An ideological-critical interpretation of justice and righteousness in Amos 5

by

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Summary

This dissertation attempts to critically analyse the effect of ideology on the text of Amos 5 and how this impacts on hermeneutics. It begins with a look at the historical-political-sociological situations of Amos' time. It also looks at ideology and the text and the effect of ideology both on the writer and the interpreter. Chapter 3 and 4 are exegetical and rhetorical readings of the texts of Amos 5. Chapter 4 focuses on the concept of justice and righteousness in Amos 5 and also in the entire book of Amos. Lastly, Chapter 5 looks at the concept of justice and righteousness and its contemporary relevance.

In course of the study, it was discovered that time and experience play an important role in the Bible experience. Further, it was discovered that both the writer and the interpreter are considerably under the influence of ideology. None is exempt from it. This study therefore is about the struggles that a modern interpreter encounter in course of doing biblical interpretation and application. Since the texts is an ancient and was written at a time different from now. It implies therefore that contemporary interpreter has to interpret the text honestly in other for biblical message to be relevant to the present.

Ten Key Words

Ideology

Justice

Righteousness

Hermeneutics

Worldview

Experience

Amos

Interpretation

Jeroboam II

Historical context

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree MA (Old Testament) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

T Osuagwu

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Research Proposal

1.1 Introduction

My observation and analyses of the recent politico-religious crises that is unfolding in the country of my origin-Nigeria have led me to an interesting revelation. The contending religious ideologies are undoubtedly, rooted in the colonial legacy of the country. Both Islam and Christianity which are vying for dominance in the socio-political and economic space are both non-indigenous belief systems in their origin. The ideological interpretation of justice and righteousness within the contending belief system exacerbate the problem in contemporary viewpoints which exist in the country. Nigeria is presently embroiled in what may be described as sectarian religious war which presumably is being fought around the issue of people's interpretation of the meaning of God's justice and righteousness. This observation has led me to ask the question; as a Bible student, how would I interpret the problem theologically. The quest to find an answer to this question prompted me to revisit the issue of what constitutes a reasonable and responsible interpretation of the meaning of righteousness and justice according to the text of Amos five. An interpretation which would specifically speak to the Nigeria context but at the same time will not violate the integrity of the text.

The book of Amos is included in the Old Testament book of the twelve. These collections of books are also collectively referred to as the books of the Minor Prophets.[1] Numerous Old Testament scholars such as Mays (1969), Hammershaimb (1970), Wolf (1977), Auld (1986), Van der Wal (1986), Carroll R (2002), Doorly (1988), Willoughby, Bruce E (1992), Ackroyed (1977), Coote (1981), Rosenbaum (1990), and Motyer (1974) have produced notable works on the book of Amos.[2] In view of all the works which scholars have done on the book of Amos, it would not be wrong to assert the necessity of ongoing research on the subject to resonate with contemporary interpretation because place, context and time plays an enormous role in biblical hermeneutics.[3] Also, closely related to this is the assumption that interpretation and

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[1] See Sweeney (2005:165-215) and Redditt (2008:195-356) for further reading about the Minor Prophets and the reasons why they are referred as such.

[2] A review of the literary development of the book of Amos which would include a look at what is believed by scholars to have been written by Amos and what may be later addition would be undertaken in Chapter two.

[3] Stuart (1984:134) explains that "hermeneutics is the theory of understanding a passage's meaning." Further, he emphasises on the importance for the interpreter to be reasonably clear and honest about the interpretation principles which they employed in course of their reading. Finally, he states that at virtually every stage of an exegesis, the interpreter is using hermeneutical principles whether directly or

reception of the Bible message is influenced by experience and that experience is in turn influenced by time, place and context (This would be further discussed in course of this research). Embedded in the three aforementioned subject of time, place and context is the role ideology played in the composition and subsequent reception of the Bible message. These facts call for continues and progressive study of the book in order for its meaning to be relevant at any point in time in history.

This dissertation titled, "An ideological-critical interpretation of the meaning of justice[4] and righteousness[5] in Amos 5" is structured to cover several areas of study; *firstly*, to investigate the presence of traces of ideology[6] in the text of Amos 5 and its influence on the interpretation of the concept of justice and righteousness in the text of Amos 5 within the framework of work and worship, unjust work, wealth gained through unjust means and perhaps most fundamentally, God's rules governing these aspects. *Secondly,* is to conduct an in depth study on the issue of hermeneutics in a contemporary context in relation to the subject of justice and righteousness in Amos 5. In the preceding paragraph, the ever changing nature of context which includes time and place and its influence on biblical interpretation was mentioned. Based on this fact, scholars such as Madipoane Masenya and Hulisani Ramantswana; Gerald West; Ferdinand Deist; Schussler Fiorenza and Bruce J Malina in their respective works have questioned the present method of doing biblical interpretation and application. They have directly or indirectly called for the adoption of new approach in hermeneutics in order to deal with the present realities in the contemporary context.[7]

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indirectly. To make this clearer, we would say the hermeneutics deals with the practical application of Bible messages and this begins from the moment a person starts reading the text.

[4] See Justice (tsadaqah): Amos 5:6-7; 5:15; 5:24; 6:12b.

[5] See Righteousness (mishpat): Amos 5:7; 5:24; 6:12.

[6] In the context of this paper, I will understand ideology to refer to "a system or network of ideas and to the values in such a system which generates praxis." (Carroll 1995:27). In this sense, Ideology can be said to be closely linked to worldview[s] and the political agenda pursued by biblical writers and present readers. It is important to observe that ideology can represent both the negative and positive ways of life of a person or of people; that is in view of how they perceive reality. Further, the question of ideology and its influence will be related to present reader, author of the text and his ancient audience.

[7] See Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:598-639); Gerald West (2008:37-57); Ferdinand Deist (1992); Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (1988:3-17); Bruce J Malina (1996: 282-87); are examples of scholars interested in hermeneutics.

This dissertation will be joining this group of distinguished Old Testament scholars and others[8] in seeking for a new approach of hermeneutics[9] that would help the biblical text, especially, the text of Amos 5, to remain relevant in a contemporary setting.

1.2 Research Problem

The problem in dealing with the text of Amos 5 does not only lie on the fact that there has been a long passage of time since it became part of the Hebrew Bible but its unquestionable relevance to contemporary socio-political settings. Deist (1978:128) contends that "hermeneutics…concerns also itself with the relevance of the translated subject matter to the recipient culture." It is significant to note that every reader of the Bible is engaged in the task of translation as well as interpreting the text. Therefore, how does one's political viewpoint as an interpreter derive a responsible[10] and honest meaning from the theological text which will be relevant to today without compromising or violating the integrity[11] of the text?

The above problem leads to my second problem which happens to be the apparent lack of detailed study on the diverse issue of ideology in the text of Amos 5. Amos' message was political, sociological as well as religious. What Amos was calling for was for people to not only observe the laws of religion that they were commanded to do but also to take cognisant of the fact that the outward working of obeying God's law is to do what is just in contemporary settings. Thus, the question becomes to what extent did ideology influence the writer[s] of Amos 5 in their understanding of doctrine of God and the concept of justice and righteousness

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[8] See Walter Brueggemann (1997:61-102). He considers the 'others' as those that operates from the margin of the discipline like feminist, liberation and black theologians

[9] See Bernard Ramm (1970:11), "Protestant Biblical interpretation".

[10] Responsible interpretation in this proposal refers to the type of reading that acknowledges that there exists a gap between the ancient text and issues of application in contemporary context[s]. This primarily locates the interpreter as the one who comes up with what the text means. Therefore, the interpreter ought to always put into consideration present day realities of life and its influence on meaning of the text in course of doing his or her interpretation. Also, see Porter S.E & Malcolm M. R (2013).

[11] Integrity of the text requires the interpreter to remain honest to the original intended meaning of the text. Here, the question of original intent becomes the central issue to be considered by the interpreter. The important question to be asked always by every interpreter is what does the text mean today? The most honest way to answer this question will be determined both by the original meaning and the original intent of the writer[s].

Some of the important works which we consulted broadly in order to arrive at the above explanation of what we consider to have helped us explain the meaning of integrity are the works of the following writers; Carson D. A (1984), Stein R. H (1994), Sugirtharajah R. S (2003), and Helmer C (2005).

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on the one hand and on the other, how does ideology influence our interpretation and application of the text of Amos 5 today?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

An answer to the problem would perhaps be to suggest that every interpreter should begin by first acknowledging that the context of interpretation is dynamic and progressive and thus changes from time to time and from place to place. Clines (1995:92) similarly argues that biblical scholars are "not all engaged in some objective quest for determinate meanings, and that our ideologies, our locations, our interests and our personalities determine our scholarship…" One would argue therefore that a well-reasoned hermeneutic which is responsible and considerate of each situation should be adopted in course of every interpretative exercise. This should include ideological-critical interpretation of the text which would help reveal what is within and without the text.

It would also argue that a thorough and critical interpretation of the text of Amos 5 would help the interpreter to derive a responsible and honest meaning of the text that would not violate the integrity of the text. This would help the interpreter in his or her application of the meaning of the text in a contemporary context because application of the meaning should always be complementary to meaning of the text.

Finally, this dissertation will thus call for a pluralistic[12] approach towards interpretation and application of the text in order to honestly accommodate the ever evolving and changing nature of life and its experiences. The essence of biblical interpretation is to arrive at an interpretation of the text that will make relevant meaning to life.

1.4 Research Objectives

This dissertation, entitled, "an ideological-critical interpretation of the meaning of justice and righteousness in Amos 5" aims to uncover the role of ideology in the human understanding of the meaning of justice and righteousness according to Amos 5 contrasted to God's. The text which directly addresses the ills found in Israel during a particular time in history and how this affected their relationship with God will be used to explore the question of hermeneutics in a contemporary context. The main objective is to try to establish the value of this text that was supposedly written 2500 years ago to today's context.

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[12] See Water Brueggemann (1997:xiv-xvi).

For the above objective to be reasonably reached requires that the historical issue, that is, "what is behind the text" should be investigated. Primarily, this entails that attempt be made to historically reconstruct the book of Amos in general. Here, the use of diachronic approach in studying the text would be utilized. This approach would allow for a look at the authorship that will include a discussion on the person of Amos as well as the others that supposedly contributed to the work; also historical-political and sociological-religious background of the book will be discussed. This is necessary because of the fact that it would at the end lead to an insightful conclusion on the existing conditions that was in place during the period the book of Amos was put together.

Secondly, the dissertation attempts to evaluate the meaning of the concept of justice and righteousness as perceived by the writers of Amos 5 and compare it to its contemporary meaning. This will seek to explain the role ideological differences (then and now) plays in an interpreter hermeneutical experience. The analysis of the text will include a synchronic reading of the text and other texts where the theme of justice and righteousness was mentioned. This process is adopted in order to help to establish whether there was a definite political agenda or motive behind the text. In this vein, the hermeneutics would attempt to bring forth the invisible thread that links all humanity to God's justice and His righteousness irrespective of their station in life and locality. Furthermore, the dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that the issue of justice and righteousness is very crucial to human in their quest to be of right standing before God. The dissertation will attempt to establish that the concept of justice and righteousness is not only important to human existence but beyond, it is tied to what they assume to be their understanding of God.

Finally, the dissertation will try to establish the relevance of the text to a contemporary context. In order to effectively relate the issue of justice and righteousness to today, the influence of ideology on the text and the influence of ideology on interpretation and application will be critically examined. The question of what is 'behind' and 'within' and what may be 'beyond' the text of Amos 5 and how this affects our interpretation of the text and how the message is applied in a contemporary context will be investigated.

1.5 Methodology

There are two major recognizable methodologies that biblical scholars have used over time to study the books of Old Testament. The first is the more traditional diachronic or historical-critical method. The second methodological consideration is synchronic reading of the text.

However, most modern scholars[13] are of the opinion that both approaches should be employed in studying the text because both have got inherent deficiencies and weaknesses as well as recognizable strengths. Barton (1996:5) observes that "all methods….have something in them, but none of them is the correct method which scholars are seeking." By applying both methodologies in this study, this dissertation will elucidate on the different types of study on the text of Amos five such as re-constructing a politico-religious-socio-historical context; putting the text through exegetical process and also using a rhetorical approach.

The dissertation will also attempt to fill the gap that has been thus identified by using both the diachronic and synchronic approach to conduct an ideological-critical study of Amos 5. The diachronic approach will help us to construct a historical context of the book of Amos as well as perspectives on how the text has grown over time. Among the things that would be considered will be the historical-political-sociological and religion background that existed during the time the text was supposedly written. This will help us to investigate the possible ideology of the writer[s]. Within the framework of historical studies, analyses of Robert Carroll's[14] (and others) idea of ideological-critical interpretation of the Bible will be conducted.

Furthermore, a synchronic study of the text will be undertaken. This will include a rhetoric analysis and criticism of the text and the other texts identified as relevant to this study. Gitay (1980:293) contends that "since prophetic speech is discourse address, the entire range of rhetoric must be utilized in studying prophetic genres." Dorsey (1999:277) was more specific by describing the book of Amos as a "masterpiece of rhetorical skills…" He (1999:293) further stated that the book "is carefully and effectively structured." This implies that any serious interpreter of prophetic books and specifically the book of Amos needs to recognize the very nature and genre of the book.

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[13] See Noble (1993:142), Barton (1996:5), De Moor (ed.) (1995), and Moberly (1983:22-27).

[14] Robert Carroll (1990, 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1998). Carroll discusses his understanding of ideology in regard to the Bible and biblical writers. My understanding of the meaning that Carroll's tries to portray about the issue of ideology with regard to the Bible, borders on the negative political agenda that was promoted by biblical writers. He compares the biblical writers to himself reading from a position influenced by being Irish by decent. He broadens this fact to include other interpreters that are located in a particular place and situation. According to Carroll, these interpreters as well are bound by their situation and usually are influenced by their pre-existing context. In other word, Carroll is saying that there is nothing like neutrality when a person approaches the text and that there was elements of ideology in the compilation of the Bible story as well as in its interpretation and reception. I would be discussing Carroll's position further in Chapter two.

Finally, since this dissertation is going to be seriously considering the context of the message of Amos 5, that is, the context of the original people involved (writer[s] and audience) and the present interpreter; a hermeneutical approach that will critically examine the context of both the text and the situation of the contemporary reader will be utilized. Brueggemann (2002:355) describes the biblical text… [as] a sufficient cause of wonder." He (2002:355) further contends that "by using an exegetical method that focuses resolutely upon the text, teachers can help people find themselves addressed and re-imagined by this strange new world of the bible." It is important that as an interpreter, one acknowledges that the biblical culture is vastly different with what obtains in the present world. Therefore, any serious interpreter must also be concerned with the real situation that is seen in contemporary societies. The biblical story although arguably complete; depending on one's theological standing must also speak to the real world situation in order to make a relevant meaning to life.

In light of the above explanation, this dissertation will therefore adopt a method that has been described as 'comparative studies'. This implies that the study will be utilizing comparative methodology to investigate the then understanding of the term justice and righteousness of God in Amos 5 and how it is applied in present context. West (1998:37) observes that comparative studies are the approach that predominantly features in African biblical scholarship. Holter (2002:88) defines it "as studies whose major approach is comparative methodology that facilitate a parallel interpretation of certain Old Testament…texts or motifs and supposed African parallels letting the two illuminate one another." The adoption of this method will require that the text be treated as a complete unit and would also necessitate that a thorough exegetical study of the text be undertaken as well. This will involve both diachronic and synchronic study of the text; in order to arrive at a possible responsible interpretation of the text that will be relevant to today.

In conclusion, this dissertation will be utilizing a pluralist approach in studying the text of Amos 5 and this will include diachronic, synchronic and comparative methodologies.

1.6 Overview of study

In this dissertation, Chapter One will begin with a concise introduction of the problem and the reason behind the research choice. It would also cover topics such as research problem; objective and hypothesis.

Chapter Two will discuss the politico-historical and socio-religious context of the book of Amos. Furthermore, the issue of ideology and the text will be discussed. This is important

because it is the writer's assumption that ideology played an important role in the production of biblical texts in the society of Israel during the period it was put together and it is still playing a critical role in biblical interpretation today. The issue of ideology and the Bible according to Robert Carroll and others will be visited and analysed. For the objective of this chapter to be achieved, close attention would be given to issues of authorship; that is the writer[s] and his original audience. This is because "the understanding of a text… is always determined by the horizon of both author and reader" (Kaiser Jr 1981:3). Diachronic studies would be utilized in this chapter.

It is important to briefly draw attention to the apparent dichotomy that exist between those that advocate for diachronic method and others that call for synchronic approach in biblical studies. Since the rise of *Literarkritik* and the work of Wellhausen in 1878; historical criticism became the preferred method for the study of biblical books. After the plenary address of Stendahl (1962) at the SBL meeting, there was resurgence in the use of a literary (synchronic) approach. Presently, both methods are recognizably being used by biblical scholars. This is because scholars recognize the fact that both methods are equally important and contributes to biblical scholarship. This dissertation will be utilizing both approaches in its investigation of Amos 5 texts. Both methods would be used with the aim of one complementing the other. The reason why I find it necessary to do so is based on the opinion that both methodologies have got inherent weaknesses and none can claim superiority over the other.[15]

Chapter Three will present a synchronic reading of Amos 5. Basically, an exegetically study of Amos 5 will be conducted it will also discuss the literary development of the book and authorship. A literary analysis of Amos 5; verses 1-3, 4-6, Verse 7, Verses 8-9,10-13,14-15,16-17, and verses 18-27 will be undertaken. This will include the study of grammar, semantic, genre, structure and composition of the text where and if necessary.

Chapter Four will be rhetorical reading of the texts dealing with issues of justice and righteousness in Amos 5 and other related text in the book of Amos. Attempt would be made to observe some of the basic rules that are observed in rhetoric criticism such as rhetoric strategy and situation.

Chapter Five will discuss the hermeneutical implication of the text of Amos 5 and also explore the meaning of justice and righteousness. In order to understand the theological

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[15] Barton (1996:5) comments "all methods….have something in them, but none of them is correct method which scholars seek." What is important is to approach the text holistically. By doing that the interpreter is afforded the privilege to have a better understanding of the text.

relevance of the concept of justice and righteousness to life in contemporary context; a comparative study of the text and its possible influence and reception today will be undertaken.

Finally, Chapter Six will be a summary of the dissertation. The chapter will discuss the practical relevance of the study paying special attention to the need to give serious consideration to events in contemporary time in biblical interpretation and hermeneutics. The research will attempt to make practical and useful suggestion towards the issue of hermeneutic, especially in respect to justice and righteousness.

Chapter 2: Historical perspectives on the text

2.1. Introduction

The question of historical issues surrounding an ancient text remains prominent among biblical scholars today. The reason behind the quest to understand historical issues about the text is that such understanding will guide the interpreter and give the person a glimpse into the world of the writer and his audience. The value which can be realised from one having such knowledge therefore warrants that any serious attempt to engage in studies that is intended to highlight a responsible ideological-critical meaning of biblical text (which is an ancient text) should begin with studies which are aimed at uncovering the original historical context and issues behind the text (Carroll R 1992:22). Such studies will enable the interpreter to have an idea of the possible conditions that existed during the period which the text was put together.[16] The first part of this chapter will be looking at the historical situations that existed in the eight century Israel and neighbouring nations before and during the time the book of Amos was written.

Before moving on, it is important to observe that most of what is known about the historical context of that period is a reconstruction of events based mostly on collection of different facts, theories and hypothesis that researchers put together from available materials and sources which generally are incomplete because of the gap between that period and now.[17] A look at the available literature produced by different scholars in the field of Old Testament scholarship over time exposes the diversity of opinions rendered by different

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[16] The term condition as used in this place makes reference to the state of life in Israel during the period the book of Amos was written or put together. It includes the political, religious, sociological aspects of their existence.

[17] The term incomplete is used here to acknowledgement the fact that the Bible itself did not give the interpreter a complete picture of everything that was happening within the Israelite society at that time. According to Carroll "much of what passes for knowledge of the Bible today, even among scholars, is at its best scholarly hypothesis or re-construction" (1995:26). Scholars and ordinary readers rely on archaeological discoveries and other times; borrow from other sources such as the history of Ancient Near East of that period in order to form their own complete picture of the Bible story. It can also be argued that people use their imaginative senses to complete the meaning; sometimes they make up the biblical stories based on their today's perspective or ideology through which the view and understand the world.

scholars through their engagement with the question of composition[18] and redaction[19] of the various books of the Bible.

Since the main thrust of this thesis is to understand the meaning of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" in Amos literature[20] and more specifically, the context that it was used in the text of Amos 5; understanding the ideology of both the writer and his audience is therefore critical. The second part of this chapter thus focuses on the question of ideology. In order to form an idea of the ideology of the people, one needs to probe the historical situations which existed during that period in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East.[21] An understanding of the people's ideology would help one in reconstructing how they perceived the meaning of righteousness and justice and also how they applied it in their lives. Through comparative studies of then[22] and now[23] perception of the meaning of justice and righteousness, one is able to establish a responsible meaning of the words in relation to how it was used in the text of Amos 5 and its application today.

By adopting the title "the historical perspectives of the text" in this chapter, it is the intention of the writer to engage with the positions arrived by some of the different scholars in their study of the historical context of Amos and the society of ancient Israel during the eight century BCE. The review of the various positions will allow for insightful assessments which would help the writer to arrive at reasonable conclusions of the existing worldview of the people of Israel in the eighth century.[24] Further, the discussion will lead towards forming an

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[18] Hadjiev (2009:1) explains that "Composition is the initial stage(s) of the creation of a prophetic book when various disparate (literary and/or oral) traditions are brought to form one larger literary whole. Composition is therefore more than collection; it creates a literary piece with its own structure, thought flow and theme."

[19] On the other hand Hadjiev (2009:1) explains that "Redaction is a subsequent literary activity in which tradents insert new material into pre-existing work, or change, rearrange or omit already existing material." Whatever way one may look at it (either to agree or to disagree), it is important to always approach a Bible text, especially as a scholar; bearing in mind that there is great probability or even certainty; that there have been literary activities carried out on text. Whether this is minor and negligible and the extent of influence it has on the text remains a debatable issue.

[20] Literature refers to the work that is called "The Book of Amos" as it is found in the Bible.

[21] Historical situations refers to life experiences in ancient Israel and its environ

[22] "Then" represent life in ancient Israel and ancient near east during the time the book of Amos was put together

[23] "Now" denotes contemporary age and also what is known today as post-modern period.

[24] Worldview will be treated as a synonym of the word "ideology" in this paper and thus would sometimes be used interchangeably. Admittedly, there are no two words that have exactly the same meaning. The

informed opinion about the perception of what the concept of "justice and righteousness" meant to the people according to the text of Amos 5. It is significant to note that the essence of biblical interpretation is to understand what the text meant[25] to the original hearers and to relate such meaning to present context.

In summary, a critical analysis of the historical context of the period presumably will bring to light the ideology of those that lived in the eight century Israel and is going to assist in achieving the primary goal of this chapter. What the discussion in this chapter has as the primary aim is an attempt to understand the role of ideology in the writing and interpretation of the text of Amos 5 through the study of the historical-political and socio-religious context of the eight century Israel.

2.2 Historical-Political and Sociological- Religious background

The primary interest of this section is to conduct a historical scrutiny of the prevailing condition during the time the book of Amos was assumed to have been put together.[26] This study will be divided into two parts. The first part will look at the historical-political background of life in ancient Israel during this period and the second part will discuss the socio-religious aspect of life in Israel during the same period.

The focus here would not necessary be on the personality of the historical prophet Amos but rather on the broader life in the society of Israel during the period the book was written.[27]

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two words are rather similar; that is they permit for mutual substitution of one for the other, without loss of function or suitability.

[25] It can be argued that biblical exegetical critical interpretation is mainly concerned with understanding the original meaning of the text. This implies that the interpreter must understand "what the author meant, or what it would have meant to an ideal audience of its day, or what accounts for its every detail without violating the historical norm of the genre" (Culler 1981: 48). See also Kaiser (1981:2).

[26] The question of authorship would not be discussed in detail in this paper. However, Tchavdar S. Hadjiev (2009) presented a good work on the question of authorship in his doctoral thesis captioned, "The composition and Redaction of the book of Amos" and therefore can serve as a reliable resource for further references on the subject.

[27] The question of time and date of when the book was written is debatable. Scholars such as Mays (1969:1) place the dating of the book in the middle decades of the eight century. He based his assumption on historical facts such as the evidences presented in the book itself; Jeroboam II who reigned between 786 to 746 BC, Uzziah, King of Judah who died in 742; but whose son Jotham replaced as a regent because he became a leper. He also cited the fact that Amos operated two years before the earthquake which occurred in 760. The record of Jeroboam appeared in II Kings 14:23-29. He also made reference to the accession of Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 of Assyria. Contrariwise, modern redaction-

This includes life in the Ancient Near East. This is in line with biblical writing on the history of that time which always included aspects of life of the other nations which the people of Israel had relationship with in course of their history. It can be argued that the history of Israel cannot be told separate from their neighbours as the events[28] that took place was interwoven with one and the other.

The question of the relationship between the history of Israel and that of her neighbours takes one to the radical discussion of comparative studies. The question arises whether it is realistic to be conducting such a study. An alternative question could be whether there is any value in studying the texts or specifically, the prophetic texts and history of prophecy in the other ancient Near Eastern countries? Below is a review of the opinions of two scholars that have written on the subject of comparative studies in relationship to prophecy in Bible and prophecy in the ancient Near East.

Nissinen (2010:5) acknowledges that comparative studies basically mean "comparison between the bible and extra-biblical documents…" He saw this exercise as, in one hand 'worthwhile' and on the other, 'dangerous'. According to him, it is worthwhile because "it serves the purpose of viewing the biblical text in its cultural context" and "dangerous because it easily leads to sweeping generalization or to a goal-directed exploitation of ancient Near Eastern sources to justify Bible-based and sometimes questionable claims." He (2010:3-15) further states that problems such as precise dating of the prophetic texts and the diverse sources that recorded Ancient Near Eastern prophecy could pose a challenge to comparative studies. However, it is important to say that Nissinen (2010:5) admitted to the fact that an increase in knowledge on Ancient Near Eastern prophetic texts has resulted in growing awareness of prophecy in ancient Israel. Nissinen (2010:3-15) sees this as an integral part rather than an antagonistic factor in the Near Eastern socio-religious milieu.

Barstad (2000:2-5) draws attention to how scholars in recent time are opting to date the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible later and later. He attributes this to the recent tendency of scholars finding other external sources such as archaeological discoveries reliable. This

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critical studies disputes the date and time the book were written. A good review of the subject can be gleaned in the work of Hadjiev (2009:3-9).

[28] The biblical narrative about the origin of the people of Israel beginning from that time the God of Israel asked father Abraham to migrate from his original land in Genesis; up until they came to settle in the promise land and to the time of dispersion and return was told in conjunction with their encounters and dealings with other nations. This included wars, inter-marriages and religious activity. Israel story was indeed interwoven with that of their neighbours.

method of study falls under the banner of comparative studies. He seems to be of the opinion that the prophetic books have little to do with a prophetic movement in pre-exilic Israel and rather the texts are composition from Persian periods. Further, he points out the difficulty in relating ancient texts to any external historical reality due to what he termed, among other things, the general collapse of historicism in the field of humanity. This he claims makes it difficult to make categorical statements about prophecy as a historical phenomenon. According to Barstad, the identified problem has resulted in the recent development of scholars increasingly turning their focus to the extant corpus of "prophetic" texts from archaeological sites from all over the Ancient Near East. Scholars who resort to such measures according to Barstad (2010:3-5) feel that these texts may also help in revealing things about the study of biblical prophecy. Barstad (2000:3-5) also admits that the popularity of comparative studies has varied over the years. However, he states that it is possible to characterize all human activity, in one way or another, as comparative. He further admits that consequently the word comparative may include linguistic, literary, historic-religious, anthropological and psychological studies thus making the term ambiguous with no limitations to what one may categorize precisely as comparative studies.

The main argument presented by both Nissinen (2010:3-15) and Barstad (2000:3-5) as seen above is that comparative studies is helpful in the study of Hebrew prophetic texts from ancient Israel. However, they both showed that there are probable weaknesses in applying this kind of study as a means of understanding Hebrew prophecy.

To answer the question whether comparative studies adds any value and if it may throw light on the study of biblical prophecy; my answer would be yes, provided one does not begin to see the other prophetic sources as a kind of extra-biblical prophetic canon (Nissinen 2010:5). What have been considered and recognized as prophecies differ from one ancient Near Eastern group to another.[29] Nonetheless, there are striking cultural similarities among the people of Near Eastern origin which one may acknowledge will be detrimental to the overall understanding of prophecy in Ancient Near East if ignored. For example, there is archaeological evidence that show that prophecy is a Near Eastern phenomenon which have always existed and practiced among the different group even before the biblical claim of the birth of the nation of Israel (Nissinen 2010:7). This type of knowledge will go a long way in helping a person in understanding the ideology behind biblical prophecy.

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[29] For further reading see Nissinen (2010:5).

2.3 Historical-Political background

The history and politics that occurred in Israel before and during the time of Prophet Amos can be reconstructed either from the Bible or external sources such as analysis of historical information and archaeological discoveries. Perhaps, it would be worth mentioning that the OT stands as a collection of books which authenticity and reliability has always been scrutinized. Modern scholarship has been concerned and therefore engaged in much discussion in the bid to prove the authenticity and reliability of the biblical claims. One can argue that from the point where modern scholarship stands today, it is inevitably dealing with a goodly distance in time away from the events it wishes to examine (Rosenbaum 1990:9-27). However, because of the availability of extra-biblical texts and tools today to study the events of the past, historians and Bible scholars are in a better position to cobble together past events and to arrive at a reasonable conclusion. This endeavour continues to be a very complex exercise that often results in different scholars arriving at various conclusions when they engage in studies that involves the same biblical text.[30]

The book of Amos has not escaped such scrutiny. The issues of dating and unnamed scribes that most likely contributed to the finished product known today as the book of Amos, trails the book just like it does the other prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah and others.[31] The question of authorship of the book has a direct bearing on the issue of ideology which forms part of the discussion in this chapter. One example of such differences in ideological leanings between then and now can be seen from the fact that during that time, people did not seem to be concerned about the modern idea of plagiarism. Redditt (2008:15-16) expands on this subject by observing that in contemporary times, copying someone works amounts to stealing and therefore, is considered unethical and more so illegal. Whereas, in ancient prophecy, those that edited the original works did not attribute their works to someone else. He (2008:15-16) compared them to ghost writers or presidential speech writers rather than deceivers. It can be deduced from the discussion of authorship that in course of time people's worldview or ideology kept on changing. People's perceptions of things today are not the same as yesterday and this influences greatly, how a biblical text is received by people.

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[30] Barstad (1993:39-60) discusses the issue of non-consensus among biblical scholars in the opening paragraph of his article, "No prophets? Recent Developments in biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near eastern Prophecy."

[31] For further reading see Redditt (2008: 15-17).

The above sentiment returns the discussion to the issue of dating. Scholars such as Rosenbaum (1990:10) are fairly confident that Amos' career unfolded around the time of the eclipse of the sun in 763 BCE which is a widely noted event, yet, he believes that other important dates and events concerning the book have not been definitely settled. The question of the prophet's occupation is one of such event that is still an ongoing dispute among scholars. Who was the prophet? What was his true occupation or the relationship between his farming career and his shepherding career? And where did he live and practise his occupation? These are still some of the issues that are yet to be resolved by scholars and others concerning the book.

On the other side of the fence lie scholars who dispute the notion of a single authorship such as Wolff (1977:100), Hadjiev (2009:2-3), etc. The arguments which they postulate raise questions around the issue of time, that is, how long it took for the final form of the book of Amos to come to be. Assuming, it happened over a long period of time, what role did ideologies played in the formation of the book of Amos which we have today? The questions posed here are based on the assumption that ideologies do not remain stagnant, but rather are dynamic and are influenced by time. The important thing is to acknowledge that whosoever Amos represents shares the same basic ideology as the audience that the book was originally addressed to.

The people of Israel were supposed to be unique in all respect because of their relationship with YHWH the only true God.[32] This position came with it, the part challenge of how they were to fashion their relationship with neighbouring states. Rosenbaum (1990:11) describes the reign of David as a time when Israelite foreign policies seem to have been one of undiluted imperialism. He (1990:11) characterized the period when Solomon was in charge as a period during which Israel foreign policies tilted more towards consolidation and conciliation and was backed by far-reaching commercial alliances. The kingdom benefitted from alliances such as Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter and also enjoyed mutually beneficial relations with Phoenicia. The kingdom ceased to be a United Kingdom after the death of Solomon and was split into the kingdom of Israel and Judah also referred to as the Northern Kingdom.[33]

The kingdom of Israel was located between the dry Transjordan plateau and the sea. This put it in a good position to benefit from the trade that happened between Egypt, Anatolia

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[32] See Deuteronomy 7:6. Also see Amos' comment in Amos 3:2.

[33] For further information see 1 Kings 12:1-24.

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and Mesopotamia. There were the coastal areas that served as ports. Another important feature was the strategic Via Maris and King's Highway that passed through the territory of Israel which the kingdom often claimed and sometimes possessed (Rosenbaum 1990:11).

Before continuing with the discussion, it is important to observe that two kings of Israel had the same name; Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II (יְרָבְעָם). Jeroboam I was the son of Nebat and the first king of the Northern Kingdom (922-901 B.C.E) (Evans 1992:742). Before he became king, he served under King Solomon. He later rebelled against the king because of the manner in which King Solomon treated the Northern tribe (Evans 1992:742). He was forced to flee to Egypt because the King sought to kill him. He remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon. After the death of the King, he returned by home and was made King of the Northern tribes. After his ascension to the throne, he embarked on a mission of developing an independent religious-political system for his people (Evans 1992:743). His aim was to become completely independent from the Davidic kingdom of Judah. For this reason, Jeroboam I is remembered in the Bible as the king who misled Israel and in the process, led his people down the path of sin (Evans 1992:744).

During the period between ninth and eight century, the kingdom of Israel find itself located between the then superpowers of the Middle East. The Assyrian empire was beginning to emerge as a dominant state in the Near East. The rules of Ashur-nasir-pal II (998-859), Shalmaneser III (858-824), Tiglath-pilser III, Sargon II and Sennacherib were a great menace to existence of smaller states such as Israel. There were strong Assyrian military campaigns which were directed towards the western states that included Israel with the aim of gaining control of the economically lucrative trade routes and commerce.[34]

According to Branick (2012:38) the Assyrians lived in north-central Mesopotamia and had no natural frontier. They were literally surrounded by enemies on every side and this led to the people developing into a nation of warriors. In order to enforce her dominance, the nation had to deal summarily with her perceived enemies which logical were the nations that

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[34] Willoughby (1992:205) observes that the most important conquest the nation of Israel achieved during the reign of Jeroboam and Uzziah was the Gilead and the Transjordanian cities of Lo-debar and Karnaim. He further states that the kings highway which was the major trade route linking the Tigris-Euphrates river valley to the gulf of Aqaba and Egypt passes through Gilead and the Transjordan. He notes that Jeroboam the greatest king of the Jehu dynasty annexed the area of Judah and occupied Transjordan and Judah. It must be stated that Assyrians had already destroyed the Syrians, thus and was themselves weakened by the fact that they had weak rulers and faced constant attack from the kingdom of Urarta. This therefore gave Israel the control over the major trade route of the region and they reaped great wealth.

surrounded her at all sides. Nations were given options either to surrender or be destroyed. Those that chose to surrender were allowed to retain a certain degree of independence but were subjected to paying heavy annual tribute. The nations that resisted the Assyrians were invaded and their cities utterly destroyed. Their citizens were subjected to serious torture and were executed. In order to forestall future resistance the influential citizens of such nation were deported to far away cities in the Assyrian empire. The Assyrian army was known for her ferocity, brutality and cruelty which made them synonymous with terror.

The threat from the Assyrians forced nations that ordinarily would not see eye to eye to come together to form an anti-Assyrian alliance (1988:16). Major players in the alliance were Irhuleni of Hamath, Ahab of Israel from the Omride dynasty and Hadadezer of Damascus. After the death of Hadadezer, Hazael replaced him as the king of Syria (1988:17). These were nations that where geographically located in the western parts; as far north as Asia Minor and south such as Egypt. This coalition later dissolved because of internal strife that arose because of the activities of one of the partners the King of Syrian that was reputed to be the strongest member of the alliance.[35]

Shavitsky (2012: 16) refers to the incident that led to Ahab and Ben-Hadad King of Aram to make peace. According to Shavitsky (2012:16), it can be inferred from 1 Kings 20 that there existed between Ahab (873-852) and Ben-Hadad both a commercial and a political relationship. She attributes this relationship to the resulting benefits that might accrue to both parties in the face of the rising threat of the Assyrian power. Further she (2012:16) talks about a coalition of twelve nations which included Israel and Aram as partners that took part in the battle of Qargar on the Orontes in 853 BCE, in an attempt to check the advance of the common threat of Assyria under Shalmaneser III (858-824).

The breakdown in relationship amongst those nations that formerly entered the coalition created a new enemy for the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel had to contend with a new threat that came from their former allies the Syrians. King Hazael of Damascus who replaced Hadadezer was able to withstand the incursion from Assyria under the great leadership of the

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[35] The peace and unity among the coalition partners could no longer hold because after the death of Hadadezer the King of Syria, his successor Hazael who succeeded him through a *coup de etat* for reasons that was not clear began to attack those that were members of the alliance leaving there common enemy Assyria. The Syrians were the strongest member of the coalition.

much feared King Shalmaneser III (Hayes 1988:17). Hazael also attacked and defeated the northern kingdom of Israel and made them her vassal territory.[36]

The Bible gives an account of what was happening in Israel at that time. Israel had three dynasties beginning from Jeroboam I; the Omrides and then Jehu. According to the story told in 2 Kings 8:25-10:4, the Omride dynasty was beginning to lose its grip on power. Joram the successor of Ahab sustained serious injury in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead in his bid to rebuff the attack of Hazael and was forced to leave the army under the command of Jehu, the commander of the Israel army. Later, Jehu embarked on cleansing exercise, murdering the legitimate kings of both Israel and Judah, Jehoram and Ahaziah respectively (Rosenbaum 1990:17). He extended the killings to include other prominent leaders from Israel as well as Judah. Jehu was driven to commit all of this because of his apparent zeal for God that made him anti-Omride (Rosenbaum 1990:17). The account given in 2 Kings 10:16, shows that Ahaziah's mother; Athaliah of Israel was Ahab daughter. Another account given in 2 Chronicles blames the King Ahaziah's death on his mother's influence that was encouraging him at the time to pursue an alliance with Israel. This therefore points to third reason outside political and religious which were military reasons for Jehu's action (Rosenbaum 1990:17).

Having come to power through murderous actions that did not endear him with many of his countrymen, but rather estranged him from many of them that were still loyal to the decapitated house of Omri, Jehu (839-822 BCE) resorted to taking actions that placated the Assyrians. He took the radical step of forming an alliance with Shalmaneser III and as recorded in the Black Obelisk; Jehu paid homage to him and the Assyrian King accepted and thus Israel became a vassal state, protected by the Assyrians. This line of action taken by Jehu can be seen as controversial because Prophets such as Hosea (7:8-13) criticise such foreign policy. Isaiah also did the same by criticizing Hezekiah for trusting in alliance and fortresses and Amos had the same concern (Rosenbaum 1990:19).

Shavitsky (2012:18) links the rising influence of the Aramean Empire under Hazael to the bloody purge that was carried out by Jehu (842-814 BCE) against the both royal houses. She (2012:18) also describes the severing of ties between Israel and Tyre, and the waning of Phoenician influence upon Israel and Judah. Shavitsky (2012:18) refers to a recent archaeological discovery; a fragment of a commemorative stela that was most likely issued by Hazael of Aram which describes the event that took place in Israel and Judah without directly making mention of Jehu. The story that is contained in the stela has it that both Jehoram of

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[36] See the narrative of 2 Kings 10:32-34.

Israel (851-842 BCE) and Ahaziah of Judah (843-842 BCE) were killed by Hazael. She concluded that it is possible that Hazael saw Jehu as his agent just like the biblical writers understand him to be an instrument used by Yahweh to accomplish his will.

Further biblical accounts in 2 Kings 10-13 depict what followed after the ascension of Jehu, as a period during which Israel incessantly came under attack from the Syrian Kings, Hazael and Benhadad (Hasel 1988:19). The treatment of the Israelites by the Syrians was reputed to be ruthless. Towards the end of His reign, Jehu's hold over the territory became weakee (Hasel 1988:19). The activities of the kings of Syria weakened Israel and finally led to them to surrender to the Syrians during the reign of Jehoahaz (821-805 BCE) the successor of Jehu. Israel became a vassal state under the protection of Syria (2 King 13) (Hasel 1988:20).

Adad-Nirari III took over the reign in Assyria and was a strong and successful king. At the beginning of his reign, he attacked Damascus twice and later he led another four successful war expeditions against them. 2 Kings 13:5 gives the impression that the very first attack which took place in 806 BCE came at the right time to save Israel from a total conquest in the hands of the Syrians. Jehoash (798-782) who later became the king of Israel after Jehoahaz (814-798) the son of Jehu; who ascended the throne at Jehu's death took advantage of the apparent weakness within the state of Syria and defeated Damascus thrice with the encouragement of Elisha (Rosenbaum 1990: 20). He also defeated the Judah under the leadership Amaziah (2 Kings 13:12). Later, Assyria became weak due to attacks that were mounted by the Kingdom of Urartu that came from the Northern frontier (Mays 1969:2). During these periods, Adad-Nirari III had passed on and the three successive kings that came after him were weak and could not cope with the mounting external aggression directed at Assyria.

Amos entered the stage just around this period going by the subscription found in the beginning of book of Amos. Wolff (1977:89) writes that "Amos' appearance in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (787/6-747/6) is attested by the report that the prophet had announced this king's death by the sword, a threat which Amaziah, the priest of Bethel conveyed to Jeroboam (Am 7:10-11)." In a further comment, Wolff (1977:89) alleges that "the Deuteronomistic redactor of the book's superscription accepted it, adding the name of Uzziah, the Judean king who had been enthroned the same year as Jeroboam (1:1b)." In a different account give in Hosea 1:1 about Uzziah, it was said that "Uzziah became severely ill with leprosy, his son Jotham assumed the responsibilities of government in 757/6 (Wolff 1977:6) This last account raises the important question of why Amos did not include the information

20

about Uzziah's illness in his work and therefore "whether the last decade of the reign of Jeroboam II should be even be taken into consideration at all for the time of Amos' appearance" (Wolff 1977:89). A further account suggests that Uzziah is believed to Azariah, Amaziah's son who was elevated to the position of king whilst his father was under captivity in the hands of the Judeans (Andersen and Freedman 1989:19). On the other hand, Jeroboam II was the son of Jehoash who died in 782 BCE. He ascended the throne after the death of his father and released the captive king (Rosenbaum 1990:23). Admittedly, there are discrepancies in the account surrounding the actual date that historical Amos lived. However, we will like to conclude that Amos was active between the period of 760 and plus minus five years (Rosenbaum 1990:23). This conclusion was reached putting into consideration Amaziah's death in 767; the death of Jeroboam II in 753; the well know eclipse of the sun that took place in 763 and the earthquake of 760.

The situation in Egypt during that period favoured Israel. The Egyptians were engaged in a civil war that left them weak. This led to a large chunk of their territory to be swallowed up by the Nubians. So this gave the Israelites some sort of respite from that quarter and with the situation in Assyria being unstable, Israel and Judah took advantage and gained some ground in the then Ancient Near East politics and territory as well (Rosenbaum 1990:22).

Mays (1969:2) observes that during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BCE) in Israel and that of Uzziah (791-740 BCE) in Judah, both kingdoms experienced a resurgence in might which led them to re-establish their political influence in the ancient near east political arena and also an increase in socio-economic prosperity. The other nations that posed a threat to the existence of Israel such as Syria and Assyria were at that time weakened from both internal and external problems which left them incapacitated. There was peace between the Israelites and the Judeans. Jeroboam took advantage of the existing condition and engaged in an expansionist agenda. He restored the northern and southern borders of Israel.[37] He also carried out a strong policy of expansion east of the Jordan. The biblical writer in 2 Kings 14:23-24 hints that Yahweh saved Israel by Jeroboam II. The writers of Amos recognized this development in their speeches (6:1, 8, 13). Similarly, Rosenbaum (1990:23) comments on the successes of Uzziah whom he said made military innovations that helped the newly reconstituted Judean army to gain considerable victory at the detriment of the Philistines, Ammonites and others.

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[37] See 2 Kings 13:25-14:25.

The situation that existed in Israel and Judah during the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah created an affluent society. Paul (1991:1) describes the period when Jeroboam II (789-748) and Uzziah (785-733) as the Silver Age of Israelite history. He (1991:1) qualifies the period as a time when Israel reached the apex of its material power and economic greatness as well as zenith of its territorial expansion, comparable only to the times of David and Solomon, the Golden Age.

This was the prosperity that the writer[s] of Amos condemned. The condemnation came from the fact that the writer[s] of Amos saw a society that was prosperous, but which had within it various types of injustices and idolatry. The biblical account given about Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-38) shines a light on the way the writers of kings assessed the reign of Uzziah. The passage (2 Kings 15:38) says, "… he did what was right in the sight of the lord; he did according to all that his father Uzziah has done." But what followed also exposes the negative side of their leadership; "However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places" (2 Kings 15:35).

The encounter between Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, where he requested that Amos should flee and return to the land of Judah (Amos 7:10-17) raises the question of the type of peace that existed between the two nations of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. Anderson and Freedman (1989:21) are of the opinion that during this period the alliance that existed between the two kingdoms was one that operated on the basis of equal partnership, at least in principle. According to them (1989:21) normally, a person would always think that Israel is the dominant party in any of their previous cooperative relationships. Further, they (1989:21) argue that whether there was a formal alliance and whether they came together and agreed on a uniform plan of action will remain unknown. However, they (1989:21) conclude that implicitly both had a clear intention and it was to restore the former borders of Israel that existed during the time of United Kingdom of Israel under David and later Solomon.

2.4 Socio-Religious background

The pragmatic concern here is to attempt to reconstruct the social realities that existed in Israel before and during the period of the eight century; that is at the time the historical Amos lived. The question of social realities can be quite broad and may include issues such as religion, economic structure, gender as well as political realities. When Amos criticized the society of Israel, he did not separate the issues that were plaguing the society; rather he presented a society that suffered from combined social ills which included wholly the way of life of those that inhabited the land. As part of his introductory remarks in his work "social and religious

22

critique" on Amos, Auld (1986:60) remarks that many will prefer a situation where society matters would be treated separate from cultic [religious] activities. He (1986:60) acknowledges that this group of people that holds to such a position may well be right. Auld (1986:69) goes on to admit that on the opposite side, are those that believe that the two topics are inextricably linked. In regards to the book of Amos, he (1986:60) points to the fact that wherever Amos spoke about cultic issues; social issues were never totally removed from these texts. But at the end he preferred to take a cautious approach in dealing with the topic by opting to divide the matter rather differently.

The question thus becomes how this subject would be treated in this section of the dissertation. Already a keen observer would have noticed that the title given shows the inter-relatedness of the subject. However, like Auld, this discussion would recognize the distinctive character of the two subjects and also that it overlaps at certain areas. Therefore, a cautionary approach will be adopted in this discussion in order to be able to treat the subjects separately or jointly where necessary.

The basic composition of every society consists of institutions such as family structure, government machinery, educational procedures, markets, legal processes, religious organization, theological concepts, etc. The fundamental reason why these institutions exist is to function to meet the basic needs of the members of the society. By fulfilling this basic role, the society is enabled to survive and to perpetuate itself. Any change in the social structure of a society, for whatever reason affects the institutions in several ways (Doorly 1989:32).

Doorly (1989:32) argues that ancient Israelite society happens to be a victim of the change that occurred in its social composition as time progressed. The pre-monarchical Israel operated as tribal society. The basic occupation of people in a tribal society is farming and this requires an extended family system to be able to function effectively. In such a system each member of the family plays a role in the farming activities, with each getting an assignment that is best suited for their age. A common feature of such arrangement is that members of the extended family stay together in one location. The arrangement was beneficial to all as it allows for every member of the society to be able to contribute to the general and greater good of the society. Hence, this arrangement made the survival of each family a greater reality. Such was the situation in Israel before the coming of the monarchy.

The coming of the monarchy changed the social structure of the nation of Israel.[38] It is significant to note that the institution of monarchy was introduced when the Israelites settled in Canaan. They people of Israel demanded that they wanted to be led by a king like other nations.[39] This verse brings to mind the issue of ideology and the influence that came with the people of Israel settling among other nations. The social realities of the people of Israel had begun to change at this point due to their exposure to other world views. When Samuel heeded to their demand and appointed a King for them according to their request, the overall social structure changed. The society became a class society comprising of the royalty and the ordinary citizens.[40]

In a monarchical system of government, the power is centred in the hand of the king who is the supreme ruler of the land (Coote 1981:27). This also applied to the monarchy that ruled the state of Israel at that time. However, the King alone cannot be able to carry out all the state functions and thus required deputies and assistants (Coote 1981:27). He therefore appointed the necessary functionaries with whom he ran the state (Schoors 2013:98). This group of individuals constituted what can be referred to as the royalty and were as such among the upper class of the society.[41] This category of people in the society needed to be serviced and this led to the introduction of a royal taxation designed to extract payment from the ordinary class and was used to foot the bills of those that were in the Kings service. Those that fall within the bracket of royal class included the king, his family, the king's administrators and military service men and others (Schoors 2013:98).

This was the state of affairs in Israel when Amos entered the scene. During the eight century when Amos ministered, Judah and Israel were ruled by Uzziah and Jeroboam II respectively. There was peace and people were able to carry out economic activities without fear (Mays 1969:2). The prevailing condition was favourable for growth in all spheres of life

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[38] Coote (1981:24-32) discusses the evolution of Israel's tenure system and how it moved from that to higher society with a more diversified economy.

[39] See 1 Samuel 8.

[40] Samuel warned the Israelites about the repercussion that they will face by having a King. He listed some of the demands and even changes that will accompany having such institution in the society. Yet, the people refused and insisted that they wanted a king so as to be like other nations. This is a clear case of being influenced by other nation's ideology. To what extent ideology influenced the writing of the Bible will remain unknown. However, it cannot be ruled out. Human beings are prone to be ideological in nature. See 1 Samuel 8:1-21.

[41] For further reading, see Schoors (2013: 98).

and thus both nations experienced economic growth (Hayes 1988:22). Amos saw that the good conditions created a fertile ground for the people to sin against God.

In his oracle against Israel, Amos spoke singling out crimes particularly against social Justice as well as idolatry. He mentions enslaving the poor (2:6), oppressing the weak (2:7). Branick (2012:40) observes that oppressing the poor by the weak was a widespread phenomenon during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel. The question of perversion of justice by the poor was a crime Amos saw as a grave sin against the poor. Amos portrays a scenario that shows that these sins were committed against God because it was God who had allowed the Israelites to enjoy prosperity and peace. For this reason, God was going to turn the wheel and visit Israel with destruction (Am. 2:13). Similarly, Rosenbaum (1990:52) describes the situation in Israel as an era of good feelings amongst the inhabitants. However, Amos arose and argued that the society of Israel was decayed at its heart. The society did what was contrary to God's commandment in every aspect of its life. Rosenbaum (1990:52) is also of the opinion that Amos was privilege to have an inside information of what was going on among the haves; he considers Amos to be a well-to-do individual who was most probably a high ranking government official.[42] There have been opposing arguments to the fact that Amos was among the haves because there are no concrete evidence to support such claims.[43] Most of the opposing and supporting claims are based on both literary and historical studies which scholars have conducted over time on the subject of Amos profession and the position which he may have occupied in the society prior to his calling by God to prophesy.[44]

The social abuses that prompted Amos to denounce the wealthy class in Israel and Judea during his time have been blamed on the emergence of interest capitalism in Israel (Rosenbaum 1990:53). This development is referred to as part of early capitalism.[45] The text of Isaiah 5:8 and Micah 2:1-5 and Amos 8:5-6 are biblical texts that can be used to lend credence to the existence of such conditions in ancient Israel and how this condition was received and criticised by those who supposedly were God's spokespersons. The concept of early capitalism is believed to have started already at the time of early Kings. This practice contributed to the birth of more people that joined the category of wealthy class and hitherto unknown extravagance, which was advanced and made strong by the "Baal-izing" of the old

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[42] See Rosenbaum (1990:53) for further reading.

[43] See Rosenbaum (1990:48-50).

[44] See Hasel (1991: 41-47).

[45] Also see Coote (1981:28) and Schoors (2013:91-94).

YHWH worship (Schoors 2013:88-94). The sole aim of this group was to amass wealth and these they did to the detriment of the poor.

Amos witnessed a society that was at its lowest in terms of its moral and ethical standings. The quest for material acquisition superseded every other good in life. People selfishly acquired wealth and they engaged in the pursuance of pleasure which they considered as the highest good. The wealthy class feasted in luxury and extravaganza; they built large edifice and had separate winter and summer places decorated with expensive ivory wares (3:15). Their houses were an epitome of opulence, containing luxurious beds and sofa where they lounge in laziness while the poor toil endlessly in order to meet up with the financial demands imposed on them by the wealthy (3:12). The women were merciless and also were partaking in the oppressive behaviours that targeted the poor and the needy; Amos compared them to cows of Basham and he further criticised their indulgence and addiction to wine (4:1). The market was run by deceitful and fraudulent traders whose sole aim was to make profit. They falsified the scales and sold bad wheat (8:5-6). Judges were corrupt; justice was sold to the highest bidder thus there was no justice in the land (5:7; 12). According to Polley (1989: 131), "Amos did not hesitate to deliver a scathing attack against those persons in Israel whose behaviour he found reprehensible. He named names and pinpointed the precise acts he considered sinful." Amos was very direct in his criticism of those he found wanting irrespective of their social standing. Subsequently, this led him to incur the wrath of Amaziah and earned him rebuke from the Priest (7:10-17).

The favourable economic conditions in Israel were also accompanied by a rise in religious activity. Already, Solomon had had encounters with other types of worship through his marriage activities and therefore had associations with foreign gods.[46] It is significant to note that the coming of the monarchy in ancient Israel brought with it the emergence of state religion in which the king held a prominent role in the worship of Yahweh. During his enthronement the king was sanctified through an anointing ceremony and was acknowledged as the adopted "son of God." This made him a sacred person and thus giving him the right to perform certain religious function (1 Sam. 13:9-10; 2 Sam. 6:13, 17-18) (Polley 1989:28).

David and later Solomon promoted a nation-state that was united around a monarch that was supported by Yahwism. During the time of David and Solomon, there was a well-developed national religion in the united kingdom of Israel and the people were united around a divinely appointed monarchy (the David line), sacred objects (ark and cherubim), sacred

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[46] See 1 Kings 11.

sites (Jerusalem and Mount Zion), shrines (tent and temple), priesthoods (Zadokites and Levites) and a sacred calendar (festivals). Undoubtedly, these institutions were part of the social structure and religious faith of Israel that reaches to the previous periods in Israel's history (Polley 1989:28). Their religious life therefore was wholly intertwined with their social life which included political and economic life of the people.

The united kingdom of Israel ceased to exist at the death of Solomon and was supplanted by two rival states. This split was as a result of the oppressive policies of forced labour and discriminatory taxation that was pursued by Solomon which his son and heir Rehoboam refused to discard. The northern tribes under the leadership of Jeroboam I pulled out of the united kingdom of Israel and became solely the kingdom of Israel. The southern states returned to answering their former name; Judah and they inherited all the sacred religious institution of the united kingdom which includes-Mount Zion, the ark, the cherubim, the temple, legitimate priesthood and the divinely appointed monarchy (Polley 1989:53).

In order to create some sort of legitimacy around his throne, Jeroboam I needed to create alternative religious institutions separate from those in Judah. He established an autonomous Yahweh cult in the ancient Canaanite shrines at Bethel and Dan. He also created a new line of non-levitical priesthood. He even changed the official dates for the holy days (1 Kings 12:25-32). Jeroboam I is alleged by Deuteronomistic historians to be the king that led the north astray through the actions he undertook; he partitioned the monarchy by establishing a rival capital to Jerusalem. He also erected Baal golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Though at the beginning northern monarchy remained as loyal to Yahweh as the Davidic line, however, later they deviated from the established ways of following Yahweh and embraced other practices that were contrary (Polley 1989:54). Coote (1981:22) opines that according to the Deuteronomistic tradition, Jeroboam II was the king that built most of the physical structures that was used to carry out the acts in Bethel and that he was closely related to Jeroboam I, the originator of the cult in Bethel.

In conclusion, it could be inferred that Amos addressed the social-political-economic-religious situation of his time. They perceived peace and prosperity of the time had misled the people into believing in other gods. The people had invariable divorced themselves from the traditional concept of justice and righteousness which Yahweh expected them to adhere to and practice. Instead, they have resorted to oppressing the poor and the weak. Yahweh was going to punish them for their offences. Amos foresees a situation that will lead to foreign encroachment and the carting away of the people to exile. His message was full of pessimism

though sometimes presenting an array of hope which was dependent on their seeking Yahweh and abandoning what was evil.

In the subsequent unit, I will be discussing the issue of ideology and the text. It is the belief of the writer that ideology is interwoven with history. Therefore, the writer will argue that one of the places where the issue of ideology could be seen is in the writing of texts. The fact that the author is part of history allows for the written text to contain traces of the writer's ideology. Since the Bible is a text, it could be argued that therefore it is not exempted from this effect as can be seen in the discussion below.

2.5 Ideology and the Bible text

The main idea under discussion here is the meaning of the term "ideology." The question of ideology and the role it probably played and is still playing in determining the outcomes of events in the Bible story, past and present. In an attempt to do so, the logical place to begin will be to try and explain the meaning of ideology and also what the writer considers as the Bible. However, before proceeding with the discussion, the writer will like to observe that the question of ideology and the text is one that may stir controversy depending on who is involved in the discussion.

Carroll (1998:103) recognizes this problem when he commented that, "in the first place not everyone believes that there is any such thing as ideology in the Bible." He admitted that most people in the "ecclesiastical communities and theologians who make the Bible foundational for belief and praxis prefer a "hermeneutics of trust" to a "hermeneutic of suspicion" and that these people are not persuaded to think otherwise. This group of individuals prefer to rather admit that the problem of ideology is more likely to occur within the framework of reading and teaching communities other than in the Bible itself (Carroll 1998:103). Furthermore, he went on to identify another group which he called purist who believes that "ideology belongs to the modern world, it is a feature of post-enlightened societies rather than ancient or antique societies..." According to Carroll (1998:103), "other interpreters, taking a more postmodern approach would claim that just as texts do not have meanings neither do they have ideologies..." Having identified the different positions of some concerning ideology and the Bible, this discussion will therefore proceed with the aim of attempting to answer the question; whether the Bible contains ideology or not. As has been stated already in the first paragraph, the discussion will begin by attempting to explain the meaning of ideology and what is the Bible?

Carroll (1995:27) explains that, "in neutral terms the word ideology may be said to refer to a system or network of ideas and to values in such a system which generates praxis." In order to further clarify his understanding of the meaning of ideology, he further summarized the meaning of the definition into two segments. Firstly, he stated that ideology could either serve as a valuable or progressive factor, that is, when it is used in a "benign sense." In this case, "to say that something is ideological is just to say that it belongs to a larger point of view or worldview involving general beliefs, outlooks, values and social practices." or Secondly, it could connote negativism, that is, when it tends to be "a bad thing." Carroll (1995:27) explains that in this regards, "it remains for many people a term describing false beliefs as opposed to science and knowledge." This position is mostly taken by those influenced by Marxists thoughts.

Clines (1995:9) discusses the meaning of the word ideology in the first chapter of his book titled, "Interested parties: The Ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible." He (1995:9-10) classified the meaning into two headings; *firstly*, are those he regarded as "good denotations of the word" or the direct meanings of word and *secondly*, are those he referred to as "the connotations of the term ideology." Clines (1995:10) arranged the direct meanings of the word "according to their 'weakness' or 'strength'" or what he termed "their degree of generality or specificity." He listed the following direct meanings:

I.   A more or less connected group of ideas.
II. A relatively coherent set of ideas amounting to a world-view, or outlook on life.
III. A set of such ideas special to a particular social class or group.
IV. The set of ideas held by the dominant group in the society

Further, Clines (1995:10) noted the following meanings under what he perceives as what the term "ideology" connotes:

I.   Ideas which are shared with others.
II.   Ideas serving the interests of a particular group, especially a dominant group.
III. Ideas which are wrongly passed off as natural, obvious or commonsensical.
IV.   Ideas which are assumed rather than argued.
V.   Ideas which is often unexpressed and unrecognized by those who hold them.
VI.   Ideas oriented toward action, ideas controlling or influencing actions
VII. A representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence
VIII. False ideas
IX.   Ideas, different from our own, that other people have
X.   Rationalistic or metaphysical ideas, as distinct from practical politics

29

XI.   A romantic view of the world, idolizing the ideal and scorning the actual

XII.   A totalitarian attitude

XIII.   A pseudo-scientific attitude to history and social realities.

The summary of the above definitions by Clines could be reduced into two categories which will at the end generate similar meanings to the explanation given by Carroll as the meaning of the word "ideology." Just like Carroll's, the different views as seen in parts 1 and 2 of Clines' list above could either have a positive or negative connotation.

Barr (2000:102-140), engages with what he considers to be the various ways that the term ideology have been applied by different people. The aim of his (2000:102) analysis was to find out whether the different usages "have any point of common meaning with one another." He began his investigation by contrasting the term 'ideological' with 'pragmatic'. He (2000:102) explains,

> an ideological person will have principles and convictions that will override any factual evidence or any indication of the practical possibilities; a pragmatic person may share these same principles and convictions-thus, may belong to the same political party-but want to look at facts, determine what is practically possible, and may even adjust the principles and convictions so as to meet these realities.

Based on the analysis, he (2000:103) defines ideology as "a world-view or set of ideas that is so intensely held that factual realities and practical considerations have no power to alter or affect it." He saw this as one way of defining ideology. He linked this definition to politics and how people have come to cynically perceive the term ideology by associating it to political activities. Thus, there are different degrees that a person could become ideological depending on the extent a person chose's to be involved with a particular issue. This was interesting.

Barr (2000:103) discusses another way a person may choose to look at the term by focusing on the 'quality and originality of ideas'. According to him (2000:103) an original idea that a person presents is not necessarily an ideology. "The original work is a serious thought; the half-unthinking use of it is ideology" (Barr 2000:103). In effect, Barr (2000:103) is pointing to the character of ideology which he believes is usually of second-hand, half-baked quality.

Barr (2000:104) stated that another meaning which has been given to the term emanates from its unconscious character. In this instance ideology becomes something that is in a person even without the person knowing or acknowledging that it is there. It is others, therefore, that would point it out to the person that it is there. He (2000:104) cited the question of "gender and race" as an example of where this phenomenon is noticeable.

Barr (2000:104) also added that another way people might understand the meaning of ideology is by viewing it from the perspective that an ideology must be "in some way comprehensive." This eliminates the possibility of a 'mere idea' being received by this category of people as an ideology. It is for this reason (according to Barr) that some people generally use the term system to describe what they understand as ideology. This explanation led him to deduce the following: 1) ideologies normally have the form of generalizations. 2) Ideology is a social property; that is, it is an ideology because it is an idea that is shared by a whole section of the society. 3) Ideology is completely opposite to objective truth. They are not based in external reality rather they come from ideas and views that originates from the social needs and interests of those who hold these ideas and views. 4) Ideology has been linked to something which is always bad or pejorative.

At this point, I would like to give a summary definition of my understanding of the meaning of the term "ideology". It is important to note that my definition of the term "ideology" is based on what I consider to be the summary of all the definitions that was presented. Ideology therefore is a set of ideas or belief system (which could be positive ideas or beliefs system or negative ideas or beliefs system) that influences or even controls the way a person lives or the manner a group of persons live. It can be observed that the definition highlights two important aspects; positive and the negative ways in which ideology influences ideas or belief system which in turn influences events happening in a society or in a person's life. This is because what could be described as a positive idea for one person or a group could be considered to be negative to the other. To bring this back to the Bible, which is the text under discussion here, today there are lots of voices such as the feminist theologians, the liberation theology and black theologians who show discontentment about certain writings and teachings that are contained in the Bible and as such disputes such writings. To this group the parts identified are graded as negative whereas, the same teaching remains valid to some other interpreters of the Bible. One may therefore ask if the opposing group find those parts of the Bible that they disagree with ideological in any way. This question will be taken up later in this discussion.

The definition highlights two important aspects; positive and the negative ways in which ideology influences ideas or belief system which in turn influences events happening in a society or in a person's life. What is not contained anywhere in the definition is any indication that human or a human being could be ideologically neutral. This again opens one to the question of whether a person could be ideologically neutral. To respond to this question, I will like to refer back to the definition of ideology, which states that "ideology is something that is

31

in a person even without the person knowing or acknowledging that it is there (Barr 2004:104)." To add to this definition, the question of "provisional knowledge" which could also be referred to as "preunderstanding" is also important (Pokorny 2011:89).

> Porkorny (2011:89) explains that

> The basic fact to bear in mind when working with a text is the motivation behind our interest in the particular text that we are interpreting. The term "provisional knowledge" or, more often, "preunderstanding" (taken from the German *Vorverständnis*) is the concept that we use for this kind of motivation. The new philosophy and theory of the text long failed to recognize the importance of preunderstanding because the notion was associated with prejudice and thus suspected of subjectivism. Then, however, phenomenology and the philosophy of existence launched a critique of the prejudices that thought hitherto had harboured against prejudices. Provisional knowledge is part of our historicity. It reflects the fact that historical understanding is associated with decision making. If this takes the form of ingrained unexamined "prejudices," we shall hardly get rid of them by refusing to talk about them, but only by defining them and trying to look at them with a degree of detachment. In order words identified "prejudices" cease to fetter interpretation and become preunderstanding. To get rid of them entirely would be impossible and in any case unhealthy (an entirely unprejudiced person would be an anomaly)

Here, Porkorny (2011:89) uses the term "provisional knowledge" or "preunderstanding" to describe the list of inventory which amounts to ideological baggage that will bring along, whenever we are engaged with the act of interpreting a text or the Bible (Carroll 1995:26). It could therefore be argued that no one reads the Bible in a state of innocence or "without considerable amount of ideological baggage controlling such reading" (Carroll 1995:26). This argument could be applied to the writers of the Bible, in so far as they were human; they were also consciously or unconsciously under the influence of ideology or provisional knowledge as the case may be. One could therefore conclude, following the lead of Porkorny (2011:89) that ideological neutrality is a myth.

The next question which was identified in this discussion is what does the Bible represent? In order to do so, rationally the place to begin would be the Christian community. Generally, within this community, the belief is that the Bible is a sacred book that was given to believers through the revelatory work of God over a unique period but was written by people.[47]

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[47] See Frans J. Verstraelen (1993:265) article, "The real issues regarding the Bible: summary, findings and conclusions." He (1993:265) discusses the fact that the Bible is considered a divinely inspired and authoritative for Christians but yet a product of human endeavour.

To this category of people, the Bible is seen as a divine book. This view is contested by others who view the Bible and treat it as any other literature that was composed by humankind.[48] Outside this two categories are those others that see and read the Bible as a history book or the history book that tells the story of a particular people. There are still others who do not consider the Bible as neither literature nor historical book or even a divine/sacred book. This category sees the Bible as a mystical book.

The important fact which can be inferred from all of this is that the Bible have been received and interpreted differently by various people. The question thus becomes what informs or what is behind this reception and the different ways that various people have carried out their interpretation of the Bible? In order words, does the Bible contain ideology? This issue will be taken up later in this discussion under the subheading, "is there ideology in the Bible text?"

2.5.1 Ideology and the writers of the Bible

This discussion will be focusing on the issue of ideology and the biblical text and those who wrote it. Early in this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that one issue which confronts this discussion is the relationship between the writers and the text which they produced. Is the writer separate from the text, in other words; is the author separate from the work he or she produced. Scholars such as Pokorny (2011:178) suggest that, "…the text can emancipate itself from its author, with whom it would possible to have a dialogue, and lead its own life." He (2011:178) describes interpretive exercise as the meeting of worlds, that is, the worlds of the author and that of the interpreter. In interpretation, the reader is dealing with an unknown world which he would only know by building bridges to close up the gaps which exist between the world of the text and his or her own world (Pokorny 2011:178).

Like every other text, are the writers of the biblical text separate from the text which they produced? The reasoning behind the question lies on the question of relationship between the writer and the text which he produced. It is also about who is behind the true meaning of the text or who gives the text its meaning? These questions open the Bible up to other questions such as; is the Bible a history book and if so, is history just another subject of ideology? Likewise, is the Bible just another piece of literature that comprises a collection of different

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[48] Kevin J. Vanhoozer (1986:85): acknowledges that Scripture is a composition that is made up of "ordinary" language and "ordinary" literature. He made reference to fact that Christ taught and prayed using day to day spoken language of his people. He contends that this does not in any way reduce the Bible from not being "God's word."

stories that was written by humankind? In contrast, is the Bible a divine production that was solely produced by the deity? Garbini (1986:xv) opines that it is "impossible, to draw a dividing line between what is history and what is religion, because its 'religion' is not our 'religion' and its 'history' is not our 'history', at least as an object of analysis." He goes on to say that:

> once one becomes aware of this diversity, which mean adopting a historical critical attitude, it becomes relatively easy to define the historical conception of the Old Testament: the political thoughts which defines itself with religious thought (the prophets) and the religious thoughts which makes itself historical thought (the history writers) and creates a fictitious but sacral history come together in a circularity which in our all too knowing language is no longer politics or religion or history-but ideology

If Garbini is right that there is not really a distinction between political manoeuvre and the religious manoeuvre inside the Old Testament, what is therefore the role of those who put together the text in this play of ideologies? Assuming this is true and that it can be established that the text is not separate from the writer; what then is behind the meaning of a text? How much hold does the writer's worldview have over his or her character/personality and to what extent does this influence the work which they produce? It is the presupposition of the writer that a person's worldview is synonymous to the person's ideological holdings. In other words, if a person's character is made up of ideologies that he or she consciously or unconsciously adopts in course of their life; would they not transfer such into whatever work they are producing, especially, things such as a written text? To answer the questions that were identified requires that one begins by attempting to discover what does a text mean[s] or the true meaning of a text and secondly, to attempt to establish the relationship between ideology and the text.

2.5.1.1 What does a text mean?

Every biblical text has a meaning. The meaning of the text is supposed to represent the writers originally intended meaning; however, different interpreters tend to arrive at different meanings on each occasion that they interpret. When one is engaged in the act of interpretation, he or she is involved in exegesis. The process of exegesis is done with the intention of arriving at a meaning which the interpreter considers as what the text means. The question that arises when one analyses the act of interpretation is whether it is the writer or the interpreter that gives the text its final meaning? Also, there is the question of ideology that haunts the text. There are arguably two ideological forces in play in regards to the text; those from the writer[s] and that which comes from the interpreter. The writer's ideology is supposed to be embedded

in the text, whereas, the interpreter is assumed to impose his or her ideology on the text whilst he engages with it.

Scholars such as Fowl (1995:16) are of the view that texts do not have meanings neither do they have ideologies. Fowl's basic argument states that texts are neutral and that it is the reader who constructs ideologies from the text-(which most of the time is influenced by the person's experience which comes from their existential context) - and from that, give meaning to the text. The question that comes to mind when one is confronted with scholars who view the text as neutral such as Fowl is whether the writers of the Bible (for example) were doing so without having a particular aim or purpose or even agenda in mind? I do not believe that the writers of the Bible were writing without any informed purpose. It is my belief that they had a definite purpose behind their writings and this purpose arose due to a particular context which they observed and which the felt needed to be addressed. I agree that we should disagree with Fowl. Texts had ideologies and the authors of the texts had political agendas.

For the sake of this study, my engagement with the biblical text is as a piece of literature.[49] There is a general consensus amongst most biblical scholars that people wrote and rewrote the texts. Though, there are still others within and without the academics that hold different views. For those who argue that it is purely a human creation, it is subjective and can lend itself to subjective interpretation, while those that argue that it is an infallible God breathed book, are simply driven by doctrinal positions. For this reason, it would be justifiable to ask, what explanation could be given to the reason why when different people read the same text depending on which group they come from, each tend to arrive at a conclusion different from the other. Scholars have tried to analyse why this phenomena occurs when people undertake the task of exegesis and interpretation. Their analyses have led to different suggestions and conclusions.

I am going to attempt to critically analyse some of the views presented by some scholars that discussed the concept of "meaning" as it affects the interpretation of biblical text depending on which side of the interpretation divide that they find themselves. I will do so in the light of how I approach my own reading and how my theology has been influenced thus far by my ideological position. Clines (1995:13) argues that theology should be regarded as subset of ideology in the same vein that one would classify cosmology or politics or law. If one is to support such view, then it means that the person would have to drop the idea of the Bible being a divine revelation that is infallible. Contrariwise, a thorough scrutiny of the Bible reveals

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[49] See Noble (1993:142).

"traces of ideological positions" that was taken by the writers. However, it would be unfair to come to a conclusion that may be detrimental to what the text is trying to communicate in its entirety, since one cannot directly engage with the writers in order to determine what actually their intentions[50] were when they wrote the biblical text. The interpreter is then left to assume his or her personal ideological position so long as they do so within the boundary of meaning established by the text. This implies that the text should be allowed to express the information that it contains and not bended to produce the meaning intended by the interpreter.[51]

This critical analysis is not exactly an attempt to only contrast views but rather it would be focusing on trying to find realistic meaning of what is involved in an 'honest reading' that would eventual lead to a responsible interpretation. The question of honest reading motivates a critical interpreter to look at how the person is engaging with the message found in the text and which comes out from the reading and beyond.[52] This implies that the final message might go beyond the confine of the written text and this could be allegorical, philosophical or doctrinal. The meaning arguably would usually come from the reader or the interpreter holistic existential experience which arguably includes his physical and mental existence. Rowland (1995:429) explains that:

> A critical reading will involve the ability to acknowledge prejudice and so enable the peculiarities and 'otherness' of the text to become fully apparent and for the text to 'speak', if not precisely on its own terms, at least with sufficient respect for its own integrity that it does not merely mirror the prejudice of the reader.

Rowland (1995:429) draws attention to the effect of prejudice to both the text and the reader and highlights the fact that it could prevent objective consideration of what is found within the text. The resulting effect that comes from ones exposure to these prejudicial factors necessitates that one honestly admits that all interpretation is distorted. It could therefore be argued that there is no interpretation that is without some sort of personal angle to it. The likeable reason why a person suffers from such interpretative deficiency is the hold which ideology wields over human experience. Prejudice most of the time is as a result of people's personal ideology which they accumulate over time in course of their existence. The writer/text and also the interpreter are all under the influence of ideology. Thus, prejudice which is an off-

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[50] See Barton's (1984:167-170) work on "Intentionalism" for further reading. He discusses the complex nature of the issue surrounding the original intention of the biblical writers. He is of the opinion that it is psychological and therefore involves psychology and emotion.

[51] See John Barton (1994:158-178) for further reading.

[52] Beyond here represents the interpreters imagined meanings of what the text means.

shoot of ideology could either be explicitly or subtly directed from the text to the interpreter or at the text from the interpreter. There are those who are of the belief that God directs the way an interpreter understands a text. Those that hold unto these beliefs believe that their interpretation is guided by supernatural or is divinely influenced. This is usually the case with those that affirm the doctrine of inerrancy; in-fallibility and see the Bible as the final authoritative word of God revealed to man. It would only be fair to the text if one approaches the reading with an attitude of "open-mindedness" irrespective of the belief or supposition that the person holds unto, even before approaching the text. This would help retain a measure of integrity, both to the text and the reader; which would in turn help in ensuring that the interpreter arrives at a fairly reasonable interpretation of the text. One could argue that it is the writer's primary objective to lead his reader into the text and thereby, helping to determine what the text means. Ironically, it does not always happen that way because as far as the text is concerned; it is a neutral entity that receives its meaning from the interpreter.

Barton (1998:13) discusses the concept of what a text actually means; in his attempt to explain the reason why doing only traditional historical criticism is not enough or adequate for the purpose of holistic understanding of biblical text. He advocates that in order to get a holistic meaning from the text, the interpreter needs to broaden the outlook of the individual work. He urges the interpreter to take into consideration different elements that can possibly influence both the text and the reader.

Barton's (1998:18) primary concern is with the subject of historical criticism, yet, his ideas have a far reaching ramification on the act of biblical interpretation and therefore, can be applied to the question of how a person could realistically arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the biblical text. He (1988:19) prefers using the phrase "biblical criticism" to describe the art of biblical interpretation. This allows for the inclusion of a broader perspective in the process of biblical interpretation which will evidently lead the interpreter towards deriving a realistic meaning from the text under study.

Embedded in Barton's phrase, 'biblical criticism,' is the idea of dealing with the Bible as a whole. Barton, who is apparently in support of historical-critical methods as a means of studying the text calls for a more robust way of doing so. He (1998:15-16) argues that "criticism (historical) has scarcely ever been historical enough…" Further, Barton (1998:13) through his submission affirms that every reader should at least be honest and accept that he or she is anything but neutral in their interpretation.

The main concern here is not about the subject of historical criticism but rather on what motivates a person towards deriving a final meaning from a biblical text. Therefore, the bone of contention is how; who and what influence the final outcome; when a person is engaged in the act of biblical interpretation. I believe that Barton's submission is quite lucid and helps me to question my position as a reader. He challenges my consciousness to consciously ask the question; what influences the outcome of my reading as well as my interpretation? It also opens me up to another important question that a person need to engage with prior to arriving at what he or she would consider to be a realistic meaning of the text; which is whether their reading was done objectively with conscious attention given to the ethical issues that surrounds or that might be ingrained in the text.

Gadamer (1989:267) writes that:

The actual meaning of the text, as it speaks to the interpreter, is not dependent on the occasion represented by the writer and his original public [as romanticists and historicists maintain]. As least it is not exhausted by it; for the meaning is also determined by the historical situation of the interpreter and thus by the whole of the objective course of history…The meaning of a text goes beyond its writer, not only occasionally but always. Understanding is not merely reproductive, but always productive.

The biblical text has been in existence for a very long period of time. Each period in history presents a different story because the activities of people at every point in time influence how they understand and interpret the biblical text at that time. To be objective when we read requires that a reader as observed by McLean (2012:31) should acknowledge the existence of the person's historical situation which adds to how the outcome of his interpretation is determined. The observation that the "the meaning of a text goes beyond its writer, not only occasionally but always" can be linked to the fact that different people tend to arrive at different meanings when they read or interpret because of their personal life experience.

The fact that people end up arriving at different meanings which mostly happens because of the person's present 'historical situation' supports McLean's (ibid) position that "understanding is not merely reproductive, but always productive." My experience each time I read have shown me that my ultimate aim whenever I approach the biblical text is to make the story beneficial to my world. Hence, the expectation becomes that the text is supposed to produce a meaning that makes sense to my existence today. Otherwise, my mind will process the text as meaningless. For the text to be meaningful it has to resonate with my present experience and circumstances. I could therefore argue that meaning from my own experience

is not only purely reproduced from the text rather it is produced from the text in conjunction with my existential experience.

The overflow of the above discussion could be seen from the method utilized to arrive at the meaning of the text by theologians that subscribes to the interpretation that is guided by what some have come to classify as liberation theology. This also includes the reading and interpretation of those known today as feminist theologians. There are still other voices within the theological academia like Robert P. Carroll that speaks of an ideological-critical reading of the text that sometimes can be seen as controversial.[53] These radical voices attempts to present a meaning which they claim comes from a reading and interpretation that accords both the text and the reader a fair level of freedom and integrity.

The Latin American situation for example has prompted theologians such as Mark Daniel Carroll R, to arrive at meanings that reflect their existential experience. Carroll R (1992:9) claims in his work title; Context of Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin America Perspective, which he presented for his doctoral thesis that:

> [It] is a product of the desire to understand better how to allow the Old Testament to speak within Latin American and reflects the twin foci of this interest: on the one hand, the locating of biblical study and theological reflection with the complex cultural realities of that continent; on the other, the articulating of a possible fruitful textual method.

He (1992:9) utilizes different tools and methods and also approaches that sociology employ in its attempt to resolve social issues. The pragmatic application of sociological studies and methods to probe the biblical text and the underlying contexts that exist within and without the text is not a new trend in biblical studies. According to Tolbert (1993:254), "all religions are profoundly social phenomena, whatever their varied claims may be to divine revelation or transcendent knowledge." Though some school of thoughts may dispute or even reject this observation, but a verifiable knowledge is that all religion takes place within a particular social context. This implies therefore, that religion is indeed a social subject. What I find interesting in Carroll R's (1992) work is the fact that he was able to arrive at interpretations that reflects not only the existing context in Latin America; but doing so through "the articulating of a possible fruitful textual method" (Carroll R 1992:9) which allowed him to arrive at interpretations from the Bible that make sense to him, his church audience and even beyond. He (1992:9) points out that "the sacred text can function… as a means to… [generate] possibilities and [also allows for] the dynamic interplay of text and context." He takes a cue

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[53] See Carroll (1998:103).

from Walter Brueggemann who is a strong advocate of the power of the biblical text in his works. Carroll R (1992:141) discusses how ultimately the interpreter could be triggered by the text to nurture an imagination faithful to the text that can be pleasing to Yahweh. Carroll R (1992:9) describes his work as an alternative approach from those of the Latin American liberation theologians yet his approach which he uses to arrive at a final interpretation of the biblical text seem to be basically the same as that of the other Latin American liberation theologians.

The act of adding an element of imagination when a person is reading and interpreting a biblical text helps the interpreter in reconstructing the existing situation present at the time the text was written and also in constructing a present reality from the text. Since, the biblical events happened at a time different from today, the power of imagination aids the interpreter to connect with the then and to bring it to now. However, whatever imagination that occurs must remain faithful to the text in order to arrive at a realistic meaning of the text.

The method and approach used by feminist theologians to read and interpret the biblical text in order to arrive at a realistic meaning of the text apparently involves to some extent the use of their imaginative senses. The essay by Malbon and Anderson in "Searching the Scriptures, Vol. One; A feminist Introduction" titled "Literary-Critical Methods," analyses the different literary-critical methods as it relates to feminist theology. In the essay, they (1993:241-254) identify different approaches that have been in use over time for reading and interpreting the biblical text. A section of the essay discusses the "Reader-Oriented Approach" to reading and interpretation the biblical text. They (1993:249) raised the following important questions: (1) what role does the reader or hearer of a text play in creating the meaning of a text (i.e., does the reader find or make a meaning)? (2) Who is the reader/hearer? (3) What is the experience of reading or listening to a text like or what happens when we read? These are question they believe the "reader response critics" may ask.

The question that is directly related to our 'imaginative senses' discussion is the question, "what happens when we read?" In response to the question, Malbon and Anderson (1993:249) said:

> One of the central aspects of reader response criticism is its focus on reading as an experience, as an event with a linear, temporal dimension. As we read we anticipate what is to come and reflect on what have gone before. We fill gaps (the omitted or unsaid in the text) and give fixed meanings to indeterminacies. We thus create coherence and consistency wherever they seem to be lacking. Or, we look for inconsistencies, seams, and gaps to challenge a false unity, highlight ideology, and foreground multiplicity, that is,

40

to undermine any reading that claims to be true and final meaning of the text. We do all these things in the light of the individual experiences we bring to the text, through social competencies, and through learned communal linguistic and literary conventions. This description of the reading experience emphasizes cognitive activity.

Malbon and Anderson's (1993:249) response to the question agrees with the reasoning that the reader is naturally endowed with the capacity to automatically employ his or her imaginative senses when engaged with the act of reading and interpretation of the biblical text. The fact that the reader can "anticipate what is to come and reflect on what has gone before" involves the use of imaginative senses. Also to be able to fill in the gap needs the person to imagine those things and how it probably happened. This implies that our imaginative senses play an important role in derivation of meaning when an interpreter is engaged with the biblical text. The meaning an interpreter derives is partly rested on his imagination.

Carroll (1995:25-43) introduces what he means by his "*Ideologiekritik"*-approach to biblical studies in his essay, "An Infinity of traces: On making an inventory of our ideological holdings. An introduction to *Ideologiekritik* in biblical studies". The essay was part of the lectures he delivered in University of Stellenbosch in South Africa in 1993. It is important to note that for the purpose of this discussion that the term "biblical studies" as it was used by Carroll (1995:25-43) will be treated as equivalent to; reading and interpretation of biblical text. The essay is of interest to me because it was given at a time that "*Apartheid"* was officially beginning to come to an end in South Africa. The question of reading and interpretation was an important issue during this period in South Africa because some white churches believed that there was nothing wrong with "*Apartheid.*" A position which some of them believe is justifiable and defendable through the use of biblical teachings based on their reading and interpretation.

Carroll (1995:26) explains that the term "*Ideologiekritik"* in the context of biblical studies should be understood, "to apply to any and all analyses of the *situatedness* of every reading of the Bible." He (1995:26) further explains that this includes, "who is doing the reading, under what conditions is the reading being done, and for what purposes?" He (1995:26) said that "*Ideologiekritik"* is therefore about the reading process involved in the study of the Bible." Carroll (1995:26) further noted that "It may also be extended to analyses factors involved in the production of the Bible, with particular reference to the conditions under which the books of the Bible were themselves written." There is detectable similarity between the approaches of Carroll"s "*ideologiekritk*" and Malbon and Anderson (1993:241-254). Both are advocating

41

for a highly critical interpretation that subjects the Bible to thorough scrutiny beyond the ordinary reading.

A close analysis of Carroll's argument on how "*Ideologiekritik"* could be useful in helping a person arrive at a realistic meaning of the biblical text through his favoured approach of using "*Ideologiekritik"* appears to be similar to those of Malbon and Anderson (1993:241-254). However, the outcomes or final meaning are different because beyond the basic idea which they share, lies the idea of feminism, that is, in respect to the method of exposition used by Malbon and Anderson (1993:241-254) and the notion of ideology that Carroll puts emphasis on in his works.

Carroll (1998:113) speaks about "a pluralist approach to reading the bible." Carroll (1998:112) maintains that a "pluralist approach" allows him to avoid the pitfall that comes with approaching biblical interpretation from a particular fixed ideological position. In other words, an interpreter is afforded multiple opportunities that allow him or she to arrive at meaning which best reflects their understanding of the Bible text. He (1998:113) contends that there is "plurality of viewpoints in the biblical writings." Carroll's argument could be understood from the alternative ideas and meanings that the different groups of readers such as feminist theologians and liberation theologians are able to extract from the text. These meanings are reasonably reflective of the teachings that are associated with the Bible message, though; one could argue that sometimes these meanings are derived from imagined thoughts and believes of what the text actually means.

Bultmann (1957:4) once remarked that:

No one who is old enough to think for himself supposes that God lives in a local heaven. There is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word. The same applies in the sense of a mythical underworld beneath our feet. And if this is so we can no longer accept the story of Christ's descent into hell or his ascension into heaven as literally true. We cannot any longer look for the return of the son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:15ff)

There are lots of biblical narratives which from a modern point of view could be classified as mythology. One cannot escape the fact that today is a different era and most people that are engaging with the Bible text in today's context is doing so based on their present experience. Mankind is living in a modern or even post-modern era. Therefore, their worldviews or ideologies are guided and formed from events and experiences drawn from activities happening in this time which they live. Unlike the Bible, which was written at a time when

certain worldview or ideologies was easily accepted by people without having adequate means to investigate and verify the factuality of some of the biblical narratives. These days the influence of science has led to modern-day people having a different world view. It is not un-common therefore to encounter people today whose perception of meanings and interpretations clashes with some of the literary direct interpretation that could be derived from some of the biblical narratives. This warrants that the people that fall within this category of modern based ideological-holding individual would look for a way to either adjust their mind in order to receive the Bible narratives or to reject it completely. In such circumstances, interpretation becomes something that is a projection of mere human thinking or ideology based reasoning of what should be or what should not be. An example of such conflict that could emerge from differences in worldview or ideologies between then and now could be found in the biblical story of Jonah; today's ordinary human mind would encounter difficulty conceptualizing the story. This would leave some people with no option other than to come up with some sort of forced or implied interpretation because always, reading is accompanied by interpretation. Whether, the impact from the reading is considered negative or positive is a different issue which does not stop interpretation from occurring.

Carroll (1992:61-85) discusses the issue of how readers may receive different biblical narratives in his essay titled "the discombobulations of time and the diversities of text: note on the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the Bible." According to Carroll, the word '*Rezeptionsgeschichte',* a German compound word; will under normal circumstances mean the "history of the interpretation of the Bible" but in the essay, he chooses to interpret it as the "history of the reception of the Bible." Both words; interpretation and reception are very interesting subjects to me, as it affords me the privilege of investigating how my 21st century ideology or ideologies affects how I interpret and also how I receive the biblical message. Carroll uses the story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac in Genesis 21-22 to illustrate how modern readers can easily be negatively affected by a particular biblical narrative. He used the text to highlight some negative reading that certain readers can equally draw from the text, namely, the issue of chauvinism as demonstrated by Abraham unilateral decision concerning the whole episode of sacrifice and Isaac; the issue of oppression of women that most feminine theologians may conclude from studying the text and also, the issues of child abuse as it relates to Isaac who supposedly may have been traumatized by his experience. Carroll (1992:76) notes that "the history of the reception of the Bible is determined by the reader's situational hermeneutics and not by the text's narratological values." My personal experience as a reader is that interpreting and receiving the biblical story from a 21st century perspective which is greatly influenced by

modern values makes me a victim of similar ideological based interpretation and reception that is governed by situational hermeneutics rather than the narratological values.

It would therefore be very ironical if the biblical text is exempted from proper scrutiny. McLean (2012:196) asks the question that, "one [who] seeks the present sense-event of a Biblical text, what kind of knowledge is [the person] seeking? McLean (2012:196) responded to his own question by applying the thoughts of Aristotle where he distinguishes between the three types of knowledge: practical knowledge or wisdom, scientific knowledge and technical knowledge. He (2012:196) borrowed from Gadamer's interaction with Aristotle's practical wisdom concept, "in [his] argument that interpretation should always lead to some kind of practical wisdom in the art of living." McLean (2012:196) concluded that a "…positivistic model of biblical interpretation as a sovereign subject…with a properly hermeneutic model, which recognizes what is at stake for the interpreter is nothing less than self-transformation." These therefore makes the ideas of 'the suspicious reading of the text', 'scrutinizing the text for probable distortion' and 'allowing the text to surprise the reader' and also 'responsible reading' a better approach to reading the Bible.[54]

In conclusion, I would say the following about what my observations are when it comes to what the text means:

1. It could not be established whether there is any separation between the text and its writer. What is observed is that the text is a creation of the writer and as such the text directly or indirectly assumes the character of the writer. This according to our opinion extends to the biblical narrative.

2. The meaning derived from the text rest on the interpretation given to it by the interpreter. It could be said therefore that the text does not have a fixed meaning. The text is fluid and could flow towards the direction given to it by the interpreter.

3. Interpretation could either be positive or negative. Either way it does not affect the fact that an interpreter must at the end of his or her reading reach some sort of interpretation.

4. Interpretation is greatly influenced by a person's life experience. In other words a person worldview or ideology plays a major role in determining the outcome of interpretation.

5. Arguably the text is a neutral entity that is brought to life by the interpreter. Though the writer may have definitely had a purpose in mind before he or she began to write. This purpose is lost when the interpreter comes in contact with the text and this is because original intent of the author is something that is very complex to determine by the interpreter.

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[54] See McLean (2012:196) for further reading.

6. One could therefore argue that the text is a very complex living organism that draws its life from external factors such as the reader's ideologies and the reader's imagination.

2.5.1.2 What is the relationship between the writer/text and ideology?

In the previous section, an attempt was made to ascertain what a text means. In the opening paragraph of the discussion, it was mentioned that the relation between the text and its writer is a very complex one. It is important to acknowledge that it is difficult to separate the text from its writer. The writer constructs the text.[55] For the author to do so requires that he or she pours in their thoughts and being; in the words which in effect would become the work that would finally give birth to the final interpretation of the narrative. Carroll (1996:21) commenting on the text of Jeremiah stated that those who wrote the texts were readers in the first place. He concluded that "the book of Jeremiah is therefore…a reading of readings." The overarching question becomes whether the interpreter recognizes that the writer may have subtly or deceptively hidden other ideas within the text. If this is the case, does it mean that there is ideology in the text since, the author is a product of his or her worldview or ideological stands? Thus, if there is indeed ideology embedded in the text, how then would the interpreter be able to uncover such? And after uncovering the existence of such; what does the person do with it or how does he or she treat it?

It is the objective of the writer therefore, to attempt to answers the questions that were stated above in the preceding paragraph and it is his assumption that the answers to the identified questions would help throw some light on the relationship between the writer/text and ideology. This discussion would be focused mainly on attempting to uncover if there is ideology in the biblical text, especially on the Hebrew text but it may; from time to time, digress to include and borrow ideas from a broader perspective concerning ideology and text in general.

2.5.1.3 Is there ideology in the biblical text?

Ideology is everything a person does.[56] This opening statement might sound like an exaggeration, but if one is to critically apply his or her mind into the life a person leads, the

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[55] Tate (1991:9) opines that "a text is the product of an author, and the author is a product of an age." The age which the writer lived is under the influence of different ideologies that are at play in that particular era. This ideologies contributes greatly towards shaping the final form of products that comes from the period and this includes text written within the said period that the writer existed.

[56] Carroll (1998:104) discusses the fact that the problem with ideology lies on the fact that is everywhere and in everything. He opines that it is the natural condition of our existence. The medium through which

person would begin to see why there is ideology in every aspect of a person's existence. In this particular instance, ideology is equated to a person's worldview. Before we proceed with this discussion, it is important that reference is made to some of the definitions of ideology listed by Clines. Amongst the definitions of ideology listed by Clines (1995:9) which the writer considers to be directly related to the topic under discussion here are the following: 1. A relatively coherent set of ideas amounting to a world-view, or outlook on life 2. A set of such ideas special to a particular social class or group 3. The set of idea held by a dominant group in a society 4. Ideas serving the interest of a particular group, especially a dominant group 5. Ideas oriented toward action, ideas controlling or influencing actions and 6. Ideas, different from our own, that other people have. The question that comes to mind when one critically analyse the ideas that are found in these definitions and attempt to pass the Bible through the prism of these ideas is whether the Bible is in any way a victim of the ideas listed in these definition? In other words, whether the Bible is a victim of ideology in any manner?

In an attempt to answer the above question, the discussion would be focused *firstly,* on two important themes that could be identified in the Abraham narrative. They are: 1) the superior deity that called Abraham and 2) the God who told Abraham to take possession of a certain land, which resulted in what many, have come to consider today as, the land theology.[57] What is prominent in the narrative is could be described as religious and political worldviews or ideologies. There is also a third identifiable ideology that is detectable in the Bible; ideology or worldview of kingship (lords) and servanthood (subjects) or what could be alternatively referred to as "royal ideology".[58] The last theme identified as 'royal ideology' could be grouped under social-cultural ideology.

Dube (2000:66) identifies what she deemed as the use of land ideology in the Exodus-Joshua account as a tool by the Israelites to remove land from the rightful owners. She contends that, "the literary device used to represent land to be colonized, like those used to justify travelling, also revolves around God, characterizing it as a God promised land, a rich land, an inhabited land" (2000:62). The people whose land were disposed were by all accounts

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people lives and move and have their being. He acknowledges that it is pervasive, just like the air we breathe and no one can escape its influence. He points out the fact that ideology is found everywhere and is engrained in us and in all our operations.

[57] See Besty Halpern-Amaru (1994:2) for further reading on the theology of land in Jewish history.

[58] See the work of Marc Zvi Brettler (1995:91-97) where he discusses the presence of royal ideology in the writing of the book of Samuel. He included the evidence of such being found in other ancient near east literature by referring to this been documented in Mesopotamian historical inscriptions found in the Assyrian annals.

seen as being inferior both in culture and also by virtue of their belief system. One can argue that the event is a clear case of people basing their action on their ideological holding and using same to deprive another of her rightful possession.

The biblical narratives in the Pentateuch were set in a manner whereby the God of Abraham always emerges as the victor in every contest that took place between him and other gods. From the very beginning when, "he revealed himself to Abraham, to Jacob and finally in a grand manner, to Moses: he makes a covenant with his people by means which they pledge themselves to a monotheistic faith" (Garbini 1986:52). The narratives were constructed in such a manner that Yahweh was shown to be the only true God and thus superior to the other gods. This also makes those that worship him; a people that are superior to the others. This superior ideology could be seen from how Yahweh allegedly protected those from his chosen race against all odd and to the detriment of those others whose causes, allegiance and beliefs are rested in other gods.

The narrators used war situations and other confrontational events that happened between the so called people of God and others to project the superiority of God of Abraham. An example of a biblical narrative where the writers used a war narrative to show the superiority of Yahweh over the god of other nation is the story of David and Goliath. The narrator set the tale in such a manner that Yahweh triumphed over the god of the Philistines. It is without doubt that these stories were designed to show a God that is superior to other gods. Even, when the people of Israel were defeated in battles or encounters, the stories were shown to represent a time that God was punishing his people for their wrong doings. The blame is thus shifted from God to his people. They also resorted to using other narratives such as priestly encounters; like the narrative of Elijah, the prophet of God; pitching against the Prophets of Baal and emerging the victor at the end of what a critical interpreter would see as a battle between gods. It could be argued that the writer's ideology is alive both within and behind the text.[59] What any critical interpreter would uncover is that there is an ideological

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[59] Carroll R (2000:19), elaborates on the complexity involved when a person attempts to uncover ideologies that is embedded in the text or textual ideologies. He is of the opinion that task even become more difficult when the interpreter sought to uncover the ideologies behind the original materials. He alleges that some people completely disagrees that there is anything like original ideologies in the collection of book we call the Bible today because of the processes of redaction and emendation the Bible have undergone throughout history. He made a specific reference to those who are of liberationist persuasion who tries to uncover from the text an original impulse, that is ideologically commendable and relevant for today and also those that comes to the text from a feminist and womanist approaches; this category primarily is concerned about gender issues.

intent which is at play and which prompted the writers to craft the text in such a manner that the God of Abraham was always portrayed as the victor that vanquishes the rest of the gods in biblical text.[60] The definition of ideology that was listed in the first paragraph explains that it could either be a conscious or an unconscious act, therefore either way, the biblical writer's propagated ideology.

Clines (1995:200) came to the following conclusions after looking at the concept of "God in the Pentateuch" through his analysis of the "Exodus narrative" and the narrative of "God and the chosen people." According to him (1995:200):

> This is all right if you happen to be an Israelite…You know what you need to know, which is that Yahweh is your God…But if you happen to be a Hittite, or even a twentieth-century reader of the Pentateuch, how congenial is it to encounter in its pages a deity who is bound in this way to just one nation: the nation claims that he is their peculiar deity, and he professes that he has chosen them as his own peculiar people.

A person who engages with the biblical narratives and who applies the standard that is utilized in critical interpretation in modern time would not be found wanting if he or she declares that the narrative is riddled with a nationalistic agenda which could be best described as a quest by some people to present themselves as operating under the auspices of a particular worldviews or ideologies which purportedly is superior to that of the others. Fundamentally, it could be argued that there were ideologies or worldviews that went behind the construction of the text by the authors.

When the war narratives and the other narratives that are found in the Old Testament are looked at superficially, one could easily get the impression that the contest was between the players that were mentioned in the text; but if the text is studied further; reading from "left to right" as has been suggested by scholars such as Clines (1995:26) or is interpreted using the ideological-critical methods as have been applied by scholars such as Carroll (1990, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1998) and others, it could been seen that it goes beyond the human players that were mentioned in the text. The text on a deeper level is representing the contest between gods: the God of Abraham and other gods.[61]

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[60] See Carroll (1998:111) for further reading. He describes the kind of behaviour that the writers tries to project as a "behaviour designed to encourage resistance against cultural imperialism."

[61] See Clines (1995:24) were he discusses the tendency to concealment (deliberate or unconscious) by writers of the Hebrew Bible. He stated that on the surface writers of the Bible presents a picture of "coherence" and "rationality" and "they give the appearance of sincerity and either moral fervour or objectivity." However, beneath all of this lies the" issues of power, of self-identity and security, of group

In exploring the narrative of the Ten Commandments as Divine Law, Clines (1995:26) stated,

> The first thing I observe when I try to take this text seriously, when I ask whether I believe it, when I consider whether I can buy its ideology, is its opening words, 'And God spoke all these words, saying' (Exod. 20.10), or, in its Deuteronomy version, its closing words, 'These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain…and he added no more' (Deut. 5.22). Taking these words seriously, and not brushing them aside as some strange Hebrew idiom, I find myself asking: Did God (if there is God) actually speak audible words out of the sky over a mountain in the Arabian Peninsula in the late second millennium BCE?

Here, Clines (1995:26), applied modern standards and values; which arguably are parts of element that makes up ideology (if one should go by the meanings of ideology as listed in the first paragraph of this section) in his interpretative engagement with the text. Clines (1995:26) admitted that it would not come as a "shock to many readers of these pages if *he* says that *he* does not believe that any such thing ever happened, and that *he* would be surprised if any scholarly reader did either" (letters denoted by italic were added by me). The inference which I drew whilst interacting with Clines approach in dealing with the text is that he possesses the ability which enabled him to approach his interpretation differently; using an ideological-critical method and that it was this ability that helped him to uncover the ideologies which was most probably hidden in the text.

Carroll (1995:29) used the work of George Orwell entitled, "The Principles of Newspeak" as a point of reference, to describe the Bible as a book that contains propaganda about YHWH and its concomitant denigration of other gods…He (1995:29) stated that the work presented in the Hebrew Bible (the grand narrative of Genesis to Chronicles) is nothing other than ideological literature that was concocted by some in the second temple period. He (1995:29) came to the conclusion that the worship of YHWH is most likely the dominant ideology of the Bible (Hebrew Bible) and according to Carroll, the traces of this ideology could be noticed in the entire literature and that it also affects the interpreters in their interpretation. In another work, Carroll (1998:101-114) evaluates the Hebrew Bible as a text that possesses elements of thought-praxis or ideologies which have its origin from the ideologies of the writers which they constructed from their view of the world and how to live in it. He (1998:108) also made reference to the position that most modern readers would take concerning the teachings of

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solidarity, of fear and desire, of need and greed," which may have played a role or even a leading role in the production of the text

the Bible in regards to gods. Carroll (1998:108) said he prefers treating the "biblical statements about the divine as contestable and contested."

There are aspects of the religious worldviews or ideologies that were displayed by the biblical writers in their writings which could be classified under the banner of social-cultural ideologies. Included among these are ideas that pattern to gender subjugation, land ideology and also class ideology that deals with the notion of kingship and subjects. There are dissenting voices today that are alive both within and outside the church establishment such as those from feminine theologians which are highly critical of the manner biblical writers constructed the text and thus are prone to challenging them.[62] There are also the voices of people that are reading from the third world and Africa that are of the opinion that the Bible was written from an ideological point of view that disfavours them. The question that readily comes to mind is whether these concerns raised by these voices are legitimate enough to be given some sort of consideration by the academia and other readers.

Feminist theologians and those who lend support to their cause claim that the Bible narrative was constructed in a manner that it promotes ideological biasness toward women. In other words, it contains narratives that encourage the suppression and oppression of women in the society. Ringe (1998:142) alleges that "women's stories in any form are scarce in the Bible, and where women are mentioned, it is only as they relate to the purposes of the male authors and editors and of religious authorities who made decisions about canonization." Similarly, Schneiders (1993:35) discusses what she considers to be tension that arose between the biblical text and women whose feminist consciousness began to rise as modernity sets in. As time progresses, women began to emerge, their worldviews also began to shift and this had a direct influence on how some of them interpreted the biblical narratives. Based on this development, Schneiders (1993:35) points to the fact that the manner which the Bible narratives was structured "privileged the male as the normative human and women (insofar as they were featured at all) as inferior in themselves, subjected to males by divine design, marginal to salvation history, and far more marked by and responsible for sin and evil in the world than men." She (1993:35) gave the reason why she thinks that women were subjugated in this manner during the time the Bible was produced as the fact that, "the biblical text, like most text in world history, arose in a patriarchal historical setting, that is, in a society and

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[62] Collins (2004:19) discusses the approach used by modern interpreters such as feminist scholars that read the text from a particular social location. This group treat the text as a reflection of historical situations. One implication that emerges from such treatment of the text is that the text is viewed by them as a reflection of the ideological interests of their authors.

culture in which ruling males owned and dominated other people and most property and used them with impunity for their purposes." She (1993:35) defines "*Patriarchy*" as the term that refers to the ideology and social system of "father rule," and she claims that this system (ideology) was virtually the dominant ideology at the time the Bible text was produced.

It is therefore the quest to expose the presence of patriarchal worldviews or ideologies in the Bible that led those that embraces feminist criticism as an approach to biblical interpretation such as Clines and Exum (1993:17) to state that the primary concern of feminist criticism is not the text but the issues and concerns that is linked to worldview and the political enterprise which was dominant during the period the Bible was put together. Clines and Exum (1993:17) also stated that the enterprise that is been pursued by these category of interpreters allows them the privilege to recognize that in the "history of civilization women have been marginalized by men and have been denied access both to social positions of authority and influence and to symbolic production (the creation of symbols, such as making of texts)." According to them (1993:17) the enterprise of feminist criticism in biblical studies is therefore concerned with exposing strategies by which "women's subordination is inscribed in and justified by texts." In much more general ways the feminist interpreters in effect are rejecting the idea that there is a proper way to interpret. They promote the notion that the texts could be read in a variety of ways.

The biblical writers operated from ideological positions which found nothing wrong with humans having other humans as slaves as could be seen from the biblical literature which they produced. They justified this particular worldview as a system that was created and that was ordained by their God. According to Tate (1991:33), "writers can exercise no alternative but to express themselves in the conceptual and ideological categories of their own time." He (1991:33) added that "a people's conceptual framework is especially evident in its religious and philosophical expressions, and these expressions most often are interrelated." The narrative of Solomon, who was declared to be the wisest person ever according to 1 Kings 4:30, had slaves as part of his heroic accomplishment that qualified him to be judged by the writers as the wisest person ever. The question that could easily arise in the mind of a modern interpreter; who most likely would be judging the biblical text based on contemporary values and standards is whether God, who according to the biblical writers was an all knowing God, did not see the institution of slavery as inhumane? Another closely related question would be whether Solomon wisdom did not awaken within his conscience the fact that slavery was bad for humanity?

51

2.6 Present reader ideology and the text

In any of act of reading, the reader interacts with the text. Conversely, it could be argued that the text is also interacting with the reader. Both the text and the reader come with its ideology. It must be understood that the ideology contained within the text has the potential to impact on the prevailing ideology of the reader. However, the converse cannot be true because the text is static and would always remain the same. Instead, what may happen is that the present reader may begin to question the veracity of the ideology therein contained. To counteract such effect may require the present day reader to have a wide vision of world behind the text to enable him or her to be able to grasp the ideological world of the text (Tate 1991:34).

Often times, the true contextualization of a text, come alive when the reader identifies with the writer and his circumstances. This makes hermeneutic an easier process because the exegetical values are alive in the reader. Pre-eminently, the ideology of the reader which is greatly intertwined with his or her circumstances plays a major role in influencing his criticism or acceptance of the text. For instance, the understanding of nature today with advancement of science puts a present day reader in a very difficult position to accept some of the biblical text in their literal form. On the other hand, readers may easily identify with Amos' notion of oppression of the poor and other form of injustices that took place in the society that the book of Amos was produced.

The book of Amos that is accepted by most biblical scholars as a prophetic book for instance, argues that the sin committed by the Israelites at the time drew the wrath of God. God is said to have been so displeased by their acts that he caused certain calamity to be visited upon them as punishment. He is also said to have allowed them to go into captivity. The ideological leaning of some of the present day readers of the Amos 5 may lead them towards encountering a conflict with some of the portion of the text of Amos 5. This is because today people are aware and sometimes are witnesses of the same natural disasters. And according to the knowledge which they possess, such natural occurrences are not necessarily linked to acts of God. Most of the time, the explanation given to such events revolves around the present day human understanding of science and its relation to the physical environment. It is this same more advanced scientific knowledge that impacts greatly on the ideology of a present day reader and makes it difficult for the present day reader to read in an "old fashion way" (Carroll 2000:4). Rather, the present day reader is most likely to engage in his or her Bible reading strategically (Carroll 2000:4-5). Today, it could be argued that Bible reading is happening in a new world that is characterized by a changing "ideological" and "sociocultural"

experience that is different from what obtained in the ancient world of the biblical times (Carroll 2000:4).

It must be understood that Amos and his audience lived under a particular political, social-economic condition. Amos wrote guided by the conviction that the political, social-economic situations was in direct conflict with Yahweh's script of justice and righteousness. There were people who were so marginalized within their own social structure as of that time that they would have willed a cataclysmic intervention. The book of Amos presents a narrative which is based on a strong religious ideology which arguably finds its root in Yahweh. If one may accept the fact that ideology controls people's way of life, it would therefore mean that the ideology under which Amos operated would have appealed to such audiences.

Justice and righteous are human practices and therefore cannot be divorced from political-social-economic manipulations.[63] For although there are standards set by God, the inherent sinful nature of man makes it an evolutionary process. It could be argued that being that they are human makes them an ideological concept and ideology itself evolves with time. The ideology that God resides in us means that justice and righteousness is an expression that a person must exhibit in his conducts and deeds. Accepting however the depravity of humans, justice and righteousness has been so modified by man that today understands of this hendiadys is progressively changing.

2.7 Hermeneutical issues and concerns

Here, the discussion would focus mostly on application of the text of Amos, with emphasis on Amos 5, over the years by those that are reading and interpreting the text. There have been different applications by different interpreters. It must be noted that the book is popular among those that could be described as sitting on the theological fringes. This includes those that see it as a book that deals with social injustices such as liberation theologians; black theologians; feminist theologians and those pressing for the acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals and their practices within the church movement. Some of the questions that arise in the course of one engaging with the book of Amos and especially the Amos 5 text are: What is the main thrust of Amos' message? Was it about social injustices only or did Amos go beyond social injustices by anchoring his thoughts in the worship of Yahweh? Has the text being abused by how some has applied it; using it falsely to justify what was not originally intended by Amos?

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[63] The story of King Zedekiah proclaiming liberation as seen in Jeremiah 34:8-11. The motivation behind this proclamation is political (Weinfeld 1995:13).

Hasel (1991:101-104) reviewed some of the views of scholars concerning social justice as seen in the book of Amos. Some of the scholars believe that the book explicitly is designed to address the issue of social justice and therefore supports Marxist and socialist ideology. Those that are in support of this view include the proponent of various liberation theologies. Another group of scholars links Amos' social criticism to Israel's covenantal relation with Yahweh; land which was given to them in fulfilment of Yahweh's promise to the people of Israel; the observation of justice and righteousness that is directly linked to the land which Yahweh gave the people and the cult; and lastly, "God's charismatic empowerment of the prophet". Hasel (1991:104) concludes that Amos was not necessarily someone who was engaged in social revolutionary acts on humanitarian grounds. This means that Amos cannot be directly associated with our "modern cultural oriented social criticism" (Hasel 1991:104). This leaves Amos to be understood as spokesman for Yahweh that served "as a defender of the cause of Yahweh" (Hasel 1991:104).

Hasel's (1991:101-104) discussion brings to light some of the hermeneutical issues that could be experienced by a present day interpreter while studying a Bible text such as Amos 5. The first hermeneutical issue that is identifiable is literary issues. The application of a biblical text such as Amos 5 could be consciously or unconsciously expanded or even manipulated, in order to accommodate the views and ideological baggage of the interpreter. The concern for a critical interpreter will therefore be the measures he or she will take to prevent the exploitation of the text to arrive at an interpretation that is beyond what the text means. An honest critical interpretation requires that the interpreter should as much as possible, allow the text to speak for itself and not attempt to impose their presupposition on it.[64] This requires that the interpreter should always approach his or her reading with healthy measure of critical suspicion, bearing in mind that he or she could be easily drawn into the pitfall of hermeneutic of convenience.

Another important hermeneutical issue and concern would relate to the issues of time and space. The composition and redaction of the book of Amos happened within a particular time and space that is different from today. The events of that time may be said to be different from what obtains today. The question of time and space brings to fore the argument that biblical text is historically conditioned. Prominent in this regard is what actually is behind the text. The social-political condition of the time that the book of Amos was produced had either direct or indirect influence on the production of the book. Schleiermacher (1977:104)

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[64] See Thiselton (2009:5) for further reading.

highlighted the importance of historical interpretation of the text of the New Testament. This assumption could also be said to be of importance in Old Testament interpretation. The interpreter deals with the problem of being located within a time and space that is different from the time and space of the composition and redaction. Thus, the interpreter finds himself or herself living in both his time and space and also that of the writer(s). In order for the interpreter to avoid unnecessary pitfalls requires that the interpreter makes attempt to acquaint himself or herself with the historical and sociological events that happened at the time the text was put together. Doorly (1989:32) observes that a person does not necessarily need to be "a sociologist" in other to be able "to understand the economic conditions in rural Israel in the eight century which provided the ground from which the content and substance of the oracles of Amos of Tekoa grew." I think that he is correct in his observation because there is plenty of literature that is available for an interested interpreter or reader to engage with, for the person to gain a reasonable knowledge of the world behind the text. It may be true therefore to say that "without understanding the situation behind the text, the meaning may escape us" (Thiselton 2009:23).

2.8 Considering the contextual situations of the contemporary reader

This discussion will focus on the complexities which exist in the world of the contemporary reader. The existential context of the contemporary reader consciously or unconsciously forces him or her to approach a Bible text already having certain presuppositions and pre-understanding of it. The very fact that the reader approaches the text with certain degree of presupposition and pre-understanding makes it important that consideration should be given to the probable reasons that contribute towards the reader developing these two factors. Pokorny (2011:89) comments that:

> The basic fact to bear in mind when working with a text is the motivation behind our interest in the particular text that we are interpreting. The term "provisional knowledge" or, more often, "preunderstanding"…is the concept we use for this kind of motivation…Provisional knowledge is part of our historicity…

The above comment raises to great height the idea of a non-existence of neutrality in Bible interpretation. The debate of whether there is any reading that is neutral led Fiorenza (1988:10) to state that, "presupposition-less exegesis is not possible or desirable." I may rephrase this statement to say; presupposition-less exegesis is not achievable by any in a world where people operates within different existential context. This is because our existential context influences greatly how we approach our reading and subsequently, the meaning we

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give to the text that we read. "Texts must be read and made sense of within the reader's complex and multifaceted world" (Tate 1991: 146). This implies that the meaning we derive from a text is reliant on our understanding of the world we live. This observation extends to both ordinary reading and intellectual reading of any text; including the biblical text. Therefore, the important question that needs to be asked in this instance is; what are the factors that influence a reader to develop these presuppositions as well as to make the person, approach the text with certain degree of pre-understanding?

Perhaps, it is important to note at this juncture that the biblical hermeneutical enterprise is a complex endeavour. However, the writer of this dissertation has identified the following elements as factors which may contribute to the reader's contextual situations: (1) location and (2) social location such as; gender, ethnicity, race, culture and education. It can be argued that whether individual or collectively, these factors contribute in creating the contextual situations of the contemporary reader. The writer would therefore undertake a brief discussion of each of the factors identified.

Location: it is important to clarify what the word "location" signifies in its present usage. Here, it signifies the physical location where the reader is situated and where he or she is undertaking the biblical hermeneutical enterprise. The location of reader plays an important role in determining the outcome of his or her reading. For instance, an African Christian may end up having different perspective of a text from an European Christian that is reading the same text. One could argue that the reason behind such outcomes is the fact that both readers approach the text having had different life experiences which in turn led to them to develop different life interest. This individual life interest is mostly shaped by our political, sociological and historical experience.

It is important to observe that there is another type of interest that is known as "interpretive interest" that is recognized by some biblical scholars such as; Brett (1990); Fowl (1990) and West (2008). This group of biblical scholars prefer to treat "interpretive interest" as separate from "life interest." West (2008:38) explains that, "interpretive interests are those dimensions of text that are of interest to the interpreter, while life interests are those concerns and commitments that drive or motivate the interpreter to come to the text." In my response to their position, however, I would say that the two are greatly intertwined and thus, it is almost impossible to distinguished one from the other. This is because interpretive interest characteristically is shaped by life interest. As a reader, when I approach the biblical text, my

life experience greatly plays a role in shaping my "interpretive interest." The physical location of a reader plays a significant role in determining this life interest.

Social location: There is a very thin line between physical location and social location of the reader of the biblical text. This is because factors such as race, ethnicity and culture which are considered as issues in social location could likewise be treated as issues in regard to physical location. But in this dissertation, social location will be considered as where the reader is situated in terms of his or her belief system and practices. The motivation behind the use of the phrase "belief system" and "practices," is to show that social location deals with issues that are mostly concerned with the reader's internal qualities. Some of this issues which are considered here as issues that exist internally in a Bible reader are issues of race, ethnicity, culture, gender and etc. Though, these qualities are manifested physical through our behaviours.

Fiorenza (1988:5) observes that a reader's existential "…context is as important as text". What we see depends on where we stand. One's social location or rhetorical context is decisive of how one sees the world, constructs reality, or interprets biblical texts." This implies that our reading is not neutral. Rather, our social location plays a very important role in determining the outcome of our reading. The fact that "what we see" during our reading is dependent on "where we stand" links one's reading to the question of time and space and what may have become acceptable to people that is existing at that particular time and space in history. In other words, what may have become acceptable within our "social context"[65] today, may have been unacceptable in the ancient world of the Bible. This could also be reverse to mean that what is unacceptable today, may have been acceptable in the ancient world of the Bible. The "ever-changing patterns of living and thinking" makes "the processes of Bible reading" to be "constantly changing" (Carroll 2004:4). Thus, the notion that "context is as important as text" becomes important because it is within the existential context of the reader that he or she "sees the world" and "constructs reality." The reality which the reader constructs will at the end influence the manner he or she will "interpret the Bible."

2.9 Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the historical-political-social-religious situation in Israel and the Ancient Near East during the time the Amos was put together. As part of this discussion, we made attempt to discuss the meaning of ideology and what the text mean. The

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[65] The phrase 'Social context' is used here as a synonym to 'social location'.

probable effect of ideology on the text and the reader were discussed. The final part of the chapter discussed the issue of hermeneutics and the context of the present reader.

From the historical-political discussion, it was established that Amos appeared on the scene during the period of Jeroboam II as the king of Northern kingdom and Uzziah as the king of Judah. Both reigned Israel during the eight century BCE. During this period, the internal political establishment of both kingdoms enjoyed a considerable amount of stability. On the hand, there was great deal of instability in the Ancient Near East. This led to incessant war among the nations. Though, both Kings were succeeded by their sons, but the warring at the long run eventually led to the fall of both kingdoms. This could be interpreted as being part Amos' prophesy.

The socio-religious condition in Israel at that time could be said to be a mixture of positive and negative events. On the positive side lies the fact that the period of stability brought with it an economic boom. The increase in wealth was also accompanied by economic disparity. There were those who could not make it to the side of haves. Those that could be described as being successful exploited the have not's. Amos condemned the injustices that were happening in the society. He indicted the ruling class and the elite accusing them of doing things which were contrary to demand of Yahweh. One of the foremost accusations that Amos laid against the ruling class and the elites was that they contravened the existing concept of "justice and righteousness." This was supposed to be the guiding beacon of the moral and ethical life of the people. Amos went further to condemn the cultic practices that were happening, especially among the wealthy class. Amos saw these practices as being connected to the exploitation of the less privileged and the poor in the society.

The discussion also showed that both the text and the present reader are exposed to the issue of ideology. The text got its ideology from the writer. The reader or the interpreter is subjected to ideological influence through his or her existential experience. It means that he or she approaches the text with a certain degree of ideology. The writer's ideology which is embedded in the texts usually interacts with the reader and at the end both contributes towards the outcome of the interpretation. Perhaps, it is important to note that the discussion led the writer to conclude that ideological neutrality is none existent. Another important point that was identified is the fact that it is the interpreter who constructs the meaning of the text. The text is neutral up until the interpreter engages with it. Then it will come to life. This implies that the text becomes a living thing the moment it comes in contact with the interpreter. Otherwise, it remains dormant.

The subsequent chapter will focus on exegetical study of Amos 5. It is the presupposition of the writer that the theme of history and ideology will surface in the discussion.

Chapter 3: Exegetical study of Amos 5

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the researcher conducted a background study of the historical-political-sociological-religious conditions that were in existence at the time of composition of the book of Amos. Furthermore, the issue of ideology, hermeneutics and the context of the contemporary reader were discussed. The studies were done with the aim of giving the reader an overview of the origin and events that happened around the time of the composition of Amos.

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct an exegetical study of Amos 5. The exegetical study would enable the researcher to attempt to establish the meaning of the words and sentences that are found in Amos 5 in its final form. In order to achieve the stated objective, the study of the text in the original Hebrew language will be undertaken.

This study will adopt a combined use of diachronic and synchronic reading of Amos 5. The adoption of both synchronic and diachronic methodologies in this study is because the writer believes that both are necessary, if a holistic understanding of the text is to be achieved at the end. In this regard, it is important therefore to begin the study by conducting a survey of the works of different scholars who have applied the different methods in their study on the book of Amos. Perhaps, at this juncture, it would be helpful to explain what the writer means by diachronic and synchronic reading.

Diachronic reading has its focus on form, source, redaction and historical setting of the text. The primary purpose of diachronic studies is to understand the meaning which the author intended to convey to his original audience. In order to achieve this aim, Branick (2012:19), suggests that "the first step is to respect the historical context of the writing." In Culler's (1981:48) view, historical study of the text is geared towards uncovering "what the author meant by it, or what it would have meant to an ideal audience of its day, or what accounts for its every detail without violating the historical norms of the genre." In light of all these statements, it could be said "historical diachronic interpretation focused above all on the creation of the text and its relation to what preceded its creation…" (Pokorny 2011:140). This stresses the significance and usefulness of attempting to understand and reconstruct the historical context that existed during the time that the books of the Bible were written, it would therefore be a violation of the text for me as an interpreter to ignore this aspect of study in my interpretation.

To further illustrate this point, Dobbs-Allsopp (1999:235) highlights the fact that historical criticisms "have proven quite successful in illuminating the history, religion, and culture of Ancient Israel." It should be noted that any realistic interpretation of the Bible cannot avoid the history, religion and culture of ancient Israel. The interpreter understanding of this critical but vital aspect of the life that was lived in Israel at the period under study will enable him to have a more profound understanding of the meaning of the text. The deficiency associated with diachronic reading is that the exegete spends lots of time trying to uncover what is behind the text, such as; redaction history and trying to re-arrange the texts and to piece together historical information about the text. This exercise unfortunately is mostly based on a hypothesis which is not completely reliable.

On the other hand, synchronic reading is interested in the text as a whole. Most of the time it is applied in rhetorical analysis and ask questions about what "…connects a given text with the other texts of a similar type and from the same period" (Pokorny 2011:140). Also, "it seeks to understand form and content as mutually interconnected, to throw light on the unity of the text" (Pokorny 2011:140). This implies that, "…necessarily, it seeks to understand the text from inside; depending as little as possible on information gained from outside" (Pokorny 2011:140). Furthermore, "A thorough synchronic approach is based on the text in its present form and does not even concern itself with the intention of the author" (Pokorny 2011:140). The weakness with synchronic reading is that it tends to do away entirely with the notion of investigating the history behind the text in its strict sense. There is also disagreement amongst scholars that uses synchronic approaches in their study of Amos on the final structure of the book.

Since both methodology suffer identifiable deficiency, it would be right then for an exegete to explore the strength of both worlds, in order to cover for the weakness of each if applied as a sole methodology in biblical study. Barr (1995:7) believes that, "…diachronic consideration explains the synchronic…facts." In the same vein, Pokorny (2011:123) talks about the inseparable nature of methods in practice because "practice has shown that interpretation is impossible without a combination of method." Based on the facts presented, this study will treat the Amos 5 text as complete literature work but will also look at it as a text that was put together during a particular historical period. Groenewald (2007:1018) opines that, "text should be interpreted in their historical contexts, in light of the literary and cultural conventions of their time." This in effect allows for it to be treated as a complete work.

61

The study would present an exposition of the various passages that is contained in Amos 5. These various passages would be expounded and the analyses of the structure of the different passages would be conducted. The Hebrew text would be discussed based on observations made from the NKJV and NRSV translations of the text. This will include grammar and word study. Comments would be rendered using a verse-by-verse approach as well as looking at the passage as a whole. Finally, the study will be making references to lexicons and commentaries which would be more of a research overview.

3.1.1 Literary development of the book of Amos

Any effort geared towards understanding the book of Amos should include a study of its literary development. Literary development includes how the book was put together from the time the original writer transmitted his message to his audience and other works that were probably added to the original piece by others before the book was accepted as part of the canon of both the Jewish and Christian religious establishments. This effort requires that one should tentatively attempt to place it in the realm of history. The important issues to be considered are what took place during and after it original composition.

The question of form of transmission can be very broad and can have a wide ranging influence and effect on the text which was received and which became part of the Jewish and Christian canon. This discussion would make attempt to include it, as much as possible were it is deemed necessary as it would be unattainable to attempt to present an exhaustive discussion of this particular subject in this dissertation. Admittedly, most of the reconstruction that happens around these issues is based on hypothesis put together by scholars and others from evidences that are available to us today. It is significant to note that the passage of time between then and now have eroded lots of important knowledge of exactly what happened at the time this events occurred in history.

One of the prominent works that have influenced modern scholarship of the book of Amos in this regard is the work of Julius Wellhausen that was first published in 1878. He aptly observed that the ending of the book that speaks about the future restoration of Israel (Amos 9:8-18) is a total contrast to the message of judgement, condemnation and ultimate destruction that the God of Israel and the whole world would eminently wrought upon the people which the rest of the book portrays.

This observation by Wellhausen brings to the fore the question of what on one hand could be accepted as the work originally done by historical Amos and those that otherwise

could be ascribed to others.[66] The section below is designed to briefly review the works other Old Testament scholars have carried out in course of time in their studies of the literary development of the book of Amos. Different reasons have served to motivate scholars in their choice of what they consider the best method to apply in their effort to understand the book of Amos and its literary composition as well as its development as a complete literary work. The primary focus of this section would be to review some of the issues such as; Authorship; Literary style and structure of the Book of Amos and the study would be based on what Scholars have already written concerning these issues.

3.1.1.1 Jorg Jeremias

According to Jeremias (1998: 5), historical Amos in his original message announced the end of Israel. Amos announced this message because the people lived a life that was contrary to what God expected from them as his people. God has commanded them to observe certain commandment as his people. Jeremias made a very important observation concerning the literary development of the book, pointing out that it would pose a challenge for modern critical interpreters to be able to separate what was originally the work of the prophet from what can be considered to be later additions. Not-with-standing, Jeremias was still of the opinion that scholars should engage in the task of reconstructing the literary development of the book. This according to him would help in bringing to light the activities of those whose primary aim was probably to re-situate the book in their particular situation as of the time the carried out the redactional activities which they did in accordance with their perception and understanding of Yahweh.

Jeremias (1998:5) made further observations concerning the similarity and dissimilarity between the Book of Amos and the Book of Hosea. He is of the opinion that the two books should be studied together in order for one to have an insightful knowledge and understanding of the redactional process which the book have undergone. He divides the growth of composition of the Book as; (1) a probable earlier strata of the book, which may not include Amos actual words themselves. This according to him would include the writings found in chapters 3-6 and also the oracles against the nations that was proclaimed in chapters 1-2. (2) The other parts of the book, he attributes to the work of subsequent redactional activities that took place before the exile; and during the exilic and in the postexilic (9:7-15) history of

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[66] The term others represents the work of those that scholars have come to designate as redactors.

transmission of Amos' messages. Jeremias believes that the book that we have today is the result of the latter activities that was undertaken by late postexilic redactors.

3.1.1.2 James Luther May

May (1969:12) believed that majority of the text we have today is the work of historical Prophet Amos. He divided the book into three sections; (1) the direct utterances made by the prophet in course of carrying out his function in obedience to God's command; (2) narratives that were rendered in a first-person by the prophet; and (3) a third person narrative about the prophet. Mays sees the massage as being pessimistic, offering no hope of restoration to the people. He identifies three different but distinct types of writings in book. The first is the words spoken by the prophet (1:3-6:14; 8:4-14; 9:7-15), the first person narratives that was uttered by the prophet which includes (7:1-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-6), and a thirds person narrative spoken about the prophet (7:10-17). He also acknowledged the existence of other smaller kinds of material found in the book such as the title (1:1), hymnic poetry (1:2; 4:13; 5:8; 9:5; 8:8) and what can be identified as a short wisdom styled observation seen in 5:13.

He suggested that the final form of the book which we have were most likely the work of people he described as having a first-hand acquaintance with Amos' career. He proposed that the same group were also responsible for the collection of the Prophet's sayings and for the arrangement of the book. Also, May contend that further redaction and expansion of the book took place in the cultic community in Jerusalem with the aim of adapting the work of the prophet for use in Judean circle. They probably added the hymns in 1:2 and also 8:8. Furthermore, it was the work that was conducted on the book during the exile by those from the Deuteronomistic community. This group according to May were especially interested in preserving the prophetic institution; noting that their activities on the book is clearly observed in 1:1 and 3:7; and the oracle against Tyre, Edom and Judah were most probable added to the book in order to contemporize it to fit the event of that period.

Mays (1969:13) conceded that his reconstruction work on Amos was primarily based on surmise rather than adequate evidence. This implies that what he did is mostly making suggestions on what the possible final form of the Book of Amos could probably be. His findings were based on evidences which were available to him and which became the bases of the formulation his theory.

3.1.1.3 Hans Walter Wolff

Hans Walter Wolff (1977) is perhaps one of the most influential and most recognizable commentators on the book of Amos because of the detailed manner in which he separated the book into six strata. It is therefore important to attempt to elaborate on the work of Wolff as it continues to be relevant in the field of study of Amos today.

Wolff (1977:107) recognizes that the first layer which can be identified in the Book of Amos is the words that were said by the prophet himself. Generally, speaking these words could be found between Amos 3-6. Wolff analysis of the Amos text resulted in him declaring assuredly in what he referred to as "free witness speech," that the actual prophet spoke the word found in Amos 4:4-5; 5:7; 10-11; 18-26; and 6-12. He also proposes that text such as Amos 3:1a + 2, 9:11, 12b-15; 4:1-3; 5:1-3; 12 +16-17; 6:13-14 were also sayings used by the prophet to introduce his presentation of the oracle of Yahweh. Lastly, he believes that the texts which includes Amos 3:12; 5:4-5; 21-24 +27; and maybe 6:8 were possibly statements which the prophet made. According to Wolff, one could found pure oracles of Yahweh within these statements.

Wolff (1977:107) identified a second layer as the visions found in Amos 7:1-8; 8:1-2; and 9; 1-4. He also sees the oracles against the nations as part of this stratum. He called the redaction process that was undertaken at this stage "the transmission of the cycles." Though, Wolff believes that these text can be somewhat linked to the prophet himself, yet, he drew attention to their literary consistency. Wolff compared the characteristic that is found in the texts of the second layer to the freely arranged nature of the text of Amos 3-6 and he claims that they stand as witness to the fact that at the stage these texts were written, the literary development was already at a very advance stage.

Wolff (1977:108) identified a third layer as a redactional process that was carried out by the disciples of the prophet. He believes that they added the texts of Amos 1:1 and 7:9-17 and also 5:5a, 13, 14-15; 6:2; 6b; 8-4-7; 8; 8a, 9-10; 13-14; 9:7. Wolff claimed that he arrived at this conclusion through his studies of the language and style of the other speeches which he claimed that can be authoritatively attributed as the original sayings of the prophet. According to Wolff, the disciples carried out their work in Judah between the periods of 760-730 BCE. He believes that a person or persons that were part of the group were present when Amos had his dispute with Amaziah in Bethel.

Wolff (1977:111) identifies the fourth layer as Amos 1:2; 3:14b; 4:6-13; 5:6; 8-9; and 9:1. He claimed that the use of the words Bethel and Altar led him to arrive at this particular

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conclusion and he linked the activities of this group to the destruction of Bethel. Wolff claimed that this group is made up of those that were anti Bethel and that their activities were a reflection of their feelings.

Wolff (1977:112) describes the fifth strata in the Amos texts as the Deuteronomistic layer. He believed that the texts of 1:1b; 3:1b; 3:7; 6:1a; 8:11-12; 9-12; 2:4-5; and 10-12 belongs to this category. He based his findings on the fact that this layer contains similar catch words but also the sentences possess unique characteristics. Wolff found the method which they employed in their criticism to be too shrewd; claiming that it was directed only towards Judah.

Lastly, Wolff (1977:113) separated the redactional activities that were carried out during postexilic period. He pointed out that at that period the theology of salvific eschatology was widely accepted by the Yahwist. He identified the texts of Amos 5:22; 6:5; 9:8b and 11-15 as belonging to this group. It is within this group of text that one can notice a reversal in the pessimistic message that spoke about condemnation. The redactional activities brought with a message of hope for the future contrary to previous messages that was completely laden with message of destruction.

3.1.1.4 Tchavdar S. Hadjiev

Tchavdar S. Hadjiev (2009) is a modern advocate of the use of redaction-critical methods in the study of the Book of Amos. He is of the opinion that the book of Amos was originally a single work which was later expanded and redacted by the disciples of the prophet and others. The work appeared in his doctoral studies on the composition and redaction of the Book of Amos published in 2007.

Hadjiev (2009:183) identified the text of Amos 4:1-6:7 as the first version which he referred to as the "repentance scroll." According to Hadjiev, the text was most likely composed between 733-722 BC and was done with the aim of calling for the people of Israel to repent. The predominant themes identified in the texts of 3-6 were a society that was found devoid of justice and righteousness; that is rife in cultic practices and with the upper echelon of the society in decadence because their pursuit of luxurious lifestyle. Hadjiev believes that further redactional activities were undertaken on the texts between 722-701 BC and this includes texts of Amos 3:9-15 and 6:8-14. Apparently, he is of the opinion that these texts were a criticism of the arrogance and secure feelings that was exhibited by the ruling class. It also included the sinful life seen in the land of Judah.

Hadjiev (2009:193) identified another segment in the Amos Texts which he designated the "polemical scroll." He believes that this scroll was most likely composed between 734-732 BCE or before 722 BCE. He is of the opinion that the polemical scroll includes the five oracles against the nation found in 9:7; 3:3-8; the five visions; 9:9-10 and the stories found in 7:10-17. He contends that the original arrangement followed the order as listed. They were structured in this particular order; beginning with the reason for call of judgement and ending with judgment; there was no offer of hope neither any room nor likelihood of chance for repentance offered to the people of Israel in view of evading judgment. According to Hadjiev, the two scrolls were most likely joined in Judah around the period of 7th century. He is of the opinion that the actual composer meddled with the texts by moving 9:7. He also composed 3:1a, 2 and put in 1:2; 9:5-6 and the hymns.

Hadjiev's understanding of the texts of Amos is varied from that of others such as Jeremias and Wolff because of his believe that the original composition contains only one redactional layer and that this happened in the 6th century during the time they were in exile. He also narrowed it to a specified period; 586 BC and in Judah. He made further claims that this redactional activities resulted in the adding of the oracles against Tyre, Edom and Judah. The redaction also inserted 2:7b, 10-12. The redactor also moved the narrative and placed it after the third vision and also was the composer of 7:9; 8:3-14 and 9:7-15.

Hadjiev (2009:179) work was majorly based on the method of redactional criticism which he effectively used to uncover about forty-four verses that was inserted in initial work which includes 1:2; 9-12; 2:4-5; 7b; 10-12; 3:1-2; 4:13; 5:8-9, 15, 25-27; 6:1a; 6b, 2; 7:9-17; 8:3-14 and 9:5-6. Hadjiev work came mostly from the conclusion he drew after he had reviewed the works of other scholars based on their detection of methods utilized by the redactors to effect redactional interference in the book of Amos. He focused on seven important areas namely; literary breaks; theological and linguistic influences that appeared at later stages; historical issues; thematic tensions; atypical ideas and style; literary dependence on passages that appeared later; and structural issues that seem different from the others.

Significantly, Hadjiev noted that it would be a disadvantage to scholars to use the criteria which he identified as individual and arbitrary as a sure means of studying the texts of Amos. He also drew attention to the diverse results that is seen among scholars in proposing redactional hypotheses concerning the book of Amos which according to him is as a result of what he term "careless handling of redactional methods." However, he admitted to the fact that his work is based on "the realm of probability." This implies that what the reconstructive

work which he carried out on the texts was based on hypotheses which he formed from the internal materials found in course of his study of the texts. His methodology is also some sort of redactional criticism.

3.1.1.5 Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman

Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman (1989) work on the book of Amos was published as commentary in "The Anchor Bible Series." Their work covered a very wide range of subjects and includes an introduction to the Book of Amos; translation, notes and comments on every text unit of the Book of Amos. Their work divided the book into four major units with the headings of (1) The book of Doom; 1:1-4:13, (2) The book of Woes; 5:1-6:14, (3) The book of Visions; 7:1-9-6, and Epilogue; 9:7-15.

Their work viewed the book as a complete literary work but none-the-less, they acknowledged that the book was not a "necessarily perfect, product." Having this in mind, the authors chose not to engage in revision or improve on or to carry out an emendation on the received text. According to the authors, any change or changes that one observes from the text may be as a result of the prophet's personal development which happened over time in course of his career. Never-the-less, Andersen and Freedman carried out a reconstruction exercise that resulted in them identifying certain specific events such as Amos' five visions; the plagues; the encounter with Amaziah and also the prophet's sudden shift of tone that resulted in the offer of hope of salvation to the people of Israel. However, they saw this as literary arrangement rather than a chronological one as it appeared on the final text that is available today.

Andersen and Freedman (1989:4) were highly critical of what they perceived as a very unbalance criticism that scholars tend to direct on the book of Amos. The main argument which they presented was based on "old criticism." They see the final form of the book as the work that was carried out by what they described as "one master hand." They (1989:5) believed that "Amos himself had a hand in the final selection and organization of his message into something fairly close to the book we have now." Perhaps, it is important to add that they did not rule out the possibility of one of his disciples playing a major role in the presentations found in the texts that is available today. Their comments on Amos 9:7-15, remains an important part of their work. They explained that the controversial text of Amos 9:7-15 could only be the work of Amos or those who were life witness of the prophet and his work.

In their studies of the Amos' texts, Andersen and Freedman questioned the traditional critical method that scholars have used to dispute the authenticity of the book as the work of

historical Amos such as issues surrounding the originality of the hymns found in the text. About this issue, they said, "the question then remains what did such hymns do when they were sung in the cult, but what are these pieces doing now in the book of Amos? (1989:5). Their work was not to begin to separate the book into different layers like most of those that work as traditional historical critics tends to do. Rather, they prefer to see the book as a coherent whole that was put together by the prophet and by those who witness his work first hand. They are of the opinion that the different views that included the theme of both positive sayings and negative found in the book were as a result of the development both in his personal life and his career. They (1989:5) see the book of Amos as a "highly structured unity" and that the work exhibits sufficient literary coherency [despite its overall appearance of being put together from "diverse ingredients"] that undoubtedly makes the piece worthy of reading as a single literary piece of work. Therefore, it would not be far-fetched to interpret the work as the work of Amos which he did with the help of his followers and disciples.

3.1.1.6 M. Daniel Carroll R

The work of Carroll R (1992) on the book of Amos is one that is of particular interest to this dissertation because of how he utilizes the text by contextualizing it, using it to address what he perceives as the ills which exist in his immediate context. Thus, it includes the issues of experience; time and ideology which this dissertation is attempting to investigate. Though his works includes published monographs and articles, this review is going to focus mainly on the work he did on his doctoral thesis that looked at the context of social and political problems in Latin America through the prism of the book of Amos. He utilizes a method in his work that is very close to those employed by Anderson and Freedman (1989). Like them, he did not pay much attention to the task of attempting to reconstruct the history behind the literary development of the text. Rather, his emphasis was more on the practical gains and usefulness of the book in addressing the social and political ills that plagued his immediate Latin American context.

Carroll R (1992:152), is of the opinion that his methodology is poetic and "… is committed to studying the biblical texts as literature according to literary principles. In actual practice, poetics observes not only structural markers and rhetorical devices, but also…analyzes, for example, characterization and point of view." Carroll R (1992:311), saw the "text as text," yet, he proposes that greater attention should be given to the question of vocabulary, style and structure rather than shapes that have got to do with redactional processes which the book undergone in course of time. The distinctive feature of his work

could be seen in the manner in which he divided the text of Amos 3-6; "3:1-4:3; 4:4-13; 5:1-6:14" (1992:241). He separated the texts of 5:18-27 and 6:1-14 based on their chiasmatic feature. His primary focus was on the hermeneutical relevance of the text to his Latin American context however, he began his studies by first making attempt to understand the usefulness of the text to the original audience that received it.

3.1.1.7 Shalom M. Paul

Paul's (1991) commentary on the book of Amos was published in the *Hermeneia* series. According to Paul (1991:168), almost all the book was the work of the historical Amos. The weakness which one can detect in his work is his lack of explanation how the book we have in its present form came to be arranged and presented in its present form. Paul (1991:24) did not particular spell out the methodology which he employed in his critical analysis of the book. However, explained that he utilized "literary form-critical analysis" in his bid to ascertain the authenticity of the oracles against the nations. Later, he (1991:24-27) examined the oracle against the nation from a "literary point of view." Through the study he was able to see there were internal and structural differences in the style of writing and presentation. He drew attention to the rhetoric and poetic abilities which the prophet possessed and utilized in course of his presentation of the oracles against the nations. This brings to fore the way Paul treated the contradictions in writing style and presentation that could be seen in the texts of Amos and places his approach of studying the texts within the structure of rhetoric criticism.

Paul (1991:27) is of the opinion that the book of Amos is made up of the oracle against the nation; the oracles found in 3:1-5:17; the oracles that speak about the woe that is found in 5:18-6:7; the five visions that was placed at intervals within a narrative and independently placed oracles and lastly, a separate unit that consist of 9:11-15. He (1991:6) explained that "almost all the arguments for later interpolations and redactions, including a Deuteronomistic one, are shown to be based on fragile foundations and inconclusive evidence." It is also significant to mention that Paul (1991:168) acknowledged the existence of minor texts that characteristically is different from the others such as the doxology found in Amos 5:1-17.

3.1.1.8 John D. W. Watts

Watts is recognized as a scholar that did serious studies on the Amos. His first study on Amos was published 1955. In his various study of Amos, he uses form and redaction criticism to demonstrate his understanding of the development of the text. Watts (1955:109-112) came up with the hypothesis which shows how he divides the prophecies of Amos based on his

understanding of the individual forms; (1) Oracle or words of Amos: 1-6; Autobiographical accounts: 7-9; and Biographical accounts: 10-17.

Watts (1956) published a work that studied the different pieces of hymns that are found in Amos. He (1972) published another study that specifically focused on Amos 4:1-5. Watts (1981) published another work that contained a review of Wolff commentary where he agreed with the different strata which Wolff identified in Amos. Watts (1966:21-26) attempted to reconstruct the person of original Amos. He premised his hypothesis on what could be gathered from the Bible about the prophet but he avoided making conclusions about the prophet's possible ideological leanings. His work on the final form of Amos gave lots of attention to the theme, "the Day of the lord" (1958). Watts showed his interest in reading the book as a whole and unified work. In conclusion, Watts works reveals that he was able to utilize both the diachronic and synchronic approaches in the study of Amos.

3.1.1.9 Gary V. Smith (1989)

Smith (1989) acknowledged in his preface that his commentary on Amos drew a lot from the work of H. W. Wolff, W. Rudolph and a host of others. He (1989:7) believes that the book of Amos could be divided into three major sections: the oracles against the nations (1:3-2:16) which are preceded by a brief introduction (1:1-2); (2) the verifications of God's warnings of punishment on Samaria (3:1-6:14); and (3) the visions and exhortations concerning the end (7:1-9:10) which are followed by brief epilogue. He (1989:8) believes that "the structure of the larger and smaller segments, the frequent thematic connections, and the rhetorical bridges between points draw the book together as a reasonably unified whole." Based on this he concluded that the individual "who wrote out the words of Amos is unknown and relatively unimportant." In his opinion the book "contain stylistic, rhetorical, structural and thematic signs that points to an initial compilation of the oracles by a careful and faith preserver of the inspired words of the prophet." At the end, he cautioned that though it is important to still do a critical study to determine if there are evidences that contradicts what is thought to be known about the book, yet, balance should be struck to avoid inventing hypothetical redactors which may not even exist in the long run.

3.1.1.10 John H. Hayes

Hayes (1988:38) writes that his commentary on Amos "must be understood in terms of a close reading of the text in light of the historical events as reconstructed from all available resources." Hayes (1988:38) believes that, "Amos' preaching lasted only a single day at the

least and a few days at most." This event happened between 750-749 under the reign of Jeroboam II. He believes that there is nothing that shows that Amos possessed special creative ability. He sees Amos criticism of the religious establishment as being part of his criticism of the political and social condition of his day.

Hayes (1988:39) believes that the information available that concerns the prophet in the book is too vague and too little for one to construct any meaningful and helpful biography about Amos. According to Hayes (1988:39):

> The material in the book is best understood in terms of large rhetorical units rather than in terms of a multiplicity of small isolated units. To treat the book as a collection of several dozen small units (as commentaries by Wolff and Mays) is to involve forms critical concerns in the same fallacies that beset the old etymologizing word study approach to Scripture…

Furthermore, he believes that the origin of the book is unknown. Therefore, it is easier to assume that the final form as we have it today was written by Amos, "whether before or after delivering them" or the work was compiled by someone else, probably, a person from the audience or his disciple or someone from the old school of Amos. All this according to Hayes are based on hypothesis and as such are not provable facts.

3.1.1.11 Summary of studies

It could be observed that a critical analysis of the works of the different authors that was reviewed shows that there is always an overlap between the use of diachronic and synchronic studies. Though, sometimes this may seem unnoticeable, however, the fact that all is doing their interpretation on the same biblical texts, consciously or unconsciously exposes them to the same factors.

There are also differences such as the fact that with diachronic reading of the texts, the interpreters tend to work base on hypothesis which sometimes are not provable. On the hand, those that prefer synchronic readings of the texts tend to focus solely on the text and this helps them to avoid the pitfall of overly depending on hypothesis.

This chapter will heavily really on diachronic reading, however, this does not mean that doors will be closed to apply synchronic reading if the writer thinks that it will be necessary and helpful to do so.

72

The debate on Authorship

The debate on authorship of Amos is one area in the study of Amos that scholars are yet to come to a definitive settlement. This is despite the internal evidence that the book provides as could be read in Amos 1:1, "The words of Amos, who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa…" Some scholars are of the opinion that the majority of what we have today is the work of historical Amos whose name is seen in the text as the writer. Others disputes this fact based on internal evidence such as language and style. The opinions of some of the scholars are reviewed below.

May (1969:12), for example argues that, "The larger part of the material can be attributed with confidence to Amos." Scholars who believes that the work is that of the original Amos does so based on the outcome of their analysis of the text and what they considers Amos distinctive style of writing. Motyer (1974:19) argues that it is very difficult to ascertain that texts, fragments or passages were later inserted because why should someone want to insert a text knowing that such will disagree with the "context in subject matter" and thus be detected. He (1974:19) also argued against what some scholars has proposed as "insertional on stylistic grounds, but is harmonious enough with the message" of Amos. He questions, "Why should it not be a quotation used by the first author rather than a later editor?"

Rosenbaum (1990:6) believes that the book of Amos was written by Amos. He (1990:7) drew attention to the fact the book "contain so many strange spellings, forms and preferences that the whole gives the impression-to me, anyway-that it is an original product, basically unchanged in transcription or transmission." This is an emphatic rejection of the notion that the book has undergone structural development. Smith (1995:29) shares a similar opinion with Rosenbaum; he believes that the entire book should be seen as the work of Amos as every other theory and hypothesis that says otherwise is based on mere assumption and thus speculative. Paul (1991:6) is also of the same view, he proposes that those who argue, "For a later interpolations and redactions, including a Deuteronomistic one, shown to be based on fragile foundations and inconclusive evidence."

Andersen and Freedman (1989:5) are of slightly different opinion from those who strongly affirms that Amos wrote the book. They are of the opinion that the Amos we have today is the work of one person. According to them, this could be either the handwork of original Amos or if not, could be "an editor who is very close to the teacher and whose contribution was to arrange and integrate the prophecies that Amos himself produced." This implies that either way the work was the work of one person. Hayes (1988:39) shares the

73

opinion that it is either Amos wrote his own words or by someone one who listened to Amos message first hand.

Passages such as Amos 7:10-17, which is written using a third- person pronoun tend to support the view that there are others that were involved in the compilation of the work. To this regard, Hammershaimb (1970:14) suggested that, "the want of an ordered plan to the book suggests that it was not put together by Amos himself but by others, possibly by his own disciples. However, he acknowledges that this does not "affect the genuineness of the sayings."

Wolff (1977:107-113) believes that not all the work as we have it today was written by the prophet himself. He identified six different layers in the book which he attributed to a "long history of literary growth" (Wolff 1977:106). Coote (1981:3) also believes that the work was composed by more than one person. He suggests that "each stage of recomposition represents an interpretation of Amos' words…" He divides the composition of the book into three stages that comprises the work of Amos; the work of editor B; and finally the work of editor C. Harper (1979:cx) believes that more than one fifth of the book of the book that bears the name of Amos was not written by him. He believes that these were the works of later prophets. The rest of the book he attributes to Amos.

In conclusion, the above analysis highlights the fact that the book of Amos may not have existed as one entity at the beginning or may have gone through editorial processes. This may not necessarily translate to the fact that Amos did not write the entire book. To determine what belong to Amos and what does not belong to him will be almost impossible at this stage of the book. Even in modern times, a book goes through editorial processes. But that does not deny the original author the claim to authorship. In lieu of all of this, I will therefore prefer to follow the school of thoughts of Andersen and Freedman (1989:4) concerning the book of Amos. They opined that, "our aim is to make as much sense as we can of the text as it now stands, and to the degree that we can interpret the given text without changing it, to the extent that it is probable that the text is in good shape." This implies that one should be very cautious in his approach with dealing with the book. It is important therefore to try and avoid the two extremes of claiming that Amos wrote the book or that the book was recomposed.

3.2 Exegetical Study of the Text of Amos 5

3.2.1 Observations of Amos 5:1-7

Verse 1

The Hebrew Text: BHS

שִׁמְע֞וּ אֶת־הַדָּבָ֣ר הַזֶּ֗ה אֲשֶׁ֨ר אָנֹכִ֜י נֹשֵׂ֧א עֲלֵיכֶ֛ם קִינָ֖ה בֵּ֥ית יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃

The English Translations:

NKJV: Hear this word which I make up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel:

NRSV: Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel.

Observations and Comments

The writer of Amos 5:1 opens his message with the Hebrew word: שִׁמְע֞וּ. BDB (2010:1033) translate the root of this verb שָׁמַע as "hear." The word שִׁמְע֞וּ in the form which it was used is a Qal imperative masculine plural verb. "אֶת־הַדָּבָ֣ר הַזֶּ֗ה is the direct object and בֵּ֥ית יִשְׂרָאֵֽל is a vocative construct chain" (Garrett 2008:136). In this verbal form, it articulates in active voice, a command that is given. Directly, it relates to the context in which the writer applied the word, presenting it as a command. It could be argued that the existing world view in Israel and the Northern kingdom played a significant role in preparing the people to relate with Amos' message. Garbini (186: xvi) argues that

> historical conception of the Old Testament: that political thoughts which identifies itself with religious thought(the prophets) and that religious thought which makes itself historical thought (the history writers) and creates a fictitious but sacral history come together in a circularity which in our all too knowing language is no longer politics or religion or history- but only ideology.

It could therefore be argued that the audience's religious ideology is intertwined with their political ideology and together they consciously or unconsciously influence their worldview. The people were therefore prepared to receive the message in the light of a command given to them by their deity.[67] Prophets were understood to belong entirely to Yahweh; his utmost responsibility was to pay attention to Yahweh and to obey him; He never keeps his experience

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[67]This is based on what I assumed that the writer is trying to bring across; that when the Prophet speaks, it is the same as Yahweh communicating directing with the people. Similarly, Carroll R (1992:222) contends that his "reading understands the lament as Yahweh's not as the prophet's."

to himself; He always feels bound to proclaim to others what God have revealed to him (Lindblom 1973:1). This same word (שׁמע) was used also in Amos 3:1, 13; 4:1 and 8:4.

The word "hear" is used together with the object, אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה which means "this word" in English. Jointly, the three words read שִׁמְעוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה and form a Hebrew clause that can be rendered as "Hear this word." The "word"; דָּבָר, that the writer refers to, is the divine word of God[68] and it is directed to "house of Israel" בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל in the form of a lament קִינָה (Wolff 1977:227). Hubbard (1989:164-165) points out that the writer directs his speech to the Northern Kingdom "as an entire political entity (house of Israel)." This is an important point to highlight because the phrase "house of Israel," may also be referring to only the ruling house, and not the whole Israel. However, when the writer used the same phrase in verse 25 of the same chapter, he places the meaning in context and also brought clarity to his intended meaning, which is Israel.

Jeremias (1998:48) did a comparative study of the superscription found in 3:1a and the corresponding superscription found in 5:1. He noted that the two (3:1 and 5:1) the fact that here, they appeared with two notable "characteristic deviations." He drew attention to the fact that the imperative "hear this word" in both cases were accompanied by a relative clause with the "prepositional specification against you and a vocative," despite the fact that on each occasion the different relative clause "introduces a different discourse subject." Thus, the first notable difference is that in 3:1, Yahweh is the speaker and "has already spoken (to the Prophet; perfect)" whereas in 5:1, Amos is the speaker and addresses his audience in the immediate present (participle). The second distinguishable difference between the two superscriptions is that in 3:1, the speaker "addresses the listeners as 'people of Israel'." On the contrary, the addressee in 5:1 refers to the audience as "house of Israel." According to Jeremias (1998:48), the manner in which the language was structured was probably meant to represent first: "the people of God for whose sake God has acted and yet acts" (Jeremias 1998:48), while the message that was directed at the "house of Israel" was primarily meant for the people of the Northern Kingdom. Jeremias (1998:48) came to the conclusion that in 3:1, "Yahweh is addressing the sin of the people of God" and this designated north and south. And in 5:1, "the prophet is lamenting the imminent fall of the commonwealth." The presence of the "subordinate relative clause identifies the addresses as the house of Israel, the northern nation" (Smith 1989:161).

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[68] See Wolff (1977:227).

Hammershaimb (1970:76) discusses the manner in which the writer of this section of Amos applies the use of a funeral lament (the so-called *qina* rhythm) as a means of conveying his message to his audience. He points to the fact that in its original usage, the lament was limited in use; as it was usually applied to individuals. He (1970:76) drew attention to the fact that the writer of Amos 5 applies it in this instance to qualify the death of a collective. According to Hammershaimb (1970:76), the writer "is the first writer with whom such a 'political' lament is found..." Therefore, the main purpose of the funeral lament here as applied by the prophet was to convince the nation that death was at their doorstep and this message was conveyed by drawing from the common practice of the day of lamenting the death of a loved one (Smith 1989:161). The manner in which this text is structured warrants that it is "understandable only if pronounced before a great audience, a large assembly, whom the prophet thus invites to join in the lament, drawing the logical consequences" (Soggin 1987:82).

Verse 2

The Hebrew Text: BHS

נָפְלָה לֹא־תוֹסִיף קוּם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל נִטְּשָׁה עַל־אַדְמָתָהּ אֵין מְקִימָהּ׃

The English Translations

NKJV: The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; there is no one to raise her up.

NRSV: Fallen, no more to rise, is maiden Israel, forsaken on her land, with no one to raise her up

Observations and Comments

Amos continued the discourse with what one could interpret as a forceful voice, declaring in his speech the death of the house of Israel. The speech bears the characteristic of a funeral lament, which the writer delivered mostly by means of perfects.[69] According to Hubbard (1989:165) "the key verbs, 'she has fallen' and she 'she has been abandoned' described Israel's plight in the briefest, yet most final way." However, Hayes (1988:154) gave a different explanation about the meaning of the expression "fallen" as employed by the writer here. He

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[69]See Hammershaimb (1970:76). The two perfects גָּפְלָה and נָטְשָׁה was used in the past to denote, "fallen" and "cast" down and "had attached to it circumstantial clause." It could be argued that the situation is irreversible.

thinks that the terminology as employed in this instance "is such that the hearer might not have assumed her to be dead since this is not explicitly stated." Furthermore, he (1988:154) stated that "the reference to the absence of anyone to raise her, to stand to her feet, could imply a state other than death." According to Hayes (1988:154), "the verb used (*qum*, even in the hiphil) does not suggest the idea of someone picking up a corpse and carrying it away." He (1988:154) concluded that "the qinah reference and form would suggest a funeral lament but the description of the female, and her condition, helpless and unhelped, could suggest a potential fatal condition, but one in which the victim is not dead."

The argument presented by Hayes (1988) is debatable because one could argue that the writer's main theme in his speech is proclaiming the death of the people of Israel according to Yahweh's directives. The use of a perfect represents the actuality and the finality of the death (Jeremias 1998:48). Furthermore, the writer makes the entire episode to look more graphic by including the phrase "on her ground" which is an indication of where the incident is going to take place. Carroll R (1992: 223) comments that the debacle of Israel was even made worse by the writer communicating the fact that not only that Israel cannot rise, but no one will be able to lift the nation up. The writer invokes the Yahwist ideology that was the predominant worldview in Israel during that period as an avenue of communicating his message to the people. "Yahweh, who once had brought Israel up out of Egypt… excludes even himself from lifting the nation up" (Carroll R 1992:223). The prevailing Yahwist ideology that was inculcated in the mind of the people of Israel made them to have the belief that the moment Yahweh was out of the frame, the situation becomes pessimistically hopeless.

The writer portrays Israel as a virgin (בתולה). BDB (2010:143-145) translate the word בְּתוּלָה as virgin; also, the word could serve for the personification of nations. Jeremias (1998:48) remarks that the meaning of the word בתולה, as it is applied by the prophet in this verse, if taken on face value may simply mean "a young girl who died all too young and in the blossom of her years." He (1998:48) made reference to how the same word בתולה was used in Deuteronomy 22:23. According to his (1998:48) explanation, in the context in which the word was applied, it literally means "a maiden" that is yet to get married, but perhaps, she has already been promised to a man and thus was engaged. Similarly, May (1969:85) understood the phrase, "virgin Israel" בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל as describing the personification of the "nation as maid cut off before the consummation of her life, a girl violated by the ravaging assault of a military foe." Here, the prophet invokes the imagery of war and presents the picture of the activities that takes place during the time of war in order to bring across to his audience the severity of the situation. This then takes us to the history of Israel, in the past the people were portrayed

to have been punished by Yahweh each time they go contrary to his commandments. Since, it could be argued that ideology is interwoven with history; one could therefore propose that the writer's audience were well conditioned to be able to understand that going contrary to Yahweh's commandment, most of the times, could lead to tragedy in the form of military conquest of the land by the other nations. Carroll R (1992:224) refers to the vocabulary employed by the writer which hints to death by the sword in battle draws the attention of any critical interpreter to the presence of military ideology in the text. The presence of the aforementioned military ideology could also be seen in his (1992:224) analyses of the text; "on her ground/land' might imply invasion and 'the forsaken body." Hubbard (1991:165) comments that 'land' in the speech signify death that came as a result of the invasion. He (1991:165) also made reference to the fact that the land which was spoken about in the text was the 'land of hope and promise'. The event turned the land into a cruel ditch where the sprawled bodies of the people of Israel were abandoned (Hubbard 1991:165). It is significant to note that the land ideology which is a major part of the Yahwist religious ideology remain subtly present and woven into the writers discourse.

Verse 3

The Hebrew Text: BHS

כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִֹה הָעִיר הַיֹּצֵאת אֶלֶף תַּשְׁאִיר מֵאָה וְהַיּוֹצֵאת מֵאָה תַּשְׁאִיר עֲשָׂרָה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

The English Translations

NKJV: For thus says the Lord God: "the city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, And that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel."

NRSV: For thus says the Lord God: the city that marched out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which marched out a hundred shall have ten left.

Observations and Comments

The writer opened his discourse with the particle כִּי, which is translated as "for" (BDB). The verbs that are found in this verse are imperfect and stand in parallel with the particle which could be said to be a prediction (Andersen and Freedman 1989:476). In the present context, it (כִּי) stands as the connecting word that relates this speech to the previous lament: it explains the reason behind why the writer is singing the dirge (Hubbard 1989:165).

79

The opening statement, "For thus says the lord God:" כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהֹוִה bears the idea of God speaking directly through his prophet. May (1969: 85) observe that the statement could stand separately as an independent saying, but it continues the theme and rhythm of the previous two verses…" Jeremias (1998:84) concludes that "like every other prophetic oracle… this one is grounded…on a divine oracle as well." In a similar vein, Carroll R (1992: 224) writes that verse 3 begins with a "divine speech formula…" Lindblom (1962:110) remarks that "…prophets were regarded as being sacrosanct and inviolable…because there words were not human words, but divine words filled with sanctity." The prophet in this instance was fulfilling the role of "predicting future events and conditions" (Hayes 1988:155-156). "Such predictions could have been intended and understood as advocacy of a particular policy" (Hayes 1988:156). When prophets engage in such activities, they "were implicitly advocating those policies that would lead to that condition…" (Hayes 1988:156). The nature of the society that was in existence during the time of the writing was such that the audience was well acquainted with the role of a prophet and their style of communication. Therefore, the opening statement was commonly connected to prophetic preaching and reflects the worldview of the audience during that period.

The pronouncement of judgement on the people by the divine oracle through the mouth of his messenger; the prophet continued. The speech was a continuation of what the oracle was pronouncing in verse 2, with a strong allusion to an impending military catastrophe; "thousand" and "hundred" is in reference to military units of this number (Jeremias 1998:84). The end of the saga would be devastating for the people because only a small number of ten would be the remnant out of the "thousand" and "hundred" that left the city to fight.

Jeremias (1998:84) believes that the final result according to the text bears no hope, rather, would be a catastrophic defeat; a total decimation. Similarly, Wolff (1977:237) contends that "Amos' own interpretation of this oracle, found in the immediately preceding funerary lament, shows that there is as little thought of a remnant here…" He sees it as a death sentence pronounced over the state of Israel. However, commentators such as Hammershaimb (1970:76) are of different opinion. He (1970:76) came to the conclusion that, "the survival of a remnant corresponds to the passages in the book which do not look to a total destruction of the people, but encourages hope of a happier future later (see on 9:11ff.)." He (1970:76) asserts that in the context, "the saying should be understood primarily as a threat because of the accusative." He (1970:76) translates the text, הַיֹּצֵאת אֶלֶף as "who marches out as a thousand" or a "with a thousand." Though, possibly one can argue that here "the focus is on the death of almost everyone rather than on the life of a few" (Smith 1989:162). However,

80

a critically study of the text of 5:14-15, will reveal a further development of the theme of the remnant in Amos (Smith 1989:162). He argues that the phrase (remnant few) was used to refer to a limited few who seek God and establish justice.

Based on this line of interpretation, I will contend that the bases of the claim that there is as little thought for the remnant as proposed by people such as Wolff (1977) and others are weak.[70] This is because in biblical interpretation, literary considerations should take precedence over the others (Anderson and Freedman 1989: 536) and here the text clearly makes mention of a remnant few and thus provides some hope.

In conclusion, it could be said that the text talks about utter destruction that awaits the people for their disobedience, but amidst such would be devastating event; there will be a few or a remnant that would be spared.

Verse 4

The Hebrew Text: BHS

כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּרְשׁוּנִי וֶחְיוּ׃

The English Translations

NKJV: For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: "seek me and live;

NRSV: For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: seek me and live;

Observations and Comments

The writer begins his discourse with כִּי again. Here, כִּי is acting as a motivation for the exhortation "seek me and live." Harper (1979:110) explains that the phrase, "seek me" is use to express in general terms the desire to worship and this could either be applicable to Yahweh or to idols. The other half of the statement, "and live" is used to show that the danger which lies ahead will not go away except if they seek Yahweh (Harper 1979:110). It is important to note that there are cases when "speakers motivate a whole argument or series of arguments by means of כִּי" (van der Merwe et al 1999:300) In such cases, it is preferable "to leave the כִּי untranslated because it does not entirely make sense on a grammatical level" (van der Merwe et al 1999:302). However, in this context, the writer argues that it was used as a motivational כִּי. Here, it serves as a motivation to show what the Israelites will stand to gain if they seek

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[70] See Wolff (1977:237) for a further discussion of this subject.

Yahweh. In the subsequent passage, we will discuss alternative argument where it is believed that in this passage כִּי is "used to motivate whole argument or series of arguments" (Van der Merwe et al 1999:302).

Carroll R (1992:224) comments that this section is linked to the preceding one thematically. However, he explains that the lines are not necessarily talking about "a falling in the past, but move on through the imperatives in the present to warn of a disaster in the future." Carroll R (1992:224) points out that the conjunctive features found in the content between verses 4 to 6; which includes the geographic progression that moves from the writer mentioning the cities to speaking about the sanctuaries; and the joining of the titles (ישראל בית: *5.1, 3, 4*) and the themes (ואין־מכבה, 5.6b; אין מקימה, 5.2); show that the writer is still speaking about the same subject. The literary arrangement used by Amos in verses 3 and 4 which juxtaposes military language and cultic language respectively is not a mere accident. The climax of all of this according to Carroll R (1992:225) is that both the religious and military establishment is going to suffer the same sad fate. Another important feature of the text, according to Carroll R (1992:225) is the ability of the prophet to employ the use of a well-structured wordplay to condemn the socioreligious and political activities. "This observation…undercuts the regnant ideology, but also substantiates the earlier claim that the popular religious world can both include and transcend state interests" (Carroll R 1992:225).

Anderson and Freedman (1989:479) explain that the phrase, "house of Israel" appears here similarly as a vocative as it has previously been used in verses 1 and 3.[71] They cited a marching phrase found at the end of verse 6 which could be likewise treated as a vocative, "so that vv 1-3 and vv 4-6 have similar inclusions" (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). Assuming that this explanation is accepted as factual, "with the structural equivalence of *bet-yisrael* and *bet-el* in these units," it would mean that the mentioning of "house of Israel" in this verse overrides the interpretation which supports the idea of the prominence of Bethel in this text (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). This is in view of some of the interpretation that says that the message is restricted to the Northern Kingdom because of the direct mention of Bethel and so therefore the "house of Israel" here stands for Northern Kingdom (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). Rather, the phrase "house of Israel" stands for the whole nation (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). The argument for the latter is situated on the fact that the shrine in Bethel became prominent, and thus, subsequently, began to serve as a national

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[71] "Vocative is the name of a CASE that occurs in certain languages like Greek and Latin. It is used to mark the addressee MORPHOLOGICALLY. In BH the addressed person is either marked by the article הַ or not at all" (van der Merwe et al 1999:368).

shrine because it received visitors from the whole nation, that is, the two kingdoms (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). Also, by not explicitly mentioning the other cities such as Judah or Jerusalem does not necessarily mean that they are exempted from the Prophet's admonishment and subsequent pronouncement of judgment (Anderson and Freedman 1989:479). This position may be possible but I would say that Bethel was a shrine of the North and should be interpreted as such.

The sudden introduction of the phrase, "seek me and live," into the harsh tone of criticism and condemnation that the prophet has employed all along in dealing with the situation makes a critical interpreter wonder why the change of tone. Especially, the sudden offer of life in what all along has been a tale of despair and hopelessness. Thus, prompting Carroll R (1992: 226) to make the following comments about the phrase, "seek me and live": "The phrase 'seek me and live' (5.4b) has occasioned much debate on three fronts. First, what does the term 'seek' mean? Secondly, what is the life that is offered? Thirdly, in light of the constant emphasis on imminent disaster, is this a legitimate offer of hope, and for whom?"

In his response to the *first* question: "what does the term 'seek' mean?"; Carroll R (1992:226) asserts that the text (5.4) itself does not define what the term 'seek' stands for, but alleges that the subsequent text draws attention to what it does not mean. According to Carroll R the negative particles that appeared thrice in 5.5a, b: "looking for Yahweh at the sanctuaries during feasts" stands as the intended message. He (1992:226) concluded that the seeking in this context means seeking Yahweh through a personal encounter and not in the sanctuaries. Therefore, the focus is 'me', that is, the subject. Carroll R did not conclusively give definite answers for the second and third questions. Instead, he (1992:226), posited the following questions, (1) could the offer of life be referring to a quality of life- that is blessing or prosperity? (2) Can this notion make any sense at all within the framework of the divine perspective of inevitable disaster that the text has been developing? (3) Is this a suggestion of hope for the entire nation or only for a remnant that might respond to the warnings in a way that Yahweh would approve? (4) Is this a hope to be spared disaster or simply to be able to survive it?

Mays (1969:87) explains in clearer terms that 'seek' "does not mean 'inquire about' or 'search for' something or someone lost or inaccessible." He (1969:87) explains that "when Yahweh is the object, seek frequently means 'turn to Yahweh (for help in a specific situation), and then by extension 'hold to Yahweh' (as a way of life)." In the context that it was applied in this verse, he (1966:88) admitted that it may create a misunderstanding among the audience because they were already doing what they believe was right by seeking Yahweh in the

sanctuaries. According to May (1969:88), "what 'seek me' as a word of Yahweh means when the shrine are excluded is left obscure and provocative." At the end, he (1969:88) tentatively comes to the conclusion that 'seek me' in this context means looking for Yahweh outside the cults and sanctuaries, that is to seek good as the prophet admonished in 5:14;"where Yahweh is replaced as object of the verb by 'good'" (May 1969:88).

Hammershaimb (1970:77) notes that the prophet's first application of the word "seeking' in his discourse "was objectionable because visits to a sanctuary only led to feasts and debauchery." Hammershaimb (1970:77) like May (1969:88); believes that the primary intention of the prophet was to condemn the immorality that was prevalent amongst the people. The term "seeking" was purposely used by the prophet in his attempt to redirect them to a morally correct way of life. Thus, Hammershaimb (1970:77) comments,

> For this reason the prophet declaims against these cultic centres, even though they were
> dedicated to Yahweh and were connected with the earliest history of the nation. In contrast
> to this he makes the demand to seek Yahweh, which must be understood as meaning to
> seek out and observe his commandments, which stress not offerings but a moral way of
> life…To seek Yahweh means roughly the same therefore as what V. 14 calls 'to seek the
> good'.

The above comment makes Hammershaimb's (1970:77) position to be fairly close to that of May (1969:88). Both commentators went further than Carroll R (1992:226) in attempting to establish that the text of 5:4 has in it a moral message which seemingly is the core message found in the entire Amos prophetic discourse. Therefore, the promissory appeal of this verse should be understood to be dependable on the fact that the "survival of the audience" lies within their ability to fulfil the conditions stipulated by Yahweh (Wolff 1977:239).

Verse 5

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

וְאַל־תִּדְרְשׁוּ בֵּית־אֵל וְהַגִּלְגָּל לֹא תָבֹאוּ וּבְאֵר שֶׁבַע לֹא תַעֲבֹרוּ כִּי הַגִּלְגָּל גָּלֹה יִגְלֶה וּבֵית־אֵל יִהְיֶה לְאָוֶן

The English Translations

NKJV: But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to the Beersheba; For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.

NRSV: but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba, for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing

Observations and Comments

The prophet exhorts his audience to avoid seeking the Lord in these popular shrines because they were no longer capable of offering the usual security and deliverance they enjoyed in the past.

> In Bethel and Dan Jeroboam I had set up calves of gold to give the population of the Northern Kingdom a substitute for the temple in Jerusalem (I Kgs. 12:25ff.). The sanctuary in Bethel was at the time of Amos one of the most popular in the Northern Kingdom. It was regarded as a royal sanctuary, and came directly under the king (Hammershaimb 1970:63).

From a religious ideological point of view, the children of Israel would have found security and assurance in Bethel, a place of spiritual defence. Amos made it clear that their clinging to these places amounts to nothing because they will come under destruction. The fact that "Bethel had ancient and hallowed association with Israel's ancestor Jacob…" (Mays 1969:88) could have been the motivation behind the religious leaders to have encouraged a return to their ancestry.

"Gilgal in the Jordan valley had a significant place in the traditions of the conquest and enjoyed popularity as a holy site from the times of the tribal leagues" (Mays 1969:88). The reference of Gilgal indicates her venerability in regards to cultic worship during the time of Amos. Few cities boasted of this prestige in the history of Israel. "How highly the people regarded this sanctuary is shown by the fact that the population of the Northern Kingdom still went on pilgrimage to it in the time of Amos" (Hammershaimb 1970:78).

Bethel and Gilgal were the popular religious shrines in the North (Israel) while Beersheba existed in the South as the most influential religious city. Beersheba "was not in the Northern Kingdom, but in the extreme south of Judah" (Hammershaimb 1970:78). Religious pilgrims from the Northern Kingdom had to commute to the south in order to offer the necessary sacrifices. Amos prohibited the Israelites from pursuing cultic worship either in the North or the South because those shrines were no longer capable of serving their intended purposes. Anderson and Freedman (1989:481) comments that "all of these shrines and their cults are equally corrupt, and all are under the ban of God through his prophet."

A point of great significance in this verse is the juxtaposition of cultic activity and its subsequent military connotations. The issue of worship and the dilemma of their captivity are closely related in this verse. "The lexical connections between the strophes point, however, to

85

a common fate for both the military and religious institutions" (Carroll R 1992:255). They were doomed for destruction if they failed to return to Yahweh.

Verse 6

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

דִּרְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וִחְיוּ פֶּן־יִצְלַח כָּאֵשׁ בֵּית יוֹסֵף וְאָכְלָה וְאֵין־מְכַבֶּה לְבֵית־אֵל

The English Translations

NKJV: Seek the Lord and live, lest He breaks out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, with no one to quench it in Bethel

NRSV: Seek the Lord and live, or he will break, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it

Observations and Comments

Once again the prophet opens his speech repeating the phrase "seek the Lord and live" דִּרְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וִחְיוּ. This is similar to the opening seen in verse 4, but differs slightly with it in terms of the use of third person divine speech formula as applied here. And it is contrary to the first person divine speech formula that was utilized previously in verse 4.[72] The warning that accompanies the phrase "seek the lord and live" is different; in this instance, Yahweh was going to destroy the house of Joseph with fire if she fails to heed to warning. "The warning that the outbreak of Yahweh's wrath is an imminent *possibility* stands in contrast to Amos' usual announcements of judgement as irrevocable decree" (Mays 1969:89). Here, the sending of fire is hinged on the condition, that is, whether they would heed or reject the exhortation and "therefore the judgement is not unavoidable but conditional" (Hadjiev 2009:162).

It is significant to note that role of the "house of Joseph" and "Bethel" in this verse could pose some difficulties to a critical interpreter. And this becomes important if an interpreter attempts to determine to whom the verse is addressed (Hadjiev 2009:162). The passage makes mention of both the "house of Joseph" and "Bethel" without clearly stating their relationship (Hadjiev 2009:162). If one is to interpret the verse in the sense that Bethel is the central focus of the prophet's message, whereby the "divine punishment" is wholly directed at it; it would mean that the text contradicts the one that precedes it (Hadjiev 2009:163). This

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[72] See Hadjiev (2009:162) for further reading about the topic.

interpretation appears to be out of context because the mention of "the house of Joseph remains superfluous and confusing" (Hadjiev 2009:163). The most plausible interpretation of the mention of Bethel at the end of this verse, is its inability in the future to stop the coming judgement because none of those that is in any way connected to the sanctuary has the ability to stop the judgement which Yahweh sends to the house of Joseph (Hadjiev 2009:163). Thus, making verse 6b the development of the thought of v. 5 (Hadjiev 2009:163). Hammershaimb (1970:79) is of the opinion that Bethel is mentioned in the passage because it is the place where Yahweh's anger would be mostly focused and that Yahweh would allow it to be destroyed by fire without anyone being able to intervene and stop the fire. This interpretation is similar to the first probable interpretation given by Hadjiev which he believes does not agree with the context of the text. The second interpretation is the most plausible one because the house of Joseph which puts their trust on the shrine of Bethel; which is the national shrine, cannot find protection from it when Yahweh judgement comes to pass.[73]

In regard to the expression, צָלַח (to press in on), Hammershaimb (1970:79) points out that "it is used (with עַל or אֶל) of the spirit when it comes over a man…" In places where it appears with the accusative like in 2 Samuel 19:18, it can be rendered as 'to press forward' to a place (Hammershaimb 1970:79). Therefore, one can consider Yahweh as the subject of the verb and translate: "so that he may not press forward to the house of Joseph as fire" (Hammershaimb 1970:79). Another option is translating the verb צָלַח as 'set fire to' and this translation fits more to the present context.[74] This is because the phrase that came after it speaks about no one would be able to put out the fire. Smith (1989:164) also believes that this idea is supported by the final clause, "there will be no quenching of Bethel."

Verse 7

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

<div dir="rtl">

הַהֹפְכִים לְלַעֲנָה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה לָאָרֶץ הִנִּיחוּ
</div>

The English Translations

NKJV: You who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth.

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[73]See Carroll R (1992:227).

[74]See Hammershaimb (1970:79) for further reading.

NRSV: Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground.

Observations and Comments

The content of this verse is a sudden deviation from the theme that the prophet has been discussing all along in this section of his discourse. The prophet suddenly introduced two important themes; "justice" and "righteousness" which he would be developing and expounding more as the rest of the chapter 5 progresses. The composition and positioning of this verse has initiated a lot of discussion among scholars.

Hammershaimb (1970:80) contends that the placement of this verse seems "so strange in context that it is not surprising that many attempts have been made to find the right explanation for it." He (1970:80) points to the fact that some interpreters "would understand the participle with the article as a vocative…" This observation becomes important as it would help the interpreter to decide the function of this verse in relation to its placement. In the circumstance, that an interpreter decides to understand the function of the participle with the article as a vocative, it would then mean that "the demand in the preceding verse is directed to those who corrupt justice" (Hammershaimb 1970:80). Such reading where the particle with the article is understood as a vocative would undoubtedly affect the reading of the sentence and also, the thought would not align fittingly with the inclusion of the idea of 'the house of Joseph' or to 'Bethel' (Hammershaimb 1970:80). An alternative interpretation by other scholars, according to Hammershaimb (1970:80) is the assumption that the "article has risen from a misunderstood הוי 'Woe to' 9cf. 5.18; 6.1)." If an interpreter adopts this position the verse would therefore be regarded as a cry of lament (Hammershaimb 1970:80). However, this would be poorly connected to the preceding verse and hardly anything to do with the subsequent verse (Hammershaimb 1970:80). A third option which could serve as a remedy to both the *first* and *second* option and which have been proposed by certain commentators is to "assume that there has been a dislocation of the original order of verses, and that vv.8-9 should really follow after v. 10 (cf. *BH*), or v.7 after v.9" (Hammershaimb 1970:80). This last option is based on the assumption that a copyist probably omitted the verse and it was later added but not in its original position (Hammershaimb 1970: 80). The last option seems to be the most probable reason why the text is placed in its present position but "that is not to say that it is also the original one (Hammershaimb 1970:80).

Carroll R (1992: 228) believes that the verse 7 is connected to the preceding verse. According to him (1992:228), "this verse describes the entity mentioned in the preceding line-in this case, the nation." This interpretation agrees with Mays' (1969: 90-93) interpretation of

88

the text and it is anchored on the premise that the passage ought to be read as "(Woe are) those who change justice into wormwood, and discard righteousness."[75] Mays (1969:91) opines that the definite plural article found in the beginning of verse 7, is standing without an introductory particle, vocative, or subject or predicate and thus serves as the subject. "The definite plural participle is the element of the style of a woe saying (cf 5.18; 6.1), and used alone may have the effect of woe-pronouncement" (Mays 1969:91). This interpretation allows for this verse to be linked to the content of the preceding verses (1-6) which is aimed at the nations.[76] Therefore, verse 7 is a continuation of the line of message as rendered by the prophet in his discourse which indicts and brings judgement upon the people of Israel as a whole because of their acts of injustice (Carroll R 1992:228).

It is important to note that wormwood is an extremely bitter plant that was commonly found in the Palestinian territory and is usually applied as a metaphor to describe the bitterness of calamity; it also denotes harmfulness.[77]

3.2.2 Observations of Amos 5:8-13

Verse-by-verse observations and comments

Verse 8

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

עֹשֵׂה כִימָה וּכְסִיל וְהֹפֵךְ לַבֹּקֶר צַלְמָוֶת וְיוֹם לַיְלָה הֶחְשִׁיךְ הַקּוֹרֵא לְמֵי־הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפְּכֵם עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ

The English Translations

NKJV: He made Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning. And makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the face of the earth. The Lord is His name.

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

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[75] For further reading, see Mays (1969:90).

[76] See Carroll R (1992:228).

[77] See both Mays (1969:91) and Hammershaimb (1970:80) for further reading on the subject.

Observations and Comments

Verse 8 introduces a "second hymnic passage of Amos."[78] Most commentators treat verse 8 and 9 as a unit because as a passage they display several stylistic features that are similar.[79] In light of these similarities, Carroll R (1992:229) affirms, that "when verse 9 is considered with 5.8, there is a total of seven verbal forms; 5:8b is also a chiasm."

The main focus of the prophet's message in this passage is to communicate the absolute powers of Yahweh. And "The use of the predicative particles, the refrain ("Yahweh is his name"), and exaltation of Yahweh distinguishes these verses from their context" (Mays 1969:95). The passage opens with an emphatic declaration of the creative power of Yahweh with a direct mention of the heavenly star, "Pleiades" and "Orion." This is immediately followed by another of Yahweh's sovereign acts; "He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night." The word הפך "to turn" (BDB 254) was previously used by the prophet in verse 7. Carroll R (1992:229) comments that "his holy majesty is underscored by the repetition of the terms from the previous verse…which highlight the deep contrast with Israel: justice turned into poison (v.7), here darkness turned into morning; righteousness cast to the ground (v.7), now waters poured over the earth." In continuation of the prophets exaltation of Yahweh's sovereignty over creation and particularly, his control over seasons, the prophet, highlights God's ability 'to call for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth'. This may indicate "his regulation of the periods of drought and rain which characterize the weather of Palestine (Hubbard 1989:170). Both Hammershaimb (1970:83) and Carroll R (1992:229) suggest that this could probably be an allusion to the flood episode in Genesis.

In concluding this segment, the prophet suddenly makes a declaration, "The Lord is His name" יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ. A critical interpreter would question why the sudden inclusion of this clause in the discourse. Carroll R (1992:230) alleges that this is the "focal point" of the entire passage. He (1992:230) further stated that "the stress placed on Yahweh and his name(s) suggests that the crucial point within the textual world of Amos is Yahweh himself." If this is the "focal point" as Carroll R observes, and also, if the crucial point within the textual world of Amos the writer; is Yahweh himself; a critical interpreter could argue that the entire discourse is built on the religious ideology of a Yahweh reality which requires the people of Israel to exist and live in His name. The history of the Israelites is built on the idea that "Yahweh, the only God, reveals

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[78] For further studies see Carroll R (1992:229) commentary.

[79] See Andersen and Freedman (1989:487); Hayes (1988:160); and Mays (1969:95).

himself to Abraham, to Jacob, and finally, in a grand manner, to Moses: he makes a covenant with his people by means of which they pledged themselves to a monotheistic faith" (Garbini 1988:52). This history is taught to the people and thus, forms the core of their world view.

Verse 9

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

הַמַּבְלִיג שֹׁד עַל־עָז וְשֹׁד עַל־מִבְצָר יָבוֹא

The English Translations

NKJV: He rains ruin upon the strong, So that fury comes upon the fortress

NRSV: who makes destruction flash out against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

Observations and Comments

Verse 9 is a direct opposite to verse 8. Here, the prophet applies the paradoxical attribute of Yahweh. Yahweh, the creator of what is good, is also capable of punishing; in event of an evil deed or can destroy what is bad. The rhetoric movement of the preceding verses (1-8) points to the fact that the content of verse 9 is specifically directed at the "house of Joseph".[80] The use of the word 'fortress' invokes the imagery of war and also is in line with the military language that the prophet had employed previously in his discourse. Thus, prompting Carroll R (1992:231) to observe that "Yahweh in his incomparable power dismantles the military machines and pretence with language: before him, the strong are as nothing (4.10; 5, 2, 3; cf 2.14-160), and the nations fortresses will be so much rubble (cf. 3.11; 4.3)."

The main thrust of this verse lies on the two words; "strong or mighty" עָז and "fortress" מִבְצָר. The meaning of the verse also relies heavily on how an interpreter interprets the word בלג. Hammershaimb (1970:81) explains that this word, "as Arabic shows, could be translated as 'shine' or 'be glad'; the hiphil therefore means either transitively 'let shine'" which is the meaning in the present context. The ramification of such translation would be, "if Yahweh lets devastation shine or flash out over fortresses…, this in effect means their sudden fall"

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[80] It is important to note that the term the word עַל־מִבְצָר is total different from the word עַל־אַרְמְנוֹת which was applied in 3:9-11 to describe the Samaria's palaces in which the spoil of oppression is stored. But rather, in this context, the word was used to describe Israel fortifications and which serve as their defence and protection against foreign invasion (Carroll R 1992:231).

(Hammershaimb 1970: 81-82). It is therefore important to note that "9b is a consecutive clause, which is dependent on 9a" (Hammershaimb 1970:82).

Verse 10

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

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שָׂנְאוּ בַשַּׁעַר מוֹכִיחַ וְדֹבֵר תָּמִים יְתָעֵבוּ
</div>

The English Translations

NKJV: They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.

NRSV: They hate the one who reproves in the gate and they abhor the ones who speaks the truth.

Observations and Comments

Verse 10, is characteristically about legal matters. Here, the prophet elevates the fact that justice is tied to Yahweh. Therefore, verse 10 is thematically linked to verse 7 and it expresses in a chiasm the injustices perpetrated at the city gates (Carroll R 1992: 231). Any critical interpreter would raise the question; who are these people that try to speak truth? There are two sets of individuals that are mentioned in the prophet discourse, namely, the wealthy individuals and the poor. In his attempt to answer a similar question posed by him, Carroll R (1992:231) similarly observed that, "in the context of the strophe they appear to be not only the exploited who might stand up for their legitimate rights, but perhaps also others of integrity who might try courageously to defend them even at personal expense (2:11-12; 7.10-17)."

The Hiphil form of the word יכח could be translated as; 'to supervise litigation' or more commonly 'to judge'; when the word is interpreted as such, מוֹכִיחַ must then be seen as referring to the judge(s) (Hammershaimb 1970:82). This same word could be interpreted differently with greater attention paid to the verb form of the word and it would mean 'to conduct a case' against אֶל a person, like in the case of Job 13:3 (Hammershaimb 1970:82). The meaning of the term מוֹכִיחַ thus becomes; the person "who present the case of the poor before the court" (Hammershaimb 1970:82). The second translation allows an interpreter to understand verse 10b דֹבֵר תָּמִים as a reference to an honest judge that does not corrupt justice. This would then bring to light the accusation that was made in verse 7 and thus, making verse 10 a continuation of the verse 7 speech. The probable interpretation would therefore be; that

92

the prophet's speech was specifically directed to dishonest judges and their activities; that is, the judges, who favour the rich in their judgement, irrespective of availability of clear evidences that speaks contrary and proves the innocence of the poor (Hammershaimb 1970:82).

An alternative interpretation of verse 10 originates from the assumption that the prophet's discourse was directed at the entire house of Joseph. Here, the word "they" would be taken to mean the 'Israelites'. "They hate the one who rebukes in the gate and they abhor the one who speak uprightly" שָׂנְאוּ בַשַּׁעַר מוֹכִיחַ וְדֹבֵר תָּמִים יְתָעֵבוּ. The term שנאו which is a Qal perfect 3rd person plural derived from the root word שנא could simply mean "they hate" (BDB 971). The second word which could lend support to this interpretation is found in the second line in the parallelism and is יתעבו (Hiphil imperfect 3rd pers. pl. of the root word תעב); "they abhor" (Strong 153). Since, the prophet sometimes specify in the previous verses that his discourse is directed at the house of Israel, it is plausible that this condemnation is directed to the majority of the Israelites who engage in acts that are contrary to Yahweh's command. However, looking at the content of verse 11, which is the succeeding verse; there seems to be a conflict if we are to take the word 'they' as referring to the majority of Israelites. It is most probable that the prophet was addressing the wealthy and elite here; which judges happens to be among.

It is significant to note that in ancient Israel, when they speak about men gathering in the 'gate', it is usually for two purposes: *firstly*, "The gate was the regular place in which the local courts of Israel's towns and cities was held…" (Mays 1969:93).*Secondly*, "At the gate, too, men met and conducted business…" (Hammershaimb 1970:82). Therefore, the gate was very important to the life of the people and the prophet was making the point that the people were refusing to let "life to be governed by truth" (Motyer 1974:113).

Verse 11

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

לָכֵן יַעַן בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם עַל־דָּל וּמַשְׂאַת־בַּר תִּקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בָּתֵּי נָזִית בְּנִיתֶם וְלֹא־תֵשְׁבוּ בָם כַּרְמֵי־חֶמֶד נְטַעְתֶּם וְלֹא תִשְׁתּוּ אֶת־יֵינָם

The English Translations

NKJV: Therefore, because you tread down the poor, and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them.

NRSV: Therefore, because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them, you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

Observations and Comments

The nature of this statement compels one to go back to examine the preceding verse. This is because it could be argued that "verse 11 is an independent and differently motivated threat of punishment" (Wolff 1977:247), and thus is not connected directly to the preceding statement. The term לכן "therefore" is used here to introduce; after Amos's statements about those who commits acts of injustices against the poor, a declaration of what will happen to them (Van der Merwe et al 1999:304). There have been other cases where the same word לכן seems to be used as a conjunction to join preceding and subsequent verses. However, Van der Merwe et al (1999:304) opine that, "Whether לכן is indeed a conjunction, is not certain." Here, the writer believes that it is serving also as a "discourse marker because it relates two contents with one another…" (Van der Merwe et al (1999:304). This implies that it does not necessarily refer to verse 10, but to the cluster of statements found in verse 11. There is specificity in the style used by the prophet to address the wealthy that were oppressing the poor and also his tone was more personal.

The first, phrase of the discourse says יַעַן בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם "Because you tread down the poor." The phrase; בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם is according to its vocalization an infinitive with suffix from "בשס (Hammershaimb 1970:83). The origin of this verb is unknown but its form is most probably connected with the verb בוס (or בסס) and can be rendered as 'trample on'.[81] Scholars such as Cohen (1978:49) are of the opinion that the origin of the word is linked to the Akkadian word סוש which can be translated as 'to levy, extort taxes'.[82] Based on the above analysis, the phrase; יַעַן בּוֹשַׁסְכֶם could be translated as "because of your trampling." The word 'trampling' helps in presenting in a greater degree the extreme wickedness that the prophet aims to expose in his discourse. The intensity therefore, helps in bringing across the extent of injustices and wrongs that were perpetrated in the Israelite society. Mays (1969:94) observed

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[81] See Hammershaimb (1979:83) for further reading.

[82] See also BDB (143).

that the prophet in this instance directly addressed the culprits by laying bare the exact wrong-doing that was taking place in the court; which includes their acts of undermining justice for the purpose of economic exploitation of the weak דל.

The second clause "And take grain taxes from him," וּמַשְׂאַת־בַּר represent clearly the actions of the wealthy which earned them utter condemnation from Yahweh. They were objectionably harsh and also heartless in the manner which they treated the impoverished farmers. "מַשְׂאַת (construct מַשְׂאַת) is the dues which the impoverished small farmers must pay in corn (בַּר…)" (Hammershaimb 1970:83). There was a clear case of extortion and coercion that was going on in the society which directly involved the wealthy and was targeting the poor. The wealthy used the proceeds from their actions to bankroll their extravagant and lavish lifestyles. But ironically, Yahweh was not going to allow the wealthy to peacefully enjoy their beautiful "hewn stone houses" בָּתֵּי גָזִית בְּנִיתֶם and to enjoy the luxury of drinking wine from their "pleasant vineyards" כַּרְמֵי־חֶמֶד which they acquired through their ill-gotten wealth. Yahweh was going to punish the wealthy severely; they were going to reap disaster.

Verse 12

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי רַבִּים פִּשְׁעֵיכֶם וַעֲצֻמִים חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם צֹרְרֵי צַדִּיק לֹקְחֵי כֹפֶר וְאֶבְיוֹנִים בַּשַּׁעַר הִטּוּ

The English Translations

NKJV: For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: Afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate

NRSV: For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins-you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate

Observations and Comments

The verse opens with the phrase "For I know…" This raises the question of who is the speaker here. There are two persons that could be speaking; God or Amos. Mays (1969: 96) suggests that probably the prophet is the subject of 'I know', thus, making him the speaker.

The speaker makes a damning claim about the people. He accuses them of being participants in "manifold transgressions and mighty sins." This is a very direct accusation, because, contrary to what they believe, Yahweh knows fully of their injustices and the wrongs

that they were doing (Hammershaimb 1970:83). The sentence, כִּי יָדַעְתִּי רַבִּים פִּשְׁעֵיכֶם "For I know your manifold transgressions" and וַעֲצֻמִים חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם "and your mighty sins" sets in motion what follows; which is the direct naming of their offences and sins צֹרְרֵי צַדִּיק לֹקְחֵי כֹפֶר "Afflicting the just and taking bribes" and וְאֶבְיוֹנִים בַּשַּׁעַר הִטּוּ "Diverting the poor from justice at the gate."

The prophet presents a scenario that reveals a corrupt judicial system which is unfavourable to the poor. It is against this background of corruption of justice that, Mays (1969:97) comments that, "The three specifications of conduct in 12b all belongs to the sphere of judicial practice." The three events which Mays (1969:97) is referring to are: the just are suffering because they are receiving unjust punishments from the administrators, those in charge of administrating justice are accepting bribes, and lastly, the poor are denied justice due to the action of their rulers and administrators. The condemnation and subsequent judgement in this verse was directly focused on the high and mighty of the society by the prophet. Carroll R (1992:234) contends that:

> 5.12 picks up earlier generalized vocabulary with the same goal of particularizing it… At the same time, this group's responsibility is deepened in the second half of 5.12a by a parallel colon which also mentions, although with different vocabulary, the multitude of their transgression…for the second time the possessions and way of life of those in command are singled out…In sum, although Israel as a people stands under judgement, the nation's legal, administrative and economic system and those who run it, or at least who are able to utilize it for personal gain, are special objects of Yahweh's condemnation.

The event that was occurring in the society, especially among those that are supposed to be the guardian of what the prophet may have understood to be the right Yahwist ideology, was in contrary to the same. We opted to use the term ideology here instead of religion because the same occurrences that were happening in Israelite society which was condemned by Amos may have been acceptable to others. Historically, the religious worldview of the Israelites prohibits them from doing such. Since, Amos arguable borrowed heavily from the existing tradition and wisdom which is not separate from the people's understanding of religion. In this case their religion. One could therefore argue that prophet utilized what he considered the right Yahwist ideology and employing it to condemn them. Furthermore, it could be argued that the worship of YHWH is the dominant ideology of the Bible and Amos continuously drew from the hold which this ideology has over the house of Israel (Carroll 1995:29). The repeated inclusion of the phrase "thus said says the lord to the house of Israel" in his rhetoric and representation could also be said to be ideological (Carroll 1995:30).

Verse 13

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

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לָכֵן הַמַּשְׂכִּיל בָּעֵת הַהִיא יִדֹּם כִּי עֵת רָעָה הִיא

</div>

The English Translations

NKJV: Therefore the prudent keep quiet at that time, for it is an evil time

NRSV: Therefore the prudent will keep quiet in such time, for it is an evil time

Observations and Comments

Verse 13 begins with the word "therefore" לכן which shows a sign of a relationship with the preceding verse. Amos 5:13 has generated endless debate amongst Hebrew scholars (as we will see in a moment). The bone of contention remains how to translate the root word המשכיל (a participle) and which means "the prudent". The common rendering of the verse reads "Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time." Another word that is contained in the sentence which its translation contributes greatly in helping determine the meaning of the entire sentence is, "Keep silent" ידם.

Scholars such as Paul (1991:158) translate the word as "prudent moan" whereas Anderson and Freedman (1989:503) suggest that it should be translated as "the prudent keep silent." Mays (1969:96) also translates it as "the prudent keep silent." Hammershaimb (1970:84) understands it to mean that the prudent is to be silent in an evil time like this, which is similar to Mays (1969). There are other scholars such as Smiths (1988:107) who prefer that the word should be translated as "prosperous" משכיל and keep silent ידם should be seen as originating from the Hebrew root word דמם "to groan." Verse 13 should therefore read, "Therefore the prosperous person will wail at the time, for it is an evil time." This translation allows the interpreter to steer clear of the traditional understanding of the term "prudent" משכיל in the context and sense of wisdom literature. Jackson (1986:435) is of the opinion that the verse be translated in the same as Smiths (1988). The main reasoning behind the translation suggested by scholars such as Jackson (1986) and Smith (1988) is for the verse to fit neatly into the context of the preceding verse and also the entire Amos narrative. [83]

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[83]See Carroll R (1992:233) for further reading.

In conclusion, despite the disagreement between scholars on how best to translate Amos 5:13; what any critical interpreter will observe from the text is that the state of justice was riddled with corruption during the period in question. Also, there were probably an existing fear, grief, repentance and anger amongst the wise or the prosperous that caused them to remain silent or to wail.[84]

3.2.3 Observations of Amos 5:14-17

Verse-by-verse observations and comments

Verse 14

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

דִּרְשׁוּ־טוֹב וְאַל־רָע לְמַעַן תִּֽחְיוּ וִיהִי־כֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת אִתְּכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתֶּם

The English Translations

NKJV: Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken

NRSV: seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said

Observations and Comments

Verse 14 is almost similar to the speech found in Amos 5:4-6. There is a slight variation in the choice of words which seems to introduce a remarkable difference between the content of verse 14 and verses 4-6. Here, the writer said, "seek good and not evil, that you may live." The striking similarity lies on the fact that the messages found in both cases are basically a call for repentance by the prophet. But the remarkable difference is the replacement of the word "me" which is believed to represent 'Yahweh'; that is 'seek Yahweh, with the phrase 'seek good and not evil'.

The meaning of the words 'good' and 'evil' as applied by the prophet in this context have been interpreted differently by different scholars. Anderson and Freedman (1989: 507) are of the opinion that the words 'good' and 'evil' may have been used by the prophet as

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[84] See Carroll R (1992:233-234) for further reading.

personifications of deities; in this instance representing the true God of Israel as 'good' and the other Canaanites gods as 'evil'. This implies that the word "good" was used in place of Yahweh but still, it refers to him directly. On the other hand, Soggin (1987:87) said that it referred to them, "basic attitude through which the people accept that they are the people of God in accordance with the vocation that they have received, in that God has become their God." His (1987:87) perspective on the subject suggests that the prophet used 'good' and 'evil' to highlight the need for the people of Israel to be of high and good moral standing, if they were indeed the chosen people of Yahweh. This being contrary to the "world of perverse values which are incarnated in social life and structures, and never questioned by (perhaps are even perpetuated by) the nation's religion" (Carroll 1992:234) which the prophet discourse tend to project. Also, Mays (1969:100-101) argues that the term is used in its complete sense to show the inseparable relationship between Yahweh (religion) and morality. According to him (1969:101), "the consummate response to Yahweh is the practice of good." Therefore, the outward working of the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel should be seen not in the cult but in the social sphere of their relationship with one another; like how justice is dispensed at the gate courts.[85] Though, it could be said that the use of 'good' and 'evil' could be "vague terms" in essence (Carroll R 1992:234), yet, in my opinion, the saying, "seek good, not evil that you may live," finds its meaning in the fact that Yahweh is the source of life according to the prophet. Having a right relationship with Yahweh (or 'to seek good') would translate into the people having a right relationship with others, since Yahweh is the embodiment of good.[86]

The second part of verse 14 reads, "so that the lord of hosts will be with you." The expression 'Lord of hosts' is generally applied to Israel in reference to "divine provision…and protection in times of holy war…" (Hubbard 1989:174). Thus, prompting Carroll R (1992:235) to suggest that the statement is full of irony in the manner that the prophet applied it here, since previously, its mention by him has been "in the context of divine judgment (3.13; 4:13)." He (1992:235) therefore proposes that the idea behind its use by the prophet here "is to show that the sovereign God is not to be found in the ritual at the sanctuaries either for blessing or for victory, but that his presence is inseparable from the fulfilment of his moral demands."

In the last line, "as you have spoken," Amos here turned to his hearers and drew from their belief system. Again, it is the belief of the writer that this is connected to history and

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[85]See Mays (1969:101) for further reading.
[86]See Dahood (1968:296).

understanding of it by the Israelites. Mays (1969:100) believes that the situation also contributed to the formulation of the saying. He is also of the opinion that, "style and motives which occur in Wisdom's instructional forms are also present" in Amos' discourse. Wolff (1977:250) explains that final clause of verse 14 was added by Amos to elaborate the assurance of the slogan; "Yahweh is with you," which was "an ancient word of assurance within the holy war." He also added that this, "made conditional the religiously based sense of security with regard to the political future" of the people of Israel.

In conclusion, the prophet's message here took a drastic turn from the usual message of gloom and doom to one that tentatively offers the people, a chance of survival and hope but which hinges on the condition that they must 'seek good and not evil'. This condition would be repeated more clearly in the subsequent verse and would also link both messages (vv. 14-15) to the content of verse 7 and verses 10-13.

Verse 15

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

שִׂנְאוּ־רָע וְאֶהֱבוּ טוֹב וְהַצִּיגוּ בַשַּׁעַר מִשְׁפָּט אוּלַי יֶחֱנַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׁאֵרִית יוֹסֵף

The English Translations

NKJV: Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph

NRSV: Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph

Observations and Comments

Verse 15 is thematically related to verse 14. The exhortation "seek good and not evil," (v. 14a) is reversed in (v. 15a), "hate evil and love good" to derive a meaning that is entirely antithetical. The next line (15b), "Establish justice in the gate," brings to fore the theme of justice which is present in verse 7; but the metaphor used here is a direct opposite of what was said in verse 7. Hammershaimb (1970:85) observes that, "put justice on its feet" (in reference to "establish justice in the gate") is the opposite of "cast righteousness to the ground," verse 7."

There is also a thematic relationship between content of verses 10-13 and 14-15. Carroll R (1992:235) concludes that a close reading of verses 14-15 will established that those that

are being addressed in these verses are the group which was described in verses 10-13. He (1992:235) argues that, "This identification is more obvious once verse 15 is taken into account: the mention of שׂנאו (5.10) and בשׁער (5:10, 12bA); the repetition of רע in 15.14,15 (cf. רעה 5.13)." Furthermore, Carroll R (1992:235) comments that, "If the meaning of רע *is* suggested by 5.10-12, then טוב is defined in the second colon of 5:15a: the establishment of justice at the gate." This means that Yahweh expects the people to completely abandon their wayward ways which gave birth to injustices and oppression.

The concluding part of verse 15, "it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" differs considerably from the way the same conditional promise was structured in verse 14, "So that the lord of host would be with you…" Hadjiev (2009:165) comments that verse 14, contains a "more confident promise, "so that Yahweh will be with you" whereas verse 15, is much more uncertain, "perhaps Yahweh will have mercy." He contends that the difference in the two verses arises from the jussive ויהי, which is present in verse 14. He opines that how the jussive is translated will help in subduing the tension that is present in the passage because of it.

Hadjiev (2009:165) says that, "If the word ויהי is rendered as subjunctive" and reads "then it may be so…may be with you," the outcome will help normalize the mood in v.14 and 15, making them similar. This will help the tension which existed in the statement to disappear. He (2009:165) also mentions other ways which the same word ויהי could be translated: as an indicative ("so that Yahweh would be with you"); to express a wish ("may Yahweh be with you"); to describe a certain future event and finally, in a case where the word is used following an imperative, it usually describes the consequence of action commanded by that imperative. Thus, when one considers the last statement, the balance of probability of the most reasonable translation seemingly tilts towards the second option, which is, as an indicative ("so that Yahweh would be with you").

Again, one is confronted with Amos employing the use of the sovereign powers of Yahweh as a tool to appeal to the conscience of the people. His rhetorical strategy is formulated in a manner that resonates with the existing worldview of his audience. The history of the people is told not separate from the ideology which holds to the supremacy of Yahweh their God. Carroll (1998:107) used the term, "worship of an idea" to represent the "ideology of YHWH(ism) in the Hebrew Bible or the worship of the idea of YHWH (as god)." Going by the explanation given here, the term "ideological" could be used measurably in certain case to replace what "more conventional scholars and theologians prefer to call theological in

reference to the Bible" (Carroll 1998:107). Amos is therefore saying that it is therefore the prerogative of Yahweh to decide what to do with the house of Joseph. His actions are not dependent on the fact whether the people repent and return back to him or not.

The verb, חנן is translated as, "to be gracious" (Strong 1996:45). In its present form, it is a *Qal* imperfect verb and indicates in active voice, simple imperfective action viewed as a part of a whole event or situation (Kelly 1992:129). Mays (1969:102) concludes that the word, "to be gracious" represents a "bestowal of favour and help which recipient has no grounds to expect." This explanation therefore conforms to the explanation given by Hadjiev (2009:165) which highlighted the difference between verses 15 and 14, whereby he (2009:165) stated that, "verse 15 is much more cautious in its approach to the future but this caution is not linked to the issue if Israel is able to repent or not." The use of the phrase, "remnant of Joseph" here by the prophet "refers to those who will be left after the destroying decimation of Yahweh's Judgment and the remnant is not so much a theme of hope for the future…" (Mays 1969:102). Similarly, Hubbard (1989:174) believes that "Remnant should be read in the light of Israel's weakness: it is not so much a promise of the future rescue of some faithful Israelites…" One can therefore say that Yahweh is the one who would ultimately decide the faith of the sons and daughters of the house of Joseph.

Verse 16

The Hebrew Text: BHS

לָכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת אֲדֹנָי בְּכָל־רְחֹבוֹת מִסְפֵּד וּבְכָל־חוּצוֹת יֹאמְרוּ הוֹ־הוֹ וְקָרְאוּ אִכָּר אֶל־אֵבֶל וּמִסְפֵּד אֶל־יוֹדְעֵי נֶהִי

The English Translations

NKJV: Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord, says this: "There shall be wailing in all the streets and they shall say in all the highways, 'Alas1 Alas!' They shall call the farmer to mourning, and skilful lamenters to wailing

NRSV: Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord: in all the squares there shall be wailing and in all the streets they shall say "Alas! Alas!" They shall call the farmers to mourning and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing.

Observations and Comments

Having covered the major issue of repentance in the preceding periscope, the prophet moves on to consider the issue of the Day of the Lord in this section. Having emphasized the call to repentance in the previous pericope, the prophet now proceeds to address the issue of the day of the Lord which seems to be a crucial idea in this book. The background of this passage is the idea of worship unto Yahweh during the autumn harvest festival. "The dawn of the equinoctial day was a high point in the celebrations, when the sun shone through the eastern gate of the sanctuary into the innermost shrine" (McKeating 1971:45). Celebrants expected to witness great festivities and jubilations throughout this period. Instead of festal excitement, Amos instead opted to predict events of doom, mourning and wailing which were revealed by the Lord of Hosts. The events discussed in this section are not typical of the normal mood surrounding the day of Lord. Maybe, one will argue that the nation of Israel had not heeded to the prophets appeal for repentance.

Amos announces that there shall be widespread wailing in the streets, the highways and the vineyards. "Wailing (*misped*) is the translation of the term that connotes rites of mourning" (Smith & Page 1995:108).

This section proceeds to give full description of the idea that was introduced in Amos 5:1-3 where the Lord had promised to bring judgment upon the Israelites. "The tone of the announcement – voiced in weeping, wailing, woe and lamentation – takes us back to the funeral dirge with which Amos began this third judgment speech (vv. 1-2)" (Hubbard 1989:175). The case of mourning is even amplified in these verses. "Everyone would bewail the conditions of divine judgment, not just the professional mourners, but even the poor farmers who would have to bury their oppressors. The vineyards, often places of joy and merriment, would be full of mourning, as would the streets" (Constable 2016:35). The difference between the mourning that will be taking place in this verse and that which the prophet spoke about in verses 1-3 "is that this mourning is taken up by the nation itself; it is no longer Yahweh who lifts up the dirge" (Carroll R 1992:236). The situation will be one of gloom, uncertainty and desperation for all.

The use of the word לכן "therefore" could be rendered as "because they do not do what they have just been exhorted to do or because, indeed, they give no sign of doing it" (Harper 1979:126). This is an indication that verse 16 is a continuation of the preceding discourse; verses 14-15. The purpose of "therefore" in this verse can be taken further to connect not only the preceding verses but also verse 12; "the entire passages which contains both direct accusations (vv. 7, 10-11a, 12) and indirect accusations in the form of admonitions (vv. 4-6,

14-15)” (Hubbard 1989:175). The specific mentioning of the farmers as part of the mourning team in this verse and its function tends to pose a problem to interpreters. “Stylistic balance has led most translators and commentators to follow the Vulgate in placing the preposition *in* (Heb. אל) before wailing (end of v. 16) rather than before professional mourners (*skilled in lamentation*), where it stood in the MT, which reads literally: “And they will call farmer(s) to mourning and wailing to those skilled in lamentation” (Hubbard 1989:175). The RSV chooses to preserve the parallelism in their rendering of the line, “and wailing to those skilled in lamentation” (Hubbard 1989:175). Hammershaimb (1970:86) suggests that the reason for encountering difficulty whilst interpreting the last line of verse 16 is due to “its peculiar grammatical construction.” According to Hammershaimb (1970:86), how a person interprets the line depends on how he interprets the word קראו in relation to the word אכר farmer. He (1970:86) opines that, “The subject of קראו can be “farmer,” if this is taken collectively, but there is also the possibility of taking the word as an object, and making the subject of קראו impersonal: ‘they call the farmers to mourning’.”

The understanding of this line is dependent on how one wishes to treat the line that follows the one in question, “And skilful lamenters to wailing.” For the interpreter to arrive at a reasonable conclusion requires that he or she should give attention to the position the word קראו takes, that is, if it would be placed before the מספד, and the verb taken in the sense of ‘cry’ or ‘proclaim’ to read, “and they proclaim mourning to those who are skilled in lamentation.” Whether it is the skilful lamenters who would summon the farmers to wailing or whether the farmers would on their own engage in the wailing is the important question which needs to be asked and to be answered in this instance.

I would rather approach my interpretation by looking at the context and also the imagery employed by the prophet. The context as I understood it is dealing with people in the rural areas. This conclusion was arrived by “taking אכר as the subject of the sentence.”

Verse 17

The Hebrew Text: *BHS*

וּבְכָל־כְּרָמִים מִסְפֵּד כִּי־אֶעֱבֹר בְּקִרְבְּךָ אָמַר יְהוָה

The English Translations

NKJV: In all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through you,” says the Lord.

NRSV: In all the vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through the midst of you, says the Lord.

Observations and Comments

"In all vineyards there shall be wailing" וּבְכָל־כְּרָמִים מִסְפֵּד. This is a prepositional phrase with locative בְּ (Garret 2008:162).

מִסְפֵּד "wailing" (BDB 2010:704).

The cause of such calamity becomes evident in the final line of verse 17. Yahweh warned that He will pass through their midst as He did in the land of Egypt destroying the firstborn of Pharaoh (Ex 12:12). Hubbard (1989:176) says that:

> God's people had become the enemy, defiling his name in their shrines, perverting justice and righteousness into bitter and worthless waste, robbing their countrymen of God-given land and despising his invitation to return to him. They had left Yahweh with no choice but to pass through in devastating judgment and never again to pass by in grace and forgiveness.

Their enmity and disobedience to God would result in national disaster and judgment. Here, one could argue that Amos is drawing from existing historical tradition. Though, commentators such as Harper (1979:127) believes that, "this has been added by a later hand to indicate, what the passage does not elsewhere specifically express, the employment of professional mourners." Once again, the prophet draws from history of the people which is arguably intertwined with the religious ideology of Yahwism. The people were informed about the judgment and punishment that awaits them for going contrary to the commandment of Yahweh their God. Though, Amos did "not identify the catastrophe, whether pestilence or military defeat, which will work this grim havoc" (Mays 1969:98). The only thing that was clear about it is the source, "I will pass through you, says the lord." Their punishment would be divinely instituted by Yahweh. It is also important to note that the specific mention of the vineyard as the place where this calamity would occur lends support to the preceding argument that the "farmers" would be among those that would be mourning the dead. "Again, the focus of the mourning is an agricultural calamity" (Garret 2008:162).

One could argue that there is a smack of irony in play in Amos' discourse. This is because the same farmers that were being oppressed would be the ones burying the rich that happens to be their oppressors. This conclusion is reached; if one considers the farmers who live in the rural communities as the poor that Amos is referring to in his discourse.

3.2.4 Observations of Amos 5:18-27

Verse-by-verse observations and comments

Verse 18

The Hebrew Text: BHS

הֹוֹי הַמִּתְאַוִּים אֶת־יֹום יְהוָה לָמָּה־זֶּה לָכֶם יֹום יְהוָה הוּא־חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹור׃

The English Translations

NKJV: Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? It would be darkness and not light.

NRSV: Alas to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why do you want the day of the Lord? It is darkness, not light;

Observations and Comments

הֹוֹי translated as a prolong form of "ho, woe or Ala" (Strong 1996: 34). Garret (2008) explains that the word "Ala" was used in this instance as "an interjection" appearing as a "simple particle"[87] and it is employed by "the prophets when calling on evil people on whom disaster is soon to come."

Amos warns that Israel's seeming ardent worship without the necessary repentance will result in woes and calamities for the nation. Hubbard (1989:177) explains that:

> Three different backgrounds have been suggested for the woe oracles found here and in other prophets: (1) the curse, where a powerful person pronounces doom upon an individual or group (e.g. Gn 9:25; Jdg 5:23); (2) the funeral lament, where a mourner sobs in grief for a dead loved one (e.g. 1 Ki 13:30; Je 22:18; 34:5); and (3) a form of wisdom instruction, sometimes used in opposition to blessed (Isa 3:10-11 and Ecc 10:16-17)

Israel's sense of longing demonstrates their anticipation of the great and awesome day of the Lord. "The strength of the verb [desire] serves both to show how passionately the people yearned for God's deliverance and to set them up for the vast contrast between what they believed the day would be and how it would, indeed, turn out" (Hubbard 1989:178). The Day

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[87] See Wolff (1977: 242-45) for further reading on the "woe sayings with הֹוֹי.

of the Lord which had been synonymous to Israel's victories and conquest in the past was actually going to unfold as a period of judgment.

Smith (1982:111) states that "the first reference of 'the day of the lord' is found in Amos. He (1982:111) also stated that, "…it is doubtful that he coined the expression." Further, he (1982:11) stated that, "As a matter of fact, the prophet was clearly grappling with his audience understanding of what 'the day of the Lord' would mean to them. They had to know about it to 'desire' it." Amos states that the day will be darkness instead of light for Israel.

Verse 19

The Hebrew Text: BHS

כַּאֲשֶׁר יָנוּס אִישׁ מִפְּנֵי הָאֲרִי וּפְגָעוֹ הַדֹּב וּבָא הַבַּיִת וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל־הַקִּיר וּנְשָׁכוֹ הַנָּחָשׁ:

The English Translations:

NKJV: It would be as though a man fled from the Lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, Leaned his hand on the wall, And a serpent bit him.

NRSV: as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake.

Observations and Comments

כַּאֲשֶׁר root word אשר; Garret (2008:165) comments that it "generally stands before a finite verb and means 'just as'"; in its present usage, the prophet uses it to introduce an analogy.

יָנוּס root word נוס translated "to flit, that is to vanish away" (Strong 1996:92). In its present form is a Qal *yiqtol* 3 masculine singular of נוס and the *yiqtol* here is used for the subjunctive mood, here setting up an unreal, hypothetical condition" (Garret (2008:165).

אִישׁ translated as "a man, male, husband" (BDB 2010:35). "The subject, here is a hypothetical man" (Garret 2008:165).

The prophet employs the use of images to describe what would happen to those that are engaged in things that are contrary to Yahweh's will. Wolff (1977:236) comments that Amos' use of string of consecutive perfects and the single reference to 'someone'…is a strong indication that what is being referred to here is a single story. Such descriptions are typical of Amos in his book. In this verse he highlights that "man by his injustice disrupts the divine order and releases malign forces which pursue him" (McKeating 1971:46). Man is therefore in

danger both out of his house and in his vicinity. The implication is that the end will be fatal and that there is no escape from it (Wolff 1977:256).

Verse 20

The Hebrew Text: BHS

הֲלֹא־חֹשֶׁךְ יוֹם יְהוָה וְלֹא־אוֹר וְאָפֵל וְלֹא־נֹגַהּ לוֹ׃

The English Translations

NKJV: Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light, Is not very dark, with no brightness in it?

NRSV: is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness?

Observations and Comments

The prophet introduces his speech with a rhetorical question הֲלֹא־חֹשֶׁךְ יוֹם "is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light..." Garret (2008:167) observes that because "the question was introduced by the word הֲלֹא, it implies that the answer should be self-evident." This means that those that desire for the day of the lord are wasting their time. Their reward was going to be a direct opposite to what they were expecting.

The second part, "is it not very dark, with no brightness" וְאָפֵל וְלֹא־נֹגַהּ לוֹ intensifies the hopelessness of the situation which the prophet intended to portray. Carroll R (1992:245) observes that "the powerful language of smile and metaphor undercuts any hope of benefit or aid on 'the day of the lord'." Similarly, Hubbard (1989:180) states that "any lingering hope that Israel cherished about the glories of the day of the Yahweh is shattered by the rhetorical question with which Amos clinched his point." Wolff (1977:256) sees allusion to wisdom tradition. He comments that, "darkness and gloom are code words for fatal devastation; they belong to the traditional material of holy war and, from the time of Amos on, remain part of the concept of the day of Yahweh." Thus, suggesting hopelessness as already indicated.

Verse 21

The Hebrew Text: BHS

שָׂנֵאתִי מָאַסְתִּי חַגֵּיכֶם וְלֹא אָרִיחַ בְּעַצְּרֹתֵיכֶם׃

The English Translations

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NKJV: "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savour your sacred assemblies…

NRSV: I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies

Observations and Comments

שָׂנֵאתִי Qal qatal 1 common singular of the root word שנא translated as "hate" (BDB 2010:971).

מָאַסְתִּי Qal qatal 1 common singular of the root word מאס translated as "reject" (BDB 2010:588).

Here, the prophet begins his discourse by shifting it to a "first-person speech" (Smith 1982:112). The theme moves to God. "I hate, I despise" is used together here to describe the degree of extreme rejection and contempt which Yahweh holds toward the people and their festivals. Garret (2008:168) comments "the anarthrous seconding of the first verb [hate] with another [reject], near-synonymous verb eloquently expresses the disgust of someone who is weary of something tedious and irksome."

The second part of the sentence, "I do not savour your sacred assemblies" further illustrates the degree of repudiation that Yahweh holds against the religious activities of the people. The word וְלֹא אָרִיחַ Hiphil *yiqtol* 1 c s of רוח; the verb properly means to "smell" (Garret 2008:169). "The word is used especially of the festal assembly on the seventh day of the feast of unleavened bread…and the eight day of the feast of Tabernacles; here it is used in the general sense" (Hammershaimb 1970:89) to refer to the actions that happens in the sacred religious assemblies of the people (Garret 2008:169).

The manner in which Amos condemned the activities of those that are involved with the ritual raises questions about the text. This is in view of the fact that one could have expected people that were living in Israel at that time to have an attitude that is pro-ritual (Barton 2012:86). Instead, here we are seeing a supposed religious individual that is anti-ritual (Barton 2012:86). The argument is centred around the fact that as of time that Amos supposedly delivered his speech, that is, the pre-exilic period, the people of Israel or more specifically, the religion of Israel were so taken by the act of ritual and offering sacrifices that anyone who dares to go contrary to this way of thinking will be perceived as being counter culture (Barton 2012: 86). The question thus become how did the anti-ritualism find itself into the book?

Barton (2012:87) opines that sometimes the raised rhetoric in some Christian quarters which tend to elevate the idea of anti-ritualism among prophets is closely tied to what have been come to be known as the protestant agenda (Barton 2012:86). According to Barton, it is

suspected that the "dispute between Protestants and Catholics are being read back into the Old Testament and this is anachronistic." There is also the believe among some Jewish readers that the emphasis place by some Christians on the Prophetic anti-ritual sentiments is done in order to denigrate Judaism and its tendency to be inclined towards ritual practices (Barton 2012:87).

The prophet condemnation of ritualism may also be better interpreted as a way of sending the message to the people that Yahweh desire more than just sacrifice (Barton 2012). It is Yahweh's desire that justice should reign supreme among the people and also to see a heartfelt repentance. Yahweh will not therefore accept sacrifice from a polluted hand which may be judged to be full of blood (Barton 2012). The hand, involved with committing act of injustices and wrongs against the poor. The condemnation of their sacrifices and rituals may also go hand in hand with the emphasis on the superior commitment to charity, which is, doing good work and social justice that some in the Roman Catholic Church places emphasis on (Barton 2012: 91). It has also been suggested that the prophets themselves were cult officials and as such would not have condemned ritualistic practices (Barton 2012:90). In this regard, a passage such as Amos 5:25, will be read in such a manner that the emphasis is placed on the word "me" (Barton 2012:90). This implies that the response to the rhetorical question will be that the Israelites directed their sacrifices and worships to other gods which they may have come in contact with during their sojourn in the wilderness for forty years (Barton 2012:89).

Lods (1937:66-67) is of the opinion that there is a tendency for prophets such as Amos to challenge the people to present proves that actually points to the efficacy of sacrifice. Amos was therefore saying that what Yahweh demands from the people was a "society of an exclusive moral and spiritual order" (Lods 1937:85). In the same vein, Waterman (1943:66) argues that though people who lived during the time of Amos "believed that God was with them and that they had his favour, and that they knew how, through the techniques of the sacrificial system, both to win and to keep his goodwill," Amos on the other hand showed through his writing that Yahweh was against such thinking and therefore find it false. He said that "When people claimed the authority of antiquity for their sacrifices, Amos declared that in the period of their desert wandering, they were Idolaters." Amos approach towards the age of old sacrificial system was opposite to the thinking of the religion of his day (Waterman 1943:68). The assumption therefore that Amos was unaware of the existence of such system stands in contradiction to his experience and words. Harper (1979:133) believes that Amos was implying that the offer of sacrifices in the desert by the people of Israel did not receive Yahweh's approval. He believes that Yahweh rejections of these practices were based on the

fact that "they constituted a cultus which did not truly represent Yahweh, and must be abandoned, if true ideas of Yahweh were to prevail" (1979:133). But this position also seems to not have capture the situation described by Amos comprehensively. Since, there has been a history of giving sacrifice associated with the history of Israel. Honacker (1908:202) settles for an interpretation that explain that Amos implied that the ritualistic practices during the forty years the people spent in the desert did not save them from Yahweh's punishment and as such will not do so now.

In conclusion, it could be argued that though Amos's speech did not leave a clear indication of what exactly he meant. Yet, the past history and tradition of the people of Israel linked them to ritualistic practices. It is our understanding that this was against Yahweh's desire. Amos opposed it and describes it as practices that are found in the tradition the other ancient Semites religion practices (Coleran 1944:424). This theme of sacrifice would be further developed by Amos in the subsequent verses.

Verse 22

The Hebrew Text: BHS

כִּי אִם־תַּעֲלוּ־לִי עֹלוֹת וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם לֹא אֶרְצֶה וְשֶׁלֶם מְרִיאֵיכֶם לֹא אַבִּיט׃

The English Translations

NKJV: Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings

NRSV: Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of wellbeing of your fatted animals I will not look upon.

Observations and Comments

כִּי אִם־תַּעֲלוּ־לִי is a Hiphil *yiqtol* 2 m p of עלה preceded by כִּי אִם and translated in the more literal sense, "for if" (Garrett 2008:170).

The opening sentence of the verse has been the subject of much speculation among scholars.[88] Carroll R (1992:246) explains that, "the breaking of the neat parallel structure of the strophe by the initial colon of verse 22 has been the source of much speculation." The contestation lies on how one chooses to interpret the initial word of the verse כִּי אִם. Carroll R

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[88] For further reading about the subject see Carroll R (1992:246) and Smith (1989:186).

(1992:246) explains that some have chosen to understand the word "concessively" and interpret it as "even if." On the other hand, others prefer to understand it emphatically and interpret as "surely if." He (1992:246) stated that "the interruption by its length serves to underline the contrast between Israel's intent…and Yahweh's repulsion." He (1992:247) concluded that "disrupted patterns do not necessary entail redaction or scribal error, but may be purposeful literary effect…" Scholars such as Mays (1969:105) and Hammershaimb (1970:89) are of the opinion that there is a line missing after the first line. However, I am of the opinion that the received text as it is makes good sense and therefore does not require any "addition or the omission of a line" (Smith 1989:186). If one is to look at the preceding ant the subsequent verses, the verse connects well to the evolving narrative. This cast doubts in the argument that there may be scribal error, since the writer of Amos could have also seen this and could have corrected it.

The conclusion reached in the above explanation allows for the acceptance that the text should be translated as "for if" or "even though" and this therefore makes it a conditional sentence. Though the people are doing what they thought was pleasing to Yahweh, the sentence shows that Yahweh completely sees their action differently from what they believe. He rejects their offering completely because their actions are not pleasing to him. "Three terms for sacrifices were given: the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the peace offerings" (Smith1989:186).[89]

Verse 23

The Hebrew Text: BHS

הָסֵר מֵעָלַי הֲמוֹן שִׁרֶיךָ וְזִמְרַת נְבָלֶיךָ לֹא אֶשְׁמָע׃

The English Translations

NKJV: Take away from me the noise of your songs, For, I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.

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

Observations and Comments

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[89] For further reading about offerings see Smith (1989:186).

הָסֵר Hiphil imperative m s of the root word סוּר (Garrett 2008:171), translated "turn off or take away" (Strong 1996:98).

מֵעָלַי Prepositional phrase with מִן and עַל on a 1 c s suffix (Garret 2008:171).

This verse shows a continuation of Yahweh's rejection of the people's worship which involved cultic practices and everything that is associated with them. Here, their music, which usually was a source of satisfaction and joy for Yahweh was completely rejected. The introduction of the sentence with an imperative ("take away" הָסֵר) that is, a command, shows an absolute and complete rejection of the said action which in this instance was there songs that was perceived as noise by Yahweh. Garrett (2008:171) states that "the use of the preposition עַל suggests that the music of Israel has become an unbearable burden upon Yahweh."

Verse 24

The Hebrew Text: BHS

וְיִגַּל כַּמַּיִם מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה כְּנַחַל אֵיתָן׃

The English Translations

NKJV: But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.

NRSV: But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Observations and Comments

וְיִגַּל Niphal *weyiqtol* 3 m s of גלל translated "roll down or run down" (BDB 2010: 164); Garrett (2008:172) comments that the *weyiqtol* is a jussive and is here contrastive, suggesting that Israel should do this rather than singing their praise-songs."

This verse could be seen as a contrast to the preceding verse where the harsh tone of "I will not" is replaced by a reconciliatory and positive encouraging tone of "let justice flow." Smith (1982:113) states that "God wanted to hear the sweet music of Justice and righteousness rolling down like waters and an ever-flowing stream." Here, there is a demand for righteousness by Yahweh as what he values and which is directly opposed to the cultic feasts which the people offer (Hammershaimb 1970:90). This contrasts with the preceding verse could be shown by translating וְ as 'but' (Hammershaimb 1970:90).

The prophet uses the metaphors drawn from the imagery of water to describe the type of justice and righteousness that Yahweh wants to see taking place amongst his people.

Hayes (1988:174) suggests that "This was no accident since the central motif of the fall festival was the coming of the autumn rains and the renewal of streams." Garrett (2008:172) states that the Niphal of גלל used here was featured only in Isaiah 34:4 referring to where heaven is "roll up like a scroll." The same word גלל was not used anywhere else in the Bible with מַיִם.[90] The imagery that results from the statement "seems to refer to how water rolls over itself in waves" and thus suggesting that the type of waters being referred to here is one that "move with speed and in abundance" (Garrett 2008:172). This implies that "God wants righteousness and justice to flow unabated and endlessly like a mighty river" (Smith1989:187).

Verse 25

The Hebrew Text: BHS

<div dir="rtl">

הַזְּבָחִים וּמִנְחָה הִגַּשְׁתֶּם־לִי בַמִּדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

</div>

The English Translations

NKJV: "Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

NRSV: Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

Observations and Comments

Here again, the prophet posed a rhetorical question which the expected answer should be "no." However, the answer to this question, whether the people indeed offered sacrifices and offerings to God while they were in the desert have been a subject of debate among scholars. Garrett (2008:173) comments that, "verse 25 is a single clause." Anderson and Freedman (1989:530) observe that, "verse 25 is the longest individual clause in Amos, consisting of interrogative + object + perfect verb + indirect object = location + time + vocative." They (1989:531) admitted that, "the syntax presents several unusual features." Garrett (2008:173) also stated that "Its verb, הִגַּשְׁתֶּם (Hiphil qatal 2 mp of נגשׁ), indicates that the text perspective is historical (past tense). The central theme of this verse lies on the two direct objects (הַזְּבָחִים וּמִנְחָה sacrifices and offerings) that describe Israel religious observance (Garrett 2007:173). Hence, the question whether Israel offered Yahweh sacrifices and offerings whilst they were in the desert for forty years.

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[90] See Hayes (1988:175).

Wolff (1977:264) is of the opinion that verse 25 is the work of Deuteronomistic redactor. The writer(s) here challenges their generation regarding the idea of cult practices in Israel religion (Wolff 1977:264). This same position that teaches that sacrifice was not offered in early history of Israel could be seen in the writings of Jeremiah 7:21-23. Wolff (1977:264) believes that the word "זבחים" "sacrifices" is slightly different from what is believed that Amos employed in his original writings. Also, the word "מנחה" "meal offering," differs from the way it was used in Amos 5: 22. In verse 25, the word was used "in the customary singular form," and therefore, it "no longer serves as the collective designation for sacrifices" (Wolff 1977:264). He contends that the meaning is similar to that of 2 King 16:15 and what began to represent in later periods. "It is only in the language of the sixth century that 'the slaughtered animals' and the 'vegetable offerings' together come to designate the totality of all cultic offering" (Wolff 1977:264). There is the great possibility that the addition of the forty years in this speech was to remind the listeners that the material mentioned were not available in the desert and as such no such offerings and sacrifices were offered to Yahweh (Wolff 1977:265). It also signifies a period of change when a whole generation were to die out and a new generation were to take over the running of the affairs of the people of Israel (Wolff 1977:265). During their period in the wilderness, it was assumed that the people worshipped God purely and no sacrifice or offering was offered.

Harper (1979:136) believes that the verse real meaning is that during the time that the people were in the desert, they offered to Yahweh something which was greater than sacrifice (Jeremiah 7:22). He opines that this verse is logically connected to the subsequent verse and not the preceding verse. According to Harper (1979:136) the ה of הזבחים should not be read as the article, but as ה interrogative expecting an affirmative answer or negative answer. In this context it should be read in the negative sense.

Hadjiev (2009:166-167) is of the opinion that this particular question is linked to issue of righteousness and justice that was highlighted by Amos in verses 21-24. He (2009:167) opines that this should be considered to mean that "during the wilderness period Israel offered no sacrifices or only very modest sacrifices to God but her faithfulness to him was all that mattered." He (2009:167) concluded that this is in lieu of the fact that "justice is more important to God than cult. There are scholars such as Soggin (1987:98) who simply believes that the existing condition in the desert did not present the necessary requirements to offer sacrifices.

In conclusion, one could say that Amos was "calling on the people to remember the past and follow the example of their fathers" (Smith 1989:188). This implies that the people should

drop entirely the idea that sacrifices and offerings is what God desire. Yahweh desires justice and righteousness from them more than the cultus sacrifices which they offer.

Verse 26

The Hebrew Text: BHS

וּנְשָׂאתֶם אֵת סִכּוּת מַלְכְּכֶם וְאֵת כִּיּוּן צַלְמֵיכֶם כּוֹכַב אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם׃

The English Translations

NKJV: You also carried Sikkuth your king, And Chiun, your idols, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves

NRSV: You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves;

Observations and Comments

וּנְשָׂאתֶם , a Qal weqatal 2 m p of נשא translated "to lift"; "to carry (away) (BDB 2010:671).

מַלְכְּכֶם is a common masculine noun; root word מלך and translated as "King" (the chief deity of the Ammonites)" (BDB 2010:574).

סִכּוּת׃ translated as an (idolatrous) booth; tabernacle (BDB 2010:696).

כִּיּוּן ; Planet Saturn-properly translated as a statue, that is, idol; but used (by euphemism) for some heathen deity (perhaps corresponding to Priapus or Baal-peor):-Chiun (BDB 2010:575).

There are difficulties surrounding how to interpret verse 26; the difficulty emanates from how to interpret the verb וּנְשָׂאתֶם found at the beginning of the sentence. a *qal weqatal* 2 m p of the root word נשא (Garrett 2008:174) translated as "to lift"; "to carry (away)" (Strong 1996:96). Hammershaimb (1970:92) listed four possible ways which the verb וּנְשָׂאתֶם could be translated in relation to the preceding (verse 25) and succeeding (verse 27) verses:

1. The verb could be translated as future tense, parallel with וְהִגְלֵיתִי in verse 27 and in that case it would read, 'So you shall carry…'
2. The verb is taken as introducing a conditional clause, which is continued by וְהִגְלֵיתִי in verse 27: 'if you carry…, I will take you…'
3. וְהִגְלֵיתִי is taken as a past, but as a contrast with and answer to verse 25: 'No! But you have carried…'
4. The verb is taken as parallel to in verse 25, so that the whole verse is a question, which like verse 25 presupposes a negative answer.

He concluded that "Grammatically there is no problem in taking וּנְשָׂאתֶ֫ם of the future, for וְהִגְלֵיתִי must of course be understood as future (interpretation 1)."

Carroll R (1992:252) identified the "major difficulty" with this verse primarily as relating to "lexical; to what (or whom) do the various terms refer?" He (1992:252) stated that "syntactically 5:26 is best taken as a statement (and not as a continuation of the rhetorical question of 5:25) which refers to the future." He (1992:251) pointed out that "the references are probably to pagan astral deities, whose precise identification is somewhat hard to specify?"

Mays (1969:112) also admits that the major difficulty concerning the translation of this verse centres on the manner with which one is going to translate the words Sikkuth and Chiun and also on the fact that the verse is too long for it to be treated as a poetry; coupled with the fact that its syntax is awkward. According to Mays (1969:112) "the form of *sikkut* and *kiyun* is a result of pronouncing their consonants with the vowels of 'abomination' (*siqqus*) a scribal device for derogating names of false gods." Mays (1969:112) also stated that the gods mentioned in the verse may have been the gods; *Sakkut* and *Kaiwan* both linked to the Babylonian astral deity Saturn. On the other hand, scholars such as Anderson and Freedman (1989:543); Smith (1989:188); are of the opinion that these gods are linked to earlier Assyrian influence in Israel. Here, we would treat them as "Assyro-Babylonian deities; a name borrowed from Wolff (1977: 265).

In order to attempt to establish the meaning of this verse, one need to look at the gods mentioned and determines the possibility of the people of Israel knowing about them at the time of the wilderness which is the main theme of verse 25. From the record presented, the gods were linked to the Babylonians. Anderson and Freedman (1989:532) suggest that "If Israelites ever worshiped this planet gods, it was most likely a practice borrowed lately from the Assyrians" Therefore, "this cannot be an accusation of worshiping these deities in the past while Israel was in the wilderness (Smith 1989:188)." The assumption would therefore be that "the verb refers to incomplete action in the present or future…" (Smith 1989:189). It is also important to recognize the fact that "verse 27 clearly begins the punishment in Amos, 26 should not be joined to 27 to form a judgment oracle; the false worship in 26 must describe the present iniquity of Israel at the time of Amos" (Smith 1989:189).

In conclusion, verse 26 is most probably making reference to the impending calamity which would befall the people in the future. Since the people have abandoned the ways of their fathers during the time of exile and resorted to serving other gods such as the gods mentioned; Yahweh was going to send them to exile carrying their man-made gods.

Verse 27

The Hebrew Text: BHS

וְהִגְלֵיתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵהָלְאָה לְדַמָּשֶׂק אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ׃ פ

The English Translations

NKJV: Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus Says the Lord whose name is God of hosts.

NRSV: therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

Observations and Comments

Verse 27 announces with a language that could be described as "both definite and vague" (Anderson and Freedman 1989:537) the punishment that would befall the people and which is Yahweh sending them to exile. "The adverb *halea* הלאה refers to both space ("beyond") and time ("afterward")" (Anderson and Freedman 1989:537). "I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus," This phrase did not specify the exact location where Yahweh would be sending the people to. But one could speculate that the statement is linked to the Assyrians because of the subsequent defeat and the carting away of the people into exile by the Assyrians.

Verse 27b is an affirmation of "the validity of his prophecy with an oath-like confirmation formula, Says Yahweh, the God of hosts is his name" (Smith 1989:190). Anderson and Freedman (1989:537) comment that the phrase, "whose name" is "a link with the hymn in 5:8-9, which does not end in the usual way."

3.3 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I attempted to discuss what I understand to be diachronic and synchronic reading of the text. This was to enable the reader to have an understanding of the methodology which I would be using in this chapter to conduct a study of Amos 5. This was followed by study of the literary development of the book of Amos. The focus was on conducting a review of the work of other scholars. The different authors whose work where reviewed applied different methodology in their study of the book. Some utilized diachronic methods whereas others used synchronic methods. But a close observation of the different authors work will reveal that none can in actual fact claim that his method was purely based in either diachronic or synchronic approach. Perhaps, it is important to admit that in most cases

some of this cross over in methods are very difficult to notice, but there is always traces of both method in the text somewhere if one critically analyse the texts.

The rest of the study was about attempt to establish the meaning of the words and sentences that are found in Amos 5.The study engaged with the work of other authors on Amos which the writer of the dissertation considered helpful depending on the verse that was being discussed. In this light, I have tried to look at what is behind the text in some of the verses. I have also made attempt to discuss some of the passages whose contents appeared to problematic. I would like to particularly make reference to verse 21 and 25 in this regard. Verse 21 could be said to be inconclusive in the manner in which it appeared in its final form. Verse 25 could also be said to include words which are difficult to be defined. There are other words in the Amos 5 as well which I will also say are difficult to be given a definite meaning in the context which they are written. However, through interacting with other scholars work, I was able to arrive at a meaning which I consider to be the most reasonable.

Chapter 4 will focus on the rhetorical reading of the meaning of "justice and righteousness" in Amos. It is important to note that there exists a high level of similarity among some of the passages that will appear in Chapter 3. However, I will make every attempt to differentiate the two studies.

Chapter 4: Rhetorical reading of justice and righteousness in Amos five and other relevant selected text in Amos

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the experience of the present reader as he or she engages with the act of interpreting the final form of the text of the book of Amos as it is found today. To take this statement a little further, the exact interest of the author of this dissertation is to rhetorically engage with the concept of משפט וצקבה "justice and righteousness" as it was presented by the text of Amos. The implication of this later statement is that here the author will attempt to identify and understand the special relationship which the concept of וצקבה משפט "justice and righteousness" share with the rest of the book of Amos. Most importantly to be considered is how Amos structured his speeches wherever he made direct mention of this concept; and how the message therein contained in the expression functioned to address the situation; what necessitated Amos to employ the subjects of משפט וצקבה "justice and righteousness" as a strategy to address the situation; and finally, how his rhetoric invention combined to effectively persuade his audience.

Before proceeding with this study, it is important to clarify what the author means by "rhetorical reading." It is the belief of the writer that "rhetoric reading," in the sense which it is applied in this section, shares a lot of commonalities with "rhetoric criticism." It will therefore be logical to discuss the meaning of rhetoric criticism and then attempt to link the two. Another way of putting this is to say that here in this study, the term rhetorical reading was adopted so as to enable the writer to "contextualize rhetoric criticism" to serve the specific purpose of this chapter. The chapter is designed to show that the rhetorical shaping of the book of Amos relied greatly on the use of the concept משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" as a persuasive strategy to address the people of Israel to reject the existing "situation."

4.1.1 Rhetoric criticism

The main aim of Bible reading is for the reader to understand the meaning and to make use of the meaning or to apply it in any manner that seem right to the reader. In order to achieve this aim, the reader is confronted with the task of understanding the totality of the message that is therein contained in the book or the chapter of the Bible which the person is reading as the case may be. The Bible as we have it today could be said to have been handed over to us in what could be described as its "final form." This implies that any meaning that a reader may arrive at, at the end of his or her reading should have its origin from what was received; the

final form. It may be true therefore to say that the unity and coherency of the Bible's message is important as it adds to the ability of the reader to be able to arrive at a reasonable conclusive meaning. As it is to be expected, this position makes it important that any study of the biblical text must therefore be concerned with the unity and coherence of the message. It could be argued that to achieve this requires that attention should be paid to the complete work of the author that bears testimony to the author's unique style (Muilenburg1969:5).

Rhetoric criticism therefore is an approach used in biblical interpretation; where the practitioners make the claim that it is concerned with the study of the final form of the biblical texts. In current biblical scholarship, rhetoric criticism as a methodological approach was made popular by Muilenburg in his 1968 presidential address, presented to the Society of Biblical Literature. The address was subsequently published a year later in Journal of Biblical Literature under the title: "Form Criticism and Beyond." Muilenburg (1969:8) stated the usefulness of rhetoric criticism as a methodology in Old Testament studies in his statement; "what I am interested in, above all is understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole." The unique feature of Muilenburg's statement is its emphasis on the style employed in the writing of the text and not the historical person of the biblical writers. What he proposes is that focus should be given to the text as it is, without necessarily bothering to extend the study to understanding the history behind the text. By so doing, rhetoric criticism according to Muilenburg (1969:8) aims to understand the structural patterns and literary device (rhetorical questions, chiasm, parallelism, inclusions, repetition etc.) employed by the author in his or her bid to effectively convey his or intended message to the audience.

Muilenburg's (1969) advocacy for the use of rhetoric criticism in biblical studies was widely received in the field of Old Testament scholarship. However, it was as well criticised for its elevation of style and for what appears to be its a-historical tendency. Some of the voices that criticized Muilenburg's submission were Wuellner (1987:457), Gitay (1981) and Kennedy (1984). The main concern of these scholars was the limitation placed on rhetoric criticism by Muilenburg's emphasis on style. This prompted Wuellner (1987:457) to describe the Muilenburg's approach as imposing restriction on the art of rhetoric. They wanted to see the field of rhetoric criticism broaden to capture the whole essence of the existence of the text; the literary style and its ability to persuade the intended audience of the author and also the grammar-historical study of the text.

The last part of the above sentence form the second identifiable weakness of Muilenburg's approach to rhetoric criticism and which is its tendency to be a-historical. The usefulness of the conducting a historical study of the author and audience are usually downplayed if one strictly applies Muilenburg's approach. For a person to gain a well-rounded and responsible understanding of a biblical text requires that a holistic approach should be embraced in conducting the study of the text. This implies that historical studies as well as literary analysis should be conducted on the text (Mathew 1999:208). Historical study allows the interpreter to gain an understanding of the probable context under which the writer and their audience operated. On the other hand, literary analysis helps the interpreter to focus on the meaning of the text.

4.1.2 Rhetorical Reading

A brief explanation was given in unit 4.1; paragraph 2, by the author about what he understands to be the relationship between the terms rhetorical criticism and rhetorical reading. In this section the author will attempt to give further explanation on the meaning of rhetorical reading and why he chose to use it as a methodological approach in the study of concept of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" as used by Amos.

This study is seen by the author to be an unusual approach to rhetoric criticism since it deals with one single theme: משפט וצקה "Justice and Righteousness." The concept of וצבקה משפט "justice and righteousness" "was expressed in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East by means of a hendiadys"[91] (Weinfeld 1995:25). The unusualness of this study could be seen from the fact that unlike a conventional rhetoric criticism that identifies and deals with a coherent unified text, here the discussion is about the theme of "justice and righteousness", which may be said to be coherently unified. Therefore, rhetorical reading of the text of Amos 5 and the book of Amos as a whole helps us to identify specifically where and how the theme of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" was applied by Amos. The reverse of this statement will be that a specific rhetorical reading that targets the theme of justice and righteousness in Amos 5 and the rest of the book of Amos, will help the interpreter to understand the rhetorical situation that led to the birth of Amos' prophesy and the strategy employed by Amos in persuading his audience to seek a way out of the situation. One may ask the critical question about what the reasoning behind this particular argument is. The writer will argue that the theme of justice and righteousness is what defines the writing of Amos. The critical exegetical

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[91] Hendiadys is a pair of words- that is closely related in meaning and thus, are treated as one concept, though separate. They are best defined when they are used in context.

122

study that was undertaken in the previous chapter helped the writer in arriving at this conclusion. Scholars such as Hayes (1988:174) reached a similar conclusion through their exegetical study of the book of Amos.

The unusualness of this study also made the writer to opt for it to be contextualized. Unlike the Muilenburg's approach to rhetoric criticism that tend to downplay the importance of the historical study of the text, this study will be conducting a historical study of the theme of justice and righteousness as seen in Amos 5 and in the book of Amos. Though the historical study will not be conducted separately, but rather weaved into the rhetoric reading of the texts. This is important because an understanding of the historical situation that existed when the book of Amos was written will help the interpreter to have a better understanding of the meaning of the text. Also, it is necessary to observe that the notion of ideology is interwoven with history. One cannot therefore conduct an ideological critical reading of the theme of justice and righteousness without paying attention to the history of the time.

Against this background, it is important to note that this study would "reflect a multidisciplinary nature" by embracing "a spirit of exploration and methodological adventurousness" as opposed to seeking "methodological purism" (Clines and Exum 1993:15). Nonetheless, the study will endeavour to observe as much as possible the basic principle of rhetorical criticism that has "regard to the rhetorical situation of the composition and promulgation of ancient texts and to their intended effect upon their audience" (Clines and Exum 1993:16).

Here, rhetorical reading is applied to help the writer to attempt to re-construct how the rhetorician(s) that put together the book of Amos effectively appealed to the existing religious ideology which teaches the supremacy of Yahweh to call the attention of the people to issues that relate to משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." This study will therefore continue by discussing the effectiveness of the persuasive devices that were employed by the authors in their bid to appeal to the reasoning ability and imaginative senses of their audience. It will do so by discussing the meaning and application of the word משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" and conducting a rhetorical reading of the text identified as dealing with the theme of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" in Amos 5 and the rest of the book of Amos which includes the following: Amos 5:6-7, 24, and 6:12. This will be followed by an attempt to discuss the rhetoric strategy employed by Amos and lastly, will be concluding remarks.

4.2 The meaning and application of the words "Justice" and "righteousness" in Amos

4.2.1 Introduction

Here, the focus will be on the meaning of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." The question will be what role the concept played in persuading Amos' audience; especially the Amos 5 audience. This theme is understood by the writer to not only have been important in the book of Amos but also to be intertwined with Israel's mission. It was mentioned in connection with Abraham, the father of Israel nation (Gen 18:19). Weinfeld (1995:7) remarks that "it was Israel mission to do "justice and righteousness" and "Israel prophets saw the fulfilment of this goal as the basis of the nation's existence…" So this concept was part and parcel of historical Israel. Thus, it can be argued that the concept was ingrained in their thinking and therefore was supposed to be a way of life for them. Amos was no stranger to its existence. He probably wrote being aware of it and the role it was supposed to play in the life of the people.[92]

4.2.2 Meaning of the concept

In discussing the meaning of the concept of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness," the writer will like to refer back to an important observation which he made in 4.1.2, paragraph 2. It was observed that the concept of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" "was expressed in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East by means of a hendiadys" (Weinfeld 1995:25). The word hendiadys is used to denote word-pairs which are usually very close in meaning but are not the same words. Weinfeld (1995:25) opines that "the most common word-pairs to serve this function in the bible are משפט וצדקה" (Weinfeld 1995:25). In his essay about "justice," Frey (1992:92) opines, "justice does not present a rigorously defined notion; it seems to be more or less a cluster of normative ideas combined in one fashion or another; their common basis and content, however, is continuously discussed." This explanation shows that it is problematic to render a specific definition of justice, even as a lone word. Implicitly, he (1992:92) is suggesting that the meaning is best capture in context. This could be seen from the statement he (1992:93) made in the same essay following the former: "Since the understanding of justice is vague, each serious discussion of its meaning includes an on-going

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[92] See Doorly (1989:27) for further reading on the hypothesis that argues that the prophets must have had an advanced idea about religion and it was from this position that Amos spoke concerning Yahweh's wrath and judgment against the practices of injustice and unrighteousness.

124

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discussion which relates the different views of already proposed conception of justice." The implication of this statement is that the conception of the meaning of justice is dependent on the context used.

In the rest of this discussion, I will make extensive use of the writings of Weinfeld (1995) and also the discussion of Andersen and Freedman (1992) on the meaning of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" in my explanation. I believe the studies done by them are useful because their treatment of the subject was quite broad and deep and it also covers the area of interest of this study, that is, the usage in the context of Amos.

Weinfeld (1995:27) identified the use of the term to refer to the "character trait granted by God to the king." To support this view, he made reference to Psalm 72:1-2, where God was asked to grant the King with his משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." Weinfeld (1995:27) explained that the purpose behind the request and the granting is to enable the king to judge rightly and justly. Included also in this, is the fact that it was meant to be for the benefit of the people and for the poor. For the king to effectively carry out this obligation he needed to have a sense of justice and this is divinely endowed upon the king. Also, משפט וצבקה "Justice and righteousness" are considered to be a "sublime divine ideal" (Ps 33:5) (Weinfeld 1995:28). The text teaches God's love for משפט וצבקה "righteousness and Justice." Finally, as a "character trait granted by God to the king," Weinfeld (1995:28) refers to Psalm 99:4, where "an explicit parallel was found between משפט וצרקה, "justice and righteousness", on the one hand, and מישרים, "equity", on the other." The important teaching that could be taken from this text is the fact that it is God who establishes "equity", "justice" and "righteousness" in the land. However, it is human, example, Moses and Aaron; who promulgates series of regulation and issue degrees and laws (Weinfeld 1995:29).

Weinfeld (1995:29) also discussed the concept of משפט וצרקה, "Justice and Righteousness" as a social ideal. This he (1995:29) opines is usually the case when they are used "along the lines of mercy and kindness" (Weinfeld 1995:29). He made reference to Isaiah 16:5, where the establishment of David's throne was done with kindness and truth. This was linked to the demand for משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." In Isaiah 9:6, it was said that the throne was established with משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." Similar occurrences of the use of these synonyms in the Bible could be read in passages such as Proverbs 20:18; 25:5 and etc. These synonyms were also used to qualify the relationship between God's throne and the earthly thrones (Ps 89:15) (Weinfeld 1995:29). It is important

125

to also note that "social reforms which are the fruit of משפט וצרקה "justice and righteousness" are in fact rooted in the king's kindness and good will towards the people" (Weinfeld 1995:29).

Weinfeld (1995:30) discusses what he termed "the practical application of משפט וצרקה," which "accords with the usage of the term in an ideal sense." Further, he (1995:29) stated that if the term is applied in this sense, "it refers to just dealing in the social sphere, particularly when the pair משפט וצדקה is found in conjunction with the concept of דרף, 'way' of life." Example of where they could be found, used in conjunction with the word "way" is in Genesis 18:9. And this was the first appearance of the word-pair "justice and righteousness" in Hebrew Bible.

A close observation of the other verses that speak of the way, or path, of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" such as Proverb 2:8-9; Isaiah 26:7; 59: 8-9 bring to light the fact that they are link to ethical and moral behaviours and issues. Also, this refers to "a way of life bound with the observance of laws" (Weinfeld 1995:31).

Weinfeld (1995:33) also discusses what he termed the "The Concrete Meaning of the Concepts." Here, he focused on the relation of the term with social equity. According to Weinfeld (1995:33), "doing משפט וצדקה is likewise bound up with actions on behalf of the poor and the oppressed." It is important to note that it is in this sense that the prophets of the Old Testament mostly applied this term (Weinfeld 1995:35). This is to differentiate the term from its association with judicial processes or acts of charity (Weinfeld 1995:35).

The term was also connected to making "correct judicial decisions" in the courts by "Rabbis and traditional commentators" (Weinfeld 1995:34). The problem with applying the term in this regard is the fact that "the execution of justice must be untempered by partiality" (Weinfeld 1995:36).

In the bid to bring further clarity to the meaning of this term, especially, on how the prophets of the Old Testament applied it, Weinfeld (1995:33) distinguished between the phrases; משפט צדק, "a righteous judgment," which could also be literally translated as "a judgment of righteousness," with צדק serving as adjective in this instance and משפט וצרקה, "Justice and Righteousness." The fact that the same word משפט is used in both phrases does not signify that they have the same meaning (Weinfeld 1995:34). "In the first phrase, it signifies correct judgment (Deut. 16:18), while in the second it is part of hendiadys, the whole phrase signifying the concept of social justice (Lev 19:15" (Weinfeld 1995:34). Further, he (1995:34) stated that in general "צדק refers to the abstract principle of righteousness while צדקה refers to the concrete act." In application, the contrast between the terms צדק and צדקה is: the first

126

term, "an abstract ideal" can be "personified," whereas, the second term is "bound up in actions." Examples of both in a sentence can be seen in Psalm 85:12 and Isaiah 56:1, respectively.

According to Andersen and Freedman (1992:80), in the Old Testament, righteousness appears in either the form of; "צדק" (masculine) or "צדקה" (Feminine). There is no distinguishable difference between the applications of either the masculine or feminine noun in the Old Testament (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The verb is צדק, "to be righteous," "to be just," "to be in the right," with the *Hiphil* form הצדיק translated "to justify," "to declare righteous," צדיק is the adjective "just," "righteous" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The idea of righteousness in the Old Testament is holistically centred on the "fulfilment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with men or with God" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). These individual relationships come with their own expectations and requirements and it is the fulfilment of this expectation and requirement that constitutes righteousness (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The fact that each of the circumstances is unique warrants what may be considered to be righteousness in a given instance may be unrighteousness on a different occasion (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The norm for righteousness is limited within the relationship that a person either has with God or with fellow human (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The fulfilment of the imposed condition within a particular relationship; be it by God or by man is what is regarded in the Old Testament terms as righteousness (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80). The outward manifestation of this relationship could be seen in the following concepts: 1. Yahweh as righteous. 2. Righteousness in social relationship. 3. Righteousness as a forensic concept. 4 The afflicted as righteous. 5. Righteousness and sinfulness. 6. Righteousness and faith. 7. Justification and the covenant (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80-84).

In the Old Testament, the term "righteousness" is employed "as a correlate" to שפט, "to judge," or משפט, "judgement" (Deut. 25:1; Jer. 11:20 etc.) and the verb is also used in an exclusive manner in a forensic context (Job 33; Isa. 43:9). Righteousness as a forensic concept goes beyond the ordinary understanding of restoration of justice to a person in Western law, that is, "impartial decision between two parties, based on a legal norm" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:81). It includes "protecting, restoring, helping righteousness, which helps those who have had their rights taken from them in a communal relationship to regain it" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:81). It was for this reason that prophets stood at the gates of the city announcing the perversion of righteousness; they did this in order to remind the people that the foundation of their communal life is justice which in turn brings forth

righteousness (Andersen and Freedman 1992:81). The ethical and legal standards which people live are therefore intertwined and thus cannot be separated (Andersen and Freedman 1992:81). Community life demands that people should be just and live right. Amos' idea of justice and righteousness emanated from this existing tradition in Israel

In conclusion, it could be said that the Old Testaments prophets applied the terms וצרקה משפט "Justice and righteousness" more in the sense of social justice. There speeches were mostly designed to call attention to wrong doings and acts of injustices that were directed against the poor, the needy and the underprivileged. They understood the term as having its root in divine. God was originator of "justice and righteousness." However, it does not mean that the term did not apply to judicial processes. On certain occasions, one can come to the conclusion that its usage was directed related to court room processes.

4.2.3 The four different ways that "justice and righteousness featured in Amos 5 and Amos

4.2.3.1 Introduction

The use of the term משפט וצדקה "Justice and Righteousness" in Amos 5 and in the rest of Amos reflects the characteristics which were identified by Weinfeld (1995) as shown in the preceding discussion. *Firstly,* Amos applied the word to describe what was expected of royalty, the ruling class and the elites which included religious leaders. *Secondly*, Amos used it in the sense of it being a social ideal, where it is linked to mercy and kindness. *Thirdly*, Amos used it in its practical sense to refer to just dealing in the social sphere. And lastly, he used it in the judicial sense. Though, some will rather interpret it to be more closely related to social justice than actual judicial matters.

It is important to observe that Amos followed in the footsteps of his contemporaries in the manner in which he applied the term. Wolf (1977:104) observes that Amos must have drawn from the already existing "clan wisdom." The fact that there are great similarities that exist in the literary work of the Old Testament prophets bears testimony to this fact. The prophets wrote leaning more on the side of social justice than legal justice. It could be argued that their thinking was shaped by the society which they lived. It would therefore be within common sense reasoning to say that their works is a reflection of the tradition of their people. Literally speaking, the prophets were products of their environment.

In the subsequent section, attempt will be made to discuss how the terms were applied in Amos.

4.2.3.2 Application

As already indicated, Amos applied the term משפט וצדקה "justice and righteousness" in the four different ways listed above in section 4.2.3.1. However, the writer will combine the last two points and discuss them jointly. Amos' usage of the term reflects meanings that lean heavily towards its social justice sense and this therefore marks its use by Amos as hendiadys.[93] In Amos, the Hebrew terms משפט וצדקה "Justice and righteousness" appeared together in Amos 5:6-7; 5: 24 and 6:12. The word משפט "justice" appeared on its own in Amos 5:15 and the word "right" was used in Amos 3:10. In almost all their appearances, the word משפט "Justice" appeared first. Thus, one could argue that "justice" is the dominant theme in Amos 5 and also in Amos. Usually, it appeared parallel with וצדקה "righteousness"; a word that it is closely related in meaning (Kelly 1973:6).

Amos in his speech invoked one of the meanings that is buried in the words משפט וצדקה "justice and righteousness," which refers to God granting the character trait of "justice and righteousness" to the king (Weinfeld 1995:27). Amos was aware of this divine endowment to kings of Israel which required them to deal justly with the people and the poor. He applied it in the opposite sense, when he indicted them directly in the address, "…those who are at ease in Zion…Notable persons…" (Am. 6:1). This is a clear indictment of the royalty and the upper class of Israel by Amos. This was done in order to expose their inability to deal justly with the people and the poor by protecting them. Instead, they dealt unjustly with the people despite the fact that Yahweh endowed them with the said character trait.[94] Wolf (1977:275) suggests that the loose manner in which Amos applied the word נקובים "notable" may probably mean that the house of Israel depended on their leaders.

Amos accused the leaders of "turning justice into gall" and the "fruit of righteousness into wormwood" (Am. 6:13). By being liable to the said offense, the leaders have failed to live up to Yahweh's expectation. According to the history of Israel which recorded the appointment of the kings, it is the responsibility of the king to establish a just society (Ps. 72:1-2) (Weinfeld 1995:45). Amos admonishes his audience to establish justice in the gate (Am. 5:15). It could be said that Amos was speaking to the notables as the gate was a place where justice was dispensed in Ancient Israel. The statement that follows; "It may be that the Lord God of host…," clearly demonstrate the link between "justice and righteousness" and YHWH.

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[93] See Weinfeld (1995:35) for further reading.

[94] See Amos 6:4-8.

Amos spoke about an ideal or righteous king who will come to exist in the human sphere (Am. 9:15). In Israel, such prophesies usually contain the following motifs: "the establishment of "justice and righteousness" in the land, the security of the people, the productivity of the land, the ingathering of exiles and the return of captivity, the eradication of hatred and the enmity of brothers and kingdoms, and the securing of eternal, divinely ordained dynasty…" (Weinfeld 1995:67). This Amos prophesy is especially enlightening because it covers most of the expectation the people of Israel had about their king. On the other hand, it indicts the king to live up to Yahweh's expectation of him (1 Kings 10:9). Andersen and Freedman (1992:362) observe that, "The divine justice is that part of the divine righteousness which exhibits itself as absolute fairness." Amos was aware of this character trait of God which is said to be part of his being and which he passes unto kings.

Amos saw a royalty that failed to measure up to Yahweh's expectation, with its demand to practice justice and righteousness as a social ideal by showing mercy and kindness to the poor (Weinfeld 1995: 29). Justice and righteous is expected by God to happen side by side with mercy and kindness. This should be seen in the manner royalties treated the poor and the needy. Amos spoke about a royalty that did not know how to do what is considered right (Am. 3:10). Rather, this was a royalty that practiced violence and were robbers (Am. 3:10). This implies that the said royalty were incapable of showing mercy or kindness.

Amos also applied the term to expose unjust dealings within Israel's social sphere. In this sense, the word is practically linked to the people's way of life. It is in fact about their moral and ethical conducts when they deal with each other. In the Old Testament, it was the prophets that democratized the virtue of justice, by showing it to be required by God of everyman (Micah 6:5) (Andersen and Freedman 1992:362). Amos stated that the people of Israel refuse to do "right" (Am 3:10). According to Wolff (1977:104), Amos built on the wisdom knowledge that existed traditionally among the people; he employed the wisdom term נכחה to epitomize their guilt for failing to do what is "right." This was by the expected standard, according to their past historical relationship with YHWH, a failure to uphold the existing rule of law and to fulfil their obligation of being of righteous conduct (Wolff 1977:104). This precisely translates into the destruction of the moral and ethical foundations of the "ancient Israel clan life" (Wolff 1977:104). Amos precisely mentions three areas where injustices were prominent in public life: "the administration of justice in court, the confident affluent life of the upper classes, and the worship of God in sanctuaries" (Mays 1969:11).

Acting like YHWH's spokesperson, Amos called the attention of the people to the will of Yahweh for justice, this divine concern for the weak constituted what was supposed to be the basic norm of measuring the life of Israel (Mays 1969:48). Amos indicted the people for selling those he designated as "righteous" for "silver" (Am. 2:6). Wolff (1977:165) observes that Amos sounds like a person that is in fact, advocating for the "rights of the poor and the needy" and that he may have been well aware of the existing "clan wisdom" that put certain limitations on the treatment of the poor in regards to debt. Importantly, in his discourse, Amos identified with the righteousness of YHWH and those that were afflicted. Also, included in his speech is the relationship between righteousness and sinfulness. Amos accuses the people of violating the very character of YHWH which they were expected to emulate and live by its standard according to the covenant which they have with him (Mays 1969:44). Amos explicitly spoke about those who afflict the just in the city gate (5:12c). In the same sentence he made mention of those who take bribes (5:12d). The gate was a place where courts were held in ancient Israel.

Amos asked that "justice should be established in the gate" (Am. 5:15). This was an exposure of the corrupt practices that was being orchestrated by the judges in connivance with the political establishment and maybe also the religious elite. Amos used the metaphor that accuses people of turning "justice into gall and righteousness into wormwood" (Am. 5:7). Literally, this means that justice and righteousness which was once sweet have now been turned into something bitter. He made it clear that those that were part of this acts of injustices and righteousness were not going to escape punishment. Those involved in this acts will taste the bitterness which they have created. It was part of the character of YHWH, as God of righteousness and justice to punish those involved in unjust and unrighteous acts.

Amos bemoaned the state of things in regard to the people's observance of "righteousness in social relations"; "righteousness as a covenant concept" and "the afflicted as righteous" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80-85). He sees this as a great violation of YHWH's righteousness. The latter, is arguably interwoven with "righteousness and sinfulness" and "justification and covenant" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:80-85). The culmination of evil in the then society of Israel was the oppression of the weak and Amos referred to this category of people as the "righteous" (Mays 1969:10). The demands of "justice and righteousness" which could be said to be an acceptable norm in ancient Israel, makes it the social and religious responsibility of the privileged individuals to show compassion to the underprivileged among them just like YHWH showed to the people as could be seen in their salvation history (Mays 1969:10). Amos' prophecy could be seen as YHWH's "fulfilment of the

131

demands of the relationship which exists between him and his people Israel, his fulfilment of the covenant which he has made with his chosen nation" (Andersen and Freedman 1992:83). The "weak and poor are special objects of Yahweh's compassion and concern" (May 1969:10).

The religious establishment was not spared of the prophet's criticism. Amos declared that they were part of the injustices and unrighteousness that were going on in the society.[95] Amos accused them of conniving with the wealthy in flouting and contravening the existing religious rules.[96] In his discourse, Amos highlighted that the behaviour of the elites, which includes the religious and political elites as being directly opposite to the demands of YHWH"s righteousness. Considering Israel past history, it could be argued that the relationship between the people and YHWH is rooted on "justice and righteousness" as a character trait of YHWH. The people were obligated by this existing relation to observe the set standards and norms. Otherwise, it demands that YHWH punishes those that violate his absolute standard of justice and righteousness. Nonetheless, YHWH advises the people that he prefers a situation where "justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Am. 5:24). This was non-negotiable. YHWH warns them that their religious worship and festivities amount to nothing without the people observing this standard. Amos described this as cultism which is not in the real sense, worship of YHWH.

In conclusion, Amos applied the terms "justice" and "righteousness" to condemn the social situation that was prevalent at that time. YHWH who was God of justice and righteousness was going to punish his people for unjust and the unrighteous acts. The poor and the weak were considered by YHWH as the righteous according to Amos. This group of people in the society enjoyed a special protection from YHWH. The historical relationship that existed between YHWH and his people requires that they should be just and live right. YHWH who protected them from unjust and unrighteous people would punish them for becoming the same as those that was shown in Israel history that he rescued them from.

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[95] See Amos 5:4-6; 2:7-8; 4:4-5.

[96] See Amos 7:10.

4.3 Rhetorical reading of Texts dealing with issues of משפט וצבקה "Justice and righteousness" in Amos 5 and other related texts in the book of Amos

4.3.1 Introduction

In unit 4.1.1.2, I indicated what I understand as the meaning of "rhetorical reading" and how it would be applied in this study. Here, the writer of this dissertation will attempt to apply his understanding of it to analyse the different texts in Amos that mention directly the concept of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." The texts which were identified are; Amos 2:6-8; 3:10; 5:6-7; 5:23-24 and 6:24. Amos applied the words as a means to condemn and oppose injustices, oppressions and wrongdoings that was perpetrated by "the rich land owners and the ruling circles, who control the social-economic order" (Weinfeld 1995:36).

As part of his discourse, Amos condemned those that "store up violence and robbery in their palaces" (3:10), the women who "rob the needy" (4:1), those who "exact a levy of grain" from the poor but live in "houses of hewn stone" (5:11), those who "use an ephah too small and a shekel too big", who "buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals" (8:5-6) and those who are enslaved for non-payment of debts (Weinfeld 1995:36-37).

Considering the expressions of Amos that appeared in the preceding paragraph, one can argue that he applied the word-pair משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" in a general sense of social justice and equity, which is bound up with kindness and mercy (Weinfeld 1995:36). The word-pair משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" thus functioned as a hendiadys in Amos and in this discussion will be treated as such.

The rhetorical reading will adopt the "outline" formula, which will function as a rhetoric structure in the bid to determine the internal structure of the passages that was identified. The advantage of using a simple outline to demarcate the passage is that will help reveal the development of argument of the passages as identified. This will be followed by exegetical observations of the texts and a discussion of the persuasive strategy (in relation to the concept of justice and righteous) employed by Amos and concluding remarks.

4.3.2 Rhetorical reading of Amos 5:6-7

4.3.2.1 Outline

Injunction/Exhortation: See the Lord

Consequences/Purpose: Live

Warning/Consequences: Lest he breaks out like fire

Audience: In the house of Joseph

Punishment: And devour it

Threat: With no one to quench it

Purpose: In Bethel

Accusation/Audience: You who turn justice to wormwood and lay righteousness to rest in the earth

4.3.2.2 Amos 5:6-7: Exegetical Observations

Amos 6-7 forms part of the extended rhetoric unit as identified by Dorsey (1992:281), which includes Amos 5:1-17. The effectiveness of Amos' rhetoric in this rhetorical unit is anchored on his pronouncement of Yahweh as the mighty God who rules the universe and thus, must be obeyed. Verses 6-7 were introduced with an injunction, "seek the lord," which could be described as being "absolute and uncomplicated," (Andersen and Freedman 1989:481). In verse 6, Amos changes the order of arrangement in 5:4 "from the first person of divine speech into the third person" (Wolf 1977:232). Commentators such as Harper (1972:112) prefer to treat verse 6 as exhortation.[97] The Hebrew word דרשו; Qal perfect masculine plural of the root word דרש, is translated as "seek" (BDB 2010:205). The word "seek" is an imperatival verb that forms part of the eight imperatival verbs that is found in the rhetorical unit (Am. 5:1-17) (Dorsey 1992:313). Ward and Smalley (1979:101) suggest that in the present context, the verb "to seek" should be taken to mean "come and let me be your lord or come back to being my people." They (1979:101) are of the opinion that the "seek," as seen in the opening statement is the condition of the phrase "seek the Lord and live." Andersen and Freedman (1989:481) write that the imperative issued may have brought confusion in minds of those that heard the message because already they were seeking Yahweh in places where they thought it was right to do so. However, the manner in which the prophet phrased his speech connotes that the people were engaged in a wrongful act and needed to abandon it. Amos therefore enjoins his listeners to either return to doing what he considers as right or remain as they were. The consequence of the later is that they will face Yahweh's punishment.

This word is directly followed by את־יהוה; a divine name. Brueggemann (2002:238) writes that YHWH is the "proper name" for the God of Israel, unlike the other names that are

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[97] See Harper (1979:112) for further reading.

either "generic names for deity," or "titles that give respect or identify attributes for this God." The word consists of four characters, which are not pronounceable and this was an "intentional bafflement" (Brueggemann 2002:238). This anomaly was most likely constituted in order to "preserve the mystery of the name and the freedom of the one named" (Brueggemann 2002:238). Generally, scholars refer to this enigmatic term as "tetragrammaton" (Brueggemann 2002:238). One can argue that the phrase "seek the lord" is an integral part of the prophet's holistic message. The prophet's primary purpose in his discourse was to announce Yahweh's dissatisfaction with his people and to warn them of the eminent impending punishment which awaits them if they refuse to return back to true and acceptable ways of worshiping Yahweh. Justice could only be attained when the people return to being obedient to Yahweh. Hence, the accusation, "You who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth" (Am. 5:7).

Amos 5:6-7, forms part of the texts in Amos which scholars such as Wolf (1977:104) classify as having shared characteristic with traditional wisdom literatures. The (exhortation, "seek the lord"; the theme of "Justice and righteousness"; showing concern for the poor; and the unrighteous behaviour of the wealthy, that is seen through the flaunting of their wealth by living extravagantly and indulging in excessive lifestyle) were identified as vices which offend the moral standards of the traditional Israel society (Wolf 1977:104). Wolf (1977:104) believes that Amos's writings were greatly influenced by the traditional wisdom. He (1977:104) observes that "the foundations of ancient Israelite clan life are thereby destroyed" by these acts which Amos identified and condemned in his work. Perhaps, it may be reasonable to argue that Amos intellectuality and spirituality may have probably benefitted from the existing wisdom tradition that was part of life in Israel society (Carroll 2002:17-18). Wisdom literature texts such as Psalms frequently raised the issue of righteousness and justice (Wolf 1970:245-6) and also in Proverbs; imperatives always come before negative prohibitive (Paul 1990:162). Smith (1989:164) identifies the use of the "lest" clause in Amos as similar to its use in Psalms of lament such as Psalm 7:2. It could therefore be concluded that Amos knew about the existence of the wisdom literature and probably borrowed from it in his writings.

The Hebrew word וחיו; the Qal imperative masculine plural of חיה translated "live" (BDB 2010:310), "probably connotes purpose" (Garrett 2008:142). Linking this word to what was previously discussed about "seek the Lord", it could be said that the purpose of 'seeking God' was for the people to "live." The word "live" as applied in this context could be ambiguous and may therefore be interpreted differently. Here, the preferred interpretation would be to connect

it to the moral and ethical life of the people.[98] Therefore, the prophet's injunction that the people should "seek God and live," has a direct implication on how they treat the poor among them. Waard and Smalley (1979:101) opine that "the Hebrew has two commands of which "seek" is the condition and "live" is the consequences."[99] For the people to live or for them to survive Yahweh's judgment and avert destruction (Waard and Smalley 1979:101), their treatment of the poor must change. The people's refusal to seek Yahweh will lead them ultimately to death and destruction.

Lest he breaks out like fire; in this statement, פֶּן "lest" serves as a negative particle and therefore indicates a negative purpose (subordinating conjunction) (van der Merwe et al 1999:305). The word פֶּן "lest…", "appears here as clause which makes the punishment conditional and thus transforms the admonition into an ultimatum-like warning" (Wolf 1977:232). Amos warned that the "house of Joseph" would be devoured by fire unless they heed the warning of the prophet and repent. This word is followed closely by יצלח the Qal *yiqtol* 3 masculine singular of צלח which the usage in this place is somewhat enigmatic because of how the root word has been translated previously; for example, in Isaiah 54:17, it was rendered as to "be successful" and in other places such as Jeremiah 13:10; Ezekiel 15:4; it was translated "be useful" (Garrett 2008:143). Also, there has been another instance where the verb was translated "rush upon" like in Judges 14:15. This usually happens in the case where the subject is the רוח יהוה. Therefore, in its present context, the best translation will be "YHWH rushes upon the house of Joseph as an enemy" (Garrett 2008:143). The prophet offers the people an array of hope which stands in contradiction to his "usual announcements of judgement as an irrevocable decree" (Mays 1969:89). It is important to also observe the use of imagery in Amos' rhetorical strategy to convey the intensity of the seriousness of his message. Yahweh himself will appear like a wild fire and consume the "house of Joseph." Amos followed the historical tradition of Israel that personify Yahweh judgement by the use of fire imagery (Ex. 19:16; Deut. 5:20-23). Smith (1989:164) explains that in Amos 5:6 "…God himself was pictured as a devouring fire that destroys everything…"

The presence of the phrase, "house of Joseph" in this place has been a source of debate among scholars. Hayes (1988:160) argues that the mentioning of the "house of Joseph here appears as a larger entity than the house of Israel and would have included the non-Judean Israelites, that is the supporters of both Jeroboam II and Pekah, and whatever factions there

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[98] See Andersen and Freedman (1989:481-482) for further reading.

[99] Consequence(s) is that which shows the result of a condition or event (Waard and Smalley 1971:266).

may have been." However, Andersen and Freedman (1989:109) explain that the phrase "house of Joseph" was used here to designate solely the northern kingdom. In a similar vein, Wolf (1977:240) believes that "the expression refers to the tribes of central Palestine (Ephraim and Manasseh), and by extension to the northern kingdom as a whole." Harper (1979:112) is also of the opinion that "Joseph, as well as Ephraim, is often used for Northern as distinguished from Southern Israel." He (1977:112) further opines that it is more satisfactory to read house Joseph as the northern kingdom despite the parallelism that forces some to read the phrase as Israel. However, Andersen and Freedman (1989:109) also remarked that it could be possible that it was used as a synonym to replace the house of Judea, that's the southern kingdom. And if that be the case, it will mean that its application here represents the two divided kingdom of Israel.

And devour it: This is a continued application of the use of the fire imagery to describe what awaits the people if they fail to heed to warning of the prophet. The charge here is stated in a very clear term, that is, utter destruction (Hayes 1988:160).

With no one to quench it: Again, here Amos extended the use of the fire imagery to call the people's attention to the impending calamity. It also lays bare the fact that Yahweh is supreme and as such when he decrees nothing possesses the ability to overturn it (Hayes 1988:160).

In Bethel; In consideration of the context of the message that is contained in the book of Amos, it could be argued that the bulk of Yahweh's anger was directed towards false worship and that Bethel being one of the chief places that the said act is committed is most probably to attract the bulk of Yahweh's anger. Hayes (1988:160) mentions the existence of a different translation, that is, the Greek manuscripts that used "house of Israel" instead of "Bethel"; he still believes that Bethel is the best translation bearing in mind that it could be that the prophet, "interestingly, appears to show real concern for the cultic centre of Bethel" (Hayes 1988:160).

Verse 7

"You who turn justice to wormwood and lay righteousness to rest in the earth"

There is contestation amongst scholars about the right place to place verse 7 and the discussion is centred mostly on its "woe cry".[100] Whether one is going to link this passage to the preceding verse "as an extension of the exhortation addressed to the "house of Joseph"

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[100] See Wolff (1977:242) for further reading.

or let it stand alone as the part of the "woe oracles" pronounced by the writer depends on the consideration he or she gives to the presence of the "nineteen participles" that are found in the book of Amos, of which only two have the *hoy* and which all are parts of an "extended series of Woes" (Andersen and Freedman 1989:483). Both interpretations could be acceptable because "the use of the third person in the next line does not tell against this connection; such a change is acceptable in a dependent clause" (Andersen and Freedman 1989:483). The important thing to note is that this is a negative statement and was fashioned as an attack on those who turn "the fruit of justice into wormwood" (Andersen and Freedman 1988:485). This could be read as a call to highlight the very corrupt moral and ethical standing of the ruling elites, the judiciary and the religious leaders of the society. Amos accuses his audience of turning "justice to wormwood" and "lay righteousness to rest in the earth." There is contestation among scholars about the right place to place verse 7. The majority of scholars believe that verse 7 bears similar characteristics as the other woe oracles that are found in the book of Amos. Wolff (1977:241) believes that this assumption raises questions that require that a further study of the "woe cries" should be undertaken. He (1977:241) undertook a comprehensive study were he looked at the different theories and suggestions that have been proposed regarding the topic.[101]

"And lay righteousness to rest in the earth." This statement appears as a parallel statement to the statement that precedes it: "those who turn justice in to wormwood." Using a different metaphor from the former (wormwood which stands in place of "bitterness), Amos portrays "righteousness" as "cast to the ground" (לָאָרֶץ הִנִּיחוּ).[102] It is difficult to say precisely what Amos meant in the statement. Andersen and Freedman (1989:484) comment that Amos presented the speech in such a manner that the image which it created was both vague and suggestive. The result was that strong pictures were created in the people's imagination without having to equate "casting righteousness to the earth" with any particular occurrence (Andersen and Freedman 1989:484). The description given by Amos could have being a representation of any wrongdoing (Andersen and Freedman 1989:484).

Also, connected to the imprecise nature of this statement is the problem of who it was addressed to? There is the tendency to interpret this verse as a congruent to Amos 5:10-13, "thus, limiting the condemned to the rich and powerful" (Carroll 1992: 228). However, the context of the preceding verses of this chapter, that is, verses 1-6, speaks of the entire nation

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[101] See Wolff (1977:242-245) for further reading.

[102] See Wolff (1977:245-246) for further reading.

and therefore, this allows that verse 7 should be read in the same light (Carroll R 1992:228). This implies that the entire nation was under judgment for acts of injustices and unrighteousness (Carroll R 1992:228).

4.3.2 Amos 5: 23-24

Outline

Command: Take away from me

Object of command: The noise of your songs

Rejection/Reason: For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instrument

Exhortation: But let justice run down like a water; And righteousness like a mighty stream

Verse 23

Command: Take away from me

Amos 5:23 and 24 appear to share the same style as Amos 5:21, 22, 24, 25 and 27 and are different from 5:18-20 by the shift to first-person divine formula which is maintained throughout (Wolf 1977:260). Verses 23 and 24 were delivered as an imperative but in singular (Wolf 1977:260). There is a great similarity between how verse 23 and 24 are arranged and the priestly torah (Wolf 1977:261). It also bears the characteristic that are found in the sapiential admonition, which may be an explanation for the sudden transition to second-person singular by Amos (Wolf 1977:261).

Verse 23 begins with an injunction, "take away from me…" This severe injunction issued by Yahweh is characterized by a sense of urgency that demands that the worshippers should immediately stop their celebrations. Wolff (1977:263) comments that, "while up to this point Yahweh has only closed himself off to the cultic acts, now he actually drives the festal assembly from his presence." Yahweh came out very strongly in condemning the cultic activities of the people.

The noise of your songs:

It could be assumed that under normal circumstances the sound of their songs during worship will be pleasing to Yahweh. Rather, it resulted into a grave provocation to Yahweh. This utterance stresses the immediacy of God's desire for the people to cease their actions. It also intensifies the urgent need for the on-going activities to be stopped. Usually, the feeling that is developed towards noise may provoke the receiver to react in an irritable and disorderliness

139

manner. It could be argued that the metaphor of noise was used to describe the unacceptable behaviour of the people which contravenes Yahweh's relationship with the people of Israel. Arguably, this is directly related to Yahweh previous acts where he shut his nostrils (v. 21b) and closed his eyes (v. 22b) and now also stops his ears from hearing (Wolff 1977:264).

For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instrument:

Yahweh continues to reject in totality the sound of their musical instrument. The phrase אשמע לא; Qal *yiqtol* 1 common singular of שמע; translated "to hear" (BDB 2010:1033). Garrett (2008:172) comments that "the first person *yitqtol* here is not a simple statement of the future but an emphatic refusal to listen…" This implies that verb שמע "to hear" is not used here with the special meaning "to hear [with favour], to grant" that it could connote when it appeared, for example, in Psalm 6:9-10 (Wolff 1977:264).

Verse 24

But let justice run down like water

This is a declaration of what Yahweh expects to see from the "house of Joseph." Wolff (1977:264) writes, "rather than noise of cultic praise, something altogether different was to be heard and, consequently, practiced in the assembly of Israel: "justice" משפט…" Similarly, Garrett (2008:172) explains that, "YHWH here gives Israel an alternative to trying to please him with sacrifice and song." The sentence began with the Hebrew word ויגל; Niphal *weyiqtol* 3 masculine singular of the root word גלל (Garrett 2008:172); translated "run down" (Strong 1996:28). Here, "the *weyiqtol* has jussive force and is here contrastive, suggesting that Israelites should do this rather than singing their praise songs" (Garrett 2008:172).

It is also important to note that the word משפט "justice" (the direct object) is not personified in its appearance here, rather is likened to the flow of a mighty stream (Andersen and Freedman 1989:540). Though, it could be claimed that behind the word, there is some sort of mythic allusion, yet, "some reflection of the autonomous status of these divine attributes is to be found in the passage here, held up in the goal of Israelite society and in particular of its civil and religious establishment" (Andersen and Freedman 1989:540). The word משפט "justice" in this context refers "to putting an end to the oppression of the poor" (Garrett 2008:172).

The prepositional phrase כמים; with the כְּ forms an analogy that uses water as a metaphor for justice; this comparison is highly suitable as water is refreshing and cleansing and likewise, Yahweh desire that the people should in the same vein melt out justice to all.

Verse 24b reads, "And righteousness like a mighty stream." The word וצדקה "righteousness" is used parallel to משפט "justice." Here, Amos was communicating to the people what Yahweh expects from them. Yahweh demands to see the "establishment of justice and righteousness" (Smith 1989:186) in the land. Hammershaimb (1970:90) comments that the use of "the jussive form of יגל (from גלל, Niphal 'roll down', intransitive)," stands as an indication that Yahweh demands righteousness from the people and also that this is effectively what he values.

Scholars have differed on the proper translation of the adjective איתן. How the word is translated directly impacts on the understanding of the verse 24. Wolff (1977: 264) writes that in this context, what the adjective איתן, implies has a basic meaning of "flowing voluminously" and therefore, differs from the usual meaning of the word נחל ("stream [-bed]"); which transports water all year round, even during the dry seasons, "from the winter brooks that dry up easily." Those that settle for the translation, "flowing voluminously," such as Wolff (1977:264), usually base their argument on the understanding that the meaning of the adjective איתן expresses "the strength and irresistibility" which the people's righteous dealings are expected to always have (Hammershaimb 1970:90). Others translate the adjective by "permanent" or "lasting" (Hammershaimb 1970:90). This later translation allows for an image that shows that the "righteousness of the people should, in contrast to the streams which only flow in the rainy season…will flow forever" (Hammershaimb 1970:90). This implies that "righteousness should be constant, not intermittent" (Andersen and Freedman 1989:528). Both interpretations could be argued to be relevant in this context. Therefore, it could be concluded that Amos is telling his audience that righteousness should be the main driving force in their lives.

4.3.3 Amos 6:12

Outline

Rhetorical questions: "Do horses run on rocks? Does one plough there with oxen?"

Accusatory discourse: "Yet you have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood."

"Do horses run on rocks? Does one plough there with Oxen?"

Andersen and Freedman (1989:576) believe that the two parallel rhetorical questions posed by the writer at the beginning of this verse is a riddle that it is very complex to understand or

for one to arrive at a straight forward interpretation.[103] Similarly, Wolff (1977:285) contends that "the two rhetorical questions depict absurd situations in order to provoke." Here, the sentence will be interpreted simply as a rhetorical question employed by the writer to create a riddle that is unsolvable and which the resultant response is designed to bring to the fore the foolish and stupid behaviour of the hearers.

The sentence opens with the Hebrew word הירצון; Qal yiqtol 3 m s of רוץ translated "run," with "interrogative ה and paragogic נ" (Garrett 2008:199). Because of the nature of the sentence, it would be assumed that "the paragogic נ marks contrast … but the contrast is not with the next line but with reality" (Garrett 2008:199). This means that the descriptive statement that was used to describe the riddles is "inherently implausible" to be a possibility (Garrett 2008:199).

Yet you have turned justice into gall and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood:

Amos adopts the use of a speech formula which has a subtle overtone of accusation. The fact that the writer expects a negative response to the rhetorical questions posed above makes the כי that is standing at the beginning of this sentence to carry with it a force that expresses an antithesis or opposition (Wolff 1977:284). Therefore, the hearers are compelled to "acknowledge the perversity of their own contrasting behaviour" when compared to the "images drawn of the animal life" (Wolff 1977:284).

On a closer look, a critical interpreter will notice that the features of the sentence have a resemblance to imagery that the writer employed in Amos 5:7. Wolff (1977:285) comments that "a new feature here is the parallel to wormwood, namely "poison,"…" The writer accuses his audience directly of poisoning the whole essence of justice and in doing so, he "exposes Israel's perversity in the light of the generally valid world order, an approach which is in keeping with his sapiential thinking" (Wolff 1977:285). The justice that Amos is highlighting here is the justice that "should be practiced among men in life; it is not the divine justice executed against men…" (Harper 1979:136).

The noun פרי translated "fruit" (BDB 2010:826), "is almost always bound to a genitive of source," (Garrett 2008:200). However, here, Amos applies it in a descriptive sense (Garret 2008:200). The image created by the phrase, "fruit of righteousness" represents the reward that is expected to come from the practice of righteousness. Andersen and Freedman

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[103] For further reading on this topic as a riddle, it is recommended that the work of Andersen and Freedman (1989r:576-579) be read.

(1989:578) state that, this image was "meant to be wholesome and nourishing" but the people turned it into poison. Similarly, Waard and Smalley (1979:138) concluded, that "righteousness, which is like a pleasant tasting fruit, is changed into bitter wormwood." The statement ironically opines that the people were still going to eat the product despite the same having been poisoned by them (Andersen and Freedman 1989:578).

The prepositional phrase ללענה (Garrett 2008:201) is derived from the Hebrew root word לענה translated "wormwood" (BDB 2010: 542). Garrett (2008:201) comments that the plant, לענה "wormwood," is conventionally used metaphorically to denote bitterness in the Old Testament. This implies that "righteousness" which Amos metaphorically represented as a "wholesome fruit" has been transformed by the people into "a bitter and poisonous plant" (Garrett 2008:201).

Rhetoric strategy

Having conducted a rhetorical reading on the theme of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" we can now attempt to examine the rhetorical strategy used in relation with the theme of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness." The important strategy that was adopted by the prophet to draw attention of his audience to the seriousness of his message is: (1) Intensifying rhetoric (2) Application of the use of imagery and metaphors and finally, (3) History and Tradition.

(1) Intensifying rhetoric

A close observation of the surrounding texts in each place where the concept of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" was presented in the text[104] reveals some sort of heightening of the rhetoric happening. In the three places,[105] it was always Yahweh's voice that ushered in the stage prior to the application of the theme. Historically, the relationship the people had with Yahweh was such that anything that concerns Yahweh was supposed to revere. Therefore, one can argue that the reasoning behind this strategy was to raise the psychological, physical and emotional response of the prophet's audience. The fact that both Amos and his audience were ideological connected to the existence of Yahweh and his expectation from the Israelites makes this strategy effective.

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[104] Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12.

[105] Amos 5:4-7, 5:21-24, 6:11-12.

If one considers Amos 5:4-7; 5:21-24 and 6:11-12 as the texts in question in this section. Amos rhetorical strategy in each of the individual unit as shown in the last sentence will take the following shape:

Amos 5:4-7

Proclamation (v. 4) – Reason (vv. 4b, 5, 6) – Accusation (v. 7)

Amos 5:21-24

Proclamation/declaration (v. 21) – Accusation (vv. 22, 23) – Exhortation (v. 24)

Amos 6:11-12

Command/proclamation (v. 11)–Rhetorical question (v. 21a) - accusation (v.12b)

There are repetitions of style by Amos in all three units. Watts (1999:73:74) observes that repetition "is a prominent feature of public speech, used to emphasize important points and make the content memorable." The deliberate repetitive style applied by Amos is capable of heightening the curiosity of his listeners.

(2) Application of the use of imagery and metaphors

Amos applied the use of imagery and metaphor to hype the effects of his message in each of the three places where he utilized the concept of וצבקה משפט "Justice and righteousness" to appeal to his audience. The use of variety of images in public speaking is closely linked to the use of repetition. Watts (1999:73-74) observes that "variety preserves interest in publicly read law, as it does in narrative." Further, he stated that "Israel's tradition of public reading can be expected to have encouraged variety for rhetorical effect even perhaps especially, in the midst of didactic repetition"

Amos used varied metaphor and imagery to appeal to the senses and emotion of his hearers. He drew from his surrounding environment such as in Amos 5:7 where he employed the use of the popularly known plant, "wormwood," which had a historical relationship with the people. In Amos 5:24, he used the metaphor and image of water which the people were conversant with to deliver his massage. In Amos 6:12, he used a rhetorical question; drawing from a combination of animal and nature lessons, which arguable was known to the people, and in conjunction with the poison metaphor (gall) which also the people were familiar with and again, repeated the wormwood metaphor.

(3) History and Tradition

Amos existed in a society and it was through the experiences (intellectual, religion and etc.) which he gained from his society that enabled him to form his worldviews. The combination of all this experiences consciously or unconsciously filtered into his writings.

In Amos' terminology, the appearances of words such as "Joseph" is clear indication of Amos' knowledge of Israel past history. Also, the manner he treated the shrines in Bethel. Wolf (1964, 1973, and 1977) argues strongly that Amos definitely drew from the existing wisdom tradition and literature in his writings. Wolff (1977:100) writes;

> Especially influential are traditional forms deriving from Amos' cultural heritage, whose provenance we must seek in that form of wisdom which was cultivated within the clans. For the most part only individual elements from the stock of sapiential sayings are incorporated into the prophetic oracles.

In order to catch the attention of his audience, Amos used the word-pair משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" which forms a very vital part of "the foundations of ancient Israelites clan life…" (Wolff 1977:104). Amos appealed to this historical and traditional knowledge that was widely known by the Israelites as a rhetorical strategy. The flouting of principles such as וצבק משפט "justice and righteousness" was seen as abhorrence/abomination of Yahweh (Wolf 1977:282). Amos accusing the people of Israel of such behaviour and acts will definitely elicit a quick response from them.

4.5 Concluding remarks

The primary aim of this chapter was to do rhetorical reading of the text that deals with the issue of משפט וצבקה 'justice' and "righteousness" in Amos 5 and 6. From the reading, it could be concluded that Amos sought to persuade his audience to return back to the kind of historical relationship relation which YHWH expected from them. He draws from the historical relationship that existed between YHWH and the people to condemn the ills that were happening in the society. His primary concern was about the treatment which the poor and the weak and the needy were receiving from the elites. Amos accused the elites of unjust acts and unrighteous behaviour. According to Amos, משפט וצבקה "justice" and "righteousness" was the expected moral and ethical standard from them by YHWH

In order for Amos to capture the attention of the people and to get his message across, he uses the language that the people were conversant with. This is particularly evident in the manner which Amos highlights the character of YHWH, as a just and righteous God that will judge and punish the people of Israel for failing to abide by the historical relationship which they had with him. YHWH was the protector of the righteous and these were the less fortunate

in the society. YHWH rejected the corrupt religious and judicial practices of the elites because it failed to measure up to his expected moral and ethical standard. Amos employed the use of metaphor which could be said to have existed as part of the people culture. The imagery he used in communicating his message of משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" was drawn from things that the people knew very well. The water metaphor, the wormwoods and gall that represent bitterness were all part of the people's daily language usage.

Finally, Amos application of the words משפט וצבקה "justice" and "righteousness" was based on the prevailing historical context (rhetorical situation). He addressed the people based on the event that he was witnessing. There is a noticeable distinctiveness in his vocabulary and his theology. Amos rhetorical strategy through the use of the term משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" was to provoke his audience into a reaction as could be seen later in his encounter with Amaziah (Am. 7). He was calling attention to YHWH's dealing with the people of Israel by placing great emphasis on the salvation history. According to Amos theology, YHWH is sovereign and thus, demands משפט וצבקה "justice and righteousness" from the other nations as well. YHWH will for the people of Israel is that they must do right. This injunction to be just and do right was not limited to the people of Israel, rather it was applicable to people who resides elsewhere in the world.

Chapter 5: Hermeneutics

5.1 Introductory remarks

In the last two chapters, we attempted to look at exegetical issues of Amos chapter 5 and that of the verses that directly or indirectly deals with matters relating to the concept of "justice and righteousness". The objective of this chapter is to look at relevance of the text of Amos 5 in contemporary times. In other words, how the text could be applied by the present reader to their context. It must be observed that the question of the text and its relationship with the reader is very complex and "related to this question are complex philosophical issues and profound questions about the very nature of languages" (Carson 1984:16). Most of the time, the meaning arrived by an interpreter is influenced by his/her context. This implies that the interpretation of the present reader is heavily influenced by his immediate context which comprises of their life experience, their worldview and their ideology. In regards to the issue of language, it must be understood that every interpreter is engaged in the act of translation as they read the text. This arises from the fact that the Bible was written in a language different from that of the interpreter. The interpreter is therefore confronted with the basic problem of the language of the biblical text being structurally different from his own original language (Ramm 1970:5).

The above remarks bring to fore the heart of the issue that would be in discussion in this chapter and which is hermeneutics. Traditionally, in biblical studies, hermeneutics is a subject which deals with two separate issues, that is, exegesis and interpretation. Tate (1991:xv) summarizes the meaning of hermeneutics as "the study of the locus of meaning and the principles of interpretation." He explains that biblical hermeneutics is therefore the studies of the "locus of meaning and principles of biblical interpretation." More broadly speaking, the definition could include how interpreters approaches their reading; understanding and handling of the biblical texts which was written in ancient time and which operated in a context different from the interpreter's time (Thiselton 2009:1). Every interpreter is therefore faced with the primary task of "re-creating meaning in new and different context" (Rohrbaugh 1978:7). This process of re-creating meaning could pose a problem to the interpreter if left unchecked. It is important therefore that the interpreter be guided by reasonable rules. For this reason, hermeneutics has also been defined as a "science and art of biblical interpretation" (Ramm 1970:1). The science part of it, deals with rules within a particular framework that helps guide the interpreter; whereas, the art is a representative of the fact that "the application of this rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation" (Ramm 1970:1).

147

Another substantial difference that confronts the interpreter is that they are dealing with a text that was written in a different cultural milieu. Consciously or unconsciously, the distance created by the differences in culture forces the interpreter to adopt a pluralistic approach in his interpretation. This is due to the fact that the interpreter will process the meaning of the text within their present experience which differ greatly with the conditions that existed during the production of the biblical events and texts. This may lead the interpreter to experience what Croatto (1987: ix) describes as "the tension between a fixed text in the cultural milieu that is no longer ours and a living word capable of forging history." To minimize the effect of the tension on the interpretation requires that the interpreter develops a method of critical hermeneutics. This would aid the interpreter to be able to arrive at a reasonable interpretation.

This study will attempt to discuss the: hermeneutical implication of the text of Amos 5 and would focus on what the text may have meant and what it means today. It would also attempt to reconstruct the theology of "justice and righteousness" in Amos 5. Finally, it would do an overview of the author's understanding of God's perspective of justice and righteousness contrasted to human understanding of justice and righteousness as seen in Amos 5.

5.2 Hermeneutical implication of the text of Amos 5: A comparative study of what the text meant and what it means today

5.2.1. Introduction

The issue of "justice and righteousness" that is present in the text of Amos chapter 5, continue to be relevant to today's context. The issue of justice and righteousness forms the backbone of what the modern person have come to understand as social justice. The call for justice is a prominent theme in the modern public discourse. The important question to be asked is whether there have been shift in peoples understanding of the meaning of justice and righteousness from what it is used to be in the biblical times? Perhaps, it is important to note that in ancient Israel, "justice and righteousness" acquired also a religious significance" (Weinfeld 1995:5). This concept was tied to the divine and thus went beyond the "formal judicial proceedings" that is "judgement in court in the narrow sense…" (Weinfeld 1995:7). The important question which a person needs to ask why reading the text of Amos 5 is how would a modern reader possible engage with this issue? Especially, in relation to the overall content of the text which sometimes tend to contain languages that are peculiar to the then society of Israel. Below is an attempt to discuss what the text meant for Amos' audience and what it may probably mean to a modern reader.

5.2.2 What the text meant

A critical interpretation of Amos 5 would lead to the conclusion that the discourse lacks logically ordered argument. The distribution of events was presented in the following pattern: Verses 2-3, 5, 11, 13, 16-17 presents a mixture of a case of a present and impending disaster. Accusations of wrong doings against the people are seen in verses 7, 10, 11, and 12. Verses 4, 5, 6, 14, 15 contain warnings that were directed against certain specific actions involving the people. There is also the question of statements that could be directly accredited to Amos (vv. 1-2, 6-9, 14-15), which are woven together with those that could be classified as divine speech (vv. 3-5, 10-13, 16-17). In the centre of all this lies what could be recognized as nature hymn (vv. 8-9). Another important theme in the discourse is the theme that spoke about the remnant (vv. 3 and 15). The fact that Yahweh would show mercy to a remnant few brings hope to Amos message which otherwise bears the look of hopelessness.

Amos presents the issue of justice and righteousness in Amos 5 in the light of God's relationship with his people. The rhetoric strategy which Amos employed was in the form of a dirge, that is, a funeral lament, that announces the demise of the "house of Israel." The meaning of the term "house of Israel" is not very clear in Amos 5. However, scholars such as Mays (1969:7), infer from other passages in Amos that it stands "for two related entities." According to Mays (1969:7), the name Israel in Amos represents the Northern Kingdom ruled by Jeroboam II which had its own history, culture and prospects (7.9,10;3;12) (Mays 1969:7). This name was also used by the Amos to designate "the old sacral league, the people constituted by their relation to Yahweh" (Mays 1969:7). What is of central importance is the fact that Yahweh's wrath is directed to all inhabitants of Israel. It is recognized that there was no direct mention of the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel by Amos. This is however, assumed to be the reason why Amos' prophecy was given. The people of Israel contravened the basic tenets of the covenant, which is "justice and righteousness." Yahweh pronounced judgment on his people because of the rampant injustices and unrighteousness that had become prevalent in their national life. The opulent life style lived by some in society is contrary to what the covenant required from them as the attainment of such positions made them commits acts contrarily to the God's concept of, "justice and righteousness." Amos therefore warned of impending destruction.

It is interesting to keep in mind that Amos was writing to a society where religion and state was interwoven and any form of separation "was not considered a virtue" (Doorly 1994:14). Yahweh was considered the sovereign ruler of the people and it was Yahweh that

determines the fate of the nation. Thus, Amos continuously made reference to Yahweh: "For thus says the Lord God" (5:3; 4; etc). Explicitly, Amos tapped into the use of the phrase, "thus says the Lord to the house of Israel" to establish the source of his authority. The phrase also reflects the absolute power of Yahweh over his people. One of the ways that Amos projects the authority of Yahweh in Amos 5 is the fact that it is Yahweh that decides what the remnant should be after the people have been decimated (5:3). Scholars such as Kelly (1973:74) believes that the idea of the remnant is bring to fore in this verse (5:3). However, it must be observed that Amos was also motivated or inspired within the prevailing socio-political context which had created a political social class which was corrupt, unethical and thus contrary to the baseline view as would have been expected by Yahweh.

In verses 4-7, Amos condemned the type of religiosity that had become prominent among the people. Amos highlights the fact that what should be important in the life of the Israelites is "to seek God" and not the visits to the sanctuaries in Beersheba; Bethel and Gilgal frequently. This implies that Amos was denouncing the sacred sanctuaries which used to be regarded as a place where Yahweh could be found by the people of Israel. Kelley (1973:75) comments that in the Old Testament vocabulary, to seek God may mean two different things; first, "it may mean to go to the sanctuary to sacrifice or to consult the sacred oracle (cf. Gen. 25:22: 1 Sam. 9:9)" and secondly, "to enter into fellowship with God through love and kindness (cf. Hos. 10:12; Isa. 9:13)" (Kelly 1973:75). Amos would later shows in verse 7, that seeking God means showing kindness to others as implied in verse 4 (Kelly 1973:75). In other words, the type of religion that the people were practicing did not have any effect on their moral conduct. Instead, they were corrupting justice and righteousness despite their high display of religiosity.

In verses 8-9, a different theme was suddenly introduced in form of a nature hymn (Kelly 1973:77). Yahweh was shown as the one that exercises control over the forces of nature. The clear description of Yahweh's power in the hymn may have been given to show that Yahweh was actually in control of both rain and storm. This account may have been added to refute the claim made by the Mesopotamian religion which considered stars as gods and the Canaanites that believed that Baal was "the god the storm and the giver of the rain" (Kelly 1973:77). Amos reminds his listeners that Yahweh was superior to the gods of other nations. They were therefore supposed to cease emulating what the other nations where doing by returning to worshiping Yahweh. Amos seems to be drawing from the existing salvation history that has shaped the people's minds, which is also supposed to form the core of their reason of existence as a nation.

Amos proceeded by indicting the rich for their unfair treatment of the poor (vv. 10-13). In verse 12b, he referred to those that are being oppressed as the "righteous." This particular word "righteous" has a great ramification on the message of the Amos. The idea that could be inferred from it is that Yahweh considers the poor, the needy and the oppressed as people who are directly under his care and protection. The judicial cause of these sets of people, according to Amos, is of great importance to Yahweh. Yahweh is said to have remained silent witness to what presumably was going on in the society came out vehemently in protestation against the deed that was being perpetrated against those he considered the righteous (12a). The judicial establishment together with those that connived with them to oppress the poor would be severely punished by Yahweh. Kelley (1973:79) concludes that those that are involved in the acts of miscarriage of justice would definitely stand before the ultimate judge; Yahweh, the lord of host and he is a judge that cannot be bribed by them.

Amos continued his discourse in verses 14-15 by setting out in clear terms what Yahweh expected from the people of Israel. Amos undertook to explain the importance of being a morally upright individual in ancient Israel. Amos' reasoning in these verses summarizes what Yahweh expected from the people. Yahweh's interpretation of the social content defines "justice and righteousness." Yahweh's main interest lies on the moral conduct of the people. There righteousness must be seen in how just they behave towards one another. He addressed his listeners directly to "establish justice in the gate." Amos concludes this segment of his speech by using the word "perhaps" (15b). This shows that Amos was uncertain about what would be the ultimate fate of the people. Here, again, Amos made specific reference "to the remnant of Joseph" (15c).

Amos 5:16-17, reveals the extent of devastation that awaits the people of Israel for their disobedient acts. Commentators have likened the event that was going to take place to what happened to the Egyptians before the exodus. This conclusion was reached following the use of similar vocabulary by Amos. The verb translated "to pass through" is similar to the one used in Exodus 12:12 (Kelley 1973:80). The implication therefore is that the people of Israel would suffer the same fate as Egyptians because of their own disobedience.

In verses 18-20, Amos prophetically introduces the theme of "the day of the Lord." This is a theme that is popular among Old Testament writers, especially among prophetic writings of the Old Testament (Kelley 1973:81). The use of this phrase varies in meaning depending on the writer and his purpose. Amos uses it to highlight the impending destruction that awaits the people because of their unjust and unrighteous behaviour. This is contrary to what was

generally thought in ancient Israel. The general believe of the people was that the day of the Lord stands for the day that Yahweh would come to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. They were not wrong in harbouring such believe. However, what they did not know was that this time around they were the enemies that Yahweh was going to defeat. It was exactly that that Amos was proclaiming to the people. Amos uses imagery which he builds from his knowledge of the surrounding desert to describe the impending calamity that would befall the people of Israel on that day (Kelley 1973:82).

Amos 5:21-27, could be said to be the concluding part of this present discourse. Amos begins to explain to the people what Yahweh requires from them. Amos had demonstrated to the people that their religiosity was not different from that of the other nations. Yahweh has completely rejected their worship. Yahweh rejection came from the fact that the society was riddled with acts of injustices and unrighteousness. Based on this fact, Yahweh proclaims to the people what his expectations were.

Yahweh expected the people to do justice and to live righteously (vs. 24). This demand is directly tied to their social life. Amos highlighted a central idea throughout his discourse; the idea that that the oppression of the righteous must cease. Amos spoke based on his understanding of the character of God. The people of Israel were supposed to live according to Yahweh's directives. If they were going to make the exclusive claim to the privilege of being the people chosen by Yahweh, they must live by Yahweh's standard. Amos was telling the people that to have an acceptable relationship with Yahweh, entails having a good moral standing. This implies that their relationship with the poor and the needy must be of good standing before Yahweh. Therefore, justice and righteousness must triumph over evil.

5.2.3 What the text means today

In 5.2.2, the writer made attempt to discuss what the text of Amos 5 meant to the original hearers. Our interpretation of the text was based on the conclusions that were drawn from the exegetical studies of the text of Amos 5 in chapter 3 and 4 of this dissertation. Here, the aim is to attempt to arrive at an interpretation that would be relevant to an interpreter in a contemporary setting. To achieve this aim requires that one engages with the text honestly and critically. This implies that firstly, the interpreter should recognize that the text is an ancient text that was written to an audience that operated in a different context from the contemporary context. Secondly, that the

152

interpreter is doing the interpretation based on the person's present experience and existing worldviews and ideology.

Perhaps, it would be important to clarify at this juncture that the meaning of the text that is being referred to here is what the text of Amos 5 would mean to a present day interpreter. It must be understood that a present day interpreter will relate to the text from his or her present experience; his worldview and also his ideological leaning. If one could critically analyse the text, there are aspect of it that would not necessarily make any meaning to an interpreter today. These are aspects that dealt with issues that are directly related to the existing tradition at the time of the writing. There is also the issue of where the writer employed the use of languages that may not necessarily resonate with the reasoning of a present day reader. Carroll (2000:19) once asked the question, "who reads this text and under what circumstance?" while discussing the issue of "feminist readings" in his work, "The reader and the text."

Following Carroll's observation, it is important therefore to clarify the position of the person that is doing the interpretation in this instance. I find myself in sympathy with those that are anti-violence. This is irrespective of who, where and how violence is being perpetrated or disseminated. Based on this statement, it is important therefore to state that literature can sometimes serve as an avenue to disseminate violence. It is also important to note that sometimes, it is a conscious act but it could also be an unconscious act by the author. But what is important to note is that it is sometimes present in the text. The disturbing question; whether the Bible contains violent language is something that has been around for long. Some scholars have long come to the conclusion that the Bible does contain violent language. Barton (2010:193) believes that Amos's God was a destroyer; though he went on to describe him as a just destroyer. In the present discussion, the question of whether there is anything like just destroyer will not be undertaken because the writer believes that it is beyond the scope of this discussion. Having said all this; I will therefore like to acknowledge that one of the predisposition that will inform my interpretation, then, will be to approach my interpretation looking out for signs of violence in the text. Below, I want to read Amos 5, placing importance on my preunderstanding, which already configures my thought pattern towards looking out for where there are traces of language of violence within the text. This will be done irrespective of whom, where and how this appears or is ingrained in the text.

153

5.3.2.1 Amos 5

Verse 1 opens with command that already sets the tone of the chapter. Part of the introductory speech contains a funeral lamentation that was spoken in past tense which signifies a completed action in the past. The speaker has passed his judgment and the audience are expected to accept it as it is.

Verse 2 is an expansion of the subject in question, that is, the death theme; or what some (or I) may term as the slow but painful road to death of the people of Israel. The mere fact that the choice of language of the writer is one which uses the imagery of a female virgin to depict the violence done to a people will encounter resistance among some feminist readers of the people. In the Old Testament, women are sometimes depicted as being inferior to men and to represent bad events. This could be attributed to the fact that Bible is a production that happened within a particular culture and time in history. At the time these events were recorded, Israel operated under a cultural system that viewed men as superior. Men were firmly in control and as such had the power to decide political, sociological, economic and religious outcomes and agendas in the society. It was under these conditions that the canonization of the Bible took place. It could be argued therefore that the exercise of canonization also contained an aspect that was designed to assist in perpetuating male dominance in the society. Jobling (1993:139) contends that, "Establishing a canon of scripture is a major exercise of power, and power characteristically works to further entrench itself." Therefore, the use of the imagery of a female virgin to depict violence could be said to represent a male superior ideology.

Amos introduces the speaker as Yahweh in verse 3. Here, the use of language of violence by Amos continued. This time the imagery of war and conquest was used to describe the calamity that was going to befall the people of Israel. Ironically, this was to be carried out with Yahweh in support of it. Already we have mentioned Barton (2010:193) statement, which opines that, Amos' Yahweh was a destroyer. The use of Yahweh's name by biblical writers to substantiate what may be judged according to present day standard as extreme violence is not uncommon in the Bible text. Kim (2013:117) concludes that the writers of judges used the name of Yahweh to justify the invasion and conquering of places by the Israelites with the aim of possessing their land. These acts were justified using the pretence of having divine permission, irrespective of the fact that much blood and violence accompanied these acts (Kim 2013: 117). This was not different from what other nation did without employing the use of the name of Yahweh to justify their acts (Kim 2013:117). Amos 5 is a reversal of this usual

154

narratives are found in the Bible. In the present text, it is the people of Israel who will become victims of brutal violence which will take place with divine permission.

In verses 4-15, Amos employed the use of rhetorical strategy which uses the language of threat of violence to persuade his audience to either obey Yahweh's order or stand to be destroyed. If the people refuse to obey Yahweh's order and command, he will break out like fire and consume them (v. 6). This arbitrariness and arrogance is substantiated by the fact that Yahweh is the creator God and as such is capable of carrying out his threat (vv. 8-9). The use of the phrase, "the lord is his name" by Amos clearly show who was issuing the threat. Verses 16-20 continue to reiterate the fact that the people of Israel will end up violently. Here, a graphic image of how and what was going to happen was clearly painted by Yahweh through the pronouncement of Amos, his spokesperson. Yahweh declared that he will pass through them and that they will be visited by violence in the process.

Finally, verses 21-27 are riddled with arbitrary and arrogant language. Here, it is shown that Yahweh despises the people and their activities. For this reason, he will send them into captivity.

5.3.2.1.1 Conclusion

The present reading was done based on my preunderstanding which rejects violence irrespective of whom, where and how it is disseminated. My strategy for reading the text yields results that agree with my present worldview which is influenced by my life experience. The implication of this approach to interpretation is that it is done based on how an individual views the world based on his preunderstanding (Rohrbaugh 1978:22). The meaning which I reached about the text was based on my socially derived and socially maintained set of perceptions which I brought along to my encounter with Amos 5 text (Rohrbaugh 1978:22). For me to have arrived at this interpretation required that I will raise questions and these questions were prompted and informed by the preunderstanding of the world which I carry with me prior to the beginning of my reading (Rohrbaugh 1978:22).

It could therefore be said that Amos wrote the text having being informed by his ideological judgement which sees nothing wrong with a Yahweh who is arbitrary and arrogant in his decisions and judgements. On the other hand, my reading was done through my present worldview which has conditioned me to look out for traces of violence in every act of reading and to condemn or reject such. Despite the fact that Amos major theme speaks about "justice

and righteousness," yet, my reaction at the end of my reading was one that doubted the usefulness of the entire text. This reaction to the text happened because my moral judgement and ethical sensitivity takes precedence and suppresses the other meaning which may have come out of my interpretation. My other option was (alternatively) to consciously and subconsciously sieve through the content and extract the knowledge which I consider to be relevant to my present worldview. This entails finding a way to consciously subdue the parts that I judge to contain violence and to remain with the other parts that make sense to me such as "justice and righteousness."

5.3 The theology of Justice and Righteousness in Amos 5

In Chapter 4, we attempted to discuss the meaning of the concept of "justice and righteousness" according to Amos' use of the word pairs. To summarize what was said in that regard; Amos used strong language to condemn the injustices that were happening in the Israelite society during his time. The condemnation was mostly centred on the call for those who found themselves in privileged positions to desist from oppressing and exploiting the poor, the less privilege and the weak in the society. Amos also called the people to go back to true observance of righteousness. This should be according to Yahweh's desire. The people were historically connected to Yahweh and thus knew what his expectations from them were. They were chosen by Yahweh and as such enjoyed a special relationship with him (Am. 3:2). So what Amos condemned was the social injustices and religious hypocrisy that was prevalent in the Israelite society at the time.

Amos understood himself to be Yahweh's spokesperson that was sent by Yahweh to proclaim the message that Yahweh was a God of "justice and righteousness"; That Yahweh reign supreme over the whole earth; that Yahweh was the God of the people of Israel and thus, historically, the people enjoys a special relationship with him. The special relationship which the people enjoyed with Yahweh came with a responsibility which requires them to do right; That Yahweh will judge the whole earth as well as the people of Israel if they fail to live right. Mays (1969:6) declares that, "the content of the message was in unbearable tension with the basis of his commission, and that tension played a decisive role in shaping the theology expressed in his words." Amos developed his theology on "justice and righteousness" in Amos 5 by placing it firmly on the notion that this concept is directly linked to life. And that the life he is referring to could only be found in Yahweh (Am. 5:5-6). He repeated this theological theme in Amos 5:14-15. However, in these latter passages, the theme is directly linked to the moral and ethical life of the people.

Based on these observations, it could be said that Amos' theology of "justice and righteousness" is anchored on the fact that Yahweh is sovereign and thus rules over all the nations of this earth. And that God historically, has a covenant with the people of Israel which requires them to live an exemplary life of "justice and righteousness." This is in actual fact what should distinguish them from other nations.

Yahweh shows his sovereignty right at the beginning of Amos 5 by announcing what was going to happen to the house of Israel (Am. 5:1). The important thing to observe here is the fact that Yahweh is going to cause the nation of Israel to suffer defeats in wars. To show that Yahweh was in control, he announces that there is no one that would be able to save Israel from the impending catastrophe (Am. 5:2). Amos takes up the theme of Yahweh's sovereignty again in Amos 5: 8-9. Here, Amos established the fact that Yahweh created the heavens (Am. 5:8). He has sovereignty over life and death (Am. 5:9). He is in control of the whole earth (Am. 5:8) and that he has the power to destroy the powerful and the strong (Am. 5:9). Amos continued to show the supremacy of Yahweh by mocking the other gods which the people of Israel may have brought into their existence believing that those gods were going to be of any help to them (Am. 5:26). Amos concluded that not only will those gods would not be able to rescue the people from Yahweh's wrath, Yahweh will further show his sovereignty by causing the people to be captured by other nations and be taken into captivity (Am. 5:27). In view of the last statement, Barton (2010:189) contends that "in Amos theology, Yahweh "controls the whole world" and thus "is above all the destroyer; a just destroyer, but a destroyer none the less." He concludes that Amos's "brand of theism enormously stresses the dark side of the deity."

Amos' theology of "justice and righteousness" also finds itself embedded in the concept of covenant. It is important to acknowledge that Amos did not explicitly mention the word "covenant" in his discourse. None-the-less, implicitly one can discover the presence of this historical idea in Amos theology. The theme of the day of the lord, for example, is something that is traditional and historically associated with theology of the people of Israel.[106] The idea of "justice and righteousness" could be said to have originated from the historical covenant which Yahweh had with the people. Justice and righteousness was characteristic which were expected from the Israelite kings. Also, the communal relationships between Israelites were rested in the same concept. Amos 5:7-15, could be said to consist of "denunciation of social injustices, linked to the doxology in which God darkens the morning into deep night" (Barton

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[106] See Wolff (1977:255), for further reading.

2010:198). This raises the question of the theme of judgement that could be argued to be intrinsically linked to the message of Amos (Barton 2010:198). The idea that the people were covenantal linked to Yahweh requires them to do justice. Amos's theology teaches that Yahweh completely rejected the people of Israel because of the injustices and unrighteous deeds. Not only that Yahweh rejected them, he will judge them and punish them for these acts. Amidst this, is also found the remnant theme which on the other hand places Amos within the realm of those that proposes the theology of the remnant or remnant theology. This implies that not all would be destroyed. Yahweh may show mercy to a remnant few.

5.4 God's perspective of justice and righteousness contrasted to human understanding of justice and righteousness as seen in Amos 5

The texts of Amos 5 present Yahweh as a God who is concerned about the state of justice and righteousness amongst the people of Israel. Yahweh's position could be seen from some of the speeches which are directly attributed to him. The context of the text of Amos 5 shows a God who is concerned with the treatment which the poor and afflicted are receiving in the society. Yahweh reactions could be seen from his demands of justice for the weak and the downtrodden. Yahweh sees a contradiction between the life which the people were living and his will (Mays 1969:10).

Yahweh perspective of justice and righteousness is also seen in his judgement. It is for this reason that he threatened to bring judgement on those who are involved in the heinous acts of oppressing the poor. He gave them the condition to seek him or else stand to be destroyed. It is important to observe that Amos' God "was no cruel and uncompassionate judge, but the vigilant champion of the oppressed" (Ward 1969:85). Yahweh's justice requires that, "he punished violence, oppression, and deceit because he was the protector of the lives and dignity of people" (Ward 1969:85).

He condemned the people's religious hypocrisy. It could be inferred that the people's false religiosity is part of what was contributing to the acts of injustices. Those that seek God will not act in such an unjust manner as listed in Amos 5:10-12. Yahweh admonished them to establish "justice in the gate" (Am. 5:15). Therefore, it could be said that God's perspective of justice and righteous is seen in the social relationship of the people. The expectation Yahweh had from Israel which they were not fulfilling because of their oppression of the poor are "justice and righteousness" (Mays 1969:10).

Yahweh wants to see a just society where people do right. Yahweh's expectation is for the people to always have "an active zeal to protect the rights and welfare of one's fellow

citizens, and a subordination of self-interest to the interest of the community" (Ward1969:70). He wants to see a society where the poor receive justice in political; judicial and business dealings (Simundson 2005:155). This result could only be obtained when people learn to worship Yahweh the right way which he instituted from the beginning (Am. 5:21-26).

On the contrary, the people of Israel were portrayed in the texts of Amos 5 as being more concerned with material things than justice and righteousness. The society was corrupt and this could be seen from the direct accusation that pointed them out as "those who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth" (Am. 5:7). The extent of their dislike for justice and righteousness could be seen in the strong language with which Amos uses to condemn them in verse 10, "They hate the ones who rebukes in the gate and they abhors the one who speaks uprightly." It could be said that the people were more taken to the idea of offering sacrifices and offerings and indulging in religious merriment which they believed was the right way to seek Yahweh. However, Yahweh told them that that all those are nothing without "justice running down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Am. 5:25).

5.5 Concluding Remarks

The main objective of this chapter was to look at the relevance of Amos 5 in contemporary times. In order to achieve this aim, the writer of this dissertation embarked on discussing the hermeneutical implication of Amos 5 texts: A comparative study of what the text meant and what it may mean for a contemporary reader.

Section 5.2.2 discusses what the text of Amos 5 probably meant to hearers during Amos' time. A review of the text was conducted. Issues such as accusations of wrong doings were uncovered. Also the theme of "justice and righteousness" was identified and the theme of the remnant was identified in the discourse. The theme of remnant brought hope to the book of Amos which ordinary bears a look of hopelessness. Amos also condemned religious hypocrisy which he linked as being part of the problem that helps in promoting injustices and unrighteousness in Israel society. The perpetrators of injustices were in some instances condemned to immediate judgment and subsequent punishment. In other instances they were given an escape route by Yahweh. This escape route was based on the condition that they must repent and turn to Yahweh. It was Yahweh's expectation that the people of Israel must do justice and live righteously.

Section 5.2.3 discusses what the text may mean to a contemporary reader. Here, the writer made attempt to critically analyse the text to uncover what may be ingrained in the text.

159

The writer allowed his preunderstanding to play a conscious role and to contribute towards informing his reading. This reading was based on his modern experience and led to the uncovering of traces of language of violence which is embedded in the text. This led the writer to come to the conclusion that the worldview of the interpreter which is influenced by his experience plays an important role in determining the meaning of the text.

Section 5.3 discusses the theology of "justice and righteousness" in Amos 5. Here, the writer of this dissertation came to the conclusion that Amos's theology of "justice and righteousness" in Amos 5 was anchored on the notion of life. Yahweh expected the people to do justice and live right so that they can have life. And this life could only be found in Yahweh. Amos theology of "justice and righteousness" is directly linked to the moral, ethical and religious life of the people of Israel.

Finally, God's perspective of justice and righteousness contrasted to human understanding of it as seen in Amos 5 was discussed. It was determined that for God, justice and righteousness was seen from his demand of it for the weak and the downtrodden. It was also about his righteous judgment which requires him to punish those that were involved in acts of injustices. Yahweh's interest was to see a society where justice and righteousness was practiced in all spheres of life. Conversely, the people of Israel had abandoned the requirement that call for them to do right and be just. They were more concerned with material things and thus, have flagrantly poisoned justice and had laid justice to the earth. This attitude changed the whole perspective of "justice and righteousness" as it was expected to be seen in the society.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of this dissertation and also to make suggestions on what probably may require further research.

The major question which this dissertation set out to answer was: The problem of hermeneutics in a modern context and to do so, the text of Amos 5 was considered. Critical to this research was the question: To what extent did ideology influence the writer(s) of Amos 5 in their understanding of the doctrine of God and the concept of justice and righteousness on the one hand? And on the other, how does ideology influence our interpretation and application of the text of Amos 5 today? Thus, the main objective became an attempt to establish the value of the text which was supposedly written 2500 years ago to today's context.

Having identified the above mentioned problem, I set out to answer the question by first trying to establish the historical, political, sociological and religious situation during the time of Amos. The study led to the discovery that during this time, there was political instability and that there was also economic boom which led the people of Israel to become complacent in their religious affairs or the worship of Yahweh. It was this situation that prompted Yahweh to commission Amos to come and warn the people of an impending disaster which could be averted. So it could be said that Amos' message was twofold: A message of optimism and on the other hand, a message of pessimism.

From the above, the research moved to the issue of ideology and the meaning of the text. It was concluded through the research that there was nothing like a person being ideological neutral. Also, because a text is a human construct, and since human beings are ideological in every sense of it, there is therefore the presence of traces of ideology in every text which includes the Bible. It was also discovered that the text itself was a complex entity that usually gets its meaning from the reader or interpreter.

Having established the above findings, the research proceeded to conduct a critical analysis of the text of Amos 5. Chapter 3 was the exegetical reading of the text of Amos 5, which as well included a synchronic reading. This method was adopted because the writer of the dissertation believed that it is necessary to apply both methods if a holistic meaning of the text is to be derived. In course of the study, it was discovered that some of the texts did not have clear meanings. Examples include Amos 5:21 and 25, where the writer believes that further investigation and which at the end did not yield a conclusive meaning. Whether these

161

verses were left open for interpretation by Amos for a reason requires further research. This reading was followed in chapter 4 by what the writer of the dissertation called a rhetorical reading of justice and righteousness of Amos 5. This reading as well adopted the use of multi-plural approach of reading the text of Amos 5. This included the use of diachronic and synchronic methods. It was discovered that the justice and righteousness was used as a pair that was very close in meaning by Amos. This implies that they are inseparable word-pair which is used to express the concept of social justice and is a hendiadys.

Chapter 5 focused on the meaning of the text; then and now. The study helped in establishing the fact that Amos and his audience operated within a historical setting. This historical setting defined their ideology. It was based on this that they constructed their understanding of the meaning of the concept of justice and righteousness. On the other hand, a modern interpreter such as the writer exists in a historical setting that is different from that of Amos and his audience. Therefore, he or she is reading the text from a position different from theirs. The writer of the dissertation discovered through his reading for example that there are traces of the language of violence in the text of Amos 5. This honest and responsible reading of the text helped to establish that Amos wrote the text based on his ideological judgment as of the time which permitted him to judge certain societal norm as right. Today, some will find this normative disturbing.

Furthermore, in the chapter 5, attempt was made to discover the theology of justice and righteousness in Amos 5. Through the discussion, it was discovered that Amos developed his theology of justice and righteousness in Amos 5 by placing it firmly on the notion of life. And that the life which he is referring to could only be found in Yahweh. Amos theology when it is expanded includes the issue of morals and ethics of his day. These issues are still relevant in today's context. However, since it could be argued that human knowledge has advance considerably, these issues have taken a slightly different meaning. The new means could be seen for example in the manner some will accept and receive the traces of language of violence that the writer uncovered in his interpretation of the text of Amos 5. Hermeneutically, this affects the manner the meaning of the text is received by some. Thus, the on-going question of what should be regarded as a responsible and honest interpretation of the text. This is another area which the researcher believes requires further study.

Finally, the research attempted to compare God's understanding of the meaning of justice and righteousness compared to human understanding of it. It was concluded that Yahweh wants to see a society where people are treated fairly in the sphere of justice and

socio- political. Amos 5 portrays a people whose interest lies more on material gains. Justice and righteous had become an alien terminology in Israel during the time of Amos.

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