

Prophetic Warnings on Social Injustice in Amos 8:1-14 and Its Relevance for Contemporary Nigeria

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Publication History

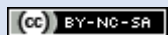
Date received: 30-06-2025

Date accepted: 20-10-2025

Date published: 05-12-2025

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Published by Bibliotheca

Publishers, Sunyani, Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prophetic warnings on social injustice in Amos 8:1–14 and analysed their relevance to the Nigerian context. It addressed the persistence of corruption, inequality, spiritual decline, and religious complacency in Nigeria, which reflected the conditions described in Amos’ prophecy against Israel. The purpose of this study was to interpret the nature of divine judgment in response to societal and spiritual failures, and to relate the message of Amos to Nigeria’s national situation. The study employed the historical-grammatical method, analysing the Hebrew text in its historical and linguistic context to interpret the visions and pronouncements. The main argument is that the sins condemned in Israel, economic exploitation, manipulation of justice, religious formalism, and neglect of God’s word, were present in Nigeria. The vision of the summer fruit signified a completed period of divine patience, while the famine for hearing God’s word pointed to the consequence of prolonged disobedience. The findings showed that these elements of Amos’ message carried implications for Nigeria’s governance, religious institutions, and public ethics. The study emphasises the significance of moral accountability in leadership, the need for reform in religious institutions, the necessity of national repentance, and the incorporation of biblical ethics into public policy. It also highlighted the societal risk of rejecting divine instruction, the economic need for fair practices, and the danger of spiritual decline in future generations. The study concluded that national transformation required a return to ethical conduct, prophetic engagement, and spiritual responsibility. It contributed to biblical theology by connecting ancient prophetic critique to current national challenges through scriptural interpretation.

Keywords: *Social Injustice, Prophetic Judgment, Spiritual Famine, Corruption in Nigeria, Amos 8:1–14, Idolatry, Divine Retribution, Ethical Leadership*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social injustice remains one of the most pressing challenges in contemporary societies, and Nigeria exemplifies this struggle. Despite its vast natural and human resources, the country continues to grapple with systemic corruption, economic inequality, marginalisation of vulnerable groups, and pervasive social inequities. These persistent injustices threaten national cohesion, ethical governance, and sustainable development. Historically, societies confronting moral decay and social oppression have often been confronted by prophetic voices that call for accountability, fairness, and ethical responsibility. The Book of Amos, particularly Amos 8:1–14, represents one such prophetic critique, a piercing condemnation of exploitation, dishonesty, and neglect of the poor. While the passage addresses ancient Israel, its message transcends time, a moral that resonates with contemporary social realities, including those in Nigeria.

Although considerable scholarship exists on Amos, much of it focuses on historical, theological, or literary analysis in isolation from one another. A critical gap remains in studies that directly examine the relevance of Amos 8:1–14 for contemporary social and political contexts, particularly in Nigeria, where structural inequalities mirror the injustices condemned by the prophet. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the text both exegetically and contextually, linking its prophetic warnings to present-day issues of social injustice and governance.

The study is guided by four main objectives: to analyse Amos 8:1–14 for its core warnings on social injustice; to situate these warnings within the socio-historical context of ancient Israel; to identify parallels between these ancient societal flaws and contemporary Nigerian challenges; and to propose lessons that can inform ethical leadership and civic responsibility today. The central research question is: How do the prophetic warnings in Amos 8:1–14 illuminate pathways for addressing social injustice in contemporary Nigeria?

The significance of this study lies in its dual contribution to biblical scholarship and social ethics. It provides a basis for moral reflection, civic engagement, and policy considerations in Nigeria by demonstrating how prophetic critique can inform contemporary social discourse. The study suggests that the moral insights of scripture are not merely historical artefacts but guides for confronting injustice in modern contexts.

The paper is structured into five sections. Following this introduction, the first section offers a detailed exegetical analysis of Amos 8:1–14, its literary structure and thematic focus. The second section examines the nature and forms of social injustice as identified in the text. The third section critically examines the relevance of these warnings to contemporary Nigeria. The fourth section presents findings and discussion, drawing connections between ancient prophetic critique and present realities. The final section concludes with recommendations that aim to promote social justice, ethical governance, and responsible civic engagement, thereby bridging theological with practical societal application.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the historical-grammatical method to investigate Amos 8:1–14 and to relate its prophetic message to the Nigerian context. The historical-grammatical method sought to discover the author's intended meaning by interpreting the biblical text through an analysis of its grammatical features within its historical setting (Kaiser & Silva, 2007; Zuck, 1991). This approach treated the text as a product of a particular time, language, and culture, requiring analysis within its original environment before drawing any theological or ethical conclusions (Pratico & Van Pelt, 2019).

The research began with a grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text of Amos 8:1–14. The analysis focused on the morphology and syntax of the Hebrew language as used in the passage. Each verb form, noun structure, particle, and preposition were examined to determine its grammatical function and contribution to the sentence structure (Brown, Driver, & Briggs, 1906; Holladay, 2000). Specific attention was given to the use of perfect and imperfect verbs, conjunctions, demonstratives, and emphatic constructions. For example, the term “וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ” in verse 1 was analysed as a hiphil perfect

verb, third person masculine singular, with a first-person singular suffix, indicating that God completed a causative action to make the prophet see. The word “קָלִיב קִיץ” (a basket of summer fruit) was analysed to understand its lexical and semantic range within the agricultural and ritual context of ancient Israel (Garrett, 2008). The use of prophetic dialogue in verses 1–2, imperative commands in verse 4, and judicial language in verses 7–10 were examined within their syntactic functions (Hadjiev, 2009).

The study proceeded to a historical analysis. This phase involved reconstructing the historical background of Amos’ prophecy during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah (Hays & Longman, 2010; Hayes, 1988). Primary and secondary sources were consulted to identify political developments, social structures, religious practices, and economic conditions that shaped the northern kingdom in the eighth century BCE. The rise of a wealthy class through trade and exploitation, the displacement of the rural poor, and the neglect of covenantal obligations provided a backdrop for understanding the indictments in the text (Barton, 2012; Andersen & Freedman, 1989). Archaeological evidence from sites such as Samaria and Hazor, as well as Assyrian historical records, was consulted to frame the historical events that aligned with the prophetic announcements.

Following the grammatical and historical investigation, the study conducted a literary analysis of the structure and progression of the oracle. The passage was divided into subunits based on shifts in genre, voice, and theme. The visionary material in verses 1–3 was separated from the indictment oracles in verses 4–6, the judicial pronouncements in verses 7–10, and the announcements of spiritual deprivation in verses 11–14. The literary analysis examined the parallelism, repetition, imagery, and structural coherence across these units (Alter, 2011). Each section was interpreted in light of its placement within the chapter and within the prophetic corpus (Garrett, 2008; Hadjiev, 2009).

The final step involved contextual application. This stage did not treat the text as a direct prophecy about Nigeria but examined the recurring ethical patterns and theological themes found in the passage. The exploitation of the poor, the corruption of economic practices, the misuse of religious institutions, and the silence of divine revelation were evaluated in light of similar patterns observable in Nigerian society. The analysis highlighted the implications of these themes for ethical governance, public accountability, and the role of religious leadership in contemporary Nigeria (Brueggemann, 2019; Folarin & Olanisebe, 2014).

This methodological process maintained a clear distinction between the world of the text and the world of application. The study ensured that any application to Nigeria was based on sustained theological reflection rather than imposed analogies by first anchoring the exegesis in the historical and linguistic setting of the original audience. The historical-grammatical method provided the framework for interpreting the text on its terms and then for drawing conclusions that could speak into present-day contexts shaped by similar moral and social dynamics (Zuck, 1991; Kaiser & Silva, 2007).

3.0 OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa and one of the continent’s largest economies, stands at a crossroads (Umaru 2024, 54). Despite its vast wealth in natural resources, particularly its oil reserves, the country is plagued by deep-rooted socio-economic and political challenges that have stymied its progress and development (Umaru 2024, 54-55). As a result, most of Nigeria’s population grapples with issues that diminish their quality of life and hinder the country’s overall development.

Umaru (2024, 10-11) argues that corruption is arguably Nigeria’s most socio-political issue. Corruption in Nigeria manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and electoral fraud. Public officials often misuse their positions for personal gain, diverting resources intended for public welfare into their own private coffers (Umaru 2024, 11). This diversion of resources has a direct and debilitating impact on Nigeria’s development. Instead, funds that could have been used to build schools, hospitals, and infrastructure are funnelled into private bank accounts, leaving critical sectors underfunded and underserved populations. This erodes public trust in government institutions, creating disconnect between the state and its citizens. This distrust gave rise to apathy and

disengagement from the political process, as citizens became increasingly cynical about the possibility of change.

Moreover, corruption undermines the rule of law, as those with wealth and connections evade justice, further entrenching societal inequality and injustice. The implications of bribery are also evident in Nigeria's electoral process. Electoral fraud, including vote-buying, rigging, and intimidation, has been a persistent issue, undermining the democratic process and the legitimacy of elected officials. When elections are not accessible or fair, the resulting governments lack the mandate or moral authority to govern effectively, leading to poor governance and further entrenchment of corruption. Corruption has also contributed to the rise of insurgency and violence in Nigeria, particularly in regions like the Niger Delta and the Northeast. In the Niger Delta, decades of neglect and exploitation by the government and oil companies have fuelled militancy as local populations demand a fair share of the region's oil wealth. Similarly, in the Northeast, the insurgency led by Boko Haram is partly rooted in grievances over government corruption and the resulting lack of economic opportunities.

Economic inequality is another challenge facing Nigeria. Despite being classified as a middle-income country and one of the largest economies in Africa, Nigeria has one of the highest levels of income inequality globally. This disparity is evident in the stark contrast between the wealthy elite and the vast majority of the population, many of whom live in poverty (Boone 2017, 276-293). The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has created a situation in which the rich continue to accumulate wealth, while the poor struggle to make ends meet. This inequality is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where poverty rates are higher than in urban centres. In these areas, access to essential services such as clean water, healthcare, and education is limited, further entrenching the cycle of poverty (Smith, 2007). This contributes to social unrest and instability, as those marginalised and excluded from the benefits of economic growth become disillusioned with the system. This disillusionment leads to increased crime, as individuals resort to illegal activities to survive, and to political violence, as groups seek to challenge the status quo.

Despite Nigeria's vast natural resources and economic potential, poverty remains a persistent challenge. According to the World Bank, over 40% of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line, surviving on less than \$1.90 a day. The high unemployment rate, particularly among young people, contributes to Nigeria's poverty (Umaru 2024, 54-55). With a youth unemployment rate of over 50%, many young Nigerians are unable to find jobs, forcing them into low-paying, informal work or driving them to engage in criminal activities. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of a social safety net, as government support for the unemployed is minimal, leaving many to fend for themselves in a challenging economic environment (Umaru, 2024, p. 55). The country's overdependence on oil also exacerbates poverty in Nigeria. While oil revenue accounts for a portion of the government's income, it has not translated into broad-based economic development. Instead, the reliance on oil has led to the neglect of other sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, which have the potential to provide jobs and reduce poverty (Umaru 2023, 102-3). This overreliance on oil has also made Nigeria vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, which have devastating effects on the economy and increase poverty levels.

Nigeria is also facing a decline in moral and ethical standards, which is evident in both public life and within society. The decline in moral and ethical standards is reflected in the widespread acceptance of corrupt practices as a norm. In many cases, individuals who engage in corruption or other unethical behaviours are tolerated and celebrated, mainly if they are successful in amassing wealth or gaining power. This has led to a situation where ethical behaviour is seen as a hindrance to success rather than a virtue to be upheld. The erosion of moral and ethical values is also evident in Nigerian society's increasing materialism and consumerism. Pursuing wealth and material possessions has become dominant at the expense of traditional values such as community, solidarity, and mutual respect. This value shift has had a detrimental impact on social cohesion, as individuals are increasingly focused on personal gain rather than the collective good.

Religious institutions, which traditionally played a role in promoting ethical behaviour and moral values, have also been affected by this decline. In many cases, religious leaders have become complicit in pursuing wealth and power, using their positions to accumulate personal fortunes rather than serving their institutions. This has led to a loss of credibility and influence for religious institutions, as they are seen as part of the problem rather than a solution to the country's moral and ethical challenges. The decline in moral and ethical standards has also contributed to the weakening of the rule of law and erosion of social trust. When unethical behaviour is tolerated or rewarded, it undermines the principles of justice and fairness, leading to a breakdown in the social contract. This hinders the effective functioning of institutions and the ability to implement policies that promote social and economic progress.

Nigeria is experiencing a decline in moral and ethical standards in public life. This decline is primarily due to the widespread acceptance of corrupt practices, which are often celebrated for their success in terms of wealth or power. This has led to ethical behaviour being seen as a hindrance to success rather than a virtue to be upheld. The erosion of moral and ethical values is also evident in Nigerian society's increasing materialism and consumerism. This shift has had a negative impact on social cohesion, as individuals prioritise personal gain over the collective good. Religious institutions, which traditionally promoted ethical behaviour, have also been affected by this decline. Religious leaders have become complicit in pursuing wealth and power, losing credibility and influence. This has led to the weakening of the rule of law and the erosion of social trust. Unethical behaviour is tolerated or rewarded, undermining the principles of justice and fairness, leading to a breakdown in the social contract and hindering the effective functioning of institutions and the implementation of policies promoting social and economic progress.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF AMOS

The prevailing view among scholars has long been that the prophet Amos was the author of the Book. This claim is mainly based on the clear attribution to Amos as the author, which can be seen in 1:1. Boaheng (2024, 8) argues that "Amos' prophetic ministry was first to be documented in a separate book named after a prophet." The topic, organisation and stylistic components of Amos closely correspond with the socio-political milieu of the eighth century. His personality was described differently by different scholars: a representative of the Northern government (Rosenbaum 1990, 73-84), a Judean nationalist (Sweeney 2000, 193-195, 200), a person with an interest in a particular historical period and contemporary political events (Hayes 1988, 38-39), a cultic prophet (Schart 2000, 34-48), a preacher of the covenant (Stuart 1992, 316-324), and so on. Boice (2007, 162) further supports the conventional acceptance that Amos is the first of the literary prophets whose authorship is still uncontested in terms of chronology. These conventional perspectives on first-person oracles within the text are typically associated with the author, alongside a third-person narrator or eyewitness accounts (Longman III and Dillard 2006, 426). Andersen and Freedman believe that Amos' ministry went through three phases: (i) calling Israel to repent (chs 5-6 and the first two visions in 7:1-6); (ii) announcement of inevitable judgment after the call was not heeded (chs 3-4; 1-2 and the subsequent two visions in 7:7-9; 8:1-3); (iii) judgment on the leadership (8:3-14 and the fifth vision in 9:1-6) (1989, 5-9; 83-88; 360-369, 590-608).

Amos is believed to have delivered his messages during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah around 760 BC (Payne 1991, 412). The prosperity and expansive political and commercial activities of the time support this date. An earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:2, archaeological findings at Hazor and Samaria, and a solar eclipse in Amos 8:9 also support the date, with historical calculations placing a solar eclipse in Israel on June 15, 763 BC. Alternative dating suggests 765-755 BC or 745 BC, while Strijdom advocates for a date closer to 738 BC, citing references to Gath in Amos 6:2 and Uzziah's death between 742 and 736 BC (Radine 2010, 54-60).

4.1 Historical Setting

According to Hays and Longman III (2010, 306), “Amos provides a specific historical setting for his prophetic words. Amos 1:1 dates his prophecy to the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah (783 – 742 BC), and Jeroboam II of Israel (786 – 746 BC).” During Amos’ era, which spanned from the 9th to the 8th century BC, the Kingdom of Israel existed as a buffer state between powers in the Middle East. Before Jeroboam’s ascension, Assyrian King Adad-Nirari III had already subdued Syria, the northern neighbour of Samaria. This circumstance allowed Jeroboam II to expand his territory and a merchant class in Samaria. This period marked a golden age for Israel and Judah, with political expansion and economic prosperity. This was a season as described by Lunn and Bandstra to be:

A pattern of land accumulation, along with the growth of urban centres and militarisation, allows elites to extract surpluses from the peasantry. This enables the upper classes to live lives of luxury and leisure while the peasants have less basic food items to consume. Trade increases but the traded goods are those wanted by the elites. In some bad years, peasants take on debt and end up enslaved (2019, 8).

The prosperity came at the expense of the marginalised, as wealth became concentrated in the hands of merchant elites while leaving the poor neglected. Archaeological findings in Palestine show the pervasive influence of corrupt religious practices that exacerbated moral decay among the Israelites (Lunn and Bandstra 2019, 12-13). Amos was known for his familiarity with the rural settings and agricultural imagery of the Dead Sea. He criticised oppression, perversion of justice, materialism, social inequality, sexual immorality, and hypocritical worship in a society marked by oppression and social inequality. His occupation as a herdsman and caretaker of sycamore-fig trees suggests extensive travels (Hadjiev 2009, 3-9). According to Rathbone (2020, 6), Amos distinguishes himself as:

Corruption is also related to the failure of professional prophets to rebuke the king, likely due to fear of losing privilege and power. Therefore, Amos, a herdsman from Judah and an outsider not influenced by the corrupt practices in Israel is the most appropriate person to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel. Hence, the clash between Amos and Amaziah in 7:10–17 is of critical importance, because it highlights the critique of corrupt leadership that swept through the northern kingdom during the time of Jeroboam ben Joash (Jeroboam III, 793–753 BCE).

Amos denounced corruption, dishonesty, cruelty, exploitation, oppression, and injustice prevalent in society, tirelessly advocating for righteousness and accountability (Johnston 2006, 131).

5.0 EXEGESIS OF AMOS 8:1-14

This section provides a detailed exegesis of Amos 8:1–14, a passage that presents a vivid prophetic denunciation of Israel’s social, economic, and spiritual corruption. Through a symbolic vision and a series of divine pronouncements, the text reveals God’s impending judgment upon a society marked by exploitation, religious hypocrisy, and moral decay. The analysis examines the literary structure, historical context, and theological significance of each segment of the passage, aiming to uncover the depth of Amos’ message and its relevance. This exegetical study forms the foundation for applying the prophetic warnings to contemporary Nigerian society.

4.2.1 Introduction of Symbolic Vision (Verses 1-3) ¹

- [1] כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה וְהִנֵּה קְלֹיב קִינִי:
[2] וַיֹּאמֶר מִה־אַתָּה רֹאֵל עֲמוֹס וְאֹמֶר קְלֹיב קִינִי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי בָּא הַקֶּזַּן אֶל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אֲסִיף עוֹד עֲבֹר לָךְ:
[3] וְהִילֵּילוּ שִׁירֹת הַיָּכֹל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֹאֵם אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה רַב הַפֶּגֶר בְּכָל־מִקְוֹם הַשְּׂלִיד הָסָּ: פ

¹ All translations are mine

1. Thus the Lord God caused me to see and behold! a basket of summer fruit.
2. Then He said, “Amos, what do you see?” Then I said, “a basket of summer fruit”. Then the Lord said to me, “The end came to my people, Israel; I will not cause to increase to pass over to them continually.
3. Then they will cause the singers of the temple to wail in that day, says the Lord God; the carcass shall be many in all of the place you were caused to cast out silence!

The introduction of the pericope with the adverb particle ,77 meaning “thus,” indicates the beginning of a new declaration. The chapter opens with a brief narrative describing a “sight” revealed to Amos by God. The use of 777, 777 translated as “Lord God,” signifies that Amos was in communication with a higher authority. Also, the phrase 777, a verb in the hiphil perfect third person masculine singular form, suffixed with the first familiar singular, is derived from the root ha’r, meaning “he saw,” and indicates that God was the agent causing Amos to see. This action represents a completed vision shown to Amos (Hadjiev 2009, 98-99). Visions serve as audiovisual means of communication between heavenly beings and earthly recipients. This particular vision can be characterised as an open vision, as evidenced by Amos’s engagement of his physical senses and mental faculties in sight and speech. God inspired Amos to perceive something beyond ordinary sight, marking it as a unique and divinely inspired experience. The phrase 777 “and behold” indicates that Amos was actively engaged and captivated by the imagery of the summer fruit. The vision’s content includes a basket and summer fruit.

A basket of summer fruit serves as a symbolic representation. Fuhr Jr. and Yates (2016, 134) believe that “...the Lord explains the meaning of the vision, again alluding to Passover symbolism (7:8; 8:2). The finality of the decision for judgment, the summer fruit (over-ripe fruit) symbolised that an end had come upon Israel; judgment was now inevitable (8:2).” In ancient Israelite culture, a basket was used as an offering brought to Bethel during the autumn festival, marking the conclusion of the agricultural year. During this festival, worshippers celebrated the arrival of a new year and sought blessings and prosperity through their rituals. The reference to 777 777: “summer fruit” signifies the culmination of the agricultural cycle. This period was characterised by heat and dryness, which accelerated the ripening of harvested fruits, making them prone to spoilage if not consumed promptly. It is logical to store such summer fruits, which spoil quickly, in containers that allow for aeration, such as a basket. The ripe fruit depicted in the vision signifies the urgency of gathering it promptly. Although the Lord communicated with Amos through a vision, the illustration can be understood in clear and identifiable terms, reflecting ancient Israel’s agricultural and ritual practices.

In Verse 2, the use of the waw consecutive on the imperfect verb 777 “he will say” indicates a sequential action following another phrase in the sentence (e.g., “Then I said”), establishing the action as completed (Ellis 2006, 162). Amos was asked to confirm whether he had seen what God showed him, to which he replied affirmatively. He saw clearly what he was caused to see, and his response was accurate.

The significance of God’s inquiry lies in Amos correctly perceiving the intended message. When the Lord declared to Amos that “the end has come upon my people Israel,” it signified that judgment was imminent due to Israel’s wickedness (Radmacher, Allen, and House 2004, 625). This message is conveyed through wordplay with the term 777 777: “summer fruit”, that the consequences of Israel’s spiritual and moral failures had reached a critical point. The pun contrasts the Israelites’ expectations of a new beginning with the fall harvest and God’s declaration that the end had arrived (Wintle 2015, 1149). This represents a stark juxtaposition of outcomes, indicating that judgment was inevitable. The perfect verb suggests that the end has already come, with the Hebrew concept of time, which focuses on the content or events within time rather than linear progression. Using a cohortative verb in the hiphil stem with a negation emphasises God’s resolve not to relent in administering judgment. Just as ripe fruit is due for consumption, the Israelites were ripe for judgment, and God

would not turn away from executing it. This is the culmination of God's patience and the certainty of impending judgment upon Israel.

The word ך "then" in verse 3 indicates the continuation of the pronouncement from the previous verse. The sin of the people will result in a stark reversal of their circumstances, turning songs of joy and celebration sung by the singers into wailing and lamentation. This wailing is described as an inarticulate, shattering scream typically associated with primitive funeral laments or sudden catastrophes. The phrase מִכֵּן "in that day" refers to a specific day of judgment, the impending consequences of the people's sin. The imagery of carcasses scattered throughout the land emphasises the scale of the devastation. Dead bodies left unburied symbolise the widespread destruction that will occur, extending beyond the leaders to affect the entire nation. The mention of קֵן "silence" is the severity of the divine judgment. This silence is not merely an absence of noise but carries a weighty significance, serving as an admonition to bow before the overwhelming severity of God's judgment. It serves as a warning against invoking the name of Yahweh during such a time of judgment, suggesting a solemn recognition of the gravity of the situation. This oppressive silence reflects the impact of the calamity and the need for humility in the face of divine retribution (Barrera, 2013).

5.1 Condemnation of Social Injustice (Verses 4-6)

[4] שְׁמַעוּ-זֶאת הַשְׁאֲפִים אֲכִילִין וְלִשְׁכִּית עֲנִי-אֶרֶץ:

[5] לְאֹמֶר מָה־יַּעֲבֹר הַחֹדֶשׁ וְנִשְׁבְּרָה נֶשֶׁךְ וְהַשָּׁבֶת וְנִפְתָּחָה-בָּרֶךְ לְהַקְטִין אִפְּהָ וּלְהַגְדִּיל שֶׁקֶל וְלַעֲוֹת מֵאֲזַנֵּי מֶרְקָה:

[6] לִקְנוֹת בַּכֶּסֶף דָּלִים וְאֲכִילִין בַּעֲבֹר נַעֲלִים וּמִכָּל בָּרֶךְ נִשְׁבְּרִי:

4. Hear this, the ones trampling the needy, to make the poor of the land cease.
5. Saying, when will the new moon pass over, and we will cause to sell grain? And the Sabbath, and let us open grain to cause ephah to decrease and to increase shekel and to deceitfully falsify scales indiscriminately.
6. To buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and we will cause to sell chaff of grain.

The phrase שְׁמַעוּ-זֶאת "Hear this" in verse 4 is a verb in the *qal* imperative masculine plural form derived from שָׁמַע "he heard" that marks the beginning of an exhortation or accusation. It is a direct command directed towards the audience, urging them to follow the message. In this context, it is an accusation against those who perpetuate social injustice. "The ones trampling" refers to those who subject the less privileged members of society to harsh and unjust treatment (Hadjiev 2009, 98). They are depicted as pursuing the poor, intending to destroy them, akin to how a beast preys on its victims. The expression "to cause to cease the poor of the land" suggests the intention of those who trample upon the poor. They aim to eliminate the destitute from society by impoverishing them and driving them away to be subject to foreign masters. This is the ruthless exploitation and oppression faced by the vulnerable members of society at the hands of the powerful and wealthy (Radine 2010, 170-172).

The phrase וְנִפְתָּחָה "to open grain" in verse 5 is a prepositional infinitive phrase introducing a conjunction (Price 2016, 180). The *qal* stem conveys the notion of boasting or taking pride in an action. The continuous tense of the sentence suggests that this behaviour was recurrent, indicating that the merchants took pride in it. Despite outwardly closing their shops to observe the New Moon and Sabbath ordinances, the merchants' attitude towards worship was misguided. They regarded these religious festivals as nuisances because they interfered with their commercial activities, prioritising profit-making (Adeyemo 2006, 1039). The New Moon celebration, occurring on the first day of every month, was not as prominent as the Sabbath but was regarded as a family celebration and a reminder of God's creation of an orderly world. It involved unique offerings and served as a means of predicting Hebrew months based on the appearance of the crescent moon (Gambo et al., 9). Similar to the Sabbath, no work was to be done during the observance of the New Moon. However, the merchants saw these religious observances as inconveniences that disrupted their business operations,

demonstrating their misplaced priorities and disregard for spiritual matters in favour of financial gain. In Israel, commercial activity was strictly forbidden on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

Despite outwardly observing religious practices, the merchants prioritised profit over genuine worship. They engaged in fraudulent practices, exploiting the poor for financial gain. These merchants perpetrate three specific injustices. Firstly, they would “cause to decrease the ephah,” a standard dry measure unit equivalent to a half bushel. Using containers that held less than the full measure, they cheated their customers by providing less product than advertised. This practice, known as “skimping the measure,” allowed them to profit at the expense of their customers. Secondly, they would “increase the shekel,” a standard weight used for measuring silver. Using an enlarged shekel on the scale, they manipulated transactions so that customers paid more than they should have for their purchases. This deceptive practice allowed them to profit unjustly from their customers’ ignorance. Finally, they would “falsify scales indiscriminately,” tampering with the balance beam to manipulate weights and measures. This deceitful behaviour resulted in unfair transactions where customers paid more for lower-quality goods or received less than they bargained for. They exploited the poor and vulnerable for their gain, disregarding God’s commandment to maintain honest and accurate weights and measures (Deuteronomy 25:13-15). In summary, the merchants in Israel engaged in systematic exploitation and fraud, exploiting loopholes in measurement systems to deceive their customers and maximise their profits. Their actions violated God’s commandments and demonstrated a disregard for justice and righteousness (Chaney 2014, 34–60; LeCureux 2012, 147-150).

In addition to profiting from deceptive buying and selling practices, the merchants in Israel also engaged in exploitative behaviour by seizing the properties of the poor as payment for debts. Even trivial amounts, such as the price of a pair of sandals or a small bribe, were used as pretexts to seize assets from the impoverished. This practice reflected not the value of the debt owed but rather the corruption of the judges who allowed such injustices to occur. By selling off the possessions of the poor, the judges effectively treated the righteous as commodities to be traded (Folarin and Olanisebe 2014, 252). Furthermore, the poor were dehumanised and commodified, reduced to mere objects for profit rather than being treated as individuals with dignity. They were exploited for the highest possible gain, akin to selling grain at a profit. In the description by Fuhr, Jr. and Yates (2016, 135):

Their crimes in the marketplace were not limited to grain and wheat. In Amos 2:6, Israel is guilty of “sell[ing] the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals” (NKJV). Now Amos completes the cycle, describing the desire of these corrupt merchants: “We can buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals” (8:6). Those who were in the business of buying and selling marketplace goods were now in the business of buying and selling humans. Ironically, those who led the poor into the desperate straits of slavery would close the deal through the financial transaction of buying and selling those same people.

Even the chaff, the worthless residue left after winnowing wheat, was sold off to the desperately poor, illustrating the merchants’ ruthless pursuit of profit at any cost. The merchants “pushed” or “compelled themselves” to sell even the refuse of grain, demonstrating their relentless drive to extract profit from every possible source, regardless of the ethical implications or the harm inflicted upon the vulnerable. This exploitation and mistreatment of the poor reveal the depth of moral corruption and social injustice prevalent in Israel during that time (Timmer, 2015).

5.2 Announcement of Divine Judgment (Verses 7-10)

[7] נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה בְּגִזְיוֹן יַעֲקֹב אִם-אֲשַׁכַּח לְגִזְזָה כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
[8] הֲעַל זֹאת לֹא-תִרְגַּז הָאָרֶץ וְאָבֵל כָּל-יְיֹשְׁבֵיהָ וְעַלְתָּהּ כָּאֵל כֻּלָּהּ
וְנִגְרָשָׁה וְנִשְׁקָה כִּי-אִשׁ מִצָּרִים: 8
[9] וְהִנֵּה 1 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהִבֵּאתִי הַשָּׁמַשׁ בְּצַהָרֵיהֶם וְהַחֹשׁ כְּתִי לְאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם אִוֵּר:
[10] וְהִפְכֵתִי חֲגִילָם לְאָבֵל וְכָל-שִׁירֵיהֶם לְקִינָה וְהַעֲלֵיתִי עַל-כָּל-מִתְנַגְּלִים שֶׁקֶ וְעַל-כָּל-רָאשׁ קִרְחָה וְשִׁמְתִּיהֶם כְּאָבֵל יְחִיד וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא:

7. The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “I will never, never forget all of their deeds.
8. Will not the land tremble upon this, and all mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and then she will be driven out and then subside, like the Nile of Egypt?
9. Then it will come to pass in that day, says the Lord God, then I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and then I will cause to darken the earth in daylight.
10. Then I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all of your songs into lamentation; Then I will cause to bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; then I will set it like the mourning for a beloved, and its end like a bitter day.

The word *נִשְׁפָּן* is a Verb *Niphal* perfect third person masculine singular derived from the root word *נִשַּׁן*, which means “he swore” or “take an oath.” Therefore, *נִשְׁפָּן* means “he was sworn.” The phrase “Pride of Jacob” is notable because God typically does not swear by somebody or something. However, in this context, “Pride of Jacob” signifies the presence of God among the Israelites, established through His covenant with Jacob (Israel). It could also represent the Lord as the Glory of Israel among the descendants of Jacob (1 Sam 15:29). Alternatively, it implies that the children of Israel had become so consistently wicked that God could swear by their settled condition of overestimating themselves (cf. 6:8) (Watts 1997, 74-75; Hayes 1988, 209; Coggins 2000, 147-151). Assyria did not determine Israel’s fate, but God Himself did. When God declares, “Surely I will never forget all of their deeds,” it is an intense and emphatic statement indicating the irrevocability of the impending judgment. “Their deeds” encompass the economic injustices Amos spoke against in verses four to six, as well as other sins, including unfaithfulness. By disregarding or leaving such sins unpunished, God would effectively deny His glory in Israel. This declaration shows the severity of the judgment that Israel will face due to their persistent transgressions (Mendenhall, 2001).

This passage refers to the consequences of God’s oath. God will cause them to shiver under Assyrian oppression, mourn for their losses and sufferings caused by it. “Will not” emphasises that such actions cannot go unpunished. There will be universal anguish and despair, symbolised by an earthquake that will sweep through the land. The expression *וְכָל־יֹשֵׁב בָּהֶן יִנְדֹּן* “and everyone mourns who dwells in it” indicates that the judgment resulting in mourning will affect all the land’s inhabitants, including the oppressors and the oppressed (King 2021, 101-109).

The imagery of the whole land being driven out and subsiding like the Nile of Egypt vividly describes God’s intended judgment, with a parallel between the river Nile and God’s judgment, its severity and inevitability. The judgment will resemble the turmoil, trouble, and calamity caused by the flooding of the river Nile when it overflows its banks. Everything will work against them, and their ruin will rise like the river Nile, causing the land to be driven out and subside, similar to the Nile of Egypt. When the Assyrians flood Israel, there will be mourning and trembling. The Assyrian flood is likened to the Nile River, which has a history of severe flooding and drought (Barton 2012, 13-14). Amos envisioned the destructive impact of social injustice, economic exploitation, and religious shallowness in Israel comparable to the Nile’s inundation (Podany, 2010).

The word *נִשְׁפָּן* is a *qal* perfect verb with a verb consecutive from the root *נִשַּׁן*, meaning “he was, he existed,” indicating that the judgment is already completed. This usage can be referred to as a “prophetic perfect statement.” The phrase *בְּיִמֵּי*, translated as “in that day,” conveys definiteness, specifically referring to a point in time. The expression *וְהָיָה* consists of a Waw consecutive prefix meaning “and, then” attached to the *hiphil* perfect first person common singular verb from the root *נָזַח* meaning “he came in, he went down.” Additionally, *וְהָיָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּנוֹן* refers to the sun at noon. The phrase is a paradoxical juxtaposition of ideas that refers to the unexpected and contradictory nature of the statement. God Himself made the declaration, adding weight to its significance. The reference to noon, the sun’s highest position in the sky, typically signifies brightness and clarity. However, in this context, it symbolises a sudden and unexpected event—the sun’s setting at its zenith, disrupting natural processes and causing darkness during daylight hours. This imagery is interpreted

as a sign of divine judgment, exemplified by an eclipse in 763 BC, which Amos adopted as a symbol of impending doom for Israel. It represents the abrupt and tragic end of Israel's prosperity and glory, signifying a premature and unexpected downfall (Barton 2012, 189). The phrase "Then I will cause to darken the earth in daylight" is the unpredictable and dramatic nature of the judgment. Despite the brightness of the day, God's intervention will bring darkness and despair, the suddenness and severity of the impending judgment. This imagery warns that even in times of prosperity and comfort, divine judgment comes swiftly and unexpectedly, signifying the importance of repentance and righteousness before the day of reckoning arrives (Agboluaje, 2007, 177-178).

This verse is characterised by concise poetic parallelism and an ironic litany of reversals. "Then I will turn your feasts into mourning" signifies a drastic transformation orchestrated by God Himself. Festivals, traditionally occasions of joy and celebration, will be transformed into sombre events marked by mourning and lamentation. The plural reference to "feasts" suggests that all aspects of their celebratory life will be affected by this judgment. The phrase "I will cause to bring up Sackcloth upon all loins and baldness upon every head" further emphasises the extent of the mourning. A sackcloth, a rough and uncomfortable garment, is traditionally worn as a sign of mourning or as a symbol of distress. Baldness, a symbol of shame or mourning in ancient cultures, will be widespread, indicating the depth of sorrow and lamentation that will envelop the people. Overall, this verse depicts a complete reversal of fortunes, with joy and celebration giving way to mourning and distress, all orchestrated by God's hand as a consequence of the people's actions.

The disasters will be so widespread that everyone will be compelled to wear sackcloths, symbolising collective mourning and grief. This act signifies that any offspring or productivity that emerges from their endeavours will bring only sorrow and lamentation rather than joy and prosperity. The wearing of sackcloth also reflects mourning for the loss of fertility and productivity, as represented by the loins. Additionally, the shaving of the head, another symbol of mourning, will be a common practice among the people. This act signifies the impending grief and distress that will befall them. In this context, baldness symbolises unproductivity and fruitless efforts in their lives (Thang, 2014). The mourning described here is intense, akin to the mourning for a beloved individual. This mourning will be characterised by hair pulling and expressions of deep sorrow, reminiscent of the mourning practices described in other biblical passages. The loss experienced will be akin to the death of a beloved family member or cherished individual, signifying the extinguishing of hope for the future and the loss of provision for one's old age (Folarin and Olanisebe 2014, 243-261). The day of mourning described here will be bitter and sorrowful, with no relief or reprieve in sight. It represents a physical and irreparable loss that affects the people and their prospects (Timmer, 2015).

5.3 Futile Search for Spiritual Guidance (Verses 11-12)

[11] הִנֵּה / יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֵם אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ לֶחֶם וְלֹא-צָמָא לָמִים כִּי אִם-לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶת דְּבַרִּי יְהוָה:

[12] וְנָעוּ מִיָּם עַד-יָם וּמִצָּפוֹן וְעַד-מִזְרָח יִשְׁוֹטְטוּ לְבָבָם אֶת-דְּבַר־יְהוָה וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּ:

11. Behold! The days are coming, says the Lord God, then I will cause to send out a famine in the land; not a famine regarding bread, and not a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

12. Then they will wander from sea to sea, and from North to east; they will run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, and they will not find it.

הִנֵּה / יָמִים בָּאִים signifies a solemn and essential declaration, indicating the impending arrival of events. "Behold" is used to draw attention to crucial prophecies or announcements. בְּאֶרֶץ רָעָב וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי describes a completed action in the past, using the *hiphil* וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי perfect form of the verb שָׁלַח "to send out." The perfect tense emphasises the certainty of the future event. The subsequent consecutive use of the waw indicates a logical sequence of ideas following the previous clause.

God's threat of famine represents a general judgment of spiritual deprivation that will affect the entire land. This famine will not be one of physical sustenance, such as bread and water, but rather a lack of spiritual nourishment, specifically a scarcity of hearing the words of the Lord. The phrase כִּי

ⲫⲁ “but of” introduces an adversative thought, contrasting physical and spiritual hunger. The famine will result in a scarcity of divine revelation, where the word of the Lord will become precious and scarce. This scarcity of divine guidance will lead to a lack of vision and understanding, as seen in 1 Samuel 3:1, where there is no frequent vision in the land. Despite having access to the written word, such as the Scriptures, there will still be a need for more individuals who effectively interpret and communicate its teachings (Jahn 1985, 3). This demonstrates God’s deep displeasure and judgment upon the people, their spiritual destitution and their need for divine guidance.

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־לֹא־יִשְׁׁמְרוּן־לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי־בָבֶלֶל וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־לֹא־יִשְׁׁמְרוּן־לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי־בָבֶלֶל depicts a frantic, aimless movement by using the perfect tense in the Hebrew verb. This wandering will extend from one end of the land to the other, from the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias) to the Mediterranean Sea (the Great Sea), encompassing the entirety of the land of Israel. Some scholars suggest that this wandering also extends beyond the borders of Israel, encompassing the entire Assyrian empire. The people will search desperately, not limited to their land but extending their quest to neighbouring regions, hoping to find prophets or receive messages from God. Their frantic search reflects their desperation and longing for divine guidance. They will traverse the land in search of prophets, seeking any word or prophecy from God. However, despite their efforts, they will not find what they seek. This represents poetic justice—despite their desire for divine revelation, it will be withheld from them. The imagery of futile wandering emphasises the severity of God’s judgment and the consequences of spiritual famine. Despite their efforts to seek the word of the Lord, they will be left empty-handed, the consequences of their rejection of God’s guidance and disobedience to his commands (Constable, <http://www.ccbiblestudy.org>).

5.4 Ultimate Judgment Against Idolatry (Verses 13-14)

[13] בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא תָּתַעַלְפָנָה הַבְּתוּלָת הַיָּפֹת וְהַבְּחוּרִים בַּצָּמָא:

[14] הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּאִשְׁמַת שְׁמִרֹן וְאָמְרוּ חַי אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֵן וְחַי דְּרָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ־שִׁבְעָה וְנִפְלוּ וְלֹא־יָקוּמוּ עוֹד: ס

13. In that day the fair virgins and the young men will veil themselves by thirst.

14. Those who swear by sin of Samaria, then they will say, ‘your god is alive, O Dan,’ and ‘the way of Beer-sheba is alive,’ then they will fall, and they will never rise again.”

In the famine of God's words, the fair virgins and the young men will veil themselves, indicating a state of intense thirst and desperation. This image serves as a *fortiori* statement, drawing on the preceding description of wandering and emphasising the severity of the famine. The verb וַיִּכְסֶּה is in the hitpael stem, metaphorically implying fainting or exhaustion. This suggests that even those who should have been able to withstand the famine with their strength and vitality—the fair virgins and the young men—will succumb to distress and weariness. The act of veiling themselves symbolises their desperation and sorrow in the face of extreme thirst. It is the intensity of the famine and the dire consequences it brings upon even the young and seemingly resilient members of society.

הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּאִשְׁמֹת שֶׁמֶרֶץ refers to individuals who pledge oaths by the idolatrous practices associated with Baal worship in Samaria. This oath is a derogatory reference to the bull image of Yahweh, indicating a departure from true worship (Hosea 8:5ff). Similarly, “thy god, O Dan” alludes to the golden calf or ox, which symbolised the Egyptian god Apis or Osiris and was worshipped in the city of Dan. This idolatrous worship in Dan represents a departure from the worship of Yahweh. The phrase וַתֵּן דָּן בְּדֶרֶךְ בִּירְשֶׁבָע “as the way of Beer-Sheba lives” signifies swearing by false gods, using place names to localise deities. This practice extends from Dan in the North to Beersheba in the South, representing the entire land. It indicates widespread idolatry throughout Israel (Clarke, <http://ccbiblestudy.net>). The declaration “they will fall, and they will never rise again” signifies divine judgment and the downfall of those who mock God. The prophetic perfect tense indicates the certainty of their fate (Shepherd, 2018). Their reliance on false gods will prove futile, leading to their permanent demise. However, this prophecy excludes those who repent and return to true worship, as other prophecies speak of Israel’s restoration.

6.0 INFERENCES FROM AMOS 8:1-14 AND THEIR APPLICATION TO CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Amos 8:1-14 presents a series of prophetic warnings directed at Israel for their social injustices, spiritual complacency, and the consequences of neglecting divine guidance and justice, resulting in a literal and spiritual famine. Applying these lessons to contemporary Nigeria, addressing social inequalities, promoting genuine spiritual revival, and adhering to God's principles to avoid similar judgment and societal unrest, serves as a moral and spiritual compass for Nigeria today.

6.1 God's Communication and Sensitivity to His Message (Amos 8:1-6)

The imagery of a basket of summer fruit signifies impending judgment, that the Israelites' actions had reached a critical point for divine retribution. This metaphor is particularly poignant as it illustrates the ripeness of their sins and the inevitability of God's judgment. The merchants' disregard for sacred observances, such as the New Moon and Sabbath, reflects a broader societal erosion of spiritual values, favouring materialistic pursuits. The society was more concerned with economic gain than spiritual fidelity and conduct. Just as fruit reaches a point of ripeness and must be harvested, so too do human actions reach a point where they necessitate divine intervention. This imagery serves as a stark warning that continued corruption and neglect of spiritual and moral values will lead to societal decay and divine retribution.

The prioritisation of economic profit over spiritual and moral obligations is evident in various facets of Nigerian society, from politics to business practices. The current state of Nigeria, marked by widespread corruption, impatience for economic profit, and neglect of spiritual and moral obligations, mirrors the conditions condemned by Amos. Nigerian society must heed these divine warnings and pursue integrity to avert impending judgment. Prophetic voices, whether from religious leaders or social reformers, call for repentance and a return to social justice. For Nigeria to avoid the fate of ancient Israel, as described in Amos, there must be a concerted effort to prioritise spiritual and moral values over material gain (Folarin and Olanisebe 2014, 256-257). This requires a shift in mindset at both the individual and collective levels. Religious institutions must play a pivotal role in this transformation, and spiritual fidelity and social justice must be important in their teachings and practices. Leaders in government and business must model good behaviour and make decisions for the common good rather than personal enrichment. Anti-corruption measures must be strengthened and enforced so that those who prioritise material gain at the expense of moral conduct are held accountable. Nigeria must recognise and respond to God's diverse means of communication to avert societal decay and divine judgment.

6.2 God's Holiness and the Demand for Justice (Amos 8:4-10)

Despite God's inherent mercy and grace, His Holiness necessitates justice when sin reaches a critical point through the transgressions of the merchants, who engaged in deceitful practices and exploited the poor. The judgment pronounced upon these offenders necessitates justice, particularly in the face of exploitation and oppression. The merchants in Amos's time manipulated weights and measures, cheated customers and prioritised personal gain over morality. Amos vividly depicts the impending judgment through natural disasters and other signs as a reflection of the severity of God's response to injustice. The imagery of the sun going down at noon and the earth darkening in broad daylight signifies a disruption of the natural order and the magnitude of divine judgment (Gambo et al. 2022, 10-12). This is a powerful warning to Nigeria that prolonged periods of impunity for corruption and exploitation will inevitably lead to divine retribution. The biblical mandate for honesty and justice must be upheld to prevent societal decay and divine favour.

6.3 Consequences of Disregarding God's Word (Amos 8:11-12)

The irony is stark: those who once mocked and dismissed God's message will face a famine of hearing His words when they most desperately need divine guidance. This truth shows the urgency of seeking

and adhering to God's word while it remains accessible. Amos's depiction of a spiritual famine reveals the grave consequences of disregarding divine messages. The people who previously ignored God's warnings are now desperate, searching for guidance that is no longer available. Therefore, when divine guidance is ignored, it eventually is withdrawn, leaving individuals and societies in moral and spiritual desolation.

In Nigeria, persistent disobedience and rejection of divine messages manifest in various ways, from injustice to moral decay and idolatry. The nation's failure to heed prophetic and moral guidance has led to social and spiritual issues. As these problems deepen, there is a growing risk that divine guidance becomes increasingly difficult to discern or access. The intergenerational impact of apostasy and moral decay is particularly concerning. Just as the people of Amos's time faced a spiritual famine due to their predecessors' disregard for divine teachings, future generations in Nigeria are at risk of suffering from a lack of spiritual guidance due to moral failures. This generational impact on the importance of adhering to divine principles and passing them down to future generations. That moral and spiritual values are upheld and taught within families and institutions is crucial for maintaining a moral and spiritually vibrant society (Rathbone 2020, 2-4). The futility of opposing God is evident in the text and must be recognised in contemporary Nigeria. The passage clarifies that attempting to resist divine principles or ignore God's commands is fruitless. The consequences of such opposition are severe, leading to societal disarray and spiritual emptiness. Therefore, Nigeria must turn towards divine principles, embracing God's guidance and rejecting moral corruption and idolatry. This shift is essential for securing divine favour and a stable and just society. This requires individual repentance and reformation, as well as systemic changes within societal institutions. Leaders and citizens alike must commit to upholding justice, integrity, and spiritual principles, and these values must be reflected in governance, business practices, and personal conduct.

6.4 Disruption of the Natural Order (Amos 8:11-14)

God's judgment disrupts the natural order as a stark reminder of the fleeting nature of worldly blessings. This disruption is characterised by the sudden onset of calamity and despair, and prosperity quickly turns to adversity when societal sins remain unchecked. The passage describes a time when the people will experience a "famine of hearing the words of the Lord," a metaphor for the loss of divine guidance and favour. This spiritual and social void, combined with the collapse of societal stability and the precariousness of prosperity and well-being, occurs when justice and righteousness are neglected. In Nigeria, where a disparity between wealth and poverty exists, and corruption undermines societal structures, the message from Amos is alarmingly relevant. The metaphorical darkness and the reversal of fortune reveal the impact of ignoring divine justice. Just as the sun goes down at noon, an unexpected and unsettling disruption of the natural order, the failure to uphold justice also leads to widespread societal upheaval. For Nigeria, this imagery underscores the urgent need for leaders to proactively address corruption and injustice. Leaders who fail to uphold justice and righteousness contribute to a societal environment where prosperity is superficial and unstable. The consequences of such failures are economic, moral, and spiritual, affecting the entire nation. The warning is that unchecked social evils lead to a breakdown of societal order, where even the most prosperous find themselves in despair. Nigerian leaders must prioritise justice and good governance (Rathbone 2020, 5-9). Effective governance should focus on creating a fair and just society where prosperity is distributed equitably, rather than merely providing a veneer over deep-seated social problems. Only by addressing the fact that prosperity is rooted in righteousness can Nigeria safeguard its stability and achieve a just and equitable society.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The study of Amos 8:1-14 reveals the consequences of social injustice and spiritual neglect. Amos delivers a stark warning to Israel about a coming famine, not of bread or water, but of hearing the words of the Lord, the critical importance of maintaining a just and faithful society. In applying these

prophetic messages to contemporary Nigeria, the parallels become apparent. Just as Israel faced divine judgment for their systemic injustices and disregard for God's commands, Nigeria today grapples with similar challenges of corruption, inequality, and moral decay. To avert a similar fate, Nigeria must heed the lessons from Amos by promoting a culture of justice, accountability, and spiritual renewal. Nigeria should avoid the dire consequences of the prophecy and build a society rooted in divine principles of peace, prosperity, and genuine spiritual growth. Amos's warnings serve as a timeless call to action for Nigeria, urging a return to righteousness and a commitment to social and spiritual integrity.

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Victor Umaru is a Lecturer in Theology and Biblical Studies with strong academic, teaching, administrative, and ministerial credentials. He holds degrees up to the Master's level in Theology and Religious Studies, with a PhD in Old Testament in view. His academic journey has been marked by numerous awards for excellence, especially in biblical languages, Old Testament studies, pastoral care, and homiletics. He has taught extensively across biblical studies, theology, ethics, hermeneutics, preaching, and pastoral ministry, and also lectures internationally. His administrative experience includes serving as Director of Academic Affairs, Chairman of the Curriculum Review Committee, Editor of the BETFA Journal, Secretary to the Council, and Director of Student Affairs. A prolific scholar, he has authored and co-authored numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers across Africa, Europe, Asia, and the USA, reflecting expertise in Old Testament studies, leadership, missiology, environmental theology, and African biblical interpretation. He is active in professional bodies such as NABIS, IBSA, ISDS, and the African Homiletics Society. Alongside his academic pursuits, he has significant pastoral and leadership experience, serving in

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