Student's Name: Minh Cong Nguyen

Course: OT755, Amos (Hebrew Text)

Professor: R. Russell Mack, Ph.D.

Essay 8

1. First, list the book title(s) you read for Amos 5 and the respective pages.
    - *Hosea-Jonah, Volume 31,* by Douglas Stuart, pages 341-350
    - *Amos, A Handbook on the Hebrew Text,* by Duane A. Garrett, pages 129-162
    - *The Message of Amos,* by J. A. Motyer, pages 105-127
    - *The Minor Prophets, An Exegetical and Expository Commentary, Vol. 1 Hosea, Joel, and Amos.* Edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey, pages 408-426

2. Second, in a few paragraphs of approximately 350 words total length, detail what you learned about these verses that was new, fascinating, or compelling to you. Focus on being specific about your learning and not the application of it.

It is so fascinating to see the chiastic structure of a poem in Amos 5:4-6. This is totally new to a student who read the Bible in his native language, Vietnamese. This language cannot be used to translate the passage into poetry form, and the reader cannot see its chiastic structure. According to Garret's analysis, the passage contains a seven-line strophe (v. 4b-6a) with a structure as follows.

A: Seek me [the Lord] and live

B: Do not seek Bethel

C: Do not go to Gilgal

D: do not journey to Beersheba

C': Gilgal will surely go into exile

B': Bethel will be reduced to nothing

A': Seek the Lord and live

Obviously, the structure emphasizes the command "Seek the Lord." Garret stated, "The initial imperative marks this as a directive text-type, as the poem uses commands, purpose clauses, prohibitions, and explanatory clauses to make its exhortation."[1] Therefore, reading the passage in the rhythm of a poem and looking at its chiastic structure, one could see clearly the command of the Lord and how imperative and serious it is.

This chiasmus followed by a warning of destruction, "lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel" (v. 6b). And then, God's Word points out the injustice and sins of Israel (v. 7-13). Furthermore, "seek the Lord" is concretized by two more commands: "Seek good, and not evil" (v. 14), "Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (v. 15). It is worth noting that the last words of verse 5 bring hope to Israel, though it seems to be slim. If the people of God follow his command, "it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (v. 5b).

In short, the command "seek the Lord" serves as a promise and a warning to the people of God. If they "seek the Lord", they will live and avoid the devastating consequences of their sin. Otherwise, they will be punished terribly (v. 6).

3. Third, identify at least one question that was not answered by your reading. This could become the topic of your research paper.

Why is the metaphor of wormwood [לַעֲנָה] used in Amos 5:7, "O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!"? Garret says that this common translation

[1] Duane A. Garrett, *Amos, A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press), 139.

cannot be correct, but he does not suggest a correct translation for this word. The Septuagint translation renders לְלַעֲנָה (to wormwood) as “εἰς ὕψος” (upward). It perhap reflect a Hebrew Vorlage of לְמַעְלָה? (upside down)[2]. It sounds reasonable but unsure.

[2] Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets, An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 418.