

The 'Other' as Brother: The Centrality of the Fraternity Motif in Amos 1,9-12

ABSTRACT

The oracles against the foreign nations (Amos 1,3 - 2,3) have been the subject of many scholarly studies whose methodologies have ranged from the diachronic to the synchronic approach. A common tendency among exegetes who apply the historical approach is to consider some parts of the oracles as secondary material on the basis of structural, syntactical and semantic peculiarities.¹ Majority of redaction critics consider the oracles against Tyre and Edom (Amos 1,9-12) as later additions.² However, recent studies by scholars who analyze the text from a literary perspective have underlined that there is no compelling reason to hastily dismiss them as non-authentic. The oracles, while possessing internal stylistic

¹For further details on the claims of redaction critics regarding non-authenticity of some parts of the OAN, see Paul, Amos, 16-24. See also T. Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos* (BZAW 393; Berlin 2009) 41-59. R. Martin-Achard, *Amos. L'homme, le message, l'influence* (Publications de la Faculté de Théologie de L'Université de Genève 7; Geneva 1984) 128-131.

²Aside from the oracles against Tyre and Edom, another widely accepted claim among scholars who espouse the historical-redaction approach is to question the authenticity of the oracle against Judah. See for example J. Jeremias, *Amos* (trans. D. Stott) (OTL; Westminster 1998) 29-30, 44. See also G. Eidevall, *Amos. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 24A; New Haven, CT 2017) 100-101. While not totally denying the possible historical development of the oracles, this paper argues that in its present literary form and structure, the oracles against Tyre and Edom function as the central and climactic thematic section of the oracles against the foreign nations which further demonstrates the coherence of the entire unit. Its distinct features ought not to be interpreted too quickly as indications of non-authenticity or secondary material.



variations, is a well-structured unit which possess a high degree of literary coherence. This paper, while not denying the possible historical development of the oracles, argues that in its present literary form and structure, the oracles against Tyre and Edom (Amos 1,9-12) are the 'central section' of the oracles against the foreign nations and its 'fraternity motif' functions as the thematic climax of Amos 1,3 - 2,3. The paper's central thesis will be supported by a critical analysis of the literary structure and features of Amos 1,9-12 in relation to its immediate literary context. This will be followed by an attempt to locate its historical origin in the customary laws of the ANE and discuss how Amos re-articulated a phenomenological norm of fundamental human fraternal relations by interpreting it from a comprehensive theological perspective grounded on YHWH's vision of universal fraternity. The paper will conclude by highlighting the relevance of the theological message of Amos 1,9-12 in the present context.

IMMEDIATE LITERARY CONTEXT, STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

A. Immediate Literary Context of Amos 1,9-12

Amos 1,9-12 forms part of the section of the book known as the Oracles against the Nations (OAN) and in particular, the 'oracles against the foreign nations' (Amos 1,3 - 2,3).³ Scholars have already pointed out the common literary features among these oracles. In summary, the common elements which unify them are the following: (1) introductory formula (2) the three-four numerical expression (3) declaration of the inevitability of judgment (4) the statement of specific transgression (5) the proclamation of the judgement (6) and a concluding formula.⁴

³Oracles against foreign nations is a common feature in many prophetic books of the Hebrew bible. This has prompted several scholars to study and analyze the literary features and structure of the oracles against non-Israelite nations in Amos separately, but not independently, from the oracles against Judah and Israel. See Paul, *Amos*, 7, 401. See also A. Steinmann, "The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3-2:16 *JBL* 111/4 (1992) 686. For a survey of scholars and commentators who have dealt with and studied the first seven oracles of Amos (Amos 1:3-2:3), see S. Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern," *JBL* 90/4 (1971) 397.

⁴See M. D. Carroll R, *The Book of Amos* (Nicot; Grand Rapids, MI 2020) 133-14. See also J. Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet. His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville, TN 1988) 52.

Despite its similar features, the oracles are not totally identical. There are some internal stylistic variations which deviate from the usual pattern. In respect to the oracles concerning Damascus (1,3-5), Gaza (1,6-8), Ammon (1,13-15) and Moab (2,1-3), the oracles against Tyre and Edom (1,9-12) are distinct. Amos 1,9-12 contain a longer description of transgressions and a shorter pronouncement of judgement. Moreover, these two oracles do not have the concluding formula common in the other four oracles.⁵ Aside from these, there are also semantic variations particularly in the use of verbs.⁶ Hence, in spite of the regularity in the oracles' general pattern, there are also some variations which do not necessarily undermine its literary coherence.

Apart from its common literary features, the entire unit is also characterized by an internal logic in terms of order and sequence. Various scholars have recognized that the oracles are arranged as neighbouring nations of Israel and Judah following a north-south geographical pattern.⁷ Others argue that the order of nations is modelled after a cultic pattern, resembling the ritual behind Egyptian execration texts.⁸ One of the recent studies, which has gained a wide acceptance among scholars, is Paul's claim about the literary ordering of the individual nations. According to him, the oracles are weaved together as a coherent unit through the use of catchwords, common motifs and lexical connections.⁹

⁵ See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 51. See also Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*.

⁶ As noted by Hayes: "Five different terms ("send, break, cut off, turn, set fire to") are used in the first-person verbal forms; no two oracles share the same combination of verbs. See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 50.

⁷ Eidevall, *Amos*, 99. See also Jeremias, *Amos*, 23-25. See further Steinmann, "The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3-2:16," 687.

⁸ See A. Bentzen, "The Ritual Background of Amos i 2 - ii 16," *OTS* 8 (1950) 85-89.

⁹ According to Paul's argument, the oracle against Aram is connected with the oracle against Gaza through the repetition of the same punishment (cf. Amos 1,5 and Amos 1,8). Moreover, both oracles are linked together by the exile motif (cf. Amos 1,5 and Amos 1,6). The same motif is used to link the oracle against Gaza with that of Tyre (cf. Amos 1,9). The mention of "covenant of brotherhood" in the condemnation of Tyre serves as the point of connection with the oracle against Edom, which talks about Edom's aggressive pursuit against his "brother." The prophecy against Edom is juxtaposed with the oracle against Ammon by the fact that their offenses were both committed by the sword. Finally, the last two nations (Ammon and Moab) are connected by similar key words and phrases (Amos 1,14 and 2,2; 1,15 and 2,3; 1,15 and 2,1) See Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern," 401-403. See also PAUL, *Amos*, 13-15. Paul's arguments has shown ...

This shows that there is a discernible literary continuity in the oracles against the foreign nations. Moreover, the common literary features and the ordering pattern in Amos 1,3 - 2,3 are not only indicative that it is a well-structured unit. Commonality in motifs and semantic parallels also pertain to its thematic coherence. It is very crucial to note that the motifs and ideas that link the oracles are characterized by a common theme: violation against right relationship with the other.¹⁰ Hence, its coherence is based not only on literary features and ordering, but is also grounded on its thematic connection. In the next section, I shall discuss how this dynamics of thematic continuity is configured in the concentric structure of Amos 1,3 - 2,3 and how it reaches its climax in the oracles against Tyre and Edom.

B. Concentric Structure and Dynamics of Amos 1,3 - 2,3

1. Concentric Structure of Amos 1,3 - 2,3¹¹

Oracle against Damascus (Amos 1,3-5)

Oracle against Gaza (Amos 1,6-8)

Oracle against Tyre (Amos 1,9-10)

Oracle against Edom (Amos 1,11-12)

Oracle against Ammon (Amos 1,13-15)

Oracle against Moab (Amos 2,1-3)

⁹(continued) that the oracles against the foreign nations may indeed be viewed as a unit possessing literary coherence. Going beyond this point, this paper argues that such literary order and unity does not only indicate the internal coherence of the entire unit. It also shows the thematic continuity of the oracles which reaches its climax in the prophetic pronouncements against Tyre and Edom. This will be discussed further in the discussion of the structure and dynamics of Amos 1,3 - 2,3.

¹⁰Paul initially touched on this point towards the latter part of his introductory analysis of the oracles against the foreign nations wherein he says that the coherent literary pattern of the oracles serves as a fitting introduction to God's judgment against those nations who have completely overstepped the bounds of all humanity by grievously offending against their fellow human beings. See Paul, Amos, 30.

¹¹Attempts have already been made by several scholars to propose a concentric and chiasmic structure of the oracle against nations such as Bovati and Meynet who propose that the Judah oracle is the center of the whole OAN. See P. Bovati - R. Meynet, *Le livre du prophète Amos* (Paris 1994) 35-100. In this paper, I propose a concentric structure of the oracles against the foreign nations by adapting the north-south geographical arrangement of the nations and highlighting how its thematic dynamics brings to the fore the centrality of the oracles against Tyre and Edom.

Following the north-south arrangement of nations,¹² this concentric structure highlights Amos 1,9-12 as the central section. The north-south sequence is not just in terms of the listing of the nations but the same pattern is followed by the framing sections which enclose the whole unit. The oracle against Damascus (opening frame) is paralleled by the oracle concerning Moab (closing frame). This concentric structure is further underlined when the oracles' sub-groupings based on their literary features are considered. As discussed already, the oracles against Tyre and Edom (which can be referred to as group 2) have some stylistic peculiarities in respect to the other four oracles (which can be referred to as group 1). Following such groupings, the oracles against Tyre and Edom (both belonging to group 2) stand at the center of the structure.¹³ Hence, the geographical arrangement and the literary features of the oracles corroborate in highlighting the centrality of Amos 1,9-12.

¹²This north-south geographical pattern as a basis for the literary order of the oracles against the foreign nations has been pointed out by several scholars. For example, see Eidevall, *Amos*, 99. See also Steinmann, "The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3-2:16," 687. See further Jeremias, *Amos*, 23-25. These scholars have noted how the nations' geographical arrangement informs its structure and organization, but it appears that no one has explicitly noted how it can be used as a basis to argue for the concentric structure of Amos 1,3 - 2,3.

¹³See Steinmann, "The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3-2:16," 685. See also P. Noble, "The Literary Structure of Amos: A Thematic Analysis," *JBL* 114/2 (1995) 219. Adapting a highly redactional approach, Coote notes that a later editor (which he calls C editor) have intentionally edited the particular elements of the oracles against Tyre and Edom (including that of Judah) in order to make them stand out in relation to the other oracles. He claims that a keen reader would immediately notice how the non-Israelite nations are organized around Tyre and Edom as the center. See R. B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets. Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia, PA 1981) 113. This interesting claim by Coote is quite different from the staple claims of other redaction critics such as Eidevall and Jeremias who merely see such literary differences as indications that such oracles are a later addition to the text. See Eidevall, *Amos*, 100-101. See also Jeremias, *Amos*, 23-25. While the question of whether the oracles were once independent units which were later collected and put together by Amos or a later group of editors is an important area of consideration, this reality, as argued in this paper, should not hinder one from seeing the exegetical significance of the literary and rhetorical features of the text in its present and final form.

2. Thematic Dynamics¹⁴

The thematic dynamics of Amos 1,3 – 2,3 further highlight its concentric structure and the centrality of Amos 1,9–12. As mentioned already, the common theme that ties these oracles is ‘violation against right relationship with others.’¹⁵ This theme is gradually developed as the text progresses. It reaches its climactic point in vv. 9–12 and regresses to its denouement as the unit comes to a close. In Amos 1,3 the transgression of Damascus is related to their “threshing of Gilead with iron sledges.” Many scholars agree that such description refers to a barbaric treatment of peoples in the context of military conquest.¹⁶ Threshing with sledges, as an agricultural activity, is crucial for the sustenance and flourishing of the life of a community. It is a collective and social event which nurtures relationships and interdependence among members of a community.¹⁷ With this reality in mind, the oracle against

¹⁴Thematic dynamics, in this paper, refers to the ways and manner through which a common theme is developed, configured and articulated in a given text. In this section, I will discuss how the thematic continuity of the oracles against foreign nations finds its climactic point in vv. 9–12. This dynamics does not only underline how Amos 1,9–12 serves as the central section of Amos 1,3 – 2,3. It also brings to the fore how such a function serves as a fundamental basis for the coherence of the entire unit.

¹⁵While most of the commentators refer to the transgressions of the nations described in Amos 1,3 – 2,3 as “international war crimes,” this paper adapts Hens-Piazza’s categorization of the nations’ offenses as “violations or transgressions against right-relationship” with others. This serves as a further argument for the paper’s main thesis that at the center of the ethical-theological discourse in Amos 1,9–12 is YHWH’s vision of human fraternity that cuts across political and socio-cultural boundaries. G. Hens-Piazza, “The Oracles against the Nations (Amos 1:3–2:8) and the Distinctive Nature of the Oracle against Israel,” a lecture delivered during the Graduate Students Meet Commentary Author (GSMCA) session at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome (November 30, 2021).

¹⁶See for example, Jeremias, *Amos*, 26. Jeremias comments that the image of threshing is also used elsewhere in the bible to refer metaphorically to the brutal act of subjugating a conquered population. See also Eidevall, *Amos*, 104. See further PAUL, *Amos*, 47–48. Paul notes that the threshing imagery as a metaphor for the barbaric and atrocious subjugation of peoples in the context of military conquest is also attested in Assyrian royal inscriptions. For examples, see A. H. Layard, *Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character from Assyrian Monuments* (London 1851) 17.

¹⁷See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 50. See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 140. For further discussion with images and depictions on the process of threshing with sledges, see P. King – E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY 2001) 89–90. See also S. R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge, UK 1915) 227–228. See further P. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah. An Archaeological Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA 1988) 111–112. For other references to illustrations, see Jeremias, *Amos*, 26. See also F. I. Andersen – D. N. Freedman, *Amos. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AncB 24A; New York, NY 1989) 239.

Damascus underscores how their military escapades have led to the horrible destruction of human relationships, the exact opposite of the original purpose of threshing with sledges.

This theme of violation against right relationship is developed in the oracle against Gaza. Building on the motif of military conquest introduced in the previous oracle, Amos 1,6 highlights Gaza's crime of "carrying people into exile." Most of the commentators note that this transgression refers to Gaza's participation in military raids and international slave trade.¹⁸ The selling of peoples is perhaps one of, if not, the greatest affronts to human inter-personal relationships since it is a blatant objectification of fellow human beings.¹⁹ It is in this sense that the Gaza oracle further develops the theme introduced in the previous oracle. It underlines how armed conflict is not only destructive to human relations but also leads to the horror of reducing other people to the level of "commercial goods."²⁰

The central theme of Amos 1,3 - 2,3 reaches its climax in the oracle against Tyre and Edom. Amos 1,9 continues the motif of sending people to exile and gives the fundamental basis for why war crimes and their consequences are detestable before YHWH - they are violations against the covenant of brotherhood!²¹ In other words, the acts condemned by the prophet in the oracles are transgressions not just because of the nature of the offenses, but because they are grave affronts to the fundamental kinship that human beings are supposed to honor in their relationship with one

¹⁸ See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 149. See Eidevall, *Amos*, 106. See also Jeremias, *Amos*, 22.

¹⁹ The fact that the motif of sending people to exile is repeated through the use of similar vocabulary in the next oracle suggests that trade of slaves is a major and fundamental concern in the description of the transgressions of the nations. The trade of slaves acquired through war and military raids is one of the most barbaric and atrocious practices in the ancient world. According to Carroll, this horrendous practice is amplified by the fact that slaves were used as domestics or workers in the constructions of fortifications, temples, administrative buildings, roads, irrigation systems and to work in farms and mines while others are conscripted in a conquering army. See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 149. See further I. J. Gelb, "Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia," *JNES* 32 (1979) 70-98.

²⁰ It is interesting to note that this objectification of human persons, that is, the sale of human beings as calculable goods, is the same kind of transgression pronounced by the prophet in the oracle against Israel (Amos 2:6). See Jeremias, *Amos*, 35-36.

²¹ See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 86. See also Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 149.

another! In this way, universal fraternity, as the basis for the judgment of the violations of the nations, is brought to the fore.²² This fraternity motif is sustained in Amos 1,11 through its dramatic description of Edom's action of pursuing his brother with a sword and the relentlessness of his rage.

After reaching its peak in vv. 9-12, the thematic dynamics revert back to a specific description of violations against right relationship in the oracle against Ammon. This is made possible by its gruesome depiction of Ammon's practice of ripping open the pregnant women of Gilead. After this, the trajectory continues to descend in the oracle against Moab. As compared to the other oracles, Moab's transgression is briefly described since it simply mentions the act of burning the bones of the king of Edom. With this, the dynamics of the unit's central theme is brought to its closing frame.²³ Having analyzed the structure and dynamics of the immediate literary context of Amos 1,9-12, the discussion will now proceed to a close study of the literary features of the oracles against Tyre and Edom. The analysis will emphasize how such features and textual subtleties are vital in highlighting the central significance of Amos 1,9-12.

²²The dominant use of fraternity motif or language in these oracles is noted by Eidevall. See Eidevall, *Amos*, 108. At this juncture, it is enough to point out that the centrality and emphasis on the fundamental fraternal relations among peoples of varying socio-political identities is supported by the fact that the transgressions condemned in the oracles do not only pertain to the offenses against either Israel and Judah. Some scholars argue that the victims in these oracles refer exclusively to the Israelites or the people of Judah (for a discussion in this argument, see Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 56; see also R. Kessler, "The Crimes of the Nations in Amos 1-2," *Acta Theologica* 26 (2018) 208. However, such claim finds little support from the text itself. Some of the crimes might be identified as directed towards Judah and Israel, but this is not the focus of the charges mentioned in the oracles. For example, the oracle against Moab mentions the burning of the bones of the king of Edom, a clear statement that has no reference either to Judah or Israel. A more detailed discussion on the fraternity motif in the Tyre and Edom oracles will be given in the exegetical analysis of Amos 1:9-12.

²³Paul notes how the beginning and ending of the literary pattern and dynamics of the oracles against the foreign nations are also indicated by the use of a grand inclusio with the repetition of *יִתְרַכְדוּ* in 1,5 and 2,3. See Paul, *Amos*, 30.

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF AMOS 1,9-12

A. *Literary Features of Amos 1,9-12 and its Dominant Fraternity Motif*

The oracles against Tyre and Edom share syntactical, structural and semantic particularities. As compared to the other four oracles, they do not contain the usual closing formula **רמא הוהי**. Moreover, the accusations against these two nations are expressed in an expanded manner while the description of the punishment (characterized by the prominent use of the phrases **שא** **יתחלשו** and **הלכאו וּמרא**) is shorter. These unique features have prompted many scholars to consider these oracles as non-authentic. However, these particularities do not necessarily indicate that they are secondary in nature. The discussion of the structure and the literary context of Amos 1,9-12 have shown multiple points of connection which bring to the fore that it belongs to a cohesive and well-structured unit.²⁴

There will always be divergences in the arguments of the scholars depending on their hermeneutical optic. Nevertheless, it is very important to underline that the possibility of historical development should not hinder us from appreciating the exegetical significance of the literary features of the text in its present and final form.²⁵ The stylistic variations of Amos 1,9-12 can be reasonably considered as intended to slow down the rhythm of the text and to allow the reader to focus on its central significance.²⁶ Hence, its

²⁴ See discussion on Immediate Literary Context, Structure and Thematic Dynamics.

²⁵ Scholars who emphasize a synchronic reading of the text like Carroll argue for the authenticity of the entire OAN while redaction critics such as Eidevall and Jeremias staunchly defend the staple historical position that some parts of the oracles are later additions and therefore belong to a later layer of the text. While both sides have their own share of plausible arguments, this paper takes a middle position which does not deny the possibility of the historical development of the text and at the same time emphasize the importance of reading and analyzing the significant features of the text in its present form and structure. As Paul rightfully puts it: "It should be added, as a final note, that whether one explains such a sequential concatenous pattern as being comprised of originally independent units (of varying dates) welded together by Amos or a later editor, or as a single literary composite, the process of internal associative reasoning provides the key to its final interrelationship." See Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern," 403.

²⁶ See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 136. As noted by Hayes, the stylistic differences is placed in order to stimulate interest and appeal to the intellect. Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 55.

unique literary feature is a rhetorical procedure. This means that the more detailed description of transgressions and the shorter version of punishment is intended to highlight the offenses of Tyre and Edom as prime examples of violations against fundamental human fraternal relations.

The oracle against Tyre begins in Amos 1,9. It is connected to the previous oracle via the theme of delivering people to exile. As compared to the Gaza oracle, the focus in Amos 1,9 is Tyre's involvement in the trade of people and not the actual act of seizing and deporting people.²⁷ But the difference, which is of greater significance, is its emphasis that Tyre's transgression is a violation of the "covenant of brotherhood" (מִיִּחָא תִירַב). This unique phrase has been the subject of many studies and scholars have offered different hypothesis about its meaning and historical reference.²⁸ Of paramount significance is the reality that this phrase has no precedence in the Hebrew bible.

Amos 1,9 does not specify the referents of the covenant and it is very plausible that the text intentionally leaves it open in order to underline its universal and wider application.²⁹ In this sense, the covenant of brotherhood does not only concern the political parties involved but is extended to the general sphere of human relations.³⁰ And it is precisely in this perspective that the fraternity motif in this verse serves as the thematic climax of Amos 1,3 – 2,3. It underscores that the violence of the nations is transgression against fundamental human relationship, that is, universal fraternity.

²⁷ See Paul, *Amos*, 59. See also Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 156.

²⁸ For a survey on the different theories about the historical identities and referents of the phrase "covenant of brothers," see Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 156-158.

²⁹ See Paul, *Amos*, 59. See also Kessler, "The Crimes of the Nations in Amos 1-2," 216-217.

³⁰ Paul articulates this claim succinctly: "...the referent is left unidentified to place the emphasis upon the deplorable act itself rather than upon the specific party affected. Thus although the prophet may have had Israel in mind, his indictment does not preclude the possibility that he was actually referring to another nation. In the long run, the nation itself is inconsequential. It is the right common to humanity at large which Amos vindicates and defends." See Paul, *Amos*, 61. This understanding of the referents in the phrase 'covenant of brotherhood' is also reflected, albeit in a more theological manner, in Neher's claim that the notion goes back to the Noahic covenant in Gen 9 which establishes that all peoples are brothers. See A. Neher, *Amos*. Contribution à l'étude de prophétisme (Paris 1950) 59-67.

The fraternity motif is continued in Amos 1,11 and is highlighted by the use of the word “brother” (אח).³¹ Edom is portrayed as someone who “pursued his brother with a sword and destroyed his closest allies.”³² The majority of scholars have pointed out the traditional fraternal connection between Edom and Israel.³³ There have been some debates about whether the relationship between these two entities refer to their ethnic ties or to a political covenant.³⁴ However, the question is more imagined than real since the two can be correlated. The fraternal relationship based on blood ties reinforces the political connection.³⁵ In other words, the barbaric nature of the transgression of Edom is amplified because of such reality. Edom, who should have acted better as compared to the other nations in consideration of existing blood ties and official political treaties, still resorted to deplorable violent actions against its brothers. Hence, Amos 1,11 reinforces the oracle against Tyre by presenting a concrete example of someone who has transgressed the covenant of brotherhood. The crimes of the other nations are clear violations against fundamental human fraternal relationship, but that of Edom is worst because they have an ethnic and political treaty of brotherhood with their victims.³⁶

³¹ Fishbane notes that the use of the word brother in this context might denote treaty relationships. See M. Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” 316-317. See also Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 92-93.

³² There is a discussion among scholars about the correct interpretation and translation of the word רמחר in v. 11. Hayes and Paul translate it as “maidens” or “young women.” Others like Coote understood it as referring to an affective reality and interpreted it as “covenant mercy.” This paper appropriates the translation of Carroll and Fishbane who translate the word as “his friends or closest allies.” This interpretation brings out both the emotive dimension (based on ethnic connection) and the political aspect of brotherhood mentioned v. 11. See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 162-163. See also M. Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” *JBL* 89 (1970) 316-317.

³³ For a discussion on this exegetical position, see Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 160-162. See also See Eidevall, *Amos*, 107-108. See also Paul, *Amos*, 63-64.

³⁴ For further details on this discussion among scholars, see Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 162-163.

³⁵ See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 163.

³⁶ Carroll argues that the fact that Edom has ethnic and political fraternal relations with his victims underscores the heinousness of his transgressions. See Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 163.

The heinousness of Edom's offenses is reinforced in v. 11b. This is made possible by the creative use of synonymous parallelism: "his anger tore without subsiding// and he kept his rage without faltering."³⁷ Of particular interest is the use of the verb טרף (tore) which is a term normally used to depict a beast's act of tearing the flesh of his prey. Such graphic portrayal underlines the excessively hostile attitude of Edom which led to the carrying out of bestial acts against his brothers.³⁸ This intensification in terms of imagery and description of emotions amplifies the literary function of Amos 1:9-12 as the thematic climax of Amos 1,3 - 2,3. The oracle against Edom closes with the same statement of punishment addressed to Tyre. Such convergence between v. 10 and v. 12 further confirms the unity of Amos 1,9-12 as the central section of Amos 1,3 - 2,3.

'UNIVERSAL FRATERNAL RELATIONS' IN AMOS 1,9-12: FROM HISTORICAL TO THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

A. Customary Laws in the ANE and YHWH's Vision of Universal Fraternity

Scholars have grappled with the task of explaining the basis and origin of the the ethical view which determines the oracles against the foreign nations.³⁹ As shown already, the ethical view

³⁷ On the function of this parallelism, see Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 163.

³⁸ Hayes notes that such description focuses Edom's hideously extravagant and harsh treatment of his brothers. See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 93.

³⁹ For a survey of proposals and theories in relation this crucial point of inquiry, see Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 126-129. See also Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 59-61. Carroll points out the three plausible theories in explaining the universalist ethical concept expressed in the OAN. The first is founded on the view that Amos is advocating an ethical monotheism, that is, a universalist ethical standard, grounded in the person and demands YHWH, which every human person is expected to perceive. The second argues for the existence of an international customary law which governs what is acceptable in terms of conduct in war. The third relates the transgressions in the OAN with the covenantal obligations entered to by the nations who were formerly under the Davidic empire. Finally, Carroll proposes what he thinks is the most viable position: Amos presupposes a comprehensive and universal moral universe in which YHWH governs and judges all the nations. Considering all these points of contention, this paper adapts the position of Hayes which argues that the ethical vision in Amos has its phenomenological origins in the customary laws of the ANE. However, going beyond such argument, I propose that Amos, in appropriating such established customary laws, added a theological foundation to it, that is, the conviction that these demands for human-fraternal ethical conduct are ultimately grounded on YHWH as the judge and sovereign of all nations. This argument therefore, combines that of Hayes and Carroll.

which informs the oracles is the theme of fundamental human fraternal relations. As will be shown later, the basis of this ethical perspective can be traced back to the customary laws of the ANE. Amos, in appropriating this tradition, supplied it with a theological dimension wherein YHWH is seen as the origin and guardian of the ethical vision of universal fraternity.

The universalist vision of human fraternal relations in the oracles is better understood as having its historical origins in the customary laws of the ANE. It is very necessary to underline that in Amos 1,3 - 2,3, the prophet is not imposing a moral system based on his understanding of YHWH nor he is arguing for a basis of the guilt of the nations. He is rather presupposing their culpability based on norms assumed to be applicable for all.⁴⁰ Barton has argued already that the rationale behind Amos' condemnation of the nations' transgressions is based on international customary laws, an established set of norms which determines what is acceptable and not in the conduct of war.⁴¹ However, customary laws are not limited to the area of political-military relations. International treaties in the ANE for example, involve stipulations on the expected behavior between the parties involved.⁴² The basis of such moral concepts go beyond political agreements. Such norms are conventions that come from practical responses to life experiences. Customary laws therefore, are based on patterns of everyday life.⁴³ Part and parcel of this is the

⁴⁰ See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 58. As noted by Jeremias, the nations are expected to have a consciousness of justice attributable to them and quite independent from any specific experience of God. Jeremias, *Amos*, 31.

⁴¹ See Barton, *Amos's Oracles Against the Nations, A Study of Amos 1:3-2:5* (SOTSMS 6; Cambridge, UK 1980) 36-61. See also C. L. Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East. Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History* (BZAW 407; Berlin 2009) 97-116.

⁴² Hayes notes that in international relations, treaties also stipulate the type behavior that is expected from the signatories. He cites an example of a treaty between Barga'yah king of KTK and Matti'el king of Arpad as seen in Sifre inscriptions. See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 59. See further J. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton 1969) 659-661.

⁴³ From a phenomenological perspective, official treatise of moral norms developed primarily from patterns and conventions drawn from everyday life. From this, it is very plausible to argue that Amos' ethical vision is primarily based on his knowledge and experience of these social norms which he then re-interpreted it in the light of his understanding of YHWH. See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 58-59.

fundamental respect for human fraternal relations, that is, the recognition of the other as a fellow, a brother!⁴⁴

In his preaching, Amos, most probably, assumed this ethical perspective and interpreted it as ultimately grounded on YHWH. In other words, Amos re-articulated an accepted customary law using the optic of a comprehensive moral perspective wherein YHWH is seen as the universal sovereign who judges and guarantees the observance of human fraternal relationships!⁴⁵ For Amos, YHWH envisions a universal kinship irrespective of ethnic, political, cultural and religious boundaries. This theological-ethical vision behind Amos' prophetic judgment against the nations appears to be very appropriate since it goes beyond the understanding of their transgressions as "international war crimes." It encompasses also the offenses of Judah and Israel

⁴⁴ Hayes further notes that there are patterns of behavior in the ancient world that are based on a certain degree of recognition of the dignity of human persons and of basic interpersonal relations. One of the concrete examples he cites is the reality that in the ancient world, the act of desecrating the tombs and of the dead is widely condemned. However, this does not mean that all the nations and peoples necessarily observed such customary laws and norms. See Hayes, *Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 59. Amsler, in his earlier study, has already linked the ethical concept in Amos 1-2 with the modern idea of human rights. See S. Amsler, "Amos et les droits de l'homme," *De la Torah au Messie* (eds. M. Carrez - J. Doré - P. Grelot) (Paris 1981) 181-187. In a rather more theological perspective, Jeremias also argues that in the oracles, the nations are expected, independent of any notion or experience of God, to have the common concept of justice which is comparable to the modern notion of "human rights." See Jeremias, *Amos*, 31. The same theological view is put forward by Wolff who claims that the universal ethical standard in the oracles, whose origin is YHWH, is grounded in creation and is accessible to everyone. See H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. W. Janzen - S.D. McBride Jr. - C. Muenchow) (Philadelphia, PA 1977) 144-147. It is very significant that the concept of human rights and the basic respect for human dignity is intimately connected to the recognition of the other as fellow, that is, a brother or a sister on the grounds of equal dignity.

⁴⁵ This theological view corresponds to Carroll's position that the book of Amos presupposes a comprehensive moral universe - one which Yahweh governs and judges all nations. Carroll R, *The Book of Amos*, 128. In the same way, Paul argues that the universalistic ethical concept in Amos 1-2 springs from the understanding that all "mankind is considered the vassal of the Lord whose power and authority, and law embrace the entire world community of nations." See also Paul, *Amos*, 45. Kessler, "The Crimes of the Nations in Amos 1-2," 208. Hayes has a slightly different argument. He claims that Amos indeed adapted an existing customary law but did not view it as ultimately grounded or founded in YHWH. He asserts that following ANE tradition, Amos understood YHWH as guardian of a universal ethical principle and avenger of the guilt for its infringement but not necessarily its source and origin.

which are clearly not war crimes but domestic forms of socio-political and economic oppression. Such thematic connection makes Amos 1,3 - 2,3 a very fitting introduction to the pronouncements against Judah and Israel who are expected to serve as models of fraternal relationship and witnesses of YHWH's vision of universal fraternity.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

By way of conclusion, I shall discuss the relevance of the theological message of Amos 1,9-12 from a 'perceived'⁴⁶ Philippine context. Right after my ordination, I was sent to Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, a pre-dominantly Muslim area where the Franciscans has the mission house for inter-religious and inter-cultural relations. The province of Lanao del Norte is part of the culturally diverse island of Mindanao which has suffered from decades-long war between government forces and Muslim separatist and extremist groups.⁴⁷ These experiences of relentless violence have created deep-seated wounds of bias, mistrust and even hostility between the Muslims and Christians in the area. The theological perspective of universal fraternity in Amos 1,9-12 is very relevant in such a context.

Amos' theological vision challenges the Christians living in such a situation to become builders of human relationships grounded on God's dream of universal kinship and to serve as prophetic witnesses against offenses which transgress our fundamental fraternal bond. It is very interesting to note that Pope Francis, in his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, has underlined the critical importance of affirming the truth that our faith leads us to the recognition that indeed, we are brothers and sisters to all. The significance of the praxis of such message in the light of present

⁴⁶"Perceived Philippine context" refers to my perspective and perception of the situation of the Philippines based on my personal experiences particularly in the culturally and religiously diverse area of Mindanao.

⁴⁷For a general description of the missiological challenges of the social, political, religious and cultural situation of Mindanao, see E. Viagedor, "The Mindanao Context in a Nutshell: A Situationer," *Life of Dialogue Initiatives* (ed. P. Cajés) (Quezon City 2019) 131-140.

realities and sensibilities needs no further elaboration. This once again shows how the fiery prophetic message of Amos, pronounced many centuries ago, continues to reverberate and find its relevance today.

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