

# The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve\*

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The book of Jonah is certainly strange within its context in several respects. It is obvious that the author of the narrative and the redactor who placed Jonah into the Book of the Twelve must be different persons. In this paper I would like to ask in what way Jonah is tied into the Twelve. Answering this question will also help discover why it was included at all. The interest is not so much in the surface of the final text but in the redactional activity that led to this text. Therefore it is of primary importance to detect the traces that the redactor left when Jonah was incorporated into the Twelve. This will help to understand more fully at what stage of the development of the Twelve the narrative of Jonah was added into the collection. As a prerequisite to this question it is imperative to undertake a source-critical analysis, i.e., to investigate whether the text of Jonah is a unified literary work by one author or whether later additions to the text can be detected.

## 1. Global Narrative Structure

The book of Jonah is a unique and special book within the Twelve Prophets in many respects. Most obviously it contains neither a collection of prophetic sayings nor poetically crafted lyrics; rather it represents a narrative, a tale about a prophet. At first glance, the story has a straightforward plot and a simple style marked by a penchant for lexical repetition, as if the author was quite restricted in his or her vocabulary. Such "Leitwörter," as Buber has called them, are used with great frequency and give the text great cohesion. By implication, the reader has easily detectable signals available regarding how to conceptualize the progression of the narrative.<sup>1</sup>

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\* I would like to thank Jonathan Robker for improving the English of this article.

1 This stylistic device has been worked out quite impressively by several scholars, see Wolff, *Studien*, 29–58; for an overview over the research history see Jeremias, "Jonabuch," 96–104.

The global structure of the narrative is likewise structured in a simple, straightforward way; the division into two parts of nearly equal length is basic: chs. 1–2 and 3–4. Both parts have a similar structure.<sup>2</sup> Let me recall the most obvious indicators. God's command to Jonah to go to Nineveh is first refused (1:1–3), whereas in the second part it is obeyed (3:1–3a). In each part Jonah delivers a message to strangers who are threatened by perishing (n.b. נָצַח in 1:6, 14; 3:9): the sailors in 1:4–16 and the people of Nineveh in 3:3b–10. These strangers act first as a collective (1:5; 3:5), but then a nameless representative comes in: the captain (1:6) and the king (3:6). In both cases the strangers hope to be saved by Jonah's God, but at the same time state that God's act of salvation is not assured (1:6, 3:9). In sharp contrast to this attitude, it is emphasized that Jonah would rather die than allow God to act differently than Jonah himself expects (1:12; 4:3–8). At the end of each part is a scene involving only God and Jonah situated in a miraculous natural environment. Within the miraculous fish Jonah cries to God (ch. 2), whereas under the wondrous plant outside of the city God tries to convince Jonah that God's grace does indeed extend to Nineveh. Whether God succeeds is left open. The text ends with a question, but one has to notice that the story includes a further element: Jonah's reaction to this question, namely his stubborn silence. The rhetorical effect of this element is that it is ultimately up to the reader to answer in Jonah's stead.

In sum, the Jonah narrative is a neatly structured story in child-like language. As a result, it is difficult to discover breaks in the narrative coherence that could imply different literary layers. But before I come to source-criticism, it is imperative to determine the genre of the narrative.

## 2. Genre

As is universally acknowledged, the narrative is fictitious throughout. The world of the text is in many respects incompatible with our normal world experience. Most famously, the episode with the fish remains simply absurd. And it does not help if one transforms the fish into a whale. This problem already bothered the scholars of the Enlightenment. Heinrich Adolph Grimm, for example, who lived from 1747–1813 and was the last professor of the old University of Duisburg, proposed the thesis that the Jonah narrative recounts Jonah's dream from the point in the narrative where Jonah falls asleep within the hull of the

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2 See Wolff, *Studien*, 76.

ship (1:5) until he was spit out on the land again (2:11).<sup>3</sup> However, massive breaks with normal reality occur throughout the whole of the book. The repentance of an evil city like Nineveh is equally as improbable as a trip within the belly of a fish. So, what we have here is a thought-experiment, a totally unrealistic narrative that only serves didactic purposes.

However, the mood in which the didactic goal is brought home is humorous and comical. There are so many details in the story where even the modern reader, who consumes the most drastic forms of humor every evening on television and is therefore oversaturated with comedy, must at least smile. I do not doubt that the ancient hearers laughed wholeheartedly, when they heard the story.

In many cases the humor takes on the shape of irony, and even parody. There are many self-contradictions in the behavior of Jonah that ironically let him appear as a fool: he flees before God's order, even though he knows that God "had made the sea and the dry land" (1:9); and he wants to die because he and his message – as opposed to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4 – had not failed, but had been too successful!

From my perspective this humorous understanding of the novella is the most plausible explanation for the many ridiculous features. Jonah is a satire: In the form of the character Jonah a specific position is caricatured and ridiculed.<sup>4</sup>

Let me hasten to add that the notion of "satire" does not imply that the narrative excludes reliable and serious insights. Quite the contrary: a satire seeks to reveal the absurdity of the opponent's position with a serious didactic intention. Millar Burrows described the striving for truth correctly:

"The truth which the story brings home to the reader is thus twofold: Compassion is supreme in God's way with his creatures; and it is a universal compassion, extending to all of them equally. What is satirized in the behavior of Jonah is a self-centered, arrogant attitude which denies or ignores these two basic truths."<sup>5</sup>

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3 Grimm, *Prophet Jonas*.

4 I follow here the position of Good, "Jonah," and others; see Jeremias, "Jonabuch," 107–109; Schart, *Entstehung*, 283–287.

5 Burrows, "Literary Category," 102.

### 3. Jonah Ridicules Joel

After having established that Jonah is a satire, the next step is to identify the position that it seeks to satirize. Here, I am convinced that we find ourselves in the lucky position that the foil against which Jonah is directed is preserved in the writing of Joel. There are some very clear verbal connections that demonstrate that Jonah must be read with Joel in mind. Joel is cited verbatim, but the contexts in which the citations are set show that Jonah does the opposite of what he confesses. Jonah presupposes Joel and needs a reader who is familiar with this writing; otherwise one would miss a good deal of the ironic potential of the narrative. This is important already for the reader of the independent book of Jonah, but even more so for the reader of the final Book of the Twelve, who will discover more intertextual relations, for example to Hosea.<sup>6</sup>

### 4. Source Criticism

After the form-critical analysis has been achieved the source-critical task can be undertaken. Most interpreters of Jonah perceive this book as a literary unity written by a single author in one situation. However, some source critics have tried to find literary breaks within even this smooth narrative. The most recent attempt comes from Jakob Wöhrle.<sup>7</sup> Wöhrle has assembled an extensive sampling of source-critical arguments. However, the basic problem is that Wöhrle and others do not give full credence to the humorous and satirical character of the narrative. I do not want to evaluate all of the arguments here, but only those where I think that the understanding of Jonah as a satire solves the problems of the alleged breaks in narrative coherence.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Scoralick, *Güte*, 182–184, demonstrates what a reading looks like that uses Joel as hermeneutical frame for Jonah. In addition, she notices connections to Hosea: e.g., the name of the prophet “Jonah,” which means “dove,” reminds the reader of Hos 7:11 and 11:11, where Israel is identified as a dove. In turn, the prophet Jonah must be understood as representing Israel. “DieJonaschrift wird so zum Midrasch über das von Joel her gelesene Kapitel Hos 11. Dabei ist die ‘zitternde Umkehr’ des Propheten Jona/Israel in der Schrift nicht erzählt, sie muß vom Leser angenommen oder erhofft werden.” (ibid., 183).

7 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 365–399.

8 For a refutation of the common source-critical arguments on the basis of a non-satirical understanding see Gerhards, *Studien*, 14–55. As rightly noted by Wöhrle, however, some of his arguments are not convincing.

Let me start with Jonah 1:5b–6. According to Wöhrle this short passage, in which the captain of the ship approaches the sleeping Jonah and asks him to contribute his share to rescue the boat, is not well integrated into the narrative flow. One of his arguments is that it remains unclear whether Jonah followed the captain's imperative.<sup>9</sup> However, I see no unclear situation here: Since no reaction of Jonah is recorded, it is clear that he did not obey but remained silent. It is only in the fish that he turns to his God, thus doing as the captain demanded of him. Those scholars who claim that Jonah joined the sailors and prayed to YHWH do so without any hint in the text. They infer this simply because they assume that Jonah, being a pious man, would not resist adhering to such an urgent wish of a desperate or dying man.<sup>10</sup> But if the satirical attitude is accepted, it is completely in line with the characterization of Jonah that he refuses to pray to God in this moment. The narrator's presupposition that Jonah did pray to God is precluded, as it would imply that he gave up his resistance to YHWH's command to go to Nineveh, just as Jeremias accurately noted.<sup>11</sup> There is no break in coherence once one realizes that the narrator is ridiculing the narrative figure of Jonah.

A second tension within the flow of the narrative is found in 1:11. Wöhrle stresses the fact that the sailors twice question Jonah in a similar way. And, although it would not have been necessary, the narrator introduces the speech of the sailors with a narrative introduction in the second case, too.<sup>12</sup> However, this phenomenon should not be perceived as a tension, but as an artistic narrative technique: the reader has to imagine a lasting phase of silence between the sailors' first and second question. Within this phase the sailors begin to grasp that Jonah has run away from his God, whereas, at the same time, Jonah gains no further insight, but becomes even more stubborn.

1:10 Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord (because he had told them so).<sup>13</sup>

9 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 366.

10 Marti, *Dodekapropheten*, 250; Rudolph, *Joel*, 342.

11 Jeremias, *Joel*, 87: "Es würde implizieren, dass Jona schon jetzt zum Gang nach Ninive bereit wäre. Er ist aber noch im Schlusskapitel lieber zum Tod bereit, als dass er Gottes Verhalten gegenüber Ninive zustimmen würde (4,3.8f)."

12 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 369–370.

13 The short sentence in parentheses is in my opinion the only secondary insertion into the text of Jonah. It is an isolated gloss by a reader who did not understand, how the sailors could have recognized from the short confession in 1:9 that Jonah was fleeing from YHWH, unless Jonah had told them so (Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 369 with note 14). However, this reader did not understand that the word "fleeing" stems from the narrator and not from the sailors. The narrator wanted to characterize the sailors to

- 11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. (NRSV)

Even in this situation, in which Jonah can see the astonishing religious sensibility of the sailors, he remains quiescent; it is only after they ask him a second time that Jonah offers his advice as to what should be done. Stubborn as he is, he chooses rather to die instead of obeying God's will to preach to Nineveh.

All in all, the sailors and their captain serve as foils against which Jonah is ridiculed. Their piety cannot be attributed to a later layer but provides a fitting contrast to the characterization of the stubborn Jonah, who must be urged to break his silence and only thereafter utters some words. It is completely unnecessary to assume an earlier layer that was secondarily expounded.

A third place where a source-critical break is often assumed is the psalm in Jonah 2:3–10. However, the psalm is totally in place and does not stand in tension to its context once one is inclined to perceive the psalm as a satirical presentation of a hypercritic. It is totally in line with chapter 1 that Jonah chooses the genre of a prayer of thanksgiving, as he thinks that he has escaped a mission that he cannot accept.

In addition to the well-known arguments that he cites approvingly, Wöhrle emphasizes that it is not a good narrative style to disclose the end of the period within the belly of the fish to the reader in advance: "Hier ist schon auffällig, dass der Prophet nach Jona 2,1 drei Tage und drei Nächte im Bauch des Fisches war. Es wird also von vornherein ein festes Ende der Zeit im Fisch angegeben."<sup>14</sup>

However, the point of the narrative is not to provide the end date of the sojourn within the fish in advance. The three days and the three nights is the time span that Jonah waits before he begins to pray and finally concedes to the captain's wish (1:6). Again Jonah is portrayed as remaining in silence for three days, presumably until he can take it for granted that he has escaped successfully.

Fourthly, many interpreters identify Jonah 4:5 as an addition because Jonah's trip out of the city is a strange reaction to God's question and it comes too late. It would be much more fitting immediately after Jonah has delivered his message (Jonah 3:4). Following Lohfink, it is sometimes assumed that the *wayyiqtol*-Forms in Jonah 4:5 are used in the sense of a pluperfect and refer back to the time described in Jonah

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*the reader* as extraordinary sensible and sharp-minded: they understood intuitively without words and explanation what really was going on.

14 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 374.

3:4.<sup>15</sup> But, as Wöhrle rightly states, this is impossible on grammatical grounds: there is no case, where a *wayyiqtol* can be used in this sense.<sup>16</sup> But Wöhrle uses the old argument that Jonah 4:5 perfectly follows 3:4, insofar as he thinks that the text between 3:5 (!) and 4:5 must be secondarily inserted. Again, the supposed tension disappears as soon as one is willing to see the humor and the exaggeration. The narrator presupposes that God does not wait 40 days but recants immediately after God has seen the exceptional way in which the king of Nineveh reacted to Jonah's short message.<sup>17</sup> It does not matter whether all of the citizens will follow the king's command. In sharp contrast to God, Jonah is not impressed by the reaction to his message; at least it does not change his attitude towards Nineveh. Before the 40 days that Jonah has pronounced as the period before the city's overthrow, he leaves the wicked city because he does not want to be eliminated with it. Outside of the city he undertakes something like a sit-in (*Sitzstreik*). Wöhrle interprets this as if Jonah wants to see what the city's inhabitants will do, whether they all will obey the king's command.<sup>18</sup> However, in my view Jonah wants to see what *God* will do. He wants to urge God to return from God's repentance and destroy the city, so that his announcement of the 40 days will finally come true. He cannot and does not want to believe that YHWH indeed spares the city for a lengthy period of time.

In sum, as soon as one recognizes the satirical mood of the book of Jonah, no convincing arguments that would justify the hypothesis of two distinct literary layers remain. Even the psalm is an original part of the book. The narrative once existed independently outside the Book of the Twelve. Since the entire story in the book is located outside of the geographical boundaries of Israel, it may be the creation of a diaspora-community that criticizes hardliners in their homeland and makes fun of their fear that the capital of the foreign nation is a big evil city. Quite to the contrary, the notion of the wicked foreign city, as is maintained, is an unjustified projection of hypocrites. It is a mystery but at the same time a gift that this polemical work was inserted into the Book of the Twelve, where the foil against which Jonah was written in the first place, namely Joel, already had its place. I suppose that it was the result of a compromise between the diaspora and Jerusalem. Jonah was integrated on the one hand and Malachi on the other.

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15 Lohfink, "Jona," esp. 190–193.

16 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 374.383 with notes 61–62.

17 This is a striking contrast to King Jehoiakim in Jer 36:1.

18 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 384.

## 5. Reading Jonah within the Framework of the Twelve: The Position of Jonah before Nahum

Turning now to the question how Jonah was integrated into the Twelve, one first has to deal with the different places of Jonah within the sequence of the Twelve in the different manuscript traditions. The main point of difference between the MT and the mainstream of the Greek tradition is that Jonah precedes Micah in MT but Nahum in LXX. The best explanation for this difference is that the Book of the Twelve was reordered when it was translated into Greek. The writings Hosea, Amos and Micah were transposed to the front, whereas the sequence of the rest of the writings was left untouched.<sup>19</sup> Especially noteworthy is the fact that already in the Hebrew tradition there is one manuscript, 4QXII<sup>a</sup>, that contains Jonah after Malachi.<sup>20</sup> This sequence difference may be due to the fact that Jonah came into the Book of the Twelve very late and its place was initially disputed.

The second point to make is that the satirical character of the story was in some way lost because the fictitious world of the Jonah narrative was integrated into the real historical world, with which the other eleven prophets were dealing. The symbolic name "Jonah" (= "dove") now designated a real person, namely "Jonah ben Amittai," the prophet mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.<sup>21</sup> At least that is most likely the reason why Jonah was inserted into the chain of the prophets after Amos and Obadiah. The narrative was read as a historical report of something that really happened, not as a fictive scenario.

After these preliminary remarks we can now turn to the thematic coherence between the message of the narrative about the stubborn prophet Jonah and the rest of the Book of the Twelve.<sup>22</sup> In this respect it is obvious that the attitude towards the nations is the biggest problem regarding conceptual coherence. There is some variation between the other prophets when they denounce the final fate of the nations. Joel seems to imply that the nations will be eliminated by YHWH at the end of days (Joel 4). Others imagine that the nations will be included in some way into the salvation of Israel. The narrative of Jonah, however, goes far beyond that. Its main message is that even a big evil city like

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19 See Schart, "Zwölfprophetenbuch (2008)," 229–230.

20 That Jonah followed Mal is the opinion of the editio princeps: Ulrich et al., *Qumran*. This thesis is challenged by Guillaume, "Malachi-Jonah."

21 It is possible that the patronym "Ben Amittai" was added only at this stage.

22 I now follow the Masoretic text. For an intriguing reflection on how the different sequences affect the reading of the Book of the Twelve see Gerhards, "Jona/Jonabuch."



Nineveh that deserves nothing more than complete destruction – at least from the point of view of the oppressed little towns – is not as bad as one might expect. If you make your way to its middle and deliver a godly message, then you'll find the people alert, sensitive, god-fearing and willing to repent. And this is true to such an extent that even God is impressed and renounces his plan to punish the city. God's mercy extends even to a city that has never heard of YHWH.

The contrast between negative and positive views is most clearly stated in the case of Jonah and Nahum. Nahum differs sharply from Jonah concerning the possibility of Nineveh's repentance. Nahum's prophecy leaves no room for repentance whatsoever. Nahum is convinced that God will totally destroy this center of oppression, exploitation, and violence. And the prophet seems to take delight in envisioning how the wrath of God will deal with this foreign superpower. That Nineveh will and can turn away from its behavior is totally unimaginable to the author. The only solution is that YHWH executes his punishment. In this point, Nahum is completely in line with the narrative figure Jonah, who also wanted to see Nineveh destroyed, but Nahum disagrees with the narrative of Jonah, which shows that God's essence leads God to spare even Nineveh.

The sharp contrast between God's behavior in the narrative about Jonah and God's behavior in Nahum has long puzzled the readers of the Book of the Twelve. As far as I can see, there are three solutions to the problem. The first is that the repentance of Nineveh did not last for long. After a couple of years they not only returned to their evil conduct but did worse, in that they attacked Israel, Judah and Jerusalem. This behavior can be inferred from the report in 2 Kgs 18:13ff and within the Book of the Twelve from Mic 5:4, where Assyria seems to represent a massive threat to Judah. Most of all, the writing of Nahum is the proof that Nineveh must have returned to its bad behavior. Otherwise Nahum's fierce accusations and predictions of doom would be unjustified. That a nation can return to bad conduct after it has experienced God's mercy and repentance is well attested in the case of Israel itself. This reading strategy can be found already in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer.<sup>23</sup>

A second option has been proposed by Jeremias, who thinks that the narrative of Jonah illustrates God's innermost and final will, namely that God's mercy even extends to the most guilty people, if they are capable of radical repentance (Jonah) and passionately ask for his will (Mic 4:1ff), whereas the severe punishment that Nahum envisions only represents God's temporary will.<sup>24</sup> Viewed in this way the reader of the

23 See Schart, *Entstehung*, 27–28; Ego, "Repentance;" Scoralick, *Güte*, 185.

24 Jeremias, *Joel*, 81.

Twelve has to learn that God's will to show mercy even to Nineveh was missed by two prophets immediately following each other: first the prophet Jonah, second Nahum.

The third option would be to see an implied criticism of the character Jonah. Jonah's fault was not to mistrust the repentance of Nineveh, but to announce a very short time span before the end of Nineveh would come about. The period of 40 days, after which the city will be overthrown, was not part of God's command, but the prophet's own invention, presumably placed into his message out of wishful thinking, because he wanted this event so desperately. In the end God fulfilled what the prophet had anticipated, but more than 100 years later.<sup>25</sup> The prophet Jonah should not have excluded the possibility of repentance on the side of Nineveh and the side of God. Although he was ultimately right with his assessment that Nineveh was bad and that it would never really change its essence and therefore would be punished someday, Jonah's judgment came too early because God gives even the worst nations the chance to repent and wants God's prophets to take this task seriously. It is totally unacceptable that a prophet wants God to obey to his own will and does not serve God's will.

## 6. Traces of Redactional Activities Related to the Inclusion of Jonah within the Twelve

Let us now consider at what stage of the development of the Twelve the narrative of Jonah was included and whether traces of redactional activities can be detected that are placed outside of the narrative of Jonah, but nevertheless stem from the same redactor who included Jonah. As several studies have shown, it is very probable that the Book of the Twelve grew in such a way that writings were included into different multi-volume precursors to the Twelve and at the same time some passages were inserted in order to balance out the tensions that the inclusion brought into the conceptual coherence of the Twelve. Different authors have identified such passages that look as though they are connected to the Jonah-redaction. Most impressive is Wöhrle's thesis of a *Gnadenkorpus*.

Wöhrle proposes the thesis that a redactor inserted the book of Jonah in order to establish a corpus comprising twelve writings: Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Deutero-Zech

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25 At least this is the case, if one identifies the narrative character within Jonah with the figure mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.

(counted as an independent writing) and Mal. This redactor at the same time thoroughly reworked the narrative of Jonah and inserted some passages in four other books: Joel 2:12–14; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2b, 3a; Mal 1:9a.<sup>26</sup> All these passages demonstrate a similar interest in the compassionate essence of YHWH. Besides this global thematic coherence some passages deliberately cite or allude to the famous definition of YHWH’s character in the context of the Sinai-theophany in Exod 34:6, designated as *Gnadenformel*:<sup>27</sup>

34:6 The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (NRSV)

In addition, some passages share words and concepts. In some cases the lexical overlap is significant, in others not so much. All in all, as Wöhrle himself admits, these observations can equally be explained by other theories and models.<sup>28</sup> What gives Wöhrle’s hypothesis of a *Gnadenkorpus* special strength is his argument that the redactional passages within the *Gnadenkorpus* show a clear intention to provide the corpus with a unifying structure. Wöhrle visualizes this structure with the following table:<sup>29</sup>

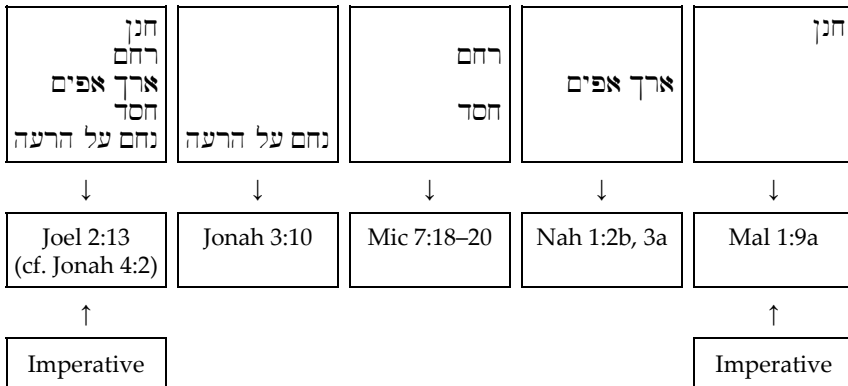


Table 1: The *Gnadenkorpus* according to Jakob Wöhrle

26 Vgl. Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 400. The redactional layer in Jonah comprises: Jonah 1:5b, 6, 8aß, 10abα, 14, 16; 2:2–10; 3:6–10; 4:1–4, 6\*(יהוה) and להציל to גרולה, 10–11.

27 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 401.

28 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 406–407.

29 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 408.

The table shows that the redactional passages in the first and the last writing begin with an imperative and in this way build a kind of frame around the corpus. The first appearance of the *Gnadenformel* in Joel 2:13 gives a complete version of the concepts mentioned in Exod 34:6, whereas in the subsequent writings, that is those except Joel and Jonah, every word is repeated exactly one time. If these were all of the allusions to Exod 34:6 in the Book of the Twelve, this neat structure would be quite impressive and a good argument to think of the *Gnadenkorpus* as a unified and self-contained redactional unit. However, if you look at it more closely, it becomes obvious that Wöhrle does not provide the whole picture.

The first point to make is that the degree of grammatical agreement between the various phrases differs from how Wöhrle actually presents it:

- The adjective חנוּן does not show up in Mal 1:9a. Only the Verb חנן appears. The root חנן, however, is also attested in Hos 12:5 and Amos 5:15. It is right that in Mal we do have a ויעתה, which is similarly found in Joel 2:12, but in Joel 2:12 the exact wording is וגם־עתה, which is certainly different. On the other hand, there is a striking and famous affinity to Amos 5:15, insofar as אול־י is attested in both places and in a comparable context. As a result, the reference from Mal 1:9 to Joel 2:12 is not especially significant or exclusive. The words they have in common cannot prove a single redactional layer.
- In Mic 7:19 the adjective רחום is not attested, but the verb רחם is. The same root is used seven times in Hos 1:6, 7; 2:3, 6, 25 (2x); 9:14; 14:4, in Hab 3:2, and in Zech 1:12; 10:6. Likewise, the noun חסד is used in Hos 2:21; 4:1; 6:4, 6 (which is especially interesting because of the occurrence of חסד as in Mic 7:18); 10:12; 12:7; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9 (roots חסד and רחם just as in Mic 7:18–20). As a result, the verbal connections between Joel 2:12 and Mic 7:19 are not so significant that Wöhrle's thesis really commends itself.

The second point is that the verbal and thematic relationship of Joel and Jonah in respect to Exod 34:6 is by far more significant than that between Joel and the other writings. This can sufficiently be explained with the thesis that Jonah cited Joel because the author of the narrative of Jonah wanted to ridicule the writing of Joel, but that the redactor who alluded to Exod 34:6 in the other writings was a different person. In contrast, it is unlikely that the same redactor worked in such a markedly distinct manner within the different writings.

The third point is that Wöhrle rightly points to the fact that Joel 2:13 contains an imperative, but he does not mention that the specific form, the imperative שׁוּבוּ "return!" picks up the same imperative of Hos 14:3. It is especially noteworthy that the command to return is doubled in Hos 14:2–3 and Joel 2:12–13 as well: Hos 14:2 and Joel 2:12 construe the

imperative with the preposition עַד and are followed immediately by a second imperative of שׁוּב, this time construed with the preposition אֶל (Hos 14:3; Joel 2:13). In addition, the topic of repentance using שׁוּב is very strong in Zech 1:2–6 and shows up ultimately in Mal 3:7. The topic of repentance and the *Gnadenformel* are heavily intertwined in Joel 2:12–14 and in Jonah 3. Therefore it is unwise to construe a literary layer by concentrating solely on the *Gnadenformel*.

The fourth point is that one has to consider the wider context of the *Gnadenformel* in Exod 34, since there are some more significant verbal agreements. In Exod 32:14 it is stated: “And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people” (NRSV). This is exactly the sentiment expressed in Jonah 3:10! Nineveh experiences the same mercy of God that allowed Israel to survive after the incident with the golden calf at Mount Sinai. Israel nevertheless had to suffer severe punishment after God repented, whereas Nineveh’s punishment seems to be nullified altogether.

The fifth point concerns Mal 1:9a. The opening imperative “Now, entreat God’s face!” is reminiscent of Exod 32:11 where it is stated with the same verb “But Moses entreated YHWH.”

All of the citations are shown in table 2.

In summary, Wöhrle is right that there is a chain of passages that cite or allude to the *Gnadenformel* as attested in Exod 34:6. As in the case of Exod 34 (and Num 14:18) it is important to note that God does not need any prerequisites from the people in order to forgive. But this analysis gives only part of the picture.

First, it is obvious that the verbal agreements that Wöhrle has observed are only significant in the case of Joel and Jonah. However, the connection between these two can better be explained by the thesis that the author of the narrative of Jonah deliberately cited and alluded to Joel, whereby a good reason for that would be the satirical character of Jonah. Apart from Joel and Jonah, the lexical overlap with the other writings does not justify the hypothesis of a *Gnadenkorpus*. In turn, the redactional passages that Wöhrle has isolated share some vocabulary of greater significance with passages and writings that do not belong to Wöhrle’s *Gnadenkorpus*. Especially noteworthy is the allusion of Mic 7:18 to Hos.

Second, within the Book of the Twelve it is especially noteworthy that the most important passage, which Wöhrle considers to be of basic importance because it contains a complete set of the concepts of the *Gnadenformel*, namely Joel 2:12–13, includes a call to repentance. This call definitely picks up Hos 14:2–3 in many respects. In addition, the concept and some of the words are also used in Zech 1:2–3 and Mal 3:7.

	Exod 32-34	Hos 14:2-3	Joel 2:12-13	Jonah 3-4	Mic 7:18-20	Nah 1:3	Mal 3:7
Imperative: Return to me!		שׁוּבוּ יְהוָה עִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	שׁוּבוּ אֲדֹנָי				
God entreated		וּשׁוּבוּ אֵל יְהוָה	וּשׁוּבוּ אֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם				שׁוּבוּ אֲדֹנָי וּשׁוּבוּ אֵלַיכֶם Mal 1:9b
YHWH	Exod 32:11			Jonah 4:2			חָלוּ נָא פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּרְחַמֵנוּ
compassionate	וַיַּחַל מִשָּׁה אֵת פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ			כִּי אִתָּה	מִי אֵל כְּמוֹךָ	יְהוָה	
gracious	Exod 34:6-7			אֵל חַנּוּן			
slow to anger			כִּי חַנּוּן	רַחוּם			
lovingkindness and truth			וּרְחוּם	אֱרֹךְ אַפַּיִם		אֲרֹךְ אַפַּיִם	
keeping mercy			וּרְבַח חֶסֶד	וּרְבַח חֶסֶד	חֶסֶד אֲמַת לַיעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם		
forgiving					כִּי חֲפֵץ חֶסֶד הוּא		
relenting					נְשֵׂא עוֹן וְעֹבֵר עַל פְּשָׁעוֹ		
not clearing the guilty			וַיִּנְחַם עַל הַדְּרִיעָה	וַיִּנְחַם עַל הַדְּרִיעָה		וַתִּקֶּה לֹא יִנְקֶה	
God relents	Exod 32:14		Joel 4:18	Jonah 3:10			
	וַתִּקֶּה לֹא יִנְקֶה			וַיִּנְחַם אֱלֹהִים עַל הַדְּרִיעָה			
				אֲטָר דְּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת לַעֲמוֹ			

Table 2: Intertextual Relations between Exod 32-34 and Texts in the Twelve

The theme of repentance definitely is an important thematic thread within the Twelve.

Third, citations of passages within the vicinity of Exod 32–34 demonstrate that the redactor was aware of the wider context of the *Gnadenformel*.

In sum, the hypothesis that there was a *Gnadenkorpus* is unlikely as Wöhrle has reconstructed it. The thesis of a redactional layer across several writings of the *Gnadenkorpus* is, at least in the case of the book of Jonah, not convincing because the claims that there are massive thematic tensions within the narrative do no justice to the satirical character of the narrative. In addition, the passages that Wöhrle has identified as belonging to the redaction do not form a significant self-contained structure. The verbal agreements between the passages do not stem from the work of a single redactor, but from different authors instead. There are several highly significant allusions to Exod 34:6 within Wöhrle's redactional passages, but they are not limited to these passages. Highly significant allusions to the *Gnadenformel* and other phrases from the Sinai episode can be found elsewhere, too. The alleged central passage of the redaction in Joel 2:12–13 contains an important element that Wöhrle ignores, namely an urgent call to repentance with a double occurrence of the imperative שׁוּבוּ. This alludes clearly to Hos 14:2–3, a passage that, according to Wöhrle, is not part of the *Gnadenkorpus*. The topic of return to YHWH is taken up prominently in Zech 1, where it is stated that the people finally followed this command. And it occurs in the final chapter of the Twelve, in Mal 3:7. Wöhrle should have considered these passages also to be part of the redaction that inserted Jonah into the Book of the Twelve. Wöhrle proposes that Hos was not part of the *Gnadenkorpus* because he cannot detect clear verbal connections between Hos and the rest of the corpus. However, there is no reason to speculate in this direction, because the verbal and conceptual agreement between Joel 2:12–13 and Hos 14:2–3 is very significant.<sup>30</sup>

## 7. Other Editorial Passages Related to the Inclusion of Jonah

The book of Jonah brought an important idea into the Book of the Twelve, namely that the nations, even those with the worst behavior, can experience the very same merciful imminence and essence of

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30 Scoralick, *Güte*, has dealt extensively with the question how Exod 34:6–7 is interwoven in the Book of the Twelve. She has noted many intertextual relations with Hos.

YHWH as Israel. The mercy of God does not extend exclusively to Israel.<sup>31</sup> Even more so, the ethnically mixed group of sailors and the Ninevites can serve as an impressive example for Israel showing how a perfect return to God can be achieved. This measure of positive attitude concerning the nations is unparalleled in the rest of the Twelve and counterbalances the many negative passages about the nations. Several authors have proposed the hypothesis that some passages that display a positive attitude towards the nations are connected to the redaction that inserted Jonah into the Twelve.

### 7.1 Possible Connections to Jonah in Mic 7

In Mic 7:19a the suffix in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural is unclear. Within the context it is plausible that the suffix refers to the nations rather than to Israel. If this were so, the verse would imply that YHWH will forgive the nations their sins in a similar way to Israel, although this meaning of the text is neither straight-forward nor easily understandable within its context.<sup>32</sup>

Metzner has proposed that the last additions to Mic, which can be found in Mic 7:11b, 12b, and 19b, contain a positive attitude towards the nations that can be paralleled to that of the book of Jonah.<sup>33</sup> In Mic 7:11b she translates “jener Tag, die Schranke entfernt sich.”<sup>34</sup> This somewhat cryptic statement is taken as having a metaphorical sense: “Im Zusammenhang mit V.12 ist an das Fallen der nationalen Schranken zu denken: die Frommen der ganzen Erde, voran die Diaspora aus Ägypten und Assyrien, werden zum geschützten Ort kommen.”<sup>35</sup> Although this understanding of the somehow cryptic passage seems a bit far-fetched, it is certainly worth thinking about, because it is completely imaginable that a reader of the Book of the Twelve or its precursors sought guidance for how to understand the shift concerning the nations from Jonah to Micah.

31 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 396.

32 Nogalski, *Precursors*, 153, puts it this way: “This allusion seeks to draw a parallel between the ‘salvation’ of Jonah and the ‘salvation’ of the congregation in 7:19b.” There is also a verbal connection to Jonah 2:4: The combination of the substantive נִצְלָה together with the verb שָׁלַח in the hiphil is attested in both cases (Nogalski, *ibid.*, 153; Metzner, *Kompositionsgeschichte*, 166–167); however, the word נִצְלָה probably has been inserted secondarily; see Jeremias, *Joel*, 89.

33 Metzner, *Kompositionsgeschichte*, 183.

34 Metzner, *Kompositionsgeschichte*, 195.

35 Metzner, *Kompositionsgeschichte*, 165.



## 7.2 Connections to Jonah in Malachi

Within Malachi there is one short statement concerning the nations that has always puzzled the readers of this book.<sup>36</sup> Mal 1:11 (cf. 14b) states:

1:11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting,  
 my name is great among the nations,  
 and in every place incense is offered to my name,  
 and a pure gift.  
 Yes, my name is great among the nations,  
 says YHWH Zebaoth.

It is indeed astonishing how the author states as a fact that people who do not belong to Israel and may not have even heard the name YHWH bring a pure offering to YHWH. As a consequence, many scholars perceive this statement as directed towards the distant future.<sup>37</sup> However the grammatical construction of a sentence with a participle and a second nominal phrase does not refer to a future event but expresses the notion that an action is durative, i.e., that it continues through time at the time of the speaker. The second proposal is that the author is not thinking of non-Israelites, but of members of the diaspora that live all over the world distancing themselves from the cults of other gods and bringing offerings to YHWH where they are. However, this meaning is speculative.

If one assumes the straight-forward sense, that non-Israelites worship YHWH outside of the land of Israel, Jonah provides two good examples of how this could be imagined in its narrative!

In Jonah 1:16 the sailors very probably should be imagined as a heterogeneous and religiously diverse group of non-Israelites in that each person prays to his own god. After the sea has calmed down – even while still on the ship! – they offered a sacrifice to YHWH and took a vow (Jonah 1:16). This matches the idea of Mal 1:11 exactly: Non-Israelites offer their gifts to YHWH, the god of Israel, who they know and address by name, but they do not need to go to Jerusalem or to another temple.<sup>38</sup> Every place qualifies as a satisfactory location for sacrifice to YHWH. And they serve as a positive example for Jonah, the Hebrew (Jonah 1:9), who knows YHWH's essence so well (Jonah 4:2),

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36 See for example Weyde, *Prophecy*, 146–149.

37 Already the King James Version did so.

38 This is noted for example by Roth, *Israel*, 153–155; he is right that Zeph 2:11 likewise envisions a worship of YHWH by the nations, but for the distant future.

but refuses to obey or to pray to his god, even should the consequence be his own death.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, Jonah 3 envisions the people of Nineveh as positively outstanding. They are depicted as serving only one God, who is identified with YHWH by the narrator, although they themselves do not know the real name of this God. As a consequence, the Ninevites turn with their repentance to the God they know. They cannot address YHWH by name because Jonah has not given them the chance to do so. Nevertheless, YHWH is impressed so much by this conduct that he recants immediately. Again, one can infer that the narrative demonstrates how foreigners who do not even know the name of YHWH can serve him in a much better way than the prophet Jonah.<sup>40</sup>

This picture stands in sharp contrast to the prayer of Jonah, who is portrayed as a hardline nationalist and who does not give up the idea that YHWH is bound to the temple in Jerusalem. In Jonah 2:5 and 2:8 his desire for the temple is expressed vividly with the same phrase. In Jonah 2:8b it even has an ironic twist to it:

2:8 “And my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.” (NRSV)

The phrase *אל-היכל קדשך* cites Pss 5:8 and 138:2. There the person who prays is located physically at the temple in front of the temple building (*היכל*). In the case of Jonah, however, his longing for the temple is so intense that he even wants his prayer to stop by Mount Zion before it reaches God.

In sum, the conduct of the sailors is the only example within the Twelve that positively proves that Mal 1:11, 14 is not an eschatological hope but an option that can be realized within history. Jonah illustrates what Mal 1:11, 14 states: that the nations can be a positive foil for venerating YHWH in Israel! This conceptual coherence between Jonah and the redactor who inserted Mal 1:11, 14b into Mal make it a probable assumption that the redactor who inserted Jonah into the Twelve also inserted Mal 1:11, 14b.<sup>41</sup>

39 This concept parallels the self-understanding of Cyrus as expressed in his edict transmitted in Ezra 1:2–4; (6:3–5, 9; 7:12). He addresses YHWH and acts truly on his behalf, although he never visited the land of Israel.

40 Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 395.

41 Bosshard-Nepustil, *Rezeptionen*, 421–428, postulates a layer that comprises the first literary layer in the Book of Jonah, Zeph 2:11, 3:1–7, and the first layer in Malachi and dates it into the period of Artaxerxes III Ochus. However, many source-critical reconstructions of his thesis are unwarranted. Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 358–360, perceives Zeph 2:11 as isolated gloss that is not part of a layer, and also Mal 1:11a is seen as an isolated gloss “ohne größere Bedeutung für die Entstehung des Maleachibuches oder gar des Zwölfprophetenbuches” (ibid., 263).

## 8. Conclusion

The source-critical hypothesis of a *Gnadenkorpus* proposed by Wöhrle undoubtedly has its merits, insofar as he has put the focus on important aspects that the inclusion of the Book of Jonah brought into the Book of the Twelve. However, the hypothesis has its limits. The source-critical analysis of the narrative of Jonah has overlooked its satirical character and therefore misunderstood some humorous and ironic elements as unmotivated tensions that justify the assumption of different layers. In other cases the borders of the *Gnadenkorpus* have not been convincingly demonstrated. It is especially unfortunate to exclude Hos from the *Gnadenkorpus*, as Wöhrle has ignored significant citations and allusions that suggest the contrary. Wherever one detects redactional traces that are connected to Jonah they belong to the latest layers in that writing, as is probable in the case of Mic and Mal. As a consequence, it is safe to assume that Jonah belonged to the final redaction of the Book of the Twelve.

The narrative of Jonah changed the message of the Twelve as a whole significantly in several respects. First, as Wöhrle has rightly noticed, YHWH's mercy is underscored, whereas his anger is downplayed. The author of Jonah alludes to the events at Mount Sinai as a kind of proof-text, presumably because he wanted to show that his understanding of God's mercy is drawn from YHWH's own self-disclosure. In contrast to the situation at Mount Sinai, YHWH's mercy is extended to the nations within Jonah. Jonah also stresses the necessity for people to repent and to return to YHWH. This topic was already important at many stages of the development of the Twelve, but with the inclusion of Jonah it was given a new twist. Some representatives of the nations serve as positive examples for Israel.

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