

ISRAELIAN HEBREW IN THE BOOK OF AMOS

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1.0. The Location of Tekoa

The vast majority of scholars continue to identify the home village of the prophet Amos with Tekoa¹ on the edge of the Judean wilderness—even though there is little or no evidence to support this assertion. A minority of scholars, the present writer included, identifies the home village of Amos with Tekoa in the Galilee—an assertion for which, as we shall see, there is considerable solid evidence.

1.1. Southern Tekoa

The former village is known from several references in Chronicles, especially 2 Chron. 11.6, where it is mentioned, alongside Bethlehem, in a list of cities fortified by Rehoboam in Judah. See also 2 Chron. 20.20, with reference to the journey by Jehoshaphat and his entourage לְמִדְבַּר תְּקוּעַ ‘to the wilderness of Tekoa’.² The genealogical records in 1 Chron. 2.24 and 4.5, referencing a

¹ More properly *Teqoaʿ* (or even *Təqōāʿ*), but I will continue to use the time-honoured English spelling of Tekoa.

² See also the reference to the ‘wilderness of Tekoa’ in 1 Macc. 9.33.

Judahite named Tekoa, may also encode the name of this village. The name of the site lives on in the name of the Arab village of Tuqu‘ and the adjoining ruin of Khirbet Tequ‘a, about 8 km south of Bethlehem.³

1.2. Northern Tekoa

Northern Tekoa, by contrast, is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible, but its existence is well known from rabbinic sources.⁴ See especially T. Shevi‘it 7.15, where the village is mentioned in connection with Gush Ḥalav. In addition, northern Tekoa is most likely the reference in the saying recorded in התְּיָוִי קָטָה אֶלְפָּה לְשֶׁמֶן ‘Tekoa is the best for oil’ (M. Menahot 8.3 MS Kaufmann), תקועה אלפא לשמן ‘Tekoa is the best for oil’ (T. Menahot 9.5 MS Vienna).⁵ While both of the following passages require elucidation, note the (probable) connection between first-rate olive-oil and the tribe of Asher recorded in מֵאֲשֶׁר שְׁמִנָּה לְחֶמֶוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מִעֲדֵי־יִמְלֹךְ: ‘{from} Asher,⁶ his bread is rich-with-oil, and he gives-forth royal

³ As so often in historical-geographical research, the first modern scholar to make the identification was Edward Robinson (1841, II:182–84). For the evidence of the Madaba map, see Donner (1992, 60).

⁴ See the convenient survey in Klein (1938, I:157).

⁵ For discussion, see Graetz (1865, 476).

⁶ I here follow the majority of scholars by removing the initial letter *mem* of this verse and attaching it to the last word of the previous verse, with the sense of ‘their heel’ (see already the Septuagint).

dainties' (Gen. 49.20)⁷ and טָבַל בְּשֶׁמֶן רַגְלֹו: 'he dips his foot in oil' (Deut. 33.24).⁸

Above I stated that northern Tekoa is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible (for example, in the lists of toponyms in the book of Joshua), but closer inspection reveals several references thereto. Jer. 6.1 connects Tekoa and Bet ha-Kerem, with the implication that both are located in the north. As evil (that is, the Babylonians) approaches from the north (see also Jer. 1.13–14; 4.6; 6.22; etc.), the prophet calls for shofar-blasts and fire-signals to warn of the impending danger. Bet ha-Kerem refers to the valley in the northern part of Israel, running on an east-west axis, separating the Upper Galilee to the north and the Lower Galilee to the south, for which see בְּקַעַת בֵּית כְּרֵם 'the valley of Bet-Kerem' (M. Middot 3.4; M. Niddah 2.7 MS Kaufmann), with reference to red soil. See also T. Niddah 3.11, with mention of בְּקַעַת בֵּית כְּרֵם 'the valley of Bet-Kerem' alongside three other Galilean valleys (Sakhne, Yotvat, and Ginnosar).⁹ The former (that is, Tekoa), accordingly, must be identified with northern (and not southern) Tekoa.¹⁰

⁷ Here and throughout this article, my translation technique tends to be hyperliteral; plus, I employ certain devices, for example, hyphenation when two or more English words are required to render a single Hebrew word.

⁸ As we shall see below, one of the possible locations for northern Tekoa is within the territory of Asher.

⁹ In general, see Klein (1939, I:15). In a different context see also Wayyiqra³ Rabba 30.1 (689:2).

¹⁰ I realise that the vast majority of commentators on Jeremiah, if not all of them, associate Tekoa in Jer. 6.1 with Tekoa in the wilderness of

The second biblical passage is the most famous of all, namely, the story in 2 Samuel 14: the wise woman of Tekoa, fetched by Joab to speak to David to present her parable before the king, hails from northern Tekoa, as may be observed via the Israelian dialectal features in her speech.¹¹ See also B. *Menahot* 85b, where the sages identify the home of the wise woman of Tekoa with northern Tekoa, located specifically in the tribe of Asher (and see further below).

As to the specific location, based mainly on literary references, historical geographers such as Gustaf Dalman, Shmuel Klein, and Michael Avi-Yonah have identified northern Tekoa with Khirbet Shema^c, located on an eastern spur of Mt. Meron (Jebel Jarmaq).¹² The excavators of the site, led by Eric Meyers, accept the identification.¹³

2.0. The Tekoa of Amos

The foregoing brings us to Amos 1.1, the only mention of Tekoa in the Bible not yet discussed. The book opens as follows, with the first part of the superscription: דְּבַרְיִי עֲמוּס אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה בְּנִקְדִים מִתְּקוּעַ:

Judah and Bet ha-Kerem with a place near Jerusalem; see, e.g., Holladay (1986, 205); McKane (1986, 139–40); Lundbom (1999, 416); Fretheim (2002, 119–20). These identifications thereby require considerable geographical gymnastics, for example, by assuming that the prophet already is warning sites to the south of Jerusalem, or by assuming a Babylonian approach from the south (starting in Lachish, presumably), even though Jer. 6.1 explicitly states מִצָּפוֹן ‘from the north’.

¹¹ See Rendsburg (2014, 166).

¹² For references, see Meyers, et al. (1976, 11).

¹³ See the discussion in Meyers, et al. (1976, 11–16).

‘the words of Amos, who was among the stockmen from Tekoa’. In Amos 7.14, the prophet refers to himself as a בוקר ‘herder’ and a בולס שקמים ‘tender of sycomores’. Notwithstanding the apparent connection between the former term and בקר ‘cattle’, in the next verse, 7.15, Amos states that God took him מאחרי הצאן ‘from behind the flock’, implying his work with sheep and goats. The more crucial term, of course, is his latter occupation, בולס שקמים ‘tender of sycomores’ (with reference to one who notches the sycomore figs to enhance the ripening process).¹⁴

The problem, recognised by all, including those who would place Amos in southern Tekoa, is that sycomore trees do not and cannot grow in the Judaeian wilderness. Note the following two passages especially:

- (1) ויהו המלך את־הכסף בירושלם כַּאֲבָנִים וְאֵת הָאֲרָזִים נָתַן כְּשִׁקְמִים אֲשֶׁר־
בְּשִׁפְלָה לְרֹב:

‘and the king made the silver in Jerusalem (plentiful) as the stones, and the cedars he made plentiful like the sycomores in the Shephelah.’ (1 Kgs 10.27)—with sycomore trees associated with the Shephelah¹⁵

- (2) מִכְּפַר חֲנַנְיָהּ וְלִמְעֵלָן כָּל שְׂאִינֹ מִגְדַל שִׁיקְמִים גְּלִיל הָעֲלִיֹן מִכְּפַר חֲנַנְיָהּ
וְלִמְטֹן כָּל שְׁהוּא מִגְדַל שִׁיקְמִים גְּלִיל הַתְּחָתוֹן

‘from Kefar Ḥananiah upward, wherever one does not raise sycomores, it is the Upper Galilee; from Kefar Ḥananiah downward, wherever one raises sycomores, it is the Lower Galilee.’ (M. Shevi‘it 9.2)

¹⁴ For a thorough survey of the terms, see Steiner (2003).

¹⁵ See also 1 Chron. 27.28; 2 Chron. 1.15; 9.27.

The presence or absence of sycamore trees is cited as a natural discriminant between Upper Galilee (which lacks them) and Lower Galilee (where the trees grow).

True, there is mention of a sycamore tree in Jericho in Luke 19.4 (the story of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector), but we can ascribe the presence of the tree there to the lush oasis which makes Jericho possible.

Those who would place Amos in southern Tekoa, on the edge of the Judean wilderness, explain the difficulty by assuming that he tended to sycamore trees in the Shephelah during the ‘off-season’ (as if those engaged in animal husbandry ever have an ‘off-season’) or that he took his flocks with him over a longer-than-average distance.¹⁶

All difficulties are removed, though, if we identify the Tekoa of Amos with the village of that name in the Galilee.¹⁷ Such was stated long ago in Pseudo-Epiphanius, *De vitis prophetarum* (*Lives of the Prophets*), with specific mention of the territory of Zebulun,¹⁸ and then in the Middle Ages by David Qimḥi, with specific mention of the territory of Asher (no doubt derived from B. Menaḥot 85b, mentioned above).¹⁹

¹⁶ See the discussion in Rosenbaum (1990, 49–50); for a more recent opinion promoting this idea, see Steiner (2003, 101–2).

¹⁷ True, if the equation of northern Tekoa with Khirbet Shema^c is accepted (see above), this places us in the Upper Galilee, but only ca. 5 km north of Kefar Ḥananiah.

¹⁸ For the original, see Migne (1864, 405–6).

¹⁹ For these two sources, see Graetz (1865, 476) and Speier (1953, 305–6).

3.0. Amos as a Northern Prophet

In addition to the two sources just cited (with the latter one, David Qimhi, better known), one occasionally finds a modern scholar who argues for a northern homeland of the prophet Amos. The most noteworthy effort in this direction is that of S. N. Rosenbaum (1990). Two significant findings are repeated here.

3.1. Amos Accused of Treason

In the famous passage in Amos 7.10, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam II of Israel accusing Amos of treason: קִשֶׁר עָלְיָיָד עָמוֹס 'Amos has *qāšar*-ed against you'. In a thorough lexical study, Rosenbaum (1990, 37–39) demonstrated that the verbs and nouns derived from ק-ש-ר *q-š-r* are used in the Bible only when the 'citizen' of one country conspires against his or her own king. A foreigner (which would be Amos's status, had he hailed from Tekoa of Judah) cannot *q-š-r* against the king of his resident land. Examples follow:

- 2 Sam. 15.12 Absalom against David
- 2 Sam. 15.31 Ahitophel with Absalom
- 1 Kgs 15.27 Baasha against Nadab
- 1 Kgs 16.9 Zimri against Elah
- 2 Kgs 9.14 Jehu against Joram
- 2 Kgs 10.9 Jehu against the House of Ahab
- 2 Kgs 11.14 Athaliah accuses Joash קִשֶׁר קִשֶׁר 'treason, treason'
- 2 Kgs 12.21 servants against Joash
- 2 Kgs 14.19 unnamed Judahites against Amaziah
- 2 Kgs 15 (4x) in northern kingdom
- 2 Kgs 21.23 servants against Amon

As such, Amos must be a ‘citizen’ of the northern kingdom of Israel, implying that he hails from Tekoa in the Galilee.

3.2. Amos Instructed to Flee to Judah

In another famous passage, Amos 7.12, Amaziah orders Amos to *b-r-h* to Judah: חֲזֵה לְךָ בְּרַחֲלֶךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה ‘seer, go, flee to the land of Judah’. In a second lexical study, Rosenbaum (1990, 35–37) demonstrated that the verb *b-r-h* always refers to fleeing from one’s own country to a foreign land. Examples include:

- Gen. 27.43 Jacob to Harran
- Exod. 2.15 Moses to Midian
- Judg. 9.21 Jotham from Shechem to Be’er
- Judg. 11.3 Jephthah to the land of Tov
- 2 Sam. 4.3 people of Be’erot to Gath
- 2 Sam. 13.37 Absalom to Geshur
- 1 Kgs 11.17 Hadad to Egypt
- 1 Kgs 11.23–24 Rezon from Zobah to Damascus
- 1 Kgs 11.40 Jeroboam to Egypt
- Jer. 26.21 Uriah to Egypt
- Jon. 1.3 Jonah to Tarshish

As such, for Amos to *b-r-h* ‘flee’ to Judah, per Amaziah’s instructions, his home must have been located in the northern kingdom of Israel.

4.0. Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Amos

The first three sections of this article serve as necessary background material, in order to establish the fact (that is, from my perspective) that Amos hails from northern Tekoa, a village in

the Lower Galilee somewhere in the general Asher-Zebulun region. This finding explains why so many Israelian Hebrew (IH) lexical features appear in the prophet's diction.

The single scholar who laid the foundation for this analysis is Chaim Rabin, in his classic article *לשונם של עמוס והושע* (1981). Notwithstanding the title, almost the entire article deals with Hosea, in which, truth be told, there are many more northern features than are present in Amos. The present article, accordingly, picks up the mantle of identifying northern features in the book of Amos, adumbrated by Rabin forty years ago, even if he treated them only marginally.

In what follows, I present the IH features in outline form,²⁰ which should suffice to permit the reader to follow the analysis. For the shorthand references to the dictionaries, translations, etc., see the abbreviations incorporated into the References section at the end of this article.²¹

4.1. IH Features in Amos 6

For reasons that are unclear, Amos 6 contains the greatest concentration of IH features. On the one hand, this may simply be a coincidence. On the other hand, the doom and downfall of the kingdom of Israel is expressed more strongly in this chapter than

²⁰ In both §§4.1 and 4.2, the individual items are presented in order of their appearance in the book of Amos. Some may bear greater weight and have greater significance than others, though I leave that possibility aside for the nonce.

²¹ Note also MH = Mishnaic Hebrew, which to my mind constitutes a northern spoken dialect of the post-biblical period (Rendsburg 2003), and QH = Qumran Hebrew.

elsewhere in the book. Possibly the prophet sought to drive home the point more strongly with the rhetorical flourish created by his employment of lexemes associated especially closely with the northern dialect. While this is a subjective judgment, it may, nonetheless, explain the high concentration of IH traits in the chapter. Note further that all six of the following items are elucidated with recourse specifically to Samaritan Aramaic (with only an occasional nod to other dialects). Did these usages remain in the land for hundreds of years, even after the destruction of the northern kingdom, only to resurface in Samaritan Aramaic centuries later?

4.1.1.1. נ-ד-י 'bring'

- (3) הַמְנַדִּים לְיוֹם רָע וְתִגִּישׁוּן שְׂבַת חָמָס:
 '(you) who bring the day of evil, and you bring-near the seat of violence.' (Amos 6.3)²²

Note the parallelism with נ-ג-ש (*hif'il*) 'bring near', hence in Sam. Aram. נ-ד-י 'bring' (Tal 2000, II:503–4), for example:

- (4) וְהִבִּיאָה לִּי וְאֶכְלָה
 'and bring me that I may eat' (Gen. 27.4) || ותנדי לי ואיכל
 (Sam. Tg.)
- (5) וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו הַשָּׂדֶה לְצוּד צִיד לְהִבְיֵא:
 'and Esau went to the field to hunt game to bring.' (Gen. 27.5) || ואזל עשו לברה למצוד ציד למנדאה (Sam. Tg.)

²² Elsewhere only אָמְרוּ אֶחְיִיכֶם שְׂנֵאִיכֶם מְנַדִּיכֶם 'your brothers hate you, cast you out' (Isa. 66.5), where the verb derived from נ-ד-י means 'cast away', for which see Ugaritic *n-d-y* 'emit, throw, take off (clothing)', MH נידוי 'excommunication'.

4.1.2. סְרוּחַ ‘sinful, transgressing’ (of humans only in Amos)

- (6) וְסִרְחִים עַל-עַרְשׂוֹתָם
 ‘and transgressing on their couches’ (Amos 6.4)
- (7) וְסָר מִרְזַח סְרוּחִים:
 ‘and the *mirzeah* of the transgressing-ones shall fall-aside’
 (Amos 6.7)

Sample renderings: ‘stretch’ (RSV) / ‘loll’ (NJV) / ‘loungue’ (Alter 2019). Sam. Aram. ס-ר-ח ‘sin, be guilty, transgress’ (Tal 2000, II:610–11):

- (8) הֲאֵף תִּסְפֶּה צְדִיק עִם-רָשָׁע:
 ‘will you indeed sweep-away the innocent with the guilty?’
 (Gen. 18.23) || הקשט תסתפה זכאה עם סרוחה (Sam. Tg.)

Vulgate rendering of סְרוּחַ: *lascivitis* (v. 4) / *lascivientium* (v. 7).

4.1.3. פ-ר-ט ‘sing, recite, pronounce’

- (9) הַפְּרָטִים עַל-פִּי הַנְּבֵל בְּדָוִד חֲשָׁבוּ לָהֶם כְּלֵי-שִׁיר:
 ‘those who recite to the tune of the harp, (and) like David
 devise for themselves vessels of song.’ (Amos 6.5)

Sam. Aram. (Tal 2000, II:699 s.v. פ-ר-ט, with cross-reference at II:702 s.v. פ-ר-ט), with several instances in *Tibat Marqe*. Montgomery (1906, 51–52) cited a Samaritan Hebrew hymn:²³

²³ According to *Ma’agarim* database of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, the root with this meaning was revived in Payṭanic Hebrew.

- (10) אל נתן לו תשבחון, אל נפרט לו כל שיראן
 ‘God – let us give to him praise, God – let us recite to him
 all songs’

4.1.4. ת-א-ב ‘despise’

- (11) מְתָאֵב אֲנִכִּי אֶת־צִיּוֹן יַעֲקֹב וְאַרְמְנֹתָיו שְׂנֵאתִי
 ‘I despise the pride of Jacob, and his citadels I hate’ (Amos
 6.8)

ת-ע-ב (II) ‘despise’ (hapax), weakening of guttural from ת-ע-ב.²⁴
 Cf. Sam. Heb., with weakening of the gutturals, including ע > א.
 Ben-Hayyim (2000, 38): “Fluctuations of אהה"ע in SP provide
 clear evidence that no later than the end of the Second Temple
 period the guttural consonants began to weaken.”

4.1.5. ש-ר-ף ‘smear with resin’

- (12) וְנִשְׂאוּ דוֹדוֹ וּמִסְרְפוֹ לְהוֹצִיא עֲצָמָיו מִן־הַבַּיִת
 ‘and his kinsman shall carry him and smear-him-with-resin,
 to remove (his) bones from the house’ (Amos 6.10)

G. R. Driver and E. Y. Kutscher independently; see Paul (1991,
 215, n. 28). MH noun: שֶׁרֶף / סֶרֶף ‘resin’ – 7x Mishna / 11x Tosefta;
 MH verb: ש-ר-ף ‘smear with resin’ (T. Miqwa’ot 6.21). Sam. Aram.
 ש-ר-ף ‘press, squeeze’ (Tal 2000, II:612–13):²⁵

²⁴ The connotation of the homonymous root ת-א-ב (I) ‘long for’ (2x in Psalm 119) does not fit here.

²⁵ Both the MH verb (1x: T. Miqwa’ot 6.21) and the Sam. Aram. verb occur in the G-stem (*qal/pe’al*), while the form in Amos 6.10 appears as a D-stem participle. The solution to his problem is to re-analyse וּמִסְרְפוֹ

- (13) זִיתִים יִהְיוּ לְךָ בְּכָל-גְּבוּלְךָ וְשֶׁמֶן לֹא תִסֹּף
 ‘you will have olive trees throughout your territory, but
 you will not anoint yourselves with oil’ (Deut. 28.40) ||
 זיתים יהוון לך בכל תחומך ומשח לא תסרף
 (Sam. Tg.)
- (14) שָׂרֵף קֵטֶף || ‘balsam’ (Gen. 37.25) || שרף קטף (Tg. Ps.-J.)

4.1.6. רְסִיסִים ‘splinters’²⁶

- (15) וְהִכָּה הַבַּיִת הַגָּדוֹל רְסִיסִים
 ‘and He shall smite the great house (into) splinters’ (Amos
 6.11)

Aramaic ר-ס-ס ‘crush’ (most dialects), e.g.,

- (16) וּמְעוֹד וְכַתוּת וְנָתוּק וְכָרוּת לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה
 ‘And anything with its testes bruised or crushed or torn or
 cut you will not offer to YHWH.’ (Lev. 22.24) ||
 וְדַמְרִים וְדַרְסִים || וְדַשְׁלִיף וְדַגִּזִּיר לֹא תִקְרִיבוּן קִדָּם יוֹי
 (Tg. Onq.)
- (17) וּבְרָב גְּאוּנָה תִהְרָס קִמֶּיךָ
 ‘In your great triumph you break your opponents’ (Exod.
 15.7) || ובסגי יכלותך רסרסתה מרגזיך (Sam. Tg.)
- (18) כִּי הִרְסוּ תִהְרָסוּם וְשִׁבְרָם תִּשְׁבְּרָם מֵעַבְתֵּיהֶם:
 ‘but shall tear them down and smash their pillars to bits.’
 (Exod. 23.24) || הלא רסרוס תרסרסנון ותבור תתבר קעמתון
 (Sam. Tg.)

so that the form begins with conjunction *waw* + enclitic *mem*, per Rendsburg (1987, 34).

²⁶ Only here with this meaning; see elsewhere Song 5.2 with the meaning ‘droplets’.

(19) וְעִצְמֹתֵיהֶם יִגְרֹם וְחִצָּיו יִמְחֹץ:

‘and crush their bones, and smash their arrows’ (Num. 24.8) || וגרמיון ירסרס וגריו ימעו (Sam. Tg.)

See Drower and Macuch (1963, 436); Tal (2000, 841); Cook (2008, 268). MH: מְרוֹסֵס ‘broken’ (M. Shabbat 8.5); מְשִׁירֵס ‘after one crushes’ and עַד שִׁירֵס ‘until one crushes’ (M. ‘Uqṣin 2.5–6).

4.2. IH Features Elsewhere in the Book of Amos

Additional IH features appear scattered throughout the book of Amos. In the preceding section, all six features were lexical items (though the case in §4.1.4 includes a phonological aspect). In what follows, the majority once again are lexical features, though a few items constitute grammatical traits.

4.2.1. נוֹקֵד ‘herder, rancher, stockman’

(20) דְּבַרְיֵי עַמּוּס אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה בְּנוֹקְדִים מִתְּקוּעַ

‘the words of Amos, who was among the stockmen in Tekoa’ (Amos 1.1)

Elsewhere only 2 Kgs 3.4 (Mesha) and Ugaritic *nqd* (cf. also Akk. *nāqīdu*).²⁷

²⁷ Most scholars (see, e.g., Eidevall 2017, 91–96) consider the superscription in Amos 1.1 to be the result of (presumably Judahite) editorial activity, and thus the presence of the word נוֹקְדִים may not carry any linguistic significance. The point remains, however, that the word appears only in Amos 1.1 and 2 Kgs 3.4, and never in a demonstrably Judahite text.

4.2.2. רַחַם ‘lass’ (with reference to Edom)

(21) וַשְׁחַת רַחֲמָיו וַיִּטְרֹף לְעַד אָפוֹ

‘and he destroyed their lasses, and his anger tore-on forever’ (Amos 1.11)

Elsewhere only Judg. 5.30, Ugaritic, Moabite; see Rendsburg (2014, 174–75).²⁸

4.2.3. עָרֶשׁ ‘couch’

(22) כִּן יִנְצָלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשִׁמְרוֹן בַּפֶּאֶת מִטָּה וּבְדַמְשֶׁק עָרֶשׁ:

‘so shall the children of Israel be saved, those who dwell in Samaria, with the corner of a bed, and with the damask of a couch.’ (Amos 3.12)

(23) הַשֹּׁכְבִים עַל-מִטּוֹת שֵׁן וְסֹרְחִים עַל-עָרֶשׁוֹתָם

‘(you) who lie on beds of ivory, and transgressing on their couches’ (Amos 6.4)

עָרֶשׁ ‘couch’: Deut. 3.11 (Bashan); Prov. 7.16; Job 7.13; Song 1.16;²⁹ Ugaritic (*DULAT*, 185); Aramaic (all dialects); MH עָרִסָה ‘couch’ (2x Mishna / 17x Tosefta).

4.2.4. דַּרְשׁוּ-טוֹב וְאַל-רָע ‘seek good, and not evil’ (Amos 5.14)

Negative particle אַל followed by a noun, as in Deir ‘Alla. For examples, see Rendsburg (2003a, 24, no. 15).

²⁸ For the argument that רַחֲמָיו means ‘his lasses’ here (and not ‘his compassion’), see Paul (1971, 402–3; 1991, 64–65).

²⁹ Admittedly, this lexeme occurs occasionally in Judahite sources as well: Ps. 6.7; 41.4; 132.3 (though the latter also may be an IH poem).

4.2.5. לְקֶשׁ ‘latter growth, late-sown crops’

(24) כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְהִנֵּה יוֹצֵר גְּבִי בְּתַחֲלֵת עֲלוֹת הַלֶּקֶשׁ וְהִנֵּה לֶקֶשׁ אַחַר
גְּבִי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

‘Thus Adonay YHWH showed me: and behold, (he was) creating locusts at the start of the sprouting of the latter-growth, and behold, the latter-growth after the hay-mows of the king.’ (Amos 7.1)

Cf. Gezer Calendar, ln. 2 ירחו לקש ‘two months of latter-growth’ (= Shevat-Adar). Attested as *laqsi* or *laqšī* in Galilean villages (see Sonnen 1927, 81; Bassal 2005–2007, 99–100).

4.2.6. חֶלֶק ‘field’

(25) וְהִנֵּה קוֹרָא לְרֵב בְּאֵשׁ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְתֹאכַל אֶת־תְּהוֹם רִבָּה וְאָכְלָה אֶת־הַחֶלֶק:
‘and behold, Adonay YHWH was calling to contend with fire;
and it consumed the great deep, and it consumed the field.’
(Amos 7.4)

Elsewhere חֶלֶק יִזְרְעֵאל ‘in the field of Jezreel’ (2 Kgs 9.10, 36, 37)—with reference to the death of Jezebel; perhaps also Hos. 5.7.³⁰ Cf. Aramaic חֶלְקָא, Akkadian *eqlu*, both with metathesis.

³⁰ The feminine form חֶלְקָה ‘portion’ occurs throughout the Bible, usually in the phrase חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה ‘portion of the field’ (7x), but the masculine form is an IH feature.

4.2.7. תִּנְּ ‘tin’ (Amos 7.7–8) (cf. Akk. *annaku*) (‘lead’ [?],
plumb line’ [?])

Regardless of meaning, note the *qəṭāl* nominal form. Alternatively, or concurrently, note the possible pun with the 1cs pronoun ‘I’ in

(26) הִנְנִי שֵׁם אֲנִי בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל
‘behold I am placing a plumb-line / myself in the midst of
my people Israel’ (Amos 7.8)

See Novick (2008) and Notarius (2017, esp. 61–63, 70–73), with an eye to the Phoenician form אֲנִי ‘I’.³¹

4.2.8. יִשְׁחַק ‘Isaac’ (Amos 7.9, 16) (instead of the standard
form יִצְחָק)

Elsewhere only Jer. 33.26; Ps. 105.9. Qumran Aramaic (4x), though see also QH: יִשְׁחַק (20x) / יִסְחַק (1x) / יִצְחַק (4x). Cf. Syriac אִסְחַק > Arabic *ishāq*.

4.2.9. קֵץ ‘end’ / קִיץ (in pause) ‘summer-fruit’ (Amos 8.2)

The wordplay works best if the latter form reflects monophthongisation of *ay* > *ē*, as in Ugaritic and Phoenician (Notarius 2017, esp. 63–64, 74–80).

³¹ For the most recent study on the Phoenician 1st common singular pronoun, albeit with a different focus, see Loder (2019).

4.2.10. היכל 'palace'

(27) וְהִלְלוּ שִׁירֹת הַיְּכָל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

'and the songs of the palace shall wail on that day, declaims Adonay YHWH' (Amos 8.3)

The end of Israel (v. 2) will result in the howling female singers in the palace (not the temple).³² IH feature: 1 Kgs 21.1 (Ahab); Hos. 8.14; Joel 4.5 (Phoenicia); Amos 8.3; Ps. 45.9, 16; Prov. 30.28. See also: Ps. 144.12 (? – late); 2 Kgs 20.18 || Isa. 39.7 (king of Babylon); Isa. 13.22 (Babylon); Nah 2.7 (Assyria). Cf. Ugaritic (Aqhat; Kirta) and Aramaic (Aḥiqar; Dan. 5.5; etc.).

5.0. Conclusion

The sixteen features (mainly lexical, several grammatical) analysed above, especially when viewed collectively, reveal the extent to which IH permeates the book of Amos. This crucial point, especially when viewed in conjunction with the geographical considerations outlined above, demonstrates (to my mind at least) that Amos was a northern prophet.³³

Two of the sixteen features (along with a third item) have been discussed in depth by Tania Notarius, though she reached a different conclusion. In her estimation, Amos was “a Judean man,

³² Andersen and Freedman (1989, 798): “The female singers point to the palace rather than the temple.” The form שִׁירֹת implies ‘songs’, though via metonymy one may assume ‘those (females) who sing the songs’.

³³ Note further that the element עמס is relatively common in Phoenician and Punic personal names (Benz 1972, 378–79; Stamm 1980, 137).

a native speaker of Southern Hebrew who is sensitive to the phonetic peculiarities of different dialectal speech” (Notarius 2017, 81). Clearly this remains possible—I myself have written extensively on the subject of style-switching and addressee-switching (Rendsburg 2013a, 2013b, 2015). But in light of (a) the collective weight of the sixteen features discussed herein and (b) the geographical and political (if you will) considerations presented above in §§1.0–3.0, to my mind one should conclude that Amos was a resident of northern Israel who used his native patois to challenge the *status quo* (on many levels) of king, cult, and society in the kingdom of Israel.³⁴

This conclusion has a far-reaching impact beyond the realm of Hebrew linguistics. If correct, then we must rethink the early history of classical prophecy in ancient Israel, as the first *two* prophets, Amos and Hosea, would then *both* be considered northerners. The unique genre of classical prophecy (unique in the ancient Near East, that is) is a product of northern Israel. Soon thereafter the genre spread to Judah, in the persons of Isaiah and Micah—but this singular enterprise commenced in the northern kingdom of Israel.

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³⁴ This finding also explains why in the opening two chapters of the book of Amos, Judah appears as a foreign land, no different than Moab, Edom, Ammon, etc.

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