



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, ITS
HISTORICAL RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND, AND ITS IMPLICATION TO
BURMA/ MYANMAR TODAY**

HARVEY VAN BIK

**Supervisor
ØYSTEIN LUND**

(If you want to import a photo/picture) that you have found elsewhere, make sure that you obtain special permission to use a copyrighted work from the copyright holder, and make a note of that fact)

*This Master's Thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the MA degree at*

MF Norwegian School of Theology, [year, term]

Course code, course title and credit points

[e.g.: AVH5010: Master's Thesis (60 ECTS)]

Study program [e.g.. Master in Religion, Society and Global Issues]

[e.g. 26407 words]

**MF-NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
OSLO, NORWAY**

**(MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGY, OT)
AVH 5010- MASTER'S THESIS (60 ECTS-CREDITS)**

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OLD
TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, REGARDING TO ITS HISTORICAL
RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND ITS IMPLICATION TO BURMA/
MYANMAR TODAY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE MF-NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE MASTER
OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGY**

**BY
HARVEY VAN BIK
AUGUST 2013**

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OLD
TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, REGARDING TO ITS HISTORICAL
RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND ITS IMPLICATION TO BURMA/
MYANMAR TODAY**

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED

BY

Prof. Øystein Lund

Date. / 08 /2013

Dedicated
To
My Beloved Mother
Mrs Ni Ca Hlawn
&
Sisters
Dorene Van Bik
Lesley Van Bik

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Øystein Lund for his inspiration guidance, loving patience and warm encouragement all the time. Without his help and care, I will not be able to finish my thesis.

I say thanks from the bottom of my heart to MF-Norwegian School of Theology who grants me this partnership chance on the behalf of Chin Christian College, Myanmar to study here at Norway. I am especially appreciative of two years financial assistance from Norwegian Education Loan Funds. I also wish to thank Norway Chin Baptist Church for offering me as her pastor, a position that I enjoyed immensely.

I am also grateful for guidance provided by international student officers: Bjorn Lyngroth and Ingrid Håp Synnevaag, all my professors and all staff: library and faculty members of MF Norwegian School of Theology.

Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks go to all my siblings, my love and my relatives for their love, care, encouragement and ceaseless prayer to accomplish this course. Without their prayer and support, I could not have completed this work.

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, ITS
HISTORICAL RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND, AND ITS IMPLICATION TO
BURMA/ MYANMAR TODAY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgment	.....	5
Abbreviation		
Introduction	.....	9
01. Defining the Task	.....	9
02. Research Background	.....	10
03. Statement of Problems	.....	10-12
04. Purpose and Scope	.....	12
05. Procedure	.....	13
Chapter One	.....	14-25
General Background of the Book of Amos	.....	14
1.1 Date and Person	.....	14
1.1.1. Date and Time	.....	14-15
1.1.2. The Person	.....	16
1.1.3. The Book	.....	16-19
1.2 The Message and Theology of Amos	.....	19
1.2.1. Amos's Understanding of Justice	.....	19-20
1.2.2. His Message	.....	20-22
1.2.3. The Theology of Amos	.....	23
1.2.3.1. Yahweh, God of All Nations	.....	23
1.2.3.2. Yahweh, the Covenant-Giver of Israel	.....	24-25

Chapter Two	..... 26-42
Exploration of Justice	..... 26
2.1. Justice and Righteousness in the ancient Near East	... 26-32
2.2. Justice in the Old Testament Understanding	... 32-35
2.3. Justice in the Prophets	... 35-36
2.4. Understanding the Hendiadys in the book of Amos and Its relevant Texts	...36-40
2.5. Justice Implication in Amos	... 40-42
Chapter Three	..... 43-56
The Exegesis of Amos 5:18-27	..... 43
3.1 Text Basis of Amos 5:18-27	..... 43-44
3.2 The Structure of Amos 5:18-27	..... 44-46
3.3 Methodological Interpretation of Amos 5:18-27	..... 47-49
3.3.1. Justice and Waters	..... 49-50
3.3.2. Symbolism of Waters	..... 50-52
3.3.3 Irony or Contrast	..... 52
3.3.4. Hyperbole	..... 52-53
3.3.5. Polysyndeton	.....53
3.3.6. Rhetorical Question	..... 53-54
3.4. Theological Reflection	..... 55-56

Chapter Four	.... 57-72
Implication of Justice and Righteousness in Myanmar	
4.1. Historical reading to the Implication of the text in the context	.... 57-59
4.2Challenges of Myanmar	.... 59-60
4.2.1. Political Challenge	.... 60-63
4.2.2. Socio-Economical Challenge	.... 63-65
4.2.3. Religious Challenge	.... 65
4.2.3.1. From the Past (Myanmar Buddhist attitude toward Christianity)	.... 65-66
4.2.4. The Present Challenges	.... 67
4.2.4.1. Church and Justice	.... 67-71
4.2.4.2. Minority Groups and Justice	.... 71-72
Conclusion	..... 73-79
Bibliography	..... 80-84

INTRODUCTION

The hendiadys **מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק** “justice and righteousness” function as the human moral qualities that God expects from the appointed kings and leaders regarding the people they lead. As Wienfield rightly observes, hendiadys may be used in different contexts but it is always referred to in association with social reform in general.¹ This means that the word indicates the dimension of God’s loyalty to His people that includes God’s promotion of justice and righteousness among his people in keeping with His promise in this world (Gen. 18:19). Therefore when the word XXX in relation with kings and leaders, it is used in the Bible, God anointed kings to attend the issue of justice on behalf of the oppressed and enjoy the prosperity and life in equality in society (Ps. 72:1; 89:14; Is. 32:1).

Therefore in the scripture, it is significantly depicted that God is the one who called the prophets to be his word bearers and through them he reminds all his nations to do justice and righteousness in every aspects of the relation to human beings but makes judgement to those who fail to fulfill. God’s punishment reached out to kings, leaders and anybody those who broke humanity in ruling and denounced all the peoples, who oppressed and exploited the poor since the time of prophets (Is. 5:7; Amos 6:12) and if we become less the accountability and responsibility in our relationship with God aware, punishment will also be inevitable in our times.

1. Defining the Task

The primary task of this project is to explore the intended meaning of the hendiadys **מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק** by interpreting in some selected texts in the book of Amos for theological insights and the people of Myanmar. For such a reason that defining the work of prophet Amos, one of the Old Testament prophets, called by God in order to denounce and remind the corrupted ruling classes and the rich in time of the eight century BCE that speaks out relevant biblical message in the ethical and legal dimension of the context of Myanmar where mismanaged, scandalous, and corrupt social, economic and political systems.

¹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 181.

2. Research Background

This project will be a biblical interpretation of **משפט וצדק** “justice and righteousness” in Amos and some related texts with exegetical method or interpretation. As the word about justice and righteousness has been indebted in prophets since they were called out, their theological and ethical virtue concern building up social justice in a society and a nation. Though it is difficult to be supposed that the hendiadys may fit in this Myanmar context however I would say that anyone speaking on behalf of the oppressed, there will never be a sense of social reform or the social liberation in any context.

Therefore this hendiadys is very relevant for Myanmar the third-world country especially one of the exploited countries in the world because she has been ruling for sixty-year by military junta or semi-civilian government lately, many people especially the leaders, the rich, the organizations and the churches are declining in ethical virtue of justice and righteousness to the poor, the oppressed and the needy in the country. For the said background, I am tempted to clarify the true intended meaning of **משפט וצדק** and its obligation and implication of Myanmar churches and the people.

3. Statement of Problems

The Union of Myanmar is geographically the largest country of mainland South East Asia with a total are of 676577km² in which comprised of 135 ethnic groups dwell. Among ethnic diversities, there are eight major ethnic groups: Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Barmar, Rakhine and Shan. In population, there are about 58 millions people in Myanmar. Barma is the largest national ethnic group, constitutes 70%, Karen 9%, Shan 8% Rakhine 5%, Mon 2.5%, Chin 2.5% and Kachin 2 %. In terms of the population of religious adherents, the estimate percentage of Buddhists is 89.3%, Christians 5.6%, Islam 3.8 %, Hindus 0.5% and animists and the other 2%.²

² Hlaing Bwa, “Christian Existence in Myanmar Today: Discerning Christo- Praxis as God's Creative Transformation.” The paper is presented to the *International Theologische Tgung, Universitat Regensburg*, Germany, 22-29 July, 2008.

In such a religiously and ethnically a pluralistic country, it is full of social dilemma in every faces of socio, economic and political in Myanmar. This work has been born out of my concern for the theological, intellectual and moral life of the people of Myanmar because of every social dilemma like exploitation, injustice, oppressions, etc. mislead the people from the will of God. As in the biblical era of the prophets, the gap between the rich and the poor, the exploitation between the ruling class and the ruled and the injustice relation among the majority ethnic and the small groups are too wide to be expressed in words in the eyes of Myanmar Churches. While the poor are struggling hard to make both ends meet, the rich enjoy life luxuriously and abundantly together with the ruling class. Besides, religiously small group of religions like Christian and people of other faiths are being exploited, marginalized and discriminated solely by the government as well the ruling and rich classes.

Almost in every affair, injustice can be seen easily and significantly in terms of bribery and exploitation. The society is in need of social justice. The powerful and the rich are blindly and recklessly oppressing the people. As a result, many are suffering from poverty but the ruling class are richer and richer. Likewise in the time of the prophet Amos, there is social injustice and religious hypocrisy among the society in Myanmar. As Amos denounced all the people who oppressed and exploited the poor, and also their religious hypocrisy of the worshippers, the Myanmar Churches are to proclaim the message of justice and righteousness for the needy people.

Since the society of Myanmar is in social injustice and corruption because of the corrupt rulers and the rich, it is very crucial to make the society filled with justice and peacefulness. The corrupt people are to be denounced and reminded to give up their misdeeds for the sake of the whole society. In particular, the church leaders should boldly play the important roles to point out the wrongdoings of the powerful and the rich like Amos. In essence, this thesis would draw the corrupt society into the accountability and responsibility with humanity and promote the marginalized, the oppressed and the poor into social welfare and prosperity where all can enjoy like in justice and equality. In this situation two challenging questions arise before Myanmar Christians, what is the role of church in this crisis of injustice and unrighteousness

and in order to deal the above mentioning challenges by which ways can the church promote justice and righteousness in Myanmar society?

4. Purpose and Scope

As mentioned above, the primary purpose of this project is to explore the biblical meaning of the hendiadys מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק “justice and righteousness” for Myanmar Churches, the aim is warning and giving the instruction of justice and righteousness that demands the ethical implication of the national leaders since they are chosen for the country as well the inside people of the country. It also aims at warning against the threat of materialism that conceals the oppressed, the poor and the needy because the rich become more individualistic and less concern to the needy people. Such improper reactions were also rejected in the time of Amos and renounced the unworthy and unacceptable relation to human kinds as well as the creator, God. Finally it also warns against the church that she is not merely a place of assembly for proclaiming the gospel, but it has great responsibility and commission for speaking about the justice of God to the whole creatures. To proclaim justice means to promote the image of God for the decent society. As people are crying for justice, the Church should proclaim the gospel of justice without any hesitation. Although the church is threatened in many ways, they must stand for the justice because this is a demand of God.

Moreover this project aims to build a bridge of the ruling leaders and the Myanmar churches must stand firmly in the side of justice at all, and shall have a prophetic voice for justice for the people those who are voiceless, and shall be ready speak on behalf of the poor, the hungry people for their rights and justice, homeless, naked, and who have been deprived of their basic human rights and voices in the society. As in the Old Testament time, the prophets cried out against the injustices and social evils of their days that deprived the powerless poor of their basic human rights, the prophetic word of the church and the ruling sense of national leader must be speaking on behalf of the poor, the powerless, the exploited, the discriminated and the oppressed. By doing so, we are becoming the representative of God’s justice and righteousness to be done in this world.

5. Procedure

In this project I will make use of interpreting of some selected texts in exegetical approach and comparative of biblical **משפט וצדק** and the other parts of the ancient Near East texts in order to get a better understanding. Therefore exegetical as well as analytical methods will be the main tool of the project.

This project is built up with four chapters in order to state the thesis from each different perspective. In the first chapter, I outline generally that the exploration of the Book of Amos, in which the prophet Amos and the historical situation of at that time will be biblically described in detail. For instance, Amos the prophet, who denounced social justice message to the unjust leaders, and pointed out the social injustice of the nation, will be depicted.

The second chapter will be an analytical study of the historical development of the notion of justice and righteousness in the ancient Near East texts and its comparison to the Bible in order to reflect and give more theological concepts of the biblical defining of justice and righteousness in literary and word in the context that spoke by prophets.

The third chapter will be the exegetical study of the texts and interpreting the theology and message of Amos in the corrupted society and clarify the demand that is the ethical role of the people in every situation. In the final chapter, I will explore the current context of Myanmar that direly in need to make known the intend meaning of the message of Amos and propose the ethical challenge as the relevant message that will inspire the people of Myanmar how to behave in the way of God's command in the near future.

CHAPTER ONE

1. General Background of the Book of Amos

The general background of the prophets have been well researched in biblical scholarship, and information that we find in the works of scholars and commentators is generally accurate for the general time, place and person of the prophetic context. Although the interests and concerns of the prophets are different in each situation, their spoken messages interconnect the situational needs as well as the need of the people because they are the called out individuals, especially for the prophet like Amos. (Amos 3:7).

This chapter discusses a general understanding of the book of Amos with regard to its authorship, composition and do an exegesis on Amos 5:18-27 where Amos pronounced judgment upon the northern kingdom because of their unfaithfulness to God. The exegesis reveals that the people of Israelite were expected to live their lives according to the rule and commandment of God, especially in their relation to their fellow human beings, but instead, their disinterested and indifferent ways of life in the nation were the reasons called for severe judgment from God.

1.1. Date and Time

David W. Baker in his article “Old Babylonian, Ischali and the Neo-Assyrian”, reports an existence of ancient Near Eastern texts which recorded similar events that are found in the biblical prophetic events recorded in the Old Testament.³ These extra-biblical texts show that the Israelite prophecy was an international movement among the surrounding neighbors. Such extra-biblical documents also serves as a reliable outside source in hypothesizing the approximate time and date of the prophets.

Prophet Amos was commonly considered as the eight-century prophet by many scholars⁴. Amos 1:1 identifies the contemporary two kings, Uziiah (Azariah) of the Southern King (1 Kg 15:1) and Jeroboam II, son of Joash of the Northern King (1 Kg 14:23) in whose reign prophet Amos delivered the doomed message of Israel with regard to the Northern Kingdom.

³ David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (ed.), *The Face of the Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Michigan: Grandrapids, 2004), 272-273.

⁴ Richard James Coggins, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Joel and Amos* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 78.

Based on the texts from Amos 1:1, scholars and commentators such as James Limburg and Philip J. King dated the book of Amos in relation to the reign of king Israel, Jeroboam II (783-742 BCE)⁵ in which Amos was called out to deliver the message of God. F. Winward writes that during the long reign of Jeroboam II, Israel extended her territory and trade routes and there was politically and economically prosperity and peace in the nation (2 Kg 14:25). The prosperity was especially evident in the capital city of Samaria, where “notable men” were proud and self-indulgent, lazy and luxurious (Amos 2:8; 4:1; 6:1-6). Along with such prosperity there appeared emergences of not only a gulf between the rich and the poor, but also no concern for the oppressed and injustice in the law-courts (Amos 2:7; 5:10-12; 8:4-6). Moreover, there occurred a switch of religion. For example, the worship of Baalim at Bethel and Gilgal was thronged with worshippers, with the display of costly offerings and sacrifices (Amos 4:4-5; 5:5).⁶ In such a time of corruption and irreligion in the nation of Israel, prophet Amos delivered God’s judgment. Here it is important to note how Amos was vitally aware of the socio-political and economic situation of his neighboring nation of Israel in delivering God’s judgment.

It also appears that the time of prophet Amos could be dated in reference to king Uzziah of Judah, a contemporary king of Jeroboam II, who ruled (792-740 BCE)⁷ over the Southern nation, and got achievement in military against Philistines, Arabs who lived in Gur-baal and the Meunites. Evidently King Uzziah restored his territory near the border of Egypt at that time (2 Chro 26:6-8). Those times prosperity and military success came about in both Israel and Judah when Syria, the rival nation, was defeated by the Assyrian emperor Adadnirari III (805-782).⁸ In that golden age, the rich became richer in Israelite society with the poor becoming poorer. The hardship that the poor faced, the deprivation their lands, and their exploitation by the rich were seen as devastating to the nation by prophet Amos. To such a nation of Israel, Amos was called to be a spokesman for God in the middle of the eight-century, most likely around 750 BCE.

⁵ James Limburg, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching “Hosea-Micah”* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 84. Philip J. King, *An Archaeological Commentary “Amos, Hosea, Micah”* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 21.

⁶ Stephen F. Winward, *A Guide to the Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 36.

⁷ Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary “Amos”* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 19.

⁸ R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1970), 223.

1.2. The Person

According to the book of Amos, Amos, one of the shepherds from Tekoa in the province of Judah, gave God's utterance to the Northern kingdom, Israel during Jeroboam II (Amos 1:1). God chose Amos from the flock in the wilderness (Amos 7:14) like Moses (Ex. 3:1-2). For instance, just like Moses was called by God while working as a shepherd in the wilderness, God called Amos while he was working as a shepherd in Tekoa, Amos's hometown. Evidently, the call took place while a number of shepherds were in the wilderness with their flocks. John D. Davis says that some shepherds extended their keeping flocks from East of the village to the Dead Sea and down on the lower level toward the sea where people found employment as dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14).⁹ Therefore, when Amaziah prophet of Bethel said that he was a seer from Judah and not prophesied at the temple of Bethel, Amos replied his work as a herdsman¹⁰ (sheep-breeder) and a dresser of sycamore trees but God's commission was to make a prophesy in Israel (Amos 7: 12-15). The above verses reveal who Amos was. He was a Judean a shepherd (a sheep-keeping person), a herdsman (a sheep-breeding person), and a prophet who was called out by God dressed with a dresser of sycamore tree.

However, the person in the book of Amos is not vividly as certain as the sole writer of the book because there seemed to be more than one genre in process of narrating different accounts of the book. Therefore, I will go into a detailed discussion of how many composers or editors might be there in the book of Amos in the section below.

1.3. The Book

There is a debate among a number of scholars with regard to whether the book of Amos is the only work out of the prophet himself or the expanded writings of later editors or his disciples. It appears that the latter is more convincing. For example, scholars like J. Blenkinsopp and J. Barton showed that often the typical languages of Deuteronomists were presented in the book (Amos 1:1; 1:3-2:5; 3.1-2, 7; 5:4, 6, 14). The usages like "*his servant the prophets*", "*seeking*" and "*that you may live..*" are

⁹ John D. Davis, *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible: Amos*, rev., Henry Synder Gehman (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1994), 26.

¹⁰ "Owner in charge of other shepherds or a substantial man of his community" James Luther Mays, "*Amos*" *A Commentary: The Old Testament Library* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 3.

definitely the expression of Deuteronomists.¹¹ In Coote's stages, it belongs to B-stage, the Bethel editor in the seventh century.¹² These verify that the whole book of Amos was the compilation of the works of different scribes in different time. Therefore, in a quite simply illustration, the book of Amos is like a "pizza". On top of the prophet's oracles (*a flat round bread*), later editors are preserving traditions, revising and editing them (*base with cheese, tomatoes, vegetables, meat, etc. on top*) in order to come out a literary form of the book. According to Troxel, the role of the editors was both transmitting and inculcating the prophet's words by oral recitation and through writing. For these writers editing was not a mere collection and rearrangement of some pieces of writing by one author. In the ancient world, the process of editing includes sampling, reformulating, and remixing the existing materials in order to inject a new meaning intended by the contributing editor(s).¹³ Therefore the works of editors are like layers of an onion-structure which cover the pristine of the prophetic oracles. Thus in order to reveal the core words of the prophet, those editorial layers must be scrutinized carefully.

The book of Amos has been divided traditionally into three parts. The first part concerns a series of oracles against the nations (1:3-2:16), the middle part includes God against Israel (3:1-6:14), and the final part braces a series of five visions (7-9).¹⁴

In this traditional structure, many scholars believe that the middle oracles (3:1-6:14) were the words of Amos rather than two other parts in linking the context of the condemned oracles to Bethel sanctuary and cultic performances in Israel in times of prosperity (3:14; 4:1,4,5; 5:12; 6:4). It is not because Amos himself uttered these oracles but because this ring composition (3:1-6:14) could be able to actualize and update in mind of the generations of the intention of the eight-century Amos from Babylonian exile through the independence of Persian Empire. However, even in the so-called the words of Amos (3:1-6:14), there are still numerous adding or secondary literature in the book itself as said the above accordingly Barton (Amos 3:7; the idea

¹¹ John Barton, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Amos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 45 & Joseph Blenkinsop, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 75.

¹² Robert B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets, Composition and Theology* (Fortress Press, USA, 1981), 65.

¹³ Ronald L. Troxel, *Prophetic Literature from Oracles to Books* (Oxford: A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, 2012), 11-12.

¹⁴ Richard James Coggins, 77.

about obedience to the law that emerged later than the eighth century).¹⁵ Therefore it is hardly to say which portion belongs to who on behalf of whom because the book is baked together in order to be the whole but each portion could simply represent the entirety like slices of pizza. The whole book really speaks about God's justice and righteousness, love and mercy to his people.

Though the book of Amos contains a variety of addition by the later editors, Amos chapter (3-6) regarded widely as a ring composition for the whole yet in the specific passage chapter (5:1-17) is concentrically composed into a central feature of the theology of the book of Amos.¹⁶ Likewise, scholars like Mays¹⁷ and Snaith¹⁸ also commented the text (Amos 5:8,9) that the mighty God whose power is dependably for the Israelite in order to live in history and exist in the universe. God is indeed both kills and bestows life. As for Barton, this (5:7-10) is a very classical doom message of Amos and its lies in the center structure of the book.¹⁹ Noteworthy Andersen and Freedman agreed in some extent that Amos chapter 5 could summarize the major themes and elements of the book of Amos whereas their concentric circle is so-called the middle of the book (5:14-15) that upheld vv. 4-6 and vv. 23-24 in balance.²⁰ In reading that vv. 4,5,6,14,15,23,24 in Amos chapter 5, it really gives a sense of repetition of synonym meanings "seek God and live" except ruined. Though different terms have been used in passages of a text, verses reveal its core theology of the book of Amos.

According to Barton, Amos 5:18-27 is linked with chapter 4:4-13 in order to be a section of the criticizing the cult. These verses show the attack on the elites who are living in luxury (4:1-3; 6:1-7).²¹ What then the classical prophets proclaimed more essentially is thus conceived of a mere ceremony and lacking of any religion value (Amos 5:21-25; Hos. 6:6; Isa. 1:10-17; Mic. 6:6-8; Jer. 7:21-23).²² That means God demands of his people to live in proper social behavior toward one's fellow human rather than sacrificial worship, the ritual act of the cult. Here Anderson and Freedman

¹⁵ John Barton, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Amos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11, 45.

¹⁶ John Barton, (Structure D: Amos 5:8,9), 25.

¹⁷ James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 96.

¹⁸ Norman H. Snaith, *Amos, Hosea & Micah* (London: The Epworth Press, 1956), 32.

¹⁹ John Barton, 26.

²⁰ Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman, 471.

²¹ John Barton, 25.

²² Alexander Rofe', *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 94.

also structured (5:18-27) as warning a woe to Israel while there are division into three categories inside: (1) the Day of Yahweh (18-20); (2) Justice (21-24) and (3) Threat of exile (25-27).²³ When I read the book of Amos especially chapter 5, it continued with the threat and destruction messages in the following verses for the unaware Israel and the elite people who keep up the false foundation of their hypocritical worship by setting religious offerings than seeking what God's demand. Neither the heartless sacrificial offers (Deut. 16:16) did a sense toward God nor the unfaithful act of togetherness in worship with images (Deut. 14:25-26; Isa. 2:8). Here the Bethel editor had added a strongly concluding clause at the end of chapter why the Israel was taken away in vv. 25-27 because they refused and failed to perform justice in time of prophecy and that was the cause of the end of the northern kingdom.

The finding of Wolff²⁴ really gave me a sense of the divisional structure of the Amos chapter five. As Amos 5:18-27 is like the sandwich between “woe” from the chapter 5 verse 18 and another “woe” from the start of the following chapter 6 verse 1 in the Hebrew Bible, I would like to make those verses (18-27) into a group and do exegesis for the thesis. Here the word “woe” approves that it is a group speech in a text.

1.2. The Message and Theology of Amos

1.2.1 Amos' Understanding of Justice

In order to comprehend Amos' message, it is important to understand how Amos interpreted justice. When prophet Amos talked about justice, it was always in relation with what happened in the Israelite society with the denouncement of all those who were oppressing and exploiting the poor. The historical setting also depicts that social injustice was very rampant in the era of Amos. In the midst of that social

²³ Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman, 519.

²⁴ When it comes to literary form, Wolff concerned vividly the “woe-cry” that is the very important highlight in the book of Amos. These “woe-cries” had been very useful when he made a comparison between the prophet and the other books for instance the book of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and wisdom literatures (Deut. 27:15-26; 1 King 13:30; Jer. 22:18; Pro. 13:14, 15:24). Among his comparison, Wolff marginally drew a closed related “woe-cry” of the prophet to the wisdom literature because of the inevitable end when the unfortunate things came one after another (Pro. 23:29-35; Amos 5:19) Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 20-24.

injustice, Amos, as the called prophet of God, attempted to herald the message of God with his understanding of justice.

According to Amos 5:6-7, justice and righteousness are absolutely parts of the presence of God as the life-bestowing force. For Amos, the Israelites perceived evil as good and were practicing it in the society. As a result, the so-called “justice” had turned into its opposite term “injustice” and the people were striving for the wealth by exploiting and oppressing the weak and the poor. They hated and opposed those who spoke the truth (Amos 5:10). Therefore, Amos reminded the people that their opposition to the essence of the court-justice system, in which the truth lied, was an embrace of death in God’s eyes. Only when God’s concern for the weak is disclosed, the Israel people would be in just and peaceful state. For Amos, the key to experiencing the presence of God is not religiosity, but the exercise of justice between and among humans (5:21-24).²⁵

Furthermore, Amos perceives that justice is in connection with life. Like the water is the key to the sustaining life in the desert, the community exists by doing justice. The worship of Israel is unacceptable to God because they don’t live as the people of God. Consequently, life is absent from them. For the presence of life, justice and righteousness must roll down like floods after the winter rains and persist like those few streams that do not full in the dry summer (6:12).²⁶

1.2.2. Amos Message

The prophet Amos, who was called by God to herald and remind Israel, was well aware of the crying of the oppressed, exploited, the marginalized, and the poor. Both knowing soundly and clearly of God’s desire, and seeing the social evils which were in existence among the Israelite people, the chosen people of God, Amos delivered the message of God to the Israel.

As the social evils in Israel has been revealed in the first chapter, it is not surprising that it was full of social injustice among the Israelite people. Amos

²⁵ Ted Grimsrud, *Healing Justice: The Prophet Amos and a New Theology of Justice: Peace and Justice Shall Embrace*, Ed., Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Pennsylvania: Pandora Press, 1999), 73-75.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

believed that God and Israel were bound together by the covenant that God had made with Moses at Sinai (3:1-2). God had promised to take care of his chosen people, the Israelites, and save them from their enemies if they would follow the way of life which he laid down for them.²⁷

The Israelites were granted special privileges through this covenant with God for understanding what God is like and how people should glorify and serve Him. By contrast, the Israelites, unfortunately, were breaking their promise to God and behaving as if they had not been given any commandments by the God who made covenant with them. In fact, through the practices of God's justice among themselves, the Israelites could make use of the covenant through which they could gain abundant blessings from God (2:4).²⁸ All that Amos learned in his visions was that God would no longer forgive His people.

Amos accused Israelites of social injustices and challenged those “who trampled the head of the poor into the dust of the earth” (2:7). He condemned the practice of bribing judges as “selling the righteous for silver” (2:6a). Moreover, Amos denounced the unjust business practices of using false balances and selling bags of contaminated grain (8:6b).²⁹ He also pointed out the exploitation upon debtors and selling the innocent and the needy into debt slavery.³⁰

With the resolution that the Lord is righteous, the nation is sinful, and ruin is inevitable, Amos heralded the judgment of God which condemned how helpless debtors were sold into slavery, how the poor were ground down, and how the worship at the sanctuaries was accompanied by prostitution and oppression. As the chosen people of God, as Israel has greater the privilege, it also has greater the responsibility. Therefore, God will bring a heavier punishment upon the people with whom he has been in intimate relationship (3:2).³¹

Due to all these sins, God's judgment will fall upon all social classes of the nation including the king and his house, the royal chaplain and his family, the leaders and the nobles, the luxury-loving men and the pampered women, the rapacious

²⁷ Bernard Thorogood, *A Guide to the Book of Amos* (London: S.P.L.K, 1971), 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹ Victor H. Matthews, *Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 69-70.

³⁰ Ted Grimsrud, 69-70.

³¹ Stephen I. Winward, *A Guide to Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 40.

landowners and the idle rich. And under the judgment, the common people will be included along with the noble men. No one is able to escape from the destruction (9:2, 3). Amos also perceived that the overthrow of the nation would take place on the field of battle. In that vision, the swiftness and strength, the experience and skill of Israel's warriors would be in vain (2:14-16), unless they repent of their crimes against humanity and let justice roll down like waters.³²

The problem in Israel was not that the people did not intellectually know the precepts of the law or their concern for the needy. Rather, the leaders and judges simply refused to practice the law as intended. This refusal led to the disregard for justice. To make matters worse, injustice ran rampant amidst thriving religiosity. People assembled at the shrines but totally disregarded God's call for them to show justice to the needy.³³ To this social situation Amos proclaimed what God required, i.e., to let justice flow like a swollen torrent and righteousness like an ever flowing stream (5:24). The dealings of men with one another in every sphere of life, personal, economic, social, political must be just and right.³⁴

In addition to such social injustice, Amos also pointed out the theme of religious hypocrisy. He depicted the uselessness of the people's worship that it was not out of true faith (2:7). He also denounced the greedy merchants who cannot even wait for the Sabbath or other religious holidays to end so that they could resume business (8:5a). Amos warned that people celebrated religious festivals, but they do not create the just society that God desires for his people.³⁵ God hates and rejects all acts of worship which are substitutes for right personal and social relationships. God is righteous. Therefore, cult and conduct must be all of one piece. No man can be in right relationship with God, who is not in right relationships with his fellow men.³⁶

³² Ibid., 40-41.

³³ Grimsrud, 70-71.

³⁴ Stephen I. Winward, 41.

³⁵ Victor H. Matthews, 71.

³⁶ Stephen I. Winward, 42.

1.2.3. The Theology of Amos

When the prophet Amos heralded the message of God to the nation, he considered himself as being called and chosen by God to declare the justice of God, with the perception that God is sovereign over the world, God has a special relationship with Israel, God judges, and God is just.

1.2.3.1. Yahweh, God of All Nations

The Yahweh who speaks through Amos is God of the nations.³⁷ Yahweh forms the mountains and creates the winds (4:13), made the starry constellations, divided the day from the night; and summons the rain (5:8). Many from the Northern Kingdom adored the Baal which was closely associated with rain and the fertility of the earth, and so Amos wanted no doubts left on this point: “Yahweh is his name” (5:8). Yahweh is even responsible for the annual rise and fall of the Nile River in Egypt (9:5). Because Yahweh is sovereign Lord, the presence of Yahweh is inescapable. Because God’s presence is inescapable, the destinies of all nations are in God’s control. Damascus, Gaza, Ammon, and Moabite all mentioned in the long oracle of judgment in 1:3-2:16. Assyria and Egypt, the two great power centers of Amos’ time, are under God’s authority (3:9), are the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Syrians (9:7).³⁸

God is not the private deity of Israel. God is active in the histories of other nations; even in the histories of Israel’s worst enemies.³⁹ He is patron of good and judge of evil in the world; his eye is on the sinful kingdom (9:8), and he sends his punishment on every nation whose crimes oppose his authority (1:3-2:3). He can summon one nation to work his wrath on another (6:14). The world is subject to his command and serves his purpose even in disasters (7:1,4: 4:6-11). Every region is under his authority.⁴⁰ Such things assured that Israel was Yahweh’s people, but Yahweh was not Israel’s God.

³⁷ James Luther Mays, 6.

³⁸ James D. Newsome, Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 23-24.

³⁹ James Limburg, *Interpretation: Hosea-Micah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

1.2.3.2. Yahweh, the Covenant-Giver of Israel

For the prophet Amos, the concept of covenant also plays a vital role in the Israelite people. Through covenant, they became the chosen people of God and had a special relationship with God. Though the Prophet Amos does not use the word “covenant”, the idea of covenant is implicit in Amos thought. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (3:2) refers to this special relationship between God and Israel. The choice of Israel to be God’s own people has been depicted in the repeated acts by God through which Israel has been saved from danger and destruction. Amos 2:9-11 pinpoints an awareness that without the grace of God Israel would not even exist but would have long ago been destroyed by its enemies. For Amos, if God did not love Israel in a special manner, Israel would not have been punished so persistently by God. Yahweh is “your (Israel) God” (4:12) and Israel is “My (God’s) people” (8:2).⁴¹

Thus the special relation of Yahweh to Israel comes into play as the ground of Israel’s guilt and Yahweh’s judgment.⁴² God’s special association with Israel (3:2) involved high moral and spiritual responsibilities. Failure to see and observe those responsibilities could only bring judgment upon the nation. According to Amos 9:7, Amos was concerned to rescue the covenant concept from a perverted interpretation that the nation was told bluntly that it had no more claim upon God than the Ethiopians, the Philistines, or the Syrians. God’s association with Israel demanded that the nation should reciprocate by observing those high moral and ethical qualities typical of the God of Sinai. Such attributes in the life of the people were depicted as their refusal of bond with God and to this apostasy the nation could expect only to incur due retribution from him who was the Lord of history.⁴³

It is important to note how Amos used the word “Israel” in a twofold sense. On the one hand, like other Old Testament writers, Amos sometimes means by “Israel” the whole Hebrew people who came into the land of Canaan and who settled into till the land and to populate the cities after conquering the inhabitants. With the exodus, the wilderness wandering, and the conquest in 2:10 and 4:10, God’s special relation to this larger nation is portrayed. On the other hand, Amos is also concerned

⁴¹ James D. Newsome Jr., 24.

⁴² James Luther Mays, 6.

⁴³ R. K. Harrison, 149.

with the Northern Kingdom and he frequently uses “Israel” to refer to this nation, which he also calls “Samaria” (3:9), “Joseph” (5:6), “Jacob” (7:2), and “Isaac” (7:9).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ James D. Newsome Jr., 25.

CHAPTER TWO

2. EXPLORATION OF “JUSTICE”

The aim of this chapter is focusing an analogy between the quest for justice and righteousness in Israel and her neighboring in which it appeared. When it comes to studying justice and righteousness in Israel, it has been more or less an influential historical-environmental for Israel since their forefathers were well travelled under conditions of colorful developed cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Such a high possession with cultures, system of laws, literatures and religions were somehow in touch with Israelite’s concept of justice and righteousness.⁴⁵

Thus, in this study I will try to present from where did this conception of justice and righteousness come into roots in the biblical documentations and why did it become a widening usage also in the ancient Near East? However studying the ancient Near East texts is a very big agenda and therefore my texts will be mostly depended on experts but discuss them in my own ways.

2.1. משפט וצדק “Justice and Righteousness” in the ancient Near East

The concept of hendiadys “justice and righteousness” was expressed as the common word-pair in ancient Israel as well as in the ancient Near East. Regard to this word-pair “justice and righteousness”, the word-pairs like “righteousness and equity”, “righteous and upright” and “righteousness and truth” are found parallelism in the Bible and in the Ugaritic literature that predates Israelite literature.⁴⁶

According to Weinfeld’s examination on this pair-word “justice and righteousness” in ancient Near East texts, this hendiadys’ notion goes into political contexts at the time kings ascended and made a redemption of the people in order to establish equity.⁴⁷ This usage of hendiadys was attributed to social justice and equity with love and kindness in the nation that shall belong to king.

As regards this hendiadys, it had long been practiced in case of social and political liberation in the ancient Near East:

The concept of social justice in the ancient Near East was usually expressed in a hendiadystic form *kittum u misarum* “truth and justice”

⁴⁵ Rainer Kessler, *The Social History of Ancient Israel* (Meneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008), 18.

⁴⁶ Moshe Weinfeld, *Justice and Righteousness, The Expression and Its Meaning in Justice and Rigtuousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence*, eds. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 228-229.

⁴⁷ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 181.

in Mesopotamia, *sdq msr* “justice and righteousness” in Phoenicia and *mspt wsdqh* in ancient Israel. These concepts have a broad range of meanings. Thus *kittum u misarum* as well as *mspt and sdqh* may be defined as a quality and attribute generally given by the deity to the king, that is the perception of truth and justice. Thus Hammurabi is said to have been given truth (*kinatim*) by *Samas* the god of justice.⁴⁸

This text above reveals kings and officials were responsible for attributing justice and righteousness to people in the ancient Near East and each hendiadys in a time and another commonly expressed the one concept that is social-political liberation for the needy people.

In that case, when used with this hendiadys often refers to the work out of royal decree or the officials concern liberty for the poor in the society and it does not totally exclude the juridical sense of just judgment. It speaks much more relevant for the social-political leaders who are making the laws and are responsible for their execution.⁴⁹

Having said that this hendiadys functions as social-political liberty with such a parallel in the ancient Near East and in the Bible that has prompted a question of where does this conception come from? It may be fair to say that the motif that Israel’s hendiadys has been instituted from Mesopotamia (not totally): the establishment of “*misarum* proclaiming”⁵⁰ of the old Babylonian king Ammisaduqa that resembled king David’s tradition refers to liberation performance (2Sam 8:15) and finally David’s tradition was remembered and depicted as an ideal notion of a future king in Israel (Isa. 9:6, 16:5; Jer. 23:5, 33:15).⁵¹ So far, what we can see here is that it was common for kings to the notion of justice and righteousness are essential in their reigning throughout the concept of hendiadys in the ancient Near East and the biblical document. What the difference between ancient Near East text and the Bible

⁴⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel against the Background of Social Reforms in the Ancient Near East in *MESOPOTAMIEN UND SEINE NACHBARN*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen (Dietrich Reimer Verlag: Berlin, 1987), 491.

⁴⁹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 44.

⁵⁰ *Misarum* proclaiming means the function of the king as the true judge, who provides justice for the oppressed, male and female, establishes righteousness and destroys the evildoer. Moshe Weinfeld, Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel against the Background of Social Reforms in the Ancient Near East in *MESOPOTAMIEN UND SEINE NACHBARN*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen, 494.

⁵¹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 48.

is that only God is in charge of both right of freedom and regulations of the nation in the Bible.⁵²

According to Leon Epsztein, gods granted kings to play as presenters of social justice in Mesopotamia society by illustrating in hymns and law codes.⁵³ We read a hymn dedicated to Utu in Sumerian literature, the sun-god and god of justice, who governs the order of the universe. This text below revealed that god *Utu* was the primarily divine representative of justice for Sumerian by approving in legal texts and religious texts at that ancient Mesopotamian world. This indicates visibly that *Utu* exemplified with royal decrees for kings to the nations. That means king was in charge with the responsibility to regulate justice and righteousness as an agent of *Utu*. Similarly, what we can see the role of the kings in the biblical accounts as kings are the receiver of God's righteousness and the judge on the side of the poor for justice (Psa. 72:1-2; 89:14; 99:4).

Utu, you are the god of justice,

Utu, (you are) the shepherd, the father of the "dark headed" (people).

Utu, (you are) the principal judge of the land (of Sumer).

Utu, to give judgment is in your power (right).

Utu, to give decisions is in your power (right).

Utu, justice is in your power (right).

Utu, to lead in truthfulness and justice is in your power.

...

Utu, the destitute girl, the forsaken woman (?) are in your power (care).

Utu, to provide justice to the widow is in your power.

Utu, if you do not come out (var., without you), no judgment is given, no decision is decided.⁵⁴

In addition, the Sumerian hymn of goddess which adduced *Nanshe*, who was a feminine goddess representative of justice and portrayed as a sensitive goddess to the oppressed by the fellow man and acted as mother to the orphan. And she also

⁵² Moshe Weinfeld, Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel against the Background of Social Reforms in the Ancient Near East in *MESOPOTAMIEN UND SEINE NACHBARN*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen, 504.

⁵³ Leon Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 4.

⁵⁴ Enrique Nardoni, *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in Biblical World* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), 15.

concerned to the fate of the widow, seeking justice for the poor and being a refuge for the weak. Here the text reads as follows:

Who knows the orphan, who knows the widow?
Knows the oppression of man over man, the orphan's mother,
Nanshe, who cares for the widow?
Who seeks out (?) justice (?) for the poorest (?).
The queen brings the refugee to her lap,
Finds shelter for the weak ...
Nanshe searches the heart of the people⁵⁵.

As the text shows, there rooted the quest for justice was steeped into the concern of god and goddess in the Mesopotamia world and the kings performed in their ruling societies.

Similarly in the code of Lipit-Ishtar, the fifth king of the dynasty of Isin enunciates the general principles relating to the origin of royal power and its exercise. In that prologue it is said that Lipit-Ishtar has been called by *Nunamnir* to establish justice in the land, to blot out corruption by “the word” and to break “by force” evil doing and ill will.⁵⁶ In that sense, the text surely performed justice as a royal function to be exemplified by kings and gods in the ancient Near East that it is an example of the beyond facts of the biblical accounts.

The same is said about the Amorite dynasty who had Hammurabi Code that illustrated how great king Hammurabi who chiefly established the greatness of Babylon, the world's first metropolis in reigning (1792 BC – 1750 BC),⁵⁷ a wise lawgiver in his fame of code, was called to make *misarum* appear in the land to destroy the evil and the wicked that the strong might not oppress the weak.⁵⁸ This means that justice and righteousness was regarded as the fount of king's regulations. Having considered these views that describe how kings represented in the influential role of social relationship with people to people to be harmony in Mesopotamia world then people got along well in the nation with humanity.

Just like Mesopotamia, the ancient Egyptians believed that they had in their deities, the goddess *Maat* whose personification was “right order, correct law, justice

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Leon Epszstein, 9.

⁵⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel against the Background of Social Reforms in the Ancient Near East in *MESOPOTAMIEN UND SEINE NACHBARN*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen, 495.

and truth” that played a central role in cosmic order.⁵⁹ The goddess was seen as responsible for justice and intimately connected with the chief gods (*Re*, the sun god, and *Osiris*, the god of the dead) as well a sense of close relationships with the king who was responsible for the divine order on earth.⁶⁰ According to Ivan Engnell, “Nothing is more certain than that the Pharaoh was divine.”⁶¹ This means that the king is divine from birth. “The child is formed by the gods in the womb of the mother, and at its birth the life-fluid throws itself from the god to the royal child, which is thus the fruit of a ‘τεροζ γαμος’.”⁶² The fact is that king has no human origin so that he has neither father nor mother. Here it seems as with other cultures, the Egyptian also had an elaborate culture of technical divination.

Denise Lardner Carmody states that the divine *Maat* (“order” or “law”) the cosmos was run orderly from heaven to human society through king. For instance king Pharaoh is regarded as the embodiment of two warring gods, *Horus* and *Seth*. As *Horus* and *Seth* implied Pharaoh, they were reconciled in his person. Though the king had the title “Son of *Re*”, son of god, he was identified with *Osiris*, the god who dies and rises which indicates that the king had manifold ties to the gods in the ancient Egypt.⁶³ Tying the king with gods had great consequences. For instance, Pharaoh was responsible for both the cosmic and the social order in his hands because he was a son of gods that was responsible for balancing these two entities.⁶⁴ Besides, in ways of cult, the functions of the king as high priest were par excellence. Pictures and texts describe him again and again as performing the ritual tasks in the daily cult as well as at the great festivals. The character of this cult is only to be understood in the light of king’s identity with god. Concerning the king Pharaoh is identical with *Re*, the sun god, there is a hymn saying:

“[Turn] thy face unto me, thou rising sun,
that illumineth the Two lands with its beauty!
Thou sun of mankind, that banisheth the darkness from Egypt.
Thou art like thy father *Re*, who ariseth in the firmament.

⁵⁹ Douglas W. Stott (translated), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: "Sadaq"* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2003), 240.

⁶⁰ Leon Epsztein, 18.

⁶¹ Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶³ Denise Lardner Carmody, *The Oldest God: Archaic Religion Yesterday & Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 61.

⁶⁴ Leon Epsztein, 19.

Thy beams enter (even) into a cavern, and there is no place that is devoid of thy beauty...

Thine eyes are more bright than the stars of heaven,
and thou canst see better than the sun.

[Even] if one speaketh, and the mouth is in a cavern,
yet cometh it into thine ear.

If ought is done that is hidden, yet will thine eye behold it.

Mernephtah, beloved of Amun, lord of grace, who createth breath!"⁶⁵

The above statement clearly expressed the characteristic of qualities of the high god. In this way Pharaoh is described not only a benevolent and gracious god but also as a consuming god of wrath.⁶⁶

As just stated, king Pharaoh stresses the important of justice and the role that falls in this respect on the vizier, who must be an impartial judge, available to all, comprehensive, not too severe.⁶⁷ Moreover, according to Engnell, the king is to be the perfect ruler in his country; above all as "administrator of justice" in the widest sense of the word, and as such as we have seen, identical with the high god. In this quality he is to be the good shepherd, a roof, mountain, and fortress in his country as well as for the widow and the orphan, he is a father; for the homeless he is a roof. His duty is to administer equal justice to all, to protect the feeble, to abhor iniquity, to be a father to his children.⁶⁸ Undoubtedly kings are supposed to be indistinguishable with the high god and hereby with the universal order, with cosmos, that they uphold by virtue of functioning in the ritual. The chief task is not to be an earthly king who makes decision but a king who gives law from the sky equally to the people.⁶⁹

In sum, I set out with the assumption that as different texts have been framed by different contexts and times comparing to biblical text, ways of concepts may have been different from one another but I have come to the conclusion that kings, visible presenters of god and goddess, were sitting at the chair of laws in order to afford law, peace and justice in human society as well in the nation. However for the study of the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible, it seems best to draw the conclusion of the differences is neither kings nor human beings are at the same level as the creator God

⁶⁵ Ivan Engnell, 6-7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁷ Leon Epszstein, 19.

⁶⁸ Ivan Engnell, 14.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15.

is. After a thorough presenting of the ancient Near East text, I will work out of biblical document at the next session in order to compare and point out what have said before.

2.2. משפט in the Old Testament

The idea about משפט in the bible has been rooted in God's intervention in history on behalf of the oppressed, the sojourner and the king (Gen 18:19; Ex 8:22-23; 9:4; 1 Kings 3:17-18) in order to make restoration to His creative intent.⁷⁰ In this way, justice regarded the teaching and the ethical demand for kings, rulers, leaders and people those were elected in power of God became the instruments of justice in the bible (Psalm 72:1-2; 89:14; Proverbs 21:3; Ecclesiastes 5:8; Isaiah 32:1-2), as exemplified by David (2 Sam. 8:15) and Josiah (Jer. 22:15-16).⁷¹ Here, the prophet Micah also declared, "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). That means to love and treat other people justly is the same way to obey what God commands for social order but people in Israel neither know how to do right thing nor cut it out the way they kept violence and robbery with their power (Amos 3:10). Besides, Isaiah who revealed the suffering of God in the social injustices for his beloved Judean people and through his suffering people were taken away from their pains and suffers (Is 42:1-4).

Moreover, the prophets of the Old Testament were champions of social justice. During those days, justice was often perverted through bribery and favoritism or partiality (Ps. 82:3; Prov. 17:23;). But God's rewards come to those who practice justice and righteousness in all their dealings with others (Ps. 119: 121, 149; Prov.10: 3; Isaiah 32: 16-20). In the words of the prophet Amos, "But let justice run down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24)⁷² means only those who are practicing justice and righteousness will get attention from God and their prayers will be heard and blessed.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 115

⁷¹ Helee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), 16.

⁷² Holy Bible (NRSV)

Very often, the biblical writers exclaim that God loves justice, “I, the Lord, love justice” (Is. 61:8) and “The Lord loves justice” (Ps. 37:23, RSV). God’s love for justice is depicted as an active love: God does justice. ‘The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed’ (Ps. 103:6); ‘ I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy’ (Ps. 140:12); and in Ps. 146 it is the Lord who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin’ (Ps. 146:7-9, RSV).⁷³

Moreover, God’s justice is expressed most clearly in the covenant, and the covenant community is called to be faithful to God’s justice (Deut 16:20). To act unjustly is to turn away from God; in acting justly God is known and obeyed. God’s justice in the biblical tradition involves a special care for the victims. In Amos’s oracles, God’s justice is revealed in His retribution to the nations according to their wrong behaviour against God’s norms of moral creativity (Amos 1:3; 1:6; 1:9, 11; 2:5).⁷⁴ Those who felt unjustly treated by others in social, economic, and political relationships asked for God to judge them (Ps. 7:6-11).⁷⁵

The Hebrew word “*mishpat*” is mostly used for law and it can also mean simply justice. It derives from the root “*shapat*”, which is usually translated by the verb “judge”. According to Andre Neher, justice signifies at the same time veneration, respect, legality, love and charity. It symbolized sacred virtue and secular honesty. It denotes equity and good law no less than strict law and severity.⁷⁶

According to the prophets, by ongoing endeavour, human beings must develop the divine spark of life of which they are the vehicles. Yet the behaviour of human beings must be in harmony with their principles. The prophets regarded men and woman as free and moral beings from which right behaviour could be required. They emphasized the obligation not only to believe but to act. For the prophets, justice is not an abstract value existing outside real life and society. Rather, it is the main

⁷³ N. P. Wolterstorff, 17.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Burnside, 80.

⁷⁵ Duncan Forrester, 360.

⁷⁶ Leon Epzstein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 47-48.

reason for the Wrath of God. God does not ask for sacrifices and offerings but for love, truth, faith, and equity.⁷⁷

Amos was the witness and victim of many forms of injustice and thus he is especially preoccupied with the fate of those who have a difficult life and is very harsh about all forms of exploitation. Hosea also proclaims that Yahweh “desires steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6), and condemns those who remove the landmark” (Hos. 8:4) of their silver and gold.⁷⁸

Likewise, for Isaiah, God has had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fed of fed beasts; for him incense is an abomination; his soul hates new moons and solemnities. He does not listen to those who multiply prayers and whose hands are full of blood; rather, he calls on people to abstain from doing evil and to learn to do good; to seek justice and correct oppression; to defend the widow and orphan (Isa. 1:11-17); not to scorn the real owner of the vine; not to crush the people and reduce the poor to nothing (Isa. 3:14). For both Micah and Jeremiah, what God wants the people to do is not holocausts, but that they practice love, piety, and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:6-8; Jer. 6:20; 22:15-16). On the other hand, Zephaniah and Habakkuk vigorously attack what is going on around them: Justice is the main remedy that they command (Zeph. 3:13).⁷⁹

According to the prophets, all the laws were provisional and conditional. They tried to reconcile the physical with the spiritual, the concrete with the utmost idealism. They are the defenders of the poor, the weak, the oppressed; they turn against the privileged, the kings.⁸⁰

Afterwards, God’s justice in the Old Testament is a matter of salvation and corrective, God’s justice is power that saves God’s fidelity to the role as the Lord for the covenant. Hosea 2:19 highlights that, ‘I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and injustice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.’ In the Old Testament, justice emerges with concepts such as **חסד**, **חמל**, **חנן** and **יְשׁוּעָה**. Justice is ultimately concerned with how a loving Creator has made the world to be

⁷⁷ Ibid., 95-96.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 100-101.

living according to the Creator's will, in harmony with God, with fellow human beings, and with the rest of creations.⁸¹

In addition, divine mercy and kindness, qualities that define the very nature of God (Exo. 34:4-7), are expressions of God's justice. God is Israel's patron and source of justice. This implies that the God of compassionate justice requires his people to care for the orphan, the widow, the poor, and the strangers. Divine graciousness and compassion are not acts of sentimental mercy and clemency for all. Rather, divine justice is revealed as compassion for the needy, the oppressed, and the repentant, but it is also punishment and judgment the wicked. Divine justice is revealed when human justice actuates compassion and graciousness.⁸²

2.3. Justice in the Prophets

There can be no doubt that social justice was at the very heart of the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Since most of Israel's kings at least professed to believe in Yahweh, Prophets like Amos and Jeremiah could, in the name of God challenge them in so far as they had tolerated or perpetrated injustice in their kingdoms.⁸³ Most of Biblical prophecy is more than fore-telling two-thirds of its unscriptural form involves forth-telling: this is, setting the truth, justice, mercy, and righteousness of God against the black drop of every form of denial of the same. Thus, to speak prophetically was to speak boldly against every form of moral, ethical, political, economic and religious disenfranchisement observed in a culture that was intend on building its own pyramid of values *vis-à-vis* God's established system of truth and ethics.⁸⁴

A clearer understanding of the role of a prophet may be obtained by considering the language used in communication the divine will. The prophets were primarily concerned with the present. Their task was to communicate God's message

⁸¹ Ted Grimsrud, *Healing Justice: The Prophet Amos and a New Theology of Justice: Peace and Justice Shall Embrace*, Ed., Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Pennsylvania: Pandora Press, 1999), 77-78.

⁸² Thomas L. Leclerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 168-170.

⁸³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 401.

⁸⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Prophet, Prophetess, Prophecy," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Paternoster Press, 1996), 645.

for now, and to summon the people to, respond today.⁸⁵ In the Bible, the prophets cried out against the injustices and social evils of their day that deprived the powerless poor of their basic human rights. This is the characteristic of almost all of the prophets. They are spokesmen of God and at the same time they spoke on behalf of the poor, the powerless, the exploited, the discriminated and the oppressed.⁸⁶

According to Robert who quoted from Von Rod said that the central element in the judgment of the prophet upon the present order was that Yahweh would bring about a new era for his people. They had freedom in dealing with the past, the new word often contradicted what had been proclaimed earlier, but Yahweh was seen as acting in the same way. Old religious institutions had become invalid. The prophets denounced and abandoned not only old social and political structures, but the fixed religious order as well. God is doing a new thing (Is. 43:19). Salvation is associated with a new action in history. Thus the prophets seek meaning in contemporary events by looking forward to events planned in the sovereign freedom in God.⁸⁷

We can see God's liberating mission, God fight for social justice through prophets. The prophets also are fighters for those who are exploited, discriminated, and poor.

2.4. Understanding of the Hendiadys in the book of Amos and Its Relevant Texts

The hendiadys **מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק** does quite often appear in comparison to other prophetic books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and etc. in the Old Testament to be connected with social justice. These comparison texts go beyond the different time frame in order to express the concept that is the social reforms among the injustices oppressions in the nations.

A broader view sees justice and righteousness in the Bible is more than a mathematical distribution of goods. The Bible speaks; this hendiadys is inextricably tied to god's mercy and grounded in the relationship between God and humankind. Justice is rooted in God's character (Is.5: 16, Duet.32: 4) and justice is what God demands of followers (Duet.16: 20). A central conception is measured by their

⁸⁵ B.W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Engle Wood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1986), 249.

⁸⁶ Dr. Rev. Lahpai Zau Latt, "Old Testament Understanding Of Social Justice," lecture note on elective Class, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Insein, 29.10.2008.

⁸⁷ J. Deatis Robert, *Liberation And Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 10.

treatment of the poor and oppressed (Is. 1: 16-17, 3:15). Their primary message can be summarized in the messages of the prophets.⁸⁸

The concept of justice and righteousness in the Bible does also go beyond the law courts to everyday life. The Bible speaks of “doing justice” (Ps. 82:3; Prov. 21:3), whereas human beings speak of “getting justice.” Doing justice is to maintain what is right or to set things right. Justice is done when honorable relations are maintained between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, government and citizens, and man and God. Justice refers to brotherliness in spirit and action.⁸⁹

In that sense justice specifies what is right, not only as measured by a code of law, but also by acting for right relationships as well as harmony and peace in society. These are all different ways in which the biblical materials reflect upon the order and regulation of society and so they are necessarily part of what it means to study biblical justice and righteousness.

Reading of this hendiadys in the book of Isaiah, it would seem enough to say that the eight-century prophet who prophesied in Judah, contemporary of Amos in Israel vividly used **מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק** forty-six times both in broken hendiadys and combined in the literary in order to express the responsibilities and obligations of the ruling classes to the poor and the need to be set social justice by king and his officials.⁹⁰ This means that the hendiadys is the nuance of social justice expression also in the prophet. In action, kings those who failed God’s justice and righteousness in their reigning were condemned and at last prophets looked forward to an ideal king who would rule in justice and righteousness to the people because God himself is the just judge, king and law-giver (Isa. 33:22).⁹¹ Besides, the ruling class had a duty to impart the sense of the proper execution of the law’s requirement to the needy people (Hos. 2:21).⁹² And justice denotes the responsibility of a person to execute justice for

⁸⁸ Peter A. Angeles, “Justice,” *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (USA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 153.

⁸⁹ “Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary,” Electronic Database, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.

⁹⁰ Thomas L. Leclerc, *Yahweh is exalted in justice: solidarity and conflict in Isaiah* (Meneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 161.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁹² Thomas Edward McComiskey (eds.), *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 45.

another person. In other words, it is a kind of restored-relationship (Mic. 7:9).⁹³ The point is that to guarantee the cost of justice and righteousness surely upon kings and official class whom God has chosen over his people to be his representative and to implement justice and righteousness.

Similar concerns like the failure of the ruling classes, who should have provided the rights of the victims instead of treating them injustice and unrighteousness are reflected both in the contemporary prophets Isaiah and Amos (Isa. 1:23; 28:2; Amos 5:7).⁹⁴

In this case, Amos clarified the picture of the actions of the corrupt leaders who caused the effect of the social realm in chaos and push the entire nation into exile. If we look this word pairs **וְצִדְקָה מִשְׁפָּט** up in the book of Amos, it was consistently related to a human sphere where social justice exercises. Here in Amos, this frequently repeated key words were considered as a measurement of the guilt of Israel (5:7, 24; 6:12) and appeared in conjoined-noun (justice and righteousness) whereas it was dealt with separately (2:6; 5:12, 15)⁹⁵. According to Weinfeld, this term **וְצִדְקָה מִשְׁפָּט** actually expressed that kings and national leaders stand for the poor miserable by means of social reforms.⁹⁶ Such duties are the so-called restoration of social justice and the needs of the oppressed. In addition, Wolff specifically allied this term “justice and righteousness” of (5:24) to the beginning threat of judgment that refers to acts of Yahweh in no other word pair in Amos (5:7; 6:12) for lacking proper duties.⁹⁷

As said the hendiadys “justice and righteousness” in Amos that indicates the proper human affairs in the community, we see that the inverted function of the people of Israel in Amos 5:7; 6:12 by means of wrong behaving to each other. In this case Barton viewed that Israel had the senseless waste of fellow human beings and

⁹³ Thomas Edward McComiskey (eds.), *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 755.

⁹⁴ Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary “Amos”* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 465.

⁹⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1990), 59-60.

⁹⁶ Moshe Weinfeld, 491.

⁹⁷ Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1977), 245.

wasteful wrongdoing in its conduct.⁹⁸ Such certain attitudes led the Israel into doom. Thus it can be said that the metaphor 6:12 “going astray from goodness” is nearly identical to 5:7 in dealing with it in one under topic of “seek God and live” because God takes a close interest in human conduct.⁹⁹ For Amos, turning the fruit of justice and righteousness into bitterness and worthlessness portrayed itself as the inevitable condemned nation.

According to Weiss, this 5:24 presents a positive action or demand for the rejected worshippers in purpose of doing justice and righteousness on which society to be founded¹⁰⁰ and it is/was the most desirable way to serve God.¹⁰¹ In addition, Wolff mentioned this 5:24 that it is used in mode of comparison “...like waters...like an overflowing stream” displays like the wisdom literature (Prov. 23:32) by the time it attempted to portray the unavoidable ending, people had overturned the fruit of justice and righteousness.¹⁰² John Barton makes the valuable point¹⁰³:

“Amos links proper behaviors like probity in commercial and judicial practice, care for the poor, and respect for the needs of widows, orphans, and slaves to YHWH”

From this passage, nothing may be deduced regarding Amos’ conception of justice and righteousness within the practice of “social justice”. Therefore, Weinfeld vividly expressed that when the prophet Amos demanded “justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream” (5:24), he certainly did not think about court procedure but rather about the behavior of the upper classes in their relation to the poor.¹⁰⁴ Besides, according to Calvin, Amos condemned the attitude of the leaders.¹⁰⁵ In sum, what God urged in Amos is the action of the upper class people who are morally responsible toward fellow human beings in a benevolent behavior as well as the right relation to Him.

Summing up, the prophets remind us that the social realm in the eight-century that ignores the fact that people suffer because other people especially the ruling class, the rich take decisions which affect them in their every aspects of the life in order to

⁹⁸ John Barton, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012), 82.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁰⁰ Meir Weiss, *Concerning Amos’ Repudiation of the Cult in POMEGRANATES GOLDEN BELLS*, ed. David P. Wright and others (Eisenbrauns: Indiana, 1995), 209.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁰² Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background*, 15, 61.

¹⁰³ John Barton, 196.

¹⁰⁴ Moshe Weinfeld, 494.

¹⁰⁵ John Barton, 176.

live peace. This was a kind of the king's failure in ruling justice and righteousness in the nation too. Because it is a responsibility of king, it is the responsibility of the official class. It is they who could turn aside the situation of the oppressed those who lost their land, farm and broken life in the social realm. Without decision-making in just for the poor is against the attribute of God as the chief speaker of justice and righteousness. Then prophets were champions of social justice instead of king and official class in the eight-century. Meanwhile it seems best to draw conclusion that "God holds human beings accountable for doing justice and God is himself committed to justice, both in the sense that God works to bring it about that human being treats each other justly".¹⁰⁶ This indicates that the hendiadys refers the proper administration of social realm by the official through God's attribute.

2. 5. Implication of Justice in Amos

It is important to notice on what grounds of justice, Amos talked about justice in the Israelite society, since justice, as mentioned before, has a variety of meaning. The prophet Amos advocated for justice in the society and denounced all those who were oppressing and exploiting the poor. The historical setting depicts that social injustice was in existence in the era of Amos. Amos, as the called prophet of God, attempted to herald the message of God with his understanding of justice.

According to Amos 5:6-7, justice and righteousness are absolutely concerned with the presence of God as the life-bestowing force for the Prophet Amos. The Israelites perceived evil as good and were practicing it in the society. As a result, the so-called "justice" had turned into its opposite term "injustice" and the people were striving for the wealth by exploiting and oppressing the weak and the poor. They hated and opposed those who spoke the truth (Amos 5:10). Therefore, Amos reminded the people that their opposition to the essence of the court-justice system, in which the truth lied, was an embrace of death in God's eyes. Only when God's concern for the weak is disclosed, the Israel people would be in just and peaceful state. For Amos, the key to experiencing the presence of God is not religiosity, but the exercise of justice between and among humans (5:21-24).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 89.

¹⁰⁷ Ted Grimsrud, 73-75.

Furthermore, Amos perceives that justice is in connection with life. Like the water is the key to the sustaining life in the desert, the community exists by doing justice. The worship of Israel is unacceptable to God because they don't live as the people of God. Consequently, life is absent from them. For the presence of life, justice and righteousness must roll down like floods after the winter rains and persist like those few streams that do not full in the dry summer (6:12).¹⁰⁸

This is a key that of the book of Amos which is Amos 5:21-24, "Let justice role down like waters." As the prophet Amos who worked as "a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees" (Amos 7:14), called by Yahweh from his work to be a spokesman. Later Amos had long attracted attention as the vivid spokesperson for God in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.¹⁰⁹ According to Amos 1:1, the time of delivering message of doom was in the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 786-746 B.C.), the son of king Jehoash of the Jehu dynasty. It was said that during the forty-year reigns of Jeroboam II was one of the great prosperity for the Northern Kingdom.¹¹⁰ According to Gottwald, the social status during the reign of Jeroboam II, the greedy upper classes with governmental and juridical connivance were systematically expropriating the land of commoners so that they could heap up wealth and display it gaudily in a lavish "conspicuous consumption" economy.¹¹¹ How murderous oppression of the poor was taken place at that time, for such a reason that Amos became God's spokesperson and demanded justice in the nation. What Stephen Winward said is that God hates and rejects all acts of worship. Which are substitutes for right personal and social relationship? God is righteous. Therefore cult and conduct must be all of a piece. No man can be in right relationship with God, who is not in right relationships with his fellowship men.¹¹²

The above statement shows that without changing the immorality deeds to the marginalized people, there will never be acceptable sacrifice and worship to God. Samuel Ngun Ling also added in this point that Amos severely condemned the external cultic practices of religion that deemphasized or even distorted the internal justice values of individual religious life.¹¹³ This means the full of the Israel nation

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁹ Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos the Prophet* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), iv.

¹¹⁰ *Zondervan's Compact Bible Dictionary* (1993), s.v. "Amos."

¹¹¹ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 356.

¹¹² Stephen Winward, 42.

¹¹³ The heart of Amos' justice message was, therefore, the conviction that only a nation in which the justice flows like a river can be, in a true sense, a people in covenant with God. So

would be due to not only individuals' immorality but also national leaders' including religious leaders' injustice. In other words, being turned from the justice of God down the nation of Israel might quickly perish.

Moreover, the priests of Amos' time pretended blind themselves so that realities and the needy of the marginalized were hardly seen. Thus, it made Amos to felt painful in his heart to stand for justice against injustice that flowed into the nation (Amos 2:6-8). That is why, the period of Amos could, therefore, be regarded as one of the *Kairos* moments in human history when God demanded his people for justice praxis in socio-politico-religious transformation.

for Amos, the future of Israel wholly depended upon her in-depth relationship with God. Samuel Ngun Ling, *Theological Themes for Our Time*, 162.

CHAPTER THREE

3.The Exegesis of Amos 5:18-27

The purpose for doing exegesis of these texts is that this group of texts shows humanity in general and disobedience to God's command in particular leads people into the ruined life. For that reason I do exegesis it in the followings:

3.1. Text Basis of Amos 5: 18-27

The Hebrew text basis for the exegesis of Amos 5:18-27 is based on the Masoretic text:

18: הוֹי הַמַּחֲזִינִים אֶת-יוֹם יְהוָה לְמַחֲזָה לָכֶם יוֹם יְהוָה הוּא-חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹרֶךְ:

19: כִּי-אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס אִישׁ מִפְּנֵי הָאֵרִי וּפָנָעוּ הַדָּב וּבָא הַבַּיִת וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל-הַקִּיר וְנִשְׁכָּו הַנָּחֶשׁ:

20: הַלֹּא-חֹשֶׁךְ יוֹם יְהוָה וְלֹא-אֹרֶךְ וְאֶפֶל וְלֹא-נֶגְהָ לּוֹ:

21: שִׂנְאֹתַי מֵאֲסֹתַי חַגֵּיכֶם וְלֹא אֲרִיחַ בְּעֲצֵרְתֵיכֶם:

22: כִּי אִסְדַּתְעֲלוֹדֵי עֲלוֹת וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם לֹא אֲרַצֶּה וְשִׁלְמִי מִרֵאֵיכֶם לֹא אֲבִיט:

23: הַסֵּר מֵעֲלֵי הַמֶּזֶן שְׂרִיד וּזְמֶרֶת נְבִלִיד לֹא אֲשָׁמַע:

24: וַיְגַל כַּמִּים מִשֶּׁפֶט וַצְדָקָה כִּנְחָל אֵיחָן:

25: הַזְבָּחִים וּמִנְחָה הַנְּשָׂתִים-לִי בַמִּדְבָר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

26: וְנִשְׂאָתְכֶם אֶת סִכּוֹת מִלְכֵכֶם וְאֶת כַּיִּוֵּן צִלְמֵיכֶם כּוֹכַב אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם:

27: וְהִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִהַלְאָה לְדַמְשֶׁק אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-צְבָאוֹת שָׁמוֹ: פ

My translation of Amos 5:18-27 as follows;

5:18: "Woe¹¹⁴ to you who desire the day of the Lord, it is nothing else than darkness!

5:19: When the day comes someone who fled from lion, met by bear or who got home¹¹⁵ and put his hand on the wall, unfortunately bitten by snake.

5:20: Surely the day of the Lord is darkness, no light and without a ray of brightness.

5:21: I hate, I despise your religious festivals and I cannot stand them!

5:22: When you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; I will not accept the animals you have fattened to bring me as offerings.

¹¹⁴ I will discuss this word "woe" in the interpretation of verse 18.

¹¹⁵ The Hebrew text uses "entered in the house" that refers a kind of safety place; likewise I used my translation as "got home".

- 5:23: Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps.
- 5:24: Instead, let justice flow like waters and righteousness like a stream that never goes dry.
- 5:25: Did you bring me sacrifices and grain-offerings for forty-year in wilderness, O house of Israel?
- 5:26: You have lifted up Sakkuth¹¹⁶ your king, Kaiwan¹¹⁷ your idols, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves.
- 5:27: Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the Lord whose name is God of hosts.

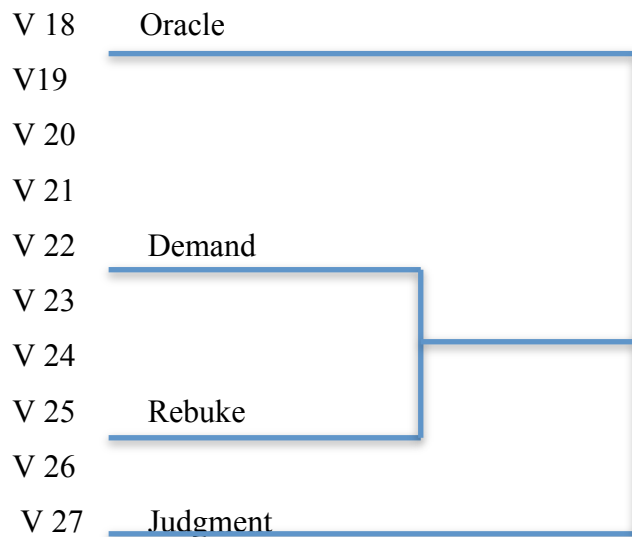
3.2. The Structure of Amos 5:18-27

Here in this part of Amos 5:18-27, rhetorical features control well the thoughts and emotions of the text or speech by the skillful arrangements (repetitions, ellipsis, addition) of word and phrases. For instance, woe in the begin came into an end in exile; darkness repeats in the later text as no brightness and festivals include burnt offerings and grain offerings in the text. As a result, these artistic texts help us and the readers or audience to experiencing the presence of God is not in religious activities but in the exercise of justice and righteousness among human beings.

The structure of this chapter can generally be viewed as, the oracle against the elite people (vv. 18,19,20), the demand of true worship (21, 22, 23, 24), the rebuke (25, 26) and the judgment (27) as shown in the diagram below:

¹¹⁶ Masoretic and Targum indicate this word in a vocalization as the name of an idol. Anthony Gelston, *Introduction and Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft,2010)84.

¹¹⁷ I prefer what Syriac renders that the second word כִּוְיָן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם as a predicate after the following clause in this verse , with which it combines this phrase. Ibid.



The oracle against the elite people (vv. 18, 19, 20): these verses introduce how reverse the day of the Lord to those who longed it for in vividly. Verse 18 describes the day of the Lord is darkness in which there is no light any more to whom wish to come recently. Verse 19 tells us clearly that on that day, the unavoidable misery things will happen again and there is no safe place anywhere. Verse 20 claims the image of the day of the Lord is nothing else than groping in the dark. The outcome will rather be mourning than cheerfulness in the desired day of the Lord.

The demand of true worship (vv. 21, 22, 23, 24) comes along with the moral conduct in every public aspect. These verses 21, 22 and 23 display a falsely believing that the ritual assemblies and costly offerings please God. However these offerings are just a mere ceremony, lacking any religious value and unacceptable because what God’s demand relates to the ethical standard and moral behavior to fellow humans as well as the heartily adore him. He rejected all of them that done in heartlessness. But what the Lord states his desire in verse 24 is rather than doing non-sense gathering, attendance and offertory with fatted animals and lyres, true worshippers must bear the fruit of God’s justice and righteousness in their society and social conduct to their fellows without failing at all times.

The rebuke (vv. 25, 26) because of disloyalty to God surely causes barred from their country. Instead, they kept the proper observance of God’s command (Deut. 6:4-5; Ex. 19:5); they indulged their performance of idolatry. The ritual system had taken place in area of their life rather than heart obedience to God. Regarding such external observances misled the Israelite from the primacy concern, “the Lord our God is one Lord, the redeemer and a jealous God” (Ex. 20:1-6) in their history.

Verse 27 is God decreed that his people missed the point of his essential command, which is the inner desire to adore him and the primacy of moral conduct in affair with justice and righteousness to the fellow humans. Therefore, the northern kingdom was moved away from their country into the hand of Assyrian and led them in exile for their unfaithfulness. The desire of the day of the Lord came to nothing because of their wickedness (Ps. 112:10b).

It is clear that the text (Amos 5:18-27) generally shows how false confidence of the day of the Lord is to the desired Israelite. However, what the different to scholars' opinions are in grouping of the text rather than its meaning. Anderson and Freedman divided this text (5:18-27) into three categories. They are (a) the day of Yahweh (18-20), (b) Justice (21-24) and (c) Threat of exile (25-27).¹¹⁸ What thing upholds the concentric meaning in the structure are especially verses 23 and 24 "cutting away the hypocrite offerings and bearing God's justice and righteousness at all times in social relation to the fellow people" that balances the theology of the book in one aspect.¹¹⁹

An exegetical & expository commentary "The Minor Prophets" views verses 18-20 as the warning about the day of Yahweh and verses 21-27 as the indictment and judgment of false religiosity and idolatry.¹²⁰ With in the structure, the real focus is lacking excessively religious that makes happen the indictment and judgment to them. Regarding to falsely worship, what Rofe views Amos 5:21-25 is the so-called "the attribute to the cult" by the classical prophets who proclaimed the primacy of moral ethics while denying the worth of sacrificial offerings. The cult is, thus, conceived as a ceremony of heartless worship in religious rituals, which really is far away from God's commandment (Hos. 6:6; Isa. 1:10-17; Mic. 6:6-8; Jer. 7:21-23).¹²¹

As the result of this way of scholarly division of the text Amos 5:18-27, therefore verifies that God never regards the external worthy offerings from his people and ever condemns idolatry instead of worshipping him and finally what he demands is to bear the fruits of justice and righteousness in society.

¹¹⁸ Francis I Anderson and David Noel Freedman, 519.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 471.

¹²⁰ Thomas Edward McComiskey (ed.), *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary "The Minor Prophets" vol. I.* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1992), 427-434.

¹²¹ Alexander Rofe, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997), 94.

3.3. Interpretation of Amos 5:18-27

How should we engage in our text? As Walter J. Houston also mentioned that using rhetorical device in all texts is appropriate because it is designed to persuade the readers as well as since all texts have persuasive purpose and built in beyond conditional situation.¹²² For that reason I will use rhetorical features in looking at the following exegesis of the text.

Verse: 5:18

Interpretation

In this starting of the verse, the interjection word הוי “woe” displays the longing people of the day of the Lord are going through of a period of the inescapable ills. This usage and meaning of the word “woe” has been indicated by its following verses. First “woe” is used in association of lamentation (1Kg 13:30); second it is used in prophetic severe threatening (Am 5:18; Is 1:4; Je 48:1) and third and final it is indicated in encouraging (Is 18:1).¹²³ As Janzen considered the simple fact that context determines meaning¹²⁴, the genre of “woe” in this Amos 5:18 assured the serious threat of prophet Amos for the elite people. The attach clause הַמְתַאֲוִים “you who desire” clearly addressed the woe oracle to the owners of the farms rather the laborers when it compares to woe in the above verse 16.¹²⁵ Therefore the woe came at first in the verse surely denotes that the desolation of the nation is coming because of the improper moral conduct of the elite people in the society.

Those who הַמְתַאֲוִים longed for the day of the Lord would consider that Yahweh would strike against their enemy and restore them into blessing and prosperity. In other words, elite people hoped the comforting eschatology concept in the day of the Lord. Instead, the captivity was to come true in 722 when Assyrian conquered Samaria because the day of the Lord calls for not only ethical revolution but also exhortation to change their behavior in view of their prior commitment to God and to one fellow human.¹²⁶ For the unethical reason, the day of the Lord came

¹²² Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (T&T Clark, New York, 2006), 10-11.

¹²³ Ludwig koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament I* (New York: Leiden, 1994), 242.

¹²⁴ Waldemar Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* (Berlin: W De G, 1972), 6.

¹²⁵ Thomas Edward McComiskey (ed.), 428.

¹²⁶ Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (ed.), *General Themes in Biblical Theology* (Manchester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 195.

because of transgression (Amos 4:4; 5:26) and judged them for repentance to those who longed for hoping to victory over the enemies. Since immorality took place in the heart of the people, there could be no longer brightness except darkness as the judgment (Am 5:8-9; Deut 28:29).

Verse: 5:19:

Interpretation

In this verse, the inescapable threats have been woven for the one who longs for the day of the Lord to come. The pattern of the verse fled from “lion, bear and snake” is intensely ironic and expresses the unavoidability of disaster.¹²⁷ This meant that when God makes a day into dismal, the world could not make in order without him because he is above all power (Am 5:8; Ps 95:3-5). Definitely, no other place is secure for anyone from God’s guidance.

Verse: 5:20:

Interpretation

Here again vivid terrible things show the day of the Lord in which people are wandering in the midst of mourning in helpless situation. It is because they were faithless and unfaithful to God that led them into judgment. No wonder had they been experienced in the ninth plague of darkness in Egypt (Ex 10:21) as judgment to king Pharaoh who refused to obey God’s command. This is the attribute to God almighty power, darkness and no light set forth as an aspect of the day of the Lord (Is 5:30, 45:7). And why the Israelite were in dire of light because this imagery represents the divine command (Gen 1:3), the joyous feeling of the Hebrews under God’s wings (1 Kg 11; Gen 4:36; Is 58:8; Ester 8:16; Ps 97:11) and symbolizes also true and appropriate religion (Sal 119:105; Is 8:20).¹²⁸

Verses: 21-24

Interpretation

I think it is more sense to me giving the interpretation in a group of text rather than verse-by-verse. These (21-24) verses speak about the fact that the Israelite’s entire worship is rejected because they lacked love for God and concern for fellow

¹²⁷ Thomas Edward McComiskey (ed.), 428.

¹²⁸ Easton Dictionary of the Bible

human¹²⁹ as well they instituted cultic rituals of offerings in worship of God is not due to divine command.¹³⁰

It is clearly seen that prophet Amos challenges the political and religious institutions of the society. What he saw is the ruler and the elite as a deliberate insult to the temple of the kingdom as well as the priests had closed their eyes to the truth (Amos 7:10-14). A close reading of Amos speech shows that condemning the people invent the cult. There is an acceptable way of worship. Amos seeks persuasion: calling them to choose the right way by denying a religious premise that is fundamental for his audience.¹³¹ Here pursuing rhetorical devices have been used in the verses as followings;

3.3.1. Justice and Waters

Concerning with waters in Amos 5:24, according to Hebrew word, ‘*mayim*’, plural of ‘*may*’ means waters.¹³² In Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, the uses of *mayim* are well classified especially the figurative references, as follows: a symbol of distress, “when thou passest through the waters” (Isaiah 43:2) means being with God never harmed by worldly difficulty. In other words, forces in the passing through of waters never come over the strength of God’s sided people. And “like the breach of waters” (2 Sam 5:20) shows the powerful of God who rules on everything; which is overwhelming through his power. Then “a tempest of mighty waters overflowing” (Is. 28:2) means of fear that is the anger of the Lord when he made a punishment, no one will be able to stand firmly before him like a destroying storm. Moreover, in Joshua (7:5), transitoriness, Job (11:16); of refreshment, Isaiah (32:2); of peace, Psalm (23:2); of legitimate pleasures, blood (Psalm 79:3), Proverb (5:15); of illegitimate pleasures, “Stolen waters are sweet” (Proverb 9:17), wrath (Hosea 5:10), justice (Amos 5:24), groaning (Job 3:24).¹³³ Such

¹²⁹ Frank E. Gaebelein (eds), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version “Daniel and the Minor Prophets” vol. 7* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1985), 316.

¹³⁰ Thomas Edward McComiskey (ed.), 431.

¹³¹ Stephen R. Haynes and Stephen L. McKenzie (ed.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1993), 137.

¹³² Georg Fohrer (ed.), “Water,” *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of Old Testament* (New York: SCM Press, 1973), 145.

¹³³ “International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,” Electronic Database, BibleSoft, Inc., 2006.

these are the symbolism of waters in the bible and there may be more beyond my findings. Therefore, what I will mainly deal with the symbolism of waters is justice that will be helpful in understanding of the concept of waters, I will also emphasize the concept of waters in Ancient Near East.

In ancient Israel, according to Ronald de Vaux, water is used as a judicial ordeal.¹³⁴ In other words, symbolically, waters represented as a just judge in the divine proof. For example, the husband who suspects his wife of misconduct presents her to the priest. The priest sprinkles some of the dust of the sanctuary over a vessel of water, proffers the oath to the woman, dissolves the writing containing the words of the oath into the water, and then makes the woman drink the mixture. If she is guilty this water becomes for her a ‘water of bitterness and cursing which makes her barren for ever (Jer.8:14).¹³⁵ This similar ritual usage of water is also found in the prophet Jeremiah who refers to this ordeal when he announces (Jer.8: 14; 9:15; 23:15) that all Israel is due to drink “bitter” or “poisoned” water. In this case, water plays the important role in the ritual performed in the case of an unsolved murder.¹³⁶ Stating the above usage of water, it positively depicted waters in Amos 5:24 that people attitude was concerned only social order to human kinds and not in cultic offerings.¹³⁷

3.3.2. Symbolism of Waters

In the metaphorical usage of water, as God is the source of “living water” (Jer. 2:13), people those who apart from Him will be dry, waterless, land doomed to die (Ps. 143:6). Besides, the knowledge of God is defined as wide and broad as the waters of the seas (Hab. 2:14; Isa. 11:9), and death is the spilling of water (IISam. 14:14; Ps. 22:14). Finally God used great rivers like Euphrates (Isa. 8:7) and Nile (Jer. 46:7-8) as to punish His people.¹³⁸

Moreover, the idea of the constant movement of water: “Water never rests, neither by day nor by night. When flowing above, it causes rain and dew. When

¹³⁴ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel Vol.1* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 157.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 157-158.

¹³⁶ R. Laird Harris, Gleason S. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 502.

¹³⁷ Philip R. Davies, *Amos, Man and Book: Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past* eds. By Brad E. Kelle & Megan Bishop Moore (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 121.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 502.

flowing below, it forms streams and rivers. Water is outstanding in doing good.”¹³⁹ The wisdom poet also describes that God’s power over the king: “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of Yahweh; he turns it wherever he will” (Prov. 21:1).¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it is the desire of Yahweh for His elect nation to have righteousness and justice should be as abundant as a vast flowing river (Amos 5:24). This is probably in the mind of Amos when he demands that social justice be like a cascading stream.¹⁴¹

Likewise in Ancient Near East (Mesopotamia and Egypt), water is regarded as powerful in which gods were thought to have arisen. For instance, the gods (*Apsu* and *Tiamat*) emerged from a mixture of the primordial waters in Mesopotamian cosmogony and the primordial water bore the name *Nuu* or *nun*, and from this the creator-god came forth in Egyptian cosmogony.¹⁴² That is why, as the gods play in doing and ruling social justice in Ancient Near East, the associated water with goddess *Anat* also plays as the symbolism of justice.

Therefore, as God is a “fountain of living waters” all the sources of life, blessing and cursing for His people are depending on people those who are listening and otherwise those who are parting from God. In the Bible, water is many times viewed as the divine salvation that demonstrated the power of Yahweh to control even the natural order to ensure that His people were protected from the threats of their enemies.¹⁴³ Then frequently waters as symbolical of God’s blessing and of spiritual refreshment, as in Ps. 23:2; Is. 32:2; 35:6-7; 41:18, etc. and the longing for it indicates spiritual need (Ps. 42:1; 63:1; Amos 8:11).¹⁴⁴ Besides, the image of the righteous person is a tree planted beside “streams of water” (Ps. 1:3) and finally water is connected with eternal life, which is earthly baptism a “reflection of the heavenly baptism and simultaneously a symbol of the soul are belonging to the world of light.”¹⁴⁵

That is why, in the understanding of the present writer on Justice as the symbolism of waters means as water itself is the medium of such divine efficacy, water itself is to transform the society. Therefore God used prophet Amos to

¹³⁹ J. E. Cirlot, “Water,” *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), 347.

¹⁴⁰ Weinfeld, “berith,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 8., ed., G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz Josef Fabry (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1997), 279.

¹⁴¹ Michael A. Grisanti, “mayim,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Vol.2., ed., William A. Van Gemeren (United Kingdom: Paternoster Press, 1996), 932.

¹⁴² G. Johannes Botterweck, 268-269.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁴⁴ J.B.Taylor, “Water,” *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Part 3.*, ed., Mary Gladstone (USA: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 1632.

¹⁴⁵ G. Johannes Botterweck, 288.

announce the message of justice as water and righteousness as ever flowing river means to have a transformation in the society of Northern Israel in which oppression and injustice alive.

3.3.3. Irony or Contrast

As already shown, the contemporary society of Amos was the heartlessness of wealthy elites who ignore the plight of the poor, the lack of justice for the righteous, and the emptiness of religious ritual apart from true faith. The people of Northern went to Bethel and Gilgal where they worship idols and multiplied their sins by doing evil things (Amos 4:4). Then they believed that they could recover their sins against to God by sacrificing burnt offerings with grains and animals (Amos 5:21-22). But the Lord would not accept any of the offerings.

In contrast, prophet Amos's heart message is the well-being of people and the purity of religious festivals. Besides, he also emphasized that Yahweh is God of moral righteousness, Yahweh made all people. Then Yahweh elected Israel and then redeemed Israel so that He would be known throughout the world (Amos 3:1-2). Election by Yahweh means that those elected are responsible to live according to the purposes clearly outlined to them in the law: bear his justice and righteousness (5:24). Only if they transformed their sterile worship into fellow human concerns with justice and righteousness, that would be true worship and acceptable sacrificial offerings to him.¹⁴⁶

3.3.4. Hyperbole

This is what people exaggerated claims or works out in their life for the purpose of external good looking. For instance in Amos 5: 21-23, what elite people wanted to offer to God was (burnt offering, cereal offering, fatted beast, solemn assemblies and melody of harps), which are not easy for poor people as well as costly for the wealthy people. Therefore, the expression for Amos's contemporaries to present many sacrificed offerings such as thanksgiving in case of passing the matriculation examination, was hyperbole. In verse 24, concerning with offerings, God answered these were the unwanted things by raising question in following verse

¹⁴⁶ Frank E. Gaebelien, 316.

25 “Did you bring me sacrifices and grain-offerings for forty-year in the wilderness, O house of Israel?” which means God did not require these kinds of sacrifices and what God called for obedience is only to act justly in social structure, to love the poor and to obey humbly to him (5:24) at all times by using metaphors “justice flow like a river...righteousness like a stream never goes dry”¹⁴⁷.

3.3.5. Polysyndeton

Polysyndeton is the adding of conjunctions in a clause or sentence. It makes the readers slow down the speed of reading and enjoys the meaning of the text more systematically.¹⁴⁸ According to the above Hebrew Text Amos 5:21-24, there are ‘ו’ conjunctions six times used so that the writer of this text gave the impression to his readers to slow down the reading process and mediate more seriously the importance of doing justice and righteousness to the poor and oppressed people that urge to the will of God.

To sum up these verses (21-24) is that God wants to his people is to adore him in hearts not in offerings; turning from transgression and repentance; knowing him alone is the Lord one and seeking his way of justice and righteousness in social behaviors to others at all times in society.

Verses: 25-27:

3.3.6. Rhetorical question

Rhetorical question has appeared in verse 25 in relation to whether sacrificial practice had been demanded or God required during the forty-year wilderness. This kind of rhetorical questioning expects a negative answer accorded to Gaebelein. For that reason, God clearly revealed sacrifice was unknown during in wilderness when obedience being the sole requirement¹⁴⁹ as well as Barton added that this sacrifice is not part of God’s wish for Israel.¹⁵⁰ However, what the Israelite had done caused the destruction of her nation because of the immorality means to wealthy and disobeyed the ways of the Lord as well turned to idolatrous worship (26) that broke the commandment “You shall not have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:1). Such this idolatrous pilgrimage has seen in later works than rather eight century Amos. In

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 316.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁹ Frank E. Gaebelein, 316.

¹⁵⁰ John Barton, 46.

accord to Barton, vv. 26-27 belongs to punishment in result of destruction of Bethel.¹⁵¹ In view of Coote, it is the presentation of the Deuteronimist as the intention of the fall of Samaria.¹⁵² This has been quite the displeased attitude to God since the first northern king Jeroboam I had established Bethel sanctuary in rival with Jerusalem by reviving religious festival with persuasive purpose of the northerners. In this case, Coote said that Sakkuth (Succoth), summer culminating time, represented the hard-rival of both sanctuaries, Bethel and Jerusalem. However, at last God has chosen alone Jerusalem only for his dwelling place when Bethel was ruined for the worship of deities.¹⁵³ Here the question comes, could these noisy worshipping and plenty offerings and sacrifices be substituted for God's command his people to do justice and righteousness?

This rhetorical question makes the readers recognize that the true method of approaching God is not by giving various disproportionate offerings, but treating fellow citizens with justice and walking righteously with God.¹⁵⁴

Interpretation

Here the redactor of the book of Amos presented how salvation came to the ancestors and what God commanded them not to do in their life (Lev 26; Deut 27 & 28). The rhetorical question has appeared here in demand of the judgment for wrong doing of the commandment (Deut 6:4).¹⁵⁵ As the Israelite had failed to keep faithfulness and self-indulgent with her hand-made of images, there brings the captivity as the judgment to Israel beyond Damascus. This exile happened because of clinging again the disgusted conduct to the Holy one and fellow humans (Deut 28:60).

For Amos, therefore, God's punishment ever goes without failing to those who disobey his commands and lack of bearing justice and righteousness in society. God expects from his people is to practice justice and righteousness to fellow human at all times.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵² Coote, 60.

¹⁵³ Coote, 60.

¹⁵⁴ Hyung Won Lee, Paper presentation on: "The Rhetorical Beauty and the Socio-theological Impact of Micah 6:6-8 in Korea," (Seoul: Asian Biblical Scholar Seminar, 2008), 10.

¹⁵⁵ Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (ed.), 186.

3.4. Theological Reflection

In the book of Amos, judgment is depicted as a time of failure of God's commandment in Israel and Judah. For Amos, justice and righteousness is the fruit of obeying God, which flow into social structure being prosperity and secure society.

In Amos 5:18-27, we can see three kinds of theology. They are (1) temple theology (v 19), (2) liberation theology (vv 21-24) and (3) covenantal theology (v 25). I really appreciated what Barton said, "Amos was the Israel's first theologian".¹⁵⁶ As each theology mentioned in the above is wide enough to write in a book, I would only link it into the context of Amos.

When it comes to "temple theology"¹⁵⁷ in this Amos 5:19, elite people had felt secure when they escaped from law-courts with their transgression and in while living at king's sanctuary (7:13) with offerings however God's judgment reached them in everywhere when his people forgot him and disobeyed his commands.¹⁵⁸ Even if the anointed king failed to do justice, God chastised him and the nation for the lack of deputy because of being the earthly representative of the heavenly king (Ps 2:2).¹⁵⁹ In the word of Stephen Winward, God hates and rejects all acts of worship. Which are substitutes for right personal and social relationship? God is righteous. Therefore cult and conduct must be all of a piece. No man can be in right relationship with God, who is not in right relationships with his fellowship men.¹⁶⁰

The above statement states that without changing the immorality deeds towards the marginalized people, there will never be acceptable sacrifice and worship to God. In this point Amos severely condemned the external cultic practices of religion that deemphasized or even distorted the internal justice values of individual religious life. This means the full of the Israel nation would be due to not only individuals' immorality but also national leaders' including religious leaders' injustice. In other words, being turned from the justice of God down the nation of Israel might quickly perish.

Moreover, cause of the religious leaders like priests and paid prophets in Amos' time, as they pretended blind themselves so that realities and the needy of the

¹⁵⁶ John Barton, 183.

¹⁵⁷ A simile used for the house (home) where is a safety place for a dweller.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Edward McComiskey, 428.

¹⁵⁹ John Bright, *Covenant and Promise* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 70.

¹⁶⁰ Stephen Winward, *A Guide to the Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 42.

marginalized were hardly seen. Thus, it made Amos to feel painful in his heart to stand for justice against injustice that flowed into the nation (Amos 2:6-8). That is why, the period of Amos could, therefore, be regarded as one of the *Kairos* moments in human history when God demanded his people for justice praxis in socio-politico-religious transformation (5:24).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. IMPLICATION OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MYANMAR

4.1. Historical reading to the Implication of the text in the context

When it comes to reading and theologizing Amos texts in Myanmar context, what I found it out for the people is daring to proclaim the primacy of moral conduct in affair with justice and righteousness to the fellow humans by overcoming nationwide nightmares like fear, anxiety, ambiguity and so on. Such these neo-psychological oppressions have dampened the people's moral obligation vis-a-vis the behavior of the crony so-called the upper classes in their relation to the poor. Thus the people of the nationwide must beware of not to keep silent for our rights and to discover when injustice threatens to prevail in society. By doing so, government who try to take unfair advantage of people rights will be in decline and it will come to a nationwide beneficial behaviors.

For that reason, in the perspective of Christianity, our theology also must be sensitive to the current suffering of the country. In fact, living and liberating theology comes up when one becomes conscious that

A society is sick when injustice is done to the poor and the disinherited. A community suffers when there is political or economic oppression depriving the powerless of freedom and well-being. A human community loses its human face when women, men and children are discriminated against on account of gender, race, and sex. When the world becomes a place for only the 'survival of the fittest', nothing is left for the majority of the weak.¹⁶¹

These are the things that theology must encounter. As it is said that nothing is real unless it speaks to us, our theology have to address things we are facing and things we are longing for. Theology therefore needs a daring courage and must be a liberating message in every context where fears and ambiguities of life prevail.

Reflected in light of this consciousness, our present situation in Myanmar, theological message of justice and righteousness is found in lacking of liberating character. Let alone liberating nature, our theological realization of the message of **מִשְׁפָּט וצְדָקָה** cannot escape yet from metaphysical terms, like humanity, love, equality and so forth.

¹⁶¹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 272.

Theology, to be contextual, has to be based on a particular situation. Hence, any theology must pay its attention to the root cause of the life experiences of the people in which it is developed. It must speak to the situation of the society if it tends to be meaningful for the society. In accordance with this premise, it must confidently be said that justice and righteousness was the quest for the Israel likewise this message also very relevant in time of the perversion of justice that ruins the country, Myanmar. In fact, this is one of the theological themes for the Christians today.

This is indeed relevant for the third world countries like Myanmar which is one of the most poverty-line and exploited countries in the world. Due to the political and economic crisis of the country, minority groups in the country are oppressed thus becomes a great threat to the social injustice in the country by the semi-civilian government recently. For the said background, the gap between the rich and the poor is wider than any other time of this military government because a small number of entrepreneurs typically refer to crony businessmen those who are intimately connecting to the military-general control major part of the country economy and business. While the poor are struggling hard to make both ends meet, the authoritarian and the rich enjoy life luxuriously and abundantly. The memory of the injustice government and its immorally social threats were, after all, the only capital I had to start writing with and on that capital I had made my thesis.

Moreover the persecution of other faiths and minority groups, alongside the persecution faced by Christians among the Kachin, Chin, Naga, Karenni and Karen and the deadly suffering of the Muslim Rohingyas, Buddhists among the Shan, Rakhine and Mon, and the imprisonment of Buddhist monks, all indicate that the corrupt authoritarian and the cronies are in serious violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Almost in every affair, injustice can be seen easily and significantly in terms of bribery and exploitation.¹⁶² The society is in need of social justice. The powerful and the rich are blindly and recklessly oppressing the people. As a result, many are suffering from injustice, discrimination and poverty.

Since the society of Myanmar is in social injustice and corruption because of the corrupt authoritarians and the elite, it is very crucial to make the society filled with justice and peace. The corrupt people are to be denounced and reminded to give up their misdeeds for the sake of the whole society. In particular, the church leaders

¹⁶² <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3275-army-boosts-troops-in-ethnic-controlled-areas> (accessed on 30.04.2013)

should boldly play the important roles to point out the wrongdoings of the powerful and the rich like Amos.

In essence, this thesis would give the message to the corrupt society and make aware of them the judgment of God. And support would continue the human rights situation and address issues of ethnic violence and the marginalized, oppressed and the poor whom shall be led to social welfare and prosperity where all can enjoy justice and righteousness, peace and equality under national unity.

4.2 Challenges of Myanmar

It would be very partially document without describing the long-history of socio-political and economic conditions of Myanmar, known as Burma in the last two decades. As I am neither a historian not a politician, I simply base on some research of other politicians, historians, theologians and etc. in order to describe the ethical implications that arise from such a socio, political and economic situations of Myanmar.

In my view, the situation of injustice and unrighteous in the times of Amos has resemblance with the currently situation of Myanmar despite of any historical link but because lacking ethical morality of human beings those in positions of power or influence who abuse the rights of human being in such violation, discrimination, oppression, etc. in the nationwide of Myanmar. In such a situation, declaration of social justice and righteousness is direly linked with the Myanmar churches today on behalf of God, the redeemer because the role of the churches must speak as Hopkins describes;

The church has to heal, preach, and help deliver... not only does the church define itself by justice, servant hood, and organizing, but it is also heals those who have broken hearts.¹⁶³

Up to this time, Myanmar churches are politically paralyzed in identifying with the people those who have already lost their lands, and ethnic minority peoples who have

¹⁶³ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 203.

been and are still neglected in almost aspect of life like education, health care and economy in the nation. If Myanmar churches and Christians realize their calling to bring about social changes and reform for the betterment of their country by becoming more involved in social, to promote justice, equality, freedom, basic human right, then it would be certainly improve the plight of the poor, the needy; and the underprivileged of Myanmar people.

4.2.1 Political Challenge

Myanmar has had a hard time surviving under various socio-political periods such as Monarchical Period (1720-1855), Colonial Period (1855-1948), Parliamentary Democracy (1948-1962), Socialist Regime (1962-1988). In 1988, pro-democracy demonstrations broke out nationwide; shattering the silence that had characterized political life for so many years. In 1990, the National League for Democracy, led by Daw Aung San Suh Kyi won a landslide victory. However, the Military regime refused to transfer power and instead began arresting some of those who had been elected.¹⁶⁴ Since the Military regime (1988- 2010), many developed countries put the country in place of restrictions and became isolated from the west but shifted to authoritarian and capricious style of leadership by Generals (dictators). This was the time that Myanmar has been left behind from global socio, political and economy. At present the new semi-civilian government headed by the ex-General Thein Sein and his party Union Solidarity and Development Party so-called Junta party in March 2011- , politically and socially people worry that the country can slide back into the dictatorial political system because the changes they see so far look a cosmetic puffing.¹⁶⁵

Briefly speaking, Burma became independent on January 4, 1948 at 4:20 AM. The AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), took power with the devoutly Buddhist statesman, U Nu, as the country's first prime minister. The decade from 1948 to 1958 was Burma's first experiment with full democracy. However, due to the new political leaders who were not having, enough training cannot control the situation and even among this AFPFL party, there was separation. Lastly, in September 1958, General Ne Win and two other senior officers, Maung Maung and

¹⁶⁴ Christina Fink, *Living Silence* (New York: Zed Books, 2001), 1.

¹⁶⁵ Asia Report, International Crisis Group, (July 27, 2012) 2.

Aung Gyi, took power¹⁶⁶, and this military leaders claim themselves as the Revolutionary Council and in their hand, the country was totally decline in all aspects. The Revolutionary Council instituted what they called “the Burmese Way to Socialism” had not gone far enough. Before this military’s ruling Burma had been ahead of both Malaysia and Thailand in industrial production in the 1950s, but declined steadily from 1964 onwards and even now the country cannot compare to these countries in all aspects.¹⁶⁷ After years of political oppression and economic corruption and stagnation, the Burmese people began what was to grow into a full-scale rebellion. They demanded an end to one-party rule and the abandonment of the *Burmese Way to Socialism*, as the government-run economy was called.¹⁶⁸

On July 23, 1988 Ne Win, the head of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) and the nation’s leader, called a special meeting of the party to deal with the growing crisis.¹⁶⁹ At the opening session, he announced his resignation and that five other leaders. From there the unsuccessful new leader Sein Lwin became a Chairman of the Council of State. Due to his dealing with public by armed forces that suppressed student uprising in 1962 and 1974 in the past and again in March 1988 with growing support from Buddhist monks, intellectuals, workers and others, the students took to the streets again and, calling for the removal of Sein Lwin and for the end of the military backed one-party system. Demonstrations occurred almost daily in early August, and hundreds of people, mostly civilians were killed. From there Sein Lwin resign from his several posts and was replaced on August by a civilian, Maung Maung-a lawyer, writer and close supporter of Ne Win. His failure led him to resign from his leadership and General Saw Maung the minister of defence and a committee of 19 military officers took power that is called *coup d’etat* and the country became under the military regime. Saw Maung declared himself prime minister, foreign minister and minister of defense. Outside of Rangoon the country was put under the control of military field commanders, and when confrontations resumed, they were suppressed with extraordinary ruthlessness. Then the effects of this political unrest, uneducated militants way of ruling, socio-economic instability makes the country one of the poorest countries in the world.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Christina Fink, *Living Silence*, 27.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁸ “1960: Burma” Encarta Encyclopedia, Microsoft Corporation, 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Christina Fink, *Living Silence.*, 54.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,

At the time under the military regime and so far today there is less freedom to live, freedom to create and develop nationally and individually, freedom which can raise each of one higher without affecting others. It is so the political challenges have marked Myanmar life so difficult to live. Taking a place there has emerged a concern for the kind of democratic organization, which the Myanmar peoples want to assume for themselves. Unfortunately, in spite of the popular pressures that sought transformation, the dominant classes succeeded in imposing the national security, state and administered by the military, which brought repression, suffering and death to the popular sectors. Human rights, personal and social are violated. Disappearances and torture became daily occurrences, establishing terror, insecurity and fear is the daily friends of the people of Myanmar. These processes are the result of the lack of administrative ability demonstrated by the military party recently.

In Myanmar, people have to face choices that are hardly imaginable in a free society. Should one need to take the high road and be honest or engage in corruption so his or her family can make ends meet.¹⁷¹ Survival depends on submitting to those in power. Therefore, strictly speaking, what it meant by militarism or military party in Myanmar is definitely the denial of people's rights to life.¹⁷² In Myanmar, people who have money also have political control. Politics is often seen today as being at the service of economic power. In virtue of their power, they also try to dominate social and cultural dimension of life. Therefore, in every government office there is corruption, bribe and bribery occur and morality is totally deprived. The government officials dishonestly demand without "consciousness of shame" to receive unfair advantage from others. Those who take unfair advantage of others are referred to as "the shrewd Burmans," "slyness" is termed "a Burmese trick", thus practice of extracting bribes is still common secretly or openly among officials.¹⁷³

At this time of social crisis, the people of Myanmar turn their face toward religion and raise questions like what should be religious message of love that God wants them to give the people who are longing for liberation, justice, peace and prosperity in the nation? By taking notice of above question, James A. Scherer may give a suitable answer that "the Christian church, along with the rest of society, is

¹⁷¹ Christina Fink, *Living Silence.*, 7.

¹⁷² Samuel Ngun Ling, "Our Hope and Their Hope: Reading Amos' Justice Message in Myanmar Context," *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol. 8* (January, 2007), 30.

¹⁷³ Helen G. Trager, *Burma through Alien Eyes* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 151-3.

inevitable involved in politics, which is the art of living in community”.¹⁷⁴ In this case, what God is urging that no more suffering be occurred from the poverty especially on account of the oppression and the exploitation of the rich and the powerful rather

For Scherer, servants of Christ must express his lordship in their political, social and economic commitments and their love for their neighbours by taking part in the political processes.¹⁷⁵ The current concern about the liberation of the oppressed, the social revolution which is to transform the present order and the counter-violence opposed to the violence which all led many Christians to ask themselves about the attitude of prophets regarding the political situation of their times. Michael Amaladoss asserts that oppression and injustice were not limited to a specific historical situation, their causes go deeper and cannot be truly eliminated without going to the very roots of the problem; the disintegration of brother-hood and communion among human beings.¹⁷⁶

However, there are several issues concerning with national political, economic, social, cultural and religious where people are also suffering under the new government of Myanmar such miseries as poverty, hunger, illiteracy, ignorance, inhuman living conditions which are the neo-political oppressions. How then, can Christian in Myanmar contribute to change? The church needs a civil courage, with profound respect for the life and loves for the persons whom we deem as oppressors. Thus, the people of God must learn not to keep silent; to discover when sin threatens to prevail in society. In short, the church needs political awareness as well as to participate in the society liberating the oppressed and seeking justice and righteousness for them.

4.2.2 Socio-Economical Challenge

Economically speaking, Myanmar must enjoy her economic resources because in Asia, Myanmar is known as the world’s leading rice exporter until the military took power in 1962.¹⁷⁷ Under the Ne Win’s economic setting, everything is changed and Myanmar became one of the poorest countries in the world. Many people, especially,

¹⁷⁴ James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization I: Basic Statement* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 272.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 29.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel Ngun Ling, *Theological Themes for Our Times.*, 179.

those who are poor, powerless and marginalized have experienced many economic hardships through decades of economic repressions under the long military rule.¹⁷⁸

The majority ethnic peoples have experienced a variety of economic hardships more than the “Bama people”¹⁷⁹ have. These experiences, combined with corrupted moral and socio-political suppressions have kept people in fear and anxiety. In order to survive, people have to develop a coping mechanism that is daubed “corruption-adapted common way of life,” which is potentially harmful both the individual and society. Hence, knowingly or unknowingly, many people young and old get involved in doing something that would have been considered illegal or unethical.¹⁸⁰ No one knows for sure about the political and economic future of Myanmar. Fear, anxiety, ambiguity, uncertainty and distress are common experiences, coupled with continuing nationwide economic nightmares. All these have dampened people’s moral obligation to uphold truth and justice.¹⁸¹

Economically, Myanmar people are struggling hard for their basic necessities of life as many of them are in a situation of living daily life from hand to mouth while the military government always claim the country as Golden Myanmar such as economic prosperous country. Although the country is rich in its natural gifts of God, now only the 20% of the rich enjoyed all these natural resources while the rest 80% still going without sufficient resources. Rich and powerful people get richer and stronger while the mass poor and powerless becomes poorer and weaker.

Socially, violence against women is experienced often as a result of rapes deliberately committed by military personnel in certain ethnic regions. For instance, in regions where minority ethnic people reside, there are often reports of incidents of rapes and other various forms of sexual violence committed by military men and their counterparts. Therefore, violence against women has become an important gender-related dimension. Hence, rehabilitation of the lives of prostitutes, promotion of social status of tortured, raped, despised women, securing the security of assaulted and oppressed women, protecting the rights of outcasts, dispossessed and discriminated

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 181.

¹⁷⁹ "Bama" term is used for the majority ethnic group to identify itself. In English, and in most academic studies, the term "Burman" is used for this group. I will use the term "Bama", instead of "Burman", and the term "ethnic people" in general for other groups, such as the Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Karen, and so forth.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 174.

¹⁸¹ Samuel Ngun Ling, “Our Hope and Their Hope: Reading Amos’ Justice Message in Myanmar Context,” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology* Vol. 8., 37.

women and spiritual care or counselling for HIV/AIDS victimized women have become the most challenging theological issues and a highly demanded mission tasks of the churches of Myanmar today.¹⁸² It is true when the writer Edward H. Hammett said, “in the society religion is gaining ground, but while morality is losing ground”. It means crime, violence, victimization, poverty, injustices, racism, bigotry, hatred, winning at all costs, and other realities are really occurred around us. The church is called out of the world to be the representative of God into the world to re-examine and speak about the role of socio, political and economic in society.¹⁸³

4.2.3 Religious Challenge

4.2.3.1 From the Past (Myanmar Buddhist attitude toward Christianity)

For centuries ago Natism or nat worship, a traditional religious form of animistic spirit worship has been deeply rooted in Myanmar soil especially among the Burma people since the pre-Buddhist time. Under the King Anawrahta of Bagan, Mon missionary by the name of Shin Araham in the 11th century the Buddhist initial access of the Theravada Mission arrive in Bagan. The most popular Christian missionary to Myanmar reaches only in July 13, 1813 by the name of Adoniram Judson and his wife Ann. The first public worship was commenced by the Bamar language in April 4, 1819 and the first Burman convert Maung Naw was baptized in June 27, 1819.¹⁸⁴

In brief, Judson and his wife encountered many hard times during their mission work. Out of many problems, oppressions, and pain lastly Judson could be able to accomplished not only translating the Bible into Burmese language but also finished Burmese-English and English-Burmese dictionary. Judson and many other missionaries not only convert people to Christ, but also built schools, medical training centers, and they try to develop Burmese people’s living. Their social involvement in the society helps the Burma Christians to grow speedily in evangelizing.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Samuel Ngun Ling, “Our Hope and Their Hope: Reading Amos’ Justice Message in Myanmar Context,” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol. 8.*, 35.

¹⁸³ Edward H. Hammett, *Making the Church Work: Converting the Church for 21st Century.*, 11-12.

¹⁸⁴ Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson* (Boston: Phillips and Company, 1853), 154, 211.

¹⁸⁵ William D. Hackett, *The Church in Asian* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 103.

In Myanmar, Buddhism was believe to be practiced by 89.3 percent of the population whereas Christianity is practiced by 5.6 percent, Islam by 3.8 percent, Hinduism by 0.5 percent and primal religions (animism) by 0.2 percent of the population. The amalgamated existence of such multi-religious and multi-cultural diversities how can a Christian's participation be effective in the society?

For Buddhist, Christianity means a foreign religion. For this reason, Christianity is a threatening for them. Although the present government repeatedly makes the claim that, there is freedom of religion and no discrimination on religious grounds.¹⁸⁶ In reality, the Christians in Myanmar have freedom of worship not freedom of religion. In the country according to Samuel Ngun Ling, there are two types of religions simply called "favoured religion" (Buddhism) and the other "unfavoured religion" (Christianity and others). There is no real encounter between the two favoured and unfavoured religions so that discrimination happening in the country. This is the ground which the minority ethnic Christians and the majority Burman Buddhists confronted each other in a conflict leading to a breach of communication between them. For a Buddhist to become Christian is to abandon his or her socio-cultural identity, even an act of disloyalty to the Buddhist society and to the nation as well. Christianity was regarded as an imported western religion being associated with the colonial schemes and movements of the past from which it look the whole nation abort a century to gain full independence.¹⁸⁷

The socialist revolution in Burma has affected not only the economic, social and cultural realms but also the place and life of the churches. Since the independence and the return of missionaries affected so that the Myanmar Christians to stand on their own feet. Christians are exerting an influence upon the total society far beyond their numerical strength because they had often been identified with the British colonial rulers; there was a time after independent when they were suspected as not being nationalistic enough in spirit. For a time nationalism and Buddhism were bracketed together, i.e., a good Burman is to be a good Buddhist. They see Christianity as foreign colonial intruders and a good Burman need to be a good Buddhist.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ The New Light of Myanmar (English) (January 5, 2003), 9.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel Ngun Ling, "The Encounter of Missionary Christianity with Resurgent Buddhism in Post-Colonial Myanmar," *Quest Vol. 2* (November, 2003), 63.

¹⁸⁸ William D. Hackett, *The Church in Asian.*, 104.

4.2.4. The Present Challenges

4.2.4.1. Church and Justice

Church life in Myanmar is predominantly Western oriented, especially in its expression of God (theology) its forms of worship, and its structure of church organization (ecclesiology) and in its strategy of mission outreach (missiology). Professor Erick Sharpe, former missionary to India said the situation of Myanmar several years ago that “Christianity in Burma is tarred with a colonialists brush”.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, in order to do away with Western ideals and accessories the church in Myanmar may need to deconstruct all its western-modelled thought forms. Western style or forms of worship and western pattern structures of Christian life need to reconstructs them in Myanmar way with Myanmar resources. What is called “contextualization”. Hence, this deconstruction and reconstruction of all western form of Christianity is a challenging theological tasked which the Myanmar churches need to undertake promptly.¹⁹⁰

In the midst of social political turmoil, Myanmar churches have over-emphasized on prayer, fasting, salvation and life after death. Even though there are many things to do the Myanmar churches are more concerned about building bigger storage buildings, converting the so called “heathens” and they are satisfied with baptizing peoples into the church. Until now most of the churches in Myanmar still practice and follow the narrow interpretation done by the American missionaries and stay apart from the society. Now is the time for the Christianity of Myanmar who must intelligently participate in every realm of social life around them in order to manifest a just human relationship at all life because this is a duty and the only way of life for all”.

Theologically speaking, many Christians are not yet mature in theological thinking so that they follow centuries-old missionary teachings without critical questioning and without re-evaluating their contents. Being spoon-fed as such by missionary teachings many Christians still hold a view or thought form that is quiet exclusive to their faith especially in relation to people of other faiths.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Erick J. Sharp, *Faith Meets Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 107.

¹⁹⁰ Samuel Ngun Ling, “In the midst of Golden Stupas: Revitalizing the Christian Presence in Myanmar,” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.3* (February, 2002), 110-111.

¹⁹¹ Samuel Ngun Ling, “In the midst of Golden Stupas: Revitalizing the Christian Presence in Myanmar,” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.3.*, 110-111.

This makes a Christians to feel that they are better than others, a holier-than-thou attitude are. This holier-than-thou attitude led Christians then to look at the non-christians and their religions with complete disdain as a bunch of hell bound people and unworthy of heaven. Pe Maung Tin, who is a Christian former professor of Pali in Yangon University once, pointed out that, “they (missionaries) evidently come to teach, not to learn, not to make Buddhists the object of their missionary love and concern. Rather, the Buddhists are seen only as the object of their missionary preaching’s”.

Concerning Christian mission in Myanmar, one has to reconsider seriously what is the preconditioned Christian mission in the past and what possible problems may persists in the future so that one may make a paradigm shift in terms of mission that best fits today’s situation. Samuel Ngun Ling points out two reasons which is not appropriate for the churches of Myanmar in doing mission; firstly, the approach used by missionaries in the past was a narrow and exclusive approach now similar to the *Buddhist Taungtan Tatana*, which also is known as an aggressive Buddhist mission supported by the present military government. Secondly, the works of missionaries clearly revealed as attitude of conquest. This kind of conquest mission a sort of proselytized mission is mainly concerned with conversions, statistics and the quantitative results of mission; rather than with the quality of Christian life. In addition, Simon Pau Khan En also pointed out why the Buddhist alienated themselves from Christians and the Christians from the Buddhist society. He says three significant factors for this alienation; first, the identification of Christian mission with colonialism by the Burmese people; second, the negative attitude of the missionaries toward the indigenous religio-culture of the people and third, the conversion of the tribal groups to Christianity *en masse*.¹⁹²

In this kind of multi religious, ethnic groups in Myanmar, what model of mission should be relevant for the church today. Here, I would like to discuss two model proposed by Myanmar contextual theologians. Firstly, according to Samuel Ngun Ling, the best or relevant Christian mission in Myanmar must not be the model of conquest but service to others. For him, it is not to produce statistics but to serve. Because Jesus model of coming into this world is “not to be served but to serve”

¹⁹² Simon Pau Khan En, “*Critical Problems Facing Theological Colleges in Myanmar*,” a paper presented to Institutional Development in Theological Education Workshop held at Myanmar Ecumenical Sharing Center, Yangon: October 26-29, 1999.

(Mark 10:45). Such a “but to serve” type of mission comes for people regardless of race, religion and cultures. This type of mission respects all faiths whether they are favored or unfavored by the government. Therefore, we need a mission today that does not look down on our non-Christian neighbors and that is not bent on condemning good non-Christians to hell.¹⁹³

The second is La Seng Dingrin, whose model is none other than an “action-oriented ethical dialogue”¹⁹⁴ a model proposed by Paul F. Knitter. This model suggests that first, we Christians in the country act together with friend of other “true faiths” for the well being of the afflicted earth and humanity that is for the sake of peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. This could help them in building a better friendship between the two parties so that a better and a more fruitful explicit interfaith dialogue could also eventually be occur, where Christians could boldly and humbly bear witness to Jesus Christ the Lord, crucified and raised, and to the Reign of God inaugurated in Him.¹⁹⁵

Samuel Ngun Ling states that the church in Myanmar does not need such a proselytized mission that calls arrogantly for conversions, statistics but rather a mission of service that must be carried out by genuine Christian love and humility can be the best mission strategy for Myanmar. We need to change Burma Buddhist attitude by serving our neighbours. In the church history of Myanmar we see that the first missionaries were successful not because they always preached the good news but because they participated in the social developments of their surroundings. They build houses, schools, hospitals, borders and many other social activities. They are especially successful in their work on education.

Therefore, Christianity in Myanmar should be transformed to bear their identity (God’s love) in their lives in order that their neighbours will experience the love of God through their daily life. By being faithful to be the good citizens in participating in social and political uplifting of the nation, our neighbours will know that Christian faith is not an alien religion. By being contextual in lifestyle, they will know that Christianity is not a western product. Our attitude toward our neighbours must be “action oriented-ethical centered living”. We need to live by what we speak.

¹⁹³ Samuel Ngun Ling, “In the midst of Golden Stupas: Revitalizing the Christian Presence in Myanmar,” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.3.*, 110-111.

¹⁹⁴ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 2002), 234.

¹⁹⁵ La Seng Dingrin, “A Study of David J. Bosch’s Theology of Mission and its Reading into a Myanmar Context” *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.9* (January, 2008), 65-66.

In Myanmar to have a peaceful relationship with our neighbors we need to have dialogue. Here what we have to apply for our country is the method proposed by Paul F. Knitter's view of "action oriented-ethical centered dialogue". Hans Kung summarizes this view when he describes the importance of dialogue as follows:

There is no world peace, without among religions and no peace among religions without dialogue between religions and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another.¹⁹⁶

This could help a better relationship between religions so that a better and more fruitful explicit interfaith dialogue eventually be occurred. Only when action based ethical or interfaith dialogue is occurred then mutual sharing, challenging, enriching, and witnessing could happen and we will be able to build a peaceful country.

In Myanmar, how can people see Christianity is really sound and good religion that they should imitate from looking our life? To have or to turn the Burmese wrong view on Christianity we need to begin from individual, by the Church and proving what the role of the Church in the society will be very important. The Church should take important part of her mission by showing her existence in the society by serving the least, helping, clothing the naked, giving food to the hunger so that others will see from our lives and we will be doing what Jesus commands us to do (Luke 4:16-21) and standing at the side of the needy people. Therefore the church is not the end in itself but the means to serve the world.¹⁹⁷

To sum up the last chapter four, Nationalism, for both U Nu and Ne Win was simply based on the notion of "one race, one language and one religion". It is to say, the Burman or Myanmar race, Myanmar-sa and Buddhism. For that reason, it is the root cause of human rights violation and the denial of the rights of religious and cultural minorities, instead of compiling detail account of human rights violations and the denial of democracy in Myanmar. The argument is the total denial of human rights in Burma began with the rejection of the right of self-determination for non-Burma ethnic nationalities, who joined the Union of Burma voluntarily as equal

¹⁹⁶ Hans Kung, "Christianity and World Religions Dialogue with Islam," *Toward a Universal Theology of Theologian* edited by Leonard Swidler (New York: Orbis Book, 1981), 194.

¹⁹⁷ Simon Pau Khan En, "Church and Society," Lecture Notes on M.Div II, Myanmar Institute of Theology, January 16, 2007.

partner in 1947. In so doing the government (SPDC) has explored itself how successive governments of the Union of Burma have abused the rights of religions and cultural minority groups.¹⁹⁸

4.2.4.2. Minority Groups and Justice

As mentioned above, Burma's military has been seen as the only one real oppressor for Myanmar ethnic minorities. These ethnic minorities were forced to join the Union of Burma after independence from the British. But the ethnic minorities did not then nor do now, identify as Burmese. They view themselves as separate independent groups with inalienable rights. The ethnic minorities occupy areas rich in natural resources. The Burmese, being the majority, have taken control of the country and are engaged in ethnic cleansing. Instead of committing mass murder, however, the regime employs concealed methods of ethnic cleansing. That is, it realizes the power of the international community and therefore operates systematically and under concealment to cleanse itself of the ethnic minorities.

The regime employs, among others, three means of ethnic cleansing. First, they do not engage in overt mass murders. Instead they "use" the ethnic minorities as land mine sweepers and forced laborers, literally and actually exhausting them. The regime, perhaps having learned from other historical events, staunchly prohibits foreign journalists. Another means the regime manages to avoid international attention is by practicing isolationism. That is, although it is a member of ASEAN, Burma's regime appreciates the non-intervention policy. Burma's military regime is trying to avoid another Kosovo where the UN intervened. So, although they agree to dialogue with neighboring countries, even including Aung San Suu Kyi, it refuses to address Human Rights violations let alone ethnic cleansing. A more insidious means of forced migration to achieve ethnic cleansing is the overt rape. Rape and the mere fear of rape cause entire communities to flee. Religious persecution is also a horrific means of ethnic cleansing and forced migration. The regime also cuts ethnic minorities off from their territories by cutting their "ties" to the soil. Finally, the regime claims that everything within the borders of the Union of Burma is their eminent domain. Hence, they claim territories, relocate entire towns, or displace large

¹⁹⁸ Lian H. Sakhong, "Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christian in Burma," *Human Rights Violations and the Denial of Minority Rights in Burma*, Salai Za Uk Ling & Salai Bawi Lian Mang (ed.) (Ottawa, Canada: Chin Human Rights Organization, 2004), 119, 127.

communities.¹⁹⁹ The abuses and atrocities suffered by the vast majority of people especially, the non-Bama. As Anna May Say Pa said, “without dealing with the ethnic minorities’ rights and concerns the future for our homeland is bleak”²⁰⁰.

Therefore, the root of human rights violation in Burma/Myanmar related with constitutional crisis of Panglong Conference as well as the new one (2008 constitution) and it must therefore be solved through constitutional means of establishing a democratic federal system of government. If it is able to manage this unfair constitution and change the mind of the rulers, Myanmar has the possibility to catching up with the global humanity while avoiding some of their mistakes and dictatorships.

¹⁹⁹ Threats to Our Existence”: Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma, 2012.

²⁰⁰ Anna May Say Pa, “The Karens: Claiming the Rights of Identity and Self-Determination,” *Engagement*, Vol. 3. (2004): 33.

CONCLUSION

Concluding The Message of Amos through the Eyes of Myanmar

It is surprisingly vivid that Myanmar is unfortunately filled with social injustices which God hates probably most. Theologically speaking, God of whom Amos proclaimed is the same God whom the Myanmar Christians worship today through Jesus Christ. In other words, as God is of all nations, God is not only of the minorities which are Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Shan, Mun and Rakhine and most Christians are from them, but also of the majority which is Bamar whose religion is mainly Buddhism. Moreover, God is of the powerful and the civilians, the rich and the poor, and the educated and the uneducated. Therefore, everyone would be judged of one's evil doings. If the Myanmar people do just things, God would be good to them. Spontaneously, the people in Myanmar need to examine themselves, and their churches and societies and nations to guard against social injustice.

Biblically speaking, God hears the cry and mourning of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the discriminated and the exploited. God called the prophet Amos to remind the Israelites of their social evils. Amos denounced all the rich and the powerful who were corrupt and exploiting the weak and the poor. Likewise, God is calling the Christians in Myanmar to point out the evil doings of the people and to herald the judgment of God. Just as Amos boldly pinpointed the injustice of the rich and the powerful, the Christians as the agents of God must be brave in advocating for the justice in the Myanmar society. In particular, the Christian leaders in Myanmar, who are appointed to look after the people of God in accordance with God's will, need to play the very vital role in demolishing the injustice in the nations. God does not want the poor people suffer from the poverty especially on account of the oppression and exploitation of the rich and the powerful. Rather, God is the one who wants the people in Myanmar the poor and the rich, the powerful and the civilians, and the adult and the children to enjoy life justly. Needless to say, God hates the leaders or the powerful that exploit and oppress upon the civilians or the weak. In the Israelite history, some anointed kings by God were punished because of their disobedience to God's will.

According to Samuel Ngun Ling, the Christians must continue engaging aggressively in combating the oppressive structures and evil systems of militarism and globalization that ruin Myanmar society. He suggests future actions to help build a new world in this trouble land as follows;

- (a) Take a stand against death-dealing evil forces in politics, economy, social and religious life, and identity alternatives to a better life and a new world.
- (b) Work for a religious liberation, promote a spirituality of people's struggle for justice and equality, and take into account of theological work as part of the people's cry against injustice.
- (c) Engage in a dialogue on practical issues at the grassroots level and network with people's movements (workers, farmer, indigenous people, fisher folks, urban poor).
- (d) Draw upon the common values of religions to attempt against militarism and globalization and envision religious communities for building together a common future.
- (e) Define the roles and rights of women and children in the context of violence, trafficking, labour, migration and ethnic conflicts and develop them as an integral part of people's struggle for liberation.
- (f) Translate all challenges into specific calls and actions at community and national level.

The authentic spirituality of any religious community is a spirituality that tries for justice, peace and holiness in all aspects of life. The central theme of God's salvation in all religions is justice. The ultimate goal of both Christianity and all living faiths is also justice.²⁰¹ His suggestions showed that he looked at the problem of the country from every aspect. However, I have now discovered some suggestions that Ling presentations mostly goes into a religion sense rather than nationwide. That means the injustice has been rooted in favoured and unfavoured religions. This finding is eventually true from the perspective of a Christian leader but not the root cause of the

²⁰¹ Samuel Ngun Ling, *Theological Themes for Our Times* (Yangon: Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2007), 176-177.

injustice and unrighteousness. What to beware is justice and righteousness is much more relevant for the social-political leaders who create laws and care for their execution like kings and officials who were in the role of attributing justice and righteousness to people in the time of ancient Near East. Such a responsibility of social-political leader will be able solve today's challenges such as ethnicity, religion, economy and etc. in the nation.

In addition, with regard to justice, there are certain suggestions given by the World Council of Churches. Above all, the role of the church is to support the struggle of the poor and the oppressed towards justice and self-reliance. The church should keep contact with organizations of the poor (landless peasants, rural workers, urban slum dwellers, migrants workers and so forth) and with people's movements, and provide them with such support as they themselves require. Such movements can be within and outside the church. Then, the church could take initiative to establish a network relationship among such movements on local, national, regional and world levels for mutual support and solidarity. The church also could take the experimental initiative to assist a few poor congregations to really become the church of the poor and for the poor, to become part of people's movements, involving the local community, to struggle against their own poverty and oppression. The church could be assisted to clarify their theological perception, organization and ethos to manifest their solidarity with the suffering and the oppressed. The poor who often form the large majority of the membership of the church should become the main inspiration and controlling factor in shaping the thinking, organization, life and mission of the church. In turn, that church, through the fellowship of the ecumenical movement, should become a means of inspiration and challenge to the rich church. Besides, the church should strive towards changes of oppressive structures on national and international levels.²⁰²

According to the Message of Amos, God is of all nations. It is not a surprise that God keeps an eye on the Myanmar authority that rules the country dictatorially and oppresses the civilians. All the evil doings being committed by the military junta are obvious before God. Even though the military junta can hide and cover all their misdeeds from the world's nations, in the presence of God, it lies bare. God will not

²⁰² Jether Pereira Ramalho, ed., *Signs of Hope and Justice* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 113-114.

bear with their oppression on the weak, their exploitation on the poor, their greed and moral corruption. As God is the one who hates injustice and judges who treat others unjustly, God's judgement on the Myanmar junta would inevitably fall sooner or later. It is very crucial for the leaders to know that God let all the Israelite kings those who ruled the nations not in accordance with His will fall. Thus, it is important not to engage with the fury of God. On the other hand, what the military junta has to do to get favour from God is to exercise the justice. Without hesitation, the leaders of Myanmar must attempt to be just and righteous in leading the country. They should have concern on the poor and strive for the welfare of all the civilians. They must give up all their exploitative nature on the people. Instead of striving for their selfish benefits to enjoy life luxuriously, the leaders of Myanmar should always think of making effort for the prosperity of the country. In particular, whether the justice is in existence among the civilians or not should be found out and justice should be exercised in the whole society.

It goes without saying that the leaders of certain nations, biblically speaking, are chosen and appointed in the leadership role by God so as to take care of and protect the people from all kinds of danger. Further, the authority or the leaders are to deal with all the problems, tensions and matters so that the community would be in prosperity and peace. With regard to submitting to the human authorities, the writings of the apostles affirmed that the Christians needed to maintain it as their social responsibilities. Government was instituted by God to perform the good functions of maintaining order, establishing justice, and punishing wrong doers. However, when government attempts to assert its authority over God's, ignoring or abusing the functions for which it was established, Christian submission to such government could be equal to sacrilege. The limits upon human subordination to government implied in Jesus' words in Matthew 22:21, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's," was a novel idea. The norm was for political and religious claims to be tied together in one system; religion, politics, social relations, and economics were so intertwined that there was little chance for any independent religious criticism

of the practices. This Christian teaching debunked such a regard for government, allowing for criticism of government when it violated God's purposes.²⁰³

The Scripture provides many examples of believers who found it necessary to disobey human law in order to obey God. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego refused to take part in emperor worship and continued to worship the living God. Consequently, they directly violated Babylonian law and were sent to tortuous deaths. Nevertheless, God saved their lives and blessed their obedience to the one true God, in defiance of human authority that tried to usurp God's divinity. Glorifying God through obedience to God's commands to submit to human authority, not to conform to this world's pattern, and to establish justice in the gate, it sometimes make find one facing conflicting claims and duties. At times very difficult ethical decisions must be made. In making such decisions, it can be helpful to distinguish among the types of duty. Duties arise out of the relationships that the people have with God, with other people. The primary duty is owed to God; no other type of duty can assume greater priority in people's lives.²⁰⁴ After all, in submitting to the human authority, the people in Myanmar must be sensible with the standards of God.

On the other hand, all the Myanmar people including the minorities who have been being treated unjustly need to discern that God is the one who loves justice and makes it flow like the river in the nations. Through the prophet Amos, God pointed out the injustice among the Israelite society and made justice flow like the fountain. Likewise, the God of Myanmar including both the majority and minority of people would let the justice flow like river in Myanmar. Therefore, the ethnic people without giving up hope in God should abide by the message of Jesus Christ. Holding steadfastly to the truth and justice of God, they should keep on struggling for justice and peace, as God is the only one who would grant them peace and set apart justice among them. For instance, the Kachins should continue striving for justice collectively by obeying and depending on God. Likewise, the Shans, Karens, Chins and the rest should also not quit struggling for justice.

Besides, as the prophet Amos denounced the rich along with the powerful on account of their exploitation, oppression on the poor and their indulgence and

²⁰³ Esther Byle Bruland and Stephen Charles Mott, *A Passion for Jesus; A passion for Justice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1983), 136-137.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

luxurious minded nature, the rich in Myanmar should be aware of their regard and dealings with the poor. It is not a surprise that the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider and wider. When the rich enjoy life prosperously, luxuriously and abundantly, the poor are too poor to afford for a day meal. All the luxurious things are nothing to do with the poor. The rich must examine their motives and have concern on the poor. They must find the way and provide with necessary means for the welfare of the poor. It is important for the rich to know that the biblical God is a God of liberation: “In the view of the Bible, Yahweh is the God who breaks into human history to liberate the oppressed.” In addition, biblical justice means justice for the poor. The work of Christ is present simultaneously as liberation from sin and from all its consequences. Salvation cannot be separated from social justice. “Justice” is what God does. But what God does is to liberate and love the poor. From exodus event to the Beatitudes, God is liberator of the poor. Jesus, who is God, was born into poverty, living with the poor, addressing “good news” to the poor, lashing out against the rich, and being “poor” or humble in spirit.²⁰⁵ Thus, though most of Myanmar people are suffering from the poverty, they should keep in mind that God would liberate and console as God loves them. They should have hope in God and continue trusting in God. By contrast, the rich must be careful about that God is the one who judges on the people those who exploit, oppress and discriminate the poor and the weak.

All in all, viewing the message of Amos, all the people of Myanmar including the powerful, the rich, the poor and the oppressed should perceive well God’s justice and that God wants his justice to flow in Myanmar like the river. As to God’s justice, the powerful should be aware of their conducts on the people which they have been committing by exploiting, oppressing, discriminating and executing. Likewise, all the oppressed, poor and exploited also should not give up struggling for justice and trusting in God.

Through learning about the meaning of justice, the real essence of the so-called social justice is learnt. In addition, studying about the prophet Amos, his setting, and message, the herald of Amos and the social injustice among the society of Israel are seen. Especially, his message could be implied to the context of Myanmar.

²⁰⁵ Karen Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 106-107.

The social injustice among the Myanmar societies is explored especially such as oppression, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination.

Needless to say, it is very important to discern clearly when it comes to justice. As the prophet heralded the justice of God, the people in Myanmar are to set it as the standard in examining the social injustice in Myanmar. Indeed, it is full of social evils in Myanmar in terms of oppression, exploitation, marginalization, and discrimination that are against the justice of God. Therefore, in order to be in accordance with the will of God, the oppression of the powerful on the weak, the exploitation of the rich on the poor, and the marginalization on the minority of people should be stopped in Myanmar. All such doings are what God hates most as God is just, righteous and truthful. God would not allow such things overcome among the human society. God would attempt to stop and demolish all such social evils, and rather God would let the justice flow in the human communities. It is already seen that God tried to stop the injustice among the Israelite societies through the prophet Amos. Likewise, it is sure that God would try to get rid of the injustice in Myanmar by using His people.

In sum, it is known of God's justice and the injustice in Israelite and Myanmar societies. The herald of the prophet Amos also has been explored and his message has been implied to the Myanmar context. It is suggested that all the people in Myanmar of different races and religions should unanimously and hopefully continue struggling for the justice and especially the Christians who worship God of justice should play the vital role in striving for the justice in Myanmar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “1960: Burma” Encarta Encyclopedia, Microsoft Corporation, 2009.
- “International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,” Electronic Database, Biblesoft, Inc., 2006.
- “Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary,” Electronic Database, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.
- Amaladoss, Michael, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997).
- Anderson, B.W., *Understanding the Old Testament* (Engle Wood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1986).
- Anderson, Francis I., and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary “Amos”* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).
- Angeles, Peter A. “Justice,” *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy, 2nd ed.* (USA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992).
- Anna May Say Pa, “The Karens: Claiming the Rights of Identity and Self-Determination,” *Engagement*, Vol. 3. (2004).
- Asia Report, International Crisis Group, (July 27, 2012).
- Baker, David W., and Bill T. Arnold (ed.), *The Face of the Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Michigan: Grandrapids, 2004).
- Barnette, Helee H., *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961).
- Barton, John, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Amos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Bevans, Stephen B., *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992).
- Blenkinsoop, Joseph, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).
- Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).
- Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz Josef Fabry *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 8., ed.*, (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1997).
- Bright, John, *Covenant and Promise* (London: SCM Press, 1997).
- Burnside, Jonathan, *God, Justice, and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Cirlot, J. E., “Water,” *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962).
- Coggins, Richard James, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Joel and Amos* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
- Coote, Robert B., *Amos Among the Prophets, Composition and Theology* (Fortress Press, USA, 1981).
- Davies, Philip R., *Amos, Man and Book: Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past eds. By Brad E. Kelle & Megan Bishop Moore* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

- Davis, John D., *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible: Amos*, rev., Henry Synder Gehman (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1994).
- Denise Lardner Carmody, *The Oldest God: Archaic Religion Yesterday & Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).
- Engnell, Ivan, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967)
- Epsztein, Leon, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986).
- Esther Byle Bruland and Stephen Charles Mott, *A Passion for Jesus; A passion for Justice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1983).
- Fink, Christina, *Living Silence* (New York: Zed Books, 2001).
- Fohrer, Georg (ed.), "Water," *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of Old Testament* (New York: SCM Press, 1973).
- Gaebelein, Frank E., (eds), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version "Daniel and the Minor Prophets" vol. 7* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1985).
- Gelston, Anthony, *Introduction and Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010).
- Gottwald, Norman K., *The Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).
- Grimsrud, Ted, *Healing Justice: The Prophet Amos and a New Theology of Justice: Peace and Justice Shall Embrace*, Ed., Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Pennsylvania: Pandora Press, 1999).
- Grisanti, Michael A., "mayim," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Vol.2., ed., William A. Van Gemeren (United Kingdom: Paternoster Press, 1996).
- Hackett, William D., *The Church in Asian* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975).
- Hafemann, Scott J., and Paul R. House (ed.), *General Themes in Biblical Theology* (Manchester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007).
- Hammett, Edward H., *Making the Church Work: Converting the Church for 21st Century*.
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason S. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).
- Harrison, R. K., *Old Testament Times* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1970).
- Haynes, Stephen R., and Stephen L. Mckenzie (ed.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1993).
- Hlaing Bwa, "Christian Existence in Myanmar Today: Discerning Christo- Praxis as God's Creative Transformation." The paper is presented to the *International Theologische Tgung, Universitat Regensburg*, Germany, 22-29 July, 2008).
- Holy Bible (NRSV)
- Hopkins, Dwight N., *Shoes that Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).
- Houston, Walter J., *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (T&T Clark, New York, 2006).

<http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3275-army-boosts-troops-in-ethnic-controlled-areas> (accessed on 30.04.2013)

Janzen, Waldemar, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* (Berlin: W De G, 1972).

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr., "Prophet, Prophetess, Prophecy," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Paternoster Press, 1996).

Kessler, Rainer, *The Social History of Ancient Israel* (Meneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008).

King, Philip J., *An Archaeological Commentary "Amos, Hosea, Micah"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).

Knitter, Paul F., *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 2002).

Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament I* (New York: Leiden, 1994).

Kung, Hans, "Christianity and World Religions Dialogue with Islam," *Toward a Universal Theology of Theologian* edited by Leonard Swidler (New York: Orbis Book, 1981).

La Seng Dingrin, "A Study of David J. Bosch's Theology of Mission and its Reading into a Myanmar Context" *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.9* (January, 2008).

Lahpai Zau Latt, "Old Testament Understanding Of Social Justice," lecture note on elective Class, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Insein, 29.10.2008.

Lebacqz, Karen, *Six Theories of Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986).

Leclerc, Thomas L. *Yahweh is exalted in justice: solidarity and conflict in Isaiah* (Meneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

Leclerc, Thomas L., *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

Lee, Hyung Won, *The Rhetorical Beauty and the Socio-theological Impact of Micah 6:6-8 in Korea* (Seoul: Asian Biblical Scholar Seminar, 2008).

Lian H. Sakhong, "Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christian in Burma," *Human Rights Violations and the Denial of Minority Rights in Burma*, Salai Za Uk Ling & Salai Bawi Lian Mang (ed.) (Ottawa, Canada: Chin Human Rights Organization, 2004).

Limburg, James, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching "Hosea-Micah"* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988).

Matthews, Victor H., *Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001).

Mays, James Luther, "*Amos*" *A Commentary: The Old Testament Library* (London: SCM Press, 1969).

McComiskey, Thomas Edward (eds.), *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

McComiskey, Thomas Edward (eds.), *An Exegetical & Expository Commentary: The Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

Nardoni, Enrique, *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in Biblical World* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004).

Newsome, James D. Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973).

- Ramalho, Jether Pereira, ed., *Signs of Hope and Justice* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980).
- Robert, J. Deatis, *Liberation And Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984).
- Rofe, Alexander, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997).
- Samuel Ngun Ling, "In the midst of Golden Stupas: Revitalizing the Christian Presence in Myanmar," *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol.3* (February, 2002).
- Samuel Ngun Ling, "Our Hope and Their Hope: Reading Amos' Justice Message in Myanmar Context," *RAYS: MIT Journal of Theology Vol. 8* (January, 2007).
- Samuel Ngun Ling, "The Encounter of Missionary Christianity with Resurgent Buddhism in Post-Colonial Myanmar," *Quest Vol. 2* (November, 2003).
- Scherer James A., and Stephen B. Bevans eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization I: Basic Statement* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996).
- Sharp, Erick J., *Faith Meets Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1997).
- Simon Pau Khan En, "Church and Society," Lecture Notes: Myanmar Institute of Theology, January 16, 2007).
- Simon Pau Khan En, "Critical Problems Facing Theological Colleges in Myanmar," a paper presented to Institutional Development in Theological Education Workshop held at Myanmar Ecumenical Sharing Center, Yangon: October 26-29, 1999).
- Snaith, Norman H., *Amos, Hosea & Micah* (London: The Epworth Press, 1956).
- Stott, Douglas W., (translated), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: "Sadaq"* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2003).
- Taylor, J.B., "Water," *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Part 3.*, ed., Mary Gladstone (USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980).
- The New Light of Myanmar (English) (January 5, 2003).
- Thorogood, Bernard, *A Guide to the Book of Amos* (London: S.P.L.K, 1971).
- Threats to Our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma, 2012.
- Trager, Helen G., *Burma through Alien Eyes* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966).
- Troxel, Ronald L., *Prophetic Literature from Oracles to Books* (Oxford: A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, 2012).
- Vaux, Ronald de, *Ancient Israel Vol.1* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965).
- Wayland, Francis *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson* (Boston: Phillips and Company, 1853).
- Weinfeld, Moshe, *Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel against the Background of Social Reforms in the Ancient Near East in MESOPOTAMIEN UND SEINE NACHBARN*, ed. Hans Jörg Nissen (Dietrich Reimer Verlag: Berlin, 1987).
- Weinfeld, Moshe, *Justice and Righteousness, The Expression and Its Meaning in Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence*, eds. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

Weinfeld, Moshe, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995).

Weiss, Meir, *Concerning Amos' Repudiation of the Cult* in *POMEGRANATES GOLDEN BELLS*, ed. David P. Wright and others (Eisenbrauns: Indiana, 1995).

Winward, Stephen F., *A Guide to Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983).

Wolff, Hans Walter, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1977).

Wolff, Hans Walter, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1990).

Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Zondervan's Compact Bible Dictionary (1993), s.v. "Amos."