

CHAPTER FOUR

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF AMOS 5:1-17

4.1 RHETORICAL UNIT

Demarcating the rhetorical unit of this section (Am 5:1-17) is quite difficult. The problem lies in the varied divisions that have been proposed by scholars so far. To name a few of them, the study of expressions and usages (*ausdrucksmerkmale und wendungen*) in the Hebrew text done by Koch (1976) who then divides the book into three units (Am 1-2, 3-4, and Am 5:1-9:6), considering Amos 9:7-15 as a kind of appendix to the previous sections; Auld (1999:56) who infers that such a division can basically be derived from the study of the introductory and concluding formulae; the study of *inclusio* by Van der Wal (1983:109-25) who divides it even into two parts (Am 1-6 and 7-9); the study of the sevenfold structures by Limburg (1987:218-19) who divides it into seven sequences, considering the major segments as intentional rather than coincidental (Am 1:1-2; 1:3-2:16; 3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-6:14; 7:1-8:3; 8:4-9:15); the study on the motif of covenant lawsuit, particularly in the form of a poem and pronouncement of judgment and the prophetic vision by Niehaus (1992:339-94) who divides the book into three sections (Am 1:3-2:16; 3:1-6:14; and 7:1-9:15); the study of the literary structures, particularly done on thematic considerations, which proposed that the book consists of a superscription plus three main parts (1:2-3; 3:9-6:14; 7:1-9:15) (cf Noble 1995:210); and, slightly different from the previous, the study of the literary structure of the book by Dorsey (1999:277-86) that shows that the unit can be divided into seven parts (Am 1-2; 3; 4; 5:1-17; 5:18-6:14; 7:1-8:3; 8:4-9:15). These views point out that it is not an easy task to decide on the independent units of the section.

In spite of this difficulty, I have to take a stand in order to determine an independent and complete rhetorical unit of the passage. The intention of the study is to follow the last two views mentioned above (those of Noble and Dorsey), where the divisions are based on the study of literary structure. The main reason for taking this step is that since the main approach of this study is a rhetorical one, the attention to literary device becomes its main preference. Such literary means is also used by the works of other scholars, such as De Waard, who believes that the whole book of Amos shares the same chiasmic climax as the smaller unit of 5:1-17 (1977:170-77; also Lust 1981:129-54; Tromp 1984:56-84).

Noble (1995:210-11) also puts the section of Amos 5:1-17 in part two (3:9-6:14) of his three divisions, calling it “a palisthropic judgment oracle.” It is arranged in a chiasmic form. He inserts the section into the larger unit of 5:1-17 where it functions as the central part of the oracle. The following pattern is then formed:

E (5:1-3)
 F (5:4-6)
 G (5:7, 10)
 H (5:8-9)
 G' (5:11-13)
 F' (5:14-15)
 E' (5:6-17)

It indicates that the section functions as an independent unit in the context of a larger unit. In the same vein, Dorsey (1999:281) sees the section as part of a larger independent unit (5:1-17), and, although arranged in the same chiasmic form, this larger unit may be divided in different ways, especially if it is compared to above, for example,

A (5:1-3)
 B (5:4-6a)
 C (5:6b-7)
 D (5:8-9)
 C' (5:10-13)
 B' (5:14-15)
 A' (5:16-17)

Therefore, the use of a chiasmic form seems to support the rhetorical intention of the author, treating this larger section (5:1-17) as an independent unit.

As mentioned above, the text of Amos 5:1-17 can be thought of as an independent unit. In a more schematic way, it can be seen in the following table (Smith 1989:155-156):

UNIT	SUB-UNIT	SUB-SUB-UNIT
A Lament Over Israel Amos 5:1-17	Lament over the death of Israel (5:1-3)	Call to hear the lament (5:1)
		Lament over dying (5:2)
		Extent of death (5:3)
	Warning about life and death (5:4-6)	Seek YHWH for life, not temples (5:4-5)
		Seek YHWH or he will destroy (5:6)
	No justice is the reason for death (5:7)	Changing justice causes lying on the ground (5:7)
	A reminder's of YHWH's power to bring judgment (5:8-9)	God's power to bring change (5:8)
		God's power to destroy (5:9)
	Oppression is the reason for judgment (5:10-13)	Rejecting legal justice (5:10)
		Riches of oppression will not be enjoyed (5:11)
		God knows the oppressive people (5:12)
		Results of oppression will end in disaster (5:13)
	Exhortation about life and justice (5:14-15)	Seek good, God may be with you (5:14)
		Do good, God may be gracious (5:15)
	Future laments when God visits Israel (5:16-17)	Everywhere, they will mourn (5:16)
God's presence will bring mourning (5:17)		

Möller (2003:74) asserts that this section has its boundaries, called “rhetorical markers,” in “the introductory phrase in v. 1 and the words . . . הוי המתארים in v. 18, which open the subsequent woe oracle.” An introductory formula (5:1) attentively begins the section, בית ישראל, שמעו את-הדבר הזה . . . (“Hear this word . . . O house of Israel”). It is, in addition, not merely an introduction but also in the literary form of a funerary lamentation. Wolff (1977:235-36) compares this “hear” pattern with the same lament in Lamentation 1:18 and assumed that, in this section, “the lament is opened with the call to attention [which] is especially understandable if indeed the initial function of such a call was to announce a recent injustice and nothingness.”

Stuart (1987:344) also asserts that “it contains the characteristic features of a funerary lament, albeit adapted to the judgment purpose.” The contents of such a lament (5:1-2) is a funeral lament comparing Israel to a young woman who has been mortally wounded and left to die (cf Chisholm 1990:89). Having presented the contents of the message, such as exhortation (vv. 4-6, 14-15), accusation (vv. 7, 10-13), and hymn or doxology (vv. 8-9), at the end of the unit (5:17b), the author uses the closing formula אָמַר יְהוָה (“says YHWH”) to close this funeral lament. Consider what Smith (1989:158) writes, “The introductory and concluding focus on lamentation and death set the tone for the whole unit,” such a structure (the introduction, the content and the closing) evidently makes the section a complete rhetorical unit.

Before proceeding to further discussion, it is important to note that the text of Amos 5:7-15 cannot be treated as an independent unit. It means that such a passage cannot stand on its own without its complementary part because a chiasmic structure requires concentric arrangement, in this case, 5:4-6 should be paired with 5:16-17. In agreement with Smith’s chiasmic structure (1989:158), it cannot be discussed apart from its surrounding chiasmic pair, in this case, Amos 5:4-6 (B: “Exhortation”) as the direct counterpart of 5:14-15 (B’: “Exhortation”). Similarly, Noble places 5:1-3 (F: Lamentations for Israel) in parallel with 5:16-17 (F’: Lamentations for Israel) as a chiasmic pair (1995:211). The work of Möller (2003:68) also arranges the same verses (vv. 4-6, B “Exhortation to seek YHWH”) in parallel with their chiasmic paired verses (vv. 14-15, B’ “Exhortation to seek good”). Moreover, a stronger argument is presented by Niehaus (1992:413) who reasons that Amos 5:1-17 is a complete unit, because it is known literarily as the “Covenant Lawsuit” written in lament form, as he divided this section in the following outline:

Covenant Lawsuit-Lament Form (5:1-17):

1. Call to Lament (5:4-6)
2. Direct Address to the Fallen (5:7-13)
3. Brief Exhortation (5:14-15)

For the purpose of this study, however, it is better to see 5:1-17 as a whole for rhetorical analysis. It means that aside from such a passage as 5:4-6, other texts (like 5:1-3 and 5:16-17) must be included in the analysis. This will exactly give a literary wholeness to the given texts. Dorsey (1992:305-30) emphasizes the necessity of working with such a complete rhetorical unit while simultaneously underscoring the use of heptads in conjunction with chiasms and envisioning a chiasm of seven sections for the prophetic text with its centre in 5:1-17.

In addition, Hayes (1988:153) once argues that this section is a rhetorical unit basing his opinion on the three basic internal characteristics of the unit: firstly, statements of calamity (vv.2-3, 5b, 11a-b; 13, 16-17), accusations against the people for wrongdoing (vv.7, 10, 11aa, 12), and admonitions exhorting particular types of action (vv. 4-5a, 6, 14, 15); secondly, statements of Amos (vv. 1-2, 6-9, 14-15) and YHWH (vv. 3-5, 10-13, 16-17); and thirdly, the hymnic participial matter (vv. 8-9) as a central position in the unit. In other words, the text of Amos 5:7-15 can only be used complementing it with 5:1-3, 4-6, and 16-17. Therefore, it is necessary to include such complementary texts into the analysis in order to maintain the completeness of the unit.

4.2 RHETORICAL SITUATION

A rhetorical unit expresses the real situation of the given discourse. The focus of the word of YHWH is still on the Israelites. Sharing the same opening formula (“Hear this word . . .”) with its parallels (Am 3:1, 4:1 and 8:4; see Mays 1969:84), the content of Amos 5:1 points to the main subject, Israel. The term itself can also point to “the house of Israel” (בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל)—although in 4:1, it is analogically compared with “cows of Bashan” (פָּרוֹת הַבַּשָּׁן)—that surely refers to “Israel” collectively, or, the people of Israel as a whole. The repetition of the term יִשְׂרָאֵל in its succeeding verses (5:2, 3, and implicitly in 6 [and 15], בֵּית יוֹסֵף [“House of Joseph”]) indicates that the central message is addressed to the Israelites.

It is interesting to note that the use of the term בית (“house”) in the unit has its own significance, especially if it is related to the word “Bethel.” It seems that there is a close relationship between the house of Israel and “the house of God” (as a literal meaning of Bethel [5:5]). Along with Gilgal and Beersheba, the Israelites made Bethel the centre of worship, where, in Amos’ time, it was thought of as the chief sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom. In other words, such places play an important role in the religious life of the people of God. According to Mays (1969:75; cf. Kraus 1966:146-65), “Clearly, one could not name two more hallowed and venerable places of the worship of the Lord.” There was a common belief among Amos’ contemporaries, that to seek YHWH and to seek the sanctuary were one and the same thing (cf Wolff 1983:20). The mentioning of such sites gives an impression that the context of the prophet’s speech is a collection of religious people in a religious atmosphere.

However, it is restrictive if one focuses only on the relationship between the house of Israel and the house of God, because the context is definitely religious. A close reading of the text shows that an adverb of negation על, especially a negative particle לא (“do not”)—used to denote both the contingent and absolute prohibition—implies that there is a serious problem the prophet is dealing with here. The phrase על-הדרשו (“Do not seek”) confirms this problem. Although Amos 4:4-5’s summons (באו “Come to”) seems to be in opposition to the call here in 5:5 (“not to come”), it actually expresses the shocking irony of the prophet’s instruction (Smith 1989:141) saying the same thing. The Israelites came to such places as Bethel and Gilgal to transgress. The pilgrimages to these sanctuaries had become a camouflage for selfishness and contempt of other people (see Wolff 1983:20). The problem thus occurred when such a religious act is not accompanied with the right attitude and conduct before YHWH, and it turns negative. It can also be seen when attention is given to the term “Bethel.” Soggin (1987:84) argued that “Bethel is often called *bēt-’āwen*, even if sometimes the texts would seem to distinguish the two terms as relating to different places (Jos 7:2; 18:12; 1 Sm 13:5; 14:23; Hs 4:15; 10:5)”.

Moreover, it is later proposed that “the house of God” would be turned to “the house of nothingness” (בית-און “Bethaven” [Hs 4:15], a disparaging nickname for Bethel. This can be clearly seen in the words of Amos as he rhetorically arranged a pun יהיה לאון (“and Bethel shall come to nought [‘aven]”) in 5:5 (King 1988:40, 97). It can be seen here that the relationship of the words (“houses”) indicates some interconnectivity. The main issue may be put in the following words: a problematic subject (“house of Israel”) in a problematic place (“house of God”) will lead to a problematic situation (“house of nought”). Thus, the choosing of the terms here is not accidental but creatively and literally engineered by the author in order to describe who the people of God really are.

The unit also contains a *qinah*, a song or lament, drawn from the word קינה which literally means “elegy” or “dirge” (BDB:884) in 5:1. It is mainly a song or lament at a funeral. According to De Waard and Smalley (1979:96), “The funeral song or ‘mourning song’ was the chief funeral ceremony in Israel. It was a poem of grief on the death of kinsman, friend or leader,” and they added that “In Amos this kind of song for an individual is changed into one for the people of Israel as a whole, so it becomes a political mourning song.” This song is intentionally set for what is to follow, the wrongdoings of the Israelites (vv. 7, 10-13) and the calamities they shall experience (vv. 5-6) in the future. Since the focus is on the fall of Israel, the announcement made in the unit therefore describes how the Israelites have sinned against YHWH, by turning the sanctuary into death (5:4-6), practicing injustice (5:7), allowing injustice at the gate (5:10-13).

This announcement also proclaims the inevitable judgement for the people. It means that if they do not repent from such sinful practices, divine punishment will consequently fall upon them, and there will be great mourning in the streets coming from their mouths (5:16-17). In this regard, it is common in the prophetic and liturgical utterance that a lamentation is accompanied by a woe (Jr 22:18; cf. Am 5:1-2 and 5:7-13), where, in fact, a lament is always a cry of “alas” (הוי). In Amos, the lament appears in the context of prophetic oracles of disaster and figuratively personifying the northern kingdom as “maiden Israel” (Fleischer 2004:19-21). Further, Andersen and Freedman (1989:44) argue, “In this oracle

the outcome is portrayed as having already occurred, and the supposition is that there is no change in the situation and it will be done.” While announcing both Israel’s sins and divine punishment, there is a sense of urgency here, especially when an imperative is used at the beginning of the sentence *דַּרְשׁוּנִי וְהוִי* (“Seek me that you may live” [5:4]).

While singing this *קִינָה*, the prophet may wear rented garments and put ashes upon his head. According to Fosbroke and Lovett (1956:810), “For the prophet himself this was no mere dramatizing of an idea. His heart was torn with the sense of tragic, untimely end of his people.” Such a lament must take effect on the audience because it creates a strong feeling of sorrow on the side of its hearer. The people of Israel who were gathering in the sanctuary must have been greatly surprised because the prophet used familiar, and yet shocking language. Finley (1990:224) argues that “The entire nation (‘house of Israel’) must listen to a lament to be recited at its own funeral. The effect must have been quite shocking.”

Looking at the background of the term *qinah*, one may get a clear description of what the effect such a genre had, because a lament is used here to mourn the death of a young, unmarried person, who had no children to carry on his or her name, and it was an occasion for the most intense feelings of grief in the ancient Israel (Gowan 1998:26). In addition, Fleischer (2004:20) explains that “the purpose of *qinah* was to stimulate tears of those affected by someone’s death (2 Sm 1:24; 3:34; Jr 9:17). As a rule the *qinah* was taken up alongside the bier of the departed in the family home or at the tomb.” It means that the prophet intentionally used such a lament in order to let the audience realize what to expect. The death penalty awaits them, if they do not repent from their sinful acts. Therefore, the lament itself is a rhetorical strategy used by the speaker to get the attention of the audience, as Gowan (1998:26) says, “It must have been a highly offensive message, but is one of the various ways Amos tried to get the attention of a people who, from what we know, would have no reason to think he could be speaking the truth.”

4.3 RHETORICAL INVENTION

It is necessary to give attention to the argumentative speech of the prophet in order to find the way he convinced his audience. Quoting Aristotle, Gitay (1980:297) proposes that one can do this by appealing to reason, as a primary factor recognized by all rhetoricians. Applying it to the unit analyzed (5:1-17), it can be seen that Amos supports his message by first establishing authority. The imperative opening שמעו את־הדבר (“Hear this word”) has no effect if it is spoken by a man, but if it comes from YHWH his speech will have its own authority. It means that Amos’ message has to be backed up with divine authority. For this reason, he then continued with the messenger formula כי כה אמר יהוה אדני (“For thus says the Lord YHWH” [5:4]).

Moreover, Amos seems to know that to deliver bad news requires divine authority. Amos’ news seems to be out of place in the ears of the people because, instead of hearing good news, the message describes a disaster the people will experience. As a result, they do not easily receive such a message, especially if the prophet does not explain the source of his speech. Soggin (1987:83) argues that, “In the present context, where someone may have wanted to contradict the prophet, pointing out the generally favourable situation, the prophet explains the source of his information.” From the very beginning the prophet has to be clear that the message delivered comes from YHWH and not from himself.

Amos also uses the cause-effect approach to appeal to the reason of his hearers. Because of religious misconduct toward God they will encounter a terrible thing. By focusing themselves only on the ritual sites, they intended themselves to find life outside YHWH. The use of imperatives הדרשו (from דרש “to seek”) and תבאו (from בא “to come in”) in the context of verse 4 connotes that the Israelites has indeed religiously searched for God, but in the wrong places. Going to and worshiping in these shrines are surely in vain for they end up being destroyed by him. It is also useless because these places will not be protected because God has forsaken them to the enemy, and this action will only bring the worshiper into the danger of being swept away into exile (see Smith 1989:163-4).

As a result, it is clear that YHWH will punish them by the death that will follow. There are some indications that historically the setting of this speech took place during the time of Pekah, the son of Amaliah. Pekah made a regional coalition with the West (pro-Syrian and anti-Assyrian), and, as a result, the Assyrians later on suppressed them by destroying Gilgal, Bethel (Am 3:12; 9:1), and Samaria (Am 4:1-3; 6:8-10), as the prophet announced (cf Hayes 1988:158-9). Through such an announcement, the Israelites were confronted with a horrific scene (5:2), where the dead body of בתולה ישראל (“the virgin of Israel) figuratively represented them to have been left in the open field. In the OT prophetic tradition, this language is used by both Isaiah (2 Ki 19:21; Is 23:12) and Jeremiah (Jr 18:13; 31:4, 21) and it refers mostly to Jerusalem, the religious centre of the southern kingdom of Judah. In Amos’ speech, however, it pointed to Bethel (and other Israelite shrines), its counterpart in the north. In Amos 5:2, the prophet thus uses the perfects נפלה (“has fallen”) and נטשה (“has forsaken”) as if the audience already experienced the result of their sins (cf Hammershaimb 1970:76).

In addition, the people of Israel practice injustice to their fellow countrymen. It is necessary to remember that justice and righteousness is not only related to YHWH but also to other human beings. Failing to treat others with the right attitude and in a correct manner is seen as wickedness in the eyes of YHWH. The prophet intends to prove the wrongdoings of the people by using a couplet משפט (“justice”) and צדקה (“righteousness”) that are figuratively dishonoured (5:7). Stuart (1987:347) insists that “The Israelites have thrown justice (משפט) upward and righteousness (צדקה) downward: the chiasmic 9:9 couplet artistically calumniates the general rejection of practices represent to summarize what the covenant demands (cf. 5:24; 6:12).” The prophet does not stop with such figurative language, later he even elaborated on it in a concrete and detailed list in the following verses (vv. 10-12): שנה (“to hate”) one who rebukes, תעב (“to abhor”) the one who speaks uprightly, בשם (“to trade down”) on the poor, לקח (“to take”) grain taxes from him, צרר (“to afflict”) the just, לקח (“to take”) bribes, and נטה (“to divert”) the poor from justice.

It is clear here that to mistreat another fellow human being is to break off from the divine covenant because such an action does not fulfill what the covenant requires. As a result, YHWH, the covenant God of Israel, will bring disaster to his covenantal people, especially because of the futility of their labours. Jeremias (1998:93) concludes that “The prophet threatens them with an imprecatory form common in the ancient Orient (the so-called curse of futility), one that associates a meaningful activity with a meaningless outcome; such people are heading to destruction.”

The prophet also emphasizes seeking YHWH as the proper response to the threatening word of YHWH. After hearing of all the sins and the consequences, supposedly the audience will realize that their sin will cause them to experience destruction. An imperative to hear (שמעו) what God says (5:1) is not the end of the speech, because the audience must do what God commands them, that is to seek (דרשוני) him (5:4b). It is said that the word “to seek” does not mean “inquire about” or “search for” something or someone lost or inaccessible, but, when YHWH is the object “seek” frequently means “turn to YHWH” (for help in a specific situation), and then by extension “hold to YHWH” (as a way of life) (cf Mays 1969:87).

This call is repeated later in the next passage (5:6 and 14, when the subject changes to “good” [טוב]). It is an important appeal that will turn all curses to blessing. To seek YHWH here means to gain life. In contrast, to seek the cultic shrines means to lose life. The motivation behind this appeal is salvation. Hayes (1988:157) maintains that “the motivation offered for seeking YHWH was survival,” and he adds, “The motivation for not seeking cultic centres was a warning about what would overtake these places.” However, the bottom line is that the people had already rejected God. The prophet argues that, in reality, the practices of worship done by the people deny that they are truly seeking God. Accordingly, the quotation of the cultic promise “Seek me and live” is more than ironic in a chapter whose main theme is death and, therefore, “it has an almost wistful tone, for Amos knows he is addressing a dying people who have forgotten how to seek the Lord” (Gowan 1999:387).

All “cause-and-effect” patterns discussed basically point to one focus, שמו יהוה (“The LORD is his name”). The prophet Amos seeks to present a clear picture of YHWH, the very person whom the people reject. It is important to note that the form of this phrase is similar to that of 4:13 and 9:5-6, while each is slightly different from the others. In these verses, the expression is related to the redemptive activity of YHWH. In 5:8b, however, it seems that the prophet led the audience to see both sides of YHWH: he has the power to bring change (5:8a) as well as the power to judge (5:9). Andersen and Freedman (1989:494) argue that the people here are encountering the divine who charges, judges, and threatens nations with destruction and clearly must be in control of the visible order things.

The prophet presents a more balanced view of יהוה in order to propose that he is not only God who can do everything on their behalf but can punish as well. In other words, both blessing and curse are always caused by YHWH. Stuart (1987:348) believes that this “hymn fragment” serves the purpose of an ironic lament: it reinforces the point that YHWH can come in judgment, not just in aid of their needs, and can stand against his people and not only in their favour. For rhetorical purposes, the prophet proves that there is a relationship of cause and effect, that is, the coming of the destructions is on its way and it surely is caused by YHWH who is all powerful to do such a thing.

4.4 RHETORICAL DISPOSITION

Amos structures the unit (Am 5:1-17) in a way that the arrangement will create a rhetorical impact to his audience. It is, therefore, carefully arranged in a chiasm structure, as can be seen below:

[Verse Line]	Verse	Strophe	Stanza
שמעו שת־הדבר הזה	a. A call to lament	A. Introduction	A Funeral Song for the Nation
אשר שנכי נשא עליכם קינה בית ישראל	b. A lament over the dying Israel		
נפלה לא־תוסחף קום בתולת ישראל			
נטשה על־אדמתה			
איך מקמה			



כי כה אמר אדני יהוה	c. The extent of the death in Israel	B. Lamentation (A)	A Funeral Song for the Nation
העיר היצאת אלף			
תשאיר מאה			
והיוצאת מאה תשאיר			
עשרה לבית ישראל	d. Seek YHWH and live, not the holy places	C. Exhortation (B)	
כי כה אמר יהוה לבית ישראל			
דרשוני וחיו			
ואל־תדרשו בית־אל	d.1. Bethel		
והגלגל לא תבאו	d.2. Gilgal		
ובאר שבע לא תעברו	d.3. Beersheba		
כי הגלגל גלה יגלה	e. YHWH will destroy these places		
ובית־אל יהיה לאון	f. Seek YHWH and all of its consequences		
דרשו את־יהוה			
וחיו פן־יצלח כאש בית יוסף			
ואכלה ואין־מכבה לבית־אל	g. Israel's injustice and oppression		D. Accusation (C)
ההפכים ללענה			
משפט וצדקה לארץ הניחו	h. YHWH's power to bring change in the universe	E. Hymn (D)	
עשה כימה וכסיל			
והפך לבקר צלמות			
ויום לילה החשיך			
הקורא למן־הים			
וישפכם על־פני הארץ	i. YHWH's name	F. YHWH (E)	
יהוה שמו	j. YHWH's power to destroy fortress	G. Hymn (D')	
המבליג שד על־עז			
ושדעל־מבצר יבוא	k. Rejection of legal justice	H. Accusation (C')	
שנאו בשער מוכים			
ודבר תמים יתעבו	l. Trampling and Robbing the poor		
לכן יען בושסכם על־דל			
ומשאת־בר תקחו ממנו	m. Uselessness of the riches gained from oppression		
בתי גזית בניתם			
ולא־תשבו בם			
כרמי־חמד נטעתם			
ולא תשתו את־ייןם	n. YHWH knows the sinful acts of oppression, bribery and deprivation		
כי ידעתי רבים פשעיכם			
ועצמים חטאציכם			
צררי צדיק לקחי כפר	o. Comment of a follower of wisdom		
ואביונים בשער הטו			
לכן המשכיל בעת ההיא ידם	p. Seek good, not evil, so that you may live	I. Exhortation (B')	
כי עת רעה היא			
דרשו־טוב ואל־רע	q. Hate evil, love good, so that you may receive mercy		
למען תחיו			
ויהי־כן יהוה אלהי־צבאות אתכם			
כאשר אמרתם			
שנאו־רע ואהבו טוב			
והציגו בשער משפט			
אולי יחנן יהוה אלהי־צבאות שארית			

יוסף			A Funeral Song for the Nation
לכן כה־אמר יהוה אלהי צבאות אדני	r. There will be mournings in all over Israel	J. Lamentation (A')	
בכל־רחבות מספד			
ובכל־חוצות יאמרו			
הו־יהו			
וקראו אכר אל־אבל			
ומספד אל־יודעי נהי	s. YHWH's passing will result in mourning		
ובכל־כרמים מספד			
כי־אעבר בקרנך			
אמר יהוה	t. YHWH's words	K. Closing	

Above organization clearly shows a concentric pattern as indicated by most scholars (cf De Waard 1977:170-77; also Lust 1981:129-54; Tromp 1984:56-84; Wilcke 1986:89-96; Smith 1989:158; De Waard & Smalley 1989:189-92; Noble 1995:210-11; Dorsey 1999:281).

Although this passage seems to be concentric in its structure, some have argued against it. Smith (1989:158) admits that this structural possibility contains “many problems in understanding how these parts fit together and how the meaning is developed within the chiasmic structure.” One of the main reasons in objecting to this argument is that the C-C' part of this section—between 5:7 and 5:10-13—is not arranged in balance, particularly the number of the lines. The C' part has more lines than the C part. It is argued that both should be put together as one unit, because 5:8-9 is seen as an interruption, during the editorial development (Mays 1969:90), and rejected as later addition (cf Rudolph 1971:194-198). Another objection is that there is no logical consistency of the content of the exhortations, for example, between 5:4-6 and 5:14-15. The exhortation in the latter is cultically oriented, while the previous is more directly related to moral issues of behaviour (cf. Smith 1989:159).

Based on this disproportion in the chiasmic structure, unfortunately, the idea exists that such part does not originate from the prophet Amos himself. The artistic style of the final texts, however, does not guarantee the authorship of Amos. Soggin (1989:81; see also Jeremias 1998:220-21) maintains that “While the symmetry and coherence of structures of this kind is always impressive, there is no need for them to go back to the author himself or even to the earliest phase of the redaction.” In a moderate way, Coote (1981:80) also argues against it,

especially against De Waard’s proposal, “When he discovered the chiasmic pattern in 5:4-15, he did not know *why* it was used here, since he did not relate it to the design of the entire book.”

Regardless of such a “minor” problem, this research, however, takes up a position which is in agreement with the chiasmic pattern of the unit and develops its argument based on it. The proposed concentric pattern will take the form as follows:

- A Lamentation (5:1-3)
 - B Exhortation (5:4-6)
 - C Accusation (5:7)
 - D Climax: YHWH (5:8-9)
 - C’ Accusation (5:10-13)
 - B’ Exhortation (5:14-15)
 - A’ Lamentation (5:16-17)

It is important to note here that although such a concentric pattern has many criticisms, my research is to maintain the main concern of rhetorical approach, that is to find the rhetorical purpose of the author’s utterance. Even if there is no logical consistency, for instance: between 5:4-6 and 5:14-15, the purpose of the exhortation is clear, to testify that YHWH remains the life of his people even in a situation in which they deserve the sentence of death (cf Mays 1969:90). In the same vein, Smith (1989:159) proposes that regardless how “these pieces all fit in a somewhat complicated manner, but the rhetorical building blocks, the repetition of the themes and structural balances are too frequent to be accidental.”

4.4.1 A-A' (Amos 5:1-3; 5:16-17)

4.4.1.1 Amos 5:1-3

The introductory formula *שמעו שת־הַדְּבַר הַזֶּה* (“Hear the word” [5:1]) begins the unit rhetorically as an *exordium*. Dorsey infers that this introduction “signals the audience the beginning of the next major unit” (1992:312). It is thought that *יהוה* שמו *אלהי־צבאות* (“The LORD, the God of hosts, is his name”), considered as a

doxology, closes its previous literary unit (Am 4:4-13). Most scholars consequently see this formula as an introduction to a new major literary unit (Wolff 1977:231; also Limburg 1987:217-8; Andersen & Freedman 1989:461ff; Paul 1991:158ff). Although it is not clear who the speaker is, such a formula also serves as an announcement of prophetic speech.

According to Stuart (1987:345), regardless who the speaker is (either Amos or YHWH or both), “it is remembered that the prophet is a spokesperson for God, not an author in the typical sense.” The important thing about this opening is that the message has the authority of YHWH as its source. Soggin (1987:83) insists that “this is not a particular political acumen or a particular gift of looking into future but a message received from YHWH.” The text is clear enough in expressing that it is an authoritative appeal spoken to the hearers in order that they may give heed to the speech. As seen in Amos 3:1 and 4:1, the introductory address which contains an imperative שמעו (“listen!”), is simply the summons to listen and can be categorized as “an attention-getting device” (Stuart 1987:345).

The following content of the message surprisingly does not deal with any positive and encouraging words of God as the audience may expect, but it is rather a plea for mourning. Amos seems to be in a position to set the statement of the case (*narratio*), especially when he uses the phrase אשר אנכי נשא עליכם קינה (“which I take up against you, a lamentation”) in the setting of a lamentation sung for Israel’s own funeral. Niehaus (1992:409) emphasized that this lament is not *over* the people of Israel, but *against* them, in the manner of prophetic condemnation of the Lord’s enemies. He thus calls the people to mourn over divine judgment that is going to fall upon them shortly. Although the disaster will not come immediately, the lament indicates that it surely will occur and come to happen. Finley (1990:223) once suggests, “The announcement of a funeral dirge for Israel forcefully proclaims the inevitability of judgment for the people.”

It is important to note that while delivering his message, the prophet employs a “prophetic past,” for instance a past complete action נפלה (“fallen,” *Qal* perfect of נפל “to fall”), to emphasize that such a disastrous condition is not a prediction but

a present state of collapse. Accordingly, as De Waard and Smalley (1979:96) affirm, “This means that what will happen to the hearers in the future is presented as an already accomplished fact and the effect of Amos’ hearers was something like someone reading in the newspaper that he is dead.” Therefore, the purpose of the prophet is to convince the nation that the death is at their doorstep, and this obituary will hopefully awaken the nation to its true status: it is dead (see Smith 1989:161).

Through a funeral dirge (the whole A), to some extent, Amos describes the spiritual condition of the people. The phrase in the first line (5:2) נפלה לא־תוֹסֵף (“Fallen, no more to rise, the virgin of Israel”) points out the finality of the fate the people will experience shortly. The term נפל is technically used in the context of war. It indicates the body of one who has fallen in the battle (cf Soggin 1987:83). It is interesting that the prophet uses the imagery of בתולת (“the virgin”) as metaphor for the people of Israel. The intention of the use of this image is to give “a metaphor which heightens the sense of tragedy. The personification of the nation as a young virgin in the prime of life, unconquered and unfulfilled in her role as wife or mother, indicates the waste of her life” (Smith 1989:162).

Some relate it to the experience of Jephthah’s daughter when she bewails her virginity (Jdg 11:37) because she is surely going to die after accepting the foolish vow of her father to sacrifice the first living being to greet him (cf Soggin 1987:82; see also Gowan 1996:385). The next phrase נטשה על־אדמתה אין מקמה (“she lies forsaken on her land, no one lifts her up”) assures that the death is final and total. It connotes that the condition of the virgin is hopeless. The metaphor is further explained in a more concrete way in the next parallelism (5:3) העיר היצאת אלף תשאיר מאה/והיוצאת מאה תשאיר עשרה לבית ישראל (“the city [A] that goes [B] out a thousand [C] shall have a hundred [D] left/and that which goes [B’] out by a hundred [C’] shall have ten [D’] left to the house of Israel [A’]”).

The scene of this poem seems to be in connection with the context of the word נפלה (“fallen”) in the previous verse, one who falls in the battle. It is a description

of a coming military disaster. Finley (1990:225) believes that it is truly a historical event because, “about forty years later, the nation was overwhelmed by the Assyrian might. Only an insignificant portion of the people survived; the national existence of Israel came to an end.” The audience may not be able to imagine how the strong army of Jeroboam II will be defeated, and, the case is clear and yet surprisingly that such a disaster is brought about by YHWH himself as it is definitely written *כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה* (“For thus says the Lord YHWH”). The prophet insists that YHWH is the God of the covenant who has spoken and surely will fulfil his word.

4.4.1.2 Amos 5:16-17

The corresponding concentric part of A is Amos 5:16-17a (A'). A close reading of the texts shows that this passage is related to the main issue of 5:2-3 (A): the tones and sounds of lamentation (cf Paul 1991:178). According to Coote (1981:81) both sections have pairs of parallel lines corroborating the chiasm where the preposition “therefore” (*לכן*) in 5:16 refers to 5:1-3, rather than to 5:14-15. The use of similar repeated words, like *מספד* (“wailing”), *אל-אבל* (“to mourning”) and *נהי* (“mourning song”) in A' most likely supports the connectivity between them, because it directly describes the figurative speech of the prophet used in A. The prophet uses the pairs of parallel lines in A-A' to picture the punishment of the oppressors when the land will be filled with future funerals.

It can be concluded that “the description of rites for the dead to be held in the future was one of the prophetic devices for painting the terrible reality of coming judgment” (Mays 1969:98). As a consequence, there will be cries of despairing grief echoed by the repeated interjections of *הו-הו* (“Alas! Alas!” [5:17]). Hammershaimb (1970:86) proposes that this is an imitation of the cry of the mourners derived from the most frequent of the cry lament *הוי* (see Jr 22:18). Such grief will take place widely in the land, from Israel’s *בכל-רחבות* (“all the broad open places” or “all plazas”) to *ובכל-הוצות* (“all streets”), and be lifted up by the people, from the *אכר* (“the ploughman”) to the *נהי* (“skilful mourner”). It

describes the total involvement of the entire community in both the tragic devastation of the land and decimation of the populace on the one hand, and the pervasive lamentation or mourning to follow, on the other hand (see Andersen & Freedman 1989:514). All of these expressions thus clearly anticipate a negative outcome that is going to happen.

Amos then gives a reason why these people have to lament: כִּי־אֵעֶבֶר בְּקִרְבְּךָ (“for I will pass through your midst”) at the end of the oracle (5:17). There are several possible references to this phrase. It may, first, point out the absence of the presence of YHWH among the people. The absence of YHWH means the lost of the source of life and it results in the lost of life itself. It is thought that such an action is a real catastrophe for “religious” people like the Israelites. Wolff (1977:249) argues that “it is like an echo of the third and fourth visions (7:8; 8:2); YHWH no longer ‘passes by’ (עֵבֶר לְ), sparing his people (cf. 9:4) . . . His presence alone, his personal intervention, will effect Israel’s death.” Secondly, it may indicate the departing event of the exodus when YHWH spared the lives of Israelites’ firstborns by “passing through” Egypt (Ex 11:4; 12:12, 23). Feinberg (1976:105) suggests that this verse (5:17) was closely related to the action of YHWH in Egypt during the Israelite captivity.

Smith (1989:173) also explains, “This time God will not pass over Israel and deliver them, he will destroy them as he devastated the Egyptians. They will grieve like the Egyptians when God’s hand of death falls upon them.” Based on his study of the ancient ritual background, Huan (1986:337-48) argues against such a view because the statement of the prophet here seems to be in connection with a covenant ritual in which YHWH “passes through” the pieces of a sacrifice (as in Gn 15). These options indicate that עֵבֶר has a wide variety of nuances, from “abandon” to “slice” (Stuart 1987:350). Since no single meaning of the phrase can be indicated, it is important to think that, rhetorically, the prophet intends to effectively communicate YHWH’s final decree when using such an alarming linguistic expression. Paul (1991:19) states, “Amos, however, once more leaves the exact nature of the imminent and ominous catastrophic confrontation (בְּקִרְבְּךָ,

“in your midst”) between the Deity and Israel unstated and unspecified in order to heighten its threatening and terrifying effect.”

4.4.2 B-B' (Amos 5:4-6; 5:14-15)

4.4.2.1 Amos 5:4-6

The prophet continues to deliver the body of the speech (*probatio*) represented in the paired sections B-B' (5:4-6; 14-15). Although the B section (5:4-6) shares the same formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* (“for thus says the LORD”) with the previous verse (5:3), it has a quite different content here. While the focus of Amos 5:3 is on the disaster of the house of Israel, the focus of the B section is on the imperative to “seek YHWH and live.” The phrase *דַּרְשׁוּנִי וְחִי* (“Seek me and live”) has its significant meaning in the context of Israelite law. Mays (1969:87) argued that “by seeking YHWH in these sites they broke the prohibitions of pilgrimages to the shrines.” Andersen and Freedman (1989:481) explain that the main reason for not visiting these places, “All of these shrines and their cults are equally corrupt and all are under the ban of God through his prophet . . .; they are places of corruption, and their festivals are occasions of sin.”

Moreover, the word *דַּרַשׁ* is a *terminus technicus* which pertains to frequenting a sanctuary or to inquiring the will of God through oracles delivered by the men of God. Amos, on one hand, uses it to totally reject these commonly held ideas, and on the other hand, to intensely demand the people to seek the Lord directly and not at the pilgrim sites (cf Paul 1991:162). It means that the most important thing for the people now is to turn their desires Godward in a far deeper sense, a longing for God himself, rather than for something he can give, such as divine words or blessings. It is an irony emphasized by the prophet that the rites in cultic places are not identical to seeking the Lord. Upon hearing this announcement, the people must have been very astonished.

The B section is also structured with geographical information. Amos mentions places such as Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba to catch the attention of the audience

because these sites are known as religious centres and even the most frequented sanctuaries. The first on the list is בית־אֵל (Bethel). Amos considers it as a main centre of worship in northern Israel (3:14; 4:4), as King (1988:40) writes, “Bethel was the chief sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom; it was also a royal sanctuary, where Amaziah was the official priest.” After preventing the prophet to speak (7:10) and expelling him, the priest claimed, “It [Bethel] is king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom” (7:13).

The second site is גִּלְגַּל (Gilgal). One tradition holds that this place is also one of the important holy shrines inherited from the conquest period (Jos 4:19-24). Mays (1969:88) argues that this place “had a significant place in the traditions of the conquest and enjoyed popularity as a holy site from the times of tribal league.” It is also the site where Saul was anointed as king of Israel (1 Sm 11). Later, by the eighth century, it was apparently a substitute for Dan as a Northern pilgrimage shrine (cf Stuart 1989:337).

The last site mentioned is בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע (Beersheba). It is one of the most prominent places of worship in the history of Israel, because it was “a venerable shrine, tracing its history as a sacred site to patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (King 1988:48) and mentioned again in a cultic context in Amos 8:14. Although it is located in southern Judah, the people of Israel in the north still considered it as a sanctuary that must be visited. In this regard, Paul (1990:163) emphasizes that even as late as the middle of the eighth century worshippers from northern Israel continued to cross the border (עַתְעֲבָרוּ) into Judah in order to frequent this ancient cultic site. However, although highly seen as one of the important sanctuaries, it is subjected to conquest and destruction because YHWH definitely is directing his wrath against it (5:6) as stated by the phrase פֶּן־יִצְלַח . . . וְאָכְלָה (“Lest he burst out like fire . . . and consumes it”). Amos here seems to be familiar with using terms of fire in order to speak of divine judgment as seen in “the oracles against nations”(1:3-2:5).

4.4.2.2 Amos 5:14-15

The prophet uses different wording *דרשו־טוב ואל־רע* (“Seek good and not evil”) in the B’ section (5:14-15) in order to repeat the same message of the B section (5:4-6), a call to repentance (see Chisholm 1990:91). It means that both B and B’ stress the same issue, that is, to quest for YHWH and for life. Dahood (1968:296) assumes that the word *טוב* stands not for the abstraction of “goodness,” but for the embodiment of goodness (the Good One), while Andersen and Freedman (1989:507) argue that such a word was used for YHWH as a counter-deity in the Canaanite pantheon. Therefore, the word “the good” should be understood as indicating YHWH himself, “the Good or the Good [one].” On the other hand, albeit the word *טוב* (“the good”) may indicate an identification of YHWH and the good, it refers to the attitude to concur with the will of God. Soggin (1987:87) suggests that the word indicates the “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.”

In my opinion, both religious (YHWH) and moral (“the good”) senses are valid as both deal with the main issue, *משפט* (“justice”) that must prevail in the gate. To seek YHWH (and “the good”) means to find life and to live with God’s demand for social justice. In the context of the unit being analyzed, it should always be understood that the right relationship with YHWH implies the right relationship with other fellow citizens (5:7, 12). Such an antithetical imperative pair *טוב/רע*, “seek good and not evil” (5:14) and “hate evil and love good” (5:15), thus, seems to be a precondition for the *שארית יוסף* (“remnant of Joseph”), faithful Israelites who will survive divine judgment in Amos’ imagination (cf Hasel 1991[b]:196-205; see also Finley 1990:241), and experience the presence of *יהוה אלהי־צבאות* (“the LORD God of hosts”) and his mercy.

4.4.3 C-C' (Amos 5:7; 5:10-13)

4.4.3.1 Amos 5:7

In this section (5:7; 10-13), Amos gives an intense exhortation (*exhortatio*) to the people of Israel. As mentioned before, the lines in C (5:7) are not in balance with those in C' (5:10-13) and it causes a problem, whether these verses can be neatly paired in this chiasmic structure or not. Without ignoring such a difficulty, that is how to explain this imbalance, this study will remain focused on a more important issue: the main thought as it is structured in these verses, particularly if attention is given to the continuation of the “Woe” concept (5:7) in the use of verbs in 5:10-12 (cf Andersen & Freedman 1989:483). In 5:7, Amos speaks about two pairs of vital terms, a *parallelismus membrorum*: משפט (“justice”) and צדקה (“righteousness”) repeated several times in the succeeding verses (5:24; 6:12, with 5:15 as a stepping stone). Supposedly both justice and righteousness are very essential in the life of the people of God.

Yet, reality shows exactly the opposite: the absence of such qualities. Instead of holding fast to them, the Israelites turn justice to wormwood and lay righteousness to rest in the earth. Since לענה (“wormwood”) is a Palestinian plant of exceedingly bitter taste (Am 6:12b), it is used figuratively here to denote bitter things or perverted justice (BDB:542). In parallel, it figuratively signifies cheating people out of their rights (see De Waard & Smalley 1979:104). There is an abandonment of righteousness among the people that makes civil justice itself helpless. It can be concluded that the people of God fail to move toward the goal because they do not stand for guiding standards for behaviour, namely, “justice and righteousness.”

4.4.3.2 Amos 5:10-13

In the C' section (5:10-13), Amos elaborates on this concept of perverting justice and abandoning righteousness. Before discussing its elaboration, we have to address the textual issue of the section first. There is an objection to the

authenticity of the line, especially one that breaks the flow of a passage such as the text of Amos 5:13. Mays (1969:98) maintains that this text is an addition to the original text of Amos, “a judicious comment of a follower of wisdom.” If attention is given to the term *המשכיל* (“the prudent man”), it seems that such an argument is right, because the term also frequently occurs in the wisdom literature, especially the book of Proverb (10:5, 19; 17:2; 21:11).

However, looking from literary perspective, Garrett (1984:275) argues against it by proving that Mays’ argument is unconvincing because the chiasmic pattern of the section (5:10 [A], 11a [B], 11b-12a [C]; 12b [B’]; 13 [A’]) demonstrated that both A (“the prudent man’s word are hated”) and A’ (“the prudent man must keep silent”) are in parallel, at least in the concept of their contents. Garrett (1984:276) then continues in his conclusion that “the proposal that 5:13 is a later insertion is not only unnecessary but against the evidence, as it is very unlikely that Amos would write an unfinished chiasmus that was later completed by one of the wisdom writers.” From a rhetorical perspective, this previous notion is most likely more compelling since it maintains the consistency of the correlation of the thought and the unity of the literary unit.

Despite such a problem, the next discussion will be focused on the issue of the exhortation itself. Amos delivers a complete list of indictments in this section. To begin with, the Israelites are condemned *שנאו בשער מוכים ודבר תמים יתעבו* (“They hated one who rebukes the wrong in the gate, and whoever speaks uprightly they abhor” [5:10]). The first line in this parallelism indicates that the people rejects the legal justice practiced in the community. The word *שנאו* ([Qal perfect. 3rd pers. pl. of *שנא*]) refers to an act of despising anyone who took a stand for justice, or simply, “they hate” (Holladay 1988:353). The word *יתעבו* (“they abhor” [Hiphil imperfect. 3rd pl. of *תעב*]) means that “they render abominable” (Davidson 1970:767). The using of both the perfect and imperfect form of the word without a conjunction *ו* (“and”) in between is very common in the classical poetic sequence and clearly shares the same tense and aspectual features (cf Andersen & Freedman 1989:496).

These verbs, in addition, have similar objects, מוֹכִיחַ וְדַבֵּר תְּמִים (“the advocate of right” [Mays 1969:93] and “the speaker of the whole truth” [Finley 1990:237]). These sinful practices take place in the very centre of legal administration and official business, בַּשַּׁעַר (“in the gate”). Although such a place was rejected as *locus* of legal issues (see Hayes 1988:162-3), it indeed describes that “the gate” was a place where public legal hearings took place and where justice was administered by מוֹכִיחַ (cf Paul 1991:170-1; Boecker 1980:21-52), especially when it is related to other texts of the book (Am 5:12, 15; cf. Ex 23:1-3; 6:8; Is 29:21; Mi 3:9). The prophet thus emphasizes that there is no hope to find justice in the place where justice should be because any voice that is raised in protest comes across only hatred and abhorrence on the part of those who are responsible for the administration of it.

Next, the result of such actions is לֹכֵן יַעַן בּוֹשְׁסֶכֶם עַל־דָּל וּמִשְׁאַת־בֵּר תִּקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ (“You tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him” [5:11]). The combination of the particles ל and כֵּן (לֹכֵן) placed before this phrase designates that there is a relationship between Amos 5:10 and 11, and the prophet makes a transition of announcement of the judgment where personal pronouns are changed from “one who” and “they” to “you.” The result is not only to make this message more personal but also more comprehensive in demonstrating the guilt, especially if it is compared with its counterpart section (C [Am 5:7]). Amos here directly addresses both a condemnation and a sentence of judgment to the leaders of society.

The phrase יַעַן בּוֹשְׁסֶכֶם may be translated as “because of your trampling” (Poel. inf. const. of בָּשַׁס [BDB:143]), albeit it often is related to the Akkadian בוּשׁ which means “to levy, extort taxes” (see also Cohen 1978:49). It is similar to the accusations in previous passages like Amos 2:6; 4:1; and later 8:4 (cf Smith 1989:168). There is indication here that this direct address style uncovers the court’s corruption where the old institution of the court in the gate is being undermined to make way for economic exploitation of עַל־דָּל or “the weak” (Mays 1969:94). The second line points to the practice of exactions of wheat as taxes. The phrase מִשְׁאַת־בֵּר תִּקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ indicates that the impoverished small farmer must

pay in corn or grain (בר [BDB:141]) and it is done under coercion. De Waard and Smalley (1979:108) insist that “the idea of forcing people is well expressed by the verb.”

By taking advantage of the poor, the rich are able to live in luxuries, as Chisholm (1990:91) infers that “ [they] exploited the poor economically (v. 11a) and then used their ill-gotten gain to build extravagant houses and plant vineyards (v. 11b).” However, the expected end result of these practices is frustrated: they cannot experience this expected luxurious life, dwelling in houses built from hewn stones (בתי גזית בנתם) and drinking from pleasant vineyards (כרמי־חמד נטעתם), because such people are heading for destruction. Hayes (1988:164) says, “the judgment to come upon the oppressors was the loss of property; someone else would live in their hewn-stone houses and drink the wine from their excellent vineyards (see Is 5:8-10).”

Amos continues his list of charges with uncovering other social sins, צררי צדיק הטו לקחי כפר ואביונים בשער (“Afflicting the just and taking bribes; Diverting the poor from justice at the gate ” [5:12]). Stuart (1987:349) explains what was going on during that time was that “Consciously, purposely, Israelite leading citizens were persecuting the righteous (or “innocent” צדיק) by taking bribe money either for declaring poor peoples’ cases against the rich to be without merit, or by ruling in favor of rich plaintiffs or defendants against poor plaintiffs or defendants (cf. Ex 23:6-8; 1 Sm 12:3; Is 10:2; 29:21; Ml 3:5).” Unfairness exists in the legal court because the rich can buy justice to defend their cases, for example, a crime they have committed while the poor cannot do the same. It denounces those who are charged with the administration of justice who practice corruption, particularly bribery.

The word כפר connotes that money given can be considered as a bribe. It is done in order to keep silent or to blind someone’s eyes (as in 1 Sm 12:3 [Holladay 1988:163]), even where murder has been committed. Money can buy a verdict while the poor have no chance of a fair hearing in court. In this regard, one may notice that the sentence placed before such accusations, כי ידעתי רבים פשעיכם,

ועצמים הטאציכם (“For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins”), seems to interrupt the flow of the message spoken throughout 5:10-11. Nevertheless, as Finley (1990:239) writes, “it serves a climactic function, with a pronouncement of punishment wedged between the accusations or rebukes.” While adding the misdeeds of the Israelites, the prophet seems to emphasize that the sins of Israel are abundant and uncountable, and, up to this point, he gives a proper reason why YHWH should punish them.

Amos continues the section with the sentence *לכן המשכיל בעת ההיא ידם כי עת רעה היא* (“Therefore the prudent keep silent at the time, for it is an evil time” [5:13]) as a logical consequence of the perversion of justice that existed in Israel (see Jackson 1986:434-435). Albeit considered as an interpolation, this sentence has a connection with the issue of the accusation in the previous verse. The appearances of a combining preposition *לכן* in the unit (5:11, 13, 16), or even in the whole book of Amos (3:11; 4:12; 6:7; 7:17), are always meant as an introduction to the actual punishment (cf Paul 1990:175). However, the description of such a punishment is not quite clear since the noun *המשכיל* (“the prudent”) may point to different opinions. On one hand, it may refer to “a wise man” who brings his case to the corrupted court and yet cannot do anything except keeps quiet because to raise complaint or plead his case will only lead to trouble for him (cf Mays 1969:98; see also Hammershaimb 1970:84).

On the other hand, a more recent approach believes that since it is related to the root of *שכל* (“prudent, prosperous, successful”), the subject may denote the “prosperous, successful, or clever” wealthy inhabitants or those who oppress the innocent and, consequently, “although the wicked have prospered and become quite successful through their prudent influence on the important people at the proper time, they themselves will soon be silenced when God’s disastrous day comes upon them (3:14; 4:2; 6:3),” as Smith (1989:170) infers. In spite of such differences, the meaning of the text seems to point toward one main aspect, the hopelessness of attempting to do anything about injustice in the courts (cf Gowan 1996:360). Therefore, it is futile to seek justice in the legal system for the court has already been seriously corrupted by the practice of bribery and money politics.

4.4.4 D (Amos 5:8-9)

The climax of the unit is found in the D segment (5:8-9) because it describes who YHWH is. Using a concentric structure like this in putting these verses as the focal point, Amos intends to lead his audience to the ultimate truth, that is, no one can find justice among human beings, only in YHWH, the Lord, the Almighty One. The putting of this doxology at the center of the unit is most likely to support the intention of “seeking YHWH” as mentioned in its context (5:6, and of course the parallel text of it, 5:14). YHWH is exalted for his power to create, עשה וכסיל (“He who made the Pleiades and Orion”). It means that he is able to create “stars” or “constelations” as they are symbolized by כימה and כסיל (De Waard & Smalley 1979:105). He is also exalted because of his power to rule, והפך לבקר צלמות ויום לילה החשיך (“and who turn the darkness to dawn, and darkens day into night”).

The word הפך (“to turn”), is thematically related to what has been said in 5:7. It implies that YHWH is able to control the daily cycle of darkness and light (cf Chisholm 1990:90) as it is pictured in the creation of the universe (Gn 1). Lastly, it is an exaltation of his power to take control over the natural forces such as water, הקורא למן-הים וישפכם על-פני הארץ (“who summons the sea’s waters and pours them out on the earth”). Amos seems to have in mind here the overwhelming action of YHWH, particularly in the “creation-decreation” context, where he ordered the waters of the flood. It may even indicate his power as the sovereign Judge (see Finley1990:234). The main idea of these words is that YHWH presents himself as the supreme ruler of the physical world. Creatively, the prophet describes it in a short statement forming the climax, יהוה שמו (“YHWH is his name”).

On the other hand, YHWH is also known as the God who destroys. Amos here wants to explain the other side of YHWH, that is, he is not only able to create what is good but also to punish or to destroy what is evil, המבליג שד על-עז ושד, על-מבצר יבוא (“who causes the devastation to burst against the strong so that the devastation comes upon the fortress”). The emphasis here is on the idea of the

irresistible power of God that makes havoc (שד) of the defenses that human beings consider invulnerable such as על-עז ("the strong") and על-מבצר ("the fortress"). It is clear that the term על-מבצר is not the same as על-ארמנות (the word used in 3:9-11) which refers to Samaria's palaces in which the spoil of oppression is stored, but rather to Israel's fortification, the defences that will protect the nation against invasion (see Carroll R 1992:231).

Besides, the word is more closely related to the context of the next verses (5:10-12) because it is in tune with Amos' direct attack on the wealthy and the powerful members of society who carry out injustices (cf Smith 1989:166). Through this doxology, the prophet intends to present a complete picture of God who both rules and judges fairly so that sins must be punished and the sinners be destroyed. As devastation will definitely come, there is a compelling reason for the people of Israel who committed sins to lament as it is consistently urged by the prophet at the beginning of this unit (5:2).

In addition, albeit considered as out of context (5:1-17), it is probably useful for our understanding of the texts analyzed to include Amos 5:24 in this discussion. Structurally, this verse is part of another unit (5:18-6:14). Although it is separated, this other unit may be considered as a context of the previous one. If Amos 5:1-17 focuses on the covenant lawsuit which is written in lament form, this unit (5:18-6:14) focuses more on the announcement of judgement (cf Niehaus 1992:328). Therefore, such a judgement gives a proper reason for the people to lament, because, as Jackson (1986:435) writes, "the wealthy oppressors who have unjustly deprived the poor of their rights (Am 5:10-12), but who will soon lament their deeds in the coming catastrophe (Am 5:16-17).

In this regard, the content of its sub-unit (5:21-27) expresses indictment and judgement of false religiosity and idolatry. It means that both units (5:1-17 and 5:18-6:14) are in a close relation with one another, because both lament and judgements were spoken in the same context, the setting of worship service ("the wrong worship [5:21-23] in the wrong place [5:5]). The prophet here seems to be dealing with the practice of false worship service which is hated by YHWH. As a

result of false practices of worship done by the Israelites, an announcement of judgement falls on them: “the judgement of YHWH and his righteous punishment will roll down on Israel like a mighty river” (see Mays 1969: 105-110).

Moreover, this verse (5:24) is closely related to 5:15 in terms of the issue addressed. In this text, Amos continues to emphasize the importance of the right living before YHWH, ויגל כמים משפט וצגקה כנחל איתן (“but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”). The main themes of the book, משפט וצגקה (“justice and righteousness”), are echoed back in this verse (5:24; cf. 5:7, 15; 6:12). The context is always the same, the priority of right living over the religious festivals. In addition, the use of the verb יגל (Niphal. imperf. 3rd masc. juss. from גלל) in this verse suggests a demand on God’s part for the people to show a just and right living.

Comparing it with other text (Is 1:16f), Hammershaimb maintains that the prophet after a powerful utterance against the sacrifices of the people ends by demanding that they should cease from evil, and instead care for what is right (1970:91). Such a call (5:23-24) has two sides, a negative, where the Israelites must reject its religious celebration, and a positive, where they were to establish justice (cf Chisholm 1990:93). In Wellhausen’s words “The old antithesis: no cult, but rather justice,” as quoted by Carroll R (2002:6), seems to fit well in this situation. It implies that the prophet proposes a sharp contrast between the view of Israelites and YHWH on the theme (see Smith 1989:187), where the latter have violated or perverted justice and righteousness and it brings them to the state of death, while the former have intended both of them to succeed in the land.

4.5 RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES

The unit (Am 5:1-17) contains more literary techniques than the other units studied in this research. Discussion about it will be focused on the major literary styles used by the prophet.

4.5.1 Chiasms

For one, Amos dominantly uses *chiastic patterns* (*chiasmus*) in this unit. It can be seen in the whole structure of the unit as it has been discussed in the previous section. Smith (1989:158; similar to Dorsey’s chiastic structure [1992:312-13]) presents a simple scheme, as follows:

- A 5:1-3 lament
- B 5:4-6 exhortation
- C 5:7 accusation of no justice
- D 5:8a-c hymn
- E 5:8c YHWH is his name
- D’ 5:9 hymn
- C’ 5:10-13 accusation of no justice
- B’ 5:14-15 exhortation
- A’ 5:16-17 lament

Although this proposed chiastic pattern is not totally convincing (cf Hunter 1982:56-60; Andersen & Freedman 1989:462f), it is based on the logical order of the strophes, revealing its present literary sense and reflecting numerous other internal connections which contribute to its impressive poetics (cf Carroll R 1992:222). If a chiasmus functions to provide a framework around the nucleus of a document, suggesting as pivot point “YHWH is his name” (Coote 1981:80, 82), it is most likely that Amos—while employing this pattern for the whole unit—tries to focus his message on YHWH himself. His trust has been betrayed and his law has been violated by the Israelites.

Some chiastic patterns also appear elsewhere in the text. As early as Amos 5:4-5, a chiastic pattern (De Waard 1977:172) is found in the form of:

<p>A אל־תדרשו but do not seek</p>	<p>B בית־אל at Bethel</p>
<p>B’ והגלגל and to Gilgal</p>	<p>A’ לא תבאו you shall not go</p>
<p>B’’ ובאר שבע and to Beersheba</p>	<p>A’’ לא תעברו you shall not cross the border</p>

This chiasm uses the names of towns particularly related to the popular public shrines such as Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. These are the places where the people of Israel go to perform religious rituals allegedly to worship God.

In opposition to this, God prohibits them to go to these sites, because he does not present himself there. He rather encourages them to seek Him instead. The prohibition concerning worship at the popular shrines is “antithetical to the encouragement to seek God” (Smith 1989:163). Rhetorically, this style should make an effect on the audiences. By structuring the parallels into a neat chiasmic pattern between three colas, the prophet intentionally directs them to the point of the Lord’s message. He gives a warning and a reason why such seeking of YHWH will not only be fruitless, but will even be no longer allowed (see Niehaus 1992:415).

Another example occurs in Amos 5:7. The structure of this verse seems to support such a chiasmic pattern:

A ההפכים you who turn	B ללענה upward	C משפט justice
C' וצדקה and righteousness	B' לארץ earthward	A' הניחו you throw

One may notice that the centre of the subject presented in this pattern is the people of Israel (cf Watts 1954:215-216). Connected to the larger unit, particularly to the issue of section C (5:7), the action of the people to overturn (הפך) justice is pertinent to the accusation of the absence of justice in the land. In this regard, the chiasmic 9:9 couplet artistically calumniates the general rejection of practices represented by two terms so common in the OT to summarize what the covenant demands (5:24; 6:12) (see Stuart 1987:347).

This verse also presents an irony, because “justice and righteousness were the only ingredients in Israel that would have quenched the burning head of God’s wrath, but instead the Israelites converted them into evil” (Finley 1990:229). Throughout 5:1-6, Amos concentrates on the failure of the people to seek YHWH, albeit his audience may not realize it because of their religious zeal in sacrifices

and prayers. Therefore, this chiasm may function as a reversal where the prophet emphasizes the truth about Israel's failure in establishing justice.

In this connection, Amos also uses other chiastic patterns in order to draw a sharp contrast between the people (v. 7) and God himself. An example can be seen in Amos 5:8b:

A והפך and who turns	B לבקר to morning	C צלמות black darkness
C' ויום and day	B' לילה to night	A' החשיך he darkens

Although there is a juxtaposed appearance of the verb הפך (“to turn” or “to overturn” [BDB:245]) in both verses (5:7 and 8), the context seems to be diverse as far as subject is concerned. For the purpose of getting the attention of his audience, it seems that the prophet uses this verb to cause a displacement by his attempt to put a “catchword” in sequence (cf Mays 1969:95). Moreover, the content of the two verses positions them antithetically: whereas Israel “turns” justice into its opposite, YHWH “turns” the darkness (the term used here often refers to the dangerous proximity of the realm of the dead) to light and light to darkness (cf Jeremias 1998:90-91). Thus, it is understandable that the centre of this chiastic pattern points to YHWH himself, not the Israelites. The end of the verse יהוה שמו (“YHWH is his name”) concludes the argument of the prophet.

Amos then continues to use a chiastic pattern in the succeeding verse (5:9), especially emphasizing the core of his message:

A המבליג the one who flashes forth	B שד destruction	C על־עז upon the strong
B' ושד and destruction	C' על־מבצר upon the fortified city	A' יבוא comes

The structure of this chiasm is similar to that of 5:8. The subject of the verse, again, seems to be YHWH. The emphasis here, however, is to describe the

negative side of God’s action, to bring שׁד (“destruction”) or doom upon Israel. YHWH is no longer considered as the God who creates the constellations and controls the daily cycle of light and darkness, but the one who devastates as the word מבלִיג implies (according to Gelston [2002:495], it is misread in the LXX as מבלִיג or ο διαρῶν that means “to disperse, to distribute”). Although the repetition of שׁד seems to violate the “law of variation between within *parallelismus membrorum*” (Wolff 1977:230), it actually demonstrates that the same fate awaits both man and his fortifications (see Carroll R 1992:231). By doing this, the prophet gives an exhortation that the Israelites may trust in their strength and be sure that their defences (fortified strongholds) will protect them against invasion. At the end, however, YHWH, the God of Israel, will bring destruction upon them.

In Amos 5:10, again, a chiasmic pattern occurs in order to expose the condition of the oppressors:

A שׁנאוּ they hate	B בשׁער מוכיח in the gate the one who reproves
B' וְדַהַר תְּמִים and the one who speaks truth	A' יתֵעֲבוּ they abhor

Relating it to its paralleled section (C [5:7]), this verse affirms the action of the people, especially in violating justice. It describes the condition of certain wealthy people who own their houses of hewn stones and vineyards (v. 11). It lashes against the officials who used to administer justice in the gate. They become rich because of their deliberate mistreatment of their poorer neighbours, perhaps through unfair taxation (“levies of grain”) and even bribery, when the influence of their status itself was not sufficient (cf Gowan 1996:390). The use of a chiasm in this verse likely focuses on what is really happening in the gate (see also the occurrence of this term in 5:12)—the arena for legal decisions and business transactions—where the evil extends beyond the purely legal. It therefore points to the fact that it is difficult to find justice in the place where justice is supposed to be.

In addition, Amos creatively expands the concept of social injustice within the whole C' section (5:10-13) using a chiastic structure (cf Finley 1990:236):

- A Hatred for the truth (5:10)
- B Oppression of the poor (5:11a)
- C Judgment (5:11b, c)
- B' Oppression of the poor (5:12)
- A' Silencing the truth (5:13)

At the same time, Amos 5:13 has its own chiastic form and follows a similar structure and content as can be seen in the scheme below (cf Garret 1984:275):

- A The prudent man's words are hated
- B The wealthy abuse the poor in the gate
- C Judgement will fall on the wealthy
- B' the wealthy abuse the poor in the gate
- A' The prudent man must keep silent

The focus of both chiastic structures are clearly on the outcome of Israel's injustice, the oppression of the poor. Amos rebukes the people for mistreating the poor, such as imposing heavy rent and exacting a payment of grain from the poor, harassing the innocent, taking bribes, and turning aside the needy. In short, the prophet strongly condemns the people for practicing dishonest business and perverting justice.

The last chiastic pattern in this unit is Amos 5:14-15. It focuses on the elaboration of the issue in its counterpart section (B [5:4-6]), a call to repentance (cf Andersen & Freedman 1989:507):

- | | |
|--|---|
| A דרשו־טוב
5:14a seek the Good [good] | B ואל־רע
and do not [seek] the Evil [evil] |
| B' שנאו־רע
5:15a hate the Evil [One] | A' ואהבו
and love the Good [One] |

It is clear that in this structure an antithetical word pair is used to form a chiasm: רע/טוב, “seek good and not evil” (5:14) and “hate evil and love good” (5:15). This word pair refers to social justice/injustice, as verse 15 makes clear. It is believed that to repent, by establishing a just society, will give substance to an

otherwise empty confession, and, such a repentance will involve a total commitment to a new way of life, that is, Israel must completely reject evil and be totally devoted to good (see Chrisholm 1990:91).

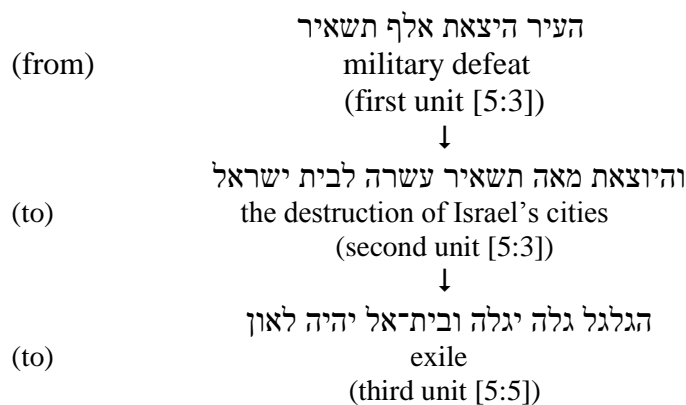
4.5.2 Inclusion and Progression

Uniquely, Amos utilizes *inclusio* and *progression* in the unit. An *inclusio*, rhetorically, may be thought of as a strategy to present the unity of the thought in one complete unit. It is important to be underscored that *an inclusio*, though it is not always the case, sometimes becomes the result of a chiasmic structure, because each section in such a structure is formed by similar (identical) words/concept at the beginning and at the end of a section, or “ends on the identical words with which it started” (Paul 1991:164). It clearly occurs, for example, in a larger section (A-A') as seen in the “lamentation” theme (v. 1 and v. 17), or in a smaller sections such as in B (5:4-6) with “seek/live” (v.4 and v. 6), in C' (5:10-13) with “the gate” (v.10 and v. 12), and in B' (5:14-15) with its “seek good/love good” (v. 14). Thus, the function of an *inclusio* is to present a whole or complete thought as well as to emphasize it.

Besides, the prophet uses *a progression* in this rhetorical unit. A progression, as one of the rhetorical devices, can be defined as “a rhetorical unit, that organizes the data from the author in a multi-phased, hierarchial structure, wherein the elements are arranged in an ascending or decending order” (Amit 2003:9). This can be seen in an inverted form in Amos 5:3 in the degression of the number of soldiers of Israel:

(from)	היצאת אלף the marching out thousand
	↓
(to)	תשאיר מאה will have left hundred
	↓
(to)	תשאיר עשרה will have left ten

It is clear that this structure describes the result of defeat in war and the corresponding decimation of the army, where decimation can be interpreted or applied in two different ways: it may refer to the loss of 10 percent, meaning that 90 percent survived, which is severe enough in terms of military casualties and losses; or it may mean loss of 90 percent and survival of 10 percent, which for all practical purpose means the end of the army and the nation (cf Andersen & Freedman 1989:477). Another example of this progression can be seen in the judgment against Israel:



Referring to the above definition and examples, such a progression seems to be in a descending order (see the direction of the arrows above) and its final step is considered as a climactic one, the end of the army (the nation) and the exile. This progression of judgment emphasizes that there is a reason for the people to lament because, they will soon be defeated, destroyed and exiled as result of practicing injustice. Amos strategically used this figure of progression in order to call his audience to repentance, as Dorsey (1992:314) writes, “Israel, this is your choice: repentance, or lamentation over your nation’s utter destruction.”

4.5.3 Elegy/Dirge

Next, Amos uses *an elegy* or *a dirge* to attract the attention of his audience. It is not difficult to identify such a lament as a funeral song (קינה) because one can notice from its literary genre and in its metre that “every line is formed of 3+2

stresses” (Soggin 1987:82). As an example, it can be seen in the structure of the text (Am 5:2) below (adapted from Bjørndalen’s 1986:161-74):

קום	לא־תוֹסִיף	נפלה	(3)
ישראל	בתולת		(2)
אדמתה	על	נטשה	(3)
מקימה	אין		(2)
אלף	חיצאת	העיר	(3)
מאה	תשאיר		(2)
מאה	והיוצאת	(העיר)	(3)
עשרה	תשאיר		(2)

Such a structure is well known in both prophetic and liturgical form. Moreover, the use of קינה is very common in Hebrew culture. It is sang over a corpse or at the grave during the deceased’s burial (in the death of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sm 1:17-27; or, in the death of Abner 3:31-34). Hayes (1988:154) indicates that the phrase “to raise up a lament” or “to lift up a *qinah*” refers specifically to the reciting of an elegy over the deceased (2 Chr 35:25). The prophets have used the imagery of a funeral and the recitation of the *qinah* to symbolize the future fate of those over whom the *qinah* was spoken (Jr 7:29; 9:10; Ezk 19:1; 26:17; 27:2, 32; 28:12; 32:2). Accordingly, Amos used this song in a cultic setting where the people gathered for some festival and expected to hear and participate in words of joy, however, he confronted a “captive” audience with his unusual fashion paradoxically overwhelming them with the unexpected (see Paul 1990:159). In a rhetorical sense, a dirge or a lamentation has to be an effective way to present an awful future to Amos’ audience, as a *fait accompli* (Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 1993:295).

It is important to be reminded that some scholars have been debating on such a prophetic literary form. Fohrer (1961:309) indicates that there is a level of difficulty in understanding the prophetic text, “The interpretation of the prophets is doubtless more difficult and complicated today than it was a half century ago.” One of the difficulties he pointed out was in investigating “the literary types used

by the prophet,” for example “the taunt songs.” With the assumption that “the prophet borrowed rhetorical forms from other realms of life, imitated them and used them in new functions,” he then argued that Amos made use of a prophetic dirge (Am 5:1-3) to express something new in the content and in contradiction to the form’s original use (Fohrer 1961:356).

However, when arguing against it, it is thought that the newness of the prophet’s message is still within the forms of existing tradition (cf Dell 1995:51) and does not contradict it. In the context of Amos 5:1-17, the song of mourning laments the irrevocable fall of Israel. Rhetorically, Dell (cf 1995:57) insists that the choice of the form is dramatic in that its effect on Amos’ hearers would have been one of shock; but it also reveals the prophet’s own grief at what his words foretell. The form seems to intensify the message of disaster of the nation because the content is totally unexpected. Therefore, a dirge or a lament can be an effective rhetorical device employed by the prophet where the audience is summoned to listen to their own death’s elegy while still alive.

4.5.4 Word Play

Amos also uses a short *word play* as can be seen in Amos 5:5a. It can be seen in the using of “ג” and “ל” in a phrase: הַגִּלְגָּל גָּלָה יִגְלֶה. The playing of the word is very noticeable because the sequence גַּל is repeated four times, and each word begins or ends with ה. It creates sounds like “*hagilgāl gālōh yigleh*” that builds alliteration between the place, the verb, and the infinitive absolute, where the infinitive absolute strengthens the verbal idea to describe how certain the idea is (cf Smith 1989:163). Such a word play is closely related to other device (particularly in poetic techniques) such as irony and allusion. It can be seen in that indirectly Gilgal, the most important city in Israel (as Israel’s first campsite in the Promise Land [Jos 4:19-5:12] having symbolized the nation’s possession of the land for a long time), will be destroyed and its inhabitants will be exiled. It is ironically directed against the popular belief among the Israelites who hold fast to

the idea that, of all places, at least Gilgal will always be spared the humiliation of exile (see Chisholm 1990:17).

In a grammatical sense, this literary device is unusual, because the names of the places are construed with verbs in the feminine form, but here it appears with verbs in the masculine form. In this connection, referring to Wolff's discussion (1977:238-9), Soggin (1987:85) argues that this word play should be seen in the fact that the text is meant to refer to the populations. He, however, added that it seems more logical to think of the general tendency to replace the forms of the feminine imperfect with those of the more active masculine. As it indicates a definite future punishment for those sites, the use of this alliteration seems to introduce the concept of exile in Israel as a consequence of not seeking YHWH (see the study of the word גלה in its connection with exile-theology in Gowan 1975:204-207). Here, Amos, when he uses such a paronomasia, uses an effective way to remind his audience of the fate that is awaiting them in the near future.

In the same verse (Am 5:5b), the prophet also uses another play of words, especially in the next phrase: וּבֵית־אֵל יִהְיֶה לְאֹן. If the previous discussion concentrates on a play upon the sounds and the places, here the play is upon the meaning of the name. It is interesting that the name of Bethel is taken as a starting-point for punishment. In Israel's history Bethel became the chief sanctuary of the northern kingdom as well as the royal sanctuary where Amaziah was the official priest (Am 7:13). However, divine judgment will befall on the city, as can be seen in such a play of words, the last part of the city's name is altered from אֵל to אֹן. A possible meaning of אֹן is something that relates to "wickedness" (BDB:19) or an expression for the powers of evil (cf Hammershaimb 1970:79). Considered as morally negative, the word is being linked with "Beth-aven" or "the house of idolatry."

There is yet another possibility of defining the word אֹן as "nought, vanity or misery." In this case, the meaning of the word may imply that "Bethel" will be turned to אֹן ("nullify"), or ironically, "nothing" (Chisholm 1980:90) because this word has to be translated in the sense of to "be annihilated" or "be destroyed"

(De Waard & Smalley 1979:102). These various meanings of the word, as a result, make the meaning of the word broad and flowing, because it may mean “grievous trouble, religious perversion, and (or) sometimes idolatry” (Mays 1969:89). However, in preference of the latter meaning, a different explanation suggests that one should read לֹא; (“not”) rather than לֹאֵל (“god”), so that “*Beth-el*” is understood as “*Beth-al*” (“house of nothingness”) and this clarifies that such a place will become nothing, more than just being nullified (see Paul 1990:164). Amos, again, utters a doom oracle against the second sanctuary of the people.

4.5.5 Hymnic Tradition

Amos definitely uses *a hymnic tradition* as can be seen in the centre of the unit (Am 5:8-9). Albeit considered as an intrusive element—being added to the flow of thought in section C-C' (5:7, 10-13) —and not originally from the prophet, Amos 5:8-9 has to be thought of as an integral part of the the unit, because one should consider the author’s style of writing (cf McComiskey 1987:145). There must be a sense of freedom on the side of the author, to add or not to add materials (in this case, hymnic element), for the sake of style and even spontaneity. Moreover, this element may be easily identified through its use of the form of the verbs and the refrain, as Mays suggests that “Amos 5:8f, along with 4:13 and 9:5f, use predicative participles and refrain in the style of the hymn-form” (1969:83). The “hymn” or “doxology” is closely related to the hymnic Psalter and, in the prophetic books, such as Amos, the prophet used this genre drawn from Israel’s practice, both to express the power and the majesty of God (cf Bramer 1999:55). Most probably, in relation with this, the prophet employs standard liturgical genres such as this hymn—classified as prophetic liturgies—reflecting the cultic setting in which the prophetic literature was performed and perhaps produced (see Sweeney 2005:42).

As seen in the refrain of the hymn, יהוה שמו (“YHWH is his name”), the focus of it is on YHWH himself. Amos’ description about YHWH may also be called “an old Yahwistic hymn” which means that “its words may have been made to fit the

lament melody (the mixed meter of the context offers little clue) or else represented a surprise shift in tune as well as topic” (Stuart 1987:347; compared to “An Old Hymn” in Watts 1954:215-16). This hymn, thus, is not merely proposing a theology about YHWH but it is also technically strategic in terms of influencing the audience who hear the message of the prophet. It is believed that this form may have been used by Amos as a rhetorical technique “to relieve the intensity of feeling among [the prophet’s hearers]. Discourse is more impressive when there is an occasional relief from the strain of deep thought and attention” (Bramer 1999:56).

4.5.6 Woe Formula

A “*woe formula*” or oracle, presented in the using of the word הוי (*hōy*) is used by Amos to accuse the people for perverting justice. It occurs in Amos 5:16 in the form of duplet particles הוי הוי which is actually the shortened form of the term הוי. It later occurs in other passages as well as Amos 5:18 and 6:1, 4. One may clearly identify this form by looking at the elements that construct the oracle, as Bramer (1999:56) indicates that “the particle הוי usually followed by a series of participles detailing addressee, the transgression and the judgment.” In general, such a word may be translated as “*Ah!*” which refers to “the grief-cry of those who mourn (cf. 1 Ki 13:30; Jr 22:18; 34:5)” (Mays 1969:98) or “an imitation of the cry of the mourners” (Hammershaimb 1970:86). As an oracle, it is believed that the term may be categorized as a curse (cf Westermann 1991:191-98) or as a particular type of judgment prophecy.

Theoretically the woe oracle commonly appears in the prophetic literature as a means to criticize specific actions and attitudes of the people and to announce punishment against them (see Sweeney 2005:40). It is clearly seen that such an oracle centres on one thing: the divine outrage against sinful behaviour. As seen in its context, their sins are primarily related to social misconduct. In this sense, Gerstenberger (1962:252-253) suggests that the woe oracles has, as its background, “the popular ethics, in other words, the adequately known and

commonly accepted order of social affair.” The end result of this misbehaviour is quite predictable, there will be national mourning, as can be seen in the repetition of *מספר* (“wailing”) and other related words like *אבל* (“mourning”) and *נהי* (“mourning song”). The outcome of the woe oracle delivered by the prophet is rhetorically assured, “to heighten its threatening and terrifying effect” (Paul 1990:181).

4.5.7 Sapiental/Wisdom Tradition

It is believed that Amos also takes up *sapiental* or *wisdom traditions* and uses them in delivering his message. Wolff (1973:80-85) convincingly argues that clan wisdom has influenced the preaching (writing) of Amos, for example, in the form of woe cries (6:1, 3-6; 5:18-20, and perhaps 5:7, 10), the exhortation speeches or *mahnrede* (4:4-5; 5:4-6, 14-15) and themes (“justice and righteousness,” “the concern of the poor” and “the condemnation of extravagant lifestyles”). Building on Terrein’s work (1962:108-15), which had linked the graded numerical sequence (3/4) of the OAN, the didactic question of Amos 3:3-8, and certain vocabulary (e.g., “the right” in Am 3:10) to wisdom, Wolff is also convinced that there was an identification of Amos’ intellectual and spiritual background with wisdom (cf Carroll R 2002:17-18). This is critically examined by Crenshaw (1967:42-52) who argues that Amos did not heavily depend on wisdom tradition. However, the link between the book of Amos and the wisdom tradition is still a possibility since one cannot deny the characteristic of wisdom which can be detected as early as Amos 5:1, the opening call of attention, *שמעו* (“Hear!”).

This summons, “to hear,” also occurs in other wisdom texts (in a form of lamentation, Lm 1:18). It is likewise characteristic of both the sapiental call to attention and wisdom’s two-part summons usually introducing an instruction (cf Wolff 1970:235). In 5:4-5, there is an indication that the prophet employs this wisdom characteristic, as Paul (1990:162) suggests, “the imperative (v. 4) followed (or preceded) by a negative prohibitive (v. 5) is typical of sapiental literature, for example, Proverbs 4:5-6; 9:8; 19:18; 20:13, 22; 24:21; 30:7-8.” In

section C-C' (5:7, 10-13), wisdom characteristic also appears in the themes of משפט ("justice"), צדקה ("righteousness"), מוכיח ("one who reproves"), דבר תמים ("one who tells the truth"), הדלים ("the poor"), and המשכיל ("the prudent man"). Such themes abundantly appear in old sapiential materials (Pr 1:3; 2:9; 13:5; 16:33; 21:3; 22:22; 28:8, 18; 29:26), and may confirm that Amos stands close to the "sapiential tradition" (Wolff 1970:245-6). For the prophet, utilizing sapiential forms in his speech is not incidental, but it seems to be calculated because his intention is to get the attention of and giving instruction to his audience.

4.5.8 Imageries

Additionally, the prophet also utilizes *imageries* in presenting some theological concepts. In Amos 5:6, particularly in the phrase כַּיִצְלַח כְּאֵשׁ בֵּית יוֹסֵף ("lest he burst forth like a fire against the house of Joseph"), the prophet uses the imagery of fire. In the OT, God reveals himself as a "consuming fire" (Ex 19:16; Dt 4:24; 5:20-23 [23-36]) who sometimes brings his judgment in the form of his very self, a holy fire in whose presence sinful people cannot stand. In the book of Amos, the imagery also occurs in the context of the judgment of YHWH, to bring destruction to the nations and those who are against him, as Smith (1989:164) infers, "Fire itself was the instrument of God in the oracles against foreign nations in Amos 1-2, but here [in. 5:6] God himself is pictured as a devouring fire that destroys everything (cf. 7:4-6)."

Another use of imagery is found in Amos 5:7, where the word לענה (literally meaning "woodworm," an aromatic herb noted for its bitter taste [King 1988:124]) in the phrase הַהֹפְכִים לְלֵעָנָה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה לָאָרֶץ ("the ones who turn justice into a bitter thing and cast righteousness to the ground") can also mean deadly poison which symbolizes the people who have so perverted justice (cf. Finley 1990:230). The last imagery used in the unit (5:1-17) is light (v. 9), המבליג, שֶׁד עֲלִיעֶז ("the one flashing destruction on the stronghold"). Here, again, the

prophet uses an imagery to announce the judgment of God, that is, he will bring destruction, and therefore the nation should lament.

In Amos 5:24, ויגל כמים משפט וצדקה כנהל איתן (“let justice flow like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing water”) the prophet also uses the imagery in a positive way. Although the word מים (“water”) may literally describe an ordinary stream (נהל or “*wadi*”) which water-flow depends on the rainfall in the rainy season, in Amos’ mind, it must be seen as “a riverbed that never dries up” (Wolff 1977:264). When an adjective איתן (“strong” or “mighty”) is linked to נהל, it expresses a flow that is steady, permanent or, simply, ever-flowing (BDB:450). Accordingly, the intensification in the description, from “like water” to “like ever-flowing water,” is to make a clear distinction between the watercourses which only carry water during the rainy season, and those that carry it all through the year (see Soggin 1988:97).

Through this imagery, there is an intention to emphasize that justice and righteousness cannot stop and start like a wilderness *wadi* that flows with water only during the rainy seasons and otherwise is just a dry stream bed, but they must instead continue night and day, all year, like נהל איתן (lit., “strong stream”) that never goes dry (cf Stuart 1987:355). The movement from the negative to the positive in this imagery literarily may also be called “a hyperbole” (Super 1973: 67-80; cf Finley 1990:113), in the sense that the author wants to emphasize something by developing the concept greater than before. In other words, through such a literary device, the prophet wants to say that “God wants righteousness and justice to flow unabated and endlessly like a mighty river,” as Smith (1989:187) writes.

4.5.9 Sevenfold Pattern

Finally, Amos uses a *sevenfold pattern* in this unit. In the sense of its literary structure, the unit is composed of seven sections, as De Waard (1977:170-7) divides it in a chiasmic form:

- (1) lamentation over fallen Israel (5:1-3),
- (2) call to repentance (5:4-6a),
- (3) warning and condemnation (5:6b-7),
- (4) hymn of YHWH's power (5:8-9),
- (3') warning and condemnation (5:10-13),
- (2') call to repentance (5:14-15), and
- (1') coming lamentation (5:16-17).

Dorsey (1999:281) argues that the arrangement of this unit is rhetorically effective in a way that all of these seven sections centre on the exclamation of YHWH's awesome power: "he is almighty and he is not to be ignored!" B-B' section (5:4-6a, 14-15), which consists of a pair of calls to repentance, also features a series of seven (plus one) imperatival verbs: דרשו ("seek!" occurred thrice), היו ("live!" occurred twice), שנאו ("hate!"), אהבו ("love") and הצינו ("maintain!"), as Dorsey has observed ([1992:313], however, mentioning seven imperatives he misses the plus one [the last imperative, "maintain!"]).

It indicates that a repentance, such as to seek God (good), to renounce evil and to maintain justice, is a serious matter in YHWH's sight, because it is his complete and definite divine will for them. The climax of the unit, a hymn of praise (Am 5:8-9), is again formed with a sevenfold pattern. Amos here lists seven verbs (combination of participles, a perfect and imperfects): עשה ("making of"), הפך ("turning"), חשך ("darkens"), קרא ("calling"), שפך ("pours out"), בלג ("flashing") and בוא ("brings"). The emphasis of this pattern is to give a description of the series of activities of YHWH (cf Limburg 1987:219). In other words, it is an emphasis of his majesty in creation and destruction, in the awesome cosmic power of YHWH which will be unleashed against some kind of human powers.

Amos 5:24 can also be included in this discussion. This verse also has a composition with a sevenfold structure. It is noticeable from the previous verses (Am 5:21-23) that the prophet lists seven things that the Lord does not like: הג ("religious feast"), עצרת ("assembly"), עלה ("burnt-offering"), מנחה ("grain-offering"), שלם ("peace offering"), שיר ("song"), and זמרה נבל ("melody of harp"). At the end of this list, interestingly, comes the climax indicating what the Lord does desire: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an

ever-flowing stream” (cf Limburg 1987:220). Holding to the general meaning of this sevenfold structure, symbolizing completeness (cf Weiss 1967:418-19) or even totality (cf Paul 1990:36), one may see that Amos here has something to say and points out YHWH and his will.

In both positive and negative ways, the prophet clearly explains that the God of Israel is seriously dealing with the present situation and condition of his people. He is the sovereign God who demands his people to believe in and to act according to divine values, justice and righteousness. In his sight, repentance from both religious and social sins is more important than doing religious rites with abundant sacrifices which are superficial. This is in accordance with proper cultic worship as can be seen in Psalms 51:19, “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (RSV). Jensen (2006:85) pinpoints that although the Israelites projected an outward show of righteousness where actually none exists, they are very hypocritical and detestable. It implies that in the perspective of the prophet, no vertical dimension is possible without the horizontal dimension.

4.5.10 Epideictic Rhetoric

In this rhetorical unit (Am 5:1-17), particularly in the passage analyzed above (Am 5:7-15, 24), Amos’ message may be categorized as *epideictic rhetoric*. Epideictic rhetoric means “any discourse, oral or written, that does not aim at specific action or decision but seek to enhance knowledge, understanding, or belief, often through praise and blame, whether of persons, things or values” (Kennedy 2001:44). Since the centre of the unit is Amos 5:8-9, namely the doxology part (יהוה שמו, “YHWH is his name”), the primary focus of Amos is not on the people of Israel and their immense sins but on YHWH himself, who he is and what he does. The given texts here clearly seek to reinforce certain beliefs about YHWH and, inseparably, his divine virtues. Stuart (1987:347-8) argued that “the prophet reminds his audience that YHWH can be a changer and a

destroyer as well as a comforter” and he demands his people to live in accordance with his two essential virtues, justice (משפט) and righteousness (צדקה).

4.5.11 Judicial Rhetoric

Besides, this unit can be thought of as *a judicial rhetoric* as well. Such a rhetorical genre can be understood as a means suited to defending or condemning specific actions and it can be used for anyone wishing to accuse or justify himself or someone else (cf Kennedy 2001:43-50). Based on this, Amos’ message seems to fit this conception, particularly to condemn what the ruling elites in Israel did in terms of oppressing their fellow citizens. In the unit analyzed (particularly, Am 5:1-17), the people also perverted justice (7, 10-11) in the place where justice must exist and be established in the gate. Through such condemnations, YHWH, as the supreme judge, reproves the perverting of justice done by them particularly through this woe oracle, and “the one who reproves is the one who strives to see justice done,” Jensen says (2006:83).

Finally, the unit contains a specific rhetorical genre, *deliberative speech*. If this speech concentrates on an assessment of actions that would be expedient or beneficial for future performance (see Black 1989:254), the prophet surely intends the audience to take some future actions. The use of repetitive imperatives such as “seek YHWH and live,” which is paralleled with to “seek good (טוב) and avoid evil (רע)” or to “love good and hate evil” (Am 5:4-6, 14-15) seems to be the emphasis of the speech. On the other hand, he also demands them to “establish justice (משפט) and righteousness (צדקה)” (Am 5:7, 15). Through this deliberative rhetoric, YHWH seems to expect that the people of Israel will experience what is best for their lives, albeit there is no indication that they will take their instructions seriously, to repent from their sins and to turn to YHWH instead, in the future. The fact is that they will finally experience doom when they are defeated and exiled by the Assyrians.

4.6 REVIEW OF ANALYSIS

Amos' intention in delivering his message in the unit (Am 5:1-17) is to make his audience realize that the sinful acts they have committed, particularly in perverting justice, may lead to the presence of the real judge, YHWH himself. It means that any wrongdoing has its own consequence. Differing from other oracles, for example Oracles against the Nations (OAN), which starts with a messenger formula, the unit begins with the words of Amos himself (Am 5:1) and the name of YHWH just appears later on (Am 5:3). The audience may not notice that it will finally point to YHWH because the speech continues from the situation of the audience, a lament of "the virgin of Israel" over the defeat of their army or nation (Am 5:2-4) and the exile as well (Am 5:5-6).

This is a result of the misconducts of the people in wrongly applying justice in the community (Am 5:7, 10-13). The flow then reaches the climax in the form of a hymn (a doxology) focused on the deeds and person of YHWH (Am 5:8-9). The flow of thought in the prophet's speech then goes back in the reverse direction. In a rhetorical sense, the placement of the hymn in the centre of the unit is not accidental because, as Jeremias (1998:91) rightly notes, it effectively contrasts Israel's acts with those of YHWH. Thus, as far as the people of Israel are concerned, it provides a powerful negative portrait of themselves.

To arrange the flow of his speech, the prophet creatively uses a major literary device, the chiasmic form, in order to effectively touch the heart and mind of the audience, with the direction from the bottom (the audience), going up to the peak (YHWH), and finally down to the bottom again (the audience). Finley (1990:222) affirms that a chiasmic structure focuses attention on the centre, drawing the reader (the audience as well) into a key idea and then gradually move them away from it by retracing the same path. This chiasmic structure has a strong effect on the hearers because it starts with them and ends up with them as can be seen in the following sequence: lamentation—punishment—sins—(God)—sins—punishment—lamentation.

Besides, the prophet forces his audience to ponder on YHWH as seen in this flow: “what the LORD says”—“who the LORD is”—“what the LORD says.” In addition, the use of repetition of the main words or concepts, such as “seek!” (דַּרַשׁ) and “live” (הִיָּה) or “justice” (מִשְׁפָּט), similar words such as “lament” (קִינָה) or “wailing” [מִסְפָּד], and “weeping” [אֲבַל], and contrasting the ideas of “life” and “death” as well, in such a chiasmic structure. Such a structure would have a deep effect on the hearers, because it is arranged in a concentric form that serves as a marker of unity and cohesion, and that, as a figure of repetition, also serves as focusing or highlighting devices (cf Möller 2003:66; Widbin 1996:177-192).

Interestingly, the prophet does not only use such a main literary device, but he also uses some other literary devices. To mention some of them, the prophet employs inclusion and progression, woe oracle, dirge or lament, wordplay, hymn, wisdom technique, imageries, and the sevenfold structure. Thinking rhetorically, one may ask why Amos uses them simultaneously in one single shoot, or what is his intention in applying so many literary devices in one occasion? It is not easy to find a proper answer to this question. Wolff (1977:231) recognizes that although the utterances, in their own literary styles (in the whole unit [Am 5:1-17]), are curiously linked one to another on one hand, it is difficult to understand their mutual relationship on the other hand. Albeit such difficulty, there must be one or another common reason for Amos to have used them. As Finley (1990:221) states, “he prefers a more subtle approach by which he draws the listener into the message.” It is also important to add here that the use of such a variety of literary styles seems to emphasize certain truths presented. The literary styles purposefully serve the importance of the content of the message. Thus, in order to effectively convince his audiences about the reality they are facing, the prophet Amos thus utilizes extensive literary devices in his message.

As a whole, Amos’ speech in this unit (Am 5:1-17) has a triad of possible genres: epideictic, judicial, and deliberative. The use of such genres implies different kinds of associations (between the speaker and the audience). The unit indicates a relationship between the Creator and the creature. The doxological part (Am 5:8-9) in the centre of the speech uses the language of praise and honour that functions

as a call to realize YHWH as the Creator. Additionally, the imperative שמעו (“listen!”) that appeared at the beginning (Am 5:1) of the unit implies that the previous has absolute authority over the later. The prophet seems to put his audience in the place of the creature that must hear (respond to) what the Creator wants to say (cf VanGemerén 1990[b]:98-99). It also refers to a correlation between the judge and the accused. YHWH, the supreme judge, affirms that the people are guilty for perverting justice using the language of the courtroom (see also the use of this language in other Old Testament texts by Bovati [1994]).

Finally, it expresses a relationship between the performer and the spectator. Here, through the prophet’s speech, YHWH presents himself as an orator who persuade the people to perform something important, repentance (see Dorsey 1999:281) in the sense of returning to YHWH wholeheartedly, stop sinning immediately and do justice accordingly. Through this relational description used by Amos, it is clear that the purpose of the use of such genres is to build up an effective communication between the messenger and the audience, and through this interaction it is expected that there will be a transformation of attitude and conduct, especially on the part of the audience.