

COHESION, RHETORICAL PURPOSE AND THE POETICS OF COHERENCE IN AMOS 3

Tim Bulkeley

To read or analyze any text one must either assume or demonstrate its coherence. A collection of words, or even of sentences, none of which have any connection to another, would be in every sense incoherent! The closely related terms "coherence" and "cohesion" have sometimes been used indiscriminately. This study will reserve the more precise term "cohesion" for the linguistic relationships between parts of the text and will use "coherence" for the related but vaguer notion of rhetorical relations between textual units.¹

Historico-critical approaches to the prophetic books have tended to presuppose a lack of coherence beyond the small unit.² The unsatisfying nature of this assumption of larger scale incoherence is a motivating factor in current tendencies to examine the final form of the text. However, these newer studies have tended to presuppose coherence, somewhat as earlier writers presupposed the disparate nature of the textual elements studied.

Not all biblical scholars have ignored the question of coherence in the texts they study. Grossberg examined the poetics of coherence in three samples of biblical poetry.³ Others in a less explicit way argue for the

¹The classic study of semantic cohesion in English texts is M. A. K. Halliday & R. Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (English Language Series 9; London: Longman, 1976). Besides cohesion and coherence, some writers have used the pair of terms "centripetal" and "centrifugal" structures to speak of larger scale cohesion or its opposite in poetic texts, following E. Stankiewicz, "Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Poetry," *Semiotica* 38 (1982) 217-42.

²A notable exception to this tendency was H. W. Wolff's concern (in *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974] xxx, cf. pp. 31-33 and 110) to examine the ways in which "rhetorical units" (form critically distinct sayings) combine into "kerygmatic units".

³D. Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry* (SBLMS 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

coherence of their texts.⁴ Nevertheless little attention has been focussed on cohesion or on the poetics of coherence for the prophetic books.⁵ For this corpus, the assumption of the separation of each short speech unit has been strongest. Indeed, both form and redaction critics have isolated very short units as fundamental to prophecy.⁶

This article explores the linguistic cohesion and the rhetorical coherence of Amos 3. It will seek to show that the cohesion of the chapter is effected by the interplay of the rhetorical purpose of the chapter with these features operating at the level of the chapter.

Amos 3 addresses several themes (such as election, the dangerous word of the LORD, injustice and invasion) and contains both oracles and a disputation speech (using proverb-like material). Thus, in the past, the variety of the material has often impressed more than its cohesion. However our examination will show that textual details which have been puzzling and subject to proposals for emendation, serve a common purpose and so effect textual coherence.

Some studies have supposed or sought to demonstrate the coherence of the chapter. Gitay, using the terminology and categories of classical European rhetoric, provided several new insights into its literary construction and unity, demonstrating the use of particular techniques for influential communication. He identified "Amos's main concern [as] the recognition that God reveals himself not only in matters of success but also in terms of sins and punishment".⁷ Jeremias likewise shows that the notion of "Yahweh's pqd" connects the elements of the chapter.⁸

⁴For example the collection of papers from "The Bible and Contemporary Literary Theory" conference (Georgetown University, 1989), whose editors use "coherence" as an organizational schema, however the papers are restricted to narrative texts: J. P. Rosenblatt & J. C. Sitterson (eds.), *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁵Notable exceptions include a chapter, "Hosea: A Poetics of Violence," in H. Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 136-57; D. G. Hagstrom, *The Coherence of the Book of Micah: a Literary Analysis* (SBLDS 89; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1988) and S. D. Snyman, "Cohesion in the Book of Obadiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989) 59-71.

⁶Though the radical scepticism of some recent work on the prophetic books tends in another direction. See the discussion between T. Overholt, G. Auld and R. Carroll *JSOT* 48 (1990) 3-54.

⁷Y. Gitay, "A Study of Amos's Art of Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1-15," *CBQ* 42 (1980) 296.

⁸J. Jeremias, "Amos 3-6: From Oral Word to the Text," *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (eds. G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen & R. R. Wilson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 222-24.

However, there is another message which pervades the chapter as a whole. Gitay and Jeremias both recognized, as others do, that verses 3-8 are concerned with the prophet's authority to transmit his message.⁹ However, neither goes on to explore the relation of this theme to the rest of the chapter. Yet De Waard and Smalley found in it the unifying feature of the larger unit.

They took this larger unit to be 3:3-4:3.¹⁰ They argued that "hear this word" introduces closing rather than opening sections of text. However, their argument is circular. Formulae like "hear this word" occur five times in the book. 3:1 and 4:1 are the object of their discussion; 5:1 & 8:4 are recognized by them as beginning major units, leaving only 7:16 to support their case. There the expression is less similar ("Now therefore hear the word of the LORD" rather than "Hear this word" 3:1; 4:1; 5:1 or "Hear this" 8:4). The construction found at 7:16, עתה followed by שמע, however, is used to follow other material at Is 47:8; Jer 37:20. Thus the traditional view that the formula at 3:1 introduces a section may be maintained.

Formal Features of the Units

VERSES 1-2

That these verses do not form a conclusion for chapters one and two but begin a new unit is evident to most commentators.¹¹ The "heaviness" of v. 1 has also been noticed.¹² The probable origin of this in the text's redaction is not our concern here. Rather, our interest is to seek an explanation in terms of possible rhetorical or cohesive functions of these phenomena in the text as it stands.

⁹Gitay, 294; Jeremias, 222.

¹⁰J. De Waard & W. A. Smalley, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Amos* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1979) 193.

¹¹Those who regard 3:1-2 as a beginning include: S. Amsler, *Osée, Joël, Amos, Abdias, Jonas* (CAT XIa; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982) 185; F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB 24A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1989) xxix, 378; W. R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905) 64; J. H. Hayes, *Amos the Eighth-century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988) 121-22; Jeremias, 223; K. Koch, "Die Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte in der Komposition des Amos-Buches," *ZAW* 85 (1973) 535-36; J. L. Mays, *Amos* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969) 54-55; S. M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991) 100-101; D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (Word; Waco: Word, 1987) 321; H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 175.

¹²Amsler, 185; cf. Hayes, 122; Paul, 100.

The entire first verse forms an introduction prefacing the oracle. The oracle itself begins at לאמר, the formula of quotation, and comprises v. 2. Thus the introduction is longer than the oracle it prefaces. In particular the specification of the “word” is more developed than is normal, the usual formula having simply “this word” or “the word of the LORD”.¹³

Wolff notes that syntax, and choice of vocabulary, place “a strong accent ... on the act of Yahweh's speaking”; citing the choice of דבר rather than the more usual אמר and the cognate accusative construction with the object represented by the relative: את הדבר הזה אשר דבר יהוה: שמעו.¹⁴ Changes of person, “he” to “I”, are not rare in the prophets, and here at least the change promotes the congruence of divine and prophetic words, as “the LORD spoke” becomes “I brought up”.

Verse 1, then, lays stress upon the idea of a message, its receptors (Israelites) and its source (the LORD). It presents the “speaker” as a messenger rather than as source of the message. The receptors are characterized in ways which emphasize their relationship with the source.

Verse 2 is a judgement oracle. Its construction is ironic.¹⁵ The first part contains the reasons for the judgement, and על-כן introduces the certainty of punishment (cf. Hos 4:1-3). Unusually the accusation is found not in the first part, but in the second, together with the punishment. Both are expressed in a brief clause of a verb with its two complements: פקד “to visit”, with על and the pronoun for the ones punished, and the offence itself indicated by the sign of the accusative.

The rhetorical shape of the oracle is thus deformed. Formally, the reason for the judgement is not the “iniquities” of v. 2b but rather the very fact of election v. 2a, which precedes the logical link על-כן.

Although short (some 32 words) this piece exhibits substantial lexical cohesion with the rest of the chapter. Lexical reiteration includes: שמע v. 9, 13; דבר v. 7-8; בני ישראל v. 12 (cf. v. 13 יעקב); עלה v. 5; ארץ מצרים v. 9; אמר v. 9, 11, 12; ידע v. 3, 10; אדמה v. 5; פקד v. 14.

VERSES 3-8

These verses are the unit of the chapter which is most highly cohesive internally. A series of formally similar elements is a highly effective cohesive technique, found frequently in both biblical and other litera-

¹³5:1 is a different case, since there the relative clause is needed to explain why a dirge rather than an oracle follows the formula.

¹⁴Wolff, 176.

¹⁵Cf. Wolff, 102; Paul, 177.

ture.¹⁶ The nine rhetorical questions in these verses produce such textual cohesion.

One verse, 7, stands apart. It contains a negative assertion followed by an exceptive clause, rather than a question followed by such a clause and so is syntactically both similar and different. It is also notably longer than the others of the series. They contain 2-4 words in each of their elements, whereas v. 7 is noticeably longer.¹⁷

The questions are paired in two ways. In terms of syntax:

	3		4b	בלתי אם
	4a		5a	אין לה, אין לו
	6a		6b	אם ... לא
and	8a		8b	מי לא

Verses 5b and 7 stand apart, 5b in its simplicity and 7 (which though not a question, comes within the series) with its complexity.

The lines of vv. 4-8 form pairs also in terms of content (semantic parallelism):

4a and b concern an animal and its prey;

5a and b speak of traps;

6a and b concern the fate of a city;

and 8a and b concern a terrible "voice" and the appropriate response.

Only 3 and 7 are unpaired. Verse 3 may be unpaired due to its place at the beginning of the unit.¹⁸ It may also forge a link with the preceding introduction.¹⁹ For who are the "two" who should "walk together", if not the LORD and the people he has known and chosen of all the families of the earth?²⁰

As well as providing cohesion, these effects in vv. 3-5, serve to "pull" the reader forward (see Table 1). The formal parallelism "leapfrogs" (jumps over one line each time, 3 to 4b, 4a to 5a). This effect is reinforced by certain verbal repetitions and echoes, which also serve to enhance

¹⁶E. C. Traugott & M. C. Pratt, *Linguistics for Students of Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980) 22-23.

¹⁷For the purposes of this article we are, as noted above, not concerned with the question of the historical origin and development of the text. However, note that the originality of v. 7 has more recently been defended by Hayes, 126-27; Andersen and Freedman, 391-93; Paul, 106-8 and cf. the discussion of the issues by Auld (*Amos*, OT Guides, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986) 30-33. Since coherence is necessary to any reasonable text, their arguments for the originality of this material implies that these authors, at least, consider it part of a coherent text.

¹⁸Paul, 106, 109 and cf. the way in which poetry often begins with a single "hemistich".

¹⁹See Gitay, 295.

²⁰But cf. Andersen and Freedman, 384, 394.

Table 1

Note the bracketing of formally similar lines, messenger formulae are boxed and vocabulary concerned with "speech" is in larger bold type.

1	שָׁמְעוּ אַחֲ-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל כָּל-הַמְּשֻׁפָּחָה אֲשֶׁר הִעֲלִיחִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר:	
2	מִכָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה רַק אַחֲכֶם יָדַעְתִּי	
3	אִתְּכֶם עַל-כֵּן אֶפְקֹד עֲלֵיכֶם הַיִּלְכוּ שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּו בְּלַחֵי אִמְנוּעָדוֹ:	
4	וְסָרַף אֵין לוֹ הַיִּשְׂאֵג אֶרְיָה בַּעִיר	
5	בְּלַחֵי אִמְ-לִכְדֹּ: הַיִּתָּן כַּפִּיר קוֹלוֹ מִמַּעַנְחוֹ	
6	וּמִוִּקֶשׁ אֵין גְּלָה וְלִכְוֹד לֹא יִלְפֹד: הַחֲפֵל צְפוֹר עַל-פֶּחַ הָאֶרֶץ הַיַּעֲלֶה-פֶחַ מִנִּי-הָאָדָמָה	
7	וְעַם לֹא יַחְדָּו וַיְהִי לֹא עֲשָׂה: אִמְ-יִתְקַע שׁוֹפֵר בַּעִיר אִמְ-תִּהְיֶה רַעַה בַּעִיר	
8	כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה דְּבָר כִּי אִמְ-גְּלָה סוֹדוֹ אֶל-עַבְדָּיו הַנְּבִיאִים:	
9	מִי לֹא יִיבֵא אֶרְיָה שְׂאֵג אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה דְּבָר	
10	מִי לֹא יִנְבֵּא: הַשְּׁמִיעוּ עַל-אֶרְמְנוֹת בְּאֲשֶׁדוֹד וְעַל-אֶרְמְנוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְרֵאוּ מֵהוֹמַת רַבּוֹת בְּחוּקָה וְעֹשׂוֹקִים בְּקִרְבָּה:	
11	וְלֹא-יָדַעוּ עֲשׂוֹת-נִכְלָהָ לִכְן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה	
12	וְהוֹרֵד מִמֶּנּוּ עֵינַי כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה	
13	מִפִּי הָאָרִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יִצִּיל הָרַעַה	
14	אוּ בְדִל-אֵין שְׁחֵי כְרַעִים	
15	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֵּן יִצְלוּ	
16	בְּפִאֲחַ מִטָּה וּבְדַמְשֶׁק עָרֶשׁ: הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשֶׁמְרוֹן	
17	שָׁמְעוּ וְהַעֲדוּ בְּבֵית יַעֲקֹב נְאֻם-אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת:	
18	פִּשְׁעֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָיו בֵּית-אֵל	
19	וְנִפְלוּ לְאֶרֶץ: וְנִגְדַעוּ קֶרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	
20	עַל-בֵּית הַקִּיץ וְהַכִּיתִי בֵּית-הַחֹרֶף	
21	וְסָכְנוּ בָחַיִם רַבִּים וְאָבְדוּ בְחַיִּי הַשָּׁן	
22	נְאֻם-יְהוָה : ס	

cohesion. The verb at the end of 4bβ *לכד* is repeated in a doubled emphatic construction in 5bβ *ולכוד לא ילכוד*. The other repetitions serve the cohesive function of linking v. 8 to v. 7 and v. 7 to the chain in vv. 3-6. So v. 6bβ ends with the verb *עשה* the first verb of v. 7, and v. 7 ends with *יבא הנביאים* whilst v. 8bβ closes with the verbal form *יבא*.

From v. 6 onwards we are slowed down, for both formal and semantic parallelism are internal to the pair. At v. 6 also, many readers begin to feel unsettled. The second line speaks of evil as coming from God. This notion, though inevitable in monotheist theology, often raises objections and discussion among readers of the text. This disquietude is not dispelled by the complex statement of v. 7, which does not easily “fit”.²¹ Verses 6 and 7, read together, suggest that the message which the prophet will have to announce, may be “evil”.

The use of *שׂא* in v. 8 serves the cohesion of the sub-unit echoing v. 4. The pair in v. 8 again combine formal with thematic parallelism and so once more slow down the reading process. This directs attention to the verse, which in any case is the last of the unit, thus enforcing the notion that, once the LORD has spoken, the one who hears has no choice but to repeat the message.

Verse 6 serves the cohesion of the sub-unit also by acting as a thematic bridge or transition. Renaud has drawn attention to the fact that in the series of questions some (vv. 3-5 and 6b) concern “acting” (*faire*) and others (vv. 6a and 8) “saying” (*dire*).²² These two themes represent the double aspect of the message of this unit. That the action of the LORD may be “evil” is one part of the message. Thus v. 6b is in a way a sub-conclusion. It is paralleled, however, with the first line to introduce the theme of “saying” (v. 6a). This in a sense anticipates the final conclusion (v. 8b) for the prophetic message is also a warning.

Theme	Verses
acting (<i>faire</i>)	3-5
saying (<i>dire</i>)	6a “Is a trumpet blown ...”

²¹This is indicated by the tendency of many commentators to see it as a redactional addition, e.g. J. Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos* (London: SCM, 1987) 58; Amsler, 186-87; Mays, 61-62; Wolff, 180-81; but cf. already Harper, 72-73; and more recently Andersen and Freedman, 391f; E. Hammershaimb, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970) 59-61; Hayes, 126f.; Paul, 106-8; H. Graf Reventlow, *Das Amt des Propheten bei Amos* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 27-30 and see the summary of the arguments in Auld, 30-34.

²²B. Renaud, “Genèse et théologie d’Amos 3, 3-8,” *Melanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M Henri Cazelles* (ed. A Caquot et M Delcor; AOAT 212; Kevelaer: Butzon & Berker, 1981) 353-72.

acting (<i>faire</i>)	6b	“... has done it?”
saying (<i>dire</i>)	7-8	

VERSES 9-15

The material in these verses clearly proclaims punishment. Verse 12 distinguishes itself by its content and begins with a messenger formula. Such a formula also concludes the section (v. 15). These are habitual uses of such formulae. However, elsewhere in this passage, their usage is not normal. As Andersen and Freedman note:

The elaborate proposals in BH³ for trimming the one in v. 13, deleting the one in v. 15, and moving the one in v. 10 into v. 9, as well as dismembering v. 12 and relocating the parts before v. 9 and after v. 13, draw attention to the problems but do not solve them.²³

All in all, there are five such formulae in seven verses. A concentration like this is rare, but not unique, in the prophetic corpus. In the 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah the only comparable concentration is in 52:3-6 (with 4 formulae). Ezekiel with 48 chapters provides an example in 12:21-13:7. Here the theme is prophecy and false prophets. Ezekiel defends himself. In 16 verses there are 11 formulae (3 of which are quotations of the words of the false prophets).²⁴ The book of Haggai also gives an example in 2:1-8, as does its companion Zechariah, where chapter 8 contains 16 formulae in 23 verses. In the MT of Jeremiah (though not in the LXX) the frequent use of these formulae is usual, yet in only three places is there a sequence comparable with our passage: 13:8-14 contains 6 formulae, 23:1-6 has 5 and 29:4-28 (which is concerned with false prophets) contains 15. From this it can be seen how rare are such concentrations in the prophetic corpus and that most are in contexts which suggest that the prophetic word is contentious.

In our text, the placing of these formulae is even more notable than their frequency. The formula נִאֲמַר יְהוָה in v. 10 occurs in the middle of a phrase. In v. 11, there is a second formula, for this same oracle, introducing the judgement. It is separated from the previous one by only half a

²³Andersen and Freedman, 404. Immediately before this statement they have suggested that “There are enough indications, structural and thematic, to encourage the search for some unifying principle”. However they do not appear to have a proposal in this direction. The present paper provides one.

²⁴Following this series, however, the next messenger formula, also in the same unit, does not appear till 13:13.

line. Just a line and a half later comes the formula introducing v. 12. This enlarged formula *נִאֲמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* (v. 13) is unique.²⁵

Clearly these phenomena demand explanation. It is not necessary to propose textual corruption, for which there is little evidence.²⁶ Rather, one can see in this strange usage a deliberately intrusive rhetorical device. The strange positioning and abundance of messenger formulae stress the nature of the prophet's declaration as "message". By their striking use, the speaker points to another as the source of this message.

Lexical Features of the Chapter

It is instructive to consider the vocabulary used in the whole chapter. As Gitay noted, words characterizing speech are frequent in prophetic texts.²⁷ Yet such vocabulary seems particularly frequent here.

To test this impression a list was compiled of words in the semantic field of communication: speaking, hearing, and the like. A provisional list was extended using the lists from Andersen and Forbes.²⁸ In chapter 3 of Amos, communication vocabulary is indeed unusually frequent, as Table 2 indicates.²⁹ These words are roughly twice as frequent in chapter 3 as they are in the rest of Amos or in the prophetic corpus as a whole. Only the common root *אָמַר* is less frequent here. On their own, it is true, these figures would prove little. The sample is small (only 207 words). However, in the light of the analysis presented above, they reinforce the notion

²⁵Though similar but less elongated divine appellations do sometimes occur in messenger formulae. Within Amos the form *נִאֲמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* occurs at 4:5; 8:3 & 9:11, and *נִאֲמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* at 6:8 & 9:11 and similar forms occur at Isa 1:24; 3:15, 19:4; Jer 49:5.

²⁶Pace *BHK*, and to a lesser extent *BHS* and Wolff 190, 199, though he sees one case as a gloss rather than a textual corruption.

²⁷Gitay, 293.

²⁸F. I. Andersen & A. D. Forbes, *The Vocabulary of the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989).

²⁹Figures for the book of Amos and for the prophetic corpus were taken from Andersen and Forbes *Vocabulary* (1989). Figures for chap. 3 were compiled by the author using their word count (207 words), from "'Prose Particle' Counts of the Hebrew Bible". *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. C. L. Meyers & M. O'Connor; Philadelphia: ASOR, 1983) 165-83, with a manual count of the communication words.

There are two doubtful cases, *דָּבַר* in v. 7 where it means perhaps "decision" rather than "word", and *אָזַן* in v. 12 which, though it means "ear", does not overtly at least refer to hearing. The two occurrences of "roar" may also be questioned, as they refer to an animal noise. They are included because in context a message is being transmitted and because in v. 8 (as at 1:2) the LORD's voice is likened to such a roar.

that the chapter as a whole is concerned to transmit a message about messages.

Table 2
The Semantic Field “Speech”

Word:	Amos:		Amos 3:		Amos 1-2 & 4-9:		Prophets:
	No:	Freq:	No:	Freq:	No:	Freq:	Freq:
דבר qal	1	5	0	0	1	5	3
דבר pi	2	10	2	97	0	0	34
דבר (Nn)	9	44	2	97	7	38	54
אמר	52	255	4	193	48	262	191
שמע qal	9	44	2	97	7	38	46
שמע hi	1	5	1	48	0	0	5
שאג	3	15	2	97	1	6	2
קול	3	15	1	48	2	11	24
נבא ni	6	29	1	48	5	27	11
נביא	5	24	1	48	4	21	22
נאם	21	103	3	145	18	98	50
קשב	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
עד	1	5	1	48	0	0	2
אזן	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
אזן (Nn)	1	5	1	48	0	0	9
Totals:	114	559	21	1014	93	508	458

The first of each pair of columns gives the actual number of occurrences, the second the frequency per 10,000 words of text. Note that the frequency of communication words in chap. 3 is twice that of the rest of the book. For the “Later Prophets” as a whole frequencies only are given.

Repetition and Lexical Cohesion

Echoing of words, motifs and themes is an important factor in the cohesion of texts in any culture.³⁰ Repetition is particularly significant in the prophetic corpus. The frequency with which “catch words” or “key words” were seen as an organizational principle, even by scholars who

³⁰Cf. e.g. Grossberg, 9 and Halliday and Hasan, 277-84.

found little other sign of cohesion between units of the text, is an indication of this.³¹

Amos 3 is not untypical in showing some direct repetition but also variations within the reiteration. This begins with the first word. In v. 1 the imperative שמעו marks a prophetic call to listen (*Aufforderung zum Hören*). When the lexeme is repeated at the start of v. 13, however, it is linked with the hiphil imperative העידו: “Hear and testify”, so that there it forms part of the “call to witnesses” in a lawsuit.³² As such it echoes in turn v. 9, where the hiphil imperative of שמעו is used to instruct the prophet to summon the “strongholds” of Ashdod and Egypt as witnesses.

The chapter begins with the words, שמעו ... עליכם בני ישראל (“Hear ... against you, descendants of Israel”), its last section begins והעידו בבית יעקב שמעו (“Hear and bear witness against the family of Jacob”). Thus the imperative “hear!” stands at the beginning and the end of the chapter and in each case the content will concern the descendants of Jacob/Israel.

During the chapter, however, there has been a change of hearer, for at the start Israel is addressed, while at the end the hearers must bear witness against Israel. The change of addressee took place in v. 9 at the beginning of the oracles. The people of Ashdod and the “land of Egypt” were to hear and see the wrong in Samaria. The “land of Egypt”, however, was present already in verse one. For those called to “hear” there were Israelites freed from the “land of Egypt”. In v. 1 as in v. 14 the judgement is the same, the LORD “visits” פקד. There is then a clear closure for the chapter, its last unit opening with echoes of its first. The reversal in the second half of the chapter in the roles of Egypt and Israel is signalled by the use of the imperative of שמעו.

Still in the first verse, the “word” that Israel is called to hear is that “which the LORD has spoken” אשר דבר יהוה. The conclusion of the “disputation speech” in v. 8 also refers to the fact that “the LORD has spoken” יהוה דבר. This echo aids the cohesion of the chapter by linking these two sections.

At a less noticeable level, the bird falling into a snare on the ground of v. 5 (התפל ... הארץ), is echoed by the falling to the ground of the horns of the altar in v. 14 (הפסל ארץ). Also, of course, ארץ מצרים recurs in vv. 1 & 9 but with dramatically changed significance—at the start Egypt is the land

³¹Von Rad was typical of such an approach. See e.g. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962-1965) 2.39-40 cf. Idem. “The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh,” *JSS* 4 (1959) 105 n. 1.

³²G. E. Wright, “The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32,” *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (eds. B. W. Anderson & W. Harrelson; London: SCM, 1962) 52.

The chapter as a whole, then, as well as its parts, is concerned with prophetic messages, and in particular with a prophetic message of evil for Israel.³⁵ Prophetic literature has rhetorical purposes. It seeks to persuade or convince. Amos 3 stresses at every turn that prophetic speech transmits a divine message, that the speaker is messenger. It also warns that the message of the LORD may be, and is in fact, itself a judgement and a warning of punishment to come. The expression and its forms have been chosen and adapted to suit this message.

Not only do the parts of the chapter serve a common rhetorical purpose but linguistic features promote cohesion and so the coherence of these parts. When examined at the level of chapter rather than of paragraph or speech unit, lexical and formal repetition functions both for cohesion and towards rhetorical ends.³⁶

Much work on the poetics of prophetic texts has focussed on the level of line and verse. This article has tried to show that, combining a concern for the rhetorical purpose with an examination of the linguistic cohesion of the text, one can approach the poetics of the prophetic corpus at a larger level than the individual speech unit.

³⁵The concern of this article has been with the relation of form and function in the final form of the text. It argues that the language of the chapter coheres, however, its rhetorical unity has been assumed. The arguments for such unity have been presented by others: Gitay ("Rhetorical Analysis") and from a very different perspective K. Koch and colleagues (*Amos: Untersucht mit den Methoden einer strukturellen Formgeschichte*, [AOAT 30, 3 vols.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976]).

³⁶A category not explicitly treated by Halliday & Hasan, but which resembles what W. Gutwinski calls "enation and agnation" (*Cohesion in Literary Texts: A Study of Some Grammatical and Lexical Features of English Discourse* [The Hague: Mouton, 1976] 75-79).