

THE DUAL OCCURRENCES OF דק IN THE BOOK OF AMOS

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent article, John Crossan suggested that Biblical studies should no longer be considered a single discipline but a "field of disciplines" including anthropology, sociology, and literary methods as well as the older historical-critical methods.¹ In other words, Crossan argues for a marriage of diachronic and synchronic methodologies in order to more adequately understand the Biblical text at hand and its formation. Since the publication of Crossan's article, his suggestion has become an increasingly accepted matter of fact in Biblical studies. Perhaps one of the most fruitful areas for such investigation is that portion of prophetic literature which falls somewhere between the two extremes of "poetry" and "prose" and which shares characteristics of each. This essay is an examination of three examples of a literary device which is normally associated with Hebrew poetry - parallelism. I will examine three occurrences of parallel uses of the Hebrew verb דק in the prophecy of Amos. These three parallel patterns are taken from sections of the book which are generally considered to be the result of successive stages of redaction.² Leaving aside the question of the history of the

¹ John Crossan, "Ruth Amid the Alien Corn: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Biblical Criticism," in R. Polzin and E. Rothman eds., The Biblical Mosaic, (Semeia Studies; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) p.199-210.

² For discussions on the redaction of the book of Amos see H. W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). Robert Coote, Amos Among the Prophets: Composition and Theology, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

formation of the text, I will suggest that these three parallel uses of קים signal the progression of a salvation theme found in Amos 5-9.

VARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF HEBREW PARALLELISM

The line of demarcation separating Biblical prose and poetry has recently been challenged by James Kugel. He prefers to see in the Biblical writings (he questions whether the term "literature" may be correctly applied to the Bible) more or less of an "elevated style" rather than the imposition of the label "prose" or "poetry."³ Certainly, Kugel's position has met with a mixed reception from Biblical scholars, nevertheless, he does without question make very clear that the distinctions which have normally been made between Biblical prose and poetry must be considered cautiously. The line, if any at all, separating the two is very fine.⁴

Adele Berlin has written that repetition is "one of the most extensive devices in the Bible, taking many

³ James Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p.85.

⁴ William Holladay, while discussing difficulties encountered in the "poetic" sections of the book of Jeremiah, wrote that "there is more than one extended passage in Jeremiah about whose nature - poetry or prose - there is no unanimity at all." William Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," Journal of Biblical Literature, 85 (1966): 401. This lack of consensus is due to the numerous ways in which literary devices are employed by the Biblical writers and the apparent flexibility of the conventions which govern the usage of those devices.

different forms."⁵ Further, she adds that repetition is "a key to perception, to interpretation; it calls attention to the similarity of two things or utterances, and may also be calling attention to their differences."⁶ Regarding the parallelistic device in Hebrew writing, Kugel adds "this is the first thing to be grasped about parallelism: it was an extraordinarily versatile and popular form of expression, one that almost anyone could use almost anywhere. Parallelistic lines appear throughout the Bible, not only in "poetic" parts but in the midst of narratives."⁷ Kugel goes on to state that parallelism, and the phenomena which he labels "seconding sequence" is found almost everywhere in the Hebrew Bible.⁸ In fact, "seconding", Kugel states, is a "reflex of the language" turning up "in every conceivable context."⁹

As the scholars cited here have indicated, parallelism can take many forms in Hebrew literature. One particular form of parallelism, in which the parallel elements are found in distant parts of narrative, was investigated by S. Talmon.¹⁰ Contrary to an earlier consensus of Biblical scholars which concluded parallel readings as a sure sign of multiple sources, Talmon suggested that the readings were designed to frame and highlight specific points of the narrative rather than representing untidy editorial

⁵ Adele Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), p.136.

⁶ Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, p.136.

⁷ Kugel, Idea, p.3.

⁸ Kugel, Idea, p.59.

⁹ Kugel, Idea, p.61.

¹⁰ S. Talmon, "Synonymous Readings in the Textual Traditions of the OT," Scripta Hierosolymitana, 8 (1961), p.335-383.

remains. Berlin, too, is of the opinion that repetitions found in narratives such as 1 Sam 19:12 and 19:18 as well as in 1 Sam 4:11 and 4:22 indicate two perspectives which are synchronous and by which the author allows the reader to switch viewpoints within one account.¹¹ By utilizing the repetition of key phrases the author in 1 Sam 4 allows the reader to approach the story of the capture of the ark first from the viewpoint of the Israelites and then in chapter 5 from the viewpoint of the Philistines. Instead of marking the remnants of two, once separate, sources the repeating formula constitutes a literary device which allows the author to tell a complex story from multiple vantage points. Distant parallelism is not limited to narrative but is found in "poetry" as well and adds thematic structure to the literary piece.¹² The following examination suggests that a form of distant parallelism was incorporated into the thematic structure of Amos 5-9.

OCCURRENCES OF קים IN AMOS

It comes as no surprise that parallelism turns up in the writing attributed to the prophet Amos. The question is not whether parallelism exists in the book, but if certain forms¹³ of that parallelism serve a thematic structure. The parallelisms which are

¹¹ Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, p.126.

¹² Wilfred Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques, (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), p.286.

¹³ For a definition of parallelism which focuses upon the function of the devise see Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," Style in Language, ed. T. Sebeok (Cambridge, MA.: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p.358. See also Adele Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, (Bloomington, IN.: University of Indiana

examined here revolve around the use of קים in Amos. The significance of this term in prophetic writing was alluded to by James Ross.¹⁴ He took up the challenge of comparing prophetic texts from Hamath, Israel, and Mari by focusing upon certain key words and phrases which appeared with frequency in all three settings. One of the characteristic verbs which he identified¹⁵ was the Hebrew verb קים and its semantic equivalents. The verb or its equivalent was used to describe the desired posture of the deity on behalf of the plaintiff. Correspondingly, in "rising" on behalf of the plaintiff, the deity could "rise" against the enemies of the worshipper.

A lexical study of Amos reveals several surprising facts about the use of קים in the book. Cognates of the verb לקים appear 10 times in the book of Amos (אקים 2:11, קים 5:2, מקימה 5:2, מקים 6:14,¹⁶ יקים 7:2, יקים 7:5, וקמתי 7:9, יקימו 8:14, אקים 9:11, אקים 9:11). Of these 10 occurrences לקים is used in the sense of "revive", "raise up", or "stand" (in the sense of "renew") in 5:2, 7:2, 7:5, 8:14, 9:11. These occurrences represent a relatively high frequency of the use of קים when compared to the other prophetic writings, especially those from the eighth century prophetic works.¹⁷ Of these 7 similar usages of the

Press, 1985), p.9.

¹⁴ James Ross, "Prophecy in Hamath, Israel, and Mari," Harvard Theological Review, 63 (1970), p.1-28.

¹⁵ Ross, "Prophecy in Hamath," p.9.

¹⁶ Wolff, commenting on this verse, states that here Amos uses the verb קים differently than is typical in the Deuteronomic History. This observation supports the contention that קים is of unusual significance in Amos. Wolff, Joel and Amos, p.170.

¹⁷ The use of קים with the sense of "revive" or

verb, 6 appear in parallel phrases (5:2a and b, 7:2, 7:5, and 9:11a and b). In all 6 of these instances the object of the verb is essentially the same, that being the people of Israel or a representative element of the nation (9:11, "booth of David" and "ruins"). Each of these dual occurrences of קים comes at the beginning of a major section in the book of Amos.¹⁸ Chapters 5-6 are comprised of a series of oracles addressed to בית ישראל as contrasted with the בני ישראל of chapters 3-4. Beginning the series of addresses to בית ישראל is the chiasm of 5:1-17. Chapters 7-9:4 (minus 7:10-17) form a series of visions. The salvation oracle at the end of the book comprises 9:11-15. The placement of these dual occurrences of קים is strategic, following hard after

"restore" is also found in Is 44:26; 49:6,8; 58:12; 61:4; 51:17; 52:2; 26:19; 24:20. Of these the most pertinent for the present study are 49:6,8 referring to "Jacob", 58:12 and 61:4 which have reference to "the ancient ruins", and 51:17 and 52:2 both of which refer to "Jerusalem." Jeremiah uses קים in this fashion five times. Twice the reference is to "David" (23:5; 30:9) and once to the "promise" of God (33:14). In 50:32 a phrase reminiscent of Amos 5:2 is given in which it is stated that Babylon would fall with אין לו מקים ("none to raise him up"). Jer 8:4, the final occurrence in which קים is used in this manner, is in the form of a proverb referring to a fallen man who will surely rise again. Ezekiel uses קים in this fashion in 16:60,62, and 34:23 (here in reference to "David"). Micah uses קים in the sense of "restore" in 7:8. Hosea 6:2 also refers to the "rising" of the fallen Israelite people.

¹⁸ For a comparative discussion of the structure of Amos see, Roy Melugin, "The Formation of Amos: An Analysis of Exegetical Method," in Paul Achtemeier ed., Seminar Papers, 1 (Society of Biblical Literature; Chico: Scholars Press, 1978), p.369-391. Adri van der Wal, "The Structure of Amos," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 26 (1983), p.107-113.

introductory formulae in 5:1 and 7:1. Through the use of קים each section (ch. 5-6, 7:1-9:4, 9:11-15) is introduced by a common figure; the reviving of Israel. Borrowing from Talmon's study we might observe that here too repetition serves to highlight.¹⁹ The beginning of each section brings to mind the opening of the previous section.²⁰ In Amos, this repetition highlights a theme which is not static but is developed through these three sections so that a progression of thought is displayed.

The first occurrence of קים in parallelism is in 5:2. Here, an impossibility is stated. The virgin Israel is fallen "never to rise again." She is upon the ground with "no one to raise her up." Clearly, the inevitable destruction of the nation of Israel is predicted. Wolff suggests that even the form of the two cola in this verse creates a "mood of despair."²¹ The nation is beyond help and there is no one to come to her rescue. The participial construction used here focuses the reader's attention upon the agent of Israel's restoration.²² In 5:2 that agent is

¹⁹ Talmon, "Synonymous Readings," p.380-383.

²⁰ This function of distant repetition has already been noted by O'Connor. Although O'Connor limits his examples to those separated by only a few lines he does show that repetitive elements not immediately connected serve as organizing principles. M. O'Connor, Hebrew Verse Structure, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), p.366.

²¹ Wolff, Amos, p.234.

²² That agency seems to be a concern of קים in 5:2; 7:2,5 is supported by the LXX rendition of 7:2,5. See note #23. Hayes, sensitive to the participial construction, offers an alternative translation, "there is no one who causes her to rise." John Hayes, Amos the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching,

non-existent.

The next dual occurrence of קים offers an improbable possibility. In 7:2,5 the nation's destruction is once again threatened. This time, however, the prophet interposes a mediating objection and the threatened annihilation is withheld. Following each of two successive visions of destruction, the prophet beseeches God to spare the nation. The prophet's plea can be translated, "How can Jacob stand? He is so small."²³ Jacob is not capable of self-support. If the threatened destruction is executed, Jacob will be destroyed for he doesn't have the resources to raise himself. Implied in the prophet's plea is recognition of a possible continuation of the nation which requires the abatement of the divine punishment. If Jacob's recovery is to be realized someone must come forward to offer assistance. The virgin who in 5:2 is on the ground must find someone to "raise her up." In chapter 7 that restoration is possible but yet improbable due to the absence of someone to offer the required aid.

The third parallelism involving קים occurs at the

(Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), p.155.

²³ LXX renders the phrase, "τίς ἀναστήσει τον Ιακωβ," ("Who will raise up Jacob?"). This avoids the awkward form of קומי whereby "Jacob" is understood as the subject. The LXX prefers קים making "Jacob" the object. This translation was followed by a recent commentator, Gary Smith, Amos: A Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), p.220. In a note this same commentator notices a connection between 7:2 and 5:2 but fails to pursue the relation between the two verses. Smith, Amos, p.224. Here, I follow the MT reading yet understand that an agent is required to enable "Jacob" to stand. For the translation of כִּי as "how" see, Giovanni Rinaldi, "MJ [MI]," Bibbia e Oriente, 9 (1967): p.118.

end of the book of Amos in 9:11. The impossible situation of 5:2, has progressed to the improbable possibility of 7:2,5 which in turn has given way to the certain probability of 9:11. The "booth of David" which in the prophetic perception has fallen will be "raised up." The "breaches" will be repaired and the "ruins raised up."²⁴ The "virgin" who in 5:12 was fallen upon the ground will be restored. Someone has come forward to offer the needed assistance. The helper which was unknown in 5:2 and only a possibility in 7:2,5 has been found. The Lord himself will raise the ruins and the fallen booth of David.

CONCLUSION

The distant repetitions of קים in the book of Amos provide a signal of thematic development found within the book. The prophecy describes in harsh and demanding terms the punishment soon to be inflicted upon the nation of Israel. Yet, at the same time the prophet interweaves a message of hope and salvation. Through the use of a key word, קים, strategically placed in the last five chapters of the book, a restitution theme is developed. The use of key words is not uncommon in the book of Amos. Such literary activity is evident in other sections of the book as well: the concatenous pattern of chapter 1-2 which ties together the oracles against foreign nations by a progression of key words,²⁵ the chiastic structure of chapter 5,²⁶ and the utilization of key words in the

²⁴ The mention of "breaches" brings to mind the figure of 4:3.

²⁵ S. Paul, "Amos 1:3-2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern," Journal of Biblical Literature, 90 (1971) p.397-405.

²⁶ J. De Waard, "The Chiastic Structure of Amos V 1-17," Vetus Testamentum, 27 (1977) p.170-177.

series of visions in chapters 7-8.²⁷

This study is not intended to suggest any particular theory of redaction regarding the book of Amos but simply to say that as the book is now composed an element of hope concerning a future²⁸ salvation is developed subtly throughout chapters 5-9. The presence of ׀ק׀ in the fashion discussed does not presuppose Amos authorship nor does it deny Amos authorship.²⁹ This paper simply suggests that when the sections under question were brought together the editor's design

²⁷ Perhaps the most celebrated being the "ק׀ק׀", "ק׀ק׀" pun of 8:2. See Al Wolters, "Wordplay and Dialect in Amos 8:2," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 31 (1988) p.407-410.

²⁸ See the injunctions of 5:6,14-15,24 and the prophecies of 9:8,11-15. I have discussed elsewhere the function of hope in the formation of a social movement and in so doing explored the social dynamics of the early history of the prophecy. See Terry Giles, "An Introductory Investigation of Amos by Means of the Model of the Voluntary Social Movement," Proceedings of the Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, 8 (1988) p.135-153. See also, G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 2 (Eng. tran., Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd; New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p.138. Herbert Huffmon, "The Social Role of Amos' Message," The Quest for the Kingdom of God, ed. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, A. R. W. Green, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), p.112-113.

²⁹ The growing use of ׀ק׀ to refer to the restoration of "Israel", "Jacob", and "David" from the seventh and sixth centuries might give credence to the hypothesis of editorial activity in the book of Amos from these centuries. This is particularly so if the Amos material is compared with the material commonly designated as Second Isaiah.

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included an unfolding salvation theme.

That קים appears in three dual usages in the book of Amos can not be disputed. The matter to decide is whether the occurrences form part of a technique designed to focus the attention of the reader onto a developing salvation theme found in the last half of the book. I believe that they do.

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