

## MAKING THEOLOGICAL SENSE OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

GREGORY GOSWELL\*

**Abstract:** *The ancient readers who supplied the Old Testament prophetic books with titles and placed the books in sequence had in mind the needs of future readers. These paratextual elements provide an interpretive frame around the biblical text and suggest ways of making theological sense of the text. The titles of the prophetic books link them to particular historic figures (e.g., Isaiah, Amos) and thereby help to protect the individual identity and discrete witness of the different books. On the other hand, the collating of the books in the prophetic corpora in the Hebrew and Greek canons (e.g., Latter Prophets of the Hebrew canon), the pairing of books (e.g., Isaiah and the Twelve in Baba Bathra 14b) and the juxtapositioning of books (e.g., Jeremiah and Lamentations in Greek Bibles) suggest the merit of reading the prophetic books in concert with neighboring books in these canons when assessing the theological import of these books.*

**Key words:** *canon, prophets, book titles, book order, Book of the Twelve*

The proper aim of the Christian reader is to interpret the prophetic books in such a way that they contribute to the development and enrichment of Christian theology.<sup>1</sup> The Classical Prophets were seen as a theological high point in Julius Wellhausen's rewriting of OT history, evidence being the exalted view of God in Isaiah and the ethical seriousness of prophets like Amos. Scholars such as Bernhard Duhm thought in terms of the evolutionary development of OT religion and believed they could isolate a kernel of material that reflected the religious genius of the original prophet by removing later accretions, but we are now more appreciative of the final form of biblical books. Although Gerhard von Rad was highly attuned to the theological character of the OT, his treatment of prophecy was a hangover from the older approach, for he saw prophecy as an innovative phenomenon. Critical approaches to the Bible have often been *theologically deaf* (a critique made by Brevard Childs),<sup>2</sup> but only toward the end of his record of publication did

---

\* Gregory Goswell is Academic Dean and Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Christ College, Sydney, 1 Clarence St., Burwood, NSW 2134, Australia.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Karl Möller, "Prophecy and Prophets in the OT," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 626–28, and J. G. McConville, "Prophetic Writings," in the same volume, 628–32. Neither author broaches the issue of book order within the prophetic corpus.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 142; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 724–25.

biblical book order become an issue that Childs explored.<sup>3</sup> As a sincere admirer of Childs, Christopher Seitz takes seriously the theological dimension of the historical process that led to the canon of Scripture as we know it, and various publications by Seitz aim to further the program initiated by Childs, namely how a believer in Christ is to read and apply the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, Seitz's main target is the critical reordering of the prophetic books in supposed historical sequence that ignores the canonical sequencing of books (à la George Adam Smith).<sup>4</sup> In *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, Seitz sees an analogy between the Twelve as a coordinated prophetic anthology and the Pauline Letter Collection, with the first possibly influencing the formation and pattern of the second.<sup>5</sup> In this article I aim to show the theological value of reading the individual prophetic books with an eye to neighboring books in the prophetic canon, giving consideration to how the prophetic books have been assembled and are presented to the reader as components of the prophetic corpora of the Hebrew and Greek OT canons.

### I. THEIR OWN DAY AND FUTURE DAYS

How accurately are contemporary readers able to reconstruct the social and religious situation to which the prophet Amos, for example, was presumably responding? The main source for discovering the background of the ministry of Amos is what can be gleaned from the book itself, which raises the dangers inherent in *mirror-reading*. Amos mentions the exploitation of the poor by the rich (2:6–8; 3:9; 4:1; 5:10–13; 6:1–7; 8:4–6), and he condemns cultic abuse (4:4–5; 5:4–5), and these may be viewed as *emphases* of his preaching. Does this mean that such crimes were rampant in Amos's day? Or is their selection due to traditional prophetic concerns (cf. 1 Sam 15:22–23; Isa 1:11–17; Mic 6:6–8)? In the case of Amos, we have a couple of controls, namely his contemporary Hosea (e.g., 2:8, 13) and passages from 2 Kings (e.g., 17:1–18), wherein Baalism is seen to be the main threat, and so it is somewhat unnerving to find that Amos is virtually silent on the issue.<sup>6</sup> In other words, our access to and knowledge of the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophecy of Amos may be less secure than commonly thought, and there is the danger of falling into circular reasoning, that is attempting a social reconstruction on the basis of Amos's words and then using that reconstructed *original setting* of eighth-century Israel to

---

<sup>3</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 130–34.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 103.

<sup>6</sup> It is only to be found in Amos 5:26 (astral deities), and 8:14 must be excluded from consideration, for it probably refers to regional epithets of YHWH at pilgrimage sites. Cf. M. Daniel Carroll R., "For So You Love to Do: Probing Popular Religion in the Book of Amos," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. M. Daniel Carroll R., JSOTSup 299 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 178–81; Max E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire: A Socio-Historical Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 87–94.

interpret the words of the prophet. Is there an alternate and more stable context for interpreting his words?

The words that the OT prophets spoke at various times and places over the years of their ministry have been collected and written down in anthologies, usually, as in the case of Amos, without indications of specific context.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, the dated oracles of Haggai (1:1, 15b; 2:1, 10, 20) are very much the exception. In Jeremiah, the exact year of the different prophecies are recorded many times (e.g., Jer 1:2–3; 3:6; 21:2; 25:1), but these time references do not form a sequence; rather, the fundamental arrangement of the book is *topical*.<sup>8</sup> A standard feature is the schematic structuring of the prophetic material into longer or shorter sections of doom and hope (e.g., Isaiah 1–12; Micah).<sup>9</sup> It does appear that the individual oracles have been loosed from any social or religious context that they may have had and have been given a purely *literary* setting, and this is the only setting of which we can be certain.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the immediate canonical context of Amos 9:11–15 is that it comes after eight and a half chapters of collected sayings of the prophet Amos, and in the wider setting of the Book of the Twelve, with the mention of Edom being picked up and developed in the following book of Obadiah.<sup>11</sup> It is the wider setting provided by the sequencing of prophetic books that is the focus of this article.

The aim is not to dehistoricise the prophetic texts, which did arise in specific historical settings, for example, in connection to the ministry of Amos to Northern Israel in the eighth century BC,<sup>12</sup> and the attribution of his oracles to a specified prophetic persona (Amos 1:1: “The words of Amos...”) helps to prevent the loss of the historical dimension of the text and protects the distinctives of his message, and, therefore, the titles assigned to the prophetic books are an important part of the canonical presentation. These functions still apply, even if the prophetic books are not viewed as archival preservations of the oracles of prophets from the mo-

<sup>7</sup> For an attempt to assign the different visions and oracles of Amos to various phases of his historic ministry, see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos*, AB 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 83–88.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the chronological rearrangement attempted in John Bright, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, AB 21 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., B. W. Anderson, “‘God with Us’—In Judgment and in Mercy: The Editorial Structure of Isaiah 5–10[11],” in *Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Gene M. Tucker et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 230–45; Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 257–61.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Brevard S. Childs, “The Canonical Shape of the Prophetic Literature,” *Int* 32 (1978): 46–55. Of course, Childs’s view that oracles have been reshaped and rearranged builds upon an acceptance of the findings of form criticism and redaction criticism, but the basic point remains: prophetic oracles as presently arranged in the canonical books give little or no clue to their original setting in the life-situation of the individual prophet.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 129: “[T]he book [of Obadiah] may be viewed as a virtual commentary on Amos 9:12” (additions mine).

<sup>12</sup> This historical link is accepted by Shalom M. Paul, *Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 6: “the book in its entirety (with one or two minor exceptions) can be reclaimed for its original author, the prophet Amos.” Cf. John H. Hayes, *Amos, The Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 223.

narchic period but instead reflect the mental image of such earlier prophets by Persian-era literati (à la the theory of Ehud Ben Zvi).<sup>13</sup>

In the wider critical examination of literature, such a study comes under the heading of titology (French *titrologie*).<sup>14</sup> The titles assigned to the books of Scripture are an element of paratext provided by ancient readers of the biblical text, and the titles directly address later readers and influence a book's reception. It is easy to ignore the influence of the paratext on the reading process, and Kevin Jackson has called paratextual elements like book titles "invisible forms," and he bemoans the fact that they are often overlooked.<sup>15</sup> Those responsible for the canonical framing of the prophetic books (replete with titles and put in order) had in mind the needs of future generations.<sup>16</sup>

## II. THE TITLES OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The "Latter Prophets" has four large books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve) matching in number the books of the "Former Prophets" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). Whereas these four books are titled after their main characters by name (Joshua, Samuel) or by office (Judges, Kings), the books of the Latter Prophets are named after the prophetic mouthpiece used by God (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos). The titles of these books are justified by the superscriptions that head most of them (e.g., Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1–3; Amos 1:1). Codex Alexandrinus in its subscriptions to the three great prophetic books has "Isaiah the prophet," etc, and for Ezekiel the title takes this form in both the inscription and the subscription (namely, at both the beginning and end of the book).<sup>17</sup> The titles amount to excerpts from much longer superscriptions, for they do not give all the information that the superscriptions provide (e.g., kings are mentioned by name in a number of the superscriptions but do not make it into the titles).

The highly abbreviated titles imply the meaning: "The *scroll* of Isaiah" or "Isaiah's *message*" etc.<sup>18</sup> It cannot be said, however, that the figure of the prophet is prominent in most of the books. Isaiah features in his prophecy only in chapters 6–

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Concept of Prophetic Books and Its Historical Settings," in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi, Bible World (London: Equinox, 2009), 73–95.

<sup>14</sup> Gérard Genette, "Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988): 692–720; Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76–94.

<sup>15</sup> Kevin Jackson, *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 1999), xvi–xvii. Jackson's first chapter deals with titles.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Nicholas Perrin, "Dialogic Conceptions of Language and the Problem of Biblical Unity," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 212–24.

<sup>17</sup> A. Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: Volumen II Libri poetici et prophetici*, two volumes in one (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979), 566, 656, 748, 770, 863.

<sup>18</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:32 may refer to the canonical book of Isaiah under the fuller title "the Vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz" (cf. Isa 1:1). CD 7.10 names it "the words of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz" (cf. Florilegium 4Q174), though, like Mark 1:5, Luke 3:4, 4:17, 20, Acts 8:28 and 30, these may not be strictly speaking titles.

8, 20, and 36–39. Jeremiah as a character is more prominent in the book named after him, mainly in Jeremiah 26–29 and 32–44. His prophetic book provides a biography of the *word*, not of Jeremiah himself, who is featured only as the bearer of the word, and Jeremiah suffers because God’s word is rejected. Ezekiel features in the prophecy named after him (e.g., his call [chap. 1] and his prophetic actions [chaps. 4–5, 12]) but in quite a different way than Jeremiah whose ministry is a very public one. Ezekiel’s apparent disconnection with his situation (largely confined to his house [3:24–27]) has led to scholarly debate over his location.<sup>19</sup> The result is that Ezekiel as a character is not as prominent in the book named after him as is Jeremiah in his book. In Hosea 1–3, the pattern of Israel’s history is reflected in the marriage relationship of Hosea and Gomer, with Gomer’s sin, punishment, and restoration symbolising God’s dealings with Israel. There is no interest in Hosea as a personality outside the role of his familial relations (wife and children) in embodying the message. The prophet Amos features only in Amos 7:10–17, where the priest Amaziah urges Amos to flee to Judah and preach there (not in Bethel). The incident is recorded for its contribution to the Amosean theme of the silencing of the prophets (2:12; 3:8; 5:13).<sup>20</sup> The prophecy of Jonah, unlike other prophetic books, is a narrative *about* the prophet, whose unattractive character and psychology are the focal point of the book.<sup>21</sup>

On the whole, then, little information is provided about the prophets as individuals, and Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi are only names. In the case of Malachi (meaning “my messenger”), we may not even know that (cf. Mal 3:1: “Behold, I send my messenger...”).<sup>22</sup> Though the titles put the focus on the prophetic mouthpiece, they are not reflective of a biographical interest *per se* in the books.<sup>23</sup> What the assigned titles do is differentiate each book and contrast it with other prophetic texts. By this means, the title of a book protects its separate perspective and viewpoint.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the failure of the titles to specify to whom the prophet speaks (whether to Judah, to Israel, or to the exiles), though this information is often in the superscription, is a feature that helps to universalize their message. It is not necessarily the case that those who appended the names to the books viewed the prophets as their authors (we know, for example, of the in-

<sup>19</sup> John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 15–18.

<sup>20</sup> Peter R. Ackroyd, “A Judgment Narrative between Kings and Chronicles? An Approach to Amos 7:9–17,” in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 71–87.

<sup>21</sup> See David Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-Prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible*, Brown Judaic Studies 301 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 148–56.

<sup>22</sup> The LXX renders it as “his messenger” (ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ), that is, the word is not treated as a proper name, and the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan adds the clause, “whose name [was] Ezra the Scribe.”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Luke 3:4: “the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet” (cf. Luke 4:17, 20).

<sup>24</sup> According to Genette, the basic (and minimal) function of a title is to identify a work and therefore differentiate it from other works (“Functions of the Title,” 708). Cf. Francis Watson, who argues that the move to assign authors to the four Gospels was done with the aim of protecting their individual identity and witness; see *The Fourfold Gospel: A Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 15.

vovement of Baruch in recording Jeremiah's prophecies).<sup>25</sup> The assigned titles are not straightforward claims about authorship. Certainly, the highly critical stance toward its protagonist in the book of Jonah does not suggest that he is a likely candidate for author.

In the Hebrew Bible, Hosea to Malachi are combined in one book as "The Twelve Prophets." As part of a review of OT heroes, Sirach 49:10 mentions "the bones of the twelve prophets," and this wording presumably alludes to the twelve prophetic booklets as a grouping. This Hebrew designation also appears in the Babylonian Talmud in Baba Bathra 14b (שנים עשר). Acts 7:42 refers to the Book of the Twelve under the title "the Book of the Prophets" (ἐν βίβλῳ τῶν προφητῶν) in introducing a quotation from Amos 5:25–27. The Vulgate designates them *Prophetiae Minores*, and this designation refers to the relative brevity of the individual books; it probably derives from Augustine (*City of God* 18.29). In the Jewish canonical lists, the Twelve are always counted as one book, and this way of presenting the twelve prophetic booklets asserts both their individual integrity as discrete works and the need to read them in concert.<sup>26</sup>

### III. THE ORDER OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The Masoretic ordering of the books of the Latter Prophets follows a chronological scheme, namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, with the catchall collection of Twelve Prophets at the end. Certainly, the ministries of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in the Persian period are to be dated later than those of the other prophets. There are other orders attested for the Latter Prophets. Notably an earlier tradition preserved in the Babylonian Talmudic tractate Baba Bathra (14b) reads: "Our rabbis taught that the order (סדרן) of the prophets is Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and the Twelve."<sup>27</sup> A noticeable feature of the Baba Bathra list is the *pairing* of the prophetic books (also a feature in its listing of books in the Writings),<sup>28</sup> though this is not always represented in English translations.

The pairing of books could be justified in the following terms. Joshua and Judges both concern the conquest and its aftermath, with the catalogue of tribal failures to complete the conquest in Judges 1 a significant overlap between the

---

<sup>25</sup> Though this is assumed by Robert P. Markham, "Ancient and Modern Titles of Books of the Bible," *BT* 18 (1967): 86–94, esp. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 150: "The canonical form of the twelve Minor Prophets is concerned both to protect the original witness and to comprehend how that witness is meant to speak meaningfully across the ages, through time."

<sup>27</sup> This is a *baraita* originating in the Tannaic period (pre-AD 200). For the text, see I. Epstein (ed.), *Baba Bathra*, Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, New Edition in Two Volumes I (London: Soncino, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> As commented on by Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 156–57.

books,<sup>29</sup> as is the repetition of the notice of the death of Joshua in Judges 2:6–10 (cf. Josh 24:29–31). The connection of Samuel and Kings needs hardly to be argued for, since their linkage in the Greek Bible as Kingdoms 1–4 shows that many ancient readers saw their obvious relation one with the other as a history of kingship from its rise to its demise. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel belong together as compendia of oracles from contemporary prophets. The relation between Isaiah and the Twelve may be due to the similarity of their superscriptions (Isa 1:1; Hos 1:1), both of which have “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,”<sup>30</sup> and also relevant is the fact that both books at or near their end depict the prospect of universal pilgrimage to Zion (Isa 66:23; Zech 14:16).

For all their distinguishing features, Jeremiah and Ezekiel have a common hope, and the juxtapositioning of the books invites comparison and leads to mutual enrichment (while preserving any individual emphases). For example, irrespective of whether Jeremiah 23 is compositionally connected to Ezekiel 34, the same combination of elements occurs in both chapters, namely an address condemning the unfaithful shepherds (Jer 23:1–2; Ezek 34:1–10a), notice of their replacement (Jer 23:3–4; Ezek 34:10b–16), and the raising up of a new “David” (Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23–24). It is plain that there is some kind of relation between Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34. It could be that Ezekiel 34 is an expanded version of Jeremiah 23, as argued by many scholars.<sup>31</sup> Others argue that Jeremiah 23:3 and 8 are dependent on Ezekiel,<sup>32</sup> and a further possibility is that the two chapters draw independently on the same stream of tradition,<sup>33</sup> for use of the shepherd as a metaphor for royal leadership is common in the ANE and in the OT itself (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 3:15; Mic 5:4).<sup>34</sup> For my purposes, it is not essential to decide the degree or direction of dependence.

In Ezekiel 34:23 the promised Davidide is simply described as carrying out the role of shepherd (RSV “feed” [root רעה]), without closer definition. However, a hint that this may involve promoting social justice is found in 34:16 as part of the

<sup>29</sup> K. Lawson Younger Jr. demonstrates this section’s dependence on Joshua 13–19; see “The Configuring of Judicial Preliminaries: Judges 1:1–2:5 and Its Dependence on the Book of Joshua,” *JSOT* 68 (1995): 75–92.

<sup>30</sup> Noted by Julio Trebolle-Barrera, “Qumran Evidence for a Biblical Standard Text and for Non-Standard and Parabiblical Texts,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. Timothy H. Lim et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 95.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., John Wolf Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1955), 106; Moshe Weinfeld, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 45–46.

<sup>32</sup> Henk Leene, *Newness in Old Testament Prophecy: An Intertextual Study*, OTS 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 263–65; Rosalie Kuyvenhoven, “Jeremiah 23:1–8: Shepherds in Diachronic Perspective,” in *Paratext and Megatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions: The Textual Markers of Contextualization*, ed. A. A. den Hollander, U. Schmid, and W. Smelik, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1–36.

<sup>33</sup> See Walter Gross, “Israel’s Hope for the Renewal of the State,” *JNSL* 14 (1988): 24–126; Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel*, FOTL 19 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 251–52.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 279–81; Jack W. Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” *ABD* 5.1187–90; J. J. Glück, “Nagid-Shepherd,” *VT* 13 (1963): 144–50.

description of what *God* will do for his flock (“I will strengthen the weak,...I will feed [root רעה] them *in justice*”). As well, the strategic positioning of 34:23 straight after the mention of God’s intervention to “judge between sheep and sheep” (34:20–22) may also be taken as implying that the prince will use his authority to exercise judgment and protect the flock.<sup>35</sup> This role is made explicit in the parallel passage in Jeremiah 23:5 (“and [he] shall execute justice and righteousness in the land”), and this is an example of how study of the one prophet may assist in the interpretation of the other.

An obvious link between Isaiah and the Twelve are the synoptic passages about “the mountain of the house of the LORD” in Isaiah 2:2–4 and Micah 4:1–3. In each case, the passage is strategically located. The second superscription at Isaiah 2:1 (“The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw...”) (cf. 1:1) helps to demarcate Isaiah 1 as an introduction to the book,<sup>36</sup> so that 2:2–4 is a programmatic passage placed at the beginning of the *body* of the book, signalling the centrality of Zion theology in the book of Isaiah, which moves from the picture of present judged Jerusalem (chap. 1) to the prospect of transformed Zion in the closing chapters.<sup>37</sup> The Masoretes marked Micah 3:12 as the middle verse of the Twelve (*masora finalis*), and 4:1–3 immediately follows it. It is a false faith in God’s presence in Zion, despite their practice of injustice (3:11), that evokes the devastating proclamation of Zion’s fate in 3:12 (“Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins”),<sup>38</sup> but as in Isaiah, the glorious future in store for Zion is central to Micah’s message of hope. The importance of this central passage is supported by the quoting of Micah 3:15 in Jeremiah 26:18 and the parallel to Micah 4:1–3 found in Isaiah 2 (irrespective of which passage depends on which). In Micah, Zion is presented as God’s capital (e.g., 4:7b: “and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion”),<sup>39</sup> and the comparison with Isaiah alerts readers that Zion theology is also important in the Twelve (e.g., Joel 3:17; Amos 1:2; Obad 21; Zech 2:10; 14:16).

Several prophetic books have superscriptions relating to kings that are mentioned in the book of Kings (e.g., Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1) and this helps to bind together and coordinate the Former and Latter Prophets, though the only writing prophets mentioned in the book of Kings are Isaiah in 2 Kings 18–20 and Jonah in one verse (2 Kgs 14:25). The juxtaposing of Kings and Isaiah (MT) or Kings and Jeremiah (B. Bat. 14b) affirms the compatibility of the perspective of the author of Kings on the sin and punishment of God’s people and the teaching of the prophets

<sup>35</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, VTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 47–49.

<sup>36</sup> Georg Fohrer, “Jesaja 1 als Zusammenfassung der Verkündigung Jesajas,” *ZAW* 74 (1962): 251–68.

<sup>37</sup> William J. Dumbrell, “The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah,” *TynBul* 36 (1985): 111–28.

<sup>38</sup> Knud Jeppesen, “‘Because of You!’: An Essay about the Centre of the Book of the Twelve,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements*, ed. Edward Ball, JSOTSup 300 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 196–210.

<sup>39</sup> According to Rick R. Marrs, in Micah, “Zion appears not solely as it currently exists but as an object of divine intent,” see “‘Back to the Future’: Zion in the Book of Micah,” in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*, ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 82.



as recorded in the Latter Prophets.<sup>40</sup> As well, 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39 are synoptic passages and this justifies the placing of Kings and Isaiah next to each other in the Masoretic Text.<sup>41</sup> The sequence Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve in Baba Bathra 14b may be due to decreasing length,<sup>42</sup> or else it reflects an alternate method of computing chronological order,<sup>43</sup> for the latter part of the scroll of Isaiah foresees certain post-exilic developments (mentioning Cyrus) and Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi concern events that post-date Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>44</sup>

Yet another explanation of the order is supplied by the rabbinic discussion recorded in Baba Bathra itself, which says that Kings ends with destruction (חורבנא) and Jeremiah is all destruction, Ezekiel commences with destruction and ends with consolation (נחמתא) and Isaiah is full of consolation, so that “destruction is next to destruction and consolation is next to consolation.” This way of reading the sequence may be no more than a *post factum* attempt to supply an explanation for what at first looks an odd ordering of the books, giving priority to thematic considerations, so that, for example, the juxtapositioning of Kings and Jeremiah is due to their common theme of judgment and the disaster of exile. Certainly, the placing of Jeremiah after Kings provides a prophetic explanation of the demise of the nation as plotted in 2 Kings 23–25. The positioning of Jeremiah immediately after Kings is appropriate, seeing that Jeremiah 52 is drawn from (and adapts) 2 Kings 25, so that these are additional OT synoptic passages. As well, the oracles of Jeremiah are set in the closing years of the Kingdom of Judah, which is what the final chapters of Kings describe. This order of books provides an increasingly hopeful prospect, given the extensive promises of restoration to be found in Isaiah 40–66.<sup>45</sup>

The alternate Masoretic order (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Twelve Prophets) is plainly chronological.<sup>46</sup> Ezekiel was the younger contemporary of Jeremiah and therefore Ezekiel’s prophetic book follows that of Jeremiah. There is a fuller discussion of the exile and the hope for the nation beyond it in the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36–48) relative to Jeremiah (largely limited to Jeremiah 30–33). The historical progression is also indicated by the different schemes of dating used in the two books. In the scroll of Ezekiel, the prophecies are often dated according to

<sup>40</sup> Pace, e.g., Christopher T. Beggs, “The Non-mention of Amos, Hosea and Micah in the Deuteronomistic History,” *BN* 32 (1986): 41–53.

<sup>41</sup> Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship*, 90–91. Seitz views the prophetic division of the Hebrew Bible as “a canonical achievement of the first order” (*Goodly Fellowship*, 44).

<sup>42</sup> The view of Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 162. For other texts that reflect the order: Jeremiah-Ezekiel-Isaiah, see Treballe-Barrera, “Qumran Evidence,” 94–95, and Peter Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons: Das Arrangement der Schriften Israels in der jüdischen und christlichen Bibel*, BBB 131 (Berlin: Philo, 2001), 142–45.

<sup>43</sup> Louis Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 35; Treballe-Barrera, “Qumran Evidence,” 98.

<sup>44</sup> Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism*, JSOTSup 376 (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 77–78.

<sup>45</sup> The discussion in B. Bat. 14b views Isaiah as “full of consolation” (כוליה נחמתא) rather than only ending with consolation (as Ezekiel does).

<sup>46</sup> The account of famous men in Sirach 48:22–26 and 49:1–10 follows this sequence, as noted by Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 80–81.

the years of Jehoiachin's exile (Ezek 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1, etc.), whereas in the book of Jeremiah, several prophecies are dated according to the year of a reigning Judean king, often Zedekiah (Jer 25:1; 26:1; 27:1; 32:1, etc.).

Should we place Lamentations with the festal scrolls (*Megillot*) as in the Hebrew Bible or should it follow Jeremiah as in the Greek canonical tradition? There may be no right answer, but such alternatives reflect the different uses and interpretations of this scriptural work within the Hebrew and Greek (Latin) traditions.<sup>47</sup> The book of Lamentations is traditionally assigned to Jeremiah, and its placement in the LXX (Sinaiticus) directly after the prophecy of Jeremiah is an authorship attribution.<sup>48</sup> This leads to a rapprochement between the prophet of judgment and the people who suffer at the hands of God, for it makes Lamentations a personal reaction by Jeremiah to the fall of Jerusalem (the account of which immediately precedes in Jeremiah 52). Jeremiah may be identified as one of the two main poetic "voices" who are in dialogue in the book (e.g., 3:1 "I am a man who has seen affliction"). The other voice is that of the suffering city herself, Daughter Zion (e.g., 1:11–16), but neither perspective is privileged over the other.<sup>49</sup> On this understanding, the prophet has "a rhetorical role" in Lamentations,<sup>50</sup> and, therefore, says Nancy Lee, the book may be viewed as a canonical "extension" of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>51</sup> The male figure who laments in chapter 3 can be viewed as an adjustment of the persona of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 20:14–18). He acts, in effect, as a representative of the suffering Daughter Zion, who does not speak for herself in that chapter, but whose grievous suffering is acknowledged and felt (e.g., 3:48; 51).<sup>52</sup> This is not a radical redrawing of the image of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 9:1), but it does bring into greater prominence his heartfelt sorrow (and of the God he represented) over the need for his people to be punished. In other words, the enjambment of Jeremiah and Lamentations results in reconciliation of the prophet and the people he roundly condemned in his prophecy. It allows a rereading of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the prophet is shown to sympathise with the plight of the judged city and nation.

The distinctive character of the two halves of Daniel (tales/visions) seems to be what caused the different positioning of the book in the Hebrew and the Greek canons. In the latter canon, which became the Bible of the early church, Daniel is regarded as a prophet, and the subscription of Alexandrinus names the book "Dan-

<sup>47</sup> For more details, see Gregory Goswell, "Assigning the Book of Lamentations a Place in the Canon," *JESOT* 4 (2015): 1–19.

<sup>48</sup> In Vaticanus and Alexandrinus the order is: Jeremiah, Baruch, Lamentations, and Epistle of Jeremiah.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Charles William Miller, "Reading Voices: Personification, Dialogism, and the Reader of Lamentations 1," *BiblInt* 9 (2001): 393–408.

<sup>50</sup> Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo*, BIS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 129 (italics original).

<sup>51</sup> Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 130.

<sup>52</sup> Hannes Bezzel, "'Man of Constant Sorrow'—Rereading Jeremiah in Lamentations 3," in *Jeremiah (Dis)placed: New Directions in Writing/Reading Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Pete Diamond and Louis Stulman, LHBOOTS 529 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 263.

iel the prophet” (Δανιήλ προφήτου).<sup>53</sup> His book follows that of Ezekiel as the last of the great prophets,<sup>54</sup> and this would seem to be the intent of this canonical placement. This canonical tradition is evident in a *florilegium* of biblical passages from Qumran,<sup>55</sup> in the New Testament, in Josephus, in Melito and in Origen,<sup>56</sup> all of which refer to Daniel as a prophet. The inclusion of Daniel among the prophets is prompted by the visionary character of chapters 7–12, wherein Daniel receives visions depicting future events.<sup>57</sup> Following Ezekiel, which ends with the vision of the new temple (Ezekiel 40–48), the temple theme of the book of Daniel is highlighted, commencing as it does with the sacking of the temple.<sup>58</sup> As well, the penitential prayer of Daniel 9 results from the hero’s pondering of the prophecies of Jeremiah. Daniel 10–12 is full of exegetical reappropriations of prophetic texts,<sup>59</sup> a notable example being the reuse of Isaiah 40:2 (“her warfare [צבא] is ended”) in Daniel 10:1 (RSV “it was a great conflict [צבא]”), such that the book of Daniel sheds light on earlier parts of the prophetic corpus in which it is found in the Greek orders. The revelation to Daniel is probably called “a great conflict” because of the description of wars, earthly and heavenly, in chapters 10–12. It seems that earthly battles are a replica of the war waged among the (guardian?) angelic “princes” of different people groups in the transcendent spheres. The placement of Daniel among *other* prophetic books encourages the reader to look for and discern such thematic and terminological connections. If Daniel is in last position in the prophetic books (as it almost always is in Greek canons), it could be understood to provide a final summing up of the message of the prophets as chiefly embodying a kingdom of God theology, a theology that should move God’s people to honest confession and rededication to God.

---

<sup>53</sup> Milne and Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors*, plate 24; F. G. Kenyon, ed., *The Codex Alexandrinus (Royal MS. 1 D V–VIII) in Reduced Photographic Facsimile: Old Testament Part III Hosea–Judith* (British Museum; London: Longmans, 1936), plate 417.

<sup>54</sup> This is the order in Vaticanus and Alexandrinus (Sinaiticus is defective), namely: Ezekiel, Susanna–Daniel–Bel and the Dragon, all viewed as one book in Alexandrinus (the subscription *τελος Δανιήλ προφήτου* [the end of Daniel the prophet] only coming after Bel and the Dragon). P<sup>967</sup> is a Greek manuscript dated ca. AD 200 (the earliest witness to the Old Greek version) and has the order: Ezekiel, Daniel, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Esther.

<sup>55</sup> 4QFlor 2:3 (“[wh]ich is written in the book of Daniel the prophet”); see John M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4.1 (4Q158–4Q186)*, DJD 5 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 54, 70.

<sup>56</sup> Matt 24:15; Mk 13:14; Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.8; *Ant.* 10.11.7, 10.26.7–8, and 11.8.5); the order of the prophets (so designated) in Melito is: Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve in one book, Daniel, Ezekiel (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13–14); and Origen in his exposition of Psalm 1 includes the catalogue: Isaiah, Jeremiah–Lamentations–Letter, Daniel, Ezekiel (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25–26).

<sup>57</sup> See Jordan M. Scheetz, “Daniel’s Position in the Tanach, the LXX–Vulgate, and the Protestant Canon,” *OTE* 23 (2010): 178–93.

<sup>58</sup> Tim Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24–27,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 435.

<sup>59</sup> Michael A. Knibb, “‘You are Indeed Wiser than Daniel’: Reflections on the Character of the Book of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, ed. A. S. van der Woude, BETL 106 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 399–411, esp. 406–9.

## IV. THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Early references to the canon count the Twelve as one book,<sup>60</sup> and the order of the booklets in the Twelve in the Dead Sea Scrolls fragments consistently agrees with the Masoretic tradition.<sup>61</sup> The only anomaly is 4QXII<sup>a</sup> (4Q76), which, if the reconstruction by Russell Fuller is correct, diverges from the Masoretic order (Zechariah–Malachi–Jonah), but this fragmentary manuscript only provides uncertain support for the existence of an alternate Hebrew sequence.<sup>62</sup> The LXX order is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum etc. With regard to the premier position almost universally given to Hosea, the only known exception is Martyrdom of Isaiah 4:22,<sup>63</sup> where the order is: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, Nahum, Jonah, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi. Amos is here identified as Isaiah’s father (cf. MT Isa 1:1: “Amoz”), and the deviation in order is probably caused by this historical misidentification, with Amos understood as prophesying in the early years of Uzziah’s long reign.

The order within the Twelve may be intended to be roughly chronological,<sup>64</sup> though the dating of several books is disputed (e.g., Joel and Obadiah). Part of the explanation of their placement among or alongside the eighth-century prophets may be an editorial desire to achieve an alternation of prophets who ministered in Israel and Judah: Hosea (Israel), Joel (Judah), Amos (Israel), Obadiah (Judah), Jonah (Israel) and Micah (Judah).<sup>65</sup> According to Keil, this oscillating North/South sequence may continue a little further in the Book of the Twelve if Nahum were shown to be a Northerner and Habakkuk a Southerner. The gentilic adjective “the Elkoshite” (הַאֵלְקוֹשִׁי) attached to the name of Nahum presumably refers to his hometown of Elkosh (Nah 1:1), whose location is unknown, but is possibly a village in Galilee (= Capernaum, meaning “the city of Nahum”),<sup>66</sup> and the anti-Nineveh orientation of his prophecy is consistent with a concern about the threat that Assyria posed to Israel (though Nahum 1:15 [Heb 2:1] addresses Judah). The

<sup>60</sup> 4 Ezra 14:45 and Josephus *C. Ap.* 1.38–41 (because of the number of OT books they count); Sir 49:10 (ca. 200 BC); Babylonian Talmud (B. Bat. 14b).

<sup>61</sup> James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002), 138–39.

<sup>62</sup> Russell E. Fuller, “The Form and Formation of the Book of the Twelve: The Evidence from the Judean Desert,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, JSOTSup 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 91–92; Mika S. Pajunen and Hanne von Weissenberg, “The Book of Malachi, Manuscript 4Q76 (4QXII<sup>a</sup>), and the Formation of the ‘Book of the Twelve,’” *JBL* 134 (2015): 731–51.

<sup>63</sup> OTP 2.163.

<sup>64</sup> See the discussion provided by Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets, Volume One: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), xxvii–xxviii.

<sup>65</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. L. G. Perdue, B. Scott, and W. Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 34. The idea goes back to C. F. Keil, *The Minor Prophets*, trans. J. Martin, Commentary on the OT, vol. 10 (1869; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 3.

<sup>66</sup> It seems impossible, however, to be certain of its location, see Duane L. Christensen, *Nahum: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB24F (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 159–61.

prophet Habakkuk is occupied with the Chaldean threat to Judah (1:6) and so presumably is to be classified as a Southern prophet. This geographical schema encourages a hermeneutic that reads the prophetic threats and promises in the various books that make up the Twelve as applying to *both* kingdoms and, even more widely, to God's people generally, irrespective of time and location. In other words, this schematic arrangement encourages a theological synthesizing of the messages of individual prophets such that they are shown to have universal implications and applications.

Amos should be dated before Hosea, seeing that the superscription of Amos only mentions Uzziah (Amos 1:1), whereas Hosea 1:1 also lists the three subsequent Judean kings, but Hosea may stand at the head of the Twelve because of its size and because it is theologically formative.<sup>67</sup> It lays down the dynamics of the covenant relationship, such that Hosea 1–3 function to introduce the leading themes of the Twelve as a unit. The story of Hosea 1–3 is one of covenant infidelity and punishment, followed by restoration. As such it provides a summary of the message of the Twelve, not just Hosea. Similarities of theme (e.g., God's love for Israel) and overt Deuteronomistic influence in both Hosea and Malachi mean that these prophetic booklets provide a frame for the Twelve.<sup>68</sup> There is no chronological data supplied by Joel to explain its placement between Hosea and Amos; presumably it was considerations of *content* that dictated Joel's position, not esoteric knowledge of the book's actual date of composition. Joel picks up and substantially expands the vegetative imagery found at the end of Hosea (14:5–7). Joel also widens the indictment of sin beyond Israelites to include a denunciation of the nations (e.g., Joel 3:1–8), and without Joel, the detailed critique of foreign powers in Amos 1–2 would appear to be a radical shift.

Amos 9:11–15 eases the transition to Obadiah, with Obadiah expanding on the mention of Edom in Amos 9:12.<sup>69</sup> According to Terence Collins, “[t]he preoccupation with the status of Zion and its temple is a major feature of Joel...[and] serves to ensure that the same preoccupation is a key note for the whole of *The Twelve*,”<sup>70</sup> and the expression “the booth of David” (Amos 9:11), correctly understood, refers to the same thing: Jerusalem with the temple in its midst.<sup>71</sup> The Zion/temple theme is found in verses such as Joel 1:13–16; 2:1, 15–17, 23, 32; 3:16–21, and Zion is viewed as God's capital, the fructifying center of the land/earth (cf.

<sup>67</sup> Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, JSOTSup 97 (Sheffield: Almond, 1990), 74–76. In what follows I acknowledge my dependence on House.

<sup>68</sup> See J. D. W. Watts, “A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi,” in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SBLSymS 15 (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 209–17.

<sup>69</sup> Note the similarity of Obadiah 19a to Amos 9:12a, with the verb “to possess” (root ירש) used in both.

<sup>70</sup> *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 68 (additions and suspension points mine).

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., Sabine Nägele, *Laubhütte Davids und Wolkensohn: eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Studie zu Amos 9,11 in der jüdischen und christlichen Exegese*, AGJU 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 211–14; Jason Radine, *The Book of Amos in Emergent Judah*, FAT 2/45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 199–211.

Amos 9:13–15) and the refuge of God’s people. Consequently, according to Rolf Rendtorff, “those who are at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1) may have drawn the wrong conclusion from the picture of Zion as a place of safety in Joel.<sup>72</sup> If the context provided for Amos is deemed hermeneutically significant, the presentation in Joel shapes the interpretation of Amos in a certain direction. The thematic connections of Amos with the prophecies that immediately precede and follow substantially relieve the perceived problem of the authenticity of the final Amosean oracle (9:11–15),<sup>73</sup> for a sudden transition from judgment to salvation is just what the reader expects given the wider patterning within the Twelve, where other prophecies combine these themes. The problem is created by the wish to root the oracle in the inner life of the prophet, something the booklet of Amos itself does not encourage, given the minimal information provided about Amos himself, or by the desire to ground the prophecy in an historical context, where critical scholars think that a message of hope is not appropriate given the continued unfaithfulness of the contemporary generation. When it is recognised that the record of the proclamation of Amos is a booklet within a larger canonical structure, his message makes eminent sense, for, like most of the prophetic books, it is a mixture of threat and promise.

Not all scholars would read the Twelve as a literary corpus and interpret its component parts on this basis (e.g., Ehud Ben Zvi),<sup>74</sup> but I would argue that taking into consideration the order within the Twelve is hermeneutically productive and theologically important.<sup>75</sup> For example, an eschatological context is provided for the Jonah narrative by the preceding book of Obadiah (e.g., v. 15: “For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations”) and by the theme of the Day of the LORD throughout the Twelve. The Jonah section continues the theme of the relation of Israel and the nations that began in Joel 3:9–21 (Heb 4:9–21) and was elaborated in Amos 1–2 and Obadiah. In the LXX, the order of Obadiah followed by Jonah is the same as the MT, suggesting this sequence is of special significance in reading. The description of the response of fasting and repentance by Ninevites (Jonah 3) is reminiscent of Joel 1:13–14 and 2:15–16, which call for fasting and sackcloth by Israelites. The response of the sailors and Ninevites is to be read within the wider “nations” theme in the Twelve, in which the end-time conversion of the nations is a leading feature (e.g., Zeph 2:11; 3:9; Mal 1:11). This helps to explain why nothing is said in the booklet of Jonah about these Gentile converts having to

<sup>72</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, “How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity,” in *Reading and Hearing*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> The passage is both frequently viewed as secondary and frequently defended as original. For an example of each approach, see Robert B. Coote, *Amos among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), who attributes 9:7–15 to the post-exilic C editor; and Paul, *Amos*, 288–90.

<sup>74</sup> See Ehud Ben Zvi, “Twelve Prophetic Books or ‘The Twelve’: A Few Preliminary Considerations,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature*, 125–56; Ehud Ben Zvi, “Is the ‘Twelve Hypothesis Likely from an Ancient Reader’s Perspective?,” in *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve/the Twelve Prophetic Books*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and James D. Nogalski, Analecta Gorgiana 201 (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009), 47–96. Ben Zvi rejects the sequential reading of the Twelve (“Twelve Hypothesis,” 53).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 219.

become Jews to be acceptable to God (e.g., circumcision, food laws, sabbath), for they prefigure the treatment of the nations in the end time. The canonical placement of Jonah by ancient scribal readers is a prompt for the narrative to be interpreted in this setting.<sup>76</sup> Alan Cooper goes as far as to say that Jonah was “never intended to be read apart from that canonical context. According to this way of looking at it, an intertextual reading of the book is, therefore, both valid and necessary.”<sup>77</sup> The point I am making is that the message of Jonah will continue to baffle interpreters until they are willing to consider its canonical context.<sup>78</sup> Jonah stands between Obadiah and Micah, and paratextual considerations like this should shape the reader’s understanding of the text, not a hypothetical reconstruction of its situation and purpose (e.g., combating the restrictiveness of the Ezra-Nehemiah reforms).<sup>79</sup>

Micah’s place after Jonah is appropriate in that it explains how sinful Israel was later threatened by Assyria, which itself had received a reprieve from judgment because it repented under the preaching of Jonah.<sup>80</sup> Micah anticipates Assyria’s subjugation by Judean shepherds (Mic 5:5–6), and in line with this, the prophecy of Nahum portrays the punishment of Nineveh (Nah 3:18–19).<sup>81</sup> The theme of God’s willingness to forgive the Ninevites in Jonah (Jon 4:2) is picked by and applied to Israel in Micah 7:18–19, but then, the theme is modified in Nahum 1:2–3. In each case, these verses allude to the gracious character of God in the creedal description in Exodus 34:6–7, though Nahum shows that there is a limit to God’s willingness to forgive (“The LORD is slow to anger”), and so recalcitrant Nineveh will be judged.<sup>82</sup> In the LXX, Nahum directly follows Jonah,<sup>83</sup> and as noted by Casey Croy, “Nahum 1:2–3 alludes to the wrathful elements of God’s character in Exodus 34:6–7 in order to ground Nineveh’s judgment in God’s righteous character.”<sup>84</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Gregory Goswell, “Jonah among the Twelve Prophets,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 283–99.

<sup>77</sup> Alan Cooper, “In Praise of Divine Caprice: The Significance of the Book of Jonah,” in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image, and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, ed. Philip R. Davies and David J. A. Clines, JSOTSup 144 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 159. Cooper has in mind its setting within the Hosea–Nahum sequence, which he views as concerned with the Assyrian crisis.

<sup>78</sup> A point also made by John F. A. Sawyer, “A Change of Emphasis in the Study of the Prophets,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd*, ed. Richard Coggins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 242; cf. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, 146–149, 209–212.

<sup>79</sup> See the rebuttal of the usual critical theory by R. E. Clements, “The Purpose of the Book of Jonah,” in *Congress Volume: Edinburgh 1974*, ed. J. A. Emerton et al., VTSup 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 16–28.

<sup>80</sup> Elmer Dyck, “Jonah among the Prophets: A Study in Canonical Context,” *JETS* 33 (1990): 72.

<sup>81</sup> Burkard M. Zapf, “The Perspective on the Nations in the Book of Micah as a ‘Synchronization’ of the Nations’ Role in Joel, Jonah, and Nahum? Reflections on a Context-Orientated Exegesis in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Scharf, BZAW 325 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 292–312.

<sup>82</sup> See Jakob Wöhrle, “A Prophetic Reflection on Divine Forgiveness: The Integration of the Book of Jonah into the Book of the Twelve,” *JHS* 9 (2009): 14.

<sup>83</sup> For an examination of the two sequences involving the prophecy of Nahum: a Micah–Nahum compilation (MT) and a Jonah–Nahum compilation (LXX), see Casey Kenneth Croy, “Tracing the Old Testament Canon through Time: The Necessity of a Diachronic Approach to Compilational Criticism,” Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019, 96–116.

<sup>84</sup> Croy, “Tracing the Old Testament Canon through Time,” 112–13.

This alternate compilational sequence also makes sense, the assumption being that Nineveh's repentance was only temporary, as Jonah suspected (hoped?) it would be.<sup>85</sup> In Habakkuk, "the Chaldeans" are only mentioned by name once as those who pose a threat to Judah (Hab 1:6).<sup>86</sup> This fact and the general nature of the prayer of the prophet in chapter 3 do not encourage readers to try to reconstruct an overly precise historical context. This gives permission for the prophecy to be read in its canonical setting, and when this is done, the fate of Assyria in Nahum can be understood to anticipate the similar penalty to fall upon the Chaldean oppressor (Hab 2:8). The breadth of the devastation pictured in Zephaniah (e.g., 1:2–3) makes it a fitting climax for the first nine prophecies of the Twelve that focus upon judgment, but it also introduces the restoration focus of Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi, with Zephaniah 3:9–20 containing God's promise to bring his people back from exile and restore the fortunes of Zion.<sup>87</sup>

The placement of Haggai and Zechariah side-by-side is noncontroversial, given the pairing of the prophets elsewhere in the OT (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), but it also assists interpretation. For example, it is twice stated in Zechariah 6:12–13 that it is "the Branch" who will build the temple. This was a responsibility assigned to Zerubbabel in 4:6–10, and so many scholars view the parallel as proving that Zerubbabel is the Branch,<sup>88</sup> but Zerubbabel cannot be the Branch, for a *future* figure is clearly in mind (6:12b–13; cf. 3:8).<sup>89</sup> On that basis, Zechariah 6 must be speaking of the building of a future (and more glorious?) temple in the consummated kingdom of God, which is just what had been predicted by Haggai (2:6–9), and the intertext supports this way of resolving the exegetical question in Zechariah.

The prophecy of Malachi is to be read as an integral part of a larger canonical structure (the Twelve), and Malachi comes straight after Zechariah 14, in which the nations recognise God as king. The connections between Malachi and the preceding prophetic booklets of the Twelve (especially Haggai and Zechariah) have been explored.<sup>90</sup> The links include the "messenger" (מַלְאָךְ) theme, the similar oracle titles in Zechariah 9:1, 12:1 and Malachi 1:1, and the question-answer schema in Haggai 2:11–14, in Zechariah's night visions, and throughout Malachi.<sup>91</sup> The

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Charles Conroy, "Jonah and Nahum in the Book of the Twelve: Who Has the Last Word?," *PIBA* 32 (2009): 1–23.

<sup>86</sup> A point made by Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 158.

<sup>87</sup> See James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 201–15.

<sup>88</sup> E.g., Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, FOTL 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 405.

<sup>89</sup> See, e.g., Anthony R. Petterson, "A New Form-Critical Approach to Zechariah's Crowning of the High Priest Joshua and the Identity of 'Shoot' (Zechariah 6:9–15)," in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, SBLANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 285–304.

<sup>90</sup> E.g., Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 240–45. They do not, however, make mention of the theme of God's endtime rule over the nations.

<sup>91</sup> E.g., Mark J. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," *JSOT* 32 (2007): 113–31; Ronald W. Pierce, "Literary Connectors and a Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus," *JETS* 27 (1984): 277–89;



prophecy of Haggai ends with the anticipation of God's rule over the nations of the world (2:20–23). The call to “return” to YHWH and the contingent promise that YHWH will “return” to Jerusalem found in Zechariah 1:3 is picked up in Malachi 3:7.<sup>92</sup> In Zechariah 14:16–19, the nations share in the cultic worship of God in a restored Jerusalem. Though there is no mention of a pilgrimage of the nations to Zion in Malachi, international recognition of YHWH's rule is an important theme in Malachi's picture of the future, and several texts in Malachi (1:5, 11, 14; 3:12) describe that future prospect and should be translated using future tense (e.g., 1:11: “in every place incense *will be offered* to my name”).<sup>93</sup> This has been anticipated in Zephaniah 2:11b (“and to him [YHWH] shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations”). Malachi cites future international cultic recognition of YHWH for the purpose of highlighting the current Judean cultic failure (1:6–10, 12–14a). In other words, Malachi, like the preceding prophets, looks forward to the dawning of the consummated kingdom of God.

In the codices Vaticanus (B) and Alexandrinus (A) and in the Greek orders generally, the Minor Prophets *precede* the Major Prophets, perhaps because the ministries of Hosea and Amos must have preceded in time that of Isaiah. The accustomed English ordering of these two prophetic blocks is only found in Sinaiticus (Ⲛ). As noted already, there is a difference in the sequence within the Twelve in the LXX compared to the MT (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum...),<sup>94</sup> though the last six books are in identical order in both forms. Marvin Sweeney overplays the theological implications of the differences between the two sequences (e.g., *pace* Sweeney, a concern for Jerusalem and the nations does not appear for the first time in the LXX in the fourth-placed booklet of Joel).<sup>95</sup> The bringing together of Hosea, Amos, and Micah places these three larger books at the head of the book of the Twelve in the LXX, with Micah 1:1 indicating a dating later than either Hosea or Amos, and the smaller books follow in their train, so that size rather than an alternate theology appears to be a contributing factor to the LXX arrangement.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Those responsible for supplying the OT prophetic books with titles and placing the books in a certain order in ancient canons lists and Bibles did so with an eye to the needs of future readers. These paratextual elements provide an interpretive

Ronald W. Pierce, “A Thematic Development of the Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 401–11.

<sup>92</sup> Stulman and Kim, *You Are My People*, 243.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory Goswell, “The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 625–38.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8HevXIIgr) (The Seiyal Collection J)*, DJD 8 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990). This scroll supports the Masoretic order (the scroll preserving parts of columns containing Jonah–Zechariah). In the 34-page codex Washington-Freer 5 (LDAB 3124) the order is Hosea, Amos, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum. Found at <https://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/text.php?quick=3124>.

<sup>95</sup> See the comparison and analysis by Marvin A. Sweeney, “Sequence and Interpretation in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Reading and Hearing*, 49–64.

frame around prophetic texts and suggest ways of making sense of them. Though the assigned titles put the focus on the prophetic mouthpiece of the oracles (e.g., Isaiah, Amos), they are not reflective of a biographical interest in the person of the prophet, but rather aim to safeguard the distinct message of the books by linking them to different prophetic personae. On the other hand, the gathering of the books in the prophetic corpora of the Hebrew and Greek canons (e.g., Latter Prophets), the pairing of books (e.g., Isaiah and the Twelve in B. Bat. 14b) and the placing of books side-by-side (e.g., Jeremiah and Lamentations in Greek Bibles) are designed to indicate to later interpreters the usefulness of reading the individual prophetic books in concert with adjacent books. The juxtapositioning of the prophetic books mandates that readers give consideration to how books may relate with each other. It provides evidence of theological thinking by those who imposed order on the prophetic books or at the very least is an essential precursor to such thinking.