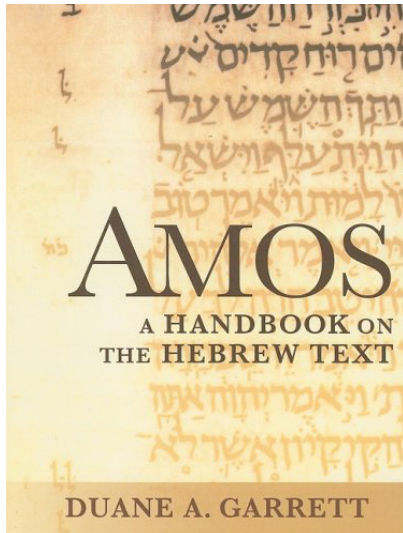


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Garrett, Duane A.

Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text

Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible

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Duane Garrett argues for a “chiastic structure” for the book of Amos and claims “internal coherence” for each division (6–7). He observes that “the seven [*sic*] divisions of Amos after the superscript (1:1) and the poetic proclamation of YHWH making his voice heard (1:2), are as follows...: I. 1:3–2:16 ... II. 3:1–15 ... III. 4:1–13 ... IV. 5:1–6:14 ... V. 7:1–8:3 ... VI. 8:4–9:15” (4). Each of these divisions is treated individually with explanatory notes, a translation, and the fully vocalized and accented Hebrew text. He deals with the prose parts clause by clause and the poems line by line. He identifies the lines by “the major disjunctive marks of the cantillation system” (8) and O’Connor’s “poetic constraints” (9). He defends this poetic analysis with the surprising assertion that “other approaches to Hebrew colometry (such as counting stresses, words, or syllables) produce no meaningful results and are not valid” (10). I shall review the book according to Garrett’s divisions and conclude that it offers only limited guidance to its readers due to its large number of errors and uncertain methodologies.

In the text of 1:1 Garrett omits בַּנְקִדִים, but he does treat it in his notes, where he defines both words. He does not indicate that the noun is definite, and only rarely does he do so, as in 9:13, where he notes that we find הַ “and the definite article” (286; cf. 257). What his basis is for indicating definiteness is not clear, as is his failure to mention the elision of the *heh* in these contexts. Further, what lexical tool(s) he is using is unclear. He regularly refers to “HALOT” (e.g., 17), but is this the only tool he used? Since there are no lexical

tools cited in the bibliography and no list of abbreviations provided, this question is difficult to answer (note the absence of Gesenius, the versions, Levi, and Pardee from the bibliography). Also uncertain is which words he defines, because, while a simple word such as כ is defined, the less common פליט of 9:1 is not. Garrett further observes that the fact that the king of Judah is mentioned before the king of Israel “suggests that Amos considered the Davidic king to have a superior claim to legitimacy” (15). He also states, “The chronological precision, that it was ‘two years’ before the earthquake, suggests that Amos gave all of his prophecies in the space of a fairly short time” (15). These remarks are better suited to a commentary rather than a handbook. But since Garrett repeatedly refers to the work as a “commentary,” we are left uncertain as to the exact nature of the book (e.g., 1).

In 1:2 Garrett finds four individual lines of a poem (a–d) and notes that “line a = X + *yiqtol*, and line b = ו + X + *yiqtol*” (16). This method of analysis is frequent throughout the book and is intended to elucidate syntactical points, but at no point are the necessary parameters of X defined. Further, the definitions of verbal forms are unclear, since *wayyiqtol* is defined as “imperfect with ‘vav consecutive’” in the introduction, but in the glossary the word “imperfect” is omitted (7, 294). Also, the definitions of *weqatal* and *weyiqtol* have been switched in the glossary, and even the definition of *weqatal* is inaccurate, since the *waw* is labeled “simple” and not “consecutive” (295; cf. 7). The last point is even more puzzling, given his observation concerning the last two lines that the “*weqatal* clauses indicate that the action of c–d is consecutive to that of a–b” (16). And elsewhere he inaccurately remarks that *qatal* “typically deals with ... present ... actions” (8). That the “student of Hebrew,” which is one of the target audiences, will be able to make sense of all this can only be hoped (1). Garrett also does not mention that מציון and מירושלם contain the preposition מן. The basis for such observations is uncertain, since similar forms in 1:5 are noted to contain the preposition. There is also nothing said about the grammar surrounding such forms such as assimilation of *nuns*, simplification of doubled consonants, quiescence of *schwas*, or lengthening of vowels. This is generally the case apart from parsing statements. Garrett further remarks on נאות that it derives “from נוה, ‘a green meadow’” (17) but then translates it simply as “pastures” (13). This kind of disparity between remarks and translation is not uncommon. One of the more startling instances is when he says with regard to שריה of 2:3 that “the older translation ‘prince’ is misleading” and then translates it “prince” in both 2:3 and 1:15 (51, 21)! He also derives נאות from נוה without any acknowledgment of lexical tools that derive it from נאה.

In 1:3–2:16 Garrett identifies a “series of eight poems,” and here again we encounter further difficulties (17). In 1:5 he calls שבט a “direct object” but in 1:8 “an objective genitive” (28, 32). He does clarify this somewhat in his glossary, but even then he presents a differing translation (293). In 1:6 he fails to note the omission of the direct object. In

1:7, while elucidating the meaning of חומה, he states that a “קיר is an internal, structural wall” (32), yet consider Num 22:25 or, worse yet, 1 Sam 25:22! In 1:9 Garrett notes that this verse “gives the reasons God will judge Tyre and the Phoenicians,” yet there is no specific mention of the Phoenicians (33–34). In 2:1 he calls a singular suffix plural. In 2:2 he observes regarding the Moabite Stone’s mention of Kerioth that “it is said to have been the site of a temple to Chemosh,” and yet the actual text says only “before Chemosh in Kerioth” (l. 13). In 2:7 Garrett offers the translation “at the dust of the earth after the heads of the poor” (22) with no guidance as to where the definite articles come from, where the lexical tool is to support taking על as “at” and ב as “after,” and where the plural “heads” comes from. Instead we get nongermane statements such as, “The oppressors are metaphorically represented as a pack of hunting dogs seeking their prey. If Samarian aristocrats enjoyed hunting with dogs in the manner of their 18th century English counterparts, this could be a deliberate recasting of the sport” (58–59), and “Did ancient hunters display the heads of animals they had killed as trophies, as modern hunters do? We do not know, but we do know that human heads could be displayed as trophies (I Sam. 17:54)” (59). Also in 2:7 he understands הנערה to be a shrine prostitute and notes that she “is here not portrayed as a powerful priestess with control over her own destiny; she is a lowly woman, no doubt a slave who was purchased to perform the duties of a prostitute for a shrine” (61). Such remarks, however, are not isolated: in 5:25 he even states, “I am on record for rejecting the documentary hypothesis” (174). Finally, he notes that מעיק in 2:13 is a *hiph’il* “participle ... in a periphrastic construction” (71; cf. also 5:8). He regularly employs the term “periphrastic,” but in nearly every case it is unclear how the forms or constructions are such.

In 3:1–15 Garrett finds three separate poems “(vv. 4–6; 9–11; 13–15) each headed by a prose section (vv. 1–3; 7–8; 12)” (77). He calls verse 2a “the matrix clause of this sentence” when it is actually an embedded clause with an omitted complementizer (81). He remarks about verse 3 that “it is universally assumed that this is the first bicolon of a poem of seven bicola” but that it really “looks back to vv. 1–2, explaining how it is that Israel, YHWH’s chosen people, will especially experience his punishment” (82). In fact, Harper came to similar conclusions in his *Amos and Hosea* (67). Garrett goes on to call verses 4–6 an “epigram” (83) and finds its function “is to vindicate Amos’ claims against Israel, arguing that, given all that has happened, it is only common sense that [*sic*] to conclude that God has turned against Israel” (84). He attempts to elucidate the logic of verse 4 by saying, “The implied declarative for the first question ... is: ‘Unless the lion has prey, he will not roar’, or conversely, ‘since the lion has roared, he must have prey’” (84). But the second sentence is actually the contrapositive of the first. In verses 7–8 Garrett sees a prose commentary that both concludes verses 4–6 and “leads into the second” poem of verses 9–11 (88). He militates against the poetic interpretation of verses 7–8 with the

amazing statement: “Parallelism is neither the essential feature of Hebrew poetry nor absent from Hebrew prose” (89). In verses 9 and 11, after failing to address two unusual construct constructions, he parses an active verb as *polal* and says that “many” propose this emended reading based on the “Vulgate (see BHS apparatus)” (95–96). However, the apparatus lists the Peshitta, not the Vulgate!

Garrett divides 4:1–13 into two parts: verses 1–5 form a “poetic oracle” and an “ironic benediction,” and verses 6–13 form “a prose recitation” and a doxology (104). Here again we encounter errors and difficulties. In verse 1 he makes no mention of why a masculine plural form is used when addressing “cows” (cf. also v. 8), why if the referent is plural the imperative is singular, and why the pronominal suffix is masculine while the referent is feminine. We also find mismatch of translation to notes (104; cf. vv. 5 and 10). In verse 5 he parses וקטר as a plural imperative; in verse 8 שבתם as a “*yiqtol*” (120); and in verse 9 הרבות as an infinitive absolute without any explanation of its deviant form. In verse 13 he calls מה שחו an “indirect question,” not a relative clause (127). According to the back cover, this series is intended “to serve as a useful agent for ... self-study,” but how the self-studying student will fare in the face of these difficulties is very much in suspense.

In 5:1–6:14 Garrett finds “the second of two indictments against Israel for its oppression and its empty religion” (129); 4:1–13 was the first. In general, he sees “a pair of linked chiasmic structures with a summarizing conclusion” (131) and finds 5:1–6:14 to be “bounded by an inclusion [*sic*]” (130). This division also demonstrates mismatch of translation to notes (e.g., 5:2, 13; 6:3, 11) and errors. In 6:13 he calls the ל “causative,” not “causal” (201). On the lexical side, 5:3, 5:11, and 6:10 contain questionable translations. 5:3 is also noteworthy because Garrett claims that both the participle and numeral “are in apposition” to “city” and that the “participle forms a relative clause” (138). In 5:4 he says that דרשוני contains an “energetic” *nun* (140) and in 5:21 that there is an “anarthrous seconding of the first verb with another, near-synonymous verb” (168). In 5:23 he calls שריך an “absolute noun” (171). In 6:1 Garrett cautions against following the Septuagint, since “it is unreliable as to the Hebrew *Urtext*” (178), and then directs us to Gelston, who has nothing to say on the subject! It is also surprising to see Garrett, who rejects “redaction-critical approaches ... [as] neither compelling nor heuristically valuable,” even mentioning the idea of an original text (2). In 6:2 he reproduces the BHS reading פלשתים with no *hiriq* without comment (cf. pg. 262 and 9:4’s איביהם). With reference to “Calneh, great Hamath, and Gath,” he remarks that “the text here indicates that the subjugation of these states has already taken place” (181, 182), but how the text indicates this is not clear. Further, calling Gath a “state” is somewhat dubious, and calling Calneh such, which was the capital city of the kingdom of Unqi/Pattin, is highly doubtful. With regard to 6:11’s מצוה, Garrett finds it unusual that “no reported speech follows this verb” (197), yet see Blau’s *Grammar* (105.1). Finally, in 6:13 the root of האמרים is given as רון.

In 7:1–8:3 Garrett finds “four visions (7:1–3, 4–6, 7–9; 8:1–3) interrupted by an account of Amos’ encounter with Amaziah the priest of Bethel (7:10–17)” (204). Here, too, the difficulties and uncertainties continue. In 7:2 he uses the language “seems to mean” when discussing מִי (208; cf. v. 8). Why he fails to utilize any lexical tools is uncertain. The same can be said of his utilization of grammatical tools, since the back cover states that this series reflects “the latest advances in scholarship on Hebrew grammar,” yet Joüon-Muroaka’s work is not employed. Garrett goes on to end this division by calling הַשְׁלִיךְ a “*yiqtol*” (231).

In 8:4–9:15 he breaks up the text in two different ways at the same time. First he finds two poems (8:4–12 and 9:1b–15) separated by a “prose conclusion” (8:13–14) and a “prose introduction” (9:1a) (232); then he says that “the text divides into three major parts, as follows[:] 1. 8:4–6 ... 2. 8:7–9:6 ... 3. 9:7–15” (232). Remarkably, in 8:4 and 9:6 he silently replaces the Ketib reading with the Qere, although he does make note of a similar switch in 8:8. Also in 8:8 he calls כָּאֵר “scribal error” (245) without any regard to Ibn Janah’s explanation in his *spr hshrshym* (cf. Ben Sira 24:27). In 9:1b we find questionable lexical fiats. We are also told that בַּצַּעַם of that verse is a *qal* “imperative m s of בַּצַּעַ with 3 m p suffix” (248) without any regard to the complexity of the form or Lagarde’s explanation in his *Anmerkungen zur Griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (vi; cf. the nominal reading of the Peshitta). In 9:6 Garrett militates against emending מַעְלוֹתוֹ by stating that “Mur XII ... attests to the reading..., and this renders emendation doubtful” (268). Yet Tov notes that the texts from Wadi Murabba‘at “reflect only” the Masoretic text *Textual Criticism*, 195). Garrett also objects to understanding this word as “steps,” since “it obviously cannot refer to a stairway to some higher place (What could be above heaven?)” (268–69). Yet see Deut 10:14. He further combats the idea of a remnant theology in Amos and in 9:9 observes, “The statement that no pebble falls to earth only means that no Jew [*sic*] will escape the buffeting of being bounced about from place to place.... This is a prediction of diaspora, not of separating out a remnant” (279). Finally, in 9:10 no comment is made about the unusual spelling of בַּעֲדֵינוּ.

In conclusion, while this book may offer only limited guidance to its readers and stand in need of thorough revision, it does offer proponents of O’Connor’s poetry model a chance to see that model employed throughout Amos. I end with the page numbers on which I found typographical errors: 3, 48, 65, 104, 110, 113, 145, 161, 177, 194, 204, 208, 209, 238, 241, 248, 264, 270, 277, 281, 293, 298, 299.