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Glimpses of Prayers and Poetics in the Book of Amos

Abstract: After a critical examination of scholarly approaches towards poetry, the study explores the connecting lines between poetry and prophecy. Among recent scholarly approaches, careful distinctions made by Robert Alter, Moshe Greenberg, and Alexa Wilke, are helpful to determine approach and method. Furthermore, the investigation focuses on the three hymns in the book of Amos: 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6, questioning their functions in a prophetic context. Following a detailed investigation of philological and literary-critical problems in all three hymns, the study points to three different strategies of transformation, which help to explain the function of the hymns in their prophetic environment.

Keywords: book of Amos; hymns; prophecy; poetry; prayer, creation; apocalypticism.

1 Poetics and prayers in prophecy

Modern scholarship on the Hebrew Bible clearly distinguishes between prophecy on the one hand and poetry on the other. This distinction can by no means be taken for granted. As we all know, it was Robert Lowth (1710–1787), a Bishop of the Church of England and Oxford Professor of Poetry, who pointed out the distinctive features of Hebrew poetry by referring to the "parallelism," the doubling of language in different words (*parallelismus membrorum*: "parallelism of clauses").[1] Lowth's description of Hebrew poetry was published in his academic lectures *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) and especially in lecture XIX that was part of an examination on "נבואה *sive poesis prophetica*" ("The Prophetic Poetry:" lectures XVIII–XXI). Lowth distinguishes three species of "parallelism:" synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic. In the following paragraphs of his lectures, Lowth explains those categories by referring to textual evidence from the Hebrew Bible that includes prophecy in particular (e.g., Isaiah or Hosea). All in

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[1] Nevertheless, Immanuel ben David Frances (1618–ca. 1710) of Leghorn (Livorno, Italy; born in Mantua) had already identified Hebrew poetry by its use of "parallelism" (cf. Berlin, *Poetry*, 163). On the pre-history of Lowth's invention of "parallelisms" in Jewish and Christian environments cf. Kugel, *Idea*, 204–73.

all, Lowth's approach to poetry views poetry and prophecy as being very closely linked to each other.

In contrast to Lowth, Jewish exegesis in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages clearly separated poetry from prophecy. The most important reason for this separation was that prophets acted as persons endowed with divine inspiration, while poetry was a human product.[2] In other words, prophecy was caused by divine revelation, but poetry was a human art form. As a consequence of this differentiation, major problems were seen among Jewish scholars, as, for example, no one could deny that divinely inspired compositions, like the Torah, included poetry (cf. Exod 15; Num 24; Deut 32 etc.). Thus, some scholars, like Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508), pled for different types of poetry and conceded that the biblical prophets used both divine and human speech at the same time.[3]

Modern scholarly discussions on Hebrew poetry, on the one hand, harshly criticize Lowth's rather formal approach to poetry, especially Lowth's restricted method of using parallelisms as a criterion to identify poetry, and, on the other hand, come back to Lowth's connection between poetry and prophecy.[4] For example, Robert Alter points out that every discursive stance between the prophet and his or her audience was realized through poetry, while those passages that address a dialogue between God and the prophet, as in the "visions," were written in prose (cf. Jer 1:13–14; 36:27–31).[5]

The picture of form-critical differentiations within prophetic literature is further muddled by the question concerning the use and function of prayers. Most recently, Andrew Hill voted for a broad definition of "prayer" as "divine-human dialogue" or a human's access to the divine and included also related forms like "prayer sidelights." Among the latter, Hill refers to texts that support the act of praying and imply that God had heard a prayer, or that a prayer was initiated by certain "code words" like "seek" (בקש, דרש), "ask" (שאל), "cry out" (קרא), and "entreat" (חלה).[6] Based on this definition and differentiation, Hill provides us with a list of different types of "prayers" in the Book of the Twelve. Regarding the book of Amos, he identifies the following passages: Amos 5:4–6 (implied prayer); 7:1–9 (recorded prayers of intercession); 2:6–8; 5:10–12; 8:4–6 ("sidelight to prayer:" a link between worship and social justice) and 4:1–4, 6–

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2 Cf. Berlin, *Poetry*, 48–49.

3 Cf. Berlin, *Poetry*, 120–24.

4 For a critique of Lowth cf. Kugel, *Idea*, 1–58 (esp. 12–15, 57–58); cf. also 274–86.

5 Cf. Alter, *Art*, 137–39.

6 So Hill, "Theology," 152–53.

13 ("sidelight to prayer:" God's theodicy).[7] Obviously, Hill thought that the "divine-human dialogue" criterion for prayer was not met in the lament and the hymnal passages of the Book of Amos.

Alexa Wilke very recently studied the whole corpus of prophetic writings in the Hebrew Bible, including the book of Daniel, with a view to prayers and how they were integrated in their contexts. Wilke, comparable to Hill's approach, finds the differential criterion for "prayer" in a verbal turn to God, or the verbal "divine communion."[8] But, beyond Hill's examinations, she is fully aware that hymnal passages may not comply with the principle of "divine communion." What is more, within their prophetic contexts, prayers are located within crucial textual environments of a passage or a book with the aim to point to transformations of "time periods," "places," or "identities."[9] Overall, the discussion of poetry, prophecy and prayer paves the way for a comprehensive analysis of the hymns in the book of Amos.[10]

2 From prayer to prophecy: hymns in the book of Amos

One of the most prolific biblical scholars of the twentieth century, Moshe Greenberg, pointed to the fact that prayers in ancient Israel were not just an issue for professionals such as priests. Greenberg's analysis demands a secondary literary transfer of prayers, which have their origin in popular experiences, into a context that was adopted by prophets, psalmists, and sages.[11] In the case of Hebrew prophecy, particularly with regard to the book of Amos, the exegetical analysis, as a consequence, should be limited to the level of literary texts.

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7 So Hill, "Theology," 156.

8 Cf. Wilke, *Gebete*, 2.

9 Wilke, *Gebete*, 403–19.

10 Generally speaking, poetry and prayer are closely linked for a variety of reasons, one of which is clearly the liturgical localization of prayers—e.g., in early Judaism. Stefan Reif, a leading expert in the field of Jewish liturgy, contributes to this topic. His analyses highlight a strong connection between prayer and liturgy, even beyond liturgy and services at the Jerusalem temple in antiquity: cf. Reif, "Place," 2–12. Reif explains the liturgical setting of prayers with a view to "private" and "official" worship.

11 Cf. Greenberg, *Prayer*, 51.

2.1 Philological notes on Amos 4:13

The hymns are among the most difficult passages in the book of Amos. Unfortunately, text-historical investigations are only possible to a limited extent due to the rather meager evidence from variant sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Old Greek version (OG). In sum, the lack of a more extensive textual basis from the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls prevents us from checking the variants in the OG version(s) and their conformity with a Hebrew *Vorlage,* as it differs from the MT.[12] This is even more regrettable, because in several cases, the OG version is supported by the Syriac (Syr.) and the Vulgate (Vulg.).

The Hebrew text of Amos 4:13 reads as follows:

ומגיד לאדם מה שחו	יוצר הרים ובֹרא רוח	כי הנה
ודֹרך על במתי ארץ	עֹשה שחר עיפה	
	יהוה אלהי צבאות שמו	

Two bi-cola—wherein each colon is introduced by a participle—are framed by a "presentative exclamation"[13] and a formula, which identifies the subject of the participles with "YHWH, the God of Hosts." The second and third colon in particular provoke controversy. Regarding מה שחו, discussion centers on the meaning of the noun שח, a *hapax legomenon,* whereas concerning the phrase עֹשה שחר עיפה, scholarly debate surrounds both the relationship between the participle and the following nouns and also the semantic range of עיפה. The noun שח is derived from the root שיח, "plaint, complaint, musing, study, thinking," attested especially in late poetry like the Psalms (cf. 77:13; 105:2; 119:148) or the book of Job (12:8).[14] But even if numerous scholars think that the suffix of the

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12 For the textual evidence, compare the following editions: For the MT cf. *BHQ* 13, 45–46, 55; for the fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls cf. Fuller, "4QXII^g," pl. LI, and 300, 307 (4QXII^g 47α ii 8; 4QXII^g 69 1–3: no photo) for the 4Q-fragments, and Milik, "Textes," planche LVIII, 188 (MurXII col. VIII 14–18), who prepares the Murabbaʿât fragments. For a reconstruction of the fragments within the context of the Book of Amos cf. Ulrich, *Scrolls,* 606, 609, and for a synopsis of the fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls and MT, including the Greek text of OG, see Ego et al., *Minor Prophets,* 56–57, 66–67.

13 Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction,* 675–78: no. 40.2.1.

14 Cf. also Sir 11:8; 13:11; 20:4LXX, the noun שיח (1 Kgs 18:27; Ps 55:3; 64:2; 102:1; 104:34; Job 7:13), and *HAL* 1225, 1230–31; *DCH* VIII, 119, 125–26. The semantics of "word, utterance, thought" is also present in the translations of the OG versions, like Aquila (ὁμιλία), Theodotion (λόγος), and Symmachus (φώνημα): cf. Ziegler, *Duodecim prophetae,* 191; Wolff, *Dodeka-propheton,* 249; Paul, *Amos,* 154. The interpretation in the Septuagint version of the OG: τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ presupposes a conflation of radicals, of מה שחו in משחו, and a late messianic re-reading (cf. Glenny, *Meaning,* 141–43, 236–40).

3rd person masculine singular refers to the divine, i.e., "God's thought/plan,"[15] a divine revelation by the muse of a human being seems much more appropriate: Firstly, the semantics of שיח and שח never point to divine plans.[16] Secondly, the structure of the poem reveals a change of divine actions concerning the cosmic (יוצר הרים ובורא רוח and עשה שחר עיפה) and the mundane spheres (ומגיד ודרך על במתי ארץ and לאדם מה שחו).

Regarding the colon עשה שחר עיפה, a participle of עשה is followed by two unrelated objects, which pertain to astrology.[17] Most recently, John Whitley examined the various possibilities for decoding the syntax in this phrase. He distinguishes two syntactical constructions. As the Masoretes interpret the participle of עשה in the construct state (עֹשֵׂה), the syntax reveals "a construct chain with an objective genitive (שחר) followed by an accusative (עיפה) designating the final rendered product."[18] If שחר refers to the "dawn" and עיפה to "darkness," the phrase includes a negative tone with an orientation that contradicts the divine creation: "the One [i.e., God] who makes darkness out of the dawn." Many scholars, including Whitley, emphasize that this negative tone makes no sense within a chain of hymnic cola "otherwise devoted to positive descriptions of YHWH's role as the creator."[19] At this point, a second interpretation comes to mind. This exegesis explains the phrase as "(1) a double construct chain with an objective genitive (שחר) followed by a genitive of material (עיפה); or (2) a verb followed by a double accusative in which the first denotes the final, rendered

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15 Cf. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 264 (cf. Amos 3:7); Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 65, 74; Mathys, *Dichter*, 111–12; Amsler, *Amos*, 201; Dietrich and Arnet, *Ausgabe*, 563; Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 135, and, most recently, Eidevall, *Amos*, 149–50, who follows in the paths of Wolff and Jeremias. Mays, *Amos*, 77, suggests the conjecture מעשהו ("his work") and, consequently, identifies God in the suffix. For a reference of the suffix in שח to human recipients cf. Keil, *Commentar*, 198; Hammershaimb, *Book*, 75; Rudolph, *Joel*, 181–82; Story, "Amos," 69, and Gese, "Amos 8,4–8," 66 n. 25.

16 This equally applies for the later genuine ("sectarian") and other compositions from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Cf. Opitz and Stadel, "שׂיח śjḥ," 756–57. Cf. also Ps 55:3, 18; 64:2; 102:1; 104:34; 119:148; Job 7:13; 1 Kgs 18:27: ironically related to "Baal."

17 The OG connected the two objects: ποιῶν ὄρθρον καὶ ὁμίχλην. This reading is preferred, e.g., by Keil, *Commentar*, 199; Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 8; and Cripps, *Commentary*, 177.

18 So Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 128–29, with nn. 4 and 5. Cf. also *HAL* 776; Eidevall, *Amos*, 83, 148, 150–51. This syntactical architecture presupposes the construct of the participle, as indicated by the Masoretes. However, both nouns, שחר and עיפה, could function as accusatives, in terms of a "double accusative" that includes the determination of a product in its second element (עיפה): cf. the second hymn (Amos 5:8a: ויום לילה החשיך) and *GKC* § 117 ii; Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, 173–77: no. 10.2.3.

19 So Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 129.

product, and the second, the material."[20] A proposed translation could sound something like: "the one [i.e., God] who turns darkness into dawn."[21] Whitley goes further and favors the initially explained syntax, in accordance with the Masoretes, but he avoids the negative tone by interpreting עיפה with reference to Hebrew עוף ("to fly") and the Aramaic term עפתא, as attested in the inscriptions on the Yehawmilk relief (*KAI* 10, line 5: fifth century BCE) and on the Arslan Tash amulet 1 (*KAI* 27, line 1: seventh century BCE).[22] Whitley translates the phrase "the one who makes the winged disk at dawn."[23]

If, for a moment, one disregards how grammatically sound the interpretation of שחר as a temporal attribute, "*at* dawn," is, and why a "winged disk" should consociate with "dawn," there are several good reasons, why עיפה could indicate the meaning of "darkness." Within the context of the following hymns in Amos 5 and 9, a destabilizing creation makes perfect sense: In Amos 5:8 the deep darkness is turned into morning *and* the day into night. In 9:5 everything that constitutes the earthly realm rises like the Nile and sinks like the Nile. Thus, the divine creation is characterized by a certain ambiguity, which is also apparent in semantic and etymological aspects of the Hebrew term עיפה.[24]

As a summary, the following translation of Amos 4:13 should be suggested:

For behold:	the one who forms mountains,	who declares to mankind
	and creates wind,	its thought,
	who makes darkness out of dawn,	who treads on the earthly
		high places,
YHWH, the God of hosts, is his name.		

2.2 Philological notes on Amos 5:8–9 and 9:5–6

Due to the specific character and textual problems in Amos 5:8–9 (see below), it makes perfect sense to start with the third hymn. In general, the second and the third hymn comprise passages that were inserted into their (hymnal) contexts at

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20 So Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 130, with n. 12.
21 Or: "The Maker of dawn out of Darkness," as suggested by Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 453 (cf. Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 130, n. 11). For the same reason *DCH* VI, 367, suggests a positive semantic denotation in עיפה II: "light."
22 Cf. Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 132–37.
23 So Whitley, "Winged Disk ['yph]," 135.
24 Cf. the Akkadian terms *apû* and *epû*: "to become dim, cloudy" (*CAD* A/I: 204); see Gesenius, *Handwörterbuch*, 958; Dietrich and Arnet, *Ausgabe*, 403.

a later date.[25] A quick glance at the cola in Amos 5 and 9 reveals double readings (cf. 5:8b and 9:6b) and strong textual relationships within the wider context of the book (cf. 9:5 and 8:8). Those references and further associations, e.g., with the first hymn (cf., e.g., the refrain: יהוה שמו, and 4:13 with 5:8: see above), raise the question as to whether at least parts of the cola from all three hymns originally formed one continuous psalm.[26]

Especially the third hymn in Amos 9:5–6 provides a useful example that offers evidence for literary techniques, which were available when the texts of the hymns were inserted into the book of Amos. Several cola in this hymn reveal a strong resemblance to other passages in Amos 5:8 and beyond. What seems apparent from the beginning is that within the process of a *literary* production, the question of a "pre-Amosian" psalm is rather of secondary nature.[27]

The Hebrew text of Amos 9:5–6 reads as follows:

v. 5		ואדני יהוה הצבאות
	ואבלו כל יושבי בה	הנוגע בארץ ותמוג
	ושקעה כיאר מצרים	ועלתה כיאר כלה
v. 6	ואגדתו על ארץ יסדה	הבונה בשמים מעלותו
	וישפכם על פני הארץ	הקרא למי הים
		יהוה שמו

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25 Regarding the first hymn, only the colon ומגיד לאדם מה שחו is suspected of being a secondary (Dtr.?) insertion (cf. Jeremias, *Prophet*, 58–59; Wöhrle, *Sammlungen*, 76, 133–34). Among other scholars, Watts ("Hymn," 11–12, 24) also omits this phrase and finds in כי הנה another later addition. He inserts 4:12bβ, as an introduction, in front of the hymn. For a skeptical view on all literary stratifications within the hymns cf. Hadjiev, *Composition*, 128.

26 Cf. a corresponding view held by Watts, "Hymn," 19–23 (cf. also the summary and critical evaluation in Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 31–33, 38–39), who reconstructs a hymn existing of Amos 4:12bβ, 13*; 5:6–9*; 9:5–6 that praises the God of Israel as being the only creator in the Autumnal New Year Festival. Leaving Watts' far-reaching textual reconstructions aside, his "original" psalm presupposes the doctrine of YHWH as a monotheistic creator prior to the eighth century BCE (between Elijah and Amos). This assumption alone makes the thesis highly improbable. In a study, which exceeds that of Watts in precision and influence, Horst, "Doxologien," 46–48 (cf., again, Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 27–29, 37–38), argues for a composite poetic text that functioned as an "*exhomologese*" of the people who accepted the divine judgment, as uttered in the prophetic context. Critical statements against this reading of one psalm were brought to the fore especially from conservative scholars who tried to save these poetic fragments for the "prophetic kerygma" of Amos (see, e.g., Pfeifer, "Jahwe," 475–81). Recently, Hadjiev, *Composition*, 134–36, argues convincingly against the "Amosian" authorship of the hymnal passages.

27 Cf. the recent commentary by Eidevall, *Amos*, 148: "It is difficult, but perhaps not necessary, to decide whether these doxologies are cited from a preexisting hymn that has been split up...."

The discussion of the text and its intended message has to focus on v. 5aγ–5bβ and v. 6aα.β. The hymn starts with a theophanic motif in v. 5: The Lord, YHWH of hosts, touches the earth so that it wavers. The following colon in v. 5aγ includes a grammatical problem: In יושבי בה the plural construct is combined with a preposition and its suffix. The Hebrew parallel in Amos 8:8aβ (כל יושב בה) presents, correctly, the participle singular absolute. While the Dead Sea fragment, MurXII col. VIII 15, also preserves the singular absolute in connection with a singular verb in 9:5aγ (אבל כל יושב בה), as in 8:8, the OG version read the plural participle and omitted the preposition in 9:5aγ (καὶ πενθήσουσιν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες αὐτήν), obviously reading the Hebrew ואבלו כל יושביה.[28] By contrast, the OG in Amos 8:8 follows the Hebrew text in translating a singular verb and the preposition with suffix (καὶ πενθήσει πᾶς ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ), in accordance with 9:5aγ in MurXII (cf. also Hos 4:3: תאבל הארץ ואמלל כל יושב בה).[29] Consequently, Amos 9:5aγ, in the version of Codex Petropolitanus, attests to a misreading or miswriting. This misreading was already at hand when the OG translated the text and, correctly, omitted the preposition. Only the Dead Sea fragment preserved the correct reading, as it was taken from Amos 8:8. The following two cola in Amos 9:5b, ועלתה כיאר כלה and ושקעה כיאר מצרים, also represent duplicates of 8:8b. As in 9:5b so in 8:8b, the reader finds some typos, but they are less severe and significant. In sum, the textual evolution in Amos 8 and 9 makes it more likely that the third hymn borrowed the examined phrases from 8:8, than vice versa.[30]

When examining the philology in v. 6aα.β, two lexicological problems come into view. The first pertains to מעלותו, which is also preserved in MurXII col. VIII 15, but comes along as a (correct) plural form in 4QXII^g 69 2 and the *qere* (מעלותיו).[31] The second term that triggers discussion is the noun אגדה. The early

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28 Cf. Watts, "Hymn," 17–18, who assumes a case of haplography because of the similar endings in יושביה and בה. The text of Amos 8:8 is not preserved among the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

29 Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 387, already hinted to this fact (cf. also Paul, *Amos*, 280 n. 72).

30 By using further supporting arguments, Keil, *Commentar*, 235; Budde, "Text (Schluß)," 107; Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 255; Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 73, 134–35, and Gese, "Amos 8,4–8," 64–65, arrive at the same conclusion. Schart, *Entstehung*, 93, and Fleischer, *Buch*, 253, argue for one and the same editorial layer in Amos 8:8 and 9:5, and for a different view cf. Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 16; Watts, "Hymn," 16; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 809–10, and, recently, Eidevall, *Amos*, 220, 232, 264 n. 95.

31 Also, the OG version (singular: ἀνάβασιν αὐτοῦ), Vulg. (*ascensio*), and the Syr. (plural: *msqnwhy*) provide this reading of "his stair(s) in heaven." Cf. Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 17; *DCH* V, 404; Eidevall, *Amos*, 232. Contrary to this, many scholars omit the *mem* and translate "upper chambers": so Budde, "Text (Schluß)," 107–8; Cripps, Commentary, 161; Wolff, *Dodeka-*

translations of the term already testified to their editors' hesitancy: While the OG (ἐπαγγελία: "promise") and Syr. (*mwlkn'*: "promise, advice, property") obviously choose to deduce from the root נגד *hiphil*, the Targum refers to "troop" and, thereby, covers the broad semantics of the noun in 2 Sam 2:25.[32] The noun אֲגֻדָּה covers a semantic field that includes "bands" (Isa 58:6), "bunch" (Exod 12:22), "troops" (2 Sam 2:25: "band of men"), and "vault" (Amos 9:6).[33]

Obviously, the metaphor of ruling and pouring water on earth (Amos 9:6bα.β) also bears positive associations and finds a doubling in the second hymn (5:8bα.β): הקורא/הקרא למי הים וישפכם על פני הארץ. Consequently, also the second and the third hymn attest to the deep ambivalence of cosmic "judgment" and "salvation," as it is prominently conceptualized in the first hymn (Amos 4:13: see above: 2.1). The most attractive explanation of the duplicate identifies in 9:6bα.β an addition that was borrowed from 5:8bα.β. The reason for this becomes apparent in the contextual disconnectedness of Amos 9:6bα.β. The phrase falls back on the "rising" and "sinking" of the river Nile in 9:5b, which was already characterized as an augmentation of the third hymn (see above).[34] Lately, the superscription of the third hymn, ואדני יהוה הצבאות, has also been a matter of dispute. This introduction is integrated into a *casus pendens* construct, and also represents a later addition.[35]

As a summary, the following translation of Amos 9:5–6 should be suggested:[36]

5	*And the/my Lord, YHWH of the hosts is he,*	
	the one who touches the earth that it wavers,	*and everyone who lives in it mourns.*
	And all of it rises like the Nile,	*and sinks like the Nile in Egypt.*
6	The one who builds his stairs in heaven,	and his vault: on earth he founds it.
	The one who calls the waters of the sea	*and pours them out on the earthly surface.*
	YHWH is his name.	

propheton, 385, 387; Hammershaimb, *Book*, 134; Rudolph, *Joel*, 242; Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 72, 74; Jeremias, *Prophet*, 123.

32 Cf. Budde, "Text, (Schluß)" 108; *BHQ* 88* (Gelston).

33 Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 72, 74; *HAL* 10. Cripps, *Commentary*, 262; Hammershaimb, *Book*, 134, and Paul, *Amos*, 280 n. 77, point to the Hebrew רקיע as a synonym of אגדה in Amos 9:6. The Vulg. has *fasciculum*, and in Akkadian one finds the noun *agittû*[*m*]: "headgear, bandage (of a physician):" cf. *CAD* A/I: 151; Gesenius, *Handwörterbuch*, 11. Cf. also Amsler, *Amos*, 240.

34 Cf. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 255, 385, 387; Rudolph, *Joel*, 247.

35 Cf. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 385–86; Paul, *Amos*, 273, 280; Jeremias, *Prophet*, 122. For a different opinion cf. Story, "Amos," 76.

36 Later additions are written in italics.

The Hebrew text of Amos 5:8–9 reads as follows:

v. 8	והפך לבקר צלמות	עשה כימה וכסיל
		ויום לילה החשיך
	וישפכם על פני הארץ	הקורא למי הים
		יהוה שמו
v. 9	ושד על מבצר יבוא	המבליג שד על עז

A brief glance at Amos 5:8–9 discloses that v. 9 follows *after* the refrain (יהוה שמו) at the end of v. 8. What is more, the lexical inventory in v. 9 is quite opaque. In sum, whatever Amos 5:9 had once explained to its readers is lost; a detailed translation and understanding of these cola is a matter of guesswork. However, it is safe to say that the text includes destructions within a war-like context. While in Amos 4:13; 5:8 and 9:5–6 the God of Israel is characterized as a God of creation and the whole cosmos, in 5:9 he is a God of war. Therefore, it seems rather unlikely that v. 9 was once part of the same literary layer as Amos 4:13; 5:8 and the older cola in Amos 9:5–6 (see above).[37]

The divine creation of star constellations, Pleiades (a cluster of seven stars) and Orion, mark the start of the second hymn: עשה כימה וכסיל. The terminology is ambiguous since the Hebrew Bible refers to those nouns—כימה and כסיל—only in Amos 5:8; Job 9:9 and 38:31.[38] While the OG in Job 9:9 speaks of Πλειάς and Ἀρκτοῦρος, only Job 38:31 attests to the pair Πλειάς and Ὠρίων in the Greek text. In the late Aramaic and the Ethiopic languages, only כימא and *kemā/kimā* bear the sense of "Pleiades." The Arabic noun *kaum*[*a*] ("bunch, herd") could, nevertheless, suggest the shape of the Pleiades as a cluster of stars, and the

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37 Especially those scholars, who tried to reconstruct the "original" hymn, excluded Amos 5:9. For a critical evaluation of older contributions cf. Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 47–60. One of the most prominent exceptions, arguing that the verse should be included in the hymn, is the reconstruction (and emendation) of Hoffmann, "Versuche," 110–11, who found names of the stars (cf. 5:8aα) in v. 9 (English translation by Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 54): "Who makes the Bull (Taurus) to rise hard on (the rising of) the She-goat (Capella), and causes the Bull to set hard on (the rising of) the Vintager (Vindemiator)." Among those who followed Hoffmann are Duhm, "Anmerkungen," 9–10; Watts, "Hymn," 13–15. In earlier times, especially Budde, "Text," 111, polemicized against this suggestion: "V. 9 bietet in den astronomischen Lesarten G. Hoffmanns (…), eins der entmutigendsten Beispiele dafür, wie uns die unvokalisierte hebräische Schrift zu Narren halten kann." For a more recent critique cf. Rudolph, *Joel*, 201.

38 The references in the versions, especially in the OG version of Amos 5:8, are slightly different, cf. Albani, "Siebengestirn," 144–46.

etymology of כסיל ("cheeky, naughty") is suspected of being connected to the Greek myth and idea of "Orion."[39]

A plethora of interpretations of Amos 5:8 emphasizes a certain relationship between the astronomical colon and the waters that God called forth and poured out on the earthly surface. According to those interpreters, this relationship indicated God's omnipotence in history and nature.[40] Klaus Koch and Matthias Albani criticized this conclusion as being more "romantic" than conclusive.[41] Both of them analyze a certain mythical worldview which serves as the background in Amos 5:8.[42] If this analysis of a mythical background is conclusive, then the hymnal insertions into the book of Amos cannot be dated before the exile (sixth century BCE). More recently, Hans-Peter Müller contests Albani's conclusions. He generally disputes a connection between the creation of the stars and the cosmic actions of the divine in Amos 5:8. It is YHWH, not the "Pleiades and Orion," who "turns" (הפך) or "pours out" (שפך) water. Consequently, Müller characterizes the colon עשה כימה וכסיל as a secondary augmentation of the second hymn, being borrowed from Job 9:9.[43] Thus, the Pleiades and Orion cannot be made responsible for divine judgment or salvation. With a view to the opaque readings in the versions of Amos 5:8; Job 9:9 and 38:31, it seems more probable that the sentence עשה כימה וכסיל was borrowed from Job 38:31, the only attestation in a version of the Hebrew Bible in which the "Pleiades and Orion" are mentioned together (see above). Taking those results into account, the opening colon in Amos 5:8 should be dated in post-exilic, i.e., in Persian or early Hellenistic times. Thus, the older parts and cola of the hymns cannot be dated earlier than the Babylonian exile.

As a summary, the following translation of Am 5:8–9 should be suggested:[44]

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39 For the latter connection cf. Albani, "Siebengestirn," 166–67; Müller, "Mond," 213–14, and for the aspects of language and etymology cf. Gesenius, *Handwörterbuc*h, 542, 561.

40 Cf., e.g., Cripps, *Commentary*, 185–86; Hammershaimb, *Book*, 81; Rudolph, *Joel*, 200; Fleischer, *Buch*, 199–200. See, especially, Amsler, *Amos*, 211: "Il célèbre d'abord le Créateur (...), en polémisant contre les divinités astrales et contre le Baal cananéen, maître de la végétation et des saisons. C'est YHWH et nul autre qui est le maître des astres ; c'est lui qui renouvelle l'alternance du jour et de la nuit, et préside au cycle des eaux qui s'évaporent des mers pour retomber en pluie sur la terre (...)."

41 Cf. Koch, "Rolle," 516–25; Albani, "Siebengestirn," 144–49.

42 Cf. Albani, "Siebengestirn," 151–97, and the summary in Fleischer, *Buch*, 200.

43 Cf. Müller, "Mond," 213–14, and Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 255, 283. Müller discusses Koch, "Rolle," 516–25, and Albani, "Siebengestirn," 144–49.

44 Later additions are written in italics. Due to the textual problems in v. 9, I opt for the translation of Eidevall, *Amos*, 83, 151, because it represents a recent version of understanding this verse, which is widely accepted.

8	*The one who built the Pleiades and Orion,*	
	the one who turns darkness into morning,	and darkens the day into night.
	The one who calls the waters of the sea	and pours them out on the earthly surface.
	YHWH is his name.	
9	*It is he who flashes destruction on the stronghold,*	*so that destruction comes upon the fortified city*.

2.3 Functions of the hymns in the book of Amos

It makes good sense to start with the first hymn, because many scholars maintain that the hymnal insertion of Amos 4:13, in comparison with the two following hymns, fits well with its context in Amos 4.[45] John Watts studied the hymn in close connection with the second part of v. 12: "Therefore, thus I will do to you, Israel. Because I will do this to you, get prepared to meet your God, Israel!"[46] More recently, Göran Eidevall calls Amos 4:12 "a bridge between the preceding catalogue of catastrophes (vv. 6–11) and the doxology in v. 13."[47] Amos 4:6–11 recalls a sequence of chastisements: famine (v. 6), drought (v. 7–8), blight and mildew (v. 9), locusts (v. 9), pestilence, battle (v. 10) and the divine overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 11), interrupted by the refrain "and you did not return to me, says YHWH." The "*catalogus calamitatum*" points out that every plague failed to bring Israel to repentance. If Israel is unable to choose the divine proximity, then God will approach Israel, as it is stated in Amos 4:12. But, the text is characterized by "its indefinite and unspecified nature."[48] Yet, the mode or habit included in the imperative הכון לקראת אלהיך strikes at the core of the matter, but in reverse order by addressing humankind. In poetry or prayers, humankind

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45 Wolff, *Dodekapropheton*, 135–37, 257, very prominently argued for a redaction-critical layer in the hymns from the time of Josiah in the last third of the seventh century BCE by pointing to the criticism of the cult at Bethel, especially in Amos 4:4–5 (with 4:13; for a moderate critique cf. Jeremias, *Prophet*, 58).
46 Cf. Watts, "Hymn," 10–11. More recently, also Schart, *Entstehung*, 73–74, among other scholars, emphasized the connection between 4:12 and 13 (see also Wöhrle, *Sammlungen*, 73–76).
47 So Eidevall, *Amos*, 148.
48 So Paul, *Amos*, 149, albeit Paul's commentary pleads for an "Amosian" provenance of the discussed passages in Amos 4. Some scholars mention a *rîb*-pattern in Amos 4 (cf. Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 121–23) and also suggest a plural reading of אלהי in Amos 4:12: cf. Ramsey, "Amos 4:12," 188–91; Youngblood, "To Call [lqr't]," 98. Paul, *Amos*, 152 n. 119, criticizes the plural reading of אלהיך as hardly convincing.

addresses God. In v. 12 the content of the encounter with God remains ambiguous. The same holds true for the first hymn, which implies doom *and* salvation (see above: 2.1). But, in contrast to v. 12, v. 13, as a hymn, provides the expected direction, from humankind towards the divine. Finally, the direction changes again from humankind addressing God to the prophet—or the prophetic message—addressing, not "Israel," but humankind as a whole.

The third hymn in Amos 9:5–6 results, at first glance, in a different mood: harshly uttered hopelessness. This becomes obvious when the earlier parts of the hymn (see above: 2.2) are read in combination with the second part of the previous verse (Amos 9:4b): "I will set my eyes upon them for evil and not for good." Here, God's ambition to reveal himself in a theophany (cf. Ps 104:32; 144:5; 46:7; Nah 1:5) is connected with YHWH's declaration to let the people of Israel encounter evil and harm. Furthermore, the motifs also refer to themes and topics from the fifth vision, which was added later.[49] However, the third hymn also addresses the following passages in 9:7–10 and vv. 11–15, because two central aspects reoccur in these texts: the universal power of YHWH, which also embraces his responsibility for the nations (v. 7), and a mundane differentiation between the sinful and the righteous "kingdoms" (v. 8; cf. 9:6aβ). The latter responsibility will lead to an eschatological rebuilding of David's booth, i.e., Judah. In other words, a turn from judgment to salvation, beginning with the fifth vision and finishing with the oracle of David's fallen booth (vv. 11–15), presupposes a shift in the perspective on God, from the altar of the temple (9:1) to the most distant nations (v.7).[50] The transformation of the older parts of the third hymn into prophecy works as a kind of catalyst for a more universalistic and eschatological perspective on "Israel."[51]

The function of the second hymn further fosters the universalistic and eschatological tendencies. First of all, the chiastic literary structure of Amos 5:1–17 is interesting, because the hymn, especially יהוה שמו at the end of v. 8, is situated in the center of this structure.[52] Therefore, the hymn can be closely

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49 Cf. the "touching of the earth" in 9:5aβ with the "striking of the capitals" in 9:1aβ or God's heavenly and earthly power in 9:5b with v. 1b–4a (see especially v. 2 and 3, and Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 134–35). For the fifth vision (Amos 9:1–4) as an addition in the context of Amos 7–9 cf. Waschke, "Visionen," 434–45.

50 Cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 235–36.

51 In the wake of these universalistic and eschatological tendencies, the additions of Amos 9:5–6 augmented the older text by referring to (the rising and sinking waters of) the river Nile and Egypt, the waters of the deluge, and the inhabitants of the earth.

52 Cf. de Waard, "Structure," 170–77; de Waard and Smalley, *Handbook*, 189–94, and the most recent reception of this approach by Eidevall, *Amos*, 10–11, 83–84, 152–53, who calls Amos 5:1–

related to the immediate context, the lament (vv. 1–3, 16–17), the exhortations (vv. 4–6, 14–15) and the critique on injustice (vv. 7, 10–12). The verses that frame the hymn (vv. 7, 10) are of particular interest. In Amos 5:7 justice is turned (הפך) into wormwood, and righteousness is cast down to earth (cf. 6:12), while v. 10 refers to the persons or functionaries who were in charge of establishing justice and righteousness in the mundane world. They are hated and their word is detested.[53] The connective key word is הפך (5:7a, 8aβ.γ). Its sense includes a radical, and sometimes violent, aspect of "turning": more precisely, "upheaval."[54] As the older parts of the hymn in 5:8 reflect on the "upheaval" with a view to the "morning," the "deadly shadow," "day" and "night," so, in the immediate context, the turning of "justice" and "righteousness" has been brought to a cosmic level. Thus, the transformation in the second hymn effectively mirrors the criticized social order in a cosmic order that pertains to a radical change (הפך)—an "apocalyptic structure."[55]

Finally, the astronomical addition with reference to Pleiades and Orion also belongs to this apocalyptic scenery. In 1 En. 18:12–14; 21:1–5, Enoch, on his cosmic journey, sees seven stars in prison, bound and cast in a terrible place, the netherworld. They strayed from their path and transgressed the command of God. It makes very good sense to associate the "seven stars" with the Pleiades.[56]

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17 a "concentric centerpiece." Paul, *Amos*, 158–59, argues for a different structure: He finds in vv. 7, 10–12, 13 the center of a chiastic structure: vv. 1–3 (a), 4–6 (b) 7, 10–12, 13 (c) 14–15 (b'), 16–17 (a'), excluding the hymn and also reconstructing a chiasm in vv. 7, 10–12, 13.

53 The relationship between vv. 7 and 10 is a matter of dispute. While some scholars deny a connection (cf., e.g., Crenshaw, *Affirmation*, 129), others emphasize their connecting links (cf. Eidevall, *Amos*, 159).

54 It should be connected etymologically with the Akkadian *abāku* B ("to turn upside down, uproot": cf. *CAD* A/I: 8–10). The Hebrew root הפך in the book of Amos (cf. Amos 4:11; 6:12; see also 8:10) is also connected with the divine upheaval in Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen 19:21, 25, 29: cf. Seybold, "הָפַךְ *hāpak*," 458).

55 A closer look at this "change," "turn" or "upheaval" shows that the motif points to a prominent "structure" within later ancient Jewish apocalypticism. Cf. Koch, "Rolle," 537; Foresti, "Funzione," 183–84; Beyerle, "Apokalyptik," 232–46. For a critical evaluation of apocalyptic thinking cf. Mathys, *Dichter*, 109–10.

56 Cf. Albani, "Siebengestirn," 168, 178.

3 Conclusions

After a critical examination of scholarly approaches towards poetry, this study explores the connecting lines between poetry and prophecy. Beyond James Kugel's rejection of all Hebrew poetry in general, Robert Alter's more moderate distinction between a poetic addressing of the audience and a prosaic dialogue between the prophet and God may serve as a hermeneutical model for further interpretations of poetic prophecy. Alter's distinction may be enhanced by adding Moshe Greenberg's insight that, prayers formed literary artifacts. If one looks at Hebrew prophecy as a *literary* product, the question arises as to how and how far prayers had undergone literary transformations when they were integrated into prophetic contexts (Alexa Wilke).

The philological analysis emphasizes the ambiguous habit found in the hymns. It pertains to an ambiguity that sharply confronts creation with the annihilation of creation (cf. especially Amos 4:13). In addition, the third hymn (9:5–6) attests to this ambiguity, although it contains passages originating from the second hymn and the wider context within the book of Amos (Am 8:8). At the opening of the second hymn, an astronomical reference is added, obviously borrowed from Job 38:31, and reflects a late post-exilic setting. The older parts of the hymns derive from exilic or early post-exilic times.[57]

When it comes to the question of how the poetic hymns became part of the prophetic message, different strategies are visible in each of the three hymns. In Amos 4:13 the transformation pertains to the role of God, who is invoked as an object when the text is prayed as an isolated hymn. The close connection to v. 12 shows that the immediate context of the hymn already points to a different role of God: as an active subject who addresses the audience—but not simply for good. Only if Amos 4:13 is read within its prophetic context does the subject, God, invoke the object, the audience. The difference between Amos 4:12 and v. 13 is that while v. 12 concludes the pursuit of plagues and addresses "Israel," the hymn refers to a concept of divine creation that invokes mankind (אדם).

Finally, the third (Amos 9:5–6) and second hymns (Am 5:8) further elaborate the universalistic tendencies and add an eschatological or "apocalyptic" aspect. In chapter 9 of the book of Amos, vv. 5–6 are part of a literary progress that starts on an altar of a temple and ends up in an eschatological hope that

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57 Cf. the language of creation as attested in Amos 4:13. It includes a combination of verbal expression that is attested only in texts from Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Foresti, "Funzione," 176, and Isa 43:7; 45:7, 18).

David's booth will be rebuilt. Within this scenery—from the Israelite temple (cf. 9:1) to the most distant nations (cf. v. 7), from the divine view on "Israel" for evil and not for good (v. 4b) to eschatological hope (vv. 11–15)—the older parts of the third hymn, their transformation from poetry as prayer to prophecy, function as a catalyst. In the second hymn, the transformation mirrors the criticized social order in a cosmic order that pertains to a radical change, as indicated by the Hebrew root הפך. The motif of "upheaval" pertains to a "structure" that paves the way for apocalyptic thinking.

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