

Amos's Earthquake in the Book of the Twelve¹

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I. Introduction

Amos's ministry began with Yahweh's call (3:8; 7:15), followed by his five visions (7:1–3, 4–6, 7–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4). There was his "High Noon at the O.K. Corral" confrontation with Amaziah (7:10–17), which was preceded by a blistering critique of Israel's movers and shakers (e.g., 2:6–16; 4:1–5; 6:1–7). The prophet was banished from the Northern Kingdom (7:12). Amos 1:1 then states that the prophet's ministry ended "two years before the earthquake (הרעש)."

The lexeme רעש, "to shake" or "shaking," appears forty-seven times in the Old Testament, thirty times as a verb and seventeen times as a noun.² Its semantic range includes earthquakes (Amos 1:1) and the sound of chariots (Jer 47:3), as well as the rattling of bones (Ezek 37:7). In both verbal and nominal forms, however, רעש appears primarily in theophanic texts.

Historically, earth tremors and shocks are common in the rift valley of the Jordan River-Dead Sea-Arabah axis, yet this particular earthquake (הרעש = "the earthquake") must have been stronger than normal, as is indicated by the use of the definite article, which implies that this tectonic shift stood out to the degree that one could simply refer to it as *the* earthquake, and everyone knew which one that was. Most scholars connect *the* earthquake to the one attested to at stratum VI of Hazor and dated to around 760 BC.³

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² Schmoldt, "רעש," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols., ed. G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. Fabry, trans. J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley, and D.E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006), 13:589.

³ Cf. Yigal Yadin et. al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956* (Jerusalem, Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1960), 24–26, 36–37. Yohanan Aharoni—an excavator of Beer-sheba—conjectures that the destruction of Stratum III of this city

We also know from where Amos's seismic shock derived theologically. Earthquakes were initially understood to be a manifestation of Yahweh's saving presence. Judges 5 is one of the earliest poems in the Old Testament, and verse 4 describes Yahweh as he travels from Seir and Edom: the "earth shook" (אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה) and "the heavens dripped with water." Even earlier than the period of the judges, however, the earth's shaking also signaled Yahweh's presence to deliver. Exodus 19 is Israel's paradigmatic theophanic text; verse 18 states, "Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because Yahweh descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently." Understood in this way, Shalom Paul believes that Amos's earthquake was interpreted as a sign of Yahweh's presence, "and authenticated his being accepted as a true prophet."⁴

And we know from where Amos's earthquake derived literarily. Prior to "two years before the earthquake," seismic shocking was a major theme in many of his oracles. It is most prominent in the fifth vision (9:1-4), in which the lexeme רָעַשׁ appears for its second and last time in the book. In verse 1, Yahweh's command makes the thresholds of the temple shake (וִירָעֲשׂוּ). An earthquake is also inferred in the following verses: 3:15, Yahweh commands the turning over (הִפָּךְ) of Bethel and the royal houses; 4:11, part of Israel is turned over (הִפָּךְ) like Sodom and Gomorrah; 6:11, Yahweh promises to smash (הִכָּה) all of Israel's houses; 8:8 and 9:5, Yahweh pledges that the land will shake (רָנִי) to such an extent that the Nile River will move up and down. It is fitting, therefore, that Amos, whose oracles were literally earth-shaking, was vindicated by an earthquake.

II. Amos's Rhetorical Strategy

This study will demonstrate that Amos takes a motif that had earlier attested to Yahweh's presence *for* Israel (Exod 19 and Judg 5) and inverts it to attest to Yahweh's presence as judgment *against* Israel. The prophet develops this rhetorical strategy in order to gain a hearing from his listeners. That is to say, Israel's leadership had become deaf to its theological language.⁵ They had allowed their texts, which at one point

may have been triggered by the same earthquake (as noted by Philip J. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah – An Archeological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 21; cf. 22 for an artistic rendering of the evidence of this earthquake at Hazor.

⁴ Shalom Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 36.

⁵ Isaiah indicates that in his day Israel also had ears but could not hear and eyes but could not see (cf. Isa 6:9-10). In Isa 42:9, the prophet quotes Yahweh as saying, "Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one

had been so surprising and remarkable and full of good news, to erode into old news. Unbelief dulled earlier promises into slogans that no longer had the vitality to do the best things that Yahweh's words do: forgive and recreate lives, form and regulate human relationships, serve as the glue that holds people together in community, and provide the sanctions that limit people's abuse of each other. In this vacuum, individual autonomy and selfishness emerged unchallenged, and Israel began to disintegrate. Oblivious to how their language had dulled their spiritual vitality, Israel's high rollers became intoxicated with violence, bloodshed, and economic exploitation. As long as the nation was up and running, sick as it was, its flow of meaningless words kept it going.

In this situation, Amos could not simply repeat words from earlier texts, but neither could he embark on a mission that completely jettisoned Israel's theological language. Francis Andersen and David Noel Freedman describe the prophet's dilemma this way: "A judicious balance needs to be struck, one in which the prophet's role as conservator of ancient tradition is blended with that of radical critic of current behavior and intention."⁶ Amos's challenge, therefore, was to use theological language itself to show the inadequacy of what the language had become, and to reconnect its parts in a way that would make it fresh and real and alive. Needing to accomplish this using the resources of the language itself, he employs the rhetorical strategy of inversion.

Amos scholars often note the prophet's sophisticated appropriation of forms and traditions, as well as his carefully crafted language.⁷ For example, James Crenshaw argues that Amos uses liturgical texts and ideas throughout his book to make contact with his audience, only to turn the

committed to me, blind like the servant of Yahweh?" (cf. 43:8; Matt 13:13; Mark 4:12). Yahweh describes the same problem in Ezekiel (e.g., Ezek 3:4-7; 33:30-33).

⁶ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 539.

⁷ Among Amos commentators, there appears to be unanimous agreement on the prophet's literary skill. H.W. Wolff marvels that in the two-dozen short oracles one finds such a "wealth of rhetorical forms," *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 91. James L. Mays hails Amos as one who displays "remarkable skill at using all the devices of oral literature available in Israel's culture," *Amos: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 6. Andersen and Freedman note that Amos is one of the most "versatile verbal craftsmen" among the prophets, *Amos*, 144. Shalom Paul speaks of Amos's "distinctive literary style," as well as the way he uses literary traditions and conventions with "creative sophistication," *Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 7, 4. The lone dissent seems to come from John Hayes, who claims, "There is nothing especially creative in Amos's preaching," *Amos - The Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 38.

themes against the people.⁸ It is almost universally agreed that Amos is a master at upending texts.⁹

Amos employs earlier motifs that simply cannot be contradicted and *contradicts* them! The prophet peppers the nation's leaders with challenging "in-your-face" questions. What if Israel is *just like* the other nations? (1:3–2:16). What if election means *judgment*? (3:2). What if worship is a *crime*? (4:4–5). What if the nation is not alive at all, but *dead*? (5:1–3). What if Passover happened again, but this time *Israel* became the first-born of Egypt? (5:17). What if the Day of Yahweh turns out to be the *night* of Yahweh? (5:18–20). What if Yahweh had accomplished an exodus for *other nations*? (9:7). And, for our purposes, what if the earthquake denotes not Yahweh's presence to *save* but his power to *destroy*? (1:1; 9:1–4).

III. An Absolute End?

Because the few islands of hope in Amos 1:2–9:10 (e.g., 5:4, 14, 15) are submerged in an earthquake of death, many doubt the authenticity of Amos 9:11–15. The consensus in critical scholarship is that Amos's earthquake signals the absolute end of all hope. Wellhausen's remark regarding Amos 9:11–15 is now classic: "*Rosen und Lavendel statt Blut und Eisen*" ("roses and lavender instead of blood and iron").¹⁰

The objection is that the promise of restoration in Amos 9:11–15 is unthinkable in the context of the prophet's repeated oracles that promise to shake, rattle, roll, raze, and ruin. The section also appears to be anticlimactic in light of earlier texts because it fails to mention the prominent words *מִשְׁפָּט וצִדִּיקָה* ("justice and righteousness"; cf. 5:7, 24; 6:12). It is additionally asserted that because there are other instances of supposedly "all's well that ends well" endings tacked onto other prophets,¹¹ the same likelihood exists here.

⁸ James Crenshaw, "Amos and the Theophanic Tradition," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1968): 203–15.

⁹ Mays, for example, says that Amos consistently "take[s] up the themes of the theological tradition from his audience and use[s] them in a way that [is] completely 'unorthodox' and unexpected," *Amos*, 57. Wolff notes the prophet's use of language that has "shocking surprises," *Joel and Amos*, 211.

¹⁰ Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1892), 96. Most scholars believe the majority of the sayings that comprise Amos are authentic, yet the following have been questioned: the title (1:1), the oracles against Tyre (1:9–10), Edom (1:11–12), and Judah (2:4–5), the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah (7:10–17), the hymnic sections (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6), and the oracles of salvation (9:11–15). Wolff's discussion on 9:11–15 is representative (*Joel and Amos*, 352–353).

¹¹ E.g., Ezek 40–48; Zech 3:13–20; Joel 4 [English translations : Joel 3].

The underlying criterion embraced by those who argue that 9:11–15 is not original with the prophet is the assumption that prophetic texts had to be continually reinterpreted.¹² A prophetic book was made more relevant by later material. Therefore, critics hold, books like Amos grew over a lengthy period and were continually reformulated.¹³ Amos is, therefore, seen as a collection of varied traditions and not the work of a single author.

This interpretation of 9:11–15 is dubious for several reasons. Already in 1902, Otto Procksch raised this issue concerning the text's authenticity: "Most of all one can hardly imagine that Amos should let Yahweh triumph over nothingness."¹⁴ Is Yahweh's victory the complete and total end of Israel as well as of every Israelite?¹⁵ Even more compelling evidence for a single author is the internal logic of the book itself. If Yahweh could change from law to gospel earlier (cf. Amos 7:3, 6 and the use of נָחַם, often translated "to relent"),¹⁶ then even if he has issued an irreversible judgment (לֹא אֲשַׁבֵּן, "I will not reverse it" – eight times in chap. 1 and 2), the possibility is held out that he could relent and change from law to gospel *again*.¹⁷ Because Yahweh is the God whose final word is always

¹² Odil Steck writes: "Diachronic findings will show that prophetic books continually explain this aspect and present it anew in the transmission movement that these books include," *The Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness*, trans. James Nogalski (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 58.

¹³ Steck, *The Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness*, 59.

¹⁴ Otto Procksch, *Geschichtsbetrachtung und geschichtliche Überlieferung bei den vorexilischen Propheten* (Leipzig, 1902), 13, note 1. Erling Hammershaimb, moreover, points to Egyptian parallels in this regard. "The pattern of misfortune linked with good fortune has also been demonstrated in Egyptian oracles, e.g., in the prophecy of Neferrohu from c. 2000 BC. Here the transition from prophecy of judgment to promise is quite as abrupt as in Amos. This has persuaded several commentators to change their minds and allow the possible authenticity of the promises in the prophets of the Old Testament. More generally, the change from misfortune to good fortune is found in Oriental dramas, in which both parts belong together to create the correct balance in life. Men of antiquity could therefore contain these contradictions in themselves. In the most recent scholarly work the view has been taken that the prophets took over this pattern from the cult," *The Book of Amos* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 137–138. Hammershaimb supports the authenticity of Amos 9:11–15.

¹⁵ Gerhard Hasel lists those scholars who believe that Amos 9:11–15 derives from the eighth century Amos, "The Alleged 'No' of Amos and Amos' Eschatology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 (1991): 3–18, 15–16. Hasel cites twenty-four between 1912–1970 and ten since then.

¹⁶ For a discussion on this important word, cf. Lessing, *Jonah* (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 2007), 324–341.

¹⁷ This is what 9:11–15 announces: the words "building" and "planting" in 9:14–15 restore the earlier judgment in 5:11; the agricultural bounty in 9:13–14 restores the

grace (cf. Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2), Israel's destiny will change. Yahweh will restore his people (9:14). The dead will rise again! The curse will be reversed! True enough, *the* earthquake and its effects throughout the book are intended to burn and bury the world of power politics and phony religion. Only after the killing message of the law is the gospel then announced in 9:11–15. Demolition is penultimate; salvation is *ultimate*.

This salvation includes the entire created order, not just Israel. The "remnant of Edom" (denoting a remnant from the nations judged in 1:3–2:3) will be restored (9:12), and the mountains and hills will drip with new wine (9:13).¹⁸ The new order will not have the possibility of ever being shaken again. Guaranteeing this is v. 15, "they will *never again* be uprooted." This promise ends with Yahweh's "signature," as it were, guaranteeing the life to come: אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ ("says Yahweh your God"). All along Amos connects creation, the nations, and Israel. Terrance Fretheim writes, "The world could be imaged as a giant spider-web. Every creature is in relationship with every other, such that any act reverberates out and affects the whole, shaking the entire web in varying degrees of intensity."¹⁹ The human and nonhuman are so deeply interconnected that human sin has a devastating effect upon the rest of the world.

This is, finally, why there is a massive quake in the book of Amos. The earthly upheaval was brought on by Israel's lack of justice and righteousness.²⁰ Their exploitation of "Jacob who is so small" (Amos 7:2, 5) ripples out and adversely affects the entire created order. Creation is shaking and groaning throughout the book of Amos (cf. Rom 8:22), so the earth, along with a remnant of Israel and the nations, will be restored.

These concerns with creation explain Amos's three doxologies in his book: 4:13, 5:8–9 and 9:5–6.²¹ The hymns are often labeled "creation

plagues and drought in 1:2 and 4:6–11; and dwelling in the land in 9:15 restores the exilic threats in 5:5, 27; 7:11, 17.

¹⁸ The interrelatedness between Israel and the world is seen in texts like Lev 26:32–43, Jer 4:23–28, and Hos 4:1–3.

¹⁹ Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology Of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 173.

²⁰ Some examples of this interconnectedness include the ground bringing forth thorns and thistles after the Fall (Gen 3:17), the world being inundated by a flood as a result of rampant sin (Gen 6–8), Sodom and Gomorrah becoming an ecological disaster because of human wickedness (Gen 13:10–13; 19:24–28), and the Egyptian plagues being brought about by Pharaoh's genocidal policies (Exod 7–11).

²¹ Amos's hymns have been subjected to multiple investigations. Questions abound: are they original with Amos or did he borrow them? Were they once one hymn that Amos subsequently divided into three sections? And what was their original *Sitz im*

hymns" because participles describing creation appear in all three sections: יצר ("to form," 4:13), ברא ("to create," 4:13), עשה ("to make," 5:8), בנה ("to build," 9:6), and יסד ("to establish," 9:6). Yahweh is not only Creator in these hymns, but he is also the De-Creator. Because Yahweh turns darkness into light (4:13, 5:8), he can also turn light into darkness (5:8, 18-19; 8:9). The one who formed order out of chaos is able to let chaos come back (cf. Jer 4:23). Yet the Creator turned De-Creator is also the Re-Creator. Yahweh's acts of judgment serve to usher in his salvation, and with it a new creation in 9:13-15. Amos's placement of creation hymns throughout the book highlights Yahweh's power to employ earthquakes when and where he pleases, as well as his ability to rebuild what has been torn down.

IV. The Book of the Twelve

Up to this point we have established that Amos employed the earlier gospel tradition of Yahweh's shaking presence *for* Israel to use it *against* Israel. The prophet did this to awaken his audience to Yahweh's living word. The convulsions continue throughout the book and are linked to the prophet's three hymns that announce Yahweh's role as Creator, De-Creator, and Re-Creator, who will finally usher in a new world envisioned in 9:11-15.

But the publication of the book of Amos brought about more than just a tectonic shift for Israel in the middle part of the eighth century BC; its repercussions are felt throughout Israel's prophetic literature. To be sure, Israel had previous prophets, some mighty fierce and daring prophets like Nathan, Micaiah ben Imlah, and, of course, the explosive Elijah. But no one had written a book. So the convergence of the earthquake's time, place, and magnitude with Amos's prediction of a divine shaking combined to make an indelible impression on Israel. Thus, with the book of Amos, there began a particular corpus of prophetic literature in the Old Testament, the Book of the Twelve.

In the order of the Latter Prophets, Amos does not appear first *canonically*—that would be Isaiah—yet it is a consensus in scholarship that Amos is first *chronologically*. This is an important distinction that forms the basis for much of what follows. Put another way, and summing up the

Leben? Form-critical work has been done by James Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 24 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975); "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79 (1967): 42-52; and "Amos and the Theophanic Traditions," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1968): 203-15. Cf. also Cullen Story, "Amos—Prophet of Praise," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 67-80.

argument to this point, I am contending that Israel's *written* prophetic movement began with Amos's earthquake in 1:1. It was a massive shaking that rapidly expanded.

The expansion can be traced in the Book of the Twelve, specifically Joel, Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah, who take up the lexeme רעש and adapt it, just like Amos did, to fit their times and their places. We will now trace Amos's seismic shocks canonically from Joel to Nahum to Haggai and finally to Zechariah, and we will see that just like Amos, all four prophets employ רעש as a precursor to Yahweh's act of a new creation. While neither Jews nor Christians have typically interpreted the Twelve as one book, there is a growing consensus that each book should be read and understood in the context of the other eleven.²² It is now acceptable in scholarly circles to view these books as a literary unit.²³ We need, however,

²² We would be remiss, however, to suppose that investigating the Book of the Twelve is completely new. Sirach prayed, "May the bones of the Twelve Prophets send forth new life from where they lie" (49:10). And both the Qumran Library and Josephus count the Twelve as one book. These twelve prophets generally appear as the fourth book of the "Latter Prophets" in the Tanak (b. Baba Batra 14b), but the Talmud also stipulates that only three lines separate the individual books of the Twelve Prophets whereas four lines normally separate biblical books (b. Baba Batra 13b).

²³ For the discussion cf. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, eds., *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 325 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003). The foundational idea is that each of the Twelve is construed by final redactors in such a way that the message of each builds on its predecessors, picking up concepts, words, and text types from them. The redactors who combined the writings into one book wanted their readers to look for, discover, and appreciate how the different thematic threads generate a colorful tapestry that reflects Yahweh's self disclosure in this corpus. That the Twelve exhibits an overall theme, plot, and/or direction greater than that of the sum of its twelve parts has been challenged, especially by Ehud Ben Zvi in "Twelve Prophetic Books of 'The Twelve.' A Few Preliminary Considerations," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 125-56. Ben Zvi's concerns are as follows. First, the Book of the Twelve does not have a comprehensive heading. Second, the argument that redactors used catchwords to form redactional links between different prophetic books seems to be doubtful, since the mere fact that one more or less unspecific word occurs in two different literary units can be accidental in many cases. Interpreting such cases as deliberate links is arbitrary. Third, there is the danger that an interpretation on the wider redactional level can conceal the original meaning of a certain book and may lead to misunderstanding. The best way to appropriate current scholarship on the Twelve is to utilize its synchronic approach in order to grasp certain elements of literary unity that divulge theological themes—a methodology that is similar to, though not identical with, Marvin Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), vol. 1. One must, however, insist on treating the separate books of the Twelve as important

a responsible methodology to follow properly Amos's seismic shock in the Book of the Twelve.

V. Intertextuality

My means of detecting the aftershocks of Amos's earthquake is called "intertextuality."²⁴ Julia Kristeva, who coined the term "intertextuality," states, "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."²⁵ Competing understandings of what intertextuality is and how it is to be practiced exist within both literary and biblical scholarship. Among the many articles and volumes written regarding biblical intertextuality, special significance is given to Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.²⁶ His work has been described as the "single most important contribution to the study of intertextuality in scripture."²⁷ Fishbane calls the phenomenon "inner biblical exegesis." Other scholars in intertextuality employ terms like "allusion," "imitation," "influence," and "echo."²⁸

The assumption, then, is that the implied readers of Israel's texts were actually re-readers and so could pick up on the subtle nuances in their literature. Psalm 1:2 and Joshua 1:8 say as much with their employment of the verb *הנה*, understood within our circles as meaning to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" God's holy word. Ehud ben Zvi states,

The concept of rereading is of major importance, because there are significant differences in the way people *reread* texts as opposed to their

in and of themselves before asking questions about how they fit into a larger picture.

²⁴ I am indebted to Kevin Golden for many of the insights in this section. They appear in his 2010 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Ph.D. Dissertation entitled, "The Waves of the Deluge Breaking on Jonah: The Intertextual Use of the Noachic Narrative in Jonah."

²⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66. Kristeva credits Mikhail Bakhtin as the person who introduced to her this literary theory.

²⁶ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985). Fishbane borrows a phrase from Thomas Mann in order to describe the textuality of the Bible: "zitathaftes Leben," which literally means, "citationous life," or more loosely, "citation-filled life" (1). By this term Fishbane meant, "the dependence of the great religious-cultural formation on authoritative views which are studied, reinterpreted, and adapted to ongoing life" (1).

²⁷ Gail R. O'Day, "Jeremiah 9:22-23 and I Corinthians 1:26-31. A Study in Intertextuality," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 259-260.

²⁸ E.g., Helen R. Elam, "Intertextuality," in *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. A. Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 620-22.

first reading of the same text. . . . Texts that are suitable for continuous rereading show at least some degree of double meaning, ambiguity and literary sophistication.²⁹

Timothy Beal asks, "But what determines which intertextual relationships are legitimate and which are not? And what determines how 'rightly' to negotiate those relationships once they are established? I suggest that the answer to these questions is: the reader's ideology."³⁰ Inasmuch as Beal places the reader's ideology in a magisterial position over the text, it is not surprising that he refers to "biblical interpretation as a *production* of meaning."³¹ The text is thus described as being devoid of meaning apart from the reader's production and imposition of meaning upon the text. The scope of such reader-oriented intertextuality is not limited to a few works within biblical scholarship. In fact, there is a prevalence of reader-oriented intertextuality within the field.³²

Though the presence of reader-oriented intertextuality within biblical studies is predominant, there is a growing symphony of voices raising concern about the exclusive authority of the reader within intertextual interpretation. Though such voices arose out of a concern that the value of the text was being ignored, they have cascaded into a full-blown argument in favor of the primacy of the text in the determination of meaning within the intertextual enterprise. One such voice is that of Brevard Childs, who writes:

When the theory of intertextuality eliminates the privileged status of the canonical context and removes all hermeneutical value from any form of authorial intent, an interpretive style emerges that runs directly contrary

²⁹ Ehud ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 9–10.

³⁰ Timothy K. Beal, "Ideology and Intertextuality: Surplus of Meaning and Controlling the Means of Production," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 28.

³¹ Beal, "Ideology and Intertextuality," 28. Emphasis his.

³² See, e.g., Beal, "Ideology and Intertextuality," 27–39; Danna Nolan Fewell, "Introduction," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 11–20; Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms Through the Lens of Intertextuality*, Studies in Biblical Literature 26 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Sjeff van Tilborg et al., "Introduction," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. Sipke Draisma (Uitgeversmaatschappij: J.J. Kok-Kampen, 1989), 7; Willem Vorster, "Intertextuality and Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, 15–26.

to the function of an authoritative canon which continues to serve a confessing community of faith and practice.³³

Childs' dedication to canonical criticism necessitates his concerns. Yet, he is not alone. Susan Handelman describes the reader's interpretive work in terms of the text's revelation. She writes, "interpretation is not essentially separate from the text itself—an external act intruded upon it—but rather the extension of the text, the uncovering of the connective network of relations, a part of the continuous revelation of the text itself."³⁴

Intertextual allusions, therefore, must be more than a product of the interpreter's own disposition. All such echoes need to be grounded upon the text itself. I will argue, then, that the lexeme רעש provides a valid way to follow Amos's impact in the Twelve and thus to witness the coherence of these Sacred Scriptures. Put another way, in Bethel, Amos dropped the bombshell of Yahweh's shaking judgment; then, due to the massive earthquake in 760 BC, his book was published. Later authors in the Twelve intentionally borrow the earthquake motif as a means to connect themselves to Amos and his bona-fide status in the community. Amos's earthquake is the "iron rod" later prophets employ to reinforce the "concrete" of their own messages. But in borrowing from Amos, these prophets do more than simply repeat the manner in which he employs earthquake theology; rather, they transform and build upon the borrowed text. A method of intertextuality that trusts the text and derives its meaning chiefly from that text will now assist us as we follow Amos's earthquake in the Book of the Twelve.

VI. Earthquakes in the Book of the Twelve

A reader of the Twelve first encounters the lexeme רעש in the book of Joel, who employs it within an eschatological framework. Unlike Amos's quake, Joel's is specifically connected to the coming Day of Yahweh. Joel 2:2 describes the day as "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness." And so we witness a significant move beyond Amos. A Yahweh-induced earthquake is now eschatologically a subset of the dominant theme in the Book of the Twelve, "The Day of Yahweh."³⁵

³³ Brevard S. Childs, "Critique of Recent Intertextual Canonical Interpretation," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 115 (2003): 177.

³⁴ Susan Handelman, quoted in Jacob Neusner, *Canon and Connection: Intertextuality in Judaism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), xi.

³⁵ See James D. Noglaski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Scharf, Beihefte

The phrase *יום יהוה* ("the Day of Yahweh") makes its first appearance in the OT, *chronologically* speaking, in Amos 5:18–20.³⁶ This oracle assumes that there were those listening to Amos who could identify with the phrase. Both his rhetorical questions and the repetition of the contrast between "darkness and not light" suggest that the prophet was trying to refute a widely held view that "the Day of Yahweh" would usher in more of Yahweh's blessings.³⁷ Just as Amos turned the earthquake motif against Israel, he also stands "the Day of Yahweh" on its head. Gospel becomes law and the nation is undone.

The term *יום יהוה* appears twenty-nine times in the Old Testament, always in prophetic texts, e.g., Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:1; Ezekiel 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Obadiah 15; Zechariah 1:7, 14; and Malachi 3:23.³⁸ This day is analogous to *יום זרעאל* ("the Day of Jezreel," Hos 2:2), *יום מדין* ("the Day of Midian," Isa 9:3), *יום מצרים* ("the Day of Egypt," Ezek 30:9), and *יום ירושלם* ("the Day of Jerusalem," Ps 137:7). All of these refer to military action; hence "the Day of Yahweh" is another way to say, "the battle of Yahweh."

One of the central motifs of this day is the convulsion of the created order. Stars fall from heaven, the sun's light grows dim, the moon turns to blood, and, of course, the earth shakes! And so Joel goes on to envision the apocalyptic army described in 2:10 as follows: "Before them the earth

zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 325 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 192–213.

³⁶ Perhaps the most compelling suggestion of the phrase's background comes from Gerhard von Rad, who maintained that the day was a "pure event of war which developed within the pre-prophetic institution of 'holy war'"; Von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," 103. Von Rad cites Isaiah 13 as providing the foundational text for the "Day of Yahweh" theme. With its threefold use of *כל* (vv. 5, 7, 15), Isaiah 13 describes a universal time of lamentation. The "Day of Yahweh" is a day of darkness (13:10; cf. Amos 5:18, 20). On this day (v. 6) Yahweh will come in person to fight, his enemies will lose heart, and their courage will fail (vv. 7–8; cf., e.g., Exod 15:14–16; Josh 2:9, 24). This day also exhibits cosmic changes: the stars will darken (v. 10) and the earth will shake (v. 13). The slaughter will be terrible (vv. 14–22). Those who will enact this judgment are called by Yahweh "my sanctified ones" (v. 3, *מקדש*). They have undergone certain rites in order to prepare for this battle (cf., e.g., 1 Sam 21:5).

³⁷ Douglas Stuart writes: "Like the student who receives an 'F' for a paper he thought was brilliant, or the employee fired after doing what he thought was excellent work, or the person whose spouse suddenly announces that he or she wants a divorce when the marriage seemed to be going so well, the Israelites were undoubtedly stunned by such a reversal of their expectations," *Hosea-Jonah* (Waco: Word, 1987), 354.

³⁸ Expressions closely related to *יום יהוה* include *יום נקם* ("the day of vengeance"), *יום אף-יהוה* ("the day of Yahweh's anger"), *יום חרון* ("the day of rage"), and *יום ליהוה* ("the day belonging to Yahweh"), while *ביום ההוא* ("in that day") in some contexts denotes "the Day of Yahweh."

shakes, the heavens quake" (רעשו שמים), because "the day of Yahweh is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?" (v. 11). Joel 4:16 [Eng 3:16] adds more. In Amos-like rhetoric the prophet begins, "Yahweh roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem," but whereas Amos 1:2 continues, "the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers," Joel expands Yahweh's theophany to include the entire cosmos. He continues, "and the heavens and the earth will shake" ורעשו שמים וארץ. Not surprisingly, this is set in the context of verse 14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of Yahweh is near." And like Amos 9:11-15, after this cosmic crumbling there is cosmic re-creation. Sounding again very much like Amos, Joel writes, "In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of Yahweh's house" (4:18 [Eng 3:18]).

Those who read the Twelve sequentially read from Joel to Amos. *Chronologically* Joel comes *after* Amos, and so Joel was influenced by Amos. *Canonically*, however, Joel comes *before* Amos, which means that Amos's quake, as fulfilled in the neo-Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 721 BC, is also a portent of Yahweh's final quake that will shake the heavens and the earth. Understood in this way, Joel's place in the Twelve gives an eschatological perspective on subsequent quakes in not only Amos, but also Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah.

After Joel and Amos, the next appearance of רעש comes in Nahum 1:5, a verse in the middle of a semi-acrostic theophanic text. It reads in part, "the mountains shake" (הרים רעשו) before Yahweh, while "the hills totter." Like Joel, Nahum transforms the earthquake motif for his unique purposes; this shaking will manifest itself in 612 BC and the Fall of Nineveh. Read in light of Joel's eschatological perspective, Nahum's quake against Nineveh foreshadows the day when all of Yahweh's enemies will fall. While Nahum, unlike Joel and Amos, offers no return to Edenic bliss after the quake, victory is still in the air in the last verse of the book as the prophet taunts the fallen Assyrian king: "Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?" (3:19b). Yahwistic shaking signifies that on his judgment day the king will fall and the ancient promise in Exodus 15:18 will once more ring true: "Yahweh will be King forever and ever!"

Our next stop on this tour of רעש in the Twelve is Haggai, who alludes to Amos's quake as a way to indicate that the Second Temple will not lack the glory and significance of Solomon's former structure. In Haggai 2:6-7 Yahweh guarantees that "in a little while I again am shaking (ואני מרעיש) the

heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake (והרעשתי) all nations, and the desired of all nations (חמדת כל-הגוים) will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says Yahweh." Reread in light of previous quakes in the Twelve, Haggai's shaking has cosmic implications for the temple's reconstruction, and the hiphil participle מרעיש indicates that the shaking is presently taking place. This comports well with Haggai's historical situation, as the Persian empire of his day was in upheaval because of its revolt against king Darius in his early years.

In all likelihood, the "desired of all nations" refers to the liturgical vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar from Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. In 2 Chronicles 36:10 these are referred to as כלי חמדת בית-יהוה ("the precious vessels of Yahweh's house").³⁹ Following Joel, Amos, and Nahum, Haggai's shaking is the prelude to blessing; in this case, Yahweh's temple will be graced again with vessels, which foreshadows its functioning again as a means of grace.

Later in Haggai, in verse 2:21, Yahweh says to Zerubbabel, "I am shaking (אני מרעיש) the heavens and the earth." Again, shaking is a prelude to Yahweh's judgment. Through Haggai, Yahweh states in verse 22, "I will overturn (והפכתי) royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overturn (והפכתי) chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother." Verse 23 rounds out the prophecy and the book with the "Day of Yahweh" signifier ביום ההוא ("on that day"). Read in light of the Twelve, the restoration of liturgical worship in the Second Temple, Yahweh's plans for Zerubbabel (a Davidic heir), and the promises of victory over his enemies have implications for the entire cosmos!

With Zechariah 14 we come to the last appearance of רעש in the Twelve, and again, due to Joel's eschatological transformation, the Day of Yahweh theme is prominent. In fact, יום ("day") comes ten times in Zechariah 14. The prophet announces the coming of the perfect day, the last day, the day of judgment, and the day of salvation. More specifically,

³⁹ The temple vessels were confiscated by the Babylonians in 587 (cf. 2 Kings 25:13-17). The return is chiefly a liturgical and spiritual return. Cyrus entrusted his treasurer, Mithredath, with the task of giving the vessels to "Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah" (Ezra 1:8). Ezra subsequently turns them over to twelve priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their relatives (Ezra 8:24). Daniel 5 narrates the Babylonian desecration of these vessels at Belshazzar's feast. In Jer 27:16-22, the prophet discourages the belief in a speedy return of the vessels that were seized in 597 and the deportation of King Jehoiachin. He does promise, however, that Yahweh will bring his vessels back on "the day I come for them" (v. 22).

Zechariah states in verse 14:5, "You will flee as you fled from the earthquake (מפני הרעש) in the days of Uzziah king of Judah." While Amos, Nahum, and Haggai use the motif in more historical ways that are then by their canonical placement eschatologically transformed, Joel and Zechariah initially place the shaking in an eschatological context.

Amos and Joel, being agriculturalists, envision the new creation as a return to Eden-like abundance. Nahum can only see the end of Assyrian oppression, while Haggai's love for the Second Temple prompts him to yearn for the re-establishment of liturgical rites with the proper vessels. Zechariah, for his part, is captivated by the priestly idea of קדש ("holiness"): "On that day, 'holy to Yahweh' (קדש ליהוה) will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in Yahweh's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to Yahweh (קדש ליהוה)" (Zech 14:20-21).⁴⁰ What are now profane horse bells and cooking pots will be completely transformed by Yahweh's holiness. For Zechariah, new creation means cosmic קדש.

Joel, Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah all employ Amos's earthquake theology for their own purposes, yet there is remarkable coherence, for every appearance of רעש in the Twelve signifies that Yahweh's judgment will usher in the new day of salvation.

VII. Prophetic Hermeneutics

Not only does Amos's use of the Yahweh-quake influence later prophetic texts in the Twelve, he also provides a way for interpreting earlier texts. Just as Amos borrowed and adapted from Exodus 19 and Judges 5, our four in the Twelve borrow and adapt the earthquake motif from Amos. Joel, Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah follow Amos when they take what is old and make it new again.

Gerhard von Rad defines this prophetic hermeneutic by means of the term *Vergegenwärtigung*, translated as "a fresh presentation," "updating," or "reactualization."⁴¹ The opening sentence in von Rad's second volume

⁴⁰ Only the turban of the high priest (Exod 28:36-38; 39:30-31), sacrifices offered or dedicated to Yahweh (Lev 23:20; 27:30, 32), vessels dedicated to the Temple (Ezra 8:28), and the spoils of war in Josh 6:19 are described as קדש ליהוה.

⁴¹ Von Rad writes, "It is now, of course, apparent that when the prophets spoke of coming events, they did not do so directly, out of the blue, as it were; instead, they showed themselves bound to certain definite inherited traditions, and therefore even in their words about the future they use a dialectic method which keeps remarkably close to the pattern used by earlier exponents of Jahwism. It is this use of tradition which gives the prophets their legitimation. At the same time, they go beyond tradition—they

of *Old Testament Theology* is telling: "Remember not the former things nor consider the things of old. For behold, I purpose to do a new thing. (Isaiah xliii.18f)."⁴² For von Rad the "former things" refers to earlier texts. The "new things" refers to the prophetic recasting and reshaping of these earlier writings. The new message was coherent with older texts, while at the same time being innovative. Older texts are adapted for new situations.

In their respective contexts it was important for Joel, Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah to anchor themselves in the prophetic tradition. Not just anything could be said. New interpretations needed to be connected to the tradition and interpreted according to the community's exegetical norms. A judicious balance, therefore, needed to be struck, one in which the prophet's role as conservator of ancient tradition is blended with that of offering law and gospel in a new situation. Repeating earlier themes and texts would not adequately address new uncertainties. Yet neither was a completely new message likely to take root in the lives of people.

VIII. Conclusions

Amos's earthquake *had* to happen. He lived among people who did not seem to notice and did not seem to care. Israel's leaders had closed their eyes to human needs, economic inequities, and broken social systems. There remained only "horses and chariots" (Ps 20:7), unbridled greed, brutality, technology, and stinginess.

In this context, Amos could not have been effective by employing stereotyped language, because stereotyped language is a language of cliché. The immediate danger of cliché is the audience's passive response. If Amos sounded too much like the old word, he risked irrelevance, but if he was too dissimilar, he risked rejection. And the same can be said for Joel, Nahum, Haggai, and Zechariah. So these prophets stood between continuity and discontinuity, and in this way we see a coherent earthquake theology denoting Yahweh's presence to condemn as well as to recreate.

This coherence finds its way into the New Testament. Matthew provides his own echo of Amos's massive quake; in 27:51 he writes, "At

fill it even to bursting-point with new content or at least broaden its basis for their own purposes"; *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, vol. 2 of *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 239.

⁴² Von Rad, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, 2:1. Brueggemann writes, "If it turns out that von Rad's entire program is an exposition of Isaiah 43:18-19, as seems likely, then *relinquishment* of what is old and treasured and *reception* of what is new and unwelcome is the work at hand"; *The Book That Breathes New Life: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 82; emphasis in the original.

that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook (καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσειέσθη) and the rocks split." In every text from the Twelve that we have considered, the Septuagint translates שָׁרַע with the noun σεισμός or the verb σείω. But, just like his Old Testament predecessors, Matthew links cosmic crumbling and cosmic re-creation when, in 28:2, he writes, καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας ("and behold a great earthquake happened"). So just like Amos, our Lord's ministry was vindicated by an earthquake. But his resurrection σεισμός is the greatest earthquake this side of the Parousia.

This means that Amos's seismic shock will manifest itself one last time, again with destructive and recreating power. Hebrews 12:26-28 says as much. Quoting from Haggai 2, the author writes, "But now he has promised, 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." And that says it all!