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The Role of Covenant in the Mission and Message of Amos

One of the main problems that traditionally has surrounded the assessment of the role which covenant played in the theology and preaching of the prophets of Israel has been the establishment of how much of the religious tradition of the Bible was made or developed by them and how much of it was preexistent and was simply transmitted by these divinely appointed spokesmen.

In the past, some biblical scholars asserted that the prophets were the principal architects of Israel's faith.¹ They held that it was the prophets who originated, rather than passed on, some of the great theological-ethical cornerstones of Israel's religious system.² The prophets, said they, took the crude raw material of a nomadic, or seminomadic, primitive religion, and through their personal experience and insight, individual genius, and divine inspiration, shaped the faith of Israel into a sophisticated and highly ethical moral-religious system.³

The moral-covenant concept was, some scholars asserted, one of these ideas originated by the prophets. Covenant was too highly complex and sophisticated a concept to have come from the desert.⁴ The great national covenants of the Pentateuch came into Israelite life only after the prophets had laid the groundwork for them.⁵ Hence, to look for any well-developed, and centrally crucial, covenant theology in any prophet earlier than Jeremiah was to read back into that material ideas that could not have been there originally.⁶

This assigning to the prophets of the role of innovator has been carried over, to some extent, to the present day. C. F. Whitely⁷ and J. Jocz,⁸ as late as the present decade, still support such views. Yet much of the more

recent research done by biblical and Near Eastern scholars, and evidence turned up by archeologists have tended to temper the innovative role once assigned to the *nby'ym*.⁹ New texts from many ancient and allied cultures and the decipherment of languages far predating the founding of the Israelite nation have shown that many of the ideas assigned late dates because of their complexity actually were ancient by the time Abram left Ur.¹⁰

As is well known, treaty-covenant texts were found to be in use in the Near East before the twentieth century B.C. Cultures with which the Israelites had to have had, and were shown to have had, contact used covenant concepts, forms, and formulations which, in some cases, are almost identical to those contained in the national covenants of the Pentateuch. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that these concepts, forms, and formulations were reflected, to varying degrees and with various emendations, in each of the Israelite covenant documents, including those covenantal texts that may be assigned Mosaic dates. Hence, while the prophetic genius may have had much to do with the sharpening of the religious consciousness of Israel's covenantal responsibilities, it seems probable now that even the earliest of the canonical prophets presupposed and built on a covenant concept already known and acknowledged as normative by the people to whom they were sent.¹¹

The basis for the mission of most of the canonical prophets seems to rest on the existence of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The main preaching emphasis of many of these prophets was the assailing of the people of the nation for breaking covenant law.¹² Recent studies have emphasized that the prophetic books of even the eighth-century prophets are laced with covenant references and technical covenantal terminology, even though the word *bryt* appears only infrequently in their texts. Terms like *twrh*,¹³ *hq*,¹⁴ *mšwt*,¹⁵ *hšd*,¹⁶ *šdqh*,¹⁷ *mšpř*¹⁸—all of which were employed by the prophets to convict, challenge, and influence the people to whom God sent them to speak—have been shown to have strong covenantal roots and points of reference.

Indeed, in the opinion of some contemporary scholars, without the covenant relationship between God and the nation, and the nation's frequent disregard for that relationship's demands and responsibilities, the prophets would not have been needed by God so often. It was as divinely appointed champions of covenant keeping that they found their purpose in Israelite society and history. For as W. J. Phythian-Adams has pointed out, the prophets "never saw themselves as sent to proclaim a new vision or a new conception of God: they came, as messengers with strict and definite orders, to recall revolting Israel to Yahweh who had chosen it."¹⁹

The prophecy of Amos gives evidence of having been provoked precisely by such a need as Phythian-Adams described. When Amos came out of the hills of Tekoa to deliver his message to the populace of Israel (Amos 1: 1), its thrust was centered upon the nation's repeated transgressions of the covenantal stipulations and upon the consequences those transgressions were going to bring.

This covenantal basis for Amos' charges against the nation is to be seen in his oracles against both the southern and northern kingdom in the second chapter of his book:

Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions [*pš'y*] of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment [*l' šybnw*]; because they have rejected the law of the Lord [*l-m'sm 't-twrt yhw*], and have not kept his statutes [*whqyw l' šmrw*], but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked. So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem."²⁰

The indictment of Israel, which immediately follows, while more specific and not mentioning either *twrh* or *hq*, is based on the same grounds as his condemnation of the southern sister:

Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions [*pš'y*] of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment [*l' šybnw*]; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same maiden, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar upon garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined." (Amos 2: 6-8)

The premise that the rebukes made by Amos are covenant-backed is based on two factors. First, the *terminology* used to describe the nation's corruption is frequently employed in Near Eastern and biblical technical covenantal parlance. Second, the sins of which the people are guilty are actions proscribed by covenantal texts or covenantal traditions.

In the first of the two indictments, Amos specifically states that the reason for God's displeasure with Judah is that she has rejected the *twrt yhw* and has not kept or fulfilled *hqw*. Both *twrh*²¹ and *hq*²² are used repeatedly in the OT to describe the provisions of the covenant which the nation is to observe because she has bound herself to the Lord. In these passages in Amos, they apparently refer to the stipulations embodied in the *bryt* which God made with Israel at Sinai, a fuller form, or more complete description, of which was later included in the Deuteronomic account of Josiah's reaffirmation of that covenant in the seventh century B.C.²³

As James Muilenberg has said, *twrh* is "the revealed law implementing the covenant."²⁴ Even when the term is used in a broader context, where it refers to the whole body of God's teaching or instruction, *twrh* is rarely devoid of this essential covenant rooting. Likewise, *hq*, which is sometimes linked with *twrh* (Deut 17: 19) and in other instances is used in covenantal texts and traditions in conjunction with *mšwh*,²⁵ often has the same point of reference as the former. It too usually encompasses the body of stipulations delineated in the *bryt* itself.²⁶

Just which of these specific obligations from their covenant with God the people of Judah were violating is not pointed out in the text of the oracle against them. They are simply charged with trampling the covenant in general. But in the condemnation of Israel, the blanket indictment gives way to a delineation of covenant infidelities. "The specific violations of the Covenant fall like sledge-hammer blows upon the heads of the guilty."²⁷ One by one, the acts of disobedience are enumerated in a lengthy catalog.

The injustice shown to, and the oppression of, the poor and righteous as condemned in vs 6-7a are infractions of injunctions against the same in the stipulations set forth at Sinai. The nation had been bound by its acknowledged and sworn covenant with God to deal fairly with such innocent and defenseless individuals.²⁸

The sexual aberration of a father and his son having intercourse with the same woman (vs 7b), which many scholars believe is a direct reference to some variety of sacred prostitution,²⁹ is prohibited by the covenantal stipulations as repeated in Deut 23: 17.

To use "garments taken in pledge" for religious carousing (vs 8a) when they should have been returned to their owners for their use at sunset,

transgressed the Sinai dictum to the opposite (see Ex 22: 26). God would hear their voice when the ones so wronged cried to him for redress (Ex 22: 27).

Drinking wine gathered by fine "unjustly extorted"³⁰ and "laying down beside every altar" were to make light of God's majesty and violate the sovereignty which the Lord demanded in the first stipulation of the Decalogue (Ex 20: 2).

Further evidence that these indictments, as well as others which are made at various places in the text, are proclaimed within a covenant framework is to be found in the term used to describe the activities condemned by the prophet.

The people's actions are termed *pš'y*, "acts of rebellion." In Near Eastern treaty language, the term "to revolt," "to transgress," "to rebel" means to throw off the authority of an acknowledged suzerain by violating the stipulations of the pact that bound the parties together.³¹ *pš'* has a similar connotation in various biblical texts as well. There are instances where it refers specifically to the breaking of existing alliances or to the overthrowing of a previously accepted sovereign.

The term is used in this sense in the account of the fracture of the union between Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12: 1 ff). When Rehoboam sends his taskmaster into Israel, where he is stoned to death by the populace (1 Kings 12: 18), the murder of the king's official, and therein the rejection of the royal authority, is described as *pš'*.³² The same verb is similarly employed in the narratives concerning the rejection of their vassalage by two kings who had been made 'bdym, "servants," by David.³³ Both the severance of its vassal status to Israel by Moab³⁴ following the death of Ahab and the setting up of its own king by Edom during the reign of Jehoram in Judah³⁵ are denoted by the verb *pš'*.³⁶ Such usage supports the assertion of such scholars as Gerhard von Rad that the term "belongs preeminently to the language of politics,"³⁷ especially the politics of treaty-covenant relations.³⁸

In Amos 2: 4-8, the relationship which has been broken by the nation's "revolt" is the one that was forged in the covenant made between God and his people.³⁹ Such negating of their sworn obligations to the treaty and its Master threatened to bring down the consequences of the curses which had been framed for just such eventualities. Not only had such protection been built into the agreements forged by such men as Suppiluliumas⁴⁰ and Esarhaddon,⁴¹ but the biblical covenants contained similar provisions to guard against the violation of their stipulations:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am

a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.⁴²

Drawing upon such provisions in the treaty-covenant tradition, Amos declares that the rebellion of the nation will be dealt with by God according to the *mutually accepted* covenant agreement. Disobedience to that bond's stipulations will be punished. Those who disregard their *sworn* allegiance to God, with the covenant loyalty which that entails, must expect to be visited with the consequences of their acts:

"Behold I will make it tremble [*m'yq*]⁴³
beneath you as a cart
trembles [*t'yq*] loaded with
sheaves.
Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain
his strength,
nor shall the mighty save his life;
he who handles the bow shall not
stand,
and he who is swift of foot shall not
save himself,
nor shall he who rides the horse
save his life;
and he who is stout of heart among
the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day,"
says the Lord. (Amos 2: 13-16)

What is especially significant is that this punishment is given to the people *because* the nation has accepted a covenantal relationship with God. The populace is not being chastised for failing to keep obligations to God about which they knew nothing or which they had not committed themselves to observe in the first place. The thrust of Amos' message is that it was precisely because they *had* entered into a covenant with the Lord, and *had* pledged themselves to live by an accepted religio-ethical standard delineated in the stipulations of that pact, a standard which they had ignored repeatedly, that divine punishment would be meted out to the nation:

Hear this word that the Lord has
spoken against you, O people of Israel,
against the whole family which I

brought up out of the land of Egypt:
"You only have I known [*rq 'tkm yd'ty*]
of all the families of the earth;
therefore will I punish you
for all your iniquities" (Amos 3: 1).

The key to understanding the covenantal import of this passage is to be found in Amos' use of the term *yd'ty*, "I have known." Its use here does not mean the usual "to learn", "perceive," "experience," "discriminate," etc.⁴⁴ As Herbert Huffmon has shown, *yd'* is used in this instance in a more formal legal sense.⁴⁵ In a pattern common to the Near Eastern treaties and earlier biblical usage, "know" is employed by Amos as a technical term for the recognition of the covenant stipulations as binding by the covenanting partners.⁴⁶

"Know" is often used to "indicate mutual legal recognition on the part of suzerain and vassal, i.e. Yahweh and his servant(s) . . . in the Bible."⁴⁷ In a number of the prophetic books,⁴⁸ including that of at least one other eighth-century prophet,⁴⁹ *yd'* must be understood within this legal frame of reference if one is to grasp the full implications of the text. The *covenant recognition* of Israel by God is the couching for Amos 3: 1-2:

Comparison with Am. 9:7, with its mention of the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and Aram, should make it clear that Am. 3: 2 has reference to that peculiar relationship between Yahweh and Israel expressed by the covenant, and that *yada'* in this context means more than "care for"⁵⁰ or "take notice of"⁵¹ as is evident from the common translation "choose." The passage calls for the technical sense, viz., "You only have I recognized by covenant,"⁵² from which it follows that the covenant-breaking invokes the curses, i.e., punishment for iniquity.⁵³

The covenantal frame of reference for Amos' proclamation is also evidenced in his rhetorical question in the following verse, where two of the key words or phrases have strong covenantal overtones and implications:

Do two walk together
unless they have
agreed [*m-nw'dw*]

The phrase "walk together" is a figure of speech used in some of the Near Eastern treaties to describe the keeping of the covenantal obligations by the treating partners.⁵⁴ In the letter of Rib-Addi to Pharaoh contained in the Amarna correspondence, the same metaphor is used, there describing the vassal's loyalty to his overlord in the face of a conspiracy against the suzerain.⁵⁵ Rather than throw in with the conspirators in their designs

against the Egyptian throne, Rib-Addi held fast to his treaty obligations to his lord. Despite the reported pressure of the populace of Byblos, who pressed him to “walk after (follow) the son of Abdiashirta, and let us make a treaty of peace between us,”⁵⁶ the vassal in Canaan stood firm. For “to walk after” or “to follow after” another ruler would have meant that Rib-Addi had broken his sworn treaty obligations to serve only the pharaoh.

In the treaty between Abban and Iarimlim, a similar metaphor is used to convey the same idea. The vassal is specifically warned by the suzerain against any action that would allow the subject to stray from the relationship to which his superior had bound him:

If ever Iarimlim says to Abban,
vizier of Hattusa: “Abban [is
not]” and he lets
go out (deserts?), then to another
king he will not go out. If he
lets go the horn (hem?) of Abban’s
garment and seizes the horn of
another king’s garment, he shall
[orfeij]t the towns and territories.⁵⁷

In both cases, the implication of the texts is clear. The treaty stipulations bound the vassal to complete allegiance and obedience to his lord. Any departure from that prescribed responsibility and obligation, such as leaving the suzerain to attach oneself to, follow after, or serve another, was considered a sign of open revolt on the part of the subject who did so.⁵⁸

The same concept is contained in *each* of the national biblical covenants, where to go after other gods and serve them is to violate both the stated terms and the spirit of the bond with Yahweh.⁵⁹ Thus, when Amos uses this metaphor in 3: 3 he stands within this treaty-covenant tradition and usage. Both the nation and God should be “walking together” because they had bound themselves in the covenant at Sinai.

The people should not let go of God to go after any other as a new sovereign, be it a human one or an idol, because both they and God had ruled out such conduct when they had “agreed” (*nw’dw*).⁶⁰ While this term in Amos 3: 3 is usually taken to be part of a wisdom saying,⁶¹ and is interpreted by some scholars as referring to “two men making their way across the horizon of Judah’s empty hill country” to meet at an appointed time and place,⁶² it may very well refer to the covenant-making event when God and Israel acknowledged—that is, “knew,” or “agreed with”—each other at Sinai. It could be a play on the word *yd’*, “to know,” in the sense that both Yahweh and the nation had recognized the covenant and its stipulations as binding

on themselves and each other.⁶³ Such a frame of reference would not only fit it in well with the two verses which precede it but would carry out the covenantal implications of the “walking together” metaphor in the first half of the verse—that is, because two parties *have* covenanted, they *should* walk together, each fulfilling his role and its responsibilities as delineated by the stipulations of that agreement. “The basic idea, the relation between Yahweh and Israel as a bond between partners, and details of formulation all suggest . . . [the] concepts and terms having to do with the covenant.”⁶⁴

But the nation has totally forgotten this “agreement” and its responsibilities. They no longer know how “to do what is right” [*nkhh*] (Amos 3: 10), but, on the contrary, “store up violence [*hms*] and robbery [*sd*] in their strongholds” (3: 10). The norms which should have governed the affairs of the Israelites have been put out of mind. Yahweh’s demands had “dropped out of sight and consciousness among Samaria’s leading citizens.”⁶⁵

The term *nkhh* has the essential meaning of “to walk straight forward,” “to go directly toward [a goal].” At times, it is used in the Bible to mean that which is “straight,” as well as that which is “honest [true].”⁶⁶ In some cases, it is used in contrast to that which is deceptive and false (cf Is 30: 40). It is also used as a synonym of “justice,” “righteousness,” and “faithfulness” in Is 59: 14 in a sequence dealing with the theme “justice is far from us.”⁶⁷ It appears in a legal framework in Prov 24: 26 and 2 Sam 15: 3; in the former instance, being used in a wisdom saying concerning conduct in legal affairs; and in the latter, being applied to a legal appeal.

In Amos’ indictment, *nkhh* appears to be used in this legal sense. It points to what was desired to be the style of justice observed in the legal proceedings in the nation. “What is alone of moment to him is the departure from an order of society which was formed according to Yahweh’s will and which maintained every Israelite one with the other in a system of mutual responsibility.”⁶⁸

That all such covenantal norms have been completely forgotten by his contemporaries is to be seen in the fact that while the poor are trampled (Amos 8: 4), as dishonesty is rampant in the marketplace (vs 5), and as the defenseless are sold into slavery (vs 6), the debauched lie on their beds of ivory (6: 4) and demand more luxury for themselves (4:1). Moreover, in the place of covenant obedience, the populace attempts to substitute religious ceremonialism. But their empty ritual and hollow pilgrimages cannot atone for the breaking of the covenantal stipulations. Through biting sarcasm in the mouth of his prophet, God pours out his abhorrence of such religious sham:

“Come to Bethel, and transgress;
to Gilgal, and multiply transgression;
bring your sacrifices every morning,
your tithes every three days;
offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of
that which is leavened,
and proclaim freewill offerings,
publish them;
for so you love to do, O people of
Israel!”
says the Lord God.⁶⁹

Because the covenant has been broken, Amos declares that the punishment entailed in the bond's curse clauses is going to be unleashed. In three chapters (7, 8, 9) Amos delineates some of the forms that chastisement will take.

In the first prophecy, the people are told that the high places and sanctuaries will be destroyed, and that God is going to set himself against the kingdom:

He showed me: behold the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.”
Then the Lord said,
“Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” (7: 7-9)

In the second oracle, the prophet declares that the people within the northern kingdom will personally feel the consequences of their rebellion. Even though the sentence was spoken to Amaziah for his contradiction of God's command to Amos, the whole nation of covenant breakers will suffer the same consequences as he:

Therefore thus says the Lord:
“Your wife shall be a harlot in the city and your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be parceled out by line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.” (7: 17)

The third prophecy tells of the extensiveness of the punishment that is to come, and announces that the moment for its breaking forth is at hand:

Thus the Lord showed me: behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the Lord said to me,
“The end has come upon my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them.
The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,”
says the Lord God;
“the corpses shall be many;
in every place they shall be cast out. Hush!”

Other punishments, including some directly connected with the curse clauses in the biblical covenantal tradition and their Near Eastern parallels, are threatened by Amos at various points within his book.⁷⁰ Together with what is forecast here, they are to comprise the chastisement for the nation's rebellion.

As in every national covenantal text preserved within the Bible, as well as in almost every complete Near Eastern treaty document, the covenantal texts themselves had provided for such a punitive response by the Deity, or deities, against those who broke their oaths and bolted the covenant's stipulations. As J. L. Mays has commented, it is “clear that Israel is to be judged precisely in her identity as the covenant people.”⁷¹

This is what God has sworn to do (cf Amos 6: 8). Three times the phrase *nšb' adny yhw h bnpšw* is used by Amos, each time to introduce a divine decree of punishment.⁷² The total force of God's personal integrity is invested in this solemn oath, the ancient Near East's most binding form of personal

commitment.⁷³ Since Israel had thrown over God's lordship, she had to take the covenantal consequences.

To smash the nation was, however, not what God *wanted* to have to do. His desire was for the people to assume a responsible and obedient posture in keeping with their covenantal ties. If that were done, then all the predicted calamity could be averted. The people had only to reverse their pattern of disobedience and "seek" the Lord, in the sense of "going after" him (5: 5-6). In the Near Eastern tradition, such an action implied not only a "search" for the Lord, but a "following after" him—that is, it entailed obedience to that Lord as the supreme partner in a covenant relationship as well.⁷⁴ If that were done, the covenantal relationship could be restored, and the people would "live" (cf Amos 5: 6) rather than perish:

Seek good, and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the Lord, the God
of hosts, will be with
you,
as you have said.
Hate evil, and love good,
and establish justice
in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God of
hosts will be gracious
to the remnant of Joseph. (5: 14-15)

The "good" which Amos envisioned was a return to living covenantally. The whole of Chapter 5 of his book, where the sins of Israel are lamented, is laced with covenantal language and allusions. The sins attacked are almost always those prohibited in the covenantal stipulations themselves.⁷⁵ His remedy for that sinfulness involves a reacceptance of their covenant responsibilities by the people:

Let justice [*mšpł*] roll down
like waters; and righteousness
[*šdqh*] like an ever-flowing
stream. (5: 24)

The people had agreed to do that when they entered the pact with God that made them his peculiar people.⁷⁶ Though they had repeatedly refused to carry out the covenantal terms they swore to perform, the assumption on which the prophecy of Amos is based is that if they acted positively on them at once, the God-Israelite breach could be healed. While the possibility for that to happen was left open by God, on the basis of the people's past

obstreperousness and obstinacy, Amos apparently anticipated no change in the nation's moral-religious course.

Since the people did not acknowledge the "right" they were to live by (cf 3: 10), then there was little hope that it might become the norm for their activity. They had denied the very basis for any such God-dictated covenantal obedience by repudiating, by their *pš'y*, God's authority over them (cf 2: 4, 6). The patience that God had shown in the past as he waited for that rebellion to end had finally reached its limits. He would no longer continue to forgive their sins. The day for reform had come, and its rejection would be dealt with:

The end has come upon my people
Israel;
I will never again pass by them. (7: 8; 8: 2)

In the eyes of Amos, this combination of the end of the divine patience and the persistent rebellion and callousness of the leaders and upper classes of Israel foreboded doom for the nation. Nevertheless, the premise that man had within himself the power to change his stance toward God and the covenant *was never denied* by the prophet. Man did have within himself the capacity for obedience. He could have—indeed, should have—been keeping the covenant all along. It was *because* the Israelites had the potential to do so, and did not use it, and *because* they had sworn to be obedient, and had then refused to perform what they were capable of accomplishing, that they were going to be punished by God. The covenant's stipulations were possible to fulfill; the problem was that God's people had chosen to break them rather than to obey them.⁷⁷

Thus, the assumption of an existing covenantal bond between Yahweh and the nation is apparent in the prophecy of Amos. The presence of at least three important factors lead clearly to such a conclusion. Briefly summarized, they are these:

First, Amos made repeated use of terms which were part of the reservoir of formal treaty-covenant parlance. Words like *yd'*, *pš'*, *twrh*, *hwq*, *šb'*, *mšpł*, *šdqh* recur often in the text of the book. While each one of these roots can be interpreted to have more than one meaning or point of reference, all of them have been shown by various scholars and textual evidence to have strong grounding in the Near Eastern and biblical treaty-covenant tradition and practice.

Second, the basis for most of the prophet's charges against the nation is their violations of specific covenant stipulations. As has been shown, in numerous instances the sins pointed out by him are those prohibited in one or another of the extant biblical covenantal texts.

Third, the curses which Amos either invokes or alludes to as being ready to befall the nation for the violation of the covenant's demands are also, for the most part, attested in the treaty-covenant texts. Even where no specific quotes or parallels to Amos' threats can be found in any biblical or Near Eastern religio-legal corpus, his maledictions clearly fit into that genre of literature.

The presence of any one of these factors, or the appearance of any single element or component of them, would not of itself be sufficient evidence to prove that Amos had presupposed and built his message on an existing covenantal relationship between God and Israel. However, the clustering of such factors, coupled with the central role they play in this biblical book, points to the conclusion that not only was there a covenant concept known to, and appreciated by, Amos and his contemporaries but that without it he may have had no mission to the nation at all. It was because the people had revolted against their divine Suzerain and the bond which he had consummated with them that Amos was taken *m'br̄y h̄s'n* and was sent to tell his fellow countrymen that the covenant's curses were about to fall upon them.

NOTES

¹ Cf J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, Menzies and Black, trans. (New York, 1957), pp. 399 f.; S. A. Cook, *The Old Testament: A Reinterpretation* (London, 1936), p. 168; see also his *The Truth of the Bible* (London, 1938), p. 63.

² Cf W. A. Irwin, "Revelation in the Old Testament," in *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, H. R. Willoughby, ed. (Chicago, 1947), p. 258; W. C. Graham, *The Prophets and Israel's Culture* (Chicago, 1934), p. 45.

³ J. Wellhausen, *op. cit.*, pp. 417 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 417, where Wellhausen attributes this transformation of the basis of Israelite religion from a "natural bond" to a "relation depending on conditions of a moral character" to "such prophets as Elijah and Amos." Although Wellhausen became the great popularizer of this theory, he was not the one with whom many of the bases for this position originated. Scholars who preceded him, such as W. M. L. de Wette, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1806-7), Wilhelm Vatke, *Die biblische Theologie Wissenschaftlich dargestellt: Die Religion des Alten Testaments nach den kanonischen Büchern entwickelt* (1835), and K. H. Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments: Zwei historisch-kritische Untersuchungen* (1866), among others, argued that much of the covenantal-legal legislation of the Pentateuch was of late origin. They declared that many of the laws included in these texts were the products of a long process of development and could not therefore be attributed to the age of Moses or even to the early monarchical period. Such a complex religious system as the covenant documents portrayed was to be dated in the period after the time of the prophets. Cf also B. Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion* (Bonn, 1875).

⁵ Cf W. A. Irwin, *The Old Testament: Keystone to Human Culture* (New York, 1952), p. 206; I. I. Mattuck, *The Thought of the Prophets* (London, 1953), pp. 36 f.

⁶ Cf R. H. Pfeiffer, "Facts and Faith in Biblical History," *JBL* 70 (1951), 2, n. 3; also his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1941), pp. 221 ff.

⁷ *The Prophetic Achievement* (Leiden, 1963), pp. 24 ff.

⁸ *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1968).

⁹ Cf N. W. Porteous, "The Basis of the Ethical Teaching of the Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, H. H. Rowley, ed. (Edinburgh and New York, 1950), pp. 143-56, and his "Prophecy," in *Record and Revelation*, H. W. Robinson, ed. (London, 1939), p. 217; A. C. Welch, *Prophet and Priest in Old Israel* (London, 1936), pp. 148 f.; G. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, 1955), p. 19; W. F. Albright, *FSAC*, p. 239.

¹⁰ Cf G. Mendenhall, *op. cit.*, pp. 3 ff.; D. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome, 1963), pp. 7 ff.; K. Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (WMANT, 4; Neukirchen, 1960), pp. 12 ff.

¹¹ Cf G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament against Its Environment* (London, 1950), p. 29; W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Call of Israel* (London, 1934), p. 23.

¹² W. J. Phythian-Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹³ Cf J. Muilenberg, *The Way of Israel* (New York, 1961), p. 68; N. W. Porteous, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-51.

¹⁴ Cf G. Schrenk, "entellomai," *TWNT*, II, p. 546.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati, 1967), pp. 56-101.

¹⁷ Cf J. Muilenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 60; J. Bollier, "The Righteousness of God," *Interp* 8 (1954), 408-10.

¹⁸ J. Bollier, *op. cit.*, pp. 404 f.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁰ Amos 2: 4-5. Some critics are of the opinion that this oracle against Judah did not belong to the original series; cf O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1965), p. 200; G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, D. Green, trans. (New York, 1965), p. 579. As J. L. Mays points out, however, such a conclusion may be unwarranted. Ultimately such critics must "call on psychological presuppositions which cannot be established," *Amos: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 41.

²¹ Cf Ex 24: 12; Deut 4: 44; 17: 11; 27: 38; 28: 58; 29: 29. See also Josh 24: 26.

²² Cf Deut 6: 17, 24; 7: 11; 11: 32; 12: 1; 16: 12; 17: 19; 26: 16, 17; 27: 10. See also Josh 24: 25.

²³ Cf W. R. Harper, *Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1905), p. 49. Because of the inclusion within these passages of phrases which have strong similarities to the terminology, usage, structure, and so on, employed in the book of Deuteronomy, some scholars delete some portions of this material as not having come from Amos, declaring them to be later additions. Cf J. Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin, 1892); and K. Marti, *Dodekapropheten* (Berlin, 1903), *in loci*; C. C. Torrey, "Notes on Am 27^{g10} 28^{g13} 29^{g9-10}," *JBL* 15 (1896), 151-54. For those opposed to this view, see S. R. Driver, *Joel and Amos* (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, 1897), and H. J. Elhorst, *De Profetie von Amos* (Tübingen, 1901), *in loci*; A. Alt, "Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts," *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München, 1953), I, pp. 278-332; W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Age from Abraham to Ezra* (New York, 1963), pp. 19 f.

²⁴ *The Way of Israel*, p. 60.

²⁵ Cf Deut 26: 17; 27: 10.

²⁶ Cf Deut 4: 45; 5: 1; 6: 17, 24; 11: 32; 16: 12; 26: 16; Josh 24: 25.

²⁷ J. M. Myers, *Hosea-Jonah* (Layman's Bible Commentary, 14; Richmond, 1959), p. 110.

²⁸ Ex 23: 6-8. For a Near Eastern parallel, see the votive inscription of Urukagina

as translated in S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago, 1963), p. 319.

²⁹ Cf H. Bauer, *Der Prophet Amos erklärt* (Berlin, 1847); S. R. Driver, *op. cit.*; H. Ewald, *Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament* (1875–81); H. J. Elhurst, *op. cit.*; W. Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt (HAT)*; Berlin, 1903); W. R. Harper, *op. cit.*, in *loci*; J. M. Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 111. By the change of one consonant, however (*hn'rh* to *hn'dh*), the text could read "a man and his father act by agreement," making it fit very well with the preceding charges of the people defrauding the poor. Cf W. R. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 51; J. M. Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 11. In either case, it would be a violation of the covenant stipulations, as in the footnote above.

³⁰ J. M. Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³¹ Cf D. J. Wiseman, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* 20 (1958), Part I, 34, 36, 46, 52, etc.

³² 1 Kings 12: 19. In Hebrew, the vs reads: *wypš'w yšr'l bbyt dwd 'd hywm hzh*.

³³ Cf 1 Chron 18: 2, 13, where the term is used in connection with both Moab and Edom. In these contexts, 'bd appears to carry the connotation of "vassal," *BDB*, p. 712. Cf 2 Kings 3: 4; 2 Sam 10: 19. The designation "servant" is used in Near Eastern treaty parlance in this sense. Cf D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 52.

³⁴ 2 Kings 1: 1; 3: 2 ff.

³⁵ 2 Kings 8: 20–22 (parallel 2 Chron 21: 8, 10). Such an act is prohibited in both Near Eastern and biblical treaty-covenant texts. Cf D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Ex 20: 3; Deut 6: 13 f; Josh 24: 20.

³⁶ See also 2 Kings 8: 22b, where the same term is used in reference to Libnah.

³⁷ *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia, 1963), I, p. 263. See also J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

³⁸ Cf W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, J. A. Baker, trans. (Philadelphia, 1961), II, pp. 381 f.

³⁹ J. A. Bollier, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

⁴⁰ Cf the treaty between Suppiluliumas and Mattiwaza, *ANET*, p. 206.

⁴¹ Cf D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–80; *ANET*, p. 534. See also the treaties between Niqmepa of Alalakh and Ir-Im of Tunip, *ANET*, p. 531, and Ashurnirari V of Assyria and Mati'ilu of Arpad, *ibid.*, p. 532.

⁴² Ex 20: 3–7; see also Deut 27: 15 ff; Josh 24: 19 ff.

⁴³ The meaning of *m'yq* is uncertain. The root '*wq*' has been translated as "press," "totter," by *BDB*, p. 734, and as "behindert sein," "schwanken lassen," by *KB*, p. 690. H. Gese, "Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches," *VT* 12 (1962), 421, translates the word as "ausholen" ("to excavate, groove"), "eingraben" ("to dig in, furrow"). See also W. R. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 60 f.

⁴⁴ *BDB*, pp. 393 f.

⁴⁵ "The Treaty Background of Hebrew *YĀDA'*," *BASOR* 181 (1966), 34 f.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34. Cf Gen 18: 19; Ex 33: 12; 2 Sam 7: 20; 1 Chron 17: 18.

⁴⁸ Cf Is 45: 3–4; Jer 1: 5, 12: 3; 31: 34.

⁴⁹ Cf Hosea 2: 22; 4: 1; 5: 4; 8: 2; 13: 4–5.

⁵⁰ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1962), p. 326.

⁵¹ S. R. Driver, *Joel and Amos, in loci*, and his *Deuteronomy (ICC)*; Edinburgh, 1895), p. 425.

⁵² For similar opinions for the covenant rooting of this passage, see B. Yawter, *The*

Conscience of Israel (New York, 1961), p. 95; W. Harrelson, *Interpreting the Old Testament* (New York, 1964), p. 346.

⁵³ H. Huffmon, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 f.

⁵⁴ D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 131; W. J. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963), 83, n. 35.

⁵⁵ J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln (VAB)*; Leipzig, 1915), II, 135: 11 ff.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ D. J. Wiseman, "Abban and Alalakh," *JCS* 12 (1958), 129.

⁵⁸ For other examples of this use of "to follow after" in other Near Eastern treaties, see J. A. Knudtzon, *op. cit.*, 149: 46; 280: 20.

⁵⁹ Ex 20: 3; 23: 13; Deut 6: 14; 8: 19; 11: 28; 13: 2; 28: 14; Josh 24: 2, 16.

⁶⁰ Amos 3: 3.

⁶¹ Cf H. W. Wolff, "Amos' geistige Heimat," *WMANT* 18 (1964), 3–12.

⁶² J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁶³ H. Huffmon, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 35, 37.

⁶⁴ D. R. Hillers, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶⁵ J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶⁶ *BDB*, p. 647.

⁶⁷ J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ 4: 4–5; for the place of Gilgal and Bethel in Israelite worship, see H. J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, G. Buswell, trans. (Richmond, 1966), pp. 146–65.

⁷⁰ See especially Amos 4: 8, 11; 5: 11; 8: 8, 10, 12; D. R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets (Biblica et Orientalia, 16)*; Rome, 1964), discusses each of these verses and their treaty-covenant curse rootings on pp. 29, 76, 29, 71, 58, 29 respectively.

⁷¹ J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁷² 4: 2; 6: 8; 8: 7.

⁷³ Cf J. L. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 118; J. Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg, 1914); F. C. Fensham, "Maledictions and Benedictions in Ancient Near Eastern Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament," *ZAW* 74 (1962), 1–9.

⁷⁴ See W. J. Moran, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ Compare Amos 5: 7, 10 with Ex 23: 1–8 and Deut 16: 18, 20; Amos 5: 11 with Ex 22: 22; 23: 6 and Deut 10: 18; 24: 17; 27: 19; Amos 5: 12 with Ex 23: 7–8 and Deut 15: 7–11; 16: 18–20; 24: 14–15.

⁷⁶ For the covenantal exhortations to justice, cf Ex 23: 6; Deut 16: 18–19; 17: 9; 23: 17; 27: 19. For an example of stipulation calling for *righteous* behavior or actions, see Lev 19: 15.

⁷⁷ G. von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (London, 1968), p. 107.