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The Relationship of Amos to the Cult

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF AMOS TO THE CULT

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Amos 5:21 it is written, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies." In Amos 5:25 the question is asked, "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?" The question would appear to evoke a negative response.

It has long been a question whether the strong language of Amos in these passages demanded the purification of the cultic worship, or whether it was a condemnation of the entire cultic system per se. A. C. Welch[1] states that after the Exile, when the Jews were seeking to reconstruct their civil and religious life, they fell back on their cult, much of which, beyond question, belonged to the pre-exilic use and practice of the temple. If the prophetic movement had been in total opposition to the cult, how can one explain that the men of the post-exilic period, recognizing that the prophets' forecast of judgment to come had been justified by events, nevertheless in the time of reconstruction turned to the very thing

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[1] A. C. Welch, Prophet and Priest in Old Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953) p. 19.

which the prophets had so bitterly condemned, and that this cult proved to be the means of preserving the uniqueness of the Jewish faith?

Welch contends that there was cooperation between prophet and priest in a very comprehensive way. The great prophets of Israel were men who transmitted a religious tradition which went back to Moses, but they also criticized very strongly those traditions when they became corrupt, and they pleaded for their reform. They were not placing the ethic and the ritual in opposition, but they were insisting that the ritual must be accompanied by actions that met the ethical demands of Yahweh.

This thesis will examine the prophecy of Amos and attempt to show that Amos was not inimical toward the cult. Through an investigation of the background and vocation of Amos it will be shown that he did not live a life of isolation, but that he had frequent intercourse with his countrymen. Through an examination of the speech forms used by Amos, it will be shown that he had a broad acquaintance with the literary arts and skills of his culture and an intimate knowledge of the cultic system of the religion of Israel.

The thesis will begin with a definition of the term "cult" and a survey of the relationship that existed between prophet and priest within the cultic system. It will be shown that there was not a dichotomy between

prophet and priest, but that the prophet normally functioned within the life and worship pattern of the cultic system.

The background of Amos will be investigated, beginning with a description of the historical circumstances in the Near East at that time, followed by an examination of Amos' occupation as a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. The influences that he would encounter in the pursuit of his dual occupation will shed light on the thought and speech forms of his message.

Amos' vocation will be studied with special attention being paid to the controversial passage in 7:14. It will be shown that Amos does not dissociate himself from the formal office of prophet but that he affirms his vocation as a prophet on the basis of a divine compulsion.

It is evident that certain literary devices and speech forms are employed by Amos in bringing his message. Seven of these forms will be analyzed and an attempt will be made to locate the source from which Amos obtained them.

The earliest reference in the Bible to the "Day of Yahweh" is found in Amos 5:18. This concept will be examined and it will be shown that it was a concept which was prominent in the cult and that Amos took it from there and used it to reinforce his message.

Finally, the prominent anti cult passage, 5:21-25, will be examined in detail and it will be shown that this strong language is characteristic of Hebrew idiom. Very often, what appears to be absolute is really meant to be comparative.

The picture of Amos that will emerge from this study will be quite different to that which has been popularly portrayed. Amos was not an isolated, unlettered rustic who challenged the cultic system and condemned it per se. He was a man closely linked to that system in thought and method. The abuses and evils of the cult, not its existence or validity, were the objects of Amos' condemnation and scorn.

CHAPTER II

THE CULT AND THE PROPHET IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

The word "cult" is not a term derived from a Hebrew word but it is used in theology to describe a religious system. Sigmund Mowinckel defines the word in the following terms:

> Cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed, and brought to its ultimate goal. In other words, a relation in which a religion becomes a vitalizing function as a communion of God and congregation, and of the members of the congregation amongst themselves.[1]

It is in this sense that the terms "cult" and "cultic" are used in this thesis.

A Roman Catholic scholar suggests that there has been a misunderstanding of prophetism due to the optimism of the nineteenth century. Literary and historical critics at that time were accounting for the formation of the Bible in terms of the literary processes standard for contemporary Western Europeans. The prophets held to a highly spiritual and moral idea of religion and by that token it followed that the prophets shared the spiritual

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[1]Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, translated from the Norwegian by D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 15.

and moral religious idea of current biblical scholarship which was basically a liberal Protestantism. The prophets must have derived their inspiration from a "normal" religious experience which would rule out anything suggesting mystical exaltation or group enthusiasm. They would repudiate animal sacrifice as a crude attempt to serve a God who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Little credence was given to any idea that the prophets' contribution had its rise from traditional or ritual sources. Hence there was a strict dichotomy between prophet and cult.[2]

This idea no longer prevails and attention has been drawn in recent years to the probability that there were cultic prophets attached to the shrines alongside the priests, and that so far from prophet and priest being exponents of opposed types of religion, they flourished side by side as fellow officials of the cult.[3]

Mowinckel argues strongly in favor of the latter position. He notes that Samuel in Ramah was both a priest and a seer who presided at the sacrificial meal. Other numerous instances connect the priest and prophet

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[2]B. Vawter, The Conscience of Israel (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), pp. 13-14.

[3]H. H. Rowley, The Nature of Old Testament Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study, in The Servant of the Lord (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 109.

together in activity at the sanctuary. This originated after the settlement in Canaan when the Israelites met two different kinds of people interpreting the deity: the temple priests and the ecstatic prophets--the nebi'im. The ecstatic form of piety was adopted by Israel with adaptations. At the same time Israel adopted and remodelled large portions of the Canaanite cultic system with its festivals, temples and clergy. The result of this was a distinction between the two types of revelation, prophetic and priestly. The priest was part of a hereditary class who was primarily occupied with temple service and sacrifice, but who remained in control of the more complicated system of oracles, the urim and the thummim, and who dispensed guidance on cultic, moral and judicial questions. The prophets, on the other hand, formed looser unions of ecstatically inspired men, into which any one could come in response to the divine call. These men were the mediums of the divinely inspired word which came to them. From these "sons of the prophets" or prophetic guilds, the classical movement of reform prophets developed. However, the boundary between priest and prophet was never an absolute one. Samuel was priest as well as prophet; and both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were members of priestly families.[4]

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[4]Mowinckel, II, 54-56.

From the beginning these prophetic guilds were connected with the temples. Elijah was a recognized leader of the sons of the prophets and he offered sacrifice. Later, in Jerusalem, an order of temple prophets came into being. Jeremiah states (29:36) that the temple prophets were under the jurisdiction of the priests. As the centuries passed the organizations of cultic prophets gradually became guilds of temple choristers.[5]

Many sections of the Psalms (60:7-8; 75:2-5; 82:2-7; 110:1-4) have Yahweh speaking in the first person, and these sections appear to be identical with prophetic utterances. Eissfeldt regards these passages as

> words which give a divine reply to a request made in a particular cultic situation by a cult ministrant who is regarded by himself and by his contemporaries as prophetically gifted, even though perhaps permanently employed in such work.[6]

Mowinckel affirms that the nebi'im were originally representatives of the congregation seized by the ecstasy of the orgiastic tumult of the cult festival; they were filled by divine power to raving point as ideally and theoretically should happen to the whole congregation and they stand side by side with the priests as the actual religious leaders in the congregation.[7]

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[5] O. Eissfeldt, The Prophetic Literature in The Old Testament and Modern Study (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 120.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Mowinckel, II, 56.

It is important to note that there were two sides to the Hebrew cult. There was the sacrificial side consisting of the things which men did in the service of Yahweh. But of equal importance was the representation within the cult of the things which Yahweh had done and was doing for Israel. His will and great deeds of the past had to be proclaimed and his answers to prayer had to be communicated. In this side of Israelite worship a leading part was taken by the cultic prophets. As this cultic role was an essential one in the system of Israel's worship, these prophets must have been regular officials in the sanctuary together with the priests.[8]

Aubrey Johnson[9] sees the prophets as official representatives of the cult. The dual role of priest and prophet is recognized in Samuel and Elijah. Gad, David's prophet, instructed his master to erect an altar and secure forgiveness through the cultic act of sacrifice (2 Sam. 24:18-25). Elisha, in addition to being recognized as the successor to Elijah as leader of the sons of the prophets, was visited on certain festival days. When the Shunnamite woman wishes for Elisha's assistance to

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[8]Norman W. Porteous, "Prophet and Priest in Israel," The Expository Times, LXII (October 1950), 6.

[9]Aubrey R. Johnson, The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1962), pp. 25-26.

restore her child to life, her husband says to her, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath" (2 Kings 4:23). This very obvious cultic association is a strong indication that the prophet had a connection with the formal worship of Yahweh.

Johnson has marshalled considerable evidence that the Jerusalem prophets formed a class of consultative specialists and as such they were members of the temple personnel.[10] Micah denounces his contemporaries, not for their function but because they are abusing their office for mercenary ends. They give promises of peace to those who pay them sufficiently well. As a result there will be no visions in the night and all their methods of divination will fail (3:5-6). Following this there is a general denunciation of some outstanding figures in Jerusalem:

> Its heads give judgment for a bribe,
> its priests teach for hire,
> its prophets divine for money;
> yet they lean upon the Lord and say,
> "Is not the Lord in the midst of us?
> No evil shall come upon us" (3:11).

In this instance divination is placed upon the same level as the judgment of a civic leader and the direction of a priest. It is recognized by a canonical prophet as a valid method of securing a decision in the affairs of

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[10] Ibid., pp. 31-55.

life. It is evident that the prophet here is claiming, in common with the other consultative specialists, that he enjoys the support of Yahweh.

Jeremiah took his stand in the temple court and threatened that if the people failed to mend their ways, the temple would suffer a fate similar to that of the sanctuary at Shiloh (26:7). As a result, Jeremiah was brought before the magistrates and accused jointly by the priests and the prophets. The magistrates and all the people said, "This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God" (26:16). From this it must be concluded that the prophets, quite as much as the priests, were officially connected with the temple cult.

There is evidence also that the prophets had special quarters in the temple itself, for when Jeremiah sought to put the Rechabites to the test, he took them into the temple, "into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God" (35:4). The term "man of God" is synonymous with "prophet." Consequently when one finds the room in question belonging to the sons of a prophet, it must refer to a particular school or guild of prophets which formed part of the temple personnel.[11] With this evidence, the anguished question asked by the writer of

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[11] Ibid., p. 62.

the book of Lamentations before the destruction of Jerusalem, "Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" (2:20) becomes more understandable.

Still later, at the time of the restoration under Zerubbabel, prophet and priest are found together again, cooperating in the building of the temple. Haggai and Zechariah had an official connection with the cult and showed a special responsibility for the temple and its worship.[12]

The prophetic function and office disappeared some time after the days of Nehemiah. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the steps leading to this disappearance. But gradually the cultic prophets became subject to the priesthood, were converted into choirs or musical guilds and were merged with the other Levitical orders.[13] It is interesting to note that the first company of professional nebi'im mentioned in the Bible (1 Sam. 10:5-10) are described as descending from a local sanctuary to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. The wheel has turned full circle as the prophet ends up reduced to the rank of a temple singer.

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[12] Ibid., p. 65.

[13] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

Alfred Haldar takes a similar position to that of Johnson, in that he asserts that the prophets and priests were cultic officials whose duties cannot be too sharply differentiated. He extends his enquiry beyond the Old Testament literature to include other literature of the ancient Near East. In ancient Babylonia there was a group of priests who are called baru. This word comes from the Akkadian root meaning "to see." The primary function of the baru was to foretell the future. The baru asks the god and the god answers. Various methods to obtain the answer were employed such as the observation of oil and water in a cup; observing the entrails--especially the liver of sacrificial animals; solar and lunar phenomena; thunderstorms; and the observation of the flight of birds.[14]

The second class of priests was the mahhu--a word derived from a verb meaning "to rave" and which signified an ecstatic person. The ecstasy consisted not only of the departure of the mind, but the coming of the breath of the god. The mahhu could occasionally interpret dreams and omens as well. The functions of these priests were regarded as a science and could be practiced only by the initiated and the instructed.[15]

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[14]A. Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1945), pp. 6-7.

[15]Ibid., pp. 22-27.

Haldar points out that the Hebrew religion was deeply influenced by the Canaanites. He thinks that the Hebrews took over the Canaanite temples and modelled their own priesthood on that of the Canaanite priests. He identifies the Israelite priest with the baru type and the Israelite prophet with the mahhu.[16] He speaks of the type of ecstasy which engaged the prophets of Israel, citing the cases of Saul and Elisha which involved music and dancing. He goes on to say:

> Finally it may be added that the Hebrew also used incense, alcohol and other drugs in the service of cult ecstasy, as is sufficiently obvious from the attacks on such methods.[17]

He asserts this to be the type of ecstasy which was found among the Sumero-Akkadians and in the Canaanite region, and which is characteristic of the early nebi'im. This ecstasy continues in an unbroken line down to the later pre-exilic prophets.[18]

Haldar disagrees with the idea that on one hand there was an official body of prophets attached to the court, practicing rituals and using a technique similar to those in use in the adjacent states; and on the other hand single prophets, independent of court patronage and

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[16] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[17] Ibid., p. 119.

[18] Ibid.

giving a message based on direct experience. He maintains that this is not the case with Elijah and Elisha who were closely associated with the prophetic guilds, and that it is not the case with Amos. He sees in Amos 2:12 an indication that there is a continuous line back to the earlier prophets.[19]

While Haldar does show many formal similarities between the priests of Mesopotamia and the priests and prophets of Israel, he fails to make any distinction between the true and the false prophets of Israel. Furthermore, in his attempt to show the similarities, he fails to point up the differences. E. J. Young comments on this failure, saying:

> The differences between the divinely revealed religion of Ancient Israel and the religions of the nations round about is as profound as is the difference between Christianity and other competing religions. To ignore these differences is to close one's eyes to all the truth. The study of similarities is interesting and profitable; the study of differences, however, will bring us to the truth.[20]

The studies by Mowinckel, Johnson and Haldar have shown that the Hebrew prophets were not so isolated from the life and worship of Israel as many have believed them to be. However, a word of caution is necessary lest the

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[19] Ibid., p. 120.

[20] E. J. Young, My Servants the Prophets (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 110.

pendulum is allowed to swing too far. Rowley says:

> While there is much evidence of this kind to suggest that cultic persons of various kinds, referred to under the general name "prophets," were associated with the shrines for individual or corporate consultation, or for group activity, we must beware of outrunning the evidence, or of forgetting that while it is probable that there were cultic prophets in Israel, the evidence does not enable us to draw hard lines or to define with precision their functions, or their relations with other prophets.[21]

In another place, Rowley feels that the softening of the distinction between priests and prophets is a great gain. This does not mean that there is no difference of attitude toward the cult between the priests and the prophets. He says:

> To think of prophets only in terms of the best and priests only in terms of the worst is unwise. There were good prophets and good priests, and while there was undoubtedly a difference of emphasis between them, they were all exponents of the same religion. The Bible contains the Law and the Prophets, and it would be curious if these were governed by irreconcilably opposed ideas as to the nature of religion and the will of God.[22]

We would sum up the question of the function of the prophet in Israel's cult with a quotation from B. D. Napier, who says:

> The function of Old Testament prophetism in association with the cultus as institutionalized at sanctuary or court is not in question. The

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[21]Rowley, p. 111.

[22]H. H. Rowley, "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," Journal of Semitic Studies, I (October 1956), 360.

real question has to do with the extent of this association and the possibility that we actually have traces in the canonical Old Testament of the work of such cultic nebi'im. Despite excessive claims from some quarters, this possibility has been firmly established in the essentially form-critical studies of a number of scholars.[23]

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[23]B. D. Napier, "Prophet, Prophetism," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, 900.

CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUND OF AMOS

Israel had risen to power under David and Solomon, but had suffered eclipse with the division into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Under the Omri dynasty and particularly under Omri's son Ahab, the Northern Kingdom was in its ascendancy. The Syrians were defeated and an alliance with Phoenicia was sealed by the marriage of Ahab to Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre (1 Kings 16:31). Meanwhile the quarrel with Judah was patched up by the marriage of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, to Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (2 Kings 8:18-26). Following this alliance the king of Judah took part in the wars of the king of Israel.

Largely due to Jezebel's efforts to impose her paganism on Israel by force, a blood purge led by Jehu brought an end to the Omri dynasty. But the cold-blooded murder of relatives of the ruling houses of Phoenicia and Judah resulted in the alienation of both these kingdoms from Israel. Isolated from these political allies that the Omri dynasty had counted upon for its foreign policy, Israel was again vulnerable to attack from Syria.

The Syrian king, Hazael, was quick to take advantage of the situation and he swept down through Trans-Jordan (2 Kings 10:32-33). In 841 B. C., Jehu sensed his

hopeless plight, and, anxious to save his throne at any cost, paid tribute to the Assyrian monarch, Shalmaneser III. This event is not mentioned in the biblical account but it is recorded in the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, which depicts Jehu, at the head of an Israelite delegation, kneeling before "the mighty king, king of the universe, king without a rival, the autocrat, the powerful one of the four regions of the world," as Shalmaneser described himself.[1]

The alliance with Assyria relieved the pressure on Israel for a time, as Syria had to meet the threat of Assyria to her Mesopotamian border. Within a few years, internal problems forced Assyria to postpone her plans for expansion into the west. This allowed Hazael to send his armies south into Israel. Jehu could not withstand him and soon Israel was humiliated and reduced to a state of servility.

The tide turned in 805 B. C. Adad-nirari III (811-783) came to the Assyrian throne, and resuming the aggressive policy of Shalmaneser III, made successful war against many of his neighbors, crushed Syria and laid its king, Ben-hadad II, son and successor of Hazael, under heavy tribute.

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[1]J. B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 280.

Again the pressure on Israel was relieved although Adad-nirari exacted tribute from her. The successes of Adad-nirari were not followed up and once again internal problems consumed Assyria's energy. For about fifty years Israel did not have to fear invasion from either Syria or Assyria.

Jehoash, the grandson of Jehu, inherited the most favorable political situation in the history of the Northern Kingdom. Soon after coming to the throne he made three quick thrusts into Syria and recovered all the land his father Jehoahaz had lost (2 Kings 13:25), and soundly whipped Judah when her king, Amaziah, foolishly tried to settle a score with the Jehu dynasty. These victories prepared the way for the era of Jeroboam II, when Israel was brought to new heights of glory.

Jeroboam extended Israel's frontiers further north than they had been since Solomon sat on the throne. Uzziah, the king of Judah, soon emerged as a full partner in the aggressive program and his conquests in the west and south matched those of Jeroboam in the north. Consequently, under these two kings the sister kingdoms of Israel and Judah controlled an empire very nearly the size of Solomon's.

Prosperity such as had not been known since the days of Solomon ensued. The trade routes which Solomon had

controlled were again in Israel's hands. Tolls from caravans, together with the free interchange of goods, poured wealth into the country. The Red Sea port of Elath was restored (2 Kings 14:22) allowing the overseas trade to the south to flourish. Recent archaeological finds in Samaria of beautiful ivories, luxurious summer and winter homes, and impressive fortifications, underscore the biblical account of the wealth which the land enjoyed at this time.[2]

But as in Solomon's day there was a great schism in society. Upper and lower classes of people were sharply divided. The upper class benefitted greatly from the commercial activity, but the poor were exploited in the process. In vivid language Amos spells out the sins of society. Shameless cheating of the poor by the rich with measures and money was common (2:6-7). The courts dispensed justice unfairly with the judges accepting bribes and bringing judgments against the innocent (8:5-6).

Religious decay went hand in hand with social disintegration. The shrines were busy, thronged with worshipers and lavishly supported (4:4-5). But the religion was shot through with rites of pagan origin which brought it to the depths of degradation and debauchery (2:7-8). Worst of all

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[2]J. Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 59.

was the lack of rebuke from the religious leaders. John Bright comments on the sad condition of the time:

> As for the clergy of the state cult, they were officials and great men of the state who could neither utter reproof of it nor countenance any. More surprising, no effective rebuke seems to have come from the prophetic orders, who had never in the past hesitated to resist the state in the name of Yahweh. Most of them seem to have capitulated completely and abdicated their office. . . . It would seem, indeed, that as a group they had sunk into the general corruption and become timeservers, professionals interested chiefly in their fees (Amos 7:12; Micah 3:5) who were widely regarded with contempt.[3]

Although the nation was in a desperate state of moral and spiritual decline, there flourished a spirit of optimism toward the future. This sprang partly from the pride of a victorious nation in its own strength, but more particularly from confidence in the promises of Yahweh. Israel believed that she was the chosen of Yahweh and as a result Yahweh was under obligation to protect her for all time and he would ultimately raise her to a position of great power among the nations. Such was the atmosphere when Amos stepped upon the stage of Israel's history.

The opening verse of the book states that Amos was among the nogedim of Tekoa. Tekoa was a village located directly south of Jerusalem about twelve miles. It stood on a hill about twenty-eight hundred feet above sea level and it occupied an area of four to five acres. The

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[3]J. Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 243.

surrounding area was a desolate region although it was rich in pasturage.[4] Since the days of Rehoboam the town had played a role in the defense system of the kings of Judah (2 Chron. 11:6; Jer. 6:1).

The word nogedim is translated as "herdsmen" or "shepherds." It is found only twice in the Old Testament. The other instance is in 2 Kings 3:4 where King Mesha of Moab is called a noged who rendered one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams to the king of Israel. In the light of this statement many Jewish interpreters urge that Amos was an owner of sheep and a very wealthy man. They point to the fact that the same word is used of the Moabite king and in addition to this, they maintain that if Amos was only a servant he could not have left his work for an excursion of this kind up to Bethel.[5]

Parallels to this word occur in other literature of the ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, large temple herds of sheep were under the supervision of officials entitled rabi-buli. Under these were several naqidu who often lived together in special towns. Those who herded the flocks were re'u, herdsmen under the command of a naqidu. This naqidu was often an official at a temple

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[4]W. R. Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 3.

[5]Ibid.

and might be responsible for the care of five hundred cows and two thousand sheep and goats.[6]

Ugaritic texts use the word noqdim a number of times to indicate a particular social or guild group. Twice it appears in the title of one who is "chief of the priests" and "chief of the noqdim."[7] This may be an indication that the position of the noqdim was important and that they had a close connection with the temple. Engnell[8] asserts that these texts prove that "shepherdship" is of a sacral nature and that King Mesha who is called a noqed, is a sacral person acting as the high priest in principle.

These associations of shepherds and temple in extra-biblical literature have led some scholars to the conclusion that Amos belonged to the cult staff of Tekoa. Haldar states: "Amos is said to be among the shepherds of Tekoa (1:1) and calls himself boqer (7:14), which shows him to have belonged to the cult staff."[9] He presumes that

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[6]Arvid S. Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1956), p. 6.

[7]John D. W. Watts, Vision and Prophecy in Amos (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958) p. 6.

[8]Ivan Engnell, Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) p. 5.

[9]Alfred Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1945), p. 112.

Amos must have been the watcher of a flock of sheep belonging to the priests of the sanctuary at Tekoa, the priesthood of which "was some sort of a filial of the Jerusalemitic priesthood."[10]

It has also been proposed that noqed means "hepatoscoper," making Amos a cultic functionary who practiced divination.[11] This position is hardly tenable due to the scanty evidence, particularly in the uncertain meaning of the Akkadian and Ugaritic forms from which this proposal is drawn.[12]

Because the word noqed sometimes refers to cultic functionaries in other literature, does not mean that it must always do so. Furthermore, that the same relationship between shepherd and sanctuary existed in Israel as it may have done in Ugarit and other places, has not been established. However, these similarities do point up the possibility of such a relationship. Amos may have been a person of relatively high rank who was responsible for a large part of the temple herd. If so, he was an important person whose words could not be ignored. It is evident, however, that being "among" the noqedim of Tekoa, Amos was

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[10] Ibid.

[11] M. Bic, "Der Prophet Amos--ein Hepatoskopos," Vetus Testamentum, I (1951), 292.

[12] A. Murtonen, "The Prophet Amos--a Hepatoscoper?" Vetus Testamentum, II (1952), 171.

not the only sheep owner or shepherd in that part of the country. Whether he was poor or moderately well-to-do cannot be ascertained.[13]

In 7:14 Amos calls himself a boqer. This is a hapax legomenon. The form is an active participle and is usually considered to be built on the noun baqar, which means an ox or a bullock. Hence a boqer would be someone who cared for or raised oxen.[14] The Hebrew text is translated "herdsman," but this implies a different thing and it is contradicted by the word צֹאֵן in the next verse. צֹאֵן may refer to goats as well as to sheep and may even be applied to human beings, but it is never used in reference to cattle or oxen.[15] A likely solution to the problem of the word boqer is that it is a scribal error wherein בּוֹקֵר is miswritten for נוֹקֵד.[16]

In addition to the task of caring for sheep, Amos had a second occupation. He was a boles of sycamore trees. The word boles is also a hapax legomenon and lacks exact

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[13]R. S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (London: S. P. C. K., 1960), p. 10.

[14]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 611.

[15]Cripps, p. 234.

[16]The corruption of a nun into a beth, and of a daleth into a resh, in the first and last letters of the word respectively, would be very simple.

definition. It may have the meaning of piercing[17] or of nipping[18] the fruit in order for it to ripen. Harper says the verb is better understood as signifying "to tend or dress the fruit of the sycamores."[19] Mays also suggests that Amos was a "dresser" of sycamores who worked as a husbandman of the tree, probably puncturing the forming fruit to make it sweeten and become more edible.[20] Again, whether Amos was a simple worker among sycamore trees or a substantial owner of an orchard cannot be determined.

This occupation raises another interesting factor. Sycamore trees do not grow at an altitude as high as that at Tekoa. They grow profusely in the Shephelah, a foothill region between the Philistine plain and the Judean highlands.[21] So numerous were the sycamores there that a reference to them served as a simile for great plenty (1 Kings 10:27; 2 Chron. 1:15). To pursue this occupation, Amos would have to travel some distance from his native home.

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[17]Harper, p. 172.

[18]Cripps, p. 235.

[19]Harper, p. 172.

[20]James L. Mays, Amos (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), p. 138.

[21]"Sycamore," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 470.

Amos is not known apart from the book in which his sayings were collected and preserved. From the book it is possible to say with certainty, only that he was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees. The type of shepherd he was and the extent of his work with sycamore trees will remain in the realm of speculation. The use of the term noqed, however, at least suggests that Amos was no ordinary shepherd, but a breeder of sheep who would have belonged to the notable men of his community, and whose voice would command attention and respect.[22] And as a husbandman of sycamores Amos, of necessity, would do some travelling and would be in contact with a variety of people including those who passed through the Shephelah with their caravans.

Although the details of Amos' background cannot be clearly drawn, it is evident that he did not live a life of isolation. The question can be summed up in the words of J. L. Mays, who says:

> However one assesses the evidence, surely it is time to lay to rest the ghost of the wilderness shepherd who reacts to city culture and cult because he sees it as an outsider whose sensitivities are outraged by its contrast to the simple life.[23]

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[22]Mays, p. 19.

[23]James L. Mays, "Words about the Words of Amos," Interpretation, XIII (July 1959), 266.

CHAPTER IV

THE VOCATION OF AMOS

It is evident that if Amos' occupation had to do with flocks of sheep and sycamore trees, his vocation originally was not that of a prophet. Amos' words in 7:14 in response to Amaziah's order, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there," present the most controversial problem in the book. When Amos says: לֹא־נָבִיא אָנֹכִי וְלֹא בֶן־נָבִיא אָנֹכִי does he deny that he is a prophet, or does he say that he had not been a prophet until Yahweh called him? Are the sentences to be translated in the present tense or in the past?

The interpretation of this passage is important to the subject because the passage has been used as evidence to assert Amos' unalterable opposition to the office of the nabi and to all cultic activity. R. E. Clements says:

> The reply of Amos to Amaziah is of great importance for a consideration of his relationship to the earlier nebhi'im. It was frequently claimed by interpreters that Amos was here refusing to identify himself as a nabhi, or as a member of one of the nabhi guilds. Such an interpretation is implicit in the translation adopted by the RSV.[1]

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[1] R. E. Clements, Prophecy and Covenant (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965), p. 37.

It has been argued that because the nebi'im were associated with ecstasy and this ecstasy often degenerated into action similar to that exhibited in the Canaanite cults, Amos denounced any personal connection with them. G. Adam Smith says:

> The answer of this shepherd to this priest is no mere claim of personal disinterestedness. It is the protest of a new order of prophecy, the charter of a spiritual religion. As we have seen, the sons of the prophets were guilds of men who had taken to prophesying because of certain gifts of temper and natural disposition, and they earned their bread by the exercise of these. Among such craftsmen Amos will not be reckoned. He is a prophet, but not of the kind with which his generation was familiar. An ordinary member of society, he has been suddenly called by God from his civil occupation for a special purpose and by a call which has not necessarily to do with either gifts or a profession. This was something new, not only in itself, but in its consequences upon the general relations of God to men. What we see in this dialogue at Bethel is, therefore, not merely the triumph of a character however heroic, but also a step forward--one of the greatest and most potential--in the history of religion.[2]

Closely related to this is the idea that this is a plea for the right of any man who has the message of God to be able to express himself as God's spokesman. Amos is insisting that a man who has come to an understanding of the laws of God is under divine compulsion to speak. Commenting on this, Walter G. Williams says:

> Amos brought a new definition to prophecy and a new understanding of its significance. By his

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[2]G. Adam Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets (Revised edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), pp. 116-117.

> actions and words he pleaded for a release of prophecy from all economic and political restraints. He was the first layman to appear upon the scene of history with a religious message. This is not to denounce all professional religious leaders, for it is becoming increasingly clear that the majority of the prophets had official and professional standing, but here is testimony that great religious insight is not confined to the professional leaders in religion.[3]

G. R. Driver suggests that Amos is really making a positive statement about his role as a prophet. The interrogative negative אִם often has affirmative force, he maintains. In some instances the interrogative particle is then omitted and the אִם retains the affirmative sense. Examples of this are found in 1 Sam. 20:9; 2 Kings 5:26; Jonah 4:11. Amos is indignantly saying to Amaziah, "I, not a prophet, because I am the dresser of sycamore trees? The Lord has called me, therefore I am a prophet commissioned to preach." The use of this idiom, says Driver, depends on the tone of the speaker's voice, which can differentiate between the negative and a question expecting an affirmative answer.[4]

A lively debate has grown out of this suggestion. Driver's position was challenged, not on linguistic grounds, but on the conclusion that was reached.

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[3]Walter G. Williams, The Prophets--Pioneers to Christianity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 158-159.

[4]G. R. Driver, "Amos vii. 14," The Expository Times, LXVII (December 1955), 91-92.

J. MacCormack says that as there is no verb, the phrase can be translated in either a past or a present tense. Amos is really saying, "I was not a prophet, I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees--until recently when the Lord called me." Amos is not pointing out the difference between the professional prophets and himself. Driver's interpretation makes Amos the son of a prophet, which he certainly was not. Amos would not be, as Driver suggests, indignant at a slur against himself.[5]

Ackroyd contends that it is unwarranted to assume that Amos was not the son of a prophet and that he was not indignant against a personal slur. He agrees with Driver and says that Amos is here describing his call. He tells Amaziah, "Am I not a prophet, not the son of a prophet? For I am a dresser of sycamore trees, but the Lord called me." He asserts that it is not derogatory to suggest that Amos was a professional. There were good professionals like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Amaziah recognized Amos as a prophet. What he did not recognize was that here was a prophet who obeyed the command of Yahweh without question and who felt bound to prophesy in the north even though it was not his home region.[6]

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[5]J. MacCormack, "Amos vii. 14," The Expository Times, LXVII (July 1956), 318.

[6]Peter R. Ackroyd, "Amos vii. 14," The Expository Times, LXVIII (December 1956), 94.

Another grammatical turn was taken by Ernest Vogt, who maintains that Amos is simply saying he is not one of the sons of the prophets, not a member of the professional guild. The waw is used in the explicative sense of "that is, namely." A classic example of this is found in 1 Sam. 17:40 where David "took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's bag, that is, in his wallet." Amaziah supposed that Amos was a professional nabi and Amos protested by saying, "I am no nabi." Then scarcely had he said this when he remembered the term was ambiguous and he adds the explanation, "that is, I am no ben-nabi."[7]

Driver notes that this may be satisfactory from a grammatical point of view but it is not true to the circumstances. Amos is challenged because he is not one of the Bethel court prophets and he indignantly asserts that he is a prophet because he has been called by God. Vogt's explanation, says Driver, "savors not of the open air of the Judean hills, but of a scholar's lamp."[8]

Simon Cohen takes a slightly different stance. He understands a nabi as one who professes to declare the

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[7]Ernest Vogt, "Waw Explicative in Amos vii. 14," The Expository Times, LXVIII (July 1957), 301-302.

[8]Driver makes his observation not in a separate article, but in a note immediately following the article by Vogt.

will of God to the people either as a true or a false prophet. The term ben-nabi is seldom used and with this exception is always found in the plural. Cohen says that the sons of the prophets were men who received prophetic training, but they were of the type that was denounced by the literary prophets. The distinguishing mark of a ben-nabi was some sort of tattoo on his forehead (1 Kings 20:38-41). Amos has not been a disciple of a professional prophet and bears no distinguishing mark. Amaziah did not call him nabi, but hozeh, which, says Cohen, is a lesser title. Amos resented this term and on the basis of his direct call from Yahweh insisted: "I am a nabi, even though I am not a ben-nabi." These are the words in the text and all that is necessary is to ignore the Masoretic punctuation and break the opening words, "No! I am indeed a nabi, but not a ben-nabi."

The use of לֹא as a negative reply is found very often in the Old Testament (Gen. 23:11; Judg. 12:5; Hag. 2:12). This simple negative is the bluntest and most defiant word that Amos could hurl at Amaziah. It is not only grammatically correct but it is also in agreement with the thought of the prophet. The Masoretic punctuation did not arise until centuries after Amos.

Cohen maintains that when the passage is read this way it sets the tone for the entire movement. It does not replace the word nabi with a new word, but it gives it a

new meaning. It denies the prophecy of the past and it affirms the prophecy of the future. It claims the old title of nabi, not as a professional soothsayer and cultic servant, but rather as one who has heard the call of God and who is irresistibly compelled to speak the word given to him despite all opposition.[9]

Cripps asserts that while translating the passage in the past tense makes intelligible sense, the insertion of the present tense is alone in accord with Hebrew usage. Amos is dissociating himself from the less spiritual and less worthy prophets of the past and of his own day. He refuses to be classed with the nebi'im.[10]

Earlier in this century, Harper accepted the present tense as the correct rendering but he interpreted the passage in a different way. Amos was not called to his prophetic ministry by the usual technical methods of the prophetic societies. Amod did not express contempt for the order of nebi'im because elsewhere he speaks of the nabi with respect. Amos was simply emphasizing the fact that he was not a prophet by profession nor a member of a prophetic guild. He was not uttering words for the sake

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[9]Simon Cohen, "Amos was a Navi," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXXII (1961), 175-178.

[10]R. S. Cripps, A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (London: S. P. C. K., 1960), p. 171.

of remuneration. But he was in the line of the prophets, spiritually, if not literally.[11]

If Amos was repudiating the title and the office of the nabi, it is strange that he would then use the verb that is cognate with nabi to designate his vocation as a spokesman for Yahweh. Rowley points out that had Amos wished to dissociate himself entirely from the function of the nabi, he could easily have avoided the use of the verb נָבָא.[12]

From a grammatical point of view, there is no reason why the past tense is not as acceptable as the present. Rabbinical scholars including Ibn Ezra have favored the past tense. Twentieth-century Hebrew scholars like S. R. Driver and E. Konig have supported the past tense. The earliest witness to the meaning of the text, the Septuagint, supplied a past tense, as did the Peshitta Syriac version. Rowley asserts:

> there is less rigidity in the rules that govern the use of waw consecutive than we may like. While therefore, the rendering by the past tense is fully permissible, and is in accordance with

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[11]W. R. Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. cvii.

[12]H. H. Rowley, "Was Amos a Nabi?," Festschrift Otto Eissfeldt zum 60 Geburtstage 1 September 1947, edited by Johann Fück (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1947), p. 194.

> the genius of the language, we cannot affirm that this is the only permissible rendering.[13]

Consequently, it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion on the grounds of syntax. Appeal must be made to other considerations.

Amos apparently was so like a prophet that Amaziah thought he was one, and he himself felt so much like a prophet that he could only use the term "prophesy" for what he was doing. He was telling Amaziah about his call, how Yahweh took him from behind the flock and commanded him to go and act as a nabi to Israel. It is impossible to see how Amos could be repudiating the title of prophet in the exact moment of recounting to Amaziah the experience of his call to be a nabi.

There is no evidence that Amos is disclaiming any idea that he is a false prophet. Amaziah had not charged him with being a false prophet and there is no reason to suppose that the word nabi meant a false prophet.[14] Nor is it likely that he is simply denying that he is a professional prophet. If by nabi Amos meant a professional prophet, it would be incredible that in 3:7 he would declare that Yahweh does nothing without revealing his secrets to his servants the nebi'im. He could not have meant that the secrets of Yahweh were exclusively

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[13] Ibid., p. 193.

[14] Ibid., p. 196.

revealed to people from whom he sharply dissociated himself, whether they were ecstatics, professionals or false prophets.[15] It is clear that Amos did think of himself as one of those to whom the secrets of Yahweh were revealed, and therefore as a nabi.

Rowley accepts the rendering of the passage in the past tense which means that Amos was declaring that he was no prophet by vocation nor a member of a prophetic guild, but Yahweh laid his hand upon him and charged him with a prophetic message.[16]

In speaking about Amos' call to be a prophet, Mays says:

> Once Amos was a shepherd; now he is a prophet of Yahweh; between then and now as the single cause of this radical change of vocation lay the event represented by the unadorned, terse statement: "Yahweh took me!" This is Amos one direct reference to his own call.[17]

A parallel to Amos' call can be found in Yahweh's selection of David for kingship (2 Sam. 7:8). Yahweh took David from the pasture, from following the sheep. The verb לקח is also used of the divine appointment of the Levites to their cultic function (Num. 18:6). There

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[15] Ibid., p. 196.

[16] Ibid., p. 197.

[17] James L. Mays, Amos (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), p. 139.

Yahweh declares: "I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the people of Israel . . . to do service of the tent of meeting."

When Amaziah told him to go to Judah where he could get paid for his prophesying, Amos said that he had not chosen the vocation of a prophet, nor had he been trained to be a prophet. Yahweh had called him, and just as anyone would shudder when the lion roars, he must prophesy when Yahweh had spoken (3:8). Far from being a denial of the prophetic role, Amos was making a claim that he was indeed a prophet. This passage is important to the study inasmuch as it shows that Amos was not opposed to the office of the prophet or to the prophetic guild.

CHAPTER V

LITERARY FORMS IN AMOS

In a statement concerning all the prophets but which has particular relevance to Amos, Curt Kuhl says:

> Anyone who desires to move the masses must couch his message in terms that the people can understand; on psychological grounds it is expedient to connect it with what is already known and to express it in popular form. The prophets made free use of this method, employing proverbial sayings, current topics and popular catchwords.[1]

That Amos was well acquainted with popular forms of speech and that he used well known literary devices as the framework for his message is evident throughout his book. His prophecies are not the crude product of a primitive state of development but they exemplify an advanced literary style and skill. An investigation of a number of these well known forms of speech and literary devices will follow.

The Voice of Yahweh

"The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers" (1:2). This opening statement may be

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[1]Curt Kuhl, The Prophets of Israel, translated from the German by R. J. Ehrlich and J. P. Smith (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 32.

considered the motto or overture to the entire book.[2] Lindblom says these lines are "a fragment taken from a cultic hymn and placed here in order to prepare and evoke the appropriate emotional response to all the oracles which follow."[3] This verse describes the awesome voice of Yahweh going forth from his residence in Jerusalem, scorching the landscape and reverberating to the summit of Mt. Carmel in the north.

The idea that Yahweh had his dwelling place on Zion in Jerusalem goes back to the days of David. When David brought the ark of the Lord back from Kiriath-jearim, he brought it to Jerusalem. He had captured the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem which lay in neutral territory on the dividing line between the northern and southern groups of tribes. He then made it his capital city as it was acceptable to both north and south. Bringing the ark to this new capital was a master stroke. It probably did more to bind the tribes together than any other act.[4]

David was not permitted to build a permanent structure to house the ark. His son Solomon built the

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[2]James L. Mays, Amos (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), p. 21.

[3]J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 116.

[4]J. Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 180.

temple and with great ceremony placed the ark in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8:1-13). This confirmed Jerusalem as the central sanctuary, the holy hill of Zion, the house of Yahweh.[5] Amos, being a Judean, shows his affinity with the election traditions of the Southern Kingdom, those attaching to David and Zion.[6]

The words in the opening verse also appear in identical form in Joel 3:16, but there the result of the voice of Yahweh is that the heavens and the earth shake. With a minor variation the same words appear in Jer. 25:30. This passage describes Yahweh as the judge of all the earth who is going to bring destruction upon all nations. Bentzen states:

> That the verse is found in these variations points towards the conclusion that Amos 1:2 is not a word coined by Amos, but common traditional material.[7]

These three texts locate the source of Yahweh's residence in Jerusalem and they describe the fearful results of his voice. Mays says that these texts use a common motif from the Jerusalem cult to depict the initiation of Yahweh's actions against his enemies in history.[8] The

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[5]Arthur E. Cundall, "Sanctuaries (Central and Local) in Pre-exilic Israel," Vox Evangelica, V (1966), p. 17.

[6]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), II, 132.

[7]Aage Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad Publisher, 1959), p. 95.

[8]Mays, p. 21.

use of this motif by Amos indicates his familiarity with the traditions and motifs of the religion of Israel.

In some of the ancient cultic hymns found in the Psalms, when Yahweh utters his voice, dreadful things are in store for his opponents. In Ps. 18:13 he utters his voice and hailstones and coals of fire come forth. In Ps. 46:6 he utters his voice and the earth melts. In 2 Sam. 22:14 he utters his voice and arrows and lightnings come forth, scattering and routing the enemy.

This verse at the beginning of the book serves as a hymnic overture where Amos presents himself as a herald announcing the advent of Yahweh, whose earthly residence is on Zion and whose appearance brings terror and defeat upon his enemies.[9]

The Messenger-Judgment Formula

Following the introduction which may have told the audience that an execration was forthcoming,[10] the oracles of judgment against the nations proceed. The style of these oracles is highly developed and it presupposes a long tradition. The eight oracles in the first

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[9]Mays, p. 22.

[10]Arvid S. Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1956), p. 19.

two chapters all are introduced by what is generally called the "messenger formula" כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, followed by the formula "for three transgressions of X, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment." The specification of the crime for which the nation is guilty follows, after which the punishment that Yahweh will impose is pronounced. Five of the oracles conclude with the messenger formula אָמַר יְהוָה.

There is a multitude of examples of the messenger formula "thus says Yahweh" in the Old Testament. Claus Westermann states that the formula authorizes the message which is repeated by the messenger before the addressee, to be the word of the sender, corresponding to the signature on a present day letter form. The messenger formula stems from the time before the invention of writing in which the transmission of a speech to a place far away was confined to the messenger's oral repetition alone.[11]

The sending of messages and messengers was common not only in Hebrew circles but in other ancient religions as well. There are numerous examples from Mesopotamia and Egypt of oracular sayings, formulated in a similar way and uttered by different gods concerning a variety

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[11]Claus Westermann, Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech translated from the German by H. C. White (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), p. 100.

of matters. Westermann demonstrates the messenger formula in the Mari letters, and this, he says, fully confirms that the character of prophetic speech is the speech of the messenger.[12]

He sees the form of the oracles in Amos 1 and 2 as a development of the prophetic judgment speeches to the individual.[13] The distinction is that the speeches in Amos are directed to nations. This form consists of the messenger formula; the accusation--which is divided into two parts, first naming the transgressions against the nation in a general way and then making the transgressions concrete with specific citations; the announcement--which is divided into two parts, first the intervention of Yahweh followed by the fulfillment of that which is announced. In some instances there is a concluding messenger formula.[14] The first oracle provides an example:

a. The messenger formula:	Thus says Yahweh.
b. The accusation:	For three transgressions of Damascus and for four
c. The announcement:	I will not revoke the punishment.
d. The accusation:	Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

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[12] Ibid., p. 128.

[13] Ibid., p. 169.

[14] Ibid., pp. 170-171.

e. The announcement: So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.

f. Concluding formula: Says Yahweh.

The concluding formula is missing in the oracles against Tyre, Edom and Judah. This is one of the reasons why many scholars including Bentzen,[15] Harper,[16] and Anderson[17] consider these three oracles as coming from a different hand at a later date.

The oracle against Israel (2:6-16) begins with the messenger formula, followed by the accusation which is expanded into an extended list of Israel's sins. The announcement of judgment does not begin until verse 13. Between the accusation and the announcement is a recitation of the deeds of Yahweh, which include the classic events of Israel's salvation history. The concluding formula is present at the end of the oracle but it is also present after the recounting of Yahweh's mighty deeds. Apart from these exceptions, the pattern is like a mimeographed form whose blank spaces need only to be filled in with the appropriate names and sinful deeds.

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[15]Bentzen, p. 141.

[16]W. R. Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. cxxxi.

[17]G. W. Anderson, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (London: G. Duckworth & Co., 1959), p. 141.

This old formula, used by prophets and priests when they had to convey the oracles of Yahweh to the cult audience, is used by Amos as a matter of course without any explanatory additions. This shows that here, as in many other cases, Amos acts in conformity with ancient cultic tradition.[18]

Some parallels to these oracles against the nations have been posited. Bentzen sees an analogy to them in the Egyptian execration texts.[19] He does not suggest that there were migrations from Egypt to Palestine of material of this kind, although the proximity of the nations to each other might favor an assumption of this sort.

In the Egyptian execration texts, the people against whom the execrations are directed are enumerated in a fixed order and there is a constant mention of the rulers of the cursed nations. The southern nations are cursed first, then the northern, the western, and finally the Egyptians themselves. The first two chapters of Amos indicate that the prophet, perhaps unconsciously, follows a similar pattern. Amos begins in the northeast with Damascus, swings to the opposite point in the southwest at Gaza, travels to the northwest to strike Tyre, then

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[18]Kapelrud, p. 20.

[19]Aage Bentzen, "The Ritual Background of Amos i 2-ii 16," Oudtestamentische Studiën, VIII (1950), 85-99.

crosses to the southeast to the Edomites and their neighbors the Ammonites and the Moabites, and finally turns to his own people of Judah and Israel.

As a possible situation from which Amos may have received his plan, Bentzen suggests the Israelite New Year festival. Following Mowinckel's lead, he says that the Ascension festival of Yahweh has a definite element of judgment in it, primarily against the foes of the nation, but also against the nation itself. These chapters in Amos imitate this ritual during the cultic renewal of Yahweh's victory in the New Year celebrations.[20]

With this assumption, the curses against Israel and Judah would not come as a surprise to the people. The new thing in Amos' preaching is the emphasis which this part of his preaching assumed. Bentzen concludes that Amos is under the influence of a cultic pattern of his country, and perhaps a pattern found in other parts of the ancient Near East.[21]

The formula "for three transgressions of X, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment," has attracted the attention of all commentators on Amos. The use of numerical sequences is not uncommon in the Old Testament

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[20] Ibid., VIII, 88-93.

[21] Ibid., VIII, 94-97.

as well as in ancient Near Eastern literature.[22] Ugaritic and Assyrian texts demonstrate this sequence. Most representative of its use in Ugaritic literature is a passage from "Baal and Anath." It is translated as follows:

> Two kinds of banquets Baal hates,
> Three the Rider of the clouds.

Three types of banquets are then listed. Most representative of the Assyrian usage is a passage from "The Words of Ahiqar" which reads:

> Two things are meet,
> And the third pleasing to Shamash.

Three things pleasing to Shamash are then listed.

Roth finds thirty-eight examples in the Old Testament and Ecclesiasticus which follow this x/x+1 sequence. Twenty-one of these are poetic passages, with the second half of the sentence in synonymous, synthetic or antithetic parallelism. The remaining seventeen passages are found in prose and poetry both, but in a single sentence and lacking any parallelism. In the poetic passages the number sequence varies between one and ten. The occurrences are as follows: one and two (Job 40:5; Ps. 62:12); two and three (Ecclesiasticus 23:16, 26:28, 50:25); three and four (Prov. 30:15,18,21,29; Ecclesiasticus 36:5); four and five, five and six do not occur; six and seven

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[22]W. M. W. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence x/x+1 in the Old Testament," Vetus Testamentum, XII (1962), 300-311.

(Job 5:19; Prov. 6:16); seven and eight, eight and nine do not occur; nine and ten (Ecclesiasticus 25:7).[23]

No prophet other than Amos uses this type of numerical gradation in his speech. With the quantity of evidence showing its frequency in the Wisdom literature, it is possible that Amos could be indebted to it for the form of his oracles against the nations.

Wolff sees the origins of this type of speech even further afield.[24] He notes that the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs where the number sequence is most prominent, does not belong to the great collections of proverbs that were brought to the court in Jerusalem. This chapter is entitled "The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa." These proverbs could be attributed to the "wisdom of the sons of the east," which are distinguished from those belonging to the wisdom of Egypt. In a footnote Wolff says that Agur of Massa probably came from between Edom and Arabia in the southeast neighborhood of Judah where the ways of Amos with the herd and as a sycamore dresser could have led. The type of wisdom in these proverbs is akin to the wisdom of the Edomites, often mentioned in the Old Testament.

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[23] Ibid., passim.

[24] H. W. Wolff, Amos' Geistige Heimat (Wissenschaftliche Monographien Zum Alten Und Neuen Testament, 1964), p. 23.

Wolff says:

> Der Inhalt zer Zahlensprüche von Prov. 30 erinnert im ganzen stärker an die Welt halbnomadisch lebender Gruppen und kleinerer Sippenverbände als an die grosse Welt höfischer Bildung.[25]

While the accusation in these oracles is couched in the language of Wisdom literature, the announcement shows dependence on ideas found in the cult. A recurring phrase in the first seven oracles is, "I will send a fire upon," (except in the case of the Ammonites where the fire is to be "kindled"). This phrase appears in other prophetic writings (Jer. 17:27; 21:14; 49:27; 50:32; Ezek. 39:6; Hosea 8:14), which suggests that Amos is using a conventional formula that was already in use for oracles against the enemies of Yahweh. In most instances fire represents the divine action on earth.[26]

Mays observes that the notion of the divine fire which consumes the enemy is a feature of the vocabulary of Yahweh's Holy War.[27] It usually appears in the context of descriptions of military catastrophe worked by Yahweh. Other features of the Holy War are mentioned in

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[25] Ibid., p. 25.

[26] E. M. Good, "Fire," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 268-269.

[27] Mays, p. 24.

some of the execration oracles. In 1:14 the fire of Yahweh will consume the defenses of Ammon to the accompaniment of the war cry in the day of battle. This תְּרוּעָה is the shout of the attacking army as it falls upon its victims (Josh. 6:5,20; Jer. 4:19; 49:2). It occurs again in 2:2 where it is accompanied by the sound of the שׁוֹפָר.

In the oracles against the Ammonites, in addition to the shouting in the day of battle, Amos adds, "with a tempest-- סַעַר in the day of the whirlwind-- סוּפָה." The סַעַר as a form which Yahweh's wrath takes against his enemies is found elsewhere in the prophets (Is. 29:6; 40:24; 41:16; Jer. 23:19; Ezek. 13:13). The סוּפָה is mentioned in Is. 66:15 and in Nahum 1:3.

Ps. 83 is an appeal to Yahweh to pursue his enemies with his סוּפָה and to terrify them with his סַעַר. The devouring fire of Yahweh also is a concept firmly rooted in the Psalms, appearing in 18:8; 21:9; 46:9; 50:3; 78:21,63; 97:3. These themes of devouring fire, shouting in the day of battle, the sound of the trumpet, the tempest and the whirlwind, are unmistakably the language of the ancient tradition of the Holy War.[28]

Amos could have received this tradition as knowledge passed on within his own family, but it is more likely

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[28]Mays, p. 38.

that he learned the terminology which he uses throughout his recital of these traditions from the cultic hymns and oracles. Mowinckel says:

> It is, however, very possible that a custom of pronouncing a series of oracles against different individual peoples may have developed out of the general oracles at the epiphany feast, and that we have here the "cultic" background of such oracles as we find in Amos 1-2. If this suggestion is true, we should be inclined to think that such oracles did not belong to the festal ritual proper, but that they mark extempore inspirations and improvisations of the cult prophet, only loosely connected with the festival, and taking place before the crowd, which was eating and drinking and playing in the temple courts.[29]

Farr objects to the suggestion that the oracles were at all extempore improvisations.[30] He affirms that these are based upon cultic psalms and he notes that a liturgy of such a nature goes as far back as the Song of Deborah.

It is noted above[31] that the accusation in the oracles against the nations is rooted in the language of Wisdom literature. The announcement, however, reflects the traditions found in the cult. Amos combines these elements to carry his message. This is stated succinctly

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[29]Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship translated from the Norwegian by D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 154.

[30]Georges Farr, "The Language of Amos, Popular or Cultic?," Vetus Testamentum, XVI (July 1966), 312-324.

[31]Supra, pp. 49-50.

by Mays when he says:

> The pattern common to these oracles against the nations seems then to be the creation of Amos. In its construction he shows the capacity to assimilate forms and motifs from a variety of spheres and traditions to fashion a speech appropriate for his message which is characteristic of his prophecy. He is a master of the oral style of his time, not bound to one background or tradition, adopting broadly from the available possibilities of communication, and fashioning original moments in the history of speech. Here he has used the long established form of the announcement of judgment cast in the messenger style, combining it with elements of the didactic and military tradition to shape an oracle form suited to a new moment in the history of Yahweh's word in Israel: the moment when it is made known that the people of Yahweh are now numbered among the foes against whom their God wages the warfare of his wrath.[32]

The Proclamation-Judgment Formula

Westermann outlines the structure of this formula under the following headings:[33]

a. Summons to hear.

b. Accusation.

c. Introduction to the announcement by the messenger formula, preceded by the word "therefore."

d. Announcement of judgment in personal address.

This structure is demonstrated in the speech of Amos to Amaziah in 7:16-17 as follows:

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[32]Mays, p. 25.

[33]Westermann, p. 131.

a. Now therefore hear the word of the Lord.

b. You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac."

c. Therefore thus says the Lord.

d. Your wife shall be a harlot in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.

Comparison is made to passages in 1 Kings 21:18-19 and 2 Kings 1:3-4. The narratives in the books of Kings depend in part on sources that stand very close to the events and with this demonstrable similarity to Amos, they furnish strong evidence for the origins of this speech form of Amos.[34]

This formula is found elsewhere in Amos. There are modifications of the pattern but the basic structure is there. In 3:1 there is the imperative summons to hear; the accusation--which is strange in that it specifies no sin but rather sounds like approval; the messenger formula "therefore"; and the announcement of punishment.

Further examples are found in 4:1-3; 5:1-3; and 8:4-8. Among these five instances the one in 7:16-17 is the only one addressed to an individual. The other four are addressed to the nation as a whole. Westermann asserts that the judgment speeches directed against an

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[34] Ibid., p. 130.

individual are an older type. All the prophetic announcements of judgment in the books of Kings are, without exception, directed to an individual person and never to a group or a class, or to the whole nation or other nations. The announcement of judgment to the nation is first encountered in the writing prophets. In this respect the importance of Amos becomes clear. Westermann says:

> It is not judgment prophecy as such that begins with Amos, but rather the announcement of judgment to the entire nation. This gave the announcement of judgment its own significance which caused a special tradition of these speeches to be established independent of their former setting in the historical narratives. Here, an important turning point in the history of God with his people can be seen. The sins of the nation as a whole, as the transgressions of the "corporate personality" had acquired such a significance that the commission of the prophet to intervene as the messenger from the court of God in case of a transgression (particularly of the king) is no longer sufficient. The accusation must now be made against the entire nation and the judicial decision of God announced to all the people.[35]

Amos was well acquainted with the proclamation of judgment against individuals. When the word of the Lord came to him to be directed against the nation, he adapted the old cultic form to this new message.

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[35] Ibid., p. 138.

The Woe Oracles

The woe oracles consist of an introductory הוי followed by a participle which determines the object of the woe. There are two examples of this in 5:18 and 6:1 and three modified forms in 5:7; 6:3,13. The modified forms lack the introductory הוי. The plural participle seems to be an element of the style of a woe-saying and it is a device that characterizes the group to whom the indictments apply.[36]

Westermann sees this type of oracle as a close approximation to the prophetic judgment speech to individuals.[37] It is completely restricted to the prophetic books other than one appearance in 1 Kings 13:30 in a lament over death. The introductory הוי followed by a participle, by its very nature concerns itself with a section of the whole, which section is defined by the participle. The woe is meant for those who have done something specific and the woe deals with a social accusation.[38]

Westermann concludes that the woe oracles are a development of the curse-form found in Deut. 27:15-26.

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[36]Mays, p. 91.

[37]Westermann, p. 190.

[38]Ibid., pp. 191-193.

The curse formula is אָרוּר not הוֹי, but it is followed by the participle which gives the specific reason for the curse. In the curse-form the transgressions noted are of a kind that are committed clandestinely and they will go unpunished, or they are offenses which are not accessible to human prosecution. These are the deeds with which the woe oracles deal. These are the deeds which will go unpunished without the intervention of Yahweh.[39]

Gerstenberger argues against such an interpretation of the woe oracles. He sees the Sitz im Leben of the woe oracles as the lament over the dead and the Wisdom literature. The interjection הוֹי is used as a wail of grief over the dead (1 Kings 13:30; Jer. 22:18; 34:5). This is also found in a mutilated form in 5:16 הוֹ־הוֹ. In addition to this, הוֹי and its related formula אוֹי introduce a threat which forecasts a catastrophe but which also endorses and promotes it.[40]

Another usage is found in the prophetic indictments where the words following the interjection describe a person or group of persons performing a deed which by its nature calls forth the foreboding woe-cry. The pronouncement of woes seems to be very matter-of-fact,

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[39] Ibid., p. 197.

[40] Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Woe-Oracles of the Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXI (1962), 249-263.

without any wilful intent in the woes to call down destruction upon the people concerned. The misdeeds bear the impending misfortune in themselves. The lack of any definite address and the lack of speaker identification in the woe oracles argue against the idea that they are prophetical announcements of judgment.[41]

That the woes are pronounced against those who practice social injustice is obvious. However, it is not only law which is concerned about this. Laws deal with a committed crime or a problem of civil order. But the other kind of law found in the Wisdom literature deals with the same problem from a preventive point of view. The concerns expressed in the prophetic woe oracles are also found in the Wisdom texts. The problems of class distinction, exploitation of the poor, and dishonesty in business are frequently mentioned in the Wisdom texts (Job 22:6; Prov. 11:1; 15:27). These Wisdom texts, like the woe oracles, do not deal with the problem in a legalistic way with formulated laws, but they speak on a more private basis, employing exhortations and warnings. Gerstenberger sees the prophetic woe oracles originating in the "same stratum of popular ethos as do the wisdom accounts."[42]

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[41] Ibid., LXXXI, 251.

[42] Ibid., LXXXI, 257.

A further evidence that the woe oracles originate in Wisdom literature rather than through the curse-form associated with priests and law givers, is found in its counterpart--the authoritative blessing (Deut. 28:3-6), and the private blessing (Prov. 14:21; 16:20; 29:18). The woe form and the blessing form occur occasionally side by side, complementing each other in content and motivation (Eccles. 10:16-17).

Wolff reinforces the foregoing argument with additional observations. Prov. 23:29 uses the same structure as the woe-cry in Amos 5:18-20. The form in Proverbs leads on to a riddle question wherein the statement is made that he who drinks much wine will find that in the end it bites like a serpent. That Amos uses this same metaphor can hardly be attributed to chance. Wolff says:

> Natürlich ist nicht an Abhängigkeit des einen Spruches vom anderen zu denken. Aber die gleiche geistige Heimat wird schwerlich zu bestreiten sein.[43]

Wolff also finds evidence for the origin of the woes in the Wisdom tradition in his examination of Hab. 2:6-19. At the beginning of the series of five woe oracles, they are explicitly characterized as Wisdom speech with the catchwords מָשָׁל, מְלִיצָה, and חִידָה. He says:

> Somit dürfte die Herkunft der Weherufe aus dem weisheitlichen Bereich als erwiesen gelten. Sie

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[43]Wolff, p. 17.

> sind parallel mit entsprechenden Heilrufen entstanden. Beide Formen zusammen dienen der Anleitung der jüngeren Generation, die Pfade des Lebens zu finden und die Fallen des Todes zu meiden. Voranstellung des "Wehe" oder "Heil" mit unmittelbar folgendem pluralischen Partizip, das die zum Tod ober Leben führende Tat nennt, Reihenbildung, Fehlen direkter Anrede und weiterer Ausführung der unheilvollen oder heilvollen Folgen sind die Kennzeichen der Grundform. Nichts weist darauf hin, dass Amos diese Form anderswo kennengelernt hat als unter den Vätern der Sippe, am allerwenigsten unter Priestern oder anderen Kultusbeamten oder gar in einem zentralen Bundeskultus.[44]

The fact that the particle הוי is not found in the Wisdom literature but is used frequently in the prophets, presents a serious difficulty in relating the woe oracles to the Wisdom circles. This, together with the similarities between the woes and the curses, points to an origin in the curse formula associated with the cult. The type of judgment that is about to fall on Israel, according to Amos, is similar to the calamities expressed in the curses.

Mendenhall has observed that there is a general resemblance between the kinds of doom foretold by the prophets and the threats contained in ancient treaty curses.[45] He affirms that the form of the covenant tradition which contains the decalogue (Exodus 20),

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[44] Ibid., p. 22.

[45] George E. Mendenhall, "Covenants in the Ancient World," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 720.

resembles that of the Hittite suzerainty treaty.[46] This form of treaty changed shortly after the fall of the Hittite empire about 1200 B. C. Thus the legal pattern must have been introduced into Israel early in her history. This reverses the position of scholars who held that a covenant between Yahweh and Israel was a creation of the prophets beginning with Elijah and Amos.[47]

Hillers examines this question and demonstrates the parallels between the curse lists in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 and the treaty curses of the ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. He says:

> The point to be grasped is that both in Israel and elsewhere there were living and primarily oral traditions of curses on which writers and speakers might draw for various purposes, either leaving the material as they found it or recasting it into their own style. The authors of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 drew on this tradition, each in his own way. Since their works are, therefore, essentially authentic ancient Israelite curse-lists, they may profitably be drawn into the discussion of treaty-curses and the prophets.[48]

One form of curse Hillers calls the "futility curse."[49] It consists of a protasis which describes the

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[46] Ibid., I, 719.

[47] J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel (New York: The Meridian Library, 1957), pp. 417-418.

[48] D. R. Hillers, Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), p. 42.

[49] Ibid., p. 28.

activity, and an apodosis which tells of the frustration of the activity. In the treaty curse of Sefire I[50] the futility curse is used. It reads:

> And should seven rams cover a ewe,
> May she not conceive;
> And should seven nurses anoint their breasts
> And nurse a young boy,
> May he not have his fill.[51]

A parallel to this is found in Lev. 26:26 and reads:

> When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and shall deliver your bread again by weight; and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

Echoes of this are found in Amos 4:8, "so two or three cities wandered to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied," and in 8:12, "they shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it."

The curse list in Deuteronomy 28 contains the malediction:

> You shall betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, and you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, and you shall not use the fruit of it.

A striking parallel is found in Amos 5:11, "you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them;

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[50]Three important treaties in the Aramaic language come from mid-8th century B. C. and are referred to as the Sefire treaties.

[51]Hillers, p. 28.

you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine."

The catastrophe which befell Sodom and Gomorrah is not included in the treaty curses but it is used in the curse-forms within Israel. Sodom and Gomorrah are used as examples to describe the condition of land which has experienced the covenant curses of Deut. 29:19-28. Reference to Sodom and Gomorrah is also made in Deut. 32:32. The prophets often make use of this curse as an example of sudden destruction coming upon the nation.[52] Amos uses it in 4:11, "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning."

To become a prostitute is a curse-form found in the Near Eastern treaty curses. An Ashur-nirari treaty of the mid-8th century B. C. reads:

> Then may the aforesaid indeed become a prostitute, and his warriors women. May they receive their hire like a prostitute in the square of their city.[53] May land after land draw near to them.

Amos utters a similar curse in his speech to Amaziah (7:17). Later prophets pick up this curse and use it in a similar way (Is. 13:16; Zech. 14:2).

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[52] Ibid., p. 76.

[53] Ibid., p. 58.

The removal of joyful sounds occurs as a curse in Sefire I and in numerous Akkadian texts.[54] In describing a ruined city, Esarhaddon writes to his god Ashur, "No merrymaker enters its streets; no musician is met there." Amos sounds the same note in 8:10 when he says, "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation." Later prophets sound this note in almost stereotyped form (Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Ezek. 26:13).

From the evidence cited above, some conclusions can be drawn. Amos employed much traditional material in composing his threats of doom. Undoubtedly there is some influence from the Wisdom tradition. But the bulk of his material is related to the Israelite tradition of curses as preserved in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.[55]

The curses gained their validity only in the fact that Israel believed herself joined to Yahweh by a covenant. Apart from this, not Amos nor any prophet would have had any grounds for speaking such words. If the prophets knew the terms of the covenant with Yahweh they also knew the curses associated with the covenant. In Joshua 8:34 it says, "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according

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[54] Ibid., p. 57.

[55] Ibid., p. 78.

to all that is written in the book of the law." This is an indication that the connection of blessing and curse with the covenant was known well enough to call for no explanation to an ancient Israelite.[56]

The cult was the vehicle in which this covenant relationship was communicated. "In particular it is apparent that the earliest recollection and affirmation of the covenant in Israel took place in a cultic assembly."[57]

Amos, in speaking these oracles of woe was performing a cultic act. This does not mean that he was an official cult prophet.

The Doxologies

The authenticity of the doxologies in 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6; has been questioned by many scholars. The doxologies have been rejected by some because they are "unlike the genuine words of Amos in both thought and form."[58] Mowinckel sees the three passages as fragments

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[56] Ibid., p. 85.

[57] R. E. Clements, Prophecy and Covenant (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965), p. 19.

[58] J. P. Hyatt, "Amos," Peake's Commentary on the Bible (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 544.

of a hymn of praise and places them in the same category as a large number of the Psalms (8,19,29,33,104,136). Then he adds a footnote:

> These verses have no connection whatever, either syntactically or logically, with the context of the sayings of Amos; they obviously belong to the same set and are fragments of a psalm in which each stanza ended with the refrain "Yahweh, the God of hosts is his name." The collectors of the book of Amos have inserted a stanza or two in such places as speak of Yahweh's appearing for judgment with the intention of underlining his majesty and power.[59]

Farr points out, however, that if the collectors of the oracles did not think these passages lacked logical connection with the context, why should Amos not have quoted the psalm for the same reason--to underline Yahweh's majesty and power.[60]

Similarities between the doxologies and passages in Isaiah and Job have been cited as reasons why they were inserted at a much later date. Crenshaw[61] endeavors to show the affinities between Amos and Job 5:8-16 and 9:5-10 which indicate a dependence of one upon the other. However, the doxologies are not inconsistent with the thought of Amos and there seems to be no convincing

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[59] Mowinckel, I, 81.

[60] Farr, XVI, 323.

[61] J. L. Crenshaw, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXXIX (1967), 42-52.

reason for denying them to him. The doxologies themselves are very similar to each other in form and content. They depict the majestic might of Yahweh upon which all things depend. He is the creator and establisher of the world's order and he is the one who can shake the world and disturb the natural order of things to recall them to his sovereignty. Each doxology concludes with the same refrain "Yahweh is his name." In 4:13 the additional words "God of hosts" are inserted. Why the portions of the hymn were placed where they now stand in the book is a question that continues to be debated.

Watts sees these doxologies as liturgical responses by bands of prophets to Amos' preaching of judgment.[62] The theme of Yahweh's coming with his judgment fit into the Autumn Festival which is considered to be either one of covenant renewal or an enthronement festival. The climax of the festival was the "Day of Yahweh."[63] This festival took place at the time when the dry summer season was expected to give way to the rains of autumn. At such a time it was the natural season for celebration and for teaching about creation and the control of nature.

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[62]John D. W. Watts, Vision and Prophecy in Amos (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 61.

[63]The "Day of Yahweh" will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

It was a time of expectancy in which the crowds anxiously anticipated every phenomenon which might be considered an omen of what the future held. Some have thought that the night preceding the great day was spent in watching for the first rays of the sun, which would foretell a day of light and blessing.[64] It was to such a congregation, gripped by the spirit of expectancy that this hymn was sung.

In Amos 4:4-12b there is a long passage telling of Yahweh's earlier chastisements of Israel and her continued refusal to repent. This proclamation of judgment is a natural buildup for the hymn's call to preparation and repentance. Watts says:

> One might think of Amos speaking the words of the hymn, but it seems more fitting to think of the prophetic band as picking up the chant or the song at the close of the message.[65]

The doxologies in 5:8-9 and 9:5-6 follow closely upon passages that announce the intervention of Yahweh in a very personal way. This being the case, the prophetic band would respond in the same way as they did following the judgment speech in 4:4-12b.

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[64] Watts, pp. 61-62.

[65] Ibid., p. 65.

Brueggemann also sees the doxologies rooted in a cultic setting, but in the context of a covenant renewal.[66] Verse 12c in chapter 4, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel," is dismissed by many as a gloss and is considered to be of no significance in the understanding of the content.[67] Brueggemann, however, shows quite conclusively that this phrase has a vital place in preparation for covenant renewal and it should be understood in terms of the covenant traditions of Exodus 19 and 34. The term הָכֵן appears in participial form three times in the Sinai narrative. The community is to prepare to confront Yahweh in an act of covenant making or renewal.[68]

In the recitation of the curses which Yahweh has pronounced upon Israel it is asserted that Israel did not repent--"yet you did not return to me, says the Lord." But each successive curse suggests that repentance is still possible. In 4:12a the לָכֵן is based upon the refusal to repent and it foretells a punishment that will arise out of the refusal. In the ancient covenant curses, curse is only one alternative for the covenant people.

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[66] W. Brueggemann, "Amos IV:4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship," Vetus Testamentum, XV (1965), 1-15.

[67] R. S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (London: S. P. C. K., 1960), p. 176.

[68] Brueggemann, XV, 2.

The counterpart of curse is blessing--the result of repentance and renewed vows of fidelity. For this reason, 12ab, which sounds like an ultimate curse of destruction, still leaves the opportunity to renew covenant as a live option. Consequently 12c is not a contradiction or a gloss but it is the goal of the entire sequence. Israel is summoned to repentance and covenant renewal, but if she does not obey, the threats will be fulfilled.[69]

The introduction of the doxology at this point is the next logical step in the sequence. Yahweh is the majestic God who creates all things and who treads on the heights of the earth. This is the God with whom Israel makes covenant. He is a God who will permit no rival and who will tolerate no wrong worship. And he is a God who will judge severely a rebellious nation. The Lord of hosts is his name. Amos here is relying upon an old cultic form, affirming to Israel that she has broken the covenant (verses 4 and 5), that she will be judged (verses 6 to 12b), and that covenant must and may be renewed (verse 12c) because of the character of Yahweh (verse 13).[70]

This interpretation is challenged by Mays, who, while agreeing that the language belongs to the cultic

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[69] Ibid., XV, 7-8.

[70] Ibid., XV, 11-13.

situation of Exodus 19 and 34, thinks it unlikely that Amos is calling the nation to covenant renewal. He says:

> In the light of Amos' unqualified rejection of the cult and denunciation of every important sanctuary in Israel, it is unlikely that he summons Israel to a ritual of covenant renewal. One more cultic ceremony, even of covenant renewal, would not fill the requirements of "return to me"; Amos says as much in the plainest language possible. Not covenant-making but covenant-keeping.[71]

While neither of these latter approaches to the doxologies may be conclusive in linking Amos in a direct way to the cult, they give strong evidence that he is using traditional ideas that are rooted in the cult and that are immediately understandable to his audience.

The Admonition Speeches

The Mahnrede or admonition speech occurs in 4:4-5; 5:4-6,14-15. The style and content of these speeches are similar to that of Wisdom literature. The repeated antithetical form in 5:14-15, "Seek good and not evil, hate evil and love good," and in 5:4-5, "Seek me and live; but do not seek Bethel," are distinctive forms of speech in Wisdom literature. Wolff observes:

> Die vermutlich älteste Sammlung der Proverbien (Prov. 10-15) bietet mehr als 90% antithetisch geformter Sprüche, die warscheinlich zweitälteste (Prov. 28f) mehr als 80%. Dabei spielt der Gegensatz "gutböse" und "hassen-lieben" rein

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[71] Mays, p. 82.

> numerisch in keinem Bereich des alttestamentlichen Schrifttums eine so grosse Rolle wie in den Weisheitsschriften, insbesondere in den Proverbien.[72]

Furthermore, he affirms that it was not only the priests who had a right to speak apodictically, but this right existed also in the old Israelite tribe-ethos.[73]

Another characteristic of the style of the admonition speech is the "result sentence" as found in 5:14, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live." The result, "that you may live," is the ultimate goal of all wise teachings.[74] The use of לְמַעַן to introduce the result in 5:14 is used in the same way in the Proverbs mentioned by Wolff. In 5:4 and 5:6 the result is joined to the action by a simple waw copula. Many of the Proverbs are constructed in an identical way (4:4; 7:2; 9:6; 13:20).

The use of אַל as the negation in the apodictic admonition is another indication that Amos relies on the Wisdom tradition rather than on the cultic tradition, which prefers לֹא as the word of negation. Wolff says:

> Die Sakralsprache der beamteten Priester und der Rechtskünder an den Heiligtümern und bei den grossen zentralen Festen war eine etwas

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[72] Wolff, p. 31.

[73] Ibid., p. 32.

[74] Ibid.

> andere als die der Ältesten und Familienhäupter die die Lehrer der Familie sind.[75]

On the other hand, these admonition speeches show marked resemblance to priestly exhortation.[76] In 4:4-5 Amos addresses the people with biting sarcasm. He usurps the role of the priest as he begins his summons, "Come to Bethel" and the pilgrims would immediately think he is one of the cultic functionaries playing his usual role. Instead of their attendance at the shrine establishing a positive relationship with Yahweh, however, they are told that their piety is an offense against him.

The list of rituals to which Amos invites his hearers sounds like a series of acts which the people would normally perform in the cult. "Bring your sacrifices . . . your tithes . . . offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving . . . proclaim freewill offerings." In each instance the exhortation is encased in irony and the series closes with, "for so you love to do, O people of Israel." The expected conclusion would be some reference to Yahweh's pleasure in the action. Mays observes:

> The shift is in effect a charge that the sacrificial cult has nothing to do with Yahweh. It is not the Lord, but the self of Israel which is the ground of their worship. The people themselves have displaced the Lord as the central

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[75] Ibid., p. 36.

[76] Mays, p. 74.

> reality of cult. However pious and proper all their religious acts, the sacrifices and offerings are no submission of life to the Lord, but merely an expression of their own love of religiosity. The cult of Bethel and Gilgal has become a breaking with Yahweh because it evades rather than enforces the Lord's rule over the nation.[77]

Amos 5:4-6 demonstrates a type of prophetic judgment speech constructed as follows:

a. The messenger formula.	Thus says Yahweh.
b. Summons.	Seek me and live.
c. Prohibition.	Do not seek Bethel. Do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba.
d. Announcement of judgment.	For Gilgal shall surely go into exile. Bethel shall come to naught.

The imperative "seek me and live" is an instruction to turn to Yahweh as the source of life and it has parallels in the Psalms (15:24; 24:6; 105:4), and in Isaiah (55:1). The implication in Amos is that the priests in Israel's shrines were offering life through the cult without confronting the worshipers with the person and the will of Yahweh. Amos endeavors to correct this. Mays says:

> Amos usurps the function of the priests of Bethel by giving tora himself in which he replaces shrine with the divine person, and

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[77] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

> then contradicts the priestly office by forbidding the Israelites to come to the shrines at all.[78]

In 5:14-15a, a similar, yet modified style is evident. Instead of seeking Yahweh that they may live, the audience is exhorted to seek "good" that they may live. This exhortation also appears cast in the style of the priestly torah, the word of the priest calling Israel to do the divine will in order to receive the gift of life.

The Rhetorical Questions

The series of nine rhetorical questions in 3:3-6,8 demonstrate a well-ordered literary style. All of them ask about the relationship between an event and its cause. In the first five questions the event is stated first, followed by the question about its necessary cause. In the sixth question the order is reversed--first the cause, then the result. The seventh question returns to the prevailing sequence. The eighth and ninth questions begin with an assertion and conclude with a question, asking if the appropriate result must not follow.

Wolff observes that these questions derive not from special revelation, nor from historical example, but rather from the experience of this man behind the herd.[79]

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[78] Ibid., p. 87.

[79] Wolff, p. 7.

Amos had observed the struggles of animals among themselves and the habits of lions which constantly threatened his herd. He was familiar with the devices of the hunter. He knew the emptiness of the country around Tekoa and the small chance of two men meeting there unless they had made a previous appointment. He took these familiar experiences, formed them into a series of questions that demanded agreement and used them as a means of illustrating what may be expected of Yahweh, and as a justification for his preaching. The literary style displayed here has its roots in the Wisdom literature (Job 6:5-6; 8:2-3,11). Wolff says:

> Für die Fragenketten des Amos finden wir nach Form, Tendenz und Stoffbereich Parallelen nur in echt weiseitlichen Texten. Die Heimat der Fragenkette in Amos 3:3ff. ist gud in Bildads erster Rede im Zusammenhang von Hiob 8:11 zu erkennen.[80]

The influence of the Wisdom tradition in the style and form of Amos' speeches is recognized and acknowledged. Particularly is it evident in the use of numerical sequence and in the rhetorical questions. At the same time, the investigation of many of the forms of speech used by Amos shows conclusively that he was immersed in the thought patterns and language of the cult.

In his study of the influence of the Wisdom tradition upon Amos, Samuel Terrien came to the conclusion that

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[80] Ibid., p. 9.

there was a close affinity between Amos and the wise in matters of terminology and style and in knowledge of the history and customs of nations outside Israel. But Amos was far from the thought of the wise in matters of soteriology. His thinking was dominated by the reality of election and covenant. The fact that he makes ethical behavior the prerequisite of divine favor does not in any way demean his regard for the covenant. Terrien concludes by saying:

> Such a hypothesis should not be construed as meaning that the prophet was not primarily steeped in the covenant theology of Israel. It rather tends to prevent the overstressing of the separation of classes among the leaders of the eighth century B. C. That various groups such as priests, prophets and wise men, existed should not be denied. At the same time, such groups were not alien one from the others, and they lived in a common and mutually interacting environment.[81]

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[81]Samuel Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," Israel's Prophetic Heritage, essays in honor of James Muilenburg, edited by Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 115.

CHAPTER VI

THE DAY OF YAHWEH

The earliest known occurrence of the phrase "day of Yahweh" is in Amos 5:18. It is clear, however, that Amos did not originate the expression or the concept but that it was a common element in the popular thought of the time. If the concept had a cultic origin then it is of importance to the subject.

The phrase occurs only in the prophets. With slight variations it occurs a total of twenty-eight times. The most obvious characteristic of the day is the element of judgment. In Amos it is a "day of darkness and not light." Zephaniah (1:15) calls it "a day of wrath . . . a day of distress and anguish." Joel (2:2) calls it "a day of darkness and gloom." This characteristic of judgment implies that other days are not Yahweh's as they ought to be. H. Wheeler Robinson says:

> His rule is not yet manifest, and therefore the day on which He does vindicate Himself will bring the penalties of judgment on those who have failed to make the other days His.[1]

Another characteristic of the day of Yahweh is that it concerns nations rather than individuals. As nations,

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[1]H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 135.

men are gathered into the valley of decision (Joel 3:14). On the day that Yahweh rises to give judgment he will gather nations and kings together (Zeph. 3:8). No nation is excluded from this judgment. Because it is a moral judgment, Israel will be judged as well as her foes.

The judgment will take the form of a divine intervention in the affairs of history. This intervention will sometimes take the form of an abnormal phenomenon in nature like the darkening of the sun and moon and the quaking of the earth (Is. 13:10); clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2); or changes in the contours of the earth (Zech. 14:4). The punitive work is done by the normal agencies of nature--the plagues of locusts in Joel (3:4) and the hostile armies in Isaiah (13:4-5). Always, however, it is Yahweh who is effecting the judgment. In Is. 63:4-5 Yahweh says:

> For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
> and my year of redemption has come.
> I looked, but there was no one to help;
> I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold;
> so my own arm brought me victory,
> and my wrath upheld me.

The imminence of the day of Yahweh is mentioned in many places (Is. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; Obadiah 15). Robinson comments on this:

> The immediacy of the day is but one aspect of its certainty, for it is already "in the heart" of God, that is, for Hebrew psychology,

> part of the purpose of God, a purpose that is pressing on to its fulfillment.[2]

The word "day" often had the significance of "day of battle." The "day of Midian" (Judg. 7:9; Is. 9:4) denotes the day of Gideon's victory over the Midianite enemy. The "day of Jerusalem" (Ps. 137:7) is the day of battle with the Babylonians. Ezekiel refers (13:4-5) to this latter event in denouncing the prophets of Israel when he says:

> Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins, O Israel. You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord.

In arguing that the day of Yahweh emerged from the traditions of the Holy War in Israel's history, von Rad does not use Amos 5:18 as a starting point for the idea. Instead he takes later texts which describe the events which happen on the great day of the Lord. In Isaiah 13 Yahweh musters a great host of warriors from the ends of the earth and says:

> Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every man's heart will melt, and they will be dismayed (Is. 13:6-8a).

The passage ends with a description of the depopulated and desolated land of the enemy. Clearly this prophecy portrays the day of Yahweh as a day of battle in which

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[2] Ibid., p. 137.

Yahweh gains the complete victory. The day is also marked by catastrophic events in the sky and on the earth (13:10-16).[3]

In Ezekiel 7 the actual phrase "day of Yahweh" does not occur, but other phrases such as "behold, the day" (verse 7); "the day is near" (verse 10); "the day draws near" (verse 12); indicate that the reference is to the day of Yahweh. Soldiers are all ready for battle when pestilence and famine strike and the enemy is not able to take the field and wage war.

Joel 2 uses the phraseology of the battle events in speaking of the day of Yahweh. The trumpet is sounded for battle; a host so strong that its like has never been seen before approaches; the earth quakes and the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon grow dark.

Zephaniah 1 speaks of the day of Yahweh as a day of war. Noise and howling come forth from Jerusalem; property is plundered; homes are laid waste. Yahweh's wrath is demonstrated in clouds and thick darkness.

In all these passages the day of Yahweh is, without doubt, an event of war in which Yahweh rises against his enemies and gains victory over them. Von Rad asserts that this imagery derives from the tradition of the Holy

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[3]Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," Journal of Semitic Studies, IV (April 1959), 97-108.

War where Yahweh appeared in a theophany to annihilate his enemies.[4] This ancient tradition goes all the way back to the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5:4-5) which says:

> Lord, when thou didst go forth from Seir,
> when thou didst march from the region of Edom,
> The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped,
> yea, the clouds dropped water.
> The mountains quaked before the Lord,
> yon Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel.

Von Rad observes that the mention of the day of Yahweh by Amos is casual and occasional. The catchword had been given him by his contemporaries and he simply selects one detail from the reservoir of ideas in the tradition and asks his audience if it has not occurred to them that the day of Yahweh brings with it darkness. The new feature in Amos is that he warns his hearers that the war of this day will turn against Israel itself. Originally the day of Yahweh carried to them the idea of an act of salvation by Yahweh for the benefit of his people. The later prophets returned to the concept that the day of Yahweh would mean salvation for Israel. But beginning with Amos and continuing with some of his successors, there was an interlude in the history of the concept when they warned that in his day of battle Yahweh would turn against Israel itself.[5]

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[4] Ibid., IV, 104.

[5] Ibid., IV, 104-105.

Von Rad does not see the day of Yahweh from an eschatological point of view. It is quite possible to describe an event in history as a day of Yahweh (Lam. 1:21; Ezek. 13:5). Whenever great problems arose such as the approach of hostile armies, a prophet could speak of the day of Yahweh when Yahweh would go out and do battle. As to the precise origin of the concept "the day of Yahweh," von Rad suggests that the formula is only accidentally missing from the ancient accounts and that it may have been the cry with which the troops were summoned and with which they went into battle. If access could be had to "The Book of the Wars of the Lord" (Num. 21:14), perhaps this problem would be solved.[6]

Meir Weiss presents a lengthy argument in opposition to von Rad's analysis. He says there are many prophecies which threaten warlike attacks by Yahweh without any mention made of the day of Yahweh.[7] What distinguishes the prophecies concerning the day of Yahweh from those which speak of the punishment brought about by war? What is the difference between the day of Yahweh and the day when Yahweh will fight against his enemies?

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[6] Ibid., IV, 106-108.

[7] Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'--Reconsidered," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXXVII (1966), 29-60.

When Amos spoke to his audience he was bent on influencing them and shocking them. If Amos and his audience both were aware of a connection between the day of Yahweh and the war of the Lord it would be strange for Amos not to take advantage of the more terrifying aspects of the holy war ideas and use them. But in referring to the day, he speaks of it as a day of darkness. This darkness is not a phenomenon in nature, which is part of the holy war complex, but it is a metaphor denoting distress and disaster.[8] In effect, Amos did not use any of the traditional marks of the holy war such as the earthquake and the panic that follows such an event.

Weiss maintains that the essential element in the day of Yahweh prophecies is not the war but the theophany. He says:

> In other words the Day of the Lord is a day in which the Lord reveals himself in some way, on which he acts in some way and which is characterized by him in some manner.[9]

It is possible that the phrase was coined by Amos and used for the first time in 5:18. This would imply that Amos' audience heard the expression for the first time from this prophecy, but that they understood what he meant from

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[8] Ibid., XXXVII, 38-39.

[9] Ibid., XXXVII, 40.

former associations. Those who desire the day of Yahweh are desiring the unfolding of Yahweh's might and power, and are, in effect, anticipating an actual theophany.[10]

Weiss may be correct in asserting that the actual phrase "day of Yahweh" originated with Amos, but this still does not help in determining the origin of the concept which he admits was well known to Amos' audience.

A different approach to the origin of the concept is taken by Mowinckel. On the basis of his detailed examination of the enthronement Psalms--those marked by the phrase "Yahweh has become king"--he argues in favor of the idea that the day of Yahweh is a cultic event. He claims that Yahweh's enthronement was celebrated every year as the high point of the autumnal festival known as the Feast of Tabernacles. The enthronement was the nucleus of an elaborate mythology that went back to creation and symbolically initiated the New Year.[11]

The natural basis for this festival was the coming rainy season in the autumn. The year was at an end, the crops had been gathered in, and, in a sense, the year's blessing was used up. All vegetation had withered, the soil was dead, the brooks and springs were dried up. The

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[10] Ibid., XXXVII, 46.

[11] Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, translated from the Norwegian by D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 107-108.

original state of chaos before Yahweh sent rain upon the earth was about to return. It was then that Yahweh came and revealed himself, giving himself to his own people and making himself known by his mighty acts. In and through the symbolic rites of the cult, Yahweh's coming, his battle and his victory really took place. He engaged in conflict with the powers of chaos and defeated them as he did in the beginning. He recreated the world and soon afterward the autumn rains came, renewing the earth and making it fertile and productive again.

Yahweh came to his people in this festival and it was then that again and again he became king as it was proclaimed in the enthronement Psalms (47,93,96,97,98,99) which belonged to this festival. The idea of Yahweh becoming king on successive occasions is not a contradiction of the fact that Yahweh had been their king at least as long as they had existed as a nation. The Israelite idea of God was not static but dynamic and as a result Israel did not regard Yahweh as sitting in calm possession and execution of his divine power. Instead they looked upon him as one who rises and seizes the power and wields it in mighty works.[12]

After he had gained the victory over all his enemies, both cosmic and historical, Yahweh entered his sanctuary,

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[12] Ibid., I, 115.

ascended his throne and sat down as king--not only of Israel but of the entire world and all its peoples. Yahweh ascended to his sanctuary attended by a large throng of worshipers in solemn but joyous procession. The central feature of the procession was the ark which was the visible symbol of Yahweh's actual presence and participation in the ceremony. This ceremony was celebrated on New Year's Day.

Through Yahweh's coming in the festival, the community shared by anticipation in the prosperity of the coming year. Thus, every year the community experienced the assurance that Yahweh would not fail his people. The future hope was there in the ever-renewed experience of the festival.[13]

Mowinckel identifies the enthronement festival with the day of Yahweh. He says:

> There is here no reference to an eschatological day of Yahweh at some indefinite point in the future. The expression still has its contemporary connexion with the cult and with cultic experience. "The day of Yahweh" originally means the day of Yahweh's manifestation in the festal cult at the New Year festival; and this connexion with the festal cult is still quite clear from the context in which the saying is found in Amos.[14]

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[13]Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh, translated from the Norwegian by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 138-143.

[14]Ibid., p. 132.

After having mentioned the day of Yahweh, Amos turns immediately to the subject of cultic feasts, assemblies and offerings. The day of Yahweh is mentioned in the same passage, which strongly indicates that the day was a cultic event. All the other features which Amos mentions in the passage are of a cultic character and it is unlikely that the day of Yahweh would be mentioned in such a context if it were not of a cultic nature.[15] In addition to this the day is imminent--not a time in the distant future but a time which the audience will experience very soon.

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[15]Arvid S. Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1956), p. 71. Cf. von Rad, IV, 105 who dismisses in a footnote the idea that the day of Yahweh originally was a festival occasion. He asserts that there is no connection between Amos 5:18-20 and 5:21-27 because the individual speech units in Amos are in thematic respects in no way attuned to each other. Against this position, J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 317 says: "It would be entirely out of accord with the methods of the collector of the sayings of Amos if vv. 21-27 should be separated from vv. 18-20, so that we had to do with two different revelations instead of one. Had the collector regarded the passages in question as two independent utterances, he would without doubt have marked the end of the former or the beginning of the latter by an oracle formula or another word or expression such as he used to separate different sayings from each other. Most scholars have overlooked this fact; and consequently the false interpretation of the expression 'Yahweh's day' has become common in exegetical works. Sellin in Das Zwolfprophetenbuch and above all, Mowinckel in several works, last in He That Cometh (p. 132) have shown the right way."

Amos stresses that this day will be contrary to popular expectations. It will not be a day of light and joy, but one of darkness and gloom. This same idea is found in Hosea 9:5-7 where the prophet warns Israel not to rejoice in its sacrifices or libations. Then he asks the question, "What will you do on the day of appointed festival, and on the day of the feast of the Lord? The days of punishment have come, the days of recompense have come." The day is here entitled יום חג־יהוה, which may have been the original term but which has been abbreviated to יום־יהוה.[16] The passage indicates that the day of Yahweh was usually a day of rejoicing, accompanied by the cultic activities of sacrifice and libation. Hosea, like his predecessor Amos, stresses that instead it will be a day of punishment and recompense.

While Mowinckel's theory is very attractive, there are difficulties in it that are unresolved. The concept of a Hebrew festival of Yahweh's enthronement is dependent upon the idea of divine kingship.[17] And the annual festival itself is a hypothetical reconstruction compiled from different sources throughout the books of the Old

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[16] Ibid., p. 72.

[17] Mowinckel believes that the concept of the deity as king was taken over by the Israelites from the Canaanites who had received it from the ancient kingdoms

Testament. Mowinckel also sees in the festival the germinal ideas of eschatology.

Cerny asks the question, "If this latter statement is true, then why should it be easier to reconstruct a picture of Yahweh's cult day of the New Year festival from the enthronement Psalms than to do it from the eschatological material found in the prophetic books?"[18] He says that Mowinckel presupposes an original coherent system which he tries to reconstruct. This reconstruction is necessary because the original system was transferred to later times in a fragmentary form. But why should not the prophets already be aware of the original unity of this picture, and why should this cult organism be so undistinguishably destroyed?

These are questions which are still unanswered and the difficulties that Mowinckel's theory pose are

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that flourished on the Euphrates, the Tigris and the Nile. When Israel was gathered into one state with Jerusalem as its national holy place, Yahweh was looked upon as the king of Zion. Possibly the concept of Yahweh's position of king derived from the supreme Canaanite deity in Jerusalem, El Elyon, whom Yahweh succeeded, and whose throne and realm he won with David's conquest of the city. See The Psalms in Israel's Worship, I, 114.

[18]Ladislav Cerny, The Day of Yahweh and some Relevant Problems (Prague: Nakladem Filosoficke Fakulty University Karlovy, 1948), p. 46.

admitted. Yet many noted scholars have accepted his interpretation with some modifications. Morgenstern affirms:

> The roots of the concept of the day of Yahweh were not new in any sense. They were embedded in the observance of the day of the fall equinox as the New Year's Day, and its ritual in Solomon's new Temple, in the entrance at dawn of this day of the first rays of the rising sun through the open eastern gate into the debir at the western end of the sanctuary.[19]

Lindblom too asserts that Amos equated the day of Yahweh with the great New Year festival. At this festival, judgment would come upon the people. That it would come precisely at this time, the prophet had been assured through a divine revelation received in the vision described in Amos 9, in which he saw the temple in Bethel collapse, burying the cultic assembly in its ruins.[20]

Snaith also connects the day of Yahweh with the New Year festival but sees the concept as developing over a long period of time, ending with a full apocalyptic outlook. In Amos the meaning is far from its full development. Originally the day of the Lord was the day of the great autumnal feast, the day on which the fate of the coming year was decided. It was natural for Israel

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[19] J. Morgenstern, "The Historical Antecedents of Amos," Hebrew Union College Annual, XV (1940), 284-285.

[20] J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 318.

to look forward to one great day when Yahweh would be established over all his enemies. Snaith says:

> By the time of Amos, the Israelites were looking beyond the annual Day of the Lord to the one Great Day when all their hopes and ambitions would be realized in plenty and prosperity and joy.[21]

After the time of Amos there was a development both of apocalyptic ideas and imagery. Amos said the day of Yahweh would be darkness without light. As a consequence, every prophet in the succeeding years used the simile of darkness. Zephaniah speaks of darkness and gloom, clouds and thick darkness (1:15). By the time of Isaiah the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light (13:10). The picture grows still more lurid in Joel where the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the day of Yahweh comes (2:31).

Watts, in accepting the day of Yahweh as the day of Yahweh's enthronement, adds a further idea. Renewal of the covenant, which was the essence of the enthronement, required a mediator who could speak Yahweh's will to the people. The prophet, called and inspired of God, was

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[21]Norman H. Snaith, The Book of Amos (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), II, 95.

such a man and it is exactly that position in which the ministry of Amos should be viewed.[22]

This latter position may seem to be extreme[23] but in view of what has already been said of Amos' vocation[24] it is a tenable position. Amos spoke to the people in the temple at Bethel. He probably considered it the only natural place to speak to the people where he would be assured of a hearing.[25] Amos 7:13 confirms the fact that he spoke in the sanctuary because Amaziah refers to the place where Amos spoke as "the king's sanctuary." Amaziah treated Amos as a temple functionary in forbidding him to preach in the sanctuary and in ordering him to go away to another sanctuary and there get his livelihood. Amos objected to the assumption of Amaziah, namely that he had the right to give him orders and to control his prophetic activity. If Amos had been a member of an ordinary association of cultic prophets, then Amaziah would have had the right to exercise authority over him. But because

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[22]John D. W. Watts, Vision and Prophecy in Amos (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 75-76.

[23]James L. Mays, "Words about the Words of Amos," Interpretation, XIII (July 1959), 270.

[24]Supra, pp. 29-39.

[25]Kapelrud, p. 70.

he was not a professional temple prophet but a prophet who had a special call from Yahweh he could not take orders from the priest. Yahweh alone had authority over him. However, when he was at Bethel he naturally attached himself to the cultic personnel at the royal sanctuary.[26]

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[26]Lindblom, p. 185.

CHAPTER VII

AMOS' DENUNCIATION OF THE CULT

Amos denounces the cult in very strong language in 5:21-26 and the present chapter will concentrate on this passage. Translated from the Hebrew it reads:

21. I hate, I reject your festivals,
and I will not smell your sacred assemblies;

22. For though you offer me whole burnt offerings
and your meal offerings, I will not accept;
and the thank offering of your fatlings
I will not regard.

23. Take away from me the sound of your songs;
the melody of your harps I will not hear.

24. But let justice roll down like water,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing torrent.

25. Was it sacrifices and gifts you brought to me
in the wilderness forty years, O house of
Israel?

26. You shall take up Sakkuth your king,
and Kaiwan, your images, your star gods which
you made for yourselves.

27. And I will carry you into exile beyond Damascus,
says Yahweh; the Lord of hosts is his name.

These verses begin with a combination of the words שָׂנֵאתִי מָאַסְתִּי. These strong first person verbs disclose Yahweh's nauseated disgust and vehement rejection.[1] Similar language is used against the heathen cults of

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[1]James L. Mays, Amos (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), p. 107.

Canaan (Deut. 12:31; 16:22). Yahweh is entirely out of sympathy with the religious worship, and is in fact, hostile to it. חַגֵּיכֶם is the term used for the three great annual festivals--Unleavened Bread; Weeks; and Harvest (Ex. 23:15-18; Deut. 16:10-16). עֲצָרֹתֵיכֶם were the holy meetings which took place at these feasts. לֹא אָרִיחַ "I will not smell," is an allusion to the savor of the offering that ascended to Yahweh from the burning sacrifices. The anthropopathic idea of Yahweh enjoying the savor of the sacrifices is common in the Pentateuch (Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31). But here Amos declares that Yahweh finds no pleasure in the aroma that comes from the offerings. It is rather a stench in his nostrils and he rejects it.

In verse 22 the sacrifices are singled out for particular condemnation. The burnt offerings עֹלוֹת are the sacrifices in which the entire animal is consumed and sent up as a pleasing odor to Yahweh (Lev. 1:3-7). The מִנְחֹתֵיכֶם is a comprehensive term for a sacrifice brought as a gift, presented as a tribute from an inferior to a superior.[2] Possibly by the time of Amos the term was specialized to designate a meal-offering.[3] The verb אָרִיחַ means "to accept with pleasure" and is

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[2] Ibid.

[3] R. S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (London: S. P. C. K., 1960), p. 196.

frequently used of God's attitude toward sacrifice (Ps. 51:19; Micah 6:7). The שֶׁלֶם is a sacrifice in which only part of the specially prepared animal is burnt on the altar while the remainder is eaten by the giver and so Yahweh and the people share a meal which re-establishes the wholeness and the vitality of their relationship.[4] Whether it should be translated "peace-offering" or "thank-offering" is debatable, but the essential feature of the sacrifice is the idea of a meal of friendship between Yahweh and his people.

In verse 23 הָסֵר, the singular imperative form of the verb is a strong expression, which with the following word, literally means "take away from upon me" and suggests there is something burdensome in the songs which the worshipers are singing. הֲמוֹן שִׁירֶיךָ literally means "the noise of your songs" and answers to the imperative הָסֵר. Noise does not necessarily imply anything unpleasant, and שִׁיר is the word for the cultic song of praise and exultation that is often used as a title in the Psalms (65,66,67,68). The sound of the songs was nothing more to Yahweh than a wearisome noise which is to be brought to an end.

The songs were sung to the music of the נֵבֶל, a word which normally means "a skin bottle" and in the case

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[4]Mays, p. 107.

of a musical instrument it refers to a type of harp with a bulging resonance-body at the lower end.[5] The verb at the end of the sentence לֹא אֶשְׁמָע "I will not hear," brings the account of festival procedure to a close on a final forcible note of repudiation.[6]

It is evident from these verses that Amos is addressing a people who went about public religion with a vigorous enthusiasm. The festivals they celebrated were ancient and well established and there is no hint that the ritual was regarded as irregular or pagan. But the verbs which were normally used to describe Yahweh's positive reaction to Israel's worship are negated. Consequently this denial of Yahweh's expected response undermines the fundamental purpose of the cult. Israel thought that the performance of the ritual established the encounter with Yahweh and developed their relationship with him so that it would reach its proper goal. But in the essential matter of this relationship, Israel is left with the divine "no" to what the people are doing and a demand is made for something else.[7]

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[5]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 614.

[6]H. E. W. Fosbroke, The Book of Amos, in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI, 819.

[7]Mays, p. 108.

The basis for Yahweh's "no" is implied in the instruction at the end of verse 24--the demand for מִשְׁפָּט --justice, and צְדָקָה --righteousness. Verse 24 has been interpreted as an announcement of judgment rather than as a word of instruction. Thus it is translated, "judgment shall roll down as water and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream."[8] Such a translation does not logically follow the personal repudiation that has gone before. Furthermore, Amos consistently uses justice and righteousness as qualities which ought to be present in the social order. In Amos, מִשְׁפָּט is associated with the court in the gates (5:10,12; 6:12). It means "the judicial process of establishing in a case before the court what the right is (and therefore who is in the right), and rendering that opinion as the judgment of the court."[9] It is closely coordinated with צְדָקָה -- righteousness--the former being the fruit of the latter. Righteousness is the quality of life displayed by those who live up to the norms inherent in a given relationship and thereby do right by the other person or persons involved.[10]

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[8]C. F. Keil, The Twelve Minor Prophets, in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), I, 289.

[9]Mays, p. 92.

[10]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

Amos is saying that the worship in the cultic community is unacceptable to Yahweh because Israel does not truly live as a community of Yahweh's people. Amos has charged his hearers with injustice against the poor and with persecution and victimization of the honest and the upright. In 2:6-8 the righteous--the innocent party in a legal process, the man in the right whom the court should acquit, has been sold for silver; the poor have been sold into slavery because they could not pay a trifling debt; clothes that have been held as security have been used in debauched actions; and wine that has been exacted from debtors is used within the house of Yahweh in a desecrating way.

These glaring perversions of justice and righteousness have rendered cultic activity meaningless to Yahweh. Therefore the call goes out to let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing torrent. The figure is that of a flood which rolls down after the winter rains and that persists like those streams which do not fail in the summer drought.

This passage does not imply that all cultic activity should be abolished and that justice and righteousness be exercised in place of it. Amos' attitude to the cult should not be understood in terms of a simple either/or of

morality or sacrifice. Eichrodt says:

> The well-known passages for all their pointed antithesis between cultic activity and righteous dealing, do not justify us in conceiving the prophetic ideal as a cultless, moralistic religion.[11]

Amos had experienced the personal quality of the divine-human relationship and he resisted anything that depersonalized this relationship. This is what had happened when the people sought Yahweh only in the cult. He had become for them an impersonal source of magical power which could be manipulated without any feeling of reverence but by means of a meticulous routine.

This degeneration of cultic life distinguishes the situation in their day from that in the early period of Israel's history. In those days the proclamation of Yahweh's will was the central concern in the relationship between Yahweh and his people. The conviction that the validity of worship offered to Yahweh depended upon the condition of the worshiper is expressed in the liturgies for admission to the sanctuary (Pss. 15,24). In the days of Amos, the priests at the shrines no longer were proclaiming the requirements of the covenantal relationship nor teaching that the congregation gathered in the sanctuary must be made up of those who were loyal to Yahweh's

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[11] Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German by J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), I, 365.

will. Amos takes up the position deserted by the priests at the gates of the sanctuary and declares that the cult is sinful and useless because the requirements of appearing before Yahweh are ignored.[12]

Verse 25 poses a rhetorical question which seems to expect a negative response, "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?" The word זֶבַח is a term for an offering in which the animal was slaughtered; the blood was poured out before Yahweh; the fat was burned on the altar; and part of the animal was cooked and later eaten as a sacred meal of communion with Yahweh.[13] It is interrelated with the שְׁלָמִים.[14] The other word-- מִנְחָה, has been discussed above.[15] These two offerings are mentioned here as the two principal kinds--bloody and bloodless sacrifices, to denote sacrifices of all kinds. This question seems to affirm that sacrifice had no part in Israel's relationship to Yahweh during the wilderness years. It further suggests that Amos did not know of

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[12]Mays, pp. 109-110.

[13]R. B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1897), P. 192.

[14]Supra, p. 98.

[15]Supra, p. 97.

the directions regarding sacrifice attributed to Moses in the book of Exodus (10:9; 12:21; 13:11-12; et al). In like manner Isaiah repudiates the idea of sacrifice (1:11-15), and Jeremiah explicitly states that sacrifice was not indigenous to the relationship established between Yahweh and Israel at the beginning when he says:

> For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices (Jer. 7:22).

In commenting on this subject, John Skinner holds that the prophetic repudiation of sacrifice was absolute. He says:

> Not only is sacrifice of no avail as a substitute for righteous conduct, but a perfect religious relationship is possible without sacrifice at all. This is plainly taught by Amos when he points to the forty years in the wilderness as a time when sacrifice was unknown. There is no doubt that Amos shared the idea of Hosea that the desert sojourn was the ideal period in Israel's history; and the obvious inference is that if Yahwe [sic] could be properly served without sacrifice then, he could be so still. Sacrifice, therefore, is no necessary term of communion between Yahwe and Israel; it does not belong to the essence of religion. And that the principle extends to the cultus in general, and was held by other prophets, is strongly suggested by the fact that they never demand a purified ritual, but always and exclusively the fulfillment of the ethical commands of Yahwe.[16]

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[16]John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion (Cambridge: The University Press, 1963), p. 181.

A similar stance is taken by Whitley, who after surveying a host of prophetic statements and the varied positions taken by many Old Testament scholars, concludes:

> God who is himself the creator of the earth, and Lord of all beasts and birds, does not want sacrificial offerings from man. Hence, although burnt offerings are continually before him, he will accept neither bull nor he-goat. On the other hand he significantly says, "He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me; to him who orders his way aright I will show the salvation of God." (Ps. 50:23). Sincere thanksgiving toward God is thus not only in itself favorably countenanced, but when accompanied by righteous conduct effects man's salvation. In the last resource, burnt offerings and sacrifices are no means of communing with God, and consequently have no place in the scheme of divine salvation.[17]

If it is true that Amos and some of his successors repudiate sacrifice altogether and have an attitude totally opposed to that of priestly religion as expressed in the Pentateuch, then there are two fundamentally different conceptions of the nature of religion set forth, each claiming to represent the will of Yahweh, and both canonized in the scriptures of a single religion.[18]

When Amos denounces sacrifice in 5:21-22 he continues with the exhortation about justice and righteousness. Jeremiah closes his condemnation by reminding his hearers

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[17]C. F. Whitley, The Prophetic Achievement (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), pp. 91-92.

[18]H. H. Rowley, The Unity of the Bible (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1953), p. 33.

that Yahweh had sent his prophets to call the people to repentance but instead of listening they stiffened their neck and refused to change (7:25-26).

Rowley observes that if these prophets meant that sacrifice was in itself wrong under all circumstances, there was no need to bring into direct connection with it that which was really irrelevant. If sacrifice and sacred seasons and prayer were anathema to Yahweh, whether or not people demonstrated justice and righteousness; and if Yahweh hated to see people in the sanctuaries sharing the forms of worship, whether or not they had obedient hearts; then it would have been wiser to unequivocally state this and not cloud the issue with irrelevancies.[19]

The message of Amos and his successors Isaiah and Jeremiah appears to be in these instances, "not sacrifice but obedience." It is important to remember, however, that a characteristic of Hebrew idiom is to say, "not this but that," when the meaning is, "that is more important than this." Consequently, often when terms used appear to be absolute, the meaning is really comparative.[20] It is

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[19] Ibid., p. 38.

[20] C. J. Cadoux, "The Use of Hyperbole in Scripture," The Expository Times, LII (1940-1941), 378-381. A large number of examples is given from both Old and New Testaments showing how the thought-idioms of the oriental mind two millenia ago were so different from what a Western mind would employ, that a literal rendering of the words would not convey to the modern reader what was meant.

possible then, that Amos is saying that justice and righteousness are more important than cultic rites, and that for lack of these, sacrifice is invalid. The very fact that he stresses justice and righteousness over against sacrifice points to the relative, rather than the absolute nature of his opposition to the worship in the sanctuaries.

The acts of Yahweh in the exodus from Egypt, in the wilderness journey, and in the conquest of Palestine, together with the requirements of the covenant, are all so central in the faith of Israel that everything else is displaced in considering the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Mays says:

> In the crisis of Israel's disobedience and cultic extravagance, the relatively true is raised to absolute fact in order to set the folly of Israel in starkest relief. The emergence and use of such a tradition must be seen in the context of Israel's combination of disobedience to the covenant and the rich development of her cult.[21]

Bruce Vawter takes the same position and comments as follows:

> There is no doubt as to what the prophetic view of sacrifice was, but it no more rejected the principle of sacrifice than did a medieval painter reject ecclesiastical authority when he put mitres on the souls in hell.

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[21]Mays, pp. 111-112.

> When the prophets condemned anything, they did it in the round Semitic fashion that is impatient of distinctions and that is existential rather than essential. They were not concerned with the principle of sacrifice, but with an evil situation. Men were going through the motions of formally honoring God while their every daily action proved that they had none of the love of God that alone gives sacrifice a meaning. It was hypocrisy that the prophets condemned, not sacrifice. Formalism is the calculated risk of every organized religion. Those who most bitterly attack a religion's formalism, however, are not its enemies.[22]

If the rhetorical question implies a denial of sacrifice, it also implies that Amos' audience knew that no sacrifices were offered in the wilderness, since the answer was left to the people to supply. This would be a very surprising suggestion when all the surviving traditions of the faith of Israel from days long antedating the time of Amos tell of such sacrifice.

The words זְבָחִים and מִנְחָה stand in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence, and the verb הֲנִשֵּׂאתֶם is unusual in its being used in connection with sacrifice. The meaning, therefore, could be, "was it only sacrifices and offerings that you brought me in the wilderness?," with the expected answer, "we brought more than this, namely true worship of the heart with righteousness."[23] Earlier in the present century W. R. Harper had

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[22]Bruce Vawter, The Conscience of Israel (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 15.

[23]Rowley, p. 42.

proposed this as the true meaning of the passage. "In the period of the wandering, 'the golden age,' ye brought me something more than sacrifices."[24]

Verse 26 adds to the complexity of the passage. The major difficulties center on the words סִכּוּת and כִּיּוּן. The form of these two words may be the result of replacing the original vowels of the divine names of Babylonian deities with those of the Hebrew word for "abomination"--שִׁקּוּץ. This was a common scribal device for derogating names of false gods.[25] The gods referred to were probably Sakkut and Kaiwan, both known from Babylonian sources as names of the astral deity Saturn. The use of the word כּוֹכָב--"star"--reinforces this idea.[26]

The Septuagint does not throw any light to clarify the meaning of the passage. It reads the first word as σκηνήν--"tent" or "tabernacle"--but complicates matters further by introducing an entirely new word--Ραιφάν. Following the clue of "tabernacle," some scholars have

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[24]W. R. Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 136-137.

[25]Stanley Gevirtz, "A New Look at an Old Crux: Amos 5:26," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXVII (1968), 267-276.

[26]J. Gray, "Sakkuth and Kaiwan," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 165.

interpreted Amos to be referring to the use of cultic objects in the worship of Yahweh, objects which were carried about in pretentious processions on certain days. Amos is thus making a contrast between the wilderness experience when Israel was treated with special favor by Yahweh although sacrifice and procession were absent, and the present situation in which extravagant methods of worship are employed to no avail.[27]

An important consideration in interpreting the passage is the future tense of the first verb. This makes the verse an announcement of punishment to come. The Israelites who sought to discharge their obligations to Yahweh through sacrifices, will in the future be forced to venerate the gods of a conqueror from the east. They have refused to obey Yahweh as King and God, so they will be delivered up to enemies who will force other deities upon them.[28]

It is not possible to say with certainty that these Babylonian deities were not worshiped in Israel in Amos' time, but the fact that Amos makes no great issue of the worship of foreign gods argues strongly against the idea that such a thing was involved in the cultic activity in Israel at that time.

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[27]Harper, pp. 137-138.

[28]Mays, p. 112.

The conclusion to this chapter is summed up in the words of T. H. Gaster who says:

> Their (the prophets) protest was directed primarily against the attribution to sacrifice of properties and virtues which in fact it did not, and could not possess; especially against the view that it expressed of itself the spiritual bond between worshiper and God, that God could thereby be persuaded or compelled, and that a man could be spiritually shriven by being ritually cleansed. Nowhere, however, in all the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, is there any denial of the promise, that, within its prescribed limits, sacrifice was indeed an effective religious vehicle; the advance beyond this assumption is entirely postbiblical.[29]

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[29] T. H. Gaster, "Sacrifices and Offerings," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 157.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing examination of Amos as a spokesman for Yahweh, certain points have been developed. By many people, the prophet and priest have been looked upon as antagonists in the religion of Israel. The priest was considered to be the promoter of the status quo who was content with the formal conduct of religion and was unconcerned with the question as to whether or not people were doing the will of Yahweh. The prophet, on the other hand, was considered to be someone who came from outside "the establishment," who saw the evils taking place in society, often in the name of religion, and who proclaimed the will of Yahweh to those who lived in opposition to that will.

The first part of the essay examined the place that the prophet occupied in ancient Israel. It was shown that often a man performed in his own person the function of both priest and prophet. It was common also for the prophets to be attached to the shrines and to live in a community at the shrines. Consequently the idea that there was a direct antithesis between prophetic religion and priestly religion should be abandoned.

Amos was a noqed and it was shown that there was a connection between the noqedim and the temple. Amos may have had something to do with the cult in this capacity, even if his task was only to furnish the temple with the necessary sheep for the sacrifice.[1]

In his dialogue with Amaziah, Amos was obviously recognized as a prophet and he himself does not deny his status as a prophet. He has the greatest regard for the office of the prophet, indicating that the prophets were Yahweh's main instruments of blessing (2:11) and that they were members of the council of Yahweh to whom he reveals his secrets. The statement that is popularly translated in the present tense, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son" can be properly translated in the past tense, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son." With such a translation the statement is a positive one in which Amos is affirming his status as a prophet.

It has been demonstrated that Amos was not an unlettered rustic who came with an extemporaneous message to his audience at Bethel. His style shows that he is steeped in the traditions and ideas of the past. His forms of speech are in many cases cultic stereotypes. It is admitted that there is ample evidence of Amos' reliance

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[1]Arvid S. Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co., 1956), p. 69.

upon the Wisdom tradition. Without doubt Amos' language shows a blend of popular and cultic terminology. In his use of this terminology, Amos often turns the sacred traditions against his hearers for non-cultic ends. The two most notable examples of this are 3:2 where covenant terminology is used to convey the opposite result that is expected; and 5:18 where the day of Yahweh is forecast as a day of judgment upon Israel. It must be admitted that this intimate knowledge of the cult and its language does not prove that Amos was connected with the cult. Any alert, intelligent worshiper who took his religion seriously may have been able to say the same things. Many lay people today are capable of quoting effectively their Bible or hymn book.

Yet the precise, formulated speech throughout the book gives strong evidence that Amos had been away from his flocks and his sycamores for some time and that he had spent time in careful thought and preparation. This could well have been, as Lindblom suggests, an attachment to the shrine at Bethel.[2] The incidence of cultic language is so great that Kapelrud concludes his study of Amos by saying: "He has hardly said a single word which is not in some way influenced by the cult."[3]

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[2]J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 209.

[3]Kapelrud, p. 81.

Amos obtained his idea of the day of Yahweh from the cult. Moreover, he saw more deeply into its meaning than anyone else. The popular expectations of the day provided the people with an attitude of easy going optimism and left them unconcerned with moral and spiritual realities. As they were waiting for the great day, watching for the first rays of the sun which would presage a day of light and blessing,[4] Amos in a cultic setting brings the message of doom.

Although Amos brings strong condemnation against the cult and its evils, it has been shown that he is not denouncing the cult per se. It is a Hebrew trait to speak in absolute terms when the meaning is clearly relative. Such is the case with the rhetorical question, "Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?"

Furthermore, in Amos' oracles of doom he shows he is immersed in cultic ideas. In his fourth vision he describes how Yahweh predicts the end of Israel (8:2). In picturing the terrible day of catastrophe, the songs of joy that formerly had filled the temple will be turned into wailings and laments. Singing or lamenting requires personnel, so even when the end of Israel has come, Amos still thinks of temple singers present to bewail the dead.

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[4] Supra, pp. 86-88.

The cultic acts were so much a part of the life of the prophet that he could not imagine life without them. Almost by instinct he painted the conditions after the judgment had fallen in cultic colors.[5]

The romantic picture of the prophet Amos, so often stressed, is undoubtedly wrong.[6] Amos was a shepherd, well acquainted with the phenomena of nature--the sound of the lion at night and the locusts that eat up the pasture. He also was acquainted with the activities in the cities--the wealthy people living in their summer and winter houses, the peasant weighed down with his debts, and the sanctuaries crowded with hypocrites. He was a keen observer of life, whose insights were sharpened through his relationship with Yahweh and his concern for Yahweh's justice.

But above all, Amos was a man rooted deeply in the faith and life that was expressed through the cult. He knew the impossibility of sustaining faith without some form of worship. He knew also that any kind of opus operatum attitude to the cult was an abomination to Yahweh. The cultic activities were not some magical ceremonies to perform in order to insure the favor of

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[5]Kapelrud, p. 77.

[6]James L. Mays, "Words about the Words of Amos," Interpretation, XIII (July 1959), 264.

Yahweh. Their efficacy was dependent upon the moral conduct of the worshiper. The heart of Amos' faith was the conviction that only a nation in which people dealt with one another justly, could in any sense, be a nation in covenant with Yahweh. The whole future of Israel depended upon its relationship with Yahweh, and apart from this relationship the nation would quickly perish.

> The first great prophet comes out of darkness, historically seen, but his oracles were delivered in a refined form as complex compositions. These compositions reveal, among other evidence, that Amos built his whole appearance as well as his oracles, contents and style, upon a long and solid tradition, mainly preserved in the cult.[7]

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[7]Kapelrud, p. 81.

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