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The Hymns of Amos and the Cosmic Temple: Salvation as Creation, Decreation, and Recreation

Ferry Yefta Mamahit
Southeast Asia Bible Seminary, Indonesia
ferry.mamahit@seabs.ac.id
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2476-2320

ABSTRACT: Salvation in Amos is typically viewed through the lens of a Deuteronomistic covenant. This article argues for adopting a broader paradigm, contending that Amos's vision is fundamentally oriented toward the restoration of Yahweh's cosmic temple. Analysing Amos's hymnic passages (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) through the lens of cosmic temple imagination reveals that the prophet's message follows a pattern of creation–decreation–recreation. The hymns establish Yahweh's sovereignty as Creator, framing Israel's sin as a cosmic rebellion that provokes decreation. Salvation thus emerges not as a nationalistic restoration but as the eschatological recreation of the divine dwelling place, affirming Yahweh's triumph as the Cosmic King.

KEYWORDS: Amos 4:13, 5:8–9, 9:1–10, cosmic temple, salvation, creation, decreation, recreation

Traditional scholarship on the Book of Amos has frequently interpreted its message through a Deuteronomistic lens, foregrounding a covenantal-legal framework as its primary theological structure.[1] This perspective is most thoroughly articulated in the influential commentaries of Hans Wolff and Shalom Paul,[2] who read the book's structure and theology primarily through the lens of covenant lawsuit (ריב) and covenant curses. From this perspective, the prophet's oracles are understood to operate within a paradigm of covenantal stipulations, where Israel's socio-religious infractions (e.g., 2:8; 3:9–12; 5:5, 21–25; 7:1–10; cf. Deut 14:21–28; 15:1–18; 22:13–30; 24:14–18, 19–22) precipitate a crisis that threatens the nation's very existence (5:2; cf. Deut 30:15–18). The remedial path within this framework is one of repentance, which offers the prospect of divine forbearance and national restoration (5:14–15; cf. Deut 1:41–46; 4:29–31; 30:1–11, 19).

1 This perspective is exemplified in the work of scholars who see Deuteronomy's ideology as central to the prophetic critique. See, for instance, A.D.H. Mayes, "Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament," *JSOT* 24/82 (1999) 57–82, https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929902408204.

2 For Wolff, the call to 'seek the Lord and live' (5:4–6) is the quintessential Deuteronomistic call to repentance within a covenantal framework (H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1977]). Paul similarly emphasises the legal and treaty-based language underpinning the oracles against the nations and Israel (S.M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1991] 39).

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As Frank Seilhamer contends, this pattern of sin, repentance, and salvation constitutes the orthodoxy of Israel's covenant religion.[3] Consequently, Amos's prophecy is often seen to emphasise a dual outcome contingent on Israel's conduct: blessings and salvation for obedience, versus curses and punitive judgement for disobedience.[4] This covenantal interpretation has proven indispensable for appreciating the book's emphasis on moral accountability and divine justice.

While this Deuteronomistic reading provides a coherent and valuable interpretative lens, this article proposes deepening its account of sin and salvation in Amos by situating it within a broader theological context. The present study argues that the scope of Israel's transgressions and YHWH's corresponding salvific action, while coherent within the covenant, ultimately extends into the cosmic realm. This article, therefore, does not seek to replace the Deuteronomistic paradigm, but to complement it by arguing that the covenant itself is embedded within the prior and more fundamental reality of YHWH's cosmic temple.[5] The covenant at Sinai was established in a world already created as Yahweh's sacred dwelling.[6] Thus, covenant life was, from its inception, about maintaining the sanctity of that divine space.

By employing a hermeneutic of cosmic temple imagination, this article resituates Amos's theology within the overarching pattern of creation–decreation–recreation that encompasses the entire cosmos. Through a focused analysis of the hymnic passages (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) and their literary contexts, it will demonstrate that the prophetic vision of salvation is fundamentally oriented toward the restoration of YHWH's cosmic temple. Within this enriched framework, Israel's sins are not merely legal or moral failures, but represent a cosmic rebellion against the Creator-King, which actively disrupts the sanctity and order of His divine dwelling place; a reality microcosmically represented by the earthly sanctuary. The prophetic response to this cosmic crisis is an eschatological intervention, climactically realised on the Day of the Lord. This ultimate salvific act entails a twofold cosmic process:

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3 F.H. Seilhamer, "The Role of the Covenant in the Mission and Message of Amos," *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* (eds. H.N. Bream – R.D. Heim – C.A. Moore) (Gettysburg Theological Studies 4; Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press 1974) 435–451. Cf. G.R. Hamborg, *Still Selling the Righteous: A Redactional-Critical Investigation of Reasons for Judgment in Amos 2.6–16* (LHBOTS 555; New York – London: Clark 2012).

4 M.D. Carroll R., *Amos—The Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos* (Louisville, KY – London: Westminster John Knox 2002). See also M.J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Siphrut 1; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2009) 112–113.

5 Moberly's work demonstrates that the patriarchal and creational traditions provide the encompassing theological context within which the later Mosaic covenant is situated and understood. See R.W.L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (OBT; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1992; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock 2001).

6 The Deuteronomistic framework is embedded within a larger cosmic theology, premised on the fact that the covenant at Sinai was established in a world already created as Yahweh's sacred dwelling. See E.B. de Souza, "Sanctuary: Cosmos, Covenant, and Creation," *JATS* 24/1 (2013) 25–41; and J.J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1995).

the decreation of a corrupted order, followed by the recreation and reestablishment of YHWH's cosmic temple, thereby achieving the final restoration for which the covenant originally served as a guide.

1. Cosmic Temple Imagination

While the Book of Amos does not employ the modern lexical categories of 'cosmic' or 'cosmos', the conceptual framework of a divinely ordered universe was integral to the ancient Israelite worldview. The term 'cosmic', derived from 'cosmos', denotes the totality of the created order – the heavens, the earth, and all that is within them. Jon Levenson clarifies that this encompasses 'the creator and all created things within the spheres of the heavens above, the earth, and the earth below,' a structure fundamentally articulated in the creation narrative of Gen 1:1–2:3 and frequently expressed in Hebrew through merisms such as 'heaven and earth'.[7] In the context of this study, the term 'cosmic' thus refers to a conceptual framework that elucidates the vast interconnectedness of all existence, providing a hermeneutical lens through which Amos's oracles of judgement and restoration can be understood as transcending a purely national-covenantal context to engage with the fate of the entire created order.

To communicate these transcendent realities, biblical authors, like others in the ancient world, relied on potent literary and conceptual devices, chief among them being theological imagination. This faculty functions not as mere fantasy but as a generative capacity to reconstrue reality from a divine perspective, allowing religious communities to navigate their historical experience.[8] Its dynamic nature facilitates multi-layered interpretations, permitting new theological messages to emerge across shifting circumstances. A prime example in Amos is the recurring title 'YHWH, the God of hosts' (יהוה אלהי הצבאות, cf. 3:13; 4:13; 5:14–16, 27; 6:8, 14), which portrays the deity as the cosmic sovereign.[9] This epithet actively invites the audience to envision YHWH as the supreme ruler, marshalling celestial armies and governing both human history and cosmic conditions.[10] Consequently, Amos's strategic use of such cosmic imagery is not merely decorative; it embodies a core theological

7 J.D. Levenson, "Cosmos and Microcosm," *Cult and Cosmos: Tilting toward a Temple-Centered Theology* (ed. L.M. Morales) (BTS 18; Leuven: Peeters 2014) 227–248. See also J.R. Roberts, "Biblical Cosmology: The Implications for Bible Translation," *Journal of Translation* 9/2 (2013) 1–53.

8 P. Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (ed. M.I. Wallace; trans. D. Pellaeur) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg – Fortress 1995) 8. Cf. W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1997).

9 J. Whitley, "עיפה in Amos 4:13: New Evidence for the Yahwistic Incorporation of Ancient Near Eastern Solar Imagery," *JBL* 134/1 (2015) 135–136, https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1341.2015.2633.

10 D. Heyns, "Theology in Pictures: The Visions of Amos," *'Feet on Level Ground': A South African Tribute of Old Testament Essays in Honor of Gerhard Hasel* (eds. K. Van Wyk – J. Coetzee) (Berrien Springs, MI: Hester 1996) 214.

vision intended to provoke a radical reorientation in his audience's perception of God and the world.

Functioning as a hermeneutical tool, this imagination provides the essential conceptual lens for accessing the ancient worldview that undergirds the text's most profound logic. It enables the reconstruction of the 'symbolic universe' – the integrated network of symbols and narratives through which Amos and his audience perceived reality.[11] Within this prophetic context, the 'cosmic temple' operates as the central, master symbol, a grid that coherently binds together the themes of creation, divine sovereignty, justice, and worship.[12] By applying this tool, the interpreter can discern the profound connection between localised human actions, such as social injustice, and their cosmic consequences, such as earthquakes and darkness. This hermeneutic reveals that Amos's rhetoric is not poetic exaggeration but the articulation of a stark theological reality: sins committed within the world, understood as God's sanctuary, constitute a direct assault on the cosmic order itself, provoking a divine response of decreation. Thus, imagination enables a reading that frames Israel's history not as a narrow national saga but as part of the grand cosmic drama of God's governance over and ultimate restoration of His creation-sanctuary.

The preceding discussion establishes the significance of a cosmic imagination for conceptualising both Israel's deity and the created world. James Linville contends that this mode of thinking originates in ancient mythic motifs, wherein unlimited, non-physical realities were projected onto limited, physical forms.[13] This cognitive process fundamentally involves juxtaposing macrocosmic (the entire cosmos) and microcosmic (a smaller reflection, such as the temple or humanity) dimensions. In this imaginative framework, the physical temple exists within the terrestrial realm, but it is understood as a tangible projection or microcosmic reflection of the broader cosmic order, which functions as the royal palace of the divine king. Within the Book of Amos, this interrelationship is linguistically embedded in the use of foundational spatial terms such as 'the earth' (הארץ), 'the heavens' (השמים), and 'the sea' (הים). It is particularly evident in the latter part of the book (9:5–6), where YHWH is simultaneously the one who 'touches the earth' and 'builds his upper chambers in the heavens'. These elements are framed within an integrated cosmic structure,[14] reflecting the prophet's vision of a *continuum* between the macrocosmic and microcosmic spheres. In this imaginative framework, heaven and earth are not bifurcated realms but exist in a dynamic

11 Cf. W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2 revised ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2001) 14.

12 M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. W.R. Trask) (Orlando, FL: Harcourt 1987) 44–45; M.A. Fishbane, "The Sacred Center: The Symbolic Structure of the Bible," *Text and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His Students* (eds. M.A. Fishbane – P.R. Flohr) (Leiden: Brill 1975) 6–27; J.R. Davila, "The Macrocosmic Temple, Scriptural Exegesis, and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," *DSD* 9/1 (2002) 1–19; and L.M. Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (BTS 15; Leuven: Peeters 2012).

13 J.R. Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination* (SOTSMS; Hampshire: Ashgate 2008) 4.

14 A. Schart, "The Fifth Vision of Amos in Context," *Thematic Thread in the Book of the Twelve* (eds. P.L. Redditt – A. Schart) (Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2003) 56–58.

and interconnected relationship, a conception that underscores the fundamental unity and coherence of the created order under YHWH's ultimate sovereignty.

This macro-microcosmic relationship is characterised by a continuous and consequential interplay. Hayes argues that the deployment of these dimensional elements (cf. 5:7–8) implies a dynamic interrelationship between social justice and cosmic order, a connection also evident in texts such as Ps 89:10–11 (English: 9–10).[15] In the ancient cognitive environment, it was a foundational presumption that all dimensions of human life were embedded within the cosmic order. It is manifested in Amos's literary composition through a series of oracles, vignettes, and surreal visions, in which disparate realities (past, present, future, and trans-historical) are juxtaposed and interwoven.[16] Within this worldview, the health of the social order directly reflects, and indeed affects, the stability of the cosmic order. Therefore, any societal instability or injustice – chaos precipitated by human action – inevitably disturbs the cosmic equilibrium. The prophetic logic dictates that events within the created world are of profound consequence to the divine. In other words, human (earthly) reality integrally affects the divine (heavenly) reality, and *vice versa*, within a single, cohesive cosmic system.

In Hebrew religious thought, the intrinsic connection between cosmic dimensions and the divine abode culminates in the concept of a cosmic temple. Fundamentally, the temple serves as the dwelling place (בית) of Israel's deity, a sacred space where His presence is uniquely manifest (cf. Exod 40:34–35).[17] Its sanctity derives from divine election and consecration, establishing it as the sanctuary where God resides among His people, meets with them, and receives their worship (cf. 1 Kgs 8:10–13; 2 Chr 7:1–2). Critically, this institution carries a profound cosmic dimension, a concept rooted in its functional origins as depicted in Gen 1, which is frequently interpreted as narrating the inauguration of God's cosmic temple.[18] Consequently, while the physical temple exists within the terrestrial realm, it is understood as a tangible projection or microcosmic reflection of a heavenly, cosmic sanctuary. This cosmic sanctuary functions as the royal palace of the divine king, the central locus from which He governs creation. This concept is rooted in texts such as 1 Kgs 8:27–30, 39, 43, 49, where Solomon dedicates the Jerusalem temple as the earthly dwelling of Yahweh, the God of heaven, from which He hears the prayers of His people. Hundley aptly summarises this concept, stating that the temple represents 'a vertical and

15 K.M. Hayes, "The Mourning Earth (Amos 1:2) and the God Who is," *WW* 28/2 (2008) 147.

16 Cf. Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 32.

17 J. Palmer, "Exodus and the Biblical Theology of the Tabernacle," *Heaven on Earth: The Temple and Biblical Theology* (eds. T.D. Alexander – S. Gathercole) (Carlisle: Paternoster 2004) 14; Cf. D. Lioy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture* (StBibLit 138; New York – Washington, DC/Baltimore – Bern: Lang 2010); A. Kampf, "The Conceptualization of God's Dwelling Place in 1 Kings 8: A Cognitive Approach," *JSOT* 40/4 (2016) 451–465, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089215613901.

18 J.H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Lost World Series; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2009) 71–91. Beale has rigorously argued that Gen 1 itself best understood as narrating the inauguration of God's cosmic temple. See G.K. Beale, *The Temple and Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 15; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2004) 66–79.

horizontal cosmic *axis*, the very center of the world around which all else revolves.'[19] Thus, the temple transcends its identity as a mere localised structure; it is a cosmic focal point that embodies the interconnectedness of heaven and earth and the absolute centrality of divine rule and worship.

This concept of the cosmic temple is not an isolated theological abstraction but aligns intimately with ancient Hebrew cosmogony and cosmology, reflecting ideological parallels shared across the creation traditions of the Ancient Near East.[20] Within the specific biblical context, this concept is deeply intertwined with the Gen 1 creation narrative. L. Michael Morales observes a 'strong correspondence or vivid parallelism between the creation texts (cf. Gen 1:1–2:3) and the tabernacle texts (Exod 25–31; 35; 39–40).'[21] This literary and theological correspondence is further reinforced by the architectural design of both the Tabernacle and the Solomonic Temple, which incorporated cosmic motifs – such as the sea, the pillars, and the celestial decor – that mirror the structure of the created world. Levenson advances this perspective, arguing that within ancient Israelite religious thought, the created world itself was understood as the primary temple.[22] In this view, the physical temple functions as a microcosm, a scaled-down embodiment of the ordered universe. God's act of creating the heavens and the earth is thus portrayed as the establishment of His Tabernacle, a sacred space wherein He resides and rules over creation. The temple, therefore, both symbolises and, in its cultic function, actualises the cosmic order, serving as the definitive focal point for divine presence and governance.

As the definitive meeting place, the cosmic temple serves as the primary *locus* for divine–human interaction. Hundley elucidates that the temple embodies both the architectural form and the ritual forum for this communication, with these very interactions constituting its essential purpose and content.[23] This dynamic and reciprocal relationship is central to ancient Near Eastern belief systems, in which the temple serves as a conduit for deities to influence humanity and, conversely, for humanity to influence the divine. While divine–human contact in other ancient contexts was often sporadic and mediated through myths, epics, and dreams, the temple regularised the divine presence, providing a stable, structured setting for engagement with the sacred.[24] This inherent reciprocity underscores that the temple's sacred space is not merely a static throne for a distant deity, but rather the critical point of intersection (*axis mundi*) where heavenly and earthly realms, along with their respective presences and influences, actively converge. The cosmic temple is thus

19 M.B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East* (WAWSup 3; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2013) 136. Cf. J.R. Middleton, *A New Heaven: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2014) 47–48; M.B. Hundley, *Keeping Heaven on Earth: Safeguarding the Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle* (FAT 2/50; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011).

20 V.A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup 115; Sheffield: JSOT 1992) 335.

21 Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figures*, 249–251.

22 J.D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64/3 (1984) 286–287, 296.

23 Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 131.

24 Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 341.

established as the vital nexus for sustaining and nurturing the core relationship between the divine and humanity.[25]

It is within this well-established framework of cosmic temple imagination that the prophet Amos articulates his message. As the subsequent analysis will demonstrate, the prophet's oracles are fundamentally centred on YHWH, who is portrayed as enthroned in His temple as His heavenly abode. This divine presence – the ultimate reality that acts and interacts within the cosmic realm – is presented as the universe's actual focal point. Interpreting Amos through this lens, Linville contends that all created things revolve conceptually around the envisioned ultimate reality: YHWH, who cosmically resides in and sovereignly rules from His sacred dwelling.[26] This sacred space, frequently depicted in archetypal forms such as a 'mountain or garden',[27] aligns with foundational ancient Hebrew conceptions of divine cosmic representation. Consequently, a constellation of related terms – the Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, the Temple as the House of Yahweh, Zion, and Jerusalem – function as interchangeable and essential symbols in shaping the image of Israel's cosmic deity. It is through this pervasive cosmic temple imagery that Amos's audience would have comprehended his sweeping oracles, which encompass themes of international warfare, divine judgement, and ultimate salvation. This cohesive, imaginative framework not only underscores YHWH's absolute sovereignty over all creation but also provides the necessary hermeneutical lens for understanding the profound interconnectedness of the prophet's seemingly disparate messages.

2. The Hymns in Amos: A Foundation for Cosmic Theology

Following the lead of John D.W. Watts,[28] a significant stream of scholarship has questioned the originality of the hymnic passages (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6), viewing them as later liturgical interpolations.[29] Tchavdar S. Hadjiev, for instance, argues in his redaction-critical study that these hymns were added by a later scribal hand to temper the prophet's message of unrelenting judgement.[30] Without resolving the historical-critical question of authorship, this study focuses on the rhetorical and theological functions of these hymns in the final form

25 J.M. Lundquist, "What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall* (eds. H.B. Huffmon – F.A. Spina – A.R.W. Green) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1983) 205–209.

26 Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 32.

27 Cf. R.J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (HSM 4; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1972).

28 J.D.W. Watts, "An Old Hymn Preserved in the Book of Amos," *JNES* 15/1 (1956) 33–39.

29 G. Farr, "The Language of Amos, Popular or Cultic?," *VT* 16/3 (1966) 312–324; P.R. Noble, "The Literary Structure of Amos: A Thematic Analysis," *JBL* 114/2 (1995) 209–226, https://doi.org/10.2307/3266936; J. Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Old Testament Theology; New York: Cambridge University Press 2012) 145–146.

30 T.S. Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos* (BZAW 393; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2009) 111–123.

of the canonical text. Their strategic placement at critical junctures – whether by Amos or a brilliant redactor – creates a deliberate dialectic that reframes the surrounding oracles. As such, they are indispensable for understanding the book's ultimate theological architecture, which is our primary focus.

The literary architecture of Amos reveals a sophisticated theological strategy through its incorporation of hymnic passages (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) that disrupt the prophetic discourse with their doxological tone. Scholars have recognised these texts as formal hymns, characterised by their participial descriptions of divine action, strophic structure, and doxological purpose.[31] However, their significance extends beyond mere formal classification to strategic theological positioning. These hymns serve as deliberate theological anchors at critical junctures in Amos's argument. Each hymn appears at a moment of rhetorical climax: 4:13 concludes the devastating sequence of failed chastisements; 5:8–9 punctuates the lament over Israel's fallen state; and 9:5–6 stands at the structural centre of the final vision of inescapable judgement. This strategic placement suggests these are not random liturgical interpolations but carefully positioned theological markers that reframe the surrounding oracles. As Stefan Paas observes, these hymns highlight 'the actions of Yahweh in dealing with the earth and its inhabitants',[32] forcing listeners to reinterpret local judgements within a cosmic framework. The hymns thus create a constant dialectic between Israel's parochial failures and YHWH's cosmic sovereignty, establishing the theological scale necessary for understanding the prophet's message in its full extent.

The theological potency of these hymnic anchors emerges from their concentrated articulation of YHWH's creative agency. When analysed systematically, these passages present a comprehensive portrait of divine sovereignty over the entire cosmic order. The consistent use of participial forms: יוצר ('forming'), ברא ('creating'), עשה ('making'), בונה ('building'), portrays creative activity not as a completed past event but as an ongoing divine identity. Frank Adu correctly notes that these doxologies focus intently on YHWH as the subject of creation,[33] a focus that becomes unmistakable when the data are systematically organised.

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31 Cf. T.E. McComiskey, "The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos: A Study of Form-Critical Methodology," *JETS* 30/2 (1987) 139–157; J. Ben-Dov, "World Order in the Doxologies of Amos and Job," *Ve-'Ed Ya'aleh (Gen 2:6): Essays in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Edward L. Greenstein* (eds. P. Machinist et al.) (WAWSup 6; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2021) II, 693–711; W. de Angelo Cunha, "Creation Faith in the Prophets: The Use of Ancient Israelite Doxologies (Amos 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) in Amos," *The Hebrew Bible / Old Testament and Scribal Scholarship in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (eds. W. de Angelo Cunha – M.N. van der Meer – M. Rösel) (OBO 306; Leuven: Peeters 2025) 1–18.

32 S. Paas, "Seeing and Singing: Visions and Hymns in the Book of Amos," *VT* 52/2 (2002) 253.

33 F. Adu, "The Concept of Yahweh in the Hymnic Doxologies of Amos 4:13, 5:8–9, and 9:5–6," *BTB* 52/1 (2021) 4, https://doi.org/10.1177/01461079211038493.

Table 1. YHWH, the Cosmic Creator: a structural analysis of the hymnic verses

Hymn reference	Creator verb	Created object	Cosmic domain
4:13	יצר (*yṣr*, forms)	הרים (*hrym*, mountains)	Earth
4:13	ברא (*brʾ*, creates)	רוח (*rwḥ*, wind)	Heavens/Atmosphere
5:8	עשה (*ʿśh*, makes)	כימה וכסיל (*kymh wksyl*, Pleiades and Orion)	Heavens
9:6	בנה (*bnh*, builds)	בשמים מעלותיו (*bšmym mʿlwtyw*, his stairs in heaven)	Heavens
9:6	יסד (*ysd*, found)	ואגדתו על־ארץ (*wʾgdtw ʿl-ʾrṣ*, his vault upon earth)	Earth

Table 1 demonstrates that the hymns are not generic accounts of creation but are steeped in imagery that directly evokes Yahweh's cosmic temple-palace, moving beyond mere verb lists to a nuanced understanding of their symbolic resonance. The opening hymn in Amos 4:13 establishes this tone with its powerful pairing of verbs and their objects: 'For behold, he who forms the mountains (יוצר הרים) and creates the wind (וברא רוח).' The distinction between יצר, which implies the fashioning of something tangible like a potter with clay, and ברא, which denotes a sovereign, divine act of bringing something into existence, is significant.[34] It is not a redundant couplet. It proclaims Yahweh's sovereignty over the entire spectrum of creation: from the most stable, visible, and enduring features of the earth – the mountains – to the most invisible, powerful, and uncontrollable force – the wind or spirit.[35] This pairing functions as a merism, declaring His absolute command over both the solid foundation and the dynamic atmosphere of His cosmic domain, establishing the 'creational baseline' as a world utterly dependent on its Maker.

This theme of absolute sovereignty is further radicalised in the hymnic portion of Amos 5:8, which states that He 'made the Pleiades and Orion' (עשה כימה וכסיל). To the modern reader, this may seem a simple reference to starlight, but in the Ancient Near Eastern context, this is a profound theological claim. Constellations such as the Pleiades and Orion were not mere celestial decorations; they were often revered as divine beings or as instruments under the control of high gods who used them to govern the cosmic order, seasons, and human fates.[36] By naming these specific constellations and identifying Yahweh as their Maker, Amos engages in a potent polemic. He is asserting that the

34 Adu, "The Concept of Yahweh in the Hymnic Doxologies of Amos 4:13, 5:8–9, and 9:5–6," 3–16.

35 Cf. Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, 248.

36 N. Ayali-Darshan, "The Polemical Cosmogony in the Doxologies of Amos (4:13; 5:8; 9:5–6)," *VT* 75/1 (2024) 10–31, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685330-bja10164; Adu, "The Concept of Yahweh in the Hymnic Doxologies of Amos 4:13, 5:8–9, and 9:5–6," 3–16; T. Collins, "Threading as a Stylistic Feature of Amos," *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (ed. J.C. de Moor) (OtSt 45; Leiden: Brill 2001) 94–104; Cf. M. Albani, "'Der das Siebengestirn und den Orion Macht,' Amos 5:8: zur Bedeutung der Plejaden in der Israelitischen Religionsgeschichte," *Religionsgeschichte Israels. Formale und materiale Aspekte* (eds. B. Janowski – M. Köckert) (VWGTh 15; Gütersloh: Gütersloher 1999) 139–207; and A. Angelini, "Representing YHWH as the Master of the Stars in the

celestial powers which other nations worshipped are, in fact, the created artifacts of Israel's God. It demythologises the heavens and strips them of any perceived autonomy, placing them firmly under the command of Yahweh, the Cosmic King, who marshals all forces from His temple-palace.

The most explicit cosmic temple imagery emerges in the architectural language of the final hymn in Amos 9:5–6, which describes the Lord as He 'who builds his upper chambers in the heavens (הבונה בשמים מעלותיו) and has founded his vaulted dome upon the earth (ואגדתו על־ארץ יסדה).' The term מעלה can refer to ascending steps or the upper stories of a building.[37] In this cosmic context, it powerfully evokes the image of a stairway or ziggurat connecting heaven and earth (cf. a divine staircase akin to Jacob's ladder at Bethel [Gen 28:12]), solidifying the cosmos as a tiered temple complex with God in His heavenly holy of holies. Simultaneously, the term אגדתו, meaning 'his vault' or 'his bound-together dome', describes the foundational arch of the sky.[38] By stating that Yahweh has 'founded' this vault upon the earth, the prophet portrays Him as the Divine Architect, who has established the firmament itself (cf. Gen 1:6–8) as the roof of His terrestrial temple. This verse provides the most compelling visual: Yahweh is simultaneously constructing His celestial palace ('his upper chambers') and securing its foundation on earth ('his vault'), portraying the entire cosmos as a single, integrated, and sacred architectural project – His royal abode.

Therefore, a close reading of the hymns confirms their role as more than doxological interruptions. The careful pairing of 'forming' and 'creating', the sovereign appropriation and command of the constellations, and the explicit architectural imagery of building and founding, all coalesce to portray Yahweh not merely as a powerful deity, but specifically as the Divine King enthroned in and ruling from His cosmic temple-palace. This detailed understanding of the hymns as foundational texts of cosmic temple theology provides the necessary exegetical groundwork for the prophetic logic that follows; rebellion against this Cosmic Sovereign and the desecration of His sanctuary necessitate a response of commensurate cosmic scale.

Table 1 thus reveals a deity whose sovereignty encompasses every cosmic domain – from the terrestrial stability of mountains to the celestial bodies that govern time and seasons, to the very atmosphere itself. Particularly significant is the architectural language in 9:6, where YHWH 'builds his stairs in heaven' and establishes 'his vault upon earth'. This terminology directly evokes the cosmic temple imagery discussed earlier, portraying creation not as a neutral space but as a carefully constructed divine palace. As John H. Walton has argued, ancient Near Eastern cosmology, including Israel's, frequently conceived of the cosmos as a temple.[39] The Amos hymns thus present a universe that is fundamentally ordered, sacred, and centred on YHWH's sovereign presence. Furthermore, Hilary F. Marlow emphasises

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Context of Ancient Near Eastern Astral Cults: Job, Amos, and Beyond," *SEC* 18/1 (2025) 151–164, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.SEC.5.152639.

37 Ayali-Darshan, "The Polemical Cosmogony in the Doxologies of Amos (4:13; 5:8; 9:5–6)," 10–31.

38 Ben-Dov, "World Order in the Doxologies of Amos and Job," II, 693–711.

39 Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 78–85.

that these cosmic elements underscore the Creator's ultimate power to bring the universe into existence and sustain its operations.[40]

The cumulative effect of these strategically placed hymnic affirmations is to establish what may be termed the 'creational baseline' – the cosmos as a divinely ordered, sacred space under YHWH's sovereign rule. This baseline serves as the fundamental theological presupposition that makes sense of Amos's entire prophetic project. By first establishing YHWH's identity as Cosmic Creator, the prophet radically recontextualises Israel's situation.[41] The social injustices, economic exploitation, and cultic abuses that Amos meticulously documents (2:6–8; 5:10–12; 8:4–6) are thereby exposed not merely as covenant violations but as a fundamental rebellion against the cosmic order itself. Israel's sins represent a direct assault on the moral and metaphysical architecture of creation, a point that becomes terrifyingly clear when the hymns are read in their literary contexts.

The theological consequence is inescapable: rebellion against the Cosmic Sovereign necessitates a cosmic response. The coming judgement cannot be understood as a conventional political misfortune but must be interpreted as the Creator's action against a corrupted creation. It explains why Amos consistently employs cosmic imagery for the judgement, mentioning earthquakes, darkened heavens, and ecological catastrophe (8:8–9), and why the 'Day of the Lord' (יום יהוה) is portrayed as a cosmic unravelling rather than a mere military defeat (5:18–20).[42] The creational baseline established by the hymns thus provides the necessary theological foundation for understanding the decreation motif that follows, demonstrating that the pattern of creation–decreation–recreation is not imposed on the text but emerges from its own structural and theological logic.

A potential objection to this cosmic-temple-centric reading is the book's overwhelming focus on very concrete, historical, social sins and its specific oracles against neighbouring nations. Does this not confirm the primacy of the Deuteronomistic and ethical-prophetic interpretation? On the contrary, the cosmic framework is what gives these social sins their ultimate theological gravity. The exploitation of people experiencing poverty and the perversion of justice (2:6–8; 5:10–12) are not merely breaches of the covenant; they are acts that vandalise the *imago Dei* within the cosmic temple (cf. Gen 1:26–28) and thus strike at the moral architecture of creation itself. Similarly, the oracles against the nations (ch. 1–2) are not just about international politics but establish Yahweh's jurisdiction as Cosmic King over all peoples, holding them accountable to a creational standard of morality. The prophet's method is to start with the known and concrete (covenant, social justice) and reveal its inseparable connection to the ultimate and cosmic (creation, temple).

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40 H.F. Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009) 138.

41 Cunha, "Creation Faith in the Prophets," 1–18.

42 B. Shimon, "The Day of the Lord," *JBQ* 38/3 (2010) 149–156.

3. From Creation to Decreation: The Hymns as Framework for Judgement

The following section demonstrates that this baseline provides the essential theological framework for understanding the nature of divine judgement in Amos, a function that aligns with the role that these hymns have in framing divine action within a cosmic context.[43] The ensuing analysis turns to the principle of inversion, whereby the same sovereign, creative power celebrated in the hymns is wielded to systematically dismantle the corrupted cosmic order. To substantiate this claim, the analysis will juxtapose the specific creative acts from the hymns with their corresponding decreative inversions in the surrounding judgement oracles. The table below is not merely a descriptive list but also serves as an analytical tool to visually map this precise, literary-theological strategy, revealing decreation as the Creator's targeted unravelling of creation.

The establishment of YHWH as the Cosmic Creator in the hymnic passages creates a profound theological tension: how can the sovereign architect of a perfectly ordered cosmos respond when that very order is systematically corrupted by its inhabitants? The prophetic logic of Amos provides a startling answer. The same creative power celebrated in the hymns becomes the instrument of creation's unmaking. This pattern is not a chronological report, but a theological framework used by the prophet (or final redactor) to interpret the meaning of the judgement: it is not mere punishment, but the systematic undoing of the created order by its Creator. R. Reed Lessing aptly identifies this terrifying transition, observing that within their literary context, the hymns now portray YHWH as the 'cosmic decreator'.[44] This decreation, however, is not the emergence of a new or contrary divine attribute. Instead, it represents the inversion of the divine creative power. The sovereign authority to build (בנה) becomes the authority to dismantle; the power to form (יצר) becomes the power to deform. This principle of inversion provides the essential hermeneutical key to understanding the nature of divine judgement in Amos. The oracles of punishment that surround the hymns are not arbitrary acts of vengeance but constitute a systematic reversal of the created order, a deliberate unravelling of the cosmic fabric by the one who wove it.

This inversion subverts the audience's complacent assumptions about God's benevolence and the stability of their world (9:10). Paas notes that Amos fundamentally transforms the traditional function of these hymns, turning expressions of cosmic confidence into declarations of impending cosmic chaos.[45] The startling theological claim is that the deity who ordained cosmic order also has the power to bring about chaos. The hymns, therefore, frame the judgement by defining the magnitude of the power being brought to bear against a people in rebellion against their cosmic king. This rebellion, as explored through the lens of cosmic temple imagination, is not merely a social or legal failure but

43 S. Paas, *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (OtSt 47; Leiden – Boston: Brill 2003) 434–436.

44 R.R. Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake in the Book of the Twelve," *CTQ* 74 (2010) 249.

45 Paas, *Creation and Judgement*, 434–436.

a sacrilege within the divine sanctuary of creation, demanding a response proportional to the cosmic scale of the offense.

This theoretical framework of inversion finds concrete expression in the precise literary relationship between the hymnic verses and the judgement oracles that envelop them. To substantiate this claim, the analysis will juxtapose the specific creative acts from the hymns with their corresponding decreative inversions. The table below is not merely a descriptive list but also serves as an analytical tool to visually map this precise, literary-theological strategy, revealing decreation as the Creator's targeted unravelling of creation.

Table 2. The inversion of creative power – from creation to decreation in Amos

References	Creative acts (from Hymns)	Inverted decreative acts (in Judgement Oracles)	Effect/ interpretation
Amos 4:13; 9:5	Forms the mountains (יצר הרים)	Touches the earth so it melts (נגע בארץ ותמוג)	Undoing terrestrial stability
Amos 5:8; 8:9	Makes Pleiades and Orion (עשה כימה וכסיל)	Makes go down the sun at noon (בוא השמש בצהרים); Darkens the earth in broad daylight (חשך לארץ ביום אור)	Reversing celestial order
Amos 5:8	Calls the waters of the sea (קרא למי־הים)	Pours them out on the surface of the earth (שפך על־פני הארץ)	Unleashing chaotic waters
Amos 9:1, 6	Builds his stairs in heaven בשמים (בנה מעלותיו)	Stands by/on the altar ... strike the capitals (נצב על־המזבח הך הכפתור)	Attacking the temple as a cosmic microcosm

As the Table 2 demonstrates, the judgement oracles in Amos do not introduce foreign concepts of punishment but systematically invert the Creator's core attributes celebrated in the hymns. The prophet's rhetoric is one of precise, theological sabotage. For instance, the deity who 'builds his stairs in heaven' (9:6), establishing his cosmic temple, is the same who 'stands by the altar' to 'strike the capitals so that the thresholds shake' (9:1). The hymns systematically portray YHWH as the sovereign over every cosmic domain. This description establishes His absolute authority, which provides the basis for the judgement that follows: the one who built the cosmos has the right to dismantle it. It is not merely the punishment of a cultic site but an assault on the microcosmic representation of the cosmic temple itself, a point Linville reinforces by noting that this platform reveals the divine reality behind the earthly structure.[46] The act of striking the temple's pillars carries a profound cosmic significance. As Paas argues, the destruction of a temple's architectural features, its thresholds and columns, serves a cosmic purpose which is the annihilation of creation by dismantling its perceived *axis*.[47]

Similarly, the God who 'calls the waters of the sea' (5:8), demonstrating his command over cosmic boundaries, is the one who now 'pours them out on the surface of the earth' (5:8),

46 Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 5, 160.

47 S. Paas, "'He Who Builds the Stairs into Heaven ...' (Amos 9:6)," *UF* 25 (1993) 319–325.

unleashing the primal forces of chaos upon the ordered land. This inversion directly undermines the stability of the cosmic order, in which the separation of waters was a fundamental act of creation (Gen 1:6–7). This pattern proves that the concept of decreation is an exegetical reality in Amos, a deliberate literary and theological strategy that frames national judgement as a cosmic crisis. The Creator's tools of formation have become the Decreator's instruments of dissolution.

The inversion principle finds its ultimate and most terrifying expression in Amos's portrayal of the 'Day of the Lord' (יום יהוה). This anticipated day, far from being one of national vindication as some might have hoped (5:18–20), is presented as the climactic moment of cosmic decreation. The imagery associated with it represents the totality of the unravelling, where the discrete acts of destruction coalesce into a comprehensive cosmic collapse. The imagery associated with the day; the earthquake that makes the earth 'rise and fall like the Nile' (8:8; 9:5), the darkening of the sun at noon (8:9), and the mourning of the whole earth (8:8; 9:5), are not random cataclysms but the culmination of the decreation pattern, affecting every domain of YHWH's creation.

Scholarly observations on these phenomena coalesce powerfully within this framework. Rolf Rendtorff's emphasis that this day is one of 'evil and darkness' for Israel[48] perfectly captures its de-creative essence, a time when the very light created in Gen 1:3–5 is extinguished. The flood motif, which Morales links to ancient curse traditions and the Noahic narrative,[49] symbolises a destructive event, a reversal of creation back towards a pre-creational state of watery chaos. Furthermore, the 'literal seismic imagery' that Lessing identifies as a rhetorical strategy to convey impending doom[50] is theologised here. It is not merely a metaphor for social upheaval but represents the literal and symbolic shaking of the foundations of the cosmic temple, of which the land of Israel is a part.

The Day of the Lord is also intrinsically linked to the theophany of the Divine Warrior. The 'God of hosts' (אלהי הצבאות), a title laden with cosmic and martial significance, reveals Himself in judgement (3:13; 5:14–16, 27). On the Day of the Lord, this Divine Warrior-King, whose identity is anchored by the hymns, wages the final battle from Zion (1:2). As the roaring lion (1:2; 3:4, 8), a metaphor that, as Strawn shows, emphasises YHWH's predatory and terrifying power,[51] He hunts and devours the guilty. His victory is measured not by conventional military success but by the comprehensive destruction of a corrupted order. This totalising judgement, however, serves an ultimately redemptive purpose within the cosmic drama, thereby setting the stage for the hope of a subsequent, more glorious recreation, in which the cosmic temple will be restored to its intended pristine glory.

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48 R. Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (eds. J.D. Nogalski – M.A. Sweeney) (SymS 15; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2000) 81.

49 Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figures*, 121–193.

50 Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake," 244–246.

51 B.A. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO 212; Fribourg – Göttingen: Academic Press – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2005) 34–36.

4. Recreation and the Restoration of the Cosmic Temple

The Book of Amos culminates in a vision of eschatological hope in which salvation is achieved through the recreation and restoration of the cosmic temple (9:11–15). The Amosian authorship of this concluding oracle (9:11–15) is widely disputed, with many critics, including James D. Nogalski and Hadjiev, viewing it as a post-exilic addition that is meant to soften the book's bleak ending.[52] However, from a literary-theological perspective focused on the book's final form, this hopeful conclusion is not an arbitrary appendage but the logical and necessary culmination of the creation–decreation–recreation pattern established by the hymnic core. A narrative that begins with Yahweh as Creator (hymns) and moves through cosmic Decreation (judgement oracles) demands a final, restorative act to be complete. The hopeful end is thus a theological, if later clarified, culmination of the pattern embedded in the text. Therefore, while its historical provenance may be debated, its theological function within the canonical Book of Amos is indispensable and coherent with the cosmic-temple framework articulated throughout.

This restoration is inaugurated by the Divine Warrior-King, who, having purged the corrupted order, now acts as the Divine Architect. The prophecy is saturated with the language of constructive reversal: YHWH will 'raise' (קום) the fallen 'booth of David', 'rebuild' (בנה) its ruins, and 'close up' (גדר) its breaches (9:11). This terminology directly counters the destruction, signalling the reconstruction of the divine dwelling place. This recreation is not merely political but cosmic in scope, evoking the promise made to the patriarchs (cf. Gen 28:10–22) and culminating in the secure replanting of YHWH's people in a transformed and fertile land (9:13–15). As Jason Lecureux argues, these idealised conditions point to an eschatological kingdom that YHWH promises to restore under His sovereign rule, a reality that transcends mere historical restoration.[53] This final vision confirms that the prophet's central concept of salvation is the cosmic triumph of YHWH, who re-establishes His reign from a restored sanctuary, thereby returning all creation to its intended *shalom* (שלום).

This restorative climax demonstrates that the hymns of Amos embody a comprehensive pattern of creation–decreation–recreation. This pattern is not incidental but reflects a deep theological structure that echoes the macro-narrative of Gen 1–11.[54] As Gordon J. Wenham

52 J.D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 1993); Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos*, 111–123.

53 J. Lecureux, "Restored Hope? The Function of the Temple, Priest, and Cult as Restoration in the Book of the Twelve," *JSOT* 41/4 (2017) 493–510, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089216670543.

54 This study operates primarily from a literary-theological perspective focused on the final form of the canonical text. While acknowledging the well-established historical-critical consensus that the final redaction of the Pentateuch (including Gen 1–11) is later than the 8th-century prophet Amos (the *lex post prophetas* principle), the author contends that the traditions and cosmological concepts embedded in these texts – such as the divine ordering of chaos and a universal flood – predate their final composition and were part of the cultural and religious milieu of the Ancient Near East, including Israel. His argument is that the Book of Amos, in its canonical form, participates in and develops this conceptual pattern, regardless of the precise chronology of source composition.

observes, this foundational biblical sequence begins with creation (Gen 1:1–2:3), moves through its destruction in the flood (Gen 6:9–7:24), and culminates in a recreation cemented by the Noahic covenant (Gen 8:1–9:17).[55] Martin G. Klingbeil further establishes that this very pattern forms the core message of eighth-century prophetic literature, including Amos.[56] In Amos, this pattern is the key to understanding the idea of salvation that extends beyond the covenant. By framing Israel's fate within this cosmic framework, the prophet underscores the transformative power of YHWH's actions; the same sovereignty that created the cosmic temple and decreated it in the judgement is ultimately directed toward its glorious recreation, achieving the final restoration of His divine dwelling place.

Amos's creation–decreation–recreation pattern demands a theological excavation to reveal its ultimate objective, which is the prophet's radical redefinition of salvation itself. This salvific framework is rooted in the foundational premise that YHWH created the cosmos as His temple, a sacred dwelling place. Within this cosmic sanctuary, humanity, created in the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–28), was instated as theophanic representatives, tasked with functionally mediating God's sovereign presence throughout creation. Richard Lints contends that human beings are thus designed to be visible manifestations of the divine within the cosmic temple,[57] which itself constitutes the 'central nave of creation'.[58] This creational ontology provides the critical lens for diagnosing the crisis in Amos. Israel's sins – both social injustice and cultic corruption – are not merely legal infractions but represent a catastrophic failure of their priestly vocation (Exod 19:5–6).[59] They have defaced the divine image within themselves and desecrated the cosmic temple through their actions. Consequently, the decreative or destructive judgement is the necessary divine response to this systemic sacrilege. Therefore, in the Amosian vision, salvation cannot be a simple return to political normalcy. It must be understood as nothing less than the re-creation of the cosmic temple and the restoration of humanity to its original, priestly calling – a comprehensive healing of the relationship between the Creator, His image-bearers, and the created order itself.

Humanity's elevated status as divine image-bearers confers not only privilege but a fundamental responsibility for sustaining the cosmic order.[60] The actions of individuals and the community, therefore, have profound cosmological consequences, either upholding or destabilising the fabric of the created world. In Amos, this human tendency is

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55 G.J. Wenham, *Rethinking Genesis 1–11: Gateway to the Bible* (Didsbury Lecture Series; Eugene, OR: Cascade 2015) 1–2, 18, 52–53, 66–67.

56 M.G. Klingbeil, "Creation in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament: An Intertextual Approach," *JATS* 20/1–2 (2009) 19–54.

57 R. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (NSBT 36; Downers Grove, IL – Nottingham: IVP Academic – Apollos 2015) 70.

58 M. Reiss, "Adam: Created in the Image and Likeness of God," *JBQ* 39/3 (2011) 183–185.

59 J.A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on the Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (JSOTSup 395; London – New York: Clark 2004) 169.

60 This builds on the concept from Lints (*Identity and Idolatry*, 70) that humans functionally mediate God's presence.

catastrophically oriented toward wrongdoing, which is manifested in the systemic mistreatment of fellow human beings. The prophet's meticulous cataloguing of transgressions – including the selling of the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (2:6), trampling the poor (5:11), and denying justice to the oppressed (5:12) – reveals a society actively engaged in dehumanisation.[61] Theologically, these are not merely social or legal crimes; they are sacrilegious assaults on the 'image of God' within other persons. By destroying the divine image in others, Israel defaces the very representation of YHWH's sovereign presence within His cosmic temple. This pervasive violation of the created order triggers a commensurate response, as reflected in the hymns; the Cosmic King intervenes to strike down those who have damaged His image.[62] The ensuing decreation – the melting earth and darkened heavens – is thus the direct consequence of this ontological rebellion, demonstrating that sins against humanity are ultimately sins against the foundation of the divine order itself.

Israel's rebellion extends beyond the social sphere into the cultic, constituting a direct desacralisation of YHWH's dwelling place. The prophet indicts their religious practices at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba (4:4–5; 5:5, 21–26; 8:14), not for a lack of fervour, but for their fundamental incongruity with a life of injustice. Theologically, this is a crisis of cosmic proportions. The earthly temple functions as the *axis*, the sacred pivot, and microcosmic representation of the entire created order.[63] By engaging in syncretistic and hypocritical worship, Israel did not merely break the ritual law; they actively undermined the sanctity of the cosmic temple's earthly analogue. This destabilised the cosmic sphere itself, for, as Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis observes, the order and stability of creation depend on the proper functioning of the people and their religious activities within the temple.[64] The people's failure to worship in spirit and truth constituted an assault on the pillars of the cosmic order.[65] The prophetic response is therefore fittingly cosmic: the destruction foretold against Israel's high places and royal sanctuaries (3:14; 5:5; 7:9; 9:1) is not merely the demolition of brick and mortar, but the divine dismantling of a corrupted microcosm. Through this judgement, Amos demonstrates that the fate of the earthly temple and the stability of the cosmos are inextricably linked; a failure to uphold the sacred space invites its destruction.

Within Amos's cosmic temple framework, the Day of the Lord (יום יהוה) represents the climactic moment of cosmic decreation, a definitive theophany of judgement emanating from the divine sanctuary.[66] The prophet radically reorients this expectation from

61 For a detailed analysis of these social crimes in their covenantal context, see Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 112–113.

62 This connects the ethical failure to the cosmic response framed by the hymns, as discussed by Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake," 249.

63 Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 80, 83, 278.

64 C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple, and the High Priest: Toward a Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation," *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (eds. T.D. Alexander – S. Gathercole) (Carlisle: Paternoster 2004) 81–100.

65 Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 1–2.

66 T. Bulkeley, "The Book of Amos and the Day of Yahweh," *Colloq* 45/2 (2013) 154–169.

a hoped-for national vindication into the systematic unmaking of a corrupted created order (5:18–20). This decreation is characterised not by conventional warfare but by primordial cataclysms that target the very foundations of creation. The flood motif (8:8) functions as a symbolic reversal of the created order back toward pre-creational chaos, a point supported by Morales's observation that it alludes to the Noahic deluge or to Mesopotamian flood traditions, framed as a curse for Israel's violations.[67] Similarly, the earthquake (9:1, 5) is a literal and symbolic shaking of the foundations of the world. While Lessing correctly identifies its power as a rhetorical strategy,[68] within Amos's theology, it is a theological reality: the physical manifestation of the cosmic temple's collapse under the weight of its desecration. This portrayal of the Day of the Lord as one of 'evil and darkness', as Rendtorff emphasises,[69] perfectly captures its destructive essence, revealing YHWH's unwavering resolve to dismantle His corrupted sanctuary.

This theophanic judgement is portrayed through the potent metaphor of a roaring lion emerging from His temple in Zion (1:2). Synthesising scholarly insights, this leonine imagery reveals its full force within the cosmic temple imagination. Walter Brueggemann suggests that such metaphors unlock the 'theological imagination' for the most serious divine speech.[70] Strawn's analysis of the metaphor's primal aspects – the terror-inducing roar announcing the hunt and the lethal strike – emphasises YHWH's predatory power.[71] Linville further refines this by arguing that the lion's roar is a direct metaphor for the prophetic word of judgement itself, a sound that guarantees its own fulfilment (3:3–8).[72] Read together, this imagery portrays YHWH as the Cosmic King, roaring from the holy of holies of His celestial palace. His emergence from the temple indicates that the decreation is a deliberate, authoritative act emanating from the very centre of His cosmic domain, confirming the judgement as the sovereign action of the world's divine ruler.

The terrifying figure of the roaring lion is identified by the sovereign title 'the God of hosts' (אלהי הצבאות). While later tradition often associates this epithet with angelic armies, its primary force in Amos's context is to assert Yahweh's supreme command over all powers, both earthly[73] and heavenly.[74] The 'hosts' (הצבאות) likely encompass the celestial bodies

67 Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figures*, 121–193. Cf. G. Cox, "The 'Hymn' of Amos: An Ancient Flood Narrative," *JSOT* 38/1 (2013) 81–108, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089213492812.

68 Lessing, "Amos's Earthquake," 244–246.

69 Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," 75–87.

70 Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 70.

71 Strawn, *What is Stronger than Lion?*, 34–36.

72 J.R. Linville, "Amos among the 'Dead Prophets Society:' Re-Reading the Lion's Roar," *JSOT* 25/90 (2000) 69, https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920002509005.

73 P.D. Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (JSOTSup 267; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic 2000) 422–444.

74 E.T. Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Chico, CA: Scholars 1980); and M. Nissinen, "Prophets and the Divine Council," *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. U. Hübner – E.A. Knauf) (OBO 186; Freiburg – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2002) 4–19; cf. R.P. Gordon, "Standing in the Council: When Prophets

(cf. the hymnic references to Pleiades and Orion in 5:8) and the armies of nations, all of which are mustered by the Divine Warrior-King.[75] This title does not necessarily require a fully articulated doctrine of a divine council, though it is compatible with such concepts found elsewhere (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:19–22). In Amos, its primary rhetorical function is to contrast Yahweh's ultimate, cosmic authority with the impotent authority of Israel's leaders and the false security of their military. He is the one who commands the true, cosmic forces that will execute His judgement, a judgement that the human 'hosts' of Israel cannot withstand.

The portrait of YHWH culminates in the terrifying image of the Divine Warrior, a figure central to the 'holy war' motif of the Day of the Lord.[76] It is not a battle against foreign armies, but a cosmic campaign waged by the Warrior-King from His heavenly command post to reclaim His defiled throne. The vision in Amos 9:1–6 is pivotal: YHWH is seen standing by or upon the altar, issuing the command to strike the temple's capitals. It is not a localised attack on a single shrine. Linville argues that this platform – whether the Bethel altar or a heavenly reality – ultimately points to the celestial temple, revealing the divine foundation behind all earthly structures.[77] The command to strike is thus cosmically significant. Paas contends that the destruction of a temple's architectural features – its thresholds and pillars – serves the cosmic purpose of annihilating creation[78] by dismantling its perceived *axis* (symbolised by 'pillars').[79] When YHWH strikes the pillars of Israel's counterfeit temples, He is not merely punishing cultic sites; He is actively deconstructing the corrupted *axis* they represent, pulling down the pillars of a world order that has rebelled against its sovereign. Israel's sin was an attempt to usurp cosmic power for itself (cf. 2:8);[80] the Divine Warrior's response is to demonstrate His true cosmic sovereignty by dismantling their illegitimate claim from the foundation up, ensuring that those who defy the architecture of His cosmos are irrevocably removed from it.

The vision in Amos 9:1–10 represents the climactic synthesis of Israel's judgement, in which the nation's political collapse is fully revealed as a cosmic cataclysm of decreation. This passage integrates all prior warnings, from the failed chastisements (4:6–11) to the final, ominous meeting with God (4:12–13), and escalates them to a universal scale. As Hayes argues, this divine judgement unfolds within a 'cosmic arena', where the very elements

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Encounter God," *The God of Israel* (ed. R.P. Gordon) (UCEP 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007) 190–204; D.E. Bokovoy, "שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב: Invoking the Council as Witnesses in Amos 3:13," *JBL* 127/1 (2008) 37–51, https://doi.org/10.2307/25610105; and E. White, *Yahweh's Council: Its Structure and Membership* (FAT 2/65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014).

75 M.S. Heiser, "Does Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible Demonstrate an Evolution from Polytheism to Monotheism in Israelite Religion?," *JESOT* 1/1 (2012) 1–24.

76 D. Ishai-Rosenboim, "Is יום ה' (the Day of the Lord) a Term in Biblical Language?," *Bib* 87/3 (2006) 395–401; and M. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Fribourg – Göttingen: University Press Fribourg Switzerland – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999).

77 Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 5, 160.

78 Paas, "'He Who Builds the Stairs into Heaven …' (Amos 9:6)," 319–325; and Paas, *Creation and Judgement*.

79 Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination*, 168.

80 Cf. J. Schipper – M. Leuchter, "A Proposed Reading of בית אלהיהם in Amos 2:8," *CBQ* 77/3 (2015) 441–448.

of creation become agents of its unmaking: 'the earth mourns, the morning darkens, and the ground melts at the command of YHWH.'[81] The passage depicts the shattering voice of the warrior deity producing 'a cataclysmic reverberation and destructive upheaval in the world'.[82] In this culminating vision, Amos portrays YHWH emerging from Zion not merely to punish a nation, but to wage a final battle against the systemic evil that has infected His cosmic domain. His intervention is therefore accompanied by events that convulse all creation – earthquakes, droughts, celestial darkness – because the corruption itself was cosmic in scope. This totality underscores the finality of the destructive process: the fate of Israel is inextricably linked to the stability of the cosmic order, and the Divine Warrior's authority is demonstrated by His power to dismantle the world that bears His name.

The divine act of decreation, however, is ultimately in the service of a greater salvific purpose, namely, the recreation of the cosmos and the restoration of God's cosmic temple. The book's concluding oracle (9:11–15) is a confident proclamation that salvation entails nothing less than this comprehensive renewal. While some scholars, following redaction-critical approaches, question the Amosian authorship of this hopeful conclusion,[83] such a dichotomy between judgement and hope is foreign to the prophet's overarching cosmic framework. The pattern of creation–decreation–recreation demands a final, restorative act to be complete, suggesting that the hopeful end is a logical, if later clarified, theological culmination of the pattern established by the hymnic core.[84] Amos does not present a strictly dualistic view of the Day of the Lord but rather a theological *via media* in which radical decreation and glorious recreation are two sides of the same divine act. The destruction of the corrupted order is not an end in itself but the necessary precondition for the establishment of a new, enduring one. Decreation is, therefore, intrinsically connected to the narrative of salvation; it is the painful but essential process of clearing away a failed structure so that a faithful one can be built in its place. This holistic vision aligns perfectly with the comprehensive portrayal of YHWH that the hymns have anchored: He is the sovereign who alone possesses the authority to create, the power to decreate, and the redemptive will to recreate. The transformative power of divine judgement thus finds its ultimate meaning in the final, glorious restoration of all things within His cosmic sanctuary.

From Amos's theological perspective, the concepts of creation and decreation are indispensable prerequisites for understanding the nature of recreation. The prophet's final vision is not a simple return to the status quo but a depiction of the Cosmic King eschatologically purging the sinful kingdom (9:8–10) to establish a new reality with a purified remnant.[85]

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81 Hayes, "The Mourning Earth (Amos 1:2)," 142, 148.

82 Paul, *Amos*, 39.

83 For a discussion of the critical view regarding the hopeful conclusion, see Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos*, 111–123; and Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, 104.

84 Cf. T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (BibSem 20; Sheffield: JSOT 1993).

85 D. Timmer, "The Use and Abuse of Power in Amos: Identity and Ideology," *JSOT* 39/1 (2014) 101–118, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089214551516.

This act of salvation is framed as a divine rebuilding and replanting (9:11, 14–15), a deliberate echo of the foundational acts of conquest and settlement that resonates with the memory of the 'house of David' and the 'house of YHWH'.[86] Crucially, this hope is anchored in the patriarchal promise, specifically alluding to God's assurance given to Jacob at Bethel that his line would not be obliterated (9:8–9; cf. Gen 28:10–22). This allusion is profoundly significant: the 'gate of heaven' (Gen 28:17) that Jacob identified at Bethel – the nexus between heaven and earth – will be re-established. The restoration of the 'booth of David' (9:11) is, therefore, the re-opening of this cosmic portal, the re-founding of the *axis*. Through this vision, Amos grounds his message of hope not in nationalistic fervour but in YHWH's faithfulness to His creational and covenantal purposes, demonstrating that His power to decreate is ultimately wielded to recreate and reconsecrate His cosmic temple, thereby restoring the broken connection between the divine and human realms.

The metaphor of 'the booth of David' (9:11, סכת־את דויד) is the hermeneutical key to Amos's vision of restoration, decisively shifting its interpretation from the political to the cosmic realm. While the imagery of raising a fallen structure suggests a literal reconstruction from ruins, as Aaron Schart notes,[87] its identification as a 'booth' (a temporary, rustic shelter) rather than a 'palace' or 'fortress' subverts expectations of a mere political restoration. It is not about re-establishing the Davidic dynasty's earthly administration. Domeris contends that the oracle transcends the physical rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, pointing instead to YHWH's reconstitution of a true worshipping community.[88] Read through the lens of cosmic temple imagination, the 'booth of David' symbolises the restored microcosm of YHWH's cosmic sanctuary. It is the re-established *axis*, the focal point from which divine order and blessing flow outwards. This renewed dwelling place is not defined by ethnic Israel alone but incorporates a universal scope (9:12), signalling that the recreation of the cosmic temple entails the reconciliation of all nations within its sanctified order. Therefore, the salvation Amos proclaims culminates in this: the Divine Architect, having decreated the corrupted sanctuary, now recreates a purified and expanded dwelling place for His presence, achieving the ultimate restoration of the cosmic temple as the centre of a renewed creation.

While the promises in Amos 9:12–15 employ the tangible language of historical restoration – the possession of nations, agricultural superabundance, and the return of exiles – a surface-level, literalist reading fails to capture their profound theological depth. These vivid images of security and blessing are not a blueprint for a revived state of Israel but are the symbolic effluence of a perfectly restored cosmic order. Lecureux rightly contends that such idealised conditions are generated by the prior concept of a 'recreated cosmos, paradise, or temple', pointing decisively to an eschatological kingdom under YHWH's sovereign

86 J.D. Nogalski, "Three Faces of Hope: Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:12–19," *RevExp* 112/2 (2015) 311–315, https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637315578828.

87 Schart, "The Fifth Vision of Amos in Context," 46–71.

88 W. Domeris, "Shades of Irony in the Anti-Language of Amos," *HvTSt* 72/4 (2016) 1–8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3292.

rule.[89] This vision is inherently metahistorical; as Nogalski argues, it transcends the historical schism of Israel and Judah, projecting a unified future that overcomes the past.[90] Consequently, the hope for the 'booth of David' is ultimately messianic and cosmic. Anthony R. Petterson notes that it signifies the expectation of a future Davidic king whose reign is realised at the eschaton.[91] Therefore, the concept of salvation in Amos is definitely tied to this transcendent vision. It is the hope that YHWH, the Creator, Decreator, and Recreator, will finally and fully restore His cosmic temple, establishing His eternal kingdom where divine presence, righteous rule, and universal shalom (שָׁלוֹם) are perfectly manifest. It is the ultimate restoration for which the entire creation–decreation–recreation pattern prepares the reader.

Conclusion

This study has argued that a reading of Amos's hymns through the lens of cosmic temple imagination reorients our understanding of the prophet's message, revealing a grand narrative of salvation as creation, decreation, and recreation. We have demonstrated that the nature of Israel's sin and the scope of YHWH's salvific action extend beyond the bilateral terms of the Deuteronomic covenant. The Israelites' transgressions were not merely legal or moral failures but constituted a cosmic rebellion. They were a desecration of the divine image in humanity and a sacrilegious assault on the very pillars of the cosmic temple. In response, the prophet, using the hymns as theological anchors, portrays YHWH's judgement as a necessary process of decreation, wherein the Creator's power is inverted to dismantle a corrupted order. However, this destruction serves a redemptive purpose. The ultimate hope in Amos is the eschatological recreation of YHWH's dwelling place, symbolised by the raising of the 'booth of David'. It is not a political restoration but the reconstitution of the *axis*, the cosmic temple from which divine rule and blessing flow, ensuring the eternal security of a renewed creation.

These findings contribute a distinct biblical-theological perspective, positioning the prophetic message of salvation within a cosmic drama that transcends, while not entirely negating, the covenantal-legal framework. This cosmic orientation, centred on the restoration of the divine dwelling place, naturally invites further exploration within the canon. It provides a profound hermeneutical key for the New Testament, where Jesus Christ is presented as the true temple (John 2:19–21), the definitive image of God (Col 1:15), and the messianic king who inaugurates the new creation. The continuity is striking: the cosmic temple theology of Amos finds its ultimate fulfilment in the person and work of Christ,

89 Lecureux, "Restored Hope?," 493–510.

90 J.D. Nogalski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve," *Thematic Thread in the Book of the Twelve* (eds. P.L Redditt – A. Schart) (BZAW 325; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2003) 192–213.

91 A.R. Petterson, "The Shape of the Davidic Hope across the Book of the Twelve," *JSOT* 35/2 (2010) 225–246, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089210386022.

through whom God reconciles all things to Himself, finally and fully restoring the cosmic temple and establishing His eternal kingdom. This approach not only deepens our appreciation for the unity of Scripture but also magnifies the universal scope of God's redemptive plan, from the mountains of Amos to the New Jerusalem.

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