

Justice and Righteousness as The Values of Life: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies on Amos 5:7,24

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Abstract

Justice and righteousness are fundamental to life. In both the church and national life, justice and righteousness must not be neglected. This article aims to uncover the values of justice and righteousness in Amos 5:7 and Amos 5:24. The steps taken are: first, analyzing the meaning of justice and righteousness in the Old Testament. Second, conducting an exegetical and hermeneutical study of Amos 5:7 and Amos 5:24. Third, applying the meaning of justice and righteousness as the values of life in religion, nation, and state. I argue that the church needs to construct its teaching and worship paradigm as a foundation for the church and Christians to continuously voice and realize justice and righteousness in every aspect of life, as contained in the trilogy of its calling.

Keywords: Amos, *misypat*, *tsedaqa*, justice, righteousness, church, Christians, worship, nation, state

Introduction

Justice and righteousness are fundamental to life. Both in the church life and in the life of the nation and state, justice and righteousness must not be neglected. However, the opposite often occurs. Justice and righteousness are not enjoyed by all parties. Nevertheless, justice and righteousness are essential. They are what God desires to be manifested in this life. However, churches and Christians often become complacent,

focusing solely on religious ceremonies and rituals, forgetting about oppression and injustice in society. No matter how beautiful the form of worship or the melodious sound of praise, it will be meaningless without justice and righteousness for the oppressed, the weak, and the poor. The question is how Christians respond and position themselves in such situations.

The prophet Amos, who prophesied in the 8th century BC, highlighted the poor social justice during the reign of King Jeroboam bin Josiah (Jeroboam II) in Northern Israel. The reign of this king is actually known as the "golden age" of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, in this golden age there was a moral and ethical degradation in Israeli social life. The results of nation building are only enjoyed by the upper layers of society. The common people did not enjoy the results of this development at all. Instead, they experience oppression and unfair treatment in everyday life. Religious ceremonies and celebrations run lively. But the poor and weak are ignored and oppressed.¹

In these circumstances, God sent the prophet Amos to condemn the behavior of the Israelite community that had "trampled on justice and righteousness" and to call for justice and righteousness to "roll down like waters." What is the meaning of justice and righteousness conveyed by the prophet Amos? What can Amos's call reflect in today's life?

This article aims to discover the meaning of justice and righteousness in Amos 5:7 and Amos 5:24. The steps taken are: first, analyzing the meaning of justice and righteousness in the Old Testament. Second, conducting an exegetical and hermeneutical study of Amos 5:7 and Amos 5:24. Third, applying the meaning of justice and righteousness as a value of life in religion, nation, and state. I argue that the church

¹ Marthinus Theodorus Mawene, *Perjanjian Lama dan Teologi Kontekstual* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008), 100–101.

needs to construct its teaching and worship paradigm as a foundation for the church and Christians to continuously voice and realize justice and righteousness in every aspect of life, as contained in the trilogy of its calling.

The Concept of Justice and Righteousness in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the words used to mean “justice” and “righteousness” are *misypat* and *tsedaqa*. *Misypat* are spread throughout most of the Old Testament books except Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum.² Its basic meaning is the correct way for someone to conduct themselves, and the correct way to treat others. In its use, *misypat* can give the meaning of right (Ex. 23:6; Deut. 10:18; Isa. 49:4); justice (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 16:19; 2 Sam. 8:15; Job 8:3; Isa. 1:17); judgment (Ps. 105:5; Jer. 51:9; Hos. 5:1); regulations (Ex. 21:1; Deut. 4:1; Ezek. 5:6); law (Ps. 19:11; 103:6; 119:7). *Misypat* also means the right decision given on difficult matters, especially by the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:15; Num. 27:21; Deut. 17:8-9; 1 Kings 3:28).³

Tsedaqa, derived from the root word *tsdq*, is found mostly in the prophets, Psalms, and books of wisdom, while it is found less frequently in history books. This word has various meanings. Literally, *tsedaqa* has a spiritual meaning, namely, according to an accepted standard. For example, Jacob's life, which fulfilled the terms of his covenant to tend Laban's sheep, is called *tsedaqa* (Gen. 30:33, my uprightness). Moses, who spoke of the right weights (Lev. 19:36) or complete and accurate (Deut. 25:15), and the demand that Israel's judges

² B. Johnson, “misypat,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, IX, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 87.

³ Johnson, “misypat,” 88–95.

judge with fair judgment (Deut. 16:18, 20) is translated as *tsedeq*.⁴

After the time of Moses, *tsedaqa* meant God's will and the actions that resulted from it (Deut. 32:4; Zeph. 3:5; Ps. 89:14); it described God's care for human and animal life (Ps. 36:7); it indicated God's word, which is always true and proclaims what is right (Jesus 45:19). *Tsedafa* then described the moral standard by which God measured human conduct, specifically imposed on kings (2 Sam. 8:15; Jer. 22:15b), but every righteous person was also expected to practice *tsedaqa* (Ps. 119:121; Prov. 1:3). In relation to divine government, justice and righteousness referred especially to punishment (cf. Ex. 9:27; Hab. 1:13; Deut. 32:22).⁵

Since the time of the judges, *tsedaqa* has been used to indicate God's actions for those deemed worthy of receiving them (Judg. 5:1); connected with redemption (cf. Ps. 31:1; 103:17; 143:1; Isa. 45:21); as God's gift to those who believe (Hab. 2:4; Isa. 45:24,25; 54:17; Jer. 31:23); has the meaning of 'goodness', especially in relation to the attitude of people who have received grace (Isa. 1:17; Jer. 22:16). Then after the exile, *tsedaqa* became a term which means almsgiving, giving money to the poor (Dan. 4:27; Ps. 112:9).⁶

There are several terms related to *tsedaqa*, namely *aman*, *khesed*, *shalom* which indicate the condition from something common, a community or positive communal relationship. When connected with *emet/emuna*, it refers to an orderly relationship with nature (Ps. 85:12), in the relationship between God and humans (Neh. 9:33; Ps. 40:11; 96:13; 143:1;

⁴ B. Johnson, "tsedaqa," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, XII, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 243.

⁵ J. B. Payne, "Adil, Keadilan dan Kebenaran," in *Ensiklopedi Alkitab Masa Kini, Jilid 1, A-L*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih/OMF, 1994), 11.

⁶ Payne, "Adil, Keadilan dan Kebenaran," 12.

Hos. 2:21,22); between king and people (Isa. 11:5), and among the people in general (1 Sam. 26:23; Prov. 12:17; Isa. 1:26). The words *safe* and *tsedaqa* refer to actions that are commensurate with a person's positive expectations regarding the surrounding circumstances.⁷

Connected with *khesed*, *khesed* and *tsedaqa* of God mean generosity. The justice of God and the king are associated with *khesed* (Ps. 85:11; 89:15). Meanwhile, *tsedeq* and *shalom* both describe good fortune, an orderly state (Ps. 35:27). *Shalom* is also a result of *tsedaqa* (Isa. 32:17). Then an important parallel word is *yasa*, His generosity, His saving intervention as an expression of His righteousness (Isa. 45:8; 51:5ff; 61:10 cf. Ps. 65:6; 71:2). But the most parallel is *misypat*. The two terms are always used together and have synonymous meanings.⁸ The meanings of *misypat* and *tsedaqa* are so close that in their use, the meaning of "justice and ighteousness" is already contained in *tsedaqa*.

Gerhard von Rad believes that no other concept in the Old Testament has such a central meaning for all human relationships as the word *tsedaqa*. This word is the standard not only for human relationships with God, but also for human relationships with each other, even down to the smallest details. It also serves as the standard for human relationships with animals and the natural environment. Therefore, von Rad said, "*tsedaqa* can be described as the highest value in life, upon which all life proceeds when truth is properly implemented."⁹

According to von Rad, the king and kingdom are the focal points of truth in the Old Testament. For von Rad, this view is not surprising, because as the leader of the nation, the king is considered the guarantor and protector of everything in the

⁷ Johnson, "tsedaqa," 246.

⁸ Johnson, "tsedaqa," 247.

⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 370.

land, which creates loyalty in the relationship of fellowship. Although the king is only a mediator and guardian, the king relies on the fact that justice and truth are given to him by God (Ps. 72:1). Meanwhile, in relation to the individual, according to von Rad, *tsedaqa* is related to how individuals understand their existence before Yahweh. There is an emphasis on faith being considered as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). The essence is a righteous person who keeps His commandments.¹⁰

David F. Hinson sees God's truth as influencing history, because on the basis of truth, the LORD will put an end to evil and will establish righteousness in His day. At that time there will be peace and justice on earth (Isaiah 65:21; Micah 4:4). Hinson then connects "justice and righteousness" with "faithfulness." According to Hinson, in the Old Testament, God's faithfulness is always linked to His truth (Psalm 85:11; Zechariah 8:8). God's truth is demonstrated by the fact that God acts according to His purpose. The fact that God does so is one measure of His faithfulness. Based on this, Hinson asserts that truth is what is in accordance with God's will and purpose.¹¹

C. Barth connects justice and truth to the meaning of God's election of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called to develop as a society that upholds truth and justice. According to Barth, Jerusalem has received the "capital" of truth and justice from above, to be developed, even multiplied by its own spirit and efforts. Barth said, "Zion/Jerusalem is called to be a "society full of justice", not only under the rule of kings, but also forever. Its calling in the field of social justice has been its constant throughout time".¹² Therefore Jerusalem became a

¹⁰ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I, 375.

¹¹ David F. Hinson, *Old Testament Introduction 3: Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1982), 112.

¹² C. Barth, *Theologia Perjanjian Lama 3* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009), 32.

bastion of righteousness and justice. This responsibility was borne by the leaders and kings who ruled in Jerusalem.

Justice and Righteousness in Amos 5:7

This verse contains one of the main points of Amos' message: religious resistance to Israel's corrupted laws and resistance to corrupt (degenerate) justice. The justice system is said to be corrupt because the judges collude with the rich and prominent, so that there is no justice and no protection for the poor, the weak, and the needy.¹³

Just as in Amos 5:18 and 6:1, in this verse Amos conveys demands to those who must judge (judges, elders, etc.). The demands that must be met are as stated in Deuteronomy 16:18-20, namely: fair trial, without twisting the law (not judging a case unfairly), without favoritism, and without accepting gifts or bribes. This has already been touched on by Amos in 2:6-7, which is discussed in more depth in this verse.¹⁴

The phrase “*turning justice into wormwood*” describes the actions of judges who violate the law to such an extent that justice, which should grow as a plant that sprouts salvation (cf. Isaiah 45:8), is replaced by a plant that is rotten (cf. Amos 6:12). According to Boland, this action also means that the judge throws the truth (in the sense of “justice”) to the ground and tramples it as something worthless. This is what is meant by the phrase “*casting truth to the ground.*” This happens because the judges do not care about truth and justice, but only *bribes* (v. 12).¹⁵ In this case, Boland views that the phrase “*turning justice into wormwood*” and “*casting truth to the ground*” both describe how the judges in Amos's time prioritized bribes for their own benefit and that of certain

¹³ B. J. Boland, *Tafsiran Alkitab Kitab Amos* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997), 36.

¹⁴ Boland, *Tafsiran Alkitab Kitab Amos*, 57.

¹⁵ Boland, *Tafsiran Alkitab Kitab Amos*, 57.

parties rather than the justice and truth that are demanded by God and needed by all parties.

J. A. Motyer sees this verse as referring to people who resist change. This is evident even though it is not placed before verse 10. Here Amos reveals a religion that leaves life untouched. The Israelites merely go to worship and sing, but there is no real change in life. Justice continues to turn sour (7a, 12c) and righteousness is still thrown to the ground (76, 12b). Therefore, the failure lies not in the promises of Bethel or the God of Bethel, but in the willful unwillingness to change from lawlessness and wickedness.¹⁶

Bernard Thorogood considers verse 7 to be imperfect in Hebrew, and he says some scholars think it should be connected with verse 10. Thorogood views this verse as belonging to the *woe-cry prophecy*, where Amos may be directly accusing his hearers of “turning justice into wormwood” and he may be saying “woe” to those who do so.¹⁷

The same view was expressed by Hans Walter Wolff. According to him, just as Amos 5:2-3 and 4-5 revolve around Israel's fatal destiny, so the introductory elements of 5:7 perhaps repeat the key words for the death lament, that “woe” essentially opening this prophecy.¹⁸ The function of these words is to warn against methods that lead to death, this function explains why 5:7+10 represents a close prophetic unity. Thus, according to Wolff, those who violate *misypat* and *tsedaqa*, have led Israel to the path of death.¹⁹

¹⁶ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Amos* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 112.

¹⁷ Bernard Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos* (London: SPCK, 1971), 58.

¹⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 241–42.

¹⁹ Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 243.

Furthermore, according to Wolff, the word pair *misypat* and *tsedaqa* is central to Amos. They recur in parallel statements in Amos 5:24 and 6:12, and justice appears alone in the next translation in 5:15. It may be surprising that this pair of words is completely unknown in the ancient Israelite law in the Pentateuch. However, parallel statements in the same way are found in the ancient wisdom material (Prov. 16:8; 21:3). Wisdom even speaks of itself in righteousness and justice (Prov. 8:20). It is therefore not surprising that all wisdom can then be summarized by this pair of words (Prov. 1:3; 2:9 cf. Gen. 18:19). Wolff believes that the driving reason behind the wisdom of Israelite proverbs is that the people should not neglect justice and righteousness.²⁰

After Proverbs, the next recorded occurrence of this pair of words is in Isaiah, who accuses Israel of wasting and corrupting this gift (Isa. 1:21; 5:7; 28:17). Then in the time of Josiah, justice and righteousness are firmly implemented for the good of the poor and oppressed (Jer. 22:16-17). The same is given in the psalm of the King James Version (vv. 1-4, 12-14). On this basis, Wolff believes that the series of traditions sketched here should be enough to make it clear that Amos stands close to the historical source for this pair of words in Israel.²¹

The justice referred to by Amos is that which is decided at the gate (5:10 cf. 5:15). Amos does not speak, as Hosea did later, about the function of the royal court and the priests to work in the implementation of the law. By justice, Amos means the rules that establish and maintain peace under the law, realized in practice through firm decisions made at the gate. Amos emphasizes this because local legal issues are regulated at the gate. Meanwhile, the righteousness referred to by Amos refers to behavior in relation to this rule, namely the

²⁰ Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 245.

²¹ Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 245.

willingness of a person who is legally entitled (tsadiq) to defend the righteous who is accused unjustly (cf. 2:6; 5:12).

But what happened was the opposite. Amos laments that those who change the law to its opposite, thus turning justice into wormwood (the same verb expression is found in Amos 5:8; 6:12; 8:10 and elsewhere in the Old Testament). Wormwood is a small shrub that can reach a height of 1.2 m and has leaves with perfect stalks. It is known for its extremely bitter flesh (cf. Prov. 5:4) but is not poisonous. However, because of its association with a disgusting taste, the plant always appears in comparison with poison (6:12; Deut. 29:17 (18); Jer. 23:15; Lam. 3:19). The word describes a godless condition (Deut. 29:17/18), of a person taken into exile (Jer. 9:14-15), and of someone in the agony of death (Lam. 3:19). This occurs because 'truth is thrown to the ground.'²²

The phrase "righteousness is cast to the ground" uses a new metaphor. Compare this with Isaiah 28:2, where the same expression is used for the destructive effects of a flood. This imagery suggests that what happened to the innocent was a real reality in the lives of the people. After all, as long as the people called good evil and evil good, they turned sweet into bitter.²³ This means that Amos's words point to a reality that was actually occurring in the people's lives. Therefore, according to Wolff, decisions and regulations in accordance with the law are like a medicinal remedy that Yahweh has bequeathed for the purpose of restoring those who are treated unjustly and liberating those who are oppressed; for justice and righteousness come from Yahweh.

Justice and Righteousness in Amos 5:24

²² Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 246.

²³ Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 246.

According to Boland, this verse uses a rather strange metaphor or allusion, because it says *justice and righteousness rolling like water in a river that always flows*. In this case, according to Boland, interpreters, remembering Isaiah 28:17, consider this verse as a notification of *punishment*. Where the words "But let it be" at the beginning of the sentence can be crossed out or replaced with the word "will". So the interpretation becomes: *justice will roll down like a flood, which will roll away all injustice on the earth*.²⁴

However, for Boland, there is sufficient reason to interpret and explain the passage differently, namely in accordance with the main point of Amos's message. Amos opposes the "piety" of those who diligently participate in worship ceremonies (especially the rich), but in their daily lives ignore God and His law. According to Boland, here Amos reiterates: God desires that on earth, especially among His people, righteousness and justice be established. This justice must be carried out continuously, without ceasing. Therefore, this verse can be interpreted by remembering Amos 5:14-15; Isaiah 1:10-17; 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13.²⁵

Unlike Boland, T. C. Witney and B. F. Price continue to see the verse as a punishment in which the rolling justice is God's action against those who commit crimes and oppression. Witney and Price write, "but let justice roll down like waters. And let the waters of justice and righteousness cleanse all those who oppress the poor, liars, those who practice injustice, idolaters, and those who give and take bribes, whom Yahweh hates. Nothing more and nothing less is required by a holy God". According to them, the same thing is said by other prophets (especially Mic . 6:6-13; Isa. 1:10-20; 58:1-7).²⁶ Similarly, Wolff argues that if verse 24 begins with a threat of

²⁴ Boland, *Tafsiran Alkitab Kitab Amos*, 68.

²⁵ Boland, *Tafsiran Alkitab Kitab Amos*, 68.

²⁶ T. C. Witney and B. F. Price, *Amos; The Christian Student' Library* (Park Town, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1956), 58.

punishment, then "justice and righteousness" must be interpreted as referring to Yahweh's action, which is not found in this sense elsewhere in Amos (cf. 5:7; 6:12).²⁷

Meanwhile, according to Motyer, the expressions used by Amos in verse 24 speak of abundance (rolling like water) and eternity (an ever-flowing river). However, Motyer admits that sometimes the image of poured water used in the Bible is about the consecration of life to God (cf. 1 Sam. 7:6; 2 Sam. 23:16). That the poured water seems to symbolize the direction in which all life's energy is then channeled. So, the idea of interpreting Amos can be added, that then God seeks a life whose energy is abundant and continuous, flowing in truth and justice: developing and upholding logical moral principles of life, and practicing these principles in personal and social behavior. Therefore, religion becomes meaningless unless its flow is justice and truth.²⁸

In relation to the previous verse, according to Thorogood, verse 24, along with the preceding verses (vv. 21-23), contains very strong language regarding the way the Israelites usually worshipped. Amos states that God rejects the feasts, celebrations, sacrifices, and music associated with worship in the sanctuary. What God truly desires is for Israel to demonstrate justice and righteousness in both personal and national life. The sacrifices mentioned by Amos were not a new custom introduced by the Israelites in his time. They were part of an old tradition, the account of which is found in the Pentateuch. The specific times for making burnt offerings are found in Exodus 29:38-42; the rules for making crop offerings are set out in Leviticus 2; and the rules for peace offerings are found in Leviticus 3.²⁹ It is possible, therefore, that these practices began as a way in which the people could show their gratitude and obedience to God, and their dependence on

²⁷ Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 264.

²⁸ Motyer, *The Message of Amos*, 133.

²⁹ Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos*, 65.

Him. But by the time of Amos, the sacrificial system had become worthless, and no longer helped the people to do God's will .

According to Thorogood the errors that occurred were: The people had begun to worship the gods, "your idols" (5:26), in the sanctuary, instead of worshipping God; In the sanctuary the people acted in ways that showed that they thought their pleasure was more important than pleasing God (2:8); The people made sacrifices merely as a show, and not from love for God (4:5); the sacrifices given in the sanctuary did not represent the offering of their lives. They were not in line with how life should be (23, 24); This problem was not only a concern for Amos himself after Amos appeared other prophets spoke about the dangers of this false religion: Isaiah 1: 11, Micah 6:8; even Jesus also condemned the same thing (Matthew 23:23).³⁰

This view supports Motyer's view that the problem with Gilgal was that the people kept their religion locked up in a box, a sealed room with no external communication. It made no difference to their lives before or afterward, and therefore had no meaning before God. But this was never God's intention for His people. Therefore, according to Motyer, if the people corrected the things they had forgotten and directed their religion toward what it should be and toward God's purpose, He would then withdraw His disappointment and make their religious observance meaningful by His acceptance and gladdening their hearts. If they had recognized themselves as sinners, there would have been a clear indication that their religion bound them to a change of lifestyle. If they had recognized God as holy, they would have found a pressure to live their lives according to His revealed character and will.³¹

³⁰ Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos*, 65.

³¹ Motyer, *The Message of Amos*, 133.

Such an attitude would certainly be in line with the sacrifices Israel offered at the holy places. Therefore, the Israelites needed to live out a clear understanding of the true meaning of sacrifice. The fundamental meaning of the burnt offering was total consecration to God (cf. Gen. 22:12). The fundamental meaning of the atonement offering was fellowship, to God and to others (cf. Deut. 16:10-12), especially to the helpless and the uncared for. What good were the purification sacrifices that were not connected to the consecration of life to righteousness, or the fellowship of sacrifices that were not connected to the fellowship of justice? They were all in vain, stopping at the gate of the holy place; not returning home; not entering the place of business.³²

It is clear that justice and righteousness practiced in life are better and more important than the splendor of praise in worship. Because offering worship to God that prioritizes external aspects but distances oneself from just behavior is an insult to God. What is most important is how worship to God is carried out correctly and sincerely, accompanied by attitudes and actions that truly embody justice and righteousness in every aspect of life by all parties. Thus, justice will flow like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing river, leading the nation to a prosperous life.

Justice and Righteousness as the Values in Religious Life

From the situation and conditions of the people during Amos's time, we can see that the Israelites paid great attention to and enthusiastically performed religious ceremonies and celebrations flawlessly. Their worship was vibrant and energetic. They brought abundant, fattened animals for sacrifice. Their songs were accompanied by music that could exploit the emotions. However, all of this was merely routine and ceremonial. This occurred because the Israelites in Amos's time believed that ritualistic worship was the only way

³² Motyer, *The Message of Amos*, 134.

to worship God. They believed that by doing so, they had successfully pleased God. The Israelites believed that God could be bribed with abundant offerings. God would forget their crimes if they could bribe God (sacrifices). This is what Amos condemned.

Amos believes that such a religious understanding is a grave error. Worship, in its truest sense, is the integration of ritualistic worship with the daily behavior of the congregation. Barnabas Ludji stated, "Ritual worship and worship in the form of social actions and behavior toward others and the environment are an inseparable whole".³³ Ludji's statement implies that worship without truth and justice is meaningless and merely formal. Worship is not limited to religious rituals with ceremonies and celebrations, sacrifices, and songs. It must be followed up by the realization of justice and righteousness in life.

Justice and righteousness are important to realize because the realization of justice and righteousness in life is the implementation of the Law of the Lord. The poor implementation of the Law of the Lord in the social life of the Israelites was mainly caused by deviations in the worship practices of God's people. Israel's worship system, which should have functioned both as an institution that upholds God's Law and as an institution that reminds the Israelites to always obey God's laws in their daily lives, apparently failed to fulfill its function properly. Therefore, improvements and renewal of the worship life of God's people are needed, so that it can support social upholding in society.³⁴ This view emphasizes that an incorrect worship life will lead to a lifestyle that contradicts the true meaning of worship. It can even result in a life that cannot implement the true meaning of worship in life.

³³ Barnabas Ludji, *Pemahaman Dasar Perjanjian Lama 2* (Bandung: Bina Media Informasi, 2009), 56–57.

³⁴ Mawene, *Perjanjian Lama dan Teologi Kontekstual*, 101–2.

According to Thorogood, Amos reminds us of the importance of humility in worship. Christians come together in church to praise Him “who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and reveals to men His thoughts” (Amos 4:13). We think about what God gives us in worship and in our whole lives rather than what we are not, our prayers, or our offerings. If we think of our worship as something we do only on holy days and in holy places, it will have no impact on our home life, business, education, or politics. We can avoid danger if we think of our whole life as worship. The way we live will reveal our attitude toward God and how we respond to His care and love for us.³⁵

Based on this, the church must realize that its time and energy are not only concerned with ceremonies or internal church issues, but also with the world in which it exists and what the church must do about the problems surrounding it. The church is an institution, a fellowship of God's people in the world to serve: serving God and serving humanity. This means that the church's ministry is a twin ministry: service to God and service to humanity. These two ministries are closely related. Serving God means doing God's will, and doing God's will means being in the world for humanity, namely fighting for humanity's freedom from oppression and injustice.³⁶ That is a true worship.

Justice and Righteousness in National and State Life

Amos's assertiveness in advocating for justice and righteousness in his reporting is driven by the corrupt lifestyle in Israel. This is marked by social inequality. The rich and powerful become richer and more powerful; the poor and weak become poorer and more weak. Bribery is prevalent in the judicial system, with wrongs justified by money. Therefore, justice and righteousness must be continually advocated for

³⁵ Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos*, 66–67.

³⁶ J. L. Ch. Abineno, *Pokok-Pokok Penting Dari Iman Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008), 197.

and realized by all parties, as they permeate every aspect of life.

Because "righteousness" in the Old Testament is a description of how God acts, the righteousness demanded of the people has its own characteristics. This righteousness cannot be fully described using the concept of equal justice. This righteousness is infused with compassion and contains concern and tends to favor the powerless. In an age of rapid social change, where many poor farmers are in debt, where many judges expect bribes, where a newly emerging class of merchants values money more than human brotherhood, the prophet Amos demands: let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing river.³⁷

Prophetic resistance to the encroachment of power on the rights and interests of the people is already reflected in the Deuteronomic Law of Reform. The Deuteronomic Law calls Israel to emulate Yahweh's concern for the poor, the oppressed, widows, orphans, and other victims of society. Even foreigners are to be treated fairly. The administration of law (*misypat*) must be carried out to promote God's goodness (*tsedaqa*), because *tsedaqa*, goodness, or social justice, is the "barometer of the health of society." The power of the privileged must be subject to scrutiny. Law and its application are subject to the law of social good. These principles and practices can realize the prophetic vision of human life in peace with others and in harmony with all creation, and the glory of God is revealed.³⁸

Amos saw Israel in a special situation in which the people had to live, and he did not hesitate to point out the injustice he saw there. He was very concerned about it. He felt that God's words were not only about false worship, but also about the

³⁷ Robert Davidson, *Alkitab Berbicara* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 83–84.

³⁸ John W. de Gruchy, *Agama Kristen dan Demokrasi; Suatu Teologi bagi Tata Dunia yang Adil* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 47–48.

lack of justice in Israel. In the Pentateuch, we find repeatedly that God's law deals with justice among people (Deut. 15:7-11; 15:12-18; 24:14, 15). The laws God gave to His people in the Old Testament show how He expects people to make each other happy. Amos' actions show that God expects there to be justice in society.³⁹

In relation to the church, according to Thorogood, it is clear that Amos's teaching, with its concern for rich and poor, is something that is important for us today. Amos reminds us that the struggle to create a just society is a religious issue. Of course, we must recognize that many people working for social justice are not just Christians. In some countries of the world people of other religions, in their private lives, or through representative bodies, work to create a better life for their fellow nations. Therefore the church cannot remain silent. The church must work and even collaborate with others.⁴⁰

The church must truly be aware of its duties and responsibilities in the world. The church, understood as a critical prophetic movement, must act as a warning so that the modern world cares for the oppressed, because this world is already full of people in need. Eleazar S. Fernandez views the church as a critical prophetic movement as reminding the church of its roots of experience so that the church discovers its unique role and purpose. This is to strengthen the church in the social critical movement as it should be. The church's true identity is as a prophetic social movement, and if it deviates from this identity, it will lose its purpose. As a prophetic social movement, the church stands in solidarity with those who have given their lives in the form of prophetic witness today. The church is one with those who suffer, and the church suffers in resistance to suffering.⁴¹

³⁹ Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos*, 50–51.

⁴⁰ Thorogood, *A Guide to The Book of Amos*, 52–53.

⁴¹ Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Toward A Theology of Struggle* (New York: Orbis Book, 1994), 157.

The church's participation in national and state life must be felt by marginalized groups. The church's prophetic voice must lead to the realization of nationalism, which proclaims justice, eliminates primordialism, and criticizes actions that exploit the common people, the poor, and the vulnerable. The church, within the life of the nation and state, must strive to uphold justice, peace, and humanity. This can only be demonstrated if the church sees itself as part of society and as part of those who suffer.

Taking into account Amos's strong condemnation of all inequalities and evils in the social sphere, we can consider what Mawene said about what the church needs to do, namely: strive to create just social conditions in society; strive to improve social relations between individuals in society and that everyone in society is valued as a fellow human being; strive to end violations of societal norms, so that a just and responsible life is achieved; strive for fair and honest trade; strive to ensure that the nation's leaders (including all political elites, community leaders, and religious leaders) live righteously and honestly.⁴² In this way, the church does not fight for itself and its own interests. The church exists for the poor and weak and those who are threatened or oppressed. The church fights for the state to fulfill its responsibilities to them.

Conclusion

Justice and righteousness are the values of people's lives with God and with each other. Justice and righteousness describe how people's relationships with God and each other are good and correct. Christians are pioneers in realizing justice and righteousness because they have received justice and righteousness from the God they believe in. A true worship is a combination of sincere worship of God and the manifestation of justice and truth towards others. The church needs to

⁴² Mawene, *Perjanjian Lama dan Teologi Kontekstual*, 219.

construct its teaching and worship so that it is not consumed by ceremonies and internal problems alone. The church must open its eyes to its surroundings to see the problems of injustice and oppression that occur so that the church can take action and take action to oppose the injustice and oppression that occurs. The church must not remain silent but must act as contained in the trilogy of duties of its calling.

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