

Center Structure in the Center Oracles of Amos

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The Structure of Amos

The problem of literary structure in the book of Amos continues to attract the attention of biblical scholars.¹ Even a casual reader can detect the reason: it is hard to miss the book's recurring speech patterns, which offer tantalizing clues for instant rhetorical and stylistic analysis. Yet equally apparent is the halting movement and interrupted development of many of its passages, defying a quick and easy solution to the organization of the book. Is it any wonder so many return to the oracles of Amos for a closer look?

A number of studies of structure in Amos have attempted to unravel the mystery of the overall design of the book.² James Limburg's analysis of "divine speech formulas" represents one of the more productive attempts at

1. A useful survey of the literature is provided in A. G. Auld, *Amos* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986) 50-59.

2. See the sections on structure in the commentaries by James L. Mays, *Amos* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969); E. Hammershaimb, *The Book of Amos* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Gary V. Smith, *Amos: A Commentary* (Library of Biblical Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989); and Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freeman, *Amos* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989). Also see Robert Gordis, "The Composition and Structure of Amos," *Poets, Prophets and Sages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971) 217-29; Robert B. Coote, *Amos among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); Hartmut Gese, "Komposition bei Amos," *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* (VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 74-95; K. Koch et al., *Amos: Untersucht mit den Methoden einer strukturalen Formgeschichte* (3 vols.; AOAT 30; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976); William A. Smalley, "Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos," *BT* 30 (1979) 118-27; Adri van der Wal, "The Structure of Amos," *JSOT* 26 (1983) 107-13.

defining major discourse units in Amos.³ Limburg observes that these formulas, 49 in number, are clustered in heptadic sets that divide the book into 7 units along the natural contours of the oracles. The distribution of these sets identifies the book's literary building blocks, as demonstrated in the following arrangement: (1) 1:1–2 (book introduction: *dibrê ʿamôš . . . way-yô³mer*); (2) 1:3–2:16 (14 formulas); (3) 3:1–15 (7 formulas); (4) 4:1–13 (7 formulas); (5) 5:1–6:14 (7 formulas); (6) 7:1–8:3 (7 formulas); (7) 8:4–9:15 (7 formulas).

The above structure has important implications for the various parts of Amos as well as for the book as a whole. For instance, the successive "Woe" appeals in 5:18–6:14, usually thought to be independent of surrounding materials, are tied within the structure (unit 5) to the "hear this word" address of 5:1–17. Also, the so-called appendix of consolation in 9:11–15, regardless of its date and origin, is incorporated by this structure (unit 7) into the essential prophetic message.

But beyond this, the structure lays a sound foundation for a broader division of the book. When intersected with other patterns (see chart 1), the seven divine speech units become the components of three major sections of the book.⁴ This complex structure results in a more reliable identification of the major sections of Amos. It also encourages us to go on and pursue the matter of the internal cohesion of each of these sections. One might argue that this enterprise should take priority over the confined analyses of smaller units of material, especially since part of the meaning of these smaller units derives from their function as elements in a larger literary framework.

In many ways, the most appealing major section for analysis is section B, 3:1–6:14. One notices immediately in chart 1 that this section is centered or

3. James Limburg, "Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos," *JBL* 106 (1987) 217–22. By "divine speech formulas" Limburg refers to "those stereotyped expressions that introduce or conclude sayings identifying them as words of the Lord" (p. 217). The book attests ʿamar formulas (27), nēʿūm formulas (21), and a single *dibbēr* formula = 49 total.

4. This "seven-into-three" arrangement of materials is far from uncommon in Amos. One notes that the oracle against Israel in 2:6–16 is constructed in three sections (Israel's crimes, vv. 6–8; divine acts of grace, vv. 9–13; consequences of judgment, vv. 14–16), consisting of seven clauses each. The center section, vv. 9–13, is given a climactic eighth clause for prominence: 2:13, "I will split you apart as a cart splits when full of sheaves," identifying the expected earthquake as a final act of grace. One will note that the arrangement of seven-plus-one first-person clauses in vv. 9–13 is organized into three units by the introductory *wē(hinnēh) ʿānōkī* (vv. 9, 10, and 13). These patterns are wonderfully reminiscent of the three heptadic divine speech sets in 3:1–6:14, the center section of the book.

Chart 1

- A. 1:1–2:16, "For three crimes, . . . I'll not relent."^a
(2 divine speech sets = 14 formulas)
- B. 3:1–6:14, "hear this word!"^b
(3 divine speech sets = 21 formulas)
- C. 7:1–9:15, "YHWH showed / Amos saw."^c
(2 divine speech sets = 14 formulas)

- a. This familiar recurring formula is found in 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, and 2:6, in a seven-plus-one arrangement (see n. 4).
- b. This recurring formula is prominent in 3:1, 4:1, and 5:1.
- c. One will note that the collection of visions in the final section of Amos is patterned with a sevenfold recurrence of the verb *nāʾā*: 7:1, 4, 7, 8; 8:1, 2; 9:1.

placed in relief by an additional divine speech set, perhaps indicating its prominence in the book. Furthermore, since scholars often regard the organization of oracles in 3:1–6:14 as the least coherent in Amos,⁵ a fresh look at these materials as a whole would seem particularly appropriate. This is the purpose of the present study.

The Center Oracles: Amos 3:1–6:14

Structural analyses of materials in Amos 3:1–6:14 usually begin by isolating a unit of text, whether by the recurring introductory formulas, 'Hear this Word' (*šim^cū ʿet haddābār*, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1) and 'Woe' (*hōy*, 5:18, 6:1), or by some other device.⁶ This approach has certain advantages, of course, but

5. E.g., Mays, *Amos*, 14; in reference to this section he comments, "the collectors apparently took oracles which had the same introductory words and used them as headings of small sequences of approximately equal length. Beyond this there is no demonstrable scheme to the arrangement, historical, geographical, or thematic."

6. Cf., e.g., Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos: III 1–IV 13," *VT* 21 (1971) 338–62; Jan de Waard, "The Chiasmic Structure of Amos V 1–17," *VT* 27 (1977) 170–77; J. Lust, "Remarks on the Redaction of Amos V 4–6, 14–15,"

these advantages are limited to the unit under analysis and, therefore, cannot reveal potential relationships with other units in the section.

By contrast, this study focuses on one way in which the widely diverse materials of Amos 3:1–6:14 find unity. One might even regard this feature as the major cohesive device within the section. My intention is to show that the whole of 3:1–6:14 is organized inextricably in an extended chiasm, or palistrophe.

Now, the suggestion that a palistrophe exists in these materials is not exactly new. Jan de Waard observed this structure more than a decade ago in his perceptive analysis of 5:1–17 (see letters G–K below, chart 2).⁷ But what has not been appreciated is that the palistrophe actually extends to all of the materials in 3:1–6:14, in effect, giving the center oracles a comprehensive center structure.⁸ Whether by coincidence or not, this structure consists of 21 subsections, corresponding exactly to the number of divine speech formulas in the section (see chart 2).

A Palistrophe in the Center Oracles

In this portion of our study we will examine the thematic and linguistic parallels that inform the palistrophe of 3:1–6:14 and so attempt to justify the arrangement shown in chart 2. Our discussion will be limited to A/A' through F/F', or those subsections that heretofore have not been treated.⁹

OTS 21 (1981) 129–54; Yehoshua Gitay, "A Study of Amos's Art of Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1–15," *CBQ* 42 (1982) 293–309; N. J. Tromp, "Amos V 1–17: Towards a Stylistic and Rhetorical Analysis," *OTS* 23 (1984) 65–85.

7. De Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 170–77; letters G through K in the palistrophe depend heavily on de Waard's analysis.

8. Prior to the appearance of de Waard's analysis, J. Lust submitted an article for publication in which he proposed in a closing footnote, albeit without justification, a chiasmic scheme for 4:1–6:7 ("Remarks on the Redaction of Amos," 153–54 n. 103). Though this was a step in the right direction, in my estimation it misses the inclusion of chap. 3 and the rest of chap. 6 in the structure. At the other extreme, William Smalley felt that the entire book of Amos could be organized in a single chiasm, with 5:8c as its center ("Recursion Patterns," 22). Beyond the subsections in chap. 5, which depend heavily upon de Waard's analysis, his proposal is unconvincing. Moreover, Smalley's suggestions for subsections in 3:1–4:13 and 5:18–6:14 are entirely at odds with those proffered in the present study.

9. For a full discussion of 5:1–17 and parallels G/G'–K, see de Waard, "Chiastic Structure," 170–77, and esp. Tromp, "Amos V 1–17," 56–84. Also cf. Lust, "Remarks on the Redaction of Amos," 129–54, and Gary V. Smith, "Amos 5:13: The Deadly Silence of the Prosperous," *JBL* 107 (1988) 289–91.

Chart 2

- A Argument: YHWH's Relationship with Israel as a Basis for Judgment (3:1–11)
- B Exhibit: An Image of Death and Worthless Leftovers (3:12)
- C Sworn Testimony: Divine Punishment of Jacob Coming (3:13–15)
- D Named in Indictment: Self-Indulgent Women in Mt. Samaria (4:1–3)
- E Condemnation: Cultic Activities (4:4–5)
- F Past Judgments Reviewed: Significance Missed (4:6–13)
- G Lament: Funeral Songs in the City (5:1–3)
- H Exhortation: "Seek YHWH" (5:4–6)
 - I Accusation: Contempt for Innocence/Poverty (5:7)
 - J Hymn: He Who Creates Light and Water on the Earth (5:8a–b)
 - K YHWH IS HIS NAME (5:8c)
 - J' Hymn: He Who Flashes Destruction on the Fortress (5:9)
 - I' Accusation: Contempt for the Innocent/Poor (5:10–13)
 - H' Exhortation: "Seek Good" (5:14–15)
 - G' Lament: Funeral Sounds in the City (5:16–17)
 - F' Present Judgment Announced: Significance Missed (5:18–20)
 - E' Condemnation: Cultic Activities (5:21–27)
 - D' Named in Indictment: Self-Indulgent Men in Mt. Samaria (6:1–7)
 - C' Sworn Testimony: Divine Punishment of Jacob Coming (6:8)
 - B' Exhibit: An Image of Death and Worthless Leftovers (6:9–10)
 - A' Argument: YHWH's Relationship with Israel as a Basis for Judgment (6:11–14)

A/A' Argument: 3:1–11 // 6:11–14

At first glance, the subsections 3:1–11 and 6:11–14 would seem to have little in common.¹⁰ The former is a rather lengthy address characterized by

10. Not all will agree with my delineation of these subsections. I admit that in some respects a more natural division of chap. 3 would be after v. 8, and again after v. 12, based on the triadic repetition of the introductory verb *šm'*, vv. 1, 9, 13. Also, some may like to see 6:11 (beginning with *šf'*) joined as a concluding comment to 6:9–10. There is a rhetorical validity to these observations. However, the comprehensive palistrophe of 3:1–6:14 develops alongside, not necessarily identical with, the three complete "Hear This Word" addresses in these oracles. This demands an alternative display of the data. One may observe as well that 3:1–11 // 6:11–14 could break down palistrophically as follows: A 3:1–2 // A' 6:14 (Raising of a Nation); B 3:3–8 // B' 6:12–13 (Rhetorical Questions involving animals); C 3:9–11 // C' 6:11 (Destruction of Fortresses). In my estimation, however, the proposed arrangement is more appropriate to the single idea that each subsection as a whole conveys: the shared relationship of YHWH and Israel implies judgment as well as blessing.

Chart 3

3:1-2

6:14

Opening:

Against you, O House of Israel^a
(^cālêkem bêt yisrāʾēl)
which I brought up (Hiphil ^cly)
from the land of Egypt

Comment:

saying (^lē^mōr)
only you (^ʔetkem) I know

Closing:

Against you, O House of Israel
(^cālêkem bêt yisrāʾēl)^b
I will raise up (Hiphil ^{qm})
a nation

Comment:

says (^{nē}ʾūm) YHWH, God of Hosts
they will fight you (^ʔetkem)

- a. 3:1; reading LXX, *oikos Israel* (= *bêt yisrāʾēl*), versus MT, *bēnē yisrāʾēl*. Error due to abbreviation.
- b. The phrase ^cālêkem bêt yisrāʾēl occurs nowhere else in Amos, though it seems to be reflected in 5:1, ^ʔanōkî nōšē^ʔ ^cālêkem qînâ bêt yisrāʾēl 'I am raising against you a dirge, O House of Israel', as part of a coexisting structure. The triadic movement of 3:1, 5:1, and 6:14 would have YHWH raising Israel in deliverance, raising a dirge for her expected demise, and finally, raising another nation to accomplish this demise. The idea of YHWH as the mover of all nations for benefit and judgment also occurs in 1:6, 15, and 9:7.

imperatives and persuasive references to Israel's historic past. The latter, on the other hand, is a succinct, emphatic statement of the coming judgment of YHWH. But in spite of their apparent differences, these subsections deal with precisely the same issue in remarkably similar ways.

First, we observe that 3:1-2 opens the initial "Hear This Word" address in the center oracles with an ironic salutation and comment. It is surely no coincidence that 6:14 mirrors 3:1-2 in the closing of the final "Hear This Word" address. This effectively forms an *inclusio* for the whole of the center oracles (3:1-6:14) (see chart 3).

A second, more obvious correspondence between the two subsections is the use of rhetorical questions for the purpose of refuting Israel's preconceptions about herself and YHWH (3:3-8 // 6:12-13). But the connections do not stop at the mere use of this form. We are impressed that (1) both sets of questions are structured in a sequence with *hā* and ^ʔim as introductory markers (cf. 3:3-5 with 6 // 6:12a with b), (2) both sets of questions conclude

with a summary explanation introduced by *kî* (3:7 // 6:12c), (3) both sets of questions argue from analogy with animals in their habitats, whether natural or unnatural (lions in the forest or den, birds on the ground [3:3-5] // horses on a crag, an ox in the sea [6:12]¹¹), and (4) both sets of questions imply the issue of military conquest in order to assert YHWH's sovereignty over all nations (3:6, and cf. *lkd* in 3:4b, 5b // 6:13).¹²

In the summary explanations, or *kî* clauses, an additional item occurs that increases our conviction that subsections 3:1-11 and 6:11-14 are related. According to 3:7, YHWH does 'nothing' (^{lō} . . . ^{dābār}) without revealing his plan to prophets. In context (3:6), this plan involves the divine judgment of Israel in the form of military disaster. In the companion 6:13, the power-hungry Israelites are said to be "rejoicing in ^{lō} ^{dābār}," an ironic pun on the place-name, Lo-Devar, which was conquered by Israel, and its supposed meaning 'nothing'.¹³ The point is that Israel's pride in her own military superiority ignores the fact that YHWH is the one responsible for her victories. The reference to Lo-Devar in 6:13 then furnishes an application of the general assertion of 3:7 that it is indeed YHWH who accomplishes the 'nothing' of conquest and that it is according to the plan revealed through his prophets.

A third set of correspondences between the two subsections occurs in 3:9-11 and 6:11. These materials emphasize two things: (1) the disintegration of buildings, particularly those associated with wealth and power, and (2) the scattered remains of these edifices.

In 3:9-11, the 'fortresses' (^ʔarmēnôt) of Ashdod and the 'fortresses' of Egypt are summoned to bear testimony against 'fortresses' in Israel that store up violence and plunder. According to the oracle, the Israelite 'fortresses' soon will be reduced to what they store, relatively insignificant articles available to a conquering foe. Their doom is imaged in a subsequent illustration

11. Accepting the commonly proposed division of the text, *bēbāqār yām*. However, in light of the context, Alan Cooper's proposed emendation is most attractive: ^ʔim yahārōš *babbīq[ā] rēm* 'Does a wild ox plow in the Valley?' (Alan Cooper, "The Absurdity of Amos 6:12a," *JBL* 107 [1988] 725-27). His point is that *sela*^c and *biq[ā]*^c refer respectively to the Edomite stronghold conquered by Amaziah of Judah (2 Kgs 14:7; 2 Chr 25:12) and the Lebanese Beqā^c, both presently in Israelite control. They represent the southern and northern limits of territory controlled by Jeroboam II, also depicted in 6:14 as the Wadi of the Arabah and Lebo-Hamath (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25). Accordingly, the riddle is: "Real horses do not scamper across crags, and real wild oxen cannot be yoked to the plow. . . . Yet the Israelite 'horses' did indeed overrun Sela, just as their 'wild oxen' plowed up the Beqā^c." This proves irrefutably YHWH's involvement in these "unnatural" conquests.

12. See Cooper, "Amos 6:12a," 725-27, for a compelling discussion of this point.

13. See Wolff, *Amos*, 288, for the identification of Lo-Devar.

of bits and pieces of a victim left in a lion's mouth after it attacks (3:12). This illustration is then reapplied in the same verse to the so-called "deliverance" of the Israelites, or those who reside in Samaria. They will be like the broken furniture of a house after the house itself has been destroyed. This final image causes us to recall the opening of the oracle in 3:1, which proclaimed, "Against you, O house of Israel."

We also note that three enemies are referred to in vv. 9–11: a conquered Egypt (cf. 3:1), an insignificant Ashdod (a play on *šōd* 'plunder', 3:10), and an unnamed enemy (Assyria) who will reduce Israel to leftovers. This parallels exactly 6:13–14, which names two conquered foes, Lo-Devar and Qarnayim, along with an unspecified 'nation' (*gōy*, Assyria) who ultimately will swallow up Israel's conquests.

In comparison now with 3:9–11, 6:11 asserts that YHWH will command the demolition of 'the big house into splinters' (*habbayit haggādōl rēsīšīm*) and 'the little house into scraps' (*habbayit haqqāṣōn bēqī'īm*). As in 3:9–11, this comment is attached to an illustration, this time of "leftovers" (relatives!) in a house reduced by the death of its owners (6:9–10). But here, instead of leading into the illustration, the comment applies it (*kī*, 6:11). One should not miss the movement from 3:9–11 to 6:11. The deserved plundering of the political and economic establishment of Samaria will result in the decimation of all life in Israel, whether wealthy or poor.

Before concluding our discussion of A/A', we must observe the internal organization of the opening/closing subsections of the palistrophe. In reference to one another they develop chiastically, or in an a b c // c' b' a' pattern, perhaps signaling the palistrophe (see chart 4).

Finally, in addition to the ideas, metaphors, and linguistic elements that unite the subsections, 3:1–11 and 6:11–14 also are united by sameness of theme: YHWH's prerogative and activity stand behind what happens in the world, particularly as it concerns affairs between nations. The misguided notion that nations themselves can control their own destinies is rendered patently absurd.

Both 3:1–11 and 6:14 are constructed basically as arguments. The rhetorical questions (a theoretical argument) and references to Israel's history, both former and recent (a practical argument), are designed to gain the general consent of a premise: YHWH's relationship with Israel has produced the benefits of her position in the world. Forced to concede this, Israel cannot escape the conclusion that, just as certainly, YHWH may reduce that position. In the palistrophe, the practical, concrete, and immediate presentation of 6:11–14 draws the specific implications of the more theoretical, metaphorical, and historical presentation of 3:1–11.

Chart 4

	3:1–11	6:11–14
a	Raising up a Nation (Israel) to know her (3:1–2)	c' Demolition of Houses (6:11)
b	Rhetorical Questions (3:3–8)	b' Rhetorical Questions (6:12–13)
c	Demolition of "Houses" (3:9–11)	a' Raising up a Nation (Gentile) to fight her (6:14)

B/B' Exhibit: 3:12 // 6:9–10

Whereas the connections between 3:1–11 and 6:11–14 were not immediately obvious, the relationship between 3:12 and 6:9–10 presents no such problem. Each subsection concocts a brief illustration of the undeniable death and disaster about to befall Israel. Amos 3:12 continues the lion imagery of 3:4, 8, while 6:9–10 anticipates the demolition of all homes in Israel, both of the wealthy and the poor.

A closer look at these brief passages reveals that they share a number of rather interesting elements in common. First, both are concerned with the idea of death and particularly with the figure of a dissected corpse. Making an issue of worthless, surviving elements serves to emphasize the finality of disaster. In 3:12, the shepherd 'will deliver' (*yašīl*) only 'two shank bones' (dual, *kērā'ayim*) and a body part (*ōzen* 'ear') from the lion's mouth. In 6:10, a relative enters a house 'to deliver' (*lēhōšī'*) 'bones' (*šāmīm*) from a body part (dual, *yarkētē*, lit. 'thighs' → recesses) of the house.

Second, in 3:12 the figure of pieces of a ravaged animal is used as an analogy for pieces of furniture¹⁴ in an Israelite house and even for the Israelites themselves. But what the analogy lacks is the vivid details of an event. This is

14. Reading the problematic *bāmšq* as *bad mšq* 'part of the leg' (of a bed); see Smith, *Amos*, 123 n. 76.

provided in the companion 6:9–10, through the image of a relative entering a house ravaged by death in order to collect its (human) ‘remains’.

Finally, the oracular introduction to the analogy in 3:12 (*kōh ʿāmar YHWH kaʿāšer*) finds a counterpart in 6:9–10 in a constant reference to speaking in the empty house of the dead (*wēʿāmar laʿāšer . . . wēʿāmar . . . wēʿāmar*), and in particular ‘the mentioning of the name of YHWH’ (*lēhaz-kīr bēšēm YHWH*) in these circumstances. In my estimation, these rather ingenious plays make the association of subsections 3:12 and 6:9–10 virtually incontrovertible.

C/C’ Sworn Testimony: 3:13–15 // 6:8

The opening words of 3:13–15 and 6:8 provide an immediate sense of the relatedness of these subsections. Both begin with legal formulas announcing a statement by YHWH. It may be that in *C/C’* the prosecutor of *A/A’* and the exhibitor of *B/B’* is taking the stand in his own behalf. It is worth noting how similar the vocabulary in these introductions are (see chart 5). But one particular item deserves special mention: the reference to Israel as “Jacob” in 3:13. This title is relatively rare in Amos, occurring only twice in the center oracles. It is hardly a coincidence that these two references to “Jacob” in the center oracles are distributed between companion subsections 3:13–15 and 6:8. Supporting the prophet’s invitation for the nations to bear witness concerning the crimes of “the house of Jacob” (3:13), YHWH declares in 6:8b that he abhors “the pride of Jacob.” A connection like this one, involving an unusual feature in the text, is particularly helpful in establishing the palistrophe.

After the legal introductions we find a second point of contact between subsections 3:13–15 and 6:8. This is provided by the divine statements themselves. Not only are the statements similar in content, dealing with the removal of the cultic and political machinery of the kingdom,¹⁵ they are identical structurally as well. Both begin with anticipatory clauses containing a nonfinite verb form with a first-person pronoun (3:14a // 6:8b),¹⁶ and con-

15. Recall that in the initial set of subsections, 3:9–11 referred frequently to the ‘fortresses’ (*ʿarmēnōt*) of nations (4 times), while 6:11 referred to ‘the big house’ (*habbayit haggādōl*) and ‘the little house’ (*habbayit haqqāṭōn*). Here it is just the opposite: 3:15 refers to ‘the winter house’ (*bēt bāhōrep*), ‘the summer house’ (*bēt haqqayis*), ‘ivory houses’ (*bāitē haššēn*), and ‘many houses’ (*bāitīm rabbīm*) (= 4 times), while 6:8c refers to ‘fortresses’ (*ʿarmēnōt*).

16. Amos 3:14a, *kī bēyōm poqdī pišcē yisrāʿēl ʿalāw* ‘indeed, when I punish him (= Jacob, cf. 3:13) for the crimes of Israel, . . .’ // 6:8b, *mētāʿēb ʿānōkī ʿet gēʿōn yaʿāqōb* ‘I, having abhorred the pride of Jacob. . .’

Chart 5

3:13	6:8a
Hear and bear witness concerning (<i>bē</i>) the house of Jacob	Adonai YHWH has sworn by (<i>bē</i>) himself
Says (<i>nēʿūm</i>) Adonai YHWH God of Hosts	Says (<i>nēʿūm</i>) YHWH God of Hosts

tinue with two main clauses introduced by consecutive first-person suffix conjugation forms (3:14b–15 // 6:8c–d).¹⁷ The greater length of 3:14b–15 is due to the intrusion of two parenthetical clauses after each of its main clauses for the purpose of specifying the result of the main activity.

The relationship between these subsections is fairly clear. Both present a testimony of YHWH’s intent to remove the cultic and political barriers that prevent recognition of his sovereignty. Amos 3:13–15 is proclaimed publicly with an emphasis on the demonstration of his intention; 6:8 focuses on its inner, motivational aspects.¹⁸

D/D’ Named in Indictment: 4:1–3 // 6:1–7

Apparently J. Lust was the first to recognize a similarity in subject matter between 4:1–3 and 6:1–7.¹⁹ A closer look reveals that, in fact, a number of items draw these oracles together and incorporate them into the palistrophe.

As Lust has noted, their common topic cannot be missed. Both vividly portray in condemning fashion self-indulgent women (4:1–3) and men (6:1–7) lounging in the lap of luxury on the upper crust of society. But as we have seen before, the points of comparison between subsections in this palistrophe do not stop at related subject matter. In fact, the strongest connection here is

17. Amos 3:14b–15: *apāqadī ʿal mizbhōt bēt ʿēl . . . wēhikkētī bēt bāhōrep ʿal bēt haqqayis* ‘I will punish the altars of Bethel . . . and I will dash the winter house and summer house’ // 6:8b–c *ʿarmēnōtāyw šānēʿtī wēhisgātī ʿir ʾāmēlōʾāh* ‘I hate his fortresses, and I will close down the city along with its contents’.

18. Cf. E/E’ 4:4–5 // 5:21–27, two oracles condemning Israel’s worship with the identical movement between the passages as in 3:13–15 // 6:8.

19. Lust, “Remarks on the Redaction of Amos,” 153–54 n. 103.

what, on the surface, would seem to be a meaningless detail: the residence of the men and women. Their "ivory tower," as it were, is 'in Mount Samaria' (*bēhar šōmrôn*, 4:1 // 6:1). It is significant that, while the plural, *hārē šōmrôn*, is amply attested, the singular, *har šōmrôn*, occurs only in Amos 4:1 and 6:1 in the entire Hebrew Bible.

In the extended portrait of the men and women, textual correspondences abound. (1) Both portraits are organized with a sequence of participles: a series of three for the women²⁰ and a series of six for the men.²¹ (2) The women are called 'cows of Bashan' (*pārôt habbāšān*, 4:1); the men are said to eat 'calves from the pen' (*ʿāgālīm mittōk marbēq*, 6:4b). (3) The women order their husbands, 'Bring me!' (*hābīʿa*, 4:1c); but it is to the men that the Israelite people regularly 'come' (*ʾābāʿū*, 6:1b). (4) The desire of the women is 'that we may drink' (*wēništeh*, 4:1c); but the men are 'drinkers' (*haššōtīm*, 6:6) of wine by the barrel.

Correspondences continue in the announcement of punishment. (1) In both portraits the penalty is exile. (2) The women will be sent away 'to the last of you' (*ʿahārītēken*, 4:2b); the men, as the 'elite' (*rēʿīt*, 6:1b, 6) will go 'first' (*bērōʿ*, 6:7). (3) The women will go 'one in front of the other' (*ʿiṣṣā negdāh*, 4:3); the men will go 'at the front' (*bērōʿ*, 6:7). (4) The women will go through 'breaks' (in the wall?) (*pērāšīm*, 4:3); the men are 'breakers(?)' (*happōrēṭīm*, 6:5) like David in their musical skill, but do not grieve over the 'brokenness' (*šēber*, 6:6b) of Joseph. (5) As the women will be carried away in *šrōt* ('hooks'(?), 4:2b), so the drunken lollygagging of the men *wēšār* ('will end,' 6:7).

Seemingly in every clause we are granted more insight into the depraved consumerism of 4:1–3 through the penetrating analysis of corrupted leadership in 6:1–7. The combined portraits of dominating women who demand the wine of "their masters" and invidious men who eat the "calves" of their "cows" is an image of society turned to feeding on itself.

EIE' Condemnation: 4:4–5 // 5:21–27

As with the previous set of subsections (D/D'), the correlation between 4:4–5 and 5:21–27 is obvious. These oracles condemn the false cult of Is-

20. Amos 4:1b, *hāʿōšēqōt* 'the oppressors'; 4:1c, *hārōšēšōt* 'the crushers', 4:1d, *hāʿō-mērōt* 'those who have a say'.

21. Amos 6:1b, *habbōšēḥīm* 'those who have security'; 6:3, *hamēnaddīm* 'ones who dismiss'; 6:4a, *haššōkēbīm* 'those who lie down'; 6:4b, *hāʿōkēlīm* 'eaters'; 6:5, *happōrēṭīm* 'those who devise'; 6:6, *haššōtīm* 'those who drink'.

rael. Though they are somewhat uncomfortable in their immediate literary surroundings, they fit together perfectly within the structure proposed here.

The ironic call to worship in 4:4–5 parodies Israel's enjoyment of religious formalism. She is invited in a series of seven imperatives to "enter" (the shrines), "commit crimes," "commit more crimes," "bring" (lavish, inappropriate offerings), "offer" (unauthorized sacrifices), "identify" and "let (all) hear" (your intention to worship); all because "this is what you love to do, O people of Israel" (4:5b). These imperatives seem to have an antithetical parallel in the seven religious activities that God refuses to acknowledge in 5:21–24.²² Listed there are festivals, solemn occasions, holocausts, tribute offerings, well-being offerings, the racket of songs and the plucking of harps.

The final, climactic imperative *hašmīʿū* 'let hear' (4:5) stands out for a reason beyond its placement in the series. It has a counterpart, *lōʿ ʿēšmaʿ*, which occurs in a similar series as the climactic, fourth negated prefix conjugation form (first person) in 5:21b–23. In this passage, YHWH's response to the frenzied religious activity of Israel is presented: "I don't enjoy" (your occasions), "I don't want" (your holocausts and tribute offerings), "I don't regard" (your fattened well-being offerings), and 'I don't hear' (*lōʿ ʿēšmaʿ*, 5:23) (the plucking of your harps). The contrast between Israel's passion for the cult and YHWH's rejection of its empty forms is stressed in the final line of 4:4–5 and in the initial line of 5:21–27: 'you love . . .' (*ʿāhabtem*) // 'I hate' (*šānēʿtī*).

Issues related to cultic observance are the source of frequent interplay between these subsections, especially in the matter of sacrifice. In 4:4b, Israel is encouraged ironically to perform 'your sacrifices' (*zibhēkem*) every morning and bring the triennial tithe every three days. But in 5:25, YHWH reminds Israel that frequency of ceremonial activity is of little consequence. For who can forget that she was sustained for forty years in the wilderness without these communal 'sacrifices' (*zēbāḥīm*)?

Another correspondence worthy of mention is the ironic invitation in 4:5 to desecrate the *rōdā* and *nēdābōt*, both occasions of the *šelem*, which, according to 5:22b, YHWH does not regard. And finally, it should not be overlooked that the first three imperatives of 4:4–5 call the Israelites to Bethel and to Gilgal (if the latter does not refer to the shrine itself at Bethel²³), the site of their cultic sins. Amos 5:24 proposes a desired alternative to this useless pilgrimage in a delightful wordplay on *haggilgāl* (4:4): "Let justice 'roll'

22. Cf. Limburg, "Sevenfold Structure," 219–21, for a discussion of the multiple sets of seven and seven-plus-one figures in the oracles of Amos. Limburg includes 4:4–5 and 5:21–24 in his discussion (p. 220).

23. See the discussion in Lust, "Remarks on the Redaction of Amos," 142–43.

(*wēyiggal*) like water; uprightness like a rushing wadi." Amos 5:27 then completes the pun with the inevitable results if they continue supporting the shrine: "I will send you into exile" (*wēhiglētī*). In a most dramatic way, 5:21–27 provides YHWH's response to the cultic priorities of Israel referred to in 4:4–5.

F/F' Judgments Reviewed / Announced: 4:6–13 // 5:18–20

Our discussion ends with a consideration of the parallels between companion subsections 4:6–13 and 5:18–20. As with A/A' 3:1–11 // 6:11–14, these subsections of the palistrophe seem to have little in common. Actually, the oracles are strikingly similar, if not in amount of material, at least in their subject matter and organization.

Amos 4:6–13 is presented in five major units, with a final statement of consequence including a hymn fragment.²⁴ The lyric of the hymn moves through a series of five active participles that praise the name of YHWH and at the same time balance the entire oracle. The five major units of the oracle are easily distinguished by the recurring formula *wēlō² šabtēm 'aday nē²ūm YHWH* 'but you did not turn to me, oracle of YHWH' (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). They are also grouped triadically in a 2+2+1 framework.²⁵ That is, lack of food (4:6) and lack of water (4:7–8) form a subunit (cf. *wēgam 'ānī / 'ānōkī* introduction for both); blight/mildew (4:9) and plague (4:10) form a subunit; the cataclysm reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah fittingly stands alone as the third subunit (4:11).

The subject matter of 4:6–13 is as transparent as its form. The oracle rehearses five stereotypical judgments that failed to bring Israel to repentance. In every instance, YHWH's efforts, in spite of their severity, proved resistible for Israel. But the oracle does not end there. Verses 12–13, in a valiant appeal for repentance, promise one final effort by the incomparable YHWH to effect inescapable judgment. The five participial names in the hymn assure us that YHWH himself is able to produce what his calamities have not. "The one who makes (even) the dawn dark" (*'ōše šāhar 'ēpā*) surely is capable of anything.

On the opposite wing of the palistrophe is 5:18–20, a brief oracle about the Day of YHWH. Though it cannot compare with the elaborate strains of 4:6–13, its materials are woven together just as tightly. The introductory

24. On pentadic groupings in Amos, see Coote, *Composition and Theology*, 66–78.

25. A similar format may be proposed for the five vision reports in 7:1–9:15. For a brief discussion, see Smith, *Amos*, 215–16.

"Woe" pronouncement is followed immediately by a rhetorical question that picks up the "Day of YHWH" theme (5:18b). Both the structure of this question and its vocabulary match the final line of the oracle (5:20), forming an *inclusio* for the analogy within: 5:18, "What do you want with the Day of YHWH? It is darkness, not light!" // 5:20, "Is not the Day of YHWH darkness, not light; blackness with no gleam whatsoever?" It seems that we are meant to recall here the reputation of YHWH, described in 4:13 as the one who blackens the dawn.

What unfolds within the oracle (5:19) are five brief acts dramatizing a man's attempt to escape a series of threatening situations. (1) He flees the mouth of the lion, (2) only to be approached by the bear; (3) so he goes home, (4) puts his hand against the wall, (5) and the snake bites him. These acts are distinguished by four *waw*-conjunctions and are organized triadically. Not only does the series identify three animal threats (each defined in the poem for recognition), but one finds again the 2+2+1 triadic framework that was employed in 4:6–11. The threats of the lion and the bear form the first subunit, the entering of the house and leaning against the wall form the second subunit,²⁶ and finally, in the climactic subunit, the snake bites the man.

As in 4:6–13, the issue again is the attempt to sidestep judgment, a point illustrated in the five-act play of 5:19. But a more basic point seems to be that Israel, in a misconception about the Day of YHWH, has forfeited her best opportunity for repentance. Consequently, she will experience this day as her doom, another point established in the final act of the illustration.

As in previous subsections, the second passage provides a response to issues raised in the first passage. The confusing (and rather ambiguous) 4:12 is pivotal for understanding how this works in this section of the palistrophe. The verse announces the consequences of Israel's failure to turn to YHWH in spite of repeated opportunities. YHWH says, "Therefore this is what I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" The demonstratives are left without referents in the passage—a most unusual situation. In my estimation, this can be resolved satisfactorily (and simply)²⁷ by assuming that they refer to "the Day of YHWH," which will be

26. One may recall here the point of correspondence in B/B' 3:12 // 6:9–10. In the former subsection, the illustration revolved around pieces of a victim in a lion's mouth. In the latter, a relative searched for surviving elements within a house of death. The first two subunits appear to pick up this "animal-house" interchange for similar reasons.

27. Contra Wolff, *Amos*, 222; Wolff posits in "thus" a nonverbal pointing to the destroyed altar at Bethel. Nor is there any reason to support the notion that Amos has in mind the statement of punishment in 3:2; see Smith, *Amos*, 147.

introduced in the companion subsection of the palistrophe.²⁸ This also makes sense of the reference to "meeting your God" in v. 12, especially if "the Day of YHWH" was conceived of as a moment in which YHWH would manifest himself within history to do battle with his opponents.²⁹

But none of this solves the problem of the hymn fragment in 4:13. We will not attempt a full discussion of that question here, since to do it justice the fragment must be addressed in conjunction with 5:8-9 and 9:5-6, which is beyond the scope of the present study. However, we have noted that the fragment contains a reference to YHWH as the "darkener of dawn"—perhaps the clearest semantic parallel to 5:18-20, wherein "the Day of YHWH" is identified twice as "darkness, not light." Perhaps what we have in 4:13 and 5:18-20 are actually alternative ways in which the sinful people of Israel may "meet" their God. And it may be that these alternatives were introduced earlier in the form *liqra't* 'to meet' (4:12).

Commentators are agreed, with good reason, that the form *liqra't* is not related to *qr*³ but to *qry*, though the LXX and the Peshiṭta opt for the former, reading 'to call, proclaim'. But it is conceivable that both were intended in an ingenious wordplay. The content of the hymn introduces a sovereign God who holds creation in his hands, is not bound to Israel as patron, and therefore may be responsible for visiting judgment upon her. But we should not dismiss too quickly the fact that the hymn also offers Israel a vehicle whereby she may "proclaim" the name of her God and so *legitimately* escape judgment.³⁰ Therein lies the alternative. Israel may prepare herself "to name" her God in recognition of his sovereign power and right to judge. Or she must be prepared to suffer the consequences of "meeting" him on his day when "the snake will bite" and there will be no escape.

If this is at all the sense of 4:12-13 (// 5:18-20), it explains why the palistrophe continues its development to a center point in the refrain of the hymn: *YHWH šēmô* (5:8c). In 3:1-5:8b, the oracles are theoretical or categorical. Often they present what might be, but need not be, if Israel will turn to YHWH in an authentic recognition of his sovereignty. What better way for cult-loving people to do this than in the form of a hymn. But in 5:9-6:14, the words are real with a finality about them. All implications are drawn, and their immediacy horrifies us. In effect, these words describe now what must be.

28. J. Lust seems to have been the first to recognize this connection between 4:12 and 5:18-20; cf. Lust, "Remarks on the Redaction of Amos," 153 n. 103.

29. For options regarding "the Day of YHWH," see among others, Smith, *Amos*, 178-80.

30. See Deut. 32:3, for *qr*³ (with accusative) used of 'proclaiming' the name of God in his power over creation.

Baruch, the Ideal Sage

J. Edward Wright

Why was the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Baruch*) ascribed to Baruch, the companion of the prophet Jeremiah? The pseudepigraphic attribution of the Jewish apocalypses to notable figures from the Hebrew Bible is an issue that prevents us from identifying and understanding better the actual authors of these works and their audiences.¹ I propose to address this problem by surveying the several Baruch pseudepigrapha to gain a more complete appreciation of the character of the Baruch who was being presented in the literature attributed to him. What will emerge from this study is the development of the character of Baruch toward that of an "Ideal Sage." Michael Stone has described the place and the nature of the ideology of the "Ideal Sage" in Early Judaism.² Building on his treatment, I shall trace the development of the portrayal of Baruch in the biblical materials pertaining to him and in the several Baruch pseudepigrapha.

In pseudepigraphic literature the narrative framework is the skeleton that binds together the visions, paranesis, testaments, etc.; it is how the author integrated the constituent components into a literary whole.³ Moreover, the

1. Standard treatments on the vexing issue of pseudepigraphy are Norbert Brox, ed., *Pseudepigraphie in der heidenischen und jüdisch-christlichen Antike* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977) and Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidenischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (HAW 1.2; Munich: Beck, 1971).

2. "Ideal Figures and Social Context: Priest and Sage in the Early Second Temple Age," *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul Hanson, and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 575-86. Note also Jacob Neusner, "Sage, Priest, Messiah: Three Types of Judaism in the Age of Jesus," *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 35-44.

3. This has been pointed out by Divorah Dimant, "The Testament as a Literary Form in Early Jewish Pseudepigraphic Literature," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Division A, The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1982) 79-83.