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Patterns of Descriptive Curse Formulae in the Hebrew Bible, with Special Attention to Leviticus 26 and Amos 4:6–12

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Curses, imprecations, or maledictions¹ occupy a highly significant place in both ancient Near Eastern texts and the Hebrew Bible.² The present study proceeds from the conviction that – although much profit can be had from analyzing these curse materials in terms of the specific content of the curses, the grammatical formulations used to express them, or their relationship to broader ancient Near Eastern maledictions – a further level of consideration is required to deal adequately with these materials in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical curse formulations must be understood in terms of their significance within the broader literary contexts in which they appear, most especially in terms of the ideological assumptions within those larger contexts, rather than in abstraction from them. The present study will thus seek to demonstrate that the biblical curse materials, when analyzed within their broader literary and ideological (or theological) contexts, fall into certain specific patterns. Moreover, even within these specific patterns, diversity may appear. Individual texts may use these curse formulae in unique ways, reflecting the ideological underpinnings of the specific contexts in which they are found. This latter point will be demonstrated through a comparative analysis of Amos 4:6–12 (henceforth Amos 4)³ and Lev 26.

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¹ Although, strictly speaking, there may be certain differences in meaning between these English terms, I will use them interchangeably here.

² For a general introduction to the subject, see J. SCHARBERT, “אלה,” *TDOT* 1:261–266; IDEM, “ארר,” *TDOT* 1:405–418; R. P. GORDON, “Curse, Malediction,” *NIDOTTE* 4:491–493; W. R. URBROCH, “Blessing and Cursing,” *ABD* 1:755–759; W. SCHOTTROFF, *Der altisraelitische Fluchspruch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

³ Although the curses are contained in vv. 6–11, they are closely related to the preceding and following sections (see below). I will include v. 12 in my discussion, since it is generally seen as reflecting the culmination of the curses in vv. 6–11. The issues surrounding Amos 4:13 cannot be dealt with in the present context.

At the outset, I wish to delimit the specific type of curse materials I will be examining. Numerous scholars have isolated various aspects of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern curse materials and used them as points of entry for their analyses. Some have focused on the various lexemes and formulae employed,⁴ others on the particular socioreligious matrices out of which such curses emerged and on the subsequent growth and development of the various curse formulae,⁵ and still others on the relationship between curses and oaths or curses and covenants.⁶ Clearly a review and appraisal of this far-reaching work is beyond the scope of the present paper. My discussion here will be limited to one specific type or form of curse expression: curses that are accompanied by a description of the specific misfortunes that may be (or have been) visited upon an offender for the violation of the stipulations set forth by the speaker of the curse. For the purposes of the present study, I will designate these as “descriptive curse formulae.”⁷ They stand in contrast to other expressions of malediction in which the adverse effects or results of the curse are left unstated.⁸ In descriptive curse formulae, however, the con-

⁴ J.K. AITKEN, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing in Ancient Hebrew* (ANES 23; Leuven: Peeters, 2007); H.C. BRICHTO, *The Problem of “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible* (JBL Monograph Series 23; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1963).

⁵ J.S. ANDERSON, “The Social Function of Curses in the Hebrew Bible,” *ZAW* 110 (1998), 223–237; S. GEVIRTZ, “West-Semitic Curses and the Problems of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” *VT* 11 (1961), 137–158; IDEM, “Curse,” *IDB* 1:749–750; J. HEMPEL, “Die israelitischen Anschauungen von Segen und Fluch im Lichte altorientalischer Parallelen,” *ZDMG* 69 (1915), 20–110; SCHOTTRUFF, *Der altisraelitische Fluchspruch* (see n. 2).

⁶ K. BALTZER, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (trans. D.E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); D.R. HILLERS, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); G.E. MENDENHALL, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: Biblical Colloquium, 1955); IDEM, “The Suzerainty Treaty Structure: Thirty Years Later,” in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (ed. E.B. Firmage et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 85–100.

⁷ Such maledictions were sometimes designated *treaty curses*. The term *futility curse* was seen to constitute one distinct type of treaty curse; see HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 28–29. However, as I will demonstrate below, though maledictions containing descriptions of the results of the curse do indeed appear in treaty texts, they also occur elsewhere. Thus, use of the term *treaty* already prejudices one’s conclusions regarding the nature and function of the maledictions involved.

⁸ This difference is not always considered in treatments of the curse material. It has, however, been noted by P. BUIS, “Deutéronome 27:15–26: malédictions ou exigences de l’alliance?,” *VT* 17 (1967), 478–479. Examples of curse formulae with no stated consequences occur with the passive participle אָרָר in Deut 27:15–26; 28:16–19; 1 Sam 14:21; Jer 11:3; 20:14–16; 48:10, Mal 1:14. The אָרָר form has been the object of significant investigation; see esp. BRICHTO, *Problem of “Curse”* (see n. 4), 77–96; SCHOTTRUFF, *Der altisraelitische Fluchspruch* (see n. 2), and the references to cursing in Gen 12:3; Num 22–24 (on which see

sequences arising from the malediction are specifically named and described.⁹ At times these formulae are very brief, involving a simple reference to one aspect or sphere of life experience.¹⁰ Most are far more detailed. Some appear in almost fixed forms, across various cultures and in varying literary contexts.¹¹ The so-called futility curses of Amos 5:11; Mic 6:14–15; and Hag 1:5–11, with their parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature (see *infra*), are a case in point.¹² Descriptive curse formulae are widely distributed throughout the Hebrew Bible. Within the prophetic literature they often appear in the context of oracles of doom.¹³ Very extensive curse lists are limited to relatively few passages, notably Deut 28:1–68 (ET 29:1) and Lev 26:1–39. Examples of more sizable lists in the Book of the Twelve include Amos 4:6–11; Mic 6:11–16; and Hag 1:3–11; 2:16–17.¹⁴ These curse lists are close in form to the maledictions in the epilogue to Hammurabi's Code (E19–32), Sefire 1A and 2A, the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon cols. 6 and 7, and the Tell Fekherye Inscription.¹⁵ Such

BRICHTO, *Problem of "Curse,"* 99–100); Judg 5:23; 21:18; Job 3:1–9. The euphemistic use of בָּרַךְ in Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9 should also be mentioned here.

⁹ Compare also the broader, more grammatically based discussion of curse formulae in S. H. BLANK, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath," *HUCA* 23 (1951), 73–95. Although Blank does not make a formal distinction between instances where the effects of the curse are specifically mentioned as opposed to where they are not, he does note that, in certain contexts, full verbal expression of the results of a curse for oath violation are more frequently omitted than verbalized (90–92). He attributes this reticence to a belief in the self-fulfilling power of the spoken word.

¹⁰ So, e.g., Deut 28:16–19.

¹¹ See the inventory in F. C. FENSHAM, "Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and *kudurrû*-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *ZAW* 75 (1963), 155–175.

¹² See A. ABOU-ASSAF et al., *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* (Études assyriologiques; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982); HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 28–29.

¹³ See the discussion in HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 77–78.

¹⁴ Other passages in the Book of the Twelve containing curse materials beyond single allusions to curses, yet not as extensive as the passages just cited, include Amos 7:17; 8:9–10; 9:2–4; Obad 15–16. See also Joel 1:4–12, 17–19, which contains extensive descriptions of curses already imposed. A full inventory of the curse materials in the prophets, not to mention the Hebrew Bible as a whole, would be beyond the scope of this essay. I have cited these examples from the Book of the Twelve owing to the fact that Amos 4:6–12 forms a major focus of the present study and because they are close in form and content to Lev 26, another key area of focus here. Many other relevant examples could be cited from prophetic materials outside the Book of the Twelve. Numerous specific examples from the Hebrew Bible will be given in the typology of curse patterns proposed below.

¹⁵ For the standard translation of these texts, see M. E. J. RICHARDSON, *Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation, and Glossary* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); D. J. WISEMAN (ed.), *The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1958); J. A. FITZMYER, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr 19; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); A. LEMAIRE and J.-M. DURAND, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré et*

ancient Near Eastern materials thus provide a useful baseline for comparison with the biblical data.

In the present paper, then, I will focus on the use of these descriptive curse formulae in the Hebrew Bible with special attention to Amos 4:6–12 and Lev 26.¹⁶ I will demonstrate that although these traditional descriptive curse formulae are very general, and may carry a great variety of connotations, it is only through careful attention to the broader ideology expressed in the contexts in which they are found, and the distinctive ways in which they are shaped, that one may draw judicious conclusions regarding their meaning and significance.¹⁷

Our study will proceed as follows. In an introductory section, I will survey some of the major themes in earlier studies of curses in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern texts and suggest that the results of these studies demonstrate the need for a nuanced and textually integrated approach to these descriptive curse formulae. In the second section, I will set forth a preliminary typology of such formulae. In my third section, I will assess both the similarities and significant differences between Amos 4 and Lev 26, texts that I see as rooted in the same general type of descriptive curse formula. Then, in the fourth section, I will suggest possible implications of this comparison for two disputed issues: the literary relationship between Lev 26 and Amos 4 and the compositional history of Lev 26. In my fifth and final section, I will set forth my conclusions, and suggest some implications of this study, especially as it regards the relationship between prophetic and pentateuchal texts.

l'Assyrie de Shamshi-ilu (Hautes études orientales; Geneva: Droz, 1984); ABOU-ASSAF et al., *La statue de Tell Fekherye* (see n. 12); F.I. ANDERSEN and D.N. FREEDMAN, "The Orthography of the Aramaic Portion of the Tell Fekherye Bilingual," in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham* (ed. W. Claasen; JSOTSup 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 9–49; J.C. GREENFIELD and A. SHAFFER, "Notes on the Curse Formulae of the Tell Fekherye Inscription," *RB* 92 (1985), 46–59; E. LIPINSKI, "The Bilingual Inscription from Tell Fekherye," in *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics* (OLA 57; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 19–81.

¹⁶ I will explain my reasons for comparing and contrasting these two texts below.

¹⁷ See the similar observations regarding the *Gattung* of penitential prayer in B. BECKING, "Nehemiah 9 and the Problematic Concept of Context (*Sitz im Leben*)," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism in the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M.A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 253–268. See also the insightful observations of K.R. VEENHOF, review of *Der altisraelitische Fluchspruch*, by Willy Schottroff, *VT* 22 (1972), 375–382, esp. 379, who observes that the significance and implications of curses found in literary compositions may differ in form and content from the same curses found in an oral context. See also AITKEN, *Semantics* (see n. 4), 4–5, who discusses the distinctive nature of the biblical materials (and the myriad meanings of the key lexemes for cursing) in literary texts, in contrast to inscriptions or graffiti.

1 Earlier Study of the Biblical Curse Materials

Study of the curse material in the Hebrew Bible has followed several lines over the last hundred years. The early twentieth century witnessed significant discussion of curses and cursing in light of various emerging archaeological discoveries and in connection with the study of oaths and blessing both in Israel and the ancient Near East.¹⁸ By the mid-twentieth century, much scholarly discussion had become focused upon the question of the efficacy of the spoken word (apart from the action of any given deity) in blessing and cursing. More specifically, scholars wrestled with the question whether oaths, blessing, and cursing reflected an earlier stage of Israelite religion in which words had a quasi-magical power. The studies of S. Gevirtz, and S.H. Blank, (vigourously contested by H.C. Brichto) are early illustrations of this.¹⁹ This discussion was taken up by A. Thiselton in the context of speech-act theory. Emphasis was shifted from the words themselves to the speaker(s) of such words of blessing and cursing and to their setting.²⁰ The study of blessing and cursing was similarly a significant element in discussions of the development of Israelite religion, specifically questions regarding the difference between religion and magic and whether one could meaningfully differentiate between the two.²¹ Pursuing a different track, some scholars examined the similarities and differences between the biblical curses and other ancient Near Eastern materials.²² Others sought to distinguish between East- and West-Semitic curse formulations.²³ In a related development, biblical curses were frequently seen as indicating that certain biblical texts were modeled on various ancient Near Eastern covenant forms, and these texts were then dated or redated according to the curse patterns within

¹⁸ HEMPEL, *Die israelitischen Anschauungen* (see n. 5); S. MOWINCKEL, *Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1924); J. PEDERSEN, *Der Eid bei den Semiten in seinem Verhältnis zu verwandten Erscheinungen sowie die Stellung des Eides im Islam* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1914).

¹⁹ BLANK, "Curse" (see n. 9); IDEM, "Some Observations Concerning Biblical Prayer," *HUCA* 32 (1961), 75–90; BRICHTO, *Problem of "Curse"* (see n. 4); GEVIRTZ, "West-Semitic Curses" (see n. 5); IDEM, "Curse" (see n. 5). Brichto strongly challenged the assertion of Gevirtz and Blank that blessings and cursings carried with them a kind of automatic efficacy.

²⁰ A.C. THISELTON, "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings," *JTS* 25 (1974), 283–299. See the excellent summary of this scholarly discussion in B.F. BATTO, "Curse," *DDD* 211–214. See also the analysis of the question from the perspective of text linguistics in AITKEN, *Semantics* (see n. 4), 17–22.

²¹ See the extensive discussion in AITKEN, *Semantics* (see n. 4), 5–22.

²² On the relationship of the curse material in these texts to the prophets, see FENSHAM, "Common Trends" (see n. 11); HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6). See also S.M. PAUL, *Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 141–149, with bibliography and illustrations.

²³ GEVIRTZ, "Curse" (see n. 5), 750; IDEM, "West-Semitic Curses" (see n. 5). See also the critique of Gevirtz in HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 27, n. 44.

them.²⁴ This period also witnessed several compilations of allusions to ancient Near Eastern curse materials in the Hebrew Bible.²⁵ As well, some studies provided more form-critical analyses of the ancient Near Eastern curse materials and suggested implications for the study of Deut 28, Lev 26, and the Prophets.²⁶

Many of these diverse issues continue to be discussed, and most are still in dispute. However, something of a broad consensus exists around two points. First, formally, although descriptive curses in the ancient Near East sometimes occur in relatively shorter lists (as in some of the *kudurru* inscriptions),²⁷ over time these lists became much longer and the curses more elaborate.²⁸ These curse lists likely served a rhetorical function: to terrorize the potential offender with all kinds of possible disasters drawn from every realm of life. As Nelson notes, “[D]eterring infractions was the primary goal. [. . .] The sequence of the individual items seems to be almost entirely arbitrary.” Moreover, the repetitions in the list were “intended to reinforce the rhetorical impact” of the curses.²⁹ Second, on a functional level, such curses served as threats to ensure compliance with the wishes of a ruler or with the terms of a law or an agreement in the absence of any broader social or political mechanisms of enforcement. Hillers rightly compared the ancient treaty to “an elaborate promise, in which curses served to guarantee that the promise would be kept.”³⁰

At times, however, some scholars drew more far-reaching conclusions regarding the exegetical sense of a given text, based largely on the presence of curse materials within it. Thus, once one had detected the presence of a descriptive curse formula within a text (especially a “futility curse”), the significance of the curse and the meaning of the text were seen as clear: the existence of a covenant was to be implied and curses were either dire warnings against covenant violation or evidence of such. However, *covenant violation* was often ill-defined. Which covenant was in view? And what were its demands and sanctions? Did the concept of covenant violation imply a minor infraction, the transgression of a single covenantal obligation, or persistent violation of the core duties of the covenant resulting in its complete abrogation?³¹

²⁴ MENDENHALL, *Law and Covenant* (see n. 6); BALTZER, *Covenant Formulary* (see n. 6).

²⁵ F. C. FENSHAM, “Malediction and Benediction in Ancient Near Eastern Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 74 (1962), 1–9; IDEM, “Common Trends” (see n. 11), 12.

²⁶ HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6).

²⁷ W. J. HINKE, *Selected Babylonian kudurru Inscriptions* (SSS 14; Leiden: Brill, 1911); IDEM (ed.), *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1912); HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6).

²⁸ HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 6.

²⁹ R. D. NELSON, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 327.

³⁰ HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 6.

³¹ On the various possible understandings of covenant violation and its effects, see, recently, S. M. OLYAN, “The Status of Covenant during the Exile,” in *Berührungspunkte: Studien zur*

For example, speaking of the futility curses in Hag 1:3–11, David Petersen suggests, “[R]econstruction of the temple is treated as a covenant duty that, because it has not been accomplished, has brought on the futility curses of an abrogated covenant. [. . .] Not only are the people living an existence cursed because of the 587 disaster; their existence is also cursed because of their reaction to the result of that earlier cursing, the destruction of the temple.”³² I believe Petersen’s assessment to be inaccurate here and have argued to the contrary.³³ Simply put, though it is certain that Hag 1:3–11 and 2:15–17 contain several verbal and thematic elements found in Deut 28 and Lev 26, can one move from this observation to the conclusion that the maledictions in Haggai imply the same covenantal arrangement and function in the same way as Deut 28 and Lev 26? This question is especially salient in that Deut 28 and Lev 26 clearly manifest points of striking discontinuity, especially with reference to the idea of covenant, and the specific covenants being referenced.³⁴ What is more, temple building does not figure as a covenantal duty in either Deut 28 or Lev 26. How can one be sure that Haggai has subsumed temple reconstruction into the demands of the Sinai covenant?³⁵ Only a careful reading of Haggai itself can determine the ideology that undergirds the descriptive curse formulae present in it. Numerous other examples of such an approach could be cited.³⁶

There are three essential problems with such a broad and general approach. First, it does not take into account the varied ways in which these descriptive curse formulae function within the theological or ideological streams of tradition in the Hebrew Bible – that is, the differing ways in which these curse materials are employed to express the basis and dynamics of the divine-human relation-

Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt; Festschrift R. Albertz (ed. R. Ebach et al.; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 333–344; J. KESSLER, “Curse, Covenant, and Temple in the Book of Haggai,” in *Covenant in the Persian Period: From Genesis to Chronicles* (ed. R. J. Bauckham and G. N. Knoppers; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 229–254.

³² D. L. PETERSEN, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (OTL; London: SCM, 1985), 50.

³³ J. KESSLER, “Curse, Covenant and Temple” (see n. 31). I will summarize my objection to his conclusion below.

³⁴ These points will be taken up further below.

³⁵ Note the development of my own thought on this point in J. KESSLER, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002); IDEM, “Curse, Covenant and Temple” (see n. 31).

³⁶ Examples of the notion that curse language automatically implies covenant are easy to come by. Other generalizations are more subtle. E. GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. D. W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 426, sees Deut 28 as “a sermon on the theme ‘God will punish the person who transgresses against the commandments.’” He then concludes that “Lev 26:14–33 also belongs, together with various discourses from Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to the genre of comminatory or admonitory sermon of the sort customarily used in the early Jewish communities for inculcating obedience to Yahweh.” This seems, to me, to level the differences between the various texts he cites and to subsume them under a single form, despite their distinctive use of the curse materials.

ship.³⁷ Second, although it is widely recognized that various biblical texts use remarkably similar curse language, this homogenizing approach does not isolate and identify, on the micro level, one text's distinctive use of these curse formulae vis-à-vis other highly similar texts. Our study of Amos 4 in relationship to Lev 26 will examine this phenomenon in detail. Finally, as the curse typology to be presented below will demonstrate, the presence of curse language does not, in and of itself, presuppose covenant, nor may it be seen as evidence that a given text takes for granted the existence of either the Sinai or the ancestral covenants. In point of fact, at the most basic level, the presence of descriptive curse formulae in a text merely signifies that a speaker (within the world of the text) or writer (of the text) views certain real or potential actions negatively and invokes one or more specific disasters upon the offender(s) as deterrents or as punitive measures. Any inferences beyond this must be supported by arguments from the specific content and context of the curse.

2 A Typology of Descriptive Curse Formulae in the Hebrew Bible

2.1 *Earlier Reflections: Two General Curse Patterns in the Hebrew Bible*

In earlier reflection on the curses in Hag 1:3–11 and 2:15–19 in the broader context of covenant in the Persian period, I suggested that there were two major curse patterns in the Hebrew Bible.³⁸ The first of these might be called “violations of covenant.” Herein, a series of severe misfortunes is deployed for the violation of the core elements of the covenant in question. Such violations culminate in cataclysmic devastation and the destruction of the offender. Despite significant differences between them at a deeper level,³⁹ Deut 28 and Lev 26 are biblical examples of this pattern. Reference to a covenant is explicitly stated or implicitly assumed (Lev 26:9, 15, 25, 42, 44–45; Deut 28:69 [ET 29:1]). Disobedience to the core demands of the covenant leads inexorably to ruin.

³⁷ See O.H. STECK, “Theological Streams of Tradition,” in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (ed. D.A. Knight; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 183–214; see also J. KESSLER, *Old Testament Theology: Divine Call and Human Response* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013).

³⁸ KESSLER, “Curse, Covenant and Temple” (see n. 31).

³⁹ On the various contrasts between Lev 26 and Deut 28, see, e.g., S.R. DRIVER, *Deuteronomy* (ICC; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1916), 304; J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2346–2348; G. FISCHER, “A Need for Hope? A Comparison between the Dynamics in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–30,” in *Current Issues in Priestly and Related Literature: The Legacy of Jacob Milgrom and Beyond* (ed. R.E. Gane and A. Taggar-Cohen; SBLRBS 82; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 369–385, esp. 380–385.

In a second, or more cultic, pattern, which may be designated “violations *in* covenant,” various misfortunes are visited upon an individual or community due to some specific legal or ritual violation. In such cases, there is no clear reference to violation of the core elements of a covenantal relationship (such as disobedience to Yahweh’s “commandments, statutes and ordinances,” as is the case in Lev 26:15; Deut 5:31; 8:11; 26:17). Such texts often display only a very loose connection to the covenant idea. In these texts, one or several misfortunes are imposed, or blessings withheld, until such time as the offense is corrected. There is no sense of any progression of the maledictions toward ultimate disaster and obliteration. Examples of this pattern include Josh 7; 1 Sam 14:24–46; 2 Sam 21; and most especially 1 Kgs 8.⁴⁰ Ongoing analysis convinced me that Hag 1:5–11 and 2:15–19 belonged to this second pattern. Thus, in contrast to Petersen’s statement cited above, I maintained that, although on a form-critical level futility curses do indeed appear in Hag 1:5–11 and 2:15–19, one could not move from such a classification to the assumption that Hag 1:3–11 and 2:15–19 view the covenant between Yahweh and Israel as having been abrogated (so Petersen).⁴¹ The broader patterns of curse usage and the underlying ideological convictions of the literary context of Haggai had to be taken into account before any such judgment could be made.

2.2 *A Typology of Descriptive Curse Formulae in the Hebrew Bible: Criteria and Classifications*

Further reflection persuaded me that these two patterns (“violation *of* covenant” versus “violation *in* covenant”) required still further nuancing and that it might be possible to establish a more complete typology of these descriptive curse formulae within the Hebrew Bible. The following typology represents the fruit of my subsequent investigation and involves the integration of a variety of criteria: (1) the presence of one or more descriptive curse formulae within a given text; (2) the literary form and setting in which such curses are presented (e.g., a single imprecation, shorter list, longer list, oracle of doom, etc.); (3) the purpose of the imprecations within the text in question (threat, warning, historical retrospective); and (4) the broader ideological/theological context,

⁴⁰ On this point, see also P.R. BEDFORD, “Discerning the Time: Haggai, Zechariah and the ‘Delay’ in the Rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple,” in *The Pitcher Is Broken: Memorial Essays for G.W. Ahlström* (ed. S.W. Holloway and L.K. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: JSOT, 1995), 71–94, here 74, who notes the “cultic” flavor of this pattern. Bedford insightfully observes, “[f]utility curses are not only to be found in the context of covenant breaking (as the demise of the kingdom, the exile and the absence of Yahweh are interpreted). They are also understood to be the result of cultic or ethical infractions (for example, 2 Sam 21:1–14; Amos 4:1–12; Hos 4:1–3; Isa 5:8–10; Joel 1–2).” Bedford places the futility curses in Haggai in the same category.

⁴¹ PETERSEN, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (see n. 32), 50.

purpose, and traditiohistorical rooting of the text as a whole (i.e., Priestly; Deuteronomic; wisdom, etc.). As a typology, it is therefore somewhat eclectic, integrating lexical, formal, and ideological considerations.⁴²

The biblical materials containing descriptive curse formulae may be categorized as follows:

- a. *Individual maledictions cited either alone or in series.* These are generally drawn from the broader stock of ancient Near Eastern curses and are scattered in various contexts relating to divine judgment. The purpose and significance of these curses are highly context specific. Such maledictions occur frequently in prophetic oracles of doom and are creatively and distinctly configured (e.g., Isa 3:1–8; 3:16–4:1; 5:1–6; 13:16, 21–22; 14:20a; 16:10, etc.; Jer 3:3; 4:29; 5:15–17; 8:1–3, etc.; Ezek 7:10–13; 7:21–27).⁴³ Occasionally they figure in legal contexts such as adjurations (Lev 5:1), trial by ordeal (Num 5:11–31), the issuing of judgments (Gen 3:14; 4:11; 9:25–26; Josh 9:22–23), or disputes between persons (1 Kgs 8:31–32).⁴⁴ At times, such individual maledictions are pronounced to preclude the undertaking of specific acts (Josh 6:26).⁴⁵ At other times, the consequences of the proscribed behavior are described using a metaphor such as the shrub in the wasteland in Jer 17:5–7. This pattern is in evidence in a wide variety of ancient Near Eastern texts (see *infra*).
- b. *Curses used as a form of lex talionis or retribution in kind.* Here afflictions are brought upon an offender that are fitting consequences of the evil committed. Exodus 22:22–24 is a prime example. In this text, the oppression of orphans and widows results in the death of the offenders, leaving their wives as widows and their children as orphans.⁴⁶ A similar phenomenon exists in Amos 5:11. Other examples could be cited.⁴⁷
- c. *Curses used as self-imprecations, invoked to demonstrate the speaker's innocence.* Job 31:5–40 contains numerous such instances.

⁴² I wish to stress that the typology to be presented in this section is both preliminary and nonexhaustive.

⁴³ See the fuller list in D. STUART, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), xxxiii–xl.

⁴⁴ BRICHTO, *Problem of "Curse"* (see n. 4), 42–55.

⁴⁵ Following the excellent discussion and examples in BRICHTO, *Problem of "Curse"* (see n. 4), 79–80.

⁴⁶ Note that none of the verbal forms normally associated with cursing appear here. Wives becoming widows and children orphans, however, clearly reflects traditional curse imagery as well as the implicit application of divine justice, with biting irony; see also FENSHAM, "Common Trends" (see n. 11), esp. 158, 170. On descriptions of lex talionis at work in narratives, see P.J. NEL, "The Talion Principle in Old Testament Narratives," *JNSL* 20 (1994), 21–29.

⁴⁷ See Prov 22:22–23. Note the analogous case in the ancient Near Eastern material where the effects of the curse relate to the primary activity of the deity who imposes them; see HILLERS, *Treaty Curses* (see n. 6), 13–14.

- d. *Shorter allusions to a stock series of misfortunes (for example, “famine, sword, and pestilence”) within human or divine speech.* Examples include Jer 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17–18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13; Ezek 5:12, 17; 6:11–12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21; 2 Sam 24:13; 1 Chr 21:12; 2 Chr 20:9. Ezekiel 14:21 lists “four evil judgments” (ארבעת שפתי הרעים). First Kings 8:37 enumerates a similar list.⁴⁸ The significance and broader implications that may be drawn from such brief lists are highly context specific.
- e. *Longer series of maledictions functioning as threats and deterrents.* The curses in such lists function as penalties or deterrents with reference to violation of a textually proximate covenant and without reference to warning, remedial discipline, or divine long-suffering. Like much of the analogous ancient Near Eastern material, these maledictions are presented as a single list, without gaps for potential human response and divine forbearance. Although there may be elements of escalation in the punishments, these increments are not presented as having a restorative function or as creating opportunity for change or repentance. No provision is made for partial or remedial punishment (although such steps are not expressly precluded). Violation of the terms of the covenant grants the stronger party the right to terminate the covenant relationship altogether and to destroy the offender. This pattern appears in the epilogue of Hammurabi, Sefire I, Tell Fekherye, and the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon. Shorter enumerations are found in certain *kudurru* inscriptions. It is generally understood to be the outlook reflected in Deut 28.⁴⁹
- f. *Longer series of incrementally applied maledictions intended to produce change and/or repentance.* This pattern weaves together the ideas of punishment, corrective discipline, warning, and divine forbearance. It includes gaps or stages in the description of the imposition of the curses to allow for remediation in the divine-human relationship. Sometimes the descriptive curse formulae stop short of a full declaration of ultimate disaster, leaving open the possibility of future restoration.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, if the curses are unheeded, the wrongdoer’s offenses will result in great destruction (as above, e). This destruction and disaster need not be total, should the

⁴⁸ F.I. ANDERSEN and D.N. FREEDMAN, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 440.

⁴⁹ See MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2347. There are differing opinions as to whether, in the D or Dtr perspective, Yahweh’s relationship with Israel could be fully terminated due to covenant violation. Compare T. RÖMER and M.Z. BRETTNER, “Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch,” *JBL* 119 (2000), 401–419, here 412, n. 58, with G.E. MENDENHALL and G. HERION, “Covenant,” *ABD* 1: 1179–1202. See also the nuanced discussion in C. NIHAN, *Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (FAT 2/25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 542.

⁵⁰ E.g., Amos 4 and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4; see further discussion below.

stronger party choose to leave a remnant and restore the offender or the offender's seed after a time of suffering and penitence (so Lev 26:40–45). This is generally understood to be the pattern in Lev 26; Amos 4; and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7–10:4.⁵¹

- g. *Various, nonincremental maledictions cited as divine responses to specific religious or ethical lapses on the part of the individual or community.* These maledictions are meant to lead to remediation or correction of a *specific* fault. This pattern subdivides into two general types. The first is the imposition of maledictions as an incentive to prayer and repentance for *unnamed* faults, described only as “sins.” As such, this pattern is paradigmatic, serving as a model for dealing with individual sin in general.⁵² This pattern is in evidence in 1 Kgs 8, where the vocabulary used to describe these maledictions is shared with the standard curse motifs in ancient Near Eastern and other biblical materials (notably Lev 26 and Deut 28).⁵³ A possible (but not necessary) implication of such terminology

⁵¹ I assume Lev 17–26 to be part of the work of one or more Holiness writers active at a time subsequent to the production of the earlier Priestly material. These tradents revised and recontextualized earlier material in light of the realities of their own age and their own theological preoccupations. On the priority of P to H, and the relationship of H to the Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomy, see the survey and discussion in J. JOOSTEN, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26* (VTSup 67; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 10–16; IDEM, “Covenant Theology in the Holiness Code,” *ZABR* 4 (1998), 145–164, esp. 147; and the detailed discussion in B. M. LEVINSON, “The Manumission of Hermeneutics: The Slave Laws of the Pentateuch as a Challenge to Contemporary Pentateuchal Theory,” *Congress Volume: Leiden, 2004* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 281–324. Levinson utilizes this chronology in his numerous studies of legal development in the Hebrew Bible. Further arguments for the dating and sequence of the various sources, as well as surveys of the scholarly literature and alternative proposals, may be found in them. On Lev 17–26 in general, see the discussion in J. E. HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), 247–260; JOOSTEN, “Covenant Theology”; IDEM, *People and Land*, 5–16; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2363–2365; NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 395–558. The specific dating of Lev 26 and its relationship to Lev 17–25 continues to be debated; see references above, especially MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2352–2363. On Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4, see H. WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (trans. T. H. Trapp; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 218–245; E. BLUM, “Jesaja und der דבר des Amos: Unzeitgemäße Überlegungen zu Jes 5,25; 9,7–20; 10,1–4,” *DBAT* 28 (1994), 75–95; J. L. CRENSHAW, “‘A Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity’ (Am 4:6–12; Isa 9:7–10:4; 5:25–29),” *Semitics* 1 (1970): 27–37.

⁵² As M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 40, notes, Deuteronomy gives no explicit instructions for dealing with individual sin. He suggests, “[t]he author’s view seems to be that spiritual purification and repentance – consisting of confession and prayer – and not sacrificial offerings expiate sin.”

⁵³ See FENSHAM, “Common Trends” (see n. 11); H. W. WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 213.

is that these infractions are seen to occur within a broader covenantal relationship.⁵⁴ E. Talstra suggests that, in contrast to the lists of misfortunes in Deut 28 and Amos 4, 1 Kgs 8 describes various “cases” as part of an “affliction-prayer-forgiveness” schema. Thus the covenant curses of the broader tradition are shifted to a more focused case-by-case setting. They become “afflictions” (to use Talstra’s term) sent to alert the individual or community of a specific fault requiring a concrete solution.⁵⁵

A second form of this pattern occurs when one or more curses arise due to a specific, *named* fault. As above, the fault has created an impasse that cannot be removed until the fault is addressed. In the interim, the divinely sent malediction(s) will unrelentingly afflict the community. Achan’s sin (Josh 7), Saul’s breach of covenant with the Gibeonites (2 Sam 22), and the community in Yehud’s failure to rebuild the temple (in Haggai)⁵⁶ serve as examples of this pattern.

In both variations of this pattern, once the specific transgression is remedied, the effects of the curse are removed. Until that time, the situation is at an impasse and the curse’s effects remain. However, the fact that the maledictions are not presented as increasing in intensity suggests that the broader covenantal relationship is not threatened by them and that, left unresolved, the sins committed will result not in cataclysmic destruction of the individual or nation but simply a state of ongoing misery.

⁵⁴ Of course, the fact that the prayer of 1 Kgs 8 is found within the so-called Deuteronomistic History would buttress such an assumption. On 1 Kgs 8 as Deuteronomistic (or Deuteronomistic), see G.N. KNOPPERS, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies, Vol. 1: The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam* (HSM 52; Atlanta: Scholars, 1993); IDEM, “Prayer and Propaganda: Solomon’s Dedication of the Temple and the Deuteronomist’s Program,” *CBQ* 57 (1995), 229–254. On broader issues related to the Deuteronomistic History, see the essays in T. RÖMER (ed.), *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (BETL 147; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000); G.N. KNOPPERS and J.G. MCCONVILLE (eds.), *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

⁵⁵ E. TALSTRA, *Solomon’s Prayer: Synchrony and Diachrony in the Composition of 1 Kings 8:14–61* (trans. G. Runia-Deenick; CBET; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 118–119. Referencing Talstra’s analysis of 1 Kgs 8, M.J. BODA, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Siphrut; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 167, concludes, “Its categories of calamities are closely related to the curse materials found in Deuteronomy 28–30 and Leviticus 26 suggesting that the prayer is being conceptualized within the framework of the covenant.”

⁵⁶ In this connection, it is crucial to distinguish any possible *historical reasons* for the community’s resistance to the temple’s reconstruction (indeed, there may have been many factors involved) from the *literary portrait* of such resistance in Haggai. On this, see J. KESSLER, “Building the Second Temple: Questions of Time, Text, and History in Haggai 1.1–15,” *JSOT* 27 (2002), 243–256. Numerous interpreters fail to distinguish between the two and interject historical reasons for the people’s reticence into the literary portrait of their reluctance in the book. This creates immense exegetical difficulties for the interpretation of the passage.

3 Amos 4:6–12 in the Context of the Curse Traditions of the Hebrew Bible

3.1 Amos 4:6–12: Closer and More Distant Parallels

The foregoing (albeit preliminary) typology provides a backdrop for our study of the maledictions in Amos 4. Our focus in this section will be on the unique and distinctive aspects of Amos 4 when compared to texts closest to it in the typology suggested above. Even the most cursory reading of Amos 4 reveals that it bears a striking resemblance to several other texts involving descriptive curse formulae. H. W. Wolff has set forth an oft-cited chart comparing the elements in Amos 4, Lev 26, Deut 28, and 1 Kgs 8.⁵⁷ Wolff sees Amos 4 as bearing the closest affinity to Lev 26. He states,

The use of the first-person divine speech and direct address in the plural further associates Lev 26 with Am 4:6–11. [. . .] One must [. . .] conclude that Am 4:6–11 stands in proximity to the Holiness Code, which probably came into being in the latest period of the pre-exilic cultus. Lev 26 ‘presumably developed from a part of the agenda for the great autumn festival. Dtn 28, with its curses and, especially, with its references to Yahweh in the third person, is more distantly related.’⁵⁸

Jeremias, for his part, sees Amos 4 as most closely connected to 1 Kgs 8.⁵⁹ J. L. Crenshaw, E. Blum, and others have called attention to the connections between Amos 4 and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7–10:4,⁶⁰ a text that Wolff omits from his list, likely because it lacks the extensive allusions to common ancient Near Eastern curse formulae contained in the others.⁶¹

3.2 Amos 4, Deuteronomy 28 and 1 Kings 8

As may be seen from the typology above, I view the curse pattern in evidence in Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4 as distinct from the one found in Deut 28. Several features, among many, demonstrate this. For example, Lev 26; Amos 4; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 (unlike Deut 28) use first-person singular verbs in the perfect and imperfect aspects, addressed to hearers in the

⁵⁷ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 211.

⁵⁸ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214. The embedded quote is from K. ELLIGER, *Leviticus* (HAT 1/4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 371.

⁵⁹ J. JEREMIAS, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (trans. D. W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 70–72; IDEM, *Hosea und Amos* (FAT 13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 198–213.

⁶⁰ BLUM, “Jesaja” (see n. 51); CRENSHAW, “Liturgy” (see n. 51); WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 1–12* (see n. 51), 225.

⁶¹ Due to the complexities involved in studying the specific relationship between Amos 4 and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4, I can only address this issue in a general way in the present study.

second-person masculine plural. This construction, however, is absent from Deut 28. Furthermore, divine judgments are introduced by *נתתי* in Amos 4:6 and by *ונתתי* in Lev 26:4, 6, 11, 17, 19, 30–31. Deuteronomy 28, by contrast, uses *נתן* far less frequently⁶² and never in the first person.⁶³ Conversely, the root *עָרַר* appears five times in Deut 28 (Deut 28:16–19) but not at all in Amos 4:6–11; Lev 26; or Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4.⁶⁴ What is more, Yahweh never speaks in the first person in Deut 28, whereas Lev 26 consists entirely of Yahweh's first-person address to Israel. Thus the profoundly interpersonal "I and thou" ethos of Amos 4 is paralleled in Lev 26 but absent from Deut 28.⁶⁵ However, and most important, the primary structuring device in Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 is the setting of the various maledictions as a series of incrementally stepped calamities, punctuated by intervals of reprieve designed to preempt the imposition of catastrophic divine judgment should the nation reverse its course. The maledictions function as disciplinary warnings.⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 28, by contrast, lacks the notion of critical moments when repentance is possible. There, the maledictions function as threats. They are enumerated in the form of a list and structured rhetorically,⁶⁷ utilizing various common descriptive curse formulae that range from simple futility curses to threats of loss of the land, descriptions of siege, deportation, exile, return to Egypt, and sale into slavery. The distance between Deut 28, on the one hand, and Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4, on the other, is thus quite wide.⁶⁸

⁶² *נתן* occurs twice in the perfect (vv. 48, 65), twice in the imperfect (vv. 24–25), and once as a participle (v. 8, with reference to Yahweh's gift of the land).

⁶³ This excludes 28:1, where the perfect of *נתן* makes reference to the giving of Yahweh's commandments. Also excluded here are the participial usages of *נתן* with reference to the land.

⁶⁴ Deut 28 is generally seen as complex and composite, so the presence of *עָרַר* in vv. 16–19 should not be unduly pressed in this regard. Literary connections between the rest of Deut 27–28 and Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 might still be posited. Nevertheless, numerous scholars view Deut 28:15–19 as part of the earliest core of the chapter; see R. NELSON, *Deuteronomy* (see n. 29), 328–329; J. R. LUNDBOM, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 756–757. As such, the use of *עָרַר* in 16–19 is noteworthy and still suggests a distinction in outlook between Deut 28 and that of Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 at a certain level. See also the literature cited in n. 40, above.

⁶⁵ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214, notes this distinction. It should, however, be noted that, from v. 36 onward, third-masculine plural forms are interspersed with the second-masculine plural forms; see P. BUIS, "Comment au septième siècle envisageait-on l'avenir de l'alliance: Étude sur Lev 26, 3–45," in *Questions disputées d'Ancien Testament: Méthode et théologie* (ed. C. Brekelmans; BETL 33; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 131–140, here 132.

⁶⁶ The concept of corrective discipline is conveyed through the root *יָסַר* in Lev 26:18, 23, 28.

⁶⁷ See LUNDBOM, *Deuteronomy* (see n. 64), 751–761.

⁶⁸ See further MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2346–2348.

As we have seen, J. Jeremias suggests that Amos 4 is closer to 1 Kgs 8 than to Deut 28 or Lev 26. He maintains that Lev 26 served as a model for 1 Kgs 8, which in its turn provided the basis for Amos 4.⁶⁹ However, if Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4 stand at a significant distance from Deut 28, the distance between Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4, on the one hand, and 1 Kgs 8, on the other, is even greater. True, all these texts utilize the motif of adversity leading to repentance. Moreover, several other parallels exist between all of these texts. Similar disasters occur whose purpose is to motivate the suffering individual or community to return (שוב) to Yahweh (Amos 4:6, 8–11; 1 Kgs 8:35, 47–48).⁷⁰ In Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4, שׁוּב is utilized with reference to the removal of Yahweh's anger (Isa 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4). Yet 1 Kgs 8 manifests significant differences from Lev 26; Amos 4; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4. These stem primarily from the function of the curse description formulae within them. Four major differences stand out. First, 1 Kgs 8 does not deal primarily with issues of national rejection of Yahweh's covenant through profound disobedience (cf. Deut 28) and its ultimate reconciliation and restoration (cf. Lev 26) or unheeded prophetic warnings leading to dramatic national disaster (cf. Amos 4; Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4). Rather, within the narrative flow of 1 Kings, the focus in 1 Kgs 8 is primarily upon the newly constructed temple as the culmination of Yahweh's purposes and its relationship to earlier cultic institutions.⁷¹ So, though 1 Kgs 8 does indeed deal with the remediation of transgression, its focus is

⁶⁹ JEREMIAS, *Hosea und Amos* (see n. 59), 198–213; IDEM, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 70–72, esp. 70, n. 16. Noting the numerous parallels and differences between these texts, he concludes that the latter is a penitential liturgy addressed to the exilic community. Jeremias understands Amos 4 to presuppose 1 Kgs 8 as well as Lev 26 and Deut 28. He rests his argument primarily on the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in Amos 4:11 and, more broadly, on the fact that prayer in 1 Kgs 8 is addressed to Yahweh not only from within the temple but toward it from afar. Thus, he concludes, the words of Amos urge the exilic community not to miss their final remaining opportunity to avoid utter destruction by returning in repentance and praise to Yahweh.

⁷⁰ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214, appropriately comments, “With each plague, according to Amos 4:6–11, Yahweh anticipated repentance. This combination of the plague series with the theme of ‘return’ is otherwise found only in a particular stratum of 1 Kgs 8 (a stratum which does not correspond to the final Deuteronomistic stratum), namely in 1 Kgs 8:33 and 35.”

⁷¹ KNOPPERS, *Two Nations under God* (see n. 54), 113–114, states, “[i]ndeed, it seems that in 1 Kings 8 the Deuteronomist is anxious to project an image of Solomon as a curator and guarantor of his nation's most sacred traditions. I would argue, however, that this stress upon Solomon's piety deliberately downplays the innovation involved in establishing the cultus of Solomon's royal shrine as normative for the whole people. [...] [T]he Deuteronomist not only integrates traditional institutions into the temple cultus, he weds these institutions, and the temple itself, to kingship. In doing so, he transforms older arrangements. Both king and temple are integral to national life.”

primarily on the role of prayer in or toward the temple.⁷² Second, *both* individual and collective cases of sin and forgiveness are in view in 1 Kgs 8. By contrast, Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 deal entirely with collective responsibility. Third, in 1 Kgs 8, the afflictions sent upon transgressors are presented as normal, even expected, occurrences. The parenthetical aside in v. 46, “for there is no one who does not sin,” underlines this point. The various instances of sin are introduced either by *את אשר* (v. 31), *אשר* (v. 33), or by *כי* (v. 35), indicating that these are potential, even expected, occurrences. The iniquity of the nation in Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4 is not of this nature. Rather, these texts concern Israel’s inexcusable behavior within its relationship to Yahweh and its stubborn refusal to heed the providential warnings sent to it. Finally, in 1 Kgs 8, there is no sense of a series of punishments sent one after another, increasing in intensity, the neglect of which would lead to ultimate destruction. Taken together, these elements make the dissimilarities between 1 Kgs 8 on the one hand and Amos 4 on the other; Isa 5:25; 9:7[8]–10:4; and Lev 26 far greater than the similarities between them. Their classification within differing categories of curse materials is therefore wholly justifiable.

3.3 Amos 4:6–12 and Leviticus 26: Points of Commonality⁷³

Amos 4 and Lev 26 share numerous points of commonality. As is frequently noted, their structure is strikingly similar. Amos 4 stands within the broader unit

⁷² As noted by WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214.

⁷³ Beyond this point, I focus upon the points of commonality and dissimilarity between Amos 4 and Lev 26. The relationship of Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4 to the two former texts is highly significant but cannot be explored in detail here. The general similarity between Amos 4 and Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4 is beyond question (see our typology above). Both texts contain a refrain involving the verb *שוב* repeated five times (Amos 4:6, 8–11; Isa 5:25; 9:11–12, 16, 20; 10:4). Both relate repeated instances of Yahweh’s affliction of his people, without positive effect: thus, “The people did not turn to him who struck them, or seek the LORD of hosts” (Isa 9:13) and “yet you did not return to me, says the LORD” (Amos 4:6, etc.). Both end on a note of indeterminacy and anticipate one (or several) further blows. Both leave open the possibility of some future hope. For these elements in Isaiah, see WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 1–12* (see n. 51), 224–225, 233; H. G. M. WILLIAMSON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27, Volume 1: Isaiah 1–5* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 403–405. Discussion of the relationship between these texts is rendered particularly complex owing to issues surrounding the order of the material in Isaiah as it now appears; see WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 1–12* (see n. 51), 224, and the survey in WILLIAMSON, *Isaiah 1–5*, 400–403; see also A. H. BARTELT, “Isaiah 5 and 9: In- or Interdependence?,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honour of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Astrid B. Beck et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 157–174; W. P. BROWN, “The So-Called Refrain in Isaiah 5:25–30 and 9:7–10:4,” *CBQ* 52 (1990), 432–443; C. E. L’HEUREUX, “The Redactional History of Isaiah 5:1–10:4,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström* (ed. W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer; JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 99–119.

of 3:1–6:14. There is a general consensus that 5:1–6:14 should be read as a unit consisting of parallel elements of devastating judgment and call to reform, with 5:1–17, itself in concentric pattern, at its core.⁷⁴ There is far less unanimity of opinion regarding 3:1–4:13. Some, such as F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, see it as closely connected to 1:1–2:16, whereas others see it as composed of several loosely connected sections: either 3:1–2, 3–8, 9–12, 13–15; 4:1–3, and 4–13 (thus S.M. Paul); or 3:1–2, 3–6, 7–8, 9–12, 13–15; 4:1–3, 4–13 (so R.B. Coote).⁷⁵ Virtually all are agreed that the curse material in 4:6–11 is integrally connected to the condemnation of the official cult at Bethel in 4:4–5.⁷⁶ The phrase *גַּם אֲנִי* (and I for my part) in v. 6a, following from the *Gottesspruchformel* in v. 5b, suggests as much.⁷⁷ Further debate surrounds the meaning of v. 12 and its relationship to vv. 6–11. These words are read either as an announcement of imminent, inescapable doom⁷⁸ or as the offer of a final chance for repentance.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ J. BARTON, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Old Testament Theology; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23, n. 26. On 3–6 as a unit, see ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 461–471; JEREMIAS, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 83–85.

⁷⁵ R.B. COOTE, *Amos among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 69–75.

⁷⁶ The arguments of M. WEISS, *Amos* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992) (Hebrew), constitute an important exception to this general trend. Weiss (*Amos*, 1:107) accepts vv. 4–5 as independent of the preceding unit, vv. 1–3, and of the following passage, vv. 6–12, in theme, style, and literary character. Dalit Rom-Shiloni has kindly provided the following summary of Weiss's argument: "For Weiss, thematically, vv. 4–5 focus on worship at Bethel and Gilgal, whereas vv. 6–12 discuss the people's refusal to return to God without any reference to specific cultic sites; vv. 4–5 sarcastically call for activity, whereas vv. 6–12 confront the people with what they have failed to do. Verses 4–5 refer to the people's feelings as motivating their cultic behavior (v. 5b), whereas the accusation against the people in vv. 6–12 is set in the context of divinely imposed judgments. Stylistically, vv. 4–5 are built on rhythmic and laconic language, whereas vv. 6–12 feature a detailed and flowing style. The two units differ in tone, vv. 4–5 being much sharper, and whereas vv. 4–5 are satirical or even parodic, vv. 6–12 are words of admonition regarding past deeds ending with an ominous future prospect (v. 12). In their literary character, vv. 4–5 contain seven stichs and close with the formula *גַּם אֲנִי יְהוָה*, as is typical of Amos. However, vv. 6–12 form a closed unit, structured as 5+1 subunits defined by a repeated verset (vv. 6b, 7b, 9b, 10b, 11b). Weiss thus concludes that 'there is no reason to assume that vv. 4–5 and vv. 6 and following were proclaimed in a single occasion' (107)."

⁷⁷ PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 141–142; W.R. HARPER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1905), 96; S. AMSLER, "Amos," in *Osée, Joël, Amos, Abdias, Jonas* (CAT 11A; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1965), 157–247, esp. 201; JEREMIAS, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 69–74.

⁷⁸ PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 151 and WEISS, *Amos* (see n. 76), 1:122–124.

⁷⁹ COOTE, *Amos* (see n. 74), 78; W. BRUEGGEMANN, "Amos IV 4–13 and Israel's Covenant Worship," *VT* 15 (1965), 1–15; S. AMSLER, "Amos: Prophète de la onzième heure," *TZ* 318 (1965), 318–328; WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 225; JEREMIAS, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 70–72.

This final call is sometimes seen as addressed either to the post-722 community at Bethel (so Wolff) or to the post-587 community in Judah (so Jeremias).⁸⁰

Although assigned to different periods and/or tradents by the various interpreters of Amos, and despite certain problematic textual and verbal elements, the literary integrity of Amos 4:6–12 is generally admitted. It is widely agreed that vv. 6–11 consist of five strophes describing the imposition of divine judgment (6a, 7a, 9a, 10a, 11a), each concluding with the refrain *עדי שבתם עדי ולא* (“and yet you did not return to me”; Amos 4:6b, 8b, 9b, 10b, 11b).⁸¹ A secondary 7+1 structure focused around specific verbal forms followed by second-masculine plural pronominal suffixes has been suggested.⁸² More convincing is the observation that these five strophes begin with five first-person declarations in the perfect aspect, followed by a number of perfect⁸³ and other nonperfective forms, and serving as a loose structure for the various maledictions visited upon Israel. In the initial first-person declaration (v. 6a) a single malediction is imposed; in the latter four, several are mentioned. The first (v. 6a) begins with *וְגַם אֲנִי* and the second (v. 7a) with *וְגַם אֲנֹכִי*. The first two consist of only a single perfect first-person singular verbal form, whereas the latter three begin with a perfect first-person singular verb and are followed by various verbal constructions.⁸⁴ The various curses involved are famine (v. 6), drought at a critical time in the agricultural cycle (v. 7a), selective withholding of rain (vv. 7aβ, 7b), overcrowded towns with insufficient water supply (v. 8a), crop disease (v. 9a), locusts (v. 9aβ), pestilence (v. 10a), death of choice young men (v. 10aβ), death and stench (v. 10b), and devastation and blighting to near annihilation (v. 11a). The precise number of plagues involved is debated, but the organization of the ten different events mentioned into a broader structure of seven plagues is highly plausible.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 225, sees these words as intended to elicit a repentant confession for the community’s enthronement of fertility gods; see also JEREMIAS, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 70–72.

⁸¹ See PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 143, on the importance of the pentad in Amos and in rabbinic literature. On the text-critical issues and various proposals for emendation of these maledictions, see AMSLER, “Amos” (see n. 77), 198–200; PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 144–149.

⁸² J. LIMBURG, “Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos,” *JBL* 106 (1987), 217–222; See also ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 440, who enumerate seven plagues. It should be noted that six of the verbs are in the perfect aspect, whereas the seventh is a *waw*-consecutive plus imperfect.

⁸³ There are seven perfect first-person singular forms in the passage (or eight, if *הַרְבֹּת* is seen as a textual error for *הַרְבֵּתִי*).

⁸⁴ The syntax of the verbal forms following these perfects involves numerous complexities. ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 436–437, 441, acknowledge their anomalous nature but view all the various forms as referring to the past; WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214, sees the imperfects as remnants of earlier curse formulations from which the Amosian tradents have drawn.

⁸⁵ CRENSHAW, “Liturgy” (see n. 51), 32, is uncertain as to the specific number of plagues here. J. A. SOGGIN, *The Prophet Amos: A Translation and Commentary* (trans. J. Bowden;

Leviticus 26, for its part, contains numerous structural elements that echo aspects of Amos 4. Verses 14–23 contain five groups of plagues introduced by וָאִם (Lev 26:14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 27)⁸⁶ and four references to a sevenfold punishment for rejection of Yahweh (Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28). As is often noted, the maledictions in Lev 26:14–39 correspond inversely to the blessings of vv. 3–13.⁸⁷ This is loosely analogous to the structure of Amos 4 with its five strophes, seven plagues, and seven first-person perfect forms.⁸⁸ What is more, the sevenfold repetition of the phrase “to walk in hostility” (הלך קרי; Lev 26:21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 40, 41) is reminiscent of the Amosian fivefold refrain describing Israel’s failure to repent (vv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).⁸⁹ Divine judgments, introduced by נתתי, appear in Amos 4:6 and by ונתתי in Lev 26:4, 6, 11, 17, 19, 30–31. Numerous verbal and thematic elements within the curse materials link the two passages. The famine of Amos 4:6 is echoed in Lev 26:20, 26, and the drought of 4:7 in 26:4 and 19. Yahweh’s smiting in Amos 4:9 appears in Lev 26:24. The plague of pestilence (דבר) in Amos 4:10 appears in Lev 26:25, and the curse of the sword (חרב) of Amos 4:11 is echoed in Lev 26:6–8, 25, 33, 36–37.⁹⁰ Both texts envisage a series of disasters, of increasing severity, visited upon the nation.⁹¹ And, in both texts, these curses are grouped into successive stages in anticipation of an even more devastating divine judgment in the future.⁹² This is achieved through the repeated use of וָאִם in Lev 26:14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 27;⁹³ the motif of “walking in hostility” in Lev 26:21, 23–24, 27–28, 40–41; and the refrain “and yet you did not return to me” in Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11. These repetitions interrupt the

OTL; London: SCM, 1987), 76, sees a series of six. ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 440, suggest that there are seven. PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 143, also proposes the same number. Arriving at the number seven, however, involves grouping some of the plagues mentioned individually under a single heading. Thus, for example, ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 440, see all of the elements of v. 7 as part of a single plague.

⁸⁶ So MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2289–2290; HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 456.

⁸⁷ B. A. LEVINE, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 276; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2288.

⁸⁸ On the significance of the numbers five and seven, see MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2288, who similarly notes other key terms that occur seven times in Lev 26.

⁸⁹ Moreover, this also corresponds to the fivefold refrain in Isa 5:20–25 and 9:7[8]–10:4.

⁹⁰ For further discussion of the points of commonality between these texts, see SOGGIN, *Prophet Amos* (see n. 85), 78–79.

⁹¹ On the specific blessings and curses contained in Lev 26 and their number, see HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 456–458; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2286–2290.

⁹² As noted above, there are strong differences of opinion as to whether Amos 4:12 implies further hope of reprieve. See *infra*, pp. 969, and 973–974 n. 159, for a fuller discussion of the issue of gaps and increment in the judgments in Amos 4 and Lev 26.

⁹³ FISCHER, “Need for Hope” (see n. 39), 374, n. 18, comments, “[T]he beginnings with וָאִם in 26:14, 18, 21, 23, 27 [...] always indicate a new stage in God’s efforts to bring his people back to the right way.”

litany of curses and introduce the idea of critical moments when change for the better (or its opposite) may occur and wherein the nation's responsiveness (or lack thereof) to Yahweh's demands can be assessed. Furthermore, in both Lev 26 and Amos 4, Yahweh repeatedly addresses the nation or describes his activities toward it by means of several first-person singular verbs, addressed to hearers in the second-masculine plural. This sets up a profoundly interpersonal, or "I and thou," tone in both passages.⁹⁴

3.4 Amos 4 and Leviticus 26: Differences in Form, Function, and Worldview

Despite the parallels just noted, several striking differences exist between Amos 4 and Lev 26, especially with reference to their underlying ideology and conceptual framework. It is to these differences that we now turn. My broader purpose here is to demonstrate that texts containing descriptive curse formulae and bearing great lexical, formal, and thematic similarities may nevertheless exhibit significant differences that stem from each text's underlying ideological or theological convictions. In that which follows, I will leave aside the obvious temporal difference between these texts – Amos 4 presents its maledictions as a historical retrospective, whereas the cursings in Lev 26 are set forth as threats and warnings – and examine eight areas of significant contrast between them.⁹⁵

First, the two texts contain a very different *mood and emotional tone*. Leviticus 26 bears the marks of a bitter and disintegrating interpersonal relationship (see *infra*), a tone lacking in Amos 4:6–12. As noted above, both Amos 4 and Lev 26 contain numerous first-person singular verbs and suffixes and second-masculine plural verbs and suffixes, setting up an "I and thou" interaction – quite frequently a conflictual one. Nevertheless, the tone of the dispute in the two texts is markedly different. In Amos, there is a distinct absence of vitriol or venom in the portrait of both Yahweh's and Israel's responses.⁹⁶ Israel's failure does not consist of overt hostility but is manifested through the *absence of a positive response* to Yahweh. Furthermore, Israel's failure to return is described without comment. No explicit reason is given for this failure – did it arise from folly or simple indifference? There is no clear reference to hostility or antipathy. What is more, the series of disasters in vv. 6–11 is seen as a disciplinary warning, and

⁹⁴ As indicated above, this dynamic is absent in Deut 28; see also WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214, who notes this distinction.

⁹⁵ In his careful discussion of these two passages, T. S. HADJIEV, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos* (BZAW 393; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), esp. 149–155, also indicates a number of significant points of contrast between them. Hadjiev's interest, however, is primarily directed toward the relative dating of Amos 4 vis-à-vis Lev 26. I will engage some of his observations below. The difference between the two passages is also noted by M. GRAUPNER and H.-J. FABRY, "שׁוּב," *TDOT* 14:485.

⁹⁶ Verse 12, "this I will do to you," admittedly does take a sharper tone.

there is no evidence of increasing irascibility on Yahweh's part. In Lev 26, by contrast, the atmosphere is one of increasing mutual animosity. Israel's failure is seen primarily not as the *absence* of returning (שוב) but rather as the *presence* of ongoing hostility. This is most clearly visible where Israel's determination to walk in hostility (קרי) to Yahweh (vv. 21a, 23, 27, 40) is met with Yahweh's corresponding enmity (also קרי in vv. 24, 41a). Indeed, Yahweh's hostility of v. 24 becomes "furious hostility" (בהמת קרי) in v. 28.⁹⁷ Emotional language of animus abounds. When Israel rejects (מאס) and abhors (געל) Yahweh's ordinances (26:15, 42, cf. Jer 14:19; Ezek 14:25), and acts treacherously against him (26:40), Yahweh will turn and abhor Israel (געל, v. 30, albeit temporarily; cf. v. 44). He will set his face against them (בתן פנה ב', 26:17; cf. Lev 17:10; Ezek 14:8) and execute the vengeance of the covenant (נקם ברית) upon them (26:25; cf. Deut 32:41, 43).⁹⁸ Such emotionally charged language is entirely absent from Amos 4. Vehement language does appear elsewhere in Amos, but it is of a different order.⁹⁹

Second, Amos 4 implies that Israel *has the real ability to turn and repent before the final catastrophe arrives*. The various disasters sent by Yahweh were corrective in nature, presupposing that these measures could have been effective had the people been willing to hear. As such, the text seems to betray a certain astonishment, signaled by its refrain, that the nation, smitten so grievously time after time, has learned nothing. Much discussion has surrounded the wisdom motifs in Amos.¹⁰⁰ The description of Israel's failure to learn from Yahweh's

⁹⁷ Note also the observation of H. RINGGREN, קרה, *TDOT* 13:162: "The divine reaction reflects the human provocation. [. . .] [T]here is an intensification of the punishment of hostility."

⁹⁸ Similar language of abhorrence and disgust abounds in Ezekiel, see B.J. SCHWARTZ, "Ezekiel's Dim View of Israel's Restoration," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. M.S. Odell and J.T. Strong; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 43–67. On the question of literary dependence, see NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 543–544 (Lev 26 presupposes Ezekiel or parts thereof); pace M.A. LYONS, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel's use of the Holiness Code* (LHBOTS 507; New York: T&T Clark, 2009); IDEM, "Transformation of Law: Ezekiel's Use of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26)," in *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition and Theology in Ezekiel* (ed. W.A. Tooman and M.A. Lyons; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 1–32; R. LEVITT KOHN, *A New Heart and A New Soul: Ezekiel the Exile and the Torah* (JSOTSup 358; London: Sheffield, 2002); MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2348–2352 (Ezekiel presupposes Lev 26). The issue cannot be discussed in the present context.

⁹⁹ See Amos 5:21; 6:8. But there Yahweh's vitriol is directed against hypocritical cultic practices and pride.

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., H. W. WOLFF, *Amos' geistige Heimat* (WMANT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); J.L. CRENSHAW, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos: The Doxologies of Amos and Job 5:9–16, 9:5–10," *ZAW* 79 (1967), 42–52; J.A. SOGGIN, "Amos and Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honor of J.A. Emerton* (ed. J. Day et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 119–123; S.L. TERRIEN, "Amos and Wisdom," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (ed. B. W. Anderson and W. J. Harrelson; New

disciplinary measures is reminiscent of the fool who is smitten a hundred times to no avail (Prov 17:10). Thus, if Israel has shown itself incapable of repentance, even out of enlightened self-interest, such a failure arose not from an innate inability to respond but from pure folly (in the biblical sense of refusal to heed reproof). Leviticus 26, by contrast, presents a very conflicted view of the nation's capacity to respond. Its heart is described as proud, uncircumcised, and *in need of radical change* (26:41; cf. Jer 9:25; Ezek 44:7, 9; cf. the opposite in Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4).¹⁰¹ Thus, though the successive stages of cursings in vv. 14–39 clearly imply the theoretical possibility of repentance, it is only after the final catastrophes of vv. 31–33, 36–39, including the devastation of the land, exile to enemy land, living on the verge of total annihilation, and following a long period of abandonment (vv. 36–39) that change ensues. It is noteworthy that, at this point, a significant distinction exists between Lev 26 and Ezek 36. In Lev 26, no heart renewal through the action of the divine spirit is explicitly mentioned.¹⁰² Rather, the emphasis falls upon the role of suffering in Israel's recognition of its guilt,¹⁰³ its repentance, and the confession of its own sin and the sin of the ancestors – stock motifs of penitential prayer.¹⁰⁴ Thus, in contrast to Amos 4, it is only through such experiences of intense suffering that change arises in Lev 26.

York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 108–115; G.H. WITTENBERG, “A Fresh Look at Amos and Wisdom,” *OTE* 4 (1991), 7–18; H. M. BARSTAD, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Am 2, 7B–8; 4, 1–13; 5, 1–27; 6, 4–7; 8, 14* (VTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 7–10.

¹⁰¹ See W. E. LEMKE, “Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor,” in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller* (ed. B. A. Strawn and N. R. Bowen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 299–319. See also the discussion in FISCHER, “Need for Hope” (see n. 39), 383. Fischer contrasts Lev 26:41, where Israel's uncircumcised heart must be humbled, with Deut 30:6, where Yahweh himself provides the nation with the ability to exhibit an appropriate response by effecting upon it the “circumcision of the heart.”

¹⁰² NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 544–545. See also LYONS, “Transformation of Law” (see n. 98).

¹⁰³ J. MILGROM, “The Priestly Doctrine of Repentance,” *RB* 82 (1975), 186–205; BODA, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55), 84–85.

¹⁰⁴ See R. J. BAUTCH, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (AcBib; Leiden: Brill, 2003); M. J. BODA, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9* (BZAW 277; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); IDEM, “From Complaint to Contrition: Peering through the Liturgical Window of Jer 14,1–15,4,” *ZAW* 113 (2001), 186–197; IDEM, “The Priceless Gain of Penitence: From Communal Lament to Penitential Prayer in the ‘Exilic’ Liturgy of Israel,” *HBT* 25 (2003), 51–75; IDEM, “Renewal in Heart, Word, and Deed: Repentance in the Torah,” in *Repentance in Christian Theology* (ed. M. J. Boda and G. T. Smith; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 3–24; IDEM, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55); M. J. BODA et al., *Seeking the Favor of God, Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (EJL 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006). As is often noted, Lev 26 and Ezek 36 differ markedly regarding the confession of the sins of the ancestors. In Ezek this idea is suppressed, likely because it conflicts with the overall perspective of individual responsibility in the book.

Third, and following from the previous observation, the *terminology used to describe the response desired of Israel* differs between the two texts. Essentially, both texts deal with the necessity of a transformation of life – turning away from things displeasing to Yahweh and returning to him – manifested by right attitudes and actions. Such a transformation is generally termed “repentance.”¹⁰⁵ However, significant differences in the language and broader traditiohistorical framework used to describe this transformation appear in Amos 4, on the one hand, and Lev 26, on the other. In Amos, Israel’s failure consists in refusing to return (שוב) to Yahweh.¹⁰⁶ Broadly speaking, one can say that שׁוּב involves a reversal of course, turning from someone or something and returning to someone or something (Isa 1:27–28; 6:10; Jer 3:1, 10; Hos 2:7 [ET 2:5]; etc.).¹⁰⁷ The language of שׁוּב appears quite frequently in prophetic preaching. Calls to return to Yahweh are given in staccato appeals, without excessive explanation of what is involved.¹⁰⁸ Frequently the emphasis falls on specific actions to be taken.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, these calls to שׁוּב generally carry with them a sense of directness and certitude – should the nation return, Yahweh’s acceptance of it is promised.¹¹⁰ Numerous suggestions have been made as to what such a return

¹⁰⁵ On the subject of repentance more generally, see J. MILGROM, “Repentance in the OT,” *IDBSup* 736–738; T.M. RAITT, “The Prophetic Summons to Repentance,” *ZAW* 83 (1971), 30–49; J. UNTERMAN, “Repentance and Redemption in Hosea,” *SBLSP* 21 (1982), 541–550; T.G. SMOTHERS, “Preaching and Praying Repentance in Hosea,” *RevExp* 90 (1993), 239–246; BODA, “Renewal” (see n. 104); C.J. DEMPSEY, “‘Turn Back, O People’: Repentance in the Latter Prophets,” in *Repentance in Christian Theology* (ed. M.J. Boda and G.T. Smith; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 47–66; T.E. FRETHEIM, “Repentance in the Former Prophets,” in *Repentance in Christian Theology* (ed. M.J. Boda and G.T. Smith; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 36–41; K.M. O’CONNOR, “Repentance in First-Person Plural,” *Journal for Preachers* 31 (2008), 9–13; M.J. BODA, “Repentance,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (ed. M.J. Boda and J.G. McConville; Downers Grove, IL, 2011) 664–671.

¹⁰⁶ The bibliography regarding שׁוּב is sizeable. See especially GRAUPNER and FABRY, “שוב,” (see n. 95), 485; J.A. THOMPSON and E.A. MARTENS, “שוב,” *NIDOTTE* 55–59; J.A. SOGGIN, “שוב,” *TLOT* 3:1312–1317; and W.L. HOLLADAY, *The Root Šûbh in the Old Testament with Particular Reference to Its Usages in Covenantal Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 1958). There is no reason to suppose that the use of שׁוּב as a term to describe religious reform is a late development; see WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 220: “As far as we know, Hosea (2:9[7]; 3:4–5; 14:2[1]) and Isaiah (9:12[13]; 30:15) were the first to recognize that the purpose of judgment was to promote such a ‘return’; the Deuteronomist elevated the concept to the status of an admonition.”

¹⁰⁷ BODA, “Repentance” (see n. 105), 664, defines repentance in the prophetic books as “the human experience of turning away from attitudes and activities opposed to God and his ways and turning to God and his ways.”

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Isa 31:6; Jer 3:12, 14, 22; 18:11; 25:5; 31:21; 35:15; Ezek 14:6; 18:30; 33:11; Hos 14:2 (ET 14:1); Joel 2:12–13; Zech 1:3–4; Mal 3:7.

¹⁰⁹ Isa 1:27–28; 55:7; 58:13; Jer 4:1–2; 18:11; 23:22; Ezek 13:22; 18:21.

¹¹⁰ This is most clearly seen in texts such as Zech 1:3–4, where an imperative followed by an imperfect or cohortative is best seen as having either a telic function or the force of a

specifically entails in Amos, although these cannot be evaluated in detail here.¹¹¹ They include: (1) a return to worship at Jerusalem,¹¹² (2) rejection of foreign deities,¹¹³ and (3) moral rectitude.¹¹⁴ Within the broader context of Amos 3–6, however, the concept conveyed by שׁוּב most likely denotes a positive response to the prophet's preaching: a rejection of hypocritical religious activity and social and economic corruption (5:4–6, 14–15, 21–24).¹¹⁵ Most significantly, there is no explicit mention of prayer, cleansing, or rites of repentance in 4:6–12 or in Amos 3–6 more generally (cf. Joel 1:13–14; 2:12–17).¹¹⁶ The prophetic שׁוּב does at times explicitly mention such inward motivations (Isa 6:10; 9:12 [ET 9:13]; 19:22; 31:6) or confession (Jer 3:12–23). However, such ideas do not appear in Amos.

By contrast, in Lev 26 Israel's path to restoration is described apart from the use of שׁוּב.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in Lev 26:40–45, much attention is given to more-internal matters such as remorse, confession, and purification (see *infra*). This is not, of course, to suggest that the tradents of Lev 26 did not share the ethical concerns expressed in the שׁוּב ideology of the prophetic and Deuteronomic voices and a belief that devotion to Yahweh must pass from words to actions. Alongside their concerns regarding idolatry, cultic practices, and proscribed sexual relations, the Holiness writers also shared much of the same social ethic as is evident in Amos and Isaiah (cf. Lev 19:9–17; 33–35). However, in Lev 26 the restoration of the divine-human relationship does not have the immediacy seen in the texts involving שׁוּב cited above. Far greater detail is given regarding the process involved in Israel's movement toward Yahweh and in Yahweh's reaction to it. Israel manifests several responses not explicitly named in Amos: the confession (*hithpa'el* of יָדָה) of its own sins (עוֹן) and treachery (מַעַל) and the sins of its ancestors,¹¹⁸ the humbling (כַּנּוּעַ)

promise; see *Jotūn* 116b, f.

¹¹¹ Outside 4:6–11, the verb occurs in Amos only in 1:3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6.

¹¹² COOTE, *Amos* (see n. 74), 50–53.

¹¹³ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 225.

¹¹⁴ PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 139.

¹¹⁵ A likely synonym of שׁוּב in Amos is the verb דָּרַשׁ, which appears in 5:4, 5, 6, 14 and 8:12.

¹¹⁶ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 225, suggests that prayer and repentance are in view in Amos: "The return to Yahweh, heretofore neglected, is now finally to become a reality through repentant confession to and fervent praise of him." But where exactly are repentance and prayer to be seen in Amos?

¹¹⁷ MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2363–2365, notes this difference and sees it as a sure indication that Lev 26 precedes rather than follows Amos 4. On this diachronic issue see further below.

¹¹⁸ On the confession of sin, see Lev 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num 5:7; Dan 9:4, 20; Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:6; 9:2–3; 2 Chr 30:22. For וָאֵת עוֹן אֲבוֹתָם, see Lev 16:21; 26:39–40; Isa 14:21; 65:7; Jer 11:10; 14:20; Ezek 18:17; Ps 109:14; Dan 9:16. On מַעַל, see Lev 5:15, 21; 26:40; Num 5:6, 12, 27; 31:16.

of its uncircumcised heart (לֵב עֵרֵל),¹¹⁹ and the making of amends (רִצְיָה)¹²⁰ for its sins (26:41).¹²¹ What is more, in v. 34, even the land is purged (רִצְיָה)¹²² and enjoys the Sabbaths due to it. As well, Yahweh's response is portrayed less directly than in Amos.¹²³ Yahweh's renewed acceptance of Israel is, in the final analysis, rooted not in Israel's repentance but in the covenantal relationship with the ancestors and the exodus generation.¹²⁴ The difference between the two response patterns highlights the distinct traditiohistorical rootings of the two texts. As noted, the ideology of return (שׁוּב) is a core element of relational repair in the prophets (see references above) and to a lesser degree in certain Deuteronomic texts (Deut 4:30; 30:2, 10; 1 Kgs 8:48; 2 Kgs 17:13).¹²⁵ The terms describing Israel's rebellion and restoration in Lev 26 are, by contrast, evocative of themes deeply rooted in Priestly traditions.¹²⁶ This is not of course to deny any sense of interiority or confession in the Amosian שׁוּב ideology

¹¹⁹ On עֵרֵל and לֵב, see Deut 10:16; 30:6. On לֵב and בָּנֵעַ, see 2 Chr 32:26; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ezek 44:7, 9.

¹²⁰ Compare Lev 26:34, 41, 43 with Isa 40:2; 2 Chr 36:21. BODA, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55), 84 notes the Priestly use of this root (or its homonym) in connection with sacrifice in Lev 1:4; 7:18; 19:7; 22:23, 25, 27. He suggests that the idea of payment is assumed in all these instances and that "the Exile itself is functioning in the role of sacrifice" in Lev 26.

¹²¹ The syntax of v. 41 is disputed, see below and C. NIHAN, "The Priestly Covenant, Its Reinterpretations, and the Composition of 'P,'" in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings* (ed. S. Shectman and J.S. Baden; ATANT 95; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009), 87–134; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39).

¹²² MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2323, comments regarding the translation of this verb in v. 34: "Scholars are at their wits' end to render this word." He goes on to present several possibilities, and his conclusion that the overarching idea is one of restoration or repayment makes good sense in this context (compare Joel 2:25). He furthermore sees רִצְיָה here as a synonym for כִּפָּר.

¹²³ That is, in Amos 4 the repeated refrain implies that *had* Israel turned from its errant ways, Yahweh would doubtless have relented in sending disaster.

¹²⁴ On which, see below.

¹²⁵ On Amos 4 and Dtr ideology more generally, see HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 159–160; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos* (see n. 100). See below on the questions related to the covenant in Amos.

¹²⁶ Note especially the notion of purification and payment implicit in רִצְיָה in Lev 26:34, 41, 43 as well as the Priestly character of the various terms in vv. 40–45, noted above. For the general Priestly outlook of this section, see NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 540–541. See also the numerous explorations of Priestly influence in the confession of sin, especially BODA, *Praying the Tradition* (see n. 104); IDEM, "The Priceless Gain of Penitence" (see n. 105); IDEM, "Renewal" (see n. 104); IDEM, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55); B.A. LEVINE, "The Epilogue to the Holiness Code: A Priestly Statement on the Destiny of Israel," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (ed. J. Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress 1987), 9–34; MILGROM, "Priestly Doctrine of Repentance" (see n. 103); IDEM, *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance* (SJLA 18; Leiden: Brill, 1976); B.J. SCHWARTZ, "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. D.P. Wright et al.;

(cf. Hos 14:2–4 [ET 14:1–3]) but simply to note the priority given to such interiority in the Priestly perspective.¹²⁷

Fourth, the calamities in Amos 4 are presented as occurring over a period of time, with gaps in between them. Although scholars dispute the precise referents of these catastrophes,¹²⁸ few would see them as being imposed one directly on top of the other on the same group of people, with no intervals or relief between them. For example, rain falling upon one city but not upon another (4:7–8) implies some relief of drought in the land – even a surfeit of rain in some areas.¹²⁹ Moreover, the repetition of the refrain lamenting Israel's refusal to return implies that, in the wake of each blow, Yahweh anticipated that the nation would pause to take stock, learn wisdom, and amend its ways. In Lev 26, by contrast, the maledictions of vv. 14–39 are presented in a more sustained and unrelenting manner, one on top of the other. This is evident in ויספתי in v. 21 and ואם באלה in v. 23, and implied in ואם עד אלה in v. 18 and ואם בזאת in v. 27. As Levine states, “The Execration is composed in an escalating scale with admonition heaped upon admonition. If the Israelites do not return to God after one series of tragic circumstances, then even more horrible punishments will ensue.”¹³⁰ Israel's ongoing hostility to Yahweh continues in the midst of and despite its sufferings. Nor can the maledictions be seen as touching only some of the population (as in Amos). Rather, they engulf the whole nation.

Fifth, the concept of covenant is mentioned explicitly in Lev 26 and occupies a central place, occurring in Lev 26:9, 15, 25, 42 (3×), 44–45.¹³¹ Much recent discussion has focused on which covenantal traditions are implied in the passage (uniquely Priestly, or Priestly and Deuteronomic)¹³² and whether it is seen as

Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 3–21; J. SKLAR, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

¹²⁷ HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 159–160.

¹²⁸ See, e.g., the discussion of ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 436; PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 143; SOGGIN, *Prophet Amos* (see n. 85), 76–78.

¹²⁹ Thus SOGGIN, *Prophet Amos* (see n. 85), 76.

¹³⁰ LEVINE, *Leviticus* (see n. 87), 181. See also HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 458.

¹³¹ The bibliography here is enormous. For an orientation to the major studies and positions taken, see HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 457–462; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39); NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49); IDEM, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121); OLYAN, “Status of the Covenant” (see n. 31); J. STACKERT, “Distinguishing Innerbiblical Exegesis from Pentateuchal Redaction: Leviticus 26 as a Test Case,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. K. Schmid et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 369–386; JOOSTEN, *People and Land* (see n. 51); IDEM, “Covenant Theology” (see n. 51), all with extensive bibliography.

¹³² See J. STACKERT, “The Holiness Legislation and Its Pentateuchal Sources: Revision, Supplementation, and Replacement,” in *Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions* (ed. S. Shectman and J.S. Baden; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 187–204; NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 535–541; IDEM, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121), 104–115. Stackert sees the covenant in Lev 26 as an extension of the covenant idea in

conditional or unconditional.¹³³ The position taken here is that, in agreement with Lohfink, Nihan, and others, the basic schema in the Priestly literature (introduced in its earliest stages and retained in its later growth) is that of an eternal covenant between Yahweh and the community as a whole, from which individuals can be cut off should they break it. The covenant itself, however, cannot be terminated but perdures so long as the seed of Israel remains in existence.¹³⁴ In Lev 26, however, this perspective is extended *to an entire generation or historical moment*. The second- and third-masculine plural suffixes repeated throughout the chapter attest to such a perspective.¹³⁵ As such, the cutting off of a recalcitrant individual (as is the case in the *karet* regulations elsewhere)¹³⁶ is now transferred collectively to a recalcitrant *generation* that must suffer a period of exclusion from its relationship with Yahweh.¹³⁷ This would seem to reflect the impact of the Deuteronomic and prophetic understanding of covenant in Lev 26. As such, a generation can lose the presence of Yahweh and its status as an active covenant partner through its disobedience. Only after a time of alienation and suffering can the relationship be restored.¹³⁸ Such a perspective lies beneath the affirmations in Lev 26 that, if Israel lives in obedience, Yahweh will maintain his covenant with them (v. 9),¹³⁹ place his dwelling¹⁴⁰ in their midst (v. 11),

the earlier Priestly material alone. Nihan, by contrast, sees Lev 26 as *incorporating* covenantal ideas found in other pentateuchal and prophetic literature. See the fuller discussion below.

¹³³ It is widely acknowledged that these terms are reductionistic and set up a false antithesis. However this should not mask the real distinction between Priestly and non-Priestly conceptions of covenant. On the covenant in Lev 26, see the contrasting positions of STACKERT, "Holiness Legislation" (see n. 132); MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2352–2363; NIHAN, "Priestly Covenant" (see n. 121); IDEM, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 537–545.

¹³⁴ NIHAN, "Priestly Covenant" (see n. 121), 104–115, argues that, by incorporating the notion of a generational, collective cutting off (from Deuteronomic traditions) into the larger Priestly schema, Lev 26 harmonizes and reconciles the two traditions. See also the arguments in JOOSTEN, "Covenant Theology" (see n. 51); STACKERT, "Holiness Legislation" (see n. 132); IDEM, "Distinguishing Innerbiblical Exegesis" (see n. 133), who see no intermingling of traditions.

¹³⁵ Second-masculine plural: Lev 26:1, 4–9, 11–13, 15–22, 24–26, 28–39. Third-masculine plural: Lev 26:36, 39–41, 43–45.

¹³⁶ Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14; Lev 7:20–21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9; 18:29; 19:8; 20:18; 22:3; 23:29; Num 9:13; 15:30; 19:13, 20.

¹³⁷ As observed by STACKERT, "Holiness Legislation" (see n. 132), 383. Both Stackert and Nihan correctly observe that such a hiatus does not nullify the broader covenantal relationship between the two parties.

¹³⁸ See Deut 4:25–31; 30:1–10. This same motif is highly important in the prophetic literature; see Hos 3:1–5; Mic 5:2 (ET 5:3); Isa 40:1–2; 49:14–50:3; 54:6–7; Zech 10:6 as well as in Lamentations, esp. 3:25–33. See also BODA, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55), 82–85.

¹³⁹ On this translation, see HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 463; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2343–2346.

¹⁴⁰ Contrast MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2299–2303, who maintains that מִשְׁכָּן in 26:11 should be translated "presence" with N. KIUCHI, *Leviticus* (AOTC; Nottingham:

and be their God (v. 12). However, if the people steadfastly refuse to obey, Yahweh will execute covenant vengeance (v. 25)¹⁴¹ and unleash horrendous suffering (vv. 27–39). By contrast, should the people turn back to Yahweh in contrition, confession, and humility and commit themselves to renewed obedience (40–43), Yahweh will not break (פרר) his covenant but remember it and restore his people (v. 44–45). Moreover, it is not ultimately Israel's confession, repentance, humility of heart, and making amends (vv. 40–41, 43)¹⁴² nor even the land's enjoyment of its Sabbaths (v. 43) that secures the restoration of Israel's relationship with Yahweh. Rather, it is Yahweh's remembering of the covenant with the ancestors (v. 42) and with the exodus generation (v. 45) that ultimately effects such restoration.¹⁴³

In contrast to its central position in Lev 26, then, the concept of covenant in Amos is ambiguous. Indeed, the question whether, where, or to what degree the idea of covenant (the Sinai covenant in particular) is to be presupposed in this chapter has been one of the most divisive issues in the study of the book.¹⁴⁴ For some, the mere use of curse vocabulary implies covenant and should be understood as implicit in the words of Amos.¹⁴⁵ Others take a more skeptical view.¹⁴⁶ It must be admitted that stock Deuteronomistic phraseology is not abundant¹⁴⁷ and that though some communal standards, perhaps reflective of those in the Covenant Code, may lie behind certain elements of the condemnations in

Apollos, 2007) 477–478, and HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 463–464, who assume it refers to the literal Priestly tabernacle, symbolic of Yahweh's presence.

¹⁴¹ והבאתי עליכם חרב נקמת נקם ברית, i.e., the punishment due for covenant violation; thus H. G. L. PEELS, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root NQM and the Function of the NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (trans. W. T. Koopmans; OtSt 31; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 103–109, who argues that the phrase here denotes “the fitting answer to contempt or damaging the covenant” (106).

¹⁴² The syntax of v. 41 is disputed. NIHAN, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121), 107, n. 70, sees the particle ו as introducing two alternate possibilities: *either* the people will confess their sin *or* their uncircumcised heart will be humbled. MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2232, sees it as an extension of the protasis “if they confess their sin,” adding the notion of sincere humility and repentance. Despite the syntactical difficulties involved in reading the particle ו in this way (noted by Nihan), Milgrom's rendering makes more sense in the context. However, with Nihan, and *pace* Milgrom, I see the lack of the conditional particle in v. 40 as indicating the *certainty* that all of these things will transpire. See further below.

¹⁴³ NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 540–542.

¹⁴⁴ See the bibliography in M. D. CARROLL R., *Amos – The Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 126, and the survey of opinions in BARTON, *Theology of the Book of Amos* (see n. 73), 103–06.

¹⁴⁵ Thus BRUEGGEMANN, “Amos IV” (see n. 79).

¹⁴⁶ BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos* (see n. 100), 66–67.

¹⁴⁷ Even in those passages that are seen as the result of Dtr redactional activity, for which see WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 112–113, typical Dtr vocabulary is not abundant; see M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), and DRIVER, *Deuteronomy* (see n. 39), lxxvii–lxxxiv.

Amos,¹⁴⁸ the term ברית is never mentioned in the book. Nevertheless, one should not be entirely skeptical. Covenantal ideas may indeed be present in Amos but in less explicit or developed forms.¹⁴⁹ However the matter is decided, the role of covenant in Amos is veiled at best, in contrast to its preeminent position in Lev 26.

Sixth, the degree and intensity of the people's suffering differ between the two texts. The plagues of Amos 4 involve serious suffering, but they nevertheless allude to the more common and repeated experiences of national life in the ancient Near East: famine, drought, pestilence, and military defeat. The plagues of Lev 26 go much further and reach a horrific crescendo in vv. 27–39: starvation, cannibalism, exile, dispersion among the nations, and ultimate destruction.

Seventh, Amos 4 is open-ended, whereas Lev 26 moves toward an ultimate resolution. As we have seen above, Amos 4:12 portrays the nation at the cusp of a future choice – one that will determine its future before God. By contrast, Lev 26:40–45 (or according to some 39–45),¹⁵⁰ describe Israel's future restoration in great detail. The *degree of definiteness* in this description is disputed due to the problematic syntax of vv. 40–41.¹⁵¹ The issue at this point involves the lack of the conditional particle אם before v. 40 and the terms או אז in v. 41. Some, such as Milgrom, take this as the long protasis of a condition continuing to the end of v. 41 (as in the NRSV “if they confess [. . .] if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled, and they make amends for their iniquity”).¹⁵² Nihan, by contrast, sees the passage as taking a more prophetic tone.¹⁵³ Yahweh sets out Israel's future in

¹⁴⁸ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 168, identifies the words of condemnation in Amos 2:8 as an ad hoc reflection of familiar abuses rather than an allusion to the Covenant Code. R. J. COGGINS, *Joel and Amos* (NCB; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 118–120, esp. 121, urges caution regarding “a specifically covenantal reading in view of the lack of *berith* language in Amos. We have noted a number of points at which there are close similarities in outlook between Amos and the Deuteronomistic History. We need to bear in mind that there are important differences, and the lack of direct reference to the people's covenant status is one such.” See B. M. LEVINSON, “Is the Covenant Code an Exilic Composition? A Response to John Van Seters,” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (ed. J. Day; JSOTSup 406; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 272–325. However the matter is decided, the practices condemned in Amos 2:8 seem analogous to the proscriptions in Exod 22:25–26 (ET 22:26–27); see ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 319–320.

¹⁴⁹ Even BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos* (see n. 100), 66–67, who doubts that covenant plays a major role in the preaching of Amos, would not deny that certain characteristically Deuteronomistic motifs were not created *de novo* by the Deuteronomists but were inherited and developed by them.

¹⁵⁰ See FISCHER, “Need for Hope” (see n. 39), 369–379.

¹⁵¹ GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 430, suggests that a scribal insertion has occurred here, disrupting the flow of the sentence.

¹⁵² MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2332.

¹⁵³ NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 545, views Lev 26:40–45 as “a prophetic oracle, stated by Yahweh himself” that “reveals to Israel all it needs to know about its future.” This

great detail, stating “they will confess.” Whichever position one takes, it is clear that Lev 26 presents a far more defined picture than Amos 4. The primary point in Lev 26:40–45 is that *even if* the nation walks in hostility to Yahweh, a way of return will *surely* be made available to it.

Eighth, of the two texts only Lev 26 reflects upon the theological issues raised by Yahweh’s judgment upon Israel and the possibility that that relationship might be severed altogether. For the Holiness writers, questions of theodicy, the divine character, and Yahweh’s fidelity to his sworn covenant are of critical importance. Such questions, however, are absent in Amos 4:6–12.¹⁵⁴ Despite their differences as to which covenant(s) are in view in Lev 26, both Stackert and Nihan (and the line of argumentation each represents) are agreed that, in Lev 26, the covenant can be broken from the human side and human offenders cut off from it but never, ultimately (or, perhaps better, only potentially), from the divine side.¹⁵⁵ To do so would constitute a theological impossibility, at least from the perspective of Lev 26:44 and from the more general Priestly understanding of Yahweh’s covenant.¹⁵⁶ In Lev 26, the statement that Yahweh will not break (פרר) his covenant is grounded in the statement “I am Yahweh their [or your]¹⁵⁷ God” (26:44b–45).¹⁵⁸ Thus, whereas both Amos 4 and Lev 26 foresee cataclysmic judgments for the nation, only in Lev 26 do we see sustained reflection on the conundrum posed by election and covenant, on the one hand, and devastating judgment, on the other.

In sum, a comparison of these two passages demonstrates that even texts bearing close resemblances in their use of descriptive curse formulae may nevertheless display marked differences at a deeper level.¹⁵⁹

position is also taken by BODA, *Severe Mercy* (see n. 55), 83; see especially his discussion of the syntax of vv. 40–41 in n. 23. GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 430, takes the same view, maintaining that v. 40 originally read “and they will confess” before a later scribal insertion. I find the position of Nihan and Boda to be more convincing than that of Milgrom.

¹⁵⁴ To be sure, the hymnic elements in v. 13 dwell upon the divine character, but these cannot be discussed here.

¹⁵⁵ STACKERT, “The Holiness Legislation” (see n. 132); NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 535–541; IDEM, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121), 104–115, 535–541.

¹⁵⁶ On the reconciliation of the Priestly and non-Priestly perspectives in Lev 26, see NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 542; IDEM, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 123). On the concept of a ברית עולם, see also OLYAN, “Status of the Covenant” (see n. 31); S. D. MASON, “*Eternal Covenant*” in *the Pentateuch: The Contours of an Elusive Phrase* (LHBOTS 494; New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ See the commentaries on the text-critical issue here.

¹⁵⁸ A Priestly idiom; see Exod 6:7; 16:12; 29:46; Lev 11:44; 20:7; 24:22; 25:17; 26:1, 44.

¹⁵⁹ One further difference distinguishes the two texts, although it is only a slight one and involves a number of subtle exegetical decisions. The two texts display some dissimilarity regarding the *increment in intensity* with which the curses are portrayed. It is generally agreed that Lev 26 depicts a steep increment in the number and severity of the maledictions imposed. Indeed, the structure of the chapter is sometimes seen to reflect a *Plagensteigerungsschema* –

4 Amos 4 and Leviticus 26: Questions of Sequence and Ideological Relationship

The preceding discussion, especially its traditiohistorical aspects, may shed light on the literary and ideological relationship between Lev 26 and Amos 4, especially the direction of influence (if any may be posited) between the two texts. It may also have implications for other issues such as the dating of various pentateuchal sources and traditions as well as the relationship between the prophetic and pentateuchal materials more generally. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to attempt an absolute dating of these two passages. Only a discussion of the relative dating and flow of influence between them is possible here. In this regard, four major positions emerge. First, there are those who see Amos 4 as subsequent to and dependent upon Lev 26. Included in this group are those suggesting an early Lev 26 and a late eighth-century Amos 4¹⁶⁰ and others who suggest a late monarchic Lev 26 and an exilic (or later) Amos 4.¹⁶¹ A second position maintains that Amos 4 precedes Lev 26. According to this view, Amos 4

an increasing imposition of curses; on this see NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 537, n. 561. This stands in contrast to Amos 4:6–12, where a degree of increment certainly exists but follows a far less uniform pattern. It is difficult to see much sense of increase in severity in the famine of v. 6, the partial drought of v. 7, the search for water in v. 8, the blight and mildew of v. 9a, and the locust decimation of v. 9b. In 4:10, we do encounter a significant increment. Here, for the first time, we read of military disaster. In 4:11, Yahweh acts more violently, signaled by the use of הפך, “to overthrow.” However, Yahweh does not overthrow the nation as a whole, but only “some of you” (בכבם). ANDERSEN and FREEDMAN, *Amos* (see n. 48), 444, suggest that “the partitive use of *b-* is unusual, but it seems to be the only plausible explanation here. [. . .] As with the second plague the disaster was partial and selective. [. . .] From the almost total conflagration only a bit of charred wood was rescued.” Thus Yahweh leaves a remnant, “like a brand snatched from the fire” (4:11). See also HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 152–155. To be sure, the potential judgment implied in v. 12 may be severe and, as such, Amos 4 reaches a similar crescendo to that in Lev 26. In Amos 4, however, no precise description of that ultimate judgment is given. In sum, though admittedly not strictly incremental in every detail, the overall movement in Lev 26 is one of a steadily increasing degree of suffering to intolerable levels. GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 413, sees “no ascending order” in Amos 4, as opposed to Lev 26. Others demur: AMSLER, “Amos” (see n. 77), 199, speaks of “une certaine gradation”; PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 143, following J.L. MAYS, *Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969), 80–81, speaks of a “‘bolerolike’ iteration.” I would thus suggest that a slight difference exists between the two passages at it relates to the degree of intensity with which the curses are imposed.

¹⁶⁰ Thus HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 52), 461–462; MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2363–2364; BRUEGGEMANN, “Amos IV” (see n. 80). However, see below on Milgrom’s view regarding Lev 26:33b–35 and 43–44 as later interpolations.

¹⁶¹ JEREMIAS, *Hosea und Amos* (see n. 59), 198–213; IDEM, *Book of Amos* (see n. 59), 69–72; IDEM, “Amos 3–6: From the Oral Word to the Text,” in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (ed. G.M. Tucker et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 217–229.

is either a mid- to late monarchic redaction or composition, preceding a post-587 Lev 26,¹⁶² or an exilic text, whose form is reworked in Lev 26 in the postexilic period.¹⁶³ A third view suggests that the two texts appeared at roughly the same time but each in a different milieu and containing a different ideology. Wolff, for example, opines that Amos 4 and Lev 26 emerged in the late monarchic period. Leviticus 26 grew out of the liturgy of the great autumn festival, whereas Amos 4 contains the word of a prophet in the Amosian tradition, decrying the worship of foreign deities at Bethel. Wolff appears to suggest that Amos 4 has been influenced by Lev 26. However, it is difficult to determine Wolff's understanding of the degree of this influence.¹⁶⁴ Fourth and finally, there are those who view Lev 26 as a composite work, reflecting an ongoing process of development,¹⁶⁵ leaving open the possibility that the relationship between it and Amos 4 may have evolved over time. For example, it might be argued that the two texts stood in a looser relationship to each other in an earlier period, and then a greater connection existed between the two at a later time.

In response to these proposals, I would make the following preliminary observations. First, the lexical and formal elements common to these two texts are in and of themselves insufficient indicators of influence or dependence. The curse formulae in them belong to common ancient Near Eastern stock, so certainty cannot be based on form or vocabulary alone. However, the opposite position, that of a complete lack of any connection between the two (or only a very loose one) is equally problematic in light of their shared structural forms and motifs, the organization of the maledictions into five groups and their incremental progression, the numerical structure around five and seven, and their disciplinary function intended to produce return or repentance.¹⁶⁶ Thus it seems beyond question that the two passages stand in some real literary relationship to each other.¹⁶⁷ But what might that relationship be, and what implications may be drawn from it?

¹⁶² Thus HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 149–152, 161.

¹⁶³ GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 413. So also GRAUPNER and FABRY, “שׁוֹב” (see note 93), 485, who state, “If some connection does remain, however, it is easier to see that the late text in Lev. 26 was influenced by Am. 4:6–11.” See also C. NIHAN, “The Holiness Code between D and P: Some Comments on the Function and Significance of Leviticus 17–26 in the Composition of the Torah,” in *Das Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk* (ed. E. Otto and R. Achenbach; FRLANT 206; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 81–122, esp. 108. Nihan sees Amos 4 as exilic or postexilic yet nevertheless prior to Lev 26.

¹⁶⁴ WOLFF, *Joel and Amos* (see n. 53), 214, 244–245.

¹⁶⁵ For various such approaches, see below.

¹⁶⁶ See above for a more detailed demonstration of these features and the similar arguments of BLUM, “Jesaja und der דְּבַר des Amos” (see n. 51), 91, regarding the relationship between Amos 4 and Isa 5, 9–10.

¹⁶⁷ See the discussion in GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 413.

Of the four positions just noted regarding the relationship between Amos 4 and Lev 26, various factors suggest that either the second proposal (Amos 4 precedes Lev 26) or the fourth one (Amos 4 is in a changing relationship to a growing Lev 26) is most likely. Let us examine these two possibilities in turn. If Lev 26 is viewed as a unified composition (for example as a Priestly epilogue to Lev 17–25¹⁶⁸ or the book of Leviticus as a whole), various factors suggest that it is best dated after Amos 4.¹⁶⁹ First, if Amos 4 is the later text, how should one account for the absence of any distinctly Priestly elements in it? Why would the Amosian tradents have taken up a manifestly Priestly text only to gut it of its most distinctive Priestly character?¹⁷⁰ It is only with difficulty that Amos 4 could be read as a conscious revision or correction of, or alternative to, Lev 26. It is likewise difficult to see why Amos 4 would deliberately distance itself from an ideology of restoration through confession of sin, the humbling of one's self, the making of amends, and the circumcision of the heart,¹⁷¹ all themes that are in evidence from the late sixth century onward, especially in the penitential-prayer settings of Ezra 9; Neh 9; Dan 9; and 2 Chron 36:20–21 (all later texts), leaving only a return-based (שוב) focus, characteristic of prophetic preaching, particularly in evidence between the eighth and fifth centuries.¹⁷² Milgrom sees this difference in response patterns between these two texts as decisively establishing the priority of Lev 26, but this difference seems rather to indicate movement in the reverse direction.¹⁷³ Moreover, the ideology of returning to Yahweh is highly compatible with the Priestly notions of repentance and confession of sin and with the idea of the circumcision of the heart, as Deut 30:2, 6, 10 well attest. Second, Lev 26 reflects carefully on the relationship between Yahweh's

¹⁶⁸ JOOSTEN, *People and Land* (see n. 51), 6.

¹⁶⁹ Thus GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (see n. 36). See further the insightful discussion in HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 148–150, 159–161. Many of his conclusions will be referenced in this section.

¹⁷⁰ On Lev 26 as a distinctly priestly text, see NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49); IDEM, "Priestly Covenant" (see n. 123); OLYAN, "Status of the Covenant" (see n. 31); STACKERT, "Holiness Legislation" (see n. 132); IDEM, "Distinguishing Innerbiblical Exegesis."

¹⁷¹ For the vocabulary here, see nn. 116–118 above. Note especially its frequent use in exilic and postexilic material.

¹⁷² See, e.g., the discussion of Hos 14:2–4[1–3] in A.A. MACINTOSH, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 558–564; See also BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos* (see n. 100), 65; HOLLADAY, *Root Šubh* (see n. 106).

¹⁷³ MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2348, asserts that the notions of confession and repentance in Lev 26 are "embryonic [. . .] older [. . .] and inchoate." He suggests that the prophets viewed such religious sentiments as "inadequate" when compared to concrete, active change. This, however, is to assume that the elements of contrition referred to in Lev 26 are superficial and do not lead to such change. This is certainly not the presentation of matters in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 10:1–5; Neh 9:38–10:39; 13:1–30), where the community undertakes concrete remedial measures following declarations of penitence, no matter how problematic its determination to enact its repentance may seem to contemporary readers.

judgment of his covenant partner due to the latter's faithlessness and Yahweh's character as faithful to his own promises (26:44), a dimension completely absent in Amos 4. If Amos 4 were the later text, such an astonishing omission would require some explanation. Furthermore, why would the Amosian tradents efface the elements of covenant (Lev 26:9, 15, 25, 42, 44–45) and Sabbath (Lev 26:34–35, 43) from consideration in Amos 4, especially if Amos 4 is seen as a post-exilic composition? Finally, Amos 4 does not reflect those elements of Lev 26 that are most characteristic of an exilic setting and that feature prominently in Lev 26, such as war, enemies, captivity, and dispersion. If Amos 4:6–12 is exilic or later, why are the elements of wholesale defeat and exile, which are present in Lev 26, eliminated from it?¹⁷⁴ It would appear, then, if Lev 26 is viewed as having undergone no literary development, Amos 4 is best understood as antedating it.

However, if one admits the possibility of literary growth in Lev 26, the picture becomes a good deal more complex. One approach is to question whether Lev 26 originally included vv. 34–35 and 40–45.¹⁷⁵ It is quite striking that, devoid of these verses, Amos 4 and Lev 26 are highly similar: they share the same type of curse pattern and a similar structure (the organization of the maledictions into five groups in an incremental progression, including moments of reprieve, leaving room for repentance), both use the broader numerical structure of five and seven, and both view Yahweh's maledictions as having a disciplinary function intended to produce change in the people's comportment.¹⁷⁶ What is more, both envisage a steady descent into darkness as well as a decided refusal to learn from adversity and to recklessly pursue rebellion, and both end in disaster.¹⁷⁷ Thus, when Lev 26 is viewed without vv. 34–35 and 40–45, it is difficult to detect any solid indications of the direction of influence between it and Amos 4. The plagues in both are drawn from the traditional biblical and ancient Near Eastern stock, and references to any specific events are difficult, if not impossible, to come by.¹⁷⁸ Thus the direction of influence could flow either way. Moreover, despite the optimism of some regarding clear literary dependence between Lev

¹⁷⁴ HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 150. Moreover, Hadjiev demonstrates that the bulk of the linguistic correspondences between Amos 4 and Lev 26 are centered in Lev 26:24–26, not in the chapter as a whole (151).

¹⁷⁵ I will return, below, to the matter of whether these verses may simply be excised from the present text in order to recover its antecedent.

¹⁷⁶ See above for a more detailed demonstration of these features and the similar arguments of BLUM, "Jesaja" (see n. 51), 91, regarding the relationship between Amos 4 and Isa 5, 9–10.

¹⁷⁷ See, however, the discussion of the meaning of Amos 4:12, above.

¹⁷⁸ The various attempts to isolate certain elements in these texts and use them for purposes of dating have not achieved any wide consensus. Even the thorny questions of the *מקדישיכם* in Lev 26:31 or the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in Amos 4:11 have elicited no agreement regarding dating.

26 and Amos 4 (however conceived),¹⁷⁹ without vv. 34–35 and 40–45, it might equally be argued that both texts belong to a more generalized form or pattern concerning the perils of neglecting Yahweh's discipline.¹⁸⁰

What is more, it is in Lev 26:34–35 and 40–45 that we encounter several elements not in evidence in either Lev 26:3–33, 35–39 or Amos 4. These elements include the following: (1) the Sabbath concept in vv. 34–35 and 43–44; (2) the Priestly vocabulary of sin, atonement, repentance, and requital in vv. 33–35 and 40–41; (3) reference to the covenants with the ancestors and the exodus generation in vv. 42, 45; (4) the fact that v. 40 presents Israel's return as certain (cf. Deut 4:29–30; 30:6–10);¹⁸¹ and (5) unlike Amos 4, Lev 26:3–33 and 36–39,¹⁸² and descriptive curse formulae in general, Lev 26:34–35 and 40–45 move away from the customary expressions of blessing and cursing and engage in theological reflection on subjects such as theodicy (including the Sabbath and the necessity for the land's desolation) and the nature of Yahweh's covenant (as ultimately indestructible).

Turning now to position four, though numerous scholars see Lev 26 as a unified composition dating from some point during either the monarchic or Persian eras,¹⁸³ many others see the text as containing one or more post-587 supplements.¹⁸⁴ The principal arguments for the latter position are well known

¹⁷⁹ HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 152, opines, "Amos 4 is probably the earlier text and the author of Lev 26 had it before him." This may, however, overstate the case.

¹⁸⁰ See the description of Amos 4 as a "negative historical retrospective" by CRENSHAW, "Liturgy" (see n. 51), 36, or as a parody of Ps 136, and thus a case of "Unheilsgeschichte" by PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 141. See also the rather apposite observation of Gerstenberger *Leviticus* (see n. 36), 413, who suggests that the "stepwise process of chastisement" of Amos 4 became a "popular schema in postexilic literature." He concludes, "It may not be accidental that this litany, too, [i.e., Amos 4] exhibits five stages of chastisement [...] and that the individual motifs in part recur in Lev 26:14–33."

¹⁸¹ See the discussion above, pp. 972–973.

¹⁸² In what follows, I will use Lev 26* to refer to an earlier version of Lev 26:3–45 and reserve Lev 26 for the final, reworked presentation of these verses, with the most distinctive elements of this reworking in vv. 34–35 and 40–41.

¹⁸³ So HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 456–462 (seeing Lev 26 as a monarchic text); NIHAN, "Priestly Covenant" (see n. 121), 108; IDEM, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 540, n. 573 (seeing it as postexilic); FISCHER, "Need for Hope" (see n. 39), 378, also postexilic.

¹⁸⁴ B.A. LEVINE, "Epilogue" (see n. 126), 19–20, following H.L. Ginsberg, sees the compositional history of the chapter as follows: (1) the primary epilogue in vv. 3–33a, 37b–38; (2) the first "post-catastrophe" addition in vv. 39–40b, 44–45, stressing the exile, confession of sin, and Yahweh's remembering of his covenant with the ancestors; (3) later interpolations in vv. 33b–37a, describing Israel's defeat and exile, the desolation of the land, and the land's Sabbaths. Levine views all three levels as exilic (25). MILGROM, *Leviticus 23–27* (see n. 39), 2364, sees the core of Lev 26 as an eighth-century composition (including the themes of destruction and exile, here with reference to the Northern Kingdom) into which 33b–35 and 43–44 have been interpolated during the exile. BUIS, "Deutéronome" (see n. 8), 139, sees vv. 36–45 as composed shortly before 587, at the same time as Jer 31 and Deut 30:1–10. Its

and cannot be rehearsed in detail here.¹⁸⁵ They generally revolve around (1) the overall similarity of various curse texts that all end on a note of indeterminacy or uncertainty (Amos 4; Deut 28; Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4); (2) the fact that in Deut 28 and elsewhere in the prophets, texts that end in abject despair are attenuated to include elements of hope;¹⁸⁶ (3) the introduction of the various motifs noted above, which are absent in Amos 4 and Lev 26:3–33, 36–39; (4) various allusions to the developing historical and ideological aspects of the exilic period;¹⁸⁷ (5) the shift to the third person in vv. 36–37 and 40–45; and (6) the possibility that other prophetic texts may betray knowledge of a form of Lev 26 that does not include vv. 40–45.¹⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that even those who maintain the unity of vv. 3–45 concede that v. 40 signals a change of perspective. Nihan, who views Lev 26 as a literary unity, nevertheless sees 40–45 as reflecting a “different, though not necessarily incompatible” perspective from the section that precedes it.¹⁸⁹ Whether Lev 26 gives evidence of literary development is thus highly complex and perhaps not liable to a definitive solution. The present form of the text displays a high degree of literary cohesion, suggesting a careful and intentional composition. Thus the simple excision of vv. 33–34 and 40–45 on the basis of their content and ideology alone would appear somewhat arbitrary and tendentious. Nevertheless, the arguments presented above regarding the close similarities between Amos 4 and Lev 26 and the distinctive elements of vv. 33–34 and 40–45 suggest to me that the chapter may have had one or more literary antecedents that served as the basis of the present text. As such, Lev 26 may be seen as a reworking of certain earlier materials, and its relationship to

addition to vv. 2–35 gave rise to the interpolation of the conditional elements in vv. 14 and 18. For other advocates of a more diachronic reading of Lev 26, see the bibliography in NIHAN, *Priestly Torah* (see n. 49), 540, n. 573. See also OLYAN, “Status of the Covenant” (see n. 31), for another diachronic perspective on vv. 40–45.

¹⁸⁵ See especially the discussion in LEVINE, “Epilogue” (see n. 126).

¹⁸⁶ On the Deuteronomistic and Priestly traditions, see D. ROM-SHILONI, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts between the Exiles and the People who Remained (6th–5th Centuries BCE)* (LHBOTS 543; New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 2. On Jeremiah and Ezekiel, see IDEM, “Deuteronomistic Concepts of Exile Interpreted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” in *Birkat Shalom I: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (2 vols.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 1:101–123. On the additional elements of hope in Amos, see BARTON, *Theology of the Book of Amos* (see n. 73), 122–125. On Isaiah, see especially H.G.M. WILLIAMSON, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); IDEM, “Isaiah, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (see n. 107), 364–378.

¹⁸⁷ LEVINE, “Epilogue” (see n. 126).

¹⁸⁸ See the excellent discussion in A. KOPILOVITZ, “What Kind of Priestly Writings Did Ezekiel Know?,” in the present collection of colloquium papers, with bibliography.

¹⁸⁹ NIHAN, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121), 106; see also FISCHER, “Need for Hope” (see n. 39), 372–375, and the bibliography cited there.

Amos 4 may be conceived of in two (or more) stages. In an earlier stage, the two texts may have shared a more general similarity, perhaps due to each one's use of a more generally known literary form describing failure to learn from divinely sent adversity. The differences between them could be explained by the theological or ideological rooting of Amos and his school, on the one hand, and of the Priestly tradents, on the other.¹⁹⁰ At a subsequent moment, another Priestly writer (or writers) reflected on the ideology of the specific descriptive curse pattern in evidence in Amos 4 and Lev 26*¹⁹¹ in light of later historical realities and ideological developments,¹⁹² reworking the text and incorporating their reflections into it.

However the question of the composition history of Lev 26 is decided, I find it entirely plausible that within Lev 26 we may find reformulations or rereadings intended to provide a theological counterpoint¹⁹³ or supplement to either Amos 4 alone or to both Amos 4 and Lev 26*.¹⁹⁴ The Holiness writers responsible for its final form may have used the five-stanza structure and sevenfold repetitions of the Amos material as a model in Lev 26. Alternatively, such a general structure was more broadly utilized and may have shaped Lev 26* from its earliest stages, independent of Amos 4. Either way, the distinctive elements and features in Lev 26:34–35 and 40–45 noted above likely served to nuance and to add further considerations to those already present in the earlier material it presupposes.

Two areas are of special significance in this regard. The first is the concept of covenant, implicit at best in Amos but central in Lev 26:3–45. As we have seen above, considerable debate exists regarding the covenant concept in Lev 26: Is it consistently Priestly (Stackert)? Does it involve the assimilation of certain Deuteronomic elements within a broader Priestly framework (Nihan)?¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ This would account for the explicit mention of covenant in Leviticus and its absence from Amos.

¹⁹¹ I will use the designation Lev 26* to refer to any literary antecedents to the chapter in its present form that may have been used by those responsible for its current configuration.

¹⁹² ROM-SHILONI, *Exclusive Inclusivity* (see n. 186), 2, aptly comments, "Preexilic Priestly and Deuteronomic conceptions of exile do not recognize the notion of a partial deportation. [. . .] The ongoing existence of the Temple, the royal court, and daily life in Jerusalem stood in puzzling contrast to these understandings."

¹⁹³ On the concept of "theological counterpoint," see J. LÈVÊQUE, "Le contrepoint théologique apporté par la réflexion sapientielle," in *Questions disputées d'Ancien Testament: Méthode et théologie* (ed. C. Brekelmans; BETL 33; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 183–202.

¹⁹⁴ Thus HADJIEV, *Composition and Redaction* (see n. 95), 152.

¹⁹⁵ See n. 155. I am persuaded by Nihan's arguments for a merging of covenantal concepts in Lev 26, rather than a uniquely Priestly perspective, yet this need not be an indication of an exilic or Persian-period date for Lev 26*. Dialogue between the two traditions could have begun at an earlier period; see the early dating of H by JOOSTEN, *People and Land* (see n. 51), 200–207, and others. Alternatively, one could assert, as does Stackert ("Distinguishing Inner-biblical Exegesis from Pentateuchal Redaction" [see n. 133]), that Lev 26* reflects Priestly

The notion of a covenantal bond between Yahweh and Israel lies at the heart of Lev 26 as a whole: Israel must obey Yahweh's statutes so that his ongoing presence might continue with them.¹⁹⁶ Yet even if Israel should betray the terms of the covenant and despise (גאל) Yahweh's statutes (26:15), engendering Yahweh's corresponding abhorrence of his people (26:30), this would not end the relationship. After a provisional time of rejection, marked by intense suffering but culminating in confession, repentance, and humility of heart,¹⁹⁷ Yahweh would renew the relationship once again and not abhor his people to the point of ultimate destruction (26:44b). Thus 26:44 clarifies and determines the scope and extent of the abhorrence alluded to in 26:30.¹⁹⁸ As such, in Lev 26 the covenant is "the single enduring reality."¹⁹⁹ Such an underlying bond, transcending even severe violations, is absent from (or at best hinted at in) Amos 4 but loudly proclaimed in Lev 26:40–45.

The second area of counterpoint lies in the different approaches in evidence in Amos 4, Lev 26*, and Lev 26 (final) to issues of judgment, suffering, and national renewal. Shalom Paul has suggested that Amos 4 demonstrates "the futility of suffering."²⁰⁰ Such a conclusion depends entirely upon reading 4:12 as implying no further hope. However, it is more likely that 4:12 is deliberately

conceptions of covenant which had always contained some element of conditionality, but that the idea of a (potential) definitive break (as in the Deuteronomic perspective) is introduced only in 40–45, esp. v. 44. Thus Lev 26* could envisage a time when Yahweh would abhor (געל) Israel (26:30) and Israel would abhor (געל) Yahweh's ordinances and spurn (מאס) Yahweh's statutes (26:15, 43) yet remain within a consistently Priestly framework. The idea that such actions could lead to a definitive breach would be in evidence only in the later reflection and integration of disparate theological traditions contained in 26:44.

¹⁹⁶ Significantly, although Lev 26:44b affirms that Yahweh will never break his covenant (פרר), our chapter never uses the terminology of "eternal covenant" found elsewhere (Gen 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19; Exod 31:16; Lev 24:8; 2 Sam 23:5; Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Ps 105:10; 1 Chr 16:17). On the "eternal covenant," see, among many others, MASON, *Eternal Covenant* (see n. 156); NIHAN, "Priestly Covenant" (see n. 121); and especially S. M. OLYAN, "An Eternal Covenant with Circumcision as Its Sign: How Useful a Criterion for Dating and Source Analysis?" in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. T. B. Dozeman et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 347–358, and IDEM, "Status of the Covenant" (see n. 31), and the literature cited therein.

¹⁹⁷ See the texts cited in n. 137.

¹⁹⁸ Such a clarification constitutes a further strong argument for the clarifying role of the later rereadings of Lev 26* reflected in 40–45.

¹⁹⁹ The comments of BUIS, "L'avenir de l'alliance" (see n. 65), 134, on this point are highly insightful: "[A]u moment où le peuple est sur le point de disparaître, on voit qu'une réalité subsiste: l'alliance."

²⁰⁰ PAUL, *Amos* (see n. 22), 143, although he may have overstated the case. If Amos's oracles have been edited in the south or have become the basis for the preaching of Isaiah in Isa 5, 9–10 (thus BLUM, "Jesaja" [see n. 51]), then the reception of the Amosian material would indicate an ongoing belief in the capacity of suffering to produce change.

ambiguous and presents the future as open-ended.²⁰¹ In the Amosian presentation (as in Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4), affliction has thus far had no effect. Failure to learn from it has left the nation on the brink of disaster. Yet, if it is accepted that Amos 4:12 may suggest the possibility of reprieve, the warning conveyed by past sufferings may still be heeded. In a sense, Amos 4 and Lev 26 engage related but distinct questions. Amos 4 underlines that rejection of divine discipline leads to doom and that, by implication, the Northern Kingdom's downfall was ultimately its own fault. It had been warned repeatedly, but to no avail. In Lev 26, however, the issue is not Israel's ultimate responsibility for its own calamities. Rather, Lev 26 focuses on the reality that sustained and intense suffering can bring about ultimate remediation and the basis on which it can do so. The two texts agree that suffering *should* lead to reformation of life. However, in contrast to the indeterminacy in Amos 4 (and the potential failure of suffering to avert disaster), in Lev 26, the Holiness writers affirm that suffering can – and indeed will – do so, provided that the suffering is sufficiently great and that it is allowed to do its work to the fullest.²⁰² Indeed, it would appear that for the Holiness writers, it is only out of such affliction, including the land's complete devastation and abandonment, that true change can come.²⁰³ As noted, whereas in Amos, Israel must turn or return to Yahweh, for the Holiness writers, an additional, more profound and internal dimension was needed, one that would give rise to such a life reformation. In addition to a renewed commitment to Yahweh's statutes (implied in 26:40–41, 43, and stated in 46), the more internal dimensions of repentance, confession, humility, and circumcision of the heart were needed (26:40–41).²⁰⁴ Moreover, Lev 26 goes on to declare that even such repentance and confession do not in and of themselves secure the nation's future. Rather, Lev 26:42, 44–45, through reference to both the ancestral and Sinai covenants,²⁰⁵ provides an explanation of how it was that the nation's repeated high-handed rejections (and the consequences thereof), which are enumerated in Amos 4 and Lev 26* and normally unforgivable in Priestly thought (cf. Num 15), did not spell its total demise: Yahweh's covenant faithfulness is ultimately given the last word.

To conclude this section, then, one can say that, however the matter of the composition history of Lev 26 is decided, in Amos 4 and Lev 26 we see both a

²⁰¹ As noted above and by comparison with Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4.

²⁰² The linking of intense suffering as the basis for renewal is apparent in the resumption of “their iniquities and the iniquities of their ancestors” (v. 39) in v. 40b.

²⁰³ Similar perspectives of total alienation and return are present in texts such as Hos 3:5; 5:25; Isa 40:1–2; 2 Chr 36:20–21.

²⁰⁴ See the excellent discussion in FISCHER, “Need for Hope” (see n. 39), 381–385, regarding the alternative resolutions to the nation's obduracy presented in Lev 26 and Deut 28–30, especially around the matter of the circumcision of the heart.

²⁰⁵ On the conflation of these covenants, see NIHAN, “Priestly Covenant” (see n. 121), 111–112; HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (see n. 51), 469–471.

particular ideological framework into which these descriptive curse formulae are set (adversities sent as incentives for change) as well as, in Lev 26:34–35 and 40–45, the theological reflections upon and refinements of that ideology. Both of these dimensions reveal significant aspects of thought concerning Israel's history and identity and most especially the dynamics involved in its relationship to Yahweh.

5 Conclusions and Implications

Several implications emerge from the preceding analysis. First, if my arguments are sound, this study has demonstrated the variety of ways in which Israelite texts have creatively reconfigured the traditional stock of ancient Near Eastern curse vocabulary for use within various theological streams and traditions. This then underlines the need to ascertain the orientation and purpose of a given text before advancing broad hypotheses regarding the significance and function of any curse formula within it. Form-critical judgments alone are not sufficient when dealing with such curse materials.

Second, as we have seen, there are several broader patterns into which descriptive curse formulations may fall. In the present instance, Amos 4; Lev 26; and Isa 5:20–25; 9:7[8]–10:4 historicize the more static pattern of sin-consequence or interdiction-deterrent found elsewhere. In doing so, they integrate the concepts of benediction and malediction with the idea of Israel's lived experience, stretched out over time, and the nation's sufferings as Yahweh's discipline and instruction.²⁰⁶ Moreover, this integration of blessing and cursing with lived experience enables the writers of these texts to view Yahweh's maledictions as challenges that put the nation to the test: Will it choose submission and blessing or rebellion and curse?

Third, significant differences of perspective may appear even between texts belonging to the same general curse pattern. For example, in the present study, a careful analysis of the differences between Lev 26 and Amos 4 has revealed fundamentally different understandings at numerous key points, especially of the role of suffering in producing change, the way in which such change will be evidenced, and the basis of Israel's ultimate hope for restoration. Thus, when considering the significance of curse language in any given context, one must move beyond commonalities of *forme* and be attentive to differences of *fond*. Texts displaying similar formal elements may intentionally deepen, revise, or correct those upon which they have been patterned.

Fourth, and finally, the fact that one or more prophetic texts (Amos 4; Isa 5:25–29; 9:7[8]–10:4) use a descriptive curse pattern strikingly similar to the one found in Lev 26 suggests that consideration of the literary growth of the

²⁰⁶ See n. 180.

Pentateuch cannot be undertaken in isolation from the prophetic corpus. The prophetic materials, which so frequently display strong intertextual relationships with numerous pentateuchal texts, must play a significant role in pentateuchal analysis. Since the inception of modern biblical criticism, the prophetic materials have been seen as a foundational element in addressing issues of the literary development of the Pentateuch. The vitality of the scholarly literature addressing the relationship between these two bodies testifies to the continuing importance of the discussion. Failure to address ongoing developments in the study of the prophetic materials can only impoverish pentateuchal study, whereas attention to the interaction between the two bodies of literature can only enrich it.