THE INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND RELIGION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: THE PROPHET AMOS AS A CASE STUDY

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Politics, in modern society, has become intimately associated with poor governance, fraud and corruption, social decay, abuse of power, indifference to the plight of the poor, squandering of critical resources and self-enrichment. This situation has been further aggravated by the debate that religion and politics should be kept separate at all costs. The demand for social justice in marginalised communities has increased dramatically over the last few decades. The escalation of human conflict, poverty, social inequality and corrupt practices across the globe over recent years, demands a radical reassessment of how the human race engages politically, socially and economically with each other.

Hebrew classical prophets such as Hosea, Amos, Isaiah and Micah have through their messages of condemnation, indictment, punishment and hope confronted the serious political and social challenges that prevailed during and subsequent to their time. They demonstrated immense bravery against the established order of the day as they proclaimed Yahweh's gross displeasure and divine judgement for the manner in which those in power had treated the poor. Amos, in particular, has captivated scholars over many decades as they dissected every emotion, historical context, social structure, biblical tradition and literary convention in order to understand his message.

This study is an attempt to re-evaluate the critical balance between politics and religion as demonstrated in the divine mandate provided to kings, centuries ago in the ancient Near East, to rule in a just and righteous manner. An examination of the role and function of the prophets, their relationship with the political and religious structures of the day as well as an exegetical study of selected Amos texts has been undertaken to determine how this social imbalance was addressed by the prophets. A general hypothesis is advanced to restore this intricate balance between modern politics and religion. The study further enables a theological re-evaluation of how this balance could possibly be pursued as a potential catalyst for its overall social restoration.

OPSOMMING

Die politiek, in die hedendaagse samelewing, word nou geassosieer met swak regering, bedrog en korrupsie, sosiale verrotting, misbruik van mag, onverskilligheid teenoor die ellende van die armes, verkwisting van kritiese hulpbronne en selfverryking. Hierdie situasie word verder vererger as gevolg van 'n debat wat daarop aandring dat die politiek en die godsdiens ten alle koste apart gehou moet word. Die aandrang vir sosiale geregtigheid in verarmde gemeenskappe het dramaties toegeneem oor die laaste dekades. Die progressiewe toename in menslike konflik, armoede, sosiale ongelykheid en omkopery wêreldwyd, die onlangse jare, vereis 'n radikale her-evaluering oor hoe die mensdom met mekaar oor die weg kom polities, sosiaal en ekonomies.

Die Bybels-Hebreeuse profete soos Hosea, Amos, Jesaja en Miga het met hulle boodskappe van aanklag, straf en hoop die ernstige politieke en sosiale uitdagings wat gedurende hulle tyd geheers het gekonfronteer. Hulle het ongekende dapperheid gedemonstreer teen die destydse owerhede en so Jahwe se intense ontevredenheid en goddelike oordeel verwoord teenoor die swak behandeling van die armes. Amos, in die besonder, het geleerdes oor die dekades bekoor en elke emosie, historiese agtergrond, sosiale struktuur, tradisie en literêre konvensie is benut in 'n poging om sy boodskap te verstaan.

Hierdie studie is 'n poging om die sensitiewe balans tussen die politiek en die godsdiens te her-evalueer in die lig van die beginsel van regverdige regering as goddelike mandaat wat reeds eeue gelede aan konings van die ou Nabye Ooste opgedra is. 'n Ondersoek na die rol en funksie van die profete, hul verhouding met die politieke en godsdienstige strukture van hulle tyd, sowel as 'n eksegetiese studie van geselekteerde Amos tekste word onderneem om te bepaal hoe hierdie sosiale onewewigtigheid hanteer is. 'n Algemene hipotese word aan die hand gedoen om die ingewikkelde balans tussen die moderne politiek en godsdiens te herstel. Die studie kan verder van waarde wees deurdat dit 'n teologiese herbesinning bied wat kan dien as 'n moontlike katalisator vir algehele sosiale restorasie.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BAR *Biblical Archeology Review*

BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*

BZAW *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

CR:BS *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*

HBT *Horizons in Biblical Theology*

HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*

Int *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*

JNSL *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*

JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

OTE *Old Testament Essays*

RevExp *Review and Expositor*

SAIIA *South African Institute of International Affairs*

SBLDS *Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series*

SOTS *Society of Old Testament Studies*

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*

VT *Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*

ZAW *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1   RESEARCH PROBLEM

The relationship between politics and religion is viewed with immense suspicion by those who might favour a particular *status quo*. In contrast to this, the relationship between politics and religion is also embraced by those who feel that religion has a critical role to play in changing political structures. It is with regard to the latter that a study of the biblical book of Amos becomes of vital significance. Despite a number of publications which examined issues of social justice present in the book of Amos (Strijdom 1996, Strydom 1996, Wittenberg 1993, Albertz 1992, Carroll 1992, Doorly 1989, Auld 1986, Mays 1983, Cohen 1979), as well as within the broader ancient Near East (Nel 2000, Polley 1989), the relationship between politics and religion has not been adequately addressed.

The focus of this research will therefore demonstrate - through the analyses of various texts and against the background of political structures in the ancient Near East - (1) the political role of the king and his relationship with the institution of Israelite prophecy, especially in the first part of the first millennium BC, and (2) the way in which the prophets, specifically Amos, had handled this complex relationship between politics and religion.

1.2   PRELIMINARY NOTES

Political structures in the ancient Near East were regarded as divinely sanctioned. The king in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, which includes Judah and Israel, had a prominent role in the state religion and was entrusted with the administration of justice (Nel 2000, Polley 1989). Nel argues that in the case of Israel and Mesopotamia, efforts at ensuring ideal socio-economic justice were subverted by the harsh realities of vested powers. In the case of Mesopotamia, the lack of application of royal decrees and the abuse of contractual law invalidated these edicts, while in the case of Israel the lack of legal enforcement and administrative assertiveness seriously contributed to the dispossession of those most vulnerable in society (Nel 2000).

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The ancient Israelite perception of Yahweh was gradually transformed from the limited perspective of a national God, whose influence did not extend beyond the confines of the Israelite territories, as perceived by earlier writers, to a universal God who holds sway over the fate of all nations. This happened from the time of Amos onwards (Albertz 1992, Cohen 1965). Cohen describes this shift in perspective as "a shift from a personal viewpoint to a political one" (1965:153). This new prophetic corpus strongly criticised the religious and political institutions of their time (Albertz 1992).

Internal politics dealing with the needs of people, as well as international politics involving the foreign relations of a state such as Israel, are important components to the political dimensions of a society (Scheffler 2001:16). This brings into sharp focus Amos's judgement oracles against the internal ruling elite and the surrounding nations. While Yahweh's authority over all nations is confirmed through the universal expectation of adherence to "moral sensibilities" and the explicit threat of punishment, Israel and Judah's transgression of God's laws relating to social justice, causes them to lose divine favour and suffer the same fate as their adversaries (Noble 1993).

Despite their relatively insignificant role in the nation's history, Israelite prophets such as Hosea, Amos, Isaiah and Micah occupied a strategic position within Israelite society (Doorly 1989). Their immense concern for social justice puts them at the forefront of politico-religious activity aimed at addressing these concerns. This radical prophetic stance was the result of "a long-term social crises which from the eighth century onwards imperceptibly led to a collapse of Israelite society, and with a contemporary political crisis which was sparked off by the expansion of the neo-Assyrian kingdom westwards" (Albertz 1992:159).[1] The concern of Amos and his contemporaries cut through the frail relationship between politics and religion in a very sharp, distinctive and decisive manner. The strong denunciation of cultic rituals in their solicitation of Yahweh's favour on behalf of the powerful, corrupt and politically influential became the focal point of the prophetic message. The involvement of the prophets also indicated a close relationship between political and religious developments in ancient Israelite society. Otzen asserts that there was always an intense and dynamic relationship between political and religious developments in society (1990:8).

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[1] This crisis led to the eventual domination of Israel by the Assyrians fulfilling the prophecy of Amos in 6:14.

Referred to as probably the earliest of the writing prophets in the Hebrew Bible, it is argued that for this reason alone, the book of Amos has become of critical importance for biblical scholars. Wittenberg raises the profile of the prophet with his statement: "A church that wants to follow the prophets cannot stay out of politics, because it must protest against evil, not only in the private lives of individuals, but also in society and the state" (1993:114).

Scholars are in agreement that the social concerns of Amos are strongly reflected in Amos 2: 6-8; 3: 9-11, 13-15; 4: 1-3; 5: 4-6, 7, 10-13, 14-15, 21-27; 6: 1-8, 11-12; 8: 4-7 (Hasel 1991, Auld 1986). Amos' social criticism is seen as being rooted in the following traditions: "(1) covenant-election traditions; (2) the land promise tradition; (3) the orders of *mišpāṭ* (justice) and *ṣedāqā* (righteousness) in connection with the land promise and the cult;" (Strydom 1996, Hasel 1991, Koch 1983). Yahweh's land promise, associated with the patriarchal narratives, became an integral part of the family tradition under the tribal system and was seriously compromised under the monarchical system of agricultural intensification. The village based agricultural system, so prevalent under Israel's tribal system, was severely eroded by this royal economic and political strategy of agricultural intensification (Chaney 1993). In addition to this, Yahweh is seen as concerned with the status of the poor and oppressed. Issues addressed by Amos concerned exploitation and oppression through forfeiture and tribute gathering (2:8), the imposition of heavy taxes and levies (5:11), feudal enslavement of the poor and righteous (2:6), economic exploitation through excessive profiteering (8:5-6), immoral sexual conduct (2:7), corrupt judicial systems (5:7, 10), bribery (5:12), the accumulation of wealth (3:10-12, 15; 6:40) and overindulgence in a life of luxury (4:1; 6:4-7) all at the expense of the suppressed classes (Hasel 1991:102).

The focus of the study of Amos has shifted from the 1950's where social criticism was viewed as only a "side product" of his proclamation, to the views held in the 1980's where social criticism was regarded as the key thrust of his message (Hasel 1991). The social, economic and political *Sitz im Leben* of the prophet lends more potency to his oracles against the nations and ultimately against Israel. Amos' relevance for our time has facilitated the development of black feminist and liberation theologies (Hasel 1991: 18). Carroll sees in the Hebrew prophetic office an inherent attraction to carry themes such as social justice beyond the Christian realm into the arena of national and international politics in an attempt to influence a change in existing political and economic societal structures (1992:15).

1.3   OUTLINE OF STUDY

The study has proceeded and is presented on the following basis:

- Chapter 2, following the introductory chapter, presents an overview of Amos studies of the past century, paying special attention to the different opinions regarding the relationship between religion and politics in the time of the prophet.

- Chapter 3 investigates the ideology underlying political structures in the ancient Near East around the first part of the first millennium BC in order to review present opinions on the relationship between religion and politics in the time of Amos.

- Chapter 4 examines the institution of prophecy in the ancient Near East with special attention to the definition, message, status and functions of these religious intermediaries within the various socio-politico-religious domains of their time. It also sketches the possible socio-political environment of eighth century BC Israel as the background for the subsequent exegetical analysis of selected texts.

- Chapter 5 presents a detailed exegetical analysis of selected texts in Amos, namely 2:6-8; 3:9-11, 13-15; 4:1-3; 5:4-6, 7, 10-13, 14-15, 21-27; 6:1-8, 11-12; 8:4-7.

- Chapter 6 serves as a summary of the extensive exegetical analysis done in the previous chapter.

- Chapter 7, which concludes this dissertation, provides an evaluation of how the balance between politics and religion is currently handled in modern society with a few recommendations on how this intricate relationship should be theologically viewed in a changing global environment.

1.4   THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This study is underpinned by the following theoretical assumptions:

- Religion as a specific way of viewing reality is not an isolated phenomenon and should be studied in close connection with developments in the socio-political environment of a given period.

- The literature of classical Hebrew prophets illustrates in a very special way how the complicated relationship between religion and politics was handled in the religious history of Israel.

- The intricate relationship between religion and politics in the book of Amos could not be properly understood unless viewed against the broader politico-religious ancient Near Eastern backdrop in which religious intermediaries played a pivotal role.

- The social-scientific perspective is a welcome addition to traditional historical and textual studies since it puts forward a fresh set of questions to an ancient corpus of literature and offers appropriate tools and frameworks for analysing such information. This enables a reconstruction of the social and cultural structures of the time of Amos in a more systematic and responsible way.

1.5   METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This study has been conducted from two theoretical perspectives, namely from a historical-critical and a social-scientific perspective.

(1) Since this study is first and foremost of a historical nature, the main focus will be an in-depth historical-critical analysis of the selected texts. The main objective of this tradition is to demonstrate the authenticity of a given literary corpus, which is succeeded by a thorough exegetical investigation of those texts.

(2) The application of social-scientific insights of prophetic texts, on the one hand, is a more recent phenomenon (the seventies of the previous century). Social-scientific criticism "insists that biblical texts are not merely historical ideas, but also social and cultural productions" (Arendse 1998:201). It focuses on the "indispensable significance of analysing the interaction between the biblical text and the ancient socio-cultural world in which it was first produced" (Arendse 1998:199). As such, analysis of the Hebrew Bible can stimulate debate and open new dimensions for research while developing a new tradition; we need to tread very carefully by ensuring that our approach is not regarded as a universal solution (Kruger 2000).

CHAPTER 2

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN AMOS STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW

The term "politics and religion" is defined by Liebman as "studies which utilize concepts, modes of thought and tools of analyses from both the field of politics and the field of religion" (1997:1). He pursues a substantive definition of the term which is two-fold. The first aspect relates to sociopolitical issues that govern the relationship between politics and religion. Religious parties and interest groups form the main elements in this relationship with the former actively pursuing their own interests within the public domain in order to defend their own community, or to impose a religious value system on society or both (1997:2). Liebman holds the view that "the very act of participation in the political arena influences religion to some extent" (1997:2). When dealing with socio-political issues, the question that requires clarification is: to what extent does religion, as part of the cultural dimension, influence political culture or public policy? The question can also be posed conversely: to what extent does political culture or public policy influence religion? There is no doubt that religion is influenced through its very participation in the existing political process. According to Liebman, this results in the creation of a new religious elitism.

The relationship between politics and religion does not only concern the sociopolitical realm as indicated above, but also involves aspects of the philosophical or normative realm (Liebman 1997:2). It is generally accepted among Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions that religion covers all aspects of life. Furthermore, the inherent function of any governing authority is regarded as the maintenance of a just and orderly society. This raises all sorts of questions with regard to the relationship between politics and religion within any society. A key question, relevant to modern society and raised by Liebman is: to what extent should "a political system which seeks to establish a just and orderly society … leave a space within the body politic, for religion, or can an orderly state only survive if religion is held to be an entirely private matter?", conversely, should the state refuse to make such an allowance for religion, can it be regarded as a fair and just society (1997:2)? Then of course there is the debate as to whether religion and politics are inseparable or not. Liebman describes this dispute as follows: "Among those who

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believe that religion and politics, for better or worse, are inseparable, there are some who believe that religion should be separated from the state" (1997:14).[2]

Despite numerous research interests in the prophetic literature and the book of Amos specifically, not enough research has been done to explore the extent to which the balance between politics and religion was evidenced in these writings. As mentioned previously, findings in this regard would not only give us insight into this relationship, but would also make a meaningful contribution to the resolution of socio-political and economic issues in our modern globalised environment. Pleins examines the "questionable economic interests" that pervaded Israelite society to the extent that it displaced "the ethical values rooted in the Yahwist faith" (2000:368). Israel's economic prosperity, so prevalent under Jeroboam II (c. 786 - 746 BC), did not benefit the entire population. Instead, it set in motion the "pervasive decay of moral sensibilities" throughout the nation that resulted in the unprecedented exploitation of the poor (Pleins 2000:368).

Before addressing these issues, it is important to look at research projects over the last century.[3] This survey will concentrate particularly on the origin, nature and context of the prophetic message as the study of biblical prophecy evolved out of certain themes.[4] The focus will be primarily on key themes as they emerged from various critical scholarly endeavours over the century. These themes also reflect different opinions regarding the relationship between religion and politics during the time of the prophet Amos. In turn, it could also possibly lay the foundation for and facilitate a clearer understanding of the message contained within these texts, and assist attempts at discerning its current relevance. These major research trends, each in turn dominated by a number of focal areas, and overlapping at times, progressed from a romanticised view, which emerged around 1880 and continued until approximately 1920, that Amos and the classical prophets were true originators of "ethical monotheism" (Wellhausen 1957). This together with a focus on the ecstatic nature of prophecy (Lindblom 1962, Robinson 1953) and a search for the authentic words of the prophet Amos dominated initial research efforts (Gunkel 1969). Traditio-historical analysis was prominent from around 1920 to the early seventies of the last century and sought to define Amos within a social and theological setting (Johnson 1962).

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[2] The extent to which this balance was achieved by the classical prophets, with Amos in particular, is the subject of this dissertation.

[3] Carroll in a publication in 2002 has done an excellent exposé of the various aspects of Amos research over the last century.

[4] This survey will be the primary focus of Chapter 1.

These studies denied him, and the other classical prophets, the role of originators of ethical monotheism but simultaneously acknowledged the critical roles they played in recontextualising the existing religious beliefs of ancient Israel. Between the 1970's and 1990's, Amos research witnessed the historical reconstruction of the text, the location of the prophet within the text and the impact of the text on the reader or community of readers within a defined social context. As we move into the current phase of research on Amos (i.e. 1990 to the present), a continuation of the trend started in the early 1970's becomes evident. Utilisation of various research tools in the archeological and social-scientific fields have delivered interesting approaches and challenges to the study of prophetic literature. The emergence and growth of liberation movements during this period can also be ascribed to a religio-political activism that gathered momentum over the last century of Amos research.

2.1   ISRAEL'S RELIGIOUS TRADITION RECONSTRUCTED: 1880s - 1920s

It is appropriate to start the survey with the reconstruction of Israel's religious tradition. This reconstruction has contributed to a better understanding of the prophet Amos. It brought with it a new dynamic that would play a critical role in the decades that lay ahead making the prophetic message more relevant in line with the prevailing social and political conditions. The period from the mid-1880s to around the twenties of the twentieth century witnessed prophetic studies emerging within their own right. Scholars focused on three interrelated aspects of research on the prophetic books (Carroll 2002:4). Research focused mainly on the role of the eighth century prophets in promoting the concept of monotheism, the effect of ecstasy on the prophetic message and the essence of the very words of these spokesmen for Yahweh. The golden thread that runs through all of these research endeavours throughout the century concerns the elucidation of the prophetic message which was constantly concluded to have an eternal dynamism and relevance. Each of the focal areas mentioned, made its own unique contribution towards the overall reconstruction of Israel's religious tradition.

Bright (1981:145) gives us some insight into how the religion and faith of early Israel was perceived since it was described as henotheistic by nature.[5] Ethical monotheism was to have

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[5] Initially this religion "was described as henotheism, i.e. the exclusive worship of a tribal national deity which did not deny the reality of patron deities of other people" (Bright 1981:145).

emerged later as a result of the prophet's oracles. Bright takes issue with the characterisation of Israel's early religion as henotheistic, labeling it as an "insufficient description" (1981:145). This insufficiency is the result of a lack of knowledge at the time about ancient religions that were polytheistic by nature. By the time Amos appeared on the scene, Israel and Judah did not suffer from a lack of religious practice. Elaborate ceremonies, sacrificial offerings and festivals were characteristic of the religious gatherings of the time. Formal rituals such as tithing, attendance at cult festivals and sacrificial offerings were observed with religious enthusiasm. Amos 2:7 also hints at the practice of immoral sexual activities that took place as part of these religious observances (1981:145).

2.1.1   Amos and Ethical Monotheism

The German Old Testament scholar, Wellhausen, is credited with the reconstruction of the history of the religion of Israel. His work, considered monumental at the time, set the tone for scholarly comprehension and research of ancient Israelite religion for years to come (Carroll 2002:4). This also had the effect of redefining the nature of prophetism, allowing the canonical prophets to emerge from the shadows of Pentateuchal studies. In setting the classical prophets apart from those prophets who preceded them, Wellhausen makes the following assertion: "The canonical prophets, the series of whom begins with Amos, were separated by an essential distinction from the class which had preceded them and which still continued to be the type of the common prophet. They did not seek to kindle either the enthusiasm or the fanaticism of the multitude; they swam not with but against the stream" (1957:473). This individual and creative nature of the classical prophets enjoyed considerable attention from early scholars. Mays viewed this concept of a "creative religious genius" as "congenial to the romanticism of the time and the ethical norms of the prophets" (1959:267). The creativity accredited to the prophets was a consequence of the view that classical prophetism predated Mosaic Law. Their basic and normative ideas were derived from a general abstract sense suggested by idealism. Critical scholarship subsequently credited Amos with a fresh perspective on Yahweh's universal moral demands (Mays 1959:267).

The role played by Amos in initiating and charting the course for ethical monotheism was considered critical by Wellhausen and his followers. Describing Amos as "the founder, and the purest type, of a new phase of prophecy," Wellhausen (1957:472) assigns the classical prophets

to the role of originators of the concept of ethical monotheism. The negative impact of the nation's ethical standards demanded a redefinition of their relationship with Yahweh. To Wellhausen the ethical demands of the prophets destroyed the national character of the old religion as they focused on righteous institutions and ushered in an ethical monotheistic approach that was not regarded as a "product of the 'self-evolution of dogma', but a progressive step which had been called forth simply by the course of events" (1957:474).

Wellhausen's restructuring of the relationship between Mosaic Law and the prophets has, in a significant manner, determined the political and religious focus of the prophet Amos. The ethical imperatives imposed on the people of Israel by Amos and his contemporaries were regarded as universal moral principles, demanded by Yahweh as the God of righteousness. This was the case, particularly in view of the fact that these principles were no longer considered as anchored in the Pentateuchal and religious traditions of Israel. The clarion call was for social justice and only through this gateway of righteousness would access to Yahweh be assured. Wellhausen describes Yahweh as "a true and perfect King, hence justice is His principal attribute and His chief demand. And this justice is a purely forensic or social notion:" (1957:415). To present fallacious sacrifices and worship in anticipation of the Day of the Lord with total disregard to the principles of social justice and righteousness demanded a dramatic realignment of moral values in line with Yahweh's moral code. The divine task assigned to Amos and the other prophets was to vehemently oppose these misguided political, economic and religious practices and sound a strong warning of impending doom.

The universality of Yahweh's moral principles also signified a considerable broadening of the limited concept of a national patron deity. Cohen describes the impact of this changed perspective as follows: "The God of the earlier prophets is a national god, whose power does not extend beyond the territories of Israel; from Amos on, He is a universal being who decides the fate of all the nations. Thus while the ethics of the earlier and later prophets are essentially the same, there is a shift from a personal viewpoint to a political one" (1965:153). Every nation and tribe was therefore under Yahweh's judgment and had to fulfill His requirements for social justice. The contribution of the classical prophets is summed up by Carroll as follows: "The prophets expanded Israel's understanding of their Deity and so ultimately would lay the theological foundation that would later help to preserve that monotheistic faith by placing it beyond the sociopolitical vicissitudes and fatal final destiny of the nation" (2002:5).

Hayes (1988:29) holds the view that modern prophetic investigation can be considered in some ways to be the inadvertent result of the success of literary analysis and criticism of the Pentateuch. He describes this nexus as follows: "The division of the Pentateuch into various sources and the dating of the most legally oriented and pervasive of these, the deuteronomic and the priestly, to the seventh century and later allowed the eighth century prophets to emerge from their shadows and become topics of research in their own right." According to Hayes, Wellhausen created a new awareness of the "individuality and creativity" of the prophets by predating the prophets to Mosaic Law (1988:30). According to Hayes this individuality of the prophets has furthermore necessitated the prophetic religion to be anchored in the person of the prophet as the logical starting point (1988:30). In this regard he asserts the following: "The individual personality, the human contexts from which they derived, and the historical contexts in which they functioned thus became indispensable elements in understanding the prophets" (1988:30).

The Wellhausen study was to generate critical scholarship over the years and the generations that followed. While differences emerged with regard to the historical-religious reconstruction of ancient Israel, Carroll (2002) is of the opinion that there was a broad based consensus among scholars that Amos, as the first of the classical prophets, was the originator of this ethical idealism and universalism. Scholars such as Robinson (1953) drew a clear distinction between the theological views of Amos and the religious practices of his day. Amos appealed to the theological and historical traditions within Israel with his status as "champion of the marginalized" gaining prominence and together with his contemporaries in the prophetic corps was regarded as a "harbinger of the higher ethics of the Christian faith and a precursor to the social gospel of the early twentieth century" (Carroll 2002:7).

2.1.2   Ecstasy and Prophecy in Amos

In addition to the above research, attempts were made to investigate the nature of the communication that the prophet received from Yahweh and the subsequent transmission of this divine message to the people of Israel. The uniqueness of the eighth century prophets was evident in their concern for a pure and ethical religion, based on an intimate relationship with Yahweh, perceived by them as the only true God, while at the same time ensuring the pursuit of righteousness and social justice on behalf of the marginalised and the poor. The relationship with

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Yahweh could under no circumstances be promoted at the expense of the dispossessed. This is the essence of the unique message of the classical prophets. By probing the inner life of the prophet, scholars were focused on revealing the uniqueness of these spirited messengers of God (Carroll 2002:7). The ecstatic nature of prophecy came under the spotlight. The advent of the twentieth century witnessed the disciplines of psychoanalyses, psychology and sociology starting to influence the study of prophecy through the phenomenon of ecstasy (Stökl 2012:1). Some scholars sought a close connection between ecstasy and the ethical monotheism promoted by the prophets, a religious purity that can only be possible following an "intense, personal experience with Yahweh" (Carroll 2002:7). The ecstatic and visionary experiences of the prophet also served to legitimate and authenticate the prophetic message with a divine origin.

While Wellhausen, Duhm and many of their contemporaries concerned themselves with the social function of prophecy, form-critical scholars such as Gunkel and Gressmann generated a consistent stream of sophisticated literary analysis attempting to explain prophetic behaviour. Hölscher redirected scholarly interest to the nature of prophecy with his work, and is considered to have made a major contribution to the study of prophecy and society (Wilson 1980:5).[6] Hölscher's work drew on the commonalities that Israelite prophets shared with their neighbours with regard to their ecstatic and visionary experiences, resulting in a turning point in prophetic studies and presenting a challenge and mutual concern to many scholars (Carroll 2002:7; Wilson 1980:5). Although the "ecstatic" element in prophecy was recognised by earlier writers, Hölscher's work accords prominence to the phenomena of "ecstasy" in the Hebrew prophets. The essence of the problem posed was the relationship between the ecstatic nature of prophecy and the theologically sophisticated message of the eighth century prophets (Wilson 1980:6). Lindblom (1962:106) is of the view that God can speak to a person in ecstasy in the same manner that he can speak to a person in prayer. He therefore describes the relationship between prophetic ecstasy and the sophisticated socio-ethical message, so characteristic of the classical prophets, in the following manner: "It is a fact that men whose awareness of the external world is temporarily inhibited can have religious experiences and receive divine revelations and spiritual impulses which by far surpass what can be given in a normal state of mind. The value of

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[6] The influential study by Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, was published in 1914. All references to this work were explored through secondary sources as the primary source is not available.

religious preaching is not dependent on the psychological conditions associated with it, but on its content" (Lindblom 1962:106).

Amos was regarded as an ecstatic by scholars such as Robinson, Lindblom and others. Robinson (1953:42) postulates that Amos experienced ecstasy while receiving a divine revelation through the visions of the plumb-line (7:7-9), the locust (7:1-3) and the fruit basket (8:1-2). The later vision in particular demonstrates, for Robinson, one of the ways in which Amos, experienced ecstasy.[7] Amaziah was unable to threaten Amos with physical violence based on a very important ecstatic convention. According to Robinson (1953:45) ecstasy justified the claim to divine authority and as such provided divine protection. Not only did ecstasy provide divine authority and protection, but it also guaranteed Yahweh's presence and message to the prophet and his audience. Lindblom (1962:102), while acknowledging the changes that had taken place in prophetic studies with regard to ecstasy, still considered Amos to have been an ecstatic. Amos's denial to Amaziah that he was neither a prophet nor a member of the prophetic guild suggests to some scholars that Amos broke the traditional view of ecstatic prophetism. Lindblom was to deny this, instead drawing a close relationship between Amos and the earlier ecstatic *něbî'îm*. Drawing on various descriptive strands such as Amos being regarded as a prophet, his prophesying activities giving him the appearance of a *nābî'*, his prophetic revelations, the sense of divine constraint and compulsion expressed in 3:8 and a series of visions, Lindblom comes to the conclusion that Amos can appropriately be described as an ecstatic and as such he is connected with the earlier prophets in an intimate manner (1962:102).

Not all scholars were in agreement on the issue of Amos and the eighth century prophets sharing the same ecstatic experience of the earlier prophets. Mowinckel (1962) does not regard the classical prophets as ecstatics but instead accepts them as "rational recipients of the 'word' of the Lord," a view contested by Freeman (1968:56, 58).[8] Freeman (1968:54) associates ecstasy mainly with the heathen prophets "who practiced divination, sorcery and magic, and who in their states of self-induced trances (ecstasy), were given to irrational utterances, raved, leaped about

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[7] Robinson's vivid description of an ecstatic moment merits citation at this point: "We can now call before our minds a picture of the Prophet's activity in public. He might be mingling with the crowd, sometimes on ordinary days, sometimes on special occasions. Suddenly something would happen to him. His eye would become fixed, strange convulsions would seize upon his limbs, the form of his speech would change. Men would recognise that the Spirit had fallen upon him. The fit would pass, and he would tell to those who stood around the things which he had seen and heard. There might have been symbolic action and this he would explain with a clear memory of all that had befallen him, and of all that he had done under the stress of ecstasy" (1953:50).

[8] Mowinckel makes the point that the prophet at times is overtaken by his own enthusiasm "so as to give expression to his personal joy and gladness in ecstatic hymnal exclamations" (1962:97).

and often mutilated themselves." Although this description was also given to the early Israelite prophets, Freeman denies that the classical prophets exhibited such behaviour. Ecstatic behaviour in early prophetism is recorded in 1 Sam 10:5-13; 18:10; 19:20-24. In Israel's later history it was evident in the false or non-Yahwistic prophets as recorded in 1 Kgs 18:25-29; 2 Kgs 9:11; Hos 9:7; Jer 29:36 (Carroll 2002:8). As far as Freeman is concerned, the true prophet of Israel, whether preclassical or classical, was guided by both the Spirit and the Word of God.

Although the interest in the ecstatic nature of the prophetic message started waning during the 1960s, it was to resurface much later under the guise of anthropological studies. Wilson's (1996) contribution to the nature of prophetic utterances is undertaken from an anthropological perspective focusing on the trance and possession behaviour of the prophets. Like Lindblom (1962) and Clements (1975; 1996), he recognises that the debates around ecstasy have often resulted in very divergent meanings. On the one hand, ecstasy is described as the nature of the process of communication between Yahweh and Man and, on the other hand it is viewed in relation to the behavioural characteristics that result from this communication process. Wilson's anthropological survey and analysis of the stem *nb'* (to prophesy) resulted in the following findings: (1) some of the Israelite prophets exhibited typical ecstatic (or possession) behaviour; (2) such behaviour is dynamic in the sense that it varies in terms of its historical, geographical, cultural and social setting; (3) behavioural patterns did not necessarily conform to the social norm or stereotypical pattern for such behaviour and (4) these behavioural patterns were viewed differently, negatively or positively, by various groups within Israel. Taking all of this into consideration, Wilson comes to the conclusion that "the question of prophecy and ecstasy is far more complex than earlier scholars had supposed" (Wilson 1996:421, 422). The socio-ethical message delivered by Amos, accepted as the first of the literary prophets, was considered to have marked a change in direction from ecstatic behaviour to "a more rational and controlled prophetism" (Carroll 2002:8).

2.1.3   In Search of the Authentic Words of Amos

A third issue addressed in this early study of prophecy revolved around the search for the original and authentic words of the prophet. The purpose of this research strategy was the unveiling of the fundamental message of these divinely inspired messengers by isolating and highlighting the *ipsissima verba* of these prophets. The unique relationship the prophets had with

Yahweh could hardly be denied. This relationship was often manifested in very high moral standards that were strongly articulated. The search for the true and authentic words of the prophet within the text could possibly assist in revealing this divine relationship. This is, however, complicated by the recent shift in prophetic studies in which the search for the historical prophet has been somewhat abandoned in favour of a greater focus on the prophetic book and the composition of the text.

Carroll refers to two "fundamental theoretical perspectives" that assisted in isolating what he refers to as the "true and authentic words" of the prophets (2002:10). The first perspective reverted to the issue of ecstasy and its influence on speech patterns. The short, symbolic messages, acquired during a state of ecstasy were more than likely conveyed in a verbal sense rather than in a written state. These short and concise messages, received in a state of ecstasy, pointed to an intense experience with Yahweh that influenced the style and nature of the message that was subsequently communicated. Prophetic speech was considered to have been originally presented in oral poetic form. The very brief and pointed nature of these oracles, described by Hayes as "short, future oriented, poetic, metrical, often mysterious" (1988:34), which at times may have come across as somewhat incoherent, lay the foundation for later additions by disciples of these prophets. This was the manner in which prophetic literature was developed by these followers. Any attempt to clearly discern the voice of the prophet, would demand a meticulous exegetical study that would deliver those original and genuine poetic oracles. Hyatt is of the view that if we are to fully comprehend the "mind and the message of the eighth century prophet," then we must leave the secondary passages out of our analysis (1949:341).

The second perspective focused on a literary-critical approach that isolated what was considered to be those authentic passages that relate to the authors. With a message as distinctive and dynamic as that of the prophets, it became necessary for the integrity and authenticity of the prophetic material to be tested. The literary-critical approach, prevalent at the time, sought to distinguish very clearly between the original written revelations and the subsequent redactional exercise. Stripping back the existing text in order to reveal the original words of the prophets became an indispensable approach to uncover the "mind and message" of the prophets (Carroll

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2002:10).[9] It is therefore important that the reader becomes familiar with the layers of authorship in the book in order to arrive at a sound interpretation of the message of the original author.

Prior to the historical-critical scholarship of Wellhausen, it was generally accepted that the book of Amos was written by the prophet himself with the possible exception of 7:10-17 which was written in the third-person format. Despite the acceptance that Amos was not responsible for writing this section, and that possibly an eyewitness or disciple of Amos may have written it, the text was nevertheless considered to have come from Amos's time (Hasel 1991:20). This view was radically altered with the advent of historical-critical scholarship when Wellhausen challenged this perspective. He argued that the book of Amos contained both authentic and original sayings that can confidently be ascribed to the eighth century prophet from Tekoa, while later additions were developed from the redactional activities of later editors. Hayes gives us some insight into how this process developed under early critical scholarship: "Duhm challenged the authenticity of 2:4-5; 4:13; 5:8-9; and 9:5-6 and Wellhausen added 1:9-12; 3:14b; 5:26; 6:2; 8:6, 8, 11-12; and 9:8-15 to that list. By the time Smith published the revised edition of his commentary in 1929, the number of challenged passages had grown to include much of the book: (1) references to Judah in 2:4-5; 3:1b; 6:1; 9:11-12, (2) the hymnic texts in 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6, (3) the optimistic ending in 9:8-15, (4) texts judged later on the basis of historical, linguistic, or theological considerations in 1:2, 6-12; 3:7, 14b; 5:26; 6:2, 14; 8:11-14, and (5) various expansions and glosses in 2:10, 12, 14-15; 3:1, 3; 4:7-8, 10; 5:6, 13, 16, 22; 6:9-11a; 8:6, 8, 13, and so on" (1988:33).

These discussions would re-emerge in the late 1960's in critical scholarship focused on form and tradition criticism. De Jong holds the view that "the search for the historical prophet, the words attributed to him, and their earliest, literary development, should, however, not only be a literary-critical, but also historical exercise" (2007:24). Through this he seeks to create interdependency between the literary development of the prophetic tradition and the historical perspective.

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[9] Doorly describes the development of the prophetic literature as follows: "Before the oracles of the eighth century prophets reached their final form, as they appear in our scriptures, subsequent authors and editors wrote additional material including introductions, conclusions, editorial comments, liturgical insertions, and third person narratives" (1989:5).

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2.2   AMOS IN A SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL SETTING: 1920s - 1970s

In sharp reaction to the Wellhausen-Duhm theory that Amos and the classical prophets were masters of creativity and religious innovation, new research efforts from the 1950's onwards sought the background of the classical prophets, or at least some of them, in the office of the cult. This seed was, however, planted a few decades earlier when Hölscher, in a comment on 1 Sam 10, suggested that there was a connection between some of the prophets and the cult (Carroll 2002:12). This new endeavour was born out of attempts to better understand the role of the prophets and their message within the context of Israel's social life.

2.2.1   Cultic Criticism in Amos

On examining Amos's attitude towards the cult, Mays (1959:270) poses the following question: "Are his (Amos's) reproaches (4:4-5; 5:21-24) a total rejection of cultic worship, as 5:25 would seem to indicate, or are they more specifically a denunciation of this specific religiosity?" He responds to this question as follows: "Careful examination of the relevant text seems to show that Amos denounced Israel's worship because it was syncretistic and abetted the social wrongs which he found so odious … When Amos called for its replacement with justice and righteousness that flowed down (5:24) he may not have been turning away from cult, *per se*, but demanding the restoration of the earlier covenant cult centred in exclusive worship of Yahweh and total obedience to his will" (1959:270).[10] Würthwein had published his extensive article on the book of Amos a few years earlier and before him Gunkel and Mowinckel had already paved the way for a critical study of this relationship. Mays sums up the status of critical scholarship at this stage: "The growing appreciation of the cult and its life as the vehicle for valid Yahwism has also led to a more sympathetic evaluation of the relationship between prophet and cult" (1959:270). The survey on this phase of scholarship will commence with the initial contributions of Gunkel and Mowinckel and culminate in the form and tradition critical approaches of the 1950s to the early seventies.

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[10] Mays's views were stated against the backdrop of form and tradition critical scholarship that sought to define this relationship between prophet and cult.

2.2.2   Amos's Cultic Associations

The link between prophet and cult suggested by Hölscher was followed by Gunkel's observation of common features that existed between the prophetic literature and the psalms (Carroll 2002:12). Gunkel (1969) based his observations on the presence of liturgical language in the prophetic oracle, the concerns over cultic ritual and social justice evident in many psalms, and also in the prophets and what appear to be prophetic utterances that appeared in certain psalms. These observations led Gunkel to conclude that the prophets exercised an influence over the cult and as such the psalms postdated the prophets.

Mowinckel, a student of Gunkel, produced a seminal work in *Psalmenstudien* (1921-1924) which significantly altered the direction of prophetic study during his time. In his reconstruction of prophetic history in Israel, Mowinckel (1962) radically reversed Gunkel's view which placed the prophetic oracles before the psalms. He postulated that the cultic connection of the prophets could be traced back to an earlier period in Israel's history when the "divine oracles of curse and blessing at the sanctuaries" were pronounced by the priest. In performing this function, the priest fulfilled a very important prophetic role. The prophetic oracles therefore took place within a cult setting. This was very characteristic of the Canaanite charismatic form of the ecstatic *nĕbî'îm*. The annual New Year festival, celebrating the enthronement of Yahweh, is considered by Mowinckel to be a key cultic event.[11] The historical covenant was renewed through the festival of harvest and the New Year.

While the categorisation of cult prophets included most of the biblical prophets, Mowinckel was careful to draw a distinction between prophets in service of the temples or sanctuaries, those belonging to professional associations and "free" prophets. Denying any distinction between the earlier and latter prophets, Haldar (1945) sought an association between prophet and cult by looking at similarities in the ancient Near East between the prophets who were employed in the temple and those who acted independently of the temple and king. He argues that Israelite prophecy must be regarded as "an off-shoot of a cultic phenomenon common

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[11] This festival, celebrating its origins in the *Akitu* festival of Babylon, had one major objective, namely, the renewal of the covenant. Mowinckel demonstrates a link between the festival and the Oracles against the Nations in Amos 1-2 suggesting that these may have originated within these cultic celebrations. He states the following: "Through the renewal of covenant were promised to king and people all the blessing, all the happiness, all the victory they might need in the year to come: a righteous, strong and victorious king, true priests, a pure temple, outer and inner power, a new happiness, a 'turning of the faith', paradisiac fertility, peace, dominion over the neighbouring peoples, victory over enemies, protection against demons and evil powers, and destruction of evildoers and sinners" (1962:1:155, 156).

to the whole Near East" (Haldar 1945:110-111). By observing similarities between the sanctuary priest in Israel and the Mesopotamian *bārûm* and between the prophets and the *muḫḫûm*, Haldar expanded the theoretical base for the relationship between prophet and cult, and attempts to link Amos with the cultic office through the analyses of labels such as *nōqēd* in Amos 1:1 and *bōqēr* in 7:14 (Haldar 1945:112). Johnson (1962:57) subscribes to the view that the prophets are cult functionaries concerned with the pronunciation of oracles and offering intercession with Yahweh on behalf of the people in the temples. The will of Yahweh was communicated unequivocally to his people. Johnson concludes that the writing prophets were not interested in speaking out negatively against the cult, *per se*, but rather castigating those who through the giving of false oracles claimed to speak for Yahweh. Johnson is of the view that Amos 3:7 demonstrates the contact with Yahweh that could originate in a cult setting. Despite Amos's vehement denial that he was a prophet in the council of the monarchy, he nonetheless stressed the important relationship between the prophets and Yahweh. According to Johnson "Amos may have insisted that he was no ordinary prophet; but, nevertheless, he admitted that the function of the latter was quite valid and in a noteworthy passage he has laid stress upon the close relation which existed between the prophets and Yahweh:" (1962:57).

Lindblom (1962) argues for and supported Amos's relationship with the sanctuary and the cult, albeit in a different manner. Despite his support for Amos's cultic associations, Lindblom nevertheless seems to have a problem with the terms *nōqēd* (Amos 1:1) and *bōqēr* (7:14) as applied by Haldar (1945). He sums up his own reaction in the following manner: "Amos presents a special problem. The present writer (Haldar) does not agree with those scholars who conclude from the titles *nōqēd* and *bōqēr* that Amos was originally a member of the cultic staff" (Lindblom 1962:209). Amos, as a herdsman in Palestine, received a special call from Yahweh to go to the northern Kingdom and pronounce judgment on Israel there. According to Lindblom he worked with the sanctuary staff at Bethel for a short while. Lindblom is of the opinion that "this is evident from the episode referred to in ch. vii. When Amaziah, the chief priest of Bethel, says to Amos, 'O seer, flee away to the land of Judah, there you may earn your living by working as a prophet', it is indicated that Amos had been maintained at the sanctuary of Bethel, having been temporarily attached to the staff there. Thus Amos did not belong to the professional prophets from the outset; but for a time he worked as a cultic prophet in Bethel" (Lindblom 1962:209). These views increasingly came under the spotlight.

Critical scholarship, seeking to define classical prophetism in terms of the cult institutions, not only focused on comparable material within the ancient Near East, but also explored source criticism methodologies in order to clarify this relationship. Source criticism methodologies incorporate form and tradition criticism approaches that seek to understand the preliterary history of the biblical text. The early twentieth century ushered in a new and intense interest in the cultic association of the prophets. Form and tradition criticism took centre stage in the pursuit of this relationship. Tucker (1971:9) regards the goal of form criticism as twofold. In the first instance, it attempts to reveal the complete living history of Old Testament literature with the view to understand the oral stage of development and subsequently to place "all the stages of development into their settings in the life of Israel" (Tucker 1971:9). Secondly, form criticism functions as a tool of exegesis and "attempts to facilitate the full understanding and interpretation of what is essentially ancient religious literature that has a long and complicated history and prehistory" (Tucker 1971:9). By studying certain forms embedded in the various literary genres, form critical scholars hope to better understand the social and institutional *Sitz im Leben* of the prophetic message within ancient Israel. These forms were regarded as originally having been oral compositions which were later developed in written form (Carroll 2002:15). Tradition criticism, on the other hand, which is concerned with the social contexts in which the prophetic oracles originated, focuses more closely on the progression of the biblical material from the oral to the written stage.

The relationship between politics and religion and the manner in which this balance was handled by the classical prophets, would be evident in the prophetic message. For this reason it would be important to understand the full dynamics of the prophetic message in all of its content, context, form and origins. With the development of form and tradition criticism, scholars started looking for a relationship between the prophetic message and older belief systems and forms. The creative genius of the classical prophets was ascribed to a dynamic recontextualisation of existing traditions rather than as an innovative approach in the form of "ethical monotheism" as proposed by Wellhausen and his followers. The link between the prophets and the Israelite cult, both based on covenantal theology, was explored with renewed intensity. In exploring the basic genre of prophetic speech, scholars identified the judgment speech as the earliest form of prophetic genre. The prophetic oracle was made up of two parts, namely, the *Drohwort* as the

threat or pronouncement of judgment and the *Scheltwort* as the basis for this judgment (Carroll 2002:15).

Earlier scholars generally viewed the relationship between cult and prophet as very close with the prophets primarily regarded as cultic functionaries (Hayes 1988, Craghan 1972, Mowinckel 1962). Amos was therefore accepted as a cultic prophet. Carroll is of the view that Amos's conversion from a prophet of weal, concerned with salvation (*Heilsnabi*), to a prophet of woe (*Unheilsnabi*) enabled him to step outside the ranks of the cult functionary (cf. Amos 7:10-17) and directly into conflict with the socio-economic, political and religious practices of the day (2002:16). Hadjiev offers an explanation with regard to Amos's invective against the sanctuaries of Gilgal and Bethel in 5:4-5 (2009:18). In his view these sanctuaries are condemned because of their pre-disposition to social evils, as discussed in Amos 3:9-10; 4:1 and 5:7-12, rather than the pursuit of righteousness. In Hadjiev's opinion, Amos 5:21-24 highlights a distinct connection between the absence of justice and righteousness in worship and criticism of the cult (2009:18). Instead of the act of worship contributing to the pursuit of justice and righteousness, it clearly aggravates and advances social crimes. This would, in a sense, offer an explanation as to why Amos wanted to clearly disassociate himself from the prophetic cult in his exchange with Amaziah, the Chief Priest, in Amos 7:10-17.

2.2.3   Covenantal Theology, Lawsuit and Wisdom Literature in Amos

If one considers that the prophetic message takes place within a specific cultural context, then it may be possible to conclude that there would be certain dynamics that would influence the formulation of these messages. Our pursuit of the political context of Amos's message would suggest that we have a close look at the influence of covenantal theory and the use of lawsuit on the prophet's message. The early sixties of the previous century witnessed the message of Amos finding support within a covenantal theology theory. Fensham (1963:133) suggested a connection between the covenantal theology background of Amos's message and the covenantal ritual that normally takes place between a *suzerain* and its vassal state within the ancient Near East around the second millennium BC. Fensham launches into the covenant theology theory on the basis that he shared with other scholars on the views of Albright that the Covenant had a very pervasive influence on the religious and political life of Israel. He continues: "It is also true that the influence of the Hittite treaties is pervasive in more legal material of the Old Testament

outside specific covenantal forms than hereto acknowledged" (Fensham 1963:134). An analogy is drawn between Yahweh's promise of protection against foreign forces in the Old Testament and the protection afforded by a king to a vassal state in terms of a Hittite treaty. In terms of this treaty and in response to the protection offered by the king, the vassal is obliged to provide immediate assistance in the event of the *suzerain* being under threat from enemy forces. The analogy applicable here is that Yahweh's promise of protection demands absolute obedience in return from the nation of Israel. He will under no circumstances entertain any form of idolatry.

In the event of the violation of this treaty, either between the king as head partner and his vassal or between Yahweh and His people, such a violation would have serious legal ramifications. A covenant lawsuit (the *rîb*) would be instituted. Huffmon is credited as the first person to understand the *rîb* pattern as a prophetic speech form and sees the primary social role of Amos's message as "ideological, not practical" (1983:111). This prophetic speech form is utilised "to express indictment and trial of Israel because of unfulfilled obligations" (Boyle 1971:341). Boyle classifies these unfulfilled obligations as covenant obligations. The effect of this lawsuit would be the chastisement of the vassal by the king, as head partner thereby invoking curses for such disobedience. The prophets were believed to have followed this agreement (treaty) pattern in the formulation of their message. In this light Amos is seen as invoking such a lawsuit to point out the breach of covenant that occurred and subsequently pronounce the relevant covenant curses (Carroll 2002:17).

A renewed interest in wisdom literature in the 1930s was accompanied by an alternative social context for Amos in opposition to that proposed by Covenant Theology. The relationship between prophecy and wisdom was explored by scholars such as Lindblom (1962). Lindblom (1962) acknowledged the influence of the wisdom movement on the prophetic literary style, but did not agree with the view that any of the prophets were members of the wisdom circles found in the royal court.

Wolff sought to locate the wisdom influence in Amos within tribal or clan wisdom circles. In a discussion on the dynamics in Amos's language, Wolff makes the following observation: "Especially influential are traditional forms deriving from Amos's cultural heritage, whose provenance we must seek in that form of wisdom which was cultivated within the clans" (1977:100). While accepting that the prophets were influenced by an older form of Israelite/ Judean wisdom, Soggin calls for a re-examination of the influence of this wisdom on the pre-

exilic prophetic literature (1995:123). He appeals for caution to be exercised in drawing significant conclusions from uncertain materials. Carroll points to the limited influence of the arguments in favour of wisdom literature and holds the view that: "As in the cases of the cult and covenant, advocates of a very circumscribed intellectual and social background have tended to overstate their case and have ignored or inadequately handled contrary data" (2002:18).

Despite the numerous shortcomings of form-critical and traditional-critical methods to satisfactorily locate the institutional and social *Sitz im Leben* of the prophet Amos, these disciplines undoubtedly contributed towards the search for the historical Amos in a significant manner. It is generally concluded, through research, that the prophetic message was influenced by a variety of theological traditions available to the prophet. Van der Woude summarises this view as follows: "We are not forced, however, to presuppose written law-books, cultic texts, a covenant renewal festival or an embryonic Pentateuch to understand the message of Amos. What we find in the book of Amos is; from a traditio-historical point of view, an amalgam of traditions and influences, which the prophet borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, from the total culture in which he lived" (1982:38, 39). The search continued for greater surety on the traditions that exercised such a remarkable influence on the prophetic message.

2.3   THE TEXT AS FOCAL POINT: 1970s ONWARDS

Kraeling (1969:4) confirms the continued historical importance of the Hebrew prophets with the following statement: "The influence of the Hebrew prophets on human history has been so vast that it is impossible to appraise or describe it. Without the prophets there would have been no Judaism, no Jesus called the Christ, no apostles and martyrs. Mohamed would have been merely an unknown camel driver. There would have been no Crusades, no Reformation. All history would have been far poorer. It is apparent then that these elect spirits of Israel demand attention not only from the religionist, but from all those who would understand our civilization." Although many of the critical views postulated by scholars offered challenging insights, the general feeling was that more research was required to better understand the prophetic message of the classical prophets. The amount of research done on Amos at this point highlighted the truly dynamic nature of the prophetic message. Scholars were increasingly getting restless and frustrated with the numerous approaches which appeared to have reached saturation point.

According to Carroll "it was recognised that these approaches had yielded theories of varying strengths and weaknesses" (2002:18). The situation demanded a new focus that would ensure greater clarity of results from scholarly endeavours. Critical study of prophetic literature between the late 1960s, early 1970s and the present not only provided fresh and challenging insights into the prophetic literature, but also ushered in a new focus on the political dimensions of the prophetic message. The focus of the study of Amos shifted from the 1950s perspective where social criticism was viewed only as a "side product" of his message to the view held in the 1980s where social criticism became the central thrust of his message (Hasel 1991:102).

2.3.1   Historical Reconstruction of the Text

This phase of research delivered various approaches that focused primarily on a reconstruction of the text referred to by Carroll (2002) as a quest for what lay "behind the text." Research efforts were directed at the literary prehistory of Amos studying the composition and redactional history of the book, analysing archeological data to clarify textual details and utilising social theory in an attempt to understand the social location of the classical prophet (Carroll 2002:18).

Form and traditional critics continued to explore the origins of the book of Amos as part of this historical reconstruction of the text. Mays draws similarities between the Tyre, Edom and Judah oracles and suggests that they were added by the same person, "probably the Deuteronomic editor of the book of Amos in Jerusalem" (1969:42). These additions would then include the oracles relating to Tyre, Edom and Judah in chapters 1 and 2, the date reference in 1:1 and 3:7, the hymnic poetry in 1:2; 4:13; 5:8f and 9:5f and possibly 8:8 that appears to have originated from a cultic setting in Judah. The disciples who provided the third person account of Amos and Amaziah, the exilic and postexilic influence found in the oracle of restoration (9:11-15) and other fragments found in 2:10; 5:25 and 5:26 all rank as part of these exceptions (Doorly 1989:8, 9). Wolff investigated the various speech forms found in the book of Amos and discussed them in terms of form and setting postulating a six stage formation of Amos (1977:107). Wolff is associated with the initial ideas expressed on the composition of the book through his supposition that the book of Amos is made up of three eighth-century literary layers in all probability assigned to Amos and his contemporary disciples and a further three additional strata as later interpretations (1977:107). Wolff confidently presented his six layers. Chapters 3 and 4 are considered to contain the authentic words of Amos as the first layer, while the Oracles

of the Nations and the visions, proposed as literary fixed simultaneously, make up the second layer (Wolff 1977:107). The theology of Amos is representative of the "the old school of Amos" and forms the third redactional layer (Wolff 1977:108). The manner in which Amos 5:15; 5:5; 8:14; 7:16 and 7:9 are presented serves as evidence for this. The Bethel redaction (Amos 5:5) of the Josianic reform dating to the seventh century finds its origins in the destruction of the sanctuary at Bethel by King Josiah. This fourth layer can be described as a religious-political move set to fulfill the message of 2 Kings 23:17 (Wolff 1977:111). The exilic Deuteronomistic redaction and the postexilic words of restoration make up the fifth and sixth layers respectively (Wolff 1977:112-113). Wolff's hypothesis drew considerable attention to the role of his hypothetical redactors while "other scholars were more aware of literary and lexical interconnections between the various passages within the text and tried to elaborate more comprehensive theories regarding the growth of Amos at the hands of redactors with intentional theological and political agendas" (Carroll 2002: 19).

Coote (1981) proposed a very simplistic three phase structure for the book of Amos which was written in the eighth century, seventh century and sixth century which he refers to as Amos A, Amos B and Amos C respectively. The Amos A section, focusing primarily on Samaria and assigned to the prophet from Tekoa, starts with 2:6 and ends with 9:3-4 and for the rest can be found scattered throughout the book. While Amos, as the A-stage author, delivered his message orally, the B-stage author is described by Coote as a seventh century scribe from Jerusalem, concerned with Bethel only, who through his writing wanted to preserve "on behalf of the ruling elite the desire to maintain the status and power of Jerusalem as a sociopolitical center, and the motivation to put this power to use in a program of customary and judicial reform" (Doorly 1989:14). An interesting observation made is that punishment in the A-stage is linked to the oppression of the poor, while punishment in the B-stage is linked to the rejection of the prophetic oracles (Doorly 1989:14). The C-stage, written in the sixth century after captivity, reflects amendments to the beginnings and endings of the B-stage composition. The oracles of restoration (Amos 9:7-15) were also added at this stage. Doorly pulls together the common threads running through these three proposals and opts for Coote's redactional conclusions as he found them much easier to work with. While Mays (1959; 1969), Wolff (1977) and Coote (1981) were not the only scholars to propose a structural analysis of the book's composition, they certainly played a key role in this endeavor.

As we move beyond the late 1980s and early 1990s we sense a renewed approach to the form-critical and redaction-critical approaches as presented by Mays (1959; 1969) and Wolff (1977). This renewed approach and commitment by scholars to define the literary prehistory of the book of Amos assigned them "a greater creative role in the shaping of the biblical texts" and esteemed them as "astute theologians with a high level of literary skill and theological sophistication" (Carroll 2002:32). The concern shared by these redactionist theorists was essentially the same as that of their predecessors, namely to get behind the written text in order to reconstruct the original message of the prophet. Scholars such as Jeremias (1998) played a key role in the pursuit of the redaction history of the book of Amos. Carroll regards Jeremias as the most "prolific and influential scholar of this persuasion" (2002:32). Jeremias's (1998) extensive research on the issue of redaction within the prophetic book postulates a continuous contextualisation and updating of the original text by different communities of faith. Jeremias "displays (a) striking awareness of the difficulties penetrating behind the present written text in order to reconstruct the original preaching of the prophet" (Melugin 1998:78).

The growth of the book of Amos developed apparently from the following three original and authentic sections, namely, chapters 3 to 6, the five oracles against the nations (chapters 1-2) and the five vision reports (7:1-9:4). This was followed by redactional activity before and after the fall of Jerusalem as evidenced in the Josianic and Deuteronomic material and also the restoration passage (9:7-15) added during the postexilic period. Jeremias (1988) views the significance of the impact of this process as broadening the attack on the elite, who had previously been the target audience, to include the entire nation. He pays particular attention to the literary qualities of the text and suggests that perhaps some scholars have been too keen to amend the text and rearrange the verses unnecessarily. He also proposed that there was a mutual intertextual influence between Amos and Hosea, citing the influence of Amos 4:4 and 8:14 found in Hosea 4:15 and linking Hosea 8:14 to the "standard judgement formula found in the Oracles of the Nations" (Carroll 2002:33).

Another interest that has developed recently is the composition of Amos within the literary history of the book of the Twelve as well as its relationship between some of the books. Nogalski (1993) demonstrates a very clear relationship between Amos, Obadiah and Jeremiah. He describes this relationship as follows: "The most concrete example of the connection to Amos 9 appears in Obad 4 with the phrase 'from there I will bring you down'" (1993:64). He also links

this phrase to Jeremiah 49:16. Sweeney, with his approach based on a synchronic literary analysis of the Book of the Twelve, acknowledges a difference in purpose of each book of "the Twelve" based on the order in which the books have been placed in the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint in order to meet different needs or address different concerns (2000:xxxv). Schart argues that a simple synchronic approach to the Book of the Twelve is inadequate (2000:31). It is also unlikely that these twelve independent units were brought together for the first time after the exile (Schart 2000:41). Schart goes on to propose a reconstruction of the redaction history of these units based on the superscriptions provided by the editors and proposes that on this basis, Hosea, Amos, Micah and Zephaniah could once have existed as a separate collection (2000:43). Hadjiev refers to a shift in interest, that took place over the last two to three decades, from "the origin of the individual prophetic books, taken in isolation, to their development as part of the larger literary whole - the Minor Prophets" (2009:7). This view based on the reading of "the Twelve" prophets as a single book, has implications for the redactional history of Amos since its redactional development is interconnected with that of "the Twelve" prophets (Hadjiev 2009:7). Hadjiev is at odds with these views since he does not see any unity in content or structure, but rather a lack of either a unifying prophetic figure or a primary theme (2009:8).

Reconstruction of the world "behind the text" also involved various social scientific methodologies and approaches, including archeological findings that formed an integral part of scholarly endeavours in this regard.[12]

2.3.2   Locating Amos within the Text

A second research focus started developing within this time frame. It was recognised that various reconstruction methodologies were useful in attempting to get "behind the text." However, some scholars diverted their attention to move and explore "within the text" in an attempt to better understand its structure. A number of factors motivated scholars to pursue this avenue of research.

In the first instance, the extensive redactional analyses undertaken in the previous phase was revisited and challenged. Andersen & Freedman (1989), through extensive research,

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[12] These approaches will be dealt with as an entirely separate section for two reasons. Firstly a considerable part of this project is based on a social scientific analysis of the background to the prophetic oracles. This in itself merits a meticulous and detailed introduction to the subject. Secondly it would be insufficient and inadequate to merely provide an outline survey of Amos studies from a social scientific perspective without simultaneously highlighting the complexities and debates around the use of these methodologies.

proposed a biographical reconstruction of the redactional history of the text. The view emerging through this endeavour suggested that most of the book of Amos can be attributed to the prophet Amos and that there was no need to identify and distinguish various redactional layers. Renewed attention was given to the literary structure and its unity within the book of Amos. Andersen & Freedman (1989) developed an extensive commentary using the Masoretic text as their basis. They argue for a unified approach to the literary form of the book.[13] It is their view that there are no compelling reasons for taking a different perspective. The literary coherence in the book is underscored by what they consider to be "a highly structured unity" (1989:144). The divergent and at times contradictory views motivated for the change in Amos's career, substantially reviewed and amended later, are cited as the motivating reasons for them to pursue a direction away from traditional criticism (Andersen & Freedman 1989:144).

From a canonical criticism perspective, Childs contrasts the redactional analyses with canonical criticism by pointing out that "it is an axiom of many redactional critics that the layering within a biblical book derives from a desire to 'update' an original tradition. While this description occasionally applies, the canonical approach to the Old Testament offers a very different model of interpreting the growth of multi-layered texts" (1995:516). It is the objective of the canonical process to shape texts in a manner that will facilitate the "community of faith with guidelines for its appropriation" (1995:516). This is no less true of Amos and the prophetic literature in general. Childs agrees with historical-critical studies that demonstrate "a complex prehistory of the final form" (Carroll 2002:25), which he considers to be of primary importance. This, in his opinion, has confirmed that the canonical form of Amos was only derived after a lengthy historical development process. The reshaping of the prophetic literature was done in a very conscientious and meticulous manner to ensure the eternal relevance of its message.

Readings within the text were not only confined to perspectives that sought to enhance the indispensable role that the Old Testament played in the Christian Scriptural canon. Rhetorical criticism, formalism and structuralism were utilised as general literary and theoretical models to inform a closer reading of the final form of texts. A satirical analysis of Amos was done by Ryken (1992) who "concentrated on the general tone (rather than on an exegetical study of the

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[13] Andersen & Freedman emphasise this unity and insist that "insofar as we can speak about the book of Amos, we can recognise one master hand. If not Amos himself, than at least an editor unified the text who must have been close to his teacher and whose contribution was to arrange and integrate the prophecies that Amos himself produced" (1989:5).

text) of the prophet's attack on the institutions and society of Israel. Ryken regards the work of Amos as a "major work of informal satire" with the objective of his invective not based on human folly but rather the "religious, social and political vice" prevalent in ancient Israel (1992:334).

Since 1990 there have been a number of literary studies that appeared on the book of Amos. Carroll categorises them into three broad categories namely, those that deal with structural concerns, others that focus on what he describes as "theological conundrums" that find expression in these structures and other literary devices and a third category that concerns itself with poetics (2002:44-47). In a move away from an acute focus on textual detail, scholars such as Möller (2003) and Linville (2000) observed these structures with a view to investigate the "theological conundrums" inherent in these structures as well as concentrate on literary word usage, metaphors and nuances. Based on a reading of Amos 3, the doxologies and 7:10-17, utilising a literary rhetorical strategy, Möller (2003) seeks to present the prophet in debate with the intention of making the hearers and readers respond appropriately to the text.

Poetics, with its focus on "plot, point of view and characterization," represents the third category of literary approaches that surfaced since the 1990s. Carroll makes use of a multidisciplinary approach in conjunction with poetics to "grasp the characterization of the nation and leaders" of the Northern Kingdom (2002:47). Carroll strongly demonstrates his concern with engaging the text of Amos with the modern world. In this regard he, quite appropriately, states the following: "The entirety of Israel, along with all of its institutions and social mores, merits Yahweh's pronouncement through the prophet of imminent and devastating destruction. What surfaces in these readings is a deeply religious construction of reality, with multiple intersecting interests and complicity in self-deluding, and finally fatal, misconceptions about life and the Deity by every sector of the population" (Carroll 2002:47).

All of the endeavours to reconstruct the social world "behind the text" (which includes all social scientific research efforts in the Hebrew Bible) and movements "within the text," to analyse the literary structures embedded in the text, find ultimate expression and relevance when the text is engaged with by the world. The impact of Amos on a reader or community of readers otherwise referred to as the influence that takes place "in front of the text," then becomes instrumental in addressing a myriad of social evils that are prevalent in the 21st century.

2.3.3   The Impact of Amos on the Community of Readers

As the above literary approaches offered new and fresh perspectives on the structural components of the text, other scholars were concerned with the impact of the text on the reader or the community of readers.

Towards the close of the 20th century the reading and studying of the Bible took a whole new turn. The emphasis was now on the impact of the text on the reader or community of readers and its application to their lives. The search for clarity on the social, literary and institutional background of the text, as well as the analysis of the literary styles and composition of the text, were still regarded as very important. However, there developed a greater concern with regard to what was happening "in front of the text" (Carroll 2002:27). In essence this was the influence of the text on the reader and the manner in which the text was appropriated by the reader. In contrast to the pursuit of classical critical scholarship, which focused on deciphering timeless universal principles in the text, liberation scholars "saw the proper - and, more crucially, the ethical - goal of the study of the Bible as moving beyond some sort of theological, historical, or literary reconstruction of the text" (Carroll 2002:27). The Bible became a proactive and intentional instrument of engagement in pursuit of a particular agenda. These scholars did not in any way disregard the value of classical critical scholarship, but rather took issue with the manner in which their findings were applied.

A characteristic of this time frame is the marked social stratification between the rich and poor in various global communities, an intense struggle for freedom following some of the worst human violations experienced in the history of humankind, e.g. the holocaust in Nazi Germany, racial oppression and segregation in North America and southern Africa, ecclesiastical and political oppression of the poor in Latin America and the ideological communistic oppression in Communist Russia and China. The book of Amos was utilised in an increasingly relevant manner to address the exploitation and oppression of the weak and vulnerable. Parallels were sought in the ancient prophetic text corpus to socially sensitise the conscience of believers and communities in an attempt to address the plight of the weak. The emergence and development of Liberation Theology was founded on the prophetic literature and hinged on "the denunciation of social injustice and the announcement of a better tomorrow" (Carroll 2002:27). The appropriation of the biblical text found expression in various sociopolitical, cultural and gender liberation strategies. Kiogora (1998:337) points to the contribution of Liberation Theology as

"raising the question of the reading of biblical texts in the light of social, political, and economic situations of Third World peoples." The term "liberation," relative to biblical and theological studies, was coined simultaneously for the first time by Black North American and Latin American theologians independently of each other as they introduced the term "liberation" into the appropriation of the biblical text within their respective communities (Kiogora 1998:338).

The people of Latin America, beset by a form of colonial Christian domination, struggled against sociopolitical and economic oppression. The Spanish occupation of Latin America between 1492 and 1808 subjected the peoples of this continent to both ecclesiastical and political domination. Poverty was seen to have originated from unjust social structures. Yahweh was most certainly not satisfied with the treatment of the poor. The Latin American view of Yahweh's relationship to the poor is stated by Kiogora as follows: "The phrase 'preferential option for the poor' was coined to indicate one of the most important hermeneutical keys in the Theology of Liberation. God, the theologians insisted, being by nature just and merciful, is more inclined to hear the cry of the poor. Moreover, by virtue of their poverty, the poor are the weak in society, and God prefers to operate in the world from the perspective of the weak, the poor, or those at the periphery of human made 'centres'. Anything that dehumanizes persons - and poverty does that - distorts God's image in human beings" (1998:340). The influence of Amos's view of the poor comes through very clearly in this statement. The poor are elevated to a sense of righteousness before God.

Black Theology in North America was rooted in the struggle against racial oppression and segregation. The black person, as the oppressed, is at the core of God's plan for salvation in Black Theology. As a result of a shared purpose, there is a connection with other liberation theology strategies. In the African context, and more specifically in the South African context, Black Theology was concerned with the liberation from political and socio-economic domination based on a racist white supremacist ideology which was believed to have been divinely inspired. The plight of the poor was also viewed as central to this liberative notion with God choosing to side with the poor and the oppressed (Kiogora 1998:343-345).

A number of liberation theology scholars utilised the text of Amos in order to pursue their concern for social justice within their own communities. Croatto (1987), an Argentine Liberation Theology scholar who specialised in the Old Testament, expressed the successful appropriation of prophetic oracles as based on the redactional modification of earlier stratums of

the biblical material through the successful interpretive strategies of later communities of faith (Carroll 2002:28). Amos 9:11-15, in Croatto's opinion, was canonically reshaped to make the text more appropriate in new social contexts (1987:56). This salvific hope and restoration postulated in this passage would also have been applicable in the Argentinean quest for justice in the 1980s. Hope and salvation can only follow on a proper execution of justice as is portrayed in the book of Amos. As a result, exegetical studies would no longer be undertaken in isolation, but would be applied in a very concrete and tangible manner to the liberation of the poor and needy from exploitation and oppression.

2.4   SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC STUDIES IN AMOS AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

Efforts to define the literary prehistory of Amos and the compositional growth of the book were, since the 1970s, accompanied by archeological findings that probed the "concrete historical realities lying behind the prophetic message" (Carroll 2002:20). Anthropological and sociological studies, subsequent to this, form a third approach that attempts to get "behind the text" (Carroll 2002:22). The interest in the political expressions of the classical prophets was on the increase and pointed to the fact that "serious investigations into the political and social convictions and loyalties of the prophets, as well as the use of the social sciences in the study of the Old Testament" was not entirely a new phenomenon (Carroll 1992:22, 23). The utilisation of social science theory in the study of the Old Testament and classical prophecy can by no means be considered as recent if one takes into account the work done by Max Weber in *Ancient Judaism* (translated into English in 1952).

Citing the sociological studies of Overholt (1979; 1982; 1989), who had made major contributions to the social reconstruction of ancient Israel, Carroll (1992:25) expresses concern that not much attention was given to sociopolitical studies. For this reason a closer look at the studies of Weber (1952), Petersen (1981) and Gottwald (1993) becomes necessary. From a sociopolitical perspective, it would be useful to step back and take a close look at Weber's *Ancient Judaism,* as the forerunner to modern sociological studies of the Hebrew Bible. Weber's (1952) reconstruction of Jewish history, with the purpose of defining the extent to which they became a "pariah people," revolved around his attempts to understand to what extent religious beliefs influenced the practical economic situation. According to Weber, classical prophecy

derived its distinctive form as an "impending gloom beclouded the political horizon" of their time (1952:267). He goes on to describe them as "political demagogues" (Weber 1952:267) who confronted the heavy politicisation and bureaucratisation of state resources, violations of Israel's historical values, and the gluttonous accumulation of wealth and power. Petersen (1981) regards the prophets as closely linked to the monarchy, yet maintaining a sufficient distance and critical posture based on their unique moral universe. Despite this relationship, the prophets did not choose any political side, but rather concerned themselves overwhelmingly with religious values. Weber (1952) on the other hand shares the view that the prophetic message was directed at the socioeconomic and political system, although the prophets understood the violations that occurred from a different perspective. Rent capitalism, considered to be the prime target of Amos's invective, subjects the rural peasant, struggling to subsist and retain his patrimonial land, to the mercy of "political and urban elites" who prematurely and forcefully foreclosed on these properties for their own benefit (Coote 1981:31-32). The result was extreme social stratification and the creation of an oppressive political, social and economic order that exploited the powerless and vulnerable. The capitalist nature of the economy was challenged by Dearman (1988:29) who pointed out that the urban elite ignored the very intrusive role played by the state in the economy and the influence of external political, economic and military factors.

Another prominent scholar who has made a significant contribution to the reconstruction of the social, political and economic world of ancient Israel is Gottwald (1985; 1986; 1993; 2001). With reference to the prophet Amos, Gottwald describes his function as "attack(ing) the patriotic and pious conservative reaction that had gained currency among the upper classes during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. The greedy upper classes, with governmental and juridical connivance, were systematically expropriating the land of commoners so that they could heap up wealth and display it gaudily in a lavish 'conspicuous consumption' economy" (1985:356). This is also defined as the central theme of the book. Amos exhibited an acute awareness of Yahweh's social justice concerns that were enshrined in the narrative and legal traditions of ancient Israel and practiced in many villages faithfully. However, the Israel that he squared up to ignored these traditions in a grotesque manner. The result was a structured critical analysis, driven by an undeterred passion and fuelled by gross violations of Yahweh's social, political and religious expectations. An immediate and dynamic experience with Yahweh provided the spark that brought forth this prophetic invective.

2.4.1   Archeological Findings and Social Theory

King views the relationship between archeology and biblical studies as so closely related that 'biblical archeology' has become a household term with its key purpose to gain insight into the Bible (1988:15). According to King, "biblical archeology is the process of correlating archeological evidence with the biblical record in order to illuminate the biblical text. The combination of material evidence derived through archeology and of textual data provided by literary scholarship can add significantly to the understanding of the Bible" (1988:16). Archeological efforts have been enhanced in a significant manner through the collaboration of various specialists such as anthropologists and archeologists, and modern scientific techniques such as "remote sensing, magnetometry, and neutron activation analysis" in providing more accurate and precise analysis. This archeological approach therefore, in King's view, assisted greatly in providing information about the impact of agriculture, trade and industry on eighth century ancient Israel that was responsible for creating the pyramidal structure that was so vehemently opposed by the prophets. Although "… the principal mission of the prophets was religion … it was intimately related to politics, because the two can never be separated" (King 1988:19).

There was a renewed interest in the religious value systems of ancient Israel. Various archeological findings throughout Palestine were at the centre of scholarly endeavours to elucidate the religious beliefs and practices of eighth century BC Israel. Commenting on the reference to the earthquake in Amos 1:1, also referred to in Zech 14:5, King suggests that "the earthquake would seem to pinpoint Amos's ministry" while he concedes that this dating cannot be regarded as precise despite the view of archeologists that they have found evidence to support this (1988:21). Carroll (2002) refers to two discoveries, in particular, that had a major influence on the understanding of the popular religion practiced in eighth century Israel. These findings can also influence how the message and ministry of the classical prophets can be interpreted and understood. The archeological data referred to concerns the *marzēaḥ* feast and the findings at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qôm. The findings in many instances contributed to the proposals made around the origins of Yahwistic monotheism (Carroll 2002:21). The *marzēaḥ* feast is considered to have been a social gathering for sad or joyous occasions and was sponsored by wealthy fraternal groupings. Amos refers to this elaborate feast in 6:4-7. A number of scholars have been influenced in their interpretations by the discoveries related to the *marzēaḥ*

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feast. Barstad (1984) stresses Amos's opposition to Baalism and his promotion of a sole Yahwistic faith as the primary goal. Andersen & Freedman (1989) recognise the religious significance of the *marzēaḥ* feast but do not in any way suggest that Amos was concerned with religious violations (Carroll 2002:21). They describe the institution of the *marzēaḥ* feast as "a kind of funeral co-operative (that provided) facilities for the burial rites and care of the dead" (Andersen & Freedman 1989:567, 568). Further on they accept the reference to *marzēaḥ* as a feast that was held in a mourning house as a wake for the dead. Amos's rejection of this feast is based on the fact that the institution was not utilised in the manner that it was intended. The grieving process should instead have been directed at the ruin of Joseph as indicated in Amos 6:6b (Andersen & Freedman 1989:567). Scholars such as Wolff (1977), Coote (1981), Soggin (1987) and Hayes (1988) focused primarily on the social implications of these celebrations ignoring their religious implications. More recently McLaughlin (2001) did an interesting study relating to the *marzēaḥ* feast in the prophetic literature as he set out to explore this ancient near eastern institution.[14]

The archeological findings at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qôm have highlighted the complexity of Israelite religion in the eighth century BC. Underscoring the significance of these discoveries, Boshoff (2000:106) makes the following statement: "Not many recent archeological finds have illuminated the popular religion of a period as dramatically as did Kuntillet 'Ajrud. The results of these excavations have radically challenged our thinking about eighth century Israelite religion. In the remains of Kuntillet 'Ajrud I believe we have come across the material heritage of people who believed Yahweh was attached to certain places like Shomron (Samaria) and Teman, who thought of Yahweh as a God with a goddess as his consort, and who saw El, Yahweh and Baal as names of one and the same God." The essence of the findings at Kuntillet 'Ajrud concerns the discovery of two large storage jars (pithoi) that contained paintings of religious motifs and an inscription pronouncing a blessing in the name of "Yahweh of Samaria and his asherah." At Khirbet el-Qôm (near Hebron), an eighth century Hebrew inscription was found on the wall of a tomb. The inscription also referred to Yahweh and his asherah. Boshoff links these sights to Israel and Judah in the eighth century BC. Asherah in the Bible is known as a Canaanite religious goddess mentioned sometimes in relation to Baal (2 Kgs 23:4) with priests associated with her service as recorded in 1 Kgs 18:19 (Boshoff 2000:100). Her association with

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[14] The *marzēaḥ* feast is explored in more detail in chapter 5.

eighth century Israelite religion has most probably contributed to the cultic opposition from the classical prophets. Dijkstra (2001) comes to the conclusion that the historic discovery at Khirbet el-Qôm gains greater significance by proving that such references to Yahweh and his Asherah were by no means the exception. He also suggested that this may indicate a little more than "*marginal syncretism*" (2001:117). He cites 1 Kgs 16:33 as confirmation that Ahab introduced the veneration of Asherah in Samaria. He further postulates that the veneration of Yahweh and his asherah was part of the local and domestic cult. Carroll links these findings indirectly to Amos's research in the sense that it might clarify passages such as 5:25-26 and 8:14 in the book of Amos. There seems to be no consensus among scholars as to whether the prophetic message referred to other deities or even if the worship of other deities can be located within this time frame (Carroll 2002:21). The significance of these archeological findings in determining the historical reality of the nature of Israelite religion in the eighth century BC cannot be underestimated.

The utilisation of archeological tools in determining the social structures behind the text of Amos has increased in significance towards the end of the 20th century. Paul's commentary in the Hermeneia series (1981) has adequately demonstrated the effective use of archeological findings in this regard. Information regarding the ancient religious practices and belief systems abound in his work. In this light the debate around the significance of the *marzēaḥ* feasts in Amos 6:3-7; 2:8 and 4:1 in terms of its religious connotations continued unabated. Discussions around the *marzēaḥ* feast and the Canaanite goddess cult Asherah also focused primarily on the origins of monotheism and the nature of popular religion in ancient Israel.

2.4.2   Social Science and Anthropology

Anthropological studies were also prominent during the 1980s. Wilson's *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (1980) sought to investigate the social background of prophecy from a cultural anthropological and traditional critical perspective. He defines the social standing of the prophet in relation to the "center of society's social, religious, and political power structure" (Wilson 1995: 339). Central prophets tend to operate close to the centre of power and enjoy social and political power and prestige through their religious functions. Peripheral prophets on the other hand, are far removed from the power structures of society. Operating on the fringes of society they "have almost no authority within the society as a whole and are usually dispossessed

individuals having little status or political power" (1995:339). Wilson's distinction between central and peripheral intermediaries, with the former concerned with maintaining the existing social status quo and the latter demanding a radical social change and questioning the legitimacy of the system, clearly puts Amos on the side of peripheral intermediaries demanding drastic and radical social, political, economic and religious changes. De Jong refers to Wilson's 1980 study as "a famous monument rather than the beginning of a new paradigm" based on his description of prophets from a socio-anthropological perspective (2007:29), in that he (De Jong) effectively renders it outdated. It might then be helpful to look at a more recent study by Overholt (1996). While we are not direct or participant observers of ancient Israelite society, Overholt is of the view that we can use the data and ideas from comparative anthropology to assist us with interpreting ancient texts. He offers the use of anthropological theory as a valuable aid in understanding the nature of culture as well as the relationship of individuals within such a culture (Overholt 1996:3). Despite the advances made in studies in the field of new archeology and socio-anthropology, De Jong argues that it has been difficult for these disciplines to be applied to the study of Israelite prophecy (2007:29). He alludes to the uncertainty regarding biblical prophecy over the last few decades. Greater emphasis on the modern literary composition of the prophetic books, as they derive from the Persian and Hellenistic period, appear to have somewhat undermined the study of prophecy as having its origins as "a historical phenomenon in pre-exilic Israel" (De Jong 2007:29). In order to overcome this difficulty, De Jong proposes that a comparative study of prophecy would add "to our understanding of prophecy and supplies analogies that may confirm the exegetical and historical analysis" and furthermore that an exegetical and historical analysis, together with an in-depth comparative study of prophecy, would provide a constructive "route from the biblical texts to prophecy as a socio-historical phenomenon in pre-exilic Israel" (2007:30).

2.4.3   The Quest for Social Scientific Effectiveness

Notwithstanding the above values, contributed by various sociological approaches, the quest was on for more sensitive and effective utilisation of sociological tools to ensure greater theoretical clarity. A number of scholars have pointed to the difficulty of utilising sociological approaches in the Old Testament. Malina points to "three criticisms leveled at the use of social science models in biblical interpretation. Theologians of various stripes see the utilisation of the social

sciences as reductionistic, hence eminently useless. Some social scientists see such an approach useful but impossible, given the paucity of data in our body of texts. Finally, for many of our historians and theologians, the social sciences are simply too deterministic to explain adequately anything as distinctive and personal as change in human history" (1982:237). Following a very detailed argument, Malina (1982:241) suggests that a good social science model for biblical interpretation would exhibit the following features: Firstly it should have a cross-cultural approach that would lay the basis for a comparative perspective. Secondly, the abstraction formulated should be sufficient in the sense that it allows similarities to surface for comparative purposes. Thirdly, the model must allow for a larger sociolinguistic frame that would facilitate the interpretation of texts. Fourthly, we should be able to identify those experiences that we are familiar with in the biblical text. Fifthly, rather than be relevant, the meanings generated should be understandable to our modern society. Finally, social scientists should be able to accept the application of the model even if they disagree with the validity thereof (Malina 1982:241). With regard to the social sciences, the biblical text and biblical history, Burden (1993:213) is of the opinion that the social sciences provide important tools that can be utilised in the "linguistic and historical dimensions of biblical scholarship." As biblical texts are historical by nature, distanced socially, culturally, economically and politically from contemporary society, some sort of historical model becomes necessary to be used in conjunction with the social scientific approach which is more rooted in the present. Burden (1993:214) is in agreement with Malina on the following statement: "Now for the interpretation of texts from the past, some sets of models of the social-science-with-history sort are necessary to deal with imposed meanings in the past so that the distinctive, particular, and different might emerge in some validatable, testable, and articulate way" (Malina 1982:233).

The use of social science theories within Amos studies is at best a very complicated matter. Carroll (1992:31-45) has with great detail highlighted some of the limitations that are associated with a study of this nature. He identifies two methodological weaknesses that are evident in social scientific reconstructions of the biblical text. The first problem concerns the availability of information and the second, very closely related to the first, concerns the arbitrary use of that information. According to Carroll "the broader the model, the greater the danger of multiple errors and the 'ripple effect' of misjudgment or lack of data throughout the model" (1992:32). The availability of data is further complicated by the academic orientation of the

biblical researcher. "Efforts at reconstruction, therefore, not only are children of their time, but can very well be confused offspring of ignorance" says Carroll (1992:33). Not only are time and expertise constraining factors in the availability of data, but so is the paucity of such data.

Apart from the limitations experienced with the availability of data, Carroll also highlights the arbitrary manner in which this data is used. Describing this as a philosophical dilemma, he points out that scholarly investigation is normally characterised by "a whole set of interrelated presuppositions, whether cultural, ideological, intellectual, or socioeconomic" (1992:34). These presuppositions normally originate within the context of the particular scholar doing the research. It is this state of affairs that has invited strong criticism from Third World theologians who regard western theologians as out of touch with the prophetic invective against injustice and unrighteousness.

The above limitations are further complicated by the arbitrary and ineffective use of social science theories to generate an effective historical reconstruction. Runciman proposes a four-step approach to an effective social science theory of reconstruction (1983:57-144). Reportage involves a "description of the actions, attitudes and states of affairs to be investigated." Priority is given to the accounts of the agents under study and in return should be answerable to and accepted by these agents and other observers. The second step involves explanation which attempts to construct a good conceptual model focusing on causes, social structures and relationships. Description as the third concern, seeks to record observations with the aim "to ascertain what life is really like, to explore the agent's *Weltanschauung*, to so conceptualize the investigated society that both the agents and the reader judge the description as comprehensible and authentic." The last phase is evaluation which is concerned with evaluating the researched behaviour as either good or bad distinguishing between the researcher's point of view and that of the agent under study. If these four components are in any way not kept distinct, the hypothetical constructs would be muddled or skewed.

Despite the obvious limitations inherent in social scientific studies, Carroll demonstrates his faith in this approach by utilising interpretive anthropology to focus on the nature of religious life prevalent within the text of Amos. As a distinct social scientific approach to the study of popular religion, "this perspective appreciates the formal and informal symbols, values, behavior, and rituals that are shared across generational, socioeconomic, and gender boundaries - those 'webs of significances' … which provide some level of coherence within any cultural

setting" (2002:42). Jaruzelska has done a number of studies on the book of Amos utilising social scientific methodology. She attempts to move beyond the simplistic approach of the rich-poor conflict model. On close examination of various elements within the social structure of eighth century BC Israel, Jaruzelska comes to the conclusion that creditors, officials, judges and tradesmen were stigmatised by the prophet for "their transgression in the matter of property law" which in most cases involved the violation of the rights of the poor (1992-1993:113).

Ideological criticism as a distinct social science approach focuses on the text as a social product of human art and workmanship. It focuses on the production of texts as "sociotheological, even political, literature within particular ancient contexts" (Carroll 2002:42). Yee describes the function of ideological criticism as follows: "Ideological criticism investigates (1) the production of the text by a particular author in a specific, ideologically charged historical context, (2) the reproduction of ideology in the text itself, and (3) the consumption of the text by readers in different social locations who are themselves motivated and constraint by distinct ideologies" (1999:535). This approach utilises literary-critical methods within a historical and social scientific frame of reference to affect an extrinsic and intrinsic analysis as part of a total strategy for reading the biblical text. The focus of an extrinsic analysis is on the social structures (i.e. political, economic and religious), relations between various conflict groups and interests that benefited from a particular mode of production and those that were deprived under it within the same community. An intrinsic analysis, on the other hand, investigates the nature of certain power groups within a society and attempts to elucidate the type of economic, political or social structures wielding power when the text was written and whether this power was of a formal nature or not, or whether it was legal, cultic or religious (1999:535).

Pleins (2000) utilises ideological criticism in his attempts to socially and historically locate the multiple, and at times, conflicting ethical visions found in the biblical text. He focuses on the text sections that deal with injustice and exploitation of the poor in Amos 2:6; 8:4-6; 2:8a; 5:11-12; 3:12, 15 and 6:4. Yahweh, through the prophet Amos, condemns the abuse inflicted on the vulnerable in society through the existing legal and economic structures. Yahweh is also displeased with the urban values that have penetrated the society and have consequently negatively influenced the lives of the poor. As a result, the entire nation faces an impending doom and is exhorted to seek the face of the Lord. For Pleins the key objective of the classical prophets together with their followers was to seriously engage the social hierarchy, religious

values and ideological persuasions of their day. The oracles of Hosea, Amos, Micah and Haggai despite their "particular historical situation," transcend their own historical boundaries as a result of a developing consciousness that came to the fore following the exile (Pleins 2000:354). Prophecy has therefore developed into "a tradition that can be tapped to measure social praxis, long after the prophet's words have been conveyed" (Pleins 2000:354).

2.4.4   Promising Prospects in Social Scientific Research

Attitudes towards social scientific approaches over the last three decades have been varied. Responses ranged from unqualified support, through careful optimism and ultimately to outright suspicion. Kruger (2000:18-21) discusses these responses and gives us some insight into both the positive and problematic aspects as well as providing some future prospects for the utilisation of social science theory in the Hebrew Bible. On the positive side, Kruger proposes three profitable benefits that could emerge out of social scientific studies (2000:19). This approach has the benefit of (1) posing new questions and providing an extended view of an existing corpus of literature; (2) while not providing additional data, it has the capacity to create a framework within which to analyse existing data and (3) it should be regarded as supplementary to historical research and not as a substitute for it (Kruger 2000:19).

Inasmuch as there are benefits to be derived from the application of social scientific principles to the Hebrew Bible, we need to take cognisance of the following problem areas (Kruger 2000:20-21):

(1) The time distance between the historical reality of the Bible and modern social theory would suggest that anthropological data rather be "mapped" instead of "mirrored" to reflect the social and religious context of the text;

(2) The dangers of reductionism that could result in a false unity imposed on the text;

(3) The suitability of descriptive terms that are limited in a general application sense and the difficulty experienced by biblical scholars in fully comprehending contemporary anthropological and social scientific theories, and

(4) The utilisation of outdated anthropological models by biblical scholars.

Despite these limitations and shortcomings, Kruger holds out the prospects of social scientific insights on the Hebrew Bible as promising if the following are considered. Firstly, it must be remembered that such an approach should not be regarded as a universal solution for

historical problems, but rather postulating some interesting probabilities. Secondly, as a relatively young discipline in the study of the Old Testament, a tradition still needs to be developed. A third consideration takes into account the progressive interdisciplinary nature of the modern behavioural sciences which requires that biblical researchers should be aware of the insights of the social sciences (Kruger 2000: 20-21).

The social-scientific perspective is therefore a welcome addition to the traditional historical and textual studies since it suggests a fresh set of questions to ask of an ancient corpus of literature and offers appropriate tools and frameworks for analysing such data. It allows the researcher to reconstruct the social and cultural structures of the time of Amos in a more systematic and responsible manner. The application of these insights to the prophetic texts is more of a recent phenomenon (the seventies of the previous century). With this in mind, we need to note that social scientific criticism "insists that biblical texts are not merely historical ideas, but also social and cultural productions" (Arendse 1998:201). It focuses on the "indispensable significance of analysing the interaction between the biblical text and the ancient socio-cultural world in which it was first produced" (Arendse 1998:199).[15] Thomas holds the view that the prophetic books contain invaluable material relating to social and political commentary and provides us with detailed insight into everyday life in Israel (2003:11).

2.5   SUMMARY

Current research on the personal, social, political, economic and religious background of the classical prophets, Amos in particular, has become more focused on issues around social injustice. Amos's concern for the poor and marginalised gained prominence and his advocacy for social justice and righteousness were recognised by all scholars who undertook a serious study of the book. Wellhausen's theory had, in no uncertain terms, set the direction that would keep scholars occupied well into the 21st century. Not only would research on Amos and the eighth century prophets generate an immense and fascinating interest in the origins of ancient Israelite religion and prophecy, but in its application it made a major contribution to the social gospel that

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[15] Since this study is first and foremost of a historical nature, the main focus will be on an in-depth historical-critical analysis of selected texts. The main objective of the historical critical tradition is to demonstrate the authenticity of a given literary corpus, which is followed by a thorough exegetical investigation of those texts. Social scientific perspectives will be applied in a selective and supplementary manner in order to achieve the objectives of this project.

developed in the twentieth century. It is precisely his concern for social justice and righteousness that led to the manner in which the prophet addressed the political, economic and religious authorities and participants of his day and defined his relationship to the prevailing political establishment. For Amos's message was not directed only against the rulers and leaders of his time, but the entire nation that risked Yahweh's judgement for their social and religious insensitivities and abuses. By contrasting the moral and ethical decay of eighth century Israel against the universal code of Yahweh, embedded in the historical-religious traditions of the nation of Israel, Wellhausen and early critical scholarship set in motion the relationship between politics and religion in the prophetic books in general and Amos in particular.[16] This balance between politics and religion, as defined by the classical prophets, was already recognisable in the early stages of prophetic studies.[17] More recently, this trend of thought was shared by scholars such as Koch (1983), Hasel (1991) and Strydom (1996) who view Amos's social criticism as rooted in the covenant-election traditions, the land promise tradition and the orders of *mišpāṭ* (justice) and *ṣedāqā* (righteousness). Developing trends in Amos research over the last century is therefore best understood against the vocation and calling of the prophet Amos, the socio-political, religious and economic backdrop of Israel in eighth century BC and the message of the classical prophets against this background.

The voluminous interest in the Hebrew classical prophets and Amos in particular over the last century is an indication of various scholarly attempts to gain a clearer understanding of the prophetic message and its application to a solution of the world's most complex social issues. Questions of large scale impoverishment, social injustice, political abuse and religious fallacy have been addressed through a meticulous study of these prophetic oracles. Politico-religious ideologies such as Liberation Theology in Latin America and Black Theology in North America and Africa were born out of the message contained in these oracles. Carroll summarises the

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[16] This relationship was underscored by Montefiore in 1892 in his *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Hebrews* (Hibbert Lectures 1892:150) with the following statement: "And, though the genius of the prophets enabled them to cast a piercing glance into political affairs, and to show greater perspicacity than the mass of their contemporaries in interpreting the movements of Assyria and in recognizing the weakness of the neighboring states, the political advice which they gave was suggested and controlled by their fundamental religious convictions."

[17] Even in his rejection of Amos as a creative religious innovator, Mays (1959:268) affirms the essential task of Amos in managing this intricate balance with the following: "Amos is not engaged in the formation of a new religion, but in the radical revival of the ancient election-covenant theology and the application of it to the contemporary situation which Israel's social development and political history have created."

interest in the Hebrew prophetic literature with this statement: "The Old Testament prophetic office and literature in particular have always attracted those who have desired to carry such biblical themes as pure religion, holiness and justice beyond the confines of Christian communities and into the national and international arena. Moved by the biblical message, and indignant at the prevailing social situation, 'prophets' from a wide theological and ideological spectrum across the centuries have spoken out and attempted to challenge the status quo. Theirs has been no mere academic interest in the biblical literature, but rather a passion to change the very structures of society" (1992:15). The Book of Amos is considered to hold a special place among the Hebrew classical prophetic literature. Not only is Amos regarded as the first writing prophet, but his powerful message has and continues to have an enticing influence on scholars. The study of Amos has to a large extent set the tone and determined the standard for the study of the prophetic movement and its literature. The uniqueness of Amos in this regard is described by Carroll (2002:3) as follows: "Its place as the first written prophetic text, the brief biographical revelations of a call and its impressive visions, and the enduring power of the message of the man from Tekoa have continually brought this text into the center of many of the broader concerns of investigation into prophetism in general." The result of this interest has been a considerable volume of studies which has reserved for the Book of Amos, a small, unique and significant library of its own. Craghan demonstrated the phenomenal growth in Amos literature when he pointed out that Mays's 1959 expectations of Amos studies "becoming a small library on their own" were exceeded by the explosive growth of literature in the following 13 years (1972:242).

The intense scholarly interest in the book of Amos over the last century, while revealing prophetic concerns with the social, political, economic and religious situation faced by the prophet, does not address in any substantial manner, the balance between politics and religion as dealt with by the classical prophets. While there were references made by eminent scholars, in the past, to the political issues raised by the classical prophets, the central thrust of the prophetic oracles, as the prophetic concern with social injustice, only gained momentum from around the 1980s onwards.

This overview will now make way for a closer study of the ideology underlying the ancient Near Eastern political structures in the first part of the first millennium BC as presented in Chapter 3. This examination will provide the ideological framework within which the political

structures of the time operated contributing to a better understanding of the socio-political and economic background against which the prophet Amos's prophetic denunciations took place.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND STRUCTURES OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AROUND THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1ST MILLENNIUM BC

The relationship between politics and religion in the ancient Near East can at best be described as complex. A very close link existed between the palace and temple. Frankfort notes that the political nature, assigned by modern scholarship, to ancient kingship would itself have been incomprehensible to the people of the time (1948b:3). The reason for this, he postulates, can be found in the transcended boundaries of local and national communities that extend deep into the realms of nature and the powers that rule the universe (Frankfort 1948b:3). To view kingship purely in terms of its political nature would seriously restrict one's view of the totality of political, religious, social and economic life of the people of the ancient Near East. Kingship therefore in all respects was considered to be the foundation of ancient Near Eastern societies.

A reconstruction of the political landscape of the ancient Orient could hardly be achieved without recognising the role that religion has played in the political structure of the state and its leadership. The declared will of divine beings play a critical role in defining the social existence and justification of states. Religion became an ideological imperative that served to authenticate the prevailing social and political order (Gottwald 1985: 65). Political conduct was somewhat sanctioned by the gods who clearly chartered the political course of society. Similarly, leadership enjoyed political legitimacy by strong association with the deities. The king, presiding over issues of social justice, security and peace, was assured political legitimacy through the religious ceremonies and rituals which existed in society. Lemche states that the association between palace and temple were so intricate that it is often difficult to clearly define the boundaries of politics and religion (1995:2049). In her introduction to a series of essays on politics and religion in the ancient Near East, Berlin (1996:1) confirms the very close relationship between religion and political life within the region. Religion becomes an inevitable part of public life where it functions as an essential element within such a society. According to Berlin (1996:1), such societies are characterised by an intricate integration between the political and religious aspects of the society. She holds the view that "kingship is established and kings are chosen at the behest of the deities; and the destruction of cities or kingdoms is explained in theological terms by the anger of the gods and their abandonment of their people" (Berlin 1996:1).

Kingship became the very basis of civilisation in the ancient Near East and played a pivotal role in the religious ideology of these ancient empires. Likewise, in ancient Israel the monarchy was central to the traditions of the Old Testament and dominated scholarly debate earlier in the century. Dearman defines the monarchy as "a central symbol for the political and religious identity of Israel" (1992:53). The level of integration between politics and religion in ancient Israel was in no way different from other ancient Near Eastern states. Ahlström asserts that "the modern idea of a separation between 'church' and 'state' is not applicable for near eastern religions" (1995:592). Pollock confirms this view with her statement that "religion pervaded political and economic decisions, just as they in turn affected religious beliefs and practices" (1999:186). Kings not only claimed to govern by divine endorsement but they were viewed as being primarily in the service of their respective deities (Pollock 1999:188). Gottwald demonstrates the association between the early development of the state and kingship ideology by pointing out that the state, from the very beginning, claimed to secure social justice and domestic order, with the head of state charged with the prime responsibility to oversee and guarantee those communal rights (2001:114). The existing state structures were legitimised through religious beliefs and practices which in turn ensured divine blessings (Gottwald 2001:114). Religion therefore, played a key role in ensuring compliance with state rule and the decisions of officials through solemn warrants, sanctions and even armed coercion where necessary (Gottwald 2001:114).

The manner in which the complex relationship between politics and religion was handled by the prophets in ancient Israel can best be understood against the background of the prevailing institution of kingship in Israel and in a broader context within the ancient Near East. The social, political and religious institutions of Israel developed within this broader context. These institutions were at the heart of prophetic concern. The political development of ancient Israel is inextricably linked to political developments in the broader ancient Near East. Gottwald describes this link as follows: "The politics that is immediately germane to ancient Israel is the politics of the ancient Near East. This is the slice of 'world-historical time' that provides the necessary perspective for viewing ancient Israelite politics" (2001:113). Israel's neighbours had an almost two thousand year head start on the formation of statehood and political institutions which exercised a phenomenal influence on this small levantine state. Gottwald provides us with some insight on the influence that ancient Near Eastern political ideologies and structures had on

Israel during its formative years (2001:120). He describes Israel as a "late secondary state" and an heir of the surrounding mature "statist political organizations" to which it was exposed during its formative years since it became fully developed as a state only after nearly two thousand years of state experience in its wider environment (Gottwald 2001:120). For Gottwald, Israel's frequent interface with other states, and at times subjugation by them, makes it "incumbent on us to understand the structures and strategies of those states as they formed a political matrix for the specifically Israelite political trajectory" (2001:120).

A closer analysis of the ideology of kingship within the ancient Near East, in particular as it existed within Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as an exegetical analysis of certain texts within the Hebrew Bible relating to kingship in ancient Israel will give us a better understanding of the background to the prophetic invective of Amos and the other classical prophets as they addressed the distorted relationship that existed between politics and religion. The term ideology is described by Pollack as the manner in which "socio-political systems, and certain groups within them, attempt to establish their legitimacy through the creation of a particular view of how the world works" (1999:173). This world view in the ancient Near East exhibited strong religious overtones since religion, according to Pollack, was not only intimately connected to nature but also to politics (1999:188). It is the intention of this chapter to sketch a broad outline of the development of political structures and the institution of kingship within a definite political and religious ideological framework within the most important centres of the ancient Near East, namely Mesopotamia, Egypt and Syro-Palestine up to the first part of the first millennium BC. This would provide a basis for a review of current opinions on the relationship between religion and politics during the time of Amos, which will be addressed in detail in chapter five.

3.1 KINGSHIP IDEOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1ST MILLENIUM BC.

In a more recent reconstruction of ancient Israelite politics, Gottwald provides us with a picture of the political environment of the ancient Near East at the "dawn of civilization" (2001:113). State politics are understood to have arisen independently in Egypt and among the Sumerian states of Mesopotamia, and spread over a wide area as a result of conquest and imitation (Gottwald 2001:113). The emergence of the state in ancient Israel and the political structures and

influencing ideology can only be meaningfully studied by taking the entire political situation of the ancient Near East into account. The emerging political structures of the ancient Near East, as they developed in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC, had a definite and very distinct influence on the emergence and origins of statehood and kingship structures of ancient Israel. Rulers were expected to preside over a flourishing and well-governed state and "ruled on the express authority of the gods" (Lambert 1998:55). The origins of kingship in the ancient Near East are inextricably related to the origins of statehood.

A critical element of the development of statehood, concerns the political ideology of state religion and divine kingship that lay at the heart of state function. The impact of kingship in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Syro-Palestine was expected to have had a profound influence on the religious political philosophy of ancient Israel as later manifested in the prophetic oracles of the classical prophets. This section will examine the ideology underpinning ancient Near Eastern political structures during the first half of the first millennium BC. In an attempt to facilitate a structured approach to this investigation, the researcher has identified four dimensions considered to be key aspects of ancient Near Eastern royal ideology that had a bearing on the prevailing political philosophy of the time. Each of these elements will be looked at from a comparative perspective involving Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian societies. The following section will concentrate primarily on Israelite society around the same period. The areas to be investigated include the origins of kingship within emerging state structures, the relationship of the institution of kingship to the relevant deity or deities, the political legitimation of the institution and the concept of ideal justice as it relates to the role and function of the king.

3.1.1   The Origins of Kingship in the Ancient Near East

While it is possible to demarcate the political developments of both ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt within distinct time frames, a discussion of the origin of kingship and its relationship to the prevailing deity must be taken back into history to where the concept of kingship originated. Without this point of reference, one would be unable to determine the nature of kingship within the political structures of the various ancient Near Eastern states around the first half of the 1st millennium BC.

The term "king" refers to "a male sovereign who exercises authority over a defined territorial area, the state" (Whitelam 1992:40) with such a person acquiring his position either as

hereditary or through election. As ruler over a defined territory and population, he becomes the central person to ensure prosperity, fertility and security. The monarchy represented the most important form of government in early agrarian societies thereby becoming a very important symbol in the political and religious development of the state in the ancient Near East. Whitelam (1992:40) says that "the development of the state with the king as the central symbolic figure represents a major stage in the evolution of political systems." In ancient Mesopotamia, the term "king" is described by Lambert (1998:55) as "inadequate and potentially misleading" (1998:55). It is an English translation of two ancient words *lugal* (Sumerian) and *šarru* (Akkadian). The word *lugal* was not commonly in use among all rulers of Sumer. They used other terms to refer to themselves. The king as initial military leader assumed a greater political responsibility and was regarded by the people as the earthly head of state, or *lugal*, i.e. "the big man" (Lambert 1998:57). He ruled the city-state by divine sanction as the representative of the national deity. The Sumerian city-state itself functioned as a theocracy ruled by the god. The city ruler, in subordination to the national deity, was primarily conceived of as a farm bailiff or manager ideologically (Lambert 1998:56). In reality this may have been different. Kings, despite this conception, therefore became political leaders who "were viewed as representatives of the gods with entitlements to rule and responsibilities to sustain order and justice in their realms" (Gottwald 2001:122). Babylonia, under the reign of Hammurabi, was developed from a small town into the capital of southern Mesopotamia while the function of the king, "to rule wisely, justly and effectively" under the guidance of the gods, was responsible for modifying the view of kingship (Lambert 1998:61). The divinity of kings was no longer a key issue as was the case previously. Lambert (1998:61) states that "the biggest ideological change was the first appearance in Babylonia of the concept of divine right to kingship based on descent from a certain family line." This divine right to kingship found expression in what Lambert refers to as "a cult of dead ancestors" as evidenced in a cult listing dating back to the reign of Ammi-saduqa, king of Babylon, the great-great-grandson of Hammurabi. The influence that the gods came to exert on the state of Mesopotamia was considerable. Over time religious ideology developed its own dynamics. The state became an important instrument in the hands of the gods with military victories and prosperous times attributed to the divine favour of the gods, and political setbacks and destruction of regimes accepted as punishment for royal neglect of the cult (Gottwald 2001:125). A closer approximation of the English "king" can be found in the Babylonian and

Assyrian *šarru* (Lambert 1998:55). The Akkadian *šarru* on the other hand find its equivalent in the Hebrew *melek*. The Akkadian etymological equivalent *malku* is rarely used in reference to Babylonian or Assyrian kings but rather to foreign rulers over them (Lambert 1998:55).

The king in ancient Egypt occupied a central and strategic role in the cosmos and the state with the institution of kingship as central to civilisation and society (Baines 1998:16). Gottwald asserts that the ancient Egyptian state exercised tremendous influence over its population and the economy (2001:29). Pharaoh as "avatar of the gods and lord of the entire Egyptian domain" played a key role in state religion, knitting the fabric of Egyptian society together (Gottwald 2001:131). In addition to this the temples, as in the case of ancient Mesopotamia, played a central role in the development of Egyptian politics based on an ideology of divine kingship. In contrast to Mesopotamian practice, Egyptian temples, initially under stringent state control, steadily gained freedom from state control with local priests becoming serious contenders for pharaonic office.

There is a dynamic relationship between the emergence of state structures and the origin of royal leadership in ancient Near Eastern societies. The origin of kingship seems to be inextricably linked to the development of early state organisation. While it is extremely difficult to pinpoint with fair accuracy the timing of the origin of kingship, scholars are in agreement that the institution has been a part of human history for a very long time (Hocart 1927; Bendix 1978; Ahlström 1995). The emergence of the organised state served to strengthen the role of kingship in society. This is further demonstrated by several of the main theories with regard to statehood in the ancient Near East. Gottwald (2001) puts the social contract, functionalist, managerial, military and social class theories concerning the development of statehood under the spotlight. Through this we can gain a sense of how royal authority not only originated, but became entrenched. According to Gottwald the social contract theory suggests that sovereign authority was instituted through a voluntary agreement between members in society who were of equal social standing (2001:115). The functionalist theory holds that political authority was acquired by those individuals who were skilled in dealing with the social and economic complexities within the society while others in society regarded them as deserving to wield the necessary authority over the community (Gottwald 2001:115). The managerial theory explains that central authority came about as a result of the need to deal effectively with major economic challenges such as the construction and maintenance of large-scale irrigation systems. The military theory

vests political power in the hands of successful military leaders while the social class theory attributes the early development of the state and its leadership to the selfish interests of groups within society who were only interested in appropriating communal property for their own selfish gains (Gottwald 2001:115). While acknowledging that all of these theories may have made some contribution to the development of states over time, Gottwald holds the view that "none seems to be wholly adequate as an explanation of the first moves to statehood, or of the rise of all subsequent states, or of the astonishing tenacity of the state as the preeminent form of political organisation once it gained momentum" (2001:115). The social contract theory, in Gottwald's opinion, is far too heavily dependent on the idea that a community consists of a loose association of individuals. While acknowledging that the emergence of some city-states in ancient Greece and Phoenicia may be supported by this theory, he holds the view that this theory fails to explain the authoritarian traditionalism of tribal societies (2001:115). In the functionalist theory, he questions the naivety of the theory's belief in seeing power transferred to the most gifted in society. This does not explain how ineffective and poor political figures have come to assume power in some societies. The managerial theory may to some extent be able to create an undeniable opportunity through the added complexity of managing technology for some members of society to assume the leadership role in exchange for greatly increased political power and influence in other areas of society. It, however, does not satisfactorily explain how tribal communities managed technological innovation in the absence of and without opting for organised state structures. The military theory, on the other hand, while failing to adequately explain how centralised military power emerges, does seem to motivate the view that tribal societies have a tendency to opt for some sort of state organisation in the face of an impending military threat and avoid the possibility of military conquest. The social class theory also does not explain how a group of people can successfully gain enough political influence by going against societal norms and setting up a social order and state hierarchy over which they could preside. This notwithstanding, Gottwald asserts that the merit of the social class theory claim "is that the state as an organisational structure, involving an executive head and an administrative bureaucracy, depends upon the support of a privileged stratum of the populace whose favoured position is protected and reinforced by centralised authority and power in a kind of synergistic cycle that aims at self-perpetuation" (2001:116). In presenting the merits and demerits of each of these theories, Gottwald argues in favour of a mix of the military and social class theories as a

plausible explanation of the role played by emerging statehood and royal leadership in early Near Eastern states. Jointly considered, "they suggest a fusion of force and persuasion that enabled some members of society, in which all shared in approximate benefits of production, to separate themselves sufficiently from prevailing communal norms and practices to take command of a surplus of authority and power that successfully transcended and subordinated the dispersed 'lesser' authorities of society at large" (Gottwald 2001:116,117). The above theories demonstrate the socio-political needs of society that may have played a significant role in the emergence of the institution of kingship in the ancient Near East.

The sacred and secular foundations of kingship produced rulers who enjoyed considerable status, vast wealth, commanded authority and who were firmly established at the summit of the social, political and religious system. These rulers "depended on retainers, personal confidants, and magnates of more independent position" in order to exercise power (Bendix 1978:21). This defined the oligarchic nature of many royal governments and may to a certain extent explain the challenges to royal authority posed by provincial governors as we have seen in the case of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Despite numerous political power struggles that took place between provincial governors and royal authorities resulting in seasonal changes in political regimes, complex societies that eventually emerged from these major empires set the tone for the political development of other states. As the political evolution of the state began to run its course, the demand for strong leadership became a natural consequence thereof. Leaders in communities generally enjoyed oversight of the interests of their communities and were consequently assigned larger portions of produced goods as a reward for the functions they fulfilled. As the earliest states were primarily agrarian societies, the king was able to control the agrarian economy through his status as "owner of the institutions of state" (Whitelam 1992:40). A very important consequence of the development of kingship was that the institution enjoyed total sovereignty over agricultural land having transferred these lands from the villages to the monarchy.

Vast improvements in irrigated cultivation and stockbreeding, facilitated increased crop and animal yields which together with denser occupation in the river valleys resulted in more complex economic and social functions (Gottwald 2001:114). This in turn requires "the negotiating of communal priorities in allocating resources and determining the rights and duties of actors in the public sphere" (Gottwald 2001:114). It would appear that some of the leaders

were in no measure satisfied with their assigned power, but instead set about converting this community based power into a form of power in its own right. The pursuit of selfish power interests made these leaders less dependent on the community for assignment. Instead they exercised their power "without the necessary consent of all affected parties or the backing of a popular majority" (Gottwald 2001:114). This resulted in a diversion of economic surplus for own selfish needs. Huge administrative complexes were built up from which enormous political power was wielded over the entire nation. This self-conceived commanding authority which assumed control over the whole of society was further enhanced by the adoption of extravagant lifestyles. Their asserted authority was converted into effective political power through the development of large-scale bureaucracies thereby giving effect to the administration of state policies (Gottwald 2001:114).

3.1.2   The Nature of Kingship and its Relationship to the Gods

Agrarian societies throughout history were characterised by kingship models that served as the nuclei of society. The development of the state with the monarchy as the central authority constituted an important phase in the development of early political systems (Whitelam 1992:40). As the central political figure, the king was primarily responsible for maintaining law and order within a nationally defined political area. This was achieved through a strong permanent military organisation as well as a central bureaucracy. "Such states were politically centralized societies based on social stratification and specialization and dependent upon the extraction of an agricultural surplus from the peasantry in order to provide for the subsistence needs of the royal elite and its religious and political specialists" (Whitelam 1992:40). The king had the authority to extract taxes from the populace, provide essential services to the bureaucracy and population at large and ensure that the laws of the state were observed and obeyed.

The concept of kingship in the ancient Near East, the nature of kingship and the conceptual framework within which the institution existed takes on more distinct features when comparing the two grand old empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The nature of kingship and the state of the cosmos in which the king operated, takes on rather distinctive characteristics when comparing these great states. For the Mesopotamians, their king was regarded as a human endowed by the gods with a divine assignment. In ancient Mesopotamian societies, the king or ruler, though not regarded with the same divinity as that of the Egyptian king, was closely

associated with the patron deity of his city and was charged with the duty to reign wisely, justly and effectively under the direction of the gods (Lambert 1998:57, 61). During his lifetime, Pharaoh was the embodiment of Horus the falcon god and after his death; he became identified with Osiris while his successor became the embodiment of Horus. It was not uncommon for the pharaoh to be referred to as "my Sun-god" by Canaanite vassal states as evidenced in the Amarna Letters (Polley 1989:18). Notwithstanding this essential difference concerning the king's relationship with the gods between Egypt and Mesopotamia, kingship in Babylonia and Assyria was nevertheless accepted as an important institution in both human and cosmic affairs. Kingship was a gift from the gods having derived its origins in heaven. Divinity of the king was assumed through adoption rather than accepted naturally. This divine role was taken on at the coronation of the king. In this light it was not uncommon for ancient Mesopotamian kings to refer to themselves as the sons of god. Polley points to Hammurabi's reference to himself as the "son of Sin," "son of Dagan" and "son of Marduk" in the preamble to his code and other texts. His opinion though is that these titles are more likely expressions of the king's reliance on the gods and an exhibition of godlike attributes rather than as an expression of deification (Polley 1989:20). The fundamental concept of Egyptian kingship was that Pharaoh was in essence divine, a god incarnate or as Baines describes the king as "a token of the divine in this world" (1998:17). While the Mesopotamian king, unlike the Egyptian Pharaoh, was charged with the duty to maintain a harmonious relationship between his human subjects and the supernatural forces, he remained part of the community. The Egyptian king on the other hand was considered to have been a god. The concept of kingship between these two major empires demonstrated a fundamental difference in their view of kingship. Another distinctive difference between these empires is that while their human emotion and psyche was totally integrated in the cyclical seasonal changes, the Egyptians initially appeared to have a smoother, fearless encounter with nature as their king was considered a god himself while the Mesopotamians reacted independently to these cyclical changes factoring in the potential for a catastrophic disturbance of harmony between nature and humans. Egypt's somewhat favourable geographical location, described by Frankfort (1948b:4) as "isolated and protected between the almost empty deserts on either side," drawing all of its prosperity from the "annual inundation of the Nile" had a tremendously positive influence on the manner in which the Egyptians viewed the cosmos. While Egypt too celebrated the seasonal changes in the course of the official year, it did so in a

spirit of affirmation that all is really well, when compared to the Mesopotamian celebrations that were characterised by mood swings and emotional anxiety. This tranquil view of Egyptian celebration of the divine order that was evident in early scholarship, underwent a radical change over time. O'Connor & Silverman (1995) describe this changed perspective as follows: "Cosmos was strong, but also vulnerable. In fact, the creator had prophesied its ultimate dissolution. In the year (sic) and now, every aspect of cosmos - divine, human, natural - had to undergo repeated rebirths or reincarnations to ensure vitality and validity. Cosmos had to be defended strenuously against the forces of chaos that surrounded it and threaten constantly to overwhelm it. Egyptian religion was not as self-assured and free from anxiety as was once imagined" (O'Connor and Silverman 1995:xviii; xix).

According to Engnell (1967:4) the divine origin of the Egyptian king is normally expressed in one of two ways. Although both expressions essentially imply the same meaning, the differences revolve around a dynastic concept of kingship and an institutional/ hierarchic concept of kingship. The Egyptian king is divine from birth with this divinity extending back into its prenatal state. Engnell states that "the crown prince is begotten by the god - corporalized by the king - and the queen. The child is formed by the gods in the womb of the mother, and at its birth the life-fluid throws itself … from the god to the royal child" (1967:4). As a result of this "divine, non-human" conception, the king of Egypt is described as having neither a mother nor father (Engnell 1967:4). The institutional view of kingship, on the other hand, regards the king as elevated to divine status through the process of "crown-prince enthronization" whereby all royal associates, nobles, dignitaries and court slaves are transferred to the crown-prince swearing allegiance to him (Engnell 1967:4). This new status catapults him into the divine sphere. He functioned as a very important intermediary between the divine and the human. O'Connor and Silverman (1995:xxv) describe the prevailing view of Egyptian kingship amongst Egyptian scholars as "a divine institution, in a way itself a god, or at least an image of the divine and capable of becoming its manifestation; each incumbent, each pharaoh, is fundamentally a human being, subject to humankind's limitations. When the king took part in the roles of his office, especially in rituals and ceremonies, his being became suffused with the same divinity manifest in his office and the gods themselves. With this capacity, the king would be empowered to carry out the actual and symbolic acts that contributed to the maintenance and rebirth of the cosmos. Indeed, in these contexts, the king acted as a creator deity and became the sun-god. Pharaoh

would be recognized on these occasions by those who saw him as imbued with divinity, characteristically radiant and giving off a fragrance" (O'Connor & Silverman 1995:xxv). Kingship in Egypt was in existence even before the emergence of the state. However, as the state evolved, the king became "the pivot of cosmos and state" (Baines 1998:16). The king was regarded as a symbol of unity in Egypt with the monarchy forming the pivotal institution around which state and society revolved. Kingship was such an entrenched institution in society that no alternative was envisaged except total chaos. The king's existence in relation to the gods is, according to Baines, based on "a polytheistic belief system in which he was dependent upon them" (Baines 1998:16). On the nature of kingship, Baines gives the following description: "The absolute status of kingship is relativized in this cosmic perspective, although it may be questioned how far these concerns spread effectively beyond the ruling group. What is absolute about the king of centralized periods is that he was single whereas both gods and people were many. This unique status between two whole categories gave kingship great prominence and strength" (1998:17).

The significance of the king's role in ancient Mesopotamian state religion was highlighted in the re-enactment and recitation of the Creation Epic (Polley 1989:20).[18] While due cognisance is given to the fragile human component of the king, it was nevertheless an important criteria that the king be perfect and filled with the divine spirit. This enables him to exercise just rule in the maintenance of cosmic harmony and facilitates divine blessings, prosperity and peace. An imperfect king on the other hand rules unjustly, without divine sanction, creates cosmic disorder and is seen to invite divine wrath, calamity and popular discontent. It was important for

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[18] Polley gives us some insight into this re-enactment process: Marduk, the chief deity of Babylon emerges as he takes on the weight of Tiamat (primordial waters) and her consort Kingu, accompanied by a number of monsters, in an unprecedented cosmological conflict in which order is confronted by chaos. The ancient gods Ea (earth) and Anu (sky) are forced into retirement. The threatening force of chaos escalates as Tiamat and Kingu take possession of the tablets of fate that determines the destiny of mankind. Marduk, elected by the assembly of the gods as a divine warrior to deliver them from chaos, slays Tiamat and Kingu thereby recovering the tablets of fate. On the accomplishment of this mission and following consultation with Ea, Marduk forms the heavens and the earth from Tiamat's body and creates humankind from the blood of Kingu. On this note the epic reaches a climax with the construction of Marduk's temple, Ersagila. The Akitu Festival, also known as the Babylonian New Year's Festival, celebrated the re-enactment of the Creation Epic. On the fifth of Nissan, i.e. the fifth day of the festival, the king was reinstalled and kingship renewed through the ritual of re-enthronement. The role of the king in the ritual is highly significant. The king is divested of his royal insignia, the scepter, ring, scimitar and crown by the high priest who strikes him on the cheek as though he was a commoner. The king immediately pronounces his loyalty to Marduk, assuring the chief god of the faithful manner in which he had performed his duties. All the royal symbols, previously divested, are returned to the king by the high priest. He is once again struck on the cheek, and if tears are drawn as a result, a good omen is suggested. The return of the royal insignia signifies the renewal of kingship and the bonds with the gods and the community they have charge over. Kingship is once again legitimised (1989:20, 21).

the king to achieve the required level of purity and perfection (Parpola 1999). The success a king achieves on the battle field and the justice and prosperity he brings to his community, is totally dependent on his relationship to the gods. This required that the king's person be blameless before the gods.

The premise on which Mesopotamian kingship ideology rests is structured by the relationship between the human king and the gods. Grabbe (1995:32) describes this relationship between the king and god as follows: "The king seems to have a position vis-à-vis the national god similar to that of a governor (or vassal ruler) to the king. He also acted in this capacity as intermediary and chief priest between the god and the people." In a study on kingship in ancient Mesopotamia, Lambert (1998:55) compares the cultures of Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria and comes to the conclusion that although kings ruled with the "express authority of the gods, and were expected to create a prosperous, well-governed land," each area still exhibited their own unique differences in "both royal institutions and their particular claims." This suggested that even within one empire, each state had the capacity to develop its own unique characteristics of kingship. In Sumer the city ruler or *lugal* ("great man"), as subordinate to the patron deity of the city, acted as a farm bailiff, taking care of the god's estates. Lambert describes the Assyrian state god in theological terms as a king with the human king acting as his regent (1998:68). The relationship between Ashur and Ashurbanipal (669 BC) is described in the coronation hymn as Ashur, the king and Ashurbanipal as his regent. In Babylonia, the concept of divine kingship that emerged under the Akkadian dynasty ceased to exist. The heavenly origin of kingship, present in the earliest Mesopotamian cultures of Sumeria and Babylonia, is according to Parpola, allegorically represented in the form of a tree planted by Inanna/ Ishtar, the mother goddess. The significance of the tree is reflected in its adornment on royal architecture, seals and weapons of the monarchy, on royal jewelry and in other areas. The walls of king Ashurnasipal II (883 - 859 BC) in Kalhu (modern Nimrud) reflected more than 400 variations of the sacred tree. The symbolic significance of the tree suggests the importance of kingship as a connection between the earthly and divine realms and places the institution at the centre of the cosmos (Parpola 1999). The king is represented as the personification of the cosmic tree emphasising his unique position and power, thereby underwriting the divine origin of kingship.

By the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, political power in the Mesopotamian region was firmly in the hands of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The institution of kingship during this time

was regarded as a politically legitimised and religiously validated institution and is described as follows: "The king was the fulcrum of the empire, the hub around which the whole system was organized. Like all aristocratic rulers, his power was absolute and unchallengeable. Absolute royal power was part of the gradual development of the institution of kingship in Assyria, directly linked to the acquisition of empire and hence of the evolution of a system to govern it" (Kuhrt 1995:505). Kingship, during this phase of Mesopotamian political and religious history, was still an important ideological consideration. The Assyrian king was not only at the centre of the empire, but was also an absolute monarch. The nature of this absolutism was integral to the development of the institution of kingship in Assyria. Despite this considerable increase in political power, "a king ruled de jure, with a military aristocracy existing to counterbalance the rule of the king. The king enjoyed supreme authority as long as he ruled and maintained the ethos of the state" (Lambert 1998:67). Whereas most of the kings of the ancient Near East, including those of ancient Mesopotamia, projected a royal ideology founded on the divine concern with the restoration of order and justice in society, the Assyrian kingship ideology introduced a "distinctive militaristic twist typified by 'the terror-inspiring' deity Ashur at the head of the pantheon" (Gottwald 2001:136). In the name of Ashur, who was also presented as the architect of the empire's expansionist destiny, they justified their ruthless expansion campaigns which started during the 7th century BC. This divine imperative was imposed on vassal kings who faced severe retribution in the event that they did not abide to the oath of allegiance sworn to Ashur. The Neo-Babylonians appropriated the Middle Babylonian creation story to present Marduk as the creator of a new sociopolitical order after he had seized the authority and power of the old Sumerian gods (Gottwald 2001:137). Kings of the Assyrian Empire of the 1st millennium BC invariably conjure up images of ruthlessness, cruelty and pleasurable indulgences.

The relationship between the earthly king and the gods was not only applicable in the case of older empires such as Mesopotamia and Egypt but also applicable to many of the newer states that emerged in Syro-Palestine around 1200 BC. Two recent archeological discoveries have thrown significant light on Canaanite culture and have unraveled a cultural history that remained hidden from historians for a very long time (Polley 1989:23). Polley highlights the Ugaritic texts discovered at Ras Shamra in 1929, dated around 1400 BC and containing various myths and legends about the gods El and his consort Asherah, Baal and Anath as well as Yamm

and Mot (1989:23). These texts also contained legendary stories of kings in the Dan'el-Aqhat and Keret texts from which we gain insight into the nature of Canaanite kingship with the kings presented as demigods (Polley 1989:23). The Baal Cycle[19], made up of six tablets, is regarded as an important religious text from ancient Ugarit which presents "a vivid story of conflict and kingship, love and death" between the deities Baal, Athtar, Mot and Yamm (Smith 1994:xxii). These deities facilitated nature's fertility as the seasons related to the functions of the kings and the gods (Polley 1989:25). In a more recent commentary on the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Smith sets out to extend the political understanding of the text, clarify the vulnerability of Baal as a finite deity with his own limitations and demonstrates a close relationship between the Baal Cycle and the Hebrew Bible (1994: xxiv-xxvi). This, he regards as a justified attempt to correct earlier scholarly views on the Baal Cycle. Smith describes the Baal Cycle as "central to the study of Syro-Palestinian religious literature" from the Bronze and Iron Ages and sees the cycle as manifesting "many of the religious ideas contained in the Hebrew Bible" (1994:xxvi).

Although the Hittite and Ugarit kings can be considered in the same light as their Mesopotamian counterparts, they were not considered divine during their lifetimes but assumed divine status after death. Due to a lack of documentation that would to a large extent assist in the accurate reconstruction of the development of rulership in ancient Palestine, before the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, Ahlström (1995:588) suggests that "an aristocratic/ military city-state could well have developed into a territorial state that incorporated different politically organized groups of people." While details are somewhat sketchy in Syro-Palestine with regard to the relationship between the king and the national deity, it was widely accepted, though not generally applied, that the king was regarded as the son of the national deity, the patron god of the city or state (Ahlström 1995:588).

3.1.3 Political Legitimation and Religious Validation of Kingship

States do not necessarily command total loyalty from their citizens at all times, a fact borne out by the need to use coercive force at times to deal with civil unrest. Legitimacy does, however, tend to emerge in a manner "in which support for the new regime and the new system become not only acceptable but morally obligatory" (Cohen 1988:69). Given the nature of socially

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[19] The Baal Cycle forms part of the mythological or literary texts in KTU and the six tablets are numbered from KTU 1.1 through to 1.6 (Smith 1994:xxii).

stratified societies, inequalities are imposed on the populace by the state regime. People tend to show a marked resilience and sense of compliance as they move from a position of total opposition to one of embracing these new values and defending the social order. The term legitimacy is derived from the Latin word *legitimare*, meaning "to declare lawful" and "confers on an order or command an authoritative or binding character, thus transforming power into authority" (Heywood 2002:210). Unlike the situation in ancient times when the distinction between religion and politics was undefined, legitimation was most probably understood in terms of a divine imperative and moral obligation. Legitimacy, in modern perspective, tends to be understood "more in terms of political behavior and beliefs" (Heywood 2002:210).

The existing state structure was legitimised through religious beliefs and practices which ensured divine blessings at all levels of society (Gottwald 2001:114). From an anthropological perspective, it was commonly accepted that in ancient societies, the establishment and maintenance of royal authority was based on the premise of the religious validation and legitimation of the role of the king (Whitelam 1989:128). The use of religion to validate and legitimise royal authority in centrally organised states is, according to Whitelam "one of the most striking features of all early agrarian states, from Egypt and Mesopotamia to the Indus valley and Mesoamerica" (1992:46). This allowed for a belief system to develop around the institution of kingship. Specialist functionaries were employed specifically with the task of maintaining and promoting a royal ideology made up of "images, attitudes and ideals" (Whitelam 1992:42). The function of these specialists revolved around ensuring that the centrality of the king's role in the cosmic system was constantly propagated. The political legitimation of the monarchy in early state societies was absolutely crucial to maintaining the institution. To this end an elaborate royal ideology, extensive religious rituals and ceremonies and a strong display of royal symbolism manifested in monumental architectural displays, played a key role in the achievement of this objective. Rulers of ancient Mesopotamia were solemnly invested with royal symbols such as a crown, scepter and throne (Postgate 1992:262). This awesome display of royal authority encompassed a world-view that strongly promoted the royal establishment as one of divine harmony within the cosmic realm with kingship being an integral part of it. Whitelam in describing the extent to which instruments of the state would be utilised in maintaining and upholding royal power states that "the heavy investment of early state societies in the ideological justification of kingship through written, graphic and ceremonial means indicates the importance

of understanding the nature of royal ideology and the way that it functioned or was addressed to different audiences to overcome opposition and thus maintain royal power" (1989:121). Through the development of these means, the state apparatus ensured the legitimation of class differences while simultaneously "establishing the king's right to rule over competing claims of other urban or rural groups" (Whitelam 1989:121). Maintaining royal power through the use of force was both costly and highly inefficient with any coercive action resulting in a destruction of the relationship on which royals are dependent for their wealth, prestige and power. The use of coercive power was avoided at all costs, but where and when necessary states would not hesitate to ensure compliance through the use of force. According to Gottwald (2001:114) "religious beliefs and practices served to legitimize the existing state structure as the channel through which divine blessings were bestowed on the governed community. Objections to state rule and non-compliance with the decisions of its officials were met not only with the solemn warrants and sanctions of state religion but also, where necessary, with armed coercion." States therefore, could only survive if they attained legitimacy, often through the manipulation of religious symbols (Whitelam 1989:121). Through this legitimation process, royal ideology was preserved and the power wielded by the king and his assumption of strategic resources was recognised and accepted with his right to rule "guaranteed by the deities of the state" (Whitelam 1989:121). The king's relationship to the cosmos ensured peace, security and wealth for the population and the state. A ritual act such as the offerings contained in stone bowls made to temples by a ruler or king are described by Postgate as "acts with overly political overtones" with the purpose of laying claim to hegemony (1992:262-263). For Postgate, this indicates the convergence of two ideological motives, namely that the king, on the one hand, would make an offering to the god(s) of the city on behalf of his people to ensure the continued favour of the god(s) and on the other hand, it would also enable the king to claim credit for any economic prosperity and social stability that follows (1992:263). The king's successes and influence on the natural elements, reaffirmed through repetitive statements, served to confirm the belief that "the gods manifested their appreciation for the legitimate and efficient king by ensuring the country with the most favourable conditions" (Liverani 2010:230). Liverani, however, warns that despite how credulous these claims may seem, we need to be cognisant of the fact that coming from a different cultural environment, we do not share the same basic principles of this ancient underlying political ideology (2010:230). The official state religion was utilised effectively by

rulers to ensure the continued religious validation of royal authority. The legitimation of kingship was achieved through divine election whereby the king assumed royal authority. A very important feature of ancient civilisations, among them Egypt and Mesopotamia, was the manner in which religion was used to grant legitimacy to royal power within state structures. The Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* functioned primarily as justification for royal authority (Whitelam: 1992:45).

By the dawn of the first millennium BC, the Egyptian world-view was strongly influenced by tradition as was the case throughout its history. Tradition has played a key role in shaping, maintaining and allowing for the pervasiveness of the Egyptian world-view. Behind this tradition, which encompassed continued unity of linguistic and cultural elements, was a strong Egyptian religious system (Trigger *et al*. 1983:189). Men played a pivotal role in ensuring that a just and orderly universal system prevailed as ordained by the gods. This was done primarily through ritual and social activities. So even with the dawn of the first millennium BC, "conformity to earlier patterns of political and religious life was therefore encouraged, and innovations - if they were to be successful - had to adapt but not radically alter the supernaturally sanctioned formal structure" (Trigger *et al*. 1983:189). The kingship system derived its authority, which was popularly recognised, from its traditional value systems, alluded to above, as well as its association with the divine realm. The system adequately met the social and economic needs of the people and as a result reinforced and advanced its own political authority and legitimacy. Despite the setbacks experienced by the kingship system during the Third Intermediate Period, the ideology appears to have survived with the king remaining the most powerful figure in the government.

Syro-Palestine was no exception, compared to the other ancient Near Eastern states, when it came to the legitimation of kingship as a political institution. Support for a ruler's position was clearly through "a kingship ideology (that) anchored the ruler and his position in the divine will, and thus legitimized his role" (Ahlström 1995:588). Kingship, as a divine institution, was in existence for a very long time. Through this legitimation process, Zakkur of Hamath (in Syria) could claim legitimacy through his appointment as king of Hazrak by the god Baalshamein-Baal, the storm god. Kingship legitimacy was further expressed through the appointment and selection of a successor by a reigning monarch. As this choice was grounded in the divine will, a commonly accepted Near Eastern view, Ahlström is of the view that "to be 'chosen by a deity'

was an expression of legitimacy" (1995:591). The king depended largely on divine support to legitimise his rule. This was especially the case in view of the fact that the national deity was seen as a very powerful symbol in the ancient Near East. Van der Toorn (1995) points to the importance of obtaining legitimacy at the onset of royal rule. This endorsement by the gods is critical for acceptance by the subjects.[20] As part of the ritual, the priests, on behalf of the gods, would include a firm endorsement of the king ensuring his continued legitimacy (van der Toorn 1995:2050). Kingship ideology in Syro-Palestine also served the purpose of entrenching the king and his authority in the divine will of the national deity thereby validating his authority.

The symbolism contained in many royal constructions was another way in which royal authority was demonstrated and legitimated (Ahlström 1982:2). The elaborate manner in which royal buildings were constructed was key to the portrayal of a royal world-view that was legitimately founded. The social differences in society were justified and reinforced through the existence of these monumental structures. According to Ahlström royal power, security and the eternal relevance of the institution of kingship was strongly demonstrated through an extensive investment of state resources in these building projects (1982:2). Included in these structures were palace-temple complexes, fortified structures and other public buildings. Ahlström (1982) emphasises the significance these structures had for both the political and religious domains. Throughout the ancient Near East, the location as well as the manner in which these buildings were constructed symbolised the political and religious significance of these structures. In many administrative centres of Mesopotamia, it was important to build the temple, the house of the local god, and the house of the governor close to each other. According to Ahlström "these two buildings were the physical expressions of the national government representing king and god" (1982:2). As god and kings were considered to be above ordinary human beings, it was important to demonstrate this difference in their living quarters. A walled acropolis usually served to separate the divine lodgings from the rest of the city. Citing numerous archeological

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[20] Van der Toorn gives us some insight into this close relationship between the king and the gods forming the basis of a legitimated kingship in Syro-Palestine (1995:2050). It was therefore not uncommon for kings to constantly express their relationship to the gods as reflected in the Ugaritic text and other royal inscriptions where it is emphatically stated that King Keret is the son of the god El. This was in keeping with legitimation processes in existence in other parts of the region. In the same manner, the ideological view that Esarhaddon, the Assyrian King, is the son of the Gods Ninlil and Shamash, prevailed. Political legitimacy and religious validation was also affirmed at major events such as the autumn festival, also referred to as the New Year's Festival by modern scholarship. A practice brought over from the Late Bronze Age in Ugarit and Emar, this festival was a seasonal affirmation of the significant role of the deity in the life of his subjects. The victory of Baal over Mot was celebrated, especially in Ugarit, and culminated in the symbolic reinstallation of Baal as king on his throne (van der Toorn 1995:2050).

studies, Ahlström points to the strategic location of these structures in Ebla, Carchemish and Syro-Palestine (1982:2).

Temples in the ancient Near East played an instrumental role in the social and religious life of a community. The role of the temple and state cult was, however, primarily related to the economic ordering of society. Silver (1985) provides numerous examples of the strategic location of temples on international borders and trade routes in order to facilitate commerce and offer protection to visitors to the market places. Some of the archeological evidence cited includes a 2nd millennium Egyptian temple in the eastern Delta that serviced the roads to the mines of Sinai, the temple at Arad, not recorded in biblical tradition, a trading station and fortress situated at the far south border of Judah on the border of the Sinai desert and an altar located 20 miles to the west of Beer-Sheba, all on international trade routes. The temples situated at Dan, linked to Hazor (south), the Orontes River (north) and Tyre (west), close to the Damascan border and at Bethel, on an important north-south carriageway that linked Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Shechem and Samaria were important cult establishments in ancient Israel. Labour and other resources were particularly heavily drained all in the name of security, prosperity, wealth and fertility.[21] This tradition further ensured the legitimation of the king's role in the political and economic system of society (Whitelam 1989:134). Prior to 525 BC, the Pharaohs provided everything that was required by the priests to perform their duties, while in Neo-Babylonia, the monarchy supplied the temple with important items such as livestock, and precious metals such as gold and silver (Dandamayev 1996:35, 36). Temples therefore functioned as economic units within their own right and partnered with the political structures in dividing the agricultural and pastoral surplus produced by their employers (Lambert 1998:55; Gottwald 2001:122). Temple establishments had a big stake in the economy, employing a huge number of people on their extensive temple estates. Lambert describes the temples as "major employers and complete economic units, something like large-scale mediaeval manors, but with a theocratic superstructure" (1998:55). Lambert provides us with some interesting insights into the socio-economic structure of the temple in the ancient Near East (1998:55). Temple revenue was extracted in the form of a tithe from the community. In Egypt, Mesopotamia and some other states of the ancient Near East, temples owned slaves, large tracts of land, huge herd of livestock

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[21] This was a characteristic of society that contributed to the challenges faced by Israel during the eighth century BC that will be explored in chapter 5.

and extensively engaged in usury and trade activities. Unlike Egypt, Israel and Judah, the Babylonian temples were staffed by civil servants who did not perform any religious activity. While the temple was considered the property of the principal god of the state, it was utilised as a source of income for various categories of temple workers and provided food during major festivals, a benefit particularly suited to the poor in society. Despite the odd exception when priests and temple officials advanced their own cause and confronted royal authority, there was generally close cooperation between the palace and the temple. Kings were an important source of supply for the temple.

As the state started to take shape, power was centralised with palaces and temples increasingly taking on the role of administrative and ceremonial functions within the greater society. These bureaucracies were dependent on agricultural and pastoral surpluses for their continued functioning. Older complex states of the ancient Near East were preceded by small autonomous agricultural and pastoral settlements. They were governed by social norms that prohibited tribal leaders from accumulating surpluses at the expense of individual producers (Gottwald 2001:113). States came into being through various conquests and through imitation. Advancements in irrigated agricultural and stockbreeding methods resulted in increased habitation and "more complex economic and social functions and interests" (2001:114). This turn of events had an influence on the amount of control public representatives exercised over the allocation of community resources and the manner in which they were able to wield power over community affairs. According to Gottwald, "some leaders in these communities began to convert the power they exercised at the will of the community into a power they exercised in their own right over the community without necessary consent of all affected parties or the backing of a popular majority. In practical terms this meant that they could divert economic surplus to ends chosen by them without veto by the community at large. These ends included the building and maintenance of large administrative complexes from which their power radiated over a wider hinterland." (2001:114). Heywood defines politics in terms of power and makes the following statement in this regard: "At its broadest sense, politics concerns the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence. Politics is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means" (2002:10). The development of ancient kingship models within the ancient Near East, exhibited political characteristics that became part and parcel of political institutions the world over.

3.1.4   Ideal Justice and the Role and Function of Kingship in the Ancient Near East

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the political destiny of a state was believed to be in the hands of the national deity. The establishment of justice, internal stability, national progress and the protection against hostile external forces were regarded as some of the key aspects of the institution of kingship as the central symbol of society. These could only be achieved through the assistance of the gods. However, the most important function the king had to perform was the establishment and advancement of order in society. The divine requirements for the ideal of justice can be traced to numerous sources such as the Hebrew Bible in the case of Israel, the Laws of Ur Nammu, Eshnunna and Hammurabi in ancient Mesopotamia and evidence of Alalakh and Ras Shamra in Syro-Palestine. In the case of the Egyptian ideal view of justice and the role of the pharaoh in this regard, scholars have made use of various legal documents, royal inscriptions and hymns to reconstruct the Egyptian view of ideal justice (Whitelam 1979:26).

The Mesopotamian parallel *kittum u mīšarum* fosters a sense of justice, "i.e. a characteristic endowed by the gods" (Weinfeld 1995:27). *Kittum and mīšarum* indicates "the establishment of social equity, i.e. improving the status of the poor and the weak in society through a series of regulations which prevent oppression" (Weinfeld 1995:33). Hammurabi, in the prologue to his code, acknowledges that he has received *kinātum* (truth) from Shamash, an acknowledged deity, who has granted him *kittum u mīšarum* as gifts. Shamash and Enlil were regarded as the gods of justice in the ancient Near East. Kings were appointed by them to administer justice as representatives of the divine order as testified to in the prologues to the codes of Hammurabi and Ishtaar. Comparable to their Israelite counterparts, the Mesopotamian kings were also assigned to act as judicial guardians for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the stranger and the oppressed (Mafico 1992, Whitelam 1979). Kings were eager to declare to the gods their success at enforcing *mīšarum ukinātum*. In this manner Uru-*inim*-gina of Lagash paraded before the gods his righteous acts of "declaring a general amnesty for the poor and … rescinding social and economic constraints which were oppressing the common people and driving them into poverty" (Mafico 1992:650,651).

In Egypt the concepts of justice, order and truth, all encompassed in the term *maʻat*, were considered to have been of great cosmic significance.[22] Pharaoh, as divine king, was also

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[22] The god Re, known as Lord of *Maʻat*, performs a very important function in his constant offensive against the powers of chaos that threatens the world (Whitelam 1979:26).

designated as Lord of *Ma'at* (Whitelam 1979:26). In relation to the cosmic order, Morschauser describes *ma'at* as defining "the divine ordinances by which the universe was originally set into motion and properly maintained, manifested in the rhythms of the natural world: the rising and setting of the sun, the annual inundation of the Nile, the recurring seasons of planting and harvest" (1995:101). This in essence ensured and advanced the well-being, fertility and prosperity of the nation. *Ma'at* projected a twofold ideal perspective. On the one hand it was regarded "as a deity representing the 'just' order of the cosmos" while on the other hand, it was considered a "normative principle to which the conduct of the king and all human actions had to conform" (Nel 2000:144). The social implications of *ma'at* were the setting of social and political parameters of Egyptian society to ensure "the proper and discretionary exercise of power by those who ruled toward those over whom they had authority" (Morschauser 1995:101). From an ethical perspective, *ma'at* placed the responsibility of just conduct on the shoulders of the socially advantaged to care for and look after the needs of the impoverished members of society. As warrior of Egypt, the king's primary responsibility entailed the protection and defense of his kingdom against both internal and external threats. As judge and priest, the pharaoh's primary responsibility was to ensure social and cultic order respectively through the establishment of justice and meeting the divine imperatives of the cosmic order. As the chief religious figure in Egypt, Pharaoh was high priest of the land and priest to the gods, a function often delegated to the priests in the different temples. While routine ceremonies were overseen by the priests in the temple, the Egyptian king would only participate in major religious ceremonies and the consecration of new temples he had constructed.

Evidence of the ideal view of the king as a judge in Syro-Palestine is extremely limited when compared to Mesopotamia, Egypt and Israel. The legal material discovered at Ugarit does not specifically deal with ideal justice in the area but is significant as it gives us a strong indication of the king's role in judicial matters. The king of Ugarit is regarded as instrumental in the legal system. Furthermore the legend of Krt and Aqhat and Dan'el's concern for the poor provides a strong indication of the ideal of justice and role of the king in Syro-Palestine. Disorder and injustice were constantly confronted and dispelled by the illuminating rays of the sun god with the rising of the sun "metaphorically seen as the perpetual establishment and maintenance of justice" (Nel 2000:145).

3.2   KINGSHIP IDEOLOGY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1ST MILLENIUM BC.

Lemche describes the motivating factors for the political evolution from tribe to state in Syria and Palestine as follows: "The history of the Near East provides plenty of cases illustrating this evolution from tribe to state. Important factors behind this process are major political, economic and environmental changes that involve all of Syria and Palestine for example, political pressure on the local population exerted by foreign powers, the establishment of international trade routes making military control over tribal land necessary, or periods of drought and famine that compels members of a tribe to seek refuge in places not so severely affected by the vagaries of climate" (1995:1199). The collapse of the political power of the Hittite kingdom and Ugarit and the retreat of large empires such as Egypt, around 1200 BC, created a power vacuum that was filled by smaller rival states such as the Phoenician city states, Carchemish and Damascus within Syria. Within "this context of highly dispersed local and regional powers, the states of Israel, Ammon, Moab, and Edom arose in the mountains and plateaus of interior Palestine without interference from stronger states" (Gottwald 2001:133). The nations of Canaan which included Israel and Judah, were very much part of the near Eastern way of life (Ahlström 1995:588). The most suitable model for government was considered to be kingship with oligarchy and theocracy posing as other forms of government that may have existed at the time. Oligarchy was seen to be a "rare, probably a short-lived or temporary phenomenon in the Near East" (Ahlström 1995:588). A second alternative to kingship that may have existed was that of a theocracy. Heywood describes a theocracy as literally a "rule by God" or in a modern sense "a regime in which government posts are filled on the basis of the person's position in the religious hierarchy" (2002:37). A variant of this concept is referred to as a hierocracy, described by Ahlström as "a theocracy led by priesthood" (1995:588).

The political structures and religious ideology of ancient Israel were inextricably associated with the political structures and ideologies of its neighbours, namely the states of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and later Syro-Palestine. By the time Israel's monarchy came into existence, the political ideologies of its neighbours were by far more advanced and logically exercised a profound influence on Israel's political thinking right from the inception of statehood. This influence is summed up by Gottwald (1985:68) as follows: "It is generally

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agreed that a core of culture, material and intellectual, runs through both the history of Egypt and of Mesopotamia, with Syria-Palestine developing local features that were heavily influenced from the older valley centers." 1 Sam 8 "occupies a pivotal place in Israel's literature concerning kingship" (Brueggemann 1990:60). The dispute presented in this text recounts a significant shift in the political expectations of ancient Israel in her demand to have a political system that was more in line with those of other nations. The relationship between the religions of Canaan and early Israel is considered to be very close. Canaanite state religion appears to have had more in common with Mesopotamian culture than with Egyptian culture (Polley 1989). Despite this close relationship between these religions, the early kings of Israel later fashioned their bureaucracies around the Egyptian kingship model. In his investigation of the relationship between these religions and especially the relationship between El and Yahweh, Dijkstra (2001) demonstrates the influence that the cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Levant had exercised on the religion of Israel. The following point he makes, is pertinent to this discussion: "Whoever wants to see the religion of Israel (and the Jewish religion that sprang from it) as a mere 'counter-religion', as an independent and unique religious phenomenon in the ancient world, has to play down or even to deliberately negate the contribution of ancient Near Eastern cultures to the cradle of Israel" (Dijkstra 2001:93).

3.2.1   Political Centralisation and Emerging Kingship in Israel

The Hebrew Bible remains the primary source for the Israelite world-view of kingship including the legitimation of the institution. This information has on a number of occasions been supported by important but limited archeological evidence. It is unfortunate that most of the information that we rely on, is characterised by fragmented source material and great uncertainty over the exact dates of events. Kingship in ancient Israel was, as much as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, inextricably linked to the cosmos. The relationship between the divine realm and earthly kingship was closely interwoven. Kingship in the Hebrew Bible, according to Whitelam, is derived from the root *mlk* with its derivatives indicating this type of monarchical government (1992:40). *Melek* refers to "king" in Hebrew while *sar* stands for "official" or "prince." The Arabic root *mlk* means to "own completely" and is used in a similar sense in Hebrew. Putting all of these terms in perspective, Whitelam (1992:40) states that "the noun *melek* is used frequently in the Hebrew Bible to refer to neighboring or foreign monarchies including Canaanite city-

states, Philistia, Ammon, Edom, Moab, Hamath, Aram, Tyre, etc. The most frequent usage, however, is reserved for the ruler of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel." Saul, generally regarded as the first king of the Israelites, is anointed by Samuel as *nāgîd*, ruler of Israel (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1).

The general consensus amongst the premonarchic populace of Israel was that the absence of kingship resulted in the natural consequence of chaos. This is demonstrated in Judg 17:6 and repeated again in Chapter 21:25. By setting up a shrine right in his own home with one of his sons appointed as priest, Micah had clearly perverted the worship of Yahweh, a fact bemoaned by the writer of Judges. Wolf (1994:367) comments on Judg 21:25 as follows: "From the standpoint of monarchy, the period of the judges was indeed a time of anarchy and upheaval. The often leaderless people wallowed in idolatry, immorality and hatred." Kingship ideology served to bring stability, peace and order to a society bestowed by a national deity through the reigning king. The transition from tribe to state in Israel has over the years witnessed an intense debate amongst scholars. A number of propositions grabbed the attention of scholars for a considerable time during the previous century. A view strongly propounded by Alt (1966), which subsequently fell into disfavor and became untenable, sought to describe the settlement in terms of biblical and extra-biblical as well as topographical influences that contributed to the development of kingship and state formation (1966:136). Toward the close of the century scholars such as Chaney (1986), Coote & Whitelam (1986), Frick (1986) and Gottwald (1986, 1993) suggested a re-evaluation of traditional scholarship on the emergence of kingship in ancient Israel. Each of them undertook a social-scientific reconstruction of the emergence of the Israelite monarchy albeit from a different theoretical perspective. While Frick (1986) focuses on the trends in recent state formation theory applicable to the secondary state formation of Israel, he did so from a social anthropological perspective. Chaney (1986) on the other hand pursues the significant influence of the introduction of the new metal technology on the agrarian societies of Palestine, weaving together this technical innovation with the demands of social organisation and political bureaucratisation. His study is primarily done from a sociological perspective. All of these scholars set about challenging some of the fundamental hypotheses that existed within scholarship at the time.

Studies on the emergence of kingship in Israel can, according to Whitelam (1992), be divided into two broad categories. The more common of the two approaches is the literary

investigation of the traditions found in the Hebrew Bible, especially those traditions that concern the rise of the monarchy. This approach continues to be a popular method of exploring the origins of Israelite kingship in ancient Palestine. More recently a new approach to the study of the formation of the state of Israel has developed that draws "more extensively and consciously on social scientific studies and methods, particularly anthropological studies of the state formation" (Whitelam 1992:41). The alternative approaches that developed sought to not only rely on the detailed literary exposition of biblical texts, but focused on "the links between environment, economy, trade, demography, settlement patterns, and so on as part of the processes which culminated in the rise of the Israelite state and the introduction of kingship into Israel" (Whitelam 1992:41).

Coote & Whitelam (1986) proposed a radical re-examination of the emergence of the Israelite monarchy. Their rationale is based on the following: "Whatever the reality of the Philistine threat - and we might characterize it as a catalyst to Israelite state formation - its portrayal as the cause of this transition, while concluding that the monarchy is alien to Israel, ignores the importance of internal developments and forces in combination with other external forces necessary for significant social change" (Coote & Whitelam 1986:127). They made extensive use of Carneiro's circumscription theory in their analyses. In their reconstruction theory, they set out to identify three major shifts in highland infrastructure which gave rise to the monarchy in that "when it occurred it was a formal political redefinition of product distribution and labor arrangements carried through in order to regularize the intensification of productive relations and processes, to support increased defense costs" (Coote & Whitelam 1986:132). This major shift in highland infrastructure is characterised by them as economic, social and political.[23]

From an economic perspective, Israel is considered to have emerged in Palestine as interregional activities experienced a serious decline. In turning to intensive agricultural activity, the people of Israel were faced with complex highland farming conditions that required a committed and enduring farming strategy. Terracing was required as a long term objective to better utilise marginal land in the highland. As an agricultural technique, it enabled the preservation of shallow soils, ensuring the removal of rocks from the soil to build terrace walls

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[23] This plausible social-scientific reconstruction of ancient Israel, as advanced by Coote & Whitelam (1986), although based on numerous assumptions but nevertheless rigorously pursuing the question of why the monarchy emerged, will provide a good background to the economic, social and political background of ancient Israel around the eighth century BC.

and the prevention of erosion on the steep slopes of the highland. Together with tree crops, i.e., vine, olive and fig, this farming activity demanded residential stability and long-term investment, and "would have been a crucial factor in the complex forces which resisted disintegration and led to centralization under an Israelite monarchy" (Coote & Whitelam 1986:132). With total commitment to expansion and growth, during a time of great political and economic stability, Israelite society and economy showed a remarkable resilience in meeting these challenges and would over the years to come turn into a formidable force in the region. By switching to agricultural intensification and growing its population accordingly to meet the demands of an expanding economy, Israel's adaptation to the highlands was turning out to be a major success. It started off with the capacity for major enlargement and agricultural expansion. As the laws of diminishing returns set in, resulting in overpopulation and agricultural depletion, leaving a "precarious balance between population and food resources," those with landed interests, bent on taking advantage of market demands for their own benefit, would set in motion political objectives that clearly furthered their own interests. Coote & Whitelam conclude that "under these conditions, the rise of kingship may have been largely a self-generating process" (1986:135).

Socioeconomic stratification in premonarchic Israel differed from one village to the next and was influenced by a number of factors. Coote & Whitelam (1986:135) assert the following with regard to the socioeconomic stratification of ancient Israel: "The idea that socioeconomic stratification increased in early Israel is based on nothing more than the assumption that over time, and in the midst of gradually expanding interregional trade, socioeconomic differences present at the outset would be magnified rather than erased or ameliorated." It is assumed that because of their relative isolation from each other, these sub regions within Israel experienced continued economic diversification based on their access to trade routes and their productive advantages. These differences in the sub regions and their effects on socioeconomic stratification were compounded by other factors such as the existing relationships between different families, or groups of nomads, and advancing their social positions by taking advantage of whatever trade opportunities that were available. Other factors included raids conducted along trade routes while other areas were subjected to taxation by nomadic groups. The result was that over time, each sub region or village developed its own socially stratified population. As families took advantage of market conditions, they increased their wealth and emerged as a creditor class within society.

According to Coote & Whitelam (1986:137), "the inevitable search for economic advantage, of which the emergence of Israel was itself one consequence, in the context of circumscription led inevitably to the amplified stratification of the monarchic state." The period of the judges is considered by them to be biblical evidence of these stratified societies.

The reconstruction theory proposed above incorporates the view that while Israel's settlement in Palestine took place amidst regional political decentralisation, it had within its own ranks "expanding groups whose interests lay in eventual centralization" (Coote &Whitelam 1986:132). The contemporaneous state formations of Ammon, Edom and Moab together with Israel in the Levant during the Early Iron Age would pose the question: What made the study of Israel so different and why did it become the focus of scholarly attention over the years? Whitelam believes that the reasons for this are not difficult to uncover. His view is articulated as follows: "The Kingdom of Israel is both the subject of, and responsible for, the formation and development of many of the traditions in the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The Israelite monarchy was able to take advantage of the temporary decline of the great riverine powers of Egypt and Mesopotamia to exploit its position astride the strategic overland trade and military routes of the Levant" (Whitelam 1989:119). The interests of those groups, who advocated a centralised bureaucracy, accounted for the third dimension of the major shift in the highland infrastructure of Israel. The process of political bureaucratisation was accelerated during the second century of Israel's existence. Those who favoured political centralisation were bent on entrenching their aristocratic foundations, thereby ensuring continued power and privilege enhanced by their accumulating wealth. The perception that developed was that centralisation served the interests of the few wealthy rather than the majority (Coote & Whitelam 1986:139).

Scholars have over the years assumed that 1 Sam 7-15 contains a very valuable and intricate account of the origin of kingship in ancient Israel (Whitelam 1992:41). An understanding of the origins of Israelite kingship must of necessity take into account the two main opposing views that emerged in biblical tradition. These views are based on two sources identified by source critical scholarship as an early and pro-monarchical source (1 Sam 9:1-19:16; 11:1-11, 15; 1-14) and a late and anti-monarchical source (1 Sam 7:3-17; 8; 10:17-27; 11:12-14) according to Whitelam (1992:41). The emergence of kingship in ancient Israel was preceded by a conflict between two opposing groups who had a vested interest in the economic progress of early Israel (Robinson 1993:49). The outcry from the political old guard of Israel

demanding a new political dispensation "to be like the nations" is seen as an act of apostasy against Yahweh and inherently rejecting him (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19). While the Deuteronomistic view conceptualised a negative kingship regarded as "a form of treason against Yahweh, the 'real' king," a more positive view of the monarchy is advanced in Ps 72 and Isa 11:1-9 (Lemche 1988:231). The view expressed in these texts makes clear that the king rules under Yahweh's favour and leadership.

The background to this conflict can be described as follows: "The process of centralization set in train during the transition from pre-state to state level society produced considerable inter-tribal and intra-social conflict. One form of opposition to kingship stemmed from groups and individuals who had the most to lose from the structural transformations … The second form of conflict in relation to kingship which must be distinguished from the first is the endemic struggle for power among the urban elite" (Whitelam 1989:121). With regard to those groups who stood to lose the most as a result of structural transformation, their biggest threat revolved around the new sovereignty the king would gain over arable land. From this emerged a defiant attempt by various groups or communities to protect them from this development. The effect of this was a continuous conflict situation that continued "in peripheral areas or underground movements to erupt in periodic popular protests against the exploitation and oppression of monarchic rule" (Whitelam 1989:121). The second form of conflict was characterised as a power struggle between the urban elite bent on usurping royal authority. Coote & Whitelam (1986:139) see this conflict as taking place primarily "between an increasingly dominant group of larger landowners whose primary social bonds had gradually shifted from the village to the regional level and a much larger subordinate group of non-wealthy villagers whose political and economic integrity was being threatened by economic developments in Israel."

Gottwald (1993:131) identifies four key areas for re-evaluation. The areas identified for a re-evaluation are the following: the influence of external factors in facilitating the transition to kingship; the simplistic presupposition that the conversion from tribe to state was accomplished relatively easily; that the state system had a decisive and destructive effect on the tribal system and that the sharp distinction between charismatic and dynastic leadership can adequately describe the transition from tribe to statehood. For the purpose of this project, the factors that contributed to Israel's transition to statehood would be the focus of attention. Matthews & Benjamin (1993), in an anthropological study of the social world of ancient Israel between 1250

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and 587 BC, identify five key areas that become the focal point around which a state emerges and a royal monarchy is established. When a village culture faces a significant external threat, it would generally organise into a state and concentrate power in the hands of a mighty leader who will, on behalf of the nation, raise a standing army, facilitate production and distribution of products, enter into foreign alliances, codify legal rules and norms and enable the development of architecture, literature and arts through public education. The state's primary objective was the protection and defense of its citizens as well as advancing their welfare through expansion. Following the death of Saul and his warriors, Israel was faced with a threat from the Philistines. David is credited with centralising state powers in the hands of the monarch. A standing army was organised under his leadership to protect Israel's borders against foreign invasions. By making some strategic changes - such as changing the manner in which the proceeds of war are distributed, hiring seasoned soldiers in a professional capacity and fashioning his army on the Egyptian model - he successfully confronted the Philistine threat. On the economic front, he set up and facilitated a production and distribution of goods network. The collection of taxes became an integral part of the entire system that financed the expanding bureaucracy. Alliances were entered into for defensive and trade purposes. Covenants incorporating both military alliances and trade agreements enabled states to exercise power beyond their national boundaries. Trade agreements facilitated the exchange of goods and offered protection to each other's merchants and caravans. Judges, teachers and architects were commissioned to devise and administer the legal code and set standards for the development of buildings, literature and the arts respectively. The law codes promulgated ensured that villages and cities were fully aware of their responsibilities and obligations to the state and prescribed the necessary means to enforce compliance. State architecture, literature and art had one primary objective and that is to promote royal ideology.

While it is accepted that the political and military superiority of the Philistines played a key role in facilitating Israel's transition to statehood, it is proposed that one should also consider the social scientific reality which suggests that both internal and external factors were important in the establishment of the state. A strong internal motivation for the transition to statehood most probably lay in the advancement of elitism not readily achieved under an egalitarian tribal society (Gottwald 1993:132). They "welcomed monarchy as a way to strengthen and legitimate privilege among those with material and social advantage under the tribal system" (Gottwald

1993:132). The narrative of Nabal demonstrates the concern of the wealthy over the gradual erosion of their interests under the tribal system (cf. 1 Sam 25). Gottwald also suggests that the discrepancy in material sources from sub region to sub region may provide "an objective basis for certain families and tribes to make a claim to dominant social power based on their greater prosperity and enlarging regional influence" (1993:133). An example of this can be found in the Josephite and Judahite communities who exceeded the productive standard of other tribes.

3.2.2   Political Legitimation of Kingship in Israel

According to Whitelam "the justification of kingship with its centralized social structure was based upon a guarantee of order, security, prosperity, fertility, etc., in return for loyalty and subservience" (1992:42). In view of the fact that Israel did not emerge within a vacuum and that her neighbours had a profound influence on her religious and cultural identity, it therefore comes as no surprise that legitimation of royal authority was of as much importance to Israel as it was to Mesopotamia, Egypt and the rest of Syro-Palestine. The legitimation of kingship was expressed through a number of rituals, celebrations and other symbolism, namely the New Year's Festival. All of these were clearly associated with the definition of the Enthronement and Royal Psalms, the building of elaborate royal monumental structures, the king as the anointed of Yahweh, his relationship with Yahweh and his role and function within the cosmos as a representative of Yahweh (Whitelam 1989). Royal symbols such as the scepter (Ps 45:6), the crown (2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kgs 11:12; Pss 89:39; 132:18) and the throne (2 Sam 14:9; 1 Kgs 2:12) were all key to affirming the legitimacy of the institution of kingship.

The coronation ritual, according to 1 Kgs 1 and 11, is a religious event that provides a new beginning for the ascending monarch. Ahlström (1995:593) identifies from a combination of texts in the Hebrew Bible (Pss 2; 89:19-29/ 20-30; 110) the following important stages in the enthronement of the Israelite king:

(1) The king is selected, chosen by oracle and announced as such.

(2) The king becomes a messiah following his anointing as part of the investiture process.

(3) Following the enactment of a possible ritual battle, the king is declared victorious and ruler of the cosmos.

(4) Being of humble descent, he rides a donkey to his investiture.

(5) At the point of accession, he is adopted as the son of Yahweh.

(6) Eternal rulership is promised to him.

(7) People accept his legitimacy.

(8) A celebration banquet is held.

The anointing of the king was a religious act that validated and legitimised the king as the chosen vassal of Yahweh. A common view shared by both traditions to the institution of kingship, those in favour of the institution and those opposed to it, is that Yahweh designated the king of Israel. This view provided the legitimation process with one of its most powerful tools as it ensured that anyone ready to overthrow the king would understand such an act as a rebellion against Yahweh (Whitelam 1989:134). In a similar manner it would be incumbent on a usurper to demonstrate that his actions were legitimate in overthrowing a reigning monarch.

3.2.3   The Nature of Israelite Kingship and its Relationship to Yahweh

Scholars of the myth and ritual tradition (Hooke 1958; Engnell 1967) speak freely of divine kingship, while scholars such as Frankfort (1948), adopted a more moderate view, preferring to speak of sacral rather than divine kingship. In examining the influence of the ancient Near East on Israelite sacral kingship, Mowinckel (1955:283) describes the extent of this influence: "The idea about the king (in Israel), is fundamentally the same as the rest of the ancient East - quite naturally, since Israel according to the testimony of the Old Testament had adopted the kingship in direct imitation of the Canaanite one (1 Sam 8:5) which has in its turn obtained both ideas forms and etiquette from the great king by the Nile and Euphrates-Tigris." He describes the king as "the representative of the god or gods" (Mowinckel 1955:284). The king becomes the conduit through which the gods exercise and demonstrate their power. He is also "the channel through which the blessing and happiness and fertility flow from the gods to men" (Mowinckel 1955:284). Material and spiritual welfare is ensured through a king that enjoys the favour of the gods and as representative of the people to the gods he ensures that the unity of his people to the gods is adequately demonstrated.[24]

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[24] The sacral qualities of the Israelite kings endowed them with qualities and characteristics that set them apart from other mortals (2 Sam 14:17, 20; 1 Kgs 3:4-15, 16-28; 4:29-34; 10:1-9, 24). David is depicted as a man of insight (2 Sam 14:17) and wisdom (v. 20). Solomon in a night vision requests Yahweh's continued favour by bestowing on him the wisdom to rule his people. As his father David before him, he pledges his "faithfulness, righteousness and uprightness (as) the required response to God's covenant" and is granted the wisdom to perform justice with a discerning heart (1 Kgs 3:13), i.e. the "ability to distinguish right and wrong and to decide and govern" (Wiseman 1993:84). Solomon's judgement involving the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:24, 25) demonstrates his sacral quality as a wise judge. Solomon is held in high esteem not only by his own people, but also internationally (1 Kgs 10:4-9).

The Hebrew Bible provides us with information on the divine status of the king as well as the religious foundation of kingship ideology. Demonstrating the "close affiliation between royalty and the divine world," Ahlström (1995) cites Ps 2:7; Ps 89:26 and Ps 45:6 as confirmation of this view. With regard to the human or divine nature of the king, Lemche poses the following view: "If we confine our study of this question to the Psalms, we shall see that there are basically two views of the Jerusalemite king (we have no information enabling us to make judgments about the understanding of kingship in Samaria): that the king is a god, or that alternatively, he is a man" (1988:231). Divine kingship in the ancient Near East was considered to be a rare concept with few exceptions according to Lemche (1988:231). These exceptions include Egypt, where Pharaoh was considered to be the son of Re or even the incarnation of the sun-god himself, and in Mesopotamia where some rulers regarded themselves as divinely descended. Despite this view, the general Mesopotamian concept of kingship was that "the king was the stateholder and priest of the god" while in the West Semitic realm, the king was considered as "the slave of the god" (Lemche 1988:232). The view of the Israelite king as the son of Yahweh, as stated in Ps 2, has been held in biblical tradition as an adoption formula. In Lemche's opinion, this view is strongly influenced by Egyptian royal ideology as demonstrated by certain aspects of the royal administrations of David and Solomon that closely resembled that of ancient Egypt. In Lemche's view David's administration, Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian princess together with his elaborate lifestyle modeled on the Egyptian system, as well as their understanding of the Egyptian kingship, all serve to support the view that "the king in Jerusalem was meant to appear as Pharaoh, as the divine lord of the empire" (1988:233).

A study of Israelite royal ideology is almost near impossible without considering the impact of the Enthronement and Royal Psalms as developed earlier last century by Gunkel (1933), Mowinckel (1922, 1962), Johnson (1967) and others.[25] By using the language of

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[25] While Gunkel was instrumental in setting the tone for the form-critical study of the psalms, realising the "convergence of modes of speech, religious claims, and social settings," it was Mowinckel's (1922; 1962) pioneering study of the Psalms that provided an influential framework within which to view the selected psalms "in a single liturgical setting that dominated Israel's life" (Brueggemann 1984:17, 18). Yahweh's kingship is celebrated in the Enthronement Psalms (Pss 47; 93; 96-99) identified initially by Gunkel. Mowinckel later expanded this group to include Ps 95 and 100. Mowinckel further identified a number of other texts, primarily in the Psalms, that are closely linked to this group (Pss 8;15; 24; 29; 33; 46; 48; 50; 66a; 75; 76; 81; 82; 84; 87; 114; 118; 132; 149 and Exod 15:1-8). The liturgical setting identified by Mowinckel was the annual enthronement festival also known as the New Year's Festival. A characteristic of this festival was the annual enthronement of Yahweh as the divine king and God of Israel. This creation renewal festival, held annually in Jerusalem, ensured the well-being of the nation and was presided over by the Israelite king who derived "great political gain from the theological claims of the liturgy" (Brueggemann 1984:18). The relationship between king and god is manifested in the portrayal of Yahweh as king of

Canaanite mythology, the Psalmist demonstrates the universal victory of Yahweh against the forces of evil (VanGemeren 1994:876).[26] Any united effort by foreign kings against Israel miraculously failed as they witnessed the awesomeness of Yahweh's power as it radiated from beautiful Mount Zion (Ps 48:4). Yahweh emerges victorious over the primeval forces and subdues all forms of opposition. As the Creator-God, he "now sovereignly rules over the waters, the earth, day and night, the heavenly bodies, and all the seasons of the year" where primeval forces previously existed (VanGemeren 1994:876). His rule is established universally (Ps 89:11-12) and he is fully capable of looking after his people and addressing their needs (Ps 68:9). A strong warning is sounded to anyone who considers overthrowing the reigning monarch and bringing chaos on society through a promise of the defeat of the king's enemies, represented in the forces of chaos and the establishment of universal rule by Yahweh (Ps 72:8-11).

3.2.4   Social Justice and the Role and Function of the King in Israel

In sketching the difference between the theoretical perspective and the political reality of justice, as it pertains to the role and function of kingship, Whitelam makes the following comment: "one

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Israel in the Enthronement and Royal Psalms. Yahweh is upheld as king, not only of Israel, but as a universal king. Once declared in the Feast of king of the universe, Yahweh ascends the throne and assumes divine executive authority over the divine council, the whole of creation and Israel (Pss 47:6-8; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 98:6 and 99:1). An imperative call, repeated five times (Ps 47:6-7) to sing praises to Yahweh is made by the Psalmist. Everyone is encouraged to give the divine king homage anew as they sing his praises (Anderson 1972; VanGemeren 1994). Yahweh is pictured in radiant majesty, glory and power as he ascends his throne following his victory over primeval chaos and the creation of the world (Ps 93:1). It is suggested that the image presented here may have been derived "from the investiture of the earthly king at his enthronement" (Anderson 1972:667). His reign extends even to the remotest areas of the earth and is a cause for all to rejoice in his kingship (Ps 97:1). The divine king will be welcomed and worshipped with trumpet, horn and great rejoicing in expectation of his coming (Ps 98:6). The trumpet and horn were instruments normally associated with the investiture ceremony of the king (Anderson 1972:692). Ps 99 represents the last of the Enthronement Psalms with its cultic setting Tabernacles and with its reference to the Covenant it "may have formed part of the great Autumnal Festival" (1972:693). The imagery of the cherubim is derived from the Ark of the Covenant (VanGemeren 1994:896).

[26] Not only does Yahweh repel disorder and chaos (Pss 93:3-4; 74:12-14; 89:10-11; 47:3-4, 8-9; 48:3-4; 68:30; 97:3,7,9; 98:2; 99:1-2), but he also restores order (Pss 89:14; 24:1; 74:15-17; 89:11-12; 29; 68:9). Fundamental to Yahweh's role as universal king, is him dispelling the forces of chaos as represented by primeval waters (Ps 93:3-4) and oppressing any form of opposition thereby ensuring the security, peace and justice of the nation of Israel (VanGemeren 1994:896). Political and social chaos is seen to be ever present and is only strongly counterbalanced by a successful and legitimate kingship institution. Judg 17-21 is also regarded as a text that provides justification for the existence of kingship as a bulwark against the forces of chaos. Similar to other ancient Near Eastern religions, where the chief deity takes on the forces of chaos, Yahweh is also involved in a battle of cosmic proportions against the forces of disorder and chaos. This epic battle takes place against the monsters of the sea in the form of Leviathan (Ps 74:14) and Rahab (Ps 89:10) and earthly opponents (Pss 48:3-4; 68:30). Yahweh affirms His sovereignty over land and sea by destroying the forces of chaos and establishing his divine rulership over these domains. In alluding to the battle between Baal and Yamm (Sea) in Ugaritic mythology and the battle between Marduk and Tiamat in Babylonian mythology, the Israelites reinterpreted and appropriated these foreign myths as "an expression of their theological vitality" rather than "a sign of weakness" (Anderson 1972:543).

of the major problems in dealing with the judicial functions of the Israelite monarchy has been a failure to distinguish between the ideal or theoretical position on the one hand, and its practical implications on the other. In general, the ideal position is presented in the Psalms and the Prophets, whereas the historical books often witness to the practical problems involved in the administration of monarchical judicial authority and the failures to attain this ideal" (1979:18). While the prophets of ancient Israel did represent the ideal of justice, they did so against the backdrop of the political reality of their time. The discussion of justice and the role of the king in this section will centre around the ideal perspective while the next two chapters will focus on social justice with its practical implications against the political reality of the time. This will also serve to facilitate the discussion on the nature and legitimation of the role of kingship within the ancient Near East.

Weinfeld (1995) deals extensively with the expression and meaning of the word-pair justice and righteousness in the ancient Near East. He postulates that the term justice and righteousness may be a character trait granted by Yahweh to the king following a petition in this regard. Yahweh is petitioned to grant justice to the reigning king and righteousness to his heir apparent to enable him to dispense ideal justice to all of his people, especially the poor, the widow, the orphan and even the stranger (cf. Ps 72:1-4). Yahweh has dominion over all of creation and will exercise his judgement with fairness (cf. Ps 96:10). As the divine judge, Yahweh is able to guarantee "order, *mišpāṭ*, peace, security and well-being" (cf. Pss 96:10-13; 97:2, 8; 98:9; 99:4) as these are fundamental to his divine kingship (Whitelam 1992:43). Yahweh's concern extends primarily to justice and peace for the underprivileged classes in society in Ps 82. This is an affirmation of his primary role in the divine council. Anderson offers the following perspective: "The essence of the Psalmist's problem is the question why the weak and the defenseless are continually deprived of justice; this is explained as due to the mismanagement of the subordinate divine beings who have been entrusted with jurisdiction over mankind" (1972:592). Much like in Mesopotamia and Ugarit, the Israelite king is obligated to ensure justice for this group of people as a special concern in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Exod 22:21-27). Yahweh in Ps 82:1-8 "is portrayed as taking the radical step of deposing the gods (i.e. rulers) from their divine and immortal status to that of humans because of their dereliction of judicial duty as it applied to the poor, the widow, and the orphan (Mafico 1992:651). As Yahweh assumes leadership of the divine council, following his defeat of chaos and having dealt with the

divine beings who failed to secure universal order, He establishes his throne on righteousness and justice as reflected in Psalm 89:14 (Anderson 1972; Whitelam 1992).

Psalm 33:5 presents justice and righteousness as the divine ideal. In Israel the principal of justice *mišpāṭ* (justice) and *ṣedāqā* (righteousness) is commissioned by Yahweh and takes on the form of a normative imperative that demands conformity from everyone in society. Liverani (2003:99) views the typical qualities of Israelite kingship as "concentrated in Solomon" on the principals of justice, wisdom and intelligence which is projected retrogressively to David (cf. 1 Kgs 3:6). While human conduct in general was expected to conform to the ideal of justice, it was linked through the principle of righteousness to the cosmic order over which Yahweh held sway. The king in Israel, Mesopotamia and Egypt, ultimately had the key responsibility of ensuring justice. Royal conduct was viewed from a religious perspective and had to conform to the divine stipulations of righteousness. It was incumbent on the monarchy to ideally represent the conduct of all of society in the pursuit of justice and righteousness. In this vein, Weinfeld (1995) goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the term "justice and righteousness" is an encompassing term that is not only concerned with the dispensing of justice, but is also concerned with true judgement that considers equity and fairness as important. He comes to the conclusion that the expression "justice and righteousness" is not a concept that belongs to jurisdiction alone, but is much more relevant for the social-political leaders who create the laws and are responsible for their execution. It was this balance between religion and politics that Amos and the other classical prophets addressed so vigorously in their prophetic invective against the harsh social and political realities of their time.

At the heart of the legitimation of the institution of kingship in ancient Israel, is the relationship between the king and Yahweh and the ideal royal attributes shared by both. A very close parallel between the "ideal attributes" of the king and the "central elements of Yahweh's kingship" demonstrates the significance of religious validation in the founding and maintenance of royal authority in early agrarian societies (Whitelam 1992:44). The primary purpose served by royal ideology and ritual was "to stress the complex and dependent cosmological relationships" (Whitelam 1989:129). The relationship of the Israelite king to Yahweh and the king's central role in the cosmos, as the representative of Yahweh, was an important element in the legitimation process. This positioning of the king within the cosmos and in the social order of society is a reflection of the manner in which his functions mirror those of Yahweh in the

heavenly realm. In the same manner that Yahweh's position is structured in a hierarchical manner in the heavenly council and in his relationship to the other beings in the heavenly council (cf. Ps 82), the king's position on earth is justified within a socially stratified society. Sharing a striking similarity with royal ideal features in other ancient Near Eastern societies, the Israelite king's role and functions on earth are identical to those of Yahweh. This hierarchical ordering of society is crucial to the maintenance of royal authority and is defended strenuously. This portrayal of the king's central position as the key symbolic figure in a well-defined social and political order enables royal ideology and ritual to act as a bulwark against "the justification for monarchy against opposition to its development" as well as any threats from urban factions who might try to overthrow the king and seize power (Whitelam 1989:130).

The role and function of the king in the ancient Near East was linked to his responsibility to establish and maintain order throughout his kingdom. As part of his responsibility to ensure *ṣedāqā*, *misarum* or *ma'at* the king had important duties to perform as warrior, judge and priest. The above exegetical excursion places Yahweh, in the Israelite world-view, in the role of a universal king who established his kingdom on the principles of righteousness and justice. His victory over the primeval forces of chaos and disorder confirm him as Lord over all his creation. This has significant implications for his earthly representative, the Israelite king. The king in turn is recognised as "the central symbol of the social system with the primary role of establishing and maintaining order in his political domain" (Whitelam 1992:44). This fundamental role is made up of three important dimensions that are interrelated, namely that of warrior judge and priest. All of these elements had one objective that focused on the establishment, maintenance and promotion of a divinely ordained order on earth. This notion of kingship is applicable across all civilisations of the ancient Near East (Whitelam 1992:44). Israel's demand for a king is expressed in terms of strong leadership in times of conflict (cf. 1 Sam 8:20). The institution of kingship sought would bring them in line with how other civilisations around them existed. The military component of leadership was an important element for the advocates of kingship. The king, in his leadership role as warrior, would confront the forces of chaos and conflict that threatened the existence of Israel. As part of his function to maintain *mišpāṭ* (justice), the king is expected to make use of whatever means necessary to achieve this objective. Being a warrior is an intricate part of the task.

Another dimension to the function of kingship is manifested in the king's role as judge (cf. 1 Sam 8:5; 2 Sam 12:1-15; 14:1-24; 15:1-6; 1 Kgs 3; 21:1-20; 2 Chr 19:4-11). When the prophet Nathan confronts David with his own transgression by means of a parable of the rich man and the poor man, David, not immediately aware of the implicit reference to him, is filled with justice and moral indignation (VanGemeren 1994:456) condemning the rich man for his actions and prescribing a penalty (2 Sam 12:5-6). Nathan unravels the parable and accuses David of killing Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba. David acknowledges his transgression and receives divine forgiveness through the prophet. Yahweh, the divine judge, however, still executes his final judgement by inflicting a fatal illness on the child that David had with Bathsheba. The king as judge had an awesome responsibility as cosmic order was entirely dependent on his capacity to ensure that justice prevailed throughout his kingdom. The maintenance of law and order in early state level societies, characterised by social inequalities arising out of stratification, was a constant challenge. The efficiency of the king's judicial responsibilities was essential in stabilising the political and social tensions that arose in these ancient Near Eastern societies (Whitelam 1989:132). Psalm 72, classified by scholars as a royal psalm (Anderson 1972, VanGemeren 1994), demonstrates the interrelationship between cosmic order and the ability and duty of the king to ensure that justice prevails in his kingdom. A petition is made to Yahweh to grant the king the ability to perform justice (cf. Ps 72:1). Yahweh's concern is for the downtrodden and in this he is represented by the king whom he has appointed. VanGemeren (1994:874) states that Yahweh's special concern for "the destitute, disadvantaged, and social outcasts" makes them more than just his concern (cf. Ps 72:12-14). They occupy a special place in his creation. VanGemeren is of the opinion that "to be an instrument of God's Kingship on earth, the monarch must conform to the divine standards of justice and righteousness" (1994:871). Pss 72:3, 5-7 and 15-17 shows that it is imperative for the king to be endowed with this special gift as it "determines the wellbeing of the nation as a whole since it is intricately tied to the fertility, prosperity and security of the nation" (Whitelam 1989:132). The significance of the king's role in dispensing justice provided a powerful tool for the legitimation of the institution of kingship in the ancient Near East and provided a guarantee against chaos (cf. Judg 17-21).

The third manner in which the king's function as the protector of divine justice and order is manifested is through his leadership of the cult as priest (cf. 1 Sam 13:10; 14:33-35; 2 Sam

6:13, 17; 24:25; 1 Kgs 3:4, 15; 8:62; 9:25; 12:32; 13:1). By presiding over the cult, the king ensured that the harmonious relationship between Yahweh and people was maintained. Within the context of the ancient Near East, the cosmic order is guaranteed on earth and the gods are appeased by constantly being assured of the fulfillment of the king's duties. As part of the universal objective of ensuring cosmic order, the function of the king as priest is crucial in obtaining divine approval and religious validation.

3.3   SUMMARY

The study of the settlement of Israel is considered problematic in that various hypotheses and models were developed over the years by renowned scholars without reaching a consensus. The biblical traditions on the settlement of Palestine are considered to be "first of all of a religious nature interspersed with family legends and sagas" giving rise to the view that these traditions, as important as they are for the development of modern religious value systems, especially in the Christian-Judeo traditions, appear not to meet the requirements for critical historiography (Scheffler 2001:33).

The purpose of this chapter was to focus intensively on the ideology underlying political structures in the ancient Near East around the 1st millennium BC. The research into kingship ideology, as the dominant political model, within emerging state structures forms a very important component of this dissertation. It provides a framework in which to evaluate the successes and/ or failures of the political establishment to ensure social order as its divine given mandate. The various social-scientific theories prevailing in current biblical scholarship and referred to extensively in this chapter position the monarchy, as a divinely legitimated institution, at the centre of society assigning it a crucial judiciary role in the process. In a study of this nature, it is necessary to take into account the overwhelming influence of other near Eastern societies and social factors in the establishment of a royal ideology in Israel. The above study therefore demonstrates the complimentary relationship between the various components of royal ideology, namely the origin, nature and divine relationship, legitimation of the institution and the ideal of justice as reflected in the role and function of the king, in providing it with its distinctive features.

CHAPTER 4

AN OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTION OF PROPHECY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PREVAILING POLITICAL SYSTEMS

The previous chapter underscored the fact that the institution of monarchy within the ancient Near East and Israel in particular understood its mandate in terms of a divine imperative. The channel, through which communication between the divine and earthly realms was achieved, was through religious intermediation. Religious intermediation became an institutionalised function that facilitated communication between the human realm and the divine order. Throughout the ancient Near East the prophet served as a religious intermediary between the reigning deity and the king and his people as this chapter will demonstrate. This set the tone for the relationship between the prophet and the political establishment of his day.

Amos and his contemporaries Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah addressed the ethical and moral shortcomings of their societies.[27] By addressing the social disjuncture between the prevailing social and religious conditions of their day, they were propelled to the forefront of politico-religious activities aimed at addressing these concerns. Although the focus of research has now shifted to the text rather than the historical prophetical figures as they may have existed at the time, it is clear that these figures addressed the relational imbalance between politics and religion in a very sharp, distinctive and decisive manner. It is against this background that the institution of prophecy will be examined in this chapter with a view to gaining a better understanding of the role that Amos played as a prophet.

The objective of this chapter is to further understand the book of Amos within the institution of prophecy and its relationship with the political order that existed at the time. An understanding of the institution of prophecy in terms of this directive would necessitate the following approach; firstly a chronological study of prophecy from its traditional romantic idealism to the modern view that focuses on the text rather than the traditional prophetic figure. This continuum will include the study of prophecy as a social phenomenon with reference to the influence of social-scientific approaches on the institution. Secondly, biblical prophecy will be

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[27] According to Cohen (1979:12) all of these prophets "lived in that turbulent 150-year period that began with the death-pangs of the Kingdom of Israel in the late 8th century B.C. and ended with the Babylonian destruction of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C." As literary prophets "they were fortunate enough to have their messages recalled, transmitted, recorded, embellished and ultimately canonized into sacred writ" (1979:xx).

viewed specifically within the context of ancient Near Eastern prophecy and its influence on this phenomenon. Finally, this chapter will examine the relationship of the prophet to king, cult and society and discern the prophetic message with special reference to issues of social justice. The role of the prophet Amos will continue to be measured against the perspectives drawn. This is important not only because of the enormous interest generated by scholars over the years, but also because of the continued, and in some cases increasing relevance that the message of a relatively unknown sheepherder from Tekoa, who may have lived and prophesied during the eighth century BC, holds for our postmodern society. Amos is described as relatively unknown because of his extremely brief tenure as a prophet. Despite this, the message of Amos still holds significant relevance today. In order to understand the message of Amos and the manner in which religion and politics were dealt with, we would need to understand the key role played by the religious intermediary within society as well as his relationship to the socio-politico-religious institutions of his day. This further presupposes that the intricate relationship between politics and religion, as presented in the book of Amos, cannot be properly understood unless viewed against the broader politico-religious ancient Near Eastern background in which religious intermediaries played a pivotal role.

4.1   UNDERSTANDING AND DEFINING PROPHETIC BEHAVIOUR

4.1.1   Traditional Views on Prophecy

Hayes (1988:30) points to Duhm who "began his general discussion of the prophets with the question: 'Why do we begin our investigation of prophetic religion with a discussion of the person of the prophet?'" Duhm's view was that the religion of the prophet was embedded in his persona and as such this would be a logical place to start from. "The individual personality, the human contexts from which they derived, and the historical contexts in which they functioned thus became indispensable elements in understanding the prophets" (Hayes 1988:30). The prophet played a key role in facilitating the divine standard to society. So critical was the nature of the prophetic role in traditional scholarship of prophetic studies that the classical prophets were regarded as the true innovators of ancient Israelite religion.[28] This view was subsequently

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[28] Wellhausen was a key proponent of this idealistic view of prophecy; a view which increasingly came under pressure and was subsequently extensively revised.

challenged as the view of prophecy developed over time and eminent scholars proposed a "paradigm shift" challenging this romantic idealistic perception of prophecy that held sway for a considerable period of time during the 20th century (Deist 1995; Gordon 1995).

The Prophet's intense temporal (experience) relationship with the deity, externally manifested in "ecstasy," was the scholarly domain of early scholars such as Gunkel (1903), Hölscher (1914) and more recently Lindblom (1962). These views, emerging at the beginning of the previous century, witnessed a definition of prophecy that focused primarily on the ecstatic behaviour of the prophet. While Gunkel was at the forefront of viewing prophetic activity in terms of ecstatic behaviour, Hölscher advocated a view that placed the definition of Israel's prophets within a psychological milieu based on their ecstatic behaviour (Petersen 2000:34). The most influential proponent of this view has been Lindblom (1962). A prophet, according to Lindblom, is a person who, acutely aware of his chosen calling, feels himself compelled to proclaim certain messages "in a mental state of intense inspiration or real ecstasy" as given to him by the deity (1962:46). Lindblom's views, as influential as they were considered to be, appear not to have contained evidence of a universal prophetic state of ecstasy. Biblical evidence suggests clear examples of ecstatic behaviour on the part of prophets such as the group of prophets who through their ecstatic behaviour swept King Saul into a frenzy (cf. 1 Sam 10:5-13) and Isaiah who is recorded as walking around naked for three years (cf. Isa 20:2-3). In the case of Jeremiah who exhibited strange prophetic actions and Ezekiel's actions who at times suggested some serious mental or physical deficiency. Hutton (2004) is of the opinion that all this suggests is that there was a fine line separating "prophetic inspiration and insanity." This shows that ecstatic prophetic behaviour was not a universal phenomenon. Other prophets such as Nathan, Gad, Ahijah of Shiloh, Jonah and many other prophets in the royal court exhibited a more calm behaviour.

4.1.2   The Social Location of Prophecy

The shift from an idealistic prophetic image, which was prominent during the 19th and early 20th centuries, to an understanding of the social location of the prophet, a view predominant during the 1980s, can be seen in the following statement: "Die idealistiese profetebeeld wat in die negentiende eeu en tot baie onlangs gegeld het …, maak al hoe meer plek vir 'n profetiese figuur wat nie los staan van sy gemeenskap nie, maar intiem sosiologies daarmee verweef is" (The

idealistic prophetic image that prevailed during the nineteenth century until most recently … , is progressively replaced by a prophetic figure inseparable from his community, but is intimately connected on a sociological level) (Kruger 1994:330). The direction of various social-anthropological approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible was strongly influenced by social theories since the end of the 19th century (Kruger 2000:5).

Kruger acknowledges that the title "prophet" (*nābî'*), derived from the Greek word *prophētes*, has always been problematic (1994:325). The term was used extensively in the Old Testament from traditional prophets to the classical prophets and was according to Kruger (1994:326) "met verskillende inhoude gevul …, afhangend van die tydperk en sfeer van toewysing" (assigned different meanings …, depending on the timeframe and sphere of reference). The conflict between Amos and the chief priest of Bethel, Amaziah in Amos 7:10-17 and the prophet's response in Amos 7:14 are considered some of the most widely written sections in the book of Amos (Hasel 1991:41). It represents one of the key texts in prophetic literature that confronts our understanding of the Israelite prophet with regards to the title, role and function of the prophet. The section is not only one of the most extensively written on texts, but also one of the most disputed by various scholars (Hasel 1991:41). Amos's statement takes place within the context of a third person report that is recorded in Amos 7:10-17 (Koch 1983; Hasel 1991). The significance of his response is the basis of the historical debate that has ensued regarding the prophetic nature of Amos.

Following his accusation of conspiracy against Amos in his report to the king, Amaziah addresses Amos as a seer and instructs him to ply his trade elsewhere as his prophecy against Israel has proven to be too much. Amos responds to Amaziah in 7:14 as follows: "I was no prophet, nor was I a prophet's son; I was a herdsman and fig-grower" (REB with Apocrypha). Andersen & Freedman describes this section a biographical in which Amos denies the title *nābî'*, despite Amos's reference to him as a seer (1989:777). Amos's denial of his status as a *nābî'* or his association with the *něbî'îm* has been interpreted by scholars in various ways. The interpretation of this section referred to by Hasel (1991:42) as the "crux interpretum" of the book of Amos and as "the central feature of the interpretation of the book" by Clements (1996:30), has been at the centre of debate for a long time. Hasel provides us with some positions that have been taken over the years with regard to this text and the question as to whether or not Amos was a *nābî'*. The first view, taking into account Amos's denial of being a *nābî'* suggests that while

Amos may initially not have been a prophet as presented in the past tense, this, however, confirms that he became a prophet after his response to a divine call. This seems to be in harmony with v. 15 where he confirms his divine directive from God to prophesy. Paul sees the basic problem as "the apparent contradiction between his denial of being a prophet" and the subsequent verse (v. 15) in which Amos confirms that he was selected by Yahweh to prophesy to Israel (1991:244). Amos's response in v.15 is seen as an attempt to correct Amaziah's perception that Amos was a salaried official within the cult rather than an independent prophet assigned directly by Yahweh (Wolff 1977:313; Paul 1991:247). In v. 15 Amos affirms his divine call by stating that the Lord "took me (ויקחני) away from the flock (מאחרי הצאן)" where he was given the divine charge to "go (לך), prophesy to (הנבא אל) my people Israel (עמי ישראל)" (Paul 1991:249). Amos essentially nullifies Amaziah's charge by confirming his divine call. The second view places Amos's statement within the present tense. Read in the present tense, Amos's claim that he is neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, suggesting a link to a prophetic guild, focused the debate on the nature and definition of the word *nābî'* (Hasel 1991:42). The solution was sought in the office of the cult prophet suggesting that while Amos may have denied his role as that of a cult or central prophetic figure, he acknowledged his calling as a prophet on the periphery of Israelite society. Sawyer (1993) observes that the prophetic figure was not only familiar with life at the royal courts, but that they also seemed to have been up to date on current and international political affairs. This leads him to conclude that these figures were educated members of society who were from "a background not dissimilar to that of other leaders, officials, and members of the intelligentsia. However emphatically they may protest their independence from the 'establishment', their style, their knowledge, and their prominent role in society prove that they belonged firmly to the religious, political, and educational heart of ancient Israelite society" (Sawyer 1993:24).

A third hypothesis suggests that the Hebrew negative particle לא ("not") be translated as an interrogative particle. This section of Amos has been pursued by a number of translations in an attempt to understand the term prophet. It is rather ironic that various scholars have attempted to define Amos's prophetic nature on the basis of his denial. The various historical approaches ranged from a reading of Amos's statement to Amaziah in 7:14 in the past tense, and in the present tense through literary intervention such as imposing an interrogative particle upon the

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Hebrew negative particle לֹא ("not") thereby creating an "exclamatory negation" that would be translated "Am I not a prophet and am I not a prophet's son" requiring a positive response (Hasel 2000:43-44). More recent approaches include Zevit's (1979) suggestion that the Prophet Amos's denial of his status as a prophet is linked to that of a prophetic guild. Petersen (1981) draws a geopolitical distinction between Amos as a southern prophet and the other northern prophets. He is supported in this view by Hubbard (1989). The debate has now come full circle with Soggin (1987), Andersen & Freedman (1989) and Paul (1991), again supporting the past tense interpretation which suggests fewer problems in interpretation. Hasel is, however, not satisfied that this problem of interpretation may have been fully resolved (2000:46). Various scholars, however, share the view that the continuing narrative in 7:14-15 serves the purpose of reinforcing Amos's claim that his prophecies and message derive from divine authority (Clements 1996:30; Sweeney 2000:260). According to Clements "the purport of the conflict between Amaziah and Amos is to show that Amos was a true spokesman of God" (1996:30). The integrity of his calling and his message is sounded with absolute clarity by this narrative.

Amos succeeds in projecting his image as a prophet as he is regarded as a prophet, not only in his own eyes (verse 3:8) as a result of his divine calling, but also in the view of Amaziah who regards Amos as a prophet. God had called him to prophesy (Hebrew root *nb'*) and he had responded fully as a prophet through his visions, his message against social injustice, doom and for salvation, representing the plight of the people to the social, political and religious establishments of his time (Hasel 1991:47).

In ancient Israel the prevailing state of affairs within society could be explained in terms of the divine will. Whatever befalls a nation, whether to their benefit or detriment, would with all certainty have been designed by Yahweh either as a result of merited displeasure or favour (Lemche 1988:240). Living and performing contrary to Yahweh's expectations would in no uncertain terms invite Yahweh's displeasure and the consequences that would result from that while on the other hand, Lemche holds the view that it was also a given in Israelite society that only an impeccable relationship with Yahweh could "influence one's fate" and ensure Yahweh's favour (1988:240). This made communication between Yahweh and the king and his people of crucial importance. As messengers, the prophets of ancient Israel existed primarily to declare

Yahweh's divine word in "particular and broader human situations" (Miller 1995:97).[29] This further makes the prophetic message understandable within its social, political and religious context. It is also important to understand the role of prophets as being different from priests. According to McNutt (1999) prophets, in contrast to priests, lay claim to being called specifically by a deity. Prophets are not primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo. As facilitators of dynamic social change, they stand in the tradition of innovators and reformers. As such they come to prominence during times of great social upheaval especially in situations when for example "class antagonisms increase or when a smaller-scale society is politically or economically threatened by a larger-scale society" (McNutt 1999:179). Prophets, during such tumultuous periods, tend to be found outside the social and cultural environment of the targeted society and may "propose new doctrines, ethics, and/ or economic values." This further raises the distinction between peripheral and central prophets.[30] The peripheral prophets identified with the marginal and oppressed within society and "are portrayed as reformers who are concerned with promoting political, social, economic, and religious change" (McNutt 1999:181). For this reason "they are normally in conflict with leaders in the texts - kings, priests, members of the upper classes, central prophets" (McNutt 1999:181). The central prophets, in contrast to peripheral prophets, are at the centre of the support base of the royal institutions. As upholders of the status quo, supporting the royal institution, the prevailing socioeconomic and political situation as well as the religious system, they serve as advisers to the monarchy, primarily providing messages of support to the leadership and society at large. They tend to be in conflict with peripheral prophets most of the time (McNutt 1999:181).

An understanding of the message of the prophet Amos is integral to an understanding of the definition of a prophet. This pursuit was undertaken as part of the anthropological focus on the study of prophecy. Hutton (2004:1-5) identifies a number of key perspectives that have shaped the debate around the definition of prophecy. These perspectives, he believes, are fairly significant since they provide a "larger investigative framework" within which any study of the prophets has to be undertaken (2004:1). Petersen (2000:33-39), on the other hand, proposes a "six-fold typology of definitions" that may prove to be helpful in any modern study of prophecy.

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[29] Miller holds that as such "they addressed injustice and social oppression, crises of military invasions and the barbarities of war, creation of political alliances, religious apostasy, monarchical pretensions and tyranny, people lamenting their exile or directionless in trying to start a new life" (1995:97).
[30] Wilson examines the social dimensions of prophecy and distinguishes between central and peripheral prophets and alludes to the predominance of peripheral prophets in the Hebrew Bible (1980:38-41).

The focus of these perspectives and typologies suggests a definition based on "religious experience, distinctive literature, social setting, personal charisma, the prophets' role as intermediary, and distinctive message" (2000:39). This will also enhance our understanding of the relationship between the institution of prophecy and the prevailing political system within ancient Israel. A closer investigation of some of these typologies and perspectives will be undertaken in an attempt to achieve a better understanding of Amos as a prophet.

Hutton views the literary character of the prophetic books and the qualitative distance that exists between the canonised text and the original oracles as a perspective that has influenced the debate on the definition of prophecy (2004:2). Why is this considered important? Scholars have debated the variance that exists between the literary quality of the prophetic books as presented in the Deuteronomistic history of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2, Kings and other prophetic texts discovered in the Ancient Near East. The heart of the debate revolves around the realness of the phenomenon of prophecy as it existed in ancient Israel. This variance is demonstrated by two renowned prophets and their denial of any association with the prophetic office. Amos in 7:12-15 disclaims any association with the prophetic office and instead presents himself essentially as a sheepherder and fruit grower. The prophet Jeremiah, although not officially disassociating himself from the prophetic office, is considered to have denounced prophets and would never have assumed the title for himself. This perspective primarily concerns itself with what might be considered to be literary efforts to embellish the received text instead of concerning itself with the historical preservation of the text, and as a result necessitates a cautionary approach in assuming that the prophetic books are an accurate presentation of the phenomenon of prophecy as it existed in Israel (Hutton 2004:2).

Petersen (2000:34, 35), on the other hand, focuses on the role of poetry in prophetic literature in his attempt to define prophecy. Poetry was and is regarded as the literature characteristic of prophetic writings in the Hebrew Bible. This view is so strongly advocated that the prophetic figure is essentially reduced to a poet. Petersen (2000:35) is not convinced that it would be entirely accurate to present prophetic writings as constitutive of poetry only. Numerous forms of prophetic literature are presented in prose; namely vision reports, so prominent in the book of Amos, and the prophetic legend. To view prophetic literature purely in terms of poetry is according to Petersen "to ignore constitutive elements of prophetic behaviour and literature" (2000:35). While certain sections of the book of Amos clearly fall into a poetic

ambit, there are certainly a number of sections that clearly do not conform to a poetic structure. Examples here would include the introductory narrative, the vision reports and the banishment of Amos from Jerusalem.

With regard to the literature and message of the prophets, Petersen argues that the prophetic literature is essentially shaped and determined by the prophetic type figure involved (2000:41). He distinguishes five basic forms of prophetic literature, namely "the divinatory chronicle, vision report, prophetic speech, legend, and prophetic historiography" (Petersen 2000:41). A good example of a divinatory oracle is recorded in 1 Sam 9 where the divinatory activities of a *rō'êh* are described. "The report conveys the social process that elicits divination as well as the divinatory utterance" (Petersen 2000:41). Vision reports are characteristic not only of the Hebrew Bible, but also outside of ancient Israel. According to Petersen prophetic behaviour is seen "(to take) place in the creation of the report rather than in the vision, which is itself utterly subjective" (2000:41). Vision reports, mainly written in prose, are a strong characteristic of texts such as Amos 7 which makes use of the term *ḥōzêh* or "seer." These reports give effect to the process of intermediation that involves the transmission of the divine message (Petersen 2000:41). The message received by a prophet is literarily manifested in the prophetic speech. It is then presented as a divine oracle or prophetic saying (Petersen 2000:41). The prophetic legenda serves as a reflection of a holy man (cf. 2 Kgs 8:4). Prophetic historiography derives from individual prophets that serve as scribes as is evident in 1 Chr 29:29 and situations where involvement of the prophet created and developed the prophetic word into an enormous power as in 1 Kgs 12:15 (Petersen 2000:41).

Lemche (1988) describes the official pre-exilic religion of Israel as "a thoroughly rationalized and conceived theological structure which put the question of justice and the preservation of the cosmos above all else" (Lemche 1988:240). The Israelite prophets played a key role in transforming Israelite religion from a traditional Canaanite fertility religion to a religion which exhibited legalistic overtones (Lemche 1988:240). According to Lemche the Israelite prophets also had "the honour of ensuring that those aspects of (the Canaanite fertility religion) which guaranteed the fertility of the land through cultic rites and the like were purified from the cult was to some extent theirs" (1988:240). This resulted in the prophetic message intensifying its focus on justice as an "ethical necessity" (Lemche 1988:240).

The relationship between the classical and pre-classical prophets and the question as to whether or not they represent prophecy as the same social institution is another perspective advanced by Hutton to arrive at a prophetic definition (Hutton 2004:3). How does the prophecy of Nathan and Ahijah, for example, compare to the prophecy of Isaiah and Ezekiel? De Jong advances a clear distinction between the classical prophets and their predecessors, the pre-classical prophets with the former foretelling punishment while the latter promised salvation (2007:36). This transition from traditional prophecy to classical prophecy is accepted to have taken place during the ministry of the prophet Amos (De Jong 2007:36). Another important consideration of this "inner-biblical" perspective questions the selective and ideological use of the prophetic movement by the Deuteronomist Historian for selfish purposes. An appropriate comparison to demonstrate this point is the image of Isaiah presented as a salvation prophet in 2 Kgs 19, assuring the Judeans of divine protection against the Assyrians, compared to the prophet Isaiah in Isa 1-5, where his message agrees more readily with the strong anti-establishment message of Amos (Hutton 2004:3).

The theories advanced by Durkheim and Weber exercised considerable influence on the Biblical sciences in the seventies of the previous century with their concepts of ideal types, conflict theory, functionalism/ systems theory amongst others (Kruger 2000:7). The charismatic nature of a prophet defined prophetic authority as opposed to the authority of other religious figures, a view strongly propounded by Weber. The contributions of scholars such as Weber need to be understood in the context of their time. The charismatic and sociological nature of the prophet endowed them with the necessary authority to command society's attention (Petersen 2000:36). However, according to Petersen, Weber's views do not appear to hold true when it comes to the Hebrew prophets. He makes two important points in this regard. If the intention of charisma is to create a following, this is not always true of the Israelite prophets contends Petersen (2000:36). Pointing to limited evidence in the Biblical text, such as the reference to "the sons of the prophets" in Elisha's case and the reference to "my disciples" in Isa 8:16, Petersen asserts that "there is little warrant for arguing that Israel's prophets exercised charismatic authority" through a disciple band or a group of loyal followers (Petersen 2000:37). There certainly appears to be no evidence that Amos had a group following.

Traditionally the most popular definition of prophecy by far was the acceptance of the prophet as an intermediary. This definition of prophecy enjoyed universal applicability across

various cultural dimensions from ancient Israel, to Mari and to the Neo-Assyrian texts. Whether regarded as messengers from Yahweh to the populace based on the messenger formula "Thus says the Lord" or the prophets viewed as mediators in the context of covenant between the deity and the people (Overholt 1996, Wilson 1980) cross-cultural application facilitated the understanding of the prophet as an intermediary across various cultural boundaries. This approach certainly enabled the understanding of biblical prophecy against a wider Ancient Near Eastern background (Petersen 2000:37). The advantage of this definition, according to Petersen, allows one to identify various prophetic type figures within the context of an intermediary.

Not only does a definition of prophecy assist us in defining the relationship between the institution of prophecy and the political system, but so do the role, function and message of the prophet enhance that understanding. For some scholars the distinctive message of the prophet played a key role in the definition of the functionary. Earlier work done on "ethical monotheism" as initiated by the eighth century prophets most certainly set the scene for early scholarly perspectives on the key role of the prophetic message in defining the role of the prophet. The role, function and message of the prophet also served to demonstrate the relationship the prophet had with other institutions and especially the political establishment. Miller (1995:100) makes the point that a more modern approach to the study of prophecy is concerned with prophetic activity and its purposes and in relation to the prophet's vocation and role in society.[31] With the prophet regarded as the intermediary between the divine world and the earthly realm, the religious function of the prophet as messenger could not be underestimated. The relationship between the prophet and the divine world to a large extent determines the prophet's relationship to the prevailing political establishment. "The socio-political, indeed religious, character of prophecy is not simply due to the particular concerns of the prophet in addressing the human world. It arises out of a socio-political transcendent world which is understood to be the source of governance for what happens in the royal court and the law court, in battle and exile, in the streets and the sanctuaries" (Miller 1995:100). This divine imperative is confirmed in Amos 3:7. The prophet functioned as a religious intermediary between the divine world and the human realm performing a key role in facilitating communication between the two realms. However, as

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[31] Traditional scholarship defined prophetic activity primarily in terms of its psychological manifestations, whereas later scholarship pursues the study of prophetic activity from a functional perspective. Also cf. Wilson 1980.

the image of the historical prophet faded and the literary aspects of the text gained prominence in recent studies, there was no longer a need for an intermediary.[32]

Within Old Testament tradition the prophet enjoyed the most legitimacy compared to other media, such as priests and witches, in determining Yahweh's intents to the world. All other means were considered illegitimate (Lemche 1988:241). While it may be impossible to determine the exact origins of Israelite prophecy, one aspect of Israelite prophecy remains quite obvious and that is that the key social function of Israelite prophecy was played out in the court of the king (Hutton 2004:14,15). "War prophecy" was generally referred to as the earliest forms of prophecy in ancient Israel. The prophet or diviner had a specific role in deliberating on the outcome of a particular military endeavour. In addition to this the prophet would also be more directly involved in the cursing of the enemies and motivating the soldiers with passion to ensure success (Hutton 2004:14). Amos and the other classical prophets appear to be operating considerably differently to the traditional prophets. The oracles of the prophet Amos are generally regarded as judgement oracles which indicate severe punishment and pending destruction. Israel's struggles appeared to have taken on a new military dimension, not only were these struggles of epic proportions, but also of divine magnitude. Yahweh was extremely disturbed with the manner in which the people, the leadership and the wealthy in particular, had conducted themselves vis-à-vis their less privileged members of society. Israel is compelled to "seek Yahweh and live" (Amos 5:4-6).

4.1.3   Current Trends and Dating of the Amos Text

The canonical structure of the Old Testament views the prophetic literature from the perspective of its relationship to the entire corpus of the Hebrew Bible. The relationship of the prophets to the "legal and historical traditions of Israel," the influence of the canonical process on the interpretation of the prophetic books and the relationship between the prophets and the Law are of paramount concern according to Hutton (2004:4). The influence of the prophets over Israel's religious development and ethical monotheism attached to that religion is at the core of this approach (Hutton 2004:4).

During the nineteenth century the Hebrew Bible was the only source for the study of ancient Near Eastern prophecy and within the confines of these limitations, various scholars at

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[32] Refer to the comments attributed to De Jong in the next section.

the time ascribed to the biblical prophets' considerable influence, crediting them with religious innovation and ethical monotheism (Stökl 2012:1). Increased interest in the study of prophecy to "reconstruct its social location in relation to the biblical data" became a new trend towards the end of the twentieth century (Thomas 2003:11). De Jong (2007) provides us with an overview of recent developments within the study of prophecy. These developments were primarily characterised by a progressive focus on the comparative study of prophecy, the status quo with regard to the continued study of biblical prophecy, insights gained from the recent comparative study of prophecy and a review of the classical prophets (De Jong 2007:25-38). Each of these developments provide us with a glimpse of where the current study of prophecy is as well as a trajectory of where we may be headed in the pursuit of the prophetic message. We need to bear in mind that comparative studies involving several cultures "is a process that is fraught with difficulties and methodological pitfalls" (Stökl 2012:5). Stökl argues further that "the right level of abstraction and appropriate perspective" is critical in this type of comparative study as such an undertaking is, by its very nature, a subjective exercise (2012:5).

The 1930's witnessed an important shift in the study of prophecy with the discovery of the Old Babylonian letters from Mari with the resultant comparative study of prophecy exerting its influence over prophetic studies (De Jong 2007:25). Barstad had long postulated the view that there will be a "growth in interest in comparative studies" (2000:4). Despite the acknowledged gap between the content of the Mari and the Old Testament prophetic messages, the Mari prophecies have come to be accepted as a precursor to Israelite prophecy equated with primitive, pre-classical and ecstatic prophecy providing valuable insight into the prehistory of prophecy (De Jong 2007:25).[33] The evidence of prophecy from the ancient Near East, gathered from across the Fertile Crescent, demonstrates in Nissinen's view, the "wide distribution of prophets and proving prophecy to be a common cultural legacy which cannot be traced back to any particular society or place of origin" (2003:4). The source documentation can at best be described as fragmentary and scanty but despite this they provide important insights into the "socio-religious profile of the prophets" and positions them "in a variety of social, cultic and lexical contexts" (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:5). The impact of the discovery of the Mari prophecies clearly overshadowed the earlier discovery, around the end of the 19th century, of the royal archives of

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[33] Section 4.2 will explore the value, contribution and influence of ancient Near Eastern comparative studies on Israelite prophecy in more detail.

Nineveh which contained the Assyrian prophecies from the 7th century BC. While the Assyrian prophecies hardly impacted the study of biblical prophecy, it would eventually be the prophecies from Mari that would exert considerable influence on the study of biblical prophecy. In De Jong's view, the following reasons account for this influence: (1) the easy accessibility to the Mari prophecies; (2) the Assyrian prophecies were not presented as prophecies; (3) "the early provenance of the Mari prophecies, in the eighteenth century BC, helped their popularity as the example of extra-biblical prophecy *par excellence*, whereas the seventh-century date of the Assyrian oracles added to their marginality" and (4) is its close association and influence by West-Semitism (2007:26). The strong influence of the Mari prophecies on biblical prophecy found its basis in its contribution to Israelite prophecy on "the level of primitive, pre-classical, ecstatic prophecy" with the Mari prophecies fitting into this "historical scheme of development" (2007:26). The classical prophets on the other hand continued to enjoy a *status aparte*, and are considered unique as a result of their social criticism and prophecy of judgement (De Jong 2007:27).

The recent study of biblical prophecy has largely been characterised by a shift from the historical prophet to the composition of the text as biblical scholars display "an increased uneasiness with regard to historical prophecy" (De Jong 2007:29). With regard to Amos, the initial view was that there was indeed a historical figure by the name of Amos who was responsible for a large part of the book. A number of authors subscribed to the view that Amos was responsible for a large part of the book, albeit for different reasons (Hadjiev 2009:2). This view was also strongly proposed by scholars such as Hayes (1988), Andersen & Freedman (1989) and Paul (1991).

Recent scholarship has dated the prophetic books contained in the Hebrew Bible later than was originally understood (Barstad 2000:3). This was accompanied by an unease that set in with regard to historical prophecy as the depiction of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible became increasingly questionable (De Jong 2007:29). De Jong further argues that as the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament are now associated as literary compositions to the Persian and Hellenistic periods, "they can no longer be regarded as straightforward sources of prophecy as a historical phenomenon in pre-exilic Israel" (2007:29). From the perspective of this focus on ancient Near Eastern texts, the question that becomes paramount is: to what extent can a reading of "prophetic" texts from the ancient Near East add value to our understanding of a pre-exilic

prophet such as Amos? De Jong makes the point that scholars have tended to accept a vital link between the historical prophets, their message and the books named after them with a widely held perception that the literary prophets recorded their own messages in writing in reaction to the dismissive response to their preaching, thereby creating the prophetic genre (2007:37). More recently, however, the distinction between traditional and literary prophecy brought into question the "historical validity of the image of the classical prophets" and instead shifted the focus to "the prophetic books as literary products" originating from the Persian period or later and primarily posited them as the end product of an extensive development of prophetic traditions (De Jong 2007:37). From this perspective, the Amos text is regarded as a post 722 BC literary composition from the Persian and Hellenistic periods (De Jong 2007:29).

In contrast to the above views, Hadjiev argues that the overall shape and direction of the book of Amos "do not entirely fit post-exilic circumstances and concerns" and cites a number of reasons for this position (2009:12). In the first instance, the punishment alluded to in the text of Amos is for Hadjiev "too general and does not seem to reflect the experience of later times" and focuses primarily on Israel's power rather than its weakness which was more characteristic of post-exilic times (2009:12). A second reason advanced by Hadjiev in favour of a pre-exilic composition lies in the reference to the kingdom of Israel (Amos 2:6-16) with its message targeted at "a North Israelite audience" as opposed to the distinct reference to Judah (Amos 2:4-5) in the Oracles against the Nations (2009:13). Despite the attempts to move the book into a post-exilic milieu with the insertion of the epilogue (Amos 9:11-15), Hadjiev is of the view that "Israel's guilt and future punishment" is the primary focus of the book which locates it essentially within a pre-exilic timeframe (2009:13-14). Other factors that favour a pre-exilic phase in Hadjiev's view include the absence of an overlord in the text as would be suggested by a post-exilic location, cultic practices (cf. Amos 4:4-5) that were more characteristic of pre-exilic times, redactional insertions dated to the time of the exile and used to reinterpret the prophecies in post-exilic circumstances as well as the strong possibility, derived from the original form of the superscription, that an earlier version of the book of Amos existed in eighth century BC (2009:14-15). In Hadjiev's view the redactional additions to the text of Amos, which can be dated to the time of exile with the express purpose of reinterpreting the prophecies within that historical context, "presuppose the existence of an older book in need of reinterpreting" (2009:15). This view is probably best summed up by Coggins who sees Amos as conventionally

dated to the eighth century BC, a time when Judah and Israel were of particular interest to biblical writers because of their constant conflicts on the one hand and their close ties on the other (2000:74).

Despite the tensions that exist between these perspectives on the dating of the Amos text, it would be prudent to consider Linville's comments on the matter: "The debates over historical methodology are far from settled, but the face of historical research into the origins of the biblical materials has been changed forever" (2008:xi). For Linville, even those scholars who do not readily accept later compositional dates for much of the Hebrew Bible, there is a greater "awareness of the textuality of the redacted texts" with a growing focus on the importance of "analyzing the religious and intellectual contexts of the later stages of production" (2008:xi).

4.2   ISRAELITE PROPHECY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Van der Woude (1989:145) holds the view that the link between Israel and the rest of the ancient Near Eastern communities resulted in common material and religious traits that emerged over time. Prophets were therefore not unique to Israel, but shared a commonality with various surrounding cultures. Various scholars are of the opinion that Israelite prophecy cannot be studied as an isolated institution while archeological discoveries, relating to prophetic texts from the ancient Near East, have to a large extent contributed to the view that Israelite prophecy is not as unique a social institution as was once believed amongst scholars (van der Woude 1989, Miller 1995 and Hutton 2004). The emergence of Israel as a state did not take place within a vacuum. This was demonstrated in the previous chapter. The commonalities that Israel shared with her neighbours were not only true from a political, social and economic perspective, but were also very much evident in the religious sphere. An understanding of Israelite prophecy in general, and the message of Amos in particular, can only be properly understood within the context of the ancient Near East. Prior to Israel becoming a state at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, various prophetic type figures were operating within the ancient Near East (Miller 1995:97). They presented in a variety of forms, were known by different titles and produced various types of messages. It is suggested that while these differences, considered significant in some instances, were a definite reality, the similarities to Israelite prophecy were so

clear that one could hardly examine Israelite prophecy in isolation (Miller 1995:97). For this reason it is important to look at Israelite prophecy within the context of the ancient Near East if we are to understand the background to the pronouncements of Amos.

Depending on the definition of prophecy subscribed to, the role of a prophet would be viewed either as a critic of the sociopolitical order, an announcer of apocalyptic events, or even as a divinely authorised messenger. The institution of prophecy, if understood as inspired speech initiated by a deity for the benefit or attention of a third party, existed within the ancient Near East long before the emergence of statehood within Israel (Huffmon 1992:477).[34] This form of prophecy was evident in Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, of which the Mari texts relating to the second millennium came to dominate the debate, as well as in Egypt. In Syria-Palestine there were a number of personalities who may have been referred to as prophets (Huffmon 1992:477). According to Huffmon (1992) an important element of Phoenician prophecy is that it has long been regarded as a forerunner of biblical prophecy. In Aram, around 800 BC, we come across a classic salvation oracle where the Baal-Shamayn assures King Zakkur of Hamath and Luash of his protection in response to the king's petition for divine protection. The Anatolian texts, dating to the 14th century BC, provide us with the means whereby divine communication was facilitated. Huffmon asserts that direct communication was facilitated through dreams, lots and prophets (1 Sam 28:6) while indirect communication was achieved through technical divination (1992:477).

According to Weinfeld "almost every one of the literary types of the Old Testament has its prototype in the ancient Near Eastern literature. Law, epic, historiography, psalms, wisdom, all of them are established literary genres in the civilization of Mesopotamia and Egypt" (2000:84). He strongly argues that despite the fact that classical prophecy had traditionally been considered as unique and original to Israel, continued research into the growing body of literature of the ancient Near East demonstrates that the basic literary forms and motifs of classical prophecy are rooted in this literature. However, "there is no doubt that the religious moral pathos pervading classical prophecy as well as the prophetic ideas about the end of

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[34] The prophetic title and role has been applied to various texts from the ancient Near East. These texts, according to Huffmon, include "predictions, or apparent predictions, eschatology or apocalyptic, social or religious criticism, and commissioned messages from deities" and also include a number of roles such as "those of ordinary priests (Egypt), technical diviners (Western Asia) and those who speak directly under the orders of a deity" (Huffmon 1992:477).

idolatry, universal peace and world salvation, reflects the genuine spirit of classical prophecy" (Weinfield 2000:84).

4.2.1   Egypt and Mesopotamia

The two key areas that appear to have had a pronounced influence on Israelite prophecy were those that emanated from Egypt and Mesopotamia. Although Israelite prophetic texts have been interpreted by biblical scholars based on their nature of apocalypticism, the view strongly persists that Egyptian prophecy is rooted in wisdom (Wilson 1980, Huffmon 1992). According to Huffmon, the sociopolitical critique contained in these texts has largely resulted in their being labeled as prophetic in a biblical sense (1992:482). Ancient Egyptian texts such as "The Admonitions of Ipuwer," the "Prophecy of Neferti" (or Refer-Rohu) and the "Wenamon Story," are regarded as forerunners to biblical prophecy with the latter text "especially significant in illustrating so called ecstatic prophecy" as the earliest forms of prophecy encountered also in the Old Testament (van der Woude 1989:145,146). "The Admonition of Ipuwer" is viewed as a "great literary and historical" text in the Pessimistic Literature genre and shares much in common with the "Prophecy of Neferti" (David & David 1992:59).[35] Although some of these texts may be related to ancient Egyptian wisdom and may demonstrate a problem with the definition of prophecy (Huffmon 1992:481), they do, however, illustrate the existence of prophecy in ancient Egypt in one form or another. However, for the purpose of this exercise, these two texts also clearly demonstrate the relationship that existed between these "divine foretellers" and the royal establishment.

"The Admonition of Ipuwer" which represents an invective against the prevailing socio-political order is regarded in the same light as biblical prophecy in the context of the classical prophets (Huffmon 1992). Ipuwer, an Egyptian Sage, active in the Middle Kingdom, c. 2000 BC, is presumed to be the author of a series of 'admonitions' which highlight the chaos which dominated Egypt towards the end of the Old Kingdom, c. 2200 BC. Despite the language being very descriptive and pessimistic, the text is viewed as nothing more than a literary exercise

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[35] Egyptian literature in most cases encompasses texts that deal with personal attitudes, religious beliefs and historical events. David (2000:46) proposes that the Pessimistic Literature "probably reflects events which occurred towards the end of the Old Kingdom, when the political structures and social order were overturned." These texts conventionally referred to as prophecies should instead be regarded as literary predictions (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:4)

written *ex eventu* (Rice 1999:81).[36] The text is assumed to make reference to the rule of Pepi II, one of the pharaohs of the Sixth Dynasty around 2350-2150 BC. From David & David (1992) we catch a glimpse of the political decay that was experienced by Egypt during this time. At the end of his long reign, the king had considerably less influence and power due to a number of political, economic and religious factors. He lost the allegiance of the provincial nobility who no longer were dependent on him for their governorships, but instead acquired their positions through inheritance. The king also appeared to face a financial crisis due to a loss of taxes on nobility owned properties while the fortunes of the rich and poor were reversed.[37] In addition to this, the lavish royal monuments and temples placed an increasing financial burden on his resources. The invasion of the kingdom by a group of foreigners further threatened the political stability of the kingdom. The king was no longer in a position to rule with a steady hand (David & David 1992:102).[38] He is addressed and denounced for a serious dereliction of his divinely ordained duties during a period of considerable political, social and economic chaos.[39] The pharaoh's total disregard for the perilous conditions that his subjects were enduring becomes the subject of the invective. The resemblance to the social conditions and message of Amos and the classical prophets is striking since these admonitions bear significant similarity to the "destruction of the country because of disobedience and divine abandonment found in the OT" (Grabbe 1995:86). The message delivered by Ipuwer resembles that of Amos and the classical prophets to the extent that the prevailing political, religious and social status quo with its hugely negative impact on the populace at large was denounced in the strongest terms (van der Woude 1989:145). The relationship between the prophet and the political system is adequately demonstrated by the prophet's call for strong and able royal leadership for the sake of political stability, economic growth and good governance.

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[36] Though written after the event, these texts were presented as a foretelling of a future deliverance of a country in distress for whatever reason.

[37] The texts relating to Ipuwer and Neferti are believed to describe the appalling economic conditions that existed while other forms of literature such as the "Dispute between a Man and his Soul" were an expression of the personal disappointment and despair of the people at the time (David 2000:46).

[38] According to David & David (1992:103) the king may have been senile and "incapable of vigorous rulership" and totally unaware of the internal destruction of his kingdom. He may have been protected by his royal staff from the cold horrors that beset his kingdom.

[39] Although there is not much known about Ipuwer, it is believed that he may have been a treasury official that came to report to the king on the financial situation of his region. He urges a remedy to the situation by encouraging the king to ensure political stability "through personal piety and a renewed reverence for the gods" (David & David 1992:59).

Another text that forms part of the Pessimistic Literature is the "Prophecy of Neferti." It is also regarded as an example of political propaganda aimed at glorifying and legitimising the rule of Ammenemes 1 (David & David 1992:91). The prophecy of Nefer-Rohu (also referred to as Neferti) is an Egyptian "prophetic text" that describes the perilous socio-political conditions and chaos following the invasion of the kingdom by the Asiatics. King Snefru, in search of some form of entertainment, is brought into contact with Neferti, a lecturer-priest who, following approval by the king, relates an event from the future (van der Woude 1989:146). The picture painted is one of desolation and disintegration with a complete reversal of social relations. Similar to the admonitions, the message conveyed is that only a strong king will be in a position to restore order following the destruction caused by internal conflicts. It is foretold that order will eventually be restored by king Ammenemes I, founder of the Twelfth Dynasty (David & David 1992:91).

One of the perspectives concerning a definition of prophecy put forward by Hutton (2004) explores the origin of Israelite prophecy and establishes a connection with ancient Near Eastern prophecy as found in the Mari prophetic texts dated to around 1775 BC. Several types of prophetic figures, some titled others not, some referred to as *āpilūm* and others called *muḫḫûm*, all seem to share one very important element with Israelite prophecy, namely, the delivery of a divine message to the king (Hutton 2004:3). Mari was a capital city of one of the most significant economic and political kingdoms in the ancient Near East between the second half of the third and the first half of the second millennium (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:13). The most significant discoveries of prophetic texts relate to those discovered at Mari, an ancient city on the Middle Euphrates, and excavated from around the 1930's onwards which set the scene for a significant evaluation of ancient Near Eastern prophetic activity as a precursor to Israelite prophecy. The essence of the debate revolved around questions of definition, continuity and parallelism between ancient Near Eastern and Israelite prophecy. Some scholars started to accept that there was indeed a relationship between the prophets at Mari and the cult prophets of Israel (Miller 1995; Huffmon 1992; 2000). More recently scholars have focused their attention on the prophetic literature of the ancient Near East with some holding the view that this exercise might illuminate the study of biblical prophecy (Barstad 2000:3). The Mari prophecies in particular have generated the most interest with the largest volume of texts discovered. Mesopotamian prophetic texts emerged from areas such as Babylonia, Assyria and more prominently from Mari.

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The form of intermediation that emerged from these texts differs widely, and in the case of titled prophets fulfilled various functions as reflected in their names (Huffmon 2000:49).

The Mari texts distinguish between titled prophets and those without titles. The prophets served as the spokespersons for and servants of the deities and as such they were associated with a specific deity. Their titles would clearly associate the prophets with specific deities and temples, as "they are often referred to as 'NN prophet of DN', for example, Abiya, *āpilūm* of Adad (no. 2) and Lupahum, *āpilūm* of Dagan (no. 9)" (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:16). The essence of the prophetic oracles focused on the welfare of the king, providing him with advice on how he should look after himself and at times proclaiming victory over enemies and adversaries. The relationship between prophetic figures and the king are clearly held together by a concern for the political wellbeing of the sovereign and his subjects (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:16).

The very close association the Assyrian prophets had with the temples of Ishtaar, determined the socio-religious status of these prophets. Furthermore, the relationship that the prophets had with a deity as servants and messengers of the deity made possible their relationship with the king and their communication with him (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:98). Their proclamations were considered to be divine and significant in view of the fact that they impersonated the deity when they delivered their oracles. In their oracles the prophets focused on the king, his royal governance and his relationship with the divine world (Nissinen *et al*. 2003:98).

The relationship between the institution of prophecy and the political establishment within the ancient Near East was clearly driven and based on a religious foundation as the above demonstrates. There is no doubt that there were indeed prophetic parallels that existed between Israel and its neighbours. The result of this was that scholars inferred a strong relationship between Israelite prophecy on the one hand and Egyptian, Canaanite and Mesopotamian prophecy on the other.

4.2.2   Israelite Prophecy

In a comparative study of titles between Israelite, Mari and Assyrian prophecy, Huffmon confirms that "Israel's prophets offer very little continuity" with their Mari and Assyrian

counterparts (2000:65). The title *nābî*[40] (an ecstatic who might also prophesy), occasionally used in self-reference, has found a linguistic parallel in one Mari text with the terms *nabû* and *munabbiʾātu*, which date back to the Late Bronze Emar (Huffmon 2000:65). The leader of a group of prophets would be referred to by the second-most frequent title *ʾîš (hā-)ʾelohîm* (man of god) with the third title *ḥōzêh* (visionary) referring to Gad, Iddo, Jehu and Amos (Huffmon 2000:65). According to Huffmon the title of visionary has its origin not in the Mari-Assyrian traditions but rather in North Syria and in the Balaam tradition of 9th century Transjordan (2000:65). The intermediary is said to gain insight into the mind of God and is charged with revealing that insight in the form of a message to the king and his people. Hebrew prophets are distinctively referred to as "men of God" (1 Sam 9; 1 Kgs 13) and as "servants of God" (2 Kgs 21:10; 24:2) in the biblical text, a reference which gives them a special status within society (Sawyer 1993:1). This also determines their relationship to society in general and the king particularly. Grottanelli defines prophets as "sacred 'inspired' specialists of the monarchic state model" and distinguishes between "autonomous" and "dependent" prophets (1999:120). Prophets such as Nathan are described as "dependent" prophets who are directly and economically dependent on the court or royal sanctuary. "Autonomous" prophets on the other hand, act more independently and offer their services to the king on request, to society and even to foreigners. They would receive compensation by means of hospitality or gifts (Grottanelli 1999:120).

Barstad distinguishes between two types of comparisons that one can make in a study of this nature. A historical comparison can be made between entities that share a similar "historic, linguistic, or literary context, within the same culture, social system, or civilization" (Barstad 2000:6). Comparisons between the Mari prophets and the biblical prophets would be dealt with in this context. Typological comparisons on the other hand explore comparisons of phenomena in different contexts and time frames. In essence these would probe the manner in which the human mind works and human behaviour is demonstrated in response to similar situations. Typological comparisons are also more akin to a social-scientific approach to biblical studies (Barstad 2000:7). Any attempt at comparative studies between biblical prophecy and ancient

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[40] Also refer to a discussion of the term *nābî'* under 4.1.2 where it is discussed in the general context of the development of prophecy. In this context it is discussed in terms of linguistic parallels evident in ancient Near Eastern literature.

Near Eastern prophecy should, however, be undertaken with extreme caution considering that so little consensus has been achieved on a definition of prophecy.

Old Testament prophecy shares some very interesting parallels with texts from the Mari archives dating from the eighteenth century BC (Lemche 1988:242). A prophetic message from Mari that demonstrates social concern is contained in two recently joined fragments (A 1121 + A 2731) that relate how Zimri-Lim, is urged by a prophet, on behalf of the god Adad of Aleppo to heed the call of a person wronged and ensure that justice is dispensed fairly. A parallel is drawn with the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jer 21:12; 22:3) in which he urges the king to: "Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed" (Malamat 1995:54). The content of prophetic utterances varied from political intent in which the king is directed to either pursue war or peace, to religious intent concerning the building of a temple as directed by the national deity. These messages, according to Lemche, served as "evidence of the god's direction of the course of history" and entitled the prophets "to intervene in political matters because they were the voices of the gods" (1988:242). Lemche concludes that "Israelite prophetism in all its various forms is to be regarded as a manifestation of this Near Eastern prophecy and not as a specifically Israelite phenomenon" (1988:243).

Intuitive prophecy, according to Malamat (1995:50), is a phenomenon that was only characteristic of Mari and Biblical prophecy. This is the earliest type of prophecy known in the ancient Near East and according to Malamat makes up the type of social and religious practices evident in Mari and in part in Israel (1995:52). Intuitive prophecy as practiced in Mari places Israelite prophecy in a new perspective and exhibits three significant features (1995:52). Firstly, divine inspiration manifests itself in spontaneous prophetic utterances (Isa 65:1). Secondly, the prophets demonstrate a strong sense and "consciousness of mission" as they present their messages, although at times unpopular, and make their proclamations before the royal and religious authorities. The Amos-Amaziah dialogue is a clear demonstration of this feature as Amos finds his message rejected by the religious authorities of his day. Thirdly, the prophets exhibit ecstatic behaviour. Within this context, Malamat argues for a broad and liberal definition of ecstatism "enabling it to apply to a wide range of phenomena from autosuggestion to the divinely infused dream" (1995:52). This would include the visions experienced by Amos. Malamat asserts that, despite the similarity of practices between the prophetic institutions of Mari and Israel, biblical prophecy holds "a far greater significance than the somewhat ephemeral

role evident at Mari" (1995:50). In Malamet's view "the prophetic utterances at Mari have almost nothing in comparison to the socio-ethical or religious ideology of biblical prophecy" (1995:50).

Two forms of intermediation, namely the intuitive and the divinatory, were practiced in Israel and the neighbouring countries. These forms of intermediation were used in conjunction with one another and were essentially utilised to verify the divine nature of the prophetic message both in Israel and the wider ancient Near East. The Mari texts demonstrate quite clearly the interrelationship between "the intuitive form of intermediation, by which a prophet receives a vision or audition of a divine word, and the divinatory form of intermediation, by which the royal experts would examine physical data as hard evidence to determine an aspect of the truth" (Hutton 2004:12). Israel received divine information through dreams and visions, Urim and Thummim (the use of sacral lots or dice), divination or necromancy, i.e. consultation with the dead as demonstrated in 1 Sam 28:6. Some of these practices fell into disuse over time as demonstrated in 1 Sam 9:9 (Hutton 2004:13). Temple priests played a key role in overseeing and validating the divine messages received by the prophets. The conflict between Amaziah and Amos in Amos 7:12-14, and the arrest of Jeremiah by the priest Pashur in Jer 20:1-6 are examples of such conflicts that took place under these circumstances. Priests and prophets in ancient Israel played a key role in the transmission, validation and determination of the divine will as it related to the king's socio-political responsibilities (Hutton 2004:13).

4.3   THE POSSIBLE SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF 8TH CENTURY BC ISRAEL

Israelite society during the period of the Monarchy experienced some serious socio-political and religious challenges at the time. The prophet played a key role in society and as such had a specific relationship to the various institutions within that society. The economic prosperity and wealth created under Jeroboam II's reign, created a new social layer within society that resulted in a moral and ethical conflict of serious proportions. Thomas (2003:180) argues that these conditions gave rise to the prophetic message of Amos and the other classical prophets.

The pre-exilic religious tradition of ancient Israel determined that Yahweh was the national deity and Lord of Israel who directed Israel's history. The relationship between Israel

and Yahweh was based on a political ideology that sought to maintain cosmic harmony as opposed to chaos. This ideology was, in many instances, manifested in political battles that the Israelites had to fight against foreign chaotic forces. These battles are presented in Ps 48:5-8 and 46:6-8 as a cosmic battle against the forces of evil (Lemche 1988:238). The relationship between the king, as representative of the people, and Yahweh as Lord of the universe, placed a special duty on the king to ensure that his people were governed in terms of the same laws that Yahweh used to regulated the cosmos (1988:239). These laws, according to Lemche, were concretely realised in "the form of social justice, so that the weak would be protected against the encroachments of the 'men of violence'" (Lemche 1988:239). The covenant treaty that came into effect some time during the course of the monarchy was a means to ensure that the king lived up to his responsibility of ensuring a righteous and just rule (1988:239). The prophetic tradition of Israel needs to be viewed against this background. According to McNutt, the origins of Israelite prophecy have been traced to Moses in terms of the biblical traditions as posited in Deut 18:9-22 (1999:179). The Canaanite adherence to false gods and their means of communication, described as abominable, is rejected by Yahweh. Authenticity is given to the prophet who will become the spokesperson for Yahweh, with anyone who does not heed the divine word coming through the prophet having to account to Yahweh himself (Kalland 1994:258). Many of the prophetic traditions emphasise the key concepts of justice and righteousness, "as they relate to the maintenance of right order and to social practices and judicial procedures that respect the right of all classes" (McNutt 1999:179). Amos understands his calling in terms of a divine directive with prophets such as Ezekiel and Isaiah describing a call vision affirming this divine call (McNutt 1999:180). These prophets are projected as key figures in addressing the political, economic and religious problems and the crisis of their social environments. These crises have their origin in a number of political events that play themselves out in the domestic arena and include external political threats especially from political powers such as Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt, "internal political conflict, social and economic injustice and oppression, and religious crises brought on by perceived corruption in the cult or syncretistic religious practices" (McNutt 1999:180).

One of Hutton's perspectives that would contribute to a definition of prophecy concerns the social location of the prophet, namely, his or her relationship to culture and society. This perspective essentially explores the prophet's relationship to the cult, the king and society at large including "other religious traditions celebrated by the community" (2004:3). A comparative

study between prophecy and the wider forms of divination such as those performed by Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern priests forms part of the discussion under this perspective. It further investigates the primary concern of prophecy as being with either the maintenance or advancement of core values within society or the revolutionary "social disruption" of the status quo as suggested in Jeremiah (2004:4).

4.3.1   Possible Political and Economic conditions in Eighth Century BC Israel

Knight describes the macrosociological pattern of Israel and Judah as that of an agrarian state or society characterised by "a pronounced social inequality in power, privileges, and honor" (2011:63). The centralised state was the main cause for this disparity with the monarchy using the state's resources at will in a rather selfish manner (Knight 2011:63). In addition to the royal house Israelite society was made up of a governing class, a minority group made up of less than 2% of the population, wielding political and economic power across the nation and was comprised of senior government officials, military personnel, landowners, merchants, priests and others who received land grants, offices and other special privileges from the monarchy (Knight 2011:64). In addition to this, Knight identifies around 5-10% of the population as officeholders, functionaries and priests who managed the business of government such as tax and rental collection (2011:64). The rest of the population, amounting to around 90% was dominated by about 10% of the population and struggled to survive in the subsistence economy.

The social setting of the eighteenth century prophets contributed to a large extent to the relationship that existed between the prophet and the political establishment of the day. In order to understand the social setting within which the prophet Amos functioned, it would be necessary to have a closer look at the economic and political conditions that prevailed at the time. The prophetic utterances of Amos took place against the background of a politically stable, economically prosperous and religiously decadent society.

The divided southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel entered the eighth century BC in a politically stable manner. Jehoash (800-785 BC) of Israel is credited with the military and economic resurgence of Israel (Scheffler 2001:104). His reign, recorded in 2 Kgs 13:10-25 and 14:8-16, ensured that Israel regained all the territories lost by his father Jehoahaz. This followed Israel's victory over the Syrians as reported in 2 Kgs 13:14-19 while bowing to pressure from the Assyrians and paying a small tribute as recorded by the Rimlah stele

(Scheffler 2001:104). The recovery of Israel under Jehoash was to lay the foundation for "the long and prosperous rule of his son Jeroboam II" (Scheffler 2001:104).

Judah, since the time of the Omrides, was not only considered weaker than Israel, but also most probably a vassal of the north (Scheffler 2001:104, 118). Amaziah ben Jehoash (802-773 BC) ruled Judah for 29 years. Following a victory over the Edomites, he mustered enough courage to take on Jehoash of Israel and attempted to rid Judah of its inferior status. This unsuccessful challenge, on the part of Amaziah, was met with defeat at Beth-shemesh. Jehoash's victory dealt a devastating and embarrassing blow to Amaziah through his invasion of Jerusalem, breaking down a part of the city wall, raiding the temple and palace and taking hostages. Amaziah suffered considerable embarrassment with his rule weakened and the vassalage of Judah to Israel re-established. He subsequently faced a revolt by an anti-Israelite faction that plotted to remove him (2 Kgs 14:17-21) forcing him to flee Lachish where he was subsequently assassinated (Scheffler 2001:118, 119).

In 1:1, Amos confirms his occupation during the time of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. The golden age experienced by the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah is greatly attributed to the reign of Jeroboam ben Jehoash (785-745 BC), referred to as Jeroboam II, and Uzziah ben Amaziah (773-747 BC) also known as Azariah respectively (Scheffler 2001:105, 119). National prosperity in both states reached its apex under the very competent political leadership of these rulers. Jeroboam II was considered one of the strong military leaders of Israel although much of his conquests are unknown. Amos 6:13 refers to two battles won at Lo-Debar and Kamaim. Bright (1981) makes a number of assumptions regarding Jeroboam II's conquests. The territories of Hamath and Damascus were subdued with the extension of Israel's northern border to Hamath, as it had been during the time of Solomon. The defeat of Damascus would have resulted in the conquests of Aramean lands in the Transjordan north of the Yarmuk. In the southern Transjordan area it is also assumed that the Moabites and the Ammonites were severely restricted in Israelite territory. The bitter suffering and defenselessness experienced by Israel previously, as described by the Deuteronomist, was now decisively reversed by Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:27). Politically and militarily Israel enjoyed superiority over the Syrians, Ammonites and Moabites ensuring a period of stability in which trade flourished catapulting both kingdoms into a very prosperous phase in their history (Scheffler 2001:105).

The Southern Kingdom, under the rulership of a younger Uzziah, who ascended his father's throne at the age of sixteen, enjoyed as much prosperity as its northern sister state. Despite his relative youthfulness, compared to his northern contemporary, Uzziah quickly adjusted favourably to this aggressive campaign of restoration. He proved to be a very able leader by fortifying the defenses of Jerusalem, restructuring and enlarging the army to 307500 men and introducing novel ideas for combat under siege (Scheffler 2001:119). He took control of Edomite territory, the Negeb and southern desert, Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. His conquests over the Philistines, Arabs and Mennites allowed him to establish and protect vital trade routes. He also fortified Elath and incorporated it into Judah according to 2 Kgs 14:22. Internally Uzziah appears to have had a great love for the soil and "promoted agriculture, vine-dressing and stockbreeding" (Scheffler 2001:119). Judah's political stability was on par with that of its sister state, Israel.

The favourable international political situation also contributed to a large extent to the political stability enjoyed by both Israel and Judah. The external threats and conflicts experienced by Israel and Judah, prior to the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, had ended. Both Assyria and Egypt suffered a decline of political and military influence over the smaller nations of Syria-Palestine (Willoughby 1992:205). This was a period of political stability experienced by both Israel and Judah following their expansionist strategies and the re-establishment of political hegemony within the region. This expansionist policy reaffirmed the borders of the old Davidic-Solomonic Empire (Willoughby 1992:205).

Israel, during the time of Jeroboam II, appeared to have enjoyed tremendous economic prosperity. Amos's reference to fortified cities, vacation homes, luxury homes and vast vineyards in 3:11, 15; 5:11; 6:5-6, all testify to the great economic prosperity experienced under the leadership of Jeroboam II. This situation together with Uzziah's able leadership and his strategies resulted in stability and prosperity also in his southern kingdom. On the macro level, by the middle of the 8th century, Israel and Judah together had enhanced their economic status to such an extent that the prosperous conditions experienced by them were unknown since the time of Solomon. Considerable wealth was generated through the major trade routes spanning the Transjordan, northern Arabia, the coastal plains, the hinterland and the Phoenician ports. Tolls were extracted from passing caravans and goods were exchanged freely adding to the wealth generated (Bright 1981:258). Archeological findings at Samaria pointed to the possible luxury

enjoyed by Israel's elite. Safe passage down the King's Highway was provided by Israel which allowed for trade with Egypt and Arabia in the south, and Byblos and Syria in the north (Willoughby 1992:205).

Not all scholars are in agreement with this prosperous picture of Israel and Judah in the eighth century BC. Tax revenues increasingly landed in foreign hands resulting in a steady economic decline (Auld 1986: 68). Hayes (1988:16) is in agreement with this view as he places the ministry of Amos within "the northern state's declining years." He describes the situation in the following manner: "By Amos' time Israel's days of glory were past. The state was surrounded by hostile kingdoms, was hard pressed to retain control of territory in Galilee and Transjordan, and was torn internally by differences over international and domestic politics. King Jeroboam II, who had earlier enjoyed economic success and political stability, now reigned over a rapidly deteriorating situation." Willoughby (1992:205), with the help of archeological evidence, argues in favour of the theory of prosperity in the mid-eighth century. Excavations at Samaria revealed that houses of the tenth century were of uniform size throughout the city. By the mid-eighth century, larger houses were a distinctive feature of Israelite lifestyle (1992:205). The elaborate feasts of the wealthy are referred to in Amos 6:4-7.

This glowing picture of prosperity at the macro level was haunted by a very disturbing reality at the micro level. The manner in which the monarchy managed and commercialised agriculture set the tone for a devastating clash of social values with very serious political and religious overtones. In the southern kingdom, commercialisation of agriculture resulted in production taking place in state-controlled areas of the southern foothills and coast being rationalised, cattle and sheep relocated to the dry lands, wheat grown in the foothills and plains and grapes and olives planted and produced in the hills. A similar policy was pursued in the northern kingdom. Ox-carts, a rare invention at the time, served as transportation from the villages to the coast. Better quality oil and wine were exported and reserved for the wealthy internally while a second pressing of the olive pulp, yielding a lower quality fuel, was sold to the poor (Coote & Coote 1990:48). The effects of commercial agriculture in the highlands were particularly severe. While the specialisation of production adversely affected the diversification of agriculture which provided villagers with a livelihood, the heavy taxation on grain forced farmers into seasonal cash crops, grapes and olives thereby destroying the practice of field rotation and other effective farming techniques. Forced to survive, numerous farmers had to rely

on agriculturally unsuitable land where they were forced to increase production at higher costs in return for less food. Not only were villagers burdened to the extent that they encumbered their land as collateral for loans at very high rates, they became wage labourers and debt slaves in increasing numbers as they succumbed to the burden of heavy debt and taxation forcing them into a situation of landlessness (Coote & Coote 1990:48).

The state procured the maximum in wheat, wine and oil production through taxation. Debt slaves continually worked against the odds as they were forced "to borrow silver against their future harvest to buy grain on the market when it was scarce and most expensive (winter) … (and) had to repay at harvestime (spring), (when) grain was plentiful and the price they could earn on their own production low" (Coote & Coote 1990:49). While the fortunes of the wealthy increased allowing them to build luxurious vacation homes and enjoying the finest meats produced, the villagers were starving. Seeking relief from the local judicial system against foreclosure resulted in defeat for many villagers who were up against powerful landlords who held sway over these courts culminating in an ever-widening gap between rich and poor (Coote & Coote 1990:49). The economic prosperity enjoyed by the wealthy did not filter down to the poor. In fact the maintenance and enhancement of this prosperity was built upon the steady impoverishment of the poor. Willoughby sums up the situation quite effectively when he says: "It is this uneven distribution of wealth that set the atmosphere for the social crimes that Amos so violently abhorred" (1992:206).

4.3.2   Prophetic Relationship to the Political Structures of the time

Israelite prophets spent a considerable amount of their time delivering their divine message to the kings. Negative prophetic announcements had become a major focus in defining the relationship between king and prophet with Samuel's initial opposition to the Israelite monarchy assuming a significance of its own (cf. 1 Sam 8; 10:17-27; 11:12-14). This relationship was viewed primarily as antagonistic by nature and is evident throughout the nation's history.[41] On the other hand there were also a number of instances in the biblical text where prophets stood in a positive

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[41] Samuel is unhappy with the request for a king (I Sam 8:6); Ahab hated Micaiah (22:8, 17f.); the end of Jeroboam II foretold by Amos (Amos 7:10-17); the kings bear the brunt of Hosea's criticism (Hos 1:4f.; 7:16: 8:4); God's judgement on Ahaz (Isa 7:10, 17), the king of Assyria (Isa 10:12), the king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-23), and Hezekiah (Isa 39:5-7) announced by Isaiah; God's judgement on Zedekiah (Jer 21:3-7; 27:12-15; 32:1-5; 34:1-5) and Jehoiakim (Jer 22:18-23; 36:10-23, 27-31)" foretold by Jeremiah.

relationship to the kings.[42] Whether the prophetic proclamations or oracles were negative or positive, they indicated a very close relationship between the prophet and the royal establishment. Generally, the messianic prophecies of a future king from the line of David suggested a positive attitude toward kingship (cf. Jer 23:5f.; 33:14-16; Ezek 37:15-28).

The institution of prophecy did not only consist of the classical prophets, but was also made up of a number of prophets who comprised the cult fraternity. These prophets existed within the royal courts of the nation of Israel (Sawyer 1993:20). For the purposes of this discussion, they will be treated as part of the political establishment. This is a fair approach since the cultic establishment primarily functioned in support of the royal household. Over the course of its history, prophets had always been active within the royal courts with Nathan active at the court of David in Jerusalem, Elijah and Elisha in the courts of Ahab and Jezebel and Isaiah at Hezekiah's court. These prophets were generally organised into guilds or associations as is attested to in the biblical text with four hundred prophets in the king's court (1 Kgs 22). In 1 Kgs 18:19 Elijah faces four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah at Mount Carmel. Amos in rejecting his association with the cult establishment insists that he is neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet (7:14).[43] This deliberate disassociation on the part of Amos and some of the other classical prophets clearly set the tone for the conflict between these elements within the prophetic movement. The clear choice for obedience and justice over the traditional sacrificial tendencies of the cult set the classical prophets apart from their contemporaries and laid the basis for this conflicted relationship between them.

Prophetic activity can also be attributed to the form-critical prophetic analysis of Mowinckel during the early part of the twentieth century who based his observations on claims that the Psalms contained prophetic elements. This literary relationship between the psalms and the prophetic literature was observed by Mowinckel as a form of social reality. This observation led to the definition of prophecy within a particular social milieu as he drew a strong association between the cult prophets and the temples (1962:55-56). This is how Mowinckel described the prophetic influence on the cult liturgies: "And even if the cultic festivals used to be the occasion

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[42] Saul was anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 10:1) and proclaimed king (v. 24; 11:14f.); Jehu and Hazael anointed by Elijah (I Kgs 19:15f.); God's choice of the Davidic dynasty confirmed by Nathan (2 Sam 7:1-17) who also anointed Solomon (I Kgs 1:32-34); Gad and Heman accepted as David's seers (2 Sam 24:11; I Chr 21:9; 25:5; 2 Chr 29:25), and Asaph prophesied with the king's permission (I Chr 25:2). Some believe that the four hundred prophets of Ahab were court prophets (1 Kgs 22:6).

[43] Sawyer (1993) refers to these associations or guilds where members were referred to as "sons of the prophet" (2 Kgs 4:38) and their leader referred to as possibly the "father" (2 Kgs 2:12).

on which the free reform prophets, partly hostile to the cult, would appear with their words of doom, as we hear of Amos and others, the promises of the 'loyal', 'state prophets' would certainly also be heard there, and that probably not only by chance, but as a more or less regular element in the liturgies themselves" (1962:56). Mowinckel's claims that prophets were essentially members of the cult and/ or priests employed in the temple allowed for further claims to be made as time progressed. More recently, scholars have argued for the prophetic figure as an integral part of the royal institutions of ancient Israel (Petersen 2000:35). As such they performed functions relative to military affairs, the appointments of monarchs and communicating divine judgement over the conduct of these individuals. This placed the prophet at the centre of society.

The internal social and religious degradation of ancient Israel took place against external political stability and a burgeoning economy in eighth century Israel. In reference to what he describes as the "religio-ideological" dimension of the history of Israel, Scheffler makes the following statement: "Religious beliefs and their development in the course of history will therefore have to be presented in such a way as to express their relationship to politics, economics, the legal system, and so forth. Religious and politico-ideological beliefs were often so closely interwoven that it is better … to speak of the religio-ideological rather than simply the religious dimension of the life of ancient Israel" (2001:20). This brings into sharp focus the fluid relationship that existed between politics and religion in Ancient Israel. The strong influence of religion over all aspects of society in Ancient Israel cannot be underestimated. Political events were overshadowed by a religious worldview that drew on everything within its own context (Scheffler 2001:21). It was through the valiant efforts of the classical prophets, with Amos ranked as the first, that this intricate balance between politics and religion was redefined and maintained.

Amos presumes that people love to worship Yahweh based on the elaborate sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal (Amos 4:4-5). This, however, appears to be superficial at best with an urgency to close religious festivals in order for them to resume their activities which involved cheating and corruption (Amos 8:4-6). This is a denial of justice which forms the central concern of Amos's message. The problem for Amos is "how one relates the worship of Yahweh to how one lives out one's life with justice and mercy for all, especially for the poor and the most vulnerable members of society" (Hutton 2004: 16).

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That Israel was a religiously focused people was evident from their cultic traditions. Bethel, Gilgal and Beer-sheba were frequented with total devotion. As dedicated as the Israelite elite considered themselves to be, they were plagued by a state of social, moral and religious decay. "Though the great shrines of Israel were busy, thronged with worshipers, and lavishly supported (Amos 4:4f; 5:21 - 24), it is evident that Yahwism in pure form was no longer maintained" (Bright 1981:260). Thanksgiving offerings and tithes were offered on a regular basis while great feasts and festivals were held regularly to honour Yahweh. Considering themselves to be the elect of God, they steadfastly sought divine favour with Yahweh. On the concept of election and "the day of Yahweh," Willoughby (1992:206) makes the following comment: "The concept of election included not only the assurance that Yahweh would preserve them as a people, but also the anticipation that the 'day of Yahweh' would come, a day of salvation when all Israel's enemies would be destroyed and Israel would stand before the world as a testimony to God's power and authority." Their lives, values and assumptions were, in their opinion, validated by the political peace and economic prosperity that they enjoyed (Willoughby 1992:206).

A more modern restatement of Amos's relationship with the cult is provided by Albertz (1992). In communicating their divine message and raising Yahweh's concerns with the moral and social decline of eighth century Israel, the classical prophets highlighted the dereliction of duty of the cult office. Amos, Micah and Isaiah, in particular, rejected the cultic practices of their day as cult officials promoted an artificial form of worship that not only covered up the social injustices and unrighteous conduct of the rich, but in a sense attempted to legitimate them through false worship and expectations. Cohen, in his sociopolitical analysis of the prophetic message, considers the fundamental burden of the prophetic message to be the ethically corrupt practices of the cult (1979:13, 14). The rich display their ill-gotten gains and seek religious favour, security and salvation from Yahweh and revel in unrighteous conduct in anticipation of the Day of the Lord when they will be liberated from their enemies. Yahweh displayed no interest in these rituals (Amos 5:21-17) but instead sought justice and righteousness (Amos 1:17). Albertz (1992:171) shares the view of many scholars before him that the classical prophetic critique was not so much directed against the existing cult, but rather against the perversion of true Yahwistic worship (1992:171). The essence of a true religious relationship with Yahweh was diluted and effectively nullified by economic exploitation, political oppression and a perverted justice system that only served to invoke the wrath of Yahweh. The relationship

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between the religious practices of the day and the social, political and economic environment can at best be described as immensely distorted. It now remained the task of prophets such as Amos to restore this balance between religion and politics.

Sawyer (1993:22) interestingly points to a close connection between what he refers to as the prophets and the cult in his reference to those prophets who prophesied in the days of Saul (1 Sam 10:5). But what he considers to be of significance is the fact that the early prophets chose the religious sanctuaries as their location to deliver their messages; Amos at Bethel (7:10-17) and Jeremiah and Hananiah at the Temple at Jerusalem (Jer 28). They were noted critics of the cult. Other prophets were either connected to priestly families or had very strong priestly ties. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Samuel, Haggai and Zacharia are good examples of these types of prophets (1993:22).

4.3.3 Amos: The Historical Figure behind the Prophetic Text

Some twelve miles south of Jerusalem, overlooking the Judean wilderness, and around eighteen miles from, and three thousand feet above the Dead Sea lies the small town of Tekoa. It was from this somewhat obscure and insignificant location that one of the most significant characters of the Hebrew Bible emerged around 760 BC; a character so significant that his prophetic utterances rocked the religious and political establishment of his day and continued to reverberate well into the 21st century. It was in all probability from this vantage point that Amos witnessed the economic and political devastation of his people, shrouded in a mist of unrighteous cultic, civil and legal practices. Doorly (1989:23) sums it up very succinctly: "He saw their poverty increasing and their hope disappearing as the limited resources of this relatively poor country were used to support the monarchy, the king's army, the courts of the land, and even the priests and the prophets of the shrines."

Until the late forties, early fifties of the previous century, scholars generally held the view that Amos was a prophet who emerged from humble beginnings as a shepherd and seasonal dresser of sycamore trees based on his statement in 7:14 (Hasel 1991:35). Recent consensus among scholars relocates Amos to the upper echelons of society, a view that emerged strongly in the 1950s. By demonstrating his knowledge of the history of Israel and Judah in relation to their neighbours in 1:3 - 2:16, the cultic and political centres of Israel and Judah and their practices (Jerusalem, Samaria, Bethel, Gilgal, Beer-sheba and Dan), his awareness of the social hierarchies

and power structures in existence, Amos confirms through his prophetic utterances that he was a gifted and educated person (Willoughby 1992:205). This confirms Amos as "an economically independent landed aristocrat" (1992:205) rather than a peasant. Summing up these views, Hasel states that Amos was "perceived either as a large-scale sheep breeder (based on the term *nōqēd* in 1:1), a trader in huge quantities of livestock, or he might have been an owner, manager and marketer of large herds of sheep and their associated products" (1991:36).

The message of the prophet Amos, and in fact that of the entire classical prophetic movement, in so far as one can refer to the development of the prophetic text over time, was heavily focused on social justice as a key religious imperative for not only the political and cultic establishment, but for society as a whole. The religion practiced by eighth century BC ancient Israel, was most certainly not one grounded in Yahweh's concept of justice and righteousness. The concern for justice is a common thread that runs through the prophetic texts of Amos, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah (Cohen 1979:12). Public religion is only acceptable where justice forms an integral part of its nature and "righteousness expressed in justice is the indispensable qualification for worship" (Mays 1983:7). The concern for social justice and righteousness arose out of the social and economic situation that prevailed at the time with the primary point of attack being centred on the economic issues. The main political issue at stake was the inability of the political powers to administer justice fairly in terms of these economic issues as well as the devastating effects it had on the weak and the poor (Mays 1983:11-14). Also concerned with the role of justice in eighth century Israel, Grimsrud summarised the social deviance in society as follows: "The problem in Israel was not that the people did not intellectually know the precepts of the law or their concern for the needy. Rather, the leaders and judges simply refused to administer the law fairly. This refusal led to a disregard for justice. And worse, injustice ran rampant in the midst of thriving religiosity. People flocked to the shrines but totally disregarded God's call for them to show justice for the needy" (1999:70-71). Much more recently, an interesting analysis was done by Dempsey, in which she explored the role of power in the prophetic literature. She looked at a number of power relationships and moved them through various stages in an attempt to arrive at "a new paradigm … informed by justice, righteousness and peace" (2000:1).

Huffmon (1994) pursues the social role of Amos's message. Following the redactional analysis proposed by Wolff (1977), Huffmon attempts to uncover the intended message for the

society of his time. He postulates that the political and economic prosperity brought about by Jeroboam II's successes, had resulted in "increasing disparity between the urban elite of the administrative and religious centers and the village population" (1994:109). Amos is neither regarded as a powerless and socially inferior individual nor as a "peasant revolutionary" whose "prophetic, charismatic authority" is seen as a challenge to the bureaucratic authority of the wealthy. His overwhelming concern is for *mišpāṭ* (justice) and *ṣedāqā* (righteousness) respectively. In addressing the conflict between the socio-economic lifestyle of the urban elite and the traditional values of Israel, Amos announces that the "socio-economic reorganization, or modernization, without compassion - power without love - is not the way for Israel. The resultant oppression of the poor cannot be tolerated" (Huffmon 1994:111). For Huffmon Amos's social role is grounded in an ideological perspective, as opposed to a practical perspective, in view of the unavoidable doom predicted in the text.

When society fails to produce a value system that regulates the individual and collective lives of society, the result is *anomie*. Escobar (1995:169, 170), using the concept of anomie, identified the social disintegration of eighth century Israel as a result of the lack of norms within Israelite society. When there is a discrepancy between a society's cultural goals and institutionalised norms, the resulting *anomie* causes deviance. Individuals, can respond to deviance in any one of the following ways; (1) conformity, by accepting both society's cultural goals and institutionalised norms; (2) innovation, by accepting cultural goals and rejecting institutionalised norms; (3) ritualism, by rejecting cultural goals and accepting institutionalised norms; (4) retreatism, a helpless withdrawal from society by rejecting both cultural goals and institutionalised norms, and (5) rebellion, as a rejection of both cultural goals and institutionalised norms expecting to create new ones (1995:170). Amos's social criticism was directed against the anomic conditions that prevailed, through the "disparaging socio-religio-political practices" of not only Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon and Moab but also within Israel and Judah. Israel and Judah, in particular, had responded to this anomic deviance in their society by resorting to the fifth response, namely rebellion. Amos's prophetic invective was directed at making the society aware of the fact that they had distorted God's original intention. This intention sought the fulfillment of the covenant through a divinely sanctioned social justice system that had its roots firmly entrenched in Yahweh's justice and righteousness. By selfishly

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pursuing your own interests, whether it is political, religious, moral or economic, God's justice is obstructed in the process (1995:172).

The balance between the political/ judicial responsibility and religious practices of the established order was totally distorted in terms of Yahweh's expectations. It would only be through the direct intervention of Yahweh, and the significant oracles of the eighth century prophets, that the delicate, yet dynamic balance between politics and religion could be restored.

4.4   SUMMARY

The relationship between prophecy and the political order that prevailed at the time of Amos is important if one were to do a complete textual analysis of the selected texts of the prophet Amos's message, which is the subject of the next chapter. This relationship, however, becomes understandable in the light of certain dynamics that not only prevailed within ancient Israel at the time but also the extent to which the surrounding neighbourhood had an influence on the prophetic movement and its political structures. In terms of its relevance to an understanding of the prophet Amos and his relationship to the political establishment of his day, it was necessary to understand the development of prophecy over time, open the discussion on how Israelite prophecy functioned within the context of the ancient Near East and set the scene for the socio-political environment of eighth century BC Israel. The exegetical study in chapter 5 will generate further insight into the relationship between the prophet Amos and the ruling establishment. The views put forward by a number of scholars over the years have been most helpful in charting this course and will hopefully enable a better understanding of how this relationship was determined and the dynamics on which it functioned.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this dissertation have set the tone for an in-depth textual analysis of selected texts within the book of Amos. They have provided the socio-political, economic and religious background to the key role players within the prophetic narrative. This analysis, will hopefully, pave the way for some interesting observations and conclusions that can be drawn for modern day society. While many scholars have made significant contributions in this regard, this modest input will further debate in one or many of the interesting areas covered and will certainly contribute in a unique manner to the rich literature that has developed over the years.

CHAPTER 5

THE INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS:
SELECTED TEXTS FROM AMOS

The previous chapters provide an overview of Amos studies over the last 100 years or so, painting a picture of the political ideology that was prevalent during the time of Amos and attempt to place the role and function of the biblical prophet within that context. This relationship between king and prophet, through the divine validation of the political ideology and the critical importance of the prophetic message respectively, set the scene for the ensuing demands that were placed on issues of social justice. With the position of the king regarded as divinely sanctioned and the prophet accepting his divine calling, the relationship that emerged can be described as somewhat ambivalent.

The relationship between politics and religion, at times a very delicate one, is viewed with suspicion by some who favour a particular status quo as they generally fear any change that would be enforced through religious views on the prevailing political situation. Tensions between Church and State arise during instances where politicians feel overly criticised and which results in seriously questioning of the Church's involvement in political matters. In direct contrast to this, the relationship between politics and religion is generally embraced by those who feel that religion has a critical role to play in changing a particular political status quo. As social issues and conflicts in global history became more acute, various marginalised social groups such as blacks, women and other oppressed communities in the United States of America, Latin America, Asia and Africa turned to the social and cultural world-view of biblical history in an attempt to address their concerns (Arendse 1998). Irrespective of the view taken, the balance remains intricate and delicate.

The prophetic books of the Old Testament, with Amos in particular, offer a very fertile ground for a detailed exploration of this relationship in Old Testament times. Auld (1986:1) attributes the current popularity of Old Testament studies among scholars as due to "its tones of social protest, religious critique, and universalism" that enjoys timeless appeal in modern society. Old Testament studies are an important source for demonstrating the prophets' concern over social justice (Auld 1986:1). In turn this also demonstrates Yahweh's concern with issues of

social justice. As intermediaries between Yahweh and the political establishment of the day, the prophets understood their calling as a divine one (Miller 1995:100).

Long advances the argument for social scientific enquiry on ancient Israel by asserting that the blending of various scholarly approaches with social scientific methods to the study of the bible, essentially amounts to a "deepening (of) the content of historical reconstruction and challenging biblical students' customary preference for models of study drawn from the humanities" (1982:244). For example, it is inadequate, from a social scientific perspective, to view ancient Israel simply as Yahweh's people bound together in allegiance to a divine covenant (Long 1982:244). Rather, the investigator would question kinship rules, varying status and power groupings. Furthermore, such a study would focus on "a people whose lives and aspirations are rooted in their material living conditions - where they live, how much space they have, the ease of food supply, their economic role in the whole society; a people whose adherence to a religious belief, such as divine covenant, is one expression, and perhaps not always the most important expression, of socio-economic and political realities" (Long 1982:244). The social scientific study of ancient Israel looks at typical patterns of relationship at any point in time, to form a clearer picture of their systemic structure and social functions (Long 1982:244).

Despite a proliferation of publications on the book of Amos, the relationship between politics and religion has not been adequately addressed. The question posed is: To what extent have the Hebrew prophets succeeded in maintaining this intricate balance? In-depth research of this balance against the background of political structures in the Ancient Near East, the political role of the king and the institution of prophecy in this region will facilitate an understanding of the interaction between these concepts.

This chapter will therefore attempt to demonstrate, through the analyses of various texts, the extent to which Amos, as a case in point and a general representative of the classical prophetic corps, had handled this complex relationship. The detailed analyses of these texts in the book of Amos will provide some insight into the delicate balance that existed between politics and religion. This in turn would make an invaluable contribution to the interpretation and resolution of modern socio-political issues and concerns of social justice - a need that profoundly and undeniably stands out in our modern society and will be explored in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. The focus of this chapter is to explore this delicate relationship between politics and religion through a detailed exegetical analysis of the following

selected texts: Amos 2: 6-8; 3: 9-11, 13-15; 4: 1-3; 5: 4-6, 7, 10-13, 14-15, 21-27; 6: 1-8, 11-12; 8: 4-7. Each of the sections brings a different part of the population oppressive techniques or a demonstration of the extent to which justice and righteousness had been distorted into focus. This ultimately results in the exposure of the overall conspiracy by various sectors of the community to perpetuate this brutal form of oppression. Amos's condemnation puts the spotlight on the complicity of the wealthy and influential in the oppression and exploitation of the vulnerable in society.

5.1   COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

Melugin underscores the value of the historical method by pointing out that it "has been invaluable in helping us understand the culture and religion of the biblical communities" (1988:54). Two reasons are advanced for a sound historical enquiry. Scripture encapsulates the relationship between God and human beings in historical communities and these testimonies can only be explored through "theologically orientated exegesis" in order to pursue the context in which these testimonies occurred (Melugin 1988:54). Secondly, the importance of "the power of religious language in shaping history itself" provides language with an important role to fulfill in creating a historical reality (Melugin 1988:54).

Hadjiev, in his pursuit of the history of the book of Amos, distinguishes between composition and redaction, two terms seen as "closely related but not entirely synonymous" (2009:1). If composition is regarded as the first stage of a prophetic book where various essentially different literary and/ or oral traditions are connected to form a larger literary unit "with its own structure, thought-flow and theme," redaction, as a subsequent literary exercise, is regarded as a process whereby tradents make new additions or omissions to an existing work (Hadjiev 2009:1). Scholars have been primarily divided between the view that practically the entire book can be assigned to the prophet Amos himself while others assign the book to a substantial redaction process (Hadjiev 2009:2-9). Andersen & Freedman (1989:5-9, 83-88, 360-369, 590-608) identify three phases that the book of Amos went through, namely (1) the call to repentance as presented in chapters 5-6 and the first two visions in 7:1-6, (2) the consequences of judgement if the call is not heeded in chapters 3-4; 1-2 and the next two visions in chapters 7:7-9; 8:1-3) and (3) judgement on the leadership of Israel in 8:3-14 and the fifth vision in 9:1-6.

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While admitting that "the book is far from uniform in focus and emphasis," Andersen & Freedman strongly maintain the unity within the book brought about by "one master hand" which could be either that of Amos or a very close disciple (1989:5-7). Paul, in promoting the unity and integrity of the book of Amos, is of the view that the book is made up of various independent collections, arranged into a coherent structure through the use of existing literary genres (1991:6). Möller, more recently, proceeds from the assumption that "the book of Amos is a unity featuring a coherent 'argument'" (2003:18).

In the same vein there are a number of prominent scholars who subscribe to the view that the book of Amos has behind it a fairly extensive process of literary growth. Wolff (1977) ushers in the modern-critical study of Amos with his influential thesis depicting six phases in the literary development of the book. Wolff argues that even "a cursory examination of the book of Amos forces one to posit behind it a long history of literary growth" that extends from the life and times of Amos into the post-exilic period (1977:106-107). Furthermore he assigns three eighth-century literary strata, on the basis of a "high degree of probability," to Amos himself and his contemporary disciples with three additional strata identified as "later interpretations by their distinctive language and different intentions" derived over the next few centuries (1977:107). Jeremias, a keen follower of Wolff, alludes to the constant updating of the Amos text over a period of time with the book undergoing "its constitutive formation after the fall of Jerusalem during the exilic-early postexilic period" (1998:5).

Given the above divergent views on the composition of the book of Amos, one has to consider the historical nature of the character of the prophet. Niehaus believes that Amos demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of Israel, Judah and the surrounding nations and as a "covenant-lawsuit messenger," he was familiar with the history of God's covenant as demonstrated in 2:4, 8, 11; 4:7, 9-11; 5:11 (1992:316). This knowledge, in Niehaus's view, was important to fulfill one's mandate as a prophet (1992:316). Bearing in mind that the focus is now more on the text rather than the historical figures associated with the text (Coggins 2000:72), it is still important in this project to determine the extent to which the text, in its original form or through subsequent secondary additions, addressed the historical and social conditions of the time.

5.2   ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TEXTS

5.2.1   Amos 2:6-8: Severe Acts of Oppression

6.   Thus says Yahweh:

"For three rebellious acts of Israel,

and for four, I will not relent,

because they sell a righteous man for silver,

and a needy man on account of sandals.

7.   Those who crush the head of the poor[44]

into the dust of the earth,

as they pervert the way of the oppressed;

and a man and his father go to the same girl,

to profane my holy name.

8.   And upon cloaks taken in pledge they lay themselves down

beside every altar,

and the wine of those who have been fined they drink

in the house of their God.[45]

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[44] Text-critical Notes on Amos 2:7: Thomas (2003:188) holds the view that the wording of this charge presents us with a number of difficulties and alludes to a crucial problem with the translation of "those who crush" (השאפים). Older translations opted for "long for," "pant" and "to yearn" (all derived from the root שאף) rendering the Hebrew as "they long for the dust of the earth on the head of the poor" (Thomas 2003:188). Modern commentaries have accepted "to crush" or "trample on" (שוף) as an alternative and more modern translation (Andersen & Freedman 1989:313-314; Paul 1991:80). For Paul (1991:79) while the intent of the statement is clear, "the wording of the verse presents several difficulties." Soggin also agrees with Paul that the general sense of v. 7a is clear while the text is "much less so" (2000:102). In order to navigate these difficulties, Paul (1991:79) proposes that the form and meaning of שאפים be clarified as a first step and recognised as a biform of שוף ("to crush, trample upon"), not to be confused with its homonym שאף ("to gasp, pant after"). Despite this Paul (1991:79) draws on various examples from the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate that although the correct translation would be "to tread (on), trample," the א in the verb should not be deleted but "is to be understood as another example of this rare by-formation from the ע″ע verb," שוף ("to crush, trample on"). Paul (1991:79) identifies further difficulties with the particle ב in בראש דלים ("the heads of the poor"). He (Paul 1991:80) concludes that despite the difficulties encountered Amos referred to the rights of the poor which have been trampled upon and crushed into עפר־ארץ ("the dust of the ground"). These still support the inexcusable act of the gross maltreatment of the poor by the wealthy. Despite the difficulties in the text, one can safely assume that this accusation in v. 7a falls within the ambit of the overall charges against the wealthy in Israel for abusing the human rights of the poor. The symbolism portrayed in the verse is extremely powerful as the prophet uses this imagery to convey the harsh conditions as they existed at the time.

[45] All textual presentations and translations provided in chapter 5 are broadly based on literal presentations proposed by Niehaus (1992). Although these presentations have only been utilised as a basis to some extent, the author has

The lengthy structure of this oracle, clearly demonstrates the critical social issues that Amos began addressing to the nation of Israel. In addition to this, the legal traditions of the nation clearly stipulated both the rights of the political ruling class as well as the rights of peasant farmers who at times might have been so impoverished that the garments on their bodies were their only form of material possession.[46] Since the prophet did not confront the established conventions and traditions that were in existence, his focus was primarily on the abusive conduct of the ruling class in their pursuit of greater wealth. This was the source of Yahweh's dissatisfaction. For Yahweh, there was a fine and delicate balance between their political responsibility to look after the destitute and poor and a genuine, authentic style of worship that honoured Him. Amos 2:6-8 demonstrates how wealthy aristocrats, in very privileged positions, resorted to large-scale abuse of the poor as they participated in a feeding frenzy to increase not only their personal wealth but also self-gratification through immoral sexual conduct fuelled by excessive wine consumption. Furthermore these perverted acts were performed in front of altars that were supposed to have had sacral significance. The multiplicity of altars in itself constituted a major problem. This is what the prophet Amos was called upon to address in the strongest terms in order to restore the delicate balance that existed between religion and politics. This is also what made the selection of this section critical to this analysis.

5.2.1.1 Literary Form and Structure 2:6-8

Amos 1:3-2:16, generally known as the Oracles against the Nations (abbreviated OAN), is comprised of eight individual oracles directed against individual states and nations. The form of the oracles is essentially that of a messenger speech which highlights the function of the prophet as a messenger and underscores the divine nature of the message (Stuart 1987:308). These oracles of which the Israel oracle (2:6-16) forms a subsection and an integral part, rests on what Stuart refers to as "a shared theological assumption: there is one God, Yahweh, who has power over the whole earth, and whose righteousness will not tolerate unrighteousness on the part of any of the nations" (1987:308). Yahweh is more than just the God of Israel and Judah, since He

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developed his own translations in some cases, especially in the instance of those verses to which text-critical notes have been included.

[46] Covenantal obligations that were binding on the nation of Israel are contained in various biblical references. The rights referred to here will be expanded on in the dissertation with the appropriate source references.

is accepted as being in a special covenantal relationship with all nations. This covenant requires obedience to "a basic sort of 'international law' that is fully capable of being enforced against any nation that acts contrary to it" (Stuart 1987:308).

V. 6 opens with the distinctive messenger introduction formula: כה אמר יהוה ("thus says Yahweh"), denoting a message or statement delivered directly from God. This messenger speech bears strong resemblance to similar speeches elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible such as in Gen 32:3-4, Judg 11:14-15 and 2 Kgs 18:19; 19:6 (Stuart 1987:308). As an introductory formula, it is used for the first time in the book of Amos (Wolff 1977:135). Stuart describes the general format of the oracle in Amos 2 as starting off with the messenger formula introduction, as described above, followed by the surety of "deserved punishment" (1987:308-309). The crimes are then specified in detail and are in turn followed by an announcement of the actual punishment. The oracle is drawn to a conclusion with a concluding formula (i.e. "an oracle of Yahweh") affirming once again the source of the oracle (Stuart 1987:308-309).[47] Righteousness is an inherent demand under justice and the party in the right must be acquitted unconditionally. Coggins points out that in Israel's case, the offences committed were primarily against God while the other oracles focused on offences committed against neighbouring nations (2000:98). Niehaus is of the view that God's covenant is derived from a divine Torah that provides clear instructions on the administration of justice and caring for the poor (cf. Lev 25:39-40, 42), based on a redemptive approach (1992:365). The oracle, as a result, serves as an indictment of the nation of Israel which now faces Yahweh's covenant lawsuit that reflects a "distinctive essential covenant lawsuit pattern" with an initial indictment for social injustice (vv. 6-7a), sexual immorality (v. 7b) as well as religious abuses (v. 8) with the rest of the oracle providing a historical review (vv. 9-12) and a subsequent announcement of judgement in verses 13-16 (Niehaus 1992:362).

Stuart argues that apart from some differences that exist between the oracles, the eight oracles are remarkably uniform and form part of Amos 1:3-2:16 as the original unit (1987:309). As the climax in the group of oracles, the Israel oracle is the longest in the group. Four of the oracles (Tyre, Edom, Judah and Israel) show "minor individual peculiarities" while the other four oracles (Aram, Philistia, Ammon and Moab) are uniform in structure (Stuart 1987:309). Jeremias's attempt to reconstruct this unit leads him to conclude that we are dealing with two

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[47] The first charges follow immediately after a synthetic parallel pattern symbolised as N: N+1 (Stuart 1987:309). This mechanism is used to great effect to emphasise the seriousness of the charges as well as the certainty of punishment according to Stuart (1987:309).

stages of growth from the "oldest book of Amos" dealing with four nations to the present text which he describes as "the exilic book of Amos" comprising seven nations (1998:25). Coggins concurs with the uniformity of the oracles and sees in it a "remarkably overall structure" although conceding some additions of nations to the "original nucleus" of nations and a further expansion to the oracle against Israel (2000:85).

5.2.1.2 Exegetical Analysis 2:6-8

After condemning a number of Israel's enemies and neighbours, Amos turns his attention first to Judah and then to Israel, stunning them into silence. Coggins holds the view that "modern commentators have allowed their imagination free reign as they set about describing the indignation that replaced the nations pleasure as they realised that Israel, in much the same way as its neighbours, is also the target of this invective (2000:99). While Coggins does not wish to commit himself to the views of other commentators on Israel's reaction, he maintains that this device, i.e. treating one's nation on par with other nations, is an unusual yet striking feature (2000:99).

Following some serious indictments against the neighbours of Israel: Damascus (1:3), Gaza (1:6), Edom (1:11), the Ammonites (1:13), Moab (2:1) and Judah (2:4), the prophet's attention turns to Israel with devastating consequences (Wolff 1977:164). While each of these oracles identifies a specific political entity, the nature of the accusations against Israel differs from that of the other nations since theirs includes war crimes for which the political leadership is responsible and in the case of Israel the entire nation comes under scrutiny (Wolff 1977:164). Scholars such as Wolff (1977), Stuart (1987), Paul (1991), Niehaus (1992), Jeremias (1998) and Coggins (2000) have highlighted significant differences between the indictments against Israel as opposed to the approach to the other oracles that were directed at its neighbours. The charges relating to Israel do not focus on war crimes as was the case with its neighbours, for which the political leadership would be held solely responsible, but rather on its offenses against the harmonious coherence prevalent in Israelite communal life (Wolff 1977:165). Yahweh is clearly concerned with the social disorders and chaos that prevailed in Israelite society for which he holds the ruling class as well as the rich and influential responsible, and on whom he will call to account. So strong is the indictment against Israel that it is placed at a pivotal point in the invective and as a result "is excoriated in far more detail than any of them" (Stuart 1987:316). As

the "grand finale and raison d'être of his prophetic commission," Israel's social conditions becomes the key focus of the prophet Amos (Paul 1991:76).

With regard to the section under discussion, Jeremias outlines two distinct and significant differences between what he refers to as the "Israel-strophe" compared to the preceding oracles (1998:33-34). Firstly, the introductory formula (i.e. "for three transgressions of Israel, and for four,"), is far more detailed in the Israel-strophe than that which was used in the other nations (vv. 6-8). The second difference points to the inward focus of Israel's transgressions with the responsibility shared between those who not only have political oversight, but also the rich and powerful who abuse their privilege through their oppression of the poor. Of course, falling outside of this section under discussion, Jeremias highlights two further differences. These differences relate to God's judgement that is reflected here as more comprehensive by nature requiring His direct intervention (v. 13) as well as a moment of reflection on God's salvation acts towards Israel which has the effect of making both the charges against Israel and its pending punishment so much more poignant (Jeremias 1998:34).

Israel becomes the final focus of Amos's condemnation against various nations resulting in a clear message that they are no better off in Yahweh's eyes than their counterparts (Coggins 2000:98). Pleasure at the indictment of other nations turns to indignation as there is a realisation that Israel itself stands under judgement. According to Coggins, this dramatic comparison was unknown in the ancient world and is used quite effectively (2000:99). The device employed is unusual and used to striking effect (Coggins 2000:99).

In his social-scientific analysis of Israelite society during the time of Amos, Thomas is of the view that the indictments brought against Israel "have their bases in the misuse of the gifts of land and settled existence" (2003:183). While there is no consensus amongst scholars on the exact number of charges in this pericope (Wolff 1977:165; Andersen & Freedman 1989:310; Paul 1991:76; Thomas 2003:183), this discussion will broadly take place around the following key thoughts.

(a)   Debt-Slavery and Bonding of Freehold Property [2:6]

This indictment can be split into two separate charges. The first charge specified in the indictment and assured of inevitable punishment is the first part of verse 6b, "because they sell (מכר) a righteous man (צדיק) for silver (בכסף)." The root of the verb "to sell" (מכר) is described

by Stuart (1987:316) as a routine business transaction that possibly also refers to "the symbolic sandal-transfer that sealed property exchanges in early times in Israel" while Niehaus (1992:365) refers to it as possibly some kind of bribery in civil or criminal proceedings that were strongly condemned by the law and the prophets. Practices of bribery were condemned by the law (cf. Exod 23:6-8; Deut 16:18-20) and the prophets (Isa 1:23; 5:23; Ezek 22:12, 29; Mic 3:9-12. It is also possible that the word refers to the sale of people into debt-slavery (Niehaus 1992:365). Dearman is convinced that the selling of the righteous relates to debt-slavery as a result of their inability to pay their debts (1988:20). The term "for silver" (בכסף) indicates the price obtained from the sale while the root צדק, from which "a righteous man" is derived, does not necessarily imply righteousness in a moral sense but could also imply a sense of rightness or in a litigation context the one who "is in the right" (Niehaus 1992:365).

While there is a fair amount of uncertainty as to who was responsible for the selling of the "righteous" for monetary gain, scholars such as Paul (1991:77) have strongly discounted the involvement of judges in this process. This was initially affirmed by Wolff who clearly demonstrates that there was no evidence in the Hebrew Bible that the verb "to sell" relates to the act of bribery (1977:165). Despite the economic prosperity enjoyed by Israel, many small-scale farmers lived precariously and were extremely sensitive to crop failures which necessitated their negotiation for loans and providing their land and children as security against such loans (Thomas 2003:185). Any failure to pay these loans timeously provided the wealthy with an unfair advantage and resulted in serious abuse of the system, a situation that was strongly condemned by the prophet Amos (Thomas 2003:185; Jeremias 1998:35). The rich and powerful extended their wealth at the expense of vulnerable small farmers.

Not only is Amos concerned about the righteous being sold for silver but his second charge also calls attention to the plight of the poor who are sold for "a pair of sandals" (נעלים). The phrase for "a pair of sandals" (נעלים) is, on the one hand, an indication of the rather insignificant amount of indebtedness the poor were sold for and on the other, a clear indication of the trivial amount these individuals were on offer to be purchased for (Stuart 1987:316; Rosenbaum 1990:61). Amos's use of the plural, in this instance, "represents something of no value" which amounts to the poor being "forced into servitude on account of a minor debt" (Ringgren 1998:466). Dearman is of the view that the reference to the pair of sandals is clearly

an indication of the ancient practice of the exchange of property rights and a subsequent symbol of possession (1988:21). It represents, according to Matthews & Benjamin, the transfer of title of immovable property through the symbolic sandal-transfer ritual (1993:210). Paul (1991:77) explores the problematical nature of the phrase and sees the problem centered on the precise meaning of the substantive נעלים ("a pair of sandals"). While this phrase may point to some kind of debt slavery for a very miniscule and insignificant amount, Paul argues that nowhere else in the Bible is this expression used to symbolise a petty sum of money with this view fundamentally giving rise to some misguided exegesis on the verse (1991:77-78). This misinterpretation was further reinforced by the current vocalisation of the word "sandals" (נעלים) on a misunderstanding of its original meaning which was the result of confusion between the hapax legomenon singular noun נעלם, derived from the root עלם ("to hide") and the plural form נעלים ("sandals") (Paul 1991:78). Paul (1991:79) concludes, by looking at the term כפר ("a bribe") in the Book of Samuel as well as the parallel structure between כסף ("silver") and נעלם in Amos, "that all three are to be interpreted as different types of gift payments" with the indictment amounting to what he refers to as "Erbarmungslösigkeit und Verachtung der Menschenwürde" ("the lack of pity and contempt for human dignity").

The "poor" (אביון) and the "needy" (עני) are paralleled by Amos in these charges (Niehaus 1992:365; Wolff 1977:165). The "righteous poor" or "righteous needy," as expressed in some translations, serves to bring out the prophet's meaning and stands in a parallel and complementary relationship to each other (Andersen & Freedman 1989:310). Linville is of the view that the parallelism created between "righteous," "needy," "poor" and "humble" need not be regarded as inconsistent as it is a feature of other religious dialogues such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (2008:61). A number of scholars are in agreement that Amos's rejection of the sale of human beings into debt-slavery does not necessarily indicate his objection to this institution, but should rather be viewed as his strong distaste for the inexcusable reasons for this action (Wolff 1977:165; Andersen & Freedman 1989:313; Jeremias 1998:35).

(b)   Violating the Rights of the Poor and denial of Justice [2:7]

Amos demonstrates the deliberate and malicious treatment of the poor at the hands of the ruling elite as they shamefully project their greed and avarice to acquire the land of the poor. The underprivileged are treated with contempt and subjected to abuse as they are trampled into the dust in an undignified manner (Paul 1991:80). The alliteration of "against the dust" (על־עפר) "enhances the poetic impact" of the physical abuse of the oppressed and the brutal socioeconomic oppression of the poor vividly demonstrated by Amos with this expression (Niehaus 1992:366). Wolff describes the perpetrators of this hideous act as "brutal and arrogant" and their victims as "humbled or oppressed" with the act associated with the "judicial proceedings at the gate" as acted out in Amos 5:12 (1977:166). Jeremias, in reference to the insulting humiliation of dependent persons, describes the symbolic trampling of a person's head as "long a familiar symbol on illustrations of Mesopotamian kings for the subjugation of their enemies" (1998:36). This charge clearly demonstrates the ruthlessness with which the wealthy and influential in Israel acquired the few possessions of the poor and destitute among them. Amos's use of poetry in this verse serves to "make vivid the brutal treatment of people who should receive the special care of those in authority, rather than the brunt of their injustice" (Niehaus 1992:366).

The list of indictments continues and appears to be getting worse. Not only have poor landowners been forced into debt-slavery, their land forcefully confiscated and their rights brutally violated resulting in their total humiliation, but their right to justice had also been denied. According to Niehaus v. 7b continues the accusation that the ruling elite brutally exploited the poor but more than that they "perverted the way of the oppressed" (1992:366). The accusation highlights "a deliberate circumvention of justice" (Thomas 2003:190). As Jeremias so clearly points out: "Where those who have no means to defend themselves through bribery are denied their rights, the community as a whole is destroyed" (1998:36). This denial of justice is regarded by Stuart in the same manner that the expression is used in Prov 17:23 (1987:317). For Thomas a proper interpretation of the terms "needy," "poor" and "afflicted" will further clarify the accusations leveled by Amos against the upper classes of Israel (2003:191). Hayes observes that the people Amos was fighting for and whose concern was foremost on Yahweh's agenda are those who share a common "state of weakness, oppression and exploitation" which made them absolutely vulnerable in the sight of the greedy and arrogant elite of Israel (1988:109). The

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intention of this accusation becomes clear when compared to an identical text in Job 24:4 ("they push the needy off the road") which points to the bullying tactics of the wealthy to oppress the poor and deprive them of any legal remedies they may be entitled to (Paul 1991:81).

Some scholars have found the expression in the accusation "a man and his father go to the same girl" in v. 7c to be difficult to explain despite a common understanding that it refers to an act of immoral sexual intercourse (Jeremias 1998:36; Thomas 2003:191). Jeremias encourages the reader to sense the prophet's outrage with the expression in what he describes as "the *ritardando* of the four-stress bicolon rhythm" (1998:36). The difficulty appears to lie in the description of the characters, their relationship with each other and the conditions around which the act takes place. The law specifically prohibits sexual relations between a father and his son's wife, and also between a son and his father's wife (cf. Lev 18:8, 15). This apodictic injunction is quite clear when it comes to certain relationships, but appears to be silent where a father and son participate in sexual conduct with the same woman (Wolff 1977:167). Amos's strong condemnation, however, clearly demonstrates that Yahweh is most certainly not happy with the situation as it particularly has the effect of profaning His holy name. It is clear that both father and son appear to be abusing their privileged positions in society over a victim who cannot defend herself. Sexual perversion is in contravention of Yahweh's divine plan for humanity and the practice leads to the desecration of the land according to Niehaus (1992:366). This practice is forbidden in terms of covenantal legislation in Lev 18:7-8 and Lev 18:24. Scholars have divergent views on the phrase "and a man and his father" (ואיש ואביו) having sexual intercourse with the same girl. For Niehaus this possibly implies an incestuous relationship between father and son (Niehaus 1992:366). Andersen & Freedman do not see this relationship as incestuous but rather that everyone participates in this unacceptable practice (1989:318). To them, if incest was intended, the wording would have been structured in the following manner: "a man had intercourse with his father's wife" (Andersen & Freedman 1989:318). Stuart holds the view that if a "female slave" (נערה) is involved, then the practice is in violation of Exod 21:8, but it most probably refers to "any practice of sexual adultery" (cf. Deut 22:30), rendered all the more detestable if it was not consensual on the part of the woman (1987:317). Irrespective of the view adopted, Yahweh's response that these evil acts only serve "to profane my holy name" places Him at a clear distance from this perverse lifestyle.

The next issue to consider is the identification of the woman referred to in v.7c, who is the subject of this enquiry and the social setting that she finds herself in. Scholars are at odds over her precise status and social setting. On the one hand, she is considered to be a "young woman" (נערה), legally a minor, with her social standing being more of an issue rather than her status related to her age (Wolff 1977:166; Paul 1991:81). On the other hand, she is considered a bond-servant or female slave who is abused by the promiscuous act of both father and son (Mays 1969:46; Stuart 1987:317). Whatever view is taken, there is no doubt that the young woman was a victim and her involvement involuntary on her part (Stuart 1987:317; Coggins 2000:103). In Jeremias's view, "Amos sees before him a society in which sexual desire determines a person's actions, desire shamelessly selecting socially dependent persons as its victims" (1998:37). Barstad, pursuing the religious polemics of Amos, links vv. 7-8 and argues that the social setting for this act is the *marzēaḥ* meal or festival commonly held in a private Samaritan house or palace (1984:34). As a result the young woman is regarded as a hostess of some sort belonging to the upper classes (Barstad 1984:34; Jeremias 1998:194). Whether Amos is seen as confirming a clan ethos that safeguards the sanctity of marriage and the legal rights of slaves (Wolff 1977:167), or alternatively his strong denunciation of the "lack of basic moral conduct" (Paul 1991:81), it is clear that this indictment is a continuation of the charges leveled against the abusive upper classes in society.

(c)   Pledges for Unpaid Debts and Abuse of Restitution [2:8]

Amos now takes issue with the exploitation of debtors as their garment pledges are abused. The prophet had the legal traditions of the Pentateuch clearly in focus as he addressed the nature of this injustice (Wolff 1977:167). Deut 24:6 prohibits the taking in pledge of essential instruments such as hand-mills and grindstones, while Deut 24:17 prohibits the taking of a widow's garment in pledge. Despite these prohibitions, the wealthy used these cloaks, taken in pledge, "to possibly recline" (נטה) at a feast occasion (Niehaus 1992:367). According to Niehaus these garments are "large square cloaks used as garments by day and coverings by night" (1992:367). A poor man's garment, taken in pledge, should not be held overnight (cf. Exod 22:25-26 and Deut 24:12-13). The rich not only used the legal process to their own selfish advantage (May 1978:47) but in a ruthless manner exploited the poor for maximum material gain. Soggin describes the expression

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in this verse as "the continuation of the orgy" as they stretch out on these garments taken in pledge (1987:47). King describes the abuse of pledged garments as a tangible illustration of the type of oppression that the poor were subjected to (1988:22). He refers to a 1960 discovery of a fourteen-line Hebrew ostracon, a non-biblical inscription he describes as being "of special value" and dating from around 625 BC (King 1988:24-25). The letter deals with the complaint of an impounded garment in which the affected person maintains his innocence and requests intervention by the military governor (King 1988:24-25). According to King, the reasons for the seizure of the garment are unclear (1988:24).

A further perversion they made themselves guilty of is that they were "reclining" (נטה) next to every altar participating in their sexual immoral behaviour. For Niehaus, the expression "every altar" (כל־מזבח) conjures a sense of multiple altars in contravention of the covenantal ideal of a single sanctuary (1992:367). This is contrary to the stipulations of Deut 12:5-11. The religious orientation of these wealthy creditors who illegally and immorally used these garments for their own gratification at their shrines of worship, made their actions so much more distasteful and despicable (Stuart 1987:317). The impact of crop failure on small farmers necessitated the pledging or pawning of possessions in favour of loans for economic survival. While this practice was acceptable in agricultural societies due to the economic and environmental realities of the time, a creditor was allowed to "seize whatever he desires except what is essential to life" (Thomas 2003:195). The indiscriminate confiscation of garments as distraint for an unpaid debt, made this practice morally reprehensible in the eyes of Yahweh and Amos had no alternative but to convey this message in the strongest possible terms.

The final charge brought against Israel in this section is that, during these religious festivals, they drank the wine of "those who have been fined." Stuart holds that the practice "of fining" (ענש) was regarded as a legal vehicle to guarantee restitution and "not as a means of enriching leaders who here have taken wine as payment-in-kind and debauched themselves thereby" (1987:317). The root ענש ("to fine") in the Bible refers to "monetary fines or indemnity" according to Paul (1991:86). A closer analysis of the grammatical form ענושים ("those who have been fined") leads Paul to conclude that the monetary nuance of the expression needed to be observed and that it probably could be translated as "wine bought with money

received from exacting fines from the poor" (1991:86). While "such fines were meant to make restitution for damages" (Wolff 1977:168), these fines were "not to be exacted in order to allow the wealthy to indulge their appetites, feasting and drinking by the shrines" (Paul 1991:86-87). Fines could be imposed to secure restitution in terms of the law as noted in Exod 21:19, 30-32; 22:14,15,17 and Deut 22:19 (Thomas 2003:197). Instead Israel's elite used this form of taxation to increase their wealth status, rob poor farmers of their possessions and subsidise their heavy drinking and feasting at the shrines (Thomas 2003:197). Amos does not take issue with the appropriateness of the fine, but rather the abuse and exploitation associated with it by turning "the purpose and goal of such co-ercive measures" into enhancing "one's own revelry and drinking" (Jeremias 1998:38). Lying around on these garments taken in pledge and the consumption of what Linville refers to as "the confiscated wines" amounts to both social and sacral offences (2008:83). A sense of estrangement developed between Yahweh and the people of Israel in the reference to "the house of their God" (בית אלהיהם) as they indulged in a form of religion that was foreign to Yahweh. The Hebrew can also be translated as "their gods" indicating idol worship. Conspicuous consumption at religious festivals was characteristic of pagan religions according to Judg 9:27; Neh 1:4-9 and also Isa 5:22-23 (Niehaus 1992:367; Stuart 1987:317). While this verse refers specifically to the corrupt practices, oppression and abuse of the poor by the privileged, it further raises the question of whether the privileged really knew who their God was (Linville 2008:63).

5.2.2   Amos 3:9-11: A Call to Witness Oppression

9.   Proclaim upon the royal citadels in Ashdod

and upon the royal citadels in the land of Egypt

and say, "Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria,

and see the great disorders within her,

and the oppression in her midst."

10.   "And they do not know how to do right" -

oracle of Yahweh-

"those who store violence and destruction in their royal citadels"

11.   Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh:

"An adversary – shall surround the land![48]

And he will bring down your strongholds from you,

and your royal citadels will be plundered."

Witnesses are summoned to observe the great social and political upheaval within the capital of the northern kingdom. The charges are devastating and the punishment will be absolutely terrifying. The selection of 3:9-11 is important for two reasons. Firstly, the indictment that Yahweh was about to deliver was of international significance with the participation of international observers such as Ashdod and Egypt, which were critical to the process, albeit as witnesses (Niehaus 1992:383). This makes the proceedings and the outcome of judgement and punishment internationally and universally relevant. The call to proclaim was originally socially located in the assignment of political ambassadorial representatives to other nations, but in this setting witnesses were summoned to bear evidence against crimes of property misappropriation and outrageous economic oppression (Thomas 2003:207). Secondly, and most crucial of all, the passage clearly directs the indictment to the political establishment of Israel, to "those who store violence and destruction in their royal citadels." As was indicated earlier, the king played a crucial role in social justice issues which placed the political administration at the centre of society. The threat to destroy the royal centres of Samaria is a serious indictment of the monarchy's failure to ensure social justice. This failure was primarily responsible for the situation of "great disorders" (מהומת רבות) and "oppression" (עשוקים) that eventually prevailed. Attention is therefore drawn to the dismal national situation in Israel.

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[48] Text-critical Notes on Amos 3:11: Andersen & Freedman describes the reference "an adversary and around the land" in v. 11 as "unintelligible or at least ungrammatical" requiring drastic emendation (1989:408). As to who will be responsible for "bringing down the strongholds" has posed a number of translation problems (Coggins 2000:112). Andersen & Freedman had suggested earlier that this amounted to a misinterpretation of the text since Tyre would be an out of place suggestion as it has already been targeted for destruction (1989:408). The word צר ("enemy") has been interpreted in various ways with LXX interpreting it as Tyre and other sources such as Aquila, the Targum and the Vulgate opting for "straits, distress," to "be in distress" or "to be encompassed" with Paul strongly concluding that "clearly the substantive refers to the oppressor" with צר indicating "enemy" (1991:118). Paul prefers to read יסובב or סובב ("shall surround" or "lay siege") as "an enemy shall encircle the land" ready to attack (1991:118). There seems to be consensus amongst scholars that the text is silent as to who was to fulfill the role of the adversary (Wolff 1977:194; Andersen & Freedman 1989:408; Paul 1991:118). While the identity of the enemy is unknown, it is clear that an unidentified enemy will surround the land and lay it to siege.

5.2.2.1 Literary Form and Structure 3:9-11

Amos 3:9-15 is made up of three sub units: vv. 9-11, 12 and 13-15 which together with 4:1-3 forms part of a wider passage consisting of four oracles (Hadjiev 2009:143). According to Park, Amos 3:9-4:3 sets out the prophetic invective against a selected group of leadership within Israelite society and functions to indict their guilt and announce Yahweh's judgement (2001:87). This indictment shifts to the general populace in 4:4-13 (Park 2001:87). Stuart describes the passage as a "partial covenant lawsuit form," reflecting overtones of both the disputation and messenger forms (1987:329). Each oracle presents evidence of Samaria's transgressions of Yahweh's law, coupled by some form of judgement utterance. Covenant lawsuit features are distinctly reflected in the plural summons to the witnesses against Israel (3:9, 13), the messenger speech being evident in the emphasis on Yahweh's words in 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 15; 4:1, 2 with the disputation form coming to the fore in the mocking disputation of Samaria's auspicious living. This makes it difficult to classify the form rigidly (Stuart 1987:329).

Vv. 9-11 was traditionally assigned to Amos, but this consensus was challenged more recently (Hadjiev 2009:143). The call to witness made in vv. 9-12 is a common feature of a trial genre that requires two witnesses (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15), in order to prevent a false report[49], according to Park (2001: 83). Park furthermore proposes that vv. 9-10 can be analysed in two ways: (1) These verses are directly attributable to Yahweh, or (2) v. 9a is regarded as prophetic with the rest assigned to Yahweh (2001:84). Wolff asserts that the oracle formula (נאם־יהוה) is a later addition (1977:190-191). On the basis of this assertion, Yahweh's speech would then only begin in v 11 and vv. 9-10 would be viewed as prophetic utterances by Amos "in a high position of authority" (1977:190-191). Park argues that the overall structure of this unit is that it is a trial scene, Yahweh's trial with Him acting as both plaintiff and judge (2001:84). In the absence of this secondary oracle formula, Amos would have been the plaintiff and the scenario quite different (Park 2001:84).

An instruction is issued in v. 9 with the first half of the summons: to "proclaim upon the royal citadels" (השמיעו על־ארמנות) being reflected in the second half of the summons: to "see (וראו) the great disorders (מהומת רבות) and oppression (עשוקים) in her midst" through

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[49] Exod 20:16 prohibits the presentation of false evidence while Exod 23:1 seeks to uphold the integrity of proper and truthful evidence: "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness."

synonymous parallelism. Niehaus describes the structure as consisting of "a bicolon with synonymous parallelism and a double-duty verb, a hinge colon (the call to assemble), and a second bicolon with synonymous parallelism and a double duty verb" (1992:383). The oracle opens with the instruction to "proclaim upon the royal citadels" (השמיעו על־ארמנות), with the imperative "to proclaim" (שמע) doing double duty and governing the colon "upon the royal citadels in Ashdod" as well as the colon "upon the royal citadels in the land of Egypt" and as a literary device, it is used to great literary effect within other prophetic passages such as Jer. 4:16, with similar commands appearing also in Isa 57:14; 62:11; Jer 5:1, 10, 20; Hos 5:8; 8:1 (Niehaus 1992:383). Scholars share the view that the oracular formula in v. 10, "oracle of Yahweh," is an editorial insertion that came about at a later stage (Park 2001:84; Soggin 1987:61; Wolff 1977:190).

According to Hadjiev, the author demonstrates the absence of a link between the summoned pair, namely Ashdod and Egypt, and the previous cities mentioned in the previous sections (2009:144). This oracle is a royal summons of witnesses (Ashdod and Egypt) to witness an indictment and a judgement against the ruling class of Samaria. The manner in which the summons is issued, the indictment presented and the judgment delivered confirms a "certain rightness and inevitability" of the entire process (Niehaus 1992:383).

5.2.2.2 Exegetical Analysis 3:9-11

(a)   Divine Proclamation to Witness: Egypt and Ashdod [3:9]

Ashdod and Egypt were well known for their oppression and ruthlessness, yet Yahweh decided that they would be the ideal witnesses to Israel's immoral, unethical and oppressive behaviour to demonstrate that Israel's wrongs exceed their own (Niehaus 1992:383). It also serves as a demonstration to these powers that Yahweh will stop at nothing to punish even His own for their disgraceful behaviour in society. The instructions to "say" (ואמרו) and "assemble yourselves" (האספו) are both plural imperatives directed at Ashdod and Egypt with these two political powers instructed to assemble themselves "upon the mountains of Samaria" (על־הרי שמרון) to witness the cruel oppression taking place in the city (Niehaus 1992:383). Although Wolff (1977:190) prefers the singular reference to the mount of Samaria and argues that the mountains surrounding

Samaria was too distant, at around four or more kilometers, to witness the oppression in Samaria, Paul (1991:116) argues that these mountaintops provided a tremendous vantage point to gather their evidence. Andersen & Freedman agree that while the plural reference to "mounts" may be unusual in v. 9, v. 11 strongly indicates that the entire land of Israel is affected by this indictment (1989:406). The assembly on the mountaintops of Samaria ensured therefore that all of the witnesses were comfortably accommodated in order to affirm first-hand the charges against the people of Israel.

Coggins holds the view that this text is one of the "earliest traceable developments in the history of interpretation of Amos" with the reference to Assyria as "an early example of reader-response criticism" (2000:111). He goes on to suggest that if the writing in the book of Amos is attributed to "an individual who lived in the mid eighth century BC, as for example is done in 1.1," then it is feasible that the Assyrian threat that occurred a generation later would have been foreseen by him, since he was a prophet and God would not do anything without revealing his secrets to his servants the prophets (Coggins 2000:111) Thomas argues that the plural reference to "mountains" is preferable since the use of plural also appears in the MT with the prophet most probably focusing not only on the Mountain of Samaria, but in a broader sense also on the other hills in the region (2003:209).

Samaria was to be exposed for its rot, the creation of disorder and oppression. Yahweh has great concern for the oppressed. Oppression of the poor was also a key focus in wisdom literature.[50] We are reminded that Yahweh takes note of the tears of the oppressed with the oppressors yielding considerable power over them with no one there to comfort them (Niehaus 1992:384).[51] The verb "see" (וראו) is also a plural imperative, doing double duty and controlling both "great disorders" (מהומת רבות) and "oppression" (עשוקים) demonstrating and accentuating the total moral chaos that existed in Israelite society (Niehaus 1992:384). The function of the exhortation here to "see" (וראו), is "to elicit an eyewitness report concerning the conditions in

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[50] In Ecclesiastes 4:1, Qoheleth says:
    I saw the tears of the oppressed –
    And they have no comforter;
    Power was on the side of their oppressors –
    And they have no comforter. (NIV)
[51] In Job 35:9 we are reminded of the heavy load of oppression that men face and in Eccl 4:1 that Yahweh took note of the oppression that was taking place with a very keen eye.

Samaria" and gather the evidence first-hand (Wolff 1977:191). The substantive מהומת ("disorders") is found only twice in the plural in this verse and in 2 Chr 15:5, both times with the same adjective "many" (רבות) and in this instance it is an all-encompassing term that describes the anxiety and confusion in society as a result of the atrocities committed by the wealthy (Paul 1991:116-117). The second substantive עשוקים ("oppression") is described by Paul (1991:117) as an abstract plural that describes the tremendous subjugation of the marginalised masses as the wealthy increase their illicit gains (cf. Job 35:9; Eccl 4:1a). The combination of "tumults" or "great disorders" and "oppression" in the verse possibly referring to different classes of the marginalised, proposes an interesting perspective of "social upheaval resulting from oppression" (Andersen & Freedman 1989:406).

(b)   Those who invest in Violence and Destruction [3:10]

The word "right" (נכחה) in verse 10, reflects a moral concern according to Niehaus (1992:384) and can therefore be translated as "just," while Paul argues that this abstract noun describes that which is "straight, straightforward, honest, just and correct" (1991:117). The term also appears in Isa 59:14: "Because honesty (אמת) stumbles in the public square and uprightness/ integrity (נכחה) cannot enter." The charge is probably one of dishonesty relating to how the strongholds of the rich have become "storehouses for the ill-gotten gains of robbery and violence" (Coggins 2000:111). The ruling elite of Samaria are simply "incapable of doing right" (Paul 1991:117), or they have lost "the elementary sense for what is right" (cf. 1 Kgs 3:7; Isa 1:14) (Jeremias 1998:58). They store up both חמס and שד, terms that are well known substantives, often appearing together, as in Isa 60:8; Jer 6:7; 20:8; Ezek 45:9; Hab 1:3; 2:17, representing lawlessness and corruption in society (Paul 1991: 117; Thomas 2003:209). Thomas asserts that "violence, brutality, lawlessness" (חמס), as it relates to crimes against humanity, is usually coupled with "bloody crimes" (דמים) and where שד, is paired with שבר, it generally refers to crimes against property (2003:209). Examples of the use of "bloody crimes" (דמים) appear in Ezek 7:23; 9:9; Hab 2:8, 17.

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The expression "violence and destruction" (חמס ושד) is used by Amos as a "metonomy of cause" where the cause is stated but the effect is intended, that is, that wealth was acquired through violent and destructive means (Niehaus 1992:384). Their wealth became a symbol of the violence and destruction that was rampant in society. Coggins argues that "the strongholds are not simply metonyms referring to the place" but instead "they have become storehouses for the ill-gotten gains of robbery and violence" (2000:112). Andersen & Freedman literally translate this wording as the "rewards of lawless behavior" and draw a strong link to internal injustice (1989:407). While the word *šōd* has various connotations with its use implying accumulated treasures as a result of the spoils of war (Andersen & Freedman 1989:407). The strongholds or citadels were not only limited to the houses of the elite where "violence and oppression" was stored up, but also encompassed all of those public buildings where property and goods were collected and stored for government use and distribution (Thomas 2003:210). For Andersen & Freedmen Amos's ongoing hostility against these strongholds was not because they served their legitimate intended purpose as a fortification for military defence, but was rather due to their abuse as storage places for their ill-gotten gains (1989:407). V. 10 gives us a clear indication of the devastation that has set in. The ruling class has lost its sense of justice and righteousness since "they do not know how to do right." While the poor have been further impoverished through these acts of unrighteousness, the leaders store up for themselves their material gains derived at the expense of the poor. The focus of the address changes to a more direct accusation of the leaders who have accumulated wealth through their corrupt acts and failure to ensure justice within their society (Andersen & Freedman 1989:406). For the poor, their lot is the considerable violence and destruction that they have experienced at the hands of the leadership who was entrusted to look after their wellbeing (Niehaus 1992:384). The ruling elite of Samaria have personally been the cause of rampant lawlessness and corruption in society and in the process neglected their duty of the administration of justice. Amos 2:4-8 demonstrated that the corrupt accumulation of wealth was primarily as a result of the king neglecting his primary duties (Andersen & Freedman 1989:407). While Amos does not refer directly to any of the kings of Israel and Judah in his pronouncements, the response from Amaziah the chief priest in 7:10-11, accusing him of sedition, is a clear indication of the negative effects these pronouncements had on the political establishment (Andersen & Freedman 1989:407).

(c)   Severe Punishment of the Political Establishment [3:11]

In v. 11 Amos starts off with "therefore" (לכן) as a statement of inevitable punishment and introduces the consequences to the sins mentioned in vv. 9-10 (Coggins 2000; Niehaus 1992). This introduction is repeated in 4:12, 5:11, 13, 16; 6:7; and 7:17 (Niehaus 1992:384). A more plausible perspective offered by Niehaus is that the expression "and he will bring down your strongholds from you" (והורד ממך עזך) is described in terms of a covenantal curse (1992:383).[52]

Jeremias contends that what is of even greater significance than the identity of the enemy, is the fact that Israel will lose its power as a state and be taken into captivity with its palaces or strongholds becoming the focus of attention and destruction (1998:58). Paul is of the view that Amos did not know who would serve as Yahweh's instrument of wrath, but that he may have considered one of the witnesses as the "executor of judgment" (1991:118).[53] What Amos did know though is that an enemy would encircle the land to destroy it in the same manner that the witnesses had been summoned to bear witness (Paul 1991:118).

    The security that the elite of Israel had built up for themselves in their royal fortified strongholds would be destroyed by a foreign nation. "First the siege and then the plunder" says Paul (1991:118), while Andersen & Freedman are of the view that "to plunder the plunderer is poetic justice" (1989:407). This would suggest that the wealth, so brutally accrued by the people of Samaria, will also be taken away from them in a brutal, violent and destructive manner. The term "those who store" (האוצרים) indicates the storing up of treasures normally, but in this instance the ruling elite are made aware of the fact that instead of storing up wealth and riches, they have stored up for themselves "violence and destruction" (חמס ושד) for which punishment and judgement is imminent (Niehaus 1992:384). Andersen & Freedman argue that while the sense of the language used cannot be determined beyond doubt, it is certainly "consistent with the theme of retributive justice in Amos and the Bible generally" (1989:407). The dark clouds of punishment and judgement now hang heavily over the city.

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[52] This is much like the covenantal curse contained in Deut 28:52: "They [a distant nation] will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down" (NIV). For a complete reference list of covenant curses and restoration blessings see Stuart 1987:xxxiii-xlii.
[53] Amos might have considered as his basis Deut 17:7: "The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you" (NIV).

5.2.3   Amos 3:13-15: Sacral Refuge and Prized Possessions Destroyed

13.   "Hear and testify against the house of Jacob"-

oracle of the Lord Yahweh, the God of hosts-

14.   For on the day that I punish Israel for its sins,

I will punish the altars of Bethel,

and the horns of the altar will be cut off

and they will fall to the ground.

15.   And I will strike the winter house

along with the summer house,

and the houses of ivory will perish

and many houses will be swept away"-

oracle of Yahweh.

Amos highlights the leisure and luxury of the upper stratum of Israelite society, built on the misery and suffering of the poor, and contrasts this against the coming horrific punishment. Their wealth will be destroyed, their comforts ruined, their altars and places of worship annihilated and the inhabitants of the city taken into captivity, exiled and killed. Yahweh is determined to go through with His severe judgement and punishment. He will show no mercy. No one was going to survive this ordeal. Despite the redactional debate around this unit, the selection of these verses for analysis is appropriate as they bring together the judgement against both the ruling elite as representatives of the political establishment as well as the key symbols of the cult. This oracle deals predominantly with Samaria and the reference to Bethel suggests that the judgement is directed in two different directions, namely the altars of Bethel and the palaces of Samaria. In Hadjiev's view these two power centres represent the main national shrine and the capital of the kingdom respectively, and as a result are connected to the key themes of cultic and social criticism (2009:145). Thomas sees a clear delineation in this section between the House of Jacob which encompassed the entire nation of Israel, the House of God as the religious establishment with the main sanctuary of Bethel in focus as well as the houses of luxury enjoyed by the elite of Israel (2003:222-226). All three come under severe judicial scrutiny resulting in the ultimate destruction of both the religious and secular symbols in society. V.15, with its imagery continued in chapter 4, shifts focus to the opulent domestic homes where wealthy women

exercised the most devastating influence over their husbands and fathers who occupied positions as priests, royalty and officials presiding over Israel politically and economically (Linville 2008:83). These women were instrumental in perpetuating the social oppression of the destitute. This unit clearly demonstrates that Israel's great religious and secular houses were nothing more than monuments to the nation's corruption and its ultimate destruction (Stuart 1987:332). They were shameful symbols of a prosperity that was built on moral bankruptcy and corruption. The indictment against the political administration that started off in 3:9-11 is continued in this unit and now assumes an added target in the form of the nation's religious symbols.

5.2.3.1 Literary Form and Structure 3:13-15

Amos 3:13-15 is a strongly disputed section in terms of redactional activity with scholars acknowledging signs of later intervention and no consensus on either the extent of redactional activity or the relevant dates (Hadjiev 2009:144). Wolff (1977:199) isolates v. 14b as an addition while Jeremias (1998:61-63) identifies vv. 13-14 as a later addition. The reference to Bethel in v. 14 seems to have thrown the cat amongst the pigeons. Park identifies the "Bethel exposition" in this unit as a redactional signal that interrupts the literary flow and offers a different subject in the middle of an oracle concerning Samaria (2001:86). He is of the view that the historical location of this unit can be assumed from the allusion to Bethel in v. 14b (Park 2001:86). This unit together with 4:4-5 extends the indictment from the selected leadership initially under the spotlight to include the entire religio-social sphere (Park 2001:87). Other scholars hold the view that vv. 13-15 portray an invective against the two chief centres of power in the north, and do not suggest any tensions within the oracle (Hadjiev 2009:145; Paul 1991:123-124; Andersen & Freedman 1989:370; Hayes 1988:136; Mays 1969:69). Hadjiev further doubts that the juxtaposition of these two power centres "implies a contradiction which requires a literary-critical solution" (2009:145).

Wolff describes the genre of this oracle as the "installation of the witnesses" (1977:200). This text is not without its difficulty. The textual difficulties of vv. 11-12 result in some uncertainty as to how this unit (vv. 13-15) is to be divided (Coggins 2000:114). Coggins proposes two possible ways of treating this section (2000:114). The first option is to take v. 13 as the concluding verse of the previous section with the verb "to testify" (עוד) standing in direct relationship with the charges presented in the previous verses. The result would be that the

expression "says the Lord God, God of hosts," generally regarded as a later addition, could be accepted as an integral part of the text and would serve to round off the oracle. The opening of v. 14 would then be understood to start with a firm declaration, "Surely on that day" (Coggins 2000:114). The second option would be to view vv. 13-15 as a unit as was the view taken by the translators of NRSV (Coggins 2000:114).

Jeremias refers to two sayings in vv. 12 and 15 that attempted to safeguard the guilty in Israel from destruction albeit that both arrive at a completely different conclusion (1998:59). In his view the context of the more recent saying in v. 13 is trying to effect "a fundamentally changed historical situation after the lapse of about two centuries: the time after the fall of Jerusalem" in the older saying in vv. 12 and 15 (1998:59). Jeremias sees in this verse a dispute between Amos, who on Yahweh's commission, presents the absolute certainty of destruction and annihilation, with his adversaries who accepted Yahweh as "his people's helper and assistant, not their annihilator" (1998:59).

The address does not appear to be directed to anyone in particular, "but echoes the juridical nature of the adversarial relationship that the Lord establishes here with the people of the northern kingdom" (Niehaus 1992:388). The command "to hear" (שמעו) goes out for testimonies to confirm the guilt of the accused. Niehaus notes that the verb "to testify" is "typical of juridical proceedings" and forms an important part of covenant-lawsuit proceedings (1992:388). Together these words form a double imperative to hear so that they could testify to the verdict (Thomas 2003:222; Wolff 1977:200). Testimonies are delivered either by Yahweh himself (cf. Deut 8:19; Pss 50:7; 81:9; Mal 2:14) or heaven and earth is called upon to do so (cf. Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28). Who are they to testify against? The expression "to testify" (עוד) has been taken as a denominative of "to witness" (עד) and has been interpreted to mean either "to witness against" or "to warn" (Thomas 2003:222). Scholars have been divided between these interpretive options. Mays (1969:68), for example, regards the "summons to serve as witness" as "more likely a rhetorical device to provoke the attention of an audience" (cf. the imperative in Amos 3:9), thereby creating an atmosphere of legal proceedings. Thomas (2003:222) is in strong agreement. Paul finds the second interpretation preferable since, in his view, it was not the prophet's intention "to bear witness to what has already happened," but rather to serve a warning to Israel about their pending punishment (1991:123).The process of issuing a warning (v13) prior

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to punishment (vv14-15) is standard in Rabbinic literature (Paul 1991:123). V. 14, according to Niehaus (1992:388), opens with a covenant-lawsuit formula: "on the day that I punish Israel for its sins," literally translated as "on the day of my visitation of Israel's sins upon it" which is linked to an indirect object, namely to "to punish (פקד) the altars (מזבחות)" of Bethel. The absence of a direct object to the verb "to visit" (פקד) "brings the attention of the initiator of the action into the experience of the direct object," namely the altars implying that Yahweh will Himself actively seek to destroy these altars (Niehaus 1992:388). The phrases used in v. 14 can be found in the original covenant documents with Yahweh's visit in this instance serving the purpose "to execute the covenantal punishment that must precede restoration" (Niehaus 1992:389). Samaria's guilt is intermixed with the pending divine judgment in v. 14 with the use of פקד on two occasions serving as a reflection of covenantal language (Stuart 1987:331). Examples of this type of covenantal language appear in Deut 5:9 and Lev 18:25.

V. 15 shifts the focus from the main sanctuary to the personal luxury enjoyed by the elite. Niehaus tells us that the opening phrase: "and I will strike" (והכיתי) regularly forms part of accounts of war with humans (Deut 2:33; 4:46; Josh 8:21; 10:10) or Yahweh (cf. Exod 3:20; 12:12, 29) himself the subject (1992:388). The verb ספו, is derived from either the root סוף ("come to an end/ cease") or from ספה ("sweep away/ destroy") with Yahweh as the subject of the verb in this punishment (Thomas 2003:226). Since Amos's invective is directed against the upper classes of Samaria, Paul proposes that the meaning of the Hebrew term בתים רבים could simply be "great houses" referring to the large estates of the wealthy that will be destroyed possibly through an earthquake, as suggested by many commentators (1991:126-127). Niehaus (1992:390) is also of the view that the literal translation of "many houses" (בתים רבים) is "great houses" with "great" preferred to "many" because of its parallel association with "houses of ivory" (בתי השן). This was the type of social injustice that the prophet rallied against. This type of luxury was only possible through the exploitation of the poor. In 1 Kgs 22:39 there is a reference to the "ivory palace" of Ahab while Amos 6:4 also refers to "beds of ivory." Archaeologists have unearthed costly ivory inlays at Samaria that demonstrate the excessive self-indulgence of the elite classes of Israel (Thomas 2003:226).

 5.2.3.2   Exegetical Analysis 3:13-15

(a)   Hear and Testify against the House of Jacob [3:13]

The use of the term "house of Jacob" (בית יעקב) may be intended to remind the nation of their

ancient covenantal heritage that originated in Genesis 35:9-12 (Niehaus 1992:388; Wolff

1977:201).[54] Park describes the audience as undefined and makes the point that there is no clear

indication that it might refer to the unjust rulers of Samaria (2001:84). The designation also sets

a distance between those that are addressed and the target group which is the elite ruling group of

Israel (Park 2001:85). The "house of Jacob" (בית יעקב) is also used by Yahweh as a reminder to

the people of Samaria that they are not an isolated political entity that existed in the eighth

century BC, but that they shared a bond of divine covenant and continuity with the patriarchs

(also cf. Amos 5:15; 6:8; 7:2, 5, 9, 16; 8:7) (Stuart 1987:331).

        Yahweh's power over the human and the sacred world is demonstrated in the term "the

God of hosts, or the God of armies." This combination also occurs in Amos 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16,

27, 6:8, 14; 9:5; Ps 80:8, 15 as well as in Jer 38:17; 44:7 and 46:10 (Niehaus 1992:388). The

expression is used to great effect by Amos to demonstrate the power and determination of

Yahweh to bring His people to trial for their indolence and wicked acts of oppression.

(b)   Loss of Sacral Refuge at Bethel [3:14]

Yahweh does not delight in the sins of idolatry that take place at the altars of Bethel, the key

sanctuary in Samaria. Niehaus argues that this idolatry stems from Jeroboam's establishment of a

polytheistic worship centre which he describes as "the satanic counterfeit at Bethel"

(1992:389).[55] According to Niehaus (1992:389) the plurality of altars in the expression "the

altars of Bethel" was made up of the altar of burnt offering, which was the main altar, and the

altar of incense, both containing horns and referred to as "the horns of the altar."[56] Andersen &

Freedman refer to a discrepancy between the plural and singular reference of altar that is present

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[54] This term first appeared in Gen 46:27 and thereafter in Exod 19:3 as well as in the prophetic books Isa 2:5; Jer 2:4; Ezek 20:5 and Mic 2:7.

[55] The plurality of altars at Bethel had its origin in Israel's history. Jeroboam I erected one altar at Bethel (1 Kgs 13:1) with more being added later. Hoseah prophesied against Bethel (Hos 10:5, 15) with the altar and sanctuary subsequently destroyed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:15-16) as was prophesied in 1 Kgs 13:1-3.

[56] Atonement was provided for in the case of sin on the part of a priest (Lev 4:7) or the "unintentional sin by the community" (Lev 4:18), by the smearing of blood on the altar of incense. The unintentional sin of a leader (Lev 4:25) or a member of the community (Lev 4:30, 34) is atoned through the application of blood to the horns of the main altar, the altar of burnt offering.

in v. 14 and conclude that Amos might have regarded the multitude of altars as sinful (1989:411).

Traditionally the horns of the altar served as "sacral security" for a fugitive (Thomas 2003:223-224).[57] This was, however, not the only function of the altar. Paul (1991:124) refers to a dual function, namely for asylum purposes, as well as a means to attain atonement or expiation (cf. Lev 4:7; 16:18 and Ezek 43:20). The role of the horns of the altars now take on a radically different meaning in the light of the announcement of Israel's grave social crimes signaling a fundamental shift. Israel's guilt has evoked Yahweh's anger and no longer will the horns of the altar be available as "sacral security of last resort" because Yahweh himself will destroy the altars (Mays 1969:70; Wolff 1977:201). Not only will it signal the end of sanctuary and immunity, but also the end of atonement and expiation (Paul 1991:124). In the same manner a destroyer will no longer be deterred by the sanctity of the horns of the altar and will pursue his victim regardless (Andersen & Freedman 1989:411). Israel can no longer take refuge in the sanctuary.

Jeroboam I elevated Bethel, a cult tradition associated and derived from the patriarchal period recorded in Gen 28, to the status of a state cult at the end of the tenth century when the empire of David and Solomon became divided (Soggin 1987:65).[58] For Coggins v. 14 can be regarded as the first example of a link between Amos and the books of Kings in its exposition of Bethel. The rivalry between the shrines of Jerusalem and Bethel with Bethel's claim to "ancestral approval" (cf. Gen 28:11-22) forms an integral part of biblical tradition (Coggins 2000:114).[59]

While the polytheistic character of Bethel was clearly condemned by Yahweh and the altars were in no uncertain terms on the road to destruction, another important factor would weigh in favour of Yahweh's condemnation. Israel's transgressions could not be counted as "unintentional sin," the only means by which atonement was obtained. Their covenantal violations clearly pointed to a deliberate attempt to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. Their sacrifices were therefore made on a false premise, a fact heavily criticised by the prophet with the warning that Yahweh stands ready to destroy their sanctuary.

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[57] Refer Exod 21:13-14; 1 Kgs 1:50; 2:28. However, in Exod 21:14, the ancient covenant law decreed that a murderer was to be torn away from the altar by force, thereby losing asylum (Wolff 1977:201).

[58] For a full account of the split in the empire and Jeroboam I's elevation of the Bethel cult, refer 1 Kgs 12.

[59] Bitter hostility is expressed against Bethel in both Amos (4:4; 5:4-5; 7:10-13) and Kings (1 Kgs 12:13; 2 Kgs 17:28; 2 Kgs 23).

(c)   Valuable Possessions will be Destroyed [3:15]

Israel's luxury was quite extensive with the elite boasting both summer and winter houses that were inlaid with ivory (v. 15). Andersen & Freedman assert that the climate of Palestine was not as consistent as some might think, experiencing severe winters and unbearable summers (1989:411). The shameless wealth accrued by the wealthy enabled them, at the height of luxury, to acquire and maintain a separate house for each these intolerable seasons. These symbols of luxury were now in sight for condemnation. Both "the winter house" (בית שתוא) and "the summer house" (בית כיצא) are described by Paul as "two separate pleasure estates" enjoyed by wealthy residents (1991:125). The "houses of ivory" (בתי השן) refers to houses whose furniture and walls were opulently decorated with ivory (Paul 1991:126). The debate as to whether the terms "winter house" and "summer house" referred to a single structure, somewhat warmer on the ground floor and airy on the upper floor, or multiple structures in different locations, seems to have been laid to rest (Jeremias 1998:60). In Jeremias's view "all linguistic and substantive probability militates in favour of the latter understanding" (1998:60).[60] As people joined the wealthy elite in social status, they tended to follow the kings example by acquiring both a winter house as well as a summer house as they callously indulged in their opulence (Jeremias 1998:60). This practice was certainly more widespread and not only limited to Israel.[61] Amos describes the indulgent life of Israel's elite in 4:1; 5:10 and 6:1-6 reiterating "unrighteous oppression" as the consequence of such indulgence (Mays 1969:70).[62]

These luxury manor houses had walls and furniture that "were adorned and decorated with ivory" (Paul 1991:126; Thomas 2003:226). Israel's moral decay led to the destruction of these symbols of great wealth. The ruling and elite classes of Israel had the opportunity to maintain their initial covenant loyalty, but forfeited this opportunity by bowing to their greed and became blind to the immense suffering they caused through their actions. Coggins sees somewhat of a tension between what he refers to as "a primarily religious and a primarily social frame of reference" (2000:114). While v. 14 addresses the cult at Bethel, v. 15 is focused on the

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[60] It is recorded in 1 Kgs 21:1 that King Ahab had a winter palace in the warm valley of Jezreel and in 1 Kgs 21:18 there is reference to another palace in Samaria.
[61] In northern Syria it was considered beneath the king's dignity to not possess both a summer and winter palace. This is evident from a building inscription that was composed by King Barrākib of Sam'al thirty years after Amos (Jeremias 1998:60).
[62] In Isa 5:8 we catch a glimpse of how the multiple houses and other possessions are playing a role in the disenfranchisement of small farmers and merchants (Jeremias 1998:61).

opulence of the ruling classes. While Coggins accepts the plurality indicated in the reference to winter houses and summer houses, he views it more likely as opposite extremes that demonstrate the idea of totality, a concept he describes as a merismus (2000:115). All houses in totality face devastation.

Soggin makes a very important observation by drawing a close connection between the cult and the deterioration of the economic, social and political conditions in Israel at the time (1987:66). This was a situation that was carefully engineered by government politics from the time of David onwards, which encouraged assimilation between the Israelites and Canaanites to ensure a strong national state in the north (Soggin 1987:66). This together with a strong respect for the position of the city state resulted in the increasing empowerment of property owners in economically strong and progressive cities at the expense of the poor (1987:66).[63] It can be concluded from this that economic and political stability during Jeroboam II's golden age was achieved at the expense of liberty and independence of small scale farmers and peasant landowners. The new monarchical form of government, strongly advocated during Samuel's time, has now completely destroyed the tribal structure and with it the traditional land tenure system known as patrimonial domain and replaced it with prebendal domain. According to Thomas, it would not be unreasonable to expect social and political stability where a state has enjoyed unprecedented economic and political growth like Israel did during the reign of Jeroboam II between 786 BC and 746 BC (Thomas 2003:180). Israel, at the time, was internally very powerful and internationally a formidable force to be reckoned with.

5.2.4   Amos 4:1-3: Feed on! You Cows of Bashan

1.   Hear this word,

you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria,

who oppress the poor,

who crush the needy,[64]

who say to their husbands,

"Bring, that we may drink!"

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[63] The narrative of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kgs 21 serves as an example of the types of conflicts that occurred between powerful landlords, in this instance King Ahab, and peasant farmers who held a usufructuary over tribal land (Soggin 1987:66).

[64] Also refer to the text-critical notes on Amos 2:7 in footnote 44.

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2.   The Lord Yahweh has sworn by his holiness:

"Even now, days are coming upon you,

when they will take you in baskets,

and the remnant of you in fishermen's pots.

3.   And through breaches you shall go forth,

each one straight ahead,

and you will be thrown out to Harmon"[65]-

oracle of Yahweh.

The spotlight now shifts to the women of Samaria with this "oracle of judgement." The selection of this unit for analysis is based on the crucial role that the women of Samaria and wives of the ruling elite had played in the oppression that was progressively destroying the social essence of society. Their insatiable demand for extravagant revelry contributed in a distressing manner to the plight of the poor. Amos's reference to these women as the "cows of Bashan" implies an indolent and opulent lifestyle that was so offensive in the eyes of Yahweh that His threatened punishment had horrific overtones. With their close relationship to those who wielded the most extensive political power in Samaria, these ladies of leisure forfeited a golden opportunity to positively influence a culture of enhanced justice within society. Instead they became a key source for corruption and in this sense contributed to the increasing exploitation of the poor and the distortion of justice.

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[65] Text-critical Notes on Amos 4:3: The word "Harmon" has rendered this statement in v. 3 fraught with difficulty in translation. Various ancient translations have appended different meanings to the expression ההרמונה ("dominion") in an attempt to arrive at a satisfactory solution (Paul 1991:135-136; Niehaus 1992:394). Proposals by some of the ancient translations included "the mountain Remman" (Septuagint), "mountains of Armenia" (Targum) and "Mt. Hermon" (Cf. Deut 3:8, 9) (Vulgate) according to Paul (1991:136). Further emendations were proposed to the phrase "to Harmon" such as "to the stronghold" (הארמונה), "to the harem" (החרימנה) and "to the dung heap" (המדמנה or המחראה) with no clear solution in sight (Paul 1991:136). Niehaus notes that "it must be admitted that no solution is certain at present" (1992:394). For Stuart the verse probably offers a "literal and metaphorical prediction" (1987:333). It is presumed that Harmon is a place name, but the difficulty is that there is no site known by this name (Coggins 2000:117). While there is no clarity on the final destination of exile for these women, it is clear that they were destined for great misery. A possible solution is to look at these alternatives figuratively as representing a miserable end to their opulent lifestyles.

5.2.4.1 Literary Form and Structure 4:1-3

The key theme in this unit is the exploitation of the poor and the social setting of the text, namely the mountains of Samaria (Thomas 2003:227). The unit opens with a masculine plural imperative "hear" (שמעו), continues with three feminine participles followed by the term "their Lords" (אדניהם) which contains a masculine suffix (Hadjiev 2009:145). According to Wolff the second person masculine plural sometimes replaces the feminine form, especially when the verb is positioned first as is the case in v. 1 (1977:55). These "three appositional participles (העשקות, האמרות, הרצצות)" signify "the ongoing repetitive nature of their oppressive and exploitative actions and injustice against the poor," according to Paul (1991:129). While the substantive usually denoting husband is either בעל or איש, the use of "lord" (אדון), as in this instance, to indicate spouse is uncommon in the Bible (cf. Gen 18:12; Judg 19:26; Ps 45:12) (Paul 1991:129). Paul postulates that perhaps the intention in selecting this specific term was to link it by contrast to the true Lord (אדני) that appears in the following verse (1991:129), while Niehaus (1992:392) is of the view that the loftier noun "lord" (אדון) instead of the more common בעל "may indicate husbands of high rank or social standing" (1992:392).

According to Park the section 3:9-4:13 introduces Yahweh's word in detail and is structured into two parts as far as form, content and subject matter is concerned (2001:83). Amos 4:1-3 is included in the first part, 3:9-4:3, in the form of "witness or commission speech" with 4:1 open with the call to attention formula "hear" (שמעו) and is connected to 3:9. Jeremias describes 4:1-3 as "an internally rounded off oracle of judgement" presented in an elevated prose format (1998:63). As such it reflects an oral discourse that demonstrates an urgency that we have not witnessed in Amos's sayings up to this point. It harshly pronounces judgement as it rounds off the unit 3:9-4:3 and draws a link between "the reproaches of oppression (3:9-11)" and "excessive luxury (3:12, 15)" addressed previously (Jeremias 1998:63). This oracle resembles Isaiah's later oracle against the women of Jerusalem, composed in a similar mix of prose and poetry style (Stuart 1987:332). According to Stuart, these women were guilty of being irresponsible to both their inferiors as well as their superiors in what he terms as "irresponsibility in two social directions" (1987:332). Stuart (1987:332) views this "irresponsibility and

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callousness" on the part of the women as heightened in the reference to "that we may drink" (ונשתה).

Much has been made by scholars about the odd interchange between the male and female forms found in the unit (Hadjiev 2009:145-146; Niehaus 1992:392-393). Following a lengthy discussion of the various forms in the text, Hadjiev comes to the conclusion that "it is best to take 4:1-3 as an oracle from Amos criticising the women from Samaria's aristocracy for their social abuses motivated by a desire for luxury" (2009:147). While the masculine suffix of "their lords" in v. 1 refers to the poor and the needy, the interchange of masculine and feminine forms in v. 2 may point to the oncoming punishment that will be carried out on both men and women according to Hadjiev (2009:146).

5.2.4.2 Exegetical Analysis 4:1-3

(a)   Despicable Acts Exposed [4:1]

Amos's concern with the women of Samaria was not so much with their outward "appearance of corpulence" or even their outward expression of "vanity and arrogance", but rather their gross self-indulgence that fuelled their "perpetual need for extravagant revelry" (Jeremias 1998:63). Maintaining their extravagant lifestyles placed an enormous amount of pressure on their husbands resulting in the increased exploitation of the poor in order to sustain their lavish lifestyles.

Thomas alludes to the challenges posed by the picture and comparison of the term "cows of Bashan" and refers to it as "the most important translation problem" in Amos (2003:227). A number of scholars have proposed various ways of translating this term. Coggins is of the view that the term "cows of Bashan" is an offensive term that may well have been intended to be so (2000:116). After an extended comparison of the term and equating it with the term the "bulls of Bashan" (cf. Ps. 22:12), he comes to the likely conclusion that the term is in reference to the well-endowed physical features of these women (Coggins 2000:116). However, the general view among scholars is strongly in favour of Amos's reference in this instance to the elite women of Samaria (Jeremias 1998; Paul 1991; Mays 1969; Wolff 1977). According to Wolff (1977:205) these women could possibly be the wives of court officials or wealthy owners of large estates (5:11-12) and of merchants (8:4-6). Hayes strikes a similar cord in that he views these women as being associated with the royal courts and administration (1988:138). For Mays, "Amos

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uncovers the role of Samaria's women in the social dynamics of the state's economic aristocracy" (1969:71). Mays sees a strong connection between these women and the royal culture placing them at the upper echelons of society and exercising extensive influence over their husbands (1969:72). Though they are not directly the perpetrators of oppression in society, they were a key factor in driving the oppression perpetrated by their husbands through their insatiable greed (Mays 1969:73). He holds them responsible for the oppressive power behind the corrupt courts in 5:10 and business malpractices highlighted in 8:4 (Mays 1969:72). By determining the extent of their own revelry, which showed no signs of abating, they had a direct influence on the increasing level of oppression within society. According to Paul, these ladies were privileged and pampered and lived for the sole purpose of self-indulgence at the expense of the poor and the needy (1991:129). Their "incessant demand upon their husbands to provide for their gluttonous needs to carouse and feast" were the primary cause for the increasing oppression of the poor and so are ultimately responsible for "the exploitation of the underprivileged classes" (Paul 1991:128).Whatever they commanded, of the best in food, drink and luxury items, their husbands ensured a constant supply at the expense of the entire social fabric (Thomas 2003:230).

We catch a glimpse of Bashan, a fertile area situated east of the Jordan, with its well-fed cattle (Duet 32:14) and fertile grazing lands (Mic 7:14). The expression "you cows of Bashan" (פרות הבשן) refers to the well-nourished, "corrupt and voluptuous women of Samaria" who are compared to these well-fed cattle that live off the good grazing land (Jeremias 1998:63; Niehaus 1992:392). These women were living off the wealth of the land accumulated on the misery and oppression of the poor and vulnerable in society. The richness of Bashan is attested to in many biblical passages (e.g. Deut 32:14; Ps 22:13; Isa 2:13; 33:9; Jer 50:19; Mic 7:14; Ezek 27:6) and is remarkable for the prosperity of its cattle as highlighted in Deut 32:14; Ps 22:13; Ezek 39:18 (Thomas 2003:229). The charge against these women was for their "complicity and collusion" in so far as they served as the prime motivators in the exploitation of the oppressed in society (Paul 1991:128). Amos uses this metaphor, not to highlight the fullness of bodily features of these women, but rather their unacceptable and "abusive social attitudes and behaviour" (Wolff 1977:206).

According to Ringgren רצץ ("to crush, oppress") amounts to the maltreatment of the poor in this instance (2004:641). The word pair "who oppress" (העשקות) and "who crush" (הרצצות)

serves as a hendiadys meaning "cruel oppression" and is also found in Deut 28:33 (Niehaus 1992:392). Another stock pair evident in this part of the text are the expressions "the poor" (דלים) and "the needy" (אביון), which we have encountered in 2:7. Niehaus argues that while these words form a stock pair in "poetry and poetic parallelism," they are not absolute synonyms since the first expression denotes "a sense of weakness and poverty" while the second implies "a sense of need." The parallel structure we find in "who oppress the poor, who crush the needy" creates a linguistic force that emphasises the concept of poverty (Niehaus 1992:392). It strongly emphasises the abuse of wealth and the disastrous consequences of greed.

(b)   Punishment ensured by Divine Oath [4:2]

The Lord swears by his holiness that severe punishment will come upon these women of Samaria. Niehaus is of the view that the holiness they defiled by their disobedience and covenantal violations "had become the guarantor of their punishment" (1992:392). For Paul this oath underscores the "irrevocability and irrefutability of the forthcoming divine punishment" (1991:129). Through their disobedience, they had violated Yahweh's covenant and He is now determined to enforce His covenant. The punishment that awaits the "cruel *grandes dames*" of Samaria is a mixture of death and exile in terms of Pentateuchal curse types recorded in Deut. 28:63 and Lev. 26:38 (Stuart 1987:333).

The expression "the Lord God has sworn by his holiness" (נשבע אדני יהוה בקדשו) is expressed in the same manner that it is used in Ps 89:36 (Niehaus 1992:392). Mays defines holiness as "the dynamic, awesome, threatening power of the divine," similar to the oath taken in 6:8 (1969:72). The oath is enforced by His holiness and guarantees and strengthens its validity (Niehaus 1992:392). Because oaths tend to become too stereotypical, Andersen & Freedman maintain that the use of oaths in Amos is particularly noteworthy as they carry "a judgment speech of great solemnity and finality" (1989:422). These women are so caught up in their indolent lifestyles that they are completely unaware of the changing tide that is signaled by the expression "look, days are coming" (הנה ימים באים) as divine judgement is imminent (Niehaus 1992:392). It is the announcement of a new phase in which "selfish complacency" is replaced by "woeful destruction" used in the same manner in Jer 7:32; 9:24; 16:14 and Deut 4:25-26 (Stuart 1987:332). The imagery of fattened cows employed by Amos in v. 1 now switches to "fish"

(דוגה), a harmless, non-threatening animal that is easily captured. Niehaus proposes that since "hooks" (צנות) appears in Hebrew as "a feminine plural with a sense of shields," it may be an indication that these women would be carried off with shields (1992:393). As a result he sees "the parallelism of hooks and fish hooks" as an indication that the women who were once likened to well-fed cows will be caught like helpless little fish and dragged away (Niehaus 1992:393).

There are other scholars who translate this section to mean that these women will be led away like cattle "with rings in their noses" attached to ropes (Stuart 1987:68) or that they will be carried away in "baskets" and fishermen's "pots" according to Paul (1991:135). Following a detailed investigation, Paul arrives at the conclusion that the terms צנות ("baskets") and סירות ("pots"), present the least interpretive difficulties (1991:130-134). Paul takes a closer look firstly at the root צנות which is rendered "shields," "ropes," "thorns," "baskets" and "boats" (1991:130-132). The word "shields" (also translated as "lance") has a strong Akkadian origin which is still in dispute and shares absolutely no cognate relationship with the Hebrew (Paul 1991:130-132). Paul does not accept that with the word "ropes" (also "nose-rope") "the proposed portrayal of captives being led in single file with ropes fastened to rings drawn through their lips" is what the prophet had in mind (1991:131). The word "thorns," applicable to both terms under discussion, was interpreted by extension as fishing hooks or alternatively as harpoons, a view also strongly unacceptable to Paul since these meanings were undocumented (1991:132-133). Paul further discounts the term "boats," also applicable to both terms, as in his view the word "boat" (סירה) is a much later addition to the vocabulary of medieval interpreters and neither does he accept that Amos had a seafaring deportation in mind (1991:133). Following a lengthy discourse, Paul accepts the more likely interpretation of צנות ("baskets") and סירות ("pots") since these terms are cognitively and biblically well demonstrated respectively and it was more likely that Amos could be understood "in the light of the common practice of catching, packing, and transporting fish in such receptacles" (1991:134). Soggin is of the view that despite the translation difficulties associated with v. 2, it is clear that deportation under appalling and violent conditions is referred to (1987:68). The term "and the remnant of you" (ואחריתכן), containing a feminine plural pronominal suffix, indicates that no one will survive this judgement (Niehaus 1992:393).

(c)   No Escape from Exile [4:3]

V. 3 continues the announcement of judgement started from v. 2b. The destruction of Samaria is now in full view as the once proud and arrogant ladies of Samaria are lead through the broken walls of the city into captivity. From v. 2 we have already had a sense of how they will physically be led into captivity. Niehaus describes the expression "and through the breaches" (ופרצים) as an adverbial accusative which points out the direction in which they will be led into captivity (1992:393). The holes left behind in a city's wall after enemy conquest are referred to as "breaches" (Thomas 2003:232). Their captivity will be swift with no means of escape. The future that awaits them is much more terrifying than the agony suffered by the poor and the needy under their watch. The expression in v.3 "each one straight ahead" (אשה נגדה) recalls a similar sentiment just after the fall of the walls of Jericho in Josh 6:5 and 20, where the Israelites were directed to charge through the broken walls of Jericho (Niehaus 1992:393).

5.2.5   Amos 5:4-6: Seek Yahweh and Live

>   4.   For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel:
>   "Seek me so that you may live!
>   5.   But do not seek Bethel,
>   and you shall not go to Gilgal,
>   and you shall not cross the border to Beer-sheba;
>   for Gilgal will surely go into exile,
>   and Bethel will become trouble."
>   6.   Seek Yahweh so that you may live,
>   lest he break out like fire against the house of Joseph,
>   and it consume, and there be none to quench it for Bethel.

The previous units that were analysed provided some insight into the total lack and inability of the political structures to ensure that the nation met its covenantal obligations. The insight that we are starting to gain is that of a nation that is morally bankrupt and that will spare no effort in oppressing the poor for its own economic gain. The indolent and opulent lifestyles of the wealthy fuelled by their insatiable greed and arrogance became the key driving force for the increasing

oppression of the poor and the ultimate demise of the nation. Although the judgement against the altars of Bethel in the previous unit introduced the complicity of the religious establishment in this demise, this unit (5:4-6) is essential for selection as it further unveils Yahweh's dissatisfaction with the nation's attitude towards worship. The indictment against cult worship starts in all earnest as Amos sounds clear warnings of punishment against some of the key sanctuaries of Israel. For all of their devotion and religious zeal to cult worship, they appear to have missed its purpose completely. Yahweh was most certainly not the focus of their veneration. As a result they proved to be totally incapable of upholding His covenantal obligations.

5.2.5.1 Literary Form and Structure 5:4-6

Andersen & Freedman describe chapter 5 as a distinct unit in "The Book of Woes" with its own internal organisation and structure (1989:469). They argue that the reference to the "house of Israel" in vv. 1 and 25 is an indication that the entire nation is addressed throughout the chapter, an inclusion that is lost if one supports the argument that vv. 25-27 is a later addition (Andersen & Freedman 1989:469). Amos 5:1-7 is a covenant lawsuit in lament form containing 5:4-6 as a call to lament (Niehaus 1992:413). It is a compilation of various oracles that have been brought together (Wolff 1977:231). Wolff asserts that five of these can be assigned to Amos with reasonable certainty while the remaining material is ascribed to various layers of redactional activity and interpretation (1977:231). Oracles assigned to Amos with reasonable certainty in 5:1-17 are vv. 1-3, 4-5, 7+10, 11, 12+16-17, while vv. 6-9, 13, 14-15 "probably belongs to various levels of interpretation" (Wolff 1977:231). According to Park, chapters 5-6 continue the prophetic sermon that is defined by two "call to attention" formulas that are presented in 3:1 and 5:1 (2001:89). The section is made up of two major sub structural units and is split into 5:1-17, of which the unit (5:4-6) under discussion forms a part, and 5:18-6:14 (2001:89). The first major unit forms what Park refers to as a prophetic lamentation (vv. 1-5) and parenesis (vv. 6-17) and the second unit introduces a "prophetic announcement of Yahweh's judgment by exile" (2001:89-90). For Park the literary unity of 5:1-17 is best achieved by viewing the chiastic structure of the text since "chiasm certainly advances our understanding of a literary formation of 5:1-17" (2001:89-90). Furthermore vv. 4-5 contain Yahweh's exhortation without any pronouncement of judgement (Park 2001:90).

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In Hadjiev's view, the bulk of the material in chapter 5 is generally ascribed to Amos (2009:161). V. 8-9 and 13 are regarded as later additions with the real problematic sections in the chapter being 5:4-6, 14-15 and 5:25-27 (Hadjiev 2009:161). Within this unit vv. 4-5 are "rarely denied to Amos" with some parts of the verses identified as glosses, v. 6 has attracted suspicion that the hand of a later redactor was involved (Hadjiev 2009:161). An argument mitigating against editorial intervention in v. 6 is that in the change from the first person to third person divine speech that takes place in v. 6, Amos presents his own interpretation of the divine oracle (Hadjiev 2009:162). The question that is more paramount in Hadjiev's opinion is: Can any tension be observed between vv. 4-5 and v. 6 (2009:162)? While vv. 4-5 state the absolute certainty of judgement on Bethel and Gilgal, v. 6, by contrast implies that this judgement is conditional based on the heeding or rejection of the warning in v. 6a (Hadjiev 2009:162). Mays argues that in contrast to Amos's "usual announcements of judgments as irrevocable," an alternative to judgement and death is offered in vv. 5:4, 6, 14 and 5:24 (1969:89). While exhortation is a marginal theme in Amos, it is offered to those in this wayward community who are prepared to heed this instruction (Mays 1969:89). Hadjiev makes a compelling argument for retaining v. 6 as part of vv. 4-5 as he regards it as coming from Amos himself (2009:163). Jeremias sees in this ring composition an artistic form that provides some hope to a surviving remnant of Israel by "juxtaposing the funeral lament and promise of life" (1998:87). The lament starting off in v. 2 is followed by a summons to seek Yahweh which is attached to the promise of life with a summons and promise formulated with noteworthy brevity in v. 4. Attention is then turned to the accusation of falsely searching for Yahweh at some of the major shrines of Israel in v. 5 before returning to a repeat of the summons to seek Yahweh and live, a promise of life. Paul refers to this structure as a literary *inclusio* in that Amos exhorts the people to seek Yahweh and live, then points to the obvious places where He will not be found in v.5 and ends of with an exhortation once again for them to seek Yahweh and live (1991:162).

This literary unit, opening with a messenger formula and followed by two imperatives, provides a ray of hope, according to Paul (1991:161). This promise to life can cancel out the funeral lament, delay divine judgement and makes salvation now conditional if only the people of Israel will respond positively. The poetic structure of this unit clearly warns of the fate that will befall these sanctuaries (Stuart 1987:347). The rejection of false worship, the threat of exile and general horror are all based on covenant curse types 2, 13 and 4 respectively (Stuart

1987:347). Curse type 2 deals with the destruction of the cult[66], curse type 13 spells out the threat of punishment through exile (Lev 26; Deut 4; 28; 29; 30; 32) and curse type 4 describes the fear that Yahweh can instill (cf. Lev 26; Deut 28; 32). They are all brought together with great dramatic effect. Exhortation occurs very rarely in the book of Amos and is described by Mays as a "marginalised feature" of his prophecy (1969:89). It is, however, offered in this passage as an alternative to the imminent destruction that awaits the entire house of Jacob. The rejection of Israel's cult is explicit in 5:4, 14 and 24 and functions, according to Mays, as words of judgement (1969:90). The form-critical genre of the prophetic admonition is evident in vv. 4-5 for the first time with the element of motivation demonstrated as a future event confirming the instruction to seek Yahweh and live (Wolff 1977:232).

Yahweh has a desire for Israel to turn to him and live.[67] V. 4 opens with the particle "for" (כי) which is linked and is a response to כי in v. 3 and introduces "the broadest of causalities": The fall of Israel (v. 2) came about "because" (כי) Yahweh had allowed for her destruction and "because" (כי) of this the Lord now pleads for their return (Niehaus 1992:414). While the particle כי can certainly introduce independent oracles, it is used in this sense as a possible stage of literary combination (Wolff 1977:232). For Wolff the sequential flow of the admonition (v. 4), warning (v. 5a) and motivation (v. 5b) demonstrates the wholeness of the oracle and makes it an original composition from a form-critical perspective (1977:232).

While the promise to life admonition and the warnings on pilgrimage certainly form part of the priestly torah, "the antithetic parallelism of the imperative (v. 4b) and the vetitive (v. 5a)" demonstrates a structural element that is typical of the wisdom tradition (Wolff 1977:232). According to Jeremias, the promise to life, based on the fulfillment of certain conditions, forms part of both the wisdom (cf. Prov 4:4; 9:6; 15:27; 21:21) and priestly (cf. Lev 18:5; Ezek 18:9; 20:11) traditions and since an admonishment, accompanied by a promise to life, has no analogy in Amos, he comes to the conclusion that this citation is based on tradition (1998:87). Amos maintains this truth from tradition while the manner in which Israel interprets this truth in the way they worship amounts to an absolute denial of God on their part.

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[66] Cf. Lev 26:31. For a full discussion of all 27 curse type see Stuart 1987:xxxiii-xl.
[67] In Deut 32:46-47, Israel is given the promise of life if they obey Yahweh's instructions.

In v. 5 comes an instruction not to cross over the border to Beer-sheba. The negative command in the instruction "and you shall not cross the border to Beer-sheba" is emphatic with the repeated motion of the negative enhancing the sense of parallelism in both cola (Niehaus 1992:415). Parallelism is used to great effect to emphasise a point in the passage. The manner in which the verses are structured emphasises the point of the message that these religious sanctuaries will no longer exist and that Yahweh will not be found at them. In v. 5 this is done by means of a three cola that forms a neat pattern of chiasmus culminating in a parallel structure (Niehaus 1992:415):

a	**b**
but do not seek	at Bethel
b'	**a'**
and to Gilgal	you shall not go
b"	**a"**
and to Beer-sheba	you shall not cross the border[68]

Stuart refers to the construction of vv. 5-6 as a clever construction in which Bethel is mentioned three times, Gilgal is mentioned twice and Beer-sheba mentioned only once, all of this in order of importance to Amos's audience (1987:346). As an inclusio, defined by Paul, the unit vv. 4-6 end in v. 6 as it started in v. 4 with the insistent exhortation to "seek Yahweh and live," although in this instance the speech pattern shifts from the divine speech as first person to Amos, the prophet, in third person (1991:164).

5.2.5.2 Exegetical Analysis 5:4-6

(a)   Seek Me and Live [5:4]

Because Yahweh does not desire their total destruction nor does He take delight in the annihilation of his people, He now offers them a remnant of hope. The prophet Amos, as Yahweh's messenger of the moment, offers Israel grace and the opportunity to re-establish their national vitality, despite the fact that he demonstrated some personal doubts over their ability to repent. The expression "to the house of Israel" is identical to a similar phrase in the previous verse and represents a link between the current call for repentance and the previous prophecy of disaster (Niehaus 1992:414). The same phrase appears in vv. 1, 3 and 6 and can be described as

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[68] This chiastic structure was taken from Niehaus 1992:415.

vocative drawing identical inclusions between vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-6 (Andersen & Freedman 1989:479). Andersen & Freedman conclude that the "house of Israel" incorporates both the northern and southern kingdoms as Bethel was visited by pilgrims from both nations (1989:479).

The term "seek me" (דרשוני) suggests ways in which Yahweh could be sought (Niehaus 1992:414). It is possible to seek Yahweh through a prophet or priest and an oracle (cf. Gen 25:22, Exod. 18:15; 1 Sam 9:9; Jer 37:7) in seeking his oversight and divine will in one's life. This concept of seeking God's will in one's life was acquired from the postexilic period onwards (Jeremias 1998:88). In turn Yahweh avails himself to those who seek him (Niehaus 1992:414).[69] Despite this clear exhortation, people sadly still choose not to seek him (cf. Isa 9:12; 31:1 and Jer 10:21).

The imperative call to seek Yahweh, is repeated three times in vv. 4, 6 and 14 with vv. 1-3 and 4 addressed to the "entire corporate body of Israel" (Paul 1991:162). The main thrust of prophetic thought is at play here, taking care of what might seem to have placed the offer to life in v. 4 in direct contrast to Yahweh's certain punishment and irrevocable judgement in the previous verses (1991: 161-162). The main thrust of prophetic thought lies in the assurance that Yahweh's decisions can be subject to change, a change that is "dependent and contingent upon the people's return" (Paul 1991:162). Stuart describes this call to react in v. 4 as taking on a grand scope since Yahweh invites a reaction by placing a choice before the people, a choice to either choose himself or persist with their cultic rituals (1987:346). For Stuart the unpredictable combination of promise and punishment is "an empirically observable feature of OT prophecy (1987:346). Not only is the nation assured of pending doom, but they are also promised future restoration should they make the right choice.

The priests of Bethel had failed to confront worshippers with the divine will of Yahweh and provide clear direction to the kind of worship He required. Mays is of the view that Amos had usurped their function by issuing a priestly instruction that replaces the shrine with Yahweh, the divine person, and forbidding the people to participate in these cultic sites (1969:87). This seriously contradicted the priestly office and may have been one of the reasons that Amaziah reacted so vehemently to Amos's message in 7:10-17.

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[69] In Deut 4:29, Moses encourages the people to search after God with all of their heart and soul (also cf. Lam 3:25). A similar charge is issued by David to Solomon in 1 Chr 28:9.

(b)   Sanctuaries no Longer Provide Refuge [5:5]

Bethel, while not the only target of the prophet's invective, is certainly presented as the prime target (cf. Amos 3:14; 4:4; 7:10, 13) through the chiastic arrangement that places the shrine first and last in the sequence "Bethel - Gilgal - Beer-sheba - Gilgal - Bethel" (Andersen & Freedman 1989:479). The people were warned to seek Yahweh and not Bethel.[70] Both Bethel and Beer-sheba were steeped in religious tradition (Niehaus 1992:414). [71] Gilgal was also a site of religious-historical significance from Israel's past.[72] These three cultic sites represented what Stuart refers to as covenant infidelity with Jerusalem regarded as the only valid and legitimate worship centre that could provide Israel with life (1987:346).[73] The phrase "but do not seek Bethel" is in contrast to the phrase "to seek Yahweh and live" in v. 4 (Niehaus 1992:414). Yahweh cannot be found at Bethel because He clearly does not wish to be associated with their fallacious worship at this shrine. The same applies to Gilgal where "and you shall not go to Gilgal" is an adverbial accusative of place expressing "the idea of direction toward" (Niehaus 1992:415). Paul is of the view that v. 5 is not conditional, but rather serves as an "outright directive" to avoid these sanctuaries (1991:163). Because they are the objects of Yahweh's punishment and also because they have no power to halt His judgement, the people are admonished not to go to the sanctuaries for their atonement, but rather to seek Yahweh directly (Hadjiev 2009:163).

V. 5, similar to 4:4-5, once again highlights the harshness of Amos's message condemning incorrect religious practices (Coggins 2000:123). For Coggins the verb "seek" (תדרשו) through its strong cultic association, lays down the requirement for proper cultic worship (2000:123). The false worship at Bethel and Gilgal is contrasted with true worship in seeking

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[70] Bethel as the main cultic site in northern Israel is mentioned in Amos 3:14 (mentioned together with Gilgal); 4:4 and twice in the encounter with Amaziah, the chief priest of Bethel in 7:10, 13.

[71] Bethel was the place where Abraham performed his sacrifice and called upon Yahweh (Gen 13:3-4). It was also the place that Jacob had in mind as he fled from Laban when he had a revelation from "the God of Bethel" (Gen 31:13). This was a direct connection to a dream he had there almost twenty years earlier, as he ironically fled to Laban (Gen 28:10-22). Following his reconciliation with Esau, his brother, Jacob subsequently worshipped at Bethel (Gen 35:1-14). Samuel visited Bethel on a number of occasions as it was an important religious sanctuary at the time (1 Sam 7:16). It was also the home to a company of prophets who lived there during the time of Elijah (2 Kgs 2:3). Beer-sheba was the place where Abraham called upon Yahweh (Gen 21:31-33). It was also the place where Yahweh appeared to Isaac (Gen 26:23-25) and to Jacob (Gen 46:1-5). Samuel's sons served as judges at Beer-sheba (1 Sam 8:1-2). Josiah desecrated all holy places including Beer-sheba during his reform following the discovery by Hilkiah of the "book of the law" in the temple (2 Kgs 22; 23:8).

[72] Gilgal, an ancient cultic worship site, was the first "promised land encampment" associated with the conquest where Joshua circumcised the conquest generation as described in Josh. 5:2-12 (Stuart 1987:346).

[73] Jerusalem's affirmation as a legitimate worship site is confirmed in Deut. 12; 1 Kgs 9:3 and 2 Chr 13:9-11.

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Yahweh (Coggins 2000:123). Coggins further argues against taking the term "go into exile" literally and views this simply as "the language of extreme punishment" taking into account its parallelism with "come to nothing" and the more general point conveyed by the poetry (2000:124).[74]

According to Niehaus (1992:415) Beer-sheba was an ancient holy place in the southern kingdom where many pilgrims from the northern kingdom had journeyed to over time (cf. Amos 8:14; 2 Kgs 23:8). It was located in the far south of Judah, about fifty miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Pilgrims had to cross the border to get there. This passage clearly indicates the popularity of this sanctuary, traditionally associated with the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac, even as late as the middle of the eighth century (Paul 1991:163). Yahweh has now put a stop to such pilgrimages. The condemnation of Beer-sheba is seen as a later addition when the material was edited in Judean circles (Coggins 2000:124). With the condemnation of Beer-sheba by Amos further on in the text at 8:14, it would appear to sound a clear warning that not only were the northern sanctuaries under threat of judgement but also the southern sanctuaries (Coggins 2000:124).

Yahweh leaves absolutely no doubt as to the fate of Gilgal: "for Gilgal will surely go into exile." One of the major recurring themes in the book of Amos is the threat of exile (cf. Amos 4:2-3; 5:27; 6:7; 7:11, 17) and once again it is being used to striking effect (Paul 1991:164). Emphasis is created with the combination of the infinite absolute and finite form of the verb resulting in "Gilgal will surely go" (Niehaus 1992:415). The richness in consonance and wordplay (*gilgāl, gālōh, yigleh*) in the colon serves as an emphatic device to drive the message home (Niehaus 1992:415). The phrase "and Bethel will become trouble" signals a change in conditions with the preposition ל playing a central role in signifying that change in conditions.

Paul speculates that the prohibition against worship at these sanctuaries must have come as a major shock to the people (1991:164). To them it was absurd for Amos to declare their treasured cultic sites, their rites and ceremonies as abominable to Yahweh. For Paul the "supremacy of morality" is the real issue that lies behind this oracle (1991:164). Worship, however intricate and extravagant and accompanied by traditional fervor, remains false and worthless in the midst of continued injustice, oppression and mistreatment perpetrated by

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[74] In Hos 4:15, the sanctuaries of Gilgal and Bethel are named with Bethel mockingly described as "Beth-aven" (i.e. coming to nothing).

worshippers against the poor and vulnerable in society. Yahweh can therefore not be found "at sanctuaries in which sin and oppression are condoned not condemned" and where the perpetrators of deception and mistreatment celebrate their faith and success (Andersen & Freedman 1989:482). By separating their worship from their daily lives, their engagement in cultic activity had become meaningless and an insult to Yahweh.

The people of Israel had absolutely no problem with the way that they were worshipping Yahweh at their sanctuaries. Amos's exhortation for them to seek Yahweh and yet forbidding them to worship at these sanctuaries, would have appeared somewhat puzzling to them since this was, in their opinion, exactly what they were doing when they performed their traditional ceremonial rites. The three shrines mentioned in this passage are clearly places of corruption with their festivals an opportunity for sin. None of them offer the kind of sanctuary that Yahweh had envisioned for them. The absolute injunction and imperative to seek Yahweh and live did not bode well for a pious nation that most probably "were constant in their devotion, frequent in their attendance, fully participant in their services, and generous in their pledges and contributions" and now faced a warning of disastrous proportions (Andersen & Freedman 1989:481). Their cultic practices, at times a hindrance as they ran out of patience (cf. Amos 8:5-6), were focused on obtaining and securing a prosperous life. A lifestyle they had somehow mistakenly accepted that Yahweh would ensure. They believed that they enjoyed favour in Yahweh's eyes and convinced themselves that they would continue to enjoy political and economic success. Alas! This was not to be the case. Continued worship in the sanctuaries had now become a matter of life and death. Should they insist on performing their worship as they had done before, they would surely succumb to Yahweh's divine judgement and not enjoy His assurance of security and prosperity. This left Mays to conclude that the meaning of the exhortation to "seek me" as Yahweh's word is left somewhat "obscure and provocative" as the shrines are strongly excluded (1969:88). The divine curse on these sanctuaries and the prohibition of cultic practices is emphasised in the passage. Amos is consistent in his condemnation of the cult and the pending judgement that they face (Amos 3:14; 7:9; 8:3).

(c)   Bethel Beware [5:6]

For a brief moment punishment is no longer irrevocable, but salvation is possible and preconditioned, not on their cultic observance, but rather upon them seeking the one true God

(Paul 1991:164-165). Alternatively, they faced the wrath of Yahweh and would be consumed by his fire (cf. Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; 7:4). Amos now speaks on his own behalf as he repeats Yahweh's command in v. 4 exhorting them to "seek … so that you may live." The forceful action of Yahweh against the people is emphasised with the expression "lest he break out like fire" should they fail to seek him (Niehaus 1992:415). According to Niehaus, Amos seeks to reconcile God and his people (1992:415). Yahweh reveals himself "like a consuming fire (cf. Deut 4:24) in whose presence sinful people cannot bear (cf. Exod 19:16-25; Deut 5:20-23). Jeremiah gives a similar warning to the people of the southern kingdom in 4:4. Destruction by fire is a covenant curse type 10[75] which indicates how Yahweh will effectively destroy Bethel by himself burning "through the apostate nation in judgment" (Stuart 1987:347).

The introductory line of v. 6 closely resembles that of v. 4 emphasising the key message that only a return to Yahweh can provide hope. In both instances an alternative to punishment and death is offered. The sentence structure "in the house of Joseph" (בית יוסף) also serves as an adverbial accusative that indicates where the fire will breakout, which according to Niehaus is Bethel and Gilgal which traditionally served the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh respectively (1992:416). This primarily refers to the northern kingdom (Paul 1991:166). Yahweh's judgement fire cannot be quenched since there is no one capable of doing so. The certainty of death is emphasised and guaranteed as the fire will be Yahweh himself so that "there will be no quencher" (ואין־מכבה) for Bethel. The inextinguishable nature of Yahweh's fire of judgement is demonstrated in Isa. 1:31; Jer. 4:4 and 21:12. Bethel, according to Jeremias, represented the defective devotion of God in Canaanite worship" or, as referred to in the Deuteronomistic history, as "the sin of Jeroboam" (1998:89). The source of life has now become the author of judgement and destruction (Mays 1969:89).

5.2.6   Amos 5:7: The Perversion of Justice and Righteousness

> 7.   You who turn justice to wormwood,
>
>   and throw righteousness into the dirt!

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[75] Refer Stuart 1987:xxxvi (cf. Deut 4:24).

The entire text of Amos revolves around the perversion of justice and righteousness in ancient Israelite society. Failure by the monarchy and the religious establishment to stem the progressive impoverishment of the marginalised, by upholding the covenantal obligations of justice and righteousness in the Mosaic law, led to the demise of the nation. The First Woe, in the Book of Woes starts off in this verse and continues in 5:10-12 according to Andersen & Freedman (1989:469). The charges reckoned in the woes are for them appropriately directed to the "leadership responsible for the manner and practice of the cult and for the perversion and subversion of justice in official proceedings" (Andersen & Freedman 1989:469). The extent to which justice was perverted and righteousness forsaken resulted in an estranged relationship between the ruling elite of Israel and Yahweh, resulting in the serious indictments that were formulated against the nation by the prophet. The final outcome of this perverted approach to justice and righteousness would be one of the most severe forms of punishment faced by any nation. The theme of justice and righteousness runs consistently throughout the entire text of Amos. Amos 5:7 is therefore an important component in this analysis and was selected for inclusion on this basis.

5.2.6.1 Literary Form and Structure 5:7

Amos 5:6-17 is regarded as a prophetic parenesis with 5:7-13 described by Park as a prophetic reproach (2001:88). According to Park v. 7 together with vv. 10-11, in this unit, indicate possible redactional activity (2001:94). Coggins, on the location of v. 7 in the text, also sees a link between vv. 7 and 10, but urges us to accept the text as we received it since we were not privileged to the rules that govern Hebrew poetry (2000:125). The theme seems to be running through consistently as it clearly indicates a lack of respect for the principles of justice and righteousness. Jeremias views the isolated position of v. 7 between v. 6 and v. 8 as a position that could only be understood from the perspective of a ring composition, a position that has created difficulty for numerous exegetes (1998:90). Amos addresses the same audience that he has exhorted with plural imperatives to seek and live in v. 6 (Niehaus 1992:418).

V. 7 is described by Thomas as a statement of lament or disgust (2003:211). Scholars assume that it is the beginning of an entirely new oracle much like 5:18 and 6:1, which shares the same literary pattern and characteristics of an original "woe"-cry (Andersen & Freedman 1989:483; Mays 1969:91; Wolff 1977:241). Andersen & Freedman cite two reasons for

connecting v. 7 to a "woe" oracle (1989:483). Firstly, the vocative nature of the definite article ה

in "you who have turned (ההפכים) justice (משפט) to wormwood (ללענה)" completes vv. 1-6,

identifying those who have been exhorted to seek Yahweh and live. Secondly, "the parallelism of

"justice" (משפט) and "righteousness" (צדקה) links 5:7, 5:24 and 6:12 with 5:15 as a stepping

stone" and between them they share a unity in terms of their verbal, thematic and structural

composition despite their differences in genre (Andersen & Freedman 1989:483). For Mays, the

definite plural participle with which v. 7 begins, is characteristic of a "woe" saying (1969:90).

Paul is of the opinion that there is no reason to emend the Masoretic text in view of the chiastic

literary pattern demonstrated in vv. 1-17 (1991:166).

Thomas alludes to a tendency to read v. 7 in the light of 5:10-13 "limiting the condemned

to the rich and powerful" (2003:211). Carroll has a different view on the matter arguing that the

first six verses of chapter 5 addresses the entire nation with v. 7 simply a continuation of that

thought, characterising the whole of Israel as an unjust nation (Carroll 1992:228).

5.2.6.2 Exegetical Analysis 5:7

(a)   Demeaning Justice and Righteousness [5:7]

Justice and righteousness, according to Thomas, in all probability "refer to right and proper order

of society" in the text of Amos (2003:213). The two concepts are central themes in the oracles of

Amos especially in 5:24 and 6:12. "Wormwood" (לענה) is a bitter plant that is used as flavouring

in absinth and vermouth and was traditionally used as an insecticide (Thomas 2003:212). It is a

Palestinian plant, of extremely bitter taste, that is used on a regular basis as a metaphor to

describe a calamity of some sort (Mays 1969:91).[76] It is a plant that is mentioned a few times in

prophetic literature (cf. Jer 9:14; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19; Prov 5:4; Amos 6:12). While the structure

of the verse seems to support the emendation from "wormwood" to "upside down" (הפך ל),

creating a chiastic relationship between turning justice *upward* and righteousness *earthward*,

Niehaus rejects the emendation of the word "wormwood" to "upward" as presented in the

Septuagint as he sees a parallel between "wormwood" (לענה) and "poisonweed" (ראש) in 6:12

(1992:418). The word "justice" (משפט) implies equity in the legal system and its processes and

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[76] Examples of these metaphors appear in Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19.

should allow for all persons within the system to claim "full and equitable participation" within all aspects of that particular community (Thomas 2003:212). Not only does justice refer to issues of legal fairness in courts, but also in a broader sense to "the divinely given moral principles by which society was to be ordered" (Thomas 2003:212). Justice, according to (Jeremias 1998:90), also refers to the impartial application of the law at the gate (cf. Amos 5:10, 12 and 15). According to Niehaus, the term משפט occurs regularly in contexts where a sense of justice is required (1992:418). In the prophetic corpus it relates strongly to the ethical intent of the Mosaic law as the context requires a sense that is close to true religion (Niehaus 1992:418). The weaker members of Israelite society had no power or influence and relied completely on the courts to protect their social standing in society.

"Righteousness" (צדקה) is described by Thomas as a relational concept whose content and meaning is defined by the particular social context in which it occurs (2003:213). As such it demands the full and proper fulfillment of the obligations imposed by a relationship. The term "righteousness" (צדקה) serves to underscore and emphasise its companion word "justice" (משפט) in v. 7 (Niehaus 1992:418).[77] "They throw … into the dirt" (הניחו לארץ), indicates taking something, in this instance righteousness, and trampling it into the dust or underfoot (Niehaus 1992:418).

Justice has been distorted, turned into bitter poison and now has a repulsive taste to it. Righteousness has been scornfully cast to the ground with everyone trampling on it. Large scale perversion of justice by the oppressors of Israelite society was the order of the day with the basic tenets of Mosaic law not taken into account. Its social concerns were ignored leaving a strong sense of bitterness and suffering experienced by the poor. When the purpose of the law is distorted and its heart is destroyed, the inevitable consequence is that righteousness is trampled upon unashamedly. God's concern for righteousness is well documented even in the New Testament.[78]

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[77] The pairing of righteousness and justice is used in parallel in Amos 6:12; Isa 5:7; 11:4.

[78] In Matt 3:15 the Church is called to righteousness and in Matt 5:20 the exhortation is for righteousness to go beyond that of the religious leadership of the day, the Pharisees.

5.2.7   Amos 5:10-13: For I Know Your Transgressions

10.   They hate the one who reproves in the gate,

and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11.   Therefore: because you trample upon the poor,

and take an exaction of grain from him[79]-

houses of dressed stone you have built,

but you will not live in them;

pleasant vineyards you have planted,

but you will not drink their wine.

12.   For I know that your transgressions are many,

and that your sins are numerous,

afflicters of the righteous, takers of a ransom-

who deprive the needy of justice in the gate!

13.   Therefore the prudent shall keep silent at that time,

for it will be an evil time.

Amos once again turns his attention to the main perpetrators of oppression and corruption with a stern warning that the availability of wise counsel will cease as they enter an unprecedented

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[79] Text-critical Notes on Amos 5:11: The manner in which the phrase "because you trample" (יען בושסכם) reflects a shift from the third-person plural in the vv. 7 and 10 to the second-person plural in v. 11 is more direct in its nature (Niehaus 1992:420; Paul 1991:171). This is the only place in the book of Amos where "therefore" (לכן) does not introduce the words of the retribution directly, but is seen as a possible delaying mechanism before issuing the "final threat of punishment" (Paul 1991:172). Wolff describes it as "an independent and differently motivated threat of punishment" (1977:247). The only problem appears to be the exact meaning of the hapax legomenon בושסכם described by Stuart as "an unknown form of unknown meaning, and probably a corruption" (1987:343). Assumed to be a hybrid form of בושכם and בוסכם it is derived from the root בסס /בוס ("to trample"), also attested to in cf. Isa 14:25; 63:6; Ps 60:14, according to Paul (1991:172). The verb is unusually written with a ש instead of ס, as attested in other biblical passages, and this in Paul's view may explain the corruption in the text (1991:172). Another possibility is that it resulted from "a conflate reading of two different verbs" namely בוס and שסה meaning "to plunder," seen as governing a direct object in Hebrew without the preposition על, all this deduced from a single Ugaritic text (cf. CTA 16:vi:48) whose interpretation is seriously in doubt in any event (Paul 1991:172). Paul suggests a simpler solution by recognising this "extremely rare Hebrew verb" as an interdialectal equivalent of the Akkadian *šabāšu* ("to gather, collect a [grain] tax") which resulted in the noun *šibšu* ("a [grain] tax") which points to the collection of tax on agricultural products (1991:172-173). Despite the difficulty presented by the translation of the hapax legomenon בושסכם, it is accepted that the reference could be either to a debtor paying off the interest on a loan by sharing part of his crop or alternatively, it could refer to someone working on another landlord's property in exchange for a small portion of his crop (Thomas 2003:201).

period of darkness in their existence. He further demonstrates his concern for the plight of property owners, in terms of their goods produced compared to the excessive taxation levied, that invariably results in them losing their rights to fair adjudication of their economic participation (Thomas 2003:203). This form of taxation, for the benefit of the provincial and national political administrative structures, placed a disproportionate and unconscionable burden on small-scale farmers leading to their ultimate domination and destruction. The theme of accusation and judgement presented in a fundamental and metaphorical sense in v. 7, is continued in this unit with actual examples detailing the extent to which justice had been violated (Thomas 2003:199). The distortion of justice, through bribery, had the effect of fast tracking the demise of the poor. The abuse of the innocent is facilitated by a judicial system that is for sale to those financially better off (Carroll 1992:232). This unit, together with other passages selected for exegetical analysis, provides greater insight into the nature of the accusation as well as the extent to which both the political and religious establishments had lost control over the social structure of society.

5.2.7.1 Literary Form and Structure 5:10-13

This section is a continuation of v. 7 according to Thomas (2003:199). V. 10-12, as a literary unit, forms an *inclusio* starting and ending with the word "gate" (שער) (Thomas 2003:199). It is also the continuation of the first woe oracle that was initiated in 5:7 (Andersen & Freedman 1989:469). In v. 10, the choice of the term "abhor" (יתעבו), which is much stronger than the verb "hate" (שנא), allows for the second colon to effectively be a structure of parallelism (Niehaus 1992:420).[80] This provides a greater emphasis on the serious nature of justice denied at the gate. The message conveyed in v. 10 is characterised by a sense of elegance and power which is enhanced by the chiastic structure of the verse. Niehaus demonstrates this chiasm as follows (1992:419):

a	**b**
they hate	the one who reproves in the gate
b'	**a'**
and the one who speaks truth	they abhor

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[80] Psalm 5:6b-7 is an example of the use of the terms "hate" and "abhor" in a chiastic style.

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Scholars such as Wolff hold the view that v. 11 is a subsequent addition by a redactor (1977:247). He sees it as "an independent and differently motivated threat of punishment" (Wolff 1977:247). Paul's (1991) view on this position is different. He accepts the authenticity of Amos's words despite a notable difference in the theme of reproach relating to the burdensome levying of taxes and the direct manner in which the charges and punishment were advanced (Paul 1991:171). Coggins advances the plausibility of this switch as a "deliberate device to heighten the tension of the attack" (2000:127). For Niehaus, this is typical of what one might find in ancient Near Eastern covenant documents (1992:420). Paul argues for the authenticity of v. 11 on the basis that while the expression might be unique, it does not necessarily negate its authenticity (1991:171). Secondly, the change of person is accepted as a "common stylistic feature" of prophetic admonitions to the extent that it has become a characteristic element of oracles in general (1991:171). A third reason advanced by Paul for the authenticity of v. 11, is that despite the fact that the nature of the charge has changed, it remains an integral part of the prophetic denunciation of the immoral behaviour of the upper classes (1991:171). Based on the presumption that v. 11 once was an independent rhetorical unit, Jeremias argues for the strategic placement of v. 11 between the verses that deal with the distortion of justice, rather than accepting it as an introduction of a new theme (1998:93). Its intent, in Jeremias's view, was to convey the message quite clearly that the perversion of justice would cause the collapse of the entire social structure in the absence of any "functioning control" over the powerful in society (1998:93).

V. 12 is another verse identified by Wolff as a later addition as "the element of accusation in a new oracle begins" (1977:248). Some scholars, however, disagree as they regard v. 12 as an integral part of the prophets description of offenses against the poor (Thomas 2003; Paul 1991). The theme of false judgement started in v. 7 follows the indictment of false religion in vv. 4-6 (Stuart 1987:348). In a verse reminiscent of the abuse of the "needy" (אביונים) in Amos 2:6, Yahweh affirms his awareness of the elite's wrongdoing that will result in the threat of punishment outlined in v. 11. The participle "for" (כי) in the acknowledgement "I know" sets off

the reason for the threat in v. 11 (Niehaus 1992:421). Niehaus speculates that the people may have believed that Yahweh was not aware of their transgressions (1992:421).[81]

In v. 13 the general consequences of the previously noted social wrongs are now introduced by the participle "therefore" (לכן), a word that we now notice is used fairly regularly to introduce judgement sayings in Amos (cf. Amos 4:12; 5:11, 16; 6:7). The participle introduces a general curse of fear/ terror/ horror (type 4) according to Stuart (1987:349).[82]

5.2.7.2 Exegetical Analysis 5:10-13

(a)   Denial of Justice [5:10]

The expression "in the gate" (בשער) refers to a number of rooms built into a corridor that ran along the city's walls. Public legal hearings and the administration of justice took place at the gate (Thomas 2003:200). It was the place where intense discussion took place and disputes were arbitrated and settled (Niehaus 1992:421).[83] According to Matthews & Benjamin, court houses were located at the gate in the cities and were located in "the open air setting of the threshing floors" in the villages (1993:122). Not all scholars share the view that the gate was the exclusive location for the nation's courts. Hayes argues that it is most unlikely that the ancient Israelites associated the terms "in the gate" or "justice in the gate" with local court proceedings as the location was more than likely associated with general public activity (Hayes 1988:162). Some of the activities that most probably played themselves out at this location included public meetings, economic activity, socialising, negotiations of all sorts and on occasion legal proceedings (Hayes 1988:162). Despite the differing views, it is clear that "the gate" played some sort of role in the administration of justice.

Niehaus (1992:420) holds the view that proceedings at the gate were normally in the hands of "the one who reproves" (מוכיח) who would act as a judge, advocate or arbitrator and would seek to "impeach or reprove the wrongdoer" (cf. Job 13:9-10; 22:4-5). This role was generally assigned to an elder who was charged with the responsibility of determining who was

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[81] In Job 22:13-14 and Ps 73:11 allude to the persistent wickedness of the people in their belief that God is unable to observe their wickedness.

[82] Refer Stuart 1987:xxxiv for a discussion of this curse type.

[83] The following references in the Hebrew Bible attests to the functionality of these courts at the gate and the role played by the elders of the community at these courts: Deut 21:19-20; 22:15; 25:7; Ruth 4:1-2, 11; Job 5:4; 31:21; Ps 127:5; Lam 5:14.

in the right and would render a verdict (Stuart 1987:348; Thomas 2003:200). Andersen & Freedman describe him as possibly "a third party or advocate who takes up the case of the poor against the rich" (1989:498). This third party became the object of the elite's hatred. This function was critical to ensure that justice prevailed in the settlement of disputes. By implication the system was to have assured the social and legal protection of the vulnerable and poor in society.

The next phrase "the one who speaks truth" suggests an intentional ambiguity meaning either the accused who relates his account truthfully or "the sense of a person who speaks up for the blameless" according to Niehaus (1992:420), while Paul interprets this phrase as "he who pleads with integrity and honesty" (דבר תמים). The integrity of the judge and the reliability of witness statements are essential elements to the administration of justice (Jeremias 1998:92). They provided the basis on which a judge's decision would be made. This makes a reliable witness one of the key persons in the system. The level of corruption was so deep rooted that even he "who pleads with integrity and honesty" became most detested by the people who felt that their interests were severely under threat (Thomas 2003:200). The essential role of these participants in ensuring integrity and fairness of the legal process, were seriously hamstrung. Amos's accusations are leveled against the populace for this large scale abuse and violation of the prevailing judicial system.

(b)   Self-Enrichment leads to Self-Destruction [5:11]

The hatred portrayed by the oppressors against anyone who exposes them is the essence of v. 10. Because of their propensity to deny justice and hate those who expose their corruption and speak up truthfully and on behalf of the blameless, there are consequences that follow from this. The consequences and reasons for such are introduced in v. 11 by "therefore" (לכן) and "because" (יען), respectively and are followed by a list of transgressions as Amos continues to castigate the upper classes of Israel for their abuse of the poor (Niehaus 1992:420).

The upper classes of Israel had absolutely no regard for either the person or dignity of the poor to the extent that their abuse of the poor intensely provoked Yahweh's punishment. The "exaction (נשא) of a grain tax (משאת־בר)" implies the forceful levying of a tax that allowed the oppressors to continue to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. Amos weighs into the

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rich and powerful by condemning their unfair and illegal taxation of the poor.[84] Scholars have advanced various social-scientific theories to explain the systematic impoverishment of the poor through this tax system. Dearman argues in favour of a broad based corrupt tax system that allowed for a fixed percentage of crops harvested and sent into storage for the benefit of provincial and central government authorities (Dearman 1988:29). Managed by local and regional officials on behalf of the central political authority, the entire situation was open to large scale corruption and abuse (Dearman 1988:29). Coote, on the other hand, argues in support of a rent capitalist system whereby control over land was progressively gained through an oppressive and fragmented rental system (Coote 1981:31-32). Reeling under the economic pressure of this rental system, land titles of the Israelite peasantry were converted to titles of debt and eventually debt slavery. Driven by their greed and excessive need for power, the ruling elite of Samaria would progressively succeed in converting patrimonial land into prebendal land to their own advantage (Coote 1981:31-32). Coote further suggests that the harshness with which the wealthy exercised their power over the poor was strongly motivated by dynamic shifts in international alliances as well as internal instability (Coote 1981:31-32). This burden of indebtedness, outlined more fully in Amos 2:6-8, served to impoverish the poor and destitute further and prolong their suffering while enabling their elite counterparts to maximise their land tenure benefits and control over them. Amos's invective therefore reveals a concern for the rights of property owners and the commodities that they produced while he lamented unfair adjudication processes that served to impoverish them further (Thomas 2003:203). The exponential growth in wealth for the privileged classes was a direct outcome of the progressive impoverishment of the poor.

Out of these enormous profits, the upper classes of Israel could accumulate enough wealth to construct for themselves "houses of dressed stone" and live in luxury. These houses were unusually costly and were of solid construction, as opposed to the traditional mud-brick houses (Niehaus 1992:420).[85] This luxurious architectural style was initially limited to royal buildings. However, as a wealthy class of elite developed through the economic progress and large scale cheating and confiscation of peasant land, their residences progressively resembled that of the royal palaces (Thomas 2003:203).

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[84] Refer text-critical notes on Amos 5:11 discussed under footnote 79.
[85] In Isa 9:9 [10] the inhabitants of Ephraim and Samaria arrogantly vowed to rebuild the fallen bricks with dressed stone.

Not only had they built houses of dressed stone that they would not be allowed to occupy.[86] They had also planted for themselves "pleasant vineyards" which they would not enjoy. Small plots farmed by peasants on a subsistence economy basis, primarily for their own and their family's benefit, were acquired by wealthy landlords through this corrupt system. On acquisition these plots were combined and converted into large commercial vineyards and olive groves (Chaney 1986:72). The commodities produced on these large plantations or latifundia were geared towards a lucrative commercial market from which peasant farmers did not derive any benefit, but rather faced social annihilation on an unprecedented scale.

The word order of this bicolon is identical to the original covenantal curse in Deut 28:30b, while the curse relating to the pleasant vineyards is also identical to the original covenantal wording in Deut 28:39 (Niehaus 1992:420).[87] As they go into exile all of their possessions will be left behind. Amos, in a very clear and concise manner, demonstrates the futility of earthly possessions in the absence of strong ethical and moral values. The "futility curse" (type 15) pronounced by Amos is described by Jeremias as "an imprecatory form common in the ancient orient" where a meaningful activity is associated with a meaningless outcome (1998:93).[88] The curse has the effect of turning the tables on the wealthier classes by robbing them of the possessions that they had acquired through corruption. As they will be taken into captivity, their captors will benefit from what they had accrued.

(c)   Subverting the Cause of the Needy [5:12]

Amos, through the reference "that your transgressions are many" (רבים פשעיכם)[89] acknowledges "numerous" (עצמים) charges as he launches into their devious and corrupt judicial practices (Paul 1991:174). As "afflicters (צררי) of the righteous (צדיק)" they perpetrate injustice against the righteous and innocent who conduct themselves in a blameless, humane and righteous manner in society (Wolff 1977:248). With the phrase "takers of a ransom" (לקחי כפר) yet another accusation is leveled at the oppressors in Israelite society. Justice is distorted by the acceptance of a bribe, which illustrates the general reproach of 5:7 (Thomas 2003:205). For Paul (1991:174)

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[86] Cf. Zeph 1:13 and in contrast to this, the promise of salvation in Isa 65:21-22.
[87] Other examples of the "futility curse" are recorded in Deut 31; and Mic 6:15.
[88] Refer to Stuart 1987:xxxviii.
[89] This statement also occurs in Jer 5:6.

the expression כפר does not signify a bribe in the sense that an offense will be overlooked, but rather a payment for the total eradication of the guilt incurred by the offense (Cf. Exod 23:6-8; 1 Sam 12:3; Isa 10:2; 29:21; Mal 3:5). Stuart describes this direct violation of covenant (Exod 23:1-8 and Deut 16:18-20) as heinous (1987:349). The law, as stated in Num 35:31, prohibited the ransom of a murderer and forbade the acceptance of "atonement" (כפר) money in exchange for the life of a murderer (Niehaus 1992:421).

The judges stand accused of "subverting the cause of the needy in the gate" (Thomas 2003:206). The powerful elite of Israel exploited the sensitive application of the law by undermining the integrity of the judge and the reliability of witnesses (Jeremias 1998:92). The corruption of the courts by officials in the royal administration shifted the control of social life away from the villages to the royal court (Mays 1969:94). Amos's indictment is a clear indication that the political establishment did absolutely nothing to stop this social exploitation of the poor.

The courts were supposed to have become a measure of last resort for the destitute that were so badly affected by corruption. Instead it made them the victims of the same judiciary that was supposed to have protected their rights. The judiciary through their part in the exploitation of the poor and underprivileged acted contrary to the traditional prescripts that were to have guided their conduct (cf. Exod 23:6; Deut 16:20; 24:17). According to Jeremias the denial of justice to the peasantry seriously affected their honour and social standing in society (1998:93). While the marginalised in society are struggling to get the most basic protection through the courts, the rich and powerful were able to bribe their way out of the most serious of crimes. The Day of the Lord that they had anxiously been waiting for was fast approaching. It was, however, not to be celebrated in the sense that they were looking forward to, but rather in a much more devastating way that was to threaten their very lives. Yahweh was fully aware of their transgressions and stood ready to punish them accordingly.

(d)   Wise Counsel will Perish for Evil Days [5:13]

The prudent in society were those who had been abused up to now (Niehaus 1992:421). The verb "to keep silent" (דמם) is derived from three roots, namely "to stop", "to wail" or "to perish", with either the first or third root intended here, according to Niehaus (1992:421). The prudent, or

wise, will either stop giving wise counsel or they will completely cease to exist[90] or be "stunned into silence" according to Stuart (1987:349). Niehaus is of the view that the meaning here is identical to that of Jer 49:26 and 50:30 where the judicious in society will perish adding to the woes of society (1992:421). As a nation faces judgement on the scale that Israel faced, wise counsel is displaced in society and wisdom becomes extremely rare (cf. Jer 49:7-8; Obad 8; Deut 32:28-29). Niehaus (1992:421) points to judgement time in v. 13 as being characterised as an "evil time," a time where the prudent will either not speak out since it would be to no avail or alternatively that they will perish altogether as goodness will not be tolerated at a time like this (cf. Ps 37:19; Jer 15:11; Mic 2:3).

5.2.8   Amos 5:14-15: Love Good and Restore Justice

14.   Seek good, and not evil,

so that you may live,

and so Yahweh, God of hosts will be with you,

as you have claimed.

15.   Hate evil and love good,

and establish justice in the gate;

maybe Yahweh God of hosts will be gracious

to the remnant of Joseph.

The exhortation to seek good rather than evil and thereby establish justice at the gate provides insight as to what was lacking in Israelite society. The evil of greed, corruption, social brutality, excessive taxation, indolent luxury and the major lack of concern for the plight of the poor and marginalised were at the root of Israel's problems. More than that, the ability of their most sacred shrines to ensure good conduct was severely limited. Coggins is of the view that despite there being no specific reference to Bethel, the link with vv. 4 and 6 implies that Bethel is now regarded as inherently evil (2000:128). The people further lived and worshipped under the grand illusion that Yahweh was with them only to be shocked into reality by Amos. A very strong connection is drawn by Amos between seeking good and establishing justice in this unit and

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[90] They will either stop in the sense that it is portrayed in Ps 35:15 or perish altogether and cease to exist as in Jer 49:26 and 50:30.

spells out some hope for this beleaguered nation. It certainly provides the solution to the nation's woes.

5.2.8.1 Literary Form and Structure 5:14-15

V. 14-15 is regarded as a continuation of the exhortation that appears in vv. 4-6 (Hadjiev 2009:163). Some scholars are of the view that these verses can be ascribed to the disciples of the prophet Amos (Jeremias 1998:95; Wolff 1977:234). Stuart regards vv. 14-15 as more prose than poetry with Amos taking a blunt pause to render a "colloquial assessment of his nation's only hope for the future" (1987:349).

According to Hadjiev, v. 14 is a continuation of v. 6 and possibly serves as an explanation for the divine oracle given in vv. 4-5 (2009:164). There is a clear resemblance between v. 6 and v. 14 in its third person reference to Yahweh with v. 14 thematically explaining the meaning of the directive to "seek Yahweh" and providing a supplementary argument for obeying that directive (Hadjiev 2009:164). To seek Yahweh is implicit in the statement to seek good and not evil in v. 14a while the latter half of the verse provides the motivation for this statement. (Hadjiev 2009:164). It is virtually impossible to live without seeking Yahweh. This motivation or reason to seek Yahweh, according to Hadjiev, "is an implicit and ironic rejection of the cultic certainty of Yahweh's closeness to and presence with Israel," and results in a cultic-polemic that also appears in v. 4-6 (2009:164).

Jeremias proposes what he refers to as a "conceptual progression" taking place in the text from (A) a sentence of death to (B) demonstration of a fruitless life to (C) destruction of the community through a dysfunctional judicial system and ending up once more at (A') a sentence of death pronounced (1998:94). However, before arriving back at the announcement of the death sentence (A'), the prospect of life is offered, enabling v. 14, in a similar sense to v.6, to provide an interpretation of the divine oracle of v. 4b (Jeremias 1998:94).

The link between the liturgy of worship "to seek good" and the legal imperative "to establish justice in the gate," which was the focus of fierce condemnation in previous verses, now continues in v. 15 (Coggins 2000:129). V. 15 is chiastically parallel to v. 14 with Amos continuing to expand on what devotion to good truly demands (Paul 1991:177). The link between terms such as "good and evil" (v. 14), "hate" (v.10), "the gate" (v.10, 12), "justice" (v. 7) and "Joseph" (v. 6) and the vocabulary of v. 15 indicates a possibility of redactional activity

(Hadjiev 2009:165). This is further manifested in the split of the original oracle that encompasses vv. 4-6 including v. 14, as well as the current form of the ring structure in 5:1-17 (Hadjiev 2009:166).

5.2.8.2 Exegetical Analysis 5:14-15

(a)　　Seek Good and You Might Live [5:14]

The verb "seek" (דרש) in the exhortation "seek good, and not evil"[91] is an instruction to seek good in an ethical sense according to Niehaus (1992:423) with the counterparts "good" (טוב) and "evil" (רע) juxtaposed against each other. Once again the promise of life is held out as an option. For Paul, this is "the third and climactic occurrence" of the verb "seek" (דרש) with Amos now taking the opportunity to clarify the exhortation as it initially appeared in vv. 4 and 6. Both Paul (1991:176) and Niehaus share the same view that the answer to the exhortation is to be found in the moral-ethical life. Yahweh is to be found, not in the observance of worship ritual, but rather in one's total commitment and "undivided devotion to the moral dimension of human relations" (Paul 1991:176).[92]

The belief that "Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, is with you" is rooted in the "good fortune, prosperity, and military and economic success of the northern kingdom" and as a result the Israelites ascribed their successes during the reign of Jeroboam II to the Lord's presence (Paul 1991:177). The prophet Amos brings a dramatic correction to this mistaken view by pointing out that Yahweh could only be present if they sought and practiced the good within an ethical-moral dimension since this can be the only foundation for salvation and survival (Paul 1991:177).

In close correlation to v. 4 where the people were exhorted to seek Yahweh and live, they are now commanded to seek good and live. The essence of this verse is that an ethical response to Yahweh is required in order for the people to retain their land (Niehaus 1992:423). According to Mosaic law, obedience to Yahweh was a prerequisite to enjoying a viable relationship to the

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[91] This exhortation can also be compared to the statement in Isa 1:16-17.

[92] Compare Mic 6:8. Paul sees a similar development of the same theme in Zeph 2:3 where the exhortation is initially presented in a general form, followed by an ethically based exposition and ending in a promise of survival (1991:170).

land He had promised.[93] There was therefore a direct relationship between the ethical good that the people of Israel sought and the enhancement of their national welfare (Niehaus 1992:423).

Stuart describes the chronological perspective envisioned for Israel as "blessing, curse, blessing - in that order" (cf. Deut 4:21-31) as Israel experienced blessing in the land, followed by their sin and the announcement of punishment and curses by Amos and if they repented and Yahweh so chooses, they could be blessed again (1987:349). Those who remain following the "evil time" (v.13) and have survived the ravages of exile, will have their blessing restored[94] if they seek Yahweh (Stuart 1987:349).

(b)   Restore Justice - Restore Yahweh's favour [5:15]

It is speculated that v. 15 may be addressing a different audience in a different historical context and may be a later addition (Hadjiev 2009:165). This view is partly based on the view that some kind of judgement has already taken place in reference to the "remnant/ survivors" of Joseph and also on the uncertainty that "maybe Yahweh, God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (v. 15), as opposed to the more definite "that Yahweh, God of hosts is with you" in v. 14 (Hadjiev 2009:165). For Coggins, the reference to remnant should be devoid of the theological weight that has been added to it over the years as it simply indicates "survivors" (2000:128). Hadjiev contends that the tension in contrast between the uncertainty of "Yahweh's graciousness to a remnant of Joseph" and the more definite "Yahweh is with you" is best explained and dependent on the way the ויהי is translated (2009:165). It can either be translated subjunctively ("then it may be so that Yahweh … may be with you") allowing for the tension to dissipate and the mood between v. 14 and v. 15 to be very similar or indicatively ("so that Yahweh will be with you"). In Hadjiev's (2009:165) view, ויהי can either be used to express a wish[95] or to describe a future event (cf. 1 Kgs 14:5; Ps 81:16; Jer 13:10; Hos 14:7). When it appears after an imperative, according to Hadjiev (2009:165), it normally provides a description of the consequences of an action directed by such an imperative (cf. Exod 9:22; 10:21; 18:19; 1 Sam 28:22; 1 Kgs 21:2; Mal 3:10). The outcome of this, based on a balance of probability, in Hadjiev's opinion, is that the indicative translation would be the preferred option (2009:165).

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[93] This is affirmed in Deut 30:15-18.
[94] For restoration blessing type 1 refer Deut 4:31; 30:3 (Stuart 1987:xli).
[95] As in the expression "may Yahweh be with you" in 1 Sam 20:13.

This draws a strong link between v. 14 and v. 6 in the optimistic view that punishment and judgement can be avoided by choosing Yahweh.

The pursuit of good leads inevitably to the fair and equitable administration of justice with both being essential to ensure the survival of Israel. Jeremias asks the question: "is this survival possible even with the pursuit of good and the fair administration of justice, given the now irreversible devastation among the people of God?" (1998:95). There is some uncertainty as to what "the remnant of Joseph" (שארית יוסף) refers to. Jeremias speculates that it could either refer to that part of the Northern Kingdom that remained on the mount following the separation of the Assyrian provinces of Dor, Megiddo and Gilead three decades after Amos in 733 BC, or alternatively to the surviving inhabitants after the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC (1998:96).[96]

The uncertainty of Yahweh's reaction to Israel's repentance creates a measure of caution in this context. This caution evident in v. 15 is another example cited by Hadjiev as a reference to a different historical period where judgement had already taken place (2009:165). The word "maybe/ perhaps" (אולי), in Paul's view, is the operative and decisive word here (1991:178). Repentance does not necessarily guarantee a change in Yahweh's will. Yahweh's response can only be determined by Him and cannot be influenced by human actions, no matter how genuine the repentance may be.

The instruction to "hate evil, but love good" is more assertive than the exhortation in v. 14. Not only do the Israelites face a choice between good and evil, but they are persuaded to passionately hate evil and love good. Judgement is inevitable since Yahweh "knows that his own faithfulness to the covenant requires judgment" (Niehaus 1992:423). According to Paul to "love good" can be practically interpreted as a strong and sincere effort to effect a lifestyle change "that is counter to their present manner of behaviour" (1991:177). The phrase "to administer justice" (שפט) in its biblical and ethical sense, especially as far as the prophets are concerned, placed a high premium and demand on justice, fairness and respect for fellow citizens. This further places an awesome responsibility on the political authorities of the day to ensure that justice was dispensed in terms of their legal traditions. Instead of ensuring that the poor were not legally disadvantaged, they actively participated in the further impoverishment of the poor. If they had done what their legal traditions demanded of them and moreover what Yahweh desired

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[96] Also refer to a similar reference to Ephraim in Hos 4.

of them, they certainly would have enjoyed his blessings rather than facing his awesome judgement and punishment. The awesome responsibility placed on these values as vital components of a dynamic social system demand their constant, perpetual and ongoing creative renewal to ensure a fully functional social system that will enhance harmonious social relations.

According to Jeremias the emphasis on Amos's own words in vv. 14-15 are characterised by three features (1998:95). The assurance that "Yahweh, God of hosts" is with them (v. 14) derives from a dialogue and represents a polemical argument against salvific faith that is based on the promise that Yahweh will always be with them, thereby justifying their freedom in actions.[97] For Jeremias there is a strong shared connection with doxologies from the Jerusalem worship service. Secondly, the exhortation to do good in v.15 expresses the revulsion against evil with the verb "hate" used in the same manner as it is used in v. 10 to express the revulsion experienced by the guilty citizens of Israel as "they hate the one who reproves at the gate." Furthermore, by placing "love good" alongside "hate evil," an emotional component is added to this summons. The application of law without undue influence is absolutely vital to Israel's survival in the view of Amos and his tradents (Jeremias 1998:95). This brings us to the third feature that "introduces an indispensable component of the good" by connecting the "establishment of justice at the gate" back to vv. 7-13 (Jeremias 1998:95). The vital link between doing good and the fair administration of justice is established quite forcefully, emphasising the balance that ought to be achieved between the administration of justice as a political component and the religious pursuit of the cult.

Mays draws a connection between "Yahweh," "good" and "justice" to demonstrate the importance that one would turn to Yahweh, not in cultic worship, but rather in the social sphere of human relations (1969:101). For Yahweh, seeking Him is best expressed in how human beings relate to one another in the social sphere rather than a misplaced commitment to cultic worship that misses the point completely. This was so aptly demonstrated by Amos. Based on his theological vocabulary, Amos places the term "good" between "Yahweh" and "justice" in the sequential flow from 5:4a: "Seek me and live" (Yahweh); through 5:14a: "Seek good that you

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[97] In Mic 3:11 it states: "Yahweh is with us! No harm shall come upon us." Also refer to Jeremiah's temple sermon in Jer 7. Mays (1969:101) refers to this as "an affirmation of trust and confidence that belonged to the history of Yahwism from the beginning" (cf. Gen 26:3, 24; 28:15; 31:8). It also has reference to Yahweh's role as a powerful God who fought for and protected them (cf. Judg 6:12f; Num 14:43; 23:21; Deut 31:8).

may live" (good) and finally to 5:15a: "love good and establish justice at the gate" (justice) making the order and interrelation of the terms binding for Amos (Mays 1969:100).

The "justice" (משפט) maintained by the court is crucial to protect the poor, the widow and the orphan in the advancement of righteousness in the social order. This is the divine ordering of society as Yahweh had predicated it. Amos's focus on the good that should reflect in the justice system should not be seen as "a reduction of the ethical meaning to a judicial legalism" but rather as an integral part of the total structure of human relations within Israel (Mays 1969:101). The laws that Israel breached, inviting this forceful invective from Amos, should have served as the basis on which the concepts of good and righteousness would be advanced. This would then have manifested itself in Israel's devotion to Yahweh, which would have resulted in divine acceptance and a stay of the impending catastrophe.

5.2.9   Amos 5:21-27: Futility of Sacrifices, Offerings and Worship

21.   "I hate, I despise your feasts,

and I do not take pleasure in your solemn assemblies.

22.   For though you offer up burnt offerings,

I will neither accept your grain offerings,

nor regard your peace offerings of fattened cattle.

23.   Take away from me the din of your songs,

that I may not hear the music of your lyres.

24.   But let justice roll on like the waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing wadi.

25.   Did you bring sacrifices and grain offerings to me

in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel?

26.   But you have carried around Sakkuth your king

and Kaiwan – your images – the star of your gods,

which you fashioned for yourselves.

27.   I will exile you beyond Damascus,"

Says Yahweh – God of hosts is his name.

The focus now shifts to cultic worship practices and the extent to which these practices undermine the administration of justice and the principle of righteousness. Amos responds to the popular beliefs of his time by "vehemently and boldly" refuting their cultic significance and importance (Paul 1991:188). Paul (1991:188) holds the view that Amos "levels his most uncompromising attack against the lavishness of the official monotheistic cult" in this section (cf. Isa 1:10-17; Jer 6:19-21; Hos 6:6; 8:13; Mal 1:10; 2:13). The display of their religious enthusiasm and indulgence through their sacrifices, offerings and music in worship did very little to impress Yahweh. In fact their worship efforts were so futile that they became a source of great irritation. The most important ingredients of justice and righteousness in daily conduct were obviously missing rendering their entire religious zeal and enthusiasm meaningless. Linville holds the view that Amos in 5:24 "recasts the image of primordial waters not simply as agents of destruction or chaotic upheaval," but instead as sustainable agents of cosmic order (2008:117). The failure of the religious establishment to nurture, safeguard and enhance the values of justice and righteousness and provide a conscientious point of reference for the ruling elite had significantly contributed to the social upheaval and the eventual demise of the nation. The inclusion of this unit is important for analysis from the perspective that it demonstrates the critical lack of balance that Yahweh requires between the cult and the other structures in society, in particular the political structures, to ensure that His covenantal obligations are upheld.

5.2.9.1 Literary Form and Structure 5:21-27

Jeremias poses the difficulty of interpretation of Amos 5:21-27 and contextualises the problem as follows: "It is not just since the Enlightenment that interpreters have struggled and argued intensively concerning the understanding of the pericope 5:21-27, which contains Amos' most severe criticism of the cult" (1998:101). This is manifested not only during Old Testament times with different interpretations assigned to vv. 22a, 25 and 26 despite its consistent prose composition, but also the significant influence of modern liberation theology's interpretation of the oracle (Jeremias 1998:101). The core of Amos's message is identified in the text and formulated into an assertion that justice was demanded to enhance human relationships instead of cultic worship rituals that had no substance.

The verbs "to hate" (שנא) and "to reject" (מאס) in the statement "I hate, I reject/ despise" in v. 21a forms a hendiadys that compounds Yahweh's "indignant rejection of their religious

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festivals" (Niehaus 1992:431). Yahweh's deep sense of rejection with strong verbs such as "despise" and "hate" is completely devoid of any ambiguity and leaves no uncertainty "as to the depth of the rejection" (Coggins 2000:130). Coggins, however, alludes to a difficulty that arises out of the suffixes that are attached to the various cultic rituals such as the festivals, solemn assemblies, grain offerings and offerings of well-being (2000:130). He says that it is possible to argue that the attachment of the second person suffix "your" would limit the address to the group addressed and would not suggest a general rejection of religious rites (2000:130). Burnt offerings on the other hand does not have a suffix and is used in a general sense (Coggins 2000:130-131).[98]

Coggins contends that the structure of v. 22 is unclear with the introductory "even if" (כי) being interpreted as either concessive ("although") or conditional ("if") and points to the widely held view that there has been some disruption to the text (2000:131). There has, however, been no agreement as to its final form (Coggins 2000:131). Following Yahweh's rejection of Israel's fallacious religious observances in v. 21, He now expresses his thoughts in what Niehaus describes as "a concise protasis-apodosis structure" (1992:431). The sacrifices and offerings described played an important part in Israel's Levitical heritage.

The condemned addressed in plural in vv. 21-22 is now addressed in the singular in v. 23 resulting in some form of uncertainty as to who is being condemned (Coggins 2000:132). Niehaus points out that the singular imperative "take away" (הסר) signifies a change from the plural forms that have characterised Yahweh's address to the people up to this point (1992:432). These shifts demonstrate a pattern that is not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern prose and poetry, since these are "consistent with shifts in person and number in the ancient Near East" (Niehaus 1992:432).

V. 25-27 are composed in prose and although concerned with worship and offerings, Coggins suggests that they share very few links with the preceding verses (2000:132). This portion of the text is regarded as part of the most difficult in the entire book of Amos (Coggins 2000:132). V. 25 is composed of a rhetorical question, introduced by an interrogative article ה ("did" …), to which the answer should be a clear "no" (Niehaus 1992:433). The emphasis in the colon is on "sacrifices and grain offerings" (זבחים ומנחה) which had indeed been offered to

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[98] Comparable material is discussed in other prophetic texts (cf. Isa 1:10-17; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8).

Yahweh in the wilderness (Niehaus 1992:433).[99] For Niehaus (1992:433), the purpose of this literary device is not to confirm that these sacrifices never transpired, but rather "it is to emphasize that sacrifices and grain offerings alone are not of primary importance to the Lord" (cf. Jeremiah 7:22-23).

5.2.9.2 Exegetical Analysis 5:21-27

(a)   I Despise your Feasts and Solemn Assemblies [5:21]

The verb "hate" (שנא) is defined by Lipiński as "an emotional condition of aversion that OT anthropology locates in the "heart" (2004:164). In reference to divine hate, he states that Yahweh's hatred is directed less at persons, but rather at certain unacceptable behaviours (Lipiński 2004:167). This is clearly the case in v.21 as Yahweh expresses his repugnance at the hypocritical festivals of his people (Lipiński 2004:167). Niehaus (1992:431) points out that the reference to "your feasts" (חגיכם) does not refer to feasts in general, but rather to the three major feasts which included the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks and the feast of booths as well as the pilgrimages that were undertaken to celebrate these feasts (cf. Exod 23:14-17; 34:22-25; Deut 16:9-17). All of them formed part of the cultic worship ritual of the people of Israel. A parallel is created between "feasts" (חגים) in v. 21a and "solemn assemblies" (עצרתיכם) in v. 21b which refers to the three major annual assemblies (cf. Lev 23:36; Num 29:35; Deut 16:8) and possibly an assembly in honour of Baal (cf. 2 Kgs 10:20). Isaiah expressed a similar sentiment to Judah and Jerusalem (cf. Isa 1:13-14). Niehaus links the term "take pleasure" (אריח) to the basic sense of smell associated with a burnt offering which suggests a "smell of sweet savour or pleasing aroma" (ניחוח ריח) that would emanate from a burnt sacrifice or offering (1992:431).

Jeremias (1998:101) suggests a double-based approach to the interpretation of any text. In this instance, firstly it is noted that the rejection of worship starts with "the harshest and most emotionally-laden verbs" followed from v. 21b onwards by "modal or iterative verb forms." Jeremias is of the view that Yahweh's criticism clearly does not address the substantive details of the cult, instead festivals, sacrifices and music make up the constituent parts of the worship service and are jointly contrasted with "justice and righteousness" in v. 24 (Jeremias 1998:101).

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[99] Exod 18:12 refers to sacrifices brought by Jethro, while Lev 9:8-24 refers to a variety of offerings that were administered by Aaron.

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This reinforces the understanding of liberal theology. Secondly, Amos is seen to be assuming the priestly language and role by evaluating the acceptance or rejection of gifts,[100] evoking a priestly judgement through the issuing of a priestly torah with the use of the word pair "love-hate" with Yahweh as the subject (cf. Pss 11:5, 7; 33:5; 37:28 and Isa 61:8) and by employing the verb "hear," again with Yahweh as subject, to pronounce Yahweh's acceptance or rejection of an individual's prayer (cf. Jer 14:11) (Jeremias 1998:102). The priests conducted their rituals strictly in terms of a tradition that focused on the passing on of the priestly torah, signalling the acceptance or rejection of sacrifices, gifts and prayers as well as summoning the people for festivals and assemblies. Amos's use of the priestly language is to convey, in the name of Yahweh, "his own judgment in the authoritative 'I' of Yahweh" and reject Israel's worship as a whole indicating the insignificance of their festivals and sacrificial giving that does not impress Yahweh (Jeremias 1998:103).

It may come as a shock to the people that Yahweh now rejects the very cultic system that he had instituted. The difference, however, is that Yahweh is not satisfied with their superficial and mechanical way of appeasing Him. Yahweh makes a strong demand on their hearts and their emotional content, which if applied correctly would enable them to pursue the good that He prescribes and the justice that He demands.

Stuart notes that in prophetic literature transgressions generally precede the announcement of punishment, but in this oracle, the order seems to have been reversed (1987:354). Charges in this oracle are only formulated later in the oracle in vv. 24-26 (Stuart 1987:354). Following on a similar pattern in vv. 18-20, this reversed pattern served to place "priority on getting the Israelites to realize that their whole preconception about their relationship to Yahweh was incorrect" (Stuart 1987:354).[101]

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[100] Jeremias (1998:102) argues that the verb "accept" (רצה) with Yahweh as its subject in v. 22, the priest would announce the acceptance or rejection of sacrificial acts in line with cultic ritual regulations (cf. Lev 1:3; 7:18; 9:5-7; 22:23, 27).

[101] Curse Type 2, cf. Lev 26:31 (Stuart 1987:xxxiii).

(b)   Your Offerings are Vain [5:22]

The offer of "burnt offerings" generally has the purpose of being pleasing unto Yahweh as was the case when Noah built an altar and offered a burnt offering following the flood.[102] This was the most frequent form of sacrificial offering, involving the sprinkling of blood and the burning of pieces of the animal (Niehaus 1992:431). Grain offerings as encapsulated in "your grain offerings" (מנחתיכם) normally applies to a gift that is offered to Yahweh (cf. Gen 4:3-5; Num 16:15; 1 Sam 2:17, 29). This refers specifically to grain or cereal offerings with the law clearly set out in Exod 29:41; Lev 2:1; Num 4:16. Lev 2. Grain offerings normally accompanied animal sacrifices and took the form of burning a handful of grain with the rest handed over to the priest for his personal use (Niehaus 1992:431). Yahweh however rejects all three offerings or sacrifices mentioned in this verse (Paul 1991:190). The Lord finds their "burnt offerings" (עולה) and their "grain offerings" (מנחה) totally "unacceptable" (לא ארצה) (Paul 1991:190). Yahweh will literally not smell their offerings as he takes no pleasure in them.

The peace offering, according to Niehaus (1992:432), was a communal offering made, involving a choice and well-fed animal as indicated here and followed by a communal meal (cf. Exod 20:24; 24:5. Lev 3). These well-fed animals that form the basis of the peace offering are described by the term שלם (Paul 1991:191). The rejection of this "peace offering" (שלם) is unacceptable to the extent that Yahweh has "no regard" (נבט)[103] or "will not take note of/ take no heed/ not look favorably upon" this offering (Paul 1991:190). Yahweh is totally displeased with their sacrifices and offerings that have become an end in themselves. They were clearly under the wrongful and mistaken impression that their religious rituals had found favour with Yahweh. The masses of oppressed poor in society were a serious indictment of their religious observances. For Niehaus "the neglected widow and the poor child in dirty rags were theological statements" that served to condemn the lifestyle of the wealthy in Israel (1992:431). To Amos, the offerings and sacrifices became objects of Yahweh's hatred since they only served to fuel the spiritual ignorance of the people and enhanced their false sense of security (Niehaus 1992:431).

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[102] Cf. Gen 8:20. The effect that this offering had on Yahweh was His promise never to destroy the world in this manner. Also cf. Exod 32:6; Lev 14:20; Deut 12:13-14. Lev 1 provides a complete description of how burnt offerings are to be performed in order to make them pleasing and a "food-offering of soothing odour" to Yahweh.

[103] The root נבט ("to look at") despite it not being predominant in a cultic context, in this instance clearly refers to the unacceptability of the offering (Paul 1991:190).

(c)   The Irritation of your Soulless Music [5:23]

As much as the attendance of feasts and solemn assemblies and the offering of burnt sacrifices and peace offerings[104] were part of Israel's cultic observance, music also formed an integral part of cultic worship to the extent that Israel worshiped Yahweh with "ritual punctiliousness" (Niehaus 1992:432).[105] Yahweh has rejected their feasts, solemn assemblies and their sacrificial giving and now he turns to the music that they create during worship.

Music, which generally contains beautiful harmony and melodies with a soothing effect, is now experienced as burdensome by Yahweh. He now commands them "to take (סור) from me the din of your songs" as the Lord no longer finds these songs of worship pleasing and soothing but rather disturbing, annoying and soulless (Niehaus 1992:432). The word המון ("din") has a broad semantic range that, for example, is equally applicable to both the description of the sound of falling rain as well as the roar of a crowd, according to Niehaus (1992:432).[106] The music in question has a devastating effect on the listener, quite the opposite to its normal soothing qualities. The music created has a loud, annoying and noisy effect. Yahweh will no longer look at (v. 22) or listen to his people's worship (cf. Deut 31:17, 18; 32:20) (Stuart 1987:355).

Nothing is more soothing from a musical perspective when different instruments are combined in harmony to form a sweet melody.[107] The "music of your lyres" no longer has a soothing effect. Yahweh's statement "that I may not hear" should be read with a sense of purpose after the initial imperative "take away" (Niehaus 1992:432). The worship music offered by the people of Israel, given their disharmonious social relationships, was strongly detested by Yahweh. For that reason He disregarded not only their music, but also their offerings as well as their solemn assemblies.

(d)   Let Justice Reign and Righteousness Prevail [5:24]

In concert with v. 7, "justice and righteousness" for Amos and the classical prophets are not to be regarded as some sort of social objective, but principally as a gift from Yahweh that can be allowed "to flourish, can support, or can obstruct" (Jeremias 1998:104). With the same passion

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[104] Burnt offerings and peace offerings generally occurred together. Refer Lev 9:22; Judg 20:26; 21:4; 1 Sam 13:9; 1 Kgs 9:25.

[105] The importance of music in worship is recorded in various texts (cf. Ps 150; Ezra 2:65; 1 Chr 15:16-24; 2 Chr 5:13; 23:13; Isa 5:12; Dan 3:5-15.

[106] "Din" describes the sound of falling rain in 1 Kgs 18:41 and a roaring crowd in 1 Sam 14:19.

[107] In Ps 81:3 the command is given: "Begin the music, strike the tambourine, play the melodious harp and lyre."

that their religious worship ritual has been rejected, they are suddenly reminded what it is really all about: justice and righteousness. This strong condemnation and rejection was directly as a result of a dysfunctional social system that lacked justice and righteousness that kindled Yahweh's anger.

The demand that justice and righteousness be constantly monitored and practised is adequately expressed in the phrase "like a wadi" (כנחל) together with "ever-flowing" (איתן). The adjective איתן, basically means "flowing voluminously" (Wolff 1977:264). While a wadi is seasonal by nature and prone to drying up, the description "ever-flowing wadi" gives effect to the idea that justice and righteousness should be overflowing and permanent by nature (Coggins 2000:132). The English word "stream," used in a number of translations, hardly captures the idea in the same manner that "wadi" does (Niehaus 1992:432). A "wadi" is a subterranean channel that transports torrents of water during the rainy season and dries to a trickle during the summer and is characteristic of the Middle East (Niehaus 1992:432). Amos's wadi is one that would never dry up but instead flow abundantly to sustain life to a dysfunctional society like vital water supplied to a parched wilderness.

Yahweh's desire from vv. 14-15 is repeated here. Only true worship is capable of ensuring justice and righteousness in society. All cultic rituals such as religious assemblies, sacrifices and offerings as well as the best music that can be offered are all totally worthless in the absence of a worship that is built on the concepts of justice and righteousness in a society. This will allow the people of Israel to bear fruit in their private lives and enhance their righteous conduct in public.

Stuart postulates the influence of the Canaanite cultic religion which allowed for the tolerance of immoral behaviour as long as the cult was fully and enthusiastically supported (1987:355). Yahweh, on the other hand, requires a dedicated consistency in upholding the provisions of the covenant. Mays paints a picture of a cult at Bethel that projected "richness and vigorous enthusiasm" in their worship of Yahweh (1969:107). As a result, the people addressed by Amos were neither secular nor indifferent, but worshippers who performed their religion with "zeal and extravagance" (Mays 1969:107). The manner, in which the Israelites religiously attended their festivals and solemn assemblies, offered their sacrificial gifts and performed their praise and worship while being responsible for the gross oppression of their fellow, less

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advantaged citizens, might have been more akin to Canaanite worship culture, but was strongly rejected by Yahweh.

(e)   Relationships Surpass Sacrifices and Offerings [5:25]

Niehaus makes the point that the purpose of the rhetorical question was not to deny that sacrifices were indeed performed in the wilderness, but rather that sacrifices and offerings should not be regarded as of primary importance over and above their relationship to Yahweh (1992:433).[108] The assumption under which the Israelites operated, that their sacrifices were the *sine qua non* of their religion, was a mistaken belief according to Stuart (1987:355). Paul is of the view that sacrifices may have been severely limited by conditions in the wilderness and as a result Amos is contrasting the "lavish and excessive ritual practice of his day" with the parsimonious situation that existed in the wilderness (1991:194). The choice that the people of Israel made to value their religion more than their relationship with Yahweh on the one hand and with their fellow citizens on the other considerably skewed their priorities in Yahweh's view. By loving the religious system that He had initiated (Amos 4:5) and elevating the ritual of the law above the primary concern of obedience to Yahweh, the people have failed to impress Yahweh.

(f)   Guilt of Idolatrous Worship [5:26]

The people of Israel did not only indulge in fallacious religious observance, but they went a step further by indulging in idolatrous worship. Sakkuth and Kaiwan are two astral deities that were carried around, most probably on top of standards created for this purpose as part of pagan worship rituals that infiltrated the North during the time of Ahab (874-853 BC) and Shalmaneser III (859-824) while Israel paid some kind of tribute to Assyria (Stuart 1987:355-356). Coggins's view is that the Hebrew words *sikkut* and *kiyyun* appear to have been purposefully mis-vocalised in the Masoretic text in order to associate them with various forms of abomination (2000:133). In Paul's view, the names of these idols are inharmoniously enunciated on the Hebrew pattern שקוץ ("detestable things") with Amos taking a satirical swipe at them (1991:196). Stuart describes the substantial deviation the Israelites were guilty of as "not their presumptuous abuse of the sacrificial system", but rather "their outright rejection of Yahweh's covenant via idolatry"

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[108] Jer 7:22-23 essentially conveys the same sentiments.

(1987:355). The verb "take up, lift" or "carried around" (נשא) most likely refers to "processions and emblematic standards" (Jeremias 1998:105). Paul (1991:197) holds the view that while Amos scorned the great cult processionals where these astral deities were triumphantly carried around by worshipers, in this instance he may also be referring to the deportation process where they would be carrying their idols off into exile (cf. Isa 46:1-2, 7). The public parading of "gods" (idols) was a regular practice in the ancient Near East according to Niehaus (1992:434). This, however, does not in any way suggest that the Israelites will carry their "own gods" off into exile, which would naturally link vv. 26 and 27 (Niehaus 1992:434). This was normally done by a conquering enemy in order to demonstrate the superiority of their gods over the gods of the conquered nation. In this instance, the Israelites are accused of idolatry where they have carried around these pagan gods in veneration in line with ancient practice (Niehaus 1992:434).

The phrase "that you fashioned for yourselves" refers, according to Niehaus (1992:434) to the polemic against idolatry that entails the rejection of human formed idols and the absurdity of worshiping these human productions (cf. Isa 41:21-24; 44:12-20; Jer 10:1-16). It is not only absurd to worship these idols, but the consequences are devastating (cf. Deut 32:16-17; 1 Cor 10:20). By resorting to idol worship, while under the grossly mistaken belief that they were paying homage to Yahweh, the people of Israel were opening themselves up to be likened to the idols they were worshiping. Ps 135:18 sounds a clear warning in this regard. This goes a long way to explain where the spirit of greed and oppression, that was so prevalent in Israelite society of the time, was derived from.

(g)   Punishment Guaranteed [5:27]

The punishment, for the sins mentioned in the oracle, is announced with the words "I will exile you" in absolute clarity. This exile will be "beyond Damascus" and ultimately to Assyria in the northeast. This would be a common understanding in Amos's day according to Niehaus (1992:434). Yahweh's threat is not an empty promise. The covenantal transgressions that were taking place were of such a nature that Yahweh could not in any way reconcile Himself to his people. They now faced the full might of Yahweh's judgement and punishment in the form of one of the most severe and original covenantal curses.[109]

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[109] Exile was one of the original covenant curses as recorded in Deut 28:36, 64-68; 29:27.

5.2.10 Amos 6:1-7: Woe to your Complacency and Self-Indulgence

1.   "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,

           and to those who are confident on Mount Samaria –

      to the distinguished men of the "first of the nations,"

      to whom the house of Israel comes.

2.   Cross over to Calneh, and see,

           and go from there to Great Hamath,

           and go down to Gath of the Philistines.

      Are you better than these kingdoms,

           or is their territory larger than your territory?

3.   You who thrust away the evil day,

           and hasten a reign of violence.[110]

4.   Who lie upon divans inlaid with ivory,

           and are sprawled out on their couches;

      and eat the lambs from the flock,

           and calves from the fattening stall.

5.   Who sing frivolous songs to the sound of the lyre –

      like David they invent for themselves musical instruments.

6.   Who drink from basins of wine

           and with first-class oils they anoint themselves,

      but they do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.

7.   Therefore, now, they will be the first to go into exile,

       and the loud partying of those who are sprawled out

           will pass away."[111]

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[110] Text-critical Notes on Amos 6:3: Paul describes the phrase "reign of violence" (שבת חמס)" in the expression "bring near (ותגשון) a reign of violence (שבת חמס)" as a puzzling and unique phrase that is difficult to clarify (1991:204). The challenge for him lies in understanding the first word, שבת, which finds its origin in the root ישב ("to sit") and could indicate a "seat," "session" or "throne" of "violence" (חמס) referring to a "rule" or "reign" of violence by a king or judge (Paul 1991:204). By further comparison of this phrase to "a seat of injustice" (כסא הוות) similar to the expression in Ps 94:20, Paul contends that the use of שבת in this instance would be both unmatched and difficult (1991:204-205). Also discounted by Paul is the suggestion that the substantive be derived from the root שבת ("to cease") which would be interpreted as "a violent end" and by extension a "cessation of violence" which was not the intention of the prophet (1991:205). By turning a blind eye to the evil that was engulfing them, the people of Israel were in essence hastening the day of punishment.

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The exegetical analysis of this unit will contribute to the objectives of this dissertation by demonstrating the extent to which both the political and religious establishments were lulled into a false sense of security, lived in great opulence and were unable to address the social and economic challenges that they were confronted with. The complacency, self-assurance and self-indulgence of the elite and wealthy are addressed by Amos in a scathing indictment that exposes their opulent lifestyle and creates for them a position at the front of the queue as "the first of the exiles." Their progress and prosperity, incomparable to that of their neighbours, had enhanced a sense of self-confidence and pride that they were one of the foremost nations, to whom everyone turned to for wise counsel. Jeremias cites four main reasons as the basis for this self-confidence (1998:112). Firstly, the location of the sacred banquet, as a traditional cultic institution, in Samaria, placed it on an equal footing with Zion, despite its lack of comparable religious traditions (Jeremias 1998:112). The second reason for this sense of confidence comes from, as Jeremias perceives it, the fact that the popular belief in their election as the "first" of the nations, a people set apart, meant that they were assured of Yahweh's constant presence (5:14) and salvation (5:18-20) rather than his judgement and punishment (1998:112). As a result they did not entertain any thoughts of defeat or misfortune (v. 3). A third reason for this carefree and self-confident attitude is to be found in their social status as noble and distinguished citizens, the only ones to have access to these celebratory feasts and serving as "the point of orientation for the directionless crowd" (Jeremias 1998:112). They were the ones "to whom the house of Israel comes" (v. 1). Finally, the self-confidence of the wealthy was derived from their political dominance of the poor, through corrupt and violent means. It was based on "securing power and wealth by restricting the life sphere of the poor" (Jeremias 1998:113). This self-confidence,

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[111] Text-critical Notes on Amos 6:7: The general consensus amongst scholars is that this verse refers to activities that are associated with the *marzēaḥ* (Paul 1991:212; Thomas 2003:233). The word *marzēaḥ* appears in v.7b, described by McLaughlin (2001:83) as the "judgment section of the woe oracle" with this section of the verse translated by him as "and the sprawler's *marzēaḥ* shall cease" (וסר מרזח סרוחים). Paul describes the *marzēaḥ* as a religious and social institution "dedicated to a god, often related to memorial rites to insure the beatification of members after death and was characterized by sacred banquets of eating and drinking that lasted several days," well attested in Ugaritic and Palmyrene sources (1991:212). In reference to the entire unit, Amos 6:1-7, McLaughlin comes to the conclusion that while v. 2 can be regarded as "most likely a later insertion," he puts up a very persuasive argument that vv. 1, 3-6 and the *marzēaḥ* in v.7 are all original to the passage (2001:89). He therefore strongly rejects the view that v. 7 is secondary as in his view lexical links between vv. 1, 3-6 and 7 are reinforced (McLaughlin 2001:89). In reaction to the argument that the content of v. 7 was somehow influenced by a redactor who based his interpretation on a description of the *marzēaḥ* in Jer 16:5, McLaughlin argues that "both could simply reflect their contemporary situations" (2001:88).

demonstrated in their luxurious lifestyle, had blinded them to their own social evils to the extent that they had vehemently denied any accountability to Yahweh and the looming Day of Judgement. The upper classes of Israel were so consumed by their extensive revelry, over indulgence and self-confidence that they did not spare a thought for the less privileged and oppressed classes on whose sweat and tears they enjoyed their festivities. So intense was their devotion to personal pleasure and self-indulgence that they remained "totally indifferent, apathetic, and oblivious to the perilous situation of Israel" (Thomas 2003:239).[112]

5.2.10.1 Literary Form and Structure 6:1-7

Modern redactional-critical studies of the passage started with Wolff who identified vv. 2 and 6b as later additions by disciples of Amos between 738 and 733 BC and identifying in vv. 1a and 1b elements of Deuteronomic additions (Hadjiev 2009:169). Wolff identifies 6:1 and vv. 3-6a as exhibiting the form of a woe oracle (1977:273). The woe-cry serves as the "accusation in the prophetic judgment oracle" on the one hand with the second part of the function to name the "announcement of punishment" (Wolff 1977:273). With a disputational style similar to 5:14-15, the direct nature of the address in second-person plural, contrasts with the usual third-person plural address in the unit as well as a break in the prosodic pattern, Wolff draws the conclusion that 6:2 may be a later addition (1977:274). In the same vein, Wolff is of the view that the "stylistic, linguistic and thematic observations" of v. 6b makes it a later addition to the text (1977:274).

Parks describes this unit as a prophetic judgement oracle with vv. 2-6 consisting of the accusation element of the judgement with a rhetorical question in v.3 and v. 7 specifying the punishment related to these accusations (2001:91). According to Parks (2001:91) unit 6:1-7, which deals with the leadership who as a result of their unjust practices are led out in exile, together with 5:18-27 and 6:8-14, forms a series of threats that culminate in exilic motifs (i.e. 6:7; 5:27 and 6:14 respectively).

The passage is dominated by the themes of self-confidence and self-indulgence reflected in both v. 1 which initiates the woe oracle, as well as v. 7 which sets out the punishment (Stuart

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[112] The fate that awaited the wealthy of Israel lay in an ominous warning prophesied by Moses many years previously and recorded in Deut 28:39-40 "You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall [not] drink the wine … You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with oil" (Niehaus 1992:440).

1987:358). Stuart describes the unit as "self-contained and rhetorically unified" and in essence following the structure of a funerary lament (cf. Amos 5:1-17). The passage is entirely poetically structured "in mixed *longum* meter with a predominance of synonymous parallelism" (Stuart 1987:358).

The oracle starts off in 6:1 with a "woe-cry" (הוי) and introduces various categories of people who are under condemnation in both Zion and Samaria (Niehaus 1992:436). V. 1 is made up of a binary structure that balances "those who are at ease" with "those who are confident" displaying a sense of false confidence. The two statements are placed in a parallel relationship with each other.

Niehaus (1992:437) describes the bicolon structure in v. 2 as "implicitly chiastic" and demonstrates its considerable rhetorical impact as follows:

a	b	c
are you	better than	these kingdoms

c'	b'	a'
or is their territory	larger than	your territory?

Niehaus points to the uncertainty of the question and asserts that "the interpretation that refers טובים to the other kingdoms disrupts the poetic structure and makes for a difficult interpretation" (1992:437).[113] He, however, comes to the conclusion that based on the direct command in the previous verse; it would be more natural to interpret this address as a second-person address (Niehaus 1992:437).

The address in v. 3 is a continuation of the address that was started in v. 1. The second-person masculine plural address is continued with the expression "thrust away" (המנדים) any idea of a "day of disaster" (ליום רע) referred to by Amos as "the Day of the Lord" (יום ה) (Paul 1991:204; Niehaus 1992:438). V. 4 is discussed in detail under section 5.2.10.2 (d) below.

The exegesis of v. 5 has presented with a number of difficulties (Thomas 2003; Niehaus 1992). The hapax legomenon הפרטים ("who sing frivolous songs") denotes some type of "verbal accompaniment to music" (Niehaus 1992:439). While there is uncertainty with regards to the

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[113] The person addressed in the MT is not clear and for that reason the NRSV offers "you" in the text and "they" in the margin (Coggins 2000:134). The BHS proposes an emendation to the text to make a second-person reading possible, which might result in an easier flow into the second-person address in v. 3 (Coggins 2000:134).

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verb פרט which suggests something "broken or fallen off," if taken in the context of Lev 19:10 (Niehaus 1992:439), Thomas suggests that it could be translated as "improvise" or to "sing extemporaneously" or even indicate the manner in which a musical instrument is being played (2003:237).

For Niehaus, the context for the phrase "they do not grieve over (נחלו) the ruin (שבר) of Joseph (יוסף)" in v. 6, requires an adversative sense for ו with נחלו ("grieve over") denoting a sense of being sick with grief (1992:440). Wolff regards this portion of the text as a possible secondary addition introduced by the same disciple of Amos that was responsible for 6:2 (1977:277). Paul disagrees with this view postulating that there is no reason to regard v. 6b as secondary since by their very actions, the wealthy were setting in motion the ruin of Israel (1991:209). For Jeremias, this statement at the very least can be associated with the events of 733 BC, when Israel lost most of its richest territories during the Syrian-Ephramite war or even the fall of Samaria in 722/ 21 BC (1998:115). According to Niehaus (1992:440) the following chiasmus in 6:6 strongly demonstrates the luxurious and self-indulgent lifestyle of the elite contrasted against their indifference to the plight of the poor and the ruin of Joseph/ Israel:

a	**b**
who drink	from basins of wine
b'	**a'**
and with first class oils	they anoint themselves

5.2.10.2 Exegetical Analysis 6:1-7

(a)   Misplaced Self-Confidence [6:1]

Similar to his contemporaries, Amos delivers a prophecy simultaneously to both kingdoms (cf. Isa 9:7-20; Hos 6:11; Mic 1:3-16; Amos 2:4-5). Coggins maintains that if there were any suggestions that Jerusalem was to be exempt from this pending judgement and punishment, any confusion was now laid to rest with both kingdoms facing punishment (2000:134). In Stuart's view, the prophetic invective was directed at both kingdoms for the avaricious self-indulgence of their leadership (1987:358). The reference to both Zion and Samaria in v. 1 is to be understood in terms of their political status, economic wealth and their residents' association of influence. Both Jerusalem and Samaria, according to Stuart (1987:358), were royal property, acquired separately

and functioned politically outside the control of tribal traditions and administration (cf. 2 Sam 5:6-9; 1 Kgs 16:24). Their rapid growth and prosperity turned them into centres of conspicuous wealth and significant political power according to Stuart (1987:356-359). This provided citizens even remotely associated with the monarchy to acquire wealth and prestige, but sadly at the risk of abandoning the original values of the covenant (Stuart 1987:359).

Jeremias asserts that the self-confidence the elite were accused of by Amos in vv. 1 and 3 is strongly associated with the celebratory meals in vv. 4-6 (1998:112). In the introductory section to this passage, Jeremias's four reasons for the self-confidence of the nation were cited in great detail (1998:112). Their self-assurance was falsely predicated on their access to cultic institutions and practices, the assurance of Yahweh's presence, their social status in society and sadly on their ability to accrue wealth and power (Jeremias 1998:112). The "distinguished men (נקבי) of the first among the nations (ראשית הגוים)" in v.1 refers to people in society who enjoyed privilege and rank, and who possibly served to judge cases brought to them (Niehaus 1992:436). These men held positions of influence in society and were consulted for various reasons (Niehaus 1992:436). Various texts refer to these men in terms of a variety of positions that they occupied in society.[114] They were the distinguished and noble rulers to whom the nation of Israel would turn to for assistance and judicial decisions (Niehaus 1992:436). They had the power to assign tax obligations, control projects in the public interest and affect the distribution of wealth acquired both internally and externally (Stuart 1987:359). Niehaus (1992:436) asserts that Israel through the capable leadership of Jeroboam II had evolved into a strong, powerful and prosperous nation and arrogantly regarded herself as "the first among the nations."

Amos addresses a section of the population that felt very secure not only in their own privileged positions in society, but also within their own homes. They experienced a false sense of security. Amos is at great pains to impress upon them that their earthly sense of security is in vain if it does not rest on Yahweh.[115] They have learnt to trust in their own strength and privilege as the "first among nations." Amos's counsel to the people is "woe!" for the mistaken confidence they shared with their leaders that Yahweh would not allow them to suffer great harm (Niehaus 1992:436).

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[114] They are described as leaders in worship (1 Chr 16:41), taking care of the distribution of freewill offerings to rural and small-town priests (2 Chr 31:19) and also assist the Levites in temple duties (Ezra 8:20).

[115] Confidence and a true sense of security are only possible if the trust is placed in Yahweh (cf. Ps 84:13).

(b)   Look Around and Compare Yourself [6:2]

Amos surveys a number of cities from Mesopotamia in the east, through Syria and to Philistia in the west in order to pose a comparative question that would once again leave Israel wanting. Amos suggests that they start their survey of "these kingdoms" by going over to "Calneh" proposed by Niehaus to be the present-day Kullanhou, near Tel Arpad, that was conquered by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BC in northern Syria (1992:437).[116] "Great Hamath," to be distinguished from Hamath Zobah (Paul 1991:202), was located on the northern boundary of Israel in upper Syria, about 150 miles north of Dan (Niehaus 1992:437).[117] Hamath had a very unstable political history with the Hivites occupying it as a test to Israel (cf. Judg 3:3), Jeroboam II restoring it to Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 14:23-28), later controlled by Assyria (cf. 2 Kgs 18:34), and defeated subsequently on a number of occasions by Shalmaneser III in 854 BC, Tiglath-pileser III in 740 BC and Sargon II in 720 BC (Niehaus 1992:437). To the west lay Gath of the Philistines, on the border between Judah and Philistia and was most probably under Judah's control in Amos's day (Niehaus 1992:437).

Having surveyed "these kingdoms" the comparative question is now put forward: "are you better than these kingdoms"? With "their territory" referring to a territory located within a specific border or boundary, they were certainly far better off in a material sense (Niehaus 1992:436). However, from a moral and ethical perspective, Zion and Samaria, who should have been in a better position than their neighbouring kingdoms as a result of Yahweh's favour, did not fare any better than their neighbours and were prone to the same type of judgement (Niehaus 1992:437). For Paul, the comparison to these kingdoms served a literary purpose with them being located to the north and south of Israel thereby constituting a geographical focus (1991:204). Israel's overwhelming confidence stems from Jeroboam II's successes, but they are warned by the prophet that they are no more secure than any of these other great kingdoms and could very well face the same fate (Paul 1991:204). According to Stuart, the leading Samarians and Jerusalemites were simply reminded that they were no more important than the other nations that they had conquered (1987:359).

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[116] Note the reference to Arpad and Calno that appears together in Isa 10:9.
[117] Hamath is recorded to be the northern boundary of Israel (cf. Num 34:8; Josh 13:5; 2 Kgs 14:25 and also Amos 6:14).

(c)	Rejection of the Day of Judgement [6:3]

The degenerate leadership of Israel rejected Amos's forecast of the Day of Judgement and also discouraged the rest of the people from realising the error of their ways and coming into a right relationship with the rest of their fellow citizens as well as their covenantal obligations. By not heeding Amos's call, they brought disaster not only on themselves, but on the entire nation. The longer that the day of repentance was delayed, the closer the "the evil day" was drawing (Niehaus 1992:438).[118] This is also a theme that runs throughout Amos in various ways. He refers to the "day of battle" and the "day of the whirlwind" (1:14), "that day" (2:16; 8:3, 9, 13 and in a positive sense in 9:11), "the day I punish Israel" (3:14), "the day of the Lord" (5:18, 20) and "a bitter day" in Amos 8:10 (Niehaus 1992:438).

(d)	Indolent Luxury and Unconscionable Consumption [6:4]

Verses 4-6 once again give us a glimpse into the decadent lifestyle of the affluent in Israelite society. The scene is the *marzēaḥ* feast that happens either during joyous celebrations or sad occasions both given to excessive indulgence (Thomas 2003:233). Jeremias asserts that if this feast is to be understood correctly, as a cultic ritual to establish and enhance contact between Israel's leadership and Yahweh, the nature of the excessive festive revelry and celebrations instead resulted in their estrangement and alienation as they rapidly became detached from the plight of the poor (1998:114). We are given an accurate description of what takes place in the various palaces and homes of the rich by Amos. The view is filled with expensive furniture, sluggish ease, the best food on offer, music and excessive indulgence (Thomas 2003:232). Since their activities do not suggest anything illegal, the prophet Amos was more concerned with issues of immorality (Hayes 1988:186). For Coggins, these activities were neutral actions, described by Amos in hostile terms, in order to generate hostility and displeasure against those whom the prophet disapproved of (2000:135). This excessive indulgence took place at the expense of the weak and vulnerable in society.

The condemnation in v. 4 is similar to the condemnation in 3:12 (also cf. Amos 2:6-7; 3:9-10; 4:1), highlighting the shameless luxury that was enjoyed by some privileged Israelites (also cf. Amos 2:6-7; 3:9-10; 4:1) while the rest struggled under the heavy weight of oppression

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[118] The days of evil are recorded in Pss 49:6; 94:13. Similar sentiments are expressed as a day of evil fortune (Pss 27:5; 41:2; Eccl 7:14) and a day of divine judgment (Jer 17:17-18; 51:2; Prov 16:4).

(Niehaus 1992:438). What had initially started off as a religious rite had disintegrated into wickedness and decadence fitting in well with the view that the book is primarily focused on the condemnation of false religious practices (Coggins 2000:135). Amos paints a picture of extravagant indulgence as he describes those "who lie" (נטה) in reference to their reclining posture while eating (Niehaus 1992:438). Not only were they in a reclining posture, but they were "sprawled out" in an excessive manner. The verb "to sprawl" (סרח), according to Wolff (1977:272), literally means to "hang over, hang down" and is used in reference to blankets (cf. Exod 26:12), a turban (cf. Ezek 23:15) or a wild growing vine (cf. Ezek 17:6). According to Wolff they were sprawled out on their couches in a state of drunken stupor seemingly having lost control of their limbs (1977:276).

In their revelry and excessive indulgence, the wealthy sprawl out on "divans inlaid with ivory."[119] Ivory during the time of Amos was a symbol of wealth and opulence with the rich having easy access to this commodity. Coggins postulates that "ivory seems to have been a particular cause of irritation" to the prophet in reference to 3:15 (2000:135).[120] As a luxury item, the subject of ivory has a fascinating and interesting history, providing insight into the social, economic and religious life of Israelite society in the eighth century BC with the most significant collections of ivory in ancient Israel uncovered in Megiddo and Samaria (Thomas 2003:235).

The verb "eat" (ואכלים) does double duty to emphasise the reclining posture in the context of dining while also indicating their consumption of "the lambs" (כרים) from "the flock" (צאן) and "calves from the fattening stall" (עגלי מרבק) with the elite of Israel having had access to the finest quality and choicest of lamb (Niehaus 1992:439). They dined on prime meat prepared for themselves by restraining and fattening these animals, in designated enclosures, to savour the best that was on offer. They dined "on nothing less than chateaubriand, on the most tender, tastiest, and choicest of meats" (Paul 1991:205). This is in sharp contrast to the majority of Israelites who "probably ate meat as infrequently as three times a year" or even less if they

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[119] Amos constantly refers to this luxurious posture that became a characteristic of the *marzēaḥ* banquets (cf. 3:12; 6:4-6).

[120] Other references to the luxury associated with ivory include Ahab's "ivory house" recorded in 1 Kgs 22:39 and the association of ivory as a luxury commodity in Tyre (cf. Ezek 27:6, 15).

were poor (Stuart 1987:359).[121] The extravagant supply of meat for these sumptuous banquets far exceeded the standards to which the ordinary farmer and worker were used to (Andersen & Freedman 1989:562-563). Amos points out the excessiveness with which they have acquired their ill-gotten gains in 2:8 and 5:11.

(e)   Your Cheap Imitation of David [6:5]

Songs were apparently made up "to the sound of the lyre," with the lyre dictating the tune of the song and the song having to measure up to the musical instrument (Niehaus 1992:439). Problems of interpretation continue with the second colon of v. 5 (Thomas 2003:237). While David is well known for creating many songs (2 Sam 23:1), he was most certainly not known for creating musical instruments. In this sense the statement "like David they invent musical instruments" comes across as somewhat problematic (Thomas 2003:237). Scholars have come up with various proposals on how to interpret this colon such as comparing their admiration for musical instruments to David and likening their instruments to those of David (Paul 1991:207). According to Thomas, whichever interpretive route one undertakes, the intent of the prophet is clear in that Amos is "heaping scorn upon the reputed musical accomplishments of those who would compare themselves to David" (2003:237). It could further be argued that the prophet saw a self-indulgent community that emulated the lifestyle of one of the greatest kings in their history and thought they could please Yahweh in the same manner that David did. What they seem to have missed is that they were totally inept and grossly incapable of being compared to David who was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (Thomas 2003:237).[122]

The upper classes of Israel lived like kings and they were compared to King David by the prophet Amos. However, instead of them bringing honour and glory to God through their songs, they tried to imitate David, creating frivolous songs that were light-hearted and possibly mocking. While David composed songs for the glory of God, the privileged classes of Israel were glorifying their own appetites and self-indulgence. They appeared to have grossly overestimated their own self-worth by considering themselves "musicians and Connoisseurs in a class with David" (Hayes 1988:186).

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[121] The majority of the Israelites could possibly only afford to eat meat at the major annual festivals (cf. Deut 12:17-18).

[122] David was designated the "sweet singer of Israel" (cf. 2 Sam 23:1).

(f)   Indifference to the Ruin of Joseph [6:6]

Having strongly condemned their sprawling posture, excessive eating and frivolous music making without due regard to the suffering of their fellow citizens, Amos now turns his attention to further unconscionable and self-indulgent acts. Their excessive drinking and anointing of themselves with expensive oils now come under the spotlight. The wealthy who unashamedly participated in these revelries are the ones "who drink from basins of wine." According to Niehaus the word "basin" (מזרק), used as a container for sacrificial purposes,[123] suggests that they may have been large and fashioned out of valuable metal (1992:440).[124] This leaves Jeremias to conclude that Amos's emphasis on these large basins was possibly not as much indicative of excessive enjoyment of wine, but rather "a violation of the boundary between God and human beings" (1998:113). Thomas (2003:238) and Paul (1991:208), however, hold out the view that it was the excessive drinking of the participants that was being condemned. According to Paul, Amos may have selected this particular description in reference to the manner and huge quantities of wine consumed (1991:208). Thomas, in agreement with Paul (1991:208), alludes to the *marzēaḥ* feast and its accompanying excesses and highlights the prophet's strong condemnation of uninhibited wine consumption (2003:238).[125] With this reprove, Amos addresses both the excessive drinking habits as well as the luxurious indulgence of the wealthy (Niehaus 1992:440). Thomas (2003:239) describes oil and wine as symbols of the "enjoyable pleasures of life" (Cf. Pss 23:5; 104:15; Prov 21:17; Eccl 9:7-8).

Not only were the wealthy prone to excessive and uninhibited wine consumption, but they also pampered themselves with the finest oils. The adverbial accusative "first-class oils" is used in reference to the quality and value of the commodity used (Niehaus 1992:440). Jeremias sees a direct link between "finest oils" and being the "first" among nations and describes it as "a perversion of election" (1998:113). The attempt is to actualise election through luxury rather than following the ancient custom of dedicating your best possessions to your deity (Jeremias 1998:113). With Israel's unusually hot climate, the use of olive oil to anoint the body became a standard practice in order to refresh and protect the skin (cf. Deut 28:40; Mic 6:15) (Niehaus

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[123] For similar use of the word refer to Exod 27:3; 38:3; Num 4:14; 7:13, 19; 1 Kgs 7:40, 45; Jer 52:18.

[124] This was much like the offerings that were made for the dedication of the altar of the Mosaic tabernacle in Num 7:13.

[125] Warnings against excessive wine consumption are recorded in Prov 20:1; 21:17; 23:20-21, 29-35; 31:4-7. Note especially Prov 31:5: "If they drink, they will forget rights and customs and twist the law against all who are defenceless."

1992:440). Records of the ancient Near East attest to the detailed documentation of the application of oil for cosmetic, hygienic and therapeutic purposes (Thomas 2003:239). The elite went one step further by adding spices and perfumes to their oils thereby enhancing their material and aesthetic value. Biblical Hebrew assigns two variations of the verb "to anoint," namely משח ("to anoint" in a cultic context) and סוך ("to anoint" in a secular context) (Thomas 2003:238; Paul 1991:208). The root משח ("they anoint themselves") occurs within the context of a cultic setting, and should therefore be interpreted in the light of the *marzēaḥ* feast (Paul 1991:208).[126] The importance of such wine and oil to the wealthy was evident in the Samaria Ostraca, indicating a constant supply to the royal store for the consumption of the elite and thereby providing us with a glimpse into the social situation that is so vividly described and condemned by Amos (Thomas 2003:239).

(g)   First in Line to be Exiled [6:7]

As the oracle moves to a close in v. 7, the conclusion is signaled by "therefore," followed by a sense of immediacy with "now" (עתה) indicating imminent punishment (Niehaus 1992:440-441). The punishment is specified in no uncertain terms with the phrase "go into exile as the first (בראש) of the exiles." The stubborn leadership of Jerusalem and Samaria would retain their primacy of position as they are led off into exile in much the same way as they regarded themselves as "the first amongst nations" (Paul 1991:210). A solemn undertaking is given in this concluding verse that all the noise associated with the *marzēaḥ* feast will not be allowed to continue as punishment enfolds the nation. V. 7 contrasts the situation condemned in vv. 3-6 and brings "to an end the sprawling *marzēaḥ*" as they assume their place at the head of the exiles (McLaughlin 2001:97). The *marzēaḥ* comes to a close, an uncomfortable silence descends on the nation (Niehaus 1992:441).

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[126] Niehaus (1992:440) also interprets this statement in the context of a consecration of a prophet (1 Kgs 19:16), a king (Judg 9:8; 1 Sam 16:13), a priest (Exod 28:41) or even some articles of great significance such as Saul's shield (2 Sam 1:21) as well as the Mosaic tabernacle and its vessels (Exod 29:36; 30:26; Lev 8:10-11).

5.2.11 Amos 6:11-12: Punishment for Absurdity

> 11.   For, behold, even now Yahweh is commanding,
>
> > and he will pound the large house to pieces,
> >
> > and the small house to bits.
>
> 12.   Would horses run on rocks,
>
> > or would one plow the sea with oxen?[127]
>
> But you have turned justice to poison-weed,
>
> > and the fruit of righteousness to wormwood.

These two verses, located in the middle of an oracle, deal with the announced judgement against the proud and unrighteous behaviour of Israel (6:8-14). They highlight Yahweh's absolute authority and control in the judgement and punishment of His people for the unnatural and perverted manner in which they had spurned their covenantal obligations. These verses further demonstrate the extent to which justice and righteousness have been distorted and introduce a new perspective announcing the behaviour of Israel as absurd and unnatural. This absurd and unnatural behaviour of the people is condemned in a similar tone in 5:7. Through their behaviour and their perversion of justice, the wealthy of Israel, distorted the norms and standards of society and thereby upset the moral order that Yahweh had so clearly specified in his covenant. Yahweh's elect fell grossly short of their covenantal obligations. This unit clearly ties in with the theme of justice and righteousness running throughout the book of Amos and as a result becomes necessary for inclusion in this analysis.

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[127] Text-critical Notes on Amos 6:12: While the first rhetorical question would solicit a simple "no" response, the problem, according to Paul, lies with the second question (1991:218). The manner in which the question is phrased in the Masoretic text: "Can one plough with oxen (בבקרים)?" is described by Paul as "self-evident and natural" and "would undermine the prophet's very intention and defeat his purpose" (1991:218). Coggins points to a minor textual change, proposed by the eighteenth-century German scholar Michaelis, in which he read the MT *babeqārīm* as *babbāqār yam*, rendering this clause now with the generally accepted version of: "Does one plough the sea with oxen" (2000:137). With most commentators accepting the redivision of the letters בבקרים to בבקר ים and by assuming "an ellipsis" and applying the object from the first question, the following is proposed: "And do oxen (בקרים) plough upon the rocks (בסלע)" (Paul 1991:219). Whatever view is taken here, the prophet succeeds in demonstrating the absurdity of the actions of the wealthy. It is yet another aspect that contributes to the vivid imagery of the text.

5.2.11.1 Literary Form and Structure 6:11-12

The passage, of which these two verses form a part, can either be read as a collection or fragments of oracles or alternatively as a series of redactional units (Hadjiev 2009:175-176). The judgement, punishment and devastation against the pride of Jacob are set out in vv. 8, 9 and 10. The general consensus among scholars is that v. 11 belongs with vv. 8-10 with 6:8-14 divided between vv. 8-11 as a group on the one hand and vv. 12-14 grouped together on the other (Jeremias 1998:115-116; Paul 1991:213, 218). Parks advances the justification for this grouping as the presence of "house" in both vv. 9-10 and v. 11 respectively while the grouping of vv. 12-14 reflects on the absurdity of Israel's social practices in relation to justice and righteousness, as a feature of everyday life (2001:91).

Wolff is of the view that 6:11, much like 3:15, is addressed to the high-living officials of Samaria (1977:281). The verse contains an "oracular fragment" attachment with a secondary linking formula according to Wolff (1977:281). This is evident from the announcement of a command from Yahweh, not followed by an utterance from Yahweh as would be expected, but rather by a third-person report of Yahweh's intentions (Wolff 1977:281). Wolff admits that the "harshness of the transition" makes it impossible to deny Amos authorship of this fragment of the text (1977:281). Jeremias speculates that while v. 11 may at one point have been part of an independent saying, it was more than likely developed "as an intensification from 3:15" where both verses share the same verb "tear down" in the destruction of Samaria's houses (1998:116). Hadjiev does not see any reason why "the connections in language and thought of 6:8, 11, (and) 12 with the rest of the Amos material" should not be regarded as "evidence of the characteristic style and thought world of the prophet" (2009:176). V. 12 is regarded as a self-contained independent unit (Hadjiev 2009:175; Jeremias 1998:117; Wolff 1977:284). It is also considered to be an imitation of 5:7.

V. 11 starts off with "for" introducing the reason for the devastation highlighted in the previous verses and is followed by a deictic particle "behold" (הנה) that indicates a sense of imminence (Niehaus 1992:445). This particle is normally associated with a participle in prophetic announcements concerning the future (cf. Amos 4:2; Isa 3:1; Jer 8:17; 11:22) according to Niehaus (1992:445). The joint rendition of "behold, now" is described by Parks as a transitional phrase which is utilised to introduce punishment in detail and that extends all the way from v. 11 into v. 14 (2001:92). Each of these verses contains a transitional phrase

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addressed in v. 11 in third-person and v. 14 in first-person forming a literary *inclusio*, vv. 12-13 providing the grounds for punishment (Parks 2001:92).

The phrase "the fruit of righteousness"[128] in v. 12 responds to "justice" (משפט) in the first colon with the parallel structure serving the purpose of dictating the kind of ethical response to Yahweh Amos had in mind (Niehaus 1992:446). The metaphor "fruit" is used both in a positive and negative sense in the Old Testament (Niehaus 1992:446).[129] Jeremias sees in v. 12 a conscious introduction of a foreign element by Amos's disciples into chapter 6, thereby disturbing the logic of vv. 8-11 in order to demonstrate the irrationality and incongruous nature of their actions (1998:118).

5.2.11.2 Exegetical Analysis 6:11-12

(a)   Yahweh commands Total Destruction [6:11]

The statement "Yahweh is commanding" is described by Niehaus as a form that occurs frequently in covenantal passages where Yahweh commands either covenantal obedience (cf. Exod 34:11; Deut 26:16) or punitive judgement against his own recalcitrant people (cf. Jer 34:22) (1992:445). Yahweh will take on the responsibility personally for striking at His people. He "will pound" (הכה) confirms that responsibility and "probably envisions an earthquake (cf. 3:15; 9:1), since the result is broken (רסס) and split (בקע) walls, or in other words a field of ruins" (Wolff 1977:283). The "vengeful demolition by enemy hordes" is also a possible translation according to Stuart (1987:364).

The devastation will be complete and beyond recognition: "the large house will be pounded to pieces and the small house reduced to bits" (Niehaus 1992:445). Coggins describes this verse as a "somewhat fragmentary section" that asserts, once again, a picture of total disaster that will affect everyone (2000:137). The root בקע means "to cleave, break open or break through" ensuring that the façade or surface under attack is completely reduced to fragments (Niehaus 1992:445). It is clear that the punishment will now engulf everyone. The employment

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[128] This phrase also appears in the New Testament (cf. Phil 1:11; Jas 3:18; Matt 7:15-20; 12:33).

[129] It is used positively in Prov 11:30 ("the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life") and Isa 3:10 and negatively in Hos 10:13 ("fruit of lies"), Prov 1:31 and Mic 7:13 ("fruit of their doings").

of a merismus, i.e. "the large house" and "the small house," foretells the total imminent destruction of the northern kingdom (Paul 1991:217).

(b)   Absurd Behaviour distorts Justice and Righteousness [6:12]

In v. 12 the prophet poses two rhetorical questions that are considered absurd and would naturally illicit a "no" response. Amos resorts to what Paul describes as "the sapiential style of the rhetorical double question" in order to convey his conviction of human relations by comparing human behaviour with those of animals and their handlers (1991:218). The absurd nature of the questions relate to the fact that they are contrary to nature. The first question "would horses run on rocks" implies a totally impossible task (Niehaus 1992:445). It clearly indicates an unnatural and impossible mission and furthermore a dangerous place to ride (Niehaus 1992:445).

The first rhetorical question in the verse solicits a very simplistic response. Horses cannot run on rocky terrain for fear of injuring themselves, damaging their hooves and being rendered totally ineffective as they would be unable to retain their balance and running pace. The second rhetorical question, however, is considered both unnatural and an outright absurdity, more so than the first question since "it contradicts the natural order of things" (Paul 1991:218). He further sees their behaviour as demented and deranged and totally deprived of reason (Paul 1991:219). For Stuart, these unnatural actions serve as an analogy, based on the principle of *reductio ad absurdum*, to the actions of Israel (1987:364).

As much as the first two clauses of v. 12 have depicted two totally absurd and unnatural scenarios, the prophet Amos in his own unique way, depicts the actions of Israel as unnatural in relation to the principles of justice and righteousness. Niehaus describes Israel's actions as even more unnatural than the scenarios painted (1992:445). The root הפך ("to turn") is utilised for double duty between "poisonweed" (שרא) and "wormwood" (לענה) and serves to accentuate the unnatural nature of the Israelites' social acts of injustice. These two nouns stand in parallel to each other.

5.2.12 Amos 8:4-7: Corrupt Practices will not be Overlooked

4. Hear this, you who crush the needy,[130]

exterminating the oppressed people of the land,

5. Saying: "When will the New Moon be over,

that we may market grain,

and the sabbath, that we may open the granaries,

lightening the ephah and weighting the shekel,

and cheating with false scales?

6. So that we may buy the poor for silver,

and a needy man for a pair of sandals,

and sell the refuse of wheat?"

7. Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob,

"Surely, I will never forget all of their deeds.

The focus now shifts to the market place, placing the merchants and traders under the spotlight. Their restless anxiety to end the observance of holy days in order to pursue corrupt economic activities was extremely distasteful to Yahweh. Amos demonstrates the widespread injustice in Israel as inherently brutal, characterised by a spirit of self-aggrandizement, deceitfulness and a lack of concern for the basic humanity of the poor. Their disdain for the Mosaic covenant was even more disconcerting. For Thomas, their unethical conduct and illicit activities could not have existed "without the passive acquiescence and ultimately the connivance of the authorities" (2003:220). He further implicates the political establishment in these corrupt activities by suggesting that the merchants enjoyed "tacit government approval" to conduct their immoral and unethical business practices (Thomas 2003:220). Israel was clearly on the road to self-destruction. The selection of this unit is important from the perspective that the merchants and traders can be considered to have conspired with the political and religious authorities to perpetuate this spiral of violence and oppression of the poor.

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[130] Also refer to the text-critical notes on Amos 2:7 in footnote 44.

5.2.12.1 Literary Form and Structure 8:4-7

Hadjiev is of the view that this section contains some signs of disunity with vv. 5 and 6a displaying elements of friction (2009:98). There is reference to two different types of commercial activities with v. 5 condemning the use of dishonest scales and v. 6a, similar to 2:6, reproving the same people for buying the oppressed for money (Hadjiev 2009:98). V. 6b returns to the sale of corn and adds another corrupt practice, namely the sale of the refuse of wheat and through its first-person speech form, it appears to be a suitable extension of v. 5, making the peculiarity of v. 6a stand out even more (Hadjiev 2009:98).

It is argued that there is strong evidence that a single redactor attempted to weave the various disparate pre-existing materials in the unit (vv. 4-8) into a whole (Hadjiev 2009:100). According to Hadjiev (2009:100), this is suggested by "the unmistakable wordplay between לשבית (v. 4) and והשבת (v. 5)" with a dense recurrence of a combination of שׁ and ב sounds throughout the section and reflected in the following words creating a measure of interconnections: לשבית (v. 4), ונשבירה שבר (v.5) and והשבת (v. 5), נשביר (v. 6) and נשבע (v. 7). V. 4 and 7 are seen as linked and together form an envelope around vv. 5-6 with the accusations closely in parallel to the indictments in 2:6b-8 (Thomas 2003:215). The difference is that the greed and corruption of the merchants are laid bare in greater detail in this unit (Thomas 2003:215).

A solemn covenantal command opens v. 4 with the verb "to hear" (שמעו) occurring frequently in contexts where the word "obey" is more appropriate (Niehaus 1992:375).[131] Amos once again condemns the injustice perpetrated against the poor in this brutal manner. The statement that spans vv. 5 and 6 initiates a new theme that deals with the concept of deception in the commercial sphere and is presented as a citation of those who stand accused of the crimes alluded to in both verses (Thomas 2003:216). According to Paul, this direct citation was employed as a favourite tactic to provide "decisive incriminating evidence" against the accused (1991:257).

Similar to 4:2 and 6:8, an oath by Yahweh in 8:7 dramatically announces the "declaration of the forthcoming punishment" (Paul 1991:259). The essence of Yahweh's oath is "I will never

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[131] These contexts utilise the word in the sense of listening with the attention to obey (cf. Josh 1:18; Jer 12:17).

forget" (אם־אשכח לנצח) and is introduced by Niehaus as a typical "Old Testament self-imprecatory oath" (1992:472).

5.2.12.2 Exegetical Analysis 8:4-7

(a)   A Warning to the Oppressors [8:4]

Similar to the opening call in 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1, "hear this" initiates an exhortation or indictment with those addressed "characterized in the vocative" as persecutors of the poor (Thomas 2003:215). This command was generally used to introduce Yahweh's covenantal commands and now it is used in the same manner to introduce his covenant-lawsuit commands against his own rebellious people (Niehaus 1992:375).[132] Forming part of this brutal and heinous treatment of the oppressed, the noun "the needy" (אביון), which recurs in 2:6 and 4:1, is a reference to those less fortunate in society who are both poor and powerless (Niehaus 1992:365). The "needy" (אביון), located at the bottom of the social hierarchy, demand special protection of their rights in terms of Yahweh's covenantal obligations (cf. Exod 23:6; Jer 5:28).

The acts of injustice on the part of the wealthy, as they strangled the livelihood out of their compatriots, had the ultimate effect of eradicating the "oppressed people of the land."[133] According to Jeremias, the violence directed at the poor, initially cited in 2:7 and again in 8:4a and 8:6, involves the systematic destruction of small-scale farmers and tradesmen (1998:147).

(b)   Preference for Corruption instead of True Worship [8:5]

Amos highlights the anxious anticipation by the wealthy and greedy merchants of Israel for the new moon and Sabbath to pass so that they can continue with their corrupt commercial practices. Acts that were centred on increasing their illicit wealth at the expense of those in society that could ill afford it. While the merchants scrupulously observed their religious obligations, they clearly did not demonstrate a passion for their religious festivals as their hearts were not in it (Andersen & Freedman 1989:805). They did not display the same zeal in their religious observance as they displayed with regards to their evil practices. Linville alludes to a brief

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[132] For this kind of language used in covenant commands (cf. Deut 4:1; 5:1; 6:4). For the use of the same language in covenant-lawsuits (cf. Isa 1:2, 10; Jer 2:4; Hos 4:1). Examples of this type of solemn covenantal commands in Amos include 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1.

[133] The expression "the oppressed people of the land" can also be found in Job 24:4; Ps 76:10; Isa 11:4 and Zeph 2:3.

cessation of corruption during the New Moon and Sabbath festivals (2008:153). He goes further to point out that it was ironic that only these sacred times drew attention to their corrupt activities and rendered their holiness sacrilegious (Linville 2008:153). Otherwise, it was business as usual.

As part of the festivals of the Mosaic covenant, "the new moon," incorporated burnt, grain, wine offerings and a goat as sin offering and was celebrated every four weeks (Niehaus 1992:470).[134] These feasts were popularly observed (cf. 1 Sam 20:5, 18, 24) and any form of commercial activity was prohibited either through custom or law (Niehaus 1992:470). The accused observed their holy days with a sense of restless impatience (Mays 1969:144). While observance of the festival of the New Moon and the Sabbath was upheld religiously, the anxiety to return to business "that we may market grain" and "that we may open the granaries" demonstrated a sense of skewed priority. The Sabbath was a day of rest commanded by Yahweh with work forbidden.[135]

For Amos the greed of the merchants was not only displayed through their restlessness to see the end of their festivals so that they could return to business according to Niehaus (1992:470), but more distressingly to their looking forward to their corrupt practices of reducing the "ephah" (איפה), enlarging the "shekel" (שקל) and "cheating" (רמה) with "false scales" (מרמה מאזני). An ephah, an Egyptian word, is described by Thomas as a "common unit of dry measure" (2003:218). Niehaus describes it as a standard measure of around 22 litres with the merchants selling a reduced amount as a standard measure (1992:471). Paul measures an ephah at just over 39 litres (1991:258). Whatever the measured unit amounts too, it should not in any way deflect from the brutal and violent effects these unethical schemes had on the marginalised of Israelite society. A shekel, on the other hand, is derived from the Hebrew root שקל (Thomas 2003:218) and weighed around 11.5 grams, according to Niehaus (1992:471). The merchants used shekels that were heavier in weight allowing them to get more payment than they should have. These duplicitous balances allowed the seller to take advantage of the buyer through "cunning fraud" (Wolff 1977:327).[136] Amos's condemnation was strongly directed against their unethical and

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[134] The New Moon festival formed part of several feasts (cf. Num 10:10; Isa 1:14; Hos 2:13) and Sabbath celebrations (cf. 2 Kgs 4:23; Isa 1:13; Ezek 46:3; Hos 2:13).

[135] Cf. Exod 20:8-11. These laws were also intended for the nations benefit (cf. Deut 4:5-6).

[136] Proverbial wisdom not only strongly condemned the use of deceitful balances in Prov 11:1; 20:23 but also denounced such unacceptable practices in Prov 16:11; 20:10 (Wolff 1977:327). The use of fraudulent weights and measures are also condemned in terms of the legal tradition in Lev 19:35-36 and Deut 25:13-15 (Wolff 1977:327).

corrupt practices of selling short measures of grain by making the ephah unit small and using heavier weights for payment. Despite the prohibition of these corrupt practices,[137] they were widespread in the ancient Near East, with excavations from shops that existed at Tirzah, around the eighth century, boasting two scales, one for buying and one for selling (Mays 1969:144). Thomas describes this economic situation in Israel as relatively new as the growth of a dynamic urban culture driven by the monarchy, and culminated in the advance of commerce and an economic upper class (2003:216).

The falsification of weights and measures was seen as "a flagrant abuse of justice in the eighth century B.C.E." and was widely condemned by the prophets Amos, Hosea and Micah (King 1988:22). According to Andersen & Freedman (1989:815) Amos identifies three key elements that make up this corrupt scheme, namely false measures, deceitful weights and dishonest balances and any one of them would be sufficient on its own to generate a huge unethical profit. In combination, they, however, reflect the intentional and "cold, cruel, calculated exploitation and greed" that violently led to the demise of the marginalised (Andersen & Freedman 1989:815).

(c)   Selling the Poor into Bondage [8:6]

V. 6 continues the anxious anticipation initiated in v.5 and sets forth the continued brutal and devastating oppression that takes place in the market. The illicit acts of the merchants continue to be exposed by Amos. The merchants prepare themselves "so that we may buy (קנה) the poor (דלים) for silver (בכסף)" and "a needy man for a pair of sandals," with parallel constructions of "the poor" and "a needy man," on the one hand, and "silver" and "a pair of sandals" on the other (Niehaus 1992:471). Niehaus (1992:471) asserts that this is an indication that the poor had no option but to sell themselves into bondage for a small amount of silver (cf. Lev 25:39-43; Job 24:9-12). People were treated by the merchants as commodities and thereby became part of a trade in human traffic a reprehensible act that further eroded justice and equity in society (Thomas 2003:219). The difference for Thomas between the activity in 2:6 and the one here is

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[137] These practices were also very strongly prohibited in Hammurabi's Code as well as in a document entitled "Hymn to the Sun God," part of fragments found in the library of Assurbanipal around 668-627 BC (Niehaus 471). In terms of Yahweh's covenant, dishonest scales are also strongly prohibited in Lev 19:35-36 with threatened punishment in Mic 6:11.

that in 2:6 "the vice was selling (מכר) the poor into debt-slavery" while the current reference is to "the actual buying (קנה) of human beings" (Thomas 2003:219; Paul 1991:259). These market practices invariably place the impoverished in an invidious position whereby they are totally unable to purchase the barest essentials and have no option but to sell themselves into some type of bondage just in order to survive. Ringgren is of the view that the practice in this verse relates to commercial deceit which would render the reference to debt servitude as "somewhat inappropriate" and demonstrates the enthusiasm and impatience of the accused to pursue a trade (1998:467).

To add insult to injury, the merchants inflated their gains by selling adulterated products to the poor. By selling "the refuse of wheat" (מפל), the merchants took their devious plans to defraud the poor to greater lengths. The bran or grain that landed on the floor after the wheat was threshed would be swept together, mixed with grain and sold at the going rate as a contaminated product, enhancing their illicit profits (Niehaus 1992:472). This grossly inferior product would clearly have been unfit for human consumption and would once again demonstrate the lack of concern these merchants had for the poor. By paying for this worthless mixture, the poor were further impoverished with no other option but to sell themselves into slavery (Niehaus 1992:472).

(d)   Deeds will not be Disregarded [8:7]

The dire situation depicted in the previous verses was of such a serious nature that Yahweh now swears never to forget what they have done. The oath "Yahweh has sworn," identical to similar oaths where Yahweh swears by his holiness (4:2) and by his life or soul (6:8) is now made against "the pride of Jacob" (גאון יעקב) indicating "either Israel's attitude of pride or the things that encourage pride, such as military power, independence, and affluence" (Niehaus 1992:472). The immoral and malicious practices of Israel evoked a correspondingly vehement retort from Yahweh (Paul 1991:259).

According to Thomas the situation depicted in these verses and the associated charges brought by Amos emphasised a fundamental shift in the economic life of Israel (2003:221). The growth in the economy and commercial activity, temporarily sustained by aggressive business practices affected the poor negatively as they had to sell off their land as family inheritance in

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order to survive. The rise of the elite and wealthy landowners and merchants had the devastating effect of economically marginalising the poor and forcing them to the edge of social existence. One of the key indictments against Israel by Amos concerns the ruthless and dishonest exploitation of the poor (Thomas 2003:222).

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

In chapter 2 we took a close look at the nature of political structures and kingship ideology within the ancient Near East. As part of this focus, Israelite kingship and its relationship to Yahweh also came under the spotlight. The Israelite kings were endowed with sacral qualities and characteristics that placed them apart from other mortals.[138] They enjoyed a special relationship with Yahweh. Furthermore, the Hebrew Bible confirms the divine status of the Israelite king as well as the religious foundation of kingship ideology demonstrating the close link between Yahweh and the political establishment represented by the monarchy.[139] Solomon, following in the footsteps of his father David, requested wisdom and continued favour from Yahweh and pledged his commitment to uphold Yahweh's covenant. Yahweh granted him the wisdom to perform justice with a discerning heart (cf. 1 Kgs 3:13) in what Wiseman describes as the "ability to distinguish right and wrong and to decide and govern" (1993:84).[140] The expectation of an honourable disposition by the king towards justice and righteousness was integral and inherent in Yahweh's covenant. Apart from the classic prophets, the royal courts of Israel were served by a number of other prophets (Sawyer 1993:20). Since these cultic prophets were positively disposed towards the king, as demonstrated by their chief presiding officer the Chief Priest of Bethel Amaziah (cf. Amos 7:10-11), they can for all intents and purposes be regarded as part of the political establishment.[141] The king, supported by the political and religious structures of the time, therefore had the awesome responsibility of upholding justice and righteousness in his society. The king's failure to do so would result in social upheaval and chaos of enormous proportions which was precisely the situation that confronted Amos during the eighth century BC.

In contrast to the political establishment, the cult, the wealthy elite comprised of corrupt judges, merchants, traders and royal officials as well as the women of Samaria whose conspicuous consumption fuelled the levels of corruption in society, stood the prophet Amos. All

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[138] These sacral qualities and characteristics are demonstrated in the following biblical references: 2 Sam 14:17, 20; 1 Kgs 3:4-15, 16-28; 4:29-34; 10:1-9, 24.

[139] Cf. Pss 2:7; 89:26; 45:6.

[140] For a full discussion on the nature and political legitimation of Israelite kingship and its relationship to Yahweh, see chapter 2.

[141] Chapter 3 of this dissertation explores the institution of prophecy and its relationship to the prevailing social structures.

of these groups, through their actions, conspired to oppress and marginalise the poor and downtrodden. The above analysis certainly confirms the acts of severe exploitation and oppression that Amos confronted. These acts included the feudal enslavement of the poor and righteous (2:6), depraved sexual behaviour (2:7), forfeiture and tribute gathering (2:8), the corrupt accumulation of wealth (3:10-12, 15; 6:40), unethical judicial systems (5:7, 10), the imposition of heavy taxes and levies (5:11), bribery (5:12), a gluttonous indulgence in a life of luxury and opulence (4:1; 6:4-7) and economic exploitation through excessive profiteering (8:5-6) all at the expense of the marginalised (Hasel 1991:102). Linville (2008:83) asserts that "an unjust political and economic system dishonours the divine (relative to their own views on what a just society is, of course)." Similarly, it would be difficult to accept that a renegade political elite who is prone to profaning the divine name would be capable of upholding justice in human relations (Linville 2008:83). The monarchy, as the prime political authority, had the required divine mandate and power to facilitate justice and righteousness and prevent social chaos. Their failure to do so resulted in an inherent tension in the intricate relationship between true Yahwistic religion, represented by the prophet Amos on the one hand and the all-encompassing political establishment on the other. Amos was called by Yahweh to prophesy in Israel (7:15) and charged with the key responsibility of indicting the nation of Israel for their gross violation of Yahweh's covenant. These violations led to very serious social upheavals. The conduct of the wealthy in Israel was undoubtedly a major cause for concern for both Yahweh and His prophet Amos, who acted as his true and authentic representative upholding the critical religious values of society. The Hebrew classical prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, all were concerned with a fair and just society, so conspicuously absent within their own day. Their scathing attacks on the religious and political status quo of their time highlighted the imbalance in society that existed between the religious expectations of Yahweh, the cultic practices of the elite and the social and political responsibility of the monarchy to the poor.

The exegetical analysis of the above selected texts certainly demonstrates the ambivalence that is created in the otherwise dynamic relationship between politics and religion when a society, through its ruling establishment, proves that it is incapable of upholding the covenantal obligations of Yahweh. Justice and righteousness, as the central theme in the message of Amos, also constitutes key values in Yahweh's covenantal obligations.[142] As a consequence

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[142] This was demonstrated in various biblical references throughout the chapter.

any relationship in society that does not uphold these values, creates tension in one's relationship with Yahweh and may ultimately result in a similar fate that befell Israel in the eighth century BC. Jensen refers to "a basic simplicity to the ethical teaching of Amos" as he highlights the failure of the political and legal systems to protect the marginalised and the hypocrisy of the religious establishment upholding a system that is prone to corruption (2006:89).

The concluding chapter of this dissertation will now focus on an evaluation of how this balance between politics and religion is currently being handled in modern society with a few recommendations on how this intricate relationship should be theologically viewed in a changing global environment. For the purposes of this evaluation the focus will be particularly on the current South African political, religious and economic environment. This will be interesting from a number of perspectives and will hopefully contribute towards both a political and theological re-evaluation of the delicate balance between religion and politics in a modern society.

CHAPTER 7

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN A 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL CONTEXT

The distorted relationship between true Yahwistic religion, as represented by the classical prophet Amos and the socio-political and religious establishments of his day was of such a nature that the indictments he served on the nation had a vicious effect. Yahweh, who historically has had a very close relationship with Israel, threatened punishment for all their injustices in Amos 3:2. The relational imbalance between politics and religion in ancient Israel gave rise to serious social transgressions which ultimately evoked the ire of Yahweh. Zimmerli argues that precisely because of this close relationship between Yahweh and Israel; they had to face the consequences of punishment (2003:44). Punishment took the form of exile from the land that Yahweh had given them. The impact of this threatened punishment was severe. In the case of Amos, this impact is demonstrated by the response of Amaziah, the Chief Priest at Bethel who banished Amos from the land with the remark that "the land is not able to bear all his words" in 7:10 (Zimmerli 2003:44). Moving the clock forward to the 21st century we soon come to realise that not much has changed. In fact one could argue quite persuasively that social conditions have deteriorated remarkably despite our human achievements on many fronts. It would be useful at this point to postulate the following question: Could the God of ancient Israel, who continues to occupy a prominent role in the 21st century, have foreseen the current socio-political challenges of our time? The answer to this would be a resounding yes if we consider God as omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent.[143] A few observations will be made in this closing chapter with regard to the theological re-evaluation of the relational balance between politics and religion in a modern global context. This will be undertaken from a Christian perspective in view of its very close relationship to the Hebrew Bible and the ancient laws that provided the theological basis for classical prophets such as Amos.

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[143] The concepts of God as all knowing, all powerful and all present.

7.1   LESSONS FROM AMOS FOR THE BALANCE BETWEEN POLITICS AND RELIGION IN A MODERN SOCIETY

Although conflicts and rivalry have formed part of our existence since time immemorial, the last hundred years or so witnessed a terrifying escalation in conflict that is considered unprecedented in human history. Stott (1999) records some of the most horrific human rights violations in the social, political and religious history of mankind with practically all of them confined to the 20th century. The two world wars combined delivered approximately 60 million fatalities and Hitler exterminated approximately six million Jews in his concentration camps and gas chambers (Stott 1999:166). While Stalin presided over the deaths of millions of dissidents in his Siberian labour camps, it is feared that around 65 million Russians were annihilated by their very own leadership after 1923 (Stott 1999:167). Around three million Cambodians died of disease, starvation or execution at the hands of a ruthless dictator by the name of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 while it is estimated that at least eight thousand Muslims were executed by the notorious Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadjic and Ratko Mladic all in the name of ethnic cleansing (Stott 1999:166, 167). The political and ideological oppression in Latin America during the 1970s witnessed the disappearance, killings and arrests of thousands of people in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and later in Peru. Closer to home we witnessed the extermination of between a half and three quarters of a million Ugandans during Idi Amin's reign of terror between 1971 and 1979, the murder of at least 200,000 tribal enemies of President Milton Obote in the Loweru Triangle, the massacre of half a million people of the Tsutsi tribe during the Rwandan tribal conflict in 1974 and 3 million displaced with more than a million people dying in Ethiopia between 1983 and 1985 (Stott 1999:166, 167). We watched our televisions in shock and horror as two planes slammed into the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. This terrorist act together with the other simultaneous incidents at the Pentagon and the plane that crashed independently resulted in the loss of almost 3000 lives. Any hope for prospects of peace and dialogue ushered in by the new millennium was crushed violently. The forceful and vivid manner in which the acts were perpetrated was a sharp display of conflicting ideologies at play.

South Africa's first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela, was sworn in on 10 May 1994 bringing to a close 342 years of white domination initially under Dutch and British

colonial rule and since 1948 under indigenous Afrikaner-led apartheid (Venter 2001:3). The history of the country was primarily characterised by social and political violence and bloodshed with almost 17000 lives lost between 1985 and 1993 (Venter 2001:3). The state pursued a policy of apartheid that was initially conceived of as a "separate but equal policy" but ultimately resulted in the brutal social, economic and political oppression of the majority "non-white" population. The black armed struggle for liberation which started in 1960 was met with violent suppression resulting in numerous detentions without trial, political deaths in detention, capital punishment and a general and continuous state of emergency (Venter 2001:3; Stott 1999:167).

Despite its momentous achievement of transitioning from an apartheid-based ideological state to a modern constitutional democracy, boasting one of the best constitutions in the world, South Africa remains an enigma. Some of the issues that were confronted by Amos in eighth century Israel certainly run through our current society like the proverbial golden thread. Issues such as corruption in both the public and private sectors for the purposes of accumulating wealth, the opulent lifestyles of politicians, government officials and senior corporate executives, bribery and corruption in our criminal justice system, the propensity to raise additional funds for government coffers through the implementation of toll-fees and charges for plastic bags, and more recently the issue of police brutality. These social challenges coupled with labour unrest and a struggling economy ultimately manifest in poor service delivery and large scale unemployment affecting the poor and marginalised most profoundly. The Church appears to have gone silent and has not succeeded in positioning itself as the religious conscience of the nation. In this regard the author concurs with Wittenberg who implies that there exists a duty on the part of the Church, who embraces the message of the prophets, to protest against all forms of social evil (1993:114).

At the heart of the social problems of ancient Israel lay poverty, social inequality and a combination of corrupt practices that perpetuated social chaos and facilitated illicit wealth. Poverty and social inequality are some of the key challenges facing South Africa and many countries across the world. The primary millennium development goal as stated in the United Nations Development Plan is the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty when it was found in 2005 that around 10 million people die every year of hunger and hunger-related diseases.[144] On the 30th of January 2013, Times LIVE reported the devastation of malnutrition facing this

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[144] Refer www.undp.org.za/millennium-development-goals (15 May 2013)

country under the banner headlines: "More than 12 million South Africans will go to bed hungry tonight."[145] The poor and marginalised are found in numerous informal settlements and across various communities in South Africa. Social upheaval and chaos results from poor service delivery protests as marginalised communities take to the streets to vent their frustrations and anger at our wanting political administration. The National Development Plan (2013), recently adopted by the South African government, identifies the reduction of poverty and inequality as one of the country's key strategies in social reconstruction towards 2030. It is envisaged that given the right action plans, income poverty (below R419 at 2009 rates as a base) can be eliminated from 39% of households to zero while simultaneously reducing inequality by reducing the Gini coefficient from 0.69 to 0.6. Raising employment substantially from 13 million in 2010 to 24 million by 2030 and vigorously promoting investment are some of the objectives of the plan.

While poverty reduction is more plausible than poverty eradication from both a practical social perspective as well as a biblical perspective, we continue to be hoodwinked by politicians who promise the eradication of poverty as a grand ideal. Jesus makes the point that "the poor will always be with us."[146] The poor stand especially close to Yahweh and can count on His help because they cannot help themselves (Jeremias 1998:147).[147] This places an awesome responsibility on the rest of mankind to continue to take care of the poor and constantly advocate for their upliftment. The health of any society can therefore be determined by the extent to which it takes care of the poor in society. It is therefore the responsibility of all politicians and public servants to take a leading role in reducing levels of poverty in society. This brings the unacceptable levels of corruption into sharp focus. South Africa was ranked 64th out of 183 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2011 with New Zealand ranked as the least corrupt and Somalia as the most corrupt of all countries listed.[148] The index ranks countries internationally based on perceived levels of public corruption and appeared against the backdrop of an international "public outcry against corruption, impunity and economic instability" that "sent shockwaves around the world in 2011" (Corruptions Perceptions Index 2011). Militating strongly against the noble and ambitious objectives of the National Development Plan to reduce

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[145] Refer www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2013/01/30/twelve-million-going-to-bed-hungry-in-sa (15 May 2013)
[146] Cf. Matt 26:11 (also cf. Deut 15:11).
[147] Cf. Pss 22:25, 27; 34:3; 37:11; 69:33.
[148] The Corruption Perceptions Index 2011 is available at www.transparency.org

poverty and inequality in South Africa is the unacceptably high levels of corruption of which the Arms Scandal and the President's homestead rank as some of the most significant. Currently, the country is awaiting the details of the more than R200 million spent on the South African President's private residence in Nkandla with facilities such as a helipad, sports fields and underground bunkers as well as the enquiry into the Arms Deal, with an initial price tag of just under R30 billion and commission payments to corrupt politicians exceeding R1 billion. These are just some of the social issues in our country that have had a devastating impact on the poor because of the large-scale abuse of public funds and corruption.[149] This is particularly unconscionable in the light of numerous people who do not even have the means to feed themselves.

The prophetic literature strongly advocates the universalism of Yahweh's expectations from all nations. The Oracles against the Nations (Amos 1:3-2:16), of which the Israel oracle (2:6-16) forms a subsection and an integral part, rests on what Stuart refers to as "a shared theological assumption: there is one God, Yahweh, who has power over the whole earth, and whose righteousness will not tolerate unrighteousness on the part of any of the nations" (1987:308). Yahweh is more than just the God of Israel and Judah, since He is accepted as being in a special covenantal relationship with all nations. This covenant requires obedience to "a basic sort of 'international law' that is fully capable of being enforced against any nation that acts contrary to it" (Stuart 1987:308).

7.2   TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL RE-EVALUATION

As intricate as the relational balance between religion and politics may be, the above study has, in a small way hopefully demonstrated the critical necessity of ensuring the maintenance of this balance at all times. Reconciling politics and religion in an acceptable manner is only possible if the Church clearly understands and conveys its biblical mandate in this regard. The theological re-evaluation of the relationship between politics and religion would require, as a key step, the integration of systematic theology and Christian ethics as independent disciplines in the Church. Grudem summarises the distinction between the two disciplines as follows: "The emphasis of

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[149]   For details on the Nkandla and Arms Deal scandals refer to the Corruption Watch website at www.corruptionwatch.org.za as well as www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za

systematic theology is on what God wants us to *believe* and to *know*, while the emphasis in Christian ethics is on what God wants us to *do* and what *attitudes* he wants us to have" (1994:26).[150] While Christian ethics, broadly concerned with social issues in life, are treated independently from theology, as a life application and despite our acknowledgement of the overlap at times, the Church will stand little chance in positively influencing the relational balance between politics and religion unless these philosophies are applied in an integrated manner to modern social challenges. It is ironic that Grudem's book on systematic theology, spanning some 1290 pages demonstrates the theoretical distance between the two disciplines as he acknowledges that "for a thorough treatment of Christian ethics, another textbook similar to this in scope would be necessary" (1994:26). The incorporation of Christian ethics into systematic theology will serve to re-energise the message of the Church in the 21st century. If prophets such as Amos succeeded in advocating a value system that incorporates these concepts in an integrated manner, how much more would the modern Church succeed given these guiding principles? Implicit in this integration would be a balanced approach to social responsibility in the message of the Church.

The development of a redefined theological approach to issues of social justice and righteousness could be further enhanced with the following practical steps:

- The Church needs to find common ground to unite its various denominations around social justice issues and refocus its social role in society.

- Explore network opportunities with other belief systems to advance a common social justice agenda.

- Develop and pursue viable methods to interact with governments around the world to reduce levels of conflict, violence, corruption and advance the social upliftment of marginalised communities.

- Utilise technological advances such as television, internet, Facebook and Twitter, to positively influence the relational balance between politics and religion.

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[150] Grudem defines systematic theology as "any study that answers the question, 'What does the whole Bible teach us today?' about any given topic" and Christian ethics as "any study that answers the question, 'What does God require us to do and what attitudes does he require us to have today?' with regard to any given situation" (1994:26).

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