

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE BOOK OF AMOS: A MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD'S PEDAGOGY

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### **Abstract**

This article looks at the influential role played by the Lord's pedagogy in the area of conflict resolution in the book of Amos. The Book is often perceived as a book of doom consisting of a litany of condemnations and a catalogue of punishments. However, it is much more than that and of considerable interest throughout are the communicative elements. In all of the dangerous and gloomy conflict situations portrayed in the book, the most striking aspect is the sheer persistence on the part of the Lord in his efforts to bring the people back into friendship with himself. When Judah and Israel intentionally rejected the *Torah*, they created a rift between themselves and the Lord. Nevertheless, the utterances of the Lord which constitute effective pedagogic tools are designed to invite the wicked to repent and to educate them in the ways of justice, peace and harmony. The Lord's pedagogy taken in the context of conflict resolution with its many subtle lessons and instructions is remarkable in that it affords the people many opportunities to avoid the divine wrath. It is quite evident that there is tremendous progression in regard to communication in the Book, a progression reflected in the actions of the Lord, who goes from being the one who roars in anger to the one who blesses.

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**Keywords:** Amos; Conflict Resolution; Peace and Harmony; Pedagogic Tools; Reversals of Fortune; Social Justice Policies

## 1. Introduction

The Book of Amos is not only a list of divine judgments, accusations, conflicts, punishments and destruction as is generally acknowledged, but further to that, of considerable interest throughout are the promising communicative elements in the Book where the utterances of the Lord constitute a manifesto of social justice policies that aim to create peace and harmony in society. The varied way in which the communiqué is presented in the book is worthy of note. For example, the image of the Lord portrayed in the beginning, was of one with a roaring voice (1:2), who then goes on to deliver a great number of divine warnings and who swears multiple oaths. However, by the conclusion, the tone of anger and disappointment has been replaced by one of assurance and a promise of restoration (9:11–15). Likewise, a dynamic tension can be detected in the pronouncements of the prophet Amos. On the one hand, he announces the divine judgments as being inexorable and unavoidable, but on the other hand, he exhorts (5:6, 14), intercedes (7:2, 5) and hopes that perhaps the Lord will be gracious and show his favour (5:14, 15). While the prophet is at pains to remind the people that the Lord completely rejects their sacrifices (4:5, 5:21–23), and predicts banishment (4:3, 5:27, 6:7, 7:11, 17), he also beautifully conveys the sense of the deep relationship that exists between the Lord and his people (2:10, 3:1) and reveals that the intention of divine punishments is not to penalize the people for their sins, but to save them. The effectiveness of the Lord's pedagogy is wonderfully illustrated by the manner in which he adopts these contradictory attitudes and approaches to resolve conflicts when the need arises.

Therefore, in this present article my aim is to demonstrate how the Lord's pedagogy is ultimately achieving conflict resolution in the Book.<sup>1</sup> It asks how the Lord, the principal agent and key-figure in the prophecies, engages with his people and instructs them in the ways of justice, peace and harmony. Placing the emphasis on the Lord's reproofs I will elucidate what the Lord communicates to Judah and Israel in the form of lessons and guidance and how the relationship develops through these engagements.

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<sup>1</sup>This article looks specifically at the role of the Lord as pedagogue in the context of conflict resolution. For an analysis of a number of related roles adopted by the Lord, see, Bincy Thomas Thumpanathu, *Communication and the Role of the Lord in Amos: Their Development and Their Implications for the Text-Immanent Reader*, Utrecht: Eburon, 2019.

## 2. A Defiant People: The Lord Intervenes

At the time when Amos was called to prophesy, Israel was enjoying its most successful period in terms of economic growth, trade was booming and the currency was performing well. Huge edifices were being built. However, a small but powerful elite controlled all the wealth, as a result of which, the downtrodden poor continued to grow in number while opulence and comforts were reserved for the few, for a large proportion of the population day to day living was an ongoing struggle. Ethical depravity characterized this longing of the rich for an abundance of material possessions. Thus the initial communication from the Lord is far from pleasant: *גַּם יְשׁוּעָה מִצִּיּוֹן וְיְשׁוּעָה מִיְרוּשָׁלַם וְתִהְיֶה קוֹל יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן וְיִשְׁאַג* (*the Lord roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice, 1:2a-c*). This surprising introduction to the Lord at the beginning of the Book continues with a very depressing portrayal of Israel saying that the pastures of the shepherds mourn (*הָרְעִים וְאֶבְלִי*) and the top of Carmel withers (*וְיִבֶשׂ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל*).<sup>2</sup> In any event, the situation foretold in the opening is unsettling. The roaring, the angry tone, the loud crying and the drying up all point to the friction that exists between the Lord and his people and are harbingers of impending punishments.

### 2.1. Lawlessness and Unbridled Violence: Warnings Issued

The Lord's engagement with the people begins with his pronouncement against Damascus for their sins (1:3),<sup>3</sup> and continues with the prophecies against Gaza (1:6), Tyre (1:9), Edom (1:11),<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See S.D. (Fanie) Snyman, "Eretz and Adama in Amos," in *Stimulation from Leiden: Collected Communications to the XVIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leiden 2004*, ed. Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums* 54, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006, 140.

<sup>3</sup>Damascus is charged with the threshing of Gilead with iron threshing machines. The term *threshing* (*דִּישׁ*) can be understood as the beating out of grain from the crops or in a broader sense the treading on men or peoples. See William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1988, 69. Also the metaphoric usage *threshing with iron sledge* (*בְּהַרְצוֹת הַבְּרִזָּה*) describing the severe barbarity that occurs during hostilities, holds comparison, 2 Kgs 13:7, Isa 41:15, Mic 4:13, Hab 3:12. See Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Shalom M. Paul, Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991, 47.

<sup>4</sup>That Edom took the sword to his brother, losing all compassion but maintaining his rage at all times is indicative of the deep sense of animosity that prevailed and of the break down in interpersonal relationships. See David J. Reimer, "Interpersonal Forgiveness and the Hebrew Prophets," in *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, New York; London: T&T Clark, 2010, 91; Bradford A. Anderson, *Brotherhood and Inheritance: A Canonical*

Ammon (1:13)<sup>5</sup> and Moab (2:1).<sup>6</sup> The divine decision announced at the beginning of each and every prophecy *לֹא אֲשִׁיבָנָהּ* (*I will not revoke it*) is unequivocal, in that no word of comfort or promise is heard. All nations are held to account for their offenses in various ways.

The tension between the Lord and the people does not end here and Amos continues to explore the reasons behind the conflict between the Lord and Judah. The claims made against Judah, particulars of its transgressions, the Lord's rage as is clear from his decision not to set aside the punishments, and finally the formal announcement of the list of chastisements, together paint a disturbing picture (2:4). Unlike Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, the first six nations in the list of the so-called prophecies against the nations, Judah is accused not for carrying out cruel acts against others, but because they deliberately damaged their relationship with the Lord.<sup>7</sup> It is expressly stated in 2:4c that Judah had rejected *תורת יהוה* (*the teaching of the LORD*),<sup>8</sup> and had not kept the precepts of God (*וְהִקְיִי לֹא שָׁמְרוּ*).<sup>9</sup> As the chosen people, Judah had extra responsibility for

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*Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions*, LHBOTS 556, New York: T&T Clark, 2011, 200–201.

<sup>5</sup>The reason for bringing charges against the Ammonites is the deplorable crimes they committed against the expectant mothers of Gilead. Smith-Christopher who closely analyses this outrageous act perpetrated against women says that it is nothing short of callous intimidation and Yahweh will not forgive this assault on human life and this kind of slaughter of a nation. See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Engendered Warfare and the Ammonites in Amos 1.13," in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Andrew Mein, LHBOTS 536, New York: T&T Clark, 2011, 19–20.

<sup>6</sup>The Lord indicted Moab for incinerating the bones of the King of Edom. Taking examples from ancient Near Eastern contexts, Paul A. Kruger makes known the gravity of the offense of incinerating bones in Amos 2:1. In his opinion this is a crime against humanity, the most evil form of abuse because it erases all memory of the deceased. See Paul A. Kruger, "Burning the Bones of the Dead as a War Atrocity: A Note on Amos 2:1," *Journal of Semitics* 26 (2017) 86–100. See also Shaul Bar, "Burning the Bones of the Dead," *Irish Biblical Studies* 30 (2012): 1–10; Saul M. Olyan, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible*, *Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements* 4, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, 216.

<sup>7</sup>Only Judah is censured because of its outright opposition to the Lord's commands; sentence is passed on the other nations on the basis of external relations. See John Haralson Hayes, *The Oracles against the Nations in the Old Testament: Their Usage and Theological Importance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, 180.

<sup>8</sup>Judah's relationship with the Lord is put in peril when it rejects his authority. See Archibald L.H.M. van Wieringen, "The Prophecies against the Nations in Amos 1:2–3:15," *Estudios Bíblicos* LXXI (2013) 13.

<sup>9</sup>Wöhrle notes that the words (*שמר, תורה, חקה, אב*) used to command attention appear in Amos 2:4 and 2 Kgs 17:13, however, they are not to be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. See Jakob Wöhrle, "'No Future for the Proud Exultant Ones': The

defending the divine Torah, but by intentionally disregarding תורה they created a rift between themselves and the Lord.

Likewise, Israel also rejected the instructions of the Lord. They traded the virtuous for pieces of silver and the very poor for footwear, highlighting the level of injustice that prevailed at that time.<sup>10</sup> Gaining from the mistreatment of the poor who do not have the means to repay what they owe is a heartless act.<sup>11</sup> Valuing the underprivileged at the price of a pair of sandals is even more despicable. This shows how they disparaged those in want. Repeatedly, the lack of respect and the contempt shown, for those struggling to survive, is to be seen.<sup>12</sup> Adding to the seriousness of their sins is the fact that any benefit accruing from their engagement in these callous acts was purely for their own gratification (2:8b). It is obvious that their actions are inconsistent with the message of the Torah.<sup>13</sup>

For this reason, the Lord speaks directly to the people, imploring them to change their ways, but his words for the most part are disregarded. The character Amaziah who is not untypical of the insubordinate Israelites refused to allow Amos prophesy in Bethel (7:13a–b) despite his divine appointment: לֵךְ הַנְּבִיאָה אֶל-עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל (go, prophesy to my people Israel, 7:15c–d). The implication here is that he rebuffed not only the words of Amos, the prophet, but those of the Lord himself. The order not to prophesy is an indicator that Israel remained implacably opposed to the prophetic call of Amos. The deeds of Amaziah; his obedience to the King rather than to the Lord

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Exilic Book of the Four Prophets (Hos., Am., Mic., Zeph.) as a Concept Opposed to the Deuteronomistic History," *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008) 615.

<sup>10</sup>Duane A. Garrett, *Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, Baylor Hand Book on the Hebrew Bible, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008, 56–57, stands up for the virtuous for their innocence declaring: 'he does not deserve this.' The upright are violated by being sold as slaves for silver as compensation for outstanding debts and also when they are compelled by the courts to make corrupt payments.

<sup>11</sup>Avi Shveka, "'For a Pair of Shoes': A New Light on an Obscure Verse in Amos' Prophecy," *Vetus Testamentum* 62 (2012) 96.

<sup>12</sup> See Graham R. Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous: A Redaction-Critical Investigation of Reasons for Judgement in Amos 2:6–16*, LHBOTS 555, New York: T&T Clark, 2012, 212, who indicates that this charge relates to an illicit act, and eating sumptuously while disregarding the under privileged whose clothes they have taken and for whom no compassion is shown.

<sup>13</sup>Archibald L.H.M. van Wieringen, "The Triple-Layered Communication in the Book of Amos and Its Message of Non-Appropriation Theology," in Koet and van Wieringen, *Multiple Teachers in Biblical Texts*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 88, Leuven: Peeters, 2017, 94, remarks that the elite of the Northern Kingdom oppose the Torah, which seeks assistance and liberty for the needy by citing Lev 25:39.

and his willingness to serve the royal house, in contrast to his wilful neglect of the laws of the house of God, lead to disaster. This should act as a timely warning for anyone who is seriously considering becoming involved in actions that are repugnant to the precepts of the Lord.

## 2.2. Widespread Corruption: Justice Denied

Injustice is at the heart of all of Israel's evil practices. They show utter contempt for justice as to do otherwise would loosen their grip on power and would be detrimental to their cozy existence and so suppressing the people through tyranny is the preferred option, a theme to found throughout the book. Surrounded by opulence, they practice indulgence to excess, with greed, laziness and heavy drinking being routine. Worst of all, there is a total lack of concern for the fall of Joseph (6:6c). Even allowing for their resistance and unwillingness to return, it is clear from his exhortation in 5:4a-b, *seek me and live* that the Lord does not wish to forsake them. However, the people did not abandon their ill-advised ways, loathing anyone advocating fairness and integrity (5:10a-d) and continuing to oppress the down-trodden (5:11b-c). Thus, the Lord angrily states, *I knew your transgressions were many and your sins were numerous* (5:12a-c). Though no exact punishment is announced, this statement by the Lord is a grave warning to those engaged in wicked behaviour that they should promptly desist and should remember that the Lord knows all that is happening. The heightened tension between the Lord and his people is seen once again in 5:19, where the encounter with three animals (a lion, a bear and a snake)<sup>14</sup> serves to intensify the sense of terror accompanying the unforeseen and shocking disasters to come on the day of the Lord. The episode in 5:19, which shows the irony of someone successfully avoiding the jaws of a lion only to be met by an equally fearsome bear, and then, having eluded danger a second time, enters his house, where he believes he will be out of danger, receive a snake bite, makes it abundantly clear that all endeavours to reach safety will ultimately fail.<sup>15</sup> In short, all hope is gone, leaving only grief.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>In Genesis man had been given authority over all living creature (Gen 1:28), however, in Amos 5:19 he fails to exercise this authority. Nahkola suggests that an increase in the sense of terror is the purpose of the dangerous encounter with these three animals. See Aulikki Nahkola, "Amos Animalizing: Lion, Bear and Snake in Amos 5.19," in Hagedorn and Mein, *Aspects of Amos*, 103-104.

<sup>15</sup>Åke Viberg, "Amos 7:14: A Case of Subtle Irony," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, 1 (1996) 110, depicts the striking irony scene in 5:19 as a man succeeds in escaping from a lion, a notable feat in itself, only to be faced with a bear! Remarkably he manages to

### 3. The Lord as Pedagogue and Conflict Resolution

In all of the dangerous and gloomy conflict situations portrayed in the book, the most striking aspect is the sheer persistence on the part of the Lord in his efforts to instruct the people and to bring them back into friendship with himself. Below I will explore the role of the Lord's pedagogy in the context of conflict resolution with its many subtle lessons and instructions, specifically designed to encourage the people to avail of the many opportunities being afforded them to avoid the divine wrath. To impart his message the Lord adopts an approach that involves employing a combination of threats, persuasion and reversals.

#### 3.1. Divine Threats and Persuasion: Effective Pedagogic Tools

Many times, it appears that, in regard to the recurrent cautions given to the people, there is a blurring of the lines between what is excessive and what is not when it comes to the Lord showing compassion. However, at conclusion the text-immanent reader realises that these cautionary utterances are, in truth, both redemptive and instructive. Undoubtedly a whole gamut of emotions characterized the relationship between the Lord and Israel. As a result of Israel's repeated transgressions, the relationship is damaged and communication between the Lord and his people is fraught with tension.

The punitive actions of the Lord, as outlined in 4:6a-11a, confirm that the people of Israel rejected every chance afforded them to eschew evil. The recurring utterance, וְלֹא־שָׁבְתֶם עָדַי (*yet you did not return to me*, 4:6c, 8d, 9c, 10d, 11e) leaves little room for argument regarding the obduracy of the people and their restiveness to being reconciled with the Lord. By imposing penalties on them, the Lord was in fact endeavouring to get them to return to him. However, with hardened hearts, the people of Israel refused to change their ways, continuing to take advantage of the oppressed and the poor, and spurning every opportunity given them to follow the Lord's commands.

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get away from the bear also, arrives home and lays his hand against the wall, only to be confronted by a snake. The lesson is clear, despite his best efforts, safety was beyond him.

<sup>16</sup>James D. Nogalski, "The Day(s) of Yahweh in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 325, Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 2003, 204, remarks that on that fateful day there will not be the remotest possibility of avoiding danger.

In 5:4a–b the Lord is seen as one who exhorts: *seek me and live* (דַּרְשׁוּנִי וְחִי). Certainly, in contrast to the earlier dreadful warnings, this is an encouraging change of tone. The counsel דַּרְשׁוּנִי should be read in conjunction with the recurring statement of the Lord, וְלֹא-יָדִי שְׂבַתְּם in 4:6a–11f. The combination of the two gives a firm indication of the Lord’s desire that Israel would make amends for past failures.

On account of the people’s failure to abandon their foolish ways, the Lord announces that catastrophes (5:3b–f), loud weeping (5:16b–17a), exile (5:27a, 6:7b, 8e), total destruction (6:11a–12d) and incursions (6:14a–f) are to be the lot of the house of Israel. Importantly, one of the punishments declared is that of famine in 8:11c–f. Here famine does not refer to a shortage of bread and water, but instead to a desire to hear the word of the Lord. Its very absence is a clear sign that communication between the Lord and the people of Israel has come to an end. This rupturing of their relationship causes unimaginable distress among the people.

For all that acceding to the intercessions of the prophet, the Lord twice reverses his decision to inflict punishment on his people. The words of the Lord לֹא תִהְיֶה (it shall not be) in 7:3b and גַּם-הִיא לֹא תִהְיֶה (it also shall not be) in 7:6b, bear witness to this. Although the text provides no evidence of repentance on the part of the sons of Israel, confirmation that the Lord has relented and has decided against punishing them can be found in the notable expression וְגַם יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ אֶת. Not only is this a sign of the Lord’s affection for the people, but it also serves to relieve the strain in their relationship.

Creating the expectation that the booth of David<sup>17</sup> would be renewed marks a significant departure from the sustained issuing of dire warnings. The language used in 9:11 points to a new beginning: אֶקִּים (I will raise up) in 9:11a and 11c, וְגִדַּרְתִּי (I will repair) in 9:11b, וּבְנִיתִיהָ (and I will rebuild) in 9:11d. The Lord promises that Israel would be re-established in all its former magnificence<sup>18</sup> and that its prospectus would indeed be bright. This is a declaration of hope for the fallen

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<sup>17</sup>See Alessandro Coniglio, “‘The Tabernacle of David That is Fallen’ (Amos 9:11): An Exegetical Study of a Moot Expression,” *Liber Annuus* 63 (2013) 137–56, where, the singular phrase סֶבֶת דָּוִד in 9:11 is scrutinized. Following a lexical examination of סֶבֶת דָּוִד, there is an exchange of views on the construction terms as they are found in Amos.

<sup>18</sup>Gerald A. Klingbeil and Martin G. Klingbeil, “The Prophetic Voice of Amos as a Paradigm for Christians in the Public Square,” *Tyndale Bulletin* (2007) 179, who suggest the phrase booth of David is used to exemplify the celebrated and unmatched period of David’s rule, which serves as a paragon for restoration.



house of Israel. The people will once again prosper and enjoy a rich harvest and copious amounts of grapes and sweet wine instead of the famine and drought prophesied.<sup>19</sup> The terms *וְהָטִיפוּ הַהָרִים עֲסִיס* (*and the mountains will drop sweet wine*), *וְנָטְעוּ כְרָמִים* (*they will plant vineyards*), *וְשָׁתוּ אֶת־יַיִנָּם* (*and they will drink their wine*), *וְעָשׂוּ גִבּוֹת* (*they will also make gardens*), and *וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיָהֶם* (*and eat their fruit*) in 9:13c-14g confirm that prosperity and contentment awaits them.<sup>20</sup> In place of the exile foretold, they will gain occupancy of the remaining fragment of Edom and of all the nations (9:12a). It is noteworthy that the promise to end captivity marks the high point of all the blessings and that it is the Lord himself who delivers the captives back to their homeland (9:14a, 15a).

Of great significance in terms of the communication in the Book is the fact that the divine exhortations were intended to be beneficial rather than penal. It is entirely valid that the Lord should end his relationship with the people on account of their evil doings. However, his fondness for them never wanes, something confirmed by the remarkable transformation in his disposition. From proclaiming and dispersing punishments, he turns his attention to bringing the people out of captivity and to restoring Israel to where it can once more experience the glory days of old. Ultimately, the Lord's passionate love for Israel prevails and is so strong that all past sins are pardoned. In this way, the Lord, whose concern for the welfare of his people is unceasing, is seen as a kind of wise and compassionate adviser.

### 3.2. The Power of the Lord's Pedagogy: Reversals of Fortune

The communicative setting in the Book is greatly enhanced with the addition of a series of reversals. As the analysis reveals, this literary device functions effectively as a method of imparting the messages of the Lord.

At first, neither Israel nor Judah are the slightest bit alarmed by the prophecies against the foreign nations. In fact, they may well have

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<sup>19</sup>Marlow makes special mentions of the fact that the final verses (9:13) are a reversal of the opening verses (1:2). See Hilary Marlow, "The Other Prophet! The Voice of Earth in the Book of Amos," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter L. Trudinger, *Symposium Series 46*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2008, 78, 82.

<sup>20</sup>James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve and Beyond: Collected Essays of James D. Nogalski, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 29*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017, 185-86, remarks that the recovery is confirmation of the restoration of the relationship with the Lord (cf. also Hos 2:14; Joel 2:12-27; 4:19; Amos 9:13-14; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi).

concluded that those nations merited such punishments.<sup>21</sup> However, they were shocked to discover that they themselves would not be exempt from these chastisements.<sup>22</sup> The penalties imposed on the foreign nations would be minor compared to what Israel and Judah faced. Coming to the realisation that their sins were just as wicked as any others, they were well and truly disabused of any thoughts they may have had of being superior to others or of receiving an exemption from punishments.

It is ironic that the references to the פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן (*cows of Bashan*) in 4:1 are intended to mock the hearers. Successive scenes suggest being lifted by בְּצִנּוֹת (*hooks*) and by בְּסִירוֹת דִּגְנָה (*fish-hooks*) and being carried away. The allusion to hooks and fish-hooks bring to mind distressing images of prisoners being cruelly hoisted, incapable of freeing themselves despite their best efforts to do so.<sup>23</sup> Hooks are used to take cows from place to place and thus alluding to the ‘cows of Bashan,’ being lifted by hooks out of their comfy environment and being brought through the breaches, is appropriate. Interestingly it is the פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן for so long the oppressors of the poor (דְּלִים) and the needy (אֶבְיוֹנִים) and who must now suffer a similar fate themselves. These contrasting scenes serve to demonstrate the range and power of the communication.

5:16b–17b foretells lamentation. The Lord announces that wailing would be heard everywhere (5:16b), with the sorrowful cry ‘alas’, ‘alas’ filling every street (5:16c–d). Tears would flow in the normally productive vineyards, which are destined to become places of mourning (5:17a). That the Lord himself is personally instrumental in bringing on this lamentation is revealed in the כִּי-clause 5:17b, כִּי אֶעֱבֹר בְּקִרְבְּךָ (*for I pass through your midst*). Instead of the beauty, joy

<sup>21</sup>John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003, 79, as they believe that there is a link between violations of the divine law and sentences passed down, this leaves them in a difficult situation from which it is not easy to extract themselves.

<sup>22</sup>James R. Linville, “What Does ‘It’ Mean? Interpretation at the Point of No Return in Amos 1–2,” *Biblical Interpretation* 8 (2000): 408, who suggests that the teeth referred to in the prophecies declared against the nations are in fact prophetic utterances against Judah and Israel.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. 2 Kgs 19:28; 2 Chr 33:11; Jer 16:16; Ezek 29:4; Hab 1:15, where captives were drawn by hooks attached to the nose, by their conquerors. Van Wieringen examines the employment of the terms hooks and fish-hooks in the context of the cow images. After being killed cows are suspended from hooks. Also cows are transported from one location to another using hook, this being an allusion to exile. See Archibald van Wieringen, “Feminized Men in Amos 4:1–3,” in *The Books of the Twelve Prophets: Minor Prophets, Major Theologies*, ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 295, Leuven: Peeters, 2018, 406–407.

and blessedness normally associated with a visit from the Lord, there would be much shedding of tears. This in itself makes for a remarkable piece of communication. The description of the *יום יהוה* (*day of the LORD*) given by the prophet differs entirely from that envisaged by the people. In 5:18d-e *יום יהוה* is described as a day of intense darkness (*חֹשֶׁךְ*). The day of the Lord will turn out to be a day filled with gloom and dread and not the much anticipated joyful one. The message is that it is total foolishness to expect great rewards on the day of the Lord despite not having made reparation for one's sins.

The account of the altercation involving Amos-Amaziah (7:10-17), contains notes of sarcasm and allusions to reversals of fortune. The high point is reached when Amaziah himself, who did his utmost to defeat Amos' efforts to complete his mission in Israel, is now faced with punishment, a spectacular fall for the one who considered himself to be irreproachable (7:17). The character Amaziah expected to be hailed by the king for exposing the alleged plot against Israel, but instead complete humiliation at the hands of the one true King, the Lord, is his lot.

Of note also are the changes brought about in the communication strategies, especially in regard to the prophet, the pronouncer of divine punishments, who at a certain juncture, becomes an intercessor. Realising what was about to befall Israel, Amos twice successfully mediates on its behalf (*אֲדַבֵּר יְהוָה סְלַח-נָא*, *Lord GOD, forgive now, please* in 7:2 and *אֲדַבֵּר יְהוָה חֲדַל-נָא*, *Lord GOD, cease, please* in 7:5). On each occasion, the Lord relents (*לֹא תִהְיֶה*, *it will not happen* in 7:3 and again in 7:6). However, this was not to last and he soon resumed the role of pronouncer of judgements. Similarly, the Lord, who roars angrily, warns of and inflicts punishments, in the end imparts blessings on his people. These reversals show the Lord to be a merciful instructor clement enough to pardon them. At the close, feelings of gladness and hope replace those of apprehension and despondency.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the roles adopted by the Lord in the book of Amos are many and varied, most notably the influential role played by the Lord in the area of conflict resolution. He is variously, one who passes judgments, publicly announces and disperses punishments, denounces and reprimands wrongdoers and acts as peacemaker and guardian. The essential message communicated in each case relates to the importance of remaining

resolutely loyal to the Lord and his commandments, with various pedagogic methods being used in the Book to ensure that it is successfully delivered. In the course of the analysis, of the broad discourse structures, numerous examples of persuasive rhetoric were found. Examples appear in the form of the divine swearing of oaths, predictions of wailing and grief, ridicule and taunts and speech that is characterised by multiple changes of mood and that presages a range of mournful scenes as well as ones that are joyous in the extreme. Taken together they form an intricate system of communication, leading to a better appreciation of their import, with one becoming actively conscious of any friction that exists. The portrayal of the Lord as a competent pedagogue and peace maker is greatly helped, specifically the successful use of rhetoric. It is quite clear that there is substantial development in terms of communication in the Book. This development is seen in the actions of the Lord, who, from being the one who roars in anger, becomes the one who blesses. The teaching method changes as the situation demands. The Book is not just an inventory of punishments as it might appear on first reading, rather, the judgments and chastisements are in truth oratorical devices designed to encourage the people to be contrite.