms and preferences that the whole gives the impression ... that it is an original product, basically unchanged in transcription or transmission.”³² This argument certainly refutes the notion that the book has undergone structural development. William R. Harper argues strongly that prophets like Amos put their words into writing. In his view Amos’ documentation of his own oracles is one of the most important achievements in his ministry.³³

In recent times, the more traditional or pre-critical view that the prophet Amos singlehandedly authored the book of Amos has been challenged to the extent that this view is hardly maintained these days. Contemporary OT scholars regard the book as the product of centuries of development from an original core of

³⁰ McComiskey, “Amos”, 270, 275.

³¹ Stanley N. Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel: A new interpretation* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990), 6.

³² Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel*, 7.

³³ William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea: The International Critical Commentary*, ed. S. R. Driver et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), cxxv-cxxvi.

material which was initially transmitted through oral tradition, probably in fragmenting form before being combined later as one document, a written document also going through a series of redaction before reaching its present form.³⁴ One of such scholars is R B Coote who proposes a three-stage development of the book.³⁵ The first stage comprises the author's own composition of short work (for example, the oracles), represented by the present Chapters 2, 4 and 6 (referred to as document A). This is followed by the work of an editor B, who to some extent, made use of an existing prophetic tradition to compose the present chapters 3, 5, and 7. The final stage involves another editor C, who recomposed the compositions of A and B with the addition of an opening and closing section—the present chapters, 1 and 8.

According to May, the book of Amos as we have today is the work of the historical Prophet Amos.³⁶ May divides the book into three sections; (1) the direct speeches made by Amos in the process of carrying out God's command; (2) narratives that Amos rendered in a first-person; and (3) narrative about Amos rendered

³⁴ J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: from its origin to the closing of Alexandrian canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 244.

³⁵ See Robert B. Coote, *Amos among the prophets: composition and theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 5-6.

³⁶ What follow is a summary of May's view cited by Tochukwu Osuagwu, *An ideological-critical interpretation of justice and righteousness in Amos 5* (Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Pretoria, 2016), 63.

in a third person. Thus, May identifies three distinct types of writings in the book, namely, words spoken by Amos (1:3-6:14; 8:4-14; 9:7-15), the first person narratives uttered by the prophet which includes (7:1-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-6), and a third person narrative spoken about the prophet (7:10-17). May acknowledges the existence of other smaller kinds of material found in the book such as the title (1:1), hymnic poetry (1:2; 4:13; 5:8; 9:5; 8:8) and short wisdom-styled observation seen in 5:13.³⁷ May believes that the book of Amos as we have today, was collected and arranged by people who had a first-hand acquaintance with Amos' career.³⁸

Hans W Wolff, belonging to the multiple-author tradition, identifies six layers of development in the composition of the book of Amos:³⁹ The first three literary strata, originated from Amos himself or his contemporary disciples.⁴⁰ They include "free witness speech," that the actual prophet spoke including most of the oracles found in chapters 3-6, including text (such as 4:4-5; 5:7; 10-11; 18-26; and 6-12). Wolff considers texts such as 3:1a + 2, 9:11, 12b-15; 4:1-3; 5:1-3; 12 + 16-17; 6:13-14 as sayings used by the prophet to introduce his presentation of Yahweh oracles. He also considers

³⁷ Most commentators accept 4:13; 5:8; 9:5-6 as hymns.

³⁸ See Osuagwu, *An ideological-critical interpretation of justice and righteousness in Amos*, 63.

³⁹ Hans Walter Wolf, *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 106-113.

⁴⁰ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 107.

3:12; 5:4-5; 21-24 +27 (and maybe 6:8) as possible utterances of the prophet.

The second stratum comprises literary fixation of the cycles of visions and oracles against the foreign nations, probably by Amos himself (including 7:1-8; 8:1-2; 9:1-4; 1:3-2:16).⁴¹ He called the redaction process that was undertaken at this stage “the transmission of the cycles.”⁴²

The third layer is the product of a redactional process that was undertaken by Amos’ disciples in Judah between the periods of 760-730 BCE.⁴³ These disciples, according to Wolff, were present when Amos had his dispute with Amaziah in Bethel. The texts in question include 1:1 and 7:9-17 as well as 5:5a, 13, 14-15; 6:2; 6b; 8-4-7; 8; 8a, 9-10; 13-14; 9:7.⁴⁴

Texts belonging to layers 4 to 6 are considered as later additions that actualize the text’s message for new situations. The fourth layer includes 1:2; 3:14b; 4:6-13; 5:6; 8-9; and 9:1.⁴⁵ Wolff arrived at this conclusion based on references to Bethel, in keeping with Josiah’s destruction of that sanctuary (2 Kings 23:17; cf. 1 Kings 13), solemnized by the additions of the doxologies (4:13,

⁴¹ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 107.

⁴² Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 107.

⁴³ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 108.

⁴⁴ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 108.

⁴⁵ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 111.

5:8–9, and 9:5–6) and the use of the word “altar”. In his view, the redactors were anti Bethel whose activities were a reflection of their feelings.

The fifth layer is referred to as the Deuteronomistic layer and it includes texts of 1:1b; 3:1b; 3:7; 6:1a; 8:11-12; 9-12; 2:4-5; and 10-12.⁴⁶ He argued that this layer has similar catchwords as well as sentences of unique characteristics. For him, the method employed by the redactors in their criticism is too shrewd, directed only towards Judah.

The last category of texts, including 5:22; 6:5; 9:8b and 11-15 are those which resulted from postexilic redactional activities.⁴⁷ Most of the texts belonging to this category focus on the theology of eschatological soteriology, a teaching that was widely accepted by the Yahwist after the exile. With this teaching the post-exilic Yahwists reversed the pessimistic message that spoke about condemnation, thereby bringing hope for the future in contrast with the previous message that was completely laden with a message of destruction.

Wolff supports his view by drawing attention to the different styles of writing in different sections of the book, particularly as evident in the third-person account of 7:10-17, a

⁴⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 112.

⁴⁷ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 113.

section which obviously interrupts the natural sequences of the book. In Wolff's view, 7:10-17 is an interruption of the vision reports.⁴⁸ Soggin considers Amos as having a relatively well-ordered form, but opposes the idea of single-person authorship because, as he argues, "7:10-17 interrupts the context of visions, which we would in fact expect at the beginning of the book, if his ministry began with them."⁴⁹

The third position regarding the authorship of the book of Amos is that Amos wrote the book of Amos, but there is also a third person (probably an eye witness⁵⁰ or someone in the audience⁵¹) who wrote 7:10-17. This position accounts adequately for evidence that Amos documented his activities and yet the book contains a third-person language in the section 7:10-17. Therefore, the writing of the book in (almost) its totality has its origin in the prophet Amos himself. In other words, the book of Amos that we have today is the work of one person. This could be either the handwork of the original Amos or if not, could be "an editor who is very close to the

⁴⁸ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 106-107.

⁴⁹ Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 243.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Amos" in *Minor prophets I*, 165-236 (Peabody-Carlisle: Hendrickson-Paternoster, 1999), 171.

⁵¹ John H. Hayes, *Amos, his time and his preaching: the eighth century prophet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 39.

teacher and whose contribution was to arrange and integrate the prophecies that Amos himself produced.”⁵²

Amos, a Southerner ministering to the North might have employed a northern scribe to record his words, who did so in the third person.⁵³ No matter the position one takes, one fact remains that the form in which we have the book today is different from how it was delivered orally.⁵⁴ Amos’ original message, like that of Jesus, was probably delivered in a series of shorter and longer forms on various occasions, a form which is quite different from what was preserved for us.

The foregoing discussions underscore the fact that the book of Amos may not have existed as one entity at the beginning or may have gone through redactional processes. This fact however, does not necessarily translate to the fact that Amos did not write the entire book. To determine what belongs to Amos and what does not belong to him is a very difficult task.

⁵² Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Double Day, 1989), 5.

⁵³ Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel*, 6.

⁵⁴ William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 247.

Structure of the Book of Amos

There is no generally accepted way of dividing the book of Amos. The book can be structured in many ways depending on one's perspective. Amos can conveniently be divided into four sections:

- a. Chapters 1-2, oracles against foreign nations climaxed with an indictment of Israel.
- b. Chapters 3-6, denouncement of Israel.
- c. Chapters 7-9:10, visions of doom.
- d. Chapters 9:11-15, the closing oracle of hope.

Within this broad outline smaller units may be isolated: the biographical section at 7:10-17 and the hymns at 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6.

Another way to structure the book of Amos is as follows:

- I. Editorial Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Oracles Against the Nations (1:3-2:16)
- III. Threefold Summons to "Hear the Word of Yahweh" (3:1-5:9)
- IV. Three Woes (5:7-6:14)
- V. Symbolic Visions (7:1-9:10)
- VI. Epilogue: Restoration Under a Davidic King (9:11-15)

Werner H. Schmidt gives a more detailed five-fold division of the book which is presented below.⁵⁵

The book of Amos is so structured that the superscription 1: 1) is followed by:

Amos 1:2 Motto (for chaps. 1-2 or 1-9?): “Yahweh roars from Zion”

I. Amos 1 :3-2: 16 Cycle of oracles against foreign nations, with the refrain:

“For three transgressions ... and for four, I will not revoke the punishment I will send a fire upon”

2:6-16 against Israel

Criticism of society, vv. 6-8; God's action in behalf of Israel, v. 9 (10-12); announcement of earthquake and war, vv. 13ff.

II. Amos 3-6 Individual sayings with announcements of judgment upon Israel, structured by the introductions used:

a) “Hear this word” (3: 1; 4: 1; 5: 1; cf. 8:4)

3:2 Election means punishment of guilt

3:3-6:8 Disputations

3:9-4:3 Various sayings against the capital Samaria

⁵⁵ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 194-5. (with slight modifications)

3:12 No deliverance

4: 1-3 Against the upper-class women (cf.

Isa 3: 16ff.)

4:4f. (5:5) Warning against cult

4:6-12 Historical retrospect with refrain: “*Yet you did not return to me*”

5:1ff.,3 Lament

b) "Woe" (5:18; 6:1; perhaps 5:7; 6:13)

5:4-6, 14f. “Seek Yahweh”

5: 18-20 The Day of Yahweh

5:21-27 Against the cult (“I despise your feasts”), for justice, with the announcement of punishment (“exile beyond Damascus”)

6: 1-7, 8ff. Against those untroubled in Samaria

III. Amos 7-9 Five visions, story by a third party, and sayings

7:1-8(9); Four visions in two pairs

8:1ff.3 "Thus Yahweh God showed me"

7:10-17 Third-person account: Amos and Amaziah
Expulsion from Bethel

"I am no prophet ... " (v. 14)

8:4-14 Individual sayings

8:11ff. Hunger for the word of Yahweh

9:1-4 Another isolated vision ("I saw Yahweh")

Destruction of the altar

9:7(8-10) Against Israel's sense of election

“Are you not like the Ethiopians to me?”

IV. Amos 9:(8-10) (Secondary addendum) Oracles of salvation

11-15

9: 1 If. Raising up of the fallen booth of David

Aside these major parts are some additions. There are doxologies (4:13; 5:8; 9:5f.) in which God's judgment on His people is acknowledged as just (see Ps 51:4). In the view of Schmidt, it is likely that these hymns got scattered throughout the book of Amos at a later date, perhaps during the exilic or the postexilic periods.⁵⁶ Section 9:11-15 is likely to have been added during the exilic and postexilic periods to assure the community which experienced God's judgment that there is still hope for the Jewish community.⁵⁷

There are also materials that may be considered “Deuteronomistic or in any case postexilic additions” including the oracles against Tyre, Edom, and Judah (11:9f.; 11f.; 2:4f.), individual sayings like 2:10-12; 3:1b, 7; 5:25(ff.); in part, 1:1.⁵⁸ Rather than considering (7: 10-17) as an interruption, Schmidt considers it as an insertion or a supplement to the whole body of

⁵⁶ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 195.

⁵⁷ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 195.

⁵⁸ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 195-6.

the work.⁵⁹ If that is the case then the book of Amos, reached its finally form through a gradual process of growth, beginning with the words and visions of Amos himself, supplemented by the third-person account (7: 10-17) who probably was part of “the school of Amos” and few other materials added later.⁶⁰ For Schmidt, the book originated from the Southern Kingdom (see 1:1ff.; 2:4ff.; 7:10; etc.), from where Amos hailed and to which he was sent (7: 12).⁶¹

The structure of Amos is a complex issue, which has exhausted scholarly energy. From the analysis above, it is clear that the position one takes informs which unit a particular text will fall and hence the literary context a text will have. While acknowledging that an introductory work of this nature cannot settle the issue of the structure of Amos, I am of the view that Schmidt’s model is helpful for the beginner student not only because of the detail it offers but also because of the additional notes it offers to explain and connect Amos to other texts of scripture.

⁵⁹ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 196.

⁶⁰ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 196.

⁶¹ Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 196.

Literary Features in Amos

Amos is a paradigm of the prophetic genre. He uses a wide variety of literary genres in his book, including judgment speeches (4:1-3); dirges (5:1-17); exhortations (3:1-12, 13-15; 4:1-5; 5:1-7, 10-17; 8:4-6); vision reports (7:1-8; 8:1-2; 9:1-4); narratives (7-9); and eschatological promises (5:18-20; 8:9-10, 13-14; 9:11-12).

Amos also uses rhetorical questions posed by himself or Yahweh to his audience (2:11-12; 3:3-8; 5:18-20; 5:25-27; 6:2; 6:12; 8:5-8; 9:7). Here are few examples from 3:3-8: “Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?” (v. 3) “Does a lion roar in the forest, when it has no prey?” (v. 4a) “Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has caught nothing?” (v. 4b) “The lion has roared; who will not fear?” (v. 8a) “Yahweh God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (v. 8b) On Amos’ use of rhetorical questions in 3:3-8, James R. Linville has remarked that, “There is also a trap in Amos 3,3-8. The reader (along with the implied audience) is asked a number of rhetorical questions which are easy to answer, although there is a growing morbidity to the different scenarios. In v. 8, the reader must agree that the roaring lion causes one to fear. But then, the trap is revealed. The lion’s roar becomes a metaphor for divine speech and fear turns into prophecy.”⁶²

⁶² On this consult James R. Linville, “Visions and Voices: Amos 7-9”, *Bib* Vol. 80 (1999) 22-42 at 25.

Amos also employs the use of chiasm in his presentation. Chiasms or concentric structures comprise mirrored top and bottom sections that work to “draw unusual attention to the central terms, which are repeated in close proximity to one another.”⁶³ Few cases will be cited at this point. Amos’ message in 3:9-6:14 is structured in chiasm in such a way that the lion’s destruction intensifies in the chiastic periphery, forcing Amos to call all of Samaria into lament. Here, the threads of destruction and mourning are inherently connected to one another. The parallel images of punishment that run alongside the lament are expected to make Samaria realize its socio-economic exploitation of the poor.

A: Introductory oracles (3:9-14)

x: Israel vis-a-vis the foreign nations (3:9-11)

y: An image of ruin (3:12)

z: The devastation of Israel (3:13-15)

B: Heartless indolence in Samaria (4:1-3)

C: Rejection of Israel's cult (4:4-5)

D: The final judgment (4:6-12)

E: Lamentations for Israel (5:1-3)

F: Seek Yahweh! (5:4-6)

G: The corruption of justice (5:7, 10)

⁶³ John W. Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Utah: Research Press, 1999), 10

H: Hymn to Yahweh (5:8-9)

G': The corruption of justice (5:11-13)

F': Seek Yahweh! (5:14-15)

E': Lamentations for Israel (5:16-17)

D': The final judgment (5:18-20)

C': Rejection of Israel's cult (5:21-27)

B': Heartless indolence in Samaria (6:1, 3-7)

A': Concluding oracles (6:2, 8-14)

x': Israel vis-a-vis the foreign nations (6:2, 8)

y': An image of ruin (6:9-10)

z': The devastation of Israel (6:11-14)⁶⁴

Another example of chiasm is found in 5:1-17 as shown below:

First Lamentation (vv. 1-3)

First Admonition (vv. 4-6)

First Accusation (v. 7)

Hymn (v. 8a)

Yahweh is His Name

Hymn (v. 9)

Second Accusation (vv. 10-13)

Second Admonition (vv. 14-15)

⁶⁴ Paul R. Noble, "The Literary Structure of Amos: A Thematic Analysis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 211.

Second Lamentation (vv. 16-17)

According to Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III (eds.), “Amos (like Micah) uses the language and imagery of common speech. His judgment oracles are permeated with a pastoral tone filled with the sights and sounds of everyday life drawn from the natural and agrarian worlds.”⁶⁵ Some imageries (symbolisms) used by Amos include threshing and iron teeth (1:3), lions (1:2; 3:4–5, 8, 12), murdered pregnant women (1:13), destroyed roots (2:9), a cart loaded with grain (2:13), a bird in the trap (3:5–6), the shepherd and his pasture (1:2; 3:12; 7:14–15), a shepherd’s rescue of a sheep (3:12), hooks (4:2), rain and harvest (4:7; 7:1), gardens and vineyards (4:9; 5:11, 17; 9:13, 14), the sycamore tree (7:14), blight and mildew (4:9), locusts (4:9; 7:1), ripe fruit (8:1–2), and horses and plowing (6:12).

Another literary device Amos uses is numerical parallelism. This can first be seen in his Oracles Against Nations (OAN). In his OAN, Amos uses graded numerical oracles until he reaches the dramatic climax of his sermon (2:6), a technique which underscores his familiarity with wisdom traditions.⁶⁶ He repeated this phrase

⁶⁵ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III (eds), *Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures Of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 119.

⁶⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 95.

seven times as he covered the sins of the various nations around Israel (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4).

The number five (5) also features prominently in Amos' work⁶⁷: He lists five examples of actions that God undertook on Israel's behalf in the early history of Israel (2:9-11); he repeats the negative particle *lo* (not) five times in 2:14-16; the refrain "yet you did not return to me, says Yahweh" occurs five times in 4:6-11; five cosmic acts of Yahweh are cited in the hymns of 4:13 and 5:8; five vision reports occur in chaps 7-9; and five curses are spoken against Amaziah in 7:17.

Amos also uses paronomasia (pun or play on words) to drive home his message. In his vision of the summer fruit (8:1, 2), for example, the Hebrew word for "summer fruit" (*qayits*) sounds similar to the word which designates "end" (*qets*). The ripe summer fruit suggests that the time is ripe for Israel to be judged. Other passages that use a play on words are 5:5b and 6:1, 7.

There are a number of short pieces structured as Yahweh-centric hymns each of which has strong parallelism between paired lines, and a dominant rhythm of three word-units to the line in Amos (4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6). These hymns describe Yahweh as the Almighty Creator (5:8; 9:6; 4:13; 9:5), the one who forms the

⁶⁷ See Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 5.

mountains and creates the winds (4:13), made the starry constellations, divided the day from the night; and summons the rain (5:8) and has power to give rain, crops, health and peace. Crenshaw understands these hymns as “hymnic affirmations of divine justice”, Möller says they lend “special force to Amos’s message of judgement by stressing as they do, Yahweh’s destructive power” while William Domeris argues that the hymns underscore the theology of the early Yahweh-only movement of which Amos was a part.⁶⁸

There is anthropomorphism in statements like, “God treads on the high places of the earth . . .” (4:13). Yahweh “was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand” (7:7, see also 9:1). In addition, God is portrayed as having eyes (9:4), which He sets on sinners; He also has hands, with which he grasps sinners (9:2). These are anthropomorphism because they ascribe human characteristics to a deity.

The statements “send fire into Hazeal that shall devour the palaces” (1:4), “selling the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes” (2:6b) or “trampling dust onto the heads of the poor”, “turning aside the way of the oppressed” (2:7a) and “the cattle of

⁶⁸ William Domeris, “Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos”, *HTS Theologise Studies, Theological Studies* 72(4) 2016.<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3292>

Bashan” (4:1) are examples of a metaphor (see also 1:7, 10, 12, 14, 2:2 and 5).

Synecdoche (the literary device that uses part of something to represent a whole) is used in 2:14-16; 8:13. Expressions like “height was like the height of cedars . . .” (1:9) and “inventing instruments like David” (6:4–5) are examples of simile while “they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of” (1:7) the “lying on ivory beds; stretching out on couches” (6:4–5), are examples of hyperbole or exaggeration. There is the personification of cities in 4:8.

We find evidence of overlexicalization (that is, the use of many synonymous or near-synonymous terms for communication of some specialized area of experience) in expressions such as Israel (2:6), Children of Israel (2:11), Daughter of Israel (3:1), Virgin Israel (5:2), People of Israel (7:8), Jacob (3:13), Joseph (5:6) and Isaac (7:9). Amos also uses both irony and sarcasm in the statement “come to Bethel and transgress” (4:5). Ironical texts can also be found in 5:20; 6:12; 9:4, 7. Other text that are sarcastic include 3:12 and 6:1. The map below shows major places in the Near East at the Time of Amos and Hosea.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ This map was retrieved from <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-amos/> [date accessed 24/1/2020]



Fig 1: Major places in the Near East at the time of Amos and Hosea

Conclusion

This chapter has offered the reader a brief introduction to the book of the Amos. Among other issues examined were the authorship and composition of the book, the personality of Amos himself, the literary structure of the book, and the purpose for which the book was written. In the next chapter, we consider contextual issues that, together with what the present chapter has discussed, place the reader in a better position to interpret the message of the prophet.

Review Exercises

1. Examine the use of numbers in the book of Amos.
2. What is your opinion regarding the authorship of the book of Amos?
3. Examine Amos' use of chiasm in his message, stating the relevance of this device.
4. With examples examine Amos' use of imagery.
5. Did Amos have an interest in cultic activities? Explain your answer.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN THE BOOK OF AMOS

Prophetic figures such as Amos, Isaiah and Micah spoke about a grave geopolitical situation in eighth-century Israel. These prophets (in various ways and contexts) warned about the threats of Assyria, a powerful, militaristic empire that was planning to attack Israel. Without changing their evil ways, Assyria would carry out God's judgment on their conduct. Before delving into the message of the prophet, a clear understanding of the historical events which led to Amos' prophetic utterances is most imperative. In this chapter, the study considers specific historical, socio-economic and religious situations that prompted Amos' ministry.

Historico-Political Context

The primary interest of this section is to conduct a historical and political scrutiny of the prevailing condition during the time Amos' prophecies are assumed to have been delivered. Politically, Israel was a unified nation (from 1020 to 922 BCE) under the leadership of Saul, David and Solomon. The kingdom of Israel was located between the dry Transjordan plateau and the sea, a location which gave Israel the opportunity to benefit from the international trade involving Egypt, Anatolia and Mesopotamia.

In the 10th century, when Solomon reigned as king over Israel, he extended his influence so far, established his kingdom so securely, and equipped himself so splendidly as to be the source of envy to all surrounding societies. However, Israel's national unity began to break apart due to certain unacceptable practices he introduced later, which were not in line with God's word. For example, Solomon introduced idolatrous shrines in honor of the religious beliefs of his foreign wives. His lavish encouragement of their religious worship traditions nearly swept the nation into an economic and religious collapse. We read from 1 Kings 11:9-10:

Then Yahweh was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what Yahweh commanded.

The united nation of Israel split into two in 922 BCE, when Jeroboam, one of Solomon's military leaders, revolted against Solomon's son Rehoboam. Jeroboam ended up consolidating the northern part of the land and becoming king of what became known as the nation of Israel while the southern part which was ruled initially by Rehoboam, was called Judah. After this, the two nations

existed separately and were ruled by a long series of kings, following Jeroboam and Rehoboam, respectively.

As two separate kingdoms, Israel and Judah existed next to each other, often as political rivals, and eventually were caught up in a much larger geopolitical conflict between the superpowers of the Middle East, Egypt (to the southwest) and Assyria (to the northeast), from the ninth to the eighth century BCE.⁷⁰ Under the rules of Ashur-nasir-pal II (998-859) and then Shalmaneser III (858- 824), Assyria engaged in strong campaigns directed towards the west in order to gain control of the trade routes and commerce, mostly along the Mediterranean (including the Northern Kingdom of Israel).

In reaction, the western kingdoms as far north as Asia Minor and as far south as Egypt formed an anti-Assyrian coalition, which was promoted by three main personalities, namely, Irhuleni of Hamath, Hadadezer of Damascus and Ahab of Israel from the Omride Dynasty.⁷¹ The coalition led by Egypt fought many battles

⁷⁰ Geographically located directly between these two imperial powers on major trade and military routes, the tiny nations of Israel and Judah suffered a lot from the hands of these powers.

⁷¹ Hayes, *Amos, his time and his preaching*, 16-17. The Omrides, Omrids or House of Omri were a ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of Israel founded by King Omri. According to the Bible, the Omride rulers of Israel were Omri, Ahab and Ahab's sons Ahaziah and Jehoram. Ahab's daughter Athaliah also became queen regnant of the Kingdom of Judah.

with the Assyrians in the struggle for supremacy but broke down after the death of Hadadezer, Hazael of Syria (Aram-Damascus). Rather than maintaining the allied bond, the new Syrian king decided to fight his own allies. Israel got into trouble as it had to fight its longtime enemies (Assyria) and now Syria at the same time. In the process Hazael took control of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 10:32-33) which he made a vassal kingdom. The Omride kingdom grew weaker; Jehoram, Ahab's successor, was wounded in the battle at Ramoth-Gilead (2 Kings 8:25-28) while he was protecting Israel against Hazael's attack. This situation forced him to leave the army under the command of Jehu, the Israelite army commander (2 Kgs 8:29; 9:14-15), who (due to his anti-Omride posture) later turned against Israel and killed kings like, Jehoram and Ahaziah and many leaders both in Israel and Judah (2 Kings 9:21-10:4).⁷²

Jehu allied with Shalmaneser III and paid tribute to him with the aim of securing the nation against attacks. Nonetheless, Israel was attacked by Syria's king Hazael and Benhadad, who dealt with Israel mercilessly (2 Kgs 10:32; 12:17-18; 13:7). Israel under Jehu (839-822 BCE) lost control over the Trans-Jordan territory. His successor, Jehoahaz (821-805 BCE) also failed to

⁷² See Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel*, 17.

recover the lost territories and finally surrendered to the Syrians as a vassal state (2 Kgs 13:3, 7, 21).

Later, in about 805 BCE, Assyria defeated Syria but suffered an attack from the north by the kingdom of Urartu.⁷³ The next three kings of Assyria were weak leaders and so Assyria did not engage so much in war. In the south, Egypt had been fragmented by Libyan and Sudanese kings, and was no longer influential in Palestine.⁷⁴ The situations in the northern and southern neighbours of Israel and Judah was a suitable atmosphere for these kingdoms to grow into strong independent nations in the region.

In Amos' time, Syria had lost its military might and Assyria had become too weak internally to be a threat to Israel.⁷⁵ Consequently, during the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and with the reign of Uzziah in Judah, the two kingdoms took advantage of the foreign political situation and the absence of an Israelite-Judean war and entered into a strategic alliance which yielded a golden age in terms of socio-political expansion. Putting their army together, the allied force had both political and military superiority over the

⁷³ Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2.

⁷⁴ Gary V. Smith, *Amos: A commentary* (Grand Rapids: Regency-Zondervan, 1989), 1.

⁷⁵ Hughell E. W. Fosbroke, "Amos", in George Arthur Buttrick (ed), *The Interpreter's Bible vol. 6* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 764.

Syrians, Ammonites and Moabites. Israel recaptured its territories previously taken from it (2 Kgs 13:25) and also expanded its boundaries as far north as Hamath (2 Kings 14:25, 28; Amos 6:14). Judah, on the other hand, conquered Edom and Philistine, had control over Ammon, promoted agriculture and the domestic acts of peace, and organized a large, powerful army, to fortify Jerusalem strongly (2 Chron. 26:1–15). The result was economic and political stability in which trade flourished catapulting both kingdoms into a very prosperous phase in their history.⁷⁶

Socio-Economic Context

After their settlement in the Promised Land, Israel lived in tribal societies and shared egalitarian values of living before the monarchy. As time went on, changes took place in the socio-economic structures of the settlement of the Israelite tribes in Canaan. Nonetheless, some elements of tribal structures continued long after the settlement gradually were replaced by the appearance of the monarchy. As stated already, by the eighth century the kingdom was already split into two smaller units. Urban areas emerged which housed primarily the employees of the king and other upper-class members in the society, while farmers and

⁷⁶ E. Scheffler, *Politics in Ancient Israel* (Pretoria: Biblia Publishers, 2001), 105.

shepherds (constituting the majority) lived farther away from the cities, where they could find farmland and pasture for their flocks. Well-developed market centers emerged where merchants provided goods such as cloth, wine, oil, pottery, food, and other necessary commodities to the city-dwellers.⁷⁷ The people built storehouses in which they kept surplus in agricultural produces for future use.⁷⁸ With time, “farmers became more adept at the processes of agriculture, they were able to utilize their surplus stores for trade.”⁷⁹

In the 8th century BCE Israel gained economic growth and consolidation, and once again had economic control over the main trade routes joining Mesopotamia and Anatolia with Egypt. The success of the two allied kingdoms was evident not only in political expansion but also in economic expansion. Trade with its rich and influential neighbor Phoenicia and other countries advanced Samaria's economic status, building itself into the leading commercial trade center of the Middle East. In contemporary terms, one could say that Israel's stock market was in great shape, and the GDP was at its peak.

⁷⁷ Theresa V. Lafferty, *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult: A Study of Amos 5:21-24 and Isaiah 1:10-17* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: The Catholic University of America, 2010), 25.

⁷⁸ Lafferty, *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult*, 26.

⁷⁹ Lafferty, *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult*, 26.

In this period of economic prosperity, a rich merchant class developed, sharing the nation's prosperity with the nobility and building for themselves elaborate homes. But the common people had no share in this new wealth. The society was also characterized by pronounced social and economic inequality.⁸⁰ Political powers were in the hands of a few people who controlled the nation. The minority which held power in the society, according to N. K. Gottwald, "included the monarch, the members of the royal family, the chief officers of the main government responsible for the chains of command that carried out state decisions, and advisors to the court who might have official assignment or might be consulted on an ad hoc basis."⁸¹ Furthermore, Amos' Israel was divided very sharply into the upper class, comprising land owners and the merchants, from whom were supplied the king's counselors and the administrators of justice and lower classes, and the lower class, consisting of peasants or laborers. The failure of Israel in its social responsibilities is evident throughout Amos (cf. 2:6-8; 3:9-11, 13-15; 4:1-3; 5:7, 10-13; 6:1-8, 11-12, 8:4-7). As one begins to examine the various passages, Israel obviously becomes guilty of a

⁸⁰ D.A. Knight, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 63

⁸¹ Norman K. Gottwald, *The politics of ancient Israel* (Louisville: John Knox Westminster, 2001), 227.

variety of social sins that can be summarized as an abuse of power in the pursuit of wealth and prestige.⁸²

The society was ruled by a few elite who are “complacent in Zion,” or “feel secure on Mount Samaria” (6:1).⁸³ As Coote observes, “A tiny ruling class, driven by their need for power and wealth, impose an oppressive fragmentation of rentals on the Israelite peasantry, turning titles of income into titles of debts, including debt slavery.”⁸⁴ Thus, the society’s production was geared towards the needs of the rich minority. Coote opines that the ruling elite of Israel who was also the governing class comprised “from 1 to 3 percent of the population, they typically own 50 to 70 percent or more of the land. . . . [and] control by far the greater amount of power and wealth in the society, and their positions of power exercise domain over the peasantry.”⁸⁵ Gerhard von Rad rightly observes that Amos’ society was one in which “economically self-sufficient upper class lived at the expense of the ‘little people’” (5:2; 8:6).⁸⁶

⁸² William R. Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 99.

⁸³ Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 99.

⁸⁴ Coote, *Amos among the prophets*, 32.

⁸⁵ Coote, *Amos among the prophets*, 25.

⁸⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology vol. 2* translated by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Haper & Row Publishers, 1965), 135.

More so, the market was filled with profiteering commerce, false weights and fraudulent merchandise (8:5-6).⁸⁷ Corrupt merchants indulged in dishonest business practices and became very rich. For example, merchants might keep two sets of shekel-weights, the heavier set for buying, and the lighter for selling (8:5; Hos 12:8), and by so doing become very rich.⁸⁸

People were denied justice (3:10) because judges were corrupt (3:12) and had turned “justice into poison” instead of healing and “the fruit of righteousness into wormwood” (5:7).⁸⁹ The elders at the city gates judged in favor of their friends and family, and in favour of those who could bribe them, thus leaving the poor, widows, and orphans without anyone to advocate for their welfare ((2:7; 5:10, 12). Devadasan N. Premnath articulates the plight of the poor, writing: “The vulnerable members of society, with no power or influence, could not protect themselves in the social order. They needed the help of the court. But the irony of the situation was that the very courts meant to promote and maintain justice, have, in fact, become the instruments of distorting and subverting justice.”⁹⁰ The poor and the less privileged in the society

⁸⁷ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 134.

⁸⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 9.

⁸⁹ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 135.

⁹⁰ Devadasan N. Premnath, *Eighth Century Prophets: A Social Analysis* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003), 170.

were exploited for material gains, crushed by the rich to deprived of their land due to high debt or subjugation to slavery (2:6-8; 4:1; 5:10-12; 8:4-6). The rich were growing richer, the poor, poorer, and the rich were oppressing the poor.

There is also evidence of hedonism and selfishness in Amos' society. The society also displayed the luxury and extravagance of the wealthy, their comfortable houses adorned with costly ivory (3:6, 11, 13-15) and their beds inlaid with ivory and provided with damask cushions (3:12-15) on which they reclined at their sumptuous feasts (6:4-6). Some of the houses were also constructed from carved stone, which was unusual (5:11). Archeological excavations at Samaria give support to luxurious living in Amos' time.⁹¹ Instead of dwelling in old houses built of clay or wood, rich homes were constructed of the finest materials to manifest their rise in status. Simon M. Dubnov observes as follows:

The old houses of clay and timber were replaced with others made of stone; conduits and water mains were installed in the larger cities; the market places featured exotic imported commodities; precious metals and ivory were increasingly used to ornamental furniture and household articles.

⁹¹ Barton, *Old Testament Theology*, 4.

Handicrafts were promoted, as well as the arts, especially architecture and music.⁹²

The people excelled in drinking wine, often from sacral vessels (2:8, 9, 12; 6:6). Even the women were likened to fat “cows of Bashan” (4:1) who were addicted to wine and were without compassion for the poor and needy.⁹³ This passage (4:1) is certainly sarcastic. Women who are supposed to be sensitive and compassionate are now compared with the fat cows living on the lush pastures of Bashan. In this text, the reader encounters the idea that the luxury demanded by spoiled women of Israel from their husbands was so huge that the men could only meet them by oppressing the poor to gain enough wealth for the luxury. Banqueting tables were provided with the choicest foods; lambs, calves, fatted beasts (5:22; 6:4). The following quote by Sunukjian summarizes Israel’s situation during Amos’ time:

Commerce thrived (8:5), an upper class emerged (4:1-3), and expensive homes were built (3:15; 5:11; 6:4, 11). The rich enjoyed an indolent, indulgent lifestyle (6:1-6), while the poor became targets for legal and economic exploitation

⁹² Simon M. Dubnov, *History of the Jews* 5 vols., translated from the Russian, 4th definitive, rev. ed. (South Brunswick, NJ: Thomas Yosoloff, 1967), 218

⁹³ Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 99.

(2:6-7; 5:7, 10-13; 6:12; 8:4-6). Slavery for debt was easily accepted (2:6; 8:6). Standards of morality had sunk to a low ebb (2:7).⁹⁴

What impact did this economic progress have on the religious life of the nation? The next section takes care of this question.

Religious Context

The pragmatic concern here is to attempt to reconstruct the social realities that existed at the time the historical Amos lived and ministered. Amos was Israel's first public theologian, one who was the first to critically scrutinize the religious beliefs and practices of Israel.⁹⁵ As Israel experienced an economic boom, religion flourished too. The shrines at Bethel, Dan, Gilgal, and Beersheba were constructed and were crowded continually by the prosperous citizens who brought sacrifices to God for their prosperity. According to Sandra J. Lieberman the temple at Bethel had become the most popular temple in the north; it was considered as a royal

⁹⁴ Donald R. Sunukjian, "Commentary on Amos" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983), 1425.

⁹⁵ Barton, *Old Testament Theology*, 52.

sanctuary and its priests were regarded as royal officials.⁹⁶ The people of Israel would have found security and assurance in Bethel, a place of spiritual defence. Bethel was originally called Luz but Jacob changed the name to “House of God”, the literal meaning of Bethel (Gen 28:19). It became a hallowed place after Abraham’s visit (Gen 12:8). That residual influences of foreign cults once again manifested during Amos’ time is evident in the following quotes:

The temples had apartments for prostitutes, both male and female, and there were frequent sacrifices of the first born to placate the god The shrine [Bethel] was to Yahweh, but not the Yahweh Moses had preached, or . . . that David worshiped, This was a rich man’s god, requiring elaborate and costly ritual, and sacrifices fat beyond the pocket of the crowd This crowd came not on foot, but in chariots, litters, on horseback, or if from a distance, on camelback. They came accompanied by troops , of servants and herds of sacrificial animals. Sometimes they brought a child to be sacrificed.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Sandra J. Lieberman, *Amos and the Rhetoric of Prophetic Utterance* (Unpublished MA Thesis: State University of New York, 1979), 22. See also E Hammershaimb, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* translated by John Sturdy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 63.

⁹⁷ Church, *The Private Lives of the Prophets*, 1-62.

These shrines provided spiritual identity to the nation (5:5; 8:1-14). It was Jeroboam II who built these shrines and appointed Amaziah to take the role of a high priest at Bethel. That the people were very religious is seen in the number of sacrifices they offered: sacrifices (4:4), peace-offerings (5:22), meal offerings (5:22), thanks offerings (4:5), freewill offerings and tithes (4:4-5).

Unfortunately, the ritualistic observances of the people lacked any internal holiness. Thus, the numerous religious activities had little effect on the social life of the people. All the people were interested in was to bringing their sacrifices to God and ensuring that they had fulfilled all righteousness.

In addition, the Israelites were idolaters who worshipped the native Canaanite deities along with Yahweh (4:4-5; 5:4-6, 14-15, 21-27; 8:9-10) and treated Yahweh as one of the gods of the land of Canaan.⁹⁸ Accordingly, the Israelite religious institutions and theology were being perverted, misunderstood and rejected, and although they performed elaborate rituals as proud demonstrations of piety, those activities were unrelated to justice and righteousness (5:21-24) or to real seeking after God (5:4-6).

⁹⁸ Fosbroke, "Amos", 768.

The foregone discussion underlines the fact that Israel's prosperity had negative effect on the people's religious life, yielding, negative fruits such as pride, luxury, religious laxity, selfishness, oppression. One could, therefore, agree with Daniel Bitrus that, "Human beings generally fall prey to a sense of false security when they become wealthy and live comfortably. Their way of life insulates them from the real issues of life".⁹⁹ The Akan of Ghana express this thought in the saying, "*asetena pa ma awarefire*" ("good living has the tendency of leading one to forget his or her root").

Conclusion

The context within which Amos ministered can be summarized as a period of economic and political prosperity characterized by moral abyss. Acquisition of wealth was considered the highest good of life. Consequently, people engaged in the pursuance of pleasure which they considered as the highest good. The wealthy and upper class enjoyed in luxury and extravagance, building large edifice and having separate winter and summer places decorated with expensive ivory wares (3:15). The market was run by deceitful and fraudulent traders whose main aim was to make a profit, even

⁹⁹ Adeyemo ed. African Bible Commentary, 2006:1063

if that meant falsifying the scales and selling bad wheat (8:5-6). Judges were corrupt and justice was sold to the highest bidder thus there was no justice in the land (5:7; 12).

Review Exercises

1. What political elements in Amos' society are found in your society? Explain your answer
2. What religious conditions occasioned Amos' prophetic ministry to Judah and Israel?
3. How is economic exploitation in your society affecting the lives of the poor in your society?
4. A careful reader of the book of Amos can conclude that "good living has the tendency of leading one to forget his or her root." What is your view on this assertion?

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGY OF AMOS

In the last two chapters, the study examined some background issues relevant to the understanding of the message of Amos. Using this background contextual framework, the present chapter explores some major theological themes taught by Amos. The study does not deal with all the issues raised in Amos. What it offers are the key issues which an ordinary reader of Amos can easily identify.

The Sovereignty of Yahweh

The sovereignty of Yahweh is one of the major theological themes in the book of Amos. Sovereignty means the idea that there is absolutely nothing that happens in the universe that is outside of God's influence and authority. It means "the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the godhood of God"¹⁰⁰ or "God's control over His creation, dealing with His governance over it: Sovereignty is God's rule over all reality."¹⁰¹ As Isaac Boaheng notes, "God's

¹⁰⁰ Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics), 18. Accessed 23/9/15 at http://www.reformed.org/books/pink/pink_sov_01.html.

¹⁰¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011), 536.

sovereignty gives Him total power over his creation just as a potter has over clay and chooses to mold His clay into whatsoever form He chooses, shaping out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor” (cf. Rom 9).¹⁰²

One way Amos teaches Yahweh’s sovereignty is his deliberate avoidance of the use of the expression “the God of Israel”, as such expression would mean that He rules only in Israel. That is to say, the use of the title “the God of Israel” would make Amos’ audience consider Yahweh in a narrow nationalism sense, an idea Amos intends to defeat. Walter Brueggemann writes that Yahweh is the “proper name” for the God of Israel, unlike the other names that are either “generic names for deity,” or “titles that give respect or identify attributes for this God.”¹⁰³ The four-consonant word is not pronounceable and this was an “intentional bafflement.”¹⁰⁴ This anomaly was most likely constituted in order to “preserve the mystery of the name and the freedom of the one named.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Isaac Boaheng, “Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility and God’s Salvific Plan: An African Perspective” in *ERATS* Volume 1 Number 3, 2019: 84-93, 85.

¹⁰³ Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 238.

¹⁰⁴ Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 238.

¹⁰⁵ Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 238.

Amos argues that Yahweh's power extends over all nations of the world, and that He controls the destinies of all. Amos' phraseology therefore destroys Israel's reliance on its special status and false beliefs that they could escape God's judgement.¹⁰⁶ Since He has dominion over the whole earth, heaven and Sheol, there can be no place of escape from His wrath (9:2-6). Yahweh is the one who "directs the history of the universe along the course of His foreordained plan and chooses individuals and groups for special purposes in the outworking of His plan."¹⁰⁷

Amos' usage of the divine name, Yahweh, indicates that he does not come preaching a new God, an unknown God, or a god never heard of before by the Israelites. It is from inside that he comes, from the perspective of the Israelite faith. The sole usage of the name Yahweh does, automatically and unquestionably, draw a link with the past; it presupposes a history of the knowledge of that God, and certain established ideas and beliefs about Him. It is a reminder of Moses' encounter with Yahweh (Exod 3) the result of which was his commission to be the deliverer of Israel from their Egyptian bondage.

As noted earlier, Amos uses at least three different hymnic texts (4:13; 5:8; 9:5-6) to underscore Yahweh's creative power,

¹⁰⁶ Boaheng, "Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility", 84-85.

¹⁰⁷ Boaheng, "Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility", 85.

describing it participially, and climaxing each in the phrase, “Yahweh is His name”.¹⁰⁸ The study gives a brief comment about these hymns after citing them below.

Hymn I (4:13)

For Io, the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind,
reveals his thoughts to mortals,
makes the morning darkness,
and treads on the heights of the earth—
Yahweh, the God of hosts, is his name!

Hymn II (5:8)

The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
Yahweh is his name,

Hymn III (9:5-6)

Yahweh, God of hosts,
he who touches the earth and it melts,
and all who live in it mourn,

¹⁰⁸ Walther Zimmerli, From prophetic word to the prophetic book, in Robert P Gordon (ed.), *The place is too small for us: the Israelite prophets in recent scholarship*, 419-442 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 434.

and all of it rises like the Nile,
and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt;
⁶who builds his upper chambers in the heavens,
and founds his vault upon the earth;
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out upon the surface of the earth—
Yahweh is his name. (9:5-6)

The first hymn (4:13) identifies God as the creator of the mountains and the wind; as one who has disclosed Himself to humankind; one who marches as a warrior deity, and whose name is Yahweh. The second hymn (5:8-9) talks about the creation of the Pleiades and Orion, depicts Yahweh as the one who changes darkness into light, or light into darkness, the Controller of the waters of the sea and the one who can destroy the mighty, and their fortresses; while the third hymn (9:5–6), talks about an earthquake through the use of imagery (cf. 1:1), repeating Yahweh’s creative ability and His sovereignty over the sea, ending with the expression, “Yahweh is His”.¹⁰⁹ These are polemical hymns used to refute the belief that Baal gives fertility and other idols control certain aspects of life. The northern community to which Amos

¹⁰⁹ Domeris, “Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos”, 3.

ministered adored the Baal for the belief that she was the god of rain and the fertility of the earth. Amos' message underlines Yahweh's regulation of the periods of drought and rain which characterize the Palestinian weather. Since Yahweh is the God of all universe, He judges not only Israel but other nations as well (see 1:3-2:16). As a sovereign One, only Yahweh is to be regarded as God; the idols of the Canaanites should be abandoned, an idea which is discussed in the next section.

Ethical Monotheism

The expression "ethical monotheism" is used within the context of this study to refer to the idea that there is only one true God, who demands some kind of ethical standard. Amos was an uncompromising monotheist. He neither admits the existence of other gods, nor denies their existence. There is not even a single verse in his writing which admits the existence of other deities besides Yahweh. As an advocate of pure ethical monotheism, Amos founded a Yahweh-only party ("a form of anti-society") that taught and defended the idea that there is no God but Yahweh.¹¹⁰ The Yahweh-only party was however a minority group. Hess describes the minority view as "the prophetic religion of God

¹¹⁰ Domeris, "Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos", 1-2.

(Yahweh) alone, superior to all Baals, covenantal, and requiring a personal and ethical as well as religious response from the people.”¹¹¹

According to George A. Barton, “The monotheism of Amos was not a philosophical theory of the universe” but “a practical monotheism reached apparently in consequence of the prophet's personal experience of the righteousness and power of Yahweh.”¹¹² Before the 14th century, Egyptian philosophers thought of a sort of monotheistic which never had any practical value.¹¹³ Babylonian priests conceived all the other divinities as different expressions of Marduk; yet this thought did not have any practical religious significance.¹¹⁴ Religious leaders of India also conceived the Brahma, or Brahma-Atman, as the ultimate principle of life, though this idea did not have any ethical influence on the people.¹¹⁵ Yet, it is not the case that Amos developed his monotheistic idea from the monotheistic thoughts expressed by these pagan nations.¹¹⁶ Amos' idea of a monotheistic religion “grew out of the old conceptions of

¹¹¹Hess as cited by Domeris, “Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos”, 2.

¹¹² George A. Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel: III. The Prophets of the Eighth Century” in *The Biblical World*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1912): 157-166 at 157.

¹¹³ Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel”, 158.

¹¹⁴ Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel”, 158.

¹¹⁵ Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel”, 158.

¹¹⁶ Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel”, 158.

Yahweh as a holy and jealous God, and the ethical and spiritual discoveries of his soul.”¹¹⁷ Amos’ idea of monotheism was distinct in its remarkable emphasis on social justice and righteousness.

A brief examination of Israel’s movement from polytheism through monolatry to monotheism is helpful at this point. The first patriarch of the Israelites, Abraham, was a polytheist (cf. Jos 24:2). Throughout their life in Egypt, the Israelites had many encounters with the gods of Egypt. No wonder they worshipped the golden calf at Sinai (cf. Exod 32-33). The period before Amos’ time and even beyond was a kind of intermediate stage in which monolatry became a stepping-stone to monotheism. By monolatry, I mean the worship of one god without the denial of the existence of other gods. The God of Israel was only one among many gods, the name Yahweh being simply a proper name that distinguished Him from other gods like Chemosh, Moab, Milcom of Ammon, Baal of Phoenicia, and the gods surrounding peoples. John M. P. Smith further observes that,

Though the recognition and acceptance of Yahweh as Israel’s God did not involve the denial of reality to the gods of neighboring peoples, but permitted them to be regarded as real deities holding relations with their worshipers

¹¹⁷ Barton, “The Evolution of the Religion of Israel”, 158.

similar to those existing between Yahweh and Israel, yet Yahweh was supreme in Israel and in everything relating to Israel, and thus, when the interests of Israel clashed with those of her neighbors, it was to be expected that he would bring about the triumph of his own nation. However, the recognition of the reality of the gods of the nations was a great hindrance to Israel's full realization of the true nature of her mission to the world.¹¹⁸

This monolatrous worship continued far into the prophetic period, monotheism not being fully accepted and established among the Israelites until the exilic period.¹¹⁹ As Smith further notes "The preservation of true Yahweh-worship was essential to the development and continuance of national life and individuality. Yahweh-religion was almost the only unifying influence together with the heterogeneous and widely scattered elements of Israel."¹²⁰ Israel was yet to appreciate Yahweh's distinctiveness and superiority evident in his deliverance of Israel from Egypt, his guidance and protection in the exodus to the Promised Land, and

¹¹⁸ John M. P. Smith, "The Day of Yahweh" in *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1901), pp. 505-533, 510.

¹¹⁹ Smith, "The Day of Yahweh", 509.

¹²⁰ Smith, "The Day of Yahweh", 509.

His conquest of the Canaanites and other people. ¹²¹ Elijah's fearless opposition to Baalism as well as "the work of Elisha as the source of the inspiration, wisdom, and patriotism in the conduct of the war with Damascus which enabled Israel to achieve final victory, sealed Israel to Yahweh in closest allegiance."¹²²

The foregoing does not mean monotheism began with Amos. Monotheism was known to Israel as early as the time of the wilderness wanderings (Deut 6:4). The idea that Yahweh is the God of all the universe goes back to the time of Abraham (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Again, the idea that Yahweh will punish all nations is also found in the Exodus tradition in which Yahweh punished Egypt and all its deities. The belief in only one true God was also prevalent among ancient Israel prophets, especially those who ministered in the monarchical period.¹²³ It is therefore safe to conclude that Amos' idea of ethical monotheism was an extension of Pentateuchal traditions, not a completely new theology. For a fact, Yahweh's concern for justice and righteousness, as expounded by Amos, stems from the meaning of the covenant established long before Amos. Notwithstanding this fact, Amos

¹²¹ Smith, "The Day of Yahweh", 509.

¹²² Smith, "The Day of Yahweh", 509.

¹²³ See Domeris, "Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos", 2.

must be applauded for his emphasis on ethical monotheism and the new dimensions he brings to his audience.

Sin

Another key theme Amos develops is that of sin. The book begins with the sins of various nations.¹²⁴ Eight nations are addressed in the series of oracles of Damascus/Aram (1:3-5); Gaza/Philistia (1:6-8); Tyre/Phoenicia (1:9-10); Edom (1:11-12); Ammon (1:13-15); Moab (2:1-3); Judah (2:4-5); and Israel (2:6-16). These OAN start in 1:3 with the first occurrence of the introductory formula “Thus says Yahweh” and closes in 2:16 with the oracular formula “oracle/utterance of Yahweh.” By use of these formulae the prophet underlines the fact that his oracles are a divine way of communication presented through him, serving as an intermediary.¹²⁵ The expression “Thus says Yahweh” (that is, “This is what Yahweh has to say”) is not a simple introduction to a quotation but one used in the prophetic books of the OT to declare God’s authority for the message. According to Wolff, Amos places the expression “oracle/utterance of Yahweh” “at the end of an oracle, in order to distinguish it in a solemn way as speech of

¹²⁴ The section Amos 1:3-2:16 is a large unit in the book of Amos known as the OAN. This unit is comprised of several smaller oracles found in subunits 1:3-5, 1:6-8, 1:9-10, 1:11-12, 1:13-15, 2:1-3, 2:4-5, and 2:6-16.

¹²⁵ M A Sweeney, *The prophetic literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 36-37.

Yahweh.”¹²⁶ That is to say, the formulaic introduction to each oracle in the series underscores the function of the prophet as Yahweh’s messenger.

After the messenger formula “thus says Yahweh” comes the general indictment “for three acts of rebellion/transgressions of [nation] and for four I will not return it” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) and then a specific indictment, introduced by the preposition *al* (“for, because”), and then followed by the announcement of the Yahweh’s judgment usually introduced by the theme of sending or setting fire (“I will send/set fire”). These formulae are definite boundaries that limit the section as a whole unit and demarcate it from other sections. In Amos, the Hebrew noun here translated as “transgressions” is used only for sins against people.

The numerical formula (n, n+1) does not only have a literal sense but also a symbolic one as well. The progression from three to four expresses a climax or increasing intensity. A number followed by the next higher number is common in Hebrew literature. For example, we have one and two (Psalm 62. 11; Job 40:5), two and three (Sirach 26:28), three and four (Prov 30:15,18,21,29; Sirach 26:5) and nine and ten (Sirach 25:7-11). Sequences three and four are however the most frequent.

¹²⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 92.

Amos carefully and effectively structured and arranged the indictments and punishments to form a sevenfold structuring. For example, he mentions seven transgressions of Israel (2:6-8, 12). Meir Weiss contends that this Hebrew expression should be translated, “For three sins of ... **even** for four,” as a poetic way of expressing the number seven, which typologically symbolizes completeness, perfection, or wholeness.¹²⁷ If this view is correct, then Amos pronounced on each nation an irrevocable divine judgment because their sins were full and complete. For the other nations, only their final and culminating sin was mentioned. In the last judgment, the condemnation of Israel, Amos actually mentions seven transgressions (one in 2:6, two in 2:7, two in 2:8, and two in 2:12): selling the righteous, selling the needy, trampling the poor, turning away the afflicted, sexually exploiting a young woman, keeping garments taken in pledge, and drinking wine taken in payment of fines, unlike the preceding accusations—except Edom, for which he names four and Judah, for which he names three. In addition, Weiss shows other patterns of seven: in 2:14-16 are seven states of panic which will result from God's punishment of 2:13; “God has inflicted seven disasters on the people so that they would return to Him (4: 6-12); [and] the destruction from which there is

¹²⁷ Meir Weiss, “The pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2, a Re-examination,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 418. (emphasis mine)

no escape will be achieved, according to the fifth vision, through seven acts (9:1-4).”¹²⁸ The seven consequences of the announced punishments (2:14-16): the swift will not be able to flee, the strong will be weak, the mighty will have no escape, the bowman will fall, the fast runner will not escape, the horseman will not escape, and the stout hearted will flee naked. To add to this, one can also say that Judah, which is later named as the place of salvation, is the seventh nation to be condemned. Therefore, Judah may be considered as representing the point of completion. The arrangement has a didactic value as evident in the wisdom literature (Job 5:19-26; 33:14-18; Prov 6:16-19; 30:15-31; Sirach 23:16-31; 25:7-11; 26:5-6, 28; 50:25-26). The following quote by Weiss about the number seven is very helpful:

As is commonly known, the number seven, also in the Bible, denotes a clear typological number which symbolizes completeness and perhaps even represents it. Seven transgressions thus signify the whole, the full sin. Judgment is pronounced on each nation because of its complete sin In the body of Amos’ address, however, in his prophecy on Israel, the reason for the irrevocable judgment, Israel’s completeness is demonstrated not only

¹²⁸ Weiss, “The pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2”, 420.

by the number seven--i.e., by laying before his audience the well-known and established symbol (or its representation) for completeness by means of three and four, and not only by recalling one of their sins, which is considered the complete and greatest one, but also, ... by enumerating seven of their sins... The nature of the Semitic mentality in general, and of the Biblical in particular, is reflected in this stylistic phenomenon, which presents a single idea not once but twice in different ways and from different aspects... A thing is perceived, not in the abstract, but in its tangible wholeness, by giving concrete form to the individual details of the thing. Cannot then a rhetorical device whereby the number seven is demonstrated by the numbers three and four be seen too as a natural and obvious expression of this way of thinking?¹²⁹

There is a 3 + 4 pattern summarized as follows: 3 unrelated nations (Damascus [Syria], Gaza [Philistia], Tyre [Phoenicia]) + 4 related nations (Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah) and 1 Climax:

¹²⁹ Weiss, "The pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2", 420.-412; Lieberman, *Amos and the Rhetoric of Prophetic Utterance*, 99-100. Gordis also mentions the apparent significance of the number seven. He sees it occurring in two other places: 3:3-7, where there are seven series of questions "through which Amos seeks to emphasize the Divine Source of his prophetic activity." He then adds the seven disasters in 4:6-12 (p. 223).

Israel. The first three are referred to by their leading cities (Damascus [Aram]; Gaza [Philistia]; Tyre [Phoenicia]), and the last five by their national identities (Edom; Ammon; Moab; Judah; Israel). According to Chisholm Amos' movement from the "foreigners" (Aram, Philistia, Tyre) to blood relatives nations (Edom, Ammon, Moab), and to Judah, a sister nation of Israel located south of Israel (1:3-2:5), has the rhetorical effect of making Amos' audience (Israel) listen to his series with delight "especially when their long-time rival Judah appeared, like a capstone, as the seventh nation in the list."¹³⁰ His audience enjoyed hearing the charges against other nations without ever knowing that it would end up with themselves as the prophet's intended audience. After catching their attention through this technique, he now shows them (Israel) that what he said about the other nations were just introductory remarks; the main audience of his message is Israel. Therefore the previous oracles against the nations in 1:3-2:5, "presumably functions as a foil for the unit's main objective, the stinging message of 2:6-16," and that "The 7+1 pattern here would have served a clever rhetorical function, viz., to ensure the surprise

¹³⁰ Robert B. Chisholm, "For Three Sins...Even for Four: The Numerical Sayings in Amos" in *Vital Old Testament Issues: Examining Textual and Topical Questions* edited by Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 187.

effect.”¹³¹ After hearing and enjoying the charges against other nations, the Israelites could not argue against the accusations levelled against them in the final oracle. The Israelites were made to understand that they were not better than the other nations because their own religious and socio-economic crimes were comparable to sins committed by the foreign nations against Israel.

The sins of these nations were mostly related to deeds in times of wars, but those of Israel were basically social, economic, political and religious injustice (as noted earlier). Damascus was guilty of cruelty in her warfare against Gilead (1:3-5). The threshing sled in the text is a symbol of extreme and thorough cruelty in war.¹³² Gaza, and the Philistines, were guilty because of their slave-trade activities with Edom (1: 6-8). Tyre was guilty of the same inhumane offense—selling slaves to Edom (1:9-10). Edom, a descendant of Esau, for his part kept a grudge for a long time and pursued his brother with a sword (1:11-12). Ammon, one of the nations which descended from Lot, was judged for expanding its border through gross cruelty in war (1:13-15). Moab, who descended from Lot through his other daughter, was guilty of desecrating the bones of Edom’s king (2:1-3), and Judah, in the

¹³¹ David A. Dorsey, “Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos”, *Biblica* 73/3:(1992) 305-330 at 306-307.

¹³² S.M. Paul, *Amos. A commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 47.

crowning sin, was judged for three specific sins, rejecting the Law, not keeping its statutes, and lying (2:4-5). Clearly, these nations were judged for breaking the unwritten codes of international relations which in effect had negative consequences on Israel.¹³³

Covenant

By way of definition, a covenant is a solemn and binding treaty or agreement between two parties and this may be conditional (bilateral) or unconditional (unilateral). Even though there is no explicit mention of the term *berit* (covenant) in this book, the concept of Yahweh's covenant with Israel is taught. The word *berit* derives from the root *brh* and is considered by some scholars as relating to the Akkadian *baru* which means "to bind" which implies binding or bonding.¹³⁴ Others suggest that it comes from the root *bry* which means "to eat." From this perspective, *berit* refers to the oath or ratification rite of an oath in which a meal is used as a symbol that seals the covenant.¹³⁵ The word *berit* usually occurs with *qarat* ("to cut") *haqim* ("to establish"), *bo* ("to enter"), *nathan* ("to give"), *savah* ("to command"), *ha 'bar* ("to cause to enter") and

¹³³ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 135.

¹³⁴ Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 11.

¹³⁵ Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 12.

sim (“to issue”), each of these words signifying one aspect of the covenant or the other.¹³⁶

God had a covenant with the Israelites, but they have broken it and so Yahweh is dissolving the covenant and declaring Israel as His enemy.¹³⁷ Four main covenants, namely, the Noahic, Abrahamic and Davidic, which are unconditional; and the Mosaic, which is conditional are identifiable in the OT. The text below underscores this special relationship between Yahweh and Israel.

You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities. (3:2)

According to D. K. Stuart, the word translated “know” signifies a covenant relationship bound by a stipulation, that is, Israel “alone” is Yahweh’s particular covenant people.¹³⁸ Amos’ message about Yahweh’s historical acts of salvation in favor of Israel in 2:9-12 has a connection with the fulfillment of the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant, which became part of the core of the Sinaitic Covenant.

¹³⁶ Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 12.

¹³⁷ Barre, “Amos”, 210.

¹³⁸ D. K. Stuart, “Amos” in *Hosea-Jonah* (Waco: Word 1987), 322.

The references to Zion and to Jerusalem in 1:2 are usually understood as alluding to the Davidic covenant. Some scholars have recognized in 1:2b a reference to the covenant curse of drought in the Mosaic covenant (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22-24).¹³⁹ This covenant, made by God with Israel at Sinai (Exod 19–24), is the central and defining factor in OT theology. It affirms that the God of all creation has made an abiding commitment of fidelity to a chosen people, Israel. In this covenant, Israel is marked for all time as the elect people of God, and God is marked for all time as the God of Israel.

The covenant motif in the book is also evident in Amos' frequent use of the name Yahweh. In his book, God is referred to primarily by the divine name of Yahweh on eighty-one occasions, fifty-two of which it appears alone while in twenty-nine, it appears in compound names. This name is used not only at the beginning of the prophetic message in 1:2 and at the end in 9:15, but also at the very center of the entire literary structure of the book in the declaration "His name is Yahweh" (5:8). The frequency of the divine name ("Yahweh") in the OAN underscores its relevance for the understanding of the oracles. It occurs fifteen times as such (1:2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 2:1,3,4[2x], 6, 11, 16), and once in the

¹³⁹ Stuart, "Amos", 300-301.

compound name “Yahweh God” in 1:8. It is clear that every aspect of the OAN is essentially related to Yahweh. The prophet makes no reference to Yahweh’s faithfulness, righteousness, covenant, or law.

The divine name Yahweh relates directly to the salvation history of Israel. The Exodus, the gift of the land, the Davidic kingdom, for example, are directly related to Him in the book. The Israelites thought they were immune from judgment, because they were Yahweh’s chosen people. Amos makes the point that the continuation of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel is dependent on Israel continual keeping of their covenant obligations. The relationship is contractual rather than natural. It was a matter of God’s choice that He gave Israel a privileged position (3:2). In fact, there is nothing so special about Israel that attracted God to choose Israel. Amos (in 2:9-11) underlines the fact that without the grace of God Israel would not even exist but would have long ago been destroyed by its enemies. It reads:

⁹ Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them,
whose height was like the height of cedars,
and who was as strong as oaks;

I destroyed his fruit above,
and his roots beneath.

¹⁰ Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,

and led you forty years in the wilderness,
to possess the land of the Amorite.

¹¹ And I raised up some of your children to be prophets
and some of your youths to be nazirites.
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?
says Yahweh.

Since Israel has not responded adequately to Yahweh, their special relationship with Yahweh is about to end. God's special association with Israel (3:2) involved high moral and spiritual responsibilities. To God, being chosen, means having the responsibility to reciprocate God's love by observing those high moral and ethical qualities typical of the God of Sinai. Unfortunately, Israel forgot the stipulations of the covenant made in Deuteronomy.

One key aspect of God's covenant with Israel is the Promised Land. These covenantal connotations of the Land appear throughout the book of Amos. In the first place, Yahweh speaks to the nations comprised within the confines of the "Promised Land" (1-2). Secondly, Yahweh gives this land to His people after the Exodus from Egypt (2:10). Thirdly, the consequence of Israel's rebellion and unfaithfulness to Yahweh are divine judgments that bring to mind the covenant curses: famine, drought, pestilence,

military defeats, the decimation of the people by enemy forces, destruction of the land by fire and warfare, etc.— 1:4-5, 7-8, 10,12,14; 2:2-3, 5, 13-16; 3:11; 4:6-12; 5:2-3, 6, 16-20; 6:8-14; 7:1,4,9, 17; 8:3, 8-14; 9:1-4, 8-10). Fourthly, exile from the land follows Yahweh's destruction of the nations as such (1:5, 8,15; 2:2; 4:2-3; 5:5,27; 6:7; 7:17). Finally, the idea of Yahweh's restoration of His people signifies their return to the "Promised Land" and the blessing of the people and the Land (9:11-15). The above analysis makes it clear that Amos' ministry is closely related to Israel's covenant tradition.

The Day of Yahweh

The concept of the Day of Yahweh was common in Jewish thought before and during the time of Amos. However, in the entire OT, it is in the book of Amos that this concept appears first with clear definition and formulation. The idea which Amos found already existing and dominating the thought of the Israelites was apparently a conception of the day as a period characterized by great glory, prosperity and victory for Israel over its enemies.¹⁴⁰ Israel desired this day thinking that Yahweh had elected them and would always be on their side and ensure their survival.¹⁴¹ Amos' conception was

¹⁴⁰ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 137.

¹⁴¹ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 137.

a total reversal of all the hopes which Israel had so long centered on this day. Obviously, the first announcement of his new doctrine (5: 8 ff.) must have fallen upon Israel with startling suddenness as it seemed a rude awakening from a pleasant dream.

Earlier traditions about this day were expected to be fulfilled at this time. All the prophets who came before Amos, with the possible exception of Elijah, seem to have foretold success and glory for Israel. The major emphasis in their message was that Israel was Yahweh's people, and that, if they (Israel) remained faithful to Him, He would and must lead Israel on to victory and prosperity. Consequently, the people interpreted the existing prosperity (at Amos' time) as a sign of God's favour according to Deuteronomistic tradition. R V G Tasker explains the concept of the Day of Yahweh as follows:

The expression "the Day of Yahweh" at the time of the rise of the great prophets of Israel denoted an event to which the Israelites were looking forward as the day of Jehovah's final vindication of the righteousness of His people against their enemies. One of the tasks of the prophets was to insist that in fact "the Day of Yahweh" would be a day on which God would vindicate "His own righteousness" not only against the enemies of Israel, but also against Israel itself. This "Day of Yahweh" throughout Old Testament prophecy

remains a future reality, though there were events within the history covered by the Old Testament story which were indeed days of judgment both upon Israel and upon the surrounding nations which had oppressed her.¹⁴²

Contrary to Israel's thought of this Day as a pleasant one, Amos proclaims a Day of Yahweh characterized by darkness and not light, fiery judgment and not deliverance (1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2; 5:6, 18-20). The Day has no positive results for sinful Israel. Amos dramatizes the Day, saying, it would be as if someone ran away from a lion and is met by a bear. In an attempt to avoid the second danger, he runs to his house, but as he leans his hand against the wall, a poisonous snake concealed in a corner bites him with its venomous fangs (5:18-19). This idea of the Day of Yahweh underlines the fact that there will be no escape for anyone on that Day. On that Day, mourning and lamentation will take the place of the songs and feasts of the present on that Day. No sinner will be able to deliver himself from the universal calamity.

Amos' doctrine of the Day of Yahweh was linked with the teachings of his predecessors. Some of the ideas from the past he uses include the thought that Yahweh would manifest Himself

¹⁴² R.V.G. Tasker, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God* (London: Tyndale, 1951), 45.

personally in judgment on a specific Day, which would be a Day of battle, and the event would be accompanied by wonderful events on earth and in the heavens would accompany the Day; that Israel and Yahweh's enemies would be punished; and that it would be a time in which Yahweh would vindicate Himself in the sight of all people. Yet, a radical departure from the past view is his teaching that Yahweh's vindication involves the discomfiture of Israel rather than her triumph, because Yahweh's love of righteousness exceeds His love for His people.¹⁴³ The term "Day of Yahweh" appears neither in Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, nor Jeremiah, and but a few times in the utterances of Isaiah (2:6-22).

Justice

Among the various theological themes in the book, Amos' concept of Yahweh's righteousness and His demand for social justice stands out.¹⁴⁴ Social concerns of Amos are strongly reflected in 2:6-8; 3:9-11, 13-15; 4: 1-3; 5:4-6, 7, 10-13, 14-15, 21-27; 6:1-8, 11-12; 8:4-7. A distinctive feature of the religion of Israel based on the covenant stipulations was that one's vertical relation with God must have a direct effect on his/her horizontal relationship with neighbor and environment. Said differently, "The quality of one's

¹⁴³ Smith, "The Day of Yahweh", 515.

¹⁴⁴ Fosbroke, "Amos", 769.

relationship to God depended to some extent on how one related to fellow members of the covenant community.”¹⁴⁵ As we have noted earlier, Amos’ society was characterized by the abuse of the poor by the rich. The prophet expressed Yahweh’s distress at the maltreatment of the poor (2:7; 4:1; 5:7, 11, 24; 8:4-6).

Yahweh proved that He was the God of justice when he brought Israel out of Egyptian oppression. Israel was a weak nation and Yahweh fought on their behalf against powerful inhabitants of the Promised Land (for example, the Amorites) in order for them to have a dwelling place. There were many powerful nations from which Yahweh could make a choice, but He decided to choose Israel alone. This choice, however, far from being a guarantee of his favor, demanded of Israel a higher righteousness (3:2).¹⁴⁶ Yahweh expected the Israelites to care for the weak, poor, marginalized and the oppressed. The Israelites were however not treating the poor fairly. Yahweh then intimates that He is still the God of justice particularly concerned that the poor and vulnerable receive justice from the powerful, whether in business transactions, political acts, or judicial decisions.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, His own

¹⁴⁵ Barre, “Amos”, 210.

¹⁴⁶ This dimension of Amos’ message continued and intensified the message of Elijah who lived in the mid-ninth century BCE.

¹⁴⁷ D. J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*. AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005). 155

people must be punished for not living up to His expectation (2:13-16). As J. M. Ward says, “oppression of the weak is defiance of the will of God and a violation of the true spirit of the people of God. It is destructive of the fabric of Israelite society, and therefore jeopardizes the nation’s integrity and survival.”¹⁴⁸

The call for social justice is rooted in God’s covenant with his people. Amos devotes most of the first seven chapters to his concerns about the moral resistance of Israel to their covenant God. Israel had transgressed most of the moral norms found in the Book of the Covenant (Exod 21–23). Here are some examples: “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right” (Exod 23:6–8). Against Israel’s popular notion that the covenant was a legal agreement, Amos argued that the covenant Yahweh had with their forefathers and by extension with the present generation is more than an agreement. By announcing impending judgment to other nations as well, Amos alludes to the universal character of the Covenant.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ J. M. Ward, *Thus says the Lord: the message of the prophets* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 203.

¹⁴⁹ O. P. Robertson, *The Christ of the prophets* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004), 206.

The thought that by offering sacrifices to Yahweh sin could be atoned was strongly rejected. The various religious pilgrimages (4:4ff) and religious festivals (5:21) were all provocative in the eyes of Yahweh (cf. 1 Sam 15:22). Sacrifices offered by people who ignored Yahweh's will as revealed in His laws had no spiritual value at all.¹⁵⁰ Amos therefore writes:

Come to Bethel—and transgress;
to Gilgal—and multiply transgression;
bring your sacrifices every morning,
your tithes every three days;
⁵bring a thank offering of leavened bread,
and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them;
for so you love to do, O people of Israel!
says Yahweh God. (4:4-5)

The religion of Yahweh as conceived by Amos was basically social ethics with no place for ritual, sacrifices and burnt offerings.¹⁵¹ Amos delivered his message to Israel during the annual harvest feast, Sukkot¹⁵², when the Samaritans would make

¹⁵⁰ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 135.

¹⁵¹ Barton, "The Evolution of the Religion of Israel", 159

¹⁵² The feast was called Sukkot and celebrated for nine days in the autumn of the year. Besides being the longest of the Hebrew festivals, it was also considered the greatest and most joyous. It was a time to show gratitude after

their pilgrimage to Bethel and joyously thanked God for the bountiful harvest and prayed that He would give rain for the next season. As people went to the sanctuary,

One led an ox, a second a sheep, and a third a goat to offer to God at the sanctuary, where they would recite prayers and sing hymns and dance in religious processions about the altar. If the peasants were poor, and could afford neither an ox nor a sheep, he presented a jar of flour as a meal-offering, or a bottle of wine for a libation on the altar It seems that . . . those participating in the celebration often went, beyond the limits of revelry and drink and the festival often became tumultuous, wild bacchanalia The prophet Amos, visited the temple . . . during the . . . festival, and . . . condemned the sanctuary and the entire ritual of the festival.¹⁵³

As the God of social justice, Yahweh not only gives the absolute standards of justice, but He also judges and acts according to this standard. Yahweh's covenant with Israel contains a dimension of the human-human relationship. Therefore, Yahweh

reaping the crops from the fields and orchards, and the grapes from the vineyards

¹⁵³ Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals: History and Observance*, trans. Samuel Jaffe (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 172.

demands that His people show social concern or compassion to others, especially the poor and the weak such as widows, orphans, and strangers (Deut 10:17-19; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-15). Yahweh champions social justice and wants it implemented in the society. He therefore says,

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.

²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (5:21-24).

Verses 21-23 are a strong condemnation of the cultic activities of the people by Yahweh. Instead of the sound of the people's worship songs pleasing Yahweh, it rather provokes Him. Amos presented justice in relation to what happened in the Israelite society and denounced of all those who were oppressing and

exploiting the poor. One therefore realizes the immediacy of God's desire for the people to cease their actions. In other words, it also intensifies the urgent need for the on-going activities to be stopped. Yahweh also despises in totality the sound of their musical instrument (v. 23b) because true worship (true religion), in the view of Amos, must be intertwined with justice informed by righteousness. James makes the point when he says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." (1:27) Therefore, justice and righteousness are absolutely part of the presence of God as the life-bestowing force (5:6-7). In the above text, the prophet calls for social justice as the indispensable expression of true piety. Justice is told to roll down like waters, and righteousness to flow like a stream. Certainly, justice is the fulfillment of God's law and righteousness is the wellspring from which justice is able to flow.

The word *mishpat* (translated "justice") is mentioned four times in the book of Amos (5:7, 15, 24; 6:12), six times in the book of Hosea (2:19; 5:1; 11; 6:5; 10:4; 12:6), and four times in the book of Micah (3:1, 3:8-9, 6:8, 7:9). The word justice brings to mind the legal profession; one goes to court in order to obtain justice. The legal system has no better purpose than seeing to it that justice is done. A judge may be called a "justice." In most of its appearances,

it is used in reference to Yahweh's judgment and saving power over His people. *Mishpat* comes from the Hebrew word *shapat* meaning "to judge", that is, to pass or enact a verdict over something, thus consulting what is deemed to be morally righteous in making the decision. Amos' argument therefore is that if Yahweh is really the source of righteousness for Israel, they will act justly in accordance with His laws, and in so doing, reinforce Him as the ultimate judge.

The idea of justice is found not only in the word *mishpat*, but also in the word *tsedeq*, usually translated "righteousness." In Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East, the expressions "justice and righteousness" were expressed by means of a hendiadys,¹⁵⁴ the word hendiadys referring to word-pairs which are usually very close in meaning but are not the same words. Weinfeld opines that "justice and righteousness" are "the most common word-pairs to serve this function in the Bible."¹⁵⁵ For this reason, these words are often found in parallel lines. It is common to find Hebrew poets place them in two lines in synonymous parallelism (cf. 5:7, 24, and 6:12, in Job 29:14, and in Isaiah 5:16). It is therefore crucial for us to consider the word righteousness in our attempt to understand God's justice. The word "righteousness" derives from *tsedeq* (or its feminine form, *tsedaqah*) and these two terms are used

¹⁵⁴ Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*, 25.

¹⁵⁵ Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*, 25.

interchangeably, the choice being apparently a matter of style or choice. The masculine form occurs 117 times, and the feminine form 155 times in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵⁶ For Amos Yahweh's predominant characteristic was righteousness (5: 4-6, 24); and this called for a corresponding righteousness on the part of Israel, His chosen people.

Understanding *mishpat* in the sense of only justice is to miss other nuances of the word. *Mishpat* has a legislative dimension (proclaimed ordinance), judicial dimension (passed judgment), and executive dimension (authority to punish or release). In other words, *mishpat* also refers to “the establishment of law, the interpretation of ordinance, the pronouncement of the verdict, and the legal foundation of the authority to execute sentence.”¹⁵⁷ Yahweh's *mishpat* talks about both His wrath (judging authority) illuminated in the OT Law juxtaposed against God's love (merciful forgiveness) illuminated in Christ in the New Testament (hereafter NT).

Amos, the former farmer and shepherd, uses an image that would be familiar to those living in an arid climate. In such an

¹⁵⁶ Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 90.

¹⁵⁷ Retrieved from <https://edensbridge.org/2012/01/11/on-justice-and-righteousness-mishpat-tsaadq-strongs-4941-6663/> [Date assessed: 1st February, 2020]

environment, water was a necessity to the cultivation of crops or the tending of fields. He therefore, depicts Yahweh's action of providing rain at the right time as a paradigm for right social behavior (cf. Deut 11:13-15; 28:12; 1 Kings 8:35-36).¹⁵⁸ Therefore, by his association of bountiful, everlasting water with the practice of righteousness and justice in the society, Amos provides a clear model of the kind of worship Yahweh demands from the Israelites. His point is that God takes no delight in religious festivals which are but a hypocritical show, nor in tithes, burnt-offerings and sacred songs given by unrighteous and unjust people. Therefore, the religious activities at Bethel and other places of worship (4:4-5) are valueless if the people do not show compassion for the needy and live righteously. In other words, the key to experiencing the presence of God is not religiosity, but the exercise of justice between and among humans.¹⁵⁹

The metaphor of water and stream in 5:24 underscores the fact that Amos perceives that justice as the life-force of the human community. Thus, just as water is the key to the sustaining life in the desert, the human community exists by doing justice. The

¹⁵⁸ Water (rain, dew) is used as a metaphor for justice in passages such as Psalm 72; Hos 6:3; 14:5-7.

¹⁵⁹ Ted Grimsrud, *Healing Justice: The Prophet Amos and a New Theology of Justice: Peace and Justice Shall Embrace*, ed., Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Pennsylvania: Pandora Press, 1999), 73-75.

absence of justice has made the community lifeless. For life to be brought back into the community, justice and righteousness must roll down like floods after the winter rains and persist like those few streams that flows even in the dry summer (6:12).¹⁶⁰ Yahweh demands to see the establishment of justice and righteousness.

“Justice and Righteousness” in Chapter 5 and in the rest of Amos underlines (at least) the following characteristics. First, there is a political dimension of the justice demanded by Amos. In the book of Amos, one can consider the powerful as a certain social class, or governing class, consisting of the kings, the judges, the official prophets, the rich, and the merchants. Amos used the word to describe what God expected of royalty, the ruling class and the elites which included religious leaders. He saw a royalty that failed to measure up to God’s expectation, with its demand to practice justice and righteousness as a social ideal by showing mercy and kindness to the poor.¹⁶¹ This requires the ruling class to treat the poor and the needy fairly rather than practicing violence and robbery (3:10).

Secondly, there is a relational dimension of this word. He used it in the sense of it being a social ideal, where it is connected to mercy and kindness. He used the term to expose unjust dealings

¹⁶⁰ Grimsrud, *Healing Justice*, 75.

¹⁶¹ Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*, 29

within Israel's social sphere, such as false scales in the market. In this sense, the word is practically linked to the people's way of life, about their moral and ethical conducts when they deal with each other. For Amos, life is not divided into secular and sacred: all things stem from the sovereign God. Therefore, the way people behave in the market place or how they judge in the gate directly relates to their religious life. Fairness and mercy must therefore be as much a part of the worship as singing and sacrifice (5:21-24).

Lastly, he used it in the judicial sense, calling for fair judgment in the law courts. Yahweh had set up a system of judicial elders during the time of wandering in the wilderness (Exod 18), which later included the king, various advisors and appointed judges (cf. 2 Sam 15:3-4; 1 Kings 3:9; 1 Chron 23:4; 26:29). The judicial sector had been corrupted by the rich and powerful people in the society as evident in Amos accusation of this sector of bribery (5:12), false testimony (5:10), inequitable rulings (2:8), and the prevention of injured parties from finding justice through the courts (2:7; 5:12). May says, "Courts were no more than markets to enslave the needy and wring the last bit of land and produce from him. His rights were violated with impunity (2:7)."¹⁶² Amos

¹⁶² Mays cited by Patrick D. Miller, *The Ten Commandments: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 375.

demanded justice from the judges, witnesses, and others who contribute in any way to the judicial system of the nation. He demanded justice in the gate (5:15). To attain justice the people had to return to being obedient to Yahweh.

Judgment

Closely related to the Day of Yahweh is the concept of judgment. Among the classical prophets, Amos' message is the least hopeful. For Amos, Israel's destruction is certain, inescapable, and total. In the first two chapters, Yahweh pronounces judgment not only on Israel but also on Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, Moab and Judah for treating others inhumanly (cf. 1-2). The two most powerful nations in Amos' time, Assyria and Egypt, are also under God's authority (3:9); so are the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Syrians (9:7).¹⁶³ He subjects Israel and all other nations to the same moral responsibility. Therefore, Yahweh's eyes are on the sinful kingdom (9:8), and He punishes any nation which opposes His authority. The world is subject to His command and serves His purpose even in disasters (7:1, 4: 4:6-11). It is clear from Amos' concern for other nations that Yahweh's concerns are widespread (universalism). He cares about other nations in addition to Israel,

¹⁶³ James D. Newsome, Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 23-24.

as opposed to the idea that Yahweh is solely concerned with Israel (“particularism”). The obvious conclusion is that God’s judgment would be impartial on the judgment day. There is a common pattern for the pronouncement of doom for each nation: “(a) a general declaration of irrevocable judgement, (b) a naming of the specific violation which caused the judgment, and (c) a description of God’s direct and thorough punishment.”¹⁶⁴ Amos uses judicial rhetoric in 2:6-8 as he presents Yahweh as a judge in a court of law Who judges past actions of Israel and demands justice from them.

In 3:3-8, the prophet uses seven rhetorical questions to show that the judgment of God is inevitable. There is a progression here: No element of force or disaster (v. 3); One animal overpowering another (v.4); Man overpowering animals (v. 5); Man overpowering other men (v. 6); God overpowers man to climax events (3:6b); God always reveals Himself and His plan to humanity (v. 7-8). The metaphor of Yahweh roaring and uttering His voice from His dwelling place (1:2) evokes the ideas of divine judgment and its announcement through the prophetic voice. Earlier, we noted that Yahweh’s judgment was coming upon several nations because of their sins against Him. His message to Israel and their king could be summarized in these words:

¹⁶⁴ Sunukjian, “Commentary on Amos”, 1428.

“Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.” (7:11)

In Chapters 3 to 6, Amos gives a series of addresses, which expand the indictment and the sentence against Israel set forth in 2:6-16. Amos' indictment bears (1) on the social disorders prevalent among the upper classes; (2) on the heartless luxury and self-indulgence of the wealthy ladies of Samaria; (3) on the too great confidence of the Israelites at large in their mere external religiosity which can in no way secure them against the imminent doom. Amos recounted future scenes of soldiers fleeing away naked (2:14-16), of men gathering corpses (6:9-10; 8:3), and of towns and sanctuaries devastated (3:14-15; 5:5, 11; 6:8, 11; 9:1). He also makes the point that because of sin, God would not turn back his wrath (2:6) but would crush rebellious Israel in a similar way a cart crushes when loaded with grain (2:13). Gerhard Von Rad notes that Amos' vision about the impending judgment was that Yahweh was no longer going to forgive the sins of His people.¹⁶⁵ Nobody would be able to save his life, not the swift, the

¹⁶⁵ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 134.

strong, the warrior, the archer, the fleet-footed soldier, or the horsemen (2:14-16).

Amos (in 4:6-11) shows God's response to Israel's hypocrisy and His repeated attempts to bring them back to Him. He writes:

⁶I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,
says Yahweh.

⁷And I also withheld the rain from you
when there were still three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city,
and send no rain on another city;
one field would be rained upon,
and the field on which it did not rain withered;

⁸so two or three towns wandered to one town
to drink water, and were not satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,
says Yahweh.

⁹I struck you with blight and mildew;
I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards;
the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees;

yet you did not return to me,
says Yahweh.

¹⁰ I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of
Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword;
I carried away your horses;
and I made the stench of your camp go up into your
nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,
says Yahweh.

¹¹ I overthrew some of you,
as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
and you were like a brand snatched from the fire;
yet you did not return to me,
says Yahweh.

The phrase, “Yet you have not returned to me” is used five times. The punishments mentioned in the above text echo the promised curses of Deuteronomy 28. Famine which is mentioned in verse 6 is found in Deuteronomy 28:17-18; drought in verses 7-8 echoes Deuteronomy 28:23-24; locust is found in both verse 9 and Deuteronomy 28:38 and plague reminds us of Deuteronomy

28:60. Other judgment to come are the destruction of the altar (3:14), and of the sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom (5:5; 7:9).

In 8:11–12 Amos presents another oracle about Yahweh’s judgment. He writes,

¹¹ The time is surely coming, says Yahweh GOD,
when I will send a famine on the land;
not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of Yahweh.

¹² They shall wander from sea to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of Yahweh,
but they shall not find it.

He predicts a famine during which people will go from sea to sea, and from north to east and search everywhere for the word of Yahweh without finding it (8:12). Here, Amos uses the word *ra'av*, (translated as “famine”), metaphorically for the lack of a message from God (v.11). The movement is presented as a circle of wandering: South (Dead Sea)–West (Mediterranean)–North (Lebanon)–East (Bashan), to mean that the search is conducted everywhere. Yet, they will not hear from Yahweh.

Future Restoration

Amos's message is not a complete doom and gloom. There remains the possibility of change, of hope and restoration. There is hope in Amos' message but it requires repentance and a change of direction:

Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said. (5:14)

Amos expected the nation to be decimated (5:3) but not to be totally destroyed (9:8ff, see discussions below). He has been prophesying judgement on the whole nation of Israel and Judah (cf. 3:1; 5:5 [Beersheba]; 6:1), though he focuses more the Northern Kingdom. His message about judgment provokes the question: Will the poor and needy, the righteous who have been oppressed by their rulers also perish? Or is Yahweh indiscriminate in His judgements?

Amos addresses this question in 9:7-15. We learn from 9:9 that all the people (evil or righteous) will be taken into exile in the nations. As Gerhard von Rad notes, "Amos' actual prophecy of the future can be reduced to the simple statement that Israel is to suffer

a calamitous military defeat and be taken to exile.”¹⁶⁶ However, like grain shaken in a sieve, the chaff will be removed but the good grains will remain. The Assyria captivity of Israel in 722 BCE was a fulfilment of this prophecy. He then clarifies that it is sinners who will die by the sword, rather than the righteous (9:10). After returning to the land, the remnant will live in the rebuilt cities and enjoy the fruit of their vineyards (9:14), which is evidently the vindication of those righteous people oppressed by the wicked back in 5:11.

The Day of Yahweh has a dual nature. On that day Yahweh will make everything right and just. On the one hand, it is characterized by a pouring out of divine wrath on God’s enemies (5:18-20; Joel 2:1-2; Zech 1:14-15) and connected with imagery of natural disaster, devastating military conquest, and supernatural calamity. On the other hand, it is characterized by a pouring out of divine blessing upon God’s people (Isa 4:2-6; 30:26; Hos 2:18-23; Joel 3:9-21; Amos 9:11-15; Mic 4:6-8; Zeph 2:7; Zech 14:6-9). The mention of the fall of David’s booth (9:11) which lay in ruins must be taken as a reference to the exile.¹⁶⁷

Scholars who consider Amos to preach only gloom and doom have argued that 9:11-15, which is the core of the restoration

¹⁶⁶ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 134.

¹⁶⁷ Ironside, *The Minor Prophets*, 122.

message, is not part of the original work because it is inconsistent with his constant announcement of judgment. Here, Amos writes:

- ¹¹ On that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen,
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins,
and rebuild it as in the days of old;
- ¹² in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,
says Yahweh who does this.
- ¹³ The time is surely coming, says Yahweh,
when the one who plows shall overtake the one who
reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the
seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
- ¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit
them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
- ¹⁵ I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall never again be plucked up

out of the land that I have given them,
says Yahweh your God.

The question is asked how likely it is for a prophet like Amos to sound a hopeful note close to the end of his prophecy.¹⁶⁸ In response, it should be noted that Amos interceded for “Jacob” on two occasions (7:2, 5). I believe with Lasor, Hubbard and Bush that since Yahweh listened to Amos’ intercession and granted his request (see vv. 3, 6), it is not strange for Yahweh to restore His people after punishing them.¹⁶⁹ God relents from His judgment following special pleading from Amos. In addition, one can say that since the ultimate fulfilment of Yahweh’s covenant with Israel was to be found in Jesus Christ, there could not be a total and final destruction of Israel at this time (Amos’ time) or even later until Christ fulfils the covenant. In other words, Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham and David could not be fulfilled if Israel was to be destroyed completely.¹⁷⁰

Another objection to the authenticity of 9:11-15 is that the statement in verse 11 (“booth of David is fallen”) can only be made after the fall of Jerusalem, not by Amos who ministered before the

¹⁶⁸ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

¹⁶⁹ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

¹⁷⁰ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

fall of Jerusalem. The booth of David may refer to “the people of Israel at the highest point of their political and military power.”¹⁷¹ In this case the passage will mean “Now they/you are like a house that is in ruins (or: has been broken down/destroyed by war). But in the days to come, I will cause (you) the people of Israel to become great/powerful again like they/you were in the time of their/your King David.”¹⁷² Lasor, Hubbard and Bush also argue that the verb translated “is fallen” is a participial form which actually means “is falling”, referring to the present state of Israel which will be fallen during the Day of Yahweh.¹⁷³ To quote these scholars,

The house of David, presumably as the “booth,” already had begun to fall when the kingdom was divided following the death of Solomon (931), and the Northern Kingdom viewed the Davidic dynasty as ending. In the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, and certainly since Ahab and Jezebel (874-853), the kingdom of Israel was also “falling.” This demise was experienced in the loss of land to the Assyrians and the payment of tribute to Assyria by Jehu. And beyond doubt, the punishment revealed by Yahweh to

¹⁷¹ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

¹⁷² Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

¹⁷³ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

Amos foretold the fall of Samaria as well as Judah. God as Judge was for the prophet also the Savior of all Israel's history. Therefore, there seems no valid argument against the use by Amos himself of the language of 9:11.22 It is even possible that we ought to understand this hope as fundamental to the proclamation of judgment upon the people of God.¹⁷⁴

Amos promises three separate things, the restoration of the house of David to prominence, the gift of abundant fertility in nature, and the reestablishment of the people in the land.

Christology

Christology is that part of theology which deals with the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Like the Christ, Amos did not have any blaring background (7:14-15; cf. John 1:46). Amos' warning about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (in 4:11) reveals Christ as a judge. In Amos 8 foretells the passion of Christ, the rendering of the temple veil, the earthquake and the darkness sun in striking details. In this same chapter, Joseph is presented as a type of Christ, and Christ is also depicted as the bread of eternal

¹⁷⁴ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 250.

life. In Amos, Christ is reflected in his glory and power. The promise of restoration and glory (9:8-15), that is the promise that the house of Jacob would be preserved, the throne of David restored, and glory given to the kingdom is expected to be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ. The Tabernacle of David referred to in the text points to the temple in the NT which is the believer. Christ Himself made his presence in the midst of people physically, becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). Christ is our “Immanuel” – God (John 1:1) with us (Matt 28:20). The tabernacle of David mentioned in Amos 9 is built by Christ in the Church (Acts 15:12-21).

Conclusion

Amos’ message has three basic elements: The people had broken their covenant with Yahweh and needed to repent; without repentance there will be judgment, yet, there is hope beyond the judgment for a glorious, future restoration. The book of Amos is therefore not only about judgment but also about the salvation of the repentant sinner. Amos proves to be a true prophet of God through his oracles against sin. Contemporary prophets have a lot of lessons to draw from the ministry of Amos, including renouncing sin, speaking against social and economic injustice, among others.

Review Exercises

1. How does Amos develop the theme of international justice?
2. Through an exegetical analysis of Amos 5:21-27, discuss Amos' concept of true religion.
3. How does judgment sit alongside grace in the message of Amos? OR Does the book of Amos give any hope to the sinner? OR How does Amos develop the idea that Yahweh loves a repentant sinner? Explain your answer.
4. Amos refers to the luxury lifestyle of those who feel safe. Do you think material comfort is linked to spiritual complacency? How does this resonate with Jesus' teaching on wealth (e.g. Luke 16:13-15)?
5. If Amos were around today, what do you think he would have said about the salaries/stipends and allowances paid to ministers of the gospel? Explain your answer.
6. Amos was speaking to people who considered themselves God's people. In what ways can our church be in danger of complacency? How do we need to be challenged?
7. How applicable is Amos' call for social justice to the contemporary African society?
8. What are some of the social challenges Amos faced in his call to the prophetic ministry?

9. Describe the conditions of the poor in the midst of plenty during the time of Amos? How does this situation compare to the modern society?
10. What significant role did the priests play during the time of Amos?
11. In Amos's time "justice was a commodity to be purchased." What elements in the judicial system of your country make this assertion true for your community?
12. What contributions does Amos make to the prophetic tradition of Israel?
13. What was the reaction of the officials to Amos and his message?
14. What can we learn about the holiness of Yahweh with reference to Amos' ministry?
15. Analyze Amos's critique of the social sins present in Judah and Israel and relate this critique to the broader view of "covenant" in the Old Testament.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Amos' emphasis on Yahweh's ethical standards seems to overshadow His love, though his message still gives hope for the sinner. The nature of Amos' message makes his God seem cold. This defect in Amos' preaching was corrected by his younger contemporary, Hosea who ministered in the last days of Israel's monarchical history. Hosea is unique for being the first book of the Bible to use the metaphor of marriage to describe God's covenant relationship with Israel, a picture which is later employed by other prophets (Ezek 16:8-14), by Christ (Matt 25:1-13) and Paul (Eph 5:22-23). Also, Hosea is the only writing prophet to come from the Northern Kingdom (Israel). This chapter examines key background data necessary for a proper interpretation of Hosea's oracles.

Author and Date

According to 1:1, the prophet Hosea was the author of the contents of the book of Hosea. However, there are several commentators (including William Rainey Harper and Hans Walter Wolff) who believe that some of the materials in the book are the result of editorial activities. It is argued that the book of Hosea began with a material that originated from the prophet Hosea and after an

evolutionary process of redaction (including restructuring and additions) reached its present form.¹⁷⁵ The numerous references to Judah and the parallels to the language and theology of Deuteronomy are some of the evidence given to support claims about redaction additions. In response, one may argue that it was common for eighth century prophets to speak to both kingdoms of Israel (Amos being an example) because both kingdoms constitute God's covenant community to which they ministered. These prophets may have one kingdom as their primary target but in reality, they ministered to the entire people of God. The parallels to Deuteronomy may be accounted for if Deuteronomy is dated before, not after, Hosea.

Like a number of biblical books, Hosea's opening verse, in 1:1, gives indication of the time of the prophet's ministry. According to this verse, Hosea's ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. From this text it may be deduced that Hosea's prophetic ministry started in the days of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel. The Jeroboam referred to in this text is Jeroboam II (the same as the Jeroboam of Amos' time), in distinction from the first king of northern Israel, Jeroboam

¹⁷⁵ See Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*, clix-clxii.

I¹⁷⁶ as noted earlier, King Uzziah (also referred to as Azariah) led Judah from around 792 to 740 BCE while Jeroboam II reigned from approximately 793 until 753 BCE. Therefore, it is likely that the circumstances mentioned in Hosea's earliest prophecies depict conditions in Israel during the last years of Jeroboam II's reign. John Mauchline argues that the name of Hosea's first born, Jezreel, indicates that the prophet began his career before the end of Jehu's house, before the end of Jeroboam II's rule in 746 BCE (cf. 1:1b).¹⁷⁷ The prophet ministered throughout the reigns of Judah's kings Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz, and he ended his ministry during the reign of Hezekiah of Judah.¹⁷⁸ His ministry did not end with the death of Jeroboam II but continued into the time of political instability in Israel (cf. 5:1; 7:3-7; 9:15; 13:10-11).

It is a bit strange why Hosea, though has Israel as his primary audience, mentions only one Israelite king but four Judean kings. Robert B. Chisholm however suggests that "the reason for the omission of the six Israelite kings who followed Jeroboam II" might signify "the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty (cf. 3:5) in

¹⁷⁶ John Day, "Hosea", in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* edited by John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 571.

¹⁷⁷ Mauchline, "Hosea", 553.

¹⁷⁸ Robert B. Chisholm, "Hosea" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983), 1377.

contrast with the instability and degeneration of the kingship in the North (7:3-7).”¹⁷⁹

Concerning the date of writing, one can reason that because Hosea makes no specific mention of the fall of Samaria, an event that would have provided a suitable and natural setting for exploring the transgressions that led to the fall of the Northern Kingdom (cf. 2 Kgs 17:7-18, 20-23), it seems that the book was completed before 722 BC. Therefore, I agree with Richard D. Patterson that “since the prophecies reflect the greater portion of the eighth century BC, a date of 760–725 BC for the oral delivery and collection of the messages would seem to be reasonable.”¹⁸⁰

Audience and Purpose

As mentioned earlier, Hosea ministered primarily to the Northern Kingdom (cf. 7:5), although there are scattered references to Judah throughout the book (eg., 5:10-14; 6:4, 11; 8:14). Some of his oracles are addressed to specific people such as the priests (4:4-9) and the royal house (5:1), all Israel/Ephraim (9:1; 11:8) or Judah (6:4, 11), and even particular cities (8:5; 10:15).

¹⁷⁹ Chisholm, “Hosea”, 1377.

¹⁸⁰ Richard D. Patterson, “Hosea” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi)* edited by Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008), 4.

The message of Hosea as well as other eighth-century prophets must be understood against the background of the message and theology of the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy we find God's covenant with Israel in which Israel was obliged to be loyal to Yahweh and to worship Him alone as God. The consequence of obedience to the covenant was blessings from God (cf. Deut 28:1-14), but disobedience was to attract God's judgment and eventually an exile. In the time of Hosea, Israel had failed to keep their part of the covenant. The prophet therefore ministered with the primary aim of exposing Israel's breach of the covenant and to make known God's plans to implement the covenant curses. In other words, Hosea had the purpose of calling Israel (as well as Judah) to acknowledge her sins, to repent and to turn to the loving and faithful God (2:14-23; 11:8-9). If she repents, Israel will not go into captivity; her failure to repent will bring disastrous effects.

More so, while Hosea exposes the "utter rebelliousness of humanity" which deserves God's "retributive wrath", the book also shows "God's unwavering righteousness" and "God's restorative mercy."¹⁸¹ In the words of G. Herbert Livingston, "Hosea's function was to summon Israel to the bar of justice before Yahweh

¹⁸¹ J.K. Goodrich, "Hosea" in M. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2014), 1315.

and to prosecute them for their spiritual, moral, and political sins.”¹⁸² From this perspective, the book can be considered as a trilogy of lawsuits (4:1-19; 5:1-12:1; 12:2-14:9).

Hosea the Prophet

The name “Hosea” is a common Hebrew name meaning “Yahweh saves” (or “salvation”), similar to the name Joshua (Num 13:8), the name of the last King of Israel, Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30) and Jesus (Matt 1:21) and has the same root as Joshua and Jesus. Early Jewish tradition identified Beerli, Hosea’s father (1:1), with a Reubenite prince named Beerah who was taken captive by Tiglath-pileser III (cf. 1 Chron 5:6, 26).¹⁸³ The name Beerli means “the well of Yahweh”.¹⁸⁴ Christian tradition however suggests that he came from the tribe of Issachar¹⁸⁵ and from a place called Belemoth or Belemon.

Of his character, Mays writes, “It is obvious from the quality of his sayings that Hosea was a man of ability and culture. He drew on the resources of wisdom, was skilled in using a variety of literary devices in the formulation of his speeches, knew the

¹⁸² G. Herbert Livingston, “Hosea” in *Baker Bible Commentary on the Bible* edited by Walter E. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 602.

¹⁸³ Patterson, “Hosea”, 3.

¹⁸⁴ Ironside, *The Minor Prophets*, 13.

¹⁸⁵ Patterson, “Hosea”, 3.

historical traditions of Israel in-depth and was even acquainted with occasional esoterica like the graveyards of Memphis.”¹⁸⁶ Hosea was a man of great emotions and strong loyalty, and was very much aware of the political events of his time¹⁸⁷ and was primarily concerned with the moral, religious, and political abominations in Israel. He was deeply committed to God and His will in relation to His covenant people, Israel. Patterson cites Wood as saying, “Hosea should be thought of as a hard-working prophet, fully dedicated to the will of God, ministering faithfully to the sinful people of his day in spite of the great sadness of his own marriage.”¹⁸⁸ His frequent reference to the priests (4:6ff; 5:1; 6:9), to the Torah (4:6; 8:12), to “unclean things” (9:3 cf. 5:3; 6:10) to abominations (9:10), and to persecution in God’s house (9:7-8) underscore his interest in cultic issues.

The prophet’s familiarity with the Northern Kingdom can be deduced from his numerous references to various locations in this kingdom, including, Gilead and Tabor (5:1; 6:8; 12:11), Gibeah (5:8; 9:9; 10:9), Gilgal (4:15; 9:15; 12:11), Jezreel (1:4, 5, 11; 2:22), Ramah (5:8), Shechem (6:9), Bethel (4:15; 5:8; 10:5, 8,

¹⁸⁶ Mays as cited by Byron L. Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought* (Wilfrid Laurier University: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1985), 27.

¹⁸⁷ Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison (eds.), *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 578.

¹⁸⁸ Wood as cited by Patterson, “Hosea”, 3.

15; 12:4) and Samaria (7:1; 8:5, 6; 10:5, 7; 13:16). In the south he makes references to Judah (1:7, 11; 3:5; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12-14; 6:4, 11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12; 12:2) but no reference is made to Jerusalem.

Structure of the Book of Hosea

The absence of clear structural markers to help demarcate between various sections of the book makes it a bit difficult to determine the structure of this book. After consulting a number of publications of the book of Hosea, I have chosen to follow the following two-fold division (chapters 1-3 and then 4-14) proposed by C H Silva for its simplicity.¹⁸⁹

PrologueSuperscription113113

I Hosea's Marriage and Family 113113

Cycle A 113113113113

Cycle B 113113113

Cycle C 113

II Hosea's Prophetic Oracles 113113

Cycle D 113

Cycle E 113113113113

Cycle F 113113113113113

Epilogue Wisdom Saying 113

¹⁸⁹ Charles H. Silva, "The literary structure of Hosea 1-3", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164(654), (2007): 181-197 at 181.

Silva convincingly demonstrates that alternating cycles of judgment and restoration control the structural development of the six cycles' that were mentioned in the outline above:¹⁹⁰

Cycle	Judgement	Salvation/Restoration
A	1:2-9	1:10-2:1
B	2:2-13	2:14-23
C	3:1-4	3:5
D	4:1-5:15a	5:15b-6:3
E	6:4-11:7	11:8-11
F	11:12-14:3	14:4-8

Literary Features in the Book Hosea

Hosea uses a number of figurative devices. The literacy features of the book suggest that Hosea belonged to the upper class of his society.¹⁹¹ He composed the first three chapters, basically family-related, in painfilled prose and the rest of the chapters in vivid poetry. There are a lot of metaphors in Hosea. For example, Yahweh is depicted as a husband (2:2); a father (11:1); a physician (7:1); a lion (5:14); a leopard (13:7); a she-bear (13:8); the dew (14:5); the rain (6:3); a cypress (14:8); a moth (5:12) dry rot (5:12).

¹⁹⁰ Silva, "The literary structure of Hosea 1-3", 182-183.

¹⁹¹ Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison (eds.), *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 578.

In addition, Israel is like: a wife (2:2); a sick person (5:13); a silly dove (7:11); a trained heifer (10:11); a luxuriant grapevine (10:1); grapes (9:10); a lily (14:5); an olive tree (14:6); a woman in labor (13:13); an unborn son (13:3); an oven (7:4); a cake of bread (7:8); a bow (7:4); morning mist and dew (13:3); chaff blown from the threshing floor (13:3); smoke that rises from the window (13:3).

In 1:4, Hosea expresses the irony that Jehu both ascends and descends to power via blood. Hosea also uses a number of chiasmus in his writing. David Dorsey shows how the entire book is divided into seven larger units arranged in an overall symmetry.¹⁹²

A: Israel is God's wayward wife, but he will cause her to return home (1.1 –3.5)

B: Condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry (4.1 –5.7)

C: Condemnation for social corruption and vain sacrifice (5.8 –6.11a)

D: Israel has not returned at God's call (6.11b – 7.16)

C' Condemnation for social corruption and vain sacrifice (8.1 –9.7b)

¹⁹² David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 265.

B' Condemnation of Israel's spiritual prostitution and idolatry
(9.7c –10.15)

A' Israel is God's wayward son; God invites his return home (11.1
–14.9)

Primary passages predicting the restored theocratic kingdom and
blessing in the coming age: 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:4-5; 6:2; 11:10-11;
13:14; 14:4-8.

Hosea's Marriage

Hosea 1-3 details Hosea's personal life and his relationship with his wife and children. When God called Hosea, He asked him to take for himself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom (1:2) with Gomer (daughter of or belonging to Diblaim, cf. 1:3). God used the marriage between Hosea and Gomer as a way of showing Israel how shattered their relationship with Him had been. Hosea did according to God's command and had three children with Gomer, his wife.

The question of whether Hosea's marriage is to be understood literally or figuratively is important not only for a proper understanding of the character of Hosea but also for a proper exegesis of the book. In what follows the study gives three prominent views.

The literal view contends that the prophet Hosea literally married Gomer who was unchaste at the time of her marriage to Hosea. Sometime after the marriage, Gomer abandoned Hosea and degenerated deeper and deeper into sin. Later, Hosea redeemed his wife from her adulterous situation. God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute and to redeem her even after being unfaithful to him in order that the prophet might learn from experience the love of Yahweh towards unfaithful Israel. Some of the supports for this view are as follows: (1) The presentation is a straight forward with several details that are not needed if Hosea meant to allegorize. For example the fact that the second child was a girl is not needed if it is an allegory; also without taking the story literally, the name Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, has no significance; another detail that is not required in an allegory is the fact that a third child was born after the second was weaned (2) The prophet gives no indication that this was a vision or a parable and not a fact; (3) The moral issues raised by the literal interpretation are not resolved by the figurative interpretation.

This interpretation has been questioned on moral grounds. The idea that Hosea consciously married a prostitute at the Divine command is inconsistent with the character of God. In response, some advocates of this view (such as T H Robinson) hold that Chapter 3 of the book of Hosea refers to events that happened

before the marriage while Chapter 1 is the account of the marriage and what happened afterwards.¹⁹³ Before her marriage to Hosea, Gomer (in Chapter 3) was a temple prostitute, and had children through prostitution.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, Hosea was commanded to marry a woman who participated in the popular Baal cult. For Robinson, whether or not Gomer was faithful to Hosea after their marriage is an open question.¹⁹⁵ If so, then Hosea married a former prostitute. Robinson's approach seems to deal with the moral question. However, it discounts the use of the word "again" in 3:1, a word that suggests a sequence of events. It also removes the parallelism of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer with that between Yahweh and Israel.

According to the **allegorical interpretation** no literal marriage occurred between Hosea and Gomer. The marriage between Hosea and Gomer is a dramatic parable of Israel's persistent unfaithfulness and YHWH's unfailing love for them. Thus, Chapter 1 of the book of Hosea which talks about Hosea's marriage to Gomer and having three children with her represents the faithfulness of Israel, Yahweh's wife. Israel, like Gomer became unfaithful and was cast out. In chapter 3, Hosea takes his

¹⁹³ Mauchline, "Hosea", 560.

¹⁹⁴ These children are alluded to in 1:2 if this text is taken as "go and take children of a harlot."

¹⁹⁵ See Mauchline, "Hosea", 560.

wife back based on Yahweh's command after she had genuinely repented. This act represents the reconciliation of Israel to Yahweh. However, Yahweh was only willing to tolerate for a time the people's infidelity until they repented and returned to the worship of the only true God. The motivation for this kind of interpretation is that if Yahweh command to Hosea to take an adulterous wife and adulterous children is taken literally, Yahweh would be commanding an immoral act; one would find it difficult to conceive that a holy prophet should have been moved by Yahweh to commit a sin.

This interpretation however raises some questions. For example, if Hosea meant to allegorize, why did he give the wife a name at all? Again, why did he speak of Gomer's father; or if he chose to invent a name for her, why did he not give her one that was plainly symbolic, like the names of the children "Not pitied" or "Not My people"? One may however respond by saying that the name given to Hosea's wife in the narratives may be of some significance to Israel of his day, and hence Hosea wanted to convey his message to them through his adoption of that name for the wife. To conclude it may be said that the allegorical view does not solve the moral questions raised by the literal view in that taking an adulterous wife in vision or in thought is as morally reprehensible as taking her in reality.

The proleptic view contends that the word “harlot” is used in the proleptic sense in 1:2. According to this view, Gomer was a pure woman when God asked Hosea to marry her but became a harlot only after her marriage to Hosea.¹⁹⁶ This view claims support from the fact that in 1:2 Gomer is not described by the usual word for a harlot, but by the expression “woman of harlotries.” The argument goes further that Hosea became suspicious of his wife after the birth of the first child. This theory suggests that only one group of children is found in the narratives, since Gomer had no children before her marriage to Hosea.¹⁹⁷ That being the case, the children mentioned in 1:2 and 1:3-9 must be the same, and hence the children mentioned in 1:2 must be unborn children. Hosea was therefore asked to go and have children with Gomer rather than to go and adopt Gomer's children (1:2).¹⁹⁸ Some advocates of this position (including Schmidt) even argue that the last two children of Hosea were named “Pitied” and “My people”; but they had their names changed to “Not pitied” and “Not my people” respectively, after their father’s bitter experience.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, revised by Moises Silva *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 625.

¹⁹⁷ T. E. McComiskey (ed), *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 11.

¹⁹⁸ McComiskey (ed), *The Minor Prophets*, 11.

¹⁹⁹ Mauchline, “Hosea”, 561.

The proleptic theory appears good in that it gives a good comparison between Israel who was wooed by God in the wilderness and brought into a covenant relationship with God which Israel obeyed only for a brief moment, on the one hand, and Gomer who was wooed by Hosea and brought into a marriage covenant relationship which she only kept for a brief moment, on the other hand. If Hosea was compelled by love to redeem his wife from the slavery of adultery (in chp 3) how much more must Yahweh desire to restore His wayward people to the OT covenant relationship? This view seeks to avoid the moral problem the marriage would have created for Hosea.

The symbolic names of Hosea's children

The meaning of each of Hosea's children is not to be regarded as representing Hosea's own attitude towards his children but as indicative of Yahweh's intentions (see examples in Gen. 17:5, Abraham; 32:20, Jacob; Matt 1:21, Jesus). When his first child was born, God said to Hosea, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (1:4-5) The name of his first child, **Jezreel** (1:4), meaning "God will scatter" (cf. Zec

10:9)²⁰⁰ or “God will sow”, speaks of both blessing and judgment. On the one hand, Jezreel signifies blessing in that it is the name of the great plain in the heart of the Northern Kingdom (located between Galilee, Samaria and the Jordan) which was the glory of Palestine for its beauty and richness.²⁰¹ According to Isaiah 5, Israel is God’s vineyard. Therefore, Israel was the vineyard of Jezreel that God had sown in the land of Canaan.

On the other hand, Jezreel was the site of many bloody battles (cf. Judg 4-5). It was also the name of the fair city which stood near the eastern end of the plain, where Ahab had his ivory palace, and where Jezebel and he committed so many infamous murders. This place initially belonged to the righteous man Naboth (1 Kings 21). Ahab’s wife, Jezebel had Naboth killed and took the land. It was this same place that dogs devoured Jezebel as Yahweh had ordained (2 Kings 21:35-37). It was at this place that Jehu’s house had been established upon the throne of Israel through blood shed (2 Kings 10:11). Elisha seems to have commended the deed (2 Kings 9:7) as the right punishment for Ahab for the blood shed by his wife, Jezebel. Hosea however condemns Jehu’s act and predicts that his dynasty will be destroyed at Jezreel.²⁰² Jeroboam

²⁰⁰ John MacArthur, *The NASB, MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 1227.

²⁰¹ Mauchline, “Hosea”, 570.

²⁰² Mauchline, “Hosea”, 570.

II who was reigning at this time was of Jehu's dynasty. The name of Hosea's child, Jezreel was therefore reminded the people of the judgment that was about to come upon Jehu's dynasty.²⁰³

The punishment however affects not only Jehu's house but the entire kingdom as well—the independence of the kingdom is taken away. Hence, in 1:5 we find another meaning of Jezreel as *break the bow*, indicating the destruction of Israel's power probably in the Assyrian invasion of 733 BCE²⁰⁴ or the destruction of Israel by Assyria in 722 BCE.²⁰⁵ This may imply the fulfillment of curses that must follow covenant breaking (cf. Deut 28)²⁰⁶ the consequence of which is a reversal in Yahweh's attitude towards Israel. The blood of Jezreel was to be avenged upon them, and they, too, must be cut off.

Upon the birth of the second child God told Hosea, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them.” (1:6) The name of the second child is **Lo-ruhamah** (1:6) (translated “not pied”, “unpitied”, “not having obtained mercy” or “not loved”). Literally meaning “womb”, *ruhamah* signifies Yahweh's tender mercy, for example, for the chosen people. However, the negative prefix “Lo-” reversed the

²⁰³ Mauchline, “Hosea”, 570.

²⁰⁴ Barre, “Amos”, 220.

²⁰⁵ MacArthur, *The NASB, MacArthur Study Bible*, 1227.

²⁰⁶ Barre, “Amos”, 220.

meaning to “No Mercy” or “No Pity”, signaling the withdrawal of God’s love, mercy, and compassion from Israel. The Hebrew word for pity carries an overtone of parental love and hence the name of this child implies “she no longer holds the love of the parents.”²⁰⁷ Here again, the name does not mean that Hosea and his wife did not have pity for their child. Rather, God gave this prophetic name to signify what He intends to do to Israel: “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them.” (1:6).

Wiersbe makes a very important point, saying, “God had loved His people and proved it in many ways, but now He would withdraw that love and no longer show them mercy. The expression of God’s love is certainly unconditional, but our enjoyment of that love is conditional and depends on our faith and obedience. (See Deut 7:6-12 and 2 Cor 6:14-7:1) God would allow the Assyrians to swallow up the Northern Kingdom, but He would protect the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Isa 36-37; 2 Kings 19).”²⁰⁸ John MacArthur writes the following in 1:9 in his study Bible: “The name means ‘not My people’ and symbolizes God’s rejection of Israel. ‘I am not your God.’ Lit. ‘I am no longer’ ‘I am’ to you.’

²⁰⁷ Barre, “Amos”, 220.

²⁰⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002), 317.

The phrase gives the breaking of the covenant, a kind of divorce formula, in contrast to the covenant or marriage formula 'I AM WHO I AM' given in Exodus 3:14."²⁰⁹

This name brought a still sadder message to the guilty nation than the name "Jezreel" did. To be unpitied by God is a worse calamity than even to be "God-scattered." Yahweh has always shown compassion towards His erring children but now He would have to punish His people. To quote Ronald E. Murphy, "The name of the first child emphasized Israel's sin; this name, the divine attitude: the long-suffering God will have to punish His people."²¹⁰ In other words, while the first name talks about judgments to come, the present name emphasizes that Yahweh's pity is now exhausted and as such the judgment implied in the name Jezreel cannot be withdrawn. This sounds like what Yahweh said through Amos (8:2), "I will forgive them no more."

Theologically, the lack of pity for Israel negates Yahweh's compassion which is a key aspect of the Mosaic covenant. The fact that the divine punishment will surely come upon the people and not be withdrawn does not mean that the divine heart had changed. God had not changed, but Israel had. The judgment was coming because of Israel's persistent and consistent attitude of breaking her

²⁰⁹ MacArthur, *The NASB, MacArthur Study Bible*, 1227.

²¹⁰ Barre, "Amos", 220.

covenant with God. Thus, Hosea interprets this name to mean the end of Yahweh's covenant with His people. YHW would still have mercy on Judah and would save them from their enemies because they had not yet revolted openly against God as had the ten northern tribes (1:7).

The name of the third child is "**Lo-ammi**", meaning "Not-my-people" presaged still worse disaster than any of the preceding names. When Hosea gave birth to his third child, Yahweh declared, "'Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God.'" (1:9) This name affirms clearly the fact that Yahweh's covenant with His people (Israel) is ended.²¹¹ The name is meant to announce the end of Israel's special privileges, and to place them at par with other nations. By this name Yahweh was rejecting the people of Israel in their sinful state. Having played the harlot and abandoned God, now Yahweh was compelled to disown His own people (Exod 6:7). They were no longer to live together as a nation but to be scattered among Gentiles. Though Hosea had pronounced judgment on Israel, he also anticipated a reversal when his children would be renamed "Ruhmad" ("shown mercy," 2:1, 23) and "Ammi" ("my people", 2:1, 23). Yahweh does not reject Israel, it

²¹¹ Mauchline, "Hosea", 572.

is Israel that has rejected Yahweh, their God and refused to be His people (1:8ff).

Conclusion

Issues of authorship, audience, place and purpose of writing, among others, have been examined in the present chapter. The family life of Hosea shows that God used Hosea's family life to depict Israel's betrayal of Yahweh, her husband. God's displeasure against Israel was signified by the names of Hosea's children.

Review Exercises

1. Considering Hosea's marriage to Gomer, what qualities would you consider important in a spouse? Explain your answer.
2. With reference to Hosea 2 discuss how Yahweh felt when Israel was unfaithful. What lessons can Christians draw from this experience?
3. Discuss the theological significance of the names of Hosea's children

CHAPTER SIX

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Hosea's prophecy must be read in light of a particular context. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the historical, political, social, economic and religious setting that form the backdrop against which Hosea prophesied. The reader will notice that Hosea shares some contextual issues with Amos since both ministered in the same century.

Historico-Political Context

The prophet Hosea ministered during the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam of Israel (1:1). He lived at a time of turmoil in the Northern Kingdom, during which six kings (following Jeroboam II) reigned within 25 years (2 Kings 15:8-17:6). Hosea began his mission in a period of peace and prosperity, the last years of Jeroboam II (783–743 BCE).²¹² Assyria had become relatively weak and this allowed the Northern Kingdom to extend its borders to nearly the same size as that enjoyed in the Solomonic era. However, (as we will consider shortly) the political and military

²¹² Charles Tieszen (ed.), *Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 27.

conquests did nothing to reverse the spiritual and moral corruption that had set in during the leadership of Jeroboam II.

After the death of Jeroboam II, Israel experienced a period of great internal political and social instability,²¹³ with intrigues at the royal court leading to the assassination of many kings. That is, the end of the Jehu dynasty in the North came with chaos in the kingdom. Between the death of Jeroboam II and the fall of Samaria (the capital city) in 722 BCE, Israel had six kings, most of whom were assassinated. The assassinations are probably reflected in 6:7-9, with its reference to bloodshed in Gilead, since Gilead is where the rebellion started. These kings, given to Israel by God “in anger” and taken away “in wrath” (13:11), floated away “like a twig on the surface of the waters” (10:7). As a matter of fact, there was “bloodshed” after “bloodshed” (4:2).

Zachariah, Jeroboam’s son, was assassinated by Shallum. A month later, he was overthrown by Menahem who ruled for six years as a vassal to Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 15:19) with the aim of securing support from Assyria for his leadership. After his death, his son, Pekahiah, succeeded him but was assassinated after only two year by Pekah who was the commander-in-chief of the army.²¹⁴

²¹³ Day, “Hosea”, 571.

²¹⁴ Day, “Hosea”, 571.

Pekah formed an alliance with the Syrians against Ahaz of Judah. Ahaz sought the protection of Assyria who ravaged Israel and Syria. Hoshea who was a supporter of Assyria overthrew Pekah and led Israel as an Assyrian vassal. Lured by false promises from Egypt, Hoshea tried to revolt against Assyria. Israel sought, both by war and appeasement, to preserve their independence but all their efforts were fruitless. The Assyrian reaction led to the devastation of Israel and deportation of Israelites including Hoshea to Assyria; the Northern Kingdom then came to an end.²¹⁵ Thus, one can say that, internal strife weakened Israel until it finally collapsed in 722 BCE when Assyria destroyed Samaria, Israel's capital. Israel was taken into captivity and strangers came to occupy the land.

Socio-economic Context

Like Amos, Hosea does criticize social conditions, though not so comprehensively. People's economic life did not reflect their relationship with Yahweh, their God. Commerce with the Syrians had already begun under David as consequence of the subjugation of several of the Aramaean and Hittite kingdoms. Ahab obtained from Ben-Hadad the right to establish bazaars in Damascus (1

²¹⁵ The Northern Kingdom's end was predicted by Hosea, who saw this as YHWH's judgement on Israel's sin.

Kings 20:34). This is evidence of the existence of business enterprise of that period.

Things had gone so far in the time of Hosea that he had occasion to lament, that Jacob had become “A trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.” (12:7) We also learn of general unrest (7:1). There was relative peace and economic prosperity in Israel under Jeroboam II (chps 4-5), largely because of a power vacuum in the larger region. After the death of Jeroboam II, decline set in and the judgment of God, represented by the Assyrian destruction was approaching. The period was characterized by renewed commerce, building activities, and the amassing of personal wealth (8:14; 12:7-8) at the expense of common people (12:7; cf. Amos 4:1-2; 8:4-6). The social life was also characterized by classes, that is upper and lower classes.

Religious Context

The prosperity that characterized Israel in the eighth century had led to an increase in the number of altars for worship (4:13; 8:11; 10:1-2). The people loved sacrifices (8:13) thinking that they were rendering acceptable sacrifice to Yahweh (5:6; 8:2), but Hosea described the altars as an occasion for sinning. Lasor, Hubbard and Bush describe the religiosity of the people in these words: “Feasts were kept judiciously (2:11, 13), sacrifices and offerings were

burnt continuously (5:6; 6:6), altars were built in abundance (10:1). This outward show, however, masked an inward corruption of the worst kind.”²¹⁶

Pagan practices were observed together with divinely established forms of worship. In Hosea’s time, the Northern Kingdom had become conformed to her cultural environment. Disregarding the ethical demands of their patriarchal Yahwism traditions, Israel was now serving the local Baals, and bringing offerings to her with the intention of receiving fertility in the fields and increase of the flocks (2:13; 11:2). Hosea was God’s man for a difficult era spiritually. “Prosperity had brought an unprecedented degree of cultural corruption. The much-sought-after political power had opened Israel to foreign cultural influence, including the demoralizing influence of Canaanite Baal worship (2:7, 17; 11:2) with its fertility cults and bacchanalian orgies (4:10-13).”²¹⁷ As E. B. Pusey remarks, “Corruption had spread throughout the whole land; even the places once sacred through God’s revelation or other mercies to their forefathers, Bethel Gilgal, Gilead, Mizpah, Shechem were especial scenes of corruption or of sin. Every holy memory was effaced by present corruption. Could things be

²¹⁶ Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 267.

²¹⁷ Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 106.

worse?”²¹⁸ The situation was so bad that Yahweh was even called by the name of Baal and worshipped in local shrines with all the loathsome accompaniments of licentious excess (see 2:13, 16, 17, 4: 12-14, 9:10-14).²¹⁹ What made it worse was that the people did not only sin by worshiping Baal, they also contaminated the very cult of Yahweh with Baalism, considering Him as “a god of the same kind as Baal.”²²⁰ As a result, Yahweh was worshipped by rites borrowed from Baalism, including, cult prostitution, an act which the people thought would constrain divinity to give them fertility.²²¹

When the United Kingdom of Israel divided into two, the Southern Kingdom, Judah, inherited all the sacred religious institution of the United Kingdom such as Mount Zion, the Temple at Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant, the cherubim, the legitimate (Levitical) priesthood and the divinely appointed monarchy (Davidic dynasty). People from the North were coming to Jerusalem in the South to worship. To prevent such movement and to create some sort of legitimacy around his throne, Jeroboam I established alternative religious institutions for the northerners. He established an autonomous Yahweh cult in the ancient Canaanite

²¹⁸ E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 1:12.

²¹⁹ Barre, “Amos”, 218

²²⁰ Barre, “Amos”, 218

²²¹ Barre, “Amos”, 218

shrines at Bethel and Dan, established a new line of non-levitical priesthood and changed the official dates for the holy days (1 Kings 12:25-32).

Having erected two calves at Beth and Dan, Jeroboam I indirectly made the step from the calf-worship to the Baal-worship of the Canaanites an easy one for the Israelites. According to Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, “Canaanite ritualistic orgies were performed by the Israelites, who wailed and gnashed themselves, just as the prophets of Baal had done in contesting with Elijah’s God on Mt. Carmel, to gain answers to their prayers (7:14; cf. 1 Kings 18:28). The drunken revelries (4:11) and criminal outbursts (v. 2; 6:7-9; 7:1) add to a grim picture of religious failure.”²²² This is not the first time Israel was found in syncretism. Prophets such as Elijah have cautioned the nation about such practices before this time (1 Kings 18).

As time went on, the people degraded the worship of the one true God into a state-religion of calf-worship which began during the reign of Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:28ff). Hosea identifies cultic sites and language: calf of Samaria (8:5); calf at Beth-aven (4:15, 5:8, 10:5); bull sacrifice at Gilgal (12:2); the wickedness of Bethel (10:15, 12:5); possible child sacrifice at Gilead (6:8, see also

²²² Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 267.

9: 15); corrupt Gibeah (9:9, 10:9); corrupt Mizpah, Tabor, and Shittim (5: 1-2); and the perhaps the killing of priests on the road to Shechem (6:9).

Hosea's time was also characterized by religious apostasy. Priests were not teaching the law (4:6) and kings sought protection from Egypt and Assyria rather than from Yahweh (7:8). Ritualism rather than righteousness was the norm in the society as even priests lost sight of the real meaning of worship. Finally, the spiritual degeneration of the Northern Kingdom reached intolerable limits (2 Kings 17:7-17, 20-23) during the reign of its last king, Hoshea (732–722 BC). The consequence was God's judgment that came upon the people in the form of the defeat and deportation of its populace at the hands of the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:1-6).

Conclusion

In about the first half of the eighth century, Israel experienced political and economic growth. Hosea's ministry however, took place during a period in which there was political and economic instability in Israel. The economic progress the people had achieved earlier had misled them into believing in other gods. This and the previous chapter are now used as contextual frameworks for exploring various themes in the book of Hosea in the next chapter.

Review Exercises

On not more than a page, comment on each of the following extracts, bringing out the historical, contextual, exegetical and theological meaning:

1. The word of Yahweh that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel. (1:1)
2. “Come, let us return to Yahweh; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up.
3. I will punish her for the festival days of the Baals, when she offered incense to them and decked herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says Yahweh (2:13)
4. “Then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. (5:13b)
5. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.² The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. (11:1-3)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEOLOGY OF HOSEA

In this chapter, the study develops theological themes in the book of Hosea. Hosea's emphasis on Yahweh's covenant with Israel, Israel's sin against their God, Yahweh's judgment upon sinners, and His act of grace are but some of the prominent themes in Hosea.

Covenant

The concept of covenant is prominent in the message of Hosea. The covenant motif is found in everything Hosea has to say, including the images he uses, the sins he condemns, the judgment he predicts and the hope he gives to the people. Corroborating this view, E. C. Rust asserts that "It is ... not suppressing that the covenant idea is the focal point of [Hosea's] message. For him, God is the covenant-God and Israel is the covenant people so that the vicissitudes of Israel's history and its contemporary situation must be understood in terms of that covenant by which it is related to the living God."²²³

Yet, the word "covenant" appears in the book only in a few verses: 2:20, 6:7, 8:1, 10:4, and 12:2.²²⁴ The covenant referred to

²²³ Rust as cited by Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 34.

²²⁴ Wayne W. Poplin, *Hosea's Use of Nuptial Imagery* (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: DTh Thesis, 1975), 27.

in 6:7 and 8:1 alludes to the Sinaitic covenant. Hosea's reference to the Mosaic tradition in 9:10 (wilderness), 11:1-4 (Egypt), 12:13 (a prophet led out of Egypt), and 13:4 (wilderness), depicts him as a Mosaic covenant mediator. The scarcity of this word must be a strategy to avoid the potential for misuse of the term in the eighth century. There were false connotations of national security and an inevitable glorious future attached to Israel's covenant relationship with God.²²⁵

Hosea had great knowledge about Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh, which he infused into his message. In this covenant relationship, Yahweh's love for Israel is likened to that of a father, who affectionately and patiently teaches his young child to walk (11:1-3) in a way that echoes the father-son relationship and love contained in the Pentateuch (Exod 4:23-33; Deut 1:31; 7:8; 23:5; 32:6). Yahweh's kindness towards Israel is compared to a man lifting the yoke from his ox's neck and feeding it (11:4). Unfortunately, after Israel was satisfied, she became proud and ignored Yahweh (13:6) instead of showing gratitude and faithful obedience. The more Yahweh's sought Israel the more it retreated from Him (11:2).

²²⁵ See Wayne Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 27ff.

In 9:10-13:16 (especially 9:10; 11:1; 12:9; 13:4) and other few passages, Hosea demonstrates a profound knowledge of Israel's history, which is characterized by Israel's continual violations of the covenant. He notes that the Yahweh-Israel covenant relation began in the Exodus time (9:10; 11:1; 12:9; 13:4). For Hosea, the Yahwistic covenant with Israel is not a bargain between equals. It is therefore unfortunate that Israel's cultic practices at Bethel, Gilgal, and Samaria seem to portray the covenant as affairs of co-equals. The prophet interprets Israel's history, explaining the covenant motif and drawing attention to its covenant infidelity and the inevitable outcome. The Sinaitic covenant (Exod 19-24), which was renewed at Shechem (Josh 24) focuses on divine-human and human-human relationships. The reference to the sojourn tradition (in 2:17, 5:1-2, 9:10, and 13:5) also points to the prophet's knowledge about God's covenant with Israel.

As one with adequate knowledge about the covenant, Hosea was in the position to castigate and condemn Israel specifically for failing to live according to covenant stipulations. Hosea's phraseologies such as "my people" (1:9; 2:3), "not my people" (1:8-9), "not pitied" (1:6), and "you shall be my people" (2:25) are all echoes of Yahweh's covenant relation with Israel (cf. Exod 6:7). The "children of Israel" were to be a kingdom of priests, standing

in the priestly office in relation to the rest of the “inhabitants of the earth,” provided they kept the covenant (Exod 19.5-6).

Hosea identified three key aspects of the covenant, namely, faithfulness (*emet*), steadfast love (*hesed*) and acknowledgement of God (*dat ‘at ‘elohim*). By combining these dimensions, the prophet goes beyond what his predecessors said about the covenant. For example, Amos stressed “righteousness” and “justice” as central elements of the covenant. In this sense, the core of the covenant was expressed in obedience to the stipulations and ordinances of Yahweh. Hosea goes beyond this dimension to stress the motivation that lies behind one’s obedience to Yahweh such as steadfast love.

The term *emet* is used only once (4:1) and a related term *enumah* is also used only once in the book (2:20). The basic meaning of *emet* includes steady (Exod 17:12), true (2 Chron 9:5), and right (Gen 24:48). In the legal sphere, *emet* means “true charge” (Deut 2:20), “fair” judgment (Prov 29:14) and “true” witness (Prov 14:24). *Emet* can also be used to express the idea that God’s word is true (Psalm 19:10; 119:142) not just in the sense that it is true to the facts but also that it is dependable, reliable, trustworthy. It is in this sense that God is described as “true” or faithful (Psalm 31:5; Jer 10:10). Its use in passages such as Joshua 24:14 and 1 Samuel 12:24 underscores the fact that *emet* means

“firmness and reliability of a [person] whose word is as good as his bond, who is consistent in his responsibility.”²²⁶ Hosea’s Israel lacked this kind of trustworthiness and reliability not only in their actions but more importantly in their relationship with Yahweh.²²⁷

The word *hesed* appears six times in Hosea in connection with the covenant motif. A survey of its use in the OT shows meanings such as how one person relates to the other (Gen 20:13), the obligation of a son to his father (Gen 47:29), the responsibility of two close friends to each other (1 Sam 20:8, 14; 2 Sam 16:17), the response of a ruler to a subject or of a subject to a ruler (2 Sam 10:2; 2 Chron 24:22; Prov 20:28; Isa 16:15).²²⁸ One can agree with Glueck that “*Hesed* is conduct corresponding to a mutual relationship of rights and duties” in such a way that “only those participating in a mutual relationship of rights and duties can receive or show *hesed*.”²²⁹ In its usage among OT writers, *hesed* mostly refers to “the attitude that God shows to Israel and Israel shows to God within the covenant relationship.”²³⁰ In other words,

²²⁶ May as cited by Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 38.

²²⁷ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 38.

²²⁸ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 38.

²²⁹ As cited by Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 39.

²³⁰ Zimmerli as paraphrased by Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 39.

hesed refers to “the proper attitudes and actions that ought to mark two parties in a bonded relationship.”²³¹

Hosea (2:20) uses *hesed* in reference to Yahweh’s attitude toward Israel. *Hesed* is part of the bride price Yahweh promises to pay in betrothing Israel to Himself again. It parallels five qualities, namely, *sedeqah*, *misphat*, *rehamim*, *emunah* and *da’at ‘elohim*, which Yahweh will pay as dowry in securing Israel as His wife (2:20).²³² *Hesed* appears again in 4:1 in the context of Hosea’s indictment against Israel to mean the lack of integrity or lack of kindness. The next verse lists some behavior of Israel which contrast the expected behavior and hence undermines the right relationship with Yahweh, including, cursing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery (4:2). Hosea uses *hesed* again in 6:4 where he compares Israel’s love to a morning cloud that goes away quickly when the sun rises to underscore the remarkably undependable and inconsistent nature of Israel’s love for Yahweh.

The climax of Hosea’s theology is found in the statement “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (6:6) In its appearances in 4:1 and 6:6, *hesed* appears together with “knowledge” and relates to the good behaviour Yahweh expects of Israel. In 6:6, “the knowledge of

²³¹ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 39.

²³² Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 39.

God” is parallel with *hesed*, “steadfast love.” This combination underlines the fact that Israel has not achieved Yahweh’s requirement of “covenant love” and “knowledge.” *Hesed* is contrasted with sacrifice when Hosea says that Yahweh prefers *hesed* to sacrifice, meaning steadfast love is more important than outward religiosity in the form of sacrifice. The last two uses appear in 10:12 where it is amplified as “sowing righteousness”, meaning Israel should live in harmony with her covenant relation to Yahweh and 12:6 where it occurs with “returning to God” to signify Israel showing love toward Yahweh. Putting the various nuances of the meaning of *hesed* together one may define the term *hesed* as the steadfast love that must be demonstrated between two parties in a covenant relationship.²³³

The third expression is *dat’at ’elohim* translated as “knowledge of God.” All 18 appearances of the word “knowledge” or “know” in Hosea refer to God’s knowledge of Israel or Israel’s knowledge of God or His works (except in 7:9; 14:9). On four occasions Hosea mentions that Israel has forgotten God (2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6). Twice God says that He knows Israel and once He says He knows Israel’s sins (5:3; cf. 13:12). Once God says He knew Israel in the wilderness in a beneficent way (13:5).

²³³ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 40.

Israel was expected to know Yahweh through experience not, just by means of intellectual knowledge. This knowledge of Yahweh (rather than about Yahweh) was the source of life and security for the nation (2:8; 4:6; 8:12). Having forgotten their God (2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6), Israel had no life or security. According to Eichrodt, the expression “knowledge of God” refers to “an acceptance of the revealed divine essence and will in its proper spiritual being which is seen as penetrated and determined by the divine reality” rather than “the reflective consideration and theoretical knowledge of the divine will.”²³⁴ T. C. Vriezen defines the meaning of this knowledge of God as follows: “In the [OT] knowledge is living in a close relationship with something or somebody...a relationship...called communion.”²³⁵ (cf. Gen 4:1). The lack of this intimate relationship is the reason of Israel’s sins, calamities and of their ultimate judgment of God by Assyria. For May it is “Israel’s personal response to the salvation-history of election and obedience to the requirements of the covenant.”²³⁶

It was not a ceremonial religion that Yahweh required of Israel, but a deep confession of Yahweh as their God, a genuine understanding of who, and what kind of God He is (4:1-3). Such

²³⁴ As cited by John L. McKenzie, “Knowledge of God in Hosea” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 74, No. 1 (1955), pp. 22-27 at 22.

²³⁵ As cited by Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 265.

²³⁶ Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 41.

knowledge was to lead to Israel's steadfast love for Yahweh. Mowinckel opines that the knowledge of God means "a mutual, personal relationship of community with Him, to know his name, his essence, his will, his sentiments and reactions and to know them existentially so that one receives thereby the direction, the quality, the content and the guidance of one's own life..."²³⁷ Perhaps G. Ernst Wright has captured the meaning of this concept best. He writes, "To know Yahweh is to acknowledge that he is sovereign, that he is the Ruler who claims, and has the right to claim, our obedience because of all that he is and has done."²³⁸ In the opinion of Robert B. Chisholm "acknowledgement" refers to "a recognition of God's authority expressed in a tangible way by obedience to His Commandments."²³⁹ He further observes that the expression "to know" in the context of the ancient near East covenants in connection with the attitude of an inferior party towards his/her superior, underscores "the subject's recognition of Yahweh's authority as binding on him."²⁴⁰

²³⁷ See Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 42.

²³⁸ G. Ernest Wright, *The Rule of God* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960), 52.

²³⁹ Robert B. Chisholm, "A Theology of the Minor Prophets" in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* edited by Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 400.

²⁴⁰ Chisholm, "A Theology of the Minor Prophets", 400.

In Hosea the expression is used in the context of God accusing Israel of not knowing Him as one who gave them grain, oil, and new wine, among others (2:8). It is something without which a person can die in the sense of allegiance to God (13:4); in the sense of recognizing God's rule and giving allegiance to Him (5:4). Hosea therefore says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge." (4:6) From these and other passages we can conclude that "knowledge" means "owing another's claim upon oneself" and "to know God" means "to give Him allegiance."²⁴¹ Knowledge in the OT is not intellectual or theoretical knowledge primarily but rather experiential knowledge.

To summarize, *emet* underlines the consistency and integrity of parties in a relationship, *hesed* emphasizes one's faithfulness in fulfilling his/her obligations in a relationship and *da'at 'elohim* underscores intimacy in a relationship.²⁴² Therefore, at the center of the covenant motif in Hosea stands faithfulness, loyalty and allegiance. Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge (intimate relationship) with God and the negligence of the priest to teach the people to live in that intimate relationship with God resulted in spiritual abyss among the people. Hosea's concept of

²⁴¹ Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 44.

²⁴² Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 44.

the covenant was to help Israel not only to appreciate covenant relationship with Yahweh but also to have confidence in the covenant Partner (Yahweh) and to be devoted to Him. The foregoing underlines the fact that the book of Hosea was written in the literary genre of the “covenant enforcement document” based on the more specific subgenre of the “covenant lawsuit” (judgment oracle).

Sin

The book of Hosea may be considered as a manual of sin because it deals with many sins of Israel. Israel’s sin basically consists of breaking Yahweh’s covenant (6:7; 8:1). Israel in Hosea’s time was characterized by all kinds of evil, including adultery (1:2; 2:2-13; 4:15; 5:4, 7; 6:10; 9:1), drunkenness (4: 11, 18; 7:5), murder (4:2; 6:8, 9), ritual prostitution (cf. 4:10-19), lying and/or false legal testimony (4:2; 7:3, 13; 10:13; 11:12; 12:1), stealing (4:2; 6:9; 7:1-2), deceit (11:12), treachery (7:3), conspiracy (7:7,16), scoffing (7:5), and insolence or cursing (7:16), among others. The period was a violent (12:1), lawless (4:6; 8:12), permissive (4:8, 9), oppressive (12:7), unjust (10:13) age. Hosea’s Israel had rebelled against God (7:13, 14; 9:15; 13:16). People had spurned the good (8:3), and stumbled (4:5; 5:5; 14:1, 9), rejected the law (4:6; 8:12), strayed (7:13), and dealt faithlessly with their God (5:7; 6:7; 14:4).

They had become defiled (5:2; 6:10; 9:4), guilty (4:15; 5:5, 15; 10:2; 12:8; 13:1, 16), and corrupt (7:1; 9:9). Even though Israel had not broken the Sabbath law (2:11), they only desired the day to end so that they could go home and carry out the evil schemes, thus making their Sabbath observance shallow (8:5) and perverting the spirit of the Sabbath law.²⁴³ The prophet uses more specific language for denouncing false gods: *pesilim* “idols” (11:2); *asabbim* “calf” (4:17, 8:4, 13:2, 14:9); *massekah* “molten image” (13:2), *ma’aseh yadenu* “works of our hands” (14:4), and *qalon* “shame” (4:7, 18). Few of these (and other) texts may be examined to show the gravity of Israel’s sin.

In Hosea 4:1b God indicts Israel of three sins saying:

There is no faithfulness or loyalty,
and no knowledge of God in the land.

The result of Israel’s faithlessness, disloyalty and lack of knowledge of God was their idolatrous activities. Doug Stuart suggests nine reasons why idolatry was attractive to the Israelites: (1) People believed that this kind of worship guaranteed the notice of the god(s). (2) It promoted selfish materialistic gain in that the worshiper received favour from the gods for the food offered to

²⁴³ Chisholm, “A Theology of the Minor Prophets”, 401.

them. (3) It was easy as the sole requirements were frequency and generosity of worshipper. It involved no requirement of living a godly, upright life. (4) It was relatively convenient because unlike Yahweh worship which required three yearly pilgrimages to the Temple, idol worship could occur almost at any place (Deut 12:2). (5) Idolatry was common in the ancient Near East and assumed to be the reason behind various military and economic successes of superpowers of the day, such as Assyria, Tyre, and Babylonia. (6) Israel perceived Yahweh as a generalist God whose only real ability lay in His having brought Israel out of Egypt, an appreciated, but currently unneeded, skill. Polytheism however provided different gods with different abilities touching on various aspects of life. It was therefore logical to follow polytheism. (7) That Yahweh was invisible but the idols were visible made idolatry pleasing to the senses (cf. Ezek 8:9 ff). (8) Idol worshipper enjoyed frequent meat meals, gluttony, and heavy drinking (cf. Amos 2:8; Dan 5:1ff; Isa. 5:11-12). (9) idolatry was erotic, allowing people to have indiscriminate sex with temple prostitutes (cf. Amos 2:7; Hos 4:14; Gen. 38:21-22; 1 Kings 22:46; 2 Kings 23; 7; Jer 2:20; 5:7).²⁴⁴

The first king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam I, had rejected the true Levitical priests, and many of them had left and

²⁴⁴ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 450-454.

gone back to Judah where they had a better chance of teaching the truth and practicing God's way of life (2 Chron 11:13-16). Jeroboam had appointed his own priests from other tribes instead of doing it in accordance with God command (1 Kings 13:33; cf. 12:31). Furthermore, there were false prophets in the land. Many of these priests and prophets claimed to represent the true God but in reality, did not.

Hosea (in 12:6-7) gives hints of social, economic and legal injustice which characterized Israel in those days.²⁴⁵ It reads:

⁶ But as for you, return to your God,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.

⁷ A trader, in whose hands are false balances,
he loves to oppress.

The corridors of power were characterized by conspiracy, drunkenness, immorality, and scoffing (7:3-7). Her kings spoke hypocritical words and false oaths (10:4), and made alliances that were not divinely sanctioned (7:11). Rust comments, "At the political level, Israel's sin was manifested in a desire for foreign alliances rather than a trust in Yahweh as Yahweh of history. The

²⁴⁵ Chisholm, "A Theology of the Minor Prophets", 401.

prophet describes Israel as a “hall-baked cake” (7:8) and a “silly dove” (7:11) because of this propensity to seek external aid rather than to abide secure in the covenant with Yahweh.”²⁴⁶ That is to say, Israel’s foreign policies were based on alliances with other nations rather than trust in Yahweh’s ability to protect them (5:13; 7:8-11; 8:9-10; 12:1). Concerning Israel seeking alliances with Egypt and Assyria, Vos writes “Before all else it is an act of disloyalty when Ephraim seeks help from Assyria whereas God ought to be his Savior (5:3).”²⁴⁷ By her alliances, the Northern Kingdom “had rejected Yahweh’s guidance in both domestic and international affairs.”²⁴⁸ It is therefore not surprising that the nation made no attempt to consult Yahweh concerning the choice of leaders (8:4), the nation’s built confidence based on strong fortress (8:14) and military might (12:8).

These sins were only indicative of the underlying problem of Israel’s violation of her personal relationship with God. Hosea uses the word *bagod* meaning unfaithfulness to describe this sin (see 5:7; 6:7). *Bagod* means to deal treacherously, faithlessly, or

²⁴⁶ As cited by Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 49.

²⁴⁷ As cited by Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 49.

²⁴⁸ Chisholm, “A Theology of the Minor Prophets”, 403.

deceitfully in the context of a relationship (see Job 6:14-15; Mal 2:10, Prov 11:3).

Hosea made use of all the major Hebrew words *hata*, *pasha*, and *'awon* for sin. The word *hata* “sin,” is used primarily in relationship with the cult (4:7,8; 8:11,13; 9:9; 10:8,9; 13:2,12). *Pasha* “rebellion,” is used only once (7:13). The word *pasha* comes from the word *pasha* meaning “to break away” (from just authority) and means “a revolt, rebellion, sin, transgression, trespass” This word is found in the phrase “ of words there wanteth not sin” (KJV) in Proverbs 10:19. Two passages graphically portray the rampant wickedness in Hosea’s time. The word *pasha* has a wide range of meanings. Sometimes, it is used for transgressions between individuals (1 Sam. 24:12 [Engl. 24:11], where the NRSV translates the word with “treason”; 1 Sam 25:28, “trespass” in the NRSV; Psalm 5:11 [Engl. 5:10], “transgression”, among others) and even within the family (Gen 31:36, “sin”; 50:17, “crime”).

The word *awon* derives from the word *awah* (meaning to crook, do amiss, bow down, make crooked, commit iniquity, pervert, do perversely, trouble, turn, do wickedly, do wrong) and means “perversity, evil, fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment, sin”. This word is found in the phrase “to call my sin to remembrance” in I Kings 17:18. In Hosea, *'awon*, “iniquity” or “guilt,” is used in 4:8; 5:5; 7:1, 9; 8: 13; 9:7, 9; 10:10; 12:8,11; 13:12; 14:1. Two

words in Hosea can be translated “wickedness,” “iniquity,” or “evil.” They are *raslia* (10:13) and several forms of *ra’* (7:1, 2, 3, 15; 9:15; 10:15).

In spite of the breach of the covenant, both kingdoms maintained a semblance of religion and worship (4:15; 5:6; 8:2, 11, 13). However, this was nothing but outward formalism which had no positive effect on the life of the worshippers. The prophet condemned the spiritual indolence and moral decline in the Northern Kingdom (see chp 2), which gave way to growing crises in relations with the Neo-Assyrian empire (eg. 5:8-13; 8:7-9; 12:1; 14:3; cf. 2 Kings 15:19-31) and Egypt (7:11; 12:1; cf. 2 Kings 17:3-4) and in relation to internal affairs (7:1-7; 10:1-4; 12:7; 13:10-11). He argued that for Israel and Judah to experience the material and spiritual blessings of the unconditional covenants (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic and later also the New Covenant), they had to fulfill their part in the conditional Mosaic Covenant. Failure to do so was to attract curses of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deut 27:1-28:68). God remembers all their evil deeds (7:2). Hosea’s basic view of sin as being the tragic violation of a personal relation with God. Vos writes, “Because thus viewing sin from the one principle of unfaithfulness to Jehovah. Hosea reaches a

profound conception of its character as a disposition, an enslaving power, as something deeper and more serious than simple single acts of transgression.”²⁴⁹

Judgment

Judgment is one of the leading motifs of Hosea and of all the prophets, yet Hosea was not specific about what political form the punishment would take or when it would occur. Hosea sees the impending judgment as Yahweh’s response to Israel’s misbehavior. Clyde T. Francisco says, “The dire consequences of sinning against Yahweh became a major theme of the eighth century prophets. Although renowned for his stress upon divine love, Hosea paints the coming woe more graphically than any other. In light of love, evil is exposed in all of its ugliness.”²⁵⁰

Majority of Hosea’s oracles consist of accusations and judgments. Except the fourteenth chapter, every chapter in Hosea has oracles about judgment. Chapter 1 talks about the imminent end of the kingdom (1:4). As we noted in chapter 2, the names of Hosea’s children signify Yahweh’s wrath upon Israel. Chapter 2 says that God will take away the grain, wine, oil, and flax which

²⁴⁹ As cited by Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 49.

²⁵⁰ Clyde T. Francisco, “Evil and Suffering in the Book of Hosea,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 5 (1963):33.

Israel thought were gifts of Baal. Chapter 3 speaks of a time when the sons of Israel will dwell without a king, prince, pillar, sacrifice, ephod, or teraphim (3:4). In chapter 4, judgment comes in the form of a storm (4:19; 10:15), of drought (4:3; 9:16; 13:15). God punishes Israel by withdrawing His saving presence from her: “Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone (4:17, NIV). This verse prepares the reader’s mind for 5:6 where God says the people will seek Yahweh in vain because He has withdrawn from them. In the fifth chapter, God proclaimed His judgment to the priest, all Israel, and the king. In this chapter His warning goes out from Gibeah, Ramah, and Beth-aven—mountainous areas in Israel (5:8). Both Israel (Ephraim), and Judah come under His judgment (5:3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14). In verses 6, 14, and 15, one realizes that God will withdraw from the people, judge them, and withhold deliverance until Israel repents.

In Hosea, judgment comes in the form of war (5:8-10; 7:16; 8:1, 14; 9:13; 10:10, 13b-15; 13:16). God will be to them like a moth (5:12), a lion (5:14; 13:7), a leopard (13:7), a she-bear robed of her cubs (13:7). The metaphors, especially those of a lion, a leopard and a bear, portray Yahweh as a destroyer. In the view of May, “These metaphors have their background in the formulary treaty-curses of the ancient near East which threaten those who break treaty ravenously; wild animals (...) are invoked in the curses

which are listed as part of the treaty form to enforce its obligations.”²⁵¹ Hosea, however, goes to the extreme by presenting Yahweh Himself as a ravaging beast and as one who will enforce the curses that Israel’s conduct invokes upon herself. Yahweh will spread his net over them (7:12); he will pour out his wrath upon them like water (5:10) and his anger like fire (8:5). God will drive them out of his house (9:15), and they will be taken captive by Egypt or Assyria (7:16; 8: 14; 9:3, 6; 10:5-6).²⁵² The word *agarsem* translated “drive out” is the same used to speak of Yahweh driving out the Canaanites from before Israel (Ex 23:29-30; 33:2; Deut 33:27; Josh 24:18; Judg 6:9). The use of this term perhaps emphasizes the fact that since the Israelites had assimilated Canaanite religious practices, Yahweh would treat them like the Canaanites and drive them out of the land (8:13; 9:3, 6; 10:16; 11:5; 12:9; to become wanderers, cf. 9:17) just as He did to the Canaanites some years ago.

Hosea pinpointed Assyria as the place for the exile (10:6; 11:5).²⁵³ He also mentions Israel’s return to Egypt (8:13; 9:3, 6) as a figurative way of saying that “Israel’s salvation history would be reversed”, a situation which is “tantamount to a reversal of the

²⁵¹ Mays as cited by Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 50.

²⁵² Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 49.

²⁵³ Chisholm, “A Theology of the Minor Prophets”, 405.

mighty Exodus deliverance (cf. Deut 28:68)”²⁵⁴ Yahweh’s separation of Himself from Israel means He has disowned them.²⁵⁵ Hosea’s idea of judgment as Yahweh’s withdrawal of His covenant presence from Israel is rooted in the Exodus tradition in which Israel’s national identity is closely linked to the presence of Yahweh in their midst (cf. Exod 33: 3, 10-16; 34:6-9).²⁵⁶

Hosea (13:2-16) is a bit unusual since it lists six different types of punishments that Israel will experience for violating God’s covenant: annihilation (v. 3); attacks from wild animals (vv. 7-8); loss of king (vv. 9- 11); death in Sheol (v. 14); drought (v. 15); and war (v. 16). Pentateuchal passages including Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 4, and Deuteronomy 28-32 mention 27 punishments that may befall a covenant-breaker.²⁵⁷ The table below shows how covenant cursing in Leviticus 26 is reflected in Hosea.²⁵⁸

Hosea	Leviticus	Covenant curse
5.2b	26:18,28	(the guilty will be chastized)

²⁵⁴ Chisholm, “A Theology of the Minor Prophets”, 405.

²⁵⁵ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 49.

²⁵⁶ Wheaton, *Hosea’s Contribution to Israel’s Covenant Thought*, 50.

²⁵⁷ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, xxxii-xl.

²⁵⁸ Some curses in Hosea however, have no connection to the known curse collections in Leviticus or Deuteronomy: rot and moth (5:2), fire (8:14), miscarriage (9: 14), unclean food (9:3), nets (7: 12), and thistles and thorns (10:8).

4:5, 5:5b	26:37	(the unfaithful will stumble)
1 I: 6, 13: 16	26:25	(the vengeful sword will destroy)
5:14,13:7-8	26:22	(the wild animals will ravage)
4:10, 13:6	26:26	(the food will not satisfy)

Stuart argues that “these six punishment types are not listed because they are the ones that especially fit the particular sins of which Israel is accused in this oracle, but they are listed as suggestive samples of the great range of miseries that the nation will have to endure as a result of their unfaithfulness to God.”²⁵⁹ To conclude, judgment for Israel will be a harvest of all the evil they have sown. The punishment was to be just and appropriate, and the severity of each one’s punishment would correspond to the crime committed (12:2).

Eschatological Restoration

Even though Hosea spends a lot of time telling the people about Yahweh’s impending judgment, he also gives gleams of hope for an eschatological restoration (salvation). The basis for the positive outcome of Hosea’s prophecies can be found in Leviticus 26:40–

²⁵⁹ Douglas K. Stuart, “Hosea 13-14: Promises of Destruction and Restoration” in *Southwestern Journal of Theology* Vol. 36 (1993) [retrieved from <http://preachingsource.com/journal/hosea-13-14-promises-of-destruction-and-restoration/>]

45; Deuteronomy 30:1–10 which list 10 kinds of restoration blessings for repentance and obedience of God’s word. They include renewal of the covenant canceling the curses and restoring blessings for obedience (Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–13), renewal of God’s favor, true worship, increased population, agricultural abundance, prosperity and health, return to the land, unification of the tribes, defeat of enemies, and freedom from death and destruction. Hosea assures the people of the return of Israel and Judah to the land as “My people” (1:10–2:1); of Yahweh’s betrothal of Israel to Himself forever (2:19–20); of the restoring of godly kingship (3:5); of healing and recovery (6:1–3); of righteousness (10:12); of love for Ephraim (11:8–11); and of Israel’s complete restoration (14:1–8).

God gave the nation a word of hope framed in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Chapter 1 has elements of restoration such as: God will *replenish* the world with Jewish people (v. 10) in fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 22:17; 32:12); God will *restore* His covenant relationship with Israel and turn judgment into mercy (v.10, cf. Ez. 36:21–27); the twelve tribes of Israel will be reunited (v. 11, cf. Ez. 37:19, 22); Israel will “appoint themselves one head” (v. 11) or a national *ruler*, probably David or Jesus; Israel will *return* to her land (v. 11).

Hosea's salvific motif centers around the word return (Heb: *sub*). In 6:1, Hosea entreats his people to return to Yahweh. The basic meaning of *sub* in the OT is "turning"/"returning".²⁶⁰ It can also be used in connection with another verb to mean repeating an action (11:9).²⁶¹ Hosea uses this term to express the idea of repentance, that is, "returning from an action or attitude and embracing Yahweh Himself and His covenant ethos."²⁶² *Sub* appears twenty-one times in Hosea's message (2:7, 9; 3:5; 4:9; 5:4, 15; 6:1, 11; 7:10, 16; 8:13; 9:3; 11:5, 9; 12:2, 6, 14; 14:1, 2, 4, 7), most of these appearances referring to Israel's return.²⁶³ The subjects of *sub* include Gomer, Yahweh, and the people (Ephraim, Israel, Judah).

Hosea entreats Israel to return with an implicit assurance that this turning will not be rejected (cf. 6:5 - 7:16). They had to take away the idols which they worshipped, trust God than earthly rulers, show loyalty and fidelity to Yahweh instead of burnt sacrifices, abandon the cultic prostitutes and seek the knowledge of God. The acceptability of Israel's return is founded on the pre-condition of Yahweh's own resolution to "love them freely, for my

²⁶⁰ J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 189.

²⁶¹ Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 189.

²⁶² Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 189.

²⁶³ Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 189-190.

anger has turned from them” (14:4), not on any merit of their own. In other words, “for Hosea, *return* to Yahweh is not a precondition for Yahweh’s healing and pardon, rather it is Yahweh’s healing that makes the *return* possible.”²⁶⁴ Yahweh’s initiative of in offering forgiveness is not primarily dependent upon human response. Therefore, it is Yahweh’s love and healing which assures that this turning will be accepted and that restoration will proceed after destruction. Said differently, the future salvation will be totally Yahweh’s act, the consequence of which is that Israel will know no other Saviour than Yahweh (13:4), who will heal her faithlessness and love her freely (14:4). The language of healing in 14:4 and dew in 14:5 is an echo of the discourse in 6:1-7:2.

However, since the aim of Yahweh's forgiveness is to achieve reconciliation, His initiative cannot be complete without the response of the offenders, evident in repentance and confession. “God’s forgiving love is, hence, abounding grace freely given to erring humanity, which needs to be accepted through repentance for its complete realization in a reconciled and harmonious divine-human relationship.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic analysis of Hosea 11,1-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 136.

²⁶⁵ Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea*, 136.

The subject of restoration is the overarching theme in 14:1-

8. The passage reads:

¹ Return, O Israel, to Yahweh your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

² Take words with you
and return to Yahweh;

say to him,

“Take away all guilt;
accept that which is good,
and we will offer
the fruit of our lips.

³ Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride upon horses;
we will say no more, ‘Our God,’
to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy.”

⁴ I will heal their disloyalty;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.

⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily,
he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon.

⁶ His shoots shall spread out;

his beauty shall be like the olive tree,
and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.

⁷ They shall again live beneath my shadow,
they shall flourish as a garden;
they shall blossom like the vine,
their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

⁸ O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
your faithfulness comes from me.

This passage contains two major themes: repentance and restoration. It includes an opening summons to return (1-3), and a divine utterance of resolution and restoration (4-8). In this passage, the word “return” is used to express Israel/Ephraim’s turning to or from Yahweh, her God (e.g. 2:7, 3:5, 5:4, 6:1, 7:10, 11:5). It is also used to in the sense of Israel’s turning toward the false security of Egypt and Assyria (8:13, 9:3, 11:5) or towards idols (e.g. 3:1, 7:16). Hosea’s emphasis on the idea of “return/returning” (especially in his last chapter) sets the agenda for further deliberations on the topic in the rest of the Minor Prophets. Schart is of the view that, “The reader is not provided with information concerning how Israel responded. As a result, Hosea remains open-ended, and readers

await further treatment of this topic. Indeed, they will not be disappointed: the topic of return will become a major thematic thread as the Book of the Twelve progresses.”²⁶⁶ The theme of return runs through Joel 2:12-14, Zachariah 1:4, 6 and Malachi 3:7. Zachariah 1:3 announces Hosea’s call to return, “Therefore say to them, Thus says Yahweh of hosts: Return to me, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will return to you, says Yahweh of hosts.

According to Wurthwein, “[This] concept of conversion emphasizes positively the fact that penitence involves a new relationship to God which embraces all spheres of human life that it claims the will and that man cannot make good this or that fault by this or that measure. Any magical element which ignores the highly personal relation between God and man is thus carefully avoided by the prophets. The question of man’s position before God is the question of existence.”²⁶⁷ To sum up, Yahweh had to repeat the salvation history of Israel all over again in order to save her again: Yahweh would drive them away from Himself (2:16–17; 3:4), send them back into Egypt (8:13; 9:3), and from there lead them into the wilderness once again, to be wooed anew (2:14) and

²⁶⁶ Bo H Lim and Daniel Castelo, “Hosea”, in *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 218.

²⁶⁷ As cited by Wheaton, *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*, 53.

remarried.²⁶⁸ Despite God's discipline, God tells Hosea that He will eventually restore the nation in the following ways: numerical growth (1:10a); spiritual restoration (1:10b); national unification (1:11a); administrative centralization (1:11b); territorial occupation (1:11c) and divine blessing (2:1). In the end, Yahweh will be like "Israel's father, calling his son out of Egypt, teaching him to walk, bending down and feeding him."²⁶⁹

Christology

In terms of Christology, one can make the following observations. First of all, 1:1-3 is a prophetic description of Christ and the prostitute of Matthew 26:6-13. The salvation of the Gentiles preached in 2:19-23 is to be achieved through the work of Christ. In addition, 3:4-5 has some references to the Davidic lineage of Christ. In 6:1-11 we have references to passion, descend to the dead and the resurrection of Christ. Finally, 13:13-15 anticipates the destruction of death through Christ's paschal mystery.

²⁶⁸ Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, np.

²⁶⁹ Robin Routledge, "Hosea's Marriage Reconsidered" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 69.1 (2018) 25-42 at 25.

Conclusion

The chapter has outlined key theological themes in the prophecy of the prophet Hosea. Hosea places emphasis on Yahweh's covenant with Israel was evident throughout the discussions. Without mending the broken relationship, Israel was bound to face the wrath of God. In the next chapter, the study draws theological implications for the African community based on the messages of Amos and Hosea.

Review Exercises

1. How does the theology of the Pentateuch inform Hosea's theology?
2. Comment on the following assertion by Walter Kaiser: "In no prophet is the love of God more clearly demarcated and illustrated than in Hosea."
3. Critically examine Hosea's understanding of true repentance.
4. Attempt an exegetical study of Hosea 4:16, bringing out its implications for eco-friendly Christian theology.
5. What has Yahweh revealed about the importance of marriage to you based on Hosea's experience?
6. What is Hosea's understanding of covenantal love?

7. Compare and contrast Hosea's concept of covenant with that of Amos.
8. Examine Hosea's metaphors in relation to the theme of unfaithfulness and faithfulness and illustrate the place of grace in God-man and man-man relations.
9. Discuss the book of Hosea as "a covenant enforcement document."
10. How does Hosea portray Yahweh as a compassionate God? What lessons can Christians learn from this?
11. Discuss Hosea's use of imagery in his oracles. How do these images help the reader to understand his message?
12. With relevant examples, discuss Hosea's use of simile in his message. How are Bible translators supposed to handle similes in Hosea?
13. Examine the Judgement Motif in Hosea and explain its relevance to the Church today.
14. To what extent do you agree that Hosea's society was characterized by moral and spiritual degeneracy?
15. Discuss justice according to the book in Hosea.
16. To what extent is Hosea a prophet of doom?

CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Some of the issues that were confronted by Amos and Hosea in eighth century Israel certainly run through our current society. Issues such as corruption in both the public and private sectors for the purposes of accumulating wealth, the opulent lifestyles of politicians, government officials and senior corporate executives, bribery and corruption in our criminal justice system are with us today. In this chapter the study relates the theologies of Amos and Hosea to the life of Christians living in Africa.

Defining Public Theology

Religion has to do with a human, culturally constructed response to an existential question. The key question is: What does ultimate reality mean for human possibilities of existing and acting authentically as human beings, in relation to self, others and the whole universe? Theology deals with the critical thinking about the meaning and truth of religious self-understanding (faith) and life praxis (witness). Theology may be classified as historical, including biblical theology (sometimes called biblical studies), with a focus on the history of faith and witness; Systematic with a focus on the meaning and truth of Christian faith and witness, in

terms of its theoretical credibility, now and always or Applied (or practical), with a focus on the meaning and truth of Christian faith and witness, in terms of its practical credibility at this time, in this place.

Public theology falls under applied theology and seeks the welfare of the state and a fair society for all by engaging issues of common interest to build the common good. It is a critical reflection on the ethical and political implications of religious self-understanding and life praxis. Ted Peters opines that public theology “is conceived in the church, reflected on critically in the academy, and meshed within the wider culture for the benefit of the wider culture.”²⁷⁰ All the three dimensions mentioned above “occur simultaneously and mutually influence each other in an almost perichoretic fashion.”²⁷¹ For Paul Chung, public theology “is a theological-philosophical endeavor to provide a broader frame of reference to facilitate the responsibility of the church and theological ethics for social, political, economic, and cultural issues.”²⁷² It was Martin Marty who introduced the term public theology in 1974. Peters summarizes the major characteristics of public theology as follows: “public theology is (1) incarnational, that

²⁷⁰ Ted Peters, “Public Theology: Its Pastoral, Apologetic, Scientific, Political, and Prophetic Tasks” in *International Journal of Public Theology* 12 (2018): 153-177 at

²⁷¹ Peters, “Public Theology,” 153-177.

²⁷² Paul S. Chung, *Postcolonial Public Theology: Faith, Scientific Rationality, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 1.

is, it addresses concrete rather than abstract matters; (2) fluid, that is, it escapes the confines of church and academic institutions to mesh with specific publics; (3) interdisciplinary; (4) dialogical; (5) non-authoritarian, that is, it recognizes that authority is a social construction mediated through social processes; (6) global; and (7) performed, that is, it engages in praxis beyond mere reflection.”²⁷³ With this brief introduction, the study now proceeds to consider some of the key implications of the messages of Amos and Hosea for African public theological discourses. Attention will be given to areas such as religion (Christianity), politics, economics, and environmental care.

Political life

In terms of politics, Amos and Hosea argue that though it is not wrong for followers of God to be part of the political process of the society, one must know and apply the principle that leadership is for the service of the people and not for one’s selfish interest. The eight century Israel society was characterized by leaders who exploited their subjects for material gains. These leaders also denied others of justice by paying bribes to judges to rule in their

²⁷³ Peter’s summary is based on the works of Kim and Day, see Peters, “Public Theology: Its Pastoral, Apologetic, Scientific, Political, and Prophetic Tasks”, 157.

favour. Like eighth-century Israel, a major problem facing Africa today is poor leadership. Office bearers are common in Africa but true leaders are hard to find. A key implication of the study for Africa's political life is that the governing class, consisting of the kings, the judges, parliamentarians, the president, the cabinet, ministers of state and others, must practice justice and righteousness as a social ideal by showing mercy and kindness to the poor.²⁷⁴ The ruling class must treat the poor and the needy fairly rather than practicing violence and robbery (see Amos 3:10). Decision-making must be informed by biblical principles and those in authority must know that it is God who has given them authority to rule on His behalf.

Those in the judicial system must be free of corruption and injustice because God has called them into office to “exercise justice with integrity and impartiality.”²⁷⁵ Lawyers must be ready to help the poor by ensuring that justice prevails. Justice should not be given to the highest bidder but to anyone who deserves it. Those who receive bribes, those who give false testimonies and inequitable rulings are advised to stop. God, through the messages of Amos and Hosea, is demanding justice from the judges, witness,

²⁷⁴Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*, 29

²⁷⁵Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of Israel*, 269.

and others who contribute in any way to the administration and judicial system of our societies.

In addition, government policies must be fair and just, and geared towards bridging the economic gap between the rich and the poor. “A just policy” according to Miller “is one that ensures that no person, or more usually category of persons, enjoys more or less of the advantages due them or bear more or less of the burdens they ought to bear relative to other members of the society.”²⁷⁶

Our exposition on Amos led to the fact that Yahweh is a universal God. It is for this reason that He pronounced judgment on nations other than Israel and Judah. According to Stuart, there is “a shared theological assumption” that “there is one God, Yahweh, who has power over the whole earth, and whose righteousness will not tolerate unrighteousness on the part of any of the nations.”²⁷⁷ As one who is in special covenant with all nations, Yahweh requires obedience to “a basic sort of ‘international law’ that is fully capable of being enforced against any nation that acts contrary to it.”²⁷⁸ Nations who exploit other nations must stop or face the wrath of God.

²⁷⁶ D. Miller, *Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

²⁷⁷ Stuart, “Amos”, 308.

²⁷⁸ Stuart, “Amos”, 308.

The Church

J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu has asserted that “Anybody who has cared to pay attention to the life of the church today is likely to see a church that is committed not to the core business of mission or the things of the Spirit as defined by the Cross, but carnality that manifests in foolish jesting, ecclesiastical pomposity, and the exploitation of the Gospel for economic gain.”²⁷⁹ At least four deductions can be made from the above assertion. The first is that the contemporary church is not committed to her core mandate, which includes giving glory to God, winning souls for Christ and nurturing believers. The second point is that the church has become carnal. Today preaching against sin has been replaced by prosperity preaching that promises heaven without holiness and a crown without a cross. It is hard to distinguish between a Christian and a non-Christian. Thirdly, the church has landed into ecclesiastical pomposity, meaning the church is so much occupied by positions and structure that it finds it difficult getting enough time to address the major spiritual problem of humanity, sin. Fourthly, the church is characterized by the commercialization of gospel. Today, some ministers charge consultation fees before giving counsel to their

²⁷⁹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Jesus our Immanuel* (Accra: African Christian Press), 140.

congregation. People preach for cash rather than preaching for Christ.

In addition, the contemporary church boasts of obedience to rituals such as tithing, thanks-offerings, church attendance, just as it was in Amos' and Hosea's time. There is an unprecedented increase in the number of revival meetings; nevertheless, there is no corresponding impact in the life of Christians. In his recent study on revival meetings in Pentecostal churches, Abamfo O. Atiemo wondered how the level of corruption in the country could be rising at the same time that the church is experiencing unprecedented Pentecostal revival activities.²⁸⁰ He observed that the various revival meetings have failed to promote individual and societal moral transformation, especially in terms of "concrete acts of justice, obedience, mercy, compassion, honesty and loving deeds."²⁸¹ One of the reasons is that many contemporary churches primarily focus on gathering crowds through marketing/advertising and providing a great Sunday experience without paying much attention to the nurture of converts. He described the numerous gathering of believers as "Crowds that bring no rains."²⁸² The contemporary African Church seems to be much more interested in numbers than

²⁸⁰ Abamfo O. Atiemo, "Crowds that bring no Rains: Religious Revivals and Corruption in Ghana" in *TJCT* Vol. 18 No. 5 (2016) 6-23 at 7.

²⁸¹ Atiemo, "Crowds that bring no Rains", 7.

²⁸² Omenyo, "Crowds that gather without Rains", 7ff.

the quality of the life of its members. The lesson from Amos and Hosea is that one's relationship with God must have a corresponding effect on his/her relationship with other humans and the environment. Again, the church must stress the fact that God hates religious observances that come from people who have no internal piety.

The church is expected to speak for the voiceless, the marginalized and the oppressed, preaching Yahweh's gross displeasure and divine judgment for the manner in which those in power had treated the poor. J. N. Kudadjie and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah sum up the prophetic role of the church in these words: "(a) like a thermometer, faithfully reflecting what is happening in society; (b) like a barometer, it must help forecast what is likely to happen, judging from prevailing circumstances; (c) like a thermostat, it must respond to changes in the situation and activate action that will bring about desired conditions. All this must aim at avoiding what is evil and bringing about the welfare of God's creation."²⁸³

The Church should teach its members biblical principles regarding their political role in the society; Christians must be encouraged to be responsible, compassionate, law-abiding

²⁸³ J. N. Kudadjie and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics* (Accra: Asempra Publishers, 1992), 43.

citizens.²⁸⁴ Christians must do all they can to solve the problem of economic inequality by encouraging the wealthy to share their resources with the poor. This sharing is not aimed at making everyone have the same amount of wealth but to make everyone have the basic needs of life such that those who have will not have too much while others have too little. John Wesley makes this point when he says, “Be ye ready to distribute to everyone according to necessity.”²⁸⁵ The poor and marginalized are found in numerous informal settlements and across various communities in Africa. According to Amos and Hosea, God expects His people to exercise our mercy and love for others in tangible ways such feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing, and visiting the sick. The church must also advocate for social justice. Mays contends that, “righteousness expressed in justice is the indispensable qualification for worship—no justice, no acceptable public religion.”²⁸⁶ In addition, the church must formulate and pursue viable methods to interact with governments around the world to reduce levels of conflict, violence, corruption and advance the social development of less endowed communities.

²⁸⁴ Calvin P. Van Reken “The Church’s Role in Social Justice”, Calvin Theological Journal vol. 34 (1999): 198-202, 201.

²⁸⁵ Emmanuel Asante, *Stewardship: Essays on Ethics of Stewardship* (Kumasi: Wilas Press, 1999), 104.

²⁸⁶ Mays, as quoted in Christopher J.H Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of Israel*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 267. Mays justice

Material Ethics

Eighth-century Israel to which Amos and Hosea ministered was characterized by materialism. The contemporary African society is extremely materialistic. It is a society where people equate material possessions, especially luxury goods and wealth to happiness and fulfillment. This is especially so when people's motivation for seeking material wealth is to satisfy their emotional needs (such as to look better, feel better) rather than functional needs (to communicate with others, to travel, and so on). There is an inordinate valuing of material things, the accumulation of material wealth as symbols of success, pursuit of upward social mobility, and the fixation on earthly gratification in almost every African society.

Our attitude towards material things is very important for our spiritual life. The theologies of Amos and Hosea underline certain material ethics. In the first place, Christians must accept that all material things belong to God, the owner of everything including the very life we enjoy. This means that no one has absolute ownership of anything on earth (whether vehicles, houses, electronics, airplanes, or the like). If so, then the second principle is that humans are only stewards of God's resources. God is not only concerned with how resources are acquired but how they are used too. The acquisition of resources through fraudulent means

must therefore stop immediately. False scales in the market must be a thing of the past. Christians must treat their business partners with dignity and the fear of God. The contemporary African society is full of people who go into commerce with monetary gains as the primary motivation rather than rendering service to others (as required by God). Those who desire to see God's kingdom must not be part of this.

Another principle is that material things are for the purpose of the common good of the people. In the eighth century Israel, the rich were living in the cities, enjoying the wealth while the poor lived in the villages without much to live on. The 21st African society also exhibits this kind of economic inequality. From the perspective of Amos and Hosea, God gave material things for humanity's common use. The African's communal worldview which gives priority to the community than the individual gives support to this view. Through sharing of resources Africa's poverty situation will reduce. By extension one can also say that it is not only material things that should be shared, spiritual things (gifts) must also be shared and used for the benefit of the entire Christian community.

Financial Ethics

The prophecies of Amos and Hosea underlines the fact that God is interested in both the means of acquiring wealth and its use. Exploiting others to amass wealth is abominable before Yahweh. Idolizing wealth is also unchristian. Unethical use of money may include hoarding and all kinds of gambling such as betting, pools and raffles, sweep stakes and similar use.²⁸⁷ Today there are many pastors who give lotto numbers to their congregation for the purpose of helping them deal with their poverty situation. The youth are deeply involved in soccer betting. Engaging in hard work under God's providence for one's success is uncommon among African youth. The present author sees everything wrong with gambling because it "makes luck or chance the determining factor of human's decisions."²⁸⁸ Gambling is contrary to the fundamental principle that humans should work for a living (Gen 2:15; Eph 4:28; 2 Thess 3:10). Another thing that makes gambling unethical is that it promotes greed and selfishness because in the practice, one desires to win and collect the money of those who lose. It is ethically wrong to base our success on people's failure. Further, materialism is condemned by the Bible (Matt 6:24-25), but gambling promotes it.

²⁸⁷ Asante, *Stewardship*, 64.

²⁸⁸ Asante, *Stewardship*, 64.

Obviously, most people today are confusing their material wealth with God's pleasure. The society does not usually question the source of people's wealth. Consequently, many people seek for wealth through all means. Prosperity preachers compound the problem with their overemphasis on material wealth. Their myopic view of money invites two complementary problems: on the one hand, those who has little can be blinded to what true blessedness is and hence miss out on the peace and joy that we really ought to have. Secondly, for those who have abundance, greed can blind them to their true wretchedness, and hence assume erroneously that all is well.

Environment Ethics

The prophetic ministries of Amos and Hosea challenge us to care for the environment. According to Hilary Marlow “non-human creation performs a significant role in demonstrating the powerful and all-encompassing nature of God.”²⁸⁹ Amos mentions some environmental and natural agricultural crises in his time (4:7–9). Marlow argues that Hosea focuses more on the relationship between God and humanity, and that the breakdown in this

²⁸⁹ Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 155.

relationship is signaled by devastation in the natural world.²⁹⁰ When humans use the land to grow offerings (the cultivation of crops or the rearing of animals) for false gods, the earth is implicated in this sin. In Hosea (2:18) we read, “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety.” This condition is expected to come after punishment, repentance and restoration. Laurie J. Braaten concludes from Hosea 2 that the modern environmental crisis is a matter offering choice, in that we have treated the earth as a land of whoredom, subservient to our own false gods of violence, greed and consumerism.²⁹¹ In many parts of Africa, waste disposal is a big issue. People gather their rubbish and dump it in the gutter; people defecate at inappropriate places, a situation which mostly result in the spread of cholera, and people cutting tree and turn forest areas into deserts, a situation which has increased global warming.

Another aspect of environment issue is noise pollution. The church that is expected to know better is a major cause of noise pollution in our societies. As Pashington Obeng has noted, even

²⁹⁰ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 194.

²⁹¹ Laurie J. Braaten, “Earth Community in Joel: A Call to Identify with the Rest of Creation,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics* ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (Leiden: Brill. 2008), 63-74.

though religious bodies claim to promote the wellbeing of their members, they cause “immense harm to their parishioners and their surrounding communities through their noise pollution.”²⁹² Noise from churches situated in residential areas is able to give people in its environs sleepless nights during all night programs, a practice which, as Obeng rightly observes, “is harmful to people and the environment.”²⁹³ Those who challenge this practice are tagged as demons. We should not be surprised to have many people suffering from ear problems in the near future. Churches and other bodies must check the level of the noise they make to help avert the situation.

The following principles (derived from Amos and Hosea) are helpful in dealing with ecological crises. First of all, humanity must acknowledge that there is an ecological crisis in the present world. Secondly, there is the need to realize that the present damaged state of God’s creation is the direct consequence of humanity’s broken covenant relationships within the earth community. Thirdly, the acknowledgment of a damaged creation, must lead to the appropriate response first in repentance resulting in the mending of the broken relationship with God and the

²⁹² Pashington Obeng, *Abibisom (Indigenous religion) by Another Name: Critical Look at Deliverance Ministries in Ghana*, Trinity journal of Church and Society, Vol. 18 No. 2, Sept., 2014, 27-40, at 33.

²⁹³ Obeng, *Abibisom (Indigenous religion) by another name*, 33.

environment. Fourthly, in addition to the spiritual dimensions (repentance and turning to God) humanity as a community (including priests, leaders of the society, and the whole church) must take concrete steps towards arresting the ecological crisis. Politicians alone cannot do it and the church alone cannot do it. There is the need for a collaboration between the church and political leaders. There is also the need for a change of heart in humanity's attitude to creation.

Building projects must be undertaken in accordance with the laws of the society. Those who build in the path of streams and eventually cause flood, leading to the loss of lives and properties must advise themselves. Those who cut down trees indiscriminately with the consequence of degrading the environment are not being Christians. Those who engage in illegal mining and other activities to pollute our water bodies must note that the wrath of God is upon them.

Conclusion

A careful reader of this chapter has come to the obvious conclusion that the prophecies of Amos and Hosea are as important to 21st century African as they were to their original audience. The reader is encouraged to practice the principles outlined in this chapter as he/she moves towards becoming matured in Christ.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study, the reader has learnt that Christian ministry has its foundation in God's calling. In other words, one cannot be a prophet of God without being called by God. Those who claim to have been called by God into the prophetic ministry must be those who themselves have personal relationship with God. Contemporary prophets whose calling are in doubt must reassess themselves and ask God to confirm their calling if they have truly been called.

Modern prophets need to bear in mind that the call into ministry is a privilege that comes along with certain demands on their life, both inward and outward. The call demands purity of life, serving as a model to other and pursuing God's agenda no matter the cost. Those who engage in unchristian acts are a disgrace to themselves and the one who has called them into ministry.

The study has shown that the prophetic ministry is relevant to the life of the society, yet abuses in this ministry in recent times raise questions about the authenticity and impact of prophetism among modern Christians. The limited scope of the present study could not allow us to consider prophetism in general. In a future work, we shall be looking at contemporary African Christian prophetism. In the meantime, ponder the question: **Is**

THIS COPY IS NOT FOR SALE

**contemporary African Christian prophetism enslavement or
emancipation?**



ADDITIONAL REVIEW EXERCISE

1. How relevant is the prophetic institution to the socio-religious life of the church?
2. What characteristics differentiate Major prophets from Minor prophets?
3. What are classical prophets? How are they different from pre-classical prophets?
4. To what extent do you agree that Moses was a prophet?
5. How significant is OT prophetic literature to OT theology?
6. How does Amos handle the issue of false prophets? What lessons can we learn from his methodology?
7. Through a critical analysis of relevant texts from the book of Amos, comment on the assertion that “true worship and socio-political justice are inseparable.”
8. Compare and contrast the ministry of a named contemporary African prophet with the ministry of Amos.
9. What lessons can the church learn from the book of Amos in combating moral decline in the society?
10. Discuss Amos 2:6-8 in the context of Amos 1:3-2:16, bringing out rhetoric devices used.

11. Critically examine the use of symbolism in the oracles of Amos. What implications can we draw for biblical exegesis?
12. What eco-theology of land does Amos develop in Amos 7-9?
13. Write an essay on Amos and cosmic imagination.
14. Discuss how Amos used numbers to convey his message.
15. Discuss the concept of grace as thought by Amos.
16. What are some of the outstanding qualities of Amos?
17. What theological contributions does Amos make to OT theology?
17. Critically examine Hosea's concept of sin?
18. Discuss the theme of restoration in Hosea 14:1-8. What lessons can the contemporary church derive from this passage?
19. According to Hosea, how did Israel respond to Yahweh's elective love and salvific activities on her behalf?
20. Discuss the message of judgment, healing, and return in Hosea 5:1-7:1.
21. Is Amos a prophet of doom? Explain your answer.
22. Is it appropriate to describe Amos as a prophet of Yahweh's righteous demand? Explain your answer.

23. To what extent do you agree that “God is a universal judge”, with reference to the book of Amos?
24. Discuss how a believer’s faith should affect his relationship to his culture noting the difference between the culture of Amos’ audience and the contemporary culture.
25. Attempt an exegetical analysis of Amos 5:18-20, bringing out key features of Amos’ concept of the Day of Yahweh.
26. What is Amos’ concept of true Christian worship? What lessons are there for the African church.
27. What implications does Amos’ condemnation of social classes have for your society?
28. “Understanding the message of the book of Hosea depends upon understanding the Sinai covenant.” To what extent to you agree or disagree with this assertion?
29. In not more than a page, comment on each of the following extracts, bringing out the historical, contextual, exegetical and theological meaning:
 - a) “Hear the word of Yahweh, O people of Israel; for Yahweh has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder.” (4:1-2)

- b) “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (6:6)
 - c) “When I would heal Israel, the corruption of Ephraim is revealed, and the wicked deeds of Samaria; for they deal falsely, the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid without. But they do not consider that I remember all their evil works. Now their deeds encompass them, they are before my face. By their wickedness they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. They are all adulterers.” (7:1-4a)
 - d) “. . . judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.” (10:4b)
 - e) “Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.” (6:4b-5)
 - f) “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. (Hosea 14:4)
30. In your view what does the future hold prophetism in Africa?

THIS COPY IS NOT FOR SALE



SUBJECT INDEX

Ammon, 42, 61, 64, 68, 70,
91

Amos, vi, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10,
11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,
18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,
25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31,
32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39,
40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48,
49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55,
56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64,
65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72,
73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79,
80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87,
88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94,
96, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103,
104, 105, 106, 107, 123,
124, 125, 128, 130, 131,
133, 140, 149, 166, 167,
168, 170, 171, 172, 174,
176, 177, 178, 179, 180,
182, 183, 186, 187, 188,
195, 196, 197, 198, 199,
200, 201, 202

Assyria, 6, 37, 39, 40, 41,
91, 98, 101, 123, 128, 129,
130, 135, 136, 144, 149,
151, 156, 162, 163

Christ, 81, 87, 100, 102, 106,
165, 173, 183, 200

Christian, iii, 111, 128, 166,
168, 173, 175, 178, 184,
188, 195, 198, 201

Christology, 102, 165

Church, 11, 50, 103, 167,
173, 174, 175, 176, 182,
196, 200, 201

covenant, 14, 63, 71, 72, 73,
74, 75, 79, 81, 83, 100,
103, 105, 106, 107, 110,
112, 121, 123, 125, 126,
133, 137, 138, 139, 140,
141, 143, 144, 146, 147,
151, 153, 157, 159, 160,
166, 167, 172, 181, 182,
188

Damascus, 25, 39, 63, 64,
68, 70, 91, 130

Edom, 26, 42, 64, 66, 68, 70,
91, 99

Egypt, 13, 37, 39, 41, 43, 58,
61, 62, 63, 74, 75, 91, 95,
130, 135, 136, 138, 149,
151, 153, 156, 163, 164

eighth century, vi, 11, 21, 39,
42, 107, 109, 110, 131,
135, 138, 154, 168, 171,
178, 198

environment, 79, 88, 132,
175, 180, 181, 183

Environment Ethics, 180

Ephraim, 109, 136, 151, 155,
159, 160, 163, 189

Ethical Monotheism, 59

- Financial Ethics, 179
 Gaza, 64, 68, 70, 91
 God, v
 Gomer, 116, 117, 118, 119,
 120, 121, 127, 160
 Historico-Political Context,
 37, 128
 Hosea, vi, 4, 5, 6, 12, 16, 34,
 71, 72, 79, 80, 85, 106,
 107, 108, 109, 110, 111,
 112, 113, 114, 115, 116,
 117, 118, 119, 120, 121,
 122, 123, 126, 127, 128,
 129, 130, 131, 132, 134,
 135, 136, 137, 138, 139,
 140, 141, 142, 143, 144,
 145, 146, 147, 148, 150,
 151, 152, 153, 154, 155,
 156, 157, 158, 160, 161,
 163, 164, 165, 166, 167,
 168, 170, 171, 174, 176,
 177, 178, 179, 180, 182,
 183, 187, 188, 189, 196,
 197, 198, 199, 200, 201,
 202
 irony, 33, 34, 46, 58, 59, 60,
 63, 115, 196
 Israel, vi, viii, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8,
 10, 11, 13, 16, 22, 23, 24,
 26, 29, 30, 32, 34, 37, 38,
 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45,
 46, 48, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56,
 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66,
 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74,
 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81,
 82, 83, 86, 89, 90, 91, 92,
 93, 94, 97, 99, 100, 101,
 105, 106, 107, 108, 109,
 110, 111, 112, 115, 116,
 117, 118, 119, 121, 122,
 123, 124, 125, 126, 127,
 128, 129, 130, 131, 132,
 133, 134, 135, 136, 137,
 138, 139, 141, 142, 143,
 144, 145, 146, 147, 148,
 150, 151, 153, 154, 156,
 157, 158, 159, 160, 162,
 163, 164, 166, 168, 170,
 171, 172, 176, 177, 178,
 187, 188, 189, 197, 198,
 200, 202
 Jerusalem, 11, 12, 42, 73,
 100, 113, 133, 202
 Jezreel, 108, 112, 121, 122,
 123, 125
 Judah, 11, 13, 19, 20, 26, 38,
 39, 40, 41, 53, 64, 66, 68,
 70, 91, 97, 102, 105, 107,
 109, 110, 113, 124, 126,
 128, 130, 133, 136, 150,
 153, 155, 159, 160, 172
 judgment, 10, 24, 26, 28, 29,
 30, 31, 37, 65, 66, 67, 74,
 78, 79, 81, 86, 87, 90, 91,
 92, 93, 96, 97, 99, 100,
 102, 103, 104, 110, 114,
 122, 123, 125, 126, 131,
 135, 137, 140, 144, 147,

- 154, 155, 157, 158, 159,
172, 175, 187, 189
- justice, vi, viii, 8, 17, 18, 25,
29, 30, 33, 44, 46, 51, 53,
61, 63, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84,
85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92,
104, 105, 110, 140, 150,
167, 168, 170, 171, 174,
176, 186, 200
- knowledge, 56, 138, 139,
142, 143, 144, 145, 146,
148, 160, 188, 189
- Literary Features, 28, 114
- Lo-ammi, 126
- Lo-ruhamah, 123
- Material Ethics, 177
- metaphor, 28, 34, 88, 92, 106
- Moab, 11, 61, 64, 68, 70, 91
- money, 179
- Mosaic Covenant, 153
- nations, 10, 19, 23, 24, 29,
30, 32, 38, 39, 41, 56, 59,
60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 70,
75, 78, 80, 81, 91, 92, 97,
99, 126, 151, 172
- New Covenant, 153
- Northern Kingdom, 9, 13,
14, 39, 40, 96, 97, 101,
106, 109, 112, 122, 124,
128, 130, 132, 135, 149,
151, 153
- oracles, 3, 4, 8, 12, 14, 16,
17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 29,
30, 31, 64, 69, 73, 103,
106, 109, 154, 167, 187
- poetry, 4, 18, 114
- Politicians, 183
- prophecy, viii, 1, 3, 28, 67,
77, 97, 100, 128, 166
- prophet, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 14,
16, 18, 21, 25, 35, 37, 60,
64, 69, 74, 80, 83, 85, 92,
100, 102, 103, 106, 107,
110, 112, 117, 119, 128,
138, 139, 140, 148, 151,
153, 166, 167, 184, 186,
187, 198
- prophets, vi, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7,
8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21,
37, 45, 57, 63, 75, 77, 81,
89, 91, 103, 106, 107, 110,
134, 150, 154, 164, 184,
186, 189, 195, 196, 197,
200, 202, 203
- Public Theology, 168, 169,
170, 196, 200
- punishment, 24, 25, 29, 66,
92, 101, 122, 123, 125,
152, 154, 158, 181
- relationship, 72, 74, 75, 79,
83, 106, 116, 118, 121,
130, 138, 139, 141, 142,
143, 144, 145, 146, 151,
152, 159, 161, 164, 166,
175, 180, 182, 184, 188
- Religion, 60, 61, 82, 85, 168,
197

Religious Context, 49, 131
Restoration, 23, 97, 114,
158, 201
return, 25, 32, 65, 66, 76, 91,
94, 95, 115, 116, 136, 150,
156, 159, 160, 162, 163,
187
righteousness, viii, 6, 17, 18,
46, 51, 60, 63, 74, 77, 79,
80, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 110,
135, 140, 143, 159, 171,
172, 176, 200
sacrifice, 90, 115, 131, 134,
142, 155, 189
Samaria, 11, 13, 14, 24, 25,
29, 30, 43, 45, 47, 93, 102,
109, 113, 122, 129, 130,
134, 139, 189
sin, 8, 10, 64, 66, 67, 71, 82,
103, 117, 119, 125, 130,
132, 137, 147, 150, 151,
152, 153, 173, 181, 187
Sin, 64, 147
Socio-economic context, 130
Sovereignty, 54, 55, 56, 195,
200
steadfast love, 140, 142, 145,
189
Syria, 40, 41, 68, 130
Tekoa, 10, 14, 15
The Day of Yahweh, 25, 62,
63, 76, 79, 98, 201
Tyrus, 91
worship, vi, 38, 61, 62, 84,
88, 90, 110, 119, 131, 132,
133, 134, 135, 148, 153,
159, 176, 186, 188

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Minor Prophets I*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1996.
- (eds.), *Interpreting the Prophets*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
- . “Amos” in *Minor prophets 1*, 165-236. Peabody-Carlisle: Hendrickson-Paternoster, 1999.
- Andersen, Francis I. and David N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Double Day, 1989.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. *Jesus our Immanuel*. Accra: African Christian Press, 2013.
- Asante, Emmanuel. *Stewardship: Essays on Ethics of Stewardship*. Kumasi: Wilas Press, 1999.
- Atiemo, Abamfo O. “Crowds that bring no Rains: Religious Revivals and Corruption in Ghana” in *TJCT* Vol. 18 No. 5 (2016): 6-23.
- Barre, Michael L. “Amos” In *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*. Edited by Raymond E. Brown. London: Society of St. Paul, 2011.
- Barton, John. *Old Testament Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Boaheng, Isaac. “Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility and God’s Salvific Plan: An African Perspective” in *ERATS* Volume 1 Number 3, 2019: 84-93.
- Braaten, Laurie J. “Earth Community in Joel: A Call to Identify with the Rest of Creation,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics* ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger. Leiden: Brill. 2008.
- Brand, Chad and Eric Mitchell (eds.). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological*

- Handbook of Old Testament Themes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Chisholm, Robert B. "Hosea" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983.
- . "A Theology of the Minor Prophets" in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* edited by Roy B. Zuck. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991
- . "For Three Sins...Even for Four: The Numerical Sayings in Amos" in *Vital Old Testament Issues: Examining Textual and Topical Questions* edited by Roy B. Zuck Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012.
- Chung, Paul S. *Postcolonial Public Theology: Faith, Scientific Rationality, and Prophetic Dialogue*. Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2016.
- Church, Brooke Peters. *The Private Lives of the Prophets and The Times In Which They Lived*. New York: New York: Rinehart & Company, 1953.
- Constable, TL *Notes on Amos*. Sonic Light (2016) <http://www.soniclight.com/>.
- Coote, Robert B. *Amos among the prophets: composition and theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.
- Day, John. "Hosea", in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* edited by John Barton and John Muddiman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Dearman, J. Andrew. *The Book of Hosea*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010.
- Domeris, William R. *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants*. New York: T&T Clark, 2007.
- . "Shades of irony in the anti-language of Amos", *HTS Teologiese Studies, Theological Studies* 72(4) 2016.
- Dorsey, David A. "Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos", *Biblica* 73/3:(1992) 305-330.
- . *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A*

- Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.
- Douglas, J. D. and Merrill C. Tenney, revised by Moises Silva
Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan, 2011.
- Dubnov, Simon M. *History of the Jews* 5 vols., translated from the
Russian, 4th definitive, rev. ed. South Brunswick, NJ:
Thomas Yosoloff, 1967.
- Francisco, Clyde T. "Evil and Suffering in the Book of Hosea,"
Southwestern Journal of Theology 5 (1963):33.
- Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament
Prophets*. Chicago: Moody Press, Fourth printing, 1972.
- Fosbroke, Hughell E. W. "Amos", in George Arthur Buttrick (ed),
The Interpreter's Bible vol. 6. New York: Abingdon Press,
1969.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2. Minneapolis:
Bethany House, 2011.
- George A. Barton, "The Evolution of the Religion of Israel: III. The
Prophets of the Eighth Century" in *The Biblical World, Vol.
39, No. 3* (1912):157-166.
- Goodrich, J. K. "Hosea" in M. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham
(eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary*. Moody Publishers,
Chicago, 2014.
- Gordis, R. *Poets, prophets and sages: essays in biblical
interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
1971.
- Gottwald, Norman K. *The politics of ancient Israel*. Louisville:
John Knox Westminster, 2001.
- Grimsrud, Ted. *Healing Justice: The Prophet Amos and a New
Theology of Justice: Peace and Justice Shall Embrace*, ed.,
Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns. Pennsylvania: Pandora Press,
1999.
- Hammershaimb, E. *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* translated
by John Sturdy. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970.

- Harper, William R. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea: The International Critical Commentary*, ed. S. R. Driver et al. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905.
- Hayes, John H. *Amos, his time and his preaching: the eighth century prophet*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1988.
- Holladay, William L. *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids-Leiden: Eerdmans-E J Brill, 1988.
- Ironside, H. A. *The Minor Prophets: An Ironside Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004.
- Kakkanattu, Joy Philip. *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic analysis of Hosea 11,1-11*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Knight, D.A. *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- Kudadjie, J. N. and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics*. Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1992.
- Lafferty, Theresa V. *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult: A Study of Amos 5:21-24 and Isaiah 1:10-17*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: The Catholic University of America, 2010.
- Lasor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.
- Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III (eds), *Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Lieberman, Sandra J. *Amos and the Rhetoric of Prophetic*

- Utterance*. Unpublished MA Thesis: State University of New York, 1979.
- Lim, Bo H and Daniel Castelo, “Hosea”, in *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015.
- Linville, James R. “Visions and Voices: Amos 7–9”, *Bib vol. 80* (1999) 22-42.
- Livingston, G. Herbert. “Hosea” in *Baker Bible Commentary on the Bible* edited by Walter E. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.
- MacArthur, John. *The NASB, MacArthur Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013.
- Marlow, Hilary. *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Mauchline, John. “Hosea”, in George Arthur Buttrick (ed), *The Interpreter’s Bible vol. 6*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1969.
- McComiskey, T E. “Amos” in F E Gaebelein (ed.), *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.
- (ed). *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.
- McKenzie, John L. “Knowledge of God in Hosea” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 74, No. 1 1955:22-27.
- Miller, D. *Social Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Miller, Patrick D. *The Ten Commandments: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Newsome, James D. Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973.
- Osuagwu, Tochukwu. *An ideological-critical interpretation of*

- justice and righteousness in Amos 5*. Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Pretoria, 2016.
- Paul R. Noble, "The Literary Structure of Amos: A Thematic Analysis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995).
- Paul, S. M. *Amos. A commentary on the Book of Amos*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Premnath, Devadasan N. *Eighth Century Prophets: A Social Analysis*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2003.
- Robertson, O. P. *The Christ of the prophets*. Philipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004.
- Rosenbaum, Stanley N. *Amos of Israel: A new interpretation*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990.
- Obeng, Pashington. *Abibisom (Indigenous religion) by Another Name: Critical Look at Deliverance Ministries in Ghana*, Trinity journal of Church and Society, Vol. 18 No. 2 (2014) 27-40.
- Patterson, Richard D. "Hosea" in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi)* edited by Philip W. Comfort. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008.
- Peters, Ted. Public Theology: Its Pastoral, Apologetic, Scientific, Political, and Prophetic Tasks in *International Journal of Public Theology* 12 (2018):153-177.
- Pink, Arthur W. *The Sovereignty of God*. Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics.
- Poplin, Wayne W. *Hosea's Use of Nuptial Imagery*. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: DTh Thesis, 1975.
- Pusey, E. B. *The Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953.
- Routledge, Robin. "Hosea's Marriage Reconsidered" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 69.1 (2018) 25-42.
- Schauss, Hayyim. *The Jewish Festivals: History and. Observance*, trans. Samuel Jaffe. New York: Schocken Books, 1975.
- Scheffler, E. *Politics in Ancient Israel*. Pretoria: Biblia Publishers, 2001.

- Schmidt, Werner H. *Old Testament Introduction* Translated by Matthew J. O'connell. New York: Crossroad, 1984.
- Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Silva, Charles H. "The literary structure of Hosea 1-3", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164(654), (2007): 181-197.
- Simundson, D. J. *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*. AOTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.
- Smith, Gary V. *Amos: A commentary*. Grand Rapids: Regency-Zondervan, 1989.
- Smith, John M. P. "The Day of Yahweh" in *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1901): 505-533.
- Snaith, Norman H. *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946.
- Soggin, J. Alberto. *Introduction to the Old Testament: from its origin to the closing of Alexandrian canon*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Sunukjian, Donald R. "Commentary on Amos" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983.
- Sweeney, M. A. *The prophetic literature*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.
- Stuart, Douglas K. "Hosea 13-14: Promises of Destruction and Restoration" in *Southwestern Journal of Theology* Vol. 36 (1993).
- . *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.
- Tasker, R.V.G. *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God*. London: Tyndale, 1951.
- Tieszen, Charles (ed.). *Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018.
- VanGemeren, Willem A. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Van Reken, Calvin P. "The Church's Role in Social Justice",

- Calvin Theological Journal* vol. 34 (1999):198-202.
- Von Rad, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology* vol. 2 translated by D.M.G Stalker. New York: Haper & Row Publishers, 1965.
- Waltke, Bruce K. *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007.
- Ward, J. M. *Thus says the Lord: the message of the prophets*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Weiss, Meir. "The pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2, a Re-examination," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 1967.
- Welch, John W. *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*. Utah: Research Press, 1999.
- Wheaton, Byron L. *Hosea's Contribution to Israel's Covenant Thought*. Wilfrid Laurier University: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1985.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002.
- Wilson, Robert R. "Early Israelite Prophecy" in in James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (eds.), *Interpreting the Prophets* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
- Wolf, Hans Walter. *Joel and Amos*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of Israel*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2004.
- Wright, G. Ernest. *The Rule of God*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960.
- Yadin et al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960.
- Youngblood, Ronald F, F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison (eds.), *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.
- Zimmerli, Walther. From prophetic word to the prophetic book, in Robert P Gordon (ed.), *The place is too small for us: the*

THIS COPY IS NOT FOR SALE

Israelite prophets in recent scholarship, 419-442. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995.

Zucker, David J. *The Bible's Prophets: An Introduction for Christians and Jews*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.



THIS COPY IS NOT FOR SALE

ABOUT AUTHOR

Isaac Boaheng holds a PhD in Theology from the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is a Senior Lecturer in Theology and Christian Ethics at the Christian Service University College, Ghana, and a Research Fellow at the Department of Biblical and Religion Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa.

