I, FERRY YEFTA MAMAHIT, declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is my own work and has not been submitted by me to any other university for degree purposes at this or any tertiary institution.

Signature : ______________________________

Date : ______________________________
ABSTRACT

Title : Establish justice in the land: rhetoric and theology of social justice in the book of Amos
Student : Ferry Yefita Mamahit
Promoter : Prof. P M Venter
Department : Old Testament Studies
Degree : Doctor of Philosophy

The aim of this research is to construct a biblical theology of social justice drawn specifically from the book of Amos. This is done on the basis of rhetorical analysis. The use of rhetorical analysis is considered to correspond with the genre of the selected texts analyzed (Am 2:6-8; 5:1-17; and 8:4-6), which are mostly rhetorical and relates to the issue of social justice in nature. The rhetorical criticism used in this research combines both diachronic and synchronic approaches, and consists of several steps such as dividing the rhetorical units, finding rhetorical situations, drawing rhetorical inventions, describing rhetorical dispositions and identifying rhetorical techniques.

The analysis shows that the prophet Amos used a wide variety of literary devices to persuade his audience, the people of Israel, such as chiasm, rhetorical entrapment, oracle against the nations (OAN), N + 1 formula, inclusion and progression, woe oracle, dirge or lament, wordplay, hymn, wisdom techniques, imagery, sevenfold structure, cause-effect form of speech and “quoting what the accused have said.” These primary devices are utilized in the context or in the imagery of a courtroom. In this connection, Amos used the epideictic, judicial and deliberative rhetoric in order to bring his audience to the “divine court” for the religious and social sins that they have committed.

These rhetorical devices function as a means of exposing a theological intention of the utterances of Amos, which is establishing justice in the land of Israel. The
message of social justice is mainly based on the covenantal relationship between YHWH and his people, as seen in traditions of creation and redemption in the Old Testament, particularly in the Torah (the codes of law) and the former prophetic writings. The covenant calls for God's people to love YHWH and to act socially just toward other fellow human beings. As a concept, this research proposes a triangular relational model. YHWH, as the theological angle must be independent, and his people, either the powerful (the political angle) or the powerless (the social angle), are dependent on him. Meanwhile, the powerful and the powerless are interdependent with each other. Keeping a balanced relationship among the angles means manifesting the ideal state of social justice in the land.

This research shows that the covenant was broken by the Israelites when the powerful disobeyed YHWH and did social injustices toward other human beings. The powerful became independent both toward YHWH and the powerless. As a result, YHWH took responsibility and action to keep his covenant, and called his rebellious people back into repentance and obedience. In other words, justice must be maintained in the land of Israel. Such a divine decision was carried out in the context of the day of Lord (DOL), a day of either judgment or salvation. The option of death and life are offered to be chosen by the powerful. However, God's people deliberately choose death, and, consequently, their end is near. YHWH himself definitely will defeat and exile them by using the mighty army of Assyria.

Key terms: Amos
Theology of social justice
Rhetorical analysis
 Literary devices
Covenant
Covenanted relationship
A triangular relational model of social justice
YHWH
The powerful
The powerless
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Ferry Yefta Mamahit
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