

Suggestions for a Discourse Analysis of Amos 5,1-6,14*

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Summary: This short study is part of a wider investigation into the rhetorical and discourse features of Amos 5,1-6,14. The purpose of this wider research will be to demonstrate that this text may be read as one piece of communication. In this present paper we shall investigate how the author is organizing his material into three 'stanzas', an introductory piece (5,1-3), and two larger ones, each introduced by the messenger formula in 5,4 and 16. In this study the author examines also the rhetorical function of the initial "appeal for attention" in 5,1a which here serves to introduce the unity as a whole. "Word" assumes a special meaning.

1. Preliminaries

In this paper we shall investigate authorial markers of rhetorical arrangement in Amos 5,1-6,14. Normally this text is splintered into several smaller units which are supposed to have originated separately and within different vital contexts; the understanding behind this procedure is that each unit has to be read as a separate entity set within an artificial and secondary literary context which is the present text of Amos (cf. Mays 1969; Wolff 1973 for such approach). A discourse approach to the text, however, would reveal that the current context is its "co-text" (cf. Brown & Yule 1983:46-50 for this concept) and hence necessary for the complete understanding of all the elements of the text we have in our hands.

In this essay we shall not offer an exhaustive discourse analysis of Amos 5,1-6,14; we shall only examine what would appear to be markers from the "author" to indicate the organization of the composition. Specifically we shall examine the "appeal for attention" in 5,1a and the "messenger formula" in 5, 3.4.16 for their rhetorical function within the text under study. Naturally, studying this text as a literary unity would constitute for some a shift in their methodological approach to the prophetic literature, the consequences of which may not all have been envisaged

(cf. Gitay 2001). But this is the only type of exegesis that is helpful to people who seek to know the text in order to translate it.

2. “Listen to this word” (5,1a)

Wendland (1988) and Abela (2002) propose to read in this verse initial “appeal for attention”¹ the authorial intention of employing it as a boundary marker, an intention which comes into clearer light if we compare the use the author makes of the formula in 3,1 and 4,1, and possibly as a title for the ensuing text²; however, the exegete has to disengage this appeal from its syntagmatic context. For “translation tradition”³ that can be traced back through masoretic exegesis, the recensions, and on to the proto-masoretic stage⁴ of the text’s development, has constantly connected this appeal with the clauses that follow it in 5,1. The LXX interpreted the lexeme אָשַׁר in this verse as a relative pronoun anaphorically oriented towards הַזֶּה הַדָּבָר, “this word”, and as the grammatical subject of the ensuing relative clause, literally saying “which I am going to raise against/upon you”. This latter clause very much resembles syntactically the typical clause of its kind (cf. Clines, *DCH*, 1993:419-423). Semantically אָשַׁר would appear to be the object of the verb נִדְּבַע⁵ (literally, “to raise”). A problem with this parsing arises since the clausal verb apparently has another object, קִינָה, “lamentation”. To assess how strange this grammatical analysis results, it suffices to read the literal translation of the LXX: ὃν ἐγὼ λαμβάνω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς θρῆνον, “which (acc.) I am giving to you a lamentation,” where the verb λαμβάνω commands both the relative pronoun ὃν and the noun θρῆνον. The Vulgate managed to somewhat lessen the syntactical awkwardness of the LXX by translating אָשַׁר through “quod”, an ambiguous lexeme that may serve both as a relative pronoun qualifying the neuter noun “verbum”, as well as conjunction, “because”. This rendering, perhaps by chance, recuperates what some consider as the original meaning/function of the connecting word אָשַׁר in Hebrew,⁵ that of “relative conjunction” with the meaning ‘that, because’ (cf. *DCH*, 1:431-433).

1. Cf. Koch 1964,²1967:205 for this formal description of the initial imperative in 5,1. For nomenclature from form-critical studies of prophetic literature I depend upon March 1974:141-178.
2. This text cannot extend beyond 6,14 given the diverse literary nature of what we find in 7,1-9.
3. For this concept one may consult Buzzetti 2001.
4. For nomenclature being employed here, and for a history of the text of the Hebrew Bible cf. Tov 1992.
5. Cf. Joüon & Muraoka (2006): § 145a.

If this is the case, the LXX has completely misunderstood the word as its qualifying the cluster τὸν λόγον by adding κυρίου (“of the Lord”) further confirms.⁶ Later translations attempt to improve upon LXX’s parsing by defining the noun קִינָה as being in apposition to the expression “this word”⁷, but they still follow the grammatical analysis of the Greek translators. A few translations would show what this parsing entails:

TOB: Ecoutez cette parole, cette lamentation que je profère sur vous, maison d’Israël.

NJB: Listen to this word which I utter against you, it is a dirge, House of Israel.

NJPS: Hear this word which I intone as a dirge over you, O House of Israel.

CEV: Listen, nation of Israel, to my mournful message.

REB: Listen, Israel, to these words, the dirge I raise over you.

In this essay I am proposing a different parsing, translation, and interpretation of Amos 5:1. a) In order to discern authorial intent behind this verse we should start with parsing the particle אֲשֶׁר as a “relative conjunction” and not as a relative pronoun. Secondly, we should read the noun קִינָה as the object of the verb נִשָּׂא. These two options would render the syntax of the verse much smoother,⁸ and would deal with the suggestion that the term “lamentation” was a gloss to explain the expression “this word” (cf. Robinson³1964; Delcor1961:209). At this stage, a preliminary translation of 5,1 may be offered:

“Listen to this word, O House of Israel, for I am about to utter a dirge about you.”

b) What is the real meaning of the term הַדְּבָר in this verse? As we have seen, it is normally translated as “word”, “message” and is taken as basically referring to the contents of the lamentation. We may quote Andersen & Freedman’s as being a typical exegesis:

“Verse 1 is the introduction, v.2 the qinah. The unit is unusual in several ways. The call to listen to ‘this message’ leads to expect an

6. On the translation strategies adopted by the LXX’s translator of Amos cf De Waard (1978):342.

7. A case of “loose apposition”, see Joüon & Maruoka(2006):§131m; and Andersen & Freedman(1989):473 for this parsing.

8. One should consult Lambdin (1971):65 with profit.

oracle of conventional type—an accusation or a judgement speech or a reproach in the form of a Woe, as in 4:1 which begins in the same way. The message is then identified as *qinah*...a song of grief, the text of which immediately follows” (1989:472).⁹

But is this the real meaning of “this word”? Is it referring to the subject-matter of the lamentation? The parallelism with 4,1 would rather reveal that there exists a syntactical caesura between the imperative clause in 5,1a and the **שׁוּעַ** clause in 5,1b.

c) Therefore, taking the cue from Giovanni Rinaldi (1963:166-167), I prefer to read “word” here as a “title of literary unity” with the meaning ‘composition’ as in Amos 1,1 and a limited number of other texts listed in *BDB*:183. The earlier translation of 5,1 may now be improved upon:

Listen to this composition:
For I am about to utter a lamentation upon you,
O House of Israel.

This exegesis and translation of 5,1 make it necessary to counsel the reader against the interpretation offered by Andersen and Freedman in their influential commentary (1989:475); these exegetes suggest that Amos 3,1 should be taken as model for 5,1. Instead, the reader should look at 4,1 for a parallel with 5,1; in 4,1 it becomes evident that the grammatical dissonance between the first half of the verse and the second would entail that the addressees of the imperative **שׁוּעַ** “Listen” are not the “cows of Bashan” (Abela 2002). Therefore the “appeal for attention” in 4,1 should be read as a semantic and syntactical unit, separate from the rest of the verse. On the other hand, the identical form of this appeal for attention in Amos 3,1; 4,1, and 5,1 would suggest that they all have the same literary/rhetorical function of introducing the ensuing material as being similar literary units. This means that the plural of **הַדְּבָרִים** in Amos 1,1 would imply that the Book of Amos is being perceived as an ensemble of such “literary units”. One such literary unit is 5,1-6,14 being hemmed between the appeal for attention in 5,1a and 7,1 which introduces a different kind of literary unit, namely, a vision.

9. Cf. also Alonso Schökel & Sicre Diaz (1980):974-975; Coggins (2000):123; De Waard & Smalley (1979):95; Mays (1969):64.

3. *The rhetorical function of the messenger formula within 5,1b-6,14*

Before embarking on an investigation into the formal function of the messenger formulas within the scope of “this word” (5,1-6,14), we shall premise: a) a short morphological and syntactical analysis of each instance of the formula in this unit; b) an examination of the semantic value of the cluster/lexeme אָדָנִי in 5,3 and 5,16.

3.1 *Grammatical Analysis of 5,3;5,4; and 5,16*

Even if the writer of Amos 5,1-6,14 is drawing this formula from narrative and prophetic tradition (cf. Rofé 1997:61-62), he does not refrain from manipulating its form, syntactically and morphologically, to make it fit his general purposes (cf. Andersen & Freedman 1989:476). If one takes the clause כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה “thus says the Lord”, that predominates in Amos’ harangue against the nations (1,3-2,16) to be the nucleus of the formula, one cannot but describe the formula within the unit 5,1-6,14 as “marked”. In 5, 3 the messenger formula is qualified by both the conjunction כִּי and the cluster/word אָדָנִי which replaces יְהוָה as head of the clause, with the tetragrammaton being in apposition to the new “head”.

Were these the only qualifications of the nucleus of the messenger formula in 5,3? *BHK* suggested a transposition to the end of v.3a of the adjunct יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵית (literally, “to the house of Israel”) in v.3c. *BHS* maintains the suggestion on the presumption that there exists a perfect parallelism between vv.3a and 4a. Some would consider the adjunct in v.4a as an addendum, but keep it in the text (Soggin 1987:81-82); others drop it from the text as unnecessary (*NV* and *NIV*; cf. Andersen & Freedman 1989: 476). *BHK*’s proposal has been accepted by a few authors like Alonso Schökel & Sicre Diaz (1980) and Delcor (1961).¹⁰ Some exegetes parse the preposition ל as meaning “in reference to, with regards to” (*GHC*: §§ 119u and 143e for this meaning) and transfer the preposition and the phrase it commands to after the *verbum dicendi* in v.3a (*NJPS*, Rinaldi). I prefer the more common parsing for this lamedh as a *nota dativi*.¹¹

What occasioned this debate concerning the transposition to v.3a is the term’s

10. “De tels déplacements sont facilement explicables” (“Such displacements are easy to explain”) (Delcor 1961:209).

11. Andersen & Freedman’s parsing of the preposition ל as lamedh vocativum based on presumed parallelism to “house of Israel” in v.1 is inadmissible; especially since these scholars do not consider this lamedh as a morphological marker for the vocative (cf. Dahood 1970).

position as a sentence-ending element. In a footnote to the verse Mays (1969:84) sententiously claims: “The phrase does not fit the syntax or metre of the sentence; perhaps it has been displaced from the introductory formula at the beginning of the verse.” Mays translates the phrase and puts it at the end of v.3a, though within brackets. But as one may surmise on checking the old Greek, Aramaic¹², and Latin versions, there exists no textual basis for transposing לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל in v.3c to after יְהוָה in v.3a as if this phrase were meant to supply the indirect object of the verb אָמַר in the messenger formula of 5,3. Hence one understands why the authors of the fifth volume of the *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project*¹³ had no comment to make on BHK’s and BHS’s suggestion.

Postposition of the phrase “to the house of Israel” to the very end of the oracle, notwithstanding a sense of syntactical awkwardness, constitutes conscious strategy. It answers to two rhetorical needs that the author had: emphasis, and the marking of an inclusio with the same phrase in v.1b (cf. De Waard & Smalley 1979:95.205; Carroll 1992:224). Of course, in translation one needs not woodenly reproduce the form of the Hebrew text so as to maintain the place of this phrase at the end of the strophe (compare Chouraqui, *RSV*, *NRSV*, and *TEV*). I think the phrase should be taken as qualifying the head noun הָעִיר (“the city”) in v.3b (cf. Andersen & Freedman 1989:476). The writer is describing the decimation of Israel’s armies that would go out for battle from the various cities and strongholds; this decimation of the armies made possible the devastation amidst the civil population, a devastation that is graphically depicted by the word picture of v.2. The particle כִּי at the head of the messenger formula carries the poet’s interpretation of these two events as intimately linked (*contra* Delcor 1961:209), so that for the author of 5,1-6,14, v.3 should be read and translated as constitutive of the קִינָה (cf. also Mays 1969: 85-86).

In 5,4 the formula is very similar to that in 5,3. The cluster אֲדֹנָי “my Lord”, which features prominently in 5,3, is missing, but it too has the clause-initial כִּי with causal or emphatic sense, and has also the referent to the addressee of the messenger formula, לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל which is completely lacking in 5,3. Very probably, this variation points to the different functions of the two messenger formulas within the unit 5,1-6,14 as a whole. Again in 5,16 one may notice a small number of changes in the formula over its form in 5,4. Instead of the causal/emphatic כִּי we find another particle, לְכֵן, normally translated “therefore” (*LXX*, *Vulg*, *RSV*, *TEV*, *TOB*, *MBS*,

12. Cf. Sperber(1992):422.

13. New York, United Bible Societies, 1980.

Chouraqui, Delcor, Andersen & Freedman) which logically links the ensuing to what precedes it (not simply to the former verse, insisted De Waard & Smalley 1979:112). Of course, the logical relationship between what precedes the formula and what follows it may be restructured differently (cf. *GNBibel*). Some translations ignore the semantic value of this particle (cf. *BLC*) while *NJPS* reads לְכֵן as an emphatic particle rather than as a conjunction (cf. also *DCH*, IV, 548 and *PdV*).

What is novel about the messenger formulas in 5,1-6,14 is the phrase or phrases אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת אֲדֹנָי “my Lord God of hosts” hanging in apposition to the head element in the clause, that is the nominal יְהוָה. This title is described as “cumbersome and unusual” by Andersen & Freedman (1989:516). But its cumbersomeness does not justify suppressing the end element אֲדֹנָי (*contra* LXX and the Vulg together with some modern translations and commentaries like *PdV* and Mays1969:96). This word/cluster stands in apposition to the tetragrammaton and not to the preceding phrase which in turn is also in apposition. May be, Andersen & Freedman were correct in reading אֲדֹנָי ... יְהוָה, “my Lord YHWH”, as enclosing the rest of the complex divine title in 5,16. They also make this suggestion that the “peculiarity of the expression in v.16 should be viewed in relation to the equally unique rubric in v.27b. This line balances v.16a and both serve as a frame to embrace and unify vv.16-27 as a larger ensemble of oracles and related pieces” (*Ibid.*).

One should also notice the inversion of elements within the nuclear phrase יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי (5,3;6,8), with אֲדֹנָי being postponed to an emphatic end-position within the clause.

3.2 *The semantic value of אֲדֹנָי*

In two out of three instances of the messenger formula in 5,1-6,14 we encounter the noun or noun cluster אֲדֹנָי which relates to the proper name יְהוָה. In 5,4 אֲדֹנָי is missing. In 5,3 it is found in its “normal position” with respect to the tetragrammaton (cf.6,8; Andersen & Freedman1989:516). In 5,16 the word or word cluster clearly carries the nuance of emphasis. The question arises: what is the real meaning of אֲדֹנָי and why has the LXX systematically suppressed the word?¹⁴

14. Later manuscripts of the LXX have not elided the word in v.3 and got the awkward combination κύριος κ̄ριος, which explains the option of the original Greek translators; in 5.16 these translators simply ignored its significance, and hence the instruction in *BHK* to delete it.

Strictly speaking, the only bone of contention has been the semantic value of the morphological marker of possession attached to the plural of the lexeme אֲדֹנָיִם//אֲדֹנָי “lord//lords”. It is symptomatic of the difficult situation in which scholarship finds itself with regards this word that while *BDB* (10-11) and *Koeler-Baumgartner* (1:12-13) treat אֲדֹנָי under the rubric אֲדֹנָי, *DCH*(I:133-135) discuss this as a separate item. Joüon & Muraoka (2006:§136d) consider the word as a majestic plural employed only for the divine name יְהוָה. The gematria in the concluding syllable is emphatic while for these two grammarians “the value of the suffix is practically nil: the Lord.”

This judgement seems to have been subscribed to by modern scholarship at large, as attested by a number of translations and commentaries. In 5,3, for instance, in order to avoid the stylistic awkwardness of the LXX, many authors opt to follow the Vulgate’s translation strategy of rendering אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה as if it were the composite name יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (cf. Abela 1994): “Dominus Deus,” cf. *BJ*, *GNBibel*, *NRSV*, *CEV*, *REB*, *BLC*, Delcor, Mays.¹⁵ For 5,16 one may consult *BJ*, *GNBibel*, *NRSV*, *CEV*, *REB*, *BLC*, Soggin, and Mays whose judgement is typical: “‘Lord’ is certainly secondary, as is possibly the entire title”(1969:96). We may also mention those authors and versions who drop אֲדֹנָי from their translation (cf. Alonso Schökel & Sicre Diaz; *PdV*). But there are authors who neither drop אֲדֹנָי nor rate as semantically zero the morphological marker that qualify the nucleus אֲדֹנָי; they interpret the lexeme as a cluster and translate it as “my Lord” in both 5,3 and 5,16 (*TOB*, *NJPS*, *MBS*, Andersen & Freedman, cf. *DCH*I:135). This means that for these translations the relational element is constitutive of the messenger formula in 5,1-6,14 as its positioning in both verses underlines. The speaker whose words the writer purports to report is “my Lord”; the writer is emotionally involved as he utters these words. He is very much the *homo sympatheticos* described by Abraham Heschel (1962).

3.3 Different rhetorical functions

We are now in a position to study the real formal and rhetorical function of these messenger formulae in this communicative act which is 5,1-6,14. We shall move through our analysis step by step:

15. Rinaldi treats אֲדֹנָי in 5, 3, 16 as a proper name, Adonai,: “poichè così dice Adonai, il Signore”(“for thus says Adonai, the Lord”); likewise Chouraqui.

3.3.1. One may start with consulting form critical analyses of prophetic literature (cf. Westermann 1960; Koch 1964, 1969; March 1974; Sicre 1995; Rofé 1997). Unfortunately this line of research will not lead to certain necessary conclusions; for while the messenger formula is usually discourse initial in use, the prophet/poet's creativity may devise other employments for specific poetic purposes. This becomes evident in Amos 5,3. The formula introduces יהוה's or ארני's discourse in v.3b.c; but the formula does not open the literary unit 5,1b-3. It is rather part of the weave of the fabric labelled by the author as קינה. It logically (hence the use of כִּי) connects the Lord's declaration about the decimation of Israel's armies to the picture of devastation drawn in v.2. This makes it clear therefore that the messenger formula in 5,3 is not a boundary marker; instead it may be termed as a "logical conjunction."

3.3.2. There exist indications that the formula in 5,4 has been meant by the author to function as boundary marker and as a sign that a new discourse unit is beginning. Several scholars have noticed the rhetorical use of "house of Israel" in 5,1b.3c as an inclusio (cf. Andersen & Freedman 1989:476; Carroll 1992:224). But that a caesura is seen to exist between vv.3 and 4 may also be deduced by the change of subject-matter as well as the style. In vv.2-3 the poet speaks in the third person even when he reproduces the speech of the Lord (v.3). In v.4, after the messenger formula, the Lord addresses the "house of Israel" in the second person throughout the entire strophe (vv.4-7), though at one point he shifts to the third person when he speaks about himself (v.6) and about the addressees themselves (v.7). There is strong evidence, however, to show that the messenger formula in v.4 is meant to introduce a new discourse unit regardless of how one chooses to define this unit.

3.3.3. Within the textual and translation traditions, there is partial acknowledgement of the anaphoric nature of 5:16a. Taking the cue from the masoretic division (the *sethumas* after vv.15.17), several versions and translations consider vv.16-17 as forming one strophe (cf. *Vulgata Clementina*, *REB*, *BJ* [+ subtitle], *PdV*, *NJPS*, *NV*, *GNBibel*, *BLC*, Rinaldi). Some would not even accord this discourse initial character to v.16a and read the formula as being rather confirmatory and emphatic in nature (cf. *TOB*, *MBS*, *NV*). A number of scholars dislodge vv.16-17 from their current position within the co-text and transpose them elsewhere to form other semantic units (Soggin, Mays). Others read vv.16-17 as the concluding strophe of a wider composition comprising 5,1-17, a composition that is chiasmically disposed, within which vv.16-17 correspond in function to 5,1-3 (cf. De Waard 1977; De Waard & Smalley 1979:189-192; Wendland 1988; Carroll 1992:221-240; Bovati & Meynet 1994):

“The closing oracle (segment a¹) complements the opening lament (segment a) by means of a sequence of references to *mourning*, presumably over the *fallen* in Israel (5,2-3), that is, effect/cause. An inclusio is formed by repeated mention of the divine name coupled with the second person references to the addressees, that is verse 1a(plural) and verse 17b (singular, collective)...”(Wendland1988:16).

“This concluding strophe rounds out the chiasm by returning to the theme of lament. The most striking difference between these verses and the matching member (5:1-3) is that this mourning is taken up by the nation itself; it is no longer Yahweh who lifts up the dirge”(Carroll1992: 237).

The only Bible translation that I know of which graphically acknowledges the presence of this concentric structure within 5,1-17 is the *Gute Nachricht Bibel* (1997). This edition marks by letters the various members of the structure: A(vv.1-3), B(vv.4-6), C (v.7), D (vv.8-9), C¹ (vv.10-13), B¹ (vv.14-15), A¹ (vv.16-17).

A number of questions need to be asked before one subscribes to the statement in favour of this overall structure within 5,1-17. First of all, the only “lexical recursion” between 5:1-3 and 5:16-17 concerns the messenger formula with its formulaic language.¹⁶ But do these instances of the formula really correspond functionally? Because if they do not correspond functionally how may one state that they are meant by the author to act as markers of correspondence within the structure? And if the formulas in vv.3 and 16 were chosen to counter-balance each other, why was the formula in v.4 left without a matching element within the overarching structure? Of course one may not deny the possibility that there exists some symmetrical patterns within 5,4-15; in this respect it’s enough to mention the recursion of the *דרש* (“seek”) motif . However, any statement concerning the presence of structures

16. The proponents of the hypothesis that here there exists a concentric structure suggest that there are significant genre-related correspondence that links these two sections. If one takes them together one may notice that v.1 functions as introduction to a little “lament” with vv.2-3 giving the reasons for the song(death in battle and the horrible consequences for the population), while vv.16-17 report the result (widespread mourning).. On the structural level, however, nothing is offered by the poet to make us read vv.16-17 together with vv.1-3 as if they were one literary unit so that one may see vv.16-17 as complementing vv.1-3. Vv.1-3 function as the introduction to 5,1-6,14 while vv.16-17 are meant to introduce the subsection 5,16-6,14. The rhetorical function of the individual subsections will be fully appreciated when “this word” 5,1-6,14 as a whole will have been studied in greater detail.

and symmetrical patterning in a text needs to take into account all discourse and rhetorical features. Otherwise it will be hard to avoid falling into eisegesis.

Secondly, does the לכן clause in 5,16 form a structure with the other instances in vv.11 and 13? “The particle *lkn* that opens v.16 is the last and climax of a chain of three after the hymn (5,8-9) that declare the judgement of Yahweh (5,11.13)” (Carroll 1992:237). But a superficial reading of 5,10-17 would demonstrate that while the particle לכן marks the semantic cause-effect relation, rhetorically it functions quite differently. In 5,11 the particle is strengthened by the causal conjunction ע” [cf. *DCH*, IV:548] and is situated in the middle of an argumentation that starts in v. 10 and ends in v. 13. In this latter text לכן heads a clause that seems to bring to a close an argumentative strophe (notice the imperative ררשו in v.14). In 5,16 the particle לכן “commands” the messenger formula that appears to be anaphoric in character.

The question that remains to be settled concerns whether the formula introduces a minor or a major division within “this word” of 5,1. In other words, does 5,16a form part of a concentric or a linear arrangement of the material available to the author of 5,1-6,14?¹⁷ Is Amos 5,15-16 harking back to 5,1-3, somehow adding commentary to what the poet says there, or is 5,15-16 ushering us into a distinct though logically related subdivision in the wider composition? It is the thesis of this study that the messenger formula in 5,16 marks the beginning of a new section, 5,16-6,14 just as the same formula in v.4 heads the unit 5,4-15.¹⁸

3.4 *The messenger formula in 5,16 as boundary marker for 5,16-6,14*

The question to be discussed is not whether we can read v.16a as a boundary marker, but whether this reading forms part of the authorial design when 5,1-6,14

17. Cf. Wendland 1988:1-8 and 1994:28-46 for useful considerations on discourse aspects of Hebrew poetry.

18. Of course one may not exclude the possibility that the poet is superimposing a concentric pattern over a linear one; we must normally assume that the linear pattern is the primary pattern unless the author gives evident structural or linguistic marks to show that the concentric pattern should be taken as primary. In our case the linear seems to be the primary pattern. I am afraid that the concentric arrangements noticed by other colleagues abstract from the structural indications given by the author of the present text. Again, there exists the possibility that v.16 is meant to have a double function and hence may serve both the basic linear pattern as well as the superimposed concentric pattern. But this has yet to be investigated into and proven; the argumentation in paragraph 3.4.1 is meant to show that vv.16-17 are not part of a concentric pattern that starts at 5,1.

was composed as **הַרְבֵּךְ הַזֶּה**; if so we ought to follow the author's own exegesis as encoded into the text.

3.4.1 *Amos 5,16 is not part of 5,4-15*

In this paragraph we shall build a negative argument to demonstrate that Amos 5,16-17 does not form part of the sub-unit 5,4-15; according to authorial arrangement though it is constitutive of 5,1-6,14. I shall first offer a brief though necessarily incomplete rhetorical analysis of vv.4-15.

The text 5,4b-7. The main formal characteristics of this text are the motif *drš* ("seek", vv.4.5.6) with (YHWH) as object, syntactically and semantically combined to the verbal concept **חַיֶּה**, ("to live"), and the technique of contrast: seek/don't seek. The negative formulation has 'Bethel' for object while the exhortation "seek YHWH" has another two negative imperatives to counterbalance it in v.5 with two verbs of motion which have 'Gilgal' and 'Beersheba' as destination points. The three names mentioned in the negative formulation of the instruction are place names of cult so that the imperative "seek YHWH" may have a cultic connotation in vv.4-5. One should notice also that the two cola with the negative imperatives in v.5b are chiasmically disposed. The justification for the strong prohibition in v.5a-b (worth noting is the supportive alliteration in the second colon in v.5) is given in v.5c: Gilgal and Bethel's future has been signed already. The destruction of the central sanctuary in the south of Palestine (Beer-sheba) is not spelled out in this text unless Bethel and Gilgal are seen as merismic for places of irregular cultic practice, or else the poet means to draw a concentric structure with Beer-sheba as the central element that he wants to criticise. One should notice that the place names in vv.5-6 come in this order: Bethel, Gilgal, Beer-sheba, Gilgal, Bethel. The recursion of 'Bethel' at the beginning and the end of the Lord's utterance seems to function also as an inclusio.

The imperative **רְשׁוּ**, seek, in v.6 marks a break from preceding argumentation and the beginning of a new strophe. One may note also a shift from the first person to the third person style. In this second strophe¹⁹ it seems that it is the prophet's voice that is being heard: it is his prophetic voice commenting on the previous exhortation (vv.4-5) and repeating its contents (hence the recursion of the head word) with

19. For the meaning of "strophe" in this essay cf. Zogbo & Wendland 2000:53-54.

some variation. The argument in favour of seeking the Lord is no longer based upon the prophecy of doom and future chastisement of the cult places; instead we find an open threat of sheer destruction of the entire 'house of Joseph/Bethel'. One may therefore notice a progression of thought in the sense of an intensification that takes the form of a sudden "irruption" of YHWH in human history. This irruption is symbolised by fire that consumes before it can be quenched.²⁰

How do the phrases **בית יוסף** and **לבית אל** ("house of Joseph" and "to Bethel") behave within the grammatical weave of the second strophe? In the second colon of v.6 "house of Joseph" is better parsed as a vocative since no "commanding" preposition is employed after the verb **יצלח**, 'break out' which therefore may be parsed as intransitive (cf. *Koehler-Baumgartner*, 3:1026; but consult also the apparatus of *BHS*). The same may be said of the corresponding phrase **לבית אל** (literally, "to Bethel") parsing the lamedh as a vocative marker.²¹ Of course, even if one opts to parse the verb **חלצ** as being transitive with "house of Joseph" as its object and the lamedh attached to Bethel as being *nota dativi*, the two phrases "house of Joseph" and "Bethel" would still be corresponding pieces within the general structure of v.6.

The two cola in v.7 stand in apposition to "Bethel". They offer the characterisation of "Bethel", centre of religious power) as subverting justice, perhaps in the name of the official religion.

The text 5,8-9 This is a strophe which the author dedicates to יהוה. Its main literary features are these: first we have a prevalence of active participles describing the Lord's behaviour in nature(v.8) and then in human history(v.9). Second, there is the recursion of the verb **הפך** literally, overturn in v.8 that features so prominently

20. The third colon in v.6 describes the action of the fire (hence the feminine morphology(cf. *REB*). This means that Mays (1969:86, note 6)'s judgement on **יצלח** (which according to Soggin is a *hapax legomenon*), that the masoretic text here "makes little sense in this context" is unacceptable. De Waard & Smalley (1979:103) though seems to endorse this statement of Mays.. The clause in the third colon of v.6 functions like a circumstantial or relative clause that qualifies **אש** fire, *contra* Chouraqui who considers the clause **ואכלה ואין מכבה** ("and it will consume and there will no one to quench") as being predicated to יהוה (YHWH). The Lord is being compared to an inextinguishable fire.

21. Cf. Dahood & Penar1970:407 for this grammatical feature. Andersen & Freedman (1989:478-480) proposes the same parsing but does not cite this grammatical function of the lamedh in this cluster.

also in v.7 where it is used to characterize the behaviour of Bethel. The use of the same verb is probably meant to enhance the contrast in the behaviour of the Lord and the people of Israel who are the addressees of the poet. The asyndeton at the beginning of the strophe in v.8 underscores this sense of distance between the two characters, the Lord and the people. Third, the poet postpones the identification of the subject of the verbs in v.8 to the very end where we meet the emphatic statement “Yahweh is his name”. This strategy was used by the poet to link the statements in v.8a-c to the following v.9 to which it also provides the subject for the verbs; the two cola in v.9 are elliptically in apposition to the tetragrammaton.²² Through these two cola the poet characterizes YHWH as effectively acting in human history.

Finally, the prophet is the speaker in this strophe; he meditates on the Lord’s grandeur in nature and in the history of human beings, and reasons that the Lord is capable of exerting influence on contemporary Israel’s daily affairs and of holding them accountable for their ethical misbehaviour. Is this “hymnal fragment” harking back to what went before or looking forward to what is still coming? In the previous strophe (v.6) the poet hints already about the possibility of Israel’s annihilation were they to refuse to repent of subverting justice using perhaps religious institutions to cover up their bad practices in the judicial field. Besides, the asyndeton in v.8 would suggest that in this strophe the poet is looking forward rather than backward. This means that the arrangement is linear rather than concentric.

The text 5,10-13 With v.10 we arrive at a new strophe; these are some of its characteristic features. First of all, the shift from the third person singular subject in v.9 to the plural שִׂנְאוּ “they hate”, with the subject encoded in the morphology of the verb) in v. 10, provides the boundary marker. But only the first two cola speak of the subjects in the third person plural. In v.11 the poet shifts to the second person plural. In v.10 the poet attempts to explain the addressees’ mismanagement in the judicial area while in v.11a (the עַיִן clause) he appears to be giving the motivation for the Lord’s oracles. Klaus Koch would call this “the indication of the situation” (cf. March 1974:159). The לְכֵן “therefore” clauses in v.11b-c would resemble what Koch would label as a “prophecy of disaster” even though there is no messenger formula to identify them as the Lord’s “word”. Instead it is the prophet who is speaking throughout this strophe. This becomes even more clear in v.12 where the

22. One may see here a case of “loose apposition”, cf. Joüon & Muraoka 2006:§131m.

speaker switches to the first person singular style: ידעתִי, “I know”. The prophet lets his addressees know that he is well informed of their “many transgressions”, short-listing three in 5,12b. In v.13 he depicts a very gloomy situation.

We ought to discuss who the addressees of the strophe in vv.10-13 are since they are not explicitly identified within the text. Perhaps on the basis of the principles of “co-text” and “local interpretation” which modern linguistics has emphasized (cf. Brown & Yule 1983: 46-50.58-61), one may deduce that the addressees are the **בית ישראל** “house of Israel” of 5,4 which is the head of the unit 5,4-15; this is further qualified as “the house of Joseph” and possibly “Bethel” in v.6.

The text 5,14-15 The two imperatives **דרשו** “seek” and **שנאו** “hate” at the head of vv. 14,15 make it clear that we have two strophes in this complex. In the first strophe (v.14) we once again have the motif *DRŠ* placed in a prominent position, combined syntactically to the theme **חיה**, “live”, and the use of contrast. The theme of “living, surviving” is further developed in v.14b. In the second strophe (v.15) the verb *DRŠ* “seek” is replaced by the verb ³*HB*, “love”. Both have **טוב**, “good” for object so we are justified in surmising not only that their respective cola are parallel but they carry equivalent meaning. The negative elliptical imperative **רע לא** literally, “and not evil”, is replaced by the positive imperative clause **שנאו רע** “hate evil”. The verb *ŠN* is the antonym of ³*HB*. The second colon of v.15a function as an explanation of the first colon: “setting/installing (**הציגו**) justice” at the gates amounts to “seeking good.” One may read **טוב** as a divine title as Andersen & Freedman 1989:506-507 suggests,²³ or interpret it in the moral sense as “good” with “evil” also to be taken as carrying a moral meaning. The personification of good and evil would underline the function of vv.14-15 as parallels to vv.4-7 within the overall structure of the unit 4-15. The problem is that **רע** as divine epithet referring to some Canaanite divinity is not that self evident within the Old Testament.²⁴ Amos 5,14-15 would then be a perfect match to 5,4-7 where the addressees are exhorted to seek the Lord and shun the places of false or ambiguous cult that are held responsible for the people’s overturning of justice; the specification of what this means are afterwards given in vv. 10-13.

But there are other elements in vv.14-15 to show that these vv. are being seen by the author as corresponding elements within a wider literary structure. In vv.4-7

23. Cf. Dahood1966:296-297; Dahood1970: 187.399.407; and Viganò 1976:182-193.

24. But cf. Andersen & Freedman1980: 476-477.

the addressees are identified as “House of Joseph” and later as “Bethel” (v.6). In vv. 14-15 the addressees, again at the end of the unit, are identified as “the remnant of Joseph” (v.15). Through the concept “remnant” (שְׁאֵרִית) the poet appears to link the complex vv.14-15 to the theme of survival announced in v.3. This indicates that vv. 4-15 are being seen as forming part of a literary unit that transcends its boundaries in vv. 4 and 15.

Moreover, vv.14-15 do not constitute a perfect replica of v.4-7. The latter strophe contains a warning to the Israelites that they should seek the Lord and should avoid the cult located at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. In the same strophe Bethel, a metonymy for “house of Joseph” / “house of Israel” is depicted as a people who were currently overturning judicial rights (v.7). In vv.14-15 one finds no explicit mention of the cult issue though the binary טוב/רע, “good/evil” may be hinting at such a concern. What is new in vv. 14-15 with respect to its corresponding match is the author’s expressing the hope that “the remnant of Joseph” could still be delivered, that is, that “YHWH, the God of Hosts” would show favour (יְחַנֵּן) to what remains of the house of Joseph (v.15b). This would mean that the development of thought and arrangement of material in vv.4-15 are not simply concentric but linear as well.

The strong correspondence between vv. 4-7 and 14-15 would justify labelling them by the same alphabetic symbol within a diagram representing the unit 5,4-15; on the other hand, the differences between these clusters of cola would require that the alphabetic symbol representing vv.14-15 be slightly differentiated as well; hence A/A¹. These two text blocks envelope two strophes, one characterizing YHWH as the prime mover in nature and human dealings (vv.8-9, this we represent by the letter B; the other strophe is painting the addressees as utter and irresponsible sinners (vv.14-15), this we mark as C. These addressees here must be identified with the “the house of Israel” of 5, 4 seeing that no other explicit identification is made by the poet (unless he is thinking of “the remnant of Joseph” of v.15b). Thus we have in 5,4-15 this simple structure:

5, 4a	messenger formula and boundary marker	
5, 4b-7	exhortation to <u>seek the Lord</u>	A
5, 8-9	statement about the LORD	B
5, 10-13	statement about the house of Israel	C
5, 14-15	exhortation to <u>seek the Lord</u> in view of his showing grace	A ¹

The presence of this overall pattern within vv.4-15 would demonstrate that this unit was meant to be open-ended and not closed as it would have been had it been a perfect structural symmetry. The wish in v.15a (אולי, “perhaps, may be”) would call for a progression of thought that would include how the Lord was going to show his graciousness. Instead, what we find after the messenger formula in v.16a is the Lord’s word about the universality of mourning among the Israelites. All or most of the statements after this messenger formula are judgmental prophecies of doom. The Lord has “come across his people” (v.17) and they could no longer expect any more חן (“grace, favour, graciousness”) after this “visitation”. All this shows that vv. 16-17 do not belong to the sub-unit 5,4-15 but to the following sub-unit that starts with v. 16 and ends at 6,14 since no other messenger formula occurs to segment the intermediate text into smaller sub-units.

3.3 Preliminary Conclusions

- a) The rubric שמעו את־הדבר הזה, “Listen to this word” was probably meant to introduce a compositional unit that extends from 5,1b to 6,14. This hypothetical statement requires further detailed rhetorical and discourse analysis in order to make clear how this text functions as a whole. At the current stage of this investigation one may say only that there exist indications to this direction. When and if the compositional unity of 5,1-6,14 will be demonstrated, we will be able to show that the lexeme הדבר “the word” in 5,1a refers not to the Lord’s “word” spoken by Amos but to Amos’ word within which the Lord’s word is inset and commented upon by the prophet.
- b) This compositional unity is made up of three sub-sections: first comes an introduction (vv.1b-3) defined by the author himself as קינה, “lamentation”, though one may study further whether this identification does not cover the whole of 5,1b-6,14.²⁵ Then we find two larger sub-sections, each being introduced by the messenger formulas in vv.4 and 16. The first large section covers 5,4-15 while the second section include the text 5,16-6,14. Each of these sections has a different rhetorical built as a preliminary reading of their respective components hints at.
- c) In this essay we have examined, in some detail (though not exhaustively), the first sub-section in order to demonstrate that between vv.15 and 16 the author intends a caesura, and that 5,16a introduces another section of the larger “this

25. Wendland1988:14-15 already hints that this lamentation may be including vv.1-17.

word". The section 5,16-6,14 requires a separate study in order to arrive to some understanding of how 5,1-6,14 is really functioning rhetorically.

- d) This study is addressed to Bible translators who work with the Hebrew text as their source text. It is meant to show how exegesis for translation purposes may not start with abstract theories about the text's origins or its rhetoric; the point of departure should remain the text itself mainly in its consonantal form, since its masoretic vocalisation and apparatus already testify to tradition as it tried to cope with the consonantal text. Adequate exegesis and the subsequent translation should account for every consonant in the text unless this proves to be evidently corrupt. The approach to the text followed here searches for authorial markers for the text's segmentation into smaller units which are not meant to be autonomous but parts of a rhetorical and semantic whole. This approach would not deny the possibility that the text has had a history which presupposes an independent pre-textual existence for some or all components. But now these "texts" are simply components of a wider unit outside of which they cannot "communicate". They are part of a whole and as such they should be read.

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