THE ETHOS OF THE COSMOS IN AMOS: CREATION RHETORIC AND CHARACTER FORMATION IN OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS

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A dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Christian Theology)

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2019

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY   McMaster Divinity College
(Christian Theology)   Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Ethos of the Cosmos in Amos: Creation Rhetoric and
                    Character Formation in Old Testament Ethics

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NUMBER OF PAGES: xviii + 462

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

this dissertation by

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is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY)

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Date: April 12, 2019

ABSTRACT

"The Ethos of the Cosmos in Amos: Creation Rhetoric and Character Formation in Old Testament Ethics"

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Doctor of Philosophy (Christian Theology), 2019

The book of Amos preserves powerful critiques of injustices in ancient Israel, and accordingly it has become famous as a resource for social justice movements across the centuries. The text has also been a testing ground for the history of prophets and prophetic literature. Given these emphases on socio-economic justice and historical dimensions of human culture, there has been a glaring neglect of "nature" themes in Amos and how these references to the non-human, created universe function in shaping the moral character of the readers. Without ecological features, the ethical message is hollow, since the character of humans and even of Yahweh as God are often evaluated and illustrated by realities in the rest of the natural world. Amos reciprocally connects the natural world (cosmos) and the moral world (ethos) together, implying that the condition and conceptions of the cosmos are partly reflective of human character and partly formative for human character in turn. The second aspect deserves attention at last. There is an ethos of the cosmos in Amos. Nature is not neutral.

To describe this cosmos and ethos, the study proceeds in two steps for each major section of the translated Hebrew text. First, after establishing a historical setting for the final form of the text, there is a careful analysis of the "creation rhetoric," followed by a

second step that doubles back to ask how such nature imagery encourages or discourages moral "character formation" for an audience in Judah. The rhetorical analysis uses insights into genre and speech act theory, while the ethical analysis uses character ethics to discuss practices, dispositions, and desires for visions of good and evil in Amos. In the end, the cosmos in Amos is more than ancient cosmology or dispensable background scenery. Built into the cosmos are dynamics that link justice with matters of life and death, and only through the nature imagery does the audience most vividly gain reverence for each other, their world, and their God. From earthquakes to new growth, creation shapes character. Creation rhetoric and character formation are mutually related and profitably compared for Old Testament ethics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Do two travel together if they did not arrange it" (Amos 3:3)? "Does a young lion project its voice from its lair if it has not captured anything" (Amos 3:4)? Does anything of significance happen in a dissertation unless Yahweh the Lion King has been involved and compelled a person to write what they learned (Amos 3:6, 8)? These questions illustrate, in reverse order, where the credit belongs, where the motivation for finishing derived, and where gratitude is due for my traveling companions as I complete my program at McMaster Divinity College. Before and through all the writing, the Lord Yahweh was at work to teach me what I could bear in each season and to bring this dissertation to completion (Amos 3:6). The Lion has roared (Amos 3:8), and so I wrote about the role of nature imagery in character formation, an interest of mine for some time as an ecologically oriented Christian. As a young scholar, however, I would have no "voice" to contribute on these topics if I had not "captured" anything worth chewing on (Amos 3:4). The ethos of the cosmos I discovered in Amos motivated me to finish the work and give it voice. Finally, I must express my gratitude for the mentors, friends, and family with whom I was able to "travel together" on this journey (Amos 3:3). Without the guidance of my advisors, Mark Boda and Gus Konkel, and my external examiner, Danny Carroll, I could not have completed this phase of the journey. Without the support of more people than I can list below, the same is also true.

I would like to acknowledge these people in particular for supporting me in various ways: (1) those from the world of academics, including Megan Roberts, the Gardners, Coopers, Breitkopfs, Burlets, Will Whyte, David and Ruth-Esther Boda,

Richard Middleton, the Stricklands and next-door Lands, Meghan Musy, Traci Birge, Daniel Kim, Goran Zivkovic, the Thomsons and Burnettes, Esther Cen, Cynthia Chau, Darlene Seal, Jen Jones, Mark Hanson, Ben and Ellen Bedecki, Merrill Greene, and recently Amy Allan and Megan Little; (2) those from Hughson Street Baptist Church or my neighborhood, including Steve and Deanna Harris, Jake Bakker, Jonathan Bedard, Josh Feather, Jesus Bondo, Tim Laws, Phil Duncan, Scherrie Kelly, Tim Brand, the Beales, Beisels, Doyles, Spoelstras, Havercrofts, Yens, Burleys, Whitleys, and others from church groups over the years; and (3) those from farther away who encouraged me, including Josh Benner, Erik and Kate Hill, the Youngers—all of them—Adric and Annie Sutton, Thomas Middlebrook, Gordon MacPhail, Anthony Lipscomb, Kaz Hayashi, Billy Pohl, Kevin Sprague, Dan Basco, Drew and Seiko Beretta, Andrew and Jalie Trowbridge, Rick Stuart, my parents (Cindy and "Scot" Stewart), my sister and new brother-in-law (Jess and Sean Best), other family such as Irene and Jack Coe, Rick and Willa Coe, Eric and Christine Stewart, Jan and Yorgo Anasis, and my generous "Buffalo grandparents," Ardis and Ken Stewart, whose hospitality I long enjoyed just across the border from Ontario. I am no prophet or disciple of a recent one (Amos 7:14), but the following study is something of what "the Lord Yahweh had me see" (Amos 8:1), and now, many fig bars later, the figs and this project are both at an "end" (Amos 8:2).

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

AAJR	American Academy for Jewish Research
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
Arnold-Choi	Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASV	American Standard Version
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BHQ	Gelston, Anthony, ed. *Biblia Hebraica Quinta, Fascicle 13: The Twelve Minor Prophets*. BHQ 13. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010.

BHRG 1	Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., et al. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999.
BHRG 2	Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., et al. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd ed. New York: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2017.
BHS	Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by A. Schenker. 5th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibSem	Biblical Seminar
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BMW	Bible in the Modern World
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ca.	*circa*, around, approximately
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEB	Common English Bible

cf.	*confer*, compare, see also
Chr.	Christian
Col.	Column
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
DCH	Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993–2011.
DDD	van der Toorn, Karel, et al., eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Boston: Brill, 1999.
DSSSE	García Martínez, Florentino, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. 2 vols. New York: Brill, 1997–1998.
EBR	Klauck, Hans-Josef, et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. 30 vols. New York: de Gruyter, 2009–.
Eng.	English
EOS	Editions of St. Ottilien
et al.	*et alii*, and others
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
ExAud	*Ex Auditu*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
FES	Finnish Exegetical Society
fig.	figure, illustration

FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, et al. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
Heb.	Hebrew
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
illus.	illustration, figure
Int	*Interpretation*
IOSOT	International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
ITC	Interdenominational Theological Center
IVP	InterVarsity Press
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
Joüon-Muraoka	Joüon, Paul, and Takamitsu Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Rev. ed. Subsidia Biblica 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006.
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSP	*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
JS	*Journal of Seismology*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KJV	King James Version
KTU	Dietrich, Manfried, et al., eds. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten / The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*. 3rd ed. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013.
KUSATU	Kleine Untersuchungen zur Sprache des Alten Testaments und seiner Umwelt
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies

LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
LXX	Septuagint translation, Old Greek (OG)
MT	Masoretic Text as represented in *BHS* or *BHQ*
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1995)
NCB	New Century Bible
NETS	Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright III, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Online: http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIV	New International Version (2011)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OG	Old Greek translation, Septuagint (LXX)
OT	Old Testament
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën

OTWSA	Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
PLBL	Bolen, Todd. *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands: Complete Collection.* 18 vols. Rev. ed. Santa Clarita, CA: BiblePlaces.com, 2012.
RB	*Revue biblique*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertations Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation
SUNY	State University of New York
SymS	Symposium Series
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, et al., eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Translated by John T. Willis et al. 16 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2018.
Them	*Themelios*

TLOT	Jenni, Ernst, and Claus Westermann, eds. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
TTE	*The Theological Educator*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UBS	United Bible Societies
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOD	United States Department of Defense
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WW	*Word and World*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenshafte*

In addition to those indicated above, abbreviations for biblical books and other ancient texts follow conventions set forth in Collins, Billie Jean, et al., eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL, 2014.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Known for its stinging critiques of social injustice, the book of Amos is one of the most

studied books among "the Twelve" so-called Minor Prophets in the Bible. It is only

minor in length, not in its message or potential impact. As one of the earliest messages

attributed to a Hebrew prophet (around 750 BC), Amos as a book has become a prime

testing ground for theories about the personas, phenomena, and production of oral and

written prophecy in ancient Israel. With its strong focus on social justice, Amos is also a

compelling book for engaging with ancient sociological dynamics and contemporary

issues of justice and poverty.

Amid the saturation of publications, however, there has been a neglect of the

wider natural world—the "cosmos," "nature," or "creation," as we might variously call

it—and how the cosmos portrayed in Amos is closely connected to Israel's social and

ethical world (ethos). The "ethos of the cosmos" in Amos is a connection inspired by

William Brown's work.[1] Attention to the cosmos has been overshadowed by other issues

in Amos. Despite all that biblical scholars have written about "context" being crucial for

interpretation and for shaping people in their character, I believe that we in North

America have often neglected the largest and most enduring context of all for shaping

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[1] See Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*. He does not discuss Amos there, so my work extends his insights to this prophetic text.

moral character: our relationships with God our creator and with the rest of creation, including the land, water, sky, and the other creatures of Earth. We have tried to have society without ecology, but as important as our social relationships are, those relationships are embedded in a larger context of "creation" or "nature" that affects our sense of place and identity in the world.[2] Our interactions with the natural world and our depictions of it play an important role in shaping our habitual activities (practices), intellectual-emotional tendencies (dispositions), and the motivating drives (desires) and visions we imagine for how to thrive. Of course, the cosmos and portrayals of it do not shape us in some simple or uniform way, as if there was only one picture of the cosmos by which to measure ourselves. However, for a few centuries we have been distancing ourselves from "nature" as if we could live in our urban enclaves and forge our technological and economic futures without consequences or connections to and from the rest of the natural world.[3]

The ancient audiences hearing the text of Amos did not live with this ecological disconnection or false dichotomy. Pervasively throughout the text we can see how the elements and creatures of the cosmos are intricately connected to the divine activity of Yahweh and to the human community in Israel and Judah. Sometimes this close ecological connection occurs at strategic literary points. The book of Amos begins with an earthquake and withering vegetation (Amos 1:1–2), and it ends with flourishing for

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[2] A more detailed discussion of the terms "creation" and "nature" appears later in this study.

[3] For this trend of post-industrial alienation from "place" or "nature," see Biro, *Denaturalizing Ecological Politics*; Kidner, *Nature and Experience*; Northcott, *Place, Ecology and the Sacred*.

both crops and Israelites rooted in their land (Amos 9:13–15).[4] In between these creation-oriented bookends are speeches that portray a natural world suffering with Israel and afflicting Israel (Amos 4:6–12; 7:1–6; 8:8–10; 9:1–4), a world instructing Israel (Amos 3:3–8; 6:12), three potent doxologies to Yahweh as the subversive creator (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6), and an abundance of metaphorical imagery and literal references drawn from the natural world. Furthermore, it is *the land* from which Amos found employment in biblical memory (Amos 1:1; 7:14–15), and it is the land for which he intercedes for the sake of the Israelite community (Amos 7:1–6). The natural context comprises one of the most important foundations of the book's cultural message.[5] It is not as if Israel was without its social and religious problems at that time, or even that they had fewer problems because of their supposed "harmony" with nature. On the contrary, the book addresses several abuses of people and religion alike, and the natural world is frequently acknowledged to be a hostile, threatening home. But the texts do not make the same dichotomies we make, and my main claim for my research is this: Amos reciprocally connects the natural world (cosmos) and the moral world (ethos) together, implying that the condition and conceptions of the cosmos are partly *reflective* of human character, for better or worse, and partly *formative* for human character.[6] Creation shapes character.

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[4] See Fretheim, *Reading*, 117. He observes how the "theme of creation brackets the book as a whole, moving as it does from the withering of vegetation before the judgment of God (1:2) to the thriving of the vineyards in the wake of the new creative action of God (9:11–15)."

[5] Heyns, "In the Face of Chaos," 72–74.

[6] Again, see Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*; Brown, "Moral Cosmologies."

The present study will employ rhetorical analysis and character ethics in order to draw out the implications of nature themes in the field of Old Testament ethics. Through careful study of the rhetoric of Amos in its final Hebrew form, with selective attention to portrayals of the natural (non-human) world, I will examine how the book's creation rhetoric encourages or discourages certain desires, dispositions, and habitual practices. Character ethics as an ethical framework is concerned holistically with the moral dimensions of head, heart, and habits rather than looking at ethical rules or consequences alone.[7] As I identify selected character dimensions, I will show how they are relevant to a blend of social, ecological, and theological issues in the implied setting of Amos. In my setting I interpret Amos as part of an evangelical Baptist congregation near my Christian seminary (McMaster Divinity College) next to Lake Ontario in Canada, coming from a male, white, middle-class upbringing in the United States. With these and other influences I am part of Christian circles that are not only challenged by the message of Amos but also motivated to challenge the same consumerism, exploitation, and other injustices around us. In the end, the cosmos in Amos proves to be more than ancient cosmology, background scenery, or scattered nature themes. Applying Brown's insights cited earlier, we can say that the created world (cosmos) in Amos conveys an ethical

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[7] These categories of head (intellect, imagination), heart (desires, emotions, also imagination), and habits (conduct, practices) are not accurate categories for ancient Hebrew anthropology, nor do the categories escape the inevitable anachronism of outsider perspectives. Nevertheless, these categories cover most dimensions of human "character" and are thus helpful as heuristic labels for now. I will use other labels later. Similarly, Brown, ed. (*Character and Scripture*, xii) speaks of character as including "the affective, cognitive, and volitional, along with their deep interrelations," but notes that these "distinctions are more heuristic than essential."

world (ethos) in which its audience may reside, and thus it called them to new visions of moral character. By exploring these worlds we can discern creation rhetoric and character formation in Old Testament ethics. The rest of the chapter situates my approach to rhetorical and ethical analysis within studies of Amos and of Old Testament ethics.

1.1 Previous Approaches to Amos

In studies of the book of Amos scholars tend to focus on one or two dimensions related to the book or text: the world "behind" the text, the world "within" the text, or the world "in front of" the text.[8] These dimensions are not incompatible, but a detailed exploration of one "world" usually leaves another world neglected. My own approach uses insights from all three dimensions, but the focus falls ultimately on the rhetorical impact "in front of" the text, namely, the impact of nature themes in forming the moral character of the ancient audience of the written text of Amos. Taking each dimension in turn, it will become clear why my own approach cannot stay "behind" or "within" the text alone.

1.1.1 Behind the Text

Diachronic studies of Amos typically treat the historical elements behind the book, whether its socio-economic backgrounds, the origins of its themes, or the redactional history leading to the written text we have today. Sociological approaches aim to reconstruct the contexts and dynamics behind the critiques in Amos, and a diverse

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[8] See van der Wal, *Classified Bibliography*; Paul, *Amos*; Pigott, "Annotated Bibliography"; Thompson, *Book of Amos*; Melugin, "Amos in Recent Research"; Carroll R., *Amos—The Prophet*; Mills,

number of social models posit everything from excessive taxation to abuses of

patronage.[9] There is evidence for some sort of social crisis during the eighth century BC

in Israel and Judah, whether caused by Assyrian pressure or by smaller nations and

internal exploitation,[10] but it is impossible to reconstruct the precise dynamics.[11] Exact

social conditions do not matter for my work as long as the rhetoric in Amos reflects

actual, if vague, injustices that the nature imagery is used to critique. Looking "behind"

the text exclusively, then, would be a distraction from the central focus of my research.

The same verdict applies to studies of the origins of themes in the book, even for themes

as relevant as Israelite cosmologies compared to those of other cultures.[12] A detailed and

Amos, Obadiah. These three categories for Amos studies are used by M. Daniel Carroll R. just cited, though they go back at least to Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (cf. Thiselton, "'Behind' and 'In Front Of'").

[9] Weber places the prophet Amos among those opposed to bureaucratization and urban decadence. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, 90–117, 267–335. See also Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*; Petersen, *Roles of Israel's Prophets*; Overholt, "Commanding the Prophets"; Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*. Gottwald suggests a Marxist tributary system of unfair taxes, Chaney likewise emphasizes government pressure on agricultural production, and Coomber posits land consolidation by Israel's political and economic elite. See Gottwald, "Hypothesis about Social Class"; Gottwald, *Politics of Ancient Israel*; Chaney, *Peasants, Prophets, and Political Economy*; Coomber, *Re-Reading the Prophets*; Coomber, "Prophets to Profits"; Cf. Premnath, *Eighth-Century Prophets*; Premnath, "Amos and Hosea"; Cowsill, "Refractions," 1–20. Loretz, Coote, and Lang posit a system of "rent capitalism" where peasants are indebted to merchants. See Loretz, "Die prophetische Kritik"; Coote, *Amos*, 24–32; Lang, "Sklaven und Unfreie," 482–88; Lang, "Social Organization"; contra the differing critiques and reconstructions of Fendler, "Sozialkritik"; Dearman, *Property Rights*, 15, 133–35; Fleischer, *Menschenverkäufern*, 359–62, 365–90. Simkins, Domeris, and Houston argue that the Israelite patronage system was being abused. See Simkins, "Patronage"; Houston, *Contending for Justice*; Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 90–91, 127. Radine places the book after the fall of Samaria as the Assyrians threaten Judah, so the socio-economic picture supposedly reflects Judah's pressure to resist or accommodate imperial tribute to Assyria combined with conflicts internal to Judah. See Radine, *Book of Amos*. Cf. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire.*

[10] Houston, "Was There a Social Crisis"—the short answer is "yes."

[11] See Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 22–47. I often use the work of Marvin Chaney when debt, taxation, or the role of food production is at stake (e.g., Amos 2:6–8; 5:11; 6:1–7; 8:4–6). See Chaney, *Peasants, Prophets, and Political Economy.*

[12] Cf. Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*; Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf.*

representative study of creation themes in Amos and other books is by Stefan Paas.[13] However, Paas focuses on God as creator—and thus on originating activity—rather than on the relationships between non-human creatures and features of the natural world,[14] and he does not get beyond historical questions to ask about the role of such rhetoric for ethics. Approaches that focus on redaction criticism are likewise concerned with the compositional history behind the text throughout its ancient editions,[15] and they thereby ignore the kinds of questions that I wish to pursue related to creation and character. Research on elements "behind" the text can become so mired in determining the origins of the text or its references that the function of the final text is hardly addressed.

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[13] Paas, *Creation and Judgement*, 183–226.

[14] Cf. Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 119. Furthermore, his inclusion of Amos 6:14 and 9:11 as "creation" texts is doubtful, whereas the inclusion of Amos 7:1–6 is justified. Surprising is his neglect of Amos 1:2. To redress this latter omission, see Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*; Hayes, "Mourning Earth."

[15] For a concise summary of redactional theories of Amos, see Möller, "Reconstructing." Compare the redactional theories advanced by Wolff, *Joel and Amos*; Coote, *Amos*; Soggin, *Prophet Amos*; Jaruzelska, *Amos and the Officialdom*; Jeremias, "Amos 3–6"; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*; Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion*; Park, *Book of Amos*; Steins, *Gericht und Vergebung*; Hadjiev, *Composition*; Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*. Some scholars find more compositional unity than disunity: Hayes, *Amos*; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*; Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel*; Paul, *Amos*. Most assume that oral messages preceded written texts of Amos (e.g., Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion*; Loretz, "Die Entstehung"; Riede, *Vom Erbarmen zum Gericht*), but others argue the content was entirely written from its inception (Peckham, *History and Prophecy*, 158–85; Rilett Wood, *Amos in Song and Book Culture*). Heightened interest in "the Twelve" prophets as one textual collection has spurred redactional studies on a larger scale than Amos alone. See Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*; Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*; Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy"; Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*; Jones, *Formation*; Jeremias, "Die Anfänge"; Jeremias, "Interrelationship"; Jeremias, *Hosea und Amos*; House and Watts, eds., *Forming Prophetic Literature*; Schart, *Die Entstehung*; Nogalski and Sweeney, eds., *Reading and Hearing*; Albertz et al., eds., *Perspectives on the Formation*.

1.1.2 Within the Text

A focus on the literary structure and devices "within" the text of Amos is also inadequate for a study of ethical implications of the rhetoric involving the natural world.[16] Close literary readings have revealed patterns such as series of five and seven things in the book,[17] telescoping numerical patterns,[18] smaller and larger stretches of reverse parallelism (chiasm),[19] and significant placements of divine names and titles.[20] Various synchronic studies fit here,[21] as do certain canonical and intertextual approaches to the Twelve prophets.[22] Studies that are solely synchronic and "within" the text are either too narrow to interpret the message of the entire book and its rhetorical units or too broad to give Amos adequate treatment separate from other similar books. Such a focus can become a showcase of aesthetics with little awareness of the social dynamics behind or in front of the text as the rhetoric impacts an audience.

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[16] For literary treatments of the entire book see Gordis, "Composition and Structure"; Garrett, "Structure"; Wendland, "'Word of the Lord'"; Ryken, "Amos"; Noble, "Literary Structure"; Bramer, "Contribution"; Bramer, "Literary Genre"; Bramer, "Analysis"; Möller, "'Hear This Word.'" For treatments of large sections within the book, see Widbin, "Center Structures"; Bulkeley, "Cohesion"; Abela, "Suggestions"; Bulkeley, "Amos 7,1—8,3."

[17] Gese, "Komposition"; Limburg, "Sevenfold"; Tromp, "Amos"; Paas, "Seeing and Singing."

[18] Weiss, "Pattern"; Zakovitch, "Pattern"; Chisholm, "For Three Sins"; O'Connell, "Telescoping"; Talmon, "Topped Triad."

[19] de Waard, "Chiastic Structure"; Tromp, "Amos" For other proposals for this section and for more elaborate chiastic structures in Amos, see de Waard and Smalley, *Translator's Handbook*, 189–94; Smalley, "Recursion Patterns"; Lust, "Remarks"; Wicke, "Two Perspectives"; Widbin, "Center Structures"; Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 157–80; Dorsey, "Literary Architecture"; Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 277–86; Bovati and Meynet, *Le livre du prophète Amos*; Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 168–308. Möller ("Reconstructing," 406 n. 67) calls the more elaborate proposals "chiasm mania." Cf. Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity" for similar cautions.

[20] Dempster, "The Lord Is His Name."

[21] See Noble, "Remnant in Amos 3–6"; Noble, "Amos and Amaziah"; Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*.

[22] House, *Unity of the Twelve*; Conrad, *Reading*; Fuhr and Yates, *Message of the Twelve*.

1.1.3 In Front of the Text

A third and more fitting avenue of approach, then, is to focus on the world "in front of" the text of Amos, the world consisting of ancient or modern audiences impacted by the book. These audiences can include those in the earliest phases of the book's reception history,[23] twentieth-century audiences promoting civil rights,[24] or even the ethical implications of Amos for contemporary Nigeria, the United States, or Pope Francis.[25] Every use from preaching and ecological activism[26] to rhetorical studies of the persuasive power of Amos on ancient audiences[27] counts as a focus in front of the text. Studies of

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[23] Examples of studying the reception history of Amos include some diachronic studies of intertextual or thematic allusions as well as more typical studies of the usage of the book by non-biblical authors and communities. See Martin-Achard, *Amos*, 161–270, 297–301; Beyerlin, *Reflexe*; Jeremias, "Interrelationship"; Jeremias, *Hosea und Amos*; Schart, *Die Entstehung*; Pschibille, *Hat der Löwe*; Marlow, "Creation Themes"; Theocharous, *Lexical Dependence*; Barton, *Theology*, 161–80; Eidevall, "Shifting Emphasis"; Roberts, "Imitation as Necessity"; Houston, *Amos: An Introduction*, 83–96.

[24] The most famous example would be how Martin Luther King Jr. invoked Amos 5:24 in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 and on other occasions. Cf. King, "I Have a Dream." Here is an excerpt from that speech: "There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights: 'When will you be satisfied?' We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. . . . We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating 'For Whites Only.' We cannot be satisfied and we will not be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream [cf. Amos 5:24]." Interestingly, Bartlett ("Let Justice Roll Down," 10) notes that Amos 5:24 was the most frequently cited verse of any biblical text in King's written and spoken work, and that he quoted it in the first and last public addresses of his life.

[25] Cf. Udoekpo, *Rethinking the Prophetic Critique*; Udoekpo, *Israel's Prophets*.

[26] See especially Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches"; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*; cf. Habel, ed., *Readings*; Habel, ed., *Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*; Ibita, "Micah 6"; Brown, "Ecofeminist Reading," 1.

[27] See Lieberman, "Amos"; Gitay, "A Study"; Wendland, "'Word of the Lord'"; Choi, "Rhetorical Analysis"; Möller, "'Hear This Word'"; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*; Zogbo, "Rhetorical Devices"; Rinquest, "Prophetic Rhetoric"; Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*; Semwayo, "Rhetoric of Amos' Visions"; Jeon, "Rhetoric."

ethical issues raised by the book and other prophetic books also fit here.[28] To varying

degrees, all in this category recognize the role of power dynamics and social location for

interpretation of Amos. Because my study of Amos is concerned with the rhetorical

impact of nature imagery on the moral character of the Hebrew-speaking audience, this

focus in front of the text is better than primarily attending to features behind or within the

text alone.[29] My methodology will use rhetorical analysis influenced by Dale Patrick and

Karl Möller,[30] while my ethical analysis is indebted to the cultural anthropology of James

K. A. Smith and the approach to "character ethics" used occasionally by M. Daniel

Carroll R. and William P. Brown.[31] Because this avenue of studying Old Testament

ethics is not well defined yet, I need to specify how my approach fits with other trends in

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[28] Some scholars and preachers affirm the ethical message of the book: For Latin American contexts see Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*; Carroll R., "Context, Bible and Ethics," 9–15. For African contexts see Udoekpo, *Rethinking the Prophetic Critique*. For African American contexts, see Bartlett, "Let Justice Roll Down." Others make caveats but are generally appreciative of its ethical implications. See the discussion in Carroll R., "Ethics and Old Testament Interpretation," 209; Carroll R., "Ethics," 189–90. He has in mind studies such as Birch and Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*; Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*; Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*; van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple*; Dempsey, *Hope amid the Ruins*; Dempsey, *The Prophets*. Cf. Erickson, "Amos"; Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*. Others are suspicious and critical of parts of Amos that are potentially oppressive, patriarchal, or violent in their ethical implications: Sanderson, "Amos"; Clines, "Metacommentating Amos"; Linville, "Amos among the 'Dead Prophets Society'"; Landy, "Smith, Derrida, and Amos." On other prophets and readings against the grain, see Brenner, ed., *Feminist Companion*; Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches"; Brenner, ed., *Prophets and Daniel*; Doan and Giles, *Prophets, Performance, and Power*. For more, see below, §1.2 Previous Approaches to Old Testament Ethics. Cf. Carroll R., "Ethics in Old Testament Theologies."

[29] Nevertheless, without attention to historical or literary dimensions behind and within the text, interpretation of rhetorical, ideological, and ethical issues in front of the text can become more subjective and anachronistic than it otherwise would be.

[30] See Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*.

[31] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*; Smith, *You Are What You Love*; Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues"; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good"; Carroll R., "Seek Yahweh, Establish Justice"; Brown, *Character in Crisis*; Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*; Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*; cf. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*.

the field of Old Testament ethics before defining my methodological framework and steps in the next chapter.

1.2 Previous Approaches to Old Testament Ethics

Within studies of Old Testament ethics my approach to character ethics fits a more recent focus on non-legal genres and on character ethics in the "course" of trends in the field. Viewing the "landscape" synchronically, on the other hand, my approach fits with studies that emphasize ethical impact on audiences in front of the text and studies that appreciate the ongoing authority or nuanced applicability of the Old Testament among ancient Hebrew communities and potentially to Christian communities like my own. Character ethics is ideal for studying the diverse genres within Amos and addressing how the rhetoric might shape the character of an ancient audience with applicability for later audiences as well.

1.2.1 The Course of Old Testament Ethics

Until at least the first half of the twentieth century, most English-speaking scholars treated Old Testament ethics as a diachronic exercise of tracing historical developments in Hebrew morality.[32] Scholars tended to "share a historical, propositional, developmental approach."[33] Similar diachronic approaches prevailed in Europe.[34] Such

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[32] Boda, "Poethics," 46–50.

[33] Boda, "Poethics," 49. Cf. Bruce, *Ethics*; Duff, *Theology and Ethics*; Mitchell, *Ethics*; Smith, *Moral Life*.

[34] Cf. Eichrodt, *Theology 1*; Hempel, *Das Ethos des Alten Testaments*; and later developments discussed by Van Oyen, *Ethik des Alten Testaments*; Otto, *Theologische Ethik*; Krüger, *Das menschliche*

studies focused on legal texts and idealized the prophetic texts, all in order to date the

texts and infer ethical principles from them.[35] Diachronic interests distract from the

function of the final form of Amos, however, and legal texts operate differently than the

poetic and prophetic condemnations that comprise the majority of Amos.

In the second half of the twentieth century, James Muilenburg and Walter

Brueggemann popularized synchronic approaches with attention to the rhetorical and

metaphorical aspects of Old Testament texts that shape the moral imagination.[36] In

contrast to the search for moral propositions and legal imperatives, Christopher J. H.

Wright developed a paradigm-based approach to Old Testament ethics, and others such

as Birch and Janzen studied narrative texts, a neglected genre.[37] John Barton was another

noteworthy scholar in the field, mainly because he wrote about the ethics of non-legal

genres and argued that Old Testament ethics could be based on more than divine

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Herz. As Kessler ("A Strange Land") observes, very little on Old Testament ethics has appeared from German-speaking scholars compared to English-speaking scholars, besides Otto's work. Cf. Otto, "Hebrew Ethics."

[35] Boda, "Poethics," 50, 57.

[36] Boda, "Poethics," 50–51. Cf. Muilenburg, *The Way of Israel*; Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*; Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*; Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*. To be sure, there were some such as Kaiser Jr. who continued to favor the legal material. Cf. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Others such as Nineham and Rodd focused "behind" the text without allowing for continuing applicability in the present. See Nineham, *Use and Abuse of the Bible*; Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*. However, these studies were becoming the exception.

[37] Boda, "Poethics," 52–53. See Carroll R., "Old Testament Law," 37–59. Cf. Wright, *An Eye for an Eye*; Wright, *God's People in God's Land*; Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*; Birch and Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*; Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*; Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics*. See also Wenham, *Story as Torah*.

commands for authority.[38] The course of the field was starting to turn toward other genres

besides legal texts at last.[39]

During the first two decades of the current century, scholars have continued a

steady stream of interest in Old Testament ethics,[40] paving the way for my study of non-

legal genres and moral character (rather than commands and consequences) in Old

Testament ethics. Studies addressing military violence, slavery, sexual inequalities, and

other objectionable issues are always popular.[41] Although social-scientific and historical

approaches continue,[42] a diverse number of publications are using synchronic and

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[38] See Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics*; Barton, *Ethics*.

[39] Cf. Boda, "Poethics," 58. See some of the work on prophetic literature in the last twenty years of the century: Davies, *Prophecy and Ethics*; Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*; Dempsey, *Hope amid the Ruins*; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live*; Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah*; Barton, "Ethics in Isaiah"; Barton, "Ethics in the Isaianic Tradition." Cf. Rogerson et al., eds., *The Bible in Ethics*. Carroll R. ("Considering") notes that evangelicals have ironically neglected the prophets for ethics, and calls for a return to these books.

[40] Cf. Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*; Pleins, *Social Visions*; Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*; Lalleman, *Celebrating the Law*; Rogerson, *Theory and Practice*; van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple*; Sprinkle, *Biblical Law*; Ratheiser, Mitzvoth *Ethics*; Carroll R. and Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*; Sloane, *At Home in a Strange Land*; Davies, *Immoral Bible*; Dell, ed., *Ethical and Unethical*; Arndt, *Demanding Our Attention*; Green et al., eds., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*; Human, ed., *Psalmody and Poetry*; Gosnell, *Ethical Vision*; Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*. See the annotated bibliography of the 1990s and early 2000s in Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 415–40.

[41] Cf. Pressler, *View of Women*; Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*; Brenner, ed., *Feminist Companion*; Weems, *Battered Love*; Penchansky, *What Rough Beast*; Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*; Brenner, ed., *Prophets and Daniel*; Ellens, *Women in the Sex Texts*; Hess and Martens, eds., *War in the Bible*; Crouch, *War and Ethics*; Seibert, *Disturbing Divine Behavior*; Davies, *Immoral Bible*; Mills, "Divine Violence"; O'Brien and Franke, eds., *Aesthetics of Violence*; Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*; Knust, *Unprotected Texts*; Seibert, *Violence of Scripture*; Creach, *Violence in Scripture*; Römer, *Dark God*; Thomas et al., eds., *Holy War in the Bible*; Zehnder and Hagelia, eds., *Encountering Violence*; Copan and Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide*; Carroll R. and Wilgus, eds., *Wrestling with the Violence of God*; Crossan, *How to Read the Bible*; Newkirk, *Just Deceivers*; Olyan, ed., *Ritual Violence*; Gnuse, *Trajectories of Justice*; Dell, *Who Needs the Old Testament*; Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*; Weiss, *Ethical Ambiguity*.

[42] See Pleins, *Social Visions*; Coomber, *Re-Reading the Prophets*; Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*. See the discussion above in §1.1.1 Behind the Text.

ideological approaches to study the ethics of entire stretches of the Old Testament or

Hebrew Bible. Several have continued the task of writing on narrative texts.[43] For poetic

genres, the majority of work has been on the Psalter,[44] but some attention is being paid to

the ethics in Proverbs,[45] Ecclesiastes,[46] and other texts with wisdom themes (e.g., Job).[47]

The prophetic books are also gaining renewed interest,[48] but Amos has only received

extensive ethical treatment from Carroll R., Hilary Marlow, and a few others, if we

exclude commentaries.[49] My study fills a niche and a testing ground for an approach that

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[43] Cf. Wenham, *Story as Torah*; Mills, *Biblical Morality*; Newsom, "Narrative Ethics"; Parry, *Old Testament Story*; Gorospe, *Narrative and Identity*; Long, *To Liberate and Redeem*; Smith, *Fate of Justice and Righteousness*; Lau, *Identity and Ethics in the Book of Ruth*; Rowe, *Michal's Moral Dilemma*; Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*; Culp, *Puzzling Portraits*; Chun, *Ethics and Biblical Narrative*; Claassens and Birch, eds., *Restorative Readings*; Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors*; Westbrook, *"He Will Take Your Daughters"*; Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian Scripture*; Peterson, *Genesis as Torah*. A recent work that integrates psychology into studying narratives is Lasine, *Weighing Hearts*. Attention to the ethics of *how to read* Old Testament narratives is another topic overlapping with Lasine's concerns: Briggs, *Virtuous Reader*. Cf. Nasuti, "Called into Character," 1–24.

[44] Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*; McCann, "'Way of the Righteous'"; Brown, "'Come, O Children'"; Wenham, "The Ethics of the Psalms"; Otto, "From Myth to Theological Language"; Human, ed., *Psalmody and Poetry*; Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*; Owens, *Portraits of the Righteous*; James, *Storied Ethics of the Thanksgiving Psalms*. Scholars are paying attention to the ethical contributions of metaphorical language, which has usually been neglected as peripheral. See Boda, "Poethics," 53–54. Cf. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*; Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*; Dobbs-Allsopp, "Poetic Discourse and Ethics"; O'Dowd, "What Is Old"; Heim, "How and Why"; Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*.

[45] Brown, "Pedagogy"; Davis, "Preserving Virtues"; Yoder, "Objects of Our Affections"; Yoder, "Forming 'Fearers of Yahweh'"; Lyu, *Righteousness*; Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*.

[46] Kamano, *Cosmology and Character*; Atkinson, *Singing at the Winepress*. Despite its similar title, Kamano's work is not very similar to my own in its approach to ethics.

[47] See Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, a major revision of Brown, *Character in Crisis*, and see selected parts of Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Carroll R. and Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*; Dell, ed., *Ethical and Unethical*. Cf. Timmer, "Character Formed in the Crucible."

[48] Cf. Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah*; Dempsey, *Hope amid the Ruins*; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live*; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*; Alaribe, *Ezekiel 18*, 18; Jensen, *Ethical Dimensions*; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good"; Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*; Coomber, *Re-Reading the Prophets*; Hrobon, *Ethical Dimension of Cult*; Hodson, *Uncovering Isaiah's Environmental Ethics*.

[49] Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*; Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues"; Carroll R., "Seek Yahweh, Establish Justice"; Marlow, "The Other Prophet"; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*; Marlow, "Justice for Whom"; Howington, "Toward an Ethical Understanding"; Barton, "Amos's Oracles"; Barton, *Theology*; Hagelia, "Violence"; Houston, *Amos: An Introduction*; Udoekpo, *Rethinking the Prophetic Critique*.

can cover the diverse genres within Amos, few of which are narrative genres and none of which are legal commands.

Within the course of trends, my study also adopts "character ethics" as a more recent and promising approach to ethical implications in the text.[50] This approach emerged in recent decades as a revival of virtue ethics found in Aristotle and Aquinas.[51] Character ethics has since grown from these roots to discuss many aspects of human experiences such as "perception, intention, and disposition, or, more broadly, the affective, cognitive, and volitional" dimensions motivating our actions.[52] This broader focus on human character allows scholars to study more than Greco-Roman categories of virtues or vices, and it can integrate insights from neuroscientific research on emotional dispositions and more.[53] Instead of focusing on ethical commands or consequences, character ethics focuses on the intellectual, emotional, imaginative, and habitual dimensions of forming the character of ancient or contemporary audiences. Beyond the fact that this allows for thicker ethical analysis than looking for moral imperatives,

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[50] Cf. Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Barton, "Reading for Life"; Barton, "Virtue in the Bible"; Carroll R. and Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*; Timmer, "Character Formed in the Crucible"; Dell, ed., *Ethical and Unethical*; Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*, 172; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*; Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*. For this approach in New Testament studies, see Brawley, ed., *Character Ethics and the New Testament*. For a study covering virtues in the entire (Protestant) Bible see Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*. Cf. Porter, *Recovery of Virtue*. The most recent discussion of character ethics is found in Nasuti, "Called into Character," 1–24.

[51] See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice*; MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*; MacIntyre, *A Short History*; MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*; Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*; Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*; Hauerwas, *Community of Character*; Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*; Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues*; Tousley and Kallenberg, "Virtue Ethics," 814–19.

[52] Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*, xii. For now, note only that "character" covers both what we call inward character and outward conduct. Cf. Sloane, *At Home in a Strange Land*, 31.

Carroll R. points to the continuing suffering of the marginalized in our neighborhoods and around the world as reason for such an approach to books like Amos in order to unlock their potential for both internal and external change.[54] Character ethics can cover more of human character than typical studies of Old Testament ethics, and thus it is ideal for studying Amos, a book that does not fit the mold of legal texts.

1.2.2 The Landscape of Old Testament Ethics

Instead of looking at Old Testament ethics diachronically, we can also consider the field synchronically and where in the "landscape" my study fits. Whereas the historical trends above showed what was studied, the lay of the land additionally shows how scholars approach the Old Testament (and thus Amos) in terms of its ethical applicability. It was this latter issue that made it appropriate to save clarification of the phrase "Old Testament ethics" until now, since it can be taken descriptively or prescriptively.[55] In fact, "Old Testament ethics" can refer to three different things, according to Barton: (1) a description of moral beliefs held among all or most ancient Israelites, (2) a description of moral beliefs held by certain Old Testament authors, or (3) a prescription of the moral beliefs espoused in the Old Testament (as authoritative Scriptures) that should be held today.[56] Even though I affirm a nuanced applicability and relevance of the Old Testament in Christian circles, I follow the second definition here, looking only descriptively at the

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[53] See more in my methodology chapter, §2.2.2.

[54] Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 77–82.

[55] Wilson, "Sources and Methods"; Carroll R., "Old Testament Ethics," 561.

[56] Barton, "Understanding," 16.

moral character encouraged or discouraged in the text of Amos for its implied audience

of Hebrew speakers. Similar to Barton, Carroll R. lists a threefold division of approaches

that look for moral issues "behind" the text (sociology, history), "within" the text

(literary), and "in front of" the text (ideological, character ethics), respectively.[57] These

categories often overlap partially. The trouble with both the twofold (descriptive vs.

prescriptive) and the threefold (behind, within, in front of) categories is that they fail to

show both dimensions at the same time.[58] It would be better to chart the array of

approaches on two axes, as in the figure below (fig. 1). The vertical axis represents a high

or low view of the authority or applicability of the Old Testament for ethics today,[59]

while the horizontal axis represents a range from a focus on the world "behind" the text

(left side) all the way to a focus more prominently on the audiences "in front of" the text

(right side). The placements within each box are alphabetical and merely impressionistic.

Those scholars just above the horizontal axis appreciate the value of the texts but object

to oppressive parts. Those below the line make these objections their overriding stance.

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[57] Cf. Carroll R., "Ethics," 191. Cf. Carroll R., "Old Testament Ethics," 562–65. Carroll R. includes in the first category Pleins, *Social Visions*; Rogerson, *Theory and Practice*. In the second category: Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*; Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*; Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*. Carroll R. includes his own work employing "virtue/character ethics" within the third category "in front of" the text (564). My own approach similarly uses character ethics.

[58] Similarly, the five types of ethical approaches introduced in Knight, "Introduction" and employed in Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah* are more confusing than clarifying.

[59] For a brief history of approaches to the ethical authority of the Old Testament, see Wright, "Ethical Authority, Part 1"; Wright, "Ethical Authority, Part 2"; Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 387–414; Carroll R., "Ethics in Old Testament Theologies."

High Authority

			Judaizers/Legalism Kaiser Jr.	Theonomism	
	Bruce Eichrodt Mitchell J. M. P. Smith	Jensen	Brown Janzen Muilenburg **My approach** Parry Anne Stewart Wenham C. J. H. Wright	Carroll R. Coomber Copan Goldingay Marlow Sloane Udoekpo	
	Pleins	Lapsley (on Ezekiel)	Birch & Rasmussen	Brueggemann Davis Dempsey Lapsley (later) Rogerson	

Behind the Text — **Within the Text** — **In Front**

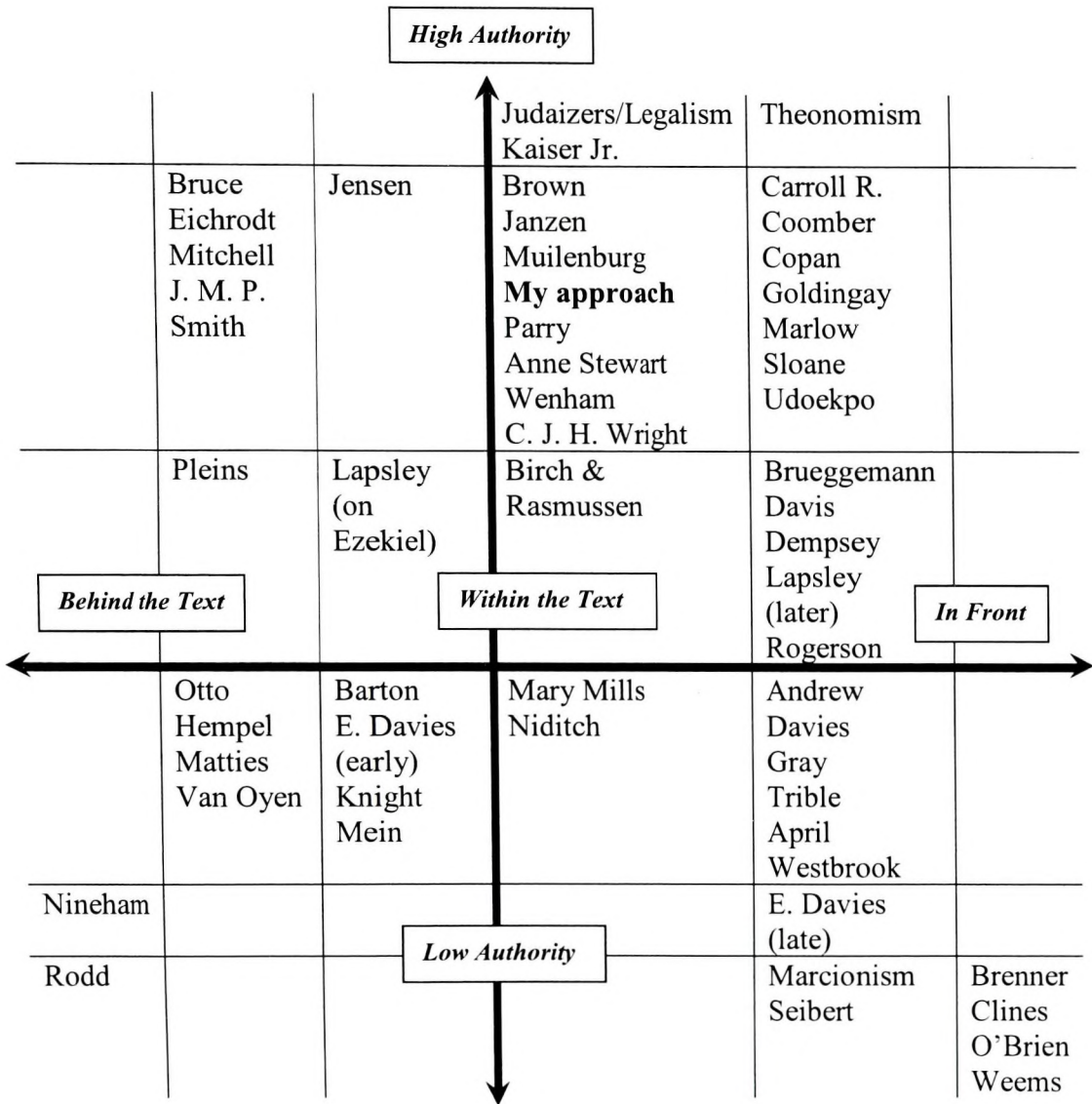|			Mary Mills Niditch	Andrew Davies Gray Trible April Westbrook	
	Otto Hempel Matties Van Oyen	Barton E. Davies (early) Knight Mein			
Nineham				E. Davies (late)	
Rodd				Marcionism Seibert	Brenner Clines O'Brien Weems

Low Authority

Figure 1. Charting approaches to Old Testament ethics

Some scholars strongly affirm the message of the book,[60] others qualify problematic

features but remain appreciative overall,[61] and still others are strongly suspicious of

oppressive aspects of the book.[62] Generally, only those who have written prominently on

Old Testament ethics or prophets are included in the table above. Those close to the

vertical axis spend more time doing detailed literary readings of the biblical texts, even if

they have slightly more interest in origins or functions of the texts. The farther to the

right they are, the more prominently they have audience-centered interests or discussions

of contemporary relevance in their interpretation. In *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary*

Environmental Ethics, for example, Marlow treats Amos, Hosea, and most of Isaiah (i.e.,

Isa 1–39) from an ecological angle.[63] Marlow is one of the only scholars doing research

on environmental ethics in Amos to date.[64] My approach differs from hers in a more

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[60] For Latin American contexts see Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*; Carroll R., "Context, Bible and Ethics," 9–15. For African contexts see Udoekpo, *Rethinking the Prophetic Critique*. For African American contexts see Bartlett, "Let Justice Roll Down."

[61] See discussion in Carroll R., "Ethics and Old Testament Interpretation," 209; Carroll R., "Ethics," 189–90. He has in mind studies such as Birch and Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*; Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*; Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*; van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple*; Dempsey, *Hope amid the Ruins*; Dempsey, *The Prophets*. Cf. Erickson, "Amos"; Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*.

[62] See Sanderson, "Amos"; Clines, "Metacommentating Amos"; Linville, "Amos among the 'Dead Prophets Society'"; Landy, "Smith, Derrida, and Amos." On other prophets and readings against the grain, see Weems, *Battered Love*; Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah*; Gray, *Rhetoric and Social Justice in Isaiah*; O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor*; Davies, *Immoral Bible*; Brenner, ed., *Feminist Companion*; Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches"; Brenner, ed., *Prophets and Daniel*; Doan and Giles, *Prophets, Performance, and Power*.

[63] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*.

[64] Cf. Marlow, "Call of the Wild"; Marlow, "The Other Prophet"; Marlow, "Justice for All the Earth"; Marlow, "Justice for Whom"; Marlow, "Ecology, Theology, Society"; Marlow, "YHWH Roars"; Marlow, "Anguish of the Earth"; and her forthcoming commentary on Amos. There are also more limited studies by Gillingham, "'Who Makes the Morning Darkness'"; Heyns, "Space and Time in Amos 7"; Heyns, "Space and Time in Amos 8"; Snyman, "Land"; Snyman, "Eretz and Adama"; Laato, "Yahweh Sabaoth and His Land"; Thang, *Theology of the Land*; Ellis, "Amos Ecology." Ellis looks broadly at the goodness, pain, and renewal of relationships within the natural world as depicted in the book.

detailed ethical analysis but a narrower scope, namely, the impact of just one biblical

book on its ancient audience, not on its contemporary readers. My approach also differs

from the Earth Bible Project in that I do not use an ecological lens for adding extra

personification to the natural world or for reading against the grain to advocate for

environmental justice.[65] While I do think there are implications for today that can be

drawn from the nature imagery in Amos, in this study I limit myself to ancient contexts

and do not make the biblical figures out to be modern environmentalists.[66] I place my

own approach in the upper right quadrant above, with a high view of the ethical

applicability of Amos and a focus that is both "within" and "in front of" the text's

rhetoric.[67]

1.3 Summary of Previous Approaches

Although it is briefer than the major prophets, Amos is a powerful book that left an

impact on its target audiences, otherwise it would not have been preserved over the

centuries. Scholars have studied the historical, socio-economic, ethical, and theological

elements of the book, but they have rarely examined the frequent presence of the natural

world in the text and how this shapes the ethical message of the book indelibly. Amos

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[65] Habel, ed., *Readings*; Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches"; Earth Bible Team, "Voice of Earth"; Habel and Trudinger, eds., *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*. Compare Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 90–95, where she assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the Earth Bible Project.

[66] See some criticisms of environmentalist readings in Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land*, 245–49.

[67] Historical context "behind" the text is still important for my approach, but only when it illuminates the social and historical dynamics referenced in Amos and provides a check on subjective guesswork, not when it becomes an end in itself to discover the origins of the ideas or textual editions of Amos. I would affirm the many benefits of historical criticism, as does Möller ("Reconstructing," 410–11), especially in preventing anachronisms and accurately identifying ancient referents and customs.

reciprocally connects the natural world (cosmos) and the moral world (ethos) together, implying that the condition and conceptions of the cosmos are partly *reflective* of human character and partly *formative* for human character in turn. Creation shapes character.

My approach to rhetoric requires a focus that is not mired in a search for the historical origins or aesthetic devices of the book of Amos. The rhetoric of the book requires attention within but ultimately in front of the text, looking at the persuasive potential of the creation rhetoric on the ancient audience implied by the text. Because the ethical impact is of particular interest, an approach to Old Testament ethics that is descriptive and flexible enough to handle the diverse, often poetic genres of Amos is needed. Character ethics fits these requirements, and it covers more dimensions of moral character than approaches restricted to commands or consequences, where internal dispositions matter less. Many of the framing concepts and steps in my methodology still need to be explained in the next chapter, however. It is there that references to "creation" and "character" become more transparent and specific.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

If "creation" and "character" are mutual influences on each other in Amos, then it is

essential to give my assumptions and definitions for these two concepts that serve as a

framework for the study. Then, in the second half of the chapter, I will explain my

methodological steps for rhetorical analysis and character ethics.

2.1 Research Framework

What we in the West tend to separate—cosmos and culture, nature and humans—the

cosmologies of the ancient Near East assumed to be connected inextricably.[68] Because of

this connection, ancient Hebrew portrayals of the created cosmos more clearly reflected

and shaped their culture. The divinely created cosmos was thus a formative context for

culture, and so too culture, including human character, was a formative context for

conceptions of and treatment of the rest of creation or the natural world.[69] This mutual

relationship between non-human creation and character, Brown notes, suggests that

"every model of the cosmos conveys an ethos."[70] The term "ethos" refers to the type of

"environment that makes possible and sustains moral living, establishing the direction

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[68] Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 1–2. See also Simkins, *Yahweh's Activity*; Simkins, *Creator and Creation*; Rasmussen, "Cosmology and Ethics"; Rasmussen, "Sightings." Many indigenous views of the world are also more holistic (Peterson, *Being Human*, 77–126).

[69] Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 10. "Creation" or "nature" will be defined provisionally as the non-human life and non-urban features of the universe. More details are given below.

and parameters of human conduct."[71] There are many dimensions of moral character, but both natural landscapes and moral "landscapes" shape each other with the result that each conception of the natural world also implies a "moral habitat"[72] that nurtures our sense of place and purpose in the world. Character shapes creation, and creation shapes character. We answer "How shall we live?" in part by what kind of wider world we think we inhabit. What, though, does "creation" include and exclude, and what is "character"?

2.1.1 Creation as Formative Context for Character

Because the English terms "nature," "creation," and similar variations have complex histories and connotations, it is important to clarify in what sense I am using them. Some of the baggage attached to "nature" or the "natural world" can be the secular, materialistic view that humans are detached from the rest of the universe and left to determine the uses and purposes of the natural world for themselves without any Creator in the picture.[73] On the other hand, "creation" is typically used in religious communities to refer to the universe (and not just its material aspects) or to the original making of it by a divine Creator (God). "Creation" can even be viewed as the sustaining and renewing of the universe by the activities of this Creator and of creatures. In the broadest sense, then,

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[70] Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 2.

[71] Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 11.

[72] Erhard, *Moral Habitat*.

[73] For discussion of the term "nature" and its often unfortunate connotations, see Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation*, 31–59. It has been used in ways that separate humans from "nature" and project our hopes and fears onto it. Contemporary human impacts on the natural world bring the very concept of "nature" into question, according to some. Cf. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*; Albertson and King, eds., *Without Nature*. The definition of "nature" is thus wrapped up in what it means to be "human" (so Peterson, *Being Human*; Doak, *Consider Leviathan*; Marlow, "Human Condition"; Marlow, *Becoming Truly Human*).

the concept of "creation" in the Bible should not be limited to past creative work by God (i.e., origins) but should include the ongoing and future creative work that is done by God or his creatures who bring about new things.[74] Even though "creation" is a larger concept than "nature," I will often use them equally to refer to the universe, the "(natural/created) world," or the "cosmos" as conceived by the ancient Hebrews.[75] Their views of the cosmos and its creatures categorized and divided things differently that many of us in North America do, and many of the entrenched dichotomies we have were nonexistent or softer.[76] Humans are part of creation in the biblical traditions, not separate from it.

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[74] Fretheim, *God and World*, 4. "Creation," Fretheim continues, is "not to be equated with *nature* or *world*. To speak of 'creation' is to state that the cosmos does not simply exist; it was *created* by God. More particularly, . . . the creative activity of God includes the work of originating, continuing, and completing creation. The word *creation* can also be used for the *result* of such creative activity, but not in the sense of a finished product, given the reality of continuing creation. Creation also includes the activity of creatures (human and nonhuman) in and through which God works to create in ever new ways."

[75] The closest the Old Testament texts come to a comprehensive designation for entire universe would be its references to השמים ואת הארץ ("the sky and the land," traditionally "the heavens and the earth"; Gen 1:1; cf. Pss 115:15; 121:2; 136:5–6; Pss 89:12 [Eng. 11]; Isa 13:13; 42:5; 45:18; 48:13; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 51:15). Some texts add the "sea" as a third zone of the cosmos (e.g., Exod 20:11; Ps 146:6; Jonah 1:9). The closest single term for the entire planet would be ארץ ("the land/earth") or תבל ("the world"), often found in parallel (1 Sam 2:8; 2 Sam 22:16; 1 Chr 16:30; Job 18:18; 34:13; 37:12; Pss 9:9 [Eng. 8]; 18:16 [Eng. 15]; 19:5 [Eng. 4]; 24:1; 33:8; 50:12; 77:19 [Eng. 18]; 89:12 [Eng. 11]; 90:2; 93:1; 96:10, 13; 97:4; 98:7–8; Prov 8:26, 31; Isa 13:11; 14:21; 18:3; 24:4; 26:9, 18; 27:6; 34:1; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Lam 4:12; Hos 4:3; Nah 1:5). The closest terminology for the concept of all creations or creatures collectively is the "works" of God (Pss 92:6 [Eng. 5]; 104:24, 31; 139:14; 145:9–10; Prov 8:22), "every living (thing)" (Gen 6:19; 8:21; Job 12:10; 28:21; Ps 145:16), or "all flesh" (e.g., Gen 6:17, 19; 7:15, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15–17; Lev 17:14; Num 16:22; 18:15; 27:16; Deut 5:26; Pss 136:25; 145:21; Isa 40:5–6; 49:26; Jer 25:31; 32:27; Ezek 20:48; Dan 4:9 [Eng. 12]; Zech 2:17 [Eng. 13]), though this last designation occasionally denotes only the land and sky creatures or only humans.

[76] See Tucker, "Rain on a Land"; Hiebert, *Yahwist's Landscape*, 76–77. For example, we today might divide the cosmos into living and non-living things, whereas some biblical traditions draw that line within the animal kingdom itself such that some animals count as נפש חיה ("a living being" or "an animal life"; Gen 1:20–21, 24, 28; cf. 1:30; 2:7) while plants and some other phyla of moving creatures are not called this (Anderson, "Creation and Ecology," 162). See generally Whitekettle, "Where the Wild Things Are." Despite the sense that there are "kinds" (מין) of creatures, the Old Testament classifies them not by their biological traits but by a mixture of their zone of habitation and/or their manner of movement (water, sky, or land, and teeming, flying, or crawling; e.g., Gen 1:20–30; 6:7, 20; 7:8, 23; 8:17, 19; 9:2; Lev 11:46; 20:25; Deut 4:17–18; 1 Sam 17:43, 46; 2 Sam 21:10; Job 12:7–8; Pss 8:8–9 [Eng. 7–8]; 79:2; 104:11–12;

But if everything except for God counts as creation, a study of creation themes in the broadest sense would need to study every entity and action in Amos equally. Some limitation is necessary. Even to study everything except for human beings would be too broad. After all, weapons of war,[77] cities, limestone plaster (Amos 2:1), a ram's horn for a bugle (Amos 2:2; 3:6), silver for money (Amos 2:6; 8:6), clothing (e.g., Amos 2:6, 8; 8:6, 10), altars and buildings (e.g., Amos 2:8; 3:14–15; 6:9–11; 9:1), furniture (e.g., Amos 3:12), harps (Amos 5:23; 6:5), metal (Amos 7:7–8), and so forth are all parts of the created order and not identical to human beings. However, these manufactured products or built environments will not be considered "creation rhetoric" because the connections to the wider ecosystem of non-human creatures and features is not as evident in these inanimate buildings and objects. Manufactured items will only be discussed as "creation rhetoric" when the text emphasizes the material derived from the natural world as a critique of human culture, such as the references to "ivory" decorations (Amos 3:15; 6:4). Other references to manufactured items do not mention the animal derivation (e.g., Amos 2:2; 3:6) or the substance used in making the tools or built environments (e.g., Amos 5:11). Another borderline case is the references to "fire" in the opening oracles of Amos

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148:10; Ezek 38:20; Dan 4:9 [Eng. 12]; Hos 2:20 [Eng. 18]; 4:3; Zeph 1:3). Several texts also distinguish whether the larger land animals are domesticated or wild (e.g., Gen 1:24–26; 2:20; 3:1, 14; Exod 23:11, 29; Lev 5:2; 25:7; 26:22; Pss 8:8 [Eng. 7]; 50:10; 104:11, 13; 148:10; Jer 27:6; Ezek 14:21; Hos 13:8; Joel 1:18, 20; 2:22; Mic 5:7 [Eng. 8]; cf. "bad animal(s)" in Gen 37:20, 33; Lev 26:6; Ezek 5:17; 14:15, 21; 34:25). By contrast, we should not exaggerate differences in human *experience* of the natural world between then and now, even if ancient Hebrews classified creatures differently (Rogerson, "Old Testament View of Nature," 68).

[77] For example, Amos 1:11; 2:15; 4:10; 7:9, 11; 9:1, 4, 10.

1–2. Although Yahweh's words there are "I will send fire" on the cities,[78] it is likely that

this would be accomplished through human armies setting the urban buildings ablaze

rather than through lightning, meteors, or volcanic activity.[79] While it might seem that

this fire should not count as creation rhetoric if it is wielded by humans, I argue that in

these instances the fire is not fully controlled by people.[80] Yahweh as divine warrior

wields the fire in Amos 1–2 just as he threatens to do elsewhere (e.g., Amos 5:6; 7:4).

Although the exceptions above can be debated, I will typically use the terms

"(non-human) creation" or "natural world" in less inclusive ways for the sake of showing

the interrelatedness of human character and the natural world in which it was shaped. By

"creation rhetoric," therefore, I mostly mean the metaphorical or literal references to the

non-human aspects and residents of the cosmos in the biblical texts. This includes any

references to natural phenomena such as earthquakes (Amos 1:1–2; 2:13; 3:14–15; 6:9–

11; 8:8; 9:1, 5), storms, rain, wind (Amos 1:14; 4:7, 13), fire,[81] or darkness and light

(Amos 4:13; 5:8, 18, 20; 8:9). It also includes any depictions of wild animals and pests[82]

along with the mention of plants.[83] It includes any references to the underworld (Amos

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[78] Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5.

[79] As evidence, military details follow the mention of fire in Amos 1:5, 8, 14–15, 2:2–3. Cf. 2 Kgs 8:12; Jer 17:27; 49:27; Hos 8:14; 10:14; Amos 3:11; 6:8; Nah 3:12–15.

[80] This is comparable to the warhorse in Job 39:19–25 that is still wild enough to feature there with other wild animals despite its partial domestication by humans.

[81] Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; 5:6; 7:4. There are a few indirect references to fire implicit in acts of burning or offering plants and animals (Amos 2:1; 4:5, 11; 5:22; 6:10), but these examples are controlled uses, do not draw attention to the fire, and thus will not be counted—with the exception of Amos 4:11 due to the non-human agent likely behind the burning.

[82] Amos 1:2, 11, 13; 3:4–5, 8, 12; 4:9–10; 5:19; 7:1–2; 9:3.

[83] Amos 1:2; 2:9; 5:7; 6:12; 7:1–2, 14. See Hall, *Plants as Persons*, 16, 60.

9:2), to the sky and its celestial bodies (Amos 5:8, 26; 9:2, 6),[84] to water and its sources

or courses,[85] and to the "land" or "soil" (respectively ארץ or אדמה) along with its

habitats, topography, dust, or rocks.[86] I use "nature imagery" as a loose equivalent of

"creation rhetoric" throughout.

References to agricultural occupations, activities, and products present another

dilemma,[87] though, for it is here that human society and the rest of the natural world

overlap the most. Like the built environments or manufactured items earlier, agriculture

is shaped by human culture quite strongly. But unlike the manufactured items, the

agricultural references are often to non-human organisms and their produce, and thus

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[84] Consideration should also be given to the צבאות (;"hosts" or "cosmic armies") under Yahweh's command (Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14–16, 27; 6:8, 14; 9:5), and how the term likely refers to or includes the celestial bodies (e.g., sun, moon, stars) in the sky above that are potentially associated with supernatural beings. See Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 119, who calls צבאות "an epithet with military connotations of Yahweh as divine warrior." He explains how it could either refer "to the nation's [Israel's] armies, celestial hosts, or the heavenly divine council, or whether it is an abstract plural signifying power (hence, the translation 'Almighty' [in the OG and some English versions]). In the broader context of the book of Amos, one or more of these is a viable option. The mention of the stars and creation in two hymnic passages could point to the celestial realm (5:8; 9:6), even as 3:7 apparently alludes to the heavenly council. The bringing of attacking armies against other nations and Israel could point to human referents, and the incomparable might of Yahweh is indisputable in the book. In any case, this title of Yahweh is linked straightforwardly with armed conflict (119)." Despite Carroll R.'s caution, I believe the celestial zone is most likely the location of these armies, considering the context of Amos 4:13; 5:27; 9:5 (cf. Amos 3:7). See the discussion in Amos 3:13 for further reasons.
[85] Amos 4:7–8; 5:8, 24; 6:12 (if emended), 14; 7:4; 8:8, 11–12; 9:3, 5–6.
[86] References to ארץ or אדמה include Amos 2:7, 10; 3:1–2, 5, 9, 11; 4:13; 5:2, 7–8; 7:2, 10–12, 17; 8:4, 8, 11; 9:5–9, 13, 15. Compare the meaning of אדמה as "soil," implying its fertility as a place where life can thrive. Not all of these references are equally significant for ecological concerns, since ארץ ("land"), for example, can appear in fixed expressions (e.g., "the land of Egypt") or idioms (e.g., "to the land") that do not draw much attention to the features of the natural terrain. References to habitats and areas include "pastures" (Amos 1:2), the Lebanon "Valley" (Amos 1:5), the proverbial "forest // lair" (Amos 3:4), the "wilderness" (Amos 2:10; 5:25), the "Rift Valley" (Amos 6:14), a "farmable portion" (Amos 4:7; 7:4), and the areas designated "north" and "sunrise" (Amos 8:12). References to mountains and high places include Amos 1:2; 3:9; 4:1, 3 (if emended), 13; 6:1; 7:9; 9:3, 13. References to dust, rocks, or pebbles include Amos 2:7; 6:12; 9:9.
[87] E.g., Amos 1:1, 3; 2:13; 3:12; 4:3, 7, 9; 5:11, 16–17; 6:12; 7:1, 14–15; 8:1–2; 9:9, 13–15.

they are more clearly part of the wider, non-human creation, despite being cultivated or

domesticated.[88] Therefore, domesticated animals,[89] oil and wine,[90] grains and bread,[91] as

well as figs and other cultivated fruits (Amos 7:14; 8:1–2; 9:14) will be considered part

of the "creation rhetoric" in Amos as well. See the figure below for an illustration of the

areas to be covered by "creation rhetoric" in the study (fig. 2). Despite this rather

extensive scope of what counts as the natural world imagery for this study, not all of the

creatures and features are equally significant for ethics. For example, the term ארץ can be

used in a phrase such as "the land of Egypt" (Amos 2:10) where there are no ethical

dispositions expected of the audience from the mention of the land as political territory

alone. Other times ארץ and אדמה ("soil") are merely indicating the relative position of

hunting tools (Amos 3:5) or the place where people, plants, and pebbles fall to the ground

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[88] Although Brown (*Ethos of the Cosmos*, 229–69) tries to maintain a distinction between human agriculture and divine horticulture untouched by human hands in Isa 40–55 (247, 252), the garden imagery he discusses still shows a blend of "culture and horticulture" that he equates, respectively, with "community and nature" (p. 238), or "city" and "garden" (266). Thus, with "cultivation comes acculturation" (268).

[89] Sheep/goats: Amos 1:1 (implied); 3:12 (implied); 6:4; 7:15; cows/oxen: Amos 1:1 (implied); 4:1; 6:4, 12; 7:14 (implied); horses: Amos 2:15; 4:10; 6:12; and animal offerings from flocks/herds: Amos 4:4–5; 5:22, 25. Domesticated land animals (בהמה) were considered part of the human community or household economy living in close existence with people (cf. Gen 34:23; Exod 8:13, 17–18; 9:9–10, 19, 22, 25; 11:7; 12:12; 13:2; 19:13; 22:19; Lev 1:2; 18:23; 20:15–16; 27:9, 11, 28; Num 3:13; 8:17; 14:17; 18:15; 31:11, 26; Deut 2:35; 3:7; 20:14; 27:21; 28:11; 2 Kgs 3:17; Pss 36:7 [Eng. 6]; 104:14; Prov 12:10; Jer 21:6; 31:27; 32:43; 33:10, 12; 51:62; Ezek 14:13; 32:13; 36:11; Jonah 4:8, 11; Zech 8:10), whereas wild animals and wild plants (and possibly human foreigners) were considered "other" (see Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 26–29; Tucker, "Rain on a Land," 10). But even with domestic animals the texts recognize distinctions that make the creatures non-human in status, abilities, or treatment (Exod 13:15; 22:19; Lev 24:21; Job 18:3; 35:11; Ps 73:22; Dan 4:13 [Eng. 16]; 5:21). Domestic animals (בהמה) typically include livestock of the בקר ("cattle/herd") and צאן ("flock") varieties (Lev 1:2; Joel 1:18; Jonah 3:7; cf. Deut 28:4), or donkeys, oxen, and sheep (Exod 22:10), or cattle, donkeys, and flocks (Num 31:30), or oxen, sheep, and goats (Deut 14:4)—various ways of subdividing the livestock.

[90] Amos 2:8, 12; 4:1; 5:11; 6:6; 9:13–14.

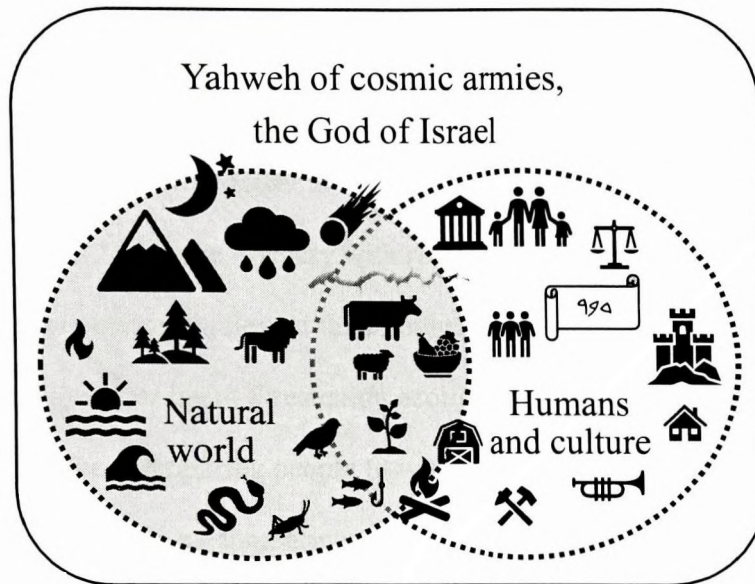[91] Amos 4:4–6; 5:11, 25; 7:12; 8:5–6; 9:13.

Figure 2. Illustrating what creation rhetoric includes

(Amos 5:2, 7; 9:9). The "mountains" of Samaria (Amos 3:9) are just that, not a cipher for arrogance or strength. Agricultural references to herding or farming (Amos 7:14–15) do not have the same moral impact that actions by Yahweh in the natural world tend to have (Amos 4:6–13; 5:8; 9:5–6). It may be an issue of who controls the natural creatures or features that makes a difference. Whether nature imagery is metaphorical or literal does not seem to be a decisive factor, however. Metaphorical depictions of Yahweh as a lion (Amos 1:2; 3:8) or of an earthquake as the cracks underneath a wagon (Amos 2:13) are more generative of reverence than are literal references to caring for herds (Amos 1:1), eating them (Amos 6:4), or failing to eat crops (Amos 5:11). It is hard to assess whether literal references to natural disasters (Amos 4:6–11) pack a more powerful punch than symbolic fruit or figurative drought do (Amos 8:1–2, 11–12). Symbolic summer fruit

(Amos 8:1–2) in turn, however, is more ominous than a passing reference to seasonal homes, used in the summer, that will be destroyed (Amos 3:15). When nature imagery features in analogies or illustrative scenarios (Amos 3:4–5, 12; 5:19), it can be striking but fail to convey any positive content about faithful living, as other nature imagery can do (Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12). Nature imagery with reference to natural-world events (Amos 1:2; 8:8; 9:5) is more ethically relevant than imagery with a human-army referent (Amos 4:2; 9:9), because the latter is not threatening ecological harm but illustrating military harm on humans alone. Comparing people to wild animals (Amos 1:11, 13; 2:7; 8:4) is perhaps equally as effective as comparing them to domesticated or hunted ones (Amos 4:1–3). Sometimes references to the sky are just hypothetical (Amos 9:2), not as impressive as stars, rain, or cosmic armies can be (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6). In other words, there are gradations or levels of creation rhetoric in Amos, some of which hold greater significance for character ethics. Not every natural feature is used to make an ethical appeal, and not all appeals are to the same dispositions. Still, every mention of a natural feature assumes the overlapping relationships between humans, the rest of creation, and the divine creator. They cannot be separated.

In her study of environmental ethics in Amos and similar books, Marlow addresses the same difficult issue of defining what counts as creation, even though creation cannot be rigidly separated from the relationships it has among its members and with its creator.[92] She ends up interchangeably using phrases such as "the natural world,"

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[92] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 7–8.

"the earth," and "non-human creation" to designate "creation apart from humanity," while she uses "creation" mostly for "the whole of the created order, including humanity."[93] Even though humans and their built environments are part of the created order just as much as other creatures and features of the natural world are, for the sake of showing interrelationships Marlow distinguishes human "society" on the one hand from "the non-human creation," "the natural world," or "the land/earth" on the other.[94] Relationships between these two spheres of culture and nature could be portrayed as harmonious or hostile in the biblical texts,[95] but it is too simplistic to view culture and nature as utterly opposed to or separate from each other.[96] She focuses on "what happens at the boundaries between human and non-human creation," including in the agricultural realm.[97] To exclude agricultural references from my study would be to perpetuate a modern dichotomy between nature and culture that is not as sharp in Amos.[98] Creation

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[93] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 8. Marlow also uses the phrases like "the rest of the natural world," "the rest of the created world," and "the rest of creation" (e.g., *Biblical Prophets*, 15, 30, 32, 34, 37, 44, 110). In addition to "creation" as a whole, she also uses "the cosmos" (e.g., *Biblical Prophets*, 19–20, 24, 103–4, 164), "the created order" (e.g., *Biblical Prophets*, 119), and "the world" (e.g., *Biblical Prophets*, 9, 52, 55, 57, 62–63, 74, 80–81, 83, 95–101, 103, 105–8, 116, 119, 158–59), three more inclusive terms that she does, nevertheless, employ at times for just planet Earth or just the non-human aspects of the universe.

[94] For example, Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 8–9, 76, 119, 152, 197, 100, 103–4, 226, 238, 241–43, 276. Compare the breached boundaries between civilization and wilderness in Isa 34 (230, 233).

[95] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 8–9. And yet she finds it helpful (as I do) to distinguish the "cultural (religious, political, social)" from the "natural (such as earthquake or drought)" (115) or to distinguish between "wild and tame animals" (268). Cf. Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 26–29.

[96] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 272–73. Cf. Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 2, 384.

[97] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 9. In her conclusion (265), she says that the prophets "not only recognize the material and economic value of the produce of the land, but also assign a place for the wider non-human creation . . . which far outstrips any utilitarian value."

[98] See Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 2–3: "If the sharp urban/rural dichotomy that now characterizes the industrialized West existed at all in Israel, it was only late, in the Hellenistic period. Certainly the Bible attests to ongoing tensions between city and countryside, but there was also deep interpenetration . . . An urban world completely uninvolved in and ignorant of agriculture is a quite new phenomenon."

rhetoric will encompass the non-human cosmos, agriculture, and any creative activity by Yahweh on the natural world. In this way, the cosmos part of the study can be defined before moving to the ethical analysis of the ethos in Amos.

2.1.2 Character as Formative Context for Creation

This study concerns not just the cosmos in Amos but also "character ethics." The advantages of this approach are outlined above in the sections about previous studies on Amos and Old Testament ethics. Character ethics is not a rigid method so much as a flexible framework used to explore various dimensions of an individual's or community's "character."[99] I define *character* as broadly as possible as "the self in relation" since we form our characteristic identities through our relationships with others (including God) in our communities and places in creation.[100] The significance of adding "moral" or "ethical" (synonymously) before "character" is that it adds an evaluative aspect whereby we can discuss whether an instance of character is "good" or "evil." In order to evaluate character, though, we need to discuss the perception or "moral imagination" of what counts as good in a community's overarching "moral vision." Then some specific categories of human character will be defined, such as desires, dispositions, and practices.

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[99] Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*, xi–xiii. See recent discussion of character ethics applied to biblical studies by Nasuti, "Called into Character," 1–24.

[100] Bondi, "Elements of Character," 204. Cf. Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 9. See more broadly Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*; Newsom, *Self as Symbolic Space*; Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self"; Doak, *Consider Leviathan*; Niditch, *Responsive Self*.

2.1.2.1 Moral Imagination to See a Moral Vision for Thriving

We are continually forming our sense of the world through interpretation, selective attention, and evaluation of experiences, not just plain sight.[101] We thus "construct" a sense of our environment in ways that may overlap with or differ from the picture that others construct. We interpret the world *as* a certain kind of place. "Moral imagination" is a suitable label for this ability to picture the actual world or a possible world *as* something good or evil.[102] Ever since his seminal work in *The Prophetic Imagination*, Brueggemann has helped us to re-discover the function of the imagination as "to entertain, host, trust, and respond to *images* of reality," especially when such images picture an alternative to mainstream, narrow ways of thinking.[103] Cognitive science as well suggests that the human brain uses imaginative, metaphorical analogies to conduct most of its moral reasoning (e.g., to apply principles to new situations).[104] Moral imagination is one crucial key, then, to determining right and wrong. It allows people to "see" something as desirable.

The moral imagination of a person or community allows them to "see" an overarching moral vision, a picture of "the good" or the good life toward which living is ultimately aimed.[105] In classical Greek virtue ethics, "the good" would be a kind of social

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[101] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 9.
[102] Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 19–21. See also Ricoeur, "Imagination," 173.
[103] Brueggemann, *Pathway of Interpretation*, xx. Cf. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*; Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*; Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation*, 13. More recently, see De Hulster, "Imagination."
[104] Johnson, *Moral Imagination*; Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 170–77.
[105] Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 82–83; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 104. Cf. Tousley and Kallenberg, "Virtue Ethics," 814–19.

flourishing determined through explicit philosophical deliberation. In Amos or another

biblical book, however, "the good (life)" is a kind of social flourishing implicitly

suggested when certain configurations of the world are critiqued as far from ideal or are

encouraged and promised as the ideal in the text.[106] The ideals of justice and goodness are

not abstract but concrete notions in the biblical texts, "grounded in the conviction that the

proper ordering of society should reflect God's moral constitution of life itself."[107] While

a study of Hebrew terms translated "good" and "evil" is one avenue for inferring this

ideal, there are numerous other ways that the biblical texts imply an ethical ideal, even

without these common terms.[108] To summarize so far, with moral imagination as our

"eyes" and a moral vision as the ideal (what we "prize," namely, to "thrive"), it remains

to unpack the other elements of human character: desires, dispositions, and practices.

2.1.2.2 Desires, Dispositions, and Practices All Aimed at Thriving

I follow the cultural anthropology of James K. A. Smith, who argues that human behavior

is driven more by our embodied desires and emotions than our rational intellects, and

thus that moral formation happens more by habitual desires and practices than it is by

beliefs.[109] We are shaped by the kind of "kingdom" we long to enjoy—our moral vision

of an ideal cosmos—as argued above, and thus our desire-driven practices in turn deepen

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[106] Invoking "the good" here is not a hopeless anachronism but rather a helpful heuristic tool "to probe how the prophetic literature envisions the ethical ideal" in its diverse contexts (Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 104).

[107] Carroll R., "Failing the Vulnerable," 35.

our allegiance to that kingdom in our embodied desires and dispositions.[110] I would argue that this anthropological framework is sufficiently applicable to ancient Israel as well, at least in its explanatory power. It is able to explain the "intentional" aspect of human character, namely, how desires are aimed at certain goals which serve as benchmarks of moral progress or regress.[111] If moral imagination enables us to "see" what we imagine to be "good" and "desirable," then *desire* is the drive that motivates us to pursue it (cf. Gen 3:6). Because we are creatures of habit, however, raw willpower or desire alone is not enough to account for moral character. There are also the habits of heart and mind (dispositions) and of action (practices) to consider.

I will call the habits of heart and mind the "dispositions," those patterns of inclinations that a person or group embodies in various situations, according to Brown.[112] Smith defines dispositions as "our default tendencies" to behave in certain ways, "to cherish certain relationships," and to do so *automatically* without conscious reflection most of the time.[113] Dispositions are blends of what we call cognitive-intellectual and affective-emotional virtues or vices.[114] The importance of the emotions has emerged in

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[108] Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 104–8. As Carroll R. says, "The 'good' here [in Micah] is not defined explicitly in any systematic fashion, but its general intent is made clearer through a constellation of images and ideas throughout this section of the book" (105).

[109] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*; Smith, *You Are What You Love*.

[110] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 93.

[111] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 9–10.

[112] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 11.

[113] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 56.

[114] MacIntyre (*After Virtue*, 149) has a similar explanation of virtues: "Virtues are dispositions not only to act in particular ways, but also to feel in particular ways."

scholarly discussions of ethics and the Bible in recent years.[115] "Emotions," it turns out,

are actually central to (im)moral character and decision-making.[116] Neuroscience

suggests that our ability to form judgments about right and wrong and to make other

kinds of evaluations is severely handicapped when emotional processing is damaged or

absent in the brain.[117] Emotions are not necessarily irrational, and are in fact intertwined

with other cognitive processes.[118] Emotions more specifically are the way we construe

the world as embodied creatures. They are reactive impressions and appraisals of the

world, they have associated bodily feelings, and they can be cultivated into long-term

dispositions that prime us to action.[119]

Like many of our Western categories, however, we should consider how closely

or distantly our concepts of "emotion" in English match the concepts and connotations

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[115] For recent work: Koosed and Moore, "Introduction"; Mirguet and Kurek-Chomycz, "Introduction"; Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion'"; Inselmann, "Emotions and Passions in the New Testament" For specific biblical material: Gruber, "Fear, Anxiety and Reverence"; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*; Pham, *Mourning*; Stiebert, *Construction of Shame*; Kruger, "On Emotions"; Yoder, "Objects of Our Affections"; Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*; Wagner, *Emotionen, Gefühle und Sprache*; Lapsley, "Feeling for God"; Launderville, *Spirit and Reason*; Van Wolde, "Sentiments"; Kamionkowski and Kim, eds., *Bodies, Embodiment*; Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*; Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*; Clendenen, "A Passionate Prophet"; Thomas, "Fear and Trembling"; Grant, *Divine Anger*; Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom*; Stewart, "Heaven Has No Sorrow That Earth Cannot Feel"; Kotrosits, "How Things Feel"; Lambert, *How Repentance*; Spencer, ed., *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions*; Stewart, "Pathos in the Cosmos"; Bosworth, *House of Weeping*.

[116] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 11.

[117] Cf. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*; McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*.

[118] Clore ("Psychology," 221) illustrates: "Rather than thinking . . . of emotion and cognition as horses pulling in different directions, we should think of them as strands of a single rope, made strong by their being thoroughly intertwined."

[119] See Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 11. According to him (*Spiritual Emotions*, 17, 19), emotions are closer to impressions than to moral judgments. Nussbaum (*Upheavals of Thought*, 4) argues that emotions are "appraisals or value judgments" connected to one's flourishing. The evaluative dimension is present in either case. I would note that emotions are not identical to physical sensations or the

behind terms in another language such as Hebrew. Biblical Hebrew completely lacks an

overarching word for "emotion" or "to feel," in fact, and no biblical text lists emotional

terms and labels those terms as one kind of experience.[120] The point of this observation is

not that ancient Hebrew speakers were unable to experience sensations, feelings, or to

make appraisals of their situations, nor does it prove that they lacked an overarching

concept of "emotion." Nevertheless, these clues suggest that they organized human

experience differently than we typically do, including emotions with other aspects of

life.[121] Where we make rigid distinctions, the writers of the Old Testament may have

assumed different or fewer distinctions of human experience.[122] For example, some

concepts of emotions today would isolate mental feelings from bodily sensations, but in

biblical texts describing what appear to be "fear" or "sadness" there is sometimes no

"separation between an emotional feeling and a bodily sensation."[123] Similar is the

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consciousness of those sensations that we might call "feelings." Emotions have associated feelings but are different than the feelings and are more like a stance or an evaluative response to certain situations.

[120] Wagner, *Emotionen, Gefühle und Sprache*, 14; Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 445–46; Spencer, "Getting a Feel," 5. Mirguet ("What Is an 'Emotion,'" 444) points out that even among modern European languages there is seldom an exact equivalent to "emotion" that conveys the same "combination of feelings, thoughts, and bodily events" as the word can in English. She bases these dimensions the definition of emotion found in Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Language*, 2.

[121] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 444–45, 463. The lists of emotional terms that are present in the Bible "indicate an amalgamation of experiences we would rather distinguish" in English (446). In contrast, Lasater ("'The Emotions,'" 540) concludes: "one can very plausibly say that there were no 'emotions' in the ancient Near East. There were feelings, of course; passions, quite possibly; but no emotions."

[122] Admittedly, there are sometimes close overlaps between Hebrew and English terms, but the cultural differences, Mirguet ("What Is an 'Emotion,'" 447) says, "suggest loose boundaries among (what we distinguish as) emotional, sensory, physical, and intellectual realms . . . overlapping in the biblical text while we rather tend to distinguish them."

[123] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 451. See also Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament: Part I"; Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament: Part II"; Gruber, "Fear, Anxiety and Reverence"; Mumford, "Emotional Distress"; Smith, "Heart and Innards"; Kruger, "Cognitive

private-versus-public conception of sadness. Sadness is often depicted in the Bible with descriptions of public mourning rituals, not private feelings, giving the impression that sadness involves the self as defined by its outer relationships rather than the self as an individual with inner experiences.[124] Mirguet concludes that the ancient Israelites did not clearly write about a category of inner experiences that they called "emotions" or "feelings" separate from actions, movements, rituals, sensations, attitudes, or social relationships.[125] The recent work of David Lambert contains similar conclusions.[126]

Is "emotion" therefore hopelessly anachronistic and misleading to use as a category? Philip Lasater argues as much. Lasater advocates abandoning the term "emotion" and instead returning to speak of the "passions" and "affections" understood from classical antiquity until the eighteenth century.[127] Although these substitutes would

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Interpretation of the Emotion of Fear"; Thomas, "Fear and Trembling"; Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom*; King, *Surrounded by Bitterness*; Davies, *Lift Up Your Heads*; Rasmussen, *Conceptualizing Distress*. Contrast Eccl 11:10, however. Lasater speaks of how "Fear" (יראה), especially in the phrase "the fear of Yahweh" (e.g., Deut 4:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10) can relate to "rationality and intentionality, including at a behavioral level," so it is inadvisable to view fear as an emotion, at least if "emotion" is understood as a non-cognitive and passive feeling. Lasater, "'The Emotions,'" 535. Cf. Lasater, "'The Emotions,'" 536–37; Kipfer, "Angst, Furcht und Schrecken," 15–79. Another example of our Western dichotomies, this time from Anderson's book *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, would be how we use terms for emotion "in ways that ignore or severely minimize their behavioral dimension," whereas references to "joy" in Hebrew often include ritual behaviors and commands to rejoice. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 13. The same could be said about "love" in Hebrew, which is not often limited to an internal feeling but includes external acts of loyalty and obedience, at least in certain contexts. Cf. Kooy, "Fear and Love of God"; Lapsley, "Feeling Our Way"; Arnold, "Love-Fear Antinomy."

[124] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 455. For more on sadness see Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*; Pham, *Mourning*; Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*; Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*; Bosworth, *Infant Weeping*; Lambert, *How Repentance*; Lambert, "Mourning"; Bosworth, "Understanding Grief"; Kozlova, *Maternal Grief*; Bosworth, *House of Weeping*.

[125] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 442–43.

[126] Lambert, *How Repentance*; Lambert, "Mourning"

[127] Lasater, "'The Emotions,'" 540. Cf. Lasater, "'The Emotions,'" 523–34. He documents how the English term "emotion" was only popularized beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and

bring us much closer chronologically to Old Testament texts, this solution does not escape the issue of anachronism. After all, using alternative terms and concepts from Greco-Roman philosophy would also carry baggage, pitfalls, and misconceptions. Therefore, I would rather qualify "emotion" than abandon it.

In order to qualify the concept, biblical scholars need to integrate findings from other fields to avoid reductive pitfalls when studying emotions portrayed in the Bible. Findings from neuroscience, psychology, and other fields reveal emotions to be complex in their characteristics, and there are a number of false dichotomies to avoid when studying emotions portrayed in the Bible. Recently, F. Scott Spencer listed some of these characteristics and correctives for biblical scholars to bear in mind.[128]

Common Characteristic	Comparative Elements	Corrective Emphases
Somatic	Physical, biological, embodied, sensual, neurological, affective, felt	*Not simply* psychological, self-conscious, intellectual, conceptual, attitudinal
Narrative	Structural, processual, contextual, coherent (though not necessarily tidy), causal at times, cross-temporal scope (past to future)	*Not simply* incidental, haphazard, a state or event, momentary
Cognitive	Mental, rational, connected with appraisals, evaluative judgments and construals	*Not simply* impulsive, instinctual, mindless, unreasonable, external, (merely) impulsive, . . . physically reactive

it represented a significant departure from the "passions" and "affections" as understood in Western thought from Greco-Roman times onward. Many of the false dichotomies we have today in the concept of emotions can be traced back to David Hume and Thomas Brown, who both had a very passive, non-intentional vision of what emotions were, a colossal shift compared to the passions of classical antiquity.

[128] Spencer ("Getting a Feel," 34) identifies emotions as somatic, narrative, cognitive, motivational, relational, and value laden, and he lists some pitfalls related to each characteristic. See more misconceptions about emotions in Davidson, "Seven Sins"; Solomon, *True to Our Feelings*, 127–200.

Common Characteristic	Comparative Elements	Corrective Emphases
Motivational	Volitional, behavioral, intentional, conative, purposive, connected with "action tendencies" or "action readiness"	*Not simply* passive, arbitrary, disruptive, unsettling
Relational	Social, rhetorical, political, communicative	*Not simply* personalized, internalized, private, self-contained, individualistic
Value laden	Axiological, moral, meaningful, vital, concern based, attachment oriented	*Not simply* trivial, petty, disengaged, insignificant, unserious, hysterical, low level, vapid

With contemporary research uncovering so many interconnected dimensions of emotions, the reductive assumptions in the right column serve as cautions not to dismiss the role of emotions in moral formation, for they may form the very heart of (im)moral character and activity. Of course, there is always the risk of anachronism and filtering an emotion-laden word in Hebrew through our Western lenses. Even so, the category of "emotion" remains helpful as long as we allow that the ancient audiences hearing the book of Amos may have considered emotions to be connected to active, bodily, relational dispositions and behavior rather than merely being passive, disembodied, or private feelings.[129] "Dispositions" is thus a thicker and more inclusive term in this study that I will use to incorporate emotions as parts of the habits of heart and mind.

Moral dispositions are formed and reinforced by habits of behavior, or "practices," Smith argues, and thus the way to our hearts and minds is through our

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[129] This addresses concerns in Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 463–65.

bodies.[130] If our dispositions, including emotions, are indeed tied to our bodies, then it makes sense that our dispositions would be shaped by the physical habits and publicly organized "practices" in which we regularly engage. These practices would be aimed implicitly at desirable "goods" and some ultimate "good" for which we long, in turn etching those desires and dispositions into our bodies more deeply. Character takes "practice" to form or deform, just like any athletic or educational endeavor.

To summarize this part of the framework, our moral imagination is like our "eyes," and our moral vision is our "prize," our ideal of what it means to "thrive." Our desire for what we prize is the primary "drive" behind our emotional dispositions and repeated practices. These practices in turn recalibrate and reinforce our dispositions, drives, and "eyes." It is a feedback loop rather than a linear process: the moral vision and good → desire → dispositions → practices → dispositions → desire → good and the moral vision. Just as creation was a formative context for shaping character in Israel and Judah, moral character was a formative context for shaping their conceptions of and impact on the natural and social world, for better or worse.[131] Character shapes creation, even though most of my emphasis will be on the other direction of influence.

2.2 Methodological Steps

With those categories and definitions for my research framework in place, I will now explain the specific methodological steps for rhetorical analysis and character ethics as

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[130] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 57–62.
[131] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 5.

applied to my translation of Amos. A fresh translation in English will be an improvement

on some versions that do not bring out the nuances of the nature imagery (e.g., Amos 1:2;

2:7; 4:13) or account for earlier textual readings as well as I do (e.g., Amos 3:12; 6:12;

7:4). In terms of procedure, my analysis will examine Amos with a blend of rhetorical

methods found in Patrick and Möller,[132] focusing on the created order the way Brown and

others do.[133] As a second step I will identify the dimensions of human character—moral

imagination, desire, dispositions, and practices—that are impacted by the rhetoric using

the cultural anthropology of Smith to study character ethics as modeled by Carroll R. and

Brown.[134]

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[132] See Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*.

[133] See Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*; Brown, "Moral Cosmologies"; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*; Dempsey, *Hope amid the Ruins*, 2–34; Fretheim, *God and World*, 157–98; Fretheim, *Reading*, 111–58; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 120–57; Marlow, "Justice for All the Earth"; Marlow, "Ecology, Theology, Society"; Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*; Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 83–109. My emphasis on creation themes aligns with the stream of Old Testament theology that views creation as more or equally fundamental and central for theology than salvation history in its priority. See Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung*; Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation"; Landes, "Creation and Liberation"; Knierim, "Task of Old Testament Theology"; Reventlow, "Righteousness as Order"; Knierim, "Cosmos and History"; Simkins, *Creator and Creation*; Fretheim, *God and World*; Hiebert, "Beyond *Heilsgeschichte*," 7; Dozeman, "Creation and Environment," 28–30. My view would be in contrast to those who frame natural world themes as a secondary priority or even a problematic holdover from "nature religions" of the cultures surrounding Israel. See von Rad, "Theological Problem"; Wright, *God Who Acts*, 19–20. It is likely that philosophical idealism or dualism was a key influence in separating spiritual and physical, cultural and natural realities in the Western mind (so Hiebert, "Re-Imaging Nature," 39–40).

[134] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*; Smith, *You Are What You Love*; Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*; Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues"; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good"; Carroll R., "Seek Yahweh, Establish Justice"; Brown, *Character in Crisis*; Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*; Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*. Cf. Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*. I cannot claim to be closely related to Anne Stewart or her insightful work.

2.2.1 Rhetorical Analysis

I will use a rhetorical approach that goes beyond studying rhetoric as the "art of composition" to study rhetoric as the "art of persuasion."[135] These two branches of rhetorical criticism within biblical studies require more explanation: There is a stylistic branch that looks for elements of structure and literary devices within a text.[136] Then there is an argumentative branch that focuses on texts as persuasive communication rather than simply aesthetic art. Within this second approach there are various streams such as what I will call the "classical stream" using classical categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric.[137] Then there is the "new rhetorical stream" which uses the classical insights but supplements them with a more flexible view of the "rhetorical situation" and its correspondence to "reality."[138] Lastly, there is the "rhetoric of power" or "postmodern" stream that pays attention to the way ancient and contemporary language creates unequal uses of social power, always from an embedded context with particular interests.[139]

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[135] The two categories derive from Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 32.

[136] See Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond"; Lundbom, *Jeremiah*; Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*; Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*; Meynet, *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric*.

[137] See Betz, "Response to Troy W. Martin"; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*; Gitay, "A Study"; Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*; Gitay, "Prophetic Discourse"; Shaw, *Speeches of Micah*.

[138] See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*; Hauser, *Introduction*; Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*; Barker, *Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*. After Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca there were technically several flexible versions of rhetorical criticism, according to Trible (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 57–62).

[139] Wuellner, *Hermeneutics and Rhetorics*; Hester (Amador) and Hester, eds., *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics*; Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*; Hester Amador, *Academic Constraints*. In Old Testament studies such postmodern or ideological approaches usually go by names other than "rhetorical criticism" (e.g., feminist, deconstructionist, or postcolonial criticism).

My own methodology fits within the rhetoric-as-persuasion branch, examining the force and effects of the rhetoric "in front of" the text for the ancient audience. My methodological steps will be informed by Patrick's work and Möller's work on Amos, taking the best of each. Both scholars fit within the "new rhetorical" stream, but Patrick has the advantage of using the tools of Old Testament form criticism rather than Greco-Roman categories of rhetoric.[140] With Patrick I define "rhetoric" quite broadly as "the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect."[141] The rhetorical situations matching the major genres of Greco-Roman rhetoric are too limiting to explain the situations and social functions of the genres of Hebrew rhetoric, so form criticism will serve as an initial approach to the functions that the texts in Amos have.[142] But Patrick also uses speech act theory—as does Möller—to show that the language throughout Amos functions to condemn Israel, an insight which can refine rhetorical analysis.[143] Condemning Israel can be accomplished

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[140] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 6–10; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 1–152.

[141] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, xvii, citing Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric*, 12.

[142] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 124.

[143] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 146–47. For some foundational works and collections of essays in the area of speech act theory see Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Searle, *Speech Acts*; Searle, *Expression and Meaning*; Searle and Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*; Vanderveken, *Meaning and Speech Acts*; Vanderveken and Kubo, eds., *Essays in Speech Act Theory*. For general discussions of this approach within biblical and theological studies, see Evans, *Logic of Self-Involvement*; Macky, "Multiple Purposes"; White, ed., *Speech Act Theory*; White, "Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism"; Patte, "Speech Act Theory"; Buss, "Potential and Actual Interactions"; Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*; Sao, "Speech Act Theory"; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*; Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts"; Briggs, "Uses of Speech-Act Theory"; Briggs, *Words in Action*; Briggs, "Getting Involved"; Briggs, "Speech-Act Theory"; Childs, "Speech-Act Theory"; Botha, "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation"; Poythress, "Canon and Speech Act"; Minton, "What Not to Do with Words." Finally, there are several studies that apply speech act theory to Old Testament texts: Evans, *Logic of Self-Involvement*; Ramsey, "Speech-Forms in Hebrew"; Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*; White, "Value of Speech Act Theory"; Eagleton, "J. L. Austin and the Book of Jonah"; Houston, "What Did the

through any number of smaller-level speech acts working together as building blocks of

genres toward even larger discourses composed of multiple genres. Because of Möller's

greater attention to structure, however, I divide the major sections of Amos for discussion

the way he, not Patrick, does.[144]

- Amos 1:1–2
- Amos 1:3—2:16
- Amos 3
- Amos 4
- Amos 5:1–17
- Amos 5:18–27
- Amos 6
- Amos 7:1—8:3
- Amos 8:4–14
- Amos 9

Instead of writing a commentary on every word in each section, this study will

necessarily be selective to put more emphasis on the nature themes.

As a selective example of speech acts and genres for such themes, then, take the

middle of the funeral announcement in Amos 5:1–17, where Israel's God is described:

"He is one who makes Pleiades and Orion, and turns over to the morning what was

blackness, and day to night he darkens! He is the one who calls for the waters of the sea,

then pours them on the face of the land! Yahweh is his name!" (Amos 5:8).[145] Traditional

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Prophets"; Hillers, "Some Performative Utterances"; Reid, "Psalm 50"; Wagner, *Sprechakte*; Wagner, "Die Bedeutung"; Wagner, "Die Stellung"; Warren, "Modality"; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*; Briggs, *Words in Action*; Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude"; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*; Adams, *The Performative*; Tanner, "Climbing the Lampstand-Witness-Trees"; Mann, "'You're Fired'"; Mann, *Run, David, Run*; Mann, "Performative Prayers of a Prophet"; Barker, *Imprecation as Divine Discourse*; Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*.

[144] See his defense of these divisions in Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 89–103.

[145] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

form criticism would suggest that this is part of a descriptive hymn of praise about Yahweh,[146] but the usual social setting (i.e., *Sitz im Leben*) for such a genre would be a worship ceremony, for which there is no evidence in the literary context. Those using form criticism, including Patrick, cannot make sense of how this piece fits in the negative context (Amos 5:1–17), and so they attribute it to a later editor.[147]

At this point Möller's approach is superior to Patrick's, since Möller treats the rhetoric of the *final form* of the text, and thus he can better appreciate how the "hymn" functions within its literary setting (*Sitz im Buch*).[148] Amos 5:8–9 is artfully placed to contribute to the rhetoric of Amos 5:1–17, a section that turns out to be a chiastic unity.[149] Yahweh is in the very middle of the chiasm with acts of sustaining and punitive justice, contrasting with those who overturn justice and exploit the poor (Amos 5:7, 10). Therefore, it is more accurate to call this a "doxology of judgment," as many do,[150] a subversive use of the hymn genre to justify divine justice.[151] As "illocutions"—what the speech acts are *doing* functionally—the clauses are not just a blend of "assertive" and

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[146] Westermann, *Praise of God*, 22.

[147] Westermann, *Handbook*, 190; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 240–41; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 132, 161. Patrick does not discuss the rhetoric of Amos 5:8 due to this methodological deficiency.

[148] Function, not origin, is the focus of "new form criticism." See Sweeney and Ben Zvi, eds., *Changing Face*; Buss, *Changing Shape*; Toffelmire, "Form Criticism"; Boda et al., eds., *Book of the Twelve*.

[149] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 63. Cf. de Waard, "Chiastic Structure"; Limburg, "Sevenfold"; Tromp, "Amos" Like the other "hymns" in the book (Amos 4:13; 9:5–6), this one in Amos 5:8–9 is climactic.

[150] For an early example see Horst, "Doxologien."

[151] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 116. This is like the funeral dirge in Amos 5:2 as an ironic use of the genre.

"expressive" speech acts.[152] They are also "declarative" speech acts that constitute a theodicy, justifying God's righteousness or justice.[153]

As informative as these rhetorical insights might be, they neglect or misrepresent some crucial points about the nature imagery here. In Amos 5:8–9, for example, Möller claims that the doxology is "simply describing the power of Yahweh" with its "destructive potential."[154] This claim flattens the text, allowing the punitive justice in Amos 5:9 overshadow the constructive and distributive justice we see in Amos 5:8. As my later analysis will explain, Amos 5:8 actually shows Yahweh's constructive, beneficent, and distributive kinds of justice in sustaining right order in the cosmos—all in contrast to the oppressive Israelites who overturn and ruin justice, causing death (Amos 5:7).[155] The creation rhetoric does not depict punitive justice just yet, and so it is subversive only in its placement next to the evil deeds of Israel. Life-giving order in the natural world is the measure of what matches or fails to be a life-giving order in the social realm. Without incorporating the ethos-of-the-cosmos framework from Brown and others (e.g., Marlow), the rhetorical analysis influenced by Patrick and Möller would be inadequate to understand the text of Amos.

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[152] See Barker, "Rhetorical Criticism," 681: "Speech-act theory employs the categories of locution (the words themselves), illocution (the actions they perform) and perlocution (the effects of the illocutionary actions) to describe what functions language can perform."

[153] It is common for speech acts to multi-task like this. There are no rules about which vocabulary will signal which illocutions (e.g., someone can promise without using "promise"). See Briggs, *Words in Action*, 98–102. For the theodicy function, see Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation*.

[154] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 114.

[155] See Laldinsuah (*Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*, 51–94) for definitions of various kinds of "justice."

Finally, within speech act theory there is a further dimension than the "illocution" or function of the speech acts to consider, namely, the "perlocution" or intended effect(s) on the audience, which may or may not happen.[156] This dimension of the rhetoric overlaps with the character ethics analysis, which will be discussed below. In justifying Yahweh's righteousness, this doxology-theodicy is directly *justifying* Yahweh's character (as an illocution), but the intended effects appear to include moving the audience to justify him, revere him, and particularly to accept the guilt of those referred to on either side of the doxology. For an Israelite audience hearing an oral message, this guilt would apply to all or a portion of them, but for a later Judahite audience hearing the written text, the intended perlocution is probably that they would condemn their northern neighbors, revere Yahweh's character as awe-inspiring creator, and change any corrupt behavior before it was too late for their own kingdom of Judah (Amos 5:4–7, 10, 12, 14–15). In the next chapter I will argue that the implied audience of the final form of Amos is likely located in Judah after the Assyrian devastation of Israel (720 BC) but before the Babylonian devastation of Jerusalem (586 BC),[157] plausibly on the early end of this period during the reign of Hezekiah (726–697 BC). Nevertheless, it is not necessary to accept this exact historical setting to appreciate the creation rhetoric affecting an ancient audience. The main difference in terms of speech acts between an implied audience in pre-exilic Judah versus one in post-exilic Judah or Yehud would be that the condemnations of Israel become preemptive *warnings* to Judah in the former case while

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[156] Houston, "What Did the Prophets," 172.

they double as condemnations to these southerners in the latter case after their Judahite

kingdom had crumbled. The creation rhetoric remains the same: a lion is still a lion

regardless of the setting. Similarly, character formation as one of the intended

perlocutionary effects remains largely the same regardless of the Hebrew-speaking

audience, and so I turn now to explain my steps in examining character ethics.

2.2.2 Character Ethics

The second and final part of my methodology is to examine how the creation rhetoric in

Amos shapes the moral character of its ancient audience. Scholars using character ethics

do not outline precisely how to infer various dimensions of character from the wording of

the biblical texts. They simply examine human character using heuristic categories, the

way Stewart in her recent (2016) work looks for "rebuke, motivation, desire, and

imagination" as important elements for character formation.[158] My own approach is more

detailed than that, and uses more comprehensive categories from the more general to the

more concrete, or the reverse (i.e., moral vision and good → desire → dispositions →

practices, or the reverse).[159] I will demonstrate below how I study these aspects of

character using the same text of Amos 5:1–17.

First, how do we access the text's overarching moral vision when it is not a

treatise on "the good" by Aristotle? We cannot expect the book of Amos to include

systematic definitions of its ethical ideal, but there is an approach modeled by Carroll R.

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[157] Following Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 120.

[158] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 78–79.

[159] For definitions see above, §2.1.2 Character as Formative Context for Creation.

that is helpful as a starting point: (1) Look first for terms such as "good" (טוב) or similarly positive terms (e.g., "truth," "justice"), and examine how human imagination and desire are being aimed at a partial picture of thriving by such language.[160] The point of this initial step is to flesh out what is portrayed as positive, and by definition desirable, because this will not only imply what is evil and undesirable but also what the competing moral visions are among different groups in the audience. Not everyone in the cultural context would have shared an equally fair and unselfish view of thriving, after all.

Amos 5:1–17 does contain such positive terms in the exhortations to "Seek good, not evil, that you may live!" (Amos 5:14) and "Hate evil, love good, and in court set up justice!" (Amos 5:15). The parallel section in the chiastic structure is similar ("Seek me so you can live! But do not seek [me] at Bethel . . . Seek Yahweh so you can live, lest he like fire burn up the house of Joseph"; Amos 5:4–6). Notice that "good" is defined by nearby and parallel associations as leading to life, whereas a rejection of good leads to death (Amos 5:4–6, 14–15). In any moral vision there will be some desire for life, naturally, but no one merely desires to survive in misery. The text must envision something more than mere survival. Based on the parallel between "Seek Yahweh!" and "Seek good!" (Amos 5:4, 6, 14), we next infer that what makes for a good life is only

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[160] Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 104. Note his caveat: "I am not suggesting that the Hebrew term ["good"] is equivalent to the Greek one, but it is interesting that both cultures/languages have a similar broad ethical term to express important ethical demands" (114 n. 5). In his earlier work on virtue ethics in Amos, Carroll R. ("Seeking the Virtues," 85) has these steps: "defining the 'good' that Israel is to follow, probing the book's observations on the virtue of justice, and demonstrating the kind of moral model Yahweh is for his people." The last item, Yahweh as a moral model, is never as simple as imitating precisely what Yahweh does, as noted by Houston, "Character of YHWH," 1–25.

possible in relationship with Yahweh ("so Yahweh . . . may be 'with you'"; Amos 5:14).[161] In the first instance this concretely means a pursuit of different worship practices (Amos 5:4–6), while in the parallel instance it is tied to establishing "justice" at the city gates (Amos 5:15), thus meaning a pursuit of fair legal practices.[162] By this we gain a first impression of what counts as "good" for the implied author of the text, giving us a partial picture of the moral vision that we are supposed to grasp. It also points to several negative things (e.g., evil actions) that could be used to define the good "by its opposite."[163] Many sections of Amos only provide a negative picture, in fact, but this sample illustrates the means by which the moral vision of the implied author and audience can be discerned.

(2) Now attention can shift to fleshing out the intended *dispositions* that are shaped by the rhetoric throughout the section. The idea of this step is to ask, "What moral dispositions are related to the vision, desires, or practices of the people, allowing the community to thrive or suffer?" This is perhaps the most complex step, since it will seem subjective to identify cognitive-emotional dispositions of character, especially when the intended shaping must be inferred without specific key words related to a basic emotion. In other words, it is easy to identify "fear" as the intended response to a "lion" when the text mentions both explicitly (e.g., Amos 3:8), but the case is more difficult when a

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[161] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 87; Carroll R., "Failing the Vulnerable," 40.

[162] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 86.

[163] Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 86. Sometimes we recognize what is ethically good "by recognizing what it is not," by looking at condemnations of evil in the text (Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 105). Cf. Carroll R., "Failing the Vulnerable," 40.

disposition such as "disgust" is never named but rather is dependent on cultural

knowledge of bitter plants (e.g., Amos 5:7). The task is also complicated by the fact that

dispositions are not often separated from related actions or practices in the text.[164] A

helpful methodological procedure here is to look for "clusters of responses" that

constitute a prototypical "emotional scenario" or "emotional script" for the disposition in

question.[165] Van Wolde defines a prototypical "emotion script" as "the patterns or chains

of events that prototypically constitute the content of an emotion as expressed in

language." This requires learning an emotion's "characteristic behavioral patterns,

including its particular series of expected actions."[166] Schlimm, for example, looks for the

causes, objects, subjects, results, and evaluations of anger to study the "prototypical script

of human anger" in the Old Testament.[167] Rather than requiring one or more essential

traits for inferring an emotion, a prototype approach allows for a range of resemblance

from more to less prototypical within a given category.[168] Contemporary psychological

research identifies anywhere from four to fifteen basic or prototypical emotions.[169]

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[164] Perhaps that is why Carroll R. often treats "virtues" in tandem with "practices" when studying character ethics in prophetic texts. See Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 105.

[165] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 456. She observes, "In the Hebrew Bible, these clusters include more than what we strictly define as emotions. Rather, they encompass social experiences [and actions] (456)." The idea of a "script" comes from cognitive linguistics and a prototype model of emotions, and this model has begun to be used by biblical scholars.

[166] Van Wolde, *Reframing*, 63. Cf. Van Wolde, *Reframing*; Grant, "Difference between Human and Divine"; Grant, "Human Anger"; Grant, *Divine Anger*; Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate," 66–69.

[167] Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*, 53. His conclusions are nuanced (63–64).

[168] Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate," 66–67.

[169] Shaver et al. ("Emotion Knowledge") in their studies identify love, joy, anger, sadness, and possibly surprise. Izard (*The Face of Emotion*) identifies ten basic emotions: interest, joy, surprise, distress, anger, fear, shame, disgust, contempt, and guilt. Ekman (*Emotions Revealed*) identifies happiness, anger, disgust, and sadness, among other candidates, as basic emotions revealed in similar facial expressions across diverse cultures. Ekman elsewhere ("Basic Emotions," 55) lists fifteen basic emotions: amusement,

As one example, however, instead of starting with a top-down list of prototypical emotions, classical virtues and vices, or contemporary categories from ecological virtue ethics,[170] I will infer the moral dispositions in Amos from the "ground up," because the natural world in the text is often the rhetorical basis for shaping certain dispositions. The disposition of disgust in Amos 5:7 is a good case in point, since it refers to "the ones who turn into bitter wormwood what was justice." The nature metaphor of "bitter wormwood" (לענה) invokes a visceral reaction of disgust, as will be discussed later (see fig. 9). Disgust is a bodily and emotional disposition, and it contributes to the condemnation of corrupt social conditions here, steering moral desire and practices away from legal injustice and toward something morally and socially good.[171] The text also points to (un)ethical practices, to which we now turn.

(3) As a third and final step in the interpretive loop, it is important to examine the habitual *practices* portrayed in the text. The question to ask is this: "What kind of ongoing practices are driven by their desires and dispositions, and how do these habits of life reorient and reinforce those dispositions and desires in turn?" This step is less nebulous than the last, for the practices are often related to key verbs and social or institutional terms such as "justice" (משפט; Amos 5:7, 10, 12, 15), legal "courts" (שער;

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anger, contempt, contentment, disgust, embarrassment, excitement, fear, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, sadness/distress, satisfaction, sensory pleasure and shame. Some of these could surely be condensed into the smaller groupings.

[170] See Van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues*; Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*; Blanchard and O'Brien, *Introduction to Christian Environmentalism*.

[171] See research on "disgust" in neuroscience and the Bible in Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 33, 71–94; Staubli, "Disgusting Deeds," 457–87.

Amos 5:15), and so forth. In the text, "justice" was meant to characterize various

practices that all should aim at lesser "goods" and ultimate "good" in the community. In

Amos 5:10—parallel to Amos 5:7 in the chiasm of Amos 5:1–17—we see what the

poisoning of justice looks like institutionally: "In court they hate one who reproves; and

one who gives a message with integrity they abhor." There are dispositions involved here

(e.g., hate),[172] but focus only on the social practices for now. The positive behavior the

judges or wealthy legal opponents reject is honest reproof and "integrity" in speech,

which implicitly lauds truth-telling in legal proceedings (Amos 5:10). The legal practice

of those who hate transparency in court has become corrupt, the text implies (cf. Amos

5:12, 15), since they only pursue justice if they do not have to listen to dissenting voices.

The creator can bring devastation on such oppressors who use their power to build up

their "fortress" at the expense of others (Amos 5:9). The standard for critique and

encouragement of positive social practices is powerfully aided by the creation rhetoric, it

turns out.

These methodological steps for character ethics proceed from the most abstract to

the most concrete (i.e., moral vision/good → desires → dispositions → practices), but the

analysis at times will proceed in the opposite direction of what is really a feedback loop,

starting with the most concrete practices portrayed in each text and then inferring the

related dispositions, desires, and moral vision last of all. As long as all the categories are

covered, particularly the dispositions at the "heart" of ethical action, this approach

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[172] See Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate."

provides a robust analysis of the moral character formation potentially intended by the creation rhetoric.

2.3 Summary of Framework and Methodology

For such a text as Amos, a framework and method are needed that are both clearly defined and flexible enough to provide thick descriptions of the rhetorical and ethical issues in the book. In my framework, therefore, I first defined "creation rhetoric" as synonymous with "nature imagery" and included in this designation any references to the non-human creatures and non-urban features of the universe. Its features include earthquakes, fire,[173] storms, rain, wind, water, constellations, darkness, and light, while its creatures include wild animals, pests, plants, cosmic armies above,[174] and agricultural plants and animals with their products.[175] Naturally, any references to the zones of the cosmos are important, whether to the underworld, the sky, areas of water, or the land with its habitats, soil, or terrain. These are the features and creatures of the cosmos that impact the human community in the rhetoric of the text (see above fig. 2, "Illustrating what creation rhetoric includes").

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[173] Fire in controlled contexts is excluded, unless a non-human agent is behind the burning.

[174] It is an open question whether the "cosmic armies" in the text of Amos refer to human armies, to non-living sources of light, or to living beings associated with the stars that we would call "spirits," "angels," or "supernatural" beings today. The evidence tilts toward the last option, considering the military meaning of the term and the cosmic, celestial context in which it often appears in the book (cf. Amos 4:13; 5:27; 9:5). See further discussion in §2.1.1 and for Amos 3:13.

[175] I exclude manufactured items like weapons, furniture, clothing, and buildings unless the text specifically mentions the non-human derivation of the compositional materials.

Defining moral "character," secondly, involved a relational and goal-driven picture of humanity. Specifically, the operating assumption is that people are motivated by what they bodily, emotionally desire more than what they intellectually believe alone. This implies that the moral imagination, the capacity to imagine a moral vision of thriving, must be shaped by "affective" means through compelling pictures of a kingdom or world that is desirable or undesirable in which to live. Moral desire in turn feeds into any number of dispositions, which are longer-term, cognitive-emotional inclinations toward patterns of action. Despite the pitfalls of studying emotions and the broader category of dispositions in an ancient text from another culture, the quest remains valid as long as demeaning, anachronistic stereotypes about emotions are shelved. Dispositions are at the heart of ethics, pivotal to (un)ethical practices and to pushing desire toward the pull of a moral vision. Habitual behavior or practices are primed by dispositions, and in turn the practices recalibrate the dispositions and desires of an individual or community.

After defining the concepts of creation and character as a framework, I explain my methodological steps for analyzing creation rhetoric and character formation. Before analysis of each section of Amos, I will provide my own English translation, reconstructing the earliest stable form of the Hebrew text in light of textual variants (e.g., *BHQ*). Because of the need to have a focus within and especially in front of the text of Amos, my subsequent rhetorical analysis resembles that of Patrick and Möller with their sensitivity to genres and speech acts. I particularly explain the contribution that the nature imagery makes, resembling Brown and others who believe that the natural world is a key participant and element in biblical communities and their texts. My ethical analysis uses

the categories from Smith, Brown, and Carroll R. to discover which dimensions of human character are morally impacted by the creation rhetoric. This approach to character ethics covers everything from the moral vision of the audience to their concrete practices in various settings, all as depicted or implied in the text of Amos, at least. I will argue for a Judahite audience of the book in the late eighth century BC in the next chapter to provide a historical setting for the practices and dispositions considered for the audience, but my analysis does not depend on historical precision to be coherent. It depends on dynamics that are present in many different historical settings.

In the end, I demonstrate that Amos reciprocally connects the natural world and the moral world together. Each impacts the other, and the creation rhetoric particularly contributes to character formation for the implied audience. The cosmos in Amos proves to be more than ancient cosmology or dispensable background scenery. The cosmos shows that justice in the world is a matter of life and death and that to oppose the creator's divine design is unnatural and harmful to victims and perpetrators alike. Because Amos reciprocally connects the natural world (cosmos) and the moral world (ethos) together, creation rhetoric and character formation on the audience may be profitably compared when describing Old Testament ethics. There were no guarantees that the ancient audience would hear the text well or respond to it reverently, but the expectation was that they would learn more of Yahweh's "name" (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6), his character, and in the process discovers theirs. Determining a historical setting and a sketch of this audience in more detail will illuminate some aspects of Amos more clearly.

CHAPTER 3: THE IMPLIED AUDIENCE AND HISTORICAL SETTING

There is no such thing as a completely ahistorical or synchronic reading of a text, and certainly not for Amos, which has various indicators of its historical setting. Minimally, the contemporary reader must assume a setting or implied audience for the material, even if that audience is largely undefined (e.g., an ancient group familiar with the referents in Amos).[1] For scholarly readers, historical and cultural knowledge about the ancient Near East and the Hebrew kingdoms can refine some of the details of the book "concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel, a couple of years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1),[2] whether the book was finished shortly after that period or many centuries later. The more specific the reconstructed setting can be for the final form of the text, the more the social and political dynamics can be clarified for rhetorical and ethical analysis. In one sense, injustice behind the text is injustice no matter the historical era, and it can manifest in various ways regardless of what was behind the social crisis claimed in the text. So too for the speech acts, a declarative condemnation of Israel is still *presented* as a declarative condemnation on Israel in the text, no matter when in history that criticism was written.

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[1] For non-specialists, reading Amos in English rather than Hebrew already comes loaded with translation decisions made in advance, softening the historical and cultural distance. Only with further study can someone determine when the events purportedly took place or the significance of certain cultural practices and values.

A lion is still a lion in the creation rhetoric, and references to such would evoke the same

kinds of fear, even if muted in intensity for an audience later than the oral audience

presumed to be originally behind the text. When it comes to the ancient audience *in front*

of the final form of the text, however, their historical and social setting makes some

difference formatively for the implications or effects of the text on them as they received

it. Much of the rhetorical and moral import would be similar regardless of the setting, as

evidenced by the power of Amos to speak to audiences across the centuries. Still, the

condemnations of Israel would become warnings or would become new condemnations

for the audience, depending on what disasters they had experienced since the setting

initially found in the superscription of the book (Amos 1:1).

In this chapter, then, I will argue for a historical setting during which the implied

audience could have heard the final form of the book of Amos. Specifically, I will argue

that the audience is in Judah and the setting is during the reign of King Hezekiah. The

superscription of the book sets "the words of Amos" during the reigns of King Uzziah of

Judah and King Jeroboam (II) of Israel, "a couple of years before the earthquake" (Amos

1:1). Reference to these kings evokes a historical period in the mid-700s BC.[3] There is

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[2] Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[3] For the reigns of Uzziah (787–736 BC) and Jeroboam II (790–750 BC) I will use the chronological reconstruction by Galil, *Chronology*, 147. Both kings had exceptionally long reigns of fifty-two years and forty-one years, respectively (2 Kgs 14:23; 15:2), due to counting years of coregency with their fathers and/or sons. Most other chronological systems differ by several years or less from Galil, and the Hebrew kings in any case reigned before the Assyrian attacks on Samaria and Jerusalem. Compare the numbers given in 2 Kgs 14–15 with the conclusions of Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 62–64, 217; McFall, "Has the Chronology," 10; Hayes and Hooker, *New Chronology*, 106; Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 337; Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 195; Barnes, *Studies*, 153; Tetley, *Reconstructed Chronology*, 182–83.

some archaeological evidence for a devastating earthquake around the middle of the

eighth century during the reigns of these kings.[4] We might assume from this opening

alone that the implied audience of the book's contents would be found within Israel

around this time, but the fact that the presumably oral messages survive in written form

means that it is not so simple, and that the book as a whole has a different purpose than

its speeches directed to the northern kingdom (Israel) might have had originally.[5] The

book seems to be a retrospective presentation and editing of the words of Amos for a later

audience, not a direct transcript of his words as if they were delivered all on one occasion

to a single audience in the order of the book as we know it today.[6] There are several lines

of evidence that the book did not reach its final form until at least some decades later in

Judah: (1) Amos apparently hailed from Judah and would more likely be received and

supported by scribes there (Amos 1:1), especially given the way his rejection at Bethel is

portrayed (Amos 7:12); (2) King Uzziah of Judah is listed first and has no lineage in the

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[4] Evidence for this earthquake can plausibly be identified in Stratum VI at Hazor in the northern part of Israel and at Stratum III of Beersheba in the south of Judah (King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 21–22). Wolff puts this around 760 BC, the middle of the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 124). See Ogden, "Earthquake Motif"; Freedman and Welch, "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin et al., "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin, "Scientific and Scriptural"; Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake." Cf. Zech 14:5.

[5] As Weeks ("Predictive and Prophetic," 29) explains, "When Amos tells Amaziah what Yahweh has declared about the future . . . (Amos 7.16–17), that is clearly prophecy. When the story of him doing so is transmitted in a book across subsequent centuries, however, something different is going on: Amaziah has already been told, so the message no longer needs delivery; even by the time the book of Amos was composed, moreover, Amaziah may have been dead, and the prophecy fulfilled. The delivery of a prophetic message is a transient action related to an immediate situation or forthcoming event—the preservation of a prophetic message in a book is not. If only for that reason, it is important to make a distinction between prophecy and the prophetic literature which claims to report prophecy." Indeed, "the act even of preserving an oracle verbatim is functionally and qualitatively different from that of delivering an oracle" (43).

[6] This latter, caricatured position is rarely held even by conservative scholars, though some argue that all of the material could have come from Amos himself or someone in his audience in a single day. See Morgenstern, *Amos Studies*; Hayes, *Amos*, 39.

book's title (Amos 1:1), perhaps because he was better known to the Judahite audience and editor[7] writing the superscription; (3) the divine lion roars from "Zion/Jerusalem" (Amos 1:2), either legitimating Judah or including Judah under the same threatening roar as the northern kingdom of Israel; (4) Judah is included in the oracles against the nations (Amos 2:4–5) and a later section attacks "the carefree on Zion," not just Samaria, showing a concern to apply the text to Judahite society (Amos 6:1); (5) the rhetoric against Israelite and Judahite sanctuaries (e.g., Bethel, Gilgal, Dan, Samaria, and Beersheba) is never applied to Jerusalem's sanctuary, a glaring omission unless the prophet and scribe(s) responsible were pro-Jerusalem (Amos 2:8; 3:14; 4:4; 5:5–6; 7:9, 10, 13; 8:3, 14; 9:1); (6) the predicted restoration of the Davidic dynasty to power fits with Judah's weakness and territorial ambitions in the decades around and after the middle of the eighth century (Amos 9:11–12); and (7) the concluding prediction of flourishing for exiled "Israel" presupposes that the *northern* kingdom, not Judah, has suffered defeat and displacement (Amos 9:13–15). Thus, even though the audience of the final form would take into account the earlier rhetorical setting of messages aimed at Israel for most of the text, they would also read the text in light of new updates and concerns from a later period in Judah.

Among biblical scholars, the conservative stream holds virtually all of the book to represent the messages of a prophet named "Amos" directly or indirectly, taking the text

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[7] Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 276, 283. The so-called Deuteronomistic formulas in Amos 1:1 could derive from the scribes of Hezekiah's or Josiah's court, according to Sweeney.

as genuine (mid-eighth-century) until proven otherwise.[8] Others at the opposite end of the spectrum argue that the book was almost entirely a literary creation with no or little connection to this historical person, and these scholars often date the origins (and thus the first implied audience) of the book to the Persian period (ca. 540–330 BC) rather than to the 700s.[9] Their assumption is to regard the text skeptically until evidence suggests otherwise. The majority of scholars argue for a middle position of composition and editing that stretches from the time of the person Amos all the way to the Persian period.[10] There are a number of factors that make a difference in identifying a historical and social setting, so I will discuss the following factors that I consider to be most relevant: (1) the vocabulary and script of the text, (2) questions of orality, literacy, and the genre of prophetic texts, (3) the restoration oracles in Amos 9, (4) supposedly Deuteronomistic language and themes, including the polemic against Bethel, and (5) potential references to the Neo-Assyrian period. I will argue, against the position of many scholars, that these factors point to a period during the reign of Hezekiah more than to a post-exilic setting in the Persian period.

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[8] Cf. Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*; Hayes, *Amos*; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*; Paul, *Amos*; Sweeney, "Dystopianization."

[9] Fritz, "Amosbuch"; Coggins, *Joel and Amos*; Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*; Davies, "Why Do We Know"; Radine, *Book of Amos*; Kratz, "Worte." Radine and Kratz argue for a first written version after the fall of Samaria (i.e., post-720 BC).

[10] As noted by Houston, *Amos: An Introduction*, 68–69. Houston makes a helpful division into three broad categories of approaches to the composition of Amos, and places himself in the third position between extremes. See also Wolff, *Joel and Amos*; Coote, *Amos*; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*; Hadjiev, *Composition*; Barton, *Theology*.

3.1 Vocabulary and Script

First of all, there are no Persian or imperial Aramaic loanwords in Amos, nor are there

any significant traces of Late Biblical Hebrew vocabulary[11] or syntax.[12] However, the

most obvious indicator that Amos as a Hebrew text was *preserved* during the Persian

period is that the script was updated from Paleo-Hebrew to Times New Aramaic font, so

to speak (i.e., 𐤃𐤁𐤓𐤉 𐤏𐤌𐤅𐤎 to דברי עמוס, "the words of Amos"). This is true of the rest of

the Hebrew-Aramaic books of the Bible, but it represents only a change of appearance,

not of language or content by itself. By "final form," then, I mean the final amount of

meaningful *content*, not the final orthographical appearance and later vocalization with

vowels. Even though I will use the later Aramaic script to access and display the text in

this study, the earliest "final form" of Amos would have been in Paleo-Hebrew script if

the pre-exilic setting for which I argue is accurate. The Masoretic textual tradition (MT)

is only one important tradition that witnesses to the text of Amos, and so the MT must be

compared with other ancient versions to reconstruct the earliest final form of the text.[13]

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[11] The name "Isaac" is spelled in a different way than in most of the Old Testament (Amos 7:9, 16; cf. Ps 105:9; Jer 33:26), which some take to be a sign of an exilic text (cf. Lombaard, "What Is Isaac Doing," 438–40; Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, 56–57; Hamborg, "Post-722," 149). On the contrary, I argue that this variation represents a trivial spelling update at most or even the original oral pronunciation before it was standardized across most texts. For the latter possibility, see van Selms, "Isaac in Amos" According to Edelman ("What Is 'Persian,'" 155 n. 17), the alternate spelling may not be a dialect issue but possibly "a deliberate play on the name of Isaac [which means "he laughs"]" so as to mock the northern kingdom's worship sites and royal dynasty "by making them 'laughing-stocks.'" For discussion of other potential loan words in Amos, see Paul, *Amos*, 94, 121–22, 165, 173, 195–98. For the issue of the full spelling of the name "David," see Forbes and Andersen, "Dwelling on Spelling," 135–37.

[12] See the chapters by Dresher, Cook, Holmstedt, and Ehrensvärd, in Miller-Naudé and Zevit, eds., *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*. In their charts Amos has none of the vocabulary or syntax consistently seen in Late Biblical Hebrew.

[13] See Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 59.

3.2 Orality, Literacy, and Genre of Prophetic Texts

A more significant set of intertwined issues for dating the book includes the dynamics of

orality and literacy as well as the genre of Amos compared to similar texts in the ancient

world. Many scholars argue that the complexity of producing written texts, whether from

oral proclamations by prophets or not, required Hebrew scribes from the Persian period

onward.[14] I will explain these factors in more detail and argue that scribal training in

Israel and Judah were advanced enough to produce such written texts even in the eighth

century BC. I also argue for the plausibility of the social dynamics and genre of Amos as

a "prophetic oracle collection" rather than an after-the-event "literary-predictive text" that

is divorced from any prophetic figure called "Amos."

"Prophets" are human intermediaries who act as spokespersons to transmit

messages from gods to humans, and "prophecies" are consequently defined here as

messages that are presented as divine-to-human communication via such a

spokesperson.[15] Out of the nearly 150 texts from the ancient Near East that count as or

contain prophecies (or mention prophets), the majority and most relevant examples come

from two periods: (1) fifty-two Old Babylonian oracle reports from Mari and Eshnunna

during the 1700s BC, and (2) twenty-nine Neo-Assyrian oracle reports from Nineveh

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[14] See Davies, "Audiences of Prophetic Scrolls," 59.

[15] Nissinen, "What Is Prophecy," 20. Prophecy is "non-inductive" divination, the inductive type requiring scholarly inferences from observations of perceptible objects such as animal organs or celestial phenomena (21). Prophecy includes dreams or visions if the visionary experience also contains a divine message (22). *Predictive* aspects are not central to the definition or prophecy used here. The message may or may not involve future-looking promises or threats.

during 681–627 BC.[16] In most of these texts the prophets operated at temples with government support,[17] and they spoke mostly favorable words from the national god(s) addressed to the kingdom's own king.[18]

In contrast, the book of Amos presents a prophet who did not necessarily receive or speak *all* his words in a temple setting (but see Amos 7:10–17; 9:1–6), was not a professional prophet with government support (Amos 7:14–15), and gave *unfavorable* words from the national God of Israel (Yahweh) to the kingdom of Israel, not to the prophet's own kingdom of Judah. In addition, the messages are mostly addressed to the whole kingdom or its wealthy members rather than to the Israelite king alone.

Even though these features are rare in prophetic texts outside of the Bible, they are not unprecedented. Some ancient Near Eastern oracles address the populace as a whole, either in support of a nation's king or in opposition to a foreign king.[19] Although oracles were collected in the capital city, the oral proclamation could originally be made in other cities of the kingdom, in foreign cities,[20] or outside of a temple setting.[21]

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[16] Nissinen, "What Is Prophecy," 25–26.

[17] van der Toorn, "Defining Prophecy," 71. The Mari oracles were always received—and almost always related—in a temple with the prophet standing in front of a god's image. The Neo-Assyrian gods were not limited to speaking to prophets in temples.

[18] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 17.

[19] See Weeks, "Predictive and Prophetic," 30–31 n. 14.

[20] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 13–14.

[21] See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*. See §18, where the prophet speaks at the palace gate, §16, where the prophet performs a symbolic action and speaks at the city gate with the elders gathered there, §29, where the prophet speaks on a sacrifice day in temple, and §47, where a prophet of Marduk in Babylon proclaims his message "in the midst of the whole citizenry" at the gate of the fugitive ruler Išme-Dagan when he (the prophet) cannot find an audience at the palace gate with King Hammurabi, who was harboring the fugitive.

There are even a few examples of oracles that are critical of the prophet's own king,[22] both in the Old Babylonian period[23] and in the Neo-Assyrian period. Two oracle reports at Mari exhort the king to provide justice for his subjects,[24] and many more exhort or chastise him concerning his lack of support for prophets and temples in his kingdom.[25] One Assyrian official warns about a prophecy (around 670 BC) that both supports a contender for the throne and announces the destruction of the current dynasty.[26] There is also evidence of censorship of negative press against the Assyrian administration. In one case, an astrologer protests that others used to toss out any omen results that were unfavorable to the king,[27] while in another case any unfavorable words against the prince from prophets and others are considered treason, and such words must be reported to the prince (cf. Amos 7:10–11).[28] In light of these things, we need to remember that we can only see "the tip of the iceberg" for oracles in the ancient world, since so few were preserved.[29] The low number of negative oracles more likely reflects the political agendas

[22] Nissinen, "Prophecy against the King," 159; Nissinen, "Das kritische Potential."

[23] Sasson, "Posting of Letters," 311–12.

[24] See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, §§1–2. See also §37.

[25] See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, §§1, 3, 4, 8–9, 12–13, 16, 25, 27–32, 34, 39, 42, 46. Note especially §32 (where the king should build the city gate lest disaster happen), §39 (a warning not to rebuild a ruined house/temple?), §42 (divine abandonment of a temple), §46 (a cursed temple that should be demolished).

[26] Nissinen, "Spoken, Written," 261. See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 171, §115.

[27] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 154, §105.

[28] Nissinen (*Prophets and Prophecy*, 150–51) translates: "If you hear an evil, ill, and ugly word that is mendacious and harmful to Assurbanipal, . . . from the mouth of a *raggimu* ["proclaimer"], a *maḫḫû* ["prophet"], or an inquirer of divine words, . . . you must not conceal it but come and tell it to Assurbanipal, the great crown prince of the Palace of Succession, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria" (§102, lines 108–9, 116–17, 119–22).

[29] Nissinen, "What Is Prophecy," 28. Cf. Millard, "Only Fragments," 301–3.

of the kingdoms involved than it does the actual proportion of negative versus positive oracles opposing or supporting a given kingdom.

In the case of Amos, then, the critical tone of much of the book is not unprecedented, and it is less unusual when viewed as Judah's critique of Israel and its leadership. The book does not critique Judah often (Amos 1:2; 2:4–5; 6:1), admittedly, but this may reflect a period *before* the traumas of Assyrian or Babylonian attacks made it easier for Judah to receive self-criticism of its own kingdom. Amos is directed at a foreign king (Jeroboam) and kingdom (Israel) for most of the oracles, and thus fits the political use of prophecy to criticize a foreign nation and thereby support Judah ideologically (cf. Amos 9:11–12; Obadiah; Nahum).

Moving from the content and recipients to the composition and writing of the oracles, we find something interesting: Although oracles were often addressed to the king in the ancient world, it was the king's officials, not the prophet, who would convey a written version of the message to the king.[30] The prophets of the ancient world, in other words, were mostly non-literate, and so their oral messages were written down not by themselves but by scribes likewise employed by the kingdom.[31]

Unlike in many societies today, the ability to read and write was not a skill-set that most people had or needed in the ancient Near East. Literacy was limited to a small

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[30] van der Toorn, "From the Oral," 219.

[31] See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 75, §48, where a prophet from a neighboring kingdom to Mari is quoted as requesting a scribe: "Send me a discreet scribe! I will have him write down the message which Šamaš [the sun-god] has sent me for the king [of Mari]."

percent of the largely agrarian population,[32] and even less of that percent would be proficient enough to write and read complex texts like those attributed to prophets.[33] Prophetic messages in ancient Israel/Judah, therefore, could only have been written down and read aloud by those who were highly literate—the "literati" as Ben Zvi dubs them— and these literati had an influential role in conserving, creating, and promoting biblical texts that claimed to be divine communication to Israel.[34] Those of us embedded in Western contexts need to be cautious not to assume that the difference between oral prophet and writing scribe was some progression of primitive to advanced, authentic to artificial, or religious to secular, as if prophets and scribes were opposed to or superseding each other, and as if writing is a sign of intellectual superiority or a later cultural development.[35]

Some critique the portrait of the prophet Amos, doubting that he would have been sufficiently literate to write down the oracles ascribed to him if he was only a rustic shepherd. This objection not only makes hasty assumptions about the social roles and

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[32] Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 5. See the bibliography listed there. Estimates of literacy in ancient societies range anywhere from a fraction of one percent to about ten percent. See the bibliography in Crenshaw, "Transmitting," 34–35; Crenshaw, *Education*. Literacy here means the ability to write and read words beyond one's name or some numbers.

[33] Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 5 n. 8. He notes that there would be different levels of literacy, with some able to write and read short reports or letters but even less able to handle more complex texts.

[34] Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 8–9.

[35] Floyd, "Write the Revelation"; cf. Evans, "Creating a New 'Great Divide,'" 749–64. These simplistic stereotypes of the oral-written distinction reflect the myth of Western superiority than they do the relationships between ancient prophets and scribes, which were usually complementary.

training that Amos might have had, since he was more than a shepherd.[36] It also misses

the point of this dynamic between prophet and scribe. All Amos would need was a state-

sponsored scribe or an independent scribal family in Judah to write down the oracles and

visions against Israel. He did not need to be a literary expert himself. Literacy of the

degree found in the book of Amos did not need to wait until the Persian period. Scribes

were employed by the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the 700s or earlier, not just

starting in the 500s.[37] The administration of Hezekiah of Judah (726–697 BC) appears to

have been a fertile context for texts of various genres (e.g., Prov 25:1), and many

prophetic messages were likely written and formed into collections during this time.[38]

The more important issue is one of comparative genre: Ben Zvi observes that the

prophecies from Mesopotamia were usually short messages dealing with circumstances in

the recent past or close future, not lengthy collections using general language and a

picture of a utopian society in the distant future.[39] This difference rarely holds within the

dystopian book of Amos, and it downplays the numerous parallels between ancient Near

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[36] The texts about his agrarian occupations seem to include large flocks and herds—thus indicating more of a livestock owner (Amos 1:1) than a simple shepherd. See Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*. See others (e.g., Niesiołowski-Spanò, "Biblical Prophet Amos").

[37] Millard, "Knowledge of Writing"; Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*; Carr, *Writing*; Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*; Hess, "Questions"; Rollston, *Writing and Literacy*; Demsky, *Literacy in Ancient Israel*; Schmidt, ed., *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings*.

[38] Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 64–90. Cf. Young, *Hezekiah*, 288. More generally on literacy for producing biblical texts, see Carr, *Writing*; Carr, *Formation*; Hilber, "Culture of Prophecy"; Walton and Sandy, *Lost World of Scripture*; Hilber, "Isaiah as Prophet"; Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe*.

[39] Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 26–27.

Eastern prophecy and biblical prophecy.[40] As to the length of the texts, a personal count

of the independent clauses in the major sections of Amos and in the Mesopotamian

examples shows that Amos is close to the Assyrian collections in the length of the book's

oracles.[41] The issue of length is only a matter of degree, and there are examples of

Assyrian prophecies that were gathered into collections of oracles by multiple prophets or

by the same prophet according to thematic concerns.[42] The genre of Amos is much closer

to the Assyrian examples than it is to the "literary-predictive" texts such as city laments.

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[40] See Hilber, "Culture of Prophecy," 222–23, where he lists ecstatic behavior, access to divine council, groups of prophets, dreams, symbolic acts, music, a prophetic burden, responses to inquiry or lament, divine letters to humans, the use of scribes, gifts and royal patronage, promise and fulfillment, conflicts between true and false prophets, public proclamations, cultic admonitions, calls to piety, admonition of kings, royal ideology and commitments to kings, and social admonition—not to mention the formulas of messenger speech and assurance that are similar.

[41] Contra Weeks, "Predictive and Prophetic," 26, who does not give the whole story when he claims that "those foreign oracles which have been preserved are rarely more than a few lines long." See also Morris, *Prophecy, Poetry and Hosea*, 15: "[N]one of the prophetic letters from Mari can compare with even the shortest or simplest prophetic book of the Hebrew Bible in length or complexity." It is one thing to say that about the Mari texts, but not quite as accurate for the material from Nineveh. In my counts of clauses using the Masoretic Hebrew for Amos and the English translations in Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, I found that the Old Babylonian material ranges between one and seventeen non-dependent clauses per oracle report, averaging just over four clauses per oracle. The Neo-Assyrian material, on the other hand, ranges from one to thirty-three clauses in length, averaging eleven clauses per oracle (or seventeen per oracle if only the oracle *collections* are considered). Dividing Amos into discourse units, often of different oracles within the book, reveals a range from three to thirty clauses in length and averaging 10.6 independent clauses per oracle unit. In other words, the length of an average unit in Amos is comparable to the length of the oracles in the oracle collections from Nineveh, even if the oracles in Amos are more numerous and rhetorically sophisticated.

[42] But see Weeks, "Predictive and Prophetic," 26–27, who says: "although there are examples of Neo-Assyrian oracles being collected together, there are no apparent instances of oracles being delivered in series. Correspondingly, there is no equivalent . . . to the first two chapters of Amos, with their sequence of oracles in which order and juxtaposition convey the message." This is not quite accurate, as noted by Bulkeley, "Book of Amos," 209–10.

3.3 The Restoration Oracles in Amos 9

The concluding "epilogue" about political and agrarian restoration, Amos 9:11–15, is often considered to be a contradictory and post-exilic addition of hope to an otherwise gloomy book.[43] As Wellhausen memorably put it, the tone is "roses and lavender instead of blood and iron."[44] Some scholars assume that the prophet Amos only delivered messages of inevitable doom,[45] while others assume he began as "cult prophet" who spoke against foreign nations and interceded for Israel, only later to preach inevitable doom.[46] It is ironic to me that the latter position (i.e., positive-to-negative messages) has no room for Amos 9:11–15 during the eighth century, because such positive messages for royalty and kingdom characterize cult prophets elsewhere in the ancient Near East.[47] The former position is the most common, however, and it assumes that pre-exilic prophets who spoke of judgment would not proclaim messages of hope or restoration. The epilogue of hope contrasts with the earlier announcements of inescapable disaster (cf. Amos 8:2; 9:1–4), and thus to some scholars these words in Amos 9:11–15 "are not imaginable in the mouth of Amos."[48] But this is a superficial understanding of judgment announcements, because it neglects the hyperbole and multiple functions that speech acts

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[43] There are some who believe the language of this concluding section contains late linguistic phrases or spellings, but these proposals are not convincing. See the discussion in Paul, *Amos*, 288–95. A more substantial case for the Persian period comes from the contrast in tone and the historical references inferred in this text, but even these factors are not convincing.

[44] Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 96.

[45] Weiser, *Profetie*, 310–11; Smend, "Nein," 416; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 103; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 158.

[46] Würthwein, "Amos-Studien"; Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 72–73. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, who date different sections of the book to the changing ministry of the prophet Amos.

[47] Cf. Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 115–28.

can have.[49] A more nuanced view of judgment announcements allows that they may aim

to warn and move an audience to some sort of repentance, and thus "behind every

prediction of disaster there stands a concealed alternative."[50] If we deny this possibility,

we are reducing the words of Amos to unconditional predictions without the possibility

that they may act as conditional threats, however strongly worded. Are they predictions

or threats, in other words?[51] The genre may seem to be casting a legal verdict on Israel

("verdictive"),[52] but this could be a rhetorical strategy to induce change (at least for a

surviving remnant) rather than a strategy solely to condemn the Israelites.[53] The social

conditions of those receiving the messages of Amos are the decisive element for how

they as audience would have received the announcements of judgment, and other

prophetic books (like Jonah) present audiences responding to seemingly unconditional

disaster with acts of repentance that may mitigate or annul the disaster.[54] Indeed, both

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[48] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 158. Cf. Smend, "Nein," 422.

[49] Möller, "Rehabilitation"; Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude"; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 118.

[50] Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*, 134. Cf. Jonah 3.

[51] They might even be both at the same time. Alternatively, the words could be after-the-event propaganda by someone other than the eighth-century Amos, as argued by Fritz, "Amosbuch," 41; Radine, *Book of Amos*; Kratz, "Worte."

[52] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 122, 132–33, 181.

[53] Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude," 359–60, 366. Möller (362) argues that the presentation of the judgment speeches is appropriate for "anyone who desires to shock the audience and propel them into taking appropriate measures to prevent the threatened outcome." Some material in the book would not fit a narrow purpose of condemning Israel (363). Even Patrick will sometimes admit that the message of judgment in Amos is "an argument for the possibility of judgment"—not the verdict itself—and a simultaneous "test to see whether they can be reformed rather than destroyed" (Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 138, 147). Overall, though, Patrick stresses unconditional doom and dismisses anything that might suggest glimmers of hope within the prophetic message.

[54] Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude," 367; Eagleton, "J. L. Austin and the Book of Jonah"; Houston, "What Did the Prophets"; Adams, *The Performative*, 77–82.

"possibilities of inexorable doom and of mercy evoked by repentance were always implicit in the use of the genre of the oracle of doom."[55]

But more than the tone, it is the references found in the epilogue that most scholars consider to be post-exilic, so we must consider Amos 9:11–12 in more detail in order to reconstruct its setting:

> In that day, I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and I will wall up their breaches, and his ruins I will raise up, and I will build it as in the days of old, (9:12) in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom, even all the nations over which my name is called (speech of Yahweh who is doing this).

The promise to "raise up" (קום) the "fallen" (נפל) booth of David (Amos 9:11) is poetic and ambiguous at multiple levels.[56] A minority believe the "booth" (סכה) is a metaphor referring to Jerusalem or its temple that has been destroyed by the Babylonians, making this an oracle of restoration for the city and/or its temple.[57] The main reason for the view is the architectural language of walls, "breaches," and the plural pronouns referring to such features. Even less argue that the term refers to the Transjordanian city of

[55] Houston, "What Did the Prophets," 186.

[56] For discussion of the "falling/fallen" ambiguity for the participle and the dynasty-vs.-city ambiguity for the referent of the "booth," see Niehaus, "Amos," 490. Niehaus prefers to translate the phrase as "the collapsing hut of David" but acknowledges that either verbal rendering is possible. A survey of research on this verse can be found in Nägele, *Laubhütte Davids und Wolkensohn*.

[57] Cf. Pomykala, "Jerusalem as the Fallen Booth"; Goswell, "David in the Prophecy of Amos"; they both argue that the architectural imagery of Amos 9:11 points to the city of Jerusalem, and Goswell (252) argues that this includes the temple more particularly. If the city and especially the temple had been at stake, however, the phrase would more likely have been "the booth of Solomon" or "the booth of Yahweh" as substitute for "house of Yahweh" (cf. Pomykala, "Jerusalem as the Fallen Booth," 286). Very few of the texts Goswell associates with Amos 9:11 are relevant parallels when the "David" factor and its connection to territorial ambitions in Amos 9:12 are considered (cf. his listing of 2 Sam 5:9; 6:17; 11:11; 1 Kgs 2:28; Ps 27:5 [the only good evidence of the temple as a "booth"]; Isa 1:8 [the only good evidence of Jerusalem or its residents compared to a "booth"]; 4:6; 16:5).

"Succoth."[58] A majority believe that the "booth of David" is an alternative way of referring to "the house of David" (cf. 2 Sam 7:11–16), the royal dynasty ruling the kingdom of Judah.[59] This royal interpretation is the most probable not only because it enjoys the most support from ancient versions (cf. Acts 15:16–17)[60] but also because it

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[58] For unconvincing emendations of סכות ("booth") to "Succoth" (thus Richardson, "*SKT* (Amos 9:11)") see the critical review of Lessing, *Amos*, 576–77, who notes that none of the ancient versions support a reading of the town "Succoth." If the town of Succoth in the Transjordan were intended, it would be "Ammon" or "Aram" that we would expect to follow in Amos 9:12, for those are the closest targets for military campaigns using Succoth as a base (cf. 2 Sam 11:1, 11; 1 Kgs 20:12, 16). Even if Amos 9:11 were alluding to "Succoth" in reference to 2 Sam 11:11, the phrase "Succoth *of David*" would be inappropriate, considering David did not actually accompany the army on that campaign in 2 Sam 11:11. If the plural in Amos 9:11 is feasible at all, then I suggest it would refer to the "booths" or "shelters" of David, meaning the towns of Judah's kingdom whose "breaches" needed repair. This would account for the plural pronouns in the verse but not for the singular "it" used in one clause. More likely, though, is the singular reading "booth of David," despite its own attendant difficulties.

[59] See counter-arguments to Pomykala in Glenny, *Finding Meaning*, 219–20. As noted by Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 165, the term "booth/hut" can refer elsewhere to a shelter for those tending a vineyard (Isa 1:8) or livestock (Gen 33:17) or for military leaders on a campaign (2 Sam 11:11; 1 Kgs 20:12, 16). Occasionally the term can be poetic for Yahweh's divine dwelling (Job 36:29; Pss 18:11; 76:2–3). And most famously in the plural it can refer to the annual "Feast of Booths" commemorating the wilderness wanderings (Lev 23:42–43; Neh 8:14–17). Finley (Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 281) thinks the metaphor refers to the royal shelter of a king in battle, and it offers the northern kingdom hope in a king from David's line. Smith and Page (*Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 165–66) argue that the "booth" is metaphorical for "house of David" in terms of the Davidic dynasty that was "falling" in the eighth century. Cf. Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 93–94.

[60] In the Greek, the ambiguity is mostly retained, with "booth" rendered as "tent" (σκηνή). In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Amos 9:11 is used as a corroboration of the dynastic promise of the royal Davidic line in 2 Sam 7:11–14:

10 [And] YHWH [de]clares to you that «he will build you a house. I will raise up your seed after you and establish the throne of his kingdom 11 [for ev]er. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me.» This (refers to the) «branch of David», who will arise with the Interpreter of the law who 12 [will rise up] in Zi[on in] the [l]ast days, as it is written: «I will raise up the hut [סוכת] of David which has fallen», This (refers to) «the hut of 13 David which has fall[en», w]hich he will raise up to save Israel. (4Q174 [4QFlor] Frags. 1 i, 21, 2:10–13, as translated in *DSSSE* 1:353).

Nägele, *Laubhütte Davids und Wolkensohn*, 22–38 makes an attempt to interpret the booth as the Jerusalem temple, but the explanations are unconvincing. The temple element of 2 Sam 7:11–16 is omitted in the Qumran text, and Amos 9:11 is related to an expected Davidic dynasty in the last days, as argued by Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 158–60. The Damascus Document from Qumran also contains an interpretation of Amos 9:11 in conjunction with Amos 5:26–27 that is more allegorical but still associated with David as king (CD 7:9–21). See Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 160–61. In the New Testament, Acts 15:16 seems to understand the booth as related to Jesus as Davidic king, but the focus is on those from foreign nations turning to the true God. The Syriac (Peshitta) and the Latin (Vulgate) are

provides the strongest fit with the political ambitions in the following clauses (Amos 9:12).[61] It also makes sense of the alternating gender and number of the pronouns (e.g., "their breaches," "his ruins"), since this could refer to the breached (metaphorical) walls of the booth (i.e., dynasty) and then to the body of the king himself ("his ruins"), since he represents his dynastic house (Amos 9:11).[62] Either way, Jerusalem or Davidic kingdom, the large majority of scholars identify this text (Amos 9:11–15) as the latest editorial addition to the book, either added during an exilic Deuteronomistic updating,[63] or more popularly during the post-exilic age (500s–400s BC) when the Davidic dynasty was no longer ruling[64] and when there was hostility from Edom after the Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC.[65] Despite this common dating, I argue that the "fallen" booth does not imply a lack of Davidic kingship in Judah at the time.[66] Several other scholars argue that Amos 9:11–15 derives from the eighth century or before the

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ambiguous like the Greek about what the "tabernacle/tent" is (cf. Lessing, *Amos*, 576). In the Targum the "booth" of Amos 9:11 was interpreted as "the kingdom of the house of David" (מלכותא דבית דויד; *Tg. Neb.* Amos 9:11), with strong political overtones for a unified "Israel."

[61] Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 64.

[62] Contra Nogalski, "Problematic Suffixes."

[63] See Jacob et al., *Osée, Joël, Amos*; Kellermann, "Amosschluss" Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 352–53) shows the weaknesses in ascribing Amos 9:11–15 to a Deuteronomistic group but places the text later in the post-exilic period.

[64] Barton, *Theology*, 8–9.

[65] Cf. Obadiah; Lam 4:21–22; Ps 137:7; Ezek 25:13–14; 35–36; Mays, *Amos*, 164; Cripps, *Critical and Exegetical*, 273; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 351, 353. See Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 108–9. Nogalski (108–9 n. 88) argues that interpretations of "the remnant of Edom" depend on predispositions toward the authenticity of the verse or not: either it refers to the late post-exilic period when the Edomites were weakened by the Nabateans or it refers to a less devastated Edom in an earlier period. But see Smith, *Amos*, 380, who notes examples of conflict between Edom and Israel/Judah before the time of Amos (Num 20:14–21; 1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8:13–14; 2 Kgs 8:20–22; 14:7, 22; 2 Chr 20; Amos 1:11–12), such that "a late date is not required." Similarly, there are a handful of conflicts with Edom in the eighth century alone, making a post-exilic date for Amos 9:11–12 a hasty conclusion at worst and only one option at best.

[66] Contra Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 158.

Babylonian exile at the least,[67] so it is worth reviewing some of the reasons why the post-exilic "consensus" may be too hasty.

Because the "booth" is a metaphor of some sort, it is important to remember that it need not imply the total destruction or death of all to which it refers.[68] The fallen "booth" could be hyperbole that "presupposes the troubled existence but not the demise of the house of David."[69] Indeed, there were a number of troubled periods for Judah's monarchy during the eighth century: First, for example, King Uzziah's father, Amaziah, (805–776 BC) had some military victories over the Edomites (2 Kgs 14:7) but subsequently overextended himself against Jeroboam II's father, King Jehoash of Israel (2 Kgs 14:8–21). Jehoash asks Amaziah before the battle, "why would you stir yourself up for something bad, and you yourself fall [נפל], and Judah with you?" (2 Kgs 14:10). Judah's army was routed, Amaziah captured, and Israel's army "breached" (פרץ) a substantial section of Jerusalem's walls (2 Kgs 14:13). The text also reports that Jehoash took all the valuables that could be found in the "house of Yahweh" (temple) and in the "king's house" (palace) along with some hostages, and returned to Samaria (2 Kgs 14:14). Amaziah was released from Samarian captivity after an unknown period, and

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[67] Hammershaimb, *Book of Amos*, 140–43; Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 285–86; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 397; Hayes, *Amos*, 223; Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 70–71; Paul, *Amos*, 288–89; Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 63–65; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:195; Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 279–86.

[68] Cf. Amos 5:2, which exaggerates Israel's "fall" before the nation has lost its independence: "She is fallen [נפל]! Israel's virgin people will not rise [קום] again! She is abandoned on her soil, none to raise her [קום]!" Despite this funeral chant, the people are called to seek Yahweh due to the possibility that some of them might survive (Amos 5:4–6, 14–15).

[69] Hayes, *Amos*, 226. Hayes points out that the unique language for the royal dynasty here in Amos 9:11 is not encountered anywhere else in the Old Testament, and that a wholesale addition in the post-exilic period might have used traditional language or terms from other post-exilic restoration oracles.

lived for fifteen years more before an assassination conspiracy ended his life (2 Kgs 14:17–20). His son Uzziah was crowned king as a teenager, ruled for many years with co-regencies (787–736 BC), and is credited with regaining and fortifying Judah's southern port at Elath, presumably lost to the Edomites sometime after his father's decline (2 Kgs 14:21–22). The similarities to Amos 9:11–12 include the terms "fall(en)" (נפל) and "breach" (פרץ) as well as the conceptual links to Edomite territory and the devastated "houses" (i.e., the temple and palace in Jerusalem, and the weakened dynasty). Either major view of the fallen "booth of David" would thus fit Amaziah's final years or the early years of Uzziah, considering that both Jerusalem and the dynasty's power were in ruins after Amaziah's battle with Israel.[70] Uzziah in this scenario would constitute the Judahite ruler who would aspire to rebuilding Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty while re-taking "the remnant of Edom" (Amos 9:12), finishing what his father had started.[71] This is the earliest plausible setting for Amos 9:11–12, but it is not the only setting that could fit historically.

Second, the text might refer to King Uzziah's final decades of sickly health, during which time he was quarantined and his son Jotham was co-regent (757–742 BC; 2

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[70] See similar assessments in Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 917. They suggest the possibility that "when Uzziah came to the throne . . . the state of his kingdom could well have corresponded to the picture presented here in Amos 9."

[71] Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 917: "What Jeroboam and Uzziah actually accomplished was not what the prophet had in mind [i.e., a united kingdom resembling David's and Solomon's], but it is likely that the oracles were all composed and delivered long before those developments occurred." Rudolph (*Joel, Amos*, 282) notes Uzziah's conquest of Elath (2 Kgs 14:22) and the subsequent loss of Elath to the Edomites during the reign of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:6), and argues that this supports a date for Amos 9:11–12 in the mid-eighth century, when Judah had some control of Edom's territory. There was, at least, no time after the Babylonian exile up to the Maccabean period during which any part of Edom was under Judean control.

Kgs 15:1–5; 2 Chr 26:16–23).[72] The fallen "booth" of Amos 9:11 would be the weak condition of the Davidic dynasty during this decade, and the promise of conquering the "remnant of Edom" of Amos 9:12 would imply that Jotham had the chance to finish in his early years what his father had started in taking Elath (2 Kgs 14:21–22).[73]

Third, the text could refer to subsequent political weakness for Jotham and Ahaz (742–726 BC) on the throne, including the famous Syro-Ephraimite War in which a coalition of Israel, Aram, Philistia, and Edom attacked Judah (2 Kgs 15:37; 16:5–6; 2 Chr 28:5–21; Isa 7–9).[74] The Davidic kingdom was certainly weakened by this costly conflict,[75] and the references in Amos 9:11–12 to raising up the "booth" and possessing "the remnant of Edom" could fit either Jotham's fortifications and conquests strengthening Judah (2 Kgs 15:35; 2 Chr 27:3–7) and then to his weakness and losses to the early coalition (2 Kgs 15:37), or more clearly could fit Ahaz's conflicts with the later coalition, including the loss once again of Elath to the benefit of the Edomites (2 Kgs 16:5–6; 2 Chr 28:5–8, 17–19). Presumably, Hezekiah (726–697 BC) as successor to Ahaz would be the hoped-for monarch to restore Edomite territory back to Judah in this

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[72] The dates for Jotham (758/757–742/741) are based on Galil, *Chronology*, 147. For a larger sense of the range of rulers, here are his estimates for Uzziah (788/787–736/735), Jotham (758/757–742/741), Ahaz (742/741–726), Hezekiah (726–697/696), and Manasseh (697/696–642/641).

[73] Cf. Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 281–82. Rudolph holds that the setting is after Uzziah's victory at Elath, and the oracle hopes for more victories that, however, did not materialize later.

[74] Although Sweeney places the book of Amos later than Jotham and Ahaz, he comments (*King Josiah*, 281–82) that Jotham and Ahaz may have hoped for some control over the northern kingdom as a reward for siding with Assyria against the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. Earlier and later periods also fit these aspirations of the southern kingdom reflected in Amos 9:11–15, however.

[75] This conflict during the time of Ahaz reportedly cost Judah the port at Elath and some towns in the Shephelah and Negev, lost to Edom and Philistia (2 Kgs 16:6; 2 Chr 28:17–18), besides many casualties against Rezin and Pekah to the north (cf. Isa 7–9; 2 Chr 28:5–15) as well significant tribute sent to Tiglath-pileser III (734 BC) to encourage his help against the anti-Assyrian coalition (2 Kgs 16:7–9).

scenario.[76] Even Hezekiah's reign had its periods of near-terminal illness (2 Kgs 20; Isa

38) and then devastation of Judah (2 Kgs 18–19; Isa 36–37), if we need to look for

another weak moment for the Davidic king or kingdom behind Amos 9:11–12. All of

these five kings and their heirs within the eighth century alone (i.e., Amaziah, Uzziah,

Jotham, Ahaz, or Hezekiah) match the political weakness and hopes of Amos 9:11–12,

but the surrounding texts (Amos 9:7–10, 13–15) are important for identifying the most

likely referents of this Davidic restoration. It cannot be just any weakened Judah but has

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[76] My dating for Hezekiah (726–697 BC) follows Galil, *Chronology*, 147. Cf. Galil, *Chronology*, 98–105. The main deficiency with Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 174, is that he dates Hezekiah to 715–686 BC, which agrees with the biblical data on when Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:13; 701 BC) but conflicts with Hezekiah identified as the king of Judah when *Samaria* was attacked (722 and 720 BC; cf. 2 Kgs 18:1, 9–10). Galil (*Chronology*, 100–102) lists several other problems with Thiele's numbers, but this discrepancy about Hezekiah during the fall of Samaria is the most significant. Trying to add a coregency to Hezekiah's reign, as does McFall (McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook"; McFall, "Has the Chronology"; McFall, "Missing Coregencies"), creates other problems such as a forty-three-year reign for Hezekiah (728–686 BC) that was only counted as twenty-nine sole years. This contrasts with the usual policy in Kings of counting all years for a monarch, even if some were co-regency years. Galil's chronology does require an emendation of either Hezekiah's or Ahaz's age upon becoming king (Galil 101), and it requires that Hezekiah's "fourteenth year" when Assyria attacked (2 Kgs 18:13) was either a mistake for "twenty-fourth year" (my view) or that it referred to 712 BC when Assyria attacked Ashdod and Azekah near Jerusalem, an attack that was confused with the one on Jerusalem eleven years later in 701 (*Chronology*, 104). The Ashdod campaign would at least fit the prophetic promises of "fifteen" more years of life after Hezekiah fell ill, if the illness coincided with the Ashdod events of 712 BC. My reconstruction is as follows: In Hezekiah's fourteenth year (713/712 BC), he came fell ill and received a prophecy from Isaiah that he would survive an additional fifteen years and that Jerusalem would be delivered (2 Kings 20:1–11; Isa 38:1–8). This deliverance possibly related to the military activity of Sargon II in 712 BC from which Judah was largely or totally spared, except for some territory in the west (cf. Isa 20:1; Azekah inscription). The "fourteenth year" of 2 Kgs 18:13 is a later, scribal mistake for the "twenty-fourth year" of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kgs 18:13—19:37; Isa 36:1—37:38). Either way, the Babylonian delegates from Marduk-apla-iddina II came after Hezekiah's sickness (ca. 712–701 BC), probably in order to collaborate on rebelling against Assyria (2 Kgs 20:12–19) before or after the death of Sargon II in 705 BC. Though Judah suffered tremendous damage from Sennacherib's response to Judah's rebellion, Hezekiah and his capital survived the Assyrian onslaught in Hezekiah's twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year (701 BC), and Hezekiah died peacefully a few years later (697 BC), fifteen years after he became ill, as promised (ca. 712 BC), and thirty years (twenty-nine due to postdating) after starting to rule (2 Kgs 18:2; 20:6).

to be a weakened Judah after a time when Israel is devastated and its inhabitants

displaced (Amos 9:8–10, 13–15).

Amos 9:7–10 threatens the destruction of all but a minority of Israelites, and thus

Amos 9:11–12 which begins with "in that day"[77] most likely refers to a restoration for

Judah *after* the devastation of the northern kingdom mentioned in the transitional text of

Amos 9:8–10 (i.e., after the 730s and 720s when the Assyrians exiled waves of

Israelites). Furthermore, if Judah's renewal is set within the same period as Amos 9:13–

15, then it is even more likely that Israel's devastation has already happened for the

following promise to be relevant:

> (9:13) "Look, days are coming (speech of Yahweh), when one plowing will come near the one harvesting, and one treading grapes (will meet) the one sowing the seed, and the mountains will drip with sweet-wine, and all the hills will melt (with it), (9:14) and I will turn back the captivity of my people Israel, and they will rebuild desolate cities and reside (in them), and plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit, (9:15) and I will plant them on their soil, and they will not be uprooted anymore from their soil which I gave to them," Yahweh your God said.

While this could be a separate oracle unrelated to the previous one, it is more likely a

picture of restoration for the remnant of the northern kingdom ("Israel") at peace with

Judah.[78] Some argue that the idyllic picture here matches the hopes of the Persian-period

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[77] Nogalski, *Interpreting*, 22–23: "Specifically, the relative pronoun ('that,' 'those') assumes an antecedent, and this assumption requires that the formulas relate to their literary context. For example, Amos 9:11 offers a promise that begins with 'on *that* day.' In its context, this promise can refer only to the deliverance of the remnant in 9:7–10. Thus it assumes the deliverance of a remnant but extends that promise well beyond the idea of mere survival, when 9:11–12 announces [the] restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Determining the nature of the antecedent becomes important in contexts where this phrase ['in that day'] appears."

[78] See the argument for the unity of Amos 9:11–15 in Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 99.

community in Jerusalem, and that the wording is borrowed from other texts such as Joel

and Obadiah,[79] but if anything the other texts more likely borrowed from Amos, which

should be studied in its own right. Furthermore, Sweeney argues that the critiques against

the northern kingdom earlier in Amos could reflect the economic toll on Judah as vassal

to Israel.[80] If so, then this "idyllic oracle" need not refer to a post-exilic utopia but only to

the "glory days" of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom when Judah enjoyed more political

power and when Judah's farmers were not taxed by tribes or kings in the north.[81] But

Israelite farmers also had taxes from their own government and then tribute to pay to

Assyria during the 700s.[82] In other words, the agricultural bounty and the rebuilt cities of

Amos 9:13–15 may only contrast with Israelite taxes or tribute-raising that affected

farmers of both Hebrew kingdoms throughout the eighth century, even if this bounty was

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[79] See Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 110–22. As Nogalski (*The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi*) puts it, "Amos 9:12 essentially summarizes a major theme of Obadiah (Judah will repossess Edom and the surrounding nations), while Amos 9:13 reflects the same hyperbolic hope . . . one finds in Joel 3:18 (MT 4:18)." Sometimes Nogalski suggests that Joel and Obadiah were borrowing from Amos, but other times that editors of Amos borrowed from Joel and Obadiah in order to link all three books (270, 355). Opposing the book of the Twelve hypothesis, see Jones, *Formation*, who claims that the OG of Amos 9:11 may be based on an earlier Hebrew tradition ("humanity," not "Edom") and notes that the order of books is different in the Greek versions, obscuring the supposed connections of Amos with Joel and Obadiah. Regardless, I argue that Joel and Obadiah more likely borrowed from Amos, the earlier book. Others do argue for a collection of prophetic books in Hezekiah's time that included Hosea, Amos, and Micah, for example. Cf. Curtis, "Zion-Daughter Oracles"

[80] Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 182–83. Sweeney uses Amos 7:1–6 to infer that Judah was suffering from heavy tribute imposed by Israel (cf. "after the cuttings of the king" in Amos 7:1) and from locust plagues and wildfires (Amos 7:1–6), all of which would have worsened the agricultural shortages in Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 14:1–22). Possibly Amos "the agriculturalist" could have traveled to Bethel to offer some of Judah's tribute that season (Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 182; cf. Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 275, 281; Sweeney, "Amos," 1:1030, 1033–34).

[81] Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 184.

[82] Thus Sweeney ("Dystopianization," 183), who observes that Israel had its own tribute to pay to Assyria during these closing decades, and so farmers not just in Judah but also in Israel may have suffered from taxes and tribute imposed on them.

later understood through the lens of Babylonian exile and post-exilic hopes.[83] In Judah in the late 700s, then, hope for Judah's political recovery and agricultural bounty for the northern refugees and their exiled kinspeople would be an appropriate message with which to conclude the book of Amos, especially with the recent Assyrian conquests now past. Notice that it is not Judah but Israel that is promised restoration from exile, and this has implications for the date of this part of Amos, as Schniedewind observes:

> The reference to being "plucked up out of the land" (v. 15) points to an exile—but Israel's exile, not Judah's. This is clear because "Israel" throughout the book of Amos refers exclusively to the northern kingdom. When the book of Amos concludes that God "will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and they shall rebuild the ruined cities" (vv. 13–14), it means to suggest that through Hezekiah the northern kingdom would be reintegrated and thereby restored. Placed in this context, the "fallen booth" must be a metaphor for the division of David's kingdom. It is this model kingdom which Hezekiah wanted to resurrect "as in the days of old."[84]

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[83] Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 184–85.

[84] Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 65. Sweeney similarly suggests (*King Josiah*, 283, 285–86) that Amos 7:10–17 and 9:11–15 could fit the circumstances of Hezekiah's early reign when the editors of Amos would plausibly have seen the downfall of Israel by the Assyrians as an opportunity for the Davidic dynasty to control the north and stop the ongoing worship at Bethel. Another period in which this combination of concerns would have been relevant would be the reign of Josiah in the seventh century BC, but Sweeney (286) distances himself from saying that the book of Amos had any further content added during Josiah's reign. There appears to be some ambiguity in Sweeney's work as to whether he identifies Josiah's reforms as merely *using* a completed version of Amos or whether he identifies this period in the late 600s as *formative* for editorial additions of anti-Bethel and anti-Judah polemic in the book. Compare this quote (*King Josiah*, 282): "Nevertheless, none of these considerations justifies the identification of anti-Beth-El passages in the book of Amos as the products of Josianic redaction. These elements are too well ingrained in the overall structure of the book and its message; rather, they point to readings of Amos' message in later periods to justify the potential or actual actions of Judean kings such as Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The anti-Beth-El perspective is easily the viewpoint of the Judean prophet and farmer Amos." Even for Amos 2:4–5 Sweeney (*King Josiah*, 285) nearly attributes the wording to an update under Josiah but then finds reasons that it could derive from the previous century (cf. Isa 1:10; 5:24; 30:9). Compare Laato, "Yahweh Sabaoth and His Land," 125–29. Laato dates the book's critiques of the "royal land" tradition to the time of Jeroboam II and dates the more universal land traditions and selected other texts to the time of Josiah. Why Josiah and not an earlier king of Judah is best is not clear.

It might seem like a leap to jump from the exile of Israel to Hezekiah, but Hezekiah's

reign (726–697 BC) is precisely the time during which Israel ceased being a kingdom,

experienced its last waves of exile in the 720s, all while Judah was still untouched by

Assyrian exile (at least until 701 BC). Again, the wording in Amos does not mention the

exile of Judah, and the "booth" is arguably a political reference to the imperiled dynasty

of David rather than to Jerusalem or its temple.[85] Hezekiah's reign is indeed plausible as

a setting for Amos 9:11–15, since it follows a period of political weakness and

compromise under Ahaz (i.e., the fallen "booth of David" by the time of Ahaz's death;

Amos 9:11), giving Hezekiah a chance to regain what his father had lost to Edom (i.e.,

"the remnant of Edom"; Amos 9:12). These political hopes for restoration are linked in

the literary context to the devastation and exile of the Israelites alone from the 730s or

720s onward (Amos 9:8–10, 14–15). Because many in Judah experienced exile in 701

BC even before the famous Babylonian rounds of exile a century later, the only period

that fits Amos 9:11–15 with no exile for Judah is between 720 and 701 BC. Those two

decades were a time of swelling growth for Judah (2 Kgs 18:8), perhaps with hopes that

Hezekiah would restore what Ahaz had lost to Edom and other nations in previous

decades (2 Kgs 16:5–6; 2 Chr 28:5–8, 16–21; cf. Amos 9:12). The death of Ahaz or the

sickness of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20; Isa 38) could all be interpreted as the fallen "booth" of

David if it referred to the king or kingdom of Judah compared to what it once was in its

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[85] On a more general level, Amos 9:7–15 is reasonably coherent as an ending to the book, and does not need to be read as a discordant or later note. Cf. Möller, "Rehabilitation"; Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude"; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 118.

prime. This view of Amos 9:11–12 also fits the later portrait of Hezekiah as a new

Solomon who would restore the glorious kingdom of the past, reintegrating the Israelites

under his rule (cf. 2 Chr 29–30).[86]

3.4 Supposedly Deuteronomistic Themes

Some scholars argue for evidence of "Deuteronomistic" language or themes in the book,

usually dating this material to exilic or post-exilic times of Judah's history.[87] Others

examine the evidence and find no firm evidence of Deuteronomistic editing.[88] An initial

example of the debate is in Amos 2:4, where the *torah*, the law or "instruction of

Yahweh" (תורת יהוה) is mentioned, but this phrasing generally matches other prophetic

texts (e.g., Isa 5:24; 30:9; Jer 6:19; 8:8–9; Hos 4:6), not any other formulation in

Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomistic History (e.g., "the instruction of Moses").[89] The

text mentions also mentions the "regulations" (חק) of Yahweh but not a "covenant"

(ברית) with Israel, nor a written "book" of such regulations.[90] The vocabulary about

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[86] See Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*.

[87] For example, Amos 1:1, 9–10, 11–12; 2:4–5, 7b, 9, 10–12; 3:1b, 7, 13–14; 5:6, 25–26; 8:11–14.
See Schmidt, "Die deuteronomistische Redaktion"; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 8.

[88] Lohfink, "Gab es"; Bons, "Denotat"; cf. Porter, "Supposed Deuteronomic Redaction." See also
Schearing and McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*.

[89] Lohfink, "Gab es," 44. Cf. Exod 13:9; Ps 19:8 (Eng. 7); Ezra 7:10; Neh 9:3; 1 Chr 22:12; 34:14.
Cf. Isa 1:10. Compare arguments for and against Deuteronomistic redactions in Amos: Schmidt, "Die
deuteronomistische Redaktion," 177; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 112–13; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 27–29; contra
Lohfink, "Gab es"; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 226.

[90] The point of these observations is not that there were no collections of Hebrew legal texts at the
time. There must have been. The point is that Amos does not reference a written collection very clearly or
directly, and certainly not with the usual phrases of Exodus or Deuteronomy. Accordingly, any hypothesis
about a Deuteronomistic addition here is tentative. Its wording is proto-Deuteronomistic at best. Cf. Paul,
Amos, 20–24. Texts in Deuteronomy that speak of "keeping" the "regulations" (חקים) of Yahweh are often
paired with similar terms in the plural (cf. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 336),
unlike the singular "instruction" (תורה) with which the regulations are paired in Amos 2:4 (cf. Deut 4:5–6,
40; 5:1; 6:17; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:16–17; 1 Kgs 3:14; 8:58; 9:4; 2 Kgs 17:37; 23:3; but cf. Deut

leading "astray" and "deceptions" (Amos 2:4) does not match Deuteronomistic literature very strongly and could refer to a number of political, moral, or religious errors in the history of Judah.[91] Compared to the rest of the book, however, Amos 2:4 is unusual in its vocabulary, and its accusations do not clearly match the other biblical traditions about King Uzziah (Amos 1:1) or his predecessor in Judah.[92] Instead, the next king of Judah to be evaluated negatively after Uzziah is Ahaz (742–726 BC), who is blamed for following Israelite and Canaanite religious practices (2 Kgs 16:1–4) and for political compromise that led his kingdom into further religious decline (2 Kgs 16:7–18). During the reign of his son Hezekiah, initially depicted as a glowing contrast to his father (2 Kgs 18), the oracle in Amos 2:4–5 could have been added by royal scribes to condemn Judah for its drifting before Hezekiah came to power. There was likely an edition of the

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4:44–45; 17:19). Another similar text to Amos 2:4 is 2 Kgs 17:15, with "reject," "regulations," and "walk after" being the same, but all the other vocabulary is different.

[91] For "lead astray" (תעה), the most similar texts are 2 Kgs 21:9; Isa 3:12; 9:15; 19:13–14; Jer 50:6 (all of which refer to political leaders misleading people); Jer 23:13, 32; Mic 3:5 (false prophets); Hos 4:12 (misleading religious practices). For the "deceptions" (כזביהם), see Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 192 n. 182), citing Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 301–5; Lohfink, "Gab es," 331–32; and especially Bons, "Denotat." Bons argues that the term refers to the deceptive preaching of "false prophets," not to "false gods." If true, then there is not even a reference to idolatry or other gods here in Amos 2:4, contrary to one the most common Deuteronomic concerns. The term "deception" (כזב) is never used for idols anywhere else, at least. Usually the term simply means "lies" that one person tells another (e.g., Judg 16:10, 13; Pss 4:3 [Eng. 2]; 5:7 [Eng. 6]; Prov 6:19; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9; Zeph 3:13), but it can also refer to false teaching or prophecy. Cf. Isa 28:15, 17; Ezek 13:6–9, 19; 21:34; 22:28). See also related terms in Isa 9:15; Jer 5:31; 6:13; 14:14; 23:25; 23:32; Lam 2:14; Ezek 13:2, 22; Mic 2:11; 3:5; Zeph 3:4.

[92] Neither Uzziah nor his father Amaziah were charged with rejecting Yahweh's "instruction," written or otherwise, nor with deceiving their people into political or religious errors (2 Kgs 14:1–22; 15:1–7). Sweeney (*Twelve Prophets*, 1:213) in one place is ready to attribute Amos 2:4–5 to Josiah's time but ultimately explains how it could also fit a mid-eighth-century date: "Insofar as Judah is allied with Israel and Israel is condemned for social abuses much like those of Isa 5:1–24 [cf. Isa 5:24 with Amos 2:4], it seems that [the original prophet] Amos may well condemn Judah for its alliance with Israel [thus the "deceptions" by Judah's rulers?] and its acceptance of Israel's corrupt . . . practices in treating the poor [thus the divine "instruction" and "regulations" Judah had rejected?]." While this is possible, I find it more likely that a later reference to Judah's failures is in view.

Deuteronomistic History completed during or just after Hezekiah's reign,[93] lending some plausibility to this theory.

I am not opposed to Deuteronomy and other texts of the Pentateuch being earlier than all of Amos, but the case for any dependence must be made on a case-by-case basis rather than assumed. When specific cases are examined, the evidence does not fit characteristically Deuteronomistic language, suggesting that the resemblance is much looser than typically posited in scholarship. Here are a few final examples: The exodus tradition in Amos (e.g., Amos 2:10; 3:1; 9:7) uses the verb עלה ("bring up") rather than the most common verb in the Deuteronomistic writings for this rescue: יצא ("bring out").[94] Examples of prophets as "servants" of Yahweh (Amos 3:7) or stories of prophetic conflict (Amos 7:10–17) are common in Deuteronomistic literature, but these similarities may be due to a shared worldview rather than a distinctive scribal tradition.[95] Likewise, the disasters of Amos 4:6–11 and Amos 5:11 do not match the curses in Leviticus or

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[93] See Weippert, "Die 'deuteronomischen' Beurteilung"; Provan, *Hezekiah*; Halpern and Vanderhooft, "Editions of Kings"; Park, *Hezekiah*, 73–78.

[94] Paul, *Amos*, 90–91; contra Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, 153–62. Hamborg demonstrates that the verb usage is not decisive but does not remove the difficulty that Deuteronomy itself only uses "bring up" once for the exodus tradition (Deut 20:1). Furthermore, Amos 3:1–2 does not uses the common "nations/peoples/kingdoms of the earth [ארץ]" for the chosen people like Deuteronomy does (Deut 28:1, 10, 25). Instead, it refers to the "clans [משפחה] of the soil [אדמה]" (Amos 3:2; cf. Gen 12:3; 28:14), the family term which is only found once in Deuteronomy (Deut 29:18; cf. Jer 8:3; Mic 2:3). In other words, the "election" tradition in Amos is dissimilar to Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic texts at a few key points.

[95] Gitay, "A Study," 304–5; Hayes, *Amos*, 126–27; Paul, *Amos*, 112–13. The concept of prophets as servants of gods and participants in divine councils has precedents in ancient Near Eastern literature that predate any exilic, Deuteronomic employment of such concepts. In addition, "The deuteronomistic view of prophecy was concentrated on the fulfillment of the words of the prophets which is not the focus of [Amos] 3:7" (Smith, *Amos*, 142).

Deuteronomy very closely (cf. Lev 26; Deut 28),[96] making it more likely that this is stock language rather than evidence of Deuteronomic scribes reworking these sections in any substantial way. If they did rework them, either they deviated from typical phrasing or these texts represent an earlier, less formulaic stage of this scribal tradition, perhaps during the reign of Hezekiah when one edition of the Deuteronomistic History was nearing completion.[97] By contrast, the social criticism in Amos about the "poor" (דל) "needy" (אביון), "righteous" (צדיק), and "downtrodden" (ענו) does not use terms found in Deuteronomy that are not *also* found in Exodus legislation,[98] whereas Deuteronomy does not mention the "poor" (דל), and nowhere does Amos refer to the "immigrant" (גר), "fatherless (orphan)" (יתום), and "widow" (אלמנה) so common in Deuteronomy.[99] For other examples of supposedly Deuteronomistic additions to Amos, I follow the more cautious assessments of Paul and Möller.[100] For the concepts of justice, good, and so on, the text of Amos more likely relies on theology in Exodus or theology common to both rather than on what is distinctive to Deuteronomy.

In terms of Deuteronomistic themes, some scholars suggest that the criticisms of the Bethel sanctuary and other sites or rituals (e.g., Amos 3:14; 4:4–5; 5:4–6, 21–24) may

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[96] Cf. Murray, *Cosmic Covenant*, 62–67; Doran, "Environmental Curses and Blessings"; Kessler, "Patterns," 943–84.

[97] Cf. Freedman, "Headings"; contra Schmidt, "Die deuteronomistische Redaktion," 170; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 116–22; Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions"; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 209–11; Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, 96–97.

[98] Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, 168–73. Cf. Exod 22:25; 23:3, 6–8, 11; Deut 15:4, 7–11; 16:19; 24:12–15; 25:1. Hamborg earlier concludes that Exod 22:25–26 was familiar to the author of Amos 2:8 but that there was "no direct literary dependence either way" (149). Cf. Deut 24:10–13, 17. Meanwhile, Amos 2:6 is loosely similar to Exod 22:25; Deut 15:7–11; 24:7, 14–15.

[99] Cf. Deut 10:18–19; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19.

[100] Paul, *Amos*; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*.

reflect a Persian-period rivalry or an earlier, Deuteronomistic rivalry between Jerusalem

and Bethel for religious adherents.[101] While I do not disagree that Bethel continued to

play a religious role even after the destruction of Samaria (cf. 2 Kgs 17; Zech 7),[102] it

seems that Jerusalem's competition with Bethel was a factor for centuries, not just in the

Persian period or the earlier time of Josiah.[103] Wolff famously dated the Bethel material

(e.g., Amos 3:14; 4:4–5, 6–12; 5:4–5) to the reign of Josiah of Judah, since Josiah was

known for defiling the Bethel sanctuary (2 Kgs 23:15–20).[104] However, the vocabulary

used is not close enough to material concerning Josiah (cf. 1 Kgs 13; 2 Kgs 23),[105] and

[101] Persian period: Coggins, *Joel and Amos*, 118, 124; Knauf, "Bethel"; Knauf, "Kings among the Prophets"; Davies, "Why Do We Know"; Edelman, "From Prophets to Prophetic Books." Seventh- or sixth-century: Coote, *Amos*, 52–53; Lust, "Remarks," 146; Weimar, "Schluß," 87, 98; Kratz, "Worte," 72.

[102] Cf. Blenkinsopp, "Bethel"; Koenen, *Bethel*; Köhlmoos, *Bet-El*, 84–120; Gomes, *Sanctuary at Bethel*; Knauf, "Bethel"; Rainey, "Looking for Bethel"; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz, "Reevaluating Bethel"; Radine, *Book of Amos*, 184–87; Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*, 314–21. Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz ("Reevaluating Bethel," 44) take a minority position and conclude that "Bethel declined in the late 8th century or sometime during the first decades of the 7th century BCE" (44) but "was probably uninhabited or almost deserted in the Babylonian and Persian Periods" (45). But the archaeology of the site is "a mess," according to Knauf ("Bethel," 307), leading him to argue that the site was continuously inhabited from the eighth to third centuries, even if a partial destruction happened in late sixth or early fifth century (308). Part of the problem is that archaeologists have not discovered the Bethel sanctuary yet, which may have been located east of the traditional dig site of Bethel (i.e., Beitin) on a nearby hilltop. See now the archaeological report about this hilltop by Tavger, "E.P. 914: East of Beitin." My thanks to Jason Radine for directing me to this new discovery.

[103] Fleischer (*Menschenverkäufern*, 101–4, 124 n. 127) even dates these critiques to a redaction from the northern kingdom prior to 722 BC.

[104] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 111–12, 217–24. See Park, *Book of Amos*, 52–67. He argues that the singular "your" in "your God" (Amos 9:15) suggests that King Josiah was the audience of the completed scroll. Linville (Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 18) rightly objects to this speculative possibility. At best, it refers to Judah as a whole.

[105] Against attributing this and other material to the time of Josiah are the comments by Melugin, "Formation," 374; Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion*, 138–40; Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 282; Gomes, *Sanctuary at Bethel*, 142–43. Furthermore, similarities between 1 Kgs 13 and Amos 7:10–17 are not strong enough to posit any intentional dependence of one on the other, as rightly noted by Gomes, *Sanctuary at Bethel*, 158; contra Ackroyd, "Judgment Narrative"; Werlitz, "Was hat der Gottesmann." Likewise a stretch is the attribution of Amos 6:10 to the time of Josiah, interpreting the ten dead men as the ten tribes of Israel (thus Ahlström, "King Josiah").

the worshipers in Amos 4–5 are criticized for ritualism as a mask for social injustice.[106]

The worshipers are not critiqued for choosing these sanctuaries per se, nor for worshiping

the wrong gods there, and they are never exhorted to worship at Jerusalem, technically.[107]

Not even Amos 1:2 is really pro-Jerusalem in its rhetoric, for the divine roar threatens

Judah and Israel alike. There are some texts elsewhere in Amos that potentially refer to

non-Yahwistic deities (e.g., Amos 2:8; 5:26; 8:14), but I argue in the respective sections

of this study that these are examples of aberrant Yahweh worship. Even if this is

incorrect, the same concern to discourage worship at Bethel or discourage worship of

other gods could have been present in Hezekiah's reign, since he too—not just Josiah—is

portrayed as restricting non-Jerusalem sites and relics to foster worship of Yahweh alone

(2 Kgs 18:4, 22; 19:14–19). Even if some parts of Amos indirectly support Jerusalem as a

religious center, then, this support would be useful to any number of rulers with power in

Jerusalem. The attacks on other sanctuaries could fit any period, including Hezekiah's

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[106] Cf. Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 177; Hayes, *Amos*, 145; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434; Bovati and Meynet, *Le livre du prophète Amos*, 140; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 265; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 18. Such a blend of social and religious polemic fits the context of the eighth century quite well, according to Gomes, *Sanctuary at Bethel*, 143.

[107] Hadjiev, *Composition*, 17–19. Contra Knauf ("Bethel," 329), who claims: "What 'Amos' is meant to say is not so much 'Don't go to church, but instead adopt a responsible life-style'; the intention is, rather, 'Don't go to Bethel (or Jericho), but spend your temple money on Jerusalem.'" If that was the intended nuance, though, then the book of Amos is strangely silent on Jerusalem as a positive place. Hadjiev (*Composition and Redaction*, 18) is correct that "a mention of an alternative, legitimate sanctuary is nowhere to be found in these verses." In fact, "Taking 4:4–5 and 5:4–6 as post-exilic, pro-Jerusalemite polemic, or as additions from Josiah's time, requires the unlikely hypothesis that a redactor wanted to condemn the northern shrines . . . [but] omitted all mention of the one and true place for Yahweh worship and placed his criticisms in [a] . . . context which suggests a completely different interpretation" (19). The polemic suggests an eighth-century critique here in Amos 4–5, according to Hadjiev, not a seventh- or fifth-century polemic (19).

(cf. 2 Kgs 17), but the text is strangely silent about Jerusalem in most of the book, suggesting that supporting Jerusalem as a worship center was not the primary purpose of the polemical sections.

Some believe that the doxologies of judgment (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6 and possibly 1:2) are exilic or post-exilic liturgies by survivors who voice a penitential expression concerning the past devastation of a sanctuary.[108] But there is no evidence for this liturgical role scripted for a reception audience in the literary context, and so the doxologies may have a different purpose.[109] It is more common for genres to be used ironically as criticism in Amos (e.g., Amos 5:1–2) than to be used for expressing sincere regrets, though both would contribute to the theodicy. If the reason for dating the doxologies late is their similarity in tone and theology to Job and Isaiah,[110] then in rejoinder it is just as likely that the creation themes predate Amos and are used polemically than that the Hebrew societies could not think of their God as cosmic creator until the time of the Babylonian exile and onward.[111]

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[108] Cf. Horst, "Doxologien," 53–54; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 8. More generally, the theme of "exile" in the book of Amos is sometimes viewed as an after-the-event pseudo-prophecy. See Radine, *Book of Amos.* But there were earlier precedents of exile in the ancient Near East before the eighth century, and so the general threats in Amos need not have post-dated the Babylonian exile or even the Assyrian attacks (thus Hadjiev, *Composition*, 22).

[109] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 113–14.

[110] Cf. Job 5:9–16; 9:5–10; Isa 40:22–23, 26–29; 42:5; 43:1, 7; 45:7, 12, 18.

[111] For those who argue that the doxologies predate or date to the time of Amos, see Paas, *Creation and Judgement*, 121, 176.

3.5 References to the Neo-Assyrian Period

There are some historical and religious references that could date to the later Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 745–609 BC), but these are not decisive. I will discuss the historical references first. In Amos 6:2 the prophetic voice invites the audience to consider "Calneh," "great Hamath," and "Philistine Gath." Then follows a pair of rhetorical questions expecting a negative answer: "Are (they) better than these (Hebrew) kingdoms, or is their territory greater than your territory?" (Amos 6:2). The Hebrew kingdoms are ruled from "Zion" and "Samaria" (Amos 6:1), so the Israelites and Judahites alike are portrayed as holding a false security that these three cities or kingdoms could not afford to have. Alternatively, the first question could mean "Are (you) better than these (foreign) kingdoms?"[112] As background, many scholars point to Assyrian campaigns by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BC against Calneh and Hamath and then in 734/733 BC against Gath, or by Sargon II against Hamath (720), Calneh (717), and Gath (712/711) two decades later (cf. Isa 10:9–11).[113] However, the Assyrians attacked most of these cities in the previous century as well, and other biblical texts mention attacks or control over

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[112] This option would expect the Hebrew audience to admit that they are *not* better than the foreign kingdoms that may have been recently destroyed or subdued. In any case, such a question would still have a negative answer implied and would still reference three foreign cities that require an explanation.

[113] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 274–75; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 114–15; Radine, *Book of Amos*, 56–60; Strijdom, "Reappraising"; Aster, "Historical Background," 438–44; Levin, "'Tell It Not in Gath,'" 454. Strijdom ("Reappraising," 231), who dates the referents to 738 BC, asks, "What do Calneh, Hamath and Gath have in common? It seems as if a fate has befallen them that is undoubtedly expected by Amos to befall Israel. The verse can only be explained as the loss or reduction or at least the threatening of these territories." This assessment actually leaves room for quite a number of scenarios for the cities if even a *threat* against them could be in view. It would be hasty to think that the cities had been utterly destroyed prior to the rhetoric, though that is possible. Scholars sometimes argue that Gath had been conquered by the Assyrians because it is missing from the cities in Amos 1:6–8. But an absence of evidence is not decisive.

Hamath by the Israelites (2 Kgs 14:25, 28) and over Gath by the Arameans (2 Kgs 12:17)[114] and the Judahites (2 Chr 26:6)[115] during the decades previous to or during which the superscription situates the majority of the book (Amos 1:1), so it is equally plausible that the rhetoric derives from the first half of the eighth century during the time of Jeroboam II and Uzziah after all.[116] This is especially likely if the questions in Amos 6:2 imply (without emendation) that the foreign kingdoms and their territories were not as large as "these" two Hebrew kingdoms of "yours" were, in which case the foreign city-states are an example of tenuous kingdoms that cannot afford to be carefree or presumptuous like Israel and Judah are accused of being. Judah and Israel may even have subdued these three cities at the height of the Hebrew kingdoms in the early to mid-eighth century (2 Kgs 14:25, 28; 2 Chr 26:6). Even if the late eighth century is the better option, the reign of Hezekiah would have seen the conquest of the foreign cities in Amos 6:2 by Assyrian forces, and thus the text would take on a fresh urgency as a warning against complacency in Judah (see fig. 8).[117]

The fact that Judah is implicated in this critique initially (Amos 6:1) does not militate that Amos 6:1–7 comes from a much later time either. It could apply to the

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[114] Maeir, "Historical Background"; Younger, "'Hazael,'" 265; Maeir, "Philistia," 241–44, 246–56; Younger, *Political History*, 625; Ben-Yosef and Sergi, "Destruction of Gath," 471–74.

[115] Strijdom, "Reappraising," 233–34 argues that this reference is accurate and places the material around 738 BC when Uzziah might have been given credit for the attack on Gath around the same time as Assyrian action against the other two cities. This, however, is an unlikely timing for a campaign by Uzziah, who was remembered as sickly for the final years of his life while his son reigned. Maeir ("Philistia," 246 n. 23) suggests that Uzziah could have gained credit for what the earthquake destroyed at Gath.

[116] Hammershaimb, *Book of Amos*, 99; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 230–33; Paul, *Amos*, 201–4; Na'aman, "In Search," 210–12; Garrett, *Amos*, 182; Maeir, "Historical Background."

[117] See the discussion of Gath as successively controlled or conquered by Philistines, Arameans, Judahites (Hezekiah), and then Assyrians in Maeir, "Philistia," 241–44, 246–56.

height and wealth of both kingdoms (cf. Amos 1:1). Again, though, even if the references

to "the carefree on Zion"[118] and "the house of Israel" coming to the rulers in Amos 6:1

does come from a time later than Uzziah, the time of Hezekiah is a perfect candidate. It

would have been the ideal time to warn Israelite refugees ("the house of Israel") and

Judahites ("on Zion") equally against complacency and decadence, especially before and

after the Assyrian conquests of Samaria (722, 720 BC) that happened early in Hezekiah's

reign (2 Kgs 18:9–11).[119] It would also be a fitting occasion to remember the "breaking of

Joseph" (Amos 6:6), now in the past rather than the future or present. The textual

scenario imagined here would be the additions of the line about "Zion" and "the house of

Israel" (Amos 6:1) by Hezekiah's scribes as a measure to warn against complacency

when the Israelite refugees started coming to Jerusalem before and after 720 BC.[120] The

Assyrian threat was not over. Such an addition would be the political counterpart to the

religious addition of Amos 2:4–5.

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[118] Some such as Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 270, delete this line, arguing that no other authentic oracle of the prophet mentions Judah. Others accept it as is: Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 358; Hayes, *Amos*, 182–83; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 110–11; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 199–200; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 228–30; Paul, *Amos*, 200. Importantly, deleting "Zion" would destroy the parallelism of the verse and the chiasm of the chapter (so Radine, *Book of Amos*, 31–36, 212–14). Radine dates this and all of the earliest parts of the book to the Neo-Assyrian period, however.

[119] The clause "and to them the house of Israel comes" (Amos 6:1) may refer to the people of the northern kingdom coming to the rulers at one or both capitals for protection and help. Radine (*Book of Amos*, 35–36) favors an emendation to "haters of Zion" rather than "the carefree on Zion" earlier, but he admits (136, 213) that the population in Jerusalem would have included refugees from the north by the late eighth and early seventh century, thus it could be both groups accused of complacency in Jerusalem ("Zion") after all. Cf. Blum, "'Amos' in Jerusalem," 34; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 173–74.

[120] There is archaeological evidence for unprecedented population growth in Jerusalem and some economic disparity during the reign of Hezekiah, as documented particularly in Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*; Burke, "Anthropological," 46–54; Burke, "Coping with the Effects," 270–84.

On a similar note, if the historical references in the oracles against the nations reveal anything (Amos 1–2), the prominence of Aram-Damascus actually suggests a setting for most of these oracles in the first half of the eighth century.[121] More generally, the fact that Israel is represented as powerful and arrogant, not weak or struggling against foreign control, is suggestive of a pre-exilic setting for large sections of the book.[122]

In terms of religious references, there are some terms in Amos 5:26 and Amos 8:14 that might place the texts in the Neo-Assyrian period. However, I argue that these references refer to past worship of Yahweh (Amos 5:26), or present worship of Yahweh through bull images (Amos 8:14), not to Mesopotamian gods that were adopted during the Neo-Assyrian period. They may date to the earliest material of Amos. Because the textual variants are numerous for these two examples, I refer the reader to my later translation and analysis for the cogency of this position. By the time of Hezekiah, even if these are actually references to foreign gods or Deuteronomistic themes, there is no trouble positing such concerns in the early scribal tradition of Hezekiah's court wanting to critique Israelite religious practices to the north (cf. 2 Kgs 17:30).

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[121] Barstad, "Can Prophetic Texts Be Dated"; cf. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 12–13. Hadjiev (*Composition and Redaction*, 13 n. 55) observes, "Damascus does not feature at all in the OAN [oracles against the nations] of Zephaniah ch. 2 and in Ezekiel and it is present in the OAN of Jeremiah in a very brief and insubstantial oracle (49:23-27) which contrasts starkly with the treatment received by Philistia, Moab, Ammon and Edom." Coote (*Amos*, 67) remarks that "an oracle against Aram makes historical sense only before 732 BC [when Assyria conquered Damascus]."

[122] Hadjiev, *Composition*, 12–14. Indeed, "The fact that Israel has an army (2:14-16; 5:3) fits better the circumstances of the monarchic period as do the allusions to the capture of Lo-Debar and Karnaim in 6:13. The mention of the latter provides a strong case for dating this particular oracle prior to 732 BC when Karnaim was made a capital of an Assyrian province" (14).

3.6 Summary: Judah in the Time of Hezekiah

To tie this section together, let me ask and answer a few questions that serve to summarize the major factors pointing to an implied audience in Judah during the reign of Hezekiah as the historical setting of the final form of Amos. What historical setting fits the absence of Imperial Aramaic or Persian loanwords and the absence of Late Biblical Hebrew syntax in the book? A setting before the Persian period when those features might unwittingly intrude into a text. What setting makes sense of the literacy required to produce the meta-genre of a collection of oracles that we call "Amos"? A historical period during which Judah had the scribal resources and political motivations to do so, including during Hezekiah's reign (726–697 BC) near the decades when Assyria preserved oracle collections of their own. What audience would be more familiar with King Uzziah than with Jeroboam, "the son of Joash" (Amos 1:1)? An audience in Judah or Yehud. In what historical setting would the format of the superscription be written in partly standard ways and partly unique ways (Amos 1:1)? Perhaps a setting when a proto-Deuteronomistic group worked in Judah for Hezekiah. What setting makes the most sense of the reference "a couple of years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1)? A setting not too distant from "the" seismic event to serve as a chronological marker. What audience would find Yahweh's lion-like roar threatening to both Israel and Judah alike (Amos 1:2; 3:8)? An audience in Judah hearing the threats to Israel in hindsight but still in danger of losing their own, smaller kingdom. What setting makes the most sense of the oracles against the nations, the prominence of Aram-Damascus at the start (Amos 1:3–5) and Israel at the end (Amos 2:6–16), with no mention of Assyria? An eighth-century

context after which criticisms of the Arameans are barely found in biblical literature, but a context before the Assyrian threat had devastated Judah (i.e., before 701 BC). What setting makes the most sense of the oracle against Judah with its proto-Deuteronomistic language, since the criticism does not fit Judah's King Uzziah (Amos 2:4)? The reign of Hezekiah, after the previous king (Ahaz) had led Judah into a theological drift and before such phrasing was standardized in later Deuteronomistic circles. What implied audience makes sense of the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6–16), since it focuses on social injustices, religious stubbornness, and natural or military disaster? An audience in Judah that overhears this in the eighth century during which the social crisis and earthquake or invasion (Amos 2:13) would be best remembered.[123] What setting best accounts for the traditions that have loose similarities to Deuteronomic vocabulary and themes at best (Amos 2:10; 3:1, 7; etc.)? A period predating the exile of the Judahite elite, predating most Deuteronomistic literature, perhaps from ancient traditions about the exodus and prophecy that were invoked in the oral preaching of Amos.[124]

In the next stretch of the book, what is the implied audience and setting of the criticisms of Bethel and other sanctuary sites (Amos 2:8; 3:14; 4:4–5; 5:4–6; 7:10, 13; 9:1)? A group in Judah or Yehud overhearing the rhetoric so that they would be discouraged from worshiping at those sites or from worship devoid of social justice, at

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[123] Similarly, if Amos 8:4–6 is a later use of Amos 2:6–8, then the time of Hezekiah would be fitting, since there was increasing commercialization in both kingdoms until the conquest of Samaria and Sennacherib's attack on Judah.

[124] The denial of being a "prophet" or a "disciple of a prophet" (Amos 7:14) is strange if this narrative were thoroughly Deuteronomistic in origin. The similarities to Zech 13:5 are best explained as Zechariah alluding to Amos rather than the other direction of dependence.

least. The vocabulary in these sections does not match the reforms of Josiah closely enough, and the polemic throughout is strangely silent about idolatry at Bethel or any positive commendation of Jerusalem, features that would be expected if these sections were derived from or edited in a period later than Hezekiah's reign. What setting explains the polemical usage of the creation doxologies (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) and the opening motto (Amos 1:2)? A setting in which previous compositions and theology were used in ironic ways rather than a setting in which penitential texts were inserted to express sorrow over disasters. The doxologies are about critique by means of contrast, not regret, though both functions could constitute a theodicy. What setting would produce critiques of aberrant worship of Yahweh (or other gods) using unique terms rather than Deuteronomistic terms for the images of Yahweh (Amos 5:26; 8:14)? A setting before or outside of the Deuteronomistic circles that still belonged to the Yahweh-only party, including the time of Hezekiah when the practices from his father's reign (2 Kgs 16:10–18) or foreign gods imported to Israel could be in view (2 Kgs 17:30).[125]

Moving into the last third of the book, what audience would understand the criticisms of complacent elites in Zion and Samaria contrasted with three foreign kingdoms or cities that were familiar to the audience (Amos 6:1–2)? An audience in Jerusalem after these kingdoms had been conquered by the Assyrians sometime by the

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[125] This assumes for the sake of the argument that Amos 5:26 refers to present or future worship of Mesopotamian gods in the Neo-Assyrian period. I argue later that this text refers only to *past* worship of Yahweh during the wilderness wanderings, but the syntax and textual variants are some of the most difficult to decipher in the entire book. Amos 8:14 is not as difficult and is closer to Deuteronomistic language for the golden calves than to the god "Ashima" in 2 Kgs 17:30.

closing decades of the eighth century, particularly under Hezekiah, who saw Gath taken

from Judah yet again. What audience would appreciate the gravity of the "breaking of

Joseph" (Amos 6:6) better than one in Judah that was around to preserve details of that

political fracturing as refugees poured in during the closing decades of the eighth

century? The political jabs at the overconfidence of Israel (Amos 6:13–14) would also

make the best sense in this century when (or soon after) it was a relatively powerful

kingdom in the region (cf. Amos 6:8–11).[126] What setting would fail to mention Assyria,

Babylon, Persia or their rulers—and fail to mention exile for Judah, only exile for

Israel—throughout the entire book (cf. Amos 3:11–12; 5:5, 27; 6:7, 14; 7:11, 17; 9:4, 14–

15)? A setting when Assyria had not yet devastated Judah (i.e., before 701 BC) and the

later empires were not yet on the scene.[127] What audience would understand the

convoluted references to the occupations of Amos (Amos 1:1; 7:14), since they seem to

conflict to many later interpreters?[128] An audience and scribe relying on authentic

information rather than mere speculation or invention. Indeed, a scribe inventing

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[126] The vision reports do not actually contradict this picture of power ("How can Jacob rise, for they are so small?!"; Amos 7:2, 5), because even a mighty nation could seem small compared to the leveling power of natural disasters enacted by Yahweh.

[127] Hypothetically, a fictional invention or after-the-fact "prediction" could be vague, but such a composition would be more effective if specific predictions involving foreign nations were placed in the mouth of the prophet. Other books attributed to the eighth century prophets usually have no reticence in specifying these empires. Therefore, I find it more likely that Assyria was not yet on the horizon for much of the book of Amos in its origins, and even by the final form of the text it seems Judah had not yet experienced forced migration (i.e., exile) due to the Assyrians or Babylonians.

[128] Could a "herdsman" (Amos 1:1) raise both cattle (Amos 7:14) and sheep (Amos 7:15), or only one size of animal, and could such a person also harvest fig trees at the same time (Amos 7:14)? Could someone from the highlands of Tekoa tend fig trees when such species only grow at lower altitudes? In my translation and analysis of these sections, the answer is yes to all of these inquiries, but even the ancient versions and the rabbis struggled with the compatibility of the terms and often harmonized the ones referring to livestock.

occupations for Amos would be unlikely to use rare, divergent terms instead of creating a harmonized profile for this agrarian figure. What settings and audiences would fit a text foretelling the selective destruction of the Israelite kingdom but not all its people (Amos 9:8–10)? Many settings from the eighth century onward, but it would be particularly effective to hear this in Jerusalem in the aftermath of Samaria's destruction when some Israelites had taken shelter there under Hezekiah. Israelites and Judahites alike would thus have an account justifying the judgment and exile of many Israelites (Amos 9:9). And finally, what settings make sense of the promised restoration for the Davidic monarchy (Amos 9:11–12) along with agricultural and social restoration for Israel (Amos 9:13–15)? If Amos 9:11–12 had closed the book directly after Amos 9:7 without Amos 9:8–10 or 9:13–15 in the picture, then the time of Uzziah in Judah (Amos 1:1) would actually be the perfect setting, as explained earlier (see §3.3). But the political oracle is set "in that day" (Amos 9:11), meaning when judgment had fallen on Israel alone (Amos 9:8–10), and the agricultural renewal assumes that the uprooting and exile of Israel is already in the past (Amos 9:13–15). Therefore, all of Amos 9:11–15 coherently fits only the two decades of 720–701 BC during the majority of Hezekiah's reign. This identification of an implied audience in Judah during an eighth-century setting for the complete text allows for more specificity of character ethics in the study. It means one thing to infer that humility is a character disposition encouraged in one part of the text, but it means something more specific to encourage humility when Judah is still in danger of the Assyrians and must learn from the recent failures of Israel. With that context in view for character ethics, we can now turn to the text of Amos, section by section.

CHAPTER 4: CREATION AND CHARACTER IN AMOS 1–2

The book of Amos opens with an introductory superscription (Amos 1:1) and a motto that

sets the primary emotional tones (Amos 1:2). Following that, the next section or major

discourse unit contains the oracles condemning violations by several nations, including

Judah and Israel (Amos 1:3—2:16). My translation of the text will come before analysis

of its creation rhetoric and character ethics.

4.1 The Agrarian Visionary and the Lion King (Amos 1:1–2)

While the superscription introduces Amos as an agrarian visionary (Amos 1:1), the motto

introduces the coming action of Israel's God as the roaring of a lion (Amos 1:2).

4.1.1 Translation

דברי עמוס אשר היה בנקדים מתקוע אשר חזה על ישראל בימי עזיה[1] מלך יהודה ובימי ירבעם בן יואש מלך ישראל שנתים לפני הרעש	1:1 The messages of Amos, who was among the herdsmen[2] from Tekoa, who[3] had visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel, a couple[4] of years before the earthquake.

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[1] With the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, I vocalize "Uzziah" in the standard way (עֻזִּיָּה) rather than following the Masoretic Text (MT), which neglects the doubling dot for ז (עֻזִיָּה). In other places that have no note or gray highlighting, I vocalize the consonants in agreement with the MT—with the exception of the divine name, which I re-vocalize as יַהְוֶה ("Yahweh"). I do not rely on the cantillation marks for dividing the text, and I only occasionally follow the paragraph markers.

[2] Steiner (*Stockmen from Tekoa*, 70–122) concludes that the term designates "herdsmen" (his preferred term) or "stock breeders" (100–1, 122) who could own both cattle and sheep/goats, following the Aramaic (i.e., Targum: "an owner of herds") and Origen ("rearer of livestock") against Aquila and Symmachus, who focus only on sheep (72). The Old Greek (OG) mistakes it for a non-existent place.

[3] There is debate about the referent of the relative pronoun אשר. Does it refer to the words "*which* he envisioned" or to Amos "*who* had visions"? See a similar ambiguity in Isa 1:1. Cf. Isa 2:1; Mic 1:1. The

	1:2	And he said:
ויאמר		
יהוה מצִיּון[5] ישאג		"It is Yahweh[6] who from Zion will[7] roar,
ומירושלם יתן קולו		and from Jerusalem he will project his voice!
ואבלו נאות הרעים		So the pastures of the shepherds will dress mournfully,[8]
ויבש ראש הכרמל		and the top of the Carmel Range will dry up!"

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solution with the least difficulties is the latter reading: "Amos . . . who had visions." See Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 188–90; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 155–57. Smith (*Amos: A Commentary*, 19–20) suggests that the strange syntax could be evidence of the superscription's early date before a standard way of introducing prophetic books was developed.

[4] The text does not use the numeral "two" but rather the dual ending on "years."

[5] With the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, I vocalize "from Zion" in the standard way (מִצִּיּוֹן) rather than following the MT (מִצִיּוֹן), which neglects the doubling dot for צ.

[6] The word order (i.e., constituent order) has double fronting before the verb. This is a marked word order for verbal clauses in the Hebrew Bible, since the verb usually comes first (contra the view of marked word order in Holmstedt, "Investigating"; Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*). See *BHRG 2*, 490, §46.1.1; Moshavi, *Word Order*, 10–17; Van Hecke, *From Linguistics*, 62–92. Based on research about such double fronting by Groß, *Doppelt besetztes Vorfeld*, both Van der Merwe and Wendland ("Marked Word Order," 116) discuss a close parallel to Amos 1:2 found in Joel 4:16 (Eng. 3:16) and conclude that the double fronting indicates "a topic shift followed by a constituent that is the focus of the assertion." In Amos, therefore, the word order emphasizes "Yahweh" first of all as the new topic of discourse and then "from Zion" as the location of his roaring, just as "from Jerusalem" functions in the parallel line. This double emphasis would be lost if the line were translated traditionally as "The LORD roars from Zion."

[7] Smith (*Amos: A Commentary*, 19) notes how the Greek (i.e., OG) uses aorist verbs to translate the prefix/imperfect verbs found in the Hebrew, while the Aramaic, Syriac, Aquila, and Symmachus have either imperfect or future tense verbs as their renderings. Smith understands the Hebrew to express continual action. I also follow the standard aspectual theory of the biblical Hebrew verbal system (cf. Cook, *Time*; contra Joosten, *Verbal System*), but this does not solve the question of how to translate the verbal aspect. Notarius ("Temporality," 287–88) argues that the default translation should be a habitual present tense in English for these verbs when the context lacks other reference times. Most English translations render the poetry in this way (e.g., "roars, "utters"). But Notarius ("Temporality," 288) hastily dismisses the context of Amos 1:1, which situates the following messages "a couple of years before the earthquake." This detail may suggest that Amos 1:2 was understood as a prediction of this earthquake—thus "*will* roar," "*will* project his voice," and so on in my translation. After the earthquake occurred, the event would have bolstered the support for the messages of Amos and aided in writing down at least some of them for reading in Judah. See Freedman and Welch, "Amos's Earthquake"; Smith, *Amos*, 50–51; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 193–98. Even if this reconstruction is historically mistaken or simplistic, the text may still be *presenting* the message as casting a future scene for the implied audience.

[8] 5QAmos from Qumran supports the consonants of the MT, while the Aramaic and the Syriac (Peshitta) paraphrase here, and all but the Aramaic among the ancient versions likely understand the verb as אבל I ("to mourn"), as I do, contra *BHQ* and the many English versions that understand it as אבל II ("to wither"). For arguments against "wither" and for "mourn" for this term, see Clines, "Was There an *ʾBL* II." The Aramaic and Syriac render the verb with imperfects, matching the Hebrew, while Aquila and Symmachus use the future tense, as I do (contra the OG). See above for discussion of the relative time of the actions.

4.1.2 Creation Rhetoric

The book of Amos begins with one of the more detailed superscriptions of any book of

the Old Testament. It is an assertive speech act, attributing the content to a man named

"Amos" and describing him and the setting of his "messages" or words (Amos 1:1).

Although the superscription of Amos includes the figure's hometown and the reigning

kings of Israel and Judah, it lacks notice of any family background or elite standing

among priests, royalty, or prophets for Amos.[9] Instead, agrarian and ecological details are

present, and these features comprise the creation rhetoric. Amos was remembered as

working "among the herdsmen from Tekoa" (Amos 1:1). Although some English

translations (e.g., NIV) and popular conceptions of his vocation would peg Amos simply

as a shepherd, and maybe a poor or hired one, the rare term "herdsman" (נקד) is not the

same as the common "shepherd" (רעה) in the Bible.[10] Although there have been some

interpretations of the term that consider Amos to be a religious official,[11] "herdsman"

most likely conveys that Amos owned and bred cattle and sheep or goats (cf. Amos 7:14–

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[9] Some superscriptions for prophetic books list only the name of the prophet and occasionally his father's name (Joel 1:1; Obad 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Mal 1:1), while other books list his ancestry and one or more kings reigning when the prophet was active (Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1–3; Ezek 1:2–3; Hos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1). More rarely the text introduces his location of residence (Jer 1:1; Ezek 1:1–3; Mic 1:1; Nah 1:1) or his social location among priests (Jer 1:1; Ezek 1:3), nobility (Dan 1:3–6), or prophets (Hab 1:1; Hag 1:1).

[10] Even ancient translations sometimes leveled out the meaning of the term to a more lowly position or one type of animal: ἐν ποιμνιοτρόφοις ("among shepherds"; Aquila); ἐν τοῖς ποιμέσιν ("among the shepherds"; Symmachus); ἐν τοῖς κτηνοτρόφοις ("among the cattle-keepers"; Cyril). The term נקד only appears elsewhere in 2 Kgs 3:4 ("Now Mesha, the king of Moab, was a herdsman [נֹקֵד], and he would bring back to the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams with wool [as tribute]"; my translation). The herds of Amos should not be equated with those of a king, of course, especially since there were multiple "herdsmen" in Tekoa, let alone in Judah (Amos 1:1). Nevertheless, the rare term denotes something different than a hired shepherd of sheep.

[11] See the literature cited in Paul, *Amos*, 34.

15) and that he was not particularly poor.[12] He may have supplied livestock for the

Jerusalem temple as part of a collective with other herdsmen from Tekoa.[13] Regardless of

the precise background, the term attributes the messages of the book to a person familiar

with the land and its livestock. The superscription ends with another ecological detail,

placing the messages "a couple of years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1). Using

chronological estimates of the reigns of Uzziah (787–736 BC) and Jeroboam II (790–750

BC),[14] this earthquake would be roughly in the middle of the eighth century BC. Some

archaeological evidence at different sites may corroborate this seismic disruption, which

probably had an epicenter north of the Sea of Galilee (see fig. 4, "Map of most places in

Amos 1–2").[15] It is probably the same traumatic event remembered centuries later in

[12] See Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 70–122. He argues that Amos was thus not a poor shepherd but an owner or manager of herds, based on the cross-cultural evidence for the lexical term (76–80). Amos was also not a religious official in charge of temple herds or inspecting sheep livers, as some have claimed (80–87). See the doubts about poverty for Amos in Niesiołowski-Spanò, "Biblical Prophet Amos."

[13] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 87–90, 95–101, 122.

[14] As discussed in the previous chapter, I will use the chronology of Galil, *Chronology*, 147. Cf. Roberts, "Terra Terror," 16 for chronologies compared. Josephus associates the earthquake with the onset of skin disease for King Uzziah (*Ant.* 4.10.4; cf. 2 Chr 26:15–23), but this is a much later association and imprecise within Uzziah's reign anyway.

[15] Roberts ("Terra Terror," 1, 157–58) summarizes this evidence from archaeological remains and sediment core samples and suggests that this quake had a magnitude of at least 7.0 on the Richter Scale ("Terra Terror," 1). Evidence for this earthquake can plausibly be identified in Stratum VI at Hazor in the far northern part of Israel and at Stratum III of Beersheba in the far south of Judah (King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 21–22). Wolff puts this roughly around 760 BC, the middle of the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah (cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 124). Cf. Roberts, "Terra Terror," 139–40 (map 4.1). The evidence of damage at Bethel is not decisive, since the excavations were done decades ago and have not discovered the sanctuary site (170–72). The damage was, however, most extensive in the north (Israel), since the epicenter seems to have been in the Lebanon Valley or just north of the Sea of Galilee along the Dead Sea Transform Fault. Cf. Austin et al., "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin, "Scientific and Scriptural"; Roberts, "Terra Terror," 1, 47, 158; Zwickel, "Amos 1,1." For those who downplay the extent of the damage from this quake, at least in Judah, see Fantalkin and Finkelstein, "Sheshonq"; Ambraseys, *Earthquakes*, 70. Nevertheless, the evidence of earthquake damage as far southwest as Philistine Gath—a nearly 20-meter (60-foot) long wall collapsed in a wavy pattern—is evidence that the quake was indeed severe and remembered accurately as such in the biblical texts (Maeir, "Philistia," 244–46, 257). See also Dever, "Case-Study"; Ogden, "Earthquake Motif";

Zechariah (Zech 14:5): "And you will escape just as you escaped from the presence of

the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, the king of Judah." The contribution of the creation

rhetoric for the book of Amos is to frame the book's messages as precursors to a

memorable earthquake that affected both kingdoms. The audience in Judah hearing this

text would associate the unsettling words to follow with the unsettling disaster that was

part of their social memory. Each reinforces the other, especially in connection with

Amos 1:2, which functions as an ominous summary of most of the book:

> And he said:
> "It is Yahweh who from Zion will roar,
> and from Jerusalem he will project his voice!
> So the pastures of the shepherds will dress mournfully,
> and the top of the Carmel Range will dry up!"

This summary or motto is introduced with a brief narrative speech act ("And he

said"), reporting the following words and discourses as speech from Amos.[16] The

creation rhetoric is dense within the motto itself. The poetry forewarns[17] of a threatening

roar by Yahweh and some devastating ecological changes to the landscape of Judah and

Israel. In terms of genre this could be considered a theophany prediction. For first-time

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Freedman and Welch, "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin et al., "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin, "Scientific and Scriptural"; Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake"; Zwickel, "Amos 1,1"; Roberts, "Stretched"; Maeir, "Philistia," 244–47; Roberts, "Eighth-Century," 306–12. More generally for earthquakes in this part of the world and/or in other parts of the Bible Bible, see Guidoboni et al., *Catalogue of Ancient Earthquakes*; Nur, *Apocalypse*; Ambraseys, *Earthquakes*; Salamon, "Patterns of Seismic Sequences"; Agnon, "Pre-instrumental Earthquakes"; Roberts, "Terra Terror"; Sbeinati et al., "Historical Earthquakes"; Lessing, "Big Bang"; Edelman, "Earthquakes"; Zohar et al., "Reappraised List"; Raphael, *Biblical Corpora*, 769–98.

[16] Only in Amos 7:10–17 is there a narrative that is not presented as direct speech from Amos in the same way that the other sections of the book are presented.

[17] If I am mistaken in translating the verbs as future actions, then the speech acts are warnings, not forewarnings, to the rhetorical audience.

listeners (Israel), however, the roaring is ambiguous. The "roar" (שאג) of the first line is a term in the Old Testament that mostly refers to a lion roaring.[18] "Projecting" a "voice/sound" (נתן + קול) can suggest a thunderstorm in which a storm god is heard,[19] but other times the phrase refers to a personal voice shouting or, most frequently, a lion roaring.[20] In tandem, then, the vocabulary is more likely depicting Yahweh's activity like a lion's rather than a thunderstorm's noise.[21] Amos contains lion imagery later on (e.g., Amos 3:4, 8), confirming this for listeners in the ancient audience who were already familiar with the content of the book.

However, is it a lion's roar of weakness or of strength, and what does this metaphor actually concern? One option for the tone is that the sound conveys a lion's hunger from a position of weakness—a starving or wounded lion.[22] Another option is that the roar is one of sadness over a lion's own destroyed habitat, as in Zech 11:3. This

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[18] The verb and noun mostly denote a lion growling or a person (or Yahweh) compared to a lion (Judg 14:5; Job 4:10; Pss 22:14 [Eng. 13]; 38:9 [Eng. 8]; Isa 5:29; Jer 2:15; 25:30; 51:38; Ezek 19:7; 22:25; Hos 11:10; Zeph 3:3; Zech 11:3). They can also describe a human moaning or shouting without the mention of a lion in the context (Job 3:24; Pss 22:2 [Eng. 1]; 32:3; 74:4), and only once clearly refer to thunder rumbling (Job 37:4). In light of these uses and Amos 3:4, 8, the most likely denotation of שאג in Amos 1:2 is a lion's roar.

[19] Thus Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf*, 198. Compare "give a voice/sound," meaning "thunder," in Exod 9:23; 1 Sam 12:17–18; 2 Sam 22:14; Job 37:4–5; Pss 18:14 (Eng. 13); 29:3–9; 68:34 (Eng. 34); Isa 30:30; Joel 2:11; Hab 3:10. More ambiguous are Ps 46:7 (Eng. 6); Joel 4:16 (Eng. 3:16). Cf. Loewenstamm, "Trembling of Nature," 173–89.

[20] Thus Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 161. For a personal or personified voice, compare 2 Chr 24:9 (proclamation); Prov 1:20 (proclamation); 2:3 (call aloud); 8:1 (proclamation); Jer 4:16 (war cry); 22:20 (lament); 48:34 (lament); Lam 2:7 (war cry). Cf. Rev 10:3. For a lion growling, compare Jer 2:15; 25:30; Amos 3:4; cf. Job 4:10; Ezek 19:7; Zech 11:3.

[21] Arguing for a consistent lion metaphor here is Weiss, "Methodologisches," 12–13; contra Hayes (*"Earth Mourns"*, 23–26), who argues for a storm connotation as well, qualifying that it could be a thunderstorm or a dust storm. On a different note, Amos uses the phrases differently than the closest parallel in Joel 4:16 (Eng. 3:16), which is arguably an adaptation drawing from Amos at a later time.

[22] See Job 4:10; Ps 104:21; Jer 51:38; cf. Pss 34:11 (Eng. 10); 38:9 (Eng. 8).

would cast the divine Lion in a sympathetic light, mourning alongside his land and

people for some calamity. However, these views do not fit the imagery elsewhere in

Amos, where lions operate from a position of strength (Amos 3:4, 8; 5:19). Furthermore,

the majority of references to lions roaring in the Bible either present the sound as a sign

of aggression and hunger aimed at living prey[23] or as aggression to fend off competitors

from recently captured prey (cf. Isa 31:4; Amos 3:4). After all, a lion in the ancient Near

East was an animal feared for its strength and fearlessness,[24] a deadly predator that could

kill livestock (Amos 3:12; Mic 5:7 [Eng. 8]) or maul a person (Amos 5:19).[25] The anger

of rulers, divine or human, is explicitly compared to the aggression of lions due to the

violent potential of anger (Prov 19:12; 20:2; Jer 4:7–8; 25:38; 49:19). Images of lions can

be found on hundreds of artifacts from Israel and the ancient Near East, and the image

often represents protection or symbolizes a royal or divine figure whom the kingdom

serves.[26] It is a royal image when used of humans or gods, in other words. Therefore, in

Amos 1:2 the roar is minimally that of a threatening Lion King who will capture some

prey.[27] Rhetorically, this royal portrayal would be heard as a political challenge to

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[23] Judg 14:5; Ps 22:14 (Eng. 13); Prov 28:15; Isa 5:29; Jer 2:15; 12:8; Ezek 19:7; 22:5; Zeph 3:3; 1 Pet 5:8. Also, in one instance Yahweh's roar asserts his supremacy without being destructive, leading his people back to him in reverence (Hos 11:10), but this is an exceptional case.

[24] Judg 14:18; 2 Sam 1:23; 17:10; 1 Chr 12:8; Job 10:16; Prov 28:1; 30:20; Isa 31:4; Nah 2:12 (Eng. 11).

[25] Cf. Gen 49:9; Num 23:24; 24:9; Deut 33:20, 22; 1 Kgs 13:24; 1 Kgs 20:36; 2 Kgs 17:25–26; Pss 7:3 (Eng. 2); 17:12; 22:14 (Eng. 13); 35:17; 57:5 (Eng. 4); Isa 5:29; 38:13; Lam 3:10–11; Ezek 19:3, 6; Dan 6:24; Hos 5:14; 13:7–8. It was rare for a single person to kill a lion (Judg 14:15; 1 Sam 17:34–37; 2 Sam 23:20).

[26] Strawn, "Material Culture," 90–99.

[27] If the metaphor subtly conveys an emotional disposition as well, it would be anger, since the Lion King is not an animal but a personal deity capable of such anger. However, the text does not comment

Israel's king, Jeroboam II. The probability of a political polemic can be illustrated by the

famous seal found at Megiddo (near "the Carmel Range" of Amos 1:2), since it reads,

"Belonging to Shema, the servant of Jeroboam."[28] Most intriguing is the seal's

iconographic imagery used by Jeroboam's official:

Figure 3. Roaring lion on the seal of King Jeroboam's servant[29]

on the reasons for the "roar" at this point, so at best the imagery portrays an activity of Yahweh figuratively without commenting on the motivations or purposes behind it.

[28] There is debate about whether this seal dates to the eighth century (Jeroboam II) or the earlier, tenth century (Jeroboam I). See Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 102–4; Strawn, "Material Culture," 93. Strawn opts for the eighth century and points out that other seals with similar script and artwork are typically dated to this century. At the least, many Samaria ivories and Assyrian lion carvings date to the ninth century, the eighth century, and onwards. Therefore, whether this seal dates to the eighth century or earlier, the lion theme for royalty or divinity would be well known by this point in Israelite history. To use the language of De Hulster et al. ("Introduction," 23), I claim that the Shema seal has relevant "congruence" with the royal lion theme in Amos 1:2, that the two representations are independent in "correlation," not directly influencing each other, and that they have a high level of historical "contiguity," coming from the same geographical and historical part of the world—the seal was even found at Megiddo, a city at a mountain pass not far from the peak of the Carmel Range mentioned in Amos 1:2. See more on this methodology for iconographic exegesis in Strawn, "Whence Leonine Yahweh"; LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*; De Hulster and LeMon, eds., *Image, Text, Exegesis*; Strawn, "Material Culture"; Bonfiglio, *Reading Images*.

[29] After Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 403, fig. 3.96; cf. Sass, "Pre-Exilic," 223, fig. 109. The illustration is technically of the seal impression, not the seal itself, which is now lost. Another version of this image is familiar to Old Testament academics from the imprint on the JSOTSup series (T. & T. Clark Library of Biblical Studies, LHBOTS). The image is also found on the Israeli five-pounds coin (1978–1984) and on the half-shekel of 1980–1985.

In light of this and other lion imagery found during this period and for centuries onward, Amos 1:2 challenges the rhetorical—not historical—audience to ask who the lion king of Israel really is, whether Yahweh or Jeroboam. Or, if the lion on the seal is intended to symbolize Yahweh rather than Jeroboam, perhaps Yahweh is not protecting the kingdom as the Israelites had assumed.[30]

Having established that the metaphorical language depicts Yahweh's activity like a lion's, with threatening political connotations, to what activity does the metaphor actually refer? In the literary context, the roaring immediately follows the superscription mentioning "the earthquake" (Amos 1:1), so the roaring of Amos 1:2 is plausibly describing the rumbling earthquake as comparable to a lion's roar, attributing the earthquake to Yahweh's divine agency, or the roar is metaphorical for Yahweh's announcement of such a disaster to the prophet. The rest of the book does allude to an earthquake a few times, potentially (cf. Amos 2:13; 3:14–15; 6:9–11; 8:8; 9:1, 5). Alternatively, if we look forward in the book, Yahweh's roar could be a metaphor of his message of judgment on the nations (Amos 1:3—2:16), especially on Israel and its capital (Amos 3:8, 12).[31] Although these are not mutually exclusive options, the rumbling sound

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[30] For the difficulty in identifying whether lion iconography portrays human royalty, divine royalty, both, or neither, see Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 54–65, 101–5, 152–217, 236–73; Strawn, "Whence Leonine Yahweh"; Strawn, "Material Culture," 98. Strawn points out that such images often associate both humans and gods as rulers. Cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 191; Ornan et al., "Lord Will Roar from Zion"; Strawn, "Canaanite/Israelite," 180. Keel and Uehlinger (*Gods*, 191) claim, "these images can hardly be interpreted as symbols or attribute animals of Yahweh. Instead, they are a way to express the respect that humans have for this powerful animal." Later (387), however, they allow that the lion could symbolize the royal *power* of Yahweh.

[31] Thus Hayes (*"Earth Mourns"*, 28), who claims, "The oracles illuminate the basis and nature of the threat posed by [the divine roar]." If this is the strongest connection informing the reasons behind Amos 1:2, then she is right to say that the earth responds "to the imminent destruction announced by YHWH in

of an earthquake more easily fits the roaring metaphor and is closer in literary context,

suggesting that the earthquake or its precipitating announcement has been framed as the

activity of the divine Lion roaring.[32] The earthquake either effectively is the roar or is

caused by the roar. It is this disaster in the creation rhetoric to which the landscape of

Judah and Israel responds next.

The second couplet of Amos 1:2, then, forewarns of the response in creation that

the divine roar will have. These two lines form a geographical and ecological merism,

ranging from the "pastures of the shepherds," likely the drier grazing lands in Judah to

the south of Jerusalem,[33] all the way to "the top of the Carmel Range,"[34] the fertile

heights of Israel to the north (Amos 1:2). In other words, it portrays "the total devastation

of all fertile places."[35] Although the landscape alone is directly mentioned, entire

1:2a and by the prophet in 2:13–16" (29). "In 1:2, then, the earth responds to the punishment YHWH will inflict because of the sins of the community. Specifically, it mourns and withers at the prospect of the military overrunning of Israel as retribution for social practices" understood as transgressions (29–30).

[32] So independently Roberts, "Reevaluating Leonine Imagery"; Roberts, "Terra Terror," 194–205. Roberts documents the "long but uneven history of supporters" (195) and several lines of evidence linking the roar in Amos 1:2 to the earthquake in Amos 1:1. This has been a minority position, perhaps because scholars have treated thunderstorm theophanies as the primary kind of rumbling worth considering for ancient Near Eastern contexts ("Terra Terror," 196–97, 200).

[33] Compare Jer 33:12 and the more common phrase "(the) pastures of the wilderness" (Ps 65:12 [13]; Jer 9:9; 23:10; Joel 1:19–20; 2:22). The hometown of Amos, Tekoa, would be one such place that had grazing grounds nearby (2 Chr 20:20; Neh 3:5).

[34] This fertile mountain range in the northwest of Israel was known for its lush vegetation and trees. It is often grouped together with other well-watered areas like the Bashan region and the Lebanon mountains (Isa 33:9; 35:2; Jer 50:19; Nah 1:4). While the Carmel Range did not have the highest elevation in Israel, it was higher than the capital (Samaria) and was famous for its height (1 Kgs 18:19–42; Song 7:5; Jer 46:18; Amos 1:2; 9:3). When it is not a place name, Paul (*Amos*, 40) notes, "carmel" can be used as a synonym for fruitful land, the opposite of dry wilderness (e.g., Isa 32:15–16; Jer 4:26). There is another "Carmel" located south of Tekoa in Judah (Josh 15:55; 1 Sam 25:2), and it once remembered for its flocks of livestock (1 Sam 25:2–18; cf. Amos 1:2), but it was not known for its elevation ("top"; Amos 1:2), which discounts it as the Carmel in view in Amos.

[35] Paul, *Amos*, 40. See the commentators he lists for the possible connotations of the merism.

ecosystems of creatures that depend on the shrubs and trees in these watersheds would be affected (cf. Jer 9:10; 12:4; Joel 1:18, 20), including the human population dependent on the land and its creatures for food (Joel 1:16–17).[36] The impact on humans is suggested in the reference to the pastures of "the shepherds" (Amos 1:2), because a disaster impacting these areas would impact the agrarian livelihood attributed to Amos in the superscription (Amos 1:1). All will be caught up in this disaster.

The effect specifically is that the pastures "will dress mournfully [אבל], and the top of the Carmel Range will dry up" (Amos 1:2). Some posit a homonym or secondary meaning of אבל as "wither," but the biblical evidence points rather to a single lexeme meaning "mourn" that can be applied to humans, animals, and even inanimate structures.[37] For humans, mourning rituals indicated by this term אבל in the Old Testament involve several actions, gestures, sounds, and words.[38] It is not that all of these

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[36] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 135–36: "the earth's response to YHWH affects the economic well-being of the people, and as we shall see, this is part of his judgement on them" (136).

[37] For arguments against "wither" and solely or primarily for "mourn" for this term, see Clines, "Was There an 'BL II"; Hayes, "Earth Mourns", 13–18; contra HALOT; Stolz, "אבל 'bl to mourn"; cf. Baumann ("אָבַל ābhal," 1:47), who concludes, "even nature participates in the humiliation . . . of the people struck with the calamity [in these cases when the natural world is the subject of the verb]."

[38] Olyan (*Biblical Mourning*, 25–26) identifies four types of mourning: (1) mourning the dead (e.g., Gen 37:34–35; 2 Sam 3:31–37; Jer 16:5–7); (2) petitionary mourning (e.g., 1 Sam 1; 2 Sam 12:16–20; 2 Kgs 19:15–19; 2 Chr 20:1–19; Ezra 8:21–23; 9–10; Joel 1–2), whether penitential or not; (3) non-petitionary mourning of a communal or individual disaster (e.g., 2 Sam 13:31–37; Ezek 27:28–36; Esth 6:12); and (4) mourning by the skin-diseased person (Lev 13:45–46). Mourning the dead is the paradigmatic model which the other types resemble (Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 24). Minimally, morning rites for the dead included "some combination of tearing the garment, weeping, and one or two other practices" (29 n. 5). But taking the biblical evidence together for this type, "Mourners may tear their garments, put on sackcloth, weep, wail, toss ashes or dust on their heads, roll in ashes or dust, and sit or lie on the ground. They may fast, groan or sign, move their bodies back and forth . . . , utter dirges or mourning cries, avoid anointing with oil, lacerate themselves, and manipulate head and beard hair by means of shaving or depilation" (30). In addition, "They may walk barefoot, strike the thigh, allow their hair to hang loose and uncovered, avoid washing themselves or their garments, abstain from sexual relations, cover or avoid grooming the moustache or face, and eat foods associated with mourning. Partial

actions must be packed into אבל whenever it appears, nor that they all occurred whenever

anyone "mourned," but most of the actions that define or accompany the term are

behavioral and related to the *external* appearance of the mourner.[39] Therefore, "dress

mournfully" as a translation conveys the external elements of אבל better than "mourn"

alone does, lest a Western reader think of weeping or feeling internal sorrow as the best

equivalents to this Hebrew term.[40] The idea of pastures going through mourning rituals

(אבל) might strike a modern reader as odd or non-scientific, but this kind of

personification of the non-human world is found throughout the prophetic books of the

Bible.[41] Furthermore, in a culture where human mourning rituals responding to death and

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or total nudity, the covering of the head, and the laying of the hand on the head were very likely also Israelite mourning practices" (31). See more generally Janzen, *Mourning Cry*; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*; Pham, *Mourning*; Kruger, "Inverse"; Lambert, *How Repentance*, 13–32; Lambert, "Mourning"; Bosworth, "Understanding Grief"; Kozlova, *Maternal Grief*.

[39] Compare "garments of mourning" in 2 Sam 14:2. Cf. Ps 30:12 (Eng. 11); Isa 61:2–3; Jer 6:26; Ezek 7:27; 24:17. Other contexts associate "mourn" with acoustic expressions of grief, whether wailing, playing sad music (e.g., Job 30:31; Hos 10:5; Amos 5:16; Mic 1:8; Ezek 24:17), or weeping tears (e.g., 2 Sam 19:2 [Eng. 1]; Neh 1:3; 8:9; Esth 4:3; Ezek 24:16). Nevertheless, אבל can be distinguished from the wailing and weeping in that "it [אבל] refers less directly to the funeral dirge during the burial and more to the entire period of mourning, even that which takes place after the funeral" (Baumann, "אָבַל *ābhal*," 1:45).

[40] Baumann ("אָבַל *ābhal*," 1:46) summarizes: "the word refers not so much to the feeling of sorrow, but to the external behavior." This conclusion from the 1970s aligns with the recent (2016) research by Mirguet ("What Is an 'Emotion,'" 463), who notes, "Biblical Hebrew words that are usually translated by emotional terms . . . exceed our emotional realm, as they also include actions, ritual gestures, and physical sensations."

[41] As I noted in an article (Stewart, "Heaven Has No Sorrow That Earth Cannot Feel," 27), clear examples of *personified* ecological suffering using this term אבל ("mourn") in the Old Testament can only be found in the prophetic books, in fact. For examples of non-human members of creation "mourning," consider the following texts which involve the withering of plants located on mountain slopes (Isa 33:9; Jer 4:24; Amos 1:2), in fertile regions (Isa 33:9; Jer 4:26; 12:10), or on grazing land (Isa 33:9; Jer 12:4; Joel 1:18–19; Amos 1:2). There are also references to the mourning land of Israel or Judah in general (Jer 12:4, 9–11; 23:10; Amos 8:8; 9:5), its farm crops (Joel 1:5–20), hungry livestock (Joel 1:18), parched wild animals (Joel 1:20; cf. Jer 14:6), birds (Jer 4:25; 12:4; 14:5), or land animals more extensively (Jer 12:4; 14:5). Sometimes a text pictures the disruption of an entire ecosystem or the whole cosmos (Isa 24; Jer 4:23–28; Hos 4:3). Other terms and phrases related to distress and mourning can be used to describe the

disaster were quite public and externally expressive, the comparison of the land to people

makes perfect sense, as Katherine Hayes explains in her work on this theme:

> In these rituals the [human] mourner fasts, strips off clothing, shaves the head,
> bows down toward the ground or sits on it, and pours dust or ashes over the head
> and body. So in a state of drought the earth "fasts," or is deprived of water; plants
> and trees wilt and droop toward the ground; the vegetative covering withers and is
> shed; and dust is everywhere.[42]

What Amos 1:2 forewarns with personification, therefore, is not the expression of

internal feelings by the plants or land nor an act of mourning paralleled by a separate act

of withering. Instead, the very withering of the plants *is* the enactment of mourning

behavior by the land.[43] The pastures lose their flowers, grass, and shrubs, the mountains

their tree cover, and the resulting brown and dusty surface is the external, mournful dress

that serves as the metaphorical funeral clothing for the land.

More importantly, why is the land withering in mourning? The poetry is

ambiguous concerning any causal or conceptual relationship between Yahweh's roar and

the withering vegetation (Amos 1:2). Is the land or its vegetation the sole target in danger

from Yahweh, or is the land mourning the violence that Yahweh threatens against some

other target(s), whether in the previous context (Amos 1:1) or in the following context

(Amos 1:3—2:16)? If the roar is a metaphorical depiction of the literal earthquake or

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cracked ground (Jer 14:4), gloomy sky (Isa 24:4; 50:3; Jer 2:12; 4:28), penitent livestock (Jonah 3:7–8), or weeping farmland (Job 31:38). More ambiguous are Pss 18:8–16 (Eng. 7–15); 97:5; Jer 49:21; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:3–15. For discussion of personification in biblical texts, see Marlow, "Hills Are Alive"; Marlow, "Anguish of the Earth," 119–25. More generally, Brown, "Nature's Travail," 104–17.

[42] Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*, 15–16. Cf. Ps 35:13–14; Isa 15:2–3; 22:12; 32:9–14; 58:5; Jer 6:26; Lam 2:10; Ezek 7:18; 26:16–17; Mic 1:8–11, 16.

Yahweh's verbal revelation of such to the visionary Amos,[44] then the land is mourning

the disasters accompanying the earthquake or its announcement. The earthquake would

be a seismic disturbance impacting humans and other forms of life, including plants (cf.

Amos 1:1–2), and so a drought might accompany the quake. Literal drying of vegetation

is the way the land metaphorically mourns, the withering plants on its surface comprising

its browned, sackcloth covering. Perhaps the quaking of the earth itself would thus be the

equivalent of tearing the garment of the land (i.e., its grass and foliage), cutting its skin

(i.e., cracked terrain), and heaping dust to cover its surface from foot to head (i.e., "the

top of the Carmel Range"; Amos 1:2). Dust would come from the quaking land and from

the urban collapse of buildings across Judah and Israel. No other commentator has

suggested this connection between the earthquake and drought to my knowledge,[45] but it

would explain why such drought imagery was connected to the Lion's roar and portrayed

as mournful in the first place: the earthquake physically started the drought in the land, so

there are literal references behind the metaphorical language. The earthquake is portrayed

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[43] Hayes, "Mourning Earth," 142.

[44] These events could be identical if the sound of the earthquake is taken as a speech act appropriated by Yahweh as his communication to Amos the prophetic visionary.

[45] Hayes ("*Earth Mourns*", 15–16) comes close but blends the lion imagery with storm imagery and connects the mourning in Amos 1:2 with the judgment parts of the following oracles (Amos 1:3—2:16) rather than with the earthquake immediately preceding in Amos 1:1 ("*Earth Mourns*", 23–32), preventing her from exploring the possibility that the landscape might physically change into a drought-like appearance after a physical earthquake. Instead, she maintains a confusing connection between the Yahweh's roar and its effect, sometimes portraying the land's mourning as a personified, psychological response *preceding* divine judgment on humans (26, 30) and other times portraying the mourning as a physical drying up caused by and *following* Yahweh's roar, a storm that brings thunder and drought (23–27, 30–31). Sometimes she maintains both (31–32). This leaves it unclear whether she believes the storm is a dust storm that can cause drought, whether the storm and drought refer to real phenomena historically, and whether the Yahweh's activity precedes or follows the withering of the landscape.

as Yahweh's activity, like a lion roaring in its sound, while the ensuing drought is

portrayed like a state of mourning in the appearance of the land. Alternatively, if the

divine roar is metaphorical for verbal revelation of some other disaster, perhaps the fire

and military threats that follow in the book, then the land will subsequently mourn (i.e.,

wither) when the fires or troops destroy the vegetation and people of Israel.[46] In either

case, the landscape mourns its own devastation in solidarity with the creatures (including

humans) that would be impacted by such disaster. And either way, the land and its plants

are not the sole or even primary target of Yahweh.[47] To assume that the withering

landscape is the primary, dispensable prey of the Lion is to read uncritically without

attention to the logic of the metaphors.[48] Although there is collateral damage to the

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[46] Cf. Elvey et al., eds., *Ecological Aspects of War*; Marlow, "Anguish of the Earth," 119–27.

[47] Marlow (*Biblical Prophets*, 134) argues that "the non-human creation acts as a channel for YHWH's message, rather than itself being the recipient of divine displeasure." She agrees (134–36) with Hayes below on the first two connotations of the mourning (i.e., the land mourning its own devastation and also mourning the judgment on humans) and then concludes with a note about solidarity between the three parties: "From the outset the book is setting up a three-way connection—between the voice of YHWH, the response of the earth and the fate of human beings" (136). Hayes (*"Earth Mourns"*, 27) initially claims that "the land must be interpreting it [the divine roar] as a sign that YHWH is threatening to ravage *it*," but then she goes on to allow other possibilities (29–30), such as the view that the land is responding to the impending judgment announced against the nations, particularly Israel, in Amos 1:3—2:16. In the end, Hayes (*"Earth Mourns"*, 32) combines the two possibilities: "the earth mourns for its own death as well as for the [Israelite] nation's and experiences both mourning and dying in the act of drying up. There is room, further, for an element of repentance in the stripping of vegetation." Mourning does not always involve penitential rituals, however, since it can be non-petitionary or at least non-penitential mourning in view, according to Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 25–26.

[48] Contra Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches," 80. They attempt an ecological hermeneutic of suspicion and conclude that "the royal urban system devastates the shepherds, the countryside, [and] the Earth" in Amos 1:2, a violence they attribute to a "Jerusalem ideology" that is neither ecologically friendly nor consistent with other views of Yahweh in the book. Besides ignoring the logic of lion imagery in the Bible—lions are not herbivores—their reading fails to grasp the subversive nature of Yahweh's roar (Amos 1:2). It unsettles the ideologies of both Hebrew kingdoms, both urban and rural settings alike within each one. In biblical texts involving lions and collective targets, the people of a land or city are nearly always the target (Prov 28:15; Isa 5:29; 15:9; Jer 2:15; 4:7; 5:6; 25:38; Lam 2:10; Ezek 19:4, 6–7; 22:25; Hos 5:14; 13:7–8; Zeph 3:3), with the people sometimes compared to sheep (Jer 49:19–20; 50:17, 44–45; Mic 5:8

landscape, it is the residents of the land of Judah and Israel that are implicitly the primary

targets of the Lion roaring (i.e., the announced earthquake; cf. Amos 8:8; 9:5), and so it is

along with these residents that the pastures and mountains will suffer. The following

oracles of judgment against the nations (Amos 1:3—2:16), particularly against Israel,

confirm additional threats signified by the Lion's roar beyond just earthquake, and the

mourning land will dress for a funeral when Yahweh's judgment takes effect on the land

and these nations (Amos 1:2).[49] It is truly a fitting introduction to a subversive and

critical book.

4.1.3 Character Formation

Having outlined some of the major ways that creation rhetoric informs the message of

Amos 1:1–2, the second step of my analysis is to demonstrate how this rhetoric holds

potential for shaping the ethical character of the audience hearing the text in Judah. In

terms of procedure I will move from the more abstract to the more concrete aspects of

character ethics (i.e., moral vision and good $\rightarrow$ desire $\rightarrow$ dispositions $\rightarrow$ practices).[50]

The superscription itself does not mention any moral vision of what is good, and

only "the earthquake" (Amos 1:1) is implicitly bad for the short-term flourishing of the

Hebrew kingdoms. There is no mention of moral desires, dispositions, or practices just

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[Eng. 7]), in keeping with the logic of carnivores in the food chain. The only time that violence to vegetation is compared to a lion's teeth is in Joel 1:6–7, and only due to the overriding locust imagery.

[49] Cf. Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*, 29–32.

[50] Scholars in the field of character ethics do not outline precisely *how* we can infer these dimensions of character from the wording of the biblical texts. They simply examine different dimensions using heuristic categories, the way Anne Stewart's work (*Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 78–79) uses the categories of "rebuke, motivation, desire, and imagination" as dimensions of character formation. As explained in the methodology, my approach uses categories from James K. A. Smith.

yet. Even so, there is some value in considering the occupation of Amos from the

perspective of a Judahite audience. Even though he "had visions" concerning Israel

(Amos 1:1), he did not come from either the upper classes of society or the lowest of the

masses. Divine revelation could come to one of multiple "herdsmen" who owned flocks

and herds and may have employed shepherds under his supervision. Words and visions

from Yahweh could come to an agrarian business owner who need not have been

educated but also need not have been in abject poverty in order to speak against the

injustices occurring in his time. This background information could serve as

encouragement for other Judahites of the following decades who might later add their

voices to that of Amos. Regardless of whether they considered themselves prophets in the

late eighth century (e.g., Hosea, Micah, Isaiah) or were merely supportive of the

messages of Amos, and regardless of their social location, they could use the power and

privilege they did have to speak about current injustices and the lessons from national

failures in the past, just as Amos did. The "earthquake" confirmed that Amos was a

visionary to the point that this unsettling calamity made it into the setting of the book

(Amos 1:1). The memory of this earthquake would thus produce reverence in Judah,

reverence for Yahweh and for Amos as a legitimate spokesperson.[51] The mention of the

earthquake might also encourage humility and dependency on their God, since there are

few things that could shake a community out of arrogance and self-sufficiency like a

disaster that reduced sturdy things to rubble. More evidence for this disposition of

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[51] See Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 195; Dell, "Amos and the Earthquake"

reverence can be found below. For Judah in Hezekiah's day, the earthquake was decades

previous, admittedly, but it left a trace in the archaeological record and in the memories

of those still living to tell younger generations, apparently.

The motto in Amos 1:2 likewise pictures a cosmos where no moral vision of ideal

thriving is in sight. Instead, the forewarning is of a cosmos both dangerous and withering,

and this world ideally shapes the ethical character of Judah. The audience would

understand that fear or reverence is one of the first emotional dispositions encouraged by

the threatening roar and withering terrain. Determining this does not require reading the

minds of the ancient audience. As discussed in my methodology, identifying an

emotional disposition requires looking for "clusters of responses" or an "emotional

script" for the potential disposition in question.[52] This could include "characteristic

behavioral patterns" associated with the disposition, "including its particular series of

expected actions."[53] Therefore, even though Amos 1:2 does not explicitly name core

emotions such as fear or sadness, we can look at the clusters of responses that accompany

earthquakes, lions, and droughts elsewhere in the Bible to see what emotional script to

which they belong. Not surprisingly, this same earthquake produced behaviors associated

with fear, like fleeing, according to a later text (i.e., Zech 14:5). Roaring lions also elicit

fear in biblical tradition (Prov 20:2; 22:13; Ezek 19:7; Amos 3:8), usually motivating a

person to run away (Amos 5:19). Drought likewise can spur dispositions of fear and

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[52] Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 456.

[53] Van Wolde, *Reframing*, 63. Compare Fehr and Russell, "Concept"; Shaver et al., "Emotion Knowledge"; Russell, "In Defense"; Clore and Ortony, "What More Is There"; Kövecses, "Introduction"; Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*; Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate."

sadness (cf. Jer 14), as Joel 2:21–22 even shows via contrast. Drought can cause "shame"

(בוש) in the sense of diminishment or humiliation (2 Kgs 19:26; Isa 37:27; Jer 14:3–4;

Joel 1:11; cf. Isa 33:9). Amos 1:2 does not instill the same level of fear and humility in

Judah as it might in Israel decades previous, because the disasters are now in the past and

the mention of them is overheard by Judah rather than aimed directly at them, but it is

still reasonable to infer these character dispositions are intended to a lower degree.

Compared to their God, Yahweh, Judah must take a posture of mental humility and

reverence if they accept the creation rhetoric here.

Indeed, the forewarning that the landscape of Judah and Israel "will dress

mournfully" (Amos 1:2) is itself an action-oriented response of debasement to the threat

posed by the Lion, the threat meaning the earthquake. These mourning rites of the

landscape do not directly denote an interior emotion but an exterior and personified

practice associated with interior sadness in humans for some present or impending loss.

This practice portrayed for the ecosystem implies that sadness is also an appropriate

disposition for Judah upon hearing this text. Evoking sadness is not the primary purpose

of the text to justify Yahweh and condemn Israel, but there are secondary effects that

draw readers into the text sympathetically, similar to the way fiction and non-fiction

literature shapes its readers at an emotional level.[54]

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[54] Cf. Booth, *Company We Keep*, 140–41; Keen, *Empathy and the Novel*, 65–99; Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 169–74; Sklar, *Art of Sympathy*; Whitenton, "Feeling the Silence," 277–85; Nasuti, "Called into Character," 11–19.

It would be a mistake, after all, to limit the fear and sadness to an Israelite

audience, as though Amos were presenting Jerusalem and Judah as superior to Samaria

and Israel at this point (Amos 1:2). Some commentators simply read the motto as

political propaganda for Judah, since Yahweh is based in the capital city of Jerusalem.[55]

This reading fails to acknowledge the sweeping threat to both Judah and Israel posed by

the divine Lion. Yahweh's roar spreads from temple mount (Zion) to temple city

(Jerusalem), and the consequent mourning practices take place in regions that are

arguably to the south ("the pastures of the shepherds") and to the north ("the Carmel

Range") of Jerusalem (Amos 1:2). Furthermore, if the Lion will roar over its already

captured prey, as does the lion in Amos 3:4, then Yahweh's location in Jerusalem may

imply the very opposite of protection and support for Judah. Perhaps the Lion will attack

Jerusalem, with no residents in the southern or northern kingdom safe from his power.[56]

Thus, it is not just Israel that is endangered by the divine roar, the earthquake caused by

Yahweh. It is both kingdoms and perhaps all the surrounding nations that are in danger

from this Lion (Amos 1:3—2:16; cf. Amos 3:8). As Lewis puts it in one of the Narnia

novels, he is not a "safe" lion.[57] An audience in Judah would understand this unsettling

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[55] Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches," 80.

[56] See Strawn ("Material Culture," 109), who notes that the position in front or underneath of a lion is "the position of prey." Indeed, "Locating YHWH-as-Lion as somehow in ([or] roaring from) Zion/Jerusalem, then, does not mean that these locales are somehow off-limits—the nice touch of a biased but well-intended Judean redactor. These places *may* be protected space, but may just as likely be threatened by this Lion. Lions, after all, protect their prey solely to devour it . . . ; they typically vocalize prior to hunting, when hungry, or while eating . . . ; and it only takes a slight change of perspective or position for the protective lion to become a destructive one" (109).

[57] Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 79–80.

and humbling point, especially on subsequent readings after hearing that they too were condemned for violations and complacency (Amos 2:4–5; 6:1). The sweeping rhetoric cultivates a disposition of humility, since there is no room for triumphal illusions that Yahweh would spare either Hebrew kingdom. In Hezekiah's time, the Assyrian threat was growing, and Judah was poised between optimism and caution before 701 BC.

Amos 1:2 also assumes solidarity between the audience and the ecosystem around them. Just as the landscapes of Judah and Israel respond to Yahweh in the text, demonstrating that all suffer together, so the Judean audience is invited to adopt a stance of solidarity or empathy that allows for sadness over the past ecological disasters that affected both Hebrew kingdoms. This sets the moral tone of much of the book. It prepares the audience to accept a somber ethos of the cosmos, somber for reasons that will only become clear beginning in the next section of the book (Amos 1:3—2:16).

4.2 Violations by the Nations (Amos 1:3—2:16)

4.2.1 Translation

1:3 "Thus Yahweh said[59]:

כה אמר יהוה
'Because of three violations by Damascus,
על שלשה פשעי דמשק
even because of four, I will not turn it[60] back,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו
because with iron sledges[61] they threshed the Gilead
על דושם בחרצות הברזל[58] את
region.
הגלעד

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[58] 5QAmos reads "[they threshed with sledges] the pregnant of the Gilead region" rather than "they threshed with iron sledges the Gilead region," as is found in 4QXII[g], Symmachus, the Latin (i.e., the Vulgate unless otherwise noted), the Syriac, and the MT. The Greek conflates both readings together, and the Aramaic amplifies. Because the mention of "pregnant (women)" appears to assimilate Amos 1:3 with Amos 1:13 (and 2 Kgs 8:12), the reading of the MT likely reflects the original wording.

[59] For traditional explanations of "messenger speech" and its introductory formulas (e.g., "Thus says the LORD" in most translations) see Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 98–136, 188; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 91–128. For a more accurate explanation of this particular formula, however, see Meier, *Speaking of*

ושלחתי אש בבית חזאל	1:4	So[62] I will send fire on the house of Hazael,
ואכלה ארמנות בן הדד		and it will consume the citadels of Ben-Hadad,
ושברתי בריח דמשק	1:5	and I will break the gate-bar of Damascus,
והכרתי יושב מבקעת און		and cut off one (p)residing[63] from "Wretched"[64] Valley
ותומך שבט מבית עדן		and a scepter-holder from the House of Luxury[65],
וגלו עם ארם קירה אמר יהוה		and the people of Aram will be exiled to Kir,' Yahweh said."

Speaking, 271–98. Meier rightly concludes (287) that "Thus said person X" (X כה אמר) "is simply a phrase optionally used to cite another's words. As such, it was employed by messengers and any other individual who wished to quote another's words. In itself it does not suggest messenger activity." Throughout this study I follow Meier's advice on how to translate "Thus says/said/has said Yahweh" (כה אמר יהוה). He concludes, "In most cases, one is simply quoting another's words that have already been spoken. The verb must be translated as past: 'Thus Yahweh said.' . . . As a citation of another's words which have already been spoken, we can be spared the over-theologizing of the verb tense when applied to God's speech" (290–91). Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 176–77) takes issue only with Meier's conclusions about the tense, not the function of the formula. Either way, the formula is *not* an instance of "performative" speech (i.e., "Thus Yahweh hereby says").

[60] There is debate about what the ambiguous "I will not bring/turn *it* back" means. See Knierim, "'I Will Not Cause It to Return'"; Noble, "'I Will Not Bring "It" Back'"; Linville, "What Does 'It' Mean" "It" probably refers to the punishment announced for the nation in question, as argued by Paul, *Amos*, 46–47; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 178–80; Boda, *Severe Mercy*, 309.

[61] My placement of the phrase "with iron sledges" is one way to show that the phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal constituent order in the Hebrew Bible. See *BHRG 2*, 494, §46.1.3, drawing on Groß, *Die Satzteilfolge*. The normal, unmarked word order *after* a verb is "Subject + object + indirect object + prepositional object + other complement/adjunct + complement/adjunct (place) + adjunct (time)" (*BHRG 2*, 494, §46.1.3.2). If a constituent stands closer to the verb than is typical in this formula, it is probably a marked order for some purpose. More precisely, Van Hecke (*From Linguistics*, 80) explains, "Moving a constituent away from its neutral position usually results in the focusing of that constituent or of the constituent it traded places with. For obligatory complements [like the subject, direct object, indirect object, prepositional object] . . . the focalized position is further away from the verb, while adjuncts will be moved closer to the verb in order to put them into focus. Pronominal constituents, on the other hand, tend to stand close to the verb, irrespective of their syntactic function, and receive focus if away from the verb."

[62] After the reasons for judgment, this first in a series of *waw*-consecutive perfects (*weqatal*) is more of a consequential rather than a sequential conjunction.

[63] The Hebrew participle יושב often means "resident of" or "inhabitant of" when preceding a place name, but it here more likely refers to a ruler who "sits" or "presides" on a throne, especially since it is in parallel with a figure holding a "scepter." See Younger, *Political History*, 367 n. 240; Eidevall, *Amos*, 103; cf. Hammershaimb, *Book of Amos*, 27; Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 126; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 129; Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes," 168–69; Garrett, *Amos*, 27. To preserve the ambiguity, I propose "(p)residing" for יושב. This also applies to Amos 1:8.

[64] Usually transliterated as "Aven," the term elsewhere means "misfortune/wickedness" and so is likely a disparaging reference to the "Valley of the Lebanon" (Josh 11:17; 12:7), the modern-day Beqaʻ Valley. Cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 27; Younger, *Political History*, 371. It was a fertile region (Ps 72:16; Song 4:11) known for its wine (Hos 14:8 [Eng. 7]) and particularly its cedar trees (Judg 9:15; 1 Kgs 5:6–10; 7:2; Ezra 3:7; Pss 92:13 [Eng. 12]; Song 5:15; 104:16; Isa 2:13; Jer 22:23; Ezek 27:5; Hos 14:6–8 [Eng. 5–7]) and other evergreens (2 Kgs 19:23; 2 Chr 2:7 [Eng. 8]; Isa 10:34; 37:24; 60:13). I would add that the vocalization of און as אָוֶן ("Aven/misfortune/wickedness") is likely a tweak of the similar sounding term אוֹן

כה אמר יהוה	1:6	"Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי עזה		'Because of three violations by Gaza,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו		even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על הגלותם גלות שלמה[66] להסגיר		because they exiled an entire exilic group to hand them
לאדום		over to Edom.
ושלחתי אש בחומת[67] עזה	1:7	So I will send fire on the wall of Gaza,
ואכלה ארמנתיה		and it will consume its citadels,
והכרתי יושב מאשדוד	1:8	and I will cut off one (p)residing from Ashdod,
ותומך שבט מאשקלון		and a scepter-holder from Ashkelon,
והשיבותי ידי על עקרון		and I will turn my hand back against Ekron,
ואבדו שארית פלשתים אמר		and the remnant of the Philistines will perish,' the[69] Lord
אדני[68] יהוה		Yahweh said."

("strength, wealth"), and thus the resulting phrase in Amos could be rendered "'Wretched' Valley" as a slur on "Rich Valley."

[65] The place called "Beth Eden" does not correspond to the polity of Bīt-Adīni along the Euphrates River (contra, e.g., Galil, "Boundaries," 37; Garrett, *Amos*, 28). See now Younger, *Political History*, 366–71. Besides the fact that Bīt-Adīni would be chronologically implausible—It ceased to exist as an independent polity nearly a century before the 750 BC, yet Amos 1:5 threatens its future destruction—there is also no evidence that the Arameans centered in Damascus ever ruled over this kingdom to the north, and certainly not in the time of the oracle in Amos, "no matter when one dates it" (*Political History*, 369). To be clear, according to Younger (*Political History*, 369), "after 855 [when Shalmaneser III devastated Bīt-Adīni], there is not a single usage of either the West Semitic *byt ʾdn* or the Akkadian Bīt-Adīni to identify the Assyrian province or an independent polity in Upper Mesopotamia! And there is no evidence of a rebellion and reestablishment of the entity Bīt-Adīni. Hence, it is highly doubtful that . . . [Beth Eden] in Amos 1:5c is to be identified with Bīt-Adīni." Instead, the phrase בית עדן is more likely a euphemism critiquing the "House of Luxury/Eden," the Aramean dynasty or capital palace, especially since the preceding phrase מבקעת און is likewise not an identifiable place by that name (371). The Greek failed to recognize this place or clarified that it was near "Haran" (Χαρραν), while some other versions rendered it as I do, the "house of luxury/pleasure" (ἐν οἴκῳ τρυφῆς, Theodotion; *de domo Voluptatis*, Latin). Symmachus transliterates, which is too wooden.

[66] Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 38 notes that the Greek has "of Solomon" for שלמה here and in Amos 1:9, perhaps "to show that the captives were Israelites," but the other Greek versions have the more likely reading of the consonants as "complete, whole."

[67] The form is vocalized as a singular ("wall") by the MT and the Latin. The Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic understand it as a plural ("walls"). See also Amos 1:10, 14. While the plural fits the parallelism better, the singular is the harder reading and matches the singular usage elsewhere in the book (Amos 7:7).

[68] The presence of this word is supported by Murabbaʿât 88, the Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic. The Greek lacks it, perhaps in conformity to the other closing citation formulas. See *BHQ* and Amos 3:11; 4:2, 5; 5:3; 6:8; 7:1, 2, 4, 5, 6; 8:1, 3, 9, 11; 9:5, 8.

[69] The divine title אֲדֹנָי (i.e., "Adonai" for ease of discussion) has a peculiar vocalization throughout the MT (cf. Jenni, "אָדוֹן *ādôn* lord," 24). One option for understanding this unusual spelling is that the majority of these forms were originally vocatives with the first person singular suffix on a singular noun (אֲדֹנִי, "my Lord"; thus Dalman, *Studien*, 29–34) or on a plural noun as a plural of majesty (אֲדֹנַי, "my Lords = the Lord"; cf. Baudissin, *Kyrios*, 2:18–37), only later to be changed to the vocalization "Adonai" (אֲדֹנָי; "the Lord") after 300 BC (thus Dalman) or later in proto-Masoretic circles. In this scenario the suffix would not be possessive (meaning "my") anymore. Another option, according to Eissfeldt (Eissfeldt, "אָדוֹן

כה אמר יהוה   1:9   "Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי צר   'Because of three violations by Tyre,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו   even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על הסגירם גלות שלמה לאדום   because they delivered an entire exilic group to Edom,
ולא זכרו ברית אחים   and they did not remember (the) treaty of brothers.
ושלחתי אש בחומת צר   1:10   So I will send fire on the wall of Tyre,
ואכלה ארמנתיה   and it will consume its citadels.'"

כה אמר יהוה   1:11   "Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי אדום   'Because of three violations by Edom,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו   even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על רדפו בחרב אחיו   because with the sword[72] they pursued their brother
ושחת רחמיו   while[73] they obliterated his females[74],
ויטרף[70] לעד אפו   so their anger[75] tore[76] continually,
ועברתו שמרה[71] נצח   while their fury[77] kept watch perpetually.

ādhôn," 1:70), is that the ending on אֲדֹנָי was "from the very beginning . . . a nominal affirmative, which elevated the basic form" to an emphatic state, giving the meaning "the Lord of all." On this second view, only a limited number of cases in the Old Testament where the form is used in direct address had a possessive suffix ("my Lord") that was later harmonized to this reverential version (68). I agree with Eissfeldt and vocalize אדני as אֲדֹנָי ("the Lord") everywhere except for Amos 7:2, 5, where the visionary directly addresses Yahweh as his Lord. This also fits the patterns in ancient Near Eastern prophetic texts, where the human king is typically addressed as "my lord" and the oracle report itself does not use "lord" with a pronominal suffix when referring to the gods as subjects or objects of clauses. Cf. Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, §§1, 2, 23, 86, 107.

[70] The Syriac and Latin have "he kept," which would be closer parallelism to שמר (see Jer 3:5; Ps 103:9), and so several people emend "and he tore" (וַיִּטְרֹף) to "and he kept" (וַיִּטֹּר; see the views discussed in Paul, *Amos*, 66). I do not find any emendations persuasive, given that Job 16:9 attests that this verb can have "anger" as its subject. See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 130.

[71] See Garrett, *Amos*, 41 for discussion of the unusual form in the MT, שְׁמָרָה, which lacks the normal dot for what is vocalized as a feminine suffix ("he kept *it*", normally שְׁמָרָהּ) and the argument to re-vocalize the consonants as a regular feminine form with no suffix ("it kept watch," שָׁמְרָה), despite the fact that the verb is rarely ever intransitive. Several agree with the verb emendation (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 131; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 268; Paul, *Amos*, 66; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 18). Eidevall argues against emending (Eidevall, *Amos*, 103; cf. Isa 23:17 for a missing dot). I emend it because the nouns are likely to be the subjects of the verbs in both lines.

[72] The phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order in Hebrew. See Amos 1:3.

[73] See Garrett, *Amos*, 39, who claims the form (a *weqatal*) should be translated "and he was exterminating" to show it is imperfective and simultaneous with the previous verb. His rendering is not the only way to show an imperfective aspect, however.

[74] The otherwise unattested combination שחת רחמיו has given interpreters difficulty for centuries. It is usually either translated more concretely as "destroyed his wombs," referring to females, or more abstractly as "stifled his compassion," since that is the usual sense of the plural noun. Some interpreters understand the noun as "his/its wombs," referring to the women of the land of Israel or Judah. See Hayes, *Amos*, 92–93; Paul, *Amos*, 64–66; Garrett, *Amos*, 39–40, who each argue for this latter view. As Paul (*Amos*, 64–66) notes, the main evidence for this meaning of the noun רחם comes from the Mesha Inscription, one Ugaritic text, and one example from the Old Testament in which "womb(s)" can refer to

Hebrew	Verse	English
ושלחתי אש בתימן	1:12	So I will send fire on Teman,
ואכלה ארמנות בצרה		and it will consume the citadels of Bozrah.'"
כה אמר יהוה	1:13	"Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי בני עמון		'Because of three violations by the Ammonites[78],
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו		even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על בקעם הרות הגלעד		because they shredded[79] the pregnant of the Gilead region
למען הרחיב את גבולם		in order to widen their territory.
והצתי אש בחומת רבה	1:14	So I will kindle fire on the wall of Rabbah,
ואכלה ארמנותיה		and it will consume its citadels
בתרועה ביום מלחמה		with a war cry on a day of battle,
בסער ביום סופה		with a storm on a day of tempest,
והלך מלכם[80] בגולה	1:15	and their king will go into the exile,
הוא[81] ושריו יחדו אמר יהוה		he and his officials together,' Yahweh said."
כה אמר יהוה	2:1	"Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי מואב		'Because of three violations by Moab,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו		even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על שרפו עצמות מלך אדום לשיד		because they burned the bones of the king of Edom for plaster.[82]

females as war captives (i.e., Judg 5:30). This concrete option fits the parallel line "with the sword they pursued their brother" better (Amos 1:11) and allows the verb שחת to have its usual meaning. Eidevall, *Amos*, 103 argues for "compassion" because it is more clearly attested for the plural and because stifling compassion is a concept found in other biblical texts, though not with the verb שחת (e.g., Pss 40:11 [12]; 77:9 [10]). There are other options, but the first seems slightly better, given the parallel violence.

[75] This noun is most likely the subject of the verb, and the noun was put in marked position to form a Hebrew chiasm with words for anger in the middle. It is too awkward to show this in translation.

[76] See Job 16:9 for this idiom of anger "tearing" like a wild animal. Cf. Amos 3:4.

[77] See Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness*, 200–201 for discussion of the term עברה, which conveys an emotional response with "lack of restraint" (Isa 14:6; Amos 1:11). It is usually human "anger" in view (Gen 49:7; Isa 14:6; 16:6; Jer 48:30; Amos 1:11; Job 40:11; Ps 7:6 [7]; Prov 14:16, 35; 20:2; 21:24; 22:8; 26:17), arguably associated with "pride" in a handful of cases (Prov 14:16; 21:24; Isa 16:6; Jer 48:30), and its duration is not necessarily short enough to be an "outburst" (contra *TDOT*).

[78] The idiom "sons/descendants of X" can indicate ethnic groups, thus "Ammonites" or "Israelites." Cf. Younger, *Political History*, 43.

[79] Normally "ripped open." But Amos 6:11 uses the noun form, which I translate "to shreds."

[80] The Old Latin and Aramaic versions support the MT for reading מלכם as "their king," which is indeed more probable in parallel with "his officials" than is the reading of the Ammonite god "Milcom" as found in some Greek versions, the Vulgate, and the Syriac. The OG has "its kings," which is assimilation to the plural in the following line. See *BHQ*.

[81] This pronoun ("he") is supported also by 4QXII^g, the Latin, and the Aramaic, while the Greek, Syriac, and some later Greek versions have "their priests" to harmonize with Jer 49:3. Cf. Jer 48:7.

[82] See Garrett, *Amos*, 48–49. Garrett follows *Targum Jonathan* ("used them for plaster on his house") in arguing that the term should be translated as "plaster," and adds that it was lime used to plaster the throne room of Moab's king.

ושלחתי אש במואב	2:2	So I will send fire on Moab,
ואכלה ארמנות הקריות		and it will consume the citadels of Kerioth,[83]
ומת בשאון מואב		and in the tumult Moab will die
בתרועה בקול שופר		with a war cry, with a sound of a bugle,
והכרתי	2:3	and I will cut off
שופט מקרבה		a justice-giver[84] from its midst,
וכל שריה		and all its officials
אהרוג עמו אמר יהוה		I will kill with him,' Yahweh said."
כה אמר יהוה	2:4	"Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי יהודה		'Because of three violations by Judah,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו		even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על מאסם		because they rejected
את תורת יהוה		the instruction of Yahweh,
וחקיו		and his regulations
לא שמרו		they did not keep,
ויתעום כזביהם		so[85] their deceptions led them astray,
אשר הלכו אבותם אחריהם		those after which their ancestors went.
ושלחתי אש ביהודה	2:5	So I will send fire on Judah,
ואכלה ארמנות ירושלם		and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem.'"
כה אמר יהוה	2:6	"Thus Yahweh said:
על שלשה פשעי ישראל		'Because of three violations by Israel,
ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו		even because of four, I will not turn it back,
על מכרם בכסף		because they sold for silver
צדיק		the righteous (person),
ואביון		and the needy (person)
בעבור נעלים		for the sake of a couple of sandals.
השאפים על עפר ארץ	2:7	They are the ones who sniff[86] (for food) on the dust of the land, (namely,)
בראש דלים		at the head of poor people,
ודרך ענוים		and the way of downtrodden people
יטו		they turn aside.
ואיש ואביו ילכו אל הנערה		Both a man and his father "visit" the (same) maidservant
למען חלל את שם קדשי		such that they profane my holy name.

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[83] "Kerioth" means "the walls" or "(The City of) Walls," and the Greek ("the cities") and Aramaic ("the city") failed to recognize the form as a place-name. Cf. Jer 48:24, 41. It is an easy mistake to make, since the article ("the") appears before the name "Kerioth" (cf. Jer 48:41), but the singular suffix in the following verse ("in its midst"; Amos 2:3) and the surrounding oracles which focus on a specific city or cities suggest that a specific place is more likely here than "the cities/walls."

[84] Garrett (*Amos*, 51) claims it means a "ruler" rather than simply a legal judge. My translation aims for some consistency with the noun that is found later in the book for "justice" (משפט).

[85] As Garrett (*Amos*, 53) notes, the *wayyiqtol* form is "logically secondary to the previous accusation but it is not temporally sequential."

[86] The rare verb either derives from שאף I ("pant/sniff [after]") or שאף II, a proposed variation of שוף I ("crush, trample on"), which then requires an emendation to הַשָּׁאֲפִים. The lexemes are hard to distinguish in several texts (Ezek 36:3; Amos 2:7; 8:4; Pss 56:2–3 [Eng. 1–2]; 57:4 [Eng. 3]). The ancient

וְעַל בְּגָדִים חֲבֻלִים יַטּוּ 2:8 Even[88] on clothes taken as collateral they stretch out
אֵצֶל כָּל מִזְבֵּחַ beside every altar,
וְיֵין עֲנוּשִׁים[87] יִשְׁתּוּ Even wine taken as fines they drink
בֵּית אֱלֹהֵיהֶם at the house of their God.[89]
וְאָנֹכִי הִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֶת הָאֱמֹרִי מִפְּנֵיהֶם 2:9 But I[90] destroyed the Amorites from their presence,
אֲשֶׁר כְּגֹבַהּ אֲרָזִים גָּבְהוֹ whose height was like the height of cedars[91]
וְחָסֹן הוּא כָּאַלּוֹנִים and who were sturdy[92] like the oaks,
וָאַשְׁמִיד פִּרְיוֹ מִמַּעַל and I destroyed their fruit above
וְשָׁרָשָׁיו מִתָּחַת and their root below.

versions struggled with the form, perhaps because none of the biblical uses of these verb(s) have a preposition before their object if they have an object at all (see שאף I: Job 5:5; 7:2; 36:20; Isa 42:14; Jer 2:24; 14:6; Eccl 1:5; שאף II: Pss 56:2–3 [Eng. 1–2]; 57:4 [Eng. 3]; cf. שוף I/II in Gen 3:15; Job 9:17). In contrast, Amos 2:7 has two prepositions (על and ב), one of which is often considered to be the object of the verb. Modern translations opt for something like "pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor" (e.g., KJV, JPS (1917), NASB, Hayes, *Amos*, 106; McComiskey and Longman, "Amos," 376–79) or "trample (on) the head of the poor (as) on/into the dust of the earth" (e.g., OG, Latin, Aramaic, ASV, JPS (1985), NRSV, NIV, CEB; Gordis, "Studies," 215; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 133; Niehaus, "Amos," 366; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 305; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 74; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 309, 314; Paul, *Amos*, 79, 91. The OG has "(sandals) which tread on the dust of the earth, and they are striking the heads of the poor" (τὰ πατοῦντα ἐπὶ τὸν χοῦν τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκονδύλιζον εἰς κεφαλὰς πτωχῶν), an unlikely (and double) translation of the syntax. Neither this nor the similar Syriac rendering can be used as solid support for "trample," since they appear to be confused. Garrett (*Amos*, 58) has semantic and syntactical reasons why "trample" is implausible. Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 316) point out that the verb's proper object would simply be "the poor," as in Amos 8:4, and thus the prepositional phrase "at/on the head of the poor" is actually "another adverbial phrase." Andersen and Freedman do not translate according to this insight, but if they had, the result would be something like what Garrett (*Amos*, 58) posits and rejects: "who trample on the dust of the earth at the heads of the poor." Garrett (*Amos*, 22) opts for "They are people who sniff at the dust of the earth after the heads of the poor," but the second phrase is the object of the verb ("sniff . . . after the heads"), based on his later commentary. I do not have a conclusive solution to this translation issue, but I suspect that the translations over the centuries guessed at the meaning of שאף based on the following phrase "on the dust of the earth/land." Because neither proposed lexeme for שאף takes a preposition for its direct object elsewhere in the Bible (cf. Amos 8:4), and "sniff" requires less grammatical acrobatics than "trample" does, I maintain the MT and translate it as follows: "They are the ones who sniff (for food) on the dust of the land, (namely,) at the head of poor people." Notably, I take the verb to be intransitive and each prepositional phrase to be the location of the sniffing, the second in apposition to the first to show that the social position of the poor is as low as the dust on the ground. The resulting picture is a hungry panting comparable to the idiom of "sniffing around" for food (cf. Jer 14:6; Garrett, *Amos*, 58).

[87] The term (עֲנוּשִׁים) is either a noun or a participle, with no difference in vocalization.

[88] The conjunctions starting each line are not sequential but front the nouns. See Amos 1:2.

[89] The form is ambiguous here ("God/gods"), but either way (i.e., "their gods" or "their God") the rhetoric distances Yahweh from the religious abuses of which he does not approve.

[90] The conjunction before the pronoun is for switching subjects of the discourse.

[91] In verbless (nominal) clauses, the default or unmarked word order in biblical Hebrew is subject-predicate, with the subject defined as the relatively more definite constituent. See *BHRG 2*, 496–97, §46.2.3.1–2. The word order is thus fronted for the predicates in these verbless clauses about the height of "cedars" and the "sturdy" nature of the Amorites, although I could not bring this out in translation.

2:10 And I myself[93] brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and I led you in the wilderness for forty years
to possess the land of the Amorites.

2:11 And I raised up some of your children as prophets,
and some of your youths as Nazirites[94].
Isn't this so,[95] Israelites? (speech[96] of Yahweh)

2:12 And you made the Nazirites drink wine,
and the prophets you commanded, saying,
"You must not prophesy!"

2:13 So look,[100] I am about to make cracks[101] below you
just as the wagon full of sheaves makes cracks,

ואנכי העליתי אתכם מארץ מצרים 2:10
ואולך אתכם במדבר ארבעים שנה
לרשת את ארץ האמרי
ואקים מבניכם לנביאים 2:11
ומבחוריכם לנזרים
האף אין זאת בני ישראל נאם יהוה
ותשקו את הנזרים יין 2:12
ועל[97] הנביאים צויתם לאמר
לא תנבאו
וְהִנֵּה[98] אנכי מעיק תחתיכם 2:13
כאשר תעיק[99] העגלה המלאה לה
עמיר

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[92] Lexicons typically have "strong" for חסן, but I reserve "strong" for more common terms in the Old Testament such as אמץ in Amos 2:14, 16.

[93] Here the pronoun is emphatic rather than marking a switch of grammatical subject.

[94] The term "Nazirites" refers to religious devotees who abstained from drinking alcohol and cutting their hair, at least for a period of time (Num 6:1–21).

[95] See BHRG 2, 397, §40.14 for the affirmative use of אף.

[96] See Meier (Speaking of Speaking, 298–314) for the phrase נאם יהוה, often translated "declares the LORD," "oracle of Yahweh," or "utterance of Yahweh." Meier (Speaking of Speaking, 309–13) demonstrates that this frozen noun—always vocalized the same way whether in construct state or not—can mark the speech of humans, not just a deity (cf. Num 24:3–4, 15–16; 2 Sam 23:1; Ps 36:2 [Eng. 1]; Prov 30:1–2). Although synonymous with אמר ("say") in certain texts (Jer 49:8; 50:40), I believe a translation of נאם should be distinct compared to other terms traditionally translated "said" or "word" (דבר), contra Meier's bland rendering ("word of Yahweh"; 298). I use "speech (of Yahweh)," meaning communication by a speaker rather than a complete oration or discourse unit. The noun does not indicate an "oracle" if that means a distinctive kind of inspired communication or a complete discourse of prophetic communication. Almost parenthetically at times, it indicates which person is presented as speaking.

[97] According to DCH, this preposition can be used with צוה to mean "lay a charge upon" or "command" the object following the preposition. The prepositional phrase is fronted compared to normal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:2.

[98] I emend the MT to include the conjunction "and/so" (ו), thus וְהִנֵּה. The Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic lack it, but a Qumran manuscript (4QXIIᶜ) has it and the Greek may or may not support its presence (διὰ τοῦτο ἰδοῦ). I agree with BHQ that this ו likely dropped out early in transmission because of the identical letter ending the previous word (תנבאו), thus תנבאו והנה became תנבאו הנה before the ancient versions translated the text. The difference is negligible, but the abruptness in the divine judgment is lessened with the conjunction present (cf. OG).

[99] I interpret this as a causative form (תָּעִיק) of עוק IV, vocalized identically to the simple active.

[100] According to BHRG 2, 410, §40.22.4.1, the particle can "point an addressee to something in the speech situation that is newsworthy … [or to] an unexpected threat" (emphasis removed).

[101] This verb only appears here in the Bible (see DCH), and may mean any of these conjectures: "press (down)" (עוק I, perhaps related to "press," צוק, and "oppression, burden," עָקָה I and מוּעָקָה; cf. Ps 55:4 [3]; 66:11), "be hindered" (עוק II), "roar" (עוק III), "split, make a furrow" (עוק IV), "cut in pieces, split open" (עקק, a proposed form related to post-biblical עוּקָה and foreign cognates), or "groan, creak" (עיק). The ancient versions guessed at the meaning as "I am rolling under you" (OG), "I will hinder" (Greek Alexandrinus), "I will creak/groan" (Aquila and Latin), "I will press you" (Syriac), and "I *will bring distress upon you, and* I will impede you in your place just as a cart is impeded when it is laden with

ואבד מנוס מקל 2:14 so fleeing will perish from the swift,
וחזק לא יאמץ כחו and the mighty will not strengthen their power,
וגבור לא ימלט נפשו and the warrior will not save their life[102],
ותפש הקשת לא יעמד 2:15 and the archer will not stand,
וקל ברגליו לא ימלט[103] and with their feet the swift will not be saved,
ורכב הסוס לא ימלט נפשו and the horse rider will not save their life,
ואמיץ[104] לבו בגבורים 2:16 and the strong-hearted among the warriors—
ערום ינוס ביום ההוא נאם יהוה naked they will flee in that day.'" (speech of Yahweh)

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sheaves" (Aramaic, emphasis original for where the Targum diverges from the Hebrew). The metaphor of the wagon implies that the verbal idea either involves hindering or pressing down the Israelites in some way (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 307; Hayes, *Amos*, 118–19; Paul, *Amos*, 94) or disturbing the ground under them with an earthquake (so Gese, "Kleine Beiträge," 417–24; Mays, *Amos*, 54; Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 148–49; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 171; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 91; Eidevall, *Amos*, 118–19). The second option is preferable, given the other references to harvest (Amos 8:1–2) and an earthquake as foreboding of judgment in the book (Amos 1:1–2; 4:11; 6:11; 8:8; 9:1, 5). See Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 91. The second option also makes better sense of the prepositional phrase תחתיכם, which most often means "under you." A translation like "press down" requires this phrase to mean "in your place." When it does means "in your place" elsewhere, however, there is a verbless clause (Exod 16:29; Job 36:16), an intransitive verb (Judg 7:1; 2 Sam 7:16; Ezek 17:6), or a passive verb before it (Isa 25:10), or there is a direct object preceding the phrase (Job 40:12; Isa 46:7), not a causative verb (מעיק) with no object, as is true here of Amos 2:13. Therefore, if the action conveyed by מעיק happens "under" the Israelites, then an earthquake below is more likely than force or weight from above. For these reasons, Eidevall (*Amos*, 119) critiques the suggestions of "to hamper" or "to creak" and proposes "sway" or perhaps "split open." Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 333) translate, "I am creaking underneath you, just as the cart that is full of sheaves creaks" (cf. Aquila and Latin), but Smith and Page (*Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 68) point out that the context requires a more active verb of destruction rather than a metaphor for Yahweh suffering underneath his people. I translate "I am about to make cracks under you just as a wagon full of sheaves makes cracks." I derive the verb from עוק IV (related to עוקה), "split open," following Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 171): "It is due to the heavy load that the cart's wheels break open the soft earth of the field, causing cracks in the ground reminiscent of those produced by an earthquake." I take both verbs as causative, however.

[102] The common and commendable hesitancy in scholarship to translate נפש as "soul" comes from the desire to avoid a Platonic or Cartesian dualism between body and "soul." Even farther from this dichotomy is Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom*, 29–35, 322–23. She argues that there are many instances where the Hebrew term נפש should be translated more viscerally as "throat" or "neck." However, it is possible that ancient Israelites had a concept of a soul that differs from the later, Greco-Roman concepts. See discussion in Lasater, "'The Emotions,'" 535–36 n. 71; cf. Steiner, *Disembodied Souls*. Either way, the term in Amos may refer to the life of a human by synecdoche (or Yahweh, anthropomorphically; Amos 6:8), taking the נפש as the throat or neck that is essential to human life for breathing. The English idiom "save the neck" can convey essentially the same thing as "save the life."

[103] *BHQ* notes that all ancient translations vocalize this as a passive (יִמָּלֵט) rather than as an active verb (יְמַלֵּט) which would require an object for the MT to be accurate. I emend the vowels.

[104] Supported by the Latin, Syriac, Aramaic, and Aquila, the MT is preferable to the mixing of letters attested in 4QXII^c ("and he who finds [his heart]" ומוצא) and the OG.

4.2.2 Creation Rhetoric

The condemnations against the nations in this section of the book (Amos 1:3—2:16)

follow a common pattern that typically includes the assertive report of divine speech

("Thus Yahweh said"),[105] an assertive argument that it is "because of three violations . . .

even because of four" that judgment will come,[106] a commissive in which Yahweh

threatens some irrevocable judgment ("I will not turn it back"),[107] a further argument

mentioning a representative violation of which the nation is guilty, and then a

commissive threatening concrete action against that nation.[108] For all but Israel, the action

involves sending fire on the walls of the nation's capital city, fire that will burn its

fortified structures (e.g., "I will send fire on . . . , and it will consume the citadels of . . .").

Sometimes there is extra detail about the forewarned judgment (Amos 1:5, 8, 14–15; 2:2–

3, 13–16), sometimes about the violations (Amos 1:9, 11, 13; 2:4, 6–8, 12), and

sometimes an oracle concludes with a report of divine speech (e.g., "Yahweh said").[109]

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[105] Technically, this makes each round of criticisms an oracle report, "oracle" meaning verbal communication from a deity to a human through a human intermediary. For my translation of the citation formula ("Thus Yahweh said"), see the translation note for Amos 1:3 above.

[106] See Weiss, "Pattern"; Zakovitch, "Pattern"; Chisholm, "For Three Sins"; O'Connell, "Telescoping"; Talmon, "Topped Triad"; cf. Talmon ("Topped Triad," 119), who claims the fourth element exceeds the other three in "heinousness and depravity" with "a qualitative and not merely quantitative difference."

[107] "It" probably refers to the punishment announced. See the arguments in Paul, *Amos*, 46–47; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 178–80.

[108] The arguments about the national crimes are simultaneously assertive accusations, expressive blaming, and declarative condemnations (i.e., declaring guilt with divine authority), while the mention of adverse consequences are not only forewarnings and commissives ("I will") but also speech acts of declarative sentencing (i.e., declaring some punishment on the nation).

[109] As Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 172–73) observes, the oracles even alternate between nations with more punishment listed (Aram, Philistia), those with more guilt (Tyre, Edom), back to punishment (Ammon, Moab), and finally to those with more guilt (Judah, Israel), though the oracle against Israel breaks the pattern in several ways.

As many commentators have observed, the rhetorical flow of these "oracles against the nations" is skillful and contributes to a sense of entrapment.[110] That is, the original oral audience before the time of the written text would have agreed with the condemnation of each nation in turn, only to find that they themselves stood condemned by the accusations of social injustice within their nation (Israel).[111] And in most of the oracles there is no appeal to divine revelation of a law or a covenant relationship, particularly for the non-Hebrew nations. In these cases, according to Barton, the oracles seem to be based on principles of natural law in which the wrongness of war crimes is assumed to be evident to all people and perhaps even to be built into the created order.[112] This is an important part of the creation rhetoric, that the basis for some of the ethical censure here is not based on revealed or secular law but on a more natural, universal sense of justice.[113] This comes out in the way that nature metaphors and poetic justice of consequences in the book are presented.[114]

The first oracle is against Damascus, the capital city representing the Arameans closest to Israel (Amos 1:3–5). The oracle denounces the Arameans for brutality against

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[110] See Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 144; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 198.

[111] See Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 215. He notes that the rhetorical effect of entrapment is "from the point of view of the text's internal audience, namely, Israelites living in the eighth century." For the implied audience in Judah, nevertheless, the impact of these oracles would still have many of the same effects as the audience is drawn into the presentation of the prophet debating with the Israelites.

[112] Barton, "Natural Law," 3–4. See Barton, "Amos's Oracles"; Barton, "Understanding." Barton later (*Ethics in Ancient Israel*, 94–126) prefers to call this "(the) moral order" in the world rather than the "natural law" underpinning these international violations in Amos (102–4). Cf. Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 146; Fretheim, *Reading*, 118.

[113] Barton, "Natural Law," 8–9. Cf. Barton, "Basis of Ethics," 15–17.

[114] Barton ("Natural Law," 9–14) suggests that the presence of "poetic justice" is a clue to an underlying idea of natural law in the ethics of the prophetic texts.

the eastern territory of Israel: "because with iron sledges they threshed the Gilead region" (Amos 1:3). This invokes a metaphor from the agricultural realm. As Garrett explains, "Sledges were heavy wooden platforms studded with nails or spikes on the bottom. Drawn by oxen, farmers used such tools to thresh grain. The image is a metaphor of harsh military conquest, ripping apart people and communities just as a sledge rips apart wheat."[115] The creation rhetoric here implies that the Arameans treated the Gileadites in a harsh, inhumane manner (cf. 2 Kgs 8:12). The threatened consequence for such a violation (traditionally "transgression") is a burned capital city, effectively ending the dynasty of King Hazael's line (Amos 1:4).[116] Yahweh also threatens the termination of the ruler of the Aramean dynasty centered in Damascus and the exile of its people to Kir (Amos 1:5; cf. 2 Kgs 16:9). The creation rhetoric consists of the "Valley" and the "fire" imagery, which becomes a recurring mode of divine judgment in this section. It likely indicates a fire set by human armies, considering the military details that follow the fire in Amos 1:5, 8, 14–15, 2:2–3,[117] but the fire is ultimately attributed to Yahweh acting in punishment against the nation in question.[118] Thus is counts as creation rhetoric because the fire is not fully tamed by people but is ultimately Yahweh's judgment activity.[119]

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[115] Garrett, *Amos*, 25.

[116] For more on Hazael's dynasty, see Younger, "'Hazael,'" 245–70.

[117] Cf. also 2 Kgs 8:12; Jer 17:27; 49:27; Hos 8:14; 10:14; Amos 3:11; 6:8; Nah 3:12–15.

[118] Technically, this makes the commissives "I will send fire" complex speech acts in terms of agency: although a person cannot promise that someone *else* will do something (Searle, *Speech Acts*, 57; Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 23), a person or a deity with sufficient authority can promise to see to it that someone else will do something. This insight is from Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*, 83.

[119] The fire is like the war horse in Job 39:19–25, the horse being listed among wild animals because it is not fully tamed, perhaps. Cf. fig. 2 "Illustrating what creation rhetoric includes."

The second oracle is against Gaza, representing the Philistines (Amos 1:6–8). The Philistines are denounced for human trafficking (Amos 1:6), selling people to Edom, and the consequences are nearly the same as for the Arameans: fire on the capital city and destruction of the Philistine rulers and populace (Amos 1:7–8). The threat of fire is the essence of the creation rhetoric.

The third oracle is against Tyre, representing the coastal Sidonians or Phoenicians (Amos 1:9–10). They are denounced for human trafficking as well, with the added detail that "they did not remember (the) treaty of brothers" (Amos 1:9), meaning an international partnership between nations pictured as siblings.[120] The consequences include fire on Tyre (Amos 1:10).

The fourth oracle is against Edom (Amos 1:11–12), denounced for violence and brutal anger against "their brother (nation)," likely Judah (Amos 1:11). A map of these nations, regions, and capital cities might help to picture the conflicts more easily (see fig. 4 below). The creation rhetoric here is subtle, conveyed mostly by the verb "tear, prey upon" (טרף). This verb is typically used for lions or other wild animals savaging their prey.[121] Thus, when the accusation maintains that the Edomite nation persisted in anger ("so their anger tore continually, while their fury kept watch perpetually"; Amos 1:11), the image of a wild animal tearing into some of its victims and stalking others comes to

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[120] See 2 Sam 5:11; 1 Kgs 5:15–26 (Eng. 1–12); 16:31.
[121] Gen 37:33; 44:28; 49:27; Exod 22:13 (12); Deut 33:20; Pss 7:2 (3); 17:12; 22:13 (14); Jer 5:6; Ezek 19:3, 6; 22:25, 27; Hos 5:14; 6:1; Mic 5:8 (7); Nah 2:12 (13).

Figure 4. Map of most places in Amos 1–2

mind. Edomite cruelty is conveyed by nature metaphors that once again depict inhumane treatment of other people. The language serves as commentary on the military violence, including the difficult phrase "they obliterated his רחמיו" (Amos 1:11). This either refers to the Edomites stifling their own "compassion" for enemies or to their murder of the "females" of another nation, either Israel or Judah. Both could fit, but the second meaning of violence against females is more likely, in light of the parallel line with the "sword" (Amos 1:11). The consequences include fire on two Edomite cities (Amos 1:12).

The fifth oracle is against the Ammonites (Amos 1:13–15), denounced for savagely killing the pregnant women in the Gilead region (Amos 1:13). The term "shredded" may compare the savage military violence to that of a bear or a lion (see 2 Kgs 2:24; Hos 13:8), although the verb is not solely used of animal violence.[122] Military expansionism "in order to widen their territory" (Amos 1:13) receives the threat of "fire" on the capital city (Amos 1:14) and exile for the Ammonite king and officials (Amos 1:15). There is even a blend of a military and a natural disaster in the destruction of the capital, since "a way cry on a day of battle" is paralleled by "a storm on a day of tempest"

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[122] The verb "shredded open" (בקע) often refers to splitting rock, water, lumber, or the ground (Gen 22:3; Exod 14:16, 21; Num 16:31; Judg 15:19; 1 Sam 6:14; 1 Kgs 1:40; Neh 9:11; Job 28:10; Pss 78:13, 15; 141:7; Eccl 10:9; Isa 48:21; 63:12; Mic 1:4; Hab 3:9; Zech 14:4), or bursting containers of fluid or air (Gen 7:11; Josh 9:4, 13; Job 26:8; 32:19; Ps 74:15; Prov 3:20; Isa 35:6; Ezek 13:11, 13), or breaking through walls or military lines (2 Sam 23:16; 2 Kgs 3:26; 25:4; 1 Chr 11:18; 2 Chr 21:17; 32:1; Jer 39:2; 52:7; Ezek 26:10). However, it can also refer to a wild animal such as a bear or a lion ripping apart its prey (2 Kgs 2:24; Hos 13:8). The term elsewhere describes the violent killing of women (2 Kgs 8:12; 15:16; Hos 13:16) or men (2 Chr 25:12) through military violence, which is the case here in Amos 1:13.

(Amos 1:14). Creation rhetoric involves the imagery of a wild animal (potentially), a storm, and a burning fire.[123]

The sixth oracle is against Moab (Amos 2:1–3), denounced for some act of cruelty involving the "bones of the king of Edom" (Amos 2:1). The king or people of Moab burned the bones "for plaster," as I translated it. This could be some sort of religious desecration or taboo, but in the context of other cruel acts this might refer to the cremation of the royal remains in order to procure plaster for Moabite palace walls.[124] The consequences include "fire" on a prominent city, with "tumult" and "a sound of a bugle" featured in this divine forewarning of a military attack (Amos 2:2). The "justice-giver" (שופט)—its king—and the city's other officials will be exterminated (Amos 2:3).

The seventh oracle is against Judah (Amos 2:4–5), denounced for rejecting instruction from Yahweh, failing to keep his regulations (Amos 2:4). Whatever these regulations entailed, Judah's refusal led them to follow "deceptions" (כזביהם)—misleading prophets or policies—that their ancestors had followed in the days of Ahaz in the preceding generation (Amos 2:4).[125] The threatened consequence is the same: fire on the capital city (Amos 2:5).

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[123] The "territory" or "border" does not count as creation rhetoric because it does not refer to natural boundaries or specific regions of land but to politically established boundaries.

[124] See Garrett, *Amos*, 48–49, following *Targum Jonathan*.

[125] See Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 192 n. 182), citing Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 301–5; Lohfink, "Gab es," 331–32; and especially Bons, "Denotat." See the earlier discussion in §3.4 Supposedly Deuteronomistic Themes. If the reign of Ahaz is in view when Hezekiah's scribes added this oracle, then the violation by Judah may have included child sacrifice in fire to Yahweh or another god (2 Kgs 16:3), making the punishment of fire on Jerusalem more fitting. Or it could refer to the religious practices by which Ahaz misled Judah (2 Kgs 16:10–18).

The eighth and final oracle of this section is against Israel (Amos 2:6–16). The representative violations are now sevenfold instead of singular.[126] Israel is denounced for a series of violations, including selling the "righteous" (i.e., innocent)[127] or "needy"[128] person for money or sandals (Amos 2:6), hounding poor people and denying them access to social benefits (Amos 2:7), and exploiting women and poor people via religious institutions (Amos 2:7–8).[129] The shock value in this context is that the Israelite violations are condemned as being just as bad or worse than the war crimes of the foreign nations or the religious infidelity of Judah. Social injustice is just as deplorable as violent atrocities on the international stage. Even though Amos never quotes legal standards from the books of the Pentateuch, such injustices violate the spirit, if not the letter, of biblical traditions about poverty and legal justice in Exod 22:24–26 (Eng. 25–27); 23:6–8, 11.[130]

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[126] Or exactly four violations, depending on how the lines are counted. Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 113.

[127] Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 22) points out that there is no inherent righteousness in being poor. Rather, in the context the term צדיק means "righteous" in the sense of "innocent," someone wrongly accused or exploited through legal proceedings.

[128] Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 14) defines אביון as "those in economic need" based on the use of the verb and because, in the prophetic books, such people are sometimes homeless, hungry and thirsty, abused, and victims of injustices such as economic exploitation (cf. Isa 14:30; 29:19; 32:6–7; Amos 2:6; 8:4).

[129] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 134: The pattern of "three" and "four" suggests "a pattern of behavior, habitual and pervasive, rather than particular acts in the past."

[130] Cf. Deut 15:4, 7–11; 16:19; 24:6–7, 10–15, 17; 25:1; Lev 19:15; Job 22:6; 24:3, 9; Ezek 18:7, 12, 16; 33:15; Neh 10:32 (Eng. 31). Whereas Exodus emphasizes that one should not charge interest on loans to the afflicted (Exod 22:24 [Eng. 25]), Deuteronomy puts more emphasis on positive generosity and warns against evil motives that might hinder a periodic cancellation of debts (Deut 15:1–15; cf. Lev 25:35–37). Exodus forbids holding a neighbor's cloak in pledge overnight (Exod 22:25–26 [Eng. 26–27]), but Deuteronomy includes other items, debtors, or details about cloaks that go beyond pity to respect for the rights of the needy (Deut 24:6, 10–13, 17). Exodus has the more concentrated vocabulary in common with Amos concerning these issues of debts and pledges, and the same applies concerning legal justice (Exod 23:6–8) compared to Deuteronomy's more scattered vocabulary for justice (Deut 1:17; 10:18; 16:18–20; 24:17; 25:1; 27:19, 25). Compared to Exodus (Exod 22:20–23 [Eng. 21–24]; 23:9), Deuteronomy is more aware of fair wages for hired agricultural workers (Deut 24:14–15; cf. Lev 19:13) and has more detailed provisions for immigrants, orphans, and widows to survive from agricultural surplus (Exod 23:10–11; Deut

The creation rhetoric so far involves a few aspects: First, silver and sandals, while not

nature imagery themselves, point to relevant agricultural issues (Amos 2:6). Marvin

Chaney explains how these are connected to agriculture and debt:

> Loans to poor peasants by wealthy landlords would typically have been made in silver before the new crop came in, when grain was scarce and expensive in terms of its price in silver. At harvest time, the loan would have been due in kind—a 'pledged' or 'contracted' crop [due to Chaney's understanding of 'sandals']— when grain was plentiful and thus worth less relative to silver. . . . 'By means of the silver' in which the survival loan to the indigent one ['the needy'] is paid out and 'by means of the pledged harvest,' the form in which payment is required, wealthy landlords are able to 'buy and sell' vulnerable peasants. The reference is not to a developed slave market but rather to a cycle of encumbered harvests that allowed creditors to bleed debtors white and then, at their discretion, to foreclose upon peasant land rights and [require] peasant labor pledged as collateral.[131]

Second, the metaphor of "the ones who sniff (for food) on the dust of the land,

[namely,] at the head of poor people" (Amos 2:7) portrays these wealthy people as

jackals or wild donkeys sniffing near the poor in a search for something to eat (cf. שאף in

Jer 14:6). This animal imagery implies invasive or aggressive behavior that is inhumane,

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14:27–29; 16:11, 14; 24:19–21; 26:10–13; cf. Lev 19:9–10; 23:22; 25:3–7, 35). Amos does not mention this triad of vulnerable classes at all. These comparisons suggest that Exodus rather than Deuteronomy is the most similar background for Amos, even though Amos does not precisely cite any legal violation from either book. Cf. Hamborg, *Still Selling*, 149, 211. I disagree with those who argue that Amos derives all condemnations from the laws of Exodus (cf. Würthwein, "Amos-Studien"). More likely, Houston (*Contending for Justice [rev. ed.]*, 70–71) is right to explain that both the "law" and the prophets appealed to the same standards independently.

[131] Chaney, "Producing Peasant Poverty," 197. To substantiate this, Chaney ("Producing Peasant Poverty," 194–98) argues that the "sandals" (נעלים) are a double entendre, referring to their role in pledges (195–96) about land or inheritance (cf. Deut 25:9; Ruth 4:7; Pss 60:10 [[Eng. 8]; 108:10 [Eng. 9]; 1 Sam 12:3 OG; Sir 46:19) and also referring to "the pledged harvest" (194), a reading he (197) arrives at by dividing the preposition "for the sake of" (בעבור) before "sandals" into עבור + ב ("by means of" [ב] + "produce/harvest" [עבור; cf. Josh 5:11–12]), with "sandals" still signifying "pledges/contracts" (נעלים) after the prepositional phrase. I find the first option sufficient and the second unnecessary to make an agricultural point about the situation portrayed in the text.

for humans do not pant or sniff near the ground for food—other animals do.[132] As a

metaphor, it may be describing cruelty by landowners who demand crops from their hired

workers on a sabbatical year or barred non-workers access to these crops, even though

the poor were allowed to collect this surplus according to biblical tradition.[133] More

likely, this sniffing around conveys the animal-like greed of the wealthy who demand a

heavy quota or tax on the grain harvested by their workers during ordinary years (cf.

Amos 5:11). These poor workers have nothing but scraps to eat by comparison, but the

greedy jackals come sniffing around for the scraps anyway! The phrase "the dust of the

land" where they sniff shows the low socio-economic position and perhaps the literal,

physical position of some of these impoverished people (Amos 2:7).[134] Not many of the

"poor" peasants in view would have owned land, and some could have been debt-slaves

working in fields they did not own (anymore).[135]

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[132] This observation remains valid even if my translation of "sniff (for food)" turns out to be less persuasive than "trample upon," as many versions read the term. See my reasons in the translation section.

[133] Exod 22:20–23 (Eng. 21–24); 23:10–11. Cf. Deut 24:19–21. In fact, Exodus and Leviticus mention that even the "wild animals" (חית [השדה]) can enjoy the surplus on this year (Exod 23:11; Lev 25:7), whereas here in Amos 2:7 the wealthy are portrayed as wild animals exploiting the poor in some way. It is a conceptual similarity at best, not an intertextual or lexical similarity. Deuteronomy does not make provisions for animals on the sabbatical year like Exodus and Leviticus do.

[134] Thus, ארץ ("land") is not a political or agricultural usage of the term but merely a spatial use for the relative position of the poor and the dust on the "ground." Cf. Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 7.

[135] Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 15) defines דל as "poor peasants" or simply "peasants," understood as agricultural workers who are obligated to give some of the yield to a superior person. Cf. Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:405–6; Carroll R., "[Poor, Be Poor]," 1:951. As a later text in Amos shows, the "poor" can be taxed on grain (Amos 5:11), suggesting that they are not completely destitute of all resources, even though "the term refers to poor peasant farmers" ("[Poor, Be Poor]," 1:951). Cf. Fabry, "דָּל dal," 3:219; Pleins, *Social Visions*, 371; Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 21.

Next in Amos 2:7, proposals for understanding the term הנערה include either a

goddess,[136] a hostess at a religious feast,[137] a female loan broker,[138] an Israelite town

called "Naarah,"[139] a "foreclosure,"[140] a temple prostitute,[141] a domestic maidservant,[142]

or an undefined "young woman" of marriable age.[143] Only the last three suggestions have

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[136] Goddess: Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 318; Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 257.

[137] Hostess: Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 15–36, refuted by McLaughlin, *The* marzēaḥ *in the Prophetic*, 122–24.

[138] Loan Broker: Coote, *Amos*, 35–38. No convincing evidence backs this up.

[139] Naarah: Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and His Father'"; cf. Naarah/Naaran in Josh 16:7; 1 Chr 7:28. I find her view unlikely because of the article on הנערה in Amos (but cf. Amos 1:3, 13; 2:2; 4:1; Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and His Father,'" 60 n. 6). More importantly, accusing the Israelites of traveling to an obscure town rather than to Bethel makes little sense in a context about social abuses, albeit some of which happen at a sanctuary in Israel, probably Bethel. Elsewhere the book uses well-known locations in the accusations. Moughtin-Mumby (73) also argues that "Naarah" is likely here because all of the other oracles of Amos 1–2 mention at least one extra place other than the nation addressed. However, this ignores that these extra places are either entire nations or regions (not cities) in the *accusation* parts or that the places are only cities in the *punishment* parts of the oracles. The oracle against Judah lacks an extra place in the *accusation* part (Amos 2:4), as does the oracle against Israel in its *punishment* part (Amos 2:13–16), which does not even mention the capital city of Israel, in fact. There is thus no reason to expect a place name or city in Amos 2:6–12 in the first half of the oracle at stake here (i.e., Amos 2:7).

[140] Foreclosure: See Chaney, "Producing Peasant Poverty," 199–201. He argues the term means "foreclosure, shaking out" (199), an otherwise unattested noun based on Neh 5:13, which has the rare verb נער II with these consonants (199–200). Because of its rarity, this noun would have been confused later with the more common noun "young woman." Chaney (200) proposes a related confusion for ילכו, in Amos 2:7, which supposedly should be vocalized as יוֹלִכוּ (i.e., "they bring") rather than as a simple active (i.e., יֵלְכוּ, "they go"). He takes the subject of this verb to be "sandals," though, such that "Sandaled footsteps literally bring a man and his aged father to the foreclosure proceedings upon their family land rights" (201). However, הלך in the *hiphil* stem is extremely rare (i.e., less than fifty out of 1,500+ occurrences) compared to the *qal* form in which the MT has it here, and only *animate* beings (not sandals) act as subjects of this verb in the causative elsewhere (e.g., Amos 2:10). Furthermore, the exploitation of a woman fits equally in this context and does not require a speculative noun based on a distant and rare verb.

[141] Temple prostitute: Sellin, *Zwölfprophetenbuch*, 170; Cripps, *Critical and Exegetical*, 142; Hammershaimb, *Book of Amos*, 48–49; Soggin, *Prophet Amos*, 48; Rosenbaum, *Amos of Israel*, 65; Garrett, *Amos*, 60–62.

[142] Domestic servant: Beek, "Religious Background," 136; Mays, *Amos*, 46–48; McKeating, *Books of Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 23; Fendler, "Sozialkritik," 42–43; Smith, *Amos*, 122; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:1:215–16; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 151–52; Carroll R., "Amos," 692; Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 114–15; Eidevall, *Amos*, 115. Compare potential legal background in Exod 21:7–11; Lev 18:7–8, 15, 17, 21; 19:20–22; 20:10–20; Deut 22:29; 27:20. Cf. נערה in Ruth 2:5, 8, 22–23; 1 Sam 25:42; Esth 4:4, 16.

[143] Undefined woman: Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 166–67; Paul, *Amos*, 82–83; Lessing, *Amos*, 161–63; Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, 209–11, 243–46; Leeb, *Away from the Father's House*, 146–50;

plausibility in light of the social abuses mentioned in the surrounding context, and I take

a blend of them to be true in what may be a unique interpretation below. First, the

existence of temple prostitution in the ancient Near East and in Hebrew cultures is now

strongly questioned,[144] but I agree with a minority that maintain that temple prostitution,

or at least sexual activity, sometimes happened without assuming any "sacred marriage"

or fertility rituals associated with this activity.[145] Granted that the specific term for a

"sacred prostitute" (קדשה) or a regular "prostitute" (זנה) is not used in Amos 2:7, the

most specific terms for maidservants (שפחה or אמה) are not used either, though perhaps

for good reasons.[146] The phrasing for those who "visit" her (i.e., הלך + אל) is likewise not

the usual idiom for sexual intercourse (i.e., בוא + אל), but the text in Amos could be

Day, "Does the Old Testament," 9. The term נערה can refer to unmarried women, concubines, widows, or female slaves: Gen 24:14; Deut 22:15 (newlywed); Judg 19:3; Ruth 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:2–4. Leeb (*Away from the Father's House*, 146–50) concludes that the "source of exploitation for this particular נערה remains a mystery" (149). Nevertheless, "Whether slave or hired girl, cult prostitute, barmaid or banquet hostess, the young woman mentioned in this problematic verse is *working outside the home*, away from the protection and supervision of her father. If sexuality is involved, it is clearly irregular in some way, not the ideal of marital intimacy within bounds of acceptable sexual activity" (Leeb, *Away from the Father's House*, 149, emphasis original). In the end, "the girl is vulnerable in some way (economically)" (150).

[144] Fisher, "Cultic Prostitution"; Gruber, "Hebrew *qĕdēšâh*"; Oden, *Bible Without Theology*, 131–53; Hackett, "Can a Sexist Model Liberate"; Bird, "'To Play the Harlot'"; Henshaw, *Female and Male*; Bird, "The End"; Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, 22–33; Assante, "From Whores to Hierodules"; Gruber, "Prostitution"; Stark, *"Kultprostitution"*; Assante, "What Makes a 'Prostitute'"; Budin, *Myth*; Nyberg, "Sacred Prostitution"; Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital*, 72–75; Assante, "Bad Girls"; Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and His Father,'" 61–69; Zsolnay, "Misconstrued."

[145] Yamauchi, "Cultic Prostitution"; Lambert, "Prostitution"; Day, "Does the Old Testament"; Day, "Hosea," 214. See Gen 38:15, 21–22, 24; Deut 23:18–19 (Eng. 17–18); Hos 4:14. Cf. Mic 1:7.

[146] Garrett (*Amos*, 61) suggests that the use of the term נערה instead of קדשה, for example, suggests that she is a slave of the sanctuary rather than a priestess, but this seems speculative. I would point out that נערה at least can refer to female servants elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 24:61; Exod 2:5; 1 Sam 25:42; Ruth 2:8, 22–23; Prov 9:3; 31:15; Esth 2:9; 4:4), something that is not true elsewhere for a reference to professional prostitution of any kind. Later I suggest that the terms for maidservant are not used because the young woman is not the concubine or wife of the men, though she is their servant.

explained as a variation of this idiom,[147] perhaps even purposefully so to indicate sexual

activity happening *outside* of the household unit or property.[148] Appealing to the

surrounding context to identify the woman shows social injustices before and after,

leading many to consider the situation to be non-religious in nature, but the following

wording about profaning Yahweh's "holy name" (Amos 2:7) and the themes in Amos 2:8

suggest a religious setting for these same social abuses.[149] Her identity is in the middle,

just like the position of the poetic line between social and religious activities. Based on

these conflicting factors, I argue that "the maidservant" (הנערה) is most likely a young

woman sold off as a family debt payment to be a servant (cf. Exod 21:7–11; Amos

2:6),[150] whether working in the house of her new mistress (cf. Exod 2:5; 1 Sam 25:42) or

the fields of her master (cf. Ruth 2:8, 22–23; Prov 27:27). She is probably not married to

either of the men (Amos 2:7), thus it is more an issue of economic and sexual

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[147] Paul, *Amos*, 82–83; contra Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and His Father,'" 67–69.

[148] Garrett (*Amos*, 61) argues that the phrasing differs the usual idiom for sexual intercourse in order to indicate that "the men are going outside of their household—to a shrine—to have sexual relations with a woman." If he means "household" as a social unit, this is possible but not conclusive, since the usual idiom can convey intercourse with those inside the household unit (e.g., Gen 16:2; 29:21; 30:3; Judg 15:1) or with those outside of that unit (e.g., Gen 38:16, 18; Judg 16:1; 2 Sam 3:7). But Garrett may be on to something. The alternative verb in Amos 2:7 may convey that the men had to travel (הלך) to the location of sexual activity to "visit" the woman rather than engaging in this activity on their own property.

[149] Against the idea that a domestic slave is being exploited, Garrett (*Amos*, 61) notes the religious language that follows and concludes, "it seems that this is a cultic act and not simply men taking advantage of a household slave." The fronted syntax ("Both a man and his father"; Amos 2:7) is also more similar to Amos 2:8 with its clauses all using fronted word order, and this likewise could indicate that the abuse of the woman (הנערה) belongs more with the activities in Amos 2:8 than with the prior activities in Amos 2:6–7. But this is not conclusive.

[150] Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 115) elaborates: "The double oppression of women, both within and without of their household, is briefly apparent here. The young woman had been chosen (as the pledge for the loan [cf. Amos 2:6, 8]) because of her gender, but then abused, because of her vulnerability, within that very situation."

exploitation by her masters, not of incest or adultery.[151] Important is the depiction that

she is exploited in a religious context (Amos 2:7–8), or else the phrase "such that they

profane my holy name" does not make as much sense (Amos 2:7).[152] Although she is not

a prostitute employed by a sanctuary—or else a more specific term would have been

used—she is likely a domestic slave whose sexual use (read: abuse) is condoned by the

sanctuaries of Israel when her master and master's father bring her there for the

debauched celebrations described next in Amos 2:8.[153]

The religious abuse of the vulnerable is certainly behind the couplet about the

"clothes taken as collateral" and the "wine taken as fines" (Amos 2:8). The use of

pledged garments, apparently overnight, would violate the standard in Exod 22:25–26

(Eng. 26–27).[154] The creation rhetoric includes the fruit of the vine turned into a symbol

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[151] Leeb (*Away from the Father's House*, 149 n. 70) notes that other "נערות (such as Ruth and Esther) cease to be called by that term when their sexual activity is 'regularized' by marriage." Thus, the woman is not a concubine or secondary wife in Amos 2:7, explaining why she is not called an אמה or a שפחה. Exodus 21:7–11 concerns a woman sold to be an אמה ("maidservant") who is to be a wife for a man or his son, but this is not the term Amos uses for the woman. If neither man was married to the woman, but she was part of the household unit as a slave, then none of the Pentateuch prohibitions about incest or pre-marital rape exactly apply. Cf. Exod 22:15 (Eng. 16); Lev 18:6–18; 20:11–12; Deut 22:28–30; 23:1; Hamborg, *Still Selling*, 210–11.

[152] The phrase "my holy name" may be used "precisely because the prostitution takes place at a shrine," according to Garrett, *Amos*, 62. But Chaney ("Producing Peasant Poverty," 201) notes the phrase is not restricted to priestly literature alone, because Jer 34:16 mentions it in the context of unfair debt slavery. It could be a combination of both contexts if the woman is a debt slave who is used for sex in a sanctuary context, though not with any payment to her.

[153] Prostitution could apparently also be used in this way to support the temples materially when men or women made donations of money or food offerings, whether the sexual activity occurred outside or inside of the sanctuary setting (cf. Lev 19:29; 21:9; Deut 23:18–19 [Eng. 17–18]; Hos 4:14; Mic 1:7).

[154] Perhaps the clothes were blankets where the young woman mentioned above was violated. Without comment on Exodus, Garrett (*Amos*, 62) makes this link between Amos 2:7 and 2:8, suggesting that, if sexual activity is indeed taking place at the sanctuary, "the men do not want to foul their own clothes by using them as sheets on which to have sex, and thus they use the poor man's cloak. The accusation is again multi-faceted: it is cultic, sexual, and involves profound disrespect for people of a lower class." While I do not think the woman in Amos 2:7 is a prostitute employed by the sanctuary, it could well

of excess and religious debauchery within the sanctuary precincts ("beside every altar //

at the house of their God"). It is not that wine, clothes, or women are negative, of course.

It is the way they are treated by people with power that marks the activity as wrong (cf.

Amos 2:12). The phrase "their God" in Yahweh's speech may distance him from such

excess and abuse (Amos 2:8).[155] This need not be a critique of polytheism so much as a

critique of corrupt worship of Yahweh. The setting is probably Bethel.

Before consequences on Israel are threatened, the divine voice heightens the

condemnation by contrasting his past provisions for the Israelites with their blatant

hindrance of his closest followers (Amos 2:9–12). Yahweh first narrates destroying the

previous people ("the Amorites") of the land, comparing that people to "the height of

cedars" and "sturdy like the oaks" in their strength (Amos 2:9). The tree metaphors

continue: "I destroyed their fruit above and their root below," actions that correspond to

the cedars and oaks, respectively (Amos 2:9).[156] The creation rhetoric involves tree

metaphors to acknowledge the strength of the Amorites and the still greater power of

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be that the intercourse with their maidservant is portrayed as occurring on these cloaks in the sanctuary precincts during a feast lasting more than one day. It is at least odd for people to be "turning aside" or "stretching out" on garments near altars if they are not spending the evening or night there (Amos 2:8).

[155] The third person reference ("their God") is probably an example of "illeism," a rhetorical device in which a speaker makes a self-reference in the third person. See Elledge, *Use of the Third Person*. For a common or formulaic phrase like "the house of Yahweh/God," Elledge explains the third person as "an accommodation to what is already a fixed expression in the language of his [the speaker's] audience" (71). Nevertheless, "Yahweh's self-reference [still] creates the distancing associated with illeism which functions to highlight his identity from an external perspective" (71). The Israelites think he is "their" God, but he does not sanction their social and religious abuses.

[156] It is hard to know how far to take the nature imagery. If the fruit and roots refer to descendants and ancestors of the Amorite "tree," for example, then the destruction involves eliminating younger and older generations of Amorites. The point of the tree metaphors is not to describe the Amorites individually as giants or as strong, or the nouns and pronouns would be plural.

Yahweh. It is an ominous comparison, because the God who could destroy the mighty

people group preceding the Israelites could also destroy the people of Israel. Yahweh had

guided the Israelites from the "land" of Egypt through the "wilderness" and to the "land"

of the Amorites (Amos 2:10), appealing to the exodus, wilderness, and conquest

traditions while directly addressing Israel ("you") for the first time.[157] The creation

rhetoric demonstrates protection from Yahweh in every land where the Israelites found

themselves, whether land as a place of oppression, travel, or possession. The protection

the Israelites had received from more powerful nations stands in stark contrast to the

accusation of their exploitative society, "an inversion of aiding the powerless."[158]

Yahweh's protection also establishes that he had the authority to raise up some leaders

and devotees such as "prophets" and "Nazirites," as the rhetorical question at the end of

the verse implies (Amos 2:11). In reverse order to how he raised these figures up (i.e.,

prophets → Nazirites), Yahweh recounts how the Israelites "made the Nazirites drink

wine" and commanded the prophets not to proclaim their messages (Amos 2:12). Wine

features again in the criticisms, this time because it is the antithesis of sobriety that the

Nazirites were expected to maintain (cf. Num 6:1–21).

The consequence is debatable as to its translation, but Yahweh threatens, "I am

about to make cracks below you just as the wagon full of sheaves makes cracks" (Amos

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[157] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 205–7. Rhetorically, the third person for the Israelites distances Yahweh from his people at first (Amos 2:9), and then the shift to the second person heightens the emotional appeal (Amos 2:10–13).

[158] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 136.

2:13).[159] This agricultural metaphor is ironic on multiple levels. The irony is partly that a full wagon cart is "supposed to be an image of abundance, a pastoral version of the good life, yet here it becomes an image of torture."[160] The other irony is the poetic justice of such a judgment for Israel when its violations involve overabundance here and elsewhere in the book. All of the other nations have fire as their punishment, but the punishment on Israel is forewarned with a picture of plenty, the cracking alluding to an earthquake underneath them. It is as if their excess farming crops have strained the earth to its limit. As one commentator puts it, "just as an overloaded wagon cuts open the soft earth with its wheels, so God will cleave or open up the ground in judgment. The imagery describes an earthquake which will destroy the nation's fortresses and send its people into a panic-stricken state."[161] The shaking will be so overwhelming, the oracle forewarns, that no speed, strength, or battle training will be adequate to escape it (Amos 2:14–16).[162] The creation rhetoric contributes to the judgment themes by highlighting ironic reversals for a greedy nation.

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[159] See the translation notes above. If the verb means "presses down," then it could connect to the trampling option for Amos 2:7. See Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 142. Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 333–35) suggest that Yahweh will "creak" under the burden of Israel (cf. the Latin), but the subsequent fleeing of the people makes better sense if the verb has a more destructive meaning (so Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 68, who prefer the NIV with "crush you"). Regardless, it is an agricultural and ironic figure of speech.

[160] Ryken, "Amos," 344.

[161] Smith, Amos: A Commentary, 91.

[162] This could also be a picture of military defeat against an opposing army, in which case the connection to the heavy wagon would be weaker.

4.2.3 Character Formation

For the original audience behind the rhetorical audience often addressed in the text—the

Israelites before the fall of their kingdom—these speech acts would have had certain

intended effects, including on the moral character of these Israelites. In speech act theory,

this is explained by the idea that all speech acts have three dimensions, the act "'*of*

saying' (locution), '*in* saying' (illocution) and '*by* saying' (perlocution)."[163] *By* saying the

words of Amos 1:3—2:16 originally (to Israelites), such a sequence of speech acts would

have had the intended effects of threatening Israel, condemning Israel and other nations,

justifying Yahweh's judgment. The eighth-century Israelites would have listened in or

"overheard" the condemnations against the other nations, with various effects.

However, the focus of this study is on the final form of the text aimed at the

implied audience of the book *after* Israel had fallen, as Amos 9:13–15 suggests with its

themes of return and rebuilding. Those in Judah would have been this implied

audience.[164] For Judah, these oracles in Amos are now written *reports* of speech acts, and

often reports of reports ("And he said, ... 'Thus Yahweh said,'" etc.; Amos 1:2–3).

Furthermore, just as an Israelite audience may originally have listened in on the oral

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[163] Briggs, "Speech-Act Theory," 88.

[164] See especially the references to Judah and Jerusalem in Amos 1:1–2; 2:4–5; 6:1; 7:12; 9:11–15. As argued in §3, The Implied Audience and Historical Setting, I contend that the implied audience of the final form of Amos is found in Judah after the Assyrian devastation of Israel (post-722 BC) but before the Babylonian devastation of Judah (pre-586 BC), on the early end of this range during Hezekiah's reign in Judah (726–697 BC). There would be a mix of Israelite refugees within Judah during this period before Judah's own exile. My view is most similar to Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 63–65; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*; Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 282–86; Sweeney, "Dystopianization" It is not necessary to accept this exact historical setting to appreciate the creation rhetoric on a later audience, however. The rhetoric still retains much of the same force regardless of the historical date of its final form.

condemnations of the other nations,[165] Judah some decades later "overheard" the

condemnations of the nations, even of their own kingdom in the (recent) past (Amos 2:4–

5), rather than being directly addressed by the bulk of these speeches.[166] In terms of

speech-act considerations, this overhearing does not change the illocutionary forces (i.e.,

an act of threatening is still *presented* as that same act), but some of the perlocutionary

effects would be different or new for a later audience in Judah.[167] For example, the

condemnations might lose some of their directness, but not their authoritative

implications, for those in Judah after the fall of Israel.

For Judah, this series of condemnations would have multiple effects that could

shape moral character. At the broadest level, as Barton pointed out, the majority of the

oracles do not clearly mention special revelation (except Amos 2:4–5), and so the

condemnations may well appeal to a natural moral order that has been violated by each

nation.[168] In terms of character formation, this has the humbling result of putting all

nations on level ground morally, all equally guilty of violating the standards of which

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[165] See Adams, *The Performative*, 91. He cites Beuken, "Confession of God's Exclusivity," 346, who observes how Yahweh addresses the foreign nations in the book of Isaiah while "*Israel is listening*" in, such that Yahweh "has a message for her too" (emphasis original). In other words, there are two audiences addressed at the same time, "one on the stage, the nations, and one in the house, Israel" (346). What I have been calling the "literary" or "rhetorical" audience (Israel) corresponds to the stage audience in Beuken's metaphor, while the "implied audience" (Judah) corresponds to the in-house audience.

[166] Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, 157) reminds us, "The reader of the book is overhearing discourse literally designed for others." But Patrick does not attempt a final form reading of Amos, and he denies the applicability of the messages in most of the book to later audiences. He is correct that we are not dealing with the prophet Amos directly but with what Möller would call the "presentation" of a "prophet in debate." Cf. Möller, *Prophet in Debate*.

[167] See Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*, 77. He notes that the illocutionary function of "an overheard illocution" is much the same as the original speech act, but the perlocutionary effects can be muted and different for the audience that overhears.

[168] Barton, "Natural Law"

they were aware. This is particularly powerful for Judah: the atrocities of the foreign

nations and the devastation of at least some of these nations by larger empires were

confirmed memories for the Judahites now. This bolstered the authority of the text of

Amos and warned them of future judgment if they rejected the natural and supernatural

revelation they had from Yahweh.[169] Likewise, if Israel could be devastated, so too could

Judah. True, Judah does not receive the longer and climactic censure that their northern

neighbor does, but any sense of moral superiority is negated by the fact that Judah's

punishment is the same fire threatened against the non-Hebrew nations. Also, Judah

would be liable to the same criticisms if it practiced any of the oppressive things Israel

had practiced (Amos 2:6–8), including censoring prophetic messages (Amos 2:12). There

may have been some level of moral indignation as the non-Judahite nations were

mentioned, but this anger would be humbled when the rhetoric turned to Judah. If the

roaring in the opening (Amos 1:2) was ambiguous at first, the oracles quickly made it

clear to Judah that they as well had been in danger of judgment: "therefore never send to

know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."[170] At the broadest level, then, character

formation takes place via a moral imagination directed to acknowledge Yahweh's justice

in threatening fitting punishments for all nations alike, for all violated the created order

through violence or oppression, at minimum. Judah even violated special revelation

(Amos 2:4–5), to use our Western dichotomies between natural and special revelation. In

the time of Hezekiah, violating the "instruction" and "regulations" of Yahweh takes on

[169] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 170.
[170] Donne, *Devotions*, 98, italics removed.

more specific manifestations (Amos 2:4), but first there are other aspects of cruelty in the text that would shape the moral imagination of Judah.

At a more specific level, the elements of rhetoric involving creation (i.e., the non-human cosmos) also play a decisive role in Amos 1–2 as descriptions of the brutal violations. As discussed earlier, the creation imagery includes the "iron sledges" of the Aramean military (Amos 1:3), the Edomite anger that "tore continually" and "kept watch perpetually" like a beast (Amos 1:11), the ferocity by the Ammonite soldiers who "shredded the pregnant of the Gilead region" (Amos 1:13), and those in Israel "who sniff (for food) on the dust of the land" like jackals or wild donkeys searching for food at "the head of poor people" (Amos 2:7; cf. Jer 2:24; 14:6).[171] The creation rhetoric portrays not just cruel practices but moral dispositions that are inhumane as well. It is not that animal metaphors or all violence inherently refer to something as morally evil or unjustified in Amos. After all, Yahweh is presented as a violent Lion (Amos 1:2). Nevertheless, these harsh verbs from the world of agriculture and animals associate dispositions of cruelty or brutality with the actions of the nations, focusing Judah on what moral dispositions are wrong.[172] In various ways, the nations treated other humans as subhuman—as grain

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[171] Garrett (*Amos*, 58–59) suggests "dogs" but does not point to Jer 14:6, where the verb שאף is used of wild donkeys (פרא) whose "panting" or "sniffing" is comparable to that of "jackals" (תן). See also Job 24, which pictures the exploitation of the poor from both angles, including the poor as wild animals on the margins (i.e., the wilderness) of their community.

[172] Ignoring political treaties (Amos 1:9), ethnic ties (Amos 1:11), and sexual boundaries (Amos 2:7) also make the actions cruel or exploitative, but these details are not part of the creation rhetoric shaping moral character.

the Davidic kingdom, living without fear of oppression from the wicked (2 Sam 7:10),[176]

every person able to sit securely "under their own vine and under their own fig tree" as in

the time of Solomon (1 Kgs 4:25).[177] All of the violations by Israel in Amos 2:6–8 strike

against ideals of protection for the poor and vulnerable, ultimately going back to the use

of the land and the poorest people who have no margin of surplus, even if there is no

specific law in the Pentateuch that was being cited. Ethical ideals from a combination of

sources are likely in the background. Some of these ideals came from common customs

in the ancient Near East ("justice and righteousness"; cf. Ps 72; Jer 21:11–12; 22:1–5),[178]

others from more specific practices and texts that reflect covenant standards between God

and the Hebrew people. Still others came from observing the patterns of life and death in

the natural world.[179] Perhaps the common denominator is "food security" or "food

justice" in most of Amos.[180] These are modern terms about access and fairness, but in

Amos the disparities of food access and consumption are a frequent concern. Even if the

moral vision for justice in Amos is not that every individual have *ownership* of land (e.g.,

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[176] Compare other positive planting imagery in Exod 15:17; Ps 80:9 (Eng. 8); Isa 5:2; 60:21; Jer 24:6; 31:27–28; 32:41; 42:10; Ezek 37:25; Hos 2:25. There is also negative uprooting imagery: Deut 29:27; 1 Kgs 14:15; Jer 12:14; 2 Chr 7:20. Cf. Pantoja, *Metaphor of the Divine Planter*. The ideal of living in safety from military or animal threats appears several times: Lev 25:18–19; 26:6; Deut 12:10; 33:28; 1 Kgs 4:25; 1 Chr 17:9; 22:9; Isa 35:9; 60:18; 65:25; Jer 23:6; 30:10; 33:16; Ezek 28:26; 34:25; 39:26; Hos 2:18; Zeph 3:13; Zech 3:10.

[177] Cf. 2 Kgs 18:31 // Isa 36:16; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10.

[178] Carroll R. ("Failing the Vulnerable," 35) comments: "It was the duty of Israel's kings to rule according to this vision" of justice.

[179] See Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung*; Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation"; Knierim, "Cosmos and History"

[180] "Food security" means "reliable access to food" (Ayres, *Good Food*, 104), while "food justice" means, more extensively, "ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly" (Gottlieb and Joshi, *Food Justice*, 6).

"under their own vine and fig tree"; Mic 4:4), there seems to be an expectation that every

person should have an adequate *share* in the land, able to live from its agricultural

products without being exploited, even if they did not own a farm themselves. Unlike

Micah and Isaiah (cf. Isa 5:8–10; Mic 2:1–5, 9), Amos does not mention the exploitation

of land ownership by the wealthy. Amos mentions disparities of food and debt.[181] In

terms of character formation, then, the violations are portrayed to direct the Judahites

away from inhumane, unfaithful, or exploitative practices, dispositions, and motivations

in their own society. It was supposed to remind them that equitable food access and

justice were important as part of their covenant with Yahweh.

Yet character formation also takes place through specific creation elements that

serve as the literal means and figurative metaphors of judgment on each nation in Amos

1–2. The "fire" threatened on seven of the eight nations, for example, is probably more

than a symbolic threat, despite the stereotypical language. It is literal fire that is in view,

most likely through an enemy army torching the cities in question. The implication of the

"fire" that will "consume" the "citadels" is that no city is secure against Yahweh's

judgment (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5).[182] The moral imagination of the Judahites is

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[181] Cf. Kessler, "Die soziale Botschaft," 217–23. Of course, food and debt are nearly always related to land usage. See Knierim, "Food, Land and Justice"; Coomber, "Debt as Weapon"; Chaney, "Producing Peasant Poverty"; Paczári, "'He Looked for Justice,'" 1–5. Deuteronomy is a book likewise concerned with food security.

[182] Carroll R. ("Visions of Horror, Visions of Hope," 5) explains that capital cities in particular "would have had an interior enclosure or citadel, inside of which would have been located the palace and/or government buildings, a temple, and the royal (quarters. The gate to the city was [also] fortified, as it had a defensive role along with being an important setting for business transactions and legal decisions." The plural "citadels" in Amos likely refers to these fortified areas of each city, from the gate(s) to the royal and religious buildings closer to the center of the city.

presented with a cosmos where human violations cannot be committed with impunity. There is no safe citadel that can grant immunity from divine judgment. Yahweh uses creation elements as a "megaphone" of pain to get the attention of each guilty nation.[183] Such a presentation of threatened pain evokes humility and reverence for Yahweh who has already judged some of the foreign nations bordering those in Judah.

The idea of divine judgment brings up several ethical questions about the character of Yahweh and the violence that such retribution involves. These questions deserve a short excursus here. Even though the issue of divine violence is difficult, the theme is found throughout the Bible and cannot be explained away as a uniquely "Old Testament" problem. Some scholars attempt to distance the God of the New Testament from the God of the Old Testament, arguing that divine judgment in history is not justified if it involves physical violence.[184] Carroll R. argues that it is too simplistic to object to God's violence if the objection is not grounded in a close reading of the texts or if the objection is unrealistic about "the fact that humanity lives in a world of cruel tragedies largely of its own making and that this is the ugly and unfair world within which God acts."[185] He suggests four considerations that can help understand Yahweh's character and actions as portrayed in Amos and elsewhere.

First, background studies of the ancient world can help us see that divine judgment is framed by many cultures in stereotypical, formulaic, hyperbolic, and emotive

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[183] Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 91.

[184] For example, Seibert, *Disturbing Divine Behavior*; Seibert, *Violence of Scripture*.

[185] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 116.

language.[186] In this section of Amos, the repetitive vocabulary and the vague methods

and timing of judgment suggest that these oracles are not necessarily "precise snapshots"

of Yahweh's decrees nor "precise predictions of what was going to happen decades later"

when Assyria attacked most of these nations. Instead, the oracles are stereotypical

expressions that Yahweh would eventually judge the guilty nations.[187]

Second, Carroll R. makes the important point that Amos, like much of the Bible,

presents divine violence as a justified, fitting response to human violence, a response

designed to stop the injustice in question.[188] This means that divine violence is not

random and arbitrary but purposeful and explainable based on various reasons ("because

of three violations," etc.). It is impartial judgment in that Yahweh does not play favorites

when it comes to condemning the violence between nations and within nations, including

the violations by Judah and Israel.[189] Judgment furthermore fits the violations, especially

with Yahweh using "the violence endemic to humankind" to turn the nations of Amos 1–

2 "over to the fruit of their pitiless aspirations and commitments."[190] Military cruelty is

met with fire wielded by military cruelty.[191] This is one of the ways that Yahweh has

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[186] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 119–20.

[187] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 120. These contextual considerations caution us against reading the text in an overly literal way, but this alone "does not solve the moral dilemma."

[188] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 120–21.

[189] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 121. Violence against his own people raises other questions, but it shows that Yahweh's anger is "not a nationalistic reflex" projected only onto other nations (121).

[190] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 121. The refrain "I will not turn it back" (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) may indeed affirm some consequences of poetic justice already set in motion.

[191] This pattern reminds me of the explanations that "all who take up a sword, by a sword they will perish" (Matt 26:52) and "judgment is merciless for one who does not practice mercy" (James 2:13).

built consequences corresponding to evil into the cosmos.[192] When human violence sometimes counts as divine judgment against other human violence, we cannot blame Yahweh directly for much of the fallout, because in such cases people are suffering from the same mechanisms of violence and exploitation that they themselves created, used, or from which they benefited.[193] Now, any judgment through human or ecological violence is "messy," with a potential for excessive damage affecting all in a given society, even though not all were equally involved in the violence and exploitation of their own nation.[194] It would be tidier and fairer if only the rulers and powerful oppressors suffered the consequences of their violence, and some scholars try to read Amos that way,[195] but "war and earthquakes are never so discriminating."[196] Carroll R. argues that it is more realistic to acknowledge multiple levels of complicity such that "all Israel at some level is sinful, even as its leaders commit transgressions that the prophets [in their books] explicitly denounce."[197] Throughout the Old Testament, "entire nations are judged, even

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[192] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 122–23. With some disagreements of emphasis, he approvingly cites Fretheim, "Divine Judgment"; Fretheim, "Theological Reflections"; Fretheim, "I Was Only a Little Angry"; Fretheim, "God and Violence"; Fretheim, *God and World*, 158–65. Fretheim focuses on the act-consequence dynamic built into the cosmos.

[193] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 123.

[194] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 123.

[195] Carroll R. ("'I Will Send Fire,'" 123–24) mentions Reimer, *Richtet auf das Recht*, 16–17, 22–27; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 139–41, who resolve the tension by reading the widescale judgment as rhetorical, or Coote, *Amos*; Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous*, who attribute the tension to editors.

[196] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 124.

[197] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 124. Carroll R. gives three examples from modern history and rightly points out that everyone in each society is complicit at some level in the wrongs committed by their leaders or country. There are injustices ingrained in every culture's customs, laws, and religious institutions that often support injustices such as racism or genocide. Yes, those in leadership and power are most responsible for the crimes of their nation and the resulting suffering, even though blame cannot be limited to such leaders alone (124–125).

as specific persons and groups are censured for their greater blame," and the same is true in the book of Amos.[198]

Third, judgment comes out of the caring *pathos* of Yahweh. Rather than relishing punishing people, Yahweh's mercy and wrath are intertwined in his actions and should not be separated or pitted against each other as incompatible.[199] Yahweh is "invested in justice" and thus "deeply cares both for the victims of injustice and for the people who languish under judgment. . . . Punishment pains God, because of his personal relationships with his people, humanity, and creation."[200] Later in Amos this sorrow over and patience with the condemned comes out more clearly,[201] but even in the oracles of Amos 1–2 there is evidence of "divine tolerance": the repeated formula "because of three violations . . . even because of four" acts to "convey a pattern of sin, in which one transgression at last forces God to send judgment. Once again, there is forbearance, even toward peoples who do not know Yahweh."[202] This consideration frames the "fire" and earthquake imagery as judgment that only came after a cumulative amount of human violence had been reached.

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[198] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 125.

[199] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 125–27. See Heschel, *The Prophets*; Fretheim, *Suffering of God*; Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 267–313. A comparison of these three scholars concerning divine *pathos* can be found in Schlimm, "Different Perspectives on Divine Pathos."

[200] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 127. Cf. Isa 16:9–11; Jer 9:1, 10, 17–24; 48:29–33; Hos 11.

[201] See Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 127–28. Cf. Amos 5:1–3 and the "woe" oracles of Amos 5:18; 6:1, which arguably express sincere sorrow over the doom of the complacent. See Amos 4:6–11 for Yahweh's patient disciplinary measures giving opportunity for the Israelites to avoid greater disasters. See Amos 7:3, 6 for Yahweh's self-restraint and willingness to cancel or modify his punitive plans.

[202] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 128.

Fourth and finally, Carroll R. points out that Amos as a book has reversals of ideology that help answer problems about justice and violence. Amos concludes with a future vision of flourishing that is the reverse of suffering and injustice (Amos 9:11–15), and Amos criticizes the religious institutions and ideology that had supported injustice in Israel.[203] While not minimizing the suffering that divine judgment would bring, this first point about the future communicates that Yahweh's final intent is not violence and death but life, peace, and justice for all. Renewal is the ultimate aim, even if judgment is the pathway through which the world must pass to experience renewal.[204] The second point is important for understanding the illusions of triumphalism supported by each nation's religious institutions, especially ancient Israel's: any ideology affirming unconditional divine favor and blessing on human enrichment and political power is a false comfort and a self-serving religion, and it is right that such ideology be exposed as a lie about the reality of human violence and about Yahweh who holds humans accountable for such violent self-advancement.[205] For any solid hope to be valid, false hopes must be dashed. Of course, it is always "easier to worship a benevolent deity" who never challenges or holds individuals and nations to account.[206] A comfortable and more palatable "god" is not the God of the Old Testament or the New Testament,[207] however, and neither is such

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[203] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 128–32.

[204] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 129–30.

[205] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 130–32.

[206] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 131.

[207] There is an expectation in the New Testament that final justice, making the world right, will involve divine violence against those who have harmed others without repenting. Therefore, only when the picture of God presented there is tamed or rejected can someone strongly contrast the Father or Messiah of the New Testament with Yahweh of the Old Testament as two different deities.

a powerless god satisfying in light of the injustices around the world. Carroll R. rightly

concludes:

> [We] must be wary of redefining Yahweh by eliminating what we do not like in
> the secure settings of much of our reflections. I am not sure if efforts to propose a
> nice God who does not judge forcefully would make much sense on the streets of
> Aleppo in the midst of the ongoing horrors in Syria today or in the mountains of
> Guatemala during the 36 years of our civil war, or whether the cries for justice—
> and for judgment!—during the Civil Rights Movement or in the days of apartheid
> in South Africa would accept a sanitized, benevolent version of Yahweh, who will
> not punish *in history*. Desperate cries for justice would not allow it.[208]

These four considerations about the cultural context, the nature of judgment, the *pathos*

of God, and the reversals in Amos can address several objections we often have today

about divine violence. With these considerations in mind, we can now return to the

character formation that the oracles against the nations encourage in Amos 1–2.

The "fire" on the first seven nations not only cultivates reverence in the audience,

as explained before the excursus, but it also encourages Judah to acknowledge Yahweh's

justice in his judgment. Each oracle is a "theodicy" in that justifying sense of the word.

Other natural elements as literal and figurative descriptions of judgment likewise function

in the same way to give Judah a sense of divine justice. More literal is the non-human

"storm on a day of tempest" that accompanies the judgment against the Ammonites who

acted in a non-human way against the Gilead region (Amos 1:14). In the oracle against

Israel, the metaphorical portrayals of divine judgment compare the Amorite people to

trees in their national size and strength (Amos 2:9), showing how Yahweh used his power

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[208] Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire,'" 132.

to destroy the powerful and guide the powerless Israelites to a land of their own (Amos 2:10). This involved literal landmarks such as "the land of Egypt," "the wilderness" and "the land of the Amorites" (Amos 2:10), and both the metaphors and the literal references point to Yahweh's just and benevolent use of power. This justifies him and condemns the Israelites as Judah overhears (Amos 2:12). The judgment on Israel is not fire as on the other nations, but an earthquake (Amos 2:13): "So look, I am about to make cracks below you just as the wagon full of sheaves makes cracks." There is poetic justice in this picture of a loaded wagon, considering the excesses and overindulgence of the powerful (Amos 2:6–8, 12). Judah would find this case for divine justice convincing and effective, especially after the literal earthquake (Amos 1:1) and the downfall of Israel. Based on archaeological evidence and sediment core samples, this intense earthquake of the eighth century had its epicenter in the northern Levant (or Israel), as the map above indicates impressionistically (see fig. 4).[209] Based on comparative evidence of modern earthquakes with epicenters in Israel close to that of the Amos earthquake, Roberts explains the relative effects and theological import of this quake for each Hebrew kingdom:

> Judah would have felt vibrations akin to a large train passing close to a house. Certainly some structures would have been damaged or even collapsed but the damage was worst and most severe throughout Israel, especially north of the Carmel Ridge. This has strong bearing on how the quake would have been perceived not only as a theological judgment, but even stronger, as a theological

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[209] Austin et al., "Amos's Earthquake"; Austin, "Scientific and Scriptural"; Roberts, "Terra Terror," 1, 47, 157–58; Zwickel, "Amos 1,1"; Roberts, "Eighth-Century," 308. There were potentially two earthquakes during this century (Roberts, "Eighth-Century," 308), but the larger of the two originated in the north, probably along the Dead Sea Transform Fault under the Beqa' Valley or a place just north of the Sea of Galilee (Kinnereth; see fig. 4), given that structural damage decreases the farther away from Galilee the ancient sites lie within Israel and Judah.

judgment on Israel, which God decimated while largely sparing Judah. Understanding this point, in my view, helps shed light on why a herdsman from Tekoa without any official link to the temple or palace would become associated with a prophetic book that bears his name. . . . In a curious twist of irony, while Judah stood in the shadows of its more sophisticated neighbor to the north, Israel effectively sat on a ticking seismic time bomb, that when it ruptured, venerated a prophet and decimated a kingdom.[210]

The creation rhetoric of this section of the book (Amos 1:3—2:16) not only shows certain moral desires, dispositions, and practices to avoid but also shapes Judah's sense of what their God's character is like. Injustice could look as unnatural as the inhumane practices of nations surrounding Judah. Justice addressing these violations could take the form of fire set by an army or earthquake cracks comparable to cracks under a heavy wagon. In hearing the text, Judah had another chance to be humane, humble, and reverent for the king of creation. In hearing the text, they had another chance to acknowledge the justice of Yahweh and the guilt of their international neighbors and their own people in the past. They had another chance for their moral imagination to see a certain ethos in the cosmos, even if this ethos was unsettling. The rest of the book continues to combine ethical and creation rhetoric in this way.

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[210] Roberts, "Terra Terror," 250. According to Roberts ("Terra Terror," 1), the earthquake was at least magnitude 7.0 on the Richter Scale.

CHAPTER 5: CREATION AND CHARACTER IN AMOS 3–4

In this chapter I will examine the creation rhetoric and character formation in Amos 3–4 one major discourse unit or section at a time. This happens to correspond to Amos 3 and then Amos 4, respectively. Amos 3 focuses on defending the message of judgment using rhetorical questions and other strategies, while Amos 4 focuses on liturgies of various kinds for the same purpose of justifying the judgment on the northern kingdom.

5.1 The Message and the Messenger of Punishment (Amos 3)

More than other sections of the book, Amos 3 concerns itself with defending the "message" or word (דבר) of punishment (פקד) and the messenger who brings it.

5.1.1 Translation

שמעו את הדבר הזה אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בני ישראל על כל המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים לאמר	3:1	"Hear this message that Yahweh sent concerning you, Israelites—'concerning the whole clan that I brought up from the land of Egypt':
רק אתכם ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה על כן אפקד עליכם את כל עונתיכם	3:2	'Only you[1] have I known out of all the clans of the soil. Due to this,[2] I will assign on you all your guilt!'
הילכו שנים יחדו בלתי אם נועדו	3:3	Do two travel together if they did not arrange[3] it?
הישאג אריה ביער וטרף אין לו היתן כפיר קולו ממענתו בלתי אם לכד	3:4	Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no torn-prey[4]? Does a young lion[5] project its voice from its lair if it has not captured (anything)?

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[1] The phrase is fronted for emphasis on the rhetorical audience. See Amos 1:2.

[2] The phrase על כן can be translated "therefore," but I am distinguishing it from the more common "therefore" (לכן) in the book (i.e., Amos 3:11; 4:12, 13; 5:11, 16; 6:7; 7:17).

[3] See Paul, *Amos*, 109–10. Contrast Garrett, *Amos*, 83, who sees it as more than an encounter.

[4] This translation shows the use of the noun matching the verb in Amos 1:11 (טרף, "tore").

[5] For a defense of this translation see Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 304–10.

התפל צפור על פח⁶ הארץ ומוקש אין
לה
היעלה פח מן האדמה ולכוד לא ילכוד

3:5 Does a bird swoop on[7] a trap of the land when it has no bait?
Does a trap come up from the soil when it doesn't actually capture (anything)?

אם יתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו
אם תהיה רעה בעיר ויהוה לא עשה

3:6 Is[8] a bugle blown in a city when people don't tremble?
Does disaster happen in a city when Yahweh hasn't done it?

כי לא יעשה אדני יהוה דבר כי אם גלה
סודו אל עבדיו הנביאים

3:7 (for the Lord Yahweh does not do something unless he has revealed his plan to his servants the prophets)

אריה שאג⁹
מי לא יירא
אדני יהוה דבר
מי לא ינבא

3:8 A Lion[10] has roared!
Who doesn't fear?
The Lord Yahweh has sent a message!
Who doesn't prophesy?"

השמיעו על ארמנות באשדוד¹¹ ועל
ארמנות בארץ מצרים ואמרו
האספו על הרי¹² שמרון וראו מהומת
רבות בתוכה ועשוקים¹³ בקרבה

3:9 "'Make it heard on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt, and say,
"Gather on the mountains of Samaria and see great disturbances within it and exploitative acts[14] in its midst!"

ולא ידעו עשות נכחה¹⁵ נאם יהוה
האוצרים חמס ושד בארמנותיהם

3:10 And they do not know how to act straightforwardly[16] (speech of Yahweh), the ones who treasure up violence and ruin in their citadels."'

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[6] Only the OG omits this term. See discussion in Bons, "Textual Criticism."

[7] This phrase means "swoop down upon" rather than "fall into," as noted by Paul, *Amos*, 110–11. The term מוקש at the end of the line means "bait" here rather than "snare" or "fowler" (111).

[8] The conjunction this translates can either function here to introduce interrogative clauses or alternative interrogatives. See Arnold-Choi §4.3.2(c), (g). The former is more likely.

[9] The Syriac and Aramaic support the MT, while the OG, Aquila, Symmachus, and the Latin reflect "*will* utter/roar," either from a text that had ישאג or due to assimilating שאג to the prefix forms later in this line and in Amos 3:4. The MT aligns better with relevant verbs in Amos 3:6–7 in the rhetoric.

[10] This subject and the parallel one are emphasized due to fronted word order. See Amos 1:2.

[11] See Eidevall (*Amos*, 130–32; cf. Paul, *Amos*, 115–17), who explains why "Ashdod" fits better than the reading "Assyria" in the OG does (contra, e.g., Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 406).

[12] The Latin, Aramaic, and Qumran (4QXII^c = 4Q78) support the MT ("mountains"), while the OG and Syriac have a singular "mountain" of Samaria, assimilating to the singular form in Amos 4:1; 6:1.

[13] The OG, Latin, and Syriac support the MT consonants or meaning of "oppression" for this form, whereas the Aramaic reads it as an active participle ("oppressors"). As *BHQ* also notes, the MT can be read as a passive participle ("oppressed people") or as an abstract noun ("oppressive acts, oppression"). I favor the abstract noun due to the parallel with the plural noun "disturbances." Cf. Eccl 4:1.

[14] Or "oppressive things/acts." I am aiming for a fresh translation.

[15] The versions struggled with the phrase עשות נכחה. Some Greek versions (Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion) and the Latin support the MT, while the OG had a different vocalization to render ἃ ἔσται ἐναντίον αὐτῆς ("[it did not know] what things would be in front of it"). The Syriac derived the second term from what would be יכה ("be acquitted"), and the Aramaic interpreted theologically ("to do the teaching/law").

[16] Or "know how to do things up front [i.e., straightforwardly, properly]," or "they are not familiar with doing right [i.e., acting uprightly]."

לכן כה אמר אדני יהוה 3:11   "Therefore, thus the Lord Yahweh said:
צר[17] יסבב[18] הארץ   'An enemy will surround the land,
והורד[19] ממך עזך   and he will pull down from you[20] your stronghold[21],
ונבזו ארמנותיך   and your citadels will be plundered.'"
כה אמר יהוה 3:12   "Thus Yahweh said:
כאשר יציל הרעה מפי הארי שתי   'Just as the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two
כרעים או בדל אזן   limbs or a piece of an ear,
כן ינצלו בני ישראל הישבים בשמרון   so the Israelites who reside in Samaria will be rescued—in
בפאת[22] מטה ובד משק[23] ערש[24]   the form of[25] a corner[26] of a bed and part from a leg of a couch!'"

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[17] Symmachus, the Syriac, and the Aramaic support the MT consonants but understand them as "distress" (like the similar term צרה), while the OG mistakes the consonants for "Tyre" and the Latin is loose or vocalizes differently, like Theodotion and the Aramaic.

[18] The OG and Symmachus support the MT, while the Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic have a verbal form "surround(ed)" (סבב). Eidevall (*Amos*, 130) emends with the Latin and Syriac, arguing that the MT could have confused a ו instead of י at the start (יסבב/וסביב vs. יסובב/וסביב). Cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 327–28; Paul, *Amos*, 118. I agree and emend to a *polel* verb, יְסֹבֵב ("he will surround").

[19] Only the OG supports the MT's active sense (וְהוֹרִד, "and he [an enemy] will pull down"), while the Latin, Syriac, and possibly Aramaic read the verb as a passive (וְהוּרַד, "and [your strength] will be pulled down"). Some Medieval Hebrews manuscripts support the passive, while more have the ambiguous והרד. The MT can stand as the harder reading, more strongly connected to the previous words about an enemy, though not as similar to the parallel verb in the passive. See Paul, *Amos*, 118.

[20] The prepositional phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order. See Amos 1:3.

[21] Or "your strength," meaning the city wall securing Samaria. See my translation of the (re-vocalized) term in Amos 5:9 as "stronghold." Cf. Pss 28:7, 8; 46:2; 59:10, 18; Prov 14:26; 21:22.

[22] *BHQ* documents how the versions diverge for this word and the following one, but none is likely to be better than the MT, which is often supported by the Latin and certain Greek versions.

[23] The other ancient versions took this to contain a place name ("Damascus") and consequently struggled with the following word (*BHQ*). The MT vocalizes the form in question (ובדמשק) as a conjunction and an unattested lexeme (דְמֶשֶׁק). There are some unlikely emendations (e.g., Pinker, "Observations ... Part II," 90; Zalcman, "Laying") and understandings of the syntax (e.g., Hayes, *Amos*, 134–35; Niehaus, "Amos," 386; Garrett, *Amos*, 98–100). However, a convincing emendation is "and part from the leg of a couch" (וּבַד מֵשׁק עָרֶשׂ), which rearranges only the word division and vocalization of the form in question (Rabinowitz, "Crux"). Rabinowitz ("Crux," 230) argues that this emendation is superior to an elliptical text with "Damascus" or an anachronistic reading of "damask" fabric (cf. more reasons against "Damascus/damask" in Moeller, "Ambiguity," 32–33; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 191–92; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 123; Paul, *Amos*, 121–22). Several agree with the proposal by Rabinowitz (Moeller, "Ambiguity," 34; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 116, 123; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 240–42; Hadjiev, "Context as Means," 656–64; Eidevall, *Amos*, 131). Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 196) and Paul (*Amos*, 121) reject Rabinowitz's proposal because שוק does not ever refer to furniture elsewhere but to a living creature's thigh, but if this is a metaphorical use to match the "limbs" of the sheep earlier (Amos 3:12), then there is no substantial objection (Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 409; Hadjiev, "Context as Means," 659). Moeller ("Ambiguity," 34) notes that the emendation allows for better parallelism. The term בד likewise plays on בדל, and so the order of furniture is chiastic to the order of the carcass of the sheep (A: limbs, B: ear, B': corner, A': leg), per Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 409–10.

[24] In starting a new paragraph after this word, I follow Cairo Codex of the Prophets, which has a closed paragraph mark (ס) here, not just a verse ending mark as the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices do.

שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב נאם אדני 3:13	"'Hear and testify[28] against the house of Jacob (speech of
יהוה אלהי הצבאות[27]	the Lord Yahweh, the God of the cosmic armies[29]):
כי ביום פקדי פשעי ישראל עליו 3:14	that in the day I assign (the punishments of) the violations[30]
ופקדתי על מזבחות בית אל	by Israel on it, I will assign (them) on the altars of Bethel,
ונגדעו קרנות המזבח ונפלו לארץ	and the altar's horns will be chopped and fall to the land.
והכיתי[31] בית החרף על בית הקיץ 3:15	And I'll cut off the winter house plus[32] the summer house,
ואבדו בתי השן	and the houses of the ivory (décor) will perish,
וספו בתים רבים נאם יהוה	and the great[33] houses will end[34].' (speech of Yahweh)"

5.1.2 Creation Rhetoric

This section of Amos (Amos 3) contains several smaller parts with different genres. In

traditional categories, there is an oracle of judgment (Amos 3:1–2), a disputation (Amos

3:3–8), an oracle of doom (Amos 3:9–11), a proclamation of the future (Amos 3:12), and

a proclamation of disaster (Amos 3:13–15).[35] Some argue for one or two chiastic

structures for the entire section,[36] but a more defensible claim is that it begins and ends

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[25] I am not emending the preposition (to כ) but interpreting it as a ב of "identity" or *beth essentiae* (cf. *IBHS* 11.2.5.e; *BHRG 2* §39.6.3.f; Rabinowitz, "Crux," 229). Cf. Smith (*Amos*, 169): "The sheep will be recovered in the form of a leg or part of an ear while the Israelites will be recovered in the form of a corner of a couch or a piece of the leg of a bed." Cf. Num 18:10, 26; Num 26:53; 34:2; 36:2; Deut 10:22; 28:62; Josh 13:6, 7; 23:4; Neh 5:15; Ezek 45:1; 46:16; 47:14, 22; Pss 35:2; 37:20; 78:55.

[26] See Paul, *Amos*, 120–21 for a translation that indicates the "corner" at the head of the bed.

[27] All extant versions support this term, though the extra titles in the Syriac can be ignored.

[28] Or "warn" instead of "testify against," but the legal trial language suggests the latter.

[29] I defend this translation later in the discussion.

[30] Traditionally "transgressions," which I take to equate to my translation. See Amos 1:3—2:16.

[31] See *BHQ* for the confusion of the OG and Aquila here, the loose Syriac rendering, and the divergent ways that the OG read words in the last line of the verse.

[32] It is rare for the preposition על to mean "(along) with" (see Exod 35:22; Jer 3:18; maybe Num 18:2, 4; Esth 9:27; Isa 14:1; 56:6; Dan 11:34) or "besides, in addition to" (see Gen 28:9; 1 Sam 12:19). Cf. *IBHS* §11.2.13.d; *BHRG 1*, 292, §39.19.3. I use "plus" to convey the second of these likely options. See also the similar usage in the Sefire inscription in Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 411.

[33] The term could also mean "many (houses)," as the versions read it, but the preceding context suggests that it is the luxurious nature and size of the houses that is in view. So Paul, *Amos*, 126–27.

[34] Like Eidevall (*Amos*, 131), I derive the verb from סוף ("to come to an end") rather than from ספה ("to sweep away"). The vocalization does not change.

[35] Melugin, "Formation," 378–79. Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 221 n. 21) comments that the literary genres would be effective together and should not be reduced to one single genre for the section.

[36] One: Dorsey, "Literary Architecture," 310–11; two: Wendland, "'Word of the Lord,'" 11–12.

with a literary envelope of the key words שמעו ("Hear!") and פקד ("assign [guilt or punishment]") in Amos 3:1–2 and Amos 3:13–15, providing some editorial unity to the section.[37] This inclusio suggests that the "primary aim" of the section is "to convince the Israelites that Yahweh has indeed resolved to punish them for their sins."[38]

To return to the beginning, then, the section opens with a directive ("Hear this message!") addressed to the Israelites, and the speaking voice shifts from Amos to Yahweh in the first person speaking of "the whole clan that I brought up from the land of Egypt" (Amos 3:1). Then Yahweh asserts an exclusive relationship ("Only you") with this clan "out of all the clans of the soil" (Amos 3:2), recalling the promise of national blessing and its global effects from the time of their ancestors (Gen 12:3; 28:14). The expected consequence of this exclusive relationship would be protection and rescue from the worst of the disasters threatened earlier. Instead, the consequence is divine punishment (Amos 3:2), surprisingly enough![39] Rather than increased protection Israel has increased accountability for its wrongs. The creation rhetoric includes the reference to "the land [ארץ] of Egypt" and "the clans of the soil [אדמה]" (Amos 3:1–2). Although "land" is found in a common expression, it nevertheless refers to the particular place

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[37] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 218–22, 244–47. This is more defensible, given the risks of finding "chiasmus in ubiquity" (see Boda, "Chiasmus in Ubiquity"). See also Bulkeley, "Cohesion," who finds all of Amos 3 to be unified by the theme of prophetic messages. By editorial unity, I follow Möller ("'Hear This Word,'" 508; *Prophet in Debate*, 246) in viewing this chapter and the book as a whole as "edited collections of oracles (taken perhaps from different speeches) as well as abstracts or summaries of prophetic discourses." Therefore, "what we have are not the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet Amos but his *ipsissima vox*, that is, a collection of material that captures Amos's original message while presenting it in a new way" (*Prophet in Debate*, 246–47).

[38] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 222.

[39] Gitay ("A Study," 300) notes that the surprise element elicits curiosity and attention.

from which Yahweh brought the Israelite people, supporting the sovereign authority and

commitment of Yahweh (cf. Amos 2:10). The "land" (ארץ) as a term has different

nuances in Amos, as is true of the rest of the Old Testament, but here it refers to political

territory.[40] The "soil" (אדמה) in this context, by contrast, denotes the habitable ground of

the entire world, not of one specific nation, and thus gives a global scope to Yahweh's

authority to bless or judge.[41] It is also the first use of the term אדמה in Amos, a book that

is quite "oriented to the fertile soil" in its agrarian perspective.[42] In fact, compared to its

total word count, Amos has the highest density of the term אדמה out of any book of the

Old Testament,[43] and is second only to Genesis in its combination of "soil" (אדמה) and

"land" (ארץ) considered together.[44] Some scholars identify ארץ as political in most of its

connotations in the Bible and אדמה as connotating "native soil"[45] or "life-giving soil."[46]

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[40] Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 3) observes that the term often but not always refers to the "territory of a particular nation or people" (e.g., Amos 2:10; 3:1, 9, 11; 7:2, 10, 12; 8:4, 8, 11: 9:7). Cf. Marlow, "Land," 489. She notes the frequent "fluidity" and "overlap in biblical thought between ideas of cosmic space and territory."

[41] Cf. Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 9–10. This applies also to Amos 9:8. I understand אדמה in the way Hiebert (*Yahwist's Landscape*, 62) does in sections of Genesis: "As that from which all life is derived—plant, animal, human—arable soil [אדמה] is the key to the Yahwist's conception of the structure and essential character of the natural world." Indeed, all forms of life on Earth are "distinct features of the same organic system, sharing a common essence derived from the soil" or "arable land," as he also translates אדמה (65).

[42] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 127.

[43] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 209 n. 29. The next closest is Deuteronomy, which is only half as dense in its use of "earth" (i.e., "soil") as Amos is with its ten occurrences.

[44] Bulkeley, "'Exile,'" 77–78. For ארץ ("land/earth") alone, he calculates—per 100 words rather than per book—that Amos comes in sixth place behind Habakkuk, Deuteronomy, Zechariah, Jeremiah, and Job (77), while for אדמה ("earth/soil") alone Amos is clearly first by twice the frequency as the closest books, followed by Zephaniah, Deuteronomy, Genesis, and Joel (78). When both terms are considered as a percentage of all the words in a biblical book, then Amos is second to Genesis, with Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, and Joel coming next after Genesis and Amos (78).

[45] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 315.

[46] Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 148.

It is more accurate to recognize that either term, depending on the context, can "designate the full semantic range of the 'land' in terms of land as territory, land as fruitful (e.g. ארץ in 7:2; אדמה in 9:15), and land as cosmic or [referring to] the whole earth (3:2; 4:13; 5:8, 9; 8:9; 9:5, 6, 8)."[47] The two terms both contribute to the rhetoric of divine care for Israel that makes them all the more culpable for their guilt (cf. Amos 3:2). The land is certainly a key theme in the book, and the land is a gift that Israel can lose.[48]

The next part (Amos 3:3–8) switches to what appears to be the voice of Amos. A series of rhetorical questions build to a climax of predominantly effect-and-cause scenarios (3:3–6) before an explanation (Amos 3:7) that delays the final cause-and-effect climax (Amos 3:8). In terms of speech acts, questions are directives since they motivate an audience to give an answer to the discourse, even if not aloud.[49] Here the expected answers are all negative ("no, of course not" or "typically not"), drawing the audience in to a chain of reasoning that ultimately defends the prophet's preaching about Israel (Amos 3:8). This part as a whole seems to respond to an implicit objection the original audience might have had against the legitimacy of the negative message or the authority of the prophet to give it.[50] Most of the rhetorical questions employ nature imagery essential to making the final point, as will be seen below.

The first question about people traveling together does not have any nature imagery, and it seems to be a planned rendezvous, harmless if abrupt in its current

[47] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 2.
[48] Snyman, "Land"; Snyman, "Eretz and Adama"; Bulkeley, "'Exile.'"
[49] See de Regt, "Discourse Implications."
[50] Möller, "'Hear This Word,'" 504.

context (Amos 3:3). The next four questions, however, involve lions, prey, birds, and hunting traps, all of which rely on knowledge of the created order and cultural knowledge for the reasoning to be convincing. There is a pair of questions about lions: "Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no torn-prey? Does a young lion project its voice from its lair if it has not captured (anything)?" (Amos 3:4). Typically not, is the expected answer. The first term, אריה ("lion"), is the most frequent term for lions in the Old Testament, and it refers to a male that is fully mature, since it is distinguished from younger lions elsewhere and can hunt prey not only for itself but for its "cubs" (from גור) and its "lionesses" (from לביא; Nah 2:12–13).[51] The parallel term, כפיר ("young lion"), is an adolescent that is older than a cub because it can hunt prey like the rest of the adults (cf. Judg 14:5; Jer 51:38; Ezek 19:1–9).[52] In a study of vocalizing and other lion behaviors, Schaller speaks of "at least nine more or less distinct expressions" of roaring among lion prides in Africa, only some expressions of which are related to food.[53] In particular, although lions can roar or growl when hungry and when consuming food—it is more of a growl than a full roar when feeding—they do not actually roar in the process of hunting their prey, since that would alert the prey to the danger.[54] It would be a misperception to

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[51] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 300. The term is too general to distinguish whether an African lion (*Panthera leo*) or an Asian lion (*Panthera leo persica*) was meant, although one of the two subspecies was prevalent in this part of the ancient Near East for thousands of years (29–32, 300), as attested by archaeology, texts, and iconography. See Borowski, *Every Living Thing*, 199–200, 226–27.

[52] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 309.

[53] Schaller, *Serengeti Lion*, 103–15. Some examples (109–10) include: (1) to call one another and to advertise their presence; (2) to 'avoid contact, by, for instance, delineating the pride area'; (3) to enhance "the physical presence of an animal by making it more conspicuous"; and (4) "to strengthen the bonds of the group."

[54] Hope, "Problems"; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 35; Strawn, "Material Culture," 100–101; contra King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 129.

interpret the rhetoric as suggesting that lions roar only while hunting or after hunting, so the scenarios of roaring in Amos 3:4 are likely imagining a warning growl to assert dominance and scare off other animals from its already captured prey.[55] Another misperception that should be avoided is to understand "lair" (מענה; Amos 3:4) as a permanent cave or den in which lions sleep and consume their food. Lions roam in large areas, and "seldom sleep more than one day at a time in a particular place, although they do have favourite places to which they return from time to time to rest."[56] Here in Amos 3:4, then, it is best to understand "lair" as a generic term for any temporary hiding spots for lions in the dense "forest" (יער) of undergrowth away from urban centers.[57] So this picture of lions growling over captured prey fits one common scenario in which lions were likely to growl in the natural world. If the audience contrasts this picture with the option of a lion roaring just *before* it has captured its prey, then the question will easily be answered in the negative: no, of course a lion would not roar unless it had captured something. The creation rhetoric refers to lions not as an allegory but to build a case for what is natural, not what is "unnatural behavior" or "cosmic nonsense."[58]

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[55] Strawn, "Material Culture," 100–101. Hear a sound clip of lions growling while feeding (Pro Sound Effects, "Lions Feeding"): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JxOc6STpTY.

[56] Hope, "Problems," 203. Indeed, "anyone who knows anything about lions knows that they don't live in dens, except in zoos" (202). Cf. Schaller, *Serengeti Lion*, 12–15, 119–25, 267–71; Clines, "Misapprehensions"; Job 38:40; Song 4:8; Ps 104:22.

[57] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 38; Strawn, "Material Culture," 100. For the "forest" as a place for wild animals see 2 Kgs 2:24; Pss 50:10; 80:14; 104:20; Isa 56:9; Jer 5:16; 12:8; Ezek 34:25; Hos 2:14; Mic 5:7. A forest is typically portrayed as a lush, non-cultivated area, and it is contrasted with urban areas (Josh 17:15, 18; Isa 10:18; 29:17; 32:15; Jer 26:18; Ezek 34:25; Hos 2:14; Mic 3:12).

[58] Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 80; and Barton, "Natural Law," 7, respectively. Cf. Amos 6:12.

The next pair of questions concerns birds and traps baited for them: "Does a bird swoop on a trap of the land when it has no bait? Does a trap come up from the soil when it doesn't actually capture (anything)?" (Amos 3:5). The "bird" (צפור) is a general term for perching birds, not raptors. Again, the expected answer is that no, a bird would not swoop upon a trap unless there was bait in the snare. Likewise, the trap itself would not spring up without capturing something. The same verb is used for lions as for traps in "capturing" something (לכד). Creation rhetoric includes not only the bird but also the trap, since it is part of the agrarian world of hunting and farming. The "land" and "soil" function in a progressive parallelism that zooms in from a general zone (i.e., land as opposed to sky) to a specific area of ground where the trap is set in the scenario (Amos 3:5). Here the "land" (ארץ) and "soil" (אדמה) are not political or agricultural so much as spatial in connotation, that is, they merely indicate the relative position of the trap on the ground.[59] The pair of questions reinforces wisdom about the created order and tightens the rhetorical snare for the audience.

The next pair of questions is the "climax of the first series of questions."[60] The climactic nature of the questions is marked by conjunctions that break with the previous method of inquiry (Amos 3:6).[61] This first climax is also marked by the chiastic order

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[59] Cf. Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 7, 10. The only difference may be that "soil" zooms in on the scene whereas "land" depicts the trap from a bird's-eye view, literally.

[60] Gitay, "A Study," 296.

[61] Gitay, "A Study," 304. It is rare to have two אם in a row used this way (cf. Job 6:12; Jer 38:27). Cf. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 183, who notes that the conjunctions mark a pivot away from "lions and fowling to distress in a city." There is no easy way in English to bring out the difference.

elements,[62] the second line reverting back to the usual order of effect and cause: "Is a bugle blown in a city when people don't (then) tremble? Does disaster happen in a city when Yahweh hasn't done it?" (Amos 3:6). There is no specific creation rhetoric here, now that the scenario moves into urban space with an unspecified military threat and a disaster that is ultimately attributed to Yahweh. There seems to be a progression of less threatening to more threatening events up to this point, and the scenarios alternate between sight and sound.[63] Perhaps the rhetoric of Amos 3:3–6 also moves from rural to urban settings if the initial travelers are far from a city, for then the questions would concern space away from built environments (Amos 3:3), space where wild animals hunt (Amos 3:4), space where humans hunt birds (Amos 3:5), and finally urban space where calamity (רעה, "a disaster") happens (Amos 3:6).[64] In this couplet of Amos 3:6, ironically, "humanity becomes the endangered species."[65] Perhaps the rhetorical (original) audience needed convincing that Yahweh would bring calamity on his people,[66]

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[62] Gitay, "A Study," 304.

[63] Paul, *Amos*, 108. Cf. Schart, "Deathly Silence"; Urbrock, "Book of Amos," 245–53.

[64] For more on urbanism and the relationships between cities and the broader environment of the ancient Near East or Israel, see Aufrecht et al., eds., *Urbanism*; Herzog, *Archaeology of the City*; Brueggemann, "The Land and Our Urban Appetites"; Brueggemann, "The City"; Brown and Carroll, "Garden and the Plaza"; Grabbe and Haak, eds., *'Every City Shall Be Forsaken'*; De Geus, *Towns in Ancient Israel*; Camp and Berquist, eds., *Constructions of Space II*; Roddy, "Landscape of Shadows"; Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 155–78; Rogerson and Vincent, *The City*; Carroll R., "Biblical Theology of the City"; Mills, *Urban Imagination*; Bills, "Urban Imagination"; Schart and Krispenz, *Stadt*; Prinsloo and Maier, eds., *Constructions of Space V*; Edelman and Ben Zvi, eds., *Memory and the City*; Aitken and Marlow, eds., *City in the Hebrew Bible*. Carroll R. ("Biblical Theology of the City," 71) cautions that the contrast between urban and rural should not be overdrawn, since the biblical texts do not provide a precise "theology of the city and its relationship to the created order" (72). See more on the cities in Amos in Carroll R., "Visions of Horror, Visions of Hope."

[65] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 186.

[66] Gitay, "A Study," 296.

or perhaps the final question invoked yet another instance of rational assumptions in

Hebrew culture about how the world worked: their God was sovereign and thus

ultimately behind disasters, whether natural or social. Either way, the text this far justifies

the punishment threatened in Amos 3:2. It sets the looming disaster within a horizon of

cause-and-effect order in the world, making the proclamation of judgment more

comprehensible. A later audience in Judah identify the urban disaster (Amos 3:6) with the

fall of Samaria, but for now the rhetoric within the text continues to unfold.

A parenthetical assertive explains that Yahweh reveals "his plan" (סודו)[67] to "his

servants the prophets" before any acts of judgment (Amos 3:7).[68] This further justifies

divine judgment, heading off objections that people might have concerning their

ignorance or lack of warning about the judgment. The remark also builds toward the final

climax that reveals the point of the entire series of questions in persuading the audience

of why the prophet has been announcing judgment: "A Lion has roared! Who doesn't

fear? The Lord Yahweh has sent a message! Who doesn't prophesy?" (Amos 3:8). The

prophet characterizes Yahweh as a lion once more, but this time it is his message alone

(not also an earthquake as in Amos 1:2) that is like a roar to the prophet. Just as a person

naturally reacts in fear upon hearing a lion's roar, so a person naturally reacts in being a

spokesperson of the divine message upon hearing Yahweh's message. Amos the prophet

preached these messages because Yahweh told him to do so. The point of the creation

[67] Or it could be "his council," as in the divine council.
[68] Davis (*Biblical Prophecy*, 14) translates this part of the verse "unless he has divulged his privileged communication . . . to his agents . . . the prophets" (Amos 3:7)."

rhetoric is to justify the prophet's proclamations as "natural" proclamations in the sense

of fitting or logical proclamations, as unpopular as they might have been. There is also a

sense of compulsion here in that Amos must speak the way he does, just as the people

who answer the previous rhetorical questions would nearly be compelled to answer the

final questions the same way and so vindicate Amos the prophet.[69]

The next part (Amos 3:9–11) switches back to the prophet quoting Yahweh, it

turns out (Amos 3:10). Two directives are aimed at plural and unspecified heralds.[70]

These heralds are to make a message "heard" (cf. Amos 3:1) on the "citadels" of the city

of Ashdod and of the "land" (ארץ) of Egypt (Amos 3:9), summoning the armies or

residents of these foreign places to "gather on the mountains of Samaria," the capital of

Israel, to witness "great disturbances" and "exploitative acts" within it (Amos 3:9). Of all

foreign groups to summon for a legal proceeding, the combination here is not accidental.

The groups connect back to the oracles against the nations (Amos 1–2), including the

Philistine city "Ashdod" (Amos 1:8), and to the earlier references to Egypt (Amos 2:10;

3:1).[71] There are also wordplays enabled by the choice of locations, since אשדוד

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[69] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 232–33. The abundance of such questions has earned Amos the distinction of being "the prophet of the rhetorical question" (Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 5, 210). For the rhetoric of compulsion as it relates to legitimizing prophecies, see Milstein, "'Who Would Not Write'"

[70] The identity of the heralds may not be significant, for the summons could be a rhetorical device meant to be heard only by the Israelites (and later Judahites), not by any heralds or foreigners. It is also possible that the heralds include supernatural messengers (angels), if the סוד of Amos 3:7 is better understood as Yahweh's divine "council." Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 374) believe the imperatives are "given by God directly to some of those attending the heavenly council." This could include Amos the prophet as one of the addressees. See the similar ambiguity of heavenly and human speakers in the divine council in Isa 40:1–11 in Boda, "Authors and Readers," 262–68. I argue that the plural imperatives are rhetorical, not intended to be carried out by human or supernatural messengers.

[71] Eidevall, *Amos*, 131.

("Ashdod") sounds like שד ("violence") and מצרים ("Egypt") sounds like אצרים

("treasure up") in the listing of Samaria's wrongs in Amos 3:10.[72] Given the past history

of exploitation and violence from the Egyptians and Philistines, the mention of

exploitation, violence, and hoarding within Samaria is ironic: Israel had become so

corrupt that even their enemies would be "shocked by the violence and corruption."[73] The

rhetoric amounts to summoning notorious enemies of Israel as legal witnesses to testify

that Israel's record is worse. The Samarians are condemned as those who "treasure up

violence and ruin in their citadels" (Amos 3:10), which is short for hoarding in the

fortified parts of the city the proceeds of exploiting both "people and property."[74] The

prophet cites an oracle mentioning "an enemy" that will surround Israel's "land" (ארץ),

plundering the very "citadels" of Samaria in which the wealth was stored (Amos 3:11).

The explicit nature imagery here is limited to the "land (ארץ) of Egypt" (Amos 3:9), the

"mountains" (הר) of Samaria (Amos 3:9), and the "land" of Israel (Amos 3:11). While

the "land of Egypt" is a fixed expression, all three of these references situate land or its

mountainous terrain as a place of threat or potential loss. No place is safe, since it is

either a place from which enemies come or a place around which an enemy surrounds

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[72] Paul, *Amos*, 117; Eidevall, *Amos*, 131.

[73] Eidevall, *Amos*, 132. He (132) mentions the biblical traditions of how the Philistines and Egyptians "enslaved and/or tyrannized the ancestors of the Israelites" (Exod 1–15; Judg 13–16; 1 Sam 4–18), and how this implies "the Israelites had become just like (or, even worse than) their worst enemies." Snyman ("Land," 531) argues that Ashdod was mentioned to allude to the conquest of the land that Israel was now in danger of losing (cf. Josh 12:22; 13:3; 15:47), but this seems to be a stretch.

[74] Paul (*Amos*, 117) comments that חמס ("violence") refers mostly to crimes against people (e.g., Ezek 7:23; 9:9; Hab 2:8, 17), while שד ("ruin") usually refers to crimes against property (e.g., Hos 9:6; 10:14; Obad 5; Mic 2:4). A further irony is that those from foreign "citadels" are to warn those in Samaria's "citadels" (Amos 3:9–10), for it is in such fortified places where the "proceeds" of the crimes are stored (Paul, *Amos*, 117), and it is such places that will be "plundered" in the end (Amos 3:11).

Samaria. The exploitation that is condemned violates certain standards of what is good

and right, standards which ultimately go back to the agrarian concerns of the land, as

Ellen Davis explains:

> What is often overlooked is the extent to which the prophetic judgment of the city's righteousness (or unrighteousness) reflects a central agrarian concern. Righteousness is a question of who controls the land that feeds the city and fuels the royal trade economy, and who works that land; a question of who has plenty to eat and drink, and who does not; a question of who reaps the profits from the land's fruitfulness. . . . Does the city, the most widely visible symbol of royal sovereignty, provide for the needs of all those within its walls and its sphere of influence, or does it function as a colonial power, a parasite on the villages [with their farms and farmworkers], near and far?[75]

In other words, it is not arbitrary that the urban elites are threatened with destruction from

their land in Amos 3, for it is the land's resources and people that they have exploited

unfairly. The nature imagery helps convey a sense of poetic justice for the northern

kingdom, just as the urban imagery does with the catchphrase "citadels."[76]

The next part (Amos 3:12) seems to be placed to answer an unspoken objection

from the Israelite audience,[77] who might have counted on being rescued from such an

invasion of their land: "Thus Yahweh said: 'Just as the shepherd rescues from the mouth

of the lion two limbs or a piece of an ear, so the Israelites who reside in Samaria will be

rescued—in the form of a corner of a bed and part from a leg of a couch!'" The assertives

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[75] Davis, Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture, 156.

[76] For more on this catchphrase in Möller, Prophet in Debate, 234, 247–48.

[77] Pfeifer, "'Rettung,'" 276; Möller, Prophet in Debate, 243. Möller (244 n. 117) maintains that the material of Amos 3:12 could be "a genuine part of the Amos tradition, which has been placed in its current setting by the book's editors in their desire to capture and present the prophet's debate with his eighth-century audience."

report divine speech and then forewarn of a pathetic and ironic "rescue"[78] that will serve

only as evidence that the Israelites of Samaria are dead.[79] The shepherding scenario is

gritty but realistic about the occasional predators who might kill sheep from the flock.[80] It

was a cultural and legal custom for a shepherd to find the mangled carcass of a sheep to

confirm the accidental loss of the livestock by some wild animal (Exod 22:12 [Eng.

13]).[81] But the focus in Amos 3:12 is on the slain sheep rather than on the shepherd.[82]

There is debate about whether the "lion" stands for a human king[83] or whether this is

another allusion to Yahweh as divine "Lion," given the imagery in Amos 3:8 (and Amos

1:2).[84] For an audience in Judah hearing the final form of the text, the Lion would be

identified with Yahweh, based on Amos 1:2. It is an ironic reversal of the divine

shepherd motif: "God as a lion towards his own people . . . is to be explained as a

conscious reversal of the traditional description of God as shepherd, which was

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[78] Chisholm ("Wordplay," 47–48) observes that נצל ("rescue, snatch away") can refer to deliverance from death or enemies (e.g., Gen 32:12 [Eng. 11]; 32:31 [Eng. 30]; Exod 12:27; 18:8, 10; 1 Sam 17:37; Pss 18:1; 33:19; 56:14 [Eng. 13]; 86:13). This background makes the "rescue" an ironic reversal of expectations.

[79] Pfeifer, "'Rettung.'" The metaphor "means that the sheep is dead, not that part has survived," notes Garrett, *Amos*, 98.

[80] The mangled animal is likely a sheep, not a goat, given that the Old Testament books associate the lion with sheep as its prey most often. See Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 354–55. Sirach 13:19 mentions wild donkeys as prey, and iconographic drawings show gazelles as prey (36), among other wild animals. Mention of "the shepherd" confirms that it is not wild but domestic prey here, though.

[81] See similar Mesopotamian laws cited in Paul, *Amos*, 119. Cf. Gen 31:39; 1 Sam 17:34–35.

[82] Garrett, *Amos*, 97–98.

[83] Either Assyria's king or Israel's rulers together, per Stith, "Whose Lion Is It"; cf. Ezek 34:10, where Israel's rulers are compared to bad shepherds acting like lions against their flock.

[84] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 60. Cf. Pyper, "Lion King." Not every element in the comparison needs to correspond to a specific referent, and it is best to focus on the destruction rather than the identity of the lion or shepherd.

particularly in use in the Northern Kingdom."[85] Lion carvings were used for protective

symbolism and decorative purposes in this century within Samaria, so the comparison of

furniture to remnants of an animal mangled by a lion is ironic, if nothing else.[86] The legs

and ear of the sheep imply that "from top (ear) to bottom (leg), almost nothing

whatsoever will be saved."[87] The creation rhetoric vividly underscores that only a meager

remnant will be left after Yahweh's judgment is complete.[88] The furniture items could

either be taken literally, "so all that will remain of Israel will be broken fragments of her

proud and opulent past,"[89] or the furniture could represent the Samarians themselves, left

"like a few scraps of furniture salvaged from a looted city."[90]

The final part of Amos 3 (Amos 3:13–15) resumes the trial of Amos 3:9–11 by

calling on a plural audience—probably the foreigners of Amos 3:9—to "hear and testify

against" the kingdom of Israel (Amos 3:13).[91] The report of divine speech that intervenes

between summons and sentencing—"speech of the Lord Yahweh, the God of the cosmic

armies" (Amos 3:13)—is the longest in the book, marking the sentencing that follows as

climactic.[92] The first use of "cosmic armies" (צבאות) appears here (Amos 3:13), and the

term may denote either earthly or celestial armies (or both) under Yahweh's command,

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[85] Van Hecke, "'For I Will Be like a Lion,'" 401. Cf. Pss 77:21 (Eng. 20); 78:52; 79:13; 80:2.

[86] Weippert, "Amos," 15–18, 25.

[87] Paul, *Amos*, 119.

[88] See Boyd, "Is There a Remnant" for more on this theme.

[89] Niehaus, "Amos," 386. Garrett (*Amos*, 99–100) rejects this view because he takes it too literally as implying that the furniture items will be salvaged by the wealthy Israelites as they flee.

[90] Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 410. Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 239) splits the difference: "the worthless parts of once luxurious furniture will only attest to the former existence of some wealthy people."

[91] But see discussion in Bokovoy, "Invoking the Council."

[92] Dempster, "The Lord Is His Name," 178.

though the celestial connotation is most prominent elsewhere in the book.[93] In addition to

returning to the verb of punishment (פקד) found at the beginning (Amos 3:2, 14), "house"

features as a key theme in this final part.[94] In addition, there are seven verbs portraying

complete urban destruction in Amos 3:14–15, just as there were seven verbs in the finale

of Amos 2:14–16.[95] The stone "horns" of the altar (Amos 3:14) were significant features

in different ways (see fig. 5), one of which was as an object people could grasp to claim

refuge from the death penalty (Exod 21:13–14; 1 Kgs 1:50–53; 2:28). If the horns of the

altar are chopped off, this would mean that there was no safety for any Israelites within

the sanctuary precincts (cf. Exod 21:14; Amos 9:1).[96] Another possible connotation of the

very shape of these horns was that they could represent bread-loaf offerings continually

presented to Yahweh, and thus their destruction meant the end of ritual food offerings at

that site.[97]

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[93] The title "Yahweh (God) of (the) צבאות" could thus refer to Yahweh as commander of *human* armies as "the God of the armies [צבאות] of Israel" or of a foreign army (1 Sam 17:45; cf. Exod 12:41; Isa 1:24; 13:1–22; 24:23; Jer 28:14) or Yahweh as commander of the *non-human* armies (צבאות) such as stars and spirits who were part of the "army" or "host" of heaven (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 6:6–23; 19:15; Ps 89:5–18; Isa 6:1–6; 37:16; 51:15; Jer 31:35; 32:18; 33:22; Amos 4:13; 9:5–6). Isaiah uses the term in both senses, even in close proximity (e.g., Isa 34:2, 4). It could also refer to both kinds of armies, earthly or celestial (hence the OG's frequent translation of צבאות as παντοκράτωρ, "Almighty"). See my footnote on "hosts" or "cosmic armies" earlier in §2.1.1. In light of the cosmic references in the doxologies of Amos where the term appears (Amos 4:13; 9:5–6) it is slightly more convincing to identify the צבאות in Amos 3:13 as referring to the celestial armies of Yahweh above the earth. Thus also the following scholars who argue the title refers to celestial armies more than earthly ones: Meier, *Themes and Transformations*, 156; Meier, "Angels," 26–27; Heiser, "Divine Council," 165; Oswalt, "God," 289–90. Fretheim ("Hosts," 214) likewise argues that the military overtones are "diminished" for the title in the prophetic books and that צבאות suggests instead the "divine council and the prophet's role as a messenger" sent from that council. This view would fit with most occurrences in Amos and with 1 Kgs 22:19; Jer 23:18; Amos 3:7; 4:13.

[94] Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 332.

[95] Dorsey, "Literary Architecture," 311; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 222.

[96] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 221.

[97] Thus Falk, "Significance of the Horns"; cf. Exod 25:30; Num 4:16.

Figure 5. Horns at the corners of altars[98]

The horns will fall "to the land," and idiom for falling to the ground (Amos 3:14),[99] a

weak level of creation rhetoric, and the creation rhetoric is still quite passive in the

concluding forewarnings that mention "the winter house plus the summer house" and

"the houses of ivory" that will be destroyed (Amos 3:15). While these terms refer to

literal places, seasons, or objects, they are inanimate, controlled by humans, or settings

for the critique. Separate seasonal residences could only be afforded by royalty (cf. 1 Kgs

21:1–2; Jer 36:22), and "ivory" carvings likewise could only be afforded by the wealthy

or royal for their mansions or palaces (1 Kgs 10:18; 22:39; Ps 45:9 [Eng. 8]), since ivory

tusks were luxury items imported from merchant ships originating outside of Israel (1

Kgs 10:22; Ezek 27:6, 15). Such ivory decorated the interior furniture of wealthy homes

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[98] Left: German Bible Society, "Horns of the Altars"; right: Bratcher and Hatton, *Handbook*, 153.

[99] According to Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 7), ארץ here "simply means the surface of the land, and an area of land used for a particular purpose. Theologically, the term 'ground' [ארץ] is not important because it merely indicates that which people walk on or something falls on." Perhaps this usage could be called a "spatial" use of ארץ, a clarification compared to Thang's ambiguous category "The Term ארץ as 'Ground'" (6). Cf. Amos 9:9. Debatable texts that may be spatial or may use ארץ with additional, agricultural nuances are Amos 2:7; 3:5; 5:7.

in Samaria, as archaeological discoveries have confirmed.[100] See the illustrations below
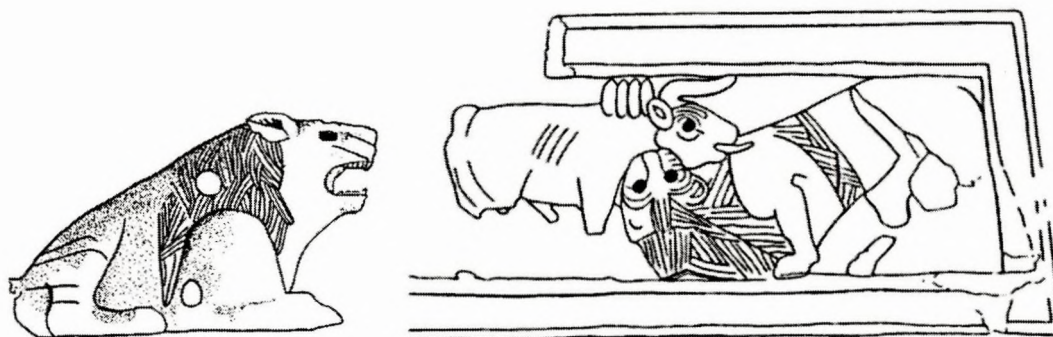
(fig. 6):

Figure 6. Ivory decorations with lions from Samaria[101]

The creation rhetoric thus includes "cosmic armies" (Amos 3:13), "the land" (Amos

3:14), and these "summer" and "winter" houses, some of which were decorated with

"ivory" animal figurines, including ones carved into the shape of lions (Amos 3:15; cf.

Amos 3:12). Only the cosmic armies contain strong potential for character formation,

whereas the other features are mostly backdrop or built environments and objects that are

part of the criticism against the wealthy. The section implies that it is in "the environment

whose natural state is most altered by people," an urban context, that a "human-based

ecology of pain is most at home."[102]

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[100] See the cover of King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*.

[101] Left: after Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 402, fig. 3.92; right: after Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 405, fig. 3.103; cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 189, illus. 203–4. Both are from Samaria, Iron Age II (ninth or eighth century BC), approximately the period of Amos 3:15.

[102] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 263. An "ecology of pain" is equated with violence to the (non-human) natural world. But compare the differences between ancient and modern urban contexts in Carroll R., "Visions of Horror, Visions of Hope"; Carroll R., "Biblical Theology of the City," 71.

5.1.3 Character Formation

Together, the "Amosian sound bites" that comprise Amos 3 put the Judahite readers "in a position to relive the debate between the prophet and his eighth-century hearers."[103] The creation rhetoric has various impacts on the moral character of those in Judah hearing the text. Primarily, the portrayals of the natural world contribute to justifying Yahweh's righteous character and condemning the Israelites, and it is this justification that Judah overhears in a later context. This shapes the moral sense of justice for Judah, a capacity to recognize the various kinds of justice or its abuses. Even with the reversals of expectations, the justice of divine judgment comes from a God who is sovereign over every land of the habitable soil (Amos 3:1–2, 9). The messages of prophets are not to be rejected hastily (Amos 3:8), because their somber words are as fitting and inevitable as a lion roaring after a kill (Amos 3:4), a trap capturing a bird (Amos 3:5), or a fearful response to threatening noises (Amos 3:6).

The series of rhetorical questions in Amos 3:3–8 reinforces a sense of wisdom about the workings of the natural world.[104] Wisdom about creation leads to wisdom about the creator Yahweh who effects even calamities in human cities (Amos 3:6) and reveals messages of judgment as scary as a lion's roar (Amos 3:7–8). This would be relevant to

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[103] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 247.

[104] This part of Amos is sometimes viewed as evidence that the prophet was influenced by sages or drew from thinking associated with wisdom literature. See studies of wisdom and Amos or other prophetic books: Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom"; Wolff, *Amos' geistige Heimat*; Crenshaw, "Influence of the Wise"; Soggin, "Amos and Wisdom"; Kessler, "Amos and Wisdom"; McLaughlin, "Is Amos (Still) among the Wise"; Kessler, "Amos und die Weisheit"; Krispenz, "Zwölfprophetenbuch"; Boda et al., eds., *Riddles and Revelations*. It is not important to determine the influences or sources one way or the other.

Judah's political scene at various points when they needed wisdom about Yahweh's plans as increasing threats from world empires started to impact Judah as well.

In condemning the violence of Samaria (Amos 3:9–10), Judah is to hear in the text a caution that their own acts of violence could bring a similar fate. Their land, too, could be surrounded by an enemy and lost (Amos 3:11), for they had their own violence and exploitation (e.g., Isa 1–5; Micah). The particularly fear-inspiring elements of Amos 3 (e.g., Amos 3:8, 12) could instill reverence in Judah—reverence being a form of respect for Yahweh that is not a terrifying fear of immediate danger from him. After all, Judah is overhearing a threat against their northern neighbors retrospectively, which means that any direct threat of divine judgment in Amos 3 that might have produced terror in the Israelites is now an indirect threat for Judah at best, producing something less intense in the spectrum of fear (i.e., what I will call "reverence"). Judah would also be warned against frequenting Bethel for worship (Amos 3:14) and humbled for its own social excesses of wealth and luxury (Amos 3:15), for ivory decorations have been found from eighth- and seventh-century Judah as well.[105]

These inferences about practices are not the primary rhetorical point of the text like Yahweh's justice and Israel's violations are. They are nevertheless secondary points that a later audience might discern as the book shaped their moral imagination for how

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There were likely many traditions that influenced the messages in Amos, not just one, and the similarities could be due to common views rather than direct influence.

[105] King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 140.

creation and creator operate. Overall, character formation here includes reverence, wisdom, and humility for Judah if they heeded the implications of the text.

5.2 Mountains and Liturgies at the Point of No Return (Amos 4)

This section begins and ends with references to mountains (Amos 4:1, 13), and it contains three kinds of liturgies, loosely defined: a mocking summons for Israelites to worship at corrupt sanctuaries (Amos 4:4–5), a recounting of divine judgment in history instead of salvation history (Amos 4:6–11), and a summons for Israelites to meet their God (Amos 4:12) that uses a liturgical doxology to reveal Yahweh as the righteous creator and king of the cosmos (Amos 4:13).

5.2.1 Translation

שמעו הדבר הזה פרות הבשן אשר	4:1	"Hear this message, cows of the Bashan region who are on
בהר שמרון		Mount Samaria,
העשקות דלים		the ones who exploit poor people,
הרצצות אביונים		the ones who crush needy people,
האמרת לאדניהם[106] הביאה[107] ונשתה		the ones who say to their lords, 'Bring so we can drink!'
נשבע אדני יהוה בקדשו	4:2	The Lord Yahweh has sworn by his holiness:
כי הנה ימים באים עליכם[108]		'Surely[112] days are coming on you
ונשא אתכם בצנות[109]		when someone will lift you up with nets[113],
ואחריתכן[110] בסירות[111] דוגה		even the last of you with fishing pails[114],

[106] The masculine suffix ("their") is unusual if it refers back to the feminine "cows." The Syriac has a feminine suffix, and the Latin has "your" (plural), both trying to smooth the text, while Qumran (4QXII^c) and the Aramaic ("to their nobles") support the masculine suffix in the MT. The MT could mean either "their lords," as in the husbands of the women, or "their lords," as in the masters of the poor people. For the latter possibility see Fleischer, *Menschenverkäufern*, 82; Eidevall, *Amos*, 136–37.

[107] Qumran (4QXII^c) has the command in the plural (הביאו) instead of the singular, and the other versions understand a plural of some verb as well, while the MT "reports the wording of the individual wife to her husband" (Gelston in *BHQ*). The MT can be retained as the harder reading.

[108] Again, masculine suffixes appear here and on the definite object marker (אתכם), rather than the expected feminine suffix that appears on a later term (ואחריתכן). The Aramaic supports the MT here, while the Syriac assimilates to the feminine. I retain the MT.

4:3 ופרצים תצאנה אשה נגדה
והשלכתנה[115] הַחַרְמוֹנָה[116] נאם יהוה

and through breaches[117] you will go out, each woman facing ahead,
and you will be thrown out toward the Hermon (mountain).' (speech of Yahweh)

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[109] Theodotion and the Latin support the MT, while the other versions mistake it for a shield (צנה III) or generic weapon, probably due to the idiom "shield bearer" (נשא צנה) in 1 Sam 17:7, 41; 1 Chr 12:24; 2 Chr 14:7, according to Paul, *Amos*, 131.

[110] MT and the Latin have a feminine suffix ("your"), while Qumran (4QXII^c) has a masculine suffix. The Greek translates "those with you," while Theodotion and the Aramaic have "the offspring" or "your daughters," which may derive from an emendation to "(those who come) after you." The MT can be retained and understood as "the last of you" (Garrett, *Amos*, 110–11; cf. Amos 9:1).

[111] The ancient versions either identify the term as "[cooking] pots" (from סיר) or "fishing boats" (Aramaic), since the following word in the text relates to fish. Qumran is obscure here ("with lamentation[?]," בסופוד, 4QXII^c), and none of the versions suggest a reading superior to the MT.

[112] The conjunction כי could be "evidential" (i.e., "for"; Arnold-Choi §4.3.4(b)), "asseverative" ("surely"; Arnold-Choi §4.3.4[i]) or "recitative" and left untranslated (i.e., "sworn by his holiness [that]"; Arnold-Choi §4.3.4[l]). The recitative or asseverative are most likely in the context of an oath (Paul, *Amos*, 130). Cf. Gen 22:16; 1 Kgs 1:13, 17, 30; Isa 45:23; Jer 22:5; 49:13. Although כי הנה appears later (e.g., Amos 4:13; 6:11; 9:9), כי may not have the same nuance as in those places, because no oath precedes there.

[113] This unique term might mean "hook" (צנה I), "shield" (III), "rope" (IV), or "basket" (V), per *DCH*. The first meaning could derive from "thorn" (צן/צנין). Cf. Num 33:55; Josh 23:13; Job 5:5; Prov 22:5. The majority of commentators follow this option. See, e.g., Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 161; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 65 n. 31; Eidevall, *Amos*, 137. Garrett (Garrett, *Amos*, 111–13) does not believe the imagery would change from cattle to fishing, and so lands on an improbable picture of meat hooks for slaughtered cattle. But this noun (צנה) and its parallel (סיר) do not elsewhere appear in the *feminine* plural meaning of "thorns" (thus "hooks"), and Paul (*Amos*, 132–35) argues convincingly that Mesopotamians did not fish with hooks but with underwater "baskets," while Egyptians used such baskets more than hooks, at least. In English, "nets" is less confusing as a translation.

[114] The term is most likely either from "pots" (e.g., סיר in Exod 27:3; 38:3; 1 Kgs 7:45; 2 Kgs 25:14; Jer 52:18; Zech 14:20) or "thorns" (e.g., סיר in Isa 34:13; Hos 2:8; Nah 1:10[?]; Eccl 7:6). *BHQ* is favorable to the derivation "thorn" (סיר), but in support of "pots" is the OG and Paul, *Amos*, 133–35. In English, "pails" conveys the same idea of containers for transporting fish.

[115] Only the MT reads the verb as active ("and you will throw out [something]," וְהִשְׁלַכְתֶּנָה), while the rest of the ancient versions read a passive ("and you will be thrown out," וְהֻשְׁלַכְתֶּנָה) or loosely translate ("they will exile you," Aramaic), so I emend to the passive as the best option.

[116] The word "Harmon" (הַרְמוֹן) is unique in Hebrew, perhaps an unknown place name or an error. The versions tend to divide the form into two words or double-translate parts of the whole string of letters, linking the rendering to places known or unknown to us today (see *BHQ*). The OG reads "Mount Remman," Aquila, the Syriac, and arguably the Latin and Aramaic have "the mountain(s) of Hermon" (Latin: simply "Armon"), Symmachus has "to Armenia" (Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum*, 83 translates as if the Aramaic might mean this instead, despite the initial ה), Theodotion and the fifth column of Origen have "(to the) high mountain," and the rest of the Greek witnesses have a double translation of "cursed [from חרם] of them is Harmana." So far I agree with Eidevall (*Amos*, 137) that the most likely option is to read הַחֶרְמוֹנָה, "toward the Hermon (mountain)," the well-known peak near Damascus, which is supported by the four versions above and three medieval Hebrew manuscripts (*BHQ*). It only requires a confusion between ח and ה. Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 207; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 65.

באו בית אל ופשעו	4:4	'Come to[118] Bethel and commit a violation!
הגלגל הרבו לפשע		At the Gilgal site multiply violations!
והביאו לבקר זבחיכם		And every[119] morning[120] bring your slaughter-offerings!
לשלשת ימים מעשרתיכם		Every three days (bring) your tenth-portions (of produce)!
וקטר[121] מחמץ תודה	4:5	And from leavened bread give a thank-offering!
וקראו נדבות השמיעו		And proclaim voluntary-donations! Make them heard,
כי כן אהבתם בני ישראל נאם אדני		for so you love (doing), Israelites!' (speech of the Lord
יהוה		Yahweh)
וגם אני[122] נתתי לכם נקיון[123] שנים	4:6	'But as for me, I gave you starving teeth[124] in all your cities,
בכל עריכם		and a lack of bread in all your places,[125]
וחסר לחם בכל מקומתיכם		but you did not turn back to me.' (speech of Yahweh)
ולא שבתם עדי נאם יהוה		
וגם אנכי מנעתי מכם את הגשם בעוד	4:7	'But as for me, I withheld from you the downpour when
והמטרתי על שלשה חדשים לקציר		there were still three months to the harvest. So I would[127]
עיר אחת ועל עיר אחת לא אמטיר		bring rain on one city, but on one city I would not bring
חלקה אחת תמטר וחלקה אשר לא		rain; on one farmable portion it would rain, but the
אמטיר[126] עליה תיבש		farmable portion on which I would not bring rain would dry up.

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[117] The phrase is fronted compared to normal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:2.

[118] Garrett (*Amos*, 115) notes that prepositions of direction are "often omitted in poetry."

[119] See Garrett, *Amos*, 115–16 for the prepositions on "morning" and "three days."

[120] The phrases concerning "the morning," "three days," and "from leavened bread" (Amos 4:4–5) are all fronted in their clauses compared to normal, postverbal word order in Hebrew. See Amos 1:3. "Every three days" is perhaps an exaggeration mocking the overly religious people, who only needed to bring their tenth-portions every three *years* (cf. Deut 14:28).

[121] The OG misread this verb and the next word due to taking תודה as תורה later. The Aramaic avoided God ordering a violation of laws for offerings. The Latin and Syriac support the MT, which need not be emended since its infinitive absolute can continue the sense of preceding imperatives (cf. *BHQ*).

[122] Qumran (4QXII^g = 4Q82) has the more common form (אנוכי), matching Amos 4:7.

[123] Symmachus and Theodotion support the MT, while the other versions definitely or probably took the noun as a "grinding/numbness/plague" of teeth (via קהה; cf. Jer 31:29–30; Ezek 18:2) rather than "innocence/cleanness (of teeth)." See *BHQ*.

[124] Traditionally "cleanness of teeth" as an idiom for food shortages. Previously, this term referred to "ivory" decorations in Amos 3:15 (cf. Amos 6:4), but here it is human "ivories" or teeth.

[125] Despite the occasional parallelism, Garrett (*Amos*, 117–18) argues that Amos 4:6–12 should not be "scanned as poetry" but as prose. There are some sections, like Amos 4:6, 9, however, where the usual signs of prose (e.g., non-obligatory את) are lacking, and thus these can be viewed as poetic.

[126] Talmon ("Paleo-Hebrew Alphabet," 144) argues that the first letter in paleo-Hebrew was confused (i.e., א/ﭏ and ﭏ/ת look similar in this script), and therefore that the MT (תַמְטִיר, "it causes to rain") is a graphical error for an original אַמְטִיר ("I cause to rain"), as the Greek and Latin have. Arguing against the emendation are Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 209; Paul, *Amos*, 145 n. 50; *BHQ*; Eidevall, *Amos*, 145. Emendation makes sense.

[127] For this use of several verbs in Amos 4:7–8 for customary (not future) action, see *IBHS* §32.2.3.e, 533–34. Contra Barco del Barco, "Text in Context"; Del Barco del Barco, *Profecia y Sintaxis*, 88–89.

ונעו שתים שלש ערים אל עיר אחת לשתות מים ולא ישבעו ולא שבתם עדי נאם יהוה	4:8	And two or three cities would stagger to one city to drink water, but they would not be satisfied, but you did not turn back to me.' (speech of Yahweh)

הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון
הרבות[128]
גנותיכם וכרמיכם
ותאניכם וזיתיכם
יאכל הגזם
ולא שבתם עדי נאם יהוה
	4:9	'I struck you with scorching and with blight.[129] Multiple times (I struck)
		    your gardens and your vineyards,
		      and your fig trees and your olive trees[130]
		the locust horde would consume,
		but you did not turn back to me.' (speech of Yahweh)

שלחתי בכם דבר בדרך מצרים הרגתי בחרב בחוריכם עם שבי סוסיכם ואעלה באש[131] מחניכם ובאפכם[132] ולא שבתם עדי נאם יהוה	4:10	'I sent among you a plague in the manner of Egypt. I killed with the sword your youths along with your captive horses, and I brought up the stench of your camps, even in your noses, but you did not turn back to me.' (speech of Yahweh)
הפכתי בכם כמהפכת אלהים את סדם ואת עמרה ותהיו כאוד מצל משרפה[133] ולא שבתם עדי נאם יהוה	4:11	'I overturned some among you like the divine overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a log rescued from the burning, but you did not turn back to me.' (speech of Yahweh)
לכן כה אעשה לך ישראל עקב כי זאת אעשה לך הכון לקראת אלהיך ישראל	4:12	'Therefore, thus I will do to you, Israel: Because of the fact that this is what I will do to you, prepare to meet your God, Israel!'

כי הנה יוצר הרים[134]
ובורא רוח
ומגיד לאדם מה שחו
עשה שחר עיפה
ודרך על במתי ארץ
יהוה אלהי צבאות שמו
	4:13	For[135] look, he who shapes mountains,
		    and creates[136] wind,
		      and tells humanity what his thought is,
		    he who makes dawn into dusk,
		and treads on the high places of land,
		Yahweh,[137] God of cosmic armies, is his name!"

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[128] The versions mostly support the MT (הָרֻבּוֹת), despite scholarly suggestions to emend to הֶחֱרַבְתִּי ("I laid waste") with no attestation in the versions. With Paul, *Amos*, 147 I retain the MT, which can be rendered as an adverb or an adjective (cf. Prov 25:27). If it modifies the preceding nouns, then it could mean "I struck you . . . *multiple times*" or "with scorching and blight *in abundance*." If it modifies the following two nouns, as I believe the MT rightly points the cantillation (contra Garrett, *Amos*, 121), then it is likely adverbial with a gapped verb (i.e., "*multiple times* [I struck] your gardens and your vineyards").

[129] My translations of "scorching" and "blight" are based on discussion by Paul, *Amos*, 146. For the color ירק related to blight, see Brenner-Idan, *Colour Terms*, 150–51, 189–90.

[130] Either these two nouns are fronted for a chiastic effect or all four nouns a fronted before the locust consuming them if I am mistaken about the use of "multiple times" (הרבות). See Amos 1:2.

[131] The OG is alone in reading this as "with fire," but the MT reading fits better in the context.

[132] All other versions omit the conjunction, but the MT is the harder reading and still makes sense.

[133] With the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, I vocalize "from the burning" in the standard way (מִשְּׂרֵפָה), not following the MT (מִשְׂרֵפָה), which neglects the doubling dot for שׂ.

[134] There are no convincing reasons to read "the thunder" (הָרַעַם) with the OG (βροντήν) instead of "mountains" (הָרִים) and several reasons why mountains make better sense text-critically and thematically. So Paul, *Amos*, 154.

[135] Based on the evidence in Garrett (*Amos*, 197) for כי הנה, the כי is explanatory.

5.2.2 Creation Rhetoric

Despite similarities to the end of the previous section, Amos 4 constitutes a new section

in the book with a new summons to listen ("Hear this message!"; Amos 4:1).[138] The

directive is from the prophet to the "cows of the Bashan region who are on Mount

Samaria" (Amos 4:1). The pronouns referring to the addressees change between feminine

and masculine forms, leading some scholars to view even the "cows" as a satirical

address to the elite men ruling Israel, possibly involving not only gender polemics but

also religious polemics against the worship of Baal or Yahweh with the golden bull-calf

at Samaria.[139] However, the following material about social injustices suggests rather that

it is the socio-economic status of the powerful women of Samaria that is more likely at

stake, even though the wider population may be implicated in the judgment.[140] The

metaphorical imagery for the women of Samaria is "not necessarily derisive" since such

imagery could be used to describe beauty (Song 4:1) or wealth.[141] Northeast of Lake

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[136] There have been arguments for and against translating ברא as "to separate, to differentiate." See Van Wolde, "Why the Verb"; Van Wolde, *Reframing*, 184–200; Becking and Korpel, "To Create, to Separate or to Construct"; Van Wolde and Rezetko, "Semantics." The arguments are not compelling enough to diverge from the traditional rendering of "create."

[137] In verbless (nominal) clauses like this one, the default or unmarked Hebrew word order would be subject-predicate, with the subject defined as the relatively more definite constituent ("his name"). See Amos 2:9; *BHRG 2*, 496–97, §46.2.3.1–2. The divine name and title are therefore fronted for emphasis before the subject ("his name").

[138] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 60, 90–103, 251.

[139] See discussion in Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 253–55.

[140] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 256, 261. A religious polemic is not more than a possibility. Cf. Melugin, "Formation," 382–83. The majority support a socio-economic view of the "cows" as the elite women of Samaria (e.g., Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 205; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 332; Hayes, *Amos*, 139; Paul, *Amos*, 128; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 63; De-Whyte, "Chattel or Cattle").

[141] Garrett, *Amos*, 107. Cf. Jemielity, *Satire*, 89.

Galilee, Bashan was known for its large trees (Isa 2:13; Ezek 27:6) and fertile grazing grounds for cattle (Deut 32:14; Ps 22:13 [Eng. 12]; Jer 50:19; Ezek 39:18; Mic 7:14). See the figure below:

Figure 7. Cows of the Bashan region in view of Mt. Hermon[142]

Because of this background, the nature imagery here probably implies the wealth and health of the women, not any fat-shaming or gender slights that contemporary readers might perceive (Amos 4:1). The critique is not that these elite women are rich and powerful but that they use such privilege to "exploit poor people," "crush needy people," and "say to their lords, 'Bring so we can drink!'" (Amos 4:1). Specifics about the means of exploitation are lacking, but it is possible that the poor are the landless agricultural workers who tend the vineyards producing the (implied) wine for the drinks that the

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[142] The photo is courtesy of the Pictorial Library of Bible Lands (Bolen, "Cows of Bashan").

wealthy women demand from "their lords" (לאדניהם)—meaning their husbands or the

overlords of the poor servants, or men who act in both roles.[143] The creation rhetoric

compares the wealthy of "Mount" Samaria to the "cows of the Bashan region" (Amos

4:1), the place of the capital to a place of plenty. It also implies that water or wine is

produced for the upper class while others slave away and have few resources (Amos

4:1).[144] For this the prophet reports an oath by Yahweh his "Lord" (Amos 4:2),

contrasting with the human "lords" of the ladies just characterized.[145] The oath involves

both men and women[146] being carried away "with nets" or "fishing pails" (Amos 4:2),

which changes the creation imagery to a different type of agriculture (i.e., fishing).

Sometimes people are compared to fish when they are powerless before another group or

ruler (Jer 16:16; Hab 1:14).[147] The last part of the oath pictures the women of Samaria,

now human or cows again, exiting single-file through "breaches" in the city wall and cast

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[143] See Fleischer, *Menschenverkäufern*, 82; Eidevall, *Amos*, 136–37. Cf. Amos 5:11; 6:6.

[144] The exploitation could refer to forced labor, according to Reimer, *Richtet auf das Recht*, 89. This could be related to debt slavery hinted at earlier in Amos 2:6. Cf. עשק and רצץ together in Deut 28:33; 1 Sam 12:3–4; Jer 22:17; Hos 5:11.

[145] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 257–58. There may also be a literary play on the verb בוא, since the ladies want men to "bring" (הביאה) drinks while the Lord promises that days of exile will "come" (באים) on them. Cf. Wolff, "Zitat," 79; Paul, *Amos*, 130; Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 202 n. 2.

[146] Either the masculine forms (i.e., "[coming] on you" and "[lift] you") are used inclusively for both the men and women of Samaria (so De-Whyte, "Chattel or Cattle"; Eidevall, *Amos*, 137; cf. Ruth 1:8) or the forms refer to the "lords," returning to address the women—"even the last of you (women)" (ואחריתכן)—at the end of Amos 4:2–3. For the latter view see Praetorius, "Texte"; Holland, *Joel, Amos und Obadja*, 135. There could also be a gender parody happening in this part of the text (so Jerome; Eidevall, *Amos*, 136; van Wieringen, "Feminized Men," 403–9), but this more likely is an attack on a mixed audience with no gender-bending parody against the elite women and men of Samaria. Cf. Nwaoru, "Fresh Look"; Jacobson, "Wit and Witness"; Irwin, "Amos 4:1," 231–46.

[147] Paul (*Amos*, 134) also mentions an example of fishing imagery in a prophetic dream report from Mari, which I quote from a newer translation: "I {referring to the god Dagan} [will make] the king[s of the] Yaminites flounder in a fisherman's chest and [pl]ace them before you {i.e., King Zimri-Lim}" (Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 63, §38).

out "toward the Hermon (mountain)," though the text is difficult for the location.[148] If it is indeed Mount Hermon in view, then the creation rhetoric is ironic, since this mountain is visible from the Bashan region and would allude to the same direction of exile as Amos 5:27 does ("beyond Damascus"), since Damascus is located near Hermon.[149] This part would begin with a mountain and end with a mountain.

The next part (Amos 4:4–13) contains Yahweh's sarcastic call to worship (Amos 4:4–5) and a summary of past divine judgments (Amos 4:6–11) before a climactic warning (Amos 4:12) and doxology of judgment (Amos 4:13). Perhaps the call to worship features here as a response to another objection from the Israelites of Samaria, the original audience protesting that they were faithful worshipers of Yahweh, offering frequent food contributions at the Bethel and Gilgal altars.[150] As the map below shows, the Israelites had several sanctuary sites where they could offer food on altars to Yahweh, and later the book will criticize religious visits to Beersheba, Samaria, and Dan (Amos 5:5; 8:14), not just Gilgal and Bethel. See figure 8 below:

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[148] See the note for the Hebrew term in the translation section above.

[149] Eidevall (*Amos*, 140) observes this geographical irony and the fit with Amos 5:27, and he notes that "Hermon," if correct, would give Amos 4:1–3 an inclusio of mountains at the start and close.

[150] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 266–67.

Figure 8. Map of most places in Amos 3–9

The creation rhetoric at these locations involves the intersection of nature and culture that is agriculture, specifically the "slaughter-offerings" (זבח) from animals and the "tenth-portions" (מעשר) of plants (Amos 4:4). The order of plants and animals is reversed in the following lines: "from leavened bread give a thank-offering," and "proclaim voluntary-donations," likely animal offerings (Amos 4:5).[151] There are various reasons that such religious activity might be criticized here. One popular explanation is that such practices were merely external rituals that did not reach the dispositions of the heart or the practices of social justice in the wider culture. There is some truth in this, but the text is not a blanket condemnation of all ritual activity or external embodiments of religious loyalty.[152] It is not exactly questioning the sincerity of the worshipers, for these are the things they "love" doing (Amos 4:5).[153] There are social, theological, and ecological issues of ethics at stake in this references to Israelite temple offerings. In terms of socio-economic justice, there could be a sense in which the animals and plants offered on the altar were stolen or extorted from the poor, thus not legitimate possessions for the

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[151] Some such as Niehaus ("Amos," 396–97; cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 338) think the leavened bread is mocked because it was not to be burned as an offering in the Pentateuch (cf. Lev 2:11; 6:7–11 [Eng. 14–17]), but this does not apply to the thank-offering (cf. Lev 7:13; 23:17) and would weaken the irony of the rhetoric, for the other actions seem to be good if overzealous displays of piety. Cf. Finley, 183–84. A portion of certain grain offerings could be burned on their own on the altar or ritually offered with a gesture while an animal offering was burned on the altar, and either might apply to the bread offering here (cf. Lev 9:10–17; Num 5:26; cf. Lessing, *Amos*, 250).

[152] Other criticisms of worship practices in the Old Testament are similar. Worship is good, but it is offensive to Yahweh when tainted by wrongdoing the rest of the week. Cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Pss 40:7–9 (Eng. 6–8); 51:18–19 (Eng. 16–17); Prov 15:8; 21:3, 27; Isa 1:11–15; Jer 6:20; 7:9–10, 21–22; 14:12; Hos 6:6–8; 8:13; Amos 5:21–24; Mal 1:10.

[153] For options on understanding the offerings and their timing, see the literature in Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 263–65. Cf. Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do.'"

wealthy to offer in the first place.[154] This would connect the social exploitation by the

wealthy (e.g., Amos 4:1) more closely with the liturgical practices of the rich and poor

alike (Amos 4:4–5). In terms of theology, the offerings listed here are all for celebrating

the divine-human relationship, never clearly for repairing it or making amends for

violations of the relationship. There are no offerings for moral failure or guilt

mentioned,[155] as if the Israelites were mostly focused on reveling in the blessings and

saving work by Yahweh rather than the judgments and withdrawal of blessing that were

also part of their experience (e.g., Amos 4:6–11). In terms of ecological justice, the

people at such sanctuary towns "were wasting . . . the land's resources in hypocritical

worship that compounded guilt rather than atoning it."[156] These are several reasons why

agricultural offerings are criticized here.

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[154] Klawans (*Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 87) claims, "One who has taken unjustly from the poor cannot properly *give* anything, and therefore the 'sacrifice' offered by such a person is anathema." Indeed, "ritual and ethics are inherently connected—and virtually inseparable—when it comes to sacrifice. Sacrifice became anathema for the prophets not because God preferred a loftier form of worship, nor because the temple service was performed by people who had other things on their minds. The prophetic critique of contemporary cultic practice stemmed from the fact that many sacrifices were being offered by those who property was unduly earned, being proceeds from the exploitation of the poor. Because proper sacrifices presupposes due ownership, a thieving society cannot render due offerings, at least not in the prophetic understanding of these matters" (Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 249). Eidevall ("Role of Sacrificial Language"; *Sacrificial Rhetoric*) understands the reason not as ethical but as rhetorical, indicating a total but situational rejection of offerings.

[155] Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 209.

[156] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 263. In legal texts and for practical reasons, the kinds of animals suitable for offerings were limited to very few domesticated land animals and birds, so it is not as if all species of animals were being killed for religious celebrations and donations. There was supposed to be something reverent about these limited acts of slaughter, but how could it be so when social injustices and theological distortions were involved? For positive ecological and theological aspects of animal offerings, see Morgan, "Sacrifice"; Wirzba, "Priestly Approach." With so many misconceptions about the function of these offerings, I believe we no longer understand animal "sacrifice" in North America and should stop using the term unless we define it carefully and holistically.

In the next part (Amos 4:6–11) Yahweh narrates his past activity with Israel not
as salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) but as disaster history (*Unheilsgeschichte*).[157] The
rhetoric moves "out into the larger creation where God is at work."[158] The disasters
include famine (Amos 4:6), drought (Amos 4:7–8), blights and locusts on the land's
crops (Amos 4:9), plagues (Amos 4:10), military attack (Amos 4:10), and a natural
disaster similar to the "divine"[159] destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Amos 4:11; cf.
fig. 8). Despite all these events, the refrain throughout is that the Israelites "did not turn
back" (שוב) to Yahweh (i.e., five times in Amos 4:6, 8–11).[160] It is a litany or "liturgy of
wasted opportunity."[161] The recounting of disasters seems to retrace biblical traditions in
reverse order: first the futility curses on food and field common to covenant treaties
(Amos 4:6–9; cf. Lev 26:14–45; Deut 28:15–68; 1 Kgs 8:33–53),[162] then the earlier
plagues and warfare of Egypt (Amos 4:10; cf. Exod 7–12), and then the Genesis tradition
about catastrophe for Sodom and Gomorrah (Amos 4:11; cf. Gen 19:1–29).

The final disaster threatened (Amos 4:12) goes back even farther still to creation
traditions about the God who maintains the cosmos (Amos 4:13), though the wording

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[157] Paul, *Amos*, 141.

[158] Fretheim, *Reading*, 133.

[159] The phrase is literally "like the overturning by God of Sodom and Gomorrah," and this self-reference by Yahweh can be explained as due to its force as a fixed expression or word pairing in Hebrew tradition (cf. Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40; see also Deut 29:22 [Eng. 23]; Jer 20:16; 49:18; Lam 4:6). See Malone, "God the Illeist," 508–9; Elledge, *Use of the Third Person*, 71.

[160] There might be an ironic echo of Amos 1–2 in that there Yahweh threatened he would not "turn back" (שוב, *hiphil*) the judgment on each nation (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6), while here he accuses Israel of failing to "turn back" (שוב, *qal*) to him (Amos 4:6, 8–11).

[161] Crenshaw, "Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity."

[162] The wording in Amos does not precisely match the wording or order of any other text, making it more likely that the prophetic text refers to a common tradition rather than a specific intertextual allusion.

does not strongly rely on either creation account in Gen 1–2. The bridge between past and

present is the explanation and warning of Amos 4:12 that twists a call to worship—or a

call to war: "prepare to meet your God, Israel!"[163] Then the prophet speaks:

> For look, he who shapes mountains,
>> and creates wind,
>>> and tells humanity what his thought is,
>> he who makes dawn into dusk,
> and treads on the high places of land,
> Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, is his name! (Amos 4:13)

There have been a large number of studies on this and the other "doxologies" in

the book.[164] This entire doxology is one complex assertive. It is an explanation (כי; "For")

basing the divine judgment in the past and future as "a reality grounded in creation" and

the creator, meaning that the dynamic of consequences for actions are "built into the very

infrastructure of God's cosmic design."[165] In sweeping terms it identifies the cosmic

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[163] See Crenshaw, "Amos," 204; Crenshaw, "Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity," 27; cf. a theophany encounter in Exod 19:17 (cf. נכון, "be ready, prepared" in Exod 19:11, 15; 34:2). Cf. a military encounter in Num 21:23; Josh 8:14; 11:20; Judg 4:18; 7:24; 20:31; 1 Sam 4:1–2; 17:2, 21, 48, 55; 23:28; 2 Sam 10:9–10, 17; 18:6; 2 Kgs 9:21; Job 39:21; Ps 35:3. Cf. meeting a human king to welcome him in 1 Sam 18:6; 21:2; 30:21; 2 Sam 19:16–17, 21, 25–26; 2 Kgs 16:10. Those emphasizing the military connotations of the "meeting" are Carny, "Doxologies," 152–53; Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, 118–21; Hayes, *Amos*; Smith, *Amos*. Those emphasizing the theophany and possibly covenant renewal (cf. Exod 19) are Brueggemann, "Amos 4:4–13"; Crenshaw, "Amos," 204; Crenshaw, "Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity," 27.

[164] Horst, "Doxologien"; Vaccari, "Hymnus"; Gaster, "Ancient Hymn"; Wambacq, *L'épithete*; Kapelrud, "God as Destroyer"; Watts, "Old Hymn"; Crenshaw, "Influence of the Wise"; Crüsemann, *Studien*, 97–106; Crenshaw, "*Wedōrēk*"; Berg, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente*; Koch, "Rolle"; Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation*; Carny, "Amos 4:13"; Carny, "Doxologies"; Story, "Amos"; Fabrizio, "Funzione"; Zalcman, "Astronomical"; de Waard and Dieterlé, "Dieu createur"; McComiskey, "Hymnic Elements"; Thompson, "Response"; Pfeifer, "Jahwe als Schöpfer"; Gillingham, "'Who Makes the Morning Darkness'"; Byargeon, "Doxologies"; Paas, "De Here"; Dijkstra, "Textual Remarks"; Meßner and Lang, "Gott erbaut"; Cox, "The 'Hymn'"; Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13."

[165] Fretheim, *Reading*, 135.

creator as "Yahweh," a name that itself may mean "present one" or "creator."[166] The

structure of the doxology is loosely chiastic,[167] starting with and returning to the

"mountains // high places of land," the phenomena of the sky in parallel ("wind // "dawn

into dusk"), and revelation to humanity in the center. The picture is awe-inspiring, and

such a piece may have derived from an earlier hymn of Israelite liturgy that appropriated

various ancient Near Eastern motifs.[168] Yahweh "shapes mountains" like a potter or

sculptor and also "creates wind" (Amos 4:13). This suggests that he is sovereign over

both the firmest and most shifting features of creation, both the visible and invisible.[169]

He also "tells humanity what his[170] thought is,"[171] either through prophetic

communication or through natural phenomena, but probably through the latter in this

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[166] For the name in Exodus see Surls, *Making Sense*. In support of the *hiphil* causative meaning the name as "cause to be, create": Haupt, "Der Name Jahwe"; Albright, "Contributions," 370–78; Albright, *Yahweh*, 168–72; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 60–75; Freedman et al., "יהוה *YHWH*," 512. In support of the *qal* perfective (stative) meaning ("He is [or: will be], he exists, he was present," see Hyatt, "Was Yahweh"; Fretheim, "Yahweh," 1296; Kitz, "To Be or Not to Be"; Kitz, "The Verb"; Kitz ("To Be or Not to Be," 213–14; "The Verb," 61–62), however, allows that by the end of the eighth century BC the divine name could have been understood as causative, "He causes to be, creates," regardless of its original etymology.

[167] So Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 216–17; Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13," 135.

[168] See Dijkstra, "Textual Remarks," who argues the hymn is pre-exilic and relates to a theophany of a weather god, not the origins of the cosmos.

[169] Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 182.

[170] For arguments that this refers not to humanity but to Yahweh, see Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 141; Amos 3:7; cf. Job 35:11; Ps 94:10; Isa 28:26; Mic 6:8. Contra Berg, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente*, 287; Story, "Amos," 69; Ps 94:11; Jer 11:20; 12:3.

[171] Paul (*Amos*, 155 n. 151) notes a few "forced emendations" scholars have suggested when attempting to relate each part of the doxology to the "realm of nature." The MT reads this line as follows: וּמַגִּיד לְאָדָם מַה־שֵּׂחוֹ. See Vaccari, "Hymnus," 187; Wambacq, *L'épithete*, 188 n. 3, who both propose וּמַגִּיר לָאֲדָמָה מֵי שֵׁחוֹ ("and he pours upon the land his inundating waters," my translation). See Horst, "Doxologien," 49. See Gaster, "Ancient Hymn," 24–25, who proposes וּמַגְדִּיל לָאֲדָמָה שִׂיחָה ("and he increases for the soil its abundance," my translation). See also Dijkstra, "Textual Remarks," 250–52, who translates (253) what would be וּמַגִּיד לָאֲדָמָה שֵׁחוֹ ("and Who let[s] resound to the Earth his cry"), deleting מה or one מ as supposed dittography and interpreting שחו as a shout from a related lexeme (ציחו*) instead of more articulate communication. Dijkstra's emendation is the least invasive, but none of the ancient versions attest it, and his translation relies on hypothetical lexemes and unattested meanings (e.g.,

context (Amos 4:13). The content of the divine "thought" is ambiguous, if it is indeed

from שיח as assumed here, since the term can refer to one's "thoughts," "meditation," or

"conversation" (e.g., Pss 69:13; 104:34; 119:97, 99) or to a negative "complaint."[172]

Given the positive activities ascribed to Yahweh in other lines of the doxology, this line

seems to praise Yahweh for making his mind or "thought" intelligible to humans through

his activity in the natural world.[173] He is not an inscrutable deity whose character is

capricious and unknowable.

The next line ("he makes dawn into dusk") has been translated in a variety of

ways, but all options involve some amount of light in the sky (Amos 4:13). The ancient

versions and most commentators view the scenario as going from dawn (שחר) to

darkness (עיפה), respectively,[174] while other commentators view it as the reverse

transformation of darkness into dawn[175] or making the sun-disk at dawn.[176] Similar uses

of the noun or verb elsewhere in the Old Testament favor the traditional rendering of

turning "dawn into" some sort of darkness.[177] I would suggest, uniquely, that עיפה is the

ideal contrast to "dawn" because it refers exclusively to "dusk" in the evening, whereas

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"resound" for נגד). As he himself (251) notes, the idiom מה + ל + נגד ("tell to X what") is found in several other texts (e.g., Gen 29:15; Num 23:3; Josh 7:19; 1 Sam 14:43; 2 Kgs 4:2; Ezek 24:19; Mic 6:8). There is thus no need for an emendation, as noted by Crenshaw, "Wedōrēk," 42.

[172] 1 Sam 1:16; Job 7:13; 10:1; 21:4; 23:2; Pss 64:2 (Eng. 1); 102:1; 142:3 (Eng. 2); Prov 23:29; Jer 9:27.

[173] Cf. Job 5:9–16; 9:5–10; Isa 40:22–23, 26–29; 42:5; 43:1, 7; 45:7, 12, 18.

[174] For example, Mays, *Amos*, 77; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 66; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 211.

[175] For example, Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*, 5; Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 170; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 453; Paul, *Amos*, 155. Cf. the syntax of Gen 2:7. Paul (155) argues for the reverse meaning of each term: "He who turns blackness [שחר] into daybreak [עיפה]" or "glimmering dawn."

[176] Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13."

[177] See עיף in Job 10:22; 11:17; Isa 8:22. See the syntax of Ps 104:3 ("He is the one who makes clouds into his chariot") as the closest parallel to the phrase in question.

the closest synonym נשף can refer to evening or to morning "twilight" (cf. Job 7:4; Ps 119:147) and would be comparatively ambiguous.[178] Some take the "dusk" to be a threatening picture of judgment with storm-clouds,[179] a shift to "deadly darkness" in the future,[180] but this reads into the text an unjustified nuance. These negative interpretations assume a theophany background with a divine warrior who brings upheaval and destruction when he acts in the natural world. But even if Yahweh is presented as a divine warrior here, his power is not destructive against the natural world with the activity so far. His actions in making dawn into dusk is by itself the equivalent of maintaining the rhythms of day and night for the world,[181] showing his righteous order in the cosmos. The next doxology shows this day-to-night cycle in both directions (Amos 5:8) and conveys the same point about divine righteousness. I therefore argue that the dawn turning to dusk in Amos 4:13 is not at all "the reversal of the laws of nature"[182] or a celestial shift that "amounts to the undoing of creation."[183] Instead, it is a further example

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[178] Additionally, both terms (i.e., נשף and עיפה) can refer to times that have some light but mostly darkness in them. If true, it would explain the translation dilemma over the noun or verb עיף in Job and Isaiah that is sometimes given "light" and sometimes "dark" renderings (Job 10:22; 11:17; Isa 8:22). The dilemma is solved if "dusk" is an appropriate rendering for עיפה, dusk understood as evening darkness with some fading light still visible in the sky.

[179] Dijkstra, "Textual Remarks," 248.

[180] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 287.

[181] So too Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 140.

[182] Carny, "Doxologies," 156. Cf. Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 288, who claims that "the creator of the world will even reverse the laws of nature in order to punish his people." However, nothing in the text indicates that natural laws might be reversed or manipulated.

[183] Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13," 129. This is a view he finds unlikely, leading him to reject a meaning for עיפה related to darkness and seek it in something brighter (i.e., a winged sun-disk). However, his arguments for a positive and non-destructive doxology can work equally well if the term means "dusk" and simply refers to twilight or nightfall every evening, as I argue it does.

of the creator's royal righteousness in keeping the world going from dawn to dusk each day.

Penultimately, the doxology calls this creator the one who "treads on the high places of land" (Amos 4:13). The closest parallel is in Mic 1:3 where an appearance of Yahweh on the "heights of land" causes the mountains to melt as he moves to punish Samaria (Mic 1:3–7). There are other references to "treading on" (על + דרך) the land in triumph (Deut 33:29; cf. Deut 11:24; 32:13; Isa 58:14), on wild animals (Ps 91:13), or on wild seas (Job 9:8; cf. Hab 3:15), implying power to subdue threatening forces. The phrase can also refer to the ability to traverse difficult terrain, however (Hab 3:19; cf. 2 Sam 22:34). The phrase "of land" refers to the entire land zone of the planet rather than just to cultic high places in "the" land of Israel.[184] Furthermore, there are cosmological connections between a sky deity and mountains as his domain ("high places of [the] land [zone]") elsewhere in the ancient Near East, so this line too is not necessarily threatening by itself.[185] In the literary context, of course, all this power of the creator God is threatening, for the Israelites are accused of injustice, which is a disturbance of the cosmos that will have consequences enforced by the world's divine king. The hymn thus becomes a subversive doxology of judgment rather than a purely celebratory hymn. It forms a contrast with the opening "mountain" of Samaria where participles describe injustice (Amos 4:1), since now the shaper of "mountains" shows his justice in the

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[184] Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 5–6) argues that ארץ here refers to the whole "earth," thus land as cosmic in extent. Cf. Amos 5:8; 8:9; 9:5–6. For "high places" see Barrick, BMH *as Body Language*.
[185] Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13," 129 nn. 8, 136–37.

natural world (Amos 4:13), just as the call to worship in Amos 4:4–5 is echoed in Amos 4:12 in a more threatening way.[186]

Finally, the identity of this creator is revealed at the crescendo of a conclusion: "Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, is his name!" (Amos 4:13). This invokes not only the name of the creator but also the title which refers to celestial bodies of the sky under his command. In revealing the "name" (שם) of Yahweh, the members of the cosmos reveal something of his moral character.[187] The doxology is not simply raw power on display but an "ecology of goodness" in which Yahweh's benevolence and righteousness are displayed in his commitment to the stability, interconnectedness, and life-promoting order of the wider creation.[188] That interconnectedness can be threatened by humans and used to judge humans too, however, and so there is a dangerous side to the created world and its creator that cannot be safely contained.[189] Nevertheless, it is only in juxtaposition with the preceding material that the doxology is one of judgment. Its rhetorical functions consist in "(1) magnifying YHWH's ability to bring the previously mentioned judgment about, (2) proclaiming his right to do so, and, perhaps more to the point, (3) affirming that *in doing so* YHWH is performing a necessary part of his role as the sustainer of creation."[190] In doing so, Yahweh of cosmic armies will enact justice in the cosmos,

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[186] Byargeon, "Doxologies," 51–52.

[187] Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 81.

[188] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 258–61. Consider (259) that "the physical creation reflects a kind of righteousness and justice as well, in the sense that creational rhythms follow loyal patterns of functioning whose dependability promotes the welfare of the rest of creation."

[189] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 258, 260, 263–64.

[190] Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13," 137, emphasis original. Similarly, Fretheim (*Reading*, 119) states that the doxology displays "the foregoing divine involvement [in Amos 4:6–11] as a matter of God

setting things right, and that would be a fearful thing for the Israelites implicated in social

injustices. Justice, whether sustaining or punitive, is a necessary and central part of the

divine purposes for creation, including humanity's responsibility for justice within the

much smaller sphere that they can manage. For Judah, this message still applies much as

it did for Israel.

5.2.3 Character Formation

The primary purpose of Amos 4, as is true of most of the book, is to condemn Israel and

justify Yahweh's judgment on the nation that happened in the 700s BC. To shape the

moral imagination of those in Judah toward this end, this part of the text uses satire and

irony to stir up moral indignation and contempt for the wealthy "cows" of Bashan and

their injustices (Amos 4:1). Some contemporary scholars object that Amos here blames

women unequally for social injustices and generally neglects the poor women in Israel.[191]

But the book does mention women as the victims of military violence (Amos 1:11, 13)

and sexual exploitation (Amos 2:7; 7:17), and the criticism of the "cows" merely

demonstrates that "both women and men are accountable to God and responsible for

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tending to the created moral order, not arbitrarily imposing a series of sanctions or controlling the workings of nature." It is natural justice, not arbitrary, not interruptive of creation's order.

[191] Thus Sanderson, "Amos"; cf. Bird, "Poor Man or Poor Woman," 37–51. Amos has not attracted as much attention from feminists as other prophetic books have. Part of the reason for this is that there are simply fewer references to women and marriage in the book of Amos. Women are mentioned in a few places (e.g., Amos 1:11 [arguably], 13; 2:7; 4:1–3; 7:17). Other than that, there is the structural patriarchy of using masculine terms for ethnic groups, dynasties, rulers, and nations (e.g., Amos 2:4, 6; 3:13; 5:6; 7:9, 16) as well as for God (Dempsey, "Feminist Interpretation," 243–44). There is also the feminine personification of cities (e.g., Amos 1:7, 14; 3:9) and Israel's population collectively (Amos 5:1), but these are not denigrating ("Feminist Interpretation," 245).

social justice."[192] The moral implications for Judah would therefore not have been patriarchal or sexist for Amos 4:1–3, despite the satire at work. The text also stirs up indignation and contempt for the self-centered religious displays of the Israelites more broadly, using exaggeration and sarcasm to condemn these practices (Amos 4:4–5).[193] At the same time, there are dispositions of awe-filled reverence and humility required to accept Yahweh's judgments as justice on Israel. The text cultivates these through metaphors of fishing (Amos 4:3), lists of scary natural disasters in the past (Amos 4:6–11), and a stunning, awe-inspiring doxology (Amos 4:13). The cosmic features in that doxology and the others of the book (Amos 5:8–9; 9:5–6) are "designed to provoke a response of awe . . . . If mountains, wind, and sea are powerful, unpredictable, and dangerous, how much more so their creator. If changing days and seasons, and the movement of the night sky, are mysterious and unfathomable, how much more so the one who causes them."[194] Related to this reverence and humility, it is worth mentioning that Judah was not instrumental in bringing Israel's political downfall, nor did it have the ability to bring natural disasters on its northern neighbor. Those were the creator's prerogatives, and Yahweh's agents of chastisement were mostly non-human creatures and features through whom he mediated the effects of Israel's wrongs (Amos 4:6–11).[195] The only place for humans at the end of the section, in fact, is "sandwiched between

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[192] Dempsey, "Feminist Interpretation," 245. Cf. Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 100. Cf. Isa 3:16–26.
[193] Jemielity, *Satire*, 22, 91.
[194] Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 81. Cf. Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 141.
[195] Fretheim, *Reading*, 119.

descriptions of God as the creator" in a sweeping picture of the cosmos (Amos 4:13), a

position that "conveys the smallness and insignificance of humanity (or possibly of the

author himself) in comparison with these natural phenomena" and their awe-inspiring

maker.[196] Thus the creation rhetoric primarily shapes a moral imagination to

acknowledge divine justice and condemn Israel for its injustices.

Secondarily, Amos 4 discourages Judah as a nation from various practices,

dispositions, and desires. This is because, despite the direct address to the "cows of the

Bashan region" (Amos 4:1), it is a Judahite audience that is intended to overhear the

criticisms of the Israelites.[197] Practices discouraged include the following: living in

decadence (Amos 4:1), exploiting the weak and poor (Amos 4:1), bringing agricultural

offerings that are incongruent with natural disasters or with systemic corruption at the

sanctuaries of the former northern kingdom (Amos 4:4–5), and refusing to return to

Yahweh when natural disasters suggest broken relationships (Amos 4:6–11). Positively,

the justice in the wider cosmos (Amos 4:13) encourages the audience to practice justice

in society, for both natural and social realms are mutually linked.[198] Connected to the

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[196] Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 81. Cf. Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 141. Cf. Ps 8.

[197] See Weeks ("Predictive and Prophetic," 30), who observes, "we may be dealing often with materials that were never intended to be heard by their supposed recipients, and which [words] would have been, without broader publication, little more than shouts in the wind: it seems unlikely, for instance, that . . . the cows came down from Bashan to hear Amos; . . . The portrayal of the prophet in such cases moves away from the classic idea of a messenger or mediator, and comes closer to the idea of a character, on a stage or in a book, whose words require not a recipient but an audience."

[198] Ellis ("Amos Ecology," 259–60) explains, "The interconnectedness of all creation, both non-human and human, testifies to the value of fulfilling the demands of relationships, or acting in patterns that could be described as righteous and just. The concept of a connection between a 'physical morality' that is created to function righteously (faithfully) and a human morality that is also created to operate righteously is foundational to the ecology of Amos."

negative practices, some related dispositions discouraged would be self-indulgence, greed (Amos 4:1), arrogance, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, self-centeredness (Amos 4:4–5), and any callousness and irreverence that prevents sorrow and fear in the wake of disasters or awe-inspiring phenomena (Amos 4:6–11, 13). Yahweh's emotional dispositions are unclear. The repeated "but you did not turn back [שוב] to me" might be a mix of sorrow and frustration, but certainly it is not indifference to the Israelites.[199] This picture of divine pathos also discloses a tragic lesson for Judah might learn: "neither punitive measures nor violence succeeds in changing hearts."[200] Finally, an ethos of solidarity and interconnectedness is suggested by the many interactions between the natural and social worlds. This means Judah could not exempt itself from the same standards to which Israel was held, and it primes their desire and imagination to long for human justice— rightly ordered relationships—that matched the varieties of cosmic justice on display in Amos 4. Justice in the cosmos and in human society is indeed a focus of the next section as well.

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[199] Fretheim, *Reading*, 133. From the human side, שוב ("turn [back]") may not be identical to what we call "repentance" today. Lambert ("Mourning," 141–42) notes that "The LXX, in fact, seems to recognize that *šûb* [שוב] does not quite equate to *metanoeō* ['repent, change one's mind'] and, contrary to common assumption, never once uses the term as its translation, preferring, instead, variations of *-strephō* ['turn']. In short, *šûb* does not appear to be depicted discursively as an 'emotion' in the Hebrew Bible." In Amos 4, Lambert (*How Repentance*, 78–79) proposes that Israel's failure to "turn" to Yahweh was not a lack of inner repentance but a failure to seek divine guidance in the right place. They should have "turned" to the prophet Amos for Yahweh's guidance. As Boda (*'Return to Me'*, 107) observes, however, the concept of "repentance" is defined in biblical texts in various ways, with "relational, behavioural, internal, verbal and sometimes ritual" dimensions. Thus, not every use of the verb שוב indicates an internal change of disposition as opposed to a change of activity or relational orientation (26–27). "Repentance" in biblical theology refers primarily "to a turn or return to faithful relationship with God from a former state of estrangement" (*'Return to Me'*, 31). This fits Amos 4 quite well.
[200] Dempsey, "Crops, Gardens, and Landscapes," 147.

CHAPTER 6: CREATION AND CHARACTER IN AMOS 5–6

A common theme running throughout the next three sections is social justice, portrayed with using the paired terms "justice" (משפט) and "righteousness" (צדקה).[1] Even though this theme is present conceptually throughout Amos, these two key terms for the concept are only found in these sections (Amos 5:1–17, 18–27; 6:1–14). Styled as a funeral announcement and exhortation, the first section in this range shows that justice or its corruption is a matter of life and death (Amos 5:1–17). The second section exposes the false security of trusting in religious tradition and activities to guarantee protection from disaster (Amos 5:18–27). The third section exposes the false security of trusting in wealth and military power (Amos 6).

6.1 Justice: A Matter of Life and Death (Amos 5:1–17)

Usually, the expression is "a matter of life *or* death," but in this section justice is not that simple. Sometimes social justice by humans is associated with life, and injustice with death, but other times punitive justice by Yahweh conceptually requires death for a corrupt society. Thus, justice is a matter of life *and* death, not just one or the other.

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[1] See Weinfeld, "'Justice and Righteousness,'" 228–29; Frey, "Impact"; Gossai, *Social Critique*; Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 34; Mays, "Justice"; Houston, *Contending for Justice*; Williamson, *He Has Shown You*; Baines, "Biblical Theology of Justice"; Laldinsuah, *Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*; Jeremias, "Justice," 21–31.

6.1.1 Translation

שמעו את הדבר הזה אשר אנכי נשא עליכם קינה בית ישראל	5:1	"Hear this message[2] that I am lifting up concerning you as a funeral chant, house of Israel!
נפלה לא תוסיף קום בתולת ישראל נטשה על אדמתה אין מקימה	5:2	'She is fallen! Israel's virgin people[3] will not rise again! She is abandoned on her soil, none to raise her!'
כי כה אמר אדני יהוה העיר היצאת אלף תשאיר מאה והיוצאת מאה תשאיר עשרה לבית ישראל	5:3	For thus the Lord Yahweh said: 'The city that marches out with a thousand will have[4] a hundred remaining, and the one that marches out with a hundred will have ten remaining to the house of Israel.'
כי כה אמר יהוה לבית ישראל דרשוני וחיו	5:4	For thus Yahweh said to the house of Israel: 'Seek me so[5] you can live!
ואל תדרשו בית אל והגלגל לא תבאו ובאר שבע לא תעברו כי הגלגל גלה יגלה ובית אל יהיה לאון	5:5	But do not seek (me) at Bethel[6], and to the Gilgal site you must not come, and to Beersheba you must not pass through, for the Gilgal site will be exiled, guaranteed,[7] and Bethel will become belittled[8]!'

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[2] See Abela, "Suggestions," 68–70, 81–82 for a doubtful argument that "this word" means "this composition" (i.e., all of Amos 5:1—6:14) rather than the prophet's message in a more limited context (i.e., Amos 5:1–3 or Amos 5:1–17).

[3] For the view that "the virgin of Israel" refers to the kingdom's capital city (Samaria), see Schmitt, "Gender"; Schmitt, "Virgin"; Hayes, *Amos*, 155. There are some potential examples of this option in the Bible (Isa 23:4; 47:1; 62:5; Jer 31:4; Lam 2:13), but cities and their residents are so closely linked that the alternative discussed next is also possible. Cities are sometimes portrayed as mothers (Lam 1:18; 2:21), so "the virgin of X" could refer to the population of the city or the nation (cf. Jer 14:17; 18:13; 31:21; Lam 1:15), especially when this "virgin (daughter)" is exhorted to travel somewhere, a directive more fit for a people than for a city's infrastructure (Isa 23:12; Jer 31:21; 46:11). The interpretive issue is related to similar discussions about the phrase "daughter (of) Zion" in scholarship. Compare Stinespring, "No Daughter of Zion"; Fitzgerald, "BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities"; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*; Kim, "Interpretation of בת ציון"; Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*; Floyd, "Welcome Back"; Floyd, "Daughter of Zion"; Kartveit, *Rejoice, Dear Zion*. The connotations behind "virgin" are complex but here the term likely alludes to the vulnerability of such a woman and the tragedy of being cut down in the prime of her fertility (cf. Gen 24:15; Exod 22:15–16; Lev 21:3, 13; Deut 22:19; Judg 21:12; 2 Sam 13:2, 18; Job 31:1; Isa 62:5; Jer 2:32; Lam 5:11; Joel 1:8; Amos 8:13; Zech 9:17).

[4] The translation could be "have remaining" (*niphal*) or "leave remaining" (*hiphil*).

[5] The second of two sequential imperatives can convey the result of the first (cf. Amos 5:6, 14). See *BHRG 2*, 197–98, §21.5.2.1h.

[6] The name "Bethel" means "House of El/God." There is no direct object marker before "Bethel," so it is perhaps an adverbial accusative of place (i.e., "at Bethel") rather than the object of "seek." There are a few examples of "seek" followed by an object not suffixed or found with this object marker, but these are usually abstract nouns or personal names, as in Exod 18:15; Deut 23:6 (Eng. 7) // Ezra 9:12; 1 Kgs 14:5; 1 Chr 16:11; 1 Chr 21:30; 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 19:3; 26:5; 30:19; Esth 10:3; Pss 34:11 (Eng. 10); 38:13 (Eng. 12); 69:33 (Eng. 32); 105:4; 119:45, 94; Prov 11:27; 31:13; Isa 1:17; 16:5; 55:6. In rare instances it is possible to "seek" a place (e.g., Jer 30:17), but far more often it is "God" or "Yahweh" who is sought at sanctuaries (2 Chr 1:5) or by the leaders (Jer 8:2; 10:21) and people in general (Isa 9:13; Hos 10:12; cf. Isa

דרשו את יהוה וחיו	5:6	Seek Yahweh so you can live,
פֶּן יצלח[9] כאש בית יוסף		lest he like fire burn up the house of Joseph,
ואכלה ואין מכבה לבית אל		and it consume with none to quench (it) for Bethel!
ההפכים	5:7	They are the ones[11] who turn
ללענה[10]		into bitter wormwood
משפט		what was justice,
וצדקה		and righteousness
לארץ		to the land
הניחו		they cast down.

55:6; 58:2). The seeking of a divine message can take place at a sanctuary or wherever a priestly or prophetic figure resides.

[7] This is my attempt to bring out the geographic wordplay on the similar sounds of the words "Gilgal" and "exiled/displaced." See Paul, *Amos*, 163, who points out this rhetorical device of *nomen est omen* ("a name is an omen"). Here he translates, "Gilgal shall go into galling exile," and notes some other attempts in German. Another rendering into English is de Waard and Smalley, *Translator's Handbook*, 100: "Gilgal will be your gate into exile." See other wordplays in 2 Sam 1:20; Isa 10:29, 30; 15:9; Jer 6:1; Ezek 30:17; Hos 12:11 (12); Mic 1:10–15; Zeph 2:4. A name of fame would become a name of shame.

[8] There is another geographic wordplay here, probably envisioning the site or sanctuary of Bethel (which means "the house of God"; בית־אל) becoming "nothing/wickedness" (און) like the nearby site of "Beth Aven" ("House of Nothing/Wickedness"; בֵּית אָוֶן) mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament (Josh 7:2; 18:12; 1 Sam 13:5; 14:23). If this is the primary allusion, then the idea is that Bethel would become like the insignificant or destroyed town of Beth Aven. The book of Hosea also mocks Bethel as Beth Aven, the "House of Nothing/Wickedness" (Hos 4:15; 5:8; 10:5, 8). The secondary implication of the term "nothing" (אָוֶן) here in Amos is that the "House of God" (Beth-El; בֵּית־אֵל) would become the "House of Naught" (Beth-al; בֵּית־אָל), as noted by Paul, *Amos*, 164. To this I would add that *aven* (אָוֶן) is similar in sound and appearance to *ayin* ("there is not"; אַיִן) in Hebrew, which would be another roundabout way of hinting at the same belittlement for Bethel. The term און can also be broad term for "wickedness" associated with moral evil or with illicit deities in certain contexts. Cf. de Waard and Smalley, *Translator's Handbook*, 100: "'God's House' will be haunted!" If the term און is instead interpreted as "misfortune" or "trouble" (similar to און IV, derived from אנה, "distress"; e.g., Gen 35:18), then I would translate the wordplay as "Bethel will become a bother." Cf. Num 23:21; Job 5:6; 18:7; Prov 11:7; 12:21; Pss 55:1; 90:10; Amos 1:5; Hab 1:3; 3:7; Jer 4:15.

[9] The meaning of the verb is ambiguous. It could be "rush (upon)" or "burn."

[10] The OG (εἰς ὕψος) mistook the Hebrew as למעלה and is confused (contra Watts, "A Note"; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 343). The MT is the harder reading and is supported by the parallel in Amos 6:12.

[11] Garrett (*Amos*, 143–44) argues that the participles refer to the people and religious officials at Bethel, "where they turn" justice into wormwood (144). I do not find this fully convincing. The chiastic parallelism suggests a broader group of people who are criticized, not just priests.

עשה כימה וכסיל[12]   5:8   He is one who makes[15] Pleiades and Orion
והפך   and who turns
לבקר   into the morning
צלמות[13]   what was blackness,
ויום   and day
לילה   to night
החשיך   he darkens!
הקורא למי הים   He is the one who calls for the waters of the sea,
וישפכם על פני הארץ   then pours them on the face of the land!
יהוה [14] שמו   Yahweh is his name![16]
המבליג   5:9   He is the one who brings about[19]
שד על עז[17]   ruin on a stronghold,
ושד על מבצר   and ruin on a fortress
יביא[18]   he brings!

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[12] See Zalcman, "Orion"; Zalcman, "Pleiades" for the constellation "Pleiades" (כימה) and "Orion" (כסיל). The identification of "Pleiades" is fairly certain, and "Orion" and "Pleiades" do appear in tandem in Homer, Hesiod, and several Mesopotamian texts ("Pleiades," 658). Cf. Albani, "'Siebengestirn und den Orion'"; Müller, "Der Mond und die Plejaden"; Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy*, 229–31. The term כימה perhaps means "cluster," while כסיל means "fool." Cooley (231) comments, "The two constellations' association with each other in the Hebrew Bible makes good sense given their proximity to each other in the sky." In the Talmud these two were linked as well (*b. Ber.* 58b).

[13] Based on the research cited in Joosten, "Tiberian Vocalization," 27–29, I vocalize the noun צלמות not as צַלְמָוֶת ("shadow of death, deep darkness") but as צַלְמוּת ("gloom, darkness, blackness"), similar to its form in other Semitic languages. Contrast the traditional position defended by Michel, "ṢLMWT"; Van Acker, "צלמות."

[14] As Stuart (*Hosea–Jonah*, 343) notes, "G adds ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, i.e., אלהי צבאות 'God of the armies,' perhaps under the influence of v 14." The Hebrew, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic versions have only the divine name here, however, and are more likely to reflect the original wording.

[15] Several commentators argue that the participle should be translated with a past tense "made" in regard to Yahweh's creation of these constellations. See Garrett, *Amos*, 146; Eidevall, *Amos*, 153. This tendency, I contend, reflects deistic notions of creation as a finished work in the distant past, whereas the cosmological view here rather depicts Yahweh as the creator who continually maintains order in the cosmos, "making" the constellations and the alternations of light and darkness as part of his creation justice. Creative acts by God are not always confined to the past, as we Westerners tend to think.

[16] The word order for this verbless clause is marked, fronting the predicate ("Yahweh"), and can thus be translated "Yahweh is his name" rather than "His name is Yahweh." See Amos 2:9; 4:13.

[17] Here I follow the Greek and Symmachus in vocalizing the term as a noun (עֹז) rather than as a substantival adjective (עַז), as the MT, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic do. See Eidevall, *Amos*, 154 for agreement with the vocalization as supported by the Greek and how "it improves the poetic parallelism." Furthermore, Amos elsewhere parallels substantives of the same grammatical class, and the only other use of עֹז in the book is as a noun referring to architecture as well (i.e., "stronghold" in Amos 3:11).

[18] All other ancient versions where extant read this as יָבִיא ("[he] brings") rather than יָבוֹא ("[it] comes"). Contra *BHQ*, I believe that the best reading is not the MT but the versions, given that most lines in the doxologies of the book have Yahweh as the subject (cf. Amos 4:13; 5:8).

[19] Contra Stuart, *Hosea—Jonah*, 342–43 ("cause to stream over") and the meaning of the verb elsewhere as "make shine, flash, be cheerful" (cf. Job 9:27; 10:20; Ps 39:13 [14]), though Garrett (*Amos*,

שנאו בשער	5:10	In court[20] they hate
מוכיח		one who reproves;
ודבר תמים		and one who gives a message with integrity
יתעבו		they abhor.
לכן יען בושסכם[21] על דל	5:11	Therefore, due to your trampling on the poor,
ומשאת בר תקחו ממנו		and (since) a grain tax[22] is what you take from them,
בתי גזית בניתם ולא תשבו בם		chiseled houses you built, but you will not reside in them.
כרמי חמד נטעתם ולא תשתו את		Desirable vineyards you planted, but you will not drink
יינם		their wine.
כי ידעתי רבים פשעיכם	5:12	For I know how great[23] your violations are
ועצמים חטאתיכם		and how numerous your failures[24] are:
צררי צדיק לקחי כפר		Those who are enemies of the righteous, bribe-takers,
ואביונים בשער הטו		And needy people in court they have turned aside.

148) considers it a purposefully ironic claim that "he smiles destruction," the verb more likely should be understood from other cognates to mean "bring about," as argued by Glück, "Three Notes," 116.

[20] Literally "at the gate (of the city)," where public proceedings of legal and other concerns were settled. In contextualizing my translation, I partially follow the Targum's practice here (Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum*, 85 n. 14) for Amos 5:10: "They hate him who admonishes *them in court with words of the law*" (emphasis original). But Hayes (*Amos*, 162–63) notes that "the gate" represents a larger variety of social activities than just legal proceedings. The phrase could be closer to meaning "in (the) public sphere" or "in the public square." My placement of the phrase "in court" reflects that the phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal constituent order in the Hebrew Bible. See Amos 1:3.

[21] This verb appears nowhere else in biblical Hebrew. The versions struggle to make sense of it, either assimilating it to a similar text (e.g., G's κατεκονδυλίζετε is similar to ἐκονδύλιζον in Amos 2:7) or deriving a translation from a similar sounding verb such as בזז (e.g., *diripiebatis* in Latin). As it is vocalized in the MT, the verb בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם is a *polel* infinitive construct with a pronominal suffix acting as the subject ("you[r]"), and the extant Qumran reading supports this spelling (בושסכם). Modern conjectures mentioned in *HALOT* to emend the consonants from בשס to שבס (and thus שְׁבָסְכֶם) based on the Akkadian *šabāsu šibsa* ("to exact corn tax") are not convincing beyond the semantic parallelism of the following line (contra Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 228; Eidevall, *Amos*, 154). As Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 500) put it, "It is a very long shot to import into Hebrew a technical word from Akkadian, especially when that word itself has to be rearranged." Even more speculative are the emendations proposed by Pinker, "Observations ... Part III," 171–72. More likely is the suggestion to read בּוּסְכֶם ("your crushing/trampling") as a *qal* infinitive from בסס/בוס. See Fleischer, *Menschenverkäufern*, 164–69; Pleins, *Social Visions*, 372 for more discussion. As Gelston notes in *BHQ*, drawing on Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 194–95, the two sibilants in the MT may derive from an original spelling of the verb with שׂ that was standardized to ס without removing the older consonant, as seems to be the case in the combination of שׂס in Neh 7:52; 11:13. Thus, I argue that an original reading of בּוּסְכֶם ("your trampling") from בוס was standardized to *בּוּשַׂסְכֶם (cf. Neh 7:52; 11:13) and then vocalized as a *polel* (cf. Isa 63:18; Jer 12:10) with a slight shift in the sibilant sound (בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם) by the time of the Qumran scroll and the proto-Masoretic tradition. Cf. Niehaus, "Amos," 420.

[22] The singular is more likely than the plural attested in the Greek and Syriac.

[23] The word order is fronted compared to normal, verbless (nominal) clauses. See Amos 2:9.

[24] My translation "failures" instead of "sins" potentially conveys the range of meanings better, especially in priestly literature where the verb or noun from חטא is not always about moral "sins" but sometimes about ritual "failures" to avoid contact or conditions related to unclean or dead things. See Boda (*Severe Mercy*, 52–53, 61), though he does not translate the term as "failures" because of this flexibility.

לכן המשכיל בעת ההיא ידם כי עת   5:13   Therefore, even the successful[25] at that time will be
רעה היא   silent[26], for it will be a disastrous[27] time indeed.[28]

דרשו טוב ואל רע למען תחיו   5:14   Seek good, and not evil, in order that you may live
ויהי כן יהוה אלהי צבאות אתכם[29]   and so[30] Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, may be 'with
כאשר אמרתם   you,' just as you have said (that he is)!

שנאו[31] רע ואהבו טוב   5:15   Hate evil and love good,
והציגו בשער משפט   and in court set up justice!
אולי יחנן[32] יהוה אלהי צבאות   Perhaps Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, will be merciful
שארית יוסף   to the remnant[33] of Joseph.

The offering for such failures (i.e., חטאת) is better translated as a "purification offering" if the result is in view or as a "failure offering" (my translation) if the reason for the offering is in view. It would be inappropriate to defend the translation "failure" or "error" based on the more concrete uses in Judg 20:16; Job 5:24; Prov 8:35; 19:2. As Boda (Boda, "Sin," 713) rightly observes, the terms for sin or evil in the Old Testament are used in such diverse ways that they cannot all be reduced to one basic or lexical meaning. In general, he defines the concept, not the lexeme, of "sin" as "a violation in thought, word or deed against another party (divine, human, creation) that breaks a divinely ordered norm" (713).

[25] The translation of the term המשכיל is debated, but "even" shows that it is fronted in the word order. Cf. Amos 1:2. See the rhetorical analysis below for the semantics of the term "successful."

[26] Ambiguity remains between an active reading (יִדֹּם qal, "will be silent") and a passive one (יִדַּם niphal, "will be silenced"), vocalized identically. I favor the former in light of other disasters where silence is appropriate in light of the death toll (e.g., Amos 6:10; 8:3). See more on this verb later.

[27] Whether an adjective or a noun, my understanding of "disastrous" matches the usage of רעה in Amos to refer to a disaster brought by God (e.g., Amos 3:6; 6:3; 9:4, 10) rather than to moral evil by humans (cf. Goff, "Awe, Wordlessness," 639–43). The term only means "moral evil" in the exhortations (i.e., Amos 5:14–15).

[28] The word "indeed" shows the emphatic fronting of "a disastrous time." Cf. Amos 2:9; 5:20; 7:2.

[29] This line likely alludes to a formulaic benediction that was used to wish Yahweh's presence with worshipers at Bethel and at other sanctuaries. See other benedictions invoking divine presence such as Exod 18:19; Josh 1:17; Ruth 2:4; 1 Sam 17:37; 20:13; 2 Sam 14:17; 1 Chr 22:11, 16; 2 Chr 19:11. Cf. Exod 10:10. All of these blessings use the common preposition "with" (עם). In contrast, Amos 5:14 uses a different preposition for "with" (את), one only found elsewhere referring to divine presence with people in a *minority* of instances (e.g., Gen 21:20; 24:40; 39:2–3, 21, 23; Num 14:9; Josh 6:27; Judg 1:19; Ps 67:2 [Eng. 1]; Isa 43:2, 5; Jer 30:11; 42:11; 46:28; Ezek 34:30; Hag 1:13; 2:4). Besides Haggai (Hag 1:13; 2:4, 5), none of the other prophetic books in the Twelve use "with" (את) in this manner to denote divine presence. I would argue that the choice of this preposition in Amos 5:14 was not accidental but reflects authentic covenant traditions and patriarchal theophany traditions incorporated into the religious language at Bethel. The preposition appears dozens of times in the idiom for making or confirming a covenant "with" another party (e.g., Gen 6:18; 9:9–11; 15:18; 17:4, 19; 32:11; Exod 2:24; 6:4; Lev 26:9, 44; Deut 29:13–14; 2 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:16; Ps 105:9; cf. Gen 32:11; Deut 28:8; 2 Kgs 18:31 // Isa 36:16). Most significantly, the preposition is used to describe God speaking "with" Jacob (Gen 35:13–15) at a place named "Bethel" after a theophany. Considering that Bethel is the primary target in Amos 5:1–17, the clause "so Yahweh . . . may be 'with you'" (Amos 5:14) probably reflects the authentic wording from Bethel of the traditions associated with Jacob and the Abrahamic covenant confirmed there in the past.

[30] This reflects that the verbal form (ויהי) continues the purpose clause (למען) that precedes it.

[31] The Greek reads the first four words as the literary audience's verbal confessions rather than the prophet's exhortations: "We have hated the evil things and we have loved the good things!" (Μεμισήκαμεν

לכן כה אמר יהוה אלהי צבאות 5:16
אדני[34]
בכל רחבות מספד
ובכל חוצות יאמרו הו הו
וקראו אכר
אל אבל
ואל[35] מספד
יודעי נהי

5:16 Therefore, thus Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, the Lord, said:
'In all squares there will[36] be wailing,[37]
and in all streets they will say, "Oh no! Oh no!"
And they[38] will call a farmhand[39]
   to mournful dress,
      and (call) to wailing
those knowledgeable[40] in lament.

τὰ πονηρὰ καὶ ἠγαπήκαμεν τὰ καλά). The Qumran evidence (4QXII^g) also attests the "we" subject for the first verb (שנאנו) but does not preserve the other verbs until "he will be merciful to us [less likely: to him]" (יחננו). While the Greek may have used a source text similar to that at Qumran, the Greek uses to an imperative for the third verb of the verse (ἀποκαταστήσατε) and supports the MT rather than Qumran for the "be merciful" verb, perhaps because it is hard to maintain a declaration of innocence or repentance for long. The "we" alternative only makes sense if the concluding clause (כאשר אמרתם) of the previous verse (Amos 5:14) is incorrectly construed as introducing speech, and thus the variant readings are unlikely to be original. The Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic (Targum) support the MT. See *BHQ*. Imperatives as found in the MT are a better fit with the imperatives of the previous verse and the material following this present verse, material which does not suggest any rhetorical awareness of repentance by the Israelites here.

[32] Qumran has "he will be merciful to us" (יחננו). Compare this verb with the third-person singular suffix in Job 33:24 (וַיְחֻנֶּנּוּ) and Isa 27:11 (יְחֻנֶּנּוּ) and with the first-person plural suffix in Pss 67:2 (Eng. 1) (יְחָנֵּנוּ); 127:2–3 (חָנֵנוּ, שֶׁיְחָנֵּנוּ); Isa 33:2 (חָנֵּנוּ); Mal 1:9 (וִיחָנֵּנוּ). Some Greek manuscripts have "he may be merciful *to you*" (ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς). As in the discussion above for the earlier verbs, the MT is superior in light of the wider context. See *BHQ*, which notes that the (original) Greek, Latin, and Syriac support the MT on this verb.

[33] Could "remnant of Joseph" be vocative rather than the object of the verb? Only if the Qumran reading is followed: "Perhaps Yahweh . . . will be merciful to us [יחננו], O remnant of Joseph." Again, this reading is not likely to be original compared to the MT, for the finite verb in the *qal* always takes an object.

[34] For the versions that preserve this stretch of text, not all include this term "my/the Lord." This line starts the final part of the chiasm (Amos 5:16–17, mirroring Amos 5:1–3), so the long series of divine titles here is fitting for introducing this section in a climactic way. The MT is arguably original. For discussion of the titles in Amos, see Dempster, "The Lord Is His Name"; Tromp, "Amos," 56–85; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 617–18, 718. Dempster ("The Lord Is His Name," 180) rightly calls the elaborate string of titles in this verse a case of "appellative overkill." But see Möller's assessment (*Prophet in Debate*, 79–82) that Dempster overstates the function of these longer titles: "rather than viewing them as structural markers, it seems preferable to regard them as another example of rhetorical highlighting" (82), because the titles do not always appear at points of closure in the book.

[35] The MT has "and wailing to" (ומספד אל) rather than "and to wailing" (ואל מספד), while the ancient versions all struggle to make sense of the awkward construction. Modern commentators are similarly divided: Niehaus ("Amos," 424): and [they will call], 'Wailing!' to the professional mourners"; Andersen and Freedman (*Amos*, 512): "and let them summon the field hands to mourning and lamentation—to those trained in wailing." Clines in *DCH* can only make sense of the construction by translating the preposition אל as "alongside" rather than "to," which would match its use in the parallel line ("to," as in "call/summon *to* [an activity]"): "and they will call a farmworker to lamentation and mourning alongside the experts in dirge." Clines does acknowledge the possible emendation: "and to mourning the experts in dirge." I favor this emendation (contra *BHQ*) along with the Latin and Syriac (reflecting ואל מספד), which makes sense and fits the chiastic structure of the couplet better than the MT does.

5:17 וּבְכָל־כְּרָמִים מִסְפֵּד   And in all vineyards there will be wailing,
כִּי־אֶעֱבֹר בְּקִרְבְּךָ אָמַר יְהוָה   for I will pass through your midst,' Yahweh said."

6.1.2 Creation Rhetoric

Given the threatening encounter between Israel and Yahweh pictured at the end of the

previous section (Amos 4:12–13), this present text (Amos 5:1–17) opens with a call to

"hear" a "funeral chant" for Israel (Amos 5:1). This starts a new section with an

elaborate, symmetrical structure that scholars have long noticed. The opening and closing

parts (A and A', Amos 5:1–3, 16–17) make announcements of judgment through the use

of lament. These bookends suggest that the entire section is an announcement of

judgment in terms of its functional genre, and so a shadow of coming judgment rests over

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[36] Garrett (*Amos*, 160) claims: "This is a nominal (verbless) clause; subsequent verbs indicate that it should be regarded as predictive."

[37] "Wailing" (מספד) refers to public rituals of grieving a national or personal tragedy upon hearing about or commemorating that loss (e.g., Gen 23:2; 50:10; 1 Sam 25:1; 28:3; 2 Sam 1:12; 3:31; 11:26; 1 Kgs 13:29–30; 14:13, 18). Dictionaries such as *TDOT* (Scharbert, "סָפַד *sāpad*") refer to some elements that are entailed in this term, including beating one's chest (Isa 32:12) and crying out short exclamations or sounds (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 6:26; 22:18; 34:5; Amos 5:16; Mic 1:8), sounds that were not part of a formal dirge (קינה) chanted at someone's funeral (2 Sam 1:17–27; 3:33–34; cf. Amos 5:1–2). Although the term is closely related to the "mournful dress" (אבל), public "wailing" lasted a shorter time, whereas the mourning rituals could last for several days and involved dressing in a manner expressing grief (Gen 50:10; Deut 34:8; 2 Sam 14:2).

[38] Niehaus ("Amos," 425): "The subject of this verb is probably the same as that for יאמרו (they will say), that is, the citizens who throng the streets crying out in lamentation. These people will cry to the farmers who are outside the city limits, as well as to the professional mourners, to join them in their outpouring of woe."

[39] Based on Isa 22:12, Paul (*Amos*, 179) argues that it is preferable to understand this noun as the object rather than the collective subject of the verb "call." Compare Jer 14:4; Joel 1:11. I use his translation ("farmhand") rather than "farmer" based on other Semitic languages and on the instances in the Bible where such "farmhands" work on land that they do not own (e.g., Isa 61:5; 2 Chr 26:10). Alternatively, it is possible that the noun means "grave-digger" from כרה ("to dig, hew"). Cf. Glück, "Three Notes," 116–19.

[40] There were professional mourners in Israelite and other cultures. See Paul, *Amos*, 180.

the inner parts of the chiasm: the exhortations (B and B′), the accusations (C and C′), and

the central doxology (D and D′). The chiastic order of parallel themes is quite striking:

A. Lament over the death of the nation (5:1–3)
  B. Call to seek Yahweh and live (5:4–6)
    C. Accusations of no justice (5:7)
      D. Hymn to Yahweh (5:8a–e)
        E. "Yahweh is his name" (5:8f)
      D′. Hymn to Yahweh (5:9)
    C′. Accusations of no justice (5:10–13)
  B′. Call to seek Yahweh and live (5:14–15)
A′. Lament over the death of the nation (5:16–17)[41]

The initial lament (part A, Amos 5:1–3) includes a summons to hear (Amos 5:1; a

directive speech act), a prophetic lament (Amos 5:2; assertive-expressive), and an

explanatory citation ("for thus . . . Yahweh said") presenting a forewarning to the

rhetorical audience (Amos 5:3, all assertives). As commentators rightly point out, the

lament itself (Amos 5:2) is ironic in applying a funeral genre to Israel while the kingdom

still has its independence—"Funeral music before the death has occurred!"[42] Like other

uses of the so-called "prophetic perfect," a future situation is portrayed using verbs that

are typically used for complete or past actions.[43] Such usage could also be called a

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[41] Lessing, *Amos*, 297. Ultimately, the outline is based on the seminal work of de Waard, "Chiastic Structure." Cf. also de Waard and Smalley, *Translator's Handbook*, 189–93; Smalley, "Recursion Patterns"; Tromp, "Amos"; Wicke, "Two Perspectives"; Widbin, "Center Structures"; Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 157–80; Dorsey, "Literary Architecture"; Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 277–86; Bovati and Meynet, *Le livre du prophète Amos*; Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 168–308. Furthermore, as Hubbard (*Joel and Amos*, 173 n. 20) notes, "The overall chiastic structure is matched by a profusion of specific chiastic patterns in several of the verses [such as Amos 5:5, 7–12, 14–16]."

[42] Fretheim, *Reading*, 135.

[43] Cf. Pullin, "Prophetic Perfect"; Klein, "Prophetic Perfect"; Rogland, *Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal*; Carver, "Reconsideration"; Carver, "Reconsidering the So-Called Prophetic Perfect." Depending on the theory of the Hebrew verbal system adopted, scholars usually either explain the "prophetic perfect" as an event portrayed as complete despite its incomplete state at the speech-time or as an event portrayed as past relative to a future reference-time. Either way, the usage is rhetorically powerful.

"prophetic assertive."[44] The only strong reference to the nonhuman creation is to the

"soil" (אדמה) on which the virgin population lies abandoned[45] to its death (Amos 5:2).[46]

The "soil" is not a source of fertility or security for Israel.[47] Instead, it serves to portray

the mortal wounding and decimation of the populace as a certainty, a point reinforced by

the military defeat forewarned as the divine explanation for the lament (Amos 5:3).

In the next part (part B, Amos 5:4–6), the prophetic voice reports another oracle

("Thus Yahweh said"), but this time it consists of exhortations to seek Yahweh and not to

seek the sanctuaries of the northern and southern Hebrew kingdoms. After these

exhortations (directives: advising and warning), a positive outcome of survival ("so you

can live") is the motivation for seeking Yahweh (Amos 5:4, 6), and harmful events are

the explanations and forewarnings asserted behind the warnings against seeking out

Yahweh at the religious sanctuaries (Amos 5:5–6). These sanctuaries *were* the typical

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[44] See Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*, 85. Holroyd defines this newly minted phrase as follows: "To adapt the use of the prophetic perfect to the language of speech act theory, I will refer to such instances as 'prophetic assertives.' I use the phrase 'prophetic assertive' to refer to the word from the prophet that, at surface level, simply describes a state of affairs—which typically is not true at the particular time of utterance—and that also functions, according to indirect speech act theory, as a commissive: the self-committing or promising to bring about those states of affairs. In a prophetic assertive, the prophet presents future events as actions of the past or present in order to emphasize YHWH's commitment to bring those future events to pass."

[45] Cf. 2 Kgs 21:14; Isa 2:6; 32:14; Jer 7:29; 12:4; 23:33. A different preposition is used if the sense is closer to "thrown down" or "cast away" (e.g., Jer 34:29; Ezek 32:4). The verb could mean "spread out" over the land, but this sense is always positive elsewhere (cf. Judg 15:9; 1 Sam 30:16; 2 Sam 5:8, 22; Isa 16:8).

[46] Some argue the term אדמה here refers to the territory of Israel (Mays, *Amos*, 84; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 81), while others prefer "soil" (Paul, *Amos*, 157; Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*). The senses probably overlap, as suggested by Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 8).

[47] With the vineyards of Amos 5:17, the "soil" and the "virgin" (Amos 5:2) have in common a "sinnlosen Fruchtbarkeit," a meaningless fertility that is ruined or wasted (Keita, *Gottes Land*, 258 n. 7).

means of "seeking" Yahweh, however, so how were the Israelites to seek their God?[48]

This part offers no clear answer, but the parallel part of the chiasm (B', Amos 5:14–15)

offers more clues. At the very least, the audience would have understood that the

practices condemned in the following pair of parts (C and C', Amos 5:7, 10–13) would be

the opposite of seeking Yahweh. The sanctuary at Bethel is particularly singled out as

taboo, and the creation rhetoric in this section consists of the metaphorical comparison of

Yahweh to a "fire" that could consume both the kingdom ("the house of Joseph") and its

most honorable sanctuary ("Bethel"; Amos 5:6). Fire is one of the most frequent

phenomena of the natural world mentioned in the book of Amos, whether as literal fire

(Amos 1:4 ,7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; 7:4), an implicit aspect of something burning (Amos 2:1;

4:5; 5:22; 6:10), or as a metaphor for destruction (Amos 4:11; 5:6). Such language makes

the exhorting into a life-or-death issue for the rhetorical audience.

The placement and meaning of the next set of parallel parts (C and C', Amos 5:7,

10–13) cannot be understood apart from each other and apart from their relation to the

central doxology of Amos 5:8–9 (D and D'). Consider a more specific version of the

chiasm for these parts:

C. Accusing the oppressors (5:7)
    D. Justifying the God who creates and sustains (5:8)
        E. Proclaiming his identity (5:8)
    D'. Justifying the God who destroys (5:9)
C'. Accusing and sentencing the oppressors (5:10–13)[49]

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[48] See Noble ("Remnant in Amos 3–6," 129): "For many of Amos' contemporaries . . . this would have been extremely perplexing, since the sanctuary was widely regarded as the primary place at which to seek Yahweh."

[49] This is modified from Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 222.

The unjust practices of which people are accused in Amos 5:7 and 5:10–13 are contrasted

with the justice displayed by Yahweh as cosmic creator. At first (Amos 5:7), there is not

much detail on the identity of these people being accused of injustice. There is creation

rhetoric in the metaphors used to depict their deeds, however. These people "turn into

bitter wormwood what was justice, and righteousness to the land they cast down" (Amos

5:7). The "bitter wormwood" (לענה) is traditionally translated as "wormwood," and it had

bitter juice that was toxic in large enough quantities (Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15; see fig.

9).[50] As the structure shows above, this verse is related in chiastic fashion to Amos 5:10–

13, meaning that the "wormwood" accusation has to do with legal injustice in court

(Amos 5:7). Legal cases about land and debt should have been fair and life-giving to the

poor, the sort of "justice" (משפט) that the Israelites knew about from the natural order

and from their written traditions.[51] The powerful are accused of turning the edible plant

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[50] The species may have been *Artemisia judaica* or *alba*, according to UBS, *Fauna and Flora*, 198. Hayes (*Amos*, 160): "[Wormwood] is a bush-like plant of the *Artemisia* genus whose pulp has a sharply bitter taste (see [Amos 5:7;] 6:12). The plant yields a slightly aromatic dark green oil used in absinthe liqueur."

[51] By the "natural order" I argue that the Israelites could see the regularity of life-giving phenomena in the natural world as examples of goodness and rightly ordered relationships (צדקה, "righteousness") thanks to Yahweh. Society and law were either aligned with this order or neglected it to the peril of human society (Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation," 107–108). As Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 202) puts it, "Amos' view of . . . [righteousness or justice] might come in part from his understanding of creation, the cosmos." By "written traditions," I argue that the book of Amos drew on ideas in common with those in the laws of the Pentateuch without directly quoting from any of them. Exodus has the more concentrated vocabulary in common with Amos concerning legal justice for the innocent and guilty (Exod 23:6–8) compared to Deuteronomy's scattered treatment of legal משפט, which likewise prohibits partiality, bribery, and depriving the vulnerable of just verdicts (Deut 1:17; 10:17–18; 16:18–20; 24:17; 25:1; 27:19, 25). Genesis 18:19 has both terms, צדקה ומשפט, as a goal for Abraham's family, but it is an isolated case. The noun "righteousness" in one spelling (צדקה), the spelling found in Amos, is infrequent in Deuteronomy, the only non-self-righteous examples being obedience to the *torah* "instruction" of Yahweh or having compassion for the weak in a non-legal setting (cf. Deut 6:25; 24:13). The shorter form, צדק, appears in a few places in Leviticus and Deuteronomy for fair legal trials and business practices (cf. Lev 19:15, 36; Deut 1:16; 16:18, 20; 25:15). The verbal and adjectival forms of צדק

of justice into "bitter wormwood," their variety of so-called "justice" (cf. Amos 6:12;

Hos 10:4, 12–13). The chiastic couplet also accuses these Israelites of bringing

"righteousness" (צדקה) to the ground (לארץ), probably referring to corruption of legal

justice as if the wrongdoers were throwing life-giving plants or fruit to the ground.[52] The

pair of terms "justice" and "righteousness" function in tandem to convey the idea of

"social justice," though this can have different connotations in different texts.[53] Here it

appear in Exod 23:7–8; Deut 4:8; 16:19; 25:1; 32:4. None of the legal texts matches the ethical terms in
Amos 5:7. Therefore, at least for Amos 5:7, 24 and Amos 6:12, the nature imagery develops the concept of
"social justice" in unique ways from the Pentateuch. I say "social justice" because the texts convey a
broader concept than simply legal fairness, as the later uses of the word pairing will confirm (cf. Amos
5:25; 6:12; Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 25–44).

[52] Conceptually, "righteousness" (צדקה) or the act of rulers maintaining it could be associated
with life-giving rain from God above (cf. Pss 72:6; 85:12 [Eng. 11]; Isa 45:8; Hos 10:12; Joel 2:23; Matt
5:45), or with life-giving plants springing up from the ground below (cf. Ps 72:7; Isa 45:8; Hos 10:12), so
the second half of the imagery here in Amos 5:7 may relate to issues of "up" and "life" much as justice and
wormwood center around reversal and death. The verb נוח ("cast down," *hiphil*) can mean a variety of
things in certain contexts, the most relevant meanings including ideas of lowering, placing, or leaving an
object somewhere: "put down" or "place" objects or people (e.g., Gen 2:15; Exod 16:33; Josh 4:3; 1 Kgs
13:30; 2 Kgs 17:29; Isa 46:7; Ezek 37:1; 40:2); "lower," or "bring down" (e.g., Exod 17:11; Ezek 5:13;
16:42); "cast down" (Isa 28:2); "leave remaining, behind" or (rarely) "forsake" (e.g., Gen 42:33; Lev 7:15;
Num 32:15; Judg 2:23; 3:1; 2 Sam 16:21; 1 Kgs 19:3; Jer 14:9; 27:11; Ezek 16:39; Ps 119:121); and "leave
alone" (e.g., Exod 32:10; 2 Sam 16:11; 2 Kgs 23:18; Hos 4:17). The closest semantic and syntactic parallel
is arguably Isa 28:2, where Yahweh has an agent who is like a destructive flood and can "cast [something]
to the land/ground with power" (הניח לארץ ביד). The idea conveyed by וצדקה לארץ הניחו in Amos 5:7 is
either that the evildoers "put down" or dropped righteousness when they should have been holding it up in
court (cf. Amos 5:15), that they "left" righteousness behind when they should not have forsaken it, or that
they more forcefully "cast down" righteousness from its position as one of Israel's standards or sources of
life. Because the first half of the verse uses plant imagery, righteousness may be implicitly compared to a
beneficial plant or to the good fruit of that plant that corrupt have "cast down" (הניחו) to the ground where
it cannot provide life for the poor anymore. As Houston (*Contending for Justice [rev. ed.]*, 92) says, "the
loss of justice for the poor means the loss of land, livelihood, freedom, or indeed life."

[53] See Weinfeld, "'Justice and Righteousness,'" 228–29; Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 34. Pairings of
a term with "righteousness" (צדקה/צדק) in the Old Testament and similar pairing in ancient Near Eastern
texts show concerns for proper order in society. Cf. Gen 18:19; 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 3:6; Pss 9:9; 33:5; 58:2;
66:13; 72:1–2; 85:12; 89:15; 97:6; 98:9; 99:4; Prov 8:20; Isa 9:6; 11:4–5; 16:5; 33:15; 45:19; 59:4, 8–9; Jer
9:23; 22:13, 15–16; Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12; Zech 8:8. Righteousness is a gift from the gods but the duty of
rulers to maintain. It is a standard for both gods and humans to establish in the world (Weinfeld, "'Justice
and Righteousness,'" 230–231). It is related to kindness and faithfulness, and "it [often] refers to just
dealing in the social sphere" (232), and "the establishment of social equity, that is, improving the status of

probably refers to the administrative or legal responsibility of those with power to provide fair policies and decisions for the population, especially the poor or otherwise vulnerable in society.[54] While the "land" (ארץ) is potentially a usage referring merely to the "ground" as a spatial location (i.e., downward), the preceding plant imagery and following contrast with the actions of Yahweh that employ the same term for worldwide land suggest that the "land" could also agricultural in its connotation, not merely a directional expression as it is in Amos 3:14.[55] The accusations are only concrete because of the creation imagery used. In the extended parallel matching this (Amos 5:10–13) the accusations become more socially specific: these people hate those who dissent or speak the truth in public forums (Amos 5:10), they "trample" on the poor and tax "grain" from the poor (Amos 5:11), they have the means to construct "chiseled houses" and plant "desirable vineyards" (Amos 5:11), and they are able to take bribes and deny the needy access to a fair hearing in court (Amos 5:12; cf. Exod 23:7–8). In other words, they are wealthy and powerful in society, and are accused of gaining or maintaining their power at

the poor and the weak in society through a series of regulations which prevent oppression" (235). Biblical uses of "justice" in proximity to "kindness" (e.g., Pss 33:5; 89:15; Prov 21:21; Jer 9:23; Mic 6:8; Hos 2:21) lead Weinfeld (238) to say that the tandem of "justice and righteousness" together "does not refer to the proper execution of [legal] justice, but rather expresses, in a general sense, social justice and equity, which is bound up with kindness and mercy."

[54] Weinfeld (*Social Justice*, 44) emphasizes the administrative responsibility of rulers to create and enforce laws for social justice, not primarily the judicial responsibility of judges to give fair rulings in disputes. However, Houston's comments on Ps 72 are appropriate here (Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 161): "If the general assumption in the ancient Near East, exemplified in Psalm 72 and messianic texts, was that the maintenance of 'justice and righteousness' in society was the responsibility of the king, it is significant that large parts of the Hebrew Bible refuse the assumption. Several texts in the prophets offer sketches of the divinely-founded jus society in which the king plays either no role or not the key role in establishing justice; and the Torah, while barely acknowledging the possibility of monarchy [cf. Deut 17], lays that responsibility on the people themselves."

[55] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 7–8.

the unfair expense of the innocent (Amos 5:10) and the impoverished in Israel (Amos 5:11–12). They are the privileged, perhaps including both the ruling and retainer classes (e.g., nobility, judges, priests) and certain wealthier landowners and merchants of the kingdom.[56] The powerful will not be able to reside in their fancy homes or enjoy the wine from their vineyards (Amos 5:11), and things will be so bad that even this kind of "successful"[57] person will be stunned "silent"[58] at the severity of the disaster (Amos

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[56] See Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 233, who notes this complexity: "the guilty cannot be simplistically said to be the 'rich' . . . The afflicted would include the poorest of the urban and rural poor, peasant farmers, lesser landowners, and others who speak out in vain on their behalf." It is not as simple as pitting the rich against the poor. Cf. Carroll R., "Failing the Vulnerable," 37–38.

[57] The noun and verb are confusing (המשכיל . . . ידם), and most likely either express "the astute will be mute(d)" (i.e., "the smart will be dumbfounded") or "the successful will be silent/silenced." The first option, translating "the astute" one (המשכיל), would make sense if viewed with the legal corruption of Amos 5:10 as an inclusio for Amos 5:10–13 (cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 154) or as a synonym for the "righteous" in Amos 5:12 (cf. Lessing, *Amos*, 315). The most frequent meaning of the verb or noun שכל is for persons or acts of positive discernment or wisdom (e.g., Gen 3:6; Deut 32:29; Pss 2:10; 14:2; 32:8; Prov 10:5, 19; 15:24; 16:20, 23; 21:11–12; Isa 41:20; 44:18; Jer 3:15; 9:23; 23:5; Dan 11:33, 35; 12:10). Accordingly, these prudent and innocent people in Amos 5:13 would either keep their mouths shut because "corruption in the courts has silenced men of integrity; they cannot openly oppose such a system for fear of reprisal and because no one in power will listen" (Garrett, *Amos*, 155) or because of stunned silence at the disaster coming on their nation (see Goff, "Awe, Wordlessness")—perhaps even because they will be "muted"—censored or killed by their wealthy opponents. It does not make sense for המשכיל to refer to the prophet himself, at least (contra Maag, "Übersetzung"; Amsler, "Amos," 326). Ultimately, Carroll R. (*Contexts for Amos*, 233, 258) follows the second option for translating the term as "the prosperous" or successful person proposed by other scholars (Jackson, "Amos 5:13"; Smith, "Amos 5:13"). The verb שכל can indeed mean "to prosper, succeed" (e.g., Deut 29:8; Josh 1:7–8; 1 Sam 18:5, 14–15, 30; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 18:7; Prov 17:2; Jer 20:11). This makes more sense of the preceding context of accusations and judgment on the wealthy, so Amos 5:13 would be a continuation of the punishment on the wealthy who will be stunned "silent" or "silenced"—potentially killed off—when the judgment falls on them. My translation combines elements from Smith, Carroll R., and Goff.

[58] I favor the view of Goff ("Awe, Wordlessness," 642) that the verb "imagines a man's stunned reaction to a future moment of divine recompense." This view is coherent whether the verb means "mourn" (Levine, "Silence") or, as is more likely, "be silent, quiet, mute" (Reymond, "Hebrew Word"; Eidevall, "Sounds of Silence"). I favor the theme of silence as shock or grief in light of other instances where silence follows a high death toll (e.g., Amos 6:10; 8:3). This picture also makes sense whether the person or class in question is the innocent but discerning peasant or the successful and oppressive elite, though I argue for the latter. Either way, this verse fits as part of the condemnation and punishment declared in Amos 5:7, 10–13.

5:13). The gifts of creation that were extracted ("grain" and "vineyards") will no longer be available to the powerful. As assertives, the accusations here denounce or accuse,[59] and the sentencing forewarns future disaster. As expressives, the lines simultaneously reprove or deplore the corruption.[60] As declaratives, they function to condemn and sentence the oppressors. Indeed, because of the divine authority behind the message, the accusations and sentences in such oracles of judgment repeat a speech act that "brings the hearers (or a third party) *under judgement*. It initiates an objective state of condemnation . . . regardless of whether the sentence has yet been carried out, or ever will be."[61] An oracle of judgment such as Amos 5:7, 10–13 "has the declarative force of a judicial sentence" in its function as a speech act.[62]

In between the accusations and sentencing stands the central part of the entire section: the hymn or doxology (Amos 5:8–9). In traditional form criticism, the participles here are usually considered to function as praises, which in speech-act terms would be a blend of assertives and expressives (i.e., asserting that Yahweh is the creator God while

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[59] According to Vanderveken (*Meaning and Speech Acts*, 1:179–80), to "accuse" is to blame publicly, while to "denounce" is to accuse a third party of a serious error from a position of superior moral authority. Either label for could fit the assertives of Amos 5:7, 10–12. Amos 5:13 is a further forewarning of the consequences, thus an assertive that is part of the sentencing (declarative).

[60] According to Vanderveken (*Meaning and Speech Acts*, 1:217), to "reprove" is to express strong disapproval or blame of someone who did something wrong intentionally, while to "deplore" includes reproving with a deep level of discontent or sorrow.

[61] Houston, "What Did the Prophets," 180, emphasis in the original.

[62] Houston, "What Did the Prophets," 180. Houston distances himself from claiming that the wording of these oracles derived from a court of law or another specific social setting. In this his treatment is closer to new form criticism than traditional form criticism. Cf. Adams (*The Performative*, 80): "In one sense, the illocution is an *assertive-declaration* hybrid that assess the addressees as guilty and simultaneously categorizes them as such."

at the same time expressing feelings of praise).[63] Form critics thus identify the genre as a

"hymn" of "descriptive praise"[64] and posit that its normal social setting (*Sitz im Leben*)

would be found in temple liturgies for praising God (e.g., Ps 146:5). Here in Amos,

however, there is no mention of a temple setting for the speech and no signal that the

speaker has changed from the prophetic voice speaking since Amos 5:6. Tied to the

traditional assumptions about genre, critics like Westermann, Wolff, and Patrick cannot

make sense of how this hymn fits with the rest of the section (Amos 5:1–17), and so they

attribute the piece to a later editor.[65]

Here is where Möller's approach is superior, because Möller treats the rhetoric of

the *final form* of the text, and thus can better appreciate how the "hymn" functions within

its literary setting in the chiasm rather than in a fixed social setting in history.[66]

Contrasting with the oppressors who are charged with inverting and censoring justice

(Amos 5:7), Yahweh is portrayed as a subversive creator who has the power to create,

maintain (Amos 5:8), and destroy order in the cosmos (Amos 5:9). Here is my translation

of the "hymn" surrounded by some of the accusations against the oppressors in Israel

(Amos 5:7–10):

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[63] See the landmark work of John Searle (*Expression and Meaning*, 1–29).

[64] Westermann, *Praise of God*, 22

[65] Westermann, *Handbook*, 190; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 240–41; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 132, 161.

[66] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 63. Rhetorical function in a text (*Sitz im Buch*), not social setting (*Sitz im Leben*), is the focus for genres in "new form criticism." See Sweeney and Ben Zvi, eds., *Changing Face*; Buss, *Changing Shape*; Toffelmire, "Form Criticism"; Boda et al., eds., *Book of the Twelve*.

[7] They are the ones who turn
    into bitter wormwood
        what was justice,
        and righteousness
    to the land
they cast down.
[8] He is one who makes Pleiades and Orion,
and who turns
    into the morning
        what was blackness,
        and day
    to night
he darkens!
He is the one who calls for the waters of the sea,
then pours them on the face of the land!
Yahweh is his name!
[9] He is the one who brings about
    ruin on a stronghold,
    and ruin on a fortress
he brings!
[10] In court they hate
    one who reproves;
    and one who gives a message with integrity
they abhor.

The proclamation of his identity—Yahweh is his name!—appears in the very center

(Amos 5:8), in between the benevolent and destructive uses of his power and in the very

center of the chiastic section spanning Amos 51–17, in fact. For those who reject truth-

telling in public proceedings (Amos 5:10), Yahweh has the power to reject *them* via

destructive judgment (Amos 5:9).[67] It is therefore an advance within traditional form

criticism itself to call this piece a "doxology of judgment,"[68] a subversive use of the

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[67] The one who "reproves" according to Garrett (*Amos*, 150), "is a person who openly criticizes corrupt practices during court proceedings. A modern counterpart would be a 'whistle-blower.'" The setting seems to be a legal trial, but the same critique could also apply to attempts to censor prophetic speech that reproves the corruption in society. See examples of prophets speaking at palace or city gates in Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, §16, 18, 29, 47.

[68] Among others, see Horst, "Doxologien"; Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation*, 29. Many since then have recognized it as such.

hymnic genre to justify divine justice.[69] In terms of speech acts, this means that the

doxology is not merely assertive or expressive praise but also a declarative "theodicy"

(i.e., justifying God's righteousness/justice).[70]

Most commentators stop with that insight, viewing the doxology as a power-play

in which Yahweh's power is declared superior to that of the corrupt oppressors—case

closed. However, it is too hasty to reduce the doxology to "simply describing the power

of Yahweh," with its "destructive potential" as the main point.[71] This common view

allows the destructive, punitive justice in Amos 5:9 to overshadow the constructive and

distributive types of justice in Amos 5:8.[72] The oppressors use their power negatively

(Amos 5:7), but Yahweh creates the constellations, a *constructive* or sustaining use of

power (Amos 5:8). The oppressors "turn" (הפך) justice into "bitter wormwood," a picture

of their poisonous variety of legal "justice" (Amos 5:7; cf. Hos 10:4), but Yahweh in

contrast "turns" (הפך) blackness into bright "morning" (or vice versa; Amos 5:8), which

is not ominous by itself. His overturning gives life and regularity to the earth, while the

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[69] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 116. Like the funeral chant of Amos 5:2, this is an ironic use of the hymnic genre. See the genre-bending observations in Dell, "Misuse of Forms," 45–47.

[70] It is common for speech acts to multi-task like this, and there are no rules about which vocabulary will exclusively signal which illocutions (e.g., someone can promise without using "promise"). See Briggs, *Words in Action*, 98–102. That flexibility does not stop scholars from trying to make lists of verbs for the various categories, but these should only be used with caution (cf. Adams, *The Performative*, 30–32, 64–68). See the lists in Searle and Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, 179–216; Vanderveken, *Meaning and Speech Acts*, 1:166–219; Hillers, "Some Performative Utterances"; Wagner, *Sprechakte*, 98–132.

[71] Contra Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 114.

[72] See Laldinsuah (*Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*) for discussions of "justice" in classical philosophy (51–57) and definitions of "commutative justice" (58), "social justice" (58), "distributive justice" (59–61), "retributive justice" (61–62), "restorative justice" (62–64), and "biblical justice" (64–72) which is essentially "relational justice" (73–94).

evildoers only bring bitter death. The oppressors cast righteousness or its fruit "to the land," whereas Yahweh pours life-giving water "on the face of the land" as his display of righteousness (Amos 5:8). Pouring water is not a picture of judgment (punitive justice), nor does it match the vocabulary of the Flood in Gen 6–9.[73] It is rather another example of *distributive* or sustaining justice.[74] Yahweh sustains the right order of the cosmos by faithfully distributing daylight, darkness, and rain. Thus, God's righteousness in the natural world (cosmos) is the standard by which the social-and-moral world (ethos) of Israel is measured and critiqued as unrighteous.[75] This is not some muscle-flexing contest where "might makes right." Instead, the doxology shows that "*right* makes might" in the sense that rightly ordered relationships are the measure of legitimate, ethical power. This is what the creator God does for producing and maintaining justice in the world. This is who he is ("Yahweh is his name!" Amos 5:8).[76] Only with that in view is Yahweh's violent, punitive justice brought into the picture (Amos 5:9).[77] And only flanked by prophet's accusations does the theodicy take on an ominous tone. Creation justice is the measure of social justice.

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[73] Contra Paas, "Seeing and Singing," 258; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 115; Cox, "The 'Hymn'"; Marlow, "Creation Theology," 108. Not all identify the water with flood/Flood imagery, but they claim it is destructive imagery. Also unlikely is a tidal wave (tsunami) in Amos 5:8, as proposed by Luria, "Who Calls," 259–62; Mills, *Urban Imagination*, 183.

[74] See Laldinsuah (*Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*) for definitions of "commutative justice" (58), "social justice" (58), "distributive justice" (59–61), "retributive justice" (61–62), "restorative justice" (62–64), and "biblical justice" (64–72) which he defines as "relational justice" (73–94).

[75] As Byargeon ("Doxologies," 54) puts it, the perpetrators "may seek to destroy the order of the world, but the creator will insure it."

[76] See Boda, *Heartbeat*, 94. The participles "express Yahweh's key role as creator and sustainer of the universe" and thus contribute to the testimony about God that could be called a "character creed."

[77] And even the punishments on humanity in the doxologies are "part of the *maintenance* of the created order" (Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13," 129–30, emphasis original).

In the next part of the chiasm (B', Amos 5:14–15) there are exhortations that resemble the parallel part about seeking Yahweh apart from the usual sanctuaries (i.e., part B, Amos 5:4–6). Here, however, the exhortations define more concretely what it means to seek Yahweh: "Seek good and not evil in order that you may live" (Amos 5:14). This defines the quest for God as the quest for "good," which will be discussed in the ethics section below (§4.3.3 Character Formation). Beyond mere survival, the additional purpose is "so Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, may be 'with you,' just as you have said (that he is)" (Amos 5:14). This alludes to a spoken benediction for Yahweh's presence to be with the worshipers at Bethel and other sanctuaries.[78] It also includes an awe-inspiring title ("God of cosmic armies") that reminds the audience of the power Yahweh has over the "cosmic armies" (צבאות), a term referring either to earthly armies or more likely to the celestial bodies, as argued earlier (cf. Amos 3:13; 4:13; 9:5). Even in the blessing, then, the creation rhetoric lends weight to seriousness of the exhortation. In parallel fashion, the next exhortation is "Hate evil and love good, and in court set up justice," with the benediction then turned into a sliver of hope for divine mercy: "Perhaps Yahweh, God of cosmic armies, will be merciful to the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15). The ominous title ("God of cosmic armies") reveals the rhetorical audience to be utterly at the mercy of their God.

At this point it is helpful to consider the function of the exhortations (B and B', Amos 5:4–6, 14–15) within the entire section. Some scholars do not believe that they can

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[78] See the discussion of the preposition "with" (אתכם) in the translation section.

act as genuine exhortations to repentance (changing one's life), because the coming

judgment seems so certain as to make any change of behavior pointless.[79] The offer of

life in the middle of so many death sentences seems like a paradox,[80] if not an outright

contradiction, and so a common solution is to attribute the exhortations to a later editor,[81]

to view them as ironic, not sincere (cf. Amos 4:4–5), or to explain the exhortations as an

early element of the prophet's preaching before God revealed unconditional doom for

Israel.[82] None of these options are necessary or convincing, in my opinion, because they

rest on rigid views of genre, thematic coherence, and even the function of speech acts

such as judgment speeches. Scholars typically assume that judgment speeches are

unconditional announcements of doom, and yet the biblical tradition also speaks of the

possibility that Yahweh can change his heart and have mercy on a group.[83] Here in Amos

5:15 mercy (חנן) is in view, though it is not a mechanical guarantee, nor is it an offer to

the entire kingdom of Israel. It is "a severe mercy."[84] Notice that "the house of Joseph"

(Amos 5:6) is now "the remnant of Joseph"[85] (Amos 5:15), implying that only a portion

of the northern kingdom would survive the judgment (cf. Amos 3:12). Some scholars

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[79] Smend, "Nein," 416; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 103; Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 144, 158.

[80] This "paradox" can be solved, according to Noble, "Remnant in Amos 3–6."

[81] Representative is Lust, "Remarks."

[82] Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 8; Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 72–73.

[83] See Exod 32:7–14; Jer 18:1–12; 26:1–3; Hos 11:8–9; Amos 7:1–6; Jonah 3:4–10.

[84] See Boda, *Severe Mercy*, 312. The mercy of God cannot be demanded.

[85] "Joseph" refers to Joseph's descendants that formed the dominant tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) in the heartland of the Israelite hill country and in expansive sections of the Gilead and Bashan regions (Gen 49:22–26; Num 32:39–42; Deut 33:13–17; Josh 13:29–32; 16:5–10; 17:1–13). The Joseph tribes in theory were allotted more than half of the land that became the northern kingdom, but their actual efforts did not always match the biblical ideal. Nevertheless, because the successive capitals of the kingdom (Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria) were all located in Manasseh's territory, the ruling dynasties likely exerted disproportionate power with the support of Manasseh and Ephraim over the other tribes.

argue that the language is so strong here in order to shock the oral audience into repentance,[86] and that the judgment was meant to be viewed as conditional after all.[87] The most helpful solution, however, is one that breaks out of the false dichotomy: either Amos 5:1–17 offers conditional threats that repentance might cancel out entirely or it offers unavoidable doom that no repentance can change. As Hunter notes, these exhortations can function as calls to repentance *even though* the judgment would still fall:

> The prophets [like Amos] have not come at the eleventh hour when a chance, however slight, to change the future still existed, but at the twelfth hour when the judgment, already a foregone conclusion, is beginning to break in. In the midst of such a time of judgment the prophet nevertheless exhorted the people to obedience, not because they felt that the catastrophe could be averted at the last minute, but because repentance is what Yahweh asks of his people even in, or especially in, a time of judgment.[88]

Even with the prophetic assertive-declarative concerning future judgment, repentance is still the right thing to do. Furthermore, the speech-act dimensions of a judgment speech are not always what they seem on a surface level.[89] Patrick concludes that the speeches only function as declaratives that condemn the audience.[90] Möller rightly objects that this is too simplistic, tied to reductionist views of genre and speech acts, and he points out that the declaratives may also be contextually understood by an audience as functional

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[86] Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude," 362–63.

[87] Cf. Auld, *Amos*, 65; Asen, "No, Yes and Perhaps." Buber (*The Prophetic Faith*, 134) claims that "behind every prediction of disaster there stands a concealed alternative."

[88] Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, 278. See the section on Amos in Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, 56–122.

[89] Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude," 356, 359–61.

[90] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 121–22, 130, 133, 145.

warnings to repent.[91] There is no need to choose between one and the other function,

since illocutions can have multiple dimensions with indirect forces, as Adams explains:

> Judgment speeches, then, are multidimensional illocutions expressing
> both directive and declarative points. . . . judgment speeches typically assess the
> state of affairs of the addressee as forensically guilty (assertive), which in turn
> designates them as condemned (declaration) while at the same time warning them
> (assertive-directive) of impending doom (declaration) to be executed at a
> subsequent point in time. If the warning is not heeded, then the future implied
> consequences (assertive) will be realized through the actualization of disaster
> (declaration).[92]

This hybrid blend of forces more adequately accounts for the judgment speeches mixed

with exhortations, at least at the literary level that presents a debate between the prophet

and the eighth-century Israelites. For a later audience, the intended effects of the speech

acts would be indirect, as will be discussed below.

Finally, in the conclusion of the section, Amos 5:16–17 (part A′) mirrors the

themes of mourning present in Amos 5:1–3 (part A), this time mostly from the voice of

Yahweh and the people rather than the prophet. After the most elaborate citation formula

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[91] Möller, "Words of (In-)evitable Certitude," 363–71. Cf. 2 Sam 12; Jonah 3. He (376) concludes: "there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the prophet's message is not one of inevitable certitude. That is to say, taking into account the non-judicial material of the book, such as Amos' appeals to the people's emotions [e.g., Amos 5:1–3, 16–17]; the fact that in the Old Testament traditions there is evidence to suggest that prophetic oracles of judgement were not necessarily taken to be irreversible announcements of an unalterable fate; and that Amos' aim may have been to challenge his audience's perception of reality by painting a picture of a radically different world, I believe we would be mistaken to delimit the function of prophetic judgement oracles to giving a judicial verdict." Cf. Möller (*Prophet in Debate*, 144): This "suggests that when prophets utter unconditional announcements of judgment (*locution*), these can (indeed, may even have been intended to) function as warnings (*illocution*), which can (and may have been intended to) result in the audience's repentance (*perlocution*)." Traditional form critics miss these options due to their definition of the genre, as noted by Adams, *The Performative*, 81. Cf. Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 54.

[92] Adams, *The Performative*, 81.

in the book, including Yahweh as "God of cosmic armies" (Amos 5:16), the divine

assertives forewarn of "wailing" in all the "squares," "streets," and "vineyards" (Amos

5:16–17).[93] Both the lowly farmhands and the experts in lament will be summoned to

mourning rituals (Amos 5:16). The creation rhetoric here works to show that diverse

regions of land and classes of people will be affected by the impending disaster. The

mourning implies that there will be widespread human deaths and crop failures to mourn:

"Oh no! Oh no!" (Amos 5:16). The ultimate tragedy is that the wailing will be due to

Yahweh "passing through" (עבר) the midst of the nation. Formerly, that phrase applied to

a deadly judgment on Egypt during the exodus plagues (Exod 12:12), but now it is turned

against part of the people of God.[94] Lament is in service of announcing judgment again.

For the oral audience behind the rhetorical audience (Israel), these speech acts

apparently had the intended perlocutionary effects of condemning the Israelites,

justifying Yahweh's character and actions, forewarning the Israelites, and perhaps

motivating them to change, even though such repentance would not stop the judgment

from coming. For the implied audience of the book in Judah *after* Israel had fallen,

however, the intended effects of hearing this message would be indirect, since the

message is not directly aimed at them.[95] For the Judeans, arguably, the rhetoric of lament,

exhortations, doxology, and forewarned judgment would bolster the authority of the text

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[93] Potentially, this shows a shift from urban to rural settings for the mourning, but the vineyards may have been fairly close to the cities.

[94] See the balanced arguments for and against inferring an allusion to Exodus in Chisholm, *Exegesis to Exposition*, 53–54.

[95] See Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*, 77.

as a series of divine oracles from the prophet to his earlier generation. It would explain

the downfall of Israel and justify it as Yahweh's judgment on a corrupt nation. In

addition, the rhetoric would challenge Judah and its leadership to avoid such injustices

and pursue justice instead as a way to seek Yahweh in their generation.[96] The creation

rhetoric would shape the ethical imperatives to change their practices lest a similar

disaster happen to Judah. The natural world, like the divine Lion of Narnia (and Amos

1:2; 3:8), was still not "safe," but it is "good." The regular and life-giving side of the

cosmos remained a witness to Yahweh's commitment to justice, as did the dangerous and

threatening side of the cosmos. The text in its final form still interconnected the fate of

the land and its fertility with the fate of the human community, even if applied to a

different kingdom (Judah).

6.1.3 Character Formation

With the rhetorical flow of Amos 5:1–17 in mind, I now turn to demonstrating how its

creation rhetoric in Amos shapes the moral character of its Judean audience.

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[96] Hamborg, "Post-722," 156. He argues, "While the composition at this point is nominally addressed to northern Israelites, it is worded in such a way that people in Judah would recognize that it was just as applicable to them. They too must seek YHWH (5:4), and they too must seek good and not evil, . . . and establish justice in the gate (5:14–15)." Cf. Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 295–96, at length:

> [The finished book of Amos] was meant to admonish a pre-exilic Judaean audience not to repeat the mistakes of the Israelites who would not listen to the prophet Amos . . . That is to say, at a time when, for instance, the prophet Isaiah, criticizing the Judaean elite for their social crimes and luxurious lifestyle, announced the divine judgment as a consequence of the people's wrongdoings, the book of Amos would have been a powerful means for backing up that message. By drawing attention to the Israelites' intolerable behaviour as well as to Yahweh's eventual punishment of his stubborn people, it would have pointed to an alarming precedent, suggesting that something similar might be in store for the Judaeans, if they too refused to be warned by their prophets. Let me add, finally, that, if asked how exactly the book would have been used in that situation, I would envisage a public reading, quite possibly in the Jerusalem temple.

First, how do we access the text's overarching moral vision when it is not a treatise on "the good" by Aristotle? We cannot expect the biblical text to include systematic definitions of its ethical ideal, but there is an approach modeled in Carroll R. that is helpful for this section: (1) Look first for terms such as "good" (טוב) or similarly positive terms (e.g., "love," "right"), and examine how human *desire* is being aimed at a partial picture of thriving by the language.[97] The point of this initial step is to flesh out what is portrayed as positive, and by definition desirable, because this will not only imply what is evil and undesirable but also what the competing moral visions are among different groups in the audience.

Looking for broadly positive terms in Amos 5, then, we find the exhortation to "Seek good, and not evil, in order that you may live!" (Amos 5:14) followed by another: "Hate evil and love good, and in court set up justice!" (5:15). The parallel section in the chiastic structure is similar ("Seek me so you can live! But do not seek Bethel . . . Seek Yahweh so you can live, lest he like fire burn up the house of Joseph"; Amos 5:4–6). Notice that "good" is defined by nearby and parallel associations as leading to life, whereas a rejection of good leads to death (Amos 5:4–6, 14–15). In any moral vision there will be some desire for life, naturally, but no one merely desires to stay alive in misery. What *kind* of life is the text envisioning for more than mere survival, then? Based

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[97] Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 104. Note his caveat: "I am not suggesting that the Hebrew term ["good"] is equivalent to the Greek one, but it is interesting that both cultures/languages have a similar broad ethical term to express important ethical demands" (114 n. 5). In his earlier work on virtue ethics in Amos, Carroll R. ("Seeking the Virtues," 85) has these steps: "defining the 'good' that Israel is to follow, probing the book's observations on the virtue of justice, and demonstrating the kind of moral model Yahweh is for his people."

on the parallel between "Seek Yahweh!" and "Seek good!" (Amos 5:4, 6, 14), we next

infer that what makes for a good life is only possible in relationship with Yahweh, with

his favorable presence in the community ("so Yahweh . . . may be 'with you'"; Amos

5:14).[98] In the first instance this concretely means a pursuit of different *worship* practices

(Amos 5:4–6), while in the parallel instance it is tied to setting up "justice" in "the court"

(Amos 5:15), thus *legal* or social practices in the public square.[99] By this we gain a first

impression of what counts as "good" for the implied author of the text, giving us a partial

picture of the moral vision that we are supposed to grasp.[100] Positively, the possibility

that some might "live" also suggests more than mere survival but rather "the nature of the

future relationship with Yahweh" (i.e., whether he would be favorable to the remnant or

not).[101] The text also points to several negative things ("evil") that could be used to define

the good "by its opposite."[102]

(2) Now attention can shift to fleshing out the associated *dispositions* throughout

the section. The idea behind this step is to ask, "What kind of moral dispositions would

be necessary for life—individually and communally—to thrive?" This is perhaps the

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[98] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 87.

[99] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 86. Hayes, *Amos*, 167 opts for political rather than judicial connotations of the phrase "justice in the gate."

[100] See Noble, "Remnant in Amos 3–6," 129: "Thus the two units [Amos 5:4–6 and Amos 5:14–15] mutually interpret each other, showing on the one hand that Amos' exhortations in [Amos 5:4–6] . . . are not a call to an inward, mystical religious life but to a practical concern for moral uprightness; and on the other hand, that [Amos 5:14–15] . . . is not proposing an alternative to religion, or reducing religion to morality, but coordinating the moral and religious imperatives as joint goals that must be pursued together."

[101] Noble, "Remnant in Amos 3–6," 135.

[102] Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 86. Sometimes we recognize what is ethically good "by recognizing what it is not," namely, by looking at condemnations of *evil* in the text (Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 105).

most complex step, since it will seem subjective to look for cognitive-emotional

dispositions of character. It is also complicated by the fact that the categories of

"emotions" and thicker "dispositions/virtues" toward conduct are not neatly separated

from embodied desires and actions in the biblical texts.[103]

Rather than start with a top-down list of classical "virtues" and "vices" or

contemporary labels from ecological virtue ethics,[104] I recommend inferring the moral

dispositions in Amos from the "ground up" in the sense that the physical, tangible world

of creation will often be the basis for shaping emotional dispositions imaginatively. The

"soil" (אדמה) on which the virgin population of Israel has fallen in the funeral chant

suggests a lowly or humiliating position, contributing to the pathetic picture that evokes a

moment of empathetic sorrow for Israel as Judah imagines its vulnerable neighbor, Israel,

lying on the ground with a mortal wound (Amos 5:2).[105] The "fire" as metaphorical for

Yahweh's destruction elicits fear in the first round of exhortations (Amos 5:6). The

accusation against those "who turn into bitter wormwood what was justice" (Amos 5:7)

likewise uses nature metaphors. In speaking of "bitter wormwood" (לענה), the text draws

on the visceral reaction of disgust that any Israelite could "feel" when imagining the

bitter taste of this slightly toxic plant (cf. Amos 6:12). Other biblical texts confirm this

script for disgust when it comes to this species of plant (cf. Amos 6:12 with Jer 9:14;

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[103] Perhaps that is why Carroll R. often treats "virtues" in tandem with "practices" in Micah. See Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 105.

[104] See Van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues*; Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*; Blanchard and O'Brien, *Introduction to Christian Environmentalism*.

[105] Cf. Isa 22:4; Jer 8:21, 23 (Eng. 9:1); 14:17; Lam 1–2; 3:48–51. See the discussion of readerly identification in Nasuti, "Called into Character," 11–19.

23:15; Lam 3:15, 19). The physiological changes related to emotions like disgust may be universal, regardless of culture, but the specific way disgust is evoked here is culturally dependent on familiarity with "bitter wormwood" known in the ancient Near East.[106] It would be like mentioning hemlock, nightshade, arsenic, or vinegar today as examples of poisonous or sharply bitter substances. The text thus leverages the disposition of bodily-emotional disgust as a way of condemning the corruption of legal justice, steering desire and action away from injustice and toward something more pleasant.[107]

Of particular interest, the natural world in the first part of the theodicy establishes the just and righteous dispositions and practices of the creator through his regular maintenance of the cosmic order (Amos 5:8). You can see his dispositions toward justice and benevolence written in the stars ("Pleiades and Orion"), in the regularity of day and night, and in the righteous gift of rain on the land (cf. Pss 72:6; 85:12 [Eng. 11]; Isa 45:8; Hos 10:12; Joel 2:23; Matt 5:45).[108] Of course, the tone in Amos 5:8 is not light and joyful, but only because it contrasts so strongly with the unrighteous deeds dispositions and actions surrounding this centerpiece. Like "good" earlier, "justice" and "righteousness" are associated with the creator as the exemplar, though not in a simple way. The text never uses "justice" or "righteousness" explicitly to describe the creator's

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[106] For discussion of the universal versus culturally specific aspects of emotions, see Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate," 66.

[107] For "disgust" in neuroscience and the Bible, see Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 33, 71–94. Disgust is a sub-category of anger in some studies, and it is related to hatred in Amos (cf. Amos 5:10; 6:8).

[108] For discussion of how "justice" can be a virtue or emotional disposition, see Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 44–46, 141–64. In Joel 2:23, Davis (*Biblical Prophecy*, 108) claims, the term "righteousness" probably connotes "a healthy relationality among creatures, between creature and Creator" that could be translated as "right-order." Cf. Isa 32:16.

actions in the doxology, but that is what his actions demonstrate. His character also

includes merciful favor (חנן; Amos 5:15; cf. Hos 12:5), which lightens the grim portrait

that might otherwise result.[109]

Other dispositions in the text include hate, love, and grief. The oppressors are

accused of "hating" (שנא) those who speak truth in public settings (Amos 5:10),[110] hatred

which is judged by devastation that Yahweh "brings about" (בלג; Amos 5:9).[111] "To hate"

in some contexts ranges from emotional dislike (Gen 37:4) and bodily revulsion (2 Sam

13:15), to active distancing or abandonment (Gen 26:27; Judg 11:7; Isa 60:15), leading to

divorce (Deut 22:13, 16; 24:3).[112] Here, however, "hate" means distancing and rejecting

people of integrity (Amos 5:10) and rejecting what is evil (Amos 5:15), whereas to

"love" (אהב) what is "good" seems to be tantamount to desiring it and choosing it (Amos

5:14–15).[113] The language of grief in the text does not always name internal feelings so

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[109] Noble, "Remnant in Amos 3–6," 137–38: "if there were no such passages as 5:4–6, 14–15 in Amos one could too easily misconceive Yahweh as a brutal deity who was not altogether sorry that his people had given him an opportunity to unleash his wrath. The exhortations to repent, however, firmly rule this out; thus although they comprise only a relatively small proportion of the book, they nonetheless perform a vital theological task in guarding against an unbalanced characterization of God."

[110] Hatred can be a healthy disposition when it steers people away from what is "evil" (Amos 5:15), but the oppressors hate whistle-blowing and those who speak without corruption from bribery (Amos 5:10, 12). They do not "hate" what is evil but what is "good" (contra Amos 5:15).

[111] Usually these three letters convey "smile, flash." See Job 9:27; 10:20; Ps 39:13 (14). But see the alternative reading "bring about" based on cognate evidence in Glück, "Three Notes," 116.

[112] Cf. Mirguet "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 449–50; Nutkowicz, "Concerning the Verb"; Botta, "Hated"; Riley, *Divine and Human Hate*.

[113] For "love" and "hate" as so-called "emotions" see Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 447–50. She emphasizes that there are multiple dimensions to these categories that blur the distinctions we make in Western societies. The usage of "love" in Amos is different from the interpersonal or political uses of the verb in many other instances in the Old Testament, where scholars have noticed a gendered imbalance of power (i.e., usually it is men who "love" women, and not the other way around). Cf. Ackerman, "Personal Is Political"; Lapsley, "Feeling Our Way"; Van Wolde, "Sentiments," 18–24; Müller, "Lieben"; Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 447–49.

much as the rituals and postures of abasement associated with mourning: people are lying

on the soil (Amos 5:2), stunned into silence (Amos 5:13), assembling, wailing, and (by

implication) wearing mourning clothing (Amos 5:16–17).[114] Nature imagery contributes

to the *pathos* of these scenes. There is also the ethical disposition toward fairness or

(distributive) justice that the text promotes in various ways.[115] One aspect of this not

mentioned already is that the punishments listed in Amos 5:11 are a form of poetic

justice. That is, the natural resources ("grain" and "wine" from "vineyards") that were

unfairly distributed to the wealthy will be denied to them. The texts also mentions moral

practices, to which we now turn.

(3) As a third and final step in the interpretive loop, I will examine the habitual,

(un)ethical practices portrayed in the text. The question to ask is this: "What kind of

conduct or social practices are driven by their desires and dispositions, and how do these

habits of life reorient and reinforce moral dispositions and desires in turn?" This step is

less nebulous than the last, for the practices are often related to key social or institutional

terms such as "justice" (משפט; Amos 5:7, 10, 12, 15), "(city) gates" (שער) as places of

public interactions, and so forth. In the text, "justice" was meant to characterize various

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[114] For the category of "grief," see Mirguet, "What Is an 'Emotion,'" 452–55. She ("What Is an 'Emotion,'" 455) observes, "In a narrative about loss or abuse, we would expect some mention of grief—of an individually and internally felt emotion, designated by a particular lexeme. This is not the case in Biblical Hebrew. Such scenes comprise few 'emotional' terms. Rather, movements, ritual actions, speeches, and external appearance all contribute to portraying the experience of the characters affected by disaster. What is done takes precedence over what is felt. The experience also seems to concern the self in its relationships, more than in its individuality."

[115] For discussion of the complex emotion of a "sense of justice" see Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 44–46. Kazen addresses the measures in legal texts of the Bible that restore equilibrium to a relationship (141–64).

practices that all should aim at lesser "goods" and ultimate "good" in the community. In Amos 5:10 we see what the poisoning of justice (Amos 5:7) looks like institutionally: The positive behavior the powerful reject is "reproof" and "integrity" in speech, which implicitly lauds truth-telling in legal proceedings. The practice of those who hate transparency in court has become corrupt, the text implies (cf. Amos 5:12), since they only pursue dialogue if they do not have to listen to dissenting voices. The creator can bring devastation on such oppressors who use their power to build up their "fortress" at the expense of others (Amos 5:9). The powerful are called out for taxing the poor (Amos 5:11), opposing the innocent, taking bribes, and denying needy people a place in public proceedings (Amos 5:12). Presumably, these are the sorts of practices that were indirectly supported by the sanctuaries mentioned earlier, given the function of most state-sponsored religious meetings to preserve the status quo (Amos 5:5). Even military practices are declared to be doomed (Amos 5:3). The standard for critiquing these institution-bound practices and for giving a vision for ideal practices like justice is powerfully aided by the creation rhetoric. The central doxology ensures that.

What I have outlined for character ethics proceeds from the most abstract to the most concrete (moral vision/good → desires → dispositions → practices), but the analysis could also proceed in the opposite direction of what is really a feedback loop, starting with the most concrete practices portrayed in each text and then inferring dispositions, desires, and moral vision last of all. As Anne Stewart notes, human desire

and imagination are central to all facets of morality,[116] with desire as the drive and

imagination as the "eyes" to envision both the ethical ideal and the concrete way of life

that might pursue it. This text in Amos steers desire away from what is bad and toward

what is good, using metaphor and symmetrical poetry to unsettle the moral imaginations

of the implied audience in Judah. Even more sorrow and rebuke is presented in the

sections that follow this one.

6.2 False Security in God and Religious Institutions (Amos 5:18–27)

If the rhetorical audience thought it could avoid disaster because of its religious traditions

about Yahweh's deliverance on "the day of Yahweh" or because of its dedication to its

religious institutions and offerings, this section of the message would come as a shock.

For Judah, their retrospective reading confirms the theodicy that justifies Yahweh and

implies a different way forward for Judah if they are to avoid Israel's fate.

6.2.1 Translation

הוי המתאוים את יום יהוה 5:18	"Oh no for the ones who crave the day of Yahweh!
למה זה לכם יום יהוה	Of what real use to you[117] is the day of Yahweh?
הוא חשך ולא אור	It is darkness and not light,
כאשר ינוס איש מפני הארי 5:19	just as a person[118] would[119] flee from the lion's presence,
ופגעו הדב	and the bear would attack them,
ובא הבית וסמך ידו על הקיר	and[120] they would come to the house (of God)[121], and
ונשכו הנחש	place their hand on the wall (of the temple),
	and the snake would bite them!

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[116] Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*, 6, 171.

[117] Based on observations about the idiom (ל) למה זה in Paul, *Amos*, 185 n. 22; Gen 25:22, 32; 27:46; Job 30:2; contra Garrett, *Amos*, 164, who takes לכם to mean "in your estimation" as in "Why do you regard the day of YHWH as this (a thing to be desired)?" The pronoun זה intensifies the question.

[118] Literally "a man," but my rendering of this and the related pronouns aims to be inclusive.

Hebrew	Verse	Translation
הלא חשך יום יהוה ולא אור	5:20	Isn't the day of Yahweh actually[123] darkness, and not light,
ואפל[122] ולא נגה לו		and gloomy, and no glimmer (of hope) to it?"
שנאתי מאסתי חגיכם	5:21	"'I hate—I reject—your festivals,
ולא אריח בעצרתיכם		and I will not savor (scents) in[124] your assemblies!
כי אם תעלו לי עלות	5:22	Even if[126] you send up to me wholly-sent-up-offerings,[127]
ומנחתיכם לא ארצה		both[128] your grain-offerings I will not accept,
ושלם מריאיכם[125] לא אביט		and your fellowship fatlings I will not countenance.
הסר מעלי	5:23	Remove from upon[129] me
המון שריך		the noise of your[130] songs,
וזמרת נבליך		and the music of your harps
לא אשמע		I will not hear!
ויגל[131] כמים	5:24	But like water
משפט		let[132] justice roll,
וצדקה		and (let) righteousness
כנחל איתן		like a permanent[133] wadi (flow)!

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[119] Garrett (*Amos*, 165) notes that the verb conveys a "subjunctive mood" for a hypothetical scenario. He translates "Just as though a man were to flee . . . Or he went" (133).

[120] Either the conjunction is sequential ("and") or a parallel scenario ("or"; Garrett, *Amos*, 166).

[121] The OG has "into his house," interpreting the noun as a domestic residence, while the Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic keep it as ambiguous as it is in the MT ("the house"). See the discussion about the creation rhetoric below for a defense of the religious interpretation of the building as "the house (of God)," perhaps Bethel.

[122] All versions except the Syriac diverge from the MT by reading a noun instead of an adjective.

[123] The noun "darkness" is fronted in this verbless clause, and this is one way to show the emphasis. See Amos 2:9; 5:13; 7:2. Some translate the rhetorical question as an assertive (Eidevall, *Amos*, 163–64; cf. 1 Sam 23:19; 1 Kgs 11:41; Isa 44:20; Jer 3:4; Amos 9:7).

[124] See Garrett, *Amos*, 169. He argues that the object of divine smelling (savoring) is likely implicit, referring to the scents of offerings made "in" the assemblies. Cf. Isa 1:13.

[125] All versions except the Latin translate ושלם מריאיכם inaccurately, loosely, or elusively.

[126] See Garrett, *Amos*, 169–70.

[127] This offering (traditionally "burnt offering") uses the same consonants as the verb ("send up").

[128] The conjunction introduces the first of two fronted objects in parallel. "Both . . . and" shows this relationship for the apodosis of the conditional statement. Cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 170.

[129] The phrase hints that the music is "an unbearable burden" on Yahweh (Garrett, *Amos*, 171).

[130] The imperative ("Remove") and the second-person pronouns are singular, perhaps referring briefly to individual worshipers or to a priest directing the music. See Lessing, *Amos*, 373.

[131] The OG supports the MT, Symmachus has κεκύλισται γάρ, while Theodotion, the Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic translate the term as if it were a form of גלה ("to reveal"; cf. Amos 3:7) rather than גלל ("to roll, to flow"). The MT makes the most sense here with the nature imagery.

[132] Contra Berquist, "Dangerous Waters," 56, the syntax of ויגל is more likely jussive ("let/may") than imperfect ("will"), since an imperfect would normally be placed later in the clause. The construction is arguably contrastive to the previous human activities. See Garrett, *Amos*, 172.

[133] The term this translates (איתן) can either mean "permanent, enduring" (Deut 21:4) or "mighty" (Gen 49:24), the latter of which would fit a view of the water as divine justice rather than human justice. But against this and for human justice, see later discussion.

הזבחים[134] ומנחה הגשתם לי במדבר   5:25   Were they slaughter-offerings and grain-offerings[135] (*only*
ארבעים שנה בית ישראל   that) you brought near to me in the wilderness for forty
                                                  years, house of Israel?

ונשאתם[136] את סכת[137] מלככם[138]   5:26   And you were (also) carrying[142] the booth of your king and
ואת כן[139] צלמכם[140] כוכב אלהיכם[41]   the pedestal of your image, the star of your god[143] which
אשר עשיתם לכם   you made for yourselves.

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[134] See Garrett, *Amos*, 173 for the unusual vocalization of the interrogative ה. Cf. Num 13:19.

[135] The term should not be taken as a general reference to offerings, since it is found next to more specific terms for offerings. Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 254 n. 40; contra Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 263. The sense of the question is difficult, but Carroll R. (*Contexts for Amos*, 250) paraphrases as follows: "'Did you bring to me (the kind of) sacrifices and offering (you do now) those forty years in the wilderness, O (religious yet rebellious) house of Israel?' The answer must be 'no.'"

[136] All ancient translations interpret this as non-future action, probably complete/past action, which *BHQ* regards as mistaken, because this would supposedly imply an "Assyrian astrological cult in the wilderness period, and [the rendering is] contrary to the ו consecutive" in the MT. Much depends on how the following terms are translated and how this arguably fits or does not fit with the period of Israelite history in view. I do not agree that the conjunction must be taken as a waw-consecutive with a future sense.

[137] The MT vocalizes סכות and כיון as slurs on the names of two deities or images of such, and the Aramaic does likewise ("Sikkut" and "Kiyyun"). For סכות, the Damascus Document (CD-A 7:14) from Qumran links this text with the "booth" (סכת) and king of Amos 9:11. See discussion of this allegorical reading in Radine, *Book of Amos*, 64–65. The Greek, Symmachus, and Syriac have "the tent" (τὴν σκηνήν) or its equivalent, Aquila and the Latin have "shelters" (συσκιασμούς), though Theodotion has "the appearing" (τὴν ὅρασιν), none of these allegorical. Most modern commentators argue for "Sakkuth" as the original reading and equate the god with a minor Mesopotamian god (cf. Stol, "Sakkuth"). Cf. de Moor ("Standing Stones," 10–11), who argues that סכות should be derived from *sikkāntu ('stele'; thus "the stele of your king") and כיון should be derived from *kwn ("pedestal," thus "the pedestal of your statues"). *BHQ* prefers סֻכּוֹת ("booths/shelters") with Aquila and the Latin, and I agree that a common noun is more likely than what was later viewed as the image of the deity or the deity himself. See, e.g., ASV, NIV; Gevirtz, "New Look"; Hayes, *Amos*, 176–78; Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy*, 237–41; contra most scholars and Brown, "Amos 5:26," 77. I emend to the singular סֻכַּת ("booth"), assuming that ו was added as a reading aid for the later reinterpretation of the term as a deity's name. See the note on "Kiyyun" below.

[138] The Damascus Document (CD-A 7:14), Symmachus, and Theodotion support the MT (מַלְכְּכֶם, "your king"), while the OG, Latin, and Syriac read this as the god "Molek/Molech/Moloch" (or "Milcom" in Aquila, notes Radine, *Book of Amos*, 64–65), and some omit the suffix. The Aramaic has "your statue" here to match "your idol" later in its translation. See Lessing (*Amos*, 369) on Molek.

[139] Again, the MT and Aramaic vocalize כִּיּוּן as a slur on a deity ("Kiyyun") or deity's image, this time joined by Aquila and Symmachus who regard it as a proper name. The OG has a reading corrupted in transmission (i.e., Ραιφάν, "Raiphan," an otherwise unknown deity and probably a mistake for Καιφάν, "Kaiphan, Kaiwan," the god associated with Saturn). Cf. Acts 7:43. Theodotion reads it as if from כהה (ἀμαύρωσιν, "dull/dark thing"), perhaps similar to the Latin (*imaginem*, "an image"). The Damascus Document (CD-A 7:15) supports the consonants of the MT but lacks vowels. *BHQ* claims that the original Syriac preserved the correct vocalization with ܟܝܘܢ (i.e., כֵּיוָן, "Keywan"). Either the verse is accusing the Israelites of worshiping foreign gods (or Yahweh in an aberrant way) before the fall of Samaria or the verse is a later, editorial insertion of Assyrian deities brought into the area after the fall of Samaria, as potentially attested in "Succoth Benoth" in 2 Kgs 17:30. Radine, *Book of Amos*, 60–67 supports the latter option. He (66) says: "MT likely preserves an older understanding, referencing the Mesopotamian gods Sakkut and Kaiwan, which were probably unknown to the LXX translators." In the end, Radine (*Book of Amos*, 66–67)

והגליתי אתכם מהלאה לדמשק[144]   5:27   So I will exile you[145] beyond[146] Damascus,' said Yahweh,
אמר יהוה אלהי צבאות שמו   whose[147] name is God of cosmic armies."

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allows that these gods may have been worshiped before Assyria exiled many Israelites, but he thinks it is more likely overall that the verse reflects a post-722 period (cf. 2 Kgs 17:30) and mocks the Israelites for worshiping gods introduced by those who conquered the Israelites. Others would see different storm and astral deities behind these terms (Weinfeld, "Worship of Molech") or would leave the terms as furniture items and symbols without specifying what deities are in view (see Maag, *Text*, 34–36; Jacob et al., *Osée, Joël, Amos*). Based on the astronomical research of Cooley (*Poetic Astronomy*, 237–41), I take the original term to have been כֵּן ("pedestal, stand"), parallel to the "booth" earlier in the text. This object is connected with a god, of course, explaining how the Hebrew tradition could vocalize it as כִּיּוּן ("Kiyyun") as a slur on a foreign god at some point, but if the deity was worshiped in wilderness generation, as I argue it was, then it could originally have been Yahweh or another god who had religious furniture housing his image.

[140] The Damascus Document (CD-A 7:15), Theodotion, Latin, and Aramaic support the consonants of the MT as plural ("your images"), the OG has τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν ("their models/replicas"; cf. Acts 7:43), referring to the images of the named gods, the Syriac has the singular ("your image") to match "Kaiwan," and the other versions are fragmentary at this point. I follow *BHQ* in emending to the singular (צַלְמְכֶם, "your image"), positing that the proto-MT made the term plural later in transmission history before some versions followed it.

[141] Theodotion and the Latin support the MT, the OG transposes the phrase "the star of your god" before "Raiphan," the Syriac has a shift of meaning, and the Aramaic has "images" instead of "gods."

[142] Translating the corresponding verbal form (ונשאתם) is difficult. Either it refers to future exile (e.g., "and you will carry the images into exile with you"; cf. Paul, *Amos*, 194; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 225; Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 251; cf. the syntax of Judg 13:3; 1 Sam 15:28; 1 Kgs 2:44) or it refers to present (Gevirtz, "New Look"; Hayes, *Amos*, 176–78) or past religious activity (Garrett, *Amos*, 174–75; cf. the syntax of Gen 30:40–41; 1 Sam 7:15–16; *IBHS* §32.2.3). Some take the verb as a continuation of the questioning, expressing a question about idolatry that was practiced during the wilderness years (Lessing, *Amos*, 367; but cf. Lessing, *Amos*, 377–79 with the future view), or even about idolatry that *wasn't* practiced compared to the generation critiqued in the text (cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 265; de Waard and Smalley, *Translator's Handbook*, 122; Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 195–96. Garrett (*Amos*, 175) claims: "[Amos is asking] *whether they made sacrifices while also carrying images of the sky gods from place to place. . . . he is pointing out how absurd it is to imagine the wilderness Israelites under Moses doing such a thing. Also, the 'carrying' of the sky gods may allude to festive processions, in which images of astral deities were paraded about, that took place at the shrines in Amos' time.*" Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 171. I take it as a past-oriented accusation of worshiping Yahweh or another deity during the wilderness years. See subsequent notes.

[143] Eidevall (*Amos*, 170) translates "your astral gods." Cf. Paul, *Amos*, 188; Jeremias, *Amos*, 98; Garrett, *Amos*, 175.

[144] Some Greek manuscripts and one of Origen's columns (εβρ') have "Babylon" instead of Damascus (cf. Acts 7:43), but this telescopes the exile of Israel into the exile of Judah. The citation in Acts follows the OG for the most part, and both are consistent in the charge of idolatry throughout the history of Israel (Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 227).

[145] The verb "exile" (i.e., גלה) may play on the rare use of גלל to describe how water can "roll" in Amos 5:24. It could also remind the audience of Gilgal (גלגל), a holy site near Bethel. Unlike Amos 5:5, however, Gilgal is not in the nearby context.

[146] See 1 Sam 20:22; Gen 35:21; Jer 22:19 for the prepositional phrase.

[147] See Garrett (*Amos*, 177) for the implied relative clause.

6.2.2 Creation Rhetoric

This section of Amos (Amos 5:18–27) opens with an expressive speech act lamenting the fate of those who have false hopes in "the day of Yahweh" (Amos 5:18, 20): Oh no! (הוי). The prophet seems to be speaking here, as is common for a new section, and he questions the people about their mistaken expectations (Amos 5:18). Apparently the Israelites expected this "day of Yahweh" to be a time when their God would fight for them, grant victory of military enemies, and restore blessing to their land and families (cf. Joel 4 [Eng. 3]). The prophet affirms the opposite and denies the optimistic image for this time: "It is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). The creation rhetoric uses light and darkness as symbols for positive and negative circumstances, unlike the naturalistic references to light and darkness in the hymns, where arguably even the darkness (Amos 4:13; 5:8) is part of the positive if overwhelming portrayal of Yahweh maintaining the order of the cosmos. An extended simile elaborates what darkness might imply in this context: "just as a person would flee from the lion's presence, and the bear would attack them, and they would come to the house (of God), and place their hand on the wall (of the temple), and the snake would bite them!" (Amos 5:19). The creation rhetoric involves the three wild animals who threaten and finally attack a person. It is possible to read the lines as two parallel scenarios, each ending with a deadly attack, but there is no conjunction "or" or change of subject for the snake-bite sequence, so it is better to envision the same person escaping the first two encounters before being bitten at last in a location of presumed

security.[148] Encounters with lions and bears would have been rare but perhaps all the

more frightening in the Israelite imagination because of that.[149] In the context of Amos

5:19, the "lion" (ארי) calls to mind "threat and power,"[150] the "bear" (דב) is sometimes

"the biblical pinnacle of animal aggression" (cf. Hos 13:8), and the "snake" (נחש) might

have been chosen to illustrate "the suddenness of judgment."[151] The snake may have been

poisonous, its bite fatal.[152] The creation rhetoric serves to produce an "escalation in

horror"[153] or "an ecology of danger: a sense that nature is an unpredictable source of peril

for humanity."[154] It is possible but not necessary that all three animals symbolize Yahweh

directly.[155] It is more likely that the point is that "the punishing God is dangerous in the

way these animals are dangerous. We might say, in this instance, that the experience of

'nature' is prior to the experience of God."[156] Regardless, the irony of the scenario

thickens when the expression "place their hand on" and the term "wall" are considered,

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[148] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 256; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 351; Paul, *Amos*, 185–86; Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing," 84–85.

[149] Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing," 103–4. Nahkola summarizes the archaeological and artistic evidence for lions, bears, and snakes and the distribution of the first two creatures in the ancient Near East. Based on modern studies of population density and territorial range for lions and bears, Nahkola (92–93) estimates that the borders of ancient Israel (and Judah) might have contained about eighty to one hundred lions, living in no more than twenty-five prides, and about twenty to thirty bears. Due to their nocturnal hunting (lion) and hibernation (bear), and due to the tendency of all three to avoid humans, the Israelites would not have encountered these wild animals personally on a regular basis.

[150] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 65.

[151] Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing," 101, 102, respectively.

[152] Nahkola ("Amos Animalizing," 90 n. 30) mentions at five poisonous snakes found in modern Israel: "the Palestinian Saw-scaled Viper (*Echis coloratus*), the Field's Horned Viper (*Pseudocerastesfieldi*), the Desert Horned Viper (*Cerastes cerastes*), the Black Desert Cobra (*Walterinnesia aegyptia*), and the Israeli Mole Viper (*Atractaspis enganddensis*)." Cf. Kochva, "Venomous."

[153] Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing," 104.

[154] Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches," 81.

[155] So Strawn, "Material Culture," 111–12. I do not think the animals symbolize Yahweh.

[156] Jobling and Loewen, "Sketches," 83

since "wall" (קיר) is mostly used of temple walls in the Old Testament,[157] and the

expression "place their hand on" with no object marker is found only here and in

Leviticus (i.e., סמך ידו על appears only in Lev 1:4; 3:2; 4:24; Amos 5:19).[158] Of all the

other expressions that could have been used, this sequence appears deliberate and would

recall the ritual action of a worshiper who presses their hand on their livestock's head

before it is offered on an altar.[159] The allusion is thus a parody of a worship ritual to

critique the worship rituals of Israel. Therefore, in a section that criticizes Israelite

worship practices (Amos 5:18–27), in a verse that has precise phrasing in common only

with priestly literature, and in a book that elsewhere denies the Israelites access to the

altar or its horns for refuge or making offerings (Amos 3:14; 9:1), there is reason to

suspect that the "house" and "wall" in Amos 5:19 are the "house (of God)" and the wall

of that temple (or, less likely, the side of its altar). The temple is probably Bethel,

meaning "house of God," since it is the building that receives the most attention in the

book.[160] Amos 5:20 then bookends the paragraph with a paired rhetorical question: "Isn't

the day of Yahweh actually darkness, and not light, and gloomy and no glimmer (of

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[157] The majority of uses of the term refer to the wall of a temple complex (e.g., 1 Kgs 6:5; Ezek 41:5), and it can even refer to the side of an altar (Exod 30:3; 37:26; Lev 1:15; 5:9), among other structures.

[158] Cf. *BHQ* and Lev 3:8, 13; 4:4, 15, 29, 33; 16:21; Num 8:12.

[159] So a colleague of mine, Anthony Lipscomb ("'He Leans His Hand'"). He argues that the expression was conventional and would most strongly call to mind the action performed before offering an animal in a temple. The effect is to create a parody in Amos 5:19.

[160] Compare the translation "entered the Temple" by Laato, "Yahweh Sabaoth and His Land," 118 n. 7. The person in the scenario might even be a priest who escapes the previous two animals and enters the temple to find safety and resume his priestly duties, only to be bitten fatally by a snake. Regardless, it is interesting that Bethel elsewhere in the biblical tradition has stories of lions and bears attacking people (cf. 1 Kgs 13; 2 Kgs 2:23–24; 17:25–26). This makes "the house" in Amos 5:19 slightly more likely to be the Bethel temple than otherwise.

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hope) to it?" The creation rhetoric uses repetition and poetic heightening to reinforce the
dark reality that clashed with popular hopes and false security in religion.

The next part is skillfully arranged to continue the attack on false security in
religion (Amos 5:21–27), for one of the reasons the Israelites might have hoped for
rescue rather than judgment from Yahweh is their religious résumé. They were devoted
worshipers who brought animal and plant offerings to the sanctuaries of the land (cf.
Amos 4:4–5). The divine voice is abruptly quoted to protest (expressive), reject
(commissive), disapprove and denounce (declarative) their "festivals" (חגיכם) and the
food in their "assemblies" (בעצרתיכם; Amos 5:21)—more specifically their "wholly-sent-
up-offerings" (עלות, for the sake of a wordplay), "grain-offerings" (מנחתיכם), and
"fellowship fatlings" (שלם מריאיכם; Amos 5:22). Even the music should cease, for
Yahweh will refuse to hear it (Amos 5:23). Such complete rejection of worship activities
involves the "emotional (hate, despise), volitional (no acceptance), and sensory (smell,
touch, sight, hearing). God holds his nose, shuts his eyes, and plugs his ears!"[161] The
creation rhetoric involves the various animals and plants that here form part of the
religious system of offerings (Amos 5:21–22).

It is not that the religious practices were rejected because of being performed for
gods other than Yahweh, nor merely that the practices were divorced from ethical living,
though that is partially true (cf. Amos 5:24). These explanations alone would not explain
why Amos did not call for a reformation of Israelite worship but rather announced its

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[161] Fretheim, *Reading*, 141–42. There are even a total of seven verbs for divine rejection,
representing "comprehensive repudiation" (Paul, *Amos*, 192).

complete destruction.[162] Furthermore, the rejection of offerings and songs at Israel's

sanctuaries is not primarily a political move to bring worshipers to Jerusalem[163] or to

dissuade people from taking sides in Israel's competing factions,[164] nor is it primarily an

attack on the worship of other gods such as Baal.[165] It is not even as simple as a critique

against the rich and powerful who are hypocritical in their mix of religious piety and

social exploitation.[166] As Carroll R. observes, it is the privileged and the masses alike

who are criticized for worshiping their version of Yahweh:

> Some sectors, of course, precisely because of their greater resources and higher
> social position, would benefit from this socio-religious reality in more visible
> ways that would have a profound social impact. . . . [But] the nation as a whole
> never questions this religion. Those in power revel in their detestable religious
> practices, even as the poor are trampled under foot and march into debt slavery
> (2.6-8, 8.4-6). Ironically, the unfortunate look to those over them, these very ones
> who have no feeling for the 'ruin of Joseph' (6.2, 6). The masses continue to
> congregate, along with their leaders, at the traditional cult centers and praise
> Yahweh as a god of abundance and prosperity. Life goes on with all of its
> inconsistencies, and the harps still play (5.23). One might say that the Marxist
> claim that religion is the opiate of the people holds true . . . even in ancient
> Israel.[167]

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[162] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 217.

[163] Contra Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire.*

[164] Contra Hayes, *Amos.*

[165] Contra Barstad, *Religious Polemics.*

[166] Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 182–83.

[167] Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 183. Cf. Carroll R. ("Imagining the Unthinkable," 49):
"Powerful and poor alike, the privileged and the exploited, rally together around the great god of the nation.
. . . Herein lies another tragedy—and transgression: those who suffer at the hands of the system are some of
the very ones that perpetuate it and defend it, even to their death." Contra Houston, *Contending for Justice,*
55: "But though it is a widespread assumption that the whole of society joined in the cult, I am not
convinced that this is true for the state temples and pilgrimage shrines attacked in Amos. Prosperous
peasant families from Israelite villages might make the journey to Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba, but hardly
the poor for whom Amos is concerned."

In other words, religious practices profoundly shape a society's views of their god(s) and of divinely ordained identity, purpose, ethics, and politics for humans.[168] Such practices and institutions are integral to every other sphere of human life, and even "Yahweh himself is at stake."[169] The Israelites on an official and a popular level believed they were worshiping Yahweh through religious activities, but to worship a false, self-serving version of Yahweh is the same as worshiping a false image of him or another god.[170]

In contrast to the rejected worship, Yahweh gives a directive requiring something else of Israelite society: "But like water let justice roll, and (let) righteousness like a permanent wadi (flow)!" (Amos 5:24). Structurally, "justice" (משפט) and "righteousness" (צדקה) are in the center of the poetic chiasm, surrounded by language about "water" and a "wadi." The creation rhetoric employs similes that have multiple implications, depending on how the water imagery is viewed. There may also be an acoustic dimension, namely, that Yahweh prefers the "sound" of justice to the sound of worship songs, as ambiguous as that justice might be for either destructive or sustaining purposes.[171] Some think that this section is a forewarning or threat of divine, punitive justice that will sweep over the nation like a torrent of water to purge unjust leaders and

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[168] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 217–20.

[169] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 226.

[170] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 227. As Carroll R. ("Failing the Vulnerable," 42) puts it elsewhere, "It was ultimately to worship another deity—to be sure, one who carried the same name, but one who was very different from the true God."

[171] Brown, *Sacred Sense*, 111. Brown (111) suggests that the overtones might change depending "on where one stands in the water, where one is situated in relation to the rich and the poor."

structures from Israel.[172] Because the book elsewhere uses "justice" and "righteousness"

and other variations only for humans,[173] however, it is more likely that this is a directive

to the audience to implement just policies and right relationships that would give life, just

as a wadi that does not dry up can be a source of life for those nearby (Amos 5:24). The

term "permanent" (איתן) sometimes refers to a "mighty" person or posture (e.g., Gen

49:24; Job 12:19), but much more often it refers to a something that is enduring,

continuous, steady, or perpetual (e.g., Deut 21:4; Job 33:19; Ps 74:15; Jer 5:15; 49:19;

50:44; Mic 6:2). Thus, the burden of proof is on those who wish to see it as a term of

sheer power and volume rather than a term referring to the constancy of its flow.[174]

Berquist, for one, has to perform several interpretive acrobatics in Amos and similar

books to deny or muddy the references to human righteousness or justice.[175] It may be

that in different historical and literary contexts would produce different readings of Amos

5:24,[176] but within the literary context of Amos 5:18–27 and an eighth-century Israelite

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[172] For example, Berquist, "Dangerous Waters." The strongest evidence for this view comes from Isa 10:22 and Hos 5:10 (cf. Isa 4:4; 8:7–8; 30:28). He ("Dangerous Waters," 57) summarizes: "Large amounts of open water typically appear in metaphors of danger, whether of YHWH's destruction or of ravaging cleansing. . . . [This is mostly true] when the passage focuses on moving water." Although he mentions Isa 11:9 as a non-destructive example, he neglects Isa 48:18, which speaks of well-being like a river, righteousness like the waves of the sea. This is a closer parallel to Amos in vocabulary.

[173] Fretheim, *Reading*, 142. Cf. Amos 5:7, 15; 6:12. Cf. Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 248; Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, 113.

[174] Even if the first line refers to ocean waves rolling, it may be in the sense of abundance rather than destruction (cf. "your righteousness would be like the waves of the sea" in Isa 48:18).

[175] Berquist, "Dangerous Waters." He also overlooks Amos 2:3, which calls the king of Moab a שופט ("justice-giver," to bring out the use of the related term "justice" later) and the references to "righteous" (צדיק) people in Amos 2:6; 5:12.

[176] Gillingham, *The Image, the Depths and the Surface*, 8–9, 79–121. Her multiple readings of Amos 5:24 demonstrate some of the shifting nuances that "justice and righteousness" might have depending on the historical audience and contextual boundaries in view.

audience portrayed for us in the text, the emphasis is more on human righteousness. This could be understood as exhorting the Israelite leaders to enact and enforce just policies and laws (i.e., legal and commutative justice),[177] or it could include the entire society with special responsibility on the wealthy and powerful, even if they were not royalty or judges.[178] The more expansive option is more likely, given the surrounding references to religious practices that involved all Israelites, not just leaders. The surprise is that the wadi should be "permanent," a description more natural for "rivers" (Ps 74:15).[179]

The final paragraph (Amos 5:25–27) returns to religious themes again. Though it is difficult to translate the first few clauses, I argue that the leading question somehow contrasts the offerings the Israelites made in the wilderness (Amos 5:25) with their simultaneous veneration of other gods or a non-normative version of Yahweh in the wilderness (Amos 5:26).[180] Instead of their worship being tainted by injustice alone, their

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[177] Cf. Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 25–44; Jaruzelska, *Amos and the Officialdom*; Laldinsuah, *Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*, 58; Ps 72. In fact, "If we look at exactly what it was that the prophets opposed, we see that [the] main wrongdoing is not the perversion of the judicial process, but oppression perpetrated by the rich landowners and the ruling circles, who control the socio-economic order" (Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 36). This might be questioned as a false dichotomy.

[178] Cf. Hayes (*Amos*, 162–63) on Amos 5:15. Earlier, for Amos 5:7, Hayes (*Amos*, 161) says: "'To define justice and righteousness in this text merely in terms of the legal and juridical system of Israel is to take far too narrow a view of Amos's concerns. Certainly, lack of justice in the legal system was one of his concerns (see 2:6b-7), but justice and order in the larger political and social realm were even greater matters for him." For Amos 5:24, Hayes thinks that "justice" means to avoid joining worship at Bethel or Gilgal due to the political factions that were supposedly forming there. It means avoiding "the divisiveness of society" (174). This is too subtle, depending on his unique reconstruction of the date of the text.

[179] Byrne, "Torrents of Water," 1.

[180] If the more common reading of Assyrian gods that are worshiped in the eighth century BC is accepted instead, the creation rhetoric does not change, for a "star" is still a "star" in any period of Israelite history. The very fact that most of the book downplays references to other gods shows that precision here is irrelevant to the main message of Amos 5:26 and related texts (so Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 187–88). However, support for my position against any astral deities in this verse can be found in the recent astronomical research by Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy*, 237–41. He notes the faulty reading of a cuneiform

worship has been tainted by divided loyalties to "the star of your god(s)" all the way from

their early experience out of Egypt until the present rhetoric (Amos 5:26). The sentence

for these actions is "I will roll you into exile beyond Damascus," a commissive threat

reported by the prophet from "Yahweh, whose name is God of cosmic armies" (Amos

5:27). The creation rhetoric includes the "slaughter-offerings" and "grain-offerings" in

the "wilderness" (Amos 5:25), the "star of your god(s)" (Amos 5:26), and the "cosmic

armies" (Amos 5:27). The offerings are mentioned not to denigrate the agricultural

worship but to relativize it due to religious infidelity. The wilderness was a place of

offerings, however sparse, but not a place of exclusive fidelity. The astral symbol to

represent either one or two gods is contrasted with Yahweh as commander of "cosmic

armies" (Amos 5:27), including the stars.[181] All these elements of nature imagery

undermine false confidence in any blessing or triumph through Yahweh or any religious

activity in his name.

6.2.3 Character Formation

In terms of character formation, Amos 5:18–27 contains two competing moral visions of

prospering: on the one hand, the vision of "light" (Amos 5:18, 20) and religious

celebration of Yahweh's goodness (Amos 5:21–23), and on the other hand, the vision of

"justice" flowing like "water" (Amos 5:24). The former vision is based on false

assumptions about the day of Yahweh and about offerings, and its moral imagination

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text that scholars thought referred to "Saturn" and argues, like I do, that the terms in Amos 5:26 are more
likely religious items, not the names of astral deities.

[181] Carroll R. ("Prophetic Text," 93): "the celestial General announces the defeat of his people."

requires uninterrupted favor and blessing from Yahweh. The latter vision is based on

ethical practices in society, and its moral imagination requires administrative, legal,

religious, and relational practices that allow uninterrupted life and worship for all people,

not just the wealthier people.[182] Perhaps the agricultural offerings were being given by

the wealthy at the expense of the poor, who were taxed on their surplus or subsistence

crops and herds and so could not themselves offer things as frequently at a sanctuary. If

so, then the injustice in this section would be religious exploitation of the poor, akin to

the suggestion that "stolen" animals do not constitute legitimate offerings in Amos 4:4–5.

In order to deconstruct the false ideology, the text condemns Israel for its desires,

dispositions, and practices, often using creation rhetoric. This would have implications

for the moral dispositions of Judah concerning Israel, Yahweh, and the relationships of

people within Judah itself. The primary takeaway for Judah would be to join in the

condemnation of Israel and its religious system while acknowledging Yahweh's justice in

sending the Israelites into exile. But the condemnation comes first, and it works at

multiple levels for character formation: The opening "Oh no!" (Amos 5:18) is reserved

for funeral contexts outside of prophetic condemnations (cf. 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18),[183]

so the interjection draws the Judahite audience into a moment of empathetic sadness or

pity for their northern neighbors who were so badly mistaken in their religious

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[182] Brown (*Sacred Sense*, 112) says, "gushing water figures prominently in the shaping of the moral imagination. . . . it reconfigures what it means to worship."

[183] Schart ("Deathly Silence," 2) argues that הוי (traditionally "woe") is not a noun but an interjection that is closer to an imitation of "someone screaming in pain." In Amos 5:18, despite being ironic and even sarcastic, it may represent "the honest pain of the prophet, because he is convinced that the death of the accused persons . . . is part of the end of Israel" ("Deathly Silence," 2).

expectations. The disposition of surprise is also encouraged as part of the condemnation, surprise over the darkness and danger that the day of Yahweh would bring (Amos 5:18–20), a disposition inferred because the rhetoric assumes that the audience had a positive view of the "day of Yahweh." Surprise has occasionally been identified as one of the basic, prototypical emotions,[184] but it rarely receives much attention compared to anger, sadness, fear, joy, or love. Perhaps this is because surprise typically does not last as long before some other disposition like fear predominates in an individual or group. The element of surprise would have been most vivid for the Israelites but muted for the Judahites upon hearing of the dangerous animals (Amos 5:19).

Contempt or disgust at the Israelite practices is encouraged as the Judahites hear of divine disgust towards the festivals and offerings of the Israelites (Amos 5:21–23). Food offerings would normally be delicious and appealing to the senses, but the corruption in Israel was such that Yahweh is portrayed with "a visceral response" against those offerings.[185] Compared to the previous section (Amos 5:1–17), there is a potential play on "hate": The powerful "hate" the truthful (Amos 5:10) but needed to "hate" evil instead (Amos 5:15), so now Yahweh declares "hate" or rejection for their religious practices (Amos 5:21).[186] Hate, disgust, and contempt are related to anger, according to some emotion studies.[187] In these ways, Judah joins in on the condemnation and heaps

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[184] Shaver et al. ("Emotion Knowledge," 1065, 1068) discusses "surprise" as an ambiguous category, not as strongly prototypical as the other emotions.

[185] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 224.

[186] Carroll R., "Can the Prophets Shed Light," 224.

[187] Shaver et al., "Emotion Knowledge," 1069; Ekman, *Emotions Revealed*, xvi; Grant, "Prototype of Biblical Hate"; Riley, *Divine and Human Hate*. Shaver et al. (1069) states: "Disgust, which many

contempt on the sincere but hypocritical worship practices involving the good gifts of the land (Amos 5:21–23).

A sense of justice is another moral disposition cultivated in this section,[188] meaning at first an inclination to recognize and desire what is fair and fitting. The creation rhetoric cultivates this sense of fitting punishment or punitive justice through irony and reversal of expectations (Amos 5:18–20), then through exile to a foreign land corresponding to foreign deities worshiped outside the land of Israel (Amos 5:26–27). The rhetoric also shapes a sense of social justice (Amos 5:24) that contrasts with agricultural offerings alone (Amos 5:21–22). Just as a freshwater stream provides life for all near it (Amos 5:24), those with power must in effect provide access for all to share in life in the community, particularly for the weaker members of society who otherwise might not have the food, water, or shelter they need. Without the water imagery, the meaning of "justice" and "righteousness" in Amos 5:24 would not allow Judah clarity in condemning their northern neighbors or in envisioning the kind of relational flourishing that constitutes the ideal of the moral vision in the text.[189]

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emotion theorists have treated as a basic emotion in its own right (because of its distinct facial expression and supposed links to innate reactions to bad tastes and smells), is clearly part of the basic-level anger category in the present study."

[188] Cf. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 44–46, 141–64. Of course, this sense would also have been cultivated through other texts and facets of life in Judah.

[189] See Laldinsuah (*Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*) for "social justice" (58), "distributive justice" (59–61), "retributive justice" (61–62), "restorative justice" (62–64), and "biblical justice" (64–72) He definesצדק as "relational faithfulness" (74) and משפט/שפט "as sustaining relationship" (86) in Hosea.

A final pair of dispositions related to all the rest would be reverence and humility. The opening lines mention darkness (Amos 5:18, 20) that forms a literary bracket around dangerous animals (Amos 5:19) illustrating what the "day of Yahweh" was like for Israel (Amos 5:18, 20). It was a time not to be craved but feared, in other words. Thus, if Judah claimed to serve Yahweh, they could not arrogantly presume on his favor or help simply because of their piety, devotion, or offerings (Amos 5:21–23). Indeed, seeing as Judah's ancestors were implicated just as much as Israel's ancestors in the tainted offerings of the wilderness generation (Amos 5:25–26), the threat of exile by the "God of cosmic armies" further implies that reverence and humility are appropriate for the later audience (Amos 5:27), lest their pride and brazenness lead them to serving the same gods as previous generations. The dispositions overlap with practices, to which I now turn.

For ongoing practices, the condemnation of hypocritical or compromised worship would also be relevant to Judah in the closing decades of the eighth century. The creation rhetoric warns Judah that religious compromise and devotion are not acceptable worship practices, no matter the number and types of offerings and music (Amos 5:21–23, 25–26). It stands as a convicting challenge should they worship the stars instead of the maker of the stars that were part of the "cosmic armies" (Amos 5:25–27). In the period of Hezekiah, the memory of foreign worship policies adopted by Ahaz would still be fresh (2 Kgs 16:2–4, 10–18), as would the impetus to avoid the Israelite sanctuaries and gods now that Israel had fallen to Assyria (cf. 2 Kgs 17:30). Judah is discouraged from worshiping at the northern sanctuaries, for that entire system is censured as corrupt.

Judah could read the pivotal exhortation in Amos 5:24 as applicable to their own

social practices, warning them against any injustice that would deprive their culture of

reliable conditions for life.[190] Examples of such injustices can be found in other sections

of the text (e.g., Amos 2:6–8; 5:7, 10–12). These unjust practices would be like the

opposite of rolling water or a "permanent wadi" (Amos 5:24)— like a trickle of water or

a dried-up streambed that only flows occasionally. Social injustice would invalidate their

own worship practices at Jerusalem, pushing Judah to maintain right policies and

relationships in their land so that they would not be hypocrites. The section would have

been theologically "reassuring and threatening at the same time" to Judah, for it assured

them that Israel's downfall was not due to Yahweh's inability to protect his people, but it

also served as a warning that they and their offerings might also be rejected "if they failed

to meet the divine demands for justice and righteousness."[191] The criticisms of other

prophetic voices in the late eighth century corroborate the relevance of Amos as read in

Judah (e.g., Isaiah, Micah).

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[190] See Gillingham, *The Image, the Depths and the Surface*, 93–96, who discusses the ways a Judahite audience in the eighth and seventh centuries might have understood the "justice" of Amos 5:24 variously as divine judgment on Israel's sanctuaries and legitimation of Judah's as well as a call to social justice in Judah lest their own worship become corrupt like Israel's had. At the end of the eighth century, the appeal of justice to roll like waters would become "a way of *ratifying* (from a southern point of view) God's judgment on the north, rather than a means of *defending* it, as had been the case in Amos's day" (94, emphasis original). By the end of the seventh century, however, this polemic against Bethel and for Jerusalem was intensified in Judah such that the leaders in Judah were the wealthy elite supporting the Jerusalem temple, ironically the promoters rather than the targets of the attack on religious activity, and so their understanding of the call to justice might have viewed it as a warning rather than an absolute judgment or exclusion of all religious practices (95–96). In my opinion, the warning of Judah and justifying of Yahweh would apply equally to Judah at the end of the eighth century with a growing Assyrian threat.

[191] Eidevall, *Amos*, 169.

6.3 False Security in Wealth and Military Institutions (Amos 6)

Lavish consumption and military bravado characterize both Hebrew kingdoms, according

to this section, but neither wealth nor conquests will protect the Israelites from exile. This

serves as a warning to Judah during the prosperity and expansion under Hezekiah.

6.3.1 Translation

הוי השאנגים[192] בציון	6:1	"Oh no for the carefree on Zion,
והבטחים בהר שמרון		and the ones who are confident on Mount Samaria,
נקבי ראשית הגוים		the notables of the first-rate of the nations
ובאו להם בית ישראל		—and to them the house of Israel comes!
עברו כלנה וראו	6:2	Pass through to Calneh, and see!
ולכו משם חמת רבה		And go from there to great Hamath,
ורדו גת פלשתּים[193]		and go down to Philistine Gath!
הטובים מן הממלכות האלה		Are (they) better than these (Hebrew) kingdoms,[194]
אם רב גבולם מגבלכם		or is their territory greater than your territory?
המנדים ליום רע	6:3	You are the ones who put off (thoughts)[195] of the
ותגישון שבת חמס		disastrous day,
		then you[196] brought near a violent ending[197].

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[192] See *BHQ* for a few erroneous, elusive, amplifying, loose, or alternative renderings by the versions for this and several other terms in the section. Only when a variant is a viable alternative to the MT will it be discussed.

[193] With the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, I vocalize "Philistines" in the standard way (פְּלִשְׁתִּים) rather than with the Leningrad Codex, which neglects the final vowel (פְלִשְׁתִּים).

[194] The wording could alternatively mean "Are (you) better than these (foreign) kingdoms?" Directed to Israel and Judah, such a question would still have a negative answer implied.

[195] The verb is likely from נדה (entry I), meaning "thrust aside, postpone, exclude" (*DCH*). It does not elsewhere take an object with ל, so the object may be implied (i.e., thoughts/things pertaining to the disaster ahead).

[196] See Wittenberg, "Amos 6:1–7," 65–66; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 202–3 for discussion of who is the subject of the participle המנדים. I agree with Ramsey ("Speech-Forms in Hebrew," 53–57), who argues that the switch from third-person to second-person has precedent in the sphere of legal accusations and then sentencing in Israelite courts. Cf. Amos 5:12. Israelites are the subject in both lines.

[197] The OG and Syriac read שבת as שַׁבָּת ("Sabbath[s]") which *BHQ* rightly labels a mistake. The Sabbath appears in Amos 8:5, but the MT (שֶׁבֶת) makes just as much sense, usually thought to derive from ישב, thus traditionally "seat" or "reign (of violence)" from the idea of sitting down, sometimes on a throne (cf. Deut 6:7; 11:19; 17:18; 1 Kgs 10:19; 16:11; 2 Kgs 19:27; Esth 1:2; Pss 113:5; 139:2; Prov 31:23; Isa 30:7; Lam 3:63). However, שֶׁבֶת is just as likely to be from the verb שבת, meaning "desisting, ceasing, ending" as a noun (cf. Exod 21:19; Prov 20:3; Isa 30:7). This is the option I take here, with no emendation required. Similar is the translation "ein gewaltsames Ende" in Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 216. If "seat" was

השכבים על מטות שן	6:4	They (Israel) are the ones who lie on beds of ivory,
וסרחים על ערשותם		and who lounge on their couches,
ואכלים כרים מצאן		and who consume lambs from the flock,
ועגלים מתוך מרבק		and calves from within the feeding-stall.
הפרטים על פי הנבל	6:5	They are the ones who pluck[198] at[199] the harp.
כדויד חשבו להם כלי שיר		Like David they have invented for themselves instruments of song.[200]
השתים במזרקי יין	6:6	They are the ones who drink using basins of wine,
וראשית שמנים ימשחו		and with first-rate oils they anoint (themselves),
ולא נחלו על שבר יוסף		but they haven't become sick over the breaking of Joseph!
לכן עתה יגלו בראש גלים	6:7	Therefore, now, they will be exiled with the first exiles,
וסר מרזח סרוחים		and the banquet of loungers[201] will depart."[202]
נשבע אדני יהוה בנפשו נאם יהוה	6:8	"The Lord Yahweh has sworn by his life[204] (speech of Yahweh, God of cosmic armies):
אלהי צבאות		
מתעב[203] אנכי		'I abhor
את גאון יעקב		the pride of Jacob,
וארמנתיו		and his citadels
שנאתי		I hate,
והסגרתי עיר ומלאה		so I will deliver up (the) city and what fills it.'
והיה אם יותרו עשרה אנשים בבית	6:9	And it will be that if ten people are left in one house, then
אחד ומתו		they will die,

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intended, כסא ("throne") would have been a better choice than שבת (cf. Ps 94:20; Prov 20:8), and it makes poor sense to have anyone bringing near a "seat" or "habitation" to Samaria, even metaphorically (contra Garrett, *Amos*, 185). The phrase "ceasing/ending of violence" does not mean an end or cessation to violence but rather a destruction that is violent, the second noun ("violence") matching the adjectival function that the noun "disastrous" has in the parallel line above. The violence could refer to internal injustices (as it does in Amos 3:10), argues Snyman, "Violence," 44–46, or it could refer to violence from a foreign army that is coming in the future. Both may be possibilities.

[198] The verb this translates appears only here, and the versions and I made a contextual guess. Some argue that פרט means "to sing" (Eidevall, *Amos*, 179).

[199] Garrett (*Amos*, 187) explains that the "mouth" (פה) of the harp is the "open space in the center where the fingers plucked the strings." It is simpler in English to omit this in translation, however.

[200] Cf. 1 Chr 15:16; 16:42; 23:5; 2 Chr 7:6; 29:26–27; 34:12; Neh 12:36; Ps 151:2 (OG); 11QPsᵃ 151A:2 ("My hands made a flute, my fingers a lyre," 11Q5 Col. xxviii:4 in *DSSSE* 2:1179; cf. Ps 151A in CEB). Or the line could mean "they improvise for themselves (on) instruments of song" (cf. 1 Sam 16:23; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 544, 563). Eidevall (*Amos*, 180) prefers the improvising option as a better fit with the leisure activities, but this requires an implicit preposition or two (256 n. 69; cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 188). The inventing option is simpler for the syntax.

[201] Technically it is either an adjective or a passive participle, just like in Amos 6:4.

[202] I am following the MT (Leningrad) against the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets in treating the following text as a new paragraph (פ).

[203] I consider מִתְאַב ("desire") to be a mistake for מְתָעֵב ("abhor") and emend accordingly, since the parallel verb is שנאתי ("I hate"). Cf. Amos 5:10 (תעב // שנא). See Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 197.

[204] See an explanation for this translation in the notes to Amos 2:14. Garrett (*Amos*, 190) argues that Amos 6:8a (the divine oath) goes best as the conclusion to Amos 6:7, and the Amos 6:8b (speech of Yahweh, the God of the cosmic armies) starts the new paragraph (Amos 6:8b–14).

6:10 ונשאו דודו ומסרפו להוציא עצמים מן הבית ואמר לאשר בירכתי הבית העוד עמך ואמר אפס ואמר הס כי לא להזכיר בשם יהוה[205]

6:10 and one's relative and their cremator[206] will lift up one to bring out bones from the house, and the one will say to (the other) who is in the inner rooms of the house, 'Is there (anyone) still (alive) with you?' And the other will say, 'Nobody.' And the first will say, 'Hush, for we cannot make invocation (for them) in the name of Yahweh (anymore).'

6:11 כי הנה יהוה מצוה
והכה הבית הגדול רסיסים
והבית הקטן בקעים

6:11 For[207] look, Yahweh is commanding,
and he will strike the big house to fragments,
and the small house to shreds.

6:12 הירצון בסלע סוסים
אם יחרוש בבקרים[208]
כי הפכתם לראש
משפט
ופרי צדקה
ללענה

6:12 Is it on the cliffside[209] that horses run?
Or with oxen does one plow (the) sea?
But[210] you have turned into poison hemlock
    what was justice,
    and the fruit of righteousness
(you have turned) into bitter wormwood.

6:13 השמחים ללא דבר
האמרים הלוא בחזקנו לקחנו לנו
קרנים

6:13 (You) are the ones who rejoice over (City of) 'Nothing,'
the ones who say, 'Wasn't it by our might we took for ourselves Karnaim?'"

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[205] I am following the MT (Leningrad) against the Aleppo Codex and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets in *not* treating the following text as a new paragraph (ס). Amos 6:8–14 is editorially unified with an inclusio of divine speech (cf. Paul, *Amos*, 213; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 115; Eidevall, *Amos*, 183–84).

[206] The term this translates might derive from סרף I ("anoint with spices") or סרף II as variation of שרף ("burn, cremate" or "burn incense [for the dead]"), or even be a term for the "maternal uncle" (מסרף I) of the deceased (*DCH*). Only the option where the term indicates some "burning" has lexical plausibility (cf. שרף in Amos 2:1; 4:11), since we know so little about Israelite funeral customs with spices or embalming (cf. 2 Chr 16:14), but this still does not clarify the role of the person compared to the "uncle/relative" of the deceased. Are they one and the same person, or are these two people working to dispose of the remains in the house? Is this a military house regular house, or a royal palace, since the bodies of kings were typically burned in certain situations (1 Sam 31:12; 2 Chr 16:14; 21:9; Isa 30:33; Jer 34:5)?

[207] According to Garrett, *Amos*, 197, the term כי in this expression is explanatory.

[208] The ancient versions differ for this difficult part, but all bring out the absurdity of something related to the actions or uses of animals. The text is difficult. Symmachus (πέτρα) and the Aramaic ("Or is it plowed with the oxen?") took the object of plowing to be the "rocky terrain" (סלע) implied from the previous and parallel line (so also Niehaus, "Amos," 445; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 362–362; Hayes, *Amos*, 191; Garrett, *Amos*, 199), but this gapping would be unprecedented for the rhetorical questions in Amos. A more serious objection to retaining the MT is the plural "oxen," which is nearly always a (collective) singular in the Old Testament (i.e., 178 out of 180 times, per Allen, "Understanding," 442 n. 13; cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 578). Nevertheless, elaborate emendations are not convincing (e.g., most of the options in Allen, "Understanding"). I prefer to emend to בַּבָּקָר יָם ("Does one plow the sea with oxen?"). This emendation is found in, e.g., Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 284; Paul, *Amos*, 218; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 109; Eidevall, *Amos*, 183, 187. This only requires a different word division and vocalization of the consonants (i.e., בַּבָּקָר יָם instead of בַּבְּקָרִים). The word division would have been condensed to בבקרים when a scribe was influenced by the plural "horses" in the parallel line (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 284).

[209] This and the "oxen" are fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order. See Amos 1:3.

[210] It is hard to decide between the explanatory and adversative uses of כי (Garrett, *Amos*, 200).

כי הנני מקים עליכם בית ישראל 6:14   "'Surely I am about to raise up against you, house of
נאם יהוה אלהי הצבאות[211] גוי   Israel (speech of Yahweh, the God of the cosmic armies),
ולחצו אתכם מלבוא חמת עד נחל   a nation, and they will oppress you from Lebo[212] of
הערבה   Hamath as far as the wadi of the Rift Valley.'"

6.3.2 Creation Rhetoric

This section (Amos 6) begins with the same expressive of lament as the last: "Oh no!"

(Amos 6:1). Here, however, it is not the religious beliefs and practices that are lamented

but the wealth, decadence, and military confidence of Israel and Judah. Those on Zion are

characterized as "carefree," parallel to the "confident" on Mount Samaria, and these

people are called "the notables of the first-rate of the nations" (Amos 6:1). The prophetic

voice then gives rhetorical directives commanding these leaders to visit "Calneh," "great

Hamath," and "Philistine Gath" (Amos 6:2). After considering these foreign city-states, a

pair of rhetorical questions expects a negative answer: "Are (they) better than these

(Hebrew) kingdoms,[213] or is their territory greater than your territory?" (Amos 6:2). The

questions imply that the *foreign* kingdoms are not as large as "these" two Hebrew

kingdoms, in which case the foreign city-states are an example of tenuous kingdoms that

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[211] For the seeming intrusion of the speech formula, see Paas (*Creation and Judgement*, 186–186), who thinks it is an interruption or was displaced from the end of the verse. The formula marks the change from prophetic to divine voice, it is part of the inclusio for editorial unity, and it introduces the climactic oracle at the end of this section, just as a similar formula did in Amos 3:13; 5:16. It should not be deleted. So also Paul, *Amos*, 220; Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 270.

[212] See Joosten, "Pseudo-Classicisms," 26: Originally the phrase denoted "Lebo" in Hamath, but later the location was forgotten and reinterpreted as an infinitive ("to come," thus "the entrance of [Hamath]" in some translations). Younger (*Political History*, 489) explains "Lebo" more specifically as "a reference to ancient Labā'u, modern Lebwe, 25 km northwest of Baalbek in the northern Beqa' Valley of Lebanon . . . . In the inscription of Tiglath-pileser III, it is clear that the city of Labā'u was on the border and was, at that time, a possession of Damascus. The association in the biblical tradition of Labā'u with Hamath may derive from an earlier time when this was reflective of that kingdom's territorial extent."

[213] The wording could alternatively mean "Are (you) better than these (foreign) kingdoms?" Directed to Israel and Judah, such a question would still have a negative answer implied.

cannot afford to be carefree or presumptuous like Israel and Judah, and these foreign

cities may have been subjugated by others, including the Hebrew kingdoms at the height

of the Hebrew expansions (see 2 Kgs 14:25; 2 Chr 26:6).[214] The questions expect a

negative answer, pointing to the political arrogance of the Hebrew kingdoms. A political

accusation in Amos 6:3 asserts contrasting accusations about Israelites who try to "put off

(thoughts) of the disastrous day" and yet "brought near a violent ending." It is plausible

that the focus has narrowed to Israel alone at this point. Political language predominates,

showing little interest in nature imagery in this paragraph (Amos 6:1–3). The creation

rhetoric is only the mention of the "Mount" on which Samaria is built (Amos 6:1), and

the terrain is only important as a political zone on which the Israelite capital stands. At

best, then, the creation rhetoric serves to set up the arrogance and false security of the

Israelites on or in the "Mount" of Samaria, since the preposition ב after הבטחים can

indicate either the location of the confident—the most likely option, in view of the

previous line—or the object of their confidence (i.e., trusting *in* the mountain of Samaria

as the basis of their security).

The rhetoric continues to denounce (assertive) and condemn (declarative) the

Israelites for luxurious banqueting in the next paragraph (Amos 6:4–7). The creation

rhetoric includes the "beds of ivory [שן]," "lambs from the flock" (כרים מצאן), "calves

from within the feeding-stall" (עגלים מתוך מרבק; Amos 6:4), "basins of wine" (מזרקי יין),

and "first-rate oils" (ראשית שמנים; Amos 6:6). Each of these natural products or animals

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[214] For discussion of the historical setting, see §3.5 References to the Neo-Assyrian Period.

portrays a lifestyle of "conspicuous consumption"[215] in which the notables of Samaria

enjoy a lavish standard of living and participate in a "banquet" (מרזח) that may have

religious overtones (Amos 6:7).[216] This particular kind of banquet, a מרזח (marzēaḥ), is

attested across the ancient Near East, and appears to have been "like a club for rich men"

where "heavy drinking" would feature in each gathering.[217] Similar to Amos 4:1, the fine

dining of the Israelites in Amos 6:4–6 is presumably another example of socio-economic

disparity that is due to systemic injustice in how the non-human creation is used. In order

to obtain luxury imports such as "ivory" inlays for beds (Amos 6:4),[218] for example, the

wealthy leaders would have exported wine and olive oil extracted from poorer Israelite

farmers (read: peasants) to finance their imports.[219] Demand for these two food

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[215] Chaney, "Political Economy," 128.

[216] See McLaughlin, *The* marzēaḥ *in the Prophetic*. Barstad (*Religious Polemics*, 127–42) and Greer ("A *Marzeah* and a *Mizraq*") argue it was a religious banquet custom in honor of other gods, downplaying the socio-economic reasons for the condemnation. Some connect the meal with rituals for the dead (cf. Amos 6:9–10; Jer 16:5–9; Pope, "Cult of the Dead"; King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 137–39; Smith, *Early History of God*, 126–32; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 125–32; van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 206–35), while others believe that caution is in order, and that economic overindulgence is the main concern here (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 277–78; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 88; Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 22–23, 62–66, 144–47; Moughtin-Mumby, "'A Man and His Father,'" 73–81). Both social and religious elements may be in the background (Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 175–76), and the god honored may have been Yahweh (Eidevall, *Amos*, 174). I side with Moughtin-Mumby ("'A Man and His Father,'" 81) against a religious polemic here, since the social aspect is more prominent, hardly anything points to foreign gods, and "Amos is not a book known for pulling its punches" (81).

[217] Eidevall, *Amos*, 174. Cf. McLaughlin, *The* marzēaḥ *in the Prophetic*, 69–70.

[218] Ivory from Samaria in archaeological finds is discussed in King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 142–46; Jaruzelska, *Amos and the Officialdom*, 79–82, 164–65. Cf. Dijkstra, "Ivory Beds and Houses."

[219] Chaney, "Political Economy," 248. See also Houston, "Exit the Oppressed Peasant." He argues that the "peasants" being oppressed mostly lived in walled cities where the oppressors were, not on rural farms, and that these poor people no longer owned land. The nature of identifying "peasants" is complex and debated. Domeris (Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 42) discusses terms like "serfs" and "share-croppers" but does not find them helpful either since they are just variations on "peasants." Domeris (82) estimates that "the aristocracy and their retainer class" would make up less than five percent of the population in ancient Israel.

commodities for elite consumption was also a factor, to be discussed below, but first there is the issue of meat consumption to consider.

In a culture where meat was consumed far less frequently than in North America today, the demand for prime animals such as "lambs" (cf. 1 Sam 15:9) and "calves" for these banquets would create further injustices in society (Amos 6:4). Raising such animals only for food, not for their "milk, wool or traction [i.e., plowing]" before eventual slaughter,[220] requires more grazing ground and grain, the grain used to stock the "feeding-stall."[221] All this would be for less benefit to the farmers, who did not themselves consume these animals and who likewise had less crops to feed their families due to feeding the cattle.[222] MacDonald estimates that the typical Israelite diet would have consisted mostly of grains, olive oil, and wine.[223] With increasing social

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[220] MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 63. He (64) points to dairy products as a key part of some diets.

[221] The "feeding stall" should not be interpreted as an illicit practice of taking nursing calves from their mothers, as rightly noted by Eidevall, *Amos*, 179; contra Weippert, "Amos," 7–9; Schorch, "'A Young Goat,'" 128–29. It is merely the place where cattle were fed with grain for some months before slaughter.

[222] Steiner (Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 100) even views the herding occupation of Amos as symptomatic of a larger demand for meat in Israel during the eighth century. Davis (*Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 99) notes how the redirection of crops to feed livestock rather than people has taken on new proportions in industrialized agriculture today: "Beef cattle now consume half the world's wheat, most of its corn (a grain they do not naturally eat), and almost all of its soybeans. In turn, the agricultural industry is the largest consumer of water in North America. In addition to these extractions from the earth, the meat industry is responsible for dangerous inputs." On excessive meat consumption in industrialized contexts, see MacDonald, "Food and Diet," 21; Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 131. Regarding corn in the United States, for example, the harvests are not going toward feeding people, because "ethanol and feed production [for livestock] account for approximately 90 of the corn grown" (Ayres, *Good Food*, 180 n. 28). With this crop, at least, we are feeding our vehicles and animals more than the hungry in my home country.

[223] MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 60. Cf. Deut 8:7–10; 2 Chr 2:10, 15; Hos 2:8; Mic 6:15. Other vegetables would have been consumed as well, but they are not mentioned often in biblical texts. Wheat was more common in the Israel, while barley was more common in Judah (*Not Bread Alone*, 60–61). For other crops in addition to wheat and barley, see 2 Sam 17:28; Isa 28:25; Ezek 4:9. For olive oil as a food product see 1 Kgs 17:12–13; Isa 25:6; Ezek 16:13, 19. Figs may have been the most common fruit consumed, if wine from grape juice is not counted (cf. 1 Sam 25:18; 30:12; 2 Sam 16:1–2; cf. fig. 11). See Borowski, *Agriculture*, 114.

stratification and external pressures of trade and tribute in this period, meat would have

been consumed less often and by a smaller proportion of Israelites than in previous

centuries.[224] Thus, even if enough meat was *produced* for all in Israel, it would not be

distributed equally to all, and since "males and elites had greater access to food

resources," meat would not feature regularly in the diet of the common Israelite.[225]

Despite regional variation, the remains of bovine (i.e., cattle) versus caprovine (i.e., sheep

and goats) bones around Palestine for the Iron II period (1000–550 BC) always reveal

that cattle were a significantly smaller percentage of the animals used for their products

and meat.[226] For every calf raised for prime slaughter, there was less grain and benefit to

the farmers who could not use that calf to pull a plow or provide dairy products before

slaughter. The same applies to the lambs with regard to their milk and wool. The kind of

banquet envisioned here was probably restricted to wealthy men, making them the male

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[224] MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 63–64.

[225] MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 64. Meat was thus not rare, but not regular, and there were many sociopolitical, geographical, and seasonal factors at work. Cf. MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat*, 61–79; *Not Bread Alone*, 47–60. MacDonald (*Not Bread Alone*, 62–63) notes that sheep, goats, and cows were the top sources of meat. Fish were also available, but mostly to urban elites or to those living near freshwater lakes and rivers, which were rare in Israel (64–65). Hunting for mammals or birds (e.g., Amos 3:5) was apparently not a significant part of the diet compared to crops and livestock.

[226] See MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat*, 68–72. In the Negev, approximately "10–15 percent of the animal bones are from cattle and 75–85 percent are from caprovines" (69). In the Shephelah greater numbers of cattle and sheep were being used for meat over the decades, but the majority of these animals were still raised for plowing and wool, as suggested by the age of the animals at death (69). The coastal plain shows more sheep proportionally than in other areas, possibly with tribute to Assyria as a factor (69). In the Jezreel Valley, while still outnumbered by sheep and goats, cattle are used more often, especially in areas where dry farming (and thus plowing) was more prominent (70). In Galilee and the north higher percentages of wild animals (e.g., deer) and cattle are found than in the south of Palestine (70). One site near Lake Galilee (Rosh Zayit) was a military fort, and perhaps the soldiers at the fort account for the higher beef consumption there (70). In the Transjordan, the more arid regions to the south had less cattle, whereas the northern Transjordan had more cattle, which MacDonald (70) takes as evidence of "a more intensive plow-based agriculture rather than cattle herding" (cf. 124–125 n. 46). This area would have been one of the breadbaskets of Jeroboam II's kingdom (cf. Amos 4:1).

equivalents of the high-status "cows of the Bashan region" earlier (Amos 4:1; cf. Deut 32:14). The food choices of these men widened the gap between rich and poor, as did the larger military in Israel (Amos 6:2, 13), for the agricultural costs and shifts required to supply this lifestyle and this military fell on the peasants but did not benefit them proportionally.

For oil and wine, there was both foreign and domestic demand, and the biblical text focuses on the domestic demand from the elites (Amos 6:6). If Chaney is right about the general dynamics of crop commodities, the Israelite rulers would have pressured some farms in the country to cultivate only grapes and olives rather than a diverse mix of crops, creating a situation in which the top two percent of the population benefited much more from the agricultural production than the peasant majority who carried most of the risks and enjoyed less of the rewards.[227] Agricultural zones were likely directed by the government to serve regional specializations of various crops and herding to supply the demands of foreign export and domestic consumption (cf. Uzziah's agricultural policies in 2 Chr 26:10).[228] One way to pressure growers to produce the two main "cash" crops of olives and grapes would be to increase grain taxes, reducing crop diversity in the land (cf. Amos 5:11).[229] Archaeologically, this increase in luxury production has been corroborated: "the Samaria ostraca document the flow of oil and wine to Israelite court officials from upland estates" and even refer several times to a "superior grade of olive

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[227] Chaney, "Political Economy," 124–25.
[228] Chaney, "Political Economy," 125.
[229] Chaney, "Political Economy," 131. "Taxes" and "cash" would be agricultural commodities, not currency, at this point in history.

oil" which would match the quality described by the "first-rate oils" (ראשית שמנים) in Amos 6:6.[230] The wealthy men use the oil for cologne and lotion rather than food, and they drink using basins of wine at their fraternity-like feasts.[231]

In summary, what may seem like "just" food at first turns out to be neither merely food nor equitable food in the creation rhetoric of Amos 6:4–6. Food and social justice are intertwined (cf. Amos 4:1), and the elements of rhetoric feature here to condemn the decadence enjoyed by the rich at the expense of the poor who could not enjoy such food. Clinching it all, the banqueters have not "become sick concerning the breaking of Joseph" (Amos 6:6), referring to some sort of damage to the kingdom or its central core, since the Joseph tribes traditionally had the most territory in Israel, including the land on which Samaria was built. This breaking could refer to economic, political, or agricultural—even geological—disruption toward the end of Jeroboam II's reign or during later decades when the kingdom was contested by various factions (e.g., 2 Kgs 15:8–31; Isa 9:21) and was reduced to a fraction of its former holdings by nearby nations

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[230] Chaney, "Political Economy," 126. Cf. Stager, "Finest Olive Oil"; Kaufman, "Samaria Ostraca"; Premnath, *Eighth-Century Prophets*, 60–62, 81–83.

[231] One use of oil was as a cologne or perfume on the head (e.g. Esth 2:12; Pss 23:5; 45:8 [Eng. 7]; Eccl 9:8). Alternatively, the passage might echo the anointing rituals of priests, kings, or prophets in mockery, as if the wealthy leaders were anointing themselves as leaders of Israel (e.g., Exod 28:41; 29:7; 30:30; Judg 9:8; 1 Sam 9:16; 16:12–13; 2 Sam 5:3; 1 Kgs 1:39; 19:16; 2 Kgs 9:3, 6). The allusion to leadership anointing is only slightly likely, but the text does compare these men to "David" (Amos 6:5) just before the mention of oil and wine, and the verb משח ("anoint") is not the usual one for cosmetic daubing (סוך; e.g., 2 Sam 12:20; 14:2; Ruth 3:3; Mic 6:15). Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 180–81. The term מזרק usually designates temple bowls or basins for collecting and sprinkling animal blood (e.g., Exod 27:3; Num 4:14; 7:13; 1 Kgs 7:40; 2 Kgs 12:14; 25:15; Jer 52:18; Zech 9:15; 14:20). The significance of this may be the size or the ritual use of the container. For the latter, see Greer, "A *Marzeaḥ* and a *Mizraq*," 250, 261. The "basins" in question are not narrow-mouthed cups, at least. The resulting picture would be the equivalent of a party with lamb and veal to eat, extra virgin olive oil for cologne, and punch bowls full of Merlot.

and by Assyria (i.e., 734–722 BC; cf. 2 Kgs 15:29; Amos 5:15, which refers to "the remnant of Joseph").[232] The irony for the Israelite rulers who presumed to be the "first-rate" (ראשית) notables of the nations (Amos 6:1) and used "first-rate" oils is that they will be with the "first" (ראש) in the line of exiles (Amos 6:7; cf. Isa 7:8–9). The first in line at the banquet will be the first in line to lose their feasts and land.

The next paragraph (Amos 6:8–14) proceeds with an assertive reporting a divine oath, even the "speech of Yahweh, God of cosmic armies" (Amos 6:8). The ethical issue of Israel's "pride" (גאון) is at stake, probably an arrogant confidence in their "citadels" (Amos 6:8). Yahweh expresses hatred for such urban concentrations of injustices and violence, and so he declares he will surrender "(the) city and what fills it" to conquest (Amos 6:8). The city is probably Samaria, given Amos 6:1. The protest is simultaneously an expressive protest, a commissive rejection and threat, and a declarative denouncement and sentencing. In the following scenario the prophetic voice illustrates the near-total elimination of the urban population (Amos 6:9–10). The number of people (literally "ten men") in a single house might indicate soldiers or royal quarters (Amos 6:9),[233] but the more important point is that they all die with no survivors as relatives come to take care

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[232] Hayes, *Amos*, 187. Hayes explains most of the political references in the book using the Syro-Ephraimite coalition and the supposedly pro-Assyria and anti-Assyria factions in Israel. Cf. also Eidevall, *Amos*, 181. "Joseph" in Amos may be similar to "Ephraim" in Hosea where it can refer to all of Israel or simply to its central remnant. On the other hand, the language in Amos is not very specific. This section of text could equally well have originated earlier in the final decade of Jeroboam's reign before Assyria was a threat again.

[233] Schart, *Deathly Silence*, 3; Eidevall, *Amos*, 185 on soldiers; cf. Amos 5:3. Contrast Garrett (*Amos*, 194), who suggests the "house" may refer to a "household" in the sense of an extended family and that אנשים can refer to people of any gender or age, not just men. The first suggestion is unlikely in view of Amos 6:10, where "the house" is clearly a location rather than a family.

of the bodies (Amos 6:10). The urban soundscape is bleak, the dialogue between the disposal team suggests: "the one will say to (the other) who is in the inner rooms of the house, 'Is there (anyone) still (alive) with you?' And the other will say, 'Nobody.' And the first will say, 'Hush, for we cannot make invocation (for them) in the name of Yahweh (anymore)'" (Amos 6:10).[234] The reason for silence might be fear of further repercussions from divine judgment,[235] but it could just as likely be interpreted as despair or resignation, that there is no point in praying for the ten people anymore, because they are dead. The prophetic voice argues ("for") and forewarns of an attack by Yahweh on "the big house" and "the small house" (Amos 6:11), referring to the social disparities in Samaria once more.[236]

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[234] Invocations "by/in the name of" a god can be found elsewhere in Josh 23:7; Isa 48:1; Ps 20:8 (Eng. 7). All other examples of זכר in the causative do not use the preposition ב before the object like Amos 6:10 does. Cf. Smelik, "Use," 326, who argues that the expression with the preposition denotes taking an "oath" on the name of a god. But the argument could equally well refer to making a prayer "in" the name of a god. I would argue that the text does not denote mentioning the name "Yahweh" but denotes some sort of request invoked in his authority. In other words, there is an implicit object of the invocation (e.g., for them, the dead) that cannot be commemorated in prayer "in the name of Yahweh" in Amos 6:10. Were the ten men still living, this would be an option. The idea may be that the two men are telling each other that it is no longer possible to pray to Yahweh for the ten people who are now dead. So Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 209. Cf. the syntax of the infinitive for possibility/ability in Josh 17:12; Judg 1:19; Eccl 3:14. The sense of "should not" is expressed using an infinitive in 1 Chr 15:2; 2 Chr 26:18. Contra Garrett, *Amos*, 196, this second sense is not the only option, nor is it necessarily blasphemy that is at stake. On a different note, I do not find it persuasive to interpret הס ("Hush!") as the last breath of one of the dying men, as Schart ("Deathly Silence," 3) speculates.

[235] So Smelik, "Use," 326, who claims the verse is concerned with a superstitious taboo against swearing an oath "in a blasphemous manner, in rage at God's destruction of the complete family," but there is no evidence of anger cited, nor any reason for understanding magical beliefs to be in the background. The deaths may have been caused by structural collapse after the famous earthquake, according to Roberts, "Is Anyone Home," 186–200.

[236] Both types of houses may be for the elite, actually (Hayes, *Amos*, 190). Still, there were unequal house sizes not just in the Samaria but elsewhere (Campbell, "Archaeological," 49–50), implying that social inequalities and exploitation could be prevalent not just due to "the significantly wealthy at the court at Samaria but also [due to] people who lived only relatively better than their neighbors" in these

To highlight the injustices perpetrated in these urban centers, the prophet asks a pair of rhetorical questions and makes a pair of accusations, all related to creation rhetoric, interestingly enough:

> Is it on the cliffside that horses run?
> Or with oxen does one plow (the) sea?
> But you have turned into poison hemlock
>   what was justice,
>   and the fruit of righteousness
> (you have turned) into bitter wormwood. (Amos 6:12)

The absurdity of horses galloping up a cliffside[237] or using oxen to plow the ocean shows the "cosmic nonsense" of the injustices that follow.[238] The noun translated "poison hemlock" (ראש) is used of poisonous plants (Deut 29:18; Hos 10:4) or snake venom (Job 20:16), but in this context it is more likely a plant derivative, possibly from poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).[239] The "bitter wormwood" (לענה) has been discussed earlier (cf. Amos 5:7), and it denotes a variety of plant with bitter, toxic juice (cf. Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15).[240] Illustrations of these two plants can be seen below (fig. 9). Instead of producing social justice and righteousness, which would be comparable to

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other cities. Campbell discusses Tirzah, Hazor, and especially Shechem. Cf. Kessler, "Would Amos Have Understood"; Faust, "Social Stratification," 481–91.

[237] The "cliffside" is not a small stone or level ground with exposed rock but a rocky surface, probably a cliff face passable only to mountain goats. See Lessing, *Amos*, 420. Alternatively, it could refer "to rocky ground that is badly broken with fissures, large stones, and sheer drops, such that a horse could not run on it without breaking his leg" (Garrett, *Amos*, 199).

[238] Barton, "Natural Law," 7. Cf. Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 80.

[239] UBS, *Fauna and Flora*, 167–68.

[240] UBS, *Fauna and Flora*, 198. Ironically, poison hemlock looks like a carrot plant (168), and wormwood grows in the desert (cf. German Bible Society, "Hemlock and Wormwood"), making the reversal of justice and righteousness all the more appalling in Amos 6:12. The plants either look deceptively like an edible plant or are mildly toxic but only prevalent in dry regions, the opposite of a good-tasting, edible plant that can sustain life when cultivated in a field (cf. Hos 10:4).

edible plants that sustain life (cf. Ps 85:12 [Eng. 11]; Isa 45:8; Hos 10:12), these

influential Israelites are accused of producing poisonous "plants" from the soil of unjust

social policies and actions, plants that would bring suffering and death to those who

experienced them (Amos 6:12; cf. Isa 5:7; Hos 10:4, 13; Amos 5:7). The cosmos

certainly has an ethos here, and it is not neutral.

Figure 9. Hemlock above wormwood[241]

The paragraph ends with a return to the military arrogance that featured at the

beginning of the section (Amos 6:1–3), now mocking those who celebrate re-capturing

the "(City of) 'Nothing'"—"Lo-Debar" said differently to portray much ado about

nothing—then quoting their boasting about conquering the city meaning "Pair of Horns":

"Wasn't it by our might we took for ourselves Karnaim?" (Amos 6:13).[242] The

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[241] German Bible Society, "Hemlock and Wormwood." The drawings are of hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) above wormwood (*Artemisia alba*), respectively.

[242] Lo-Debar is mentioned a few times elsewhere (2 Sam 9:4–5; 17:27), apparently controlled by the Ammonites, while Karnaim is mentioned only once elsewhere (Gen 14:5), probably controlled by the Arameans before the Israelites captured it during the reign of Jeroboam II. Younger (*Political History*, 642)

achievements might sound impressive at first, but "the bravado discloses the senseless

pretense of the Jeroboam regime and the blind faith of the people."[243] Strength for

strength, the divine oracles seems to reply, for Yahweh threatens to raise up a nation that

will "oppress" the kingdom of Israel "from Lebo of Hamath as far as the wadi of the Rift

Valley" (Amos 6:14; see fig. 8). Ironically, these are essentially the northern and southern

extents of Jeroboam II's kingdom according to 2 Kgs 14:25 ("from Lebo of Hamath as

far as the sea of the Rift Valley"),[244] and that with prophetic support (Jonah)! Amos 6:14

represents a critical tradition against the kingdom's expansion. It may have grown due to

an act of divine pity at Israel's affliction from the Arameans in previous decades (2 Kgs

14:26–27), but now that growth had bred arrogance (Amos 6:1–3, 8, 14) and internal

injustices (Amos 6:4–7, 12). Israel's king would no longer be the savior (2 Kgs 14:27–

28), helpless before a greater "nation" (Amos 6:14) that remains anonymous in the book

of Amos. The phrase נחל הערבה ("the wadi of the Rift Valley") is unique in the Bible,

and it deserves further scrutiny. A similar phrase, "the sea of the Rift Valley," refers to

the Salt Sea (i.e., Dead Sea; Deut 3:17; 4:49; Josh 3:16; 12:3; 2 Kgs 14:25), even if

הערבה on its own can refer to regions in the Transjordan east of the rift (cf. Deut 4:49;

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identifies Lo-Debar tentatively with Tell Dover "on the north bank of the Yarmuk River." My map (fig. 8) tentatively places Lo-Debar farther south based on other biblical texts. See Monson and Lancaster, *Geobasics*, 15. Younger (*Political History*, 562) identifies Karnaim in Amos 6:13 with "Qarnīnu" of Assyrian sources and "Carneas" of classical sources (cf. 1 Macc 5:43; 2 Macc 12:21), namely, modern-day "aš-Šēḥ Saʿd," which is 4–5 km northeast of Aštara (Aštartu) in Syria.

[243] Carroll R., "Prophetic Text," 93.

[244] This was more extensive than the conquest tradition for the Transjordan (Deut 3:8; 4:48; Josh 12:1) but less impressive than the Solomonic kingdom or other ideals (1 Kgs 8:65; cf. Num 13:21; Deut 11:24; 2 Kgs 24:7; 1 Chr 13:5; Isa 27:12). The gains essentially compensated for the losses inflicted by the Arameans in previous decades in the Bashan and Gilead regions (2 Kgs 10:33).

Josh 12:1). Often, the term "wadi" (נחל) can refer to a brook with seasonal water flow

(e.g., Amos 5:24; cf. 1 Kgs 17:7; 2 Kgs 3:16–17), sometimes named as a specific brook

(e.g., Zered in Num 21:12; Kishon in Judg 5:21; Cherith in 1 Kgs 17:3), while other times

the term refers to a valley or gorge without any focus on the water it might contain (e.g.,

the Eschol Valley in Num 13:24; the Arnon Gorge in Deut 2:24). Is a specific brook in

view in Amos 6:14, or is this a term denoting the north-south "valley" of the rift? If the

"wadi" is more general in scope, then it could refer to the נחל as the geological "valley"

of the north-south rift, with the north shore of the Dead Sea being a natural boundary for

the extent of Israel.[245] In light of the semantic satire on locations in Amos 6:13, נחל could

even refer to the Jordan River as if it were the sole "wadi" of this Rift Valley,[246] belittling

the perennial Jordan as if it were a seasonal brook at best! But perhaps the language is

more specific and equally ironic. Admittedly, narrowing the reference of the "wadi"

down is complicated by the fact that neither the ערבה ("Arabah, Rift Valley") nor the

Dead Sea has only one wadi emptying into it. The context in Amos 6:14 shows that such

a נחל would be at or near the southern border of Israel at the time, which could be a wadi

at the north end of the Dead Sea separating Israel and Judah (Wadi Kelt?),[247] a wadi at

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[245] Perhaps the other natural boundary would be if the phrase envisions the Rift Valley extending down to Elath at the Gulf of Aqaba. This would assume Israel's political and economic control over Judah's territory and sea port (Elath). Sweeney (*Twelve Prophets*, 1:243), identifies the "sea of the Arabah" in 2 Kgs 14:25 as "the Gulf of Aqaba," making the wadi of Amos 6:14 refer to "the depression south of the Dead Sea that falls into the Gulf of Aqaba."

[246] Cf. Hayes, *Amos*, 192. He mentions but does not opt for this view. The Jordan River was certainly "in" the Rift Valley (Arabah), at the very least (Deut 3:17).

[247] So Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 289), who suggests Wadi Kelt to the west or Wadi Kefrein (east). Hayes (*Amos*, 192) suggests Wadi Kelt because a town in the area has the name Beth-arabah (Josh 15:6; 18:22), "House of" this ערבה that I have been translating "Rift Valley."

the southern end of the Dead Sea (Wadi Zered),[248] or the Arnon Gorge on its eastern side. Although no other commentators to my knowledge have picked up on this last option, I argue that it is the best one. If any single wadi deserves to be called "the" wadi of the Rift Valley or of the Dead Sea, then it would arguably be the massive Arnon Gorge. The Arnon Gorge was the southern extent of Transjordanian conquest by the Israelites in some traditions (Deut 3:8, 16; 4:48; Josh 12:1), the southeastern border between Israel and Moab (Num 21:13–15, 26; 22:36; Judg 11:18), and it would match the otherwise eastern (often Transjordanian) locations of Amos 6:13–14. The Arnon also was the southern extent of Aramean conquest in the Transjordan when Hazael attacked Israelites there (2 Kgs 10:33; cf. Amos 1:3), making it a perfect example of poetic justice for Israel to lose territory to this extent again (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25; fig. 8), this time due to a greater nation than Aram-Damascus.[249] The creation rhetoric of Amos 6:8–14 thus includes the nature imagery of Amos 6:12, the twice-mentioned title "(the) God of (the) cosmic armies" which bookends the paragraph with the divine creator's power (Amos 6:8, 14), and the "wadi of the Rift Valley" in Amos 6:14. This wadi was a natural feature mentioned here to deconstruct the illusion of national security. All of these elements have implications for forming character in Judah.

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[248] So Niehaus, "Amos," 448, but he offers no reason for it. Cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 365, who offers Wadi Kelt or Wadi Zered. The Zered would be near the southern extent of Moab's territory, not Israel's, however.

[249] The Aramean connection becomes even more relevant if Amos 6:2 alludes to Hazael's destruction of Gath (cf. 2 Kgs 12:17). Amos 5:27 also mentions "Damascus" as a point of reference.

6.3.3 Character Formation

The main pair of purposes in Amos 6 is to condemn Israel (and Judah) and justify

Yahweh. But the specific means of doing so are centered on humbling the pride of the

ruling elite in each Hebrew kingdom, especially the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos

6:1). "Pride" is an interesting emotional disposition because it is more complex than the

basic emotions like fear or sadness. Along with shame and guilt, pride is one of the so-

called "self-conscious" emotions that involves self-evaluation and facilitates not only

survival goals but also social goals for individuals and communities.[250] Psychologists

distinguish between "authentic" (*beta*) pride and "hubristic" (*alpha*) pride; the former is

positive and based on a sense of legitimate accomplishment or self-worth, while the latter

is negative and based on an inflated sense of self-worth or accomplishment.[251] In an

application of this theory to the pride of Babylon in Isa 47, Antony Prakasam

distinguishes between the two by saying that positive pride "orients toward prosocial

goals motivated by mastery [or excellence]" while negative pride "orients toward

antisocial goals motivated by performance."[252] The positive kind of pride attributes

achievements to "internal, unstable, and controllable causes" while the negative kind

attributes achievements to "internal, stable, and uncontrollable causes"—things for which

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[250] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 180–81.

[251] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 181. He (182) asks, "can we say that authentic pride and hubristic pride are two distinct emotions, like shame and guilt? The answer is not that simple. From a behavioral perspective, they seem more like two facets of a single emotion."

[252] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 183.

one cannot take full credit or responsibility—and sometimes assumes a permanency or exclusivity for these accomplishments.[253]

In Amos 6, this negative pride is depicted in various ways. It shows up in the labels "carefree," "confident," and "the notables of the first-rate of the nations" to describe the arrogance of the ruling elite in both Judah and Israel (Amos 6:1). It shows up in the rhetorical question comparing the size or strength of foreign kingdoms to Hebrew kingdoms (Amos 6:2), comparing being a prerequisite for self-conscious emotions. The creation rhetoric of animal products ("ivory") and foods ("lambs," "calves," "wine," and "oil") highlights a social decadence that is part of the arrogance, false security, and social injustices of these influential Israelites (Amos 6:4, 6). The natural world features to show the antisocial behaviors of elite men who have an exclusive fraternity at the expense of the rest of the people. The fact that the rulers were not "sick concerning the breaking of Joseph" (Amos 6:6) indicates that their arrogance was blinding them to the brokenness of their nation, undermining the sustainability of their lifestyles and their assumed national security. The clearest reference to arrogance is the divine hatred for "the pride [גאון] of Jacob" (Amos 6:8), a negative pride that is based on military and economic prosperity concentrated in the capital with its powerful leaders.

The creation rhetoric contributes to portraying this arrogance by comparing social injustices to unnatural absurdities with horses and oxen (Amos 6:12), thus making the natural and agricultural world the measuring stick for right order in human society. Such

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[253] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 190.

nature imagery in the accusation shows that the consumeristic and militaristic activities

are antisocial because they involve to oppressive behaviors as bitter and poisonous as

hemlock or wormwood (Amos 6:12).[254] Not only is arrogance antisocial, but it is also

stupid, as stupid as trying to plow the wrong terrain with oxen.[255] Because wealth and

wisdom are associated with honor in Hebrew wisdom literature,[256] it is likely that the

foolishness of the Israelites in Amos 6:12 shames them, as will be discussed later.

Arrogance leading to injustice is foolish, and by implication humility leading to justice

would be wise for Judah hearing the text. The final aspect of pride is in the boasting in

military conquests of either "Nothing"-ville or without giving Yahweh any credit:

"Wasn't it by our might we took for ourselves Karnaim?" (Amos 6:13). The "represented

speech" indicates that "pride as an emotion has verbal expressions" revealing the moral

character of the Israelites,[257] and the prominent first-person phrases "by our might" and

"for ourselves" are portrayals of egotistical pride, an exaggerated self-image of

independence (Amos 6:13).

The pretense of security in their status is demolished rhetorically by the critique

concerning a current or upcoming violence (Amos 6:3), the threat of the end of the

banqueting (Amos 6:7), and the destruction of the urban population and structures of

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[254] Cf. Prakasam ("Pride of Babylon," 190): "hubristic pride leads to oppressive behaviors."

[255] Marlow ("The Other Prophet," 80) explains the relationship between the halves of the verse: "It contrasts the natural wisdom of a horse whose hooves are unsuited to mountaineering with the foolishness (and danger) of setting justice aside, and compares the absurdity of an ox ploughing the sea with the stupidity of neglecting righteousness."

[256] Domeris, "Shame and Honour," 95.

[257] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 186.

Samaria (Amos 6:8–11). The text mocks militarism by calling the city of Lo-Debar "Nothing" (Amos 6:13; see fig. 8).[258] The creation rhetoric humbles military arrogance by alluding to Yahweh's cosmic military power ("God of cosmic armies"; Amos 6:8, 14), including his sovereign action to bring military oppression that will take away most of the gains Israel made in the eighth century (Amos 6:14). Similarly to how the divine "intervention" in Isa 47 involves taking away the security in which Babylon trusted and revealing the city's vulnerable self,[259] Amos 6 strips away the security on which Israel counted and renders the fate of the kingdom controllable by Yahweh, not by the wealth and power of Israel's political leaders or soldiers. The text shames all pride in human wealth, wisdom, and strength and honors Yahweh as the one with all strength. I infer shaming on the basis of the high social status of the banqueters and the victories in war, both of which would be associated with social honor, and both of which were probably reduced when criticized or threatened.[260]

For Judah hearing Amos 6 in the closing years of the eighth century, the message against "the carefree on Zion" would challenge the same temptation to false security and arrogance among Judahite leaders who might now consider themselves to be the "notables" to whom "the house of Israel comes" as refugees from the north (Amos 6:1).

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[258] Carroll R., "Prophetic Text," 88.

[259] Prakasam, "Pride of Babylon," 191.

[260] See generally Stiebert, "Shame and Prophecy"; Stiebert, *Construction of Shame*, 1–86. She notes how complex the concepts of shame can be, how shame overlaps considerably with guilt, and how very few studies have treated shame in prophetic literature in any comprehensive way. Cf. Klopfenstein, *Scham und Schande*; Huber, "Biblical Experience"; Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction"; Simkins, "'Return to Yahweh'"; Wu, *Honor, Shame, and Guilt*.

The mention of foreign kingdoms to the north and west, even if originally concerning

city-states prior to the fall of Israel, would now be read in light of the Assyrian conquests

of these three kingdoms in the second half of the eighth century. Calneh, Hamath, and

Gath were not "better" or "greater" than Judah (Amos 6:2), leading Judah to arrogance as

if it had managed to "put off (thoughts) of the disastrous day" (Amos 6:3). The famous

seal impressions on pottery reading *lmlk* ("belonging to the king") dating to the time of

Hezekiah show that Judah was stockpiling food and drink during the final two decades of

the 700s BC.[261] Government extraction of wine and oil would have increased the pressure

on the peasants in Judah to produce these crops instead of a more diverse variety for

subsistence, not only to meet the new tribute requirements externally imposed by Assyria

and to prepare for rebellion against that empire but also to meet the growing demand for

these agricultural products and for beef among Judah's elite,[262] who also had military

supplies, monumental architecture, and luxury items for which to pay.[263] There were also

new mouths to feed with Israelite refugees entering Hezekiah's growing kingdom.[264] One

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[261] Cf. Rainey, "Wine"; Kessler, *Staat und Gesellschaft*, 144–48; Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*; Young, *Hezekiah*; Chaney, "Political Economy," 126.

[262] Chaney, "Political Economy," 128. He argues that the Assyrian tribute may have included livestock as well as oil and wine, adding to the agricultural pressure on the farmers in Judah.

[263] Chaney, "Political Economy," 124. For trade exports to Phoenicia during the time of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, both Israel and Judah would have exported "the triad of wheat, olive oil, and wine" to pay for timber for sanctuaries, palaces, and elite homes. I am assuming the same would be true in the time of Hezekiah for the kingdom of Judah, since they would need weapons for military action against the Philistines and defense against Assyria (2 Kgs 18:7–9). Precious metals (2 Kgs 18:14–16) were ultimately gained through both military and agricultural means (i.e., commerce). The government's share may have been ten percent (1 Sam 8:11–18; 2 Chr 31:5–12). Cf. Yee, "'He Will Take the Best of Your Fields.'"

[264] Again, there is archaeological evidence for population expansion in Jerusalem and some economic disparity in Judah during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*; Burke, "Anthropological," 46–54). Burke (50) surmises: "Either the [Israelite] refugees would become dependent upon the charity of the [Judahite] king to provide for their subsistence until they

account before Assyria's attack in 701 BC mentions Hezekiah's treasuries containing

silver, gold, spices, high-quality oil, and weapons (2 Kgs 20:13).[265] Nevertheless, despite

a foreboding prophecy against Hezekiah's dynasty and wealth, Hezekiah could still

assess his reign with some level of complacency: "Won't there be well-being and

faithfulness in my days [at least]?" (2 Kgs 20:19).

In other words, the ruling elite in Judah had the same luxuries, inequalities, and

potential for arrogance and social injustices against its poorer members as did Israel in

previous decades. It would not be hard to imagine the wining and dining of the rulers in

Judah who likewise did not see the fracturing of their kingdom (Amos 6:4–6) on the

horizon in 701 BC or see any end to their banqueting under Hezekiah's reign (Amos 6:7).

This section of Amos thus serves as a critique and a call for humility against Judah's

arrogance from a strong army and material wealth before 701 BC (cf. 2 Kgs 20:19; 2 Chr

32:25–26). Natural imagery in the food (Amos 6:4, 6), the foolish nature scenarios (Amos

6:12), and the "cosmic armies" (Amos 6:8, 14) together shames the arrogance of Judah

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were naturally absorbed into the local economy, filling niches wherever possible, or work projects could be developed in which refugees would be employed while accomplishing important objectives for the state. . . . Indeed, a program of labor projects at the end of the eighth century can be identified that appears to account for Hezekiah's efforts to provide refugee assistance while benefitting from, if not exploiting, their labor" (50). However, "While the labor projects in Jerusalem may have contributed to short-term food security, they would not have alleviated long-term *food insecurity* and *loss of access to common property*, both of which would . . . have necessitated the intensification of agricultural production or the eventual resettlement of some of Jerusalem's population to other areas around Judah" (52, emphasis original).

[265] The account in Chronicles is even more elaborate and may reflect a plausible accumulation of royal possessions before 701 BC: "Now to Hezekiah belonged very great wealth and honor, and he made treasuries for himself for silver and for gold and for precious stone and for spices and for shields and for all desirable items, and (he made) storehouses for produce of grain and wine and oil, and (he made) stables for all livestock, both livestock (i.e., cattle) and droves (i.e., of sheep/goats) for stalls. And he made cities for himself, with herds of flocks and oxen in great numbers, for God gave to him very great property" (2 Chr 32:27–29, my translation).

and any foolish injustices in how they were treating the poorest among them. Therefore, as secondary purposes beyond condemning Israel and justifying Yahweh, the text shapes the dispositions and practices of Judah toward humility, moral wisdom, and social justice. Practicing justice would require, among the elites, practices of moderation in food consumption, restraint in taxing the crops of farmers, and restraint in offensive military activity (cf. 2 Kgs 18:7–9), lest Judah overextend itself just as Israel had done on the international stage.

The negative practices and related dispositions, if followed, could aim the desire of the Judahite leaders toward lavish indulgence as their moral vision of the good life, whereas the creation rhetoric in this part of Amos could aim their desire toward a different vision. This moral vision is implied by its opposites in Amos 6:12; the vision is the opposite of foolishness and absurdity (i.e., horses on cliffsides or oxen plowing the sea), the opposite of poisonous and bitter plants (i.e., hemlock and wormwood). Thus, the ideal of thriving is wisdom and moral sense, a society which produces life-giving practices and policies for all, namely, social justice for the weak and poor who would otherwise perish from lack of food and resources. The positive standard probably requires structural changes, not simply handouts to the poor. As the Archbishop of Brazil once said, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist."[266] Justice is the ultimate standard against which Judah would be judged too.

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[266] Dom Helder Camara, cited in McGovern, *Third Freedom*, 13.

CHAPTER 7: CREATION AND CHARACTER IN AMOS 7–9

Scholars often divide the book into macro-units of Amos 1–2, Amos 3–6, and Amos 7–9,

particularly since the last three chapters often feature visionary material in contrast to the

auditory oracles of the earlier chapters. This distinction between "words" and "visions" is

not accurate in the details, since all parts of the book draw attention to verbal and visual

aspects of divine revelation, and Amos 7–9 contains other genres besides vision reports.[1]

Nevertheless, the predominance of visions with various symbolic items, often from the

natural world, justifies treating Amos 7–9 as a macro-unit.

The first section of Amos 7–9, Amos 7:1—8:3, contains four autobiographical

vision reports and a narrative about prophetic authority (Amos 7:10–17) in between the

last two visions. The first vision concerns locusts (Amos 7:1–3), the second vision

concerns fire (Amos 7:4–6), and both times the visionary figure recounts pleading with

Yahweh to pardon Israel or stop the disaster, at which there is divine assurance that the

envisioned disaster would not happen. The third vision concerns the metal tin (Amos 7:7–

9), and this time the visionary (named "Amos" at last) does not plead but receives an

explanation of the vision in terms of religious and political devastation. The narrative

about prophetic authority (Amos 7:10–17) is strategically placed after the third vision due

to its mention of Israel's religious centers and king (i.e., the "high places," "sanctuaries,"

and dynasty of "Jeroboam" in Amos 7:9). In other words, once king and official religion are threatened, it makes literary sense to include a conflict between the visionary (prophet) and a priest representing the religious and royal interests of the kingdom of Israel (Amos 7:10–17). The fourth vision concerns a basket of fruit (Amos 8:1–3), and once again there is no pleading but only a divine elaboration on the disaster to come.

The next section, Amos 8:4–14, is an oracle that summarizes many of the previous charges in the book about social exploitation and the rejection of the prophetic message. It reads like a variation on Amos 2:6–16 and Amos 5:1–17.

The final section, Amos 9, contains several genres within it, collecting together a final vision report (Amos 9:1–4), a final doxology (Amos 9:5–6), a question focused on the international scene (Amos 9:7), a pronouncement about selective destruction (Amos 9:8–10), and a pair of hopeful promises about political restoration (Amos 9:11–12) as well as agricultural and social restoration (Amos 9:13–15). In what follows, I provide my translation of each major section followed by the usual discussion of creation rhetoric and character formation.

7.1 The Agrarian Visionary and the Cosmic King (Amos 7:1—8:3)

This section consists of two visions of destruction forestalled (Amos 7:1–6), one vision of destruction forewarned for Israel's dynasty and sanctuaries (Amos 7:7–9), one narrative of prophetic conflict (Amos 7:10–17), and one vision of destruction forewarned for the

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[1] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 61, 155-57.

people (Amos 8:1–2). The visionary intercedes, interacts, interjects, and insists on his

legitimacy as one who has received revelation from Yahweh, the cosmic king.

7.1.1 Translation

כה הראני אדני[2] יהוה והנה יוצר[3] גבי בתחלת עלות הלקש והנה לקש אחר גזי[4] המלך	7:1	Thus the Lord Yahweh had me see: And look,[5] he was shaping a locust swarm at the start of the coming up of the late growth, and look, it was late growth after the cuttings of the king.
והיה אם כלה לאכול את עשב הארץ ואמר אדני[6] יהוה סלח נא מי יקום[7] יעקב כי קטן הוא	7:2	And then,[8] when it had finished consuming the vegetation[9] of the land, I said, "My Lord Yahweh, please pardon! How[10] can Jacob rise,[11] for they are so[12] small?!"

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[2] The Latin, Syriac, Aramaic, and Qumran support this term, while the OG lacks it. *BHQ* claims that the Qumran evidence is insufficient on the presence of this term one way or the other, but 4QXII[c] and 4QXII[g] in Ego et al., eds., *Biblia Qumranica*, 60–61 have the first letter or two of אדני partly visible.

[3] The OG (ἐπιγονή), Syriac, and Aramaic vocalize יצר as "offspring" or "formation," while the Latin supports the MT (יֹצֵר; "[he was] shaping"), which is the most likely option, given the active role of Yahweh in these envisioned disasters.

[4] For לקש אחר גזי the OG has βροῦχος εἷς Γωγ "one locust larva, Gog" (NETS). See *BHQ* for discussion of this theological misreading of the terms.

[5] The use of והנה is more frequent in dream or vision reports, and the construction points "to each separate state of affairs or event that is observed by means of וְהִנֵּה" (*BHRG 2*, 417, §40.21.2).

[6] Here and in Amos 7:5 I argue that the original, final-form vocalization would have been אֲדֹנִי ("my Lord"), because the form occurs in a vocative address. Only later was this earlier spelling standardized to אֲדֹנָי ("the Lord") to match the other titles in the book, even though those titles are arguably original to the eighth century as well. See the discussion for Amos 1:8.

[7] Symmachus and the Aramaic support the MT as a stative verb ("rise"), whereas the OG, Latin, and Syriac render it as a causative ("raise"), as in τίς ἀναστήσει τὸν Ιακωβ ("Who will raise up Jacob?"). The same applies for Amos 7:5. The MT is a better reading in the context, and need not be emended.

[8] The form וְהָיָה has a discourse-marking function, normally to indicate an event "must be construed as part of a main line of events projected in the future" (*BHRG 2*, 428, §40.24; cf. Amos 6:9). Here, however, it is appears to function in relation to subsequent events narrated in the past, equivalent to the discourse use of וַיְהִי (cf. *BHRG 2*, 427 n. 59; Stipp, "*wehayā* für nichtiterative Vergangenheit"; Garrett, *Amos*, 207). The function most relevant to Amos 7:2 is that וְהָיָה updates "the reference time of a scene" that is either "the onset of a new episode" or "a development in an episode" (*BHRG 2*, 430, §40.25, speaking of וַיְהִי).

[9] This is reminiscent of the plague of locusts in Exod 10:12, 15; Ps 105:35. The mowing of the king is reminiscent of the advice in Prov 27:23–27.

[10] The term this translates (מי) usually is an interrogative meaning "who/whom," but it could occasionally be translated with other pronouns (e.g., Gen 33:8; Deut 4:7; Judg 9:28; 13:17; Ruth 3:16; Mic 1:5). Cf. Joüon-Muraoka §144b; *IBHS*, 320 n. 10, §18.2.d.

[11] The verb is קום ("rise"), not עמד ("stand"), but "rise" here means essentially the same as the traditional translation, with an implicit "fall" of the nation from which it would be unable to rise again to its feet (i.e., to survive or regain health). Cf. Amos 5:2; 8:14.

7:3   נחם[13] יהוה על זאת לא תהיה אמר יהוה[14]

7:3   Yahweh changed feelings[15] concerning this. "It will not happen," Yahweh said.[16]

7:4   כה הראני אדני יהוה והנה קרא[17] לרבב[18] אש אדני יהוה ותאכל את תהום רבה ואכלה את החלק

7:4   Thus the Lord had me see: And look, the Lord Yahweh was calling for a shower of fire, and it consumed the great cosmic ocean[19], and it was about to[20] consume the farmable portion (of the soil).[21]

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[12] The Hebrew term קטן ("small") is fronted here and in Amos 7:5 (cf. Amos 2:9; 5:13, 20), and "so" is an attempt to show this. This rendering would also be apt if כי were asseverative, not explanatory.

[13] Aquila, the Latin, and the Aramaic (with theological shifts) support the MT, while the OG, Symmachus, and Syriac read the verb as a continuation of the prophet's prayer, as they do in Amos 7:5–6.

[14] The OG assimilates the wording to match Amos 7:6 (i.e., as if גם־היא were present in both contexts), the Syriac treats לא תהיה as part of the prophet's prayer and omits "Yahweh said" to do so, while Murabbaʿât 88, the Latin, and the Aramaic support the MT (לא תהיה אמר יהוה).

[15] The verb נחם in this stem with Yahweh as subject arguably has an emotional dimension to it, based on the verb in other stems meaning "to comfort" or "to have compassion" (*DCH*). Renderings like "relent" or "repent" derive from contextual guidance but either mute or complicate the emotional dimension. Even apart from other stems, the usage of the *niphal* when Yahweh is the subject nearly always occurs in the context of other emotionally charged terms of compassion or situations where divine anger is nullified, at least (cf. Gen 6:6–7; Exod 32:12, 14; 1 Sam 15:11, 35; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:15; Isa 57:6; Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8, 10; 20:16; 26:3, 13, 19; 42:10; Ezek 24:14; Joel 2:13–14; Jonah 3:9–10; 4:2; Zech 8:14; Ps 106:45). The noun נחמים has similar emotional connotations (e.g., Hos 11:8). Boda (*'Return to Me'*, 26–27) discusses the similarities of נחם to שוב for changes that God makes, and how either verb can in certain contexts "indicate a shift in internal disposition" (27) or a shift in behavior (e.g., Exod 32:12; Ps 90:13; Jer 4:28; Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:9). It is that shift in internal disposition that my translation of "changed feelings" indicates.

[16] In starting a new paragraph after this clause, I follow Cairo Codex of the Prophets, which has an open paragraph mark (פ), not just a verse ending mark as the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices do. Cf. the extra space in Murabbaʿât 88.

[17] For והנה קרא, Theodotion omits הנה but translates the verb as a participle. The Aramaic paraphrases but uses an adjective that may reflect a participle in the MT. The OG and Latin read קרא as a perfect. The Syriac is ambiguous but probably supports the MT (קֹרֵא).

[18] The MT reads לָרִב בָּאֵשׁ, apparently meaning "(calling) for judgment with/by fire," or "to contend with/by fire," and all the ancient versions followed suit. Cf. the listings in *BHQ*; Simone, "'Chariot of Fire,'" 458–59. Some interpreters defend the MT as it is (e.g., Limburg, "Amos 7:4"; Rütersworden, *Dominium Terrae*, 49–50; Eidevall, *Amos*, 194, 196), and some re-vocalize but keep the word division (e.g., לְרֹב בָּאֵשׁ, "for a 'growing great' in fire" in Mittmann, "Der Rufende," 167), but these options result in awkward syntax or semantics, as noted by Simone, "'Chariot of Fire,'" 460–61. For syntax, ב is normally attached to the object contended *against* (e.g., Gen 31:36; Judg 6:32; Jer 25:31; Hos 2:4), never the means of a dispute or lawsuit (but cf. Isa 66:16; Jer 25:31b). There are thus more than a dozen proposed emendations of the text—twelve by 1940 alone (Morgenstern, *Amos Studies*, 59, 64). Popular proposals include "a flame of fire" (לְהֶבֶת אֵשׁ) in Elhorst, *De Profetie*, 162 and *BHS* and "for a shower of fire" (לִרְבִיב אֵשׁ) in Krenkel, "Zur Kritik," 271; Hillers, "Amos 7:4"; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 338; cf. Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 220–21, 244; NRSV. More recent proposals include "an enormous [fire]," requiring a hypothetical *piel* infinitive of רבב (Riede, *Vom Erbarmen zum Gericht*, 65), "to inundate with fire, bring up fire springs," requiring a hypothetical ריב II meaning "bring much water" (Notarius, "Playing with Words,"

ונשמו	7:9	And the high places of Isaac
במות ישחק[31]		will be desolate,
ומקדשי ישראל		and wasted away
יחרבו		the sanctuaries of Israel will be,[32]
וקמתי על בית ירבעם בחרב		and I'll rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."
וישלח אמציה כהן בית אל אל	7:10	Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, the
ירבעם מלך ישראל לאמר קשר עליך		king of Israel, saying, "Against you[33] Amos has conspired
עמוס בקרב בית ישראל לא תוכל		in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to
הארץ להכיל את כל דבריו		endure all his messages,
כי כה אמר עמוס	7:11	for thus Amos said:
בחרב ימות		'By the sword
ירבעם		Jeroboam will die,
וישראל		and it is Israel[34] that
גלה יגלה מעל אדמתו		surely will be exiled from its soil.'"
ויאמר אמציה אל עמוס חזה לך ברח	7:12	Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Visionary, go bolt to the
לך אל ארץ יהודה ואכל שם לחם		land of Judah, and there[35] consume bread, and there
ושם תנבא		prophesy,
ובית אל לא תוסיף עוד להנבא כי	7:13	but at Bethel do not anymore prophesy again, for a
מקדש מלך הוא ובית ממלכה הוא[36]		sanctuary of a king it is,[37] and a house of a kingdom it is."
ויען עמוס ויאמר אל אמציה	7:14	Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah,
לא נביא אנכי		"A prophet is not what I am,[39]
ולא בן נביא אנכי		and a disciple[40] of a prophet is not what I am,
כי בוקר[38] אנכי		but a cattle breeder[41] is what I am,
ובולס שקמים		and a fruit harvester[42] of sycomore fig trees.

[30] One Qumran manuscript (4QXIIᵍ) and the OG, Latin, and Syriac support the MT participle (שָׂם), while the Aramaic paraphrases and another Qumran manuscript (4QXIIᶜ) has the contextually awkward perfect/suffixed form of the same verb: שמתי ("I placed").

[31] This unusual spelling of "Isaac" here and in Amos 7:16 (i.e., ישחק instead of יצחק) appears elsewhere only in Ps 105:9; Jer 33:26. Perhaps because it looks more like "he laughs," the OG (τοῦ γέλωτος) and Syriac took it to mean "jest, amusement," while the Latin translates as "of an idol." Symmachus substituted "Jacob" in assimilation to the more common ancestral name for the nation. The Aramaic and two Dead Sea manuscripts (4QXIIᵍ and Murabbaʿât 88) support the MT. Cf. *BHQ*. In Amos 7:16 a different distribution of witnesses is found along these lines, but the name "Isaac" in the rare spelling is still likely the original. It may reflect a northern spelling. Cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 216.

[32] The chiastic order in Hebrew places the religious locations, not the verbs, in the middle.

[33] The phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order. See Amos 1:3.

[34] Like "by the sword," "Israel" is fronted compared to normal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:2.

[35] The adverb "there" and its repeat are fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order. Cf. Amos 1:3. Note the chiastic order of verb + "there" + "bread" + "there" + prophesy (Garrett, *Amos*, 221).

[36] By including the following text with no break in the paragraphing I follow the Aleppo Codex, which has a verse ending mark, in contrast to the additional closed paragraph mark (ס) in the Leningrad Codex and Cairo Codex of the Prophets.

[37] These two verbless (nominal) clauses have fronted word order. See Amos 2:9; 4:13; 5:8.

[38] The OG (αἰπόλος, "goatherd") and Syriac adjust their renderings to match the flock in a later line, but all other extant versions support the MT, which refers to larger herd animals. Technically, the

ויקחני יהוה מאחרי הצאן ויאמר אלי	7:15	Then Yahweh took me from (following) after the flock, and
יהוה לך הנבא אל⁴³ עמי ישראל		Yahweh said to me, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel!'
ועתה שמע דבר יהוה אתה אמר לא	7:16	So now, hear the message of Yahweh! You are saying,
תנבא על ישראל		'You must not prophesy against Israel,
ולא תטיף⁴⁴ על בית ישחק⁴⁵		and you must not preach against the house of Isaac!'
לכן כה אמר⁴⁶יהוה	7:17	Therefore, thus Yahweh said:
אשתך בעיר תזנה⁴⁷		'It is your wife who in the city⁴⁸ will be a prostitute,
ובניך ובנתיך בחרב יפלו		and your sons and daughters who by the sword will fall,
ואדמתך בחבל תחלק		and your soil which by the cord⁴⁹ will be portioned out,⁵⁰
ואתה על אדמה טמאה תמות		and you who on unclean soil will die,
וישראל גלה יגלה מעל אדמתו		and Israel that surely will be exiled from its soil.'"

Aramaic uses the same rendering here as for נקד in Amos 1:1 (i.e., מרי גיתין, "owner of herds"), but this may be due to assimilation (i.e., harmonizing). Attempts to emend בקר to דקר ("piercer"; cf. Zalcman, "Piercing") are not convincing, as rightly argued by Garrett, *Amos*, 223.

³⁹ All four lines have the subject fronted compared to normal word order for verbless (nominal) clauses. See Amos 2:9; 4:13; 5:8. The relative time of the predication is ambiguous: it could be present ("am") or past ("was"), but the first option makes the most sense grammatically and for rhetorical effect, per Eidevall, *Amos*, 209.

⁴⁰ This translation of the singular phrase derives from the elsewhere plural phrase "the sons of the prophets" (בני הנביאים) that seems to indicate associations or guilds of disciples who were apprentices of prophets (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1; cf. 1 Sam 10:5). Cf. Garrett, *Amos*, 222.

⁴¹ Steiner (*Stockmen from Tekoa*, 66–70) reviews the options for this term and concludes that it refers to a person "who bred and sold cattle" rather than merely taking care of them for someone else (67).

⁴² Steiner (*Stockmen from Tekoa*, 5–31) discusses the history of interpretation for בולס שקמים and then the etymology and cognates of בולס (32–47), concluding that the verb is a denominative derived not from the name of the tree but its fruit (44), and thus the participle בולס in Amos 7:14 refers to "a person that harvests the fruit of the sycomore," perhaps "in contrast to some term for a person who used the sycomore tree" for its wood (46). The participle does not refer only to the scratching or gashing of the fig, as is first found in the OG translation due to the cultural practice for ripening the fruit (8–17). Rather, it "refers to the entire process of harvesting sycomore figs, beginning with the gashing. The distinctiveness of that initial step may have promoted the coining of a special verb for the whole process" (47). See fig. 11.

⁴³ Here 4QXIIᵍ, the OG, and the Latin support the MT (אל), while Murabbaʿât 88, the Syriac, and the Aramaic have or reflect the more common preposition על ("concerning, against").

⁴⁴ Aquila and the Latin support the MT, while Murabbaʿât 88 adds עוד ("anymore"), and the other versions have exegetical renderings like "incite a mob" (OG in NETS), "reprove" (Symmachus), or "teach" (Syriac and Aramaic).

⁴⁵ By including the following text with no break in the paragraphing I follow the Leningrad and Aleppo Codices, which have a verse ending mark in contrast to the additional closed paragraph mark (ס) in the Cairo Codex of the Prophets.

⁴⁶ The OG, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic support the MT on the divine name alone, while 4QXIIᵍ and the Old Latin adds or reflects אדני before the divine name.

⁴⁷ The OG, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic support the MT ("will be a prostitute"), while Symmachus and Theodotion vocalize the verb as passive ("will be prostituted"). The MT is more likely grammatically, even though the dynamics of war make the passive interpretation more likely socially. It is no criticism of the woman in either case.

⁴⁸ The subjects of the verbs in this oracle as well as the first two prepositional phrases are fronted compared to normal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:2. My translations attempt to show this fronting.

כה הראני אדני יהוה והנה כלוב 8:1
קיץ[51]

ויאמר מה אתה ראה עמוס ואמר 8:2
כלוב קיץ ויאמר יהוה אלי בא הקץ
אל עמי ישראל לא אוסיף עוד עבור
לו

והילילו[53] שירות[54] היכל ביום ההוא 8:3
נאם אדני יהוה רב הפגר בכל מקום
השליך[55] הס

8:1 Thus the Lord Yahweh had me see: And look, (there was) a basket of summer's (end fruit).

8:2 And he said, "What are you seeing, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer's (end fruit)." And Yahweh said to me, "The (summer's) end has come to[52] my people Israel. I will not anymore pass by them again.

8:3 And the female singers of (the) palace[56] will wail in that day (speech of the Lord Yahweh). Great are the corpses. In every place one has thrown (them) out. Hush!"

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[49] This implies, Garrett (*Amos*, 227–28) observes, "the fall of the government of Jeroboam II, Amaziah's patron. Also, it is fitting that members of the elite, who used judicial means to take the land of the poor, should have the same done to them [by the judicial allotments of another set of rulers]."

[50] That the priest's land was large enough to be "portioned out" implies the Amaziah "was one of the wealthy aristocrats that Amos inveighs against" (Garrett, *Amos*, 228).

[51] See *BHQ* for the loose translations of some ancient versions for this and the preceding term.

[52] See Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 261.

[53] The OG, Symmachus, and Aramaic support the MT, while the Latin ("they will creak") and Syriac shift the meaning.

[54] Symmachus and the Syriac support the MT (שירות, "songs"), the OG and Theodotion have exegetical renderings (τὰ φατνώματα, "the compartments" NETS), Aquila and the Latin mistakenly read צירות, thus αἱ στρόφιγγες or *cardines* ("the pivots" or "hinges"), while the Aramaic smooths the syntax: וייללון חלף זמרא בבתיהון ("They shall be wailing inste[a]d of singing in their houses," Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum*, 92). Because "songs will wail" would be unusual, others vocalize or emend the noun as שָׁרוֹת ("songstresses"; thus Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 317; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 143; Noble, "Amos and Amaziah," 432–33; Eidevall, *Amos*, 213; cf. 2 Sam 19:36 [Eng. 35]; 2 Chr 35:25; Eccl 2:8), or argue the same meaning from an unattested lexeme שִׁירָה ("female singer"; thus Paul, *Amos*, 255). Another option is to understand a generic subject "they" before the object of wailing (i.e., "they shall wail temple songs"; so Garrett, *Amos*, 230), but the verb ילל (*hiphil*) is never transitive elsewhere (Eidevall, *Amos*, 213). Throughout the Old Testament and Amos (e.g., Amos 5:23; 8:10) the plural of "song" is שירים, not שירות as in the MT for Amos 8:3 here (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 317). I agree with Paul, *Amos*, 255 that it need not be repointed but understood as a variant spelling of "female singers."

[55] Most versions support the MT for this verb and the following word, but they vocalize the verb differently, often with a passive sense (so also Paul, *Amos*, 255 n. 21). Murabbaʿât 88 supports the MT and makes sufficient sense. Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 317–18. The suffixed (perfect) form of the verb is the most unusual feature in an oracle oriented to future doom. Perhaps the verb and the prior verbless clause portray the scene as a whole as if the future is already past, the corpses thrown out without burial.

[56] The basket of summer fruit (Amos 8:1–2) may indicate that this is an agricultural offering made a sanctuary (cf. Deut 26:1–11), so היכל would refer to Bethel as a royal temple, as Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 105–107, 110–13) suggests. It is not likely Jerusalem (contra *Theology of the Land*, 109–10). However, female singers (שירות) are always associated with the royal court elsewhere, so the term היכל could refers to the "palace" rather than the "temple" (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 319). Cf. Amos 6:10. The closer literary context uses מקדש ("sanctuary") and בית ("house") for the Bethel temple (Amos 7:13), perhaps suggesting that the distinct term היכל indicates the "palace," probably the royal palace in Samaria. Cf. Lessing, *Amos*, 500.

7.1.2 Creation Rhetoric

Compared to the previous sections of the book, the rhetoric shifts for a while to
autobiographical vision reports by a figure soon to be identified with "Amos." In the first
vision and ensuing dialogue (Amos 7:1–3), Yahweh had the visionary "see" (ראה) the
shaping of "a locust swarm" (גבי). The agricultural timing of this swarm could hardly
have been worse, "at the start of the coming up of the late growth [לקש]" (Amos 7:1),
meaning the spring crops before the rainless summer.[57] If these crops and vegetation were
destroyed, there would be very little food for the human and animal population of Israel
until the summer harvest still a few months away. Adding to the sense of urgency, and
perhaps as a subtle critique of the monarchy, "it was late growth after the cuttings (גזי) of
the king" (Amos 7:1).[58] The mowing of grass and crops for the royal stable and table may
have been customary, but the government practice reduced the harvest potential of the
average peasant farmers in Israel and made them more vulnerable to starvation in the

[57] Cf. Joel 1; Amos 4:9. According to Fretheim, *Reading*, 147, this is the worst timing because the
"early growth (grain) is ready for harvesting (though the king had gotten *his* share out of the field!) and the
late growth (vegetables) has just begun to sprout." The locusts would consume both grain and vegetables.
Cf. Paul, *Amos*, 227. The term לקש can refer to the late (spring) growth of plants or herds, "late" in the
sense that such plants or animals grow up during or after the crucial period of "latter rain" (מלקוש) from
December to March in the agricultural calendar (*HALOT*; *DCH*; Deut 11:14; Jer 3:3; 5:24; Joel 2:23; Zech
10:1). This rainy season is used metaphorically for life-giving words, favor, or blessing from an elder,
leader, or Yahweh (Job 20:23; Prov 16:15; Hos 6:3). Given the locusts in the context, the late growth is
probably plants. In the Gezer Calendar, "two months of growth" (*lqš* = לקש) in the agricultural year
correspond to the months of January and February after grain had been planted and before the barley
(April) and wheat (May) harvests were gathered. See Hiebert, *Yahwist's Landscape*, 45–47.
[58] "Cutting" or "mowing" (גז) is used to describe the shearing of sheep (Deut 18:4; Job 31:20) or
the mowing of fields (Ps 72:6). Mowing of grass is most likely in view here due to the locusts. Cf. the
"grain tax" in Amos 5:11. But either way, whether it refers to shearing wool or reaping crops, "it is clear
that the crown has extracted the prime share of the surplus" (Premnath, "Amos and Hosea," 129).

event of a locust plague like the one envisioned here.[59] The similarity of sounds in terms

for the "locust swarm" (גבי) and the "cuttings" (גזי) of the king may portray the monarch

as a locust in his own right.[60] For an agrarian visionary who lived from the land, it is no

wonder that, when the swarm "had finished consuming the vegetation of the land," the

visionary implores, "My Lord Yahweh, please pardon! How can Jacob rise, for they are

so small?!" (Amos 7:2). At this intercession, Yahweh "changed feelings" (נחם)

concerning the scenario and made a formal denial, both assertive and declarative in

quality: "It will not happen" (Amos 7:3). The creation rhetoric features the "locust

swarm," (Amos 7:1), the "late growth," "the cuttings of the king," (Amos 7:1), and the

"vegetation of the land" (עשב הארץ; Amos 7:2), "the land" meaning both political

territory and fertile land.[61] While there may be a hint of disapproval at Jeroboam's royal

policies, the focus is on Yahweh's sovereign activity in "shaping" (יוצר)[62] the locust

swarm (Amos 7:1) and the devastation such insects could cause to the vegetation and thus

to the food chain of the land-based ecosystem. The rhetorical function of the visionary's

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[59] Davis (*Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 123) comments: "Altogether, the demands of the centralized government [on the agricultural products and laborers] may well have consumed half or more of a [farming] family's labor and production capacity. In a bad agricultural year (about three years out of ten in that semiarid land), many families would have been unable to feed themselves and also meet the demands of the state. So the crown literally gained ground for centralized agriculture through acquisition of the ancestral lands of small farmers who went into debt and put up their land as collateral. Land thus extracted from freeholders was reassigned to the new aristocracy in the process known as latifundialization ('the making of wide estates')."

[60] Garrett, *Amos*, 207.

[61] Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 4) claims that the term "land" here may connote both political territory and fertile land "at the same time." The former nuance comes from the surrounding context, while the fertility nuance comes from the mention of locusts and vegetation (12).

[62] Previously in the book Yahweh was portrayed as the God who "shapes" mountains (Amos 4:13).

here,[67] because the etymological evidence does not support a direct derivation from the name of the Babylonian god Tiamat as previously thought,[68] and the book of Amos does not characterize any body of water as evil, disobedient, or opposed to Yahweh. Even the sea snake later in the book is not in conflict but in cooperation with Yahweh (Amos 9:3). The "cosmic ocean" is not a foe but a source of life for the land. That is why is it natural, after the fire consumed the depths in the vision, that the next vulnerable place was the "farmable portion" (חלק) of the soil in Israel (Amos 7:4).[69] That חלק refers to the portion that comprises the tillable "soil" (אדמה) in Israel is suggested by the nearby forewarning that a priest's "soil" or farmland (אדמה) would be "portioned out" (תחלק) to someone else (Amos 7:17; cf. Amos 4:7). And yet the cosmic scope of the underground ocean suggests that more is at stake than just one person's or city's farmland. I take the "portion" to be more extensive than the scattered farming areas of Amos 4:7 and Amos 7:17 but less extensive than the entire land mass of the Levant or the world. After all, Amos 7:17 and the visionary's intercession are focused on Israel/Jacob, not the entire Mediterranean seaboard or the inhabited world.[70] Without the protection of groundwater,

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[67] Rightly Lessing, *Amos*, 452; contra the *Chaoskampf* views in Hillers, "Amos 7:4," 223–25; Paul, *Amos*, 232; Simone, "'Chariot of Fire,'" 469–70.

[68] Waschke, "תְּהוֹם *tehôm*," 574–75. In general (Waschke, "תְּהוֹם *tehôm*," 575), "the common Semitic root *tihām(at)* originally denoted the sea as an unpersonified entity . . . . Behind all the various cosmogonies stands the shared notion that the world was created from water and that the earth from its first beginnings was surrounded on all sides by water."

[69] That the term חלק probably means "farmable portion" is supported by the feminine noun that is found twice in Amos 4:7 (חלקה, "farmable portion"), where it refers to farmland near Israelite cities.

[70] Eidevall (*Amos*, 194) takes it to be "the land," leaving the implicit area as ambiguous as it is in the Hebrew, not definitively cosmic, and not definitively limited to Israelite land alone. A defense of an implicit "land" (ארץ) could also be made by comparing the locust vision which speaks of the "vegetation of the land" (עשב הארץ) being consumed (Amos 7:2). The same idea could be present in the fire vision, namely, that it is the portion of the land that belongs to Israel and is agriculturally viable.

the soil of Israel's land would be particularly dry, its vegetation more vulnerable to

catching fire. Knowing and seeing this, the visionary implores Yahweh to "stop" (חדל),

noting again Israel's tiny size as reason for its inability to rise from such an ecological

disaster (Amos 7:5). Yahweh once again has compassion ("changed feelings") and denies

the scenario a future (Amos 7:6). The creation rhetoric shows the natural world as a

responsive agent to Yahweh's commands, since he calls for (קרא ל) or summons the

"shower of fire" (Amos 7:4), a fire which then acts to consume other parts of the cosmos

(cf. the locusts). The fact that the visionary implores Yahweh to "stop" the unfolding

events (Amos 7:5) implies that Yahweh is ultimately sovereign over the natural disaster.

Spurred by the creation rhetoric, the empathetic emotional character of both the visionary

and Yahweh are reinforced in the ensuing exchange (Amos 7:5–6).

The third vision (Amos 7:7–9) diverges from the format of the first two in that the

Lord (Yahweh) and the visionary (Amos) are more prominent in the vision and its

interpretation. There is hardly any nature imagery as defined in this study, since the focus

is on a "wall of tin" and a separate "tin" (אנך) object (Amos 7:7–8) that symbolically

foreshadow destruction for Israel's religious centers and royal dynasty (Amos 7:9).[71]

There has been no lack of debate about what the "tin" really is, but the options are all

human-crafted materials and thus not part of the creation rhetoric.[72] There may even be a

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[71] See the options for interpreting "the house of Jeroboam" in Garrett, *Amos*, 217.

[72] The term אנך appears in this text and nowhere else in the Old Testament. One option going back to the Middle Ages is that the term refers to the metal "lead" and thus to a construction "plumb line," implying that Israel has been measured and found to be crooked. Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 300; Williamson, "Prophet and the Plumbline"; Hoffmeier, "Once Again"). But אנך is not the usual term for "lead" (עפרת; Num 31:22; Ezek 22:20), "measuring line" (קו) or "level" (משקלת; 2 Kgs 21:13; Isa 28:17;

wordplay between "tin" (אנך) and the pronoun "I" (אנכי)[73] or a noun for

"sighing/groaning" (אנק/אנח) in Hebrew,[74] making Amos an agent of divine judgment or

the besieged walls a source of groaning, respectively. I understand the term merely to

refer to a soft metal ("tin") that signifies how weak Israel's defenses actually are.[75]

Yahweh threatens to no longer "pass by them" (עבור לו), meaning either no more passing

over or passing by without punishing (cf. Mic 7:18),[76] or meaning no more passing

through in judgment (cf. Amos 5:17; Nah 2:1 [Eng. 1:15]), since the judgment this time

would be severe enough.[77] The only nature imagery is the "high places" (במות) of Isaac, a

poetic way of referring to the national shrines on hilltops dotting the land of Israel (Amos

7:9). These locations do not recall any ecological connotations but rather the religious

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34:11; Lam 2:8). More problematic, it is first found in the phrase "a wall of אנך," which likely indicates a material rather than a construction tool. A second option, and the most likely one, is that the term means "tin" (cf. Paul, *Amos*, 233–34; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 130–32; Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 185–86; Novick, "Duping"; Noonan, "There and Back"; Eidevall, *Amos*, 198–200). Sweeney (*Twelve Prophets*, 1:253–55) suggests "plaster" (cf. the Latin) but struggles to explain how this would be a threatening symbol in the context of the vision (cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 756–59).

[73] See Notarius, "Playing with Words," 70–74.

[74] Gese, "Komposition," 81–82; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:255; Fretheim, *Reading*, 146.

[75] If correct, this metal does not signify strength (contra Willi-Plein, "Das geschaute Wort"; Eidevall, *Amos*, 199–200), since that would require alloying it with copper to make bronze. Instead, it signifies the weakness of Israel's military defenses (so Paul, *Amos*, 235; Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do,'" 185–86).

[76] Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 301; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 752–53; Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 227, 251, 254; Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 239; Niehaus, "Amos," 457; Lessing, *Amos*, 462–63. If so, the expression in Amos 7:8; 8:2 would be elliptical for the fuller expression in Mic 7:18 (cf. Prov 19:11), as noted by Paul and Niehaus. I think Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 301) is more accurate in saying that the positive version of the phrase (i.e., not negated with לא) does not denote forgiveness but merely means "pass by" in the sense of "not to intervene (with punishment) against someone." Yahweh thus expresses that he *will* intervene in judgment in Amos 7:8; 8:2.

[77] Crenshaw ("Amos," 207) argues that it is more likely, given Amos 5:17, that the expression denotes a situation in which "God warns of a final theophany for judgment, after which he will cease to deal with Israel." Cf. Smith, *Amos: A Commentary*, 235. Compare the similar wording of an enemy invasion (לא יוסיף עוד לעבור בך) in Nah 2:1 (Eng. 1:15).

uses of the natural spaces for burning incense and other acts of worship (cf. 1 Kgs 3:2–3; 12:31–32; Hos 10:8).

Mention of religious and political ruin likely explains the placement of the narrative that follows the third vision.[78] The account describes how the priest of Bethel, Amaziah, sent a message to King Jeroboam accusing Amos of conspiracy (קשר): "The land is not able to endure all his messages" (Amos 7:10).[79] Here the "land" (ארץ) is not ecological but political in connotations, representing the territory of Israel,[80] similar to "the land of Judah" (ארץ יהודה) later (Amos 7:12). Amaziah quotes Amos with a paraphrase of the threat against the king's dynasty and a threat of exile (Amos 7:11).

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[78] Contra those who try to explain the order as a historical sequence in the life of the visionary (Amos). See a thorough discussion of the literary features that unify Amos 7:1—8:3 together in Bulkeley, "Amos 7,1—8,3." It is not necessarily true that the narrative (Amos 7:10–17) was included in between the third and fourth vision reports to explain a shift in the visionary's hope for Israel (contra the suggestion in Boda, *Severe Mercy*, 313), for the narrative might be better placed *before* the third vision if this were the primary reason for its presence. The relation of the visions to a chronology of the ministry of the visionary Amos and to the other oracles in the book is not possible to determine (cf. Fretheim, *Reading*, 145). If the narrative of rejection at Bethel explains a shift from optimism to pessimism in the visionary-prophet, why was it not placed after the superscription (Amos 1:1) as a call narrative, after Amos 3:3–8 defending the prophetic message of judgment, or after Amos 5:1–17, where hope is held out for a remnant in Israel while worship at Bethel is criticized (cf. Amos 5:18–27)? It more likely fits within the visions of Amos 7:1—8:3 for other reasons. Boda ("Deafening," 192) later suggests more helpfully that the prophetic intercession ceases because the third and fourth visions are directed not at agricultural zones but at urban sanctuaries and a corrupt dynasty or because Yahweh insists that the time for sparing Israel is past (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3). These factors are plausible, and they open up other reasons that the narrative of Amos 7:10–17 is found in its present location. There are several literary connections that the narrative has with the visions on either side, in fact. Cf. Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 82–87.

[79] See the options for the import of the accusation in Garrett, *Amos*, 219: "(1) Amos' words are so many that they fill the land; that is, he won't stop preaching. (2) His message is spreading through all Israel and even spilling over into other nations, making them wonder what is happening here. (3) The land (referring to the people) cannot bear his preaching; in other words, he is discouraging and frightening them. (4) Amos' message is about to burst the land open like an overstuffed bag; that is, a violent reaction, possibly directed against the king, will soon erupt."

[80] Bulkeley, "'Exile,'" 82. He argues ארץ has this restricted sense here. Technically, it may refer to the *people* living in the territory rather than the landscape itself.

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Importantly, this second threat is that Israel "surely will be exiled from[81] its soil [אדמה]"

(Amos 7:11), which drops the political use of ארץ ("land") in favor of a more agrarian

term, אדמה, which arguably includes the sense of land as the fertile source of livelihood

for its residents.[82] After that message to the king, the narrative reports Amaziah's

directives to Amos: "Visionary, go bolt for yourself to the land of Judah, and there

consume bread, and there prophesy, but at Bethel do not anymore prophesy again, for a

sanctuary of a king it is, and a house of a kingdom it is" (Amos 7:12–13).[83] There is not

necessarily anything disparaging about the title "visionary" (חזה) itself, for it accurately

describes the role Amos as a figure plays in the surrounding vision reports, and it relates

on a literary level back to the superscription of the book, where Amos is one who "had

visions [חזה] concerning Israel" (Amos 1:1). What is disparaging is the implication that

Amos is looking for professional compensation (to "consume bread") from the Israelite

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[81] The preposition מעל is a compound one meaning something like "from (living) upon." The same applies to the identical phrase in Amos 7:17.

[82] Namely, אדמה here was not chosen merely as a synonym for political territory or the property of the priest, or both (contra the implication in Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 9–10; Snyman, "Land," 529). Admittedly, territory, property, and farming land can all be referred to with the same term אדמה, but in this context the theological and agricultural nuances should not be lost. Cf. Keita, *Gottes Land*, 273; Laato, "Yahweh Sabaoth and His Land," 125–29. Keita (*Gottes Land*, 273) contrasts the usage of Hosea and Amos with respect to these two terms, ארץ and אדמה, and notices that Hosea only once uses אדמה for Israel's territory (Hos 2:20), whereas Amos uses the term much more often but does not use the exact phrase ארץ ישראל at all. She (273) argues that the political nuance of the land is weaker than the agricultural nuance in Amos: "Das lässt darauf schliessen, dass bei Amos der territorial-politische Aspekt des Landes insgesamt hinter dem agrarischen Aspekt zurücktritt." Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 11) disagrees with this implication, because both terms for land "can be used in the territorial sense as well as the agrarian." While this flexibility is true in general, it does not explain why each term is exclusively found in the words of one person in Amos 7:10–17. See other studies of land in the prophetic books: Zimmerli, "The 'Land'"; Köckert, "Jahwe"; Braaten, "God Sows"; Kwakkel, "Land in the Book of Hosea"; Pilor, *Land of Israel in the Book of Ezekiel*.

[83] It is not "the" lone temple in Israel, but "a" temple, "suggesting that it is one of several," including one at Dan and Samaria, according to Garrett, *Amos*, 221.

government or that he does not have the authority to prophesy within the borders of Israel. It is a conflict over jurisdiction and authority. The conflict over jurisdiction again goes back to the terms for land that each person chooses here: Amaziah, representing the political interests of Jeroboam's kingdom, uses "land" (ארץ; Amos 7:10, 12), while the words of Amos only ever refer to the "earth/soil" (אדמה; Amos 7:11, 17). This is significant. It may reflect that the priest views the land as territory under the jurisdiction of a human king, whether of Israel or Judah, whereas the prophet views the land under the jurisdiction of Yahweh, a conditional gift to his people meant for their equitable flourishing.[84] Then, too, the conflict is over authority. Political terms heap up to confirm this: a sanctuary of a king—a house of a kingdom—indicate Jeroboam's royal authority and Amaziah's priestly prerogative in the government-sponsored temple of Bethel (Amos 7:13). The text presents the official religion and state as united together in opposition to any criticism of the status quo.

But Amos responds by denying any professional prophetic occupation, by asserting his economic self-sufficiency, and by narrating that Yahweh called him away from agrarian work to act as a prophet to Israel (Amos 7:14–15). The denials and assertions, first of all, are crafted as two poetic couplets:

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[84] Cf. Bulkeley, "'Exile,'" 82–83; Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 12–21, 86–104; contra Köckert 44–50. I disagree with Thang's argument (*Theology of the Land*, 86–102), that Amos views the people and the land as including all the people and soil of both Judah and Israel. I do not believe that "Israel" in this context expands to include all Hebrews. It refers to the people of the northern kingdom, not to Judah. Nevertheless, he is convincing when he concludes that "Amaziah challenges Amos with his own view of 'Israel' and the 'land', and conversely, Amos challenges Amaziah's" (89), and that likewise, "The legitimate possession of land, for Amos, depends on a true understanding of what is meant by the covenant and the people of Israel [to whom the land was given as a gift]" (104).

> A prophet is not what I am,[85]
> and a disciple of a prophet is not what I am,
> but a cattle breeder is what I am,
> and a fruit harvester of sycomore fig trees. (Amos 7:14)

Amos denies being a prophet (נביא) in a professional capacity or being an apprentice (בן) of one. Instead, he clarifies that he is a "cattle breeder" (בוקר). This is no contradiction to Amos 1:1 (נקד, "herdsman") or Amos 7:15 (צאן, "the flock" of smaller animals), for a נקד in the ancient Near East could own and manage both large and small herding animals.[86] Because cattle were more valuable than sheep or goats, Amos may allude to his role as a בוקר ("cattle breeder") "as a sign of self-sufficiency" in reply to the priest's insinuation that he was looking for compensation (Amos 7:14).[87] Furthermore, there is no conflict between being a "cattle breeder" and a "fruit harvester" (בולס) of "sycomore fig trees" (שקמים)—spelled as such here to distinguish it from the unrelated "sycamore" (Amos 7:14).[88] Some scholars point out that his hometown (Tekoa) is too high in elevation for these trees to grow, but with moving herds to manage, Amos and the other herdsmen from Tekoa could have exchanged some of their animals, wool, and dairy for the right to harvest figs while pasturing their herds under such trees in the Shephelah foothills to the west (cf. the Targum and *b. Ned.* 38a) or in the Jericho Valley to the northeast (cf. Luke

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[85] The predications are most likely present ("am"), not past ("was"). See Eidevall, *Amos*, 209. Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 306, 312–13; Dijkstra, "'I Am Neither'"; Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 144; Gass, "Kein Prophet"; Campos, "Structure," 14–15.

[86] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 67, 69.

[87] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 69. Cf. Amos 7:12.

[88] See Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 105–19. This tree (שקמה) should be identified as a different species than the common mulberry fig tree (i.e., תאנה), and the spelling I use is designed to distinguish this "sycomore" tree (*Ficus sycomorus* L.) from the unrelated "sycamore" tree in Europe and North America. Cf. Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 3.

19:4).[89] It is more likely that Amos owned a share of the figs rather than the trees themselves, or else he would have referred to his use of the sycomore for its comparably more valuable wood (see fig. 10 below).[90]

Figure 10. Sycomore fig tree illustration and picture[91]

Managing livestock and tending figs seasonally would provide shade and food for the animals and the herdsmen, especially during the winter, since the sycomore fig "is the only tree in the [Jericho] region that bears fruit in the winter and since much of its fruit is unfit for humans but good for cattle."[92] In this light, the two roles of tending animals and

[89] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 101–4, 111–12. The herdsmen were "from" Tekoa (Amos 1:1), not confined "in" Tekoa year-round (*Stockmen from Tekoa*, 89, emphasis removed). The Shephelah was known for its sycomore fig trees in earlier times (1 Kgs 10:27 // 2 Chr 1:15; 9:27; 1 Chr 27:28) and is the location for the fig trees of Amos in the Targum (Amos 7:14) and rabbinic tradition. However, Steiner thinks the Jericho Valley is more likely since it was known for its figs in the Roman period (105).

[90] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 102. There is a parallel in the modern Egyptian *gemamzi*, "who buys the yearly crop of sycomore fruit in advance and does all the work of gashing and picking, [and yet does] . . . not own the trees" or the land on which the trees stand (122).

[91] Left: UBS, *Fauna and Flora*, 180. Right: Bolen, "Sycamore-Fig Tree." Cf. Wright, *Understanding the Ecology*, 23, 29–32, 37–39.

[92] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 122. The trees produce between three and six generations of fruit per year (111 n. 91). The leaves are also good for livestock fodder (112, 122). Steiner (*Stockmen from*

harvesting figs are quite compatible, and they lend a powerful note to the creation

rhetoric in this section. The agrarian roles establish that Amos the visionary-prophet is

not a lifelong prophet or a professional prophet looking for room and board at the support

of the Israelite government. He is not part of a group of prophets that might fall under

Amaziah's jurisdiction as the priest overseeing food supplies and the activities of

prophets at Bethel. No, Amos makes a living from the land, not the largess of a Hebrew

government, not even back in Judah.

Amos also replies to the issue of the authority by which he speaks. Amaziah had

prohibited his prophesying at Bethel, a royal sanctuary or kingdom temple (Amos 7:13),

to which Amos recounts his prophetic calling: "Then Yahweh took me from (following)

after the flock, and Yahweh said to me, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel!'" (Amos

7:15). He appeals to a higher authority than the king of Israel, namely, the God of Israel.

Furthermore, the agrarian-turned-prophet mentions his צאן ("flock") "as a symbol of

legitimacy"[93] for his change of roles, since the exact wording "took me from (following)

after the flock" (לקח + מאחרי הצאן) alludes to the tradition of David called by God from

shepherding to a social leadership role (Amos 7:14–15).[94] In other words, Amos has the

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Tekoa, 115) summarizes: "Our theory, then, is that the herdsmen from Tekoa rented fields containing sycomore trees at the end of summer, when the trees were full of figs. While keeping an eye on their animals, they harvested the figs, selling the edible ones and storing the others. When winter came, they fed their animals the stored figs plus the leaves on the trees and whatever additional figs had appeared on the trees in the meantime. If the fields they rented were in the Jericho Valley, they were only around 20 km. [12 mi.] from Jerusalem—not much further from the city than the spring pastures in the wilderness of Tekoa. . . . This constant proximity to Jerusalem would have made it easy for Amos and his business associates to supply a steady stream of animals for sacrifice in the Temple throughout the year."

[93] Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 69.

[94] Cf. Steiner, *Stockmen from Tekoa*, 91–94; 2 Sam 7:8 (לקח + מאחר הצאן, "took" + "from after the flock"); Ps 78:70–71; Ps 151A:7 in CEB ("Instead, he sent and took me from following the flock [וישלח

highest authority to legitimate his temporary prophetic activity, and this overrules the orders that Amaziah has given on behalf of the king of Israel.

The prophet continues with a summons to hear Yahweh's message, then cites the censorship from Amaziah (Amos 7:16) before explaining that divine judgment will extend to the priest's family members and land within Israel, and that the priest will die "on unclean soil," just as Israel as a people "surely will be exiled from its soil" (אדמה; Amos 7:17; cf. Amos 7:11). For creation rhetoric, the first nature-based judgment on the priest is that his "soil" (אדמה) will be "portioned out" (תחלק) by a cord, reversing the way the land was originally portioned out in the book of Joshua.[95] The priest will share the fate of his kingdom, the loss of the promised land. In terms of ritual holiness, the irony of "unclean" (טמאה) soil is not related to modern concepts of hygiene but rather religious concepts of defilement of a place by the death or immoral practices of the people living there. The loss of fertile land means death or forced migration for the people and the priest serving at their most prominent holy place (Bethel). The sanctuary at Bethel and the land of Israel would be "clean" due to the presence of Yahweh there.

After the conflict narrative, a fourth vision report reinforces the points, again using nature imagery to communicate divine judgment on Israel. Yahweh showed Amos the visionary a basket of "summer's (end fruit)" (קיץ; Amos 8:1). Upon inquiring and confirming this sight with the visionary, Yahweh reveals "The (summer's) end [קץ] has

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ויקחני מאחר הצואן]. God anointed me with holy oil; God made me leader for his people, ruler over the children of his covenant" (CEB). Cf. 11QPsᵃ 151A:7 = 11Q5 Col. xxviii:10–12 in *DSSSE* 2:1179.
[95] Bulkeley, "'Exile,'" 82–83. Cf. Josh 17:5, 14; 19:9, 29.

come to my people Israel" (Amos 8:2). The wordplay is more than a clever similarity of

sounds between the "summer" (קַיִץ) and the "end" (קֵץ), though it is at least that.[96] It also

has conceptual coherence: harvest is a biblical image of judgment[97] and the summer is the

final portion of the agricultural year. Things were drawing to an "end." There is even a

progression between the visions since the first vision involves the spring crops, the

second vision involves a fire, possibly in the summer, while the fourth vision involves the

late summer crops. The main two fruit crops collected in the summer were grapes and

figs, often mentioned together in biblical texts, and so it is probably grapes and figs that

were in the basket (see fig. 11).[98] Without the basket of fruit as creation rhetoric, the

poetic justice of the end would not be so concrete. Instead of offering such fruit in

celebration of the land's fruitfulness, the access of the Israelites to the fruitful land will

come to an end.[99] As in Amos 7:8, Yahweh promises not to pass by Israel anymore.

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[96] See further discussion of the sounds in Wolters, "Wordplay"; Paul, *Amos*, 253–54; Notarius, "Playing with Words," 74–81. These scholars suggest that the words are vocalized in a Judahite dialect and would originally have been pronounced in an identical manner in a northern, Israelite, dialect of Hebrew. Compare a similar sound play in Jer 1:11–12.

[97] Cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11. In other biblical texts figs or fig trees can be symbolic for a time of judgment and a time of fulfillment of divine revelation. Cf. Matt 24:32–35 // Mark 11:28–31 // Luke 21:29–33; Luke 13:6–9. cf. Isa 28:4; Nah 3:12; Rev 6:13; see also Jer 24:1–10; 29:17.

[98] See Num 13:23; Deut 8:8; 1 Sam 25:12; 30:12; 2 Sam 16:1–2; 2 Kgs 18:31; Neh 13:15; Song 2:13; Isa 34:4; Jer 8:13; 40:10, 12; Mic 7:1. Other possible candidates that could have been in the basket of summer fruit (Amos 8:1–2) would be pomegranates (Num 13:23; 20:5) and olives (Jer 40:10), but the frequency of pairing grapes (or wine) and figs together suggests that these two types of fruit were present, at most, in Amos 8:1–2 (cf. Hiebert, *Yahwist's Landscape*, 45). Grapes were harvested in June and July, while the other summer fruits such as figs and pomegranates were gathered in August. Technically, olives were harvested in the fall (September–October), not the summer, but the Community Rule from Qumran (1QS 10:7) includes all of these times as the period for the summer harvest (קַיִץ), unlike the more detailed breakdown in the Gezer Calendar (Hiebert, *Yahwist's Landscape*, 46–47). Cf. Albright, "Gezer Calendar"; Talmon, "Gezer Calendar," 177.

[99] However, it is not correct to say, "The good and fruitful land, with its promised gifts, is coming to an end" (Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 113). The death of people in Israel is not the same as the

Figure 11. Basket of fruit (figs) at summer's end[100]

the non-intervention is over. The end will bring wailing and death (Amos 8:3).[101] The

setting of mourning is either in a temple or a palace.

7.1.3 Character Formation

Unlike many previous sections, the visions and narrative in Amos 7:1—8:3 offer very

few explicit reasons for divine judgment on Israel. Instead of directly justifying

Yahweh's punitive justice, the rhetoric presents the agrarian visionary-prophet interacting

with Yahweh over the potential of a pardon for Israel (Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3). There are

only a few practices that are critiqued, most centrally the censoring of prophetic activity

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"cancellation of the life-giving and fruitful land" (114). It is the cancellation of *access* to that land and its fruit (i.e., food).

[100] Photograph courtesy of Bolen, "Basket of Good Figs."

[101] The speaker is unclear in the second half of Amos 8:3, but I argue that it is the divine voice describing the carnage and commanding the prophet to be silent ("Hush!"). As in Amos 6:10, I think the hushing is not due to a taboo about speaking in such situations but due to horror and the lack of an option to intercede for the dead in prayer anymore. The visionary will not be able to pray for these fallen Israelites. The silence is closer to a funeral service than a temple service, at least. Cf. Boda, "Deafening," 200 n. 65.

(Amos 7:10–17) but also perhaps the royal practices of taking a share of the mowing and

crops (Amos 7:1) or supporting a corrupt temple system (Amos 7:13). For dispositions,

the Judahite audience is drawn into empathetic sorrow with the visionary who objects to

the worst natural disasters out of pity for the small size of Israel (Amos 7:2, 5). Empathy

can be cultivated through textual mediation rather than directly witnessing another person

or creature suffering.[102] Although the judgment had fallen on Israel by the time Judah

heard this entire book in its final form, the desperate pleas modeled an empathetic

prophet in the tradition of Moses (Exod 32:11–14; Num 14:13–23) and other intercessory

leaders,[103] supporting the authority of Amos as a prophet. The visionary's pleas also

defended his character against suspicions that he was only a nationalist who wanted the

complete destruction of Israel to the north. Amos the visionary "cares deeply about their

future."[104] Amos 3:3–8 has a similar function for defending the prophet's authority for

the audience, though there it is more logical and less emotional.[105] Like the mention of

his agrarian occupation in Amos 1:1, the agrarian occupation in Amos 7:14–15 serves to

bolster the authority of Amos for a Judahite audience. It shows the courage and

willingness of this visionary-prophet to heed divine revelation and interrupt his normal

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[102] See my article, Stewart, "Heaven Has No Sorrow That Earth Cannot Feel," 22–23. For a more recent discussion of empathy shaping the moral character of those reading the biblical texts, see Nasuti, "Called into Character," 11–19.

[103] Bulkeley, "Amos 7,1—8,3," 522; cf. Becker, "Prophet als Fürbitter"; Dijkstra, "'I Am Neither'"; Widmer, *Standing in the Breach*. Cf. Gen 20:7; 1 Sam 7:5–9; 12:19, 23; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 15:1; Ezek 9:8. The imperative "pardon" (סלח) also appears in Num 14:19 (Moses) and Dan 9:19 (Daniel). Eidevall (*Amos*, 195) compares the scene in Amos to the intercession by Moses during the locust plague on Egypt (Exod 10:12–19).

[104] Fretheim, *Reading*, 148.

[105] Bulkeley, "Amos 7,1—8,3," 516.

work for a time. Though the work with herds, flocks, and figs does not paint Amos as poor,[106] it does paint him as a person outside of the halls of power, a non-elite speaking from outside the government-supervised circles of prophets. He is no career politician, no prophet for profit, making him more credible to the average Judahite who sees him legitimated by divine calling and visions rather than ancestry or privileged appointments from a king or priest. If Yahweh could speak to this cattle breeder, he could speak to anyone, and the consequences of ignoring such revelation would be dangerous. As was true for Amos 1:1, others speaking to Judah prophetically (e.g., Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah) could take courage in their mission to speak what Yahweh had revealed for their own generation, because Amos had shown moral courage to speak even when rejected by leaders of his audience. Even those who were not prophets but simply supportive of Amos could learn from this episode and visions that they could use whatever power and privilege they had to pray for their people, to speak up in the face of government censorship (cf. Mic 2:6), and to heed the message of prophets contemporary to their own situation.

The visions also show the empathetic character of Yahweh, since he twice "changed feelings" (נחם; Amos 7:3, 6) concerning the potential calamities, cancelling them from taking effect. Such a change of heart shows the audience that Yahweh is responsive to human communication and to considerations of pity as well.[107] The divine

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[106] Cf. Niesiołowski-Spanò, "Biblical Prophet Amos."

[107] As Fretheim (*Reading*, 147) puts it, "God makes every effort to find a more positive way into the future. God is not hasty or capricious, but 'slow to anger' (see Exod 34:6–7), that is, patient with human wrongdoing." The visionary's intercession demonstrates that "God is gracious and merciful and could

change of feelings (נחם), often translated by others as "relent" or "repent" (thought not of

moral evil), is a verb that in this stem connotes "a reversal prompted by one's being

moved by the situation in view."[108] This dispositional change is grounded in the

confessional affirmations about Yahweh's compassionate and patient moral character

found throughout biblical literature (e.g., Exod 34:6–7; Ps 106:45; Joel 2:13; Jonah

4:2).[109] He does not ultimately allow locusts to consume all food sources in Israel (Amos

7:1–3), nor does he allow fire to destroy the groundwater and threaten life on the

farmable land in Israel (Amos 7:4–6). Although the third and fourth visions are affirmed

irrevocably (Amos 7:8; 8:2), one point of the sequence is that things could have been

worse, displaying Yahweh's mercy even in judgment.[110] His mercy was a "severe

mercy,"[111] to be sure, but the military devastation would not utterly destroy the

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'forgive' without repentance on Israel's part" (148). Cf. Fretheim (*Suffering of God*, 52): "The initial announcement of God's decision of judgment means that that [sic] is a probable future for Israel, but the openness to Amos's response entailed in the announcement means that there is also another possibility for the future which is just as real for God as for Israel." Further, "The fact that Amos does not respond in 7:7–9 probably indicates that Amos realizes that he can make no further contribution to the discussion; judgment is inevitable. . . . Amos's refrainment from further comment is thus parallel to Abraham's halt at the number ten in Gen 18:32" (176 n. 19). Cf. Fretheim, "Repentance of God," 46, 52–53.

[108] Fretheim, "Repentance of God," 44. Cf. Wolff (*Joel and Amos*, 298), who defines the term as "a change of mind prompted by the emotions, a turning away from an earlier decision on the part of someone deeply moved."

[109] Fretheim, "Repentance of God," 52. Cf. Gen 6:6–7; Exod 32:12, 14; Judg 2:18; 1 Sam 15:11, 29, 35; 2 Sam 24:16 // 1 Chr 21:15; Pss 90:3, 13; 106:45; 110:4; Isa 57:6; Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8, 10; 20:16; 26:3, 13, 19; Ezek 24:14; Joel 2:13–14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9–10; 4:2; Zech 8:14. According to Boda (*'Return to Me'*, 27), sometimes the verb can indicate "a shift in internal disposition." It is part of the "character creed" in confessions about God's "gracious character" (Boda, *Heartbeat*, 51).

[110] Contra Bulkeley ("Amos 7,1—8,3," 522), who believes the punishments in the visions become more severe as they are framed with more certainty and with Yahweh's increasing involvement. These factors alone are not persuasive, because a punishment affecting even the entire human community in Israel is still more lenient than punishments affecting the wider ecosystem of Israel (i.e., Amos 7:1–6).

[111] Boda, *Severe Mercy*. See his observations (*Severe Mercy*, 348) that, "while holding out hope for repentance alongside the announcement of judgment, Hosea, Amos, and Micah all look to *a severe*

ecosystem like locusts or fire might (cf. Amos 7:1–6). Judah sees this severe mercy in hindsight.

Overall, the disposition cultivated by the creation rhetoric is reverence for Yahweh. It is fear-inspiring to picture and hear about ravenous locusts (Amos 7:1–2), insatiable fire (Amos 7:4), ominous implications of fruit at summer's end (Amos 8:1–2), the unspecified means by which Yahweh could make high places desolate (Amos 7:9) and threats of sending leaders and populace into exile from their homeland "soil" (Amos 7:11, 17). Although these forewarnings after 720 BC would not hold the same potential for terror as they would beforehand for Israel, the text would still hold potential to promote a reverential fear of Yahweh for those in Judah who had survived the Assyrian devastation to the north, both Israelite refugees and traditional residents of the south (i.e., Judahites). This Yahweh was the same God Judah claimed to serve as well, and Yahweh could bring a political and agrarian end to Judah as well if the kingdom were to reject prophetic visions like Israel did in rejecting Amos the visionary-prophet. For the moral imagination and ethical desire of the Judahites, the text projects a cosmos in which Yahweh is creator and commander of natural forces and military threats, the one who announces that harvest time of judgment has arrived for Israel. Reverence and receptivity to prophetic messages are the moral responses appropriate for Judah.

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divine discipline from which will emerge a penitent and faithful community, often associated with the Day of the LORD" (emphasis original).

7.2 Greedy Grain Dealers and Tragic Scarcity (Amos 8:4–14)

In an echo of Amos 2:6–16, this section criticizes the social injustices and refusal to hear

Yahweh that characterize Israel. The tragic consequences involve scarcity that goes

beyond food and water to include a drought of communication from Yahweh to Israel.

7.2.1 Translation

שמעו זאת השאפים[112] אביון	8:4	"Hear this, you who sniff after the needy (for food),
ולשבית עֲנוּ[113] ארץ		and[114] make cease the downtrodden people of the land,
לאמר מתי יעבר החדש ונשבירה	8:5	saying, 'When will the new month (feast) pass by so we
שבר[115]		can market wheat,
והשבת ונפתחה[116] בר[117]		and the (weekly) Sabbath-ceasing so we can display grain,
להקטין איפה ולהגדיל שקל		—making[118] a measure small and a weight big,
ולעות מאזני מרמה		and making deceitful scales bent;
לקנות בכסף	8:6	acquiring for silver
דלים		(some) poor people,
ואביון		and the needy (person)
בעבור נעלים		for the sake of a couple of sandals—
ומפל[119] בר נשביר		and so the husks of grain[120] we can market?'!"[121]

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[112] The versions were confused by or misread the letters of this rare term (*BHQ*). See Amos 2:7.

[113] Murabbaʿât 88 supports the consonants of the MT against the Masoretic reading of the word as עֲנֵיָי = עֲנֵיֵי ("afflicted people"). Cf. Amos 2:7 (ענוים). I vocalize the word as עֲנֵיֵי ("downtrodden").

[114] According to Garrett (*Amos*, 239), the conjunction (ו) before the infinitive construct may be "emphatic" ("even"), "explanatory" ("that is"), or "represent a situation successive to that represented by a finite verb . . . or participle"—a quote from *IBHS* §36.3.2. Cf. Joüon-Muraoka, §124p; Ps 104:21; Jer 17:10; 44:19; 1 Chr 6:34; 12:33. Of these options, Garrett (*Amos*, 239) takes the last as best, concluding that "the infinitive serves as a second relative clause after" the participle השאפים.

[115] The Syriac and Aramaic support the MT for ונשבירה שבר, while 4QXII^g copied the ending of the verb incorrectly (ונשבים), the OG abbreviated, and the Latin was loose with the meaning.

[116] I translate this as to "display" grain, but another way to understand it would be an elliptical expression, to "open" (sacks of) grain.

[117] The OG, Syriac, and some Aramaic manuscripts read "storehouses," while Murabbaʿât 88 and the Latin support the MT in its harder reading of "grain."

[118] This and the other infinitives in Amos 8:5–6 may be "gerundive, explanatory or epexegetical," to explain "the circumstances or nature of a preceding action" (*IBHS* 36.2.3.e, emphasis removed). Cf. Joüon-Muraoka §124o; Garrett, *Amos*, 241. In other words, the marketplace practices are not honest but exploitative in nature. Alternatively, the infinitives may convey purpose, namely, that the merchants want to open up the markets or containers *in order to* profit dishonestly in their transactions.

[119] The Latin, Syriac, and some Aramaic manuscripts support the MT. The OG misread a letter.

[120] The phrase is fronted compared to normal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:2.

נשבע יהוה בגאון יעקב	8:7	Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
אם אשכח לנצח כל מעשיהם		'I will not, for perpetuity,[122] forget any of their doings!'
העל זאת לא תרגז הארץ	8:8	Because of this, won't the land shake,
ואבל כל יושב בה		and each who resides in it dress mournfully?
ועלתה כ**יאר**[123] כלה[124]		And won't it come up like the Stream,[127] all of it,
ונגרשה[125] ונשק**עה**[126] כ**יאר** מצרים		and be churned up and sink like the Stream of Egypt?
והיה ביום ההוא נאם אדני יהוה	8:9	'And in that day (speech of the Lord Yahweh),
והבאתי השמש בצהרים		I will bring the sun down at noon,
והחשכתי לארץ ביום אור		and I will bring darkness to the land in daylight,
והפכתי חגיכם לאבל	8:10	and I will turn your festivals[129] into mourning dress,
וכל שיריכם לקינה		and all your songs into a funeral chant,
והעליתי על כל מתנים שק		and upon every waist[130] I will bring burlap[131],
ועל כל ראש קרחה		and on every head (I will bring) baldness,
ושמתיה כאבל יחיד		and I will make it like mournful dress for an only child[132],
ואחריתה כיום מר[128]		and the last of it like a bitter day.'"[133]

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[121] The question mark concludes the long string of questions from the merchants that started in Amos 8:5, while the exclamation mark concludes the summons to hear ("Hear this!") from Amos 8:4.

[122] This phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal Hebrew word order. See Amos 1:3.

[123] The MT alone has כָאר ("like light"), perhaps assimilating to the "light" of Amos 9:9, while the other extant versions reflect כַיאר ("like the river/stream/Nile"), the correct reading in view of the parallel line (*BHQ*). I emend accordingly, and I emend the parallel כִּיאור to its short form as well.

[124] The major three Greek recensions and the Latin and Aramaic support the MT (כֻּלֹּה), while the OG and Syriac interpret the form as ("[its] consummation"), vocalizing it as כָּלָה/כַּלֹּה. The "land" is more likely the subject of the verb than this form, which I take to mean "all of it" (thus MT).

[125] The OG omits (cf. Amos 9:5), the Syriac and Aramaic read it from the wrong lexeme (i.e., the common גרש I), while Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Latin support the MT (גרש II). Garrett (*Amos*, 245) thinks the distinction between two lexemes is needless: "Used of a river, it does not mean to splash about or be unsettled, it means to overflow its banks and so toss up mud and silt (Isa 57:20). This is simply a function of the meaning 'drive out.'"

[126] The MT consonants (ונשקה, "and be watered") are a graphical error for וְנִשְׁקָעֽה, as the Masoretic vocalization and the extant versions all essentially agree. Cf. *BHQ*; Amos 9:5 (ושקעה).

[127] Traditionally "Nile," since יאר mostly refers to the main river of Egypt or to its branches, when plural (but cf. Dan 12:5–7). My translation brings out the creation rhetoric better but acknowledges with capitalization that it is a specific "Stream" in the context. Compare the similar use of (ה)נהר ("[the] River") alone to refer to the Euphrates River (e.g., Gen 31:21; Exod 23:31; Num 22:5; 1 Kgs 5:1 [Eng. 4:21]; Pss 72:8; 80:12 [Eng. 11]; Isa 7:20; Mic 7:12).

[128] In starting a new paragraph after this clause, I follow Cairo Codex of the Prophets, which has a closed paragraph mark (ס), not an open paragraph mark (פ) as in the Aleppo Codex or merely a verse ending mark as in the Leningrad Codex.

[129] If the festivals are the same as in Amos 5:21, where astral worship is critiqued (Amos 5:26), then "the cosmic darkening of the sky is directly relevant" as judgment (Garrett, *Amos*, 248). I interpret Amos 5:26 as past activity, however, and so the relevance of a link with Amos 8:9–10 is diminished.

[130] The phrase is fronted compared to normal, postverbal word order. See Amos 1:3.

[131] This is a fresh equivalent for "sackcloth" material for mourning clothing.

8:11 הנה ימים באים נאם אדני יהוה
"'Look, days are coming (speech of the Lord Yahweh),

והשלחתי רעב בארץ
when I will send hunger on the land,

לא רעב ללחם
not hunger for bread,

ולא צמא למים
and not thirst for water,

כי אם לשמע את דברי[134] יהוה
but for hearing the messages of Yahweh,[135]

8:12 ונעו מים עד ים
and they will stagger from [southern] sea to [western] sea,

ומצפון ועד מזרח
and from north even to (eastern) sunrise.[136]

ישוטטו לבקש את דבר יהוה
They will roam around to seek the message of Yahweh,

ולא ימצאו
but they will not find (it).

8:13 ביום ההוא תתעלפנה הבתולת היפות
In that day, the beautiful young women will faint,

והבחורים בצמא
and the young men with thirst (will faint),[137]

8:14 הנשבעים באשמת[138] שמרון
the ones who swear by the guilt of Samaria

ואמרו חי אלהיך דן
and say, "As surely as your God is alive, Dan!"

וחי דרך[139] באר שבע
and "As surely as the way of Beersheba is alive!"

ונפלו ולא יקומו עוד
And they will fall and not rise anymore!'"

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[132] Eidevall (*Amos*, 264 n. 98) observes, "Although the masculine form in . . . 'only,' may be interpreted inclusively as referring to both boys and girls, it is likely that the author of Amos 8:10 primarily had the death of an only son in mind. After all, this text was written in a patriarchal society."

[133] Garrett (*Amos*, 246) notes that there are eight lines of judgment corresponding to eight lines of accusation in Amos 8:5–6.

[134] Although only some Aramaic manuscripts support the MT ("words/messages"), the MT is the harder reading compared to the singular noun found nearby in Amos 8:12. No emendation is needed.

[135] It is the fixed nature of the expression "the word of Yahweh" (Amos 8:11–12) that accounts for Yahweh referring to himself in the third person. See Elledge, *Use of the Third Person*, 70–71.

[136] Although the noun can appear independently, as here, it often appears in connection with "the sun" (שמש) to indicate the east where the sun rises. Cf. Num 21:11; Deut 4:41, 47; Josh 1:15; 12:1; 13:5; 19:12, 27, 34; Judg 11:18; 20:43; 21:19; 2 Kgs 10:33; 21:25; 25:6; 25:19; Pss 50:1; 113:3; Mal 1:11. The verbal form זרח means "to appear, emerge, rise, shine" (e.g., Gen 32:32; Exod 22:2; Judg 9:33; 2 Kgs 3:22; Eccl 1:5; Jonah 4:8). Thus, מזרח means "place of (sun) rising" here as a way of indicating the direction we would call "east."

[137] Garrett (*Amos*, 254) argues that this verse is not poetry but prose, given the long first line, but with verb gapping the difference in length is not decisive. I take it as poetry.

[138] The MT (אשמת) finds support from Murabbaʿât 88, the major Greek recensions, the Latin, and the Aramaic, while the OG (κατὰ τοῦ ἱλασμοῦ, "by the atonement") translates the term as if from the similar noun אשם ("guilt offering"). There is no ancient evidence for the conjecture to emend to the goddess "Ashimah of" (אֲשׁמַת; cf. אשימא, 2 Kgs 17:30) or "Asherah of" (אשרת) Samaria (cf. 2 Chr 24:18; 33:23). Contra Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 144, 152. Eidevall (*Amos*, 222) makes a good case for viewing the "guilt of Samaria" as the worship of Yahweh, not some other deity, using the golden bull-calf, in light of similar critiques in Hos 4:15; 8:5–6. Cf. Day, "Hosea," 214–16. Cf. 1 Kgs 12:28–30; 2 Kgs 10:28–29.

The most likely idea behind the "guilt of Samaria" is a religious one in Amos 8:14 (cf. 2 Chr 24:18; 33:2), considering the context of swearing oaths and the context of Yahweh (or other gods) revered at other locations (i.e., at Dan and Beersheba). Garrett (*Amos*, 255) argues that the guilt of Samaria is the creation of additional worship sites at Dan and Beersheba, essentially equivalent to frequent refrain about the religious failures of King "Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (e.g., 2 Kgs 10:28; 14:24; 2 Kgs 17:21–23; 2 Chr 13:8–9; cf. 1 Kgs 12:28—13:34).

7.2.2 Creation Rhetoric

This section (Amos 8:4–14) begins with a summons to hear, as several previous sections

began (e.g., Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1), and the charges describe practices that are similar to the

very first condemnation of Israel in the book (Amos 2:6–7). The same verb is used to

describe those who "sniff" (השאפים) after the needy for food (Amos 8:4; cf. Amos 2:7), a

verb I earlier argued should not be emended or interpreted as "trample" but understood in

accordance with its usual range of meanings. In light of the sometimes beastly imagery

for violent nations in the oracles of Amos 1–2, the verb in Amos likely portrays the

oppressors as jackals or wild donkeys hungrily sniffing for food (cf. Jer 14:6; שאף). In

context, this would mean panting for and consuming any resources that the needy might

have, keeping them in their poverty or making them "cease" (לשבית) entirely (Amos 8:4).

The fact that the needy in Israel are also called "the downtrodden people of the land" (ענוי

ארץ) indicates their shameful poverty as well, for it denotes their forced humiliation into

a lowly social status.[140] Here "land" is the territory of Israel, and the extermination of

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[139] Similarly, the MT finds support from Murabbaʿât 88, the Latin, and the Syriac, while the OG has "your god/God" and the Aramaic is exegetical. There are various emendations proposed for the title of a deity here, but the same corrupt Yahwistic worship can be argued for the practices at Dan and Beersheba (cf. Gen 21:33; 1 Kgs 12:28–30). But see other suggestions for the deities in Olyan, "Oaths," 121–49. Linville (*Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 156–57) suggests "strider" as an emendation (cf. Amos 4:13), and Jeremias (*Book of Amos*, 152) emends to "by the power of" Beersheba (cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 382). Eidevall (*Amos*, 223) leaves it open because the emendations lack support in the versions and also have no other examples of such actions or titles for holy sites. Yet, he says, "swearing by the one who treads a cultic site sounds as strange as taking an oath by the pilgrimage route leading to that site" (Eidevall, *Amos*, 223). But compare "treads on the high places" (Amos 4:13; Mic 1:3), which some others take to refer to elevated religious sites.

[140] Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 18–19) identifies the ענוים—virtually identical to the similar עני—as a "class" of the poor who were oppressed—not *humble* so much as forcibly *humbled* and pushed into their low status. It is not accurate to translate the term as spiritually "humble," for that neglects

such "downtrodden" from the land represents a means for the powerful to appropriate

more of the land's resources for themselves (Amos 8:4).

The land's resources are at stake in the following greedy speech put in the mouths

of the powerful,[141] who in effect are thinking about crops as commodities rather than as

gifts from God:

> "When will the new month (feast) pass by so we can market wheat,
> and the (weekly) Sabbath-ceasing so we can display grain,
> —making a measure small and a weight[142] big,
> and making deceitful scales bent;
> acquiring for silver
>> (some) poor people,
>> and the needy (person)
> for the sake of a couple of sandals—
> and so the husks of grain we can market?" (Amos 8:5–6)

Here the words represent impatience with religious breaks from marketplace business, a

greed that exploits peasants who can no longer grow enough food to feed their families

independently. The creation rhetoric includes the "new month (feast)" (חדש)[143] and the

"(weekly) Sabbath-ceasing" (שבת), since these seasonal and weekly breaks from work

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the bodily and economic "extremes of peasant poverty" (22). Cf. Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," 5:412–13. Accordingly, I translate it as "downtrodden" to show that these people are victims of oppression. Domeris (*Touching the Heart of God*, 170–77) uses an axis of power/powerlessness along with an axis of honor/shame to define poverty and wealth with more nuance than economics alone. As he (26) explains, "the semantic domain of poverty is tied to several other domains, including wealth, power, honour and righteousness. To limit the biblical understanding of poverty to economics is to fail to hear what the Bible is saying about the different dimensions of poverty."

[141] Even though such a lengthy stretch is put in the mouths of the merchants, Garrett (*Amos*, 240) rightly doubts that the merchants "were so brazen as to actually say these things; Amos is using this caricature or travesty as a literary device to portray their attitudes as betrayed by their actions."

[142] The "shekel" was a counterweight to silver lumps placed on the scales for grain payments.

[143] Thang (*Theology of the Land*, 126) argues that חדש could be translated with the common rendering "New Moon" since the Hebrew word "month" (חדש) comes from the consonants that mean "new" as an adjective—and because the Israelites typically used a lunar calendar for their agricultural calendar, I might add. I translate it as "new month (feast)."

were tied to the celebration of the land's resources and to a stoppage from work as commanded by Yahweh. Traditions concerning these two kinds of days were observed in the eighth century (cf. Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13 [Eng. 11]), and probably long before that.[144] Even if the new month festival and particularly the Sabbath in Amos 8:5 did not have all of the nuances that they do in the legal material of the Pentateuch,[145] there must have been some minimal relation of these days to Israel's lunar calendar and agricultural offerings on the one hand (e.g., Num 10:10; 28:9–14; 1 Sam 20:5, 24, 27, 34),[146] and a relation to the culturally unique stoppage of ordinary work every seventh day on the other hand, even when there was not a new month festival with which the Sabbath coincided.[147] In other words, these days assume a ceasing from ordinary work such as agricultural production and marketing so that the land and people might rest and enjoy what they already have. Thus the Sabbath is one of the measures that enables the poor and wealthy alike to enjoy the fruits of their labor, the fruits of the land, as a gift from Yahweh (Amos 8:5).[148] The Sabbath here "rests on a belief about the just and proper use of land" as well

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[144] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 124–26, 133.

[145] Cf. Exod 16:22–31; 20:8–11; 23:12; 31:12–17; 34:21; 35:2–3; Lev 23:3; Num 15:32–36; Deut 5:12–14.

[146] Although a feast once every month was not commanded in the Pentateuch, it was perhaps customary to hold a feast with offerings on the day of the new moon (Garrett, *Amos*, 240; e.g., Num 10:10; 28:9–14; 1 Sam 20:5, 24, 27, 34; 2 Kgs 4:23; Ps 81:4; Isa 1:13–14; 66:23; Ezek 46:1, 3, 6; Hos 2:13). Even though this occasion in other texts was only described as a time of religious celebration and offerings, the implication is probably that buying and selling were discouraged then as well, not only on Sabbaths. Amos 8:5 is the only text that implies a work stoppage for the new month celebrations, though (Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 126–27).

[147] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 124–26, 132–33.

[148] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 135. Furthermore, "The rich want to monopolize the land-produce such as grain and wheat by economic injustice. The Sabbath rather suggests that the poor and the needy are also to enjoy the gift of land. Amos condemns the desire to have a sabbath-less society, which brings about social and economic exploitation of the poor" (135). Ellis ("Amos Ecology," 262) explains,

as a belief about proper relationship with Yahweh their creator and liberator (cf. Exod 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15).[149] The Sabbath is a benevolent practice of "ceasing" (the שבת), but the powerful dealers are accused, ironically, of making the downtrodden "cease" (שבת), not from work but from existence on the "land" (Amos 8:4). Profit or perish, *parish or profit*, would be two ways of putting it from the perspective of the merchants given in the text.

The issue of grain forms part of the nature imagery as well, since the selling of "wheat" (שבר)[150] or "grain" (בר) reflects the enrichment of large landowners or government dealers against the landless who must buy such staples instead of growing them.[151] Davis explains the social dynamics that may have led to this situation:

> As residents of rural districts, they [the prophets Amos and Hosea] would have witnessed the appropriation of the land and those who worked it; many formerly free peasants became serfs, doubtless on land their own families had long held. Speaking from firsthand knowledge, they show what state-run agriculture meant to the small farmer. In the diversified farming characteristic of the village-based economy, families had grown nearly all their own food and obtained the rest through cooperative trade networks. In the more "efficient" system of commodity-driven agriculture, families were forced to purchase their most important dietary staple in the grain market, without benefit of the ethical constraints that perforce inform business among neighbors and kin.[152]

"On a day when working the land was forbidden in order to focus on the celebration of divine gifts, the elites arrogantly planned how to extort more for themselves from the land and its creatures."

[149] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 135.

[150] "Wheat" (שבר) and "grain" (בר) are general synonyms and not the usual terms for "wheat" and "barely." The text does not distinguish between two kinds of grain. The terms merely denote grain that is already threshed and ready for sale (thus Garrett, *Amos*, 241).

[151] Compare the views on these dealers in Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 64–65. Houston argues that they are more likely government officials but concludes, "In any case, the oppressors in this passage are the same social group as are in the sights of the text in Amos 3 and 5" (65).

[152] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 124. Her sketch agrees with the helpful studies of Chaney, *Peasants, Prophets, and Political Economy*. Cf. Premnath ("Amos and Hosea," 130): "More and

The merchants are likely among the large landholders who were part of the ruling elite in

Israel. The poor, in contrast, might be smalltime farmers who "farm in barley" but "prefer

to purchase wheat for the making of bread" or porridge, and these farmers are cheated

when exchanging their barley for wheat because of the distorted measures, weights, and

scales (Amos 8:5).[153] Alternatively, the poor might be landless farm workers who

exchange some of their wages for the overpriced grain at the marketplace.[154]

The part about "acquiring for silver (some) poor people" or the needy for

"sandals" (Amos 8:6) is not separated from agricultural issues but rather is part of the

exploitation of these peasants who are becoming debt-slaves to the grain dealers when in

need of a loan of silver or in need of crops contracted out to them (cf. Amos 2:6). The

activity of the dealers violates the legal traditions that mitigate debt and landlessness (cf.

Exod 22:24–26 [Eng. 25–27]; Lev 25:35–37; Deut 15:7–11; 24:7, 14–15). The greed of

the grain dealers is also underscored by the nature imagery of "the husks of grain" that

they desire to sell (Amos 8:6). "Husks" (מפל) refers to the unwanted parts of the plant

more lands were converted to producing commercial crops, leaving the staples, which the peasant class needed for survival, in short supply. Consequently, peasants were forced to buy in the market the staples they had once produced themselves."

[153] Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God*, 110. Also, "As peasants bring their grain for barter, over-heavy weights are in use. When they buy seed or food, smaller measures are employed. The peasants are being robbed both in their sale of crops (against rental or debt), and in their purchase of commodities (for rations and seed)." According to MacDonald (*What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat*, 19), grain-based foods were indeed the staple food for this part of the world, comprising over half (i.e., anywhere from 53 to 75 percent) of the calories consumed by the average person. Wheat (i.e., durum wheat, *Triticum durum*) was more highly valued than barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), perhaps twofold, in some instances (20–21). Cf. 2 Kgs 7:1, 16.

[154] Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*, 233: "The afflicted would include the poorest of the urban and rural poor, peasant farmers, lesser landowners, and others who speak out in vain on their behalf."

that had "fallen" (נפל) to the ground with the grain when threshing or winnowing.[155] The

merchants are trying to profit from every last piece of the harvest, whether edible or not.

The creation rhetoric for these items is stronger than the earlier reference in passing to "a

grain tax" (Amos 5:11) but weaker than the accusations of corrupted justice elsewhere

(Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12).

At this greed and injustice, the prophet quotes an oath from Yahweh that he will

never forget these shady dealings (Amos 8:7). Then, in response to the corrupt practices

or to the divine oath, the prophetic or divine voice asks:

> Because of this, won't the land shake,
> and each who resides in it dress mournfully?
> And won't it come up like the Stream, all of it,
> and be churned up and sink like the Stream of Egypt? (Amos 8:8)

Similar to the Lion King's roar in Amos 1:2, the natural world and those residing there

respond to the announcement of judgment with fear and sadness.[156] The creation rhetoric

assumes a connection between social injustice and tragic, natural consequences. The

language depicts an earthquake using water imagery to depict the rise and fall of "the

land" (הארץ), not of water, so this is not picturing a flood.[157] The "land" could refer to the

territory of Israel alone, to the whole earth, or to some overlap between the local and

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[155] The term elsewhere refers to the "folds" or "scales" of Leviathan's flesh (Job 41:15) or to urban "ruin(s)" in the feminine (מפלה; Isa 17:1; 23:13; 25:2). It is derived from the verb נפל ("to fall"). Hence translations like "sweepings" (NRSV, NIV), "refuse" (JPS, NASB), "garbage" (CEB), or "chaff" (CSB). It is "grain from the bottom of the heap that is heavily contaminated with dirt and chaff" (Garrett, *Amos*, 243). Fretheim (Fretheim, *Reading*, 152) explains: "we would call it the bottom of the barrel."

[156] Garrett (*Amos*, 245) notes the parallel to Amos 1:2 in which Yahweh's roar leads to mourning in the natural world. Here it is the oath of judgment that leads to disturbance and mourning.

[157] Fretheim, *Reading*, 152.

global meanings.[158] As in other texts about the mourning of the cosmos, "earth and sky will mourn, enacting the purposed desolation."[159] That is essentially what the following commissives of divine threats propose for the sky: it likewise will become desolate and darkened in fear or sadness over the broken relationships among the Israelites and the divine judgment that will follow (Amos 8:9). The darkening of the sky and daylight uses language common to heightened judgment scenes in the prophets (Amos 8:9; cf. Amos 5:18, 20),[160] but the resulting picture is analogous to human mourning rituals of wearing drab clothing, shaving the head, or dust darkening human bodies (Amos 8:10).[161] Yahweh darkens both here, meaning he will cause a calamity that brings both the sky and the populace into mourning. Whether the cosmic darkening was envisioned as a solar eclipse or a dust storm does not matter as much as the connection that is drawn between the natural and social realms.

In the final part of the section (Amos 8:11–14), the creation rhetoric contributes to an elaborate metaphor for a famine of divine revelation. Yahweh threatens a time when he will send "hunger on the land, not hunger for bread, and not thirst for water, but for

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[158] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 5. He explains, "Regarding the term ארץ in 8:4, 8, 11, . . . 'land' here might simply be land as the physical entity, that which shakes in an earthquake, or dries up in a famine. In his rhetorical technique, Amos could also be using it here to extend his thought from 'land' to 'whole earth'. Amos 8 illustrates the overlapping meanings of the word."

[159] Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*, 77. As Edelman ("Earthquakes," 225) observes, "it is not always clear if figurative references to the earth shaking are preludes to theophany, part of the accompanying sound-and-light show [but not identical to the divine appearance], [whether the shaking counts as] the theophany itself, or [is] a reaction to an awe-inspiring theophanic display. In some instances it seems to represent the activity of inanimate nature reacting to a theophanic storm but in others could metonymically refers to the reactive response of humanity [and other residents of the natural world]." Amos 8:8 is a perfect example of this ambiguity.

[160] Cf. Isa 5:30; 13:10; 59:9–10; Jer 4:23, 28; 13:16; 15:9; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:2, 10; Mic 3:6.

[161] Cf. 2 Sam 12:16–20; Ps 35:14; 38:7; 42:10; 43:2; Isa 50:3 (for cosmos).

hearing the messages of Yahweh" (Amos 8:11). Before, it had been a famine and drought

of physical food and water (Amos 4:6–8). Now, the ensuing picture of Israelites

staggering "from [southern] sea to [western] sea, and from north even to (eastern)

sunrise" to seek some prophetic message from Yahweh reformulates the literal thirst into

a religious one (Amos 8:12).[162] Silence from Yahweh is poetic justice for those who

silenced the prophetic message in Amos 2:12 and Amos 7:12–13, 16.[163] Then, as if to

combine the two kinds of water, the rhetoric switches to what appears to be literal

dehydration (Amos 8:13) and death for those who takes oaths "by the guilt of Samaria,"

meaning the worship of Yahweh at other sanctuaries from Dan to Beersheba (Amos

8:14).[164] As I understand Amos 2:8 and other texts (Amos 2:4; 5:26), I do not think that

syncretistic worship or polytheism is at stake in the critique by Amos. If it is, the book is

strangely muted on the name of these deities compared to Hosea, who has no trouble

using both mocking names and proper names for Baal. Instead, I argue the "God"

worshiped at Dan or Beersheba, even throughout the northern kingdom, is Yahweh,[165]

but the Israelites worshiped a false version of him using the golden-bull calves at Dan

and Bethel, with no concern for social justice on the part of the privileged visitors of

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[162] Garrett (*Amos*, 252–53) dismisses attempts to identify the seas more specifically (cf. Joel 2:20; Paul, *Amos*, 266; Andersen-Freedman, *Amos*, 825–26), claiming that "they will cross many seas and go far away into unknown territory" (253). Cf. Ps 72:8; Zech 9:10. There is no mention of exile here, however, only death. I argue instead that the first "sea" could be the Dead Sea to the south, while the second "sea" could be the Mediterranean Sea to the west, hence my labels for the Mediterranean and Dead Sea in fig. 8 above. This identification and order would produce four cardinal directions and would picture the Israelites going in circles—south, west, north, and east—searching futilely for (prophetic) messages from Yahweh.
[163] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 142. Cf. Hos 5:6; 6:5; Mic 3:5–7.
[164] Fretheim (*Reading*, 153) views it as spiritual thirst throughout, while Eidevall (*Amos*, 220–22) views it as spiritual and then physical, as I take it. The imagery connects both together.
[165] So too Eidevall, *Amos*, 222.

these sanctuaries (see fig. 8). The "thirst" for hearing from their God would be accompanied by a bodily thirst that would lead to their death (cf. Amos 5:2).

7.2.3 Character Formation

The creation rhetoric shames the privileged grain dealers at first, whether for animal-like greed ("sniff after the needy [for food]") and treatment of the "downtrodden people of the land" (Amos 8:4) or for the wealth that they dishonorably gained through corrupt marketplace practices that increased debt-slavery related to land use (Amos 8:5–6). For Judah, dispositions of greed and impatience are discouraged, the importance of practices such as new month feasts and Sabbaths for maintaining social justice is elevated (Amos 8:5).[166] The practices of dishonest business dealings are condemned, for which the ruling elite in Judah would have the most responsibility to stop and punish as a way of protecting the poor. The enigmatic "pride of Jacob" (גאון יעקב) by which Yahweh swears is likely an ironic condemnation of the disposition of arrogance displayed by the grain dealers (Amos 8:7): their arrogance is so strong that their God can swear an oath by it![167] Humility and equal protection of rest from work and business are the alternatives for Judah, if they are to avoid the same character that the Israelites displayed.

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[166] For a poem applying Amos 8:4–8 to our contemporary, consumerist culture, see "The Costliness of a Rushed Sabbath" in the new edition of Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 121–23.

[167] That Yahweh swears by "the pride of Jacob" (Amos 8:7) is ambiguous. It could be the same as swearing by himself, the legitimate object of Israel's pride. It could be an ironic reference to the stubborn arrogance of the powerful class of Israelites, so strong that their God can swear by it (Fretheim, *Reading*, 152). Or the "pride" could refer to the "land" as a gift from Yahweh to Israel, since the land is elsewhere described as the "pride of Jacob" (cf. Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 148–49; Eidevall, *Amos*, 219; cf. Ps 47:5 [Eng. 4]; Nah 2:3 [Eng. 2]). I argue that it is the ironic arrogance of the powerful Israelites, given the negative connotations of this "pride" in Amos 6:8.

Judah hears that retributive justice can take the form of natural disasters, particularly through the nature imagery of reversals in the land (Amos 8:8) and in the sky (Amos 8:9). The natural order is overturned when right relationships in society are overturned, because these are inextricably linked.[168] Such natural disasters would damage not only the perpetrators of injustice but also the human victims and the non-human creatures and landscape, admittedly, so this might seem like a selective or illegitimate kind of "justice."[169] Nevertheless, collective wrongdoing affects collective communities, life on the land is a conditional gift in Amos, and the disasters envisioned would take away control of the land previously stolen by the wealthy from the poor, putting the Israelites on equal footing.[170] Here, the reversals in the land portray the kind of disturbance or shaking (רגז) that is associated elsewhere with human subjects who display fear,[171] sadness (e.g., 2 Sam 19:1; Isa 32:10–11; 64:1), or anger,[172] the opposite of peaceful tranquility.[173] The natural world also "trembles" (רגז) in fear,[174] sometimes mixed with sadness (Joel 2:10), and here in parallel the "mourning" (אבל) of its residents

[168] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 128: "Amos does not conceive of the world as having components that are neatly separable into discrete categories: moral, physical, social, religious. Israel's political disorder is a disturbance of creation itself." Cf. Gese, "Amos 8,4–8": "wird ... die naturhafte, ja kosmisch-physische Dimension des Verderbens verdeutlicht" ("the natural, even cosmic-physical dimension of the ruin is made clear").

[169] Marlow, "Justice for Whom," 111. She says, "In both social and ecological spheres this raises concerns that it is divine wrath rather than justice that triumphs . . . . Is this really justice for the poor?"

[170] Marlow, "Justice for Whom," 111–13.

[171] See Exod 15:14; Deut 2:25; 1 Sam 14:15; Ps 99:1; Isa 23:11; Jer 33:9; Joel 2:1; Mic 7:17; Hab 3:16.

[172] See Gen 45:24; 2 Kgs 19:27–28; Ezek 16:43 (divine anger); Prov 29:9.

[173] See 1 Sam 28:15; 2 Sam 7:10; Prov 30:21; Isa 32:10–11; Jer 50:34.

[174] See 2 Sam 22:8; Pss 18:8 (Eng. 7); 77:17, 19 (Eng. 16, 18); Isa 5:25; 13:13; 14:16; Joel 2:10; cf. Job 9:6. Often it is fear of harm, sometimes in the context of divine anger.

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Yahweh's communication through the figurative and literal references to thirst for water. Both are essential to life, and thus the tangible is an ethical reminder of them of the necessity of divine revelation to their lives (cf. 1 Kgs 17). No matter what geographical direction the Israelites travel in their land, their punishment for rejecting Yahweh is that they will not hear from him, whether they wander south toward the Dead Sea, west toward the Mediterranean Sea, northward, or east toward the rising sun (Amos 8:12). Such revelation cannot be found at Samaria, Dan, Beersheba—or found anywhere in between, by implication (Amos 8:14), directing Judah to Jerusalem at best for its worship practices and prophetic messages (see fig. 8). These worship centers are not neutral but charged with socio-economic patterns that will influence the worshipers. After all, the greedy grain dealers are probably pictured as muttering their corrupt desires to themselves at these religious sanctuaries during a Sabbath day! The cosmos thus has and ethos that connects the religious, the ecological, and the social together.

7.3 Rival Temples and Rival Kingdoms (Amos 9)

Identifying the rival temples and kingdoms is not as simple as pitting Israel versus Judah. Yahweh, ultimately, has an unshakable temple and kingdom in this final section of creation rhetoric shaping the character of its audience.

7.3.1 Translation

9:1 "I saw the Lord positioned beside the altar, and he said, ראיתי את אדני נצב על המזבח
'Strike the (pillar) capital so the thresholds may quake, ויאמר הך הכפתור[180] וירעשו הספים
and cut them off at the top of them all, ובצעם[181] בראש כלם
and the last of them with the sword I will kill! ואחריתם בחרב אהרג
For them no fleeing person will flee, לא ינוס להם נס
and for them no escapee will be saved. ולא ימלט להם פליט

9:2 If they dig down into the underworld, אם יחתרו בשאול
from there my hand will take them, משם ידי תקחם
and if they go up to the sky, ואם יעלו השמים
from there I will bring them down. משם אורידם

9:3 And if they hide at the top of the Carmel Range, ואם יחבאו בראש הכרמל
from there I will search and take them, משם אחפש ולקחתים
and if they conceal themselves from in front of my eyes ואם יסתרו מנגד עיני בקרקע הים
on the floor of the sea,
from there I will command the snake, and it will bite them. משם אצוה את הנחש ונשכם

9:4 And if they go into captivity before their foes, ואם ילכו בשבי לפני איביהם[182]
from there I'll command the sword, and it will kill them. משם אצוה את החרב והרגתם
And I'll set my eye on them for disaster and not for good.'" ושמתי עיני[183] עליהם לרעה ולא לטובה

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[180] Murabbaʿât 88, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Syriac support the MT, while the other versions are confused, loose, or assimilate to other texts.

[181] Murabbaʿât 88 and the OG support the MT consonants, while the Latin and Syriac interpret it as the noun meaning "unlawful gain" (בצע). A verb makes more sense here (thus MT; BHQ).

[182] I vocalize the form in the normal way (i.e., Cairo Codex of the Prophets: אֹיְבֵיהֶם), not with a missing a vowel as in the Leningrad Codex (i.e., אֹיְבֵיהֶם).

[183] MT and Syriac read "my eye" (singular), while the OG and Latin have "eyes" plural, matching Amos 9:3 earlier. I retain the MT. The difference is inconsequential, but there does appear to be an idiom for "eye" in the singular for the expressions "(set) an eye on" someone (e.g., Gen 44:21; Ps 32:8; Jer 24:6; 40:4) or "an eye pities" someone (cf. Ezek 5:11; 7:9; 8:18; 9:10; 20:17), or for certain expressions of sight or grief where the matching verb in the singular confirms "eye" rather than "eyes" (Job 7:7; 13:1; 16:20; 17:2, 7; 42:5; Ps 6:8 [Eng. 7]; 31:10 [Eng. 9]; 54:9 [Eng. 7]; 88:10 [Eng. 9]; 92:12 [Eng. 11]; Jer 13:17; Lam 1:16; 3:48, 51).

ואדני יהוה הצבאות 9:5   But the Lord Yahweh of the cosmic armies,
הנוגע בארץ ותמוג   he is the one who touches the land so it melts,
ואבלו[184] כל יושבי בה   and all who reside in it dress mournfully,
ועלתה כיאר כלה[185]   and it comes up like the Stream, all of it,
ושקעה כיאר מצרים   and it sinks like the Stream of Egypt!
הבונה 9:6   He is the one who builds
בשמים   in the sky
מעלותיו[186]   his (temple-palace) steps,
ואגדתו[187]   and his (papyrus-bundle) foundation—
על ארץ   on the land
יסדה   he established it!
הקרא למי הים   He is the one who calls for the waters of the sea,
וישפכם על פני הארץ   then pours them on the face of the land!
יהוה שמו[188]   Yahweh is his name!"[189]

הלוא כבני כשיים אתם לי בני ישראל 9:7   "'The Cushites—aren't you like them to me, Israelites?
נאם יהוה הלוא את ישראל העליתי   (speech of Yahweh) Wasn't it Israel that I brought up
מארץ מצרים ופלשתיים מכפתור   from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor,
וארם מקיר   and Aram from Kir?
הנה עיני אדני יהוה בממלכה 9:8   Look, the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are on the (morally)
החטאה והשמדתי אתה מעל פני   failing kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the
האדמה אפס כי לא השמיד אשמיד   soil, except that I will not completely destroy the house of
את בית יעקב נאם יהוה   Jacob (speech of Yahweh),
כי הנה אנכי מצוה והנעותי בכל 9:9   for look, I am commanding, and among all the nations I
הגוים את בית ישראל כאשר ינוע   will sift the house of Israel, just as (something) is sifted
בכברה ולא יפול צרור ארץ   with the sieve, and not a (bad) pebble will fall to the land.
בחרב ימותו כל חטאי עמי האמרים 9:10   By the sword all those who fail[190] among my people will
לא תגיש ותקדים בעדינו הרעה   die, the ones who say, "The disaster will not come near
   and surround us!"'"

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[184] Murabbaʿât 88 diverges from the MT in having a singular verb (אבל, "mourn") and participle ("resident"; cf. Amos 8:8), but the OG, Latin, and Syriac support the MT plurals. I do not emend.

[185] See the versions on the same term in Amos 8:8.

[186] I follow the plural Masoretic vocalization (מַעֲלוֹתָיו) also supported by the consonants of 4QXIIᵍ. Cf. Ego et al., eds., *Biblia Qumranica*, 67; *BHQ* 6*. This contrasts with the singular consonants in the MT (מַעֲלוֹתוֹ) and Murabbaʿât 88.

[187] Murabbaʿât 88, Aquila, and the Latin support the MT for this rare term, while the OG and Syriac read it as related to the verb נגד ("tell, relate") and the Aramaic is exegetical.

[188] The MT finds support from Murabbaʿât 88, the Latin, and the Aramaic. The longer versions in the OG and Syriac probably assimilate to the previous verse (Amos 9:5). I do follow Cairo Codex of the Prophets that has a new paragraph after this part (פ), not just a verse ending mark as in the Leningrad Codex. Cf. the extra space after "his name" in Murabbaʿât 88.

[189] The word order for this verbless clause is marked, fronting the predicate ("Yahweh"), and can thus be translated "Yahweh is his name" rather than "His name is Yahweh." See Amos 2:9; 4:13; 5:8.

[190] Traditionally "sinners." See the discussion in Amos 5:12.

9:11	ביום ההוא אקים[191] את סכת דויד הנפלת וגדרתי את פרציהן והרסתיו[192] אקים ובניתיה כימי עולם	"'In that day, I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and I will wall up their breaches, and his ruins I will raise up, and I will build it as in the days of old,
9:12	למען יירשו[193] את שארית אדום[194] וכל הגוים אשר נקרא שמי עליהם נאם יהוה עשה זאת	in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom, even all the nations over which my name is called (speech of Yahweh who is doing this).'"
9:13	הנה ימים באים נאם יהוה ונגש חורש בקצר ודרך ענבים במשך הזרע והטיפו ההרים עסיס וכל הגבעות תתמוגגנה	"'Look, days are coming (speech of Yahweh), when one plowing will come near the one harvesting, and one treading grapes (will meet) the one sowing the seed, and the mountains will drip with sweet-wine, and all the hills will melt (with it),
9:14	ושבתי את שבות עמי ישראל ובנו ערים נשמות וישבו ונטעו כרמים ושתו את יינם ועשו גנות ואכלו את פריהם	and I will turn back the captivity of my people Israel, and they will rebuild desolate cities and reside (in them), and plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit,
9:15	ונטעתים על אדמתם ולא ינתשו עוד מעל אדמתם אשר נתתי להם אמר יהוה אלהיך[195]	and I will plant them on their soil, and they will not be uprooted anymore from their soil which I gave to them,' Yahweh your God said."

7.3.2 Creation Rhetoric

This final section of Amos, Amos 9, opens with a fifth and final vision report (Amos 9:1–4) and a final doxology (Amos 9:5–6). The visionary relates that he saw the "Lord positioned beside the altar" and giving a command to destroy the architecture of the

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[191] Murabbaʿât 88, the OG, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic support the MT for this verb, while some texts from Qumran (i.e., 4QFlor = 4Q174 I 12 and CD-A vii 16) have the similar form והקימותי, as reflected in Acts 15:16 (καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω). The MT reflects the most likely verbal form in context.

[192] The versions attempt to smooth out the pronouns that alternate in gender in the MT.

[193] The Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic support the MT (יירשו, "they may possess"), while the OG reflects what would be יִדְרְשׁוּ ("they may seek"), probably based on its reading of the later term "Edom" (אדום) as "humanity" (אָדָם). Although the territorial possession reading makes sufficient sense to be original, the Greek reading is understandable if its source text did not have a clear י in the term and if the noun אדום did not yet have the letter ו as a guide to reading (cf. BHQ). The Greek is also theologically consistent with the international scope of Amos 9:7. Cf. Acts 15:17. See the following note.

[194] Murabbaʿât 88 and the Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic support the MT (אדום, "Edom"), while the OG (οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων) and some Greek manuscripts (οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον) read אָדָם ("humans, humanity") and make it the subject rather than object of the verb (cf. Acts 15:17). Defending the OG as reflective of the earliest reading is Jones, *Formation*, 183–91. I follow the MT in light of the mention of "nations" and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom (Amos 9:11–12).

[195] The OG assimilates to Amos 3:13; 5:27 in adding ὁ παντοκράτωρ (for הצבאות), but the other extant versions support the shorter reading "Yahweh your God."

surrounding temple (Amos 9:1). The temple is not named, but it is most likely the Bethel sanctuary of Jeroboam II's kingdom, given that it is the sanctuary most frequently mentioned in the book (Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5–6; 7:10, 13).[196] If so, then the vision may have been separated from the other visions a fitting resolution to Amos 8:13–14, which proclaimed death for the worshipers at other sanctuaries visited by the Israelites. The implied audience might wonder about Bethel and its fate, since it was not specifically mentioned in the sweeping list of "Samaria," "Dan," and "Beersheba" (Amos 8:14). Beyond these considerations, the wording of the fifth vision itself hints that Bethel is indeed in view. The phrase "positioned beside the altar" (נצב על המזבח) in Amos 9:1 recalls a confrontation set many generations earlier between a prophet and the first King Jeroboam of Israel at this very same sanctuary (1 Kgs 13:1–10). In the written tradition, the Israelite king was "standing beside the altar" (עמד על־המזבח) when a prophetic figure confronted him about his religious and political activity (1 Kgs 13:1). The figure predicts the eventual defilement of priestly bones there and the immediate destruction of the Bethel altar, which purportedly splits as confirmation of the message (1 Kgs 13:2–3).[197] In Amos 9:1 the divine Lord stands by the altar operative under the reign of the second

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[196] Bethel is also likely implied as the setting of the activities in Amos 2:8 ("the house of their God") and Amos 5:19 ("come to the house [of God]"). Perhaps Amos 8:1–3 is at the Bethel temple (so Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:262), although I argue that היכל there denotes the "palace" of Samaria where the wailing occurs (Amos 8:3; cf. Amos 6:9–10). The merchants of Amos 8:4–6 are perhaps complaining during a Sabbath day of worship at Bethel, and that sanctuary is condemned implicitly along with other sweeping descriptions in Amos 7:9; 8:14.

[197] Although many scholars place the "Deuteronomistic" book of Kings anywhere from some decades to two centuries after the eighth century BC, the tradition about Jeroboam I in the tenth century could have been preserved as the book of Kings grew incrementally.

King Jeroboam of Israel to portray a similar (but rhetorical) slaughter of priestly

personnel and destruction of the Bethel temple. He orders someone to strike the "capital"

of a pillar so that the "thresholds may quake."[198] The capital and thresholds indicate the

whole temple, from top to bottom.[199] The following wording is difficult to interpret ("and

cut them off at the top of them all"; Amos 9:1), but there may be intentional ambiguity:

"Just as the temple is about to be destroyed entirely, from top to bottom," so also the

people, from their "heads" (ראש, i.e., leaders) to the "rest" of them (ואחריתם, i.e., the

population) will be destroyed.[200] The occupants of the temple might try to escape, but

there is no escape (Amos 9:1; cf. Amos 2:16; 5:19).[201]

At this point, the creation rhetoric picks up to emphasize the inescapable

judgment: Neither in "the underworld" (שאול)[202] nor up toward "the sky" (השמים; Amos

9:2), neither "at the top of the Carmel Range" (בראש הכרמל) nor "on the floor of the sea"

(בקרקע הים) can the Israelites escape (Amos 9:3), for the divine Lord of creation can

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[198] The command may be to the human visionary (Amos) or to a supernatural figure who is part of the "cosmic armies" under Yahweh's command. See Paul, *Amos*, 274. The shaking architecture of the temple is reminiscent of the divine temple vision of Isaiah in which the "pivots on the thresholds shook" (Isa 6:4). Smashing pillars in a temple is also vaguely reminiscent of Samson's suicide that leveled the temple where the Philistines were celebrating his defeat (Judg 16:23–31). This second similarity is very distant and shares none of the same wording, however, and is not likely in the background, contra Eslinger, "Education," 53; Rilett Wood, "Tragic and Comic," 43; Sharp, *Irony*, 155–69.

[199] Paul, *Amos*, 275.

[200] Paul, *Amos*, 276.

[201] This may be an ironic allusion to Israel's asylum law that allowed a person to take hold of the corners of the temple's altar to seek asylum and get a hearing in cases of an accidental killing (cf. Exod 21:13–14; Stackert, "Altar Asylum"). Wright (Wright, *Inventing God's Law*, 159) suggests as much when he says, "Amos 9:1–4 appears to reflect asylum practice. It inverts the motif by portraying Yahweh as an avenger who prevents the people's access to the altar to obtain safety." In Amos 9:1–4, the Lord not only rhetorically destroys the Bethel sanctuary, barring Israel from seeking refuge at the corners of its altar, but also nullifies any attempts to escape to the farthest ends of the created order.

[202] Sometimes transliterated as "Sheol," and sometimes personified in the biblical texts.

reach all these zones of the cosmos. He can even delegate "the snake" (נחש) on the sea floor to bite those who might theoretically want to hide there (Amos 9:3). At this point, an illustration may clarify the sweeping picture of the cosmos here (fig. 12):
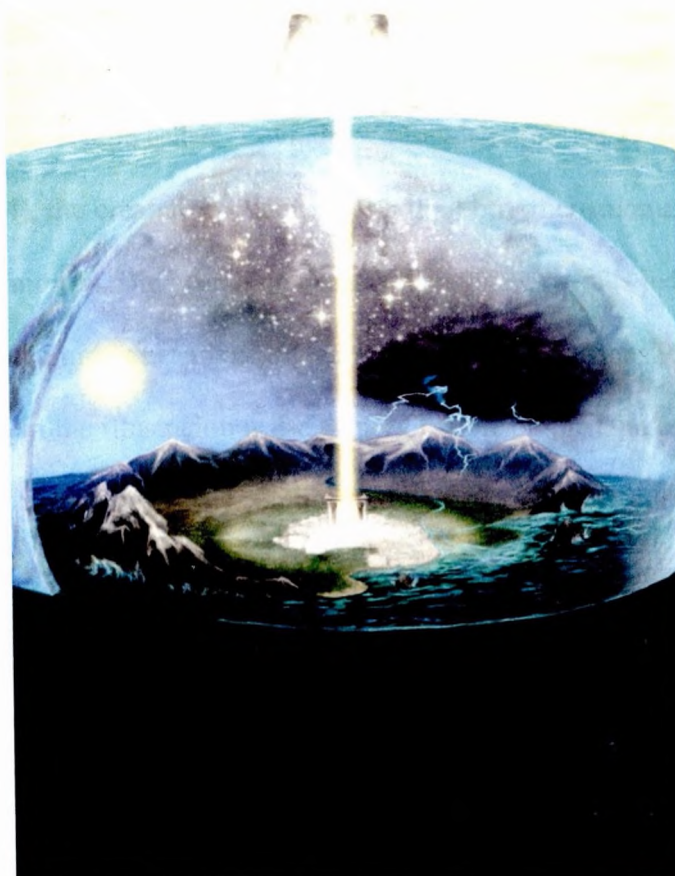
Figure 12. Elements of the Israelite cosmos[203]

In the illustration there is a depiction of "the underworld" (i.e., "Sheol") below the land, and all of the celestial bodies and phenomena are rightly included within the "sky" above, not beyond the sky in some other realm (Amos 9:2). There is no "heaven" completely

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[203] Illustration by Jonathan Walton. Used with permission.

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distinct from the "sky" in Hebrew literature.[204] These celestial lights of the sky are in the

ranks of the "cosmic armies" mentioned in the final doxology and elsewhere (Amos

9:5).[205] There are mountains next to the cosmic ocean (cf. Amos 7:4), similar to the

"Carmel Range" and the "sea" in Amos 9:3. It is impossible to miss the sea serpent

("snake") lurking in the ocean depths (Amos 9:3). That "snake" is probably a reference to

the dangerous marine reptile called "Leviathan" elsewhere (cf. Isa 27:1).[206] Like water or

fire (Amos 5:8; 7:4), the creature cooperates with the Lord of creation as an agent of

judgment against humans. But even human armies are agents of this judgment, since the

Israelites cannot even hide as captives exiled by their enemies (Amos 9:4). What is more

difficult to discern in the illustration is the shining temple on the land connected to the

divine temple in the upper sky. This is relevant to the vision report and the doxology in

Amos 9:1–6, not only because human temples were used as connections with the divine

realm, and not only because temples in the ancient world were constructed in patterns

similar to what the transcendent residence of the supreme God was imagined to be like. It

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[204] The Hebrew term is never singular for "skies/heavens" (שמים), so I translate in the singular and in a way that shows that this zone is part of the created and (at least) physical universe, not a wholly separate, spiritual dimension later understood as "heaven." I want to avoid the sharp dichotomy between physical and spiritual, earth and "heaven," that Western culture and Christianity has unfortunately perpetuated. See Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*. Biblical portrayals of "heaven" do not use a different term than for the sky (i.e., שמים), although there are nuances of transcendence and invisible features to the part of the cosmos where Hebrew literature depicts Yahweh residing. It is analogical thinking about divine beings operating beyond the terrestrial zone, at the very least.

[205] Cf. Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14–16, 27; 6:8, 14; 9:5.

[206] As is well known, Leviathan was not just a monster in the Hebrew view of the cosmos but one from various traditions of the ancient Near East. For the relevant Ugaritic material, see Smith and Pitard (*Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:53–54, 72, 252), who translate (252) the following words about Baal: "When you struck down Litan, the fleeing snake, Annihilated the twisting snake, The powerful one with seven heads" (*KTU* 1.5.i.1–3; cf. 1.3.iii.41–42; 1.5.i.27–30). Cf. Job 26:13; Isa 27:1.

is relevant as well because temples were viewed as important to the stability of the cosmos and society, since such sanctuaries were occasionally viewed as microcosms of the universe and always viewed as places where divine power was manifested and mediated for the created world and the rulers of various nations.[207] When the vision portrays the Israelite temple quaking (Amos 9:1), then, with no stable place for the worshipers to run (Amos 9:2–4), it rhetorically undermines one of the key foundations of order in the Israelite worldview. As the Bethel temple crumbles, however, there remains a ruler above and his divine temple that is firm when all else trembles. Who is this ruler who is called only "Lord" so far in Amos 9? The final doxology of the book[208] reveals his name—his identity—once more:

> But the Lord Yahweh of the cosmic armies,
> he is the one who touches the land so it melts,
> and all who reside in it dress mournfully,
> and it comes up like the Stream, all of it,
> and it sinks like the Stream of Egypt!
> He is the one who builds
>   in the sky
>   his (temple-palace) steps,
>   and his (papyrus-bundle) foundation—
>   on the land
> he established it! (Amos 9:5–6)

The creation rhetoric spans the sky (i.e., "cosmic armies," "in the sky") and land (i.e., "the land," "on the land") alike in both halves of the doxology (Amos 9:5–6). Here the

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[207] Cf. Levenson, "Temple"; Beale, *Temple*; Barker, *Gate of Heaven*; Walton, *Genesis 1*; Morales, ed., *Cult and Cosmos*; Keel and Schroer, *Creation*. See other depictions of ancient cosmology in Deist, "Genesis"; Keel, *Symbolism*, 15–57; Cornelius, "Visual," 218; De Hulster, "Picturing," 48–49; Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology*, 26; Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern*, 138.

[208] See the earlier ones: Amos 4:13; 5:8–9.

terrain reacts by dissolving at Yahweh's contact with it (Amos 9:5), implying that the divine warrior is fiery or so powerful that the firm ground is destabilized when he manifests himself in this way. Repeating most of Amos 8:8, the disturbance of the land is portrayed as an earthquake via the inundation of the Egyptian Nile as the analogy once again, and the people mourn along with the terrain (Amos 9:5).[209] The only secure place in the cosmos is Yahweh's palace in the sky: he is the builder of his stairs or "steps" (מעלותיו) leading up to his divine palace or throne, and he is the foundation-builder of its "(papyrus-bundle) foundation" (ואגדתו). Both terms are likely allusions to Egyptian motifs of royalty and world origins. "His steps" (מעלותיו) could be portraying the steps up to a throne or a temple-palace complex (cf. 1 Kgs 10:19–20; 2 Kgs 9:13; Neh 3:15), while the papyrus-bundle foundation (ואגדתו) is a unique term for cosmic architecture, and could either be an unprecedented way of referring to the "firmament/dome" (רקיע) of the sky (e.g., Gen 1:6–8) or to the pillars (עמוד) of the sky (e.g., Job 26:11)—most likely closer to the latter, following Linville.[210] From this palace, Yahweh summons the water of the sea to bring rain on the land, a picture of his righteous kingship in watering the earth (cf. Amos 5:8).

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[209] See Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 145. The phrase "all who reside in it" is not necessarily limited to humans, though they are the focus of divine displeasure (145). Cf. also Marlow, "Lament," 235–36.

[210] Linville (*Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 168) suggests that the terms מעלות and אגדה allude, respectively, to the stairs leading to Pharaoh's throne and to a bundle of papyrus stalks supporting the world in Egyptian creation texts. The rare Hebrew term "foundation" (אגדה) does elsewhere refer to a "bundle" or "bunch," whether of plants (Exod 12:22), ropes (Isa 58:6), or a band of people (2 Sam 2:25). Cf. Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 173. He gives evidence of reed-pillar designs used in tent-sanctuaries. See also Meßner and Lang, "Gott erbaut." Egyptian imagery is likely here, considering the references to the Nile in the immediate context (Amos 9:5).

The next part (Amos 9:7–10) shifts the focus to the international and political scene again, like Amos 1:3—2:16. In comparing the Israelites to the African Cushites, who had their own migration from Cush (i.e., South Sudan or Ethiopia),[211] or comparing the exodus from Egypt to the exodus of other nations from one location to another (see fig. 8), the divine questions undermine the exclusive privilege of Israel as the chosen people (Amos 9:7; cf. Amos 3:2).[212] The questions do not feature creation rhetoric except in the broadest sense of universalizing Yahweh's sovereignty over all nations of the world, as the oracles against the nations at the start of the book also communicate.[213] Just as none are excluded from Yahweh's benevolent guidance (Amos 9:7), no nation is excluded from divine judgment (cf. Amos 1–2), and thus the prophetic voice turns to quoting words of divine judgment on Israel one final time (Amos 9:8–10).[214] Israel is described as "the (morally) failing kingdom" (ממלכה החטאה), and the divine commissive is bristling: "I will destroy it from the face of the soil, except that I will not completely

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[211] See Strawn, "What Is Cush"; cf. Adamo, "Amos 9:7–8"; Smith, "New Perspective"; Holter, "Being Like the Cushites," 306–18.

[212] As Sharp (*Irony*, 155) puts it, "No privileged metanarrative is left." For more on "Kir" as the homeland of the Arameans of Damascus, see Younger, *Political History*, 41–42; Younger, "Recent Developments," 199–222.

[213] Fretheim, *Reading*, 117–18, 120, 155. Fretheim claims, "this sheer worldwide range of divine activity is related to earlier claims about the Creator God. God the Creator is the one who saves and judges all" (155). The geographic horizon covered in the book of Amos is indeed large, perhaps encompassing a circle with a radius of 500 miles (800 kilometers) from Bethel or Tekoa at the center, according to van Selms, "Amos' Geographic Horizon," 169.

[214] Notice that the vision material has ended and the markers of auditory oracles (e.g., "speech of Yahweh") have resumed at various points in the text (Amos 9:7, 8, 12, 13, 15). Thus I refer to the "prophet" rather than the "visionary," if only to distinguish the roles cast for the speaker in the book. The divine voice is consistent throughout Amos 9:7–10, with the exception of the quotation formulas ("speech of Yahweh") and the quotation of complacency by the Israelites in Amos 9:10. Yahweh is referring to himself in the third person in Amos 9:8, which is not unprecedented (e.g., Amos 2:8; 4:11; 8:11–12). Cf. Elledge, *Use of the Third Person*, 70–71, 156–57.

destroy the house of Jacob" (Amos 9:8). The creation rhetoric involves the "soil" (אדמה),

a term which has particularly agrarian connotations in the context compared to the use of

"the land" (ארץ) of Egypt as a political territory in Amos 9:7. There can be no kingdom

without soil on which to live and farm (Amos 9:8).[215] The creation rhetoric continues in

the distinction Yahweh makes between those who have failed and those who have not:

"among all the nations I will sift the house of Israel, just as (something) is sifted with the

sieve, and not a (bad) pebble will fall to the land" (Amos 9:9). The agricultural metaphor

of sifting with a "sieve" (כברה) contributes to the distinction of sorting out unwanted

elements from a larger whole. The metaphor probably refers "referring to a large meshed

sieve that retains the useless straw, stones, and earth but allows the corn, smaller grains,

and fine sand to pass through."[216] The "pebble" (צרור) in this case is likely anyone among

the Israelites who has failed, religiously and morally, by following the distorted worship

of Yahweh that Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II maintained at Dan and Bethel (Amos 9:9).[217]

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[215] The term אדמה may also extend beyond the fertile land of Israel to encompass the fertile land of the entire world, as in Amos 3:2 (thus Lessing, *Amos*, 561). For a similarly cosmic or international scope of "on the face of the soil," see, for example, Gen 4:14; 6:7; 7:4, 23; 8:8; Exod 32:12; 33:16; Num 12:3; Isa 23:17; Jer 8:2; 16:4; 25:26, 33; Ezek 38:20; Zeph 1:2–3. For the use of the phrase in Deuteronomy and the historical books, see Deut 6:15; 7:6; 14:2; 1 Sam 20:15; 2 Sam 14:7; 1 Kgs 8:40; 9:7; 13:34; 17:14; 18:1. Cf. Jer 28:16; 35:7; 2 Chr 6:31.

[216] Paul, *Amos*, 286. Furthermore, "The useless coarse rubbish, that is, the guilty, shall be held fast in the sieve . . . . However, the fine particles, that is, the righteous, shall slip safely through the perforations in the sieve." But compare Sir 27:4 (בהניע כברה יעמד עפר), which says, "When a sieve is shaken, dirt remains," according to Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 349.

[217] The failure relates to the "failure" of Jeroboam I in setting up alternative sanctuaries and using images of Yahweh (i.e., the golden bull-calves; 1 Kgs 12:28—13:34), a legacy continued by the Jehu dynasty (2 Kgs 10:28) of which Jeroboam II was the penultimate king (2 Kgs 14:24). The mercy for a remnant of Israel in Amos 9:8 is phrased differently from the promise corresponding to the time of Jeroboam II in the book of Kings (cf. 2 Kgs 14:27), making it unlikely that there is a direct citation or dependence of one text on the other. The same applies to the basis for the destruction of the northern kingdom later (cf. 2 Kgs 17:21–23). The wording there differs from Amos 9:8. The text that is closest,

Such will not escape (i.e., "fall to the land"; יפול . . . ארץ), not even in exile.[218] "Land" here is spatial, not political or agricultural.[219] The creation rhetoric is weak here, as the imagery points to human warfare and exile rather than natural devastation (cf. Amos 4:2–3). Yet Yahweh "will not completely destroy the house of Jacob" (Amos 9:8).

Many scholars take the qualification of utter destruction in Amos 9:8–10 to be a discordant note introduced by a later editor,[220] but the theology of sparing some remnant of Israel fits the reference to the "remnant" in Amos 5:15, and the language of "Jacob" and "my people" (Amos 9:8, 10) fits the vision reports (Amos 7:2, 5, 8; 8:2) and the intercession that Amos the visionary makes for endangered "Jacob" (Amos 7:2, 5). In other words, the pleading with Yahweh was successful, for despite the destruction decreed against Israel, there is still a remnant that will survive. Again, this is a "severe mercy,"[221] but the threatened destruction is hyperbolic and was never meant to eliminate literally every descendant of the Israelites.[222] Nevertheless, the removal of the majority "from the face of the soil" (Amos 9:8) is still pictured as a judgment that will affect most of the Israelite kingdom, whether the exiled people are equally guilty or not.

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however, is 1 Kgs 13:34 ("And this thing became a failure [or: sin; חטאת] for the house of Jeroboam [the First], even to wipe out and destroy [ולהשמיד] [it] from the face of the soil [מעל פני האדמה]"). It shares the term for "failure" (חטא), "destroy" (שמד), and "from the face of the soil" with Amos 9:8.

[218] There is potential irony in this reference at a literary level, since the greedy grain dealers were portrayed as marketing the "husks"—what had fallen—with the winnowed grain (Amos 8:6), and now judgment will catch the bad elements so that no one guilty will "fall" to the ground with the good grain (Amos 9:9). Yahweh is better at sorting out the good from the bad than the merchants are, in other words.

[219] Cf. Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 7–8. He is undecided on "ground" versus "earth."

[220] Cf. Kellermann, "Amosschluss"; Weimar, "Schluß"; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 162–66; Koenen, *Heil den Gerechten*; Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion*, 270–76.

[221] See Boda, *Severe Mercy*.

[222] See Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 139–45.

In the next part there is an oracle of restoration (Amos 9:11–12), and at last the implied audience in Judah is more directly concerned. There is no creation rhetoric in this part, concerned as it is with promises of political expansion for Judah among the surrounding nations.[223]

The final part of Amos 9, however, has another oracle of restoration, primarily concerning the land and people of the northern kingdom (Amos 9:13–15). It is here where the creation rhetoric emerges once again:

> "'Look, days are coming (speech of Yahweh), when one
> plowing will come near the one harvesting, and one
> treading grapes (will meet) the one sowing the seed, and
> the mountains will drip with sweet-wine, and all the hills
> will melt (with it), and I will turn back the captivity of my people Israel, and
> they will rebuild desolate cities and reside (in them), and
> plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens
> and eat their fruit, and I will plant them on their soil, and they will not
> be uprooted anymore from their soil which I gave
> to them,' Yahweh your God said." (Amos 9:13–15)

In what can be described as an "agricultural bonanza,"[224] the prophet reports Yahweh's promises and commissives regarding Israel. The fertility of the land and crops are enhanced such that the work of plowing (חורש) and harvesting (קצר) overlap, pictured in reverse order as "treading grapes" (דרך ענבים) and "sowing the seed" (משך הזרע; Amos 9:13). Normally there would be a gap of some weeks or months in between these

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[223] There is no creation rhetoric, that is, unless the "booth of David" is an agricultural metaphor referring secondarily to the Feast of "Booths" celebrated in the kingdom of Judah (Amos 9:11; cf. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:273). This would be a very odd way of referring to that festival, however, and I argue that the phrase is more likely a political reference to the dynasty or kingdom of Judah ruled by a Davidic king (see §3.3 The Restoration Oracles in Amos 9). Even if it is a reference to Jerusalem, the "booth" is still not part of the nature imagery in the book.

[224] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 266. Cf. Wright, *Understanding the Ecology*, 29–34.

agricultural activities, but either the maturation of the wheat and grapes is so quick or the harvest periods are so prolonged that the farmers meet each other in their work. The agricultural abundance is incredible—utopian.[225] Instead of a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:8),[226] the concluding picture of the land in Amos is a land where "the mountains will drip with sweet-wine, and all the hills will melt (with it)" (Amos 9:13; cf. Joel 4:18 [Eng. 3:18]).[227] Only a few things can make hills "melt" (מוג) in biblical imagery. In the final doxology it was the touch of Yahweh in his majesty (Amos 9:5), while here it is the fruitfulness of grapes that drip so abundantly in the hill country of Israel that they would figuratively dissolve the slopes on which they grow (Amos 9:13). Alternatively, the poetic language may communicate that "Wine shall be produced in such plenty that the rivers flowing down the mountainsides will be filled with wine rather than water[!]."[228] Part of the social restoration of the exiled Israelites is urban renewal as they "rebuild desolate cities" (Amos 9:14), but part of the restoration is agricultural, naturally, as they "plant vineyards and drink their wine," or "make gardens and eat their fruit" (Amos 9:14). This is a reversal of Amos 5:11, where the condemned Israelites were doomed to futility in such endeavors after taxing the grain of the poor. Here is a future without taxes and oppression for the Israelites, and perhaps for the Judahites too, since the latter would have been burdened with agricultural tribute and taxes from the more

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[225] Ellis ("Amos Ecology," 266 n. 25): "One suspects the poet would find any effort to work out a temporal logic for this bountiful prediction to be a small-minded act lacking in poetic imagination."

[226] Cf. Exod 3:17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; 16:13–14(!); Deut 1:25; 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Ezek 20:6, 15.

[227] Cf. Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 266.

[228] Fretheim, *Reading*, 158.

powerful Israelites and then the Assyrians during this eighth century.[229] It is an

alternative way of expressing the hope found elsewhere that every person could sit

securely "under their (own) vine and under their (own) fig tree" as in the time of

Solomon (1 Kgs 4:25).[230] Instead of the plants being rooted securely, the final words of

the restoration oracle speak of Yahweh's promise to "plant" Israel securely "on their soil"

so that they will not "be uprooted anymore from their soil which I gave them" (Amos

9:15). This loosely echoes the promise to King David of a secure existence for the people

of Israel (2 Sam 7:10).[231] But the promises are more than a political statement. They

speak of "the restoration of harmony between the natural world and humanity" and

between Yahweh "and his people."[232] The term אדמה may be political in part, referring to

Israel's land, but it is additionally a clear referent to the "land as fruitful,"[233] hence my

translation "soil." Notice, too, that this fruitful utopia is "no return to Eden here, no myth

of the eternal return," for "the creation will function in ways that outstrip God's original

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[229] If so, then the material in Amos 9:11–15 need not refer to a post-exilic utopia but only to the "glory days" of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom when Judah enjoyed some political power and when its farmers did not have taxes on their crops imposed by any tribes, kings, or emperors in the north. Thus Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 184. In other words, the agricultural bounty and the rebuilt cities of Amos 9:13–15 may only presuppose Israelite aggression or Assyrian threats in the late eighth century BC, even if this restoration was later understood through the lens of Babylonian exile or eschatological hopes. See Sweeney, "Dystopianization," 184–85.

[230] Cf. 2 Kgs 18:31 // Isa 36:16; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10.

[231] Compare other positive planting imagery in Exod 15:17; Ps 80:9 (Eng. 8); Isa 60:21; Jer 24:6; 31:27–28; 32:41; 42:10; Ezek 37:25; Hos 2:25. There is also negative uprooting imagery: Deut 29:27; 1 Kgs 14:15; Jer 12:14; 2 Chr 7:20. Cf. Pantoja, *Metaphor of the Divine Planter*.

[232] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 157.

[233] Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 9, 12.

creational intentions."[234] The nature imagery speaks of security against future exile. The Israelites "will be planted by the divine farmer in an environment made good again."[235]

7.3.3 Character Formation

In terms of practices, the main message for a Judahite audience from Amos 9 would be to avoid worshiping at an Israelite sanctuary such as Bethel (Amos 9:1) and to avoid the moral and religious "failures" (חטא) of which Israel had been guilty (Amos 9:8, 10). These failures included worship at these alternative sites but also likely recalls the social injustices read from the earlier sections of the text. The restoration oracles (Amos 9:11–15) authorize the kingdom of Judah to extend their territory into surrounding nations (Amos 9:12)[236] and to continue agricultural work with the hope that the exiled portion of their northern neighbors would one day return to their soil and enjoy abundance permanently in a reunification of Israel and Judah (Amos 9:13–15).

For dispositions, Amos 9:1–6 encourages reverent fear of Yahweh, since he can destroy even those who ostensibly worship him.[237] It is scary to consider the idea of "no escape" in Amos 9:1–4 as a grim parody of Ps 139:7–12.[238] The created world is not "safe" for those under divine judgment, just as Yahweh is not a safe lion from the outset (Amos 1:2). The creation rhetoric of Amos 9:2–3 holds the potential to inspire fear, toned

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[234] Fretheim, *Reading*, 158.

[235] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 265.

[236] The military implications of this expansion might be problematic from post-colonial perspectives, but the text would view the warfare as the rise of a formerly oppressed kingdom.

[237] The divine violence is not arbitrary but relies on earlier and later sections of the text to justify.

[238] Cf. Irsigler, "Keine Flucht vor Gott," 184–233; Garrett, *Amos*, 261.

down to reverence for those in Judah at some remove from the threat against Israel. In the doxology Judah hears both the awe-inspiring way that the created order responds to Yahweh's threatening presence (Amos 9:5) as well as the awe-inspiring sovereignty Yahweh displays in the sky above, where the regularity of rainfall is evidence that his celestial palace is impressive, secure, and unshakable beyond upheavals below (Amos 9:6). Added to reverence is surprise and humility at the leveling questions of Amos 9:7, for Judah can claim no superiority to Israel or other nations in those scenarios. In the following proclamation of destruction (Amos 9:8–10) Judah hears of a devastating removal of many Israelites from the soil of the northern kingdom and may fear that it too could be torn from its soil in a similar judgment if it followed after the failures of Israel. At the least, irreverent or arrogant denial of future disaster is one of the markers of those who are failures, religiously and morally (Amos 9:10).

It is not only reverence but also a sense of justice that is impressed upon the audience, however. Israel is guilty, and Yahweh is righteous. Judah gains a deeper sense of justice through the creation rhetoric. The creator's just ordering of the world justifies his character (i.e., "his name"; Amos 9:6). Justice as right order brings life to all through rain (Amos 9:6), whereas the opposite by humans brings death to the vulnerable and retributive justice from God. This second kind of justice impacts the human community and the natural world (Amos 9:5). All creatures and surrounding places suffer because of the abuses by the powerful, and the "ecology of pain"[239] inflicted in turn by Yahweh does

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[239] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 263. Indeed, "While these people perverted God's creational ecology of goodness through their abuses of the land and the poor, all creation will partner with God in bringing

indeed impact all alike as he mediates the consequences of human evil to the wider environment. This might seem like an unfair manner of justice, especially to a privileged and secular context in the Western world,[240] but the reversals would serve to take away creation's resources from the perpetrators, at least (Amos 9:8), and are realistic to the fact that the fallout cannot be contained within tidy boxes. The cosmos and its ethos are too interconnected for that. From another angle, the sifting of the pebbles from the good grain implies that divine judgment is not indiscriminate but selective, targeting those who deserve it (Amos 9:9). By evoking the cosmos in the context of Yahweh's judgment, the text "suggests a moral order built into the very structure of creation."[241] Even the concluding restoration oracles contribute to a sense of justice, restorative justice in the sense of making things right and harmonious again (Amos 9:11–15). What was fallen would be raised up, what was broken would be fortified (Amos 9:11), and what was lost would be repossessed (Amos 9:12). What was scarce and taxed would be abundant and non-exploitative (Amos 9:13). What was exiled would return, what was desolate would be re-inhabited, and what was fruitless would become fruitful (Amos 9:14). Those who

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upon them an ecology of unremitting pain. This picture of a massive creational destruction [actually] witnesses to God's commitment to the poor and to creational justice. As such, nature turns out to be as much a voice of divine will as the prophetic word" (264).

[240] See Barton, *Theology*, 200. Barton claims that most people in the Western world no longer believe that the God of the Bible still acts and punishes within the created order. Fretheim (*Reading*, 120), in contrast, believes that the biblical language cannot be "reduced to poetic imagery. The world that God created actually works this way." Ellis ("Amos Ecology," 264–65) advocates living with the tension rather than discarding uncomfortable parts of biblical tradition. Cf. Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 101–3.

[241] Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 146. Cf. Fretheim, *Reading*, 118.

were uprooted would be planted permanently in the land that was a gift from Yahweh their God (Amos 9:15). Those are the forms that restorative justice takes.[242]

Amos 9:11–15 also shapes the character of the audience in a unique way: it encourages hope for the future.[243] The positive themes encourage those in Judah more directly (Amos 9:11–12) or indirectly (Amos 9:13–15). Rhetorically, the text addresses those who have survived the sifting sieve of Amos 9:9. Fretheim suggests that these people would be "northerners who fled south after the destruction of Samaria" and the Judahites who survived the Assyrian threat around that period.[244] These are people who lives "between the lines," meaning "somewhere between 9:10 and 9:11," between memory of the grisly past and hope in a different future.[245] The political restoration of Judah's wavering "booth" would not be like the arrogant dynasty of Jeroboam II: no army, no citadels, no altar, and no human temple are mentioned, arguably.[246] The agrarian economy is not defined by scarcity any longer, inspiring hope for a new tomorrow and a new generation.[247] This hope derives from the joy associated with harvests and what they mean for food security.[248] In such a vision of plenty, scarcity will

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[242] See Laldinsuah (*Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration*, 62–64) for "restorative justice" and the overarching idea of "relational justice" in biblical texts.

[243] Hope, arguably, is an emotional disposition related to excitement and joy, and joy itself is a prototypical emotion. See Shaver et al., "Emotion Knowledge," 1078; Fehr and Russell, "Concept," 470.

[244] Fretheim, *Reading*, 157.

[245] Carroll R., "Living between the Lines," 56.

[246] Carroll R., "Living between the Lines," 58. In contrast to Amos 7:13, there "will be no national sanctuary and cult to legitimate the new regime." Even the possession of Edom may not be accomplished through military force. Cf. Carroll R., "Reflecting on War and Utopia," 116–20.

[247] Carroll R., "Living between the Lines," 58–59.

[248] See Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 266. "The passage imagines the great joy of a harvest, . . . and extrapolates that joy infinitely, so that the expectation of planting is immediately caught up in the

be a foreign word, and even urban spaces will be places of justice, by implication,

because it will be impossible to hoard or extort agricultural goods in such an "ecology of

goodness made new."[249] In the final picture of agricultural bounty (Amos 9:13–15),

"Israel" has not become a new label for Judah. Rather, Judah "overhears" in the audience

once more,[250] and their moral vision of what thriving and "the good" looks like is attuned

to the cosmos that has an ethos of hope and joy concerning their kin to the north. Just as

Judah's suffering was partly connected to the wrongs perpetuated in Israel in the past,

Judah's restoration would only be possible with the restoration of Israel as well. In all of

the prior sections of the book, discerning the moral vision of "the good" was almost

always by implication, defining good or justice by viewing its opposite portrayed.[251] Only

the doxologies pictured occasional instances of Yahweh's righteous power that sustains

balance in the world without any violent, retributive justice (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6). Here,

at last, are some portrayals of a positive ideal for the Judahite and Israelite communities

made right (Amos 9:11–15). The good is to thrive in an abundant, life-giving setting

without exploitation or fear, to have a home rooted in the gift of good land (Amos 9:13–

15). This, too, is the ethos of the cosmos in Amos.

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celebration of reaping, which is immediately thrust into the hopefulness of the next act of sowing, only to be overtaken by the joy of more harvesting."

[249] Ellis, "Amos Ecology," 267. "In this way, the rural setting, which was the locus of so much pain and abuse for the poor of the land, will become the center of a new justice and righteousness rooted in the earth, where the poor have more than enough and God's own righteousness overwhelms human sinfulness with unimagined generosity. In other words, in the future God will be righteous in the sense of fulfilling the expectations of relationships by offering unlimited earth gifts of bounty in such a way that human sinfulness is overwhelmed and abuse of resources is impossible" (267).

[250] Again, this is comparable to the oracles against foreign nations in which Israel listens in as the implied audience, such as in Isaiah (cf. Beuken, "Confession of God's Exclusivity," 346).

[251] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues," 86; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good," 105.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Creation and character are mutually connected in Amos, and the text shows this in a diverse number of ways. After summarizing the moral impact of nature themes for each section (§8.1), I will highlight some distinct contributions my study makes to the scholarly field and suggest some fruitful areas for further research (§8.2).

8.1 Creation Rhetoric and Character Formation in the Book

Not surprisingly, the ethos of the cosmos in Amos is complex. The superscription introduces the agrarian visionary named Amos, whose role "among the herdsmen" of Tekoa is neither a background of abject poverty nor a government-funded position for prophetic, priestly, or other kinds of leaders in Judah (Amos 1:1). The agrarian role suggests to those in Judah that divine revelation could come from any part of society, not just the religious leaders of their time. It also encourages Judahites to add their voices to that of Amos, using whatever power and privilege they had to support his message, to defend the marginal who seldom received a hearing, and to create policies that were fair for all. The majority of the text, at least, is set "a couple of years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1), featuring additional creation rhetoric as context for understanding the words of Amos. The mention of the earthquake effects reverence for Yahweh and the visionary, Amos, who was understood to have foretold the earthquake (Amos 1:1).

The threatening roar of Yahweh and the terrain that mourns by withering (Amos 1:2) evokes reverence for Yahweh, humility in the fragility of the natural world, and empathetic mourning for the tragic scene portrayed as the opening motto of the book. The interconnected relationship of natural and human spheres (e.g., "pastures of the shepherds"; Amos 1:2) implies that the mourning landscape would lead to sympathy in the listeners hearing of the disaster that affected Israel and Judah alike.

The oracles against the nations have the humbling effect of leveling all the nations listed to the same degree of guilt for their violations (Amos 1:3—2:16). No arrogance or self-righteousness is allowed by the creation rhetoric since it threatens the same natural agents of judgment for the non-Hebrew kingdoms as for Judah (i.e., fire). Even though fire is not the threat for the violations by Israel, the kingdom has an earthquake or other painful consequence envisioned, thus invoking the natural world as a picture of some literal and inescapable disaster that might come on Israel (Amos 2:13– 16). The non-favoritism in the divine judgments reinforce a sense of creation justice for violating creation standards of proper order. Some nations were particularly animal-like in their violence and dispositions, treating others as sub-human (Amos 1:3, 11, 13; 2:7). Judah even violated divine instructions that were more specific than the knowledge that could be gained from natural revelation (Amos 2:4–5). The creation rhetoric condemns violence, greed, overindulgence, and lack of compassion (cf. Amos 2:6–8, 12). Judah's desires are directed away from inhumane and exploitative dispositions and practices. They acknowledge the justice of Yahweh in this section, whether through the "fire" (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5), "storm" (Amos 1:14), or cracks in the ground (Amos

2:13). The creation rhetoric contributes to the theodicy justifying Yahweh and condemning all the nations involved. Even though the focus narrows to Israel for most of the book, these connections between creation rhetoric and character formation continue in later sections of the book.

In the next section (Amos 3), the creation rhetoric likewise displays Yahweh's sovereignty over all the lands where humans live (Amos 3:1–2, 9), and the message of judgment conveyed by the prophets is as fitting and inevitable as a lion roaring after capturing prey (Amos 3:4), a snare capturing a bird (Amos 3:5), or a fearful reaction to a threatening noise (Amos 3:6, 8). This conveys a sense of logical appeal to the message and the messenger figure.

It also conveys a sense of wisdom and reverence to those in Judah. The rhetorical questions about several events in the natural, non-urban world lead to an inference discerning that Yahweh is at work behind disasters in the human, urban world (Amos 3:6–8). Wisdom about creation leads to wisdom about the creator, Yahweh, who is at work on the political stage as well as in the wider natural world.[1] But the scenarios from the natural world are at times threatening, leading to some measure of fear or reverence in the audience as they participate in the logic of entrapment (Amos 3:3–8). Similarly, if the same exploitative acts were practiced in Judah as in Israel (Amos 3:9–15), the Judahites would also find the fearsome picture of land surrounded (Amos 3:11) or a sheep killed by a lion (Amos 3:12) applicable as threats to their own land and human population. They

would be warned against oppression of the poor and amassing luxury items in their homes (Amos 3:9–10, 15). Worship at Bethel would be discouraged (Amos 3:14), even though its altar was likely still standing during the late eighth century and early seventh century (cf. 2 Kgs 17). These dispositions and practices encouraged or discouraged point the moral imagination and desire toward a society where equity and non-violence are the ideal and away from a society where injustice and harm prevail. The land over which Yahweh is sovereign is comprehensive, and so the land in which Israel and also Judah resides is a tenuous possession for them, subject to the authority of the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt (Amos 3:1) and yet can threaten their removal from a stake in the land of Israel (Amos 3:11, 15; cf. Amos 2:9–10).

In Amos 4, Judah is drawn to condemn Israel and justify Yahweh through similar strategies. First there is moral indignation at the luxury of the wealthy women and men of Israel with their social and religious excesses (Amos 4:1–5). Then, too, there is reverence instilled due to the fear-inspiring metaphor of fishing (Amos 4:2), the natural disasters in Israelite history (Amos 4:6–11), or the reverent doxology that closes the section (Amos 4:13). Anytime reverence is evoked, the likelihood of humility being evoked is also present, particularly when the power and objects of human pride are dwarfed by the power and majesty of Yahweh as divine creator (Amos 4:13). These dispositions contribute toward a sense of justice, a disposition toward fairness, for those in Judah. What is labeled "justice" or "fairness" is described in the text with reasons for divine,

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[1] The logic is similar to the way Jesus critiques his contemporaries for failing to discern the

punitive justice and presentations of how Yahweh maintains justice in the world, either

setting the order of the world right again through punishment or regularly maintaining

right order in the wider cosmos and in human society.

Those are the primary character traits shaped by the creation rhetoric, but there

are also moral practices and dispositions of a secondary nature that are discouraged.

Examples include living decadently at the exploitative expense of the comparatively

weaker (Amos 4:1) or bringing agricultural offerings hypocritically and without

addressing the broken relationship with their God (Amos 4:4–11). The creation rhetoric

discourages dispositions such as self-indulgence and greed (Amos 4:1), arrogance,

hypocrisy, self-righteousness, self-centeredness (Amos 4:4–5), and stubbornness in the

wake of natural disasters or awe-inspiring phenomena (Amos 4:6–13). Whereas one

primary focus of the section was on the justice of Yahweh, it also indirectly encourages

the Judahites to practice justice in human society to avoid the disasters that befell their

northern neighbors.

In Amos 5:1–17, this dual focus for justice becomes even clearer. As Judah

overhears "Seek good, and not evil, in order that you may live!" (Amos 5:14) or "Hate

evil, love good, and in court set up justice!" (Amos 5:15), the exhortations are relevant to

the moral desire and practices of their own social context. Human justice is the "good"

that enables life, preventing premature death (cf. Amos 5:7), but this moral vision or ideal

is connected to seeking Yahweh, whose presence is the source of life and death (Amos

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political forecast even though they could discern the weather forecast (Matt 16:2–3; Luke 12:54–56).

5:4–6, 14). Worship practices such as attending ceremonies at Bethel, Gilgal, or

Beersheba are discouraged (Amos 5:5–6; fig. 8), perhaps because these religious sites

promoted a denial of injustices in Israelite and potentially Judahite society.[2] Nature

imagery depicts human injustice as an inversion of the created order, whether turning

life-protecting "justice" in public proceedings into the equivalent of a bitter wormwood

plant or bringing the stalk or fruit of "righteousness" crashing down to the ground (Amos

5:7). Disgust and disgrace are heaped on such injustice, pointing Judah away from similar

corruption in their day. In contrast to the misdirected "hate" for people who speak what is

right in court (Amos 5:10), the Judahites are to "hate" (i.e., reject) what is evil and "love"

(i.e., choose) what is good (Amos 5:15). In other words, they are to practice truth-telling

in court (Amos 5:10) and are to avoid taxing poor farmers on their grain (Amos 5:11) or

taking bribes, since bribery clouds just verdicts or lets the rich off leniently, blocking the

poor from access to a fair hearing (Amos 5:12). Although creation rhetoric is not the only

aspect of the text, it features in the metaphoric and literal depictions of injustice. Even the

legal proceedings are likely concerned with agricultural conflicts over land and

unbearable taxation policies on agricultural yields. During Hezekiah's reign and

following, for example, taxation of agricultural goods would be especially relevant in

Judah with its policy of stockpiling such goods in stamped jars "for the king" as Judah

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[2] Worship at Jerusalem was not immune from this propensity toward hypocritical religious practices (cf. Amos 2:4–5; 6:1), so the polemic against other sites should not be seen as a categorical or perpetual prohibition of worship at non-Jerusalem sites. The polemic is rather a situational critique of corruption leading to the downfall of Israel as a kingdom. Cf. Eidevall, *Sacrificial Rhetoric*. For Judah after

grew and as Assyrian pressure to give tribute increased. The temptation to pride and false security in military strength and economic expansion would be present during such times of growth (cf. 2 Kgs 20:19; 2 Chr 32:25–26).

When it comes to the justice of Yahweh in Amos 5:1–17, the creation rhetoric blends with military and other social aspects to condemn Israel as unjust and elevate Yahweh as just in his judgment on Israel. As part of this theodicy justifying Yahweh, Judah is encouraged to have reverence, humility, and sadness for Israel. Reverence for Yahweh and corresponding humility is promoted by the scary and status-leveling scenes of destruction (Amos 5:2–3, 9, 13, 16–17), including Israel's shameful abandonment on its "soil" (Amos 5:2), the unquenchable "fire" (Amos 5:6), the humiliating futility of planting crops without enjoying the produce (Amos 5:11), and the fearful prospect of mourning over deaths and crop failures (Amos 5:16–17). Reverence and humility are also promoted by the central doxology to Yahweh, who can create and destroy (Amos 5:8–9). This hinge to the entire chiastic section begins with creation rhetoric that emphasizes Yahweh's benevolent justice in ordering the world rightly, the regular rhythms of the natural world promoting life and growth for all (Amos 5:8). Judah can see in these divine actions involving stars, day-and-night, and rain a positive contrast with the injustices of the Israelites (Amos 5:7–8). This positive ideal is not something that Judah can imitate in the natural sphere but rather can approximate in the social sphere. Nature imagery portrays the moral vision of what thriving looks like for the human community. Failing

that downfall, the prohibition would be valid only as long as the religious practices were hypocritical or

that standard—practicing injustice (Amos 5:10)—would lead to the more threatening acknowledgment of Yahweh's justice, a punitive form of justice that could touch Judah and not just Israel (Amos 5:9). Such justice is often poetic, corresponding to the life-depriving actions of those who exploited others (Amos 5:11–12), which shows the righteousness of Yahweh to Judah once again. Depictions of sadness for Israel convey the certainty of punitive justice, a certainty that is rhetorically effective for Judah as well, considering that the consequences had already fallen on Israel by the time the audience in Judah heard this text. The funeral chant for Israel's virgin population (Amos 5:1–2) evokes a sad disposition, as does the ending of the section predicting wailing by farmers in the vineyards (Amos 5:16–17). Justice will be tragic for those who do not practice it in their community. Justice is a matter of life and death, and justice is the moral vision or "good" toward which Judah is directed that they might live. The ethos of the cosmos shapes the moral character of Judah, mostly based on the justice and thus on the character of their God: "Yahweh is his name!" (Amos 5:8).

In Amos 5:18–27 two visions compete for the moral imagination of the audience: (1) a vision of a positive future ("light") and unconditional abundance celebrated in religious offerings from the plants and animals tended by people (Amos 5:18–23), and (2) a vision of justice and right relationships, allowing people to thrive when self-serving religious activities are no longer involved (Amos 5:24). In condemning Israel, the audience in Judah justifies Yahweh's announcement of exile. The condemnation is aided

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disloyal to Yahweh at those sites.

by empathetic sorrow and surprise at reversals of expectations, particularly with the nature imagery of light and darkness or surprise attacks by animals (Amos 5:18–20). But there is also indignation, hate, disgust, or contempt raised at Israel's agricultural offerings when these when these offerings are regarded as contemptible by Yahweh (Amos 5:21–23). Poetic or ironic justice plays a role in justifying the judgments that often involve creation rhetoric. For example, exile to a foreign *land* corresponds thematically to the foreign deities or to Yahweh improperly worshiped outside the land of Israel (Amos 5:26–27). Reverence and humility are instilled by the reversals and fearsome scenes of darkness, dangerous animals (Amos 5:18–20), and rejection of worship offerings (Amos 5:21–23). If Israel's offerings were rejected by Yahweh, Judah could not presume on unconditional favor from Yahweh either, a humbling and fearful consideration. Judah's ancestors were also implicated in the infidelity of the wilderness generation (Amos 5:25–26), and so the mention of the "God of cosmic armies" above encourages reverence for Yahweh among the Judahites, lest they be sent into exile as well for worshiping Yahweh using a star as the image of the divine commander of such starry, cosmic armies (Amos 5:25–27).

In terms of practices, the worship of star-gods or astral images of Yahweh is prohibited by such creation rhetoric, as is the frequenting of Israel's religious sanctuaries, at least as long as these locations were tainted by injustices, corruption, and leaders who encouraged only celebratory offerings and never penitential ones. The pivotal exhortation in the middle of the section provides the positive alternative: "But like water let justice roll, and (let) righteousness like a permanent wadi (flow)!" (Amos 5:24). Judah would

hear this as a call equally applicable to their own population, and the creation rhetoric shows what this social justice should be like. It should be abundant and consistent, providing life for all like a waterfall or stream that never runs dry. This was the sort of moral character Judah needed if it was to avoid the same hypocrisy, criticisms, and fate as Israel.

Amos 6 shifts to more economic and military themes instead of religious ones, but it still condemns Israel (and Judah) and justifies Yahweh. To do this, the text humbles the pride of both Hebrew kingdoms (Amos 6:1–2). The creation rhetoric includes products from non-human creatures used for decorations (e.g., ivory) and for food to show the decadence and indulgence of the elite in these kingdoms, especially in Israel (Amos 6:4, 6). It is not that feasts are inherently unjust, but the plenty of the exclusive meals was covering over the fracturing of the nation and the abuse of the poor (Amos 6:6), such was the "pride" of Jacob (Amos 6:8). Their pride manifested in lavish banqueting and boasting in military victories (Amos 6:13; fig. 8), but the creation rhetoric exposes such arrogance as deadly and foolish, as foolish as expecting a horse to run up a cliffside or oxen to plow the wrong terrain (Amos 6:12). It is deadly to the poor and thus the whole nation in a way comparable to the poisonous hemlock or wormwood plants (Amos 6:12; fig. 9). Furthermore, beyond the rhetorical demolition of Israel's pretenses via critique, mockery, and announcement of judgment (Amos 6:3, 7–11, 13–14), the section also humbles military arrogance by calling Yahweh the "God of cosmic armies" (Amos 6:8, 14). For Judah, the nature imagery would shame their own social inequalities and arrogance in military expansionism (e.g., "the carefree on Zion"; Amos 6:1), pointing the

population to humility, wisdom, and justice as moral dispositions that escape such criticism. Judah during the time of Hezekiah was stockpiling food and drink in preparation for expanding independently from Assyria or preparing tribute for Assyria. In other words, the same potential existed for unequal extraction from the peasant farmers to the benefit of the elite Judahites or foreign markets (cf. Amos 6:4–6). With royal riches abounding (2 Kgs 20:13), the Judahite elite may have taken false security in their position and banquets, blind to the fracturing of their own kingdom on the horizon (Amos 6:4–7). The text shapes a community that must practice moderation in food consumption, restraint in taxing farmers, and humility in military offenses to avoid overextension. Creation rhetoric offers mostly a negative ethos of the natural world being misused or gone awry, thus no robust and positive moral vision for the audience except in the terms "justice" and "righteousness." These positive practices are supposed to lead to life, not death (Amos 6:12). Only such social justice would count as moral wisdom, and only such justice would provide life for the weak members of society who would otherwise be pressed into poverty by decadent consumption and militias that needed to be fed.

As an aside, in each of the central sections of Amos—Amos 5:1–17, 18–27; 6:1–14—the paired terms "justice" and "righteousness" have a different nuance, but all three examples are linked to nature imagery in the immediate context. In Amos 5:1–17, "justice" and "righteousness" (Amos 5:7, 15) seem to be missing character traits—better, community traits—that should be present in legal settings (Amos 5:10, 12, 15) and in agricultural policies (Amos 5:11). In Amos 5:18–27, justice and righteousness are community traits that are missing from religious settings (Amos 5:24), suggesting some

sort of religious exploitation of the poor and their agricultural produce that is now being offered hypocritically by the wealthy. In Amos 6, the nuance of the pair of terms shifts to economic and political aspects (Amos 6:12), the missing moral ingredients in the decadent consumption of food (Amos 6:4, 6) and the arrogant militarism that partly enabled and partly required such agricultural output to be distributed unjustly (Amos 6:8, 13–14).[3] In other words, while the legal and religious aspects of justice are not excluded from the picture, the economic and political aspects of exploitation are primarily in view in the third pairing. Nowhere else in the book do these two terms appear, even though justice or injustice as concepts are described in other ways elsewhere. Each angle on these key terms for social justice, then, fills out the ethos of the cosmos in the book, for each section describes right order in terms of creation imagery. It is the lack of alignment between the natural and social worlds that drives much of the critique in Amos, and it is often the natural world that provides the vision of flourishing or its opposite that forms moral character throughout. There is essentially no ethical message in Amos without the natural world as the measure of divine standards being met or violated. The two areas of character and creation are too interrelated to be studied separately.

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[3] The same disparity between spending on the military and spending on food programs can be seen in the United States. As observed in Jung, *Sharing Food*, 92, "In the first ten hours[!] of 2004 (and every year thereafter), we in the U.S. spent as much on our own weapons systems and other aspects of defense as we will pay the entire rest of the year for agricultural programs addressing long-term needs of the hungry in the poorest regions of the earth." In 2018 the "defense" budget was $639 billion, while the spending on the so-called "Farm Bill" for residents of the United States was $428 billion, showing where the priorities for the administration of my country are (USDOD, "Special Report"; USDA Economic Research Service, "Agriculture"). Like what Chaney (*Peasants, Prophets, and Political Economy*) proposes for lower crop diversity being a problem in ancient Israel, the US Farm Bill subsidizes only certain commodity crops, making it harder for farmers to grow diverse crops. Cf. Ayres, *Good Food*, 38–45.

In Amos 7:1—8:3, the only practices indirectly discouraged are the government extraction of crops (Amos 7:1), support of a corrupt temple system (Amos 7:13), and censoring the prophetic message (Amos 7:10–17). Character dispositions are more central to this section than practices are: Judah is drawn to empathize with the visionary, Amos, in his compassion for Israel (Amos 7:2, 5) since he is portrayed as an intercessory figure loosely similar to Moses (cf. Exod 32:11–14; Num 14:13–23). Not only does this cultivate empathy in Judah but also respect for Amos and Yahweh, who both do not ultimately want the complete destruction of Israel (Amos 7:3, 6). The agrarian occupation of Amos likewise legitimates him and his character as honorable (Amos 7:14–15; see fig. 10). It also prepares Judah to heed and promote prophetic messages from others in later decades, regardless of the social background of such speakers. Reverence is promoted by the scary images of locusts and fire consuming parts of the natural world (Amos 7:1–2, 6), by fruit foreboding summer's "end" for Israel as a nation (Amos 8:1–2; fig. 11), and by the tenuous security of their "high places" (Amos 7:9) and homeland "soil" (Amos 7:11, 17). The moral imagination of Judah apprehends Yahweh as the creator and commander of natural forces and human armies, and reverence is appropriate lest Judah find itself on the threatened end of these visions and words as well. The ethos of the cosmos conveys that Yahweh is sovereign over both human communities and the wider, natural world, and Judah sees the severe mercy on Israel in hindsight, since the visionary's intercession with Yahweh proved effective in preventing a total ecological collapse in the northern kingdom. Locusts and fire would have been worse than the

military destruction and depopulation suggested in the second pair of visions (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3).

In the next section, Amos 8:4–14, the dispositions of greed and arrogance along with dishonest marketplace practices are discouraged while contentment, humility, and practices of new month feasts and Sabbaths for social justice are encouraged for Judah—if they are to avoid the same condemnation that fell on Israel, that is (Amos 8:4–7). Judah's sense of reverence at divine justice and empathy for those suffering is strengthened by the nature imagery of the land experiencing an earthquake and darkness (Amos 8:8–9), cosmic acts in parallel to human mourning rituals of sadness (Amos 8:8, 10). The creation rhetoric thus conveys how injustice in the social realm ripples out to impact the natural realm as God mediates the effects to the wider environment as his judgment. Ethos and cosmos are linked. One cannot be disturbed without also disturbing the other. Creation rhetoric at the end of the section also compares divine revelation to water that sustains life (Amos 8:11–12), elevating the importance of heeding such revelation in Judah now that Israel had experienced a drought of this "water" and of literal water after rejecting the prophets and true Yahwism at various sanctuaries (Amos 8:13–14). The moral vision of thriving for Judah is related to the water imagery of the natural world, though the continuation of either literal or revelatory "water" is not guaranteed if a stubborn audience refuses the second source of life, divine communication (cf. Deut 8:3). By implication, Judah's worship practices should take place at some other location where prophetic messages are heard and promoted, where Yahweh is worshiped without false images.

The last section, Amos 9, picks up on this religious theme and suggests—without using the word "Bethel"—that the sanctuaries of Israel are corrupt and will be destroyed (Amos 9:1). In its practices, Judah is to avoid worshiping at such places, avoid creating images of Yahweh as was done there, and avoid the social injustices that led to the condemnation of Israel's religious institutions as failures (Amos 9:8, 10). More positively, Judah may expand its territory (Amos 9:12) and continue agricultural work until their exiled northern neighbors return to their soil and enjoy life there along with the Judahites (Amos 9:13–15).

In terms of dispositions, reverence is again prominent due to creation rhetoric stressing that the natural world is an unsafe place for those under divine judgment (Amos 9:1–4; see fig. 12). Those who worship at Bethel cannot escape Yahweh's punishment, no matter what corner of creation in which they might want to hide (Amos 9:1–4), warning Judah decades later not to expect an exception for themselves if participating in that temple system when it was still corrupt. The final doxology (Amos 9:5–6) presents the awe-inspiring upheaval in the natural world when Yahweh interacts with it in judgment (Amos 9:5) and then presents the righteousness of Yahweh on display in the sky above (Amos 9:6). Both interactions between Yahweh and the natural world inspire reverence. The provision of rainfall from the sky is evidence of a rival temple, God's temple, that is superior to Bethel and unshakable compared to it. Other predictions of Israel's exile from its own soil or the sifting of those who fail from the loyal ones (Amos 9:8–9) instill reverence in Judah as well, lest they lose their own land due to similar failures (cf. Amos 9:10).

The creation rhetoric in Amos 9 also encourages a disposition that recognizes and desires justice in its various forms. The creator's righteous ordering of the world justifies his character, his name (Amos 9:6). This could be called sustaining justice, since Yahweh sustains the structure of the universe and brings life-giving rain on the land (Amos 9:6). Human injustice brings death to the vulnerable and retributive justice from God, justice that cannot be escaped in any corner of creation (Amos 9:1–4) and which impacts both human and non-human areas (Amos 9:5). Nature imagery also provides a perspective on retributive justice that is more selective, a targeted sifting of good from bad, in which the good grain will escape while the pebbles (i.e., those who do wrong) will be trapped in Yahweh's judgment (Amos 9:9). In the concluding oracles of the book, it is no longer retributive justice but restorative justice that is promised, both politically (Amos 9:11–12) and agriculturally (Amos 9:13–15). This is justice or righteousness in the sense of making things right with the world again, providing growth and life for all after the devastation of the northern kingdom. Judah learns that its own restoration is linked to the return of prosperity and unification with the north once again.

The ethos of the cosmos is hopeful in this conclusion (Amos 9:11–15). The kingdom that is envisioned for Judah is not pictured with an arrogant military or fortresses, not with a pretentious temple system or exploitation. Instead, the agricultural abundance will do away with the scarcity, greed, and fear that made exploitation frequent in the past. All of it comes from divine blessing on a tottering dynasty in the south and a scattered people in the north. Judah's moral vision of thriving is directed to a cosmos with an ethos of hope, showing that judgment and mourning are not the final outcomes

for them or for Israel. In the wake of disaster Yahweh intends a restoration of the natural world that will renew human communities as well. He intends to root his people in their own homeland soil once again, providing hope for the future. The creation rhetoric shows that life in right relationships is the ideal for the universe, and that life is a gift that should be protected with adequate access to provisions for all. The sources of life cannot be hoarded or denied to the poor without the natural world protesting along with its sovereign creator, bringing consequences to the oppressive that affect all in that part of the world. Land and people are so connected that not only their suffering but also their restoration is bound together in God's design. Creation and character are connected, thanks to the cosmic creator, Yahweh.

There are a diverse number of emotional dispositions that I have identified during the course of the study, and here is a listing of some examples by category:

- Sadness/Mourning/Grief:
  - Evidence: mourning, wailing, silence, funeral dirges, exclamations
  - Examples: Amos 1:2; 5:1–2, 16–18; 6:1, 10; 8:3, 8, 10; 9:5
- Justice/Righteousness/Fairness:
  - Evidence: any inclinations toward fairness or reactions at its lack
  - Examples: Amos 5:7–8, 15, 24; 6:12
- Fear/Anxiety/Reverence:
  - Evidence: earthquake, fire, lions, bear, snake, locusts, plagues, droughts, etc.
  - Examples: Amos 3:4–8; cf. Amos 1:2; 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6
- Disgust/Revulsion/Contempt:
  - Evidence: foul smells, poisonous plants, defiled soil, revulsion at food/actions
  - Examples: Amos 4:4–5, 10; 5:7, 10, 21–23; 6:12; 7:17
- Anger/Indignation/Wrath:
  - Evidence: explicit lexemes or implicit in aggression or frustration
  - Examples: Amos 1:11; perhaps Amos 1:2; 3:8; 4:4–5, 6–11; 5:21–23
- Love/Desire vs. Hate/Rejection:
  - Evidence: explicit lexemes or acts of distancing/desire
  - Examples: Amos 4:5; 5:10, 15; 6:8

- Humility/Shame and Pride/Honor
  - Evidence: explicit lexemes or implicit in actions/objects of pride/shame
  - Examples: Amos 2:14–16; 6:1–14
- Empathy/Compassion/Mercy:
  - Evidence: explicit lexemes, actions, or changing decisions to harm
  - Examples: Amos 1:11; 6:6; 7:3, 6
- Surprise/Shock:
  - Evidence: reversals of inferred audience expectations
  - Examples: Amos 3:2; 5:18–20; 9:7, 10
- Wisdom/Discernment:
  - Evidence: rhetorical questions, logical argumentation
  - Amos 3:3–8; 6:12
- Joy/Happiness and Hope/Optimism:
  - Evidence: positive promises, survival or flourishing, not scarcity
  - Examples: Amos 5:6, 14–15; 9:13–15[4]

With those summaries of creation rhetoric and character formation, I will now conclude

by highlighting some of the contributions my research has made to various fields and

what areas of research might be fruitful for others to study in the future.

8.2 Distinctive Contributions and Further Work

Overall, my study of Amos is distinctive within the field of Old Testament ethics. It is

most similar to the publications by Karl Möller, Dale Patrick, Daniel Carroll R., William

Brown, and Hilary Marlow, similar to Möller and Carroll R. in a detailed reading of the

final form of Amos, similar to Carroll R. and Brown in a focus on character ethics in

biblical texts, and similar to Brown and Marlow in attention to creation rhetoric or nature

imagery in particular.[5]

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[4] This summary is based on my presentation at SBL, Stewart, "Pathos in the Cosmos."

[5] There are also similarities to the work of Paas (*Creation and Judgement*, 183–226), but Paas concentrates on the origins of the imagery rather than the function of such imagery.

Although I use the insights of speech act theory and the structural outline of Amos found in Möller, I differ from him in using a broader rhetorical framework that is not Greco-Roman but closer to the work of Dale Patrick in this regard. Neither Möller nor Patrick explore the nature themes or ethical ramifications of the text for a Judahite audience at length, though. Patrick only covers selected texts, while Möller only covers Amos 1–4 in his 2003 monograph.[6] In terms of historical setting, my conclusions match Möller's in general (post-720 BC but pre-586 BC) and match Sweeney and Schniedewind in attributing the final form to the reign of Hezekiah.[7] This early date for the entire text of Amos will doubtless be contested, but the case for how the nature themes rhetorically shape a society's moral vision, dispositions, and practices is still cogent even if the complete text was only read starting in a later period. An earthquake is still an earthquake, and traditions about this disturbing one still served as an example of fearful disaster much later than the eighth century BC (e.g., Zech 14:5). By studying the reconstructed reception of the final form in Judah, my approach is similar to the multi-layered study of speech acts in Holroyd's recent work.[8] Sociologically, my approach is

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[6] However, see more recently Möller (*Reading Amos as a Book*), which covers the entire book at a more popular level.

[7] Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 63–65; Möller, *Prophet in Debate*; Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 282–86; Sweeney, "Dystopianization." See other early views for texts in Amos usually dated late: Rudolph, *Joel, Amos*, 285–86; Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 397; Hayes, *Amos*, 223; Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 70–71; Paul, *Amos*, 288–89; Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise*, 63–65; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:195; Sweeney, *King Josiah*, 279–86. See above, §3.6.

[8] See Holroyd, *A (S)Word against Babylon*, 29–31, 74. Instead of treating at least four levels of speech acts for a single oracle as Holroyd does, I consolidate the levels in Amos to two: (1) the lower-level illocutions "within the text," meaning within the discourse units directed rhetorically at Israel for most of the book, and (2) the higher-level illocutions as their perlocutionary effects would impact an audience "in front of the text" that heard it in Judah in the time of Hezekiah.

most similar to Chaney's, since he highlights the role of agricultural products in the

social dynamics of poverty, debt, legal corruption, and government administration. These

dynamics remain relevant regardless of the date of the book, and thus they contribute to

illuminating the cosmos in Amos whenever agricultural practices or products are at stake.

For Old Testament ethics, my approach to character ethics is ideal due to the

genres within Amos, which are not legal genres. Earlier works by conservative scholars

sometimes assumed that the laws of Exodus through Deuteronomy were foundational for

all prophetic messages, but this only illuminates some aspects while obscuring others in

Amos. In particular, a legal lens often favors a basis for ethics in divine commands rather

than consequences or character. While imperatives from Yahweh preserved in oral and

textual tradition could account for some of the standards assumed by the audience of

Amos (e.g., Amos 2:4–5, 10–12), many sections appeal to moral knowledge available to

all people (e.g., Amos 1:3–2:3) or to insights learned from observing the natural world

(e.g., Amos 3:3–8; 5:7, 24; 6:12). This means my work attempts to recover one of the

other bases for Old Testament ethics that Barton outlined a few decades ago: a natural,

moral order built into the world.[9] My research has strong similarities to the work in

character ethics by Carroll R. His work on Amos and other prophetic texts often contains

a dual focus on the sociological context of the eighth century and on the contemporary

contexts of Guatemala or the United States, which contrasts with the more limited lens

[9] Barton, "Natural Law"; cf. Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel*, 102–4; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 146, 254–66. Marlow notes that all three models of ethics can feature in the prophetic texts, especially certain interests in common with consequentialism and virtue ethics (266–68).

for this study, attending only to the ancient audience in Judah. That is why my approach

to Old Testament ethics is not mapped as far to the right "in front of" the text as the

approach of Carroll R. in the introduction (cf. fig. 1), since he focuses on contemporary

audiences "in front of" the text of Amos, not merely on the ancient audience. On the

other hand, until his forthcoming commentary due in 2019, Carroll R. has not typically

worked on the entire book of Amos at the same length but rather has treated sections

(e.g., Amos 3–6) or selected texts as overviews of virtues or windows into sociological

and religious dynamics.[10] My work covers more ground, though not with the same

sustained attention to religious and sociological issues that he has given for decades.

For creation rhetoric itself, my approach is an application of Brown's insights to

Amos and runs parallel to Marlow's work. Brown mostly treats creation texts in Genesis,

Psalms, and wisdom literature, so an exploration of Amos provided an opportunity to

validate the usefulness of Brown's "ethos of the cosmos" paradigm in prophetic

literature.[11] By contrast, Marlow treats Amos directly along with Hosea and Isa 1–39, and

she arrives independently at many of the same conclusions without using the categories

from Brown. Nevertheless, my use of James K. A. Smith and Brown to explain desires,

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[10] Cf. Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos*; Carroll R., "God and His People"; Carroll R., "'For So You Love to Do'"; Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues"; Carroll R., "'I Will Send Fire'"; Carroll R., *Book of Amos*. His commentary will appear in the NICOT series.

[11] Brown does cover parts of Isaiah (*Ethos of the Cosmos*, 229–69), Amos 5:21–24 (*Sacred Sense*, 110–12), and other prophetic texts concerning the natural world suffering ("Nature's Travail"). However, he either treats these texts from a bird's-eye view due to the space constraints of the publications or he only deals with a brief section in Amos. I believe that his "ethos of the cosmos" paradigm is applicable at close range and through entire books of the Old Testament. My approach has affinities to the work of Schmid, Knierim, and Fretheim.

emotional dispositions, and practices provides a more detailed ethical analysis than

Marlow is able to give. My use of Strawn and MacDonald on lions and food in ancient

Israel also allows for in-depth treatment of the natural world that is not found in

Marlow's publications, because she covers more biblical books and uses a broader model

of connectedness between God, humanity, and the earth.[12] I draw on recent earthquake

studies by Roberts, pursuing the seismic evidence and implications further than most

scholars (see fig. 4), who do not usually focus on the geophysical phenomena so much as

the metaphorical imagery for the "roar" in Amos 1:2 or the confusing threat in Amos

2:13. Compared to Thang, the most recent study of "land" themes in Amos, my work

covers more natural features than his but does not address the significance of temples and

holy mountains like his work does.[13] My focus on "creation" themes does swing the

pendulum away from the legal material of the Pentateuch—away from "covenant" as the

sole category for ethical standards. Both were important to Judah when reading Amos,

but because of the historic neglect of nature themes in biblical scholarship, I emphasized

the nature-based influences on the ethical world of Israel and Judah. The comparisons

and contrasts above show where my work fits within biblical studies, but there are also

specific contributions that my work makes within studies of Amos and Old Testament

ethics.

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[12] See Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 111. Cf. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 183–87. Others who use Wright's "triangle" of relationships between God, humanity, and the non-human creation are Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 85; Ibita, "'Plead Your Case,'" 483–84.

[13] See Thang, *Theology of the Land.*

Some more detailed contributions that my research makes to the study of the

rhetoric of Amos include the following: (1) I connect the "roar" by Yahweh to the

historical "earthquake" in the eighth century BC (Amos 1:1–2) and argue that the

visionary named Amos was believed to have predicted this event using a lion metaphor

("Yahweh . . . will roar"; Amos 1:2) and using other probable earthquake imagery later

on (Amos 2:13; 8:8; 9:1, 5).[14] (2) I also connect the mourning, withering landscape to the

Lion's roar—the earthquake as divine judgment—in a way that actually explains why

withering would follow this audible "roar" (Amos 1:2). Namely, the earthquake would

crack part of the landscape and toss dust on the vegetation of Judah and Israel, causing

the landscape to resemble the appearance of a person in mourning. It would be easy to

personify this dusty terrain as if sackcloth were covering the pastures and dust were

covering the "top" of the Carmel Range like the head of a mourner, all intimated by the

broad term "mourn" in parallel with "dry up" (Amos 1:2).[15] Even careful studies of

biblical earthquakes, nature's personified mourning, and lions thus far have not explained

this physical link as I have, opting to leave the withering at the mythical or poetic level

with no natural-world logic to it.[16] (3) I argue that the first clause in Amos 2:7 should be

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[14] Not since the 1930s has anyone other than Ryan Roberts and I argued strongly for a connection between Yahweh's roar and the earthquake of Amos 1:1. See Roberts, "Terra Terror," 194–205. I am grateful to him for access to his dissertation. Look for his published version soon.

[15] I even suggest as a possibility that the earthquake splitting the ground could have been associated with the mourning rituals of tearing one's garment or gashing one's skin, the start of mourning rituals that I translate "dress mournfully" because of the withered appearance that is then suggested in the poetry (Amos 1:2).

[16] Cf. Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 202; Hayes, *"Earth Mourns"*, 15–16, 23–32; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 59–61, 258, 266; Roberts, "Terra Terror," 203 n. 27. The reason for this disconnect, as Roberts (196) notes, is probably that scholarship has been "associating nature's trembling solely with thunder rather than seeing earthquakes as equal or more plausible imagery." Rain and drought do not easily

translated as "the ones who sniff (for food) [השאפים] on the dust of the land, (namely,) at the head of poor people."[17] It is a metaphorical picture, in part, that describes beastly greed by the powerful landowners. They require so much of their field workers in grain as a quota or tax (cf. Amos 5:11) that these poor workers have nothing but crumbs to eat by comparison—and then the jackals come back for the crumbs! (4) Although identifying people does not qualify as creation rhetoric, I identify "the maidservant" in Amos 2:7 not as a prostitute but as a female servant who is sexually exploited by her masters at a religious celebration (Amos 2:8). This is a unique blend of the usual positions, which do not typically combine the economic and the religious realms. (5) In general, I examine the usage of terms for "soil" (אדמה) and "land" (ארץ) more carefully than most scholars do, and I show that these terms can convey spatial, political, agricultural, or cosmic nuances as their primary meaning, depending on the context.[18] There are different levels of creation rhetoric, not all of which is morally significant nature language. Not every plant or domesticated animal is intended to invoke a particular disposition or practice. This is especially true of the inanimate parts of creation or those under human control,

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connect in the contemporary Western mind. If an earthquake kicked up dust from the land and urban collapse, however, then the withered appearance of the landscape makes sense in Amos 1:2, something even Roberts does not consider.

[17] Unlike renderings that emend or guess at the verb (e.g., "trample on") or take one of the prepositional phrases to be its object, I note that this verb nowhere else needs a preposition when it takes an object (cf. Amos 8:4). I therefore render this example as an intransitive use of the verb—not "to sniff after" something but "to sniff" somewhere—namely, sniffing like a donkey or jackal on the dusty ground where poor people can be found (Amos 2:7; cf. Jer 14:6). I am indebted to the arguments of Garrett (*Amos*, 22, 58) for retaining the meaning of "pant/sniff," though he does not end up with an intransitive translation, contrary to the evidence he presents.

[18] Thang, *Theology of the Land*; Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 127–28. Only Davis translates אדמה with "soil" as I do. I also translate שמים as "sky" rather than "heaven" so as to avoid a material-spiritual dualism that does not match the distinctions made in Hebrew cultures.

since these can provide more of a setting than a paradigm for the human responses. (6) I

maintain the text of the MT as reflective of the earliest readings in all but a few places

where confusion arguably obscured an earlier reading (e.g., Amos 3:12; 6:12; 7:4).[19] (7) I

interpret the religious polemic in Amos to be against corrupt Yahwism, not against the

worship of other gods. Thus, in places where some see veiled critiques against other gods

and religious practices (e.g., Amos 2:4, 7–8; 4:1, 13; 6:4–7; 8:14; 9:8, 10),[20] I see

critiques of misleading government policies or prophets (Amos 2:4), not false gods, or

certain sanctuaries criticized due to social injustice or distorted views of Yahweh

condoned there, not due to any foreign deities mentioned there.[21] Even in the two texts

that allude to the golden bull-calves or the establishment of rival sanctuaries as the "guilt"

of Samaria or the "failing" of the northern kingdom (Amos 8:14; 9:8, 10), the figurines

and sanctuaries were for the worship of Yahweh, even if the Judahites objected to these

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[19] These three cases involve incorrect word divisions: Amos 3:12 (וּבַד מֶשֶׁק); 6:12 (בַּבָּקָר יָם); 7:4 (לְרִבֶב אֵשׁ). Other emendations to the MT of less importance include the following: accidental omission of a doubling dot or vowel in Amos 1:1 (עֻזִּיָּה); 1:2 (מִצִּיּוֹן); 4:11 (מִשְׂרֵפָה); 6:2 (פְּלִשְׁתִּים); 9:4 (אֹיְבֵיהֶם); mistaken vocalization or spelling of verbs in Amos 1:11 (שָׁמְרָה); 2:15 (יְמַלֵּט); 4:3 (וְהִשְׁלַכְתֶּנָה); 5:9 (יָבִיא); 5:11 (בּוּשְׁכֶם); 8:8 (וְנִשְׁקָעָה); mistaken vocalization or spelling of nouns in Amos 5:8 (צַלְמוּ); 5:9 (עֹז); 5:26 (סַכַּת, צַלְמְכֶם, כֵּן); 6:8 (מְתָעֵב); 7:2, 5 (אֲדֹנָי); 8:4 (עַנְוֵי); 8:8 (כִּיאֹר, בִּיאֹר); 9:6 (מַעֲלוֹתָיו); incorrect word order in Amos 5:16 (וְאַל מִסְפֵּד, not וּמִסְפֵּד אֶל); and mistaken omission of a consonant (haplography) in Amos 2:13 (וְהִנֵּה); graphic confusion of ו-י or ה-ח in Amos 3:11 (יְסֹבֵב); 4:3 (הַחַרְמוֹנָה); 5:9 (יָבִיא)—or of the paleo-Hebrew א/ﻉ and א/ת in Amos 4:7 (אַמְטִיר). In one place above I go against the Masoretic *qere* in the margin (i.e., Amos 8:4) and two other times I follow it against the *kethib* consonants (i.e., Amos 8:8; 9:6). Of these less important cases, only my readings in Amos 4:3 and Amos 5:26 are particularly divergent from the meanings most scholars would read there. Overall, there are proportionally more cases where I follow the MT as the best witness to the earliest final form of the text, even when most of the ancient versions contain smoother readings.

[20] Cf. Barstad, *Religious Polemics*.

[21] The banqueting is not wrong because of the god worshiped by the participants, apparently; no god other than Yahweh is ever named explicitly for the texts some believe allude to a *marzeach* feast (cf. Amos 2:7–8; 4:1; 6:4–7). Amos 6:4–7 alludes to such a feast, but the other texts are not clear, and no god besides Yahweh is ever named in the otherwise social criticism against the Israelites in these three texts.

practices on various grounds.[22] (8) I argue for a positive and ethically substantial view of

the creation doxologies in the book (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6). Instead of viewing these

as solely violent and amoral theophanies of a warrior storm-god, I highlight the non-

violent parts of the doxologies (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6) that balance the more destructive

parts (Amos 5:9; 9:5). This is an important point to make: the creation rhetoric of Amos

is not that "might makes right" but rather that "right makes might," to coin a new

phrase.[23] The benevolent and fair order of phenomena in the natural world constitutes

some of Yahweh's moral qualifications, justifying his character and his use of power as

ethically legitimate.[24] Only because he is a cosmic king who maintains right, life-giving

order can he legitimately enact justice that harms corrupt societies. Nature is not neutral,

and neither is the use of Yahweh's power in the natural world.

How is Amos distinct from other books of the Old Testament when it comes to its

creation rhetoric and its ethical impact? Certainly, the book of Amos is not as systematic

as Gen 1:1—2:3 or Gen 2:4–25 when it comes to origins of the created world or

[22] The only strong case for the worship of other gods in Amos is Amos 5:26. Although I argue that the emended text refers to the past worship of Yahweh or some other god(s) during the wilderness generation, I could be mistaken. If these are other gods and not merely symbols for aberrant Yahweh-worship, then it is the one exception in a book otherwise concerned with Israel's corrupt social practices and their rejection of prophetic messages.

[23] Even Fretheim fails to explain this, treating the doxologies as revealing only the extent and inevitability of divine power to bring destruction or mediate judgment in the world. He does not comment on the benevolent, sustaining uses of divine power very clearly, although this would show the positive side of divine justice or righteousness. Cf. Fretheim, *Reading*, 135, 139, 154–55. Hayes (*Amos*, 161) in his commentary does not take Amos 5:8 to be destructive but sustaining "proper order in creation."

[24] As a comparison, my view on the creation rhetoric in Amos would match a positive view of the creation rhetoric at the end of the book of Job (Job 38–41), which I likewise take to be ethically relevant as an awe-inspiring theodicy rather than a non-sequitur that overpowers human protests dismissively. See a recent study of creation imagery shaping human identity and outlook in Breitkopf, "מה־אנוש."

humankind, nor is it as lengthy and comprehensive in imagery as Isaiah. The book does

not have the joy-filled exuberance of the Psalms (Pss 8; 19; 104; cf. Prov 8) or the divine

delight in the wild things of Job 38–41, though the doxologies have a similar effect of

awe-inspiring reverence (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6).[25] As Davis notes, there are more

succinct expressions of Yahweh's restorative justice for the whole world (Ps 36:7 [Eng.

6]), just as there are clearer announcements of the connection between human evil and

natural calamity (Hos 4:1–3).[26] Nevertheless, Amos has an intense concentration of

creation rhetoric within its nine chapters that is seldom seen elsewhere. It bears repeating

that Amos in fact has the highest density of the term אדמה ("earth, soil") out of any book

of the Old Testament,[27] and it ranks second only to Genesis when the terms "soil" (אדמה)

and "land" (ארץ) are both considered.[28] The book is therefore "to a remarkable degree

oriented to the fertile soil."[29] Looking at other nature imagery, only Amos uses a loaded

cart as a comparison of Yahweh's methods of judgment (Amos 2:13).[30] Only Amos goes

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[25] Cf. Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*; Brown, "Moral Cosmologies"; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*.

[26] Davis, Biblical Prophecy, 90.

[27] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 209 n. 29. The next closest is Deuteronomy, which is only half as dense in its use of אדמה as Amos is with its ten occurrences.

[28] Bulkeley, "'Exile,'" 77–78. For ארץ ("land/earth") alone, he calculates—per 100 words rather than per book—that Amos comes in sixth place behind Habakkuk, Deuteronomy, Zechariah, Jeremiah, and Job (77), while for אדמה ("earth/soil") alone Amos is clearly first by twice the frequency as the closest books, followed by Zephaniah, Deuteronomy, Genesis, and Joel (78). When both terms are considered as a percentage of all the words in a biblical book, then Amos is second to Genesis, with Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, and Joel coming next after Genesis and Amos (78).

[29] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 127.

[30] See also Isa 5:18, which pictures evildoers carting around their wrongs. Along with a minority, I identify the rare verb עוק in Amos 2:13 as referring to the threatened earthquake with a meaning "make cracks" (עוק IV). If convincing, the picture would also be unique for earthquake imagery, but the overall picture is still unique, even if the verb means something else. The same applies to Amos 1:2, which I identify not as thunder but as the earthquake of Amos 1:1 portrayed as Yahweh's leonine growl.

into as much gritty detail about a lion mangling a sheep as an example of judgment
(Amos 3:12).[31] Amos alone has a lion, bear, and a snake in the same illustration (Amos
5:19).[32] No text besides Amos develops the theme of social justice with plant and water
metaphors in the exact configuration found for the three instances of "justice" and
"righteousness" in tandem (Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12).[33] No other texts relate social injustice to
bitter "wormwood" or "poison" hemlock (cf. Isa 5:20). No other biblical books describe
an earthquake with Nile imagery (Amos 8:8; 9:5), though some use the Nile or Euphrates
to portray foreign armies (cf. Isa 8:7–8; Jer 46:6–8; 47:2). Finally, there are at least two
unique visions of cosmic features found in Amos. One unique picture of the cosmos is the
vision of a fire consuming the great "cosmic ocean" (תהום) located underneath and
around the land in Amos 7:4. The term for the water is not unique, but the phrase
"shower of fire" (לרבב אש) is unique, if emended correctly, and the picture of fire in any
form consuming this vital zone of the universe is unparalleled in the Old Testament. In
the other direction, toward the sky, Amos 9:6 is unique in its portrayal of Yahweh's
cosmic palace from which he rules. Nowhere else does the Old Testament use the
Egyptian imagery of "his (papyrus-bundle) foundation" (אגדתו; Amos 9:6) to describe the
supporting structure of God's residence in the sky.[34]

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[31] Cf. Gen 31:39; Exod 22:12 (Eng. 13); 1 Sam 17:34; Mic 3:2.

[32] Other combinations appear in Prov 28:15; Jer 5:6; Lam 3:10; Hos 13:7–8; Hab 1:8; Zeph 3:3.

[33] Cf. Hos 10:4. Some general uses of agricultural imagery for wicked results include the
following: Job 4:8; Prov 1:31; 11:18; 22:8; Isa 5:7; Hos 8:7; 10:12–13; Gal 6:7–8.

[34] Cf. Gen 28:2; 1 Sam 2:8; Job 38:4; Pss 24:2; 75:4 (Eng. 3); 78:69; 89:11; 102:25; 104:2–6, 13;
Prov 3:19; 8:27; Isa 45:18; 48:13; 51:13; 66:1. None of the imagery is precisely the same as in Amos 9:6.

Beyond these considerations, is Amos distinct among the prophetic books more specifically? By contrast, it is Joel that has the strongest concentration of *agricultural* devastation and restoration of any biblical book (cf. Amos 1:2; 5:16–17; 8:8–9; 9:5), while Jeremiah conveys the emotional anguish of the prophet and Yahweh over ruined land most forcefully (cf. Amos 7:2, 5).[35] Jonah has the best satire showing the obedience of other creatures to God (cf. Amos 5:19; 9:3),[36] Micah has the most geographic wordplay (cf. Amos 1:5; 5:5; 8:14 with Amos 7:8; 8:2), and Isaiah has the most extensive vision of restoration for the whole cosmos (cf. Amos 9:13–15).[37] Ezekiel is more concerned with priestly purity (cf. Amos 7:17),[38] and Hosea with religious and political promiscuity (cf. Amos 5:26; 8:14),[39] making an impact on the way that the creation rhetoric is connected to such themes in these books.[40] Nevertheless, Amos is centrally concerned with social justice, particularly the economic (read: agricultural) exploitation

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[35] Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 91, 94.

[36] Davis, Biblical Prophecy, 104.

[37] Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 105; cf. Brown, *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 229–69.

[38] Jensen, *Ethical Dimensions*, 146–48.

[39] Jensen, *Ethical Dimensions*, 102–5.

[40] Hosea "is the one who speaks most suggestively, even mystically, of a covenant between God and the creatures" (Davis, *Biblical Prophecy*, 87; cf. Hos 2:18–25 [Eng. 16–23]). Keita (*Gottes Land*, 273) concludes that the political nuance of the land is weaker than the agricultural nuance in Amos compared to Hosea, contra Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 11. For more on Hosea, see Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 130–38. Davis (*Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 131) argues, "Hosea is as much a prophet of social justice as is Amos, and he is equally concerned with the separation of farm families from their land. However, while Amos speaks directly and unmistakably about extortion in the marketplace, Hosea focuses more on the way in which the religious establishment lends respectability to the market economy, which sets the state's interests over those of the people." Cf. Pleins (*Social Visions*, 355), who contrasts Amos and Micah with Hosea, Hosea having a "vision of justice" that is not centered on peasants so much as on "the idolatry of the bureaucratic establishment."

of the poor and injustices in administrative and legal practices in urban contexts.[41] Micah,

for example, never uses the terms for "the poor" that are found in Amos, despite other

similar themes.[42] Economic injustices are not concerns entirely exclusive to Amos, of

course, but the way Amos puts these internal injustices on par with the violence of

international warfare (Amos 1:3—2:16; 3:9–15) and the frequency of critiques of Israel's

economic abuse in the book makes the text ethically distinct.[43] In terms of style,

moreover, the book is interesting for its series of five and seven things,[44] the telescoping

numbers at the start ("because of three violations . . . even because of four"),[45] and for

containing one of the largest chiasms in any prophetic book, Amos 5:1–17.[46]

Furthermore, Amos is not known as "the prophet of the rhetorical question" for nothing.[47]

The book has an unusual number of these questions, and they often involve nature

imagery (e.g., Amos 3:4–5, 8; 5:20; 6:12). Either the questions draw the audience into

vindicating the message of judgment (Amos 3:4–5, 8) or they expose Israel's religious

illusions (Amos 5:20) and the "cosmic nonsense" of turning the plant of justice into bitter

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[41] Jensen, *Ethical Dimensions*, 89. One of the most frequent key words in the entire book is "citadels" (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 13; 2:2, 5; 3:9–11, 6:8), observes Davis (*Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 128), often in a context threatening the destruction of urban spaces.

[42] Pleins, *Social Visions*, 390. Cf. Kessler, "Die soziale Botschaft," 217–23.

[43] Barton, "Amos's Oracles," 118. Cf. Amos 2:6–8, 12; 3:10; 4:1; 5:10–12, 15; 8:4–6. See Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 58. Houston points out that social injustice is the primary concern in Amos, whereas other prophetic texts feature this issue as merely one of several concerns. In contemporary contexts, there are many ways to reapply the book's opening oracles to the violence and corruption in the world today. Cf. Frey, "Oracle against the Nations"; Drinkard, "Thus Says the Lord"; Schlimm, "For Three War Crimes"; Schlimm, "Teaching"; Beach and Barker, "Springing the Trap."

[44] Gese, "Komposition"; Limburg, "Sevenfold"; Tromp, "Amos"; Paas, "Seeing and Singing."

[45] Weiss, "Pattern"; Zakovitch, "Pattern"; Chisholm, "For Three Sins"; O'Connell, "Telescoping"; Talmon, "Topped Triad"; cf. Amos 1:3, 6, etc.

[46] de Waard, "Chiastic Structure"; Tromp, "Amos"; cf. Amos 5:1–17.

[47] Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 5, 210.

wormwood (cf. Amos 5:7; 6:12).[48] Another distinctive technique, even a "signature

rhetorical strategy" in Amos, is "the dramatic reversal of traditional symbols, images, and

stories that the political and religious establishment used to support their interpretation of

the national interest."[49] Indeed, the theme of reversal is found throughout the entire

book,[50] and not only where it features the verb הפך ("turn into, overturn") or שוב ("turn,

turn back").[51] The book is set apart by these reversals and the relentless way they suggest

that there can be no false security for the kingdom of Israel, no escape from divine

judgment, no matter how strong or religious the people, no matter where they try to hide.

It is a shock-and-awe strategy, perhaps, that Judah overhears: the shock that the Israelites

may have experienced originally combined with awe at Yahweh the king and judge of

creation and all nations. Compared to many books, even among the prophetic texts, Amos

stands out for its creation rhetoric ranging from detailed hunting imagery (Amos 3:4–5)

to impressive mountains, stars, and precipitation over which Yahweh is sovereign in

righteousness (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6). Lion imagery appears quite often in Amos

(Amos 1:2, 11 [perhaps]; 3:4, 8, 12; 5:19), and once again, it bears mentioning that the

theme of social justice is developed with plant and water metaphors that are essentially

unparalleled in the Old Testament (Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12).[52] The creation rhetoric shows

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[48] Barton, "Natural Law," 7. Cf. Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 80.

[49] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 127.

[50] Davis, Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture, 130.

[51] For הפך: Amos 4:11; 5:7–8; 6:12; 8:10; for שוב: Amos 1:3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 4:6, 8–11; 9:14. See Recla, "Reversing the Reversal," 1–9; Kruger, "Disaster," 418.

[52] Cf. Ps 72; Isa 5:7; 45:8; 48:18; Hos 10:4, 12–13. For the lion imagery, see now Van Hecke, "'For I Will Be like a Lion,'" 393–98; Pavelcik, "Amos," 230–35.

that justice is related to life-giving aspects of the natural world, while injustice is comparable to plants or streambeds that cannot support life. In other words, my contribution in this study is to show that creation reveals the character of both humans and the cosmic creator, the God of Israel and Judah, whose righteous sovereignty extends beyond these kingdoms to the whole earth. Creation impacts human character through its ethos, not only as an illustration or metaphorical frame but also as a lived reality of water, soil, creatures, and seasons that demonstrate what justice—right relationships—and the lack of justice each look like. The point of the creation rhetoric in Amos is not to save the environment but to show the inseparable ties between nature and culture, all under the rule of the cosmic yet covenantal creator of the world.

Of course, there are many areas for further research that my study reveals. When it comes to ethical analysis, the heart of my study was the emotional-cognitive dispositions of the Judahites. However, emotion studies in biblical scholarship have only recently emerged from their infancy, and many of the dispositions I identified have not been studied in much depth. Anger is overrepresented in biblical studies of emotion, though anger is not mentioned frequently in Amos. More scholars need to work on the clusters of expected responses surrounding other prototypical emotions such as sadness, shame, and humility. The work of Stiebert and Lambert are launching points, showing that studies of emotions have been oversimplified in the past.[53] For the controversial category of "justice," further work needs to be done to determine whether this can be

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[53] Cf. Stiebert, *Construction of Shame*; Lambert, *How Repentance*.

included as a disposition toward fairness and equilibrium as I and a few others argue,[54] or

whether justice is only a standard, condition, or moral value, not an embodied inclination

toward such a standard of relationships. Overall, the application of cultural anthropology

from James K. A. Smith to Old Testament character ethics is a new one, and so additional

research could be done by biblical scholars using the categories of desires, dispositions,

and practices.[55] Work in the wisdom literature has started to use some of these categories

with different labels, thanks to Brown and others,[56] and narrative texts are certainly

amendable to character ethics. However, the prophetic books, Psalms, and even the legal

material of the Pentateuch could yield many returns if studied with fresh eyes to see

ethical formation using this approach to character ethics.[57] Even genres *within* a biblical

book may affect its creation rhetoric or character formation. For example, all of Amos

contributes toward theodicy, but the oracles of judgment give specific reasons for divine

judgment (Amos 1–6; 8:4–14), whereas the vision reports give no reasons (Amos 7:1—

8:3; 9:1–6)—unless the narrative conflict (Amos 7:10–17) and final condemnation are

considered (Amos 9:7–10). Even these two bridging interludes suggest religious reasons

rather than reasons of social justice for Israel's guilt, in contrast most of the book. It is in

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[54] Cf. Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 132–34; Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 44–46, 141–64. Cf. Carroll R., ("Failing the Vulnerable," 40), who observes, "Justice is one of the cardinal virtues, and it is central to the message of Amos."

[55] Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; Smith, *You Are What You Love*.

[56] Cf. Brown, *Character in Crisis*; Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture*; Yoder, "Forming 'Fearers of Yahweh'"; Carroll R. and Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*; Timmer, "Character Formed in the Crucible"; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*; Stewart, *Poetic Ethics in Proverbs*.

[57] Cf. Carroll R., "Seeking the Virtues"; Carroll R., "Considering"; Carroll R., "Passion for Justice"; Carroll R., "He Has Told You What Is Good"; Lapsley, "Feeling for God"; Dozeman, "Creation and Environment"; Owens, *Portraits of the Righteous*; Clendenen, "A Passionate Prophet."

the visions, too, that Yahweh's compassion is most evident, whereas most oracles only

hint at his patience and mercy (i.e., Amos 4:6–11; 5:14–15). Further research might

compare other prophetic books to see if similar patterns obtain for their visions and

oracles or if Amos is distinctive in this regard.

More broadly for character ethics, there is work to be done on embodied

dispositions. According to Smith, human bodies and repeated habits are the primary

vehicles for character formation. My own work only studied human bodies and rituals

indirectly, mostly through the interactions they have with food and the rest of the natural

world. Here is where embodiment studies and "affect" theories of emotions could find

common ground, namely, in the physical, ecological dynamics of human existence, and

how these relate to ethical rhetoric and formation.[58] Connections between land, physical

bodies, and embodied dispositions mean that we cannot understand one without the other,

ultimately.[59] Along these lines, there is much fruitful research that remains to be done

using "place and space" studies of biblical texts, and this might illuminate parts of Amos

or other books where scholars formerly neglected "the land" as mere background scenery

in a given context.[60] Urban spaces are also frequently neglected in nature-oriented

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[58] Cf. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*; Grushkin, "Emotions"; Schroer and Staubli, *Body Symbolism*; Kruger, "The Face"; Koosed, *(Per)mutations of Qohelet*; Launderville, *Spirit and Reason*; Barrick, BMH *as Body Language*; Kamionkowski and Kim, eds., *Bodies, Embodiment*; Schlimm, "Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics: Engaging Anger in Genesis"; Avrahami, *Senses of Scripture*; Coetzee, "Bodily Interpretation"; Thomas, "Fear and Trembling"; Boase, "Grounded in the Body"; Cottrill, "Reading of Ehud and Jael"; Koosed and Moore, "Introduction"; Kotrosits, "Seeing is Feeling"; Black, "Bird on the Roof"; Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom*; Tilford, "Affective Eye"; Kotrosits, "How Things Feel"; Davies, *Lift Up Your Heads*. Very few of these are oriented to the natural, non-human world, however.

[59] Cf. Keefe, *Woman's Body*; Keita, *Gottes Land*; Barrick, BMH *as Body Language*.

[60] Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*; Habel, *The Land Is Mine*; Gunn and McNutt, *"Imagining" Biblical Worlds*; Berquist and Camp, eds., *Constructions of Space I*; George, *Israel's Tabernacle*;

research, perhaps reflecting the false dichotomy of society (urban) and nature (rural) that still persists and influences industrialized contexts, including this one.[61] What would it look like to consider biblical urbanism through an ecological lens, with cities as integrated parts of the surrounding landscape? As scholars think about the relationship between rural and urban, farm and city, more agrarian and food-conscious readings like those of Ellen Davis and others will be needed.[62] Otherwise, we urbanites will probably continue to turn justice into wormwood by the dietary choices we make each week (cf. Amos 6:4–7), regardless of what we might advocate about social equality in other contexts. This study is only one contribution to Old Testament ethics and biblical studies of Amos in this regard, and scholars will need to use Amos as one of many resources in addressing the present disparities in food security that exist today.

In the end, I have demonstrated that there is an ethos of the cosmos in Amos. Justice and injustice are related to life and death, and their dynamics are not arbitrary but built into the very framework of the universe. Nature is not neutral, and divine power is not raw power but power for justice. Right makes might as the constellations, days, and weather testify to a rightly ordered cosmos and to a cosmic king who maintains, judges, and restores life (Amos 5:8). The cosmos in Amos is dangerous around the edges but

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Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*; Prinsloo and Maier, eds., *Constructions of Space V*; Northcott, *Place, Ecology and the Sacred*; de Vos et al., eds., *Constructions of Space III*; Russell, *King and the Land*; Russell, *Space, Land, Territory*.

[61] See the references cited in §5.1.2 for more on urbanism in ancient contexts.

[62] Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*; Davis, "Just Food"; MacDonald, "Food and Identity"; Wirzba, "Agrarian Ecotheology"; Abernethy, *Eating in Isaiah*; Stulac, "Rethinking"; Stulac, *History and Hope*.

provides ethical visions of flourishing and suffering under the rule of God. Without the creation imagery, hardly anything remains of the moral vision in the book. Only in relationship to the natural world could Israel and Judah develop and measure their own character, and only in relationship to the natural world could they learn the character of their God. His name, as we know by now, is Yahweh.

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