

וְאֲנִי לֹא אֶחָדָם עַל-
הָעֵיר הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר
יֵשׁ-בָּהּ הַרְבֵּה מִשָּׁת



Journal of
HEBREW SCRIPTURES



VOLUME 21 | ARTICLE 7

YISCA ZIMRAN

*"Do Two Walk Together Unless They Have
Made an Appointment?" Complementary
Contradictions in Amos 3:1–8*

Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, RAMBI, and BiBIL. Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by Library and Archives Canada and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by Library and Archives Canada.

ISSN 1203-1542 <http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhs>

“DO TWO WALK TOGETHER UNLESS THEY HAVE MADE AN APPOINTMENT?” COMPLEMENTARY CONTRADICTIONS IN AMOS 3:1-8

YISCA ZIMRAN
UNIVERSITY OF BAR-ILAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Amos 3:1-8 reads:

1. Hear this word
that YHWH has spoken regarding you, O children of Israel
regarding the whole family that I brought up out of the land
of Egypt, saying:
2. I have known only you of all the families of the earth
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.
3. Do two walk together unless they have made an appoint-
ment?¹
4. Does a lion roar in the forest, when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has caught noth-
ing?²
5. Does a bird fall [into a snare] on the earth, when there is
no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground, and it captures
nothing?³

¹ The word **נועדו** is the *nifal* conjugation of the root **עו**. The verb can denote meeting (thus, e.g., G. Pfeifer, “Unausweichliche Konsequenzen: Denkformenanalyse von Amos 3:3-8,” *VT* 33 [1983], 341-47 [343]; S.M. Paul, “Amos 3:3-8: The Irresistible Sequence of Cause and Effect,” *HAR* 7 [1983], 203-20 [211]; M. Weiss, *The Book of Amos*. Vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992], 79 [Heb.]), or a pre-planned meeting (J.L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* [OTL; London: SCM Press, 1969], 50). The Septuagint reads **נודעו** rather than **נועדו**, and thus connects vv. 1-2 with the rest of the unit and affects its demarcation.

² It has been suggested that the word **ממעונתו** (“from its den”) should be omitted, since it disrupts the rhyme of the verse. See R.J. Coggins, *Joel and Amos* (NCBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 109, who objects to this suggestion. See also the critique by E.R. Hope, “Problems of Interpretation in Amos 3.4,” *Bible Translator* 42 (1991), 201-5 (203), on the translation of the word on the backdrop of lion characteristics. As explained above, the relationship between the two parts of the verse is disputed.

³ There may be distortions in the verse. This is indicated in the Septuagint version, which omits the word **פח** (snare) from the first part of

6. Can a trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?

Can disaster befall a city, and YHWH has not done it?

7. Surely the Lord YHWH does nothing without revealing his counsel to his servants the prophets.

8. A lion has roared, who would not fear?

The Lord YHWH has spoken, who would not prophesy?

This article proposes a new understanding of the structure and primary theme of Amos 3:1-8, explicating the relationship between the unit's structure and theme by clarifying their association with the details of the verses. My argument challenges previous positions that base their conclusions on a particular delineation of the unit. I offer an alternative interpretation of the parameters that serve as the foundation for their demarcation. The article thus opens with a survey of the scholarly opinions regarding the disputed issues in Amos 3, after which I will present my own view, which treats vv. 1-8 as one unit from the perspective of the text as a whole. As I will demonstrate, the development of the unit's theme is dependent on the verses and their constituent details; none should be ignored or dismissed.

Taking a synchronic approach, I will demonstrate the presence of three sub-units in vv. 1-8 and the recurring element that unites them; these constitute the foundation for the discussion of the unit. The meaning of the element, its diverse manifestations in the unit, and its contribution to an understanding of the content will be clarified through a discussion of the sub-units and will shed light on the complex ideological content of vv. 1-8.

The process will show how the themes that other scholars have defined as mutually exclusive focal points in the unit can indeed coexist within the approach presented here. The unit deals with the relationships between God and the nations, the relationship between God and the prophet, and God's dominion over all the nations. In addition, the approach I posit recognizes the significance within the relationship of the various points mentioned above and shows how this conveys ideological importance that will be demonstrated at length throughout the article.

Finally, my argument offers a response to some unresolved problems. Some previous studies have ignored the content of the unit in its present form; others have not been sensitive enough, in my opinion, to the details of vv. 1-8. Accordingly,

the verse. For a brief discussion of this correction, see Coggins, *Amos*, 109. Conversely, cf. Weiss, *Amos*, 80, who maintains the full MT, based on a different interpretation of the verse. See also Paul's analysis of the verse, "Amos 3:3-8," 212-13. See further on this issue E. Bons, "Seltene Wörter in der Septuaginta des Amosbuches (Am 3,5.15): ἰξεντῆς, σχάζομαι, θερινός, περίπτερος", in: W. Kraus and M. Karrer (eds.), *Die Septuaginta - Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.) 404-15 (406-7), who explains the logic underlying each of the versions: MT describes one ongoing action between the two parts of the verse, while LXX describes two separate actions. The two changes in the translation serve the internal logic of the verse in this version.

details that were previously perceived as indications of the unit’s boundaries or as justification for omitting verses from those boundaries, are now the foundation for understanding the complex contents of the unit in its present form. A contribution of the close reading offered here, compared to previous studies of these verses, is its uncovering of a multidimensional content.⁴

2. RESEARCH REVIEW

Previous studies have addressed the definition of the theme of the first eight verses in Amos 3, as well as the demarcations, internal structure, and function of the details contained in these verses.⁵ Indeed, these matters are all interlinked, since what might be perceived as a technical matter relating to textual boundaries has powerful interpretive ramifications. The theme and content of the unit affect its structure; however, to the same extent, the demarcation of the unit’s structure affects the identification of the main theme and its development in the verses.⁶

⁴ This analysis is an application of the methodology of “Rhetorical Criticism,” since it includes linguistic, literary, and structural investigation, as well as an examination of the effect of the unit’s design on the impressions created by its content, and its effect on the receivers. This understanding of Rhetorical Criticism coheres with the definition advanced by J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method on Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 209, among others.

⁵ The foundation of Milstein’s position is whether the unit’s theme is the nation of Israel or the prophet (S.J. Milstein, “‘Who would not Write?’ The Prophet as Yhwh’s Prey in Amos 3:3-8,” *CBQ* 75 [2013], 429-45 [here 435-36]). Hadjiev, who demarcates the unit as comprising vv. 3-8, briefly addresses the alternative meaning resulting from demarcating the unit as vv. 3-6. However, his discussion lacks clarity and is insufficiently detailed: “Naturally those who see the end of the original unit in v. 6 interpret it differently” (T.S. Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos* [BZAW 393; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009], 142 n. 21). Similarly, G.V. Smith (*Amos: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1989], 106) notes the debate, and postulates that including vv. 3-8 with vv. 1-2 would alter the theme of the verses. Renaud’s analysis of the unit, which includes various stages of authorship that affect the theological meaning and the interpretation of the rhetorical questions, is also important for the interpretation advanced in the present article: see B. Renaud, “Genèse et Théologie d’Amos 3, 3-8,” in: A. Caquot and M. Delcor (eds.), *Mélanges Bibliques et Orientaux en l’Honneur de M. Henri Cazelles* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 353-72. M. Dijkstra, “Unit Delimitation and Interpretation in the Book of Amos,” in: M.C.A. Korpel and J.M. Oesch (eds.), *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablet* (Pericope 5; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005), 114-40, discusses the traditional division of the Book of Amos in Hebrew textual witnesses. He examines the different divisions and attempts to determine the reasons for these differences as well as the source of the divisions.

⁶ “The question of the determination of the original utterance is the question of determining its meaning as well” (Y. Gitay, “Reflection on the Study of the Prophetic Discourse: The Question of Isaiah I 2-20,” *VT* 33 [1983], 207-21 [208]). On the necessary connection between the unit’s structure, details, and primary theme, see for example: Weiss,

I identify vv. 1-8 as one unit; therefore, the review begins with a discussion of the most limited boundaries suggested for the unit and concludes with those that include vv. 1-8 in their entirety.

One approach, based on lexical and stylistic similarities, defines the unit as vv. 3-6.⁷ According to these boundaries, the unit expresses the universal control of the God of Israel.⁸ However, this approach leaves some unresolved problems. First, the reasons for separating vv. 1-2 and 7-8 from the unit are often unclear and unpersuasive, seeming to depend on an arbitrary predetermination of the theme of the unit (vv. 3-6) rather than the identification of objective distinctions between the unit and its adjoining verses. This results in a circular argument: The theme is fixed in advance, and the boundaries of the unit are then correlated with that content.⁹ Second, even scholars who acknowledge the stylistic and structural differences between vv. 7-8 and the preceding verses¹⁰ disregard the meaning conveyed by the text's current structure in which these verses are linked. For example, is there no significance to the lexical and thematic

Amos, unmarked introduction. The research method called "Delimitation Criticism," developed in the early twenty-first century, is founded on the assumption that delimitation and structure have ramifications on textual interpretation. In this method, however, the interpretations that result from various divisions of units generally involve ancient textual witnesses and early and later translations; compare, e.g., M.C.A. Korpel, "Who Is Speaking in Jeremiah 4:19-22? The Contribution of Unit Delimitation to an Old Problem," *VT* 59 (2009), 88-98.

⁷ For example: Y. Zakovitch, *The Pattern of the Numerical Sequence Three-Four in the Bible*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University (Jerusalem, 1977) [Heb.], 195-99; Weiss, *Amos*, 77-78.

⁸ See for example: H.N. Rösel, *The Book of Amos* (Haifa: Ah, 1990) [Heb.], 84; J.R. Linville, "Amos Among the 'Dead Prophets Society': Re-Reading the Lion's Roar," *JOT* 90 (2000), 55-77 (71). But Cf. J. Jeremias, "Amos 3-6: From the Oral Word to the Text," in: G.M. Tucker *et al.* (eds.), *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 217-29 (224). See Weiss (*Amos*, 80) who claims that while the unit is defined in vv. 3-6, its innovation is that the prophet does not bring calamity with his words; he is only a representative of God's word. (See also Pfeifer, "Unausweichliche Konsequenzen," 345; as well as Y. Gitay, "A Study of Amos's Art of Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1-15," *CBQ* 42 (1980), 293-309 (296-97). In this case, there is an inherent relationship between the prophet's words here and the contents of vv. 7-8, which obscures Weiss's distinction between these verses. Conversely, H.L. Bosman, "Does Disaster Strike only when the Lord sends it? Prophetic Eschatology and the Origin of Evil in Amos 3:6," *OTE* 1 (1988), 21-30, claims that due to the dating of the unit, it cannot deliver a monotheistic message of God's control over evil; instead, the prophet wishes to clarify that the nation of Israel is to be judged for its deeds, and by this contradicts the nation's basic perception.

⁹ E.g., Zakovitch, *Three-Four*, 199.

¹⁰ E.g., Weiss, *Amos*, 78, 82-83. For considerations for and against the separation of v. 8, see H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. W. Janzen *et al.*; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 182; Rösel, *Amos*, 86-87.

similarity between v. 6 and the verses that follow? Additionally, advocates of this approach assume that v. 6 is the climax of the unit because of the structural and thematic differences between it and vv. 3-5.¹¹ Yet, by applying the same standard, what is the significance of the differences between v. 3 and the verses that follow?¹² Why should we accept that the uniquely structured v. 6 is the unit’s climax, when v. 3 also diverges from vv. 4-5, as will be explained below? Furthermore, why should v. 7 or v. 8, which differ in style and ideology from their predecessors, not be defined as the unit’s climax, based on their uniqueness?¹³

Alternatively, scholars who define the boundaries of the unit as vv. 3-8 generally assume that the unit addresses the prophet’s right and duty to prophesy as a consequence of the divine source of his prophecy.¹⁴ According to this approach, the

¹¹ E.g., Zakovitch, *Three-Four*, 198-99. E.L. Greenstein, “How Does Parallelism Mean?” in *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (Winona Lake: The Dropsie College, 1983), 41-70 (62), emphasizes the similarity between the two clauses in v. 6 as a basis for demonstrating the centrality of the verse. Conversely, see Pfeifer, “Unausweichliche Konsequenzen,” 342. Renaud, “Genèse,” 365, views this as the conclusion of the original unit (4-5, 6b) before it was further developed and new themes included. For a different view, see Linville, “Amos,” 71, who defines the verse as “bait.”

¹² Others (e.g., H. Gese, “Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches,” *VT* 12 [1962], 417-38 [425]) present the gap between v. 3 and subsequent verses as evidence that v. 3 is a later addition. However, this does not explain the meaning created nonetheless from the links between the verses when viewing the text as a whole. For discussion, see, e.g., K. Möller, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 225.

¹³ For the common perception regarding the anomalous Deuteronomistic nature of v. 7, see, e.g., Mays, *Amos*, 59, 61; Wolff, *Amos*, 181; Renaud, “Genèse,” 354-55; Pfeifer, “Unausweichliche Konsequenzen,” 342; Rösel, *Amos*, 85; J. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 79-83; J. Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 45, 114-16; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 141. For an opposing view, see: Smith, *Amos*, 102; Möller, *A Prophet*, 226-27 and n. 35-37; Paul, “Amos 3:3-8,” 207, 215-16; Linville, “Amos,” 71-72. See also Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 304-5, who deals with this question from a rhetorical perspective. And compare A.G. Auld, “Amos and Apocalyptic: Vision, Prophecy, Revelation,” in D. Garrone and F. Israel (eds.), *Storia e Tradizioni di Israele* (Brescia: Paideia, 1991), 1-13, who dates the verse to a later period.

¹⁴ For example, Paul, “Amos 3:3-8,” 203-5; F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AncBib 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 400; Coggins, *Amos*, 109-10; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 142; R.R. Lessing, *Amos* (Concordia Commentary; Saint Louis: Concordia Publication House, 2009), 215, 221-22. Mays, *Amos*, 59, 62; Wolff, *Amos*, 183; A. Scharf, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftener Redaktionsprozesse* (BZAW 260; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 64; Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 79-82, reach a similar conclusion, although they omit v. 7. However, see on this the critique by Auld, “Amos,” 12. Bosman, “Disaster,” 23, 27, writes that v. 7 transfers the

rhetorical questions (3-6) reflect a cause and effect relationship between natural phenomena that demonstrates the requisite relationship between God and the prophet (8).¹⁵ Therefore, the questions in vv. 3-6 are not related to v. 8 in terms of content, but rather are connected on a logical-paradigmatic plane: The principle demonstrated by these questions prepares the ground for understanding the content of v. 8, which is the focal point of the prophecy.¹⁶ This approach ignores the differences among the various rhetorical questions. For example, is the description in v. 3 of the two walking together similar to a lion catching his prey in v. 4? Is the structural difference between v. 6 and the preceding verses without significance? What is the relationship between the rhetorical question that opens v. 8 and the preceding questions in vv. 3-5? Are the rhetorical questions part of the paradigmatic sequence or part of the unit's central ideological content? Additionally, this approach strips the rhetorical questions of their meaning; they could have been replaced by any question that demonstrates causality, regardless of the unit's climax in v. 8. Is the entire function of the rhetorical questions merely to prepare for the apex in v. 8? If so, why does the unit repeat questions that demonstrate the same principle over and over?

Sarah Milstein is among the scholars who delimit the unit as verses 3-8; however, she includes only vv. 3-6a and 8.¹⁷ This creates a coherent and balanced unit, which can be read as Amos' "call narrative" in spite of the fundamental differences that Milstein identifies between this and subsequent call narratives. The unit reveals the prophet's thoughts and feelings about God from the time he was assigned his role.¹⁸ While Milstein's interpretation is innovative, it poses some difficulties. For example, her

responsibility for calamity to the nation, since God forewarned them through the prophet. A. Schenker, ("Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen, oder steht Israel vor der Evidenz der Weisung Gottes in der Weissagung des Propheten? Zur Interpretation von Amos 3,3-8," *BZ* 30 [1986], 250-56 [251, 254, 256]), posits that the entire unit emphasizes the fact that the prophet's words are embedded with God's message, and therefore that the nation is compelled to adhere to the words of the prophet. D.U. Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuches* (BZAW 243; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 112-13, believes this is the meaning of vv. 3-8, but attributes it only to the final stage of the unit, and demonstrates the meanings of the unit in its previous arrangements.

¹⁵ E.g., Paul, "Amos 3:3-8," 203; Mays, *Amos*, 60; Wolff, *Amos*, 183-84; Barton, *Theology*, 45; Lessing, *Amos*, 215-16. Cf. Pfeifer, "Unausweichliche Konsequenzen," 343, 346, who points out the emphasis on result, rather than causality, which in turn highlights the need for the prophet to prophesy.

¹⁶ For example, Wolff, *Amos*, 183-4. Cf. Smith, *Amos*, 97, who claims, based on his delineation, that the rhetorical questions demonstrate causation in order to emphasize that there is a reason for the calamity that befalls Israel.

¹⁷ Milstein, "Who Would Not Write," 438-39. Cf. Renaud, "Genèse," 362-63, who believes 6b is part of the original unit that includes vv. 4-5, 6b.

¹⁸ Milstein, "Who Would not Write," 433, 440, 444. Interestingly,

interpretation precludes any discussion of the relationship between the verses that were originally included in the unit and those added later, according to her assertion. Surely the secondary significance of the unit and the reasons that brought about this change are worthy of consideration. Also, does the gap between the verses included in the unit (3-6a, 8) and the ones Milstein believes were added (6b-7) justify separating the verses? Does the altered relationship between the rhetorical questions in v. 6, for example (a developing sequence of questions, instead of parallel) constitute a sufficient basis for the omission of 6b? In other prophetic units, when differences anchored in the unit’s contents occur, do they also warrant an omission of verses or words?¹⁹ Furthermore, is the mention of God in v. 6 insignificant on its own and only damaging to the impression created by the mention of God in v. 8, as Milstein argues? And finally, Milstein does not explain the significance of the discrepancies in the unit she defined, such as the relationship described in v. 3 and the relationships portrayed in the rhetorical questions that follow.²⁰

Scholars such as Möller and Gitay regarded vv. 3-8 as one unit that is part of the whole of 3:1-15. The chapter in its entirety addresses the calamity that will befall the kingdom of Israel. In this context, vv. 3-8 emphasize that the source of the disaster is divine, thereby providing justification for the harshness of the calamity and proof that it will come to pass.²¹

Barton, who includes 6b in the unit, defines it as “almost a ‘call narrative’ for Amos” (Barton, *Theology*, 45). See also Park’s definition, which combines the term “call narrative” with the purpose, which is justification of the prophet, with the exception of the internal view into the prophet’s soul: “Functionally, this unit serves as a prophetic call, which legitimates the prophet’s word and ministry”. (A.W. Park, *The Book of Amos as Composed and Read in Antiquity* [New York: P. Lang, 2001], 83). M.E. Campus, “Structure and Meaning in the Third Vision of Amos (7:7-17),” *JHS* 11 (2011), also addresses the prophet and his function, and thus agrees with the line of thought represented in Milstein’s article.

¹⁹ Indeed, while scholars who identify with the approaches presented above acknowledge the varied relationship between the two parts of the verse, they do not omit the second part of v. 6.

²⁰ Milstein, “Who Would Not Write,” 437. Renaud, “Genèse,” 366-68 notes that when it stands alone, v. 8 is a description of the relationship between the prophet and God. On p. 369, he explains how in later stages of redaction the questions were given metaphorical status that demonstrates this relationship. Linville, “Amos,” 65-66, analyzes the questions as a rhetorical device and a metaphor (without elucidating which relationship they are symbolizing). In his words, he emphasizes the effects of the questions on the readers; they are the captured prey.

²¹ Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 300; T. Bulkeley, “Cohesion, Rhetorical Purpose and the Poetics of Coherence in Amos 3,” *ABR* 47 (1999), 16-28; Möller, *A Prophet*, 222-4. Gitay demarcates the unit as vv. 3-8, but defines the peak of the unit as 6b. He defines vv. 7-8 as the prophet’s response to the prophecy (similar to Jeremias). Also J. Rilett Wood, *Amos in Song and Book Culture* (JSOT.S 337; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 54-59, examines the unit comprising vv. 1-15. However, she distinguishes the original unit (1a-2, 3-6, 9-11 [ibid., 27-29]) from the reviser’s additions, and notes the interpretations that

However, if the appearance of the root שׁמ"ע in v. 1 marks the beginning of the unit, and its repetition in 4:1 attests to the introduction of another unit, why are its appearances in vv. 9 and 13 not similarly regarded as the opening of new units?²² Furthermore, viewing the chapter as one unit does not attribute sufficient significance to the stylistic and thematic differences between the verses; moreover, it disregards the verses' independent literary design.

If boundaries of the unit are expanded to vv. 1-8, a reference to the particular status of the nation of Israel (vv. 1-2) is included, converting the unit from universal to national and from individual (the prophet) to general (Israel). Therefore, the unit's theme within these confines is the calamity God intends to bring upon the nation of Israel (v. 2) as an outcome of their unique relationship (vv. 3-6). This approach presents some difficulties. First, it fails to attribute significance to the content of v. 3 and the distinction between v. 3 and the subsequent verses. In other words, does v. 3 allude to the relationship between God and the nation? If so, why is the relationship between the figures depicted as reciprocal instead of one based on unequal power, like the relationships described in the verses that follow? Second, Jeremias, who supports this approach to the verses, notes the distinction between v. 6 and the other rhetorical questions,²³ but does not discuss its implications. What is the relevance of the verse's exceptional status, and why is it not defined as the focal point of the unit instead of vv. 1-2? Additionally, how does this unit differ from other calamity prophecies? The book of Amos is full of severe calamity prophecies, and the prophet faces a resistant audience (6:3, 9:10) and resulting threats (2:12, 7:10-13).²⁴ Why, then, does only this unit include a response to

emerge from this complex structure. Park, *Amos*, 80-94, views 3-8 as one unit, but believes this unit is part of a larger section comprising chs. 3-4, dealing with the sins of Israel (within an even bigger section comprising chs. 3-6 that discusses sins and punishments), and is part of the section foundation.

²² Bulkeley, "Cohesion," 26, who also assumes the unit includes chapter 3 in its entirety, explains the significance of the recurring root and its diverse use, but fails to explain why the repetition should not be interpreted as attesting to the start of a new unit. Similarly, Möller, *A Prophet*, 219-20. A more significant question emerges from pp. 89-103, where he relies on the analysis of the unit to explain why some of the occurrences of the root indicate the beginning of a new unit, while others are perceived as sequential. This approach blunts the significance of the occurrence of the root שׁמ"ע and undermines the distinctions he wishes to create based on the occurrences of the root. Schart, *Entstehung*, 62-63, views the occurrence of the root in 3:1 and 5:1 as testimony for the division of chs. 3-6. However, he also uses the occurrence of the root in vv. 9 and 13 as one of the parameters for his subdivision of the unit.

²³ J. Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (trans. D.W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 51-52.

²⁴ Wolff, *Amos*, 188; Mays, *Amos*, 60; Paul, "Amos 3:3-8," 204; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 400; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 143. Compare Linville, "Amos," 66, who regards these verses as supporting his

the prophecy, as Jeremias and others claim regarding v. 8?²⁵ Alternatively, if v. 8 is not a response to the content of the prophecy, what is its role within this arrangement of the unit?

The final position I will review is represented by Uffenheimer, who views vv. 1-8 as a single, indivisible prophetic unit. He makes no exceptions to these delimitations²⁶: Neither the differences between the verses nor those that arise from his analysis result in his dividing the segment into separate prophetic units.²⁷

According to Uffenheimer, the rhetorical questions in vv. 3-8 not only indicate causation, but also the possibility of disclosing the cause. Specifically, the prophet has a singular ability to reveal that cause to Israel. Like the existence and exposure of causation in the natural world, the reasons for the calamity that will befall a nation that maintains a unique connection with God can be exposed by the prophet.²⁸ Verses 1-8 therefore address the uniqueness of Israel and the prophet’s attendant role.²⁹

claim that Am 3:3-8 depicts a plausible narrative scenario. Cf. also Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 59, who argues that verses such as 2:11-12 are an addition by the reviser, preparing the ground for vv. 7-8, which were likewise added by the reviser, and turns these into the primary purpose of the unit.

²⁵ Jeremias, *Amos*, 53-54.

²⁶ B. Uffenheimer, “Amos and Hosea – Two Directions in Israel’s Prophecy,” in: B.Z. Luria (ed.), *Zer Li’Gevurot* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1972), 284-391 [Heb.]. In a parallel English article, Uffenheimer briefly presents the unit’s theme, but does not detail the structure or the way in which he reached his conclusion: B. Uffenheimer, “Amos and Hosea—Two Directions in Israel’s Prophecy,” *Dor le Dor* 5 (1977), 101-10 (103-4).

²⁷ See Smith, *Amos*, 100-3, who demonstrates the unity of the unit despite the distinctions in content and style. T. Lescow, “Das vor-exilische Amosbuch: Erwägungen zu seiner Kompositionsgeschichte,” *BN* 93 (1998), 23-55 views vv. 1-8 as one unit, which serves as a prologue justifying the calamity detailed in the second part of the book, chs. 3-6.

²⁸ Smith, *Amos*, 97-112, includes vv. 1-8 in the unit and posits that the calamity is a central theme in the unit. Nevertheless, on p. 112 he concludes similarly to Uffenheimer: “Even the roar of God through the prophet’s mouth is an act of grace that warns Israel of God’s impending judgment.” Cf. Coggins, *Amos*, 110, who believes the causation portrayed in vv. 6-8 reflects back on the causation presented in earlier verses. If v. 6 presents God as the one responsible for the events, the purpose of the verses is to claim that causation is divine, not natural. In this context, T.E. Fretheim, *Reading Hosea-Micah: A Literary and Theology Commentary*, (Macon: Smith & Helways, 2013), 127-28, holds a somewhat unique position: He believes the simple answer to the rhetorical questions in vv. 3-6 is the essential one, regardless of their content or the distinctions between them. This proves the credibility of the claim in v. 2.

²⁹ Uffenheimer, “Amos and Hosea,” 288. S.R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge England: University Press, 1901), 156-58, views vv. 3-8 as evidence of universal causation. However, contrary to Uffenheimer, he views the purpose of the verses as proof that there is reason behind divine retribution (vv. 1-2). Driver views the mention of the prophet in vv. 7-8 as part of the demonstration of causation, which

Within this view, however, can it be proven that vv. 1-8 are an organic part of the original unit? Furthermore, although Uffenheimer views the discrepancies in the verses as stages in developing the unit's ideology (namely, 1-2, 3-5a, 5b-6a, 6b-8), the stages he defines do not evolve naturally. None has any importance on its own; rather, the audience is required to keep in mind the totality of insights that emerge from the various sub-units and to independently construct the general theme of the unit. Is it reasonable to assume that the prophet would utilize such a circuitous method to deliver his message?³⁰ If so, how might this affect how we determine whether this is an oral or written prophecy? In addition, Uffenheimer bases his analysis of the unit on the change of the directionality of cause and effect in the verses,³¹ i.e., from effect to cause in the past (3-5a) and from cause to effect in the future (5b-6a).³² Why doesn't Uffenheimer continue to define the logical direction between cause and effect in the final sub-unit he includes (i.e., 6b-8)? Does this not undermine his division and the ideological conclusions that follow?

3. VERSES 1-8: COMPLEMENTARY CONTRADICTIONS

I would like to offer an alternative approach to Amos 3:1-8 that will resolve the issues raised above and address other points that have not, to date, been raised. In my opinion, the eight verses

verifies the beginning of the unit, and not as testimony to the theme of the unit. Cf. Schart, *Entstehung*, 67, who assumes that the final layer of the unit, which also includes vv. 1b, 2, and 7, emphasizes the prophet's function as messenger of the future calamity.

³⁰ Uffenheimer, "Amos and Hosea," 286, admits that this is a complex application of a theological principle. However, see R. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 179, who emphasizes the gap between the modern and biblical understanding; perhaps for this reason, he delineates the unit as comprising vv. 1-8 (Ibid., 326) despite the discrepancies these verses present.

³¹ The definition of directionality that characterizes the rhetorical questions and the relationship between the questions have troubled many scholars and have been explained in various ways. The differences depend on the interpretation of the words in the verses (such as 5b) and reflect on the relationship between the questions and the definition of the borders of the unit and its contents. Cf., e.g., Weiss, *Amos*, 77-78; Paul, "Amos 3:3-8," 207-8; Rösel, *Amos*, 84; Milstein, "Who would not Write," 438-39.

³² Conversely, cf. J. Breslavi, "Does a Lion Roar in the Forest, when it has no Prey? The Lion's Roar and its Pronunciation," *Beit Mikra* 12 (1967), 12-16 [Heb.], who assumes the roar in v. 4a is the sound that leads to capturing the prey (from cause to effect), while crying out in the second part of the verse attests to the previously captured prey (from result to cause). See also Hope, "Problems," 201-5, who opposes the accepted interpretation of the verse, specifically regarding the interpretation of the roar and the lion's den, and suggests a different structure for vv. 3-8. Mays, *Amos*, 59, claims that 5b moves from present to past. Regarding 6a, he admits that there is a change of direction, but that this is the result of the subject matter, not an indication of an essential change.

need not be viewed as the unit’s original composition. It is reasonable to assume that previous versions of the unit were arranged differently, reflecting a variety of content, as mentioned above. The short, poetic formulations of the clauses, rhetorical questions, and repetitions testify to the possibility that some of these compositions were delivered as oral prophecies; but this question is beyond the scope of the present discussion and impossible to determine unequivocally.³³

The present form is significant, however, and conveys meaning together with the details of the content, structure, and totality of literary devices that comprise the unit. Therefore, I intend to relate to verses 1-8 as a single unit, based on the interrelations between the verses. All of the verses—with their details, similarities, and differences—contribute to the development of the theme, and none of these should be ignored. The analysis of the details included in vv. 1-8 as a unit correlates with the discussion of this unit in its written form; the findings presented below, including the unit’s design and rhetoric, relate to the stage of written prophecy.³⁴ Furthermore, the analysis corresponds with a unit in the final stage of the book’s redaction. The intricate ideological content of the unit is appropriate for this stage, as is the assumption that the text should be viewed as

³³ For example: Gitay, “Reflections”, 221; J. Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 93, 262-72; Barton, *Theology*, 52-3; Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 16-18. For a discussion of a pre-literary prophetic stage and the parameters for identifying it, see, e.g., Y. Gitay, “Deutero-Isaiah: Oral or Written,” *JBL* 99 (1980), 185-97 (188-90). See also Dekker’s fundamental argument with Van der Toorn’s position regarding the question of whether prophecies were intended to be written and to whom the written stages of prophetic works should be attributed: J. Dekker, “Bind Up the Testimony: Isaiah 8:16 and the Making of the Hebrew Bible,” in: R. de Hoop *et al.* (eds.), *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63-88.

³⁴ Cf. V. Fritz, “Amosbuch, Amos-Schule und historischer Amos,” in V. Fritz *et al.* (eds.), *Prophet und Prophetenbuch* (BZAW 185; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 29-43 (39), who believes vv. 3-6 and 8 are a written unit that does not belong to the oral tradition of Amos, but rather to theologies that succeed Amos. Conversely, Lescow, “Amosbuch,” 37, assumes an oral rhetoric specifically here, but not as an original part of Amos’s prophecy.

multidirectional,³⁵ as will be explained below. This stage also corresponds with the ideological content of the book as a whole, as detailed below.³⁶

Although this study addresses the written and redacted stage of the unit, there is room to discuss the rhetoric of the unit and the manner in which its content relates to and affects the recipients. However, the statements should not be viewed as those of a prophet addressing a specific audience, but as the rhetoric of the unit for its Universal Audience.³⁷

My approach to this unit acknowledges the distinction—some of which were presented above—among the eight verses with regard to language, style, content, and the intended audience of the prophecy. However, I believe these distinctions do not justify dividing the unit or omitting verses. Rather, they should be viewed as a foundation for defining the unit's structure and shedding light on its content and insights. Within my approach, the discrepancies and internal contradictions within the verses serve as the focal point of the unit. Accordingly, I offer a different perspective on existing criteria for determining the unit's boundaries and reconsider their contribution to the unit's meaning. In other words, that which is perceived as evidence of the unit's boundaries may sometimes be part of the design of its content. In addition to examining the unit and defining its topics and themes, I will also describe the unit's association with the rest of the book from stylistic and ideological perspectives.

³⁵ See, e.g., Gitay, "Reflections," 207. However, Gitay analyzes a rhetoric of very long prophecies that were intended to be heard by an audience; he rejects the position of form criticism according to which oral units were short, and assumes that written texts were also intended for oral transmission; it is therefore impossible to distinguish between the types of texts. See, e.g., Gitay, "Deutero-Isaiah," 191-94. Polak separates written and oral texts, but relates to the language and not to the content (F.H. Polak, "The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *JNES* 26 [1999], 59-105). Hadjiev, *Composition*, 143, determines that literary complexity does not necessarily negate a pre-literary stage. My analysis of vv. 1-8, in their complex form, does not rule out an earlier stage, but rather rules out the complexity of the arguments and formulations in that stage.

³⁶ Cf. Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 58-9, who believes the unit 3:1-15 includes a later redaction whose contents correlate with other late verses and broader perceptions in the book.

³⁷ For this term see Gitay, "Reflections," 208. For the significance of the similarity and difference between the rhetoric in written and oral text, see Möller, *A Prophet*, 26-30, who relates to the rhetoric in the written text as communication that is not limited to the rhetorical situation in which the unit was originally transmitted or written. See, e.g., Wolff, *Amos*, 184, and Möller, *A Prophet*, 149-50, who claim that although the redaction of the text in its currently written form removed it from its initial formulation and the original reality in which it was delivered, the effect of the prophet on his audience can still be reconstructed.

3.1. THE SUB-UNITS

As I will argue below, three sub-units, namely, vv. 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, can be distinguished in the unit 3:1-8 according to literary and thematic parameters. Although the sub-units address different topics, they cannot be defined as independent units, for they never had such status in their current formulation. Once combined, however, they constitute the content of the unit.

Verses 1-2

*Hear this word
that YHWH has spoken regarding you, O children of Israel
regarding the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt,
saying:
I have known only you of all the families of the earth
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

Verses 1-2 begin with the imperative שמעו; which is an explicit introduction to the sub-unit.³⁸ The verses are formulated as an appeal to Israel, without figurative or symbolic language, and present the idea that due to their close relationship, God will punish the nation for its sins. In opposition to those who dispute the original connection between the words in vv. 1-2,³⁹ I argue that lexical repetitions reinforce the connection between the verses, support the demarcation of the sub-unit, and enhance the impression created by the content. For example, the first two verses include the root על"י (including various conjugations of the preposition על): עליכם / על כן / העליתי / על כל / עליכם, as well as the words שמעו / ידעתי / עונתיכם, that include a recurring consonant ע. These repetitions link the words and reflect the close relationship between God and Israel, and the forthcoming retribution.

The particle כל also anomalously appears three times in these verses.⁴⁰ This repetition creates a logical connection between the verses in which God's relationship with all nations on the earth (v. 2: מכל משפחות האדמה of *all the families of the earth*) becomes limited to God's relationship with Israel (see v. 1: על כל המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים regarding the *whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt*), which in turn is limited to

³⁸ See, e.g., Weiss, *Amos*, 71; Möller, *A Prophet*, 75-76.

³⁹ Verse 1 may be perceived as a general introduction which does not necessarily relate to the current unit but rather to chs. 3-4 as a whole. See, e.g., Lescow, "Amosbuch," 37, who perceives v. 1a as an introduction to vv. 1-2 when they stand as an independent unit, but together with v. 2 he also views it as an introduction to the entirety of chs. 3-4. The second part of v. 1 is perceived as possessing Deuteronomistic characteristics (e.g., Jeremias, *Amos*, 48-49; Schart, *Entstehung*, 63-64). For discussion of the unified nature and composition of v. 1, see, e.g., Weiss, *Amos*, 71-3; Rösel, *Amos*, 73-76; Wolff, *Amos*, 175; Hadjiev, *Composition*, 140. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 83, suggests a division between the original prophecy, 3-6, 8, and the addition in vv. 1a, 2. Like other scholars, he views vv. 1b, 7 as Deuteronomistic additions; in other words, he identifies three layers in vv. 1-8.

⁴⁰ Möller, *A Prophet*, 220.

the retribution for their sins (כל עונותיכם אפקד עליכם *I will punish you for all your iniquities*).⁴¹

Verses 3-5

*Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?
Does a lion roar in the forest, when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has caught nothing?
Does a bird fall [into a snare] on the earth, when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground, and it captures nothing?*

The questions that characterize vv. 3-5 demarcate a new sub-unit that has its own theme and style. These double rhetorical questions also serve to organize the unit's internal structure into five clauses.⁴² All of the questions relate to nature and are built according to a consistent pattern—*does/do* (ה)... / *unless...*—that implies a negative answer. Each question focuses on two figures; the second part of each question identifies the relationship between the two figures and the nature of that relationship [*unless they have made an appointment / when it has no prey / if it has caught nothing / when there is no trap for it / and it captures nothing*]. The varied and essential relationships are the central theme of this sub-unit.

The clauses in this sub-unit have an alternating internal structure that is based on the formulation of the second part of each question. This arrangement places the third question at the center, since it is linked to the first and fifth question (questions 1//3, 2//4, 3//5), as can be seen in the Hebrew text. The lexical links between the questions reinforce the connection between

⁴¹ Those who posit that vv. 1-2 are an outcome of the stratification of the text, and have no organic connection, undermine the significance of the recurring phrases mentioned here (e.g., Wolff, *Amos*, 181; Mays, *Amos*, 55; Rösel, *Amos*, 73-76). However, I do not assert that the repetitions attest to an organic connection between the verses, but rather to the present relationship between them and to the meaning that emerges from these repetitions. These distinctions are demonstrated in other units in Amos. Compare, e.g., J.M. Ward, *Amos and Isaiah* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 56 and the bibliography there, regarding the relationship between the visions in 7:1-9, 8:1-3, and the narrative unit in 7:10-17.

⁴² Regarding the double rhetorical question, see, e.g., M. Held, "Rhetorical Questions in Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969), 71-79 (71-74); H.W. Wolff, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and its Background* (trans. F.R. McCurley; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 6-16; S.M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 106; H.W. Brueggemann, "Jeremiah's use of Rhetorical Questions," *JBL* 92 (1973): 358-74. However, the correlation with the common definition of the double rhetorical question is incomplete, both due to the absence of the particle וְ in the second half of the question, and due to the nature of the relation between the two parts of the question. These are not two alternatives presented in the question, but rather one question divided into two clauses. Cf. Amos 6:2, 12.

the clauses in the sub-unit and distinguish this sub-unit from the next.⁴³

[ב3] וְטָרַף אִין לוֹ [ב4] בְּלַתִּי אִם לִכְדּוֹ [ד4] וַיִּמְדַּקֵּשׁ אִין לָהּ [ב5] וְלִכְדוֹ לֹא יִלְכּוּד [ד5]

Taken individually, none of these verses (3-5) offers hints as to the identity of the unit’s intended audience.

Verses 6-8

*Can a trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?
 Can disaster befall a city, and YHWH has not done it?
 Surely the Lord YHWH does nothing without revealing his counsel
 to his servants the prophets.
 A lion has roared, who would not fear?
 The Lord YHWH has spoken, who would not prophesy?*

Verses 6-8 relate to the unidentified inhabitants of a city, God, and the prophet. Words such as *יחרדו* *tremble*, *רעה* *disaster*, *ירא* *fear*, and *שאג* *has roared* impart a threatening tone. Like the previous sub-unit, this section includes rhetorical questions, with a negative answer implied by the second part of each question. Despite this similarity, these verses constitute a separate sub-unit. First, as scholars have noted, the central characteristics of the rhetorical questions in vv. 3-4 are absent from the questions in vv. 6-8. That is, the article ה that opens the questions in vv. 3-5 is absent from vv. 6-8; the relationship between the rhetorical questions that comprise v. 6 indicates development, not parallelism; and the questions do not include two figures. Furthermore, the questions in vv. 6-8 lack the naturalistic theme that characterizes vv. 3-5,⁴⁴ as evidenced by the contrast between “forest” (4) and “city” (6) as well as the absence of any natural background for the lion in v. 8, unlike v. 4. The two questions in v. 8 should be perceived as a metaphor and its direct referent. With regard to v. 8, the implied answer is not “no,” as in the previous sub-unit’s questions, but “no one.” Also, v. 7 is formulated in prose and does not include any rhetorical questions. Finally, unlike the previous sub-unit, vv. 3-5, which contains no reference to God, references to God appear throughout this sub-unit. However, these references are in the third person, unlike vv. 1b-2 of the first sub-unit.

Despite the stylistic diversity of vv. 6-8 and the absence of an organic connection between the verses’ components, a recurring pattern of “event and preceding action” with an emphasis

⁴³ Greenstein, “Parallelism,” 62-63, asserts that v. 3 parallels v. 4b, 4a parallels 5a, 5b stands alone, and the two questions in v. 6 parallel one another. His assertion does not view additional connections between the verses as meaningful, as suggested above.

⁴⁴ According to Schenker, “Prophet,” 253, even the presentation of the man in this question as the attacked instead of the attacker makes this verse unique in relation to its predecessors. He also assumes that vv. 3-5 and 8 are metaphorical, and only v. 6 directly relates to God and man.

on their developmental sequence is apparent in the sub-unit. This pattern characterizes all clauses of the sub-unit, although not necessarily in the same order. In other words, the pattern does not necessarily assume a causal relationship between the various components, as seen in vv. 3-5, but rather places them in sequence:

Preceding Action	Event
Can a trumpet be blown in a city	and the people not tremble?
And <i>YHWH</i> has not done it	Can disaster befall a city
Without revealing his counsel to his servants the prophets	Surely the Lord <i>YHWH</i> does nothing
A lion has roared	who would not fear?
The Lord <i>YHWH</i> has spoken	who would not prophesy?

Moreover, a chaining (or concatenous) literary pattern can be identified throughout the clauses of the sub-unit, demonstrating the existence of the developmental sequence even between the clauses, and reinforcing the delineation of the sub-unit in vv. 6-8, unlike vv. 3-5:⁴⁵

אם יתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו
אם תהיה רעה בעיר ויהוה לא עשה
כי לא יעשה אדני יהוה דבר כי אם גלה סודו אל עבדיו הנביאים
אריה שאג מי לא יירא אדני יהוה דבר מי לא ינבא

3.2. A TURNING POINT

Verses 1-8 encompass three separate sub-units, each internally unified on the lexical plane and each possessing a distinct content. Verses 1-2 discuss the relationship between God and the nation; vv. 3-5 present a sequence of naturalistic rhetorical questions regarding a threatening relationship between two figures; and vv. 6-8 present divine calamity while emphasizing the developmental sequence between events. Delineating these sub-units as discrete sections highlights a common element that connects all three sub-units of vv. 1-8 without undermining their separateness, and allows their respective themes to emerge and unify into the essential message of the entire unit. Identifying this common element enriches the content of the sub-units and of the unit as a whole and endows them with another dimension. This element

⁴⁵ Paul, *Amos*, 5, asserts that concatenation is a common literary device throughout the book of Amos. Wolff, *Amos*, 181, and Schart, *Entstehung*, 66, claim that the lexical similarity between v. 7 and vv. 6, 8, demonstrates the foreignness of the verse and the attempts of a later author to integrate the verse into an existing text. Similarly, Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 55-56, writes that vv. 7-8 are part of the reviser's writing, intended to correct the impression of the ancient prophecy. The hypothesis is based on the lexical similarity to the other verses, which is the foundation of the changes implemented by the reviser and the new principles transmitted through them. These principles are reinforced by the changes implemented throughout the book.

does not appear from v. 9 and onward, reinforcing the delimitation of the unit to vv. 1-8. What, then, is this common element?

Each individual sub-unit contains a turning point created by the relationship between the beginning and end of the sub-unit, and dividing it into two parts.⁴⁶ The turning point is unanticipated by the audience, and thus contributes rhetorically to the success of the prophetic mission in two ways. First, as seen in other prophetic units,⁴⁷ introducing the unit with a positive tone, including familiar and benevolent content, for example, can attract the audience’s attention and calm any incipient antagonism. Then when the audience is captivated, the harsh message can be delivered. The turning point initially appears to function as an indication of the transition from literary device to essential message. The contrast between the first part of the text, which precedes the turning point, and the latter part, which comes after, enhances the impact of the prophecy on its audience through surprise and increases the efficacy of the message.⁴⁸ The turning point conveys additional meaning as well, which I will describe below after first demonstrating its presence in each of the sub-units:

The turning point in each of the sub-units of Amos 3:1-8 divides the descriptions of two types of relationships among the figures represented in the verses. The impression created by the turning point is enhanced against the background of the text’s style. Although the content of the units includes contrasts, neither the style nor the rhetoric utilizes the “positive vs. negative” device that is prevalent throughout the book and might have been appropriate here as well. Instead, the style of these verses emphasizes the sequence and anticipated relationship between two premises.⁴⁹ The rhetorical questions are based on an understanding between the speaker and the audience that the answer is obvious. Therefore, the speaker assumes that the people will respond as expected; in practice the speaker does not wait to hear their response.⁵⁰ Moreover, each of the rhetorical questions in vv. 3-5, 6, and 8 describes a logical and permanent relationship between parties. Even the use of the phrase “therefore” in v. 2

⁴⁶ Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 306, notes a recurring surprise element between vv. 3-6, 7, and 8. However, he believes the surprise is based on a change of genre rather than content, as I will argue.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Amos 1:3-2:16; Micah 1:2-9; Isaiah 5:1-7

⁴⁸ Paul, *Amos*, 5; Y. Hoffman, *The Prophecies Against Foreign Nations in the Bible*, (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1977), 158-59 [Heb.]; Weiss, *Amos*, 71; Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 300. Similarly, Amos 5:18. In principle as a rhetorical device to open a speech, see, e.g., R. Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), 170.

⁴⁹ “Positive vs. Negative”: e.g., 5:2, 4-6, 14-15, 18-20; 7:14; 8:11; 9:4, 15. Regarding this rhetorical device, see, e.g., Paul, *Amos*, 5; also Wolff, *Amos the Prophet*, 67-70, who exemplifies a specific application of the phenomenon in the use of “antithetical word pairs.”

⁵⁰ E.g., Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 81; Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 128; however, cf. D. Rom-Shiloni, *God in Times of Destruction and Exiles* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2009) 66-67 [Heb.].

reflects a logical connection between two phenomena. As mentioned above, the relationship between the events of vv. 6-8 exists even *between* the clauses, emphasizing their complete continuity. The use of these literary devices fosters the audience's expectation that they will hear something obvious, a natural development. For example, after reading v. 3, one expects that v. 4 will continue to discuss a close relationship between two equals. Similarly, v. 6 furthers the expectation of hearing about the calamity God will inflict upon people. Through its rhetoric, the unit as a whole creates, nurtures, and intensifies the audience's expectations. Consequently, a turning point is formed not only through the respective elements of the sub-units, but also through the gap between the message the audience expects and the message they actually receive. In addition, the turning point sometimes reflects the tension between prevailing perceptions and the unit's unique statement, as I will demonstrate below.

While past arguments emphasized the causal relationship between elements of the unit in its various delimitations, my opinion is that this oft-repeated relationship is a tool the prophet masterfully exploits to present the unit's unique claims in a powerful way.

Verses 1-2

As other scholars have mentioned,⁵¹ the turning point in vv. 1-2 lies in the transition from the intimacy God expresses toward his nation in vv. 1-2a to the punitive position toward the nation, which surprisingly concludes v. 2, between "I have known only you of all the families of the earth" and "therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." The introduction in vv. 1-2a includes statements that are familiar and beneficial to the recipient, intended to engage the audience.⁵² The word "therefore" in v. 2b then creates the expectation of hearing about the nation's positive future, one that stems from the close relationship with God, whose nature is conveyed by the verb ידעתי.⁵³ The root פק"ד in *qal* conjugation (v. 2 אפקד) also intensifies the nation's anticipation for good tidings,⁵⁴ since it can denote an interest in the status

⁵¹ Jeremias, *Amos*, 50; Weiss, *Amos*, 75-76; Lessing, *Amos*, 210; Gitay, "Art of Speech," 300, 302; Möller, *A Prophet*, 224; Barton, *Theology*, 71. See Mays, *Amos*, 56, who defines the turning point differently based on the syntactic structure of the verse.

⁵² The fact that the words משפחות האדמה appear in Gen. 12:3 and 28:14 raises the possibility that another tradition is included here, upon which the people depend, and with which Amos debates (Weiss, *Amos*, 74; Rösel, *Amos*, 77).

⁵³ Möller, *A Prophet*, 219. See also Mays, *Amos*, 57. See Coggins, *Amos*, 108, who views the universalism expressed in the final chapters of the book as an alternative conception, which is raised after the nation of Israel endangered its personal relationship with God with its behavior. Cf. Barton, *Theology*, 53-57, 74. Schart, *Entstehung*, 63, views the root יד"ע as an expression of Israel's identity, which is dependent on their relationship with God.

⁵⁴ Schart, *Entstehung*, 63, 65, notes the occurrence of the root in v. 14. This root, the root יד"ע, and the term "lion" are the basis for

of the other regarding, for example, salvation (e.g., Ex. 3:16; Ps. 106:4) or birth (Gen. 21:1; 1 Sam 2:21). However, an antagonistic meaning of the same root, used specifically as an expression of divine punishment (e.g., Hos. 8:13; Am. 3:14), hints at the change at the end of the verse. In fact, the root פק"ד is one example of the conflicting content that appears in this sub-unit.⁵⁵ The impact of the verses' surprising conclusion is magnified by the opening content. The contrast between the opening and closing content of this sub-unit is disturbing and thought-provoking; also, it alters the conventions of the nation.

Verses 3-5

In the sub-unit 3-5, a division is apparent between the initial question and the four that follow in terms of both structure and content. Specifically, the figures in v. 3 are two people portrayed as equal in status, in a reciprocal relationship, unlike the predator/prey relationship that characterizes the figures in the subsequent questions.⁵⁶ The word שנים *two* testifies to their equality, as does the fact that both parties are mentioned explicitly, unlike the other questions in the unit in which the second figure is referred to indirectly. The word יחדו *together* emphasizes the parties' mutuality, and finally, each of the final four questions presents a description of the location in which the prey is attacked. This location is absent from the first question, which instead includes an adverb of manner:

Question	Images	Adverb of Manner	Nature of the Relationship
הילכו	שנים	יחדו	בלתי אם נועדו

Question	Image	Adverb of Location	Nature of the Relationship
הישאג	אריה	ביער	וטרף אין לו
היתן... קולו	כפיר	ממענתו	בלתי אם לכד
התפל	צפור	על [פח] הארץ	ומוקש אין לה
היעלה	פח (the hunter)	מן האדמה	ולכוד לא ילכוד

Far from challenging the sub-unit's integrity, the division heightens the contrast, serves the prophet's rhetorical and didactic goals, and makes the conclusion more powerful by surprising the

defining a circular structure in ch. 3. According to this position, this structure is a result of the redaction of ch. 3, and a foundation for understanding the meaning this redaction imparts to the chapter.

⁵⁵ For various denotations of the root פק"ד in *qal* see G. André, "pāqad," *TDOT* 12 (2003): 50-63 (51-59).

⁵⁶ E.g., Gitay, "Art of Speech," 295.

audience.⁵⁷ Verse 3 depicts a relationship between two equal parties, and when the identical form is used for the next questions, the audience expects similarity in the content as well. It is a surprise, then, that from v. 4 onward the relationship between the two figures is one between predator and prey.

Verses 6-8

This sub-unit opens with a description of a harsh relationship and God bringing calamity upon the nation: **אם יתקע שופר בעיר** (6). Verse 7 begins with the words that concluded v. 6: **כי לא יעשה אדני יהוה דבר**.⁵⁸ The lexical similarity creates the expectation that the description of the calamity will continue because the recurring divine deed (**עש**) in both verses is the disaster God brought upon the city.⁵⁹ However, the end of the verse inverts the image: **כי אם גלה סודו**. This should be viewed as a reversal for two reasons. First, instead of describing a divine action that accentuates God's exclusive rule and responsibility for all events, as v. 6 describes, this occurrence involves the prophet as well. The root **עש**, which in v. 6 emphasizes God's exclusivity, implies that the prophet is also engaged in the action.⁶⁰ Second, the prophet's involvement and awareness of the divine plan before the calamity is unleashed, imply that the anticipated disaster might be avoided.⁶¹ Thus v. 7 subverts both the certainty of the calamity and the exclusivity of God described in the previous verse.⁶²

The reversal that appears in v. 7 and continues in v. 8 with the mention of the prophet reflects a broader difference in the relationship than the one described in v. 6. That is, the mention of the prophet expresses a relationship with the inhabitants of the city that extends beyond bringing calamity upon them. Indeed, the prophet's role indicates a relationship of mutual attentiveness as described, among other places, in Amos 7:1-6.⁶³

⁵⁷ The very use of rhetorical questions attests to the prophet's rhetorical and didactic goals; Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis*, 175-76.

⁵⁸ E.g., Bulkeley, "Cohesion," 22; Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 55.

⁵⁹ In correlation, scholars viewed v. 7 as an interpretation of v. 6 and a link to v. 8; e.g., Paul, *Amos*, 108; Möller, *A Prophet*, 230.

⁶⁰ E.g., Milstein, "Who would not Write," 439, used the lexical repetitions as a foundation for her assertion that 6b and 7 are later additions. However, she fails to note the turning in the sub-unit and its contribution to the unit's content. The fact that the turning point in v. 7 continues into v. 8, and the existence of a turning point in each of the sub-units, instills meaning into the differences between vv. 6 and 7 instead of merely demonstrating the distinction and presuming that it is an outcome of later Deuteronomistic redaction, without discussing the interpretive ramifications of this redaction.

⁶¹ Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 82; T.E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 52. Cf. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 205.

⁶² Mays, *Amos*, 61.

⁶³ Paul, *Amos*, 3-4; B. Uffenheimer, *Classical Prophecy: The Prophetic Consciousness* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001) [Heb.], 130-34; Fretheim, *Suffering*, 52; *Ibid*, Hosea-Micah, pp. 128-29. The possibility of changing God's will is apparent in the earlier visions, while the later visions

Rhetoric of Turning

If the turning point is a rhetorical device, as explained above, then the beginning of every sub-unit is designed to create an impression and open the hearts of the recipients, while the essence of the message is given only at the end. However, the turning point in each sub-unit can also be viewed as an incidence of the literary phenomenon called “rhetoric of turning,” previously undetected in these verses.⁶⁴ Acknowledging this phenomenon in the text transforms what was previously perceived as merely a rhetorical device into a means for transmitting content. In each of the sub-units, the turning point separates two opposing insights expressed in the verses, thereby creating space for each. Assuming a multidirectional reading, the turning point also leads to an interpretation of the first part based on the fresh insights that emerge from the second part. Accordingly, each sub-unit expresses complex content that encompasses meaning from three locations: the beginning of the section, the end of the section, and in the interpretive shift that the ending conveys to the beginning. The turning point highlights the two separate insights and also activates the interpretive relationship between them. Therefore, the turning point should be perceived as a tool for expressing content and as a tool for the audience to understand the structure and content of the prophecy.

The presence of a turning point in each of the sub-units also serves to indicate the use of the rhetoric of turning, connects the sub-units, and makes the content of vv. 1-8 richer and internally consistent. In fact, the meaning of the entire unit depends on the internal development in and between the sub-units, and

demonstrate the idea that God is the primary authority, despite some room for the prophet’s impact in particular and human influence in general. However, others assumed the visions in chs. 7-8 attest to the prophet’s inability to impact God from the time of Amos onward (e.g., H. McKeating, *The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah* (CBC; Cambridge: University Press, 1971) 52-53; G. Brin, *Studies in the Prophetic Literature* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2006 [Heb.] 45-47. Barton, *Theology*, 61, views the message of complete calamity for the nation as testimony that the prophet was the ‘nation’s enemy,’ in contradiction to his expected role. Here too Amos undermines prevalent perceptions, but through this means demonstrates the prophet’s acceptable role. The definition of the prophet’s role and relationship with God is also expressed in 7:14-15. According to Milstein’s approach, *ibid.*, the unit 3-6a, 8, presents another fundamental aspect of the prophet. However, see Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 81, who argues that the fundamental discussion of the prophet’s role and the nature of prophecy only occurs in vv. 7, 8, which are unparalleled in the book—not even in vv. 2:11-12; 8:11-12, where the phenomenon is mentioned.

⁶⁴ B. Sommer, “Ambiguity and the Rhetoric of Turning in Isaiah,” in: C. Cohen *et al.* (eds.), *Birkat Shalom* (vol. 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 321-45 (331-34). See also: E.L. Greenstein, “Re-analysis in Biblical and Babylonian Poetry,” in: *Birkat Shalom*, 499-510. Further references to studies in this field can be found in *ibid.*, 500 n. 6.

on the additional layer of meaning embedded in the sub-units by creating this connection,⁶⁵ as I will explain below:

Verses 1-2 explicitly present a relationship between the God of Israel and the nation, characterized by a closeness that can advance calamity, and by a calamity that is an inherent aspect of closeness. In light of this, the first rhetorical question alludes to the intimacy between them: “Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?” (v. 3).⁶⁶ God encounters the nation and is portrayed as an equal, without a power gap. However, this relationship is replaced in the subsequent questions by an association between predator and prey, indicating an adversarial relationship between God and the people that involves calamity and retribution: “Does a lion roar in the forest, when it has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has caught nothing?” (v. 4).

Furthermore, the nature of the relationship in vv. 4-5 reflects back on the understanding of v. 3, i.e. the plan for the meeting of the two figures in v. 3. The verb *נועדו* “(they) *have made an appointment*,” loses its innocence and in light of vv. 4-5 is reinterpreted as a predator or hunter setting out a trap for the prey. In this sense, the repetition of the root *על* in vv. 1 and 5 instills in the Exodus from Egypt the sense of a trap: compare *על כל המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים לאמר* in v. 1 with the question *היעלה פח מן האדמה ולכוד לא ילכוד* in v. 5. The rhetorical questions portray the relationship as inescapable, emphasizing God’s authority over the nation to its detriment; God is compared to a lion and a predator, while the nation is a bird and prey.⁶⁷ Reinforcing this point, the verses fail to mention a specific sin that will serve as reason for the calamity, such as the social or religious sins described elsewhere in the book; they only mention the forthcoming calamity.

The calamity in general, and a calamity likened to the capture of prey in particular, challenges the common perception of God as savior, replacing it with the perception of God as one who inflicts punishment, as emerges from the book of Amos.⁶⁸ Moreover, the calamity here may correlate specifically with the recurring theme of “The Day of the Lord” in the book (e.g., 4:12;

⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 295, who believes there is no significance to the independent verses or sub-units, except in the sequence of the text. This assertion misses the diverse interpretation of the sub-units.

⁶⁶ Bulkeley, “Cohesion,” 20, and Jeremias, *Amos*, 52, views all of the questions as a metaphor for the relationship between God and the nation, without distinguishing among the descriptions of differing relationships. Gitay, “Art of Speech,” 295, assumes that the two entities are God and the nation; however, this is not the case in the subsequent rhetorical questions. The LXX translation of *נועדו* as *νοδενο* reinforces this interpretation.

⁶⁷ See: Jeremias, *Amos*, 52-53. Schart, *Entstehung*, 67 views the questions as a representation of the claim that the nation’s punishment is predetermined, and God would have preferred not to punish the nation.

⁶⁸ E.g., Barton, *Theology*, 53-57, 71.

5:18-20)⁶⁹; 8:9-10, 13-14).⁷⁰ In this sense, the nation’s perception of the Day of the Lord may be expressed in vv. 1 and 3, whereas the book’s perception is expressed in vv. 2, 4, and 5. That which the nation perceives as an opportunity for closeness is described in the book of Amos as a relationship with calamity in store. The audience’s expectations, formed by the start of each sub-unit, are juxtaposed with the surprising content that follows. Accepted views are confronted by new assertions, as often occurs in the book of Amos.⁷¹ These effects reinforce the assertion that the turning point is not only a rhetorical device, but is also essential to the content of the unit and to the changes it initiates in the recipients.

Reading the sub-units consecutively shows that the first two sub-units describe two different relationships between God and the nation, and it is therefore incorrect to read them as a development.⁷² They each present the start of an intimate and positive relationship between God and the people (1-2a // 3) and later threaten the people with calamity (2b // 4-5). However, the design of the two sections is very different: The first is direct, the second uses imagery. According to this reading, the figures in the rhetorical questions were carefully selected to symbolize the nature of the relationship between God and the people. They are not merely a rhetorical device; they are an integral part of the unit’s message. Describing God’s relationship with the nation in terms of predator and prey draws attention to the nature of the relationship, emphasizing the severity of the threat contained in the verses and enhancing the overall impression created by the unit. The rhetoric of turning in these verses reduces the positive nature of the relationship between God and the nation and emphasizes the aggression.

The closing sub-unit, vv. 6-8, can be understood as a response to the severe impression left by vv. 1-2 and 3-5. Verses 6-8 do not identify the city or its inhabitants, which conveys a sense of universalism to the portrayal of God. However, reading the text in light of the preceding sub-units establishes the identity

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Lescow, “Amosbuch,” 37, who suggests linking the two units, and views the lexical connection to 5:19 as a lexical expression of the connection.

⁷⁰ E.g., Barton, *Theology*, 62-66. Gerhard von Rad, “The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh,” *JSS* 4 (1959): 97-108, presents the debate regarding the Day of the Lord as part of the polemic on Israel’s unique status: Will the Day of the Lord bring calamity to all the nations and relief to Israel, or calamity to Israel by the nations, orchestrated by God? For a myriad of positions on the perception of the Day of the Lord in Amos see: G.F. Hashel, *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 109-12.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Paul, *Amos*, 3; Barton, *Theology*, 5. On the rhetorical advantage of this formulation, see Gitay, “Reflections,” 214. For the literary phenomenon of citing the opposition and the polemic against it in prophetic books, see in detail: Rom-Shiloni, *God*, 58-83.

⁷² Cf. Uffenheimer and Jeremias, who believed the relationship presented in vv. 1-2 is based upon, and clarified by, the subsequent verses.

of the nation that dwells in the city as Israel and clarifies God's attachment to it. Similarly, the punishment mentioned in v. 2 is identified with the calamity to which v. 6 alludes. The final sub-unit qualifies and clarifies the previous statements, asserting that punishment visited upon the nation does not attest to the end of that nation's relationship with God, which is unique and intimate. Had the statement about the calamity stood alone, the logical conclusion would have been that any connection with God had been severed. In this context, however, the calamity is reinterpreted as an expression of a connection with God. In a final example, the lion that roars in v. 4, symbolizing the calamity, is understood in v. 8 as a representation of the prophet, who is sent to the nation by God and serves as testimony to the preservation of a close mutual relationship between God and the nation even in times of crisis.

As stated above, the developmental sequence that characterizes the final sub-unit assigns the prophet a central role in the relationship between God and humanity, mitigating God's exclusivity and creating the possibility of nullifying the calamity: God's action is preceded by revelation to the prophet (7-8) as the disaster is preceded by God's action (6). The turning point establishes a sequence that incorporates the calamity and the prophet's involvement. That is, the fear of the nation (ועם לא יחרדו אם יתקע) is the result of the sounding of the trumpet (אם תהיה רעה בעיר), which attests to the disaster (שופר בעיר) brought about by God's action (ויהוה לא עשה // כי לא יעשה), which in turn is preceded by the revelation of God's intention to the prophet (כי אם גלה סודו אל עבדיו) (הנביאים).

Verse 8 summarizes the entire process: The lion's roar that causes the nation to fear in v. 8a is the conclusion, but the divine revelation experienced by the prophet in 8b is its beginning.⁷³ Thus, contrary to the perception conveyed by the beginning of the sub-unit according to which God alone is responsible for all that happens, the comprehensive view is that the prophet's actions may affect the realization of the entire process.

The conclusion of unit 1-8 is similar to its starting point, as expressed in the following formulation (v 1a // v. 8b)⁷⁴:

שמעו את הדבר הזה אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בני ישראל
אדני יהוה דבר מי לא ינבא

I would cautiously suggest that the shift in the directionality of causation in vv. 3-5, and in the order of events with that which

⁷³ Cf. Schart, *Entstehung*, 68, which likens the lion's roar in v. 8 to the words of the prophet himself, who transmits God's message to the nation.

⁷⁴ E.g., Lescow, "Amosbuch," 37. See Rottzoll, *Studien*, 122-24, who believes the connection between the two verses is secondary, reflecting the perceptions that emerge from the entirety of vv. 1-8, and delineates them as one framework.

precedes it in vv. 6-8, reflects the dynamic nature of the relationship between God and the nation that is expressed in the totality of the unit. Sin leads to calamity, but may also enable restoration. Relationships with God do not move only on a linear-chronological axis, but also enable return and renewal of the relationship.

This portrayal of the relationship between God and the nation is conflated with the perception of Amos as a prophet of calamity⁷⁵ and as a prophet whose initial belief in repentance and salvation transformed to espouse retribution and punishment.⁷⁶ However, the book in its entirety points to a more nuanced view. While the book of Amos does predict and emphasize calamity, it does so in a context of intimate connectivity between God and the nation. Therefore it also contains comfort and a window for change (e.g., 5:4-6, 14-15; 7:1-6; 9:11-15).⁷⁷ The multifaceted meaning that emerges from unit 3:1-8 corresponds with the perception that emanates from the entirety of the book in its current form.

Complementary Contrasts

Thus far I have related to the turning point and the rhetoric of turning it contains as principles that unite the sub-units, clarifying their content and facilitating an outline of the primary theme in vv. 1-8. The sub-units, through the intertwining of meanings that inform each other, combine to form a larger unified section, vv. 1-8, that imparts a single coherent message. In addition, they also sustain contradictory insights within the verses and support the presentation of rich content within the unit. Based on this meaning of the rhetoric of turning, the assumption that the text was written is reinforced. Which insights contradict each other, and how is it possible to sustain contradiction within a single text?

As has been argued regarding the rhetoric of turning in poetry and prose texts,⁷⁸ a unit's conclusion does not necessarily

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Brin, *Studies*, 46; Jeremias, *Amos*, 126; McKeating, *Amos*, 2, 52-3.

⁷⁶ E.g., Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 114-15. For an array of similar positions see Barton, *Theology*, 74-76; Brin, *Studies*, 43 n. 23. Schart, *Entstehung*, 67, raises the possibility that the redacted unit 3:1-8 indicates that after Amos there is no longer an option of repentance.

⁷⁷ E.g., Paul, *Amos*, 3; Barton, *Theology*, 93. However, Hadjiev, *Composition*, 202-4, argues for a post-exilic redaction that presents broad misconduct on the social and religious spheres, and in the treatment of the prophet. The book in its final design presents the punishment as irreversible, but nonetheless introduces hope for the future. On p. 205, he also posits that 3:7 correlates with the stage of redaction that acknowledges the destruction that has already occurred. Therefore, it is irreversible and known to the prophets. Regarding the claim of post-exilic redaction see Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 15-16. For a variety of positions on this fundamental question, see Hashel, *Understanding*, 106-9.

⁷⁸ M. Perry, “Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings,” *Poetics Today* 1 (1979): 35-64 (58-61), 311-61; M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University,

refute its initial message; instead, the messages stand side by side. This is the case in Amos 3:1-8. Literary devices such as rhetorical questions, formulations that emphasize cause and effect such as the phrase “therefore,” terms that express contradictory content, and finally, emphasis placed on the developmental sequence in vv. 6-8, all affirm the unit’s intention to preserve each of its premises, even if the relationship between them is unexpected and even if the audience does not view them as a natural sequence. The fact that the unit includes no application of the literary device “positive vs. negative” which, as mentioned earlier, is prevalent throughout the book of Amos, bolsters this claim; this device would have presented the respective perceptions as interchangeable alternatives, whereas its absence presents them as parallels. The literary devices and the integrated patterns provide direction for reading the content of the unit and sub-units, thereby contributing to a comprehensive and integrated understanding.

These assertions apply to both the sub-units and the text in its entirety⁷⁹: Verse 6, when read without regard to the other verses, portrays a universal God who rules over the universe as well as humanity. However, vv. 1-2 and the light they shed on the verses that follow depict an exclusive intimate relationship with Israel. This contrast is also expressed in the logical connection, described earlier, between *כל המשפחה* and *מכל משפחות האדמה*.⁸⁰ The juxtaposition of a universal God with a particular God is found in other units in the book, such as 1:3-2:16; 4:4-13; 5:7-13; 6:1-7; 8:11-12; 9:7-10, and the relationship between them. Here, too, the unit juxtaposes the nation’s common perception, which emphasizes Israel’s special status, with the perception of God’s universality.

The relationship between God and Israel is close but complex. Verses 1-2 and 3-5 depict a personal and mutual relationship between Israel and God, a depiction strengthened by God’s portrayal as Israel’s savior, but they emphasize that this relationship also comprises criticism, calamity, and retribution for sinful behavior. God is one who inflicts punishment.⁸¹

1985), 199; J.C. Exum, “Of Broken Pots, Fluttering Birds and Visions in the Night: Extended Simile and Poetic Technique in Isaiah,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 331-52 (337); Sommer, “Ambiguity,” 331-34. Cf. W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978), 132.

⁷⁹ Mays, *Amos*, 58 makes this assertion regarding v. 2, based on his premise that Amos does not entirely contradict the common perceptions but rather chooses to challenge them.

⁸⁰ Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 126 emphasizes the personal facet of the term ‘family’ in this instance. Fretheim himself does not attribute significance to the tension between the universalistic and particular aspects here as in verses such as 9:7. He sees only a close relationship with Israel (cf., e.g., McKeating, *Amos*, 66). Rilett Wood, *Amos*, 55, views this contradiction as a tension between Amos the prophet and the redactor.

⁸¹ Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 116, 127, believes the prophecies against

As stated above, vv. 6-8 present another perspective on this assertion: A calamity befalling the nation abrogates neither the intimate relationship between God and the nation nor God’s will to prevent the calamity. The calamity itself does not stand as the sole message but contains its own antithesis.

The fact that the verses include reversed directionality—from effect to cause and the reverse, from preceding action to event and the reverse—implies that no stage is most important or representative of the final state. Rather, the relationship between God and humanity is variegated and limitless.

The possibility that the calamity will not be implemented introduces the prophet to the relationship between God and the people, as expressed in vv. 7-8 and 1a.⁸² The prophet’s involvement subverts the exclusivity of God’s relationship with the nation, the relationship that is an expression of the totality of God’s control over the people as seen, for example, in vv. 1b-2a and to some extent in v. 6. God’s control, presence and far-reaching influence on human beings and their future, which were emphasized, *inter alia*, through the metaphors in verses 3-5, are also restricted by the unit’s emphasis on the impact of the people’s actions on their fate and on the call to the people to take responsibility for their actions.

Each of the points contributes layers of meaning to the text; the fact that these points, with their divergent meanings, appear side-by-side, enriches the complexity of the unit’s content. Is there an additional layer of significance that stems from the contradictory interpretations?

Other units in the book of Amos indicate,⁸³ as does the book as a whole from a synchronic perspective,⁸⁴ that the points detailed above and their interaction with one another express a fundamental statement that defines the root of the problem addressed by the book. This statement is more complicated than the meaning that emerges when vv. 1-8 are read linearly, *i.e.* without recursion. The myriad ideological insights combine to form a practical statement regarding human consciousness, emphasizing God’s centrality and power, weakening human complacency and the sense of human capability, and diminishing the belief in

the nations in chs. 1-2 and other units indicate a similar claim of personal connection expressed in calamity.

⁸²Verse 1a contains an unusual emphasis on the source of the prophecy (see, *e.g.*, Wolff, *Amos*, 176; Bulkeley, “Cohesion,” 19). In correlation, vv. 7-8 present the fundamental relationship between God and the prophet.

⁸³As stated above, the unit 9:7-10 maintains a similar tension between universalism and particularism, creating a balance between God’s rule and man’s responsibility. Acknowledging this tension and its ideological consequence contradicts the prevalent hypothesis regarding the stratification of this text (*e.g.*, Rösel, *Amos*, 264).

⁸⁴Barton, *Theology*, 156-59, bases his interpretation on the canonical reading of the book, which allows for all the perceptions expressed in the book and explains the integration of those perceptions, but reaches different conclusions.

the individual's power and success.⁸⁵ This message is demoralizing; hence, a compensatory element is presented in the form of a demand that people take responsibility for their fate both on a national and personal plane.⁸⁶ The blending of these arguments, each of which has an independent status, balances the demand to acknowledge and depend on God with the need for individuals to take an active part in designing their future. Acknowledgment of God's centrality does not necessitate an absence of human initiative: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so YHWH, the God of hosts, shall be with you, just as you have said" (5:14).

The demand for balance that emerges from 3:1-8, and from the book as a whole, may be directed at the Samaritan elite mentioned explicitly in chap. 3 and addressed in other units of the book. This elite used its wealth and power to inflict harm upon the poor; it trusted in its military power and neglected its commitment to God. However, in light of the book in its present form, the demand may be understood as being independent of any historical or geographical anchor. The fact that it emerges from coherent units, layered units, and from among different units in the book reinforces the timelessness of the meaning of, *inter alia*, Amos 3:1-8.

CONCLUSION

This article is based on the premise that an essential relationship exists between the structure, details, and themes of a textual unit. This premise is demonstrated briefly using previous studies that discussed Amos 3 and showed how determining the unit's delimitation, structure, and function of its details affect the manner in which scholars define the chapter's primary theme. In light of the questions that remained unresolved in previous studies, the central part of the article presents an approach in which vv. 1-8 in their current form comprise a single unit that may not be organic, but has a unified meaning. Based on lexical, stylistic, and

⁸⁵ This is presented as an independent statement, among others in vv. 6:8, 13; 9:10. A universal perception of God, expressed on a cosmic (9:1-6) and ethnic (9:7-8a) plane, also serves the purpose of emphasizing God's centrality. The repetition of calamity in the book, including the threat of exile (2:5, 13-16; 3:9-12, 15; 5:11, 27; 6:7, 8-11) undermines man's reliance on his own power, on his past merits, and on the externalism of his wealth and successes. Instead, it emphasizes the power of a God who is unlimited to a specific location or context.

⁸⁶ Similarly, when viewing the book as a whole, human responsibility is expressed through an emphasis on the gap between Israel and the nations (1:3-2:16), the context in which Israel are punished for moral sins, and the polemic against the prevalent premises in Israel regarding their unique status, based *inter alia* on the Exodus from Egypt (9:7). If they do not have a unique status, or if the unique status is expressed specifically in over-punishment, this would mean that they have to take responsibility for their actions. Even the prophet's central role, which is addressed in several units (3:7; 7:1-9, 10-17), demonstrates the individual's ability to influence his destiny, even if expressed differently.

thematic parameters, three sub-units are defined (1-2, 3-5, 6-8). The delineation of these sub-units is based on thematic and literary unity between the verses and ascribes significance to the similarities and differences between verses in an original way. Delineating the sub-units facilitates the identification of a recurring element that connects the three sub-units: a “turning point” that separates two divergent relationships between the central entities in each of the sub-units. These relationships include God’s closeness to the nation alongside a prediction of harsh calamity; a naturalistic equitable relationship alongside one between predator and prey; and God’s exclusive control over the individual, which conceals calamity, alongside the prophet’s involvement, which can affect a positive outcome.

In addition to reinforcing the unit’s boundaries and internal structure, identifying the turning point also aids in recognizing the diverse insights in the unit. In addition, the approach I offer does not blur but sustains the ideological differences reflected in the unit, imbuing them with meaning as an intrinsic part of the unit’s content, which in turn supports a more plausible understanding of the text.

Initially, I pointed out that the turning point has a rhetorical advantage, separating the engaging opening from the principal content of the unit. The turning point is sometimes juxtaposed to the common perception so that the new idea is highlighted in the unit (e.g., God as a savior *vs.* God as a disciplinarian; anticipation of the Day of the Lord *vs.* its portrayal as a day of calamity; Israel’s exclusive status *vs.* a universalistic God, and more). I then demonstrated that through a coherent reading of the entire unit, the turning point attests to a “rhetoric of turning” that promotes the portrayal of a complex relationship between God and the nation, one with the potential for both closeness and calamity. The intimate relationship is replaced by an aggressive one, darkening the positive impression, but the appearance of the prophet enables the unit to conclude with a description of a relationship similar to the one described at the beginning of the unit.

The rhetoric of turning contributes an additional facet to the literary and rhetorical characteristics of vv. 1-8: the presence of contradictory perceptions. These do not refute one another, but co-exist, and comprise the underlying principle of the unit that extends beyond the article’s initial contention. In other words, the ideological contradictions are not grounds for omitting verses from the unit, but rather are an integral component that serves to define the unit’s central ideas. This approach to Amos 3:1-8 challenges previous criteria for defining the boundaries of the unit.

Based on this approach, the words **הִלְכוּ שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּו בְּלִתִּי** **אִם נֹעֲדוּ** in v. 3 are imbued with a secondary meaning, which directs the audience toward a more tenable reading of the unit; the phrase **שְׁנַיִם** “two” reflects two contradictory insights that coexist together.

In fact, the unit in vv. 1-8 presents an essential debate regarding the association between God’s relationship with the

nation, God's universality, and the position of the prophet. What insights can be gleaned from the relation between these topics, and what are their ramifications on the individual? The unit calls for recognition of the absolute rule of the God of Israel, but it accompanies this with the demand not to rely solely upon God but to take responsibility for human behavior. Indeed, the competing themes that scholars proffer as the singular idea of the unit and the concepts that serve to justify omitting verses from the unit are the unit's intrinsic components, constituting its unique quality. The unit does not contain a single peak, as some scholars have argued; instead, the text as a whole, the compilation of insights that each verse contributes, and the turning points in each sub-unit, unite to produce the meaning of the unit, defining its thematic and ideological climax.

The audience also plays a part in deciphering the prophetic unit, and their response, too, deepens the unit's content and meaning. The audience can understand the unit's intent only after absorbing the full picture comprised of all the details and the relationship between them. However, every stage of understanding includes independent content that is part of the messages embedded in the unit; none of them is solely rhetorical, nor relegated to a preparatory phase for the main message. This approach infuses the details of the unit with meaning and correlates with the most plausible method of communication between prophets and their audience, in their own generation and for posterity.