**The Polemic Cosmogony of the Doxologies of Amos (4:13; 5:8; 9:5–6)**

In 1875, the esteemed German scholar Bernhard Duhm made a significant observation regarding Amos 4:13, 5:8–9, and 9:5–6.[[1]](#footnote-1) He pointed out that these units deviate from their context in terms of literary, syntactic, and lexical features. At the same time, they share common elements, such as cosmogonic themes and the use of participial phrases concluding with the statement “his name is YHWH.” Because of their hymnic nature, these units have come to be known as “the doxologies of/in Amos.” Over time, scholars have identified a few late editorial additions to these verses, resulting from intentional or accidental scribal modifications,[[2]](#footnote-2) and it has been observed that the structure of the doxologies has changed, including the following:

יוֹצֵר הָרִים וּבֹרֵא רוּחַ, וּמַגִּיד לְאָדָם מַה שֵּׂחוֹ, עֹשֵׂה שַׁחַר עֵיפָה, וְדֹרֵךְ עַל בָּמֳתֵי אָרֶץ. ה' אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ.

(He) who forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and has told man what his wish is,[[3]](#footnote-3)

(who) makes blackness daybreak,[[4]](#footnote-4) and treads upon the back of the earth[[5]](#footnote-5)—his name is YHWH, the God of Hosts (4:13)

עֹשֵׂה כִימָה וּכְסִיל, וְהֹפֵךְ לַבֹּקֶר צַלְמָוֶת, וְיוֹם לַיְלָה הֶחְשִׁיךְ. הַקּוֹרֵא לְמֵי הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפְּכֵם עַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ. ה' שְׁמוֹ.

(He) who makes the Pleiades and Orion,[[6]](#footnote-6) and turns deep darkness into morning and darkens day into night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth—his name is YHWH. (5:8)

וַאדֹנָי ה' הַצְּבָאוֹת, הַנּוֹגֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ וַתָּמוֹג, וְאָבְלוּ כָּל-יוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ; הַבּוֹנֶה בַשָּׁמַיִם מַעֲלוֹתָו, וַאֲגֻדָּתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ יְסָדָהּ, הַקֹּרֵא לְמֵי הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁפְּכֵם עַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ. ה' שְׁמוֹ.

“It is my lord, YHWH of Hosts, who touches the earth, and it trembles, and all who dwell on it mourn;[[7]](#footnote-7) who builds his lofts in heaven, and founds his vault on the earth, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth[[8]](#footnote-8)—his name is YHWH. (9:5–6)

The combination of the roots *y-ṣ-r* (‘to form’, 4:13), *b-r-ˀ* (‘to create’, 4:13), and *ˁ-ś-y* (‘to make’, 5:8) in these units, as well as *b-n-y* (‘to build’, 9:6) and *y-s-d* (‘to found’, 9:6), indicates that the doxologies of Amos mainly address cosmogony and creation. However, the key verb for understanding this cosmogony, which challenges other prevailing cosmogonic concepts in ancient Israel and beyond, is a different one altogether: the verb *q-r-ˀ* (‘to summon’, 5:8, 9:6). Therefore, in order to trace the cosmogony echoed in the doxologies, I shall examine this verb in its current context, before proceeding to the units that exemplify it.

# **(He) who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth (****5:8d = 9:6c)**

The phrase in Amos 5:8d and 9:6c has been widely interpreted as a description of a catastrophic flood. According to the majority of scholars, the author refers here to either the primeval Flood[[9]](#footnote-9) or a tsunami event that supposedly occurred in the Mediterranean Sea.[[10]](#footnote-10) It has also been suggested that the text refers to the frequent torrential rains that characterize Levantine winters,[[11]](#footnote-11) or merely warns of a future flood, representing God’s judgment upon Israel’s transgressions.[[12]](#footnote-12) Alternatively, some interpret this phrase in a positive sense: YHWH waters the land with the sea itself, through streams that “run to the sea” (Qoh 1:7), or through the rains that result from the sea.[[13]](#footnote-13)

However, the submersion of the land in seawater is not a scenario that features in biblical prophecies of doom. On the contrary, it is the threat of drying up the sea and sending drought that is frequently presented (e.g., Isa 50:2; Na 1:4; Deut 11:17; Jer 3:3). Likewise, seawater does not play any role in biblical or Mesopotamian Flood narratives, where the flooding is caused by rain from above and by water that surges from the great deep.[[14]](#footnote-14) Additionally, irrigating the soil with seawater cannot be seen as a blessed act due to the salt content of the sea, and it would be misleading to interpret the explicit expression “waters of the sea” as a sophisticated reference to other bodies of water such as streams or rain.[[15]](#footnote-15) In fact, the common biblical description of the land being covered by seawater echoes a cosmogonic context.[[16]](#footnote-16) In what follows, I give prominent examples.

According to the Priestly account in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, the creation story begins with a depiction of the whole land being submerged beneath waters (1:2). On the second day, God indirectly commands the waters to gather in a single place (1:9: “Let the water below the firmament be gathered into one area”), resulting in the emergence of dry land (“so that the dry land appears”). God then names the land ‘Earth,’ and the gathered waters ‘Seas.’ According to the account in Genesis, both the sea and the earth are considered primordial materials, thus exemplifying the doctrine of *creatio ex materia*. The sea in its current basin is nothing but the primordial waters that covered the land and gathered in one place, while the earth is the land that existed beneath the seawaters beforehand.

In Psalms 104, a similar event is described. Verse 6 claims that before the creation of the inhabited world, the earth was covered by primordial waters, likened to a garment enveloping a person.[[17]](#footnote-17) There were so many waters that even the mountains were covered by them (“the waters stood above the mountains”). YHWH then rebukes the waters and thundered at them in the manner of a storm god, causing them to retreat (7: “They fled at your blast, rushed away at the sound of your thunder”). The waters flee to the designated place established by YHWH (8: “They rose mountains, sank valleys, to the place you established for them”), and their boundary is set to prevent the seawater from covering the dry land again (9: “You set bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth”).

The significant similarities in substance and vocabulary between Genesis 1 and Psalms 104 (here and in further verses) have led scholars to argue for a relationship of dependency between the two.[[18]](#footnote-18) However, since none of these texts appears to be reliant on the other, they seem to have been independently influenced by a common Israelite source.[[19]](#footnote-19) Psalms 104 preserves more traces of original theomachy during creation, with its description of the waters’ flight, God’s rebuke, and thunderous actions. Both texts, however, arrive at the same conclusion: when the dry land emerged from the receding waters, the sea basin—where the primordial waters gathered—was simultaneously formed.

Other biblical texts that describe the closing of the primordial waters in their new basin during creation imply that a cosmogony portraying the land submerged by water as the initial state was widespread in ancient Israelite poetry. Noteworthy examples include Job 26 and 38, Psalms 89 and 74, and Jeremiah 5:22.[[20]](#footnote-20) The last-named clarifies that the boundary of the sea, its bars and doors, which are mentioned in Psalms 104 and Job 38 (among others), are merely a metaphor for the sand, which separates the seawater in its new, present-day basin, from the inhabited earth.

The widespread adoption of such a creation account in West Asia during the first millennium BCE can be inferred from the Babylonian work Enuma Eliš, which was composed around the 12th–10th centuries BCE. The existence of multiple manuscripts from that era, as well as the commentaries dedicated to it and the works composed under its influence, reveal the broad distribution of that work.[[21]](#footnote-21) According to Enuma Eliš, Tiamtu (Tiamat), whose name is the Akkadian term for the sea, existed before the gods and the inhabited world were created (I 1–5). After the gods were born and battled against Tiamtu under their new king Marduk, the latter began creating the world by dividing his defeated enemy Tiamtu into two parts. The upper liquid part he transformed into the blue sky (VI 138–140), while on the lower liquid part he poured a mountain of dust, causing the water to flow out in the form of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers (V 54–58; cf. VII, 70).

The comparison between the creation account in Enuma Eliš and the biblical cosmogonies reveals distinct variations in their perspectives. Although both view the sea as a primordial substance, the process of land formation differs. In Enuma Eliš, the dry land emerges as Marduk pours soil over the lower part of Tiamtu, the sea, concealing the seawater beneath the earth. The prevailing cosmogony in the Hebrew Bible describes the appearance of the land when the waters recede to their new location, the present-day sea basin. These differing descriptions reflect the contrasting geographical settings of Mesopotamia, characterized by its two rivers, and the coastal Levant, where the tumultuous Mediterranean dominates the visible horizon.[[22]](#footnote-22) Nevertheless, the shared common tradition between the two cannot be denied. [[23]](#footnote-23)

As expected, certain biblical texts present a contrasting cosmogony that deviates from the prevalent *creatio ex materia* narrative and excludes the mythical traces of the sea. Psalms 95:5 and 146:6 serve as notable examples emphasizing that God created everything, including the sea. In fact, the Priestly account in Genesis 1 also opposes the traditional cosmogony, but from a different perspective. While it maintains the sequence of events and considers the sea as *creatio ex materia*, it specifically eliminates all traces of theomachy, such as the divine rebuke and the fleeing of the waters.[[24]](#footnote-24) The doxologies of Amos, it appears, confront it from yet another standpoint.

Like Genesis 1 (and other biblical texts), the doxologies of Amos describe the seawater as a primordial material. However, in contrast to Genesis 1, the doxologies present a distinct perspective wherein the primordial waters did not cover the land before creation. Instead, YHWH summoned them to be poured onto the dry land. In this manner, not only did the waters become God’s subordinates who obediently fulfilled his command, but God never engaged in conflict with them, as conveyed in other biblical and Mesopotamian texts. This unique perspective offers a novel understanding of the relationship between YHWH and the primordial waters.

Close perceptions, concerning both the waters as a subordinate of God and their summoning during creation, can be observed in the prophecies of Amos and Deutero-Isaiah. In Amos 9:3, YHWH commands the sea serpent, which is considered hostile in other biblical cosmogonies, to serve him: “And if they conceal themselves from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them”. By that, the prophet, like the later poet of the doxologies, does not challenge the mythical notion of the sea serpent but instead views it as an aide of YHWH rather than his rival.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Thanks to the use of the verb *q-r-ˀ* (to summon) in the creation account of the doxologies, a parallel can be drawn with Isaiah 48:13, which depicts the summoning of earth and sky to stand up during creation: “My own hand founded the earth, and my right hand spread out the skies. I summon (קרא) them; let them stand up”. Therefore, in addition to the verbs *b-r-ˀ*, *y-ṣ-r*, and *ˁ-ś-y*, which are used exclusively in the cosmogonic context of both the doxologies of Amos and Deutero-Isaiah, as discussed elsewhere, the verb *q-r-ˀ* should also be included in this list of cosmogonic verbs.

To conclude, neither a prophecy of doom nor a blessing, the phrase “(He) who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth” suggests that according to the doxologies of Amos, the sea was formed when God ordered the seawater to cover the dry land, instead of expelling it from the land.[[26]](#footnote-26) The following examination aims to demonstrate that the polemical approach rejecting the presence of the sea before creation and its expelling from the land during creation is reflected throughout the doxologies of Amos and is not unique to the present phrase.

# **(He who) treads upon the back of earth (4:13d)**

Following the old translations of the Hebrew Bible, the lexeme במותי in Amos 4:13d is traditionally interpreted as “heights of (the earth),” instead of its literal meaning “back of (the earth).” However, the former translation lacks support both etymologically and contextually.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The phrase דר"ך על במה (treading upon the back) in biblical Hebrew commonly signifies the triumph of the victor over his defeated rival. For instance, the victory of the Israelites is vividly expressed in Deuteronomy 33 through the imagery of treading upon the backs of their enemies: “Your enemies shall come cringing before you, and you shall tread (תדרך) upon their backs (במותימו).” Additional verses referencing this victorious gesture describe it in relation to the enemy’s neck (“Come forward and place your feet on the necks of these kings” [Josh 10:24]) or focus on the victor’s feet (“…Because of the enemies that encompassed him, until YHWH had placed them under the soles of his feet” [1 Kgs 5:17]). Similar references can be found in ancient Near Eastern literature and iconography, involving both gods and humans. For example, the Egyptian king Sahure of the Fifth Dynasty extols “Thoth and Soped who treading (*ptpt*) upon the Mntw (=the nomad people).”[[28]](#footnote-28) Enuma Eliš also depicts Marduk trampling (*izziz*) on the corpse of Tiamtu (IV 104), and treading (*ikbus*) on her lower parts (IV 129), just before creating the world from her organs.[[29]](#footnote-29)

A striking parallel to the scene in Enuma Eliš can be observed in Job 9:8–9. In this doxological passage, YHWH is said to tread upon the back of the sea, alongside cosmogonical phrases: “(He) who alone stretches out the heavens and treads upon the back of the sea (ודורך על במתי ים); who makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the constellation of the south.”[[30]](#footnote-30) The depiction of Rahab’s aides’ submission in Job 9:13[[31]](#footnote-31) reinforces the interpretation of the above phrase as referring to the victorious gesture of YHWH at the end of his battle against the sea. Another reference appears in Habakkuk 3:15, at the end of a hymn: “You trod on the sea (דרכת בים) with your horses, churning the mighty waters” (v. 15).[[32]](#footnote-32) These citations demonstrate that YHWH’s victorious gesture upon conquering the sea was well-known among Israelite poets.

The close similarity between the doxological phrases in 9:8–9 cited above and the doxologies of Amos, both in content and wording, has been widely noted.[[33]](#footnote-33) This is especially evident in the phrases “(He, who) makes… Orion and the Pleiades” and “(He, who) treads upon the back of…” For convenience, Fig. 1 presents these verses side by side:

Figure 1: Job 9:8–9 and Amos 4:13, 5:8

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Job 9:8–9** | **Amos 4:13 and 5:8**[[34]](#footnote-34) |
| (He,) who alone stretches out the heavens,**and treads upon the back of the sea.**  | (He,) who forms the mountains, and creates the wind, and has told man what his wish is, (who) turns blackness into daybreak, **and treads upon the back of the earth.**  |
| **(He,) who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades,** and the constellation of the south. | **(He,) who makes the Pleiades and Orion,** and turns deep darkness into morning and darkens day into night, (he) who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth. |

While the occurrences of these two phrases in two different texts may suggest that one depends on the other, it is more plausible that both draw from a shared source, and that certain phrases were reworked to align with the poetic style, context, and theological perspectives of the text in which they were inserted.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Nevertheless, due to this similarity, scholars have tended to amend one of the verses in accordance with its parallel. For example, because Job 9 includes the constellation of the Bear (עש) and “the constellations of the south” (חדרי תמן) alongside Orion (כסיל) and the Pleiades (כימה), some have argued that the Bear (עש) was mistakenly omitted from the stich “who makes Orion and the Pleiades” in Amos 4:13, possibly due to haplography caused by the preceding verb “who makes” (עשה).[[36]](#footnote-36) Alternatively, the hapax term עש may have resulted from dittography of the verb עשה in Job 9. Others maintain that the stich in Amos 4:13, which notably lacks a supplementary stich, originally included the “constellations of the south,” as in Job 9.[[37]](#footnote-37) Alternatively, some posit that the absence of a supplementary stich in Amos 4:13 might suggest that the extant stich “who makes Orion and the Pleiades” was unintentionally added (albeit through metathesis) to Amos 4:13 by a later scribe due to his familiarity with Job 9:8–9.[[38]](#footnote-38)

In contrast to the above conjectures, which are explained by haplography, dittography, metathesis, or other scribal errors, the alteration from ‘earth’ to ‘sea,’ or *vice versa* in the phrase “(He, who) treads upon the back of…” (Job 9:8 / Amos 4:13) cannot be explained in the same way. Rather, it is a significant change, suggesting intentional modification. In Job 9, the phrase refers to a victorious gesture upon conquering the sea, a familiar mythological entity referenced multiple times in the Hebrew Bible and other sources, whereas the phrase in Amos 4:13 lacks such connotations. The earth is rarely depicted as a mythological entity in biblical texts, nor is it ever portrayed as an adversary of YHWH.[[39]](#footnote-39) Since this alteration cannot be explained as a scribal error, and considering the process of demythologization that the biblical texts underwent,[[40]](#footnote-40) it is reasonable to assume that a common cosmogonic source related to the victorious gesture of power over the sea during creation was borrowed in its entirety by Job 9, while the author of the doxologies of Amos, who opposed the notion that the primordial seawaters were expelled from the earth by YHWH, altered the term ‘sea’ in favor of ‘earth.’ In this way, neither the primordial sea nor the fighting in it during creation left any echo in this verse.[[41]](#footnote-41)

# **(He) who forms the mountains, and creates the wind (4:13a)**

Following the Septuagint, some commentators have converted the term ‘mountains’ (הרים) in Amos 4:13a to ‘thunder’ (רעם) or ‘thunderclaps’ (הדים),[[42]](#footnote-42) since they could not find any connection between ‘mountains’ and ‘wind,’ or any reason to choose the mountains, out of all the forces of nature, as the objects of divine creation. Others, however, have rightly rejected this emendation, for thunder never functions as an object of cosmogony in the Hebrew Bible (even if it is used as a weapon by God who combats the sea before and during creation), nor is it recorded as a peer of the wind in biblical and other West-Semitic poetry.[[43]](#footnote-43) Moreover, contrary to the argument above, the wind and the mountains do share something in common: like the primordial waters, and always in relation to them, they are presented as precosmogonic material in the biblical texts cited above.[[44]](#footnote-44)

According to Psalms 104:6, the mountains were covered by primordial waters before YHWH drove them into their new basin. As for the wind, it is portrayed in Genesis 1:2 along with all other precosmogonic materials, such as the waters, over which it hovers (מרחפת).[[45]](#footnote-45) The wind is mentioned in Psalms 104 as well, but it does not hover over the waters. Instead, it is YHWH who moves (מהלך) over it (v. 3c) and makes (עשה) his messengers from it (v. 4a).[[46]](#footnote-46) Since both Genesis 1 and Psalms 104 are probably based on a shared tradition,[[47]](#footnote-47) it seems that each of them preserved some original mythical details while reworking others.

Phoenician sources that refer to the wind as a precosmogonic material, like the writings of Philo of Byblos (FGrH 790 F 2 = Eusebius PE 1.9.30–1.10.2; 1.10.7) and those of Damascius, attributed to Mochos and Eufemos (FGrH 784 F 4 = Damascius de Princ. 125 c), indicate that this view was prevalent in neighboring cultures as well.[[48]](#footnote-48) In these Phoenician-oriented sources, as in Genesis 1:2 and Psalms 104:3–4, the wind does not represent God’s anger (רוח אפו) or function as his weapon, nor is it breath or spirit, but rather a force of nature: the movement of the air. Together with Genesis 1, the Phoenician texts thus enlighten a prevailing Levantine concept, only traces of which have been preserved in the extant ancient writings. Accordingly, the wind is never mentioned among the created matter in the Hebrew Bible. The sole exception is the doxologies of Amos. By comparison, the mountains, which are also portrayed as precosmogonic material in Psalms 104, are already depicted as having been created by YHWH in some biblical texts (such as Isa 40:12, Ps 65:7, and Prov 8:25).

While it is possible to interpret the innovative—and polemical—description of the creation of the wind in the doxologies, as well as that of the mountains, without linking it to the distinctive description of the formation of the sea basin, a strong connection between them nevertheless appears to exist. For the poet of the doxologies, none of the three (the mountains that according to other sources were hidden under the primordial waters before creation, the wind that hovered above the primordial waters before creation, and the primordial waters themselves that submerged the mountains before creation) existed in these forms before creation. Only during creation did the wind, mountains, and primordial waters come into being. The creation of those forces of nature, which elsewhere are described in their precosmogonic form, may thus point again to the consistent polemical view of the doxologies of Amos.

# **(He) who builds his chambers in heaven, and founds his vault on the earth (9:6a–b)**

The discussion so far has highlighted the contrasting cosmogony presented in the doxologies of Amos in comparison to biblical texts like Psalms 104, Genesis 1, and Job 9, as well as the Babylonian Enuma Eliš and the Phoenician cosmogonies. It is thus intriguing to examine whether there are additional phrases in the doxologies that share similarities with those texts, excluding the element of water. Amos 9:6a–b, which describes the construction of YHWH’s abode, aligns with this paradigm.

Psalms 104:3 praises YHWH as covering his lofts (עליותיו), i.e., his upper dwelling, with water (“(He,) who sets the rafters of his lofts in the waters”).[[49]](#footnote-49) In light of verse 13 in Psalms 104 (“(He, who) waters the mountains from his lofts”), these lofts appear to refer to primordial upper heavens. This notion corresponds with further biblical and Babylonian cosmogonies that suggest the presence of primordial waters in the upper heavens. Prominent examples are Genesis 1:6–7 and Psalms 148:4–6 where the “firmament” (רקיע) or the “limit” (חוק) is said to close off the upper primordial waters.[[50]](#footnote-50) Similarly, in Enuma Eliš IV 135–140, a watch (*naṣṣaru*) is assigned to prevent the waters from escaping the heavens, which are the upper part of Tiamtu, the primordial sea.

The phrase occurring in Amos 9:6a: “(He,) who builds his lofts (מעלותיו) in heaven,” bears a striking resemblance to the one in Psalms 104, as both describe the building of the upper dwelling of YHWH.[[51]](#footnote-51) The prominent difference between them is that the verse in Psalms includes a reference to water (מים), whereas the doxologies omit it, and refer to heaven (שמים) instead. As a result, Theodore Gaster proposed amending the term “heavens” (שמים) in the doxologies to “waters” (מים),[[52]](#footnote-52) thus expressing a preference for the version in Psalms 104 over Amos 6:9. However, the alteration from מים to שמים does not seem to be a scribal error. Rather, considering the polemical approach of the doxologies, it is very plausible that the poet intentionally added the letter ש to the term מים, in order to eliminate the old tradition about the building of the upper seat of YHWH in the primordial waters.[[53]](#footnote-53)

The second part of Amos 9:6 praises YHWH as “(He, who) founds his vault (אגודתו) on the earth”. The term אגודה here is commonly understood in biblical dictionaries and commentaries as a vault, which evokes the round shape of the earth,[[54]](#footnote-54) upon which rests the upper seat of God. Since אגודה in this context is a hapax, its usage cannot be directly compared to other biblical occurrences. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Proverb 8:27 and Job 26:10 describe the foundation of “a circle” (חוג)—a term that shares a similar meaning to אגודה—within the primordial waters.[[55]](#footnote-55) It becomes evident that for the poet of the doxologies, there was no primordial water on which to base the world’s vault, but only dry land. Hence, “(He) founds his vault on the earth.”

# **Summary and conclusions**

The present paper suggests that the doxologies of Amos present a cosmogony that disputes the common view reflected in multiple biblical texts, as well as in certain extra-biblical sources. In contrast to these cosmogonies, according to the doxologies of Amos, seawater did not cover the land before creation and then recede into a basin, but rather the waters of the sea were poured upon the dry land during creation (Amos 5:8d; 9:6c, and cf. Gen 1:2, 6–10; Ps 104:6–9). Therefore, YHWH did not triumphantly tread upon the back of the sea (Amos 4:13d, and cf. Job 9:8–9). Likewise, the mountains did not emerge from the receding primordial waters, nor did the wind hover over them; rather, both were created by God (Amos 4:13a, and cf. Gen 1:2; Ps 104:3–4). And YHWH’s dwelling was not built in the primordial upper waters, nor was his vault founded in the lower waters, but rather in the solid heavens and earth (Amos 9:6a–b, and cf. Ps 104:3; Prov 8:27; Job 26:10).[[56]](#footnote-56)

Although this polemical approach is unique to the doxologies of Amos, it bears significant similarities to the cosmogonic phrases of Deutero-Isaiah. These include the exclusive use of four cosmogonic verbs referring to the creator God: *b-r-ˀ*, *y-ṣ-r*, *ˁ-ś-y*, and *q-r-ˀ*, alongside the opposition to *creatio ex materia*. Since Deutero-Isaiah is dated to the beginning of the Second Temple period, there is no reason to date the doxologies to an earlier time. The question of their dating also pertains to the composition of the doxologies.[[57]](#footnote-57) Their unified and distinctive viewpoint, as well as their close relation to each other, supports the premise that the doxologies are based on a single source, rather than independent supplementary additions. Yet, the inquiry regarding the integration of those doxologies within the Book of Amos deserves a broader study, as it relates to the formation of the Book of Amos, a topic that falls outside the scope of the present study.

Abstract

This paper explores the doxologies of the Book of Amos, arguing that they articulate a polemical viewpoint distinct from prevailing biblical and ancient Near Eastern notions about the formation of the sea, mountains, wind, and God’s abode. Central to the comprehension of this cosmogony is the recurring phrase in Amos 5:8d and 6:9c, “(He) who summons the waters of the sea and pours them on the surface of the earth.” While previous scholars have understood this phrase as referring to the primeval Flood, a tsunami event, or Levantine torrential rain, the present paper suggests interpreting it, in line with its context, as a cosmogonic description in which the sea was summoned and poured over the dry land. Subsequent actions in the doxologies are interlinked with this portrayal, emphasizing the unified perspective of the doxologies. This new explanation also has ramifications for the dating and composition of the doxologies in the Book of Amos.

1. Duhm 1875, 119, n. 1. For extensive research of these units in subsequent years, see discussions and history of research in Horst 1929; Koch 1974; Crenshaw 1975; Foresti 1981; Weiss 1992:2, 212–218; Paas 2003, 209–214, as well as the commentaries on the Book of Amos. The main point of contention revolves around the date and authorship of the doxologies, their unity, their original *Sitz im Leben,* and the purpose of their integration into Amos’ prophecies. The conclusions below address some of these issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thus, for example, the first two words of 4:13 are not considered part of the doxologies; they serve as a link between the preceding prophecy and the doxologies. The stich 9:5c–d (“And it arose like the Nile, and subsided like the Nile of Egypt”), which repeats 8:8c–d, using the verbs in the qatal form, appears to be an error resulting from homoioteleuton. This list also includes 5:9 which follows the concluding part “YHWH, lord of hosts”, and seems to be a later addition. Alternatively, some scholars include extra verses in the doxologies that were not part of Duhm’s original list. For a discussion, see the references in n.1 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The traditional translation of the term שחו is “wish” or “thought,” interpreted as a hapax by-form of שיח. See, e.g., *HALOT* s.v. \*שֹח. For a new suggestion, see below, n. … [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. An alternative translation would be “(He, who) makes the daybreak darkness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The traditional translation, following LXX, is “heights of the earth.” For further discussion, see below, section B. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The identification of Kimah and Kesil with the Pleiades and Orion (respectively) follows LXX and other early translations. Among them, only the association between Kimah and the Pleiades finds support elsewhere, in Eblaite and Amorite texts (see Geroge and Krebernick 2022, 119). Some scholars have suggested that this verse refers to Kimah and Kesil because they represent the changing seasons, while others conclude that it exhibits a polemic against Babylonian astronomy (cf. Koch 1974, 517–520; Jeremias 1998, 91). However, both these interpretations lack a philological basis, especially in light of Job 9:8–9; see the discussion below, section B. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gaster 1935 suggested omitting this verse from the doxologies, probably due to its diverse content in relation to the other units of the doxologies. I tend to agree with him. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Most commentators (such as Gaster 1935, 24; Watts 1958, 55–56; Crüsemann 1969, 100, 103; Crenshaw 1975, 73–74; Berg..) assume that this stich was originally located in 9:6, for various reasons. The most plausible reason, in my opinion, is the fact that the participial forms in 9:5–6 are all definite, including the current stich, while those in 5:8 are indefinite, excluding the present stich. However, if indeed the original location of the stich was in 9:6, it is difficult to determine why it was copied again in 5:8. Therefore, that phrase might have alternatively served as a refrain, copied at the end of each original stanza. Alternatively, a few commentators (such as Wolff 1977, 216) suggest that the original location of the stich was in 5:8. For further discussion, see Weiss 1992:2, 274, n. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Harper 1905, 116; Tur-Sinai 1954, 378; Koch 1974, 518–520; Crenshaw 1975, 128; Szabó 1975, 504. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Rahmer 1881, 30–31, 38–39; Weiser 1929???; Shalem 1956, 162; Luria 1985; Ben Dov 2021, 696 and n. 10. In recent years, with the growing awareness of climate change, geoarchaeological studies on this topic have also intensified (see, for example, Shtienberg et al., 2020), including efforts to find literary evidence of such calamities in the Bible. Nevertheless, the conclusions below indicate that the doxologies of Amos lack evidence of this phenomenon. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Driver 1915, 183, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Ehrlich 1912, 240; Cripps 1969, 188; Andersen and Freedman 1989, 491–492; Hadjiev 2009, 126; Cox 2013; Eidevall 2017, 158. Among these scholars, some argue that this warning ultimately alludes to the primeval Flood in Genesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For the first interpretation, see Gaster 1935, 23–24; Story 1980, 72. For the second, see Hitzig 1852, 114. For the third, see, e.g., Horst 1929, 47; Watts 1958, 60; Mays 1969, 96; Pfeifer 1991, 478; Gillingham 1992, 180 and n. 19 (who mentions the subterranean waters together with the rain). According to Foresti 1981, the phrase originally referred to seasonal rain, but in its new context, it was reinterpreted as a threat of flooding. Note that some commentators describe the various interpretations without favoring one over others (such as Wolff 1974, 241, n. 93; Paul 1991, 168–169; Paas 2003, 287–288). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cf., Pfeifer 1991, 478, who additionally argues that the root *š-p-k* is not part of the vocabulary of the Flood stories in Gen 7–9. Furthermore, in light of God’s promise in Gen 9 to never again flood the earth, it would be inconsistent to assume that the doxologies communicate the threat of flooding. Against these arguments, one may claim that the doxologies reflect a different tradition of the primeval Flood than Gen 7–9. However, as both the Flood stories in Gen 7–9 and the biblical prophecies of doom do not ever refer to seawater as a source of flooding, it appears that such a situation was unfamiliar with the biblical authors, unlike—for example—the flooding of streams (cf. e.g., Job 12:15) or rains occurring routinely every winter. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Therefore, some (e.g., Mays 1969, 155; Koch 1975, 518) have interpreted the seawater in this phrase as the upper water above the firmament, which rains on the land according to Ps 104. Others have found in this verse a familiarity with the water cycle, comparing it to Job 36:27 (e.g., Harper 1905, 116). However, it seems that the biblical authors did not possess such a modern meteorological understanding (cf. Paas 2003, 287). Additionally, several commentators assume that this phrase cannot in any case be interpreted as a blessed act due to the occurrence of the root *š-p-k*, which is used elsewhere in negative contexts (Berg 1974, 311; Koch 1974, 518; Crenshaw 1975, 128; Weiss 1992:1, 155). In contrast, Paul 1991, 168–169, n. 99, argued that this verb does not inherently carry a negative meaning, with its Akkadian equivalent being used in the context of rain. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Cf Driver 1953, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The masculine suffix pronoun in the verb כִּסִּיתוֹ in v. 6 does not correspond with the feminine gender of תהום as the object of the verb. The emendation to the feminine pronoun (following several ancient translations) is implausible given the context and additional biblical texts in which YHWH drives out the waters covering the earth. Gunkel 2006 (1895), 311–12 and n. 196 thus corrected it to כִּסַּתָּה in the pausal form, taking תהום to be the subject of the verb, which covered the mountains with water; cf. also Kraus 1978, 297; Allen 2002, 37; Rofé 2006, 321. The Masoretic text appears to have originated from later copyists attributing the verb כִּסִּיתוֹ to YHWH. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Humbert 1935 and Berlin 2005, 76, for example, maintain that Gen 1 is dependent upon Ps 104, while van der Port 1951 and Day 1985, 52 assume that Gen 1, which presents fewer mythic characters than Ps 104, draws on the latter. For further discussion and references, see Allen 2002, 41–42. The similarity between these texts, as reflected in the aforementioned verses, is also found in the very formation of the sea creatures, the Taninnim (Gen 1:21) and Leviathan (Ps 104: 25–26), and in their shared terminology, including מועדים in regard to the creation of the luminaries (Gen 1:15 and Ps 104:19), חיתו ארץ/חיתו שדה/חיתו יער (Gen 1:24 and Ps 104: 11, 20), עוף השמים (Gen 1:28 and Ps 104:12), and others; cf. Day 1985, 51–52. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. It is likely that the hymn in Ps 18/2 Sam 22 was influenced by the same shared source; see Ayali-Darshan 2020, 166–167, and cf. Anderson 1972, 719–720; Craigie 1974, 18; Fenton 1978, 378. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. To that list of biblical texts, one may add some more verses echoing additional pieces of cosmogony, beginning with waters covering the land, such as Prov. 8:29; Ps 33:7–9; 18 [=2 Kgs. 22]:14–16; Isa 17:14–16, Job 26:7–13; Ps 89:6–13; 74:12–17; see Gunkel 2006 (1895); Cassuto 1975 (1943); Cross 1973; Day 1985; Ayali-Darshan 2020, 156–203, and further references there. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. For a discussion and references, see Lambert 2013, and further references in Ayali-Darshan 2020, 148–149, nn. 132–133. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Note, however, that a few biblical texts describe the earth’s foundation above the seawater, as in Ps 24:1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Gunkel 2006 (1895); Cassuto 1975 (1943); Cross 1973; Day 1985; Ayali-Darshan 2020 and further references there. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Cf. Cassuto 1961, 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Cf., also Job 40:28–29 concerning the Leviathan: “Will he make an agreement with you, to be taken as your lifelong slave? Will you play with him like a bird, and tie him down for your girls?” The process of turning God’s rivals into his subordinates and aides is also recorded in Enuma Eliš (IV 105–118; V 73–76). For further discussion, see Ayali-Darshan 2020, 124–125. Note that Amos 9:4, which describes God’s command for the sword to do his will, was apparently added later, inspired by v. 3 (cited above); cf. Rofé 2009, 317–318. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Therefore, there is no reason to interpret the root *q-r-ˀ* in Amos through the Arabic *q-r-y*, which means “to gather, bring or hold together,” as suggested by Eitan 1939, 6 (because he assumed that the verbs *q-r-y* and *š-p-k* must oppose each other), followed by Speier 1953, 307; Wolff 1977, 241; Gordis 1979–1980, 229–230. For the theme of creation through speech in general, which is also common to Egyptian cosmogonies, see Weinfeld 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Etymologically, במה refers to the middle body part, like the chest and back, as inferred from the occurrences of the Akkadian word *bamtu* (*CAD* B, 78–79) and the Ugaritic term *bmt* (*DULA*T 221). It also corresponds to the meaning of the Akkadian word *bamtu*: a “half” (*CAD* B, 77–78). In light of the parallels in Ps 18/2 Sam 22 and Hab 3, it is possible that the biblical Hebrew term במה referred additionally to the upper legs. Metaphorically, both in biblical Hebrew and Akkadian, במה was used in topographical contexts to describe the middle position of a certain place (similar to other body parts such as ירך, ירכתיים (thigh) and ראש (head) which are used in reference to low and high positions, respectively, in accordance with their location in the human body). Only in later periods, as evidenced by the Greek and Syriac translations of the Bible, was the term במה understood in topographical contexts as a “high place,” and henceforth it was often translated and interpreted in this way. This secondary later meaning of במה may have been influenced by the homophonic term במה, namely a construction or an elevated object that was used in religious rituals and funerary rites. In any case, the later meaning of במה as a high place in a topographical context is not recorded in biblical Hebrew, but only in its translations from the Hellenistic period onwards. For further discussion, see Tur-Sinai 1955, 235–239; Vaughan 1974; Weiss 1992:2, 97 n. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Borchardt 1913, pl. 8. For further discussion, see David 2011, 86–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Lambert 2013, 92–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf., Cassuto 1975 (1943), 96; Pope 1965, 69–70; Crenshaw 1972, 47; Gray 2010, 195 who highlight the link between Job 9:8–9 and the parallel scene in Enuma Eliš. Some of them also compared these verses to the scene shown on the *Baal au foudre* stele (AO 15775) although the sea on this stele is not anthropomorphic. This comparison probably derives from the common translation of Job 9:8 “(He, who) treads on the waves of the sea” (instead of: “… treads upon the back of the sea” as translated by, e.g., Gray 2010, 191; Greenstein 2019, 39), which again reflects the erroneous meaning of במה as a high place, this time referring to high waves; cf. Vaughan 1974, 60, n. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Rahab is listed among YHWH’s enemies, alongside Tannin and Leviathan, in contexts combining theomachy and cosmogony, as found in Job 26:12, Ps 89:11, and Isa 51: 9–10. Over time, Rahab was identified with Egypt (see Ps 87:4 and Isa 30:30). For Rahab, see further Ayali-Darshan 2020, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cf. Cassuto 1975, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cf. Koch 1974, 520–522; Crenshaw 1975, 135; Wolff 1977, 216; Andersen and Freedman 1989, 490; Jeremias 1998, 77; Gray 2010, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The doxologies’ concluding verse “YHWH (God of hosts)” is not included in the above quotations. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Cf. Koch 1974, 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Andersen and Freedman 1989, 490. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Cf Crüsemann 1969, 100. In contrast, Gaster suggested reconstructing: “ומוציא מזרות בעתו” in light of Job 38:32. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cf. Wolff 1977, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. For that reason, scholars have suggested several other mythical interpretations of this phrase. Dijkstra 1998, 247 linked this phrase to the Hittite and Levantine iconography of the storm gods standing on mountains. Rudolph 1971, 182, connected it to the Near Eastern descriptions of the sun god’s journey, from sunrise to sunset, while others attributed it to the journey of the storm gods and the natural storms themselves (Harper 1905, 105; Edghill 1926, 47). According to Andersen and Freedman 1989, 456–457, only traces of a myth have been preserved here, without the myth itself. In this, they are close to the interpretation suggested below, but without offering a reason for the disappearance of myth here. Alternatively, due to the Amoside context of the doxologies, some have identified במתי ארץ here with the במות used in Israelite and Canaanite worship (cf. Jeremias 1998, 79). While this could have been one of the reasons for integrating the doxologies in the Book of Amos (cf. Koch 1974, 513–514), it is unlikely that the doxologies originally incorporated elements of reality within the cosmic descriptions attributed to God (cf. Eidevall 2017, 149). For further discussion, see Crenshaw 1972; Weiss 1992:2, 228–229, nn. 108–109. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Shinan and Zakovitch 2012 with previous literature therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The closest parallel to the present phrase is found in Mi 1: 3–4: “He will come down and tread upon the back of the earth (וירד ודרך על במתי ארץ), and the mountains shall melt under him, and the valleys burst open…”. However, interpreting במתי ארץ in Amos 4:13 in a topographical sense, as in Mi 1:3–4, is difficult, since it requires the catastrophic results of God’s treading upon the earth, results that are missing in Amos 4:13. In this regard, note that some scholars (such as Wolff 1990, 41, and cf. BH) have questioned the originality of the verb דרך in Mi 1:3–4, due to its absence in LXXL (however, in LXXA the verb וירד is missing) and in 1QpMic (however, traces exist in the Micah scroll from Mur 88), as well as the duplication created by the two successive verbs וירד ודרך. According to them, the verb ודרך was added later in Micah under the influence of Amos 4:13 and Deut 33:29. Others, such as Crenshaw 1972 and Waltke 2007, 48, in contrast, maintain that both verbs in Micah are original. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Such as Duhm 1911, 8; Edghill 1926, 47; Driver 1950, 56, n. 70; Cripps 1969, 176; Mays 1969, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Considering this, several scholars, such as Harper 1905, 104; Rudolph 1971, 182; Paul 1991, 154; Paas 2003, 247–248; Eideval 2017, 150, argue that the choice of mountains and wind, among all the forces of nature, stems from their inherent opposition: stability vs. transience; visibility vs. invisibility, and so forth. However, this interpretation is overly inclusive and therefore insufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. It should be emphasized that in Amos 4:13, as well as in other biblical cosmogonies (see below), the term ‘wind’ refers to the natural phenomenon of moving air, distinct from breath, soul, spirit, and the like; see Paul 1991, 154. For alternative viewpoints, see Weiss 1992:2, 221, n. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The interpretation of the biblical root *r-ḫ-p* is based on the Ugaritic parallel between the roots *r-ḫ-p* and *d-ˀ-y*, the latter meaning “to fly” (*DULAT*, 727–728). Gunkel 1997 (1910), 105–106 has proposed an alternative interpretation of the Hebrew *r-ḫ-p*, drawing on its Syriac equivalent root. Since one of the meanings of the Syriac *r-ḫ-p* is “to brood,” he argued that the biblical term is an echo of the Phoenician cosmogonic tradition involving a legendary egg, a motif that originated in Egyptian cosmogonies. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. While participial forms are employed in these verses, their content and close affinities with subsequent verses lead to the conclusion that they also originate from the ancient cosmogonic source, which the biblical poet drew upon for the present hymn. See also Kugel 2015, 143, regarding Ps 104:4a: “… the broader context would suggest that at the time of the creation, the winds were made God’s angels and not *vice versa*. The reason is that the parallel syntax of the previous verse, ‘who has made clouds His chariot,’ seems to assert that an element of the natural world (clouds) was taken by God and shaped into something of service to Him (His chariot).” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See below, n…. Note that Jub 2:2–3 (and cf. 4QJuba V 4–10) directly connects Ps 104:3–4 with Gen 1, incorporating the above verses into the creation story of Gen 1. Was the author of Jubilees familiar with an independent tradition that fused ideas from Gen 1 and Ps 104, or was this an innovative adaptation of his own? For additional Jewish post-biblical sources addressing these topics, see Kugel 2015; Darshan 2019, 68–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The topic has recently been discussed at length by Darshan 2019, and cf. Eissfeldt 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For עליה as loft, see, e.g., Jud 3:20, 23–25; Kgs 17:19, 23; Jer 22:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Other texts, such as Prov 8:27, consider the clouds as the storeroom of the upper primordial waters; cf. Ayali-Darshan 2020, XXX. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. For *b-n-y* // *q-r-y,* cf. Neh 3:3; 2 Chr 34:11. Since the Hebrew term מעלות is commonly interpreted as “stairs” in other instances (such as 1 Kgs 10:19; Neh 3:15), some have suggested this meaning here (cf., Berg 1974, 307; Paas 1993 who suggests an Egyptian influence; 2003, 294; Eidevall 2017, 231–232.). However, many others rightly understand it here as “lofts,” in keeping with Greek and Latin translations of Amos 9:6 (cf., Harper 1905, 190–191; Edghill 1926, 89; Gaster 1935, 25; Mays 1969, 155; Cripps 1969, 261; Wolff 1969, 336; Rudolph 1971, 242, n. 6; Crenshaw 1975, 72, 74; Paul 1991, 280, n. 75). While most suggest that dittography of the letter מ turned עליות into מעלות in Amos 9:6, the term מעלות may have merely been used as a synonym for עליות; see Driver 1915, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Gaster 1935, n. f (and cf. Harper 1905, 191). In addition to Ps 104, Gaster compared this text to line 17 in the Babylonian composition *The Foundation of Eridu* (Lambert 2013, 372–373): “Marduk constructed a raft on the surface of the waters.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. For the motif of the building of God’s abode that concludes cosmogonies in the Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature, see Ayali-Darshan 2020, 187–190, and previous references there. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. This interpretation is primarily drawn from the context, as in its other biblical occurrences it typically signifies “a bundle” (but cf. Paas 1993, who interprets אגודה here as a bundle of plants decorating the throne of YHWH, inspired by Egyptian iconography). *BDB* 8a suggests a semantic development of the root *ˀ-g-d* (“as fitted together, constructed”), comparing it to the Arabic *ˀijād*, meaning “arch, dome.” Gaster 1935, 25 compared it to the Arabic *ˀajd* “foundation,” in light of which he interpreted אגודה. For additional suggestions, including emendations, see Weiss 1992:2, 517, nn. 89–91. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Prov 8:27: “When he inscribed (בחקו) a circle (חוג) upon the deep (תהום);” Job 26:10: “He inscribed (חק) a circle (חג) upon the water (מים), up to the boundary between light and darkness”.The close relation between חוג and אגודה has been noted by, e.g., Cripps 1969, 262; Paul 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. In light of the conclusion drawn from the examination of the four phrases discussed above, which all seem to align with the same polemical approach, I would cautiously propose amending the phrase “ומגיד לאדם מה שחו” (8:13)—over which scholars have disagreed in their interpretations and emendations—to “ומגיר לאדמה שרע.” This suggestion, in part, follows Coppens 1952, who amends the verse to: “ומגיר לאדמה מי שחו.” While the first part of his conjecture is convincing, the second part remains unintelligible. The proposed emendation שרע refers to the subterranean water, which, according to this view, was poured onto the ground by the creator God, in contrast to other biblical texts describing it as part of the primordial waters stored in the abyss (cf. prov 8:28b, Ps 33:7b). The term *šrˁ*, documented in a Ugaritic text in proximity to *thm* (*KTU* 1.19 I 45) and thus understood in the same semantic field, is not recorded in the Hebrew Bible. However, an equivalent term in metathesis, שעירים, is mentioned in parallel with רביבים (Deut. 32:2), meaning “copious showers.” Furthermore, it has long been suggested that the biblical expression שדי תרמת (2 Sam 1:22) should be amended to שרע תהמת based on that Ugaritic text (Ginsberg 1938, followed by many). For a comprehensive review of the various opinions regarding the possibility of שרע in biblical Hebrew, see Dietrich and Loretz 1989, and further bibliography there. If this emendation is accurate, then the doxologies reference the three traditional locations of the primordial waters in the inhabited world: the heavens, the land, and the abyss. As for the heavens, the doxologies assert the absence of water entirely, claiming that God poured water over the land and the abyss only during creation. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For references, see above, n. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)