



PROPHETIC CRITIQUE OF COVENANT VIOLATION IN AMOS 5:22–24: IMPLICATIONS FOR EASTERN OBOLO, AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

Prophecy in the Old Testament functioned as a covenantal instrument that addressed moral decadence, social injustice, oppression, communal unfaithfulness, corruption, religious hypocrisy, and leadership failure in Israel and Judah. Despite its strong Christian influence, the twenty-first-century prophetic expressions in Eastern Obolo appear increasingly centred on individualised predictions, with limited emphasis on broader communal and ethical issues. Hence, this study examines the prophetic critique of covenant violation in the light of Amos 5:22–24 and evaluates its relevance to the socio-religious realities of Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State. The study employs historical-critical and contextual hermeneutical methods in the interpretation of Amos 5:22–24. It adopts a qualitative approach, with interviews conducted to explore the perceptions and experiences of participants regarding the prophetic message. The exegesis revealed that the Hebrew terms *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) and *ṣēdāqāh* (צְדָקָה) are central to the prophetic message of Amos. *Mishpat* denotes justice expressed through fair judgment, protection of the vulnerable, and social equity, while *ṣēdāqāh* refers to righteousness manifested in right relationships and covenant fidelity. The imagery of justice rolling like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream in verse 24 underscores the divine demand for continuous and enduring justice within covenant society. The contextual analysis demonstrated that the message of Amos is highly relevant to Eastern Obolo, where religious enthusiasm often coexists with communal disputes, economic inequality, favoritism, leadership crises, neglect of vulnerable persons, and other forms of social injustice. The study concludes that authentic worship acceptable to God is inseparable from justice, righteousness, and covenant faithfulness. It recommends that churches, community leaders, and policymakers in Eastern Obolo promote ethical leadership, transparent governance, social responsibility, and compassionate care for the poor, widows, orphans, and the elderly.

Keywords: Prophetic Critique, Covenant Violation, Eastern Obolo, the Book of Amos, Social Equity and the Bible

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Introduction

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets functioned as divine spokespersons entrusted with the responsibility of communicating God's will to individuals, leaders, and entire nations. The prophets served as covenant enforcers who confronted sin, condemned social injustice, challenged corrupt leadership, and called both rulers and citizens to repentance and spiritual renewal. Amos 5:22–24 constitutes one of the most powerful prophetic declarations in the Hebrew Bible. In this passage, Yahweh rejects Israel's burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, songs, and musical worship because they are disconnected from ethical obedience. The climactic demand, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” reveals that covenant faithfulness is measured not merely by ritual observance, but by the practice of justice and righteous living. The passage, therefore, presents a profound theological critique of any attempt to separate worship from social responsibility (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 13).

The concept of covenant violation is fundamental to understanding the message of Amos. The covenant established between Yahweh and Israel at Sinai required exclusive loyalty to God and obedience to His commandments, including the protection of the poor, widows, orphans, foreigners, and other vulnerable members of society. When Israel practised oppression, dishonesty, and judicial corruption while continuing religious ceremonies, the prophets interpreted such conduct as a breach of the covenant relationship. Thus, Amos's message is not merely a social protest; it is a prophetic indictment rooted in covenant theology (Hayes, 1996, p. 45). The relevance of this prophetic critique extends beyond ancient Israel to contemporary societies where religious vitality coexists with ethical and social challenges. Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State, provides an important context for such a study. The area is characterised by strong communal traditions, vibrant prophetic activities, and significant religious participation. Churches conduct revivals, conventions, thanksgiving services, fasting programmes, and musical celebrations that demonstrate a high level of religious consciousness.

However, like many contemporary communities, Eastern Obolo also experiences challenges such as communal disputes, favoritism, economic inequality, youth restiveness, leadership crises, corruption in local administration, neglect of vulnerable persons, and other forms of social injustice. Additionally, allegations of witchcraft directed at vulnerable persons, particularly children and the elderly, have generated social tensions in some communities. Such accusations have, in certain instances, contributed to family fragmentation, social stigmatisation, fear, mistrust, and communal distress. These developments raise important theological and ethical questions concerning the extent to which contemporary prophetic practices reflect the biblical mandate of promoting covenant faithfulness, justice, truth, reconciliation, and societal transformation (Ukpong, 2000, p. 18).

Ultimately, this research is based on the conviction that the prophetic message of Amos remains relevant for contemporary Christian communities. In a context where religious activities may flourish while ethical standards decline, Amos's call for justice and righteousness serves as a corrective and transformative voice. The study, therefore, seeks to demonstrate that authentic worship acceptable to God must be inseparable from ethical integrity, social justice, righteous leadership, and covenant faithfulness, and that these principles are essential for the spiritual and social renewal of Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State.

Conceptual Clarification

1. Prophetic Critique

The term prophetic critique derives from the biblical understanding of prophecy as a divinely inspired activity aimed at evaluating human conduct, societal structures, and religious practices in light of God's covenantal standards (Anderson, 2007, p. 39). In the Old Testament, prophets functioned not merely as predictors of future events, but as covenant prosecutors who confronted individuals, leaders, and nations whenever they deviated from God's will. According to Heschel (1962), "A prophet possesses an acute sensitivity to the moral concerns of God and serves as God's spokesperson in confronting injustice, oppression, and covenant unfaithfulness" (p. 109). Heschel argues that prophetic ministry is fundamentally concerned with ethical transformation and the restoration of righteousness within society (Heschel, 1962, p. 112). The prophet, therefore, becomes the voice of divine judgment against social and religious corruption.

Similarly, Brueggemann (2001) defines prophetic ministry as the task of nurturing, nourishing, and evoking an alternative consciousness that challenges dominant social and religious structures contrary to God's purposes (p. 18). For Brueggemann, prophetic critique involves exposing systems of injustice, false worship, exploitation, and moral decadence, while calling people to repentance and covenant renewal. Wright (2004) also maintains that the prophetic mission was deeply rooted in covenant ethics and involved holding both rulers and ordinary citizens accountable to the moral requirements of God's covenant (p. 55). The prophets condemned idolatry, economic exploitation, corruption, and oppression because such actions constituted violations of the covenant relationship between God and His people. From these scholarly perspectives, prophetic critique may be understood as the divinely inspired examination, condemnation, and correction of beliefs, attitudes, practices, and institutions that contradict God's covenantal standards.

2. Covenant (in the Old Testament)

The concept of covenant occupies a central position in Old Testament theology. The Hebrew word *berith* (covenant) refers to a binding relationship established between two parties, involving obligations, promises, and responsibilities. In biblical theology, covenant primarily describes the relationship initiated by God with individuals and with

the nation of Israel. Eichrodt (1961) describes covenant as the foundational principle of Israel's faith and the organising centre of Old Testament theology. According to him, the covenant established a unique relationship between God and His people, defining their religious, moral, and social obligations (p. 41).

Similarly, McCarthy (1972) defines covenant as a formal and binding agreement that creates mutual responsibilities between the covenanting parties (p. 60). God's covenant promises were accompanied by ethical demands requiring Israel to live according to divine standards of holiness, justice, and faithfulness. The covenant was, therefore, not merely a legal arrangement but a moral and spiritual relationship. The Old Testament records several major covenants, including the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:8–17), the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3; 15:1–21), the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19–24), the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8–16), and the promise of a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34) (Wright, 2004, p. 59).

These covenants reveal God's desire to establish a relationship with humanity while demanding faithfulness and obedience from His people. Covenant, therefore, serves as the foundation upon which prophetic ministry operates, since the prophets were primarily concerned with enforcing covenant obligations and calling God's people back to faithful obedience. For this study, covenant refers to the sacred and binding relationship between God and His people, characterised by mutual commitment, divine promises, and ethical responsibilities that regulate both religious and social life.

3. Covenant Violation

Covenant violation refers to any act of disobedience, rebellion, or unfaithfulness that breaches the obligations established within God's covenant relationship with His people. In the Old Testament, covenant violation was viewed as a serious offense because it represented a rejection of God's authority and a departure from His revealed standards of righteousness. According to Wright (2004), covenant violation occurs whenever individuals or communities fail to uphold the ethical, spiritual, and social obligations required by their relationship with God (p. 21). Such violations include idolatry, injustice, oppression of the poor, corruption, immorality, dishonesty, and neglect of divine commandments. Brueggemann (2001) argues that covenant violation is fundamentally an act of resistance against God's sovereign rule and an abandonment of the values that sustain communal life. He notes that Israel's social crises often resulted from persistent covenant unfaithfulness manifested through exploitation, false worship, and disregard for justice (p. 39).

Similarly, Anderson (2007) observes that covenant violation is not merely a religious failure but a disruption of the entire moral and social order established by God (p. 60). It affects relationships between God and humanity, as well as relationships among

members of the community. From a biblical perspective, covenant violation may, therefore, be understood as rebellion against divine authority and a rejection of God's moral order. It signifies humanity's refusal to live according to the principles of justice, righteousness, truth, and faithfulness prescribed by God. Consequently, covenant violation invites divine judgment and often results in social instability, moral decay, and spiritual alienation. In relation to this study, covenant violation refers to attitudes, practices, and social behaviours within Eastern Obolo society that contradict the ethical and moral demands of God's covenant, thereby undermining communal harmony, justice, and spiritual integrity.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF AMOS 5:22–24

Hebrew Text

אֲבִיט: לֹא מְרִיאֵיכֶם וְשִׁלְמֵ אֲרָצָה לֹא וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם עֹלוֹת אִם-תַּעֲלוּ-לִי כִי
אֲשַׁמֶּעַ: לֹא נִבְלִיד וְזִמְרַת שִׁירִיד הִמּוֹן מַעֲלֵי הָסֵר
אֵיתָן: כִּנְחָל וּצְדִיקָה מִשְׁפָּט כִּמְיָם וְיִגְל

Literal Translation

“Even though you offer to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals I will not look upon. Remove from upon Me the noise of your songs; the melody of your harps I will not hear. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Obolo Translation

Ikerere ngwugwa ewowop mè ngwugwa akpa ke enyi egwa inyi emi, mkpabobokpo.
Ikerere eriembuuk òmimiiñ ufuk ke enyi esa igwa ngwugwa esuuk inyi emi,
mkpayayaka chieeñ ikpo.

Ìben okput okwa kinyi cha ìsaña emi me uton; ida okwa uneeñ kinyi cha, mkpayaka
igbañ.

Kpañasi echicha, itele me unen oyerebet igbokok kubok muñ, mè ata irorọ igbuk kubok
ogbuuruk eyi ikakirak!

Literary Context and Lexical Analysis of Amos 5:22-24

Amos ministered during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah (Amos 1:1). Although Israel enjoyed economic prosperity, the wealthy exploited peasants, manipulated courts, and ignored the vulnerable. The prophet, therefore, interprets social injustice as covenant violation rather than merely political corruption (Wolff, 1977, p. 65). The covenant background includes:

- Exodus 19:5–6 – Israel as Yahweh's covenant people
- Deuteronomy 10:18–19 – protection of the vulnerable
- Deuteronomy 16:18–20 – the command to pursue justice

Amos stands within the Deuteronomic tradition that links worship, justice, and covenant

fidelity. Amos 5 forms part of the prophet's lament oracle against the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Wolff, 1977, p. 71). The chapter contains a call to repentance (5:4–6), denunciation of injustice (5:7–13), exhortation to seek good (5:14–15), and an announcement of divine judgment (5:16–27) (Wolff, 1977, p. 72).

Verses 22–24 stand at the climax of the oracle, where Yahweh rejects Israel's worship because it is disconnected from justice and covenant faithfulness. The movement from rejection to requirement forms the central structure of the oracle and reveals Amos's understanding of the relationship between worship and covenant faithfulness. The opening expression *כִּי אֲמַלְאֵלֶיכֶם* (*ki 'im-ta 'ālū-lî*) introduces a concessive idea: “even though you offer to Me.” The verb *אֲמַלְאֵל* (*ta 'ālū*) derives from the root *עָלָה* (*'ālāh*), “to ascend,” from which the noun *עֹלֹת* (*'ōlôt*), “burnt offerings,” is also derived. In the sacrificial system, the burnt offering symbolised complete consecration because the entire animal ascended in smoke to Yahweh (Lev. 1). Amos does not condemn sacrifice as an institution; rather, he condemns sacrifices offered by a people whose lives contradict the covenant they claim to honour (Andersen & Freedman, 1989, p. 103).

The phrase *וּמִנְחֹתֵיכֶם* (*ûminḥōtêkem*), “and your grain offerings,” contains the noun *מִנְחָה* (*minḥāh*), which originally referred to a tribute or gift presented to a superior. In Israel's worship, it became a grain offering expressing gratitude and dependence upon God. The possessive suffix *-כֶּם* (“your”) is significant because it emphasises that these offerings have become identified with the worshipers themselves rather than with Yahweh's covenantal purposes. Their worship is externally abundant but internally corrupted by injustice (Jeremias, 1998, p. 48). Yahweh's response is expressed through the emphatic negative declaration *לֹא אֶרְצֶה* (*lō' 'erṣeh*), “I will not accept.” The verb *רָצָה* (*rāṣāh*) means “to be pleased with” or “to accept favorably.” In sacrificial contexts, it denotes divine approval of worship (Lev. 22:19–20). The negative particle *לֹא* transforms what should have been an act of fellowship into an act of rejection. This indicates that ritual correctness cannot secure divine acceptance when covenant obedience is absent (Jeremias, 1998, p. 49).

The next clause, *וְשָׁלֶם לֹא מְרִיאֵיכֶם וְשָׁלֶם* (*wešelem meri 'êkem lō' 'abbîṭ*), refers to the peace or fellowship offerings. The noun *שָׁלֶם* (*šelem*) is related to *שָׁלוֹם* (*šālôm*), conveying ideas of peace, wholeness, and restored relationship. Peace offerings celebrated communion between God and the worshiper, yet Yahweh declares that He will not even look upon them. The verb *אֲבִיט* (*'abbîṭ*) from *נָבַט* (*nābaṭ*) means “to look attentively” or “to regard with favor.” The refusal to look upon the offerings signifies a broken covenant relationship despite the continuation of covenant rituals (Mays, 1969, p. 73). The oracle then shifts from sacrificial worship to musical worship with the imperative *מִצְלֵי הָסֵר* (*hāsēr mē 'ālay*), “remove from upon Me.” The verb *הָסֵר* (*hāsēr*) derives from *סָר* (*sûr*), meaning “to remove,” “turn aside,” or “depart.” The command is abrupt and forceful, suggesting that Israel's worship has become offensive rather than pleasing to God. What the people considered praise, Yahweh commands to be taken away from His presence.

The object of the command is שִׁירֵיךָ הַמֶּוֹן (*hāmôn šîrêkā*), “the noise of your songs.” The noun הַמֶּוֹן (*hāmôn*) often describes the roar of crowds, armies, or tumultuous activity. By choosing this word, Amos deliberately redefines Israel's worship music as mere noise. The prophet does not oppose music itself; throughout the Old Testament, music is a legitimate means of worship (Ps. 33:2; 150:3–5). The problem is that music has become disconnected from justice and righteousness (Mays, 1969, p. 75). The expression זִמְרַת נְבִלֶיךָ (*wezîmrath nebāleykā*), “the melody of your harps,” contains זִמְרָה (*zimirāh*), meaning “song” or “melody,” and נְבֵל (*nēbel*), a stringed instrument often translated “harp” or “lute.” Once again, the possessive suffix emphasises your songs and your harps, highlighting the self-centred nature of Israel's worship. Yahweh concludes, לֹא אֶשְׁמָע (*lō’ ešmā*), “I will not hear.” In Hebrew thought, hearing often implies attentive response; thus, God refuses not merely to perceive the music, but to respond favourably to it (Mays, 1969, p. 76).

The theological climax of the passage appears in מִשְׁפָּט כַּמַּיִם יִגַּל (*weyiggāl kammayim mišpāt*), “but let justice roll down like waters.” The verb יִגַּל (*weyiggāl*) derives from גָּלַל (*gālal*), “to roll” or “flow forcefully.” The imagery suggests movement that is continuous, abundant, and irresistible. Justice is not to appear occasionally during festivals or public ceremonies; it is to become the normal and perpetual condition of covenant life (Eichrodt, 1961, p. 88). The key noun מִשְׁפָּט (*mišpāt*) is one of the most important ethical terms in the Hebrew Bible. It includes legal fairness, proper judicial procedure, protection of the vulnerable, and the maintenance of social order according to Yahweh's covenant. In Amos, *mišpāt* is repeatedly associated with the treatment of the poor and oppressed (Amos 2:6–7; 5:11–12). Israel's covenant violation is, therefore, fundamentally a failure of justice rather than merely a failure of ritual observance (Wright, 2004, p. 63).

The parallel expression אֵיתָן כְּנָחַל וְצִדְקָה (*ûšēdāqāh kēnaḥal ’êtān*), “and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream,” deepens the ethical demand. The noun צִדְקָה (*šēdāqāh*) refers not only to personal morality, but also to right relationships within the covenant community. It encompasses honesty, integrity, faithfulness, and social responsibility. The pairing of מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה occurs frequently in the Old Testament and summarises the ethical obligations of God's people (Gen. 18:19; Isa. 1:27; Jer. 22:3) (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 31). The image of נָחַל אֵיתָן (*naḥal ’êtān*), “an ever-flowing stream,” is especially significant in the semi-arid environment of ancient Israel. Many streams flowed only during the rainy season and quickly dried up. By contrast, אֵיתָן (*’êtān*) means enduring, permanent, or perennial. Amos, therefore, contrasts Israel's seasonal religiosity with the unceasing flow of justice and righteousness that Yahweh requires from His covenant people (Wright, 2004, p. 68).

Taken together, the three verses form a deliberate contrast between external religiosity and covenantal ethics. Burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, songs, and musical performances are all rejected because they exist alongside oppression,

corruption, and social injustice (Heschel, 1962, p. 114). The repeated negatives — לֹא אָקֶצֶה (“I will not accept”), לֹא אֶבִּיט (“I will not regard”), and לֹא אֶשְׁמָע (“I will not hear”) — create a rhetorical crescendo of divine rejection that is reversed only by the positive command רִגְלֵךְ (“let it roll”). The structure demonstrates that Amos is not attacking worship itself; he is attacking hypocritical worship that attempts to separate devotion to God from justice toward fellow human beings (Jeremias, 1998, p. 107).

Eastern Obolo Society And Covenantal Values

Historical Background of Eastern Obolo Society

The Eastern Obolo people are an indigenous group in Nigeria, primarily in Akwa Ibom State. Historically, Obolo is the name of an outstanding Niger Delta lord who was the progenitor of a race of warriors culturally identified as *Ebi Obolo* (Obolo people) *Ida-Obolo* (n.d). Geographically speaking, the name alludes to *Ijoñ Obolo* (Obolo land), the territory his people eventually established and the location of his community, *Ido Obolo* (Obolo nation). Additionally, it alludes to the language spoken by his people, *Usem Obolo* (Obolo language) (Ejituwu, 1991, p. 23). It is uncertain how the Obolo migrated to their current position in the Eastern Delta. There have been conflicting reports of movement from Benin via the Ijo homeland and through Ramby (also known as "Urombi") in the Cameroons. While others tell tales of their ancestors who came from the Ijo villages, others talk about their home in Urombi (Ramby) (Eneyo, 1991, p. 11).

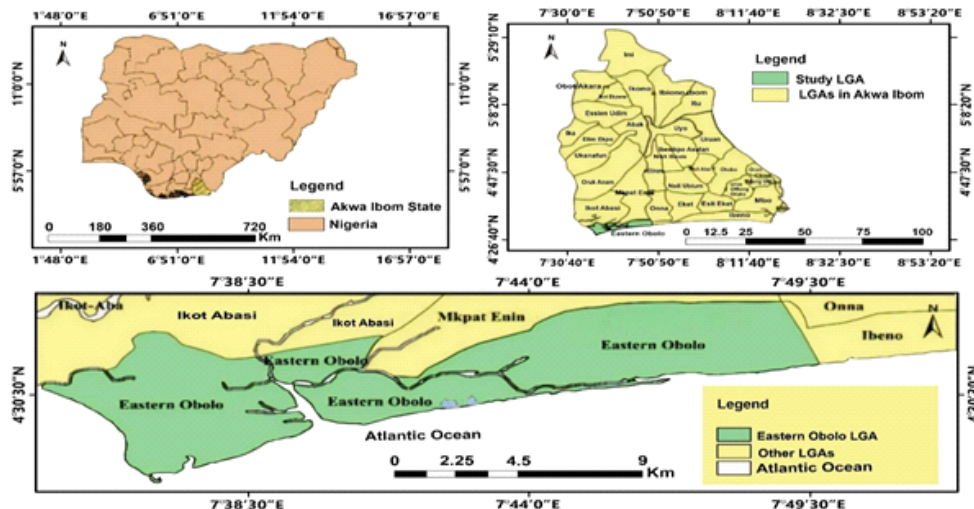
According to Ejituwu, “Although the Obolo dwells in the Niger Delta, they had their origin in the Nigeria-Cameroon border. The tradition of migration from there relates to the Ibeno, the Oron, and points to a strong contact with the Efik-Ibibio and the Ekoi (Ejaghams)” (Jeffreys, 1966, p. 416). Ardener indicates that “The movement was still around the Ranby area by about 1600. The Obolo migration from the Ranby Estuary could be placed between 200 A.D. and 1600 A. D. He further maintains that the Obolo may have been in the Niger Delta by about 1200 because the European visitors to the Niger Delta in the last years of the 15th century had referred to the Andoni River (Ejituwu, 2010, p. 14).

On the settlement at Eastern Obolo, Ejituwu links it to the 18th-century Obolo Civil War. Details of the causation of the war are not presented by him; however, he adds that “all seem to point to one direction, namely: economic decline. The involvement of the Obolo in overseas trade was declining, and Nna Biget sought a reorganisation of the trade to place himself in a position to be able to wage a war with Bonny, which, according to Obolo tradition, refused him access to European trade at Bonny, the Andoni River, having silted and not being capable of receiving heavier British vessels. He was opposed by other traders who, like him, were not wealthy but ambitious. This resulted in a civil war and the eventual emigration of segments of Obolo from Andoni (who later became Eastern Obolo) (Ejituwu, 2009, p. 524).

A portion of the Obolo-speaking population in Akwa Ibom State is known as Eastern

Obolo. Around 1931, the colonial government of the Eastern Region of Nigeria came up with the moniker "Eastern Obolo." When the colonial government reorganised the Obolo-speaking population in the Eastern Region of Nigeria for administrative reasons, it became an administrative language to differentiate the region (s). Edicts No. 6 of 1970 and No. 7 of 1972, issued by the South Eastern State Government, respectively, confirmed the name "Eastern Obolo" (Enemugwem, 2009, p. 55). General Sani Abacha, the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, established the Eastern Obolo Local Government Area on December 4, 1996, among others (Ukpatu, 2001, p. 5).

The total size of the Eastern Obolo Local Government Area is 156.5 km². Between the estuaries of the Imo and Qua Iboe Rivers, it is situated on the Niger Delta periphery between latitudes 4° 28' and 4° 53' and longitudes 7° 50' and 7° 55' East. Mkpát Enin and Onna Local Government Areas to the north, Ikot Abasi Local Government Area to the west, Ibeno Local Government Area to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south, define the boundaries of the Eastern Obolo Local Government Area. The Bight of Bonny has a significant tidal influence on this coastal local government area. On December 4, 1996, the Federal Government of Nigeria mapped Eastern Obolo LGA, which had over 30,000 inhabitants and covered an area of over 17,000 km², out of Ikot Abasi LGA (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006).



Contemporary Prophetic Practices in Eastern Obolo

Eastern Obolo is predominantly Christian, with churches representing various denominations, including Pentecostal, Charismatic, and African Indigenous Churches. Within these religious settings, prophetic activities have become an integral aspect of worship and spiritual life. Similarly, John Enemugwem observed that prophetic practices gained wider acceptance due to testimonies of healing, deliverance, and fulfilled predictions among church members (J. Enemugwem, personal communication, June 15, 2026).

One of the most common forms of prophetic practices in Eastern Obolo is personal prophecy. This involves the delivery of specific messages believed to originate from God concerning an individual's life circumstances. Many respondents indicated that personal prophecy addresses issues such as marriage, education, employment, business decisions, and spiritual growth. Christopher Benard noted that church members often seek prophetic counsel before making major life decisions (C. Benard, personal communication, June 15, 2026).

Prophetic healing and deliverance constitute another significant dimension of prophetic ministry in Eastern Obolo. Prophets frequently conduct prayer sessions aimed at addressing sicknesses, spiritual oppression, and perceived demonic influences. Awaji Ubulom explained that many people approach prophetic ministers seeking healing when conventional medical solutions appear ineffective (A. Ubulom, personal communication, June 16, 2026). Grace Eneawaji also affirmed that prophetic prayers are widely believed to facilitate both physical and spiritual restoration (G. Eneawaji, personal communication, June 16, 2026).

Dreams and visions continue to play an important role in prophetic activities. Prophetic ministers often interpret dreams and claim to receive divine visions concerning individuals and communities. Ebenezer Daniel stated that dreams are commonly regarded as channels through which God reveals hidden truths and impending events (E. Daniel, personal communication, June 17, 2026). Such interpretations frequently influence personal decisions and communal actions. Prophetic declarations are believed to release divine blessings or alter unfavourable circumstances. These declarations are commonly delivered during worship services, revival meetings, and prayer gatherings. According to Awajioyi Atayork, prophetic declarations are viewed as expressions of faith that reinforce confidence in God's promises (A. Atayork, personal communication, June 17, 2026).

Perceived Shift from Biblical Prophetic Ministry to Popular Prophetic Performance

A significant number of respondents observed what they described as a noticeable shift from the traditional understanding of prophetic ministry toward forms of prophecy that prioritise popularity, material gain, and public recognition. While respondents generally affirmed the importance of prophetic ministry, many expressed concerns that some contemporary prophets have departed from the biblical and ethical foundations that historically characterised prophetic service. According to Love Ijente (Personal Communication, June 19, 2026), “Contemporary prophecy in some circles has become increasingly centred on personal benefits rather than the spiritual and moral transformation of individuals and society”. Some respondents argued that some prophets now deliver messages primarily to attract followers, maintain relevance, and secure financial support from congregants.

John Enemugwem remarked that the desire for popularity has contributed to the emergence of sensational prophetic practices that emphasise dramatic revelations rather than genuine spiritual edification (J. Enemugwem, Personal Communication, June 15, 2026). A recurring concern among respondents was the increasing emphasis on revealing personal details such as phone numbers, residential addresses, family names, dates of birth, or the colours of people's clothing and undergarments. While such revelations are often presented as evidence of prophetic power, many interviewees questioned their spiritual value and relevance to Christian growth. Grace Eneawaji states: "I feel pain saying this, but I have to say it. My son bound my hands and legs, and threw me into the river because a prophet who had just visited to preach in his church told him I was the witch stopping his progress. Thank God for the good people who came to my rescue" (G. Eneawaji, Personal Communication, June 16, 2026).

Awaji Ubulom expressed concern that the tendency of some prophets to label vulnerable individuals, particularly children and elderly persons, as witches or wizards, has contributed to stigmatisation, family conflicts, emotional trauma, and social exclusion within some communities (A. Ubulom, Personal Communication, June 16, 2026). Ebenezer Daniel similarly argued that prophetic ministry should be exercised with wisdom, compassion, and respect for human dignity, especially when dealing with vulnerable members of society (E. Daniel, Personal Communication, June 17, 2026). Christopher Benard maintained that biblical prophecy was primarily intended to communicate God's will, promote righteousness, and call people to repentance rather than merely display supernatural knowledge. According to him, prophecy should guide believers toward holiness, faithfulness, and responsible living rather than becoming a platform for entertainment or public spectacle (C. Benard, personal communication, June 15, 2026).

Several respondents lamented that many contemporary prophets appear reluctant to challenge political authorities, speak against corruption, or address systemic injustices affecting ordinary citizens. Sunday Stephen observed that while many prophets readily identify personal problems among church members, few openly confront political leaders regarding poverty, unemployment, insecurity, corruption, and the suffering of the masses (S. Stephen, Personal Communication, June 23, 2026). Awajioyi Atayork further noted that the prophetic voice historically functioned as a moral conscience within society. According to him, genuine prophets should not only reveal personal secrets but should also challenge unjust structures and defend the interests of marginalised people (A. Atayork, personal communication, June 17, 2026). He narrates:

Our church hosted a revival programme, and the visiting prophet stayed in my house throughout the event. One morning, I discovered an exercise book containing members' names, phone numbers, workplaces, and personal challenges. Although I found it strange, I ignored it and

continued with my activities. During the Friday prophetic service, the prophet called me out, mentioned my phone number, and claimed that my girlfriend intended to kill me unless I sowed a seed. Knowing that my cousin had shared details of my relationship problems with the prophet, I became convinced that the information was obtained through human sources rather than divine revelation. The experience left me saddened and concerned about the misuse and commercialisation of prophetic ministry, highlighting the need for discernment in the church.

Rhoda Enemugwem is of the opinion that certain prophetic leaders remain silent in the face of unethical practices within churches because of personal interests, financial benefits, or fear of losing influence (R. Enemugwem, Personal Communication, June 17, 2026).

Consequently, the prophetic ministry risks losing its moral credibility when it fails to address misconduct among religious leaders and institutions. Israel Ojoko observed that the biblical prophet was not merely a predictor of events, but a spokesperson for divine justice and righteousness (I. Ojoko, Personal Communication, June 18, 2026). In his view, authentic prophecy should challenge both church leaders and political authorities whenever their actions contradict ethical and biblical standards. Clifford Atairet noted that prophets should be known not merely for revealing secrets, but for defending the poor, comforting the oppressed, promoting peace, and speaking truth to power (C. Atairet, Personal Communication, June 24, 2026).

The Implications of Amos 5:22–24 for Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State

The message of Amos 5:22–24 has profound implications for the contemporary socio-religious realities of Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State. Although the prophet originally addressed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the theological principles embedded in the text transcend its ancient context. Amos confronts a society that maintained impressive religious activities, while simultaneously tolerating injustice, corruption, and oppression (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 110). In a similar manner, Eastern Obolo possesses a vibrant Christian presence with numerous churches, prayer gatherings, conventions, and worship programs. However, the prophetic challenge of Amos is whether such religious activities are accompanied by justice (מִשְׁפָּט, *mišpāṭ*) and righteousness (יְדִיאוֹת, *šēdāqāh*), which constitute the ethical heart of covenant faithfulness.

The implications of the text for Eastern Obolo may, therefore, be examined under four interrelated themes:

1. Religious Activities without Social Transformation

The church community in Eastern Obolo often attracts large congregations, fosters a sense of communal identity, and creates opportunities for worship and fellowship.

Nevertheless, Amos 5:22–23 warns that religious intensity does not guarantee divine approval. Yahweh rejected Israel's sacrifices, songs, and musical worship because they existed alongside injustice and covenant unfaithfulness (Wolff, 1977, p. 110). In the Eastern Obolo context, the prophetic warning becomes particularly relevant when religious activities coexist with corruption, dishonesty, exploitation of the poor, land disputes, neglect of widows and the elderly, and abuse of communal resources. The existence of churches, prayer meetings, and public worship does not automatically indicate that a community is living in harmony with God's ethical demand. Amos exposes the danger of ritualism, in which worship is treated as an independent sphere detached from everyday moral conduct. The prophet insists that worship acceptable to God must be reflected in economic fairness, truthful speech, compassion for the vulnerable, and justice within the community.

Land disputes provide a practical example of this challenge in many riverine and coastal communities. Families and villages may participate actively in church programmes, while simultaneously engaging in prolonged conflicts over land ownership, inheritance, or communal boundaries. Such situations reveal a contradiction between religious devotion and covenantal ethics. Amos's critique, therefore, challenges the tendency to separate church worship from community ethics, reminding believers that true worship involves both devotion to God and righteous treatment of fellow human beings.

2. Justice (מִשְׁפָּט) and Community Leadership

The Hebrew concept מִשְׁפָּט (*mišpāt*) has significant relevance for Eastern Obolo leadership structures, including village councils, youth associations, church committees, and local political authorities. In the Old Testament, *mišpāt* refers not merely to legal judgment but to the establishment of social order according to God's standards of fairness, equity, and protection for the vulnerable (Anderson, 2007, p. 106). Practical implications include: transparent handling of community funds, fair distribution of development projects, impartial settlement of disputes, protection of vulnerable members, and accountability in traditional and church leadership.

Amos condemns those who “afflict the just” and “take bribes” at the gate (Amos 5:12). Applied to Eastern Obolo, this means that justice must not be influenced by wealth, family connections, political influence, or denominational affiliation. The poor and socially weak deserve the same protection as the influential and powerful. Furthermore, church leadership is not exempt from this prophetic standard. Church committees, pastors, elders, and ministry leaders must administer resources honestly, treat members fairly, and avoid favoritism. Amos demonstrates that religious leadership without justice is unacceptable before God.

3. Righteousness (צְדָקָה) and Social Relationships

The term *שְׁדָּאָה* (*šēdāqāh*) calls for the restoration and maintenance of right relationships within the covenant community. While *mišpāt* emphasises justice in public and institutional life, *šēdāqāh* focuses on the quality of personal, family, and communal relationships (Wolff, 1977, p. 115). In the Eastern Obolo context, this includes: honesty in business transactions, faithfulness in marriage and family life, respect for elders, responsible youth conduct, communal solidarity, care for widows, orphans, and the aged. Economic integrity is an important expression of *šēdāqāh*. Traders, fishermen, contractors, farmers, and business owners are called to practise honesty, avoid exploitation, and fulfil their financial obligations faithfully. Fraudulent transactions, false measurements, unpaid debts, and deceptive business practices contradict the righteousness demanded by the covenant God.

Family life is another critical area. Faithfulness in marriage, responsible parenting, and mutual respect among family members are visible expressions of covenant righteousness. The principle of *šēdāqāh* supports the preservation of respectful intergenerational relationships and communal responsibility. The care of widows, orphans, and the aged is, perhaps, one of the clearest practical expressions of righteousness. These groups are often economically and socially vulnerable. Amos's concern for the oppressed implies that a truly righteous community must protect those who cannot adequately protect themselves. Righteousness becomes visible in daily social behaviour, not merely in doctrinal confession.

4. Prophetic Role of the Church in Eastern Obolo

Amos models a prophetic ministry that confronts societal sin rather than merely maintaining religious institutions. The church in Eastern Obolo should, therefore, embrace a prophetic responsibility that extends beyond worship services and ecclesiastical activities. The church should preach against corruption and exploitation, advocate justice and human dignity, promote ethical leadership, provide practical support for vulnerable persons, encourage reconciliation in communal conflicts, and integrate worship with social responsibility.

The first responsibility involves courageous preaching against corruption and exploitation. Prophetic preaching must address not only personal morality, but also public injustice, economic oppression, abuse of authority, and unethical community practices. Silence in the face of injustice may allow covenant violation to continue unchecked. Second, the church must advocate justice and human dignity. This includes defending the rights of the poor, opposing discrimination, supporting fair treatment in communal and political processes, and promoting peaceful coexistence among villages and families. Third, the church should promote ethical leadership by teaching integrity, accountability, servant leadership, and stewardship. Leadership training programmes, discipleship classes, and ministerial formation should emphasise that authority is a trust to be exercised for the good of the community rather than for personal enrichment.

Fourth, practical ministry to vulnerable persons is essential. Widows, orphans, unemployed youths, abandoned elderly persons, and families affected by poverty or conflict require not only prayers, but also tangible assistance. Fifth, the church should function as an agent of reconciliation in communal conflicts. Eastern Obolo, like many communities, may experience tensions arising from land disputes, family disagreements, political rivalries, and generational conflicts. The prophetic ministry of the church includes facilitating dialogue, forgiveness, restitution, and peaceful settlement of disputes. Finally, the church must integrate worship with social responsibility.

Conclusion

This study examined the prophetic critique of covenant violation in the light of Amos 5:22–24 and explored its relevance to Eastern Obolo, Akwa Ibom State. The research demonstrated that Amos's message emerged within a context of religious prosperity accompanied by social injustice, oppression, and covenant unfaithfulness. Through detailed exegetical analysis, the study established that Yahweh's rejection of sacrifices, offerings, songs, and musical worship in Amos 5:22–23 was not a rejection of worship itself, but a rejection of worship divorced from justice and righteousness. The exegesis revealed that the Hebrew concepts מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) and שְׁעֵרֵי צְדָקָה (šəʿēṛē ʿēḏāqā) are central to the theological message of the passage. Mishpat emphasises justice, fairness, and the protection of the vulnerable, while šəʿēṛē ʿēḏāqā emphasises righteous relationships, integrity, and covenant faithfulness. Together, these terms express Yahweh's expectation that His people embody His character in every dimension of communal life.

In applying the text to Eastern Obolo, the study found that the prophetic message of Amos remains highly relevant to contemporary challenges such as communal conflict, favouritism, corruption, leadership failure, economic inequality, neglect of vulnerable persons, and the tendency to separate religious activity from ethical responsibility. The research, therefore, concludes that authentic worship acceptable to God is inseparable from justice, righteousness, and covenant faithfulness. The study further concludes that the church in Eastern Obolo must function not only as a centre of worship, but also as a prophetic community committed to social transformation, ethical leadership, compassion for the vulnerable, and the promotion of justice within society. Amos 5:22–24, thus, provides a powerful biblical framework for evaluating religious practice and addressing contemporary covenant violations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Churches Should Integrate Worship with Social Ethics: Churches in Eastern Obolo should intentionally connect worship, preaching, discipleship, and social

responsibility. Sermons and teaching programmes should emphasise that justice, honesty, compassion, and righteous living are integral aspects of Christian worship and not optional moral additions.

2. Promotion of Ethical Leadership: Community leaders, church leaders, youth leaders, and local administrators should adopt principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, and servant leadership. Leadership training programmes should incorporate biblical teachings on מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) and שְׁחָדָה (šəḥāḏā) as foundational ethical values.

3. Establishment of Justice-Oriented Community Structures: Traditional councils, church committees, and community development associations should strengthen mechanisms for fair dispute resolution, protection of vulnerable persons, and equitable distribution of communal resources.

4. Care for Vulnerable Groups: Special attention should be given to widows, orphans, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged individuals. Churches and community organisations should establish welfare programmes, scholarship schemes, healthcare support initiatives, and empowerment projects that demonstrate practical covenantal righteousness.

5. Prophetic Engagement with Social Issues: The church should recover its prophetic role as the moral conscience of society. Religious leaders should speak courageously against corruption, exploitation, violence, favoritism, and other forms of injustice that undermine communal well-being and covenant faithfulness.

6. Contextual Biblical Education: Bible schools, seminaries, and church training institutions should encourage contextual interpretation of prophetic texts, enabling ministers and Christian leaders to apply biblical principles effectively to contemporary African social realities, including those of Eastern Obolo.

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Personal Communication

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCUPATION	DATE
1.	Clifford Atairet	89	Elder	24 June 2026
2.	Awajioyi Atayork	49	Deacon	17 June 2026
3.	Ebenezer Daniel	27	Prophet	17 June 2026
4.	Grace Eneawaji	44	Deaconess	16 June 2026
5.	John Enemugwem	72	Retired Lecturer	15 June 2026
6.	Rhoda Enemugwem	41	Businesswoman	17 June 2026
7.	Benard Christopher	36	Civil Servant	15 June 2026
8.	Israel Ojoko	39	Prophet	18 June 2026
9.	Sunday Stephen	53	Busisnesman	23 June 2026
10.	Awaji Ubulom	66	Chief	16 June 2026
11.	Love Ijente	54	Teacher	19 June 2026