

# AMOS 3:3-8: THE IRRESISTIBLE SEQUENCE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

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By means of a series of rhetorical questions characterized by analogies drawn from common experience and well-known empirical phenomena, the prophet Amos logically and skillfully draws his unexpected audience into the flow of a persuasive and penetrating presentation of the inextricable relationship of all events and happenings.<sup>1</sup> This didactic device drawn from folk wisdom is anchored in the premise that every event has its immediate cause and every cause, in turn, leads to its own concomitant result.<sup>2</sup> Once the people are cognizant of the fact that nothing is accidental, and that there is an indissoluble and inevitable interrelationship between cause and result in both the animal and human spheres of existence, they would then be unable to deny that an identical sequence exists between the direct command of God to the prophet to speak (the cause) and the ensuing words of the prophet (the result)—a necessary conclusion which thus applies and expands the law of causality from the natural and social realms to the religious sphere. Amos is hereby presenting an "*apologia*" for his (and every prophet's) calling. He justifies and legitimizes his prophetic commission<sup>3</sup> by explaining its authority and authenticity as well as its absolute force and necessity. By such compelling and commanding rea-

1. See the annotations of Gordis (1980, pp. 218-219) to whom it is a privilege to dedicate this article. For a rhetorical analysis of this entire chapter, with special emphasis upon this pericope, see Gitay (1980, pp. 293-309). The most recent study is by Renaud (1981, pp. 353-372) who proposes a reconstruction of the unit in the following three stages: vss. 4-5, 6b, and vs. 8 as two independent sections representing the original unity to which were later added vss. 3 and 6a, and subsequently vs. 7, each with its own different theological outlook. His analysis and conclusions are very difficult to accept. See also Zakovitch (1977).

2. Cf. Renaud (p. 365), "L'effet visible permet de remonter à la cause invisible."

3. E. Hammershaimb (1970, p. 57); Fey (1963, p. 41); Ward (1969, p. 39); Mays (1969, p. 89); Rudolph (1971, p. 154); Wolff (1977, p. 183).

soning, Amos responds to the attacks and protests which must have been levelled against him and his message.<sup>4</sup> His (as well as other prophets', 2:12) right to speech had been challenged and his words and ideas impugned. In defense of his previous oracle announcing impending punishment of the elected people (3:1-2), he forcefully and cogently argues that prophecy is not a self-generating act, but that the prophet is irresistibly compelled to deliver God's words: "A lion has roared, who can but fear? My Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (3:8).

Though, as has been oft-noted, Amos adopted and adapted the style of the wisdom teacher in this pericope,<sup>5</sup> his composition nevertheless remains unique both in its form and content as well as in its comprehensive presentation and internal development. The purpose of this study is to highlight the literary artistry of this unit, in addition to commenting on pertinent lexical and contextual matters.

It should be noted at the outset that Amos has a decided predilection for delivering his oracles *seriatim*. The book commences with a catalogue of prophecies against foreign nations and in the ensuing chapters further examples are clearly attested.<sup>6</sup> This formal literary device, moreover, is skillfully used by him here and in chs. 1—2 for an additional psychological purpose. He first attracts the attention of his listeners by deftly drawing them into his orbit of thinking by means of statements which they can readily and favorably accept, and then suddenly and dramatically he confronts his already captive audience with a totally unexpected and climactic finale. The literary genre of the prophecies against foreign nations served him as an apt prelude to his surprise denunciation of Israel.<sup>7</sup> And now by employing another genre, this time drawn from the sphere of wisdom literature, he gradually yet persuasively leads his opponents step by step into the vortex of a seemingly innocuous reasoning process. He commences by bringing an example from an everyday normal occurrence, and then he carefully continues to describe crisis situations which take place in both

4. Cf. Rudolph (1971, p. 151); and Wolff (p. 181). See, too, Melugin (1978, p. 381). For the appeal to reason and method of analogy, see Gitay (p. 298).

5. Cf. Lindblom (1955, p. 201); Gese (1962, pp. 424-427); Terrien (1962, pp. 111-115); Reventlow (1962, pp. 27-30); Amsler (1965, p. 187); Mays (p. 60); Ward (p. 40); Rudolph (p. 154); Wolff (pp. 93, 183). See also Mittmann (1971, pp. 141-143). For analogous Mesopotamian rhetorical questions, see Lambert (1967, p. 241, ll. 40-42); *ina la nākimi erātme, ina la akālīme kabrat*, "Has she become pregnant without having had intercourse? Has she become fat without eating?"

6. For the presentation in a series, cf. the litany of punishments with their stereotypic refrain in ch. 4:6-11; and the sequence of visions in chs. 7-8.

7. See Paul (1971 a, pp. 397-403, and 1981, pp. 189-204).

the animal and human worlds—all of which merely serve as a cohesive prolegomenon to his essential and final point: the phenomenon of prophecy is likewise a product of this same irresistible sequence of cause and effect.

Another literary similarity exists between Amos' use of these two different genres (in chs. 1—2 and here). Not only are they presented in a series, but both skillfully employ the well-known pattern of the graduated ascending number scheme, 7/8, in which the *eighth* oracle and the *eighth* rhetorical question (and *not* the seventh) bring the respective pericopes to their climactic and unexpected conclusion.<sup>8</sup> The first seven oracles as well as the seven rhetorical questions serve as an effective decoy for his ultimate trap; they are pre-climactic. His audience, who most probably assumed that the seventh oracle (against Judah)<sup>9</sup> and the seventh question ("Can misfortune come to a town if the Lord has not caused it?") would be the final one, is thus completely caught off guard when the prophet adds his eighth and last thrust. The effect is even more poignant when it is recalled that Amos himself had a literary penchant for expressing himself also in heptads (cf. 2:14–16),<sup>10</sup> and when it is further noted that the personal name of the god of Israel, YHWH, appears for the first time specifically in the seventh question—two impressive reasons which would naturally lead one to conclude that the prophet had reached the apogee of his presentation with his seventh pronouncement. All the more startling then that he immediately confounds his by now unsuspecting listeners with his dramatic dénouement. Such surprise finales are yet another literary device utilized with great dexterity by this prophet in order to upset and reverse firmly established beliefs and principles held by the people of Israel, e.g., 3:2; 5:18; 9:7.

The internal logical development of the subject matter itself is also well-designed. After a general and logical all-inclusive introductory question (vs. 3, see below), he continues first with a pair of examples drawn exclusively from the animal world—a lion and its victim (vs. 4), and then proceeds by presenting two rhetorical questions rooted in the antagonistic relationship between the animal (birds) and the human world—the latter

8. See Paul (1981, pp. 196–197) for examples from Ugaritic and the Bible.

9. For a discussion of the originality of this oracle, see Paul (1981).

10. Gordis (1943, pp. 17–26; and 1980, p. 218). Zakovitch (p. 195) sees here a pattern of 3–4 (actually one question followed by three pairs of questions) within a larger pattern of six–seven, and brings examples from Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern literature (p. 547). Although he does not accept the originality of vs. 7 and 8, he understands correctly the internal structural and contextual order of the unit leading up to the seventh question (pp. 198–199).

who set traps for the former (vs. 5). Thereupon he progresses to the interpersonal realm, where man's hostility is directed against his fellowman (vs. 6a); and then finally he ascends to the human-divine sphere of interaction—catastrophes on earth are divine doings (vs. 6b). Then, and only then, after all areas of existence are acknowledged to fall within the same preconceived pattern of cause and result, does he add his last link, i.e., the unique causal relationship between YHWH and the prophet (vs. 8b).

An additional emotional dimension in this literary unit (after the first innocuous introductory question) is the ominous feeling of no exit, no escape. The examples all depict the parties involved as being in situations where they are ensnared or overpowered by some stronger force, be it animal, human or divine. This physical or psychological entrapment provides a very apt analogue to the end of the previous chapter, where Amos describes the imminent defeat of Israel in terms of complete and total inescapability. With the aid of an heptad to express completeness, he powerfully portrays the paralysis of all the military units and divisions of the Israelite army (2:14-16). This theme of total inescapability, it should be noted, also recurs in a later chapter, 9:1-4.

Another unique facet of this pericope, which has all but escaped the attention of commentators, is the novel way in which Amos employs the literary device of the double rhetorical question. The particle  $\alpha\kappa$  which introduces vs. 6 is not, as many have thought, a more intensive form of the question, but is rather the standard correlative and complement of the interrogative particle  $\eta$ , which is employed in the previous verses. Though there are some dozen different ways of posing and composing double questions in biblical Hebrew,<sup>11</sup> this specific pattern—five consecutive questions introduced by  $\eta$  followed by two introduced by  $\alpha\kappa$ <sup>12</sup>—is unparalleled and can be attributed to the innovative literary creativity of the prophet himself.

Once this literary device is recognized, it is intriguing to see whether it can be pursued yet one step further. Biblical Hebrew also has several different ways of formulating a triple question. The two most attested are  $\eta \dots \alpha\kappa \dots \eta$  (e.g., Jer 2:14, 31; 8:4-5; 16:19; 49:1; cf. Isa 50:2) and  $\eta \dots \alpha\kappa \dots \eta$  (e.g., Num 11:12; Isa 66:8; Jer 18:14-15; 31:20; [48:27]; Amos 6:12; Mic 4:9; Hab 3:8; Job 7:12; 10:5-6; and a possible conflate of both forms in Jer 8:22). In the latter form, the particle  $\eta$  introduces the

11. Avishur (1973, pp. 421-464). See also Held (1969, pp. 71-79). For the device of rhetorical questions in influencing people, cf. Gitay (pp. 296, 302).

12. For other examples of two consecutive interrogatives introduced by  $\alpha\kappa$ , cf. Jer 48:27 and Job 6:12.

logical conclusion of the two preceding  $\alpha\kappa$  . . .  $\eta$  questions.<sup>13</sup> This very tripartite pattern is also attested once in the book of Amos, 6:12. Thus is it only merely a coincidence that in this unit directly after the double  $\alpha\kappa$  . . .  $\eta$  questions in vss. 3-6, vs. 7 begins with  $\eta$ , the particle which so often functions as the introduction to the third part of this conventional literary pattern?

If this verse is a later interpolation, as most—but not all—modern commentators think<sup>14</sup> (see below), it should at least be noted that formally and externally (if admittedly not contextually), the addition conforms to the distinctive style of the biblical formulation of the triple question.

A further point. In the first five questions, all of which are introduced by the interrogative  $\eta$ , the result or effect precedes the cause: "Can two walk together" (result) "without having met?" (cause). "Does a lion roar in the forest" (result) "when he has no prey?" (cause). "Does a great beast utter a cry from its den" (result) "without having made a capture?" (cause). "Does a bird swoop to the ground into a trap" (result) "with no bait?" (cause). "Does a trap spring up from the ground" (result) "unless it has caught something?" (cause).

However, in the first half of verse 6, the prophet deliberately reverses his train of thought and states the cause prior to the result:<sup>15</sup> "When a ram's horn is sounded in a town" (cause), "do people not take alarm?" (result). And at this juncture, the change of formal presentation coincides with a change of formulation—for precisely here the prophet introduces his rhetorical questions for the first time with the interrogatory particle  $\alpha\kappa$ . Change of order of reasoning, change of formal expression—a delicate additional literary touch. Then, in vs. 6b, he continues using the  $\alpha\kappa$  particle, but reverts to his original pattern of result preceding cause: "Can misfortune come to a town" (result) "if YHWH has not caused it?" (cause). By

13. Cf. Avishur, *loc. cit.*, for the distinction between  $\eta$  and  $\eta$ . For  $\eta$  after two initial series of rhetorical questions, see Job 10:4-6 (and, partially Hab 3:8). Zakovitch (p. 199) also remarks upon the  $\eta$  in this rhetorical sequence, but discounts the originality of vs. 7.

14. For it being a later literary addition, see, e.g., Marti (1904); Duhm (1911, p. 5); Löhr (1901); Nowack (1922); Sellin (1930); Weiser (1929); Lehming (1958); Baumann (1952); Gese (1962); Schmidt (1965); Ward (p. 39); Wolff (1977); Rudolph (1971). On the other hand, cf. Harper (1905); Gressmann (1921); Theis (1937); Robinson (1964); Maag (1951, p. 14); Cripps (1960); Reventlow (1962, p. 27); Terrien (p. 112); Hammershaimb (p. 70), "can be interpreted not as superfluous." Most recently, Gitay (pp. 304-305), bases the verse's authenticity on its rhetorical function.

15. This point was seen by many commentators; e.g., Cripps (p. 155); Wolff (p. 183); Rudolph (p. 154); but they do not indicate that this is a deliberately intentional reversal of the train of thought, nor do most of them connect it with the change in rhetorical formulation.

thus alternating the cause-result sequence (6a) with the immediately preceding and following result-cause sequence (5b and 6b), the prophet artfully varies a stereotypic formal pattern and creates thereby a very effective chiasmic word order.

One more feature accompanies this stylistic formal change from ה to אם. In the first five ה-questions, the subject matter remains the same in the single or double cola (i.e., individuals, lions and prey, birds and traps). But in vs. 6, where the two אם-questions appear, two different subjects or themes are present in each of the separate cola: the sounding of a "ram's horn" (6a) and a "catastrophe" in the city (6b)—the former makes the people tremble; the latter is the Lord's doing.

It is also of interest to note that in his application of the process of cause and effect, Amos relies on both the senses of seeing and hearing—and these two are employed in an alternating pattern. One reaches the obvious conclusion when one *sees* two walking together (vs. 3); when one *hears* the growl of a lion (vs. 4); when one *sees* a bird swooping down or caught in a trap (vs. 5); and when one *hears* the blast of a ram's horn (vs. 6a). All these *sights* and *sounds* together demonstrate the inevitable and indissoluble connection between cause and effect.

An internal literary pattern characterized by symmetry and concatenation is also discernible within this section:

3	הֲלֹכוּ שְׁנַיִם יַחַד בְּלֹחַ אִם-יַנְעוּד		
4	בְּלֹחַ אִם-יִלְכֹד	הֲיִחַן כְּפִיד קוֹלוֹ מִמְעוֹתָיו	וְסוֹרֵף אֵין לוֹ
5	וְלֹכֹד לֹא יִלְכֹד	הֲיִעֲלֶה-יָפֶחַ מִן הָאָדָמָה	וּמִקֶּשׁ אֵין לָהּ
6	הֲלֹא עָשָׂה	אִם-יִתְדַיֵּה רֵעָה בְעֵיד	וְעַם לֹא יִחַרְדוּ
7	הַגְּבִיאִים	כִּי אִם גִּלְהַ סוֹחַד אֶל-עֲבָדָיו	כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹי ה' דָּבָר
8	מִי לֹא יִבְאָ	אֹתוֹי ה' דָּבָר	מִי לֹא יִדָּא
			הֲשֹׂאֵג אֲרִיָּה בִיעֹר
			הַתְּפוֹל צְפוּר עֲלֵי-יָפֶחַ הָאָרֶץ
			אִם יִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר בְּעֵיד
			כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹי ה' דָּבָר
			אֲרִיָּה שֹׂאֵג

1. The negative expression *אם בלח* appears before a verb only twice in the entire Bible, and these two sole occurrences are in the consecutive vss. 3 and 4b.<sup>16</sup> (Interestingly enough the word *אם* itself is employed in three different ways in these series of questions—as part of a negation (vss. 3, 4b), as the correlative of *ה* in a double rhetorical question (vs. 6), and simply as a particle (vs. 7)). Note also the alternating formulations of *בלח*

16. In both Gen 47:18 and Judg 7:14, *אם בלח* is employed before a substantive. For extra-biblical occurrences of *בלח*, cf. the Phoenician inscription of Tabnit, line 5, *בלח אן שבב*, Dönnner-Röllig (1962, 13:5). For Ugaritic, *hlt*, see Gordon, (1965, 466 and 479). Cf. Labuschagne (1964, pp. 97-99).

אם, (vs. 3), ה . . . ה (vs. 4a), בלתי אם, . . . ה (vs. 4b), ה . . . ה (vs. 4c), followed once by לא . . . ה and twice by לא . . . אם.

2. In addition to אם בלתי, there are several other negative formulations, all of which appear in set pairs:

- |    |                              |                               |
|----|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a) | <u>וסרף אין לו</u> (vs. 4a)  | <u>ומוקש אין לה</u> (vs. 5a): |
| b) | <u>ועם לא יחודו</u> (vs. 6a) | <u>והי לא עשה</u> (vs. 6b):   |
| c) | <u>מי לא יידא</u> (vs. 8a)   | <u>מי לא יבא</u> (vs. 8b):    |

3. The verb לכד appears in two consecutive final cola, vss. 4b and 5b.

4. Since in vss. 4-6 the place or instrument in question is always specifically mentioned in both cola, and since the same word, בעי, is twice repeated in vs. 6, more caution should be taken before concluding (as most commentators do) that the word פה in vs. 5a is a so-called redundant intrusion from vs. 5b. (See below for further evidence for the originality of this word in vs. 5a.)

5. Vs. 7a is directly linked to the immediately prior vs. 6b by the identical three words, ה' לא יעשה ה' . . . ה' לא עשה, which are arranged chiasmically.

6. Vs. 8, in turn, contains two specific features which link it directly with vs. 7: a) Three identical words ה' אלהים דבר (vs. 7a) and ה' אלהים דבר (vs. 8b). (Of course דבר in vs. 7a is a noun and דבר in vs. 8b a verb; however the appearance of this base root twice in conjunction with the rare expression ה' אלהים is very striking and obviously meant to be intentional.) b) Only in these two verses is there a specific mention of prophets, הנביאים (vs. 7b), and their prophecy, יבא (vs. 8b). (For the significance of these last two points, 5 and 6, in determining the originality of vs. 7, see below.)

7. A chastic *inclusio* exists between ה' אלהים דבר (vs. 4a) and אלהים דבר (vs. 8a).

8. Another (editorial) *inclusio* can also be detected in the phrase דבר ה' (vs. 1) and ה' אלהים דבר (vs. 8). (Although the first two verses of chapter 3 are an independent literary unit, they formally serve as the contextual background for the ensuing justification of the prophet's mission.)"

9. Finally, as a literary aside, attention should also be drawn to the chapter's overall embracive *inclusio*: שמעו . . . אפקד (vss. 1-2) and (תפקודו) שמעו . . . אפקד (vss. 13-14).

17. The לא-negation is already introduced in vs. 5b.

18. Gitay (p. 295), suggests that a rhetorical analysis of the various units of this chapter suggests their being "mutually related" . . . "are part of a single discourse." See also p. 306.

*Annotations to the verses:*

Verse 3:

הֲלֵכִים שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּם בְּלֹא אִם נִוְדָה

"Can two walk together without having met?" Doubt has been cast by some commentators on the authenticity of this verse in relation to the entire literary unit.<sup>19</sup> The main arguments are: 1. This is the only verse in the composition which lacks a complementary poetic colon. 2. A plural verb is found only in this sentence. 3. Unlike all the other verses, the image portrayed here is a peaceful one, bearing no overtones of a threatening situation. However, 1. Since the pericope consists of an heptad of introductory questions, and since seven is an odd and not an even number, one verse by necessity must contain only a single and not a double question. 2. The plural verb is necessitated by the subject שְׁנַיִם, "two". Moreover, the anonymity of "two walking together" makes this theme an appropriate continuation of the dual relationship just described between Israel and God (vss. 1-2),<sup>21</sup> on the one hand, and serves in addition as a convenient all-purpose introduction to the remaining six questions of "bilateral" relations, on the other. 3. The citing of a "neutral" or "normal" life situation and not one which alludes to a specific threat or crisis is intentional, in order to lure the audience into the prophet's train of thought. By capturing their attention with such a "banal" and everyday event with which they can readily concur, Amos "socractically" and psychologically weaves the first thread in the web which will eventually bind them to his own pre-planned conclusion. Linguistically, too, this verse bears a distinctive "trademark" of Amos, i.e., the expression בְּלֹא אִם preceding a verb, as noted above, appears only in this book.

The verb נִוְדָה here means merely "to meet," without any overtones of

19. Cf. the striking verbal similarity to Gen 22:6, 8. Note, too, the iterative or frequentative force of most of the verbs in this pericope. The prophet, as so often throughout his prophecies, draws upon his own personal experiences for most of his examples.

20. E.g., Nowack; Marti; Gese (p. 425); Schmidt (p. 183); Renaud (pp. 357-359). Marti and Gese consider this verse to be a gloss supplying the motif for the punishment announced in 3:2b. See also Stoebe (1970, pp. 217 ff.) and Eichrodt (1977, p. 125). However, according to Wolff (p. 184), "Verse 3 belongs to the original series of questions, even though this sentence differs in tone from those that follow." See also his note b on p. 180 and p. 181, "Verse 3 gives the impression of being a preface." Cf. also Mittmann (pp. 135-137), Renaud (p. 354), is correct, however, in his observation that vss. 1-2 concern the election of Israel; vss 3-8 that of the prophet. The first two verses are the words of Yahwe, the next, the words of the prophet.

21. Cf. Gitay (p. 295) and Koch (1976, p. 16).



“by plan” or “by design.” Neither does it imply meeting by “agreement” or by “making an appointment.” For it is natural, as well as obvious, that people do bump into one another by chance without prearranging either the time or the place of the liaison.<sup>22</sup> Were the prophet to have asked whether two people walk together only by predesignation, he would have defeated his purpose from the very outset. For the answer to such a question is, of course they do: sometimes two individuals do walk together by chance. But his examples are geared toward an absolute negative response without room for any exception. And so it is impossible to disagree with him, for what he describes is so self-evident. If two people are seen walking together, it is clearly because they have met. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. As Rudolph (p. 155) so correctly comments on this verse, “Je unbestreitbarer seine Beispiele sind, desto brauchbarer für die Absicht, die er mit ihnen verfolgt.”

For *יד* “to meet,” compare *אהל מועד*, the “Tent of Meeting”; and for the verb in the *Nif'al*, e.g., Exod 25:22 *ונועדו*; 30:6, 36, *אָנַעַד*, to describe the meeting of Moses with God.<sup>23</sup>

#### Verse 4

הישא איהו ביער וסרף אין לו  
היתן כפיד קולו ממענותו בלח אם לנד

“Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a great beast let out a cry from its den without having made a capture?”

These two rhetorical questions most likely refer to two different stages in the hunt. The initial roar of the lion<sup>24</sup> issues *from the forest* (ביער)<sup>25</sup>, when

22. See Rudolph (p. 151, n. 3a), with additional bibliographical references and discussion, especially to Gese (p. 425). Cf. also Tur Sinai (1967, p. 458). The LXX reading, (*ἐὰν μὴ γνωρίσωσιν ἑαυτούς*) = *ידו*, “unless they knew one another” is due to the influence of the verb *יד* in verse 2a and is not to be accepted. So Rudolph (p. 151, n. 3a), and Wolff (p. 179, n. a), against Marti; Nowack; Cripps. Thomas (1956, pp. 69-70), on the other hand, followed this reading, but derived the root from the Arabic cognate, *wd'*, “to be reconciled, to make peace”—which misrepresents the intention of the question. The Masoretic text is independently confirmed by two other Greek translations, Aquila *συντάξονται*, “agree to come together” and Theodotion, *συνέλθωσιν*, “meet one another,” as well as by the Vulgate, *convenerit eis*, “they have agreed” and the Targum, *אָמַדְנָה*. There are times, however, when a pre-arranged agreement is referred to, e.g., Job 2:11; Neh 6:2.

23. This does not mean to imply that in Amos, however, the verb has “une portée théologique,” or “une allusion à l'expérience de Moïse,” Renaud (p. 359), or that there is an allusion to the covenant, Stoebe (p. 221).

24. Cf. 1:2, 3:8. The lion is also mentioned in 3:4, 8, 12.

25. For other examples of an *איהו* in the *יער*, see e.g., Jer. 5:6; 12:8.

he has first located and confronted his prey, but before he has made the kill. The second growl is the sound of victory and contentment which he emits *from his den* (במטעה)<sup>26</sup>, after he has successfully captured and consumed his victim. For other references to roars before or after the catch, cf. e.g., Isa 5:29; 31:4; Ezek 22:25; Ps 22:14; 104:20-21.<sup>27</sup>

For כפיד, "great beast," rather than its usual translation, "young lion," see Ezek 19:3, "She raised up one of her cubs; he became a great beast (כפיד)."<sup>28</sup>

### Verse 5

התפול צפור על פח הארץ ומוקש אין לה  
היעלה פח מן האדמה ולכוד לא ילכוד

"Does a bird swoop down upon a trap on the ground, if there is no bait?  
Does a trap spring up from the ground unless it has caught something?"

The two antithetical verbal expressions in the separate cola, נפל על and עלה מן, also represent two different stages in the capture of a bird, before and after it is trapped. For the meaning of נפל על is not the same as נפל ב-; only the latter means "fall into" (—a trap into which most translators and exegetes have themselves inadvertently fallen into here). נפל על, as the preposition itself indicates, means to "swoop" or "plunge down upon."<sup>29</sup> Amos is rhetorically posing the following question: does a bird swoop down upon a ground trap (פח) unless there is a מוקש? The problem now is what is exactly meant by a מוקש. Since it is usually assumed that מוקש is synonymous with פח, and since, to further compound and confound the issue, the Septuagint reflects a reading על פני (ἐπι εἰς) "upon" instead of על פח, many commentators conclude that the noun פח in the first colon has been incorrectly repeated from the second colon and consequently should be

26. The *מטעה* or *מטון* is the den of lions, Nah 2:12-13, Ps 104:21-22, Job 38:39-40, Cant 4:8; jackals, Jer 5:10, 10:22, 49:33, 51:37; adder, Isa 11:8; and other wild animals, Job 37:8. The word has not been added, but, as seen from all the comparable place names in the other cola, is original; *contra* Cripps (p. 154); Wolff (p. 180).

27. For the interpretation of two different stages in the catch, cf. Nowack (p. 132); Sellin (p. 214); Theis (p. 120); Hammershaimb (p. 58); Cripps (p. 153); Rudolph (p. 155). See especially Braslavi (1967, pp. 12-16) who also refers to Kahle (1935, p. 586).

28. For the roar of a מוקש, cf. Judg 14:5.

29. For the word pair נפל על . . . עלה מן, see Weiss (1981, p. 138).

30. This nuance has been almost universally overlooked. For a rare exception, Vogt (1967, p. 80). "Fall upon" by extension gets to mean "attack." Cf., e.g., Isa 16:9; Jer 48:32; and Akk. *ana X maqātu* "to fall upon," and "to attack."

deleted.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the few commentators who defend the correctness of the Masoretic text and who also make a distinction between the nouns *מַלְכָּא* and *מוֹקֵשׁ*, conclude that a *מוֹקֵשׁ* refers to either a "throwing stick/boomerang"<sup>32</sup> or to a "striker," i.e., the moveable part of a trap which strikes and paralyzes the ensnared bird.<sup>33</sup> However, these same commentators unfortunately overlooked the correct nuance of Heb. *נָפַל עַל* and themselves "fell into" a translation trap. That which is being described in this verse is the *cause* for a bird's sudden and swift descent. Why does a bird swoop down upon a trap? It is because of the *מוֹקֵשׁ*, which is obviously none other than the "bait" or "decoy" which is attached to the trap.<sup>34</sup> For this meaning of *מוֹקֵשׁ*, compare I Sam 18:21, "Saul thought, 'I will give her [Michal] to him [David]; let her be the bait that lures him [*מוֹקֵשׁ*] to his death at the hands of the Philistines'." (So correctly *NEB*). (By *pars pro toto*, *מוֹקֵשׁ*, which is the "bait" of a trap, comes to signify the "trap" itself.) The bait or decoy first lures the unsuspecting bird to plunge down from on high (5a), and then the trap itself springs up to ensnare its victim (5b).

## Verse 6

אם יתקע שופר בעיר רעם לא יתרום  
אם תהיה רעה בעיר יהל לא עשה

"When a ram's horn is sounded in a town, do the people not take alarm?  
Can misfortune come to a town, if the Lord has not caused it?"

31. So most commentators; cf. Wolff (p. 180, n. d). A few commentators, on the other hand, interpret *מֵה* as a corruption of an original *מֵי* (with the LXX); so Ehrlich (1912, p. 234); Harper (p. 69), following Perles (1895).

32. E.g., Wolff (p. 185), who refers to von Oppenheim (1931, pp. 93-94 and plates 9b, 17b). Hammershaimb (p. 58), brings his evidence from Erman and Ranke (1923, p. 264).

33. Driver (1954, pp. 131-136). (Driver's Akkadian equivalents, however, must be viewed with a great deal of caution). On the subject of traps and snares, see Gerleman (1945-46, pp. 79-90). (On p. 81, *מוֹקֵשׁ*, "a manned clap net," and on p. 82, *מֵה*, "automatic bird trap."); and Toomb (1962, pp. 687-688). For the combination of *מֵה* and *מֵה*, see Ps 124:7; Prov 7:23; Eccl 9:12. For *מֵה* and *מוֹקֵשׁ*, see Josh 23:13; Isa 8:14; Pss 69:23; Pss 141:9. Compare, too, Ugaritic *yqšm*, "bird catchers." Cf. Hos 9:8 *קִישׁ מֵה*; Ps 91:3, *מֵה קִישׁ*; 124:7, *מֵה יִקְשִׁים*.

34. For the meaning "bait," Driver; Harper (p. 71); Cripps (pp. 144-154); Vogt; and Rudolph (p. 151, n. 5a), who also cites van Hoonacker, van Gelderen, Robinson, Snaith, and Amsler. See also Heller (1960, p. 51) and Ashbel (1966, pp. 103-104). Interestingly enough, the Targum translates Heb. *מוֹקֵשׁ* by *צִי* "provision, game." See, too, Vogt (pp. 79-90), and Rudolph, both of whom also add Ps 69:23. For an example of a bird (Heb. *מֵה* = Akk. *issuru*) being caught (Heb. *לִי* = *sabatu*) in a trap or decoy, compare the following curse in Wiseman (1958, p. 73, line 582): *ki ša issuru ina du-ba-qi issabatuni*, "just as a bird is caught in a ???" For Akk. *tubāqi*, cf. Wiseman, "trap;" *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, I, 209 *issur tubāqi*, "decoy;" *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 1364, *tubāqu*, "ein Gebusch?" Cf. also Akk. *arru*, "bird used for decoy," and *arrutu* "used as decoy," *CA D*, A, II, 305-306.

Here the locus changes, and the focus is set upon events which take place within a town or city (בְּעִיר).<sup>35</sup> The questions are introduced by the interrogative אִם (see above), and in vs. 6a the cause precedes the result (see above).<sup>36</sup> This sequence not only produces its own literary effect but is also contextually necessary, for there are many possible reasons which would result in a people's taking alarm.<sup>37</sup> Here, however, the alarm is specifically caused by the ram's horn heralding the imminent danger of an approaching enemy.<sup>38</sup> (For a similar alarming effect of such a blast upon the people — within the context of Moses' prophetic mission — cf. Exod 19:18-19, (שׁוֹפֵר . . . יִחַדְדוּ הָעַם.)

The second half of vs. 6 returns to the result-cause sequence, thereby creating an internal chiasmic order. In vs. 6b, the finale to his interrogatory overture, Amos indulges in yet another polemic, this time against the popular belief that the Lord will not bring any misfortune or catastrophe upon his chosen people.<sup>39</sup> Having been elected and selected, they naively believed that YHWH, the God of Hosts, was truly with them (5:14), and that the "Day of the Lord" would be one of light for them (5:18). They therefore feel secure enough to confidently boast, "Never shall the evil (הַרְעָה) overtake us or come near to us" (9:10). (For similar sentiments, cf. Mic 3:11, "The Lord is in our midst; no calamity (רָעָה) shall overtake us;" and Jer 5:12, "No trouble (רָעָה) shall come upon us.") Amos here, as in the other sections, demolishes these popular sentiments and time-honored beliefs and reaches completely opposite conclusions.<sup>40</sup>

35. By the locus now being the "city," the prophet "progressively zeros in on the world of experience of his hearers [in Samaria]," Wolff (p. 186). For the use of אִם with a plural verb, cf. Exod. 20:18.

36. Cf. n. 15, above. There is no reason to either reverse the two stichs as suggested by Baumgartner (1913, pp. 78-80) nor to view 6a as "une intervention rédactionnelle," Renaud, (p. 359).

37. Compare Rudolph (pp. 154, 156), ". . . weil hier die Fortsetzung des bisherigen Schemas zu Unrichtigkeiten geführt hätte: Das Erschrecken der Menschen kann vielerlei Anlässe haben nicht nur den hier genannten."

38. E.g., Hos 5:8; 8:1; Joel 2:15; Jer 6:1, 17; Ezek 33:3.

39. For רָעָה, "misfortune, calamity," in Amos, 6:3; 9:4, 10. Cf. Deut 32:23; 1 Sam 6:9; 2 Kings 6:33; Isa 45:7; Jer 1:14; 18:8; Ezek 7:5; Job 2:10. For לַעֲשׂוֹת רָעָה, cf. Exod 32:14. In Akkadian the same semantic development also occurs: *lemnu* "morally bad, evil;" *lemuttu*, "misfortune, calamity." Cf. *Enlil lemutta ina mati iššakan*, "Enlil will inflict a calamity upon the country." See *CAD*, L, 128, for examples.

40. Cf. Gitay (pp. 296-297), and Kapeirud (1966, p. 198).

## Verse 7

כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי ה' דָּבָר  
כִּי אִם גִּלְה סוֹדוֹ אֶל־עַבְדָּיו הַנְּבִיאִים

"Indeed" my Lord God does nothing<sup>42</sup>  
without having revealed his purpose<sup>41</sup> to his servants, the prophets."

Most commentators regard this verse as a later interpolation.<sup>44</sup> It is a prose didactic declarative dogmatic assertion (not a rhetorical question), and it is contended that it is "reminiscent of Deuteronomistic history writing"<sup>45</sup> or is a "Deuteronomic cliché."<sup>46</sup> Though the expression עַבְדָּיו הַנְּבִיאִים, "his servants, the prophets," is typical of that school of expression—e.g., 2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5, 29:19; 35:15; 44:4 (cf. Ezek 38:17; Zech 1:6; Ezek 9:11; Dan 9:6, 10)—it does not inevitably and absolutely follow that the prophet could not have expressed himself in this manner. "The fact that the representation of the prophets as the servants of YHWH occurs especially in Jeremiah and the later prophets is not sufficient proof that Amos could not have used this image."<sup>47</sup> Or as succinctly stated by Rudolph in another connection. "Natürlich haben wir hier Ausdrücke, die auch deuteronomistischen Literatur geläufig sind, . . . aber der deuteronomistische Stil war ja nicht eines Tages plötzlich da, sondern hat sich entwickelt."<sup>48</sup> And it is obviously more than a bit exaggerated to declare that the "theology seems very unlike the thinking of Amos."<sup>49</sup> The notion expressed here is intrinsically rooted in the biblical concept of prophecy. The prophet stands in the presence of God (Jer 15:1, 19), is privy to the divine council (Isa 6; Jer 23:18, 22), and as the spokesman for the deity is apprised in advance as to the plans of his God. The institution of prophecy is founded on the basic premise that God

41. The כִּי is asseverative. Note moreover the use of כִּי twice corresponding to the double אִם in the former verse.

42. "anything," "nothing," cf. Exod 9:4; 1 Kgs 5:7; 10:3; Isa 39:2. Compare also the prophet's ironic use of this expression as a *double entendre* in 6:13. For *לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר*, cf. Akk. *amatu epešu*, "to perform an act," *CAD. E*, 202.

43. גִּלְה סוֹד, Prov. 11:13; 20:19; 25:9. Wolff (p. 187), agrees that "the expression, 'to reveal a plan,' is otherwise at home in proverbial wisdom," yet does not interpret it by "reference to its wisdom background," against Terrien (pp. 112-115). For the relation between אִם and the prophets, see Lindblom (1973, pp. 112-115).

44. See above n. 14. Cf. Wolff (p. 181), "It can be asserted with considerable assurance that 3:7 is a later literary addition." See, too, Renaud (pp. 354-355); and Willi-Plein (1971, pp. 21-23).

45. Cf. Weiser (p. 128); Lehming (p. 152); Mays (p. 61); Fey (p. 42); Wolff (p. 187); Rudolph (p. 107) with certain reservations. Cf. esp. Schmidt (p. 185-188).

46. Zimmerli (1957, pp. 22-23).

47. Hammershaimb (p. 60).

48. Rudolph (p. 121). Nevertheless, he does consider the verse here to be secondary.

49. Mays (pp. 61-62). So, too, Renaud (p. 355).

makes his will known to chosen individuals, as is already clearly stated in Gen 18:17.

If the verse is a later interpolation, it must be admitted that it was inserted with great adroitness and artistry. For as the above diagram shows, vs. 7a is chiasmically interrelated to vs. 6b by the identical phrase, ה' לא עשה / לא עשה ה' /, and is related to vs. 8b by the words, ה. אלהים דבר. Vs. 7b is also connected to vs. 8b by the common theme of prophecy. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the formal literary framework is the . . . א . . . ה pattern, even though the particle כִּי here is used differently. Thus Hammershaimb's cautious comment (reached without the aid of the above literary connections) should be taken very seriously: "Verse 7 can, however, be interpreted as a far from superfluous element in the context."<sup>50</sup> The verse definitively establishes the credibility of the prophet, *per se*.

#### Verse 8<sup>51</sup>

אֵרִידָה שָׂאֵן מִי לִילָא יִידָא  
אֲדִנִי הֵל דְּבַר מִי לֹא יִנְבֵא

"A lion has roared, who can but fear?  
My Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Amos finally reaches the climax and ultimate purpose of his presentation. Literarily, as seen above, the first two words (which are identical to 1:2) form a chiasmatic *inclusio* with vs. 4.<sup>52</sup> The style of this verse is also distinct:<sup>53</sup> a declarative statement of fact followed by a rhetorical question. The prophet thereby artfully concludes his thought in the same stylistic manner in which he began, that is by employing the device of a rhetorical question to express a consequential relationship. The staccato-like effect of the entire sentence highlights and emotionally reflects his own existential situation. The prophet acts under divine compulsion. "A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will. . . . A prophet does not elect to prophesy but is selected by God and is irresistibly

50. Hammershaimb (p. 59). Cf. Gitay (p. 299).

51. Some exegetes consider this verse as a separate oracle. Most recently an argument has been made based on meter by Stuart (1976, p. 201). Cf. also Renaud (p. 350). See, however, Wolff (pp. 181-182), and Rudolph (p. 154, n. 13).

52. See Schwarzwald (1979).

53. For other examples of sections which begin and end with the same root words, cf. 2:14, 16 (אָמַן, אָמַן), and 9:1, 4 (חָרַב, חָרַב).

54. Gitay (p. 306), suggests that the prophet, "breaks the stylistic pattern in order to attract attention. The usage of mixed 'genres' 3-6, 7, 8 . . . is effective."

compelled to deliver his message."<sup>55</sup> Thus it is useless for the populace to demand or even threaten him to remain silent (2:12).<sup>56</sup> The prophet speaks when commanded, but once commanded, must speak.<sup>57</sup>

55. Paul (1971 b, pp. 1151-1152). See also Cripps (pp. 157-158); Rudolph (p. 156). Cf. Jer. 20:7-9.

56. Rudolph (p. 156), "und wie man da nicht überlegen kann: soll ich zittern oder soll ich nicht zittern?—man zittert eben—, genauso ist es, wenn der Ruf Jahwes ergeht." Cf. Junker (1950, pp. 4-13).

57. Paul, *loc. cit.*

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