

Amos 6:1-7 as an intensification of Amos 3:9-11

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Abstract

The composition of the book of Amos has caused a lively discussion in which many different answers have been given. One of the many proposals, namely that of J. Jeremias, holds that Amos 3-4 (a Gotteswort) should be separated from Amos 5-6 (a Prophetenwort), with 3-4 seen as representing an earlier stage in the formation of the book. In this contribution the proposal made by Jeremias is put to the test by examining two pericopes in Amos 3-6 i.e. 3:9-11 and 6:1-7. The result of the investigation leads to the conclusion that Amos 6:1-7 serves as an intensification of Amos 3:9-11, thereby confirming the results of Jeremias on the composition of the book of Amos.

1. Introduction: views on the composition of the book of Amos

The composition of the book of Amos has caused a lively discussion where many different answers have been given. A quick and cursory survey of recent literature on the question of the composition of the book of Amos portrays a wide variety of conflicting viewpoints on this matter. Koch (1976a:81) in his study as well as Andersen and Freedman (1989:23-72) divide the book into four parts. Koch's option consists of Amos 1-2, 3-4, 5-9:6 and 9:7-15 while Andersen and Freedman distinguish the Book of Doom 1:1-4:13, the Book of Woes 5:1-6:14, the Book of Visions 7:1-9:6 and an Epilogue 9:7-15. According to Paul (1991:6-7) the book of Amos can be divided into five literary units: 1:2-2:16, 3:1-5:17, 5:18-6:1-7, 7:1-9:10 and 9:11-15. According to several scholars the book of Amos displays a three part structure. Smalley (1979:124-125) distinguishes three parts in the book: Amos 1-5:3, 5:4-15, 5:16-9:15. Stuart (1987:287) argues that Amos should be divided into a first group of oracles 1:2-6:14, visions 7:1-8:3 and a final group of oracles 8:4-9:15. Another scholar who maintains a threefold composition of the book of Amos is Smith (1989:7-9): judgments on the nations, 1:1-2:14, are followed by the verification of God's warnings of punishment on Samaria, 3:1-6:14, and finally 7:1-9:15 which deals with visions and exhortations of the end. According to Jeremias (1988a:126, 1988b:218) the book of Amos can be divided into mainly three sections: a middle part containing the words of Amos

and characterised by the saying "hear this word" (chapters 3-6), surrounded by two other parts, the oracles against the nations or *Völkerworte* at the beginning of the book (chapters 1-2) and the vision reports or *Visionsberichte* at the end of the book (chapters 7-9). Van der Wal (1983) argues for a two part division in the book, the first part consisting of chapters 1-6 and the second part consisting of chapters 7-9. Little wonder then that Hasel (1991:95) in a recent publication on the book of Amos concluded that the compositional picture of Amos in current scholarship is anything but unified.

2. Problem statement

The aim of this contribution is to focus on only one of the many proposals on the composition of the book of Amos by putting the views of Jeremias to the test by examining in more detail two pericopes in Amos 3-6 and to establish whether his thesis would be valid in a particular case in Amos 3-6. The two pericopes under discussion are Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7. On the matter of method Jeremias (1988b:218) is of opinion that synchronic questions pertaining to the surface of the text must be bound together with diachronic questions about the individual stages through which the book passed before attaining its final form. This contribution will follow these methodological guidelines by subjecting the two pericopes under discussion to a structural analysis and also to pay attention to matters such as *Gattung*, *Sitz im Leben* and redactional issues.

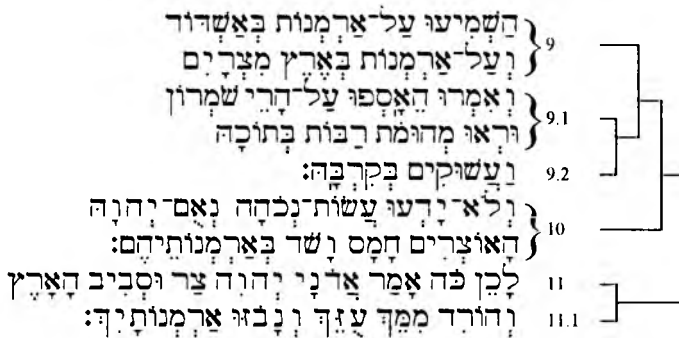
3. The views of J. Jeremias on the composition of Amos 3-6

In the above-mentioned article Jeremias (1988a:131) calls for a closer examination of Amos 3-6. He notes that the introductory verses beginning with "hear this word" in 3:1, 4:1 and 5:1 are not in each case exactly the same. According to him "hear this word" in 4:1 should be taken as an introduction to only 4:1-3: on the one hand it lacks the relative clause characteristic of 3:1 and 5:1 and on the other hand it is directed specifically to the wealthy women of Samaria over against 3:1 and 5:1 with a more general address. A closer examination of 3:1 and 5:1 also brings significant differences to the fore. In 3:1 it is a word from Yahweh (יְהוָה) to בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, while in 5:1 it is a word from the prophet (אָנֹכִי) directed to the בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. He noted further that the term בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is used throughout Amos 3-4 as a designation for the people of God while the term בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל is used in Amos 5-6 to denote the people of God. Amos 3-4 is thus clearly a *Gotteswort* followed by a *Prophetenwort* in Amos 5-6. These observations lead Jeremias to the conclusion that Amos 3-4 should be distinguished from Amos 5-6, as 3-4 represents an earlier stage in the formation of the book. Yet, in spite of the separation of Amos 3-6 into two parts the *Zusammenhang* of these parts must also be recognised (Jeremias, 1988a:135). The conclusion Jeremias reaches is that the tradents of Amos's words did two things simultaneously. On

the one hand they sharpened Amos's accusations, extending them to all Israel, and brought them into confrontation with Yahweh's saving acts. On the other hand, they dared to call people to a new beginning in the establishment of justice even more clearly than Amos dared to do (Jeremias, 1988a:136; Jeremias, 1988b:227).

4. A structural analysis of Amos 3:9-11 and Amos 6:1-7

• Amos 3:9-11



Amos 3:9-11 is a well demarcated pericope (cf. also Gitay, 1980). It begins with *הַשְּׁמִיעוּ* (cf. also Amos 3:1, 3:13, 4:1, 5:1 and 8:4) indicating the beginning of a new unit in the book. *אַרְמְנוֹת* is found in stichoi 9-11.1 (verses 9, 10 and 11) which is another indication of the limits of the particular pericope as it is not found in 3:12ff. Amos 3:12 opens with *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, a well known introductory formula indicating the beginning of another pericope.

Stich 9.1 and 9.2 (verse 9) are linked because of the waw copulative in 9.2 and because *בְּתוֹכָהּ* and *בְּקַרְבָּהּ* can be seen as synonyms. The participles in both 9.1 and 9.2 also call for the linkage of stich 9.1 with stich 9.2. The waw at the beginning of stich 9.1 and the imperatives found in stich 9 and 9.1 are indications that stichoi 9 and 9.1-9.2 (verse 9) must be joined. Stichoi 9, 9.1 and 9.2 link with stich 10 (verse 10) due to the waw beginning of stich 10 (verse 10). *נְאֻם־יְהוָה* in stich 10 (verse 10) also brings the divine utterance of stichoi 9-10 (verses 9-10) to an end.

The waw at the beginning of stich 11.1 (verse 11) continuing the *כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי* utterance in stich 11 (verse 11) necessitates the joining of stich 11.1 with stich 11 (verse 11). The word at the beginning of stich 11 (verse 11) – *לָכֵן* – indicates that a conclusion is drawn on the basis of the foregoing argumentation and

therefore stichoi 9-10 and 11-11.1 are interlinked. אַרְמֻנֹת is found in stichoi 9, 10 and 11, binding the stichoi together in a unity.

♦ Amos 6: 1-7

הוֹי הַשְּׂאֵנַנִּים בְּצִיּוֹן וְהַבְּטָחִים בְּהַר שְׁמֶרֶן	1	
נִקְבֵי רֵאשִׁית הַגּוֹיִם וּבָאוּ לָהֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:	1.1	
עֲבְרוּ כָל־גֵּה וּרְאוּ וּלְכוּ מִשֵּׁם חַמַּת רֶבֶחַ	} 2	
וּרְדוּ גַת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים		
הַטּוֹבִים מִן־הַמְּלָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲסִר־בֶּ	} 2.1	
גְּבוּלָם מִגְּבֻלְכֶם:		
הַמְּנַדִּים לְיוֹם רַע וַתִּגְיֹשׁוּן שֶׁבֶת חָמָס:	3	
הַשֹּׁכְבִים עַל־מְטוֹת שֵׁן וְסִרְחִים עַל־עֲרֻשׁוֹתָם	4	
וְאֹכְלִים כֶּרִים מִצֹּאן וְעֹגְלִים מִתּוֹךְ מִרְבֵּק:	4.1	
הַפְּרֻטִים עַל־פִּי הַנֶּבֶל כְּדוֹרֵד הַשְּׁבוּ	} 5	
לָהֶם כְּלִי־שִׁיר:		
הַשְּׁתִים בְּמִזְרְקֵי בֵּין וְרֵאשִׁית שְׂמָנִים יִמְשְׁחוּ	6	
וְלֹא נִחְלוּ עַל־שִׁבְרֵי יוֹסֵף:	6.1	
לָכֵן עֲתָח יִגְלוּ בְּרֵאשׁ גּוֹלִים	} 7	
וְסִר מְרֻזַח סְרוּחִים:		

There is little doubt that Amos 6:1-7 constitutes a demarcated pericope. The call הוֹי in verse 1 (stich 1) marks the beginning of a new pericope and as in the case in Amos 3:9-11, לָכֵן denotes the idea of a conclusion reached on the basis of a foregoing argumentation. Paronomasia links רֵאשִׁית in stich 1.1 (verse 1) with וְרֵאשִׁית in stich 6 (verse 6) and בְּרֵאשׁ in stich 7 (verse 7). Roberts (1985:155) makes the remark concerning the demarcation of Amos 6:1-7 that there is a fairly general agreement on the extent of the oracle.

Stichoi 1 and 1.1 link because of the participles common to both stichoi. Stichoi 2 and 2.1 link because of the imperative forms found in both stichoi. Stichoi 1-2 (verses 1-2) should be grouped together. The many proper names occurring only in stichoi 1-2 point to the linkage of verses 1-2. The reference to kingdoms (הַמְּלָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה) and territory (גְּבוּלָם מִגְּבֻלְכֶם) in stich 2.1 points back to the foreign cities mentioned in stich 2 as well as Zion and Samaria in stich 1 which serves as another argument in favour of the linkage of stichoi 1-2 (verses 1-2).

Stich 3 (verse 3) introduces a new unit in Amos 6:1-7. No further mention of foreign cities and no more plural imperative forms – characteristic of stichoi 2-2.1 (verse 2) – are found from stich 3 onwards. Stichoi 3-6.1 (verses 3-6) are further

characterised by a number of participles alternating with finite verbs – a phenomenon which is an indicator that these stichoi should be joined. Paronomasia links שִׁבְרָה in stich 6.1 (verse 6) with שִׁבְתָּה in stich 3 (verse 3) acting at the same time as an inclusio (Carroll, 1992:262) providing yet another argument for the joining of stichoi 3-6.1 (verses 3-6). Carroll (1992:258) also notes that the perspective changes in verse 3 from Israel's relations with foreign powers to that of internal affairs.

Stichoi 1-2.1 (verses 1-2) are interlinked with stichoi 3-6.1 (verses 3-6) due to the flow of the argument presented in the pericope and because of the continuation of participle forms in both parts.

There is almost general agreement that stich 7 (verse 7) constitutes the third part of this pericope. Stich 7 (verse 7) begins with the prominent עֲתָה לְכֹן drawing the pericope to a conclusion by introducing the verdict pronounced upon the people. Ultimately stich 7 (verse 7) links up with stichoi 1-6 (verse 1-6).

5. Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7 related

Following the thesis of Jeremias, Amos 3-4 and 5-6 can and even should be related to each other. There are indeed several arguments pointing in the direction of a relationship between Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7.

Jeremias himself (1988a:135; 1988b:225) noted that the enumeration of the transgressions in the capital city of Samaria combines the divine speech of chapters 3-4 and the prophetic speech of chapters 5-6.

The results of a structural analysis reveal that both pericopes display a similar structure. In each case the pericope consists of three parts. In Amos 3:9 mention is made of foreign cities followed by the actual accusation in Amos 3:10 and finally the pericope concludes by the verdict pronounced upon the guilty party in verse 11. In Amos 6:1-7 the pericope also commences with a reference to foreign cities (in verses 1-2). This reference is also followed by the actual accusation (in verses 3-6) and the pericope comes to a close (in verse 7) by the verdict introduced by לְכֹן as in 3:11.

It has already been referred to that in both cases foreign cities are mentioned. In Amos 3:9 the foreign city of Ashdod is mentioned as well as Egypt while in Amos 6:2 the foreign cities of Calneh, Hamath and Gath are mentioned. Both Gath and Ashdod are Philistine cities.

There is, however, an important difference between the mentioning of the cities which should also be kept in mind. In Amos 3:9 the cities are called upon to come and look at Samaria while in Amos 6:2 Samaria and Zion are called upon to look at the foreign cities. Carroll (1992:256) rightfully remarks that the idea of

going to another country (in Amos 6:2) is reminiscent of Amos 3:9 but that the difference in purpose could not be greater. In 3:9 the pagan nations come to bear witness to the sin and observe the judgment on the people, while Israel's leaders in 6:2 attempt to bolster their pride and in doing this confirm themselves in that sin.

In both cases the sin of which Samaria (and Zion in Amos 6:3) is accused of is described with the same word: **סִמְּךָ**. In Amos 3:10 the inhabitants of Samaria are accused of the violent way in which they acquire their wealth ("filling their mansions with things taken by crime and violence" – Good News Bible). In Amos 6:3 they are accused of "bringing near the throne/rule of violence" (Wittenberg, 1987:57). It should also be noted that Amos 3:10 and 6:3 are the only two instances where the word **סִמְּךָ** occurs in the book of Amos. This observation has led several scholars to allude to a possible relation between Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7 (Wolff, 1975:320; Wolff, 1977:275; Mays, 1976:116-117; Carroll, 1992:258; Van Gelderen, 1933:164).

The verdict is in both cases introduced by **לֵבִיךָ** – cf. Amos 3:11 and Amos 6:7 (Cripps, 1969:208; Koch, 1976b:185; Limburg, 1988:112). In both cases the verdict pronounced upon them hints back on what they are accused of. In Amos 3:11 mention is made of their mansions which will be destroyed. In Amos 3:10 they are accused of filling their mansions with things taken by crime and violence. In Amos 6:7 it is predicted that their feasts and banquets will come to an end (**סִמְּךָ** was also mentioned in verse 4), while in Amos 6:4-5 they are accused of feasting and of composing songs.

To sum up the first part of the argument: There are a number of indications that Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7 can be linked; the enumeration of transgressions conducted in the capital city of Samaria mentioned in both pericopes, the similar structure of both pericopes, the foreign cities mentioned in each of the pericopes, the occurrence of **סִמְּךָ** in only these two parts of the book of Amos and the verdict introduced by **לֵבִיךָ** all point to a link between Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7.

6. Amos 6:1-7 as an intensification of Amos 3:9-11

6.1 The accused

In Amos 3:9-11 only Samaria is addressed while in Amos 6:1-7 it is not only Samaria which is addressed, but also Zion – more so, Zion is mentioned in a prominent and initial position right at the beginning of the oracle. It strikes one as rather surprising that Zion is also included in the woe-oracle as Amos directs his prophecies mainly to Israel, the northern kingdom, and not to Judah. Yet, in this case Zion is explicitly mentioned. This observation fits in with the conclusion

Jeremias (1988a:136; 1988b:227) reached that the tradents of Amos's words sharpened the accusations of Amos and at the same time also extended them to all Israel. Although some scholars (Wolff, 1977:269-270; Deissler, 1981:119; Markert, 1977:164) hold the reference to Zion to be a later addition to the book and others (Rudolph, 1971:215) emend the text albeit with no textual evidence, there are many scholars (Harper, 1960:143; Cripps, 1969:202; Mays, 1976:115; Koch, 1976b:184; Deissler, 1981:119; Roberts, 1985:157; Van Leeuwen, 1985:237; Stuart, 1987:358; Limburg, 1988:110) who regard this reading as the original – especially due to the reference to David in verse 5. The consequence of Jeremias' point of view is that not only the reference to Zion should be taken as a later addition to the book, but that the whole of Amos 6:1-7 represents a later edition.

The intensification is obvious: the intensification is implied in the fact that not only Samaria is included in the woe-oracle but, contrary to what one would expect, Zion as well. The span of the prophet's judgement is thus widened by the tradents of Amos's initial words to include not only Israel but Zion as well.

6.2 The word סמך

As was noted, the word סמך occurs only twice in the book of Amos i.e. in Amos 3:10 and Amos 6:3. In Amos 3:10 the meaning of סמך can be described as "acquiring wealth and property by the exploiting of others," cf. especially verse 10.

In Amos 6:3 the people are accused of dismissing the day of disaster and bringing near the seat/throne of violence – being the reason for the announced woe in verse 1. The meaning of this is elaborated on in verses 4-6 by the use of ן + participles. The great number of participles in verses 3-6 have long been recognised by scholars (Markert, 1977:167-168; Wolff, 1964:13; Wolff, 1977:273; Andersen & Freedman, 1989:548, 557). The use of the participle plus ן has inter alia the function of relative clauses (Waltke & O'Connor, 1990:621; Gemser, 1968:225) so that verses 4-6 can be understood as a closer definition and clarification of what is actually meant by סמך תבש . The luxurious lifestyle of the people (verses 3-6a) without any regard to the plight of Joseph (verse 6b) is sharply criticised and is rendered as nothing else but violence. It is their conduct and attitude of indifference coupled with a luxuriant lifestyle which are labelled as violent.

While סמך is only mentioned in Amos 3:10, it is now given a much more specific and elaborate meaning in 4-6. It is also significant that the sin of the people is described by the word סמך . Not only the way in which wealth was acquired but also the way in which it was enjoyed with no concern for the demise of Joseph are judged by the prophet.

6.3 The *Gattung* employed

The *Gattung* employed in these two pericopes also indicates an intensification in Amos 6:1-7. The *Gattung* used in Amos 3:9-11 is usually described as a *Prophetenspruch* or a *Scheltwort* (Weiser, 1974:146; Kaiser, 1985:302) or a *Prophetische Gerichtswort* (Wolff, 1977:191; Koch, 1976a:133) or *Gerichtsrede* (Van Leeuwen, 1985:122). In Amos 6:1-7 the *Gattung* of the *Weheruf* or woe-oracle is employed (Kaiser, 1985:302; Wolff, 1977:273; Rudolph, 1971:218; Van Leeuwen, 1985:236; Andersen & Freedman, 1989:545; Deissler, 1981:119; Mays, 1976:114; Koch, 1976b:185; Markert, 1977:170). Whereas the *Prophetenspruch* indicates punishment, the woe-oracle indicates more than punishment, it indicates death, the *Sitz im Leben* of the woe being rooted in the funeral lament and practices in Israel (Gerstenberger, 1962; Clifford, 1966; Wanke, 1966; Krause, 1973; Janzen, 1972). Jeremias remarks that the dominant theme of Amos 5-6 is that of death (Jeremias, 1988a:134; 1988b:224).

6.4 The content of the judgement pronounced

The judgement pronounced upon the people in Amos 3:11 holds that an (unnamed) enemy will surround the land and that their palaces or strongholds will be devastated. In Amos 6:7 exile is predicted: not only their palaces will be destroyed but they will be taken captive, which ultimately means the loss of the land promised to them by Yahweh himself.

In Amos 3:11 the rich people only stand to lose their palaces. No mention is made of the loss of people. In Amos 6:7 people are involved: they will be taken into exile.

In Amos 3:11 it is only those who live in their palaces who will be punished. In Amos 6:7 it is not only the affluent people who will go into exile, they will merely lead the whole nation of Israel into exile.

7. Conclusion

From this preliminary investigation it seems as if the view of Jeremias on the composition of Amos 3-6 at least deserves serious consideration and calls for an even more detailed analysis of the whole of Amos 3-6. When applied to Amos 3:9-11 and 6:1-7 it seems as if his thoughts on the composition of Amos 3-6 hold valid. The inclusion of Zion in the woe-oracle of Amos 6:1-7 which has always been a *crux interpretum*, is explained in a more satisfactory manner, the sin of דָּמָן only mentioned in Amos 3:10 is given a more elaborate meaning in 6:1-7, the *Gattung* of the woe employed in Amos 6:1-7 also indicates a sharpening (to

use the words of Jeremias) of the message of Amos 3-4 and the final verdict of 6:1-7 is much more severe than the verdict pronounced in 3:11.

An investigation of this kind also brings something else to the fore. Different pericopes or units in the books of the Old Testament should not merely be analysed and interpreted in isolation from each other. To investigate the possible relationship between different units in a particular book may prove to be a fruitful way of gaining a better understanding of the particular book and its theological trends.

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