

The Message of Amos on Justice and Righteousness and its Relevance to Nigerian Society

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Abstract

This paper examines the dilemma of the prophet Amos' message in the Nigerian context amid oil wealth enjoyed by the few rich and political class and the life-threatening poverty of the masses courtesy of the bourgeois. In Amos' day, the rich were accumulating more wealth and living large at the expense of the poor who were languishing in penury. The unfortunate situation matches the ugly trend in present-day Nigerian society. Amos cried out passionately against the increased gap between the wealthy and the poor. He preached the message of God to Israel when the economy of Israel was booming, while the rich were crushing the poor. The act of oppressing the poor, sojourners and the defenceless in the land was a serious crime before God. Amos, without delay, launched an attack against the privileged that had downtrodden the vulnerable. He pronounced God's judgment over the nations cautioning that any nation that disobeyed God's commands and condoned evil would inescapably face God's wrath. The study adopts a narrative criticism to explore and analyse prophet Amos' message to address similar anomalies in Nigeria. In its innovative recommendation, the study calls for restructuring as the only solution to salvage the ugly trend in Nigeria.

Keyword: Amos' Message, Justice, Righteousness, Nigerian Society, injustice, economic boom

Introduction

The prophecy of Amos to the Israelites emphasises justice and righteousness in the 8th century BC. During the period of Amos, there was an economic boom and prosperity, but the rich class decided to exploit and oppress the poor Israelites. The rich landlords beleaguered the masses, seizing the estates of several disadvantaged Israelites. Ivory places were erected, and capitalists became intolerant of Sabbath restraints. The bourgeois were tyrannical and crooked; the courts were unfair; the righteous activities were polluted and infiltrated with idolatry. Falsehood and immorality were rampant. Prophet Amos was called by God to address the evil practices in Israel. He admitted that such outrageous circumstances could bring God's judgement and punishment instead of blessings. Amos cried out on God's grief at the ill-treatment of the poor (Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:7, 11, 24; 8:4-6).

Tantamount to the ugly scenario in Israel as Amos prophesied, his message is significant to the current trends in modern-day Nigerian society, where social injustice, corruption and unrighteousness have been prevalent. Justice and righteousness as the pinnacle of Amos' prophecy absolutely indicts the political and rich class on social justice, corruption and unrighteousness. This unfortunate situation retards progress in all segments of Nigeria as a nation and renders the middle class and the less privileged impoverished.

In the religious sphere, many pastors and church leaders pervert worship with idolatry, fake miracles and dupe their members in the name of tithing for the man of God. Many Christians in Nigeria are disguised as saints whereas practically scores of unfairness and decadence triumph (Diara, Onukwufor, & Uroko, 2020). Scores of the liturgical services in Nigerian religious assemblies are fictitious like that of the Israelites as cried out in Amos' prophecy. Their solemn assemblies are like the echo of musical instruments without any impact on our society.

This study is a qualitative research work that employs an analytical method and narrative criticism to explore social injustice and righteousness in Amos' day and Nigerian society through basic observations and interpretations to arrive at the desired outcomes. Secondary sources are used by utilising library resources and online materials. This study examines Amos' prophecy on justice and righteousness in Israel and its relevance to present-day Nigerian society to proffer solutions that might erode malevolent leadership. A distinctive remedy that will annihilate corruption, Inyaregh (2024), calls for revolution, however, the study reevaluates and deduces from the premise of arguments and recommends restructuring into regions to have better leadership.

Historical Background of the Book Amos

Amos, the prophet of God emanated from the village of Tekoa, a satellite town approximately nine kilometres south of Bethlehem and seventeen kilometres from Jerusalem. His name Amos signifies burden or burden-bearer. His livelihood stemmed from shepherding his flock and the tendering sycamore-fig grove (Amos 1:1; 7:14-15). His call conveyed him from Judah (Southern Kingdom) to Israel, Northern Kingdom (Strydom & Wessels, 2000). His ministry was for the period of the rule of Uzziah over Judah (792-740 BC) and Jeroboam II over Israel (793-753 BC), therefore, the peak of his prophetic call falls within 760-750 BC. Amos, a tender of fig tree and shepherd, was not a prophet before but received the message of social structurings for the nations of Judah and Israel at the pinnacle of their prosperity.

MacDonald (1990) avers that Amos, the prophet of God reveals that he was a shepherd and a tender of sycamore trees sent by God to preach his oracles to Israel, thus he doesn't portray himself as a prophet nor a son of a prophet. Amos arose from his agrarian profession to become a prophet to God's nation, Israel. Amos as a book belonged to the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. It is organized into nine chapters and arranged logically: Prophecy against the nations (1-2); prophecies against Israel (3-6); a set of revelations concerning Israel's doom (7:1-9:10); the hope of reinstatement (9:11-15). Amos' profile and ministry are recorded in a prophetic manuscript which carries his designation. Amos lived at Tekoa in Judah adjacent to Bethlehem (Amos 1:1, 7:12).

Jeroboam II the heir of Jehoash launched an intensive project to extend the borders of Israel, over and above what his predecessor, father had accomplished (2 Kings 14:25, 28). The achievement triggered superfluous political and economic fortunes (Hoerth, 1998). This was moreover a period of decadence and religious triviality. At the peak of religious bankruptcy, God raised Amos without prophetic upbringing like other prophets from Judean communities, to naturalize the unappreciative lifestyle of Israelites by updating them on Yahweh's agenda to judge their infidelity and disobedience against Him. More so, God intended to strike them rigorously even much beyond his wrath on the surrounding countries (Hoerth, 1998). It is evident that Amos was a professional nomad tending flocks in Tekoa and his lineage was not traced to a household of prophets, neither did he claim to be one. Again, he was involved in horticulture of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14-15).

During Amos' ministry, Israel was bedevilled with an unprecedented corrupt lifestyle. Boadt (1984) argues that the rudimentary prophecy of Amos underscores God's righteous reign on nations and the divine call for fairness and equity for the destitute or the marginalised. In spite of the foregoing, peripheral devotion to Yahweh and religious rituals were on the high side, and the hearts of the individuals were far from God, therefore this upsurge in worship was only deceitful (Smith & Page, 1995). MacDonald (1990) also collaborated with Smith & Page that the motif in Amos' oracle was on uprightness. He was an authoritative advocate of uprightness and unbending justice. Considerable of Amos' oracles are focused on the cruelty of the rich traders who disregard the dilemma of the underprivileged, the absence of justice for the just, and the barrenness of sacred ceremonies besides true faith. Amos was a prodigious mouthpiece of God who was bent on implementing uprightness in society. This is very conspicuous in his prophecy. Keller (2008) likewise deduces that the overriding motif of Amos' prophecy is moral uprightness. As stated by Doorly (1989) the emphasis in Amos' oracle was a condemnation of sinful acts, particularly the egotistic lifestyle of the wealthy people in Samaria who out of gluttony disallowed the impartial circulation of the nation's wealth to Israelites.

The Theology and Message of Amos to Israel on Justice and Righteousness

The theology and message of Amos are centred on moral uprightness which is further articulated conspicuously in the fifth chapter (McConville, 2002). McConville (2002) has not captured another central message of Amos, but Grimsrud (1999) presents a comprehensive message in Amos that this is the oracle he expounds, particularly in the fifth chapter. He establishes that justice and righteousness are unquestionably manifestations of God's existence as the life-giving potency (Amos 5:67). For him, the people of Israel declared wickedness as upright and this was evident among them. Consequently, the supposed fairness had twisted to its reverse expression of unfairness and the Israelites were chasing after riches by manipulating and suppressing the fragile and the underprivileged.

They detested and witch-hunt the upright who defended justice (5:10). Thus, Amos impelled the folks that such antagonism to the core of justice jurisdiction, where legitimacy manifests, was a hug of demise in the presence of Yahweh. Unless Yahweh's care for the fragile is unveiled and observed, would the Israelites experience fairness and harmony? For Amos, the fundamental thing to be accepted by God is official piousness, but the isometrics of justice between and amid people (5:21-24).

The economic boom has unfortunately thriven in causing the God's elect to luxury (1:6); taking advantage of the underprivileged (2:6-7, 5:7, 10-13); infidelity (2:7); worship of idols (5:18-27) and arrogance (6:8). All through chapters 5 to 6, the prophet critiques all the wealthy class who took advantage of the downtrodden and camouflage as if they are sacred. Amos notifies the wrongdoers that God articulates that he abhors such acts, spurns their carnivals, and has no pleasure in their religious gatherings (Amos 5:21).

According to Geisler (2011), the foremost message of Amos was to remind the Israelites of their evil and warn them of the impending verdict. Thus, he elaborates on the dominion of Yahweh to portray his dominion over the universe. Dominion is Yahweh's supremacy over all reality. In collaboration with this assertion, Boaheng (2020) avers that God's dominion equates him to a potter who decides to frame a portion of soil into whatever formula he admires (cf. Rom 9). Moreover, as Amos was trying to underscore God's dominion, he mentioned Israel's God as Yahweh and purposely evades the expression of calling 'the God of Israel' on account of the predisposition to entail God' is their Yahweh who has no business with other peoples (Boaheng, 2020).

The implication of Amos' prophecy centres on social justice because he was generally extolled as the messenger of fairness and righteousness. He upheld that authentic adherence to their bond with God can be revealed through compliance with justice to the members of the covenant, who are measured as relatives. This is celebrated as the cradle of stimulus for freedom theology and for the activists who are struggling to secure the privileges of the underprivileged and the downgraded against all tyrannical dominion (Ceresko, 1992; Menezes, 2003). Amos uncovers the absolute vanity of idolatry that was formalized. Yahweh is not an ethnic or domestic God who can be conciliated by religious rituals. He denounces societal unfairness but stresses the ethical righteousness of his people and is concerned for the privileges of fellow citizens. Yahweh condemns folks who crush the privileges of others be it a prodigious country or a person.

Amos appreciates justice as a created social standard. Unfairness flouts communal living, like a curved wall or an ox ploughing the sea. Choosing the path to unfairness is hence intrinsically destroying oneself. Injustice destroys those who practice it. The first and second chapters express that Amos views God's justice as envisioned for everybody, comprising the heathen nations. The Israelites have a distinct obligation due to their exceptional cognizance of God's justice. The prophet cried out so passionately in contrast to the intensified gap between the rich people and the needy. Amos packaged the oracle of God to the northern kingdom when the riches of the nation were afloat, and the wealthy class were crushing on the hapless. For the time being, abusing poor people, the visitors and the defenceless in Israel happened to be a severe sin in the sight of Yahweh (Deut. 15:7-9). The prophet, without hesitation, had to condemn outrightly all the cartels that had downtrodden the less privileged in Israel. He declared Yahweh's verdict on the people (Amos 3:10), revealing that any country that disobeyed God's commands and concealed cruelty and pilfering should unavoidably expect Yahweh's anger. His condemnation was directed at the

Northern Kingdom and other surrounding countries (Fosbroke, 1969).

Amos' message was a doom on societal unfairness, for example, fraud, gluttony and deceitful reverence, which triumphed in adjacent countries and exclusively to the Northern Kingdom. This is articulated in Amos 5:24 where Amos instructs the people to let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Socio-Political Injustice

It is attested that during Amos' ministry, Syria was weak in terms of soldierly strength and Assyria was excessively feeble so they were no longer a danger to the Israelites (Fosbroke 1969). Throughout the rulerships of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah, these nations attained the summit of administrative extension. Throughout the rule of Jeroboam II, the Israelites reached the climax of economic prosperity. Assisted with a conspiracy among monarchs and magistrates, a rich upper class arose causing damage to the underprivileged. They slept in deluxe abodes built in towns. It is evident that this fiscal boom was never associated with an impartial circulation of the people's fortune, therefore the upper class were becoming more affluent from the stretched bazaars due to the extension of Israelite terrain and overseas transactions, and most of the people persisted in poverty.

Amos elaborated on the monetary affluence that was benefited by Israelites' frontrunners. Doom was declared on the privileged who sleep on expensive divans and lie on their settees, and dine on sheep from the herd and young cattle from the hub of the outlet (Amos 6:4). This unfortunate trend portrays to Amos that exploitation among the frontrunners, predominantly within the courts' organism, remained widespread. Looking at the rich class in Israel, monetary affluence prompted gratification and fraud. On top of the cosiness and extravagance in Israel self-reliance manifested alongside a fabricated logic of safety. However, opulence expressed exploitation and obliteration (Barton 1995).

Considering the flagging of Aram-Damascus and the termination of its domination over Syria-Palestine then likewise to the neighbouring marketable and monetary bonds amid the two territories throughout that half of the century, they used the opportunity of the external partisan status quo and lack of Israel-Judea war to build a coalition that ushered in harmony and growth of their regions. Israel was capable of restoring its territories that were seized before (2 Kings 13:25) and similarly spread its boundary as far north as Hamath (2 Kings 14:25, 28; Amos 6:14). For Judah, Uzziah, its king, had restrained the Edomites and the Philistines, put the Ammonites under domination, invigorated husbandry and the local acts of peace, and outstretched a great, influential armed forces, revitalizing Jerusalem powerfully (2 Chron 26:1–15). However, the political leaders were oppressing and marginalizing the poor.

As earlier borders were reinstated, Israel developed into a major and powerful nation alongside the eastern Mediterranean shore, and Jeroboam II undoubtedly gained popularity based on that. Furthermore, the coalition of the two nations occasioned the appearance of a fresh authority, the result of which was the Israelites civil and soldierly dominance over the Syrians, Ammonites and Moabites. These circumstances guaranteed an epoch of firmness in which commercial activities flourished, turning the two nations to be very wealthy (Scheffler, 2001).

Socio-Religious Injustice

Amos uttered God's condemnation of the Israelites religious gatherings. The repercussion was that God would never condone the aroma of the burnt offerings that the children of Israel sacrificed to

Him in their worship centres. Undoubtedly, God does not abstain from swiftly discarding with absolute abhorrence any sacred organization that rejects to do his bidding. It is evident as the Israelites turned out to be careless when it comes to religious assembly, that the gentle fragrance of their offerings no more appealed to God. God was more concerned with taking possession of their hearts than their unsubstantiated sacrifices. Accordingly, Yahweh confirms that as their hearts were shifted away from him and again used religion only as a robotic way of attracting him, then he lost attentiveness to the Israelites link to the sacred organism that he instituted (Niehaus, 1992). On the other hand, Stuart (1987) emphasis is on the fact that Israelites were habitually traditional in the elegance of their religious acts but wayward in individual as well as communal lifestyle.

Yahweh exhibited no curiosity in Israelites religious rites (5:21–27) nonetheless they were asked to pursue fairness and uprightness (1:17). In Amos 4:4 he transcribes ironically that Israelites should to Bethel and sin; then to Gilgal, and increase disobedience; convey their offerings every sunrise, their one-tenths in three days' time. Other people in Israel ingenuously misunderstood the point that participating in worship ceremonies can shield them from evil ways. However, the prophet directly acknowledged by stating that none of the devotional feasts would appeal to Yahweh, their unfilled and insincere devotions were useless. As a result, those who disobeyed God by unholy acts could not be fixed through some offerings, feast or devotion unaccompanied, since the most ornate rite that the folks performed persisted abominable to God given that it was offered by people who failed to do the needful. Amos, comparable to Samuel, maintained that obedience supersedes offering and to listen supersedes the butters of sheep (1 Sam 15:22). Amos intimated them on the right footing that Yahweh abhors and loathe their banquets. God is not happy with their fervent carnivals. He does not accept their offerings. He is willing to listen to their melodies. Nonetheless, they should allow fairness to stream like river and uprightness like a constant water (5:21).

As construed in the prophecy, authentic worship ought to have arisen from the inner mind and must have arisen from genuine belief in Yahweh. Genuine worship is fairness inclined by uprightness deep-seated in the uprightness of God. This portrays the type of faith that looks after the welfare of the less privileged, orphans, widows and the destitute. Such faith practice is wholesome and unblemished before Yahweh and separating oneself spotless on secular matters (James 1:27). In the prophecy of Amos, an upright affiliation with God ought to unescapably materialize to a robust corresponding rapport with one's fellow citizen and the surroundings. Consequently, the wealthy people should discontinue duping the masses and somewhat assist the help the underprivileged escape from their depressed condition.

Nonetheless, after Amos observed the Israelites' attitude, it was a breach of their promise to God, and acting as if God's commandments are no more (Amos 2.4). Amos cautions Israelites in his prophecy that failure to change, Yahweh would not fulfill his oath which he had assured them accompanied with benefits, all will be forfeited (Exodus 34). The prophet realized that Israelites were incapable to withstand Assyrian invasion, and will be defeated effortlessly, however he beseeched for revival to repent of their evil ways. Amos concludes by advocating for reinstatement of expectation for Israelites supposedly their sinful acts are relinquished (Amos 9:13-15).

Israel's financial boom brought an upsurge in spiritual undertakings. The sanctuaries at Bethel, Dan, Gilgal, and Beersheba were erected as individuals congregated to the very altars to perform their ritual rites by offering livestock. These sanctuaries afforded divine distinctiveness to Israel (Amos 5:5; 8:1–14). The prophet highlights numerous offerings (Amos 4:4), peace offerings (Amos 5:22), meal

offerings (Amos 5:22), thanksgiving offerings (Amos 4:5), freewill offerings and moreover one-tenths (Amos 4:4–5). All of them, nevertheless, depicted simply ceremonial adherences, absent in any inner piety and displaying pintsize impact on the everyday Israelites' spirituality. Following this, Amos expressed that they should fetch their offerings every daybreak, and one tenths every three days. Israelites were asked to bring to the altar a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is fermented and announce freewill offerings; they should broadcast them as they liked to do so (Amos 4:4–5).

Looking at the angle from which the people of Israel were reasoning, the spiritual revitalisation was meticulously connected to commercial achievement, since they assumed, from the Deuteronomist source, that commercial accomplishment was a symbol of Yahweh's kindness to them (Deut 28). It seems that the Israelites' keenness in erecting sacred sanctuaries and altars was an approach to showcasing their thankfulness for Yahweh's goodwill and God's kindness. Richard (1987) argues that regrettably, this incentive was paradoxically twisted into self-admiration. While such spiritual events occurred, the upper class unmoved plagued the oppressed and underprivileged. Undoubtedly, the people were selfish. Egocentricity is an act whereby the egoistic lifestyle inhabits a dominant direction concerning many psychological activities (Richard, 1987).

Socio-Judicial Injustice

It is attested that unfairness took the centre stage as magistrates collected bribes and the tyrannical loaners sold into captivity the paupers whose limited liability was however equated to the cost of a footwear (Brueggemann, 1978). Amos lamented the dishonest court structure, the disadvantaged generally lack avenues for fair hearing and justice. From the wealthy, the adjudicators grabbed payoffs, vending verdicts for a pair of sandals. He surmises that similarly, it was conceivable as issues were conveyed as trivial as a matter of shoes. The imperative expression at this point is that the underprivileged were marginalised by the opulent through land confiscation or in the courts. Justice was scarce in the society (3:10) for every magistrate was crooked (3:12) and they twisted justice into venom instead of remedial, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood (5:7).

Amos establishes that justice and righteousness are unquestionably the core of God's existence God is the life-bequeathing power (5:6–7). Consistent with Amos, the people of Israel professed wickedness as upright and were performing it in the social order. Accordingly, the supposed 'justice' had been crooked and changed into its contrasting phrase unfairness and the folks were unwavering for riches by taking advantage of and marginalising the fragile and the disadvantaged. The rich in Israel despised and fought the upright who upheld the truth (5:10). For that reason, Amos retold the people that their hostility to the crux of the judicial organism, whereas the truth was destabilized, and stands as a death sentence before God. The prophecy attests that Israelites can be acknowledged as living in justice and peace whenever God's care for the needy is divulged and practicalised. Considering Amos' wish, the crucial path to please God is not pointless, formal devoutness, but the application of justice between and among people (5:21–24) (Grimsrud, 1999).

Socio-Economic Injustice

Following the path of Ben-Sasson (1979), it is attested that Jeroboam II's rule was an epoch of monetary prosperity and consolidation'. The economic evolution unquestionably impacted the people's way of life. The marketplace was full of racketeering trade, dishonest scales, and deceitful commercial transactions (8:5–6). Fraudulent traders are involved in fraudulent commercial transactions to increase profits. Coote and Coote (1990) asserted that, during this era, improved superior oil and drinks were distributed and earmarked for the rich

while an additional squeezing of the olive pulp, yields an inferior oil sold to the underprivileged. The consequence exhibited by this status quo exposed a sharp distinction between the extravagance of the opulent and the wretchedness of the needy, which the wealthy class delighted in a slothful, easy-going lifestyle (4:1ff; 6:1–6) whereas the needy turned out to be an alluring object for legal and economic manipulation (2:6–8; 4:1; 5:10–12; 8:4–6). As a matter of fact, the rich flourished to the detriment of the poor (4:1) by oppressing the penurious, grabbing the estate of the people who were indebted and endangering them to servitude (2:6; 8:4, 6), rejecting their fairness in the unprofessional courts at the entrances of town (2:7; 5:10, 12), and cheating them in the open market (8:5–6).

Misguidedly, the status quo in Israel was devastating because the wealth was hijacked by the ruling clique, who downgraded the less privileged and evicted them of their possessions. Ostensibly, the rich business class arose with a heritable status, sharing the nation's prosperity with the aristocracies and constructing for themselves extravagant mansions. They legitimized the practice of making riches through land snatching, in conjunction with the appearance of an aristocratic class of landlords that expelled the small farmers by unlawful ways to expand their lands (Robinson, 1998).

Religious devotion is empty if it is accompanied by prejudiced taxes on the poor, backdoor bribes, and working against the poverty-stricken (Amos 5:11–12). Prophet Amos condemned injustice and corruption in the marketplace where the rich cheated the poor with corrupt scales and false weights (Amos 8:5–6; cf. Micah 6:11). In Amos' day wholesalers cherished the accomplishment of the profit motivation over spiritual piety, market decency, and even humankind. These merchants were restless for the sacred carnivals to finish so that they might carry out commercial activities to transact and get profit; marketing fewer but making extra cash, therefore, they were tinkering with weights and measures. More so the brokers anticipate the carnival time to pass swiftly so that they can purchase the underprivileged for silver and the penurious for a pair of sandals (Amos 8:6). In this scenery, silver could signify a mortgage made to the disadvantaged (cf. 2:7a) and sandals the procurement he transacted on loan, while confidentially the dealer planned to force the needy into servitude for nonpayment of the loan (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1).

The Relevance of Amos' Message to the Socio-Political Situation in Nigeria

The situation in Nigeria is tantamount to Israel's in Amos' day. It is a multifaceted problem that has devastated the nation for a long period. The oil boom of Nigeria is restrained to a small number of cabals and has ushered in all sorts of civil deterioration among the masses. The termination of the 30-month civil war in January 1970 conveyed unparalleled economic prosperity to Nigeria elicited by the unpredicted rise in the oil revenue, a development that threw Nigeria's economic leaders off-balance. Crowder (1978) elucidates that the most momentous development of the post-war years has been Nigeria's rise as a foremost manufacturer of Oil This fresh wealth in oil placed Nigeria without planning into the league of rich nations worldwide.

Nigeria's Oil Boom Period covered 1973–1983 (Crowder, 1978). The speediest way people have been accumulating ill wealth in contemporary Nigerian society is mostly through holding political offices or positions. The Nigerian state is wealthy but those in power misappropriate and siphon the riches at the expense of the underprivileged. The pervasiveness of inequality in the Nigerian state is fundamentally attached to the kind of governance we have been subjected to since independence. Recent research carried out by Inyaregh (2024) lamented that there is a broad fissure between the

wealthy people and the less privileged in Nigeria. Nigerian statesmen are elected into robust offices to rheostat authority and affluence so owing to their cartel on oil and gas industries in Nigeria. Many political figures possess shares in these industries, tax revenues from the energy sector are dwindled, and the returns of Nigeria's energy are not evenly distributed in the state.

The Nigerian rich have siphoned Nigerian wealth, monies, accumulated and stashed in home and foreign accounts to enjoy for donkey years, which is stolen and worst still, they indulge in cultism, homosexuality, immoral acts, and so on (Inyaregh, 2024). What Inyaregh (2024) decried is a mimic of Amos' day in Israel. People found pleasure in consuming wine, repeatedly from holy bowls (2:8, 9, 12; 6:6). The rich ladies were compared to overweight cattle of Bashan (4:1). They were addicted to wine and had no empathy for the deprived and penurious. Feast tables were served with high-quality diets; rams, calves, and overweight animals (5:22; 6:4). Regrettably, it is only a few of the Israelites delighted in such comfy living. This was enjoyed by a limited number of persons, generally the governing or the ruling class. Israelites' society was consequently partitioned into rich groups and disillusioned, deprived towns on account of injustice.

Unemployment and corruption are other causes of modern slavery, for instance, underpayment of civil servants. As a result of the corruption and mismanagement of government funds in Nigeria, many people do not succeed in getting a decent job which affords their families with necessities. Contemporary slavery may affect the mindset of the Nigerian people, education, health and economy also (Inyaregh, 2021).

Nigeria could have been a better place like Dubai, China, the UK, the US, Canada and the like, where people would scramble to come for vacation, but the political and rich class have reduced Nigeria to a poor state with dilapidated infrastructure leading to underdevelopment. Pilfering of communal coffers by the ruling class has turned into the order of the day in Nigeria. Institutes, highways, health centres and other social services are not properly taken care of. Those at the grassroots patronise public hospitals where there are poor facilities and no satisfactory medications or treatment due to the lackadaisical attitude of the government on maintenance. Their children, without option, join communal institutes where educators are not motivated to do the needful and recurring strikes proliferate. The rich class in Nigeria go to private hospitals or treat themselves overseas. Most of the time times their progenies attend schools in overseas countries. The challenge in Nigeria is the indisposition and failure of its frontrunners to wake up from slumber and change the ugly scenario.

Religion in Nigeria today is being camouflaged for selfish ends. Religion has turned into a lucrative merchandise business. There are many churches, mosques and shrines in Nigeria, but the level of immorality, injustice and corruption is devastating. Nigerian Christians are good at attending worship, speaking in tongues, and giving tithes and offerings but it is an external form of religion without any spiritual commitment. Stolen wealth is offered in the church.

Proliferated religious ceremonies in Christendom are experiential punctiliously by devotees in Nigeria. Unfortunately, those who thrive in their inappropriate trade have been giving tithes and other donations frequently to churches. In this kind of worship, Amos lamented the uproar of tunes and the strain of harps throughout his day. Nigeria is experiencing the same uproar that is heard in some religious gatherings since there are no changes in the lifestyles of citizens. In Isaiah's prophecy Yahweh exclaimed that Israelites come

closer and worship him with their mouth and reverence him with their lips, though their minds are distant from him, and their fear of him is an instruction imparted by folks (Isa. 29: 13).

Amos' oracle on justice and righteousness to the people of Israel of his day imparts to Nigerians many lessons, which can absolutely impact their lives to reverse the ugly status quo of injustice and corruption. Nigerians are known for being religious. But the more they are religious, the more they are corrupt. Righteousness is only seen in behaviour that must reflect that we are God's people.

Amos underscores the significance of social justice and righteousness in human society. The act of using human and mineral resources from the things that God has created is a key to progress. Development cannot be accomplished without good governance and a strenuous struggle for upright and godlike social living in the community. The life of everyone will be improved in line with the will of God if justice and righteousness are truly practised.

The rich in Nigeria are very wicked because they hoarded palliatives sent by other nations during the COVID-19 pandemic, they pad budgets for their selfish benefit and term it prayers, procurement of expensive cars worth hundreds of millions, squandering constituency allocations, still, they ask the poor to be tolerant and reduce their costs (Inyaregh, 2024). Justice is fairness in the manner people are treated so what Inyaregh lamented is anchored by Iwe (1985) who asserted that justice as a moral notion with enormous social implication infers the idea of justice, just deals, ethical uprightness and righteousness in handling people and the matters and business of societal life. Injustice in Nigeria is the reverse of fairness which encompasses man's mercilessness to man, prejudicial circulation of natural endowments and break of ultimate human rights. These elicited the relevance of Amos' message to Nigerian society.

Most Nigerians are characterised by religiosity without spirituality and morality which is tantamount to Israel during Amos' day. Some of the politicians, the wealthy men and the poor worship God in principle, without devotion so they place their egotistic primacy in immorality, homosexuality, cash, trade, celebrity, political affairs, charismas, idolatry, etc. It is cumbersome to be loyal to two masters, you either love one or hate the other, thus, God cannot be substituted with material gains, as the Israelites of Amos' time were victims. Some church members scarcely distinguish what they accept as true, whether riches or God since they continually make every effort to accumulate more affluence for themselves at the expense of fellow humans. Prophet Amos' appraisal of corruption and injustice is rendered to address people's interactions in society.

Amos perceives justice and morals as the underpinnings of humanity. He upholds that devotion to Yahweh without commitment is spiritual emptiness since such adherents indulge in sinful acts like egoism, gluttony, decadence and cruelty. God detests it. A lot of people in Nigeria are very religious without spiritual connection or devotion to God. The prophet was Yahweh's mouthpiece who contended that in case Israel intended to conciliate their spiritual life with God, they were expected to reconcile with their neighbours and relate with them on an equal basis. He condemned injustice and oppression of the poor in the world and branded them as sins against God and humanity. In the equivalent approach, the Nigerian political and rich class should be just in relating with their fellow citizens as fellows of the same nation.

There is no equality before the law because the rich are more Nigerians than the poor. People are convicted and sentenced because they are denied justice in our current lawless courts. Fundamental human rights are neglected every day under loathsome verdicts. The perversion of justice in Amos' day through bribery is the worst hit in

the Nigerian judiciary. In Nigeria, the masses lost hope in the judiciary because it was their death trap (Umeanolue, 2018). Trailing the foregoing Ugwueye (2003) upholds that corruptible judges and all other people who settle disputes at all levels of society reject poor people's justice, because of bribes from the rich. The rich are continually claiming poor people's lands, yet the court constantly rules on the side of the rich, due to bribery. In the same line of thought, it is deduced that it is very disastrous that Nigerian courts have twisted into dangerous areas due to gluttony, greed, self-centeredness, and several disgusting acts of adjudicators who arrange two conflicting judgements, one for the accuser and the other for the offender; awaiting eagerly to sell the judgement to the uppermost dealer (Umeanolue, 2018).

According to Eguavoen (2009), Nigerian politics has never had crisis-free and fair elections. Elections in Nigeria have never been free of malpractice and aggressiveness. The juvenile unemployed are hired and manipulated as hoodlums to obstruct the electoral process for rigging. The gift of life is not cherished and worth insignificant to political objectives as the less privileged were likened to a pair of shoes in Amos' period.

Conclusion

In Amos' day and Nigeria today, social justice aims to build a well-adjusted society, one in which the structures are fair to everybody without exclusion. The craving is to develop an enabling environment where minority groups, the destitute, womenfolk and the underprivileged are not victimized in all aspects of life. Human rights and equality should be guaranteed. Amos's cry and call for social justice is a challenge to Nigerian society. The jurisdictional area in Nigerian society is similar to the scenario in Amos' day as justice is perverted through bribery. The thriving of potential socio-religious realities is dashed to the ground.

As portrayed in Amos' prophecy that Yahweh is the God of justice, righteousness and kindness should be imbibed into Nigerians. Nigerians should practice uprightness and exhibit a godly lifestyle in their rapport with fellow citizens so that peace, equity, righteousness and honesty will reign in Nigeria. The cry and call for social justice by Amos is a challenge to religious bodies in Nigeria. Moral uprightness is predominantly anchored on how society is systematized, and how well-being, positions, amenities, rights and duties are shared to each layer of society. To fight injustice and evil deeds in our contemporary society, all hands must be on deck to turn the tables. The study calls for a restructuring of the Nigerian state into regions to install good governance capable of enabling an environment for true democracy to thrive in Nigeria. The oppressors and the corrupt who conspire with the Western world to exploit and impose taxes on Nigerians are by this prophecy forewarned of the impending doom.

Conflict interest(s)

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Ethical considerations

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