

CHAPTER THREE

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF AMOS 2:6-8

3.1 RHETORICAL UNIT

Amos 2:6-8 must be discussed in the context of Amos 1:3-2:16. This is a large unit in the book of Amos known as the Oracle against the Nations (OAN). This unit is comprised of several smaller oracles found in subunits 1:3-5, 1:6-8, 1:9-10, 1:11-12, 1:13-15, 2:1-3, 2:4-5, and 2:6-16. The division of it can be seen as follows:

UNIT	SUB-UNIT	SUB-SUB UNIT
Oracle against the Nations (OAN) Amos 1:3-2:16	Syria (1:3-5)	
	Philistia (1:6-8)	
	Tyre (1:9-10)	
	Edom (1:11-12)	
	Ammon (1:13-15)	
	Moab (2:1-3)	
	Judah (2:4-5)	
	Israel (2:6-16)	Description of specific sins of the Israelites (2:6-8)
		Rejection of God's acts for the Israelites (2:9-12)
		Punishment of destruction upon the Israelites (2:13-16)

This division clearly shows that each oracle of these oracles can be considered as an independent sub-unit because it contains a specific subject. In this relation, each sub-sub-unit, for example, Amos 2:6-8 in the sub-unit of the oracle against Israel, may also be thought as an independent or complete “rhetorical unit.”

Aside from that, the completeness of the unit can be seen in the uniqueness of elements the oracle against Israel has, as compared to the preceding series. This uniqueness is found in the length and the details of the contents. Hayes (1995:163) explains several different aspects, such as the expansion of both

description of the wrongs (vv. 6-8, 12), the depiction of the coming judgement (vv. 13-16), the accusation is no longer concerned with international matters but with domestic ones, the reference is made to specific events in the past, the interspersion between the second and third person, and the stylized announcement of judgement—*אֲרַמְנוֹת וְשִׁלְחֵתִי אֵשׁ בְּחֹמַת בְּאַכְלָהּ* (“I will send fire and it will consume the fortress”)—is dropped. The sharing of common forms while simultaneously showing unique aspects indicates that each oracle is an independent and a complete literary unit.

As seen in the divisions of the units earlier, Amos 2:6-8, as sub unit of the oracle against Israel (Am 2:6-16) and a sub-sub-unit of OAN (Am 1:3-2:16), is an independent literary unit. As a complete unit, this section starts with the introduction, followed by the content of the oracle and ends with a conclusion. The messenger formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* (“Thus says YHWH”) is considered as the introductory part of the section. It introduces the content of the oracle. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, this type of introduction was used to introduce letters and proclamations (cf Gowan 1996:353-354), or simply serve as an announcement introducing messages. It means that these words mark the beginning of a new unit.

After elaborating on the contents of the indictments, Amos uses the closing formula, *נְאֻם־יְהוָה* (“Says the LORD”) and it subsequently closes the oracle. It is called “the divine oracle formula” (“oracle/utterance of YHWH”), and, in the case of Amos, this oracle or utterance that the prophet delivered appears in the form of a speech. According to Wolff (1977:92), this speech “always stands at the end of an oracle, in order to distinguish it in a solemn way as speech of YHWH,” and it is also important to be noticed that this closing formula is inseparable with its twin, the introductory formula. Both of them are considered as definite boundaries that limit the section as a whole unit and demarcate it from other sections. Thus, the oracle against Israel forms one independent speech unit that here can serve as a rhetorical unit.

The text of Amos 2:6-8 is a sub-unit of the larger unit in 2:6-16 called “the indictment.” It can be seen that this section does not constitute a complete statement because the theme of wine is continued in verse 12. Accordingly, this section (2:6b-8, and continued in 12) is the most difficult part to be analyzed because the crimes committed by the Israelites may be counted as 7, 9 or even 10, depending on how the units are arranged, but “if allowance is made for the virtually synonymous parallelism throughout and the sins are viewed conceptually, only four crimes appear” (Chisholm 1990:193). In the same vein, telescoping an N+1 (“N” represents a number usually 3 or 7) pattern in the book of Amos, O’Connell (1996:60) maintains that the author deliberately and consistently used 3+1 pattern in presenting the indictments against Israel, for example, oppression of the poor (2:6b-7a), cultic profanity (2:7b), abusing pledges and fines (2:8), and Israel’s disrespect for prophets and Nazirites (2:12).

In contrast to this, others prefer not to see verses 7b-8 as parallelism. It is because “the elements are not identical and therefore no two are quite parallel, and it is simply thought that this section is structured in a total of seven charges (2:6b-8), which the adding of another accusations (v. 12) would then constitute the eighth wrong” (Hayes 1995:163). It is important then to think that, whatever forms the enumeration takes, this section (2:6-8 and 2:12) should be viewed inseparably and considered as a whole unit. Although the reason for punishment (vv.6b-8) is interrupted by a historical retrospective (vv. 9-11), Gowan (1996:365) insists, “that actually leads to a concluding accusation in v. 12, so vv. 6b-12 should be taken as a whole, leading to the announcement of judgement in vv. 13-16.” To conclude, it seems that Amos 2:6-8 forms a subunit along with other subunits 2:9-11 and 2:12-16, and, most importantly, should be read in conjunction with 2:12. Therefore, this unit will be the main materials to be analyzed in discussing the issue of social justice.

3.2 RHETORICAL SITUATION

After the rhetorical unit has been determined, it is important to next concentrate on the context “behind” the speech, especially on the persons, the circumstances and the events which led to the composition of the specific text. The creative speech of the prophet is essentially not delivered in a vacuum. It is his reaction to a certain situation. In doing rhetorical analysis, it is necessary, therefore, “to trace the problem which gives rise to the given discourse” (Gitay 1980:296). As mentioned before, the real audience of the book as a whole is the Israelites. The question then will be “What does **ישראל** mean?” or, in a more specific way, “Does it refer to the state or to the people?” Based on the study of the term as it occurred in the book, Wolff (1977:165) once explains that “when Amos says ‘Israel’ he intends to level the following accusation against the people of God.” The word “Israel,” therefore, may refer to a group people who have special relationship with YHWH as expressed by the parallel term **עמי ישראל** (7:8, 15-17) with its first person possessive pronominal suffix.

This term, however, is contradictory in the sense that it stands in opposition to reality. Instead of being the people who are very dear to him, God is now accusing his very people for their wrongdoings. Although it frequently occurs in the oracles against other nations (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4), the term **פושעים** (pl. construct of **פשע**), which may be literally translated as “transgressions” (ASV, RSV, NASB and NKJV) has its special meaning in the context of this oracle against Israel. It may express “the completeness of Israel’s sinfulness” (Hayes 1988:107) as supported by the using of the enumeration (“three . . . and four”) formula, and most importantly, the word indicates the excessive rebellion against a covenant or a divine law (Smith 1989:65). The words of Amos may cause the hearers to think “Is it true that YHWH will punish us?” since they considered themselves as God’s chosen people with all of its privileges.

The OAN (Am 1:3-2:16), as the context of Amos 2:6-8, has its background in the situation of Israel and the surrounding nations in the eighth century BCE. The mentioning of other nations, being the enemies of the Israelites, may have caused

the hearers to be overconfident with their special existence. One after another Israel's neighbours are included in the list of judgment. The charge, after all, is directed to Israel herself. The listener might think that Judah, the seventh, was the end of the list, and "his captive northern audience, who must have been enjoying every minute of it, would psychologically be in a state of mind which would lead them to believe that he had reached his climax with his fulmination against Judah" (Paul 1981:197).

Besides, the moving from the foreigners (Aram, Philistia, Tyre) to blood relatives (Edom, Ammon, Moab), and to Judah, Israel's sister kingdom to the south (1:3-2:5) should create an excitement on the side of the hearers for, as Chisholm (1990:189) indicates, they "must have listened with delight to this series of messages, especially when their long-time rival Judah appeared, like a capstone, as the seventh nation in the list." Although the prophet also addresses oracles to other nations, these are actually introductory to the main target of his message, the Israelites. It is a surprise created by Amos, because the Israelites may have enjoyed hearing the accusation of the nations without ever realizing that it would end up with themselves as the prophet's intended audience. Dorsey (1992:306-307) thus concludes that the previous seven oracles against the nations in 1:3-2:5, "presumably functions as a foil for the unit's main objective, the stinging message of 2:6-16," and he added that "The 7+1 pattern here would have served a clever rhetorical function, viz., to ensure the surprise effect."

The mentioning of Israel at the end of the list of judgment may also mean that the nation was the culmination or centre point of the judgment of YHWH. Paul (1981:197) argues that the prophet Amos resorted to this alternate pattern for a complementary reason, that is, to express finality and climactic culmination. In the context of religious polemics, Barstad considers this section (2:6-8) as "the pronouncement against Israel closes the climactic list of words of judgment toward other nations" (1984:11-15). Chisholm (1990:72) also says that "Chapters 1-2 include a series of oracles against various nations, culminating in splendid rhetorical fashion with a judgement against Israel," or, as Hayes (1995:163)

indicates that Amos “after this rhetorical and geographical circumambulation, hones in on the center, his actual audience,” the Israelites.

By hearing this indictment the audience could no longer argue against the accusation addressed to them. It supposedly led them to realize that they were not better than other nations, because the oppressive acts they committed were equal to the terrible war crimes committed by the neighbouring nations. The using of the structure of the oracles thus is effective to corner the listeners because “the disturbing and shocking message is that the nation’s socio-economic offences are comparable to violent acts perpetrated by foreign nations against Israel and other peoples” (Wood 2002:24).

In addition, Amos seems to challenge the common belief of the audience at that time that they are the chosen people of God, who have more privileges and favour from God than any other nation on the earth. In this regard, Barton (1980:47-48) specifically infers that there were some popular beliefs held by the audience during the eighth-century BCE Israel, such as, the audience must suppose that Israel had a specially privileged position and hence was indemnified against punishment; Amos’ hearers clearly did not expect their prophets to proclaim judgement on Israel; and Israelites rather had mutual obligations as individuals than that they as nation ought to observe the conventions of war. Because of this deemed special status or privilege they ignored their moral and social responsibilities, that is, to treat the lowly in a correct manner. In their mind, it is hard to believe that YHWH will punish his own people who mistreated their fellow citizens.

However, Amos seems to have made a special effort in order to convince his audience that things were what they seem to be. By using a rhetorical strategy, namely “a rhetoric of entrapment” (Alter 1985:144), the prophet mentioned the preceding seven oracles with the intention to eventually focus the accusation on Israel. Chisholm (1990:189) pinpoints that “Rather than being self-contained pronouncements of judgment, the earlier messages set up the climactic denunciation of the prophet’s primary target group, the sinful Northern

Kingdom.” Israel thus can not hide their own status in the presence of YHWH, because in fact they have violated the covenant by mistreating others.

The formula “for three . . . and for four . . .” (2:6a), also repeated several times in the preceding oracles, functions not only to bring the audience to realize that they were the main target of God’s judgement, but also to prepare them to respond. In the case of Israel, God could not tolerate the transgression of his people which have reached its climax. He had to take an action of punishment (v. 6a) against them in order to reveal his divine justice (2:13-16). In these verses, Amos dramatically describes the panic that will overwhelm the Israelite military.

It is also important to note here that rhetorically this formula is not just a response but also initiates a kind of debate. The prophetic utterance, as Möller (2000:510) describes, is “a form of speech done in the context of presenting readers with debate between the prophet Amos and his eighth-century audience.” In an extensive rhetorical study on the book of Amos, it is insisted that the prophet intentionally uses the rhetoric of persuasion in the sense that “the presentation of the debating prophet is the primary rhetorical means employed by the book’s authors or final redactors in order to achieve their communicative aims” (Möller 2003:2). Therefore, whether this section is viewed as a surprise, a climax, a debate, or whatever, the bottom line is, the texts are rhetorically arranged or structured in order to prepare Amos’ audience to hear the charges.

3.3 RHETORICAL INVENTION

A rhetorical analysis is also concerned with the way the author persuades his audience, for example, the modes and manner used in the attempt to convince (Gitay [1980]:297), or simply “the proofs” of a speech or writing, called *inventio*. Before stating the indictments, Amos has to establish his position as a prophet of YHWH. He definitely has to use the messenger formula “Thus said the Lord” (כה אמר יהוה) (2:6) in order to settle his authority. Since the beginning of his oracle, the prophet considered himself as a prophet who spoke to the Israelites on behalf of YHWH. There must be a link between what he prophesies and YHWH

as the source of his authority. Therefore, the verb *הזה* intriguingly is translated not only as “saw” but also as “envisioned in visions” (NAS), or even as “prophesied” (JPS).

It implies that the words of Amos here should be understood as divinely inspired because they are revealed directly by YHWH to the prophet. Mays (1969:20) indicates that this was “a conventional way of saying that his words were received as revelation before they were spoken” as also experienced by other prophets such as Isaiah (1:1; 2:1) and Micah (1:1). The source of all utterances of the prophets, particularly the prophet Amos, is YHWH who roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem. Wolff (1977:91-92) suggests that the use of this formula was “strictly tied to the commissioned from YHWH and on the principle is formulated in the divine first person. . . . When YHWH comes to the fore in the messenger speech, it is consistently as the first person speaker.” The words of Amos thus are the words of YHWH given through a divine revelation, and as a result, they have divine authority and origin (cf Smith 1989:22).

In Amos 2:6-8, the enumeration formula of the transgressions (. . . על־ארבעה וועל־שלשה) committed by the people may function as a preliminary pointer to the “proofs” of the accusation, and by elaborating their wrongdoings, the people will soon realize that they are worthy to be punished. According to Mays (1969:24), the use of the formula by the prophet generally was “in order to present the coming action of YHWH as a response to an accumulation of offences that has outrun the tolerance of God.” Amos pointed out that there was a relationship of cause and effect between Israel’s sins and God’s punishment. It applies a kind of “action and reaction” or “sow and reap” principle for, according to Blenkinsopp (1984:88-89), there is a close link between indictment (Am 2:6-8) and verdict (vv. 13-16).

Jeremias (1998:34) also notes that the sequence of the listed transgressions possibly underscore a continual increase in culpability. All listed transgressions seem to expose not only the total or complete quantity of the rebellion but also the quality of the “sins” (NIV). In this context, the enumeration formula also

expresses the seriousness of the transgression by the people in the eyes of YHWH because it points to “the multiplicity and intensity of the atrocities committed by the nation” (Kim 1996:40). Through the elaboration of the wrongdoings of the people, Amos most likely is trying to state that his charges are not going in the wrong direction.

The use of the word פשעים (pl. construct of פשע) in Amos 2:6a may indicate that the prophet rhetorically envisages what the sins were. The word translated as “crimes” moreover, cannot be understood as merely crimes in an ordinary sense but refers also to crimes in a moral sense, a rebellion against authority. Paul (1991:45) considers it a revolt against YHWH when he said that “for such crimes they are found guilty of revolting against the Lord of history, who, in turn, holds them directly accountable and executes punitive action against them.” In a more concrete way, Andersen and Freedman (1989:231-232) argue that “Just offences against conscience in days long before any declarations of human rights as such, or more specifically wilful violations of formal agreements, which made them directly answerable to YHWH himself.” Thus, the word “crimes” here is closely related to the sins against YHWH, the God of covenant.

This implies that all the violations committed by the Israelites were actually actions that break the covenant that YHWH established, being acts of “rebelliousness against YHWH’s sovereign law” (Stuart 1987:310). Based on the study of Ancient Near Eastern treaties, Niehaus (1992:340) specifically points out that the rebellious acts performed by the nations, including Israel, were seen as violations against the covenant of YHWH. He established the covenant of creation with all creatures and conducted a recreation in the covenant of Noah which demanded respectful treatment for all human beings as creatures created in God’s image. The above views therefore are in agreement with the nature of the word “crimes” that must be placed in a covenantal framework, as effectively used by the prophet to prove his charge of the people of the covenant.

Different to other oracles, the prophet announced Israel’s crimes in a long and detailed list of indictments. Listing the crimes in such an extended form seems to

demonstrate that he was intending to prove the wrongs in a concrete and all encompassing description. It needs actually more than eight lines, even if Amos 6:12 is included, with its sevenfold sinful acts—following Dorsey’s suggestion (1992:277)—in order to explain all the crimes of Israel (Am 2:6-8). In comparison with other oracles, the intention to extend Israel’s transgressions is to describe the sins in a more tangible way.

Coote (1981:16, 32)—categorizing Israel’s section as “Stage A,” the original edition of the prophet Amos—argues that the oracle was quite distinctive because all indictments contributed to a single basic message: the powerful in Israel have oppressed the powerless, or the ruling elite have oppressed the poor. With a clearer picture of the societal conditions prevailing in the time of Amos, the terms of his announcement take on a new concreteness. In the same vein, Dorsey (1999:278) maintains that “Both *its accusation section* and its punishment section are *several times longer* than those preceding oracles, *servicing to highlight this oracle*” (italics mine).

The extended list is also aimed at portraying the completeness or totality of Israel’s sins. If it is related to the use of the “sevenfold” pattern in the section, it seems that the prophet was proposing the notion of completeness. Rosenbaum (1990:55) once reminds us that “whatever one decides about the formula ‘three, yea four’ in the oracles against other nations, in the Israel oracle three plus four equals seven—the number of completeness even if used in negative situations.” Paul (1991:30, 76) similarly argues that Amos’ using of a series of wrongdoings in an elaborated and extensive way was to convey the concept of totality, and the reason behind it was that the Israelites have received abundant ongoing blessings from YHWH (vv. 9-12). Therefore, there is no way of escape or self justification to be made by the audience after hearing the charges that the prophet announced to them.

3.4 RHETORICAL DISPOSITION

In order to expose the charges, the author of the book organizes the materials carefully. Before looking closely at the texts, it is necessary to see how Amos 2:6-8 is poetically structured:

[Verse line]	Verse	Strophe	Stanza
כה אמר יהוה	a. YHWH announces	A. Introductory formula	Announcement of God's punishment on a multitude of sins e. g. abuse of powerless people and performing heathen practices
על־שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ועל־אַרְבַּעָה לֹא אֲשִׁיבֵנו	b. For three/four categories of transgression I will not revert my punishment	B. Indictment:	
על־מִכְרָם בְּכֶסֶף צְדָק ואביון בעבור נעלים	c. They sell people for nothing	C. 1) Categories of people mistreated	
על־עַפְרָ־אֶרֶץ בְּרֹאשׁ דָּלִים הַשְּׂאֵפִים	d. The lowly are discriminated		
וּדְרֹךְ עֲנוּיִם יִטּוּ	e. Their profanation brings shame to YHWH's name	C.2) Cultic profanation	
ואיש ואביו ילכו אל־הנערה למען חלל את־שם קדשי			
ועל־בגדים חבלים יטו אצל כל־מזבח			
ויין עמושים ישתו ויין ביתאלהיהם	f. Repeated pattern: deed + place of profanation at cult places		

From the perspective of rhetorical analysis, the first verse line כה אמר יהוה (v. 6) may be considered as introduction (*exordium*) since it contains an introductory formula (first strophe). The second and third verse lines, על־שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל indicate the statement (*narratio*) of the transgression in “three and four” formula (second strophe). In the third line, a conclusion (*peroratio*) is given in a short phrase לא אשיבנו which connotes the result of such indictments. At the end of the unit, the body of speech (*probatio*) is elaborated in each succeeding line (Am 2:6b-8) as seen in the fourth strophe, “categories of people mistreated” such as האשפים (selling people for nothing) and על־מִכְרָם בְּכֶסֶף צְדִיק ואביון בעבור נעלים (discriminating the lowly); and in the fifth strophe, “cultic profanation” such as ואיש ואביו ילכו אל־הנערה למען חלל את־שם (insulting the name of YHWH through profanation) and ועל־בגדים חבלים יטו (repeating the deed and place of profanation at cultic places). It is clear that all the strophes and verses point to the

stanza, the central idea of the unit, “God will punish the multitude of sins done by the Israelites.”

The careful introduction arranged at the beginning of the unit (Am 2:6a) seems to be a stunning one. The introductory phrase כה אמר יהוה (“Thus says YHWH”), as it also occurs at the head of the other oracles of the nations, does not simply introduce the content but also affirms divine origin and authority. According to Frye (1983:212) this was considered as a divine speech formula that had an expression of the biblical “voice of authority.” It thus refers to the one who is sending the message (Smith 1989:43) that is YHWH himself. The term “YHWH” has a specific religious significant meaning in the hearts and minds of the Israelites. The *tetragrammaton* יהוה is considered to be the most sacred name because it refers directly to the God who has established a covenant with his people, as Kapelrud (1961:47) writes, “YHWH and Israel were standing in a special relationship to each other, that of the *bērit*, the Covenant.”

However, in the context of the OAN (Am 1:3-2:16), this name can be related to God’s control over the universe. The word itself, according to Wright (1965:225-37), connotes that YHWH, the God of Israel, holds universal claims and exercises universal imperium. This simply means that YHWH also has total sovereignty over all of the nations as Smith (1989:68) argues, “God has spoken; the nations have committed sins; they will be held accountable for their inhumanity to man; God will destroy these centers of power and the leaders who do such things.” As the audience hear the word “YHWH,” they give heed to the message, as Smith (1989:64) adds that “the audience acceptance of the word of God as authoritative for others enabled the prophet to gain maximum advantage.” Although the audience still thinks that their relationship with YHWH was unshakeable, the following words may turn their thoughts upside-down, because the fact is that God actually intends to punish his own people.

In addition, if one observes Hayes’ study (1968:87), saying that the OAN might have presented in multiple contexts in ancient Israel, for example in “cultic services of lamentations” or in “the royal court,” it is possible that such an

introductory formula has been said in the context of Israel's religious and authoritative sanctuary. Kapelrud (1961:75-76) once infers that denunciation of Israel as a whole for its sins goes far beyond anything that could have formed part of a regular ritual pattern. The choosing of both place and the word "YHWH" is not accidental because it is the most effective way to attract the attention of the audience. In the setting of the sanctuary, the people most likely hear what the prophet said, especially when hearing the phrase "Thus says YHWH."

Upon hearing such a formula, the people may have expected to hear a "blessing" from God as reward for what they have religiously done, but then they realized that it was not so. In contrast, it was the announcement of both accusation and declaration of punishment addressed to themselves, as Dorsey (1992:306) argues that "in each oracle the formulaic introduction is followed by a prophetic utterance containing the same two elements, always presented in the same order: (1) accusation against the nation; and (2) declaration of YHWH's intended punishment upon that nation." Therefore, Amos intentionally spoke this introductory formula in the setting of the sanctuary because "the rhetorical effect of his highly stylized oracles hammers home the message in a way which cannot be avoided" (Smith 1989:69).

Amos uses the phrase *על-שלשה פשעי ישראל ועל-ארבעה* ("for three transgressions of Israel, even four") as a statement of the case, or as *narration*, which purposively sets the direction for the literary proofs that follow. Such an enumeration formula points to the word *פשעי* which—also used in other oracles against the nations—is generally translated to mean "transgressions" or "crimes" (Stuart 1987:310). Chisholm (1990:75) also means it in the same way, "[the word] suggests that the sins of various nations shared the same basic character." If attention is given to its context, particularly to other oracles against the nations, the word may refer to a sort of criminal action, as Soggin (1987:46) translates it, "the innumerable crimes of Israel." In Amos 2:6a, the word in itself is not specific enough in explaining the multiplicity of the crimes committed by the Israelites. It is too general in the sense that it may refer to any kind or any quantity of wrongs.

The word “crimes” thus cannot be well understood without the elaboration of its counterpart in the succeeding verses. This implies that the formula is programmatically used by the prophet to set the direction for proving the case. Accordingly it is a common literary technique in the Old Testament in proposing lists, where such a graduated numerical saying is usually followed by a list of items corresponding to the second number, and in the case of Israel, it pointed to the crimes specified in the next verses (cf Chisholm 1990:74). By giving his statement of the case in this way, the author seems to prepare his highlighting of the corruption of the people.

Amos also sets the body of the speech or *probatio* in this section (Am 2:6-8). It means that the prophet explains the contents of his speech or writing. This is part of the section where the indictments are emphasized. To begin with, the prophet accuses the Israelites for selling into debt-slavery the innocent and the needy (v. 6b) (to understand the concept, see Chirichigno 1993:145-185). The first clause of the text, על-מכרם בכסף צדיק, may be literally translated “they sell the righteous for/on account of silver/money” (ASV differently translates the verb “have sold”), it is, yet, not clear enough what this action means. Scholars differ in explaining what such a phrase means, and most of them focus their study on how to give a proper meaning to כסף within its context. The “silver or money” then may indicate several things, for example, a debt owed to a creditor (Mays 1969:45), the purchase price of a slave (Fendler 1973:38; Soggin 1987:47), or a bribe given to a judge in the courts (Hammershaimb 1970:46).

However, the majority of interpretation on the text holds the first to be unlikely. The reason for this, albeit having its counterpart with other verses (Is 1:23 and Mi 3:9), is that this view does not fit with the meaning of the verb מכר (“to sell”). Smith (1989:82) maintains that the concept of bribery or court injustice is not preferable, because “the term ‘to sell’ when used of the needy is always in the context of debts and slavery (Exod. 21:7-8; Lev. 25:39-40; Deut. 15:12-14).” The צדיק (“righteous” or “innocent”) is being sold into slavery either because of the loan that he was not able to pay, or was falsely charged of owing money or the small debt that too insignificant (cf Paul 1991:77). The victim therefore was

being accused of being unable to pay his debts and was sold into slavery, although the accusation was not true.

The second clause **וּאֲבִיוֹן בְּעִבּוֹר נְעָלִים** (“[and] the needy for the sake of a pair of sandals”) follows the first in a connecting line. It means that the innocent is not the only one who suffers injustice but here there is another one, **הָאֲבִיוֹן** (“the needy”). Wolff (1977:165) defines the person as the one who was “in need” of help. It may imply that a needy person cannot defend himself (or herself) from being forced into debt slavery. The needy has no money, power and legal recourse in the courts, and lacking of these things might cause him or her to be a means for others to get rich (cf Finley 1990:164). The placement of **אֲבִיוֹן** along with **צַדִּיק**, however, has associating effects, so that, both of them may be called “the righteous needy” (Stuart 1987:316). Moreover, since the line **עַל-מִכְרָם בַּכֶּסֶף** **וּאֲבִיוֹן בְּעִבּוֹר נְעָלִים**, these lines may naturally have the same thought or concept. If this is the case, the righteous needy, in reality, was sold into slavery not only for the sake of “silver” but also of “sandals” (**בְּעִבּוֹר נְעָלִים**).

To understand the term **נְעָלִים** is quite difficult. It is because of translating it as “a pair of sandals” is seemingly imprecise. Hayes (1988:109-110) explains that others argued that the text has nothing to do with sandals, for example, the Aramaic Targum understood it as “possession of them” while the medieval Jewish exegete Rashi understood it as “a field owned by a poor” located between two fields owned by the judge, being forced to sell to the latter in order to secure the property and “lock” (from **נָעַל** “to lock, to close”) it in. Giving another conclusion, Paul (1991:78-79) insists that this term should be derived from its root **עָלַם** (“to hide”) and thus refers to a “hidden gift” or “payoff.”

This view, however, seems to be more problematic because since it may imply a bribe (1 Sam 12:3; Gordis 1971:213-215)—as discussed before, the bribery view is unconvincing—“the hidden gift” is not a better translation. For the sake of its clarity, it is advisable to consider that **בְּעִבּוֹר נְעָלִים** “probably indicates hyperbolically the ridiculously low price for which they were sold” (Stuart

1989:316). Moreover, giving textological notes on the texts (Am 2:6b-7a), Orel (1997:411) argues that the sandals still may be connected with the legal transfer of land and/or slavery, and, on the other hand, they still may be a symbol of social status as in Egypt where even a specific role of sandal-bearers and keepers of the sandal bag is known. Orel (1997:411) then conclusively adds that whatever the judicial meaning of נעלים may be, in Amos 2:6b-7a they become a symbol of the rich and powerful, a striking symbol of the prophet's political poetry. Thus, the issue in both accusations in this verse is evidently the unreasonable and unjust sale of the innocent and the powerless into slavery by the rich and the powerful.

Next, the Israelites are accused of practicing the abuse of the poor (v. 7a). It is important to note that the long clause על-עפר-ארץ בראש דלים has a difficult syntax. The problem lies in the question "how the clause should be read?" since neither שאף ("pant"/"gasp") nor שוף ("trample/crush") may be the root of האשפים: "Those who gasp/pant after on the dust of the earth, on the head of the poor," or, "those who crush/trample the dust of the earth, on the head of the poor." Both translations might lead to different meanings. The former, as De Waard and Smalley (1979:48) point out, implies three things: "(a) as a picture of extreme greed: the rich landowners even long to own the small quantity of earth people throw on their heads as a sign of mourning; (b) as a picture of the way the poor people are pushed down: the rich are only satisfied when they see the poor in a miserable condition; and (c) as "they long for land at the expense of the poor."

In contrast, the latter is also possible because it is also true to read האשפים as "they trample" if שוף is its root (cf Stuart 1987:307). Smith (1989:83) similarly argues that the latter option is widely accepted because the imagery was similar to Amos 4:1 "who crush the needy" and Isaiah 3:15 "What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" To solve this problem, in my opinion, it is preferable to reconcile both forms and to see them as correct because their meaning is almost the same, "to trample." It can be explained by considering that "They are either biforms (cf. BDB) of each other or possibly the *aleph* has been inserted through the linguistic process of mixing (cf. וּשְׁבַתִּי in Ps.

23:6, where the expected form is (וישבתי) or as a vowel letter” (Finley 1990:132). The word “trample” here conotes that the Israelites “step upon the heads of the poor as though they were stepping upon the ground beneath them, that is, they treat the underprivileged with contempt and abuse” (Paul 1991:80). The Israelites therefore are charged for their mistreatment of the poor or the weak by exploiting them socio-economically.

The parallel to the above clause is the short clause ודרך ענויים טו (“and turn aside the way of the humble”). This clause is a direct parallel to verse 7a because the main idea of these parallel lines is the same, the poor people were not able to defend themselves from the action of the oppressor. Accordingly, such a statement may have an additional meaning especially if it is understood in a legal sense. Mays insists that the meaning of the clause is “a locution for the perversion of legal procedure” because, he continued, “‘Way’ (*derek*) is a synonym for ‘justice’ (*mišpāt*); cf. also *hittah mišpāt* in Ex 23.6, and *hittah saddīq* in Isa. 29.21. Both 6b and 7a are charges that the courts are being used to oppress the poor instead of to maintain *mišpāt*” (1969:46). In the same vein, De Waard and Smalley (1979:48-49) suggests that there is a possibility to translate the clause as “they keep the miserable from getting justice.”

However, to understand it in a legal context is not necessary because the clause may be taken in other ways. For example, if the word ענויים is translated naturally as “tenant farmers,” the action of the oppressor may include perverting the normal behaviour of tenant farmers (cf Rosenbaum 1990:56). It also may be meant figuratively, where “turn aside the way” is similar to “push off the road” which figuratively expresses “the idea that the underprivileged class is bullied and oppressed by the wealthy, who deprive and block them from obtaining the privileges and prerogatives to which they are naturally entitled” (Paul 1991:81).

The above discussion shows that whether the meaning of this clause is a legal, natural, or even figurative one, the point is clear that the oppressor manipulated the way of life of the afflicted inhumanly where the former “push them [the latter] around, control their life, determine how they will live, and deprive them of their

rights (Pr 22:22; 30:14)” (Smith 1989:84). Rhetorically, it seems that Amos is using clear and derogatory imagery in this text (v. 7a and b) to show the factual sin of the Israelites, that is their violation of human rights and dignity, so that they can not escape divine judgment.

The second half of 2:7 describes another kind of transgression committed by the Israelites, ואיש ואביו ילכו אלי-הנערה למען הלל את-שם קדשי (“and a man and his father go into the same maid in order to profane my holy name”). The key to understand this phrase is the word הנערה (“the maiden”), which literally means “young woman” (BDB:655). Commentators however vary in identifying the meaning of the word. The word may have several interpretations such as a secular prostitute that has no relation with any cultic connotation (cf Gordis 1979-1980: 216), a cultic prostitute because such a word is “a current term for sacred prostitute, and is therefore a synonym of *q^edēšāh*” (Soggin 1987:48), or a waitress at a house of feasting, that is “a pagan religious meal or banquet” (Barstad 1984:33-36).

Unfortunately, these views all seem to be speculative since the explanation presented is far from the original meaning of the word. Chisholm (1990:82; Mays 1969:46; Gowan 1996:365) argues against these views and maintains that the word does not connote either as cult or prostitution, “Though fitting nicely with verse 8, the view that the girl is a cult prostitute is unlikely, since the Hebrew word here translated ‘girl’ never refers elsewhere to a prostitute.” Another possible meaning of it is “a slave girl,” because “nowhere in the Old Testament does the word ‘girl’ means ‘prostitute,’ nor anything equivalent in ancient translations” (De Waard & Smalley 1979:49) that is similar to “a female servant” (Stuart 1987:317), or “someone who is minor, or is personally dependent on a master” (Jeremias 1998:37).

Since there are many options of interpretation, it is more preferable to put in consideration a literal meaning of the word. Both Wolff (1977:167) and Paul (1990:82-83) agree that נערה should have a more specific connotation, because it literally means “a young woman or maiden,” and it should be read together with

its previous paired words such as ענויים and דלים. “A young woman” here just simply points out an oppressed person, one of the members of the defenseless and exploited human beings in northern Israel. Such a young woman suffers injustice. The use of the verb ילכו (Qal impf. 3 m. p. from הלך which literally means “to go, come or walk”) probably implies that “illicit sexual acts are involved here” (Soggin 1987:48). Based on his observation of the term in the Akkadian occurrences, Paul (1982:492-494) proves that the word should be understood in the sexual sense, “the interdialectal semantic and cognate equivalent of Hebrew הלך אל, has the same idiomatic meaning, ‘to have sexual intercourse.’”

Further, Paul continues convincingly that “The semantic development is also attested in Aramaic, in which the expression אזל אל/על (= Heb. הלך אל) is employed in Talmudic and Geonic literature for sexual intercourse” (1991:82). Since this act was done by both איש (“a man”) and אביו (“his father”), the issue was clear that there was a sexual adulteration, where both a son and his father made the same young woman—it could be “a slave female”—an object of sexual intercourse. Stuart (1987:317) observes that such a practice “made all odious by the possibility that it may be involuntarily on the part of the woman.”

In the context of the Law, the practice of sexual adulteration, where the pairs have sex with the same person, is strongly prohibited and condemned (Lv 18:8, 15; 20:12; Dt 22:23-29; 27:20). The description Amos used here, according to Wolff (1977:167), is “a radicalizing of the apodictic stipulation.” Consequently, this practice is an act of desecrating the holy name of YHWH, למען חלל את-שם קדשי (“thereby profaning my holy name”). Since the particle למען expresses result or purpose (“in order that” BDB:775), most likely Amos wanted to emphasize that “when you violate this girl, you thereby pollute My holy name as well” (Finley 1990:131).

Amos 6:8 describes the last wrongs of the Israelites, that is exploitation of the destitute for pleasure (Smith 1989:86). The indictment is divided into two parts: firstly, the act of exploiting of the debtors (v. 8a), ועל־בגדים חבלים יטו אצל כל־מזבה, (“and on garments seized as pledges they stretch out themselves beside every

altar”). The action of taking of someone’s בגדיים (large “cloaks” or “garments”) in pawn and of keeping it until the next day is illegal according to the law because it is probably the only thing that that person has as a cover of his body, and it should not be kept as pledge overnight (Ex 22:26[26]; Deut 24:12-26[27], especially in 24:15, the widow’s garment cannot be taken in pledge at all). Such an illicit practice done by the Israelites is worsened by the using of the garments as reclining mats where they could “stretch out themselves down”—as the word טו (Hi. impf. 3 m. p. of נטה) literary meant—on them. Paul (1991:86) suggests that the use of the preposition על “makes clear that the garments are not being spread but that they are stretching themselves ‘upon’ (על) these very garments,” and it includes the orgy, the wild party characterized by excessive drinking and sexual activities (cf Soggin 1987:49; see also Niehaus 1992:367).

Some then argue that this practice possibly took place in the context of cultic ceremonies or feasts (Smith 1989:86; see also Gowan 1996:365), particularly when it is related to the succeeding phrase “beside every altar” and “drinking wine.” Niehaus (1992:367) further emphasizes that כל-מזבה may refer to multiple altars of YHWH and these “were at various locations: Bethel (3:14), Dan (8:14), Gilgal (Hs 12:12 [11]), and other local sanctuaries (Hs 8:11; 10:1-2, 8).” The indictment thus clearly indicates that the prophet intended “to condemn wealthy creditors who, rather than providing their own lounging materials while enjoying a meal of sacrificial flesh, were using garments belonging to debtors with no respect for their poor owners who could not afford the pleasure of such sacrifice” (Hayes 1995:164).

Secondly, the verse indicates the misuse of the debtors’ property (v. 8b), ויין ענושׁים (“and wine purchased from those fined, they drink in the house of their god”). It is difficult to identify whether the expression of ויין ענושׁים (“wine purchased from fine”) would be legalized or not during that time. Mays (1969:47) once reminded us that “The line between legality and illegality of these practices would be difficult to draw in technical sense from the material available.” As a result, those who were fined *probably* paid their fines in

money—then used it to purchase wine—or in wine that had been seized because the debtors did not have money to pay. Hayes (1988:114) gives a probable explanation to this unclear use of the verb ענש, which could refer to the penalty imposed on a man who, while struggling with another, bumped into a pregnant woman causing her to miscarry (Ex 21:22), and to a man who was convicted of slander against his new bride and her parents (Dt 22:19; Pr 22:3; 27:12).

In either case, it is proper to think that the former was sentenced to these fines in the violation of the law by the rich officials while the latter violated the law which they committed in order to hold their orgies. The issue then continues in the fact that this practice happened in בית אלהיהם (“the house of their god[s]”). The term בית is an ambiguous word that could be used to denote a variety of places of divine worship, but in practice it also functioned as economic, cultural and civic centres (see King 1988:90). To sum up, Amos denounced the actions that went beyond the prescription of the law, that is, those in power unjustly extorted money legally (or even illegally) and used it to indulge themselves in malpractice, and this is considered as the absence of moral conscience and social compassion.

It is important to note here that the structure of the section (Am 2:6-8) shows an unusual arrangement. Instead of placing it at the end of the unit, the conclusion part (*peroratio*)—לא אשיבמו (“I will not turn [its] punishment back”)—is placed in the beginning of the section. However, the prophet probably has his own purpose in placing this part here. As a complete sentence, such a phrase cannot be separated from its preceding one, על-שלשה פשעי ישראל ועל-ארבעה, (“for three transgressions of Israel, even four”) because the latter gives exact meaning to the former. This phrase then is descriptively elaborated in details in the successive verses, particularly at the end of the stanza (vv. 13-16). Interestingly, the term לא אשיבנו is commonly used in the context of covenant or treaty, the phrase לא אשיבנו not only means YHWH intended to punish Israel but also that He intends to terminate the covenant with his people (cf Barré 1986:630).

However, other views are also proposed to enrich the meaning of the phrase. As an example, based on the study of the object marker ל (the plene version of לא)

which is needed for the word שׁוּב, Andersen and Freedman (1989:233) believe that it may be meant as a rhetorical question, “Shall I not withdraw it?” In the same vein, Muraoka (1985:118-19) argues that although the phrase was not using the interrogative הֲ, this rhetorical question possibly pointed out incredibility, irony, sarcasm, and repugnance, and that the negative question may be somewhat emphatic.

Another view differently holds that it is a retrieval of God’s intention to punish Israel, as Linville (2000:424) writes, “YHWH may be speaking of withdrawal of his word of punishment, the impending of punishment or some other related concept . . . In the end, however, YHWH relents (9:11-15).” These differences are important to underline that the placing of the phrase at the beginning has a rhetorical impact on the listeners to be shocked. The overall effect is not only to produce surprise but also to elicit horror in the intended audience (cf Barton 1980:3) because there would be a universal act of divine punishment (see Raabe 2002:667). The phrase לֹא אֲשִׁיבָמוּ in the beginning of the section (v. 6a) implies that because of the gross sinfulness of God’s people, the punishment is definite and final.

3.5 RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES

The author generally uses certain techniques in order to persuade the audience. The whole oracle against Israel (6:6-16), particularly the indictment section (6:6-8) uses a certain rhetorical genre called *judicial rhetoric*, because all the accusations are wrapped in the courtroom language. It seems that through the prophet, YHWH as the prosecutor is bringing the case against the Israelites into a legal court and delivers a word of indictments upon them. As the prophet internalized the words he received, he then delivered them in a specific way as if YHWH himself spoke these exact words directly to the audience. Wolff (1977:100) argues that “demonstrations of guilt and disputations have merely an ancillary function [where] the irreducible force, which inspirationally overwhelmed Amos, enabled him to reshape received forms with the view toward

his directly threatened audience.” The accusations themselves were clearly directed to the past only, the sinful acts that the people already did, as is shown by the usage of some perfect form of verbs.

3.5.1 Alternating Syntactical Structure

The structure of the passage, however, does not simply denote the “already” but also the “repetition and duration” aspect of the actions. One can notice that there is an alternating syntactical structure in the description of the sin in this section, for example, it begins with the perfect infinitive (6b) then perfect participle (7a), until it shifts to the imperfects (7ab-8). Jeremias (1998:35) suggests that “The temporal sequence implied by the infinitive and participle is unspecific; by contrast, the imperfects shows that . . . no particular, exceptional, one-time deeds are being portrayed, but rather the typical, enduring behaviour of the inhabitants.” This technique seems to be effective in explaining the urgency and the seriousness of the case to be dealt with.

3.5.2 Numerical (N+1) Formula

Prior to the announcement of the contents of the oracle, namely the indictment and the punishment, the message delivered by Amos to the Israelites takes the reason-announcement form, which is a widely used genre in the prophetic tradition (cf Westermann 1967:142-176). This can be seen in the usage of the numerical (N+1) formula על-שלושה פשעי (“For the three transgression of . . .”) followed by ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו (“and four I will not turn it back”), which is considered as a teaching technique usually used in the wisdom literature (Job 5:19-26; 33:14-18; Pr 6:16-19; 30:15-31; Sir 23:16-31; 25:7-11; 26:5-6, 28; 50:25-26). The mentioned numbers, however, cannot be meant: “for three sins of (the specific nation) I will forgive; but for four (that is, the fourth) I shall not” as medieval Jewish commentators have understood it (cf Paul 1991:29), or simply as

an addition of three and four to get “a perfect number of seven” as some have suggested, but it preferably points out “the multiple offences” of the wrongs (Gowan 1996:354).

It is proper to understand that the numerical formula does not only have a literal sense but also a symbolical one. Following this numerical formula, Amos then listed the indictments and punishments written in a highly stylistic way. The list itself is carefully and effectively structured and arranged to form a sevenfold structuring, for example seven transgressions of Israel (2:6-8, 12): selling the needy, trampling the poor, turning away the afflicted, sexually exploiting a young woman, keeping garments taken in pledge, and drinking wine taken in payment of fines, and seven consequences of the announced punishments (2:14-16): the swift will not be able to flee, the strong will be weak, the mighty will not escape, the bowman will fall, the fast runner will not escape, the horseman will not escape, and the stout hearted will flee naked (cf Limburg 1987:217-222; see also Dorsey 1992:277).

3.5.3 Oracle against Nations (OAN)

An oracle against a nation, in general, which is composed of stipulations (in the treaty), penalties, and curses, is usually delivered by a prophet as part of the royal court procedure (see Hayes 1968:91). The OAN itself is a kind of literature genre used to be employed in prophetic writings. This means that the appearance of an OAN is found not only in Amos but also in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, such as in the later prophetic writings (Is 13-23; Jr 46-51; Ezk 25-32; Zph 2; Ob 1-6; Nah 2:14-3:4; Hab 2:6-17; 3:7-15) (see Raabe 1995:236). Compared to other prophetic oracles, Amos’ OAN is considered unique because this prophecy is the first oracle of this type and no other book among the Old Testament writing prophets begins with an OAN (cf Hasel 1991[b]:57).

Albeit many scholars have devoted themselves to the study of this OAN, none of them is in agreement with one another on some of the issues, particularly on the

unity and authenticity of Amos' OAN. Auld (1999:41-49) feels that the biggest question is on the unity of 1:3-2:16, and it is important to note this because one should not neglect a major break before 2:6ff. Compared to the previous ones, the last part of the oracles (the oracles against Israel) is different in length and details. Hayes (1995:153) indicates this by saying that "the Israel section (2:6-16) differs from all preceding oracles, possessing both a lengthy statement of offences (2:6b-12) and a lengthy pronouncement of coming disasters (2:13-16) as well as two attributive formulas ("says YHWH" or declares "YHWH" *ne'um* YHWH)."

Such formulas, in the study of forms of prophetic speech, are usually called the "messenger formula." Accordingly, their appearance at the beginning or end of a speech indicates that the prophet's message comes from God, because in the prophetic literature the formula highlights the divine origin of the prophet's words (cf Cook 2005:17). In this connection, one may notice that all the messenger oracles, including those of Israel, share the same form comprising of five common elements: the introductory messenger formula כה אמר יהוה ("Thus says YHWH"); certainty of deserved punishment; evidence (specifications of crimes); announcement of curse (punishment); and a concluding formula יהוה אמר or נאם יהוה (Stuart 1987:308-309). Smith (1989:34) reduces these elements to four, namely the source of the message; an indictment; the punishment; and a concluding divine confirmation formula. Smith's points are similar with the construction of an oracle offered by Mays (1969:23): the messenger formula, the indictment, the announcement of punishment and concluding messenger formula. The purpose of this speech, above all, is clear, that YHWH has spoken and the people must listen.

3.5.4 Word Repetition

Amos 2:6-8 (and 12) also contains word repetition when describing Israel's sinful condition. The paragraph begins with the construction על (in a causal sense "because"), infinitive construct and pronominal suffix (used as subject).

Accordingly, the purpose of this arrangement is “to state a specific accusation or introducing a list of charges against the nation” (Chisholm 1990:191), that is a common appearance in the first paragraph of the indictment of each oracle. It is then modified and elaborated to “על plus a specific wrong” pattern, in which such a pattern appears repeatedly throughout the whole paragraph. The use of this repeated pattern may raise curiosity because it seems that it is arranged deliberately for a certain purpose.

Although the intended purpose of the author in repeating such a pattern is usually to give “a literary boundary” or to set a complete rhetorical unit to the paragraph of indictment, as Smith (1989:75) suggests, “[this repetition] rhetorically held together” the paragraph, it is necessary to give attention to the work of Christensen (1975:69-71) who extensively studied this pattern and tentatively came to a conclusion that this repetition might refer mainly to “a single crime,” i.e. that the Israelites have perverted justice. It means that though the crimes are multiple in their nature, they actually point to one single thought. In other words, although the pattern is expanded with the repetition of the preposition על (“because of”) and whatever follows, it simply focuses on a single idea. The repetition of this pattern throughout the section is able to exert a rhetorical effect on the audience, to advance the clarity of the case.

3.5.5 War Oracle

To convince the Israelites about the consequences of their sins, the prophet also used the “war oracle” form in order to confirm that at present they themselves were also one of the enemies of YHWH. The expression על-שלשה פשעי ישראל ועל-ארבעה לא אשיבנו (“because of three and because of four I will not turn back my wrath”), as it occurs in the other OAN’s of Amos, seems to use the language of war or, at least, draws it from the context of warfare, as Hayes (1968:84) proposes that “the recognition of warfare as an original *Sitz im Leben* for Israelites oracles against foreign nations is supported by the use of oracles and curses

against the enemy during military undertaking in other Near Eastern cultures.” When it was used by YHWH, it was connected to “the Holy War tradition.” Christensen (1975:12-15) also believes that the language of war was used in pre-Amos materials such as oracular divinations (Jdg 1:1-2; 7:9-14; 20:23-28; 1 Sm 14:18-19; Hs 4:12), the summons to the battle (Nm 14:41-43; 21:34; 31:1-4; Jos 6:1-5; 8:1-8; Jdg 19-20), the summon to flight (Dt 28:25), and the prophecy of victory or defeat (Nm 24:15-24).

However, Barton (1980:9) reminds us that although it is valid to think that there was such a tradition, it “has played no part at all in shaping these oracles.” It means that the Holy War concept probably influenced Amos but it was not taken directly from earlier known war oracles. According to Smith (1989:30-31), “The terminology and rhetoric of the oracle may include political war propaganda in order to gain audience acceptance, but the climax is a clear break from expected tradition.” Therefore, the war oracle used in the Israel section serves as a rhetorical challenge from YHWH who stands against his very foe, the Israelites, because their transgressions have violated his covenant.

3.5.6 Paralleled Structure

The elements of accusation are also uniquely arranged not only in a stylistic way but also in a rhetorical way. The Israelites’ wrongdoings are listed in a parallel structure following the pattern of *על-שלשה . . . ועל-ארבעה*. The arrangement of the paralleled lists may vary from one to another. On the one hand, it may refer to four crimes, as Christensen (1975: 66, 71) argues. The parallels should then be seen more from a conceptual point of view rather than from the formal usage of the verbs that makes the number of crimes reach up to eight. In this case, the enumeration will be three plus one equals to four. It also has significance in Hebrew thought. Jeremias (1998:34) proposes that the transgressions of Israel enumerated in the texts (vv. 6-8)—which he divided into four—stand *pars in toto* for a thoroughly selfish society.

On the other hand, the list itself may refer to seven—derived from the structure of *parallelismus membrorum*—where the two numbers (“three” and “four”) represent the most natural components of the number seven and shows clear traces of psychological and rhetorical elements, and in Hebrew it expresses a “sense of totality” (Weiss 1967:419-422). In the same vein, the study of Limburg (1987:222) shows that the “three and four” is simply “three plus four,” or seven as actually listed in the Israel oracle, and it possibly means “a totality of transgressions.” Although the meaning of enumeration is different in each case (four or seven) depending on how the text is divided in that specific case, the enumeration itself can be understood as stipulation (see Hayes 1995:163). Both sides seem to be adequate in giving a rhetorical impact to the audience because whatever approach is being used, the enumerative pattern is intentionally used “to aid imagination” (Niehaus 1992:340) and arranged “to emphasize that Israel’s guilt surpassed that of its neighbours” (Chisholm 1990:197).

3.5.7 Chiasms

The indictment of Israel (Am 2:6-8) also contains a chiasmus. Accordingly, the chiasmic pattern in general is quite common in Amos’ work. De Waard and Smalley (1979:189-214) once inferred that the whole book of Amos could be organized as a chiasm. In contrast, Wendland (1988:1-51) argues against it because it was somewhat forced for the chiasmic pattern could not be applied to all of the book of Amos. In Amos, the chiasmic structure has its own purpose, as Ryken (1987:334) identifies that the chiasm in the book of Amos, as a specific genre, could be categorized as “the major work of informal satire in the Bible” and later he believed that it “utilizes a rhetoric of subversion” (see Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 1993:342). It means that the chiasmic structure was arranged, in the case of the prophet Amos, to attack the institutions and society of Israel.

In a more specific way, the chiasmic structure appears in Israel’s section, especially in verse 7, in the form of ABB’A’:

השאפים על־עפר־ארץ
A “they who crush against
the dust of the earth”

בראש דלים
(B) “the head of the poor”

ודרך עמוים
B’ “the way of the meek”

יטו
(A’) “they pervert”

Niehaus (1992:366) suggests that this structure of the bicolon gave an elegant articulation to a horrible fact, and by stating it in a chiasmic form, both social and sexual evils come under the spotlight of God’s judgement. By composing such a chiasmic structure, it seems that the author was intentionally highlighting Israel’s predicaments. Thus, whether the usage is found in the whole book of Amos or only in a section of it, the function of the chiasmic structure is always the same, that is, to clearly expose and firmly accuse the crimes of the Israelites. In other words, to use discourse analysis terminology, the structure is arranged in order to highlight the wrongdoings of Israel (cf Dorsey 1992:306).

In addition, seen from the aspect of the artistry of the writing, all the oracles (Am 1-2) take the form of a geographical chiasmus: Syria to the northeast (1:3-5), Philistia to the southwest (1:6-8), Tyre to the northwest (1:9-10), and Edom, Ammon, and Moab to the southeast (1:11-2:3), and finally to Judah in the south (2:4-5) and Israel at the centre (2:6-16) (cf Niehaus 1992:323; see also Stuart 1987:290-91). Among other nations, Israel becomes the focus of attention. In other words, this chiasm intends to highlight the nation of Israel as the centre of divine judgment where the accusation finally hits its main target.

Still focusing on a geographical arrangement, Steinmann (1992:683-689) similarly insists that all the oracles were arranged by the author in certain patterns, such as the geographical orientation (from northeast to southwest to northwest to southeast before moving to Judah and Israel) and the nature of the state (from city-state to nations and to special nations). As a result, it is clear that such arranged oracles are all pointed at Israel as the main or central focus of divine accusation. A long elaboration of Israel’s sinfulness (Am 2:6-8) probably supports the authorial intention in the use of this geographical chiasm.

In this connection, Stuart (1987:309) affirms that “the oracle against Israel is longer and more detailed than any of the others because it constitutes the climax to the entire group of oracles.” It means that, seen from the purpose of the writing, the oracle against Israel can be considered as a continuation or even a culmination of other oracles since all the nations are guilty in the sight of YHWH. Additionally, the listing of nations, ending up in Israel, most likely indicates that YHWH is the only ruler of the universe because it is believed that YHWH, the God of Israel, held universal claims and exercised universal imperium, and therefore, “he not only condemned his faithless people Israel but also executed wrath against all who display opposition or indifference to the divine will (Nah 1:2-8)” (Raabe 1995:243).

3.5.8 Judicial Rhetoric

According to its genre, this unit is a judicial rhetoric, suited to condemn specific actions as a judgement on the past (Kennedy 1999:4). The language of Israel’s indictment (Am 2:6-8) may be thought of as the language of the courtroom. The judge in a court of law judges past actions and is primarily concerned with justice. YHWH here stands as the supreme judge who accuses the nations, and particularly God’s own people, the Israelites, for their sinful acts done in the past. The prophet Amos, as a channel of divine utterance, speaks on behalf of the source of all utterances, that is YHWH himself who roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem, as Van der Wal (1983:109) considers that “a series of oracles against 8 nations, is framed by the combination of the verb *š’g* ‘to roar’ with the noun *’ryh* ‘lion’ in Am. 3.8 or *Yhwh* in Am. 1.2. Both terms *ryh* and *Yhwh* are used in synonymous parallelism.”

3.6 REVIEW OF ANALYSIS

Because of their sinfulness, treating others inhumanly, all nations mentioned in Amos’ OAN (1:3-2:16) cannot escape God’s judgment, including Judah and

Israel. The judgement will finally reach its climax in Israel, as Mays (1969:23) observes, “the style is that of reports for general announcement from a court which has already deliberated and reached its verdict.” Besides, the using of a sequential technique which leads up to the climax, the oracle against Israel, is the author’s technique to turn “the usual climax of positive words about Israel against the nation into a sweeping and extended misuse of the oracles to the nation form” (Dell 1995:55). This changing of customary form of accusation against the nations into its opposite is exactly what was done in the context of the judicial accusation against the abusive people.

Möller (2000:510) similarly asserts that prophetic utterances delivered in a courtroom are a form of speech in which the prophet addressed his audience using oracles, in such a way that it presents readers with the debate between the prophet Amos and his eighth-century BCE audience (see also Gitay 2000:173-187). In a more specific way, Barstad (1984:11-15) views this section (2:6-8) in the context of religious polemics where the pronouncement against Israel closes the climactic list of words of judgment towards other nations. As a speech, this form of utterance thus seeks to draw attention from the audience in a forensic sphere. The intention of Amos in delivering his oracle to Israel is definitely to convict his audience that they are guilty of violating “the law of YHWH” (Noble 1993:74), particularly on the issues of social justice.

The Israelites commit serious crimes, namely social oppressions, toward other fellow Israelites such as selling the innocent and poor for financial profits (v. 6), oppressing the weak (v. 7a), misusing the defenceless (v. 7b), profaning God’s name by mistreating a low-ranking (female) servant or slave described in the practice of sexual abuse (v. 7b), and exploiting the debtors and the misuse of their property for pleasure (v.8). Smith (1989:92-93) argues that “the oppressors in Israel do not take advantage of some foreign individuals in a time of war but turn their own brothers into slaves, their own servants into objects of abuse for their own pleasure, and their legal system into a shameful affair (2:6-8).”

As a result, divine reaction against Israel is clear, that is, they must be punished because they are responsible for what they have done. As God’s chosen people,

they had received the truth literally written in the Mosaic Law and surely had known all the consequences of violating it because it gave explicit regulations or prohibitions for each of these crimes (cf Finley 1990:17; see also Sailhamer 1974:438-39). The people, at this point, had once again broken the covenant of YHWH, and the God of the covenant once again had to punish them for it. Upon hearing the verdict, the audience thus cannot escape or look for an excuse. All that had been spoken in such oracle was solely in the context of convincing the audience and proving their wrongs.

Using a literary device called rhetorical entrapment, the prophet shockingly appeals to the audience in a both rational and ethical manner (see Partlow 2007:23-32). The audience most likely enjoyed hearing the accusations addressed to other neighbouring nations as if they all deserved to be punished. The unexpected and final outcome, however, was suddenly pointed at them, where they were actually the climax or the main target of it. Since the beginning of the OAN, the prophet argued against the nations based on the common sense of morality which all people are supposed to have through conscience, but he finally condemned the last two nations (Judah and Israel) on the basis of revelation. According to Smith (1989:92), “If God’s judgment was valid on the basis of acts contrary to conscience, how much greater is the responsibility for those people who have specific divine revelation on how to live,” and he added that “Accountability and severity of justice are both related to the degree of responsibility.” It is unreasonable to think that the powerful who are responsible to take care of and to defend the poor and the weak, did just the opposite.

In addition, the crimes listed in this section (Am 2:6-8) relate to social justice within Israel. It focuses mainly on the issue of moral ethics, particularly the lack of social compassion described in mistreating other people in daily practices and misusing the worship service for excessive celebrations (cf Dietrich 1992:321). The prophet warned the people that the oppressions of the weak was, as Ward (1991:203) says, “destructive of the fabric of Israelite society, and therefore jeopardizes the nation’s integrity and its survival,” and he further noted that “it is clear that Amos’ oracle proclaims one of the central ethical ideas of the prophetic

canon.” Thus, the prophet is trying to convince them that whatever the audience did to others is reasonably and morally wrong both in the sight of YHWH and of all human beings. It seems that the rhetorical strategy used by the prophet in this section may reach its purpose, to deeply appeal to the heart and mind of his audience.