

The Prophecies Against the Nations in Amos 1:2–3:15¹

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RESUMEN Las llamadas "profecías contra las naciones" en Amos 1–3 están caracterizadas por tres niveles de comunicación. El primero está dirigido al Reino del Norte de Israel, el segundo al Reino del Sur de Judea y el tercero al lector implícito. En los tres niveles las profecías no son contra las naciones, sino que más bien son una autocrítica, animando a acoger seriamente la Palabra de Dios anunciada por el profeta.

PALABRAS CLAVE Amos, profecías contra las naciones, análisis pragmalingüístico, lector implícito, técnicas retóricas.

SUMMARY *The so-called "prophecies against the nations" in Amos 1–3 are characterized by three communication levels. The first one addresses the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the second one the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the third one the text-immanent reader. At all three levels, the prophecies are in fact not against the nations as such, but are rather meant as self-criticism, encouraging one to take God's word, expressed by the prophet, seriously.*

KEYWORDS *Amos, Prophecies against the nations, Communication-oriented analysis, Text-immanent reader, Rhetorical techniques.*

Texts are not only historical documents, which can be the object of empirically historical research. In biblical studies this is almost only used to find out who the historical author (or authors or redactors) of the text is. Texts, however, are primarily carriers of communication. They wish to communicate a message to their readers. 'Readers', however, should not immediately be un-

1 This article is a revised version of my guest lecture at St. John's regional Seminary in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, in 2011. I would like to thank the board of the Seminary and Dr. Solomon Pasala, secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Bible Commission, for their hospitality and Drs. Maurits Sinninghe Damsté for the correction of my English.

derstood as being readers of flesh and blood, either now living or historically traceable. Texts are first of all directed to the text-immanent reader, the reader who is present within the text itself².

The distinction between characters, text-immanent author and text-immanent reader gives new insight into the prophecies against the nations in Amos 1:2–3:2. At the level of the characters, we see a character, called Amos, acting in the role of a prophet. He performs in Bethel, which is located in the Northern Kingdom Israel, and there he addresses other characters. On this stage, the characters act, and communication directed to Israel arises.

The heading of the book Amos in 1:1 already implies this communication addressed to characters in Israel: Amos has seen words *על־ישראל* *about Israel*.

The following verse, verse 2, indicates this communication as well. This verse begins with the narrative *wayyiqtol*-form *וַיֹּאמֶר* *and then he said*. Using this *wayyiqtol*-form, the book Amos starts a narrative frame, of which the narrative *wayyiqtol*-forms in 7:10 are the continuation. This verse is the beginning of the narration about the famous clash between the character Amos and the character Amaziah, the priest of Bethel³.

However, the communication directed to the Northern Kingdom Israel is not the only communication in the book Amos. There is also communication with Judah, the Southern Kingdom. This communication does not occur at the level of the characters which are present on the stage; this communication rather takes place at the communication-level evoked by the text-immanent author.

In the heading in 1:1, the character Amos is introduced from a Judean perspective. This perspective is not so much created by means of the toponym Tekoa, which is considered to be a Judean place, as by the fact that Amos is primarily situated in the days of the Judean King Uzziah⁴.

2 See: A.L.H.M. VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (Biblical Interpretation Series 34; Brill, Leiden 1998) 2-26 and the literature mentioned there.

3 See: K. MÖLLER, *A Prophet in Debate. The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos* (JSOTS 372; Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 2003) 159. Pace: M. DIJKSTRA, "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's pupil": Amos 7:9-17 as the Presentation of a Prophet like Moses", in: J. DE MOOR (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet. The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (OTS 45; Brill, Leiden 2001) 114.

4 See: W. SCHROTTROFF, "Der Prophet Amos: Versuch der Würdigung seines Auftretens unter sozialgeschichtlichem Aspekt", in: W. SCHROTTROFF / W. STEGEMANN (eds.), *Der Gott der kleinen Leute. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen* (Kaiser, München 1979) 40; J. NOGALSKI, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 1993) 85.

When Amos starts speaking in the second verse, he first of all expresses the Judean perspective. The Lord roars his voice *מִצִּיּוֹן* *from Zion*, and utters his voice *וּמִירֻשָׁלַם* *and from Jerusalem*.

Finally, there is the communication with the anonymous text-immanent reader. This text-immanent reader is also addressed by means of the communication with Israel and Judah.

I would like to specify the question concerning the so-called Prophecies Against the Nations as follows: how do the Prophecies Against the Nations function in these three communication-levels? I would like to demonstrate that the so-called Prophecies Against the Nations contain three levels of communication:

- The communication between the character Amos and the Northern Kingdom Israel.
- The communication between the text-immanent author of the book Amos and the Southern Kingdom Judah.
- And the communication between the text-immanent author of the book Amos and the text-immanent reader.

We will discover that all these three communications have the same content, namely: lend your ear to the prophetic voice!

To gain insight into the communicative function of the Prophecies Against the Nations, we first have to pay attention to the structure of these prophecies. It is obvious that our text is composed of eight units, each time containing a nation, namely Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Israel and Judah. However, these eight units, which are very similar, do not have exactly the same structure. Two patterns can be distinguished.

Pattern I is characterised by the following elements:

1. A formula indicating a direct speech: *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* *thus spoke the LORD*.
2. A formula formed by *עַל* *for* + *שְׁלֹשָׁה* the numeral *three*, followed by *עַל* *for* + *אַרְבָּעָה* the numeral *four*, followed by *עַל* *for* + one or more concrete reasons formulated in the third person.
3. An announcement of a counteraction by the first person singular (= the Lord) formulated in *w^eqatal*-forms first person singular.
4. The final result of this counteraction, also formulated in *w^eqatal*-forms, this time in the third person.
5. A formula concluding the direct speech: *אָמַר יְהוָה* *the LORD spoke*.

The first statement concerning Damascus in 1:3-5 and the fifth statement concerning Ammon in 1:13-15 follow this first pattern. With a small variant in the fifth element, the statement concerning Gaza in 1:6-8 also follows this first pattern. Although the fourth element is missing, the statement concerning Moab in 2:1-3 is usually considered to follow the first pattern as well⁵.

Pattern II is as follows:

1. A formula indicating a direct speech: כה אמר יהוה *thus spoke the LORD*.
2. A formula formed by על *for* + שלשה *the numeral three*, followed by על *for* + ארבעה *the numeral four*, followed by על *for* + one or more concrete reasons formulated in the third person.
3. An announcement of a counteraction by the first person singular (= the Lord) formulated in *w^eqatal*-forms first person singular.

The statement concerning Tyre in 1:9-10, the statement concerning Edom in 1:11-12 and the statement concerning Judah in 2:4-5 answer this second pattern, which looks like the first pattern, but which is shorter.

The statement concerning Israel, is usually considered as also following the second pattern. However, there are some remarkable differences. It is true that the formula introducing the direct speech כה אמר יהוה *thus spoke the Lord* and the על-*for*-formulas are present in the statement concerning Israel, but the third element does not exactly correspond with the third element in pattern II.

The I-person is emphatically introduced by means of the separate personal pronoun אנכי *I*. This personal pronoun occurs in the verses 9 and 10 in the construction יאנכי *yet I* and in verse 13 in the construction הנה אנכי *behold I*. Instead of *w^eqatal*-forms, *qatal*-forms are used in the verses 9 and 10, whereas a participle is used in verse 13. This implies that the verses 9 and 10 do not indicate a future counteraction by the I-person, but that these verses form a rhetorical defence by the I-person through appealing to the past. It is true that a kind of future action is indicated in verse 13, but this action is formed not by using a *w^eqatal*-form, but by using the construction הנה + participle, a so-called *futurum instans*.

5 See also: A.W. PARK, *The Book of Amos as Composed and Read in Antiquity* (Studies in Biblical Literature 37; Peter Lang, New York 2001) 74-75; E. ZENGER, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie 1,1; Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1995) 387.

This difference also evokes another problem: where does the statement concerning Israel, which starts in 2:6, end? Does it run as far as verse 8, when the אֲנֹכִי-clauses begin? Does it run as far as the first or second אֲנֹכִי-unit? Or does it run as far as verse 16, so that the third אֲנֹכִי-unit also is part of the statement concerning Israel? In the last two cases, there would be a formula concluding the direct speech as in pattern I, but now concretized by using the expression אָמַר יְהוָה *utterance of the LORD*.

If the statement concerning Israel is considered as following pattern II, there is at least a remarkable variant in the third element of this second pattern.

Concerning the structure, the occurrence of the two patterns in the Prophecies Against the Nations implies that there are three pairs of nations, followed first by the statement concerning Judah and next by the statement concerning Israel.

This arrangement in pairs is evoked by the slight deviation in the Gaza-statement in 1:6-8. The first pair follows pattern I and consists of Damascus and Gaza. The second pair, which follows pattern II, consists of the statements concerning Tyre and Edom. The third pair, which again follows pattern I, consists of the statements concerning Ammon and Moab. The greater deviation in the Moab-statement not only makes clear that the first pattern is brought to an end, but also that the pairs of foreign nations is completed.

Now, the two statements concerning the people of God begin. First, Judah is dealt with and next, in a completely unique version of the second pattern, Israel is dealt with.

It is remarkable that, in the Prophecies Against the Nations, the Lord addresses no one; he only speaks *about* the nations, not *to* them. This situation changes in 2:10 because of the introduction of a second person plural, which becomes visible by using an emphatic אַתֶּם *you*. This means that the addressee of the Prophecies Against the Nations is not formulated before 2:10⁶.

Because of the fact that the direct speech by the Lord runs as far as verse 16 and the second person plural is also present in the verses 11, 12 and 13, the verses 10-16 form a separate unit within the Prophecies Against the Nations.

However, by formulating this structure of the Prophecies Against the Nations, the overall text-linguistic structure has not yet fully been determined.

⁶ See also: MÖLLER, *A Prophet in Debate*, 206. Pace: D.A. KNIGHT, *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (the biblical seminar; Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1990) 269; F. FÖRG, "Beobachtungen zur Struktur von Amos 2,6-12": *BN* 132 (2007) 13.

In 1:3–2:16, no verbal foreground form is used to introduce the direct speeches of the Lord. The various direct speeches were introduced and concluded either by using the verbless formula **גַּאֲם יְהוָה** *utterance of the LORD*, or by using a formula containing the *qatal*-form **אָמַר** [*he*] *spoke*, namely **כִּה אָמַר יְהוָה** *so the LORD spoke* and **אָמַר יְהוָה** *the LORD spoke*. For a complete unit, however, a verbal foreground-form is necessary. This means a verbal form that, in the discursive world, which our text is part of, is a *q^tol*-form (an imperative) or a *yiq^tol*-form. This form appears in 3:1 by means of the imperative plural **שִׁמְעוּ** *listen!* What has to be heard, follows in verse 2. The unit 3:1-2, therefore, is inseparably connected to the so-called Prophecies Against the Nations⁷.

As a matter of course, the text 1:3–3:2 is part of an even wider text-linguistic coherence. The direct speech of the prophet-character does not start in 1:3, but in 1:2, marked by the verbal form **וַיֹּאמֶר** *and then he said*. What the prophet-character Amos says in 1:2, is formulated in the verses 2b-c by using *yiq^tol*-forms, verbal forms expressing the foreground perspective in the discursive world. These forms are connected to the imperative in 3:1.

The verses 1:2 and 3:1-2 are also semantically connected. In 1:2 the Lord is portrayed as speaking clearly. If the verb **שָׁאָג** *to roar* (verse 2b) cannot be understood as a *verbum dicendi*, the construction **נָתַן קוֹל** *to utter one's voice* (verse 2c) can be understood as a *verbum dicendi*. What the Lord says, is not mentioned in 1:2. The verses 3:1-2, using, in verse 1, a call to listen **אֲתִדְבַר הַזֶּה** *to this word that the LORD spoke* in the verse 1a-b, refer to the fact that the Lord has said something, whereupon the word itself follows in 3:2.

Now, I would like to focus on the communication with Israel, the Northern Kingdom where the character Amos performs.

First, it is important to recognize that the series of statements concerning the nations develops in three climaxes. As first climax, Edom appears. Israel would not be sorry about that. Judah follows as second climax. The rhetorical effect of Judah's appearance seems to be favourable for Israel. Finally, as third and last climax, Israel itself appears, which turns everything upside down: whereas initially it seems that people other than Israel come off worst, the real blow hits Israel itself.

7 Confer: J. DE WAARD – W.A. SMALLEY, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Amos* (Helps for Translators 22, United Bible Societies, New York, 1979) 193.

Edom, the fourth nation in the series of nations, is the first climax⁸. From a semantic point of view, Edom has a special position. Whereas, in the statements concerning the surrounding nations, only one or two transgressions are concretely mentioned, no less than four blameworthy actions are mentioned in the Edom-statement. In the communication with Israel, the rhetorical effect of this pause calls attention to someone else other than the own group: to someone else other than Israel itself, as if there were a communication that there is nothing wrong with Israel, but with those annoying nations surrounding Israel, more specifically with Edom.

The Judah-statement forms the second climax⁹. After the summing-up of the six surrounding nations, the rhetorical climax to be expected, is the big superpower Assur. However, Assur does not follow after the six little neighbouring nations. Instead of Assur, the Southern Kingdom Judah is mentioned. Judah is presented as if it were just one of the surrounding nations; as if there were no distinction between Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab on the one hand and Judah on the other hand.

As a political and religious opponent of the Northern Kingdom Israel, the rhetorical effect is great: not Israel is not good, but Judah. And, considering the expression *אשר הלכו אבותם אחריהם* *after which their fathers walked* in 2:4f, Judah is not only recently not good, but has been not good for a long time.

Next, the last and greatest climax follows by mentioning the eighth nation, which turns everything upside down: the third and final climax is Israel. The preceding nations only appear to be a prelude to put Israel to shame. The nations were not enumerated to indicate Israel's unassailable status, but to express a complete encirclement around Israel.

Once surrounded, Judah seems to get the real blow. This should have been considered as a wake-up call: if Judah is not good, Israel cannot be good either! The warning to Judah differs from the warnings to the neighbouring nations. It is only after the Judah-statement, that the Lord mentions that they risk their relation with him, by mentioning in the first place *הורת יהוה* *the teaching of the LORD* (2:4c). It is exactly this relation that appears to be the main warning of the Lord against Israel. He presents himself as a contrast in an emphatic *ואנכי* *but I* (2:9) and sums up his blessings in contrast to the transgressions. How much the relation has been

8 See also: MÖLLER, *A Prophet in Debate*, 184-185.

9 Confer: MÖLLER, *A Prophet in Debate*, 192.

harmed, also appears from the fact that the accusation against Israel is formulated by using the distant third person (פניהם *away from their face* in 2:9 instead of the more intimate second person פניכם *away from your face*¹⁰).

The character Amos, however, is introduced by the text-immanent author as a Judean character. This implies that, beyond the communication with Israel, there is a communication with Judah as well.

In 1:2, Judah does not seem to have to be worried. The capital Jerusalem is the religious centre. It is from Jerusalem that the Lord speaks. The effects of the Lord's words seem to ignore Jerusalem. They occur in the anonymous נאות הרעים *pastures of the shepherds* and on הכרמל *the Carmel*, a mountain not situated in the Southern Kingdom Judah, but in the Northern Kingdom Israel.

On second thought, however, it is very doubtful whether Judah does not have to be worried. In the biblical land, pastures are located mainly in the south of Judah. In other words, the geographical indications in 1:2 should be understood as a so-called merism, in which the northern Carmel and the southern pastures indicate the totality of the biblical land¹¹.

Apart from this geography, Judah has no reason to be glad that Israel forms the climax in the series of statements concerning the nations. After all, Judah takes the place of Assur. Judah, therefore, is highly identical to and treated as one of the surrounding nations. Even more, Judah seems to get off even worse than Israel. No punishment is mentioned for Israel, at least suggesting that Israel will escape without being punished. Conversely, in the Judah-statement, a punishment is mentioned: a punishment which is exactly identical to the punishment of the six preceding nations: a devouring fire. More exactly, a fire which is aimed at destroying Jerusalem.

Judah is warned because, instead of being led by the תורה יהודה *teaching*, the Torah, *of the LORD* and חקיו *his statutes*, it has been led by כוביהם *their own lies* (verse 4). The word כוב *lie* is used to characterise the false prophets especially in Ez 13: the false prophets only saw lies and they prophesize based upon these lies, disguised as an נאם־יהוה *utterance of the LORD*¹². The warning against Judah, therefore, can be understood not as a warning about having lis-

10 Pace: *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*, 1976, which translates 'for your sake' (instead of 'for *their* sake').

11 See in particular: P. BOVATI – R. MEYNET, *Le Livre du Prophète Amos* (Rhétorique biblique 2; Les éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1994) 28; 32.

12 See also: MÖLLER, *A Prophet in Debate*, 192.

tened to the prophets, but, instead, about listening to the false prophets. This warning has not been expressed against Israel, or, at least, has not *yet* been expressed against Israel; nevertheless, the question was raised whether Israel will listen to the prophetic message of the character Amos. Would Israel be better than Judah by listening to the prophetic voice?

The communicative complexity is increased in 3:1-2. The addressee is made explicit in the vocative בני ישראל *sons of Israel* (3:1c). Who are these בני ישראל *sons of Israel*?

The expression בני ישראל *sons of Israel* can be used to indicate the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom Israel. I will give an example: in 1 Ki 18, Ahab, the King of the Northern Kingdom, gathers the inhabitants, indicated as בני ישראל *sons of Israel*, on Mount Carmel for the confrontation with the prophet Elijah.

However, the indication בני ישראל *sons of Israel* also means the entire people of God. Such a text can be found in 2 Ki 13. After King Joahaz' realm has fallen into Aram's hands, because of his sins, he, the King of the Northern Kingdom Israel, repents and seeks the Lord's mercy. The Lord hears him by giving a redeemer to בני ישראל *Israel*, so that they can live again as the בני ישראל *sons of Israel* (the entire people of God) used to do in the past.

There also are a few texts in which *sons of Israel* indicate the Southern Kingdom Judah. An example can be found in 2 Chron 31. In the description of King Hezekiah's regulation of the contributions for the temple, the King commands לעם *to the people*, which is explained as ליושבי ירושלים *to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to give a contribution for the priests and the Levites (verse 4). The next verse describes how, after the King's word had spread, the בני ישראל *sons of Israel* carry out the command. Only in the following verse are these בני ישראל *sons of Israel* divided into ובני ישראל ויהודה *the sons of Israel and of Judah*.

Regarding our text in Amos 3:1, this means that the vocative בני ישראל *sons of Israel* can also be understood inclusively as an expression for both the Northern Kingdom Israel and the Southern Kingdom Judah.

In our Amos-text, Judah and Israel are parallelised. As Israel is, Judah could be as well. Considering the communication to Judah in comparison with Israel, this could also be formulated as follows: as Judah is, Israel could be as well.

Now, I would like to pay attention to the text-immanent reader, with whom the text-immanent author communicates. He does this also by using the communication with Israel and with Judah.

The text-immanent reader is located in a similar ambivalent address-situation as Israel and Judah are. In the summing-up of the nations, even including Judah and Israel, the nations are only discussed, not addressed. The introductory text 1:2 does not mention any addressee either. The character Amos tells that the Lord utters his voice, but to whom is not mentioned. The addressee of the speech of the character Amos is also not mentioned; his direct speech is only introduced by the clause **וַיֹּאמֶר** *and then he said*.

This narrative start of the book Amos keeps the text-immanent reader at a distance. After all, the narrative world is characterized by a less direct involvement than the discursive world, because the narrative world is about other people in the third person. Because of the narrative *wayyiqtol*-form, the text-immanent reader does not expect to be addressed.

This situation changes in 2:10, where, in my view, the text-immanent reader becomes primarily visible in the second person plural. Whereas so far no one has been concretely addressed, there in chapter 2 an addressee is formulated for the first time: *you* (plural).

Who are these 'you' plural? It is possible to identify this 'you' with the Northern Kingdom Israel. Israel is the nation mentioned last in the series of nations and appears to be the climax, just before the addressee 'you' plural is formulated. In this case, the syndetic connection **וַאֲנֹכִי** in 2:10 is to be understood as *and I*.

The second person plural can, however, also be understood as Israel and Judah together. The blessings which the I-person describes having given, namely to make them come out from Egypt, to lead them going through the desert during forty years and, finally, to give them the land of the Amorites, are not given only to the fathers of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom Israel or only to the fathers of the inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom Judah, but to the entire people of God. Not before verse 11d, is the 'you' identified with the vocative **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** *sons of Israel*. I have already called attention to the ambiguity of this vocative. It does not allow an explicit use for the Northern Kingdom Israel, but suggests that, besides Israel, Judah should be considered as well.

However, the text-immanent reader can also be recognized in the second person plural in 2:10. This interpretation is not so much evoked by the fact that the indication **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** *sons of Israel* can refer to the entire people of God, even independent of the Northern or Southern Kingdom, as by the fact that the

second person plural is first of all anonymously introduced in the text in verse 10. The ‘you’ is everyone whom the speaking Lord brought out from Egypt through the desert to the promised land. Even more, these blessings are continued by the Lord in calling some of their sons to be prophets or Nazirites, expressed in the text as *מבניכם* of *your* sons, and *מבחורכם* of *your* young men. In verse 11d, therefore, this general ‘you’ is identified as the *בני ישראל* *sons of Israel*.

After this address to the general ‘you’ in verse 11, concluded by the formula *נאם יהוה* *utterance of the Lord* in verse 11e, the address to the ‘you’ is continued in another form. In 2:12-16, neither the first person singular (= the Lord) nor the second person plural (= the ‘you’) occur as a separate personal pronoun. The ‘you’ are addressed because of their present behaviour, in which they obstruct the prophets and Nazirites. In the ‘you’ in 2:12-16, the presence of the text-immanent reader has decreased, without being directly marked.

In 3:1-2, a second person plural occurs as well. While 2:10 shows to whom the Lord was speaking, 3:1 shows to whom the character Amos is speaking, namely to the *בני ישראל* *sons of Israel*. The neutral *ויאמר* *and then he said* in 1:2a actually appears to be a serious communicative *ויאמר עליכם* *and then he said to you*.

The warning which is made against both the general ‘you’ in 2:10-11 and the concrete ‘you’ in 2:12-16, is about the rejection of the prophets. Regarding the concrete ‘you’, this warning is parallel to the warning which was communicated to Israel and to Judah. However, the warning is now extended to the general ‘you’, that means towards the text-immanent reader.

Because of this, a communicative chain arises. The slogan ‘like Israel, like Judah’ –or if you want: ‘like Judah, like Israel’– is extended to read: ‘like Judah, like Israel, like the text-immanent reader’. Judah is deaf to the prophets. Israel also seems to be deaf to the prophets. The text-immanent reader however does not read a warning that is only addressed to deaf people; he himself also risks being deaf to the prophetic voice.

I would like to cast a final glance at 3:3-15. The announcement by the character Amos in 1:2 that the Lord is speaking and the content of what the Lord is speaking which is given only in 3:1-2, is continued in the analogous structure of text-unit 3:3-15.

The rhetorical questions in the verses 3-8, which are formed by using the foreground-form *yiqtol*, culminate in the question as to who would not prophesize, when the Lord speaks a word. Where in the text is that word for-

mulated that the Lord has entrusted to his prophets? In my view, the text contains two words, both marked by a double imperative.

The first one is marked by the imperatives *השמיעו* *proclaim!* (= *make heard!*) and *אמרו* *say!* (verse 9). This verse forms the word the Lord lets his prophets know. This word is explained in three short utterances of God in the verses 10-12.

The second one is marked by the imperatives *שמעו* *listen!* and *העידו* *warn!* (verse 13). What the warning is about, follows immediately in the verses 14-15.

Semantically speaking, the main reference to the surrounding nations takes shape in verse 11c: it is about an enemy, an adversary, namely *סביב הארץ* *surround the land*. This description corresponds with the position of the nations surrounding Israel/Judah in 1:2-2:3, which are represented in the text as encircling Israel/Judah.

In the first word of God in 3:9-12, the nations are central. The call is located in Ashdod and Egypt, to recruit spectators of Samaria's decline. From a communicative perspective, this call is meticulously formulated. The second person plural in verse 9 is nowhere identified with any of the surrounding nations. Only the location of the call suggests that the nations are addressed. Just as God does not address any of them anywhere in the so-called Prophecies Against the Nations, in the same way the prophet avoids addressing any of the nations in this word of God.

The second word of God in 3:13-15 is connected to the climax of the series of statements concerning the nations. The *בית יעקב* *house of Jacob* has to be warned that *ישראל* *Israel* will be visited. Regarding the elaboration concerning the sanctuary in Bethel, the indication *ישראל* *Israel* is to be understood here as the Northern Kingdom Israel, just as in the final climax. However, the indication *בית יעקב* *house of Jacob* is parallel to the expression *בני ישראל* *sons of Israel* and is at least as ambiguous as *בני ישראל* *sons of Israel*. In the narrative texts of the bible, the expression *בית יעקב* *house of Jacob* hardly occurs and elsewhere it seems to indicate the entire people of God¹³. What the warning is about, focuses on Israel; the warning itself, however, is addressed to anyone who is part of God's people, therefore including Judah and the text-immanent reader.

As I have already mentioned, preceding the two words of God for his prophets to prophesize, a number of rhetorical questions are formulated in the

13 See e.g.: Ps 114:1; Isa 2:5; 48:1.

verses 3-8, culminating in the prophetic issue in the final rhetoric question. These questions make clear that there is no escape for the character Amos to act as a prophet. This does not mean, however, that Amos addresses himself by means of these rhetoric questions¹⁴.

The fact that the inescapability is formulated by means of rhetorical questions, is meaningful. Using these questions, the speaker gives the addressee no other option than to answer affirmatively and, by doing so, to accept the inescapability of the prophecy. That means: the speaker wants the addressee to do what we have already seen in the communication with Israel, with Judah and with the text-immanent reader: something that the addressee has not yet done. The rhetorical questions, therefore, form a communicative contrast to the so-called Prophecies Against the Nations.

The rhetorical questions do not have a specific addressee. That is why the text-immanent reader primarily appears as the addressee of these questions. The first rhetorical question in 3:3a makes this clear in using the image of two partners. The expression שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּי *two together* means the Lord with a partner. Who this partner is, is left open. The one who answers the rhetorical question affirmatively, presents himself as the Lord's partner.

I have arrived at my conclusion. The so-called Prophecies Against the Nations have a communicative function at three levels: regarding Israel, regarding Judah and regarding the text-immanent reader. In all three communicative situations, the recognition of the prophecy is at issue, and, because of that, also the recognition of the word of God, that he is about to visit the transgressors. At all the three levels, the addressees initially appear to have nothing to worry about. However, appearances are deceptive. They are actually dealt with very harshly.

In contrast to this ambivalent communication, the prophet formulates his own 'yes' to the word of God, concretized in the words he speaks on behalf of God to anonymous foreign nations and to God's own people. Moreover and first of all, in contrast to this ambivalent communication, by using rhetorical questions, the prophet formulates the invitation to say 'yes' to the inescapability of the word of God as well, just as he has done.

14 See also: Y. GITAY, "A Study of Amos's Art of Speech. A Rhetorical Analysis of Amos 3:1-15": *CBQ* 42 (1980) 296; *confer.* A. SCHENKER, "Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen, oder steht Israel vor der Evidenz der Weisung Gottes in der Weissagung des Propheten? Zur Interpretation von Amos 3,3-8": *BZ* 30 (1986) 253.

