Justice and Righteousness in the Prophecy of Amos and their Relevance to Issues of Contemporary Social Justice in the Church in Ghana

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Download date: 14. Feb. 2020
Justice and Righteousness in the Prophecy of Amos and their Relevance to Issues of Contemporary Social Justice in Ghana

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PhD Theology and Religious Studies
Abstract

The thesis focuses on protest against social injustice in the prophecy of Amos and their implication for social justice in the world today, using examples from contemporary Ghana. It identifies social justice concerns in Amos, by carefully analysing the text and context. It also identifies pressing social justice issues in Ghana by analysing interview data and current news items on Ghana. The data is examined to ascertain how the social injustice which Amos protests against speaks to social injustice in Ghana today. The thesis provides a comprehensive exploration of all texts dealing with social justice in the book of Amos through the prophet’s criticism of the society of his time. Novel features include a triangular model of understanding how social justice is perceived in the Hebrew Bible and how Amos’ protest against social injustice fits into that framework. There is also an attempt towards a definition of social justice, bringing on board all the strands of social justice perception in the Hebrew Bible. It also provides evidence of systemic social injustice in Ghana and reflects on how the biblical paradigm is relevant to the Ghanaian situation. Novel features here include an analysis of how three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible shed light on how Ghanaians assimilate the social justice issues raised by the prophet Amos. Again, there is an attempt towards defining social justice in the Ghanaian perspective bringing three different views on board. Generally, the thesis offers a framework by which social justice issues in the Bible can be harnessed to illuminate the quest for social justice in today’s world.
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List of Abbreviations

AASOR – Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AJBA – Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology
AJSLL – The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ANE – Ancient Near East(ern).
AS Anatolian Studies
BASOR – Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BI – Biblical Interpretation
BICS – Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies
BSG – Bible Society of Ghana
BT – The Bible Translator
CBQ – Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CRB – Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
CPI – Corruption Perception Index
DVEP – Deutscher Verein zur Erforschung Palästinas
ESV – English Standard Version
GJT – Global Jurist Topics
HTS – Harvard Theological Studies
HTR – The Harvard Theological Review
IEJ – Israel Exploration Journal
IJPT – International Journal of Public Theology
JACT – Journal of African Christian Thought
JAOS – Journal of American Oriental Society
JBR – Journal of Bible and Religion
JBL – Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS – Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JETS – Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JHS – Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JJS Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES – Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JR – The Journal of Religion
JRA – Journal of Religion in Africa
JRE – Journal of Religious Ethics
JTS – The Journal of Theological Studies
KJV – King James Version
LE – Law of Eshnunna
LH – Law of Hammurabi
LL – Law of Lipit-Ishtar
LU – Law of Ur-Namma
NASB – New American Standard Bible
NIV – New International Version
NRSV – New Revised Standard Version Anglicised Text. Unless otherwise stated, all English biblical translations are from the NRSV © 1999 by Oxford University Press.
OTJ – Oral Tradition Journal
PAAJR – Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research
PR – The Philosophical Review
RB – Reuvre Biblique
RE – Review & Expositor
RIDA Revue Internationale des Droits de l’Antiquité
SBL – Society of Biblical Literature
SCJ Stone-Cambell Journal
SM – Studia Missionalia
SPCK – Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SR – Studies in Religion
TB – Tyndale Bulletin
TJCT – Trinity Journal of Church and Theology
VT – Vetus Testamentum
ZAW – Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Chapter 1

Introduction and Research Design

1.1 Aim of the Study

...I am aware that my attraction to the book’s concern for the poor not only appeals to my own political views but also, I suspect, engages my own vulnerability at a deeper level, as I identify with the ‘poor’ and the ‘needy’ in the text – Paul M. Joyce (2011:115).

The above statement is a profound admission by Paul Joyce on what the psychological, political and social disposition of readers of the biblical text, like himself, brings to the interpretation of the text and how the text in turn impacts that disposition. In his article ‘The Book of Amos and Psychological Interpretation’, Paul Joyce extensively discusses how D. J. A. Clines and J. C. Exum’s categories of the world of the text, the world behind the text and the world before the text (see Clines and Exum, 1993:11-25) can illuminate psychological and psychoanalytical study of the book of Amos (Joyce, 2011:115; 2012:133-48). My reading of the book of Amos focused on what the text has to say to the contemporary world on issues of social justice but my desire to explore fully the social justice issues that Amos raises and how these issues can speak to the contemporary Ghanaian situation has been reinforced by Paul Joyce’s statement above. My own interest in studying the book of Amos and its implications for social justice in Ghana is born out of similar psychological and social disposition. There are many vulnerable men, women and children in Ghana whose vulnerability is not always as a result of their own choices, but a function of the unhelpful political and economic choices made by the elite. This scenario is played out in the prophecy of Amos. It is my personal identification with these vulnerable people in Ghana that leads me to this quest. The discussions here could also serve as a reflection on the possibility that both I and other readers of the text of Amos could identify with the rich oppressor and have reason to change our behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which protest against social injustice in the prophecy of Amos are relevant to contemporary social justice issues in Ghana. The research is a contribution to the ever-growing literature in the
field of applying biblical texts to the African context. Specific examples of this contribution include a new triangular representation which facilitates the understanding of how social justice in the prophecy of Amos focuses on the victims of social injustice and a comprehensive thematic study of texts in the prophecy of Amos which criticise social injustice. The study also provides a working definition of social justice in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts and an examination of how social justice is perceived in contemporary Ghana, based on interview data. In both contexts, social justice revolves around deliberate efforts by the community to quash oppression, extortion and exploitation and to enforce programmes that makes it possible for the victims of social injustice to be liberated. Further, the work uses news reports and interview data to analyse the state of social justice in Ghana, establishing that there is endemic and systemic social injustice in Ghana. The reflection on these issues of social injustice in Ghana in the light of what Amos protests against is another valuable contribution to scholarship.

1.2 Background to the Study

The prophecy of Amos stands out among its contemporaries in the call for social justice. The text may not be concerned with the cases of social injustice for their own sake but more with indicting the ruling classes of not fulfilling the divine expectations. In these accusations however, other issues are manifest. Some scholars contend that these indictments offer an understanding of the acts of social injustice that might have occurred in eighth century BCE Israel (e.g., Houston, 2008:18-52). Again, with archaeological and social anthropological insights, scholars such as D. N. Premnath, attribute most of these accusations to the negative effects of latifundisation that might have resulted as eighth century BCE Israel moved away from subsistence agriculture (Premnath, 2003:43-188). This allows for deriving social justice principles and testing them against contemporary social justice issues. The issues of social injustice for which Amos indicts Israel include lack of human dignity in dealings with the poor (Amos 2:6-8); exploitation and oppression of the poor (Amos 3:9-10; 4:1); bribery, corruption and perversion of justice (Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12) and unjust trade (Amos 8:4-6). There is also a call for a reversal of the trend for justice and righteousness to prevail (Amos 5:4-6, 14-15, 24). The concern for social justice is not exclusive to Amos. Most of the other prophetic books call on
society to protect the vulnerable against oppression, abuse and exploitation (Mafico, 1992:1127-29). Also, other books of the Hebrew Bible express themes of social justice in one way or the other.

Away from the biblical world, social justice activists have employed prophetic complaints against economic injustice in the campaign for the eradication of such injustice. As Martin Luther King Jnr. used Amos 5:24 as an authoritative text for his call to ‘let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream’ in his campaign for the eradication of segregation from the United States, Jewish activists invoke Micah 6:8 to promote the rights of Palestinians in the occupied areas (see Coomber, 2011a:212; Serotta and Walt, 2004). Unfortunately, after many centuries of calls for social justice by Amos and other biblical prophets, and the numerous contemporary social justice activisms in both the developed and developing world, social injustice is still widespread. Many developing countries and their subsistence communities have suffered the adverse effects of the present day corporate globalisation, which has resulted in unprecedented widening of the economic gap between the poor and the rich. For instance, 1.7 billion people in the world live in absolute poverty and 2.8 billion people live on less than $2 a day while others live in extreme affluence.¹ The wealthiest (20% of the world’s population) account for 76.6%, of private consumption; the middle class (60% of the world’s population) account for 21.9% of private consumption and the poorest (20% of the world’s population) account for only 1.5% of private consumption.² Celebrities control most of the wealth while greater percentage of world population wallows in abject poverty. According to Forbes list of world billionaires, the combined assets of the ten wealthiest individuals in the world summed up to $375.1 billion.³ Within the same period, the total gross national product of the thirty-one poorest nations of the world (with a total population of 817 million people) was less than $200 billion.⁴ These staggering statistics show that wealth distribution is tilted against a greater percentage of the world’s population while few enjoy extravagance and luxury. With this stark inequality come questions of fairness or social justice: is unrestricted right

to gaining wealth socially unjust? Would social justice imply constraining unrestrained acquisition of wealth? Do the rich and society itself have any duty towards the poor and disadvantaged?

The search for answers to these questions has made social justice a common concern, towards which politicians, religious leaders and legal practitioners have different attitudes. First, politicians ride on the back of social justice to sell their messages during electioneering campaigns, just like gods and kings are seen to trumpet their credentials of social justice in biblical and other ANE Texts. What is interesting is that these politicians find crafty ways of working biblical texts into their rhetoric with little or no reference to the context (Coomber, 2011b:397). In reality however, almost immediately upon assuming political power, politicians seek to curtail social interventions because they are expensive to implement, while at the same time, their fiscal policies cause the poor to pay for the cost of economic mismanagements which the poor did nothing to bring about. Secondly, various religious and faith traditions champion social justice as long as it is seen as a moral duty of politicians and the rich towards the poor and disadvantaged. But there is more to social justice than political policies, blaming the rich and carrying out charitable programmes. The religious campaign for social justice needs a broader outlook, which will encompass the needs of all members of the community, the role of government, both local and national and the responsibilities of multinational corporations and investors towards the communities where they exploit natural resources and make their wealth. Thirdly, legal experts use the terms social justice to indicate when the law is interpreted such that fairness is achieved. Unfortunately, justice has become a commodity only for those who can afford it or who have political and economic power on their side. The huge sums of money involved in hiring legal aid and the bureaucracy that goes with litigation, make it impossible to seek justice when individual rights are trampled upon. Worse still, what is seen as unjust, become glaring to the legal system only when it involves loss of life and property.

In Ghana, in particular, the gap between the poor and the rich is widening. There are still exploitation and oppression, coupled with serious allegations of bribery, corruption, perversion of justice and unfair trade. In most communities in Ghana, the exploitation of natural resources enriches those who invest in it while the indigenous dwellers suffer the negative effects including loss of farmlands and water
bodies coupled with polluted environment. These negative effects mean loss of livelihood for many in these communities. Unfortunately, nothing seems to be given back to restore the lives of these poor residents and the degraded environment. Their roads are bad; they live in squalor and have almost next to nothing of the necessities of life. If social justice could be achieved, there is the need to consciously restore the livelihood of the people and the environment. Here, social justice becomes the duty of the whole society but places a greater responsibility on leadership and owners of wealth, made out of the society’s resource endowment, to ensure that community life is restored to acceptable levels. Consequently, Ghanaian Christians face a challenge to uphold social justice and call for an end to injustice. These challenges have over the years evolved from the cultural and communal life of Ghanaians, influenced by their encounter with the Bible. As social injustice increase in Ghana and as churches become actively involved in promoting social justice in Ghana, exploring the relevance of the protest against social injustice in the prophecy of Amos to the quest for social justice in Ghana is a valuable contribution to scholarship.

1.3 Research Question

There are a good number of scholarly work on ethics and social justice in the Hebrew Bible prominent among which are: Barton (2003), Birch (1991), Coomber (2010), Epsztein (1986), Houston (2008), Weinfeld (1995). These studies set the needed platform for a study that takes into consideration modern biblical interpretation in communities that have adopted the Bible in their religious and social life, like Ghana. The book of Amos is a good place to begin because in its indictment of the ruling class for failing to fulfil the divine expectations, there is a manifest presence of a call for social justice. The well-known commentaries on the prophecy of Amos such as: Andersen and Freedman (1989), Auld (2005), Barton (1980), Coote (1981), Hammershaimb (1970), Jeremias (1998), Mays (1969), Paul (1991), Wolff (1977) only give indications of their awareness of social concerns in Amos. Again, most studies on social justice in the Hebrew Bible including: Birch (1991, 1997) and Weinfeld (1995) cite Amos extensively but do not make significant application of the text to modern social justice concerns. An exception is Walter Houston who presents Amos as primarily concerned with social justice and goes
further to apply the general principle of social justice in the Hebrew Bible to contemporary situations (Houston, 2008:58; 2010:104-136). D. S. Escobar devotes a journal article to social justice in the Book of Amos but also does not go beyond a general application of its relevance to the role of the Christians in establishing social justice in the world (Escobar, 1995:169-74). In his PhD thesis, F. Y. Mamahit (2009) constructs a model of social justice in Amos but his model is fraught with problems, including failure to examine the possible different roles that the economic and political powers play in perpetrating injustice and also taking the focus of social justice in Amos away from the victims of injustice. He however discusses briefly the relevance of social justice in Amos to social justice in the contemporary world with the expectation that his work could be used as a foundation for theology and practice of social justice in societies that are suffering from endemic poverty and injustice.

It would be a further contribution to develop a new model that put the focus back on the victims of injustice and distinguishes the role of the economic forces from the political forces in the social injustice of Amos’ days. This will then facilitate the investigation of the relevance of the call for justice and righteousness in Amos to issues of social justice in Ghana. The study therefore focuses on social justice principles in Amos and their implication for social justice issues in Ghana today. On the one hand, it identifies social justice principles in the prophecy of Amos, by carefully studying the text and context. These principles are discussed with reference to similar principles in the wider biblical context. On the other hand, the study identifies pressing social justice issues in Ghana today; through analysing interview data and current news items on Ghana from the media together with social actions of some churches in Ghana. These sets of data are then examined in a reflection on social justice issues in Ghana in the light of the text of Amos. The study therefore seeks to answer the question: To what extent are the social justice principles in Amos relevant to contemporary issues of social justice in Ghana? To answer this main question, the following sub-questions are helpful: What social justice themes can be extracted from Amos’ condemnation of injustices and call for justice and righteousness? What is the relationship between these social justice principles in Amos and those elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible? Which issues of social
justice are pressing to Ghanaians today? And how relevant is the call for social justice in Amos to issues of contemporary social justice in Ghana?

1.4 Organisation of the Study

Chapter 1 deals with the background to the study setting out the question to be investigated in the research and providing an explanation of how the study is organised. The chapter provides a review of relevant literature on social justice in Amos, examines the hermeneutical challenges in applying Old Testament texts like the prophecy of Amos to contemporary Ghana and the methodology employed in the study. Chapter 2 explores the concept of social justice in the Hebrew Bible and other ANE texts. Chapter 3 focuses on how social justice is expressed in the prophecy of Amos and proposes a new model for understanding social justice in Amos. This model puts back the focus of social justice on the victims of oppression, extortion and other forms of social injustice. Chapter 4 discusses selected texts from Amos that reveal social justice concerns. Chapter 5 analyses how social justice themes in Amos are presented in Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible. This helps investigate how social justice themes in Amos are understood by the Ghanaian readers and the light the translations shed on social justice in Ghana. Chapter 6 explores three angles from which Ghanaians look at social justice and presents data on current issues of social justice in Ghana. Chapter 7 presents social actions of some churches in Ghana, analysing them as their contribution towards achieving social justice. Chapter 8 reflects on how social justice themes in Amos shed light on social justice issues in Ghana. Chapter 9 summarises the study, discusses the contribution to scholarship and draws conclusions.

1.5 Review of Relevant Literature on Social Justice in the Prophecy of Amos

The review begins with an evaluation of works of scholars who cast doubt on the authenticity of the prophecy of Amos as a text that protests against social injustice and calls for social justice. It goes on to evaluate the works of other scholars who contend that social justice is genuinely integral to the message of the prophet Amos.
The result of the survey indicates that a further examination of Amos’ protest against social injustice and especially their relevance to contemporary issues of social injustice will be a helpful contribution to scholarship.

In his article: ‘Dangerous Waters of Justice and Righteousness: Amos 5:18—27’, J. L Berquist argues that ‘The justice and righteousness of Amos 5:24 do not refer to the human activities that God prefers, but to God’s own activity to purge the community of its failings in order to provide justice and righteousness for all people’ (Berquist, 1993:54). He acknowledges that interpretation of ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24 have wavered between the punitive divine action for human ethical failings (see Blenkinsopp, 1996:96; von Rad, 1965:132), and a positive ethical behaviour restorable by human beings (Harper, 1905:136; Hyatt, 1956:24), belonging to the horizontal not the vertical sphere (see Mays, 1969:108) and which must replace empty worship (Paul, 1991:188-93). Berquist contests this meaning and insists that ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24, and in the prophecy of Amos in general, has nothing to do with human action. To him, it is rather the non-punitve but restorative action of YHWH (Berquist, 1993:54-56).

Biblical use of משפט וצדקה (justice and righteousness) as explored in chapter 2 indicates that justice and righteousness has both divine and human dimensions. It is the nature of YHWH, but is also demanded of kings and individual members of the community. It is therefore quite misleading to restrict ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos to divine action. Following Miranda and Weinfeld, Houston concludes that the expression משפט וצדקה (justice and righteousness) in all its forms (in Amos) clearly refers to social justice manifested in the elimination of oppression and exploitation and helping the poor. To Houston, Amos gives meaning to the expression משפט וצדקה by denouncing injustice, identifying acts of injustice, victims of injustice and perpetrators of injustice. This expression of ‘justice and righteousness’, makes Amos the voice of the oppressed (Houston, 2008:61; Houston, 2010:48; Miranda, 1977:93; Weinfeld, 1995b:25-44). Kapelrud argues that Amos’ audience recognised that משפט וצדקה characterised the ethical standard and behaviour YHWH expected of them (Kapelrud, 1961:65-66, 80). Wolff rightly confirms that ‘Israel’s injustice must be sought exclusively in the oppression of the poor’ and that God demanded from them ‘equity for the oppressed’ and ‘readiness to assist others’ (Wolff, 1977:104, 106). Nardoni adds that Amos’ call for justice and righteousness should be understood within the wider biblical context which variously parallels ‘justice and
righteousness’ with ‘loving-kindness’, ‘faithfulness’ and ‘compassion’ to improve the social conditions of the poor and needy (Nardoni, 2004:102). Thus Amos’ המשסה וצדקה, which includes the protection of the oppressed, is an expression of social justice.

Furthermore, there are contentions that social criticism in the 8th century prophets is a later re-working and not original to the prophets. Radine evaluates the book of Amos against characteristics of ANE prophecy and contends, among others, that Amos’ criticism of Jeroboam II and his criticism of foreign kings and the people of Israel are rare among ANE prophets who rarely criticised the king but rather supported and predicted victory for him (Radine, 2010:94). Radine thus argues that social criticism was a post-exilic reshaping of an ancient pre-Israelite tradition and not a new prophetic phenomenon beginning with Amos (Radine, 2010:99; see also Bendor, 1996:249-58; Holladay, 1998:389-91; Zvi, 1999:89-99). Radine’s argument does not take into account Nissinen’s analysis of prophetic texts from the ANE suggesting that not all prophecy was favourable to the king (Nissinen, 1995:157-70). Jonathan Stökl also points out that speaking in favour of the king and denouncing the king for bad behaviour are shared characteristics of both biblical and ANE prophecy (Stökl, 2012:63). Similar to Radine’s argument, is Robert Oden who contends that the biblical prophets were not necessarily spokesmen for the unfortunate in society (Oden Jr, 1984:173). He draws on Max Weber’s proposition that the prophets’ advocacy for the socially disadvantaged was an occasional activity rather than their main preoccupation and that they rather spoke on YHWH’s demand for justice in general, to strengthen his argument (Oden Jr, 1984:173; Weber, 1952:277-78). This is very questionable because contrary to this opinion, it can be demonstrated that the eighth century prophets, especially Amos, spoke primarily about injustice against the socially marginalised.

Houston has effectively and accurately demonstrated that the social criticisms in the eighth century prophets were rooted in the social injustices of their time (Houston, 2004:131-47). He cites, as archaeological evidence, de Vaux’s report on the discovery from Tell el Far’ah North. The evidence found on this site dates from the eighth century and shows the presence of increasing stratification at the time (de

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5 The Tell el-Farah (North) archaeological site is located in the northeast of Shechem in Samaria, modern day West Bank. Excavations were undertaken at Tell el-Farah between 1946 and 1960 by the École Biblique under the direction of Roland de Vaux.
Vaux, 1955). This does not deny the fact that there were social crises in post eighth century Israel. Also, literary evidence from Amos 2:6-8; 4:1; 5:11 and 8:4-5, which Coote believes are original to the eighth century Amos (Coote, 1981:11-15) also contains social criticism. T. S. Hadjievi is therefore right to conclude on the basis of Houston’s analysis, that there is no compelling evidence to warrant the relegation of social criticism in Amos to post-exilic periods (Hadjiev, 2009:20). Radine’s failure to successfully compare social criticism in Amos with other biblical prophets only strengthens the argument that social criticism is a predominant character of the prophecy of Amos. The centrality of social justice in Amos could therefore, be sufficiently upheld based on the evidence that the prophets criticised a society that had failed to provide enough support for its poor and needy and that had not made it easy for the weak and vulnerable in society to overcome their vulnerability.

The acts of injustice, such as exploitation and oppression of the poor, bribery and corruption and lack of commitment to helping the needy, that Amos condemns, demonstrate the centrality of social justice in Amos. Houston rightly describes the book of Amos as the only prophetic collection that primarily presents social injustice as the reason for national punishment (Houston, 2008:58). This does not underestimate the condemnation of injustice present in other prophets, but emphasises that Amos is outstanding in that tradition of champions of social justice who stood tall as ‘the moral conscience of the kings and the powerful’ (Nardoni, 2004:100). Kapelrud argues that Amos’ attack on the cruelty with which the foreign nations treated one another and the lack of interpersonal relationship among the Israelites are issues of social concern, central to the prophecy of Amos (Kapelrud, 1961:64-65; Thorogood, 1971:47). As Wolff writes, YHWH is here seen as the one who punishes the nations for their crimes against humanity and Israel for injustice against the weak in society (Wolff, 1977:101). Stuart confirms that Amos’ reputation for social justice comes out through his portrayal of YHWH as concerned about the plight of the poor and the decadence of the rich (Stuart, 1987:291-92). In addition, Birch examines Amos’ confrontation of those who seek refuge in cultic rites at the expense of social justice (Birch, 1991:161, 263-64; Birch, 1997:170). Gomes traces the centrality of social justice in Amos to Amos’ polemic against ‘the house’ (בית) including his attack on the ostentatious houses in Bethel as evidence of the disregard the rich had for the ancient property laws of Israel (Gomes, 2006:144).
Thus Amos’ condemnation of the misuse and abuse of the socially marginalised, by the economically powerful, his rejection of exploitation and opulence, his denunciation of corruption and lack of justice, his attack on confiscation of property to pay for debt, dishonesty in trade and failure to give the needy justice at the gate, reveal him as a champion of social justice. His boldness in condemning Israel for these endemic acts of injustice in the fabric of society makes Amos an extraordinary social critic. In recent times, therefore, much of the scholarship on social justice cites texts from Amos to support their thesis. These include Moshe Weinfeld’s *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* (1995) and Walter J. Houston’s *Contending for Justice* (2008) and *Justice – The Biblical Challenge* (2010).

Exploring the concept of social justice in biblical and ANE contexts, Moshe Weinfeld cites Amos 3:10; 4:1; 5:7, 11, 24; 6:12; 8:5-6 among others to illustrate how משמיע וצדקה (justice and righteousness) ‘expresses, in general sense, social justice and equity, which is bound up with kindness and mercy’ (Weinfeld, 1992a:238; 1995b:36-37, 218). His attention is on what Amos and other prophets oppose: ‘the oppression perpetrated by the rich landowners and ruling circles, who control the socio-economic order’. Thus to Weinfeld, when:

Amos rebukes those “who store up lawlessness and rapine in their fortresses” (3:10), the women who “rob the needy” (4:1), those who “exact a levy of grain” from the poor but live in “houses of hewn stone” (5:11), those who “use an ephah too small and a shekel too big”, who “buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals” (8:5-6),

his use of ‘justice and righteousness’ rightly expresses social justice delivered in liberating the victims of all the acts of injustice he protests (Weinfeld, 1992:238a; 1995:36-37b). Weinfeld’s focus does not allow him to explore the extent to which those texts demonstrate the prophet’s protest against social injustice. Similarly, D. S. Escobar devotes an article to social justice in the Book of Amos but also does not go beyond a general application of its relevance to the role of the Christians in establishing social justice in the world (Escobar, 1995:169-174).

In *Rise up, O Judge: A Study in the Biblical World* (2004), Enrique Nardoni discusses Israeliite monarchy and prophecy as ‘two social phenomena important to [the] analysis of ancient Israel as a community called to serve God and practice justice’ (Nardoni, 2004:95). He selects Amos as one of the
prophets whose message touches on the situation of justice during the monarchy. Nardoni contends that Amos’ ‘…oracles reflect the sharp contrast between the well-off, who lived in the cities, and the poor dwelling around the cities or in small towns’ (Nardoni, 2004:100). Referring to Amos 2:6-9; 3:9-10; 5:7, among others, Nardoni emphasises Amos’ denunciation of violation of justice by the leaders of the society and the upper class and influential people. To him, Amos sees the abysmal gap between religious piety and relationship with neighbour, especially the poor and needy as a ‘terrible chasm’ between worship and ethics (Nardoni, 2004:101). Though he gives attention to a good number of texts in Amos, Nardoni does not draw on all of the prophet’s protest against social injustice. He omits passages like Amos 5:11; 6:1-7 and 8:4-6. This is to be expected in such a general discussion of issues of justice in both the Old and the New Testament.

In his work *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants*, William Domeris provides ‘a multidimensional understanding of the process and appearance of poverty in Iron Age Israel’ (Domeris, 2007:169). He uses social construction theory of poverty as a tool for interpreting Israel’s peasant history and demonstrates the worsening of peasant poverty in Israel from the period of the divided monarchy to post-exilic periods and beyond. He concludes with a model of social construction of poverty using the concept of power/powerlessness and honour/shame as applicable to poverty in the Hebrew Bible (Domeris 2007:170-76). Though Domeris does not purposely discuss social justice in the Old Testament, his attempt to trace the causes and consequences of peasant poverty in Israel leads him to discuss biblical issues that have implications for social justice.

In chapter 7, Domeris provides a comprehensive understanding of the forms of oppression in the Hebrew Bible and how they impacted the lives of the peasant poor. Tracing the cycle of oppression, Domeris cites the prophecy of Amos extensively to support his diagnosis that the rich and powerful of Israel use both economic and political power to oppress the poor and needy (Domeris, 2007:97-103). He also cites Amos copiously to support the fact that the oppressors use various tools of exploitation including rents, pledges and fines, taxation and interests on loans (Domeris, 2007:103-109). In the same
vein, texts from the prophecy of Amos form the bulk of his support for the forms of injustice that resulted from the oppressive activities of the rich and powerful. These acts of injustice were found in the courts, in trade, in the unfair labour practices, with the abuse of power and labelling of the poor finally condemning the poor to perpetual destitution (Domeris, 2007:109-126). Occasionally, Domeris springs up contemporary examples of what he finds in the Hebrew Bible (Domeris, 2007:122) and most of his theories and definitions are contemporary social scientific in nature (Domeris, 2007:2-12). At the end, Domeris sets five principles for the relevance of his work for today, including the need for changes in societal structures and a level playing field to deal with poverty. However, he does not apply his findings to any general or specific contemporary situation of poverty or social justice.

In his *Contending for Justice – Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (2008), Walter Houston devotes a substantial portion of his discussion of oppression and the prophets to examining Amos’ condemnation of injustice. He presents Amos as primarily concerned with social justice. In the section on Amos, Houston gives a snapshot of the message of Amos. He identifies that much of the materials between the oracles against the nations, warnings and judgement and the visions ‘consists of judgement oracles against Israel, primarily for the oppression of the poor’. To him, Amos’ message is very clear that ‘after due warning given, YHWH is about to destroy the kingdom of Israel for its sins, primarily for social injustice’ (Houston, 2008:58-59). Houston continues to examine texts in Amos that touch on the acts of oppression, the oppressors and the victims (Houston, 2008:58-73). He rightly describes the book of Amos as the only prophetic collection that primarily presents social injustice as the reason for national punishment (Houston, 2008:58). In the concluding parts of his *Contending for Justice*, Houston reflects on the implications of justice and righteousness in the Hebrew Bible for today’s world and emphasises that the resources in the Hebrew Bible can be useful to the quest for social justice today (Houston, 2008:222-31). Furthermore, in *Justice – The Biblical Challenge*, after surveying social justice in the Hebrew Bible (and in the life of Jesus), Houston assesses the state of justice in the twenty-first century and proposes that the realisation of social justice in today’s world could be aided by an understanding of the principle of
social justice in the Hebrew Bible (Houston, 2010:104-36). Houston’s studies serve as a fertile ground upon which further examination of the relevance of social justice principles in Amos, to a specific contemporary situation of social injustice, as in Ghana, could thrive.

In his PhD thesis, F. Y. Mamahit (2009) constructs a biblical theology of social justice in the prophecy of Amos (Mamahit, 2009:5, 13). Mamahit analyses three main text units in the book of Amos (2:6-8; 5:1-17; 8:4-8) as texts that lend themselves to the discussion of social justice. He does not exhaust all texts in Amos that protest against social injustice and that leaves room for further work in examining social justice in Amos. Mamahit additionally proposes a triangular model of theology of social justice in Amos, identifying three main groups around whom social justice revolves: YHWH, the powerful and the powerless; relating to each other on the social issues of the community (Mamahit, 2009:177-233). As excellent and innovative as this model is in showing the inextricable dynamics of Israelite society, it fails to examine the possible different roles that the economic and political powers play in perpetrating injustice. The model also removes the focus of social justice in Amos from the victim of injustice by placing the powerless as one angle. At the end of his work, Mamahit discusses briefly the relevance of the theology of social justice in Amos to social justice in the contemporary world (Mamahit, 2009:254-56), with the expectation that his work could be used as a foundation for theology and practice of social justice in countries that suffer endemic poverty and injustice (Mamahit, 2009:256). The present study therefore proposes a model that puts the focus back on the victim of injustice and distinguishes the role of the economic forces from the political forces in the social injustice of Amos’ days. It also takes Mamahit’s challenge and examines the relevance of the social justice values in the prophecy of Amos, to contemporary social justice issues in Ghana.

The above survey has shown that with the exception of Walter J. Houston, no scholarly work on social justice exhausts the texts in Amos that demonstrate the prophet’s protests against social injustice and his call for the establishment of social justice. Though application of the principles to contemporary situations is limited, Houston’s application of issues of social justice in Amos in particular and the Bible in general to social justice in the
twenty-first century sets the tone for further application of specific text to specific contexts. This study thus examines Amos’ protest against social injustice and how its message can be relevant to the quest for social justice in Ghana.

1.6 Problems and Method for the Study

This section outlines the hermeneutical challenges that confront the study and discusses the methodology employed to enhance its reliability. The hermeneutical challenges include historical, cultural and chronological gaps and the authority of the Hebrew Bible in contemporary Ghana.

1.6.1 Hermeneutical Challenges in Applying Biblical Texts to the Ghanaian Context

There are many hermeneutical challenges in applying any biblical texts to any twenty-first century context. The major hermeneutical challenge of this study is the historical and cultural gaps between the texts of Amos, the Hebrew Bible in general and the ANE texts that are cited on the one hand and the contemporary Ghanaian context on the other hand. There is also the challenge of the dominant Ghanaian Christian emphasis on the authority of the Bible including the Old Testament. Again, there is the hermeneutical challenge of whether the same biblical texts used to suppress Africans can now teach them anything about their own present situation and whether it does not meet resistance instead of acceptance. These challenges have been acknowledged and the approach of a two part study where the biblical text is analysed in one part and the Ghanaian situation is analysed in another part with reflective application, helps to iron out these challenges.

The historical and cultural gap between the texts cited and the Ghanaian situation poses a hermeneutical challenge. This study follows other scholars in dating the ministry of Amos to the eighth century BCE. The book itself might be dated to a later period with the possibility of redaction material and later additions
Andersen and Freedman, 1989:19; Bright, 1971:357; Hammershaimb, 1970:14; Msopole, 2010:1059; Paul, 1991:2; Tucker, 2006:90). This means that the study views contemporary social justice in the light of a text that has almost thirty centuries of history. Coupled with other older biblical texts and some ANE texts that are consulted in exploring the principles of social justice in Amos, the chronological gap widens. Also, there are historical, religious and socio-cultural gaps that confront the application of the text to the present world. Issues that were relevant to the people at the time these ancient texts were composed, including their approach to social and economic and political issues, which are vital to social justice, were different from our times. Further, the means of production, distribution and other economic activities of the biblical times differ from our time. Cultural values and moral considerations of biblical times also differ from ours (King, 1988:29-60; Premnath, 2003:43-98). The study therefore does not claim that social justice principles in Amos and the Hebrew Bible can be lifted and placed in our modern context without addressing the implications of the above issues. However, the evidence from social evolution of agrarian societies and the socio-economic context behind the complaints of the eighth century BCE prophets (Coomber, 2009:15; Coomber, 2010:1-3; Coomber, 2011a:213; Coomber, 2011b:376-77) shed a new light on the relevance of the issues of economic injustices raised in the eighth century BCE prophets for contemporary social justice. Coupled with the reception and adoption of biblical principles in the religious, social and economic life of many Ghanaians, it is possible to assess how the principles in Amos can be brought to bear on social justice issues in Ghana.

The second hermeneutical challenge to the study is the predominant assertion of the authority of the Bible in Ghanaian Christianity. Seeing the Bible as an authoritative word of God is contestable by many who hold that the Hebrew Bible, as an ancient text more than three thousand years old, has nothing useful to contribute to our world today. The study acknowledges that despite its divine inspiration, the human role of writing and transmission, makes the Bible susceptible to human elements and ideologies (Houston, 2010:6). However, in the more than two centuries of Christianity in Ghana (see Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:9), the Old Testament, forming a greater portion of the Christian canon, has been received by Ghanaian Christians as the authoritative word of God. There are therefore, many
Ghanaian pastors, preachers, biblical scholars and educated Christians who, though aware of the fact that the Bible is a compilation of documents written by human beings, also believe that these human writers were inspired by God. This belief in inspiration gives the Bible its authority and makes most of its principles applicable to the daily living of Ghanaian Christians. To this end, the Hebrew Bible equally and authoritatively speaks to Ghanaian Christians and to a large extent, the Ghanaian situation as it did to ancient Israel. Houston’s contention, that the Hebrew Bible is a useful ancient text that can facilitate and make real the dialogue between the past and the present, is thus relevant. He rightly asserts that as biblical ideas such as ‘...community, generosity, equality, liberation of slaves, crushing of oppression, return to the ancestral land...’, no matter their utopian nature, challenged the existing oppression within the biblical text itself, so do the principles in these same ideas challenge social injustice in the world today (Houston, 2008:15). The principles behind the biblical text are thus partners in dialogue with modern society. It is not so much quoting the prophecy of Amos as a proof text; instead the principles behind his protest are being reflected on for their relevance to the Ghanaian context.

The third hermeneutical challenge to this study is the implication of the historical fact that the text of the Bible was used to suppress Africans. In seeking to interpret social justice principles in Africa in the light of biblical texts, it is important to ask the question, to what extent can a text that has been used to suppress the rights and freedoms of Africans in many years provide meaningful lessons about social justice to Africans? To address this challenge, it is important to separate church and state collaboration (during and after colonisation), from the actual use of the Bible in justifying or promoting oppression or violence. Below is an examination of the perceived use of the Bible in the Rwandan genocide, apartheid in South Africa and the promotion of slavery in Africa.

First, the contention that the Bible was used to support the 1994 genocide in Rwanda is difficult to establish because there has not been any direct accusation that any part of the Bible was quoted by the church to incite Rwandans to kill each other or to justify the genocide. Churches in Rwanda are only accused of historically seeking state support, meddling in state politics, playing the Tutsis and the Hutus against each other and inciting or manipulating tribal conflict to their advantage. Longman concedes that ‘the churches did not preach ethnic hatred and murder as
such’ but the fact that ‘charity and love for fellow humans had never been the
dominant message’, Christians and Rwandans in general believed that it was
consistent with Christian teaching to support the genocide (Longman, 2001:182).
Critics also condemn churches in Rwanda and their leaders for their open and ardent
support for the government that was leading the genocide, their failure to denounce
the violent atrocities that led to the genocide and also their active involvement in the
Prunier, 1995:166-74). Parish centres and church building became death chambers
where many Tutsis who had been encouraged to gather in various churches for
protection were systematically slaughtered, in some cases, with active participation
of church members, officials and clergy (Omaar, 1994:865; Longman, 2010:4-5).

Attempts by churches to secure the support of the powerful of the land
predates the genocide and goes back to the precolonial and colonial days, when, led
by European missionaries, the churches played the minority but dominant Tutsis
against the Hutus (Longman, 1997; Munyaneza, 2003:62-66). Here, biblical
interpreters and missionaries justified traditional ideas of the Tutsis’ superiority over
the Hutus (Munyaneza, 2003:63-75). Later in post-colonial Rwanda, when it suited
its interest, the churches also played the Hutus against the Tutsis (Longman, 1997;
Munyaneza, 2003:66-71). Here, they interpreted the Bible to favour the concept of
‘the liberator’, ‘self-sacrifice’, caste and racism in Rwanda (Munyaneza, 2003:63-
75), which strengthened the resolve of the Hutus to annihilate the Tutsis to liberate
themselves. So when the genocide surfaced, the churches had inadvertently helped
create a congenial atmosphere for it ‘…by making ethnic violence understandable
and acceptable to the population…’ (Longman, 2001:166). These power playing
tendencies of the church had far reaching consequences in the events leading to the
genocide because by its actions, the leadership of the church created the impression
in the minds of state officials and political functionaries that the killing was favoured
by God (Des Forges, 1999:245-48; Longman, 2001:164; Omaar, 1994; Zarembo,
1995). So it is an undeniable fact that the actions and inactions of the Church had a
far reaching contribution to making the genocide possible. However, since it is not
clear whether individual ministers or representatives of the Church quoted any
biblical text to justify the genocide, it is imperative to separate church and state
politics and the church’s failure to stop this violence before during and after the
genocide, on one hand, from the explicit use of the Bible to promote slavery and violence in Africa, on the other.

Secondly, the use of the Bible in apartheid South Africa has also been cited as a challenge to any meaningful usage of the Bible in promoting social justice in Africa. It is well known that apartheid in South Africa was anchored on the interpretation and application of biblical texts. Using the Exodus story, the persecuted Afrikaners saw themselves as the oppressed people of God whose oppressors were the French and the British. They wandered in the ‘wilderness’ till they reached the ‘Promised Land’ in South Africa. On their arrival however, they applied their understanding of the book of Joshua and Judges to the people of South Africa by treating them as drawers of water and hewers of wood (Burridge, 2011). It has been emphasised that in the events leading to apartheid, ‘policies which assumed the superiority of white colonists–racially, religiously, morally, and otherwise–often included references to the Bible, accompanied by claims that their practices did justice to biblical “directives”’ (Dube, 2000:5-6; Punt, 2006:885). Notwithstanding, the fact also remains that the Bible was also quoted by the Church and other liberation fighters to encourage the indigenous South Africans to resist apartheid. While the Dutch Reformed Church collaborated with the political leaders of apartheid South Africa to use the Bible in justifying apartheid and also to suppress revolution by emphasising the biblical teachings on obedience, there were other Christian groups who opposed any such use of the Bible. Groups like the Kairos theologians quoted from Exodus and other biblical passages to encourage civil disobedience and revolution against the status quo (Munro, 1990:161-164). Again, the same Exodus story became the driving force for African liberation theology. Here the leaders of liberation in apartheid South Africa, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, saw themselves as the oppressed and the Afrikaners as the oppressors (Burridge, 2011) and demanded their liberation. Also Punt contends that recent events in South Africa show that ‘...the Bible continues to play a positive role in post-Apartheid South Africa, even if its interpretation is often contested’ (Punt, 2006:886-87).

Thirdly, it is widely asserted that biblical passages were used to justify and promote slavery in Africa. This is because the European slave masters were aided by the missionaries’ application of biblical teaching of obedience to subdue African slaves, evident in David Diop’s poem, ‘The Vultures’. When Diop used expressions
like ‘When holy water slapped our cringing brows.../And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster/Drowned the howling on the plantations...’ (Diop, 1959), he reiterated the fact that religious teaching and rituals deprived the African slaves of the will to revolt and to liberate themselves, and that this represented the church’s sanctioning of slavery. Contrary to expectations that all these oppressive use of the Bible against Africans should have resulted in hostility towards it, Punt correctly asserts that in today’s Africa, ‘the Bible is–ironically–still found to play an important role informing not only ecclesial practice but also social discernment on a wider scale’ (Punt, 2006:886-87). Again, many social justice initiatives in Africa have their root in the indigenous church’s reinterpretation of the Bible and application of the same principles to liberate the oppressed. Thus though the Bible has been used in both destructive and constructive ways in the history of the struggle of Africa for liberation, there is no need to focus only on the negative experiences that Africa had with the Bible. More importantly, since Ghana has no direct experience of political or economic oppression that was justified by any biblical interpretative tradition, it is appropriate to apply the biblical conceptions of social justice to contemporary concerns in Ghana.

The study’s approach to dealing with all these hermeneutical challenges is through the two-part approach. The first part is a textual analysis of the prophecy of Amos to ascertain the principles behind the issues of social injustice he protests against. These principles are set alongside similar principles in other texts in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE that deal with protest against injustice or deal with social justice. The issues of social injustice Amos condemns include lack of human dignity manifested in the treatment of the vulnerable people as merchandise and violence against the poor and the needy. Other injustices are: extortion, exploitation, bribery and corruption, excessive taxation, unjust trade and unfair treatment of labour and affluence in the midst of poverty. The two parts are bridged by a chapter that discusses how three Ghanaian translations of Amos transpose the meaning of the text into the Ghanaian situation by using cultural and linguistic categories, including proverbs. The second part then analyses issues of social injustice in Ghana. These issues include affluence of the few, especially politicians, individual wealthy people and pastors of churches. Others are: bribery and corruption and perversion of justice; negative impact of domestic and international trade on the Ghanaian economy; gender and society issues such as widowhood rites and religious slavery (trokosi)
and poverty. These issues of social justice that concern Ghanaians are then reflected on in the light of the issues of social injustice that Amos condemned and the work being done by some churches in Ghana to restore social justice. This method helps to avoid reading too much into each context or directly transposing the texts of Amos onto the Ghanaian situation.

1.6.2 Method

There are two parts in this study brought together by a bridge chapter looking at the implications of Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of Amos for the interpretation of the text as a model of social justice. The first part of the study employs literary and comparative methods with intertextuality to explore protest against social injustice in the prophecy of Amos. Social justice themes are selected and discussed based on the context and the language of the text. Individual words and phrases are analysed to identify how they contribute to the text’s social justice principle. Further, using intertextuality, other biblical texts that teach similar principles or use similar words and phrases are analysed to shed light on the theme selected. Intertextuality was first used by Julia Kristeva as ‘...a dialogue among several writings’ (Kristeva, 1980:65). It has been described as ‘...a covering term for all the possible relations that can be established between texts’ (Miscall, 1992:44) and ‘...the sum of knowledge that makes it possible for a text to have meaning’ (Culler, 1981:104). Barton sees intertextuality as ‘reading one text in the light of another’ (Barton, 2013:2) and to Burridge, intertextuality is achieved by ‘the interpretation of one text in the light of another and by putting one story alongside another story’ (Burridge, 2011). In biblical interpretation, intertextuality is at work when ‘...scripture is interpreted by scripture’ (Thiselton, 1992:171). In this study, intertextuality is simply an acknowledgement of the fact that there are similarities in biblical texts that allows one to be interpreted in the light of the other and vice versa.

There are three main sources of data for the second part of the study which looks at issues of contemporary social justice in Ghana. These are: interviews, focus group discussions and news reports on contemporary social justice issues in Ghana. The selected news publications highlight social justice issues in Ghana and the social actions of the church that address these concerns. In addition to the above, heads of some churches and their officers in charge of social action were selected across the
three ecumenical bodies for interview on such activities. Also, beneficiaries of Christian social intervention programmes and members of the general public were interviewed to ascertain the impact of church social action both on the beneficiaries and the community as a whole. The interviews also sampled the views of participants on how social justice could be perceived by the ordinary Ghanaian and what issues of social justice concern Ghanaians today. Four focused group discussions were held. Part of the data from these discussions has been used to cross check the analysis of how the Ghanaian Bible translations present the social justice theme in Amos.
Chapter 2

Social Justice in the Context of the Hebrew Bible and Some Ancient Near Eastern Texts

2.3 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of social justice in the Hebrew Bible, with references to some ANE texts. This is necessary to place the issues of social justice that Amos raises in the wider biblical and ANE contexts. As expected, social justice is not a uniform concept in the Hebrew Bible. Neither is it so in ANE context within which the biblical concept itself should be located. There are different voices and contesting opinions of social justice right through these ancient texts. This chapter explores how the Hebrew Bible and some ANE texts express social justice. Attention is given to how מישרים, משפט and צדקה become the biblical expression of social justice and the role of YHWH/the gods, the king and individuals in delivering social justice. The chapter further identifies and discusses three different concepts of social justice that surface in the Hebrew Bible and some ANE texts. Based on the different approaches and the issues considered in this chapter, the study defines social justice as deliberate actions aimed at supporting the vulnerable to live a life of dignity and freedom from oppression.

2.3 Expressing Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible

This section explores how the modern concept ‘social justice’ finds expression in biblical text. It proposes that in biblical tradition, different combinations of משפט (justice), צדקה (righteousness) and מישרים (equity) express social justice when they are used in the context of practical acts of helping the vulnerable out of their predicament. Social justice is primarily expressed by the hendiadys משפט וצדקה.

6 A hendiadys is the joining of two nouns by means of the conjunction ו (and) to express a single idea. The use of hendiadys and construct is the means by which the Hebrew language qualifies other nouns, that is using one noun in a relation that makes it function as an adjective. For further explanation of hendiadys see Melamed, 1945:173-89.
(justice and righteousness) or (righteousness and justice) in the Hebrew Bible (Weinfeld, 1995b:25). The expression occurs in texts such as Genesis 18:19 where YHWH chooses Abraham to teach his descendants to dorightness and justice to the people of his kingdom.有时 and righteous sometimes run parallel with righteousness and justice. To Weinfield, these expressions could be translated as social justice (Weinfeld, 1992a:228; Weinfield, 1995b:25). For example the shoot from the branch of Jesse will judge the poor with righteousness (and decide with equity for the needy of the land (Isa. 11:4). In line with recent scholarship on social justice in the Hebrew Bible, I discuss below the separate meanings of righteousness and justice. In reference to David Reimer’s suggestion (Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:750), this is not intended to emphasise the individual meanings of these terms over against the meaning of righteousness and justice which in a hendiadys means social justice but to provide an introduction to the discussions on how the various pairs express social justice.

2.1.1 The Meaning of righteousness

righteousness is a masculine noun which has a wide range of meaning, including ‘justice’ or ‘judgement’. It occurs 425 times in the Hebrew Bible (for different counts see BDB:1048; Booth, 1942:105; Even-Shoshan, 1990; Gossai, 1993; Johnson in TDOT IX:87; Mitchel, 1984:765) and is present in 32 out of the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible (Leclerc, 2001:8). In the Hebrew Bible righteousness means ‘that which should be’ or ‘the right thing’. Isaiah speaks of the servant of YHWH: ‘…he will bring forth justice to the nations…he will faithfully bring forth justice…he will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth...’ (Isa. 42:1, 3-4). In one of the only four occurrences of righteousness, the prophet Amos admonishes Israel to ‘Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate (Amos 5:15)...’ righteousness here may refer to ‘right verdict’, in a proper and reliable court system, where the courts will not be on the side of the rich and powerful when they are in the wrong. The result of carrying out righteousness, among other things, is social justice because in doing the right thing, the interest of the vulnerable in society could be seen to be upheld.

7 See Isa. 33:15; 45:19 for and righteousness and justice in different combinations and Ps. 9:9; 98:9 for and righteousness. In Prov. 1:3; 2:9, the combination appears as and righteousness.
could also mean adjudication, in reference to ‘...the case/cause that a plaintiff brings before the court’. Wright maintains that the שלום of the ‘orphan and the widow refers to their rightful case against their exploiters and oppressors’ (Wright, 2004:257). Thus Jeremiah accuses the wicked for not judging the case of the needy (Jer. 5:28). Moses brought the case (.mem) of the daughters of Zelophehad before God for decision (Num. 27:5). The שלום of YHWH, to the vulnerable means YHWH upholds the cause of the weak and vulnerable (Deut. 10:18; Ps 10:18). To those who manipulate the defenceless and deny them of their rights, YHWH’s שלום comes as ‘judgement’ where he holds them accountable for their greedy exploitation of the vulnerable (Jer. 5:28-29). These examples also bring home the idea that שלום as a practical action on behalf of the vulnerable gives expression to social justice.

may also refer to what is rightfully due or deserving. Depending on the context, this usage of שלום may also be interpreted as justice, right or deserving. The people of YHWH are admonished not to pervert the justice due to the poor in their lawsuit, or the stranger or the fatherless, or the widow in other to avoid curse (Exod. 23:6; Deut. 16:19; 24:17; 27:19). YHWH through Isaiah condemns anyone who makes unrighteous decrees and writes iniquity in order to ‘...turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of their right (שלום, Isa. 10:1-2). These texts demonstrate that שלום calls for practical actions, either by YHWH or human agents, to help the vulnerable and thus bring out the social justice implications of שלום.

is also used in reference to the process of formal litigation when different parties enter into a law suit for redress. Here, שלום is rightly translated as ‘judgement’. Isaiah says: ‘The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and prince of his people...’ (Isa. 3:14). Jeremiah complains that ‘you will be in the right, o Lord, when I lay charges against you, but let me put my case to you...’ (Jer. 12:1). Closely related to the above, שלום sometimes means judicial decision (BDB:1048; Enns in NIDOTTE 2:1142; Fohrer, 1973:166; Johnson in TDOT IX:89; HALOT:650-51). In this sense, it refers to the pronouncement of judgement or a judicial sentence. For instance: ‘Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence on him (2 Kgs 25:6’).

When שלום is used in relation to commandment or law, it is mostly translated as ordinance. Booth distinguishes between שלום as commandment of man and as commandment of God (Booth, 1942:105-08). שלום as commandment of man
includes laws and ordinances that human leaders give to their communities. Joshua made a covenant with the people of Israel at Shechem where he gave them a statute and an ordinance (Josh. 24:24). YHWH admonished the Israelites not to walk in the statutes of their fathers nor observe their ordinances (Ezek. 20:18-19). There are numerous biblical texts where מְשָׁפֶת is used to refer to the commandment of God. Here too, the usual translation of מְשָׁפֶת is ordinance: ‘My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord your God’ (Lev. 18:4). In Deuteronomy chapter 4 alone, מְשָׁפֶת appears five times in reference to the commandment of God:

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you...See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy...And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?...And the Lord charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy...These are the decrees and the statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt (Deut. 4:1, 5, 8, 14, 45).

Wallis has suggested that, among the numerous translations of מְשָׁפֶת “that which is lawful”, “ordinance” and “justice” are most accurate (Wallis, 2010:64). Wallis’ suggestion is too absolute since a particular context could make one translation of מְשָׁפֶת more accurate than another. However, from the above discussions, מְשָׁפֶת has diverse meanings and cannot, as Mafico argues, be restricted to one interpretation except the context demands it (Mafico, 2006:158-59). It is clear that the aspects of מְשָׁפֶת that gives meaning to social justice are those that refer to actions. When מְשָׁפֶת calls for response and demands that someone takes upon him/herself the cause of those who are unable to defend themselves due to their weak and vulnerable status in society (Mott, 1993:79) and ensure that they receive what is due them, then its social justice implication is asserted.

2.4.2 The Meaning of צדקה

צדקה is the feminine noun of צדק and is generally translated as ‘righteousness’. Rodd’s assertion that צדקה is empty of concrete meaning just as ‘right’ or ‘good’ are empty of meaning (Rodd, 2001:47), could be justifiable only when צדקה is used without recourse to the context. Houston rightly contends that though abstract in
nature, it is only out of context that הוה is deprived of its meaning (Houston, 2008:101; see also Miranda, 1977:96-103). הוה is seen as both a human and divine attribute (BDB:842, Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:744; Ringgren and Johnson in TDOT XII:253-55). My personal observation of the use of the English word ‘righteousness’ (which sometimes translates the Hebrew הוה in most English versions of the Bible), especially by some Christians, limits it to the idea of ‘holiness or piety’. This has overshadowed the other meanings of the English translation of הוה as ‘righteousness’ and makes it difficult to convey this wider meaning of הוה as it appears in the Hebrew Bible. In discussing the meanings of הוה therefore, I separate the few occurrences where הוה can actually be interpreted as ‘piety or holiness’ from הוה in its wider meaning as ‘righteousness’.

In its meaning as righteousness, הוה has an appeal to human relationship and everyday practical actions which result in doing the right thing. Jacob, in negotiating his wages with Laban, said: ‘So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face...’ (Gen. 30:33 KJV). Jacob was putting forward his honesty and integrity to do the right thing in selecting the part of Laban’s flock that was to be his wages. David Reimer comments that it is suitable though restrictive to translate הוה as ‘honesty’ in this context (Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:747). With support from the narratives of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38) and Saul and David (1 Sam. 24), Reimer shows the use of הוה to compare behaviour of individuals in particular relationships (Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:747-48). The injunction to restore the pledge of the poor to him at sun set concludes with a reason: ‘...that your neighbour may sleep in it. Then they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God’ (Deut. 24:13 NIV). הוה here is descriptive of the practical act of returning the pledge of the poor. YHWH says ‘if the righteous turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before them, they shall die...they shall die for their sin, and their righteous deeds (צדקיה) that they have done shall not be remembered’ (Ezek. 3:20). צדקיה (from his righteousness) in this text is made clear as a practical action rather than an abstract quality, by צדקה (his righteous deeds). The above examples demonstrate that הוה as righteousness is practical, an action to be done not an abstract quality to be gained.

וה in some circumstances means ‘right’, ‘due’ or ‘merit’. When Mephibosheth defended himself before David and against Ziba’s slander, he said:
‘For all my father’s house deserved death at the hand of my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right therefore have I yet?’ (2 Sam. 19:29). Solomon called on YHWH to justify the righteous to give him according to his righteousness (1 Kgs 8:32). Here, נדיב refers to the right or merit a person has, what is deservedly due a person. Joel exhorts the children of Zion to be glad in YHWH their God because he gives them the former rain in right measure (Joel 2:23)...’ This use of נדיב refers to appropriateness or exactness rather than right as in what one deserves.

When נדיב means piety, the translation ‘righteousness’ or ‘uprightness’ still holds but the context reveals a reference to a quality rather than an action (see Wright, 2004:257). Abraham’s belief in YHWH gave him the quality of righteousness (Gen. 15:16). David stressed the meaning of נדיב as piety by putting it alongside the phrases ‘cleanliness of my hands’ and ‘my cleanliness’: ‘The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me...according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his eyes’ (2 Sam. 22:21, 25). When God decides to bring a calamity upon a city where Noah, Daniel and Job (three men seen in biblical tradition as possessing the quality of righteousness/piety) dwelt, only their righteousness could deliver them (Ezek. 14:14, 20). Paul Joyce describes Ezekiel’s allusion to Noah, Daniel and Job, as a forceful way of saying to the wicked that justice will be thorough and absolute and that the punishment that YHWH seeks to bring to a sinful nation will be overwhelming such that these paragons of righteousness cannot moderate (Joyce, 2013b:119, 122). In all the above examples of the use of נדיב, there is no reference to a practical action done but rather to an abstract quality that describes the nature of a person. It is in this sense that the English translation of נדיב as ‘righteousness’, acquires the meaning of ‘piety’, ‘sinlessness’ or ‘holiness’. It is important not to confuse this with the wider meaning of נדיב.

Schofield and Weinfeld have acknowledged that the strong element of mercy or benevolence in נדיב (righteousness) gave נדיב its status as the word for almsgiving in later Hebrew (Schofield, 1971:112-16; Weinfeld, 1995a:34). This claim is supported by Daniel’s admonition to Nebuchadnezzar to give alms and show mercy to the poor: ‘Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for your sins with righteousness (נדיבות) and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged’ (Dan. 4:24). Though נדיב is
here translated as ‘with righteousness’ or ‘by doing what is right’ (NIV), the following sentence which calls for ‘showing mercy to the oppressed’ (ESV) or ‘being kind to the oppressed’ (NIV) suggest that צדקה in this context could mean ‘by almsgiving’. 8 From the above discussion, it could be seen that צדקה comes close to social justice when it is used in relations to doing ‘what is right’, and giving to the individual, especially the vulnerable, what is ‘due’ them. This meaning of צדקה focuses on practical actions done for and on behalf of the poor to better their lives.

2.4.3 The Meaning of מישרים

The word מישרים comes from the root ישר (BDB:448-49; Olivier in NIDOTTE 2:563; Ringgren and Alonso-Schokel in TDOT VI:463). מישרים means ‘uprightness’ or ‘righteousness’ (DCH V:264), especially in accordance with YHWH’s eternal truth (Lemche, 1979:22; Olivier in NIDOTTE 2:565). For instance: ‘The one who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly (מישרים)...will live on the heights...’ (Isa. 33:15-16) and ‘I know, my God, that you search the heart and take pleasure in uprightness (מישרים)...’ (1 Chr. 29:17). The JPS, NIV and NRSV translate מישרים as ‘equity’ (see also Olivier in NIDOTTE 2:563) in Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 9:9; 75:3; 96:10; 98:9: The shoot from the stock of Jesse will judge the poor with righteousness and decide for the meek of the land with equity (מישרים). ‘He will judge the world in righteousness; he will minister judgment to the peoples with equity (מישרים)’; ‘At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity (מישרים);’ YHWH ‘will establish the peoples with equity (מישרים);’ ‘he will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity (מישרים)’. מי שרים parallels צדקה and to elaborate the concept of social justice.

8 REB has ‘charitable deeds’, as do all the ancient versions. However, Goldingay (1989: 81) rightly indicates that as this is advice to a king, the sense ‘do justice’ is more appropriate.
David Reimer is right when he writes regarding the meaning of מְשַׁמְשַׁת וּצְדָקָה that ‘Since the pair forms a hendiadys, precise and distinct meanings for each of the partners should not be sought. Rather, together they represent the ideal of social justice…’ (Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:750). Thus the separate discussions of the three main terms that express the concept of social justice in biblical tradition, only helps to arrive at the explicit expression they give to social justice when they are used together. Mays has described the entire history of Israel’s relationship with YHWH as subordinated to one purpose, which is ‘righteousness expressed in justice’ (Mays, 1983:8). This expression could represent better the meaning of מְשַׁמְשַׁת וּצְדָקָה. Thus wherever the hendiadys מְשַׁמְשַׁת וּצְדָקָה or צְדָקָה מְשַׁמְשַׁת is used, it almost always means social justice. As seen in the separate discussions above, מְשַׁמְשַׁת comes close to social justice when it is used in relations to the ‘rights’ or ‘rightful due’ of individuals and when the ‘cause’ of the vulnerable is upheld in the legal process. At the same time, צְדָקָה comes close to social justice when it is used in relations to doing ‘what is right’, and giving what is ‘due’ to the individual, especially the vulnerable. When מְשַׁמְשַׁת and צְדָקָה come together, from these separate meanings into a hendiadys, they become an explicit expression of social justice.

In the Hebrew Bible, both צְדָקָה and מְשַׁמְשַׁת, depending on the context, can be used to describe actions that are fundamental to the legal process and on which the vulnerable depend for protection of their rights and provision of their needs (Neville, 2001:307). Comparatively, while מְשַׁמְשַׁת describes the individual’s legal claim to life and equity in a community, צְדָקָה describes what is expected of each individual towards wholeness of relationships in that same community (Birch, 1991:259-60; Childs, 1978:46-55; Donahue, 1977:68-69; Gossai, 1993:55-56; Knierim, 1984:36; Mays, 1983:13). So when the people of Israel were admonished: ‘You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour’ (Lev. 19:15), it served to ensure that the individual’s legal claim to fairness is maintained while he/she at the same time upholds his/her responsibility in ensuring wholeness in the relationship with fellow

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9 A survey by Walter Houston of all the examples of the expression suggests it has a wider meaning, though social justice is an essential aspect (Houston, 2014).
members of the community. To sustain this cordial human relationship in a community, YHWH’s justice and righteousness comes as his protection and salvation to restore broken human and community relationships (Duchrow and Liedke, 1989:78). This is expressed in the way Isaiah creates a strong link between YHWH’s justice and righteousness and his saving acts of restoring community relationships (see Isa. 56:1; 59:9-17). Thus Mays is right that ‘where someone cries for justice, all hear in that word a claim that something has gone wrong in the relation between a society and its members’ (Mays, 1987:146). The interaction betweenמשפט and צדק comes to life when צדק is seen as what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with צדק (Wright, 2004:257).

Weinfeld posits that biblical justice and righteousness culminates in ‘ameliorating the situation of the destitute’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:7). His claim finds support in the vivid biblical instruction to YHWH’s people to act to deliver the oppressed and exploited from oppression and exploitation. For example, when YHWH demanded משה צדק and מניший from the princes of Israel, he wanted them to actually remove violence and stop their extortion of the poor and vulnerable (Ezek. 45:9). Thus when it is properly executed by the total elimination of exploitation and oppression, משה צדק becomes social justice.

מישרים adds emphasis to the expression of social justice in biblical tradition. For instance YHWH has established equity (מישרים) and has executed justice and righteousness (משפט צדק) in Jacob (Ps. 99:4). This establishment of justice, righteousness and equity and the protection of the vulnerable, constituted the basic fibre of the social, economic and political life of Israel, referred to here as social justice. The link between צדק,משפט and מישרים, in any combination, as a single expression of social justice, is evident in how they are used together and sometimes interchangeably in the biblical texts. Thus the proverbs of Solomon are given for the performance of right, justice, and equity (Prov. 1:3) and the son who follows his father’s wisdom will understand righteousness and justice, and equity (Prov. 2:9).

Generally in the Hebrew Bible, different pairs of משה צדק represent acts done on behalf of the poor and express social justice. It implies the deliverance of the weak and vulnerable from vulnerability and weakness by ‘the elimination and avoidance of oppression and exploitation’ that inhibits their progress (Houston, 2008:61, 141). In biblical tradition, social justice is embodied in laws that articulate
the ideal of a community emphasizing compassion for those who are vulnerable and prone to abuse, due to their underprivileged economic political or social status (Hanson, 2002:50). Examples of these laws are the sabbatical and jubilee laws which emphasised the fact that social justice was basically an act to make life better for the vulnerable in society. In these laws, and as a means of social justice, Israelite slaves were released after six years of service and/or on the seventh year. As will be pointed out later in this chapter, Westbrook, Weinfeld and Houston have shows that the jubilee and sabbatical laws were idealized, utopian measures that might never have been implemented. For example, Zedekiah’s proclamation of liberty to the people of Jerusalem to release their slaves was initially obeyed but almost immediately turned down when the officials and the people turned about and brought back their slaves into subjection (Jer. 34:8-11). By implication, biblical examples of the jubilee and sabbatical laws could be pure rhetoric or even ignored. Yet these measures could have also set standards for relationship between the poor and the rich. From the foregoing, social justice in biblical tradition, as expressed by ולְדָּקָה מְשַׁפֵּט, means being merciful and showing kindness to those who are weak and vulnerable in society, delivering them from oppression and setting them free from exploitation.

2.2 Ancient Near Eastern Expression of Social Justice

In most Babylonian, Assyrian, or more generally Mesopotamian texts, social justice finds expression in the Akkadian terms mǐšaru, andurāru and kittu. Weinfeld identifies the thin line between mǐšaru and andurāru where, though both connote social justice; mǐšaru refers to economic liberty while andurāru refers to personal manumission (Weinfeld, 1995b:75). In Old Babylonian view of mǐšaru, it is a ‘redress (a legislative act to remedy certain economic malfunctions’ (CAD 10:117). In general, mǐšaru means justice (CAD 10:117). As an instrument of personal manumission, andurāru is a ‘remission of (commercial) debts, manumission (of private slaves), cancelling of services (illegally imposed on free persons). It also refers to legal texts that deal with the ‘release of slaves by their private owners’ (CAD 1:115) and the ‘official act proclaiming the remission of commercial debts’ (CAD 1:116). Furthermore, according to Amit, in the ANE, mǐšaru and andurāru were administrative edicts which ordered tax rebates, debt forgiveness, freedom for
slaves and repossess of family lands issued by a king when he assumed the throne (Amit, 1992:53). Generally, kittu means ‘truth, justice, correct procedure, loyalty, fidelity, correctness, normal state’ (CAD 8:468).

Weinfeld surveys eleven cases from third millennium BCE Mesopotamia, to establish the fact that ANE liberation/freedom was similar to biblical freedom and that both imply social justice (Weinfeld, 1995b:78-96). The first is the inscription of Enmetena, Prince of Lagash, ca 2430 BCE (see Cooper, 1986:56, 67) whose proclamation of freedom led to restoration of family members to themselves and debt forgiveness, which according to Weinfeld, possibly reflects the laws of Jubilee in Leviticus 25. In the reform of Uru’inimgina, ca 2370 BCE (see Cooper, 1986:73) and the prologue to the Law of Ur-Namma (LU), ca 2100 BCE (LU § A.iii 104-124; see Roth, 1997:15), Weinfeld refers to the freedom which led to the protection of the widow and orphan, as commensurate with the Akkadian mšaru and the motif of justice and righteousness in biblical prophecy, where the powerless are to be protected by the ruling class so that they do not fall prey to the powerful (Weinfeld, 1995b:81). From the laws of Lipit-Ishtar (LL) ca 1930 BCE (LL § i 20-37; see Roth, 1997:25), Weinfeld intimates that the release of adult and young people from long days of forced labour coupled with the policies implemented to ensure the welfare of the people, are all acts of mšaru that bring equity and justice to the people. Weinfeld then concludes that the sabbatical year in Israel, as a means of social justice, is identical with the mšaru and andurāru in Mesopotamia, except that those in the Hebrew Bible were ‘woven into a literary framework and thereby received a utopic colouring’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:156). In the Law of Hammurabi (LH), ca 1750 BCE, slaves were to be released after three years (LH §117-119; see Roth, 1997:103-04). In Mesopotamia and other ANE communities, including Egypt, walking in the path of kittu mšaru means the establishment of social equity and improving the status of the poor and the weak in society through a series of regulations which prevent oppression, similar to that of the Hebrew Bible (Weinfeld, 1995a:33). In the epilogue to LH, the king ‘judged the land’ by dealing justly with the oppressed, the widow and the orphan, ensuring that the weak does not fall prey to the strong or the strong might not oppress the weak (LH § xlvii 59-78; see Roth, 1997:133-34; Weinfeld, 1995b:48-49). Thus social justice in the ANE tradition is effectively expressed by mšaru, andurāru and kittu, emphasising liberation of the poor and needy from oppression, extortion and exploitation with prospects of a better life.
2.3 Agents for Delivering Social Justice in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Tradition

This section examines the role of agents upon whom the duty fell to deliver social justice in the biblical and ANE traditions. These agents included the deity who was seen as possessing the divine quality of ‘justice and righteousness’. The deity then gave this divine quality to the ruler and demanded of him and his officials the duty to ensure that social justice was established. At the same time, individual members of society, especially those who were well-to-do, were expected to deliver social justice to their community.

2.3.1 YHWH/The gods

In the ANE, it was believed that the deities were socially just in nature. Thus the Mesopotamian deities were exalted as embodying all that was good and just (Kramer, 1961b:129). In a hymn dedicated to him, Utu, the Sumerian sun god (Šamaš in Akkadian), is referred to as the god of justice: ‘Utu who decrees justice for all countries...who renders justice for all countries, the lord who is highly skilled at verdicts’ (ETCSL 2006; Kramer, 1961a:255). Nanshe, the goddess of Lagash is given the appellation as the goddess who showed sensitivity to the oppression of her people, a mother to the orphan, carer of the fate of the widow, seeker of justice for the poor and provider of refuge for the weak (ETCSL 2006; Kramer, 1961b:126).

A similar belief was upheld in biblical Israel that YHWH was the embodiment of social justice. He was the initiator, custodian and executor of social justice (see Mafico, 2006:171), who was more concerned about social justice than rituals (Hasel, 1991:103). For that reason, any act of injustice could spark YHWH’s wrath (Epsztein, 1986:96). Weinfeld reveals that the Israelites conceived the ‘justice and righteousness’ of YHWH in three dimensions. First, they saw YHWH’s establishment of social justice as ‘creational’, where YHWH, in his creation, established justice in the world. Second, YHWH’s social justice is ‘covenantal’, referring to YHWH’s establishment of covenant with Israel at Sinai which culminated in the giving of laws to order social justice. Third, YHWH’s social justice is ‘eschatological’, referring to a future when YHWH will reveal himself as...
the just and righteous ruler of the universe (Weinfeld, 1995b:5). Wright proposes a similar three-tier view of YHWH’s justice and righteousness: justice as God displays it; justice as God demands it and justice as God will ultimately deliver it (Wright, 2004:254). Mays also points out that the prophets understood justice as ‘a theological term’, in terms of ‘moral value’ and as something that ‘could be done’ (Mays, 1983:8).

There are tensions in seeing YHWH as an agent of delivering social justice as presented in the Hebrew Bible. If the exodus and the occupation of the Promised Land are interpreted as YHWH delivering oppressed Israel from oppression in Egypt, it raises questions of injustice since the action results in other people being further oppressed or unjustly treated. If YHWH is the judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25), why does he brutally kill the firstborn of all Egyptians, including slaves and commoners who had no part in Pharaoh’s enslavement of Israel and who themselves might have been victims of the same injustice that Israel was suffering? Why does he sanction genocide of the original dwellers of Canaan in order to dispossess them and give the land to Israel? It is only when YHWH’s actions here are placed in the context of his struggle to prove his divine powers as God (Exod. 7:5, 17; 9:16) and his special relationship with Israel that there can be a justification (see Durham, 1987:96; Gowan, 1994:131-40; Houston, 2008:205-14; Houston, 2010:58; Knierim, 1995:96-100; 102-03). In general perspective, however, YHWH’s impartial justice for all that are under oppression and in need, especially as expressed in the Psalms, sheds light on his moral obligation to champion the course of the vulnerable.

The song of Moses speaks of YHWH as the rock, his work as perfect, his ways as just, his nature as just and upright, faithful and without deceit (Deut. 32:4). It is said that righteousness and justice are the foundation of YHWH’s throne and he is heralded by steadfast love and faithfulness (Ps. 89:15). The psalmist says YHWH is the God ‘who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry...sets the prisoners free...opens the eyes of the blind...lifts up those who are bowed down...loves the righteous... watches over the strangers...upholds the orphan and the widow...’ (Ps. 146:7-9). Thus YHWH’s justice is his protection of those who cannot secure their own right (Birch, 1991:156, Snaith, 1946:70). His justice and righteousness is especially manifest in his care for the poor, the hungry, the widow, the orphan, the oppressed, the troubled and the afflicted. He also actively responds to and redresses the inequity when needs are unmet and rights are denied. In Psalm 82
YHWH is enthroned in judgement over the other deities. He demands justice from these deities that they should not show partiality for the wicked but they should defend the rights of the weak, the poor, the orphan, the lowly and the destitute. He declares that the absence of these elements of social justice will result in the death of these deities as though they were mortals. Thus ‘in Israel’s conception the doing of justice and righteousness was defining of true divinity’ and only YHWH could claim faithfulness in accomplishing and maintaining social justice (Birch, 1991:157; see Booth, 1942:110). Houston is right when he observes that ‘...it is obviously central to almost all ideologies of justice in the [Hebrew Bible] that God acts to establish or preserve justice and righteousness [and] to create a just, peaceful and blessed human community’ (Houston, 2008:14-15). Israelite prophets, especially Isaiah and Amos, denounce debt slavery, garment seizure, violation of laws that protected ordinary people and the activities of those who exacerbated the misery and deprivation of the poor, because they believe that such behaviours meant they have neglected their responsibility to imitate YHWH, their God (see Amit, 1992:49; Epsztein, 1986:59, 101).

The qualities of social justice are rooted in the character of YHWH who has acted in justice and righteousness toward all people and thus expects these qualities to be reflected in the life of his people, in their relationship with one another and with him (Birch, 1991:260). YHWH looked to Israel and Judah for ‘justice and righteousness...’ because he himself is ‘...exalted by justice and...shows himself holy by righteousness (Isa. 5:7, 16)’. YHWH pays special attention to the poor because in all cases of injustice, they are the ones at the receiving end. Amos clearly shows that though the rich and the politically powerful in Israel were unjust, at the receiving end of which injustice were the poor, the needy and the slave, YHWH will intervene to establish social justice. Wright correctly observes that YHWH’s particular favour for the poor was accounted for by the fact that ‘...they are the ones who are on the “wronged” side of a situation of chronic injustice...’ (Wright, 2004:268).

Normally, YHWH causes human beings to execute his justice and righteousness but when human institutions fail in this purpose YHWH acts directly (Mott, 2011:220). Epsztein affirms that the strong link between human-divine relationship, passing through human-human relationship and coinciding with social action, is the spirit of social justice in the Hebrew Bible. This understanding, coupled with the
emphasis of the prophets that the fate of the Israelite community depended on their behaviour in defending the inalienable rights of the individual in their social practice, formed a dynamic pillar to hold the practice of social justice among the people (Epsztein, 1986:140). It is the claim of Psalm 72 that the king was favoured by YHWH because of his protection of the poor from exploitation but it is YHWH, the just God, who is finally responsible for social justice for humanity. If YHWH being a God of justice and righteousness implies that he is ultimately responsible for social justice, then Israel his people must be a just people (Epsztein, 1986:63). Epsztein quotes Cazelles that:

The Israelite king received from his God the virtues of righteousness and justice, 
oshr and tsdq just as the Pharaoh received Maat, justice or truth, from Re, the supreme God, the Babylonian king received kitu and mesharu from Marduk and the Phoenician king had divinised right and justice (mshr and tsdq).

By implication, as ‘the Israelite king had the duty of protecting the weak and the poor, the widows and the orphans’ his counterparts in the ANE were bound by divine injunction to do same (Epsztein, 1986:105). Thus the greatest human responsibility of practical execution of social justice in biblical Israel and the ANE rested on the king/the ruling class.

2.3.2 The King/the Ruling Class

It is important to note that the performance of social justice is vital in biblical and ANE traditions because of the belief that the king’s legitimacy to rule depended largely on his faithful execution of the divine injunction to rule justly. Consequently, it was thought that the king could lose his throne if he was unjust or oppressive (see Smith, 2009:75). Jonathan Stökl writes:

Israelite and Judean as well as ancient Near Eastern prophets pronounced divine support for their rulers, announced defeat for their opponents and dispensed divine criticism of the behaviour of “their” kings. They promised divine support for their dynasties and threatened to take away their kingship if their demands were not met (Stökl, 2012:63).

Many of the demands that these prophets made, which the kings needed to meet in order to continue their rule, hinged on social justice. Also, divine favour was predicated on the king’s elimination of oppression, corruption, injustice and
exploitation. As part of the traditional legitimisation of royal authority, it was demanded of the monarch to listen to the people, care for them and increase their well-being by upholding social justice. Failure to do so could result in a revolt, which could be led by elders and officials of the state. For example, if the account is historical, the elders of the northern tribes of Israel led a revolt against Rehoboam when he threatened to rule them unjustly (1 Kgs 12:1-16). The events leading to the division of the Davidic kingdom in 1 Kings 12 show that the northern tribes of Israel perceived Solomon to have been a tyrant and an unjust king who unjustifiably burdened them with hard labour, extortion and exploitation in order to finance his expansionist and international relations policies. Even though Solomon ruled till he died, the anger of the people turned against his son Rehoboam, who succeeded him. Again, Absalom revoluted against David because he, Absalom, perceived David as an unjust king (see 2 Samuel 15-17). Absalom claimed that David has lost the divine mandate to rule, for not maintaining justice in the kingdom and that he, Absalom, has been divinely elected to rule in his stead. Laundervile comments that even the assassination of a monarch could be seen as legitimate in the Bible if the ‘king had undermined his kingship through unjust actions...’ and that ‘Divine election was not an indelible mark imprinted on the person of the king; it could be forfeited by an unjust king’ (Laundervile, 2003:268). Possibly, the negative casting of some kings could be part of the distortion of historical realities by the biblical writers in order to justify their own ideologies (see Stavrakopoulou, 2004:1, 8-13, 16, 141, 316-22). However, the picture painted in the biblical text, shows that royal authority could only be legitimised and maintained through upholding justice. An unjust king, even if not physically dethroned by the divine power, could be assassinated, captured or even exiled from his kingdom and divine intervention will be assigned as the reason.

Westbrook successfully points out that it was to the king that the oppressed citizens in the ANE turned for social justice (Westbrook, 1995:150). Whether they were poor or not, widows and orphans were singled out by ANE kings for protection against oppression and exploitation because the loss of the husband or father meant there was no one in the household to defend their rights and inheritance against

10 ‘The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him’ (1 Kgs 11:42-43).
human predators who may seek to covet their property (Westbrook, 1995:151). Evidence of ANE king being an agent for executing social justice are found in some Mari letters. First, a prophet of Adad of Aleppo declares to Zimri-Lim: ‘…When a wronged man or wo[man] cries out to you, be there and judge their case…’ (A.1121 + A.2731; see Nissinen et al., 2003:19-20). Also, Abiya, the prophet of Adad of Aleppo says to Zimri-Lim: ‘…if anyone cries out to <you> for judgement, saying: ‘I have been wr[ong]ed; be there to decide his case; answer him fairly…’ (A.1968, see Nissinen et al., 2003:22). Again, a woman whose servant girl was kidnapped, was encouraged by a prophet to request the intervention of the king without which the kidnapper will not release the servant (ARM 26 232; see Nissinen et al., 2003:61). An oracle from a deity to the king, in the Ammonite Citadel Inscription also says in part: ‘…And let justice [and kindness] dwell in every hall-of-government…[Then shall I establish peace in the city] and peace for thee and p[ease for thy progeny]’ (see Margalit, 1998:531). To Weinfeld, these examples affirm that Mesopotamian literature portrayed that the state of social justice could determine the fate of a nation (Weinfeld, 1995b:49). Thus the legitimacy of the king’s reign in the ANE was a divine mandate to ensure social justice in his kingdom (Finkelstein, 1965:103; Westbrook, 1995:150).

In ANE literature, as in the Hebrew Bible, there were hopes for a righteous king (Weinfeld, 1995b:45). Isaiah’s prophecy about the child who will sit on David’s throne, establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness forever (Isa. 9:1ff) finds expression in the Mesopotamian prophecy from Uruk, where there is a vision of a king who ‘will rise up in Uruk’ and judge the land, restore the kingdom and give his people liberty (Weinfeld, 1995b:58). Further Isaiah’s prophecy concerning a Judean king who seeks justice and righteousness and whose throne is established with kindness and truth (Isa. 16:5) finds expression in the Moabites expectation of the king of Jerusalem who seeks justice and righteousness and destroys robbery and violence (Weinfeld, 1995b:58). In ancient Egypt, the base of the throne of the king had a drawing that symbolised justice and righteousness (Weinfeld, 1995b:59). Jeremiah also describes an ideal king who will establish justice and righteousness on his coronation (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). This compares favourably with the saying ‘mīṣarum ina mātim šakātum’ describing reforms that new kings introduced on their coronation in Mesopotamia to enforce social justice.
In Psalm 72 the psalmist prays to YHWH to endow the king with the quality of justice and righteousness, which is YHWH’s own. This quality will enable the king to judge his people with righteousness by defending the cause of the poor and delivering the needy by crushing the oppressor. The psalmist continues to pray for international prestige and military dominion, long life, victory, blessings, fame and honour for the King because he promotes social justice by mercifully delivering the needy and the poor from oppression and violence (see Houston 2008: 142). Weinfeld asserts that the king’s ‘...intervention on behalf of the weak, not only saves them from their oppressors, but also acts to abolish evil and suppresses the oppressors and tyrants’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:49). The king’s legitimacy to rule was dependent on his execution of social justice by showing mercy and compassion towards the poor and vulnerable. In, the pair ‘justice and righteousness’ Isaiah describes the role of the king and his officials emphasising that the legitimacy of the king’s rule rests on his capacity to roll out policies to ensure social justice (Isa. 32:1-8).

Social justice in the Hebrew Bible therefore, required a practical translation of royal policies into concrete actions to rescue the poor and vulnerable from poverty, oppression and vulnerability. To achieve this, the ruling class must roll out measures to ensure the wellbeing of the weak in society (Weinfeld, 1995b:40). To emphasise this biblical perspective of social justice, Weinfeld interprets Jeremiah 22:15-16 as ‘he judged the case of the poor and the needy, then it was good for him [the poor or needy]’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:55).

Most of these sayings about kings in the Hebrew Bible and ANE texts were just to preserve the status quo and to cast them in the eyes of their subjects as just kings. In reality, there is rarely any evidence to prove that any king upheld social justice by significantly changing the lives of the poor. However, this attempt by the upper-class to preserve the status quo in the hierarchy of society, which was not backed by real change in the life of the poor and needy, did not take away the people’s expectation of the king to curb oppression and show generosity to the vulnerable in the society. Weinfeld argues that the duty to ensure that the poor, the widow, the fatherless, the alien and the disadvantaged in society were treated fairly and given their due was the

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In an earlier paper, Houston discusses extensively the rhetorical, ideological and ethical implications of Psalm 72 and its claims about the king’s preferential option for the poor (see Houston, 1999:341-67).
responsibility of all individuals. However, the prophets’ sharp plea to the kings to execute social justice was to ensure that good-will alone was not to be the determinant of crushing oppression. To him, ‘the execution of justice and righteousness in the royal domain referred primarily to acts on behalf of the poor and less fortunate classes of the people’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:8). In ancient Israel, the responsibility to ensure social justice was both a divine demand and a symbol of good kingship.

2.3.3 The Individual

The Hebrew Bible emphasises that individuals have a responsibility to make social justice a reality. It was incumbent on each person to show special regard to the poor, the needy and the underprivileged by championing their cause and by permitting no oppression (Haran, 1963:96-101; Weinfeld, 1995b:97-99). This was so because YHWH by his activity in their history had already shown himself as a God of social justice and had given them laws that urged them to do same (Birch, 1991:177). In Exodus 22-23 the individual Israelite is admonished to uphold the principles of social justice. The individual should not wrong nor oppress the stranger neither should he afflict the widow and the orphan. He should also not take interest from debtors and must return his neighbours garment, taken in pledge, at sun set. He must refrain from all acts that pertain to wickedness and injustice but should observe the rules of the sabbatical year of rest, release, restoration and redemption. In Ezekiel 18, the man who upholds social justice does what is lawful and right. He does not wrong anyone, nor takes anything by robbery, he restores the pledge he took for a debt. That just man feeds the hungry and covers the naked; he does not take interest but executes true justice. Houston rightly observes that social justice in the Hebrew Bible takes cognisance of the reality that there are individuals in society who are strategically positioned by being free and in command of economic resources and/or political power. These individuals are capable of exercising and maintaining social justice and have the responsibility to do so. In this sense, the Hebrew Bible exhorts those with power and resources to be generous towards those with less power and resources and to be kind to the poor (Houston, 2008:99). Thus each individual in the Israelite community had responsibility to ensure that social justice was maintained.
2.4 Approaches to Social Justice in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions

Defining social justice in the context of the Hebrew Bible is a complex enterprise. This complexity is partly due to the different and sometimes contradictory voices on social justice in different strands of the biblical text. Also, as Keith Whitelam implies, there is substantial difference between what the biblical text presents as the ideal and what the reality is (Whitelam, 1979:14-18). An example is the requirement for the centralization of the cult, prescribed in Deuteronomy (see Nicholson, 1963:380-89) and the archaeological reality that sacrificial altars, 'high places', and shrines existed in ancient Israel and Judah (see Miller and Hayes, 1986:109-19). Again, the representation of the image of a just king in the Bible, such as David, is at odds with the historical realities that existed. These significant gaps between the historical reality and representation of ideal images add to the complexities associated with social justice in biblical texts. This section discusses three aspects of social justice ideas found in the Hebrew Bible and ANE traditions: maintaining the status quo, advocacy for fairness and generosity to the needy and a desire for equality.

2.4.1 Maintaining the status quo

The first aspect of social justice in biblical and ANE traditions is the preservation of the status quo. According to Westbrook, in biblical and ANE texts, the pursuit of social justice was about preserving the status quo in a hierarchical society made up of the household, the nobles, the king and the deities. The household, was made up of a male head, wives, children and servants (Westbrook, 1995:149; reprinted in Westbrook, 2009:143). In biblical tradition, this hierarchy was expressed in stories about the divine election of the king and his authority to rule all the people. He was the head of his own family but had authority over other heads of families and communities. He was to be revered and obeyed as an earthly representation of

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12 See discussions below.
YHWH. In the ANE, this hierarchy was presented through cosmologies such as the legend of Atrahasis where the king was at the apex of the hierarchy after the gods, followed by the nobles and the commoners, served perpetually by those on the lowest level (see Berman, 2008:19). Social justice in such a society aimed only at preserving the status quo not poverty alleviation (Westbrook, 1995:161). Slaves remained slaves and nobles remained nobles. In LH, for example, social justice meant applying different rules to different classes of people and therefore punishing offence against the palace or an awīlum more severely than that against a muškēnum, a commoner or a poor man (LH § 8; see Roth, 1997:82). Similarly in LU, slaves who had gained their freedom from their masters by running away, were to be brought back into slavery (LU § 17; LH § 18; see Roth, 1997:19, 84). In biblical tradition, Israelites were not to be slaves for life in their own land but be released in the seventh year (Exod. 21.2-11, Deut. 15.12-18.). Similar release is provided for the year of Jubilee. If they were slaves to resident aliens, they had the right of redemption. However, Israelites are permitted to acquire slaves from foreigners and resident aliens who will serve them for life (see Lev. 25:39-55). Chirichigno acknowledges the tension in this provision (Chirichigno 1993:26-28, 328-43).

Furthermore, most of the biblical and ANE texts that touted praises of rulers as upholding social justice were only rhetoric about their interventions on behalf of the vulnerable. They presented images of the ideal rather those realities and the few real actions that are found were in the interest of the rulers than their subjects. In biblical tradition, for instance, it is said that: ‘David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people’ (2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Chr. 18:14) and that he walked before YHWH ‘...in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart...’” (1 Kgs 3:6). Yet throughout his reign, David did nothing practical to relieve his subjects from their predicament except defeating their enemies. Instead, he perpetrated oppression by killing Uriah and marrying his wife (2 Sam. 11:1-27) and he failed to curb the acts of injustice in his own court (2 Sam. 13:1-37). The freedom and return of property David extended to Mephibosheth was only face-saving and in anticipation of loyalty from families loyal to Saul. It is thus not surprising that this was revoked when Ziba slandered Mephibosheth as not loyal to David (2 Sam. 9; 16:1-4). Smith has rightly contended that this statement about David, ironically describes the (catastrophic) fate of justice and righteousness in the reign of David,
pointing out his failure to establish justice and righteousness (Smith, 2009:78). In the ANE, most of the supposed royal interventions on behalf of the vulnerable are found in prologues and epilogues¹³ and not the law codes themselves. For instance, Ur-Namma ‘established freedom for Akkad and foreigners in the land of Sumer and Akkad…’ He did not deliver the orphan to the rich, the widow to the mighty, the man with one shekel to the man with one mina and he did not deliver the man with one sheep to the man with one ox (LU § A.iii 114-24, iv 162-168; see Roth, 1997:15-16). Hammurabi makes justice prevail in the land, abolishes the wicked and evil and prevents the strong from oppressing the weak (LH § i 27-49; see Roth, 1997:77). The actual laws do not demonstrate enough determination to protect the weak from oppression (see Hurowitz, 1994:1-12). These proclamations were formalities aimed not at helping the weak but making the king appear as righteous before the people (see Weinfeld 1995b:10; Westbrook 1995:151-57).¹⁴ Berman’s comments that the claim by ANE monarchs to be benevolent towards the marginalised never led to classless society, is very appropriate (Berman, 2008:6). This suggests that the biblical utopian representations of just societies are also unlikely to reflect a historical reality.

Apart from the few provisions that may demonstrate concern for the weak in society, especially in terms of maintenance of the widow and the orphan (see LE § 39; LH § 116-117; 148; 177; see Roth 1997:65, 103, 109, 116), the majority of the provisions in these ANE and biblical laws protected the interest of the upper class to the detriment of the weak and vulnerable. Most provisions in LU serve to perpetrate slavery and give no freedom to a slave or his/her offspring from slavery. For instance a male slave who marries a female slave is not allowed, upon gaining his freedom, to go away with his wife (LU § 4; see Roth, 1997:17). It is not clear whether the male slave’s wife is a slave to the same owner or she was given to him by his master. In the biblical equivalent, if the slave’s master gives him a wife and she bears him children, upon gaining his freedom, the slave must either go without his wife and children or continue to be the master’s slave in order to keep his wife and children

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¹³ Hurowitz (1994:1-12) prefers ‘non-judicial sections’ to ‘prologue and epilogue’ because they are neither adequate nor accurate terms for these section of the ancient law codes.
¹⁴ Bruce Wells argues that [these laws] might have not been considered as law because there is no indication that they had any bearing on how the legal systems were to be handled (Wells, 2008:225, 242). For this and other reasons, he describes the biblical and cuneiform codes as legally descriptive treatises (Wells, 2008:243).
(Exod. 21:4-6). The interest of a widow is not protected in any way in the case when a man has sex with her without a formal contract (LU § 4, 5, 11; see Roth, 1997:18). In the Law of Lipit-Ishtar (LL), the slave woman, who bears children for her master and her children are given no inheritance if the master’s wife also bears children (LL § 25; see Roth, 1997:31). Most provisions in LH protected the crown and its functionaries on land, rents, commerce and military might, and these had little to do with the interest of the poor and vulnerable (LH § 26-107; see Roth, 1997:85-101).

In the context of social justice as maintaining the status quo, the stratification of society leading to the existence of poor and rich side by side was never challenged. At best, the benevolence of the upper class was appealed to and the only act considered as injustice and in which the kings intervened was when those who were already poor and weak, including widows and orphans, were oppressed, exploited and robbed of their possessions. Rodd and Houston acknowledge texts in the Hebrew Bible that accept the existence of differences in access to wealth and social power without question but seeing oppression of the poor, rather than poverty itself, as a problem (Houston, 2008:99-100; see Rodd, 2001:174). To this end, ‘the condemnation of the oppression of the poor by the rich in the Hebrew Bible cannot be construed as a rejection of the very existence of the two classes [and that] the identification of justice with equality is essentially a modern phenomenon’ (Levenson, 1993:133). However, there were expectations to protect the weak in society. Westbrook rightly argues that social justice in these communities included the people’s expectation of the king to protect ‘the weaker strata of society from being unfairly deprived of their due: the legal status, property rights and economic condition to which their position on the hierarchical ladder entitled them’ (Westbrook, 1995:149). The kings thus intervened in cases of oppression, guarded against oppression and abuse of power, defended the rights of widows and orphans and protected them against attempts by the powerful to covet their inheritance. Yet the focus was on preserving the hierarchical structure and keeping it balanced.
2.4.2 Fairness and Generosity to the Poor and Needy

The second aspect of social justice in biblical and ANE traditions was the demand for fairness and generosity to the vulnerable in society. At the time when kings touted themselves as establishing social justice in their kingdoms, the reality of poverty and the predicament of the lower class stared them in the face, a situation that has not changed in the world today. In biblical tradition in particular, prophets and other functionaries demanded a paradigm of social justice where the ruling class was expected to show generosity and fairness to the poor and needy. This was scarcely new, but already a commonplace in documents representing the royal ideology. Seeing themselves as mandated by YHWH, the prophets demanded practical actions from the kings and other members of society who had the power and the resources, to help alleviate poverty, oppression and exploitation.

משהט וצדקה as expressions for social justice in the Hebrew Bible (see Melamed, 1945:173-89; Miranda 1977: 93-97, 108-9, n. 35-38; Weinfeld, 1992:228; Weinfeld, 1995b:25), indicates that social justice ‘…is more associated with mercy and loving-kindness…ameliorating the situation of the destitute [and aided] by the elimination of exploitation and oppression on the part of the oppressor’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:7). Justice and righteousness in the prophetic literature reveal that social justice refers primarily to the improvement of the conditions of the poor. Jeremiah charged the king of Judah to execute ‘…justice and righteousness’ and demanded of him to ‘deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed’ not to do any ‘wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood’ (Jer. 22:23, see also Ezek. 45:9). The author of Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed that YHWH has chosen a fast that will adequately demonstrate Israel’s righteousness. This fast is expressed in acts of kindness in doing away with wickedness, taking away the burden of oppression, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless and clothing the naked (Isa. 58:6-8). The Akkadian expression kittu u mīšaru (truth and equity) shows the establishment of social equity by ‘improving the status of the poor and the weak in society through a series of regulations which prevent oppression’ (Weinfeld, 1995b:33). For instance, Zimri-Lim was instructed by Adad, the god of Aleppo: ‘When a wronged man or wo[man] cries out to you, be there to judge their case...If anyone cries out to you for judgement, saying “I have
In Israel and the ANE, the king was expected to be there for the poor and as part of his role in establishing justice he was expected to respond to petitions (2 Kgs 8:3-6), restore property or defend the rights of the needy (see Houston, 2008:153). This is because the deity granted ‘justice and righteousness’ to the king as a character trait, expressed in mercy and kindness. Just dealings in the social sphere and in the royal domain referred primarily to acts on behalf of the poor and less fortunate classes of the people (Weinfeld, 1995b:27-33). Jackson strengthens this position by arguing that in administering justice judges were to apply the concept of fairness and equity, which were expected of the king (Jackson, 1998:222-23). The prophets speak against oppression perpetrated by the rich landowners and the ruling circles who control the socio-economic order (Weinfeld, 1995a:35-37). For instance, Nathan condemns David for killing Uriah and marrying his wife Bathsheba (2 Sam.13:1-15); Elijah condemns Ahab for killing Naboth and possessing his vineyard (1 Kgs 21:17-19); and Amos condemns Israel for oppressing the poor and needy (Amos 2:6-8). He rebukes those who ‘store up violence and robbery in their strongholds’, the women who ‘oppress the poor [and] crush the needy’, those who ‘take levies of grain’ from the poor, those who ‘make the ephah small and the shekel great’ who ‘buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals’ (Amos 3:10; 4:1; 5:11; 8:5-6). Amos also condemns the Israeliite elite for pushing ‘aside the needy in the gate’ (Amos 5:10, 12) and Isaiah criticises landowners who enlarged their estate by oppressing the poor (Isa. 5:8-18).

In this context the patron-client relationship as an integral part of social justice in biblical tradition, assumed that free men who were in command of resources and power had the responsibility to show kindness and behave responsibly towards those who do not have power or resources especially the poor (Houston, 2008:99). From the description of the ‘righteous man’ and the ‘wicked man’ in Ezekiel 18, it can be noted that regardless of the fact that social justice was not about solidarity with the weak, reducing the gap between the poor and the rich, or making society less class-divided, social justice was ‘...about how the powerful man should use his power, to help the weak rather than exploiting them’ (Houston, 2008:105). This call for benevolence in the hierarchy is epitomised in the biblical and ANE expectation of
the king to act on behalf of the poor against their oppressors because it is this concern for the poor that entitles the king to reign (Houston, 2008:143).

2.4.3 Desire for Equality

The third aspect of social justice in biblical and ANE traditions is the quest for equality. The notion of equality is highly problematic in any hierarchical society because such societies survive on preserving the status quo of class distinction and economic disparities. It is thus not always possible to impose contemporary ideas of equality on ancient texts. The discussion on equality as an aspect of social justice does not seek to describe ‘equality’ in biblical and ANE traditions in terms of the modern view of equality. It only draws attention to some texts that seem to be inherently advocating equality, even though it might have not been achieved. This section engages extensively with the works of Joshua Berman (2008) and Walter Houston (2010) who draw attention to strands of biblical texts that portray a desire for an egalitarian society. It also takes into account the implications of the many instances of inequality in the two traditions.

It is important to acknowledge here that the institution of slavery and the subordination of women in biblical and ANE traditions demonstrate a lack of ‘formal, legal or political equality’ (see Houston, 2010:83-88). Undoubtedly, there are texts in the Hebrew Bible which portray discrimination and class division on gender and status, for which reason one cannot claim uniform equality (see Exod. 21:7-11, 18-19). Houston identifies women, aliens and foreign slaves who were treated differently from men, native slaves or freeborn males in the Bible. Women in particular were unfairly treated differently from men. For example, the redemption fee for an adult male from temple service is far greater than that of an adult female (Lev. 27:2-7). Though the smaller amount for redeeming a woman from temple service may be interpreted as making it easier to redeem a woman than a man and may thus seem positive for the freedom of women, in biblical tradition, it is indicative of the fact that women were less regarded and less valued than men. In addition, women were never thought of to have equal authority with men despite the interpretation of Genesis 1:27 that men and women were created equal (Clines, 1990:41-45). Houston also adds to the list of unequal treatment of women the
consigned women to domestic life and the assumption that public life is for men. The presentation of women with strong leadership qualities, intelligence and ingenuity, such as Rebekah, Deborah and Abigail, to Houston, only confirms the fact that women had to go the extra mile in order to make a difference in the man’s world presented in the Bible (Houston, 2010:83-88). Like Houston, Berman acknowledges that the highly stratified order in biblical Israelite society in which priests, Levites and kings get a greater share of everything than all other members of the community, such as servants, resident aliens and foreigners, coupled with its sharp distinctions between men and women; makes it difficult to sustain the claim that the Bible embraces egalitarian ideals (Berman, 2010a:4). Again, when it comes to the judiciary, the cult, the military and land ownership, there is no equality as women are seen as the subordinate (Berman, 2010a:5).

Despite these and many other instances of inequality against women and slaves in the Bible, Houston maintains that ancient Israel and Judah had a ‘vision of equality...’ (Houston, 2010:83-88) though this is obviously limited to free-born adult males and did not extend to women, slaves or children. To him, as far as community life was concerned, in the Bible, ‘the family you were born into does not make any difference in the way the law affects you’. Houston acknowledges that people were treated differently depending on whether they were born into royal, priestly or enslaved family (Houston, 2010:76). Berman emphasises that despite all the inequalities he and others have identified, the Pentateuch discourages social stratification by ‘rejecting the permanent and institutionalised power given to a particular class to control the economic, military and political resources of society (Berman, 2010a:5, Mann; 1986:38). Also the Pentateuch ‘...offers a blueprint for a social and religious order which rejects the social stratification that divides the dominant tribute-imposing class and the dominated tribute-bearing class (Berman, 2010a:5; Boer, 2002:120; Gelb, 1972:92; Gottwald, 1993b:6, Snell, 1997:146). To him therefore, ‘...the Pentateuch is history’s first blueprint for a society where theology, politics and economics embrace egalitarian ideals by reconstituting ancient norms and institutions’ (Berman, 2010a:4). Berman defines an egalitarian society as ‘...one in which the hierarchy of permanent and institutionalised stratification is dissipated’ (Berman, 2008:5; Berman, 2010a:5). He thus contends that ‘...for the

15 Berman borrowed the term ‘tribute-imposing class’ and ‘tribute-bearing class’ from Gottwald 1993b:6.
free, non-priest/Levites of the Israelite polity, the Pentateuch rejects the divide between a class of tribute imposers, who control economic and political power on the one hand, and an even larger class of tribute bearers on the other. Instead, the Pentateuch articulates a new social, political, and religious order, whose core is a single, uniformly empowered homogeneous class’ (Berman, 2010a:5).

Though priests/Levites and kings were accorded some power and privileges in the Hebrew Bible,¹⁶ there were attempts to limit these privileges and powers. In the Pentateuch, the priests and Levites are limited in the amount of land they can own (Num. 18:20, Deut. 18:1-2.) and they share cultic prescriptions with the masses who sometimes play a more active role in the temple (see Berman, 2008:64-67; Berman, 2010a:11). The presence of the judges, whose appointment was the responsibility of the people, the prophets, who were called by God and independent from royal, priestly/cultic and judiciary control, served as checks and balances to limit the power of the king and the priests and to promote a community of equals (Berman, 2008:6-7, 10, 64-72).

There are cases where a comparison between Hebrew Bible and ANE texts shows that the biblical evidence exhibits more of a tendency towards equality than the ANE evidence. One of such instances is the punishment of offenders, especially, in the Law of Hammurabi which applies different punishment to people depending on whether they were ‘awīlum’ or ‘muškēnum’. The man who ‘...steals an ox, a sheep, a donkey, a pig, or a boat’ will restore it thirtyfold, if the stolen item belongs to the gods or the palace but only tenfold if the stolen item belongs to a commoner (LH § 8; see Roth, 1997:82). Also, if an ‘awīlum’ blinds the eye or breaks the bone of another ‘awīlum’, his eye will be blinded or his bone will be broken as punishment. But if the same ‘awīlum’ blinds the eye or breaks the bone of a commoner, for his punishment, he will pay 60 shekels of silver (LH §196-198; see Roth, 1997:121).¹⁷ Again, the LL fines a man who causes a free woman to miscarry thirty shekels of silver as against five shekels of silver if he causes a slave woman to miscarry (LL § d, f; see Roth, 1997:26-27). These notwithstanding, there are

¹⁶ No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations. No bound or hired servant of the priest shall eat of the sacred donations; but if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, the person may eat of them; and those that are born in his house may eat of his food (Lev. 22:10-11).

¹⁷ See also LH xI 60-74 for other provisions where the application of the law depends on one's status, see Roth, 1997:121.
provision in the same LH where punishment for a particular offence is the same whether the offended is ‘awīlum’ or ‘muškēnum’. For example, punishment for a man who enables a slave to run away is the same, death, whether the slave belongs to the palace or a commoner. Also, the same punishment, death, is given to the one who harbours a slave, whether belonging to the palace or a commoner (LH §15-16; see Roth, 1997:84). The passage below is an example in the Covenant Code where equality is upheld in punishing people for the same offence:

When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the woman’s husband demands, paying as much as the judges determine. If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. When a slave-owner strikes the eye of a male or female slave, destroying it, the owner shall let the slave go, a free person, to compensate for the eye. If the owner knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave shall be let go, a free person, to compensate for the tooth (Exod. 21:22-27).

There are two different offenders and offences here in Exodus 21:22-27: men who fight and injure a pregnant woman, on one hand and a man who injures his slave, on the other hand. In the first, though there is no question of women fighting and injuring another woman, the biblical law does not distinguish between punishments for this offence based on whether the pregnant woman is a free woman or a slave woman. In the second, the man who injures the eye or tooth of his slave is enjoined to set the slave free as compensation, whether the slave is male or female. Given that the biblical and ANE texts came from different sources and different eras, these comparisons survive only on the textual level. Beyond that, context and age may dictate different conclusions.

The motives behind the creation of the human race in biblical and ANE narratives also reveal the desire for equality. The text of the El-Bersheh wooden coffins dated 2000 BCE, is titled: ‘All Men Created Equal in Opportunity’. This text shows that in the middle kingdom of ancient Egypt ‘social justice and the right of the common man were emphasised’ because the creator-god made ‘all men equal in access to basic necessities of life’ (Pritchard, 1969:7). ‘The All-Lord’ boasts of his four good deeds in the portal of the horizon: He made the four winds that all men can

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18 בנים in verse 22 which the NRSV translates here as ‘people’ is translated ‘men’ in many English versions such as the KJV, JPS and ESV. Similarly, שות in verse 26 has been translated here as ‘a slave-owner’ instead of ‘a man’ as in KJV, JPS and ESV. This restricts the application of this law only to men.
breathe equally; he made the great inundation so that the poor man’s right, like that of the great man, can be protected; he made every man like his fellow; and he set the hearts of all men to continue making the divine offering to the gods of the provinces (Pritchard, 1969:7-8). The above examples may contrast with other ANE texts where the purpose for the creation of man was for him to do menial jobs for the gods. They include the Atrahasis epic (see Berman, 2008:18-21, Foster, 1995:54-55) and another epic titled ‘Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess’ (Pritchard, 1969:99). However, the intention for equality cannot be missed out. In the Hebrew Bible, the narrative of the creation of man in Genesis 1:26-29 and its counterpart in Psalm 8:5-6 state that all human beings were created to rule/have dominion over God’s other creation, to share in the glory and dominion with God, not to be ruled or dominated by God (Berman, 2008:22) or other human beings. In Genesis 2:15 where ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it’, the purpose of man’s work in the garden was for his own living not to do the work for God. Thus the framers of the creation narrative intended to exhibit an egalitarian society. Again, the difference in era of the two sets of texts may explain the disagreement.

Berman’s comparison between Israel’s covenant relationship with YHWH and the Hittite suzerainty treaty, which leads him to conclude that the biblical view of the human community was egalitarian, is problematic, due to the different contexts and eras of the texts. However, his emphasis that the use of the collective ‘you’ in the Pentateuch (Deut. 6:5; 12:7; 17:14) and the marriage metaphor describing the relationship between YHWH and Israel in the prophets (Hos. 2:4-10; Isa. 1:12; 54:5-8; 57:3-10; 61:10-11; 62:4-5; Jer. 2:2, 20; 3:1-25; 13:27; 23:10; Ezek. 16, 23) are texts that point to equality of men and women or at least the inclusion of women in areas of life that are exclusive to men (Berman, 2008:41-44), is tenable. Critically examining Berman’s claims, Susan Ackerman assembles evidence from Exodus

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19 The oldest tablet of the Atrahasis epic is dated seventh century BCE. According to this tablet, human beings were created purposely to serve the gods by doing the menial and back-breaking jobs which the Igigi gods (the lowest and working class in the hierarchy of the gods) had refused to do. This portion of the Atrahasis epic is likely to be part of Enuma Eliš, a Babylonian creation myth dating back to early twentieth century BCE, which also explains that human beings were created to do menial jobs for the gods: “After Ea the wise, had created mankind/Had imposed upon it the service of the gods/That work was beyond comprehension…” (Pritchard, 1969:60, 68).

20 The text clearly indicates that Lullu, the first man, was created to bear the burden and yoke of creation by serving all the gods.

21 See Berman, 2008:41-44; 2010a:8 for details of Berman’s argument.

22 See Berman, 2008:44-46 for more on Berman’s contention.
19:15; 20:17; Deuteronomy 12:7, 12 and others to prove that the collective ‘you’ in the Pentateuch does not always include women, except in the larger context of Deuteronomy 12:2-28, where, as Berman also argues, ‘...male heads of households and their wives are ...‘addressed in equal fashion” in ‘the collective address of the entire polity’” (Ackerman, 2010:18; see Berman, 2008:13, Braulik, 1994:180-81). Ackerman further argues that apart from Michal (1 Sam. 18:1), no woman is mentioned in the Bible as loving a man.23 Ackerman thus concludes that the marriage metaphor in Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel describing the relation between YHWH and Israel, does not necessarily imply ‘reciprocity’ and ‘intimacy’ as Berman claims and thus is not evidence of the biblical egalitarian ideal (Ackerman, 2010:25). She believes that there are more social disparities and diversities in biblical ideology than equality (Ackerman, 2010:27). She therefore contends that Berman’s claim of equality of men and women based on the use of the collective ‘you’ in the Pentateuch and the metaphor of Israel’s marriage to YHWH; is ‘...an over optimistic interpretation’ of the text and that in Israel, ‘...only men – indeed only some men – are created equal’ (Ackerman, 2010:15). Notwithstanding, Berman’s rebuttal that Ackerman’s conclusion about the non-inclusion of women in the collective ‘you’ does not take into account the complexities that Exodus 19:13, 21, 23-24 brings to the debate (Berman, 2010b:48-49) makes the point of equality still considerable.

Furthermore, biblical law presents the people of Israel as a community of equals in many ways. This includes the reference to members of the community as ‘brothers’ (Deut. 15:7-10; Lev. 25:25) ‘a kingdom of priests’ (Exod. 19:6), ‘YHWH’s slaves’ (Lev. 25:42, 55) and ‘a people holy to YHWH’ (Deut. 7:6). Though this might exclude women and probably foreign slaves, it displays an attempt to encourage the free-born males in Israel to see themselves as equals both before the law and before YHWH regardless of wealth and status. In Deuteronomy, even the king, despite all his powers and privileges, is not allowed to exalt himself above the people:

23 The norm, as Ackerman points out, is that men love their wives (Gen. 24:67, 29:18, 20, 30; Judg. 16:4, 15, 1 Kgs. 11:1-2; 2 Chr. 11:21; Est. 2:17). To her, the exception of Michal proves the rule that in Israelite marriages ‘...it is only the hierarchically superior party in the relationship who can be said to “love”’. Thus Michal the princess is said to love David the shepherd boy (Ackerman, 2010:25).
When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me’, you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you...he must not acquire many horses for himself...neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left...(Deut. 17:14-15, 20).

Berman interprets this as the Pentateuch’s departure from ‘exclusionary power strategy,’ to a ‘collective power strategy’, where kingship and other forms of leadership was ideally not limited to any particular class, because anyone who is ‘among your brethren’ is eligible to be king or judge (Berman, 2010a:9; see Blanton, 1998:147). Thus the limitation of political power, military might and wealth acquisition of the Israeliite king (Deut. 17:14-20), promotes an egalitarian agenda (Berman, 2008:53). The vision for equality in Deuteronomy is strengthened by placing all the people of Israel on the same platform where anyone of them qualifies to be elected king, where all the people had equal responsibility in appointing a king and where both king and people had equal responsibility of reading and obeying the law (Berman, 2008:56). To Berman therefore, the biblical requirement for a good king is to be a good Israeliite citizen (Berman, 2008:63). It is worth noting that despite this provision which opened the opportunity of being a king to any free born male member of the community; from David through Solomon to the subsequent Judean or Israeliite kings, no monarch sought to promote this agenda. Rather, they established dynasties to ensure that only their descendants could reign after them.

The biblical desire for equality could also be seen in asset holding in Israel, where land ownership was by individual families as a grant from God (Lev. 25:32-34). This guaranteed ‘the economic stability of the common man of Israel’ (see Berman, 2008:91). The distribution of the land by Joshua and the returning of the land to the family in the jubilee law (Lev. 25), indicate that the biblical images presented by the writers show a desire for Israel to be ‘a landholding people among whom the land is divided in equal shares...’ and thus ‘this fashions the people as a whole in the image of the egalitarian tribal village’ (Houston, 2010:79). Also, the Hebrew Bible’s discouragement of interest on loans given to the poor and other fellow Israelites gave greater hope to individual members of the community in

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24 Joshua followed the principles set out in Numbers 33:50-56 to distribute the land by families and by lot: You shall apportion the land by lot according to your clans; to a large one you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small one you shall give a small inheritance (Numbers 33:54; see Josh. 13-19).
maintaining their economic independence and also ensuring economic equality (Berman, 2008:96-107). S. M. Olyan points out similar visions of equality in the ANE. First, priesthood in Phoenicia and other ANE communities includes women. Secondly, divorce in Egypt and some ANE societies could be initiated by women as well as men. Third, at Nuzi, female ownership of and trade in landed property is practiced. These visions of equality point to the fact that with regard to gender, there is a degree of equality in ANE socio-political vision (Olyan, 2010:40-41). Similarly, that the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 considers a field and buys it.25 Also, the returning of Zelophehad’s inheritance, which definitely included land, to his daughters became a precedent that women could inherit their deceased fathers if they had no brothers (Num. 27:1-8). Finally, the Shunammite Woman owned property, including land, which was restored to her upon her return from the land of the Philistines, though it is unclear whether she purchased the property, received it from her deceased husband or it was a family heritage (2 Kgs 1-8). A vision for gender equality, therefore, cannot be totally denied the biblical and ANE sources.

Norman Gottwald is of the view ‘...that egalitarian practices are evident in Israelite history’ (Gottwald, 2010:29). He had earlier posited that ‘The laws demanding social justice, far from being late and utopian in origin, were actually practiced within the decentralised polity of earliest Israel, and bears a considerable resemblance to pre-state societies the world over (Gottwald, 2010:29; see Gottwald, 1979:491-92). To him, ‘...the inventive polity Berman finds in Deuteronomy is best understood as an attempt to resurrect the egalitarianism of early Israel and to do so by transferring its values and many of its specific measures from the tribe to the state’ (Gottwald, 2010:31).

The following statements in biblical Wisdom also demonstrate the biblical desire for an equal society: ‘the rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD is the maker of them all’ (Prov. 22:2), ‘the poor and the oppressor have this in common: the LORD gives light to the eyes of both’ (Prov. 29:13) and ‘The rich, and the eminent, and the poor— their glory is the fear of the Lord’ (Sir. 10:22). If these are not mere rhetoric, then the Wisdom writers here reveal that the common factor that binds human beings together, that they were all created and sustained by YHWH, must take precedence over the division of society that gives few people

25 She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard (Prov. 31:16).
absolute power over others and the discretion to use such power (see Houston, 2003:238-39). Golka agrees with Gottwald that this common origin of both poor and rich (being created by YHWH), which enabled the poor to hold their ground against the rich, ‘...reflects the ethos of an egalitarian tribal society’ (Golka, 2004:69, see Gottwald, 1979). This shows that biblical wisdom does not entirely support the preservation of the existing hierarchy (see Houston, 2008:126). Also, the prophets’ condemnation of the ruling class for social injustice, oppression and inequality and their open opposition to the class-divided order, as discussed above, show that they also did not seek to preserve the status quo of the hierarchical society.

Thus from the above, while one cannot dismiss the acceptance of the hierarchical structure of society in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE, it can also be pointed out that not all voices in biblical and ANE traditions supported the hierarchy and that some even challenged inequality. The framers of the Pentateuch incorporated texts that sounded the need for an equal society, the prophets vehemently attacked the abuse of power and Wisdom writers emphasised the need to understand the common origin of humanity. Dumbrell rightly contends that when Amos pronounced judgement on the rich and powerful, his aim was ‘...the creation of the egalitarian society, which Israel’s election demanded, in a land that was free from exploitation’ (Dumbrell in NIDOTTE 3:457). This means that, these biblical authors imagined a community in which the potentially humiliating relationship of inequality will be no more (see Houston, 2008:133-34). Houston rightly concludes that, by proposing a benevolently hierarchical society, some biblical texts show deeper anticipation of equality as an ideal (Houston, 2008:100). To Berman, there are enough texts in the Bible to support the claim that ‘...the birthplace of the ideal [of]...a society without class division...is the Five Books of Moses’ (Berman, 2010a:13).

Social justice in biblical tradition therefore, goes beyond the preservation of the status quo of hierarchical ordering and further from the demand of the dissenting voices for action to improve the situation of the poor and needy, to a vision of an equal society. The reference to Israel as one people, sharing their land in equal proportion and admitting their common source as created by YHWH and redeemed by YHWH from slavery, indicates that social justice was popularly viewed to include basic equality. The desire for equality, evident in the Egyptian myth: ‘All Men Created Equal in Opportunity’, reveals that equality as an aspect of social
justice was rooted in ANE thoughts. It suffices to conclude that the desire for an equal society as an aspect of social justice was not totally absent in biblical and ANE traditions. This might not have been achieved in both societies, as it has not been achieved in modern society, but it was and still is a recognisably longed for ideal.

2.4.4 Working definition of social justice

From the above discussions, social justice in biblical and ANE traditions was multi-faceted. From the perspective of the establishment, the ruling class and high level of hierarchy in society, social justice was upheld as long as it served the purpose of preserving the status quo. From the point of view of the prophets and other critics of the establishment and the upper classes, social justice meant actions that were aimed at promoting the welfare of society, especially the needy and vulnerable. From the perspective of the writers of the Pentateuch, the prophets, the wisdom writers and the ordinary people, social justice was an imagination of and desire for an equal society. It is obvious that no matter how much relatedness one can establish among the three aspects, there are tensions. It could be difficult for the ruling class and other members of the upper class to accept to protect the interest of ordinary citizens or work towards equality without feeling the threat to their own positions and the destabilising of the status quo. Also, it is difficult to claim that the ideal of equality was a uniform desire. However, the existence of these tensions cannot mute any of the opposing voices such as Amos who criticised social injustice when the vulnerable in society were oppressed and exploited. For the purpose of this study therefore, social justice is defined as a concerted effort to improve the general wellbeing of the society, focusing on the protection of vulnerable individuals from oppression and abuse and supporting them to enjoy reasonably decent life and to have a fair share of the resources of the community as much as their own efforts can enable them.

2.5 Summary

The above discussions have established that social justice in the Hebrew Bible and in the ANE requires deliberate policies to alleviate the suffering of those who are
deprived of the basic needs of human life. It has also been noted that YHWH/the gods, the king and the individual are agents through whom social justice is delivered. YHWH has shown the way of social justice by his care for Israel and its people. He continues to demonstrate his zeal for social justice by his special care for the weak, the poor and the vulnerable. Consequently, YHWH has divinely charged people in authority to maintain social justice and he demands each individual who has the means and is in the position to do so, to show kindness and favour towards the weak and vulnerable in society. Similarly, social justice in the ANE was perceived as a divine command to be executed by the king. He was responsible to ensure that the poor and the needy were cared for adequately and protected against oppression and exploitation. Thus in Israel and the ANE, the king’s legitimacy depended largely on his faithful execution of this social justice injunction from YHWH/the gods. By extension, the king could lose his throne if he failed to uphold social justice or if he became oppressive. The model of social justice in Amos, discussed in chapter 3, will demonstrate the interconnectedness of the role of these agents in delivering social justice. In the days of Amos, the ruling elites and individuals, who had the resources and influence, had failed to be useful agents and partners of YHWH in delivering social justice to the needy and the poor. Instead, they had become predators, preying on the vulnerable in society. This, to Amos, has caused YHWH to step in to protect the rights of the oppressed and the exploited, in the bid to ensure that Israel lives as a just and righteous community.
Chapter 3
The Prophecy of Amos as a Model of Social Justice

3.0 Introduction

This chapter develops a model for understanding social justice in Amos. The discussions in chapter 2 emphasised that most of the occurrences of "משפט וצדקה" in the Hebrew Bible can be translated as social justice especially in the context of helping the vulnerable out of their predicament. This expression occurs only three times in Amos with "משפט" occurring once on its own. To understand how social justice issues permeate the message of Amos, this chapter explores how social justice is expressed in the book of Amos. It further evaluates F. Y Mamahit’s model of social justice in Amos and proposes a new model. This model helps to identify the victims and perpetrators of social injustice in the book of Amos and the desired partnership between YHWH, the ruling class and the individual to ensure social justice. The chapter begins by outlining the background issues and the message of the book of Amos.

3.1 Background to the Prophecy of Amos

The study uses the text of Amos in its canonical form. The fact that we can know almost nothing about Amos’ personality has been underscored by Paul Joyce (Joyce, 2011:108). Thus P. R. Davies correctly suggests to look out for ‘what the existence of prophetic literature tells us about the history of Israel and Judah rather than trying to make plausible historical figures from their heroes’ (Davies, 2006:131). There is no attempt to claim the significance of any particular historical issue to the study. As long as the historical antecedents of the social concerns raised in the texts are not denied (see Hadjiev, 2009:17-20; Houston, 2004:130-149), the dating of the text and the historical Amos are not of great significance to the analysis presented here. The most important background issue that is relevant to the study is the authenticity of the social concerns in the final form of the text.

The text portrays Amos as an outstanding personality among several prophetic figures. He hailed from Tekoa (Amos 1:1). According to the text, Amos
described himself as a herdsman and also a dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14).26 The description of Amos from Tekoa as being among the shepherds (הָנָדִים)27 indicates that he might have owned and managed large herds of sheep (Wolff 1977:90-91). הָנָדִים, the nominal root in בְּנֵי הָנָדִים, suggests ‘sheep breeder’ (DCH V:748). In 2 Kings 3:4, the only other place in the Hebrew Bible where הָנָדִים is used, it refers to King Mesha of Moab, who owned livestock. Craigie’s investigations of הָנָדִים in Ugaritic, Akkadian and Moabite indicate that הָנָדִים is applicable to sheep owners of appreciable economic independence and of high status in society (Craigie, 1982:29-33). Interestingly and heuristically significant, however, Amos is purported to have described himself as a בּוֹרֵךְ, meaning shepherd (Amos 7:14). By describing his profession as בּוֹרֵךְ rather than הָנָדִים, Amos might be emphasising his identity with the socially marginalised, presenting himself as an ordinary person called by YHWH to prophesy to Israel. This may add to the authenticity of his social justice message.


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26 NJPS – ‘cattle-breeder and tender of sycamore figs’.

27 בְּנֵי הָנָדִים in Amos 1:1 is among the words whose translation in LXX has created the ‘misreading’ and ‘free translation’ debate between A. Gelston and E. W. Glenny respectively (See Gelston, 2002; Glenny, 2007).

A great deal of uncertainty surrounds the dating of the book of Amos (Thorogood, 1971:105). The introduction to the book (Amos 1:1) dates the prophecy to ‘two years before the earth quake’. The mention of the earthquake, coupled with the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam, king of Israel, suggests the possibility of dating Amos’ ministry within 765-755 BCE (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:19). Zechariah’s statement; ‘You shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah’ (Zech. 14:5) appears to corroborate Amos’ naming of the earthquake and the reign of Uzziah. Again, since archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of a violent earthquake in Israel around the same period, (Msopole, 2010:1059; Paul, 1991:2) dating Amos’ ministry within the mid-eighth century BCE is reasonable (Tucker, 2006:90).

There is no scholarly consensus on whether the text of Amos, as we have it, was composed by Amos or someone else and when. Jason Radine insistent that ‘the earliest form of the book of Amos was composed after, not before, the fall of Israel to the Assyrians, [and] that it was addressed to an audience living in Judah, not Israel,...’ (Radine, 2010:1). S. Jozaki attempts to divide the book of Amos into multiple strata, dating from the actual words of the prophet in the mid eighth century BCE, to redaction materials in the fourth or third centuries (Jozaki, 1956:25-100). Wolff suggests six layers. These layers, he explains, have resulted from a long process of oral transmission starting from Amos’ own words through editorial additions and final composition (Wolff, 1977:106-113).28 R. B. Coote later divided the book into three stages of composition: A, B and C as far as dating and authorship are concerned (Coote, 1981:7-10). He attributes stage A to the oracles of the 8th century Amos himself, recorded by someone else before 722 BCE, containing Amos’ condemnation of Israel and announcement of disaster (Coote, 1981:11-45). Coote ascribes stage B to a Bethel editor in the seventh century BCE who, using existing prophetic traditions and some material from stage A, admonished Israel and offered choices for repentance to avoid the disaster (Coote, 1981:46-109). Coote finally identifies the author of stage C as the closing editor in the exilic period, who

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used materials from stages A and B with opening and closing sections offering a promise of restitution (Coote, 1981:110-134). However, J. Bright cautions that the tools available to current biblical researchers do not allow a precise description of the sources of the book of Amos. He asserts that the prophecy of Amos is too small a book to provide any valid data to enable a claim that its material and style belongs to a later stratum of tradition (Bright, 1971:357). For Andersen and Freedman, Hammershaimb and Paul, almost every word in the book originates from Amos (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:5; Hammershaimb, 1970:14 ). The views of scholars discussed above lean towards the possibility of acknowledging that the text of Amos, as we have it in the Hebrew Canon is a result of a long history of composition since the original words of Amos in the mid eighth century BCE.

3.2 The Message of the Book of Amos

The book of Amos pronounces judgment on Israel and her surrounding neighbors. After judgment oracles against six foreign nations for war crimes, the judgment on Judah focuses on her religious failings. The rest of the book contains judgment on Israel for both religious and social failings, which shows Amos’ call to transform social injustice and religious insincerity to social justice and religious sincerity. The social concerns in the text lead to its social justice appeal.

Just as in earlier and later periods, the period of the ministry of Amos witnessed two distinct social classes in Israel: the poor and the rich. It was a time of Israel’s military superiority, political dominance and influence (Paul, 1991:2), material power and economic prosperity (Nwaoru, 2009:461; Stuart, 1987:283). These successes were a result of the long reign of Jeroboam II in Israel which had brought stability and expansion to the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:21). Israel, at the zenith of her military dominance at this time, gained control over the trade routes and wealth accumulated in her cities through the profits gained from international trade (Smith, 1989:2). Coote estimates this wealth was not evenly distributed but rather accrued to about three per cent of the population who formed the ruling elites who owned about seventy percent of the land and wealth of the Israelite community (Coote, 1981:25). Auld points out that Geus’ re-evaluation of biblical poverty in the light of archaeological excavation of
material remains in Israel and Palestine indicates that ‘the disparity between rich and poor which Amos found so objectionable may have been the result, not of recent prosperity acquired by some under Jeroboam’s long reign, but of a longer established decline which bore most heavily on the poor’ (Auld, 2005:13; see Geus, 1982:50-57).

There could be elements of rhetorical exaggeration in how Amos describes the lifestyle of the rich in his days. However, the text paints a portrait of the social disparities that intensified with increased luxury and extravagance of the wealthy during Amos’ time and beyond. Their summer and winter houses were decorated with expensive ivory and they reclined on their gorgeous couches with foreign linen pillows after they had feasted sumptuously (Amos 3:15; 6:4-6) and their wives drunk wine at the expense of and without compassion for the poor and needy (Amos 4:1, see Kleven, 1996:215-27). The economy was flooded with dubious trade notable for profiteering, false weights and fraudulent merchandise (Amos 8:5-6). The land was deprived of justice as the judges became corrupt (Amos 5:7, 12). This created the stark contrast between the luxury of the rich and the misery of the poor with the poor becoming helpless targets of legal and economic exploitation.

The priority for social justice stands out in the text of Amos. Paul has rightly observed that Amos was the first of the prophets who played major roles in the theological, ideological, cultural and historical development of the nation (Paul, 1991:7). Barton’s comment, that Amos established the teaching pattern which led to a distinctive colouring of subsequent Israelite prophecy (Barton, 2012:162), emphasises Paul’s position. This observation is an indication that Amos’ pioneering work at attempting to transform Israel to a community that preferred social justice to empty religious and ritual piety, paved the way for what has come to be known as classical prophecy in ancient Israel.
3.3 Social Justice in the Prophecy of Amos – The Prey, the Predator and the Protector

3.3.1 Expressions of Social Justice in the prophecy of Amos

It has been argued earlier that social justice in the Hebrew Bible finds expression in the hendiadys משפט וצדקה. This is so especially when it is used to refer to the acts of showing mercy and kindness towards the vulnerable in society to help deliver them from oppression and exploitation. This presupposes that a case for social justice in the prophecy of Amos will rely on the extensive use of משפט וצדקה. In contrast however, Amos uses משפט and צדקה in a limited sense. משפט וצדקה occurs three times as a pair in Amos while משפט occurs alone once. This infrequent appearance of משפט וצדקה in Amos however does not limit the effect of Amos’ call for social justice since all the uses are rooted in Amos’ protest against social injustice.

Two of the uses of משפט וצדקה and the use of משפט alone are found in Amos chapter 5. The first instance is preceded by a lament concerning Israel’s imminent fall and exhortation to seek YHWH instead of the Bethel, Gilgal and Beer-sheba shrines. The text describes the perpetrators of injustice as those who ‘...turn justice into wormwood and bring righteousness to the ground’ (Amos 5:7). The text is cryptic about the actual crime, but it is clear that by their actions the perpetrators are making life bitter for their victims. Also, when put in the general context of Amos chapter 5, the use of משפט וצדקה in verse 7 is rooted in Amos’ condemnation of religious extravagance and social injustice. Between this first use of משפט וצדקה and the only use of משפט where Amos calls on Israel to establish justice in the gate (Amos 5:15), there is a vehement denunciation of injustice: The oppressors hate the one who reproves and tells the truth in the gate, they trample on the poor and impose heavy taxes on them; they afflict the righteous, take bribes and push aside the needy in the gate. The other usage of משפט וצדקה in Amos chapter 5 is when Amos speaks of YHWH’s outright rejection of the worship and sacrifices of Israel, which had become a cover-up for their injustice. He plainly states that the people of Israel should ‘...let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream’ (Amos 5:24). Here too, acts of the injustice condemned earlier are in focus. Finally, Amos compares Israel’s defiance of the natural order, evident in their
negative attitude towards social justice, to the absurdity of horses running on rocks and the irrationality of ploughing the rock with oxen (Amos 6:12). By this usage in Amos, מַשֵׁתָ וּצְדָקָה is rooted in the condemnation of injustice that emanates from the opulent and affluent living of the elite, which is vividly denounced in Amos 6:1-6 and the subsequent judgement that follows. These and many other passages in Amos that condemn social injustice, discussed in chapter 4, overwhelmingly demonstrate that Amos’ מַשֵׁתָ וּצְדָקָה is rooted in his criticism of oppression, exploitation and extortion. Houston is therefore right that the meaning of מַשֵׁתָ וּצְדָקָה in Amos ‘comes out with all clarity in the denunciation of injustice’ (Houston, 2008:61). As evident in the above discussion, מַשֵׁתָ וּצְדָקָה is used very scarcely in Amos. However, because Amos placed much emphasis on denouncing injustice, which implies the need for fairness and equity for the poor and disadvantaged, the limited use of מַשֵׁתָ וּצְדָקָה does not necessarily reduce the effectiveness of the prophecy of Amos as a text on social justice.

### 3.3.2 Modelling Social Justice in the Prophecy of Amos

The rest of this section proposes a model for understanding social justice in the book of Amos. This proposal is based on two earlier models. The first was developed by Christopher J. H. Wright. His triangular model (see fig 1) explains the three pillars of Israel’s world view and the primary factors of their theology and ethics (Wright, 2004:19-99). It depicts a structure of Old Testament ethics consisting of the theological angle (God), the social angle (Israel) and the economic angle (the land). These three angles, according to Wright, form ‘a triangle of relationships, each of which affected and interacted with both the others’ (Wright, 2004:19). The theological angle shows that Old Testament ethics is fundamentally theological because ‘ethical issues are at every point related to God – to his character, his will, his actions and his purpose’ (Wright, 2004:23).
The social angle is represented by Israel and its people. God chose and used the Israelites to create a setting for emulating God’s ethical principle in human life (Wright, 2004:48). Their deliverance from slavery, the giving of the Law and other religious traditions including the Prophets, Psalmists and Wisdom writers, shaped Israel as a peculiar model of ethical living to the whole of the universe (Wright, 2004:74). Finally, the economic angle is represented by the land, which was of central importance to Israel’s ethics and theology. The economic ethics of Israel is revealed through the view of their land as a gift promised and given by God, which was abused, lost and later recovered. Though God gave them the land as their inheritance as long as they remained in covenant relationship with him, God is still the owner of the land and held them morally accountable for their stewardship of the land (Wright, 2004:98-99).

Wright’s structure reveals a three-way interaction between God, the people of Israel and the land of Israel. It helps to understand that God is the source of ethical living and chose to demonstrate his will for human life through the history of Israel and its land. Israel depends on God and the land for its religious and economic survival and exhibits YHWH’s ideal for all human living. This model is for Old Testament Ethics of which social justice in the prophecy of Amos is part. The
interrelation between God, the people of Israel and the land gives meaning to the expected collaborative relationship between God and the people of Israel in establishing social justice, as Amos presents in his prophecy. Wright’s model possibly forms a basic structure for what Mamahit calls the triangular relational model of social justice in Amos and will be the founding structure of the new model.

Ferry Yefta Mamahit develops a triangular relational model of social justice (see fig 2). The model consists of three different but related angles of social justice. They are, theological (YHWH), political (the powerful) and the social (the powerless) angles (Mamahit, 2009:174-212). The theological angle represents YHWH as the determinative factor of social justice. According to Mamahit, in the book of Amos, ‘YHWH is the only one…who is absolutely responsible [for] maintaining justice in the land’ (Mamahit, 2009:212). Thus Amos announces YHWH’s plans to maintain social justice in the land since he is the guardian of justice and righteousness.

Fig. 2 Mamahit’s Triangular Relational Model of Social Justice

![Mamahit's Triangular Relational Model of Social Justice](image)

Mamahit’s political angle represents the powerful. He names the elders and the leaders in the community, the monarchy, the wealthy merchants, and the elites, as the members of the political angle. These classes of people, through their control of economic, political and social power and through their greed, have deprived the
socially disadvantaged of justice both economically and politically. They have extorted land, taxes and fees from the powerless and rendered them economically non-viable (Mamahit, 2009:189-94). Mamahit describes the third angle as the social angle which consists of the powerless in society. He groups them as: the innocent and the needy, the peasants and the oppressed, the servant girl and the Nazirites and the prophets. The powerless, according to Mamahit, are the victims of social injustice. They constitute the majority who live [both in the midst and] on the margins of society and who are economically deprived. They hire out their labour for a living and find themselves in debt slavery. While they depend on YHWH for justice, the powerful, upon whom YHWH has laid the responsibility to give them their due, rather exploit them and treat them with contempt (Mamahit, 2009:194-98). In Mamahit’s model, ‘the connection between one’s commitment to God and one’s covenant responsibility towards other covenanted neighbours is very significant to Amos’ theology of social justice’ (Mamahit, 2009:212). However, because the powerful have broken their covenant responsibility to take care of the powerless, they have sought to be independent of YHWH making only the powerless dependent on YHWH (Mamahit, 2009:198-210).

Mamahit’s model enhances our understanding of the interrelationship between the players in the social structure of Israel. It explains how Amos conceives of social justice as initiated by YHWH and demanded of ‘the powers that be’ to be exercised on behalf of the weak, the vulnerable and socially disadvantaged. The model demonstrates explicitly how, in the ideal situation, YHWH is the sovereign on whom both the powerful and the powerless depend. It confirms my conclusion in chapter 2 that in both biblical and ANE traditions, social justice was deemed to be an inherent character of YHWH/the gods who then demanded of individuals to ensure its establishment in society. The model also demonstrates adequately how the powerful and the powerless depend on each other. The collapse of this relationship as the powerful try to be independent of YHWH and engage in social injustice is also well demonstrated. Notwithstanding the above, there are concerns that call for a new model.

First, in his argument that YHWH is the only determinative factor of social justice, Mamahit agrees with Berquist that justice and righteousness in Amos is absolutely divine. This rather weakens Mamahit’s position because Berquist’s contention only supports the fact that YHWH is the source of justice and
righteousness. However, Berquist’s general proposition that justice and righteousness in Amos is only a torrent flow of dangerous waters of divine execution of justice and righteousness but not a human action (Berquist, 1993:54-63), is incompatible with any idea of biblical justice and righteousness being interpreted as social justice, an idea that Mamahit proposes. I have argued in both chapters 1 and 4 that ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos acquires both theological and social dimensions.\(^{29}\) It is therefore not necessary to limit it to either divine action or human character. Social justice in Amos is a divine initiative to be executed by human beings. Mamahit’s absolute reliance on Berquist’s assertion faults his own interpretation of ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos as social justice.

Secondly, in naming the four classes of powerful people in the political angle, Mamahit lumps together two groups of people whose role in the ongoing social injustice, though collaborative, could be distinct from each other. Consequently, he omits the economic angle that is critically vital to issues of social justice. There is no denying that the four sub-groups in the political angle may have things in common in helping to create a cartel of perpetrators of social injustice. Joshua Berman has argued that the exploiters or the dominant tribute-imposing class are made up of political elites including native and foreign powers but also merchants, administrators, military and religious retainers and land owners who directly or indirectly benefit from political power. These all conspired, through taxation, slave labour or debt service, to extract produce or surplus from the dominated tribute-bearing class made up of the agrarian and pastoral producers, slaves and unskilled workers (Berman, 2008:4). However, Berman acknowledges that the role of political power on the one hand and economic power on the other hand have different impacts on social justice (Berman, 2008:4). Mamahit should have acknowledged this. The monarchy and the elders, on the one hand, form the core of the political system and are in control of executive, legislative and judicial power. Their main vehicle of oppression is thus political power, though in biblical Israel it usually comes with economic power. The wealthy merchants and the elite on the other hand form a group of non-political oppressors. They may use their wealth to support the political system and demand political favours including executive decrees, legislative concessions and judicial favours. This could probably result in

\(^{29}\) See literature review in chapter 1 and the discussion on Amos 5:24 in chapter 4.
further oppression and exploitation of the poor since the wealthy may have ‘the powers that be’ on their side. Notwithstanding, their basic machinery in perpetrating social injustice is not the political power that may come along due to their privileged position, but rather, economic power. It is therefore necessary to draw attention to possible distinction between the roles of political power and the economic power, in the model.

Finally, placing the victims of social injustice as one angle and calling them the social angle is problematic because it takes the focus away from the victims of social injustice. This is out of place with Amos’ vehement condemnation of social injustice, which explicitly presents the victims of social injustice as the focus and the centre of social action. Expressly stated, social justice in Amos is achieved only when actions are done on behalf of the poor. The victims of social injustice are not just part of the triangular relationship of social justice. They are the centre of it. The victims of social injustice are the reason why YHWH initiated social justice and they are the reason why YHWH demands social justice to be performed by the ruling class and wealthy individuals.

3.3.3 The New Model

The new model is based on the premise that social justice in biblical tradition is primarily the act of YHWH but he devolves it to the ruling class and individuals who are capable. The focus of all social actions is the poor and needy in society and all others who are susceptible to oppression and injustice. It acknowledges that in line with biblical and ANE traditions, Amos identifies YHWH, the ruling class and the wealthy individuals as agents for delivering social justice in Israel. Amos approaches social justice by attacking the injustices meted out to the vulnerable in Israel. It is seen in Amos’ claims that the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged in society have become prey and victims of injustice in society. This injustice is perpetrated by the ruling class and the well-to-do in society. However, YHWH in all his dealings with Israel, past and present, procures and executes social justice. He is therefore the protector of social justice and especially of the victims of social injustice. The new model of social justice in Amos, therefore, consists of YHWH (the theological angle)
at the zenith of the triangle with the politically powerful (the political angle) at one base angle and the economically powerful (the economic angle) at the other base angle. The victims of social injustice (the politically and economically powerless) are placed inside the triangle (see fig 3). Because Amos attacks an already socially unjust system, it is convenient to identify the victims of injustice and the perpetrators of injustice and establish how YHWH views them.

Fig. 3 New Model of Theology of Social Justice in Amos

Thus ‘the politically and economically powerless’ are the victims ‘the politically powerful’ and ‘the economically powerful’, are the perpetrators and YHWH is the initiator, custodian and executor of social justice who protects the victims and avenges the actions of the perpetrators of social injustice.

3.3.4 The Prey

‘The politically and economically powerless’ are the victims of social injustice and are located in the centre of the triangle. Amos uses seven terms in reference to these victims of social injustice in Israel. They are צדיק (just, righteous, innocent, see BDB:843; HALOT:1002; Ringgren and Johnson in TDOT VII:257-59), עمعنى (in want, needy, poor), דל (poor), עני (poor) נערה (girl, young unmarried girl, see
BDB:655; HALOT:707), עוננים (those fined, mulcted, BDB:778-79; HALOT:859), and עניים (the afflicted or oppressed of the land, see BDB:776). The first four are used mostly in the same context or interchangeably while the last three stand on different pedestals touching on the situation of victims of abuse, injustice, exploitation and oppression.

The צדיק (righteous) may obviously refer to the poor or the needy but has a sense of ‘innocence’, ‘being in the right’ or ‘having rights’, (DCH III:75-76, Fohrer 1973, HALOT:1004-1006)\(^{30}\) in the legal sense as used in Amos 5:12. He is also a ‘victim of a miscarriage of justice’ as used in Amos 2:6 (Bendor, 1996:246, Houston, 2008:62, Soggin, 1987:47). צדיק in both Amos 2:6 and Amos 5:12 indicates the person guiltless before the law (Wolff, 1977:165) or ‘he whose cause is just’ (Paul, 1991:77). As the object of מכר צדיק is a vulnerable person at the hand of the oppressor.

Houston refers to Fleischer’s discussion of the distinguishing features among three of the words Amos uses to describe the victims of social injustice in Israel (Fleischer, 1989:264-83; see Houston, 2008:62): דלי (poor), אביון (needy) and עניים (poor). These three words fall within the semantic domain of poverty in the Hebrew Bible. The terms in this domain, which W. R. Domeris discusses extensively (Domeris, 2007:14-26; see Domeris in NIDOTTE 1:228-32), are listed below, starting with those used by Amos: עניין (in economic need/needy), עני (afflicted) עני, אביון (needy) and עניים (poor). In the Prophets, a variety of these terms are used, in most cases, in combinations, to catalogue victims of oppression, abuse and injustice. This is typical of Amos, who uses these terminologies, mostly in different combination and interchangeably and in similar circumstances of the oppression, abuse and injustice he protests against. The approach of the prophets to the issues of the poor, especially locating them in contexts of oppression, abuse and injustice of various forms indicate their understanding that poverty is the result of injustice and that the poor person is further made vulnerable to oppression, abuse and injustice. The prophets were thus fundamentally appalled by the oppression of the poor (see Domeris, 2007:22).

\(^{30}\) See discussion on צדיק in chapter 4.
 Boca appears seventeen times in the prophets, five of which are found in Amos (2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4, 6). They are those in economic need. They lack homes (Isa. 14:30), are hungry and thirsty (Isa. 32:6-7), are abused by the powerful (Isa. 29:19) and suffer injustice and economic exploitation (Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4, 6). Boca had absolutely no property and so had to earn a living by hiring himself out as a labourer on daily bases. Boca lacks the basic necessities of life including food, water and clothing and thus in absolute need. He also lacks economic and political power and this lack makes him a means for others to get rich, through forced labour (e.g., Exod. 23:11; Deut. 24:14; Job 30:24; 31:19; Isa. 41:17, see Finley 1985:414). Elsewhere, the class of people normally referred to as Boca includes the widow and the orphan (Job 24:3-4; 31:16-19; Jer. 5:28). Boca describes the poverty-stricken as suffering because they are vulnerable and helpless (Finley 1985:415). The Psalms extend the meaning beyond poverty to reliance on and need for God (Ps. 86:2; 40:17; 69:37, see Botterweck, 1974:37-38; Domeris, in NIDOTTE 1:228-31; Domeris, 2007:14-15). Like the other prophets and unlike the Psalmist, however, Amos does not spiritualise the condition of the Boca into reliance on or need for God. In all the five occurrences, Amos emphasises the lack of economic power, the oppression, extortion and the indignity they suffer.

 דל refers to the poor peasant or farm labourers who may also engage in forced labour (Domeris, 2007:15). Their condition seems to be imposed on them. This can be deduced from M. D. Carroll’s definition of the verb דל as ‘small, helpless, powerless, insignificant or dejected’ (Carroll in NIDOTTE 1:951). It also draws attention to the Ugaritic cognate, which means ‘to make poor, to oppress’ (see Domeris, 2007:15). The דלים are vulnerable to legal abuse in the courts (see Isa. 10:2; Amos 2:7), economic abuse, probably both in their employment and in the market (Amos 4:1; 8:6) and also economic exploitation in the form of excessive taxation (Amos 5:11). They may not be totally destitute but suffer economic hardship (Carroll in NIDOTTE 1:951; Domeris, 2007:21). דל refers to the poor peasant who had not totally lost everything but possessed some land from which he could farm to provide the basic needs for himself and his family. Because of this understanding, Domeris translates דל as ‘peasant’ (Domeris, 2007:20). However, as Houston rightly points out, with Amos’ location of the victim of injustice in the urban area, it is difficult to limit דל to a peasant but appropriate to extend it to poor people in the city who had very little to live on with their dependants (see Houston,
Amos uses דלים four times, all in the context of oppression, extortion and unfair treatment. In the first instance, the דלים suffer oppression and extortion together with the ענוים and the girl (Amos 2:7). Put in the general context of Amos 2:6-7, the innocent needy, the poor, the afflicted and the girl, suffer indignity as a result of the oppression and abuse. In the second instance דלים suffer oppression and are crushed together with the אביון (Amos 4:1). In the third instance, the דל is a victim of oppression and extortion (Amos 5:11) and in the fourth instance, דלים and the אביונים are victims of unfair labour treatment (Amos 8:6). Both the דל and the אביון could be referred to as ענים when the emphasis is on their right to claim the compassion and assistance of those who are in the position to help.

עוני or עני, seem to come from common roots and are thus identical in meaning. In the Hebrew Bible, עני refers to the oppressed poor. If there is any time when poverty is clearly seen as the result of oppression and as a situation which enables the poor to be further oppressed, it is when the Hebrew Bible uses עני. It means bowed down, afflicted (BDB:776, see Pleins, 1992:5, 411; Dumbrell in NIDOTTE 3:454-56). Pleins defines עני as ‘economically poor; oppressed, exploited, suffering (Pleins, 1992:5, 411). It carries the sense of physical poverty, outward deprivation and inner humiliation (see Gillingham, 1988-89:17). עני refers to the poor as an identifiable group. They may be a political group or a group of pious poor with a political agenda (Domeris, 2007:18-19). In the Prophets and Wisdom, ענים are found in the context of injustice and oppression. In all the seven appearances of ענים in the Prophets, it is in the context of oppression and injustice (Amos 2:7; 8:4; Isa. 6:1; 29:19 except Zeph. 2:3). Pleins details three contexts in which ענים are found in the prophetic texts. These are: economic oppression (e.g. Isa. 3:15; Ezek. 18:12), unjust treatment in legal decisions (e.g. Isa. 10:2) and victimisation through deception (e.g. Isa. 32:7). Amos uses ענים twice. In the first instance, they are oppressed together with the דלים (Amos 2:7a) and in the second instance, they are the afflicted of the land (עניםאתי), also oppressed together with the אביון (Amos 8:4). ענים-ארץ (the afflicted of the land) are generally in the class of the poor and the needy, who are afflicted by the injustice and oppression they suffer. The word השפאים (to crush’ or ‘to trample) which appears in both instances of

31 The distinction between the two terms may be a later development (see Domeris, 2007:18-19; Dumbrell in NIDOTTE 3:455; Fleischer, 1989:272-74; Gerstenberger in TDOT XI:242; Houston, 2008:61 n. 38).
Amos’ use of ענוה is indicative of the context of oppression, extortion and injustice within which Amos uses these terms for the victims of injustice.

Who exactly נערה refers to is difficult to ascertain from the context in Amos 2:7. It may simply refer to a maiden, a girl or a young woman who is a victim of exploitation. In chapter 4, I have argued that נערה is a victim whose vulnerability is being exploited by a man and his father to satisfy their indiscriminate and inordinate sexual desires. Clearly, the context of Amos 2:6-8, within which Amos uses נערה, refers to social injustice whose victims are the defenceless in the society and נערה is one of them. נשים (those fined) are the vulnerable poor of the land who have become victims of corporate injustice. The court system is manipulated against them and they are fined as penalty for crimes they might have not committed and these perpetrators of social injustice feast on the wine charged as a fine. This is a great act of injustice because, as Garrett opines, ‘The use of such wine indicates that the revellers are able to carry on at no expense to themselves’ (Garrett, 2008:63).

As partly demonstrated above, Amos uses these terms interchangeably and in some contexts, uses a combination of them (see Houston, 2008:62). For instance, in one judgement oracle (Amos 2:6-8), Amos uses six out of the seven terms referring to the victims of social injustice:

...because they sell the righteous (צדיק) for silver, and the needy (אביון) for a pair of sandals. They who trample the dust of the earth on the head of the poor (דל), and turn aside the way of the poor (ענוש). A man and his father go unto the girl (נערה), to profane my holy name and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who they have fined (ענושים).

In other instances, Amos uses different combinations of the terminology to emphasise the helpless situation of the victims of social injustice in Israel:

...They who oppress the poor (דל) and crush the needy (אביונים) ... because you trample upon the poor (אד) and take from him exactions of wheat... you who afflict the just (צדיק), who take a ransom and who turn aside the needy (אביונים) in the gate ... you who swallow the needy (애ב) and destroy the afflicted of the land (עניי ארץ) ... That we may buy the poor (דל) for silver and the needy (אביונים) for a pair of sandals and sell the refuse of the corn (Amos 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4, 6).

By his usage of these terms, Amos depicts ‘a class of people in Israel who lack any share in the wealth of the kingdom...who lack basic necessities of life and who are suffering as innocent victims’ (Finley, 1985:415). These victims of injustice are the socially marginalised, economically disadvantaged and politically oppressed. They
are the victims of social injustice because they have no resources to fight the politically powerful and the economically powerful that oppress them.

Contrary to Mamahit (2009:196), the prophets, the Nazarites and Amos himself, are neither presented as victims of social injustice, nor are they seen as part of ‘the victimised poor’ (also contrary to Linville, 2008:61). Cataloguing his favour done to Israel, YHWH says: ‘I raised up some of your sons to be prophets and some of your young men to be Nazirites.’ However, YHWH complains of Israel’s ingratitude to his favour in raising Nazirites and prophets for them because they have corrupted the Nazirites and prevented the prophets from exercising their divine ministry (Amos 2:11-12). This is purely Israel’s rejection of what will be her own good and not necessarily meeting out injustice to the prophets and the Nazirites. Unlike the innocent, the poor, the needy, the afflicted of the land, the girl and those who are fined, the prophets and the Nazirites are not presented as economically and politically vulnerable or powerless whose disadvantaged situation is exploited by the ruling class and the merchants. Rather, Amos presents them as people who could have served as YHWH’s mouthpiece but who are rejected. The encounter between the prophet Amos and Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (Amos 7:10-17) clearly shows that, though Amos was attacked by Amaziah, he was not as vulnerable as Mamahit presents him. Amos spoke with authority while Amaziah tried to serve his master and protect his job. However, Amos did not fall to his threats. He had the final word and delivered the message of YHWH. Amos might have suffered rejection, attacks and emotional trauma from all the frustrations he faced in ministering to Israel. He might have even ended his ministry after the encounter with Amaziah. Notwithstanding, he does not fall within the class of the victims of social injustice. Amos and probably the other prophets and Nazirites referred to in Amos 2:11-12 are rather advocates of social justice who were always on the side of the victims of social injustice, but they are never presented as being economically or politically oppressed and exploited themselves.
3.3.5 The Predator

The two base angles of the new model represent the predator of injustice. Through the respective vehicles of political and economic power, these upper class members of Israel consistently and systematically oppress their victims. W. R. Domeris defines oppression as ‘abuse of power’. To him, the biblical writers saw oppression as essentially an abuse of power in a world where powerlessness and poverty went hand in hand (Domeris, 2007:95, 97). The poor and vulnerable people were economically and politically powerless but the rich and ruling elite had economic and political power on their side with the attendant prestige, honour and wealth (see Domeris, 2007:82). They demonstrated their power by controlling lands, by being free from taxation and by being part of the hierarchy of honour (see Bendix, 1978:106). The ruling elite might not have engaged in agriculture by themselves but controlled the peasants and took part of their produce from them (see Lenski, 1984:219, 228). They also controlled the means of production (see Kautsky, 1982:119) and had multiple streams of income, including peasant surplus, taxation, trade, mining and spoils of war (see Duby, 1974:49).

Thus the most fruitful and helpful relationship between the rich and the ruling elite on one side and the poor peasant, on the other side, was that between a patron and a client. The poor peasants either had to enter into forced labour or into a relationship with a patron, more powerful than themselves. Patronage relationships provided hope for the future for the poor but for the patron, an opportunity for exploitation. The patron was an urban resident, a more powerful person who had access to resources beyond the reach of the peasant. ‘In exchange for the surplus (in kind, money or in labour), people with power, who might be legitimate rulers, the ruling elite or illegitimate bandits, offered a measure of protection from other possible competitors – rivals for the extraction of surplus’ (Domeris, 2007:88). The benefit that came to the patron included honour and economic and political power. As the peasants ‘paid tribute (rent, tax) and gave gifts and honour’ to their patrons, they ‘hopefully received in return provisions for clothing, housing and protection in times of famine’ (Domeris, 2007:89; see Moxnes, 1988). Thus there was expectation of positive reciprocity, the failure of which led the prophets to condemn the ruling elite (Domeris, 2007:88-91). In a thriving patron-client relationship where positive
reciprocity was upheld, both the client (the poor and other powerless people) and the patron benefited. In this instance, the patron, who usually has either economic or political power or both, chose to use his power for mutual benefit. However, in many other situations, positive reciprocity collapsed because the patron chose to abuse his power. This opened the way for oppression (see Domeris, 2007:95). The oppressors wield power and use violence and injustice to win their cause. Power, rather than wealth then became ‘…the major distinction between the oppressors and the oppressed, between the rich (strong) and the poor’ (Domeris, 2007:95).

Four of the ten frequent biblical Hebrew terms for oppression that T. D. Hanks outlines (Hanks, 1983:5-26; Domeris, 2007:96-97) occur in the prophecy of Amos. The first of these is עשק, which means, to oppress or to take by extortion. It carries the idea that oppression involves injustice (Domeris, 2007:96; Hanks, 1983:5-8). עשק is among other forms of the same root, which in rare cases, describe the oppression Israel suffered at the hands of foreign oppressors (1 Chr. 16:21; Ps. 105:14; Isa. 52:4; Jer. 50:33; Hos. 5:11). In the majority of their occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, however, they ‘describe various forms of social injustice by which the rich in Israelite society oppressed the poor’ (Swart in NIDOTTE 3:557). The victims of such oppression, including the poor, widows, orphans and strangers often lacked the ability to defend their own rights, and thus suffered extortion and plundering. Through false scales and fraudulent trade (Hos. 12:7; Amos 8:5), poor treatment of labour (Jer. 22:13; Amos 8:6), by bribery, excessive interest and profit at the expense of the vulnerable (Ezek. 22:12, 29; Amos 5:12), the oppressors plunder their vulnerable victims to ‘accumulate wealth that is only attainable by exploiting and robbing one’s neighbour’ (Swart in NIDOTTE 3:557). Amos use כמו כן to describe the oppression that is going on in Israel, which he invites Israel’s foreign neighbours to witness and judge. Here, כמו כן is indicative of the oppression and distress that comes upon the poor and needy in Israel as a result of the violent robbery unbleached upon them from the strongholds of the ruling elites and the rich (Amos 3:9). He also uses כך as in condemning the women of Samaria for oppressing the poor and crushing the needy. Their method of oppression and crushing is excessive demands from their lords to fund their opulence and extravagance, which consequently cause their lords to extort and plunder the poor and needy (Amos 4:1, see discussion in chapter 4). In the same context, Amos also uses מצר, which means, to crush, smash up, ill-treat, abuse, oppress. Its appearances in the Hebrew Bible are mostly in the
immediate context of poverty (e.g. Isa. 58:6; Amos 4:1). ‘…and its derivatives are also used to describe the oppression of the socially weak in Israelite society’ (e.g. 1 Sam. 12:3-4; Amos 4:1; Job 20:19; see Dam and Swart in NIDOTE 3:1192). Together, עפש and עפש reflect ‘… the exploitation and despoliation of the poor’ (Dam and Swart in NIDOTE 3:1192) and the oppressors are the powerful rich and ruling elite.

Another frequent biblical word for oppression which occurs in Amos is ברך. It has the notion of restricting or impeding movement or progress and also to oppress or distress (Hanks, 1983:17-20). Amos’ use of this term is in reference to the oppression that the vulnerable in Israel suffer when they are afflicted by the oppressor through bribery and denial of justice at the gate (Amos 5:12). The final word for oppression that Amos uses is לחץ. It expresses the pain of oppression felt by the oppressed (Hanks, 1983:10-11). It carries with it the sense of the oppression that physically and psychologically destroys its victim (Swart in NIDOTTE 2:792). Amos uses לחץ to describe the destruction that will come upon Israel as her punishment for oppressing the powerless among them (Amos 6:14). This is the only time Amos talks about oppression whose effect is not on the oppressed but rather the oppressor and this is the only time that YHWH is the initiator of oppression in the prophecy of Amos. In all other instances, as seen above, the rich and ruling elites abuse their power and that results in oppression that brings untold hardships on the powerless.

The angle representing ‘the politically powerful’ (the political angle) demonstrates that social justice is a divine responsibility of all who have been entrusted with political authority. This includes the king and other members of the ruling class: the princes, the courts (judges), the notable men and the priests (religious authority). YHWH expects them to use their political power to give the poor and the needy their due. Debates on social justice in the Hebrew Bible seems to suggest that the social injustice in Israel grew worse with the coming in of the monarchy and the development of urban life and commercial economies (see Houston, 2008:35-51; Houston, 2010:25-31).32

The above perception gains grounds in Samuel’s warning to the people of Israel when they demanded a king:

So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, ‘These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves (1 Sam. 8:10-17).

These new developments weakened the tribal system, the extended family system and the traditional land owning and inheritance system which hitherto made land available for every family at all time to serve their economic needs. The monarchy needed to own some more lands at the state level for production and income to pay for the cost of royal administration. This included the day to day cost of the officials, maintenance of security and military expenditure and cost of international relationships and territorial expansion. This ended up either depriving family units of their family lands or reducing their portion of the yield from their land because of taxes and tribute they had to pay to the monarchy. This gave room for individuals who had commercial interests to strategise and own more lands for commercial purposes. Coupled with difficulty in maintaining their farming needs and the fact that peasants needed more to provide for the needs of their families, most of them either became tenants on their own lands or sold them out completely. This brought untold hardship on them while the monarchy and the merchants profited from it. They could not access redress when they were deprived of their yield or lands because the court officials were inclined to protect the interest of the monarchy and the rich in the community. Social justice, which was the duty of the political authority had then been cast to the ground and trampled upon. Domeris challenges this contention because its premise is idealistic (Domeris, 2007:44). However, the rise of the monarchy and its contribution to increased social stratification in Israel cannot be denied (Coote, 1981; Frick, 1985:1-70; Gottwald, 1986). Citing the collapse of the judicial system in Israel (2 Sam. 15:1-6) and Solomon’s tax system, that made an upward mobility of some people possible (Gottwald, 1986:82-83;
2001:113-18), Gottwald traces the problem of peasantry of the vast majority to the period of the monarchy (Gottwald, 1986:78-79; see also 1993a; 1993b). The works of Premnath and Coomber, which explore the negative effects of such changes in the traditional economy of eighth century BCE Israel (see Coomber, 2010:258-62; 2011b:414; Premnath, 2003:20-24; 43-179), reveal the awful plight of the poor and needy during this period.

The angle representing the ‘economically powerful’ (the economic angle), demonstrates that the community as a whole has a duty to show favour and special regard for the needy and disadvantaged and that anyone who is in position to do so, due to their control over economic and other resources must ensure social justice for all. The members of the economic angle include the merchants, the rich and the well-to-do. They may or may not hold political office but due to their commercial, business, trading and large scale production, they owned large acreages of land and hired a lot of labour to work for them. Some of them could be landlords on whose land the peasants worked and paid rents or gave a substantial portion of the produce to them. Their merchandise, wealth and influence could give them power to oppress their powerless victims, through bribery, debt slavery, unfair trade and other economic manipulation and exploitation. What compounded the crime of these economic oppressors was that in the midst of abject poverty and glaring misery, they engaged in carefree extravagant opulence all at the expense of the poor and needy (Amos 6:1-6). They employed unfair trade mechanisms to cheat the poor and needy by causing them to pay more for little but at the same time hired their labour for insignificant wages and also treated them unfairly and with no dignity (Amos 8:4-6). It is possible that there could be collaboration between the politically powerful and the economically powerful in oppressing their victims. Amos stressed this possible collaboration among the ruling class, the aristocrats and the merchants in Israel in treating the poor and the needy with no dignity and unjust extortion of fines and taxes (Amos 2:6-8; 5:11). They exploited and oppressed the poor to fund their own carousing and that of their spouses. As the merchants perpetrated violence against the needy and robbed them of the little they had (Amos 3:9-10; 4:1-2), there was no genuine means of redress for the oppressed because if they sought redress against their oppressors in the courts, they were met with bribery, corruption and perversion of justice, facilitated by the political powers (Amos 5:7, 10-12; 6:12-13). It is even possible that there could be individual members of the community who belonged to
both groups of political and economic oppressors. However, they have significantly
different roles. While the politically powerful may control executive, legislative and
judicial power, which also gives them access to wealth and property, the
economically powerful are commercially oriented merchants and traders who may
attract legislative, judicial or executive favours. Nevertheless, their economic
resources enhance their privilege and power to influence. They could hire and pay
for labour, buy off the lands of the needy and thus deprive them of their livelihood.
They could even pay for justice and thus deny justice to the innocent needy who did
not have money to bribe the court officials. By all these acts, whether individually or
in collaboration, the economically and politically powerful preyed on their powerless
victims with harsh extortion and fierce oppression.

3.3.6 The Protector

The angle that represents YHWH (the theological angle) shows that he is the initiator
of social justice who defends the rights of the poor and the needy. As he did for
Israel and continues to do, he delivers the oppressed from the oppressor and crushes
the oppressor. He demands social justice from the ruling class (the politically
powerful) and the other well-to-do members of the community (the economically
powerful). He revenges social injustice by an overthrow and destruction of the
politically powerful and economically influential who use their power and resources
to oppress the poor. The hymns about YHWH’s praise in Amos come immediately
after a denunciation of social injustice and other negative behaviours of the people of
Israel (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9), or after a vision that announces judgement and
punishment for injustice (Amos 9:5-6). These hymns and their location in the text
attest to the fact that Amos held the view that YHWH was the ultimate initiator,
promoter and executor of social justice who will champion the cause of the
oppressed against their oppressors. This agrees with Coote’s perception of YHWH
and justice in the book of Amos. To Coote, Amos portrays YHWH’s justice as first,
YHWH stands beyond the world and acts in the world. His word is effective because
he is both the speaker and agent. Secondly, YHWH acts according to justice.
YHWH’s justice means saving the powerless. Thirdly, YHWH chooses justice ahead
of life and that those who take life from the powerless will lose their own lives.
Finally, YHWH tilts the balance of power by giving leverage to human beings to make his justice known and that without YHWH our only choice is to make peace with injustice (Coote, 1981:39-41). YHWH indeed, as far as Amos is concerned, is the embodiment of social justice and he watches over Israel to establish social justice. In condemning Israel’s injustice, pronouncing judgement and punishment and calling for a reestablishment of social justice, Amos reminded Israel of their earlier experience with YHWH when he punished them (Amos 4:6-11), teaching them to understand that the purpose of YHWH’s punishment was for them to return to YHWH. Since they did not heed YHWH’s call to return to him, judgement was imminent and Israel’s punishment, as far as Amos was concerned, was irrevocably decreed by YHWH, the just king.

### 3.3.7 Synthesis

The synthesis of this new model of social justice in Amos is that the victim of social injustice at the centre of the triangle depends on YHWH, the politically powerful and the economically powerful for social justice. The triangle could be understood as social justice itself being a protective cover around the poor, needy and vulnerable members of the community who are always at the receiving end of social injustice. This triangle is held in shape and intact by YHWH, the politically powerful and the economically powerful. If any of these three lets go their angle, the victims will be exposed to injustice and oppression. By what Amos and other biblical texts say about YHWH and his commitment to social justice, it is clear that he will always hold his part at the apex. When greed, abuse of power and other unjust practices lead the other two to let go their hold of the triangle, the vulnerable become prey to exploitation and other forms of social injustice. Thus YHWH at the zenith of the triangle seeks partnership and collaboration with the politically powerful and the economically powerful to ensure social justice for the economically and politically powerless. YHWH has shown the way by giving justice to Israel when they were vulnerable, oppressed and exploited (Amos 2:9-11). Unfortunately, as Amos declares, the politically powerful and the economically powerful have either omitted social justice or committed social injustice. They have turned themselves into predators whose prey is the politically and economically powerless. YHWH, the protector of the weak, will intervene and deliver the victims of social injustice from
oppression, exploitation and vulnerability. Ideally, all the angles must collaborate to ensure social justice. Failure on the part of any breaks the triangle and exposes the victim to dangers of predators in the form of oppression, exploitation and deprivation. This is the situation Amos condemns.

3.4 Conclusion

The new model developed in this chapter has emphasised the central place of the victims of social injustice in Amos’ message and the distinct though not mutually exclusive roles of the economic and political powers. Instead of collaborating with YHWH to ensure protection and care for the politically and economically powerless, the politically powerful and economically powerful had refused to partner YHWH but had collaborated with each other to oppress their victims. Amos’ uncompromising castigation of the ruling class and the well-to-do for perpetrating injustice and his call on them to ensure that social justice is made the pillar of the Israelite community, agrees with the expectation in ANE and in other biblical traditions where the ruling class and the wealthy individuals had the divine responsibility to ensure that social justice was established. The problem however, is that the ruling class and the wealthy members of the community, as also seen in ANE and biblical traditions, are keen on preserving the status quo, extending their rule and dominance and also acquiring more wealth, all to the detriment of the poor and needy. YHWH is not pleased that the poor and the needy are not allowed to better themselves but are rather being exploited to enrich the wealthy and powerful. He is thus determined to intervene to preserve the wellbeing of the poor and needy by overthrowing the rulers and wealthy and by sending them into exile. Based on the discussions in chapter 2 on agents for delivering social justice in biblical and ANE traditions, the model reflects the interrelatedness of YHWH’s protective role and his expectation of the economically powerful and the politically powerful to ensure that the vulnerable in society have effective means of survival. It will be established in chapter 4 that Amos’ condemnation of Israel was because they have failed to play their part in establishing social justice.
Chapter 4

Social Justice Themes in the Prophecy of Amos

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines texts in the prophecy of Amos that demonstrate protest against social injustice. The working definition developed in chapter 2 describes social justice as a concerted effort to improve the general wellbeing of the society. This effort focuses on protecting those who are predisposed to oppression and abuse and establishes effective systems to support them to live reasonably decent lives with opportunities to access a fair share of the resources of the community within their abilities and capabilities. As demonstrated in the model of social justice in chapter 3, this definition is consistent with social justice in biblical tradition, which is expressed as משפט והצדק, as a call to the ruling class and other individuals to show kindness to those who are weak and vulnerable in society, delivering them from oppression and exploitation. This is what Israel’s God, YHWH, demands from kings and other individuals in the community who are in command of resources and authority to do so. Unfortunately, the ruling class and other wealthy individuals have failed to alleviate the suffering of those who are deprived of basic needs. The texts discussed in this chapter therefore, show how the upper class in Israel perpetrate injustice instead of partnering YHWH to protect the vulnerable. Amos’ condemnation of these acts of injustice is interpreted as a call to establish social justice, expressed through condemnation of their actions that constitute social injustice. Consequently, Amos’ call for justice and righteousness is interpreted as his positive call for social justice to be established in Israelite.

I indicated in chapter 3 that Amos uses seven different expressions for the victims of injustice. Following Houston, I pointed out that these terms are synonymous as Amos uses them either interchangeably or in parallels of two or more. Houston rightly concludes that these victims are all ‘people lacking in material resources and therefore power’ (see Houston, 2008:62). Thus the themes are discussed with emphasis on words in the texts that reflect Amos’ protest against social injustice and thus his advocacy for social justice. Adjectives and nouns such as צדיק (innocent/righteous), עני (needy), עוני (poor), נערה (the girl),
(those fined) and עניי־ארץ (the afflicted of the land) identify the victims. As objects of participles such as מכרים (they sell), השאפים (they trample), והעשקות (they oppress) and הגזירות (they crush), these adjectives and nouns help to identify the issue that might have bothered Amos and, to some extent, the perpetrators of such injustice.

4.1 Lack of Human Dignity in the Treatment of the Vulnerable (Amos 2:6-7)

4.1.1 The Concept of Human Dignity in the Hebrew Bible

In certain contexts, some English versions of the Hebrew Bible translate הדר and כבוד as ‘dignity.’ הדר is translated as ‘dignity’ in Proverbs 31:21 by the JPS, NRSV and the NIV and by the NRSV in Job 40:10. כבוד is translated as ‘dignity’ in Exodus 28:2 (NIV and NJPS) and in Exodus 28:40 (NIV). Bailey believes that הדר and כבוד have been rightly translated by the English word ‘dignity’ in these passages because, in those contexts, the two words exhibit the intrinsic nature of dignity as self-worth. Thus in Psalm 8:6, where כבוד and הדר appear in parallel in the same sentence, Bailey opines that ‘dignity and honour’ may translate כבוד והדר better than ‘glory and honour’ in the NIV, NRSV and JPS (Bailey, 2011:96-98). Doron Shultziner adds that though כבוד has other meanings such as honour, glory and respect, it is an appropriate word for ‘dignity’ (Shultziner, 2006:666).

The biblical concept of human dignity could be traced from the creation narratives where human beings, both male and female, are said to have been created in the image of God (see Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6; Bailey, 2011:99; Claassens, 2011:34-35; Cox, 1990:1, 6; Mays, 2006:38-39; Shultziner, 2006:666-68; Soulen and Woodhead, 2006:1; Willis, 1998:232-33). Being created in God’s image implies that there is an inalienable and inviolable self-worth intrinsic in every human being. For this reason every human being must be treated with respect, no matter the social, economic or political status (Bailey, 2011:99; Shultziner, 2003; Shultziner, 2006:667; Willis, 1998:232-33). John Barton agrees with Eckart Otto that biblical Law and Wisdom show fresh and radical appreciation of human dignity than similar ANE texts (Barton, 2003:2; see Otto, 1994:62). This is in affirmation of instances in the Hebrew Bible where human dignity in general and the dignity of the vulnerable,
in particular are major concerns. Chris Sugden has argued based on issues of human right traceable in the Hebrew Bible, that fundamental human dignity is of great concern to the biblical authors (Sugden, 2014:178-81). The biblical prophets persistently condemned society for inhuman treatment of the vulnerable and called for human dignity to be upheld, in the midst of dehumanisation. In the song of the vine-yard, for example, Isaiah describes a worrying disregard for human dignity and perversion of justice but also boldly and persistently calls for the restoration of human dignity (Isa. 5:1-23). For Willis therefore, it is within the context of threatening, violating and obscuring human dignity in the Bible that conversations on restoring human dignity become most fruitful (Willis, 1998:34, 36-38).

Willis’ comment is reflected in the text of Amos. When Amos perceives various shades of injustice in the Israelite society, including an upper class that treats the vulnerable without dignity, Amos condemns all actions and behaviours that dehumanise the vulnerable and deprive them of their human dignity. If the righteous and needy are sold for silver and a pair of sandals, if the poor are trampled upon, the lowly are turned out of the way and if a man and his father having sex with the same girl, then these victims have been treated without dignity and the perpetrators of such acts of injustice deserve condemnation and punishment from YHWH.

4.1.2 Amos Protest against the Injustice of Treating Victims with Indignity

Amos 2:6-8 is the first stanza of the judgement against Israel (Amos 2:6-16).\textsuperscript{33} It contains the transgressions of Israel which have attracted YHWH’s judgement (v. 14-16). The stanza begins with the same oracular formula as in the judgement against the seven neighbours of Israel (Amos 1:3-2:5). Unlike the other nations who are accused of crimes regarding war and international relations, Israel’s crimes are of domestic nature; relationship among the Israelites themselves.\textsuperscript{34} In this stanza, Amos stipulates seven wrongdoings against Israel, as if he seeks to make good the introductory statement ‘For three transgressions of Israel and for four’ (v. 6b). If so,

\textsuperscript{33} The judgement against Israel can be divided into four stanzas with the other three being verses 9-12 (a description of God’s mercy to Israel in the past), 12 (another accusation) and 14-16 (judgement), see Garrett, 2008:54-77.

\textsuperscript{34} Wolff calls them ‘…transgressions against the harmonious ordering of Israelite communal life’ as the powerful oppress the poor among their own people (Wolff, 1977:165).
this will be the only oracle that Amos proffers seven charges as the cause of the judgement (vv. 14-16) to come upon Israel (see Hayes, 1988:107-08). The accusation in verse 12 does not amount to social injustice but if the seven crimes in verses 6-8 are considered to mean that Amos expresses ‘…the completeness of Israel’s sinfulness, seven being the number of totality or fullness’, then it ‘…constitutes the eighth wrong, giving a sense of going beyond all limits’ (Hayes, 1988:107). The rest of the book contains other accusations against Israel, most of which reflect Amos’ protest against social injustice.

Table 1 Amos 2:6-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (NRSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יִשְרָאֵל וּנְכֹל אָמַר יְהוָה עַל־שְׁלֹשָה פִּישְׁעֵי</td>
<td>Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עַל־מִכְרָם בַכֶּ֨סֶף צַדִּיק וְאֶבֶּן בַּעֲבֹר נַעֲלָי</td>
<td>and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְאִיש וְאָבֵיָו יָלְכוּ אֵל־הַנַעֲרָה לְמַעַן חַלָל אֱשֶּם קָדָּש</td>
<td>and the needy for a pair of sandals— they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way; father and son go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְעַל־בְגָדִים חֲבֻלִים יַטָּוִּי אֶל־מִזְבַּח</td>
<td>they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink wine bought with fines they imposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 The judgement has seven consequences (see verse 14-16).
36 But you made the nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy' (Amos 2:12).
The stanza is introduced by the divine speech formula; ‘Thus says the Lord’ (v. 6a), which serves as a prose title for the poetic structure that follows in the judgement (see Garrett, 2008:23). Amos enumerates the seven crimes of Israel in a series of terrible acts against the defenceless:

6da they sell the righteous for silver  
6db and [they sell] the needy for a pair of sandals  
7aa they trample upon the head of the poor  
7ab and they push the afflicted out of the way  
7ba a man and his father go into the girl  
8aa they sleep on garments [they have] seized as pledge  
8ba and [they] drink wine [extorted] from those they have fined

When the text is read without the later additions, as above, a vivid picture emerges that in this stanza Amos is more concerned with the acts of social injustice suffered by the vulnerable than he is with religious immorality. Apart from the first three lines (6a-c), the rest of the stanza has three parallel statements: 6da&β, 7aa&β and 8aa & 8ba. 6da and 6db concern sale (מכרם) of vulnerable human beings. This sale is seen by some scholars metaphorically, where an unjust legal system allows for the innocent needy to be convicted in return for bribe from the guilty rich (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:311-13; Cripps, 1955:140; Domeris, 2007:112; Gordis, 1950:44-47; Hammershaimb, 1970:46-47). However, it is a real situation where the righteous needy have either sold themselves due to poverty or have been sold into debt bondage for owing insignificant money ( XSSKH), as little as the price of a pair of sandals (בעבור נעלים). 7aa and 7ab centre on violence. The use of trample (השאפים) in 7aa and push (ימי) in 7ab shows the violence with which the rich attacked the poor in order to increase their own wealth at the expense of the needy. 8aa and 8ba are about extortion. The clothes the officials and their rich counterparts sleep on have been seized as pledge (בגדים חבלים) and the wines they feast on have either been extorted from their victims or purchased with money taken as fines from these

37 Following Wolff (Wolff, 1977:133-34, 167 n. 194), I consider ‘into the dust of the earth’ in v. 7aa, a latter addition. I also consider v. 7d, 8aβ and 8bβ as later additions.
38 I argue against this below.
victims (ךֵלֶד). 7bα, which does not have a parallel, touches on a man and his father having sex with a young woman of marriageable age (גְּרָנָה).

The two forms of injustices that are distinct in this stanza are: lack of human dignity in how the upper class relate to the vulnerable they abuse and oppress (vv. 6dβ-7bα); and extortion of the poor (v. 8αa, 8bα). The second theme is discussed in the next section. The discussions in the rest of this section manifest three acts of injustice that happen to victims because the perpetrators disregard them. These are: selling the righteous and the needy (6dα and 6dβ), violence against the poor and the afflicted (7aα and 7aβ) and sexually abusing a vulnerable girl (7bα).

To begin with, the injustice of selling the righteous and needy for silver and a pair of sandals (v. 6dα and 6dβ) constitutes indignity. This is because, by such actions, the perpetrators reduce human beings to commercial commodities, when they are exchanged for monetary value, as cheap as the price of a pair of sandals. The dynamics are explicit in the triangular model below (fig. 4). The innocent needy39 are the victims of social injustice here. They are the ones who are being looked down upon because they do not have means to afford basic needs of life. Their rich creditors, who represent the economic angle, have the means to support them in whatever form possible: loans, credits, agricultural inputs, and other resources. YHWH, the initiator of social justice, expects the rich creditors to be kind and generous to the needy debtors. Unfortunately, they have collaborated with their political allies (some of these rich creditors being state officials) to sell these vulnerable people into debt bondage even though the amount they owe may be very insignificant. This in effect has broken the protection around these poor people and thus exposed them to more acts of injustice. As the protector of the victims of injustice and the restorer of social justice, YHWH will punish the elite by disempowering them, taking away their strength and by bringing fear and flight upon them (Amos 2:13-16).

The circumstances which make it possible for a person to be sold are not explicit in the text. There are two possibilities that have been considered most certain: miscarriage of justice and debt slavery. To the proponents of the miscarriage of justice argument, the abuse of the legal system made it possible for corrupt judges to take bribes and pronounce judgement against innocent needy (Andersen and

39 I translate צדיק ואביון as ‘innocent needy’, a hendiadys which implies that the victim of the injustice being condemned is both innocent and needy, who is sold for as little as the price of sandals.
Freedman, 1989:311-13; Cripps, 1955:140; Domeris, 2007:112; Gordis, 1950:44-47; Hammershaimb, 1970:46-47). Most recent of these proponents is Domeris who interprets ‘selling the poor for sandals or silver’ (Amos 2:6c) as an abuse of justice. To him, ‘selling the poor’ is an analogy and ‘sandals and silver’ refer to bribery, which is attested in the prophets (Isa. 1:23; 5:23; 33:15, Mic. 3:11) and in all the main literary genres of the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 10:17; 16:19; Job 6:22; Prov. 17:23). He concludes that ‘It is the right of the poor to fair hearing in the courts that are being sold, rather than the poor themselves’.

Fig. 4 Selling the Innocent Needy for Money as Little as the Price of a Pair of Sandals

Thus the judges are the ones taking the bribe. Domeris agrees with Speiser and Gordis who link מכר (to sell) with מעלם (bribe) and Soggin who links shoes and bribes based on 1 Sam. 12:3 (Domeris, 2007:112; see Gordis, 1950; Soggin, 1987:47; Speiser, 1940:18). This is doubtful especially as Amos’ terminology for bribery (כפר, see Amos 5:12) is not used here. Garrett argues that the bribery interpretation is only tenable if the statement is seen as Amos’ point about the judges’ lack of integrity in ‘perverting justice for even the cheapest of bribes’ (Garrett, 2008:57). Thus objection against the bribery interpretation does not simply fall away as Domeris posits. His attempt to explain away Driver’s argument that ‘sandals were too paltry a sum for bribery’ (Driver, 1913:88-89) is not tenable since he is comparing the value of sands in eighth century Israel to that of twenty-first century Third-World countries where due to abject poverty people could even kill for sandals (Domeris, 2007:112).
Though it cannot be said that ‘silver’ has little value, its parallel ‘sandal’s should not be regarded as an item of high value. Ben Sira’s interpretation of 1 Samuel 12:3 (Sir. 49:19) shows that sandals were valueless. The parallel of silver should therefore not justify the value of sandals as a symbol of status (against Speiser, 1940:18) but emphasise indignity as a human being being reduced to merchandise.

Lack of human dignity is thus a better interpretation. This interpretation is consistent with Domeris’ model of poverty that emphasise the shame, dishonour and lack of dignity that poverty brought to the peasants of Israel (Domeris, 2007:170-78) and consistent also with the other suggestion that assumes debt bondage. The proponents of this argument contend that the victims are sold into debt bondage or permanent slavery, either cheaply, or for an insignificant amount they owe (see Garrett, 2008:57; Hayes, 1988:108; Houston, 2008:66; Mays, 1969:45; Rudolph, 1971:141; Wolff, 1977:165-66). Given that debt-slavery or slavery in general was not frowned upon in biblical tradition (Exod. 21:2-11; Lev. 25:39-54; Deut. 15:12-18, see Chirichigno, 1993), this suggestion rightly means that Amos is protesting against abuse of the system to the disadvantage of the poor and needy, rather than slavery itself. This abuse may include ‘…the sale of individuals who were personally innocent and…the needy persons who had only incurred debt for some minor necessity of life’ (Wolff, 1977:165).

The fact that the person is sold is in itself a means of showing disregard for the person. מכר (they sell), sharply and aptly describes this indignity. He or she has been reduced to mere merchandise. מכר is the qal infinitive construct of מכר (‘to sell’, see Lipiński in TDOT VIII:291) with 3mp suffix, meaning ‘they sell.’ By implication, Amos condemns an on-going action with futuristic consequences. In the Hebrew Bible, מכר describes the selling of various objects such as land, crops, house, animals, food, and clothes (e.g. Gen. 47:20; Exod. 21:35, 37; Lev. 25:15-16; 27:20; Prov. 31:24; Ru 4:3; Neh. 10:32; 13:15-16, DCH V:271-73; HALOT:581-82; Cornelius in NIDOTTE 2:937-39). In the many instances where מכר refers to the sale of human beings, the derogatory tone of the word is evident since in most cases human beings are sold as slaves (Gen. 37:27-28, 36; 45:4-5; Exod. 21:7-8; Deut. 21:14; 24:7; Zech 11:5; Neh. 5:8). Joel pronounces YHWH’s coming judgment upon the nations because, among other ordeals they put Israel through, they sold (ימכר) a girl for wine and drunk it (Joel 4:3). Even when מכר is used to mean giving in marriage, it still carries a non-complimentary tone. For instance, Leah and Rachel
complained that their father had sold them into marriage and consumed their bride price. These examples of the use of מָכָר in the Hebrew Bible and the context within which Amos uses it establish that the act is derogatory. When linked with בָכָסף...נעלים, representing the meagre value, it affirms that the person involved had been treated with indignity.

Amos’ use of ‘בכסף’ and ‘נעלים’ strikingly reveal that the innocent needy are sold cheaply and therefore suffer injustice manifest in lack of dignity. בכסף is a prepositional phrase which literally means ‘with silver’ or ‘with money’ but in this and similar contexts, ב refers to the price for something or the reason/cause for an action (Garrett, 2008:56). For example, Joseph was sold תמשריםכסף (for twenty pieces of silver, Gen. 37:28). Thus בכסף in Amos 2:6 means ‘for silver/money’ or ‘because of silver/money’. Amos is therefore protesting because the innocent person has been reduced to a commercial commodity. The idea of reducing the human person to insignificance is even stronger in the phrase בכסף נעלים, which means ‘for (the sake of/the price of) a pair of sandals’ or ‘on account of a pair of sandals’.

‘Sandals’ is not spoken of as having high value, as Ben Sira emphasised: ‘Before the time of his eternal sleep, Samuel bore witness before the Lord and his anointed: “No property, not so much as a pair of shoes, have I taken from anyone!” And no one accused him’ (Sir. 46:19). Garrett opines that selling the person for the insignificant price of shoes meant the oppressor gained nothing. The insignificant value of sandals justifies that Amos used בכסף נעלים to amplify the indignity that the vulnerable in society suffer as they are sold for ‘a paltry debt too insignificant to justify such an action’ (Paul, 1991:77). Hayes is very apt as he concludes his discussion on the significance of בכסף נעלים as used by Amos: ‘In relating the trading of the poor to a pair of sandals, Amos was emphasising how lightly human life was being treated by drawing upon imagery one might use in describing a good bargain purchased cheaply’ (Hayes, 1988:110). Thus the imagery of selling human beings for silver and for a pair of sandals enhances Amos’ protest against the lack of dignity towards the vulnerable.

Furthermore, Amos’ description of the victim of the sale indicates that these victims suffer humiliation because of their low economic and social status.

40 נעלים (sandals/shoes/foot wear) appears twice in Amos (2:6; 8:6) and nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. Other forms of נעל appear elsewhere (see Gen. 14:23; Josh. 5:15; 9:5, 13).

41 This is Ben Sira’s interpretation of 1 Samuel 12:1-5.
victims are described as צדיק והאביר (innocent needy) and this contributes to the strength of Amos’ protest. Whom Amos calls צדיק defies definition. However, ‘just,’ ‘righteous,’ ‘correct,’ and ‘lawful’ (see Reimer in NIDOTTE 3:744) and ‘innocent’ may be probable glosses in the context of Amos 2:6; 5:12. Ezekiel brings to light its multi-faceted meaning when he describes the צדיק in religious, moral, ceremonial and social terms. He does what is lawful and right (משה מעשה וצדק). In addition to observing all the religious, ceremonial and moral rules, he chooses not to oppress. He has debtors to whom he kindly returns their pledges and from whom he does not take interest. He has enough food and clothing to share with the hungry and naked (Ezek. 18:5-9; see also 15-17). This powerful individual in the community is righteous partly because he chooses to use his economic power and possibly, political influence, to help the vulnerable, instead of oppressing them. The resources and power he possesses, the dignity he commands in society, at least for his moral uprightness, his innocence and his kindness to the vulnerable, indicate that this צדיק is not vulnerable. He therefore does not suffer injustice and indignity.

It is obvious from the above that being צדיק does not necessarily make one vulnerable. It is the availability of resources and status in society that determines one vulnerability or power. Due to lack of material resources and political power, the צדיק Amos talks about is vulnerable. If he had the power and the resources that the צדיק in Ezekiel 18 had, he would not be sold for owing small debt and thus treated with disregard. Also, considering the virtues of Ezekiel’s צדיק, it can be deduced from Amos 2:6-8 that it is the absence of the צדיק among the powerful upper class in the Israelite society that has led to the undignified and inhuman treatment that the vulnerable people Amos refers to suffer. If those condemned here could choose not to abuse with their power but to share their resources with the needy and be kind to their debtors, the community could achieve justice and righteousness. Unfortunately, the perpetrators of injustice that Amos condemns are like the בן-פריץ (the son who is a robber), who ‘... oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge...takes advance or accrued interest...’

42 צדיק is used as ‘just’ or ‘righteous’ especially in reference to God (eg Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 23:3; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9; Ps. 119:137; 129:4; see BDB:843; DCH VII:75-76; Ringgren and Johnson in TDOT XII 257-59). In the judicial sense, צדוק refers to someone who is just in his cause, who is in the right or innocent (BDB:843; DCH:76; HALOT:1002; see Paul, 1991:77; Wolff, 1977:165). צדיק as innocent could also mean the person is morally in the right (HALOT:1002). In the context of religious concerns in the text, צדיק (just) could be those who are devoted to the worship of YHWH and who lead upright lives (DCH VII:76).
Thus, Amos’ צדיק is vulnerable because he lives in a society that lacks a צדי קק among the upper class. He is consequently the object of מֵר (DCH VII:76), treated with contempt and sold at a disgraceful price by oppressors and exploiters.

Adding to the vulnerability of the victims of injustice is Amos’ use of האור (needy, in want, poor), who is materially and/or economically poor (BDB:2; DCH I:104; HALOT:5; Botterweck in TDOT I:28). According to Domeris, האור ...is used for people who are virtually destitute...completely dependent on others for their daily survival (Domeris in NIDOTTE 1:228). His abject poverty, suffering, vulnerability and helplessness, due to lack of economic and political power, makes him a means for others to enrich themselves (see Finley, 1985:414). The Psalmist refers to himself as poor and needy in a context that shows he is not talking in terms of economic need or material poverty (Ps. 40:18; 70:6). In Amos’ context however, ‘needy’ means the person who lacks the basic necessities of life including food, water and clothing. The class of people usually referred to as needy in other biblical texts includes the widow and the orphan (e.g. Job 24:3-4; 31:16-19; Jer. 5:28). Deuteronomy 15:4, 7, 9 teaches that there is supposed to be no needy person in Israel because YHWH will bless them with material and economic possessions. In reality however, needy people abound. Therefore, YHWH expected the wealthy to support them. Amos’ usage of האור in this stanza and elsewhere (Amos 5:12; 4:1; 8:4, 6; see Isa. 32:7; Ezek. 22:29) shows that contrary to YHWH’s expectation, the needy are subject to abuse and oppression. As depicted in fig. 4 above, the rich creditors and their political allies have conspired to mistreat the needy because of the money they owe. This is against YHWH’s wish and he will respond with fearsome judgement.

I have interpreted the phrase צדיק ואביון in Amos 2:6d as a hendiadys: innocent needy. The implication is that while צדיק emphasises the victim’s innocence, האירא stresses his poverty (see Garrett, 2008:56-57). This means then that Amos is accusing the rich creditors of selling the innocent needy into slavery for money as little as the price of a pair of sandals. Amos might have intentionally put צדיק (innocent) and נעלים (sandals) in the same line to emphasise the total lack of dignity with which the rich treated their poor and needy debtors (Fensham, 1962:129-39; Hammershaimb, 1960:75-101; Wolff, 1977:165-66). At the heart of

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43 The biblical semantic field of poverty within which האור, דלים and ענוים could be properly understood is discussed in chapter 3.
Amos’ condemnation thus lies the fact that the innocent needy in the Israelite community are treated with utter inhumanity and indignity. This is a manifestation of social injustice.

The protest against the lack of human dignity continues, targeting the aggressive scramble for the vulnerable and the consequent harassment. The plight of the poor victims as the perpetrators violently trample upon their heads heightens the protest against indignity. The perpetrators are the subjects of שאף (DCH III:217) and their actions, being powerful enough to harass their victims, suggest that they may be among the elites of Israel, probably

**Fig. 5 Aggressive and Violent Treatment of the Poor and Afflicted**

![Diagram](attachment:0.png)

with economic or political power or both. Fig. 5 indicate that the state officials and other upper class members with command over economic resources, should partner YHWH to protect the poor and afflicted against violence in any form. Instead, they have collaborated to violently harass them and oppress them further. השאפים in the text confirms that there is a protest against undignified treatment of humans.

 srand could be interpreted as the qal participle of the first root ofRand with 3mp suffix (Garrett, 2008:58).Rand here means ‘pant, pant after, gasp, long for, or sniff’ (BDB:983; DCH VIII:217; Garrett, 2008:58; HALOT:1375; Fredericks in NIDOTTE 4:11; Maiberger in TDOT XIV:268-69). Additionally, the first rootRand
means ‘to swallow’, 44 ‘to be a nuisance’ or ‘to pester’ (HALOT:1375). If this is how
means ‘to swallow’, it stresses the greed of the perpetrators manifested in their inordinate desire for even the dust upon the head of the poor. They have made themselves a nuisance to the vulnerable by swallowing them and/or harassing their miserable lives. Garrett may be right in interpreting נאש (to sniff) as a metaphor of a hunting dog sniffing the dust to locate its prey. This leads him to suggest that the perpetrators ‘hunted for the poor with the same relish that they hunted for animals’ (Garrett, 2008:59). This hunting sport which Garrett agrees is an eighteenth-century English sport is only relevant in biblical and ANE texts as dogs, lions and bears and other predatory animals are used to metaphorically depict the adversary as ‘regally powerful and demonically unscrupulous’ (Keel, 1997:87-95). However, Wolff has successfully argued that ‘dust of the earth’ is a later addition (Wolff, 1977:133), making this interpretation not plausible. Thus the implication of נאש for Amos’ protest against social injustice manifested in lack of human dignity, could be sought by interpreting it as the qal participle of the second root of נאש, which is a by-form of נאש meaning ‘to crush’ or ‘to trample’ (BDB:1003; DCH III:218; Paul, 1991:79). This agrees with the Septuagint’s translation of נאש as τὰ πατοῦντα, translated ‘they that trample’. 45 Thus the oppressors trampling upon the head of the poor (גיל) indicates total lack of dignity for the victims, which is the injustice Amos protests against.

The parallel appearance of poor and afflicted in the text reinforces the protest against human indignity. ענו is the masculine plural of עון, meaning ‘poor’, ‘afflicted,’ ‘humble’ or ‘meek’ (see BDB:776; DCH VI:502; Dumbrell in NIDOTTE 3:454). It stands opposite to גאים (arrogant or proud, Prov. 16:19). ענו and גאים appear as a parallel in Isaiah 10:2, which has identical form and theme with Amos 2:7 (Wolff, 1977:166). The afflicted are vulnerable because they are helpless victims of violence and indignity. They are harassed and blocked from receiving justice, as evident in: ענו יטו דרך (push the afflicted out of the way). 46 Mays and Wolff see this statement as an abbreviated form of לאש ארחות מושפש (to pervert the course of

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44 See JPS of Ezekiel 36:3; Ps 56:2-3.
46 As the hiphil 3mp of נאש means ‘thrust away’, ‘turn away’ or ‘thrust down’ (see DCH IV:674).
justice), seeing דרר as a synonym of ממשת ממנה (Mays, 1969:46; Wolff, 1977:166).47 However, where לְהַטָּה means ‘to pervert’, it is always followed by a direct object or (e.g. Exod. 23:6; Deut. 16:19, Isa. 10:2; 29:21; Prov. 18:5, see Paul, 1991:81). Comparing this with Job 24:4 рын אמרים מדרק they turn the needy out of the way), makes it clear that Amos is condemning the oppression of the underprivileged by the wealthy who deprive them of their inherent privileges and prerogatives (see Paul, 1991:81). This corroborates the identification of Amos 2:6-7 as a protest against social injustice evident in indignity that the vulnerable suffer.

Again, the disregard of upper class for their victims is evident in the man and his father who have sex with the girl. This is the first of only two cases where Amos names the perpetrators of injustice.48 In fig. 6, the girl is the victim of injustice. The predators are the man and his father. The girl is vulnerable to them. She may be a slave who is simply being abused because of her vulnerability to the man and his father. Both men have both economic power and political influence, at least within the domestic environment that give them the power to abuse the girl. They represent many men among the elite in Israel who take advantage of vulnerable women to satisfy their indiscriminate sexual desires. YHWH expects them to partner him to protect and provide for women like the girl who due to their economic and political status are exposed to such predators. Contrary to this expectation, they have taken undue advantage of their economic power and political influence and the girl’s vulnerability to abuse her and destroy her future prospects. The key to identifying Amos’ concern here lies in the interpretation of נערה and how the action of the man and his father affects her. I argue that נערה is a vulnerable young woman and that the text portrays Amos disapproval of the sexual abuse and indignity that she suffers at the hands of the man and his father.

Apart from the traditional view of נערה as the ‘girl’ (BDB:655; DCH IV:711-12; HALOT:707) two other possible views could be considered: first as a place name (BDB:655; DCH IV:712-13; HALOT:708). Moughtin-Mumby has recently suggested that נערה can be the name of a border village of Ephraim near Jericho. This means that Amos is referring to the city where the man and his father

48 The second is in Amos 4:1.
go to profane the name of YHWH. Citing Joshua 16:7 and 1 Chronicles 7:28, where similar words are interpreted as place names, Moughtin-Mumby argues that LXX reads נערה literally leading to the translation παιδίσκην (a girl) instead of the place name Naarah (Moughtin-Mumby, 2011:72, 82). Notwithstanding, unlike Bethel and Gilgal which were significant cultic centres during Amos’ days (e.g. I Kgs 12:28-33; 13:1-6; Amos 4:4; 5:5, see Williamson, 2012:73), in the only two biblical references to נערה, as a place name, there is no evidence that it has a religious shrine or ritual centre. Also, it does not point to what the man and his father go to do at Naarah which profanes YHWH’s holy name. Moughtin-Mumby however affirms that in the general context of Amos 2:6-8, the condemnation of injustice in Israel, is Amos’ main theme (Moughtin-Mumby, 2011:70, 82). This means that whatever the man and his father do at Naarah, whether cultic or social, has elements of injustice. Secondly נערה could be seen as the name of a person (BDB 1906:655; DCH IV:712; HALOT:708), citing נערה (Naarah), the wife of Ashshur, mentioned in the genealogy of Judah in 1 Chronicles 4:5-6 as textual evidence. It is obvious that these two meanings of נערה do not lead to understanding what Amos’ concern is in the text. I therefore go back to the view of נערה as ‘the girl’.

The traditional interpretation of ואיש ואביו ילכו אל־הנערה (a man and his father go in to the girl) focuses on the meaning of הנערה as ‘the girl.’ This interpretation has wide scholarly support (see Andersen and Freedman, 1989:318; Carroll, 2003:692; Dines, 2001:583; Mays, 1969:46; Stuart, 1987:317; Wolff, 1977:166-67). To interpret the action of the man and his father that Amos condemns, these scholars posit that ילכו אל in the text should be seen as a euphemism for ‘to have sexual intercourse with someone’. Paul relies on the Akkadian ‘ana alāku’,
which has the idiomatic meaning; ‘to have sexual intercourse’ (CAD:321) to support this interpretation.53

Scholars such as Andersen and Freedman, Garrett and Fisher contend that ‘the girl’ is a cultic prostitute and that Amos is condemning cultic prostitutes patronised by a son and his father (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:257; Bentley, 2006:30; Fisher, 1980:1389-90; Garrett, 2008:61; Hammershaimb, 1970:48-49; Marsh, 1962:39; Rosenbaum, 1990:56, 65; Thorogood, 1971:23; Zevit, 1975:48). The prominence of cultic expressions: ‘to profane my holy name’ (vs. 7d), ‘beside every altar’, and ‘in the house of their god’ (8αβ & 8ββ) seem to support this argument. However, as Wolff argues, these expressions reflect the priestly theology of Ezekiel and the Holiness Code and could also be a later interpretation of the action of the man and his father, in the light of Hosea 4:14 (Wolff, 1977:133-34; 167 n. 194). Houston agrees with Wolff on the basis that these statements do not fit Amos’ ideas and that of prophetic judgement regarding oppression (Houston, 2008:68). There is thus no textual support that ‘the girl’ is a cultic prostitute (see Gordis, 1980:201-64; Johnston, 2009:65; Paul, 1991:81). Julia Assante’s successful demonstration that most claims about cultic prostitution in the ANE and the Hebrew Bible are forced (Assante, 2007:117-32; Assante, 2009:23-54) and the fact that there is no clear evidence of the practice of temple prostitution in ancient Israel (see Barstad, 1984:21-23; Goodfriend and Van der Toon, 1992; Grabbe, 1995:196, Mays, 1969:46), make the cultic prostitution argument redundant. Also, Barstad’s contention that Amos is inveighing against Israel’s patronage of the marzēah which profanes God’s name (Barstad, 1984:17-36) and that ‘the girl’ is a marzēah hostess, seems farfetched as a female marzēah hostess is not yet attested in any ANE document.

Furthermore, it is not plausible to state that Amos is only condemning immorality of man and father who share the same sexual partner. The relevant sexual prohibitions in the moral teachings of the Pentateuch are not against a man and his father sharing a sexual partner, especially if she is not the spouse of either of them. If

53 see Paul 1982:492-94, Paul 1991:82 for Paul’s argument. Paul’s interpretation of הָלַךְ אלָם is not attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The expression commonly interpreted as sexual intercourse is בָּא אלָם: ‘come to a woman for sex’ (see DCH I:113; HALOT:112; eg. Gen 16:4, 30:3-4; 2 Sam 17:25), which Garrett suggests refers only to sexual relations with a woman who is part of the household such as wife, concubine or slave girl (Garrett, 2008:60).
‘the girl’ was the man’s wife or concubine, then his father would be morally wrong if he had sex with her (see Lev. 18:15; 20:12). Again, if ‘the girl’ was the father’s wife or concubine, the son would be morally wrong to have sex with her (see Lev. 18:8; 20:11; Deut. 27:20). However, none of the two scenarios seem to be the case in the text. Wolff therefore, believes that what Amos is condemning is close to Deuteronomy 22:23-29. As the man has sexual intercourse with the young woman, he commits to marry her. For this reason, his father cannot have any sexual intercourse with her because she is now his daughter-in-law. Explicitly, Exodus 21:8 and Deuteronomy 22:30 suggest that sexual access to such a person was the right of either the male head of the household or his son, but not both. The sexual ‘use’ of the woman has, therefore, given way to ‘abuse’. ‘Instead of being taken as a second wife or concubine, with at least some security of status, she is being used by both father and son… she is being abused because of her vulnerability’ (Domeris, 2007:114-15).

To Wolff therefore, what Amos does here is ‘a radicalisation of the apodictic stipulation in Lev. 18:15…’ (Wolff, 1977:166-67). I agree with Wolff that Amos is interpreting ‘moral teachings’ (see Houston, 2008:70; Houston, 2013:59-60) such as the above, more radically. To this end Amos is condemning the indecency in the act of a father and his son who have sex with a girl, the exploitation of the girl, like the innocent and the poor (vulnerable in society), and also the jeopardy that is inflicted on the girl’s dignity and possibility of a future marriage (see Coggins, 2000:103). If ‘the girl’ was a dependent of the man and/or his father, her vulnerability exposes her to the man and his father who take advantage of her to satisfy their indiscriminate and inordinate sexual desires. This emphasises Amos protest against inhuman treatment and lack of dignity that people like the girl suffer in such societies (see McKeating, 1971:22). Patterson writes that ‘Slavery is one of the most extreme forms of relations of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the view point of the master, and total powerlessness from the view point of the slave’ (Patterson, 1982:1). If נערה is a slave, she obviously fell powerlessly before her powerful masters (the man and his father) who abused their power over her to intimidate her. The context, within which Amos uses ‘the girl’ refers to social injustice whose victims are the defenceless and this girl is one of them.

In this section, I have argued that in Amos 2:6-7, the prophet protests against acts of injustice which manifest in indignity suffered by the innocent needy,
the poor, the afflicted and the girl. These are all vulnerable people whose lack of material resources to acquire their basic human needs have put them in a situation where they rely on the elite in society for survival. Instead of the political and economic elite obeying YHWH’s command to show kindness and generosity to them, they rather take undue advantage of their vulnerability. They are sold into debt bondage for insignificant amount of debt, they are violently trampled upon and harassed and abused. Amos is concerned about these series of oppression and violations of the poor and vulnerable in society and he pronounces YHWH’s judgement upon Israel’s elites.

4.2 Extortion of the Poor and Needy (Amos 2:8)

The text discussed in this section (Amos 8αα and 8βα), which has the theme of extortion of the poor, is presented in table 1 above. Amos attacks the powerful who sleep on clothes taken in pledge and who feast on the wines they have taken as fines from people who might have been found guilty in court. The religious language, ‘before all altars … in the house of their God’, may suggest that Amos is engaging in religious polemics. I however contend that the seizures of garments as pledges and fines extorted from the poor indicate Amos’ concern about social injustice.

בגדים, plural of בגד, is used here in reference to ‘garment’ (DCH I:91; Alden in NIDOTTE 1:595). בגד could refer to all kinds of garments from the filthy clothing of the leper to the holy robes of the high priest, the simplest covering of the poor as well as the costly raiment of the rich and noble. It is therefore the qualifier חבלים that explains the kind of garment. חלב, masculine plural participle of חל, means ‘take or hold in pledge’ (BDB:286; DCH II:149; Wakely in NIDOTTE 2:6). It may be a ‘pledge which is taken when the debt is due but remains the property of the debtor’ (HALOT:286). What happens to this בגדים חבלים is what Amos discloses with על־בגדים חבלים יטו. על־בגדים חבלים יטו, as the hiphil imperfect 3mp of נטה, is used here to mean ‘to stretch oneself out’ (BDB:640, Garrett, 2008:62; HALOT:693; Paul, 1991:86; Hamilton in NIDOTTE 3:91; Ringgren and Johnson in TDOT IX:384-86). "על־בגדים חבלים יטו" is thus in reference to the practice by which the perpetrators take the garments of the poor as pledges and sleep on them.
However, Shalom Paul contends that 'בגדים חבלים' should not be translated as ‘garments taken in pledge’ because it does not refer to ‘…security or pawn when a loan is granted by a creditor’. He argues that the root חבל in both the Law and Wisdom (e.g., Exod. 22:25; Deut. 24:6, 17; Prov. 13:13; 20:16; 27:13; Job 24:9) points to a distraint, which could be either a person or property which is confiscated only when the debtor defaults the payment due (Milgrom, 1975:77-79; Paul, 1991:83-84). To him, ‘the purpose of the distraint…is to put pressure on the defaulting debtor’. Andersen and Freedman had earlier drawn attention to the violent nature of seizure of garments as distrainst. To them, though the rich seized the garments under the pretext of security for loan or an unpaid debt, the use of tomar ‘tear away, seize, snatch, rob’ and לקח ‘take’ to parallel חבל in the Hebrew Bible makes the seizure a violent robbery (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:320). It is possible that Amos might be protesting both the forcible seizure of garments from poor debtors and the act of sleeping on them. As discussed below, the Yavneh Yam Ostracon throws light on this practice.

The practice of confiscating a garment is attested in the Yavneh Yam Ostracon, which is dated between 639 and 609 BCE. This seventh century date brings the practice close to Amos’ days. Below is a translation of the text:

May my lord, the officer, hear the word of his servant. As for your servant, your servant was harvesting at Hazar-asam. And your servant harvested and measured and stored, according to schedule, before quitting. Even as your servant measured the harvest and stored—according to schedule—Hoshaiah son of Shobai came and took the garment of your servant. When I had measured my harvest for some time, he took the garment of your servant. Now all my colleagues will testify for me—those who harvested with me in the heat of [the sun. All] my colleagues will testify for me (that) truly I am innocent of guilt. Therefore, let him return my garment, and if not, it is possible for the officer to return the garment of your servant and may you grant to him mercy … your servant and do not dismiss him.

The text reveals the plea or an extrajudicial petition (Dobbs-Allsopp, 1994:49-55; Westbrook 1988:30-35) of a reaper to a governor about the seizure of his garment by Hoshaiah son of Shobai, who has refused to return the garment to the reaper after many days. Who exactly this reaper is and the relationship between him and Hoshaiah son of Shobai are not immediately clear. His vulnerability to Hoshaiah son

54 Job 24:9- (there are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast, and take as a pledge the infant of the poor). Proverbs 20:16; 27:13- (Take the garment of one who has given surety for a stranger; seize the pledge given as surety for foreigners).

of Shobai, who could seize his garment for days, means he is a person from the lower class. Though his reference to himself as a servant ‘his servant’, once and ‘your servant’, eight times,) could be in reference to his relationship with any superior, his work as a harvester shows that he is a servant of a kind to someone. Isserlin suggests that the Hebrew of the text itself is evidence of its lower class origin (see Isserlin, 1972:198).

If the petitioner is a servant of the governor or one of the reapers in his services (Naveh, 1960:135), then Hoshaiah son of Shobai may be the official appointed by the governor. The petitioner could also be a poor man who might have hired himself out to a creditor, probably the governor or Hoshaiah son of Shobai, in payment of his debt. In this case, the same relationship as above would exist between him and Hoshaiah son of Shobai. This is more likely the case because of the confiscation of his garment, which to F. M. Cross, ‘implies the claim of a creditor’ (Cross, 1962:46). The taking of the garment, possibly as a pledge or distraint, legally indicate that the petitioner here was not a mere conscripted labourer (see Cross, 1962:46). Milgrom even suggests that the petitioner might be a debtor who had defaulted in payment and whose creditor had pursued him to distrain his garment (Milgrom, 1976:96 n. 349). S. Talmon has however contended, based on the legal situation reflected in the petition that: ‘...the plaintiff was not necessarily a poor man who had hired himself out to his creditor, apparently the governor, in payment of a debt, nor “one of many reapers employed in the governor’s service”’ (against Naveh, 1960:135; see Talmon 1964:30). To Talmon, the petitioners is ‘...a corvée laborer who claimed that he had adequately discharged the duties incumbent upon him’ (Talmon, 1964:30). Talmon’s proposal is in agreement with I. Mendelsohn and comes close to Cross who presents the petitioner as a farmer in a military colony, or a sharecropper whose garment has been seized in contention of ‘whether or not he had paid in full the landlord’s claims or lien on his crop’ (Cross, 1962:46; see Mendelsohn, 1962:33-34).

The petitioner, whether a debt slave, a corvée labourer or a sharecropper, owes some debt (see Milgrom, 1976:96; Tigay,1993). Thus upon the perception of the official that he had not paid in full, his garment has been seized as a pledge or distraint to force him to pay in full. On the assumption that the reason for seizing the garment of this petitioner may be purely on the ground of failure to complete his work, which has nothing to do with debt, J. H. Tigay contends that the petition is an
evidence that distraint of garments could be for other purposes rather than defaulting on loans (Tigay, 1993).

Hoshaiah son of Shobai under whose supervision the petitioner was and who might have been in charge of the governor’s harvest, represents the economic giants whom Amos condemned for seizing the garments of the poor but who refuse to return them before sun set. The petitioner thus represents the vulnerable in society who have no power to defend themselves. In the words of Cross, ‘The petitioner, whether guilty or innocent, is in the right, at least, according to Israelite law, in demanding the return of his garment’ (Cross, 1962:46; see Rainey, 2000:75). He is in the same situation as Amos’ צדיק. He is innocent and does not deserve the treatment he is suffering. The governor’s position is similar to that of the political and judicial authorities who have the divine responsibility to ensure that social justice prevail. The Yavneh Yam Ostracon thus attests to the fact that such seizure of garments and the consequent disregard for the moral teachings in the Pentateuch, actually existed at some point in Israelite history.

The issue of seizing items as pledges or distraint from debtors might have been a common problem of abuse and injustice in biblical and ANE traditions for which reason various provisions were made to address it. One such provision is:

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbour’s only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbour cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate (Exod. 22:26-27).

In a similar injunction, even the creditor is not permitted to enter the house of the debtor to collect the pledge but must stay outside till the debtor brings the pledge:

When you make your neighbour a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbour may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the LORD your God (Deut. 24:10-13).

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, a widow of a deceased prophet appealed to Elisha for help when a creditor seized her two children into slavery for debts, probably, the deceased prophet could not pay. One of Ezekiel’s qualities for the ‘righteous man’ is that he ‘restores to the debtor his pledge’. He condemns the ‘unrighteous man’ for not
restoring the pledge to the debtor (Ezek. 18:7, 12; 33:15). If על־בגדים חבלים יטו is taken to mean that the wealthy keep the garment overnight and sleep on them, then Amos is condemning an unjust practice which is contrary to moral teachings of similar nature as those in the Pentateuch (see Houston, 2008:107, 112; Mays, 1969:47; Paul, 1991:86). The Law of Eshnunna (LE) provides for protecting the commoner from a distrainer who may want to take another man’s slave woman, wife or child as a distraint, without any proof of debt (LE § A ii 13-25, see Roth, 1997:62). Also, LH provides that: ‘If a man should distrain an ox, he shall weigh and deliver 20 shekels of silver’ (LH § xliii 81-84 Roth, 1997:127). It is possible that Amos was condemning the injustice that arose from this practice and how it rendered the poor and needy more vulnerable and helpless.

Fig. 6 demonstrates the players that should have ensured that social justice is established. YHWH expects the creditors and other state officials, who themselves may also be creditors, to ensure that the poor and needy who fall into debt are treated well. Instead, they seize the clothes of the debtors, they do not return it at sunset and they sleep on it, depriving the poor and needy debtors their right to warmth and protection.

Amos continues to condemn feasting on the wines extorted from the poor through unjust fines imposed on them. The expression ויין חמסים appears only here with the closest parallel, ויין חמסים (wine of violence) appearing in Proverbs 4:17. In the nominal form עֵנָש describes a ‘fine’ or ‘mulct’ and in the verbal form it means ‘to impose a fine, penalty, levy’ (Wakely in NIDOTTE 3:466). It may refer to monetary fines and indemnities (e.g., Exod. 21:22; Deut. 22:19; 2 Kgs 23:33; 2 Chr.
36:3, see Paul, 1991:86; Wolff, 1977:168). Thus either the wine was bought with money extorted as fines from the poor, or the wine itself was the fine (see Andersen and Freedman, 1989:321; Mays, 1969:47). In the Pentateuch, according to Wolff, the only legal fines are those taken to ‘…make restitution for damages and not to finance drinking bouts’ (Wolff, 1977:168; eg Exod. 21:22; Deut. 22:19). Thus Amos condemns the excessive abuse of what might actually be a legal ordinance (Jeremias, 1998:37). In sponsoring their parties and festivities, the perpetrators of injustice engage in acts that bring suffering to the poor and needy, using legal process to their advantage at the expense and neglect of the poor (Mays, 1969:47).

Fig. 7 demonstrates the dynamics at play in the injustice of extorting fines from innocent parties in a suit to fund parties of the elite. The issue of fines surely raise one judicial situation or another, which Amos does not make clear. It is possible that the judiciary have connived with the party to the dispute that has higher economic status and therefore judicial influence. They have taken bribes from these elites and therefore have declared the innocent guilty.

**Fig. 7 Unjust Fines Extorted from the Vulnerable**

The fines that are taken from these victims are then used to fund the feast of the elite, including the court officials. In the model of social justice, YHWH will expect the court officials in particular to protect the vulnerable party against the predatory tendencies of the rich party. Unfortunately, the judiciary partnered the rich to foster this injustice. The poor party in the suit is thus handed out with injustice. YHWH will consequently bring upon these predators the punishment that will take away their power and influence.
In this section, I have argued that Amos protests against the violent seizure of garments from debtors and extortion of fines from the poor. Amos’ concern is not whether the seizure of garments as distraint and the procurement of party wines from court fines are legal or illegal. Instead, that these acts are at the heights of injustice by which the perpetrators indulge their appetites, feasting and drinking at the expense of the poor and needy. Andersen and Freedman see the garment and wine as symbols of indulgence acquired fraudulently and unjustly. To them, if the poor and the needy had actually committed crimes, it would not have been wrong to lodge the fines in the temple. The injustice ensues in the fact that the wines and garments were acquired through extortion and forceful seizure (Andersen and Freedman, 1989:320). This injustice is evident in the keeping of the cloak that the vulnerable needs for warmth and the sponsoring of the elite’s feast with the money or wine paid in fines instead of using it for restitution.

4.3 Oppression of the Poor and Needy (Amos 3:9-10; 4:1)

Table 2 presents passages from two different chapters. Amos 3:9-10 and 4:1 have common themes: extortion, exploitation and oppression. In these two sets of passages, the attack on the powerful in Israel, for exploiting and oppressing the poor and the needy, is given a strong force by the choice of words. The neighbours of Israel are invited to gather together and to witness the great tumults/confusion and the oppression within Samaria. Some upper class women are accused of oppressing the poor and crushing the needy.

Amos 3:9-11 is the second of three poems in the chapter. In Amos 3, the prophet condemns his audience’s ‘misguided faith’, which ‘assumes that because they are YHWH’s people, they are inviolable’ (Garrett, 2008:77). Amos declares to the people of Israel that their status of being YHWH’s people means they will be judged (v. 2). He also takes the opportunity to present an apology of his own ministry, probably against the presumption that he does not have the right to prophesy (vs. 4-8). Amos then calls for Israel’s neighbours to be invited to witness the violence and oppression that YHWH’s people have stored up, instead of learning to do good (vs. 9-10). For this reason, YHWH will punish them with an enemy attack (v. 11). Contrary to their expectation, they are not going to be delivered easily (v. 12). Instead, their punishment will include an overthrow of their important
religious sites and the symbols of their luxury (vs 13-15). The discussion in this section focuses on verses 9 and 10. In these verses, Amos rhetorically calls on Israel to invite the neighbouring nations to serve as a jury in judging Israel’s injustice. There is a double irony here. First the Philistines and the Egyptians have oppressed Israel in the past. Their experience in oppression, ironically, makes them experts in witnessing and judging Israel’s oppression. Second, the Philistines and the Egyptians are supposed to be pagans as far as Israel’s worship of YHWH is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (NRSV)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לשמשו על־אמרוניה באמשיור ועל־אמרוניה באשבים 3:9</td>
<td>Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod, and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, ‘Assemble yourselves on Mount Samaria, and see what great tumults are within it, and what oppressions are in its midst.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>באתי כע afsי על־אמרוניה battled וראנ מגדה רבדות 3:10</td>
<td>They do not know how to do right, says the LORD, those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ואמרו השמיעו על־אמרוניה באמשיור באדניה 3:11</td>
<td>Therefore, thus says the Lord God: An adversary shall surround the land, and strip you of your defence; and your strongholds shall be plundered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אומרים סלולך עלроיה אברכים וסיבי הארץ 4:1</td>
<td>4:1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, ‘Bring something to drink!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
concerned. They therefore do not know the standards that YHWH has set for his people, especially what Amos calls ‘good’. Yet these pagans are the ones invited, ironically, to witness the injustice in Samaria. The injustice Amos condemns in these verses are not very specific:

9bβ there are great tumults within Samaria
9bγ there are oppressions in its midst
10b they store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.

As unspecified as these acts of injustice may be, they create a picture of an unsettled community where violence and confusion rule. In such a community, the vulnerable suffer most. They have no peace to go about their daily life and they bear the brunt of all the violence. Amos uses the image of a treasure store effectively to communicate the seriousness of the injustice he protests. The violence and the robbery are stored in strongholds. This means that the tumult, oppression, violence and robbery they engage in bring in a lot of spoil, which is stored up in the treasure houses of the citadels. In the general context of the injustice that Amos condemns, whatever treasure the upper class have is the result of extortion from the poor and needy through oppression, violence and robbery. This links well with Amos 4:1. The focus on the oppression perpetrated by the ‘cows of Bashan’ in the face of their heartless religion separates Amos 4:1-5 from the rest of the chapter which concerns YHWH’s futile effort to win Israel over to himself and the resultant punishment. In 4:1, the addressees:

1bα oppress the poor,
1bβ crush the needy,
1c [and] say to their husbands, ‘Bring something to drink!’

The accusations in v. 1b and v. 1c bear semblance with Amos 3: 9bβ, 9bγ and 10b and the two pericopes are linked by ‘Mount Samaria’ (3:9bα; 4:1a) and oppression/oppress (3:9bγ/4:1bα). Reading them together reveals that the extortion through oppression, tumult, violence and robbery in 3:9bβ, 9bγ and 10b are concretised in 4:1b, 1c.
The plural of the feminine noun מָהוֹמָה which means ‘tumult,’ ‘confusion,’ ‘disquietude,’ ‘discomfiture’ or ‘panic’ (BDB:223; DCH IV:163; HALOT:552). A double meaning may be intended here. First, it may refer to the panic or confusion that will hit Israel when it comes under YHWH’s judgement. This interpretation draws attention to the only other occurrence of the plural מָהוֹמָה in 2 Chronicles 15:5 where מָהוֹמָה רָבָה describes the great panic that engulfed the people when there was no peace but war and strife (see Paul, 1991:116). Elsewhere, מָהוֹמָה describes the confusion and panic that accompanies divine judgement or the aftermath of a battle involving the deity (e.g. 1 Sam. 5:9; 14:20; Isa. 22:5; Zech. 14:13, see Paul, 1991:116). Secondly, and in this context, מָהוֹמָה describes the result of human action (e.g. Exod. 22:5; Prov. 15:16). It becomes Amos’ general but all-inclusive term in reference to the fear and confusion engulfing the Israelite society due to the distasteful acts committed by the wealthy (see Paul, 1991:117). These acts include: oppression, extortion and exploitation, which appears twice elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Job 35:9; Ecc. 4:1).56 is used in the sense of ‘oppression’ or ‘extortion’ (BDB:799; DCH V:616; HALOT:896; Swart in NIDOTTE 3:557; Gerstenberger in DTOT XI:412). The verbal form עָשק appears in Amos 4:1 and as will be seen later in this section, describes the oppression the poor suffers from the ‘cows of Bashan’. עָשק, according to Paul, designates ‘the manifold “oppression” of the downtrodden masses, at whose expense the upper class increases its ill-gotten gains’ (Paul, 1991:117). Thus, Amos is condemning the chaos that has already hit Israel due to endemic oppression and uncontrolled extortion of the poor and needy (see Andersen and Freedman, 1989:406; Garrett, 2008:93).

Amos describes further other acts of oppression that have violently invaded the Israelite community. The people expertly store violence and destruction (חָמס) in their strongholds. חָמס is a masculine noun which means ‘violence’ or ‘wrong’ (BDB:829; Swart and Dam in NIDOTTE 2:177). It is linked with wrongs such as violating the covenant or physical violence. שָׁד is used here to mean ‘violence’ ‘oppression’, ‘devastation’ or ‘destruction’ (HALOT:1418). While חָמס refers to crimes against human beings, שָׁד describes crimes against property and property rights (see Garrett, 2008:94; Paul, 1991:117; Wolff, 1977:191-194).

56The form in Ecclesiastes is עָשקים.
Furthermore, with which the text describes the acts of these upper class elite in Israel, is the qal active participle masculine plural of אצר which means ‘to store up treasure’. Thus what Amos condemns in this text is violent oppression which manifests itself in plundering through extortion to pile up wealth. As discussed below, the actions of the ‘Cows of Bashan’ reveals that the victims of this oppression, violence and robbery, are the poor and needy whose plight concerns Amos.

Amos 4:1 is the second of only two situations where the perpetrators of injustice are specified.57 They are the Cows of Bashan who live on the mount of Samaria. They oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to their husbands ‘bring something to drink’. The exploitative effect of the life styles of the upper class women, probably the wives and concubines of the ruling class and the merchants, is the object of condemnation.58 העשקות is the qal active participle feminine plural of עשק with the definite article. עשק and its noun form עשוק is ‘oppression’ or ‘extortion’ (BDB:799; DCH V:616; HALOT:896; Swart in NIDOTTE 3:557). An examination of the 35 occurrences of עשק in the Hebrew Bible59 points to financial exploitation (see Wilgus, 2012:99). In the Prophets, עשק characterises the actions of the rich who have extorted from the poor (see Wilgus, 2012:100).60 Like its participle עשוקים (see discussion on 3: 9bγ above), עשק, as demonstrated by its negative effect on the poor and needy, rightly heightens the multifarious oppression of the lower class masses. Also, הרצות is the qal active participle feminine plural of רצות, which means ‘crush’, ‘mistreat’ or ‘oppress’ (BDB:954; DCH VII:548; HALOT:1285; Dam and Swart in NIDOTTE 3:1191). רצות describes the effect of the oppression on the oppressed (see Wilgus 2012:100). Thus together, העשקות and הרצות serve as a parallelism to show the brutality of the oppression (see Wilgus, 2012:101) to accentuate the condemnation of the ill-treatment the vulnerable

57 The first is in Amos 2:7.
58 There are switches in gender in Amos 4:1. The passage begins with让你, which is a masculine plural imperative. It moves on to three feminine plural participles: אוצרות and עשקות. Finally it switches to a perfect common plural: Andrונם. Even Andrונם, has 3mp suffix, instead of the 3fp suffix, if Amos is addressing women. Garrett has argued, using Ruth 18:12 as an example, that since ‘Hebrew is not consistent in using the feminine plural pronominal suffixes for feminine antecedents’ and since ‘no other interpretation makes sense of Andrונם in this context, except ‘husband’, Amos’ addressees are women (Garrett, 2008:108).
59 See Lev. 5:21, 23; 19:13; Deut. 24:14; 28:29, 33; 1 Sam. 12:3, 4; 1 Chr. 16:21; Job 10:3; 40:23; Ps. 72:4; 103:6; 105:14; 119:121, 122; 146:7; Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3, 17; Ecc. 4:12; Is 23:12; 52:4; Jer. 7:6; 21:12; 50:33; Ezek. 18:18; 22:29; Hos. 5:11; 12:8; Amos 4:1; Mic. 2:2; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5.
60 See Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:29; Zech. 7:10, where the vulnerable are at the receiving end of עשק.
suffered at the hands of the elites of Samaria. The oppression being condemned here is conceived as one done out of a desire for a luxurious lifestyle and with complete disregard for the poor (see Wilgus, 2012:99-105).

פרות הבשן (cows of Bashan), in reference to the women of Samaria, could be a complimentary reference to their beautiful bodies. This is conceivable if it is seen as a metaphor of the fertile pastures of Bashan which provides nutritious feed for its well-fed, healthy and beautiful cattle (see Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 27:6; 39:18; Mic. 7:14; Zech. 11:2; Ps. 22:12; Garrett, 2008:107; Koch, 1983:46). The context of the text, however, reveals that the nourishing looks of these women resulted from exploiting powerless members of their community (see HALOT:964) and that is a protest against injustice. By referring to the elite women of Samaria as ‘cows of Bashan,’ Amos first caught their attention with flattery but sharply condemned them for oppressing the poor and crushing the needy (see Irwin, 2012:231-37).

Closely related to the above is the cultic interpretation of Amos’ use of ‘cows of Bashan’ (see Barstad, 1975:293; Barstad, 1984:35-47; Jacobs, 1985:109-10; Koch, 1983:46). This interpretation restricts Amos’ protest to purely religious significance and overlooks the prominence of social criticism in the text. Contrary to this cultic interpretation, scholars such as Irwin, Jacobs and Kleven have rightly interpreted ‘cows of Bashan’ as condemnation of social injustice. Amos is more concerned with the immodest and immoral behaviour of the women (Jacobs 1985:109-10), which results in the suffering of the poor and needy (Kleven, 1996:219-26). The greed of the upper class women of Samaria motivated the unscrupulous behaviour of their men who used their political and economic powers to exploit, extort and oppress the poor.

Whether the ‘cows of Bashan’ directly or indirectly oppress their victims is debatable (see Williamson 2012:79), but the oppressive effect of their actions on the vulnerable is obvious. Contrary to the view that the women of Samaria indirectly oppressed the poor and crushed the needy through their extravagant lifestyle that forced their husbands to oppress others (see DiGangi, 1985:38-39; Limburg, 1988:99; Mays, 1969:72; Paul, 1991:128; Smith and Page, 1995:85; Smith, 1972:103; Snaith, 1956:24), Irwin believes that these women were directly involved in oppressing the poor and crushing the needy (Irwin, 2012:239). To him, the

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61I rely on the translation of Barstad’s ‘Die Basankühe’ in HALOT:964.
demand for ‘their lords to serve them drink’ is part of an overall characterization of those women as perpetrators of injustice’ (Irwin, 2012:231, 237-46). This is because by those demands the women were ‘attempting to overturn the prevailing patriarchal social order, which Amos understood to be the mechanism by which social stability were maintained’ (Irwin, 2012:231-32; 241). Irwin, however, struggles to substantiate the claim that the power and money that elite women had in Israel gave them control over slaves and made it possible for them to oppress the poor and needy directly. However, it is clear in the text that the demand of the women for their lords to serve them drink refers to a conspiracy to plunder the poor (see Pusey, 1950:280) or a ‘mutual feasting on spoil seized from the poor’ (see Calvin, 1846:223-26; Fausset, 1871:539; Henderson, 1868:146; Schmoller, 1886:29). Thus Amos 4:1 is a protest against the oppression and injustice that the poor suffer from the powerful men of Israel because of the extravagant demands of the upper class women of Samaria. The behaviour of the upper class women of Samaria, which Amos condemns, sharply contrasts with the character of the capable woman (-אשת חיל) in Proverbs 31:10-31. This ideal woman is kind to the poor and needy. Instead of opening their arms to the poor and needy, these ‘cows of Bashan’ make demands that cause their husbands to oppress the poor and needy.

Looking at Amos 4:1 in the light of the Psalmist’s ‘bulls of Bashan’ strengthens the protest against violent oppression. Psalm 22:13 describes how helpless the psalmist is at the hands of his enemies, whom he calls פרימ רעים אבירי بشן (many strong bulls of Bashan). These enemies have encompassed him and open wide their mouths at him like ravening and roaring lion. The Psalmist’s description of his enemies alludes to the robustness, vigour and the brutish nature of the ‘bulls of Bashan’ (see Delitzsch, 1871:315). The imagery thus reflects the vulnerability of the psalmist and conveys the violence, torture and exploitation he suffers at the hands of his enemies. Significantly, both פרימ רעים אבירי بشן and פרות הבשן appears only here in Amos 4:1 and Psalm 22:13 respectively and nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. When Amos calls the women of Samaria פרות הבשן, he criticises them for oppressing

62 Irwin’s biblical textual evidence: the אשת חיל (NIV - virtuous woman, see Prov. 31); Sarah’s control over Hagar (Gen. 16:6; 21:9-10); and the property owned by daughters of Zelophehad and Naomi (see Num .27:1-11; Jos. 17:3-6; Ruth 4:1-10) – all do not demonstrate that these women directly oppressed the vulnerable. Again, his ANE examples are all about maintaining the status quo in a society where men hold all the power and not threatening social order. See Irwin, 2012:240-45 for the full argument.
the poor and crushing the needy by making demands on their husbands. Similarly, when the Psalmist calls his enemies מרים רעים אבירי ושן, he describes how they terrorise him, threaten to devour him and his vulnerability before them. It is therefore, heuristically plausible to suggest that the men whose wives are described as ‘cows of Bashan’ are like the ‘bulls of Bashan’ who due to their strength and vigour can brutishly and heartlessly oppress the vulnerable in order to meet the nagging demands of their women. This confirms that when Amos describes the women of Samaria as ‘cows of Bashan’ his emphasis is on the oppression, extortion and injustice the vulnerable suffer at their hands.

Fig. 8 demonstrates the dynamics of social injustice manifested in the exploitation and oppression that the prophet condemns in 3:9-10 and 4:1. In Amos 3, the perpetrators are the ruling class with their state officials who store up the spoils from their oppression in the strongholds. These are the people, who, like the king in biblical and ANE traditions, have been given the responsibility by YHWH to protect the poor and needy. Even though their victims are not mentioned, implications from 4:1 and other passages such as 2:6-8, already discussed, show that their victims are among the vulnerable such as the poor and needy. In Amos 4, the perpetrators are the upper class women of Samaria and their husbands who

![Fig. 8 Oppression of the Poor and Needy](image)

possibly have political or economic power or both. With their wealth and influence, they fall into the class of individuals who in biblical and ANE traditions have the
responsibility from YHWH to be kind and generous to the poor and needy. Unfortunately, they have made these same poor and needy, victims of their oppression and crushing. YHWH will then bring punishment upon them in the form of enemy defeat and exile.

4.4 Bribery, Corruption and Miscarriage of Justice (Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12)

Table 3 presents texts from Amos chapters 5 and 6 that protest against bribery, corruption and miscarriage of justice. Amos 5:6-7 and 5:10-13 are two stanzas from a long section of a mixture of oracles and exhortations (see Garrett, 2008:129).63 These two stanzas are preceded by a prose introduction and a poem of lament for Israel (vs. 1-2), another poem giving the context for the lament (v. 3) and an exhortation to seek YHWH and forsake religious shrines (vs. 4-5). They are separated from each other by a hymn about YHWH’s creative power over light and darkness and his destructive abilities (vs. 8-9). Amos 6:11-14 is the concluding stanza of that long section which begins with an announcement of YHWH’s punishment (v. 11), a proverb, in the form of a question, and its interpretation (v. 12), an accusation (v. 13) and judgment (v. 14). The focus texts for the discussions in this section are Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12, which communicate Amos’ message about injustice that manifests in bribery, corruption and miscarriage of justice. While Amos 5:7 and 6:12 describe perversion of justice in very vague terms, 5:10-12 present concrete evidence of this miscarriage of justice and the punishment that follows.

In 5:7, the prophet accuses his addressees that they have:

7a turned justice into wormwood
7b and cast righteousness to the ground

In 6:12, Amos casts the same accusation in a proverbial question and its interpretation to show how unnatural and absurd injustice could be:

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63 Garrett considers Amos 5:1-6:14 as one long section linked in different ways. First, the two chapters serve as a follow up of Amos 4:1-13 where the prophet accuses Israel of cruelty and hollow religion. Secondly, both chapters have laments (5:2, 16-17) or a scene intended as lament (6:9-10). Thirdly, there is a possible chiastic structure of 5:1-17 and/or 5:16-6:11 (see Garrett, 2008:129).
12aα Do horses run on rocks?
12aβ Does one plough the sea with oxen?
12bα But you have turned justice into poison
12bβ and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood

Table 3 Amos 5:6-7, 10-13; Amos 6:11-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (NRSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>דִּרְש֥וּ א ת־יְהוָָ֖ה וִָּֽחְיֶ֑וּ פ ךָא ש֙ בַ֣ית י וס ָ֔ף</td>
<td>Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והַה פְכִּ֥ים לְלַעֲנָָ֖ה מִּשְפֶָ֑ט וּצְדָקָָ֖ה לָּאָֽֽהַנ׃</td>
<td>Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לְלַעֲנָָ֖ה מִּשְפֶָ֑ט וּצְדָקָָ֖ה לָּאָֽֽהַנ׃</td>
<td>10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:11 מְצַוּ ָ֔ה וְהִּכִָ֛ה הַבַ֥יִּת הַגָ֖דוֹל רְסִּיסִֶּ֑ים וְהַבַ֥יִּת הַקָט ָ֖ן בְקִּ֥עִים׃</td>
<td>11 Therefore, because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:12 כִָּ֤י־הֲפַכְת ָ֤ם לְר אש֙ מִּשְפָָ֔ט וּפְרִ֥י צְדָקָָ֖ה לְלַעֲנָָֽה׃</td>
<td>12 For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:13 הָא ַ֣מְרִָּ֔ים הֲלַֹ֣וא בְחָזְק ָ֔נוּ לָקַ֥חְנוּ לָָ֖נוּ קַרְנָָֽֽֽיִם׃</td>
<td>13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אָ֥רּוֹרָהּ לְאַל־יַחֲר ָ֖וש בַבְקָרִֶּ֑ים</td>
<td>11 See, the LORD commands, and the great house shall be shattered to bits, and the little house to pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַשָּׁמַח ָ֔ה הַיְרֻצָ֤וּן בַס ֶּ֨לַע֙ סוּסִָּ֔ים אִָּֽם־יַחֲר ָ֖וש בַבְקָרִֶּ֑ים</td>
<td>12 Do horses run on rocks? Does one plough the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַשָּׁמַח ָ֔ה הַיְרֻצָ֤וּן בַס ֶּ֨לַע֙ סוּסִָּ֔ים אִָּֽם־יַחֲר ָ֖וש בַבְקָרִֶּ֑ים</td>
<td>13 you who rejoice in Lo-debar, who say, ‘Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַשָּׁמַח ָ֔ה הַיְרֻצָ֤וּן בַס ֶּ֨לַע֙ סוּסִָּ֔ים אִָּֽם־יַחֲר ָ֖וש בַבְקָרִֶּ֑ים</td>
<td>14 Indeed, I am raising up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says the LORD, the God of hosts, and they shall oppress you from Lebohamath to the Wadi Arabah.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two verses parallel each other as they express the same idea in slightly different ways. The accusation of turning justice into wormwood (5:7a) and turning righteousness into wormwood (6:12β) on one hand and casting righteousness to the ground (5:7b) and turning justice into poison (v. 12α) on the other hand, link the two verses together, irrespective of the fact that they stand in different chapters. Together, both verses contain two of the only three mentions of the hendiadys ‘משפט וצדק’ in the book of Amos, which this study has followed scholars like Houston (2008), Westbrook (1995) and Weinfeld (1995) to interpret as social justice. Notably, the expression is slightly different in 6:12, where ‘משפט ופרי צדק,’ could be interpreted as ‘the fruit of social justice’. Amos 5:7 and 6:12 could therefore be paraphrased to mean that the people of Israel have done the most unnatural and absurd thing by perverting social justice, by corrupting the fruit of social justice and poisoning the masses with social injustice. Thus in these two verses, Amos accuses the perpetrators of failing to uphold social justice.

The expression ‘לארץ הניחו’ (cast to the ground) shows the destructive effect of social injustice (see Wolff, 1977:246; Isa. 28:2), while ‘האש להב’ and ‘האש להב’ capture the bitterness and poison of social injustice in Israel. ‘למענה’ is commonly translated as wormwood, a bitter and poisonous plant (DCH V:376; HALOT:533) and ‘ראש’ also refers to a bitter and poisonous plant (HALOT:1167-68; Fleischer in TODT XIII:264). Using the above expressions, Amos registers his utter abhorrence of the injustice in Israel. Furthermore, Amos 6:12 seeks to communicate that since it is absurd for horses to run on rocks and for a farmer to plough the rock with oxen, it is equally absurd and a ‘cosmic nonsense’ to pervert or corrupt social justice (see Barton, 2003:38; Williamson, 2012:73). For the rhetoric to be logical and effective, both questions in Amos 6:12a should produce negative answers. 6:12αα satisfies this condition because the obvious answer to the question ‘Do horses run on rocks?’ is in the negative. However, ‘בבקרים’ in 6:12αβ points to a positive answer because one can plough with oxen. This answer defeats the purpose of the comparison. Various

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64 Due to its exceedingly bitter taste, ‘למענה’ is sometimes used to metaphorically describe the bitterness of calamity (eg Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19).
solutions to this problem have been proposed involving either emending the MT, or maintaining it.\textsuperscript{65}

Gapping בָּשָׁלַח in 6:12aα into 6:12aβ, as Garrett proposes (Garrett, 2008:199),\textsuperscript{66} is a plausible solution. This brings the reading of Amos 6:12 to: ‘Do horses run on the rock? Does one plough [בָּשָׁלַח ‘the rock’] with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood’.\textsuperscript{67} Here, the antithetical relationship between the similes in the two parts of the question is set against the danger and foolishness of neglecting social justice (see Marlow, 2009:127). The intention of Amos therefore comes clear that social injustice is against the natural order.

Amos 5:10-12 presents some activities by which the upper class in Israel pervert and corrupt social justice. 5:11 contains an accusation of excessive taxation, which is discussed in the next section. In Amos 5:10, 12, the prophet condemns Israel because:

10a they hate the one who reproves in the gate,
10b they abhor the one who speaks the truth
12c they afflict the innocent and take bribes
12d they push the needy aside in the gate

\textsuperscript{65} Rudolph, Cooper (supported by Allen) and Szabó, all assume different scribal errors and thus emend the MT accordingly (see Allen, 2008:438-47; Cooper, 1988:725-27; Rudolph, 1971:225-26; Szabó, 1975:506-7 for details of their argument). J. D. Michaelis had earlier divided בָּשָׁלַח יִבָּשָׁלַח into בָּשָׁלַח בָּשָׁלַח translating: ‘does one plough the sea with oxen?’ (Michaelis, 1772:86, discussed in Paul, 1991:218 and Tov, 2012:357). This emendation is followed by the NIV, adopted in the notes of the BHS for possible reading (See BHS n. b on Amos 6:12) and restored by Ulrich in his compilation of the Qumran scrolls (4QXII, see Ulrich, 2010:607).

\textsuperscript{66} The LXX reads יֵעָרֵד as ‘silent’, ‘dumb’ or ‘speechless’ (see BDB:361; DCH IV:322) and בָּשָׁלַח as ‘mares’ and translate it as: ‘ει παραστοιχίζονται εν θηλείαις’ (will they [horses] be silent among mares?). Dahood translates it as: ‘does one plough without oxen?’ as he reads בָּשָׁלַח as ‘without’ (Dahood, 1980:14).

\textsuperscript{67} A word is gapped if it appears in the first segment of a sentence and is at the same time understood and read as part of the second segment of that same sentence. For example, in ‘A gift in secret averts (יכפה) anger; and a concealed bribe in the bosom, strong wrath’ (Prov. 21:14), יכפה has been gapped so that it is understood in the second part which can be interpreted as ‘a concealed bribe in the bosom, [averts] strong wrath’. Here are examples of gapping in the MT of Amos. In ‘because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals’ (Amos 2:6), מָכַר in the first part of the sentence is gapped into the second part so that it can be understood as ‘and they [sell] the needy for a pair of sandals’. Again, in ‘...let justice roll down (יגל) like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream’ (Amos 5:24), יגל in the first part is gapped so that the second part could be understood as ‘and righteousness [roll down] as a mighty stream’.

\textsuperscript{68} The translation: ‘Does one plough there with oxen’ (ESV, KJV, JPS) follows the same principle.
Both verses are set in the gate to demonstrate the violence with which social injustice is perpetrated by Amos’ Israelite audience. The context of the gate indicates a possible attack on the justice system of Israel and a call for fairness in the judicial sphere. This also designates the elders, judges and influential people in Israel’s governance as the perpetrators of this injustice. The innocent, the needy, and those who stand against injustice at the gate, are the victims.

The role of bribery in social injustice comes up strongly in Amos’ diagnosis of the Israelite society. Those who perpetrate injustice are accused of utterly hating the one who reprove in the gate and the one who tells the truth. They do this to pave way for bribery in the gate in order to declare the guilty as innocent. The result of their action is that they are able to deny the needy justice by pushing them aside in the gate. שעון appears 375 times in the Hebrew Bible in reference to gates of cities, towns, temples and houses (BDB:1044-45; DCH III:519-520; HALOT:1614-18; Hess in NIDOTTE 4:208-11; Otto in DTOT XV:364). It plays a central role in biblical Israel. Community elders sat at the gate to administer justice and decide disputes (eg Deut. 21:19; 22:15; Ruth 4:1-11). People went to the ‘gate’ when they had disputes, hoping to receive justice. The wisdom writer gives general advice, probably to those who have power: ‘Do not rob the poor because they are poor or crush the afflicted at the gate’ (Prov. 22:22). Robbing the poor here could be of both commercial and judicial nature. The sense in which Amos uses שעון gives the indication that he may either be referring to a market place, a court of justice or both (see Andersen and Freedman, 1989:501). This appalling situation at the gate finds a parallel in Isaiah. While Amos condemns those who ‘hate the one who reproves in the gate ...abhor the one who speaks the truth...who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate’, Isaiah condemned those who ‘....lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought’ (Isa. 29:21 JPS). Amos was possibly condemning a failure to adhere to well-known moral teachings:

69 Hayes has argued for a more broad view of ‘the gate’ in Amos 5:10, 12 instead of limiting it to legal or judicial matters (Hayes, 1988:162-65). It is worth noting that among the many other activities that took place in the gate, hearing of disputes was part and in the general context of Amos 5:7, 10, 12 and 6:12, some form of judicial context, whether formal or informal, is implied.

70 NIV translates some occurrences of שעון as ‘court’ (eg 1 Sam. 4:18; 9:18; Is 29:21; Jer. 38:7; Job 29:7, 16.).
You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe (כפר), for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right’ (Exod. 23:6-8; see also Deut. 16:19; 24:17).

The text does not mention the gate but ‘in his lawsuit,’ ‘false charge’ ‘innocent’ or ‘those in the right’ refer to the justice system, the miscarriage of which is condemned.

Amos’ expression for bribery is the absolute noun כפר. Commenting on Amos 5:12, Paul contends that ‘כפר is not a bribe’ aimed at overlooking or disregarding an offence. To him, כפר has become a negative word just as many other ‘gift’ or ‘payment’ words and this has made כפר synonymous with bribe or unjust gain (e.g. 1 Sam. 12:3; Prov. 6:35, see Levine, 1974:61-62, Paul, 1991:174). Interestingly, in Proverbs 6:35, כפר parallels שחד, where a husband’s jealousy results in anger that he accepts neither ransom/compensation (כפר) nor bribe (שחד). There is textual evidence that כפר can be seen as both a gift/ransom and a bribe (DCH V:456; HALOT:496; Lang in TDOT VII:301).

According to Lang, כפר is a legal term which ‘…denotes the material gift that establishes an amicable settlement between an injured party and the offending party’ (Lang in TDOT VII:301). The clearest example of כפר used for this purpose is found in Exodus 21:28-32, relating to an ox that kills a human being. The ox is stoned to death in all situations whether it is the first time, where the owner is not liable or the ox has done that before and the owner has been warned. In the latter instance, the owner is liable and he should be put to death as a punishment. However, if an agreement is reached which reflects ‘extenuating circumstances,’ the owner of the ox pays a כפר that had been agreed between the parties. For the injured party who receives the כפר, it is a ‘compensation, reparation [or] indemnification’ but for the offender, it is a ransom for his life (see Lang in TDOT VII:301). Thus Paul contends that כפר takes the place of the death penalty that the owner would have suffered. Again when the people of Israel take a census, they are enjoined to give a כפר for the soul of each man, to avoid the punishment of a plague (Exod. 30:12). For certain offences, however, the punishment must be executed and no כפר should be taken (Num. 35:31-32). It is evident from the above that כפר is a payment for the benefit

71 Also translated as ‘gift’ (BDB:1005; DCH III:316). כפר and שחד appear as parallels in Proverbs 6:38.
of the victim, to compensate them for their injury (see Prov. 6.35). This is so, especially, when the parties themselves negotiate justice in a culture where that is the accepted procedure and where כפר that is accepted is the punishment. In this sense, כפר may be better viewed as compensation. Wisdom literature sees such arrangements as enabling the rich to escape the death penalty by paying כפר (Job 36:18; Prov. 13:8). Therefore, such a system could possibly disadvantage the poor who are not able to pay כפר. Justice could thus become an expensive commodity which only the wealthy and powerful can afford.

There are two biblical instances where כפר takes on the meaning of ‘bribe’ because it is used to bribe judges (see 1 Sam. 12:3; Amos 5:12; Lang in TDOT VII:301) and in both instances, כפר comes with the verblekח. Whenишד is employed to mean ‘bribery’, it also comes withלך (see 1 Sam. 8:3; 12:3). Amos uses כפר in accusing the aristocrats of Israel (probably the judges among them) who have allowed bribery and corruption in the courts to blind their eyes from seeing what is right and are therefore able to declare the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty (see McCann in NIDOTTE II: 711-12; Wolf, 1977:248).

It is not straightforward to analyse whether bribery is immoral or not in biblical and ANE traditions. I suggest that though there are many instances in both traditions that bribery seems acceptable, there are indications that in biblical and ANE traditions, bribery was seen as immoral and/or illegal. M. L. Goldberg argues that this negative attitude of the Hebrew Bible towards bribery developed as a result of Israelite understanding of YHWH their God and the stories they produced to communicate that understanding. Goldberg contends that biblical condemnation of gifts and bribery, especially in the sphere of the judiciary, is at odds with the norm in the ANE. To him, the principle of reciprocity that operated in the ANE demanded that a judge delivered a favourable judgement in return for a gift received and/or the judge expected a gift in appreciation for delivering a favourable judgement. To this end, ANE societies saw payment by litigants to judges as normal and appropriate, not as access payment which was morally wrong (Goldberg, 1984:17 n. 6). Goldberg’s claims may gain grounds from some ANE texts which show that bribes

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72In Akkadian, leqû, (to take or accept) is used within the context of accepting gifts and bribes (CAD:139, see Paul, 1991:174).
73Goldberg defends his argument by comparing Israelite perception of YHWH as an uncreated God who cannot be influenced, with the perception of ANE deities who have human origins (see Goldberg, 1984:18-25).
or gifts were given to judges in expectation of favourable judgement. The immorality lies in the failure on the part of the judge to reciprocate the gesture of the one whose case he was handling and whose gift he collected. In one late Assyrian letter addressed to the king, the writer complains of not having any friend among the judges in the royal court to whom he might give a ‘šulmanu’ (gift) to oblige him to take up his cause. This ‘šulmanu’ is given for the purpose of gaining ‘special consideration or influence in important circles on behalf of the donor’ (Finkelstein, 1952:78; see Harper, 1930:no. 2; Pfeiffer and Harper, 1935:no. 160). In another instance, a woman gave her maid as a ‘šulmanu’ to Ashur-aḫa-iddina, in expectation of the recipient acting in favour of the donor and her son who have fallen into the hands of the law. Finkelstein contends that these instances suggest ‘...that a šulmanu was a recognized form of gratuity which obliged the recipient to help the donor...’ (Finkelstein 1952:78). There are three instances in a Nuzi text, where people who had ‘court’ cases gave tātu (present) either to the judge directly or through an influential person for the purpose that the judge will attend to their lawsuits (see AASOR 8:27ff, 63ff, 9:1, 16). These three instances indicate that ‘giving a tātu was a recognized practice and that the alleged malfeasance of the officials is not that they had accepted such gratuities but rather that they had failed to uphold their end of the bargain and had even refused to return the “gifts” they had received’ (Finkelstein, 1952:79). Goldberg also contends that the anger of the legendary Poor Man of Nippur against the mayor was because he refused to give him the favour he deserved after the mayor collected the šulmanu from the poor man (Goldberg, 1984:17; see Gurney, 1956:145-64).

The moral obligation of šulmanu or tātu on the recipient, coupled with the fact that there is no known ANE law against bribery, makes it easy for scholars such as Goldberg to contend that giving a gift or bribe to a judge in the ANE was not morally wrong. Attention can even be drawn to passages in Proverbs that commend bribery and giving of gifts. These passages include: ‘A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who give it; wherever they turn they prosper…; A gift opens doors; it gives access to the great…; [and] A gift in secret averts anger; and a concealed bribe in the bosom, strong wrath’ (Prov. 17:8; 18:16; 21:14). As Scherer points out, without passing any moral judgement, these Wisdom passages describe the positive

74 Finkelstein’s contention that šulmanu could mean a ‘gratuity’ or something close to it, comes from the understanding that in some ANE texts, ‘tātu’ (present) is a synonym of ‘šulmanu’.
consequences of bribes. They point to the fact that to employ bribe in circumstances when its purpose is not selfish interest or unjust gains but to win favour, is a sign of wisdom and prudence, rather than something immoral (see McKane, 1970:65-66, Scherer, 1997:486). From the above, it is obvious, as rightly observed by K. A. Farmer, that the composers and editors of Proverbs ‘do not consider all bribes equal’ (Farmer, 1991:88) and may thus seem to confirm the idea that bribery in the ANE and the Hebrew Bible was not morally wrong. Obviously, this practice of bribery will only tend to favour and protect the interest of the rich and powerful ‘whose gifts—and the obligatory reciprocity they entail—will generally be greater than those of the [poor] whose resources are less substantial’ (Goldberg, 1984:17 n. 7).

Notwithstanding, the contention that bribery in the ANE was not immoral is not wholly right. When Hammurabi was informed of bribery among his judges, he ordered a full scale investigation which culminated in the confiscation of the money involved. Also, Šamaš is said to punish the judge who accepts bribes (Gray 1901:41-44; Lambert 1996:132-33) and Amenemopet advises against receiving a bribe from a mighty person (Scherer, 1997:65). Again, a Babylonian tablet warns the king against bribery:

If the Nippurians bring aught to him for judgment and he oppress them by reason of gifts then will Bêl, lord of the lands, summon the hostile stranger against him and will cause him to slaughter his soldiers; the prince and his chief šatamu shall be dragged about the streets (see Langdon, 1907:151).

Moreover, Šamaš favours the judge who attends to the cause of the weak, without accepting tātu (Gray, 1901:41-44; Lambert, 1996:132-33). Also, Andreas Scherer draws attention to condemnation of bribery intended for gaining unjust advantage (see Prov. 17.23) and further acknowledges the obvious ‘agreement within the Old Testament that bribery is reprehensible’ (e.g. Exod. 23.6-8; Deut.. 16.19; 24:17; 27:25; Isa. 1:23; 5:23; Ezek. 22.12; Ps. 15.5; see Scherer 1997:65). Strongest among these is the curse pronounced upon the one who takes a bribe in order to shed innocent blood (Deut. 27:25). Judging from the different Biblical and ANE attitudes towards bribery, it is obvious that though there may be some positive views of bribery, these traditions do not lose sight of its dangers in perverting justice (Scherer, 1997:66). There is no absolute evidence that bribery in both the ANE and the biblical worlds was accepted on moral or legal grounds. Bribery was doubtless a constant
concern for the administration of justice in the ANE and the Hebrew Bible. Amos’ condemnation of bribery and corruption in the gate and the consequent perversion of justice indicate that bribery and corruption were fostering injustice.

**Fig. 9 Bribery, Corruption and Miscarriage of Justice**

Fig. 9 demonstrates the dynamics of bribery, corruption and miscarriage of justice. YHWH, as the initiator of social justice, has commanded Israel to ensure that social justice is well established. This includes ensuring that the judicial system is fair for every member of the community. The responsibility for this is on state officials, namely the judges and other community elders who are involved in dispute settlement to ensure that everyone is given a fair hearing and that the vulnerable are protected against the economic might and political influence of the upper class. Unfortunately, these judges and elders have connived with the rich and upper class members to deprive the innocent and needy members of the community of their right to justice. They have taken bribes from parties in disputes who have the economic power to pay and therefore condemned the party that was in the right. To make matters worse, the few men of integrity, probably among the elders, who stand by the truth and reprove those who take bribes to pervert justice, are fiercely opposed with hatred and abhorrence. These victims of injustice; the innocent, needy and their advocates, have been exposed to bitter and poisonous injustice. YHWH will not look on unconcerned.
4.5 Excessive Taxation of the Poor (Amos 5:11)

Amos 5:11, which is the text discussed in this section, is presented in table 3 above. It contains an accusation of excessive taxation,\(^7\) and an announcement of punishment. The perpetrators:

11αα collect taxes from the poor
11αβ and exact grain tax from them

As their punishment, YHWH will not allow them to live in the houses of hewn stone they have built (v. 11b) and they will not enjoy the juicy drinks from the vineyards they have planted (v. 11c). I suggest that Amos 5:11a is an attack on excessive taxation that brought unbearable suffering to the poor. The key to this proposal is the interpretation of בוש쌔ך, which together with משאת־בר indicates that unbearable taxation was an element of the injustice that bedevilled the society at the time.

Scholars who translate בושהלך as ‘trample,’ or ‘tread down’ interpret it either as infinitive construct of בוס, or hybrid of בוסס and בוסס, from the root בוס (BDB:100; DCH I:128; Harper, 1905:118). It has also been suggested that בושضاءך is a conflate reading of בוס and משאת, both meaning ‘to plunder’ (Paul, 1991:172). These interpretations limit the intensity of Amos’ condemnation of excessive taxation. As the qal participle of בושอาศ, meaning ‘to gather or collect a [grain] tax (Garrett, 2008:151; Hubbard, 1989:172; Paul, 1991:172-73; Soggin, 1987:89). משאת־בר, another grain tax taken from the poor, is among many other well documented regular taxes collected in ancient Mesopotamia (Garrett, 2008:152; Paul, 1991:173; Wolff, 1977:247). Thus Amos pronounces judgement upon the upper class because they have ‘collected taxes from the poor and exacted grain tax from them’ (see Chaney, 1999:108 for a similar interpretation). This interpretation and consequent translations intensifies the condemnation of excessive taxation of the poor. The focus then is on the drastic result of taxation on the poor who have become labourers on lands they once owned.

\(^7\) Robert A. Oden concludes his discussions on taxes in biblical Israel that the prophets, including Amos, did not denounce the tax regime of their time, either because the taxes did not overburden the people or they were just and reasonable (Oden, 1984:165-71). Contrary to his views, taxation was possibly among the major causes of the continuous increase in poverty in Israel (Reinstore, 2009:336).
The translation of בושصم as ‘to tread down’, ‘to trample down’ or ‘to plunder’, if at all accepted, only emphasises the violence with which these levies and taxes were imposed on and extorted from the socially disadvantaged. Thus Amos 5:11a is a protest against the plight of victims of social injustice in Israel who were hurt most by excessive taxation.

Fig. 10 Excessive Taxation of the Poor

Fig. 10 demonstrates the dynamics of the injustice resulting from the excessive taxation. YHWH as the initiator of social justice has given responsibility to the state officials and other individuals to partner him in protecting the innocent and the needy against injustices including excessive taxation that can hurt them and destabilise their economic survival. On the contrary, these state officials and other individuals with commercial interests have extorted excessive taxes from their victims. The consequent impoverishment of the innocent and needy stands starkly opposite the affluence of their predators whose luxury houses and juicy vine yards are the result of the extortion of taxes. YHWH will thus come in to protect the victims and punish the perpetrators. They will not enjoy the luxury they have acquired with those extorted taxes.

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76 Archaeological materials from eighth century Israel have been cited as evidence of the drastic effects of taxation on the poor in eighth century Israel as a result of growing development of large estates and cash crop farming (See Chaney, 1999; 2005; Coomber, 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; Premnath, 2003:132-33).
4.6 Carefree Extravagant Opulence in the Midst of Abject Poverty (Amos 6:1-7)

Table 4 presents text from Amos 6:1-7., which is a lament, describing the behaviour of citizens and leaders of Samaria and Zion (v. 1, 3-6) and announcing impending exile (v. 7). Verse 2 may be seen as an aside, which ‘offers evidence that the people have no reason for their unperturbed attitude’ (Hayes, 1988:182). They live at ease and in false confidence (v. 1), their behaviour brings near the reign of terror (v. 3), they indulge themselves in luxury living and extravagant feasting (v. 4-6b). Amos’ disapproval lies in the fact that they are feasting when they ought to be mourning (v. 6c), for which reason they will be the first to go into exile, to bring their feast to an end (v. 7). There is no doubt that the actions that attract exile as judgement may not be unjust in themselves and that Amos reproves them for partying instead of wailing and for not doing anything about the impending destruction of Samaria. However, I suggest that in the general context of the social injustices in the form of extortion, oppression and corruption condemned throughout the text; Amos denounces the lavish lifestyle of the rich because he believes it is funded from wealth acquired unjustly from the poor and needy. Consequently, their lack of concern about ‘the ruin of Joseph’ reflects their apathy towards the suffering vulnerable masses.

Amos describes the elite as ‘you that put far away the evil day, and bring near a reign of violence’ (v. 3). The link between the nearness of the ‘reign of violence’ (שבת חמס) and the behaviour of the upper class is upheld by most scholars. Paul writes: ‘in their attempt to ward off forthcoming national catastrophe, they paradoxically and antithetically bring near [the reign of violence]’ (Paul, 1991:204). Similarly, Birch argues that ‘...they think the day of reckoning announced by Amos is “far away”’ (v. 3a), but the text suggests that in such an attitude they are actually bringing the ‘reign of violence’ near (Birch, 1997:226). However, the interpretation of the שבת חמס in verse 3b differs among scholars. Some have interpreted it either as ‘the coming of the conquering king’ (Hammershaimb, 1970:99-100), or ‘the future invaders of Israel’ (Thorogood, 1971:69). Garrett and Wolff rightly see it as the oppression and injustice visited on the underprivileged by the elites (see Garrett, 2008:185; Wolff, 1977:275). Smith expresses this position succinctly that the statement ‘...cause the seat of violence to come near’ refers to ‘tribunals or thrones in which violence was in authority instead of justice’ that it expresses the fact that the leaders ‘condoned oppression in the midst of Israel’ (Smith, 2009:189). Thus the
seat of violence is in itself the injustice that the upper class perpetrates against their victims. A later redactor may look at it in terms of the Assyrian invasion that had happened by the time of the final redaction but on the surface, Amos was talking about the violence that the elite of Samaria brought upon the weak among them through oppression, extortion and other forms of injustice. This interpretation fall in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (NRSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>הָלָּ֖ו הַשָּֽאֲנַנִַּּ֣ים בְצִּי ָ֔ון וְהַבֶּטֶּ֖ים בְהַַ֣ר ש מְר ֶ֑ון</td>
<td>1 Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, the notables of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel resorts!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>סְבָּרָֽה קֵלָּה וֹרֵאָ֣ה וּלְכַּ֣וּ תַּבְּנַ֗יה וּבָ֥אוּ לָה ָ֖ם ב ֥ית יִּשְרָא ָֽל׃</td>
<td>2 Cross over to Calneh, and see; from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עִּבְרָ֤וּ כַָֽלְנ ה� וּרְאָ֔וּ וּלְכ֥וּ מִּשָָ֖ם חֲמַַ֣ת רַבֶָ֑ה וּרְדַ֣וּ גַת־פְלִּשְתִ֗ים</td>
<td>3 Or is your territory greater than their territory,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הָלָּ֖ו וּרְאָ֔וּ מִּכְּלָנ ה֙ וּרְאָ֔וּ מִּנ־הַמַמְלָכ</td>
<td>4 O you that put far away the evil day, and bring near a reign of violence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַשָּֽכְבִּים עַל־מִּט ַ֣ות שָג</td>
<td>5 Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מִּצ ָ֔אן וַעֲגָלִָּ֖ים מִּת ֥וךְ מַרְב ָֽק׃</td>
<td>6 who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַפְּרִטִָּ֖ם עַל־פִַּ֣י הַנֶָּ֑ב לִִּ֕יד חָשּוּ֖וּ לָה ָ֖ם כְל י־שִָּֽיר׃</td>
<td>7 who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לָכִ֛ן עַתָ֥ה יִּגְלָ֖ו בְר ַ֣אש ג לִֶּ֑ים וְסָָ֖ר מִּרְזַ֥ח סְרוּחִָּֽים׃</td>
<td>8 Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
line with the idea that whatever Amos will later describe as the ruins of Joseph (v. 6c) is the making of these same upper class.

The ease of life and false confidence of the upper class is expressed with two participles. These are הושעננים, meaning ‘those at ease, untroubled’ (BDB:893; Oswalt in NIDOTTE 4:10-11); at rest, peaceful, carefree, self-confidence (Thiel in DTOT XIV:265) and בטוחים, meaning ‘those who trust’ (BDB:105). Both words denote the false security of the upper class and the carefree life style of the prominent citizens of Israel (see Paul, 1991:200; Wolff, 1977:274).⁷⁷ Again, their extravagant lifestyle and excessive feasting are expressed in a picturesque description of the furniture, food, wine and entertainment. They sleep on expensive beds with ivory inlays and stretch on couches. They also sumptuously feast on tender beef and lamb, a sign of expensive consumption since ordinary people in the Israel of Amos’ days rarely ate meat (see Andersen and Freedman, 1989:562-63). In addition, they also drink wine from bowls (במזרק ותשתים), signifying large quantities. למך refers to a large bowl, associated mostly with rituals (see BDB:284; DCH IV:212; HALOT:283).⁷⁸ Only Amos uses it to refer to the container from which wine is consumed, instead of כוס (cup). Significantly, Amos highlights the large volumes of expensive wine the wealthy Israelites drink, exposing their overindulgence (see Paul, 1991:208; Wolff, 1977:276). Amos also finds the sound of their improvising music an indication of their careless self-confidence (see Wolff, 1977:276). In the midst of this feasting and excessive indulgence, comfort and personal pleasure-seeking, the elite remain totally oblivious and apathetic to the perilous situation of Israel (v. 6c). הנחלו, meaning ‘indifference’ or ‘apathy’, (see BDB:317)⁷⁹ is Amos’ language describing the attitude of the wealthy in Israel who are so consumed in opulence that they cannot bring themselves to be tired or sick of the afflictions of Israel. In the light of Proverbs 20.1; 21.17 and what Amos says about these rich elite, it seems they have been led astray and rendered unwise by their excessive drunkenness such that they cannot even see the dangers around them.

⁷⁷ In Isaiah 32.9, 11, both words describe women who are at ease ‘שאננות’, and daughters who are complacent ‘בטוחים’.
⁷⁸ In all the other 31 appearances in the Hebrew Bible, למך refers to sacred vessels used in sacrifices and offerings (see Exod. 27.3; 38.3; Num. 7.13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79, 84-85; 1 Kgs 7.40, 45, 50; 2 Kgs 12.13; 25.15; 1 Chr. 28.17; 2 Chr. 4.8; 4.11, 22; Neh. 7.70; Jer. 52.18-19; Zech. 9.15; 14:20).
⁷⁹ In Jeremiah12.13, הנחלו means ‘to make oneself sick’, ‘to be made sick’ or ‘to be tired’ (see DCH II:228).
Also in line with Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-39, the doom Amos pronounces on the extravagant elites predicts the misery and impoverishment they will suffer in exile.

From the text, it may seem that Amos’ concern is not so much with the feasting or its ‘illegality’ as it is with its ‘immorality’ (see Hayes, 1988:186). The point of Amos’ accusation, in the words of Hayes, is that ‘instead of being sickened to their stomachs over the breakup of Joseph, the members of the establishment were continuing their ordinary lifestyle as if normalcy prevailed’ (Hayes, 1988:187). However, a re-reading of verse 6c in the general context of all the injustice Amos complains about, may redirect our focus to the plight of the vulnerable in Samaria.

‘ש sqr יספככ (the ruin of Joseph) can be interpreted as original to Amos and/or as a later addition. If it is a later addition, then it may refer to the invasion of Assyria which had occurred by the time of the final composition of Amos and that the editor is reading into the text how unconcerned the elite were when Assyria subdued and plundered Israel for years. This tallies with Wolff’s position:

The ‘ruin of Joseph’ alludes to Israel’s condition which, between 738 and 733, became ever more precarious as the state came under the deepening shadow of vast Assyrian empire, till at the end of the period it had lost most of its territorial possessions. But all the while there remained those in the capital who, rather than ‘being ‘troubled’, (literally ‘become sick’) by the demise of Israel, persisted in seeking security in personal well-being and pleasure (Wolff, 1977:277).

In this instance, the personal well-being of the elite is being contrasted with the lack of same by the poor and needy in the wake of the Assyrian invasion and occupation. However, given the conditions of invasion and domination, one wonders whether the Israelite elite had the luxury to indulge themselves. Heuristically, it could either be that these elite were Assyrian imperialists themselves occupying Samaria, feasting and thus not caring about the plight of the nation Israel and its people, or the Israelite elite had aligned themselves with the Assyrian empire or co-operated with it in order to maintain their position and wealth. However, if it is original to Amos, then ‘ruins of Joseph’ could be an allusion to the suffering of Joseph, the son of Jacob in a pit while his brothers were feasting or even his entire suffering in Egypt which later will supply sustenance to his family. This position is shared by Smith who writes that Amos ‘shrewdly describes the nation as Joseph’ to remind Israel of the lad Joseph ‘…who wailed his heart out in a deep pit while his hardened brothers sat down to eat’ (see Gen. 37:23-25; 42:2; Smith, 2009:191). This will metaphorically means that
the elite do not care about the troubles that the ordinary people go through in the
country. They eat and drink while others are suffering right in their sight. Again, it
can also simply refer to the fact that the prophet foresees a coming disaster that to
him the happenings in Israel foreshadow but which the elite do not worry about.
Here, verse 3a comes in focus. The upper class has already pushed such a day of
disaster out of their minds and so they cannot bring themselves to be sick of the
conditions of those who will suffer its aftereffects. But it is this same opulent living
and lack of concern that will lead to the destruction of the nation. Paul shares a
similar notion that: ‘…this type of living, with its concomitant lack of care and
concern for the rest of the people, is the very beginning and cause of devastation and

In both cases, the text is concerned with the apathy and indifference of the
upper class towards an impending or already existing disaster as Birch writes that
these privileged folks are so busy feeding their aesthetic and bodily desires that they
‘are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. They do not care what is happening in
Israel’ (Birch, 1997:228). Though Amos does not mention the poor and needy here
as he does in other oracles, his general attitude towards the source of wealth of the
upper class and the manner in which they expend it indicates that he has the
vulnerable in society in mind when he speaks of the ruin of Joseph. Birch further
writes:

Elsewhere Amos has described social conditions in which the poor and weak are exploited,
the law courts are corrupted, illegal business practices abound, worship has grown
hypocritical, and justice is not honored. But these privileged folk have been insulated from
these realities by their capacity to buy material well-being. It is their apathy and indifference
that draws Amos’ indictment. They simply don’t care (Birch, 1997:228).

Amos’ concern for the state of Israel’s suffering masses is in focus here and that in
painting the upper class in a carefree extravagant and opulent image, he intends to
contrast it with the abject poverty that the poor and needy suffer. Reading verse 3b
and verse 6b in the light of each other; it is the violence and oppression, the injustice
the upper class presides over that is ruining Israel and its underprivileged population,
and that it is towards that same ruin that they are apathetic.

Thus it is possible to interpret Amos’ message as a protest against social
injustice. The feast Amos describes is on a scale that is beyond the means of the
ordinary people. The inverse relationship between the quality of lifestyle of the poor
and rich cannot be ignored. As the affluence of the rich increased the quality of life of the poor also decreased. Since the rich invested the limited resources in luxury, less of it were available for the suffering masses who will then struggle to procure the staples they survive on (see Premnath, 2003:139-40). Such extravagant opulence is unjust in the face of the poverty and lack which many in Samaria suffered at the time. Further, T. F. Carney has posited that in any society, ‘All good things – food, land, honour, and standing – are in fixed quantities and short supply’ and that ‘Where one person receives an undue amount of any of these commodities, he or she is deemed to have gained it at the cost of his neighbours and so is subject to suspicion’ (Carney, 1975:198). To Domeris, Carney’s position defines that thinking that informed the prophets to criticise the powerful people who continuously acquired riches and luxury at the expense of the powerless (see Domeris, 2007:91).

T. Mann describes this in the language of ‘zero-sum gain’. To him, the more resources and/or power one acquires, the fewer is available for others to acquire. Citing Isaiah 5:8 Mann continues that, ‘If one person is seen to be excessively “blessed” in [power, honour, good harvest and nice homes], the community might become concerned that there is a corresponding withdrawal from other members of the community of these things’ (Mann, 1986:66). Those Amos accuses are among the oppressors whose mark is power and prestige. ‘They do not struggle for their existence, but live comfortably and at ease, safe from the daily grind of hard labour and fear of starvation’ (Domeris, 2007:99). Hunger and thirst are not real to them and they have no understanding of the violence of oppression. With the detailed description of the eating habit of the rich and ruling elite, Amos effectively ‘draws attention to the deep gulf that exists between rich and poor at the most basic of levels, diet’. With his description of their luxury and absence of concern ‘Amos uses the comfort of the ruling elites as foil for implicit discomfort of the peasant poor, as once again the practice of balance reciprocity is seen to have broken down’ (Domeris, 2007:99). Thus Amos’ message may mean that by acquiring these commodities in excess, the elites have deprived the poor and needy of access to the limited supply available. That they acquired them through extortion, exploitation and oppression worsens their guilt.

Again, Amos accuses the upper class of acquiring their wealth through extortion, exploitation, oppression, bribery, corruption, land seizure and unjust trade (see discussions on Amos. 2:6-8; 3:9-10; 4:1; 5:7, 10-12; 6:12; 8:4-6). In the general
context of these acts of social injustice Amos condemns, the source of funding for this lofty live style is the surpluses of the lower class, most of whom wallow in abject poverty. Furthermore, Premnath suggests that the ruin of Joseph which the upper class do not grieve about, ‘draws attention to the plight of the suffering majority’. This is useful especially as Amos’ attempt to contrast ‘the luxury of the few with the oppression and suffering of the many’ (Premnath, 2003:141). McLaughlin affirms that Amos’ opposition to the failure to grieve over the ruin of Joseph indicates that what is occupying their attention ‘results from injustice’ (McLaughlin, 2014:297). Significantly therefore, as the upper class exhibits apathy towards the ruin of Joseph, so do they exhibit total insensibility towards the glaring devastation of the lives of their many victims from whom they have extorted resources to finance their extravagant opulence. This is the injustice Amos protests against.

**Fig. 11 Apathy Towards the Devastation of the Poor and Needy**

Fig. 11 demonstrates the interaction between YHWH and the community in protecting the vulnerable against injustice. As the initiator of social justice, YHWH expects the state officials and the wealthy individuals to partner him in protecting the poor and needy against danger and destruction. However, these same people look on with oblivion as the community faces imminent danger. They are engrossed in their affluence and luxury with very expensive feasting. Though Amos does not mention the poor and the needy, it is obvious that the resources used in acquiring these luxuries and financing this opulence have come from exploitation of these poor and
needy, who have been exposed to the impending ruin. YHWH as the protector of the prey will send the predators into exile and bring their opulent living to an end.

4.7 Unjust Trade (Amos 8:4-6)

Table 7 presents Amos 8:4-6, which is an introduction to two poems that conclude the book of Amos (8:4-12; 9:1b-15). The offences described are the basis of the judgement in Amos 8:7-9:6 (Garrett, 2008:232; Hayes, 1988:208). Amos accuses his addressees of various oppressions that are of commercial nature. They:

4aβ trample on the needy
4b put an end to the afflicted of the land
They are impatient for the Sabbath and New Moon holidays to end because they want to get back to their trading where they can:

5aβ sell grain
5αγ sell wheat
5bα manipulate the measures
5bβ cheat with deceitful balances
6a buy the poor for silver
6b buy the needy for a pair of sandals
6c sell unwholesome wheat

Verse 4 connects perfectly with verse 6a&b, indicating that the elite’s fraudulent merchandise (v. 5bα&β and v. 6c) is oppressive and destructive to the poor and afflicted of the land. Focusing on the negative effects of unjust market conditions on the suffering masses, Amos significantly uses three of the terminology for the oppressed: ‘needy’ (v. 4αβ & 6c) ‘afflicted of the land’ (v. 4b) and ‘poor’ (v. 6a).
### Table 5 Amos 8:4-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (NRSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>שִּמְעוּ־ז ִ֕את הַש אֲפִָ֖ים א בְי ֶ֑ון וְלַשְבִָּ֖ית עַנְו י אָָֽר ץ׃ 4</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> Hear this, you that trample on the needy,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לַאֵלַח אֵלֶּ֨יוּ תָּהַקְתַּ֣ה עַל־הַשְּבָּ֔ית עַל־הַשְּבָּ֔ית וְנַשְּבִּ֖רָה שָׁבָֽרָֽו זֶֽר׃ 5</td>
<td>*and bring to ruin the poor of the land,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לְהַק טִָּ֤ין א יפָה֙ וּלְהַגְדִּ֣יל ש ָ֔ק ל וּלְעַוּ ָ֖ת מ אזְנ ֥י מִּרְמָָֽה׃ 6</td>
<td><strong>5</strong> saying, ‘When will the new moon be over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לִּקְנ ָ֤ות בַכ ֶּ֨ס ף֙ דַלִָּ֔ים וְא בְי ָ֖ון בַעֲבַ֣וּר נַעֲלֶָ֑יִּם וּמַפַ֥ל בַָ֖ר נַשְבִָּֽיר׃</td>
<td>*so that we may sell grain;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Hear this, you that trample on the needy,</td>
<td><strong>5</strong> saying, ‘When will the new moon be over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and bring to ruin the poor of the land,</td>
<td>*so that we may sell grain;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 saying, ‘When will the new moon be over</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> saying, ‘When will the new moon be over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so that we may offer wheat for sale?</td>
<td>*so that we may offer wheat for sale?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> buying the poor for silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and practise deceit with false balances,</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> buying the poor for silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals,</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> buying the poor for silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and selling the sweepings of the wheat.’</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> buying the poor for silver</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In the first instance, the needy and afflicted of the land are victims of oppression and destruction (v. 4aβ) and in the second instance, the poor and needy are victims of cheap labour (v. 6a&b) either because they desperately sell themselves cheaply or they receive poor remuneration for the use of their labour. The issues discussed in 8: 4-6 bear semblance with 2:6b-7a and 4:1a but 8:4-6 is elaborate and specific on charge of greed and corruption used by the trading elite to exploit the vulnerable (see Hayes 1988:208). It is this greed and these corrupt trade practices that constitute social injustice.

The malicious business intentions of the trading elite are betrayed by their desire to sell the refuse (מַפַּל), which has fallen to the ground and been trampled on and thus contaminated heavily with dirt and chaff, together with the grain (שָׁבָר) and wheat (בר). Stuart’s contention that בר and שבר together represent foodstuffs that
people in the urban centres will pay almost any price for (Stuart, 1987:384), suggests that the buyers were at the mercy of the traders who took advantage of high demand to cheat. Their profiteering motives were evident in the use of small ephah, big shekel and deceitfully falsifying the balances. Probably, the traders either filled the ephah with wax or changed its shape to reduce the amount of grain (Coote, 1981:33; Wolff, 1977:327). As a result the buyers received less grain than they pay for. השקל (shekel), is the measure for the medium of payment, silver. The traders adjusted it such that the buyers had to put in more silver than the actual price of the grain. They also over-weighted the measuring bowl of the balance and bent its cross beam out of shape, in order to cheat (Coote, 1981:33; Wolff, 1977:327). Consequently, they sold less grain for a higher amount of silver. In the light of the themes discussed above, the multiple cheating denounced by Amos was worsened by the fact that they bought the grain cheaply by extortion, oppression and over taxation and sold them dearly by corrupt measures. Amos’ condemnation of the unjust trade is at home with the numerous condemnations of such practices in the Hebrew Bible (see Lev. 19:35-36, Deut. 25:13-15, Ezek. 45:9-12 and Prov. 11:1; 20:23).

The buying of the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals constitute grave injustice. In 2:6α&β, the elite are accused of selling the innocent for silver and the needy for the price of a pair of sandals. In 8:6α&b, they are condemned for buying the poor and the needy at the cheapest price possible. It does not make business sense for these same merchants to buy slaves cheaply and sell them cheaply at the same time. Instead, while 2:6α&β emphasise the indignity that the poor and needy suffered, 8:6α&b shows that they either sold themselves to these merchants, who will then buy them cheaply due to their desperate need or that their labour was used and they received unfair prices and treatment for it. Thus the people accused here used fraudulent means to acquire the poor and the needy either as their debt slaves or as source of cheap labour with which they produced the commodities they sold so dearly and deceitfully. That the market which Amos describes was full of abuse and corrupt practices is unequivocally clear. For him, this commercial corruption and deceit cost the poor and needy dearly. Its possible consequence of leading the impoverished into indebtedness and debt slavery, was the social injustice that Amos protests.
Fig. 12 Unjust Trade

Fig. 12 depicts the dynamics of the injustices that Amos condemns in the text discussed in this section. YHWH has initiated social justice for Israel, as a partnership between him and the ruling class and other individuals, here the traders. This should ensure that the poor, needy and afflicted of the land are protected against oppression, cheap labour and commercial fraud. The state officials with responsibility for selling grain and the other traders have conspired to oppress these victims with fraudulent market manipulations and by paying them less for their labour. YHWH will descend to protect these victims from their predators with stiff punishments.

4.8 Amos on Ecological and Justice

Though the prophet Amos does not directly condemn his audience for damaging the environment or misusing the natural resources available to them, he exhibits an awareness of the environment. The text is full of language and images that draws the reader’s attention to the role of the natural world in the religious, political and economic life of the community. For instance, through Amos’ use of הקרקע (land/soil) the text acquire a land/soil characteristics. Again, his use of the creation hymns and
other metaphorical reference to the earth, animals, plants, water bodies and other non-human creation draws the reader’s attention to the ecology.

In Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible, Ellen F. Davis approaches the Bible as an agrarian text, speaking from the point of view of the land and thus addressing issues that concerns it. Arguing that humans are connected to the land, Davis challenges her readers to care for the land because they hold it in trust for the next generation. In chapter seven, ‘Running on Poetry: The Agrarian Prophets’ Davis uses the ‘soil centred character’ of the prophecy of Amos (Davis, 2009:129-30) and the connection between sexuality, food, worship, economics, and politics in the prophecy of Hosea (Davis, 2009:135-38) to invite readers to appreciate the ecological theology that these prophets advocate amidst the social change in the eighth century BCE context. Amos and Hosea, as Davis demonstrates, were concerned about the need for appropriate land use as an essential part of the issues of social justice in their time. In agreement with Klaus Koch (see Koch 1982:74-75), Ellen Davis sees Amos’ prophecy as one that is ‘to a remarkable degree oriented to the fertile soil’ and thus translates שָדָם, which occurs ten times in Amos,80 as ‘arable land’ or ‘soil’ (Davis, 2009:127). As is accustomed with him, Amos reverses a traditional symbol that the establishment in Israel adduced to support their claim as YHWH’s people: ‘Only you have I known from all the families of the ‘אדמים; therefore I shall visit upon you all your iniquities’ (Amos 3:2, see Davis, 2009:127).81 In his confrontation with Amaziah, Amos demolished Amaziah’s ‘false understanding of both land and religion’ by emphasising how false allegiance to YHWH will result in total loss of Israel’s land (Davis, 2009:127).

…Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land. …Therefore, thus says the LORD: Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parcelled out by line;

80Amos 3:2, 5; 5:2; 7:11, 17 (3x); 9:8, 15 (2x). This frequent occurrence of adama in Amos, Davis note, constitutes ‘…the greatest density of its appearance (in proportion to the total number of word) in any book of the Bible (Davis, 2009:209 n. 29).
81All the families of the שָדָם alludes to God’s promise to bless the earth through Abraham and his descendants (Gen.12:3; 28:14), the only other appearance of the expression in the Hebrew Bible.
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,  
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land (Amos 7:11, 17).

Ellen Davis comments that ‘Amos’ persistent reference to the soil [4 times above] gives precision to his condemnation of Israel’s political and religious system…his words expose the ideology and inner workings of a complex social system that alienated ordinary Israelites from their inherited land’ (Davis, 2009:127).

In addition, the text of Amos draws on various imageries from nature to invite the reader to reflect on the environment. As the book of Amos begins, we hear the voice of YHWH roaring from Zion and uttering his voice from Jerusalem. The effect of this on nature is picturesquely devastating: ‘the pastures of the shepherds wither, and the top of Carmel dries up’ (Amos 1:2). The importance of this imagery, according to Hilary Marlow, is that ‘From the outset the book is setting up a three-way connection between the voice of YHWH, the response of the earth and the fate of human beings’ (Marlow, 2009:136). Similarly, YHWH is presented by Amos as a God who summons his creation to act in judgement against the people. He calls the waters of the sea (Amos 5:8; 9:6), which obey the voice of YHWH (in contrast to the disobedience of the people), and fire, which devours both the great deep and the terrain (Amos 7:4). In both cases, Amos uses nature to demonstrate the power of YHWH over the universe and thus over human beings (see Marlow, 2009:136-37). In his apology for his prophetic call and ministry, Amos poses rhetorical questions, using observable imageries. Here, the lion roaring in a forest, a young lion crying from its den and a bird falling into a snare (Amos 3:4-5), among others, are used to elicit a negative answer to draw the conclusion that Amos is prophesying only because YHWH has spoken (Amos 3:8). Also, Israel’s escape from an enemy attack will be as narrow as how a shepherd snatches only parts of the sheep from the jaws of a lion (Amos 3:12, see Marlow, 2009:126). The day of the Lord, which Israel expects to be a day of deliverance, Amos say will be as dangerous as the dangers posed by lions, bears, and snakes in the natural world (Amos 5:19 see Marlow, 2009:126). David Jobling and Nathan Loewen see Amos’ application of the metaphors of these dangerous animals as demonstrating Amos’ ‘ecology of danger’, which makes nature ‘…an unpredictable source of peril for humanity’. By so doing, Amos shows his knowledge of ‘…the power of the environment to strike fear into humans’. This contrasts the ““Edenic” ecology’ of plenty seen in Amos 9:13-15,
where ‘…the natural world can endlessly and effortlessly supply all human needs and wants’ (Jobling and Loewen, 2000:81).

Further, Amos uses the unnaturalness of horses running on rocks and a farmer ploughing [rocks] with oxen to provoke a negative answer which then proves to the people how absurd it is to turn social justice poisonous and bitter (Amos 6:12). Again, three of Amos’ visions are based on images from nature. First, Amos saw YHWH ‘…forming locusts at the time the latter growth began to sprout…’ (Amos 7:1). Secondly, Amos saw YHWH calling for fire, which devoured the great deep and then the terrain (Amos 7:4). Finally, Amos saw a basket of summer-fruit, which YHWH interpreted to him as the end coming upon Israel (Amos 8:1-2). Here Amos plays on קֶם (summer/summer-fruit) and קֶץ (the end/reaping time) to drive home the message that YHWH is determined to punish Israel. Amos also presents imageries to demonstrate how the non-human creation cooperates with YHWH (see Marlow, 2009:137-39). In his final vision, Amos sees YHWH commanding a striking of the capitals of the altar and to shake its thresholds. The aim is to shatter them on all the people, to destroy them and to kill the survivors with the sword. However, if some of the people manage to escape, wherever they go, Sheol, heaven and Carmel, will not be able to hide them as YHWH will reach out to them there. Even in the bottom of the sea, YHWH will command a sea-serpent to bite them and in exile, YHWH will command the sword to devour them (Amos 9:1-4). Apart from the sea-serpent who will act in obedience to YHWH’s command to bite the people and the sword which will obey YHWH’s command to kill them in exile, the rest of the imagery demonstrates how YHWH can reach beyond the hidden places in the non-human world.

Another means by which Amos touches on ecological justice is the creation hymns (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6). These hymns are placed strategically, to show YHWH’s power over his creation, his ability to control creation and also how YHWH’s creation responds to him in obedience. The first two are placed in the context where the prophet denounces social injustice and other undesirable conducts of the people (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9). The third concludes the final vision of Amos in which YHWH condemns Israel and pronounces his punishment for injustice (Amos 9:5-6). In these hymns, Amos emphasises YHWH’s ‘cosmic power’ in his act of creation (see Marlow, 2009:140). YHWH is described as ‘…the one who forms the mountains [and] creates the wind…’ (Amos 4:13aα) and as ‘The one who made the
Pleiades and Orion’ (Amos 5:8aa). Again, Amos proclaims that God can reverse the functions of the non-human creation. For instance, he ‘makes the morning darkness’ (Amos 4:13ay). He also ‘…turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night’ (Amos 5:6aβ/γ). Furthermore, the creation hymns reveals the impact of YHWH’s action on the earth and the sea. YHWH ‘…treads on the heights of the earth’ (Amos 4:13aδ). He ‘…calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth…’ (Amos 4:13ba, repeated in 9:6ba). His power over land and water is so immense that when he touches the earth, it melts (Amos 9:6aβ), ‘all who live in it mourn…’ (Amos 9:5aγ), causing the earth to rise and sink like the Nile (Amos 5:8ba/β). It seems clear that the purpose of the hymns is to introduce YHWH to the people who might be silently asking the question ‘who is this God?’ (Amos 4:13b; 5:8bβ; 9: 5aa, 6bβ). To Jobling and Loewen, the creation hymns represent Amos’ ‘ecology of contemplation’ in which the world is seen as ‘an object of rapt contemplation, a sphere of mystery’ (Jobling and Loewen, 2000:81). Hilary Marlow write: ‘…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. It is to this reality that the cosmos testifies’ (Marlow, 2009:146).

Amos might have not directly condemned the people of Israel for environmental injustice neither did he exhort them to pay attention to and preserve their ecology. However, his integration of imagery from the non-human creation and his demonstration of YHWH’s creative powers and control over nature, together with nature’s response to YHWH and its impact on humanity, send a clear message that the social injustice he denounced had negative effects on the ecology.

4.9 Amos on Gender Abuse and Insensitivity

In spite of other views to the contrary, Amos is not oblivious of the gender abuse and insensitivities of his time. When Amos sees women who oppress the poor and needy, such as the ‘cows of Bashan,’ he condemns them (Amos 4:1). Similarly, when Amos sees oppression against women such as the atrocities against pregnant women in Gilead (Amos 1:13-15) and a man and his father having sex with a girl (Amos 2:7c), he denounces such acts of injustice.
It has been asserted that Amos says too little about women, concentrates on condemning the few women who oppress the poor and needy and neglects the many oppressions that women suffer (Ngan, 2002:446). Two main issues in Amos have been cited to support this assertion. First, Amos condemns Amaziah’s wife to prostitution not for her own misdeeds but because Amaziah had tangled with him. To Sanderson, this shows that as long as it proves a fair punishment for Amaziah’s attack on him, Amos does not consider the effect of this punishment on Amaziah’s wife (Sanderson, 1998:220). Secondly, Amos singles out the few upper class women of Samaria (cows of Bashan) and condemns the oppressive effects of their extravagant demands from their husbands on the poor and needy (see Amos 4:1). In the context of modern advocacy for the protection of women’s rights, Judith Sanderson and L. L. Ngan may be genuine in their analysis of Amos’ concern for the plight of women. However, given his predominantly male audience, Amos’ sporadic reference to women is expected. Again, in the context of Amos’ eighth century Israel that did not have rights for women, Amos’ commitment to speaking on gender issues that caught his eyes, albeit limited, deserves commendation.

Amos first turns his attention on vulnerable women when he pronounces YHWH’s judgement on the Ammonites for ripping open pregnant women in Gilead in order to expand their territory (Amos 1:13). Judith Sanderson points out that this shows the compassion and concern of Amos for the pregnant women of Gilead who suffered Ammonite atrocities during war (Sanderson, 1992:205-07). Given the biblical evidence that ripping up pregnant women occurs in 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16 and Hosea 13:16, (see Ngan, 2002:448; VanDrunen, 2014:172), Ngan strongly cautions that ‘this horrific act of violence’ should not be explained away as ‘poetic exaggeration’ (Ngan, 2002:448). The texts Ngan cites as evidence could be war propaganda but if they were historical, then her contention rather proves that when Amos pronounces YHWH’s judgement on the Ammonites, he protests real acts of injustice against vulnerable women. Furthermore, Amos’ protest against insensitivity towards the female gender shows up strongly when he condemns a man and his father who have sex with the girl. Whether the girl is a servant, a concubine or the

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82 Hazael was going to rip open pregnant Israeliite women (2 Kgs 8:12); when Menahem was angry against Tiphshah, he ripped open their pregnant women (2 Kgs 15:16) Samaria is punished for rebelling against her God includes ripping open of their pregnant women (Hos. 14:1). An Assyrian poem praises Tiglath-pileser I for his military victory which specifically includes ripping open pregnant women (see Ngan, 2002:448).
wife of one of them, or even a prostitute, is difficult to pinpoint. The text however leaves no doubt that this girl is vulnerable to the man and his father and that these men are taking advantage of her vulnerability.

Given the widely attested vulnerability of women in the Hebrew Bible, the above discussions demonstrate that Amos’ concerns about the suffering of women is an example of his advocacy on behalf of such voiceless vulnerable people in society. The recognition of the ordeal that the girl goes through and the denunciation of the inhuman treatment of pregnant women in war indicates Amos’ sensitivity to and utter condemnation of the suffering of vulnerable women. This in no doubt casts Amos in the light of a prophet sensitive to the plight of women in an environment that had little or no room for the protection of women’s rights.

4.10 Amos’ Positive Call for Social Justice (Amos 5: 24)

The climax of Amos’ prophecy is his emphatic call for social justice. This is expressed in ויגל כמים משפט וצדקה כנחל איתן (….let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream).83 As discussed earlier מנהק וצדקה is properly translated with the modern term ‘social justice’. It is a call on the ruling class and individuals to provide support for the vulnerable in society by being fair and supportive of their cause. As a champion of social justice and a radical advocate for a new understanding of social justice, Amos’ call for justice and righteousness is a call for change of direction from the status quo of maintaining the hierarchy in society, to a new era where the wellbeing of the vulnerable in society is paramount. מנהק וצדקה is an appointed task of the people of Israel as individuals and as a nation (Coote, 1981:218-20). In both Israel and the ANE, individuals were expected to pursue justice and righteousness by helping the poor and the needy. Amos might have not mentioned מנהק וצדקה in every passage where he condemns injustice. However, his condemnation of Israel for turning justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, combined with his call for מנהק to be established at the gate and his attack on injustice, enhance the effectiveness of his call for מנהק as paramount to his message.

83 See table 6 for the text discussed in the section.
In his article: ‘Dangerous Waters of Justice and Righteousness: Amos 5:18—27’, Berquist argues that ‘The justice and righteousness of Amos 5:24 do not refer to the human activities that God prefers, but to God’s own activity to purge the community of its failings in order to provide justice and righteousness for all people’ (Berquist, 1993:54). He acknowledges that interpretations of ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24 have changed from the punitive divine action (see Blenkinsopp, 1996:96; von Rad, 1965:132) to a positive ethical behaviour restorable by human beings (Harper, 1986:136; Hyatt, 1956a:24; Mays, 1969:108). In a four point argument, Berquist contests that contrary to these interpretations, ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24 is rather the non-punitive but restorative action of YHWH (Berquist, 1993:54-56).

Berquist begins by restricting the syntax of בויגל, beginning 5:24, to niphal imperfect of בויגל (justice will roll down). This means that YHWH is not asking human beings to do justice but announcing that he will cause his own justice to roll down (Berquist, 1993:56). Since both jussive and imperfect could fit in the context (imperfect with jussive force, see Garrett, 2008:172; Wolff, 1977:264), a stronger
conclusion is that Amos has used language skilfully to communicate the divine and human performance of ‘justice and righteousness’. Paul accurately draws attention to the play on word between ויגל (I will cause to remove), in 5:27, hiphil of גל (to remove) that if Israel will not let ‘justice and righteousness’ roll, then YHWH will ‘roll’ Israel out into exile (Paul, 1991:192 n.48).

Again, Berquist argues that biblically, water generally represents a destructive force of action, not a flow of blessing, comfort or healing (against Hyatt, 1956b:23; Koch, 1983:58; McKeating, 1971:46-47), not constancy and dependability (against Andersen and Freedman, 1989:528; Cripps, 1955:198; Huffman, 1983:112; Wolff, 1977:259) and not volume (against Hayes and Irvine, 1987:174). This has been challenged by Linville, who argues that the Bible presents primordial waters not simply as the agent of destruction or chaotic upheaval, but also life-giving agent of cosmic order (Linville, 2008:117). Closely linked to the above is Berquist’s argument that גל (to roll down), which appears only in the niphal in Isaiah 34:4 and Amos 5:24, should have negative connotations (Berquist, 1993:57). However, only two occurrences are not enough to support such an absolute conclusion. Though he agrees that תנחל in the context of general water imagery in eighth century prophetic literature could have other possible interpretations, he nevertheless concludes that ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24 ‘act in dangerous, possibly destructive ways’ (Berquist, 1993:57). This ambiguity calls for a tentative but not absolute position.

Furthermore, Berquist contends that if Amos 5:18-27 is seen as one unit, the focus will be what YHWH does to the people but not his preference for any things they do (Berquist, 1993:58). This is not wholly true. Amos 5:18-27 as a unit could also refer to possible remedy that YHWH requires of the people.

Finally, Berquist suggests that the general context of ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos and the Hebrew Bible reflects the non-punitive destructive actions of YHWH. Contrary, the people are condemned for either degrading the quality of ‘justice and righteousness’ (Amos 5:7) or for destroying it (Amos 6:12). Also in Amos 5:15, they are commanded to establish justice in the gate.

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Again, this simply indicates an active human involvement in performing ‘justice and righteousness’. If human beings can degrade or destroy ‘justice and righteousness’, or play any role in allowing it to happen, then ‘justice and righteousness’ cannot be said at any point, to be the sole action of YHWH. Escobar rightly challenges Berquist on the basis of Isaiah 45:8, that ‘justice and righteousness’ in Amos 5:24 indicates that ‘God-sent justice’ produces earthly justice (Escobar, 1995:171). ‘Justice and righteousness’, as discussed in chapter 3, is the nature of YHWH, but is also demanded of human beings. There is no need, therefore, to restrict it to a sole divine action. In the prophecy of Amos and in the Hebrew Bible in general, ‘Justice and righteousness’ means social justice which YHWH decrees and expects people in authority and in command of resources to establish.

In ‘The Song of the Vineyard’ (Isa 5:1-7), Isaiah sang of a landlord who planted a vineyard and gave it all the care it needed to produce fruits. Unfortunately, the vineyard yielded wild grapes. The owner thus decided to tear down the vineyard. Isaiah concluded that the vineyard was Israel and Judah, among whom YHWH looked for justice (משפט) but found bloodshed (משפח) and for righteousness (צדקה) but found the cry of distress (צעקה). The play on words here is very significant. One could easily mistake המשפט for המשפט and the imperfect 3ms of קה (to ‘wait’, ‘look for’, ‘hope’ or ‘expect’), YHWH literally looked for justice and righteousness among Israel and Judah. If justice and righteousness could not be exhibited by human beings, YHWH would not look for it among human beings. Isaiah understood that ‘justice and righteousness’ was a human quality that YHWH desires. Its presence in Amos 5:24, therefore is an expression of social justice. As YHWH discerned the deception of Israel and Judah by rejecting their分流 and faulting YHWH and demanding分流, so has he condemns Israel for lip service that is not backed by justice and righteousness.

84 Berquist’s contention that is a rare word for ‘establish’ in biblical Hebrew and thus should be translated properly as ‘set aside’, meaning humans do not perform justice but they allow it (Berquist, 1993:60), rather faults his proposition. is in the hiphil and must be interpreted as an active human action causing justice to happen in the gate (BDB:426; HALOT:274).
4.11 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to explore the main issues of social justice in the prophecy of Amos. חסד וצדק, which has been interpreted here as ‘social justice’ is not mentioned in all the selected passages. Notwithstanding, Amos’ protest against the injustice visited on the disadvantaged clearly shows that throughout these passages, Amos’ focus is on social justice. He advocates freeing the oppressed from extortion and unjust treatment and this calls for a system that will give the vulnerable an opportunity to escape perpetual dependency. The chapter drew on other biblical and ANE parallels in discussing the themes. This has confirmed that the social justice issues Amos raised were real concerns of the period before, during and after his ministry. Amos’ choice of words and themes clearly set him out as an advocate for social justice. This places Amos among those in Israel and the ANE who rejected the definition of social justice as maintaining the status quo but who rather called for a system where the poor and needy are shown kindness and fairness.
Chapter 5
Ghanaian Reading of Social Justice Themes in the Prophecy of Amos

5.0 Introduction

In chapter 4, the study explored social concerns raised in the book of Amos. This chapter examines how translations of the Bible in selected Ghanaian languages present those themes of social justice in Amos, assessing the translators’ language choices and how they contribute to the readers’ perception of those issues as social justice. Before this examination, section 5.1 explains the reason for the choice of the three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible and presents a brief history and overview of methods of biblical translation in Ghana.

5.1 Choice of Ghanaian Language Bibles

The Ghanaian languages selected for the study are: Gã (BSG 1908/2006), Akan [represented by the Akuapem Twi (BSG 1964/2012) and the Mfantse (BSG 1948)] and Ewe (BSG 1930/2010). These three languages, together are spoken by more than 85% of the Ghanaian population. Akan is one of the majority ethnic groups in Ghana. The diverse, but mutually intelligible dialects of Akan include Mfantse, Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi and Akyem. Among these, the Mfantse differs to some extent, in sounds and spelling. Even though the world view and thought patterns of all Akans are similar, attempts at producing a unified translation for all Akans have not succeeded. For effective analysis of the Akan presentation, the Mfantse and Akuapem Twi translations have been selected. Where it serves the purpose, either Mfantse or Twi is quoted as Akan. When the difference is significant, each is quoted separately.

In 1744 Jacobus Capitein’s Mfantse translation of The Lord’s Prayer was published. This was the first ever Ghanaian translation of a biblical text (Ekem, 2011:9-11; Kpobi, 1993:148). However, the first full Bible translation to be published in Ghana was the Gã in 1866 (Ekem, 2011:39; Schaaf, 2002:89). The first complete Akuapem Twi, Ewe and Mfantse Bibles were published in 1871, 1913 and 1948 respectively (Ekem, 2011:56, 100, 137-40; Schaaf, 2002:89). The three
different local Ghanaian Bible translations, Gâ, Akan and Ewe, have been selected for comparative purposes to give a bigger picture of the universal hermeneutical perspective of the Ghanaian translators on Amos’ social concerns. It unveils how the different translations use cultural categories to communicate the original intentions of the biblical authors before applying the text to the day-to-day lives of the people using such translations (see Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2012b:8; Laryea, 2001:31).

Though Bible translation in Africa is traced to 260 BC, when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Greek Septuagint (Ekem, 2011:1; Schaaf, 2002:3), Bible translation in Ghanaian languages only begun during the 18th century Christian missionary era. As the missionary work grew, the need for local translations of the Bible increased. The whole Bible was thus translated into local languages, from the original tongue and with collaboration between the missionaries and Ghanaians (Ekem, 2011:25-48, 55-78, 82-98, 145; Schaaf, 2002:70, 105-06, 154). Through the work of the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG) and the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), the Ghanaian language Bible translations have been reviewed, over the years, to ensure that they conform as close as possible to the original Hebrew and Greek and to acceptable standards of the languages into which the translations were made (Ekem, 2011:110-13; Schaaf 2002). The BSG, established on 18th September 1965 as a result of the pioneering work of Rev’d Prof. Baeta, Mr. A. L. Quansah and Mr. E. S. Aidoo in the 1950’s and early 1960’s, became fully operational in 1966 and a full member of the United Bible Societies in 1968. In July 1980, GILLBT took over the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), begun by Dr. John Bendor-Samuel. He had partnered the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, developing written languages in Northern Ghana. His first publication was the New Testament in Kusaal. The arrival of SIL in Ghana, had been at the invitation of John Agamah who became aware of the work of the Wycliffe Bible Translators in the early 1960’s while studying in the United Kingdom.

Biblical translation in Ghana has relied on both ‘formal equivalent’ and ‘functional/dynamic equivalent’ methods for effective results. ‘Formal equivalent’ translates ‘word for word’ from the original language into the receptor language,

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85 See also www.worldscriptures.org, accessed 5th April 2013.
86 www.biblesocietyghana.org/sites/default/files/History%20of%20Bible%20Work%20in%20Ghana.pdf
87 See www.gillbt.org/about-us/history/
without recourse to sentence structure or other dynamics of the receptor language (Nida, 1964; Nida, 1969:210; Nida and Taber, 2003:210). In ‘functional/dynamic equivalent’, the translation is done with both meaning and style of both languages taken into account (Comfort, 2000:104). Among the principles outlined to guide the Review and Consultative Committee that revised the Mfantse Bible in 1966 was a preference for ‘...a dynamic equivalent translation rather than a formal equivalent translation’ (Ekem, 2011:108). It is also reported that despite being aware of ‘word for word translation’ and ‘free translation’, Jakob Spieth and Ludwig Adzaklo chose to translate the Bible from the original tongue into Ewe, ‘...according to the thought patterns of the Ewes...’ This, Ekem confirms, is similar to ‘dynamic/functional equivalent’ method of Bible translation (Ekem, 2011:133). This was probably the best solution to the challenges that the European missionaries and their African partners faced in their efforts to repackage the biblical concepts in appropriate African thought categories. As Ekem reports, though the Ewe translators had the choice of ‘borrowing words from the language of the European missionaries’, they chose to find ‘...appropriate local African terms through the process of re-interpretation and re-semanticization’ (see Ekem, 2005:61-64, 120-21; 2011:52-53) to produce an acceptable translation for Ghanaians. It is worth mentioning that where it served their purposes best, the translators also employed ‘word for word translations’ especially when the thoughts being communicated were not different. Compared to the new Ewe and Gã translations, I personally find the Mfantse translation most Hebraised. My suspicion was confirmed by Professor Gilbert Ansre.\(^8\) Notwithstanding, the combination of both methods in the selected translations cannot be doubted (see Comfort, 2000:103; Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2012b:20). Thus the selected Ghanaian Bible translations can potentially communicate the original intent of Amos within the structure and style of the languages and in conformity with the culture behind both the original language and the receptor languages.

The question of cultural and historical gaps has been raised whenever biblical text is applied to the African and any other foreign context. Interestingly, as Ekem points out, the pluralistic religious environment within which the Bible was

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compiled, provides ‘…an important hermeneutical point of departure for African biblical exegetes and translators…[to] operate within a dynamic, religiously plural context’ (Ekem, 2003:31). K. A. Dickson proposed to the church in Africa to relate the Bible to its own peculiar circumstances, mindful of the wider context of the Bible and the fruitful interaction with its other user communities (Dickson, 1991:145-46; see Ekem, 2003:31; Kuwornu-Adjaotor, 2012a:576; Mulrain, 1999:117-121; Tate 2008:228). This chapter evaluates how the Ghanaian translators used their own religious and cultural pluralistic context and the wider context of the Bible, to communicate the social justice themes in Amos. Kuwornu-Adjaottor has followed Ekem in demonstrating the ever increasing importance of ‘mother-tongue’ Bibles as effective resources for African biblical studies (see Ekem, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2007; Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2011a; 2010a; 2010b; 2011b; 2012a). In a study, he discovered that more than 50% of Ghanaian Christians possess and read the Bible in their mother-tongue translations (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2012b:1). James Barr contends that biblical translation is born out of the reverence that the translating community already had for the original text and their desire to identify themselves with and be part of the story of the Bible (see Barr, 1961:266). In Ghanaian Christianity and possibly elsewhere, the story of the Bible, read in the local language, in turn shapes the theological identity of the community. This is evident in the overwhelming reliance on the local translations of the Bible, seen above. It is important for this study, therefore, to examine how the Ghanaian translations reflect their understanding of the intention of the text and how it could influence the social justice orientation of the readers. Furthermore, F. Golka’s work on Biblical and African Wisdom (Golka 2004), sets a general frame-work for drawing on some Ghanaian proverbs, where necessary, to illustrate the message of Amos.

5.2 Social Justice Themes in Amos in Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Biblical Translations

The rest of the chapter discusses how the three Ghanaian mother-tongue Bible translations selected, present the social justice themes in the text. A table showing the selected text from the book of Amos in Hebrew (BHS) and the three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations can be found as an appendix to this work.
5.2.1 Lack of Human Dignity in the Treatment of the Poor (Amos 2:6-7)

Amos’ condemnation of the lack of human dignity evident in how the rich and affluent mistreated the righteous, the poor and the needy is expressed in 2:6-7. The translation of צדיק as jabi (righteous people) in Gâ, ɔtseneneenyi (a righteous person) in Akan and nu dzɔdzoe (a righteous person) in Ewe, emphasises both his moral/religious piety and legal innocence. The Gâ, Akan and Ewe translate מכרם as: amεhɔ, woaton and wodzra, respectively, all meaning ‘they have sold’. In my interview with Professor Gilbert Ansre, he explained that in most Ghanaian cultures, if a human being is sold, he/she has already lost his/her dignity. Thus by interpreting מכרם as an act of selling carries the cultural baggage of indignity. The 1930 Ewe translation adds an element of violent seizure to the act of selling the righteous: ɛtsɔ amε dzɔdzoe dzra... (he/she took a righteous person and sold him...), affirming the indignity at play as a blameless and innocent person is violently seized and sold. This indignity worsens if the medium of exchange is of a low calibre or if the price is comparably of very little value.89

The translations for כסף in the Gâ, Akan and Ewe are: jwiete, dweteldwetece and klosalo, respectively. Dwete means silver or mineral wealth. However, the Mfantse distinguishes between dwetece and dwete. When the Hebrew כסף is read as ‘cash’ the Mfantse translates dwetece and when כסף is read as ‘silver’, the Mfantse translates dwete. For instance, both the Twi and the Mfantse translate כסף as dwete in Ezekiel 7:19 and Haggai 2:8. The Mfantse translation of כסף as dwetece means that cash is being referred to. The Akan proverb: ‘sika nnt ɔ nkwa’; (money/cash does not buy life), reveals the indignity in selling the poor for cash. Nkwa (life) refers to human life and by extension, human being. The Gâ, jwiete (valuable mineral, like gold or silver), presupposes that the righteous was sold for high value. The Gâ focus group, however, reflected that the value is on the gains that the oppressors made and not the value of the person sold. Again jwiete alludes to the slave trade era where human beings were traded for gold and other precious minerals rather than cash. This was the time when the medium of exchange was precious minerals and not cash. To the Gâ group, therefore, the indignity lies in a human being used as a means of gaining wealth. The 2010 Ewe translation for כסף is klosalo, which represents both

89 Interview: Ansre, 13th August 2013.
cash and silver. The 1930 Ewe translation uses ga, which is restricted to cash. Indignity is implied since wealth is exchanged for human being. An Ewe proverb: ame wu ga (a human being is more valuable than money), confirms this. These translations have therefore effectively communicated the lack of human dignity the poor and vulnerable suffer when the powerful sell them to gain wealth.

Lack of human dignity continues to be evident in the Ghanaian translation of בכורה. The Gã translation ohiafo le amehɔ le tokota jra naa, means ‘the poor person they have sold him/her according to the cost of sandals’. The Akan translations mpabo nti wɔtɔn ohiani, literally means ‘and because of [a mere] sandals, they sell the poor’. The Ewe translation nenemake wodzra ame dahe ɖe atokota dodo ɖeka fe asi nu means ‘the same way they have sold the poor for the price of a pair of sandals’. These translations again capture the idea of selling a human being for a commercial value, this time, that of an item of footwear. Generally, a pair of sandals or a pair of shoes will not be seen in these three cultures as valuable. The Akan translation confirms this by adding nti, which literally means ‘because’ but in certain context can mean ‘mere’ or ‘intrinsically valueless’. The implication is that the poor were sold for a ‘mere’ pair of sandals. Though this ‘mere’ is not present in the Hebrew, it amplifies the fact that the text is being read as condemning the undignified manner with which the needy are treated. If ‘because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals’ is interpreted with the hendiadys צדיק ואביון as the focus, then the Gã, Akan and Ewe translations mean ‘the righteous poor’ were sold for a monetary value as low as the price of a pair of sandals. This indicates the translators’ understanding of Amos 2:6 as condemning undignified treatment of the disadvantaged in society.

The condemnation of human indignity perpetrated through the aggressive scramble for the poor and their possessions is evident in Amos 2:7. The Akan translation for היאמר is hon a hon kon dɔ (those who lust for [desire]...). The use of akɔndo (lust or desire) indicts the upper class of injustice. The Gã translation is amenaanaaa (they have repeatedly stamped) agreeing with scholars who translate שאמפים as ‘they who trample’. This evokes the violence with which the rich destroy the suffering masses in their communities in order to increase their wealth. The Gã focus group emphasised that ‘amenaanaa’, which translates שאמפים idiomatically, refers to treating a person without respect. Thus the Ghanaian translations portray the
text as dealing with social injustice, manifest in undignified treatment of the vulnerable.

The interpretation of Amos 2:7b in all the three Ghanaian languages emphasise the sexual meaning of the man and his father going to the girl and thus the horror of the two men having sex with the same girl. The Ghanaian traditional taboo of blood relations having sexual intercourse with the same person is evoked. The Ewe uses gɔ̃ hã (even) to translate the conjunction ו at the beginning of 2:7b, which brings the Ewe translation to mean ‘even a father and his son defile my name by sleeping with the same young woman’, Gɔ̃ hã (even) at the beginning of 2:7b implies a negative view of the act of the man and his father, being communicated by the translators. The Gã translation of ואיש ואביו as Mɔ kε lε diε etsε (a man and his very own father), escalates the seriousness of the act of both going to the girl. Though the Akan translation of ילכו אל-הנערה literally means ‘they go to one young woman’ it has a sexual implication, since the Akans use the same expression for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. The Ewe dɔna and the Gã naa bole all mean ‘to have sex’. Thus the three translations assign a sexual interpretation to ילכו אל-הנערה. Again, the Akan ababaawa, the Ewe ɖetugbi and the Gã oblayoo that translate נערה all simply mean ‘a young woman’ or ‘a girl’. However, the status of such a person in the traditions that speak these three languages indicate dependency and vulnerability. Though girls and boys depend on their parents and other family members, the practice of girls becoming house helps and maid servants in other people’s homes, is common in Ghana. Thus the interpretations do not rule out the fact that this young woman or girl is dependent on a family other than her own, serving as a house help or maid servant and that her master and his son are taking advantage of her vulnerability to sexually abuse her. Unlike the implication of my analysis from the Hebrew Bible in chapter 4, in the Ghanaian context, even if both the man and his father do not have any formal conjugal arrangement with the girl, it is still a taboo for both of them to have sexual intercourse with the same woman, whether knowingly or unknowingly. The implication from these translations is that the two men, due to their position and relationship with the young woman, possibly have power over her and that they are abusing her due to her vulnerability and dependency on them. נערה suffers injustice manifest in the sexual abuse and indignity meted out to her from a family under whose shelter she is supposed to have care and protection.
5.2.2 Extortion of the Poor (Amos 2:8)

Amos expresses revulsion at the social injustice meted out to the vulnerable by condemning unjust seizures and extortion of fines. The translation for בגדים חבלים in Akan, and Ewe are awowa ntamaltam (cloth for collateral), and avɔ si le awɔba me (cloth that is in their custody as collateral). The Gã translation emphasises the act of bringing the cloth as pledge, by translating בגדים חבלים as atadei ni akebato ame awaba anɔ (dresses [cloth] that have been brought to them as pledge). According to the focus groups, the translations have alluded to the Ghanaian tradition of giving collaterals in order to be granted a loan. In the traditional Ghanaian context, the purpose of collateral is to serve as a payment in the event that the debtor is unable to pay the loan. This presupposes that the value of the item given in pledge, both in traditional and commercial exchanges, is always either equal to the loan amount or higher. The collateral could be a building, a plot of land, a plantation, a person or some form of garment. This agrees with Paul’s assertion that the root חבל in both the Law and Wisdom (Exod. 22:25; Deut 24:6, 17; Pro 13:13; 20:16; 27:13; Job 24:9.), could be either a person or property (Paul, 1991:83-84). Where these translations differ from Paul is that they do not necessarily assume that the חבל is confiscated. Rather, the חבל is taken at the time when the loan is given to secure future payment if the debtor defaults. The garment, especially in the Gã translation, is not seized but voluntarily brought by the debtor to the creditor as collateral. The debtor does this to secure the confidence of the creditor in giving the loan. The debtor in turn trusts that the creditor will take good care of the collateral and return it intact upon the repayment of the loan. In cases where the debtor is unable to pay the loan, the collateral will be sold to pay for the loan. In many instances, the collateral will be kept by the creditor throughout the loan period, if it is a movable object. If the collateral is in the form of land or plantation, either the documents covering the property are handed over to the creditor or witnesses are appointed to inspect the property in the presence of both the creditor and the debtor to confirm that it has been used as collateral.

In the Akan, Gã and Ewe traditions taking collateral will not be unjust, in itself. It is what happens to the collateral during the loan period that determines the injustice. The collateral does not belong to the creditor until such a time that it is established that the debtor has defaulted payment and is in fact unable to pay. This
leads to the importance of יֵשׁ, which is translated by words meaning ‘they sleep on it’ (w̱òda...so/do and amekámso) in Akan and Gá. When the creditor has collected the cloth, he or she sleeps on it, instead of keeping it intact till the debtor pays or the loaning period expires without the debtor paying. The 1930 Ewe translation for יֵשׁ is wodraa afɔ ɖe. It means ‘they stretch their feet on it’. This emphasises the injustice, since stretching feet on a cloth could mean making it dirty or destroying it entirely. If the debtor later pays the loan and his cloth is returned, dirty or torn, it may not be useful to him anymore. Given that this debtor is a poor person who may not have the resources and courage to challenge the rich creditor in court, the debtor is then at a disadvantage of accepting the damaged cloth and paying the loan at the same time. Thus, drawing on the cultural background of loans and collaterals, these Ghanaian translations present the text as condemning social injustice.

The Ghanaian translations also effectively communicate the social injustice in the statement יֵנָּה עָנַוֹשׁ יֵשׁ. The Akan translations for יֵנָּה עָנַוֹשׁ are won a wɔadi won kasa nsã (drink from those they have cautioned) or hɔn a wɔabo hɔn kaw no nsã (drink from those on whom they have imposed cost). These translations allude to traditional dispute resolution. An Akan proverb, which means: ‘if you have little money, your plea is belittled’, illustrates the judicial injustice the poor suffer in such dispute resolutions. Also Christensen rightly links two other Akan proverbs to judicial injustice against the poor. These are ‘a poor man cannot win a court case’ and ‘the poor man’s plea receives hurried treatment’ (Christensen 1973:513). The Akan focus group deliberated on a traditional proverb which means ‘if you give good advice to a fool, you are depriving the chief of his daily bread’. This is satirical of the injustice that sometimes characterise traditional dispute resolution, normally in the chief’s palace. Sometimes, in order to reward the panel, fines in the form of alcoholic beverage or sheep are extorted for trivial offences. Another proverb also literally means ‘justice in [a named village] is for sale’. Thus they unjustly fine the innocent/poor so that the powerful will profit. The translations’ allusion to cases where traditional dispute resolutions favour the rich due to their financial and economic influence communicates Amos’ denunciation of social injustice. The 1930 Ewe translation of יֵנָּה עָנַוֹשׁ is nyadr2ha (arbitration drink). It reveals the function of a fine in a traditional court, which is to bring peace among litigating parties. In Ghanaian traditional dispute resolution, after a judgement is given and a drink is taken from the guilty party, both parties sit with the elders, who settled the dispute,
to drink, signifying reconciliation. Thus the Ewe translation depicts a parody of the court system. In the context of Amos 2:8, instead of using the arbitration drink to reconcile neighbours, it is only drunk by the upper class. An Ewe proverb *hiato fe nya medzɔɔ le vonmuɗo fe o*, which means ‘a poor man’s case is never justified in the court of law’, affirms this judicial injustice. Amos’ message thus becomes clear to the Ghanaian that the poor may be fined not because they are actually guilty but because they have been disregarded. The translators understood that Amos is criticising the creation of an avenue for the upper class to feast on the fines. Nothing could be more unjust than when fines, imposed as a result of perversion of justice against the innocent poor, is used to fund the revelry of the upper class. This judicial implication of pledges and fines taken from the poor, as presented in the Ghanaian translations, reveal that Amos 2.8 has a link with the condemnation of bribery, corruption and perversion of justice in Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12.

5.2.3 Bribery, Corruption and Miscarriage of Justice (Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12)

The discussions in 4.4 established that Amos protests against the miscarriage of justice, propelled by corruption and bribery. The bitter and poisonous judicial system had led to denial of justice to the vulnerable. The Ghanaian mother-tongue translations bring to bear the fact that Amos 2:8 and Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12, emphasise the collision between the judges and their rich political and business counterparts against the vulnerable. The Akan translation for *לענה* is *bɔwen* (bile, bitter), the Gã is ‘*taatso’* (chewing stick) and the Ewe is ‘*atsa’* (bitter). The bitterness and poison of injustice is concurrently captured by the Akan *bɔwen*. Bile is bitter and poisonous, but *bɔwen* could also refer to a particular plant which is bitter but edible. In Amos 6:12, the Akan translates *ראש* as *bɔwema* (little bile), also emphasising both bitterness and poisonousness. The Gã *taatso* emphasises bitterness but not poisonousness. However, in Amos 6:12 where *לענה* and *ראש* are used in parallel, the Ga translates *לעה* as *ebɔɔ* (poison). This is also the case for the Ewe which brings in the poisonous aspect by the translation, *adži* (poison). Further, in the Akan, the perpetrators repeatedly smash righteousness on the ground. The same idea is expressed intensely in the Gã, where the perpetrators of injustice use ‘the pursuit of righteousness’ to mop the floor. Thus the three translations communicate Amos’
condemnation of bitter and poisonous injustice that had bedevilled a society that had neglected social justice.

In 5:12, Amos details the acts of corruption that lead to this poisonous perversion of justice and the utter condemnation of the innocent poor in favour of the guilty rich. The Ewe translates ḏaɽer ḏrekw as mielè ḏzdzewo ḏe ke me (you hold righteous people as your enemies) and ṣ manière ḏasew as miete ḏahewo ḏe anyi le vunu! (you suppressed poor people at the court of law). This translation reveals the bitter antagonism between the rich and the poor regarding justice. However, it is the poor who are at the receiving end of this antagonism. It is the rich who make the poor their enemies and suppress them in the courts. By translating ḏaɽer ḏrekw as muhiahia streneeni ho (you worry the righteous), the Akan translations heighten the suffering of the poor at the hands of the judges. The Gã use nyëgbaa to translate ḏaɽer. It could either mean ‘you hit’ or ‘you worry’. Both ways, the rich are able to deny the poor access to the courts. This is evident in the translation of ṣ manière ḏasew as nyëmëse gbe koni ohiafo ke esane ahye koishi koni aye ahâ le (you do not allow way so that the poor one can make his case reach the council so that they will deal with it for him).

The translation of כפר in all the three languages implies bribery. The Gã nyëgnii (middle of the night things) is an idiom for bribery. Bribe is given and collected secretly or under the cloak of darkness. Mboaba (money/article paid in secret, see Bannerman et al, 2012b:11) in Mfantse and Zānu in Ewe both mean bribe. The Twi translates כפר as ‘mpata’ (compensation), which refers to money, sheep/goat/fowl or drink that the elders who adjudicate a dispute collect from the one who is in the wrong to compensate the one who is in the right. The fact that the ‘mpata’ is collected from the ḏrekw streneeni (the one who is in the right) shows that the court is corrupt. The Akan translation of ṣ manière ḏasew as mokyeye ahiafo asem kurow pon mu (you twist the plea of the poor in the big city), captures the consequences of bribery in the courts. This emphasises the Ghanaian translators’ understanding that Amos was condemning judicial injustice, where only wealth could buy justice, where the poor had no access to justice.

In this perverse court, the presence of a just and truthful person may be useful in correcting and reproving the unjust. Thus Amos 5:10 mentions מוכיח (the one who reproves) and דבר תמים (the one who speaks the truth), who is hated (שנאו). Shenaw is translated in Gã as amenyë, in Ewe as mielé fu and in Mfantse as wotan, all
meaning ‘they/have hate’. The Twi ‘wokyi’ means ‘they abhor’ or ‘is a taboo to them’. "יתעבו" is translated amehi ehie (they dislike his face) in Gã. This emphasises that the perverted courts did not want to see anyone who will rebuke and tell the truth. Justice was so perverted that a member of the court panel who dared to stand by the truth was deprived of his resolve to defend the innocent. The victim of this perversion of justice, clearly, is the innocent poor and needy person who is declared guilty, from whom unjust fines are taken, and whose advocate in the court is silenced or even banned from the court. Thus the translations communicate Amos’ condemnation of the bitter and poisonous injustice that had bedevilled a society that had neglected justice and righteousness.

5.2.4 Oppression of the Poor and Needy (Amos 3:9-10; 4:1)

Amos 3:9-10 and 4:1 condemn the rich and powerful in Israel for exploiting, oppressing and crushing the poor and needy. The Akan, Ewe and Gã translations for מוחמות are kitikiti (rough/tough), weɛweɛyɛ (disruption), vunya vunya wo (violent commotion) and basabasa (confusion), respectively. The Akan translations imply that whatever acts the rich and powerful engage in disturb and disrupt the normal flow of the daily life and survival of the ordinary people. The Ewe sees it as a violent affront on the survival of the vulnerable. This is also emphasised in the Twi kitikiti. Unlike its synonym gidigidi (boisterous), which describes a violent act which affects the perpetrator, kitikiti affects other people. Thus the violence of the powerful affects the vulnerable and not the powerful themselves. This depicts social injustice. The Akan translates ע showError as nhyɛso/nhyɛdo (compulsion, see Bannerman et al, 2012b:54), while the Gã translates it as niseniianii (atrocities). The effect of the oppression on the poor is thus heightened.

The Gã evokes theft and imprisonment when it translates הארמנים הם רעים as amske yiwalɛ ke juu buaa nibii anaa ye moji le amli (they use wickedness and stealing in collecting things together inside their castle). When castles were built and used to house slaves and imprison ‘criminals’, the Gã called it moji, a place of power, slavery, torture and imprisonment. Thus the Gã translation of ארמנים הם as moji implies slavery, torture and imprisonment as part of the injustice that Amos condemns. When Amos 4:1 comes in focus, it implies that the
victims of violence and oppression are the poor and needy. is translated as *mo a mumia abrefo* (you who suppress sufferers), *nyewaa ohiafo ai* (you make life hard for the poor people) and *mi amesiwo te ame dahewo de anyi* (those of you who oppress the poor) by the Akan, Gã and Ewe respectively. The Ewe and Gã translate as *gbà hiâtowo gudugudu* (you have broken poor people and reduced them to nothing) and *nyeshwishwiaa mei ni efi ame shi* (you mop down the floor [with] those who are in difficulty) respectively. This heightens the oppression and the destruction the vulnerable suffer. It is clear that the translators intended their readers to understand that Amos was condemning a culture of exploitation and oppression whose victims were the needy and poor.

5.2.5 Excessive Taxation of the Poor (Amos 5:11)

In Amos 5:11 the prophet accuses the upper class of increasing their wealth through excessive and illegal taxation from the poor. The Ghanaian translators accept *משאת־בר* as ‘trample’, or ‘tread down’, ‘to trample down’ or ‘tread down’, or ‘to plunder’. For instance the Akan and the Gã translate as *hom tsiatsia obɔbɔfo do* and *nyenaanaa ohiafo nɔ* (you repeatedly step on the destitute/ afflicted/poor). The Ewe also translates it as *miefanya ame dahewo kple afɔ* (you trample on poor people with your feet). However, all these Ghanaian translations accept *משאת־בר* as grain tax. Thus *hom gye no hɔ apempem ewifua* (you forcefully extract grain tax from him, see Bannerman et al, 2012a:144-45), in Akan and *miexɔ blidɔ le wo si la* (you took levies in the form of grains from him [the poor person]) in Ewe. The idea of over-working the poor and excessiveness is present in the Gã translation *nyetsuo le able onia fe bo ni sa hewɔ le* (you work corn offering [from] him more than what is fitting). By accepting *משאת־בר* as grain tax, the Ghanaian interpretation of suggests the violent force with which these grain levies are exacted from the vulnerable. This is a clear demonstration of awareness of Amos’ condemnations of a socially unjust system.
5.2.6 Carefree Extravagant Opulence in the Midst of Abject Poverty (Amos 6:1-6)

The Akan translation of שאנן in verse 1 dwudwoodwo or dwoodwoo, relates to affluence in perpetual peace with no fear for destruction or disaster. The Twi translates המתחים מדר שמרות as won a wade won ho to Samaria bepɔw so (those who trust in Samaria’s mountain). This emphasises that these rich and affluent actually trust in the security that the mountains surrounding Samaria offer. Metaphorically they trust their military and economic might. The Mfantse translation for the same sentence reveals that the addressees live very posh and affluent life in Samaria. The Gã translates השאננים as ahe ejɔ amε (it is cool for themselves). It is an idiomatic expression for comfort. It translates המתחים as mei ni nyεsusuɔ ake amεyε shweshweeshwe (those who think that they have safety). With the stark poverty staring them in the face, this interpretation implies that the upper class are living in false security.

The three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of המתחים ליוו וטוושא שבת in Amos 6:3 agree that those being accused push/wish the day of evil far away but their action actively draws the bad day (Gã and Ewe) or seat of trouble/suffering (Akan) closer. There is a dual meaning in all the translations. First, the translators communicate their understanding that the upper class were doing all they could to flee the looming catastrophe, while at the same time they orchestrated the suffering and anguish of the poor and needy. However, and especially in the Gã, the translators portray the irony in the attitude of the rich and influential towards יום רע, that they deceive themselves by thinking that they are pushing the bad/evil day backwards and far away. The deception lies in the fact that their very behaviour brings evil upon them. The 1930 Ewe translation of שבת as fiazikpui (throne) emphasises the power and might the upper class had arrogated to themselves, which they used to oppress the poor and needy rather than helping them to live a meaningful life. The Akan translates שבת as agua (seat). However, they are all using appropriate language to interpret the role of שבת in the sentence, rather than literally translating it as ‘dwelling’ or ‘place’. Though the Gã version chosen for this study does not translate שבת at all, but rather replaces it with the word for יו, which is gbi (day), the earlier version’s translation of שבת as sei (throne) buttresses the point that
the rich were abusing power. Thus the three Ghanaian translations all demonstrate their conviction that Amos was condemning the wealthy for injustice, when they try to escape their own eminent calamity, while at the same time presiding over the oppression and crushing of the vulnerable. To Amos, as seen in the interpretation of the Ghanaian translators, the evil they push away will come to them as punishment for oppressing the vulnerable.

The Gâ translation of שן as: shwuɔ wu (elephant bone) rightly implies ivory but its translation of מטת as saatsei (wood mat) is significant. If saatsei is seen as a bed, then shwuɔ wu saatsei, which translates מטת שן, means ‘ivory bed’, which in line with the Hebrew indicates expensive extravagance. However, if saatsei is interpreted literally as ‘wood mat’, then shwuɔ wu saatsei literally means ‘ivory mat’. Here, the wood mat, which need not be expensive, due to its use (mostly as door mat), had been made with ivory, an expensive material, instead of ordinary wood. This heightens how the opulence of the rich results in waste of resources in the face of abject poverty. This same idea is expressed in the translation of כרים מצאן and עגלים. Akan – nguambaa and anantwimba, Ewe – miedu alêviwo and nyiviwo and Gâ – gwaŋtεŋbii and tsinabii, all meaning lambs and calves. It is rare for subsistence Ghanaians to kill and eat a lamb or a calf. They will rather save them for reproduction and eat the cow/bulls and ewe/sheep, which may no longer be productive. The Akan proverb which means ‘no one sells a hen for selling sake’ could be interpreted here to mean that killing and eating a calf or a lamb, which has the capacity of reproducing, could only be as a result of abject poverty, not riches. Thus the Ghanaian understanding of what Amos presents as the eating habit of the rich is simply that of an unjust and insensitive depletion of resources. In the light of the abject poverty that Amos decries, the consumption of these young animals implies depletion of sources available for wealth creation that could alleviate poverty.

At this wasteful feasting, revellers drink excessively in quantities, the money spent on which could alleviate the plight of the disadvantaged in society. Akan and Ewe translation of מזיר as nkora and gâwo (calabashes), indicates extreme extravagance. Calabashes are big pot-like bowls made from the fruit of the calabash tree. Apart from being used to store water, they are commonly used to drink a local wine tapped from the palm tree. This wine is normally sweet but cheap because it is not distilled. So people drink it in large quantities using the calabash. Once it is
distilled, the liquor extracted is strong, corrosive and highly inflammable and therefore, very expensive. For this reason, people drink it in small quantities using tumblers. For the rich to drink ‘expensive’ wine in calabashes, bowls or big cups (as evident in the Akan and Gã translations), is a sign of excessive extravagance.

In the face of all this extravagant opulence, there was what Amos calls שבר יוסף (the ruin of Joseph), which these partying rich upper class and rulers could not pause to find solution to. The Ewe translates לא חלה של-שבר יוסף as: mele mia vem be Yosef fe afe la le gbagba (yet it does not hurt you that the House of Joseph faces destruction). The Akan translates it as: na Yosef see nye won yaw (yet the destruction/agony of Joseph does not bring any pain to them). The Gã translation is: shi Israel hiekpãtãm ɛ le edɛɛt amɛ kwraa le (but Israel’s destruction of face is not a care to them at all), interpreting יוסף as Israel. It is implied in some of the passages discussed above (e.g., Amos 2:6-7; 4:1) that poverty and squalor stared at these rich people while they enjoyed their luxury. This was injurious, an agony and a destruction to both the upper class and Israel as a whole. Thus the Ghanaian translators have demonstrated that they understood Amos as condemning the social injustice that affected his time.

5.2.7 Unjust Trade

In 8:5-6, Amos condemns the upper class for exacerbating the already appalling conditions of the poor. Through unfair trade, the traders worsen the poverty of the disadvantaged. The sense that the traders are in haste to cheat unsuspecting poor customers with false balances and twisted scales is present in all the three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations. The Akan and Ewe translations of Amos 8:5 maintain the idea that the practice of reducing the ephah and tempering with the other scales are deliberate attempts by the traders to cheat the buyers. The traders give the buyers too little and charge them too high. The Mfantse add the dimension of lying and deception by translating לא חלה מault מומת מרהמה as: yedze akɔhwi asen eesisi (use deceptive [lying] scales to cheat). Similarly, in the Gã translation, the result of making the ephah small and the shekel great is deceptive or lying scales that become means of cheating. The injustice resulting from such an unscrupulous trade regime is
heightened by the translation of מפל רכ נאש (Amos 8:6b). The Mfantse; yaatɔn ewifua ntɔmpamu no, mean the traders are determined to sell unwholesome grain that has been rejected because it has no economic value. Ntɔmpamu, when used in trading, refers to the remnant of a stock (here the grain), which has no economic value and has therefore been rejected (see Bernnerman et al 2012b:98). In the Gã, the grain sold is from a leftover stock which is ironically sold at a high price. Interestingly, the Ewe reverses the order of verse 6, translating 6b as the first line. This is possibly a mental emendation in the mind of the translators to bring verse 6b next to verse 5b, since both deal with trading in goods, before coming to verse 6a which seem to talk about trade in human beings. Thus the Ewe Miadra bli gbegblẽ asi gãe (we will sell weevil-infested corn at an exorbitant price) does not only escalate the unwholesomeness of the grain that is sold but also adds that this weevil-infested grain which has been rejected is being sold at a price, probably higher than it deserves. The sense of unjust trade and its consequent negative effect on people have been clearly expressed in these translations.

5.2.8 Amos’ Positive Call for Social Justice (Amos 5: 24)

The Ghanaian translations effectively interpret Amos’ call for ‘justice and righteousness’ as a call for social justice. The Akan, Ewe and Gã translations all indicate that Amos believed that human beings had a part to play in restoring justice and righteousness. To this end, the call ייגל כמים משפט וצדקה כנחל איתן is not only a divine action to purge Israel and restore justice and righteousness. It also involves human action that YHWH demands. The Mfantse translates ייגל as ‘hom mma...[ɔ] mpem mbra’ (you let it roll and come). Hom (you) translates the addressees of Amos, which, though obvious in the Hebrew, may lend the sentence to different interpretations, when not translated. By using ‘hom’ the Mfantse clearly affirms that Amos was calling on the people of Israel, especially the rich and powerful, to restore social justice. The Gã goes further to interpret how human beings can play their role to restore justice and righteousness in their communities. Thus ייגל כמים משפט is interpreted as: nyεyea jalε sane moŋ koni etsɔ tamɔ nu ni hoɔ (you pursue just matter so that it will turn like water that flows). The Gã has translated גלל as ‘to turn/to wheel’ to emphasise that the wheel of justice must turn endlessly. It further
translates as: *nyešāa jale ahea shi, ni ets5 tamɔ faa ni hoɔ daa* (you allow justice to take root so that it will turn like a river that flows always). Here, the Gã repeats the addressees ‘you’ (*nye*) to emphasise the role of the people listening to Amos, in the process of restoring social justice. This role is deliberately ensuring the firm rooting of righteousness in society, which will result in endless turning and flowing of the river of justice. The Mfantse and Gã translations eliminate any possible abstractness from the text. It is thus directed to an audience whom Amos believed had a duty in the process. These interpretations confirm the thesis that Amos invites human beings to partner YHWH, in establishing social justice, which involves actions done on behalf of the disadvantaged.

5.3 Implications of the Translations for Understanding Social Justice Issues in Ghana

The uniqueness that local mother-tongue translations bring to the interpretation and understanding of biblical texts has been demonstrated in this chapter. Analysing the Ewe, Akan and Gã translations has revealed that the Ghanaian translators communicated their understanding of social justice themes in the book of Amos from both traditional and biblical perspective. This approach helps readers to appropriate the message, without losing its original meaning. For instance, the analysis has led to the realisation that the same Ghanaian proverbs that apply to understanding Amos 2:8 also relate to perversion of justice in the court, the major theme in Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12. Again, it has been demonstrated, that the Ghanaian translators’ approach to interpreting *כסף* and *נעלים* shows their understanding that Amos was condemning social injustice in the form of undignified treatment of the vulnerable in society. Similarly, their interpretation of *בוש쌈* and *משאת־בר* connotes the violence with which the rich extorted grain tax from the poor. This and many other unique dimensions brought to bear through the Ghanaian languages analysed indicate that the use of mother-tongue translations is important in determining how Ghanaians understand and communicate social justice in the book of Amos.

Through their reading of the mother-tongue translation of the Bible, Ghanaians establish a vocabulary of social justice that will enhance the understanding of their own circumstances. The uniqueness of some of the
interpretations, which draws from local tradition, also implies that there exists an awareness of these social justice issues. When Ghanaians come to the book of Amos, their reading illuminates the problems of contemporary social injustice. Their belief that human beings cannot be exchanged for wealth enhances their interpretation of the issues in the text. As Ghanaians are able to find linguistic categories to interpret their understanding of Amos’ message, the text will in turn facilitate their appreciation of social injustice issues. The insight gained from these translations confirms that Ghanaians approach the Bible from their socio-cultural perspective and allow both text and context to illuminate their own context. Thus the social justice issues they identify in their community are issues that they face daily which their reading of the Bible in general and Amos in particular has illuminated.

The oppressed Ghanaian, as he reads Amos in his/her mother-tongue, finds ‘a voice to express his/her own experience of oppression’ because the vocabulary is at home with his/her situation (adopted from Houston, 2008:71). Similarly, a Ghanaian who has the resources to help others discovers in Amos the need to be on the side of the poor, because the vocabulary of Amos, read in his/her mother-tongue is at home with the situations of those oppressed around him/her.
Chapter 6
Issues of Contemporary Social Justice in Ghana

6.0 Introduction – Methodological Issues

The aim of this chapter is to sketch the chronic and systemic social injustice in Ghana and to provide the context within which the relevance of the social justice message of Amos to social justice in Ghana could be assessed. There are two main sources of data for this chapter. The first is drawn from the outcomes of interviewing 77 Ghanaians from different walks of life. This includes heads of churches, church officials in charge of church social actions, beneficiaries of church social action, academics, social commentators and other people I classify as ‘general public’. 35 out of this number were interviewed individually, while 42 were part of five separate focus groups. In most cases, I have selected the response that represents the generality of views on a particular issue but I have also brought in responses that add unique dimensions to the general view.

Table 8 – People interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Heads of Churches</th>
<th>Church social action officers</th>
<th>Beneficiaries of church social action</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number interviewed Male/Female</td>
<td>4/0</td>
<td>4/0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>4/0</td>
<td>8/12</td>
<td>21/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the distribution of the respondents in the individual interviews while table 9 deals with the distribution of participants in the focus group discussions. The second source of data is drawn from news reports in the Ghanaian electronic and
print media which shed light on issues of contemporary social injustice in Ghana. Other documents and reports by organisations have also been consulted.

Table 9 – Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Gã</th>
<th>Akan (Mfantse)</th>
<th>Ewe</th>
<th>TTS&lt;sup&gt;90&lt;/sup&gt; Dip. Theo Class</th>
<th>TTS MTh Class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Male/Female</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>26/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1 The Meaning of Social Justice in Ghanaian Communities Today

In an interview, Gilbert Ansre acknowledged that since justice is multifaceted, picking one aspect and calling it social justice is difficult, especially when its meaning has not been well explored. To him, even fairness, which seems to be at the heart of most definition of social justice, is relative. This is because where one feels fairly treated, another may feel unfairly treated.<sup>91</sup> Ansre’s concerns were confirmed in the diverse angles from which other respondents approached the definition of social justice in contemporary Ghana. Analysing these responses, I identified three main perspectives from which Ghanaians approached social justice. These are: traditio-cultural, religious and socioeconomic perspectives. Out of the 35 respondents, 15 touched on all the three approaches and 12 touched on two. The views of 8 respondents focused on only one perspective, mostly either the socioeconomic or traditio-cultural. The three perspectives were also present in the definitions discussed in the focus groups. Though the respondents did not categorically separate any perspective from the other, they could be clearly distinguished, and yet each one is inseparable from the others. These different standpoints bring in different factors and players in the dynamics of social justice.

<sup>90</sup> Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, Ghana.  
<sup>91</sup> Interview: Ansre, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2013.
Fairness, as an important determinant of social justice, runs through all the perspectives but with different emphasis.

The communal life of traditional Ghanaian society was at play in most of the responses on defining social justice in Ghana and this is what I call the traditional-cultural approach. This is not an attempt at painting a historically accurate picture but reporting and reflecting on the way in which it is seen and remembered by many today. Communal living has been the bedrock of Ghanaian society, as in most African communities. Even in this modern globalised world where the individual is at the centre of affairs, the ethos of sharing resources as a community still thrives in most Ghanaian societies. Emmanuel Asante\textsuperscript{92} sees social justice as ‘a condition for the possibility of community living’. Social justice is achieved, according to Abraham Ofori-Koragu\textsuperscript{93}, when ‘people in the society feel that there is a sense of belonging’. Zan Akologo\textsuperscript{94} puts the whole approach in broad perspective. To him, in the traditional Ghanaian set-up, social justice is viewed as the responsibility of the larger family to take care of one another. The responsibility for social justice in this perspective begins with the family unit and then spreads to the larger community, as community settlements were mostly homogeneous, sharing the same ancestry and cultural values. Issues of social injustice were thus settled at the household or family level. When relationships broke up, the head of the family and other family members were consulted. Decisions were properly made and grievances were properly settled. If it went beyond the family, then leaders of the community took over. Only difficult issues went to the chief or traditional ruler, whose responsibility it was to ensure social justice for all in the larger community. A Ghanaian proverb which means ‘when the eye cries the nose is also affected’, aptly explains the traditional-cultural perspective of social justice. It emphasises the interconnectivity in traditional communal living. By implication, social justice for the community was expressed in shared responsibility for the survival of all members and in ensuring that

\textsuperscript{92} The Most Rev’d Prof. Emmanuel Kwaku Asante is the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana (2009-2015) and chair of Ghana Peace Council. He is also an associate professor of Systematic and Practical Theology. Interview: 14\textsuperscript{th} August 2014.
\textsuperscript{93} Apostle Abraham Ofori-Koragu is the General Secretary of the Apostolic Church, Ghana. Interview: 8\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.
\textsuperscript{94} Samuel Zan Akologo is the Executive Secretary at the Department of Human Development, National Catholic Secretariat, Ghana. Interview: 8\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.
everybody’s needs or problems were everyone else’s. This is akin to the Dangme95 traditional vision of *kplɔkɔtɔ* (well-being). Among other things, *kplɔkɔtɔ* is achieved ‘…where there is contentment and harmony, peace and progress; where no man is an island to himself, but each is part of the other, what affects one, affects all’ (Kudadjie, 1995:1).

One major factor that defines social justice in the traditio-cultural perspective is relationship. Mercy Amba Oduyoye underscores the supreme importance of relationship to the African when she writes: ‘It is the quality of relationships rather than power or prestige that informs the daily encounter of the traditional African…’ (Oduyoye, 1995a:132). Ghanaian communities are interconnected and people define their identity and survival in terms of their relationships with other people in the community. Thus social justice is viewed, traditionally, in the light of people’s relationship with others in the community. It is expected that members of the community will treat one another equally, especially from different social statuses. To James Walton,96 this shows that, people expect to be treated the same whether they are rich or poor. It also presupposes that traditional Ghanaian communities are socially just when the community seeks to foster harmonious relationships among its people. To this end, according to Kwesi Addo,97 the traditional understanding of social justice is focused on how communities come together to settle disputes, restore broken relationships and mobilise resources to help the vulnerable. To Joshua N. Kudadjie,98 social justice is not being achieved in Ghana, ‘probably because of the waning of our communal life’. This implies the Ghanaian belief that social justice was guaranteed to some extent when communal living was the order of the day.

The above suggests that in defining social justice from the traditio-cultural point of view, Ghanaians look at their traditional structures, cultural practices and values. Here, issues that would inform social justice in pre-globalisation years when

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95 The Dangme people are part of a bigger ethnic group called Ga-Adagme in the Greater Accra and Eastern Regions of Ghana.
96 Very Rev’d Dr. James Walton is a research assistant at the Akrofi–Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong–Akuapem, Ghana. He was part of a five member Mfantse focus group held on 4th August 2013.
97 Rev’d John Kwesi Addo Jnr. is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church Ghana and a graduate student at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana. He was part of a five member Mfantse focus group held on 4th August 2013.
98 Very Rev. Prof. Joshua N. Kudadjie is the Vice Principal of the Methodist University College, Ghana and a Professor of ethics and philosophy of religion. Interview: 16th August 2013.
life was interpreted from the perspective of their own traditions and culture, are at play. From this perspective, ‘social justice’ as a term is new and almost foreign. At the same time however, it serves as an eye opener and lenses through which Ghanaians can critically evaluate and redefine social justice in their traditions.

Notwithstanding all its advantages, it is difficult to totally trust the traditional Ghanaian community to ensure social justice. The first source of difficulty is the patriarchal nature of most Ghanaian traditional societies. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu\(^99\) intimates that in patriarchal societies in Ghana, ‘the father figure tends to be dominant in decision making….and associated with authority’. Children thus grow up knowing that their place in the family and society does not allow them to question the status quo, even when it is abusive or unjust. This submission is demonstrated in a Ghanaian adage which means ‘an elderly person does not plead guilty in the presence of a young person’ or ‘a superior does not plead guilty in the presence of a subordinate’. Thus even if the older person or the superior is wrong, in the eyes of traditional oral law, he/she must not concede to the younger person or the subordinate. The consequence of this tradition is that when the perpetrator of injustice is a person of authority, he does not face the consequence. Thus prominent people such as politicians and high ranking members of the community suffer nothing for being unjust. Their crimes are covered up and their victims have to suffer in silence. This is evident in the handling of rape cases in the traditional system, where rape offences are not pursued legally but settled at the family level in order to prevent shame. Again, Asamoah-Gyadu identifies that although traditional leaders, including chiefs and community elders, are supposed to be servants of their people, the sacral nature of their mandate allows them to lay claim to certain powers and privileges. There have been cases where some chiefs have coveted other people’s properties and even gone to the extent of eliminating the owners. To Asamoah-Gyadu, such socialisation makes it difficult to determine whether the ordinary Ghanaian knows what social justice is all about.\(^100\)

Furthermore, Ghanaian marriages are traditionally and inherently polygamous. This puts women in a disadvantageous position when it comes to

\(^99\) Very Rev’d Professor J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is the Baeta-Grau Professor of African Christianity and Pentecostal Theology. He is also Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Africa at Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. Interview: 12th February 2014 in the presence of MTh students who also contributed to the discussion.

\(^100\) Interview: Asamoah-Gyadu, 12th February 2014.
determining what is socially just or unjust. Nana Kofi Acquah\textsuperscript{101} deliberates on the significance of this for the Ghanaian view of social justice. In most Ghanaian traditional culture if a man loves a woman, he takes care of her and her children. He is free to commit to more than one woman in this sense. No matter how unfairly treated a woman feels by her husband as a result of his affairs with other women, she cannot complain. If she does, her actions will be seen as unfair treatment of her husband. However, even when an unmarried woman has an affair with a man she has not officially introduced to the community as her lover, she is considered extremely adulterous. Clearly, the yardstick for determining social justice is not the same for men and women in such a community, at least, as far as marital and conjugal relationships are concerned. What is accepted as fair on a man’s part may not necessarily be accepted as fair on a woman’s part. These restrict the effectiveness of social justice defined in the traditio-cultural perspective.

From the religious perspective, the respondents perceived social justice in terms of a divine responsibility towards members of the larger community as a whole. Here, biblical teachings are seen as the yardstick for social justice. However, African traditional belief in a supreme being who is all-powerful and who sees to ordering justice in the world is also at play. J. Yedu Bannerman\textsuperscript{102} traces Ghanaian understanding of social justice from an Akan proverb, which means ‘when God makes a judgement on a dispute, no human being can change it’. This implies a religious approach where social justice is based on the supreme justice of God. This may be the reason for a very famous Ghanaian cultural trait called ‘fa ma Nyame’ (give it to God), which places a lot of emphasis on forgiveness and moving on, not bearing grudges.\textsuperscript{103} This tradition assumes that there is a power above human beings, someone more powerful to deal with issues of justice than any human being. Thus social justice is a concept Ghanaians have learnt from God’s justice and righteousness. Such an approach is influenced by the encounter of Ghanaians with the Bible and Christianity. As discussed earlier, social justice in the Hebrew Bible, expressed by ‘justice and righteousness’ is a divine quality of God which he

\textsuperscript{101} Nana Kofi Acquah is a professional photographer based in Accra, who shoots across Africa for companies and NGO. He also tells the story of Africa through photography and blogging. Interview: 13\textsuperscript{th} February 2014.

\textsuperscript{102} Rt. Rev’d Joseph Yedu Bannerman is a retired ordained Methodist minister, Ebusa Baatan of the Asona Royal Clan of Ampia Ajugamo and a well-known Akan folklorist. He was part of a five member Mfanse focus group held on 4\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.

\textsuperscript{103} Interview: Acquah, 13\textsuperscript{th} February 2014.
demands to be performed by people in authority and individuals resourced to ensure that the vulnerable in society get their due and are able to live meaningful lives. Thus if Ghanaians see social justice as God’s demands on them, especially people in authority to use their privilege positions to enhance the lives of the grassroots, then they are expressing similar values. It presupposes that within the church context, social justice will be upheld such that servant leadership of pastors and other church officials will translate into caring for the poor and needy. However, pastoral authority very rarely talks about service. Ministers like to give instructions and order people about. They even behave as if they have access to the resources of their members.\(^{104}\) This makes any talk of social justice from the religious point of view, very difficult.

Most respondents who view social justice in contemporary Ghana from the socioeconomic point of view consider a modern globalised society where issues of equitable distribution of resources, human rights and equality are at play and where political leadership, the judiciary and other state institutions are held accountable for how socially just or unjust the country is. Kwesi Pratt\(^{105}\) was one of the respondents whose view on social justice in Ghana was purely socioeconomic. To him, social justice in Ghana: ‘...should simply mean the equitable distribution of the resources available to the Ghanaian community and also ensuring that processes are put in place which accentuates the principle of equality of citizen before the law, in the exercise of their political and democratic rights...’ Two main factors emphasised in this view are equitable distribution of resources and equality, both of which were reflected in most of the responses. On equitable distribution of resources Asante believes that for social justice to be achieved, what people call ‘national cake’, ‘must be distributed evenly’.\(^{106}\) To Bishop Osei-Bonsu,\(^{107}\) every Ghanaian citizen expects a formalised way that ensures everybody benefits from the available resources. This can be achieved, ‘when there are jobs for the people and decent wages for people who are working’.\(^{108}\) Kudadjie shares the view that any talk of social justice should revolve around ‘a situation where there is equality for all sections of the people,

\(^{104}\) Interview: Asamoah-Gyadu, 12th February 2014.
\(^{105}\) Kwesi Pratt Jnr. is the Managing Editor of the Insight newspaper. He is a leading socialist campaigner in Ghana and a social commentator. Interview: 12th August 2013.
\(^{106}\) Interview: Asante, 14th August 2013.
\(^{108}\) Interview: Asante, 14th August 2013.
The role of the judiciary is pivotal to this outlook of social justice because it is the best institution that can ensure that people are not discriminated against and that their rights as human beings are respected. In Ghana justice emanates from the people but it is administered by the judiciary on behalf of the republic. To this end, individual members of the public must have access to justice through the courts. Akologo emphasises this when he speaks of peace and justice as co-determinants of social justice which fall under the dispensation of the law and the legal system.

The three perspectives of social justice in Ghana, discussed above are never isolated from each other. Due to the fact that most Ghanaian traditions have survived the age of globalisation and that many Ghanaians have one religion or another, there is a possibility to look at social justice holistically as a situation where the traditions of Ghanaians, their religious beliefs and their encounter with globalisation can merge. From the responses analysed above, traditio-cultural social justice is based on harmonious communal living. Again, equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of resources, access to judicial justice, good governance and human right protection are the focus of the socio-economic perspective of social justice in Ghana. Also, most Ghanaians will continue to view justice as emanating from God. Social justice in contemporary Ghana must therefore embody the three approaches, where people in state governance and wealthy individuals in Ghanaian communities recognise that they have a divine mandate to empower communities to live harmoniously, to ensure the wellbeing and fair treatment of all Ghanaians and to protect ordinary Ghanaians who have fewer resources at their disposal. This can be demonstrated by adopting the triangular model of social justice discussed earlier (see figure 13).

Figure 13 depicts the interrelatedness of the various views on social justice. Social justice in Ghana can be achieved when people in authority take on their divine responsibility to ensure harmonious communal living, distribute resources equitably, and ensure that Ghanaians have equal opportunity and access to judicial justice and

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109 Interview: Kudadjie, 16th August 2013
111 Interview: Akologo, 8th August 2013.
that their human rights are protected. Stumbling blocks to this ideal include affluence of the few, corruption in government, unfair trade systems, poverty and gender inequalities. Among others, these bottlenecks portray contemporary Ghana in a negative light as far as social justice is concerned.

6.2 Contemporary Issues of Social Injustice in Ghana

Another major question asked at the interviews and the focus groups was ‘what issues of social justice concern Ghanaians today’? Most responses focused on socioeconomic issues and placed the responsibility at the door steps of politicians. This is not out of the ordinary if one looks at the trend of issues raised throughout this study as to where the responsibility for social justice lies. In today’s post-modern globalised world, the state has the responsibility to ensure social justice. Also, in a lower middle income African nation like Ghana, it is the state that has resources, control, power and therefore the responsibility to ensure that the economic and political environment is conducive for people’s survival. For these reasons, most of the issues that respondents raised and examples of injustice they cited have a lot to
do with governmental failings. To Akolo, ‘if any governance arrangement denies people of their basic livelihood’, they will interpret it as injustice. In many poor communities, when people participate in the governance process, especially elections, they see it as their contribution to the systems, arrangements and processes that has the responsibility to deliver their common good. In the rest of the chapter I discuss issues of social injustice that were raised in the interviews and focus groups. I have used news reports and other media materials to present examples that demonstrate that social injustice is chronic and systemic in Ghana.

6.2.1 Affluence, Extravagance and Opulence of the Few

Social injustice, manifest in affluent, extravagant and opulent living in the midst of abject poverty has been a problem for Ghanaians in recent times, as it has been in years past. Almost all respondents in the interview and the focus groups viewed the extravagant lifestyle of the top echelon of Ghanaian society as social injustice. This is exhibited in different ways and at different levels, including the luxurious use and display of wealth by politicians, private individuals and pastors and/or church leaders. All three perspectives of social justice in Ghana have elements of affluence, extravagance and opulence. There are rich and powerful private individuals whose lifestyle exhibits conspicuous consumption and affluence. Their source of wealth is mostly attributed to hard work. Society however questions how such rich individuals treat their employees and other business associates through whom and from whom they make their wealth. Wealth, when acquired genuinely, can be enjoyed. However, if acquiring such wealth means cheating someone down the line, either through payment of low wages or failing to ensure good conditions of service for workers, then society must question the genuineness of such wealth and affluence. Also, when politicians are displaying affluence and luxury in a country where abject poverty has condemned more than 50% of the population to misery and disillusionment, it is very worrying, especially if the sources of funding such affluence are the scanty national resources that politicians claim are not enough to alleviate the poverty of the masses. Further, most pastors and church leaders make their wealth through the giving of members, most of whom are despondently poor. Others also ride on the

112 Interview: Akolo, 8th August 2013.
back of the name of their churches to engage in personal private business that their churches have no stake in. Such wealth, when spent in affluence and luxury, casts pastors and church leaders in a negative light, particularly when the masses in the same church or community do not have enough to eat and have no decent clothing and shelter. In the rest of this subsection, I look at how misplaced priorities in government expenditure result in extravagant display of wealth by politicians and how pastors and/or church leaders display carefree extravagance and affluence in Ghana.

First, some Ghanaian politicians enjoy conditions of service far beyond that of most Ghanaians. They receive very high salaries, excellent housing, cars and fuel allowances. However, when they leave office, they receive ex-gratia payment in amounts that no Ghanaian public servant can dream of. In April 2013, the Ghanaian media reported a disclosure from the office of parliament that the government had paid the two hundred and thirty members of the dissolved 5th Parliament of the Fourth Republic a total of thirty-nine million Ghana cedis as ex-gratia payments.\textsuperscript{113} The social injustice here is that the monies were paid at a time when almost all labour unions were on strike to demand better conditions of services. At the same time, subsidies on fuel and agricultural products had been removed and government claimed not to be able to pay a total of ten million Ghana cedis to stop public university teachers from going on strike.\textsuperscript{114} These made the decision to pay politicians such colossal sums of money quite insensitive and unfair on the many hard working Ghanaians who retire with almost nothing and who have to battle with a very harsh economy. The reflection of an MTh student in Trinity Theological seminary, Accra, Ghana is very appropriate here:

> Ordinary Ghanaians are looking for their daily bread. When they look at government functionaries driving big cars, using sophisticated equipment and living extravagant lives while they, the ordinary citizens, lack the basic necessities of life, then they see that they are being denied the justice they deserve.\textsuperscript{115}

Furthermore, on 16\textsuperscript{th} July 2014, the president of Ghana presented thirteen four-wheel drive pick-up vehicles to regional and national houses of chiefs. It was

\textsuperscript{113} http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201304/103870.php, 4\textsuperscript{th} April 2013, accessed on 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.

\textsuperscript{114} http://opinion.myjoyonline.com/pages/articles/201304/103928.php, 5\textsuperscript{th} April 2013, accessed on 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.

\textsuperscript{115} Interview: Asamoah-Gyadu, 12\textsuperscript{th} February 2014.
towards an otherwise noble cause to strengthen the support base of the chieftaincy institution and help run the day to day activities of the secretariat. Each vehicle costs an estimated US$18,125.00. One wonders how many Ghanaian standard school buildings the total of US$235,625 could build to eliminate schools under trees in the communities of these same chiefs. The move by the president was thus described as a waste and a misplaced priority in expending the scarce resources of the country. At the same time when the president presented the pick-ups to the chiefs, the government had failed to pay the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), the National Health Insurance Scheme and the School Feeding Programme. It was also at a time when many Ghanaians were suffering due to failing economy and accelerated depreciation of the currency. Commenting on this glaring misapplication of scarce resources on luxury for the few while the majority lack essential means of livelihood, Nathan Gadugah writes:

That, a president decides to donate 13 … Pick-ups to chiefs at a time when government says it cannot pay subsidies and [is] threatening to shirk the little responsibility it has to protect the poor vulnerable citizens…when hardship is knocking at the doors of many Ghanaians. It is obviously not the time for Ghanaians to be happy seeing their most respected chiefs down from their palanquins and receiving Pick-ups for administrative duties.

Clearly, this shift of state funds away from important sectors such as education, health and agriculture negatively affects the vulnerable and deprived school children in rural communities. Again, during the 2014 FIFA Football World Cup, the Ghana government spent money on celebrities as football ambassadors to Brazil. These were wealthy members of the Ghanaian community who could afford to go to Brazil on their own. Within the period while they were in Brazil, there was fuel shortage and most labour unions were threatening industrial actions over an ailing and failing economy and low wages.
Beside these misplaced priorities in government expenditure, there seem to be no calculated effort by both the executive and legislature, and to some extent, the media, in finding solutions to the misery of the many in Ghana. In March 2011, Pastor Mensah Otabil,121 ‘criticized politicians and the media for what he believes is failure on their part to address what matters most to Ghanaians’. He asked Ghanaian leaders to ponder on the following:

…our cities are choking with filth, educational standards are [low], infectious diseases are killing us, our highways are unsafe for passengers, our water bodies are polluted, our forest cover is gone, industries are dying, homes are breaking up, the gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening, yet when you listen to our parliamentary debate, read our newspaper headlines, listen to radio or watch television for a whole month, you will not come across any sustained intelligent discussion offering [solutions].122

As much as this may be an unfair generalisation, which does not take into account some very productive discussions that seek to propose solutions to the problem of social injustice in Ghana, Mensah Otabil effectively draws attention to the unproductive use of precious media time and legislative resources.

Another area of concern regarding affluence and extravagance in Ghana is that most pastors and church leaders have adopted a lifestyle of affluence that is far beyond the reach of the greater number of individuals in their congregations. In October 2011, the Daily Guide listed five pastors from the Charismatic tradition as ‘Ghana’s Richest Pastors’. The first on the list was Rev. Sam Korankye Ankrah, the Apostle General of the Royal House Chapel. Among the evidence of his wealth were that he owned a fleet of cars including ‘a Cadillac 4x4, a Toyota Land Cruiser Prado, a Toyota Land Cruiser V8 and a Mercedes Benz ML’. These cars were status symbols at the time and to own more than one of them meant the person was very wealthy. The next was Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom, leader of the Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre. His wealth included a private radio station, a private television station, a hundred-building estate and fleet of cars including two of the latest model of Chrysler. Others on the list were: Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, the overseer of the Lighthouse Chapel International; Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, the General Overseer of Christian Action Faith Ministries and Bishop

121 Pastor Mensah Otabil is the founder and General Overseer of the International Central Gospel Church. He is also the founder and Chancellor of Central University College, Ghana.
Charles Agyin Asare, the Presiding Bishop of the Word Miracle Church International. Though the report did not name any specific display of affluence as evidence of their wealth, their fleet of luxurious cars and palatial homes are known by Ghanaians.\footnote{http://www.modernghana.com/news/354475/1/ghanas-richest-pastors.html, 5th October 2011, accessed on 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.} This list confirms a well-known fact in Ghana, which Asamoah-Gyadu aptly expresses, that many pastors in the charismatic Christian tradition ‘…have access to money and have very comfortable lifestyles that include the building of palatial homes and the use of luxurious cars…’ (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:88).

The source of wealth of these pastors has been linked to sales from their books and other private business they own. For example, Dag Heward-Mills is believed to have written close to a hundred books. However, there is evidence that the greatest source of their wealth is the gifts from members of their congregation. For instance Rev. Sam Korankye Ankrah is on record to have explained partly, the source of his wealth as this:

\begin{quote}
…I have a club in my church called the Kings Club. It is made up of very high-profile people… Now every month, I pray with them and let them know that God has placed them in their positions so that they can serve people … Say I have 500 people in the club and it is Christmas or my birthday or my wedding anniversary, by Ghanaian customs and traditions where we honour our fathers, how much do you expect these people to give me? …by our position as men of God, we definitely attract blessings of which includes money … the more we serve them, the more they show us kindness at the least opportunity.\footnote{http://www.modernghana.com/news/354475/1/ghanas-richest-pastors.html, 5th October 2011, accessed on 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.}
\end{quote}

Korankye-Ankra’s explanation confirms Asamoah-Gyadu’s acknowledgement that the sources of such affluence may be gifts of cash and kind that members of the congregations give to their leaders on ‘pastors’ appreciation days’ and ‘the celebration of particular events in their lives’ (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:87). Asamoah-Gyadu gives an example:

In the early 1980s, Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the Christian Action Faith Ministries in Ghana received the gift of two Mercedes Benz cars from a member…About a decade later, Pastor Mensa-Otabil’s receipt of the birthday gift of a Mercedes Benz car from his church…raised some furores among members of the public as an example of what was considered the emerging extravagance within the new contemporary Pentecostal Churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:87 n. 13).
He further adds that ‘...people have sowed buildings, air travel tickets, luxurious cars, jewellery, computers, clothes, footwear, and other such material objects in the lives of men and women of God, in anticipation of God’s blessing and favour’ (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:91).

In most historic churches in Ghana today, it has become fashionable for ministers to demand or voluntarily be given expensive cars and large sums of money as parting gifts when they move from one appointment to another. The Methodist Church Ghana at its 2012 Conference took a decision to buy a car for every Presiding Bishop and Administrative Bishop when their terms of office end, which depending on their age, reaches the maximum of six years. There is no limitation on what car can be given except the engine size, which is limited to 2.0 and 1.8 for the Presiding Bishop and Administrative Bishop respectively. This is in addition to a cash gift of GH¢10,000 and GH¢8,000 respectively. Since the administrative Bishop is at par with Diocesan Bishops, the provision that Diocesan Bishops will receive GH¢1,000 from the connexional office while their Dioceses take care of other things, means that Dioceses are at liberty to buy cars, at least with the same specification, as that of the Administrative Bishop, for their Bishops as send-off gifts. The problem with this may not be the practice of giving a gift to a Bishop at the end of his tenure of service. It is rather the fact that most of these Dioceses have very poor members who struggle to sustain themselves and their families. These poor members are the ones who contribute to church finance and while most of their congregations cannot boast of decent worship places, their resources are used to fund affluence.

The worrying reality is that all this extravagant displays of wealth by pastors and church leaders and by politicians, through the misuse of state resources, is carried out in the full glare of the public whose poverty could be alleviated by a fraction of the wealth that their leaders conspicuously misapply. When the poor begin to realise that it is state money meant to be spent to improve their lives that few individuals are splashing around, when poor members of congregations come to the realisation that it is their offering and tithes that go into funding the affluent lives of their ministers, when the vulnerable in society see that their plight is of no concern

125 For further details on the extent to which pastors and leaders in charismatic churches in Ghana live in and argue in favour of affluence and luxury, see Asamoah-Gyadu , 2010:152-55.
126 Conference Agenda of the Methodist Church Ghana 2012:301.
to the powers that be who live in opulence in the midst of abject poverty, they perceive it as social injustice.

### 6.2.2 Corruption

Corruption has been defined in various ways. To be corrupt is to willingly act dishonestly in return for money or personal gains. Corruption is a dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery.\(^{127}\) It is a deliberate abuse of power through bribery or dishonest means for personal gains. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) broadly defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.\(^{128}\) In his statement on the 2002 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) survey report, Peter Eigen, Chair of Transparency International (TI) stated that corruption happens in developing countries when corrupt political elites work hand-in-hand with greedy business people and unscrupulous investors to put private gain before the welfare of citizens and the economic development of their countries.\(^{129}\) Corruption, in all its forms, is an act of taking advantage of a position of power in a way that disadvantages other people.

Since 1995, Transparency International, the leading civil society organization fighting corruption worldwide, has been releasing CPI for a number of countries each year, based on survey reports. Ghana’s performance from 1998 when it was included in the survey is found in table 10 below. From 1998 to 2011 the survey report was on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (very clean). This has changed since 2012 when the survey was based on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Thus the higher the CPI score, the less corrupt is the country. Ghana’s CPI increased from 3.3 in 1998 and 1999 to 3.9 in 2002, with a drop from 3.5 in 2000 to 3.4 in 2001. This means that Ghana was perceived to be improving on its corruption perception. The index sharply declined to 3.3 in 2003 and fluctuated between 3.6 in 2004 and 3.7 in 2008 with the lowest being 3.3 in 2006. 2009 to 2011 figures being 3.9, 4.1 and 3.9 respectively still showed better performance though unstable. With the new scale, Ghana seems to have improved from 45 in 2012 to 46 in 2013. If the

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\(^{127}\) [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/corruption], accessed on 6\(^{th}\) September 2014.

\(^{128}\) DfID’s Anti-Corruption Strategy for Ghana January 2013.

2011 score is re-calculated using the new methodology, Ghana’s score for 2011 would have been 46. This means that Ghana’s position on the CPI in 2012 dropped, implying that Ghana is still not winning the fight against corruption. This is true of the general trend. In the 1998 to 2011 scale of 0 to 10, Ghana’s highest CPI score was 4.1 in 2010, far below the average of 5 and nowhere near 10. On the new scale

Table 10 – Ghana’s CPI 1998-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rank/Countries</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>Number of Issues surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>55/85</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>63/99</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>52/90</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>59/91</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>50/102</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>70/163</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>69/179</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>67/180</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>67/180</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>62/187</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>69/183</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>64/176</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>63/177</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>61/175</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

131 The table has been built on figures extracted from each year’s CPI survey report released by Transparency International: http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview, accessed on 15th October 2014.
of 0 to 100, Ghana’s highest CPI score is still below average. Thus even though the statistics may show that Ghana is improving on its corruption perception there is still so much room for improvement. Given that different number of issues and different number of countries are surveyed each year, Ghana’s ranking on the CPI may not be the complete picture. However, giving the low CPI coupled with the general low ranking, corruption in Ghana is perceived to be relatively high.

Other surveys support the general view that corruption is worsening in Ghana by the day. According to the DFID, up to 90% respondents in a survey on corruption in 2012 said they believe that key public institutions such as government, police and judiciary were corrupt. The 2013 Global CPI released by TI reported that 54% of the respondents believed that corruption in Ghana had deepened in the past two years with 82% of the respondents expressing the view that corruption was a problem in Ghana. The 31st October 2013 Gallup report on perceived corruption survey ranked Ghana third most perceived corrupt country among 129 countries. Again, the June 2014 Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) report of a survey revealed that about 83% of Ghanaians perceive that corruption is high under the fourth republic. All the 35 respondents I interviewed in Ghana and the 5 focus groups mentioned corruption as a major source of social injustice and for most of them it was the first on the list. The respondents cited examples that indicated that in Ghana, corruption takes the form of people in position of power such as government appointees, public and civil service officials taking bribes before doing what they are paid to do. It also involves diversion of state resources into private pockets and accounts through manipulation of contract awarding processes or execution of assignments/contracts. The 2007 World Bank Enterprise Survey reported that about 38% of companies operating in Ghana expect to make informal payments in order to get things done and 48% expected to give gifts to get a construction permit. 63% of companies had to pay bribes to secure government contracts, 23% to get an operating licence and

134 Gallup is an American research-based, global performance-management consulting company.
18% in meetings with tax officials.\textsuperscript{137} According to the DfID, 60% of Ghanaians said in a survey that they paid a bribe in 2012.\textsuperscript{138} The above statistics indicate that corruption in Ghana is widespread and systemic.

One area of political life in Ghana that fosters corruption is the patronage networks. Politicians such as members of parliament and government appointees are looked up to by poor people of their villages/home towns to provide financial and other material support. In most cases, they have to lead people from their community to seek admission for their children in secondary and tertiary institutions and also introduce some to facilitate job search. For these and other dependence of poor village folks on politicians, the Ghanaian political sphere is characterised by a deeply entrenched culture of patron-client relations.\textsuperscript{139} According to S. I. Lindberg, practices of patronage include favours such as attending to individuals’ school fees, electricity and water bills, funeral and wedding expenses; distributing cutlasses and other tools for agriculture, finding someone a job or a place to stay, contracts, or other services; or even handing out small cash sums to constituents. It might also entail personal assistance in dealing with the authorities, whether police, courts, headmasters, local government officials or ministries (Lindberg, 2003:128-30). In the spirit of reciprocity, the clients bestow honour on their patrons. They give gifts of food stuffs and other farm produce and also protect their interests in the community. In election years, most of the clients become activists in the campaign teams of the political parties of their patrons, to the extent of risking their lives in order to get the patrons back in power. Lindberg’s 2003 survey of Ghanaian Members of Parliament (MPs) shows that they form these patron-client networks in order to sustain their political power. Patronage politics among Ghanaian MPs has thus persisted and increased through the country’s democratisation process (Lindberg, 2003:128-30). These relationships may not be seen as corrupt in themselves but they take MPs and government officials from their core duties and also put pressure on them to divert official resources into meeting these needs. A former Majority Leader of Ghana’s Parliament has said that some members of parliament ‘...take bribes to articulate the

\textsuperscript{137} http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploreeconomies/2007/ghana, accessed on 6\textsuperscript{th} September 2014.
\textsuperscript{138} See DfID’s Anti-Corruption Strategy for Ghana January 2013.
views of some individuals and organisations on the floor of parliament’. The bribery here may not be directly related to their patronage networks but it is possible that the need for the MPs to raise more money to fulfil their responsibility as patrons motivates their drive to engage in such corrupt practices. If policies were implemented such that resources of the nation are put into programmes that will alleviate poverty, the patron-client relationship, though it may continue, might not foster corruption.

The above surveys of perception of corruption in Ghana indicate that to the people of Ghana, corruption is a major problem. Far from being abstract, these perceptions are based on the day-to-day happenings both in public and private encounters. There are concrete examples of these perceived corruption reported in the Ghanaian media, almost on a daily basis. I first list few general examples of such systemic and institutional corruption reported and then continue to discuss specific examples of corruption in government and other public institutions and how they have been handled.

Most of Ghana’s corruption happen in public and civil services, though the private sector is not immune. It ‘has its roots in political and bureaucratic behaviours’. In the 2013 CPI report, the Ghana Police Service for the third time running topped the list of public organizations perceived to be the most corrupt, with political parties, the Judiciary, and the Education system following in that order. The Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) and the Cocoa industry are also fraught with systemic and institutional corruption. In 2011, an undercover investigative journalist, Anas Aremeyaw Anas released video footage and news reports of corrupt practice including bribery, tax evasion and stealing at Ghana’s Tema Harbour where CEPS was implicated. Similar footage was released showing smuggling of Cocoa, meant for export by Ghana, into neighbouring countries where producer prices were higher. Anas has also produced a report on undercover

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investigations which reveals ‘…massive corruption, pilfering and plain stealing at the Electricity Company of Ghana’ which cost Ghana million of Cedis.\textsuperscript{143}

In an article titled ‘Corruption in Ghana’ Nana Akosua Tweneboah-Koduacatalogues her personal experience of incidents of corruption in public and civil services. At a building permit office, she was asked to pay GH\textcelsius{}2000 for expedited service for which the officer was not ready to issue an official receipt. Other examples included officials in Birth and Death registry, the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Authority (DVLA), the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) and government hospitals who demanded extra money from customers, before they would offer services that they are paid to offer.\textsuperscript{144} In 2013, Manasseh Azure Awuni led an investigation which uncovered massive corruption at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital. They named some accountants who take bribes from patients, reduce their bills and divert the money into their private pockets. One example involved three accountants who together reduced the bill of a patient from GH\textcelsius{}1500 to GH\textcelsius{}750, forcing the patient to pay GH\textcelsius{}300 to them personally.\textsuperscript{145} Even though there had been similar complains on how these departments and agencies are infested with corrupt officials, my personal experience at the DVLA and the Passport Office in July 2013 proved otherwise when I got the services I wanted without being asked to pay extra. When I later passed this positive comment, workers in other public services attributed it to the recent undercover investigative journalism, causing corrupt official to be careful and selective. I was told then that my experience was the exception and that the norm is that bribery and corruption has over-taken the systems and institutions of Ghana that are established to serve the citizens. In the rest of this section, I cite some examples from government that underscore the invasive nature of corruption in Ghana.

In February 2001, barely a month in office, the then Minister of Sports, Mallam Issa, travelled with US$46,000 cash to Sudan and lost it.\textsuperscript{146} The money was

\textsuperscript{144} http://news.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2014/march-16th/corruption-in-ghana.php?print=1?print=1, 16\textsuperscript{th} March 2014, accessed on 17\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
\textsuperscript{146} http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=14140, 16\textsuperscript{th} March 2001, accessed 17\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
to be used to pay players of the senior national football team.\textsuperscript{147} To stem the tide of the endemic and systemic corruption that bedevilled the nation, the then President, John Agyakum-Kufour, had declared zero tolerance for corruption. Thus Mallam Issa’s case was treated as corruption manifest in wilful cause of financial loss to the state and the minister was fired. Upon the recommendation of the committee set up by the Inspector General of Police, Mallam Issa was held personally responsible for the missing money.\textsuperscript{148} He was prosecuted at an Accra Fast Track High Court\textsuperscript{149} and on July 20, 2001, he was convicted on two counts of stealing and fraudulently causing financial loss to the State. He was accordingly sentenced to four years imprisonment on each of the two counts, to run concurrently and also ordered to refund the US$46,000 to the State within one month, or serve an additional two-year jail term. The case went back and forth on appeal even to the Supreme Court, to no avail. He spent almost two years in prison and on 27\textsuperscript{th} July 2003, he was released on Presidential Amnesty, due to ill health. It is quite surprising that ten years later, in March 2011, a Deputy Sports Minister travelled to Brazzaville with over US$200,000 cash, being the bonuses for the players of the Senior National Team.\textsuperscript{150} Also in July 2014, the government of Ghana airlifted US$3,000,000 cash to Brazil to pay the appearance fees of the Ghana Black Stars at the then on-going FIFA Football World Cup. Though these two instances did not raise any issues of corruption or wilfully causing financial loss to the state, one wonders whether government official had learnt any lessons.

Mallam Issa’s case might have demonstrated that the then president was serious about fighting corruption in Ghana. However, during the eight-year period of his presidency, there were many other cases of corruption. This included sales of state-owned houses and lands to members of his government, the US$3,000,000 purchase of a hotel by his son with a loan guaranteed by government, the corruption allegations surrounding the US$75,000,000 spent on the presidential palace and another US$75,000,000 spent on the celebration of 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Ghana’s

\textsuperscript{147}http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=14194, 20\textsuperscript{th} March 2001, accessed on 17\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
\textsuperscript{148}http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=14770, 20\textsuperscript{th} April 2001, accessed on 17\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
\textsuperscript{150}http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=20570325, 17\textsuperscript{th} March 2011, accessed on 17\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
independence in 2007. The fact that none of these cases were investigated and that the perpetrators were not prosecuted made it difficult for Ghanaians to believe President Kufour’s seriousness in stemming the tide of corruption.

One of the key officials in President Kufour’s administration, Dr. Richard Anane, was involved in acts that were perceived as corruption and abuse of office. In February 2001, as the minister of health, Dr. Anane attended an HIV/AIDS conference in Washington. He met and had an affair with a young woman and had a child. This became an issue of enquiry, later in January 2005 when he was nominated for re-appointment as the Minister of Road and Transport and appeared before the parliamentary select committee on appointments. It was alleged that Dr. Anane sent money up to the tune of US$90,000 for the upkeep of the woman and the child. He used various means, including the offices of Ghana Airways for this transaction, leading to an accusation that he had used money of a state institution for personal purposes. The parliamentary appointment committee also drew attention to allegations of bribery and corruption and abuse of office against him, in the award of contracts. Dr. Anane was also alleged to have paid money, belonging to the then Ghana Airways into his private account. The Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) investigated Dr. Anane and found him liable for perjury, abuse of office and conflict of interest. Consequently, CHRAJ recommended to the president to sack him. Dr. Anane resigned and challenged the ruling till the Supreme Court cleared him, on the grounds that CHRAJ did not have the jurisdiction to investigate him. Dr. Anane was later re-appointed as Minister of Road and Transport. It seems a fairy tale but that was how a clearly

corrupt and immoral act of a government minister ended up with the state losing money and the perpetrator walking free.

Among the officials of the then opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) that were prosecuted by the Kofour-led New Patriotic Party (NPP) government was Mrs. Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, wife of Jerry John Rawlings, the President of Ghana from 7th January 1993 to 6th January 2000. Mrs Rawlings was prosecuted with seven others purported to have played a role in the divestiture of Ghana’s Nsawam Cannery.\footnote{http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=102518, 11 April 2006, accessed on 17th October 2014.} The Cannery was bought by Caridem Development Company Limited, owned by the 31st December Women’s Movement, whose founder and life president was Mrs. Rawlings. The Ghanaian public felt that the 31st December Women’s Movement was a wing of the NDC government that divested the Canary. Thus there were allegations of corruption and conflict of interest. On Wednesday 12th April 2006, Mrs. Rawlings and the others were charged at an Accra Fast Track High Court with numerous offences including causing financial loss to the state.\footnote{http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=102557, 12th April 2006, accessed 17th October 2014. See also http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=102405, 12th April 2006, accessed on 17th October 2014.} They had failed to pay interest accruing on an outstanding balance amounting to US$264,060,447 to the Divestiture Implementation Committee (DIC) in respect of the sale of the Nsawam Cannery. Given the association of Mrs. Rawlings with the then government that divested Nsawam Cannery on one hand and her relationship with Caridem, which bought the Cannery, the Ghanaian public suspected corruption or at least conflict of interest. The case went on until the end of 2008 when the NPP lost power to the NDC. Just before leaving office, President Kufour instructed that the charges should be dropped. Even though it may be Kufour’s attempt to gain favour with his successor, there was no doubt that the new government will discontinue the case. There is no evidence that Caridem was made to pay the money it owed the state. Thus another huge amount belonging to the people of Ghana had been lost to private individuals with impunity.
In recent times, government handling and payment of judgement debt has sparked allegations of corruption. The most popular of such cases is one involving Mr. Alfred Agbesi Woyome, a private contractor. Mr. Woyome obtained a judgement in his favour when he filed a writ against the government of Ghana for failing to pay him for a contract that was wrongfully terminated. Media reports indicated that on May 24, 2010, just a month after Woyome filed a suit against government, the High Court ruled in his favour, ordering the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance to pay a total of GH¢105,565,548.24 as judgment debt, interest and costs to Woyome.161 The Attorney General’s department did not put up any defence because, to them, the case was indefensible. Instead, the Attorney General negotiated a settlement with Mr. Woyome and requested the Finance Minister to pay him judgement debt. The suspicion of corruption was fostered by the revelation that Woyome was a financier of the governing political party. Also, the previous government, in whose tenure the contract was supposed to have been awarded, denied having any contract with Woyome. The then President instituted a probe into the case. However, when he defended Woyome that he was entitled to the money he has been paid because it was a court decision,162 his credibility in instituting the probe was undermined. The investigation found that the payment was wrong. Woyome was subsequently arrested, tried and ordered to refund the money to the national coffers. Unfortunately, the money has not yet been retrieved. Since then, the government has appointed a sole commissioner to investigate all judgements debts and the revelations are startling, as to how much of Ghana’s scarce resources have gone to individuals in the name of judgement debts. Again, this is another case of Ghana’s money lining the pockets of individuals to the disadvantage of the suffering masses who lose out because the loss of such monies means less money available to the government to embark on welfare programmes.

Other incidents of corruption and misapplication of public funds are the GYEEDA and SADA cases. The investigative report on the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) reveals that friends and families of the government were paid over one billion Ghana Cedis for

For political expediency, according to Manasseh Azuri Awuni, an investigation report by the National Security, recommending prosecution of GYEEADA officials, was hidden. The rot in GYEEADA is still under investigation but unfortunately, those implicated are still being shielded by government. Closely related to the GYEEADA saga is the Savana Accelerated Development Authority (SADA), which was established by law to see to the speedy development of five northern regions in Ghana deemed to be the poorest. There had been accusations of corruption, misapplication of funds and poor decision making in project implementation and supervision. Manasseh Azure Awuni once again investigated, wrote reports and released video footage, exposing the corrupt practices that wasted GH¢32.4 million without anything to show for it. Trees were planted in the dry season and workers were laid off almost immediately, leaving the trees to die and wasting the money invested. When the leadership of SADA was questioned, they claimed they were asked to plant trees and create jobs and that is what they did. What happened to the trees did not matter. Sadly, in some areas where there was thick forest cover, trees were felled or burnt in order to pave way for the planting of new trees. In the Northern Region, these trees included economic trees like shea-nut trees which were the main source of income for most poor people in the area. Thus the failure of the project meant a waste of Ghana’s scarce resources and loss of livelihood of the people due to the greed of the few elites who led the implementation of the project. The SADA afforestation project that was to bring development to the people and alleviate poverty rather took away their economic trees and left their land without vegetation. Once again, a few avaricious individuals have enriched themselves and deprived the people of Ghana of their resources and livelihood.

With all the revelations of rot and mismanagement at SADA and GYEEADA, there is yet to be heard what will happen to those held accountable. It is heartening to hear that government has retrieved GH¢14, 500, 000 from contractors who received


these payments illegally.\textsuperscript{165} This, if not only political propaganda, will attest to the fact that efforts made by the President in 2013, when he instructed the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice to retrieve monies illegally paid to individuals and companies through contracts with GYEEDA, SADA and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), yielded positive results. At the same time it will also bear witness to the fact that government holds a strong key to ending corruption in Ghana.

The systemic nature of corruption in Ghana’s public sector was starkly revealed in September 2014 when it was reported that the Commissioner of Human Rights and Administrative Justice, Ms Lauretta V. Lamptey, was involved in profligate spending of limited public funds on accommodation. According to an investigation report by the Daily Graphic from July 2011 to July 2014, the CHRAJ boss spent US$203,500 on rent and utilities, made up of the monthly US$5,500 on her rented accommodation for thirty-seven months (July 2011 to July 2014) and hotel accommodation costing US$456.25 a day since August 2014. Ms Lamptey had ordered a renovation of her official residence at a cost of GH¢182,000,\textsuperscript{166} which has taken three years but is yet to be completed. The 2012 Auditor General’s report showed that CHRAJ was involved in other corrupt practices that were siphoning funds from the state. As a watchdog against corruption and misapplication of public resources, CHRAJ has a mandate to protect and promote administrative justice to ensure that the government, its officers and other public and civil institutions are accountable and transparent. According to the Parliamentary Act that established CHRAJ, the Commission has the mandate to ‘investigate complaints of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms, injustice, corruption, abuse of power and unfair treatment of any person by a public officer in the exercise of his official duties’ and take steps to remedy the situation.\textsuperscript{167} Thus for the head of such an anti-corruption institution to insensitively use public funds on her accommodation, the Ghanaian public deemed it corruption at the apex. To make matters worse, CHRAJ has been attributing its none-performance to lack of funds. It is mind boggling that the head of


a public institution that is under-resourced can rent accommodation and live in an expensive hotel while a huge amount of money is spent to renovate her official residence, all to be paid for by the same budget which does not have enough funds to enable CHRAJ to perform its statutory duties. It has been reported that the Chief Justice has established a prima facie case against the CHRAJ commissioner and gone ahead to institute an investigation into her conduct.\(^{168}\) The Ghanaian public awaits what will become of the enquiry and whether the CHRAJ boss will face any penalty for misapplying public funds, and again, whether she will be made to refund the money she has misappropriated, if found guilty.

Furthermore, there are very few known cases of bribery aimed at manipulating the legal system. This is not because bribery does not happen, neither is it that there are no allegations of bribery and corruption against the judiciary in Ghana. Instead, despite the numerous such allegations, there is lack of evidence. The exceptions are one incident where the Judicial Council of Ghana dismissed two magistrates for taking bribes from parties in cases they were presiding over,\(^{169}\) and a report that a high court judge blamed lawyers for taking bribes from litigants in the name of judges.\(^{170}\) Again, there are many cases where ordinary Ghanaians are jailed for decades for stealing goats, and other household items, or even small amounts of money. On the other hand, there are politicians who are convicted of stealing large sums of money from government coffers or for mismanaging, misapplying or misappropriating state funds who are jailed for a few years. For instance, in 2013, a High Court Judge and a Court Registrar were jailed for nine and twelve months respectively for conspiring to commit a crime involving US$50,754.9. The money was meant for compensation of parties in litigation. They had converted it into Ghana Cedis and lodged it in a deposit account, sharing the interest between them.\(^{171}\) Also, recently, two high profile staff of the Ghana National Health Insurance Authority were given one year jail terms for stealing GH¢131,409.26 belonging to

the Amanfiman Scheme office in the Western region. These are two cases of theft involving prominent people in society, possibly close to corridors of power. This is in stark contrast with how ordinary people who are not considered powerful or prominent are treated. For instance in 2013, a Court sentenced a twenty-five year old man to five years in prison for stealing a goat. Also in 2014, a twenty-eight year old farmer who was charged for stealing cassava valued at GH¢500 was jailed for ten year with hard labour. It is true that the accused were tried in different courts by different judges. What is worrying is that these cases are just a microcosm of a larger problem where the rich and influential are dealt with leniently while the poor and non-influential are handed harsh sentences. In the corruption cases within ruling governments discussed earlier, the convicted politicians were either granted pardon or they won appeals against their convictions and sentences. Such avenues are never accessible to the poor and needy who are handed heavy sentences for very ‘insignificant’ crimes.

Following the trend of corruption allegations in Ghana, one can imagine the effects of corruption on the nation, including perversion of justice and denial of access to resources. While these huge sums of money are ending up in the pockets of a few individuals, increasingly, government has not been able to fulfil its role of providing livelihood opportunities for the poor and needy in both urban and rural Ghana. These incidence of misappropriation of state funds are evident that through corruption, resources meant to enhance the lives of poor people in Ghana end up replenishing the financial stock of those who already have enough. Indeed, ‘corruption…siphons vital resources for national development into the pockets of the elite and contributes to the denial of access to important social services to the people’. Ghanaians are expectant that the Government and CHRAJ initiated National Anti-Corruption Action Plan, a ten-year national roadmap to fighting corruption, may be a great tool in restoring the nation’s fortunes. This plan has been described as a comprehensive and holistic one that seeks to fight corruption at all

levels and in a very collaborative manner. This may be achieved only if the plan does not become a political propaganda and a national disaster, suffering similar fate as its predecessors.

6.2.3 Domestic Trade and Social Justice

Domestic trade and its impact on the livelihood of the individual is an issue that determines whether people in Ghana feel fairly treated or otherwise. In a society where communal living is paramount, people’s ability to contribute to the life of the community is very important. This will depend on how much resources they have. Whether they are peasant farmers who depend on the sales of their surpluses to survive or they are commercial producers who depend on effective marketing for their products to survive, fairness in domestic trading is essential to the achievement of social justice in Ghana. There are also the fishers, the bulk purchasing traders, the retailers, head potters and the general public who also depend on effective marketing with affordable pricing to be able to make meaningful use of their incomes. From the socioeconomic point of view, the producers, traders and consumers all look forward to good pricing. While producers want to be given fair prices, traders want to make reasonable profits and consumers want to get value for money. Unnecessary price hikes thus reduce the value of disposable income and negatively affects the living standard of the people but low prices also deprive farmers and fishers of their fair reward. The interview respondents and the focus groups pointed out the fact that domestic trade in Ghana has a lot of unjust practices whose victims are the poor peasant farmers and consumers.

The activities of market queens in Ghana who buy produce from farmers at very cheap prices and sell in the cities at high prices and who prevent these farmers from selling their produce directly in the market, has always been condemned as social injustice. In an article, Yaw Opare-Asamo takes up the perennial problem

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of seasonal tomato glut in Ghana. If the farmers were given free access to the city markets, it could increase their income and at the same time stabilize prices for consumers. This does not happen because the farmers have no means of getting their produce to the city markets. They are thus forced to sell their produce to the market women who, according to Opare-Asamoa, ‘...go to the tomato-growing areas to buy the tomatoes at ridiculously cheap prices’ and who ‘...come and charge an arm and a leg for them’ at the city markets. If any of these tomato farmers, Opare-Asamoa continues, ‘...decide to bring the produce themselves...they are refused access to the market’. This happens because the traders have organised themselves into associations with leaders called ‘Market Queens’ who use all means, mostly illegal, to stop the farmers from getting direct access to the market. This is in order to maintain high profit for the traders. In such situations, both the farmers and consumers lose, while the traders benefit from the high prices.\(^{178}\) Opare-Asamoah’s submission justifies the concerns of most of the respondents to the interview that access to the market has implication for pricing and income of farmers and ordinary people in Ghana.

The respondent who pointed to issues of domestic trade affecting social justice traced the problem from transportation and accessibility. Most of the food stuff and other essential agricultural goods are produced in the hinterlands. Producers need access through good roads and regular and reliable means of transport to send their produce to the city where there is high demand for them. Unfortunately, in Ghana, most road networks are bad. Also, fuel cost is high and spare parts for big trucks are expensive. This makes transportation of farm produce to the cities very expensive. There are traders who hire big tracks to such remote farming centres. Once they are able to get there, they offer the farmers any price they want. It does not matter whether it is good for the farmers or not. There is a great difference in the way they calibrate for the farmers and back in the city market, paying meagre prices to the farmers and charging exorbitant prices for them in the city. Though these traders are doing business for profit, they are not being fair to these famers who have spent many hours tilling the land and growing crops, when they pay them small amounts of money for their labour. One farmer bitterly complained:

I live and work in a very remote village in the Northern part of Ghana. There are no good roads here. We toil to produce tomatoes, yam and maize which rot because we do not have any means of transporting them. If we had silos or canneries, we could avoid post-harvest losses. We also have no price guarantee. So during the bumper season, we produce a lot but within a short time it is gone and for the rest of the year we have nothing. We cannot hope for any regular income. Even during harvest when we could have made good money to take us through the year, lack of transport, unsustainable prices and post-harvest losses deprive us of any such hopes. The result is that as soon as the planting season starts, we go into debts and sometimes we do not even get enough to pay what we owe.\textsuperscript{179}

The essential role that these local conglomerates play in the chain of distribution cannot be overemphasised. In most situations, without them, agricultural produce will rot in the rural areas and farmers will get nothing for their efforts. However, the way they organise themselves and the purpose for which they do it is unfair to both farmers and the general public. In cases where primary producers organise themselves into corporative, hire big trucks/vans to transport their produce to the city markets, either the market queens decide what price to give or they block them from accessing the market. Unfortunately, because these farmers have no arrangement for accommodation, they accept the price even if it is not good for them. For the traders to be able to make abnormal profits, they create artificial shortage by hoarding. When farmers decide to sell at the roadsides, they are in danger of all sorts of manipulations by urban visitors. To many of the respondents, this practice is unfair to the farmers. The effect is that due to high level of inflation, and the fact that farmers get less for their efforts, they pay more for other service, get into debt or are unable to take care of their families. Their status in the community thus suffers.

\subsection*{6.2.4 International Trade and Social Justice in Ghana}

International trade in this work simply refers to the exchange of goods and services between different nations, whether bilateral or multilateral. Ghana’s international trade components include export of mostly raw agricultural products such as cocoa, timber, mango, pineapple and tuna. Ghana also exports unrefined precious minerals

\textsuperscript{179} I interviewed this farmer at the Tudu Market in Central Accra, on 9th August 2013. He managed to bring down from the North few sacks of tubas of yam and other agricultural produce which he was selling on the roadside. He claimed the price he was getting was good but he could continue to sell only as long as the market queens do not see him.
such as gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese. Among these exports, cocoa, gold and timber are the major foreign exchange earners for Ghana. Ghana in turn imports finished products such as clothing, processed food, electronic equipment, agricultural machinery and jewellery. In recent times, some food stuffs, such as rice and maize have also been imported. Ten interview respondents raised international trade as a major factor affecting the state of social justice in Ghana.

From the traditio-cultural perspective, the survival of most farming and mining communities in Ghana depends on the resources available to them from the proceeds of the export of their produce. In most cocoa farming areas, the food needs of farmers and their dependants are met by the food stuffs that are harvested as part of their cocoa farming. But these are enough only to meet their subsistent needs. Their major income comes from the sale of the cocoa. Their level of income therefore depends on how much the government makes from the export of the cocoa, which they are only paid a percentage. The higher the price of cocoa in the world market, possibly, the higher the producer price that the government pays to these farmers. There are people in such communities who are also employed in sectors of the economy that depends on cocoa, such as Ghana Cocoa Board and other produce buying companies. The same scenario applies to mining areas and other export producing communities. Their livelihood depends on the price of the exports. In mining areas, for instance, employment rises and falls with the world price of gold, diamonds, etc. Again, arable lands in mining areas are taken over by multi-national mining companies to exploit minerals. There is thus not enough land for agriculture and as such the people depend on others parts of the country or mostly imports for their food needs. Such communities are able to support the vulnerable among them only when their income from the export products is enough for their immediate families and there are surpluses. There are food crop farmers in many Ghanaian communities whose income also depends on local patronage of their harvest. However, there are cheap import alternatives of staple food like rice and maize which out-compete them on prices. Their income levels are therefore low since in most cases they do not get buyers. On the socio-economic level of social justice, the government is able to embark on welfare programmes if export earnings are increasing and the earnings are managed well. Also, the import controls of government could determine whether local farmers can compete with imported
goods. Thus social justice, in both the traditio-cultural and socio-economic senses is affected by international trade.

Unfortunately however, since most of Ghana’s exports are unprocessed, the country does not get the maximum revenue available on the world market. This is worsened by the fact that Ghanaian producers and even the government have little or no say in determining the price of their exports. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) arrangements are so technical that emerging democracies such as Ghana do not have the technical know-how and even the sheer numbers of human resource to engage in those debates. The result is that the terms and conditions that are defined are more for the benefit of those who are making the decision and that countries like Ghana will have to accept whatever price they are offered for their exports. Worse still, Ghanaians do not determine the price of the goods they import. In most cases, they get less from exports and spend more on imports. The ordinary Ghanaian is thus worse off as he/she gets very little income from hard work and yet is expected to spend more on the essential commodities which are imported. The frustration of Ghanaians about the processes and outcomes of international trade is succinctly expressed by one of the respondents in the interviews:

How come that people in Ghana are not able to determine the prices of what they produce on the international market...how come that they are determined by cartels, which have no relation to the production? If you take cocoa for example, nobody in Ghana contributes to the determination of the price of cocoa on the international market. If it comes to importing machinery, technology and so on, again we are not in the position to determine the prices...when we export we lose and when we import we lose...people are not getting the right values for the labour that they expend in the production of raw materials that are exported...180

World prices of crude oil are also out of Ghana’s control and when imported, refined and released on the market, the high prices of petroleum products swell the price of almost all goods and services in the country. Since less revenue from exports and more expenditure on imports means less money for government to spend on welfare programmes and since cheap imports of food stuff compete away the local producers, poverty results and community life is negatively affected.

180 Interview: Pratt, 13th August 2013.
6.2.5 Poverty

In the interviews and focus group discussions, participants were of the view that poverty in Ghana has risen to a level high enough to be a social justice issue. From their traditio-cultural view of social justice, Ghanaians do not see poverty as injustice in itself. Most of the respondents commented that it is natural in every community to have people who due to no faults of theirs do not have enough resources to meet their basic needs. This would normally not be a problem in a communal society where those who have more than they need are willing to share with those who have less. However, negative socioeconomic factors have made it difficult for most of the ordinary citizens to make enough resources to provide their basic needs. Thus poverty, to these respondents, is a major issue of social justice because it comes as a result of injustice and that failure by society to put in place pragmatic policies to deal with poverty is in itself injustice.

A report produced by the International Labour Organisation in 2004 indicated that four out of every ten Ghanaians live in poverty, many of whom are food crop farmers, micro and small entrepreneurs and daily casual labourers. Women form the bulk of this group (ILO, 2004:2). The Ghana Statistical Service has also produced a report based on the 2010 population census which analyses non-monetary poverty in Ghana based on the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). This report puts the overall MPI national incidence of poverty at 42.7%, compared to the national income poverty measurement of 28.5% in 2006. The general picture in the report showed that poverty in Ghana, both monetary and non-monetary, is on the ascendancy (Owusu and Mensah, 2013:iv-vi). Recent studies and surveys of poverty in Ghana all indicate that more than a quarter of Ghanaians are poor. An August 2014 report on poverty by the Ghana Statistical Service put the poverty level in Ghana at 25% based on the UN definition of poverty.\textsuperscript{181} According to this definition, poverty is:

\ldots the total absence of opportunities, accompanied by high levels of undernourishment, hunger, illiteracy, lack of education, physical and mental ailments, emotional and social instability, unhappiness, sorrow and hopelessness for the future... also characterized by a chronic shortage of economic, social and political participation, relegating individuals to exclusion as social beings, preventing access to the benefits of economic and social development and thereby limiting their cultural development (Blanco, 2002).

This definition is all encompassing. It includes poverty as ‘a basic lack of means of survival’ where the poor cannot feed themselves properly or are at the risk of death in any normal circumstance (MacPherson and Silburn, 1998:1; see Domeris, 2007:9) and as economic deprivation (Domeris, 2007:9; see Novak, 1996; Sen, 1999). The UN definition however moves further away from seeing poverty as a ‘uni-dimensional economic phenomenon’ (Øyen, 1997:126-27) to a multi-faceted one with economic, social, political, cultural and demographic dimensions (Samad, 1996:34).

The report from the Ghana Statistical Service put the very poor in Ghana at the level of those who lived on less than GH¢2.17 a day. But in reality, the percentage of people living in poverty in Ghana, if actually based on the UN definition above will soar to about 60%. Going round Ghana in person, in August 2013 and January 2014, I saw the personification of poverty. More people are living on the street than there used to be ten years ago. Slums in Accra and Kumasi alone have more than tripled within the past decade. More children are out of school and most households cannot eat three square meals a day without having to sacrifice other life necessities such as clothing and shelter. Ghana started producing offshore crude oil in 2010. With more than a decade of stable government, good weather, vast arable land and abundant depository of mineral wealth, an additional wealth from oil should have made Ghana able to reduce poverty drastically. Unfortunately, even though Ghana has reached a lower middle income status and has churned out various statistics to show that poverty levels have reduced,182 the reality is that most Ghanaians are still living on less than US$1.25 a day, that there is alarmingly rising income and welfare inequality in Ghana183 and that poverty is still soaring in both rural and urban Ghana.184

Like all over the world, people are quick to blame the poor in Ghana for being the architects of their own misfortune. They are accused of being lazy, less forceful or incompetent. However, most of these poor Ghanaians are hardworking

farmers, fishers, weavers, artisans, potters and sometimes people struggling in urban centres doing all kinds of menial jobs in the homes and offices of the rich elite and government officials. The farmers, fishers, artisans and weavers do not get a fair reward for their effort and their surpluses are taken away so that the rich urban population can live cheaply. Potters and other urban workers do not earn living wages. Their employers would rather feel important when they become the patrons of these poor people than give them what is due them to enable them to be independent.

In mining areas, for instance, small scale mining, locally called ‘galamsay’ has been declared illegal. Local residents are treated harshly when they try eking-out a living by extracting the precious minerals such as gold, diamond or bauxite. The authorities send police and all kinds of taskforces to chase them away from the mining sites. Meanwhile, the government sells the land to multinationals and when the local residents see the sort of lifestyles that these multinationals live, they know there is some money in small scale mining. During the 2008 electioneering campaign, the then leader of the opposition NDC, the late J. E. A. Mills, made promises on campaign platforms to legalise ‘galamsay’ when his party wins power. This has not happened since the NDC came to office in 2009. Rather, they have tightened up laws against ‘galamsay’. Knowing the risk to life and natural vegetation, it is reasonable for government to safeguard people against illegal mining, especially given that in recent times scores of people have accidentally lost their lives in mine pits.\textsuperscript{185} However, it is possible to create a safe environment for the local people to mine legally and earn decent living. They do not have to live in wealth and still depend on city patrons for survival.

There is no doubt also that the oppression, corruption and injustice that happen in Ghana helps to create and perpetuate poverty. The hard working poor of Ghana can do better for themselves if the creators of poverty in a land full of wealth will create an enabling environment for all citizens. All the corrupt practices discussed above contribute immensely to perpetuating poverty. The more state funds end up in individual pockets, the less is available for development and life enhancing programmes to alleviate poverty. The close link between corruption and poverty is affirmed each year when the TI releases its CPI report. In 2004, Peter Eigen, Chair of

TI declared: ‘If we hope to reach the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, governments need to seriously tackle corruption in public contracting’.\textsuperscript{186} He repeated this in 2005 when he said: ‘Corruption is a major cause of poverty as well as a barrier to overcoming it’.\textsuperscript{187} The 2014 CPI report commented that: “Bribes and backroom deals don’t just steal resources from the most vulnerable – they undermine justice and economic development, and destroy public trust in government and leaders”.\textsuperscript{188}

6.2.6 Gender Insensitivity and Inequality – Social Injustice against Women and Girls in Ghana

Gender becomes a social justice issue when there is evidence that people are being denied their basic needs, rights and freedoms on the basis of their gender. I was surprised to discover that only 12 out of the 35 respondents mentioned gender as a social justice issue. I had earlier assumed that fighting against gender insensitivity and inequality should be one of the top issues for social justice in Ghana, because from my personal knowledge, women in most Ghanaian communities are treated without dignity and suffer inequality. It is true that attempts have been made to empower Ghanaian women. However, the problem is far from being solved. Patriarchy dominates most Ghanaian communities, resulting in a lot of gender insensitivity with women always losing out. For instance, when a woman has an abusive husband, she may seek the support of her family to seek divorce. However, because most traditional Ghanaian communities see divorce as a disgrace to the family of the woman, she is almost always told to go and submit to her husband. The general notion here is that if a marriage is not working, then the woman is not submissive. This is just one example of how women suffer suppression and oppression in patriarchal communities.

Nana Kofi Acquah makes a comprehensive submission on the complexity of the place of gender in social justice in Ghana:

Gender is a very big determinant of social justice but it needs to be put in context. I was brought up in a highly matriarchal tribe and so I grew up with very strong women

\textsuperscript{186}http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_2004, accessed on 18\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
\textsuperscript{187}http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_2005, accessed on 18\textsuperscript{th} October 2014.
\textsuperscript{188}https://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results, accessed on 21\textsuperscript{st} October 2015
in my life…So the first time I heard of feminism, I was totally shocked. In my part of Ghana when you need stuff, you go to your mother: which school you go to, which cloths you wear, who you marry; are actually more influenced by the women in your life than the men. The Akans have a saying that: ‘A father gives his children the soul, but the child belongs to the mother’s family’. By this the Akans mean that when a father gives a name that identifies his child, it is almost as if that is where his responsibility ends. The women almost always take the responsibility of looking after their children and shaping their future. It was different when I lived in the Northern part of Ghana. I noticed that the women were socially of a lower class. They were, to a large extent, supressed. This, I realise, is predominantly the case in other parts of the country. The sense of power of Akan women is very different from that of women from the Northern and other parts of Ghana.

The role of queen mothers as king makers among the Akans may give credence to Nana Kofi Acquah’s suggestion. Also, when elders meet, in most Ghanaian communities and a consultation is needed to make a decision, they say ‘we are going to consult the old woman’. Thus they regard women as repository of wisdom. Nana Kofi Acquah might however have over-generalised the Akan situation, because even among the Akans, there are places where decision making powers are the preserve of men. For instance, the queen mother has no other traditional political power over the men she nominates to be king. Mercy Amba Oduyoye confirms that the political significance of Akan matrilineal bond is ‘…only insofar as the Ohemaa (the queen mother) nominates the Ohene (the ruler)’ and that when it comes ‘to political power, even the matrilineal, matrilogical Asante are not matriarchal’ (Oduyoye, 2009:123; commenting on Busia, 1951:78). However, Oduyoye argues elsewhere that the political insignificance of the Asante queen mother was born out of the attitude of the colonial masters not to recognise her, an act that was exploited by Asante men to suit their patriarchal agenda (Oduyoye, 1995:93-96; see Rattray, 1969:83-84, 294-95). Also, in almost all communities in Ghana, there are cultural practices that suppress women. These include widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and trokosi. Unfortunately, as Mercy Amba Oduyoye rightly puts it, statistics to illustrate the prevalence of violence against women in Africa are difficult to come by (see Oduyoye, 1995:165).

Widowhood rites in Ghana differ from community to community but it is common to all communities that when a woman loses her husband, she is made to undergo humiliating, oppressive and inhuman cultural practices and in most cases is

189 The Akans of Ghana practice the matrilineal system of inheritance.
190 Interview: Acquah, 13th February 2014.
left to fend for herself and her children without being allowed to inherit any of her late husband’s estate. Michael Martey Tei-Ahontu discusses widowhood rites in Gâ communities in Ghana (Tei-Ahontu, 2008:39-57). These practices, which Tei-Ahontu recounts as done during such rites are very much the same in other parts of Ghana. Generally, a widow is made to wear black clothes for the one year period of mourning. During this one year, there is a period of confinement to keep her from having intimate relationships before the end of the mourning period. One practice that is injurious to the health of the widow is when she is forced to bathe in a stream (see Odoyoye, 1995:15) or, in coastal areas, in the sea at dawn (Tei-Ahontu, 2008:42). Though Ghana is a tropical country, in certain times of the year, the weather can be very cold between mid-night and day break. Thus forcing the widow to bathe in the sea at dawn may affect her health. Also, some families heckle the widow, particularly at the cemetery, after the burial of her deceased husband. Tei-Ahontu describes this heckling vividly: ‘In most cases someone strangles the neck of the woman from behind with a cover cloth…Some people can go to the extreme by sprinkling pepper into the eyes of the widow…the intention is to cause some pain to the widow’ (Tei-Ahontu, 2008:45). In some communities, the women in the family of the deceased mix other herbs with the pepper and bathe her with it (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; see Tei-Ahontu, 2008:57). In one such heckling incident, the concoction sprayed into the widow’s eyes resulted in total blindness (see Tei-Ahontu 2008:45).

In other cases, the widow is physically beaten and stripped naked in public. She may be forced to sleep in the same room with the corpse of the deceased over night to prove her love for her husband and her innocence in her husband’s death. Some families collect the water used to wash the corpse into a bucketed and force the widow to drink and/or bathe with it (Tei-Ahontu, 2008:44-45). In rare cases, she may even be forced to have sexual intercourse with strangers in order to remove supposed bad luck that might come upon her as a result of being widowed. The widowhood rites among the Vagla tribe of Northern Ghana includes forcing the widow to sit on the bare floor without eating nor drinking until the dead husband is buried. She is also forced to sleep on a straw mat and use a grinding stone as her pillow (Kondor, 1993; see Tei-Ahontu, 2008:57). In 2010, it was reported that ‘widowhood rites and other negative cultural practices are still matters of great concern, especially, in the
In September 2014, ActionAid Ghana (AAG), in collaboration with Women and Orphans Movement and Belim Wusa Development Agency organised a workshop to educate the communities in and around Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region of Ghana. At the forum, a widow narrated the ordeal she went through at the hands of the family of her deceased husband. Her story confirmed that widows in such communities go through very gruesome inhumane treatments, including those mentioned above.

Apart from widowhood rites, there are the witch camps in the northern part of Ghana. When people are branded witches, especially women, they cannot live in their own communities. They have to live in a witch camp. In a report titled: ‘Condemned without Trial: Women and Witchcraft in Ghana’, AAG reports on the ordeal women go through when they are accused of witchcraft in communities in the northern part of Ghana.

According to the report, there are six witch camps in these areas where, mostly women, accused of witchcraft and banished or chased away by their communities, find refuge (Kwatra, 2012:4). The women living in these camps are voiceless; they have no representation in deciding matters affecting their lives and they do not attend village meetings due to social barriers including discrimination and stigmatisation. They therefore have no access to justice. J. P. Kirby, a Catholic priest and a former missionary in Ghana, describes the awful situation of these accused witches and the deplorable conditions they live in:

Their mud huts and leaky roofs offer little protection from the torrential rains. The knee-high walls of their compounds deny them privacy and human dignity. Their life lacks the most basic needs: food, water, shelter, and clothing, but most of all, human recognition, companionship, and love. Because of the African formula for identity, ‘I am because we are’, social rejection means they are denied their very identity as human beings and children of God (Kirby, 2015:19).

All it takes is one person to wake up one day and accuse a woman of witchcraft. She does not have any means of defending herself. The people in the village will immediately pounce on her, beat her and often banish her from the village. According to the report ‘Most of the time the allegation of witchcraft happens quickly. A lot of the women leave with absolutely nothing, sometimes not even slippers on their feet

192 For further discussions on issues of witchcraft accusations in Ghana and the response of the Christian community, see Kirby, 2015:19-22 and Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015:23-27.
and sometimes with wounds or bruises because they have been beaten’ (Kwatra, 2012:4). In some cases, the accused witches are not lucky enough to reach the camp. They die on their way. The report states the case of a woman from Jillig number 2, a town near Gambaga witch camp, who was murdered in the process of running to the camp, ‘after being blamed for the death of a child through witchcraft’ (Kwatra, 2012:5).

These witch camps are effectively women’s prisons where inmates have been given no trial, have no right of appeal but have received a life sentence. However, because these alleged witches are more vulnerable and at risk of being beaten and killed in their own communities, once they are accused of witchcraft, they run to the camps for safety (Kwatra, 2012:5). Those who are lucky enough to reach the camp have injury and pain resulting from the violence they suffer. The story of Asana, as told in the ActionAid report is revealing. Asana, a 27 year old pregnant woman was accused of being a witch by her ex-husband when he was ill. He claimed to have dreamt that Asana was trying to kill him. He beat her severely and poured melted plastic over her. Asana fled to her mother’s house, but her ex-husband followed her, beating her, her elderly mother and younger brothers (Kwatra, 2012:6).

The gender insensitivity and inequality in all these is that though both men and women can be accused of witchcraft, the vast majority are women, especially the elderly and widows. In a patriarchal society like the northern part of Ghana, women who are not safely protected by a man, usually a father, husband, or sometimes a brother, are extremely vulnerable to being labelled witches. In addition, most of these older women and unmarried or childless women do not seem to fulfil gender stereotypes and may be perceived as not contributing to the economic needs of the household. A survey by ActionAid in 2008 found that over 70% of residents in Kukuo witch camp were accused and banished as witches after their husbands died. The survey further revealed that about a third of the women in Kukuo camp were not engaged in any form of economic activity before they were banished there (see Kwatra 2012:8). In an article, Mensah Adinkrah discusses thirteen incidents of homicide committed against women accused of witchcraft during 1995 to 2001. His work reveals witchcraft accusations and murder as a form of gender discrimination (Adinkrah, 2004:325-56). This is an unjust targeting of vulnerable women under the guise of witchcraft in order to visit violence and cruelty on them.
Female genital mutilation (FGM), traditionally called female circumcision, is another unjust means by which women and girls are put through ordeals in Ghana. A typology developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), describes four types of FGM (WHO, 2008:4). The first involves the partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce. The second also involves the partial removal of the clitoris in addition to the labia minora, leaving the labia majora intact and the vagina left unclosed. The third involves the complete removal of the clitoris and labia minora as well as the inner surface of the labia majora. The two sides of the vulva are then stitched together with thorns or by silk of catgut sutures so that when the remaining skin of the labia majora heals, it forms a bridge of gaps of scar tissues over the vagina. The fourth involves ‘pricking, piecing or incision of the clitoris and or labia, burning of the clitoris and surrounding tissues and scrapping or cutting of the vagina or surrounding tissues (WHO, 2008:4). Depending on the community performing the FGM, the age of victims falls between day one and ten years old. In other communities, FGM is carried out at puberty or during pregnancy.

Samuel Adadi Akapule describes the excruciating ordeal that an FGM victim goes through: she is held down tightly by a number of women including relatives. The perpetrators use sticks to pull longer, the small lips of the vagina, pulling her legs apart in order to cut part of her genitalia with sharp instruments such as knifes, blades or scissors. They douse the wound with alcohol, lemon juice or ash, which increase the agony. In some cases, shea butter or coconut oil is used, which may soothe the pain. In other cases, herbal mixtures, porridge or cow dung are used and this may cause infection. Depending on how long it takes the wound to heal, the agony may last for months.\textsuperscript{193} Considering the permanent physical, psychological and physiological damages FGM does to its victims, their suffering is life-long.

A conservative estimate by WHO, quoted by UNICEF, indicates that about one hundred to one hundred and forty million girls and women have undergone FGM in the world with two million more at risk of the painful and dehumanising practice each year (WHO, 2008:4; see also UNICEF, 2013; Yoder et al, 2004). In Ghana, FGM is practiced mostly in the three northern regions. Research by the Navrongo Research Institute in 1998 and Dr. K. Odoi Agyekum of Rural Help Integration, indicate an FGM prevalence rate of 77\% and 85\% respectively, in the Kassena-

Nankana East District. Also, statistics from the Social Welfare, Ghana Health Service and the Ghana Education Service indicate that 30% of girls between the ages of one to seventeen years are either mutilated in their own communities or smuggled into neighbouring Burkina Faso, Togo or Niger to be mutilated. Though UNICEF reported in 2011 that FGM prevalence in Ghana had declined to a record low of 4% compared to other countries, they were quick to acknowledge that the low percentage ‘still translates to several hundred thousand women and girls and that there are areas of the country, for example, the Upper West region, where FGM is much more prevalent with 16% of all girls aged fifteen to nineteen years having been cut’.194

Traditionalists who practice and promote FGM justify it on the grounds of ancestral beliefs and rites,195 designed to preserve the woman’s virginity by diminishing her sex drive and the consequent temptation to have sex before marriage.196 The injustice of FGM however, lies in the fact that though seen as a female version of male circumcision, the purpose and the result of FGM oppress and dehumanise women but at the same time promote male dominance and superiority. For example, male circumcision protects men against filth and germs, helps the passage of urine and enhances their sexual pleasure. However, in FGM, the parts of the female genital that are cut off are very important to the woman’s sexual and reproductive activities. FGM actually inhibits women’s ability to enjoy sex. Oduyoye is therefore right in commenting that the dominant strand in the practice of FGM is that it is a response to the needs of men, which needs women are socialised to meet. In a society where marriage and childbearing define women and where a woman would not be married without circumcision, mothers will reluctantly, but inevitably, force their daughters to undergo the surgery (Oduyoye, 1995:165). Furthermore, FGM often has negative health implications for its victims, resulting in medical complications. This includes infections such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B due to the use of unsterilized sharp instruments and the application of local dressing such as herbal concoctions, ash and cow dung. Micro-organisms that cause such infections may move up into the bladder and then to the kidneys to cause kidney problems.

Other victims experience difficulty in passing urine, pain during sexual intercourse, difficulty in child birth and barrenness. Some women even die either during or immediately after suffering the heinous ordeal of FGM or die later as a result of complications and psychological trauma. In some cases, the girls who suffer the inhuman and undignified act of FGM become school dropouts. Indeed, FGM negatively affects the dignity of women and violates their fundamental human rights. FGM is a very cruel, inhuman and degrading abuse of the physical and psychological state of its victims. It is a cultural means of justifying discrimination against girls and women and promoting gender inequality.

Another unjust practice in Ghana that oppresses women is Trokosi, a traditional shrine slavery that deprives victims of all their human rights and dignity. Trokosi simply means ‘slave of the gods’ or ‘wife of the god’. It is a traditional religious practice found among the Ewes in parts of Ghana, Benin and Togo. It is supposedly an important part of the local justice system of the people, the custodian of which is the priest of the local shrine. In the event of a crime (such as murder, rape, adultery or theft), the priest咨询s the gods, who will reveal the family and the person responsible for that crime. In most cases, the criminals are powerful men in the family. In other cases, families suffering afflictions may enquire from a shrine to know its source. The priest may reveal that the cause of the calamity is a curse placed on a family member who committed a crime. As a means of atoning for the crime, in both cases, the family from which the criminal hails must provide a virgin girl to serve the gods at the shrine. It is the belief of the community which practice trokosi that if the family does not bring a virgin to serve the gods in the shrine, an untold misfortune will befall the whole family and to some extent, the whole community. In this sense, the practice of trokosi could be linked to the traditional cultural and religious perspectives of social justice. Here in the bid to maintain harmonious community relationships, the powers of the gods are invoked in this practice of trokosi to deter people from committing crime. However, the inhuman treatment and the abuse of the rights of the innocent virgin is in itself injustice. She is sacrificed to atone for the misdeeds of a powerful person, mostly male, in order to avert calamity that will supposedly be visited on the community.

197 Trokosi describes the system/the practice and its victim.
Trokosi is characterised by confinement of victims, rape, child labour, and denial of education, all of which amount to abuse of the rights of children. The girl slave is confined to the shrine and cannot leave until the priest decides to release her. Children born to her also become slaves to the gods. Because the trokosi is seen as the wife of the gods, the priest rapes and defiles her at will without the responsibility to provide for the trokosi or the children born out of his sexual intercourse with her. Victims of this practice are also deprived of their education and healthcare. One liberated former slave who spent twenty-one years at a shrine and has a fifteen year old child with the priest said that throughout her pregnancy, the priest did not allow her to go to the hospital for antenatal care. She also had to fend for herself. Worse still, communities that practice trokosi believe that accepting a trokosi back into the community brings misfortunes. Consequently, if a trokosi manages to escape from the shrine, she is sent back to suffer worse ordeals.

Trokosi victims go through a lot of trauma. It is unjust because they have not committed the crime for which they are enslaved. They also suffer lots of physical and psychological trauma because they are rejected and abandoned by their family. As a result of the trauma they go through, trokosi victims lose their self-esteem, self-worth, dreams and aspirations. The seriousness of its human rights abuse has long been asserted. E. K. Quashigah describes the ‘physical, mental, moral, economic, social and even the spiritual conditions’ of the shrine slaves as ‘nothing but squalor, despondency, sexual exploitation, starvation and disease’ calling it ‘a type of slavery which dehumanises the victims to such a level as is unimaginable’ (Quashigah, 1998:199). These and many other startling revelations of the ordeal that the trokosi suffers justify Asamoah-Gyadu’s assertion that the practice of trokosi (shrine slavery) falters in the area of maintaining fundamental human rights (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004:346). It is injustice perpetrated in the name of culture. It condemns innocent young girls to a life of indignity, suffering and oppression.

All these atrocious acts happen to women in Ghana despite the many human rights laws, constitutional provisions and other human rights activities which attempt to stop them. For instance the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana clearly states that: ‘All cultural practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental wellbeing of a person are prohibited’.\(^{198}\) There is no doubt that all the

practices described above are all cultural practices that dehumanise and injure the physical and mental wellbeing of their victims. Part of Ghana’s directive principle of state policy allows the government to take steps to ensure that ‘...traditional practices which are injurious to the health and well-being of the person are abolished’. In 1994, Ghana’s Criminal Code (Act 29, 1960) was amended to include FGM as a second-degree felony punishable upon conviction by three or more years’ imprisonment. This was further amended in 2007 making FGM a criminal offence punishable on conviction by five to ten years prison sentence. In November, 2003, a Court in the Upper West Region of Ghana jailed a forty-five year old woman for five years as punishment for carrying out FGM on three girls, including a three-week old baby. In February 2004, another court in the Upper East Region of Ghana sentenced a seventy year old woman to five years imprisonment when she was convicted of performing FGM on seven girls. In the case of trokosi, the 1992 constitution again spells out clearly that: ‘No child shall be deprived by any other person of medical treatment, education or any other social or economic benefit by reason only of religious or other beliefs.’ The constitution also prohibits slavery and forced labour respectively: ‘No person shall be held in slavery or servitude’ and: ‘No person shall be required to perform forced labour’. To further strengthen the battle against trokosi, the Criminal Code was amended in 1998 to outlaw all forms of ritualized forced labour, making it a criminal offence punishable by a minimum of three years in jail.

Again, Ghana’s assent to some International Laws and Conventions that seek to protect the rights of all, especially girls and women are great efforts to ending all forms of violence, injustice and inequality against women. These include the Convention of the Rights of the Child, African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). Others are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Declaration on Violence against Women (1993) and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on

201 Section 69A subsection 1 and 2 of Ghana’s Criminal Code as amended in 2007.
Women (1995). Furthermore, Ghana has also set up constitutional and statutory institutions to, among other things, deal with these acts of injustice against women. They include CHRAJ, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) and the National Commission for Civic Education. Also, there are many social justice and human right campaign organisations which educate communities and raise awareness about the dangers and abuses of FGM, widowhood rites, witches camps and trokosi. These include the Ghanaian Association for Women’s Welfare and the Ghana chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers. Organisations such as Every Child Ministries and International Needs, Ghana have successfully organized the liberation of more than four thousand trokosi slaves and their children. These organisations have given the liberated slaves and their children education, and employable skills.

Unfortunately, despite outlawing trokosi, irrespective of the legal instruments that stand against the practice and in spite of the many advocacy groups and organisations working to liberate the slaves and end trokosi, it is still entrenched and practiced in some communities in the Volta region of Ghana. Again, notwithstanding all these efforts, it is disheartening that FGM is still perpetrated in hideouts in some communities in Ghana. It seems that the laws and institutions are either weak or ill resourced. Also, many people in such communities are either not aware of the laws or they believe so much in superstition that they accept the status quo.

6.2.7 Domestic Work Arrangement

Domestic work in Ghana was predominantly a family and communal arrangement where ‘well off’ members of the community, usually living and working in cities, bring along children of their poor relatives living in the village to live with them. Locally referred to as House Helps, these domestic workers were brought in to help with domestic work, child care, cleaning, cooking, washing and running errands, among others. In return for the domestic work done by these children, they expect their ‘employers’ to put them through formal education. In recent times however, there are formal arrangements involving agencies and intermediaries who help to negotiate salaries and other service conditions. According to Challenging Heights, a
children’s right organisation in Ghana, about 85% of all children in domestic work in Ghana are girls.\(^{204}\)

For about half of the respondents to the interview, domestic work arrangement has become a social justice issue because of the many stories of abuse and violence. Most domestic workers are not paid any salary. A report by Challenging Heights revealed that the only payment 44% of child domestic workers receive for their services ‘are a place to sleep, food to eat and the rejected cloths they receive from the children of their employers’. Those who are paid receive minimal salaries below the national minimum wage. In 2009 while the minimum wage was about GH₵71.55, it was reported that most house helps were paid between GH₵5.00 to GH₵6.00 per month. Abuses that have been reported include sexual abuses, starvation, bad accommodation and unending hours of work. In most families, the domestic worker is not allowed to enjoy what the family members enjoy. He/she sleeps in accommodation below the standard conducive for human living. They may sleep in the garage, on the floor, in a store room or even in the open compound. Again, most domestic workers do not eat what their employers and their family eat. They are given left overs or made to eat some other food that the employing family will not eat. Sometimes, they are even starved for days.

In addition to all these, some domestic workers suffer violence, assault and abuse in the form of beating, insults and humiliation in the presence of other family members or outsiders. They also have long working hours. They wake up very early before every other person in the house and they can only go to bed after the last member of the family has gone to bed. One of the focus group members related a situation in his family where he personally had to intervene before the house help was allowed to go to bed when all her core job is done, whether others have gone to bed or not. The cases of male employers of female domestic workers sexually harassing or abusing them or entering into a forced sexual relationship with them is a common knowledge even though not much statistical evidence can be adduced. There are times when children result from such sexual relations and the male

employers either deny it or fail to provide for the mother and child. In 2011, a popular preacher in Ghana was accused of fathering a baby with his house help. DOVVSU investigated the case but nothing officially was heard again. As it normally happens, it is possible that the families involved might have settled the case out of court and as in most cases, the employer, being a public figure, would have been let off the hook by paying only a minimal compensation. Clearly, domestic work arrangements in certain situations are another form of slavery through which ‘privileged’ families perpetrates acts of injustice against poor children, men and women.

As in the case of all the other issues of social injustices that have been discussed above, there is legislation that is supposed to bring justice to these children and men and women. The overall legal framework for working conditions in Ghana is provided in the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana, which gives every person the right to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions and to receive equal pay for equal work without any discrimination. It also guarantees rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours, holidays with pay and remuneration for public holidays for every worker. The Constitution also guarantees protection from slavery or servitude and forced labour. Issues of formalising employment relations, working hours, emoluments and other legislations to operationalize the constitutional provisions are enshrined in Ghana’s Labour Law (Act 651, 2003). Unfortunately, the practice of enslaving domestic workers continues in Ghana. Many of these workers, especially children, continue to work under inhuman conditions, deprived of all rights and privileges.

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208 See especially Article 33 and 34 of the Ghana Labour Law.
6.3 Conclusion

Chapter six set out to report issues of contemporary social justice, drawing attention to the systemic and endemic injustice in Ghana. Critical to this quest was the perception of Ghanaians as to how social justice should be defined. Though fairness and equal opportunity were predominant in the definitions that interview respondents provided, the varied approach to social justice had to be categorised into three. The first, traditio-cultural approach is embedded in the traditional Ghanaian communal living where everybody in the community is supposed to be provided for, irrespective of their economic or social status. The second, religious approach, emanates mainly from the people’s encounter with Christianity but not out of character with their own African belief in a bigger power who has the duty and the means to ensure justice for all. The third, socioeconomic approach, is born out of a modern globalised perspective where governments are perceived to have the resources and the responsibility to ensure equal opportunity and fairness in the distribution of the national cake. The fact that the three facets are not mutually exclusive has been underscored. In a typical Ghanaian community, the role of communal life, the belief in God and the responsibility of government will all be at play in seeking or assessing social justice.

Seven main issues of contemporary social injustice, which were raised by the respondents of the interview, have been discussed. Using news reports and comments of respondents, it has been established that there is chronic and systemic social injustice in Ghana. This is manifest in how politicians, religious leaders and wealthy individuals display affluence, extravagance and opulence while the masses, from whose sweat most of this wealth might have been made, are condemned to perpetual and abject poverty. The serial nature of corruption in government also confirms that government’s inability to ensure the wellbeing of the citizens has its root in how individuals in corridors of power are allowed to siphon state resources for their selfish use. Again Ghanaians feel unjustly treated when it comes to trade at the domestic level and in the international market. While local conglomerates of traders take advantage of lack of means of transport and desperation of primary producers, to cheat them, Ghana’s international trade partners determine both how much she gets for her exports and how much she pays for her imports. The result is
that government is left with almost nothing and has to go to these same trading partners to beg for loans in other to meet the social needs of its people. Consequently, poverty is on the increase in Ghana and this has also made most Ghanaians, especially women and children, vulnerable to other violence, injustice and inhuman treatment such as widowhood rite, FGM, witches camps, trokosi and servitude in domestic work. Despite the efforts of government and civil society to improve social justice, these acts of injustice persist in Ghana untamed. Thus social justice suffers in Ghana as much as the people of Ghana suffer social injustice. In the light of all the above examples of systemic and chronic social injustice in Ghana, the respondents were right that Ghana has a longer journey to travel towards achieving social justice.
Chapter 7

The Role of some Churches in the Quest for Social Justice in Ghana

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents examples of church social action and other social engagement geared towards addressing issues of social injustice in Ghana. As part of gathering data for the study, I interviewed some heads of churches and church officials in charge of the social action programmes of those churches. The Church\textsuperscript{209} in Ghana considers itself called to a prophetic role in society: as the voice of the voiceless and the conscience of Ghanaian society. To this end the Church has been a major player in advocating social justice, good governance and in speaking against abuse, and corruption in Ghanaian society. This is done through the release of communiques and press statements and by seizing the opportunity, whenever it comes, to speak out in society. This happens especially with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Pentecostal Council. Again, the churches accept the challenge to rise up to their religious duty to ensure that the very poor live as human beings. For this reason, there are many churches in Ghana, both historic mission and contemporary congregations who are directly involved in providing services and implementing programmes that are able to alleviate the plight of suffering individuals who are at the receiving end of the acts of social injustice that have been described in chapter 6. Though the efforts of the churches in correcting social injustice might not be rigorous enough, there are indications that churches in Ghana are calling attention to issues of social injustice and directly addressing issues of poverty, inequality and unfairness.

\textsuperscript{209} I use ‘the Church’ here as a collective term for all churches in Ghana. However, where activities and programmes of selected churches are highlighted, the names of those churches are specified.
7.1 Social Action Programmes of the Church in Ghana

7.1.1 Provision of Educational Facilities

As a means of teaching Christianity and training local personnel to provide leadership for the churches, Christian missionaries established schools in almost all the areas in Ghana where they operated. Since then, the missionary-founded churches continue to establish schools from primary to secondary levels. Initially, the churches managed these schools, developing their own curricula, training teachers and managing all other aspects of their schools. From the time of independence, there have been changing levels of partnership between government and the churches in managing mission schools. For instance, most mission schools in Ghana are public schools with the churches providing limited supervision and influence. However, the recognition that these schools were originally mission schools has not diminished and they continue to keep that identity. In Ghana today, more than 60% of all basic, secondary and teacher training schools are mission schools. Within the last three decades, churches in Ghana have also established private universities.

The approach of most of the churches to providing educational facilities is unique and aimed at meeting the needs of people who ordinarily would not have access to formal education. Most mission schools were and still are in remote rural areas where they are the only or the best schools available. This ensures that every child of school age has access to education. In 1995, at a time when the country’s public universities could not absorb the teeming young people who qualified for university education, the first private university in Ghana was established by the Seventh Day Adventists, called Valley View University. The International Central Gospel Church followed by upgrading its ministerial training institute into the Central University College in 1997. Since then many private universities have been established and here too other churches are playing leading roles. The Methodist University College, the Presbyterian University College and the Catholic University College are more examples of what the churches are doing in this area of tertiary education.

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210 Interview: Asante, 14th August 2013.
education. This initiative by the churches made university education accessible to more secondary school graduates than the public universities could offer.

However, Mr. Kwesi Pratt expressed concern that most private universities run by churches are beyond the reach of the poor and needy in society: ‘….some of these universities promoted by churches are the most expensive, far more expensive than public universities and far more expensive than private universities built for commercial purposes…’\textsuperscript{211} When I put Kwesi Pratt’s concerns to Prof. J. N. Kudadjie, Vice Principal of the Methodist University College, he did not dispute the fact that church sponsored private universities may charge more fees than other private universities. He however intimated that because church-sponsored universities provide better quality services to their students than business oriented private universities, in real terms they charge less.\textsuperscript{212} Since most business-oriented private universities are looking for profit, they charge tuition fees and few other logistics and leave their students to personally handle other important components of their studies, such as books. Also, they do not pay their staff acceptable remuneration. However, because the churches believe in social justice, they pay their staff better in order to deliver quality tertiary education. They also have higher standard libraries and other logistics which the business-oriented private universities do not have. As a move towards reducing the burden that private university education put on parents and students, Prof. Kudadjie suggested that the government should treat all university students equally, whether they are in the public or private institutions. At the moment, the government gives bursaries to all students in public universities. This helps to reduce what they pay to the universities and also supplement their subsistence. Thus if there is to be real social justice, the state must pay bursaries to everybody who qualifies for tertiary education. Some could choose to utilise it in public universities but those who are not admitted to public universities should have those bursaries paid to private universities to the same level as those in public universities then parents can pay the difference. This, to Kudadjie, will change the situation where some Ghanaian parents have to pay huge sums of money because their children could not gain admission to public universities.

Another means through which churches in Ghana are helping the poor and needy to access education is scholarship schemes. The Methodist Church Ghana has

\textsuperscript{211} Interview: Pratt, 12\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.

\textsuperscript{212} Interview: Kudadjie, 16\textsuperscript{th} August 2013.
a scholarship scheme that provides funding for brilliant but needy students from secondary school to university or other tertiary institutions. The scheme, started in the year 2000, has sponsored over nine hundred members of the church between the ages of 14 and 21 years in their educational aspirations. About one hundred and fifty beneficiaries are being sponsored currently, seventy of whom were awarded in September 2014.\(^{213}\) Stories of the beneficiaries indicate that most of them, who are now either in universities or gainfully employed after graduation, could not have attained it given the economic circumstances of their families. I personally know a young man in my home town whose family had difficulty in supporting him financially for his secondary education. He was brilliant by all standards and achieved an excellent result in his basic education exams. He won a scholarship from the Methodist Church to secondary school and did very well. He is now a professional teacher and doing further studies in the university. Also, through its social responsibility wing, Central Aid, the International Central Gospel Church has been awarding scholarship to brilliant but needy students since 1998. In 2014, four hundred Senior Secondary students from all parts of the country benefited from the initiative. The amount given to each scholar is to assist them in paying their tuition and registration fees.\(^{214}\) Similar initiatives by other churches have been an opportunity by which poor and vulnerable children, who would have lost out in education due to poverty, have equal access to quality education and a better future.

### 7.1.2 Provision of Healthcare Facilities

Many churches in Ghana are also involved in the provision of health services. Most hospitals, clinics and health facilities in rural areas have been established and are managed by churches. The Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventists are leading in the provision of healthcare services in urban and rural areas followed by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana. Among the prominent health facilities of the Methodist Church Ghana are the Wenchi Methodist Hospital and the Ankaase Methodist Hospital. The intervention of the Wenchi


Methodist Hospital is an example of how the church partners with the state to provide healthcare to Ghanaians, especially the poor and needy.

Established in 1955 by the combined effort of the church and the people of Wenchi, the hospital started as a dressing unit. It has grown into a referral medical centre for the Brong Ahafo and the three Northern Regions. Besides treating everyday illnesses of people in the community, the hospital provides high level medical care to poor people at no cost. One such service is surgery to repair physical vaginal fistula, medically called vesicovaginal fistula (VVF). Since 2006, in partnership with one Dr. Miller from Northern Ireland, the Wenchi Methodist hospital has been performing free physical vaginal fistula repair for women suffering from VVF between March and April every year. The condition which is an abnormal communication between the vagina and the bladder, usually resulting from complication during protracted delivery, leaves the victims incontinent and thus with a stench. Most of the victims of VVF have been abandoned by their families and cast out of their communities. The stories of the beneficiaries of the free treatment at the Wenchi Methodist Hospital are moving. The first woman to be treated was discovered by the then Diocesan Bishop on his pastoral visit to one of the villages. He saw a woman living in a hen coup and when he inquired, the family told him that the woman was a witch. Drawing closer, the Bishop smelled the stench and immediately knew why she had been abandoned. He arranged for her to have the surgery at the hospital. She now lives a healthy life going about her business. Most of these victims of VVF are unable to afford the surgery and thus were suffering dejection, rejection and abandonment by their own families. However, the free treatment they receive from the Wenchi Methodist Hospital makes it possible for them to get back their lives and go about their daily business and be able to earn their own income to cater for themselves and their dependants. They are therefore liberated from the injustice and abuse they would have continuously suffered.

Furthermore, according to Rev’d Daniel Oppong-Wereko, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has a facility called ‘poor and sick fund’ at their health facilities in the rural areas. In each of the health facilities, there are counsellors and chaplains to whom cases of poor people who cannot pay for their medical care are referred. They

216 Rev’d Daniel Oppong-Wereko is the Director for the Presbyterian Relief Services and Development of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Interviewed on 12th August 2013.
examine the cases and the people affected and then recommend them for help by the church. The church pays for their medical expenses but also encourages them to enrol in the National Health Insurance Scheme. If need be, the church pays the first annual premium of those who are poor and may not be able to pay. These are few examples of a bigger involvement of many churches in Ghana in ensuring that the social injustice which lead to lack of access to healthcare are minimised.

7.1.3 Poverty Alleviation – Protecting and Empowering the Vulnerable

Churches in Ghana, especially the historic mission churches, believe that in all their social actions, there should be an option for the poor. This means that all social interventions of these churches are geared toward helping the poor to come out of poverty. Zan Akologo intimated that if one looks at the educational, health and other social facilities that most churches in Ghana have established, and the fact that these facilities are mostly set up in rural and deprived areas of the country where poverty is endemic, it will come clear that the Church in all circumstances has made an option for the poor. Also, in response to the call to duty towards the poor, some churches in Ghana have establish various funds and programmes that help their poor members to have good footings in order to be able to provide for their families and contribute to both the life of the church and the community. Even though there are occasions when churches give money to help individual poor members who find themselves in hardships, the greater efforts of most churches are focused on helping these members to have a sound financial footing. Most churches have established various financial and welfare schemes where loans and grants are given to needy members to establish and run businesses and other enterprises that their knowledge and abilities will enable them. One of such schemes is the Credit Union. Church Members and other people in the community are encouraged to save as much as they can and become members of the credit union. The Credit Union in turn grants loans to its members for trading, transport business, land acquisition, building projects, medicals, education and others, as the needs of members are. The Credit Union and similar schemes have helped poor members of most churches to be able to send their children to school and afford medical care.

217 Interview: Akologo, 8th August 2013.
Another area through which churches help people out of poverty is the provision of education and housing for orphans who are deprived of parental care. This according to the churches is also aimed at correcting social injustice. The Methodist Church Ghana has a project for such children, called the Rafiki Village. The main funding of the Village is from the Methodist Church Ghana, either through their overseas mission partners, Head Office subvention or contributions from local congregations, organisations and individuals in and outside the church. I interviewed the director of the Village, Very Rev’d Ekow Sey.218

According to Very Rev’d Ekow Sey, the Rafiki Village targets children from disadvantaged and poor backgrounds, including orphans and children who are being cared for by single parents. These are children who will not have anywhere to go, without the intervention of the church in providing the facility. The traditional Ghanaian family system is such that even though there are people who are orphans, they will not need to go into care or orphanages. In this system, family members take up the responsibility of caring for children in the family who have been orphaned. Unfortunately, as Sey explained, the extended family system which used to work well in the past is losing ground. Many children, both orphans and those from poor backgrounds are thus increasingly becoming a burden on society. However, because the government does not have enough resources and welfare institutions to take care of these children, they are losing the opportunity to develop their talents and build a secure future for themselves. The church comes in to mop up what society has left undone. Rev. Sey explained that the Methodist Rafiki Village runs a foster home rather than orphanage:

Orphanage comes with some stigmatisation…we are going outside the norm, do things differently from the status quo…even though we are doing some orphanage business, we do not want to be tagged so…we allow them to go back into their communities when they are on break so that they can integrate well when we resettle them.219

He believed that the intervention of the Rafiki Village discourages parental irresponsibility but at the same time changes the circumstances of the beneficiaries economically and academically and also improves their health. Apart from putting

218 Very Rev’d Ekow Sey is the Director of the Methodist Rafiki Village, Winneba, Ghana. Interviewed on 7th August 2013.
219 Interview: Sey, 7th August 2013.
the children through education, the Methodist Rafiki Village ensures that they also have employment qualifications and skills.

I spoke with three children in the village to see how they perceive the benefits of the Village to them. Abigail comes from Mankesim, in the Central Region. Before she came to the Rafiki Village, Abigail was in school. Abigail said: ‘My father was not always able to pay my school fees and to provide me with school uniform, food and other needs. Since I came to the Village, I am able to learn well, eat better food and wear good clothes’. According to Abigail, the support she is getting from the Village will help her to become a better person. Justina, from Agona Odoben, in the Central Region has been in the Village for five years. Before she came to the Village, she was going to school but things were difficult. Her fees, uniform, health and other needs were not always forthcoming. However, since coming to Rafiki, Justina said: ‘I am always happy because they take good care of us and treat us as their own’. Kekeli comes from Finte, in the Volta Region. Before he came to the Village, he could not go to school and was at home every day, even though he had parents. His parents could not afford to send him to school. In Kekeli’s own words: ‘Since I came to the Village, I go to school, I have learnt to read and write’.

Churches in Ghana are also part of the fight against practices that violates the human rights of women and children in Ghana. As part of the fight against inhuman practices in widowhood rites, many churches in Ghana have collaborated with families and communities to develop alternative versions of widowhood rites. This is in addition to the church speaking out against all forms of cruelty against women and children whether it is FGM, trokosi or widowhood rites. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Catholic Church for instance, have projects among the accused witches of Northern Ghana, working at liberating them and reintegrating them into their communities (see Kirby 2015:19, 22).

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220 Abigail, a child at Methodist Rafiki Village, interviewed on 7th August 2013.
221 Justina, a child at Methodist Rafiki Village, interviewed on 7th August 2013.
222 Kekeli, a child at Methodist Rafiki Village, interviewed on 7th August 2013.
7.1.4 Advocacy and Policy Dialogue

Advocacy and policy dialogue seem to fit the description of the Church as a prophet of the society. In the words of Emmanuel Asante, ‘because the church takes its prophetic role seriously, where we need to speak on issues bordering on social justice and peace, the Church has come out with statements’. In his capacity as the then chairman of the Christian Council of Ghana, Asante recalled the role of the Council in such social advocacy in pre-independence and post-independence Ghana:

It is a well-known fact that the Christian Council of Ghana was very vocal in fighting for Ghana’s independence. Situations where there were infractions, where soldiers came in and we felt that human right abuses came into being, the church spoke, engaged the authorities that they were obliged to respect the human rights of the individuals.

Again, the Christian Council of Ghana, through its member churches joined civil society in the 1980s and the early 1990s to call for an end to military dictatorship and the reintroduction of democratic rule. It is also well known that it was the advocacy and lobbying work of the Christian Council of Ghana that led to the establishment of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in Ghana, which has benefitted many poor people who hitherto could not afford medical care.

Furthermore, all churches in Ghana issue communiques at the end of major events such as conferences, general assemblies and synods. In these statements, the churches always find space to address issues regarding the economic, political and social environment of the nation. They also draw attention to injustice and deprivation that are destroying the lives of the poor and vulnerable. Through these official statements and sermons by their leaders, most churches in Ghana call attention to issues of bribery and corruption. Government officials and institutions have always been the lead targets even though private institutions are also highlighted. For instance, the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference issued a communiqué after its 2012 plenary assembly, among other things, condemning the increasing spate of bribery and corruption and calling on all stakeholders to stem the tide of this destructive evil in the Ghanaian society. In a similar communiqué in 2014, the Conference regretted that the ‘twin-evil of bribery and corruption in

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223 Interview: Asante, 14th August 2013.
224 Interview: Asante, 14th August 2013.
Ghana…continues to ravage every fabric of the Ghanaian society’ despite the many statements and exhortation to governments and individuals to nip it in the bud and the fact that the efforts made by government do not seem to be effective in stopping bribery and corruption. The conference intimated that ‘reports of corruption from the media and on-going national commissions of enquiry such as the Judgment Debts, GYEEADA and SADA, National Service Scheme and the 2014 FIFA World Cup as well as allegations of corruption in CHRAJ are worrying’. Through the communiqué, the Bishops encouraged government ‘to act without fear or favour in dealing with those who will be found culpable in the reports of the on-going investigations’.

Also, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Right Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey, spoke against the deepening nature of corruption in Ghana, attributing it to lack of wise usage of executive power to prosecute government officials who have been alleged to have engaged in corrupt practices.

Through these statements, the churches condemn corruption as an endemic social evil that deprives the vulnerable people of Ghana the needed social intervention that will make life easier for them, hoping that the nation will heed the call and stem the tide of corruption.

However, there seems to be a growing concern within the churches themselves that church leaders and preachers need to do more in their messages against corruption. For example, Rev’d Stephen Wengam, Head Pastor of the Cedar Mountain Chapel Assemblies of God Church, described as disappointing, the role of the church in the fight against corruption. This was born out of his belief that most of the people who engage in corrupt practices in the country are Christians and that it is either that the pastors are not preaching credible sermons to curb corruption or the that members remain unconverted, despite the sermons preached. To Pastor Wengam, the church should be able to make sermons relevant to nip corruption in the bud. That the church does not seem to be effective in its advocacy and influence in Ghanaian society was further underscored by J. N. Kudadjie:
I do not think the church is doing enough. The church is too silent. We are supposed to be the voice of the people, we are supposed to be the advocates; we are supposed to let the prophetic voice come out. But we are not speaking on many things. We see a lot of the corruption and wrong things happening....the kind of thing that the church should be doing all the time is to talk when traders or politician are grabbing things for themselves and ordinary people are suffering.229

This, ineffectiveness of the churches’ advocacy, to Kudadjie, may be because the church sides with government at one particular time, or is afraid or has its own problems bordering some of the same evils in society that the church must speak against. Kudadjie insisted that the church should be more vocal on social justice by using its well-known status as a heavy weight to do things for the vulnerable. It was not surprising then that on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014, the Rt. Rev. S. R. Bosomtwi-Anyensu, Methodist Bishop of Obuasi urged the clergy to speak against corruption in the country and in government.230

Beyond the above mentioned efforts made by churches in Ghana towards influencing society and governance towards social justice, there is not much being done in the area of influencing government policy direction. For instance, though all the heads of churches interviewed mentioned that they have been interested in and participated in fora that discuss policy directions and legislations, only the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference mentioned that they have a parliamentary lobby group whose aim is to ensure that parliament makes laws and policies that will ensure social justice, especially in helping the poor to access various welfare programmes. To Zan Akologo, it is a precondition for the church to ‘…engage more in the policy discourse both in terms of providing alternatives and paying attention to policy proposals that are coming to ensure that they really have the potential to meet the needs of all’.231 The way forward for the churches’ advocacy in society is to push harder and go beyond issuing statements to engaging policy makers and government.

7.2 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to outline some of the social action programmes of some churches in Ghana in response to the many conditions in the country that breed social injustice and which leave many Ghanaians vulnerable. The churches, through

229 Interview: Kudadjie, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013.
231 Interview: Akologo, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2013.
their social responsibility or social action programmes, support those who are disadvantaged. The Church also serves as the voice of the voiceless in drawing attention to social injustice and advocating state policies that will stem the tide of endemic social injustice. Providing education and medical care, especially in rural communities and supporting poor and needy members of such communities to access these facilities are some of the major interventions of the churches. Through the issuing of periodical statements and press releases on the state of the nation, churches in Ghana have drawn attention to issues like bribery and corruption and other questions that pertain to social injustice. Again, churches in Ghana have made a modest effort in the area of advocacy and policy formulation in Ghana, aiming to tilt the direction of government policy towards welfare programmes that will support the socially disadvantaged. Though the examples of these social interventions of the churches have been limited to few churches, they are representative of a bigger picture of a socially concerned and active Christian presence in Ghana.

There is the feeling, however, that such programmes and advocacies from churches in Ghana are either not enough or only deal with the symptoms of social injustice in Ghana. Most respondents to the interview in the general public category were of the opinion that the church in Ghana falls short of promoting social justice. In the view of Kwesi Pratt, building schools, hospitals and orphanages, as most churches do as their contribution towards restoring social justice, do not provide effective solutions to the problem. Those efforts, to him, rather tackle ‘the symptoms of the problem’.\textsuperscript{232} He believes that the church and the whole nation should focus on the fundamental question of unjust systems of production and distribution which have created a situation where people cannot get access to schools, medical care and other basic needs. From the above, it seems that the effort of the church in promoting social justice might have traditionally focused on solving problems that issue out of systemic injustice, which themselves need dealing with. There is no doubt that churches in Ghana are helping the vulnerable in society and pushing government to rise up to its responsibility towards its citizens. It is however evident that greater effort is needed to deal with the root cause of social injustice in Ghana.

\textsuperscript{232} Interview: Pratt, 12\textsuperscript{th} August 2014.
Chapter 8
Theological Reflection

8.0 Introduction

Selected texts from the book of Amos have been analysed to set out the extent to which Amos protests against social injustice in eighth century Israel. The social justice themes that arise from Amos’ protest and that of its precursors and contemporaries in both the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East have been located in the triangular model of social justice. After analysing how Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of Amos already bring home the message of Amos to Ghanaians through the use of cultural and linguistic categories, the picture of social justice in Ghana and the extent to which issues of injustice affect the ordinary Ghanaian has been examined. In this chapter I reflect on how social justice in Ghana fairs in the light of some of the texts of Amos.

8.1 Social Justice in Contemporary Ghana in the Light of Social Justice Themes in the Prophecy of Amos

The point at issue here is how relevant is Amos’ message to eighth century Israel to twenty-first century Ghana. Paul Joyce points to the relevance of the prophetic books in the Bible, especially Amos, to different situations at different times:

The very fact that each of the Old Testament prophets addressed a particular human situation can actually prove to contribute to the power of their words, making them more rather than less relevant today. Lessons for our own very different situations cannot be read off in any simplistic way, but if we take the original settings seriously we shall again and again be surprised by the challenges which are posed to our assumptions and values (Joyce 1994:219).

Paul Joyce made this comment as part of his summary on Amos in a contribution to a handbook that serves as a companion to the prophetic book. How relevant the prophecy of Amos could be to a modern situation, Ghana and the world in general today, is what is presented in this section. Reflecting on the relevance of the prophet Amos to the quest for a just society in Zimbabwe, M. R. Gunda asserts that the concerns Amos has with Israel, as the political and economic elite collaborate together with the judiciary and religious leaders to exploit the poor, is also a concern
in our society today (Gunda 2010). A similar case can be made on how relevant the message of Amos on social justice is for the contemporary Ghanaian situation and the global situation as well. Chronic and systemic social injustice in Ghana and elsewhere in the world is of similar nature or even worse than those which Amos condemned in eight century BCE Israel.

The pertinent question to ask is what will Amos say to Ghanaians today? The answer may not be as clearly defined as the question seems, because the social, cultural and historical settings of eighth century BCE Israel and twenty-first century Ghana are quite different. However, the dynamics of social injustice that have been diagnosed in the Ghanaian context and the scale of the acts of injustice that Amos claims Israel of his days is guilty of, have symmetrical characteristics. Thus if Amos accuses the elite of Samaria of carefree extravagance, he may accuse the rich and powerful in Ghana today of misplaced priority, especially in government expenditure. If Amos accuses the legal system of Israel of perverting justice, he may accuse Ghanaians today for punishing the poor and needy severely for crimes that are not proportionate to the punishment while at the same time the rich and influential are let off the hooks and tentacles of the law. Amos may also denounce the Ghanaian government for shielding corrupt men and women by either not prosecuting them or manipulating the legal system to their advantage. If Amos condemns the man and his father for their horrible sexual escapade with the girl and denounces nations for inhuman treatment and barbarous murder of women, he will not stand on the side of a society that uses cultural and religious practices to enslave young girls for sexual and economic exploitation. He will not agree with a society that oppresses widows and jeopardises the life and prospect of women by circumcising them.

8.1.1 Definitions of Social Justice

Two main levels of defining social justice have been attempted in this study. The first was based on how social justice is expressed in biblical texts and observation of the various strands of voices on social justice in the Hebrew Bible. The scholarly view that the modern term social justice is primarily expressed by the hendiadys משפט וצדקה (justice and righteousness) in the Hebrew Bible, has been
affirmed. As expressed in the Hebrew Bible, social justice focuses on helping the poor and needy in society, through the elimination of exploitation and oppression and support for victims of such injustice. Though YHWH is the ultimate architect of social justice, he also demands kings and rulers to partner him in delivering social justice by protecting the vulnerable from oppression and exploitation. Also, individuals have a responsibility to make social justice a reality by showing special regard to the poor, the needy and the underprivileged by championing their cause. Furthermore, social justice in the Hebrew Bible is multi-faceted. From the perspective of the establishment and the upper class, the purpose of social justice is to preserve the status quo. From the point of view of the prophets and other social critics, social justice means promoting the welfare of society, especially the needy and vulnerable. Yet a third voice on social justice in the Hebrew Bible leans towards a desire for equality. The tension is obvious: the elites could not accept their responsibility to protect the interest of ordinary citizens or promote equality without feeling that their own interest is under threat. However, the opposing voices are immutable. This study thus defines social justice in the Hebrew Bible as a concerted effort to improve the general wellbeing of society, protecting the vulnerable from oppression and abuse and supporting them to live a reasonably decent life, having a fair share of the resources of the community as much as their own efforts can enable them.

The second level of defining social justice is based on how contemporaryGhanaians perceive social justice. The three main viewpoints: tradition-cultural, religious and socioeconomic, each focuses on different experiences of Ghanaians. The tradition-cultural approach focuses on the traditional communal life of Ghanaians, where the community seeks to support and provide for the needs of all, especially the most vulnerable among them. Mercy Amba Oduyoye has underscored the relevance of unity of life as the cohesive principle in every African community (see Oduyoye 2009:110) and it is this community unity and cohesiveness that serves as the bedrock of social justice in traditional Ghanaian society. The religious perspective, mostly coming from both traditional and Christian experience of Ghanaians, presupposes that God is the ultimate authority on social justice. With modern lenses on, the socioeconomic approach to social justice in Ghana focuses on the duty and responsibility of government to ensure that there is equitable distribution of national resources and equal access to all opportunities of wellbeing by all citizens. These
three perspectives are interrelated and are sure to surface in any attempt to define and assess social justice in Ghana. When superimposed on the model of social justice in Amos, the interrelatedness of these three perspectives is underscored. Thus there is social justice in Ghana when people in authority and individuals with means in Ghanaian communities recognise the divine injunction to work together in ensuring that all Ghanaians are fairly treated, their wellbeing guaranteed and that all communities are empowered to live in harmony and to protect the vulnerable members of such communities against poverty, exploitation and oppression.

The definition of social justice from these biblical and Ghanaian traditions have common grounds. They both have the element of the role of the divine in ensuring that social justice is well established. They both also hold people in authority responsible for executing social justice. Again, both traditions place a significant amount of responsibility on each individual in the community to ensure that social justice is achieved. Thus the working definition of social justice, stated above works for the contemporary Ghanaian situation as it is assessed in the light of the book of Amos. As social injustice was rife in the days of Amos, because the ruling elites and individuals, who had the resources and influence, had failed to partner YHWH in delivering social justice, so is the systemic social injustice in Ghana born out of the failure of the government and wealthy members of the community to respond to their divine duty to ensure that the poor and needy in society are cared for in a manner that does not dehumanise them.

J. N. Kudadjie’s attribution of the endemic social injustice in Ghana to the waning of traditional Ghanaian communal life is worth revisiting. He claims that social justice was guaranteed to some extent when communal living was the order of the day in Ghana. Similarly, but from a controversial perspective, Brian Irwin posits that Amos’ problem with the upper class women of Samaria, was that they were ‘attempting to overturn the prevailing patriarchal social order, by which social stability were maintained’ (Amos 4:1, see Irwin 2012:231-232, 241). Though I have argued against Irwin’s farfetched interpretation, its implication that a traditional society faithful to its communal values will move towards being more socially just than a community where traditional communal living have been replaced with modern individualism, is worth considering. If Irwin is right, it means that the

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233 Interview: Kudadjie, 16th August 2013.
traditional social order that could sustain social justice in the Israel of Amos’ days was patriarchy. Unfortunately, it is this same patriarchal social order that fosters most acts of injustice in the Ghanaian community, especially gender insensitivity and abuse.

Thus, the effect of patriarchy in the Ghanaian community on perpetuating social injustice draws attention to the similarity between the traditio-cultural view of social justice in Ghana and maintaining the status quo, as an aspect of social justice in biblical and ANE traditions, discussed earlier, where social justice meant that the hierarchy of society was preserved with each person accepting his or her place in society. As already discussed, the Ghanaian proverb which means ‘an elderly person or a superior does not plead guilty in the presence of a young person or a subordinate,’ implies that in the eyes of traditional oral law, an older person or a superior who is wrong, will never concede to the younger person or the subordinate. It is obvious that in such a culture, social justice cannot be pursued and achieved easily. And even when it is purported to have been achieved, it will be because the status quo has been maintained such that the subordinate has conceded instead of the superior. It is thus worse for women in patriarchal Ghanaian societies, because vigorous attempts are made to subordinate them. The consequence of this tradition is that prominent people such as politicians and high ranking members of the community suffer nothing for being unjust. When things have to do with the poor, it is handled differently compared to when it has to do with the rich. Generally, when the perpetrator of injustice is a person of authority, they are not brought to face the consequences of their action. Their crimes are covered up and their victims have to suffer in shame. Thus being used to the patriarchal culture has made it difficult for many Ghanaians to define what is wrong, abusive or unjust. The handling of rape cases in the traditional system is an example. Here people do not pursue rape offence legally. They rather treat it at family level in order to prevent shame coming upon the family. In this case, the evil is not dealt with but recycled. Amos’ condemnation of the situation where bribery and corruption makes it possible for the poor and lowly to be pushed aside at the gate in favour of their rich and prominent opponents in dispute resolution (Amos 5:12) speaks unequivocally to this unjust cultural approach to legal matters in patriarchal Ghana. Again, chiefs and community elders, are supposed to serve their people, they rather arrogate to themselves privileges with
impunity. Some chiefs have coveted properties and eliminated the owners. This is comparable to the story of Naboth’s vineyard in the hands of Ahab (1 Kgs. 21). The lenses of a modern globalised world with which Ghanaians view social justice helps to bring it to both traditionally acceptable and globally compatible terms. The different perspectives are a check on one another to ensure that the negatives effects of each are overcome by assimilating the positive effects of the others.

8.1.2 Corruption

My discussion on Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12 sought to explore Amos’ condemnation of corruption manifest in bribery and miscarriage of justice. Amos denounces the elders, judges and other powerful people in Israel who corrupt the legal system by taking bribes from the wealthy party in a dispute, who may be guilty. They do so in order to manipulate the legal system to their advantage and thus condemn the poor party, who may be innocent. Thus in taking bribes and pushing aside the needy at the gate, the powerful in Israel manipulate the justice system to their advantage and through corrupt means deny justice to the vulnerable among them. Besides referring to the evidence provided by the various statistical surveys, I also referred to bribery, where people paid to do particular jobs will make extra financial demands on unsuspecting members of the public who need such services. I also made reference to the very few but substantially representative cases of bribery and corruption in the Ghanaian judiciary, acknowledging that the few number is only due to lack of evidence rather than non-existence. Again, I pointed out, two cases where ‘powerless’ people were handed heavy sentences for stealing either a goat or cassava, on one hand, and two cases where ‘powerful’ people were dealt with leniently for stealing substantial sums of money from the state. Together with the statistical survey and news reports that I have presented, these pieces of evidence reveal the scale of bribery and corruption in Ghana and make Amos’ attack on the corrupt judicial system in Israel, beset with bribery and miscarriage of justice, relevant to the Ghanaian situation. The poor and vulnerable in Ghana are at risk of suffering from similar miscarriage of justice if bribery in the judiciary is not halted.

234 Interview: Asamoah-Gyadu, 12th February 2014.
Poor and needy Ghanaians will spend their limited resources on bribing officials for services that they do not need to pay for and this has the potential of further impoverishing them and increasing their vulnerability to predators. As the plight of those who suffered judicial injustice hit Amos to condemn the elite, so does his message judge people in authority in Ghana who either use their position or the legal system to extract from the vulnerable or to hand them raw deals.

Again, I have presented copious examples of corruption in government with statistics and cases that evidently reveal that corruption in Ghana is systemic and endemic. Though these examples of corruption may have no direct link to perversion of justice, as they do in Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12, they are a great source of worry for a community like Ghana where the loss of the smallest amount of government resources implies an increased disadvantage for the poor masses. In most of the examples I presented, it is either that the government officials involved are able to manipulate the legal system to justify their actions or that when convicted, they are set free through pardon or appeals that quash their convictions and sentence. For instance, some people may have legal grounds in claiming huge judgement debt from the government. However, Ghanaians are justified in crying out for justice because of the amount involved and other revelations surrounding these payments that indicate manipulation of the law for the selfish interest of the few. Just as Amos complains about the elite using the legal system to their advantage, so is it evident that in cases of judgement debt, either the recipients or the government use the legal system to take money for purposes other than what it was meant for. Again, whereas there have been reports and many enquiries into ventures such as GYEEDA and SADA and the complaints about corruption involving the head of CHRAJ, prosecution has not been forthcoming. The government which has the duty to prosecute these people is shielding them probably for its own interest or benefit from the actions of such corrupt people. This is no less akin to the corruption and miscarriage of justice that Amos condemns. The message of Amos thus should speak loudly to the corruption infested governance and administration of Ghana, both past and present.
8.1.3 Trade and Social Justice

Trade, both domestic and international, has a lot to contribute to the Ghanaian economy and for that matter to achieving social justice in Ghana. From the traditional-cultural point of view, individuals involved in agricultural and other primary production need good pricing and well developed trade and transport networks to maximise their income and minimise post-harvest losses. At the same time, traders envisage good profit for their involvement in distributing and making agricultural produce available on the market. A successful balance between the ambition of producers and marketers will mean that both groups have a substantial amount of economic resources with which they can participate in the life of their community and be helpful to those who genuinely have less or no resources to fend for themselves. Unfortunately, due to bad transport networks, rural farmers have less or no direct access to city markets and this makes them vulnerable to the profiteering schemes of market and trading cartels. I have outlined many of the schemes, sometimes illegal, and rough tactics with which market conglomerates create artificial shortages, deny farmers access to market, pay meagre sums to farmers for their products and sell them at very high prices in the city market. The social injustice that these farmers and other primary producers suffer obviously makes it difficult for them to be self-sufficient. They are therefore not able to garner enough resources to cater for their immediate families, making it extremely difficult to help anybody in their community who may need help.

Though Amos 8:4-6 condemns the attitude of traders who cheat with false scales and who sell unwholesome grain, the plight of the Ghanaian farmer does not escape the eye, if it wears the lenses of Amos. The cheating scheme of local traders in Ghana as they buy cheap from producers and sell at high prices, as they restrict access to markets and create artificial shortage implies that they are profiting at the expense of unsuspecting men and women whose situation makes them prey to the traders. These Ghanaian market queens and their associates indeed ‘trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land’. Just as the traders of Amos’ days wanted the Sabbath to be over soon so that they can cheat and extort from others in their grain trade, so the perpetrators of fraudulent trade in Ghana waste no time and effort in getting at their victims, buying their goods extremely cheaply and selling
them in the city at very high prices. By their behaviour and aggression, they indeed buy the poor Ghanaian farmer and the needy primary producer ‘for silver and for a pair of sandals’.

On international trade and social justice in Ghana, the focus is on the socioeconomic view of social justice. As discussed earlier, Ghanaians expect the government to be the main institution with resources and capabilities to ensure that the welfare of every citizen is guaranteed. Revenue from export of cocoa, gold, timber and others forms the bulk of the revenue of the government of Ghana from which all expenses are made, including those of welfare programmes. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, the Ghana government has no control over how much is paid for her exports and how much is charged for her imports. Since exports from Ghana are mostly raw materials and imported components are of processed and finished nature, including technology and heavy equipment, the country spends more on her imports than she gets for her exports. There is always a negative trade balance for Ghana. Ghana’s foreign trade partners buy her raw materials at very low prices and sell her finished goods at very high prices. For this reason, the developed world partners that trade with Ghana are benefiting immensely from international trade, while Ghana, like many other developing countries, is losing out. There is no denying the fact that there is so much corruption and mismanagement that makes it difficult for the Ghana government to mobilise sufficient resources in order to tackle the poverty of many Ghanaians and to create equal opportunity and access to resources for individual growth and development. However, the scale at which Ghana loses out on international trade is highly responsible for the unavailability of resources to make life easy for the citizenry. The setting for Amos 8:4-6 may be a local market but the issue of merchants that use all means to cheat the vulnerable and extort money from them through exorbitant prices could apply to all kinds of trade. Ghana is very vulnerable when it comes to international trade. She is helpless before her powerful partners from the developed world, just as many other poor countries are. With their awareness of how they are handed a raw deal on the international trade scene, Ghanaians reading Amos’ protest against unjust trade see in their international trade partners the image of the merchants of eighth century Samaria who rob the poor and needy by trading with false scales and balances and who charge prices that are far beyond the value of the goods they sell.
Poverty constitutes a major component of the numerous issues of social injustice because all injustice issues such as excessive affluence of the few, especially misplaced priority in government expenditure; bribery and corruption; unjust domestic and international trade, all result in impoverishing the people of Ghana. Worse still, the poverty that results from these acts of injustice makes the victims vulnerable to other acts of social justice. Thus poor women become vulnerable to all kinds of negative cultural practices and children of poor rural and urban dwellers are sent into all kinds of domestic servitude that impede their personal development. The cause of poverty in Ghana is not always laziness, but combination of factors such as oppression, corruption, bad economic management, unfair trade arrangements both domestic and international.

Amos does not discuss poverty in detail neither does he talk about the causes of poverty. However, the plight of the suffering poor and needy is the major subject of his condemnation. Among other groups of vulnerable people in Israel, Amos refers to the poor and needy, eleven times with various terminologies. The poor and needy are trampled upon, abused and treated with indignity (Amos 2:6-7), they are oppressed and crushed (Amos 4:1) and they suffer the consequences of unjust trade and its attendant ill treatment of labour (Amos 8:4-6). The situation of the poor described in the text is daily enacted in the lives of many poor Ghanaians who struggle to feed themselves and their families, whose labour is not adequately rewarded, who lack shelter and clothing and who are at the receiving end of trade manipulations that deny them enjoyment of the fruit of their labour. When poor Ghanaians read the prophecy of Amos, they identify with the poor, needy and the meek whose cause Amos champions. They suffer indignity and inhuman treatment just as the poor in Amos are trampled upon and crushed. They are victims of oppression and extortion just as their counterparts in Amos’ days were and they are helpless in a hopeless situation as those in Amos are. They thus see the voice of Amos as a voice in their favour that calls for urgent response by Ghanaian society.

It is obvious that Amos presents the poor and needy in Israel of his days in a passive light. The text records no direct word from any poor or needy person and we are not led to any particular scene where the poor and needy are engaged in any
dialogue with their oppressors or with the prophet and the likes of him who champion their cause. Their story is told by Amos only as far as he condemns the injustice and oppression they suffer and only as far as Amos denounces the elite for perpetuating such a dehumanising state of life. Amos makes himself the champion of the poor, the needy and other victims of injustice. He advocates for them without giving them their own voice. It is possible that the situation they found themselves in could have silenced the poor and needy of Amos’ days. They could even be afraid that protesting or challenging their oppressors could lead to further destitution. And yet in twenty-first century poverty studies and advocacy, the poor and needy are still voiceless. The victims of injustice are seen as those at the receiving end always having no voice of their own. In Ghana, there are many people, groups and agencies that work as advocates of poor and vulnerable people. Very rarely are the people on whose behalf these groups and agencies are working, given the frontline role in the quest for their own liberation. If they are seen at all, it is only to narrate the stories of their horrible experiences hoping to receive help. Time has come that the poor and other victims of injustice take their destiny into their own hands. If they continue to be passive, they will continue to be victimised. The position of the victims of injustice in the triangular model does not only focus social justice on them but is also a call for such individuals to make themselves the focus and the centre of change in their circumstances.

8.1.5 Gender Insensitivity and Inequality

Reflecting on injustice that African women suffer in the name of religion and tradition and the emotional, psychological and economic trauma that come with such injustice, Mercy Amba Oduyoye writes:

When I look at the model in which religion has cast women, the psychological binds of socioeconomic realities that hold us in place, our political powerlessness, and the daily diminution of our domestic influence by Western-type patriarchal norms, I call what I see injustice. No other word fits. I do not wish to be pushed to the point where I
must bare my breasts, throw off my clothes, or beat pots and pans in the streets, but as an African woman I do want to be given a hearing (Odoyoye 1995a:157).\textsuperscript{235}

Odoyoye’s reflection on women’s plight in Africa casts its shadow on realities in Ghana, as outlined. She aptly comments that ‘…socio-cultural norms generally demands submissive and subordinate behaviour of women; this in turn, makes them easy victims of violence and predisposes them to accept the violence done to them’ (Odoyoye 1995a:164). Women and girls in Ghana are always at the receiving end of oppression, suppression and abuse. Issues of widowhood rites, FGM, trokosi and other cultural practices that affect the dignity of women have been thorny issues in Ghana for many years. Various efforts to legislate against such practices or ban them have failed and many girls and women in Ghana continue to suffer such inhuman and humiliating abuse. Odoyoye comments that FGM excludes dignity from women who fall victim to it due to cultural demands. In her opinion, the fight against FGM defies all conventional methods such that ‘….attitude count more than knowledge and legislation is but an impotent tool…’ (Odoyoye, 1995a:165). Widowhood rites and FGM are not only dehumanizing but impinges the fundamental human rights of victims.

When Amos pronounces YHWH’s judgement on the Ammonites for ripping open pregnant women of Gilead in order to expand their territory (Am. 1:13), he condemns atrocities and inhuman treatment of women in the context of expansionist war. His message however should speaks to the Ghanaian situation today. Women victims of FGM and widowhood rites hear the voice of Amos calling for justice to roll so that they can be emancipated from such destructive cultures. Reflecting on 2 Kings 4:1-7 in relation to women and children’s rights in Africa, Dorothy Akoto-Abutiate writes that the plight of the widow projects a real existential situation for African women, exemplifying the harshness of such traditional cultural practices. She laments the ordeal and hardship which widowhood brings upon womanhood in African and the fact that it ‘threatens the emotional health of both women and their children’ (Akoto-Abutiate 2014:64). Amos’ solidarity with women serves as an inspiration for Ghanaian women to liberate themselves from such abusive and

\textsuperscript{235} Odoyoye’s words reflect the curse that comes upon a child who hurts his/her mother to the extent that she bares her breast that nursed that same child; the 1929 women’s protest in Nigeria by ‘throwing off clothes’ and similar protest by women in Ghana who ‘beat pots and pans’ in the street. See Odoyoye 1995:157 n. 1.
oppressive religious and cultural practices. Akoto-Abutiate calls on women in Africa, particularly Ghanaian women to ‘…unite and fight against such oppressive cultural and religious practices that worsen the plight of women’ (Akoto-Abutiate 2014:65). It is indeed a fight to liberate women but in a patriarchal society like some communities in Ghana, men must be dragged into such wars against social injustice that target women.

If Amos condemns a man and his father for having sexual intercourse with a girl (Amos 2:7), his message denounces men and women who force innocent virgins to go into shrine slavery for crimes they did not commit and thus become the sexual prey of old men, so called priests of the shrine who sexually abuse these girls. The situation of the Trokosi in Ghana is as dehumanising as that of the girl in Amos 2:7. The Trokosi is away from her father’s house serving as a shrine slave because a relative, possibly a powerful male ancestor committed a crime that has brought a curse on the family. She is sexually abused since, as the wife of the gods, she must give in to the sexual advances of the priest. Her vulnerability is heightened because in most cases, she is irredeemable and condemned to live in that abusive servitude and loveless sexual relationship for life. Asamoah-Gyadu compares ‘the virtually irredeemable tabooed status of the Trokosi’ to the situation ‘capture by the proverb “the fathers eat sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge”, which was denounced by Prophet Ezekiel’, (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:347-48). He acknowledges ‘the inter-generational transfer of merit or guilt, and…the matter of personal responsibility in repentance and change’ that Ezekiel 18:1-4 deals with, without disputing the difficulty in explaining the underlying philosophy of collective justice in the Bible (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:347-48). Paul Joyce is of the opinion that Ezekiel’s distinctive emphasis that ‘the present generation is punished for its own sins and not for the sins of a previous generation (Ch. 18)’ should not be interpreted to mean that ‘Ezekiel wished to stress individual responsibility’ or the ‘moral independence of contemporary individuals’. This is because, according to him, ‘Ezekiel’s overriding concern is consistently to explain a disaster that is national and thereby collective’. Paul Joyce is however convinced that among others, Ezekiel’s calls for repentance ‘anticipate a time when YHWH will grant a new beginning (Joyce 2013a:65). It is thus only fair that this religious and cultural institution should give these young women the chance to have their own new beginnings without being compelled to suffer abuse and oppression for crimes whose perpetrators they never
knew or have met. Just as the man and his father immorally and illegally had sex with the girl, so are the priests in the shrine conniving with the community to sexually abuse and economically exploit these young innocent virgins in the name of religion and culture. Similarly, just as Amos condemned the actions of the man and his father, so must the church in Ghana and Ghanaian society as a whole stand up against such religious and cultural practices that dehumanise young women. If there is any lesson that can be learnt from the woman in 2 Kings 4:1-7 who took steps to avoid her sons’ enslavement for the debt of their deceased father (see Akoto-Abutiate 2014:64), it is its imperative call to the Ghanaian community to take steps to liberate the trokosi and prevent other young girls from being enslaved in that way. And if there is any inspiration that Ghanaians can take from Amos’ words against those who abused women in his days, that inspiration must move the society to fight against all forms of cultural and religious practices that are inimical to the health and wellbeing of women.

8.1.6 Affluence, Extravagance and Opulence

Ghanaians have concerns about some of the expenditure made by government and the timing of such expenses which exposes misplaced priority and insensitivity to the plight of the poor and needy and the teeming suffering masses. The genuineness of the concern is enforced because of the timing of most of such lavish spending. In the examples outlined, the government seems to be doling out money and gifts at times when it has not provided an enabling and congenial environment to safeguard the future of workers, at a time when salaries are woefully low, and when living standards are harsh with all essential commodity prices shooting up to the roofs. Certain payments to parliamentarians and government functionaries are made at a time when government claims to have no money to ensure that essential economic cushioning is available to alleviate the plight of the ordinary citizen. When government spends money in buying cars for chiefs or to send already rich individuals to Brazil as football ambassadors, when at the same time government claims there is no money to pay for welfare programmes like school feeding and GETFund and when the economy is admittedly struggling to sustain any kind of
welfare expenditure, it is genuine for the citizens to question the wisdom in such display of affluence.

In Amos 6:1-6, the prophet condemns the affluence of the elite not because they do not deserve to enjoy their hard earned wealth, but because the wealth they conspicuously enjoy had been acquired by exploiting and oppressing the poor and that while they live in extreme extravagance, they are oblivious of the plight of these same people from whom they have made their riches. What Amos says is of great significance to this act of misplaced priority of expenditure. Ghanaians see a re-enactment of the conspicuous consumption of the elite in Amos days, in the carefree extravagant expenditure by the upper class and those with political power. The regular shortages of LPG gas, power cuts, lack of clean water and also the many needless deaths of both young and old due to lack of funds from the National Health Insurance Scheme, all point to social injustice as described by Amos, when set against such misplaced priority of expenditure made on those who already have enough. Again, when Pastor Mensah Otabil draws attention to the unproductive use of precious media time and the legislative resources, he re-echoes the message of Amos 6:1-6 exposing the suffering of Ghanaians while politicians and the few rich carelessly misapply the wealth of the nation.

Furthermore, there is credible evidence that many pastors and church leaders have taken to a lifestyle that is beyond the reach of many of their congregants who contribute to the treasury that funds such affluence. The class of cars they drive, the numerous models of different expensive cars they own, the palatial homes they live in and the level of expenditure they make on their immediate families, compared with the struggles and suffering which characterise the daily routine of most church members is sacrilegious. I contend that the display of such affluence is evidence of structural social injustice in Ghana and that Amos’ message is relevant to all religious leaders to reconsider the situations that their followers find themselves in and thus channel some of the gifts and wealth they receive into bettering their lives. I asked twelve pastors in the Charismatic traditions in Ghana whether they have preached any sermons from the book of Amos. My intention was to study those sermons to ascertain how they apply Amos’ protest against oppression, exploitation and other forms of social injustice. Out of the five who had preached some sermon on Amos, only one used texts in which Amos protests against social injustice (Amos 6:11-12). The other four made references to texts in Amos (1:11-15; 8:9-14; 9:11-15)
in a sermon not necessarily based on Amos. The responses from the remaining seven indicated that they find no issues in the book of Amos on which they could preach sermons. This is plausible, especially in the context of the charismatic tradition. Amos does not advocate prosperity and affluence, which is a significant content of their sermons. He rather protests against the dominant conditions of most of them who live in affluence and extravagance while the majority of their congregation and members of their community suffer. This lifestyle of most pastors in the Charismatic traditions is subtly creeping into the historic mainline churches. The message of Amos is thus very relevant to Ghanaians today; calling Christian leaders to resist any shade of teaching that seem to promote affluence at the expense of the needy and the poor.

8.2 The Grazing Sheep and the Screaming Fowl

As mentioned earlier, my data collection in Ghana included five separate focus groups that discussed selected texts from the prophecy of Amos which protest against social injustice. The discussions focused on how Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the selected texts revealed Amos’ protest against social injustice. In addition, members of each group related issues of social injustice in Ghana that helped them to understand the text. An analogy from the Ewe language group, as they discussed Amos 6:1-6, aptly sums up what Amos says about social injustice to Ghanaians today.

An analogy is simply a comparison between one thing and another, with the aim of interpreting and clarifying issues. Alberto Vespaziani’s work on the hermeneutical approach to metaphors in law (Vespaziani, 2010:130) shows that using analogy as a hermeneutical key to any text and context for application in another context requires both analogy and text to be interpreted in the light of each other. I have used the analogy of the grazing sheep and the screaming fowl as a specific hermeneutical key to opening the understanding of anyone who observes social injustice in any contemporary situation and see a re-enactment of the injustice that Amos condemned. In the book of Amos, the prophet uses analogies for different
effects. Some of these analogies do not directly link injustice and victims. Examples are: the analogy of cause and effect as a hermeneutical key to Amos’ call (Amos 3:3-8) and the analogy of the man who runs from a lion and meets a bear and is bitten by a snake as a hermeneutical key to understanding the Day of the Lord (Amos 5:18-20). In his protest against a series of social injustice, Amos describes vividly, with various analogies, how the victims of those injustices are treated. He uses the metaphor of marketing and that of violence to describe the indignity that the innocent, the poor and needy suffer at the hands of their oppressors (Amos 2:6b-7b). In this analogy, the victims of injustice are seen as merchandise and objects of trampling and destruction. The perpetrators are seen as the merchants and men of violence. Amos further uses the analogy of well-fed cows whose stature makes it possible for them to bully their victims and command even their lords. The victims here, the poor and needy, are thus seen as the grass and the earth under the feet of the cows that smash and squash them (Amos 4:1). For a Ghanaian seeking to interpret the social injustice he/she sees in the community, in the light of the injustice Amos condemns, all these analogies may come together in one analogy of the grazing sheep and the screaming fowl. By this, Ghanaians understand social injustice in the sense where the powerful do not care about the sufferings of the powerless as long as they are able to get what they want. I acknowledge that analogies, like all metaphors and other literary devices, breakdown at some point. It is thus possible that using a Ghanaian analogy to interpret how the message of Amos could be appropriated for the Ghanaian community may be fraught with problems. However, the acts of social injustice that Amos protests against and those that are currently seen in most Ghanaian communities indicate that the analogy serves a good purpose.

Now I turn to the analogy of the grazing sheep and the screaming fowl as a conclusion to my reflection. The analogy states:

A sheep is grazing around and a fowl following. The sheep squashes the fowl. The sheep hears the fowl ‘screaming’ loudly and desperately but the sheep looks elsewhere and continues to graze. Nothing moves the sheep to remove its hooves from the fowl as long as there is enough grass to graze.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu used a similar analogy to interpret attitude towards injustice in Africa: ‘…If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say
that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality’ (cited in Quigley, 2003:8). Amos 4:1, where the cows of Bashan are accused of oppressing the poor and crushing the needy, comes to focus here. Like the grazing sheep, the cows of Bashan and their counterpart, ‘Bulls of Bashan’\textsuperscript{236} are squashing the poor and needy among them. The more these victims scream for freedom, the harsher they are oppressed. It is only YHWH the protector of the prey who will scare off these predators into exile.

What will make a fowl follow a grazing sheep? Eating insects and other creatures that run away as a result of the stir and scare that come with the movement of the sheep! In cases where there is famine and where all these insects and other creatures are not available, the fowl will be picking the droppings of the grazing sheep. So the relationship between the grazing sheep and the fowl that follows is that of dependence: the fowl benefits from the grazing activities of the sheep without taking anything from him. The fowl cannot graze the juicy and nutritious grass but it can either eat the insects and other creatures or in rare cases the droppings of the sheep. Unfortunately for the fowl, she is crushed by the sheep which is intentionally unmindful of her suffering. It will take only an external force, probably the shepherd,\textsuperscript{237} to scare the sheep off the tiny legs of the fowl to set her free.

In relation to Amos’ protest against social injustice and the Ghanaian situation, the sheep represents the oppressors who will do anything to make their wealth and enjoy it, even if it means their actions amount to damaging or killing the existence of those they oppress. They do not look at the direction of their victims. They focus on enjoying their juicy and nutritious pasture. The fowl represents the victims of injustice who suffer because their little effort to survive is impeded by their wealthy oppressors. Their plight, their suffering and their ruin do not pain these oppressors. The shepherd is the figure of the liberator, in the language of Amos and other prophet, God. He comes to scare the oppressors off their victims, even if it means taking them into captivity. The group’s reflection on the texts discussed, in the light of the issues of social injustice in Ghana and the analogy is as follows:

\textsuperscript{236} I argued in chapter 4, based on Psalm 22:13, that the ‘Lords of the ‘cows of Bashan’ could be described as ‘bulls of Bashan’.

\textsuperscript{237} The shepherd is not an important part of the analogy. I have assumed it to bring the analogy in line with the triangular model of social justice in Amos.
Most of the issues Amos protested against have to do with the powerful looking elsewhere while the masses are suffering. Amos’ statement: ‘yet it does not hurt you that the House of Joseph faces destruction’\textsuperscript{238} indicate that the suffering is there, but the elites are looking elsewhere. Even where Amos accuses the Israelites that ‘they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals’ is about the powerful using and misusing the masses for their own advantage. This is common in the Ghanaian society. The political, economic and religious landscape of Ghana is filled with such oppressive injustice. When you go to any corporate organisation in Ghana, the ‘top people’ are extremely powerful but the ‘down people’ mean nothing. They do all the dirty jobs, their sweat brings in the wealth but their reward is next to nothing. If they ask for more, they will be squashed till they can scream no more. Politicians in Ghana are making it big. They live in affluence and opulence while workers, farmers and other lower class people suffer.\textsuperscript{239}

The social justice message of the book of Amos thus should speaks volumes to Ghanaians today. They look at Amos’ protests and see in their community stark injustice going on. Their reading of Amos and the reality of social injustice both illuminate each other.

\textsuperscript{238} Amos 6:6, back translated from the Ewe translation 1930/2010.
\textsuperscript{239} This is a summary of various contributions from the group as they reflected on the text.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

The study set out to investigate the extent to which the acts of social injustice that Amos condemns could be relevant to contemporary issues of social justice in Ghana. To achieve this, social justice themes have been extracted from Amos’ condemnation of injustice and his call for social justice, setting these theme in their biblical and ANE contexts. Furthermore, data has been presented on issues of social injustice that are pressing to Ghanaians today. Finally, there has been a reflection on these evidence of social injustice in Ghana in the light of those issues that Amos tackles. This concluding chapter summarises the study, explores the contribution of the study to scholarship and presents the possible conclusions that could be drawn.

9.1 Summary of the Study

This study set out to investigate the social justice principles that come out of the protest against social injustice in the prophecy of Amos and to examine the extent to which these principles are relevant to issues of contemporary social justice in Ghana. The research design in chapter 1 included the background and the question investigated. The literature reviewed indicated that there is enough room to further explore the issues of social justice that can be derived from Amos’ protest against social injustice and more so to apply them to contemporary issues of social justice. In chapter 2, the study examined social justice in the Hebrew Bible in other to place Amos’ protest against social injustice in context. Based on the analysis of how social justice is expressed in the Hebrew Bible and, to a limited extent, some ANE texts, together with analysis of possible definitions of social justice coming out of the different voices in the Hebrew Bible, a working definition was reached. This study thus sees social justice in the Hebrew Bible as referring to actions aimed at
supporting the vulnerable to live a life of dignity and freedom from oppression. In chapter 3, the study developed a new triangular model for understanding social justice in the prophecy of Amos. The model, which is a modification of an earlier model developed by F. Y. Mamahit, revolves around how the prophecy of Amos depicts the biblical ideal of the inter-relationship between YHWH and the people to ensure social justice in Israel. The model showed that social justice in Amos and the Hebrew Bible in general is focused on the victims of social injustice and that the partnership that exist between YHWH and all human agents is aimed at helping the victims of oppression and injustice out of their predicament. Chapter 4 examined selected texts from the book of Amos which demonstrate the prophet’s protest against social injustice. Examining those texts in the bigger context of the Hebrew Bible and in the light of the triangular model revealed that through condemning the acts of social injustice of his time, contemporary social justice issues could be assessed in the light of Amos’ message. Chapter 5 analysed three Ghanaian translations of some of the selected texts examined in chapter 4, serving as a bridge chapter between chapters 2 to 4, which was based mainly on the Hebrew Bible and chapter 6 and 7 which are centred on contemporary issues of social justice in Ghana and how churches are involved in addressing social injustice in Ghana.

In chapter 6, the study first explored three main approaches by which Ghanaians view social justice: traditio-cultural, religious and social-economic, stressing that these three views are not mutually exclusive. Instead, whenever Ghanaians look at social justice, divine responsibility of individuals and governments will be in view towards establishing a fairer society where government and wealthy members of the community are playing their part to make life easier for all, especially the poor and vulnerable and where communal harmony is not neglected. Following from this, issues of social injustice in contemporary Ghana, raised by the interview respondents, were discussed with examples that underscore the systemic and chronic nature of social injustice in all aspects of the Ghanaian community. Chapter 7 also examined some of the social actions of churches in Ghana and how effective or otherwise they are in helping curb social injustice. In Chapter 8 I examined the issues of social injustice in Ghana in the light of the social injustice Amos condemns and reflected on how the reality in Ghana may throw light on the text of Amos. By placing the issues of social injustice in contemporary
Ghana, alongside the injustice for which Amos pronounced YHWH’s judgment on Israel, both contexts illuminate each other.

9.2 Contribution of the Study to Scholarship

The contribution of the thesis is mainly to the study of social justice in the Hebrew Bible and the application of biblical social justice to issues of contemporary social justice. To the study of social justice in the Hebrew Bible, the study provides a comprehensive, possibly an exhaustive, exploration of all texts dealing with social justice in the book of Amos through the prophet’s criticism of the society of his time. The literature review identifies recent studies on social justice in the Hebrew Bible and points out that these studies cite texts from the prophecy of Amos and other books of the Hebrew Bible to support the issues of social justice they discuss. Among these studies, only Walter J. Houston and F.Y. Mamahit give attention and space to discussing selected texts in Amos that reveals the prophet’s condemnation of social injustice. Houston, for instance, discusses almost every text on the subject, identifying the instances of oppression and pointing out who the oppressors and the victims of oppression are. However, his scope does not allow room for extensive textual analysis. Also, Mamahit discusses only three main text units in the book of Amos (Amos 2:6-8; 5:1-17; 8:4-8), as the only texts that lend themselves to discussions of social justice in the book. He presents a rhetorical analysis of each corpus in a separate chapter and attempts a theology of social justice in the prophecy of Amos. However, he also does not exhaust all the texts in Amos that condemn social injustice.

This study thus builds on these earlier works by presenting a thematic study of eight sets of texts in the prophecy of Amos. With each set of texts, the study presents a specific issue of injustice that the text protests against. For instance with Amos 2:6-7 the study identifies that the injustice being condemned concerns the lack of human dignity in the way the rich and powerful treat the vulnerable. Other themes and texts identified and discussed are: extortion of the poor (Amos 2:8); oppression of the poor (Amos 3:9-10; 4:1); bribery, corruption and perversion of justice (Amos 5:7; 10, 12; 6:12) and excessive taxation of the poor (Amos 5:11). The rest are carefree extravagant opulence in the midst of abject poverty (Amos 6:1-6); unjust trade (Amos 8:5-6) and Amos’ positive call for social justice (Amos 5: 24). The
study also presents a general argument on issues of gender abuse and insensitivity that can be gleaned from Amos’ occasional references to women issues.

In developing a theology of social justice in the prophecy of Amos, F. Y. Mamahit developed a triangular model to explain how social justice works out in the texts he had discussed. I have explained some shortcomings of his triangular model, including mainly, taking the focus away from the victims of social injustice. This study has developed a new model redefining the relationship between YHWH, the ruling class and other members of the community in ensuring social justice and putting the focus back on the victims of social injustice. The triangular model further offers a unique paradigm of understanding how social justice is perceived in the Hebrew Bible and how Amos’ protest against social injustice fits into that framework. Its uniqueness further lies in depicting that in the Hebrew Bible and possibly in ANE literature, social justice is the effort of YHWH/the gods and that of the ruling class and other individuals to ensure the wellbeing of all in the society but that the focus of all social actions is on the victims of social injustice. The study also goes further to present each theme of social justice present in the book of Amos on the triangular model to emphasise how it works out in each set of texts. Based on the triangular model and the expression of social justice in the Hebrew Bible, the study also attempts a particular definition of social justice, bringing on board all the different voices that present views on social justice in the Hebrew Bible. This is a step ahead of what we have in current literature on social justice in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE.

To the application of biblical social justice to issues of contemporary social justice, the thesis provides evidence of systemic social injustice in Ghana and reflects on how the biblical paradigm is relevant to the Ghanaian situation. This is a further addition to Houston’s general application of biblical social justice to contemporary situations in the world and on a much deeper level compared to other similar works that do not relate the social justice issues in the text to any specific contemporary situation. To set forth a context within which the text of Amos could find reception in Ghana, the study analyses the selected text in three Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible. Though mother-tongue theology is common in contemporary Africa, not many scholars have done the verse-by verse and thematic analysis of issues of specific nature as is done in this study, with the
mother-tongue translations of social justice themes in Amos using their Ghanaian mother-tongue Bible translations. The analysis shows how Ghanaian translators of the Bible, especially, Akan, Gã and Ewe used cultural categories and traditional understanding of issues to present the social justice message of Amos. The success of such an endeavour sets the scene for Ghanaian readers to assess the fate of social justice in Ghana in the light of the text of Amos. The study again attempts a definition of social justice in the Ghanaian perspective. The definition takes cognisance of three different perspectives from which Ghanaians approach social justice: traditio-cultural, religious and socioeconomic. This definition is the first of its kind and was developed purely out of primary data based on responses from 77 Ghanaians from different pursuits of life. The study further brings the three different views on board, synthesises the views and superimposes them onto the triangular model. This reveals a possible synthesis of both the biblical and the Ghanaian contexts.

The link made between the biblical and Ghanaian perspective of social justice and theologically reflecting on the relevance of the texts in Amos to specific and challenging social justice issues in Ghana presents an opportunity to attempt a universal application to similar situations where contemporary social justice is in a similar state. There are challenging issues of social justice in both developed and developing world. Most of the issues discussed as amounting to injustice in Ghana happen in similar levels or even worse in many countries in the world and the international community. The study thus offers a framework by which social justice issues in the Bible can be harnessed to speak to social injustice everywhere in the world and also to illuminate the quest for social justice in today’s world. Though this study adds to many similar approaches to biblical studies where texts are discussed in the contexts of contemporary situations, it opens a new door for a relook at the possibility of improving the relevance of biblical scholarship to practical situations.

9.3 Coda

The relevance of the biblical messages for contemporary situations may be a hermeneutical challenge and whether the message of the Old Testament can speak to the twenty-first century world may be in doubt. However, this study has shown that
with due care taken, biblical books can be brought back to the life of modern readers and its message be made alive to them. The triangular model put in perspective how Amos’ protest against social injustice fits the general trend in the Hebrew Bible. Unlike the earlier model, the new model focuses social action on the victims and demonstrates Amos’ vision of the desired partnership between YHWH, the ruling class and the wealthy individuals to protect the vulnerable against injustice. Again, the examination of the selected texts in Amos shows that the various behaviour of the elite in Israel that he condemned; carefree extravagance, oppression, treating the vulnerable without dignity, unjust trade and corruption, indicate that he was condemning social injustice, albeit in the context of religious infidelity. In the Ghanaian context, various issues of social injustice that have been discussed can clearly be assessed in the light of the text of Amos. Again, the mother-tongue translations examined and the analogy of the grazing sheep and the screaming fowl show that such cultural categories as proverbs and sayings among the people of Ghana, if appropriately harnessed and analysed, can promote understanding of most biblical concepts and their relevance to the Ghanaian reality.

The scale of injustice in the contemporary world calls for something more than passive condemnation to action for change and transformation. To this end, it may seem that Amos’ passive denunciation of oppression and injustice in Israel is not of much help here. However, looking at the level and detail of Amos’ criticism, it is unfair to deny him an active influence towards transforming society. Amos might not have called for a revolution or a reformation but his criticism of society, his protest against oppression, abuse of power and injustice imply that he looked forward to a society that will change its attitude and structures in order to be fair to the vulnerable. Just as all the prophetic literature and most of Wisdom, condemning social injustice was Amos’ way of advocating changes in society. Archaeology and other historical information give a level of certainty that though mostly using abstract contexts and vague analogies, Amos protested against concrete social injustice. Amos’ message is therefore aimed at transforming society.

The acts of social injustice Amos protests against serve as a mirror in which Ghanaians view social injustice in their communities. Amos’ call for social justice is thus an important resource for the quest for social justice in Ghana today. When Ghanaians come to the book of Amos, therefore, their reading illuminates the problems of contemporary social injustice. As they are able to find categories to
interpret their understanding of Amos’ message, the text in turn facilitate their appreciation of issues of social injustice. The oppressed Ghanaian, as he/she reads Amos, finds ‘a voice to express his/her own experience of oppression’ (see Houston 2008:71). Similarly, a Ghanaian who has the resources to help others, discovers in Amos the need to be on the side of the poor. More generally, our understanding of the principle of social justice in the prophecy of Amos, especially when read with the relevant contexts in mind, could enhance our realisation of social justice in our world today.

Through the lenses of the texts of Amos, we view social injustice in Ghana today and see in concrete terms what Amos spoke of in abstract terms. Consequently, in the light of the concrete oppression, corruption and abuse of power we see in Ghana today, we can envisage the enormity of the eighth century BCE oppression, extortion and abuse that Amos condemned. The prophecy of Amos is thus about the twenty-first century as much as it is about eighth century BCE Israel. Amos condemns twenty-first century social injustice in Ghana as loudly as he denounces social injustice in eighth century BCE Israel. Amos’ call for social justice is as relevant today as it was in his days and must be responded to more positively. The protest against oppression, exploitation and abuse, widely spread across the prophecy of Amos, must be viewed by twenty-first century world leaders with the same seriousness with which Amos expected Israeliite leaders of his time to view it. The prophecy of Amos is therefore a good model for discourses on social justice both in the Hebrew Bible and in any specific contemporary context.


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text &amp; theme</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Gā</th>
<th>Akan (Mfantse)</th>
<th>Ewe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amos 2:6-8</td>
<td>הָפֵ֖כָה אַֽפְרֹ֥קֶת הַשָּׁלֶ֖שֶׁת פֹּ֣שְׁתָּה יָשַׁ֣רַל וּבֵיתָ֑יו לֹֽא־אָפַ֖נְתָּו</td>
<td>6:17 בֹּ‏נָי יְהֹ֣וָה קָ֑אֵץ נָי, “תוֹמֵי בַּבָּא֔ו נָי יְהֹוָ֣אֵ֔י נָי הוֹ֥ו לָא, עִמֶ֑נָה עַמָּ֖מָה עַמְּכֵֽהָא אַֽמְטֵי נָי נִמְּטֵי</td>
<td>6:17 Bowej Yehowa kee ne, “Tōmē bābāo ni Yehowā bi tsi hē wō le, mīmēn amotō ni mitō ake mībāgbālī le he, ejeake amēhō jēbi amēche jwieti, ni ohiafō le amēhō le tokō jō taa.</td>
<td>6:17 Yehowa be: “Israel towo no vā ni vā wō, eye wogōle wō wō wō dżi. Eya ta mēhe to na wō godoo. Wodon wō dzōdzee wōla dje klosalō no. Nenemake wodzi aame dahē dje atokōta dodo dēka fe asi no.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Human Dignity</td>
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<td>7:7  שֵׁלֹשָ֖ה פִּשְׁעָ֣י יִ֑שְרָאֵ֖ל וְעַל־אָֽרְבָּעַֽה לְאָ֥שֶׁב נֻֽנָה</td>
<td>7:7 7:8  בֹּ‏נָי יְהֹוָ֣אֵ֔י נָי הוֹ‏וֹ לְאָ֖שֶׁב נֻ‏נָֽה</td>
<td>7:7 7:8  Wotea aame dahee dje to, eye womexa hātō fe nye dzōddee le tnu o. Vi pkle ba nūtō gā hō dōna pkle dētbūgi dēka ma ke he/ho dje nye ṭē.</td>
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<td>in the Treatment of the Poor (2:6-7)</td>
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<td>7 Wotea aame dahee dje to, eye womexa hăihtō fe nye dzōddee le tnu o. Vi pkle ba nūtō gā hō dōna pkle dētbūgi dēka ma ke he/ho dje nye ṭē.</td>
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<td>Unjust seizures and fines taken from the poor (2:8)</td>
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<td>8 Le wofe mawusubefowo la, womlāa awo si le awɔba me le wɔgbɔ la dži, eye wɔnaa agɔdzehe si wɔxɔna le aame si la le mawu/ewo me.</td>
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</table>
| Exploitation and Oppression of the Poor | | 3:9 ḇo‏n̄i Yehowa kee ake, “Ameke yiwaale ke jō bua nibi aana ye mji le amli. Ameleee no ni ja gbē | 10 Na wonnyim dza etsen | 10 Yehowa be: “Amesiwo //
### Excessive Taxation of the Poor (5:11)

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<th>Amos 5:7-12; 6:12</th>
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<td>Brbery, Corruption and Perversion of Justice (Amos 5:7, 10, 12; 6:12)</td>
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### Ye, Euwadze na ose, han a wahyehe: han ahenf enyimpidze na nwurandanz amaama.

4:1 Hom ntise asem yi, hom Bashan anakwara a hom wa Samaria bopew do a a hom hye abobofo, hom dwerew ehiafo, na hom se han wuranom de, hom mfa mbra ma yennom.

4:1 Hom ntise asem yi, hom Bashan anakwara a hom wa Samaria bopew do a a hom hye abobofo, hom dwerew ehiafo, na hom se han wuranom de, hom mfa mbra ma yennom.

4:1 Samaria-nnuwo, mi ame siwo da ami abe Basan-nyinwo ene. Mia me siwo tea me dahewo de anyi gbá hiátwáw gudugudu, eye miegbgbána na mis sró wo be: ‘Ku aha v mín!’ mídó to miase nia sia.

### 5:7

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Amos 5:21-24

Amos’ positive call for social justice (5:24)

11 Akeni nyenzaa ohi fo no, ni nyetsa no ake onia fe bo ni sa hewo le, ...
12 ... Ngygba jalo naa, ni nyeho nyomni, ni nyenje gena ohi ohi fo ke esane ahe koishi koni aye ah no.
11 Akeni nyenzaa ohi fo do, na hom gye no ho apempem ewifua nsti; hom esisi abi nyesi adan, naa o na hom rentse na; hom atsetsaw wenin nure fzfrew, na hom ronnom mu nsah.
12 Na minyim mbr sa hom mbrato dza dzos, na mbr bon du dzon; hom a hom hiahia etseneneenyi ho, hom a hom gye mboaba, na hom kyea chiao asam wo asendzi.

5:21 Mihi nrygbii jujii le; amjree no ko krhah mi; ni nychee naa ni nyrbuua kejaa mi le tete, mibe he mishere.
5:21 Mihi Nykiry, mopo hom afahye na da, no na meremmenf na ely biara wos hom hityadi kronekron no mu.

22 Njrshaa saa afrei ke nrynjenyenii afrei tete nychea mi ne, shi miheee. Shidaa afrei ni nykrey nykooli ni eshwiowwii saaa le hu, miikwee po.
22 Ehere, se hom dze hom shhyw-atfr na edziban-atfr bre me mpo a, mennyi ronnoo; eso murumumu hom mbowa a ad seradze no ho asomdwee atfr no bi.

23 Nyrke nyxalai le ajea mino, mitaoo nyranganjyi le agbremo hu toia mabo.
23 Fa w'adwontow ne dede no fi mo do; na de hom tsiatia aboabo do, na hom gye no ho apempem ewifua nsti; hom esisi abi nyesi adan, naa o na hom rentse na; hom atsetsaw wenin nure fzfrew, na hom ronnom mu nsah.

24 Nyrkewa jale saa man gena ohi fo no ni ho; nychee jalo ahe aha shi, ni
de hom tsiatia aboabo do, na hom gye no ho apempem ewifua nsti; hom esisi abi nyesi adan, naa o na hom rentse na; hom atsetsaw wenin nure fzfrew, na hom ronnom mu nsah.

5:21 “Melé fu miafe nkeke nyiwoo, eye miafe azaa duwu megadoa dzidzo nam o.

22 Miebame

24 Le esia tefe mina nya dzidzo nasih abe tsi ene, eye nu dzidzo wawo natsa abe to makumakua ene.
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<th>Amos 6:1-7</th>
<th>Carefree Extravagant Opulence in the Midst of Abject Poverty</th>
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<td>1 6:1 Kpoo hà mɛi ni ahe ejo ame ye Zion, ke mɛi ni nyẹsusa ọ̀k .gender</td>
<td>6:1 Kpoo hà mɛi ni ahe ejo ame ye Zion, ke mɛi ni nyẹsusa ọ̀k</td>
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<td>2 6:1 Wondue, hẹn a wọtẹ ɗuwudwoody ọ̀k Zion, na hẹn a wọtẹ ẹgbẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k Samaria bepọwọ, o, amanamẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k</td>
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<td>3 4 Mbiy ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k</td>
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<td>4 3 Mbiy ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k</td>
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<td>5 2 Mbiy ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k</td>
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<td>6 1 Mi ọk ẹgbẹẹ ẹkọ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k ẹgbẹẹ ẹgbẹẹ ọ̀k</td>
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<td>Amos 8:4-6</td>
<td>4: SKAPE'ATA SHIESHEHI YEHSHI LEHESA YEHNI: 4</td>
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<td>4: Nyebo toi, nye mei ni nyamaana mei ni efe ame le ano, ni nyekpataa ohiafo ari ye shikra le no.</td>
<td>4: Unjust Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: ...kon woboi yamaa hsoo? ...kon woboi waayyamaa hsoo ke susumona ni sheza, saaj ke nsonite ni ate na?</td>
<td>5: Unjust Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Woke jiwetze aahhe ohiafo nyamote, ni woke tokota aahhe no ni efi le, ni yamaa shishi tutu tete wostho le ke jrawale.</td>
<td>6: Unjust Trade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>