

GOD'S COMMITMENT TO THE NON-HUMAN CREATION:
THE ECOLOGY OF SIN AND ITS ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
ACCORDING TO AMOS, HOSEA, AND FIRST ISAIAH

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Word Count: 79,487

ABBREVIATIONS

1QIsa ^a	Qumran scroll Isaiah ^a
AB	Anchor Bible
BA	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of Old Testament</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JTS	<i>The Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KJV	King James Version
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NIB	The New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NRSVue	New International Standard Version Updated Edition
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

<i>SBT</i>	<i>Studies in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>SSN</i>	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
THOTC	The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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ABSTRACT

Although there has been a renewed interest in ecological readings of the Hebrew Bible, there is little analysis on the cosmic relationship between sin and the non-human world. Even less reflection has been devoted to how the ecology of sin is related to eschatological thought within the prophetic corpus. Yet, voices within the prophetic corpus speak about both the ecology of sin and God's commitment to the non-human creation eschatologically, including the classical prophets Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. These three books speak about these two themes, and while there has been some research concerning their views of the non-human creation ecologically, there has been limited analysis of their views of the non-human creation eschatologically.

This study examines salient passages within the books of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah in order to understand how human sin affects the interrelatedness of the created order and the ensuing cosmic implications of prophetic eschatology; that is, how God's judgement and redemption involve the whole cosmos. First, this study locates the pertinent passages that consider the themes of the interrelatedness of the cosmic order, the role of the non-human creation in judgement and eschatology, and the overall eschatological implications. Second, employing literary and theological methods, the research examines the relevant passages in their present form of the Masoretic Text in order to discern prominent themes related to the non-human creation and eschatological thought. Finally, after summarising the findings, the research concludes by synthesising the main themes discovered amongst the three voices and noting both their similarities and differences.

A close reading of these passages reveals the prominent role the non-human creation plays in both judgement and eschatological acts. YHWH is committed not only to humanity but also to the non-human creation, empowering her and partnering with her to

bring renewal to the cosmological order. That Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah proclaim similar messages emphasises the important eschatological role of the non-human creation.

DECLARATION

I, Christina L. Bohn, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 79,487 words in length, has been written by me; that it is the record of work carried out by me; and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina L. Bohn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "B".

Christina L. Bohn

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Introductory Remarks

After a long history of interpreting the Hebrew Bible anthropocentrically, recent scholarship has attempted to interpret the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of the non-human creation (NHC), especially within the prophetic corpus. This re-examination of the prophetic texts has revealed themes of the interrelatedness of the cosmic order, the consequences of humanity's sin upon the NHC, and the NHC's role in judgement. A strong thread within the Hebrew prophetic literature affirms that, because of the interrelated cosmic order, transgression against God is not simply a violation of covenant; it is also a violation against the NHC. Many of the prophetic writings also communicate a hopeful vision for the NHC's renewal, including the books of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. Restoration is not just for God's people, but for everything God has created. The NHC is God's partner, and as such, God is committed to all of creation and will not abandon the NHC.

While recent scholarship has analysed the relationship YHWH has with the NHC, few have examined how YHWH's commitment to the NHC extends eschatologically. Several have briefly alluded to it, but there has been no critical, exegetical engagement with the eschatological dimensions of Hosea, Amos, and First Isaiah.¹ Even less consideration has been given to examining how humanity's sin against the NHC may have eschatological ramifications. The trend in research has been to treat each of these as separate and unrelated topics: the prophetic views of eschatology and sin's ecology.

This research will examine the salient passages from Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah and demonstrate the lack of eschatological engagement with these prophetic texts. It will

¹ The pertinent scholarship is highlighted in the review of recent scholarship below.

also discuss the major ecological themes relevant to eschatology that are present within the texts of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah: the interrelatedness of the cosmic order, the effects of humanity's sin upon the NHC, and the NHC's role in judgement. Finally, the eschatological trajectory for the NHC will be considered. This study will pose advancements to the discussion of ecological hermeneutics, especially in light of eschatological thought. As Olley so poignantly asks, "In descriptions of the present and visions of the future non-human members of the Earth community are clearly visible, but how are they involved?"² This thesis will be predominantly concerned with the role of the NHC, especially as it relates to future realities.

2. The Rationale for Hosea, Amos, and First Isaiah

This study has chosen to examine the relationships YHWH and humanity have with the NHC as revealed through the prophetic writings of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. All three prophetic voices write about the close relationship humanity's sin has upon the NHC. They also all contain eschatological visions involving the NHC as either actor or recipient of YHWH's reconciliation. Together, these three prophetic voices represent a snapshot of the NHC and eschatological themes in a portion of the prophetic literature. This approach toward Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah is unique in that there has not been substantial study related to how these prophetic voices speak of the renewal of the NHC and envision a harmonious relationship between humans and the non-human world. For these reasons, this research will examine the NHC and eschatological themes in these three prophetic writings and analyse how their voices compare as an intertextual unit.³

² John W. Olley, "The Wolf, the Lamb, and the Little Child: Transforming the Diverse Earth Community in Isaiah," in *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Cleveland, OH: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 218.

³ Other pertinent texts are also examined in order to illuminate the study's selected texts.

This study recognises the diverse positions concerning the delineation of Isaiah and that there is division about whether Isaiah should be divided into two-halves or even thirds. Because Isa 1–39 attributes an eighth-century context (1:1) and concludes with historical events at the close of the eighth century (36:1–39:8), this study will utilise the term “First Isaiah.”

The prophetic voices of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah are linked in this study for several reasons. First, these prophets are three of the four so-called “classical prophets” who traditionally are attributed to the eighth-century context based upon their superscriptions. While Micah is also considered a classical prophet with ties to the eighth century, any unique references that Micah does have to the NHC are brief and do not meet the textual criteria (below). It is not necessary, therefore, to address texts from Micah specifically.

However, since many, if not all, of the selected texts likely underwent an exilic or post-exilic editing process, these prophetic texts cannot be comprehensively grouped together as “eighth-century texts.” This study recognises the long compositional history of the Hebrew Bible and the contributions of diachronic approaches to the study of these texts. Because of the span of textual dating, additional connections between these prophetic voices must be considered.

Thus, intertextual links constitute a second justification for the texts of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah.⁴ This overlap confirms the prophetic texts were not crafted in isolation from each other.⁵ The intertextuality also suggests the writers of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah either had access to other works within the prophetic corpus or shared a common prophetic tradition. It is possible unpreserved prophetic traditions shared similar themes to those in

⁴ There are connections between all four traditional eighth-century prophets (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and First Isaiah). See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB 19 (NY: Random House, 2000), 106–107.

⁵ Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 65.

Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah.⁶ While both Amos and Hosea demonstrate similarities to First Isaiah, Amos and First Isaiah have the strongest connection.⁷ Blenkinsopp observes a possible reference to Amos' ministry in Isa 9:7 (Eng: Isa 9:8) and numerous passages that intersect linguistically and thematically.⁸ Perhaps the writers of Isaiah contextualised Amos' message to their Judean setting. While the connections are not as clear as Amos', Hosea also demonstrates similarities to First Isaiah.⁹ Some similar themes include unfaithful children (Isa 1:2–3; cf. Hos 1:2; 2:6 [4]; 5:7; 11:10); presenting God's people as an unfaithful wife (Isa 1:21–26; cf. Hos 2:4), symbolising Israel as a vineyard (Isa 5:1–7; cf. Hos 10:1), and using the title "Holy One of Israel" (Isa 1:4; 5:24; 10:20; 12:6; etc.; cf. Hos 11:9, 12). Finally, the intertextuality between Amos and Hosea is readily apparent.¹⁰

Thirdly, even if the literary connections between these books are redactional and not original to an eighth-century context, their presence confirms that they should be studied in relationship with one another. Indeed, a redaction-compositional view affirms intentional intertextuality. The inclusion of Amos and Hosea within the canonical form of the Book of the Twelve further confirms intentional cross-connections.¹¹ Since Amos is the most prominently overlapping text and perhaps a source for both Hosea and First Isaiah (above),

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 106; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 65. Blenkinsopp observes, "Isaiah's debt to Amos is nevertheless not difficult to detect" (106).

⁸ These passages include Isa 1:10–17 and Amos 5:21–24; Isa 29:13 and Amos 4:5; Isa 3:16–4:1 and Amos 4:1–3; Isa 5:11–13 and Amos 6:1–7; Isa 32:9–14 and Amos 6:1. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 106–107.

⁹ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 107.

¹⁰ See Jorg Jeremias, "The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, eds. James W. Watts, et al (NY: Bloomsbury, 1996), 171–186.

¹¹ See James D. Nogalski, "Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading," *Int* 61 (2007): 128–30. Specifically, Hosea (14:4–9) ends with agricultural imagery ("grain," "vine," and "wine," v. 7), which connects to Joel's beginning: a locust plague devastating the land ("grain," "new wine," and "grapevine," in 1:10–12). Nogalski concludes "these linking references to grain, wine, and vine in Hosea and Joel contrast the future blessing of Israel with the present realities of judgment." (45) Joel ends with the Lord roaring from Zion (3:16), which then connects to Amos' introduction of the Lord roaring as a lion (1:2).

this research begins with analysis of the Amos texts. The triad is thus ordered Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah.

Finally, in addition to the above reasons for including texts from First Isaiah, this prophetic voice is considered because of the lack of scholarship from theological perspectives that concern the NHC. Thematically, First Isaiah has not had the same level of ecological attention as the second half of Isaiah. It also has not been the focus of eschatology, of which Isaiah 40–66 has dominated. Including First Isaiah not only provides an additional dialogical perspective to those of Amos and Hosea but also contributes to the field of ecology within Isaianic studies.¹²

2.1. Synchronic Approach

Much has been written about the compositional history of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. In fact, redaction criticism has dominated the discussion surrounding the prophetic corpus for much of the past century. It is largely the consensus to view most, if not all, of the books in the Hebrew Bible as the product of editing sometime in the post-exilic period. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in synchronic approaches to the prophetic corpus, particularly with the rise of canonical criticism, which views the Hebrew Bible as a closed system. Unfortunately, these diachronic and synchronic methods have created a staunch dichotomy in biblical studies.¹³

¹² See the review of Isaiah scholarship below.

¹³ For instance, Sweeney primarily approaches his study of Isaiah from a diachronic perspective, situating the various texts within their historical setting. See Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, The Forms of OT Literature, Vol. XV, eds. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 11–13. Brueggemann, on the other hand, prefers a synchronic approach in his Isaiah commentary. See Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah, Vol. 1: Chapters 1–39* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1998), 3–5. Others have criticised this unnecessary polarisation. See Johannes C. de Moor, ed., *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, OTS 34 (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1995); Rolf Rendtorff, “The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity,” in *New Visions of Isaiah*, eds. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009).

The intent of this study is not to prove one approach right or wrong, for such an agenda limits itself to this dichotomous thinking. Rather, the investigative interest in these prophetic theological themes naturally warrant a close reading of the texts in their present forms. This is not to say that critical issues related to the formation of the respective books will be ignored or overlooked. Certainly, the shaping of the texts reveals the theological processes of YHWH's people. Yet this study's interests lie not in the theological development of these people but in the theological conclusions presented in the texts in their present form. Thus, this research will be located within the synchronic field of study. As Childs aptly puts it, "to work with the final stage of the text is not to lose the historical dimension, but it is rather to make a critical, theological judgement regarding the process."¹⁴

In his persuasive article (and contra Childs' terminology, above), Loader argues for the term "the present text" over the term "the final text."¹⁵ While historical and literary approaches have different focuses, and a literary approach can give insight different than that of the historical-critical, the literary approach is dependent upon the text's historicity.¹⁶ His argument considers the role of textual criticism in the shape of the present text, as well as the additions from the Masoretes in pointing, scribal edits, and paragraph divisions.¹⁷ Brueggemann also acknowledges the limitations of "final" language, as each new rendition to the tradition was intended to be the "final" version.¹⁸ These "final" traditions are retained and layered with subsequent retellings, a long procedure which Brueggemann terms "the traditioning process."¹⁹ In order to recognise canonical criticism's dependency on

¹⁴ Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 76.

¹⁵ James Alfred Loader, "The Finality of the Old Testament 'Final Text,'" *OTE* 15 (2002): 739–753.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 742–3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 739–753.

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11–13.

historical-critical methods and the preserved layers of the faithful community, this study will adopt Loader's term "the present text."

2.2. Criteria for Selected Passages

The following criteria define the scope and selection of texts: 1) the passage concerns the NHC as an entity; 2) the passage demonstrates a connection between humanity and the NHC; 3) the passage depicts a relationship between the NHC and YHWH; 4) the passage presents the NHC as possessing agency; and 5) the passage considers the NHC's eschatological role and/or effect.

Of course, not all the selected passages met the above criteria in their entirety.²⁰ In fact, the only ones which fulfil all five criteria are Amos 9:11–15; Hos 2:18–25 [16–23]; Isa 11:1–10; 24:1–20; 30:18–26; 35:1–10. Since criterion #1 was non-negotiable, this narrowed down the appropriate texts quickly. Each of these prophetic books contain numerous passages with NHC themes, but most of these instances portray the NHC figuratively. These prophetic voices are rich in metaphorical references to botanical and animal imagery alike. In particular, Judah is frequently likened to plants in First Isaiah and Hosea likens Israel's wickedness to "planting."²¹ This imagery, however, does not consider the NHC an autonomous agent who relates with both YHWH and humanity. The representation of the NHC as a real entity is essential to this study. The remaining passages, which at least meet criteria #1, #2, and #3, offer additional insight into the broader scope of these theological themes concerning the NHC. Since eschatological themes are an essential piece of this study, it would be reasonable to make criterion #5 non-negotiable as well. However, passages that

²⁰ See chart in Appendix for further detail on which criteria correspond with each passage.

²¹ Isa 1:30; 2:12–17; 5:24; 15:6; 17:13; 18:5–6; 27:11–12; 33:9–11; Hos 10:12–15. In contrast, Amos uses very little figurative language for the NHC.

do not contain eschatological themes are still included to compare with those that do include themes of renewal. For instance, passages concerning the judgement role of the NHC will be intentionally compared to the passages that concern the NHC's eschatological role in order to note points of continuity and discontinuity.

In First Isaiah, a few passages met several of the above criteria but were excluded from the study: Isa 6:8–13; 13:1–21; 25:6–8; and 26:12–19. Isaiah 6:8–13 describes the conditions of the Babylonian exile, which includes the desolation of the land of Judah. While the land (ארץ) is specifically mentioned, there are no themes pertinent to the thesis, such as the interrelatedness of the created order, the agency of the NHC, or an allusion to eschatological promise.

Isaiah 13:1–21 contains similar imagery and themes to Isa 34:1–17, such as “day of the Lord” and wild, unclean animals occupying human settlements. This passage was initially considered with 34:1–17 because the passages together would support the impact of these themes beyond the scope of Israel: Isa 13:1–21 concerns Babylon and Isa 34:1–17 concerns “Edom,” a location probably intended to include all nations collectively. Yet, Isa 13:1–21 does not further illuminate the themes in the thesis beyond Isa 34:1–17. Preference has been given to Isa 34:1–17 because its presentation of these themes is more comprehensive, including its eschatological trajectory. In addition, its pairing with Isa 35:1–10 contributes to the theme of eschatology that is missing in Isa 13:1–21. Nevertheless, the notable points of continuity between Isa 13:1–21 and 34:1–17 are frequently cited in the latter's analysis.

Alluding to both Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, Isa 2:1–5 and 25:6–12 conjure images of a mythological mountain whereby an eschatological order is imposed. In Isa 2:1–5 this reality is brought about by a teaching, whereas in Isa 25:6–12 it is given in the form of a banquet. The eschatological imagery is pertinent to the thesis; however, the mythological

language does not illuminate the thesis concerning the NHC. The mountain metaphor connects to Zion as a cultic site and does not characterise the NHC.

While eschatological, Isa 26:12–19 does not concern the NHC. The two allusions to the earth (vv. 19, 21) liken ארץ to Sheol rather than to the NHC. The disclosure of blood in v. 21 indicates the theme of pollution will be overturned, but the brief mention is not significant enough to warrant study.

Finally, although Micah is classically considered an eighth-century text, the NHC imagery in the book is figurative and does not consider sin's ecological implications. Neither does Micah demonstrate an emphasis on the NHC's restoration. With the exception of Mic 4:1–5, which is also found in Isa 2:1–5, Micah does not envision eschatological renewal of the NHC. The mountain imagery in this passage (and the rest of Micah) refers to Israel's sacred spaces and not to the NHC as a whole.²² Because it lacks references to the NHC as an autonomous agent who participates with YHWH eschatologically, the book of Micah does not pertain to this research.

3. Terminology

3.1. The Non-Human Creation (NHC)

There is no consensus among scholars as to how to define the things God has created. The term “creation” can refer to the NHC, the human creation, the combination of the two, the creative activity of YHWH, the creative activity of creatures (humans and non-humans), or a resultant creative work in general. The terms “natural world” or “nature” have been favoured by some, but these terms do not give sufficient clarification, as humanity could be considered part of this natural world.²³

²² For instance, Mic 1:2–4 alludes to the temple mount and 6:1–2 alludes to Mount Sinai.

²³ So Dempsey for “nature.” See Carol J. Dempsey, *Hope Amid the Ruins: The Ethics of Israel's Prophets* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000). Marlow prefers “natural world” to “nature,” although frequently uses “non-human

In discussing this issue, Anderson contends that creation is a category of history while Fretheim believes “creation” is terminology of theology; they nevertheless both conclude “creation” should not be equated with “nature” or “world.”²⁴ Fretheim, however, uses the generalised terms “creation” to refer to all things God has made, “created world” to refer to the NHC, and “creatures” to refer sometimes to all created entities, sometimes just to animals, and sometimes just to humanity.²⁵ All three of these terms contain so much overlap that it is often difficult to discern to what exactly Fretheim is referring.

Further, “earth” can be interpreted as “land,” two terms the biblical texts seem to use interchangeably.²⁶ Thang, for instance, observed that “land” (אֶרֶץ) and “earth” or “ground” (אֲדָמָה) are often used interchangeably throughout the book of Amos.²⁷ Finally, the term “human creation” could refer to entities humans have made, so this term will also not be used.

To avoid all of the above confusion, this study will use the terms “non-human creation” (NHC) and “humanity.” These terms avoid overlap and, while admittedly a bit awkward, are succinct in their specificity. The term NHC encompasses all the non-human entities present in the cosmos, including both the earth and its animal occupants. While it is true that little scholarship focuses on the role of the NHC, even less scholarship has considered the role of animals. Nevertheless, this study will include animals because of their frequent appearance in passages that refer to other features of the NHC. The frequent pairing of animals with “earth” suggests the two belong together and should be considered together.

creation” as well. See Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8.

²⁴ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos* (Portland, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub., 2005), 114; Terence Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 5. See also 17–19, where he frequently uses “creatures” to mean different entities.

²⁶ אֶרֶץ will be analysed and defined early in the Amos research.

²⁷ Robert Khua Hnin Thang, *The Theology of the Land in Amos 7–9* (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2014), 18.

Defining animals is challenging, but the Genesis creation poem does define different categories: sea creatures, birds, livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals (1:20–25). Meanwhile, the flood story includes the categories of birds, livestock, wild animals, and creatures that swarm over the earth (Gen 6:7; 7:21). Hosea 2:20 [18] and 4:3 use several of these categories: wild animals, the birds of the air, the creeping things, and the fish of the sea. Each of these groupings of animals appear in the selected passages. Further, the second Genesis creation story differentiates between humans and animals (2:18–23).

3.2. Creation

In addition to the terms for the non-human and human creatures, it must be discerned what is meant by YHWH's creative activity. Fretheim proposes three different terms that form a spectrum between a "minimalistic" view of creative acts and a "maximalistic" view of creative acts.²⁸ The three points of reference are 1) originating creation, whereby YHWH brings something into existence that did not previously exist;²⁹ 2) continuing creation, whereby YHWH continues to function as Creator by sustaining and innovating the cosmos; and 3) completing creation, whereby YHWH brings teleological completion to the cosmos.³⁰ Scholars fall somewhere within the spectrum of advocating for a "minimalistic" understanding of creation and a "maximalistic" understanding of creation. A minimalistic definition of creation, held by scholars like Paas, Ollenburger, Childs, and von Rad, suggests YHWH's role as Creator is limited to the origination of the cosmos.³¹ They

²⁸ Terence Fretheim, *God and World*, 5.

²⁹ This "originating creation" does not necessarily mean something created *ex nihilo*. Bringing something into existence that did not previously exist can also be creating order from chaos.

³⁰ Fretheim, *God and World*, 5–6.

³¹ Stefan Paas, *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some 8th Century Prophets* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 55–60; Ben C. Ollenburger, "Isaiah's Creation Theology," *ExAud* 3 (1987): 54–71; Brevard S. Childs,

argue the “continuing” and “completing” actions are not creative acts, but redemptive or salvific acts. This is representative of the dominant interest in *Heilsgeschichte* in the mid-twentieth century.

Meanwhile, Westermann and Anderson maintain more of a centrist view, recognising creation as a category pertaining to history-salvation, while also maintaining YHWH’s role in “continuing creative and redemptive work.”³² Likewise, Reumann proposes a *creatio continua* within the subset of redemption.³³ Levenson defines YHWH’s creative activity more broadly by positing that YHWH’s defeat of chaotic forces is in fact an act of creation.³⁴ In his maximalist perspective, along with those of Fretheim and Moltmann, creation includes making chaos into order.³⁵ It is thus not a one-time action, but an ongoing process that will find its completion in the eschaton.³⁶ Because the NHC is present in the selected passages that involve both the preservation and completion of creation, this study will fall more on the “maximalistic” view of creation. The texts present YHWH’s creative activity as not confined merely to “the beginning,” but also occurring in the “middle” and the “end,” especially in the ways YHWH sustains and renews. This view will become clear over the course of the research.

3.3. Eschatology

Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflections on the Christian Bible (London: SCM, 1992), 110; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (NY: Harper & Row, 1965), 1:136–138.

³² Quote from Anderson, *Creation*, 132. Claus Westermann, “Creation and History in the Old Testament,” in *The Gospel and Human Destiny*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971): 11–38; Anderson, *Creation*, 41–42, 52–53.

³³ John Reumann, *Creation and New Creation: The Past, Present, and Future of God's Creative Activity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 58–9, 103.

³⁴ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (NY: HarperCollins, 1988), 22.

³⁵ Fretheim, *God and World*, 43–46; Jürgen Moltmann, “Creation as an Open System,” in *The Future of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 120.

³⁶ Anderson considers creation to consist of three categories: primordial, historical, and eschatological. See his use of these categories in his analysis of Second Isaiah in *Creation*, 119–130.

3.3.1. Defining Eschatology

An additional challenge lies in defining the eschatological features present in several texts. Since eschatology seems to be neither a primary nor a predominant interest in Hebrew biblical studies, few definitions exist. Indeed, defining “eschatology” is not simple. Although the etymology of the word implies a branch of theology related to the “last things” (i.e. afterlife, death, final judgement), such ideas are rare in the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ Mowinckel, for instance, defines eschatology as a “complex of ideas about the ‘last things’” that “implies that the present state of things and the present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superseded by another of an essentially different kind.”³⁸ Limiting “eschatology” to this narrow definition would render this topic largely inconsequential to Hebrew biblical studies. Vriezen observes that such a definition excludes “not only all pre-exilic prophetic ideas *a priori*, but also all post-exilic prophetic ideas.”³⁹

Generally speaking, “eschatology” is the expectation of a future reality discontinuous with the present.⁴⁰ Because of God’s role throughout Israel’s history and the covenantal promises therein, the Israelites anticipated a future time when God would ultimately triumph over evil, fully redeem God’s people, and inaugurate a world characterised by *shalom*. Because of Israel’s covenant traditions, this new age included God’s faithfulness to Israel and the lineage of David.⁴¹ Thus, Israel’s anticipated future reality is sometimes that of an immediate, political reality, often portrayed as a return from exile and the appearance of

³⁷ Gowan asserts that the eschatology in the Hebrew Bible anticipates the “last” or “end” of evil. See Gowan, *Eschatology*, 2.

³⁸ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 125.

³⁹ Theodorus Christiaan Vriezen, “Prophecy and Eschatology,” in *Congress Volume Copenhagen 1953*, eds. G.W. Anderson, et. al. (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 201–2.

⁴⁰ Bill T. Arnold, “Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.

⁴¹ While it had previously been proposed that Israel’s eschatological thought had a foreign (particularly Babylonian) origin, this idea no longer has support. See Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:495–6; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 127–8; von Rad, *OT Theology*, 2:113–4.

a messiah figure.⁴² Other times, as will be demonstrated in the analysis, these eschatological texts envision a reality that extends beyond the nation-state of Israel, including the entire cosmological order. These two eschatological hopes—political and cosmic renewal—are not dichotomous but are deeply interconnected. Since, however, this research is primarily concerned with the cosmic renewal insofar as it involves the NHC, “eschatology” will be viewed predominantly through this lens.

Of course, there is debate as to when, if at all, eschatological thought emerged within the prophetic corpus. If eschatological thought is present in certain texts, there is dispute about whether they should be considered pre-exilic. Some scholars, such as Wellhausen, Mowinckel, and Lindblom believe there is discontinuity between Judaism and the early Israelite tradition, thus making eschatology a much later development in Jewish tradition.⁴³ Wellhausen concludes eschatology is a later development directly linked with apocalyptic literature.⁴⁴ Mowinckel believes the prophets were not speaking eschatologically, but were rather proclaiming “an urgent message from God about the immediate future.”⁴⁵ Because eschatological themes are most apparent within later, exilic texts, such as Second Isaiah and Ezekiel, most date eschatology’s emergence to the post-exilic or Second Temple period.⁴⁶ This new eschatological tradition converges Israel’s redemptive history with the experiences of the exilic community.⁴⁷

⁴² Routledge describes this figure as someone who fulfils “the kingly ideal” and reigns on God’s behalf. See Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 288.

⁴³ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Enzies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1994); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (NY: Abingdon, 1954); Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 360–75.

⁴⁴ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 502–8.

⁴⁵ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 460.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 126, 132; Arnold, “Old Testament Eschatology,” 28.

⁴⁷ Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 415.

The rare scholars who do examine Israel's eschatological traditions differ on what exactly eschatology entails, yet the particular characterisations of Von Rad and Gowan are compelling. Von Rad believes a prophetic text is eschatological when it envisions a future, salvific action of God at odds with previous bases of salvation.⁴⁸ Gowan makes a similar argument, drawing upon the "in that day" and the "day of the Lord" language.⁴⁹ Eschatology is not a general, vague hope concerning the future, but it is "those promises that speak of a future with significant discontinuities from the present."⁵⁰ Moreover, these promises cannot be expected to come about by creaturely efforts alone; their fulfilment is a divine act. The examinations of the selected texts from Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah take these particular views on eschatology into account. Portions of the selected texts envision a new reality starkly different from the one the prophetic voices previously described. These texts utilise mytho-poetic language, a feature of eschatology.⁵¹

This is not to say, however, that eschatological actions preclude the efforts of human creatures and the NHC. According to Fretheim, a new creation is not simply a replication of the original creation at the beginning.⁵² This new creation will consist of both God's divine intervention and humanity's evaluated contributions throughout history.⁵³ This eschatological age will have some consistencies with the present (such as bodies and earthly life) but will also have "new" things that only God can bring into being. These acts made the former means of attaining salvation void, thus thrusting Israel toward a newfound trust in God's intervention. Gowan considers eschatology to encompass the following realms: the

⁴⁸ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, II:108–10.

⁴⁹ Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 1986), 118.

⁵⁰ Gowan, *Eschatology*, 1.

⁵¹ Jindo characterises mythological language in the prophetic corpus as "apocalyptic eschatology." See Job Y. Jindo, "On Myth and History in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology," *VT* 55 (2005): 412–415.

⁵² Fretheim, *God and World*, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

human person, human society, and nature (the NHC).⁵⁴ Together, the selected texts from Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah suggest that God will include these three parties in God's eschatological efforts, who are each affected by sin and sin's consequences. This will be demonstrated throughout the course of the research.

Von Rad argues the eschatology in the Hebrew Bible concerns the acts of God that happen "soon."⁵⁵ It is disputed whether the prophets envisioned the end of time, but von Rad argues the concept of an end to history did not exist for the biblical prophets.⁵⁶ Contrary to Mowinckel's definition above, this new world order was not anticipated to occur only after human history came to an end. Rather, it was anticipated to occur within human history.⁵⁷ Walton specifies that Israelite eschatology entails a new development occurring within their history.⁵⁸ This sharply contrasts with a view in which the new era is only realised after history has run its course. The Israelites did believe God would do new, futuristic acts within Israel's history, and this characteristic will guide this study's understanding of "eschatology" as it relates to the NHC.

3.3.2. Apocalyptic Literature

In addition to defining eschatology, the nature of apocalyptic literature requires comment, especially in its relationship to biblical eschatology. This distinct literary type anticipates YHWH's eschatological salvation, yet not all eschatological texts qualify as apocalyptic. Unlike eschatology, which is characterised by particular themes and motifs, apocalyptic literature is genre-specific. In 1979, a Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) group

⁵⁴ Gowan, *Eschatology*, 2.

⁵⁵ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II:108–109.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁷ Ronald Ernest Clements, *Prophecy and Covenant* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 104.

⁵⁸ John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 313–14.

defined the apocalyptic genre as “revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”⁵⁹ Koch, on the other hand, lists six common features of apocalyptic texts: discourse cycles, spiritual conflict, paraenetic discourses, pseudonymity, mythical imagery, and composite character.⁶⁰ Unlike the definition proposed by the SBL group, Koch did not claim these features were necessary for a text to be labelled “apocalyptic” and based his limited list on the “historical” apocalypses of *Semeia* 14.

While the SBL definition remains the most prevalent and useful criteria for apocalyptic literature, scholarly conversation has since criticised and refined this description.⁶¹ Admittedly, the definition is itself circular, in that it first arbitrarily assumes there is a collection of texts considered “apocalyptic” and then determines which texts should be included based upon those texts’ features. Nevertheless, the definition helpfully denotes those passages that contain these unique features and justifiably groups them together.

Because apocalyptic literature overlaps with eschatological literature, a distinction must be made. Paul Hanson, for instance, suggests the difference lies in their treatment of history and myth: eschatology is more historically oriented while apocalypticism is more mythically oriented.⁶² This characterisation has been strongly refuted by Roberts, who argues this distinction is an oversimplification.⁶³ Jindo refines Hanson’s definition as follows:

⁵⁹ John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, *Semeia* 14 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979), 9.

⁶⁰ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, SBT (London: SCM Press, 1972), 23.

⁶¹ See James C. VanderKam, “The Prophetic-Sapiential Origins of Apocalyptic Thought,” in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, ed. James D. Martin and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1986), 164.

⁶² Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, rev. ed., Philadelphia: Fortress: 1979, 11

⁶³ J. J. M. Roberts, “Myth Versus History: Relaying the Comparative Foundations,” *CBQ* 38 (1976), 2.

“in principle, prophetic eschatology is a history understood mythically, whereas apocalyptic eschatology is a myth understood historically.”⁶⁴ Meanwhile, keeping with the definition proposed above, Collins argues the main difference lies in apocalypticism’s expectation of judgement of the dead.⁶⁵ He also describes apocalypses as “largely revelations of heavenly secrets.”⁶⁶

With the possible exception of Isa 24–27 and Isa 32–33, which some scholars have labelled “early” or “proto-apocalypses,” the selected texts do not meet the above criteria for the apocalyptic literary type.⁶⁷ This is not to say that no apocalyptic features are present, nor that the texts are without such post-exilic influence. Rather, as Otto Plöger argues, these post-exilic eschatological passages produce “a line, when joined together, that leads from the older restoration eschatology, which is certainly within the sphere of influence of the pre-exilic prophetic promises, to the rather different, dualistic and apocalyptic form of eschatology, such as we find in a fairly complete form in the Book of Daniel.”⁶⁸ As Høgenhaven thoroughly demonstrates in his analysis of proto-apocalyptic texts, including Isa 24–27, apocalyptic texts employ literary features of older prophetic texts.⁶⁹ He thus argues that these texts can be viewed “as reinforcing and developing tendencies already present in older prophetic literary tradition.”⁷⁰ The selected eschatological texts may demonstrate the ongoing development of the prophetic tradition and contain preliminary apocalyptic characteristics, yet they do not contain clear components of the apocalyptic genre so as to

⁶⁴ Jindo, “On Myth,” 412.

⁶⁵ John J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death,” *CBQ* 36 (1979), 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁷ Isaiah 24:1–20 is especially considered apocalyptic when its pericope is expanded to include vv. 21–23. See Arnold, “Old Testament Eschatology,” 33.

⁶⁸ Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond, VA: Knox, 1968), 108.

⁶⁹ Jesper Høgenhaven, “Something Borrowed, Something New? Reflections on Apocalypticism and Prophecy in the Old Testament,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 31:1, 16–17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

be classified as such. For this reason, the texts pertinent to this study will not be interpreted according to the framework of apocalyptic literature.

3.3.3. Eschatological Language

Eschatological language utilises mytho-poetic language to denote a shift from the prophet's present, tired reality to YHWH's new, life-giving reality. In particular, prophetic eschatology uses hyperbolic imagery and conveys both history and the future mythically.⁷¹ This is not to say that prophetic eschatology is divorced from reality, only that it utilises myth to give significance to reality. In his examination of eschatological texts, Simkins specifies that Hebrew eschatological language merges historic language with metaphoric language.⁷² The cosmic metaphors in the selected eschatological texts, then, connect myth with reality. The metaphorical imagery is not merely hyperbolic; it emphasises the significance of and gives meaning to this new cosmic reality.⁷³ As such, Fretheim advises readers to recognise the "yes as well as the no in all metaphoric language."⁷⁴ It is a cosmos both imagined and realised.

Jindo notes there are always two classifications in the world of eschatological myth: order and chaos.⁷⁵ All cosmological forces are categorised into one or the other; everything is either inclined toward destruction or inclined toward stability. Levenson comments that chaos is the symbol for death, which should be understood metaphorically as encompassing "all life-denying forces, natural and historical."⁷⁶ The pull of these two forces, order and

⁷¹ Jindo, "On Myth," 412.

⁷² Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 211.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Fretheim, *God and World*, 171.

⁷⁵ Jindo, "On Myth," 412.

⁷⁶ Levenson, *Creation*, 30.

chaos, life and death, creates a cosmic battleground.⁷⁷ However, in the selected eschatological texts, there is no sign of combat myth. YHWH is victorious in inaugurating a cosmological world marked by order and prosperity.⁷⁸

In his examination of the use of myth in the Hebrew Bible, McKenzie argues the mythical mind observes cause and effect relationships markedly differently than science or reason.⁷⁹ In myth, a cosmic event initiates phenomena in the natural realm; what occurs in the sacred realm is mirrored in the profane realm.⁸⁰ This is congruous with the cosmological destruction of the temple in Amos 9:1–6, where the collapse of the cosmological temple was reflected in the destruction of the NHC.⁸¹

3.3.4. Eschatological Interpretation

The future tenses, such as “it will come to pass,” along with the frequent phrase “on that day,” indicate these eschatological events are yet to be experienced.⁸² What is to be experienced, however, varies depending on the interpretation of the metaphors. Some scholars reduce the vivid imagery to a spiritual allegory or metaphor.⁸³ This interpretation is reductionist of the mytho-poetic imagery. DeGuglielmo argues spiritualizing eschatological texts is a “failure to view the land in its own merit, outside of its relationship to humanity.”⁸⁴ He argues these visions list the spiritual results and then move beyond this reality to include the renewal of the NHC. Eschatological passages never indicate the fertility of the NHC will

⁷⁷ Jindo, “On Myth,” 412–413.

⁷⁸ See listing of eschatological texts in Appendix.

⁷⁹ John L. McKenzie, “Myth and the Old Testament,” *CBQ* 21 (1959): 271.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸¹ See the analysis on Amos 9:1–6 in ch. 2 for more detail.

⁸² Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 201.

⁸³ Kaiser, for instance, approaches the Isa 11:1–10 vision with a minimalist interpretation, concluding that “in the end the present text merely expresses the longing for a life with no danger.” See Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, Second ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 260. DeGuglielmo refutes such spiritual approaches to eschatological visions. See Antonine DeGuglielmo, “The Fertility of the Land in the Messianic Prophecies,” *CBQ* 19 (1957): 310.

⁸⁴ DeGuglielmo, “Fertility,” 308.

atrophy after YHWH's acts of salvation; rather, the renewal of the NHC is presented as a permanent result.⁸⁵

Other approaches view the imagery literally, which also is reductionist of the metaphoric imagery.⁸⁶ Were the prophetic voices to convey literal, future realities, poetic language would not be the literary mode. Reducing the imagery to literal events relinquishes poetry's role of creating nuance, imagination, and meaning. In light of the mytho-poetic language, as explained above, the preferred approach in this research is to treat eschatological passages as "mythological portrayal[s] of the future" while at the same time regarding the metaphors as anticipating real, yet hyperbolised, events.⁸⁷ This treats the metaphors as anticipated realities while honouring the various ways poetic imagery can be interpreted.

4. Review of Previous Scholarship

Creation as a theological subject has been a topic of interest throughout Jewish and Christian history.⁸⁸ Theological interpretations have varied as theologians and biblical scholars responded to the thought and challenges of their respective time periods. While these scholars and their contributions to Jewish and Christian traditions may not reflect a linear development of thought, they nevertheless provide a framework by which to situate the present discussion of ecological hermeneutics.

4.1. Early Jewish Thought

⁸⁵ Ibid., 309.

⁸⁶ For instance, both DeGuglielmo and Delitzsch interpret Isa 11:1–10 literally. See DeGuglielmo, "Fertility," 210; Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, VII: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 285.

⁸⁷ Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, Continental Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), 480–481.

⁸⁸ While some early Jewish scholars are noted, this summary of scholarship primarily examines the Christian tradition of the Western Church. This by no means rejects the contributions from Jewish and global scholarship.

Interpretation of the biblical texts has always been an undertaking of the Jewish tradition, exemplified by the rabbinical traditions of *peshat* and *midrash*. Genesis 1, however, remains largely unmentioned until the mid-second century BCE, where it is a prominent topic in *Jubilees*. Instead, the Talmudic traditions warn against discussion of “the work of the beginning” without significant caution.⁸⁹

A contemporary of *Jubilees*, the Sirach (c. 180 BCE) opens with examples from the NHC as revelation of God’s mysteries (1:1–5), and links creation to the wisdom tradition.⁹⁰ Wisdom is integral to all of creation and is the first created work of God.⁹¹ Creation is ordered and “good,” the Sirach states, living in harmony with God and each other.⁹² Yet, the Sirach focuses primarily on the creation of humanity and their purpose of obeying “Wisdom,” or the Torah.⁹³

Meanwhile, the presence of Greek philosophy had a profound impact on both Jewish and Christian theology. Plato’s dualism of soul and body, mind and matter impacted these early faith communities’ interpretations of the NHC in the biblical texts.⁹⁴ Aristotle had an interest in the natural world and created some of the first systematic studies of animals.⁹⁵ However, he viewed the NHC as a tool for human consumption and structured creation hierarchically according to its utilitarian purposes.⁹⁶ Both Plato and Aristotle viewed the cosmos anthropocentrically, a view that has had a lasting effect until the present day.

⁸⁹ Peter Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 17.

⁹⁰ Shane Berg, “Ben Sira, the Genesis Creation Accounts, and the Knowledge of God’s Will,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013): 142.

⁹¹ Ben Sira 1:1–10.

⁹² Ben Sira 16:26–30.

⁹³ Berg, “Ben Sira,” 142–3.

⁹⁴ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 21.

⁹⁵ Charles E. Raven, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology: Science and Religion*, Gifford Lectures 1951, Series 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 41.

⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1.6.1256.

Philo of Alexandria was a first-century CE Jewish scholar who was greatly impacted by Greek philosophy. His interpretation of the Greek Bible had a profound impact on early Christian interpretation.⁹⁷ Philo's work on the Genesis creation stories, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*, deems humans the pinnacle of the Genesis stories because of their "soul," which he claims is humanity's ability to reason.⁹⁸ Philo's dualistic anthropology undergirded his conclusion that the image of God pertains only to humanity's soul and not to their body.⁹⁹ This dualistic emphasis and prioritisation of humanity within the cosmos is repeated throughout the work of the Christian fathers, including Origen (c. 185–253), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394), Aquinas (1224–1274), and Luther (1483–1546).¹⁰⁰

4.2. Early Christian Thought

Contrary to this influence of Greek thought, Irenaeus (c. 180) defended against the subordination of the material world in *Against Heresies*. His emphasis on God as Creator was a rebuttal against the Gnostic belief that the physical world was evil. While he still emphasised humanity's place within the creation story, Irenaeus maintained that creation did not exist solely for humanity.¹⁰¹ Irenaeus claimed creation was evidence of God's wisdom and kindness for all created beings.¹⁰² Eschatologically, he also maintained the restoration of the cosmos instead of its destruction.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 27.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29. Cf. Philo, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* by David T. Runia, Vol. 1, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 216. See also David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 465.

⁹⁹ Philo, *On Creation*. 69–71.

¹⁰⁰ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 22.

¹⁰¹ H. Paul Santmire, *Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), 42. Cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 1, ANF: *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), II.1–10.

¹⁰² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV.38.3.

¹⁰³ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, 42. Cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.32.1, V.33.3.

Basil of Casearea (c. 330–379) notably wrote nine homilies on the six days of creation. His homilies rejected an allegorical interpretation, which, given his admiration of Origen, was surprising.¹⁰⁴ Basil noted the intrinsic worth of all creation according to God’s wisdom and only briefly mentioned humanity.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, his discussion of what constitutes creation as “good” pertains to its functionality for humanity.¹⁰⁶ Basil’s brother, Gregory of Nyssa, defended Basil’s homilies and further emphasised humanity’s superiority over the rest of creation.¹⁰⁷

Likewise, Augustine’s (354–430) commentary on Genesis focuses on humanity’s role as image-bearers, which elevates them as creation’s “greatest ornament.”¹⁰⁸ Like Irenaeus, Augustine rejected the Platonic idea that the material world would be destroyed in the *eschaton*.¹⁰⁹ Yet, he considered the present physical world as merely a transitional gap to the future “City of God.” Creation’s primary purpose was to direct humanity to relationship with God, which contributed “to the alienation between human and non-human creation in later Christian thinking.”¹¹⁰

4.3. Medieval and Reformation Thought

In his method of relating Aristotelian philosophy to divine revelation, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–1275) approaches the topic of creation from an anthropocentric position. In his view, there is a hierarchical order to the cosmos which corresponds to the ordering of

¹⁰⁴ Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 86.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 91. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *The Treatise De Spiritu Sancto: The Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters of Saint Basil the Great*, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Oxford: James Parker, 1895), Homily 9:106.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Cf. 1:6, 4:6.

¹⁰⁷ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 32. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Selected Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, Vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), *Opif.* 2:1.

¹⁰⁸ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, 60–3. Cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Marcus Dods, Vol. 1, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), *Civ.*, 14:13.

¹⁰⁹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 35. Cf. Augustine, *City*, 22:21.

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *City*, 36.

the Genesis 1. Humanity, then, is superior to all creatures as the “most perfect grade.”¹¹¹ It is the purpose of the inferior beings to serve the superior ones. “Lifeless beings exist for living ones,” he writes, “plants for animals, and the latter for man.”¹¹² According to Aquinas, the created world is an object for human consumption and use.¹¹³ Moreover, these “inferior” beings are not included in God’s eschatological plans. Only spiritual beings, such as humans and angels, would be “perfected.”¹¹⁴ According to Aquinas, “plants and animals will altogether cease after the renewal of the world.”¹¹⁵

Like those before him, the Medieval rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270) prioritised humanity within the creation stories. His anthropological understanding of them was dualistically composed of beast and divine. Humanity’s “body of an animal,” which is “produced under the influence of the stars and constellations,” is the source of humanity’s evil nature while the soul is the “pure spirit.”¹¹⁶

The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century marked a shift in biblical interpretation. While the doctrine of creation was not a primary interest of this period and received little attention, the Bible was considered on its own merit apart from the established ecclesial tradition. Martin Luther’s principle of sola scriptura (1520) first decentred theology from the institution of church tradition and established the Bible as authoritative for theology.¹¹⁷ Spinoza (1670) proposed a reading of the Hebrew Bible that

¹¹¹ Leo Scheffczyk, *Creation and Providence*, trans. R. Strachan (London: Brunes & Oates, 1970), 136. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Part I*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1937), Q. 73, Art. 1.

¹¹² Aquinas, *Summa*, Q. 72, Art. 1.

¹¹³ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, 91–2.

¹¹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa*, Q. 73, Art. 1.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Part III*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1942), Q. 91, Art. 5.

¹¹⁶ Qtd. in David Novak, “The Human Soul,” *The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented*, Brown Judaic Studies (2020), 25–26.

¹¹⁷ Martin Luther, Smalcald Articles II, 15 in Cindy A. Beesley, ed, “The Smalcald Articles of Martin Luther (1537),” Project Wittenberg, 25 May 1998, <https://ctsfnw.edu/etext/boc/sa/>.

emphasized a text's theological claims in light of its historical setting, thus systematizing biblical theology.¹¹⁸ These historical developments certainly contributed to critical study of the Bible, yet they also produced a further emphasis on humanity. This anthropocentrism, although certainly evident prior to the Reformation, resulted in the neglect of the NHC as subject.

Luther, for instance, wrote very little about the topic of creation. In his exegesis of Genesis, he echoed Augustine and Aquinas' utilitarian purposes of creation for serving humanity and directing them to knowledge of God.¹¹⁹ Instead of creation, Luther and his contemporaries were primarily concerned with human salvation.¹²⁰ This emphasis on humanity's prevalence within the cosmological order and God's eschatological plan obtained a dominant role in Protestant thought.

4.4. Heilsgeschichte (Salvation History)

Historical methodologies dominated theology during the Enlightenment period as scientific discoveries and philosophical criticism challenged the established authority of political and religious institutions. These methodologies especially dominated the mid-twentieth century, when human history was stressed within the biblical narrative. Because of this, creation as a theological subject was relegated to the periphery.¹²¹

In 1919, Karl Barth published *Römerbrief* and legitimised biblical theological interpretation.¹²² Barth emphasised the role of the Bible as sacred canon rather than as a reconstruction of religious history. In Barth's view, encountering the "Word" was more

¹¹⁸ See Michah Gottlieb, "Spinoza's Method(s) of Biblical Interpretation Reconsidered," *JSQ* 14 (2007): 286–317.

¹¹⁹ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Vol. 1 (Saint Lois, Miss.: Concordia, 1958), 47.

¹²⁰ Santmire, *Travail of Nature*, 124.

¹²¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 57.

¹²² This piece was later published in English as *The Epistle to the Romans* in 1933. See Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University, 1933).

central to the Christian faith than its history. While Barth was not a biblical scholar, his call for a new approach to the Bible rekindled an interest in biblical theology.¹²³

Mid-twentieth century scholars, such as Gerard von Rad and Walther Eichrodt, viewed creation with a nominal interest: the NHC was subservient to salvation theology and a counterpart to human history.¹²⁴ Walther Eichrodt, for instance, argued for a systematic theology based on themes throughout the historical narrative of the Hebrew Bible.¹²⁵ According to Eichrodt, creation is subordinate to human history, as “subjugation of the earth and dominion over its creatures bestows on the human race a common universal task.”¹²⁶ In Eichrodt’s view, creation is a living entity which relates to YHWH, yet its primary purpose lies in revealing the “infinite power and wisdom of the one Lord.”¹²⁷ Gerhard von Rad also argued that “Israel’s faith is grounded in a theology of history.”¹²⁸ In his view, creation’s integration into Israel’s “salvation history” occurred after the seventh century and thus concerns Israel’s belief system.¹²⁹ Creation, he argues, is “effected strictly for man’s sake, with him as its centre and objective.”¹³⁰

In 1972, however, Claus Westermann critiqued these limited view of creation and argued for a theology that paired creation and history together instead of over and against each other.¹³¹ Creation, he argued, is not primarily concerned with historical origins but is a

¹²³ Leo G. Perdue, *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology: After the Collapse of History*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 40.

¹²⁴ von Rad argued for the subordination of creation to redemption in the Hebrew Bible. See Gerhard von Rad, “The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation,” in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernard W. Anderson, Issues in Religion and Theology 6 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 53–64. Eichrodt considered creation to be a subset of history but argued that creation, and not salvation (contra von Rad), was the starting point of Israel’s faith tradition; *Theology* 2:101.

¹²⁵ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, II:110.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, II:159.

¹²⁸ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, I:106.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, I:140.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, I:150.

¹³¹ Westermann, “Creation and History,” 11–38.

continuous act of God.¹³² In this way, Westermann paved the way for creation to be considered in its own right.

4.5. The Biblical Theology Movement

The era that followed is often referred to as “the Biblical Theology Movement” (BTM).¹³³ Led by G.E. Wright, Brevard Childs, and James Barr, the BTM sought to recover theological reflection.¹³⁴ The perspectives on creation during this period varied. Wright, for instance, held a more negative view of creation as “handmaiden, as servant of history.”¹³⁵ His elevation of human history perpetuated the marginalisation of the NHC. Meanwhile, Bernhard Anderson is credited for contributing to the rediscovery of creation theology.¹³⁶ Anderson argued creation and salvation belong together and warned against imposing the dualism of nature/history onto the biblical texts.¹³⁷

Although it is contested to what extent Judaism had a formal counterpart to the BTM, the BTM did generate interest in the discipline of Jewish theology.¹³⁸ Moshe Goshen-Gottstein first called for an equivalent movement for the Jewish community in 1981.¹³⁹ Goshen-Gottstein noted that while theology has always been a Jewish discipline,

¹³² Ibid., 30–32.

¹³³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Role of Old Testament Theology in Old Testament Interpretation: And Other Essays* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 5.

¹³⁴ G.E. Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1952). Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); James Barr, “Revelation through History in the Old Testament and Modern Theology,” in *Bible and interpretation: The Collected Essays of James Barr, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193; James Barr, “The Old Testament and the New Crisis of Biblical Authority,” *Inter* 25 (1971): 24–40.

¹³⁵ Wright, *God Who Acts*, 43.

¹³⁶ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 67.

¹³⁷ Bernhard Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 106.

¹³⁸ See Ziony Zevit, “Jewish Biblical Theology Whence? Why? And Whither?” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 76 (2005): 289–340; Marc Zvi Brettler, “Biblical History and Jewish Biblical Theology,” *The Journal of Religion* (1997): 563–83.

¹³⁹ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Jewish Biblical Theology and the Study of Biblical Religion,” *Tarbiz* 50 (1981): 37–64 (Heb.); “Tanakh Theology: The Religion of the Old Testament and the Place of Jewish Biblical Theology,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 614–44.

“Jewish scholars instinctively shrink back at the very mention of 'theology' in biblical studies.”¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, alongside the contributions of Goshen-Gottstein, Jon D. Levenson was instrumental in forging a new approach to Jewish biblical theology.¹⁴¹ In 1988, he explored the intersection between creation and history by proposing that God’s creative work is an on-going process throughout history.¹⁴² Because the forces of chaos remain at large, God’s people must rely on YHWH’s sovereignty to sustain and ultimately complete creation.

While this emerging Jewish biblical theology remains ongoing, the BTM began to decline in the 1970s from both internal and external scrutiny.¹⁴³ Childs faulted the BTM for “its total failure to come to grips with the inspiration of Scripture.”¹⁴⁴ In response, he proposed canonical criticism as a means to recentre the doctrine of inspiration and “as a rejection of the method that would imprison the Bible within a context of the historical past.”¹⁴⁵ James Barr also accused the BTM’s appropriation of history as selective and criticised the movement’s inability to agree on what constitutes “history.”¹⁴⁶ He noted that some of the Hebrew Bible, such as the wisdom tradition, does not concern “history.”¹⁴⁷ Further, the BTM was faulted for ignoring the “voices of discontent” directed against its Enlightenment methodologies, particularly historical criticism.¹⁴⁸ The emergence of postmodern thought critically questioned BTM’s epistemology, particularly its claims of

¹⁴⁰ Goshen-Gottstein, “Tanakh,” 618.

¹⁴¹ Brettler, “Biblical History,” 566.

¹⁴² Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (NY: HarperCollins, 1988).

¹⁴³ In 2003, SBL first generated a panel to discuss “Jewish Biblical Theology” and hosts a section on “Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures,” which remains at-large.

¹⁴⁴ Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99–100.

¹⁴⁶ Barr, “Revelation through History.”

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 196–7.

¹⁴⁸ Perdue, *Reconstructing*, 6.

objectivity and priority of empiricism. While the BTM failed to survive what Perdue terms “the collapse of history,” methods pertaining to biblical theology have not disappeared.¹⁴⁹

4.6. Postmodern Thought and Beyond

The rise of postmodernity has not altogether discarded historical approaches to interpretation but it has “dethrone[d] it as the only or foundational method taught,” prompting supplemental “methods, approaches, and theories.”¹⁵⁰ Drawing upon cues from postmodern theorists, this approach argues a text has multiple meanings when approached from different perspectives. In this way, postmodernity has similarities with premodern interpretation.¹⁵¹

Perdue describes the era that followed the collapse of the BTM as the “search for a resolution.”¹⁵² There has perhaps been no greater influence on the modern terrain of Old Testament theology than Walter Brueggemann.¹⁵³ Brueggemann embraced postmodernity’s epistemological framework to introduce a paradigm that characterises the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation as unsettled and dialectical.¹⁵⁴ Brueggemann’s contributions of honouring the multiplicity of perspectives within both the text and the community impacted present, postmodern *methods* of theological interpretation.¹⁵⁵ However, with the exception of *The Land*, which examines land in history with Israel, Brueggemann has largely remained silent on topics related to ecological hermeneutics.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ Perdue, *Reconstructing*, 3–4.

¹⁵⁰ Dale A. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008, 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵³ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁵⁵ See Norman Habel, ed., *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2000), 34.

¹⁵⁶ This source is examined further below.

In addition to Brueggemann, other methods of Hebrew Bible study have emerged and developed, with a greater emphasis on theological diversity. Some of these approaches include feminist, womanist, postcolonial, and liberation hermeneutics. Feminist theology achieved prominence in the 1970s and was built on the social-anthropological theories of the women's civil rights movement. In 1983, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza articulated a feminist hermeneutic for New Testament methodologies that has also impacted present theological discourse.¹⁵⁷ Her work proposes new interpretive approaches, such as acknowledging the self-interests of writer and reader, listening to silenced voices, and adopting a hermeneutic of suspicion.¹⁵⁸ Such feminist methodologies have been adopted by current ecological hermeneutics.¹⁵⁹

While the challenges of our environmental crisis are certainly one cause of this current engagement with ecological interpretation, several key developments brought the ecological perspective into focus at the turn of the millennium.¹⁶⁰ Postmodernity's value of plurality has led to the reading of the biblical text from the perspective of marginalised and silenced groups.¹⁶¹ The methods of liberation hermeneutics, especially feminist approaches, has impacted the developing discipline of ecological hermeneutics.¹⁶² The Earth Bible Project is perhaps the most significant spearhead in this hermeneutical shift. In *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, Norman Habel proposed a hermeneutic that considers the role of the "Earth" in biblical texts and reads these texts from the perspective of "the Earth

¹⁵⁷ See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 2nd ed. (NY: Crossroad, 1994).

¹⁵⁸ See Perdue's extensive summary and analysis of her work. Perdue, *Reconstructing*, 109–135.

¹⁵⁹ Habel, *Readings*, 34.

¹⁶⁰ For a more thorough history of this development, see Walter Brueggemann, "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology," *ThTo* 53 (1997): 177–90.

¹⁶¹ Perdue writes, "If there is a unifying factor in postmodernism, it is, ironically, an affirmation of pluralism in ways of knowing and being in the world"; *Reconstructing*, 12.

¹⁶² Habel, *Readings*, 34.

community.”¹⁶³ This interpretive perspective involves acknowledging the anthropocentric bias within texts and historical interpretation, identifying the “Earth” as subject in the texts, and highlighting the voice of the “Earth.”¹⁶⁴ The subsequent volume *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets* and the work *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, both edited by Habel, contain several chapters which informed this study.¹⁶⁵ Terence Fretheim’s *God and World in the Old Testament* was another pioneer in ecological hermeneutics, especially with regard to its thorough examination of the entirety of the Hebrew Bible.

The following review of literature considers the roles of these hermeneutical shifts and involves two types of works: (1) those dealing with the topic of the NHC in the Hebrew Bible; and (2) those that specifically discuss the role of the NHC in Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. Sources in both categories occasionally allude to themes of eschatology; however, as of yet no resources devote significant study to the overlap between ecology and eschatology in the prophetic corpus.

4.7. Works on the NHC in the Hebrew Bible

Recent studies related to the NHC in the Hebrew Bible emphasise the relationship the NHC has with humanity and the role of the NHC in judgement. Very few link the NHC to themes of eschatology, and those that do are brief and generalised. For instance, Terence Fretheim’s *God and World in the Old Testament* is one of the most thorough analyses of

¹⁶³ Habel, *Readings*, 34. Habel uses “Earth” in such a way that is similar, if not equivalent, to “NHC.” Not all the contributors in the series utilise Habel’s terminology.

¹⁶⁴ See Norman Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta: SBL, 2008).

¹⁶⁵ Laurie J. Braaten, “Earth Community in Hosea 2,” in *The Earth Story in Psalms and Prophets*, The Earth Bible, Vol. 4, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2001); Olley, “The Wolf”; Melissa Tubbs Loya, “‘Therefore the Earth Mourns’: The Grievance of Earth in Hosea 4:1–3,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, eds. Habel, Norman C. and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008); Hilary Marlow, “The Other Prophet! The Voice of Earth in the Book of Amos,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, eds. Habel, Norman C. and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008).

creation theology in the Hebrew Bible. His research has been foundational for the direction of this study, particularly regarding his relational theology of creation. Fretheim explores the non-human world's potentiality toward chaos or order and argues some disorder in the cosmos is "necessary for the proper development of the creation; such elements of disorder are 'good.'"¹⁶⁶ However, Fretheim also notes humans can adversely participate in this disorder, perpetuating the chaos in such a way that it harms the NHC. Human choices can either develop the non-human entity or harm her.¹⁶⁷ In his portion about the NHC in the prophetic literature, Fretheim mostly focuses on the judgement themes related to the NHC, however, and does not pursue eschatological implications. He notes the prophets' imagery of new creation, but does not examine it in detail.¹⁶⁸

Jürgen Moltmann discusses the indirect link between humanity's sin and the NHC in his eschatological redefinition of the NHC.¹⁶⁹ This pursuit leads him to question whether the NHC is an open or closed system. If the NHC is "open," she is subject to change and the restraints of time, thus capable of being influenced by the potentiality of chaos; if, on the other hand, she is "closed," she is unchangeable and unaffected by time.¹⁷⁰ Moltmann argues the NHC is an open system because the phrase "in the beginning God created" forms a relationship between God and the NHC within the parameters of time.¹⁷¹ The NHC, however, must not be only understood "in the beginning." It is essential that the NHC be understood in the context of God's creative acts within history and the completing act of consummation.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ Fretheim, *God and World*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44–45.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 194–198.

¹⁶⁹ Moltmann, "Creation," 116.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁷² Moltmann discusses the NHC in terms of "creation in the beginning," "creative acts in history," and "the consummation of creation." See "Creation," 119–127.

Jon Levenson also argues for an “open” creation, arguing that since the primeval chaos is not locked away in the past, it can be reactivated.¹⁷³ Levenson explains YHWH does not always choose to exercise YHWH’s authority over chaos, thus permitting parameters of freedom for the NHC.¹⁷⁴ The openness of the non-human entity affirms humanity’s sin can have an impact. It also affirms the NHC’s need for redemption, or rescue from chaos. He posits that YHWH’s covenant with creation “means the guarantee that the experience of chaos serves an orderly purpose and shall pass away when it is no longer needed.”¹⁷⁵ In “Ecology of Creation,” K. Froehlich echoes Levenson and Moltmann, noting the ability humans have either to perpetuate chaos or to nurture the goodness YHWH gave to the NHC.¹⁷⁶ He concludes that humanity’s sin makes humanity culpable for the NHC’s deterioration.¹⁷⁷

Ellen Davis joins the discussion by examining the theological and ethical use of land in the Hebrew Bible. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture* is primarily a dialogue between biblical hermeneutics and contemporary agriculture, and as such, she devotes most of her research to modern application. In her introduction, Davis poses the following question to direct her research: “How do these texts view the relationship between humans (or Israelites in particular) and the material sources of life as an essential aspect of living in the presence of God?”¹⁷⁸ She specifies that she is interested in engaging “questions of contemporary social analysis.”¹⁷⁹ Her chapter on the prophets has an emphasis on the pre-exilic prophets, although her focus is on connecting the social settings of Amos and

¹⁷³ Levenson, *Creation*, 19. Levenson does not use Moltmann’s term “open,” but his theological ideas are consistent with this terminology.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷⁶ K. Froehlich, “Ecology of Creation,” *ThTo* 27 (1970): 272.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 273–4.

¹⁷⁸ Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Hosea to those of today.¹⁸⁰ There is no reflection on how the prophets viewed the NHC's future.

Published in 1977, Walter Brueggemann's *The Land* filled a void in biblical studies on the theme of land as an organising feature of the biblical narrative. Brueggemann recognises both God's revelation through land and Israel's symbiotic relationship with land themes laden with both symbolic and literal meaning. This work is comprehensive, examining each stage of Israel's story and demonstrating the centrality of land as a significant reality for God's people. As with other works exploring the NHC, Brueggemann considers the consequences for Israel's mismanagement of the land ("landlessness") but does not consider possibilities for how this informs theologies of eschatology.

4.8. Works on the NHC in Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah

One of the most comprehensive works on the ecological themes in Hosea, Amos, and First Isaiah is Hilary Marlow's *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*.¹⁸¹ Marlow argues the increasing concerns about contemporary, environmental ethics necessitate a closer look at the biblical text. With the goal of understanding a prophetic, ecological hermeneutic, Marlow examines Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah exegetically and theologically. Marlow's quest for a contemporary, theological model of ecology drives her examination of the Christian church's history with ecology; the Israelites' views of the NHC, including the effects human sin has upon the NHC; and the in-depth, exegetical examination of her selected prophetic texts. She concludes by connecting the theologies in the prophetic

¹⁸⁰ "For Jews and Christians seeking to situate themselves theologically and ethically in the current social milieu, it is of the greatest significance that these earliest prophetic writings express a certain understanding of land and its proper use" (Davis, *Scripture*, 121).

¹⁸¹ Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

texts with contemporary environmental ethics, suggesting a new, biblical-environmental ethic for the Christian church.¹⁸² While she acknowledges the texts' trajectory toward eschatology, these themes are outside of her interests.¹⁸³ In her analysis of Amos 9:11–15, she acknowledges the “reversal of fortunes” and notes that it hints at an eschatological future.¹⁸⁴ She notes similar eschatological connotations in Hos 2:20–25 and Isa 24:1–20.¹⁸⁵

In *Creation and Judgement*, Stefan Paas examines the creation themes in the eighth-century prophetic texts.¹⁸⁶ Paas, however, has a minimalist view of what constitutes “creation”: only those texts which have themes of originating creation are considered.¹⁸⁷ In order to determine whether an eighth-century text concerns “creation,” Paas gave consideration to Hebrew roots that appear in Genesis 1–2, such as *ברא*, *עשה*, etc.¹⁸⁸ Even so, Paas is most concerned with what these creation texts reveal about YHWH, specifically YHWH's kingship and relationship with Zion.¹⁸⁹ In addition, Paas strictly limits his research to eighth-century texts.¹⁹⁰ Because of these two criteria, Paas dismisses all those passages relevant to this study. While he is not convinced Amos 9:11–15 is an “afterthought,” as some have contended, he nevertheless does not include this eschatological passage because he views God's activity within it as not as “creation” but as a “restoration activity.”¹⁹¹ Because of the parameters of his research, most of his analyses did not contribute to this research.

¹⁸² Ibid., 274–8.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 156.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 178–182, 200.

¹⁸⁶ Stefan Paas, *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some 8th Century Prophets* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 194.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 58–59.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 21–3.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 195.

Ronald Simkins also examines Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah in *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*.¹⁹² He analyses the creation myths and the values these myths transmit, both within the Israelite worldview and also within other ancient Near Eastern worldviews. His chapter on eschatological myths is especially relevant, as he considers the NHC's eschatology in Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.¹⁹³ His examinations of the prophetic texts are brief, however, and he often draws his theological conclusions deductively instead of via a close and inductive interpretation of the texts.¹⁹⁴

In *The Earth Mourns*, Katherine Hayes examines the metaphor of the earth mourning in the prophetic texts, a few of which are significant to this study: Amos 1:2; Hosea 4:1–3; Isaiah 24:1–20; 33:7–9.¹⁹⁵ Because of the prevalence of ארץ paired with אבל, Hayes suggests the אבל metaphor may have a common oral tradition.¹⁹⁶ She observes that, in the pre-exilic texts (which she considers to be Amos 1:2 and Hos 4:1–3), the metaphor is primarily used to describe judgement on Israel; the post-exilic texts (of which she includes Isa 24:1–20 and Isa 33:7–9) are linked to themes of restoration.¹⁹⁷ This metaphor suggests that there is an intimate relationship between humans, the NHC, and YHWH, and that humans can enact consequences upon the land they inhabit. Her analysis of these passages focuses on the NHC's judgement and does not consider eschatology.

¹⁹² Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

¹⁹³ Simkins, *Creator*. See Ch. 6: "In the End: The Eschatological Myths," 207–25.

¹⁹⁴ For instance, Simkins connects Amos 9:13–15 to Eden ("Yahwist creation myth") without closely examining the text; *Creator*, 215. He concludes that "Amos emphasizes the essential unity between humans and the natural world" without explaining how he arrived at this outcome (215). Similarly, he likens the effect of the drought in Hos 4:1–3 to a cosmic, "primordial condition as described in the Yahwist creation myth" without explaining his rationale for a cosmic effect nor for a connection to Genesis 1:1–2 (216). Finally, in his epilogue, he argues for a singular "biblical worldview" on ecology based on what he deems "the Israelite worldview," thus ignoring the diversity of biblical texts on the subject (260–261).

¹⁹⁵ Katherine Hayes, *"The Earth Mourns": Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic* (Atlanta: SBL, 2002).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 236–244.

4.8.1. Works on Amos

There are several sources specific to Amos that intentionally consider the NHC. Hilary Marlow's chapter entitled "The Other Prophet!" examines the use of direct speech as a literary device in the book of Amos, and her essay analyses whether the NHC can be included as a "voice."¹⁹⁸ Her chapter considers the ways in which the NHC responds with "speech" to YHWH's commands, cooperates with YHWH, and functions as a means of judgement. Whether the NHC is an active participant in God's redemption remains to be seen, but a role as a "voice" gives credibility to the NHC's role as YHWH's eschatological partner.

Robert Khua Hnin Thang also considers the role of the "land" throughout Amos 7–9 and argues Amos' perspective relates to other theological traditions about the NHC, such as creation, justice, and eschatology.¹⁹⁹ He notes Amos' multivalent use of "land" to identify its relationship to Israel as territory, fruitful partner, and even as a cosmic entity. Yet, despite Thang's recognition of Amos' eschatological trajectory, this work does not contain a section on eschatology and only briefly alludes to eschatological themes in Amos 9:11–15.

Finally, although not written primarily from ecological perspectives, commentators who have contributed to Amos studies serve as resources for this project. James R. Linville's *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination* frequently considers the NHC as an entity throughout Amos, and as the title implies, discusses the cosmic implications of the prophetic voice.²⁰⁰ Additionally, Francis Anderson and David Noel Freedman, Donald E. Gowan, Jorg Jeremias, James L. Mays, Shalom M. Paul, and Han Walter Wolff all contributed to this study's section

¹⁹⁸ Marlow, "The Other Prophet!"

¹⁹⁹ Thang, *Theology of the Land*.

²⁰⁰ James R. Linville, *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2008).

on Amos, although their interests did not align with this study's emphasis on ecology and eschatology.²⁰¹

4.8.2. Works on Hosea

One of the most noteworthy examinations of Hosea from an ecological perspective is Laurie J. Braaten. In his article "Earth Community in Hosea 2," Braaten analyses the three-way relationship between YHWH, land (the NHC), and people.²⁰² He argues Hosea chs 1 and 3 provide a frame around the land themes in ch 2, which centres the NHC as the victim of humanity's sin.²⁰³ In "God Sows," Braaten continues this examination of the NHC themes in Hos 2 and connects them to Hos 4:1–3.²⁰⁴ Melissa Loya analyses Hos 4:1–3 further and develops a case that the NHC is an active agent in YHWH's *rib* rather than a passive entity.²⁰⁵ Not only does the NHC impose YHWH's judgement, but she is also the one who suffers.²⁰⁶ Throughout the chapter, Loya argues ארץ should be translated as "Earth" because of the general, universal description of the creatures.²⁰⁷ Finally, Walter Brueggemann strengthens the argument concerning the prominent role of the NHC in Hos 4:1–3 by acknowledging the explicit absence of the deity.²⁰⁸ This indicates YHWH does not directly

²⁰¹ Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Amos*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1989); Donald E. Gowan, "Amos," in *Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature; Daniel; the Twelve Prophets*, NIB 7, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); Jorg Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016); James L. Mays, *Amos*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1969); Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1991); Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia, trans. Waldemar Janzen, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

²⁰² Braaten, "Earth Community."

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁰⁴ Laurie J. Braaten, "God Sows: Hosea's Land Theme in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, eds. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2003), 104–132.

²⁰⁵ Melissa Tubbs Loya, "'Therefore the Earth Mourns': The Grievance of Earth in Hosea 4:1–3," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, eds. Habel, Norman C. and Peter Trudinger (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 57–59.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 55–56.

²⁰⁸ Walter Brueggemann, "The Uninflected Therefore of Hosea 4:1–3," in *Readings From This Place, Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, Vol. 1, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

intervene to enact the punishment against Israel. Rather, the NHC has an active role in the indictment, which demonstrates a necessary course of action on the part of the NHC: the NHC is operating according to the cosmic order YHWH has decreed.²⁰⁹ Additionally, while not pertaining directly to the themes of the NHC, the specific commentary works of J. Dearman, Brad Kelle, James Luther Mays, James D. Nogalski, and Hans Walter Wolff contributed to this study's foundation of Hosea.²¹⁰

4.8.3. Works on First Isaiah

Lastly, several First Isaiah sources consider the role of the NHC. In her commentary on Isaiah, Patricia Tull notes “no book of the Bible more frequently correlates human and environmental desolation than Isaiah does, nor more frequently depicts human flourishing in terms of the natural landscape.”²¹¹ Tull’s commentary is consistent with this observation, frequently discussing the presence of the NHC in the Isaiah texts whenever she is alluded to literally and figuratively. Similarly, in his chapter about the “earth community” in Isaiah, John Olley examines the appearance of the NHC in Isa 11:1–10, 34:1–17, and 35:1–10, concluding that the NHC is not merely an “appendage” to human society but “beings with their own integrity.”²¹²

Other than Tull and Olley, the examination of First Isaiah from the perspective of the NHC leaves much to be desired. A few commentators briefly include the NHC in their

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 242.

²¹⁰ J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010); Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2005); James Luther Mays, *Hosea* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969); James D. Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011); Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1974).

²¹¹ Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2000), 375.

²¹² John W. Olley, “The Wolf, the Lamb, and the Little Child: Transforming the Diverse Earth Community in Isaiah,” in *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Cleveland, OH: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 218.

analysis of First Isaiah. John Oswalt, for instance, views the inclusion of the NHC in First Isaiah as a means to emphasise YHWH's sovereignty and to demonstrate humanity's dependence on YHWH.²¹³ He observes the effect sin has upon the NHC and that redemption entails "the re-creation of the land."²¹⁴ Despite acknowledging this theme in his introduction, Oswalt largely ignores the NHC in his treatment of the texts. He is instead concerned primarily with the resettlement of the Israelites into their land.²¹⁵ His treatment of 30:23–36, for example, only makes connections to Israel's restoration, not the NHC's restoration as well.²¹⁶ Other Isaianic commentators, such as Hans Wildberger, Joseph Blenkinsopp, Christopher R. Seitz, and Marvin Sweeney also ignore the topic of the NHC.²¹⁷ R. E. Clements is unique in that he notes eschatological themes in his commentary, yet only briefly relates them to the NHC.²¹⁸

4.9. Conclusion

In summary, there is scholarly precedent for analysing the eschatological function of the NHC. Gowan admits that "as of yet, almost nothing has been done with the eschatological aspect of the Hebrew Bible's theology of nature."²¹⁹ Gowan wrote this statement in 1986, but as has already been noted, this is still the case. These sources have laid the foundation for the topic of this study, yet there is much to be discovered. The

²¹³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 37.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 561–563.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, Continental Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991); Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, Continental Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997); Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, Continental Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002); Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, The Forms of OT Literature, Vol. XVI, eds. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

²¹⁸ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

²¹⁹ Gowan, *Eschatology*, 108.

merging of these two theological concepts (ecology and eschatology) within this select portion of the prophetic corpus can richly illuminate both the covenant community's relationship with the NHC and the prophetic vision for YHWH's final intervention on the NHC's behalf. As evidenced by the aforementioned literature, the Hebrew Bible demonstrates an intimate relationship between YHWH and the NHC and a tenuous relationship between humanity and the NHC. Based upon YHWH's creative and covenant relationship with Israel, YHWH promises to redeem YHWH's people. Since YHWH also demonstrates a committed relationship with the NHC, should God's people not also anticipate the final redemption of the NHC?

5. Methodology

As stated earlier, the aim of this thesis is to explore the NHC's eschatological dimensions as portrayed by Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah. The process followed in this research principally draws upon literary and theological methods. To accomplish this, the thesis will 1) note significant features of each text; 2) analyse the themes related to the NHC; 3) summarise the findings; and 4) synthesise the main themes.

Since each passage contains various themes, this project groups the initial analyses by book. Beginning with Amos, who, as noted earlier, has the most intertextual commonality with Hosea and First Isaiah, each chapter briefly offers introductory remarks about each text, including the delimitation, structure, and broad literary features. Then each text is translated from the MT, in consultation with other texts, such as the *BHS*, the Isaiah Scrolls, and modern translations. Since translation is itself the first act of interpretation, this step is crucial for the analysis process that follows. Instead of striving after a dynamic equivalence English translation, the text translations are rendered more literally and aim to highlight

findings related to the NHC. While the Dynamic Equivalence (DE) theory of translation has largely been the preferred Western approach since 1986, it is not without its drawbacks. Nichols highlights some of these problems, notably that it prioritises reception meaning over form.²²⁰ While the DE theory is useful for providing clarity, especially for complex biblical passages, its intent to produce a “natural” reading assumes the texts would have been “natural” to their ancient audiences.²²¹ This makes translations prone to cultural bias in what constitutes a “natural” reading, which historically tends to diminish the role and voice of the NHC.²²²

The translations, therefore, demonstrate a preference for replicating the form of the Hebrew, especially when the NHC is concerned. Since, as demonstrated above in the review of interpretation history, translation and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible has been largely anthropocentric, the translation of the texts aims to uncover the ways in which the NHC functions as subject. The purpose of the translation work is not to reproduce comprehensive, textually-critical editions with all textual variants accounted. Rather, textual variants are noted when they concern the NHC or reflect significant interpretative considerations related to the understanding of the text. For example, although Amos 8:4–14 has 20 notes listed in the *BHS*, none concern the NHC. Meanwhile, in Hos 4:2, the LXX includes “upon the land,” while the MT does not. This variant is significant because it concerns the NHC’s role in the *rib*.

Since examining these texts from an ecological perspective has not been comprehensively undertaken yet, the careful translation of these texts gives insight into ways the NHC is present. Toward this aim, the translation and interpretation employ many of

²²⁰ A.H. Nichols, *Translating the Bible: A Critical Analysis of E.A. Nida 's Theory of Dynamic Equivalence and Its Impact upon Recent Bible Translations* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1997), 228–31.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

²²² See Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” 4.

the principles developed by the Earth Bible Project, such as identifying the NHC and retrieving the “voice of Earth” in the texts.²²³ For instance, how might instances of ארץ refer not only to the territory of Israel but also to the entire NHC? These translation contributions are further highlighted in each text’s analysis. Below is a summary of the principles employed by the Earth Bible Project, applied to this thesis’ NHC terminology:²²⁴

1. The NHC has intrinsic worth.
2. The NHC and humanity are interconnected.
3. The NHC is a subject with a voice.
4. The NHC has a purpose within the cosmic order.
5. The NHC and humanity can function in mutual partnership.
6. The NHC suffers from human injustices and actively resists it.

Of course, as with all translation and interpretation methods, this approach is not impervious to ethnocentrism and anachronism. For example, the language above of the NHC’s “resistance” against injustice assumes the NHC has moral awareness, which is perhaps enforcing a Western anthropomorphism or assuming a contemporary ethical posture. To avoid this, the goal of the translations and analyses is to uncover the various ways the ancient Israelites may have understood the NHC’s presence within these texts.

These Earth Bible Project principles also inform the next step of interpretive analysis. After the translation work, the project considers the themes related to the NHC via literary and theological analysis passage by passage. The conclusion of each chapter summarises the most significant and relevant motifs related to the NHC and offers initial theological findings. Finally, after examining the themes throughout Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, the last

²²³ Ibid., 6–7.

²²⁴ Ibid., 2.

chapter places the findings in dialogue with each other. The study identifies the ideas that were most pervasive across the texts and organises them into the following themes:

1. The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order
2. Humanity's Effect on the NHC
3. The Role of the NHC
4. The NHC's Response
5. Eschatological Implications

After synthesising these findings, the study offers final conclusions, focusing especially on themes related to eschatology, and offers considerations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: AMOS

Compared to Hosea and First Isaiah, the book of Amos seldom refers to the NHC in a figurative sense. Instead, Amos considers the NHC an entity who partners with YHWH and humanity and sometimes possesses autonomy in judgement and salvation. Using the established criteria, this chapter will examine the following five texts: Amos 1:2; 4:4–9; 8:4–14; 9:1–6; 9:11–15.

The first text, Amos 1:2, is structurally significant to this research in that it sets up NHC themes appearing throughout the remainder of the book of Amos. Wolff and Nogalski, for instance, suggest this unit functions as a motto for the rest of the book, although neither comment on how these themes are woven and emphasised throughout the remainder.²²⁵ Eidevall, however, links 1:2 to various passages throughout the book of Amos via several of its key words.²²⁶ This vision of divine judgement in 1:2 connects in stark contrast to 9:11–15, forming an inclusio.²²⁷ Eidevall and Jeremias note the ways in which 1:2 and 9:1–6 bracket the book in divine wrath.²²⁸ Thus, YHWH's roar in 1:2 triggers the trembling of the cosmological temple in 9:1–6.²²⁹ In these ways, the content in Amos 1:2 functions as much more than a superscription; this simple poem reveals the NHC is a theological thread throughout the book of Amos, especially the way in which the book concludes.²³⁰

Linville argues cosmic temple imagery frames the book of Amos. He writes this theme “is the conceptual landscape in which the action of the book of Amos takes place. Or,

²²⁵ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 119; Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 275.

²²⁶ Of the notable themes, Eidevall observes two threads pertinent to the NHC: earthquakes (1:1; cf. 2:13–16; 3:14–14; 6:11; 8:8; 9:1) and drought (1:2; 4:7–8; 8:11–12). See Göran Eidevall, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 92.

²²⁷ Möller, on the other hand, describes 1:2 as a “narrative frame” that connects to ch. 7. See Karl Möller, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos* (London: Sheffield, 2003), 159.

²²⁸ They both argue 1:2 and 9:1–6 are editorially bound by the recurrence of the “top of Carmel.” See Eidevall, *Amos*, 98; Jeremias, *Amos*, 5.

²²⁹ This connection will be further explored in the examination of 9:1–6.

²³⁰ This thread will be demonstrated via the close reading of the selected Amos passages. See also the NHC's prevalent role in the forthcoming analysis of 9:11–15.

more accurately, Amos uncovers the cosmic reality as hidden bedrock beneath the shifting fortunes of the human and natural world, and, once uncovered, reduces it to chaos."²³¹

While this cosmic temple imagery is especially emphasised in 9:1–6, the remaining chosen passages concern the NHC and contribute to this theme of divine judgement and salvation.

Amos 4:4–9 and 8:4–14 both concern cultic practices which contribute to either the stability or destruction of the cosmos. Amos 4:4–9 reminds God’s people of past fertility curses in order to persuade covenant renewal. The NHC participates in God’s judgement and perhaps in the covenant renewal as well. Amos 8:4–14, on the other hand, accuses God’s people of cultic practices which have had devastating effects on the NHC. Abusing the “pride of Jacob,” a term which refers to the NHC (argued below), contributes to the final collapse of the cosmic temple in 9:1–6. Yet the book concludes with an eschatological oracle envisioning the renewal of the entire cosmological order (9:11–15). In this vision, the NHC no longer retaliates against humanity (1:2; 4:4–9) and humanity no longer abuses the NHC (8:4–14). The NHC partners with both YHWH and humanity in inaugurating YHWH’s cosmic reign.

1. AMOS 1:2

1.1. Introduction

The book of Amos begins with two verses that form a self-contained unit (1:1–2). While the first verse gives the setting of the prophet’s vision, the second verse introduces themes concerning the NHC. YHWH’s judgement pervades the land of Israel, sweeping from city to pastures and mountains. Although Amos 1:2 does not contain overtly eschatological themes, this verse is nevertheless foundational for understanding the role and agency of the

²³¹ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 5.

NHC. How does the book of Amos portray the NHC's involvement in judgement, and how does this compare to other passages that portray the NHC's involvement in eschatology?

In addition to its function as a “motto” which establishes themes throughout Amos (see above), Lindblom likens the verse to the hymns throughout Amos (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6) and argues it exhibits similarities in style and content.²³² Others have also noted its theophanic function.²³³ Paul, for instance, notes similarities between the catastrophic results of YHWH's appearance in Amos 1:2 with those of Mesopotamian war gods; a god's appearance frequently brought “catastrophic effects upon the cosmos and nature.”²³⁴ This divine appearance and consequential judgement prompts Gowan's observation of two main themes in 1:2: the power of YHWH and the responsive mourning of the earth.²³⁵

1.2. Text and Translation

He said, “From Zion YHWH roars
and from Jerusalem he thunders;²³⁶
the pastures of the shepherds mourn,²³⁷
and the top of Carmel²³⁸ withers.”

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג
וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ
וְאָבְלוּ נְאוֹת הָרָעִים
וַיְבֹשׁ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל

1.3. Themes and Motifs

1.3.1. Covenantal Curses

²³² All hymns portray YHWH ushering destruction via the NHC. Amos 1:2 and 4:13 refer to YHWH's dominance over mountains. Amos 1:2 connects to 5:9 and 9:5–6 with flood imagery and to 9:5 with “mourn.” All use the divine name. See Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 116–17. Jeremias also describes the verse as a hymn; *Amos*, 13.

²³³ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 121–2; Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 13; Paul, *Amos*, 38; Eidevall, *Amos*, 97.

²³⁴ Paul, *Amos*, 38. He cites the following Ugaritic description: “Ba[al gives] forth his holy voice; the high places of the ea[rth] quake.” See CTA 4: vii:29–35; cf. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1969), 135.

²³⁵ Gowan, “Amos,” 352.

²³⁶ This word choice will be explored in more detail below.

²³⁷ אָבַל has two meanings: “to mourn” and “to dry up.” This word choice will be explored in more detail below.

²³⁸ Since there is a definite article, this most likely refers to the location rather than a “fertile field.” Further, Carmel as a specific mountain contrasts with “Zion.”

Citing Hillers' extensive compilation of ancient Near Eastern curses, Stuart observes three different covenantal curses at work in this preface to the book of Amos: a wild animal curse, a futility curse, and a fertility curse.²³⁹ In the prophetic tradition, curses relate to Israel's covenantal relationship with YHWH, particularly via the Mosaic covenant. The prophetic voices remind God's people of the consequences for their disobedience, many of which are disasters YHWH has sworn to inflict upon YHWH's people. Since all three of these curses involve the NHC in some way, these curses will first be examined to illumine the prophet's proclamation of judgement and the role of the NHC in implementing this judgement.

In Amos 1:2, the prophetic voice portrays YHWH roaring like a lion, a motif present throughout the book of Amos (3:4, 8, 12; 5:19) as well as in other prophetic traditions (Hos 5:14; 11:10; 13:7–8; Joel 3:16; Jer 25:30).²⁴⁰ In Israel's historical traditions, YHWH was known to employ lions to punish the wicked (1 Kgs 13:26; 20:25; 2 Kgs 17:25), but here in Amos it is YHWH who appears as the lion. The loosing of wild animals was a conditional curse within Israel's covenant with YHWH (Lev 26:22; Deut 32:24), and the lion imagery suggests this curse is now being enacted upon the Israelites in Amos. In his catalogue of treaty curses in the ancient Near Eastern world, Hillers notes that the curse of devouring animals could be understood both literally and metaphorically.²⁴¹ Thus, while the lion imagery in Amos 1:2 is

²³⁹ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 537; cf. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 55–6. Stuart notes that there are many categorisations of curses, and grouping prophetic curses into these arbitrary categories is largely subjective (WBC 31:xxxii).

²⁴⁰ The remarkable similarities of this superscription to the content in Joel 3:16 and Jer 25:30 posit questions about whether all of these prophetic writings drew from the same tradition or whether there is some sort of a relationship of dependence. Hayes concludes the lion motif in Amos is original because it also appears in Amos 3:4, 8, 12, an oracle generally regarded as an original text; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 21. Its presence in Hosea (5:14; 11:10; 13:8), coupled with imagery of drought (Hos 9:16; 13:15), suggests the content in Amos 1:2 may have been part of a prominent tradition in the pre-exilic period; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 21. Wolff and Jeremias, however, believe this is the addition of an exilic redactor; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 122; Jeremias, *Amos*, 8.

²⁴¹ The curse in Jer 5:6; 8:17, for instance, may have been understood literally while the curse in Hos 13:7–8 is metaphorical. See Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 55–56.

metaphorical, it still functions as a wild animal curse. YHWH instigates the consequences of Israel's sin, but as the subsequent curses in this verse reveal, YHWH is not the only actor. Portrayed as a wild animal, YHWH's roar summons the NHC to "mourn" and "dry up."

The second clause depicts a futility curse: YHWH יתן קולו (literally, "gives his voice"). In other contexts, קול functions as thunder in both its singular and plural forms.²⁴² There are also several instances in Ps 29 where the "voice of YHWH" is portrayed as theophanic thunder (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9). Because of its ambiguity, יתן קולו can be translated in multiple ways. However, the verb "thunder" provides a more appropriate parallel to the verb "roar" in the previous line. "Thundering" intensifies the parallelism, whereas "crying out" or "calling out" would render the relationship between the two verbs anticlimactic. While most English translations render this phrase literally, some scholars prefer "thunder."²⁴³ This rendering provides a poetic parallel with the earthquake allusions appearing throughout Amos, including in the superscription in Amos 1:1 (Amos 8:8; 9:5; cf. Joel 3:16). For these reasons, the above translation gave preference to "thunder." Wolff, meanwhile, acknowledges this phrase is sometimes used as a thunderous voice in theophany accounts, but he rejects this translation.²⁴⁴ A thunderstorm, he counters, does not signal drought.²⁴⁵ By dismissing this translation, Wolff fails to see how this thunder imagery could function ironically.

When this verb is translated as "thunder," this phrase functions as a futility curse. Other traditions describe YHWH as a storm God (Pss 18:6–16; 68:8–10; 2 Sam 22:8–16; Nah

²⁴² Singular: 1 Sam 7:10; Plural: Exod 9:23, 28; 19:16; 1 Sam 12:17, 18; Job 28:26; 38:25. Job 37:2, 4, 5 associate God's קול with thunder. Passages that pair נתן with קול include Exod 9:23; 1 Sam. 12:17, 18.

²⁴³ NRSVue, RSV, ESV, NASB, and KJV translate the phrase as "utters his voice"; NIV prefers "thunder." Meanwhile, Marlow, Hayes, and Stuart translate it as "thunder." See Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 134; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 22; Stuart WBC 31:301.

²⁴⁴ Wolff translates this phrase literally as "raises his voice." See *Joel and Amos*, 116.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

1:2–8). If fertility cults were present in the ANE world, then YHWH’s “thunder” evokes a function expected of a Canaanite god.²⁴⁶ This motif is consistent with other images in this verse, such as the specification of Zion and Jerusalem as the origin of YHWH’s voice, instead of the pagan centres of Bethel and Dan in Israel. This also explains why Mount Carmel, a focal point of fertility imagery, stands in parallel to Mount Zion (1 Kgs 18). Here in Amos, however, YHWH’s voice reverberates throughout Israel like thunder, but there is no promise of rain in sight. Instead of rain, YHWH’s judgement brings drought as the pastures dry up and the water on Mount Carmel withers away. YHWH’s thunder announces the blessing of rain, but dispenses the curse of drought instead. The NHC participates in YHWH’s judgement by withholding rain, resulting in a fertility curse.

This fertility curse is the final and most noticeable curse present in Amos 1:2. In response to YHWH’s roar, the pastures “mourn” and Mount Carmel “withers.” The first word, אָבַל, translated in this study as “mourn,” has an unknown Semitic root.²⁴⁷ It is used as an action of the NHC nine times in the prophetic literature (Isa 24:1–20; 33:7–9; Jer 4:23–28; 12:1–14, 7–13; 23:9–13; Hos 4:1–3; Joel 1:5–20; Amos 1:2).²⁴⁸ It is sometimes paralleled with אָמַל (“to languish”),²⁴⁹ with סָפַד (“to weep, lament”),²⁵⁰ or in the case of this passage, with יָבֵשׁ (“to be dry, to dry up”). Because of these diverse pairings, אָבַל is understood to have the following two distinct meanings: “to mourn”²⁵¹ or “to dry up.”²⁵² It is inconclusive as

²⁴⁶ The presence of such a cultic system is disputed. Although connections between fertility, agriculture, and religion appear in the ancient Near East, many are hesitant to fuse these links together with certitude. See Aurelian Botica’s careful examination of these connections in “Weather, Agriculture, and Religion in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament,” *Perichoresis* 11 (2013), 95–122.

²⁴⁷ Arnulf Baumann, *TDOT* 1:44.

²⁴⁸ See Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*.

²⁴⁹ Isa 19:8; 24:4,7; 33:9; Hos 4:3.

²⁵⁰ Amos 5:16.

²⁵¹ When occurring in the qal, hifil, hitpael, or substantive.

²⁵² When occurring in the qal or hifil.

to how these two meanings may be related.²⁵³ In fact, some believe the two meanings are derived from two different roots.²⁵⁴

Since אָבֵל parallels יָבֵשׁ, Wolff and Paul argue אָבֵל should be translated as “wilt” or “dry up,” respectively.²⁵⁵ Linville, however, counters these translations, arguing they hold to a rigid understanding of how Hebrew parallelism functions.²⁵⁶ He instead argues for a translation of “mourn.”²⁵⁷ Clines also concludes “to mourn” is the true interpretation and rejects the assumption that “mourning” is a reaction reserved solely for humanity.²⁵⁸ In fact, inanimate objects “mourn” throughout the Hebrew Bible. Clines cites the following passages where inanimate objects are said to “mourn”: Isa 3:26; Jer 12:10–11; Lam 1:4; 2:8.²⁵⁹

While Hayes hypothesises that these two meanings are derived from a single root, she concludes that “mourn” is the primary meaning.²⁶⁰ Hayes argues the pastures’ reaction in Amos 1:2 evokes the stripping in ceremonial mourning.²⁶¹ In grieving rituals, mourners strip off clothes and replace them with sackcloth (Ps 35:13–14; Mic 1:8–10; Isa 15:3; 32:11; Jer 6:26; Lam 2:10; Ezek 7:18; 26:16). Heads are also shaved, or in a sense, “stripped” (Isa 15:2; Ezek 7:18). Hayes postulates that this is how the second meaning “to dry up” developed.²⁶² This is further supported by Amos 8:10, where אָבֵל is used in the context of

²⁵³ Baumann, *TDOT* 1:45.

²⁵⁴ In addition to אָבֵל, another root could be the Akkadian stem *abālu*. See Godfrey R. Driver, “Confused Hebrew Roots,” in *Occident and Orient*, ed. Bruno Schindler (London: Taylor, 1936), 73–74; Wolff, *Hosea*, 65.

²⁵⁵ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 125; Paul, *Amos*, 39. Wolff translates אָבֵל as “to wilt,” although he does note that אָבֵל is a root with two possible meanings, one of which is “to mourn” (125). Paul also rejects the translation of “mourn” because the Targum translates it as יִצְרֹן (“dry up”). His translation causes him to conclude that the devastation is a result of YHWH’s voice and not a response from the NHC (39).

²⁵⁶ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 45.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. Jeremias also argues for “mourn.” See Jeremias, *Amos*, 11.

²⁵⁸ David J.A. Clines, “Was There an ‘bl II ‘Be Dry’ in Classical Hebrew?,” *VT* 42 (1992), 8.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 18. Marlow also concludes “mourn” is the primary meaning, but her reasoning for this is less clear. See *Biblical Prophets*, 134.

²⁶¹ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 30–31.

²⁶² Ibid., 31–32.

ceremonial mourning. Consistent imagery is also demonstrated in Amos' first vision, where the land is "stripped" by locusts (7:1–2).

Because of the various parallels between "drying up" and "mourning" throughout the Hebrew Bible, as well as the above precedent, this research has also chosen a translation of "mourn." However, the secondary meaning "to dry up" should also be considered. In fact, this word may very well have a fluidity of meaning.²⁶³ The meaning need not be one or the other; perhaps in this case אָבַל can mean both drying up *and* mourning. In fact, the very act of "drying up" may be why the pastures also "mourn." While the NHC may "mourn" because of the effect YHWH's judgement has upon her, she might also mourn out of solidarity with humanity's sin and consequential suffering. Hayes believes the ambiguity of אָבַל permits several different nuances: the NHC mourns both for her own death and for the death of God's people.²⁶⁴

Regardless of whether אָבַל is translated as "mourning" or "drying up," its coupling with יָבֵשׁ indicates drought. This fertility curse is effective even on Mount Carmel, where Elijah and the Israelites were able to find water after three years of drought (1 Kgs 17:1–6; 18:33–35). Carmel was viewed as one of the most fertile places in Israel (Song 7:5; Isa 33:9; Nah 1:4).²⁶⁵ Like the wild animal curse, the Pentateuch specifies drought curses for violating the covenant (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22–24). The NHC's reaction of "mourning," "drying up," and "withering" indicates the covenant has been breached and YHWH is enacting punishment. The NHC suffers because of Israel's sin. Wolff argues "a drought that makes both forests and meadows die must indeed be of eschatological dimensions."²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Baumann, *TDOT* 1:47; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 32.

²⁶⁴ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 32.

²⁶⁵ See Gowan, *NIB* 7:352.

²⁶⁶ *Joel and Amos*, 125.

These three covenantal curses highlight the NHC as a prominent theme in YHWH's judgement. While she is certainly present as a witness to YHWH's retribution, her role within the judgement is less clear. She is a means by which YHWH inflicts the covenantal curses, but is she also a participant in the judgement?

1.3.2. The NHC's Role

While YHWH'S roar and thunder initiates the curses, the three treaty curses in Amos 1:2 all involve the NHC. Nogalski observes a cause-and-effect chain of events in this verse: YHWH roars and the earth responds.²⁶⁷ This communicates a relationship between YHWH and the NHC; the NHC is so intrinsically connected with her Creator that she responds to YHWH's rage. Since YHWH's "roar" is the cue which spurs the NHC's reaction, perhaps YHWH's pain has become the NHC's pain. This is not to say the NHC is the subject of God's wrath; rather, the NHC functions as a "divine channel" by which to judge sinful humanity.²⁶⁸ As argued above, the NHC simultaneously grieves and dries up, signalling to readers that she is not a passive victim. The mourning personifies the NHC as an entity present to YHWH's judgement, suggesting she is actively responding.²⁶⁹ Mourning is not inaction; it is a prophetic response that signals critique.²⁷⁰ Her mourning may be a denouncement against humanity's sins, which instigates drought within the land. In these ways, the NHC is a participant in YHWH's judgement, even though her actions entail her own destruction.

The passage also demonstrates how the NHC's role relates to humanity. While her grief may be in response to YHWH's anger, her grief could also be anguish over the judgement unleashed upon humanity, even though she has a role in dispensing that very

²⁶⁷ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 275.

²⁶⁸ Marlow, "The Other Prophet," 77.

²⁶⁹ Hayes argues this mourning language makes the NHC assume a "persona." See *The Earth Mourns*, 2.

²⁷⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), 12–13.

judgement. Shepherds are specifically mentioned as casualties of this cosmic judgement; their economic prosperity would be greatly compromised.²⁷¹ If the NHC mourns in reaction to humanity's fate, her grief implies a symbiotic relationship between humans and the NHC: the emotions of the pastures mirror those of their intended caretakers.²⁷²

1.3.3. The Scope of the Judgement

This verse moves from a mountain (Zion), to a city (Jerusalem), to pastures, and then back to a mountain again (Carmel). Although this movement has a beautiful poetic structure, this sweeping landscape also implies YHWH's judgement, as inflicted by the NHC, would be pervasive throughout the entire land. The combination of mountains with pastures may be a merism that communicates a judgement of cosmic proportions (see Jer 9:9 [10] for a similar description of YHWH's judgement). The effects of YHWH's judgement would not be confined to one specific region but would be both initiated and felt by the totality of the NHC. While the text does not contain overtly cosmic motifs, these two spheres do imply cosmic ramifications.

1.4. Summary

As previously observed, the three covenantal curses involve and affect the NHC. She is both the enforcer and the recipient of God's judgement. The NHC's active role in YHWH's judgement upon the Israelites indicates a relationship with YHWH, as she responds to YHWH's thundering voice. Further, the three-way connection between YHWH's voice, humanity's sin, and the NHC's response indicates an interconnected, relational web. Because of this interdependence, the NHC's reaction affects both humanity and her very own

²⁷¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 136.

²⁷² Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 6.

wellbeing. The NHC “mourns,” a verb that implies both the prophetic critique of grief and also drought. This mourning action could be in sympathy with humanity’s plight, in anguish over her own destruction, or in grief alongside YHWH’s roar.²⁷³ Perhaps the verse invokes all three reactions at once. This mourning causes a drought effect that pervades throughout the entire NHC, as indicated by the sweeping scope of pastures and mountains. While this verse alone does not contain eschatological imagery, the NHC’s partnership with YHWH in judgement has parallels with her partnership with YHWH in re-creation. These parallels are compared in the concluding chapter of this study.

2. AMOS 4:6–9

2.1. Introduction

Amos 4:4–5 introduces the larger unit (4:4–13) with YHWH’s sarcastic call to idolatrous worship. “Go to Bethel and rebel,” the prophet admonishes, “for this is what you love to do” (vv. 4–5). The verb אהב is a covenantal term; its use here for Israel’s unfaithful worship implies these cultic practices violate the covenant with YHWH.²⁷⁴ God proceeds to remind the people of the covenant curses that have befallen them in the past (vv. 6–11). Three of the covenantal curses involve the NHC and will be analysed in detail in this section. After reviewing these past judgements, YHWH promises to judge the people again (vv. 12–13).

Because of the three instances of messenger formula language, it is difficult to ascertain how these three individual oracles in Amos 4:6–9 are related. The larger pericope could be divided into three or four sections. One suggested division is vv. 4–5; 6–11; 12–13;

²⁷³ Hayes believes the text allows all these nuances in *The Earth Mourns*, 32.

²⁷⁴ G. Wallis, “אהב,” *TDOT* 1:104–16.

another suggestion further divides vv. 12 and 13.²⁷⁵ Wolff sees an evident uniformity throughout this section as persuasive grounds for treating the text as an interconnected unit.²⁷⁶ YHWH is the speaker in all the oracles, evident by the use of the first personal pronoun *אני*. Further, *גם* is a device used to connect the oracles.²⁷⁷ The combination of *אני-גם* is unique within the book of Amos.²⁷⁸ Functionally, it contrasts with the people's idolatrous actions in vv. 4–5: the people brought offerings, and YHWH will now bring curses. Stuart also argues for a connected literary unit because all the oracles address Israel and conclude with *נאצם-יהנה*.²⁷⁹ In addition, the oracles are all connected by the opening rationale for judgement (vv. 4–5) and the concluding sentence (vv. 12–13).²⁸⁰

Of the five curses that appear in this unit (4:4–13), these three curses concern the NHC: famine (v. 6), drought (vv. 7–8), and agricultural ruin (v. 9).²⁸¹ All three are also closely tied to the Mosaic curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28.²⁸² Particularly noteworthy is the extent to which the vocabulary is the same. While Lev 26:19 and Deut 28:22–24 both generally mention drought, Lev 26:4 employs *גשם* (cf. Amos 4:7) and Deut 28:24 employs *מטר* (cf. Amos 4:7). Leviticus 26:26 specifically mentions the people “would not be satisfied” (*שבוע*; cf. Amos 4:8) after YHWH “attacked” them (*הִכִּיתִי*; cf. Amos 4:9). With regard to the agricultural failure in Amos 4:9, the language is largely similar to that in Deut 28.²⁸³ The

²⁷⁵ See Stuart, *WBC* 31:537 for an in-depth analysis.

²⁷⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 211–15.

²⁷⁷ *גם* is used in the oracles in vv. 6 and 7–8, but it disappears in the oracles in vv. 9–11.

²⁷⁸ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 213. This phrase is frequently found in the Holiness Code (Lev 26:16, 24, 28, 32, 41, 44).

²⁷⁹ Stuart, *WBC* 31:536–7.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁸¹ The five curses include famine (v. 6), drought (vv. 7–8), agricultural ruin (v. 9), plagues (v. 10a), and war (vv. 10b–11).

²⁸² All five of the curses in Amos 4:6–11 have parallels to the curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28, but for the purposes of this study, only the three curses in 4:6–9 will be analysed. For a detailed chart on the shared vocabulary between these three sources, see Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 213.

²⁸³ Both Lev 26:20 and Deut 28:22, 38 make general references to crop failure.

shared terminology includes *בשדפון וברקון* (Deut 28:22), *כרמים* (Deut 28:39), and *זיתים* (Deut 28:40).²⁸⁴

It is clear that, given the themes and the common terminology, it is the intent of the redactors of Amos 4:6–9 to make a connection to covenantal curses.²⁸⁵ However, in this context, YHWH is not warning YHWH's people about the consequences for breaking covenant; rather, YHWH is reminding the Israelites of the times they had already suffered the consequences for breaking covenant. In other words, the sin had already been committed and the curses had been enacted, but to no avail.

Although these curses were written in a certain time to a certain people, there is nevertheless a timelessness about them. Unlike the allusion to the earthquake in Amos 1:1, no details tie these judgements to specific instances. Several scholars, nonetheless, do believe these curses concerned particular historic events. Wolff, for instance, believes the *כה* in v. 12a and the *זאת* in v. 12b demonstrate a historic referent for these curses: the destruction of the sanctuary at Bethel during Josiah's reign (c. 640–609 BCE).²⁸⁶ Stuart, on the other hand, believes the *כל* in v. 6 demonstrates that this curse references no specific famine.²⁸⁷ Jeremias also believes these plagues are not referring to specific historic events.²⁸⁸

Instead of a historic event, perhaps it is best to understand these curses as purposefully enigmatic. YHWH's judgement can include many instances of famine, drought, and

²⁸⁴ In addition to Lev 26 and Deut 28, there are also a few textual connections to 1 Kgs 8:33–37, when Solomon's prayer anticipates a time in Israel's history where the Mosaic curses would be enacted against God's people. There is the real possibility that this prayer was written during the exilic period in retrospect of these curses. Jeremias approaches his examination of Amos from this perspective and makes exilic connections between the two passages in *Amos*, 71–2. The prayer uses the shared vocabulary of *מטר* (1 Kgs 8:35; cf. Amos 4:7) and *שדפון וברקון* (1 Kgs 8:37; cf. Amos 4:9). The rhetorical functions of 1 Kgs 8 and Amos 4 differ, however, in that the former is an intercessory prayer, a plea for forgiveness and reinstatement, while the latter is an accusation from YHWH.

²⁸⁵ Gowan does note the curses were common in the ANE world and Amos may have created his own list and order. See *NIB* 7:381.

²⁸⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 217.

²⁸⁷ Stuart, *WBC* 31:537.

²⁸⁸ Jeremias, *Amos*, 70.

agricultural failure. When read this way, the judgement oracle is timeless, warning God's people in various times and contexts. The pairing of cities with fields in v. 7, a merism, seems also to indicate its universal reach.²⁸⁹

2.2. Text and Translation

⁶"I even gave you clean teeth²⁹⁰ in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your towns,
but you did not return to me."
Oracle of YHWH.

⁷"I even withheld rain from you
for three months before the harvest.
I sent rain on one city,
yet on another city I did not send rain.²⁹¹
One field²⁹² received rain,
but a field which did not receive rain upon
it dried up.

⁸Two or three cities would stagger to
another city to drink water
but would not get enough.
But you did not return to me."
Oracle of YHWH.

⁹"I attacked you with blight and mildew
repeatedly.²⁹³
Your gardens and your vineyards,
your fig trees and olive trees the locusts
devoured.
But you did not return to me."
Oracle of YHWH.

וְגַם-אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָכֶם נִקְיוֹן שָׁנִים בְּכָל-עָרֵיכֶם⁶
וְחֶסֶר לֶחֶם בְּכָל מְקוֹמֵיכֶם
וְלֹא-שָׁבַתֶם עָדִי
נְאֻם-יְהוָה
וְגַם אֲנֹכִי מִנַּעַתִּי מִכֶּם אֶת-הַגֶּשֶׁם⁷
בְּעוֹד שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים לְקָצִיר
וְהִמְטַרְתִּי עַל-עִיר אַחַת
וְעַל-עִיר אַחַת לֹא אֶמְטִיר חֶלְקָהּ
אֶחָת תִּמְטָר
וְחֶלְקָהּ אֲשֹׁר-לֹא תִמְטִיר עָלֶיהָ תֵיבֵשׁ
וְנָעוּ שְׁתֵּי עָרִים שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים אֶל-עִיר אַחַת⁸
לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם
וְלֹא יִשְׂבְּעוּ
וְלֹא-שָׁבַתֶם עָדִי
נְאֻם-יְהוָה

הִכִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם בַּשָּׂדֶפֶן⁹
וּבִירְקוֹן הַרְבּוֹת גִּנוֹתֵיכֶם
וְכַרְמֵיכֶם וְתַאֲנִיכֶם וְזֵיתֵיכֶם יֹאכַל הַגָּזָז
וְלֹא-שָׁבַתֶם עָדִי
נְאֻם-יְהוָה

2.3. Themes and Motifs

²⁸⁹ Paul, *Amos*, 145.

²⁹⁰ Literal translation of the idiom; i.e., lack of food. Eidevall translates this phrase as "empty mouths." See *Amos*, 143.

²⁹¹ In contrast to the prior verbs, which are perfect, this verb and the ones that follow are imperfect.

²⁹² Or "portion" of land.

²⁹³ The hiphil infinitive of רבה ("multiply") is awkwardly positioned. See Paul, *Amos*, 137, 147. Wolff and Jeremias render it "I have caused to wither." See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 210 and Jeremias, *Amos*, 66. Eidevall argues this translation lacks support and also translates it as "repeatedly." See Eidevall, *Amos*, 145.

2.3.1. Renewal of Covenant

Brueggemann argues convincingly that Amos 4:4–13 is neither a threat nor a call to repentance, but a call to covenant renewal.²⁹⁴ The final sentencing in vv. 12–13 commands Israel to “prepare” (כּוּן) to meet YHWH, a word that appears several times throughout Exodus (particularly Exod 19:11, 15; 34:2). Brueggemann believes these two instances of covenant-making in Exodus are the key to understanding Amos 4:4–13.²⁹⁵ YHWH sent the curses against the people so they would respond, not only with repentance, but with a willingness to renew the covenant with YHWH. Further, this is consistent with the two curse passages in Lev 26 and Deut 28, to which Amos 4:4–13 is intentionally connected (see introductory notes above). In the passages that immediately follow Lev 26 and Deut 28 (Lev 27 and Deut 29), YHWH invites the Israelites to dedicate themselves to the covenant. This pattern anticipates a similar response in Amos 4:4–13, where YHWH expects YHWH’s people to repent after the covenantal curses. As such, Gowan suggests this language in Amos may be part of a covenant-curse ceremony.²⁹⁶ This is further evidence that the purpose of the oracles was to prompt God’s people to repent and to remake the covenant.

2.3.3. The NHC’s Role

The curses occurred in the past, and the oracle envisions what the covenant now looks like after the judgement. Since the oracles in Amos 4:6–9 are reminiscent of the Mosaic curses (see above), and like those curses, function as a call to covenant-renewal, then the NHC assumes a covenantal role in these oracles alongside YHWH and humanity. Linville observes a dynamic, “symbiotic” relationship between YHWH, humanity, and the

²⁹⁴ Walter Brueggemann, “Amos IV 4–13 and Israel’s Covenant Worship,” *VT* 15 (1965): 8.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹⁶ Gowan, *NIB* 7:381.

NHC in this passage.²⁹⁷ As seen in Amos 1:2, Israel's sin has a direct consequence on the NHC; the NHC suffers as a result of humanity's sinful choices. In fact, the crop failure in Amos 4:9 both mirrors and connects to the destroyed fields in Amos 1:2. It is unclear, however, whether the NHC assumes an active role in this passage. Given YHWH's first-person pronouns in this passage, followed by active verbs, it appears YHWH directly invoked this reaction from the NHC. There is no indication from the text that the NHC has an active role in dispensing judgement. Like the Israelites, she is the afflicted and not the afflicter. Paul echoes this idea, concluding that the repetition of *אני* coupled with the selective rain (a feat only a divine being could do), suggests YHWH alone is responsible for the devastation.²⁹⁸

Since, on the other hand, this passage is a call to covenant-renewal, what role does the NHC play in this covenant? Is she an active participant in the covenant? Is humanity's sin a violation against her as one of the covenant's participants? Linville notes the NHC is at the very least involved in the covenant-making, as all of the sacrificial offerings come from the NHC.²⁹⁹ Indeed, in vv. 4–5 YHWH goads the Israelites about bringing their sacrifices. The presence of the NHC is necessary for the Israelites to have a right relationship with YHWH. Unfortunately, after this judgement process, the Israelites could not obtain the proper sacrificial elements. YHWH's indictment against the Israelites specifically mentions leavened bread as one of the offerings (4:5), one that would now be impossible for the Israelites to bring after the first curse in v. 6. While the text does not indicate the NHC is one of the covenant's parties, she is involved with the covenant-making process via her agricultural produce. In this case, the removal of her fertility blessings compromises the relationship God's people have with YHWH.

²⁹⁷ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 91.

²⁹⁸ Paul, *Amos*, 144.

²⁹⁹ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 91; see vv. 4–5.

2.4. Summary

The Mosaic curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28 concern Israel's future, but the curses here in Amos concern the past.³⁰⁰ These judgements had already occurred at some point in the life of God's people. These curses, then, were not merely hypothetical; God's people understood that judgement concerning the NHC was a reality. The curses had been enacted by YHWH and realised by the people in some way, perhaps in several different instances throughout their history. Breaching the covenant signified devastating results upon the NHC, which in turn affected the Israelites' livelihood and participation in their cultic worship.

These curses beckon God's people to "return" to YHWH and remake the covenant. As in Lev 26 and Deut 28, these curses in Amos 4:6–9 were designed to alert God's people to their need for preparation (v. 12b). While the NHC does not assume an active role in this passage, her agricultural gifts are the means by which God's people maintain a right relationship with YHWH. Because humanity's violation of the covenant affected the NHC's fertility, humanity no longer had the proper means by which to return to YHWH. The text therefore implies humanity's return to YHWH will subsequently heal the NHC by returning rain and fertility to the land. This, in turn, will further heal humanity's relationship with YHWH via the provision of grain and oil for offerings. By humanity's restoration of their covenant with YHWH, the NHC is a mediator who has an eschatological role in the restoration of the cosmological order.

3. AMOS 8:4–14

³⁰⁰ There is, of course, evidence that these passages were written during the exilic or post-exilic periods. However, they are contextualised literarily as pre-exilic writings. It is due to this literary function that this judgement is made.

3.1. Introduction

While Amos 4:4–9 calls God’s people to faithful covenant-worship, Amos 8:4–14 accuses God’s people of profaning their covenant-worship. This abuse of the cultic system affects both the poor and the NHC. Following the accusation against the people in 8:4–8, the prophet issues three oracles of judgement in vv. 9–14. Each oracle begins with a phrase involving **דוּם**. Thus, 8:9–14 can be divided into three distinct judgement oracles: vv. 9–10, 11–12, 13–14. There is general consensus that 8:4–14 should be treated as one literary unit.³⁰¹ With the exception of the oracle in vv. 11–12, the NHC is a motif that binds this unit together.

3.2. Text and Translation

⁴Listen to this, you who swallow³⁰² the needy
and destroy³⁰³ the poor of the land, ⁵saying,
“When will the New Moon be past
that we may sell grain³⁰⁴
and the Sabbath
that we may trade wheat?”

Making the ephah small
and the shekel large,
falsifying the scales by deceit.

⁶Buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals.
Selling the chaff of the wheat.

שָׁמְעוּ-זאת הנֹשְׁאִים אֶבְיוֹן⁴
וְלִשְׁבִּית עֲנוּי- (עֲנוּי-) אֶרֶץ⁵ לֵאמֹר
מָתִי יַעֲבֹר הַחֹדֶשׁ
וְנִשְׁבִּירָה שָׁבֶר
וְהַשָּׁבֶת וְנִפְתָּחָה-בָּר

לְהַקְטִין אֵיפָה
וְלְהַגְדִּיל שֶׁקֶל
וְלַעֲוֹת מֵאֲזַנֵּי מִרְמָה
לְקַנּוֹת בַּכֶּסֶף דָּלִים⁶
וְאֶבְיוֹן בַּעֲבוּר נַעֲלִים
וּמִפֶּל בֶּר נִשְׁבִּיר

³⁰¹ Stuart, *WBC* 31:537; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 321–324. Paul counters vv. 9–10 should be considered a separate unit because of “on that day,” although he does concede it has logical continuity with v. 8; *Amos*, 262.

³⁰² While most translations read “trample,” “swallow” was chosen to align with the meaning of נֹשֵׂא (‘‘gasp,’’ ‘‘pant,’’ ‘‘swallow’’).

³⁰³ The root שָׁבַת typically means ‘‘cease’’ or ‘‘rest.’’ Its usage here is strange, and most translations choose ‘‘destroy.’’ This is probably a word play with Sabbath in the following line. Stuart’s translation of ‘‘eliminate’’ purposely links this verb to the next verse and fits the hifil construction. See *WBC* 31:381.

³⁰⁴ Contra Wolff, who argues this is an instance of paronomasia because שָׁבֶר and הַשְׁבִּיר have the same root. See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 321-2.

⁷YHWH has sworn by the pride of Jacob.
Surely I will not forget any of their deeds.
⁸Shall not the earth tremble for this
and everyone who mourns live in it?
And the Nile shall swell, all of it,
and heave and subside³⁰⁵ like the Nile³⁰⁶ of
Egypt.

⁹“And on that day,” says the Lord YHWH,
“that I will make the sun go down at noon
and I will darken the earth in the brightest
daylight.
¹⁰I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation.
I will bring sackcloth on every waist
and baldness on every head.
I will make it like mourning for an only son
and its end like a bitter day.

¹¹“Behold, the days are coming,” says the
Lord YHWH,
“that I will send a famine on the earth.
Not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water
but for hearing the words of YHWH.
And they shall wander from sea to sea
and from the north to the east.
They shall run back and forth seeking the
word of YHWH,
but shall not find it.

נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה בְּגִאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אִם-אֶשְׁכַּח לְנִצָּחַ⁷
כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם
הֲעַל זֹאת לֹא-תִרְגַּז הָאָרֶץ⁸
וְאָבַל כָּל-יוֹשֵׁב בָּהּ
וְעָלְתָה כָּאֵר כָּלָהּ
וְנִגְרְשָׁה וְנִשְׁקָה (וְנִשְׁקָעָה) כִּי־אֵוֶר מִצְרַיִם

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה⁹
וְהִבֵּאתִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בַּצָּהָרִים
וְהִחֲשַׁכְתִּי לְאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם אֹר
וְהִפַּכְתִּי חֲגִיקֵכֶם לְאָבֵל¹⁰
וְכָל-נְשִׁירֵיכֶם לְקִינָה
וְהָעֲלִיתִי עַל-כָּל-מִתְנַיִם שֹׁק
וְעַל-כָּל-רֹאשׁ קִרְחָה
וְשָׁמַתִּיהָ כְּאַבֵּל יָחִיד
וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ כִּיּוֹם מָר
הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נָאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה¹¹
וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ
לֹא-רָעָב לֶלֶחֶם וְלֹא-צָמָא לַמַּיִם
כִּי אִם-לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶת דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה
וְנָעוּ מֵיָם עַד-יָם וּמִצָּפוֹן¹²
וְעַד-מִזְרָח יִשׁוּטְטוּ
לִבְקֹשׁ אֶת-דְּבַר-יְהוָה וְלֹא יִמָּצְאוּ

³⁰⁵The Qere suggests the verb is *וְנִשְׁקָעָה* (“to sink”) instead of the Ketiv’s *וְנִשְׁקָה* (“to be watered”). The former suits the context.

³⁰⁶This passage utilises two variant spellings for “Nile.” Eidevall argues this is evidence of the MT’s “corruption.” See *Amos*, 217. Stuart also argues that this is a miscopy; *WBC* 31:382. Linville, however, argues that this spelling is a strategic wordplay. His theory is explored in more detail below.

¹³In that day the beautiful young women
and the young men
shall faint from thirst.

¹⁴Those who swear by the shame of
Samaria³⁰⁷ and you say,
'As your god lives, O Dan,'
and 'As the way of Beersheba lives,'
shall fall and never rise again."

¹³ביום ההוא
תתעלפנה הבתולת היפות
והבחורים בצמא
¹⁴הנשבעים באשמת שִׁמְרוֹן
ואֲמְרוּ חַי אֱלֹהֵיךָ דָן
וחַי דֶּרֶךְ בְּאֵר-שֶׁבַע
וְנָפְלוּ וְלֹא-יָקוּמוּ עוֹד

3.3. Themes and Motifs

3.3.1. Sin as Violation of the NHC

The accusation against the Israelites in 8:4–6 involves sin humans commit against other humans, particularly the poor. Yet, this sin involves the NHC, too. Dempsey observes a link between sin and suffering of the land in this passage.³⁰⁸ While humanity may not be sinning directly against the NHC, the NHC is implicated in the crime in several different ways. This is demonstrated through the phrases “poor of the land” (v. 4) and “Pride of Jacob” (v. 7). The accusation also involves the NHC indirectly, in the practice of unjustly selling her resources to the poor, even on sacred days.

First, the violation is against the “poor of the land,” a phrase that appears only a few places throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is used in 2 Kgs 24:14; 25:12 and Jer 52:16, where it functions in reference to “land” as the boundaries of the Israelite nation in the context of exile. Finally, this phrase references the NHC, or a general sense of “ground,” in Ezek 22:29. This latter usage is similar to how it is used here in Amos. This phrasing is curious, in that the construct seems to designate “land” as a description of the “poor” rather than as a geographical location. If this phrase were a geographical specification, we would expect the use of the ׁ preposition (as is the case in Deut 15:11; Jer 39:10; 47:7). Instead, “of the land”

³⁰⁷ Stuart argues the translation of אֲשִׁמַּת as “Ashimat” (a deity mentioned in 2 Kgs 17:30) does not fit the context, especially in its contrast with “Jacob’s pride” in v. 7. See WBC 31:382. This is disputed by Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 688.

³⁰⁸ Dempsey, *Hope Amid the Ruins*, 74.

seems to serve as a further description or identification. This description of the poor as “of the land” instead of “in the land” seems intentional, especially in light of the specific crimes involving the land that were committed against the poor. The phrase is a poignant critique of Israel’s context, as the “people of the land” lacked the land. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The construct relationship functions as an indication of possession or ownership. The sin in question concerns the equal access to land for all people. According to Stuart, the economic system described in 8:5–6 indicates the poor were deprived of access to the land and its natural resources.³⁰⁹ One of the terms of the covenant was land possession, and this ownership was meant to be preserved across successive generations (Num 26:53–56; 33:53–54; 36:1–12). That the poor were dependent upon the rich to sell them grain and wheat indicates the rich had deprived the poor of their share of the land.³¹⁰ The poor were no longer self-sustaining, but were at the mercy of the rich’s system of economic exploitation, which Jeremias calls a “methodical destruction of the independent existence of small farmers and tradespeople.”³¹¹ With no access to the land to grow their own crops, the poor had no choice but to purchase food from the rich. The poor were even deprived of the gleanings that, by law, were rightfully theirs to claim (Lev 19:9–10; Deut 24:19–21). Davis poignantly describes this system as a “more ‘efficient’ system of commodity-driven agriculture.”³¹² Thus, the term “poor of the land” could be a purposefully provocative phrase, critical of the ways in which the poor no longer had this God-given relationship to the land. This phrase is a reminder that the land, a component of the NHC, was intended for all people.

³⁰⁹ Stuart, *WBC* 31:537–8.

³¹⁰ Thang, *Theology of the Land*, 136.

³¹¹ *Amos*, 147.

³¹² Davis, *Scripture*, 124.

The second phrase that implicates the NHC in these offences is “the Pride of Jacob” in v. 7. This wording is ambiguous and understood in several different ways by scholars. It appears in Amos 6:8, where it is frequently interpreted literally as “arrogance.” If it is used in the same manner here in 8:7, then YHWH appears to be making a sarcastic oath on Israel’s stubbornness.³¹³ Just as Israel will not change in her arrogance, so YHWH’s oath will remain unalterable.

It is important to note, however, that God consistently swears by God’s self, whether via God’s name, right hand, holiness, etc. (Gen 22:16; Ps 89:35; Isa 62:8; Jer 22:5; 44:26; 49:13; 51:14; Ezek 20:42; 36:7; 44:12; Amos 4:2; 6:8). In fact, YHWH swears by YHWH’s self in Amos 4:2 and 6:8. It can therefore be concluded that this “pride” is something of solemn worth to YHWH and not a facetious, ironic oath. Such a solemn oath gives weight to the words in v. 7b: “I will never forget anything they have done.”

Outside of Amos, “pride” refers to majesty (Nah 2:2; Ps 47:5 [4]). In Ps 47:5 [4], it specifically refers to the “land” as the subject of pride. Because of these specific instances, Jeremias and Stuart both understand “pride” in Amos 8:7 to mean “land.”³¹⁴ YHWH is thus swearing by a valuable possession, the gift of the “sworn land” to YHWH’s people.³¹⁵ Understanding this phrase as “land” fits within the context of the detailed accusation, in which the violation against the poor includes the violation of the land. If this phrase functions in such a way, then it raises several different questions about YHWH’s relationship with the land. How is the NHC involved in this oath? Is she simply an object upon which to swear, or could this oath be a promise to enact judgement on the NHC’s behalf, not just on

³¹³ So Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 328; Paul, *Amos*, 260.

³¹⁴ Jeremias, *Amos*, 149; Stuart, *WBC* 31:537.

³¹⁵ Stuart, *WBC* 31:537.

behalf of the poor? This latter understanding seems likely based upon the judgement that follows: the NHC becomes the primary instigator of retribution in vv. 7–14.

The prophet specifies that the Israelites' particular sin was committed on two sacred days: the New Moon and the Sabbath. The Mosaic tradition restricts buying and selling on the Sabbath (Exod 20:8; 23:12; 34:21; Deut 5:12–15), but there are more sinful dynamics at work here than mere marketing. Several different laws in the Pentateuch also command Sabbath for the land (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:1–7). The people were commanded to enjoy the land's abundance and to share its yield with others, particularly with the poor and marginalised (Lev 25:6–7). The land was provision for both landowners and their servants. This was because the land belonged to YHWH; as YHWH's possession, YHWH could designate its proper usage (Lev 25:23). Under Sabbath law, the land was for the benefit of both the rich and the poor.

While there is no command to cease work on New Moon festivals, the New Moon and Sabbath are often mentioned together (2 Kgs 4:23; 1 Chr 23:21; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33; Ps 81:3; Isa 1:13–14; Ezek 46:1; Hos 2:13). Most notably, two prophets contemporary to Amos pair these sacred days (Isa 1:13–14; Hos 2:13). Niehaus thus concludes that ceasing from work was a custom for the New Moon, although not a definitive commandment.³¹⁶ The New Moon festival was a time of celebration, and like the Sabbath, was a time of worship via offerings (2 Chron 8:12–13; Neh 10:33). Since the poor were deprived of their access to the land and her resources, they were thereby forced to purchase their offerings from those who owned the land, and by extension those who owned the grain necessary for offerings. That the landowners were using deceptive practices to sell the land's resources means they were cheating the poor out of life-giving fellowship with YHWH.

³¹⁶ Jeffrey Niehaus, "Amos," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas Edward McColmskey (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 470.

The land, intended to be a gift to all, was a commodity only the rich could afford. Exploiting the land, an extension of the NHC, in such a way diminished its value: no longer was it the “pride of Jacob” but instead was an object to be used greedily against the most vulnerable. That the Israelites continued to work and use the NHC on Sabbath and sacred festivals demonstrates an attitude of control and manipulation toward the NHC.³¹⁷ This improper use of the NHC demands justice.³¹⁸

3.3.2. The Effect of Sin on the NHC

The NHC is not only violated in Israel’s transgressions against the poor, but she is also the primary entity who enacts judgement. This seems fitting as a form of poetic justice; the NHC may have involuntarily been brought into the sin, but she now brings the judgement demanded by the people’s sins. Dempsey comments these series of judgements are a “direct result of God’s action,” but the NHC appears to have some autonomy as well.³¹⁹ In the text, YHWH is the one who causes the NHC to react in vv. 9–10, but there is no indication of YHWH’s involvement in v. 8. The land’s “trembling” appears to be a natural reaction on the part of the NHC, consistent with her “mourning” in Amos 1:2. This series of judgements is a partnership between YHWH and the NHC: YHWH causes her to react, but the NHC also reacts of her own volition.

The first action of the NHC is the “trembling” of the land. Scholars are divided on what this imagery entails. Jeremias, Wolff, and Paul believe this “trembling” is an allusion to a literal earthquake.³²⁰ They both cite the numerous earthquake allusions throughout the

³¹⁷ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 97.

³¹⁸ Based upon the prominence of legal codes that demand justice for the landless (Exod 21:1–11; 22:1–4; Deut 15:12–18), Davis believes abuse of the land was a frequent sin during the monarchic period. See *Scripture*, 210.

³¹⁹ Dempsey, *Hope Amid the Ruins*, 75.

³²⁰ Jeremias, *Amos*, 149; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 329; Paul, *Amos*, 260.

book of Amos (1:1; 2:13; 9:5a). Nogalski also believes this verb implies an earthquake, although he considers it to be a theophany motif alerting the listeners that YHWH's judgement is on the horizon.³²¹ He suggests this image foreshadows the similar motifs that appear in the hymn in 9:5.³²² On the other hand, Stuart argues an earthquake interpretation relies too heavily on 1:1; he believes this word alone does not suggest such a specific catastrophe.³²³ However, the word אַבַּל also provides a link between all of the potential earthquake imagery: אַבַּל appears in all three earthquake instances (1:1–2; 8:8; 9:5).³²⁴ Each time the earth trembles, the response is אַבַּל. In 1:1–2, it is the NHC who “mourns,” but here in 8:8 and 9:5, it is the inhabitants of the NHC who “mourn.”

The second response of the NHC is a catastrophic flood, likened to the flooding of the Nile River (v. 8b). There is dissension among scholarship as to whether the Nile's waters should be treated as a separate ecological curse or as a simile for the earthquake. Story pairs the earthquake imagery in v. 8a to the imagery in the following line in v. 8b; he believes the Nile's undulation imagery is a simile to describe the shaking of the ground.³²⁵ Paul, too, treats the flood as a simile, arguing the verbs suggest the swaying of the land during an earthquake.³²⁶ Jeremias, Wolff, and Gowan offer similar interpretations.³²⁷ On the other hand, in his examination of treaty-curses, Hillers lists Amos 8:8 as an example of a flood curse.³²⁸ Marlow also treats this verse as a separate catastrophic event, but suggests the flood waters are the consequence of the earthquake; a catastrophic earthquake would cause the waters to rise and fall.³²⁹ Although plausible, this cause-and-effect relationship is unclear

³²¹ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 346.

³²² Ibid., 436.

³²³ Stuart, *WBC* 31:537.

³²⁴ 2:13 is not included as an allusion because it is much more speculative.

³²⁵ Cullen I. K. Story, “Amos: Prophet of Praise,” *VT* 30 (1980): 77.

³²⁶ Paul, *Amos*, 260–261.

³²⁷ Jeremias, *Amos*, 149; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 329; Gowan, *NIB* 7:417.

³²⁸ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 70–1.

³²⁹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 145.

and may not reflect the mythic-poetic nature of this segment. This flood may be an anticipated event at the time of writing, or perhaps it already occurred. Either way, it is a poetic allusion to YHWH's ability to reverse YHWH's creative acts, as seen in the ancient flood tradition (Gen 6–9).

Linville treats the Nile imagery as a flood curse and observes the peculiarity of two different spellings of "Nile" in v. 8.³³⁰ In the first appearance, the Nile is spelled כְּאֵר, which literally means "as the light." The second mention, however, is the conventional spelling of נִיאוֹר. Linville suggests these two variants are a clever word play that precludes the following oracle in v. 9. The land will be drowned with water, just as the "light of day" will be smothered "on that day."³³¹ Paul notes an eclipse was understood as a direct result of a god's wrath in the ANE world; the disappearance of daylight would have a similar effect here.³³² YHWH has the ability both to create and to de-create, and the de-creation of flood waters and an eclipse indicate his fierce judgement.

Finally, the last way the NHC responds to humanity's sin is by a drought in v. 13. Unlike the figurative "drought" of the words of the Lord in vv. 11–12, the drought in v. 13 appears to be a literal thirst.³³³ The phrase "in that day" introduces a new oracle, breaking from the previous one. The word for "faint" (עָלֵף) is the same word used in Jonah 4:8, where the prophet grew weary from the heat of the sun and winds. This particular drought would be so intense in nature that not even those in their prime would survive; everyone, including the young and strong, would succumb to it.

³³⁰ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 154.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Paul, *Amos*, 262–3.

³³³ Gowan, *NIB* 7:419.

Davis notices the irony of the people's punishment for exploiting the NHC. The prophet announces the land will be stripped from Israel's possession in 7:11, 17.³³⁴ The people are punished by being cut off from the very land they were abusing. Israel's punishment, then, becomes the NHC's deliverance.

3.3.3. Cosmological Judgement

The reaction of the NHC is so pervasive that it has cosmological effects; Israel's sin affects the entire ordered cosmos. As observed in the previous section, all of the NHC responds. Both the heavens ("the sun" in v. 9) and the earth (the earthquake in v. 8) wreak catastrophe (cf. Joel 2:10). Together, this evokes a common merismic phrase ("the heavens and the earth"), indicating the totality of the created order.³³⁵ In addition, water covers the "whole land," an image that conjures YHWH's triumph over the mythological waters of chaos in the first creation account (Gen 1:6–10). All three of these judgements have ties to the first creation account, indicating these disastrous feats are part of a de-creation of the cosmic order.

Linville acknowledges these judgements are universal in nature and observes the irony of their appearance right after mention of the New Moon festival (v. 5).³³⁶ The Israelites' festivals were meant to illustrate the union between heaven and earth, but here in Amos they only demonstrate the separation that now exists between God and humanity.³³⁷ Jeremias also believes this judgement extends to the entire created order.³³⁸ Nogalski, however, divides the scope of the judgement into two domains: the land of Israel in 8:8 and

³³⁴ Davis, *Scripture*, 127.

³³⁵ Paul, *Amos*, 262.

³³⁶ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 154.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Jeremias, *Amos*, 149.

the entire cosmos in 8:9.³³⁹ This division is unnecessary, as the flood imagery also appears to be universal in nature. While the oracle mentions the Nile River, the origin for the flood is not a literal geographical location (as demonstrated by the כ preposition, which designates a comparison). Rather, the waters threaten to cover the “whole land,” a phrase that harkens back to the flood tradition in Gen 6–9. Jeremiah 46:8 also utilises the rising waters of the Nile as a force that could cover the entire earth. It must be acknowledged that the meaning of ארץ is often ambiguous and its scope difficult to discern; yet, the universal effect of the NHC’s retribution in Amos 8:9 indicates the flood, too, is an act of judgement that extends beyond the boundaries of the nation of Israel. Further, both the flood and the darkness judgements anticipate the destruction of the temple and the ensuing effects in Amos 9:1–6, an event that has devastating cosmic consequences.

3.3.4. Eschatological Renewal

The oracles pronounce cosmological destruction for the Israelites’ sin, yet they also subtly suggest hope for eschatological renewal. Most scholars note the devastating effects of the flood imagery in 8:8, but Linville recalls that the flooding of the Nile was often a symbol of life for those in the ANE.³⁴⁰ While Nile flood waters certainly caused devastation, they also brought new life; when the waters receded, fertile soil and vegetation flourished.³⁴¹ Indeed, the Nile was the very symbol of life for the Egyptians.³⁴² A famine deals more destruction than a flood, as a drought produces no life after it has ended. In their oracles against Egypt,

³³⁹ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 346.

³⁴⁰ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 154.

³⁴¹ Gerald E. Kadish, “Seasonality and the Name of the Nile,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 25 (1988): 187.

³⁴² The Egyptian god of fertility, Hapi, embodied the flooding of the Nile as a source of life and vitality. See Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 153.

several of the prophets curse Egypt with the drying up of the Nile River (Isa 19:5–7; Ezek 29:9; 30:12; Zech 10:11). In fact, with the exception of Amos, none of the prophets curse the Nile with flooding. Rather, the surplus of the Nile waters is used to demonstrate Egypt's strength and dominance (Jer 46:8; Nah 3:8). This mention of the Nile's waters may be a creative reversal—that which is a source of life will ironically wreak destruction—but it may also be an allusion to eschatological hope. One of the themes in Amos is the de-creation and re-creation of the heavens and the earth, and this judgement appears to be accomplishing both.³⁴³

Life from the waters of chaos was not a concept unique to the Egyptians; the very birth of the nation of Israel was thought to originate from their crossing of the Sea of Reeds (Exod 15:1–18; Ps 77:14–20). Their “birth” out of Egypt was often connected to YHWH's mythical victory over the waters of chaos.³⁴⁴ Anderson believes this mythical birth of their nation was the Israelites' first conception of “creation”; creation as the cosmological origins of the universe was secondary in Israel's tradition.³⁴⁵ One of Israel's oldest texts, “The Song of the Sea” in Exod 15:1–18, likens YHWH's victory over the Egyptians to the ANE's traditions concerning deities' battle with the mythical waters of chaos.³⁴⁶ According to Enns, the biblical people “understood the exodus as another ‘act of creation,’ which even included a ‘cosmic battle.’”³⁴⁷ This flooding over the entire NHC, then, may entail a re-birthing. Just as YHWH saved and redeemed his people through the waters of chaos, so can YHWH redeem and save them again.

³⁴³ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 154.

³⁴⁴ See Pss 114; 135; 136. See also M. S. Heiser, “Chaos,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 85; Pete Enns, “Yahweh, Creation, and the Cosmic Battle,” *BioLogos*, 2 February 2010, <https://biologos.org/articles/yahweh-creation-and-the-cosmic-battle>.

³⁴⁵ Anderson, *Creation*, 49–50.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁴⁷ Enns, “Yahweh.”

3.4. Summary

In this accusation and series of judgement oracles, the NHC is both the means by which the sin is committed and the means by which the judgement is dispensed. The “poor of the land” ironically did not have access to the land. The opening indictment criticises the affluent for hoarding the land and dishonestly profiting from its resources. The land, a God-given term of the covenant for all God’s people, was severely diminished as a commodity and rendered accessible for only the most elite in society. Because of this distribution of the land, the poor were only able to give offerings to YHWH by paying an unfair price for grain. In this way, the rich in Amos’ society were using the NHC as a vehicle to swindle those who were most vulnerable.

In addition to implicating the NHC in these sinful practices, the rich were also harming the NHC. In pursuit of more wealth, the Israelites continued to buy and sell on both the Sabbath and New Moon festivals, two sacred days set aside as times of rest and worship. According to the Mosaic tradition, the NHC was entitled to rest (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:1–25). Sabbath reminds God’s people that the NHC is not a product to be consumed for their own gain; the NHC has its own God-given rights.³⁴⁸ Through Sabbath, God’s people are in covenant with the NHC.

Because the NHC was unjustly implicated as a participant in the people’s sin, it is only fitting that she is also an arbiter of justice. The NHC assumes both an active role and a passive role in judgement. In v. 8, the NHC appears to be reacting of her own volition, as seen in Amos 1:2. In this way, the NHC liberates herself from the tyranny of humanity by forcibly removing them. However, in vv. 8–10, the prophet specifies it is YHWH who causes

³⁴⁸ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 59.

these destructive consequences via the NHC. These dual roles indicate YHWH and the NHC work in partnership to judge humanity and deliver the NHC from abuse.

The judgement the NHC enacts is cosmological. Nogalski notes the significance of the judgement in 8:8 as the pivot point in this literary unit.³⁴⁹ He describes v. 8 as the “center of theological summary between the fourth and fifth visions.”³⁵⁰ The “whole land” is flooded and the sun darkens, consequences that affect the entire cosmos. Yet, the flood imagery hints at eschatological hope. The flooding of the Nile was a symbol of life and fertility; it only became dangerous in extreme amounts of flooding, as indicated here in the text. However, the flooding of the Nile always brought new life after the waters receded. It is thus possible the judgement imagery projects eschatological renewal after YHWH’s punishment. This imagery is consistent with the Israelites’ historical pattern of salvific hope. In the beginning, YHWH battled the primordial waters of chaos (Gen 1:6–9). He then redeemed Israel from Egypt through the same waters of chaos (Pss 114; 135; 136). Now in Amos there is hope that God will once again restore his people through these waters of retribution.

4. AMOS 9:1–6

4.1. Introduction

Amos 9:1–4 is the fifth and final vision in the book of Amos and functions as its own distinct unit. Since the hymn in vv. 5–6 contains additional content pertinent to the NHC, these verses have been included for analysis alongside vv. 1–4. Because there are structural and stylistic differences that distinguish 9:1–4 from the four visions that precede it (7:1–9; 8:1–3), Eidevall argues 9:1–4 does not continue the vision sequences and should be treated

³⁴⁹ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 348.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

distinctly.³⁵¹ Another possibility is 9:1–4 departs from the pattern of the previous visions so as to draw attention and heighten tension. The vision begins suddenly without an introductory formula, emphasising the horrifying judgement scene.

The trend in scholarship is to ascribe the cultic location in this vision passage to a specific place, with Bethel as the most agreed-upon location.³⁵² Gowan and Wolff, on the other hand, believe it is impossible to determine the date and location of this vision, although Wolff does concede its content seems to concern the destruction of the shrine at Bethel.³⁵³ Linville, however, convincingly argues this temple scene is not set in a specific place but is a paradigm of YHWH's cosmic temple.³⁵⁴ Earthly temples are merely miniature models of the heavenly realm, and the upheaval in this passage has drastic, cosmic effects characteristic of what could only be wrought from the sacred realm.³⁵⁵ The mythic language present in this passage also suggests this vision is a glimpse into the heavenly realm.³⁵⁶ Simkins explains the prophets often merged historic accounts with metaphoric imagery, creating a unique, mythical language.³⁵⁷ Thus, this cosmic temple is both “anywhere” and “everywhere.”³⁵⁸ Jeremias, too, notes this temple has “cosmic dimensions” that extend beyond the confines of the earth.³⁵⁹

³⁵¹ Eidevall, *Amos*, 224. Jeremias, on the other hand, argues that the five visions parallel the five nations in the opening oracles against the nations (OAN). See Jeremias, *Book of Amos*, 158.

³⁵² Paul, *Amos*, 274; Timothy Green, *Hosea-Micah*, NBBC (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2014), 299; Aaron Schart, “The Fifth Vision of Amos in Context,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, eds. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 56; Eidevall, *Amos*, 225.

³⁵³ Gowan, *NIB* 7:421; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 338–9.

³⁵⁴ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 159.

³⁵⁵ Levenson recognizes the earthly temple as a miniature model for the heavenly realm. Levenson, *Creation*, 89–90.

³⁵⁶ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 159.

³⁵⁷ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 211.

³⁵⁸ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 159–60.

³⁵⁹ *Amos*, 156.

In addition to the location, there is also dispute about whether YHWH is standing beside the altar or upon the altar.³⁶⁰ Because the same preposition is used in 7:7 to designate “on the wall” (עַל-חֹמֶת), it seems appropriate to translate it consistently in 9:1 as “on the altar.” YHWH’s presence upon the altar, while unconventional, does evoke dramatic imagery and climactically contrasts with 7:7. In addition to the ominous imagery, YHWH’s stance on the altar designates YHWH assumes a priestly role (1 Kgs 13:1).³⁶¹

4.2. Text and Translation

¹I saw the Lord standing upon³⁶² the altar
and he said,
“Strike³⁶³ the tops of the columns and the
thresholds will shake.
Sever³⁶⁴ them at the head of them all.
And the remainder I will slaughter with the
sword.
No remnant of them will be able to flee;
no survivors shall escape.

רָאִיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי נֹצֵב עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ¹
וַיֹּאמֶר
הִן הַכְּפֹתוֹר וַיִּרְעָשׁוּ הַסָּפִים
וּבְצַעַם בְּרֹאשׁ כָּלֶם וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם
בַּחֶרֶב אֶקְרַג
לֹא-יָנוּס לָהֶם נָס
וְלֹא-יִמָּלֵט לָהֶם פְּלִיט

²“If they dig down to Sheol,
from there my hand will take them.
If they ascend to heaven,
from there I will bring them down.
³If they hide on the top of Carmel,

אִם-יַחְתְּרוּ בְּשְׂאוֹל²
מִשָּׁם יָדִי תִקְחֵם
וְאִם-יַעֲלוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
מִשָּׁם אוֹרִידֵם

³⁶⁰ Some scholars prefer to translate this preposition “beside.” See Paul, *Amos*, 274 and Mays, *Amos*, 153. Others translate it as “upon.” See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 336; James R. Linville, “Visions and Voices: Amos 7-9,” *Biblica* 80 (1999): 37; Jeremias, *Amos*, 153.

³⁶¹ See Jeremias, *Amos*, 155.

³⁶² There is dispute whether YHWH stood “by” or “upon” the altar. The choice of “upon” will be explained in the analysis.

³⁶³ The lack of a clear addressee has prompted several scholars to either change the verbal forms or propose text corruption. These theories are explored in detail below. The LXX maintains these imperative forms.

³⁶⁴ בָּצַע is a violent word and challenging to translate. Its root is used in contexts of weaving, i.e. cutting a thread. See Paul, *Amos*, 275.

from there I will hunt them down and take them.

If they hide from my eyes on the floor of the sea,

from there I will command the serpent and he will bite them.

⁴If they go into captivity before their enemies,

from there I will command the sword and it will kill them.

I will fix my eyes upon them for evil, not for good.”

וְאִם-יִחַבְאוּ בְּרֹאשׁ הַכְּרָמִל
מִשָּׁם אֲחַפֵּשׁ וּלְקַחְתִּים
וְאִם-יִסְתָּרוּ מִנֶּגֶד עֵינַי בְּקִרְקַע הַיָּם
מִשָּׁם אֲצַוֶּה אֶת-הַנָּחָשׁ וַיִּנְשָׁכֶם
וְאִם-יֵלְכוּ בְּשָׁבִי לִפְנֵי אֲבִיָּהֶם⁴
מִשָּׁם אֲצַוֶּה אֶת-הַחֶרֶב וְהִרְגָתָם
וְשִׁמְתִי עֵינַי עֲלֵיהֶם
לְרָעָה וְלֹא לְטוֹבָה

⁵The Lord, YHWH of Hosts,
the one who touches the earth and it
quakes.³⁶⁵

All who dwell in it mourn.

It rises like the Nile and sinks like the Nile of Egypt.

⁶The one who builds his stairway³⁶⁶ into the heavens

establishes his column³⁶⁷ upon the earth.

The one who summons the waters of the sea
pours them upon the face of the earth.

YHWH is his name.

וְאֵדֵנִי יְהוָה הַצִּבְאוֹת⁵
הַנּוֹגֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ וְתִמּוֹג
וְאָבְלוּ כָל-יוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ
וְעָלְתָה כִּיָּאֵר כְּלָה וְשָׁקַעָה כִּיָּאֵר
מִצָּרִים
הַבּוֹנֶה בִּשְׁמַיִם מַעְלֹתָיו⁶
וְאֹגְדָתוֹ עַל-אֶרֶץ יִסְדָּהּ
הַקֹּרֵא לַמַּי-הָיִם
וַיִּשְׁפֹּכֶם עַל-פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ
יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ

4.3. Themes and Motifs

4.3.1. Cosmic Setting/Implications

Amos 9:1–6 alternates between destruction in the heavenly realm and destruction in the earthly realm. As indicated above, this vision’s setting is the cosmic temple, which has ramifications for the earthly domain. The events that transpire in this mythical, heavenly temple are felt throughout the entire cosmological order. The striking of the columns parallels the striking of the earth; the shaking of the threshold in the temple parallels the

³⁶⁵ מוֹג can mean “quake” or “melt.” Because of the imagery that follows, this translation chose “quake.” Cf. the LXX, which reads “shakes.”

³⁶⁶ This follows the Qere and Greek readings.

³⁶⁷ אֹגְדָה refers to items that are firmly held together. For example, a “bunch” of hyssop (Exod 12:22); a “company” of soldiers (2 Sam 2:25); “cords” of the yoke (Isa 58:6). This is the only instance where it refers to YHWH’s dwelling place.

shaking of the earth (v. 5).³⁶⁸ What occurs in the heavenly realm also occurs in the earthly realm. Jeremias observes that the collapse of the cosmic temple signals the breach of humanity's relationship with YHWH.³⁶⁹ Both the sacred and the profane are intrinsically connected, and this connection is sustained by YHWH. If, however, humanity chooses to sever this relationship, then they reap the effects of this divorce from heaven and earth.³⁷⁰

There are also cosmic parallels between the locations where the humans try to hide in vv. 2–4. Wolff recognises these four locations (Sheol, heaven, mountains, sea) as the four-part layout of the cosmos.³⁷¹ Together, these four locations represent the totality of the cosmos, both mythical and physical. Sheol and heaven were realms of myth in the ancient Near East. Sheol was thought in some traditions to be a sphere outside of even YHWH's reach (Isa 38:18; Pss 6:6; 88:6, 11–13; 115:17).³⁷² Carmel and the sea are two locations in the earthly sphere, although Anderson and Freedman rightly point out that the sea could also be categorised as a place of myth.³⁷³ As a mountain, Carmel would have been considered a place where the human and divine worlds intersected. Yet this sacred space was also compromised; YHWH has already declared judgement upon it in Amos 1:2. Jeremias observes heaven in v. 2 and Carmel in v. 3 parallel each other as elevated locations.³⁷⁴ Similarly, Sheol (v. 2) and the sea (v. 3) parallel each other as “low” places.³⁷⁵ The pairings (Sheol and heaven; Carmel and sea) also contrast with each other. While YHWH is the main arbiter of judgement in 9:1–6, Marlow does note how the NHC seems to cooperate with

³⁶⁸ Schart, “The Fifth Vision,” 56.

³⁶⁹ Jeremias, *Amos*, 157.

³⁷⁰ See comments about humanity's agency in this judgement in the following section.

³⁷¹ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 341.

³⁷² Paul suggests the prophet is employing a clever play on words here. Hosea 13:14 and Ps 49:16 allude to the “hand of Sheol,” a counterpart of YHWH's hand in v. 2. Thus, YHWH's hand will snatch them from Sheol's hand. See Paul, *Amos*, 277.

³⁷³ Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 837.

³⁷⁴ Jeremias, *Amos*, 157.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

YHWH's search for sinful humanity.³⁷⁶ She aids YHWH by denying humanity refuge, exposing humanity to YHWH's reach.

The destruction that occurs in the heavenly realm overflows into all spheres of the cosmos. Schart explains the stability of the entire world depends on the structural integrity of a deity's dwelling place.³⁷⁷ Thus, if something as significant as YHWH's heavenly temple collapses, the very stability of the entire cosmos is in danger. It is no surprise, then, that the effects of the sanctuary's collapse are felt once again in the NHC (vv. 5–6).

4.3.2. The Impact of Humanity's Sin Upon the Cosmic Order

The vision in 9:1–4 contrasts with the previous visions in the book of Amos. In this instance, there is no dialogue between YHWH and the prophet and there are no warnings about consequences for the people's sin. Instead, YHWH issues a command from upon the altar to enact YHWH's judgement. The imperative verbs in v. 1 have given many commentators pause, as it is unclear whom YHWH is addressing. Several scholars are reluctant to attribute this command to the prophet, as they believe it is alarming for someone besides YHWH to dispense divine judgement.³⁷⁸ If this were a symbolic act, the reader would expect an interpretation to follow, as is consistent with other prophetic traditions.³⁷⁹ The command could be directed to a heavenly host, although there is no mention of such an entity here or elsewhere in Amos.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Marlow, "The Other Prophet!," 78.

³⁷⁷ Schart, "The Fifth Vision," 57.

³⁷⁸ Jeremias notes there is no precedent for this in *Amos*, 155. See also Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 334.

³⁷⁹ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 337.

³⁸⁰ Contra Anderson and Freedman, who conclude without textual evidence there is a heavenly being present; *Amos*, 835.

In their hesitancy to name Amos as the actor, many scholars have proposed emendations.³⁸¹ Jeremias and Wolff conclude the verbs are a transmission error.³⁸² Jeremias argues YHWH is the subject of the verbs based upon the first-person verb “I shall kill” (אהרג).³⁸³ Wolff and Soggin change the command הָךְ to וַיִּךְ (“he smote”) so as to make the actor YHWH.³⁸⁴ Wolff then moves וַיִּאֲמָר so YHWH is addressing not the prophet but the columns to be demolished.³⁸⁵ While Nogalski believes YHWH is the one who dispenses this judgement, he does not alter the text to reflect this conclusion.³⁸⁶ Anderson and Freedman also preserve the text, but they suggest the acting agent is either the heavenly court, the sword mentioned in vv. 1, 4, or the serpent in v. 3.³⁸⁷

A more likely approach is to accept the text in the present form and view the command as an address to the prophet.³⁸⁸ Mays and Gowan believe that while Amos is the one addressed, the imperatives are rhetorical and ultimately imply YHWH’s agency.³⁸⁹ Linville, however, convincingly argues Amos is the one who strikes the temple’s columns in this vision. While Amos represents YHWH to YHWH’s people, he also represents the collective people to YHWH. Thus, it is possible Amos is functioning as humanity’s representative in this vision.³⁹⁰ In his examination of Amos 7–9, Linville persuasively concludes “the character of the prophet is used as a tool . . . to aid in the reader’s

³⁸¹ For other variants not mentioned here, see Rudolph, *Amos*, 240–1; J. Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos: A Translation and Commentary* (Kiribati: SCM Press, 1987), 119–20.

³⁸² Wolff argues this action is not something a prophet has the authority to perform; only YHWH is suitable for such a task as destroying a sanctuary. See *Joel and Amos*, 337.

³⁸³ Jeremias, *Amos*, 156.

³⁸⁴ Soggin, *Amos*, 119–20; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 334. Soggin recognizes, however, an emendation is unnecessary, as the text is coherent as it is. That the LXX includes imperative forms like the MT is also noteworthy.

³⁸⁵ “[He smote] the capital so that thresholds shook. [Then he said]. . .” See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 334.

³⁸⁶ Nogalski calls Amos a “passive observer” who is only giving a report of the destruction. See *The Book of the Twelve*, 348.

³⁸⁷ Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 835, 839.

³⁸⁸ Scharf, “The Fifth Vision,” 46. He admits it could also be interpreted as YHWH. See also Paul, *Amos*, 274.

³⁸⁹ Mays, *Amos*, 153; Gowan, *NIB* 7:421.

³⁹⁰ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 161.

self-identification of the text, to feel the terror of the divine word.”³⁹¹ The readers are encouraged to see themselves in the literary persona of Amos.³⁹² The people’s collective sin has reached a breaking point; Israel’s sin has become heaped so high it strikes the cosmic temple’s columns, sending ruin upon themselves. Humanity is responsible for the judgement that befalls them. If this interpretation is correct, then it exhibits a cause-and-effect relationship. Humanity’s sin has an effect not just on humanity’s judgement, but also on the entire cosmic order.

4.3.3. Chaos and De-creation

Amos, representative of collective humanity, strikes YHWH’s cosmic temple and unleashes a chain of events that affects the entire cosmic order. Heaven has collapsed, and its disastrous effects seep into the very structure of the earth. In fact, Paas suggests the column Amos strikes is the axis between heaven and earth.³⁹³ In ancient cosmogony, it was believed temples were entry points into the divine realm; some even constructed stairs so as to connect to heaven.³⁹⁴ In this view, if the structural integrity of the temple is compromised, then both the land and all who dwell in it are doomed. Since the temple was the source of a land’s stability and fertility, its destruction ensures chaos will befall the cosmological order.³⁹⁵ The temple’s ruins rain down upon the earth, creating a “cosmic upheaval of both land and

³⁹¹ Linville, “Visions and Voices,” 41.

³⁹² Linville recognises the futility of investigating a “historical prophet” and instead examines the prophet as a literary device in which the readers are to project themselves. See “Visions and Voices,” 23–4.

³⁹³ Paas, *Creation*, 294–5.

³⁹⁴ Walton, *Ancient*, 118–119.

³⁹⁵ Scharf, “The Fifth Vision,” 51; Jeremias, *Amos*, 157.

sea.”³⁹⁶ The NHC descends into chaos and subsequent images of de-creation abound in vv. 5–6.

The hymn in vv. 5–6 has many similarities to 4:13 and 5:8–9. Since 5:8b and 9:6b are identical, scholars such as Watts have suggested this hymn was well-known outside of Amos’ use.³⁹⁷ Stuart believes Amos is either repeating this segment of the hymn again in 9:8b or the hymn had this repetitious stanza.³⁹⁸ Möller points out that the hymns in Amos do not function as doxology, as some have proposed.³⁹⁹ Rather, the hymns function as poetic affirmations of YHWH’s judgements. Because of this, Möller believes Amos is quoting this well-known hymn ironically, to emphasise judgement.⁴⁰⁰ This is consistent with the many clever reversals the prophet employs throughout the book.

Regardless of whether it had a history prior to Amos, this hymn also repeats the de-creation themes of earthquake and flood waters as in 8:8. Rather than merely the NHC, “all who dwell” on the earth mourn. This contrasts with only the NHC mourning in 1:2. Marlow points out that this phrase includes the NHC as well.⁴⁰¹ Despite the parallels with other texts, it is clear this particular cycle is a “superlative of the other two hymns.”⁴⁰² This stanza is the final culmination of all of the judgement seen in the book of Amos.

In light of the temple’s collapse, Linville argues an earthquake is too narrow an interpretation for the destruction occurring. The collapse does not just shake the earth; it shakes the entire cosmos.⁴⁰³ In 8:8, it was the NHC who initiated the judgement; this time it is YHWH who “touches” the earth to enact this chain of events (9:5). Most scholars translate

³⁹⁶ Paul, *Amos*, 280.

³⁹⁷ John D.W. Watts, “An Old Hymn,” *JNES* 15 (1956): 33–34.

³⁹⁸ Stuart, *NBC* 31:537.

³⁹⁹ Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 116.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 145.

⁴⁰² Stefan Paas, “Seeing and Singing: Visions and Hymns in the Book of Amos,” *VT* 52 (2002): 259.

⁴⁰³ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 161.

מוג as “quake,” but the verb can also connote melting.⁴⁰⁴ Whether translated “quake” or “melt,” the verb communicates an intensification from the land’s previous state of “trembling” (8:8).⁴⁰⁵ Both YHWH’s direct involvement and the heightened verb מוג seem to signal an increase in severity from the judgement. Marlow observes “the evoking of the created world in the context of YHWH’s judgement against the people suggests a moral order built into the very structure of creation.”⁴⁰⁶

YHWH also commands the sea and its serpent to enact judgement against God’s people. Wolff rightly identifies the sea as the “deified power of chaos” and the serpent as the “mythical embodiment of the sea’s inimical power.”⁴⁰⁷ Yet, these two embodiments of chaos submit to YHWH’s sovereignty. The sea dragon has become YHWH’s “plaything” and servant (cf. Isa 27:1; 51:9–10; Job 12:13).⁴⁰⁸ They are not hostile forces acting on their own terms, but are YHWH’s servants who respond to divine directives. Paas notes YHWH “summons” (קרא) the waters of the sea, a verb used only with reference to judgement upon the NHC throughout the book of Amos.⁴⁰⁹ He suggests קרא may also imply “name-giving,” a creative act of ordering the NHC.⁴¹⁰ Instead of bringing order out of chaos, this “name-giving” is used here to bring chaos to the created order. Once again, the NHC responds to YHWH and ushers in destruction, even against herself. YHWH ushered in a creation fashioned out of chaos, which can easily be reverted back to chaos.⁴¹¹ Here in this act of judgement, this primeval chaos has been reactivated.

⁴⁰⁴ See Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 844. So also the Vulgate.

⁴⁰⁵ This verb is especially significant when contrasted with its usage in 9:13, which will be explored in the next section.

⁴⁰⁶ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 146.

⁴⁰⁷ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 341.

⁴⁰⁸ Levenson, *Creation*, 17.

⁴⁰⁹ קרא also appears in 5:8, with reference to the sea, and in 7:4, with reference to fire. See Stefan Paas, “Seeing and Singing,” *VT* 52 (2002): 258–9.

⁴¹⁰ Paas, “Seeing and Singing,” 259. See Gen 1:5, 8, 10.

⁴¹¹ Levenson, *Creation*, 19.

Again, the flood waters rising and falling over the land represent the waters of chaos. Mays notes the verb נָגַל signifies a quick and startling fluctuation of water.⁴¹² The chaotic waters overtake the cosmos suddenly and without warning. It is once again peculiar that the prophet chose the Nile as the source of these waters as opposed to the Euphrates, a river associated with Assyria (Isa 8:7; 27:12; Jer 46:6, 10). Linville argues the image of the Nile waters in this passage is an allusion to Egypt's creation accounts.⁴¹³ In his comparison of Egypt's creation mythology to those in Genesis, Atwell mentions a sacred mound emerged when the Nile's primeval waters receded.⁴¹⁴ This mound became the first dry land. Linville connects this sacred mound to the "foundation" of YHWH's dwelling on the earth in v. 6.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, the waters signify chaos and destruction, collapsing the creational order YHWH established in Gen 1:6–7. As was the case with the Nile waters in 8:8, the receding waters suggest a promise of rebirth. Just as the Nile fluctuated depending on its annual cycles, there will be an end to the destruction humankind has brought upon themselves. As the prophet reminds the readers in 9:11–15, YHWH will ultimately relent in YHWH's judgement.

4.4. Summary

An analysis of the heavenly temple setting in Amos 9:1–6 reveals the cosmic impact humanity's sin has upon the entire created order. While it is tempting to try to pinpoint an exact geographical location for the vision's sanctuary, the altar upon which YHWH stands is most likely YHWH's cosmic dwelling place. A deity's temple brought stability to the land, so

⁴¹² Mays, *Amos*, 155.

⁴¹³ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 167.

⁴¹⁴ James E. Atwell, "An Egyptian Source for Genesis," *JTS* 52 (2000): 471.

⁴¹⁵ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 167.

the collapse of the temple signified the collapse of humanity's relationship with YHWH, and ultimately the collapse of the entire cosmos.

That the prophet appears to strike the column and set off this chain of events is a surprise. While some have proposed Amos is not the one who receives and implements the commands, even at the expense of modifying an alleged corrupted text, it is possible Amos functions as the representative of humanity before YHWH in this passage. It is the culmination of humanity's sin that put this series of cosmic destruction into motion. This is consistent with the themes we have seen in Amos so far: humanity's sin has a profound impact on the entire cosmic order.

This effect on the cosmic order has consequences for the NHC. As opposed to previous passages in Amos, where the NHC seems to respond directly to humanity's sin, YHWH is the one who implements destructive consequences on the NHC.⁴¹⁶ Similar to the hymn in 8:8, the whole earth trembles and flood waters rise and fall. YHWH's involvement, intensified by the dramatic word "quake," indicates this judgement is more severe than the pronouncements that have come before. In fact, this judgement over the whole cosmos is the climactic moment in the book of Amos.

Humanity tries to flee from YHWH's punishment to both mythical and physical locations. These four locations (Sheol, heaven, Carmel, and the sea) represent the entire created order. The NHC, however, participates with YHWH by revealing sinful humanity's hiding places. The sea, a symbol of primeval chaos, also partners with YHWH and even offers its serpent's assistance. In v. 6, YHWH "summons" the sea, and the sea, a symbol of chaos, responds without resistance.

⁴¹⁶ See vv. 5–6, where YHWH initiates the destruction by "touching" the earth.

In this terrifying vision sequence, the NHC is both the victim and arbiter of YHWH's judgement. Humanity's sin against YHWH's sacred space directly causes a chain of events that implicates her in the judgement sequence. Yet, the NHC also partners with YHWH by quaking and flooding. Her chaotic elements enact YHWH's wrath against humanity. While eschatological imagery is missing from this passage, the NHC's involvement in this judgement sequence directly relates to the eschatological vision in Amos 9:11–15, to which this research now turns its attention.

5. AMOS 9:11–15

5.1. Introduction

The opening phrase “on that day” has been utilised several times in Amos (8:3, 9, 13), but the mytho-poetic language that follows quickly confirms this oracle is not one of judgement, but one of salvation. Because of its abrupt change in tone and content, many scholars treat Amos 9:11–15 as “inauthentic.”⁴¹⁷ Its sudden shift from judgement and destruction to renewal and hope has largely prompted scholarship to dismiss it as no more than an inconsequential epilogue. This stance is perhaps best encapsulated in Wellhausen's famous comment that Amos 9:11–15 is a “sudden switch to roses and lavender instead of blood and iron.”⁴¹⁸ While Gowan does see the text's value in relation to the book's present form, he nevertheless contends that it has no continuity with the rest of Amos.⁴¹⁹ He argues

⁴¹⁷ See Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 352–353; Jeremias, *Amos*, 162; Soggin, *The Prophet Amos*, 148–150 and Mays, *Amos*, 163–166. Hayes and Paul, however, argue for its “authenticity.” See John H. Hayes, *Amos, the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 223–228 and Paul, *Amos*, 289–290.

⁴¹⁸ *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Berling: W. de Gruyter, 4th edn, 1963), 96. Qtd. in Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 116.

⁴¹⁹ Gowan, *NIB* 7:426.

Amos has not previously expressed an interest in the Davidic lineage, and the content in 9:11–15 would have been irrelevant to the original recipients in the Northern Kingdom.⁴²⁰

Recently, scholarship has questioned this treatment of Amos 9:11–15. A renewed interest in the text’s rhetorical function has prompted consideration for its inclusion in Amos as a suitable ending for the book. Compelling arguments have been made for its inclusion with the rest of the book. Paul, for instance, argues the trend to determine this text’s redaction history has created tunnel vision. As fascinating and important as redaction criticism is, it fails to understand the overall rhetorical purpose of this text.⁴²¹ Similarly, Hayes proposes the “rhetorical and historical horizons of the total proclamation” are the important issues to consider.⁴²² Möller argues this eschatological vision cannot be deemed inferior to the rest of the book until its function reveals such; determining the rhetorical function is the first step.⁴²³ Instead of asking whether this last segment in Amos is “authentic,” Linville helpfully asks whether it is “appropriate.”⁴²⁴ He argues its content is consistent with what has come before in the book of Amos, specifically in its completion of the vision cycles.⁴²⁵ The text is an integral part of Amos. This hopeful ending also has precedent in how many of the other Hebrew prophetic traditions conclude (cf. Isa 30:23–26; 35:1–9; Hos 14; Joel 3:17–21; Mic 7:8–20).

Evidence for a redaction process in Amos 9:11–15, along with other texts, need not dismiss the text altogether as “secondary,” much less consider it as “treason” against the

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 427.

⁴²¹ Paul, *Amos*, 289. Paul also points out this eschatological vision has similarities with Mesopotamian prophecies, where restoration often follows judgement. Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, “Mesopotamian Prophecies of the End of Days,” *Shnaton* 3 (1979): 263–276.

⁴²² Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 220.

⁴²³ Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 118. Möller believes the rhetorical function of the book as a whole is to persuade an eighth-century Judean audience from making the same mistakes as their northern counterparts.

⁴²⁴ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 173.

⁴²⁵ Linville, “Visions and Voices,” 27. Eidevall also calls this last oracle in Amos a “fitting conclusion.” See Eidevall, *Amos*, 239.

rest of the prophet's message.⁴²⁶ The faith community felt it was imperative not only to add this eschatological vision, but also to preserve it as sacred text. To borrow Linville's phrasing, this addition was "appropriate," even necessary, for the preservation of the whole story. This "second act," so to speak, reflects the theological development of YHWH's people. That it may be a later addition does not mean it should be read in isolation, divorced from the rest of the book; rather, it should be read as an integral portion of Amos. Without denying the importance of the redactional history of Amos, 9:11–15 will thus be studied in its present form with careful consideration to its rhetorical function.

5.2. Text and Translation

¹¹"On that day,
I will raise the fallen sukkah⁴²⁷ of David
and I will wall up their⁴²⁸ breaches.
I will raise his ruins
and I will rebuild her as in the days of old,

בְּיוֹם הַהוּא¹¹
אָקִים אֶת-סֹכֶת דָּוִיד הַנִּפְלֹת
וְגִדַּרְתִּי אֶת-פְּרִצֵיהֶן
וְהִרְסֹתִיו אָקִים
וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם

⁴²⁶ As Smend suggests in "Das Nein des Amos," *EvT* 23 (1963): 423. Qtd. in Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 116.

⁴²⁷ Or booth. It is noteworthy that it is not בֵּית.

⁴²⁸ A third person singular pronoun is expected to follow the "sukkah of David." The *BHS* proposes "his."

¹²“So that they may possess the remnant of Edom⁴²⁹

and all the nations I call by my name.⁴³⁰

Oracle of YHWH, who [does] this.

¹³“Behold, the days are coming,” oracle of YHWH,

“the one who ploughs will catch up with the one who reaps

and the one who treads grapes with the one sowing seeds.

The mountains will drip with sweet wine and all the heights will flow.⁴³¹

¹⁴“I will reverse the reversal⁴³² of my people Israel

and they will rebuild desolated cities and settle [in them].

They will plant vineyards and drink their wine.

They will plant gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵I will plant them upon their land

and never will they be uprooted

from all the land which I have given to them,”

says YHWH your God.

¹²לְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת-שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדוֹם

וְכָל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם

נְאֻם-יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה זֹאת

¹³הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם-יְהוָה

וְנִגַּשׁ חוֹרֶשׁ בְּקֹצֵר

וְדֹרֶךְ עֲנָבִים בְּמִשֶּׁךְ הַזֶּרַע

וְהִטִּיפוּ הַהָרִים עֲסִיס

וְכָל-הַגְּבֻעוֹת תִּתְמוּגְגֶנָה

¹⁴וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת-שְׁבוֹת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

וּבְנוּ עָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיִּטְעוּ כְרָמִים וַיִּשְׂתּוּ אֶת-יַיִנָם

וַעֲשׂוּ גִנּוֹת וַאֲכָלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיָהֶם

¹⁵וַיִּטְעֻם עַל-אֲדָמָתָם

וְלֹא יִנְתְּשׁוּ עוֹד

מֵעַל אֲדָמָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם

אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

5.3. Themes and Motifs

5.3.2. Reversal Language and Imagery

A frequent feature of Amos has been its reversal language; the irony in this last passage should be no surprise, then, where all the destruction accrued in the vision cycles is undone. In this way, Amos 9:11–15 forms an inclusio with Amos 1:2.⁴³³ The NHC, which once

⁴²⁹ The LXX renders this as “seek the remnant of humanity,” perhaps to downplay the nationalistic theme. Another possibility is that translators read Edom as “Adam” from a textual variant.

⁴³⁰ Literally, this phrase is awkward: “over which my name is called.”

⁴³¹ מִוֶּגֶךְ is literally “melt.” However, because of the context, this translation has adopted “flow,” which further contrasts this passage with its usage in 9:5. This will be further explained below.

⁴³² This phrase (“reverse the reversal”) is an idiom and will be explained in more detail below.

⁴³³ See “Introduction” to this chapter on Amos for further details about this inclusio.

simultaneously mourned and dried up, now thrives and prospers. The judgement wreaked on her throughout the course of Amos is no more.

While there are implicit, thematic reversals throughout this passage, v. 14 mentions reversals explicitly. Most commentators translate the phrase וְשָׁבְתִי אֶת-לְשׁוֹנִי so as to refer to an end to captivity, but Gottlieb chooses a more literal translation of “reverse the reversal.”

⁴³⁴ Linville follows suit, arguing this phrase indicates much more than a return from exile.⁴³⁵

In his examination of the verb in its literary contexts, Bracke concludes שׁוּב is rooted in prophetic eschatology and refers not to an end of judgement, but to a *reversal* of judgement.⁴³⁶ While it can indicate a return to the land, it refers more broadly to a return to a previous state of wellbeing.⁴³⁷ Bracke thus argues the “returning” refers to all of the restorative processes mentioned in Amos 9:11–15, including rebuilding the cities, the fertility of the NHC, and the return of the exiles.⁴³⁸ All of the judgements that have occurred in Amos are ultimately reversed.⁴³⁹ In the case of Amos 9:11–15, this “reversal” is not simply a return to Israel’s prosperity before YHWH’s judgement was enacted. As will be explored in the following section, this reversal supersedes the state the NHC had previously experienced.

Many scholars are quick to note the marked linguistic change in this section from what came before, some even to the point that they deny any continuity between Amos 1:1–9:10 and 9:11–15.⁴⁴⁰ Schart, however, notes the prophet’s use of מוֹג (v. 13) links this passage of restoration to the preceding passages of judgement.⁴⁴¹ In Amos 9:5, מוֹג,

⁴³⁴ Isaac B. Gottlieb, “*Sof davar: Biblical Endings*,” *Prooftexts* 11 (1991): 218. Gottlieb examines other passages where this phrase is found (Zeph 3:20; Pss 14:7; 53:7) but strangely does not examine this instance in Amos.

⁴³⁵ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 171.

⁴³⁶ John M. Bracke, “Šûb Šebût: A Reappraisal,” *ZAW* 97 (1985): 237.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 239–40.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ See the opening remarks regarding the linguistic and ideological differences in this section’s “Introduction.”

⁴⁴¹ Schart, “The Fifth Vision,” 60.

sometimes translated as “melt,” refers to the devastation inflicted upon the NHC, but here in 9:13 מוג means “flow.” Previously, the NHC trembled at YHWH’s judgement, but now new wine “flows” from her hills. This is an intentional, explicit reversal of YHWH’s judgement, whereby the NHC now experiences fertility and prosperity.

5.3.3. Eschatological Renewal of the NHC

The “reversal” of YHWH’s judgement extends even to the wellbeing of the NHC. Schart remarks the renewal of the NHC is an integral part of the restoration process, “otherwise it would not address the deepest sources of Israel's sin.”⁴⁴² Leviticus 26:3–5 alludes to a similar promise to renew the NHC, but whereas Lev 26:3–5 is conditional upon Israel obeying YHWH’s commands, Amos 9:11–15 does not list prerequisites for YHWH’s blessing. This restoration is a gift from YHWH based not upon humanity’s merit but upon YHWH’s generosity to his people and YHWH’s faithfulness to the NHC. This is further articulated in “the land I have given them” in v. 15.

Even so, this renewal of the NHC is not a return to her previous state; the text insists the NHC will flourish above and beyond her capacity prior to the judgement cycles. The normal agricultural rhythm in Israel was to plow and harvest six months apart. Barley was reaped at Passover in April, and wheat was reaped 50 days later at Pentecost.⁴⁴³ Similarly, grape treading and sowing had a gap of 2–3-months in between.⁴⁴⁴ What YHWH describes in Amos 9:11–15 is a cycle with cues that follow right after each other. There is no time to harvest, because it will already be time to plant for the next season. The NHC is so fertile she produces an overabundance of crops, a feat Simkins remarks is possible without the aid of

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 354; Paul, *Amos*, 292.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

human effort.⁴⁴⁵ In the scope of the Hebrew Bible, the curse in Gen 3:17–19 is reversed; toil is no longer necessary to sustain the fertility of the NHC. The Genesis curse describes eating food “by the sweat of your brow,” a phrase many have understood to signify hard manual labour. Yet Fleming proposes “sweat” signifies not physical exertion, but anxiety.⁴⁴⁶ The curse of the NHC produced “thorns and thistles” (Gen 3:18), as well as infertility and inconsistency. The NHC sometimes failed to respond to human efforts, retaliating with drought, flood, blight, and mildew instead.

In this prophetic vision, humanity no longer needs to fear whether the NHC will produce her life-giving sustenance. Neither does humanity exploit the NHC, an accusation in Amos 8:4–6. Instead, harmony exists between humanity and the NHC. In this relationship, the NHC thrives in ways that exceed her prior state, ways Jeremias describes as a “revocation of the divine curse.”⁴⁴⁷ This restoration is not a reversal back to Eden, but a reversal that extends beyond Eden to a recreated cosmos.

5.3.4. Eschatological Partnership

It is curious that the prophet does not give readers a glimpse of the cosmic event that begins this eschatological era, as he was wont to do throughout the vision cycles. Perhaps this is intentional: it is not any human event that initiates these earthly phenomena, but YHWH himself. While it is plausible humanity’s collective sin was responsible for the collapse of the cosmos in 9:1–6, here in 9:11–15 there is no indication any agent beside

⁴⁴⁵ Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 215.

⁴⁴⁶ Daniel Fleming, “By the Sweat of Your Brow: Adam, Anat, Athirat and Ashurbanipal,” in *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible Manchester, September 1992* (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994): 93–100.

⁴⁴⁷ Jeremias, *Amos*, 169.

YHWH begins the NHC's eschatological renewal.⁴⁴⁸ Not even humanity's repentance is a prerequisite for the new eschatological order.

Although YHWH is the one to initiate this cosmological transformation, the text implies collaborative eschatological efforts between YHWH and humanity for the sake of the NHC. Jeremias notes the link between just leadership and the fertility of the land, as evidenced also in Ps 72.⁴⁴⁹ YHWH restores "David's fallen *sukkot*," a term that is unclear in meaning. This "tent" or "booth" elicits images of the Davidic dynasty, a political period idealised as a golden era in Israel's history.⁴⁵⁰ Mays and Paul believe this term is symbolic of a David-like reign, but Linville believes readers should be hesitant to limit this feature to political realms.⁴⁵¹ It is possible this term evokes an idealised period marked not just by the house of David, but also by the house of YHWH.⁴⁵²

Nevertheless, the text indicates humanity has some impact on the restoration of the NHC. Righteous leadership and a land marked by the presence of YHWH produce an environment in which the NHC can flourish. Just as humanity rebuilds their ruined cities, humanity also engages eschatologically with the NHC by planting vineyards and gardens (v. 14). While inaugurated by the grace of YHWH, this eschatological era has opportunities in which humanity can partner alongside YHWH in restoring the NHC. In this way, humanity reverses the sin they placed upon the NHC throughout the book of Amos. No longer does the NHC suffer because of humanity's sinful choices; rather, YHWH, humanity, and the NHC collaborate together in an ongoing cosmic drama.

⁴⁴⁸ The word "begins" is very intentional, as it appears that humanity has the opportunity to continue this eschatological work. This will be discussed further in the analysis of theological themes.

⁴⁴⁹ Jeremias, *Amos*, 168.

⁴⁵⁰ Jeremias, *Amos*, 167; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 353.

⁴⁵¹ Linville, *Cosmic Imagination*, 172.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

5.4. Summary

This concluding vision of hope is a reversal of the judgement enacted on both humanity and the NHC. The use of the word **בֹּשֶׁת**, often interpreted in the prophetic literature to refer only to a return from exile, actually indicates a “reverse of the reversal.” As such, this phrase envisions not just an end to judgement, but a reversal of all of the devastation, extending not just to YHWH’s people but also to the NHC. The reversal of **נִמַּח** from “shake” or “melt” in 9:5 to “flow” in 9:13 further emphasises the transformation of the NHC in this eschatological era.

The extent of this reversal is demonstrated by the hyperbolic description of Israel’s agricultural cycle. The NHC overproduces crops, resulting in a rapid succession of harvesting and sowing, a rhythm with which no human could keep pace. This is a reversal of the Genesis curse, where humanity was cursed with laborious work, without any guarantee their efforts would be fruitful. In this eschatological age, humanity and the NHC have a relationship characterised by mutuality and harmony. No longer does humanity exploit the NHC for economic gain (cf. Amos 8:4–6), nor does the NHC retaliate against humanity by withholding crops (cf. Amos 4:4–9). The overabundance of produce and wine indicates this redemption of the NHC is not a return to Eden, but a complete recreation of the cosmological order.

While YHWH is the one who begins this recreation process, humanity is invited to partner with YHWH in redeeming the NHC. Humankind plants vineyards and gardens in the land YHWH has given them and the NHC responds by giving them food to eat and wine to drink (v. 14). The restoration of “David’s fallen *sukkot*,” a phrase referring to a golden era of Israel’s history, may indicate a leadership characterised by righteousness. This leadership may be one of the contributing factors to the flourishing of the NHC (cf. Ps 72).

In terms of logical and scientific analysis, this myth-eschatological language is inadequate. Yet, it is a way of seeing and imagining a reality that cannot be fully encapsulated in the language of logic and reason. The metaphors in this last segment of Amos convey a cosmological reciprocity of YHWH, humanity, and the NHC, whereby earth and heaven, the ordinary and the sacred, become a unified synergism. The beauty of the mythological language is that it conveys a sense of timelessness that extends beyond the period of the book's compositional process: this vision portrays a reality forever true.

6. SUMMARY OF AMOS FINDINGS

These select passages from the book of Amos present a world in which YHWH, humanity, and the NHC are intricately connected. In this world, the NHC performs a significant role not only in judgement but also in eschatological renewal. The NHC mourns—a prophetic act of critique—yet the ambiguity of אֵבֶל permits multiple interpretations of her grief's source: YHWH's anger, humanity's sin, or her own fate, for which humanity is complicit (1:2; 4:4–9; 8:4–14; 9:1–6). Because of humanity's breach of covenant, the NHC enacts a series of judgements that includes her own demise (1:2; 4:6–9; 8:7–10). Her response involves two oppositional actions: drying up (1:2; 4:7–8) and flooding (8:8; 9:5–6).

Despite humanity's breach of their relationship with the NHC (8:4–6; 9:1–6), humanity depends upon the NHC for the resources necessary to their covenant relationship with YHWH (4:6–9; 8:4–6). Similarly, the NHC depends upon humanity's faithfulness to the covenant, since its violation enacts devastating consequences upon the NHC (1:2; 4:6–9;

8:4–14; 9:1–6). Ultimately, humanity’s severance of their covenant relationship with YHWH causes the collapse of the entire cosmological order (9:1–6).

Yet, images of eschatological hope commingle with the judgement scenes in the book of Amos. The Nile imagery pronounces judgement, but it may also suggest the renewal of the NHC (8:8; 9:5). The last oracle promises a “reversal” of all the judgement throughout the book of Amos and envisions the flourishing of the NHC alongside humanity (9:11–15). The careful tending of the NHC replaces humanity’s exploitation of the NHC (9:14). In response, the NHC provides humanity with life-sustaining resources instead of judgement curses (9:13). In the end, YHWH, humanity, and the NHC partner together eschatologically to inaugurate YHWH’s cosmological reign.

CHAPTER THREE: HOSEA

Unlike Amos, the NHC's judgement and eschatological roles are not prominent themes throughout the book of Hosea. Relationships between YHWH, humanity, and the NHC are confined to Hos 1:1–4:3. Hosea begins by referencing the "land" (1:2), a term which embodies the NHC (as argued below). "Land" is a prominent theme in the following three selected passages of study and will thus be examined in detail in this chapter: 2:4–17 [2–15]; 2:18–25 [16–23]; 4:1–3.⁴⁵³

Hosea 2:4–17 is a covenant dispute (*rib*) placed between the prophet's two sign-acts (Hos 1:1–2:3 [1:1–2:1]; 3:1–5). In this *rib*, YHWH accuses his wife, the "land," of covenant unfaithfulness. Israel and land mirror each other as the *rib* cycles through YHWH's accusations, presentation of evidence, and punishment. The final verdict, however, is not one of retribution but of reconciliation. The NHC's reconciliation continues in 2:18–25, where YHWH grants humanity virtues that have eschatological implications for the NHC.

In his analysis of Hosea 2:4–17 in relationship to chs. 1 and 3, Braaten pinpoints the "land" as a theme in ch. 2 that binds the three chapters together.⁴⁵⁴ Hosea 1:2 indicts the "land" for her sin, but otherwise the "land" is a theme missing in ch. 1 and ch. 3. Braaten argues the absence of the land theme in chs. 1 and 3 forms a frame around ch. 2, causing readers to identify Israel with the land.⁴⁵⁵ Yet, Braaten acknowledges the people are responsible for the sin, not the land; he suggests the framing of these chapters is designed to guide readers to this conclusion.⁴⁵⁶ The intertwined identities of Israel as a people and Israel as a land will be discussed further below.

⁴⁵³ This analysis will utilise the Hebrew versification in Hosea.

⁴⁵⁴ Braaten, "The Earth Community," 192.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

Finally, Hos 4:1–3 expresses the reversal of the eschatological effects in 2:18–25. Using the same virtues that appear in 2:21–22, Hos 4:1–3 demonstrates the devastating results of a world without faithfulness to YHWH’s covenant. Like Amos 1:2, the NHC “mourns” and dries up, setting catastrophic events into motion (4:3). Together, these three texts present a choice for the covenant community between faithfulness and disobedience. Faithfulness welcomes the NHC’s flourishing, but disobedience yields the NHC’s destruction.

1. HOSEA 2:4–17 [2–15]

1.1. Introduction

Following YHWH’s sign-act command to the prophet (1:1–2:3 [1:1–2:1]), YHWH issues accusations against YHWH’s “wife” (2:4 [2]) in Hosea 2:4–17 [2–15]. The accused “wife” is personified as “land” in Hos 2:4–17. The identity of these two entities (the wife and the land) often blur together. This appearance of the NHC is of particular interest and will be discussed in more detail below. This text’s unity is not disputed, as both the style and content suggest one unit.⁴⁵⁷ The exact nature of the literary genre, however, is contested. Many consider this passage to be a covenant lawsuit (*rib*) and treat the language as a legal proceeding between YHWH, the “land,” and their children.⁴⁵⁸

When viewed within this court setting, YHWH assumes the roles of judge, jury, and punisher.⁴⁵⁹ YHWH assembles the land’s children to testify against their mother and then issues a series of punishments (vv. 5, 11–15a, 16–17) as well as evidence for the land’s adultery (vv. 6–7, 10, 15b). Each of the three judgements is introduced by לָּ. The last

⁴⁵⁷ Wolff remarks this divine speech has an “unusual consistency of theme and form.” See *Hosea*, 32.

⁴⁵⁸ Stuart, *WBC* 31:147–9; Wolff, *Hosea*, 33; Loya, “Therefore,” 55; Nogalski, *The Book of Twelve*, 51–2.

⁴⁵⁹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 33; Stuart, *WBC* 31:147–8.

“judgement” in the sequence is a surprise to the listening community: YHWH does not punish the mother, but instead restores her as his wife.

Others dispute the categorisation of a *rib* as a lawsuit. Deroche, for instance, argues a *rib* is not a lawsuit, but a quarrel. A *rib* is between two parties, he counters, while a lawsuit includes an arbitrator and the two party members involved in the dispute.⁴⁶⁰ In a formal lawsuit, it is the judge’s role to decide on a sentence and implement it within a court setting (Deut 25:1). In a *rib*, however, the victim approaches the accused on his or her own terms and seeks retribution; the *rib* is settled when both parties agree to a settlement without the intervention of a court.⁴⁶¹ Based on this, Deroche concludes YHWH is taking on the role of a husband and not a judge.⁴⁶²

While possible that YHWH legally may not function as a judge in this *rib*, the role of husband in the ANE did include judiciary responsibility over the family.⁴⁶³ Even if Hos 2:4–17 does not involve a court setting, YHWH’s role as husband certainly includes judgement of the wife, as evidenced in this passage (vv. 5, 11–15a, 16–17). This husband-wife relationship, and the violent nature of YHWH’s punishment against the “wife,” has been a critique of feminist hermeneutics since the 1980s.⁴⁶⁴ Some feminist critics, such as Törnkvist, argue it is impossible to separate YHWH from the violent metaphor and dismiss the text altogether.⁴⁶⁵ Meanwhile, others, such as Yee and Keefe, affirm the theological message of Hosea 2:4–17 but warn against imposing this metaphorical marriage literally.⁴⁶⁶ Although she does not

⁴⁶⁰ Michael Deroche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” *VT* 31 (1981): 408.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.* See also Prov 25:7–10.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 409.

⁴⁶³ I. Mendelsohn, “The Family in the Ancient Near East,” *BA* 11 (1948): 36.

⁴⁶⁴ Brad E. Kelle, “Hosea 1–3 in Twentieth-Century Scholarship,” *CurBR* 7 (2009): 197–202.

⁴⁶⁵ Rut Törnkvist, *The Use and Abuse of Female Sexual Imagery in the Book of Hosea: A Feminist Critical Approach to Hos 1–3* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 1998), 72.

⁴⁶⁶ Gale A. Yee, “Hosea,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, eds. C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2012), 299–308; Alice A. Keefe, *Woman’s Body and the Social Body in Hosea* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

ignore the problematic nature of the violent imagery, Keefe emphasises the rhetorical function of the metaphor by broadening the marriage relationship so that it extends to a household, which includes not just Israel as “wife” but the “social body” of Israel.⁴⁶⁷ The relationship YHWH has with the “wife” in this passage certainly reflects the social context of the ANE, and the metaphor must be considered carefully.

After punishing the wife for her unfaithfulness, YHWH reconciles with her in vv. 16–17. Despite the unity of Hos 2:4–17, this conclusion is viewed with some scepticism. Daniels, for instance, argues vv. 16–17 are not the original continuation of v. 15.⁴⁶⁸ Daniels considers vv. 16–17 to be a separate legal “sentence” whose original context has been lost in transmission.⁴⁶⁹ The reason for this proposed structure is unclear; Daniels does not offer an explanation as to what he believes is missing between v. 15 and v. 16. Wolff, however, does support Daniels’ premise by asserting לָכֵן in v. 16 is not a connecting participle to what directly precedes it.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, since this final sentencing is in the present form of the text, it will be included for examination.

1.2. Text and Translation

⁴Dispute with your mother! Dispute!
For she is not my wife
and I am not her husband.

רִיבוּ בְּאִמְכֶם רִיבוּ
כִּי-הִיא לֹא אִשְׁתִּי
וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אִישָׁהּ

Let her remove her sexual immorality⁴⁷¹
from her⁴⁷² face

וְתָסַר זְנוּנֶיהָ מִפָּנֶיהָ
וְנִאֲפֹקֶיהָ מִבֵּין שְׁדֵיהָ

⁴⁶⁷ Keefe, *Woman’s Body*, 15.

⁴⁶⁸ Dwight R. Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 96.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 98. Daniels does suggest the situation can be reconstructed from the allusions to Baal in the passage.

⁴⁷⁰ Wolff, *Hosea*, 32. Wolff says this לָכֵן “belongs to the internal structure of the kerygmatic unit.”

⁴⁷¹ The meaning of זְנוּנָה is disputed, especially because it parallels “adultery.” It can refer to prostitution and adultery, but it can also generally refer to sexual immorality,

⁴⁷² BHS: מִפָּנֶיהָ

and the adultery from between her breasts.

⁵Or else I will strip her naked
and leave her like the day she was born.
I will make her like the wilderness,
I will make her like a dry land,
I will slay her with thirst.

⁶Also upon her children I will not have
compassion,

for they are the children of adultery.

⁷Because their mother has committed
adultery,
she who conceived them has been a
disgrace.

For she said: "I will follow my lovers,
those who give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."

⁸Therefore I will block her⁴⁷³ way with
thorns,

and I will construct a fence
so that she cannot find her paths.

⁹Then she will pursue her lovers
but not catch up with them.
She will seek them but not find [them].

She will say, "I will go
and return to my first husband,
because it was better for me than now."

¹⁰She does not know
that I gave her the grain,
the new wine,
and the olive oil,
that I lavished upon her silver
and gold they made for Baal.⁴⁷⁴

¹¹Therefore, I will return
and take my grain in its time,
the new wine in its season.

I will snatch my wool and my flax,
which were to cover her nakedness.

¹²Now I will expose her shamefulness⁴⁷⁵
in front of her lovers.

⁵פֶּן-אֶפְשִׁיטָנָה עֲרָמָה

וְהִצַּגְתִּיהָ כְּיוֹם הַיּוֹלָדָה

וְשָׂמְתִיהָ כַּמִּדְבָּר

וְשָׂתָהּ כְּאַרְץ צִיָּה

וְהָמַתִּיהָ בְּצָמָא

⁶וְאֶת-בְּנֶיהָ לֹא אֲרַחֵם

כִּי-בָנִי זְנוּנִים הֵמָּה

⁷כִּי זָנְתָה אִמָּם הַבִּישָׁה הוֹרְתָם

כִּי אִמָּרָה אֵלֶכָה אַחֲרֵי מְאֵהָבִי

נִתְּנִי לַחֲמִי וּמִימִי צִמְרִי

וּפִשְׁתִּי שְׂמִנִי וְשִׁקּוּיִי

לִכֵּן הִנְנִי-שׁוֹךְ אֶת-דֶּרֶכָּךְ בְּסִירִים⁸

וּגְדַרְתִּי אֶת-גְּדָרָהּ

וְנִתְּיבוֹתֶיהָ לֹא תִמָּצֵא

⁹וְיִרְדָּפָהּ אֶת-מְאֵהָבֶיהָ

וְלֹא-תִשָּׁג אִתָּם וּבִקְשָׁתָם

וְלֹא תִמָּצֵא

וְאִמָּרָה אֵלֶכָה וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֶל-אִישִׁי הָרִאשׁוֹן

כִּי טוֹב לִי אִזְּ מֵעַתָּה

¹⁰וְהִיא לֹא יָדְעָה

כִּי אֶנֶכִּי נָתַתִּי לָהּ הַדָּגָן

וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֶּצֶק

וְכֶסֶף הַרְבִּיתִי לָהּ וְזָהָב עָשׂוּ לַבָּעַל

לִכֵּן אֶשׁוּב וְלִקְחֹתִי דָגְנִי בְּעֵתוֹ¹¹

וְתִירוֹשִׁי בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ

וְהִצַּלְתִּי צִמְרִי וּפִשְׁתִּי לְכִסּוֹת אֶת-עֲרוֹתָהּ

¹²וְעַתָּה אֲגַלָּה אֶת-נִבְלָתָהּ לְעֵינֵי מְאֵהָבֶיהָ

וְאִישׁ לֹא-יִצְלִלָנָה מִיָּד

⁴⁷³ This verse shifts to second person, a change that Wolff argues contradicts the context; *Hosea*, 30.

Meanwhile, G and Syr include the third feminine pronoun (דִּרְכֶּיהָ). Since the pronouns that follow v. 8 are third feminine singular, this translation has chosen to follow G and Syr for reading consistency.

⁴⁷⁴ This could imply either that they devoted the gold to Baal or that they made a Baal out of gold.

⁴⁷⁵ "Her shamefulness" is sometimes translated as "her genitals," although there is no lexical evidence for such a meaning. See Stuart, *WBC* 31:44. In the line right before, עָרוֹה has this meaning in Gen 9:22–23.

No one can rescue her from my hand.

¹³I will put an end to all her rejoicing,
her feasts, her new moon and Sabbath
celebration,

all her special days.

¹⁴I will desolate her vines and fig trees,
of which she said,

“These are my wages,
which my lovers gave me.”

I will make them a forest
so that the beasts of the field will devour
them.

¹⁵I will call her to account for the feast days
of the Baals,

when she burned incense to them.

She dressed herself with ring and jewellery
and followed her lovers, but forgot me.

Oracle of YHWH.

¹⁶Therefore, I myself will allure her.

I will bring her into the wilderness
and I will speak to her heart.

¹⁷Then I will give to her her vineyards from
there

and the Valley of Achor as a gateway of
hope.

She will respond there as in the days of her
youth,

as the day when she came up from the land
of Egypt.

¹³וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי כָל-מְשׁוּשָׁהּ חֲגֵה חֲדָשָׁה וְשַׁבָּתָהּ

וְכָל מוֹעֵדָהּ

¹⁴וְהִשְׁמַתִּי גִפְנָהּ וְתֵאֵנָתָהּ

אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָה אֶתְנָהּ הִמָּה לִי אֲשֶׁר נָתַנּוּ-לִי

מֵאֲהָבָי

וְשִׁמְתִים לִיעֹר

וְאָכְלָתֶם חֵית הַשָּׂדֶה

וּפְקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ אֶת-יְמֵי הַבָּעָלִים¹⁵

אֲשֶׁר תִּקְטִיר לָהֶם

וּתַעֲד נִזְמָה וְחִלָּתָהּ

וּתְלַף אַחֲרַי מֵאֲהָבָיהָ

וְאֵתִי שָׁכַחָה

נָאֻם-יְהוָה

¹⁶לִכֵּן הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מִפְתִּיחָהּ

וְהִלַּכְתִּיהָ הַמִּדְבָּר

וְדִבַּרְתִּי עַל-לִבָּהּ

¹⁷וְנָתַתִּי לָהּ אֶת-כָּרְמֶיהָ מִשֵּׁם

וְאֶת-עֵמֶק עֲכוֹר לְפֶתַח תִּקְוָהּ

וְעֲנָתָה שָׁמָּה כִּימֵי נְעוּרֶיהָ וְכִיּוֹם

עֲלוֹתָהּ מֵאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם

1.3. Themes and Motifs

1.3.1. The Intertwining of Israel and “Land”

Throughout chs. 1–2, the prophet fluctuates between various identities for Israel, such as “mother” (2:4, 7) and “wife” (2:4, 21–22). Hosea 1:2 refers to Israel as “the land,” a designation that has created much confusion among interpreters. Indeed, Israel’s identity as אֶרֶץ seems to continue throughout the *rib* in Hos 2:4–17, where YHWH threatens to strip Israel like a wilderness (v. 5) and make her infertile (vv. 11, 14). Because of this land motif,

Hayes suggests Gomer is a metaphor not just for Israel but also for the land.⁴⁷⁶ The ארץ imagery, coupled with Israel's assigned role as ארץ, indicates Israel and ארץ are intertwined. Indeed, this fluidity is evidenced by how difficult it often is to differentiate between the two entities. Because of this, Wolff connects the shared identity of Israel as ארץ to Canaanite mythology.⁴⁷⁷

While most scholars view the land and the people of Israel synonymously throughout Hos 1–3, Marlow warns that removing this distinction entirely creates interpretive challenges.⁴⁷⁸ While these two entities may share some common identities and are certainly linked, the very fact that Hosea distinguishes between the two is significant for interpretation. Yet, Marlow convincingly argues the NHC and the nation of Israel are distinct yet interdependent participants.⁴⁷⁹ She treats Hos 2:4–17 as an indictment against the house of Israel with consequences that extend to the NHC. Marlow notes the marriage and childbearing metaphors in Hos 2:4–17 are intricately interwoven with land and fruitfulness imagery.⁴⁸⁰ The following figure is a reproduction of her helpful chart comparing “Israel” and “land” side-by-side:⁴⁸¹

Indictment of house of Israel (1:4)	Indictment of the land (1:2)
Barrenness (2:7)	Desert (2:5)
Loss of husbands (2:9; cf. 2:4)	Thorns (2:8)
Removal of provision (2:11) End of rejoicing (2:13)	Removal of provision (2:11) Desolation of vines (2:14)
In the wilderness with YHWH (2:16)	
Restoration of marriage (2:18)	Restoration of vines (2:17)

⁴⁷⁶ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 52.

⁴⁷⁷ Wolff, *Hosea*, 34.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 166–7.

⁴⁷⁹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 167.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Covenant restored (2:20)	
YHWH's response to bride (2:21–2)	YHWH's response to the land (2:23)
Fruitfulness of people (2:25)	Fruitfulness of land (2:24)

Figure 1. Reproduction of Marlow's Chart Comparing Israel with Land

This chart demonstrates how intertwined these two themes are throughout Hos 1:4–2:25.

The state of the land mirrors the state of Israel and vice versa. While blurred, these two identities are nevertheless distinct and must be examined as separate but interwoven entities.

The *rib* begins with YHWH's prompt for the "children" to accuse their "mother" (2:4).⁴⁸² Braaten considers the "mother" (v. 4) and the "woman of whoredom" (v. 5) to be the "land," consistent with the designation in 1:2.⁴⁸³ He further supports this claim by the presence of the feminine pronouns in this passage, pronouns he believes reference אֶרֶץ.⁴⁸⁴ This is consistent with the Canaanite view of land as feminine.⁴⁸⁵ In the remainder of Hosea, Israel and Ephraim always assume the role of a male son, never a female bride.⁴⁸⁶ Further, only the masculine form of זָנָה is used for Israel/Ephraim throughout chs. 4–14.⁴⁸⁷ That Hosea 2:5 uses the feminine role "mother" and the feminine form of זָנָה suggests YHWH is referring to Israel outside of the conventional male role in chs. 4–14. In this view, Israel is presented as "land" until 2:15. Following suit, Nogalski refers to the wife and land interchangeably throughout his commentary on Hosea 2:4–25.⁴⁸⁸ Stuart, however, believes YHWH's wife is the אֶרֶץ in vv. 5b–6, but then the wife switches to represent the collective

⁴⁸² The "children" appear to be the land's inhabitants. See Wolff, *Hosea*, 34; Braaten, "God Sows," 107.

⁴⁸³ Braaten, "God Sows," 107–108.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁸⁵ Stuart, *NIB* 7:150.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁸⁷ See, for instance, 4:15. The female form only appears in reference to specific women, such as in 4:14.

⁴⁸⁸ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 50–63.

nation of Israel in v. 7.⁴⁸⁹ The identity then changes back to the land again in v. 12.⁴⁹⁰ In the salvation oracle thereafter, the bride extends beyond the land to include Israel.⁴⁹¹ However, YHWH's wife often assumes the role of the NHC throughout the judgement proclamations in 2:4–15. YHWH's blessings are cast as agricultural blessings (v. 10), and the punishments are cast as infertility of the land (vv. 5, 11).⁴⁹² In each of these interpretations, both the "land" (the NHC) and the people of Israel are united in their destruction and in their salvation. The blurring of the metaphor and the role indicates their interdependence.

This raises the concern as to how ארץ can be held accountable for the people's sins.⁴⁹³ Braaten suggests the "land" role is actually a rhetorical device which "tricks" the children into lobbying accusations against themselves. By pronouncing judgement on the land, they are unknowingly condemning themselves.⁴⁹⁴ Dearman, on the other hand, acknowledges the land entity in 1:2, yet views "land" as a symbol for the people of Israel.⁴⁹⁵ In his perspective, the "land" is simply a metaphorical device; the Israelites are the ones who are culpable, not the land.⁴⁹⁶ Yet, based upon the evidence for the intertwined identities of Israel and land (above), Dearman's restriction of "land" to metaphor is unsatisfactory. Hosea 4:1–3, which will be examined in detail forthcoming, presents a counter perspective: humanity is responsible for sin, which directly impacts the NHC.

⁴⁸⁹ Stuart, *NIB* 7:149. His reasons for the switch from "land" to nation are unclear.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁹¹ Braaten, "God Sows," 108.

⁴⁹² This fertility imagery will be discussed in more detail below.

⁴⁹³ Isaiah uses a similar literary device in the judgement against the vineyard in Isa 5:1–7.

⁴⁹⁴ Braaten, "Earth Community," 190.

⁴⁹⁵ Dearman, *Hosea*, 57.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

1.3.2. The “Stripping” of the NHC

The imagery throughout the *rib* parallels the stripping of the wife with the stripping of the land. The text describes the wife putting on ornaments, accessories that may have connoted prostitution, only to have them stripped off by her husband, YHWH.⁴⁹⁷ If the wife resists, YHWH in YHWH’s anger will not just strip these symbols from the wife’s body, but will strip her entirely naked. Publicly stripping a woman was a common punishment for sexual misconduct (Jer 13:26–27; Ezek 17:37–38; 23:22–35; Nah 3:4–6). Hillers notes its function in treaty-curses, whereby an enemy is threatened to be stripped like a prostitute.⁴⁹⁸ Men were legally responsible for clothing their wives, so YHWH’s stripping suggests YHWH is extricating YHWH’s self from marital responsibilities.⁴⁹⁹ Yet, YHWH makes no mention of stoning or burning the wife, two typical sentences for adulterous women (Gen 38:24; Lev 21:9; Deut 22:23). As previously discussed, this further indicates YHWH’s intentions are to reconcile the relationship rather than to terminate it.

The judgement sentence likens the wife’s stripping to a wilderness, illustrating the blurring identities of Israel as a people group and Israel as land. Thorns and thistles are also wilderness imagery.⁵⁰⁰ Mays specifies their function as infertility symbolism (cf. Song 2:2; Isa 5:6; 32:13; Hos 2:8).⁵⁰¹ The triad of grain, wine, and oil represent a fertility formula often used within Deuteronomy (Deut 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4) and the prophetic tradition (Hos 2:8; 2:22; Joel 1:10; 2:19; Hag 1:11). Their presence in both the judgement and the salvation oracles represents YHWH’s control of the land’s fertility (Hos. 2:8; 2:22).⁵⁰² Hayes

⁴⁹⁷ According to Wolff, זָנוּיָהּ and נִצָּפוּיָהּ were objects or markings associated with a sex cult. See *Hosea*, 33–34. Mays believes they are self-lacerations common to fertility cults; *Hosea*, 112. See Deut 14:1–2; 1 Kgs 18:28; Jer 5:7; Zach 14:6.

⁴⁹⁸ In addition to Hos 2:5, Hillers includes Jer 13:26–27 and Nah 3:5 as other examples of this treaty-curse. See *Treaty-Curses*, 58–59.

⁴⁹⁹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 34.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁰¹ Mays, *Hosea*, 77.

⁵⁰² Nogalski, “Recurring Themes,” 128–30.

notes the “stripping” here in vv. 5, 14 mirrors the “mourning” that occurs in 4:1–3.⁵⁰³ The abolishment of the festivals in v. 13 also seems to indicate a mourning period.⁵⁰⁴ The removal of celebratory sounds is a traditional treaty-curse in the ANE, and a curse often adopted by the prophetic tradition.⁵⁰⁵

In this *rib*, YHWH is the one directly responsible for the punishment on the NHC.⁵⁰⁶ The conjunction *וְלִי*, which appears three times throughout the *rib* (vv. 8, 11, 16), is a signal of divine action.⁵⁰⁷ It is frequently utilised by the prophets to indicate a people’s guilt and YHWH’s subsequent judgement.⁵⁰⁸ This series of punishments in Hos 2:4–17 is in reaction to the people’s adultery; thus, the land’s inhabitants are ultimately culpable for the suffering of the NHC. Because of her loss of fertility, the NHC mourns in 4:3.⁵⁰⁹

YHWH’s accusations against the wife also imply Israel was implicating the NHC in Israel’s sin. The land’s fertility is linked to the Israelites’ relationship with YHWH, a link Israel denied (v. 10).⁵¹⁰ That she disclaimed the source of her fertility implies she disclaimed YHWH as her husband and God.⁵¹¹ In order to acquire fertility blessings, God’s people pursued the Canaanite gods (v. 7). The people tried to “clothe” the land in blessings by committing adultery with other gods, gods believed to provide fertility.⁵¹² In this way, the land, through no consent of her own, was linked to Baal through Israel’s “adultery.” For this reason, the NHC’s crops failed and she became barren (vv. 12–15).

⁵⁰³ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 52–53.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁰⁵ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 57–58.

⁵⁰⁶ Wolff, *Hosea*, 37.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 36. See also Hos 4:3; 13:3. This conjunction will be discussed in more detail in the section on Hos 4:1–3.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ Mays sees this as a cause-and-effect connection between 2:4–17 and 4:1–3. See Mays, *Hosea*, 81.

⁵¹⁰ See vv. 22–23, where the fruitfulness of God’s people entails the fruitfulness of land. See also Deut 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51.

⁵¹¹ Stuart, *WBC* 31:151.

⁵¹² Keefe, *Woman’s Body*, 77.

1.4. Summary

In this *rib*, YHWH incites the land's children to lobby accusations against their mother, the "land" (cf. 1:2). While many scholars have conflated "land" and "Israel," it is best to treat these two entities as distinct. There is certainly some intertwining between the two, yet the feminine roles and agricultural imagery in Hos 2:4–17 seems consistent with the "land" identity, especially when compared to how Israel is personified in the remainder of Hosea. Hosea 4:1–14:9 only refers to Israel in masculine pronouns and roles (Ephraim, son), even regarding Israel's depiction as זִנָּה. The stripping of the wife in 2:5, 11–12 further supports the personification of Israel in Hos 2:4–17 as the NHC. The punishments for Israel's sins impact the NHC in the form of infertility; the land becomes like a desert and its resources of grain, wine, and oil dissipate (vv. 5, 8, 11–12, 14). The people and the NHC are interdependent, both in their prosperity and in their desolation.

The text parallels the wife's sentence of stripping with the "stripping" of the NHC. The wilderness (v. 5), thorn (v. 8), and wild animal (v. 14) images all have links to agricultural infertility tradition, rendering the NHC barren. Further, the grain, wine, and oil images (v. 10; cf. v. 24) connote agricultural fertility. In light of the blurring of land and people identities, it is apparent the people are responsible for their sin's consequences on the NHC. YHWH enacts the judgement, which in turn affects the non-human created order, but the culpability lies in the people's adulterous relationship with the baals (vv. 7, 9). In their pursuit of other fertility gods, the Israelites implicated the NHC in their adultery by joining the NHC to gods other than YHWH. Their pursuit of fertility by other means beyond YHWH's involvement had the opposite desired effect: YHWH, the one truly responsible for the NHC's livelihood, withheld fertility blessings. At the end of the *rib*, YHWH's final sentencing was not

an annulment of their marriage but full reconciliation. Although this pericope lacks overtly eschatological elements, it directly ties into the subsequent eschatological passage of Hos 2:18–25.

2. HOSEA 2:18–25 [16–23]

2.1. Introduction

Hosea 2:18–25 [16–23] builds upon the reconciliation themes presented at the end of Hos 2:4–17. YHWH's reconciliation with his wife and "land" escalates into a promise of eschatological renewal of the entire cosmos. The oracle's repetition of "on that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) structures this passage into three units: vv. 18–19, 20–22, 23–25. Because of this repetition, coupled with YHWH's voice, Wolff concludes this is what he deems a "genuine unit."⁵¹³ This passage appears to be a structurally-unified oracle, although several scholars note the composite nature of the text.⁵¹⁴ The constant shift of pronouns suggests this unit is a conjoining of fragmentary texts.⁵¹⁵ Both the subject (restoration) and the speaker (YHWH), however, remain consistent throughout the unit.

Hosea 2:18–25 continues the *rib* themes in vv. 4–17 but does diverge from the *rib* form. Stuart observes that vv. 18–25 may be considered an expansion of the "judgement" pronouncement in vv. 16–17.⁵¹⁶ Hosea 2:18–25 is also connected to 1:1–2:17 by its allusion to the names of Hosea's children. This is the third time the book refers to Hosea's children, presupposing the readers are familiar with their background in 1:1–2:1. Since the prose in ch. 3 is unrelated to 2:18–25, the pericope concludes at v. 25.

⁵¹³ Wolff, *Hosea*, 47.

⁵¹⁴ Daniels, *Hosea*, 96; Wolff, *Hosea*, 47.

⁵¹⁵ The text makes the following pronoun shifts: second feminine singular in v. 18; third feminine singular in v. 19; third plural in v. 20; second feminine singular in vv. 21–22; third feminine singular in v. 25a; second and third masculine singular in v. 25b.

⁵¹⁶ Stuart, *WBC* 31:161.

2.2. Text and Translation

¹⁸“And on that day,” oracle of YHWH, “you will call me, ‘My husband’ and you will not call me any longer ‘My Baal.’ ¹⁹I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips and they will not be remembered any longer by their name.

²⁰“I will cut for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field and with the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground. I will abolish the bow and the sword and battle from the land and I will make them lie down in safety.”⁵¹⁷

²¹I will take you as my wife forever. I will take you as my wife in righteousness and in justice and in loving-kindness and in mercy.

²²I will marry you to me in faithfulness. Then you will know YHWH.”⁵¹⁸

²³“On that day I will answer,” oracle of YHWH, “I will answer the heavens and they will answer the earth

²⁴and the earth⁵¹⁹ will answer the grain, the new wine, and the oil and they will answer Jezreel.

²⁵And I will sow her⁵²⁰ for myself in the land.

And I will have mercy on No Mercy and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people,’ and he will say, ‘My God.’”

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה תִּקְרָאִי¹⁸
אִישִׁי וְלֹא-תִקְרָאִי-לִי עוֹד בְּעָלִי¹⁹ וְהִסְרֹתִי
אֶת-שְׁמוֹת הַבָּעֲלִים מִפִּיהָ וְלֹא-יִזְכְּרוּ עוֹד
בְּשֵׁמָם

וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עִם-חַיֵּית²⁰
הַשָּׂדֶה וְעִם-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְרִמָּשׁ הָאֲדָמָה
וְקִשְׁת וְחֶרֶב וּמִלְחָמָה אֲשַׁבֵּר מִן-הָאָרֶץ

וְהִשְׁכַּכְתִּים לְבִטָּח וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךְ לִי לְעוֹלָם
וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךְ לִי בְצִדָּק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד²¹
וּבְרַחֲמִים²² וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךְ לִי בְאֵמוּנָה וְיָדַעְתָּ
אֶת-יְהוָה

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶעֱנֶה נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה²³
אֶעֱנֶה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְהֵם יַעֲנוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
וְהָאָרֶץ תַּעֲנֶה אֶת-הַדָּגָן²⁴
וְאֶת-הַתִּירוֹשׁ
וְאֶת-הַיִּצְהָר
וְהֵם יַעֲנוּ אֶת-יִזְרְעֵאל
וְיִזְרְעֵתִיךְ לִי בְאָרֶץ²⁵
וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֶת-לֹא רַחֲמָה
וְאֶמְרֵתִי לֹלֵא-עַמִּי עַמִּי-אַתָּה
וְהוּא יֹאמַר אֱלֹהִי

2.3. Themes and Motifs

2.3.1. The New Covenant

2.3.1.1. The NHC's Covenantal Role

⁵¹⁷ Literally, “I let them rest in safety.”

⁵¹⁸ Vg, many MT MSS, and Cyril of Alexandria read כי אני יהוה

⁵¹⁹ Despite Hosea's frequent use of ארץ as “land,” an “earth” translation is best here because of the creation imagery.

⁵²⁰ The second feminine suffix's antecedent is unclear. If it refers to Jezreel, the pronoun grammatically needs to be masculine. This will be explored below.

YHWH promises to “cut” a new covenant with “them” (לָהֶם) in v. 20, a pronoun which is ambiguous in light of the passage’s constantly shifting pronouns.⁵²¹ This unit has already shifted from referring to YHWH’s people in the second person feminine singular (v. 18) to the third person feminine singular (v. 19). Overall, the passage seems to imply this covenant involves YHWH, YHWH’s people, and the NHC, but which role does each of these party members assume in this covenant-making? And who is “them” in v. 20? Does the pronoun reference YHWH’s people? Or perhaps this unclear pronoun refers to the NHC?

Both Wolff and DeRoche conclude “them” is the nation of Israel.⁵²² They thus argue the covenant is mediated by YHWH between the animals and Israel. Stuart believes the pronoun refers to God’s people, but the covenant is “imposed on behalf of God’s people on all living creatures.”⁵²³ If YHWH were referring to YHWH’s people, however, the listener would expect the pronoun to be consistent with the “you” (feminine singular) pronoun that references Israel in v. 18. In fact, it is inconsistent for YHWH to refer to Israel as “them” and then shift back to four instances of “you” (feminine singular) in vv. 21–22. Because of this inconsistency, others have proposed “them” is the animals, and this covenant is between YHWH and the animals for Israel’s behalf.⁵²⁴ Kelle, on the other hand, argues YHWH is not a party to this covenant, but the covenant is primarily between the NHC and the Israelites.⁵²⁵ YHWH initiates the covenant between these two partners as both a witness and a

⁵²¹ Anderson and Freedman view the shift in pronouns as an indication of an “overall symmetrical structure,” which they argue is evidence of the text’s unity. This theory seems unlikely. See Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 265.

⁵²² Wolff, *Hosea* 50–51; DeRoche, “Reversal,” 405–406. In his translation, DeRoche changes “them” to “you” (405).

⁵²³ Stuart, *WBC* 31:58.

⁵²⁴ Mays, *Hosea*, 49; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 57; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 178. Anderson and Freedman conclude “them” refers to the “children” who represent Israel (cf. Hos 1:2–9); *Hosea*, 280–1.

⁵²⁵ Kelle, *Hosea* 2, 276.

“guarantor” of the covenant.⁵²⁶ In this way, Kelle interprets “them” to refer to the NHC and the Israelites collectively.⁵²⁷

Daniels argues this is a renewal of YHWH’s covenant with Israel, yet he believes it includes the NHC as an equal party member, thus creating a three-way covenant.⁵²⁸ Daniels persuasively supports his claim by observing that the standard format of covenant-making in the Hebrew Bible always includes the object of the ל preposition as an active member of the covenant agreement.⁵²⁹ Thus, the covenant is between the subject of the verb and the noun or pronoun designated by ל. Daniels views the effect of the covenant in v. 20 (elimination of warfare) as further support for his claim; this peace applies to all three of the covenant parties.⁵³⁰ Marlow offers a similar conclusion in her analysis, suggesting this three-way relationship is enacted on Israel’s behalf.⁵³¹ Lim and Castelo and Braaten also conclude this covenant is made directly with the NHC.⁵³² Dearman treats the NHC as a covenant partner with YHWH and views her partnership as having both literary and literal ramifications.⁵³³

Nogalski argues English translations, particularly the NRSV, which substitutes “you” for “them,” erroneously treat “them” as a scribal error.⁵³⁴ He counters that this pronoun is actually functioning proleptically, or in anticipation of what is to come.⁵³⁵ Therefore, Nogalski offers the translation, “I will cut with them a covenant, *that is*, with the beasts of the field.”⁵³⁶ While other interpretations (see above) have included the NHC in the covenant-making process, the NHC’s involvement has been largely viewed as secondary to

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 277.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Daniels, *Hosea*, 101.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 102.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 178.

⁵³² Bo H. Lim and Daniel Castelo, *Hosea*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 75; Braaten, “God Sows,” 110.

⁵³³ Dearman, *Hosea*, 77–78.

⁵³⁴ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 57. The NRSVue, however, translates the pronoun as “them.”

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid. Emphasis original.

Israel's involvement. However, if Nogalski's interpretation is correct, then this Hoseanic covenant places the NHC as the primary party in the covenantal agreement. While God's people are certainly involved, this new covenant is as much for the benefit of the NHC as it is for God's people. This possibility, and the effects that ensue, will be discussed in more detail below.

Batto recognizes the similarities between this Hoseanic covenant and other "covenants of peace" in the Hebrew Bible, particularly with Ezek 34:25–30.⁵³⁷ Although the Hosea text does not explicitly call this covenant a "covenant of peace," Batto concludes that, based upon the eschatological motifs, this covenant is the same covenant as that in Ezekiel.⁵³⁸ Yet, if "them" in Hos 2:20 is in reference to the NHC, as those above have persuasively argued, then this covenant in Hosea has a quality unique from the other "covenants of peace." Other Hebrew Bible passages emphasise the benefits of a covenant for humans, and in contrast, this covenant in Hosea seems to be made with and for the NHC.⁵³⁹ The covenant in Ezekiel, for example, is clearly for the sake of the nation of Israel. Although the NHC is involved, the covenant is not a three-way relationship. Instead of assuming an active role as a co-participant, animals are subdued by YHWH as part of YHWH's covenantal responsibility (Ezek 34:25, 28). Further, this Ezekiel covenant, along with several other instances in the Hebrew Bible, has a solely negative view of the NHC.⁵⁴⁰ The covenant in Hosea does not hold this view, even though wild animals were involved in Israel's punishment (2:14).

⁵³⁷ Bernard F. Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 189.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ In addition to Ezek 34:25; 37:26, see Lev 26:9; Is 35:9–10; 54:9–10.

⁵⁴⁰ See more negative attitudes concerning the NHC in the following passages: Lev 26:6; Isa 35:9; Jer 15:3; Ezek 34:25; Job 5:22–23.

Braaten believes YHWH enters into this covenant with the NHC because the animals suffered from Israel's sin, as recorded in Hos 2:12 and 4:1–3.⁵⁴¹ He concludes true restoration between YHWH, YHWH's people, and the NHC "must include freeing the animals from this undeserved suffering."⁵⁴² According to his analysis, the NHC is the mediator of the covenant with God's people, a role humanity forfeited through their abuse of the NHC.⁵⁴³

Several scholars have noted a connection between the inclusion of the animals in v. 20 and v. 14, where wild animals were responsible for judgement against Israel.⁵⁴⁴ Hillers lists wild animals as a common motif in treaty-curses.⁵⁴⁵ Because of this, it is possible the three-fold mention of the NHC in v. 20 is a restoration blessing countering this particular judgement.⁵⁴⁶ While the inclusion of the NHC in the covenant here does portray a harmonious relationship between the NHC and God's people, its structure suggests this blessing is an eschatological blessing. While v. 14 only mentions wild animals, v. 20 lists the three categories of creatures, a literary device often used in the Hebrew Bible to designate all of creation (Gen 1:26, 28; 9:10; Ps 8:6–8). Further, there is no mention of YHWH subduing the animals, as in other oracles of hope that revoke wild animal curses (Lev 26:9; Isa 35:9–10; Ezek 34:25, 28; 38:20). This three-way covenant entails peace between YHWH, the NHC, and humanity, yet the mention of the animals, i.e. all of the NHC, seems to designate covenantal involvement rather than only the reverse of a wild animal curse.

While these three categories of the NHC may indicate a reversal of a specific wild animal curse, they do appear in reverse order of the first creation account (cf. Gen 1:28). This is the same reversed order in which they appear in Hos 4:3, a passage detailing the

⁵⁴¹ Braaten, "Earth Community," 197.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Stuart, *WBC* 31:163; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 178; Wolff, *Hosea*, 50-51; Dearman, *Hosea*, 126.

⁵⁴⁵ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 54–6.

⁵⁴⁶ Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 281.

devastating effect of humanity's sin on the created order.⁵⁴⁷ In light of Hos 4:3, the reader would expect Hos 2:20 to list the animals in the created order, thereby emphasising the restorative process of this covenant. That both passages list the animals in this reversed order is peculiar. However, while the order is the opposite of that in the creation poem (Gen 1:26, 28), it is nonetheless the same order as it appears in both the second creation story (Gen 2:19, 20) and the flood story (Gen 7:14; 9:2, 9–17). Batto connects the “covenant of peace” after the flood story (Gen 9:8–11) with the covenant in Hos 2:20.⁵⁴⁸ As will be demonstrated in the analysis of Hos 4:1–3, the Hoseanic tradition recalls the flood tradition on numerous occasions. Perhaps it is for this reason 2:20 lists the animals in the order of the flood story. While it is unknown whether the prophets had access to the Yahwist and Priestly accounts in Genesis, there may have been a shared tradition of this phraseology.⁵⁴⁹

In summary, it has been demonstrated that “them” in this passage likely refers to the NHC. Since the *l* preposition designates the NHC as a party, it can be concluded that the NHC possesses an active role in this covenant. While humanity certainly benefits from this covenant, the primary participant in the covenant is the NHC.

2.3.1.2. The Effect of the Covenant on the NHC

In addition to a harmonious relationship between the NHC and God's people, the covenant removes warfare (v. 20). According to Hosea, true security involves disarmament,

⁵⁴⁷ This reverse order is also seen in Ps 8:7–8 and Zeph 1:2–3. The animals are listed in the created order in Ezek 38:20.

⁵⁴⁸ Batto, “Covenant of Peace,” 195.

⁵⁴⁹ In addition to the occurrences in Gen 1–11, similar terminology appears in the epics of Atrahasis and Gilgamesh. See Batto, “Covenant of Peace,” 191–4.

not an increase in weaponry (cf. 1:7; 10:13). YHWH specifies that war will be removed “from the land” (מן-הארץ), a phrase that could have multiple meanings, depending on how ארץ is interpreted. On the one hand, מן-הארץ could refer to the specific geographical location: warfare will no longer be present in Israel. On the other hand, “land” may more generally designate the NHC, especially since she is the main constituent in the covenant (v. 20). Marlow and Braaten observe the destruction of weapons extends to the welfare of the NHC as well; war damages crops and eco-systems.⁵⁵⁰ If the first appearance of “them” referred to the NHC, it is plausible that this second appearance of “them” also includes the NHC: YHWH will make “them,” i.e. the animals (NHC), lie down in safety. In this way, Israel and the NHC are intertwined. The affairs of humanity affect the wellbeing of the NHC.

In vv. 21–22, YHWH specifies the restorative nature of this covenant in the context of a “marriage” with Israel. YHWH makes this covenant ב righteousness, justice, kindness, and compassion. The ב preposition can designate “by means of” or “accompanied by,” two different understandings that impact the interpretation of this covenant. If the ב preposition is interpreted “by means of,” then these virtuous qualities are actions YHWH initiates in order to enact the covenant on Israel’s behalf.⁵⁵¹ If, however, the ב preposition is interpreted “accompanied by,” then these qualities are the expected outcomes of the covenantal relationships; they are blessings that accompany the agreement. It is possible to interpret the ב preposition as both of these meanings simultaneously: YHWH acts with justice and kindness to initiate the covenant, and YHWH also expects the covenantal participants to respond accordingly.

It is worth noting “faithfulness” (v. 22) is left out of the list of qualities in v. 21. This intentional isolation of “faithfulness” in v. 22 seems to emphasise the change that will take

⁵⁵⁰ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 178; Braaten, “God Sows,” 110.

⁵⁵¹ Stuart calls this the “bride price”; *WBC* 31:164.

place in Israel. Previously, Israel had repeatedly acted unfaithfully to YHWH, pursuing other gods in YHWH's stead (2:7, 9, 15). "Faithfulness" is emphasised in v. 22, along with the declaration that the Israelites would "know YHWH." Since this verse is in first person, the reader expects YHWH to say "know me." The divine name contrasts with the names of the baals in v. 19. YHWH's name is now on the people's lips. Faithfulness and knowledge of God specifically connect to YHWH's accusations against Israel in 4:1, where both of these attributes are absent in the life of the community.⁵⁵² The word for "know" in 2:22 is יָדַע, signifying an intimate way of "knowing" YHWH, while the prophet uses דָּעַת, a noun derived from יָדַע, in 4:1 to signify "knowledge." The "knowledge" in 4:1 may refer to familiarity with the Torah, although this can also be understood as a way of "knowing" YHWH.

Since this covenant is a three-way relationship between YHWH, YHWH's people, and the NHC, these traits extend to the NHC as well. Righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, and mercy are not just virtues for YHWH's people; neither are they solely for the relationship humanity has with YHWH.⁵⁵³ These traits are repeated in 4:1–3, once again in the context of knowing YHWH, and this passage specifies the devastating impact their absence has on the NHC. The presence of these virtues and intimacy with YHWH is necessary for the stability of the entire cosmic order, an idea supported by Isaiah (see Isa 11:3–9; 32:15–17, where the entire NHC is affected by humanity's righteousness).

"On that day" YHWH promises to enact a chain of interrelated actions that extend to the NHC (vv. 23–25). In these cause-and-effect statements YHWH "answers" or "sings" five times, beginning with a response to the NHC ("heavens" and "earth").⁵⁵⁴ In this "song,"

⁵⁵² This will be discussed in detail below in the analysis of 4:1–3.

⁵⁵³ It is worth mentioning three of these virtues (צדקה, מִשְׁפָּט, חסד) appear in Jer 9:24 [23] in the context of Israel's knowledge of YHWH.

⁵⁵⁴ עֲנָה can also be interpreted as "sing." See Stuart, *WBC* 31:166 and Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 180.

YHWH brings fertility to the NHC, an action which in turn brings blessing to humanity.⁵⁵⁵ The gifts of grain, new wine, and oil, a parallel to vv. 10–11, reverse the judgement threats against Israel (Deut 11:17). Dearman remarks the “whole cosmos responds as if its constituent parts are YHWH’s household at work.”⁵⁵⁶ That the NHC “answers” so freely to YHWH’s call indicates the intimacy of their relationship.⁵⁵⁷ Stuart suggests this “answer” of fertility is an “answer” to prayer, although he does not specify whose prayer.⁵⁵⁸ Koch believes the “answer” signifies Jezreel first asked for blessing.⁵⁵⁹ Israel, however, does not petition YHWH for deliverance in 2:1–25. Neither does YHWH redeem Israel in response to her pleas.⁵⁶⁰ In Hosea, however, the NHC does “mourn” and cry out to YHWH in agony (4:1–3). If vv. 22–25 is an “answer” to a plea, then the most logical supplicant is the NHC.

By partnering with the NHC, YHWH restores the effects of the judgement against Israel which extended to the NHC (vv. 11, 14). As per the order of the song, the NHC is the first recipient of YHWH’s salvific actions (“heavens” and “earth” in vv. 23–24).⁵⁶¹ Several have noted the cosmic implications of this fertility blessing.⁵⁶² Kelle, however, counters that this not an eschatological day of renewal but a remarriage.⁵⁶³ Thus, he concludes the fertility blessings are bridal gifts, not evidence of a new eschatological era.⁵⁶⁴ Others have argued there is no evidence of a divorce in the text and this covenant should not be considered a

⁵⁵⁵ Wolff, *Hosea*, 53 and Stuart, *WBC* 31:60 note this is a full agricultural cycle.

⁵⁵⁶ Dearman, *Hosea*, 130–1.

⁵⁵⁷ The Targum suggests an intimate relationship between these spaces in the NHC via the following explanation: “1) God responds: ‘I will listen,’ 2) heavens respond: ‘they send down rain,’ 3) earth responds: ‘it makes abundant,’ and 4) they respond to Jezreel: ‘they shall supply enough for.’” See A. Guillaume, “A Note on Hosea II. 23, 24 (21,22),” *JTS* 15 (1964): 57. Guillaume argues the Targum accurately portrays the “play on the nuances” of “answer” (58).

⁵⁵⁸ Stuart, *WBC* 31:166.

⁵⁵⁹ Claus Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?,” in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 69.

⁵⁶⁰ See vv. 16–17, where YHWH punishes Israel and then redeems her of YHWH’s own initiation. Repentance is not implied until after YHWH “woos” her in the wilderness.

⁵⁶¹ Braaten, “Earth Community,” 201.

⁵⁶² Braaten, “God Sows,” 110; Dearman, *Hosea*, 80; Wolff, *Hosea*, 51.

⁵⁶³ Kelle, *Hosea* 2, 280.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 282.

remarriage.⁵⁶⁵ Wolff concludes the covenantal language in vv. 21–22 implies a completely new eschatological agreement, not a renewal of the old marriage.⁵⁶⁶ According to Deut 24:1–4, it was legally impossible to return to a marriage after a divorce. Because of this, it is most compelling to understand the *rib* in Hosea 2 not as an official divorce, but as a stylized warning accompanied by punishment. Nevertheless, regardless of whether Hosea is viewed as pertaining to punishment of adultery or to a legal declaration of divorce, the chain of fertility events appears to be eschatological in nature based upon the presence of בְּיוֹם הַהוּא and the cosmic merism of “heavens” and “earth.”⁵⁶⁷

2.3.2. Sowing Imagery

Several scholars have noted the prevalence of a planting metaphor throughout Hosea.⁵⁶⁸ This motif is prevalent throughout Hos 2:4–25 and climaxes in v. 25 with the name “Jezreel,” a word meaning “God sows.” Braaten suggests “Jezreel,” like the other children’s names, holds a deeper meaning; it should not be merely understood as a geographical location.⁵⁶⁹ Unlike the other names, Jezreel is not negated with אֵל. Neither does it possess an obvious reversal of meaning as the other names do in v. 25. The reversal is much more implicit in the text. Braaten believes the first appearance of Jezreel in 1:4 signifies a “sowing” of judgement for violating the covenant relationship with YHWH, as the Israelites did in 2 Kgs 9.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁵ Wolff notes the divorce language in 2:4 but counters that YHWH’s actions imply reconciliation and not marriage annulment; *Hosea*, 33. Lim and Castelo acknowledge 2:4 communicates a threat of divorce, although not divorce itself; *Hosea*, 69. Stuart believes Hos 2:4–17 is a trial for adultery, not a legal hearing for divorce; *WBC* 31:148.

⁵⁶⁶ Wolff, *Hosea*, 52. Lim and Castelo suggest the covenant is a remarriage, which counters their previous claim on pg. 69 that this is not a divorce. See *Hosea*, 77.

⁵⁶⁷ As Stuart concludes in *WBC* 31:166.

⁵⁶⁸ Notably, Braaten, “Earth Community”; Batto, “Covenant of Peace”; and Gerald Morris, *Prophecy, Poetry and Hosea* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁵⁶⁹ Braaten, “God Sows,” 106.

⁵⁷⁰ In 2 Kgs 9, God punishes for sins of bloodshed (vv. 7, 26) and idolatry (v. 22), two crimes listed in Hos 1:2–5.

Braaten and Morris argue the name Jezreel is not only symbolic for judgement; it “also emphasizes God and Israel’s intimate association with Land.”⁵⁷¹ The fertility chain ends with Jezreel, one of the names of Hosea’s children that doubles as a reference to a symbolic place of judgement (1:5; cf. 2 Kgs 9). In light of the eschatological covenant, Jezreel is transformed from a place of punishment to a place of hope. Braaten views Jezreel’s function in v. 25 as both a location and a confession: the Israelites respond to God’s blessings with the exclamation, “God Sows!”⁵⁷² Thus, because of God’s salvific act, Israel acknowledges these fertility blessings as gifts from YHWH and not from her lovers, as she previously did in v. 10. This name, then, signals a reversal of judgement by sowing salvation in the NHC and for the NHC.

This “sowing” theme in Hos 2:4–25 is consistent with Batto’s analysis of “covenants of peace,” where planting imagery is prominent.⁵⁷³ Ezekiel 34:29 envisions that YHWH will “plant” peace in the land, as does Lev 26:3–6.⁵⁷⁴ In light of this motif’s occurrence throughout the Hebrew Bible, Batto believes the name “Jezreel” signifies YHWH’s sowing of eschatological blessings in the land.⁵⁷⁵ Anderson and Freedman argue there are sexual connotations to “sowing” in the land, concluding the “insemination of a woman is like the sowing of a field.”⁵⁷⁶ Such sexual interpretations of texts are based upon a fallacious sexualization of the Canaanite fertility cults.⁵⁷⁷ Keene argues “androcentric perspectives combined with theological interests have determined the way that biblical scholars approach and think about female sexual imagery in Hos 1–2.”⁵⁷⁸ Kelle steers from sexual

⁵⁷¹ Braaten, “Earth Community,” 187. See also Morris, *Prophecy*, 89.

⁵⁷² Braaten, “God Sows,” 110.

⁵⁷³ Batto, “Covenant of Peace,” 211.

⁵⁷⁴ Lev 26:3–6 uses נָתַן, a verb also used in Ezek 17:5 to indicate a sowing action.

⁵⁷⁵ Batto, “Covenant of Peace,” 202.

⁵⁷⁶ Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 288.

⁵⁷⁷ See Keene, *Woman’s Body*, 50.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

imagery and views this planting imagery as Israel's return to both her marriage and her land.⁵⁷⁹ Braaten also argues the imagery is not sexual, but refers to the mythic realm of the womb of the earth (cf. Job 1:21; Ps 139:13-16).⁵⁸⁰ Because of the dubious evidence of fertility cults and sexual rituals, projecting sexual metaphors onto Hos 1–2 should be avoided.

After the chain of fertility blessings, YHWH promises to sow “her” for YHWH's self in the land, a feminine singular pronoun whose antecedent is unclear (v. 25). Kelle believes the feminine pronoun refers back to the unfaithful wife from 2:4–17.⁵⁸¹ Batto proposes the pronoun refers to the covenant and its resulting blessings.⁵⁸² Braaten also believes the pronoun refers to the covenant and bridal gifts, concluding “it” in v. 25 forms an inclusio with “covenant” in v. 20.⁵⁸³ In both cases, the sowing imagery reveals God's intentions to renew the NHC eschatologically.

2.3.3. Eschatological Renewal of the NHC

Because of the ambiguity of ארץ in Hosea, scholars are divided on whether the eschatological renewal that stems from this new covenant is cosmic or localized to the land of Israel. Wolff believes this covenant is eschatological, yet he argues since Hosea never uses ארץ for “world,” ארץ should thus be understood as pertaining to Israel.⁵⁸⁴ Others compellingly maintain ארץ refers to a cosmic renewal of the entire NHC. Braaten views this covenant as a creation-wide salvific event, thus translating ארץ in vv. 20, 25 as “Earth.”⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁹ Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 282.

⁵⁸⁰ Braaten, “God Sows,” 109.

⁵⁸¹ Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 282.

⁵⁸² Batto, “Covenant of Peace,” 202.

⁵⁸³ Braaten, “Earth Community,” 200.

⁵⁸⁴ Wolff, *Hosea*, 51.

⁵⁸⁵ Braaten, “God Sows,” 110–11.

Marlow also concludes this event involves the fertility renewal of the entire NHC.⁵⁸⁶ She argues the formulaic structure of the covenant signifies the fertility blessing extends beyond Israel's political borders.⁵⁸⁷ Dearman follows suit and argues the covenantal effects impact the entire world order and signify peace for the cosmos: "As the book of Hosea makes clear, cosmic community can respond to the healing, restorative word of its creator, and like its human inhabitants, can be transformed."⁵⁸⁸

2.4. Summary

Hosea 2:18–25 portrays an eschatological covenant that impacts the entire cosmic order. The reoccurrence of the phrase "in that day" suggests a break from the judgement which came before (vv. 4–17). The inclusion of the three-fold categories of living creatures (v. 20), a merism reminiscent of the creation and flood accounts, implies the covenant involves the entire created world.

The NHC assumes a prominent role in the mediation of this eschatological covenant. The ambiguity of "them" in v. 20 has led to many different interpretations; nevertheless, textual evidence suggests "them" should in some way include the NHC, whether solely or composite with Israel. Because the ל preposition identifies the animals as party members, it is most likely that "them" functions proleptically. Further, in contrast to other examples of "covenants of peace" in the Hebrew Bible, Hos 2:20 treats the NHC as a co-participant in the covenant, whose blessings extend not only to humanity but also to the NHC. Both the elimination of warfare (v. 20) and the supplication of the bridal gifts (vv. 21–22) support the flourishing of the NHC.

⁵⁸⁶ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 179.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 179–80. She helpfully argues the scope in 2:20 supersedes the judgement limited to Israel's land in 2:14.

⁵⁸⁸ Dearman, *Hosea*, 155.

The passage not only names the NHC as the primary participant in the covenant; it also uses “sowing” language as a means of further highlighting the prominence of the NHC. Thus, both the message and the medium centre the NHC. The “sowing” imagery, consistent with traditional “covenants of peace,” implies the gift of eschatological blessings. This imagery climaxes in v. 24 with the name Jezreel, which means “God sows,” and could be understood as Israel’s confession of faith. Through the initiation of this covenant with the NHC, YHWH annuls the judgement inflicted upon both the Israelites and the NHC in 2:4–17. As will next be demonstrated in Hos 4:1–3, the particular eschatological characteristics of “faithfulness” and “knowledge” are necessary for the stability of the NHC.

3. HOSEA 4:1–3

3.1. Introduction

Hosea 4:1–3 is a self-contained unit that functions as an introduction to the larger unit of Hos 4:1–14:9. Its themes of sin’s effect upon the NHC and the agency of the NHC are pertinent to this study. The transgressions of “no faithfulness” and “no knowledge of God” contrast with the presence of these virtues in 2:18–25. Because of its shift in tone from chs. 1–3, most scholars isolate chs. 1–3 and treat chs. 4–14 separately.⁵⁸⁹ Hosea 4:1–3, however, has many connections to Hos 1–3. Not only does 4:1–3 demonstrate coherence with chs. 1–3, but it also functions as a bridge to connect the two units together.

Several cross-references bind 4:1–3 to the chapters preceding it.⁵⁹⁰ The dispute (*rib*) in 4:1–3 is a reversal of the covenant in 2:20, even so far as using the same language for the NHC (“beasts of the field” and “birds of the air”). Further, the term “word of YHWH,” a

⁵⁸⁹ Kelle, “Hosea 1–3,” 180.

⁵⁹⁰ Landy notes other ways chs. 1–3 connects to the greater unit of chs. 4–14. Francis Landy, *Hosea*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2011), 12–15; 53–55.

proclamation speech formula rare in the prophetic corpus, appears in the superscription to the entire book (1:1).⁵⁹¹ The only other occurrence of a proclamation formula in Hosea is 4:1 (cf. Isa 1:10; Amos 3:1; 4:1; 7:16; 8:4; Mic 3:1, 9; 6:1). The term “sons of YHWH” appears in 3:1, 4, 5 and 4:1 but not otherwise in Hosea. Finally, 4:1 emphasises the land just as 1:2 does. Because of these connections in Hos 4:1 to Hos 1:1–3:5, Wolff concludes a redactor added 4:1a in order to connect the new unit of chs. 4–14 to the unit of chs. 1–3.⁵⁹²

Within its context of ch. 4, vv. 1–3 are set apart from vv. 4–19 because of the shift in address. Verses 1–3 address the “sons of YHWH,” or all of the Israelites collectively, while vv. 4–6 address the priests. In this way, vv. 1–3 function as a self-contained unit; the verses that follow v. 3 are not necessary to its interpretation.⁵⁹³ Yet, v. 4 does refer back to vv. 1–3 by its use of אֲנִי, suggesting vv. 4–19 continue vv. 1–3. The references to the “mother” in v. 5 and the feminine pronouns in vv. 18, 19 may also allude to the “land” in 4:1–3.

Like 2:4–17, Hos 4:1–3 is a covenant quarrel (*rib*). In this *rib*, the accusations are made against the “inhabitants of the land” and not the land itself. Stuart notes the various features of this *rib*: the summons and accusation (v. 1), the evidence of covenant violation (v. 2), and the judgement sentencing (v. 3).⁵⁹⁴ As in 2:4–17, YHWH is once again settling his dispute with Israel by functioning as both the judge and prosecutor in 4:1–3; however, it is not YHWH who carries out the judgement sentence this time, but the NHC.

3.1. Text and Translation

⁵⁹¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 66.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁹⁴ Stuart, *WBC* 31:187.

¹Hear the word of YHWH, sons of Israel!
YHWH has an accusation against the
inhabitants of the land,
for there is no faithfulness and there is no
covenant-faithfulness
and there is no knowledge of God in the
land.

²Cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and
adultery break forth,⁵⁹⁵
and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

³Therefore, the land mourns⁵⁹⁶
and all who live in it fade away,
along with the beasts of the field and with
the birds of the air.
Even the fish of the sea are swept away.

שִׁמְעוּ דְּבַר-יְהוָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל¹
כִּי רִיב לַיהוָה עִם-יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
כִּי אֵין-אֱמֶת וְאֵין-חֶסֶד
וְאֵין-דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים בְּאָרֶץ

אֵלֶּה וְכַחַשׁ וְרֹצֵחַ וְגָנֹב וְנָאֵף פָּרָצוּ²
וְדָמִים בְּדָמִים נִגְעוּ

עַל-כֵּן תֵּאָבֵל הָאָרֶץ³
וְאִמְלִל כָּל-יוֹשֵׁב בָּהּ
בְּחַיֵּית הַשָּׂדֶה וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְגַם-דִּגְי הַיָּם יֵאָסְפוּ

3.3. Themes and Motifs

3.3.1. “In the Land”

This passage includes the phrase “in the land” twice in v. 1. Several textual critics note the possibility of a third occurrence in v. 2. The MT’s omission of “in the land” in v. 2 may be the result of homoioteleuton; the sound is similar to פָּרָץ.⁵⁹⁷ The LXX includes the phrase “upon the land” in v. 2, reemphasising the role of the NHC in this passage.⁵⁹⁸ Nevertheless, without this LXX addition, אֶרֶץ is mentioned three times in this passage (vv. 1, 3). That אֶרֶץ is repeated at least three times is significant. In fact, אֶרֶץ appears more often than YHWH does in this passage.⁵⁹⁹ Marlow observes that these occurrences connect the ethical expectations of God’s people to the NHC and is “perhaps evidence of the importance of this connection in early prophetic traditions.”⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁵ The LXX includes “upon the land” in v. 2. This mirrors the appearance in v. 1. Wolff and Stuart argue the absence of this phrase in the MT is a result of homoioteleuton. See Wolff, *Hosea*, 65; Stuart, *WBC*, 72. The significance of this for the NHC will be discussed below.

⁵⁹⁶ Many translators choose “dry up” over “mourn.” This translation choice will be explained below.

⁵⁹⁷ Wolff, *Hosea* 65; Stuart, *WBC* 31:72; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Hosea* (Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), 96.

⁵⁹⁸ See Wolff, *Hosea*, 65; Stuart, *WBC*, 72.

⁵⁹⁹ If the third occurrence of “in the land” is included, אֶרֶץ appears more often than the deity. See Loya, “Therefore,” 55.

⁶⁰⁰ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 185.

Loya observes ארץ appears in each stage of the *rib*: the summons (v. 1a), the indictment (v. 1b), and the sentencing (v. 3).⁶⁰¹ The first occurrence references the inhabitants “in the land.” This phrase does not appear to be a mere specification of the people’s geographical location; the designation affirms the people’s association with the NHC.⁶⁰² It is a reminder of both the inhabitants’ relationship with the NHC and their responsibilities to it. The second occurrence references either the collective list of sins committed “in the land” or the specific sin of the absence of knowledge of YHWH. In either interpretation, this positional clarification serves as another reminder that the people’s ethical behaviour affects the NHC. This iteration contrasts with the allusion to “land” in 1:2, where it is the NHC, not the inhabitants, who is accused of committing adultery. Counter to the land’s personification in 1:2, Hos 4:1 indicates it is the people who are guilty, not the “land.”

The frequent use of ארץ indicates the people are identified and defined through their relationship with the NHC.⁶⁰³ This same stress on the Israelites’ ethical connection to the NHC is seen in Deut 11:8–15, where God instructs the people to observe their covenantal duties so the “land” may sustain its fertility. It is clear the Deuteronomist tradition affirmed an interdependent relationship between YHWH, the people, and the NHC, a relationship that Hos 4:1–3 affirms. The repetition of ארץ demonstrates it is not just the specific sins that are important; it is also significant that these sins are committed in and against the land.

3.3.2. The Role of the NHC

⁶⁰¹ Loya, “Therefore,” 55.

⁶⁰² Dearman still contends “land” functions as a metonym here, as he did in 1:2. Such a function would render this phrase redundant in its associations with the inhabitants; *Hosea*, 148.

⁶⁰³ Loya, “Therefore,” 55. Anderson and Freedman unconvincingly argue readers should understand the judgement instigator to be YHWH, even though he is not explicitly mentioned. See *Hosea*, 341.

As the repetition of “land” foreshadows, the NHC takes more of a prominent role in judgement than she did in the previous Hosea passages. In contrast to YHWH’s action of withdrawing fertility in 2:4–17, the NHC is the one who acts in 4:1–3. In fact, apart from the judgement pronouncement, YHWH does not explicitly act in this *rib* at all. Brueggemann argues the explicit absence of the deity in Hos 4:1–3 indicates YHWH does not directly intervene to enact the punishment against Israel.⁶⁰⁴ He argues “therefore” (עַל-כֵּן) implies a necessary course of action on the part of the NHC: the NHC is operating according to the cosmic order YHWH has decreed.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, the conjunction is a causal link between the indictment and the judgement, stressing that YHWH is not the active agent.⁶⁰⁶ Hayes notes עַל-כֵּן is an intentional transition choice, as עַל-כֵּן denotes a resultative action or state, while לְכֵן tends to denote divine involvement (see Hos 2:8, 11, 16).⁶⁰⁷ This conjunction choice further implies the absence of divine action.⁶⁰⁸ For this reason, both Hayes and Loya choose to translate the conjunction as “for this reason” and “as a result,” respectively.⁶⁰⁹

Although YHWH does not act in this passage, the first verb (אָבַל) in v. 3 does have an explicit subject: אָרֶץ. This communicates that the NHC has an active role in the indictment without the direct command from YHWH to implement his judgement. The NHC is the one who acts, and her mourning in response to humanity’s sin is an active punishment.⁶¹⁰ The cause-effect actions are a sequential parallelism; the NHC’s mourning initiates the curse on the land’s inhabitants and creatures.⁶¹¹ Wolff calls this an “organic structure of order.”⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁴ Brueggemann, “Uninflected Therefore,” 241.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 242.

⁶⁰⁶ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 190.

⁶⁰⁷ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 45. She explains לְכֵן often precedes divine declarations. See Hos 2:8, 11; 13:3.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 41; Loya, “Therefore,” 61.

⁶¹⁰ Loya, “Therefore,” 57.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 57.

⁶¹² Wolff, *Hosea*, 68.

In his analysis of several passages from Hosea, Koch observes an implicit system of retribution.⁶¹³ Most notable is 4:9b, where YHWH promises to “bring back” the Israelites’ sins and “send their deeds” back. Koch concludes “Hosea is not compelled by the idea that God requites sin. He is compelled, instead, by *the view that actions have built-in consequences and it is in this vein that he proclaims the onset of disasters.*”⁶¹⁴ Thus, in Koch’s interpretation of 4:1–3, YHWH does not actively punish; YHWH permits the ארץ to respond, thereby maintaining YHWH’s ethical order of the cosmos.⁶¹⁵ This system is a means by which to “protect the land from being utterly decimated.”⁶¹⁶ Humanity’s actions have consequences, and these consequences are integrated into the cause-effect design of the NHC. As Loya concludes, the NHC “*must mourn*” in order to abide by YHWH’s moral order.⁶¹⁷

It has been proposed that the NHC is the main actor in this covenant dispute, but to what is the NHC responding? There are several possibilities. First, the NHC could be “mourning” in response to YHWH’s judgement pronouncement in v. 1. If so, this demonstrates an intimate relationship between YHWH and the NHC, whereby the NHC responds in grief to YHWH’s anger and anguish. However, it is more likely that the NHC mourns because humanity has violated their relationship with her. If so, her grief is once again a prophetic protest (cf. Amos 1:2). By committing the sins “in the land,” humanity has alienated the NHC by disregarding their covenantal responsibilities toward her. For this reason, Braaten argues the NHC is responding to both humanity’s sin and to her subsequent state of death.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹³ Koch, “Doctrine of Retribution,” 57–87.

⁶¹⁴ Koch, “Doctrine of Retribution,” 66. Emphasis original.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 67–8.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁶¹⁷ Loya, “Therefore,” 61. Emphasis original.

⁶¹⁸ Braaten, “God Sows,” 112.

3.3.4. Humanity's Effect on the NHC

The accusations lobbied against God's people form a sequence of cause-and-effect relationships. First, the absence of the people's covenantal identities and character traits (v. 1) leads to the embodiment of specific sins in v. 2a. This in turn leads to a culmination in v. 2b, where "bloodshed follows bloodshed." The charges against God's people heighten throughout vv. 1–2, finally climaxing with the NHC's response in v. 3.

The first list includes virtues absent in the life of God's people: אמת, חסד, and דעת-אלהם. "Truthfulness" and "loving-kindness" (sometimes translated "loyalty") are characteristics of YHWH (Exod 34:6; 2 Sam 15:20; Ps 36:8; Jer 9:23). YHWH, in turn, expects the covenantal people to uphold these same standards. These two virtues appear together in Ps 85:10–12, where the outcome is the NHC's fertility. Truthfulness and loving-kindness are necessary for the flourishing of both God's people and the NHC, and their absence in Hos 4:1–3 means a violent and chaotic community. The lack of knowledge of God is the last one in the list, a position which may entail emphasis (cf. Hos 2:22).⁶¹⁹ This lack of knowledge leads to breaking the covenant commandments in v. 2. Thus, this first list of absent character traits leads to the list of sins in v. 2.

The second list in v. 2 is comprised of five infinitive absolutes that recall the specific commandments in the Decalogue, although it is unclear whether these sins in Hos 4:2 directly reference Exod 20:2–17 and Deut 5:6–21 (cf. Jer 7:9). Cassuto argues this list is Hosea's own unique alteration of the Decalogue, but there are various conclusions about Hosea's textual dependence on the Decalogue.⁶²⁰ Although the Decalogue in its present form

⁶¹⁹ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 48.

⁶²⁰ U. Cassuto, "The Second Chapter of the Book of Hosea (1927)," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, Vol. 1, *Bible*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), 89. See also Dearman, *Hosea*, 134; Else Kragelund Holt, *Prophesying the Past: The Use of Israel's History in the Book of Hosea* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 115; Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 337; Graham I. Davies, *Hosea*, NCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 337.

may not have been available to the prophetic corpus, it is unlikely the prophets invented the Torah.⁶²¹ This accusation of violating these ethical standards points back to Israel's traditions, for "Law was assumed by the prophets, not invented."⁶²² Torah was understood by the prophets covenantally, regardless of whether a conclusive list had been codified and canonised. By alluding to the Torah, Hos 4:2 argues the stability of the created order is dependent upon covenantal faithfulness.

Three of the sins (רצח "murder," גנב "theft," and נאף "adultery") use the same Hebrew roots as the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments in both versions of the Decalogue, although they appear in a different order. The other two sins (אלה "swearing" and כחש "lying") are similar to the commandments in the Decalogue, but they do not use the same verbal roots.⁶²³ Wolff observes all of these sins involve humanity's relationship with their neighbours.⁶²⁴ Thus, the lack of faithfulness to God results in the breaking of relationship with others.

This list of sins culminates in violence: "bloodshed follows bloodshed" (v. 2). The verb נגע connotes touching, reaching, or striking.⁶²⁵ On one hand, "touch" and "reach" can imply bloodshed extends everywhere: it is rampant throughout the Israelite community. On the other hand, the translation "strike" implies bloodshed has led to, or contributes to, more bloodshed. Violence breeds more violence. That an outbreak of violence is the climactic outcome of the people's sins indicates the gravity of the people's disobedience. In light of the Hebrew Bible's legal codes, Frymer-Kensky connects violence with the desecration of the

⁶²¹ Gene M. Tucker, "The Law in the Eighth-Century Prophets," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays In Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, eds. G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen, and R. R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 214.

⁶²² Lim and Castelo, *Hosea*, 118.

⁶²³ Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 337.

⁶²⁴ Wolff, *Hosea*, 67. He translates "swearing" as "cursing," arguing it involves cursing a person by using the divine name for evil intentions.

⁶²⁵ Munster L. Schwienhorst, "נגע naga," *TDOT* 9:203–4.

NHC.⁶²⁶ The language in the Torah suggests murder “pollutes” the NHC, even causing the earth to “vomit” (Lev 18:25; 20:22; Num 35:31–34; Deut 21:22–23). The “life force” was believed to be in the blood and blood cries out to YHWH from the ground (Gen 4:10; Gen 9:4–6; Lev. 17:10–11). In Hos 4:3, the NHC’s cries turn into mourning over humanity’s violence. Perhaps she “mourns” in protest of the blood that has polluted her.

The Torah also expresses a link between human ethics and the NHC. The Torah, “as with ancient Near Eastern law generally, is most fundamentally associated with creation.”⁶²⁷ In the command to honour parents, the Decalogue specifies a result from this action: “that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you” (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). Both the Israelites’ tenantry in the land and the fertility of the NHC was dependent upon the people’s covenantal obedience.⁶²⁸ Dempsey remarks the “Torah as a way of life flows from and is supportive of a covenant relationship that includes all creation.”⁶²⁹

This theme is consistent with Hos 4:1–3, where obedience to the covenant results in agricultural fertility; disobedience results in drought, famine, and death. The list of sins portrays Israel’s withdrawal from YHWH’s covenantal expectations while still living in the land YHWH gave her. This indicates an ethical dissonance: the people cannot claim the gift from YHWH while disregarding the commandments that come with it, for occupation of the land is conditional. Wolff recalls that violation of any of the commandments in Hos 4:2 was punishable by death; they were breaches of life for covenantal people.⁶³⁰ Thus, by violating the covenant, the Israelites “bring the created world with them in their own death.”⁶³¹

⁶²⁶ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Carol L. Meyers and Michael O’Connor (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 406–9.

⁶²⁷ Bruce C. Birch et. al, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 158.

⁶²⁸ Deut 28 lists blessings and curses that involve the NHC.

⁶²⁹ Dempsey, *Hope*, 37.

⁶³⁰ Wolff, *Hosea*, 68.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

3.3.5. The NHC's Response

3.3.5.1. Mourning

In response to Israel's sins, the NHC sets into motion a drastic series of events. The root used to describe the NHC's response (אבל) generally means "to mourn" or "to perform mourning rituals."⁶³² The NHC's action of "mourning" may suggest the stripping of clothes associated with mourning rituals.⁶³³ Braaten links this "mourning" to the stripping of the wife in 2:5, which he views as a repentance ritual.⁶³⁴ He concludes that the resurgence of this mourning/stripping metaphor in 4:3 indicates the wife has now chosen to repent and submit to YHWH's judgement.⁶³⁵ The parallels between these images in Hos 2:5 and Hos 4:3 strengthen the metaphor of "stripping"; the NHC is desolated in 4:3, just as YHWH threatened in 2:5.

Through the lens of trauma theory, Kavusa analyses the mourning language of Hos 4:1–3 and suggests the NHC responds as a victim of violence.⁶³⁶ He argues the three verbs used in 4:3 (אמל, אבל, and אסף) always appear in the Hebrew Bible in traumatic contexts and that the NHC's "mourning" is a natural psychological response to an overwhelming incident.⁶³⁷ Hayes offers further support to this trauma theory by demonstrating that all of the nine prophetic texts she examined use אבל as a response to human actions, over which the NHC has no control.⁶³⁸ In addition, the "stripping" induces a state of shame, a common response to trauma (cf. Hos 2:12).⁶³⁹ Braaten also describes the NHC as a "victim" whose

⁶³² Loya, "Therefore," 57–8.

⁶³³ See previous discussion in the analysis of Amos 1:2.

⁶³⁴ Braaten, "God Sows," 112–3.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁶³⁶ Jonathan Kivatsi Kavusa, "Social Disorder and the Trauma of the Earth Community: Reading Hosea 4:1-3 in Light of Today's Crises," *OIE* (2016): 481–501.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 495–7.

⁶³⁸ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 2–3.

⁶³⁹ Kavusa, "Social Disorder," 495.

wellbeing is dependent upon the unrepentant Israelites.⁶⁴⁰ Kavusa thus concludes that, while humanity is responsible for the trauma inflicted upon the NHC, both humanity and the NHC are affected as trauma victims.⁶⁴¹

3.3.5.2. Drought

The verb אבַל is often paired with other verbs that connote dryness. It is paired with אָמַל (“to languish”) in Isa 24:4, 7; 33:9; Joel 1:10. It is paired with יָבֵשׁ (“to be dry”) in Amos 1:2; Jer 12:4; 23:10; Joel 1:10. Because of this, several have proposed אבַל has a secondary meaning of “to dry up.”⁶⁴² In Hos 4:3, אבַל parallels אָמַל, “to diminish” or “to waste away.” When interpreted as “drying up,” אבַל implies a loss of fertility.⁶⁴³ The presence of thorns and thistles in deserted settlements indicates an infertile wilderness setting, as was seen in 2:8, 14 (cf. Isa 5:6; 7:23–25; 32:13).

Drought is often a symbol of chaos in the Israelite tradition. Themes of danger and desolation are often associated with “wilderness” (מִדְבָּר) throughout the Hebrew Bible (Deut 8:15; Job 6:18; Ps 107:40).⁶⁴⁴ In addition to the “wet chaos” motif prevalent throughout the Hebrew Bible (often indicated by תְּהוֹם), Tromp notes there is also an evident “dry chaos” concept, whereby the NHC returns to her dry, barren state prior to YHWH’s creative activity (Gen 1:4–6; 2:5).⁶⁴⁵ Hayes notes the prophetic tradition tends to “commingle images of wet and dry.”⁶⁴⁶ The NHC’s “drying up,” which in turn causes the beasts and birds

⁶⁴⁰ Braaten, “God Sows,” 112.

⁶⁴¹ Kavusa, “Social Disorder,” 499.

⁶⁴² Baumann, *TDOT* 1:45; Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 339; Mays, *Hosea*, 60, 65; Wolff, *Hosea*, 68. See previous discussion of Amos 1:2 (ch. 2, 1.3.1.3.).

⁶⁴³ Hayes, *Earth Mourns*, 43; Loya, “Therefore,” 58. Cf. Jer 15:9.

⁶⁴⁴ Shemaryahu Talmon, “The ‘Desert Motif’ in the Bible and in Qumran Literature,” in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966), 41–44. Hillers describes the ANE curse of wild animals infiltrating desolate, vacant cities. See *Treaty-Curses*, 44–54.

⁶⁴⁵ Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1960), 132. Examples include Deut 8:15; Job 6:18; Ps 107:40.

⁶⁴⁶ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 60.

to “waste away,” conjures connections to the “formless void” state in Gen 1:2. The last effect the NHC has on the entire cosmic order is the “sweeping away” of the fish of the sea. A “dry chaos” is a logical cause of death for sea creatures. In this way, the NHC returns the cosmos to its pre-created state. This cosmic drought is the punishment of a fertility deity, a feat which demonstrates the incapacity of the Canaanite fertility gods (cf. 2:9–10).⁶⁴⁷ YHWH assumes these gods’ place by controlling the NHC’s fertility.

3.3.5.3. Decreation

Despite the drought imagery, the NHC’s reaction has several major links to the flood account. The dramatic language in 4:3 indicates an upheaval of the entire created order, and its terminology alludes to this primeval tradition.⁶⁴⁸ Hayes observes “Hosea 4:3 reflects traditional phraseology concerning creation and the traditional myth of a cosmic ‘undoing’ of creation by means of a great flood.”⁶⁴⁹ The most notable link between Hos 4:1–3 and the flood narratives is that the cosmic destruction occurs because of the extent of humanity’s sin, specifically their proclivity for violence (Gen 6:11–13). This parallels Hosea’s emphasis on the Israelites’ violence in 4:3, where violence begets more violence. However, whereas the flood destroyed all creatures on the earth, including the birds, it did not destroy sea creatures (Gen 7:21–23). Hosea escalates the flood narrative by taking it one step further: all the fish die, too (v. 3).⁶⁵⁰ The conjunction ו draws attention to this amplification. The lack of humanity’s “faithfulness” (cf. v. 2) usurps humanity’s covenantal relationship, ushering in catastrophic consequences reminiscent of the ones wrought by the flood. While Hosea

⁶⁴⁷ DeRoche, “Reversal,” 403.

⁶⁴⁸ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 60.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ This connection could imply intertextuality with the Yahwist account, although the dependence on the account is unclear.

portrays a “dry chaos,” Hayes argues the prophetic tradition may recall the “wet chaos” from the flood narrative, thus connoting an act of total devastation.⁶⁵¹

As mentioned in the analysis of Hos 2:18–25, the triad of beasts, birds, and fish is a merism that designates the entire created order.⁶⁵² The most noteworthy uses of this merism are in the creation accounts (Gen 1:26; 2:4b–25).⁶⁵³ Although Hosea likely predates Genesis, this grouping of animals reads like traditional phraseology.⁶⁵⁴ As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this merism is not limited to the Hebrew Bible; DeRoche cites additional ancient Near Eastern texts that use this grouping, including the Atrahasis and Gilgamesh Epics.⁶⁵⁵

3.3.5.4. Harvest Imagery

The last verb that parallels *אכל* and *אכל* is *אסא*, often translated “destroy,” or “remove.” Several have noted the verb’s secondary meaning is “gather” or “collect.”⁶⁵⁶ When used in this secondary way, *אסא* elicits the harvest actions of reaping crops (Exod 23:10, 16; Lev 23:39; 25:3, 20; Deut 16:13; Isa 17:5; Jer 40:10, 12) or gathering fish (Num 11:22; Hab 1:15). While harvesting evokes images of plentiful bounty, it also evokes images of destruction. Harvesting entails death; all that covers the earth is “stripped.” In the context of Hos 4:3, the NHC is the reaper of death. Loya likens this dramatic and universal language to “Earth’s *final* harvest.”⁶⁵⁷ This harvest imagery furthers the fertility motifs present throughout Hos 1–3: YHWH, not Baal, is the deity in control of the NHC’s flourishing. It also

⁶⁵¹ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 60.

⁶⁵² DeRoche, “Reversal,” 403.

⁶⁵³ Other references include Gen 6:7; Ps 104:11–12.

⁶⁵⁴ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 56. DeRoche concludes the order in 4:3 is the reversal of the list in the first creation account and indicates a state of decreation; “Reversal,” 403. This logic, however, is conspicuously inconsistent with the eschatological language in Hos 2:18. See analysis of Hos 2:18–25 above.

⁶⁵⁵ DeRoche, “Reversal,” 404–5.

⁶⁵⁶ Braaten, “God Sows,” 113; Loya, “Therefore,” 59; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 44.

⁶⁵⁷ Loya, “Therefore,” 59. Emphasis original.

connects to the planting and sowing imagery explored above in Hos 2:18–25. In this regard, it supplies a climactic “exclamation point”: what God “sowed” via the NHC in the covenant of peace in 2:18 is now “harvested” by the NHC.

3.3.5. The Scope of the Effect

Because of the merism in v. 3, several have proposed this judgement extends to the entire NHC. DeRoche argues this list is “representative of all animal life, and the prophets mean to announce a total destruction.”⁶⁵⁸ Loya argues for the translation of “Earth” in this passage in order to encapsulate what she sees as a general, universal depiction for all of creation.⁶⁵⁹ She thus concludes the drought in v. 3 is global, affecting both the NHC and all her inhabitants.⁶⁶⁰ Wolff offers a similar interpretation.⁶⁶¹

The phrase “all who dwell in it” in v. 3 contrasts with “the inhabitants in the land” in v. 1. The “all” phraseology in v. 3 suggests a distinction between the two groups; v. 1 is only one portion of the whole in v. 3. When אֲבֵל is coupled with כָּל, it tends to imply cosmic proportions (cf. Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:18; 3:8, 19).⁶⁶² Hayes believes v. 1 refers to the Israelites, while v. 3 refers both to the Israelites and to all of the NHC.⁶⁶³ Braaten also believes v. 3 references this collective group.⁶⁶⁴ Brueggemann concludes the occurrences of אֶרֶץ in vv. 1–2 refer to the human inhabitants, while אֶרֶץ in v. 3 should be interpreted cosmically.⁶⁶⁵ In this regard, the fates of both humanity and the NHC are linked; the drought curse affects the entire cosmic order, in which humanity and the NHC are participants.

⁶⁵⁸ DeRoche, “Reversal,” 403.

⁶⁵⁹ Loya, “Therefore,” 59–60. See the Earth Bible’s definition of “Earth” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 1–3.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁶¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 68.

⁶⁶² Baumann, *TDOT* 1:401.

⁶⁶³ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 41.

⁶⁶⁴ Braaten, “God Sows,” 114.

⁶⁶⁵ Brueggemann, “Uninflected Therefore,” 241.

3.3.6. Eschatological Implications

The imperfect verbs in v. 3 (אָסַף, אָבַל, and אָמַל) could have several different interpretations, depending on whether they are translated in the present tense or the future tense. Anderson and Freedman and Kavusa translate v. 3 as present events with immediate results.⁶⁶⁶ Brueggemann, meanwhile, admits the consequences described in this passage may be already occurring, or will at least occur soon.⁶⁶⁷ Loya postulates that the verbs describe the judgement events in Hos 4:4–11 or even Hos 4–14.⁶⁶⁸

Wolff, Stuart, and Hayes, on the other hand, translate these verbs as a threat of future punishment.⁶⁶⁹ Hayes argues for the future tense based upon the prophetic pattern of nine other *qal* uses of אָבַל, which all anticipate future judgement (cf. Jer 5:6; 20:11).⁶⁷⁰ Davies suggests the inclusion of the fish in this curse indicates something “out of prophetic expectation rather than present experience.”⁶⁷¹ Mays, too, refers to the events in v. 3 as “Yahweh’s coming punishment.”⁶⁷²

While both these present and future translations are supported by the text, the two different translations yield different implications. A present-tense translation indicates the judgement has already occurred, which may impact whether the restorative covenant in 2:18–20 has already occurred, too. Of course, since prophetic material is not often linear, it should not be presumed that 2:18–25 precedes 4:1–3 chronologically because of their canonical order. On the other hand, if this passage indicates a future judgement, the language implies a punishment of apocalyptic proportions (apocalyptic not in form, of

⁶⁶⁶ Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 330; Kavusa, “Social Disorder,” 489.

⁶⁶⁷ Brueggemann, “Uninflected Therefore,” 241.

⁶⁶⁸ Loya, “Therefore,” 60.

⁶⁶⁹ Wolff, *Hosea*, 65; Stuart, *WBC* 31:179; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 37–8.

⁶⁷⁰ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 38.

⁶⁷¹ Davies, *Hosea*, 117.

⁶⁷² Mays, *Hosea*, 65.

course, but in subject matter). It is also unlikely the covenant in 2:18–20 would have been understood in the present tense, as it directly undoes the judgement sequence in 4:1–3. In this way, a future interpretation of 4:3 gives further evidence that 2:18–20 is eschatologically future-oriented.

The causal link between humanity’s breaking of covenant and the “mourning” of the NHC, moreover, does have implications for a collaborative eschatological relationship. That the land’s response is a result of (על-כֵּן) humanity’s sin implies humanity is responsible for the wellbeing of the NHC. As Brueggemann concludes, “the two, human action and the health or unhealth of creation, are related delicately, fragilely, precariously, but inescapably.”⁶⁷³

3.4. Summary

The *rib* in Hos 4:1–3 reveals the interconnectedness of YHWH, humanity, and the NHC. YHWH, while enacting the judgement proclamation, does not assume an active role in mitigating the punishment against God’s people. YHWH announces the judgement but does not give any direct commands. As demonstrated by על-כֵּן, a conjunction that denotes a resultative action instead of divine involvement, YHWH relies upon YHWH’s system of causation to mete punishment against humanity. In this way, YHWH defers the judgement sentence to the active response of the NHC.

Humanity is revealed as the perpetrators who violate the covenant. In vv. 1–2, they are identified at least twice via their relationship to the “land.”⁶⁷⁴ This repetition reveals the prominence of the NHC in the passage, as well as humanity’s responsibility toward her. The two lists of sins, reminiscent of the Decalogue, further indict humanity’s violation of the

⁶⁷³ Brueggemann, “Uninflected Therefore,” 242.

⁶⁷⁴ The LXX indicates there may be three instances of “in the land” in vv. 1–2.

NHC. The Torah conveys a connection between covenant and “land,” and the virtues listed in v. 2 (particularly “loving-kindness” and “knowledge of God”) refer to the bridal gifts in 2:22. As demonstrated in the analysis of Hos 2:18–25 above, these marriage blessings extend to the NHC. That the blessings are now revoked signifies a three-way breach between YHWH, humanity, and the NHC. Finally, the climactic sin in v. 3, “bloodshed strikes bloodshed,” signifies the pollution of the NHC.

In response, the NHC “mourns,” an action that indicates prophetic critique, sympathy with YHWH’s pain, sorrow over humanity’s betrayal, and/or remorse for her own fate. This verb links to the “stripping” of the NHC in 2:5, an action that could portray ceremonial mourning. This action may also indicate a trauma response expected of a victim. In addition, אכל may allude to desert and infertility imagery, consistent with its secondary meaning “to dry up.” The triad of creatures in v. 3 indicates a cosmic scope of destruction, which surpasses even the flood story.

The ambiguous tenses of the verb enacted by the NHC leave room for both present and future interpretations. If the tenses are the latter, which is likely, the text impacts the eschatological realities of 2:18–25. In either case, the relationship between humanity and the NHC indicates the possibility of eschatological collaboration: if humanity can adversely affect the NHC (4:1–3), then humanity also has the potential to heal and restore the NHC (2:18–25). In the same way, the NHC has the capability of both judging humanity (4:3) and healing humanity (2:18–25).

4. SUMMARY OF HOSEA FINDINGS

Hosea 2:4–25 and 4:1–3 present a world in which humanity’s covenantal responsibilities have an impact on the NHC. Within the metaphor of a “marriage,” YHWH accuses humanity of covenant unfaithfulness. People and land are blurred but distinct identities, suggesting humanity possesses a responsibility to the NHC (1:2; 4:1–2). Humanity’s connection to the NHC includes both destruction (2:5, 8, 11–15; 4:3) and restoration (2:18–25).

In their pursuit of fertility blessings, humanity linked the NHC to other fertility gods besides YHWH, violating their relationship with both YHWH and the NHC (2:9–10). Humanity also discarded the covenantal virtues of righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, mercy, and knowledge of YHWH (2:21–22). The latter two of these “marriage” qualities, loving-kindness (דוד) and knowledge of YHWH, are necessary for the stability of the NHC (4:1). The absence of these virtues leads to the violation of the Torah, which in turn leads to violence (4:1–2). The violence pollutes the NHC, causing her to “mourn” and dry up (4:3).

These passages present both YHWH and the NHC as agents of judgement. Hosea 2:4–17 emphasises YHWH’s role of judge in the *rib*. With each instance of לִי, YHWH unleashes punishment upon the wife/land by turning her into a dry, barren wasteland and “stripping” her of all his fertility blessings (2:5, 8, 11–15). In this passage, the NHC does not assume an active role but functions as a passive victim of humanity’s sins. Hosea 4:1–3, on the other hand, portrays YHWH as the passive entity; the NHC is the one who inflicts punishment upon humanity. The presence of על־כֵּן, a conjunction denoting a result rather than divine action, contrasts with לִי in 2:4–17. This conjunction suggests the NHC acts in accordance with the cosmic system of retribution YHWH has interwoven into the cosmic framework. In response, the NHC “mourns,” an action indicating distress as well as drought. Her reaction causes a cosmic upheaval, whereby all the animals die, including the fish. The

reverse animal merism in 4:3 may evoke imageries of decreation, similar to that of the flood account. The judgement in Hos 4:1–3 contrasts with the flood account, however, in that it imagines a “dry chaos” over a “wet chaos” and signifies absolute destruction with its inclusion of fish.

Located between these two passages of cosmic punishment (2:4–17; 4:1–3), the eschatological covenant in 2:18–25 proposes another future for God’s world. The tri-fold use of “in that day” denotes eschatological expectation. YHWH enacts this new covenant, but he includes the NHC as an active co-partner, designated by the *ל* preposition and the proleptic use of “them” (2:20). Humanity participates in the covenant via their observance of virtues (2:21–22). In turn, these “marriage blessings” impact the fertility of the NHC (2:23–25).

These passages in Hosea demonstrate the potential YHWH, humanity, and the NHC have for ecological eschatology. As partners in the eschatological covenant, all three entities have responsibility toward each other. Humanity, however, is the one culpable for the breach of covenant with both YHWH and the NHC (4:1–2). Thus, God’s people have a choice between the devastation of the NHC (4:1–3) or the restoration of the NHC (2:18–22).

CHAPTER FOUR: FIRST ISAIAH

First Isaiah contains several passages that portray the NHC as an entity who participates with YHWH in both judgement and cosmic renewal. Prophet and king dominate the focus of the book, yet the NHC plays an important role in descriptions of Israel's past and visions of the future. This chapter identifies and analyses seven key passages within First Isaiah that highlight the judgement and eschatological roles of the NHC.

This study of Isaiah begins and ends with passages that specifically consider the eschatological role of animals. Like Hos 2:18–23, First Isaiah includes animals in God's cosmic action. Isaiah 11:1–10 opens the study by envisioning a period of justice, righteousness, and peace, not only for humanity but also for wild and domestic animals. This oracle offers eschatological possibility before the oracles against the nations (OAN) in chs. 13–23, where the prophet offers an alternative vision of judgement. Isaiah 34:1–17 and Isa 35:1–10 close this chapter by also proposing pathways of judgement or hope. Although it envisions devastating effects upon humanity, Isa 34:1–17 offers shelter and care for the wild animals, some of which are dangerous to humanity. Isaiah 35:1–10 suggests the possibility of renewal for the entire created order, including the continued care of animals.

Between these bookends, Isa 24:1–20 adopts a cosmological perspective, portraying the catastrophic effects of humanity's sin upon the NHC. This passage concludes the OAN section (chs. 13–23) by offering a universal vision of judgement. It also begins the unit of chs. 24–27, which describes judgement against the entire world. After these oracles of judgement against the nations (chs. 13–23), the world (chs. 24–27), and Israel (28:1–30:17), Isa 30:18–26 promises God's mercy upon humanity and the NHC. The NHC partners with humanity in vanquishing enemies, thus ushering in a time of cosmic renewal. Similarly, Isa

32:9–20 envisions peaceful habitations for people and animals after condemning Israel's complacency toward the NHC. Finally, Isa 33:6–9 echoes the NHC themes from Isa 24:1–20, concluding that the land “mourns” and withers away because of humanity's actions.

1. ISAIAH 11:1–10

1.1. Introduction

Isaiah 11:1–10 begins with נִצַּח, a verb denoting a shift from the previous passages of woe and judgement oracles. This shift sets the tone of the passage by alluding to an eschatological promise yet to come. The dating and delineation of this complicated passage have been debated.⁶⁷⁵ Some argue this passage is a conglomerate of several different poems (vv. 1–5 and vv. 6–9), while others argue this distinction is unnecessary.⁶⁷⁶ Similarly, the dating of the unit varies. Although assigning a passage a late date based upon its eschatological themes is inconclusive, some of the words (נֶצֶחַ “branch,” גִּזְעַ “stump,” נִצַּח “shoot”) may suggest a later date.⁶⁷⁷ Most scholars understand the “return” language to be exilic.⁶⁷⁸

Isaiah 65:25 closely parallels Isa 11:6–9, suggesting a shared tradition. Both passages mention the wolf and lamb feeding together, the lion eating straw, and the reversal of predatory behaviour on YHWH's holy mountain. However, the two passages also contain several noteworthy differences. First, while Isa 11:1–10 presents the renewal of the Davidic kingdom, the scope of Isa 65:17–25 includes a new heaven and new earth; there is mention of neither king nor kingdom. Second, Isa 65:17–25 treats the renewal of the NHC as an event

⁶⁷⁵ See Wildberger for further explanation of the various challenges with the text's delineation and dating; *Isaiah 1–12*, 465–9.

⁶⁷⁶ See Blenkinsopp for an explanation as to why he rebuffs the theory that the passage consists of two poems; *Isaiah 1–39*, 263.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 264. “My holy mountain,” for instance, is frequently used in so-called Third Isaiah (cf. 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20).

⁶⁷⁸ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 243; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 490; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 125.

separate from humanity's salvation (vv. 18–24). Humanity is not mentioned in Isa 65:25 as relating with the NHC. Olley argues this distinction signifies the “animals are spoken of in their own right” in Isa 65:25.⁶⁷⁹ Finally, while both passages mention the elimination of the threat of wild animals, their use of the serpent is different. The snake in Isa 11:8 is juxtaposed with a child to highlight the removal of threat; the snake in Isa 65:25, however, seems to relate to the serpent from Gen 3:14–15.⁶⁸⁰ The serpent's curse of eating dust is further enforced in Isa 65:25.

While most scholars demark the passage as Isa 11:1–9, Wildberger and Marlow prefer to include v. 10 with vv. 1–9.⁶⁸¹ Although he acknowledges the phrase “on that day” in v. 10 introduces a new idea, Wildberger maintains that v. 10 thematically belongs to vv. 1–9.⁶⁸² Marlow observes that the double references to the “root of Jesse” in v. 1 and v. 10 form an inclusio.⁶⁸³ She also notes the following chiasmic structure in vv. 1–10:

- A. Shoot of Jesse (v. 1)
- B. Knowledge (v. 2)
- C. Ideal age: justice (vv. 3–5)
- C'. Ideal age: harmony (vv. 6–9a)
- B'. Knowledge (v. 9b)
- A'. Root of Jesse (v. 10)⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁷⁹ Olley, “The Wolf,” 227.

⁶⁸⁰ Perhaps because of Isa 65:25, Kaiser interprets the presence of the snake in Isa 11:8 as the reversal of the Gen 3:15 curse; *Isaiah 1–12*, 260.

⁶⁸¹ So Childs, *Isaiah*, 100; Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 200; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 263; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 278; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 252–3.

⁶⁸² Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 463. Contra Gitay, who argues “on that day” does not introduce a new unit but represents “a certain syntactical dependence on the previous text”; Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and His Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1–12*, SSN (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1991), 243.

⁶⁸³ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 239.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

For these two reasons (the thematic and structural connections), v. 10 will be included in the unit of Isaiah 11:1–10.

1.2. Text and Translation

¹There will come forth a stem from the stump of Jesse,
a shoot from its root will grow.

²And the spirit of YHWH will rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and strength,
the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of YHWH.

³His delight will be in the fear of YHWH.
He will not judge by the sight of his eyes;
neither will he decide according to what his ears hear.

⁴But with righteousness he will judge the poor
and he will decide with fairness the humble of the land.

He will strike the land with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

⁵Righteousness will be the belt of his hips
and faithfulness⁶⁸⁵ the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf will sojourn with the lamb
and the leopard will rest with the kid.
The calf and the young lion
and the fatted steer together,
and a small child will lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear will feed;
their young ones will lie down together;
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸The child will take delight over the hole of the asp,

וַיֵּצֵא חֹטֶר מִגִּזְעֵ יֵשׁוּעַ¹
וַיִּנָּצֵר מִשְׁרָשָׁיו יִפְרֶה

וַיָּנַחַהּ עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה²
רוּחַ חֲכָמָה וּבִינָה
רוּחַ עֲצָה וּגְבוּרָה
רוּחַ דַּעַת וַיִּרְאֵת יְהוָה

וַהֲרִיחוּ בִּירְאֵת יְהוָה³
וְלֹא-לְמַרְאֵה עֵינָיו יִשְׁפּוּט
וְלֹא-לְמִשְׁמַע אָזְנוֹ יוֹכִיחַ
וְשִׁפֹּט בְּצֶדֶק דָּלִים⁴

וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּמִישׁוֹר לַעֲנִי-אֶרֶץ
וְהִכָּה-אֶרֶץ בְּשִׁבְט פִּיו
וּבְרוּחַ שְׁפָתָיו יָמִית רָשָׁע
וְהָיָה צֶדֶק אֲזוּר מִתְּנָיו⁵
וְהָאֱמוּנָה אֲזוּר חֲלָצִיו

וְגַר זֵאֵב עִם-כֶּבֶשׂ⁶
וְנִמְר עִם-גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ
וְעֵגֶל וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיא יִחָדּוּ
וַיִּנְעֹר קֶטֶן נְהַג בָּם

וּפְרֶה וְדָב תִּרְעִינָה⁷
יִחָדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יִלְדִּינָה
וְאַרְיֵה כִּבְקָר יֹאכֵל-תֶּבֶן
וְשִׁעֲשַׁע יוֹנֵק עַל-חֹר פֶּתֶן⁸

⁶⁸⁵ 1QIsa^a omits the article (ואמונה). Roberts argues this is more original than the MT because “the article is often a secondary prosaic element in poetry.” See J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2015), 178.

and the nursing child will stretch out his
hand on the viper's nest.
⁹They will not harm nor destroy in all my
holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of
YHWH
as the waters cover the sea.

וְעַל מְאוֹרֶת צִפְעוֹנִי גָמוּל יָדוֹ הָדָה

לֹא-יָרְעוּ וְלֹא-יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל-הָר קֹדֶשִׁי⁹
כִּי-מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת-יְהוָה
כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מְכַסִּים

¹⁰ And there will be on that day the root of
Jesse,
which stands as a sign for the people.
The nations will seek him
and his resting place will be glorious.

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׁרֵשׁ יִשְׁי¹⁰
אֲשֶׁר עֵמִד לְנֶס עַמִּים
אֱלֹיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרְשׁוּ
וְהָיְתָה מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד

1.3. Themes and Motifs

1.3.1 The Role of the Messianic Figure

Unlike the other Isaianic passages relevant to this study that briefly mention a royal figure (Isa 30:20; 32:1), the messianic ruler is central to Isaiah 11:1–10. The king language in 10:27–11:10 follows the standardised ANE form for announcing a new ruler's reign.⁶⁸⁶ The announcement is especially noteworthy in contrast to the stump imagery in v. 1, which may refer to the curtailment of the Davidic kingship.⁶⁸⁷ The former kingdom is no more, yet this new eschatological vision of hope is first enacted by YHWH's empowerment of an ideal ruler (vv. 2–3). Similarly, his reign is the result of the promise (v. 10). YHWH's spirit, a frequent image in Isaiah denoting YHWH's blessing, is the catalyst for this divinely appointed kingship (v. 2). The "knowledge of YHWH," however, is both the prerequisite and the lasting effect of his rule (vv. 2, 9). How "knowledge of YHWH" relates to the NHC will be explored in more detail below.

⁶⁸⁶ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 203.

⁶⁸⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 100. Von Rad argues the stump refers to Hezekiah's failures; *OT Theology* II:169–70.

The spirit of YHWH equips the ruler with six virtues, paired into three sets of twos (v. 2). These qualities enable the ruler to judge fairly with righteousness and faithfulness (vv. 3–5). The six virtues mentioned in v. 2 are characteristic of the values found in wisdom literature and are often attributed to the divine.⁶⁸⁸ In fact, Lady Wisdom refers to all six of these virtues in Prov 8:12–16, specifying that they are gifts Lady Wisdom grants kings (vv. 15–16). These wisdom gifts guide the king’s discernment in punishing the wicked and vindicating the poor (Isa 10:4).⁶⁸⁹ While the ruler does enact justice by striking the “earth” (v. 4), “earth” parallels “wicked” and implies judgement on humans rather than the NHC.

Although scholars are divided over the identity of this ruler, a link is implied between the restored Davidic kingship and the renewal of the NHC.⁶⁹⁰ Extra-biblical works parallel peaceful reigns with the harmony of animals, such as the Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninhursag*.⁶⁹¹ Likewise, Isa 11:1–10 portrays the political sphere and the NHC as interdependent. The king’s reign affects not only the human subjects, but also the entire created order. The new reign is characterised by justice and righteousness (vv. 3–5). The vision implies a causal relationship between these qualities and the peace that ensues in the entire created order in vv. 6–9.⁶⁹² Although the causal relationship is not explicit, the progression of the oracle from the just practices of the ruler to the peaceful effects in the cosmic order suggests this connection. This is consistent with DeGuglielmo’s study on messianic passages, which consistently link eschatological kingship with the renewal of the NHC.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 228.

⁶⁸⁹ The term “poor of the earth” (not meek) is also used in 10:2; Ps 76:9 [10]; Amos 8:4; Job 24:4.

⁶⁹⁰ Sweeney argues the ruler is Josiah, an identity he also bestows upon the young child in v. 6; *Isaiah*, 204. Delitzsch merely refers to this figure as a “second David.” See Delitzsch, *Isaiah 1–39*, 283.

⁶⁹¹ ANET, 38. See also ANET, 606–7.

⁶⁹² Gene M. Tucker, “The Peaceable Kingdom and a Covenant with the Wild Animals,” in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, eds. W.P. Brown and S.D. McBride, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 2000), 216.

⁶⁹³ DeGuglielmo, “Fertility,” 311.

1.3.2 The Interrelatedness of the Created Order

After the royal figure assumes his reign and establishes justice and righteousness (vv. 2–5), the vision presents a world in which the entire created order displays peaceful relationships: wild animals, domestic animals, and humans all coexist in a state of harmony (vv. 6–9). The oracle stresses the relationships animals have with other animals, but interestingly humanity’s relationship with other humans is missing from the vision. Perhaps this peaceful relationship among humans has already been established in vv. 2–5, thus allowing the NHC to take centre stage in vv. 6–9. This eschatological vision of harmonious relationships among animals and humans is unique to Isa 11:1–10 and its reprisal in Isa 65:25. In other prophetic passages, YHWH removes the wild, predatory animals in order to save humanity (Isa 35:9; Ezek 34:23–31; 37:26; cf. Lev 26:6b). Here, the animals that would normally pose a threat to humanity are not banished but instead “share in the transformation with humans,” thus implying “interconnectedness and purpose.”⁶⁹⁴

In addition to preserving the wild animals, Isa 11:1–10 removes the boundaries that exist between the three spheres of wild animals, domestic animals, and humanity. This contrasts with the vision presented in Isa 34:11–15, where threatening animals invade the boundary of human civilisation after humanity is banished, and Isa 35:9, where the threatening animals are banished and humanity invades the boundary of the wilderness.⁶⁹⁵ Rather than presenting a world in which only one entity can dwell, Isa 11:6–9 presents a world in which animals and humans can coexist on YHWH’s holy mountain.

The oracle pairs not just the wild animals with domestic animals and humans, but it also pairs the most powerful with the most vulnerable: wolves and leopards will lie down

⁶⁹⁴ Olley, “The Wolf,” 227.

⁶⁹⁵ As well as the similar themes in Isa 13:21–22.

with baby lambs and calves (v. 6). Toddlers need not fear the venomous snake (v. 8).⁶⁹⁶ Even more surprising, the wild, carnivorous animals will eat grass, a practice they have not done since their pre-flood state (Gen 1:30; 9:3). According to Marlow, “this depiction of perfection is not intended to negate the natural biological processes of the world, but rather to paint a wide picture of the potentiality of YHWH's ideal reign.”⁶⁹⁷ The cycle of predators and prey has been broken.⁶⁹⁸ The effects of this harmonious interrelatedness of the NHC with humanity extends to the entire cosmic order, demonstrated by the terminology of “earth,” “sea,” and “nations” in vv. 9–10. The pronoun “they” in v. 9 is vague, but perhaps refers to the animals previously mentioned.⁶⁹⁹ Another possibility is that the pronoun encompasses both the animals and the human beings.⁷⁰⁰ “They,” the animals and humans, neither harm nor destroy because they possess the “knowledge of YHWH” (v. 9).

1.3.3 The Role of the NHC

The double reference to the “knowledge of YHWH” (v. 2, 9) brackets this passage. Its first use in v. 2 relates to humanity, specifically the human ruler. Its second use in v. 9, though, broadens to include the entire cosmic order, implied by the “earth” and the “sea” (cf. Hab 2:14). In this way, the passage’s scope shifts from humans to the NHC, from national to global. All participate in the “knowledge of YHWH,” including the animals. If an ox can “know” its owner (Isa 1:3), animals possessing the capacity to “know” YHWH is within the realm of possibility. This knowledge of YHWH creates a causal relationship in which both

⁶⁹⁶ Unlike Isa 34:11, 13–15, the animals in this passage are discernable, with the exception of the *נֶחֱשׁ*, whose precise species is indeterminable.

⁶⁹⁷ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 241–2.

⁶⁹⁸ This imagery is consistent with Sumerian texts that present ideal reigns. See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 479.

⁶⁹⁹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 287.

⁷⁰⁰ So Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 284.

humans and animals dwell in safety.⁷⁰¹ As such, the NHC participates in the renewal YHWH initiates via his relationship with her.

As previously mentioned, this new reality is contingent upon humanity's just rule. In YHWH's ideal reign, the animals peacefully interact with humanity and respond to their leadership, as demonstrated by the image of a child leading all the animals (v. 6). This theme of humble and vulnerable leadership over and against a proud and powerful monarchy is a consistent theme in Isaiah.⁷⁰² This child could represent the new Davidic figure, as outlined in vv. 1–5, but the divergence from the kingship language suggests the child represents humanity as a whole. In God's vision, the lowly and weak welcome and guide God's initiative of a peaceful kingdom.

1.3.4 Eschatological Implications

The phrase “on that day” (v. 10), along with the future verbal tenses (especially “it will come to pass” in v. 1), indicate these events are yet to be realised.⁷⁰³ The interpretation of these eschatological metaphors varies. Kaiser, for instance, considers this passage a broad, generalised metaphor, concluding that “in the end the present text merely expresses the longing for a life with no danger.”⁷⁰⁴ This interpretation is reductionistic of the vivid imagery. DeGuglielmo argues against spiritualizing eschatological metaphors because such passages already list the spiritual results.⁷⁰⁵ Assuming the text presents a mere spiritual or metaphorical reality also undermines the significance of the inclusion of the animals.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 283.

⁷⁰³ Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 201.

⁷⁰⁴ Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 260.

⁷⁰⁵ DeGuglielmo, “Fertility,” 309–310.

In his examination of the impact messianic passages have on the NHC, DeGugliemo prefers a more literal interpretation. He argues the reason why scholars tend to interpret these eschatological passages allegorically is because they have yet to be fulfilled literally.⁷⁰⁶ Delitzsch also prefers a literal approach, arguing that as prophecy it would have been expected to be realised in the future; it would not have been understood merely as a “beautiful dream and wish.”⁷⁰⁷ However, literal readings of the vision do not fully account for the mytho-poetic language and imagery. Had the prophetic voices desired to present literal, future events, myth and poetry would be unnecessary and counterintuitive.

Other approaches consider the imagery to be mythological. Wildberger concludes the text should neither be reduced to literal images nor to allegory. An allegorical approach would render the text remarkably differently.⁷⁰⁸ He argues such a text “would speak *only* of animals and not of children.”⁷⁰⁹ In fact, Isaiah 1:1–39:8 never employs allegory.⁷¹⁰ Oswalt also rejects a purely allegorical approach and deems the vision “figurative.” In this way, Oswalt preserves the transformation as actual events.⁷¹¹ Marlow, too, concludes the vision is “poetic hyperbole” that portrays actual transformative events.⁷¹² Such mythical and figurative interpretations convincingly present the events in Isa 11:1–10 as hyperbolic visions of the future that are rooted in reality.

This eschatological vision portrays the NHC as both a participant in and a recipient of YHWH’s salvation. This hopeful message is not a return to some idealised past, but a proclamation of an astonishing new act of YHWH that transforms the NHC.⁷¹³ YHWH initiates

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 310.

⁷⁰⁷ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 285.

⁷⁰⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 481.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 218. Italics original.

⁷¹⁰ Tucker, “Peaceable,” 218.

⁷¹¹ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 283.

⁷¹² Marlow, *Biblical*, 242.

⁷¹³ Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

and maintains this new cosmic order. Eschatologically, it is one of only three places in the prophets where peaceful bonds are created between animals and humans (cf. Isa 65:25; Hos 2:20). It is in the locus of this renewed NHC that YHWH makes YHWH's "resting place" (v. 10).

1.4. Summary

Isaiah 11:1–10 presents a new cosmic reality initiated by the reign of a ruler. This ruler, empowered by YHWH's spirit and equipped with wisdom's virtues, enacts justice and righteousness among the nations. This reign enacts a harmonious effect on not just the political and social spheres, but also on the sphere of the NHC. While the text does not explicitly demark a direct, causal connection between the leader's reign and its effect on the NHC, the link between the two is implied by the oracle's structure and literary movement.

The refrain "the knowledge of YHWH" brackets the text, indicating an emphasis on this value as a means of the eschatological vision. The entire cosmic order will know YHWH, signalled by the inclusive language of "earth," "sea," and "nations" in vv. 9–10. Both humanity and the NHC will have a relationship with YHWH, which will in turn bring renewal to all. In this way, the NHC participates with humanity in renewing the cosmic order via their collective relationship with YHWH, demonstrating a three-way partnership.

The messianic figure's reign establishes peaceful interrelatedness between humanity and the NHC. Within the NHC, there is a further subset of this interrelatedness in the ways in which both the domestic and wild animals coexist. Unlike other prophetic passages, the animals are not removed in order to enact peace; rather, like their human counterparts, the animals are transformed. In this hopeful vision, there are neither predators nor prey. This transformation is not a return to a past but a complete overhaul of the cosmic order. This

idealised existence, pictured as a “holy mountain” (v. 9), is where YHWH will establish YHWH’s “resting place.”

2. ISAIAH 24:1–20

2.1. Introduction

2.2.1 The Unit of Isaiah 24:1–27:13

Isaiah 24:1–20 presents a counter vision of judgement to the eschatological vision in Isa 11:1–10. Following the oracles against the nations (OAN) in chs. 13–23, Isa 24:1–20 describes devastation upon the entire world, including the NHC. There is general consensus that Isa 24:1–20 is part of chs. 24–27, which is a distinct unit.⁷¹⁴ Moreover, there is recent agreement that chs. 24–27 exhibits compositional unity.⁷¹⁵ There is limited agreement, however, on the structure of its composition, much less on its redaction process. The text’s delineation, order in which the text was developed, and rationale behind the compositional process varies greatly among scholars.⁷¹⁶ Much of the contention lies in views about the text’s dating and thus its content, which will be briefly examined below. Nevertheless, there is consensus regarding the gradual redactional process of chs. 24–27: the present text is the composite of a significant number of textual additions.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 446; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 351; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 134; Marvin A. Sweeney, “Textual Citations in Isaiah 24–27: Toward an Understanding of the Redactional Function of Chapters 24–27 in the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 39.

⁷¹⁵ Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 15; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 447; Sweeney, “Textual,” 39. This is not to say there are no tensions, as the text suggests a growth of development via expansions and insertions.

⁷¹⁶ Plöger suggests chs. 24–26 is original material while ch. 27 is a later addition. See O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 12. Johnson believes the process was not haphazard, but was intentionally ordered; *From Chaos*, 15. Kaiser identifies many layers to chs. 24–27. Pertinent to this study, he suggests 24:1–12 and vv. 16–20 are original, while vv. 13–14 are a second eschatological layer. See Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 178.

⁷¹⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 450; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 177–8; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 368; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 441–2.

Part of the distinction of chs. 24–27 within First Isaiah is its lack of geographical or historical references. This particularly contrasts with the OAN that immediately precede chs. 24–27 (chs. 13–23). While chs. 24–27 announce judgement against the world at large, this unit is not characterised as OAN.⁷¹⁸ With the exception of Moab (25:10–12), no foreign nation is mentioned. Rather, the oracle simply refers to a nondescript “city.” These marked changes suggest the oracles in chs. 24–27 are not to be conflated with the OAN. Instead, the redactor intentionally placed this unit after the OAN in order to “put the previous oracles into their own proper eschatological context.”⁷¹⁹ Arranged in this way, chs. 24–27 depicts the world judgement that follows the OAN in chs. 13–23.⁷²⁰

Despite its marked difference from the OAN in chs. 13–23, chs. 24–27 connects with both the preceding and following texts linguistically and thematically.⁷²¹ Childs observes the parallelism between 24:1–3 and ch. 13 regarding the destruction of the earth.⁷²² Isaiah 24:1–20 continues the themes begun in chs. 13–23 and is in many ways more similar to the OAN in chs. 13–23 than to the oracles in chs. 28–33.⁷²³ However, several intertextual references link chs. 24–27 with chs. 28–33, such as the imagery concerning the “city of formlessness” in ch. 24 and ch. 28.⁷²⁴ Noteworthy to this study, Isa 24:1–20 also has connections to 33:7–9, where people cry out in the streets, a covenant is broken, and the land mourns. Because of its linguistic and thematic intertextuality, Kim concludes chs. 13–33

⁷¹⁸ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 446.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 196; Childs, *Introduction*, 332.

⁷²¹ Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “City, Earth, and Empire in Isaiah 24–27,” in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, eds. Todd J. Hibbard and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 40.

⁷²² Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 178.

⁷²³ Kim, “City,” 34.

⁷²⁴ Specifically, compare the drunkenness imagery in 24:9, 20 with 28:1, 3, 7. Both passages use the same word for “beer” (שכר), which rarely appears in the prophetic corpus.

reads as an intentional, cohesive editorial.⁷²⁵ Several have noted the role ch. 24 has in transitioning the reader from the unit of chs. 13–23 to chs. 25–33.⁷²⁶

Because of the absence of historical markers, scholars are widely divided on how to date the unit. Most scholars, however, assign a late date.⁷²⁷ This is based upon several literary features which point to prophetic literature from the post-exilic period, such as the cosmic and mythological imagery, eschatological allusions, and connections to other exilic and post-exilic material within the prophetic corpus.⁷²⁸ The “everlasting covenant” (v. 5), for instance, appears in exilic and post-exilic prophetic writings (Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:59–60; 37:36). Further, the allusion to the “windows” or “floodgates” of heaven appears also in the Priestly flood account. There is general agreement that chs. 24–27 should be dated closer to the exile than to the time of Daniel.⁷²⁹ Thus, there should be hesitancy to interpret this unit based upon the book of Daniel, particularly within the Danielic lens of apocalyptic literature.⁷³⁰

2.2.2 The Unit of Isaiah 24:1–20

⁷²⁵ Kim, “City,” 43–4.

⁷²⁶ Kim, “City,” 47; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 443.

⁷²⁷ Hayes, *Earth Mourns*, 137; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 916; George Buchanan Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, International Critical Commentary (NY: Scribner, 1912), 401. Roberts dates chs. 24–27 to the late seventh century or the early sixth century. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia, 306. Wildberger cautiously assigns a fifth-century date to the text; *Isaiah 13–27*, 466–7. A notable exception is Johnson, who interprets chs. 24–27 within the context of Jerusalem’s destruction at the hand of the Babylonians and contends the unit implicitly references Jerusalem and Judah; *From Chaos*, 23.

⁷²⁸ See Ronald E. Clements, “Patterns in the Prophetic Canon,” in *Canon and Authority*, eds. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 54; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster, 1996), 226–39.

⁷²⁹ Johnson, *From Chaos*, 16; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 173; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 367; Contra Plöger, who believes chs. 24–27 was written in close proximity to the composition of Daniel; Otto Plöger, *Theocracy*, 75–78.

⁷³⁰ Associating chs. 24–27 with Daniel or apocalyptic literature is a misreading of the text. First, Daniel is not considered a prophetic text in the Hebrew canon. Second, a group within Society of Biblical Literature determined a series of characteristics of apocalyptic texts which do not apply to chs. 24–27. See Collins, “Introduction,” 9. Clements does, however, contend that the text employs apocalyptic motifs while maintaining a distinction from an apocalyptic text; *Isaiah 1–39*, 196–7. He considers chs. 24–27 to be an “important stage of hermeneutical development between prophecy and apocalyptic” (196). The themes associated with apocalyptic texts that appear in this text, such as *Chaoskampf* and eschatology, are also consistent themes in prophetic literature.

The smaller unit of Isa 24:1–20 marks a new section in First Isaiah. There is evidence of structural and compositional unity, although scholars are divided on which parts are later additions.⁷³¹ The presentative הִנֵּה marks the beginning of the unit, which often signals an announcement of judgement in the prophetic corpus (cf. Isa 3:1; 8:7; 10:33; 22:17). The content concerning the city contrasts with the oracles against the nations that precede it (chs. 13–23). Thematically, the passage has a marked shift after v. 13. Verses 14–16a shift to a hymn, followed abruptly by a judgement woe in vv. 16b–20. The theme of cosmic judgement binds the unit, although the unit redirects its focus from the earth in vv. 1–6, to a city in vv. 7–16a, and then to both the city and the earth in vv. 16b–20. The phrase “on that day” in v. 21 indicates a new oracle that is separate from Isa 24:1–20, although certainly connected to it. Most scholars consider vv. 21–23 to be a later addendum.⁷³² Because vv. 21–23 demark a new unit and shift from an emphasis on land to an emphasis on mythological, celestial entities, they are not included in this study.⁷³³

In addition to shifting focus between the earth and the city, the passage also shifts between verb tenses. Verses 1–3 utilise the future tense and then move to the perfect tense in vv. 4–12, implying the conditions already exist. The text then returns to the future tense in vv. 13–20. It is possible the perfect tense in vv. 4–12 is the prophetic perfect.⁷³⁴ If so, this past narration describes future events. Hayes disagrees that the verbs in v. 5 are prophetic perfects; instead, she argues the conjunction 'ִי signals they should be translated as simple past tenses.⁷³⁵

⁷³¹ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 172–3.

⁷³² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 356; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 205; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 134.

⁷³³ These celestial bodies may be *Chaoskampf* metaphors for gods. See Johnson, *From Chaos*, 52–55; Kim, “City,” 27–28.

⁷³⁴ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 313.

⁷³⁵ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 152.

2.1. Text and Translation

¹Look, YHWH will empty⁷³⁶ the earth⁷³⁷ and devastate her;
he will ruin her surface⁷³⁸ and scatter her inhabitants.

²It will be as the people, as the priest;
as the servant, as his master;
as the maid, as her mistress;
as the buyer, as the seller;
as the lender, as the borrower;
as the creditor, as the debtor.

³The earth will be completely emptied and totally plundered,
for YHWH has spoken this word.⁷³⁹

⁴The earth mourns and fades away,
the world languishes⁷⁴⁰ and fades away.
The exalted people⁷⁴¹ with the earth languish.

⁵The earth is defiled by her inhabitants,
because they disobeyed laws,⁷⁴²
they violated a statute,
they broke an everlasting covenant.

⁶Therefore a curse eats the earth
and the inhabitants in her are guilty.⁷⁴³
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth burn⁷⁴⁴
and few men are left.

⁷The new wine dries up and the vine withers;
all the merry of heart groan.

הִנֵּה יְהוָה בּוֹקֵק הָאָרֶץ וּבֹלֵקָהּ¹
וְעוֹה פָּנֶיהָ וְהַפִּיץ יִשְׁבִּיהָ
וְהָיָה כָּעֵם כִּכְהֵן²
כַּעֲבָד כַּאֲדֹנָיו
כַּשֹּׁפֶתָה כַּגִּבֹּרָתָהּ
כַּקוֹנֶה כַּמוֹכֵר
כַּמְלִיָּה כַּלֹּוָה
כַּנֹּשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא בּוֹ
הַבּוֹק תְּבוֹק הָאָרֶץ וְהַבּוֹז תְּבוֹז³
כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה

אֲבָלָה נִבְלָה הָאָרֶץ⁴
אֲמָלָלָה נִבְלָה תֵּבֵל
אֲמָלְלוּ מְרוֹם עַם-הָאָרֶץ
וְהָאָרֶץ חֲנֹפָה תַּחַת יִשְׁבִּיהָ⁵
כִּי-עָבְרוּ תוֹרַת
חֻלְפוֹ חֹק
הִפְּרוּ בְרִית עוֹלָם

עַל-כֵּן אָלָה אֲכָלָה אֶרֶץ⁶
וַיֵּאָשְׁמוּ יִשְׁבֵּי בָּהּ
עַל-כֵּן חָרוּ יִשְׁבֵּי אֶרֶץ
וַנִּשְׂאֵר אֲנוֹשׁ מְזֵעַר

אֲבָל תִּירוֹשׁ אֲמָלְלָה-גֶּפֶן נֶאֱנָחָה⁷
כָּל-שִׂמְחַי-לֵב

⁷³⁶ Or lay waste.

⁷³⁷ 1QIsa uses אֲדָמָה instead of אָרֶץ. The LXX uses οἰκουμένη rather than the common γῆ.

⁷³⁸ Literally, "world."

⁷³⁹ The BHS denotes this concluding phrase as an addition, with no textual evidence.

⁷⁴⁰ The LXX lacks this first verb, reading instead "mourns, fades away, fades away, languish." However, 1QIsa and 4QIsac include it.

⁷⁴¹ MT: "exalted people of the earth." The BHS proposes "the exalted with the earth languish." Since earth/world have been the subjects in the two lines prior, this reading is suitable.

⁷⁴² 4QIsac has singular "law."

⁷⁴³ 1QIsaa has וישמו "are destroyed."

⁷⁴⁴ The root חרר usually means "to burn" (1QIsa lists חורו, from חרר). The DCH, however, reads this as deriving from חרר, "to diminish."

⁸The mirth of tambourines ceases;
the noise of those who rejoice ends;
the joy of the harp ceases.
⁹They do not drink wine with a song;
strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.
¹⁰The formless city is broken down;
every house is shut up from entering.
¹¹There is crying for wine in the streets;
all gladness is darkened,
the joy of the earth is removed.
¹²In the city is left horror,⁷⁴⁵
the gate is crushed to ruins.
¹³For thus will it be in the midst of the earth
among the people,
as at the beating of an olive tree,
as when gleanings are left after the grape
harvest.

¹⁴They raise their voices,
they sing for joy;
over the glory of YHWH they shout⁷⁴⁶ from
the sea (west).
¹⁵Therefore in the region of light (east)⁷⁴⁷
they glorify YHWH;
in the isles of the sea the name of YHWH
the God of Israel.
¹⁶From the ends of the earth we hear songs,
honour to the righteous one.

But I said, "I waste away!
I waste away!"⁷⁴⁸ Woe is me!"⁷⁴⁹
The treacherous betray;
the treacherous betray with great
treachery. ¹⁷Terror and pit and snare
are upon you, inhabitant of the earth.
¹⁸And it will be that the one who flees from
the sound of terror
will fall to the pit,

נִשְׁבַּת מְשׁוֹשׁ תְּפִים⁸
חִדְלָא שְׁאוֹן עֲלִיזִים
נִשְׁבַּת מְשׁוֹשׁ כְּנֹר
בְּשִׁיר לֹא יִשְׁתּוּ-יַיִן⁹
יִמַּר שֹׁכֵר לְשִׁתּוֹ
נִשְׁבְּרָה קִרְיַת-תְּהוֹ¹⁰
סֹגֵר כָּל-בֵּית מְבוֹא
צֹחֶקָה עַל-הַיַּיִן בַּחוּצוֹת¹¹
עֲרֻבָה כָּל-שְׂמֻחָה
גָּלָה מְשׁוֹשׁ הָאָרֶץ
נִשְׁאָר בְּעִיר שְׂמָה¹²
וּשְׂאִיָּה יִפֹּת-שָׁעַר
כִּי כֹה יִהְיֶה בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ בְּתוֹךְ הָעַמִּים¹³
כְּנֻקָּה זֵית
כְּעוֹלֵלֶת אִם-כָּלָה בְּצִיר

הִמָּה יִשְׁאוּ קוֹלָם¹⁴
יִרְנֹו
בְּגִאוֹן יִהְיֶה צִהְלוֹ מֵיָם
עַל-כֵּן בְּאֲרָיִם כִּבְדּוֹ יִהְיֶה¹⁵
בְּאֵי הַיָּם שֵׁם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכְנַף הָאָרֶץ זְמַרְתָּ שְׂמֵעָנִי¹⁶
צְבִי לְצִדִּיק

וְאָמַר רְזִי-לִי
רְזִי-לִי אוֹי לִי
בִּגְדִים בִּגְדוֹ
וּבְגָד בּוֹגְדִים בִּגְדוֹ
פָּחַד וּפִחַת וּפָח¹⁷
עָלֶיךָ יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ
וְהִיא הִנֵּס מִקּוֹל הַפָּחַד¹⁸

⁷⁴⁵ Or desolation.

⁷⁴⁶ The BHS proposes reading this as an imperative rather than a perfect.

⁷⁴⁷ The LXX omits "the region of light."

⁷⁴⁸ רִי means "my secret," but can also mean "wasting away." The Targums read "mystery." The LXX omits this phrase. Gray contends the MT intends "mystery"; Gray, *Critical*, 418–9. Young, on the other hand, argues his translation of "leanness" contrasts with "glory" in v. 14; Young, *Isaiah*, 173.

⁷⁴⁹ The BHS makes note of the LXX and reads לִי as a preposition attached to what follows: "Woe to the false."

and the one who climbs out from the pit
will be caught in the snare.

יִפֹּל אֶל-הַפֶּתַח
וְהָעוֹלָה מִתּוֹךְ הַפֶּתַח
יִלְכַּד בַּפֶּחַח

For the floodgates above are opened
and the foundations of the earth shake.

¹⁹The earth⁷⁵⁰ is broken, broken down,
the earth is split apart,
the earth violently trembles.

כִּי-אֲרָבוֹת מִמָּרוֹם
נִפְתָּחוּ וַיִּרְעֲשׂוּ מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ
רָעָה הִתְרַעְעָה הָאֶרֶץ¹⁹
פֹּר הִתְפֹּרְרָה אֶרֶץ
מוֹט הִתְמוֹטְטָה אֶרֶץ
נוֹעַ תָּנוּעַ אֶרֶץ כַּשְׂפֹּר²⁰
וְהִתְנוֹדְדָה כַּמְלִינָה
וְכָבַד עָלֶיהָ פִּשְׁעָה
וְנָפְלָה וְלֹא-תִסִּיף קוֹם

²⁰The earth reels like a drunkard,
and it sways like a hut,
transgression heavy upon her.⁷⁵¹
It falls and does not rise again.

2.3. Themes and Motifs

2.3.1. The Cosmic Scope of the Effect

One of the biggest challenges in interpreting Isa 24:1–20 is determining whether ארץ should be translated as “land” or as “earth.” The interpretation of this simple word has significant connotations for whether the passage refers to simply the land of Israel or the entire earth. It also changes the scope of the passage’s eschatological trajectory. Watts, for instance, chooses to translate ארץ as “land” based upon his belief that the oracle concerns the broad scope of the Palestinian-Syrian territory.⁷⁵² Similarly, Johnson concludes the term refers to “land” of Israel based upon his view that the city and everlasting covenant concern Jerusalem.⁷⁵³ However, that ארץ parallels תבל in 24:4 seems to imply an “earth” translation.⁷⁵⁴ The word תבל usually connotes the world as a whole, such as is the case in Isa

⁷⁵⁰ 1QIsaa reads all four occurrences of “earth” in vv. 19–20 with the definite article.

⁷⁵¹ This feminine pronoun could refer to the “earth.”

⁷⁵² John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 316.

⁷⁵³ Johnson, *From Chaos*, 24–26.

⁷⁵⁴ So Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 411; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 468–9; Marvin A. Sweeney, “Textual,” 43. This is also consistent with Isa 1:2.

27:6.⁷⁵⁵ The appearance of ארץ and תבל after the OAN (chs. 13–23) also seems to imply judgement that extends to the whole world, not merely to Israel. When used within mythological contexts, תבל is often used to signify cosmological dimensions.⁷⁵⁶

In addition to the translation of ארץ, the scope of the metaphor also depends on the interpretation of קְרִית-תְּהוֹ. While some have maintained staunch support for associating the city with Jerusalem, there is no reference to Judah, Jerusalem, or Israel throughout Isa 24:1–20, and the times these geographical locations appear in the larger pericope of chs. 24–27 are limited to Israel’s role as a means of restoration (Isa 26:1, 27:6).⁷⁵⁷ Further, there is no reference to a specific foreign entity; neither is the elusive “city” given a specific identity, implying this judgement involves all the nations of the earth. The OAN in chs. 13–23 prepare the readers for this conclusion; the judgement in 24:1–20 is the culmination of these oracles. Seitz observes chs. 13–14 and chs. 24–27 form an inclusio around the OAN: both focus on world judgement, framing Babylon as the prime symbol of judgement.⁷⁵⁸ Thus, he extends the meaning of the “city” in 24:10 to refer to any city conquered by Babylon.⁷⁵⁹ While it is plausible this framing presents Babylon as both the recipient (chs. 13–14) and dispenser (chs. 24–27) of judgement, it is also possible Babylon’s fall in chs. 13–14 foreshadows the final cosmic judgement in Isa 24:1–20, including, but not limited to, Babylon. Kim argues the obscure nature of the city intentionally enables readers to designate various identities.⁷⁶⁰ Overall, the mythological imagery indicates the city functions

⁷⁵⁵ TDOT 15:561. Concerning Isa 24:3–4, TDOT concludes “the synonymous parallelisms in this paronomastically structured poem address the whole universe.”

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ Most notable is Johnson, who believes the identity of the city is Jerusalem based upon the linguistic and thematic repetition of 5:11–14 and 24:8–9. He also argues the phrase בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ indicates Jerusalem, whom the Israelites understood to be the “center of the earth”; *From Chaos*, 32. Isaiah’s usage of this phrase concerning Jerusalem and Judah does lend credibility to his theory (see Isa 5:8; 6:12; 7:22). However, the remainder of the passage’s proclivity for cosmological language seems to complicate this characterisation.

⁷⁵⁸ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 175.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Kim, “City,” 45–46.

as an archetype of primordial chaos (cf. Isa 25:2; 26:5; 27:10).⁷⁶¹ This contrasts with the “strong” city in Isa 26:1.

The references to the floodgates of the heavens and the foundations of the earth indicate a cosmological scope as well (v. 18b). Together, “heaven” and “earth” create a merism, denoting the entire cosmos. This parallels the reaction to judgement by the inhabitants of the earth in vv. 17–18a. The cosmic imagery of the “windows” releasing rain mirrors the cosmic language in the Noah story (cf. Gen 7:11). The heavens languish with the earth and the earth’s inhabitants (cf. Jer 4:28).

2.3.2. Everlasting Covenant

This proclamation of judgement against the entire earth culminates in an allusion to an “everlasting covenant” (v. 5), the identity of which is enigmatic. This is the only instance where an “everlasting covenant” is broken in the Hebrew Bible. Most scholars believe it refers to either the Noachic or the Mosaic covenant. Seitz, for example, argues the covenant references the Noah story based upon the cosmic language in the chapter, particularly the allusion to the “windows” of heaven (v. 18; cf. Gen 7:12).⁷⁶² Blenkinsopp also argues the covenant is the Noachic covenant.⁷⁶³ Since the Noah covenant concerned the entire created order, its appearance here amidst Isaiah’s cosmological context seems fitting. Hayes details

⁷⁶¹ Wildberger deems the city a “symbol der grossen Gegenmacht Jahwes” (symbol of the great Opposing Power of YHWH). See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 19. Hibbard calls this broad representation the “universalisation” of the prophetic corpus. He argues the “tradition records continuity in God’s action and its effect, but enlarges the object of God’s judgement (and blessing) to include the entire earth.” See James Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 49.

⁷⁶² Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 180.

⁷⁶³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 352.

the connections Isa 24:1–20 has with the flood account and concludes the covenant further links these two passages.⁷⁶⁴ She concludes the covenant contains “universal roots” which extend “back to a covenant with all humanity, which protects the entire created order, and even to the forging of creation itself.”⁷⁶⁵

The biggest objection to this theory is that the Noachic covenant could not be broken; there are no stipulations for humanity to violate. In response, Blenkinsopp contends the “laws” humanity has violated pertain to the shedding of blood, as described in Gen 9:1–7.⁷⁶⁶ He further argues Isaiah understood this “everlasting covenant” in the flood account differently than the Priestly authors did, in that the former attached stipulations to the covenant while the latter did not.⁷⁶⁷ Day takes Blenkinsopp’s position further by arguing Isaiah’s presentation of the Noachic covenant as conditional overrides the unconditional promise in Gen 9:15.⁷⁶⁸ While this would explain the differences in the texts, this interpretation is presumptuous and cannot be proved. Seitz, on the other hand, explains this paradox is the point Isa 24:5 intends: the unbreakable covenant has been broken. Humanity, in their sin, has accomplished the impossible feat of voiding a covenant God established as unconditional.⁷⁶⁹ It is possible that a reference to the Noachic covenant could be used in such an ironic manner, especially in its placement after OAN: the long list of offences has culminated in the violation of an inviolate covenant.

Because the Noah covenant cannot be violated, other scholars have posed the Mosaic covenant as the “everlasting covenant” in Isa 24:5. Whereas the Noah covenant was an everlasting covenant with the cosmos that could not be broken by humanity, the Mosaic

⁷⁶⁴ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 159.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 352.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 146.

⁷⁶⁹ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 182.

covenant could be broken by either party member. It is for this reason Marlow and Kissane suggest this interpretation.⁷⁷⁰ Johnson argues the covenant mentioned in Isaiah is the Mosaic covenant based upon the references to “laws” (תּוֹרָה), a term which, in light of his Jerusalem-centric interpretation of Isa 24:1–20, refers to the covenant requirements placed upon God’s people.⁷⁷¹ Indeed, תּוֹרָה is never used in reference to any foreign entity.⁷⁷² Nonetheless, there are two reasons the Mosaic covenant does not appear to be this particular “everlasting covenant.” First, out of the sixteen references to the “everlasting covenant” throughout the Hebrew Bible, none refer to the covenant with Moses. Second, the Mosaic covenant does not fit the universal setting of Isa 24:1–20, as the Mosaic covenantal agreement only concerned the Israelites.

Overall, neither the Noachic nor the Mosaic identities are satisfactory, as both have inconsistencies with the Isa 24:1–20 text. For this reason, Wildberger proposes a convergence of both these covenants.⁷⁷³ While this certainly removes the problems presented above, this solution is arbitrary. Others propose the covenant in Isa 24:5 is neither the Noachic nor the Mosaic, but a broader covenant pertaining to the cosmos. Dempsey, for instance, concludes it is not a single covenant, but a broad cosmic relationship God has made with both humanity and the NHC.⁷⁷⁴ Levenson follows suit by offering a translation of “ancient covenant” instead of “everlasting covenant,” thus presenting the covenant as pertaining to humanity in general.⁷⁷⁵ Because of its generality, Oswalt concludes the

⁷⁷⁰ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 203; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah, Vol. 1* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan, 1941), 271.

⁷⁷¹ Johnson, *From Chaos*, 27.

⁷⁷² Johnson believes תּוֹרָה in Isa 24:5 was originally singular so as to refer to the Israelite “Law.” He references Amos’ accusations against Judah and Israel in Amos 2:4–8. In contrast to the OAN that precede these oracles, Amos never judges the nations for breaking the covenant laws; only God’s people are held accountable to the Torah. See *From Chaos*, 27.

⁷⁷³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 480.

⁷⁷⁴ Dempsey, *Hope*, 81. See similar conclusion in Murray, *Cosmic Covenant*, 43.

⁷⁷⁵ Levenson, *Creation*, 28.

agreement is an “implicit covenant between Creator and creature, in which the Creator promises abundant life in return for the creature's living according to the norms laid down in Creation.”⁷⁷⁶ Watts also contends the תּוֹרָה in vv. 5–6 do not constitute Israelite law, but a common, universal law.⁷⁷⁷ Isaiah 24:1–20 does not specify which sins have caused the curse on the NHC, an observation which causes Clements to conclude the sin refers to a “universal condition.”⁷⁷⁸ In a similar fashion, Wildberger concludes the guilt refers to a general knowledge available to all people.⁷⁷⁹ The “everlasting covenant” involves the breaking of the חֶק, often translated as “statues.” The word חֶק, however, can also be translated “boundary” or “limit,” which may imply the ordering of the cosmos.⁷⁸⁰ If so, the breaking of the חֶק implies “law” available to all social orders. This broad, universal covenant fits the cosmic setting of Isa 24:1–20.

2.3.3. The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

The prophet links the total destruction of the NHC to the people's violation of the “everlasting covenant” (v. 5). If the “everlasting covenant” is a universal covenant with the cosmos, as has been proposed above, then Isa 24:1–20 involves the entire world's violation of the NHC. Dempsey describes the violation of this covenant as “direct evidence that the suffering of the land is linked to human sinfulness.”⁷⁸¹ Supporting this link, Hayes observes that the double use of the conjunction עַל-כֵּן in v. 6 denotes a direct relationship between the sin and the curse.⁷⁸² The conjunction עַל-כֵּן differs in function from לְכֵן, which is often the

⁷⁷⁶ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 446.

⁷⁷⁷ Watts, *WBC* 24:317.

⁷⁷⁸ Clements, *Isaiah* 1–39, 202.

⁷⁷⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 1–27, 480.

⁷⁸⁰ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 157.

⁷⁸¹ Dempsey, *Hope*, 83.

⁷⁸² Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 151.

preferred conjunction for communicating YHWH's intervention. This further strengthens the connection Isa 24:1–20 presents between humanity's sin and the NHC. All the nations are to blame for the suffering which has ravaged the NHC. As with other covenants in the Hebrew Bible, there are both blessings for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking them, and the consequences for breaking this "everlasting covenant" are cosmic.

The passage describes humanity's sin as "defiling" the NHC in v. 5. The verbal root *חנף* denotes profanity or pollution, a concept sometimes utilised in the biblical tradition in the context of humanity's relationship with the NHC (Gen 4:10–11; Num 35:33; Ps 106:38).⁷⁸³ The common denominator in these passages that reference "pollution" is the concept that bloodshed pollutes the NHC. This is also evidenced in Isa 26:21, where the NHC exposes humanity's bloodshed. Roberts observes the reason the earth has been defiled is because of the NHC's position "underneath" (*תחת*) humanity.⁷⁸⁴ This phraseology suggests a geographical, if not a relational, connection between humanity and the NHC. The defilement of the NHC is also seen in v. 20, where humanity's sins lie heavy (*כבד*) on the earth, resulting in the NHC's violent reaction.

While vv. 1–6a indicate the effect humanity's sin has on the NHC, vv. 6b–13 indicate the effect the NHC has upon humanity. Humanity affects the NHC, and the NHC returns this effect back upon humanity. The conjunction *על-כן* in v. 6b signals this cause-and-effect relationship and vv. 7–13 then elaborate on the effect. These two different cause-and-effect relationships demonstrate the interrelatedness of the cosmic order. It also suggests a system of retribution, whereby humanity's sins are returned in kind.

2.3.4. The Role of the NHC

⁷⁸³ See also above analysis on Hos 4:1–3.

⁷⁸⁴ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 314.

The text describes a dual role of the NHC. On one hand, the opening announcement in v. 1 indicates YHWH is the one who dispenses judgement; in this case, the NHC is a passive casualty of YHWH's punishment. The description of the earth being emptied and laid waste (v. 3) also suggests the NHC's passivity: YHWH strips the NHC and the NHC mourns. Both בָּקַק and נָבַח appear in the niphal, suggesting these actions are being done to the NHC. In fact, the NHC is devastated by an external agent four times (vv. 1, 3, 6, 13). One of these agents is the warfare in vv. 12–13, in which the NHC suffers from the devastation of her vineyards and olive groves.

On the other hand, as previously demonstrated, the text indicates a direct link between humanity's sin and the response of the NHC. That the NHC "mourns" (v. 4) and "trembles" (v. 19) demonstrates an active role in dispensing judgement. Oswalt calls these curses natural consequences for humanity's sin; they are not the product of God's active punishment.⁷⁸⁵ Indeed, the devastation appears to be a natural recourse imbedded within the framework of the cosmological order.

The word "earth" appears in this passage frequently, demonstrating her prominent role in the covenantal curse. In her fourteen appearances, אֶרֶץ is sometimes included with her inhabitants (24:1a, 13, 20b) and sometimes distinct from her inhabitants (24:1b, 4–6, 17–19, 20a). Nevertheless, Hayes notes the prominent ways in which the earth is portrayed as having an active role in the judgement sequence.⁷⁸⁶ The NHC's active role is especially demonstrated in v. 4 and vv. 18b–20, particularly in her response.

2.3.5. The NHC's Response

2.3.5.1. Water: Drought and Flood

⁷⁸⁵ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 446.

⁷⁸⁶ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 159.

The NHC responds with two curses involving water in v. 18. The first response is via a drought which affects the full scope of the created order. Drought is a covenant curse in the biblical tradition (Deut 28:23–24). That it impacts the entire NHC is indicated by its reach to the heavens, the source of rain.⁷⁸⁷ The description of the “city” as *תֵּהוֹ* may also denote a drought, as this word describes the state of the cosmos before YHWH’s creative activity (Gen 1:2). Wildberger rightly cautions that the same vocabulary in Isaiah and Genesis does not certify Isaiah’s literary dependence on the creation account, although the recurrence may imply common vocabulary in texts concerning creation.⁷⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the literal meaning of *תֵּהוֹ* (“desert,” or “wasteland”) may imply a “dry chaos.”⁷⁸⁹

Because of the commingling of drought imagery with military defeat imagery in vv. 7–18a, it is difficult to ascertain the intensity of the drought effect. While v. 6b seems to indicate the population dwindles because of the NHC’s languishing, as implied by the causal “therefore,” the imagery that follows (vv. 7–13) suggests military invasion. Roberts argues the “plundering” (*בָּזַז*) language in v. 3 suggests a military invasion as well. It is possible, however, to associate the “plundering” with stripping, especially since this verb parallels “emptying” (*בִּקֶּק*). Nahum 2:3, for instance, uses *בִּקֶּק* to describe a tree stripped of its branches. The NHC’s reaction of “mourning” in v. 4 also seems to imply stripping.⁷⁹⁰ This meaning is strengthened by its pairing with both *בִּקֶּק* and *בָּזַז* in v. 3. This theme is further exemplified in v. 13, where the state of the NHC is compared to the harvesting of olives and the gleaning of vines.

⁷⁸⁷ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 183.

⁷⁸⁸ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 157.

⁷⁸⁹ For more on the concept of “dry chaos,” see the analysis of Hos 4:1–3.

⁷⁹⁰ See word study on the correlation between “mourning” and “stripping” in the analysis of Amos 1:2. See also discussion concerning “stripping” in Hos 2:4–17; 4:1–3; and Isa 32:9–20.

The language in vv. 7–13 seems to communicate military destruction more clearly, although there are still several questions about the relationship war has to the NHC. Is the “city” rendered *תִּהְיוּ* because of the drought or because of warfare? Is the devastation of the vineyards and subsequent outcry for wine because the land has dried up or because of military destruction? Perhaps these images are purposefully interwoven, as suggested by the constant fluctuation between war and agricultural images. Both forces of destruction ravage humanity and the NHC alike.

Contrasting with the drought motifs throughout the pericope, the text abruptly shifts to a brief flood image: the “floodgates above” open (v. 18). The terminology recalls the language from the flood account, suggesting an intentional connection between the two texts (Gen 7:11; 8:2). The connection associates the terror of the flood curse with the judgement in Isa 24:1–20. In this way, the devastation enacted against humanity consists of both “dry chaos” and “wet chaos.”

2.3.5.2. The Splitting of the Foundations

The foundations of the earth tremble in conjunction with the flood imagery. This parallelism of heavens and earth is a merism that portrays the entire cosmological order. Like the floodgates, the breaking open of the earth recalls the splitting apart of the deep in the flood account (Gen 7:11; 8:2). But unlike the flood imagery, which is only briefly mentioned in v. 18b, the earthquake imagery is elaborated and intensified in vv. 19–20. Clements remarks this dire description suggests a return of the NHC to her primeval, chaotic state.⁷⁹¹ The NHC’s description of “drunkenness” contrasts with the scarcity of wine in vv. 7–9 and the reference to a “hut,” a word connoting a fragile, temporary shelter (v. 20),

⁷⁹¹ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 205.

intensifies the effect of the metaphor. The ominous closing to the passage in v. 20 demonstrates the severity of the cataclysm.

2.3.5.3. Decreation

The NHC's reactions of flood, drought, and earthquake together suggest a theme of decreation. As noted above, the flood and earthquake reactions allude to the flood account. The language of the windows of heaven and the foundations of the earth in Isa 24:18b coincides with Gen 7:11; 8:2, implying the breakdown of all the entire cosmic order. The "formless city" in v. 5 may also be a reference to the NHC's primeval state of chaos before YHWH ordered the cosmos (Gen 1:2).

Several have noted chs. 24–27 share common *Chaoskampf* imagery with Babylonian tradition, particularly the *Enuma Elish* and the Baal Epic. Levenson, Kim, and Johnson recognize these motifs as Israel's polemic against oppressive empires.⁷⁹² While these themes are more prevalent among chs. 25–27, Isa 24:1 may hint at the *Enuma Elish*.⁷⁹³ The verbal root בלק may be interpreted as "split open," which could in turn parallel Marduk's splitting of Tiamat's body into the sky and earth.⁷⁹⁴ Kim argues this reference implies YHWH's intentions to reverse the created order.⁷⁹⁵ The same imagery of splitting and the collapse of the two realms of heaven and earth is also seen in vv. 18–20. A clearer word (פרר) is used for "split apart" in v. 20.

Since "splitting" or separating the waters is a means of ordering the NHC in both the first Genesis creation account and the *Enuma Elish*, however, it would seem the presence of the imagery in Isa 24:1–20 communicates this same creative process. Instead, "splitting"

⁷⁹² Levenson, *Creation*, 38; Kim, "City," 26; Johnson, *From Chaos*, 99–100.

⁷⁹³ As observed by Kim in "City," 27. See his work for more *Chaoskampf* images throughout chs. 24–27.

⁷⁹⁴ A translation which both Blenkinsopp and Kim choose. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 349; Kim, "City," 27.

⁷⁹⁵ Kim, "City," 27.

here connotes the dismantling of the NHC; the metaphor is inconsistent. A clearer allusion to the biblical and Babylonian creation accounts may be evident in vv. 18b, where the waters above and the waters below collapse. Like the flood account, this reverses YHWH's orderly process of separating the two realms. Levenson views vv. 18–19 as a connection to Ugaritic mythology, in which the opening of the heavens' windows parallels the opening of Baal's windows.⁷⁹⁶ Because of the cosmic imagery of the chaos myths through the remainder of chs. 24–27, both of these motifs in Isa 24:18–20 have creditability. As Levenson argues, combat myth in the Jewish tradition is usually encased in eschatological language, a topic to which the analysis now turns.⁷⁹⁷

2.3.7 Eschatological Implications

Isaiah 24:1–20 presents a tenuous, unstable cosmos subject to YHWH's judgement. Because of humanity's violation of YHWH's created order, the NHC mourns and withers. This passage presents a dire perspective in which YHWH's cosmological order must be reasserted. Thus, the text is eschatological in that it anticipates YHWH's imminent intervention to set the cosmos right again. It is YHWH who sustains the NHC and prevents it from reverting to chaos. As demonstrated above, the passage alludes to the flood account several times, a story which illustrates the cosmos' need for YHWH to subdue hostile, chaotic forces.⁷⁹⁸ In the end, only YHWH's promise keeps the primordial powers at bay. The NHC provides no means of security; rather, the stability of the cosmos depends upon YHWH's commitment to both humanity and the NHC.

⁷⁹⁶ Levenson, *Creation*, 27.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26–31, 48.

⁷⁹⁸ This connection is especially evident if the "everlasting covenant" in question refers to the Noachic covenant.

The text hints at YHWH's commitment to the cosmos in several places. Despite the cataclysmic imagery and the dire description at the end of the judgement sequence in v. 20, humanity is not completely destroyed (vv. 1, 6). Instead, a remnant is preserved and scattered. Seitz has suggested this is another allusion to the flood account, whereby God preserves a people by means of the ark.⁷⁹⁹ Whether this connection is intentional, this brief suggestion of hope implies the NHC will also be preserved, at least in part if not in whole, since humanity cannot exist without the NHC, as the very structure of creation indicates.

Levenson describes this tenuous hope in YHWH's sovereignty during cosmic instability as a "confession of faith."⁸⁰⁰ He recounts "the absolute sovereignty of the God of Israel is not a simple given in the Hebrew Bible," but must be a belief expressed as eschatological hope.⁸⁰¹ Perhaps this "confession of faith" is evident in vv. 14–16a, where the people sing for joy after the "city" has been defeated (vv. 12–13). While there are many theories as to the identities of these people and the function of this hymnic interlude, the liturgical response does reflect trust in YHWH's sovereignty.⁸⁰²

Watts argues Isa 24:1–20 theologically challenges Israel's eschatological views. He views chs. 24–27 as demonstrating of the transfer of power from cities to empires during the 8th-5th Centuries.⁸⁰³ Thus, the "formless city" in v. 10 is an indication that the past world order is gone; the city is no longer the locale of power. In this, Watts views Isa 24:1–20 as a polemic against the Israelites' expectation that Jerusalem would one day resume her seat of

⁷⁹⁹ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 183–4.

⁸⁰⁰ Levenson, *Creation*, 47.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Wildberger believes it is the song of the scattered Israelites; *Isaiah 13–27*, 495. Clements argues the reaction is a prophetic vision of all the nations' embrace of YHWH's reign; *Isaiah 1–39*, 203. Oswalt believes it the response of oppressed people to the fall of the "formless city"; *Isaiah*, 450. Johnson, on the other hand, believes this is a rhetorical "trap," whereby the prophet is voicing the Israelites' reaction only to reveal they are the recipients of the judgement; *From Chaos*, 39.

⁸⁰³ Watts, *WBC 24:319*.

power under another King David.⁸⁰⁴ By presenting this vision of a city in ruins, the prophet envisions a new role for God's people as a "temple city."⁸⁰⁵ In order to reach this conclusion, Isa 24:1–20 must be synchronically juxtaposed with chs. 65–66, where explicit temple language is employed (Isa 65:17–18; 66:1–2). However, a similar conclusion may be reached in Isa 25:6, where the city is destroyed in favour of a mountain.⁸⁰⁶ This mountain-temple reality is then heralded a "city" in 26:1.

Isaiah 24:1–20 presents not just the city in ruins, but the entire cosmos in ruins. Isaiah 24:18b pairs the devastation of both the heavens and the earth, a merism that entails not just the entire cosmos, but also the temple on occasion.⁸⁰⁷ In accordance with ANE thought, the temple mechanism was the tangible representation of the cosmos. This microcosm reflected the ideal world order, which in the Israelites' case was governed by the reign of YHWH. Both the tabernacle and temple were constructed in correspondence to YHWH's creation of the NHC. That the NHC now lies empty and desolate implies the temple, God's dwelling place, also lies in ruins (Isa 66:1). The blending of the NHC and the temple solicits an eschatological longing. The NHC needs to be re-created as a temple-city. By recreating the NHC, YHWH renews the cosmological order and establishes YHWH's eschatological reign.⁸⁰⁸ The unleashing of the hostile, chaotic forces upon the NHC instils an anticipation that YHWH will now eschatologically intervene, vanquish YHWH's foes, and renew the NHC as YHWH's microcosm (cf. Isa 27:2–6).

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ In this case, the image is "temple-mountain" rather than "temple-city."

⁸⁰⁷ Levenson, *Creation*, 90.

⁸⁰⁸ This anticipation of YHWH's re-enthronement is consistent with the Canaanite and Ugaritic mythological language summarised above; both Marduk and Baal constructed temples and ascended their thrones following their conquests. See Levenson, *Creation*, 29–32.

2.4. Summary

Isaiah 24:1–20 transitions the book of Isaiah from the OAN in chs. 13–23 to a pronouncement of cosmological judgement in chs. 24–27. That the scope of this judgement announcement includes the entire cosmos is evidenced in the paralleling of *ארץ* with *תבל* in v. 4, the world scope of the OAN which precede the passage, and the heaven and earth merism in v. 18b. In light of this cosmological designation, it is best to understand the “formless city” as a paradigm for the cosmos. The prophet accuses humanity of violating the “everlasting covenant,” a covenant that may be a universal law available to all peoples, although the covenant possesses similarities to the Noachic covenant. The violation, or “pollution” of this agreement thereby brings disaster upon the NHC. The verb *חנף* may indicate bloodshed based upon its pattern of appearance in the Hebrew canon. At the very least, humanity’s violation of the covenant does indicate an interrelated relationship between humanity and the NHC.

The passage presents the NHC as both a victim of YHWH’s judgement and an active participant in dispensing judgement. In the latter case, a system of retribution imbedded into the cosmological order becomes apparent. In response to humanity’s sin, the NHC draws upon the waters of chaos to enact dual drought (vv. 1, 4, 7, 13) and flood (v. 18b), images of both “dry chaos” and “wet chaos.” The NHC “mourns,” a significant verb that, as examined in the studies of Amos and Hosea, suggests prophetic critique, grief, and drying up. In addition to the drying up of the earth (vv. 1, 4) and the vineyard (vv. 7, 13), the NHC also splits (v. 1) and trembles (vv. 18b–20), two motifs that indicate earthquake. The dual actions from both the heavens and the earth in v. 18b hint at the devastation inflicted in the flood account (Gen 7:11; 8:2).

The action of “splitting” both the heavens and earth (vv. 1, 18b–20) alludes to ANE combat myths. This language entails YHWH’s efforts of returning the NHC to a state of decreation. As such, this mythological language instils an expectation for YHWH to re-create the cosmos, an action that signifies temple language. Since the NHC is YHWH’s temple, the readers expect YHWH to vanquish the chaotic forces at work and reenact YHWH’s reign. These expectations find fulfilment in the remainder of chs. 24–27. Nevertheless, Isa 24:1–20 hints at eschatological hope in that humanity is not completely destroyed, but scattered (vv. 1, 6). Since humanity is preserved, logically the NHC is also preserved, as humanity is dependent upon the NHC. In a vision of instability and devastation, there is still hope YHWH will re-create the “formless city” and redeem the cosmological order.

3. ISAIAH 30:18–26

3.1. Introduction

3.2.1 The Unit of Isaiah 28:1–33:24

Following Isaiah’s vision of global, cataclysmic judgement (24:1–20), First Isaiah shifts back to focusing on both the judgement and deliverance of Israel. Isaiah 30:18–26 envisions Israel’s return to YHWH (cf. 30:15–17), which results in the collective salvation of God’s people and the NHC. This selected passage is located within the unit of chs. 28–33, which is bracketed by two clearly structured sections (chs. 24–27; 34–35).⁸⁰⁹ The internal structure of woe oracles suggests literary unity, as 28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; and 31:1 all begin with הוֹי (woe). The series of woe oracles culminates in a break in 32:1 (הֵן instead of הוֹי) before

⁸⁰⁹ Clements and Childs argue the unit includes chs. 34–35. See Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 250; Childs, *Isaiah*, 199. Seitz views chs. 28–35 as an intentional unit that anticipates Hezekiah’s reign in chs. 36–39; *Isaiah 1–39*, 235. Kaiser lists the unit as Isa 28–32; *Isaiah 13–29*, 234. On the other hand, Oswalt includes ch. 33 in the pericope because he views it as a conclusion to chs. 28–32 based upon the overlap of common themes; *Isaiah*, 505. 1QIsa marks chs. 34–35 as distinctive from ch. 33.

returning to the woe pattern in 33:1. Together, this series of “woe” and “see” oracles portray Judah’s judgement and then restoration.

While most scholars agree chs. 28–33 is a unit, there is disagreement concerning the unit’s dating. Because of its close links to chs. 1–12, several scholars view chs. 28–31 as rooted in the words of an eighth-century prophetic tradition.⁸¹⁰ Chapters 32–33, however, are often ascribed to a later, post-exilic date.⁸¹¹ Several characterise these two chapters as semi-apocalyptic in nature.⁸¹² While chs. 32–33 exhibits characteristics of apocalypticism and may even reflect the early stages of this genre’s development, readers must be careful not to force it into this category; it does not meet all the standards for apocalypticism.⁸¹³

3.2.2 The Unit of Isaiah 30:18–26

The larger section of Isa 30:1–33 is demarcated by the “woe” statement (v. 1). The messenger formulas in vv. 1, 12, and 15, along with the prophetic oracle formula in v. 6, constitute YHWH’s speech. This contrasts with the third-person references to YHWH in vv. 18–26. In this subunit, the prophet anticipates YHWH’s future deliverance of YHWH’s people. Verse 18 denotes a change in content from God’s condemnation of Israel’s reliance on Egypt (vv. 1–17) to God’s promise of compassion (vv. 18–26). This shift is further indicated by two repetitions of לָךְ (v. 18), followed by two repetitions of יָ (v. 18b, 19).⁸¹⁴ Verse 18 concludes the preceding pericope (vv. 1–17), urging some scholars to include v. 18 with the unit of vv.

⁸¹⁰ Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 217; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 234; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 504; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 459.

⁸¹¹ Wildberger assigns it to the 5th C. BCE and Kaiser dates it to the 2nd C. BCE; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 172; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 235. Clements argues this section is not original to the 8th C. prophet and assigns it a date during the Babylonian exile; *Isaiah 1–39*, 250. Contra Oswalt, who believes ch. 33 is an allusion to Sennacherib’s siege; *Isaiah*, 595.

⁸¹² Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 217; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 235. Kaiser considers 32:9–20 a “short apocalypse” (235–6).

⁸¹³ One useful model is Collins’ summary of his SBL group’s conclusions, which do not apply to Isa 32–33. See John J. Collins, “Introduction,” 9.

⁸¹⁴ Some scholars, such as Kaiser, isolate v. 18 as its own unit because of its poetic form; *Isaiah 13–39*, 397–8. While Sweeney includes v. 18 in the unit of vv. 18–26, he does indicate that the repetition of יָ in v. 18b and v. 19 is cumbersome; *Isaiah 1–39*, 397. This repetition, however, mirrors the repetition of לָךְ in v. 18.

1–17.⁸¹⁵ Yet, vv. 19–26 also connect to v. 18 as an expansion of the specific blessings God will give God’s people. As such, v. 18 functions as a fulcrum between these two pericopes: it concludes vv. 1–17 and introduces a new theme in vv. 19–26.

Sweeney notes the passage’s frequent connections to the Deuteronomic tradition.⁸¹⁶ The parallels include the promise of agricultural fertility for covenant obedience (which is explored below), the metaphor of deviating to the right or left of a path (Deut 2:27; 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14), and the fluctuation between singular and plural 2nd-person pronouns.⁸¹⁷ Because of these parallels, Sweeney argues vv. 18–26 originated during the Josianic period.⁸¹⁸

3.2. Text and Translation

¹⁸Therefore, YHWH longs to show favour to you;
therefore he rises to have compassion on you. For YHWH is a God of justice.
Blessed are all who long for him.

¹⁸וְלִכֵּן יִחַפֶּה יְהוָה לַחֲנֻנֶכֶם
וְלִכֵּן יָרוּם לְרַחֲמֵכֶם
כִּי-אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר־יִכָּל-חֹכֵי לוֹ

¹⁹For, O people in Zion, those living in Jerusalem, you will definitely weep no more. He⁸¹⁹ will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. When he listens to you he answers you.²⁰ He gives to you the bread of distress and the water of oppression,⁸²⁰ yet your teacher⁸²¹ shall not hide himself anymore; your eyes will see

¹⁹כִּי-עַם בְּצִיּוֹן יֹשֵׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם בָּכוּ
לֹא-תִבְכֶּה חֲנוּן יִחַנֵּךְ לְקוֹל זַעֲקֶךָ
כְּשִׁמְעָתוֹ עֲנֶךָ²⁰ וְנָתַן לָכֶם אֲדָנִי לֶחֶם
צָר וַיִּמָּיֵם לַחֹץ וְלֹא-יִכְנַף עוֹד מוֹרֶיךָ
וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רְאוּת אֶת-מוֹרֶיךָ²¹ וְאַזְנֶיךָ
תִּשְׁמַעְנָה דְּבַר מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ לֵאמֹר זֶה

⁸¹⁵ Verse 18 also stands apart from what follows by the setuma (paragraph divider) in the MT. This indicates the verse was seen as part of vv. 15–18 by the Masoretes. See Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 543; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 420.

⁸¹⁶ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 396–7.

⁸¹⁷ Cf. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 460.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 396.

⁸¹⁹ 1QIsaa adds “YHWH” as the subject.

⁸²⁰ The BHS proposes the ׀ preposition before the construct nouns, changing them from construct to contrasts: “bread in the place of.”

⁸²¹ The Hebrew is masculine plural, but the verb is singular. 1QIsaa has מוראיך, “your fear/dread,” while the LXX has πλανωντες, “deceiver.”

your teacher. ²¹And when you ⁸²² turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears will hear behind you a word, “This is the way. Walk in it.” ²²Then you will defile your silver idols and your golden images. You will scatter them like menstrual cloths⁸²³ and you will say to it, “Get out!”

²³He will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground and grain, the product of the ground, which will be fat and plentiful. On that day your cattle will graze in enlarged pastures. ²⁴The oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed⁸²⁴ with shovel and fork.

²⁵On every lofty mountain and upon all high hill streams of water will flow; on a day of great slaughter the towers fall. ²⁶The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days,⁸²⁵ on the day when YHWH binds up the injuries of his people and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

הַדֶּרֶךְ לָכֹן בּוֹ כִּי תִאֲמִינוּ וְכִי תִשְׁמְאִילוּ
²²וְטִמַּאתֶם אֶת-צְפוּי פְּסִילֵי כֶסֶף
וְאֶת-אֲפֻדַּת מַסַּכֶּת זָהָבךָ תִזְרֹם כְּמוֹ
דָּוָה צֹא תֹאמַר לוֹ

וְנָתַן מִטֶּר זֶרַעְךָ אֲשֶׁר-תִּזְרַע²³
אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה וְלֶחֶם תְּבוֹאֵת הָאֲדָמָה
וְהָיָה דָשֵׁן וְשֶׁמֶן יִרְעֶה מִקְנֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם
הַהוּא כֹר נִרְחֵב
וְהָאֲלָפִים וְהָעִירִים עֲבָדֵי הָאֲדָמָה²⁴
בְּלִיל חֲמִיץ יֹאכְלוּ אֲשֶׁר-זָרָה בְּרַחַת
וּבִמְזָרָה

וְהָיָה עַל-כָּל-הָר גְּבוֹהָ וְעַל-כָּל-גְּבוּעָה²⁵
נִשְׁאָה פְּלָגִים יִבְלִי-מַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא רֹב
בְּנוֹפֵל מִגְדָּלִים²⁶ וְהָיָה אֹר-הַלְבָּנָה
כְּאֹר הַחֲמָה וְאֹר הַחֲמָה יִהְיֶה
שִׁבְעָתַיִם כְּאֹר שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים בַּיּוֹם
חֲבֹשׁ יִהְיֶה אֶת-שִׁבְר עַמּוֹ וּמַחֲץ מַכָּתוֹ
יִרְפָּא

3.3. Themes and Motifs

3.3.1 The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

The text declares a shift from judgement to restoration, initiated by YHWH's acts of grace and compassion (v. 18). This graciousness is indicated by two gifts of YHWH: the return of instruction (vv. 20–22) and the return of the NHC's fertility (vv. 23–26).⁸²⁶ There is no

⁸²² The pronouns throughout vv. 21–22 are all singular. The *BHS* notes this shift to the singular is also in the *LXX* and *V*.

⁸²³ The *LXX* has “like water,” presumably כְּמֵי, and refers to dung instead of menstrual cloths. The *BHS* also proposes צֹא as צֹא (“dung”).

⁸²⁴ 1QIsaa has the imperfect form of the verb rather than the participle.

⁸²⁵ The *LXX* omits “like the light of seven days.” Kaiser suggests this phrase is a gloss; *Isaiah 13–39*, 300. Targums have “343 times brighter,” which is three multiples of seven.

⁸²⁶ A third gift appears in v. 20, before the transition to restoration, where YHWH gives the people the “bread of distress.”

indication, however, that the return of human righteousness has a direct impact on the fertility of the NHC; the two gifts are simply portrayed side-by-side without commentary on whether there is a cause-effect relationship or whether the events happen simultaneously. Nevertheless, righteous living and the NHC's fertility do happen in conjunction with each other.

Sweeney connects the specific gifts of fertility described in vv. 23–24 to the Deuteronomic tradition, where rain (Deut 11:11, 14, 17; 28:12, 24; 32:2), agricultural produce (Deut 14:22, 28; 16:15; 22:9; 26:12; 33:14), and cattle (Deut 3:19) are blessings given in response to Israel's adherence to the covenant.⁸²⁷ That Isa 30:18–26 has many consistencies with Deuteronomy, as demonstrated above, may indicate a similar connection between obedience and fertility. However, this can only be inferred indirectly.

Wildberger notes the fruitfulness of the NHC (land, animals, and humanity) often depended upon a king's just reign in the ANE world.⁸²⁸ For instance, Enlil promised the king Ishme-Dagan an overflow of the Tigris and Euphrates if he reigned justly, and Marduk promised fertility to Nebuchadnezzar I.⁸²⁹ The "teacher" in v. 20 could be the ruler frequently hinted at in chs. 28–33, usually thought to be Josiah or Hezekiah.⁸³⁰ The identity of the teacher is unclear, and could also be YHWH, the prophetic tradition, or the Torah.⁸³¹ Blenkinsopp understands the direction of the voice as coming from "behind" to refer to the past; thus, he offers an interpretation of a deceased prophet.⁸³² Roberts concludes the "teacher" is the present prophetic word.⁸³³ As indicated above, there is no explicit

⁸²⁷ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 396–7.

⁸²⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 177.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 356.

⁸³¹ YHWH is an unlikely candidate for the teacher, as the only reference to YHWH as "teacher" is by Elihu in Job 36:22. Contra Beuken, *Isaiah*, 148. Blenkinsopp concludes the reference to YHWH right before the "teacher" (v. 20) signifies the teacher is someone other than YHWH; *Isaiah 1–39*, 421.

⁸³² Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 421.

⁸³³ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 394.

relationship between the blessing of this unknown teacher in vv. 20–22 and the blessing of fertility in vv. 23–26. Unfortunately, none of these proposed identities of the teacher illuminate the relationship between the two blessings.

While the connection between righteous living and the NHC is unclear elsewhere, there does appear to be a cause-effect relationship between humanity and the NHC in v. 26b. Here, the vitality of the NHC is described as an act of healing, indicating a relationship between YHWH's people and YHWH's cosmic order. The healing of humanity results in the healing of the NHC.

3.3.2 The Role of the NHC

In addition to the link between humanity and the NHC, there is a link between the defeat of the people's enemies and the NHC's fertility in v. 25. Two possible cause-effect relationships are presented in the text. First, the toppling of towers could be the catalyst for life-giving water to flow from the mountains. In this reading, sinful humanity obstructed NHC's fertility, and their removal returned the water. Second, the streams could be the catalyst for the toppling of the towers.⁸³⁴ In this reading, the return of the NHC's fertility leads to the triumph of God's people. The direction of the causality is unclear, allowing for both readings. Yet, since v. 23 describes YHWH's gift of rain upon the land, the second reading is preferable. The movement of the text indicates the rainwater (v. 23) culminates in rushing streams powerful enough to topple the enemies' strongholds (v. 25). In this way, the NHC assists in the liberation of God's people.

⁸³⁴ See the description for the "day of the Lord" in Isa 2:12–16, where all high places, including towers, are torn down.

Since this pericope has made no mention of a “day of slaughter” prior to v. 25, the reference to the towers is obscure. Clements suggests this event is the eschatological day of the Lord, while Wildberger connects this specific day to the defeat of Israel’s enemies.⁸³⁵ Isaiah 2:12–18 describes this day of the Lord as including the dismantling, not only of the proud and arrogant, but also of all the high places, including mountains and towers. It is perhaps for this reason the NEB renders “towers” in 30:25 as the “highest in the land.” The overthrowing of entities opposed to YHWH’s rule clears the way for the NHC to flourish.

By overthrowing the towers, or the enemies opposed to YHWH’s rule, the NHC assumes an active role in this passage. She is both the blessing given to God’s people and the catalyst that paves the way for YHWH’s renewal. Since there is no clear connection between human action and the fertility of the NHC, this gift of fruitfulness does not appear to be a reward; YHWH does not give this fertility blessing based upon humanity’s merit.

3.3.3 Eschatological Implications

After the vanquishing of enemies, the eschatological oracle portrays a striking transformation of the cosmic order.⁸³⁶ In dramatic description, the vision portrays the fertility of the NHC as exceeding the present natural order. For this reason, Wildberger argues the prophet is portraying a “supersession” of the cosmological order, not a return to previous conditions.⁸³⁷ Blenkinsopp, too, proposes an “eschatological image” of “superabundant fertility” which he likens to the similar imagery in Amos 9:13–15.⁸³⁸ Water

⁸³⁵ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 251; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 180–1.

⁸³⁶ Clements believes the NHC’s abrupt change is a new eschatological order; *Isaiah 1–39*, 249–50. Wildberger also defines these events as eschatological; *Isaiah 28–39*, 183. Sweeney, on the other hand, argues this cosmic reversal is not eschatological; it is just portraying the effects of YHWH’s healing. Yet, Sweeney observes vv. 18–33 uses similar language to that of Isa 24–27, including the removal of grief, the defiling of idols, and the reversal of judgement; *Isaiah 1–39*, 396.

⁸³⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 183.

⁸³⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 421.

will flow where it does not currently flow (v. 25); the sun and moon will shine brighter than naturally possible (v. 26). The vibrancy of heavenly entities is a theme of later Jewish apocalyptic imagery.⁸³⁹ In particular, the book of Jubilees describes a world in which “all of the lights will be renewed for healing and peace and blessing for all the elect of Israel” (1:29). This brilliant light imagery is also a theme of the prophets, although they more frequently describe the absence of light as a symbol of judgement (Isa 24:23; 60:19; Joel 3:4 [2:31]).

3.4. Summary

Isaiah 30:18–26 portrays the fertility of the NHC as one of two blessings from YHWH. While the two blessings are connected, the relationship between the two remains unclear: humanity’s return to righteous living (vv. 19–22) and the NHC’s return to fertility (vv. 23–26) occur side-by-side. Yet, the unit’s possible connections to the Deuteronomic tradition may indicate that this just and righteous living results with the vitality of the NHC. While this connection is ambiguous, YHWH’s renewal of the fertility blessings produces an active NHC who overthrows the enemies’ strongholds. The return of rain empowers the NHC to invade the enemies’ territory and attack their towers (vv. 23–25). In this way, the return of her fertility unleashes a chain reaction as the NHC comes to the aid of humanity. Further, the eschatological language indicates the cosmological order will be completely transformed; the effects of this transformation will far exceed the present natural order (v. 26).

⁸³⁹ Jub 1:29; 19:25; Enoch 91:16.

4. ISAIAH 32:9–20

4.1. Introduction

Located within the same unit as Isa 30:18–26 (chs. 28–33), Isa 32:9–20 also envisions the return of the NHC’s fertility. Isaiah 32:9–20 is a subset of 32:1–20, whose “see” introduction (v. 1) contrasts with the “woe” passages within the unit of chs. 28–33 (see 28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). This break from woe oracles introduces an unnamed king who reigns with justice (32:1). Both the king and the historical setting of Isa 32:1–20 is unclear. Clements describes this royal figure as already present at the time of the writing and identifies him as Josiah.⁸⁴⁰ Sweeney identifies this figure as Josiah or a post-exilic person.⁸⁴¹ In anticipation of the narrative in chs. 36–38, Seitz argues the individual is Hezekiah.⁸⁴² Since the historical context of Isa 32:1–20 is also ambiguous, it does not clarify the identity of the king. Clements suggests a date before the fall of Jerusalem while Wildberger offers a date right before.⁸⁴³ Meanwhile, both Seitz and Blenkinsopp propose a date following the withdrawal of the Assyrian army in 701 BCE.⁸⁴⁴

The delineation of the passage depends upon the perceived function of v. 15. The unit clearly begins with the address to women in v. 9, but based upon the shift from judgement to salvation in v. 15, most segment the pericope into two units: vv. 9–14 and vv. 15–20.⁸⁴⁵ Blenkinsopp, on the other hand, sees no justification for this break and marks the unit as vv. 9–20.⁸⁴⁶ Since v. 15 begins in the middle of a sentence, there is justification for

⁸⁴⁰ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 259.

⁸⁴¹ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 418.

⁸⁴² Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 229.

⁸⁴³ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 263; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 267.

⁸⁴⁴ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 226; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 434.

⁸⁴⁵ So Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 413; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–29*, 325, 331–2; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 257; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 469.

⁸⁴⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 433.

joining these two segments together. Additionally, v. 15 connects the themes of vv. 9–14 to those of vv. 16–20. In this way, v. 15 functions as a hinge between units. Both parts are further linked by עָמִי (vv. 13, 18). For these reasons, and because there are themes throughout vv. 9–20 pertinent to the topic of this research, the unit will be examined in its entirety.

4.2. Text and Translation

⁹Careless women, rise up and listen to my voice;

complacent daughters, heed my speech.

¹⁰In a little more than a year,
you will tremble, you complacent ones;
for the vintage will fail;
the harvest will not come.

¹¹Tremble, ⁸⁴⁷ you careless ones;
quake, you complacent ones.
Strip and make yourselves bare;
gird sackcloth upon your loins.

¹²Wail⁸⁴⁸ upon your breasts,
upon⁸⁴⁹ the lovely fields,
upon the fruitful vine.

¹³Upon the ground of my people,
thorns and briars will come up;
yes, upon all the joyous houses and exulted town.

¹⁴For the fortress will be deserted,
the noisy city abandoned;
the hill and the watchtower will become
dens forever,

נָשִׁים שְׁאֵנָנוֹת קִמְנָה שְׁמַעְנָה קוּלִי⁹

בָּנוֹת בְּטָחוֹת הָאֲזָנָה אִמְרָתִי

יָמִים עַל-שָׁנָה¹⁰

תִּרְגַּזְנָה בְּטָחוֹת

כִּי כָלָה בָּצִיר

אֶסֶף בְּלִי יָבוֹא

חֲרָדוּ שְׁאֵנָנוֹת¹¹

רְגַזְנָה בְּטָחוֹת

פִּשְׁטָה וְעָרָה

וְחִגְוָרָה עַל-חֲלָצִים

עַל-שִׁדִּים סִפְדִּים¹²

עַל-שִׁדֵּי-חֶמֶד

עַל-גֶּפֶן פְּרִיָּה

עַל אֲדָמַת עָמִי¹³

קוֹץ שְׁמִיר תַּעֲלָה

כִּי עַל-כָּל-בֵּיתִי מְשׁוֹשׁ קָרְיָה עֲלִיזָה

כִּי-אַרְמוֹן נָטַשׁ¹⁴

הַמִּן עִיר עֲזָב

עָפָל וּבַחַן הָיָה בְּעַד מְעָרוֹת עַד-עוֹלָם

⁸⁴⁷ “Tremble” is masculine plural, which contrasts with the other third feminine singular imperatives. Oswalt suggests this is indicative of a command for all people, not just the women. See *Isaiah 1–39*, 582. The *BHS* refers to the Syriac, which proposes 2nd feminine plural.

⁸⁴⁸ Masculine plural participle. The *BHS* reads a feminine participle. The *LXX* reads the action as “smite,” which may relate to the practice of beating breasts while mourning. This concept is explored below.

⁸⁴⁹ “Upon” was chosen here and in the next line to refer to the action of beating, an action of mourning.

the delight of wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks.

¹⁵Until a spirit is poured upon us from on high,
the wilderness becomes a fertile field⁸⁵⁰
and the fertile field becomes a forest.
¹⁶Then justice will dwell in the wilderness
and righteousness will dwell in the fertile field.⁸⁵¹

¹⁷The work of righteousness will be peace
and the effect of righteousness will be
quietness and trust forever.
¹⁸My people will live in peaceful dwelling
places,
in secure homes, and in quiet resting
places. ¹⁹And when hail⁸⁵² comes down on
the forest
and the city will be brought low in
humiliation. ²⁰Happy will you be who sow
beside every stream,
who let the cattle and donkeys roam freely.

מְשׁוֹשׁ פְּרָאִים מְרֵעָה עֶדְרִים

¹⁵עַד-יַעֲרָה עָלֵינוּ רוּחַ מִמָּרוֹם
וְהָיָה מִדְּבַר לִפְרֹמֶל
וְכַרְמֶל (וְהַפְּרֹמֶל) לִיַּעַר יִחְשַׁב
וְשָׁכֵן בַּמִּדְבָּר מִשְׁפָּט¹⁶
וְצִדְקָה בַּפְּרֹמֶל יִתְּשֵׁב

¹⁷וְהָיָה מַעֲשֵׂה הַצְּדָקָה שָׁלוֹם
וְעִבְדַּת הַצְּדָקָה הַשְׁקֵט וְבִטָּח
עַד-עוֹלָם
וְיָשֵׁב עִמִּי בְּנוֹה שָׁלוֹם¹⁸
וּבְמִשְׁכָּנוֹת מְבֹטָחִים וּבְמִנְחוֹת
שְׁאֲנֹת
וּבְרֹד בְּרֹדֶת הַיַּעַר¹⁹
וּבְשִׁפְלָה תִּשְׁפַּל הָעִיר
אֲנֹשִׁיכֶם זֶרְעֵי עַל-כָּל-מִים²⁰
מִשְׁלַחֵי רֶגֶל-הַשּׁוֹר וְהַחֲמוֹר

4.3. Themes and Motifs

4.3.1. Humanity's Effect on the NHC

The oracle begins by addressing the women in Israel's society who are ignorant of or apathetic about the devastation their actions have caused. The "women" and "daughter" references most likely include Israel as a whole, although the reason for confronting a small representation of the population, let alone female addressees, is unclear.⁸⁵³ Wildberger translates נָשִׁאן as "carefree" and בִּטְחוֹ as "gullible," implying the women are not aware of

⁸⁵⁰ Or Carmel.

⁸⁵¹ Or Carmel.

⁸⁵² Both the LXX and Targums read "hail." Other translations treat בָּרַד as a misspelling of יָרַד ("it will go down"). See, for instance, the RSV. This is explored in more detail below.

⁸⁵³ See similar references to women in Amos 6:1; Jer 6:26; Zech 1:15. The pronouns throughout vv. 11–12 fluctuate between male and female, making the addressees difficult to determine. Beuken argues the prophet is addressing Israel as a whole based upon the language of "my people" in v. 13; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah, Volume II: Isaiah's Chapters 28–39* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 200.

their looming judgement.⁸⁵⁴ Consistent with the NRSVue, Kaiser and Sweeney translate the two adjectives as “at ease” and “complacent,” respectively.⁸⁵⁵ The text gives two interpretive possibilities of women who are either ignorant or apathetic of their fate. Nevertheless, both interpretations imply that the women, representing Israel, do not acknowledge their sin or the effect their sin has on the NHC.

4.3.2 The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

This naivete or complacency has dire effects on both God’s people and the NHC. The judgement oracle distributes the destruction between Israel’s civic and agricultural spheres (vv. 14–15). The salvation oracle also envisions parallels between the renewal of these spheres (vv. 16–20). Together, the judgement and salvation oracles form mirroring chiastic structures. The judgement oracle begins with the desolation of the fields and vineyards (vv. 10b, 12–13a) then moves to the city (vv. 13b–14b), before shifting focus back to the fields once more (vv. 14c–15). In the same way, the salvation oracle highlights the restoration of the NHC (v. 16) before shifting to the city (v. 18) and then concluding with the NHC (vv. 19–20). Placed side-by-side, the judgement and salvation oracles form the following chiastic structure:

- A. Desolation of the NHC (vv. 10b, 12–13a)
- B. Desolation of humanity (vv. 13b–14b)
- C. Desolation of the NHC (vv. 14c–15)
- C.’ Restoration of the NHC (v. 16)
- B.’ Restoration of humanity (v. 18)

⁸⁵⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 250. See the similar usage of שָׁאֵן in Isa 33:30; Joel 21:23; and בָּטוּחַ in Judg 18:17.

⁸⁵⁵ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–29*, 325; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 411. See the similar usage of שָׁאֵן in Ps 123:4; Job 12:5; Zech 1:15. See Isa 3:16–26 and Amos 6:1 for additional examples of prophetic accusations against complacent or arrogant women.

A.' Restoration of the NHC (vv. 19–20)

The passage alludes to the NHC more often than humanity and also places the NHC's desolation and restoration within the centre of the chiasm, thus further emphasising the theme. This sequence gives the NHC prominence throughout the oracles and implies the people and the NHC are united in both their judgement and their salvation.

Similarly, the women are invited to mirror the desolation of the NHC by stripping and beating themselves in vv. 11–12. Just as the vineyards are stripped of their harvest (v. 11), the women are instructed to “strip” themselves. Although the MT does not include שָׂק (sackcloth), the imagery suggests the stripping of clothing for mourning (v. 12).⁸⁵⁶ Specifically, the women are commanded to “wail” or “beat” upon their breasts and upon the fields (v. 12).⁸⁵⁷ The words “breasts” (שִׁדִּים) and “field” (שָׂדֵה; שִׁדִּי in the text) have a similar sound, suggesting an intentional play on words.⁸⁵⁸ These words further link humanity with the NHC. The women's cause of lament is the failure of the harvest, which is linked to the devastation of human dwellings in the city.⁸⁵⁹ It is unclear what has caused the harvest to fail, but the devastation could be a result of war.⁸⁶⁰ Another explanation is the hail in v. 19. Both effects of “beating” upon the NHC link the women's response with the state of the NHC.

The locations where human power is concentrated are destroyed and given to wild and domestic animals (v. 14). Thus, while human sin negatively affects the NHC, the removal of human influence in the land provides care for the animals. Wild donkeys and cattle take up residence in the human areas with “delight” (v. 14). That the hill and watchtower become

⁸⁵⁶ The LLX includes “sackcloth,” as do several English translations (NRSVue, RSV, NASB, ESV, to name a few).

⁸⁵⁷ Women also beat their breasts as a mourning ritual in Nah 2:7.

⁸⁵⁸ The similarity has prompted Wildberger to translate both instances as “fields.” See *Isaiah 28–39*, 244–5.

⁸⁵⁹ This same link between the NHC and an unnamed city is evident in 24:4–13. The cessation of joy in 32:11–12 is also similar to 24:11.

⁸⁶⁰ So Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 330.

“empty spaces” (“dens” in NRSVue) may imply the invasion of dangerous and wild animals.

Humanity is punished for their wickedness, and in response, the NHC prospers.

4.3.3 Eschatological Implications

4.3.3.1 Eschatological Renewal of the NHC

Just as the fates of both humanity and the NHC are interrelated, so is their collective salvation. The turning point in the passage is in v. 15, where the oracle declares the pouring out of the spirit prompts the judgement’s end. Several have noted the presence of God’s spirit is a characteristic of eschatological writing.⁸⁶¹ In the very least, this image is connected to salvation.⁸⁶² This empowerment of the spirit is the catalyst for a new world order characterised by the spirit’s gifts of justice and righteousness (v. 16). The result is the fertility of the NHC. In fact, the NHC is the first to be renewed (v. 15b).

Justice comes to the wilderness (vv. 15–16), a realm which had been previously infested by briars and thorns, two symbols of infertility (v. 13). The transformation of the wilderness to a fruitful field is the opposite of the prophet’s pronouncement in Jer 4:26 (cf. Isa 51:3). The language in v. 19 is obscure; translations either include or omit the hail imagery.⁸⁶³ Either way, the forest imagery suggests land unsuitable for sowing and planting. Thus, the removal of the forest implies a return of fertile land capable of cultivation.⁸⁶⁴ The forest imagery in v. 19 contrasts with the imagery in v. 15, where a forest is presented as a

⁸⁶¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 433; Childs, *Isaiah*, 241. See similar language in Isa 65:13–14; Ezek 37:4, 9–10; Joel 3:1 [2:28]. Wildberger, on the other hand, argues the passage does not contain the eschatological terms expected of prophetic literature, such as “on that day”; *Isaiah 28–39*, 260. The lack of this conventional phraseology does not make the content any less eschatological in nature.

⁸⁶² Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–29*, 335.

⁸⁶³ The Vulgate, Targums, and Syriac include the reference to hail (cf. NIV, JPS, KJV). Hail is a divine judgement in Isa 28:2, 17; 30:30. Other translations (NRSV, Ranakh, RSV, NJB) translate it as “the forest will go down.” The NRSVue translates it as “the forest will disappear completely.”

⁸⁶⁴ Kaiser, on the other hand, argues the forest and the city in v. 19 are symbols for Israel’s enemies; *Isaiah 13–39*, 335–6. See 10:18–19, 33–34; 30:30 for forest imagery and 25:2; 27:10 for city imagery. Since there have been no references to Israel’s enemies in this oracle, this connection seems unlikely.

desirable symbol of fertility.⁸⁶⁵ In contrast with the infertility imagery in v. 19, Wildberger suggests the forest in v. 15 connotes a significant source of water.⁸⁶⁶ The destruction affects both rural (forest) and urban (city) settings. Perhaps, with the erosion of the infertile forest, the city is brought down in humiliation via the removal of her walls. The peaceful result suggests a protective wall is no longer necessary for God's people. Rather, the "quietness" and "rest" associated with rural life extends to the people's dwelling places.

4.3.3.2 Eschatological Partnership

Justice and righteousness, two virtues demonstrative of YHWH's human society (see v. 1), come to the wilderness and fields first (v. 16). The text is unclear whether justice and righteousness are the results of human actions or simply a resultative state first initiated by the spirit. Since the broader oracle specifically mentions justice and righteousness as virtues enacted by rulers (v. 1), it is likely these virtues here in vv. 16–17 are tied to human actions, particularly those of a ruler or governmental system.⁸⁶⁷ The specification that the spirit comes "upon us" (v. 15) supports this view; the spirit moves humanity toward justice and righteousness, which in turn affects the cosmological order. In biblical thought, fruitfulness is often linked to human righteousness (Isa 11:1–10; Ps 72). The "dwell" language for justice and righteousness (v. 16) connects to the language that humanity will "dwell" in peace (v. 18). Wildberger interprets נוה (often translated "peaceful habitation") as "meadow" or a pasturing field, a space that extends beyond the human realm to include the NHC.⁸⁶⁸ Moreover, the repetition of "peace," "secure," and "quiet" in vv. 17–18 contrasts starkly with

⁸⁶⁵ It is unclear why this oracle uses the same imagery in opposing manners.

⁸⁶⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 261.

⁸⁶⁷ Childs notes this connection between fertility and human rule; *Isaiah 1–39*, 241.

⁸⁶⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 263.

the frenzy of the women wailing in vv. 11–12. Thus, these two virtues benefit both the NHC and humanity.

At the close of the oracle, the prophet invites humanity to continue the process of instilling life by sowing seeds and caring for animals (v. 20). This parallels v. 14, where the locations of human power became habitations for wild donkeys and cattle. The Torah often pairs donkeys and oxen together, especially with laws that govern their intentional care (Exod 21:33; 22:3, 4, 12; Deut 5:14; 22:4, 10). The imagery presents a world in which crops flourish and farm animals can graze. Both domestic donkeys and wild donkeys live together without fear. Kaiser concludes that this closing image prompts listeners “to consider the difference between the future of our salvation which is in the hands of God, and the possible improvements in human society which we are called upon to make.”⁸⁶⁹ This final imagery of humanity continuing the work first enacted by the spirit urges God’s people to life and vitality, results typically associated with God’s spirit (Ps 104:30–25; Isa 31:3).

4.4. Summary

The chiastic structure of the judgement sequence in 32:9–14 and the salvation sequence in 32:16–20 produces a prominent focus upon the NHC. It also links both the destruction and redemption of the NHC with those of humanity. This connection is further evidenced by the command to the women to mirror the NHC’s desolation by stripping and beating themselves in vv. 11–12. The infertile images of thorns and briars reveal the effect of humanity’s sins upon the NHC, but the removal of humanity from their urban settings creates habitable places for wild animals (v. 14). The turning point in the passage, v. 15, indicates a movement toward salvation. The NHC is the first recipient of this salvific act. The

⁸⁶⁹ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 330.

spirit's gifts of righteousness and justice produce fertility for the NHC. The wilderness is renewed, providing sustenance for both wild and domestic animals (vv. 14, 20). The final image presents a world where humanity dwells amongst the NHC in peace.

5. ISAIAH 33:7–9

5.1. Introduction

After the eschatological vision in Isa 32:9–20, First Isaiah resumes the woe oracle structure of chs. 28–33. A new woe oracle begins in 33:1, initiating a distinct unit (33:1–24) most scholars agree is loosely unified.⁸⁷⁰ Its structure suggests a “prophetic liturgy,” of which the lament in vv. 7–9 is part.⁸⁷¹ After declaring judgement on an unnamed “destroyer” (v. 1) and pleading for salvation (vv. 2–6), the oracle shifts to a new section of lament designated by הָיָה. A divine response follows the lament in vv. 10–13, marked by the divine messenger formula. Although vv. 7–9 are closely tied to vv. 10–13, the lament in vv. 7–9 can be isolated for examination.⁸⁷² Brueggemann calls vv. 7–9 a “complaint proper unit.”⁸⁷³

Tull notes the presence of all perfect verbs in vv. 7–9, even though most translations render them present tense.⁸⁷⁴ She concludes this shift to past tense designates a shift in thought, and the particle (הָיָה) can highlight an opposing viewpoint in a debate or to issue a counter-argument.⁸⁷⁵ Although the sequence of events in Isa 33:1–24 is difficult to determine, it is plausible vv. 7–9 is a response to vv. 1–6. Either way, vv. 7–9 seems to

⁸⁷⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–39*, 280; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 264; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 344; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 570.

⁸⁷¹ Gunkel cited in Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 548; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 264.

⁸⁷² Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 163; Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 262; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 595. Contra Wildberger who treats vv. 7–24 as one unit; *Isaiah 28–39*, 280.

⁸⁷³ Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 262.

⁸⁷⁴ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 487. The NRSVue, NASB, NIV, ESV translate them as present tense verbs. CEB translates all the verbs as past tense.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

suggest a divinely-established pattern in the cosmos which applies to this context and beyond.⁸⁷⁶

The absence of historical markers and proper names has prompted a wide range of suggested dates. Seitz and Oswalt propose the context of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and assign the pericope a pre-exilic date.⁸⁷⁷ However, the consensus favours a post-exilic date.⁸⁷⁸ Wildberger notes the similarities in vocabulary, themes, and style between ch. 33 and chs. 24–27 and argues for a late date.⁸⁷⁹ Similarly, Hayes argues the reference to הַשָּׂרֹן (“the Sharon”) in v. 9 is an indication of a late period, as the name appears exclusively in post-exilic sources.⁸⁸⁰ Finally, Brueggemann concludes the language reflects an “apocalyptic, transhistorical mode of hope” which is indicative of post-exilic thought.⁸⁸¹

Several have noted more similarities between Isa 33:1–24 and Isa 24:1–20. Beuken argues that while ch. 33 and chs. 24–27 were not originally written in conjunction with each other, the two units are semantically connected.⁸⁸² He suggests ch. 33 exhibits evidence that a redactor tied the two units together.⁸⁸³ One of the noteworthy ways these two units are closely related is via shared vocabulary. Specifically, אָבֵל אָמַל mirrors the language in 24:4, 7. In 33:9, the NHC mourns and languishes; in 24:4 the NHC mourns and languishes, followed by the languishing of the whole world and the heavens. Further, 33:8) הִפָּרַר בְּרִית (is comparable to 24:5 and חָפַר (“shamed”; 33:9) parallels 24:23. Because of this similar

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid, 487.

⁸⁷⁷ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 207; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 595.

⁸⁷⁸ So Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 265; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 165. Kaiser assigns the text to the Hellenistic period; *Isaiah 13–39*, 341–2.

⁸⁷⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 271.

⁸⁸⁰ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 163.

⁸⁸¹ Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 259.

⁸⁸² Willem A. M. Beuken, “Yhwh’s Sovereign Rule and His Adoration on Mount Zion: A Comparison of Poetic Visions in Isaiah 24–27, 52, and 66,” in *Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, eds. A. Joseph Everson and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 92.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

vocabulary, Wildberger argues the covenant in 33:8 must be read in tandem with the covenant in 24:5.⁸⁸⁴

Further conceptual parallels exist between 33:7–9 and 24:1–23. In 33:7, the people cry out in the streets; in 24:11 the people also cry out in the streets, specifically for wine. Desolation is described in the highways (33:7) and in the city (24:12). In 33:8, traveling ceases (שבת); in 24:8 the instruments cease (שבת). Hayes observes that both passages have a trifold list of actions that lead to the upheaval of the NHC: in 33:8 the covenant is broken, the cities disregarded, and no one is respected while in 24:5 the people disobey the laws, violate the statutes, and break the everlasting covenant.⁸⁸⁵ Finally, Tull concludes the climax of Isa 24:1–23 is YHWH’s reign on Zion (v. 23), which is consistent with the climax in Isa 33:10–13.⁸⁸⁶ Of course, similar vocabulary does not correlate to similar usage. The shared words are used in two different literary, and possibly historical, contexts; they sometimes communicate different meanings. For instance, Isa 33:1–24 anticipates YHWH’s salvation while Isa 24:1–20 anticipates YHWH’s devastation.

5.1. Text and Translation

⁷Look, the people of Ariel⁸⁸⁷ cried outside;
the envoys of peace will bitterly weep.

הֵן אֲרָאִים צָעֲקוּ חֲצָה⁷
מִלְאֲכֵי שְׁלוֹם מֵרַבְּכִיּוֹן

⁸⁸⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 283–4.

⁸⁸⁵ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 175.

⁸⁸⁶ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 488.

⁸⁸⁷ Meaning uncertain. Tanakh, NJB: “Ariel”; cf. Isa 29:1–2. 1QIsaa reads אֲרָא לֵם, “I will appear to them.” The LXX reads φῶβος, from ירא rather than ראה. KJV, NRSV, NIV: “heroes” or “warriors.” Vulgate: “watchers.”

⁸The highways were deserted,
the traveller has abandoned the road.
He broke the treaty,
he despised the cities,⁸⁸⁸
he disregarded all people.

נִשְׁמּוּ מִסְלֹת⁸
שְׁבִית עֶבֶר אֶרֶץ
הִפָּר בְּרִית
מֵאִס עָרִים
לֹא חָשַׁב אָנוּשׁ

⁹The earth mourned⁸⁸⁹ and languished;
Lebanon was ashamed and withered away;
Sharon was like a desert,
and Bashan and Carmel shook off their
leaves.

אֲבַל אֲמָלְלָהּ אֶרֶץ⁹
הַחֲפִיר לִבְנוֹן קָמַל הָיָה
הַשָּׂרֹן כְּעֶרְבָה וְנִעַר בָּשָׁן וְכַרְמֶל

5.3. Themes and Motifs

5.3.1 The Role of the NHC

The text gives no indication of divine agency; the NHC acts of her own volition.

Despite YHWH's appearance in vv. 1–6 and vv. 10–24, YHWH is strangely missing from vv. 7–9. The absence of the conjunction **לִּכְן**, which frequently denotes divine action, further indicates the lack of YHWH's activity. However, since **לִּכְן**, **עַל-כֵּן**, and **כִּי** are not present in v. 9, unlike other passages that describe the NHC's action of mourning (Hos 4:3; Isa 24:5), there is also no indication of a cause-effect relationship.⁸⁹⁰ Does the land mourn and dry up because of humanity's actions or in tandem with these actions? Lebanon's passive verb ("be ashamed") is also unclear: who or what is causing this shame? The source of shame could come from either the people who broke the treaty in v. 8 or YHWH, despite his otherwise absence in the passage. Because humanity is responsible for the other verbs in v. 8 ("broke," "despised," "disregarded"), humanity's shame of Lebanon is a possibility. However, since the shame is mentioned in the context of Lebanon's infertility, an image of "stripping" (explored below), perhaps the shame comes from her lack of covering. This latter reason is most likely.

⁸⁸⁸ MT: "cities." 1QIsa^a: "witnesses."

⁸⁸⁹ Since this verb is used similarly to its previous occurrences in Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, "mourned" is preferable.

⁸⁹⁰ Compare, for instance, to the clear cause-and-effect relationship in Hos 4:1–3.

5.3.2 Humanity's Effect on the NHC

Although there is no explicit link between the actions of humanity and the effect they have on the NHC, a connection is nevertheless implied.⁸⁹¹ In the very least, the sequence of the NHC's action following those of humanity associates the two together; although humanity and the NHC are distinct, they are linked in both their suffering and their yearning for YHWH's deliverance. The structure of the pericope moves from humanity's situation (vv. 7–8a), to the description of humanity's sin (v. 8b), to the NHC's situation (v.9). The centralisation of sin connects to both humanity and the NHC; in this way, these spheres are paralleled and linked together. Hayes argues the repetition of *אמל*, *אבל*, and *חפר* form a distinct connection between humanity and the NHC.⁸⁹² Oswalt observes a contrast between fruitfulness and barrenness in the pericope and links these two states to human activity: trust in YHWH results in fertility, while self-reliance results with infertility.⁸⁹³ Hayes, too, describes the results on the NHC as “external signs of crisis” caused by humanity's sin.⁸⁹⁴

The sin in the centre of the pericope is three-fold: “He broke the treaty, he despised the cities, he disregarded all people” (v. 8b).⁸⁹⁵ This particular treaty is ambiguous, suggesting a generalised, universal expectation of values.⁸⁹⁶ Wildberger connects it to the everlasting covenant in Isa 24:5 and suggests it be interpreted in the same manner as “staying faithful to the basic norms of human life in community.”⁸⁹⁷ While Isa 24:5 does employ much of the same vocabulary as Isa 33:9 (see introductory notes above), the

⁸⁹¹ So Dempsey, *Hope*, 83–4; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 174. Contra Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 262.

⁸⁹² Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 167.

⁸⁹³ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 597.

⁸⁹⁴ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 169.

⁸⁹⁵ The subject of these verbs is unclear. Blenkinsopp proposes the subject is Hezekiah and the treaty refers to his agreement with Assyria in 701 BCE; *Isaiah* 1–39, 440.

⁸⁹⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 283; Clements, *Isaiah* 1–39, 257; Kaiser, *Isaiah* 13–39, 435; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 169. Blenkinsopp, on the other hand, thinks the covenant refers to Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria; *Isaiah* 1–39, 440.

⁸⁹⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah* 28–39, 283.

covenant in 33:9 is not specified as “everlasting.” The text also does not specify whether this treaty is with YHWH or humans. Further, there is no link between this treaty and the violation of laws or decrees (cf. Isa 24:5). Instead, the violation of this treaty involves the disrespect of cities and people.⁸⁹⁸

5.3.3. The NHC’s Response

Although the catalyst remains unclear, the NHC responds in v. 9 by mourning (אבל) and wasting away (אמל). This pairing of אבל with אמל is also evident in Hos 4:3 and Isa 24:4, 7, where the NHC responds directly to humanity’s sins. In fact, the NHC’s response in Isa 33:9 follows the two-part structure of Hos 4:1–3, where a mourning reaction follows humanity’s actions. Kaiser calls this reaction “nature’s response to the violence of the destroyer.”⁸⁹⁹ As indicated above, while there is no explicit cause-effect connection between humanity’s actions and the NHC’s response, their interrelatedness is implied. Humanity’s situation and the NHC’s situation are linked. Clements views this description of the NHC as the conditions after Babylon’s devastation of Jerusalem; both humanity and the NHC were affected by this destruction.⁹⁰⁰

The response of mourning links the NHC with humanity (v. 7). Mourning is a signal the normal rhythms of life have ceased (שבת) because of the new, devastating reality. This cessation of everyday activity is often an indication of divine punishment.⁹⁰¹ Tromp observes ארץ sometimes functions as a synonym for Sheol (Num 16:30–33; Job 10:21, 22; Ps 139:15; Isa 44:23).⁹⁰² If ארץ has this dual image in v. 9, the human cries in v. 7 could be understood as

⁸⁹⁸ The MT lists “cities” as the ones being despised; some translations favour the word “witnesses” based upon the DSS. See also Isa 43:10, 12; 44:8, where the prophetic voice refers to “witnesses.”

⁸⁹⁹ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 345.

⁹⁰⁰ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 267.

⁹⁰¹ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 57–8; Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 165.

⁹⁰² Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, 23–4; cf. Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 168.

inhabitants of ארץ /Sheol. Thus, ארץ simultaneously houses the dead and mourns for the dead.⁹⁰³ Although interesting, the rest of the text does not give any indication ארץ should be understood in such a way. In fact, the specific geographical locations external to Sheol suggest ארץ be interpreted as the NHC. Yet, the source of the NHC's mourning is unclear; is she mourning in response to humanity's situation, her own situation, or perhaps both?

As a result of her mourning, four specific geographical locations “waste away” and dry up. Lebanon withers, Sharon becomes like the desert (שָׁרֹן כְּעֵרְבָה), and Bashan and Carmel “shake off” their leaves, imagery reminiscent of the practice of stripping in mourning rituals (v. 9). This echoes the imagery in Isa 32:11–12, where the women were commanded to strip their clothes and expose themselves bare. These four areas were renowned for their fertility and appear together in various combinations within the prophetic corpus (Isa 2:13; Jer 50:19; Mic 7:14; Nah 1:4). Together, they function as an expansive imagery of fertility. Three of the four (Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel) appear in Isa 35:2 as a counter image to the infertility in 33:9. Geographically, the four locations span each direction: Lebanon in the north, Sharon in the south, Bashan in the east, and Carmel in the west. The pairings (north with south; east with west) contrast directionally. The wide span suggests the pervasiveness of infertility in the NHC. The word “ashamed” (חָפָר) used in reference to Lebanon also appears in Isa 24:23 in reference to the moon and the sun (cf. Zeph 2:11).⁹⁰⁴ Perhaps in the context of 33:9 this word refers to Lebanon's “shame” because she is stripped “naked.” Regardless, the metaphor signals an effect of drought in Israel's most fertile locations.

5.4. Summary

⁹⁰³ Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 166.

⁹⁰⁴ In his reading of Isa 24:1–24 as a *Chaoskampf*, Johnson argues the celestial bodies in vv. 21–23 are symbols for pagan gods; *From Chaos*, 55.

Isaiah 33:7–9 presents an interrelated world in which humanity and the NHC are connected in their collective suffering. The pericope’s structure links both humanity’s suffering (vv. 7–8a) and the NHC’s suffering (v. 9) to humanity’s sin (v. 8), although the text is not explicit as to the extent and scope of this link. There is no causal link; neither is there any indication YHWH exercises YHWH’s divine agency in the mitigation of this punishment. Strangely, while YHWH is present in both the preceding passage (vv. 2–6) and the forthcoming passage (vv. 10–24), YHWH does not appear in vv. 7–9. Instead, the NHC acts on her own accord.

The NHC acts by mourning and languishing, which mirrors humanity’s grief in v. 7. This creates a reaction in the most fertile locations in Israel: Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan, and Carmel all dry up and “shake off” their leaves. That these four locations span four different directions evokes imagery of a widespread curse. The effect of the metaphor highlights an infertile NHC who is linked with humanity in her grief and desolation. This text does not include an eschatological vision, and the salvation oracle that follows does not include the NHC (vv. 17–24). Yet, this passage demonstrates the NHC’s prominent role of judgement, which will be contrasted with her role of salvation in the other selected texts. Isaiah 33:7–9 also links to Isa 35:1–10, which will be analysed below in relationship with Isa 34:1–17.

6. ISAIAH 34:1–17

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1 The Unit of Isaiah 34:1–35:10

Isaiah 34:1–35:10 closes this study on First Isaiah and contains pervasive, eschatological themes related to the NHC. Because of its consistent vocabulary and style,

along with its frequent connections to earlier Isaianic material, the consensus is to treat 34:1–35:10 as a unified section.⁹⁰⁵ Chapters 34 and 35 share a similar structure, contrasting the judgement of Edom (ch. 34) with the salvation of Judah (ch. 35). The imagery for Edom also contrasts with the imagery of Judah: Edom changes from settled land to a deserted wasteland while Judah changes from a dry desert to a vibrant garden. In these ways, Edom is the foil for Judah. This is congruous with ways in which the rest of the Hebrew Bible portrays Edom as the antithesis to Israel.⁹⁰⁶

Since the chapters exhibit noticeable continuity, it is probable they share a common authorship.⁹⁰⁷ What is debated, however, is how ch. 34 relates to what precedes it and how ch. 35 relates to what follows it. Beuken, for instance, views ch. 35 as a bridge between the prophetic oracles in chs. 32–34 and ch. 40.⁹⁰⁸ Marlow and Oswalt view chs. 34–35 as a conclusion to the prophetic material in First Isaiah before its shift to the narrative material in chs. 36–39.⁹⁰⁹ Tull identifies three separate “hinge” passages that connect to chs. 1–32 and chs. 40–66. Out of these three passages, chs. 34–35 serve as the “middle hinge.”⁹¹⁰ Several have noted the close connection chs. 34–35 have with the OAN in chs. 13–27, while others have identified chs. 34–35 as containing points of connection to chs. 40–55.⁹¹¹

6.2.2 The Unit of Isaiah 34:1–17

⁹⁰⁵ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 271–2; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 236.

⁹⁰⁶ See the contrast between Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau) in Gen 25:23; Num 20:14–21; Ezek 35:1–36:38 (35:1–15 in particular) and Mal 1:2–3.

⁹⁰⁷ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 272.

⁹⁰⁸ Beuken, *Isaiah*, 283–8.

⁹⁰⁹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 226; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 606. Oswalt calls chs. 34–35 the “climax” of this section (606).

⁹¹⁰ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 503.

⁹¹¹ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 271; Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 606–7; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 432; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 271; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 503.

While Isa 34:1–17 is a distinct unit, its nature is disputed. Some, such as Kaiser and Clements, view this oracle as apocalyptic.⁹¹² Wildberger, however, refuses this characterisation.⁹¹³ Marlow argues that an apocalyptic designation is “misleading.”⁹¹⁴ Indeed, Isa 34:1–17 does lack many of the features characteristic of apocalypses, such as heavily symbolic language.⁹¹⁵ Such symbolic language would impact the interpretation of the passage.⁹¹⁶ The text does, on the other hand, contain the features consistent with eschatology, such as visions of new future realities encased within mytho-poetic language.

Similar to the themes in chs. 13–27, the passage begins in vv. 1–4 with judgement against all nations of the world before focusing on judgement against Edom (vv. 5–17). It is uncertain why the oracle specifically targets Edom. Perhaps this concentration is for historical purposes, as Edom may have aided Babylon in Judah’s defeat (Obadiah; Jer 49:7–22; Ezek 25:12–17). However, several other nations contributed to Judah’s defeat and do not receive the same level of animosity as the prophets reserve for Edom. Since other nations, such as the Philistines and Samaritans, also occupied Judah’s land during her exile, Judah’s hatred of Edom cannot be tied solely to their occupation of the land in the sixth century.

Because Edom was not included in the list of nations in the OAN (chs. 13–24), it is possible this nation was reserved to fiercely contrast with Judah’s triumph in ch. 35. In this way, Edom could represent all nations opposed to YHWH’s rule.⁹¹⁷ The numerous addressees in this oracle (“nations,” “peoples,” “earth,” and “world” in v. 1) suggest a broader identity than just Edom.⁹¹⁸ Ben Zvi argues Edom was specifically chosen by the prophets because of

⁹¹² Kaiser, *Isaiah 12–39*, 353; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 271. Clements describes it as “proto-apocalyptic” (271).

⁹¹³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 317–8.

⁹¹⁴ See footnote in Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 226.

⁹¹⁵ See Koch, *Rediscovery*, 23.

⁹¹⁶ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 345.

⁹¹⁷ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 610.

⁹¹⁸ James Muilenburg, “The Literary Character of Isaiah 34,” *JBL* 59 (1940): 340.

the “brother” motif in Gen 25:19–34; this familial theme contrasts Judah’s favour with the other nations.⁹¹⁹ Assis continues this idea by suggesting Edom’s distinctiveness in the prophetic corpus spoke to the Judean fear that YHWH may have rejected Judah as the covenantal people and selected other nations, represented by Judah’s “brother.”⁹²⁰ Most likely, Edom functions as an archetype, much like Seitz’s conclusion that Edom is a “representative type for all the nations that merit God’s judgement.”⁹²¹ Oswalt concludes similarly, suggesting vv. 1–17 portrays universal judgement, of which Edom is an example.⁹²² Raabe argues Edom in particular was chosen to represent all the nations because its name has a similar sound to blood (דָּם), a key word in the Isa 34:1–17 oracle (vv. 3, 6–7).⁹²³

Tull observes the ways in which Isaiah presents Edom as a tenacious adversary to Israel, even persisting beyond Babylon’s shadow.⁹²⁴ Babylon first appears in ch. 13 and is last referenced in chs. 47 and 52. Edom, however, first appears in chs. 11 and 34 and is last referenced in ch. 63. In this way, Edom literarily outlasts Babylon and was perhaps viewed as more threatening.⁹²⁵ Tull remarks, “while Babylon represented the continuing problem of empirical threat, Edom’s status as Judah’s ‘brother’ sets it up to represent the more insidious danger of treacherous kin.”⁹²⁶ If Edom does represent the neighbouring powers who challenged YHWH’s rule in the post-exilic period, their threat to Israel did indeed outlast that of Babylon.

⁹¹⁹ Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 239–40.

⁹²⁰ Elie Assis, “Why Edom? On the Hostility Towards Jacob’s Brother in Prophetic Sources,” *VT* 56 (2006): 14.

⁹²¹ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 237.

⁹²² Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 607.

⁹²³ Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah*, AB (Cumberland, RI: Yale University Press, 1996), 32. Beuken also notes this word play at work; *Isaiah*, 296.

⁹²⁴ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 514.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Isaiah 34:1–17 has several notable similarities to Isa 13:1–22.⁹²⁷ In particular, both chapters end their oracles with a pronouncement that wild, unclean animals will occupy the devastated remains of the respective nations of Babylon (ch. 13) and Edom (ch. 34).⁹²⁸ The significant parallels between these two passages will be noted throughout this study.

6.2. Text and Translation

¹Come near, nations, to listen;
people, pay attention!
Let the earth listen and all that fills it;
the world, and all that comes from it.

קָרְבוּ גוֹיִם לִשְׁמָע¹
וְלְאֻמִּים הַקְשִׁיבוּ
תִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ וּמְלֵאָהּ
תִּבֶּל וְכָל-צִצְאָאֶיהָ

²For YHWH's wrath is upon all the nations
and fury is upon all their hosts.
He has doomed⁹²⁹ them,
he has delivered them to the slaughter.

כִּי קֶצֶף לִיהוָה עַל-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם²
וְחֵמָה עַל-כָּל-צְבָאָם
הֵחֲרִימָם נִתְּנָם לַטֶּבֶחַ

³Their slain will be sent out
and the stench of their corpses will rise.
The mountains will melt from their blood.

וְחִלְלֵיהֶם יִשְׁלְכוּ³
וּפְגִרֵיהֶם יַעֲלֶה בְּאֲשָׁם
וְנִמְסוּ הָרִים מִדָּמָם
וְנִמְקוּ כָל-צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם⁴
וְנִגְלוּ כִסְפֵּר הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְכָל-צְבָאָם יָבוֹל
כְּנֹבֵל עֵלֶה מִגֶּפֶן
וְכִנְבֶּלֶת מִתְאֵנָה

⁴All the hosts of heaven will rot⁹³⁰
and the heavens will be rolled up like a
scroll.
All their host will wither
like a leaf withers from a vine
or a withering fig tree.

⁹²⁷ Isa 34:1–17 also has connections to Isa 27:1–6, particularly in parallel imagery. Because of these parallels, Seitz argues Edom is an example of the judgement oracle in 27:1–6, citing a form of “inner-biblical exegesis”; *Isaiah* 1–39, 262.

⁹²⁸ While Babylon is identified as the recipient of the judgement (13:1, 17–19), the day of the Lord imagery does not contain references to Babylon. Most references vaguely address “them,” “kingdoms,” etc. Compare, for instance, to Jer 50:1–51:64, where Babylon is mentioned 56 times in 110 verses. This suggests Isa 13:1–22 may have been applied to other nations than only Babylon. See Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 198; Tull, *Isaiah*, 262.

⁹²⁹ This word is used to denote something devoted to YHWH, often via destruction. It can also denote the removal of something from use or function (cf. Lev 27:21).

⁹³⁰ The LXX lacks this phrase and 1QIsa^a reads “the valleys will be split and the host of heaven carried away.” BHS reads “hills” instead of “host of heaven,” perhaps to parallel “mountains” in v. 3.

⁵For my sword⁹³¹ has drunk⁹³² its fill in
 heaven— look, upon Edom it descends;
 upon the people I have set aside to
 judgement. ⁶YHWH has a sword filled with
 blood;
 it drips with fat – the blood of lambs and
 goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams.
 For YHWH has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
 and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
⁷And the wild oxen will fall with them
 and bulls with the powerful.
 And their land will be drunk with blood
 and their soil will be fattened with fat.

⁸For it is a day of vengeance for YHWH,
 a year of reckoning for the controversy⁹³³ of
 Zion.
⁹Her streams will be turned into pitch
 and her soil into brimstone;
 her land will be burning pitch.
¹⁰Night and day she will not be quenched,
 forever her smoke will go up.
 From generation to generation it will be in
 ruins
 and no one will cross through her.

¹¹But the hawk and the hedgehog will
 possess her,
 the owl and the raven will live in her.
 He will give to her a (measuring) line of
 formlessness,
 a plummet of emptiness.⁹³⁴
¹²Her nobles—there is no one there to call it
 a kingdom;
 all her princes will be nothing.⁹³⁵

כִּי-רוֹתֶה בְּשָׁמַיִם חֶרֶב⁵
 הִנֵּה עַל-אֲדוֹם תֵּרֵד
 וְעַל-עַם חֶרְמִי לְמִשְׁפָּט
 חֶרֶב לִיהוָה מְלֵאָה דָם הַדִּשְׁנָה⁶
 מִחֶלֶב מַדָּם כָּרִים וְעֵתוּדִים מִחֶלֶב
 כְּלִיּוֹת אֵילִים כִּי זָבַח לִיהוָה בְּבִצְרָה
 וְטִבַּח גָּדוֹל בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם
 וַיִּרְדּוּ רֵאשִׁימִים עִמָּם⁷
 וּפָרִים עִם-אַבִּירִים
 וְרוֹתֶה אֶרֶצָם מַדָּם
 וְעִפְרָם מִחֶלֶב יִדְשָׁן
 כִּי יוֹם נָקָם לִיהוָה⁸
 שְׁנַת שְׁלוֹמִים לְרִיב צִיּוֹן
 וְנִהְפְּכוּ נַחְלֶיהָ לְזָפֶת⁹
 וְעִפְרָה לְגַפְרִית
 וְהִי־תֶה אֶרֶצָה לְזָפֶת בַּעֲרָה
 לַיְלָה וַיּוֹמֶם לֹא תִכָּבֶה¹⁰
 לְעוֹלָם יַעֲלֶה עֲשָׁנָה
 מִדּוֹר לְדוֹר תִּתְחַרֵּב לְנִצָּח נִצָּחִים
 אֵין עֹבֵר בָּהּ
 וַיִּרְשׁוּהָ קֶאֱת וּקְפוֹד¹¹
 וַיִּנְשׂוּף וְעָרַב יִשְׁכְּנוּ-בָּהּ
 וְנָטָה עָלֶיהָ קוֹ-תֵהווֹ
 וְאַבְנֵי-בָהוּ
 חֲרִיָּה וְאֵין-שֵׁם מְלוֹכָה יִקְרָאוּ¹²
 וְכָל-שָׂרֶיהָ יִהְיוּ אָפֶס

⁹³¹ BHS reads "sword of YHWH."

⁹³² The LXX supports the MT and reads "drunk." 1QIsa reads "is seen" instead of "has drunk." Blenkinsopp also translates it as "is seen"; *Isaiah 1–39*, 448.

⁹³³ Driver offers a translation of "advocate of Zion" based upon the assumption that רִיב is the nomen agentis of צִיר and קִים. See Samuel Rolles Driver, *Isaiah: His Life and Times* (London: James Nisbet, 1888), 55. This is supported by the BHS, which reads לָרֵב, "advocate" or "champion." Pope also demonstrates its function as the nomen agentis and translates it as "controversy." See Marvin Pope, "Isaiah 34 in Relation to Isaiah 35, 40–66," *JB* 71 (1952): 236–7. This use only occurs elsewhere in Isaiah in 41:11.

⁹³⁴ The MT is unclear. The LXX translates this as "a measuring cord of desolation will be cast on her."

⁹³⁵ NRSVue: "They shall name it No Kingdom There."

¹³Thorns will go up in her palace,
thistles and briars her fortresses;
and it will be a settlement for jackals,
a pasture⁹³⁶ for the ostriches.
¹⁴Wildcats will meet with hyenas,
the sair⁹³⁷ will call upon⁹³⁸ his companions,
there lilith⁹³⁹ will linger and she will find for
her a resting place.
¹⁵There the snake will nest, lay, hatch, and
brood under her shadow;
there also will buzzards be gathered,
each with its mate.

¹⁶Earnestly seek from the book of YHWH
and read;
not one of these will be missing,
no woman will visit her companion,
for his mouth has commanded it,
and his breath⁹⁴⁰ has gathered them.
¹⁷He has cast a lot for them
and his hand has divided for them a
measuring line;
forever they will possess it,
from generation to generation they will live
in her.

¹³וְעִלְתָּה אֲרָמְנֶתֶיךָ סִירִים
קִמּוֹשׁ וְחוֹחַ בְּמִבְצָרֶיךָ
וְהִיתָה נִוָּה תַנִּים
חֲצִיר לְבָנוֹת יַעֲנָה
וּפְגָשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת-אֵיִים¹⁴
וְשָׁעִיר עַל-רַעְהוּ יִקְרָא
אֶרֶץ-שָׁם הִרְגִיעָה לִילִית וּמִצָּאָה לָהּ
מְנוּחַ¹⁵ שָׁמָּה קִנְיָה קִפּוֹז וְתַמְלִיט
וּבִקְעָה וְדִגְרָה בְּצִלָּהּ אֶרֶץ-שָׁם נִקְבְּצוּ
דִּיּוֹת אִשָּׁה רְעוּתָהּ
דָּרָשׁוּ מֵעַל-סֵפֶר יְהוָה וּקְרָאוּ¹⁶
אֶחָת מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִעְדְּרָה
אִשָּׁה רְעוּתָהּ לֹא פָקְדוּ
כִּי-פִי הוּא צִוָּה
וְרוּחוֹ הוּא קִבֵּץ
וְהוּא-הַפִּיל לָהֶן גּוֹרֵל¹⁷
וַיְדוּ חִלְקֶתָהּ לָהֶם בִּקּוֹ
עַד-עוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּהָ
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר יִשְׁכְּנוּ-בָּהּ

6.3. Themes and Motifs

6.3.1 Humanity's Effect on the NHC

While the description of YHWH's wrath against the nations in general and Edom in particular is vivid, the text does not specify the distinct sins that have triggered this response of judgement. Nevertheless, the accusations are lobbied against pastoral animals (v. 6), which are often metaphors for human leaders in the prophetic corpus (Isa 16:1; Jer 51:40; Ezek 34:17; 39:18; Zech 10:3).⁹⁴¹ Several of these animals are also used metaphorically by

⁹³⁶ Literally "green grass." LXX: "court."

⁹³⁷ Or satyrs, goats, goat demons.

⁹³⁸ BHS: יִקְרָה ("will meet").

⁹³⁹ Or nighthawk, night demon. 1QIsa reads this creature as plural, which lends further support that it is not a name.

⁹⁴⁰ Or spirit.

⁹⁴¹ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 612; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 205.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel to allude to human slaughter (Jer 51:40; Ezek 39:18). The text assumes sacrificial imagery in its description of judgement against these leaders, resulting with a blood- and fat-soaked land (v. 7).⁹⁴² These two sacrificial rituals take place not in a sacred space but in the profane space of pagan land. In this space, the blood is used to purify the land instead of a temple and the offering meal of fat goes not to the priesthood but to the soil.⁹⁴³ This is dually emphasised by the parallelism of “land” with “soil,” a pairing that constitutes the climax of the poem’s first three strophes.⁹⁴⁴

While the sacred space could be atoned through the cultus, particularly via the placement of blood, the land could not be atoned from humanity’s pollution against her (Lev 18:24–28). An exception, however, is if the atoning blood is the blood of the transgressors (Num 35:33) or if YHWH is the one who atones via judgement (Deut 32:41–43). Both of these atonement actions occur in Isa 34:6: YHWH inflicts judgement upon Edom’s leaders, whose blood in turn cleanses the land. Edom’s sins may not have been committed directly against the NHC, yet Edom’s blood is payment for the ways in which the NHC has been polluted on account of their sins.

6.3.2 The Role of the NHC

The NHC is dually identified as both ארץ and תבל (v. 1) and as הנשמים in (v. 4).⁹⁴⁵ She is included in the summons in v. 1, although her role in the indictment is unclear. In the very least she functions as witness to both the nations’ crimes and Edom’s crimes (cf. Isa 1:2); at

⁹⁴² Similar sacrificial language is used in Jer 46:10, although it does not mention the land receiving the sacrifice nor the sacrificial meal.

⁹⁴³ Tull acknowledges the sacrificial language (blood, fat, kidneys) and Kaiser likens this description to the ritual meal that follows the sacrifice. See Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 507; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 357.

⁹⁴⁴ Muilenburg, “Literary,” 350.

⁹⁴⁵ Isaiah 13:1–21 neither summons nor addresses the NHC, yet ארץ (v. 5) and תבל (v. 11) are also implicated in the judgement.

the most she also functions as judge.⁹⁴⁶ In addition to serving as a witness, the NHC inflicts judgement through her response of rotting (מִקָּק) and withering (נָבַל) in v. 4. In the oracle against Edom's leadership (vv. 5–7), the NHC receives the slaughter's blood and fat. The verbs "be soaked" (רָחַץ) and "make rich" (שָׂבַע) suggest the acceptance of a sacrifice. Perhaps the blood and fat serve as atonement for the previous blood that was shed in the land, as was explored above (cf. Num 35:33; Deut 32:41–43). Thus drunk on blood and engorged with fat, the NHC's actions shift toward a more passive role in vv. 8–9. The verbs "be turned" (niph'al: נִפְּחוּ) and "become" (הָיָה) suggest YHWH is the one who inflicts this devastation on the NHC as a means of punishment against Edom.

6.3.3. The NHC's Reaction

The NHC is first affected by YHWH's judgement against the nations (vv. 1–4) and Edom's rulers (vv. 5–7) before she reacts of her own accord. First her mountains "melt" (מָסַח), indicating humanity's blood has an impact on her wellbeing.⁹⁴⁷ The heavens are also affected as they rot (מִקָּק), a term used to indicate decay (Lev 26:39; Ezek 4:17). The imagery of the hosts of heaven rolling up like a scroll is unique; this is the only instance of this metaphor in the Hebrew Bible.⁹⁴⁸ Muilenburg observes these three verbs escalate climactically and form a "triad of eschatological proportion and power."⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁶ See discussion on various ways the NHC functions in covenant lawsuits in Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959): 285.

⁹⁴⁷ Not "flow," as some (NRSVue and ESV, for instance) translate. See similar reaction in Ps 97:5; Mic 1:4. In these passages, however, the mountains "melt" in reaction to YHWH's appearance and not because of the blood of judgement.

⁹⁴⁸ In Isa 13:10 the celestial bodies darken, a common effect of the day of the Lord (cf. Joel 2:31; Amos 5:18, 20). Kaiser suggests it darkens to hide YHWH's presence from human eyes; *Isaiah* 13–39, 17.

⁹⁴⁹ Muilenburg, "Literary," 345.

The NHC joins YHWH's judgement against the nations by turning her streams into pitch and her soil into brimstone (v. 9). The feminine possessive pronouns linked to "stream," "soil," and "land" most likely reference Edom (v. 5).⁹⁵⁰ These two images of pitch and brimstone recall the language of Sodom and Gomorrah and other prophetic oracles that also appropriate this dramatic judgement story (Gen 19:24–29; Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40).⁹⁵¹ In addition to the same vocabulary of "pitch" and "brimstone," Isa 34:9 uses the verb (הפך), which also appears in the Sodom and Gomorrah story (Gen 19:21, 25, 39).⁹⁵² Whereas in Gen 19:24–25 both the cities' inhabitants and the vegetation were destroyed, Isa 34:9 only specifies the land. Perhaps this is because all the inhabitants have already been slain (vv. 2–3, 5). Nevertheless, it is notable the NHC is inflicted independently of her human dwellers.

Seitz likens the NHC's reaction to the flood account, as the text contains three references to an animal and its mate (vv. 14, 15, 16; cf. Gen 6:19–20).⁹⁵³ In this way, Edom, representative of all nations, is returned to the state right after the flood where the only living creatures are the preserved remnant (Noah/Judah) and the animals (vv. 11–15).⁹⁵⁴

6.3.4. Eschatological Implications

It is only after humanity is ravaged and the land desolated that the passage shifts once more to a description of the invasion of animals (vv. 11–15). This shift in residency is at odds with the destructive imagery of vv. 8–10, where the land's burning is described as

⁹⁵⁰ Contra Oswalt, who argues Edom is not mentioned in vv. 9–17 as a way of strengthening his argument that this oracle represents all nations, not just Edom; *Isaiah*, 614.

⁹⁵¹ In their retellings, Isa 13:19 and Jer 50:40 interestingly do not include the words "pitch" and "brimstone."

⁹⁵² This verb is often used to compare other cities to Sodom: Deut 29:22 [23]; Isa 13:19; Jer 20:16; 49:18; 50:40; Lam 4:6; Amos 4:11.

⁹⁵³ Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 237.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid. Seitz also proposes the "book" in v. 16 is the scroll where the flood story was chronicled, although this is unconvincing.

lasting “forever.”⁹⁵⁵ Humans no longer live in this territory, but have been driven out; this is evidenced by the absence of rulers (vv. 6–7, 12) and the presence of thorns and briars, plants hostile to human life (v. 13). The totality of the destruction is indicated by the two nouns בָּהוּ תָהוּ in separate phrases (v. 11b). While בָּהוּ תָהוּ is frequently used to demonstrate the devastation of the entire created order, or a return to the pre-creation state of Gen 1:2, here in Isa 34:11 it is used to demonstrate the devastation of human civilisation alone. No human can even pass through the land (v. 10), yet wild animals will occupy it and flourish in it.⁹⁵⁶ Although some identify this development as a wild animal curse, Marlow argues this is YHWH’s “deliberate provision for these animals” as it “is only for the human population, not the animal one, that the outcome is disastrous.”⁹⁵⁷ Indeed, there is a contrast between the fate of humanity in v. 10 and the fate of the animals in v. 17. Both verses share similar language, but the outcome is only positive for Edom’s wildlife. God has purposefully taken the land away from humanity and given it to the animals.⁹⁵⁸

These particular animals are unclean. In fact, three of the four appear in the list of prohibited animals in Lev 11:24–47. This contrasts with the “clean” sacrificial animals used symbolically in vv. 6–7, which were ironically sentenced to judgement. Another five of the species named in ch. 34 appear in 13:21–2.⁹⁵⁹ While it is often challenging to pair precise species of animals to Hebrew vocabulary, it is clear these twelve animals in Isa 34:11–15 live on the margins of human settlements.⁹⁶⁰ They are elusive and live at the periphery of human

⁹⁵⁵ This language of “forever” and “generation to generation” is also evident in Isa 13:20 and Jer 50:29.

⁹⁵⁶ In Isa 13:21–22, five of these same creatures “lie down” in the devastated land, a word that designates comfort in Ps 23:2. This parallel passage also suggests care for these wild animals.

⁹⁵⁷ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 44; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 274; Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 229.

⁹⁵⁸ This theme was also seen in Isa 32:14. Sweeney acknowledges that some of this imagery may have been very literal, as most of these animals occupied Edom in the fifth century; *Isaiah 1–39*, 446.

⁹⁵⁹ Three of the animals appear in Zeph 2:14, where the prophet pronounces ruin upon Assyria. Another three appear in Jer 50:39.

⁹⁶⁰ As twelve is often symbolic in the Hebrew Bible for God’s presence or God’s favored people, it is possible that this number is being used here to express favour for the animals.

consciousness, often in places of tension. By inviting these specific animals into the former dwelling place of humanity, YHWH is issuing punishment by disrupting the created order.⁹⁶¹ YHWH is also disrupting the Israelites' standards of clean and unclean animals. The clear boundaries between humanity's realm and wildlife's realm have been blurred as these wild animals invade human territory.

The list of animals moves from owls, birds associated with the underworld (v. 11), to jackals and ostriches, two dangerous animals associated with deserted areas and destruction (v. 13).⁹⁶² Next, the passage mentions two mythological creatures (v. 14). It is not just the owl and jackal who now occupy this space, but the mysterious *sair* (שָׁעִיר) and the *lilith* (לִילִית). Oswalt acknowledges the possibility of interpreting the *sair* and *lilith* as demonic, but he believes they should be interpreted as animals to be consistent with how other animals are used in passage.⁹⁶³ Since the LXX translates these creatures as “satyrs” and “demons,” however, there appears to be a tradition of associating them with mythology. Frey-Anthes identifies these creatures as belonging to humanity's “counterworld.”⁹⁶⁴ Their inclusion in this list heightens the danger and elusiveness of the creatures. *Sair* appear to have been worshipped and in some cults existed as gods (cf. Lev 17:7; Deut 32:2; 2 Chr 11:15; Isa 13:21). Here in Isa 34:14 they function as eerie, intimidating creatures who dwell in the periphery. They straddle the tenuous line between the world of animals and the world of demons.⁹⁶⁵ “*Lilith*” (לִילִית) is sometimes translated as a screech owl or night hag.⁹⁶⁶ In Sumerian and Assyrian mythology, the *lilith* was understood to be a feminine wind or storm

⁹⁶¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 233.

⁹⁶² Henrike Frey-Anthes, “Concepts of ‘Demons’ in Ancient Israel,” *Die Welt Des Orients* 38 (2008): 43–5.

⁹⁶³ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 616.

⁹⁶⁴ Frey-Anthes, “Concepts,” 45. Geyer identifies the setting of these demonic creatures as the wilderness, a location thought to contain portals to the underworld; “Desolation,” 58.

⁹⁶⁵ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 20.

⁹⁶⁶ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 509.

demon.⁹⁶⁷ Sawyer observes the significance of her inclusion, as she has been feared and excluded throughout Jewish tradition.⁹⁶⁸ Together, these deadly creatures make Edom uninhabitable for humans.

Interestingly, after climaxing with these dangerous, mythological entities (v. 14), the list concludes with the more common, albeit still unclean, arrow snake and buzzard (v. 15). These last two animals seem inconsequential after the adversarial sair and lilith. Why are they reserved for the end? The text specifies the snake will nest under “her shadow,” a feminine pronoun whose likely antecedent is the lilith (v. 14). Perhaps this placement emphasizes YHWH’s hospitality for all wildlife, hostile or common. Despite humanity’s wariness of these creatures, they will not exhibit their predatory behaviour in YHWH’s eschatological era—snakes will care for young and buzzards can mate in the presence of the lilith without fear. Of the references to wild animals in Isaiah, only two instances demonstrate violent behaviour against humanity (Isa 35:9; 56:9). This sharply contrasts with Ezekiel’s frequent portrayal of violent animals.⁹⁶⁹

Once again, Isa 34:11–15 blurs the boundaries between what constitutes clean and unclean animals. According to the Talmud, “clean” animals consisted of those which were non-predatory.⁹⁷⁰ YHWH creates space for the “unclean” animals and then makes them “clean” by removing their predatory behaviour. The “clean” animals (the rulers in vv. 6–7) show predatory behaviour and are eliminated while the “unclean” animals show hospitality to one another and are honoured.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., 510.

⁹⁶⁸ John Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 215–219. Sawyer likens lilith’s inclusion with the other wild animals to Isa 11:6–9.

⁹⁶⁹ Out of all the references to wild animals in Ezekiel, Ezek 31:6, 13 are the only instances where they are not portrayed violently.

⁹⁷⁰ See 11.41–43. So also Mary Douglas, “The Forbidden Animals in Leviticus,” *JSOT* 59 (1993): 3–23; Jacob Milgrom, “The Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System: Food and Faith,” *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 292–293.

6.4. Summary

YHWH's rage against the nations, of which Edom is a representative, dominates the imagery of Isa 34:1–17. The central subject of the poem, however, is the NHC.⁹⁷¹ It begins with YHWH's call to the "earth" to serve as a witness to Edom's judgement (v. 1). While it is less clear whether the NHC functions as a judge, she certainly is a means of YHWH's judgement against humanity. First, however, the NHC is devastated by the judgement. The blood "melts" the mountains while the heavens "roll up" and "wither." The text does not specify the events that preclude Edom's punishment, instead immediately plunging into vivid descriptions of the nation's judgement. The punishment first afflicts the nations' leaders, indicated by the clean, pastoral animals in vv. 5–7. This judgement language is cast in the metaphor of the sacrificial cultus, whereby the land receives the sacrificial blood and ritual meal (v. 7). As the blood of the land's perpetrators could cleanse the land from humanity's sin (Num 35:33), it is possible this sacrificial imagery is functioning as the land's atonement. The purge of humanity via the shedding of blood is the means of salvation for the NHC.

Thus sated by humanity's blood and fat, the NHC turns her streams and soil into sulphur and pitch, language that recalls the catastrophic judgement at Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 9–10). Because of this destruction, humanity is completely dislocated from the land (v. 10). This is further indicated by the designation of "no kingdom" in v. 12 and the infertility language in v. 13. While the NHC overall assumes a passive role in this judgement, the text specifies this devastation is against humanity and not against the NHC. In fact, the text then turns to the care of the NHC in vv. 11–17.

In this eschatological vision, YHWH deliberately reserves this wasteland for the NHC's wildlife (v. 17). In this way, the space of judgement and death becomes a space of salvation

⁹⁷¹ Muilenburg, "Literary," 351.

and life. The particular animals that occupy the land are not only unclean, but they are also peripheral, elusive, and, especially in the case of the *sair* and the *lilith*, deadly. Yet, these animals dwell together in harmony, indicated by the language of a snake caring for her young in the shadow of the *lilith* (v. 15). This oracle presents a world in which land ravaged in reaction to humanity's sin is redeemed for the sake of the NHC. All creatures, even the "unclean," dangerous ones on the fringes of human civilisation, have a place in YHWH's eschatological plan.

7. ISAIAH 35:1–10

7.1. Introduction

As noted above, Isa 35:1–10 forms a unit with Isa 34:1–17. Together, these two chapters stress God's triumph over the nations, intently personified as Edom (34:1–17), and God's dignifying of Judah (35:1–10). The multitude of contrasts between the two chapters is dramatic: the streams turn to pitch (34:9) and then the desert turns to streams (35:6); a barren wasteland (34:13) transforms into lush vegetation (35:7); wild animals gather in Edom (34:11, 13–15) but then no predatory animals can be found in Judah (35:9); no travellers can navigate Edom, save for unclean animals (34:10), while Judah's highways remain traversable for all but the unclean (35:10). In addition to these contrasts, two particular words appear in both chapters, further binding them as a unit. First, YHWH's "vengeance" (נָקָמָה) is stressed (34:8; 35:4), although both times it is directed toward the

nations surrounding Judah. Second, both chapters mention a “habitat of jackals” (34:13; 35:7). The double use of this latter phrase will be explored in more detail below.

Marlow and Tull also note the chapter’s many connections to chs. 28–33, particularly with regard to the ways ch. 35 reverses key images within that unit.⁹⁷² Most notable to this study are the ways Isa 35:1–10 reverses imagery from Isa 33:6–9. When compared, the deserted highways (33:8) are now trafficked (35:8) and the land’s mourning and withering (33:9) is reversed to the land’s flourishing (35:7). Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel previously wasted away (33:9) but are now locations of lush fertility (35:2).⁹⁷³

In addition to being linked to ch. 34 and chs. 28–33, Isa 35:1–10 has numerous connections with chs. 40–55, particularly chs. 40 and 51. Yet, the consensus maintains ch. 35 was not originally part of chs. 40–55; rather, ch. 35 contains secondary references to this subsequent section of Isaiah.⁹⁷⁴ These references include allusions to YHWH’s glory (v. 2), the opening of blind eyes (v. 5), the highway for God’s people (v. 8; cf. 40:3), and the duplicate verse in 35:10 and 51:11. Of particular interest to this study are the analogous allusions to water emerging from dry land (vv. 6–7; cf. 41:18; 43:10; 44:4; 48:21; 49:10) and the rejoicing of the NHC (vv. 1–2; cf. 49:13).

7.1. Text and Translation

¹The wilderness and the dry wasteland will
be glad,
the desert will rejoice and blossom as the
crocus;

יִשְׁשׂוּם מִדְבָּר וְצִיָּה¹
וְתִגַּל עֲרָבָה וְתִפְרַח כַּחֲבַצְלֹת
פָּרַח תִּפְרַח וְתִגַּל אֶף גִּילֵת וְרִנָּן²
כְּבוֹד הַלְבָּנוֹן נִתֵּן-לָהּ

⁹⁷² Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 236–237; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 513.

⁹⁷³ Interestingly, Isa 35:2 does not include Bashan while Isa 33:9 does. This will be discussed below.

⁹⁷⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 255; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 275; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 362. Clements argues the “secondary nature of the references here is unmistakable” and treats ch. 35 as a “concluding summary” to chs. 1–33. Kaiser proposes ch. 35 is a later imitation of chs. 40–55.

²she will blossom abundantly and rejoice
even with joy⁹⁷⁵ and singing.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to her;
the majesty of Carmel⁹⁷⁶ and Sharon.
They will see the glory of YHWH
and the majesty of our God.

הַדֶּר הַכַּרְמֶל וְהַשָּׂרוֹן
הִמָּה יֵרְאוּ כְבוֹד-יְהוָה
הַדֶּר אֱלֹהֵינוּ

³Strengthen your feeble hands and make
firm your staggering knees.
⁴Say to them who are worried of heart:
“Be strong! Do not be afraid!”
Look, your God will come with vengeance,
with the requital of God he will come and
save you.

חֲזִקוּ יָדַיִם רַפּוֹת וּבְרָכִים כְּשָׁלוֹת³
אִמְצוּ

⁵Then the eyes of the blind
and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
⁶Then the lame will leap as a stag
and the tongue of the mute will sing,
for in the wilderness waters will burst open
and streams in the desert.⁹⁷⁷
⁷The parched land will become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water.
In the settlement of jackals it will be her
resting place;
grass reeds and rush.

אָמְרוּ לְנִמְהָרֵי-לֵב⁴
חֲזִקוּ אֶל-תִּירְאוֹ
הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם נָקָם יְבוֹא
גָּמוּל אֱלֹהִים הוּא יְבוֹא וַיִּשְׁעֶכֶם
אֲז תִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי עִוְרִים⁵
וְאָזְנֵי חֲרָשִׁים תִּפְתַּחְנָה
אֲז יִדְלַג כְּאַיִל פֶּסַח⁶
וְתָרַן לְשׁוֹן אֵילִם
כִּי-נִבְקְעוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר מַיִם
וּנְחָלִים בַּעֲרָבָה
וְהָיָה הַשָּׂרֵב לְאֵגֶם⁷
וְצִמְאון לְמַבּוּעֵי מַיִם
בְּנוֹה תַנִּים רִבְצָה
חֲצִיר לִקְנָה וְגִמָּא

⁸And there will be a highway and a way,⁹⁷⁸
the way of holiness it will be called.
The unclean will not cross over it.
It will be for them.⁹⁷⁹
The wanderer, the fools, will not wander
about.

וְהָיָה-שֵׁם מַסְלֹל וְדֶרֶךְ⁸
וְדֶרֶךְ הַקֹּדֶשׁ יִקְרָא לָהּ
לֹא-יַעֲבֹרְנָה טִמָּא
וְהוּא-לְמוֹ
הֵלֶךְ דֶּרֶךְ וְאִוִּילִים לֹא יִתְעוּ

⁹No lion will be there,
nor will predators, wild beasts, come up on
her. They will not be found there,
but the redeemed will walk there.

לֹא-יְהִיָּה שָׁם אַרְיָה⁹
וּפְרִיץ חַיּוֹת בַּל-יַעֲלֶנָּה לֹא
תִמָּצָא שָׁם

⁹⁷⁵ The BHS and Targum read this noun as feminine singular absolute, which contrasts with the MT's feminine singular construct.

⁹⁷⁶ The definite article suggests this usage refers to the specific location rather than a general “fertile field.”

⁹⁷⁷ 1QIsa adds ילכו (“will go”), which offers the reading, “and streams will go (flow) in the desert.”

⁹⁷⁸ 1QIsa omits “and a way.” The LXX adds καθαρά, “a pure way.”

⁹⁷⁹ LXX: “there shall not be any unclean way there.” Targums: “The wayfarer will not cease.”

וְהָלְכוּ גְאוּלִּים

¹⁰And the ransomed of YHWH will return,
and come up to Zion with joyful shouting,
and everlasting joy will be on their heads.
They will obtain joy and jubilation;
sorrow and sighing will flee.

¹⁰וּפְדֵי־יְהוָה יָשׁוּבוּ
וּבְאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה
וְשִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם עַל-רֵאשָׁם
שָׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה יִשְׂגוּ
וְנִסּוּ יִגּוֹן וְאַנְחָה

7.3. Themes and Motifs

7.3.1 The Restoration of the NHC

As a counterpart to the preceding oracle of judgement (ch. 34), Isa 35:1–10 begins with a proclamation that the NHC will “rejoice” and “blossom” (35:1). The focal points—the wilderness, the parched land, and the desert—are all infertile areas that do not sustain life. Yet, these regions will sing with joyfulness because of YHWH’s new act of creation. The poem likens these dry regions to the blooming of a “crocus,” a flower whose exact identity is uncertain but is associated with the plains of Sharon, which is also mentioned in this passage (cf. Song 2:1). This newfound flourishing of the NHC is likened to three of Canaan’s most fertile regions: Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon. In Isa 33:9, the prophet pronounced desolation upon these three locations. However, while 33:9 includes Bashan in its list of locations, that particular region is missing from 35:2. Carmel frequently appears with Lebanon (Song 7:5; Isa 33:9; Nah 1:9) and Bashan (Isa 33:9; Jer 50:19; Nah 1:4). Sharon is only paired with these fertile locations in 33:9 and 35:2. Given its tradition alongside these other fertile locations, why was Bashan excluded?

In the prophetic corpus, Bashan only has a negative connotation in Amos 4:1. Even then it is used as a symbol of rich fertility. Elsewhere, its usage pertains to fertile pastureland (Isa 33:9; Jer 50:19; Ezek 29:18; Mic 7:14; Nah 1:4) and forest (Isa 2:13; Ezek 27:6; Zech

11:2). There is evidence Bashan functioned as a cultic site for Baal worship.⁹⁸⁰ Some have proposed Amos calls the women of Bashan “cows” to signify a role in this cult (4:1).⁹⁸¹ Further, Miller lists support from Ugaritic texts that Bashan was a dwelling place of mythological monsters and the dead.⁹⁸² It is perhaps for these reputations Bashan is excluded from the list, for its presence would be more advantageous to the desolation in Isa 34:1–17 than for the prosperous image conveyed in Isa 35:1–10.

Nevertheless, these abundant places serve as a paradigm of fertility for the dry regions, which are flooded with water (vv. 6–7). Wildberger observes the language of these waters bursting open sounds similar to the rupture of the “waters of the deep” in Gen 7:11.⁹⁸³ Rather than this outburst of water being a threat as it was in the flood account, here in Isa 35:6 it is a symbol of vitality, perhaps even a symbol of creation (cf. Gen 2:6). The presence of water further contrasts with the two nouns בָּהֵו תְּהוּ in separate phrases in Isa 34:11 (cf. Gen 2:1). While some have viewed the wilderness metaphor as a specific reference to the desert region former exiles traversed from Babylon to Israel, Oswalt broadens the metaphor by suggesting the desert refers to the entire world.⁹⁸⁴ Just as Edom referred to all the nations in ch. 34, it is possible this region in ch. 35 refers to the entire NHC.

In addition to the desert regions, the waters also flood the “haunt of jackals,” a phrase that specifically connects Isa 35:7 to Isa 34:13. This habitation of jackals becomes a “resting place” full of lush “grass reeds and rush.” Jeremiah frequently uses “haunt of

⁹⁸⁰ See Miller’s description of the archeological evidence for this in Robert D. Miller, “Baals of Bashan,” *Revue Biblique* 121 (2014): 506–15. Jacobs also mentions the location’s allusions to YHWH and “Asherah,” a pairing that may signify syncretism. See Paul F. Jacobs, “‘Cows of Bashan’: A Note on the Interpretation of Amos 4:1,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 109–10.

⁹⁸¹ See Klaus Koch, *The Prophets: The Assyrian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 46; Miller, “Baals of Bashan,” 506–15.

⁹⁸² Miller, “Baals of Bashan,” 514–5.

⁹⁸³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 352.

⁹⁸⁴ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 620.

jackals” negatively to imply the destruction of human settlements and desolation of pastures (Jer 9:10; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37). Isaiah, on the other hand, presents it as a positive metaphor for the jackals in Isa 34:13. Perhaps the positive metaphor is continued here in Isa 35:13.⁹⁸⁵ The jackals are not driven out from their dwelling place, but are provided fresh water and fertile land. Jackals are referenced similarly in Isa 43:20, where the wild animals honour YHWH for the provision of water. In this way, it is possible Isa 35:7 does not reverse the metaphor from Isa 34:13 but reinforces it. Moyter describes this as a “reversal of a settled and inhospitable situation,” in which the location becomes hospitable for creatures beyond the jackal.⁹⁸⁶ YHWH’s care for the NHC continues, only now humanity is invited to flourish alongside the NHC.

7.3.2 The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

While the “haunt of jackals” becomes a “resting place” for animals and humans alike, Isa 35:9 announces the removal of all predatory animals, particularly the lion. At first, it appears this is a reversal of Isa 34:11–15 and implies the exile of all the dangerous animals. Lions, however, did not appear on the list in Isa 34:11–15. Were the prophet attempting to reverse the habitat for wild animals in ch. 34, surely ch. 35 would utilise a specific animal already mentioned. Further, the animals in Isa 34:11–15 no longer have predatory behaviour. This is especially evident in v. 15, where the dangerous animals demonstrate hospitality to one another. Thus, perhaps it is not that all wild creatures are removed from this eschatological vision; perhaps only those who are predatory are removed. This is

⁹⁸⁵ Olley concludes similarly, arguing this is not a negative metaphor for the jackals. See Olley, “The Wolf,” 222.

⁹⁸⁶ J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 274.

consistent with Isa 11:6–9, where the threat from wild animals is removed rather than the animals themselves.

In addition to the flourishing of non-predatory animals alongside humanity, the text links the restoration of the NHC with the healing of humanity (cf. 29:18; 30:26; 35:5–6). Marlow notes יָרָא in v. 6 connects the healing of humanity with the outpouring of water.⁹⁸⁷ This link is further demonstrated by the double use of מָחַ in v. 5 and v. 6, connecting humanity's healing to the gift of water in vv. 1–2. Renewal comes first to the NHC and then extends to humanity. While it is possible to view humanity's healing as a physical reality in light of the blind and deaf allusions, these two impairments are used symbolically elsewhere in Isaiah with regard to Israel's spiritual impairment (cf. Isa 6:9–10).⁹⁸⁸ Whether interpreted literally or figuratively, there is a connection between the flourishing of the NHC and the health of humanity.

7.3.3 Eschatological Implications

In this eschatological vision, YHWH's glory and majesty is evident both to the NHC and to humanity. The recipients of YHWH's glory in vv. 1–2, however, are unclear because of the shifting pronouns. The passage begins with the “wilderness” and “dry wasteland,” designated together as masculine plural in the verbal form (v. 1a). The desert (עֲרֵבָה) in v. 1b is designated as a feminine entity; her pronoun (“she”) continues in v. 2a as the subject who blossoms and rejoices. Thus, the glory and majesty of the three locations (Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon) appear to be given to “her,” the desert (v. 2b). An amplified translation is as follows:

⁹⁸⁷ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 236.

⁹⁸⁸ Marlow suggests the metaphors can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically; *Biblical Prophets*, 236–7.

The wilderness and the dry wasteland will be glad, the desert will rejoice and blossom as the crocus. She [the desert] will blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to her [the desert]; the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

However, v. 2c suddenly shifts to a masculine plural pronoun: “They will see the glory of YHWH and the majesty of our God.” Who is “they” who witness YHWH’s revelation first?

Kaiser argues it is not the NHC, represented by the desert, who sees YHWH’s majesty but the nation of Israel.⁹⁸⁹ While he recognizes the feminine singular pronoun (“she”) refers to the transformed desert, he argues “they” (v. 2c) anticipates the redeemed people in v. 10.⁹⁹⁰ Similarly, Oswalt interprets the entity to be Israel.⁹⁹¹ The LXX supports this by substituting “my people” for “them,” as do the Targums by offering the translation “house of Israel.” For this pronoun to anticipate the “ransomed people” at the very end of the chapter seems improbable; a proleptic function is premature. The ambiguous pronoun suggests an antecedent.

Two possible antecedents for “them” in the literary unit include the wilderness and dry land or the three geographical locations. Since the wilderness and dry land together utilize a masculine plural verb (“they will be glad” in v. 1), these portions of the NHC may be the entities who witness YHWH’s glory.⁹⁹² However, the wilderness and dry land do not directly precede “they” in v. 2. Grammatically, the three geographical locations immediately appear before the masculine plural pronoun and thus logically appear to be one and the same.⁹⁹³ Thus, YHWH’s glory manifested in Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon is given to the

⁹⁸⁹ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 363.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁹¹ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 623.

⁹⁹² So Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Volumes 1–3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 447.

⁹⁹³ Delitzsch also concludes “they” is a reference to these three regions. See Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 77.

wilderness and desert; collectively they all also witness to it. In this reading, the NHC is the first entity who is restored and invited to see this eschatological reality.

In the book of Isaiah, glory refers to YHWH's resting place (Isa 11:10). Elsewhere, it is a phenomenon available for the sight of all people (Isa 24:23; 40:5; 60:1–3). The fullness of YHWH's glory is evident on the earth (Isa 6:2) and is specifically referenced as evident in Lebanon again (Isa 60:13). In Psalms, the word-pair "glory" and "majesty" is used for YHWH and YHWH's kingship (Pss 29:2; 145:5, 12). They are characteristics given to kings (Ps 21:6 [5]) and humans (Ps 8:6 [5]). However, Isa 35:2 is unique in that the NHC is invited to both manifest and participate in YHWH's glory and majesty. This is the only place in Isaiah where the NHC "sees" YHWH's eschatological presence.

7.4. Summary

Isaiah 35:1–10 is saturated with contrasts to the dire image of desolation in Isa 34:1–17. The dry, burning landscape in Isa 34:8–9 is contrasted with plentiful water bursting into the wilderness and desert regions in Isa 35:1–2. The fertile regions of Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon, previously locations of judgement (Isa 33:7–9), now overflow with life-giving water. This imagery evokes the creative force of water in the second creation account (Gen 2:6), perhaps alluding to YHWH's new creative activity. This further contrasts with the decreation evident in Isa 34:1–17.

While ch. 35 contains many contrasts with ch. 34, the particular phrase, "the haunt of jackals" (v. 7), appears to strengthen the imagery of Isa 34:13 rather than unravel it. This phrase is significant, as it is one of two instances where ch. 35 verbally intersects with ch. 34.⁹⁹⁴ Rather than dispersing the dwelling place of jackals, Isa 35:7 insists their home will

⁹⁹⁴ The second repeated word is *נִקְמָה*, "vengeance" (Isa 34:8; Isa 35:4).

become a “resting place” with an abundance of water. This is consistent with the positive use of the metaphor in Isa 34:13, where YHWH exhibits intentional care for the wild animals. Predatory animals will be removed from the land (v. 9), including the lion, an animal not mentioned in Isa 34:1–17. This does not imply all wild animals will be exiled from the land, only that the remaining animals will not exhibit violent behaviour (cf. Isa 11:6–9). Indeed, the treacherous animals in Isa 34:11–15 were no longer predatory (34:15). The renewal of the NHC incites harmonious relationship with humanity and may even bring about the spiritual, if not physical, healing of humanity (vv. 5–6).

Finally, the prophet identifies the NHC as not just the recipient of YHWH’s glory and majesty but the first witness to its manifestation (vv. 1–2). The three personified regions (Lebanon, Carmel, Sharon), designated as “they” in v. 2, “see” YHWH’s glory and give the glory to the desert. While Isaiah frequently envisions humanity “seeing” YHWH’s glory, this is the only instance in Isaiah where the NHC is the one who bears witness to it. This gift implies an eschatological partnership between YHWH and the NHC, whereby the NHC is invited to actively participate in the re-creation of the world. She is not merely an instrument of this eschatological work, but she welcomes and embraces YHWH’s presence.

8. SUMMARY OF ISAIAH FINDINGS

These passages from First Isaiah present a world in which humanity and the NHC are linked in both destruction and renewal. In response to humanity’s sin, the NHC dispenses judgement, functioning in this way according to YHWH’s system of retribution. Images of wet and dry chaos mingle in Isa 24:1–20 as the NHC “mourns” over the violation of the “everlasting covenant” (vv. 4–5). She “splits” and “trembles” (vv. 19–20), signalling

decreation throughout the “formless city,” a motif indicating the entire cosmos. Similarly, the NHC “mourns” in 33:7–9 in response to humanity’s violation of a treaty. While Isa 33:7–9 does not allude to flood imagery, it nevertheless describes drought as the most fertile places in Israel wither away. Unlike Isa 24:1–20, YHWH neither appears nor acts in Isa 33:7–9; the NHC is the sole arbiter of judgement. However, in Isa 34:1–17, YHWH’s “vengeance” (v. 2) is on display, pronouncing judgement upon the nations (personified as Edom) for their undisclosed sin. While “Edom” appears to be the focal point, it is the NHC who takes centre stage in this passage. The land receives Edom’s sacrificial blood and meal, which cleanses the land of humanity’s pollution (vv. 5–6). Despite this act of atonement, the NHC still purges humanity from the land, which in turn brings salvation to the NHC (vv. 8–10).

These passages of judgement demonstrate the interconnectedness of humanity and the NHC. The NHC may function in some passages as judge, as indicated above, but she also functions as the victim of humanity’s sin (24:1–20; 33:7–9). In this way, the actions of humanity have an impact upon the cosmological order. Other passages do not directly imply this connection, but do imply a connection between the fate of humanity and the NHC. Isaiah 32:9–20 centres the NHC in its structure, portraying a link between both the destruction and renewal of humanity and the NHC. The women in the passage mirror the NHC by “stripping,” suggesting a common fate (vv. 11–14).

These passages also indicate NHC’s eschatological involvement in renewing the cosmological order. Animals and humanity peacefully co-exist in Isa 11:1–10 and Isa 35:7. The entire world—humanity and the NHC alike—“know” YHWH on his holy mountain (11:9–10). The burning wasteland portrayed in Isa 34:1–17 is transformed into a lush landscape in 35:1–10, where the “haunt of jackals” becomes a resting place for humanity and animals (v. 7). While the predatory animals (symbolised by “lion” in 35:9) are relocated

to protect humanity, the prophet expresses a future in which the non-predatory animals of 34:13–15 come along with God’s people. As YHWH inaugurates a new kingdom reign, the NHC “sees” and receives YHWH’s glory first (35:2).

YHWH further lavishes fertility blessings and transforms the NHC in 30:18–26. This gift enables the NHC to participate eschatologically by overthrowing the enemies of God’s people (v. 25). When the spirit is “poured out” in Isa 32:9–20, fertility comes to the NHC before bringing salvation to humanity (vv. 16–20). In this vision of God’s reign, even the unclean and dangerous animals are protected and valued (34:1–17). In this world, there is no fear of harm, even in the shadow of the lilith (v. 15). The NHC is transformed alongside humanity, perhaps because of humanity’s adoption of justice and righteousness (11:1–10). Even the most devastating visions of destruction do not have the final word in First Isaiah, as Isa 24:1–20 anticipates the renewal of the cosmos for scattered humanity (v. 6).

CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL THEMES AND IMPLICATIONS IN

AMOS, HOSEA, AND FIRST ISAIAH

Now that the salient passages from Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah have been thoroughly analysed, the findings will be synthesised in order to develop theological conclusions. In this section, the selected prophetic voices will be placed in dialogue with each other so as to summarise and deduce the various theological positions of God's people in this collection of texts. As already argued above, while these texts demonstrate evidence of an editing process beyond the eighth century, they nevertheless provide a tentative snapshot of Israel's theologies pertaining to the eschatological role of the NHC. The texts demonstrate it is not possible to settle on a single, uniform theology that eighth-century prophetic voices held, let alone all of God's people throughout their collective history. Yet, these three prophetic voices express unity by including several prominent themes pertaining to the NHC. Thus, both the unified and the diversified thought within these consistent themes will be considered in conversation with each other.

Throughout the course of the study, several prominent themes have emerged related to the interrelatedness of the cosmic order and the role of the NHC in this created world. Specifically, the motifs that have been most prevalent amongst the selected texts include the following categories: 1) The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order; 2) Humanity's Effect on the NHC; 3) The Role of the NHC; 4) The NHC's Response; and 5) Eschatological Implications. Each theme, and more importantly, the theological conclusions imparted by these themes, frames and shapes the final conclusions regarding the eschatological involvement of the NHC before proposing considerations for future research related to the NHC's eschatological role.

1. The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

1.1. YHWH's relationship with the NHC

The books of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah demonstrate an interrelatedness of the cosmic order, evidenced by the relationship YHWH has with the NHC and the relationship humanity has with the NHC. YHWH has a dynamic relationship with the NHC in Amos, characterised by YHWH's partnership with the NHC in enacting judgement upon sinful humanity. In Hosea, YHWH functions as a fertility deity who is responsible for the wellbeing of the NHC, which in turn affects the wellbeing of humanity (2:4–17). While YHWH's relationship with humanity is imagined in the context of a marriage in Hosea, YHWH also exhibits an intimate relationship with the NHC. Indeed, the interconnected, yet distinct, identities of Israel and "land" blur throughout the passages of Hosea 2:4–25 and 4:1–3. YHWH's initiation of a covenant with the animals in 2:20 especially demonstrates a relationship between YHWH and the NHC.

Similarly, First Isaiah presents a diverse portrait of YHWH's relationship with the NHC, one that is most prevalently presented via YHWH's relationship with animals. According to First Isaiah, animals have a relationship with YHWH separate from that of humanity. In Isa 11:1–10, the animals, along with the "earth" and "sea," have knowledge of YHWH (cf. Isa 1:2–3). This contrasts with YHWH's accusation that humanity does not have this knowledge, which is a prerequisite for a right relationship with YHWH (Hos 2:22; 4:1). In Isa 34:11–17, YHWH cares for animals who are hostile to humanity. This care is deliberate and everlasting (v. 17; cf. Isa 35:7). Further, in Isa 24:1–20, the stability of the cosmos depends on YHWH's intervention and sustaining power over the forces of chaos. This contrasts with YHWH's silence in Isa 33:7–9, the only text in this study that indicates YHWH's absence in relation to

the NHC. Overwhelmingly, the studied texts collectively communicate YHWH's commitment to the NHC.

In light of this interconnected relationship with YHWH, the NHC responds to YHWH's voice, sharing in YHWH's grief over humanity's violation of covenant (Amos 1:2; Hos 4:1–3; Isa 24:3–4). The NHC functions as a witness and judge upon YHWH's summons (Isa 34:1). The volatile waters of chaos, a sinister force in antiquity, respond to YHWH's call without hostility or resistance (Amos 8:8; 9:5; Isa 24:14; 35:6–7), and even the sea serpent is YHWH's willing servant (Amos 9:3).

1.2. Humanity's Relationship with the NHC

Whereas the NHC complies with YHWH, her relationship with humanity is ambiguous in these prophetic texts. She appears to mourn humanity's sins, yet the ambiguity of אבל also suggests she mourns her own fate, for which humanity is complicit (Amos 1:2; Hos 4:3; Isa 24:4; 33:9; cf. Isa 32:11–12). Because of humanity's breach of covenant, the NHC enacts a series of judgements that include her own demise (see below). Yet, some sort of tenuous relationship exists between humanity and the NHC, as humanity depends upon the NHC for the rituals necessary to preserve a right relationship with YHWH (Amos 4:4–9; 8:4–8; Hos 2:8–9; cf. Amos 5:22). Similarly, the NHC depends upon humanity's faithfulness to the covenant, as its violation signals the destruction of the NHC (Amos 4:6–9; Hos 2:18–22; 4:1–3; Isa 24:5; 33:8; cf. Lev 26:32; Deut 11:16–17). The texts exemplify these covenant curses on numerous occasions, the most frequent curses involving infertility of the land (Amos 1:2; 4:7–9; 8:13; Hos 2:6, 9; Isa 24:7; 32:10, 13; 34:13), flood (Amos 8:8; 9:5–6; Isa 24:18), drought (Amos 1:2; 4:7; 8:11; Hos 4:3; Isa 24:4; 33:9), and pollution (Hos 4:3; Isa

24:5; 34:9). As such, humanity and the NHC have a symbiotic relationship in these prophetic messages, both depending upon each other for stability.

In Amos and Hosea, God's people are identified via their relationship with the NHC, a distinguishing quality suggesting humanity's responsibility to the NHC (Amos 1:2; 8:4; Hos 2:2–3; cf. Hos 1:2). Although First Isaiah does not blur the identity of humanity and the land, it does portray humanity's connection to the NHC as linked in both destruction (Isa 24:5–6; 32:9–13) and restoration (Isa 30:23–26; 32:16–20; 35:5–7). Indeed, humanity mirrors the state of the NHC via their posture and actions (Isa 32:11–13). First Isaiah is also unique compared to Amos and Hosea in that it alludes to a messianic figure or a ruler who initiates humanity's restoration with the NHC (Isa 11:1–5; cf. 32:1). The presence of a divinely-appointed ruler may be implied in Amos and Hosea by the presence of righteousness, a leadership quality associated with fertility, although such a ruler is elusive (Amos 9:11; Hos 2:19–20).

Finally, both Hosea and First Isaiah consider humanity's relationship with animals, who are presented as an entity within the NHC (Hos 2:20; 4:3; Isa 11:6–8; 30:23–24; 32:14, 20; 34:11–17; 35:7). Both prophetic voices portray eschatological visions of harmonious relations between humans and animals, which will be explored in more detail below.

2. Humanity's Effect on the NHC

2.1. The Nature of the Link

Throughout all of the selected passages, the NHC is harmed by humanity's sin. Yet what constitutes sin varies amongst the prophetic texts. Most often the sin is described as Israel's violation of their covenant with YHWH. Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah all emphasise covenant infidelity as a direct breach of humanity's relationship with the NHC (Amos 4:6–9;

Hos 2:4; 4:1–3; Isa 24:5; 33:8). Other times the exact nature of the sin is ambiguous (Amos 1:2; Isa 32:9–14). The same appears true for the “nations” outside of Israel: they can violate the “everlasting covenant,” YHWH’s cosmological standards for all humanity (24:5; cf. 33:8), and also commit unclear sins (34:1–2), both of which contribute to the devastation of the NHC. While both Israel’s and the nations’ sins are a violation of relationship with YHWH, in some cases collective humanity’s sins are also a violation of relationship with the NHC.

When Amos, for instance, portrays sin as a breach of relationship with the NHC, the sin affects the NHC directly. Humanity abuses the NHC by exploiting her resources and depriving her of her sabbath rest (8:4–6; cf. Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:1–7). Against her will, the NHC becomes a means by which to oppress the most vulnerable (Amos 8:4–6). Amos also portrays humanity’s violation of the cosmological temple as having a direct effect on the cosmological order (9:1–6). Hosea 2:20 envisions a cosmic covenant that includes the NHC, signifying that sin, or covenant infidelity against the NHC, directly impacts the NHC (cf. Hos. 4:1–3). Thus, according to Amos and Hosea, both abuse of the NHC and covenant violation against her constitute sin. Sin not only jeopardises humanity’s covenant relationship with YHWH, but it also jeopardises their covenant relationship with the NHC.

Other times the effect of sin against the NHC is presented indirectly. For instance, Hosea frequently presents an indirect link between sin and suffering. Humanity sins against both YHWH and fellow humanity, yet the effects of this sin are inflicted upon the NHC. In this way, the NHC is often portrayed as a casualty of humanity’s covenant violation. For instance, in their pursuit of fertility blessings, humanity linked the NHC to other fertility gods besides YHWH, creating a three-way breach in relationship spaces (Hos 2:7). As God’s people, Israel was expected to uphold YHWH’s covenant expectations, which in turn promoted the flourishing of the NHC. Two expectations in particular, faithfulness (ἰσχυρ) and knowledge of

YHWH, were necessary for the stability of the NHC (2:22; 4:1). Instead of pursuing these virtues and obeying YHWH's commandments, humanity committed "adultery" with other gods, broke the Torah, and perpetuated violence (4:1–2). The violence in particular polluted the NHC, an act that recalls the events of the flood narrative.

The remaining selected passages present an ambiguous relationship between humanity's sins and their effect on the NHC (Amos 1:2; 4:6–9; Isa 32:9–20; 33:7–9; 34:1–17). In these texts, humanity's transgression and the affliction of the NHC are presented as two separate, unconnected events. Sometimes YHWH afflicts the NHC as punishment (Amos 4:6–9; Isa 32:9–20; 34:1–17) and other times the NHC responds of her own volition (Amos 1:2; Isa 33:7–9). Yet, despite this unclear connection between humanity's sin and the effect on the NHC, several of these passages present direct links between the restoration of the NHC and the restoration of humanity, which will be explored in more detail below.

2.2. The Effect of the Link

Humanity's sin affects the NHC on both a localised and a cosmological scope. On one hand, several passages understand the effect of sin as localised to the nation of Israel. Amos 1:2 portrays YHWH's judgement as sweeping from YHWH's resting place in Jerusalem to the pastures and mountains of the Northern Kingdom. It is possible this imagery functions as a merism to indicate all of Israel, inclusive of both the North and the South. Other passages indicate a localised context because of YHWH's address to Israel specifically (Amos 4:6–9; Hos 2:4–17; Isa 32:9–20). Finally, two passages in First Isaiah imply an Israelite context, yet at the same time push this geographical boundary by specifically including Lebanon, a region Israel never controlled (Isa 33:7–9; 35:1–10).

At the same time, it is possible Israel represents the entire world. To the Israelites, their temple-city was a microcosm, or in the very least, the epicentre of the cosmological order.⁹⁹⁵ In Israelite thought, the locus of the world was Jerusalem's temple, a "footstool" or extension of YHWH's reign from heaven (Isa 66:1–2). What was localised in Israel was representative of the cosmos. Therefore, even the examined passages that demonstrate human sin's limited scope are indicative of the entire world.

The climactic vision scene in Amos 9:1–6 further demonstrates this cosmic connection, as humanity's sin against YHWH's heavenly temple ultimately collapses the entire cosmos. The destruction that occurs in the heavenly realm is mirrored in the earthly realm; the totality of the cosmic order is thus intrinsically connected.⁹⁹⁶ Elsewhere in Amos, a cosmological aspect to humanity's sin is also implied by the use of several merisms that indicate sin's effect upon the entire created order.⁹⁹⁷ Hosea and Isaiah also employ a similar scope of heaven and earth (Hos 2:21; Isa 24:4).

Finally, several of the texts indicate sin's effect on the NHC is not only Israel's responsibility but is also a responsibility of all nations. The city in Isa 24:1–20 parallels the inhabitants of the earth and represents all the nations (vv. 10–13).⁹⁹⁸ Similarly, the oracle against Edom in Isa 34:1–17 is representative of all foreign entities. Other passages, such as Amos 9:11–15 (Edom) and Isa 33:9 (Lebanon) indicate a wider scope than just Israel. While the prophets' messages are primarily for the Israelite community, they nevertheless implicated the entire world in the NHC's suffering. All people both inside and outside Israel break "covenant," which in turn devastates the NHC.

⁹⁹⁵ Levenson, *Creation*, 86.

⁹⁹⁶ As indicated in the text's eschatological analysis, this same temple-cosmos connection may also be implicitly indicated in Isa 24:1–20.

⁹⁹⁷ In Amos 1:2, the mountains, city, and pastures. In 4:7, the cities and fields. In 8:8–9, the heavens and the earth. In 9:3–4, the mythical and physical locations.

⁹⁹⁸ Thus, it is the culmination of the OAN before it (Isa 13–23).

3. The Role of the NHC

3.1. Passive Roles

Amid this cosmological perspective in the texts, the NHC assumes a predominant role as the dispenser of judgement. Sometimes this role is active, in which she appears to act of her own accord without explicit directives from YHWH (Amos 1:2; Hos 4:1–3; Isa 24:1–20; 30:25; 33:6–9), and sometimes her role is more passive, in which YHWH inflicts the judgement upon her as a victim (Amos 4:6–9; 8:9–10; Hos 2:4–17; Isa 34:1–17).

In Amos 4:4–14, YHWH takes an active role in judgement and inflicts punishment on a passive NHC. Similarly, Hos 2:4–17 emphasises YHWH's infliction of punishment based upon the active role YHWH assumes and the repetition of the divine conjunction **יְהוָה**. YHWH strips the NHC into a dry, barren wasteland and removes all YHWH's fertility blessings from the land. Finally, Isa 24:1 identifies YHWH as the originator of the punishment upon the NHC.

3.2. Active Roles

In contrast, the remaining judgement passages primarily present the NHC as the active dispenser of judgement. Occasionally, YHWH summons the NHC to partner with YHWH to judge humanity's actions and/or inflict judgement. The NHC responds to YHWH's summons and acts obediently (Amos 1:2; 9:3; Isa 34:1).

While the beginning of Isa 24:1–20 implies YHWH's direct involvement (v. 1, see above), vv. 4–5 identifies the NHC as the actor. Specifically, the prophet utilises the conjunction **עַל-כֵּן** (v. 6), which denotes a result rather than divine action. In Hos 4:1–3, YHWH assumes a passive role in judgement; the NHC is the arbiter of judgement against

humanity. The presence of עַל-כֵּן (v. 3) contrasts the NHC's judgement role with YHWH's in Hos 2:4–17. This suggests the NHC is acting on her own, in accordance with the system of retribution YHWH has interwoven into the cosmic framework.

4. The NHC's Response

In her role as an active participant in the cosmic order, the NHC responds in a variety of ways. The operative mode of retribution in the texts is de-creation, in which the NHC unleashes the forces of chaos. The earth returns to either a dry, barren wasteland (“dry chaos”) or floods (“wet chaos”).⁹⁹⁹ In Amos 4:4–14 and Isa 24:1–20, these effects occur simultaneously. In addition, the NHC “mourns,” an action that indicates distress as well as drought, and is often paired with “drying up” or “withering” (cf. Amos 1:2; 8:4–14; Hos 4:3; Isa 33:7–9). In Hosea, her “mourning” causes a cosmic upheaval, whereby all the animals die, including the fish (Hos 4:3). Amos 4:6–9 does not present the NHC as “mourning” but still indicates drought. Consistent with the mourning ritual of stripping, other passages present the NHC as a land stripped of her fertility “coverings” (Hos 2:4–17; Isa 32:12–13).

Infertility is another response of the NHC. The NHC is inflicted with blight and mildew in Amos 4:6–9, thorns and thistles in Hos 2:4–14. In Isaiah, vineyards dry up (24:7–10; 32:10), thorns grow (32:10), and soil burns (34:9–10). The NHC becomes an emptied, formless void (תֶּהוָּ בִּהְיוֹתָ) in Isaiah, evocative of a pre-creation state (24:10; 34:11). In contrast with the drought passages, the NHC occasionally responds with flood in Amos and Isaiah (Amos 8:8; 9:5–6; Isa 24:18). Finally, also confined to Amos and Isaiah, the NHC responds with violent trembling and shaking (Amos 1:2; 8:8; 9:1–6; Isa 24:19–20). Collectively, the

⁹⁹⁹ “Dry chaos imagery”: Amos 1:2; 4:6–9; 8:4–14; Hos 2:4–14; 4:1–3; Isa 24:1–20; 32:9–20; 33:6–9. “Wet chaos” imagery: Amos 8:8; 9:1–6; Isa 24:1–20.

NHC's responses function as a protest against humanity's sin and a defence mechanism for herself. These reactions create environments unsuitable for humanity, which either coerce humanity to change their actions or exiles them. Both outcomes provide liberation for the NHC.

5. Eschatological Implications

While Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah promise punishment upon humanity often by the agency of the NHC, the passages also promise eschatological hope, sometimes even within the setting of the inflicted judgement. In the context of YHWH's eschatological partnership with the NHC, YHWH intervenes in human history and offers a redemptive future whereby all creation, including humanity and the NHC, flourish according to YHWH's purposes. Chaos, while a formidable force of judgement in Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, does not have the final word in God's purposes for the NHC.

In three passages in First Isaiah, the NHC is prioritised as the first to receive YHWH's eschatological blessings. First, the virtues of justice and righteousness are initially given to the NHC, who in turn bestows the wilderness and fields with postures of peace and quietness (32:15–17). Only after the NHC undergoes this transformation does humanity benefit eschatologically (32:18). The structure of Isa 32:15–20 also prioritises the NHC, as the passage begins and ends with the renewal of the NHC. Isaiah 34:11–17 emphasises deliberate care for the NHC, specifically the wild animals, at the expense of humanity's dislocation. In fact, no eschatological renewal for humanity occurs in this passage. Lastly, in Isa 35:1–10 the NHC first bears witness to YHWH's eschatological glory before humanity (vv. 1–2, 10).

In other eschatological passages, the blessings are given to the NHC in response to human action. While Hos 2:18–25 does include the NHC in the covenant process, the text presents a renewed cosmic order first implemented by humanity’s covenant fidelity (vv. 18–22). Isaiah’s eschatological vision in 11:1–10 describes the restoration of humanity’s society before the restoration extends to the NHC (vv. 1–5), and Isa 30:18–26 begins with humanity’s spiritual revival before the NHC is included. Finally, while Amos 9:11–15 does not indicate a chain of events, it does describe humanity’s transformation before that of the NHC; the restoration of Israel’s polis (vv. 11–12) occurs before the renewal of the NHC (vv. 13–15).

While the prophetic voices express diversity on the order of the eschatological events, they remain united on the effect these events have for the NHC. Again and again these selected passages emphasise the return of fertility as an indication of a new salvific event. Vineyards overflow with wine (Amos 9:13–14; Hos 2:17, 24), fields produce an abundance of crops (Amos 9:13–14; Hos 2:24; Isa 30:23; 32:15–16), and drought comes to an end (Amos 8:8; 9:5; Isa 30:25; 35:6–7). What was taken in judgement is returned to the NHC.¹⁰⁰⁰

In several instances, the banishment of humanity from the land is what enacts the renewal of the NHC. In Amos 8:4–12, humanity harms the NHC via their abuse of her resources, which in turn removes humanity from the land. Their removal protects the NHC from further abuse. In Isa 32:9–20, the palace and city are deserted, which leads to the flourishing of wild and domesticated animals. Finally, Isa 34:1–17 portrays the removal of the sinful nations from their land as a necessary step in the care for wild animals. Together these texts present the exile of humanity as the liberation for the NHC.

¹⁰⁰⁰ This is especially evident with Amos’ language regarding “turning the turning” (9:14).

5.1. The Supersession of Previous Standards

Two passages proceed beyond the simple reversal of judgement by indicating an idealised cosmological order which significantly supersedes the previous order. The last vision in Amos “reverses” all of the judgement oracles in Amos, not just of humanity’s exile but also of the NHC’s destruction (9:11–15). This reversal is not a return to a previous state of being, but is the complete flourishing of both humanity and the NHC, in ways that have not been previously experienced. Similarly, Isa 30:18–26 presents a transformed NHC whose waters and celestial lights surpass humanity’s current state of being.

5.2. The Inclusion of Animals

This plan for the NHC’s flourishing includes animals. Unlike other voices that envision the removal of wild animals for human flourishing, such as Ezekiel, the voices of Hosea and First Isaiah pronounce both the inclusion and the transformation of the animal kingdom.¹⁰⁰¹ On the other hand, the only allusions to animals in the passages from Amos include the presentation of YHWH as a lion (1:2) and YHWH’s relationship with the sea serpent (as mentioned above); there is no relationship between humanity and animals in Amos.

In Hosea, the backdrop of cosmic punishment is upended by the eschatological, three-way covenant in 2:18–25. The covenant YHWH enacts includes the animals as active co-partners, designated by the proleptic use of “them” and 2:20) לָ). The inauguration of this covenant instils blessings (2:21–22) that extend to the NHC. The elimination of warfare and gift of the marriage blessings have implications on the NHC’s flourishing, including the care

¹⁰⁰¹ See, for instance, Ezek 34:23–31; 37:26; cf. Lev 26:6b.

of the animals. This is the reversal of the judgement humanity's sin causes against the animals in Hos 4:3.

First Isaiah furthers this eschatological vision for the care of animals. Isaiah 11:1–10 presents a world in which animals demonstrate flourishing relationships with YHWH, with each other, and with humanity. In Isa 32:14 and Isa 34:8–17, YHWH cares for animals by driving sinful humanity away. Like the vision presented in Isa 11:1–10, there is no hostility among even the most predatory animals. While a counterpart to Isa 34:1–17 in many ways, Isa 35:6–7 nevertheless surprisingly preserves the wild animals in the eschatological vision: the jackals receive water as their habitation becomes a resting place for God's people.

5.3. The Scope of the Renewal

Just as the judgement indicated a universal scope, so does the eschatological renewal of the NHC. This is demonstrated by the passages' sweeping cosmic imagery, denoting all of the NHC everywhere, as well as the location of Israel as an epicentre of the world. Amos' eschatological vision presents renewal explicitly for the nation of Israel, yet this restoration also extends to Edom and "all the nations over which [YHWH's] name is called" (9:12). This "reverse of the reversal" first restores God's people before unfurling to the rest of the cosmos.

Hosea 2:18–25 presents a "covenant of peace" which includes the entire cosmological order, indicated by the merism of animals who are co-participants in the covenant and co-recipients of the marriage blessings. The chain of fertility blessings (2:23–25) extends from the heavens to the earth. Israel is identified as the initial recipient of these blessings, which in turn extend to the cosmos.

Perhaps First Isaiah contains the clearest indications that YHWH's eschatological renewal for the NHC is cosmological. Isaiah 11:9–10 portrays YHWH's holy mountain as accessible to all nations, not just Israel. This vision extends to the earth and sea, a merism that indicates the entire cosmos (v. 9). Surprisingly, Isa 35:2 includes Lebanon as one of the loci for eschatological renewal, a territory that Israel never successfully conquered. This inclusion of Lebanon in both First Isaiah's judgement (33:9) and renewal sequences (35:2) indicates an inclusive scope beyond Israel's borders. Finally, while Isa 30:18–26 specifically mentions the "inhabitants of Zion" as the recipients of YHWH's eschatological blessings, the effect includes both the renewal of the sun and the moon, phenomena that the entire world would experience.

5.4. Eschatological Partnership

Each of the eschatological visions throughout Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah present varied partnerships between YHWH, humanity, and the NHC for the renewal of the NHC (which then renews humanity). While the combination of partner members varies across eschatological passages, it is clear YHWH, humanity, and the NHC are intricately connected not only in judgement but also in salvation. By working together, these three entities seek *shalom* not just for their own self-interest, but for each other.

Overall, YHWH is presented as the primary instigator of the eschatological renewal. In Isaiah, YHWH's spirit is the catalyst for this new reality (11:2; 32:15). The other passages describe God's initiative as God grants mercy and justice to God's people (Amos 9:11–12, 14–15; Hos 2:20–22; Isa 30:18–19; 34:4). Finally, God initiates the new salvific event by returning fertility to the NHC (Hos 2:14–15, 22–25; Isa 30:23–24; 35:1–2).

Two passages in First Isaiah present the NHC as an entity who partners with humanity to vanquish humanity's enemies. In this way, the NHC is humanity's protector, a stark contrast to the ways in which she was humanity's judge and executioner. In Isa 30:25, streams gather into a fierce torrent that topples the towers of the enemy, generating a victory for God's people. In Isa 34:11–17, wild animals gather in the territory of the enemies of both God and God's people, preventing them from returning. The adversaries no longer pose a threat; their power has been decentralised, enabling God's people to flourish (Isa 35:1–10). In Hos 2:23–25, the NHC does not vanquish enemies but does vanquish infertility from the cosmos. In her dialogue with YHWH, the NHC unleashes a chain of events that restores YHWH's fertility blessings to YHWH's people.

Nonetheless, humanity is more frequently presented as the active partner in the relationship with the NHC. This is often indicated by the presence of a Davidic figure who inaugurates the new eschatological era. In the examined passages, the messianic ruler is most clearly identifiable in First Isaiah (Isa 11:1–5; 30:20; 32:15–20; cf. 32:1).¹⁰⁰² While no Davidic figure explicitly appears in the eschatological passages from Amos or Hosea, they may nonetheless implicitly indicate the presence of such a ruler. Amos 9:11 references the “booth of David,” which implies the Davidic dynasty, and Hos 2:21 mentions virtues frequently associated with a messianic ruler, specifically justice and righteousness.

Other passages in the corpus demonstrate action not reliant on the presence of a ruler but on the part of humanity as a whole. In Amos 9:11–15, the overabundance of crops communicates a harmonious relationship between humanity and the NHC. Humanity no longer exploits the NHC, and the NHC provides humanity not with curses but with life-giving sustenance. Further, both YHWH and humanity partner together eschatologically for the

¹⁰⁰² If, indeed, the identity of the “teacher” in 30:20 is a Davidic king. See comments on passage above.

sake of the NHC. YHWH reverses the judgement, but it is humanity who tends to the NHC and nurtures her flourishing. In this way, humanity reverses the sin they placed upon her throughout the book of Amos. No longer does the NHC suffer because of humanity's sinful choices; rather, YHWH, humanity, and the NHC collaborate together in an ongoing cosmic drama.

As partners in the eschatological covenant in Hosea 2:18–25, all three entities have responsibility toward each other. Humanity, however, is answerable for the breach in all of the interconnected relationships. God's people, thus, have a choice between the reversal of the NHC (4:1–3) or the restoration of the NHC (2:18–20).

Finally, First Isaiah envisions humanity's leadership over the NHC as the activator of the NHC's renewal. Humanity's return to their covenant with YHWH, indicated by righteousness and faithfulness, activates a changed cosmos in which rain returns to God's people (30:18–24) and animals peacefully interact with each other and with humanity (11:1–10). The transformed human community guides the transformed animals in this new reality (11:6–8). Humanity has the sacred responsibility of submitting to God's transformation so as to aid in the renewal of the entire cosmological order.

6. Conclusions

Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah exhibit cohesion in their presentation of dynamic relationships between YHWH, humanity, and the NHC. Collectively, they present a relational world in which all entities are interrelated, even in eschatological visions of the future. In this interrelated world, YHWH works from within a committed relationship with both humanity and the NHC. At the same time, humanity also has a relationship with the NHC. Humanity, however, is not always committed; humanity's relationship with YHWH impacts

the relationship they have with the NHC. As indicated above, the NHC can be affected by humanity's actions in both judgement and eschatological renewal.

Although the texts demonstrate a connection between humanity's sinful actions and the NHC, the exact nature and impact of this link is often unclear. Some passages contend that the effect on the NHC is the result of covenant violation while other passages make no contention of a direct link between the two. Nevertheless, all the passages indicate some sort of link, even if the link is ambiguous. Moreover, the prophetic voices are diverse regarding the scope of the judgement upon the NHC: the NHC is harmed on both a local and a global scale. At the same time, the local scopes of judgement may be theologically understood to encompass the entire world. Since Israel is the axis of God's dwelling place, what affects her overflows to the rest of the cosmos. Indeed, other entities outside Israel, such as Lebanon, Edom, and "the nations," can also bring judgement upon the NHC via their sins. The entire world is responsible for the wellbeing of the NHC, and the prophetic visions of the future encourage God's people to move from their patterns of sin to covenant faithfulness, a change which inaugurates the flourishing of the NHC. The eschatological visions urge God's people to commit themselves alongside YHWH to the wellbeing of the NHC.

Because the visions of wholeness vividly contrast with the communities' present state of deterioration, the prophetic voices alert the listening communities to the very real effects their sin has upon the NHC. All three prophetic voices describe the NHC's "mourning," an action suggesting solidarity with YHWH's pain, humanity's destruction, or perhaps her own fate. This mourning echoes the prophets' own voices of anguish, presenting the NHC as a prophetic voice herself. Her grief prophetically criticizes humanity's actions and permeates the cosmological order, creating a rippling effect of cataclysmic

events. While the NHC is occasionally presented as a passive victim of YHWH's punishment, more often she is presented as an active partner in judgement. Sometimes the NHC acts when YHWH calls her, but she also notably acts independently of YHWH (Hos 4:1–3; Isa 24:4–6; 30:25; 33:7–9). YHWH intentionally structured the cosmos so that the NHC possesses agency, indicating YHWH's commitment to the NHC as a co-partner in judgement. Further, both these active and passive roles reveal a system of retribution within the corpus; YHWH's actions and the NHC's actions put the consequences of human action into motion.¹⁰⁰³ Thus, the NHC *must* act in response to humanity's sin because of the governance of this judgement mechanism. Her actions vary amongst the prophetic voices, yet the consistent responses include the opposite actions of flooding and drying up, the latter of which produces infertility. Overall, the actions present imagery of a state of de-creation and *primaeval* chaos—conditions inhospitable to humans. These cataclysmic responses seem like self-harm, but the judgement actions are also a defence mechanism against humanity's actions in two ways. First, the tumultuous responses create unviable conditions for humans, and they are removed. Their absence abets the healing the NHC. Second, these drastic effects demand humanity's repentance. The NHC forces humanity to join her in collective destruction as a means of intervention for them both.

In light of this interrelated world YHWH has created, a world in which humanity's sin has devastating effects on the NHC, the selected prophetic texts culminate with eschatological themes that complement the oracles of judgement. The eschatological passages reveal a God who is committed to the flourishing of the NHC. Often, YHWH is the main actor who inaugurates the NHC's restoration. In addition, YHWH created the NHC in such a way that she is capable of more than dispensing judgement; the eschatological

¹⁰⁰³ See Koch, "Doctrine of Retribution," 57–69.

passages demonstrate that YHWH's internal design also empowers the NHC to initiate the restoration of the entire cosmos. In YHWH's commitment to the cosmos, YHWH invites the NHC to partner in eschatological renewal.

The judgement and eschatological themes mirror each other in several ways. First, the retribution and healing passages together present YHWH's created world as an interrelated web. Both humanity and the NHC have the capacity to either harm or heal each other. Second, humanity harms the NHC then inaugurates healing in one of two ways: via their just leadership or via their collective return to covenant righteousness.¹⁰⁰⁴ Third, both the judgement and eschatological passages present an effect on the NHC that is cosmological. Since the scope of the devastation against the NHC is universal, so too must the renewal of the NHC include the entire cosmos.

In other ways the judgement and eschatological passages are reversals of each other. In several instances, humanity harms the NHC, but the NHC produces renewal without the assistance of humanity. Many times, there are no requirements placed on humanity to warrant their salvation (Amos 9:11-15; Hos 2:16-17; 2:18-25; Isa 32:9-20; 35:1-10). In addition, the eschatological passages present restoration that far surpasses the devastation induced during the judgement sequences. The visions of a new future do not signal a return to the conditions of the past but point to a transformed cosmos that is superior, perhaps even superlative to YHWH's original creation. The NHC continues YHWH's creative activity by innovating new ideals of fertility and flourishing. In this way, the NHC is a co-creator alongside YHWH.

Part of this transformed cosmos involves animals, both domestic and wild.

Collectively, these three prophetic voices present a future in which even the dangerous

¹⁰⁰⁴ These actions are the case only in passages where humanity has input into the eschatological age. Not all passages indicate humanity's actions are the catalyst for eschatological activity.

animals are not banished from God's community but are transformed alongside humanity. Wild animals are invited to participate as equal co-partners, perhaps even the most prominent party member, in the new covenant of peace YHWH makes with humanity. The animals exhibit peaceful relations with each other and with humanity while God provides for even the most elusive and threatening within the animal kingdom. These animals "know" YHWH, and as such YHWH remains committed to their flourishing. All creatures are invited to participate in this new cosmological order wherein YHWH's values of righteousness, justice, faithfulness, and mercy are exhibited by all—humans and the NHC alike (Hos 2:21–22; cf. Hos 4:1; Isa 11:1–10).

Prophetic portrayals of the future function not as predictions but as modes of inspiring appropriate response in the present. All three prophetic voices invite the listening community to consider the ways in which they participate in this interrelated cosmos alongside YHWH and the NHC. God's people have the unique position within God's world to affect the vitality of the NHC through their interactions with God and each other. The eschatological visions remind God's people that God has not abandoned God's relationship with the NHC, and neither should humanity. Through these prophetic voices, YHWH invites YHWH's people to participate in the continuation and completion of the salvific creation of the NHC.

"The time is surely coming," YHWH says in Amos' closing eschatological vision, when "they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit" (9:13–15). This ideal, future reality was at odds with the Israelites' state of exile, yet YHWH invites them to hope and imagine beyond the limits of their broken context. In this way, the prophets challenge God's people to hold two truths together in tension: the promised truth of a hopeful future and the present truth of a tired, splintered reality

wrought by humanity's sin. While the prophets certainly do not deny the present reality, they nevertheless urge the listening community to choose the truth more worthy of their commitment: God, humanity, and the NHC can labour together to usher in a new reality of flourishing that extends beyond Eden to a recreated cosmos, because "YHWH your God" declares it so (Amos 9:15). This shift to the singular personal pronoun "your" at the very end of Amos' eschatological vision reminds the listening community that they are actors in this cosmic drama. This direct address to God's people not only invites them into this literary world, but also invites them to imagine, labour toward, and realise a time when God places the final parenthesis on the destructive forces of chaos. May these days come.

7. Considerations for Further Research

This study examined the theological themes presented by several traditional eighth-century prophetic voices related to the NHC. While this study covered numerous salient passages across three different books and set the voices in dialogue with each other, it is clear that much more can be discovered within this corpus of texts, let alone within the entire prophetic corpus. The application of other methods not conducted in this study, such as rhetorical criticism, may yield different or additional conclusions to these texts. Rhetorical criticism could provide a means of tracking the development of these various theological threads throughout Israel's history, in the eighth century and beyond.

Recently, there has arisen an interest in the thematic connections within the Book of the Twelve.¹⁰⁰⁵ Since there were various connecting themes concerning the NHC amongst Amos and Hosea, there are certainly more NHC threads throughout the remainder of the

¹⁰⁰⁵ See, for instance, Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, eds., *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*.

Book.¹⁰⁰⁶ How is the NHC presented across the course of these twelve voices and what does this reveal about theologies concerning the NHC? With regard to First Isaiah, themes could be compared with the remainder of the book, with special consideration for how the second half of Isaiah characterises the NHC from a post-exilic perspective.

Since the study was confined to Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, it would be intriguing to set these three voices in dialogue with the sixth- and seventh-century prophets in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, this study discovered disagreement among the prophetic voices regarding the presence of wild animals in covenants of peace. The eighth-century texts collectively present a reality in which all animals are welcome in YHWH's transformed world, while later texts present a world in which the animals are expelled. What circumstances impact these different positions? What other differences might there be amongst these prophetic voices concerning the NHC? How might there also be agreement across time and space? Intertextual work across more of the prophetic corpus would surely yield fascinating results.

One outcome of this study includes the application of an ecological hermeneutic to the reading of these prophetic texts. Throughout the history of biblical interpretation, the Hebrew Bible has primarily been read through the limited lens of anthropocentrism. With a few selected texts, this study highlighted the importance of an ecological reading of the Hebrew Bible and welcomes further application and development of this particular hermeneutic.

The exegetical task of examining these texts was conducted with an awareness of the global crisis threatening our contemporary setting. Current developments threaten not just humanity, but the NHC as well. While this study did not consider the ways in which these

¹⁰⁰⁶ Nogalski, for instance, notes Hos 1 and Mal 4 form an *inclusio* with common themes, one of which is the NHC. See James D. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (Berlin: De Gruyter), 2012.

prophetic texts may ethically inform our environmental practices today, these texts may illuminate our approach to some of our modern ethical dilemmas. Several prophetic texts, for instance, describe the direct link between humanity's environmental abuse of the NHC and the NHC's retribution (Amos 8:4–6; Hos 2:20; 4:1–3). In addition, the prophetic emphasis on the NHC's unique, eschatological role challenges our modern emphasis on human activity, which regulates the NHC to objects of human activity. How might our partnership with the NHC change were she to be viewed as a subject, an entity with a voice and relational capacity? While imposing twenty-first-century problems onto these ancient texts is inefficacious at the least and dangerous at the most, further research may reveal points of continuity between the biblical texts and our current ethics concerning the NHC. The prophetic traditions of Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah can invoke within us an imagination for the present realisation of God's world as it is to come. Their voices remind us of God's invitation to partner with God and the NHC to welcome such a world.

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Appendix: Criteria for the Selected Passages

The introductory material listed the following criteria for the selection of passages from Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah:

1. The passage concerns the NHC as an entity
2. The passage demonstrates a connection between humanity and the NHC
3. The passage depicts a relationship between the NHC and YHWH
4. The passage presents the NHC as possessing agency
5. The passage considers the NHC's eschatological role and/or effect.

Book	Passage	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
AMOS	1:2	1, 2, 3, 4	X	X	X	X	
	4:6–9	1, 2, 3	X	X	X		
	8:4–14	1, 2, 3, 5	X	X	X		X
	9:1–6	1, 2, 3, 4	X	X	X	X	
	9:11–15	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	X	X	X
HOSEA	2:4–17	1, 2, 3	X	X	X		
	2:18–25	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	X	X	X
	4:1–3	1, 2, 3, 4	X	X	X	X	
ISAIAH	11:1–10	1, 2, 3, 5	X	X	X		X
	24:1–20	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	X	X	X
	30:18–26	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	X	X	X
	32:9–20	1, 2, 3, 5	X	X	X		X
	33:7–9	1, 2, 4	X	X		X	
	34:1–17	1, 2, 3, 5	X	X	X		X
	35:1–10	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	X	X	X

Here is how the above criteria correspond with each of the selected passages:

Figure 2. Chart of Textual Criteria