THE THEMATIC UNITY OF THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

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CONTENTS

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The reason for writing this book, a modified version of my doctoral thesis, arose from a need to teach a thirteen-week Sunday school lesson on the Minor Prophets. At the time, I had one more week than I did prophets, and I did not know how I should introduce the topic. My professor, Dr Gary Hall, suggested I look at a newly released edited volume entitled *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, particularly Marvin Sweeney's brief article on the canonical position of the various writings of the 'Book of the Twelve'. That short article helped shape the next few years of my life as I pursued in my PhD dissertation the links between these various prophets, ultimately landing on the unifying nature of the theme of return. Though I have only met him briefly, I am forever grateful for the work Dr Sweeney has done.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AOT	Abingdon Old Testament
BDB	Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHHB	Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible
BHS	*Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BO	Berit Olam
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BST	Bible Speaks Today
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BTS	Biblisch-theologische Studien
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
CRBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DL	Didsbury Lectures
DSB	Daily Study Bible
EBC	Everyman's Bible Commentary
EC	Epworth Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
HBL	*Horizons in Biblical Literature*
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HCSB	*Holman Christian Standard Bible*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*

IBC	Interpretation Bible Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*Journal of the Hebrew Scriptures*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NCV	New Century Version
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	Willem A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997)
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
REB	Revised English Bible
RNBC	Readings: A New Bible Commentary
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBET	*Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SCJ	*Stone-Campbell Journal*
SEA	*Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
Sem	*Semeia*
Scr	*Scriptura*
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SPOT	Studies on the Personalities of the Old Testament
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation

TBS	The Biblical Seminar
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
VF	*Verkündingung und Forschung*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum* Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WW	*Word and World*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps because of their small size, perceived eclectic nature, or even the name 'Minor Prophets',[1] the Book of the Twelve has never been accorded the same scholarly attention that has been lavished on other more popular Old Testament prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, or even Daniel. This situation changed in 1994 when the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) developed the *Seminar on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*. The focus of the seminar, which reflected a growing trend in the scholarly approach to the Twelve, was to discuss the nature of the Book. This included its historical development—how it came into existence, various literary connections, author dependency, and other interpretation issues that sought to answer the question, 'How is the Book of the Twelve a book?' The seminar proved popular and resulted in the publication of three symposium works[2] and

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1.   The Book of the Twelve consists of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi following the MT order. These writings are also referred to as the Minor Prophets, a name first given to them by Augustine in reference to their size. 'The prophecy of Isaiah is not in the book of the twelve prophets, who are called the minor from the brevity of their writings, as compared with those who are called the greater prophets because they published larger volumes. Isaiah belongs to the latter, yet I connect him with the two above named, because he prophesied at the same time' (Augustine, *The City of God* 18.29; http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.XVIII.29.html [14 October 2008]). Augustine later identifies Hosea as the 'first of twelve' (*City of God* 18.27; http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.XVIII.27.html [14 October 2008]). For the rest of the paper I will refer to the Minor Prophets as the Twelve or the Book of the Twelve. I will refer to the individual prophetic books that make up the Twelve, i.e. Hosea and Joel, as writings or books.

2.   James W. Watts and Paul R. House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts* (JSOTSup, 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBLSS, 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); and Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart (eds.), *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW, 325; New York: W. de Gruyter, 2003). Aaron Schart also keeps an online bibliography of works on the Twelve: *Bibliography on the Book of the Twelve Prophets*, http://www.uni-due.de/Ev-Theologie/twelve/schanews.htm (20 October 2009).

numerous articles, but more importantly a shift in the scholarly approach to the Twelve.

Prior to the Seminar, the majority of academic publications focused on the individual writings that made up the Twelve. Commentaries and other works discussed those writings in isolation, apart from their context within the collected Twelve. Since the seminar, however, scholarship has begun to take seriously the historical idea that these twelve writings, in some way, were meant to be understood as a unified whole. While this approach has opened the Twelve to new scholarship, it remains at its heart somewhat schizophrenic: how can twelve independent writings also be a unity? What is at stake in such a question is how one reads, understands, interprets, and applies a major section of the Old Testament, in fact the concluding section in the English Bible. Even entertaining the idea of a 'Book of the Twelve' changes the way readers approach this section of Scripture. To speak of a Book of the Twelve implies a shift in the context of the collection: gone are the independent writings, and in its place is a unified book. How these writings function together within the context of this larger collection has been the topic of much discussion.

The present work will argue that there are strong historical and literary reasons to consider the Twelve a book. It is equally important, however, that any interpretive approach that seeks to examine the Twelve in this way must take seriously both the collective and individual nature of the writings. Because of this, any method that destroys the individual character of these writings should be abandoned. For this reason I propose that themes, particularly the Hebrew word שׁוּב which conveys the call to return in the phrase 'Return to me and I will return to you' (Zech. 1.6; Mal. 3.7; cf. Hos. 14.1-4 [ET 14.2-5]; Joel 2.12-14) are keys which unlock the unity of the Book while at the same time preserving its individual nature. By focusing on the position and distribution of שׁוּב those seeking to read the Twelve as a book will find a message that through force and repetition brings the reader back to this central concern and provides a unifying message: Yhwh struggles to turn towards his people as his people struggle to turn towards him. This chapter will examine the historical reasons for reading the Twelve as a unity, as well as provide a history of research for the Book, before concluding with an outline of my argument for the importance of שׁוּב.

1. *Transmission History of the Twelve*

The textual transmission history of the Twelve, conveyed from finds in Qumran to the works of the early church fathers and Jewish commentators, highlights the divided nature of the Twelve, emphasizing its individuality while at the same time strongly supporting the notion that the Twelve is a

unified collection. As will be shown, the understanding of the Twelve as a unity is an ancient, yet undefined approach to the Book that nonetheless provides a historical foundation for a unified approach.

Though sometimes varying the order of the individual writings, the manuscript finds from Qumran give witness to the fact that the writings of Hosea–Malachi have been transmitted on one scroll from very early in the transmission process despite the lack of an overall introductory heading (cf. Isa. 1.1; Amos 1.1; Mic. 1.1).[3] The oldest finds from Qumran, 4QXII[a-b], contain sections of the writings Malachi–Jonah (4QXII[a] in that order) and Zephaniah–Haggai (4QXII[b]), and date from c. 150 BCE.[4] While all in partial form, no less than six other first-century BCE manuscripts, in both Greek and Hebrew, attest to the collection of these writings onto a single scroll.[5]

Besides textual evidence, the external witnesses also support the Twelve as one book. The oldest external citation is from the apocryphal work Sirach written c. 200–150 BCE, which states, 'May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the grave! For they put a new heart into Jacob, and by their confident hope delivered the people' (Sir. 49.10 REB).

Moving further in history, Josephus, writing in the late first century CE, counts the Twelve as one book in a listing of the Old Testament canon.[6] 4

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3.   David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 169-70.

4.   Russell Fuller, 'The Form and Formation of the Book of the Twelve: The Evidence from the Judean Desert', in Watts and House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 86-103 (87, 98-99). The date of these manuscripts places them within c. 50 years of Ben Sirach, the oldest external reference to the Twelve. See Fuller, 'Form and Formation', p. 91. Fuller dates Sir. 49.10 to c. 190 BCE.

5.   Fuller, 'Form and Formation', pp. 98-99. The Hebrew Scrolls are 4QXIIc (c. 75 BCE, Hos.; Joel; Amos; Zeph.; Mal.); 4QXIIe (c. 75–50 BCE, Hag.; Zech.); 4QXIIf (c. 50 BCE, Jonah); 4QXIIg (c. 50–25 BCE, Hos.; Amos; Obad.; Jonah; Mic.; Nah.; Zeph.; Zech.). The oldest Greek scroll is 8HevXIIgr (c. 50 BCE, Jonah; Mic.; Nah.; Hab.; Zeph.; Zech.) which Fuller identifies as a recension (R), which is 'a conscious revision of the LXX to agree with a Hebrew text which was not quite identical with the consonantal text of MT, but differed from it in only small ways' (Fuller, 'Form and Formation', p. 90). For more on how the writings fit on the scrolls as well as how they could have been read by the Qumran community see George J. Brooke, 'The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. André Lemaire; VTSup, 109; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), pp. 19-43. While discussing the reading strategies of the Qumran community, Brooke notes, 'The combination of passages indicates that the significant intertexts for several passages from any one of the Twelve were to be found in other books of the Twelve. This early integrated reading of the twelve by these sectarians in the second century BCE need to be used as a guide by modern scholars as they seek unifying principles behind the various constituent parts of the Twelve' (p. 39).

6.   'For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of

Ezra, from about the same time as Josephus, does likewise, counting the Twelve as one of the books copied by Ezra. 'At the end of the time the Most High said to me: "Make public the twenty-four books you wrote first; they are to be read by everyone, whether worthy or not"' (2 Esd. 14.45 REB).[7]

The early church fathers also give witness to a unified Twelve. Mileto, Bishop of Sardis (c. 160 CE) calls the Minor Prophets, Τῶν δώδεκα ἐν μονοβίβλῳ, 'the twelve in one book'.[8] Likewise, after describing some of the individual works of the Twelve, Jerome says, 'And because it is too long to speak of all these things now, I would only you were warned this…the book of the Twelve Prophets to be one'.[9]

The ancient Jewish commentary, the Babylonian Talmud, also provides support for the Twelve. Like the other writers mentioned so far, the Talmud counts the Twelve as one in the listing of canonical books.[10] Of more interest is the Talmudic directive given to scribes that when copying the writings of the Twelve, three lines should be placed between the writings instead of the standard four.[11] Additionally, the Masoretes provide a verse tally for both the

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them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death' (Flavius Josephus, 'Against Apion', in *The Complete Works of Josephus* [trans. William Whiston, A.M.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987], 1.8. Libronix Digital Library).

7.   *4 Ezra* (2 Esdras) also lists the writings of the individual prophets following the LXX order. 'The leaders I shall give them are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Hosea and Amos, Micah and Joel, Obadiah and Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah, and Malachi, who is also called the Lord's messenger' (2 Esd. 1.39-40 REB). The position of the Twelve in the Hebrew canon immediately after the three Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) may well be significant. 'The pattern of three plus twelve recalls the three patriarchs and the twelve sons of Jacob—one of the basic paradigms of Israelite historiography, repeated again among the apostles of Jesus and among the twelve 'tribes' at Qumran with their council of twelve laymen and three priests' (Herbert Marks, 'The Twelve', in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* [ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987], pp. 208-209). Marks continues, 'By accommodating the prophetic corpus to such a type, the editors were in effect assimilating prophecy to a canonical rule, solidly rooted in communal tradition… From this perspective, 'The Book of the Twelve' may well be an anti-prophetic document, restricting prophecy to a limited number of sources, whose authority depends on established precedent' (p. 209). The reading of *4 Ezra* supports this idea.

8.   Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (New York: KTAV, 1968), p. 203.

9.   Http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_preface_prophets.htm (trans. Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, CA, 2006 [12 November 2008]).

10.   See *b. B. Bat.* 14b 'Our Rabbis taught: The order of the Prophets is, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets' (http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_14.html#PARTb [14 November 2008]).

11.   *B. B. Bat.* 13b http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_13.html (14 November 2008). 'Between each book of the Torah there should be left a space of

individual writings as well as the Twelve as a whole. Moreover, instead of marking the centre verse in each prophet's writing as they do with Isaiah (33.21) and Jeremiah (28.11), the Masoretes indicate Mic. 3.12 as the centre of the entire Twelve.

   While transmission history strongly supports a unified Twelve, there are also numerous references to the individual writings or prophets, often listing the writings in various orders (cf. MT, LXX, and *The Martyrdom of Isaiah* 4.22), and even contains elaborate stories from the prophets' lives. The most colourful of these comes from Bel and the Dragon, where an angel carries Habakkuk by his hair from Jerusalem to Babylon to deliver food to Daniel who has, once again, been thrown into the lions' den (vv. 33-39). As mentioned above, the Masoretes do include verse numbers for the individual writings, and the Babylonian Talmud desires to place Hosea before Isaiah in the larger prophetic block, concluding that the only reason Hosea was transmitted with the Twelve was to prevent it from being lost to history.

> Hosea came first, as it is written, God spake first to Hosea. But did God speak first to Hosea? Were there not many prophets between Moses and Hosea? R. Johanan, however, has explained that [what It means is that] he was the first of the four prophets who prophesied at that period, namely, Hosea, Isaiah, Amos and Micah. Should not then Hosea come first?—Since his prophecy is written along with those of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi came at the end of the prophets, he is reckoned with them. But why should he not be written separately and placed first?—Since his book is so small, it might be lost [if copied separately].[12]

What this transmission history shows is that there is a strong belief among the ancients that the Twelve is a book. However, with the inclusion of statements that emphasize the individuality of the prophets, often in the same documents as those that support its unity, the meaning behind the ancients' idea of a Book of the Twelve is at best unclear, if not conflicted. As Brooke concludes, 'It seems as if the Twelve were appreciated as a group for the kinds of theological and historical perspectives which they contained, but that their group identity never suppressed the specific character and value of the individual books of the Twelve, some of which took pride of place'.[13] There-fore, despite this inherent disconnect, the ancients' interpretive practices and concerns form an important foundation for arguments for a unified Twelve.

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four lines, and so between one Prophet and the next. In the twelve Minor Prophets, however, the space should only be three lines. If, however, the scribe finishes one book at the bottom [of a column], he should commence the next at the top [of the next]'. A footnote (18) which follows the second sentence, 'Since all these only form one book', has been added by the Talmud scholars.

   12.   *B. B. Bat.* 14b http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_14.html (16 November 2008).
   13.   Brooke, 'The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls', p. 36.

2. *Historical Analysis and the Growth of the Twelve*

With a few exceptions, scholars made little effort to understand the unity of the Twelve until the 1920s–30s, and following that, no major publications were made again until the late 1970s.[14] Scant though they were, the works that appeared early on provided the basis for the current research on the Twelve. Beginning with Budde's work in 1922[15] but reaching prominence with Wolfe 1935,[16] scholars began to argue that the oneness of the Twelve was located in the history of the Book's growth. Bits and pieces of Hosea, Amos, Joel, and the rest may have existed, but it was later editors who took all of these pieces, edited them, moved them around, and placed them together. Numerous additions and subtractions took place over time until the collection grew to its current state—one book contained on one scroll. Though the various arguments for the growth of the Twelve are complicated, a brief review of a few scholarly contributions is necessary in order to continue.

Wolfe's seminal work is, without question, one of the more important approaches to the Twelve. Wolfe was able to identify no less than thirteen different editorial layers in the Twelve: (1) The Judaistic Editor of Hosea, (2) The Anti-High Place Editor, (3) The Late Exilic Editor, (4) The Anti-Neighbor Editor, (5) The Messianist, (6) The Nationalistic School of Editors, (7) The Day of Jahwe Editor, (8) The Eschatologist, (9) The Doxologist, (10) The Anti-Idol Polemist, (11) The Psalm Editor, (12) The Early Scribes; their Pentateuchal Redaction, and Editing of the Book of the Twelve, and (13) Later Scribal Schools. These editors were responsible for inserting their particular concerns into the Twelve and with each inclusion, the Book grew. All these various editorial layers led Wolfe to label his approach the 'strata hypothesis'.[17] In fact, Wolfe's editorial process was so complex that he believed the early Twelve may have included an early form of Isaiah, but 'in

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14.   Of course, work on the Twelve continued during this time, but it did not have the same impact on future research. See Alfred Jepsen, 'Kleine Beitraege zum Zwölf-prophetenbuch', *ZAW* 56 (1938), pp. 85-100; Alfred Jepsen, 'Kleine Beitraege zum Zwölfprophetenbuch II', *ZAW* 57 (1939), pp. 242-55; Franz Hesse, *Zwölfprophetenbuch* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1965, 1969–1970); Wilfried Werbeck, *Zwölfprophetenbuch, zur Auslegungsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965, 1970).

15.   Karl Budde, 'Eine folgenschwere Redaction des Zwolfpröphetenbuchs', *ZAW* 39 (1922), pp. 218-29. Two earlier works were H. Ewald, *Die Propheten des alten Bundes*, I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1867), pp. 73-81; and C. Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung das alte Testament* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1912), pp. 669-72.

16.   Roland Emerson Wolfe, 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve', *ZAW* 53 (1935), pp. 90-129. This article is a summary of his dissertation 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve' (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1933).

17.   Wolfe, 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve', p. 91.

the course of post-exilic days, the prophecy of Isaiah was removed in order to become the nucleus of another great miscellaneous collection'.[18] Though this approach may seem unnecessarily complicated, it is nonetheless helpful. Where Wolfe, and to a lesser extent Budde,[19] contribute to the study of the Twelve is that they are essentially the first to argue that purposeful stages of development took place in the Twelve. In Wolfe's case, he argues that the Twelve grew from a book of two (Amos and Hosea), to a book of six (with Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Nahum), then a book of nine (with Joel, Jonah, and Obadiah), and lastly, a book of the Twelve (with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). Wolfe even identifies historical periods for these additions: Amos and Hosea were combined shortly before the exile. Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were positioned, according to chronology, at the end of the exile. Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah were added around 300 BCE, and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi at c. 225 BCE. Additions were also made with the insertion of these three writings, and further editorial activity lasted until the Book came into completion sometime between 200–175 BCE.[20] Though later scholars disagree with him, particularly in regard to his number of redactions, Wolfe's work is one of the first to see the Twelve, not as a random collection of unrelated writings, but a purposefully organized book whose similar ideas spread over time and gave it a unified message. It is this idea, the purposeful editing, arrangement, and growth of the Book that ultimately provides a basis for a discussion of its unity as well as a foundation for future arguments.

Other scholars have taken Wolfe's work and modified it. Schneider argues that the Twelve developed around a Hosea–Amos–Micah corpus, an order preserved in the LXX, which was originally created by Hezekiah's men in order to support Hezekiah's religious reforms.[21] This proto-Twelve continued to grow as the writings of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were collected by Josiah, but were added later to the Twelve, and thus circulated independently for a time.

One of Schneider's more important departures from established scholarship is his belief that Joel, the next writing to be incorporated, was a pre-exilic composition. He argues that Joel was a contemporary with Habakkuk, and because of its strong parallels with Hosea and Amos, was composed in

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18.   Wolfe, 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve', p. 124.

19.   Budde's arguments focus on the systematic deletion of prophetic narrative from the Twelve.

20.   Wolfe, 'The Editing of the Book of the Twelve', pp. 124-25.

21.   Dale Allan Schneider, *The Unity of the Book of the Twelve* (Yale dissertations, May 1979), p. 236. 'Although Hezekiah's son reversed that policy, the prophecies became a permanent part of the national culture, so that a century later Micah's influence on Hezekiah's reform was widely known (Jer. 26:17-19)'.

the late seventh century specifically for its current position between the two writings.[22] Several decades later, Obadiah and Jonah were added at the same time that the Nahum–Habakkuk–Zephaniah corpus was incorporated into the Twelve. This means that 'the first nine of the XII were collected in their present order by about the middle of the Exile'.[23] Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 were composed after the return from exile and also circulated independently for a time. Deutero-Zechariah was added to this small corpus sometime in the early fifth century when it became apparent that the community was not as righteous as Zechariah had hoped, and Malachi soon followed.[24] Schneider argues that the Twelve were placed in their final form by Nehemiah sometime during the closing years of the fifth century.

Schneider, like Wolfe, notes the similarities between the writings but goes further by suggesting that position highlights these similarities. This is demonstrated by the creation and position of Joel, as well as Jonah. Schneider argues that Jonah's location within the Twelve was determined by its topic (Assyrian Nineveh). As a result, Jonah, which deals with Nineveh's salvation, begins an 'Anti-Assyrian' section that includes Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. 'Because Jonah dealt with Nineveh and her reprieve, the editors set Jonah at the beginning of those books which dealt with Assyria, that is before Micah. At the same time they added after Micah the collection of three books, Nah–Hab–Zeph, which had arisen at the decline and fall of Assyria.'[25] Therefore, Jonah was purposefully positioned prior to Micah to highlight these similarities.

Like Schneider and Wolfe, Nogalski is also concerned with recurring ideas and writing position in the Book.[26] His arguments focus primarily on the redactional history of the Twelve and what he has identified as catchwords—linking words which close one writing and begin another. Nogalski asserts that during the growth of the Book, editors inserted these catchwords in an effort to bring purposeful unity to the Twelve. This is best illustrated by the phrase 'YHWH roars from Zion, and from Jerusalem he utters his voice' found in Joel (4.16 [ET 3.16]) and Amos (1.2).[27] Nogalski's arguments share

22. Schneider, *The Unity*, pp. 237-38.
23. Schneider, *The Unity*, p. 238.
24. Schneider, *The Unity*, p. 239.
25. Schneider, *The Unity*, p. 238.
26. James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW, 217; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1993); Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW, 218; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1993).
27. ויהוה מציון ישאג ומירושלם יתן קולו Translation is Nogalski's. The two passages are identical except Amos's passage does not contain the initial vav. For more see James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, pp. 24-25. It should be noted that this phrase works as a catchword in the MT order only, as the writings are not next to each other in the LXX. Nogalski's catchwords are not universally accepted. For an in-depth critique of a unified

some similarities with Schneider's understanding of the Twelve's growth, particularly with the collections of Hosea–Amos–Micah, Haggai–Zechariah, and the important function of Joel. Nogalski finds such strong parallels between Joel and the other parts of the Twelve that he argues for a 'Joel-redaction layer' in which two sections of the proto-Twelve, the Deuteronom-ist corpus (Hosea–Amos–Micah–Zephaniah) and the Haggai–Zechariah (1–8) corpus, both of which circulated independently, were joined together and expanded in light of the thoughts and ideas conveyed in Joel. 'The majority of the editorial work related to the production of the Book of Twelve occurs in this 'Joel-related layer'.'[28] Nogalski, like Schneider, believes that Joel never existed apart from its current position in the Twelve.[29] Instead it was composed to serve as what Nogalski has called the 'literary anchor' of the Twelve, uniting and defining various images in the Book.[30]

  For Nogalski, the growth of the Twelve revolves around the Joel-layer. The Deuteronomic corpus 'presumes the exile, implying Hosea, Amos, Micah and Zephaniah were combined on a single corpus following 587 to explain Jerusalem's destruction'.[31] The Haggai–Zechariah corpus, of course, reflects the period around the construction of the second temple (c. 520–515 BCE), and was composed after the events. The main step, the Joel-redaction layer, combined the two corpora and incorporated the writings of Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi into the collection sometime between c. 400–350 BCE. This step brought the total writings to eleven, leaving only Jonah and Deutero-Zechariah unincorporated. These last two were added sometime after 332.[32]

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approach to the Twelve as well as Nogalski's catchwords, see Ehud Ben Zvi, 'Twelve Prophetic Books or "The Twelve": A Few Preliminary Considerations', in Watts and House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 125-56. Ben Zvi examines Nogalski's catchwords using Obadiah and finds them lacking (pp. 139-48).

  28. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 275.

  29. 'This investigation suggests a strong probability that two writings, Joel and Obadiah, were first compiled, by adapting existing material, as part of the literary pro-duction of the Book of the Twelve'. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 276.

  30. James D. Nogalski, 'Joel as "Literary Anchor" for the Book of the Twelve', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 91-109.

  31. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 279.

  32. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 280. Schart also agrees with a Deuterono-mistic Corpus, but does not see a similar Joel related layer. He argues that Hosea and Amos came first, followed by the Deuteronomistic Corpus. Nahum and Habakkuk were added next, followed by Haggai and Zech. 1–8. Only after this was Joel incorporated along with Obadiah and Zech. 9–14. Jonah and Malachi concluded the Twelve. See Aaron Schart, 'Redactional Models: Comparisons, Contrasts, Agreements, Disagreements', http://www.uni-duisburg-essen.de/Ev-Theologie/courses/schart/lit-schart-sbl1998.htm (25 November 2008). Schart modified this web posted article from Schart, 'Zur Redaktions-geschichte des Zwolfprophetenbuchs', *VF* 43 (1998), pp. 893-908. See also Schart, *Die*

Barry Alan Jones is also concerned with the connections between the writings, but focuses his efforts on the LXX version of the Twelve rather than the more popular MT.[33] Much of his argument is based on the Qumran manuscript 4QXIIᵃ, which contains the order Malachi–Jonah;[34] an order that Jones believes reflects the original sequence of the Twelve, and implies that Jonah was the last writing to enter the Book. From this, Jones contends that editorial intention is apparent by the position of Jonah in each collection (LXX, MT), and going further, Jones argues that the MT is dependent on the LXX, rather than the reverse, which had been previously argued.[35]

Jones, like Nogalski, is concerned about the position of the writings, and like Nogalski, looks to catchwords to help establish that order. Jones argues that there is a weakness with the catchwords surrounding Joel and Obadiah in the MT, the last of which is highlighted by Ben Zvi,[36] that can be solved by the LXX sequence. He illustrates this by focusing on Amos 9.12 and its MT connection to Obadiah. Jones notes that the catchword, the proper name 'Edom' (אדום) that exists between the MT Amos–Obadiah, is absent in the LXX, replaced instead by 'of men' (τῶν ἀνθρώπων, reading אדם).[37] Jones concludes that the original catchword, Edom, is supplied by the LXX order of

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Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs. Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriften-übergreifender Redaktionsprozesse (BZAW, 260; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1998), pp. 304-306.

33.   Barry Alan Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon* (SBLDS, 149; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

34.   Though the manuscript is very fragmented, most scholars now accept that Malachi–Jonah was the original order of the scroll. See http://www.uni-duisburg-essen.de/Ev-Theologie/twelve/main.htm (24 November 2008) which contains links to summaries of discussions on the position of Jonah in the works of O.H. Steck, 'Zur Abfolge Maleachi-Jona in 4Q76 (4QXIIᵃ)', *ZAW* 108 (1996), pp. 249-53; and Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*. This site also provides links to works by Fuller and Jones. This position, of course, is not universally accepted. While speaking of 4QXIIᵃ, Brooke notes, 'When provisionally reconstructed in light of these damage patterns, its seems very far from certain, though just possible, that there would be enough room to preserve the remaining ten books of the Twelve between what remains and the start of the scroll. It is quite possible, therefore, that rather than Jonah being the text which is placed at the end of the manuscript, as is now widely assumed without question, Malachi and Jonah, in that order, may have belonged together closer to the middle of the collection, or that this manuscript merely contained some rather than all of the Twelve' (Brooke, 'The Twelve Minor Prophets', p. 22).

35.   See Schneider, *The Unity*, pp. 224-25. 'Considering the close similarity of the two orders and the near relationship of the text types within them to each other, it is most likely that the second redactors ('LXX order') were directly dependent upon the first (MT order)'.

36.   See n. 27.

37.   Jones, *The Formation*, p. 175.

Joel–Obadiah in Joel 4.19 (ET 3.19) and that 'the use of the word Edom as a catchword in the MT of Amos 9:12 is a secondary textual alteration of an earlier reading'.[38] More significantly, this change was made 'under the influence of Joel 4.19',[39] so that the original catchwords were contained in the LXX, and it is the MT that has been altered to provide its current order. Jones also highlights other similarities that exist between Joel and Obadiah and the surrounding Twelve.[40] From this and other evidence, Jones concludes that the Twelve grew from a book of nine (which excluded Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah), to a book of eleven (excluding only Jonah), to 4QXII[a], with Jonah as the concluding work. This was followed by the LXX order, and lastly the MT.[41] For whatever reason, Jones's work has largely gone unrecognized, and many disagree with his findings. 'The main problem with Jones's hypothesis is, that it has no explanation how the masoretic order came into being. Much more convincing is that the Septuagint version placed Am and Mic immediately after Hosea and left all other writings in the order they had in the masoretic sequence.'[42]

Though Wolfe, Schneider, Nogalski, and Jones come to different conclusions regarding the development of the Twelve, a few similarities can be drawn from their studies. First it should be noted that there is purpose behind the growth and order of the Book. These writings did not occur by happenstance and neither were they randomly positioned. Rather the Twelve grew under the guidance of a purposeful, editorial process that took place at certain stages in Israelite history. Second, they argue that the individual writings of the Twelve, at least in the form that appears today, are dependent on the writings around them and were intended to be read (and reread) in a certain

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38. Jones, *The Formation*, p. 224.

39. Jones, *The Formation*, p. 224.

40. Jones, *The Formation*, pp. 194-213: 'Third, the books of Joel and Obadiah contain numerous literary and thematic ties to one another, and to both the broad context of the corpus of Hosea, Amos, and Micah that precedes them, and to the Book of Nahum that follows them in the LXX sequence (absent the Book of Jonah)' (p. 224).

41. Jones*, The Formation*, pp. 226-27. 'Although theoretically it is possible to argue for the existence of other stages of collection prior to these nine books, the extant manuscript witnesses offer no further corroborating evidence for such an enterprise' (p. 227).

42. Schart, 'Redactional Models'. He continues, 'The reason probably was the historical setting given by the superscriptions. Since Hosea, Amos and Micah prophesied partly under the same kings, they form a close group, to which Joel, Obadiah and Jonah do not belong'. It is interesting to note, however, that despite their presumed lateness, both Jonah (2 Kgs 14.25) and Obadiah (1 Kgs 18) can be read as either contemporaries (Jonah) or even predecessors (Obadiah) to Hosea–Amos–Micah. See Marvin A. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation in the Book of the Twelve', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 49-64, 53. In either case, it is clear that the MT offers the more difficult order.

order. The writings are aware of thematic and theological connection to each other, and were intended to be interpreted in light of one another. This is seen in both Schneider's and Nogalski's belief about the position and function of Joel, as well as Wolfe's understanding of the interconnecting ideas that run through the Book. Therefore, whether it be Wolfe's anti-neighbor, Schneider's Anti-Assyrian block, Nogalski's Joel related layer, or Jones's LXX connections, these scholars have successfully argued that there are numerous repeated ideas that permeate the Twelve, and that it was these ideas/themes that served as the driving force for the production and order of the Book.

3. *How to Read the Twelve?*

In light of the scholarly consensus that these twelve prophets are indeed twelve interdependent writings, the important question of interpretation is brought to the fore. How does one read and interpret the Twelve as a book? As with everything in biblical studies, many suggestions have been offered.

a. *Isaiah-Like Approach*
Collins[43] and Coggins[44] find strong parallels between reading the Twelve and reading Isaiah.[45] Collins argues that the same historical process that was at work in the Twelve was also at work in Isaiah, and as a result, Isaiah's division of material between pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic roughly mirrors the Twelve's historical development from eighth century BCE to the late Persian Period.[46] Though both books were heavily edited during the exilic/post-exilic period in a similar editorial process, Collins has no doubt that 'When it comes to accepting the words on the page as "authentic", we are probably on safer ground in supposing authenticity for passages in Hosea and Amos than

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43.   Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (TBS, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

44.   R.J. Coggins, 'The Minor Prophets—One Book or Twelve?', in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. S. E. Porter, P. Joyce and E.E. Orton; BIS, 8; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 57-68. Though Coggins officially published his article later, Collins makes reference to an early form of Coggins's article (See Collins, *Mantle*, p. 57 n. 1). Since Collins is the later and more detailed work, this review will focus specifically on Collins's claims of parallels between Isaiah and the Twelve. Both arguments are similar.

45.   Steck and Bosshard-Nepustil likewise find links between the Twelve and Isaiah. See O.H. Steck, *Der Abschluss der Prophetie im alten Testament. Ein Versuch zur Frage der Vorgeschichte des Kanons* (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991); Erich Bosshard-Nepustil, *Rezeptionen von Jesaia 1–39 im Zwölfprophetenbuch* (OBO, 154; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

46.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 60.

we are when discussing Isaiah. However, the difference is a matter of degree of probability'.[47] This material was later collected, expanded and edited into the writings that now bear their names, again a process similar to Isaiah.[48]

For Collins, the only difference between Isaiah and the Twelve is that the Twelve maintained their separate headings while those in Isaiah have been lost, a problem that Collins attributes to the history of the editorial process.

> The main difference of course is that in *Isaiah* the names of the different contributors other than *Isaiah* were either unknown or suppressed, while in *the Twelve* the various sections were allocated to different names preserved by the traditions. This is, however, really only a superficial difference. The techniques of composition and presentation are the same in both books, and so are the basic elements in their contents.[49]

These elements join together to give both books an internal unity that disguises their fractured history.[50] Because of this, Collins argues that to divide the Twelve into twelve individual writings or to read it in any other way would be to destroy the unity of the book. 'Fragmentation of *The Twelve* is a mistake, just as fragmentation of *Isaiah* is a mistake, and for the same reasons'.[51] Coggins likewise, finds parallels between reading Isaiah and reading the Twelve:

> Nevertheless, despite this recent flowering of interest, the main concern has been with the separate constituent elements of the Book of the Twelve, rather than any consideration of it as a unity. By that I mean in the same sense as the book of Isaiah is being read as a unity, not with any suggestion of denying the variety of authorship that lies behind it, nor even necessarily with particular attention being paid to the purpose or intention of the redactors; but in the first instance, as it stands as a book, of the kind which one expects to read right through, without picking out bits here and omitting others there and shunting still others to some other place.[52]

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47. Collins, *Mantle*, p. 60.
48. Collins, *Mantle*, p. 61. He continues, 'In the earlier stages in the development of the collections at the base of *Isaiah* and *The Twelve* there is no reason to suppose that the names of Hosea, Amos and Micah were any less important than that of Isaiah. The quantity of material attached to their names was certainly as great, although the Isaianic collection was later to be expanded in such a spectacular fashion'.
49. Collins, *Mantle*, pp. 64-65. In other words, the twelve divisions within the Twelve are no different than the three recognized divisions in Isaiah.
50. 'Above all *The Twelve* resembles Isaiah in the way it is able to take a selection of disparate material and bind it all together by giving it an inner cohesion' (Collins, *Mantle*, p. 65).
51. Collins, *Mantle*, p. 60.
52. Coggins, 'The Minor Prophets—One Book?', p. 62.

This approach, the kind that seeks to read the Twelve like a book equal to Isaiah, is best illustrated by House's *The Unity of the Twelve*.[53] House contends that the Twelve is a book, complete with plot, structure, and genre. He asserts that the Twelve match the Aristotelian definition of a comedy[54] and thus follows a U-shaped structure that begins with Hosea, reaches a low point with Nahum–Habakkuk before returning again to a resolution in Haggai–Malachi.[55] He divides the Twelve into three main sections following the MT order: Hosea–Micah, Nahum–Zephaniah, and Haggai–Malachi. These sections are then grouped into a theological structure, Sin–Punishment–Restoration, that is found in all prophetic books.

Hosea–Micah: Sin—Covenant and Cosmic
Nahum–Zephaniah: Punishment—Covenant and Cosmic
Haggai–Malachi: Restoration—Covenant and Cosmic

'In fact, the Twelve are structured in a way that demonstrates the sin of Israel and the nations, the punishment of the sin, and the restoration of both from that sin. These three emphases represent the heart of the content of the prophetic genre. The Twelve's external structure therefore reflects its literary type'.[56]

This structure is evident in the construction of the message and plot[57] of the Twelve: Hosea and Joel introduce the sins of Israel and the nations that grow worse and worse until judgment is required to cleanse the sin. The nations are judged in Nahum, but Israel is judged in Habakkuk, which is the lowest point of the outline. Zephaniah (more so Haggai) then begins a recovery that culminates in Malachi. This plot is well developed, complete with characters (Yhwh, Israel, the Nations, and the Prophets), a narrator (the

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53. Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup, 97; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990).

54. The term comedy implies a plot construction in which a character triumphs over adversity, not necessarily something humorous. House, *Unity of the Twelve*, p. 113. This is an Aristotelian definition. 'To say, then that the Twelve has a comic plot is not to say that it is funny, farcical, or stilted. It rather means that the authors wrestle with the problems of sin and judgment, but do not find them to be the ultimate victors over the human race' (p. 162).

55. House, *Unity of the Twelve*, p. 124.

56. House, *Unity of the Twelve*, p. 68. It should be noted that House is sceptical of the uniting function of the catchword phenomenon. 'Catchwords certainly exist in the Twelve, but one would be hard pressed to find enough catchwords to unite all the books' (p. 66).

57. House defines plot as 'a selected sequence of logically caused events that present a conflict and its resolution by utilizing certain established literary devices (introduction, complication, crisis, denouement, etc.)' (House, *Unity of the Twelve*, p. 115). House continues, 'Further, it is character-oriented, normally reflects a comic or tragic perspective, and must have an important message to proclaim. Though other aspects of plot may exist, these characteristics are the heart of the term's meanings'.

prophets themselves), an implied audience, and other plot devices.[58] Such a reading places the Twelve in the same category as other prophetic books.

Ultimately, Collins, Coggins, House and others who have attempted a unified reading of the Twelve deserve recognition for forcing scholars to interact with the concept that the Twelve is an actual book. Almost all scholarship that deals with this topic is, at least in some way, responding to these early works. However, from the perspective of transmission history as well as literary analysis, attempts to level the Twelve into a book like Isaiah are overreaching. Transmission history shows that the individuality of the prophets was important to the ancient readers of the Twelve.[59] Also, as Ben Zvi has argued, the authorial superscripts which introduce each of the writings have come down through history and should not be discarded. 'The most significant and unequivocal internal evidence, namely that of the titles (or incipits) of the prophetic books, sets them [the writings] on the same level with Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel, namely as separate prophetic books'.[60] Lastly, grouping the individual writings into such broad categories as sin/judgment/restoration is to overlook their complex nature. For example, House has classified Amos as a sin section, and to be fair, the majority of the writing is centred on Israel's sins. However, such a category neglects the closing verses of the writing (9.11-15) which focus exclusively on restoration, and thus brings Amos's previous message of judgment into a different perspective. Therefore, any reading style that seeks to level, ignore, or in some way damage the individuality of these twelve writings, should be treated with caution.

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58.   This is a summary of House, *Unity of the Twelve*, pp. 111-62.

59.   Furthermore, it could be argued that House's U-shaped plot ultimately follows Israelite history. If Israel begins in a positive position during the divided monarchy (Hosea under Jeroboam II) and reaches a low point during the exile (Habakkuk) only to enter a period of restoration during the Persian period (Haggai–Malachi), then this forms a U-shaped curve. Since the Twelve are loosely organized in a chronological fashion and cover the periods mentioned above, a U-shaped outline to the Book could be expected.

60.   Ben Zvi, 'Twelve Prophetic Books', p. 137. Others who have objected to a unified reading of the Twelve have also done so based on superscript evidence. See Kenneth H. Cuffey, 'Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian: A Comparative Study of Coherence in Micah and the Twelve', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 185-208. Cuffey notes the lack of an overall superscript for the Twelve (p. 201); and Michael H. Floyd, 'The מַשָּׂא (MAŚŚĀ') as a Type of Prophetic Book', *JBL* 121 (2002), pp. 401-22. Floyd contends that the Hebrew word משא, 'burden' or 'oracle', connotes a specific genre with specific rules for interpretation. Therefore, the writings of the Twelve that are labelled משא by their superscripts, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi, should be interpreted differently from the rest of the writings.

b. *Thematic Approach*

This critique necessitates a reading strategy that strikes a balance between the individuality of the writings and the unity of the Book. Rendtorff, Bowman, and Sweeney have attempted to pursue such a strategy by focusing on thematic connections. Repeated thematic links, they argue, bring a unifying feature across the whole of the Book while at the same time allowing the writings to develop their own unique understanding of such themes. Early on, Collins noted the diversity of thematic connections within the Twelve. 'The principal themes of the whole book are those of covenant-election, fidelity and infidelity, fertility and infertility, turning and returning, the justice of God and the mercy of God, the kingship of God, the place of his dwelling (Temple/Mt Zion), the nations as enemies, the nations as allies'.[61] As will be shown, those arguing for thematic unity to the Twelve have expanded on Collins's observations, often focusing on the role of one particular theme. Such an approach is consistent with the concept that unity comes in the macro-level of work position and thematic connections rather than the micro-level of catchwords, plot and characters. But what themes do the editors of the Twelve, those who placed the writings in their current order, want the readers to find essential?

One of the earliest suggestions, represented here by Rolf Rendtorff, is that the Day of Yhwh is the unifying theme of the Twelve;[62] and there are solid reasons for such a proposal. As Petersen notes, the phrase 'is present explicitly in all but two of the Twelve. Jonah and Nahum are the exceptions; and in Nahum the יהוה יום is implicit (Nah 1:7). In addition, references to the יהוה יום are relatively and surprisingly infrequent in the Major Prophets.'[63] The function of theme within the Twelve and its interaction with the various writings is significant. Rendtorff uses Amos as an example of how theme can carry over from one writing to the next. Though Amos is (probably) the oldest writing of the Twelve and deals with the Day of Yhwh, the organization of the Twelve, specifically the position of the writings, changes the way readers are introduced to the topic. Because of this, Amos's teaching on the

    61.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 65.
    62.   Rolf Rendtorff, 'How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 75-87; Rendtorff, 'Alas for the Day! The "Day of the Lord" in the Book of the Twelve', in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), pp. 186-97.
    63.   See David L. Petersen, 'A Book of the Twelve?', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 3-10 (9). Petersen continues, 'The phrase is considerably more prominent in Isaiah than it is in Jeremiah or Ezekiel. In Isaiah, the phrase יהוה יום appears primarily in oracles against foreign nations, e.g., 13:6; 22:5, and in later texts, e.g., 34:8, though Isa 2:11-12 may be compared with texts in the Twelve' (p. 9 n.17).

Day of Yhwh does not stand in isolation, but instead is informed by the writings that surround it. In this case, the preceding writing (Joel), influences the understanding of the Day in Amos. In fact, Joel is so focused on the Day that Rendtorff labels it a 'book of the day of the LORD',[64] and '"something of a collection of different views of that day".'[65] Therefore, when the reader of the Twelve arrives at Amos's discussion on the topic in 5.18-20, he does not arrive uninformed, but rather carries with him the fully detailed 'Day' theology of Joel. 'Amos' listeners know about this day, and they desire it to come. But what about the reader? Does he or she know as well? Yes, of course, from the previous use of this term in the writing of Joel. Therefore, in order to understand Amos we have to read Joel first.'[66] Rendtorff argues that from the reader's point of view, the confusion surrounding the Day of YHWH in Amos is understandable as the result of various views of the Day found in Joel. 'It is not a balanced doctrine of the day of the LORD that we find in the Joel writings… Rather, these writings look at the day of the LORD from different angles.'[67] Amos's audience highlights one aspect of the Day, while Amos himself emphasizes another.

Rendtorff also notes the complexity of the Day in the Twelve and even believes that the concept goes beyond the use of the proper phrase יום יהוה to other shortened 'Day' phrases. 'In many cases where the term 'day' appears, be it alone or in certain combinations, the reader of the Book of the Twelve should associate it with something like the day of the LORD'.[68] This notion of the Day of Yhwh as the unifying/dominant theme of the Twelve has proved popular and has been the focus of much scholarly attention.[69]

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64. Rendtorff, 'Alas for the Day!', p. 187.

65. Rendtorff, 'How to read the Book', p. 78.

66. Rendtorff, 'Alas for the Day!', p. 187.

67. Rendtorff, 'Alas for the Day!', p. 191. Rendtorff proceeds to examine in a similar fashion the function of the Day of Yhwh as it appears in Obadiah, Zephaniah, and Malachi as well.

68. Rendtorff, 'How to Read the Book', p. 86. This is surely correct. For a more detailed study of the use of 'Day' in the Twelve see James D. Nogalski, 'The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve', in Redditt and Schart (eds.), *Thematic Threads*, pp. 192-213.

69. Besides those listed above, see also James D. Nogalski, 'Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading', *Int* 61.2 (2007), pp. 125-36; Paul-Gerhard Schwesig, *Die Rolle der Tag-JHWHs-Dichtungen im Dodekapropheton* (BZAW, 366; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006); Martin Beck, *Der 'Tag YHWHs' im Dodekapropheton. Studien im Spannungsfeld von Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BZAW, 356; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2005); John Barton, 'The Day of Yahweh in the Minor Prophets', in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays: Studies in Honour of Kevin J. Cathcart* (ed. Carmel McCarthy; JSOTSup, 375; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), pp. 68-79; Arndt Meinhold, 'Zur Rolle des Tag-JHWHs-Gedichts Joel 2,1-11 im XII-Propheten-Buch', in *Verbindungslinien, Festschrift für Werner H. Schmidt zum 65* (ed.

Bowman has taken a different approach, arguing that שׁוב instead of the Day of YHWH is the uniting theme of the Twelve.[70] Bowman bases his argument on the belief that Hosea 1–3 along with Malachi forms a framework for the entire Twelve,[71] and since Hosea 1–3 serves as an introduction to the Book, it follows that any uniting feature should appear in those opening chapters. 'Thus the clues within Hosea 1–3, once discovered for reading the BT [Book of the Twelve], not only should direct the reader logically in a coherent rhetorical understanding of the whole, they also should reveal the grand meta-narrative of Yahweh's *Heilsgeschichte* (God's redemptive activity in human history) and invite readers to participate'.[72] Bowman contends that because the Day of Yhwh (specifically the phrase יום יהוה) is absent from chs. 1–3, as well as the rest of Hosea, it is not possible for it to form the uniting theme of the Twelve.

> Despite identification of the thematic phrase 'day of Yahweh' as holding the BT together, it is not found at all in Hosea, the lead book. In Amos, Joel, Zechariah, and Malachi Yahweh's day is either expected or threatening but not in Hosea. How can this be the theme of the BT when the phrase is missing from the opening chapters of the lead book? If there is an editorial intention behind the whole, shouldn't it be found in the opening chapters of Hosea? If so, should it not be sustained throughout the entire collection, and specifically, revisited in the closing verses of Malachi, the concluding book of the corpus?[73]

It is worth noting that 'day' (יום) is not totally absent from Hosea's first three chapters appearing fourteen times, including four occurrences in the phrase ביום ההוא (1.5; 2.18, 20, 23 [ET 2.16, 18, 21]), and one occurrence of the 'day of Jezreel (יום יזרעאל Hos. 2.2 [ET 1.11]).[74] In spite of this, Bowman is

Axel Graupner, Holger Delkurt and Alexander B. Ernst; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), pp. 207-24.

70.   Craig Bowman, 'Reading the Twelve as One: Hosea 1-3 as an Introduction to the Book of the Twelve (The Minor Prophets)', *SCJ* 9 (2006), pp. 1-18.

71.   See also John D. W. Watts, 'A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 209-18. Watts asserts that it is Yhwh's love that forms the frame of the book. For other connections between Hosea and Malachi see George Andrew Tooze, 'Framing the Book of the Twelve: Connections Between Hosea and Malachi' (PhD dissertation, The Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver, 2002).

72.   Bowman, 'Reading the Twelve as One', p. 6.

73.   Bowman, 'Reading the Twelve as One', p. 9.

74.   Bowman does acknowledge these. 'One might argue that the references to "day" in Hos 1:5; 2:2, 18, 20, and 23 constitute a basis for grounding the "Day of Yahweh" theme in these opening chapters. But the deliberate interrelation of these more ambiguous and open-ended references with the full phrase by readers of the BT, would only have happened once Amos and Joel had been joined to Hosea and the whole had been read' (Bowman, 'Reading the Twelve as One', p. 17 n. 42). This, however, seems difficult to

correct to emphasize the reduced role that the Day plays in the Twelve's introductory section (Hos. 1–3), which is contrasted to the more prominent role of שׁוּב in those chapters (2.9, 11 [ET 2.7, 9]; 3.5). If Bowman's framework is accepted as genuine, then possibilities for uniting themes are limited to words and phrases from Hosea 1–3 and Malachi; an approach which I will argue is too restrictive. Regardless, Bowman deserves credit for recognizing the pervasiveness of שׁוּב, which appears in every writing of the MT form of the Twelve except Haggai.[75] The same cannot be said of יום יהוה.[76]

Sweeney has taken a broader approach to thematic distribution, focusing on the position of the writings and how that affects multiple themes within the Twelve.[77] Sweeney contends that the various orders of the Twelve, particularly the MT and the LXX, help to illumine purpose behind the Twelve.[78] 'In this regard, the sequence of books within both the LXX and the MT versions may well address diachronic questions concerning the formation of the Book of the Twelve, in that the sequence points to hermeneutics by which the individual prophetic books are both received and presented as constitutive components of the "Book of the Twelve" as a whole'.[79] Sweeney has successfully shown that though there is a loose chronological order to the Twelve in both traditions, chronology alone does not explain the order. 'Chronology is influential in that the books are grouped roughly by the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries, but various problems appear'.[80] One of those problems is the position of undated writings Joel and Malachi, as well as the possible implied ninth-century setting of Obadiah. The fluidity of the groups is best illustrated by the position of Hosea–Amos and Habakkuk–Zephaniah, in both orders. If the Twelve were strictly ordered by chronology, Amos (or Jonah or Obadiah) would head the Twelve and Zephaniah would precede Habakkuk.[81] Instead Sweeney argues that the Twelve is organized around two 'programmatic books', Hosea, which introduces the brokenness of the Covenant, and Joel, which introduces restoration on the Day of Yhwh

maintain in light of the fact that Bowman believes Hos. 1–3 functions as introduction to the *completed Twelve*, as well as to Hosea. Additionally, many scholars question the date of Hos. 1–3 since its narrative format is unlike the rest of the writing.

75.   Even this is debatable as a variant reading of Hag. 2.17 includes the use of שׁוּב. See Chapter 7, pp. 166-70.

76.   I am inclined, however, to believe that other 'day of' and 'in that day' phrases can be understood as an implied form of the Day of Yhwh. If this is the case, only Jonah omits a reference to the Day of Yhwh.

77.   Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', pp. 49-64.

78.   The LXX order is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

79.   Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 55.

80.   Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 62.

81.   See Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', pp. 53-54.

and trouble with the nations. Also, by placing the works in different locations, the two orders, perhaps organized for two different communities, emphasize different themes.[82]

> Instead of first presenting the books concerned with Israel and then those concerned with the nations [as the LXX], the MT mixes books together. The result is the placement of two programmatic books at the beginning—Hosea outlines the disrupted relationship between YHWH and Israel and calls for Israel's repentance; Joel outlines YHWH's defense of Jerusalem and Israel on the Day of YHWH, emphasizing the transformation of the cosmos as YHWH manifests sovereignty over the nations. Following books then lay out the details of these two programmatic books.[83]

Sweeney then discusses the way Amos–Malachi in the MT detail the themes introduced in these first two writings. Amos examines the punishment of the northern kingdom, while Obadiah deals with the south. Jonah shows that the nations can receive mercy, while Micah indicates that those nations can be brought into a cleansed Jerusalem. Nahum shows the consequences of an unrepentant nation (Assyrian content carried over from Micah), while Habakkuk deals with Assyria's conqueror, Babylon. Zephaniah highlights the cleansing of Jerusalem, which looks back to Micah. Haggai and Zechariah deal with the concepts of a restored Jerusalem and the new Davidic King. Malachi acts as a conclusion to the Book by repeating various themes, including the broken covenant and the Day of Yhwh, that have been mentioned throughout the Twelve.[84] Therefore, following Sweeney, it is possible to use thematic connections to unify the Book of the Twelve in both the LXX and MT orders, while at the same time maintaining the individuality of the writings. This examination supports the earlier studies of Schneider, Nogalski and others that the intentionality of the Twelve is apparent by the position of the individual writings.

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82.   Sweeney proposes that the two orders better reflect two different communities, Christian (LXX) and Jewish (MT). About the LXX, Sweeney states, 'the earliest LXX manuscripts of the Twelve are Christian manuscripts that date to the third and fourth centuries C.E. Indeed, the concern with Israel, the nations, and the restoration of the nations in Jerusalem fits well with Christian theology and its understanding of the role of prophecy as a means to predict the fulfilment of Israel's destiny in the revelation of Christ to the nations'. Sweeney states that the MT, 'focuses especially on the role of Jerusalem, including the punishment of Israel and the nations, and the implications these developments have for the purging of Jerusalem and its place as the center of YHWH's world sovereignty. Such concern would be particularly characteristic of an indigenous Jewish community centred around Jerusalem' (Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 64).

83.   Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 63.

84.   See Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', pp. 60-62. This is just a brief summary of the thematic connections that Sweeney identifies in his article. The connections that he highlights in both the LXX and the MT are more complex.

   More recently, the importance of the canonical location of the Twelve's writings has been further emphasized by Seitz,[85] who argues that the unified Twelve reveal a progressive understanding of Yhwh's actions in Israel's history. At the heart of his argument is the belief that the Twelve's view of history is destroyed if the writings are separated from one another and examined according to their critically accepted dates, rather than their canonical order. Like Sweeney, Seitz believes that there is intentionality behind the ordering of the Book. For this reason,

> a balancing act is now required. The interpreter must indeed do justice to historical references and must inquire about the individual prophetic witnesses of the Twelve, their possible historical sequence, their reporting of historical events, and so forth. At the same time,…it is clear that a larger historical project must also be respected in the Twelve. It appears that the earliest tradents were themselves concerned, not with individual historical prophets and their message in this or that period, but with the correlation of these prophets and these messages, in the name of a large-scale account of Yhwh's dispensation of history, under his providential care and sovereignty.[86]

Because the Twelve is offering a reflection on Yhwh's actions throughout history, the location of the individual works become keys to understanding the specific theology of the Twelve, as works mutually influence one another.[87]

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85.   Christopher R. Seitz, 'What Lesson Will History Teach? The Book of the Twelve as History', in *'Behind' the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, IV (ed. Craig Bartholomew *et al.*; SHS; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 443-69; Seitz, 'On Letting a Text "Act Like a Man": The Book of the Twelve: New Horizons for Canonical Reading, with Hermeneutical Reflections', *SBET* 22 (2004), pp. 151-72; Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics* (STI; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

86.   Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, p. 196. He continues, 'My plea here for a different model of history and historiographical concern is not a repudiation of 150 years of work in academic contexts, but a request that we examine texts mindful that other views of history and reading have animated previous generations of Jewish and Christian readers. While we value historical approaches, might we do well to let a past before the rise of the historical-critical method also teach us a lesson about how to read?' (p. 199).

87.   Seitz's reference to Jonah as an example of the interdependence between the individual writings mirrors Sweeney's theological concerns. 'Jonah's portrayal of an episode in national repentance, even by the Assyrian enemies of Israel, must find its place alongside the subsequent report of Nahum. At the same time, Jonah's canonical placement assures that the unilateral judgment of Edom, registered earlier in Obadiah, is not seen as the only means by which the God of Israel relates to the nations' (Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, p. 120). Seitz is also concerned about the two main orders of the Twelve (MT, LXX), but believes that the *lectio difficilior* argues in favour of the MT (p. 204).

4. *The Proposal*

Therefore, following Sweeney, Bowman, and Seitz, but clarifying and expanding on each, I propose that by using word repetition, as well as the position of Hosea–Joel and Zechariah–Malachi, the editors of the Twelve in the MT order have left behind clues to a unifying and perhaps controlling theme for the Twelve. That theme is the call to return connected to the Hebrew word שׁוב and contained in the phrase 'Return to me and I will return to you' (שׁובו אלי ואשׁובה אליכם). שׁוב is a fairly common word, appearing 1054/1053[88] times in the Old Testament. However, counting the variant in Hag. 2.17, שׁוב occurs 84×[89] in the Twelve which is second among the prophets (Isaiah 51×, and Ezekiel 64×[90]), preceded only by Jeremiah (121×[91]). To place these numbers in perspective, שׁוב appears 68× in Genesis and 71× in the Psalms.

What this study will show is that the importance of שׁוב in relation to the Twelve is not so much in the number of occurrences, though that is notable, but the distribution of those occurrences. If Haggai's variant is included, the word appears in every writing in the Twelve, but more importantly, it is concentrated on the opening and closing or 'framework' sections of the Book. שׁוב appears 24× in Hosea, 6× in Joel, 15× in Amos, the first three writings of the Twelve. It also appears 17× in Zechariah and 7× in Malachi, the last two writings of the Twelve. This means that the Twelve open and close with writings that are heavily concerned with שׁוב. A closer look, however, will reveal that the form of the word is equally important. Of the 84 uses of שׁוב in the Twelve, only eight of them are used in the imperative (command) form and all occur in four writings: the two that open and close the Twelve (Hosea–Joel) and (Zechariah–Malachi) (Hos. 14.2, 3 [ET 14.1, 2]; Joel 2.12, 13; Zech. 1.3, 4; 9.12; Mal. 3.7). Of these eight uses, two occur in the repeated phrase 'Return to me and I will return to you' (Zech. 1.3; Mal. 3.7), and it is this phrase that I believe holds the key to the unity of the Twelve. The other six uses all occur in contexts that either directly support or paraphrase this use, and I will argue that the use of the phrase in the later writings (Zechariah–Malachi) is contingent on the use of the שׁוב imperative in Hos. 14.2-3 (ET 14.1-2) and Joel 2.12-13.[92]

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88. All numbering is based on John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson (eds.), *The Hebrew–English Concordance to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

89. This includes the two nominal forms in Hos. 11.7; 14.5 (ET 14.4).

90. This includes the nominal form in Ezek. 37.23.

91. This includes the nine nominal forms in Jer. 2.19; 3.6, 8, 11, 12, 22; 5.6; 8.5; 14.7.

92. The use of the שׁוב imperative in Joel 2.12, 'return to me' (שׁבו עדי) is actually a truncation of the complete phrase, the last half of which, 'and I will return to you', is implied by the following context (2.14).

Therefore, the following pages will examine the use of שׁוּב within the context of the Book of the Twelve, thus arguing that by using constant repetition and the position of the writings, the MT editors of the Twelve hoped to instil the necessity of the imperative call to return into the mind of all who read the Twelve. To this end, the present work will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 will explain the methodology behind the thesis, dealing with the definition of theme as it relates to the Twelve. Chapter 3 will examine the function of theme as it relates to other prophetic books, particularly Isaiah, in an effort to draw parallels between the function of theme in Isaiah and the Twelve. Chapter 4, which is the heart of the present volume, will offer a detailed examination of the use of שׁוּב in Hosea–Joel, Jonah, and Zechariah–Malachi. A shorter summary section will also discuss שׁוּב as it appears in rest of the Twelve. This study will then conclude with a summary of the work presented. I would stress at the outset that there is indeed tension in the decision to read the Twelve as a whole, and the solutions are not necessarily neat, as with anything in prophetic studies. This untidy tension arises from attempting to strike a balance between the demands of the parts and that of the whole. The reader will understand that I do not seek the levelling or destruction of the parts for the sake of the whole. The decision to read the Twelve in this way is a choice, but I believe a defensible one. Furthermore, I am not arguing that שׁוּב is the only theme in the Twelve, but perhaps a controlling theme that places the message of the Twelve in perspective.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEME

In the introduction, I have explored the history of transmission and inter-pretation in the Twelve, and have laid out my proposal for a unified reading of the Book that focuses on the use of שׁוּב and the call to return. In this chapter I will examine the methodology of this project and develop a definition of theme as it applies to the Book of the Twelve.

As explained in the previous chapter, to read the Twelve as a book is a unique task among the prophets. Because it lacks a unifying superscript the choice to study the Twelve as a collected whole must be made carefully. Nonetheless, as the history of transmission has shown, the decision to do so has been made since ancient times. Among others, Sirach's statement illustrates this approach, 'May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the grave! For they put a new heart into Jacob, and by their confident hope delivered the people' (Sir. 49.10 REB). Such a statement deserves reflection. It is clear that Sirach possesses an understanding of 'the Twelve prophets', but he also understands that these prophets speak with a united voice. However, since the Twelve lack a unifying superscript, how did Sirach arrive at such a conclusion? To ask it differently, why was Sirach comfortable referring to a group of 'twelve prophets' with a unified message and what evidence caused him to arrive at such a conclusion? Did he make this assertion based on the fact that the Twelve were contained on one scroll? And going further, does not this very act, the gathering of twelve prophetic writings onto a single scroll indicate an understanding, at least on some level, of an early collectiveness? Moreover, what led future readers like Jerome and Mileto also to conclude that the Twelve were one, or the Masoretes to count the words of all the writings or to mark the middle of the Book in Micah? Additionally, what other evidence helped Sirach summarize the message of the Twelve as one of hope in spite of the numerous references to Yhwh's anger and coming destruction? After all, the final word of the Twelve is not hope, but curse (Mal. 3.24 חרם). To these questions, I would argue that the text itself presents clues to its own intention, mainly in the form of self-referencing or intertextuality that ultimately forms the basis for a thematic analysis.

Nogalski defines intertextuality as 'the interrelationship between two or more texts which evidence suggests (1) was deliberately established by ancient authors/editors or (2) was presupposed by those authors/editors'.[1] He then proceeds to list five different types of intertextuality found in the Twelve: 'quotations, allusions, catchwords, motifs, and framing devices'.[2] These messages and images develop as a reader progresses through the Book and the repeated images orient the reader to messages found earlier in the Book. The position of the writings provides the framework for that development and carries the reader from the eighth to (at least) the mid-fifth century. One of the more frequently cited examples of intertextuality in the Twelve is the repeated use of Exod. 34.6-7 (Hos. 1.6; Joel 2.13; Jon. 4.2; Mic. 7.18-20; and Nah. 1.3).[3] Other examples include the use of similar 'locust' language (Joel 1–2; Amos 4.9; Hab. 1.9; and Mal. 3.10), the near identical use of 'YHWH roars from Zion' (Joel 4.16; Amos 1.2); the similarities between the various superscripts, and the aforementioned phrase 'the Day of YHWH'.[4] From these and other uses, the Twelve presents its audience with keys to its unity that are self-evident. This constant self-referencing was identified by the ancient readers, and despite the lack of an overall superscript, permitted them to deem the Twelve 'one'. Therefore, theme grows out of an overall display of intertextuality within the Twelve itself.

1. James D. Nogalski, 'Intertextuality and the Twelve', in Watts and House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 102-24 (102). For an examination of intertextuality that compares the Twelve with the Major Prophets see Bosshard-Nepustil, *Rezeptionen von Jesaja 1-39 im Zwölfprophetenbuch*.

2. Nogalski, 'Intertextuality', p. 103. He later groups themes together with motifs, pp. 116-18.

3. See R.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; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 31-49. Though Van Leeuwen's main concern is the use of Exod. 34.6-7 in the Twelve, his discussion incorporates the relationship between this passage and the Day of Yhwh. See also J.P. Bosman, 'The Paradoxical Presence of Exodus 34:6-7 in the Book of the Twelve', *Scr* 87 (2004), pp. 233-43. Bosman's findings are significant since he argues that this passage is a unifying feature of the Twelve, while at the same time, the different uses of the passage within the individual writings supports their individuality. 'What does seem to be central to all the texts in question is the *ambiguity of Yahweh's presence*. Maybe Exodus 34:6-7 was used by redactors to bring a unity to the Book of the Twelve, but this unity is then also paradoxical and ambiguous. We should maybe rather say that it points not to the redactors' creation of unity, but that it points towards their respect for the Book's disunity' (p. 242).

4. Nogalski's article, mentioned above, deals at some level with most of these issues. For more on superscripts see John D.W. Watts, 'Superscriptions and Incipits in the Book of the Twelve', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 110-24.

But a discussion of theme raises many problems, namely what is the definition of a theme as it relates to prophetic literature and, perhaps more importantly, is theme a property of the text or the reader? This chapter will argue that despite the lack of a uniting superscript, the Twelve provide internal evidence in the form of self-referencing or intertextuality, for a unified approach. This evidence manifests itself in the structure of the book as well as word repetition, other verbal clues, and ultimately themes which throughout the centuries have provided the audience of the Twelve with hints towards its own intentionality. But before an argument for a uniting theme can be made, theme itself must be defined. In the following section, theme will be distinguished from other literary terms, its function will be discussed, and a definition as it relates to prophetic literature will be offered. This section will conclude with a discussion on how theme relates to the Twelve and who controls the theme.

1. *Distinguishing Theme from Other Literary Terms*

When dealing with prophetic literature, theme is often discussed but rarely, if ever, is it defined. Most articles that focus on a prophetic theme begin their arguments with a semantic study of the word or phrase and then progress to show how that word or phrase functions within a particular book or section of the Old Testament. This approach assumes a certain understanding of theme which, in turn, raises certain questions; the most obvious being, what exactly is a prophetic theme? How does theme function within a prophetic work? Is it legitimate to limit a prophetic theme to a word or phrase? How does theme differ from motif, topic, plot, and subject? How does one identify a prophetic theme? Is it possible for a prophetic work to have more than one theme? Part of the difficulty in understanding theme as it relates to prophetic literature is that in-depth study of theme is often relegated to the domain of biblical narrative. In order to proceed, theme as it relates to prophetic literature must be understood.

Theme is defined by Merriam–Webster as 'a subject or topic of discourse or of artistic representation'.[5] While this definition provides a fine working concept of theme, it remains broad enough that almost any idea or concept that a prophetic reader would encounter could be defined as a theme. This definition must be narrowed for dealing with prophetic literature.

In the definition above, theme is defined in relationship to 'discourse', 'subject' and 'topic', all of which should be explained. Discourse is a general term that can be defined as a category or mode of expression.[6] More effort,

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5. Http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/Theme (10 December 2008).
6. C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York and London: Macmillan, 6th edn, 1992), p. 143.

however, is needed to distinguish between subject and theme. Sellee asserts that 'A subject defines a broad area for consideration by a writer or an artist', while a theme 'makes a statement or draws attention to a particular way of seeing the subject or some aspects of it'.[7] In other words, the subject is anything about which the author chooses to write. Theme, while related to the subject, is more specific. With such common characteristics, it is easy to see how the two words are sometimes confused and seldom differentiated. This close relationship has not been overlooked. Clines understands theme and subject to function in a similar way because both deal with the plot of a work. He argues that theme is derived from the subject but 'because it is a matter for deeper perception its identification is more complex and involves more subjective considerations than does an enquiry about "subject"'.[8] Fowler further contends that subject and theme are not synonymous with each other because theme is always a subject, but subject is not always a theme.[9] So while the subject may be a description about the content of the work, a theme is a much more focused, less obvious (and possibly more abstract[10]) idea embedded in the work.

To distinguish theme from subject further, *The Bedford Glossary* defines theme as 'not simply the subject of a literary work, but rather a statement that the text seems to be making about that subject'.[11] This definition again reinforces the concept that a theme is rooted in the subject but generally requires more reflection and a deeper understanding of the subject. For example, two writers can compose separate works on the subject of suffering and come to two very different conclusions. The first could argue that suffering is a part of God's plan that strengthens the believer, while the second writer could conclude that suffering causes pain, which weakens the believer, and should therefore be avoided.[12] In this illustration, the subject of suffering has two very different themes. To put it simply, theme is a statement *about* the subject. The differentiation between subject and theme is problematical in prophetic literature which often shifts freely among multiple subjects. An example of this is displayed in Obadiah. Though the central concern of the

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7. James Bombo Sellee, 'The Theme (s) of the Joseph Story: A Literary Analysis' (PhD dissertation, University of Gloucestershire, 2003), p. 22.

8. David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup, 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997), p. 22.

9. Roger Fowler (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 248.

10. Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 225.

11. Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (New York: Bedford Books, 2nd edn, 2003), p. 479.

12. Murfin and Ray, *Glossary*, p. 479.

writing is the punishment of Edom, vv. 15-16 shift the focus from Edom specifically to all the nations in general.

Another literary element closely related to the subject of the work is the plot. Plot is understood as 'a pattern of events'[13] contained in a literary work. Plot is also related to the subject and involves characters, rising tensions, climax, falling action, and resolution. Though plot and theme both act as unifying agents to the author and the reader, a theme lacks the detailed characteristics of a plot. As mentioned earlier, while House argues for a plot to the Twelve, few scholars have followed his lead.[14]

Because they are often used interchangeably, motif and theme are sometimes confused.[15] Sellee, however, differentiates theme from motif by arguing, 'that the theme is the overriding thought whereas the motif is a secondary recurring thought that contributes something to the main recurring thought'.[16] This implies that theme has a 'broader',[17] more significant impact, than motif. It must be remembered that a theme is a statement about the subject, but a motif, especially if it takes the form of an image or a narrative detail, can simply be a literary tool to advance or unite the plot. Sellee points to numerous motifs that occur throughout the Joseph story that are not themes: Joseph's multiple robes (one given by his father, one taken by Potiphar's wife, and one given by Pharaoh), Joseph's dreams, false accusations (both Joseph and his brothers are accused of crimes that they did not commit), and the preference of the younger son over the older son (Joseph over his brothers, Perez over Zerah, and Ephraim over Manasseh).[18] Though one may speak of various themes of the Joseph story, no one would speak of the 'theme of cloaks in the Joseph story'. This image, which appears at significant junctures of the story, helps advance and unite the plot, but does not constitute a theme.

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13.   Holman and Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*, p. 361.

14.   See Chapter 1, p. 14. Though the Twelve may not have a plot as traditionally defined, this does not negate the role that structure plays in the individual writings or the book as a whole.

15.   The closeness between the two terms is not lost on Clines. 'Theme and motif are entities "of the same substance", however, for the theme of a certain pericope may become a motif of a larger work into which the pericope is incorporated' (Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 22).

16.   Sellee, 'Joseph Story', p. 23. He goes on to define motif as 'a recurring idea that sheds some light on the theme of a work'. This definition is more precise than both Baldick, and Murfin and Ray who fail to clearly distinguish between motif and theme. See Baldick, *Dictionary*, p. 142; and Murfin and Ray, *Bedford Glossary*, p. 277.

17.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 19.

18.   Sellee, 'Joseph Story', p. 23.

Having differentiated theme from other literary terms, its purpose as it relates to text and reader should also be explored.[19] Though it may appear to be a dangerous, deconstructive move to draw out a theme from a text, theme is actually one of the most useful literary tools available to the reader. Clines argues that a clear statement of theme can be beneficial because it can serve to orient the reader to the project.[20] 'And since the hermeneutical circle of interaction between text and interpreter is constantly in process, orientation is not merely a desideratum for beginners; because the interpreter's perspective on the work is gradually re-formed by the work itself, orientation is a continuing process'.[21] Therefore, theme not only orients but also impacts the reader as he/she progresses through the text.

Second, the reader can also benefit from a theme's ability to unite a text. Theme shows that there is a coherent element to the material, a consistent thread running throughout the work that provides clues to how one should approach a text. By reappearing at critical junctures of the work, theme brings the reader back to a familiar point. As Greidanus notes, 'A theme, we can say, is a summary statement of the unifying thought of the text'.[22] This function of theme is particularly essential when dealing with prophetic literature whose sections are often different from one another. Fowler builds on this by noting the controlling aspect of theme. 'We think of a theme as a line or thread running through a work, linking features which are un—or otherwise related… Thus a critic may use 'theme' to refer to those repeated parts of a subject which control aspects of a work which he perceives as formal as well as conceptual'.[23] In addition, Clines argues that theme also provides a reason for the inclusion of the material and a reason for the current shape of the work.[24] An example of a theme controlling and organizing the material in a prophetic work is seen in Isaiah 6, where the prophet's charge to 'make the heart of this people calloused' unfolds in chs. 7–8. Theme then

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19.　This concept will be expanded in more depth below. See pp. 32-37.

20.　Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 20. 'At first sight it may appear insensitive, not to say naïve, to suppose that any extended or complex work of literary art can be reduced to some (usually banal) general statement. So it is necessary to stress that a quest for "theme" is no reductionist undertaking, as if the work itself were a disposable packaging for the "idea" that comes to the realization in it. Rather, a statement of theme functions, first, as an orientation to the work; it makes a proposal about how best to approach the work.'

21.　Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 20.

22.　Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 131.

23.　Fowler, *Modern Critical Terms,* p. 249.

24.　Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 18.

gives shape and meaning to the various parts of the prophetic material, a point which should not be overlooked.[25]

Lastly, theme helps maintain the message of the work within its original historical context, by providing guidelines for later interpreters who arrive at the text from different historical backgrounds.[26] In so doing, it helps to shape the attitude of those who approach the text and 'functions as a warning or protest against large-scale misunderstanding of a work'.[27]

Identifying a theme can be difficult. A reader can be aided in this process by remembering that theme shapes the work and by attempting to discover the relationship between the various literary units. Clines contends that the only way to locate a theme is by trial and error, but since theme is closely tied to subject and plot 'the critic has an area within which to move already mapped out'.[28] Structure can also be a tool to aid in this search. As mentioned above, Bowman argues that in respect to the Twelve, any unifying theme must appear in the first three chapters of the opening book.[29] Though I disagree with the strict limitations of Hosea 1–3, his broader point, that an important theme should appear in the early section of a work, is well taken.

Part of identifying a theme is answering the question of whether a work can have more than one theme. Clines says no because 'When different, divergent, or contradictory themes emerge other than the theme the critic has first identified, one has to adapt one's statement of the theme to take account of them'.[30] This, however, disagrees with most prophetic scholarship on the uniting themes of prophetic literature. For example, Wells counts no less than six different proposed themes that unite the three parts of Isaiah.[31] Most prophetic scholars seem more than willing to discuss various themes, often at the same time. Clements identifies Jerusalem-Zion and the royal Davidic

25.   This will be discussed in more detail in regard to the Twelve.

26.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 21. 'That is to say, the statement of theme can serve an historical-critical purpose, of attempting to lay bare what the author intended to convey to his or her audience, or it can act as a control on interpretations of the text that treat it as a relatively autonomous work of art, with polyvalent significance'.

27.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 21.

28.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 23.

29.   See Chapter 1, pp. 17-19.

30.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 20. I have responded here to Clines's former position as stated in the first publication of *Theme*. His position has since changed. See Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, pp. 127-41.

31.   Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (JSOTSup, 305; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 132. The themes are: 'divine kingship, the notion of holiness, God's devotion to the city of Jerusalem and Zion, God's plan for the nations, the concept of righteousness'. These six themes have been discussed by previous scholars, and Wells sees all of them relating to the theme of holiness and the Holy One of Israel.

dynasty as two themes which 'recur in different ways and with different emphases, needing continual revision and development in the light of events'.[32] This idea of multiple themes is not isolated to Isaiah. As stated above, in the Twelve, Collins identifies the themes of 'covenant-election, fidelity and infidelity, fertility and infertility, turning and returning, the justice of God and the mercy of God, the kingship of God, the place of his dwelling (Temple/Mt Zion), the nations as enemies, the nations as allies' in the Twelve.[33] I agree with the prophetic scholars that there can be multiple themes that exist in a prophetic work, however, I am also inclined to support the possibility of one dominant, or 'controlling' theme, which asserts influence over the others. This controlling theme provides a means of understanding and relating to the other themes that appear in a prophetic work. It is also worth noting that from these references, scholars often use one word to communicate a theme (Zion, turning and returning) or idea (Davidic dynasty, kingship of God).[34] In actuality, it is probably best to understand these 'one word' themes as abbreviated references to a longer thematic statement. An example of this is seen in the Twelve when 'day' or 'on that day' is actually a reference to what Yhwh will do on the Day of Yhwh (cf. Joel 1.15; Zeph. 1.8). In this way, it is possible for one word to communicate a theme, as long as that word is understood to convey a more detailed statement.

From the above descriptions a few fundamentals of theme can be deduced. (1) Theme is a key element of the literary work, which is closely related to the plot and the subject, but is not identical to it. Theme arises from the subject, but is more subtle than a subject and requires more reflection to identify. It also lacks the story elements that are associated with plot. (2) Theme is a uniting element in a work, but is more significant than a motif, which may function in a similar way. It is also tied closely to the structure of a work. (3) It gives reason for the ordering and selection of the material into the work. This is perhaps its most significant function in regards to the Twelve. (4) It helps to protect the original intent of the work by limiting its interpretive possibilities and thus influences the reader. (5) When dealing with prophetic literature, multiple themes may exist in one work which relate in different ways to the subject of the message, though one theme may be understood as more important than another.[35] These themes can appear as a word or a phrase, but ultimately relate to a broader thematic statement. Using these five descriptions of theme as a guideline, theme, as it relates to

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32. Ronald E. Clements, 'A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah', in Watts and House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 57-69.

33. Collins, *The Mantle*, p. 65.

34. I will argue that in the Twelve, the controlling theme is tied to the word שׁוּב which then refers the reader back to a more significant theological statement.

35. This of course, allows for a healthy scholarly debate.

prophetic literature, can be defined as 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work'.[36]

2. *Who Controls the Theme?*

Now that theme has been properly defined, it is important to determine who controls the theme. In other words, is theme a property of the text/author or is it a product of the reader? Clines contends that the theme of a work does not have to originate in the mind of the author. Since the purpose of a theme is to orient the reader to the work, theme is something that is possible, though not necessary for the author to include.[37] It is the reader who needs access to theme in order to make sense of the work and observe how a work fits together.[38] Therefore, theme can originate with the reader.[39] Such an approach, however, should not overlook the impact that grammatical clues have in the formulation of a given theme. As will be shown, identifying theme cannot take place apart from an interaction with the text itself. A brief examination of Vanhoozer, Thiselton, and Eco will help clarify this issue.

a. *Vanhoozer*
In reaction to Fish and Derrida, Vanhoozer lessens the role of the reader in the interpretive process, but does not come close to destroying it completely. Whereas Fish and Derrida want to make the author/text subservient to the interests of the reader, Vanhoozer hopes to reverse the trend by emphasizing the importance of the text. For Vanhoozer, the fact that the author attempts to communicate anything at all is an indication that the text has meaning of some kind. What that meaning is, however, is open to discussion.[40] To

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36.   This ties closely to how Clines demonstrates theme. 'The only formal criterion for establishing theme is: the best statement of the theme of a work is the statement that most adequately accounts for the content, structure and development of the work. To state the theme of a work is to say what it means that the work is as it is' (Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 23).

37.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, pp. 23-24. However, Clines adds, 'If theme encapsulates the meaning of the work, the theme and the work are created together in the author's mind… None of this is to say that authors cannot or do not perceive the theme of their works or that they are not in many cases far better able to state the theme of their works than any of their readers or critics'.

38.   Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 24.

39.   He concludes, 'All I am arguing is that we do not need to assure ourselves that such and such a theme could have been present in the mind of an author or conceptualized by him or her before we allow the possibility that such and such is the theme of the work' (Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 24).

40.   Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 281.

summarize his approach succinctly, 'The present work sets out to affirm that there is a meaning in the text, that it can be known, and that readers should strive to do so'.[41]

For Vanhoozer, the author's intended meaning can be recovered by a reader who approaches the text honestly. His meaning is imbedded within the text. The author has included clues, or hints for the modern reader to follow that will lead him to his intended meaning. Since the author's intention is present in the text, the reader does not have the right to destroy the author's creation or make it say something it does not.

> It does not follow, however, that the author's intention is inaccessible or that the text means anything its readers take it to mean. The text stands between author and reader as an embodied intention that, through various textual strategies, extends the matter and mode of the author's attention to the world into the world of the reader, enabling the reader to respond to the same matter in an appropriate fashion.[42]

Understanding, then, occurs when the reader recognizes what the author is trying to communicate through the text.[43]

For Vanhoozer, the reader is a receiver of the text, not a master over it. The author is knowable through the text and has left clues for the reader about how the text should be understood. These clues are in the form of genre (specifically) and other literary devices which point toward that meaning.[44] Genre acts as a map which the author has provided to lead the reader through the work.[45]

In order to find the meaning of a text, it is the responsibility of readers to submit themselves to the text by becoming what Vanhoozer has identified as the 'obedient' reader. The obedient reader 'follows the directions of the text rather than one's own desires. This does not necessarily mean doing what the text says, but it does mean, minimally, reading it in the way its author intended'.[46] By elevating the position of the text, Vanhoozer has not destroyed the role of the reader in the interpretive process. He admits that readers do not approach the text as blank slates, but rather carry personal baggage that influences the reading process.[47] The role of the reader is seen most in the interpretive step, where the reader applies what has been read. This application, however, is limited by the text and the author's intent.

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41. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 24.
42. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 282.
43. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 337.
44. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, pp. 336-37.
45. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 376.
46. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 377.
47. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning?*, p. 282.

How then, does theme function according to Vanhoozer's principles? From the summary mentioned above it is reasonable to conclude that theme, since it is related to the subject of the work, is part of the author's intention that must be discovered by the reader. Theme is therefore a property of the text and does not exist solely in the mind of the reader. Though the application of theme is the responsibility of the reader, and thus in some way controlled by the reader, theme itself is a property of the author communicated through the text which helps point the reader to the author's intention.

b. *Thiselton*

Thiselton, like Vanhoozer, is also sceptical of the post-modern, reader-centred, deconstructionist positions of Derrida and Fish. Thiselton ultimately rejects the deconstructionist position because of a simple belief that the act of reading a text can transform the reader. To ask this another way, if a reader has sole control of a text, why does a text have the ability to change the reader? For Thiselton, this transformation takes place when the 'horizon' of the reader intersects with the 'horizon' of the text. The horizon of the text is a powerful object, capable of changing or influencing the horizon of the reader if the distance between the two horizons is properly respected by the reader.[48] 'Because of their capacity to bring about change, texts and especially biblical texts engage with readers in ways which can productively transform horizons, attitudes, criteria of relevance, or even communities and inter-personal situations'.[49] It is in this sense that meaning is communicated through the text.

The reader is not at all passive or objective in this process. The reader's horizon is shaped by his or her life experiences, position in society, etc., and every reader brings a horizon to the text.[50] The text has the ability to challenge and to call into question different areas of a reader's horizon. Change occurs when a text becomes actualized within a reader's horizon.[51] It is the responsibility of the reader to be as open as possible to the claims of the text. 'Premature assimilation' (similar to the term preunderstanding, but the latter is rejected by Thiselton) occurs when the reader remains contained within his or her own horizon or refuses to allow the text to interact with his or her horizon.[52] Thiselton believes that this type of reading occurs frequently in the church.

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48.   Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 8.
49.   Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 8.
50.   Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 34.
51.   Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 21.
52.   Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 8.

As with Vanhoozer, Thiselton argues that genre and other semiotic devices are located within the horizon of the text that help move the reader towards change. These codes are not the message of the text itself, but rather the system by which the message is communicated.[53] Misunderstanding of these codes often results in difficult reading, or worse, misuse of the text by the reader.[54] As with Vanhoozer, these codes are essential to the reading process.

Thiselton does not discuss the function or properties of theme specifically, leaving open the question of whether theme is a property of the author or of the reader. If theme is tied to a specific word or phrase, it is possible that theme could be part of the semiotic devices which would aid in interpretation. Additionally, if theme is related to the central message of the text, it would be placed within the confines of the horizon of the text. Like Vanhoozer, it would be the responsibility of the reader to both identify and make proper application of the theme so that it conforms to both horizons.

c. *Eco*

Similarly to Thiselton, Eco argues that meaning is found in the interaction between the text and the reader. Understanding between the *intentio operis* and the *intentio lectoris*[55] is possible if the role of both the reader and the text is understood. It should be stated that Eco admits that texts can be used in any way that a reader chooses, except when interpretation is the final goal. Eco, in arguing that authorial intention is part of an honest attempt at interpretation says, 'When I speak with a friend I am interested in detecting the intention of the speaker, and when I receive a letter from a friend I am interested in realizing what the writer wanted to say'.[56] Biblical texts offer a more difficult case for authorial intention than does a modern personal letter or a person to person conversation. When dealing with a personal letter or a conversation, it is possible for the receiver (in a role similar to the reader) to ask the author for clarification when a message is unclear or distorted. This is impossible to do with biblical and other ancient texts. As a result, the intention of the author has been replaced by the intention of the text. This intention is now part of the hermeneutical considerations of the honest reader who seeks interpretation.

The intention of the text is to 'produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it',[57] while the responsibility of the model reader is to

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53. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 80.
54. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 35.
55. Umberto Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (ed. Stefan Collini; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 64.
56. Umberto Eco, 'Between Author and Text', in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 67.
57. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.

figure out 'a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text'.[58] This summary of Eco's theories should be explained in more detail. First, the intention of the text is not easy to surmize because it 'is not displayed by the textual surface'.[59] Rather the intention of the text has to be discovered by the reader. 'Thus it is possible to speak of the text's intention only as the result of a conjecture on the part of the reader'.[60] This then moves the intention of the text from the responsibility of the author, to a joint responsibility between the author and the reader. It is the property of the text to conceive of a model reader and to leave clues for him. Since the text can envision a model reader who is capable of making 'infinite conjectures' about the intention of the text, there is more to the role of the empirical reader than attempting to read a text by making the correct conjecture.[61] In fact, the empirical reader is 'only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text'.[62] Then the intention of the text, and not the author, is to produce this model reader, and it is the responsibility of the honest interpreter to try to the best of his ability to interpret the text along these lines. In other words, it is the goal of the empirical reader to attempt to become the Model Reader.

The text then limits the interpretive possibilities for the reader. In order for the empirical reader to approach the text in a similar mode as the Model Reader, he must first attempt to transform his culture into the cultural codes of the Model Reader. In Eco, a reader's cultural codes are the background texts (worldview) through which all information is filtered. When the cultural codes of the text and reader do not match, misunderstanding takes place. Eco illustrates this point by using the example of Marco Polo, who upon discovering a rhinoceros, describes the creature as a unicorn.[63] Every reader possesses their own set of 'background books', and these books influence every area of life, including reading. 'In other words, the influence of these background books is such that, irrespective of what travelers discover and see, they will interpret and explain everything in terms of these books'.[64] In order for the empirical reader to become the Model Reader, he must first be aware of these background books and if they conflict with the codes of the text, change them accordingly. These codes, which are embedded in the text,

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58. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.
59. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.
60. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.
61. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.
62. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 64.
63. Umberto Eco, *Serendipities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 71-72. Polo's background texts told him that unicorns have one horn. So despite the other contradictions between the appearance of a unicorn and a rhinoceros, Polo knew of no other way to describe it because of the limits of his background books.
64. Eco, *Serendipities*, p. 71.

help to guide the reader. When it comes to interpretation, 'the internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader'.[65]

For Eco, the interaction between text and reader seems to function similarly to Thiselton and Vanhoozer. The intention of the text provided by the author limits reader control. This is not a complete domination by the text, but rather interplay or meeting between text and reader. In fact, excitement happens for Eco when the intention of the reader matches the intention of the text.[66] Theme would fit nicely as a property of the text, or perhaps better, a code of the text, that awaits reader discovery and aids in interpretation.

3. *Summary*

This brief review of author/text/reader centred material has provided an insight into some of the important issues related to deducing meaning from a text. For Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Eco, it seems safe to say that interpretation occurs at the interaction between text and reader, but that the intention of the text, communicated by semiotic codes, helps limit the interpretive possibilities. Biblical theme, however, presents a special problem. As I have given the definition of prophetic theme as 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work', who then identifies and controls these theological ideas? This is especially important for this project, which attempts to tie theme very closely to word repetition.

On the surface, it appears that a theme that is tied to a particular word or phrase has its location primarily in the text as part of the intention of the text. The identification of a theme in the text can be seen as part of the attempt of the empirical reader to understand the situation of the whole. The reader is responsible for identifying potential themes and observing how they relate to each other, the text as a whole, and the main thesis of the work. The reader must then observe these possible themes and draw conclusions based on their usage in the text. Does this then mean that a text can have an unlimited number of biblical themes, as according to Clines, theme is controlled by the reader? In other words, are there as many themes as there are readers? This project proposes that there can be multiple but not unlimited themes for a given work. Because each individual reader has their own unique perspective (horizon), then various themes conveyed by words or phrases will be more obvious to one than to another. This does not leave open the possibility for countless themes, however, since theme is limited by the shape of the literature, the close connection to the subject of the work, and the intent of the text.

65. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts', p. 65.
66. Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 59.

Therefore, to summarize, it is possible to talk about theme as part of the grammatical codes embedded in the text by the author/editors of the Twelve. In this way, theme does belong to the text. However, Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Eco introduce a level of humility to this project that should not be dismissed. It is clear that theme is unequivocally tied to the reader's understanding of these codes and not necessarily to the authors/editors themselves. Since it is not possible to converse with the authors/editors of the Twelve I must honestly state that what I am trying to prove in the present work is ultimately reduced to a level of probability. In other words, is my proposal more likely than not? Though I will argue for a unifying theme based on what appears to be strong evidence, i.e. word occurrence and structure, there is no way of knowing with certainty that such a theme was intended by the authors/editors of the Twelve for this purpose. Since theme is part of the horizon of the reader however, this admittance does not diminish or negate the function of the שׁוב theme within the Twelve.

So how then is theme related in this project? As mentioned briefly at the beginning of this section, the discussion of theme as it corresponds to biblical prophecy has been a neglected topic. The majority of works that deal with biblical theme(s) generally do so from the perspective of biblical narrative.[67] This is problematic for this project as the Twelve is essentially non-narrative. Despite a few chapters (namely Hos. 1 and 3; Amos 7; and the vision reports of Zech. 1–6) and one notable writing (Jonah), narrative is absent from the Twelve.[68] Nonetheless, by understanding the function of theme within a narrative context, I was able to offer a definition of theme as it applies to prophetic literature as 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work'.

The idea of repetition conveying meaning fits well with this project. In the chapters that follow I will argue that the call to return expressed by the word שׁוב, fits the above definition of theme. I will argue that though communicated by one word, the use of שׁוב is but an abbreviation for the more comprehensive theological statement: 'Return to me and I will return to you' which is defined in more detail as one progresses through the Twelve. Furthermore, the imperative call to return gives structure to the work as the call is concentrated in the opening (Hosea–Joel) and closing (Zechariah–Malachi) of the Book. Finally, the use of the word in all twelve writings provides a continuous reminder to the reader that keeps שׁוב in the forefront of the mind. From this it is possible to distil the return theme of the Twelve to one

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67. In addition to the works cited, see the older work Dan Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

68. The imbalance does not change in Isaiah as only chs. 6–7, and 36–39 are in narrative form.

sentence: 'As the people struggle to turn (שׁוב) from covenant failure toward Yhwh in repentance and receive his blessing, Yhwh struggles to turn (שׁוב) from judgment toward his people in grace'. The implications and depth of this statement will be developed throughout the rest of the project.

In this section I have offered a working definition of theme for both prophetic literature as well as the Twelve. I arrived at this by first distinguishing theme from other literary terms such as topic and motif. Secondly, I discussed the function of theme based heavily on the work of Clines. I then discussed who controls the theme and reviewed meaning from an author/text/reader point of view. Following the discussions of Vanhoozer, Thiselton and Eco, it became apparent that the elements of theme are provided by the text, but must be discovered and understood by the reader. Lastly, I summarized how the call to return fits within the limits of the definition of theme offered in the earlier part of this section. In the chapter that follows I will examine theme within Isaiah in an attempt to show that the function of theme within a recognized book is similar to its function within the Twelve.

Chapter 3

THE FUNCTION OF THEME WITHIN ISAIAH
AND COMPARISON TO THE TWELVE

In the first chapter I outlined the ways in which the Twelve has been understood as a Book, including transmission history, and ancient and modern interpretations. In the second chapter I defined theme as it relates to prophetic books and offered a theme for the Twelve that relates to the call to return. In this chapter I will further argue that a unified reading of Isaiah forms a precedent for the unified reading of the Twelve.

Because most scholars argue that Isaiah is a composite work of various authors whose compositional dates loosely match those of the Twelve, Isaiah provides an appropriate parallel to study the function of theme within an accepted prophetic book. The following chapter will examine the uniting aspects of theme within Isaiah and show that theme plays a similar role in the multi-author Twelve.

The focus of Isaiah studies throughout much of the last century has revolved around questions of authorship. Despite objections from a minority of scholars,[1] the accepted position is that Isaiah is the work of multiple hands thought to be connected to at least two main authors as well as innumerable disciples and other prophetic schools who added, removed, and reshaped the various parts of Isaiah into the book that exists today. The differing styles and historical settings are thought to be too diverse to have been written by one author and too specific to have been addressed to a lone eighth-century audience. As a result, the three (generally) accepted major divisions of Isaiah (1–39; 40–55; and 56–66) are thought to form three books which were composed by at least two different authors (sometimes more) who prophesied at various times in Israel's history.[2] These works were recorded either by the authors themselves, their disciples, or other editors and were formed around

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1. See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); John N. Oswalt, The *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); and E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (NICOT; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, 1969, 1972).

2. The term 'books' does not necessarily imply an independent circulation.

the works of the original Isaiah who was responsible for the core of chs. 1–39.[3]

 Since Brevard Childs's canonical approach to Scripture[4] has won a significant following, the scholarship of Isaiah has shifted away from authorship questions in an attempt to locate and understand the synchronic aspects that make Isaiah a book. Many unifying elements such as structure and recurring

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 3.   Because the confines of this study prevent an examination of the three-part Isaiah authorship discussion, the details of the theory must be assumed. In preparing this section, I consulted the following works: Hans M. Barstad, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah* (Oslo: Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, 1997); W.A.M. Beuken, *Isaiah II* (trans. Dr Brian Doyle; HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2000); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (AB, 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2002); Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001); R.E. Clements, 'Zion as Symbol and Political Reality a Central Isaianic Quest', in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (ed. J. Van Ruiten and M. Vervenne; BETL, 132; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), pp. 3-18; Richard J. Clifford, 'The Book of Isaiah (Second Isaiah)', in *ABD*, III, pp. 490-501; Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 5th edn, 1968); John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2005); Michael Goulder, 'Deutero-Isaiah of Jerusalem', *JSOT* 28 (2004), pp. 351-62; Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995); William L. Holladay, 'Was Trito-Isaiah Deutero-Isaiah after All?', in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, I (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; VTSup, 70/1; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 193-217; Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of its Results and Problems* (trans. John Sturdy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); Francis Landy, 'The Ghostly Prelude to Deutero-Isaiah', *BibInt* 14 (2006), pp. 332-63; S. McEvenue, 'Who was Second Isaiah?', in Van Ruiten and Vervenne (eds.), *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, pp. 213-22; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word: Prophecy and Tradition in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002); John N. Oswalt, 'Righteousness in Isaiah: A Study of the Function of Chapters 56–66 in the Present Structure of the Book', in Broyles and Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, I, pp. 177-92; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1985); Christopher Seitz, 'Isaiah', in *ABD*, III, pp. 472-488; Seitz, 'Isaiah (Third Isaiah)', in *ABD*, III, pp. 501-507; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993); Seitz, 'The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah', *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 229-47; P.A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66* (VTSup, 62; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995); Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW, 171; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988); Sweeney, 'On the Road to Duhm: Isaiah in Nineteenth-Century Critical Scholarship', in *'As Those Who Are Taught': The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL* (ed. Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull; SBLSS, 27; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), pp. 243-62; and Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1969).

 4.   Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

theological concepts have been identified. One such uniting element is theme. These themes (i.e. Jerusalem/Zion, the Holy One of Israel,[5] glory,[6] Light,[7] and Servant,[8]) appear in all three sections, and despite the various authorship issues, act as unifying elements within the book.

The following chapter will attempt to illustrate that a thematic approach to a diachronically divided book such as Isaiah and ultimately the Twelve, forms a foundation for a unified reading of that book. This chapter will explore how theme is able to function independently within the various sections of Isaiah while at the same time unifying the book by building on and anticipating the use of theme in the surrounding sections. Such a function is essential to the use of theme in the Twelve. The first step in this process will be to study the similarities and differences between Isaiah and the Twelve in order to determine if theme can indeed play a comparable role in the Twelve. In other words, are the diachronic issues that scholars believe separate Isaiah similar to those found in the Twelve? Next, this chapter will closely examine Isaiah's key theme of Jerusalem/Zion to determine how it functions within Isaiah.[9] At the end of this section I hope to show that many of the same difficulties identified with a unified Isaiah exist also with the Twelve and that some of the same approaches used to resolve the difficulties of a fragmented Isaiah (namely theme) can also be used with similar success in the Twelve.

5.   J.J.M. Roberts, 'Isaiah in Old Testament Theology', *Int* 36 (1982), pp. 130-43; H.G.M. Williamson, 'Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel', in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* (ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg; JSOTSup, 333; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 22-28.

6.   H.G.M. Williamson, 'From One Degree of Glory to Another: Themes and Theology in Isaiah', in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (ed. Edward Ball; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 174-95.

7.   Clements, 'A Light to the Nations', pp. 57-69. R. E. Clements, ' "Arise, Shine; For your Light has Come": A Basic Theme of the Isaianic Tradition', in Broyles and Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, I, pp. 441-54.

8.   H.G.M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah* (DL; Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998); Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book', in Broyles and Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, I, pp. 155-76. (This article focuses only on the connections between Second and Third Isaiah.)

9.   I will use the terms First, Second, and Third Isaiah interchangeably with Isaiah son of Amoz, Deutero, and Trito-Isaiah, respectively, and will use them in accordance with how they are used in modern scholarship without making any personal claims about authorship.

1. *Parallels between Isaiah and the Twelve*

Before discussing how theme unites Isaiah it is important to establish how this thematic development relates to the main point of my research, namely the thematic unity of the Minor Prophets. For many years the chief method of exegesis involving Isaiah was a diachronic approach that split Isaiah into at least three parts in a search for the words of the original author. In more recent times, however, the trend has moved in a synchronic direction in which scholars have attempted to search for unifying features in Isaiah.[10] The most important methodological step in this new approach was a simple assumption: that Isaiah was intended to be read as a unified book. Scholars, most still holding to the traditional positions on a multi-author Isaiah, decided to look at the larger picture of the book as well. The result was a newfound understanding of the interrelationship between the various parts of the book. In like manner, the history and development of the Book of the Twelve contains many similarities to the history and development of the book of Isaiah. The purpose of the following section is to demonstrate that Isaiah and the Twelve share similar diachronic concerns, which thus opens up the possibility of using theme in the Twelve in a similar manner to how it has already been used in Isaiah.

a. *Similarities between Isaiah and the Twelve*

Despite some differences which will be mentioned below, the Twelve and Isaiah share some significant similarities. The first, and perhaps the most important, is the time of composition and the way both books treat these separate chronological sections. In other words, most scholars believe that both Isaiah and the Twelve were written at approximately the same time and the divisions within the books reflect those time periods. First Isaiah has a very distinctive Assyrian perspective as opposed to Deutero and Trito-Isaiah who have a late exilic/postexilic Persian point of view. The prologue of Isaiah states that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings who reigned during the height of the Assyrian conflict reflected in chs. 1–39.

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10.   Among others see Rolf Rendtorff, 'The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity. Synchronic and Diachronic Reading', in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney; JSOTSup, 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 14-32. C.R. Seitz, 'Isaiah 1–66: Making Sense of the Whole', in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (ed. C.R. Seitz; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 105-26; Seitz, 'The Divine Council'; Walter Brueggemann, 'Planned People/Planned Book?', in Broyles and Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, I, pp. 19-38. R.E. Clements, 'The Unity of the Book of Isaiah', *Int* 36 (1982), pp. 117-29. For a balancing voice which interacts with Clements's 'The Unity' see David Carr, 'Reaching for Unity in Isaiah', *JSOT* 57 (1993), pp. 61-80.

With Deutero-Isaiah and chs. 40–66, the reader is transported to the late exilic or possibly early post exilic period, where none of the above mentioned kings are named.[11] In fact, the only king mentioned in Deutero/Trito Isaiah is the Persian king Cyrus. The Twelve follows this same basic outline, though it extends the time of the Assyrian writings down to at least the reign of Josiah (640–609 BCE), if not later (Nahum/Habakkuk), during which time the Assyrian empire was crumbling. The writings within the Twelve that specifically date to the Assyrian period (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah, the only ones that mention Judean kings), indicate from their superscripts that the prophets were active during the same period as Isaiah son of Amoz. Hosea (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Jeroboam), Amos (Uzziah and Jeroboam), and Micah (Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) were all active during the Assyrian crisis. Zephaniah, which also mentions a Judean king (Josiah), is slightly later.[12]

Besides the dates of composition, both books also contain a chronological gap between sections. As with Isaiah 39 and 40, the gap between Zephaniah (written sometime during Josiah's reign) and Haggai (520 BCE), transports the reader ahead to the early postexilic period,[13] roughly fifteen years after commentators date Deutero-Isaiah and contemporary to Trito-Isaiah. The gap in time between Zephaniah and Haggai, like the one thought to exist between Isaiah 39 and 40, is jarring to the reader.[14] When Zephaniah closes, the priests and the sanctuary still exist (3.4) and the king (1.8) and his officials (3.3) still rule Jerusalem. When Haggai opens, much like Isaiah 40, the city, specifically the temple, lies in ruins and the Hebrew king is absent. In fact, similar to Deutero-Isaiah, the only reigning king mentioned in the post exilic period of the Twelve (Haggai–Malachi, though technically Malachi is undated) is the Persian King Darius (Hag. 1.1, 15; 2.10; Zech. 1.1, 7; 7.1). Here Conrad argues that there exists a slight difference in detail between how the Twelve and Deutero-Isaiah date events.[15] Unlike Deutero-Isaiah which lacks general historical markers, Haggai and Zechariah are much more specific in their use of dates, as shown by the frequent references to Darius's reign. Though they

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11. Edgar W. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah and the Twelve as Prophetic Books', in Broyles and Evans (eds.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, I, pp. 3-18 (8).

12. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', pp. 7-8. Although Joel is undated, most scholars place it during the postexilic period. The superscripts in Nahum and Habakkuk both lack specific king names, though content indicates that they most likely preceded the fall of Jerusalem. The story of Jonah also purports to have taken place during the Assyrian time period, although most commentators believe it is postexilic.

13. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 8.

14. It should be noted that despite the various orders of the Twelve, Zephaniah always precedes Haggai.

15. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 8.

do not reflect each other perfectly, there are nonetheless strong parallels between how Isaiah and the Twelve organize and divide their books along the Assyrian/early Persian time periods.

In addition to the chronological framework, scholars have argued that Isaiah and the Twelve give strong indication that both share a similar redactional history. Collins believes that the same redactional processes that were at work to bring about Isaiah were also at work throughout the pre-exilic, exilic, and postexilic periods to bring about the Twelve.[16] For Collins, both books have a lengthy pre-book phase during which the early writings and sayings of the prophets of the Twelve and Isaiah were collected together. As with Isaiah, Collins has no reason to doubt that some of the words of the prophets of the Twelve go back to the original eighth-century setting. As mentioned in the review of literature, there may be more evidence to authenticate the words of the eighth-century prophets of the Twelve than Isaiah.[17] 'When it comes to accepting the words on the page as "authentic", we are probably on safer ground in supposing authenticity for passages in Hosea and Amos than we are when discussing Isaiah'.[18] However, it must be remembered that 'the difference is a matter of degree of probability'.[19] Both works were continually collected and expanded over time, reaching a high point of influence during the time of the late Judean monarchic period (Josiah). They both survived the downfall of Jerusalem and grew in authority during the exilic period. Collins finds parallels between the prophetic works that formed the early collection of the Twelve and Isaiah 1–55. He believes that the same cultural setting, namely Babylonian liturgical prayers and preaching, helped form the early book of the Twelve slightly before Isaiah 1–55.[20]

Similarities found in the varying messages of the Twelve and Isaiah reflect the changing concerns of the exiles. Ultimately, the return from exile changed the situation and 'a revised edition of the book of The Minor Prophets soon became necessary, and again it is evident that this step parallels the probable sequence in the development of *Isaiah*'.[21] The postexilic period caused the former exiles to focus on Jerusalem, specifically the temple, which is one of the main concerns of the Persian period in the Twelve and Trito-Isaiah. Though Collins admits that these stages of development, both for Isaiah and the Twelve, are conjecture, he believes strongly in the similarities between the two books. He is certain they developed along almost identical lines and

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16.   Not as much needs to be said about Collins's redactional view on the development of the Twelve as it is discussed in the literature review.

17.   See Chapter 1, p. 12.

18.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 60.

19.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 60.

20.   Collins, *Mantle*, pp. 62-63.

21.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 63.

for identical reasons,[22] so much so, in fact, that he simply dismisses the inclusions of the names within the Twelve and the lack thereof in Isaiah as a 'superficial difference'.[23] 'The techniques of composition and presentation are the same in both books, and so are the basic elements of their contents'.[24] Though the details of the development between these two books are lacking, Collins argues that the literary evidence seems to point strongly to the fact that the books developed in similar fashion.

Coggins also finds parallels between Isaiah and the Twelve, but in this instance it is related to the organization of the Twelve and other prophetic works in general. According to Coggins, the basic structure of the Twelve begins with 'words of doom to the recalcitrant community'.[25] This includes the books from Hosea–Micah. He finds a similar message contained in Isaiah 1–33 (as well as in Jer. 1–25 and Ezek. 1–24). The parallel breaks down slightly in the second section of the Twelve which focuses on foreign nations (Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zeph. 1–2). This section does not fit perfectly with Isaiah's section against the nations because it comes slightly earlier in the book, namely chs. 12–24. However, Isaiah 34 still 'offers an obvious parallel at this point'.[26] The Persian period of the Twelve contains calls for the restoration of the community and warnings against falling away. Coggins sees thematic parallels with this conclusion and the section in Isaiah 40ff.

Besides chronological, developmental, and organizational parallels, theological similarities also exist. Conrad has noticed connections between the way Isaiah and the eighth-century prophets of the Twelve are portrayed.[27] In both instances, they are shown to be men whose prophecies are written down but are ignored by their contemporary generation, only to be referenced as authoritative by later generations. In 30.8, Isaiah is commanded to write down (כתב) his prophecies on a tablet (לוח) and also into a book (ספר), which closely parallels an earlier command to 'bind up' (צור) his testimony (Isa. 8.16). Isaiah's prophecy is for the later Babylonian time since his contemporaries are blind and deaf to his message (ex. Isa. 6.9). 'In the book of Isaiah the LORD's words spoken in the past vision of the prophet Isaiah originating in a period of Assyrian ascendancy, become audible in a future

22.   'One thing is certain, whatever the details, and that is that at the end of the lengthy and complex process which we have sketched only too briefly above The Twelve finished up as a prophetical book which, in certain important respects, was surprisingly similar to Isaiah 1–66' (Collins, *Mantle*, p. 64).

23.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 65.

24.   Collins, *Mantle*, p. 65.

25.   Coggins, 'The Minor Prophets', p. 64. Coggins understands that these three sections that he has identified in the Twelve are broad categories and that some parts may be 'out of order'.

26.   Coggins, 'Minor Prophets', p. 64.

27.   Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', pp. 8ff. What follows is a summary of his work.

time when they are read to a community at a time of Persian ascendancy'.[28] Conrad believes that the command to read what was written to the later generations comes in 40.6a: 'A voice says, "Cry out (קרא)"' and its positive effects on the blind and deaf are found in 43.8-13. In the eighth century, however, both the LORD and Isaiah know that Isaiah's prophecies will do no good to his contemporaries, but should be saved instead for the benefit of the later generations who will be more receptive.

There is a similar treatment among the Twelve. Conrad believes that the Assyrian prophets of the Twelve (Hosea–Zephaniah) are treated by the later prophets of the Twelve as books within a book.[29] They, like Isaiah of Jerusalem, have also been ignored by their immediate generation, only to find a receptive audience during the Persian Period. In the same manner of Isaiah, 'their words are portrayed as significant for another time, when read out in a period of Persian sovereignty'.[30] In Isaiah, it is possible to understand 'the former things' mentioned in Deutero-Isaiah (42.9) as a specific reference to the prophecies of First Isaiah.[31] Though not often in the Twelve, there are at least two instances during the pre-exilic prophets that involve writing. The first occurs in Nahum where his superscript opens as 'An oracle for Nineveh. The book (ספר) of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite' (Nah. 1.1). In similar language to Isa. 30.8, Habakkuk is expressly commanded to write (כתב) his vision down on tablets (הלחות) to be read by others (Hab. 2.2-3).[32] The recording of these prophecies received special attention by later writers in the Twelve, particularly Zechariah. Zechariah twice mentions a group of men called the 'former prophets'.[33] The first is Zech. 1.2-5:

> YHWH was very angry with your fathers. And you will say to them: Thus says YHWH of Hosts, 'return to me', declares YHWH of Hosts, 'and I will return to you', says YHWH of Hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets called, saying: 'Thus says YHWH of Hosts: 'Turn, I pray, from your evil ways and your evil deeds'. But they did not listen or pay attention to me, declares YHWH.

28. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 9.
29. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 9.
30. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 9.
31. Childs, *Introduction*, pp. 328-29. Also Seitz, 'Making Sense of the Whole', p. 110, although there are reasons to doubt this conclusion. See Rendtorff, 'The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity', p. 42.
32. Conrad proposes that there is a connection between the writing and 'oracle' (משׂא) which occurs in the title of both Nahum and Habakkuk (Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 10 n. 25). For the importance of משׂא see Floyd, 'The מַשָּׂא (MAŚŚĀ')', pp. 401-22. For the importance of how phrases introduce prophetic works see Edgar Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets* (JSOTSup, 376; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), particularly pp. 182-242.
33. I will later argue that Zechariah's position within the Twelve allows for a reading of 'former prophets' to include the works Hosea–Zephaniah.

The second is Zech. 7.7: 'Are these not the words which YHWH called by the hand of the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around her, and when the Negev and the Shephelah were inhabited?' Zechariah then summarizes the message of the former prophets which bears close resemblance to the preaching of Hosea, Amos, Micah and the rest of the pre-exilic Twelve who focused much of their attention on social issues. 'Thus says YHWH of Hosts, "Render true judgments, and show covenant kindness and mercy to each other. Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the sojourner, or the poor. Do not think evil in your hearts against each other"' (Zech. 7.9-10).

   If this connection between the former prophets and Hosea–Zephaniah is correct then it is appropriate to ask how Zechariah's generation learned/remembered these prophecies. Conrad suggests that the answer is Zech. 8.9. 'Thus says YHWH of Hosts, "Make your hands strong, you who these days are hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets, and who were present when the house of YHWH of Hosts was founded, the temple is to be rebuilt".' According to Conrad, the phrase 'from the mouth of the prophets' (מפי הנביאים) is idiomatic for dictation.[34] He supports this assertion with parallel usages found specifically in Jeremiah (36.4, 6, 17, 18, 27, 32), that reference Jeremiah dictating to Baruch his scribe concerning the production of a scroll. The situation presented in Zechariah is one where the Assyrian period prophets are known in the Persian period from their writings. In both Isaiah and the Twelve, the words of the Assyrian period prophets were intended to be preserved in such a way as to reappear later during the Persian period. Conrad, however, notices that they are both preserved for different reasons. In Isaiah, 'the legal ambiance associated with the preservation of Isaiah's vision is important as testimony to undergird the trial in which the LORD opposes all the nations of the world. The preservation of the prophetic writing serves divine interest'.[35] While in the Twelve, the written prophetic words serve human interests because they 'serve to call the community concerned with the restoration of the temple to repentance'.[36] Regardless of the purpose of their preservation, the importance of recording prophecies during the Assyrian period for later use in the Persian period is a strong parallel between Isaiah and the Twelve.

   Lastly, Conrad finds a parallel between Isaiah's use of servant (עבד) and the Twelve's use of angels/messengers (מלאכים). In both books during the Persian period, prophecy is seen as something of the past that eventually makes room for another phenomenon: the rise of the servant in Isaiah and the

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   34. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 12. See also p. 12 n. 30 where Conrad goes into extended discussion.
   35. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 14.
   36. Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 14.

rise of messengers/angels in the Twelve. After Isaiah 40, the prophets 'drop from the scene' and are replaced by a servant/servants who can represent either individuals or the Israelite community in general.[37] In the Twelve, a similar fading from prophets to messengers/angels occurs. Though Conrad identifies messengers/angels in both sections of the Twelve, they play different roles. In the first section (Hosea–Zephaniah), Conrad argues that angels/messengers are things of the past, mentioned only one time in relationship to the patriarch Jacob (Hos. 12.5 [ET 12.4]).[38] This changes slightly with Haggai and Zechariah, as Haggai is the only prophet among the Twelve who is specifically identified as a מלאך (1.13). This is contrasted within Haggai by the title 'the prophet' (הנביא) which occurs 5 times in the writing (1.1, 3, 12; 2.1, 10), and is significant since titles in general, as they relate to the named prophets, are rare occurrences in the Twelve. For example, in the first part of the Twelve (Hosea–Zephaniah), Habakkuk is the only one of nine prophets to be specifically identified as 'the prophet' (Hab. 1.1; 3.1).[39] This helps support Conrad's argument that there was confusion during the Assyrian Period centred around who actually was a prophet of God.[40] As shown from the five occurrences of 'the prophet' in Haggai in addition to the two other occurrences in Zechariah (Zech. 1.1, 7), this confusion does not exist during the Persian Period. Those who speak on Yhwh's behalf are known. Zechariah also shows an increased use of מלאך. The phrase 'the angel/messenger who spoke through me' (המלאך הדבר בי) occurs 11 times in Zechariah (1.9, 13, 14; 2.2 [ET 1.19], 7 [ET 2.3]; 4.1, 4, 5; 5.5, 10; 6.4).[41]

 Malachi also continues this new emphasis on the importance of מלאך. Besides his name (מלאכי 'My Messenger'), מלאך occurs 3 times in the writing. The first in 2.7 refers to the proper role of a priest, but is located in the middle of a section (2.1-9) that is actually a rebuke of a corrupt priesthood. This is in contrast to the second and third time that מלאך appears (3.1), where the faithful messenger will prepare the way for Yhwh. In addition to the increase of מלאך, the Persian prophets in the Twelve, like Deutero and

37.   Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 14. Conrad continues: 'Prophets such as Second Isaiah and Third Isaiah appear only in the post-text of historical criticism'. Beuken argues that the main theme of Trito-Isaiah is tied to these servants who rise to replace the prophet. See W.A.M. Beuken, 'The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah "The Servants of Yhwh"', *JSOT* 47 (1990), pp. 67-87.

38.   Edgar Conrad, 'The End of Prophecy and the Appearance of Angels/Messengers in the Book of the Twelve', *JSOT* 73 (1997), pp. 65-79 (67). In fact, מלאכים only occurs twice in the Assyrian part of the book: Hos. 12.5 (ET 12.4) and Nah. 2.14 (ET 2.13), where מלאכים refers specifically to the messengers of Nineveh.

39.   Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 14.

40.   Conrad, 'End of Prophecy', p. 67.

41.   Conrad, 'End of Prophecy', p. 69. Conrad also mentions that 'The Satan' who appears in 3.2 is a type of angel (p. 69 n. 12).

Trito-Isaiah, open readers to the thought that the time of the prophets is almost complete.

> And I will cause both the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness to pass away from the land. And it will happen that if any prophesy again, his father and his mother who bore him will say, 'You shall not live because you have spoken lies in the name of YHWH'. And his father and mother who bore him will pierce him through when he prophesies. And it will happen in that day, the prophets will be ashamed, each of his vision in his prophesying; they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive. He will say, 'I am not a prophet. I am a tiller of the earth; the land has been mine since my youth'. And if someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your hands?' He will reply, 'I was struck at the house of my friends' (Zech. 13.2b-6).

If prophecy is coming to an end, then each must make way for new figures to emerge, servants in Isaiah and messengers/angels in the Twelve. Subsequently, the connections with the prophets of the past are with their written words which are read to the people.[42]

   The above summary of Collins's and Conrad's work has shown that parallels between Isaiah and the Twelve exist in multiple categories. First, and probably most important, is that both books possess a similar chronological structure that progresses from the Assyrian period to the early Persian period with a gap involving the exile. Second, it is possible that both books underwent similar redactions from like-minded editors and developed at roughly the same time. Third, both books possess comparable views toward the role of prophecy and the emergence of secondary groups (servants/angels) in the place of the prophets.

b. *Differences between Isaiah and the Twelve*

In light of the similarities discussed above, it is appropriate to focus attention on the differences between Isaiah and the Twelve. Isaiah and the Twelve are not mirror copies of one another; they are instead two different books intended for different audiences and purposes. Though some of the differences are minor, the Twelve's individual prophetic superscripts are not.[43] As mentioned in the opening chapter of this project, these headings which introduce each prophet are more than a superficial difference and should not be dismissed. The superscripts which begin each writing in the Twelve have no parallel in Isaiah. Whether the headings in Isaiah were ultimately removed by later writers or were never included in the first place is a matter of discussion.[44]

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   42.   Conrad, 'Reading Isaiah', p. 15.
   43.   As noted by Ben Zvi. See Chapter 1, p. 15.
   44.   See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66* (AB, 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003), p. 29.

Regardless of how one understands the original function of superscripts in Isaiah the fact remains that the book of Isaiah which has come down through tradition to modern times contains no mention of Second or Third Isaiah or any notation indicating expansionary work. Hence, it is safe to conclude that whoever joined this book together went to the effort of removing the superscripts if they were present, or saw no need to include them in the first place. Either way, from a reader's perspective, the editorial strategy suggests that Isaiah is intended to be understood as a whole. The same cannot be said about the Twelve to the same degree. The inclusion of superscripts within the Twelve indicates that some independence was intended by the compilers and this should never be forgotten. Nonetheless, this conclusion must be balanced by other literary clues and the Twelve's overall intertextuality. Such connections reveal the compilers' intention to communicate a level of unity between the writings. Therefore, just as Isaiah's readers must hold in balance a multi-author book intended to be read as a whole, so the readers of the Twelve must hold in tension a multi-author book which was linked together and placed within a single scroll. For these reasons any unifying element must balance this tension between the independent parts and the unified whole.

c. *The Twelve and Isaiah Conclusion*

To conclude, there exist strong similarities between Isaiah and the Twelve. They both follow very similar chronological layouts. Both begin in the eighth century and pass over the exilic period to the early Persian period. The writings of the earlier eighth-century prophets become increasingly important to the later parts of the books as recorded words that spoke about the future. Both the eighth-century Isaiah and the eighth-century Twelve are portrayed as prophets who have written their prophecies down for the benefit of postexilic Judah. Both books view prophecy as something tied to the past that will eventually wane. Both make way for other groups to rise in place of 'the prophet': Isaiah makes way for the servant/servants and the Twelve make way for angels/messengers.

Collins has argued that one of the most significant similarities between Isaiah and the Twelve is their shared redactional history. It seems that both books were developed in similar settings by scholars that shared similar anxieties about their past, present and future. Lastly, the two books are laid out in similar but not identical fashion, beginning with words of doom, followed by prophecies against the nations, and concluding with sections of hope.[45] In spite of these similarities, however, differences do exist. The most

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45. Hope for Israel is not limited only to the Persian section of the Twelve; it permeates the various writings, appearing in every writing in some form.

obvious is the inclusion of superscripts in the Twelve compared to the removal (or originally absent) superscripts from Deutero and Trito-Isaiah. Though it has been argued otherwise, surely this is more than a superficial difference. As a result, the Twelve appear as a group of individuals while Isaiah stands as a prophet alone.

Isaiah and the Twelve then pose similar problems to readers who hope to approach these fragmented books as unified works. Admittedly, some readers may be initially opposed to even attempt to read the Twelve as a whole. After all, the Book has the appearance of twelve different authors who have written at different times and places. Setting aside for the moment the validity or invalidity of the redactional studies of the Twelve, it is fair for the reader to ask how the Minor Prophets can be read as a whole without ignoring the superscripts or making them irrelevant. Isaiah partly answers this question. From a reader's standpoint and despite the lack of existing superscripts, the same question asked of the Twelve could be asked of Isaiah. How is it possible to read a book that was written by what commentators agree to be multiple writers working at different times in different places? And yet, this has not stopped scholars from reading Isaiah as a whole and searching for uniting elements that are found in the book. One of these frequently mentioned uniting elements is theme. The following section will examine theme in Isaiah in an attempt to discover how it unites a variously composed and yet unified book. With this as the background, it should be possible to contemplate the use of a similar method in the Twelve.

2. *Uniting Theme of Isaiah*

There are many studies that focus on the topic of theme in Isaiah and how it functions in all three parts of the book.[46] This section will examine the dominant theme of the future of Jerusalem-Zion and its role within Isaiah. In addition to occurring in all three sections in Isaiah, Jerusalem-Zion also agrees with the definition of theme given in the previous chapter: 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work'. As is the case with most thematic studies, this review will show that though Jerusalem-Zion occurs frequently, it does not remain unchanged. Because Jerusalem-Zion is tied closely to the structure of the book, its meaning and the function it provides varies as it is used in different sections.

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46. Besides those listed on p. 41, see also John T. Willis, 'Symbolic Names and Theological Themes in the Book of Isaiah', *HBT* 23 (2001), pp. 72-92.

a. *Jerusalem-Zion*

When discussing uniting themes in Isaiah, the conversation must begin with Jerusalem and Zion. 'If there is any single theological theme that is dominant in all three parts of Isaiah, it is that of Zion. It is by means of this overall theme that the relationship between the different sections and between other themes—holiness, God's plan, the nations—is best understood'.[47] That Zion plays such an important role in the book should not come as a surprise. Isaiah son of Amoz centres his prophetic ministry in Jerusalem and focuses many of his prophecies there. Second Isaiah opens with an address directly to the city,[48] and the entire book concludes with a section calling 'all who love her' to rejoice with Jerusalem (66.10). The Jerusalem-Zion theme permeates all of Isaiah.

In chs. 1–12 Jerusalem-Zion acts as bookends to the section. Chapter 1 portrays Jerusalem as a sinful and rebellious city which has been preserved from destruction by Yhwh's mercy (1.7-9). Jerusalem will be destroyed unless it returns to its status as a 'city of righteousness' and a 'faithful city' (Isa. 1.21-26). With this call for repentance and warning of destruction freshly introduced by ch. 1, the eschatological vision of Jerusalem-Zion is given in 2.1-5. The 'end time' Jerusalem-Zion becomes a place where all the nations go to learn the law of Yhwh and in so doing, he becomes their judge who causes war and conflicts to cease.[49] The sinful city which is called to repentance and defended by Yhwh, the city humbled by destruction because of sin, and the renewed city are the dominant images of Jerusalem-Zion portrayed throughout Isaiah. In section 2.6–4.6 the same theme again appears in a 'tension-laden antithesis between indictment and a message of salvation'.[50] Chapters 6–12 deal with Jerusalem-Zion in the face of the Assyrian threat. Since the house of David is rejected (because of Ahaz's actions in ch. 7), the future of Jerusalem-Zion lies with the remnant who will survive the coming destruction (6.13; 7.22; 10.20). Chapter 12 concludes with a call for Zion to sing praise to God. 'Sing to Yhwh for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the world. Shout aloud and sing joyfully, people of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel' (Isa. 12.5-6). From beginning to end, chs. 1–12 are framed by the theme of Zion and are filled with assurances of salvation (2.2-5; 4.2-6; and ch. 12).[51]

47.   Wells, *God's Holy People*, p. 132.

48.   Zion is first mentioned by name in v. 9. As will be seen later, it is this theme that successfully bridges the major gap between chs. 39 and 40.

49.   Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl; OBT; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), p. 156. Much of what follows is based on Rendtorff's observations.

50.   Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 156.

51.   Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, pp. 156-57.

Though not as prominent as in chs. 1–12, Jerusalem still plays a key role in chs. 13–35 which is broadly focused on judgment, particularly judgment against the nations (13–23). In this section Isaiah shows that Yhwh is present in Zion (18.7; 24.23; cf. 31.9) and that he fights his enemies from this prominent location (31.4; 34:8; cf. 29.8).[52] Hope also comes from Zion. He fills the city with justice and righteousness (33.5), it becomes a refuge for the afflicted (14.32), and a place of comfort (30.19), peace (33.20), and worship (27.13).[53] Chapter 35 ends in a similar manner to ch. 12,[54] with a poem of praise that is repeated in/from Deutero-Isaiah, 51.11: 'And the ransomed of YHWH will return. They will come to Zion with shouts; everlasting joy will be upon their heads. Exaltation and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away' (Isa. 35.10). Both of these first two sections conclude with praises rising from Zion to Yhwh.

Although the following section, chs. 36–39, are mainly narrative and thus limit the Jerusalem-Zion theme, the Daughter of Jerusalem and the Daughter of Zion both appear in a poetic section as mockers of Sennacherib (37.22-35).[55] 'She despises you; she mocks you—the Virgin Daughter of Zion. Behind you she tosses her head—the Daughter of Jerusalem' (Isa. 37.22b). To conclude, in First Isaiah, Jerusalem-Zion may be a sinful city but it is nonetheless protected by Yhwh. Though the hints of both the destruction and the restoration of Jerusalem-Zion are known in the first part of the book, the overall main concern seems to be the salvation and protection of the city. This seems especially true in light of the Syro-Ephraimite threat and the Assyrian invasion that dominates First Isaiah. The future of Jerusalem-Zion in First Isaiah is a city of salvation and protection.

In Second and Third Isaiah, the development of the Jerusalem-Zion theme reaches its zenith.[56] Authorship issues once again play a role in this analysis as Clements notes,

> Once we recognize that, by the middle of the sixth century BCE, events had raised in a most dramatic fashion the question 'What is to become of Jerusalem and Mount Zion?', then we can see that the new prophetic voice which speaks in Isa 40,1-11 addresses, not only Jerusalem as a city, but the precise question which the disasters that had befallen the city raised. The theme of Mount Zion's central role as a political centre and symbol of Jewish hope

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52. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 157.
53. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 157.
54. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 157.
55. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 157.
56. This is especially true for chs. 49–55, which Melugin identifies as 'the Zion-Jerusalem section' (Roy F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40–55* [BZAW, 141; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1976], p. 148).

henceforth becomes the dominant one for the remainder of the book of Isaiah, especially in 49–55 and 60–62. In reality, however, it is not simply these chapters, but the final form of the book as a unified whole which exemplifies this.[57]

As first introduced at the end of First Isaiah with taunts against Sennacherib, and developed further in Second and Third Isaiah, Jerusalem-Zion becomes a city personified with the ability to act, speak, mourn, or rejoice.[58] Second Isaiah begins with an address directly to Jerusalem. 'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her that her service has been completed, that her punishment is accepted, that she has received from YHWH's hand double for all her sins' (Isa. 40.2). In addition, Zion is also addressed in 51.17 and actually speaks in 49.14. Though not mentioned specifically by name, Zion is personified as a barren woman in ch. 54, and is comforted in 51.3. 'For YHWH will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her dry lands, and will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of YHWH. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of song.' This personification helps carry the theme throughout the section. The new personified Jerusalem-Zion is much more explicit and less ambiguous than the one found in First Isaiah.[59] Second Isaiah in particular, emphasizes the fact that Jerusalem-Zion will be restored. Claims of salvation and restoration for Jerusalem are found in 41.27; 44.26, 28; 46.13; 51.16; 54.[60]

Chapter 54 is particularly interesting because it imports Abrahamic (54.1-3), Sinaitic (vv. 4-8), and Noachian (vv. 9-10) covenantal language to introduce the restoration of the city.[61] Jerusalem was punished, like the world in the days of Noah, but 'now I have sworn not to be angry with you and will not rebuke you' (54.9b). The destroyed city will be rebuilt more glorious than ever with Yhwh in their midst (54.11-13). Deutero-Isaiah closes in hope for those in Jerusalem with the offer of water to the thirsty (55.1) and bread to the hungry (55.2).[62] With repetitive and consistent use the Jerusalem-Zion theme reaches its apex in Deutero-Isaiah, but has a different focus from the overall protection bent of First Isaiah. 'Taken as a whole, the sayings about Zion/Jerusalem in the second part of the book of Isaiah are extremely unified in theme; they are directed entirely toward consolation and the assurance of the divine help for ruined and depopulated Jerusalem'.[63] To summarize, the future Jerusalem-Zion will be rebuilt by divine help.

57.　Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', p. 16.
58.　Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 157.
59.　Wells, *God's Holy People*, p. 133.
60.　Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 158.
61.　Wells, *God's Holy People*, p. 134.
62.　The location is based on the continued context from ch. 54. Neither Jerusalem nor Zion appears in ch. 55.
63.　Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 158.

In Trito-Isaiah, the Jerusalem-Zion theme is centred on chs. 60–62 and 65-66 and functions similarly to Second Isaiah.[64] As with Isa. 2.1-5 and 54, the eschatological Jerusalem-Zion is the focus of Third Isaiah. The glory of Yhwh will cause the restored Jerusalem to shine, drawing the nations to it (60.1-3) and bringing unimaginable wealth into the city. 'Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will be in awe and grow wide, because the wealth of the sea will be brought to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you. Herds of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah. All from Sheba will come, carrying gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of Yhwh' (Isa. 60.5-6). So much wealth, in fact, will flow into the city that the gates will never be shut, not even at night (60.11). The kings of these foreign nations will be reduced to servitude and their people used to rebuild the walls (60.10). This new Jerusalem is called by a new name, 'the City of Yhwh, Zion of the Holy One of Israel' (Isa. 60.14). It will be filled with priests in service of Yhwh (61.5) and through it all the nations will be transformed (61.11).

The Jerusalem-Zion theme is also prominent in ch. 65. In this chapter 'my people who have sought me' (Isa. 65.10c) are compared with 'you who forsake Yhwh and forget my holy mountain' (Isa. 65.11a).[65] The implications of this contrast are developed throughout the close of the book. Those who qualify as 'my people' are brought into a newly created (ברא) Jerusalem where weeping and crying are heard no more (65.19). Those who 'forget my holy mountain' are the enemies of God and face a terrible judgment of fire and sword (66.14-25). In Trito-Isaiah, then the future of Jerusalem-Zion is a rebuilt and glorious city.

As argued, the theme of Jerusalem-Zion appears throughout Isaiah, from beginning (chs. 1–2) to end (chs. 65–66). In First Isaiah the Jerusalem-Zion theme is broad. Though it opens with calls and threats of judgement against an unrepentant Jerusalem (1.7-9) it also contains a picture of a glorified, restored temple in Zion (2.1-5, cf. 51.4). These restored images, which are picked up again in Second and Third Isaiah, are not the lone focus of the section, rather, it is the calls and threats of judgement against the city in First Isaiah that are unique.[66] Restoration images in First Isaiah lay the foundation for the restoration found in Deutero/Trito-Isaiah. Isaiah 12.6[67] and 35.10 (cf. 51.11) discuss Zion in terms and tone that would be at home in Second and Third Isaiah. Such observations, in addition to the authorship issues, raise the

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64. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 158.
65. Wells, *God's Holy People*, p. 134.
66. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 159.
67. Rendtorff remarks that this verse 'clearly belongs within the tradition of the second part' (Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, p. 159). See also p. 159 n. 289.

possibility that Zion in First Isaiah, particularly chs. 2 and 12 has been reworked, relocated, or composed under the influence of exilic/post exilic situation to fit its current context and foreshadow the use of the theme in the later sections of Isaiah.[68] As will be discussed, a similar possibility exists in the Twelve where Hosea 1–3; 14, as well as the position of Joel, and the closing verses of Malachi could have been altered to highlight central themes.

The seeds of this new Jerusalem which are sown in First Isaiah (particularly 2.1-5) come to full maturation in Deutero (41.27; 44.26, etc.) and Trito-Isaiah (particularly 60). Therefore, in spite of the various authors and places by which Isaiah came into existence, the theme of Jerusalem-Zion appears in each section, and though different aspects of the theme exist, this repetitive message nonetheless brings unity and cohesion to the book. From the reader's perspective, this theme orients the reader to a central theological development, a development which is tied closely to the structure of the book. In other words, no matter the author (First, Second, or Third Isaiah, or some unknown editor) or the location (Palestine or Babylon) the reader is always able to relate to the message of the Jerusalem-Zion theme.

b. *Jerusalem-Zion as it Relates to Structure*
The above section provided a detailed examination of how the theme of Jerusalem-Zion functions within Isaiah and how it relates to the overall message of the book. The section that follows will examine how theme relates to the structure of the book which is a crucial role in the overall definition of theme itself.

As with Malachi in the Twelve, Trito-Isaiah acts as a conclusion to the book. Many of the themes and ideas introduced in the opening chapters (1–5) of First Isaiah as well as the first 11 verses of chapter 40 find completion in the closing chapters of Trito-Isaiah (particularly chs. 65–66).[69] This is also true for the Jerusalem-Zion theme which is part of an overall framework for Deutero-Isaiah and Isaiah as a whole. The parallels between 65–66 and 40 are as follows:

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68.   For an in depth discussion on the critical issues surrounding Isa. 2.1-4 see H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 147-55; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4*, pp. 164-74. See also Williamson, 'From One Degree of Glory', pp. 189-90. Here Williamson discusses the possibility that *kābôd* was also inserted into First Isaiah during the exilic period.

69.   Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40–66*, p. 16. Motyer notes that the main links with the Jerusalem/Zion theme are between chs. 1–39 and 56–66 (Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, p. 17). As evidenced by the following charts, however, Childs, argues that there are strong parallels between chs. 65–66 and ch. 40.

65.1	God's presence manifested: Here am I	40.9	Behold, your God
66.15	God comes in fire for judgment	40.10	God comes with might, his reward with him
65.16	Israel's former troubles are forgotten, hidden from God's eyes	40.2	Israel's warfare is ended and iniquity pardoned
66.13	God comforts his people	40.1	Comfort, comfort my people
65.18	Gladness and joy for Jerusalem	40.11	Jerusalem, herald of good tidings
65.10	Sharon, a pasture for flocks	40.11	He feeds his flock like a shepherd
66.18-19	God's glory among the nations	40.5	His glory revealed to all flesh[70]

Childs also notes the parallels between 65–66 and 1.1–2.4 as follows.

65.2	God spreads out his hands to a rebellious people	1.2	Sons I reared, they rebelled against me
65.3	A people who provoke God	1.4	The whole head sick, utterly estranged
65.3	They corruptly sacrificed in gardens	1.29	You will blush for the gardens
65.6	God will repay into their bosom	1.5	Why will you continue to be smitten?
65.8	I will not destroy them all	1.9	If he had not left a remnant, then like Sodom…
65.15	His servants will be called by a different name	1.26	You will be called the city of righteousness
66.18ff.	All nations will come to my holy mountain	2.1-4	Let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh[71]

Most commentators would agree that Jerusalem-Zion, like all important themes, is part of the overall structure and helps shape the book. This further illustrates the tension between the diachronic and synchronic approaches to Isaiah. 'Once we look away from the concern with individual authorship as a controlling principle and focus instead on the relationship between prophecy and Mount Zion, the site of the most central religious institution of Israel, we can make better sense of the complex shape which the book of Isaiah displays'.[72]

The rebelliousness of Jerusalem-Zion that has led to its destruction is undone in chs. 65–66. In ch. 1, Zion is left 'like a booth in a vineyard, like a

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70.   Childs, *Isaiah*, p. 543.

71.   Childs, *Isaiah*, pp. 543-44.

72.   Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', p. 10. Clements goes on to argue that this shape gives strong evidence for multiple authors/editors at work in Isaiah.

hut in a cucumber field, like a city under siege' (Isa. 1.8b-d). In ch. 65, however, the tone is much more pleasing. Jerusalem is created to 'be a delight' (65.18) over which Yhwh will rejoice (65.19). The city that was once a harlot (1.21) will again be a place of joy (65.18b-19). The city besieged (1.8c) is now forever made safe and welcomes foreign nations (66.18-21). The glorious prophecy of the central and restored Zion (2.1-5) is seen in more detail in 65.17-25 and 66.18-24. It is a city of comfort and abundance (66.7-11). The wicked and disobedient of ch. 1 who have rebelled (1.2) and forsaken (1.4) Yhwh are harshly dealt with in 65–66. 'And they will go out and look upon the corpses of those who rebelled against me; for their worm will not die, their fire will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all flesh' (66.24, cf. 65.1-16). The sound also rises from the temple and the city as Yhwh destroys his enemies (66.6). These structural parallels, however, are not limited to connections between chs. 1–2 and 65–66 only. As Childs has shown in his chart the Jerusalem-Zion theme is also found in the main division between First and Second Isaiah in ch. 40. The calls to comfort the people of Zion (40.1-2) are also answered in the closing chapter. 'As a mother comforts her child, so I—I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem' (66.13). Jerusalem-Zion thus appears at the juncture of almost every major division in Isaiah: 1, 12, 35, 40, 60, and 65–66.

   In the previous chapter, I argued that part of the role that a theme plays in a book is to help provide structure for the book and a reason for the inclusion and exclusion of certain materials. From this review of the relationship of the Jerusalem-Zion theme to the overall structure of Isaiah, the reader can see that this theme does just that. When read as a whole, the book of Isaiah focuses on Jerusalem.

> Its shape has been brought about by the desire to uphold the central claims of Jerusalem as a religious and spiritual centre first in a very positive and triumphalist manner in the wake of the events surrounding Sennacherib's capture of the city in 701 BCE, and then, more than a century later, after the further disasters of 589 and 587 BCE. Its message is clearly 'Let Jerusalem live—even though the temple has been destroyed!'[73]

c. *Jerusalem-Zion as Bridge between 39–40*
At this point it is necessary to ask, 'If theme is such an obvious uniting factor in Isaiah, why has it taken so long to become a major focus of Isaianic studies?' According to Clements, the search for authorship in Isaiah has prevented scholars from seeing these connections in the text. Clements argues that theme and other unifying factors such as structure and motif could not properly be discovered until the belief in a one author Isaiah was set aside. 'To a considerable extent the search for such factors could only really begin,

   73.   Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', pp. 9-10.

once the mistaken belief in the unity of authorship of all sixty-six chapters was finally abandoned. That unity was explicable in terms of a single author became a dangerous device for failing to note the real basis of the book's unity.'[74] The reverse of this, which focuses too closely on the divisions within the work, is also an obstacle. 'At the same time, the attempt to counter this by assuming that we are essentially dealing with two, or more probably three, separate and unconnected books of prophecy, with a corresponding trinity of authors, has also proved misleading'.[75] Though fully aware of the differences in authorship, it is in viewing the work as a whole that these unifying features become visible and the main gap between chs. 39–40 can be bridged. The goal then is to hold these two separate approaches, the desire for unity and the knowledge of authorship, in tension.

In this case, the theme of Jerusalem-Zion combines the synchronic and diachronic issues. 'In reality the connection between chs. 1–39 and 40–66 can be fully understood in terms of the centrality of the theme of Zion-Jerusalem as the centre of divine rule and authority for the formation of the book of Isaiah'.[76] If this focus on Jerusalem-Zion is correct, then chs. 40–66, which commentators believe were most likely written post 587 BCE, seek to answer a question which the original readers would have asked: 'What future can there be for Zion, now that the temple has been destroyed?'[77] In other words, though the diachronic issues form the basis for this theme with the historical events involving Jerusalem-Zion in 701, 586/7, 515 etc., it is the synchronic understanding of Yhwh's involvement with Jerusalem-Zion during these events that brings unity to the book.

Therefore, though the change in tone from chs. 39–40 is abrupt, the reader is not disoriented by this because ch. 40 continues the theme of Jerusalem-Zion with the words 'speak tenderly to Jerusalem' (40.2). Chapters 36–39 have prepared the reader for ch. 40 and the changes that would follow. Chapter 39 ends with a prophecy of the Babylonian captivity, and when ch. 40 opens, that captivity has taken place. The words of protection offered in 37.33-35 (particularly v. 35) must be understood in light of a new historical (diachronic) reality. For this reason, the bridge between 39–40 is not the prophet Isaiah, since his name is not mentioned, nor does he take a prominent role in the chapter, but instead, what has happened to Jerusalem itself.[78] The rest of Isaiah, particularly Trito-Isaiah, seeks to answer this question.[79]

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74. Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', p. 5.

75. Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', pp. 5-6.

76. Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', p. 8.

77. Clements, 'Zion as Symbol', p. 8. According to Clements, this question has 'pervaded the entire *traditio* of Isaiah's prophesying'.

78. Seitz argues that much of the disagreement centred on Isa. 40.1-8 is the result of a failure to understand the chapter within the context of the book. 'The book of Isaiah is not expanded [by chapter 40] on the basis of the prophetic individual Isaiah (the "traditional

3. *Conclusion*

This section attempted to show that my proposal for a unified approach to a book as divided as the Twelve has precedent and parallel in the multi-author book of Isaiah. The history of modern research in Isaiah has continually reinforced the belief that Isaiah is a diachronically divided book. Depending on which commentator is expressing his/her views, Isaiah was composed by numerous hands over hundreds of years, in different locations for different audiences. Additionally, after the authors finished their work, Isaiah went through a redaction phase in which more phrases and sections were added, removed, or rearranged in order to bring the book into its present form. During this process, the diachronic superscripts within the text, if they ever existed, were removed. According to scholars, the process probably took centuries. In spite all of this unity remains. Isaiah is structured in such a way as to point its subsequent readers towards the theme of Jerusalem-Zion. This theme acts as a unifying agent, appearing in every section of Isaiah and helping to bring structure to the book. As I have noted in the previous chapter, it is possible for a unifying theme to shift emphasis throughout the book. This is apparent with Jerusalem-Zion, which runs the gamut of rebellious city, protected city, punished city, and finally a restored and glorious city. Though these shifts in emphasis are possibly related to authorship, the theme nonetheless survives and stretches the length of the book, bringing the reader along to a glorious ending. It reappears and orients the reader to the main theme and thesis of the work: the answer to the question, 'What is to become of Jerusalem?' Thus, Jerusalem-Zion matches the definition of theme presented in the previous chapter.

It is fair, then, at this stage of the project to ask how theme in Isaiah relates to thematic development in the Twelve. Following Conrad, Coggins, and Collins, I have argued that scholars have noted strong parallels between Isaiah and the Twelve. For example, Collins has argued that Isaiah and the Twelve share a similar redactional history, while Coggins has argued that both share a similar structure. Conrad has argued for similar times of composition and how the earlier, eighth-century sections are treated by those who come after them. From a scholarly standpoint, the only significant difference between Isaiah and the Twelve remains the superscripts.[80] This, however, is where the use of theme in Isaiah becomes most helpful.

view"), but solely on the basis of the enduring word of God, which has broken down ("the flower fades when the spirit of the Lord blows upon it") and will now rise up ("but the word of our God endures forever")'. Seitz, 'The Divine Council', p. 245.

79. See Oswalt, 'Righteousness in Isaiah', pp. 187ff.

80. It is interesting to note, however, that from a practical standpoint, many Isaiah scholars function as if the Isaian superscripts are still located in the text.

Clements has argued for a dual approach to Isaiah, one in which both diachronic and synchronic elements are taken into consideration. The two methods work together. The synchronic elements, like theme, are given the attention and respect they deserve as unifying elements, but at the same time are also understood in their diachronic setting. I suggest that a similar approach should be used in relationship to the Twelve. In the Twelve, the synchronic and diachronic elements are evident. Nogalski's catchwords and other redactional elements are well known, while the superscripts clearly separate the books from each other. As Clements argues with the division between Isaiah 39–40, a balance can be reached. He achieved this by noting the carry-over theme of Jerusalem taking prominence but at the same time made reference to what the Jerusalem-Zion theme would mean to those reading it from a post-587 point of view. He argued that theme reached over the gap in time and authorship and brought unity between the two sections. Though in practice the synchronic elements may take a slightly more prominent role in this approach, it is impossible to understand the synchronic themes without asking the proper diachronic questions.

Much in the same way as with Isaiah, a thematic approach to the Twelve can reach over the diachronic elements and bring unity to the book, without destroying each prophet's historical uniqueness. As will be shown in the exegetical chapters that follow, the use of שׁוב and the call to return in the Twelve resembles Isaiah's use of the Jerusalem-Zion theme: שׁוב is found in each writing, and opens (24× in Hosea) and closes (7× in Malachi, including 3.24) the Book. Additionally, שׁוב spans the gap between the pre-exilic (Zeph. 3.20) and post exilic (Hag. 2.17; Zech. 1.3) sections of the Twelve. More importantly, however, the following exegesis will show that the call to return provides a unifying voice that gives order and shape to this multi-author work. In this way it will be shown that the call to return (שׁוב) matches the definition of theme provided earlier in the project: 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work'.

Chapter 4

HOSEA

The previous chapters focused on a history of research, the definition of theme and its function in Isaiah, and have attempted to lay a foundation for a study of theme as it relates to a unified reading of the Twelve. With theme now properly defined and its function within a multi-author prophetic book examined, it is now appropriate to explore the main focus of this project—the function of the שׁוב theme within the book of the Twelve. Because of the limits of this project, the following chapter will present a detailed examination of שׁוב as it appears in Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Zechariah, and Malachi, and the rest of the Twelve. The purpose of the chapter will be to explore how the return theme of the Twelve[1] unites the Book.

1. *Introduction*

Hosea begins the Twelve in both the LXX and the MT orders. Its unusual opening in which the prophet's marriage becomes an illustration for the overall message of the writing has attracted plenty of scholarly attention, more recently from those interested in feminist studies.[2] In addition, the alternating prophecies of woe and weal provide an interesting balance between the judgments and blessings of Yhwh. In Hosea the people have violated Yhwh's covenant and must suffer the effects of the covenant curses, and yet because of Yhwh's grace, hope and the promise of restoration, albeit future restoration, remains. Because of the vacillation between woe and weal, Yhwh's emotions are particularly wide-ranging in Hosea from the loving-kindness of 2.16-25,[3] to the reluctant distress of ch. 11, to the open anger of ch. 13, before finally returning once more to promises of covenant restoration (ch. 14). Such reactions are the result of the broken covenant relationship

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1. Previously defined as: 'As the people struggle to turn (שׁוב) from covenant failure toward YHWH in repentance and receive his blessing, YHWH struggles to turn (שׁוב) from judgment toward his people in grace' (Chapter 2, p. 39).

2. For example, see Alice A. Keefe, *Woman's Body and the Social Body in Hosea* (JSOTSup, 338; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

3. Unless otherwise indicated, all verse numbers are according to the MT.

between Yhwh and his people which is at the heart of Hosea's message. Hosea's plea is that the people of Israel will once more enter into a renewed covenant relationship with Yhwh, a plea that revolves around the prophet's use of שׁוב.

Hosea's 24 uses of שׁוב (22 in verbal form and 2 in nominal form) are the most among the Twelve[4] which, along with Zechariah (17×), makes exploring each occurrence difficult. For this reason, the following section will attempt to examine שׁוב by grouping together like uses. This will allow for a brief yet detailed discussion that will show how שׁוב is used in each instance and how integral it is in the overall theology of the Twelve's opening writing.[5] The three main categories are שׁוב as Punishment, שׁוב as Restoration (3.5; 6.11b; 11.9; 14.5, 8), and שׁוב as Repentance. שׁוב as Punishment will be grouped into three subsections: Recompense (4.9; 12.3, 15), Exile (8.13; 9.3; 11.5), and Miscellaneous Punishment (2.11; 5.15). שׁוב as Repentance will also be grouped into three subsections: Refusal to Repent (5.4; 7.10, 16; 11.5), Reluctant Repentance (2.9), and Call to Repentance (6.1; 12.7; 14.2, 3, [5]). This will demonstrate that Hosea, as the first writing of the Twelve, lays the foundation for the relational concept of return that is so important for the writings that follow. The people will either turn toward Yhwh in covenant loyalty and receive the covenant blessings that result from such a relationship, or the people will turn away from Yhwh with political alliance and cultic idolatry and suffer the effects of the covenant curses. Likewise, Yhwh will turn towards his people either in judgment or grace. The struggle for both groups is apparent—while the people struggle with their sinful nature/ culture to turn towards Yhwh, Yhwh struggles with his need for holiness and the desire to love Israel. That a turning (שׁוב) takes place in either case further emphasizes the reciprocal nature of return in the Twelve. In this way, Hosea introduces the reader to the Twelve's central message of 'Return to me and I will return to you'. Hosea's calls to return specify Yhwh's desire for such a

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4.   While this chapter focuses on the verbal forms, the nominal forms will be discussed in relation to the former. This number does not include the questionable occurrence of אוֹשִׁיבְךָ in Hos. 12.10 (ET 12.9. It is possible that the word the NIV reads as 'I will make you live in tents' (אוֹשִׁיבְךָ) is a hiphil 1cs + 2ms suffix form of שׁוב rather than the more accepted יָשַׁב. In fact two computer programs, *Libronix Digital Library System* and *Bible Works* counted אוֹשִׁיבְךָ as a שׁוב occurrence. If this were the case, the verse would read, 'I will cause you to return to tents again'. However, every commentary consulted reads אוֹשִׁיבְךָ with the NIV's 'dwell', and thus from the root יָשַׁב. This reading agrees with both the LXX (ἔτι κατοικιῶ σε ἐν σκηναῖς) and the Vulgate (*adhuc sedere te faciam in tabernaculis*).

5.   These divisions are but one of a number of ways to approach שׁוב in Hosea. It should be noted that though this approach separates the uses of שׁוב from one another, within the writing itself, they often combine and overlap. By organizing the chapter in this way, I hope to bring a more systematic approach to the use of שׁוב in Hosea.

restored relationship, but the pronouncements of destruction indicate that such a relationship remains far off. Nevertheless, while Hosea's original listeners may have ignored the prophet's pleas, by reading Hosea within the context of the Twelve, those pleas to return, with all their understood consequences, are issued anew to a Persian audience that must once again make a similar choice.

As Sweeney argues, Hosea is well suited for thematic reasons to serve as an introduction for the entire Twelve.[6] The opening chapters which illustrate the troubled marriage of the prophet serve as a fitting analogy for Israel's unfaithful relationship with her husband, Yhwh.[7] Yhwh's exasperation at the actions of his unfaithful bride has resulted in his rejection of her (1.6, 9) and her eventual punishment (1.4). Yet the hope of reconciliation remains (3.5) and it is this message and continued calls for return after destruction that echo through the Twelve. Sweeney argues that by emphasizing the message of reconciliation, Hosea 'thereby stands as a programmatic introduction to a major issue posed by the Twelve, the restoration of Israel and its relationship with YHWH following punishment at the hands of various nations'.[8] Though in the LXX order Hosea directly precedes Amos, in the MT Hosea proves an appropriate predecessor to Joel. In Joel, 'the portrayal of cosmic upheaval and restoration feeds on the imagery of Hosea, which portrays natural upheaval of the land as a correlate to the disruption of Israel's relationship with YHWH (Hos. 4) and thereby expresses the cosmic dimensions of the scenario that will come to the forefront again in Zechariah'.[9] In this way, Hosea prepares the reader to encounter subsequent issues raised by Joel and the rest of the Twelve.

2. *The Uses of* שוב *in Hosea*

a. שוב *as Punishment*

The reciprocal nature of שוב is demonstrated by Hosea's use of שוב as punishment—if the people do not return to Yhwh, then they will nonetheless experience a return that is both undesired and unexpected. The people have

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6. Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (BO; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), p. 3.

7. For Sweeney's understanding of the overall organization of the book see Marvin A. Sweeney, 'A Form-Critical Rereading of Hosea', http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article7.htm (10 March 2009). Hos. 1–3 has long been recognized as a diachronically separate work. For a recent discussion on the issues and publications surrounding the opening section of Hosea see Brad E. Kelle, 'Hosea 1–3 in Twentieth-Century Scholarship', *CRBS* 7 (February 2009), pp. 179-216, http://cbi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/7/2/179 (24 April 2009).

8. Sweeney, 'Sequence', p. 56.

9. Sweeney, 'Sequence', p. 59.

violated Yhwh's covenant and as a result, face the full force of his covenant curses. In Hosea, that punishment entails the returning of deeds, a return to exile, the confiscation of their material blessings, as well as the removal of his presence. As is the case throughout the Twelve, the purpose of this punishment is to chasten his people so that they will one day return to him.

i) שוב *as Recompense.* שוב as recompense occurs three times in Hosea and is Yhwh's proportional response to Israel's failing actions. This is a judgmental use of שוב that is tied closely to Yhwh's covenant lawsuits (ריב) against Israel.

- 4.9—'And it will be, like people like priests; and I will visit his ways upon him and I will return (אשיב) his deeds to him'.
- 12.3/ET 12.2—'YHWH has a charge to bring against Judah; and will visit upon Jacob in accordance to his ways, and will return (ישיב) to him in accordance to his deeds'.
- 12.15/ET 12.14—'Ephraim has provoked bitter anger, and his blood guilt he will leave upon him, and his reproach his Lord will return (ישיב) to him'.

Holladay classifies these three uses of שוב as '"give back" ([on] to someone recompense, usually punishment or revenge)' and equates it with the English idiom 'pay back'.[10] Such a definition is certainly apt, though it should be clarified that the 'pay back' in each instance is the result of Yhwh's actions and therefore not revenge in the strictest sense, but rather divine retribution for covenant failures. In all three instances, return is connected to something Israel has done to offend Yhwh, in this case 'his deeds' (מעלליו 4.9; 12.3) and 'his contempt/reproach' (חרפתו 12.15). The end result is a reciprocal act of punishment.

The similarities between the form of 4.9 and 12.3 are obvious, with the only significant differences being the speaker (Yhwh in 4.9; the prophet in 12.3 which changes the verb from first to third person) and the insertion of the more specific Jacob for 4.9's ambiguous עליו:

(4.9) ופקדתי עליו דרכיו ומעלליו אשיב לו

(12.3) ולפקד על־יעקב כדרכיו כמעלליו ישיב לו

In Hosea 4, Yhwh brings a covenant lawsuit (ריב) against his people,[11] and charges them with lacking faith (אמת), love (חסד), and knowledge (דעת) of

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10.   William L. Holladay, *The Root ŠÛBH in the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), p. 95. He further identifies שוב in 4.9 and 12.15 as 'object a [*sic*] punishment or evil' which differs from the use in 12.3 in which the object is lacking (pp. 95-96).

11.   For a historical review of the ריב genre issue see Herbert B. Huffmon, 'The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets', *JBL* 78 (1959), pp. 285-95; James Limburg, 'The Root

Yhwh (4.1). From this foundation of failure spring the covenant violations of false swearing (אלה וכחש), murder (רצח), theft (גנב), and adultery (נאף) (4.2). With such charges laid against the people in general, 4.4 introduces the more specific troubled priesthood, whose failure is expanded in 4.5-8. The connection between the people and priests (and prophets) is notable. In 4.5, when the priests stumble, the prophets stumble with them. Yhwh then passes judgment (דמה), but he does so not on the prophets or priests specifically, but rather on 'your mother', a subject clarified in the opening of the following verse 'my people are destroyed (דמה) for lack of knowledge' (4.6a).[12] Thus, all levels of Israelite society suffer. Hosea 4.6b returns to the reciprocal nature of action/punishment:

> Priests' action: 'For you, you have rejected knowledge' (כי־אתה הדעת מאסת)[13]
>
> Yhwh's parallel response: 'I will reject you as priests for me' (ואמאסאך מכהן לי)
>
> Priests' action: 'You forgot the Torah of your God' (ותשכח תורת אלהיך)
>
> Yhwh's parallel response: 'I will forget your children, even I!' (אשכח בניך גם־אני).[14]

ריב and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 291-304; Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rîb-Pattern)* (JSOTSup, 9; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978); Michael De Roche, 'Yahweh's RÎB Against Israel: A Reassessment of the so-called "Prophetic Lawsuit" in the Preexilic Prophets', *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 563-74; D.R. Daniels, 'Is there a "Prophetic Lawsuit" Genre?', *ZAW* 99 (1987), pp. 339-60; Clauss Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Cambridge: Lutterworth; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 199-200.

12. There is some difficulty with the phrase 'I will cut off your mother' (ודמיתי אמך). For a discussion see G.I. Davies, *Hosea* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 118-19. Because of the parallel verb of destruction mentioned in the following line (דמה), I agree with Sweeney. 'The concluding statement by YHWH, "and I will destroy your mother", is enigmatic and the cause of many suggestions to emend the text. It is very likely a reference to Israel portrayed as Gomer, the wife of Hosea in Hos 1:2-9, who bears him the children who symbolize Israel. Just as Hosea will punish his wife, the mother of his children, so YHWH will punish the "mother" of the priesthood' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 47).

13. The third aleph in ואמאסאך is difficult and in fact has been omitted by multiple manuscripts. The *BHS*'s suggestion ואמאסך אני, which would place more emphasis on the first person, finds some support in the LXX (κἀγὼ ἀπώσομαι σὲ). McComiskey adds 'The א that follows the final radical of this verb is difficult to identify grammatically. It may be the vestige of an early voluntative or emphatic form. In all probability it is a scribal error induced by the preceding מ which also precedes א and is somewhat similar in form to ס' (Thomas McComiskey, 'Hosea', *in The Minor Prophets*, I [ed. Thomas McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992], pp. 1-238 [61]).

14. Yhwh's concluding 1cs pronoun (אני) contrasts with the priests' opening 2ms pronoun (אתה).

Thus Yhwh's judgmental actions are parallel to the sinful actions of the priests. This reciprocal punishment lays the foundation for the reciprocal punishment in the שוב statement of 4.9.

But are the threats posed in 4.9 directed against the people or the priests? The ambiguity of the language in 4.9 makes identifying the subject difficult. The Hebrew literally reads, 'And it will be like people like priests. And I will visit upon him his ways and his deeds I will return to him'. McKeating notes that the phrase 'like people like priests' 'means either (1) that God will inflict the same judgment on them…or (2) that the people are becoming as corrupt as their priesthood, being faced with such bad examples, or (3) the reverse, that the priests behave no better than common men'.[15] Though the meaning of the passage is plain—that the people and the priest will suffer equally—because of the specific focus on the priests in the immediate verses, it is best to understand the judgment of 4.9 as speaking specifically to the priests. As Sweeney notes, 'as the people incur sin and guilt that must be punished, so the priests will be punished for their sin and guilt'.[16] The punishment threatened in 4.9b is detailed in 4.10: 'They will eat but not be satisfied; they have fornicated but will not increase…' Thus Yhwh will frustrate their efforts.

As with 12.3, the שוב of 4.9 is tied to the priest's ways (דרכיו) and deeds (ומעלליו) mentioned earlier in the passage.[17] Hosea charges that the priests have sinned (חטאו) against Yhwh (4.7) and also 'consume the sin of my people and their iniquity they lift up to their being' (4.8). Stuart argues that this last statement points to a misuse of the sin offering and indicates 'the Old Testament equivalent of selling indulgences'.[18] All of these, however, are but symptoms of the root cause of rejecting knowledge (הדעת מאסת) and ignoring the Torah (ותשכח תורת אלהיך) (4.6). Therefore, it is these 'deeds' and 'ways' that are the reason for the שוב punishment in 4.9.

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15.   Henry McKeating, *Amos, Hosea, Micah* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 98.

16.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 48. See also Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC, 31; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), pp. 79-80. This position is not universally held. See also McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 63.

17.   Despite the parallel uses of 'deeds' in 4.9 and 12.3, מעלל does not always indicate negative actions (Isa. 3.10; cf. Yhwh's deeds Ps. 77.12 [ET 77.11]), though that is its majority use. For more see Eugene Carpenter, 'עלל', in *NIDOTTE*, III, pp. 423-25.

18.   Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 79. He continues, 'But the northern priests were presumably exacting sin offerings (Lev 4) from the people in return for declaring them forgiven'. Sweeney likewise argues for a priestly misuse of the sin offering. 'Again, the pun aids in portraying the guilt of priests who eat the sin offerings of the people even though they fail to instruct the people properly and thereby lead them into sin in the first place' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 48).

As with 4.9, in 12.3 the people of Judah, set in parallel with the patriarch Jacob,[19] face a court setting in which Yhwh has brought a charge (ריב) against them. Though the English versification is poorly placed and disrupts the flow of the section with a new chapter division, the verses which precede 12.3 (12.1-2 [ET 11.12–12.1]) detail the 'deeds' (מעלליו) which have resulted in Yhwh's charge. Three times Ephraim/Israel is charged with deceit (כחש, מרמה 12.1, כזב, 12.2) while Judah is charged with being 'unruly (רד)' (NIV)[20] towards Yhwh (12.1). Ephraim 'feeds[21] on the wind and pursues the east (wind) all day', and 'multiplies destruction (שד)' (12.2). Lastly, the prophet accuses Ephraim of improper foreign relations with Assyria and Egypt (12.2), a charge which occurs throughout Hosea (5.13; 7.11; 8.9). Such actions culminate with the ריב statement against Judah and the שוב statement against Jacob in 12.3.

In 4.10 Yhwh specifies what 'return of deeds' mentioned in the שוב statement of 4.9 will entail. However in 12.3, though judgment is announced, the details of that judgment are lacking in the following verses. While the verbal parallels between 12.3 and 4.9 in the first half of the verse are strong, the results are noticeably different. In fact 12.3-6 builds to another use of שוב, though one not centred on destruction but rather on a call to return (12.7 [ET 12.6]). In this verse the prophet urges the people to return to Yhwh with covenantal orders to 'keep love and justice' and to 'wait upon your God continually'. McComiskey argues that this call is consistent with the Jacob imagery used to this point in ch. 12. 'This admonition follows the portrait of Jacob's persistent efforts to gain divine favor. Hosea's words reflect both the

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19.   In this instance the life of Jacob is used to illustrate the shortcomings of Israel's founder. 'Hosea's point throughout this section is that Israel had proven to be every bit as deceptive as the nation's namesake Jacob (Israel)' (Charles H. Silva, 'The Literary Structure of Hosea 9–14', *BSAC* 164 [October–December 2007], pp. 435-53 [445]).

20.   The meaning of רד is disputed. Most connect it to the root רוד which the BDB defines as to 'wander restlessly, roam'. See also Elmer A. Martens, 'רוד', in *NIDOTTE*, III, pp. 1067-68. From this, some have argued that Hosea's statement is positive toward Judah and thus translate the vav as a conjunctive, in contrast to Ephraim. McComiskey offers the following translation: 'but Judah still wanders freely with God and is established with the Holy One' (McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 196). See also Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 118; James L. Mays, *Hosea* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 161. This, however, seems to stand contrary to the charge brought against Judah in 12.3, as well as the majority of the uses of Judah since Hos. 4 which portrays Judah negatively (5.5, 10, 12, 13, 14; 6.4, 11; 8.14; 10.11). Macintosh takes a more pessimistic tone and defines רוד as 'to seek to dominate' or 'to seek the mastery of' (A.A. Macintosh, *Hosea* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997], p. 474). Therefore, despite some noted opposition, the judgment statement of 12.3 argues for a negative understanding of this phrase, one that finds fault with Judah.

21.   This translation follows BDB's suggestion for רעה.

attitude of the ancient patriarch and the contemporary situation'.[22] As happens frequently in the Twelve, the threat of שׁוב has resulted in the call of שׁוב to covenant renewal and fidelity. 'Altogether, Hosea's appeal to Israel to return to YHWH constitutes the fundamental goal of his discourse and his portrayal of Jacob/Israel'.[23] However, the overall tone of ch. 12 seems to indicate that the prophet's call to return would go unheeded.

Chapter 12 concludes with the last recompense use of שׁוב in Hosea. Unlike 4.9 and 12.3 where payment comes as the result of 'his deeds' (מעלליו) and 'his ways' (דרכיו), in 12.15 (ET 12.14) recompense is required because of 'his contempt' (וחרפתו). The nominal form of חרף can mean 'reproach, shame, disgrace, scorn, insult, contempt, threat',[24] thus summarizing Israel's/Jacob's disdainful attitude displayed toward Yhwh throughout the chapter. Hosea 12 has detailed Ephraim's/Jacob's numerous violations: deceit (12.1), violence (12.2), improper treaties (12.2), dishonest merchants (12.8), abusive wealth (12.9), and improper worship (12.12) which ultimately 'provoked (him/YHWH) bitterly' (12.15). Now those violations will be returned to Israel in equal portion in the concluding statement to the covenant lawsuit initiated in 12.3.[25] That it is 'his Lord' who will do this further emphasizes Yhwh's position as the historical God of Israel (cf. 12.10-11, 14). The significance of this punishment, particularly the use of 'contempt' (חרף) is seen throughout the Twelve. Micah 6.16 also uses 'contempt' as a concluding punishment, while Joel 2.17 indicates it is something to be feared. In Zeph. 2.8 the contempt of Moab will cause it 'to become like Sodom' (2.9). Conversely, however, the removal of this reproach can be seen as a sign of forgiveness and covenantal restoration (Joel 2.17; Zeph. 3.18).

To summarize, the idea of recompense in connection with שׁוב in Hosea is well established. In all three instances the actions (מעלל/דרך/חרף) of wayward Israel have prompted a judicial (ריב) response that resulted in שׁוב. Israel had reached Yhwh's limit of covenant patience and an equal portion of punishment awaited them. The only hope, if any, was for Israel to turn [שׁוב] to Yhwh (12.7). If Israel so refused, they would experience a turning [שׁוב] that was both undesired and unexpected. In other words, if the people would not return [שׁוב] in repentance, then Yhwh would turn [שׁוב] in judgment. The idea of שׁוב as recompense is found in three other locations in the Twelve (Joel 4.4, 7 [ET 3.4, 7]; Obad. 15). Ironically, all three instances involve nations other than Israel/Judah: Tyre, Sidon, Philistia (Joel), and Edom (Obadiah) whose infringements relate to the general abuse of Judah, rather than specific covenant violations.

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22. McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 202.
23. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 123.
24. John E. Hartley, 'חרף', in *NIDOTTE*, II, pp. 280-83 (280).
25. Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 195.

ii) שׁוּב *as Exile.* שׁוּב as exile is tied closely to Yhwh's displeasure with Israel's relationship with Assyria and Egypt throughout Hosea. The use of שׁוּב in this section should be seen as the reversal of the Exodus and a predicted realization of the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28.

- 8.13b—Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins: they will return (יָשׁוּבוּ) to Egypt.
- 9.3—They will not remain in the land of YHWH; Ephraim will return (וְשָׁב) to Egypt and in Assyria they will eat unclean food.
- 11.5—He will return (יָשׁוּב) to the land of Egypt[26] and Assyria will be his king because they have refused to return (לָשׁוּב).

Holladay understands these occurrences as 'Motion back to the point of departure',[27] and שׁוּב as return to exile meets this definition. What lies behind this use of שׁוּב is Israel's misplaced trust in the superpowers Egypt and Assyria and the covenantal curses of Deut. 28.49-68, specifically v. 68.

> YHWH will cause you to return to Egypt in ships, by a way which I said you would never see again. And there you will offer yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you (28.68).

26.   Here the Hebrew is difficult. As written in the MT, the line actually reads as a negative statement 'He will not return to the land of Egypt' (לֹא יָשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם). Such a reading is problematic in light of 8.13b and 9.3 as well as the emphasis on Egypt which opens the chapter (11.1), and as a result, a few suggestions for various readings have been offered. Some translations have attempted to maintain the negative particle but still affirm Israel's eventual exile to Egypt. For example, the NJPS reads, 'No! They return to the land of Egypt…'; while the NIV understands the line as a question 'Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them…' Cf. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (AB, 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 574, who read it as an emphatic, 'He will surely return to the land of Egypt…' Other English translations (e.g. NJB, NKJV, ESV, NASB) maintain the negative particle which produces a contrast between Egypt and Assyria. 'He will not have to go back to Egypt, Assyria will be his king instead!' (NJB). McComiskey supports this position which places the emphasis on the third person pronoun הוּא. 'We may paraphrase it, "He will not return to the land of Egypt, rather it is [הוּא] Assyria that will [really] be his king". This is the last time Hosea will use Egypt as a motif for the impending Assyrian captivity; perhaps the prophet wants to make the awful reality of his analogy unmistakably clear at this point' (McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 188). While this is certainly possible, the *BHS*'s suggestion to repoint לֹא to לוֹ and connect it to the end of the previous verse finds support in the LXX (δυνήσομαι αὐτῷ, thus וְאַט אֵלָיו אוֹכִיל לוֹ, 11.4c). This reading, which results in the removal of the negative particle from 11.5 altogether, finds favour among the commentaries (e.g. Stuart, Davies, Mays) as well as the English translations (e.g. NRSV, NCV, REB). It should be mentioned that the inclusion of the negative particle only changes the location of the coming exile and does not negate that event.

27.   Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 59. He continues, 'In this category I have attempted to place all instances for which it can be demonstrated that the motion has proceded [*sic*] from point A to point B and now back to A again'.

Throughout Hosea, the prophet condemns Israel for her choice to pursue a relationship with Assyria and Egypt.[28] In 5.13, when Ephraim and Judah realize that they are suffering, Ephraim from 'his sickness' and Judah from 'his wound', they look not to Yhwh, but to Assyria, also synonymously called 'great king' (מלך ירב)[29] for healing. Unfortunately for Israel/Judah, because the wounds are a result of Yhwh's actions, Assyria 'is not able to heal you, and not able to cure your wound'. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Israel from pursuing a relationship with them. On two occasions Hosea describes Israel's actions towards Assyria/Egypt using animal behaviour as a metaphor. In 7.11 Ephraim is pictured as a stupid dove without heart, flying between Assyria and Egypt, whom Yhwh must capture (7.12). In 8.9 the metaphor changes to that of a wild donkey searching for lovers (cf. Jer. 2.23-25). Hosea also portrays Ephraim as clueless to the damage that these relationships have done (7.9), and disparages Ephraim for making treaties with them (12.2). Because of these violations, Israel/Judah will suffer the penultimate covenant curse of exile, specifically exile to Egypt (Deut. 28.64-68). Five times Hosea threatens Israel with a return to Egypt (7.16; 8.13; 9.3, 6; 11.5) and expands that threat to include exile to Assyria as well

28.   This is of course tied closely to the political situation of the day. Besides the commentaries listed see J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM Press, 1986), pp. 307-39. For a review of Assyria's role in Palestine up to the events of 701 see J.J.M. Roberts, 'Egypt, Assyria, Isaiah, and the Ashdod Affair: An Alternative Proposal', in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew; SBLSS, 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 265-83. Though slightly later than Hosea's time, Sargon II's Nineveh Prism fragment illustrates the attempt of Palestinian kingdoms, in this case Ashdod, to form a collective alliance and to balance the threatening power of Assyria with Egypt. 'To the [kings] of Philistia, Judah, E[dom], Moab, who live by the sea, bearers of tri[bute and] gifts to Ashur, my lord, <they sent> words of falsehood (and) treacherous speech to incite enmity with me. To Pharaoh, king of Egypt, a prince who could not save them, they brought their goodwill gifts and implored his alliance' (K. Lawson Younger Jr, 'Assyrian Involvement in the Southern Levant at the End of the Eighth Century B.C.E.', in Vaughn and Killebrew [eds.], *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology*, pp. 235-63 [241]). For more on the actual fall of Samaria to Assyria see K. Lawson Younger Jr, 'The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research', *CBQ* 61 (1999), pp. 461-82. For a review of the broad social issues during the eighth century see D.N. Premnath, 'Amos and Hosea: Sociohistorical Background and Prophetic Critique', *WW* 28 (2008), pp. 125-32.

29.   'Great king' is based on the *BHS* suggested emendment מלכי רב (cf. Hos. 10.6) and relates to the Assyrian title *šarru rabû* (great king). 'It probably represents *malke rab*, the *i* in Heb. being an anaptytic, intermediate helping vowel facilitating the pronunciation of the consonantal clusters of the construction, as also in Assyrian, Phoenician, Punic, etc.' (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 99). For more on the possible Assyrian treaty requirements on vassal nations see Ernest Nicholson, ' "Do Not Dare to Set a Foreigner Over You": The King in Deuteronomy and "The Great King"', *ZAW* 118 (2006), pp. 46-61.

(9.3; 10.6; cf. Deut. 28.64). They will suffer in these foreign lands: eat unclean things in Assyria (9.3), be buried in Memphis (9.6), and mocked in Egypt (7.16).[30] The relationship with these nations is so serious a violation that part of Israel's reconciliation to Yhwh involves a statement swearing off allegiance to Assyria and presumably all foreign reliance: 'Assyria cannot save us; we will not ride horses' (14.4 [ET 14.3]). Yhwh's restoration for Israel involves returning the exiles from these lands (11.11).

The use of שׁוב as exile falls within the general discussion of Assyria/ Egypt mentioned above. שׁוב in 8.13 is the culmination of an oracle framed by references to Assyria and Egypt.[31] In this verse, exile to Egypt is seen in reciprocal relation for earlier attempts to pursue Assyria.

(8.9) (כי־המה עלו אשׁור) 'For they have gone up to Assyria'

(8.13) (המה מצרים ישׁובו) 'They will return to Egypt'

'The two phrases are interrelated, but the prophet's statement constitutes a play upon Yhwh's, i.e., the people go up to Assyria, therefore they shall return to Egypt… In this manner, Hosea draws upon the tradition to indicate that Israel's relations with Assyria will lead it back into Egyptian slavery and thereby reverse the exodus from Egypt which stands as Israel's formative experience as a nation.'[32] The promise of exile is the product of Israel's faulty

30. Hos. 7.16 is directed specifically toward their princes (שׂריהם).

31. Jack R. Lundbom, 'Poetic Structure and Prophetic Rhetoric in Hosea', *VT* 29 (1979), pp. 300-308 (305).

32. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 92. That שׁוב here can be understood as exile in connection to the covenant curses of Deut. 28 is further seen by the use of the eagle image (נשׁר) that opens the chapter (Hos. 8.1; cf. Deut. 28.49). Andersen and Freedman argue that this passage does not indicate a reversal of exile, but rather 'diplomatic traffic'. 'Verse 13bB may also be construed as a threat, however. The prophet may well have imagined that when the northern kingdom was conquered, it would be divided between Assyria and Egypt, with some of the people being deported to Assyria, while others were sent to Egypt.' They reference Jeremiah's flight to Egypt as an example of such an act and conclude, 'It is more likely, however, that if v 13 is a threat of exile (rather than a description of diplomatic traffic, our preferred interpretation), then it is a prophecy which turned out to have been wrong. Egypt was less prominent in the fate of the northern kingdom than Hosea's symmetrical statements suggest' (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 511). Andersen and Freedman's strict historical understanding of the passage is not necessary. As mentioned above, Hosea alternately addresses both Assyria and Egypt as places of exile. Egypt as the ultimate symbol of exile is what forms the background throughout Hosea. 'It is evident that it [return to Egypt] implies the idea of the reversal of the exodus (11,1). In combination with Assyria, the prophet may be referring to the Assyrian deportation as revocation of the salvation history, initiated by the bringing Israel [*sic*] out from Egypt. Thus Egypt is a cipher for the land, from where Israel was once brought out, whereas in the actual situation it is called Assyria' (Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea* [FAT, 2/14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], p. 67).

cultic practices outlined between 8.9 and 8.13. Such practices result in Hosea's promise that Yhwh will 'remember their iniquity' and 'punish their sin' (ויפקד חטאותם, cf. the use of שוב and פקד 4.9; 12.3).

In 9.3 the people are no longer permitted to dwell in Yhwh's land (לא ישבו בארץ יהוה), but are instead told that they will return, like evicted tenants, to Egypt (ושב אפרים מצרים).[33] As Stuart notes, 'A more explicit prediction of exile could hardly be imagined'.[34] Because of the people's prostitution from Yhwh (9.1), their claim to the land has been revoked. 'The people had mistakenly presumed that once they possessed the land, it was theirs forever and they could choose which gods to serve in it. But title to the land had never been conveyed from Yahweh to Israel'.[35] Once again, Egypt and Assyria are placed in parallel. Sweeney is correct to note that the reference to Egypt is traditional, while the one to Assyria refers to the current political reality.[36] The punishment that the people will 'eat unclean food in Assyria' indicates that 'they would no longer be independent, but would be subject to other nations' rules and habits…'[37]

Furthermore, since Assyria was involved in Egyptian affairs since the time of Esarhaddon (c. 673, 671 BCE) and even captured Memphis (cf. Hos. 9.6), it is probable that Israelites ended up in Egyptian markets. For more on Esarhaddon's involvement in Egypt see Israel Eph'al, 'Esarhaddon, Egypt, and Shubria: Politics and Propaganda', *JCS* 57 (2005), pp. 99-111. Additionally, it is possible to see Assyria's actions in the later part of the eighth century as the impetus for the formation of Israelite communities in Egypt, a possibility Andersen and Freedman propose. Mays's suggestion that Tiglath-Pileser III's actions against Israel in 733 caused Israelites to seek safety in Egypt seems likely. See Mays, *Hosea*, p. 127. See also Miller and Hayes, *History*, p. 430, 'Jeremiah 44:1 introduces the words of Jeremiah addressed to his countrymen living in Egypt at Migdol, Tahpanhes (Daphnae), and Memphis and in the land of Pathros (Upper Egypt; see Jer. 46:14). This presupposes widespread Jewish settlements in Egypt.'

33.   Andersen and Freedman argue that it is possible to understand וְשָׁב as either 'return' or 'dwell', the later finding a parallel with יֵשְׁבוּ in the beginning of the verse (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 525). This reading is also supported by the LXX 'dwell' (κατώκησεν). Both Wolff and Holladay argue against this based on the lack of a preposition before מצרים. Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (trans. Gary Stansell; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 150. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 29 n. 42. The majority of commentaries support the MT reading. The similarity between the two verbs sets a noticeable contrast: 'The people cannot dwell in YHWH's land, but must return (to dwell) in Egypt'.

34.   Stuart, *Hosea–Micah,* p. 143.

35.   Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 143.

36.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 95-96.

37.   Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 143. Andersen and Freedman note that since the people 'have become indistinguishable from the heathen (8.12b)' then 'They might as well live with them and follow their ways of life in another land, not Yahweh's' (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 525).

Hosea 11.5 succinctly expresses the meaning of שׁוב as exile found throughout the writing. Hosea 11.1-4 recounts Yhwh's kindness to Israel in the language of a parent, loving them (אהב 11.1, 4) and teaching them to walk (11.3). The historical act that exemplifies Yhwh's love, the exodus from Egypt, begins the oracle (11.1). Israel's response to this act of love, however, was to turn to idolatry (11.2). Because of Israel's stubborn behaviour, Yhwh's response is to reverse the exodus to Egypt (11.5a), place them under Assyrian rule (11.5b), and destroy their cities (11.6). Once again Egypt and Assyria are used in a parallel setting to convey exile.

11.5 acts as a microcosm of the שׁוב relationship to exile: because the people refuse to turn to Yhwh (כי מאנו לשׁוב), they will return to Egypt/Assyria (ישׁוב אל־ארץ מצרים).[38] In other words, much like the use of שׁוב as recompense, if the people do not turn [שׁוב] to Yhwh, then Yhwh will bring about a turning [שׁוב] that is both undesired and unexpected. 'All of this is the result of Israel's inexplicable obtuse stubbornness. Returning to Egypt instead of returning to Yahweh! Their one hope is the one possibility which they ignore.'[39] The context of 11.5, however, does not allow the use of שׁוב as exile to end on a message of destruction. In 11.10-11 Yhwh announces a time of future restoration in which the people exiled, specifically those in the lands of Egypt and Assyria, are brought back by Yhwh and 'settle[d] in their homes' (11.11).[40] Paradoxically, it is this use of שׁוב, the restoration from exile,[41] that is most noticeable in the Twelve (Mic. 5.2 [ET 5.3] and Zech. 10.9-10).[42]

To conclude, שׁוב as exile can best be understood as the reversal of the exodus. Israel's desire to have relations with these nations is a source of displeasure for Yhwh that will be met with the unexpected result of exile to those lands. The prophet foresees the threat to return to Egypt as the penultimate Deuteronomic punishment for Israel's continuing idolatry and overall rebellion. That the actual exile will result at the hands of Assyria does not diminish the prophet's view that such an act is the fulfilment of the covenant curses. The ironic use of שׁוב is once again on display as Israel's refusal to

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38. As with 9.3, the LXX once more reads κατῴκησεν 'dwell' (ישׁב) for שׁוב. 'The LXX translation here would only be possible with defective spelling; this and other plene spellings in the MT must have been introduced late in the transmission' (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 584).

39. Mays, *Hosea*, p. 155.

40. To be clear, though שׁוב does not occur in these verses, they are nonetheless contextually linked by Egypt and Assyria to 11.5.

41. I will later argue that with the use of Hosean language the שׁוב in Mic. 1.7 can be used to express exile.

42. The Zechariah passage shares many similarities with Hosea's message of exile. See below.

return to Yhwh will result in an undesired return, in this case, a return to foreign lands. The interplay between שוב and ישב builds on this irony.

iii) שוב *as Miscellaneous Punishment.* The uses of שוב in 2.11 and 5.15 are miscellaneous uses that stand independent of each other, but nonetheless fall within the category of punishment. In both instances, Yhwh is the speaker and his actions are a response to Israel's sin. As with the other sections so far discussed, the purpose of Yhwh's actions is to bring about repentance and a restored relationship.

- 2.11 [ET 2.9]—Therefore I will take back (אשוב ולקחתי) my grain in its season and my new wine in its appointed time. I will take away my wool and my linen that covers her nakedness.
- 5.15—I will go and return (אשובה) to my place until they admit their guilt. Then they will seek my face, in their distress they will diligently seek me.

Hosea 2.11 is Hosea's second use of שוב and it stands in contrast to the repentant use of שוב that precedes it (2.9). In 2.10, Yhwh charges that the mother has not 'acknowledged' (ידעה, cf. 2.22; 5.4; 6.3; 8.2; 11.3) Yhwh and has used his material blessings on other gods (in this case Baal, cf. 2.15, 18, 19; 11.2; 13.1), two charges that appear frequently in Hosea. Because of their lack of knowledge and adulterous idolatry, the blessings from Yhwh listed in 2.10 as grain (דגן), wine (תירוש) and oil (יצהר) are taken back (שוב) in 2.11 in a similar order (grain דגני; wine תירושי).[43] The NIV and other translations and commentaries render אשוב dependent on the following verb 'take' (ולקחתי), and thus read 'Therefore, I will take back/away' for the more literal 'Therefore, I will turn and I will take' (לכן אשוב ולקחתי).[44] שוב here indicates a change in Yhwh's dealings with the mother. Instead of continuing to offer her blessings, Yhwh will rightfully reclaim what is his because the mother has failed to recognize that he is the source of these gifts. The significance of this is seen when contrasted with the mother's שוב statement in 2.9.

> In the play between 'āšûbâ (v 9) and 'āšûb (v 11), it is the twist in meaning that gives the wordplay its impact. The wife will not return, so the husband will change his attitude. Hitherto he has been lavishing gifts on her, but she chose not to recognize their origin (v 10). Now she will be forced to do so. He will change his policy, and take them all back.[45]

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43. Note the change to the first person possessive in 2.11. 'My wool' (צמרי) and 'my linen' (ופשתי) relate to the mother's statement found in 2.7.

44. 'The main verbal idea is represented by the verb in the second position in the clause (וְלָקַחְתִּי), while the first verb (אָשׁוּב) functions adverbially' (McComiskey, 'Hosea', pp. 36-37). Holladay identifies it as a 'reversal' (Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 71).

45. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 245.

The full impact of this punishment is seen when Yhwh takes back his linen and wool and exposes the mother's nakedness (ערותה) and lewdness (נבלתה) to her lovers (2.11b-12). In this way, the reciprocal nature of שׁוב in regards to Israel's actions and Yhwh's punishment is once more displayed.

Because 5.15 is discussed in more detail in connection with the call to repentance in 6.1, only a few words need to be said here. In 5.14, Yhwh twice describes himself as a lion (שׁחל; כפיר) towards Ephraim and Judah who is about to rip them apart: 'I, I will tear and go away. I will carry off and none will rescue' (5.14b). Though some commentators argue otherwise,[46] the lion-image carries over to the first half of the following verse where Yhwh, like a lion, withdraws to his place. Consequently, part of the punishment facing Ephraim and Judah is not only being torn to pieces, but also living apart from Yhwh's presence, as Yhwh has separated himself from his people. His separation, however, is only temporary and is meant to spur Israel to return to him. The second half of the verse states that Yhwh will withdraw only long enough 'until they admit their guilt. Then they will seek my face, in their distress they will diligently seek me.' Yhwh's withdrawal listed here is reminiscent of Yhwh's actions in Hos. 2.8-9, when Yhwh uses isolation to bring about a statement of return (שׁוב) from the mouth of his reluctant wife. In both instances, punishment yields the desired result and Yhwh's people return to/seek him.

The ironic nature of שׁוב is fully displayed in Hosea's use of punishment. If the people refused to return to Yhwh, he would turn towards them in punishment. That punishment takes the form of the returning of deeds, the return to exile, the removal of his material blessings, as well as his presence. This punishment, however, is not total and the hope for restoration remains.

b. שׁוב *as Restoration*

Throughout Hosea and the Twelve as a whole, restoration and judgment are always interconnected. In most cases, restoration only results after a cleansing judgment has taken place. Throughout the Twelve, when שׁוב is used in restoration settings, the message often involves returning from exile as well as the renewal of agricultural blessings. These same uses appear in Hosea.

- 3.5—Afterward the children of Israel will return (ישׁבו) and seek Yhwh their God and David their king. And they will tremble to Yhwh and to his goodness in the last days.

שׁוב appears only once in ch. 3, which acts as a conclusion to the opening section of Hosea (chs. 1–3). Though this verse indeed sounds positive, it must be remembered that much of the previous chs. (1.1-9; 2.4-15) as well as

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46. 'But the theriomorphism is dropped; Yahweh is not a lion dragging his prey to his lair' (Mays, *Hosea*, p. 92). However, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 68.

3.4 have been focused on Israel's unfaithfulness and subsequent punishment. The restoration language of 3.5 is the last step in Yhwh's pursuit of Israel. In ch. 3, just like chs. 1–2, judgment must come first, specifically in the form of promised isolation (cf. 2.8-9a) that is conveyed by Hosea's speech to his unnamed wife,[47] 'For many days you will dwell as mine. You will not be a prostitute and you will not be with a man, and even I will not go to you' (3.3). The last phrase וְגַם־אֲנִי אֵלַיִךְ (literally 'and even I to you') which the NIV has translated 'and I will live with you', should probably be altered along with the *BHS* to read וְגַם־אֲנִי לֹא אָבוֹא, 'even I will not go to you'.[48] The woman would therefore be isolated from not only other men, but even her own husband, and possibly Yhwh himself[49] for a set amount of time. The political parallel and reason for this isolation is revealed in 3.4. 'For many days the sons of Israel will dwell without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or idol'. Just like Hosea would be isolated from his wife, so Israel would be isolated from everything they held dear, and arguably Yhwh himself (cf. 5.15). This isolation is the same idea that was communicated in 2.8-9a where Yhwh isolates Israel from her lovers which then leads to her first notions to return. Only after (אַחַר v. 5) Israel has been isolated from its king, prince, sacrifice, sacred stones, ephod, and idol does a return become possible.

The use of אַחַר introduces an important time aspect to restoration. Throughout the Twelve, returning as restoration is linked to unspecific time markers that hint at similar eschatological events as those on the Day of

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47. 'As yet no final solution has been found to the question of the identity of the two women [from chaps. 1, 3]. It will presumably remain an unanswered quest, for the simple reason that the question concerning the identity of the two women may not be adequate and may lean too heavily on the idea that the events told in Hos. 1–3 are biographically conceivable and historically reconstructable' (R. Abma, *Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery* [SSN; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999], pp. 211-13).

48.   Though Stuart suggests a different verb (הלך) the meaning is similar. 'It appears that a verb (probably אֵלֵךְ 'I will go') and a negative particle (לֹא) have been lost. Otherwise the text makes no discernible sense' (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 63). Though there is no textual suggestion for such a reading, this amendment is supported by Ibn Ezra. 'The force of the word *lō* [= not (in the phrase *thou shalt not be any man's wife*)] is carried over to the last clause, meaning *and also I will not come in to thee*, whereas some interpret [this passage in the sense of] "if you will return to Me, I will also return to you"' (Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Hosea* [trans. Abe Lipshitz; New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1988], p. 40). Wolff believes that the לֹא אֵלֵךְ 'may have been lost as homoeoteleuton' (Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 56). Andersen and Freedman, however, argue that the text makes sense in its current form and offer the alternate translation of 'then indeed, I will be yours' but this does not ultimately affect the understanding of the passage (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 304-305).

49.   Abma, *Bonds of Love*, p. 205.

Yhwh. In Amos 9.11-15, the restoration that accompanies שׁוב שׁבות (Amos 9.14) takes place at a future time described only as 'the days are coming' (ימים באים, cf. 9.11 'In that day' (ביום ההוא). The שׁוב שׁבות restoration of Zeph. 3.20 occurs 'at that time' (בעת ההיא), while Joel's takes place 'in those days' (בימים ההמה). While these messages of restoration lack any specific details tying them to historical events, they nonetheless portray restoration as a certainty. These (better) future days will come because Yhwh will cause them to happen. In many ways, such restoration is the inverse of the judgment message of the Day of Yhwh. In both instances, the events describe a day in which Yhwh alone acts. Only he can bring about the radical change in situation that is required to mend the situation. For example, whereas in Amos 5.18-20 the Day of Yhwh is coming as judgment to purge the evil from Israel, in Amos 9.11-15 Yhwh's restoration found 'in that day' (9.11), will repair the devastation of Yhwh's judgments and will usher in a period of agricultural bounty. So while these days of restoration occur at an unspecific time, they are coming, and show an important aspect of Yhwh's character as he turns from judgment to restoration.

As with most restoration sections found in the Twelve, the damage caused by the covenantal curses is specifically undone by Yhwh's restoration; in this case the use of שׁוב and restoration in 3.5 builds upon the judgment outlined in 3.4. Whereas in 3.4 Israel will live (ישׁבו) many days without its political rulers and cultic items, once Israel returns (ישׁבו), it will seek[50] out both Yhwh and David their king. The isolation predicted in 3.4 will end when the people 'tremble[51] to YHWH and to his goodness in the last days'.[52] Hosea's/The Twelve's first use of שׁוב as restoration conveys both a physical return from implied exile (cf. Deut. 30.3-5), and a spiritual return to a faithful covenant

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50. שׁוב, 'return', and בקשׁ, 'seek', are used as synonyms in this section. בקשׁ is first used by Hosea as the antithesis of שׁוב and describes the woman's desire to seek her lovers, though Yhwh has isolated her from them (2.9). בקשׁ is frequent in Hosea (2.7; 3.5; 5.6, 15; 7.10), and occurs with שׁוב in four different verses (2.9; 3.5; 5.15; 7.10). In 5.15 it is Yhwh's withdrawal (שׁוב) from Israel that causes them to seek him out (בקשׁ), while in 7.10 the words are used in the parallel sense of seeking Yhwh. See below.

51. 'The terror of Yahweh's judgment is antithetically related to the joy of his salvation. The material prosperity associated with deliverance or returning from exile motivates this type of reaction (Isa 60:5; Jer 33:9; Hos 3:5)' (M.V. Van Pelt and W.C. Kaiser, Jr, 'פחד', in *NIDOTTE*, III, pp. 597-98 [597]).

52. Within the context of v. 5, 'last days' appears to be a general description of an eschatological period that will happen sometime in the future. There is no mention of a specific day in which Yhwh will act, rather it indicates a period in which Yhwh's people will come 'trembling' to him and to 'his blessings', a reference to items in 2.7, 11. Although a Day of Yhwh cannot be ruled out, the lack of any mention to a specific day gives the indication that this is a general period of restoration rather than the specific actions of Yhwh which take place on the Day.

relationship with Yhwh (e.g. Deut. 4.30),[53] and in so doing sets the parameters for the use of שׁוב and for the rest of the Twelve.

- 6.11b—'Whenever I would restore the fortunes (בשׁובי שׁבות) of my people'.

שׁוב שׁבות is a restorative use of שׁוב that appears 24× in the Old Testament, and 5× in the Twelve (Hos. 6.11; Joel 4.1; Amos 9.14; Zeph. 2.7; 3.20). The alternate translations for the phrase, either 'restore the fortunes' (14×) or 'restore the captivity' (7×) reflect the uncertain etymology of שׁבות. Some argue the root of שׁבות is שָׁבָה 'to take captive'[54] while others believe it comes from שׁוב, thus '"turn the turning", or more idiomatically, "restore the fortunes of" or "bring about a restoration"…'[55] However, Bracke cautions, 'Difficulty arises when, on etymological grounds an effort is made to force one solution on all situations'.[56] He instead argues for a broader understanding of the word, one that can better be read as the general reversal of God's judgment. While speaking of the concentrated occurrences of the שׁוב שׁבות in Jeremiah 30–33 (30.3, 18; 31.23; 32.44; 33.7 [2×], 11, 26), he argues 'šûb šebût indicates Yahweh's promise to reverse his judgment to restore his people to a state of prosperity and well-being which, by implication, they had enjoyed prior to their disobedience and Yahweh's judgment'.[57] This is also seen in Deut. 30.3, which has a special connection to the use of שׁוב in general which appears 7× in vv. 1-10. Bracke notes, 'the promises in Dtn 30,1-10, subsumed under the phrase šûb šebût in Dtn 30,3, can be understood as the reversal of the curses threatened in Dtn 28'.[58] For example, those exiled by Yhwh (28.64) are brought back (30.4-5); the nations that have oppressed Israel (28.49-57) will be cursed (30.7); and the people who have been made few by Yhwh's curses (28.62) will be made numerous once more (30.5).[59] While the other four instances of שׁוב שׁבות in the Twelve easily fit within this understanding, Hos. 6.11 is a little more obscure.

In the Twelve's other four locations of שׁוב שׁבות (Joel 4.1; Amos 9.14; Zeph. 2.7; 3.20) the message of restoration is one that will take place in a distant (eschatological) future. The restoration expressed in Joel and Zephaniah belongs to the exiled remnant of Judah and Jerusalem, and while the שׁוב שׁבות in Amos is directed toward Israel, part of the restoration of the section involves restoring David's fallen tent (Amos 9.11; cf 'David their king' Hos. 3.5). Hosea 6.11 is unique in that the restoration discussed has already taken

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53.   Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 67.
54.   McComiskey, *Hosea*, p. 100.
55.   J.A. Thompson and Elmer A. Martens, 'שׁוב', in *NIDOTTE*, IV, pp. 55-59 (58).
56.   John M. Bracke, 'šûb šebût: A Reappraisal', *ZAW* 97 (1985), pp. 233-44 (235).
57.   Bracke, 'šûb šebût', pp. 239-40.
58.   Bracke, 'šûb šebût', pp. 241.
59.   Bracke, 'šûb šebût', p. 241.

place and is not something that Israel can look forward to in the future. In fact, Yhwh's past restoration only revealed more of Israel's covenant violations. Hosea 7.1a shows the effects of Yhwh's restoration. 'Whenever I restored the fortunes of my people, whenever I healed Israel the iniquity of Ephraim was revealed and the evil of Samaria'. The restoration of Yhwh uncovered the iniquity (עון) and evil (רעה) of Israel. In other words, the very blessings of the land themselves have caused Israel to violate their covenant with Yhwh by turning against one another (7.1b-2). Therefore, while שוב שבות in Hos. 6.11 can still be understood as a restoration of Yhwh's blessings, it is used in a rather unique way that results in more judgment. Despite the final outcome, the use of שוב שבות illustrates the relational dynamic of the return relationship between Yhwh and his people. That Yhwh did restore his people's fortunes in the past shows just how eager Yhwh is to turn towards his people and brings about blessings. In this respect that passage looks forward to Hos. 11.8-9 in which Yhwh's struggle to both love and destroy Israel is shown.

- 11.9—I will not carry out my burning anger, nor will I return (אשוב) to destroy Ephraim. Because I am God, and not man—the Holy One in your midst. I will not come into any city.

Hosea 11.8-11 contains some of the most powerful words of restoration in all the Twelve. In 11.5-7 Yhwh announces punishment against his people that results in exile (שוב 11.5) because the people have turned (למשובתי 11.7)[60] from him. There is no doubt that Yhwh will allow the people to be destroyed and exiled from the land. In 11.8, however, Yhwh's grace is manifested by four rhetorical questions that show Yhwh's continuing love for Israel: 'How can I give you up Ephraim? How can I deliver you over Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim?' The verse ends with Yhwh stating, 'my compassion (נחומי) has grown hot'. Verse 9 builds on this when Yhwh announces that he will not bring about his fierce anger and that 'I will not return to destroy Ephraim' (לא אשוב לשחת אפרים). Whether שוב functions as its own verb or as an auxiliary to the following verb is debated. McComiskey understands it as an auxiliary and translates it, 'I will not again destroy Ephraim'.[61] Such a reading, however, is difficult in light of

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60. 11.7 is difficult. The text reads ועמי תלואים למשובתי, which BDB literally reads as '*my people is hung up to my backsliding*' (תָלָא, BDB). BDB is certain the text is corrupt and instead suggests the KJV, '*bent to backsliding from me*'. The LXX senses the tension also, and suggests a 3ms suffix (מִמְּשׁוּבָתוֹ) for the MT 1cs (לִמְשׁוּבָתִי). Stuart suggests that such a change is the result of dittography from the vav of the following verse (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 175).

61. McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 190. See also Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 70-71. He also reads it as 'again' but believes the passage has a nuanced understanding of 'do another action with the same object'.

Yhwh's reluctance towards destruction displayed in the previous verse. As Davies comments, 'But destroy (*šiḥēt*) is such a strong word…that repetition seems inconceivable'.[62] Davies goes on to note the use of שחת in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 13.10) as well as the connection between Admah and Zeboiim with those wicked cites (cf. Deut. 29.22) makes reading 'again' seem unlikely. What this indicates is that 'The idiom may therefore have its alternative sense of "act contrary to a previous action" (cf. 2.9): Yahweh undertakes not to reverse his previous acts of blessing (cf. vv. 1-2, 4) by the destruction of his people…'[63] Furthermore, the emphasis of שוב in 11.9 sets up a contrast with the actions of the people in the chapter's earlier message of destruction. In 11.7 it is the people who have turned away (למשובתי) from Yhwh and as a result, the Most High (על) will not rescue them. In 11.9, however, because Yhwh 'is God and not man' (כי אל אנכי ולא־איש) as well as the Holy One (קדוש), he is the one who will not turn (אשוב) and destroy his people.[64] In this way, the faithfulness of Yhwh is contrasted by his ability to turn from destruction with the unfaithfulness of his people and their inability to turn toward him. In addition, the parallel further emphasizes that restoration is the sole responsibility of Yhwh (cf. 5.13) and is part of his nature. Because Yhwh is not like men but is in fact the Holy One, he will bring about his promised restoration which includes the restoration of his people from exile (11.10-11).[65]

- 14.5 (ET 14.4)—I will heal their waywardness/back turning (משובתם); I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away (שב) from them.
- 14.8 (ET 14.7)—They who dwell in his shade will return (ישבו). They will revive like grain and sprout like a vine. His fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.

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62.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 263.
63.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 263.
64.   For a detailed discussion on the issues involved in Hos. 11.9–12.1, as well as the various names for God that appear in this section see Scott Chalmers, *The Struggle of Yahweh and El for Hosea's Israel* (HBM, 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 85-100.
65.   In 11.11 Yhwh states that he will 'settle' his people in their homes. While the MT reads 'settle' (וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּים) as a hiphil perfect 1cs of the root ישב, the *BHS* suggests והשיבתי, from the root שוב, thus following the LXX reading (και ἀποκαταστήσω [re-establish, restore, reinstate] αὐτούς). This suggestion finds support in the commentaries (Stuart, Andersen and Freedman, Wolff). However, such a reading overlooks a similar use in 12.10 (ET 12.9), which is normally recognized as hiphil 1cs of ישב. For this reason, I have chosen to stay with the MT. In 11.11, however, it is possible to read an intentional play on the understanding of return, as Yhwh who has earlier exiled his people to the lands of Assyria and Egypt, will bring them back. In either case, the people will be brought back from exile and settled in their homes/tents.

Because the use of שׁוּב in Hosea 14 is discussed at length in the שׁוּב as Repentance section, including a detailed discussion of 14.5, only a few words need to be said here on 14.8. Hosea 14.2-4 is focused on Israel's return to Yhwh and the words that repentant worshipers were required to bring with them in order to facilitate that return. In Hos. 14.5 Yhwh responds to the penitent worshiper with words of healing (ארפּא), and indicates a change in Yhwh's attitude towards Israel. Because his anger has 'turned away' and the people have returned to him, in 14.6 Yhwh describes himself 'like the dew of Israel' and vv. 6b-7 depict the prospering effects of that dew for Israel in agricultural language. In 14.8, the image changes and people 'dwell' (יֹשְׁבֵי) under Yhwh's shade.[66] While the NIV's decision to translate יָשֻׁבוּ as 'again' is legitimate,[67] it perhaps diminishes the significance of the verb (cf. ESV, KJV, HCSB). The translation offered above shows more of a distinction: 'They who dwell in his shade will return'. In light of the imperative calls to return to Yhwh that open the chapter (14.2, 3), as well as the threats of exile, including those that incorporate שׁוּב (8.13; 9.3; 11.5) found throughout Hosea it seems likely that שׁוּב in connection with יָשַׁב would convey a more significant meaning than 'again'. It would have been difficult for the early readers of the Twelve, or even eighth-century readers for that matter, to not read these lines as a promise of restoration from exile. However, because the chapter also opens with calls to return to Yhwh, it is also possible to understand the use of שׁוּב here as a return to Yhwh as well.[68] Therefore, Hosea's last use of שׁוּב looks forward to not only the reversal of Yhwh's punishments, but the incorporation of his blessings that result from a restored relationship. As with 11.8-11, Yhwh is once more quick to forgive.

Just as Yhwh can return in punishment, he can also return to his people with covenant blessings and restoration. Yhwh's restoration, however, does not negate the role of punishment. Destruction will come and the people will be exiled from the land. Only after this will the people return (שׁוּב) to the land as well as to Yhwh.

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66. That this is Yhwh's shade follows the *BHS* suggestion to emend 'his shade' (בְּצִלּוֹ) to 'my shade' (בְּצִלִּי), however, it should be noted that this change is without textual support. It is partially based on the description of Yhwh as a tree in the following verse (14.9b). However, it is also possible that 'they will dwell in his shade' could carry a similar connotation as 'each man under his own vine and fig tree' (Mic. 4.4; 2 Kgs 18.31).

67. Holladay lists Hos. 14.8 under the category of 'either "again" or another meaning'. In this case, the alternate meaning is 'motion, return to source' (Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 71).

68. Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 216.

c. שׁוב *as Repentance*

The uses of שׁוב as repentance are an important part of Hosea's overall message, and the prophet's calls to return are some of the most direct in all the Twelve. In Hosea, שׁוב in relation to repentance falls into three categories: refusal to repent, reluctant repentance, and calls to return.

i) שׁוב *as Refusal to Repent*.

- 5.4—Their deeds do not permit them to return (לשׁוב) to their God because a spirit of prostitution is in their midst, and they do not know Yhwh.
- 7.10—The arrogance of Israel testifies against him; but they have not returned (שׁבו) to Yhwh their God, nor have they sought him in all this.[69]

In both of these instances in which שׁוב means repent,[70] Israel should have seen the necessity of returning to Yhwh, but because their own self-inflicted wounds blinded them, they were prevented from doing so. This section once more illustrates Israel's struggle to return to Yhwh and how difficult that turning can be. In 5.4 it is Israel's improper 'deeds' (מעלליהם) that prevent them from returning to Yhwh. The translation of 5.4 is in dispute because the subject of the opening line is ambiguous. The MT reads לא יתנו מעלליהם which could be understood as either 'they will not give up their deeds'[71] or 'their deeds will not permit (them)'. At issue is whether or not a third masculine plural suffix has been lost from the verb נתן (thus יתנום) because of haplography, a position that is supported by *BHS* and the majority of the commentaries.[72] Following this suggestion, the NIV is correct to translate the opening line, 'Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God'. Here 'deeds' are listed as the obstacle to return. In Hosea, מעלל constitutes Israel's negative actions (4.9; 5.4; 7.2; 9.15; 12.3) that result in divine punishment.[73]

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69.   Hos. 11.5 also belongs to this category: 'Will they not return (ישׁוב) to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent (לשׁוב)?' However, because שׁוב appears twice in the verse both in reference to repentance but also exile, it was discussed in שׁוב as Exile. See above.

70.   Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 79.

71.   Though he seems to be in the minority, this is the translation offered by Stuart who acknowledges the ambiguity of the subject (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 88). His broader point, however, is correct. 'Whether one translates 'they will not give up their deeds' or 'their deeds do not permit them' the message conveyed is the same: Yahweh's covenant people have removed themselves from him' (p. 92).

72.   See Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 95. Here נתן can be translated as 'permit', as McComiskey notes, 'נָתַן (give) may be translated "permit" (Gen. 20:6; Exod. 3:19; Num. 20:21) when construed with לְ plus an infinitive' (McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 76).

73.   See the discussion above on שׁוב as Recompense Hos. 4.9; 12.3.

In the previous chapter (4.9), the deeds of priests are returned (אשיב) upon them because they have rejected knowledge (הדעת 4.6) and engaged in prostitution (זנות 4.11), similar charges which are levelled here (ידעו ;זנונים 5.4). Thus the people's actions, particularly in regards to the cult, have alienated them from Yhwh.

In 7.10 Israel's failure to return is tied to a phrase first introduced in 5.5: 'Israel's arrogance testifies against him'. In 5.5-7, Israel failed to recognize the effects of their sins and Yhwh's rejection of their cultic offerings. In 7.10, Israel's arrogance has caused them to be oblivious to their undoing at the hands of the nations (7.8-9). Such punishments could be understood as covenantal judgment from the hands of Yhwh for the purpose of leading Israel back to him.[74] Unfortunately, because of Israel's 'arrogance' (גאון)[75] these punishments were ineffective, and Israel was prevented from both returning (שבו) and seeking (בקשהו) Yhwh their God.

- 7.16—They do not return (ישובו) to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow. Their princes will fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongues. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.

The opening line of Hos. 7.16 is one of the most difficult in all Hosea. While Holladay classifies שוב here as repent,[76] the actual meaning of the line as a whole is uncertain. This is illustrated by the various translations and amendments suggested for יָשׁוּבוּ לֹא עָל:

'They do not return upward' (McComiskey).

'They return to what is useless' (*lᵉlōʾ yōʿîl*, Mays).

'They turned to a no-god' (*lōʾ ʿāl*, Andersen and Freedman).

'They turn themselves, (but) not (to me)' (וְלֹא אֵלַי cf. Am 4.6ff or וְלֹא עָדַי cf. Joel 2.12, Wolff).

'Time and again they change their minds but never to higher things' (Macintosh).

'They return to Baal' (*labbaʿal*, Davies).

'They turn to that which does not profit' (NRSV, matching Mays).

'Like a bow gone slack, they relapse into useless worship' (REB).

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74. This is a concept also seen in Hosea's older contemporary, Amos (4.6-11).

75. 'Pride is particularly devastating because it prevents people from knowing God and returning to trust him (Hos 5:4-5; 7:9-10)' (Gary V. Smith and Victor P. Hamilton, 'גאה', in *NIDOTTE*, I, pp. 786-89 [788]).

76. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 78-79.

'Shall they return? No! because they have become a bow that fails' (Szabo).[77]

'They shall return to the yoke' (Stuart).[78]

Despite the wide variety offered in the translations above, with the exception of Stuart, it is possible to gather the translations into two groups: those that read a return to idolatry (Mays, Andersen and Freedman, Davies, NRSV, REB), and those that read a failure to return to Yhwh (NIV, McComiskey, Wolff, Macintosh, Szabo). It should be noted that in this verse the reading of שׁוב is not at issue, rather it is the two words that follow, לא על particularly על, that cause the difficulty. עָל as it relates to the divine name 'Most High' only occurs 4x in the Old Testament including (possibly) 2× in Hosea (2 Sam. 23.1; Ps. 7.11; Hos. 7.16; 11.7).[79] Therefore, while Andersen and Freedman read לא על as 'Not-'Al, a negative divine name'[80] and Davies emends the text to *labba'al*[81] (לבעל), perhaps such steps are not necessary. Hosea 11.7, which contains a clear use of על for 'Most High', likewise laments Israel's failure to return: 'My people are determined to turn away from me (למשׁובתי). They call to the Most High (ואל־על), but he does not exalt them (ירומם) at all.' As McComiskey notes, the use of אל־על in connection with a verb that communicates height (רום) 'points to some sense of upward direction for the idiom, as do the uses of עָל outside Hosea'.[82] For this reason it is perhaps best to follow a reading that laments Israel's failure to return to the higher things of Yhwh, if not Yhwh himself.

   This section once again illustrates the struggle that is involved in turning toward Yhwh. While the prophet had issued numerous calls to return, the people, because of their deeds and their arrogance, had refused to heed those calls and return to Yhwh. Israel was caught in a spiritual trap of its own making, and this stubborn refusal to repent would result in further punishment.

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   77.   Andor Szabo, 'Textual Problems in Amos and Hosea', *VT* 25 (1975), pp. 500-524 (514). 'The only feasible rendering of it seems to be, with a question-mark after *yāšūbū*, "Shall they return?", and the answer is "No!", and then *'al* has an explanatory meaning without *'ăšär* or *ki* (Hosea often omits the particle *'ăšär*)'.

   78.   'MT לא is a corruption of ל or אל־ "to". Being put "to the yoke" is a covenant curse (Deut 28:48; cf. Lev 26:13 where freedom from the yoke is a covenant blessing' (Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 116).

   79.   Note that all four of these uses are disputed.

   80.   Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 477.

   81.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 192.

   82.   McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 116. McComiskey also makes a strong argument that שׁוב indicates a return *to* something, and in this case the people can only return to Yhwh not Baal. 'The emendation *turn to* Baal is also tenuous, because *šûb* has the sense of *return* not *turn* to in Hosea'.

ii) שׁוּב *as Reluctant Repentance.* Hosea's first use of שׁוּב is one of his most ambiguous and debated. Commentators cannot decide whether the wife's שׁוּב statement is genuine or not. What will be argued is that the שׁוּב statement in 2.9 is in fact the desired response to Yhwh's covenantal punishments.

- 2.9 (ET 2.7)—She will pursue her lovers but not reach them; she will search for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return (ואשׁובה) to my first husband because it was better then for me than now.

Hosea 2.9 acts as a culmination to the verses that come before it. In 2.7 (ET 2.5), 'their mother', Israel, has again been charged with adultery, echoing the opening charge of the section found in 2.4 (ET 2.2). In a declaration placed in the mouth of the mother but given by Yhwh, the mother has stated a misplaced belief that her material blessings come from her lovers, presumably Baal, instead of from Yhwh. 'For she has said, "I will go after my lovers, those providing my food and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my wine"' (2.7). Because of this (לכן 2.8), Yhwh's judgment results in isolation (2.8-9a) in which the mother will be cut off from her lovers. It is only then, in this isolated state, that the wife's statement of repentance appears. 'I will go and return to my first husband because it was better then for me than now' (2.9b). Because the repentance statement follows only after the wife has been cut off from her lovers, and smacks of materialistic selfishness, many commentators have questioned the genuineness of this repentance. 'The speech of Israel in v.9b…is not to be regarded as a speech of repentance or even "semblance of repentance", but as a quite amoral decision on Israel's part, in which only her own well-being plays a part ("better for me")'.[83] This view is also shared by Macintosh. 'Clines seeks to define the matter more precisely; for him genuine repentance is not expressed by these words. With that view I agree. The husband of the parable seeks to utilize what Clines characterizes as "an easy and unthinking reaction"; I would prefer to define the reaction as essentially selfish rather than "unthinking".'[84] Andersen and Freedman likewise voice difficulties with the repentance in this verse: 'Hos 2:9b, a voluntary return to the deserted husband, is only the anticipated outcome of the interference described in 2:8-9a. The impression is conveyed that such remedies were insufficient. The motivation is still rather superficial and selfish; the basic error stated in creedal form in v 7b still needs to be eradicated from her mind.'[85] If these commentators are correct, then the

83. David J.A. Clines, 'Hosea 2: Structure and Interpretation', *Studia Biblica 1978/ Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies* (ed. David J.A. Clines, Philip R. Davies and David M Gunn; JSOTSup, 11; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1979), pp. 83-104 (87).

84. Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 53.

85. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 234. It should be noted that Andersen and Freedman believe that the passage takes the form of an inter-dialogue within Yhwh's

wife's repentance is false and Yhwh is forced to change his approach in 2.16 to bring about a genuine return.

Stuart, however, disagrees with this, and believes the initial judgment will bring about the desired results.

> The Israelites felt no urgency to return to Yahweh as long as he blessed them with plenty. So he must deprive them severely. They will be driven by their loneliness and misery back to him (Deut 4:30). With its quotation of Israel's future attitude, v 9[7] provides the first clear evidence in the passage that Yahweh's covenant lawsuit will succeed not only in its proximate goal of punishment, but in its ultimate goal of reconciliation.[86]

One of the issues with understanding this verse as a true statement of return is that the following verses do not reflect a corresponding change in Yhwh's attitude. 'If v 10 is interpreted as the continuation of v 9, the wife's desire to return must be condemned as a "semblance of repentance".'[87] Wolff, however, goes on to argue that v. 10 does not respond directly to vv. 8-9, but rather to the charges listed before (v. 7). This does offer a solution to the problem. If Hos. 2.4-17 is seen as a cyclical argument, instead of a linear progression, then 2.9 can be understood as the end of a cycle of accusation and judgment, while 2.10 can be understood as the beginning of a new accusation cycle, or even a clarification and elaboration of previous charges. In other words, v. 9 transports the reader into the restorative future, while v. 10 brings the reader back to the judgmental present.

Although the structure may permit a genuine repentance, the wording of the return statement as well as the section ending at 2.15 still gives the overall feeling that the wife's return is somewhat less than sincere. The repentance is dictated by the situation, not an authentic longing to return to a restored relationship with Yhwh. Almost like a child who has been forced to apologize while not really wanting to, the wife is left with no other option but to turn to Yhwh because she no longer has access to her lovers. In addition, the materialistic 'because it was better then for me than now' adds a level of shallowness to the mother's words. The absence of total reconciliation and

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mind about which actions are appropriate. 'Viewed in this light, the speech in Hos 2:6-15 might be taken as a soliloquy. Hos 11:8 is another instance of Yahweh struggling in his own mind to work out what to do. Here the prophet contemplates possible courses of action, starting with the extreme of putting the offender to death, and finally rejects them all in favor of the redemptive scheme described in 2:16-17. So far as Yahweh and Israel are concerned, the threats are very serious. According to Amos 4:4-12, such drastic measures were unavailing. So far as Hosea and Gomer are concerned, there is no indication that the desired outcome ever emerged' (p. 236).

86.   Stuart, *Hosea*, pp. 49-50. A similar position is taken by Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 36; Mays, *Hosea*, p. 40; and Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 31.

87.   Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 36.

love language is even more striking when compared with Yhwh's words in 2.18-22. Nonetheless, the judgments of Yhwh result in the desired response, framed in the proper covenantal language of return. That the mother returns just for materialistic benefit does not negate the fact that she does indeed return.

> When they have lost what they once had, like the prodigal they will take a second thought. Life with their former husband (the covenant with Yahweh) was better than being a harlot to Baal. Everything for the people turns around the good things of the land. But Yahweh does not boggle at using this earthy material concern to bring the people back to him. Just as he gave the good things of the land as the blessing of the covenant, he will remove them for the sake of restoring the relation with Israel. With Yahweh it is the people's personal relation to him that is the sole concern.[88]

But what then should be made of the wife's perceived shallowness? Why does the reconciliation language of 2.7 pale in comparison to 2.16-22? The answer to this lies in the fact that the mother's response in 2.7 must be understood as a response to Yhwh's judgments alone. The purpose of Yhwh's punishments was to bring the mother (Israel) to the point that she at least recognized the need for her return, a situation that is accomplished by her isolation (vv. 8-9b) and the removal of covenant blessings (v. 11-14). This, however, is only the first step and it is Yhwh's restoration that ultimately completes the process of return because it is only after judgment that Yhwh's people can return to him. Andersen and Freedman suggest that 2.16ff describes a tactical change with the mother on Yhwh's part because the judgments of 2.4-15 have failed.[89] Such distinction, however, is not necessary because within the Twelve, judgment and restoration are inseparably linked. They are the flip sides of the same coin and both work together to bring about a renewed relationship with Yhwh. Hosea 2.16-25 represents not a change in Yhwh's tactics, but another step. Amos 4.6-11 illustrates how Yhwh used smaller covenant curses to call Israel to return. That they ignored these curses did not result in an immediate change to restorative tactics, but rather culminated in more severe covenant curses (Amos 4.12–5.2), namely exile (Amos 7.17). Only after the covenant curses have been fulfilled will Yhwh's grace once again allow Israel to return (e.g. Amos 9.11-15; Mic. 4.1-5; Zeph. 3.19-20).

As will be seen later in this project, in almost every book of the Twelve restoration is always preceded by judgment. Judgment is used to cleanse the people and prepare them for Yhwh's restorative works (Mic. 3–4). The threats Hosea communicates against Israel are real and imminent and should

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88. Mays, *Hosea*, p. 40.
89. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 235.

be understood as such. Samaria must be purged (14.1 [ET 13.16]). In fact, it is probably impossible to imagine an early reader of the Twelve reading the threats of Hosea 2 without looking forward to their perceived fulfilment and the events surrounding the Assyrian destruction in 722. In the light of history, these judgments must be understood as actual events that Yhwh uses to bring about a change in Israel. Destruction plays a secondary role to restoration in Hosea 2 but it is still an important part of Israel's restoration. Although her heart may not be in it completely, the wife's statement of return in 2.7 is still a step in the right direction. Judgment has forced her to realize, at least on some level, that she needs Yhwh. That Yhwh is willing to accept back his adulterous wife shows that return is still possible and testifies to Yhwh's forgiveness. The problem seems to be that her desire for her lovers is not completely removed until the final judgment (v. 16 [ET 14]) and 'in that day' when she again calls Yhwh husband and Yhwh removes the name of Baal from her lips (2.18). In other words, the statement to return can be understood as a logical response to the wife's situation as given by Yhwh, while the complete and final restoration is much more intimate.

Given this understanding, the שׁוב statement of 2.7 can be seen as the beginning of the restoration process but perhaps not the completion of it. In fact, the hollowness of the verse sounds partially correct but actually looks forward to the final judgment and the Day of Yhwh-like events that occur 'in that day' (2.18, 20, 23). שׁוב is used in such a way as to indicate the correct attitude toward Yhwh as the result of punishment, but at the same time look forward to the completed restoration that is found 'in that day' in ch. 2, and the final restoration of ch. 3 and 14.5-9. This first use of שׁוב states the desire for reconciliation that is found throughout the Twelve, and ties the necessity of the judgment of Yhwh with the complete restoration that results from his later Day of Yhwh actions. The two ideas are held in balance. From this particular passage, part of the return to Yhwh is a return to exclusive Yhwh worship which includes a proper acknowledgement of the source of Israel's material blessings.

iii) שׁוב *as Call to Repentance*. At the centre of the call to repentance is the understanding that Israel/Judah has violated the covenant and has suffered the consequences in the form of covenantal curses. As a result, of the five uses of שׁוב which will be discussed as a call to repentance in Hosea (6.1; 12.7 [ET 12.6]; 14.1, 2, 4), Holladay identifies all but one (12.7)[90] as a

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90. Holladay lists this occurrence under 'Instances presenting difficulties of classification'. The confusion revolves around the preposition attached to God (בֵּאלֹהֶיךָ). Holladay argues that what is 'perhaps most probable' is to emend the text in 12.7 to 'you shall dwell in your tents' (באהליך תשב), thus eliminating שׁוב altogether (Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 85). As will be shown, such a step is not necessary.

covenantal use meaning ' "return" (to God), often "repent"…'[91] As will be seen, the call to return not only in Hosea but throughout the Twelve is often accompanied by words of healing and promised blessing. The suffering that the people have endured because of their covenant faithlessness will be undone if they return to Yhwh. Though the prophets issue the call and plead with the people to immediately return, the context of these calls often indicates that these calls will go unheeded. In most instances throughout the Twelve, only judgment can bring about a positive response. As a result, many of the uses of שוב that are connected to restoration are couched in the language of an eschatological future, when the judgment has been carried out and the people are finally ready to hear Yhwh's words.

- 6.1—'Come, let us return (ונשובה) to YHWH. He has torn but he will heal us; he strikes, but he will bind our wounds'.

The liturgical song of 6.1-3 has a close connection to the previous chapter, so close in fact that the LXX concludes 5.15 with 'saying' (λἐγοντες), thus directly linking 5.15 with what follows and placing 6.1-3 in the mouths of the exiled people rather than the contemporary prophet.[92] Ben Zvi highlights 6.1-3's connection between ch. 5 and 6.4-11a:

> Verses 6:1-3 serve double duty. They stand by themselves as an interlude in the series of condemnations, and as a human response to IV [5.15]. At the same time, the section is deeply intertwined with 6:4-6. The reported divine speech in 6:4-6 stands in fact as the response either to a well-meaning human voice that is, however, unable to bring a long-lasting change of attitude in Israel in vv. 1-3, or perhaps to YHWH's ironic construction of the human voice of ungodly Israel, according to another possible reading of vv. 1-3.[93]

In 5.8-15, a division separated in the MT by a ס paragraph marker (5.7), Yhwh announces total ruin against Israel and Judah. Ephraim will be devastated (לשמה 5.9), oppressed (עשוק 5.11), and 'crushed in judgment' (רצוץ משפט 5.11), while Yhwh promises to 'pour out his wrath like water' (אשפוך כמים עברתי) upon Judah (5.10). Yhwh then describes himself as a 'moth' (עש 5.12)[94] to Ephraim and 'rot' (רקב 5.12) to Judah. In the midst of this

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91. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 78. Closely related to this is Israel's refusal to return which will be discussed in the section that follows.

92. Davies argues that the insertion is secondary, noting, '6:1-3 are closely linked with 5:15 by the word saying the RSV rendering, which is based on the Vss. (except for Vulg.), but this word is not represented in the Heb., and it is more likely that it was secondarily added in the Vss. (or in Heb. texts underlying them) than that it is an original part of the text that was omitted in the MT (cf. JB, NEB). There are, it is true, verbal echoes between 6:1-3 and 5:12-14, but these are not such as to require that the two passages were originally linked' (Davies, *Hosea*, p. 149).

93. Ehud Ben Zvi, *Hosea* (FOTL, 21A; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 121.

94. This follows the definition for עש in the BDB. Others have offered 'pus' (Stuart, Mays, Wolff), 'larvae' (Andersen and Freedman), and 'maggots' (McComiskey).

divine destruction, Ephraim and Judah, suffering from sickness (חלי) and wounds (מזור) turns to Assyria for help (5.13). Unfortunately, because the wounds are caused by Yhwh, Assyria 'the great king' is unable to heal (רפא) or cure (גהה) them. The text then transitions back to Yhwh's last simile, one that bears the most influence on 6.1-3. In 5.14 Yhwh describes himself as a 'lion' (שחל) to Ephraim and a 'young lion' (ככפיר) to Judah. As a lion, Yhwh says that he will 'tear and go away. I will carry off and none will rescue' (5.14b). The metaphor of the lion continues to the last verse of ch. 5, when Yhwh says he will 'go and return (אשובה) to my place until they admit their guilt'. It is only after this total and complete devastation in which Yhwh removes himself from the people that the people 'will seek my face, in their distress they will diligently seek me'. Yhwh's actions here are significant. As Mays notes, 'What the announcement of Yahweh's withdrawal does in effect is to interpret Yahweh's wrath in such a way that the experience of punishment becomes an invitation to penitence. It introduces a constant theme of Hosea that God in his anger against his people's sin ultimately seeks their reconciliation'.[95] Such an idea in connection with שוב is fundamental to the message of the Twelve and is seen again in Hosea (14.1-2 [ET 13.16–14.1]) and throughout the Twelve (e.g. Joel 2.11-14; Amos 4.6-11; Hag. 2.17).

In the face of this coming punishment and exile, a second person speaker (the prophet) interrupts Yhwh's message of destruction (that continues again in 6.4-11a) and expands on 5.15's closing message. The use of the imperative 'Come!' (לכו) followed by the first person plural cohortative 'Let us return' (ונשובה) is an unexpected transition from the previous section. Such a change however, does not necessitate a change in authorship or point of view as McComiskey argues, 'the prophecy of Hosea is marked by abrupt transitions, and we have already encountered a similar plea 2:4 [2]'.[96] Here the speaker places himself along with the punished and pleads with his listeners to return to Yhwh. The speaker's impassioned call is centred on the concept that Yhwh's punishment will end and restoration is possible if the people return. But what does this call to return entail? It is notable that this call to repentance is focused much more on the actions of Yhwh rather than the actions of the people. In 6.1 Yhwh has torn (טרף) and struck them (יך) but he will heal (וירפאנו) them and 'bind their wounds' (ויחבשנו). Yhwh will also 'revive' (יחינו) and 'restore' (יקמנו) them (6.2). In 6.3 Yhwh will 'appear' from his place and 'come like winter rains to us'. The only specific actions of the people, however, are limited to 6.3 and the dual call for the people to 'know'

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95.   Mays, *Hosea*, p. 92.

96.   McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 88. Because of this he argues against the LXX addition of 'saying' to 5.15. He continues, 'We see many examples of abrupt changes of style (see, e.g., 11:8-9, see v.7; 12:8, see v.9; 13:14, see v.13; 14:1 [13:16], see 14:2 [14:1]. We may also note the similar plea for repentance in 14:2 [1]'.

(ונדעה נרדפה לדעת) Yhwh, a message found frequently in Hosea. In fact, what is required by the prophet's call to שׁוב in 6.1 remains vague, especially when read in comparison to Hos. 14.2-4. Whereas in 14.2-4 the people are told what repentance entails in statements summarizing the prophet's earlier rebukes, from 6.1 all that is known is that a return to Yhwh involves knowing him (cf. 2.10, 22; 5.4; 8.2; 13.4; 14.9). What is noticeably absent from this repentance section is any reference to the cult, something that is specifically highlighted by Hosea (6.6).

The restorative effects of שׁוב in 6.1 in regards to Yhwh's actions are notable. In 5.14, Yhwh is portrayed as a lion that is about to tear Israel apart (אטרף 5.14). In 6.1, that action has been completed; Yhwh has 'torn' (טרף) the people but instead of promising to 'carry off and none will rescue' (5.14), he will heal them. In fact the healing (רפא)[97] that an unrepentant Ephraim was unable to receive from Assyria (5.13) is now offered to those who return (6.1). Most importantly, whereas in 5.15 Yhwh has withdrawn from his people to await their response to his punishments, in 6.2 the returned people are permitted to 'live before him'. The return of Yhwh's presence is essential to renewal sections throughout the Twelve as Yhwh's presence is also connected with new agricultural blessings (cf. Hos. 14.6-8; Joel 4.16-21; Amos 9.11-15; Hag. 2.15-19; Zech. 8). The change in Yhwh's actions and the reversal of the specific curses of the previous section are the promised result of שׁוב.

Though there is much talk among the commentaries concerning the historical setting of this call, what is most concerning is whether this call to return is an actual summons to repentance or a mocking voice that lacks sincerity.[98] Does the fact that 6.1-3 is linked to messages of destruction that both precede and follow it necessitate a failing interpretation? Is the prophet somehow mocking the people's failure to return? Mowvley argues that because the passage does not contain any sense of the remorse, it must therefore be understood as an insincere call to repentance.

> At first sight this suggests that the people were now beginning to search diligently for YHWH, for this is their response to Hosea's message and apparently they wish to return to the LORD. It is, however, a flawed response. In the first place, v. 1 expresses the all too easy assumption that all they have to do is return, and God will reverse his attitude towards them. They do not seem to have grasped that their misdeeds have barred their way back to God (5.4) and there is no sign of the remorse which was required in 5.15.[99]

97. For more on the use of רפא in Hosea see D.F. O'Kennedy, 'Healing as/or Forgiveness? The Use of the term רפא in the Book of Hosea', *OTE* 14 (2001), pp. 458-74.

98. For a summary of the various positions see Davies, *Hosea*, pp. 150-52.

99. Harry Mowvley, *The Books of Amos and Hosea* (EC; London: Epworth Press, 1991), p. 125. He continues, 'They were right to seek the LORD, to return to him, to want

Mowvley argues that Yhwh's response contained in 6.4-11a casts a failed interpretive shadow back on 6.1-3, a position supported by Mays. 'But the song cannot be an ideal model for the people's penitence spoken by Yahweh or recommended by the prophet. Verses 4-6 are a lamenting protest that the song and the response it represents come short of Yahweh's expectations'.[100] That judgmental language follows this song of repentance does not necessitate any shortcomings in the song. As Andersen and Freedman note, 'We have rejected the prevailing view that this anguished outburst [6.4-6] is a direct response to 6:1-3, which is thereby shown to be unacceptable to Yahweh, the inference being that it was half-hearted or hypocritical. Nothing in 6:1-3 itself gives such an impression.'[101] In fact, they argue that 'The response in 6:1-3 remains a possibility. If this acknowledgement is made, then Yahweh will come like the rain, and his word will go forth like sunlight'.[102] Andersen and Freedman agree with Davies who notes,

> None of these [arguments for the insincerity of 6.1-3 in connection to Canaanite backgrounds] constitutes a decisive argument…and it has properly been pointed out that these two types of interpretation [inadequate repentance] are unable to do justice to the prominent place occupied in 6:1-3 by the ideas of return to Yahweh and knowledge of Yahweh, which correspond to two very central demands of Hosea's message (cf. 5:15; 6:6). It is quite unjustified to say that these two terms are used here in some lesser sense than that in which Hosea used them.[103]

The restoration language in 6.1-3 is real enough. The agricultural blessings (rain) are similar to the agricultural blessings (טל dew, 14.6 [ET 14.5]) found later in the writing. Additionally, the immediacy of Yhwh's blessings ('after

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to know him. What was lacking was a sense of *remorse* for their sin. Without that sacrifices, worship, or even will-power could not achieve the relationship they hoped for' (p. 126). Hubbard argues similarly. See David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea* (TOTC; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1989), pp. 124-25.

100.   Mays, *Hosea*, p. 94. Insertions are mine. Mays, however, does not believe that the song is insincere. He continues, 'Nor can it be an ironic mimicry on Hosea's part of the shallow penitence which the people substitute for true repentance; the song incorporates too much of Hosea's own language and theology and responds precisely to his announcement that Yahweh's punishment sought only the response of his people. It must be a song which was composed in the situation for use in a liturgy of lament and penitence in response to his prophecy'.

101.   Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 426.

102.   Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 418.

103.   Davies, *Hosea*, pp. 150-51. Davies goes on to draw a parallel between Hos. 6.1-3 and Lam. 3.40-41. He adds, 'In other words, Hos. 6:1-3 is not itself a song of repentance but an exhortation designed to call one forth, a variant form of the *Aufruf zur Volksklage* to be added to that identified by Wolff…' (p. 151). The same principles discussed in 2.9 apply here: 6.1-3 is at least potentially sincere and effective.

two days…on the third day' 6.2)[104] show the sincerity of the people's expectations. In other words, the people expect Yhwh to act and they expect him to act soon. Furthermore, the call for the people to acknowledge Yhwh (6.3) which parallels the call to return is a message Hosea has been preaching since the early parts of his writing (4.1). This call is consistent with Israel's deficiencies described throughout Hosea and is an essential part of Hosea's message.

Though earlier verses hint at the necessity of return (i.e. 2.9 [ET 2.7]), Hos. 6.1 is the first direct call to return found in the Twelve. The discussion above, however, has revealed various difficulties with the passage, with commentators differing on speaker (people/prophet) and the sincerity of the passage. Though I have spent some time discussing these issues, I think it best to focus on a few general points. The first is that Hos. 6.1 is exhortation, not prescriptive steps for repentance. The prophet is pleading for the people to return, to receive healing, and to avoid further punishment at the hands of Yhwh.[105] Because of this, the specifics of the return are lacking, but they are nonetheless tied closely to the overall message of the writing, in this case the call to acknowledge Yhwh. This indicates that the meaning of return is carried, not necessarily by the specific passage, but by the message of the writing as a whole. All the faults that Hosea has identified in Israel—idolatry, foreign policy, the cult, etc—are symptoms of a failure to return to a covenant relationship with Yhwh. That this call to return is more general than specific is in fact similar to other uses of the שׁוּב imperative found in the Twelve (cf. Zech. 1.3). Secondly, the focus of the passage is not on the people, but rather on Yhwh's actions towards those who return. These actions serve as motivation for the prophet's exhortation to the people, and here in Hosea, hope remains. Despite the understood 'lateness'[106] of Hosea's words it is still possible for the people to return to him. The judgment and punishment of the time could be understood as Yhwh having removed himself from his people because of their sin. Nonetheless, if the people return to him, Yhwh's presence will return to the people and covenantal blessings will soon follow.

From the perspective of those reading the Book of the Twelve, the importance of Yhwh's gentleness, restoration, and willingness to accept a repentant Israel was significant. Those reading the Twelve would know that Israel failed to heed the prophet's words and were eventually destroyed and exiled. Hosea sufficiently details their failures and the reason for that destruction for

104. For more on Hos. 6.2 see M.L. Barré, 'New Light on the Interpretation of Hosea VI 2', *VT* 28 (1978), pp. 129-41.

105. Such an understanding makes sense if the historical setting of chap. 6 is post 733 BCE.

106. If these words were uttered after 733, Israel as a nation existed for a little over a decade (722) before it was completely destroyed and its people deported.

all to read. However, even this eighth-century group that so transgressed the covenant was eligible to receive Yhwh's blessings. Even if the words of 6.1-3 are placed in the mouths of the exiles, as the LXX does, hope for the audience of the Twelve remains. They themselves could speak the words mentioned in 6.1 and experience the blessings of 6.2-3. In either case, return was something Yhwh expected. The promises of restoration could soon be experienced if the people heeded the call. Those reading the Twelve would have shared a similar history as Hosea's original audience. They had felt the covenant punishments and had experienced exile. Their time away from Yhwh could be understood as Yhwh withdrawing his presence in 5.15. Though the return from exile may be understood as the beginning of Yhwh's blessings, that they now languished under Persian authority shows that Yhwh's full blessings were yet to come. Therefore, the necessity to heed the call to return remained as applicable to the early readers of the Twelve as to Hosea's original audience.

- 12.7 (ET 12.6)—'But as for you, return (תשוב) with your God; keep covenant love and justice, and wait continually for your God'.

Hosea's abrupt call to return in 12.7 functions similarly to the sudden appearance of שוב that opens Hosea 6. Such occurrences are not unheard of in Hosea: 'This verse is a good example of a characteristic phenomenon in Hosea: it reads like an isolated oracle whose connections with the surrounding text are dubious'.[107] In 12.3-6 Yhwh brings a covenant lawsuit (ריב 12.3) against Ephraim and then proceeds to parallel the patriarch Jacob's shortcomings with the failures of the nation that shares his name. The Jacob section is one of the most difficult in all of Hosea and the call to return functions as its conclusion (12.7).[108] The difficulties of 12.3-7, however, are not limited to the Jacob section as even the use of the שוב phrase which follows is in dispute. Holladay believes it is 'probable' to amend שוב to ישב and read 'you shall dwell in your tents'[109] for the MT ואתה באלהיך תשוב. The problem centres on the interpretation of the ב preposition attached to 'your God' (בֵּאלֹהֶיךָ), which is unexpected when compared to the more common אל (cf. Hos. 2.9; 6.1; 14.3) or עד (14.2). Though most commentaries do not go as far as Holladay, many feel that the ב preposition conveys a stronger understanding than the NIV's 'to your God'. Wolff argues, 'By comparison, v 7 is concerned not with Israel's return to God, but with the *how* of her return, as the

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107. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 615.

108. For more on how 12.7 fits with the surrounding context see Silva, 'The Literary Structure', p. 445.

109. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 85. Hubbard counters, 'The emendation of *your God* to "your tents"…is readily understandable in Hebrew…but unnecessary here and anticipates too quickly the announcement of a new wilderness relationship sounded in verse 9' (Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 206).

preposition ב indicates: only the God of Israel can make this possible'.[110] Because of this, Wolff contends for the insertion of a second verb, 'שׁוּב בְּ should be understood as constructio praegnans; in addition to שׁוּב, a second verb is implied which is constructed with ב, e.g., האמין (Jon. 3:5; Ps 78:22) or בטח (Ps 56:5, 12)…'[111] and reads 'But you (full of trust) shall return to your God…'[112] Mays, Macintosh, and Davies share Wolff's focus on the 'how' of the return but instead of arguing for the insertion of a new word, contend that the preposition itself conveys an understanding of 'with/through the help of your God'.[113] Such a reading seems to find support originally with Ibn Ezra, who understands the passage as a conditional phrase, 'So you, if you would have returned to your God, He would have assisted you in order to bring you back to Him'.[114] By understanding the ב in this way, the preposition takes on a dual function of 'return to God in repentance, achieved through his all-sufficient help'.[115]

 As with other שׁוּב sections it is appropriate to ask what is required in this call to repentance and how the context, in this case the Jacob parallels, influences its understanding. Unfortunately, the meaning of Hos. 12.3-6 is heavily disputed. As McKenzie notes, 'The reference to the Jacob tradition in Hos. xii is a notorious crux interpretum. The passage presents numerous difficulties which have resisted the various attempts at explanation.'[116]

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110.   Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 214.
111.   Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 207.
112.   Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 207.
113.   Mays, *Hosea*, p. 161; Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 491; Davies, *Hosea*, pp. 276-77. Davies says, 'by the help of your God is literally "by your God" (cf. the phrase in 1:7, "by the Lord their God"): it cannot mean, JB, NIV and NJPS notwithstanding, "to your God"' (p. 277). Andersen and Freedman argue against this, noting that there is nothing essentially unexpected about ב. 'Šwb in the sense of "to go back" is rarely used without a preposition, which is usually 'el. If b is *essentiae*, as in Hos 1:7, the line means "Return (to me) *as* your God"' (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 615).
114.   Ibn Ezra, *Hosea*, p. 114. It should be noted that technically, Ibn Ezra reads ב as 'to', though the idea of divine assistance is clearly in his mind. 'He [Ibn Ezra] also seems to take the prepositional *beth* in the second word (באלהיך) in the sense of a *lamed*…i.e., if only you had turned to your God by keeping "mercy and justice" and by waiting for Him continually' (p. 119).
115.   Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 493.
116.   Steven L. McKenzie, 'The Jacob Tradition in Hosea XII 4-5', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 311-22 (311). Andersen and Freedman echo a similar sentiment. 'Commentators cannot even agree that Hosea's attitude to Jacob is uniformly favorable, or the opposite. If it is favorable, Hosea contrasts Jacob's original good standing with God with Israel's present decline from this primeval high rank. If, on the other hand, Jacob is represented as a rogue, Hosea's point would be that his present-day descendants are the same' (Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 597-98). For more on the use of Jacob in Hos. 12 see William D. Whitt, 'The Jacob Traditions in Hosea and their Relation to Genesis', *ZAW* 103 (1991),

Despite the difficulties, the call to return is nonetheless built on the Jacob parallel but not in the sense that those called to return are to reject their patristic namesake. Rather the parallels with the life of Jacob illustrate that it is still possible for the nation to turn to Yhwh. The call to return is in fact a call to imitation—just as Jacob turned to Yhwh, so now the nation that bears his name should turn to him.

> This [deceitful] view of Jacob informs a great deal of the interpretation of Hosea 12 as many interpreters view Hosea's remarks as an accusation against Israel and an indication of Israel's immoral character. This is true to a certain extent, but it overlooks the prophet's clearly stated agenda of attempting to prompt Israel to return to YHWH (see verse 7 [NRSV: 6]). The Jacob tradition is very important to this strategy. Indeed, Jacob starts life as a deceitful figure, but his love for Rachel turns him into a righteous and faithful husband… It is Jacob's fidelity to Rachel and his return to Israel that prompts Hosea's use of the image to call for Israel's fidelity and return to YHWH. In the prophet's view, if Jacob could change, so can northern Israel.[117]

Therefore, following Sweeney, Jacob's life functions as an illustration of the effectiveness of repentance/return and the blessings that await the people (or in this case the nation) that turns in repentance towards him.

The next line contains two imperatives that dictate the requirements for returning to God in 12.7: 'keep (שְׁמֹר) covenant love (חסד) and justice (וּמִשְׁפָּט)' and 'wait (וְקַוֵּה) continually for your God'. Though חסד is a common idea in Hosea (2.21 [ET 2.19]; 4.1; 6.4, 6; 10.12; 12.7) the use of משפט as 'justice' only happens 2× in Hosea (2.21 [ET 2.19]; 12.7)[118] and is in fact a concept that is more central to Hosea's older contemporary Amos (5.7, 15, 24; 6.12). Used together, 'The implication is that God gives careful attention to his covenant obligations. Here the people are called to do the same.'[119] The more significant phrase is the final imperative for Israel to 'wait continually for your God'. This is the only time קוה appears in Hosea and it 'refers to patient, trustful endurance, usually in a time of trouble or need'.[120] Such a call stands contrary to Israel's past actions that sought safety not in Yhwh, but in political alliances (12.2) or its own military strength (10.13),[121] both of which are repudiated by Hosea in the closing chapter (14.3). The two imperative statements read in light of the Jacob parallel 'reflect[s] both the attitude of the

pp. 18-43; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, 'Inner Biblical Exegesis as a Model for Bridging the "Then" and "Now" Gap: Hos 12:1-6', *JETS* 28 (1985), pp. 33-46.

  117.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 120.
  118.   Hosea's other uses of משפט (5.1, 11; 6.5; 10.4) imply judgment. Note also that משפט and חסד appear together in Hosea only here (12.7) and 2.21.
  119.   McComiskey, 'Hosea', pp. 202-203.
  120.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 277.
  121.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 277.

ancient patriarch and the contemporary situation. Jacob enjoyed an unusual relationship with God, and Hosea instructs the people to renew their relationship to God by turning back to him… He would act if they would return to him'.[122] Therefore, as with previous calls to return, the use of שוב in 12.7 conveys both a call to repentance and the idea of divine rescue and hope.

- 14.2 (ET 14.1)—'Return (שובה), O Israel, to YHWH your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity'.
- 14.3 (ET 14.2)—'Take words with you and return (ושובו) to the YHWH. Say to him: "Pardon all iniquity and accept what is good, and we will offer our lips as bulls".'
- 14.5 (ET 14.4)—'I will heal their waywardness/back turning (משובתם); I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away (שב)[123] from them'.

Of all the uses of שוב in Hosea, the two imperative calls to return coupled with the שוב of Yhwh's restorative actions in ch. 14 are among the most important in all of the Twelve.[124] In this chapter שוב illustrates not only the necessity of returning to Yhwh in repentance but the positive effects of Yhwh's response (שוב) to the people's repentance (שוב). As will be argued later, the relationship between the שוב of the people and the שוב of Yhwh in Hosea 14 lays the foundation for the later שוב imperative statements, 'Return to me and I will return to you' (Zech. 1.3; Mal. 3.7; cf. Joel 2.12), which help convey שוב as the unifying thematic connection of the Twelve.

Chapter 14 acts as a summary for the book of Hosea, combining the various themes of the book (Israel's idolatry, Assyria, and Yhwh's restoration) into one final message. All commentators agree that 14.1 (ET 13.16) belongs with the previous prophecy though for some reason the MT has included it in the following chapter. Nonetheless, the Masoretes have acknowledged the break between 14.1-2 with a פ paragraph marker. The end of the passage is also easy to identify as the last verse; 14.10 (ET 14.9) is a wisdom statement which was most likely added by a later editor.[125] With these limits in mind, Hos. 14.2-9 is presented as a unified message.

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122.   McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 203.

123.   This use of שוב technically falls into the category of restoration. However, because of its close connections with the call to repentance it will be discussed here.

124.   Furthermore, it should be noted that ideas expressed in Hos. 14 are found throughout the prophetic literature. The verbal parallels between Hos. 14 and Jer. 3.22 are so similar that Jeremias calls Jer. 3.22 'eine knappe Zusammenfassung von Hos 14' (a brief summary of Hos. 14). Jorg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea* (ADT, 24/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), p. 174.

125.   'Merely the fact that this closing verse is concerned with the problem of interpretation and actualization indicates that it stands quite far removed from Hosea's lifetime, and also from the original draft of the different transmission complexes' (Wolff,

The previous section (Hos. 9–13) ends with some of the most devastating language of the entire book: 'Samaria will bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God. By the sword they will fall; their little ones will be dashed to pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open' (14.1 [ET 13.16]). Needless to say, if this were the last verse of the book, Hosea would end on a terrible note of destruction and Israel would have no reason for hope. But as is often the case in the Twelve (Joel 4 [ET 3]; Amos 9.11-15; Obad. 19-21; Mic. 7.14; Zeph. 3.14-20; and Zech. 14), the prophet ends with a message of restoration. Yhwh will not abandon his people and even at this late date, whether pre or post 722,[126] an opportunity for the people to return to him remains.

This call to return begins with the command 'Return, O Israel, to YHWH your God', that 'employs an emphatic imperative form [of שׁוב (שׁוּבָה)] to signal a new component of his message, the possibility that Israel might avoid the punishment outlined in the book'.[127] The imperative form deserves further recognition since of the 22× שׁוב is used in Hosea, only here (14.2) and in the following verse (14.3) does it appear.[128] While all of Hosea, especially ch. 13 has detailed Israel's cultic, political, and social violations against Yhwh, here in an overwhelmingly positive ch. 14, the prophet's reason for return is simply stated as, 'for you have stumbled in your iniquity'. Though 'iniquity' (עון) carries significant meaning in Hosea (4.8; 5.5; 7.1; 8.13; 9.7, 9; 10.10; 12.9 [ET 12.8]; 14.3), this lone statement is surprising when compared to the rest of the book since it is the only direct accusation the prophet makes against Israel in the chapter.

Hosea, p. 239). Among others, Seow challenges this assumption. See C.L. Seow, 'Hosea 14:10 and the Foolish People Motif', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 212-24. 'In the light of this pervasive theme, the presence of a sapiential exhortation at the end of Hosea may not seem as out of place as it had been supposed. On the contrary, the vocabulary suggests that the author of Hos 14:10—be he the "Hoseanic composer" or an editor—was at least conscious of the sapiential motif to which I have alluded' (p. 223).

126. Sweeney's argument that the prophet's call to renounce Assyria (14.4) would make little sense if the nation was already destroyed is well made (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 137). Even if this is the case, however, the whole of the chapter has an eschatological tone that looks forward to a better future. 'The prophet's words are not a final call to repentance urged in the hope of avoiding catastrophe. Rather, they are a call to repentance which penetrates beyond the current catastrophe to a dim and uncertain future' (Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, I [DSB; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1984], p. 83).

127. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 137.

128. It should be noted that though Hosea's other two calls to repentance (6.1; 12.7) function as imperatives, they are in fact imperfects.

What Hosea requires for this return, however, is one of the simplest and most beautiful statements uttered anywhere in the Twelve.[129] What the prophet commands in 14.3-4 is a penitential prayer that makes confession to Yhwh and concludes with a statement of trust in him. Though the background of the passage envisioned by the prophet has cultic overtones,[130] Hosea has included some significant changes. What is noticeably absent from the penitential prayer, once again (cf. 6.1; 12.7), is a reference to cultic sacrifices, a fact that is highlighted by Hosea's opening challenge (14.3) to 'take words with you' (קחו עמכם דברים), and return (שוב once more in the imperative וְשׁוּבוּ).[131] Their correct (sacrificial) words given to them to speak by the prophet are the essence of the prophet's definition of return. The confessions of 14.3 can be divided into three phrases:

1. 'Pardon all iniquity' (כל־תשא עון)
2. 'and accept what is good' (וקח־טוב)
3. 'and we will offer our lips as bulls (ונשלמה פרים שפתינו).

The first line, though syntactically awkward, is a plea for forgiveness and implied confession of sin (עון cf. 14.2): 'Pardon all iniquity'.[132] The second phrase (וקח־טוב) which the NIV has translated as 'and receive us graciously' is also complex. This second imperative use of לקח is universally translated as the more passive 'accept' rather than 'take', which opens the verse.[133] The problem with the line centres on the understanding of טוב. Wolff argues that

129.   As Hubbard notes, 'The terms of the return are listed with almost telegraphic brevity in verses 2-3: the issues are too clear to need expansiveness; the stakes are too high to risk obscuring the main points by embellishment' (Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 226).

130.   'The following statements proposed by the prophet in verses 3b-4 [NRSV 2b-3] apparently suggest that the people should appeal to YHWH in a liturgical context with a combination of prayers or cultic statements and sacrifices' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 137-38). The overall negative view of sacrifice offered throughout the writing (4.8-9; 6.6; 8.13) makes the accompaniment of sacrifice difficult to see. 'The very language of Hosea's instruction shows that the prayer is set over against sacrifice as an alternative' (Mays, *Hosea*, p. 186).

131.   The idea of return in connection with the spoken word appears later in the Twelve, notably in Hab. 2.1.

132.   The line literally reads, 'All you will pardon iniquity' (כל־תשא עון). As McComiskey notes, part of the problem with this line is that the verb interrupts the construct phrase; however, he finds no reason to emend the text (McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 229). Here the verb נשא, in connection with עון and God as the subject (Exod. 34.7; Num. 14.18; Ps. 32.5; Mic. 7.18), carries the idea of forgiveness. Hamilton, 'נשא', III, p. 162.

133.   The *BHS* supposes the Targum reading ונקח, thus turning the MT's qal imperative masculine singular into a qal first person imperfect common plural. If the variant were followed, the line would be addressed to the people rather than to Yhwh: 'that we may accept what is good'. The MT, however, makes sense and the variant reading does not find support among the commentaries.

טוב here means 'word' (cf. Neh. 6.19; Ps. 39.3a) and offers the translation 'Accept the word'.[134] Davies suggests following the NIV's 'graciously'.[135] Both of these readings, however, are unlikely. As McComiskey notes, 'טוב (that which is good) stands for that which is worthy of divine acceptation'.[136] Therefore, in the context of this penitentiary speech, 'The statement, "accept that which is good", is clearly a statement to be directed by the people to YHWH…[which] constitutes an appeal by the people to accept their offering'.[137]

With the plea for Yhwh to forgive and accept them, 14.3 culminates with the offering of an unusual sacrifice. Throughout Hosea the prophet has been critical of the cultic system (4.8-9; 6.6; 8.13), so much so in fact that animal sacrifice is not a required part of the previous calls to return (6.1; 12.7). Hosea 14.3 is no different. Nevertheless, as Mays notes, 'An Israelite was not supposed to appear before Yahweh empty-handed (Ex. 23.15; 34.20); by offerings he was to make good his vows'.[138] The prophet, therefore, standing between the tension of the evils of Israel's cult and the necessity of sacrifice offers an alternative to sacrifice: the worshiper's own words, or more specifically lips. The phrase, like the ones before it, is difficult. The text literally reads, 'we offer bulls our lips' (ונשלמה פרים שפתינו). The NIV, NRSV, and other English versions follow the LXX variant καρπόν, and read פרי 'fruit' for the MT's 'bulls' פרים, thus 'that we may offer the fruit of our lips'.[139] In fact, the English versions offer a variety of readings for this last line. The NCV reads 'and we will keep the promises we made to you'; while

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134.   Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 231. He continues, 'If טוב does not also mean "word" then it paraphrases the "fruit of the lips" as proverbial goodness (Prv. 13:2; 12:14). But that is the renunciation of everything except Yahweh himself and his deeds' (p. 235).

135.   Davies, *Hosea*, p. 302. Davies believes the NIV's 'receive us graciously' is actually reading טוב for the MT's טוב. Why he states this is unclear, however, as both טוב and טוב carry the same meaning. McComiskey counters, 'It is unlikely that this clause has the sense of receive graciously… Forgiving guilt and accepting good are two sides of one coin. It was not enough for their sin to be expunged; God looked for obedience as well… This is a concept reflected in Deuteronomy, where the people were encouraged to do good that it might go well with them (6:18), and where "good" is paired with *yāšār* (right), imparting to the word *good* the sense of that which is pleasing to God' (McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 229).

136.   McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 229.

137.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 138.

138.   Mays, *Hosea*, p. 186.

139.   Sweeney is correct when he says, 'The LXX misses the significance of the role of sacrifice in such petitions, however, as the Levitical laws for the expiation of sin or guilt clearly call for the petitioner to bring an animal sacrifice to the altar (see Lev 3:1-17; 4:1-5:13; 5:14-26)' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 138).

the KJV offers the more loose, 'so will we render the calves of our lips'.[140] As interesting as the image of lips as bulls or fruit is, neither reading changes the basic meaning of the passage which is that the words of return uttered here have themselves become the sacrifices.

> The repentant people would offer as sacrifices that which God really wanted, their lips. It was their words, the expression of repentance, that they were to speak under the prophet's guidance. This was more acceptable to God than the carcasses of bulls burned in the worship of pagan deities. Without this heart-felt response to God even the levitical sacrifices would not please him…[141]

With their lips freshly sacrificed to Yhwh, the worshipers move to the heart of what it means to return by renouncing their dependence on anything other than Yhwh. Hosea 14.4 contains three negative statements and one affirmation that indicate that the worshipers have placed their full trust in Yhwh.[142]

1. 'Assyria will not save us' אשור לא יושיענו (negative).
2. 'we will not ride on horses' על־סוס לא נרכב (negative).
3. 'We will not again say 'Our God' to the work of our hands' ולא־נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשׂה ידינו (negative).
4. 'for in you the orphan will find compassion' אשר־בך ירחם יתום (positive).

The one who has returned to Yhwh must acknowledge that no military power, in this case neither Assyria nor Israel's own military might is suffi-cient for salvation. 'The affirmation that Assyria will not deliver them strikes at the heart of their misplaced loyalty. It was an admission that their trust in Assyrian power was treachery against Yhwh'.[143] Yhwh, not chariots or armies, is the warrior of Israel (cf. Zech. 13–14). The third negative state-ment focuses on Hosea's central complaint against Israel's idolatrous cult. The worshiper who sought to return to Yhwh must understand that the problems caused by Baal worship and the syncretism that took place at the Israelite sanctuaries were an offence to Yhwh. Lastly, the lone statement of affirmation, 'for in you the orphan will find compassion', would have taken

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140. The REB offers a much more difficult reading, 'we shall pay our vows with cattle from our pens'. Though this translations offers a stronger understanding of sacrifice, it does not seem to match the MT and is in fact diametrically opposed to the other versions and my translation.

141. McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 230. This basic message is found elsewhere in the Twelve, most famously in Mic. 6.6-8.

142. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah,* p. 213.

143. McComiskey, 'Hosea', p. 230. Some commentators believe that the renun-ciation of horses contains a hidden reference to Egypt (cf. Isa. 31.1). See Mowvley, *Amos and Hosea*, p. 166; Macintosh, *Hosea*, pp. 565-66; Ibn Ezra, *Hosea*, p. 133.

on special significance to a people who faced destruction by the sword (14.1 [ET 13.16]). The phrase also looks to restore the alienation between Israel and Yhwh that occurs in the opening of the writing (cf. רחם 1.6, 7; 2.3, 6, 25 [2×]).[144]

To summarize, from this passage the call to return can be understood as a call to complete trust in Yhwh. The Israelite who seeks to return to Yhwh must believe that salvation is found in Yhwh alone, not in political powers, military might, or idolatry. Israel's sins, particularly at the places of worship, have led them away from Yhwh. All of these failings must be confessed to Yhwh before a return could be accomplished. This is return in its simplest form.

In 14.5 Yhwh responds to his returned people with a שוב of his own. Unlike the use of שוב in 6.1 or 12.7, here the people's call to return is answered positively by Yhwh. This section was introduced by two forceful calls to return (שוב in the imperative 14.2, 3) and here, in the opening verse of Yhwh's response, שוב is used 2× in connection with restoration. The first involves what the NIV has translated as 'waywardness' (מְשׁוּבָתָם), a noun form of the verb שוב. משובה appears 2× in Hosea (11.7; 14.5) and here it is used in connection with Yhwh's promise to heal (ארפא, cf. Hos. 6.1).[145] As Kennedy notes, the connection between healing and שוב is significant:

> It is interesting to note that there is a difference between the use of the term רפה here and in the rest of Hosea. In the previous chapters the term was used in connection with physical imagery like political activities (cf. 5:13; 6:1 and 11:3). Here in Hosea 14:5 (4) the divine healing is directed to the disloyalty of Israel herself. God wants to indicate that Israel's political sin is a symptom of a more serious sickness. The real problem is the people's broken/disturbed relationship with God that needs to be healed.[146]

In other words, משובה and Israel's failure to turn are the root from which springs all of Israel's apostasy. It is therefore important that in this restoration section, it is the people's 'waywardness' (משובה) that is healed immediately after their own return to Yhwh. The results, 'I will freely love them', are a restored relationship which look back to the rejection found in Hosea's opening chapters (cf. 1.6).

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144.   Landy finds a strong connection between Hos. 14.4 and 1.7 in particular. See Francis Landy, *Hosea* (RNBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p. 172.

145.   משובה only occurs 12/13× in the Old Testament (Prov. 1.32; Jer. 2.19; 3.6, 8, 11, 12, 22; 5.6; 8.5; 14.7; Ezek. 37.23 [?]; Hos. 11.7; 14.5). 'Certainly in the prophetic texts, the principal meaning of the word is an act of faithlessness, always against God (e.g. worship of other gods [see Jer 2:13] or false reliance on other nations for security [see Hos 8:9-10])' (Robin Wakely, 'מְשׁוּבה', in *NIDOTTE*, II, pp. 1121-23 [1121]).

146.   O'Kennedy, 'Healing as/or Forgiveness', p. 465.

Yhwh's statement of love towards Israel is followed by a כִּי causal phrase that also contains שׁוּב, 'for my anger has turned away from them' (כִּי שָׁב אַפִּי מִמֶּנּוּ). This four word phrase provides the reason for the resulting shift in Yhwh's actions. In the verses that close the writing, Yhwh promises to pour out his covenantal blessings on his people—an act that stands in drastic contrast to the concluding words of the previous chapter (13.15–14.1). The agricultural blessings which were taken away in 2.11 (ET 2.9) are restored to them (14.8 [ET 14.7]). 'To predict that his anger will turn (שׁוּב) is to predict that the punishments will cease for good'.[147] Because the people have turned (שׁוּב), Yhwh has turned (שׁוּב). In this way, Israel's relationship with Yhwh will finally be restored. As Jeremias notes, 'Ein Israel ohne Abtrünnigkeit wird ein Israel Gottes sein'.[148]

Hosea 14 acts as a summary and interpretive key for all of the writing. Here the prophet calls on his listeners to return in repentance to Yhwh and offers specific details of what a return entails. The gracious response of Yhwh, spoken by Yhwh himself, shows that such a return can/will be effective. What is obvious from this chapter is that the whole process to which Yhwh calls the people is bound up in the nature of the reciprocal relationship of שׁוּב itself. Here in ch. 14, the concluding chapter of the opening writing of the Twelve, are the seeds which will later develop into the unifying theme of the book. Though not explicitly stated, the reciprocal nature of return, later more succinctly expressed by the phrase, 'Return to me and I will return to you' is nonetheless present in the chapter. The use of the infrequent שׁוּב imperative is the key that connects the שׁוּב of Hosea 14 with the other imperative return statements found in the Twelve (e.g. Joel 2.12, 13; Zech. 1.3; Mal. 3.7). In Hos. 14.2-4, the prophet calls the people to return to Yhwh with a detailed penitential prayer. In 14.5 Yhwh responds by healing the people's 'waywardness' (מְשׁוּבָתָם) and turning away (שָׁב) his anger. Thus the concept of the imperative call to the people to return and Yhwh's promise to respond in kind is central to the chapter.

When the MT order of the Twelve is taken into consideration, the use of שׁוּב in Hosea 14 serves as the formal introduction to the unifying concept of return. Chapter 14 not only summarizes the various uses of שׁוּב found in the Twelve's opening writing, it also phrases it in such a way as to look forward to the clear calls to return, first partially imitated by Joel, then ultimately crystallized by Persian Period prophets Zechariah and Malachi. Such a development should be expected from a book whose application is connected to its final composition during the Persian Period. By positioning this concept in the concluding chapter of the opening writing, the editors ensured that those who read the Twelve would understand the subsequent uses of שׁוּב in

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147.   Stuart, *Hosea–Micah*, p. 215.
148.   'An Israel without apostasy will be an Israel of God' (Jeremias, *Hosea*, p. 174).

the Twelve, an idea that appears in each of the following writings, in this relational way. Therefore, the uses of שׁוב which promise judgment (e.g. Hos. 8.13; Mic. 1.7) can be understood as Yhwh turning in judgment because of a failure to return, while the passages that use שׁוב in connection with restoration (e.g. Hos. 3.5; Zeph. 3.20) can be understood as Yhwh graciously turning towards a chastened Israel. Though this concept forms the background of the various uses of שׁוב throughout Hosea,[149] it is here in ch. 14 where the idea is made explicit.

Hosea's use of שׁוב as it relates to repentance is an important message for the audience of the book of the Twelve. As was argued in the opening chapter of this project, the Twelve was written for application, not in the eighth century, but rather during the Persian Period. Because of this, Hosea's message carries a different meaning for those who read it as part of the book of the Twelve rather than as an independent work, if in fact the writing ever circulated apart from the Twelve. Read on its own, the result of the call to שׁוב in Hosea is unknown. 'The reader is not provided with information concerning how Israel responded. As a result, Hosea remains open-ended, and the readers await further treatment of this topic.'[150] Those reading Hosea from the perspective of the later Persian Period, however, would have been familiar with Israel's history. That the Northern Kingdom was invaded by Assyria in 733 and ultimately destroyed in 722 and its people exiled was long in the past and part of Israel/Judah's established history. From this perspective, the audience of the Twelve would have known that Israel failed to heed Hosea's calls to repentance and were therefore exiled, a punishment with which the Twelve's Judean audience would have been familiar. This knowledge of שׁוב, therefore, brings an interpretive understanding to Israel's history that defends Yhwh's actions. 'Did Israel really have the opportunity to return in the first place? Was there a prophetic call to return that was loud, clear, and convincing enough?… Both Hosea and Joel give impressive examples of how those calls to repentance happened, but were left unheeded'.[151] In this way, the call to return is a type of apologetic.

The datedness of the writing, however, would not have diminished the urgency of Hosea's calls to the late Persian readers. That the people of Persian Judah were currently occupied by a foreign power was enough to communicate that Yhwh's full blessings had not yet been given to the people.[152] The call to renounce Assyria in 14.4 could have been applied to any major power throughout Israelite history—Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, or

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149.   See שׁוב as Exile, שׁוב as Recompense, and שׁוב as Restoration.

150.   Aaron Schart, 'The First Section of the Book of the Twelve Prophets: Hosea–Joel–Amos', *Int* (2007), pp. 138-52 (141).

151.   Schart, 'First Section', p. 144.

152.   This sentiment is made clear in Neh. 9.36-37.

the current power Persia. In addition, the threat of further covenantal punish-
ments, agricultural destruction or even exile, remained. Because of this,
Persian Judah continually needed to heed Yhwh's call to return.

Though the exiles had returned, the full blessings promised by Hosea and
the rest of the Twelve were still unrealized. The message of restoration so
closely associated with the call to return (Hos. 6.1) would have spoken to the
listeners. Furthermore, Hosea's requirements for return were general enough
that those living in exile away from the land could adhere to them. In particu-
lar, Hosea's call to return lacks the temple-centred cultic aspects associated
with levitical worship. In 6.1 the prophet calls for a return that centres on the
acknowledgement of God and later states the preference for knowledge as
opposed to sacrifice (6.6). In 12.7, the prophet describes return in relation to
keeping covenant loyalty (חסד) and justice (משפט). In 14.2-4, the repentant
worshiper offers words instead of sacrifices. In this way, Hosea offers a non-
centralized path to return—one that goes around the cult and focuses on the
actions (and words) of the worshiper. Nonetheless, Hosea's urgent call to
return remains. If the people hope to fully experience Yhwh's blessings, they
must return to him. Conversely, the covenantal threat or recompense of
Yhwh's judgments, particularly exile, hangs over all those who fail to return.
In Hosea, the cost of return is laid bare before the reader of the Twelve.

3. *Conclusion*

Overall, Hosea's use of שוב is well suited to introduce readers to the theme of
return. While Hosea's twenty-four occurrences vary with use, they all share
one goal—to bring Israel back to Yhwh. In this chapter, I attempted to show
how the call to return is first introduced to the Twelve by dividing the uses of
שוב into various categories. I must acknowledge that my methodological
approach to this chapter is but one of many ways שוב could have been exam-
ined. In choosing a categorical method, I hope to bring a more systematic
approach to the subject of return and to build a unified picture of the theme
throughout Hosea. I understand that this method has come at the expense of a
more linear approach, but since every effort has been made to place each
passage in its context, I believe that its benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

As Hosea has shown, returning is not a simple task, and the theological
implications of the call are significant. By examining שוב in a more system-
atic manner, it becomes apparent just how pervasive the theological message
of return is. In fact, it is possible to argue that the idea of turning is at the
very heart of Hosea. From chs. 2–14 the use of שוב conveys the idea of a
reciprocal relationship in which Yhwh and his people are constantly turning
towards or away from each other. But the idea of turning is expressed in
other passages besides those dealing directly with שוב, for example, Yhwh

promises to change the previously named 'Not my people' to the 'sons of the living God' (2.1 [ET 1.10]). While שוב is not directly mentioned in this verse, the concept, that of Yhwh moving from judgment to restoration, is present. Such passages not only illustrate just how important turning is as a theological concept, but it also demonstrates how return can be a radical change in Yhwh's own actions. He is not locked into one particular way of dealing with his people, but can, and will turn towards them graciously.

Both Yhwh's and Israel's role in returning is well established in Hosea, particularly ch. 11, where the reader is fully introduced to the complex nature of the return (שוב) relationship. In Hosea 11, Yhwh's emotions are laid bare—he loves Israel (11.1) and does not want to destroy her (11.8-9), but Israel has betrayed him by violating his covenant (11.2-3). What results from this is Yhwh's struggle within himself between his gracious compassion that would forgive and restore Israel, and his righteous anger that would see Israel punished to the brink of annihilation (cf. 13.15–14.1) and exiled from the land. The problem revolves around Israel's inability to remain faithful to him. In another שוב statement later in the chapter, Yhwh says, 'My people are determined to turn away from me (למשובתי)' (11.7). This raises an important question: if Israel's improper actions resulted in Yhwh's punishment, why did they refuse to return (Amos 4.6-11)? Such an observation seems to raise questions about the nature of the return relationship as well as humanity itself. To ask it differently, is there something about the nature of humanity and the nature of the return (שוב) relationship that makes turning difficult? In Hosea, Israel's circumstances and 'deeds' (5.4; 7.10) have become an obstacle to return. In some way, these covenant violations prevent Israel from realizing that she is in need of Yhwh's healing and grace, and yet in spite of all of this, the prophet continues to issue calls of return (e.g. 6.1; 14.2). In light of the situation, was it even possible for Israel to rise out of its circumstances and heed the prophet's calls in the first place? From the standpoint of the audience of the Twelve such calls provide a reason for the exile of the Northern Kingdom (and thus vindicate Yhwh's actions), but from a broader theological standpoint, more must be said.

On some level Israel's stubbornness in the face of frequent calls to return is baffling. Simply put, why don't they return? After all, a return would make everything better: it would bring blessing and would end the covenantal curses, but Israel is either unable or unwilling to accept this. In this lies a contradiction—Israel's incentive and perhaps desire is to return, but they fail to do so. Israel, however, is not alone in contradiction, as Yhwh's promised destruction (e.g. Hos. 10.2-15) seems to stand in opposition to his desire to forgive (11.9). These problems, when held in tension with one another, introduce the reader to the complex nature of the struggle of the return (שוב) relationship. While Israel hears Yhwh's calls to return and the benefits that

such a return would bring, it must fight to overcome its natural desire to turn from him—a struggle the audience of the Twelve knows was repeatedly lost in the past. Likewise, it is hard for Yhwh to turn toward Israel and be gracious to her because of his absolute holiness. Nonetheless, by bringing the people back from exile Yhwh has done just that—a fact the post exilic audience of the Twelve would also have known. In this respect, Yhwh's readiness and willingness to accept a penitent Israel is the most powerful element of the return (שׁוב) relationship. Moreover, from the standpoint of Hosea as well as the Twelve, when a time comes for restoration, it is always Yhwh who initiates the return of his people (e.g. Hos. 11.10-11; Zeph. 3.20). But even a fulfilled return does not bring the return relationship to a close because returning is not a one time, final act. The central message of the need to return always remains. This is best illustrated in Zech. 1.3, where the prophet has issued a call to return to a group of post exilic people who have already experienced a return. This means that even those who had returned from exile and were in the process of rebuilding the temple, must still return to Yhwh.[153] In this way, the Twelve raise a warning that the return (שׁוב) relationship is one that will never cease, and in fact, requires constant vigilance. The struggle within Israel between turning toward Yhwh and turning toward rebellion must be confronted continually. Though Yhwh was always willing to accept them back, if Israel failed in its struggle with itself, the judgmental cycle outlined in Hosea would begin again.

As mentioned above, Hosea's understanding of Israelite history is an important component of the return message. As an introduction to the Twelve, Hosea bridges two worlds—that of the eighth-century, pre-exilic Israel, and that of the post exilic fifth-century Judah. Once Hosea was brought into the Book of the Twelve, the model reader shifted from the former to the latter. Because of this, Hosea's use of Israel's history must be understood from a post exilic standpoint, one in which Hosea projects the return theme forward into the future, by using Israel's past. Hosea offers reflections on Israel's history (i.e. Jacob, the exile), but he does so for the benefit of a model reader well removed from such events. In this way, Hosea offers a theological history that focuses on Yhwh's future judgment/blessing in reaction to Israel's present covenant failures/faithfulness. Because of this, certain discussions about Israel's past ability to heed the calls to return (Hos. 6.1) are rendered moot. In other words it no longer essentially matters if Israel could or could not have returned in the past, what only matters is that the current generation, that of post exilic Judah, learn from the past and heed the calls and return. In reading Hosea this way, Yhwh can be portrayed as one who has, and always will be, ready to forgive Israel's sin. When the people turn

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153.   This call is especially interesting in light of Zechariah's statement that Yhwh had in fact returned (1.16).

back to him, he readily accepts them. Conversely, the opposite is also true. When the people turn from Yhwh, Yhwh withdraws and isolates himself from his people (2.11; 5.15). From an application standpoint, which choice will the post exilic reader make? Such understanding has significant ramifications for Israel in terms of judgment/blessings. Hosea portrays Israel as a people who do not have an absolute claim to their land. Much like Deuteronomy, Hosea understands that Israel's hold to the land is conditional—its possession and bounty is dependent on Yhwh's grace. Once the people have violated their covenant with him, Yhwh can evict them from the land and scatter them across the nations (שׁוב as Exile), and has done so in the past. Though the post exilic reader has experienced a return, nothing prevents Yhwh from once again exiling the current generation from their land.

Fortunately for the reader, Hosea also depicts a time of restoration, one in which Yhwh will act and restore the fortunes (שׁוב שׁבות) of his people. The timing of such restoration in Hosea, as well as the rest of the Twelve, is that of an impending action—one that will occur shortly. Whether the restoration happens 'after' (Hos. 3.5), 'in that day'/'the days are coming' (Amos 9.11-15), or 'at that time' (Zeph. 3.20), restoration is something that is always on Israel's future horizon. Yhwh will never abandon them completely, nor will he fail to bring about a future return.

Chapter 5

JOEL

While Hosea introduces the readers of the Twelve to the deep issues surrounding the return theme, the use of שׁוב in Joel is muted in comparison. Nonetheless, Joel mixes the call to return with his primary concern of the Day of Yhwh.

1. *Introduction*

To those reading the Twelve as a whole, the transition from Hosea to Joel is jarring. The optimism that accompanied Hosea's concluding call to return (Hos. 14) and the turning of Yhwh which promised agricultural blessings has melted away beneath Joel's insatiable army of marching locusts (1.4). Even to the casual reader it is instantly apparent that the situations are not continuous, after all, the immediate threat of Hosea's Assyrian invaders has been replaced by a hoard of locusts! Moreover, there is no mention of Hosea's Bethel, Jerusalem not Samaria is the focus of the prophet's speeches, and Tyre, Sidon, Philistia and the Greeks are mentioned as enemies rather than Assyria. In both writings, the people face an imminent threat from invaders, but while Hosea seems resigned to this action by the conclusion of his work (Hos. 13), Joel never arrives at that point. Instead he continues a call to repentance but shapes it in light of the events of Day of Yhwh, a phrase that never properly appears in Hosea. Scholars have long recognized Joel's important contributions to the Day of Yhwh, but have overlooked the essential role that שׁוב plays in that message. Though not as prominent as Hosea, Joel's six uses of שׁוב (2.12, 13, 14; 4.1, 4, 7 [ET 3.1, 4, 7]), including two imperatives (2.12, 13), form the foundation of two key messages that echo Hosea's call to return to Yhwh. By weaving together the call to return with the Day of Yhwh, Joel, from his position as the second writer in the Twelve, has added an important dimension to the return relationship and indicated to the audience of the Twelve that these themes should be understood in light of one another; a link that will reappear later in the Twelve. The following section will examine Joel's use of שׁוב in light of the Day of Yhwh message and how that message impacts the return theme within the Twelve.

a. *Position and Authorship Issues*

The differences and similarities between Hosea and Joel, especially in light of natural connections between Hosea and Amos, raise important questions about the position and function of Joel within the Book of the Twelve. Joel is second in the MT order of the Twelve after Hosea and prior to Amos, but is located fourth in the LXX following the eighth-century prophets Hosea, Amos and Micah, and prior to Obadiah. How and why Joel occupies its current position has been a matter of discussion. The writing's composition, particularly its use of other prophetic books, including writings in the Twelve, Jeremiah, and Isaiah,[1] has drawn scholarly attention As mentioned in the introduction, Nogalski has long argued that Joel's position and inclusion was the critical step in the development of the Twelve, so critical in fact, that he has labelled it the 'literary anchor' of the Twelve.[2] From a diachronic standpoint, Nogalski argues that it was the inclusion of Joel and the 'Joel related-layer' that first brought unity to the Twelve. During this step, the Joel-layer editors gathered the Deuteronomistic corpus (Hosea–Amos–Micah–Zephaniah) and the Haggai–Zechariah 1–8 corpus, linked them together, and expanded upon them.[3] To this core group of writings were added the writings of Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Malachi.[4] In fact, for Nogalski, Joel never existed apart from its current location in the Twelve. 'This investigation suggests a strong probability that two writings, Joel and Obadiah, were first compiled, by adapting existing material, as part of the literary production of the Book of the Twelve. Joel serves as the literary anchor to the larger corpus'.[5] The influence of Joel is so extensive that these additional writings were altered to include images first introduced by Joel. For example, 'In Joel, "locust" plauges [*sic*], in the form of armies, devastate the land as a result of the guilt of the people. Redactional formulations in Nahum and Habakkuk interpret Assyria and Babylon as two of these locusts'.[6] Therefore, for Nogalski, Joel becomes the unifying writing of the Twelve.

Part of this Joel-level expansion included the incorporation of various catchwords between the writings. While the existence of these catchwords throughout the Twelve remains debatable, the similarities between Joel 4.16 and Amos 1.2 are difficult to ignore.

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1. See Nogalski, 'Intertextuality in the Twelve', pp. 102-24. For a critique of Nogalski's approach see Richard Coggins, 'Interbiblical Quotations in Joel', in *After the Exile: Essays in Honor of Rex Mason* (ed. John Barton and David J. Reimer; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), pp. 75-84.

2. See Nogalski, 'Joel as "literary anchor"', pp. 91-109.

3. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 275.

4. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 275.

5. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 276.

6. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 276. For more examples see pp. 275-78.

'YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice' (ויהוה מציון ישאג ומירושלם יתן קולו) Joel 4.16 (ET 3.16).

'YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice' (יהוה מצעון ישאג ומירושלם יתן קולו) Amos 1.2.[7]

His complete list of catchwords for Joel and Amos is as follows:

Joel	Amos
צר Tyre 3.4/Heb 4.4	צר Tyre 1.9, 1.10
וכל גלילות פלשת the regions of Philistia 3.4/Heb 4.4	עזה Gaza 1.6, 7; אשדוד Ashdod 1.8; אשקלון Ashkelon 1.8; עקרון Ekron 1.8; פלשתים Philistines 1.8
ויהוה מציון ישאג ומירושלם יתן קולו YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice 3.16/Heb 4.16	יהוה מצעון ישאג ומירושלם יתן קולו YHWH roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice 1.2
ציון Zion 3.16, 17, 21/Heb 4.16, 17, 21	ציון Zion 1.2
ירושלם Jerusalem 3.16, 17, 20/Heb 4.16, 17, 21	ירושלם Jerusalem 1.2
אדום Edom 3.19/Heb 4.19	אדום Edom 1.6, 9, 11[8]

Considering the significant difference between the position of Joel in the LXX and the MT, it seems possible that Joel's citation is at least one reason for its position in the MT order. Certainly from a reader's perspective, the close vicinity of these verses is difficult to overlook.

While Nogalski's diachronic analysis is helpful in understanding Joel's connection with the surrounding writings, it is the writing's literary function, tied closely with authorship issues, that ultimately controls Joel's message. Unfortunately, Joel's authorship issues are far from resolved. As Dillard comments 'insofar as authorial intent remains an important key to the

7. Nogalski believes that placing the Joel citation before Amos frames the latter quote in a positive context. 'Given Joel's tendency for thoughtful intertextual nuances, it seems quite plausible to suggest that Joel deliberately frames the oracles against the nations in Amos 1–2 as part of Yahweh's ongoing actions on behalf of his people'. Nogalski, 'Intertextuality and the Twelve', p. 108. For a longer discussion see pp. 103-108.

8. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, pp. 24-25. All translation of words and phrases are his. While the catchword link between Joel and Amos appears strong, Nogalski's catchwords for Hosea–Joel are not. The words 'inhabitants' (ישבי), 'grain' (דגן), 'vine' (גפן), 'wine' (יין), and 'these/this' (זאת/אלה) are simply too common to serve as substantial linking words. For more see Coggins, 'Interbiblical Quotations in Joel', p. 77. Nogalski is aware of this criticism but argues that their redactional insertion makes them catchwords. 'Because the words involved are relatively common, one should initially be cautious regarding intentionality. Note, however, that all of these words appear in one verse in Hosea. Careful literary analysis reveals a strong likelihood that three of these words (inhabitants, grain vine) entered Hos. 14.8 as a 'redactional gloss', presumably by editorial hands working on the Twelve' (Nogalski, 'Intertextuality and the Twelve', p. 113 n. 29.

meaning of any text, the Book of Joel will then unavoidably be problematic'.[9] Nevertheless, it is Joel's ability to resist specific dating that has a lasting impact on the understanding of the return theme within the Twelve. Because of this, a brief recapitulation of the authorship issues is necessary here.

Virtually nothing is known about the author or the date the writing was composed. The name Joel (יואל) appears 20 times in the Old Testament but only once in the book that bears his name: 'The word of YHWH that came to Joel son of Pethuel' (Joel 1.1). Unlike Hosea which lists the kings under whose reign he prophesied, Joel is connected only with his father, and his background is unknown. Because his message focuses on the temple and priests (1.9, 13; 2.17), many scholars have assumed that Joel, or at least his work, had some connection with the temple and the priesthood.[10] Additionally, because he mentions Jerusalem 6 times, most believe that he was active in that city, but this does little to narrow the date of composition.

To complicate matters further, as with most prophetic works, there is debate about the authorship of the various parts of the writing.[11] Barton believes that the book is divided at 2.28 between two well organized oracle cycles (1.2-20 and 2.1-17)[12] and a less organized collection that concludes the book. 'The second half of the book is a rather miscellaneous collection of oracles, assembled in no particular order at all'.[13] He does not believe that there is unity to the writing and more importantly, that the writing itself does not demand a unified reading. 'It seems to me that we have essentially two separate booklets here, and that they cannot really be regarded as forming an organic unity, only an imposed one…it seems clear to me that this [reading

9. Raymond Dillard, 'Joel' in *The Minor Prophets*, I (ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), pp. 239-314 (239).

10. See G.W. Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem* (VTSup, 21; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971); and Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), particularly p. 188. For a detailed look at the authorship issues in Joel see Paul L. Redditt, 'The Book of Joel and Peripheral Prophecy', *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 225-40.

11. For an overview of the issues see Rex Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 103-12.

12. 2.18-27 provides 'YHWH's resolution of the terrible calamities that have called forth liturgies of lamentation and mourning' (John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* [OTL; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001], p. 13). Some have argued that the division within the book occurs at 2.18 rather than 2.28. See Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel*, p. 105.

13. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 14. 'It is at 2:28 that the rot sets in, at precisely the point where we have the telltale formula "Then afterward", indicating here as elsewhere in the Old Testament that new material has been added to an old collection. It seems to me, accordingly, that Joel can best be seen as essentially two separate collections of material, which should be discussed and dated independently of each other—always allowing, of course that the process by which one came to be added to the other is also worthy of investigation' (p. 13).

the book as a unity] is not a choice that the book itself forces on us, since it gives ample evidence of being a composite work'.[14] Those who hold to a two-part Joel inevitably date the second half to post-exilic times where most also date the composition of the first half.[15]

Of course not all agree with Barton and there remains strong support for finding unity in Joel,[16] with Wolff being one of its chief proponents. While he believes the text has secondary additions (4.4-8 [ET 3.4-8]), 'the basic construction of the four chapters derives from a single author'.[17] He finds no reason to conclude that the division between the prophetic messages of chs. 1–2 and the eschatological messages of chs. 3–4 arose from different authors.

> Now it remains quite true that 2:18-19a, 21-27 and chap. 1 address the same issue—the economic plight of Jerusalem—about which chaps. 3 and 4 are completely silent. Does this admission necessarily lead us to conclude that chaps. 1–2, since they exhibit a prophecy rooted in its own time, stand in opposition to chaps. 3–4 where a purely eschatological message is unfolded? Surely not. In addition to neglecting the relationship we have described between 2:1-17 and chap. 1, such a conclusion would ignore the bond between the two parts of the book formed by the parallel 'assurances of recognition' in 2:27 and 4:17.[18]

Therefore, if Wolff is correct, then both halves of the writing were composed within the same historical setting, which for Wolff dates to the first half of the fourth century.[19]

What this discussion shows is that while the argument surrounding the authorship of the various parts of Joel remains open, a general agreement has arisen among scholars that date the completion of Joel sometime around the middle Persian period,[20] with an earlier post-exilic date allowed for Joel

14. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 14.

15. Barton references Duhm's belief that the second part of Joel was written as late as the Maccabean period, but rejects it: 'such very late dates have largely fallen out of favor' (Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 15).

16. Mason adds, 'But the unity of the book has not been without its strong supporters. Indeed, if such matters were to be settled by numbers of protagonists to be found on each side, its unity could probably be guaranteed' (Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel*, p. 107).

17. Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride Jr and Charles A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

18. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 7. He further supports his case by identifying eleven catchwords or phrases that exist between the two sections of the book (p. 8).

19. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 5.

20. 'I am not aware of any recent scholar who has formally proposed a pre-exilic date, and certainly none of those mentioned by Barton has written in the last 20 years. Even those writing for consciously conservative series, such as NICOT or the Tyndale Commentary, take a Second Temple dating to be the most likely' (Richard Coggins, 'Joel', *CRBS* 2.1 [2003], pp. 85-103 [89]). Achtemeier offers the broad dates of 500–343 BCE.

1.2-27,[21] though this is not universal.[22] While such a conclusion is sensible, there is nothing certain about this finding and the writing itself offers no clear clues about its own historical setting. Because of this, Calvin's comments are best kept in mind:

> As there is no certainty it is better to leave the time in which he taught undecided; and as we shall see, this is of no great importance. Not to know the time of Hosea would be to readers a great loss, for there are many parts which could not be explained without a knowledge of history; but as to Joel there is, as I have said, less need of this; for the import of his doctrine is evident, though his time be obscure and uncertain.[23]

In this Calvin is correct. Joel's lack of historical setting does not obscure his message, and in fact the opposite is true. It is the writing's chronologically ambiguous nature that allows it to function as a programmatic work of the Twelve, blending together the messages of return and the Day of Yhwh, and thus making it relevant to the audience of the Twelve.

b. *Literary Function of Joel*
While Joel was most likely composed during the Persian Period its lack of chronological markers means that the writing is undated, and thus chronologically flexible. From a reader's standpoint, this means that Joel can be understood as taking place at any point in Israelite/Judahite history, with the exception of the Exile since the temple seems to be standing. This is part of the reason why Joel, a Persian composition, occupies the second position in

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Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets*, I (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), p. 116.

21. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 17. Barton believes that this makes Joel an approximate contemporary of Malachi, perhaps Jonah and Zech. 9–14. However, Mason adds, 'We can summarize the discussion, however, by saying that nothing demands a post-exilic date for 1.1–2.27' (Mason, *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel*, p. 116).

22. '…our assumption is that Joel is a unified work composed under the circumstances of an invasion against the city of Jerusalem (and thus, of course, Judah) by Mesopotamian enemy forces, either Assyria or Babylonia. If this admittedly speculative assessment is correct, the words of the book would likely have been spoken on one of these occasions: the Assyrian invasion of 701 B.C., the Babylonian invasion of 598, or the Babylonian invasion of 588' (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 226).

23. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Joel, Amos, Obadiah* (trans. John King; first published 1847, republished 2007, Forgotten Books: Forgottenbooks.org), p. 6. (books.google.co.uk, 28 January 2008). Coggins's position is also noteworthy: 'The situation with regard to dating is almost as unpromising. We may begin by recalling Crenshaw's view that "endeavors to establish a historical context for a biblical book constitute exercises in futility". This certainly seems to be true of Joel' (Richard James Coggins, *Joel and Amos* [NCBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], p. 13).

the MT order between two eighth-century prophets. It is possible to read the writing as an eighth-century composition. Sweeney has noted the influence of this chronological ambiguity arguing,

> The lack of historical specificity enables the book of Joel and its presentation of the Day of YHWH to take on a programmatic character much as Hosea does; the enemy is not identified, and the threat is expressed against creation as well as against Judah and Jerusalem. Joel can therefore speak to any period of Judah's and Israel's history in which an enemy threatened the existence of YHWH's people and in that threat was removed.[24]

So the undated Joel stands along with eighth-century Hosea as the two most significant writings in the Twelve whose position influences the message of the writings that follow. An example of this is seen in the LXX order where Joel, in the fourth position, heads a section of writings that focus on foreign nations (Joel–Obadiah–Jonah–Nahum–Habakkuk). While the messages of Obadiah–Habakkuk are concerned with the destruction of Edom, Assyria, and Babylon respectively, they can also be understood in light of Yhwh's broader plan for the nations first outlined in Joel, in which Jerusalem is defended and the offending nations are brought under Yhwh's judgment. But unlike Obadiah–Habakkuk where the enemy is clearly stated, the enemy in Joel is unknown. From a reader's perspective, the lack of a clear historical setting means any number of Israel's enemies can fill that role, including the Edomites (Obadiah), Assyrians (Jonah–Nahum), or Babylonians (Habakkuk). Thus the interpretation of writings that follow can be influenced by Joel's opening position and vice-versa. In this way, 'Joel presents the paradigm by which Jerusalem will be threatened by the nations and ultimately restored. Such a role is bolstered by its anonymous character; the threat to Jerusalem in Joel may be read against Assyrian, Babylonian, or even Persian conquest of or hegemony over Jerusalem'.[25]

Because Joel sits in the second position in the MT order rather than fourth, its influence as a programmatic writing is more immediate.

> Whereas the LXX makes clear distinctions between Israel, the nations, and Jerusalem in its ordering of the books, the MT is concerned with Jerusalem and Judah throughout. Thus Hosea points to the experience of northern Israel as an example for Judah, and Joel follows immediately with its scenario of punishment and restoration for Jerusalem on the 'Day of YHWH'.[26]

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24.   Sweeney, 'Sequence', p. 58.
25.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 148.
26.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 148. In both instances the position of Joel is the key to understanding the orders. 'Thus, Joel, with its typological concern for the threat posed to Jerusalem by the nations and YHWH's pledge to deliver Jerusalem from the threat, provides an ideal transition between Hosea—Micah and Obadiah—Malachi. In the MT sequence, which focuses on Jerusalem throughout, tension appears among the various

The introduction of the concept of the Day of Yhwh and the punishment and restoration that will take place on that day is a concept that dominates the rest of the Twelve.[27] But Joel does not express this concept in isolation, and in fact mixes this important message together with that of return. Furthermore, that the writing is part of a collection and follows Hosea means that the shadow of return, so fully expressed in Hosea, hangs over the work.

But how does this reading of Joel, one that is aware of both its chronological ambiguity and its position within the MT order, affect how one understands the concept of שׁוּב and the call to return? When the reader leaves Hosea, he/she shifts from a clear eighth-century setting into a setting which the early readers of the Twelve would have found more universal. While read on its own apart from the Twelve, Hosea's call is rooted in his historical context as an eighth-century prophet to the Northern Kingdom. In contrast, Joel's message is broader, and more indefinite. For example, in Hosea 14 the prophet's call to return focuses on issues that are especially relevant to eighth-century Northern Israel. In this case, a return to Yhwh involves a return to proper worship, specifically denouncing idolatry as well as Israel's reliance on an eighth-century Assyria for salvation. Though application for a Persian audience is possible, both of these issues are rooted in the political/religious situation of Hosea's time. In Joel, however, the call to return is much more open. In fact, unlike Hosea, there is not even a clear indication of the people's sin. The people are told how to return ('with all your heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning' 2.12) but not really why. Yes, they are told that the Day of Yhwh has come and that they should return because of it, but the deeper question of why the Day has come in the first place is left unanswered. This is a significant difference when read in connection with Hosea and gives Joel's message a more universal nature. Therefore, what will be shown is that Joel's call to return builds upon the ones found previously in Hosea and makes the earlier prophet's message a timeless call.

books as Joel provides a typological portrayal of Jerusalem's experience in relation to the nations, but the following sequence only highlights Jerusalem's idealization in the middle (Micah) prior to taking up the issue as to how that ideal will be realized in Zephaniah—Malachi' (Marvin A. Sweeney, 'The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve', in Redditt and Schart [eds.], *Thematic Threads*, pp. 133-54 [152]).

27. 'Within the MT version of the Book of the Twelve, Joel presents the paradigm for Jerusalem's punishment and restoration as a fundamental question to be addressed within the Twelve as a whole' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 149). To be clear, much more could be said about the position of Joel in the various orders and the influence that it has on reading the Twelve. For Sweeney's in-depth analysis see Sweeney, 'Place and Function', pp. 133-54. It is clear from this article that Sweeney finds the LXX the more natural order and even argues for the dating of each collection.

2. שׁוּב *in Joel 2.12-14*

- 2.12-14—'But even now', declares YHWH 'return (שֻׁבוּ) to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning'. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return (וְשֻׁבוּ) to YHWH your God, for gracious and compassionate is he, slow to anger and abounding in covenant kindness, and he relents from evil. Who knows? He may turn (יָשׁוּב) and relent and leave a blessing after him—a gift and drink offering for YHWH your God.

a. *Literary Context*

Joel 2.12-14 sits at a pivotal junction within ch. 2. It begins the call to repentance which the prophet hopes will cause Yhwh to relent and hold back the army that is poised to destroy Jerusalem. In some beautifully descriptive poetry Joel 2.1-11 describes the slow advance of an invading army that threatens to destroy everything in its path. The army begins far off (2.2b) and devastates the land: 'Like the garden of Eden is the land before them, but after them a wilderness—a waste! Nothing escapes them' (2.3b). By vv. 7-8 the army is at the walls of the city, and by v. 9 the city is breached, 'into the houses they climb up; they enter through windows like a thief' (2.9b). The identity of this enemy is one of the more debated issues within the writing and is set in relation to the locusts from ch. 1.[28] The passage is understood to

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28. Sweeney believes that ch. 2 is the 'human counterpart to the natural threat of locust plague in Joel 1:2-20' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 161). Wolff identifies it as an 'apocalyptic enemy army' (Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 42). Barton understands the invaders of ch. 2 as another locust invasion (Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, pp. 44-48). The reason for this is the metaphor of 2.4-5 in which the invaders are compared to an army. 'One can hardly describe an army as being like a plague of locusts while saying that the locusts in question are like an army, unless one is very incompetent in using metaphors, which the Old Testament prophets certainly were not' (Barton, *Joel–Obadiah*, p. 44). Garrett finds this argument unconvincing. See Duane A. Garrett, 'The Structure of Joel', *JETS* 28 (1985), pp. 289-97, esp. pp. 291-94. I am inclined to follow McConville who sees a mutual 'exchange' between the image of an army and that of locusts. 'I think it is better to see a close connection between the locusts (the "vehicle" of the metaphor) and the armies they represent (the "tenor" of the metaphor)… The image of the locusts aims to portray the voracious, mindless, ruthless devastation of an invading army. At the same time, the image of a locust-swarm itself gains strength from the discipline and purpose of an army' (J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets*, IV [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002], p. 160). Besides the commentaries cited in this work, for a discussion on the role of the locusts in Joel see also Pablo R. Andiñach, 'The Locusts in the Message of Joel', *VT* 42 (1992), pp. 433-41; Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, 'Joel's Locust Plague in Light of Sargon I's Hymn to Nanaya', *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 597-603; and Joseph Lössl, 'When is a Locust Just a Locust? Patristic Exegesis of Joel 1:4 in the Light of Ancient Literary Theory', *JTS* 55 (2004), pp. 575-99. For a more dated

be a description of the Day of Yhwh, a phrase that appears twice in the section (2.1, 11). 2.1-11 builds to a climax in vv. 10-11 where the army causes chaos on earth and the cosmos (v. 10) and the shocking revelation that Yhwh himself is at the head of it (v. 11). The call to repentance that follows is a response to the final rhetorical question of v 11: 'For great is the Day of YHWH, and exceedingly terrible. Who can endure it?'

b. *The Meaning of* שׁוב *in 2.12-14*

With the city poised on the brink of destruction by an army the likes of which has never been seen before (2.2) and headed by Yhwh himself, v. 12 offers a surprising reprieve: ' "But even now", declares YHWH "return (שׁבו) to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning" '. The first two phrases which introduce the call to return are significant. 'But even now' (וגם עתה)[29] indicates it is not too late to avoid this disaster; an alternative to destruction in the form of return still exists, but the decision must be made immediately. '*Now* is the psychological moment'.[30] The sense of urgency communicated by this phrase is palpable, and once more the struggle between salvation and destruction becomes apparent. What will the people do? Yhwh is prepared to destroy them, but in this moment he is (perhaps, 2.14) prepared to offer grace, and the people must again struggle to return. The second phrase 'declares YHWH' (נאם יהוה), which only occurs once in Joel, shows that the call to return comes directly from Yhwh. 'It underscores at this turning point the fact that to the threat of his army, Yahweh himself adds the following admonition, meant as an invitation. He himself thereby initiates the decisive turn of history'.[31] This phrase introduces tension into the text between Yhwh who is at the head of an army that is about to destroy Zion, and Yhwh who is calling for a return that would conclude with the destruction being averted. As in Hosea, Yhwh is the initiator of both destruction and grace, and the struggle of turning, both for Yhwh and for the people, has begun (cf. Hos. 11ff.).

The official call is conveyed by the phrase 'return to me with all your heart' and there are difficulties surrounding its interpretation. The problem centres on whether שׁוב is functioning as a call to repentance or a call to lamentation that is not connected to communal sin.[32] In other words, why is

discussion see J.A. Thompson, 'Joel's Locusts in the Light of Near Eastern Parallels', *JNES* 14 (1955), pp. 52-55.

29.   'The conjunction must be interpreted as adversative in view of what immediately precedes it' (Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 48).

30.   Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 78.

31.   Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 48.

32.   Holladay marks it simply as a call to return to God that often conveys 'repent!' (Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 78-79). Simkins argues that Joel is not really concerned about the

the prophet really calling the people to return? Is this use of שׁוב a call to repentance or to something else? Barton makes a strong case that the passage is referring to the people turning to Yhwh in supplication.[33] His main argument is simple and straightforward—Joel lists no specific sins from which Israel should return. 'Turning from sin is impossible if you do not know what sin you have committed, but turning to God in prayer and asking for mercy might still have its point'.[34] The lack of a specifically mentioned sin has not stopped commentators from suggesting one, and the results are far ranging. Ahlström argues that Israel's sin was idolatry. 'By the usage of the phrase "turn to me", the oracle of Joel 2:12 stresses the fact that the people must return to no other god than Yahweh'.[35] Wolff believes the shortcoming is tied to haughty cultic practices: 'the cultic community of Jerusalem, which is perhaps already beginning to pride itself on its fulfilling of the Torah, is to stretch forth anew toward the God who does not allow the prophetic word to become void of meaning'.[36] While Allen believes the call to return is because of general covenant violations, 'The call to *return* presupposes the covenant relationship. Joel's contemporaries had evidently strayed from their Shepherd, turning to their own way.'[37] In light of the broad range of suggestions, Barton's words are well heeded:

> The problem with trying to work out *a priori* what is likely to have been the sin for which repentance is needed is that one can easily read into the text one's own 'favorite' sin, and it is perhaps suspicious when Protestant commentators explain that what Joel found fault with was the people's reliance on ritual or their complacency about their keeping of the *torah* and failure to heed the prophetic word.[38]

sin of the people but how they respond to the calamity. He approaches the passage from the perspective of an 'honor/shame model' and concludes, that the people are to 'Return to Yahweh by honoring him with the appropriate acts of mourning, and Yahweh will restore your honor. Yahweh will destroy the locusts and restore the land so that the people will never be ashamed again' (Ronald A. Simkins, 'Return to Yahweh: Honor and Shame in Joel', *Sem* 68 [1994]: pp. 41-54 [52]).

33. Barton, *Joel–Obadiah*, p. 77.

34. Barton, *Joel–Obadiah*, p. 79. He says previously, 'It is better to interpret Joel to mean simply that the people should turn in appeal to YHWH, asking God to save them from the threatened disaster or, if we think that it has already begun, to restore their fortunes after it has passed by' (p. 78).

35. Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult*, p. 26.

36. Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 49.

37. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, p. 78. He later adds 'Joel's whole interpretation of the locust plague does presuppose serious sin in the life of the community. It is evidently left to the people and priests to search their own hearts and habits for evidence of the sin that God's reaction proved to be there' (p. 79).

38. Barton, *Joel–Obadiah*, p. 80.

The problem, however, is that the passage bears many of the marks of a call to repentance, most importantly, the threat of destruction in the form of an invading locust army. Within the Twelve, as well as throughout the rest of the Old Testament, locusts are stock judgment imagery. They are one of the plagues sent against Egypt (Exod. 10.1-20) and are listed as one of the covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28. In fact the same word used for locust (ארבה) during the Egyptian plagues in Exodus 10 (10.4, 12, 13, 14 [2×], 19 [2×]), and in the covenant curses in Deut. 28.38, appears in Joel 1.4; 2.25. Locusts are mentioned twice in Deuteronomy 28 as signs that the covenant is broken: 'You will sow much seed in the field but little will you harvest, because locusts will consume it' (28.38); 'Swarming locusts will possess all your trees and the crops of your ground' (28.42).[39] Furthermore it should be noted that the reasons immediately given in Deuteronomy 28 for these curses are general:

> All these curses will come upon you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, *because you did not obey the voice of YHWH your God, to keep his commands and his statutes that he commanded you*. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and to your descendants forever. *Because you did not serve YHWH your God with joy and gladness of heart in the abundance of everything…* (28.45-47).

Other than broad words about disobedience, no specific sins are mentioned here.

Additionally, the use of locusts as an image of punishment is repeated in the Twelve. Locusts (גזם Joel 1.4; 2.25) are mentioned in Amos as a sign given to call Israel back to Yhwh (Amos 4.9 also in connection with שוב). Though not found in Joel, locusts (גבי Nah. 3.17) are again mentioned in Amos 7.1-2 as a sign of Yhwh's judgment on Israel, but are held back from stripping the land clean. Nahum 3.15-17 is not as clear as Amos 7, but also uses locust metaphors in connection with judgment. The locust imagery, in connection with the call to return and the lack of any protest of innocence (e.g. Ps. 44.18ff. [ET 44.17ff.]),[40] makes it easier to conclude with Sweeney, 'The passage identifies no crime or sin from which the people might return; it

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39.   It should be noted that even if the army that is invading Judah in ch. 2 is not locusts, that a description of the destruction of an actual army is similar to the destruction found in Joel (cf. Deut. 28.49-52).

40.   Ogden counters this view by saying, 'There is simply no reason for such a statement when the people are innocent… Joel does not regard repentance as necessary' (p. 105). For more on Joel and its connection to lament, particularly ch. 4, see Graham S. Ogden, 'Joel 4 and Prophetic Responses to National Laments', *JSOT* 26 (1983), pp. 97-106.

simply presupposes that if YHWH is ready to strike, the people must have done something to deserve such a terrible punishment'.[41]

But is Sweeney's conclusion the best reading of the verse? One possible way forward is to examine the passage in light of Joel's literary function and the other calls to return found in the Twelve. While Joel's call is problematic when read in isolation, for the MT audience of the Twelve who had the completed Book before them, this is not the first time the call to return has been issued. Because Joel directly follows Hosea, by the time the reader arrives at Joel 2.12, he has already been exposed to Hosea and to his full description of what a return to Yhwh entails. In fact, the similarity in form between Hosea's dual imperatives that conclude his work (14.2-3), and the dual imperatives of Joel's call create a parallel that draws the reader back to the earlier material. Because Joel is an undated book, the issues that brought about Hosea's calls to return fit well within the context of the newer writing. In addition, the Twelve were intended to be read and re-read continually, meaning that the other reasons given for returning in the writings of the Twelve, whether it be Hosea's idolatry or Malachi's general malaise, could also be understood within Joel's context. Therefore, because of Joel's chronological flexibility, the richness of the return theology found in the Twelve and all that is meant by that call makes sense in light of Joel 2.12. By not listing the specific covenant violation, the editors have made it possible for the call to speak to every manner of Israelite shortcoming linked to return throughout the Twelve. This lack of identification means that the reader can interpret the reason for the call, but he is not left on his own to do so and the list is not limitless. By filling the passage with the imperatives of שׁוב, the authors/editors have linked it with the other imperative uses of שׁוב found in the Twelve, most specifically Hos. 14.2-3.

But what does Joel's call to return require? The following verses expand on this initial call: vv. 12b-13 explain how they are to return, while vv. 13b-14 offer reasons why they should return to Yhwh. Verse 12b combines the call to return with the signs of a communal lament. The people are to return 'with fasting (צום) and weeping (בכי) and mourning (מספד)'. Stuart notes that these three actions are 'not really three things, but one—the visible part of the process of repentance'.[42] They are similar to ones to which the priests are called in 1.13-14[43] and Wolff notes that the three seem to be 'in keeping

41. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 164. However, he does add, 'Such a theology can be very problematic as the modern experience and theological discussion of the Shoah demonstrates'.

42. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 252. He notes the similar calls in Jon. 3.5-9, and Neh. 8.9, 10.

43. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 164.

with the stock of formulas of that time'.[44] While these outward signs superficially stand in contrast with the call for inner action in the following verse, they also foreshadow the actions of the king of Nineveh and his people when they successfully turn (שוב) from their evil ways (cf. Jon. 3.6-10).

In addition to the outward signs of lament/repentance, Joel then calls for his hearers to 'Rend your heart and not your garments' (2.13a). The use of 'heart' looks back to previous verse, where the worshipers are told to return 'with all your heart'.[45] In v. 13a, those hearts are to be torn. Stuart finds a connection between Joel 2.13, Hos. 14.2, and Amos 5.4, 21-24. 'In each of these instances, the fuller context shows no prophetic disdain for the sacrificial system *per se*. They call instead for a more than *mere* ritual or *mere* outward piety'.[46] While such observations are correct, since the Deuteronomic sacrificial system is not overtly condemned, interpreters should always tread carefully not to overly criticize ritual.[47] That being the case, it is interesting that in the first two imperative return sections in the Twelve, here and Hos. 14.2-3, sacrifice is not the first requirement or even specifically mentioned. In Hosea, the penitent worshipers are to take words with them, confessing their sins before Yhwh and offering their lips as sacrifices. In Joel 2.12-13, the believer is to return to Yhwh with all his heart, which the prophet then calls to be torn. This highlights a dynamic aspect of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel. Both Hosea and Joel highlight the need for confession and reliance on Yhwh and the importance of sincere repentance— the offer of the lips/heart to him—in order to truly return.

Verse 13b shifts to the benefits of returning to Yhwh, which are rooted in the character of Yhwh and his covenant with Israel: 'Return (ושובו) to Yhwh your God, for gracious and compassionate is he, slow to anger and abounding in covenant kindness, and he relents from evil'. Most commentaries identify this verse as a clear reference to Exod. 34.6-7, one that is repeated with variations eight times in the Old Testament (Num. 14.18; Pss. 86.15; 103.8; 145.8; Nah. 1.3; Jon. 4.2; Neh. 9.17, 31b).[48] The importance of return is based in the

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44.   Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 49. These three words are only found together again in Est. 4.3.

45.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 164.

46.   Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 252.

47.   Here, Sweeney is correct, 'Yhwh's words are intended to convey the reality of mourning, not charge those who mourn with hypocrisy' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 165).

48.   James L. Crenshaw, *Joel* (AB, 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 135. Seitz adds, 'The use of the self designation formula from Exod 34 across the disparate witnesses of Joel, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum is one of the strongest signs of a comprehensive editing of the Twelve' (Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, p. 216); cf. Bosman, 'The Paradoxical Presence', pp. 233-43. He also argues that the use of Exod. 34.6-7 can be understood as the theme of the Twelve (Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship*, p. 30), but he does so in

character qualities of Yhwh, highlighted by this verse: 'gracious' (חנון), 'compassionate' (רחום), 'slow to anger' (ארך אפים), and 'abounding in covenant loyalty' (רב־הסד). These covenant characteristics form a base of trust in which a return to Yhwh is beneficial for Judah. Joel is emphasizing that Judah has a historical reason to trust Yhwh. 'In effect Joel is reminding his hearers/readers that they aren't dealing with just any God, but with Yahweh, whose very name has always been associated with his compassion and willingness, in response to human contrition (e.g. Jonah 4:2), to forestall the harm he would otherwise have brought'.[49] Both Joel 2.13 and Jon. 4.2 add the same line: 'who relents from sending calamity' (ונחם על־הרעה), which shows the real point of the citation. In Joel, the prophet wants a disaster to be averted while in Jonah, Yhwh has already relented from the promised destruction.

Lastly, v. 14 asks the important question, 'Who knows? He may turn (ישוב) and relent and leave a blessing after him—a gift and drink offering for YHWH your God'. This question, 'Who knows' (מי יודע) also appears in Jon. 3.9, placed in the mouth of the King of Nineveh who adds, 'Maybe God will turn (ישוב) and relent (ונחם), and turn (ושב) from his burning anger so that we will not perish'. The concern of Yhwh's destruction is the driving force behind both quotations. The message is clear: Yhwh will not be manipulated or forced into acting. In this Yhwh is dangerous—he is offering salvation but he is still the one at the head of an army poised to destroy the people. Yhwh's characteristics, both his holiness and his grace and his inner struggle of turning towards them, hang over the passage. Going further, it is this very question that overshadows the first half of the Twelve—will Yhwh really relent from the coming disaster? This question looks back toward the judgments and blessings of Hosea, but also forward to the judgments and blessings of Amos, Obadiah, and finally to Jonah. Who knows? Will Yhwh really relent? Joel seems confident in the grace of Yhwh in 2.18, but the question is not really answered until Jonah—where Yhwh actually holds back destruction. 'Human repentance does not control God. People cannot force God to show them his forgiveness. They can only appeal to him for mercy in not meting out against them what they well deserve. They may hope for his compassion, but they cannot command it (Zeph 2:3; Lam 3:29).'[50] Joel wonders not only if a gracious Yhwh will relent, but also if he will leave behind a blessing—perhaps undoing the destruction caused by the locusts (2.18-27).

connection with the overall understanding of return. 'Even though the formula does not appear in full form, the call to return to God is strongest in Hosea and most compellingly illustrated under the narrative of human infidelity and God's abiding love' (Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, p. 216).

49. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 252.
50. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 252.

With eyes fixed on the whole of the Twelve, it is important to understand how Joel 2.12-14 advances the concept of the return theme in the Book. To begin, by using two imperative calls to return the Joel passage forges a strong connection with, and possibly draws inspiration from, Hos. 14.2-3.[51] In both instances, a people who face destruction are twice commanded to return to Yhwh and are offered the possibility of Yhwh's blessings if they do so.[52] Nonetheless, the call in Joel 2 has a few significant developments when compared to Hosea 14 that should not be overlooked. First, and most importantly, Joel's message is placed in the mouth of Yhwh, rather than the prophet. Because the Joel passage contains the phrase 'declares YHWH' the call to return has changed from the third person object, 'return to YHWH' (Hos. 14.2-3) to the first person 'return to me'. From a functional point of view this difference has no effect on the meaning of the passage, but it is the first person object phrase that is twice repeated at the close of the Book (Zech. 1.3; Mal. 3.7). However, the complete succinct phrase 'Return to me and I will return to you', found in both Zechariah and Malachi, does not appear in Joel. In fact, in both Hosea 14 and Joel 2, the second half of the phrase 'and I will return to you' is implied but not expressly stated. In Hos. 14.5, Yhwh promises to heal the people's 'waywardness' (מְשׁוּבָתָם) and to turn (שָׁב) his anger from them, while in Joel 2.14 Yhwh's turn (יָשׁוּב), though uncertain, is still present (2.14). From a diachronic standpoint, this means that even though Joel is a (probable) Persian composition that (possibly) entered the Twelve at the same time as some of the Book's other Persian writers, Zechariah and Malachi, it uses similar, but not identical wording to call the people to return. Nonetheless, strong similarities between Joel and Zechariah–Malachi, in the form of the first person object 'return to me', remain.

What this implies is that Joel 2.12-14 acts as a kind of intermediate step in the development of the return phrase. Joel can be understood as rephrasing Hosea's call to return into the first person object, but the second part of the concept, that of Yhwh turning towards his people, is left for 'later' writers to formulate into a succinct statement. From a reader's standpoint, this transitional call both summarizes what has already been said by Hosea, and prepares the reader for the concluding works of the Book.

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51.   This characteristic may also look forward to Zechariah (cf. Zech. 1.3-4). Though the dual imperative also occurs in Zech. 1.3-4, the second use of שׁוּב is a summary of a past call, one given to the fathers rather than the current generation.

52.   As mentioned in the introduction, the imperative use of שׁוּב only appears in four writings in the Twelve: Hosea, Joel, Zechariah, and Malachi—the four writings that open and close the Book. While there have been many suggested reasons for the position of Joel, none have raised this as a possibility. While I am hesitant to say that Joel's possession of two שׁוּב imperatives is the only reason for its current location in the MT order, I do believe that it may be a contributing factor.

Secondly, the position of Joel and his use of שוב further develops the message of return first introduced by Hosea. Here, once again, Joel's chronological flexibility plays an important role. Whereas Hosea issues calls to return that can be understood within the context of an eighth-century Northern Israel, Joel has no such limitations. As mentioned above, Joel's resistance to chronological dating allows his message to speak to any point in Israel's history. As a result, the call to return issued by Joel, but placed in the mouth of Yhwh, is transformed for a universal audience. From a reader's perspective, especially one seeking application, such a shift is significant. With the inclusion of Joel in the second position in the MT, any illusions that the reader may have that the message of the Twelve was time bound has been removed; Joel has taken Hosea's key message of return and reframed it into a more timeless manner. Because of this, the application of the message of return is made immediately apparent. The audience of the Twelve, reading in the Persian Period, could not dismiss it, and in fact, are given a way to understand the message of return found in the earlier prophets—not only the eighth century (Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah), but seventh century (Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) as well. By positioning Joel second, the entire Book of the Twelve looks beyond the loose chronological divisions that make up its parts, and re-frames the message in a more universally applicable, and chronologically timeless (cf. Malachi) way. Any excuse for refusing to heed the call to return has been removed.

Along these same lines, Joel's vocabulary reflects a connection to the whole of Hosea that emphasizes Yhwh's struggle within himself to turn from destruction towards grace. Both Joel 2.13 and Hos. 11.9 speak of Yhwh in connection with his anger (ארך אפים, literally 'long nose' Joel 2.13; לא אעשה חרון אפי, 'I will not carry out my burning anger' Hos. 11.9). This is also seen in Joel by the 2 uses of נחם (2.13-14), which emphasize Yhwh relenting from sending destruction (cf. Hos. 11.8, 'my compassion [נחומי] has grown hot'). In both of these instances, Yhwh's anger takes a subordinate role to his compassion. Furthermore, with the use of רחום and חסד (Joel 2.13), the prophet broadens the idea of returning by connecting the שוב concept with characteristics of Yhwh first outlined in Hosea (ובחסד וברחמים, Hos. 2.21 [ET 2.19], and ורחמתי את־לא רחמה). Such actions ground returning in the nature of Yhwh and further support the notion that Hosea is all about Yhwh's struggle to return, even if שוב does not appear in the passage.

Finally, Joel formally introduces the critical concept of the Day of Yhwh to the Twelve. In doing so, however, the prophet does not overlook the call to return, and in fact by positioning the call immediately after the concluding question of Day of Yhwh ('Who can endure it' 2.11) intertwines the two concepts. As mentioned in the introduction of this project, many scholars have identified the Day of Yhwh as arguably the most important theme in the

Twelve. Nevertheless, a close reading of Joel 2.12-14 reveals that it is the concept of return that controls the Day of Yhwh. While 2.1-11 threatens the people with the Day of Yhwh, 2.12-14 reveals that the Day can be turned from something terrible, into something good, if the people will return to Yhwh. As always, this opportunity exists because of who Yhwh is—one who is full of compassion and grace (2.13).

3. שׁוב *in Joel 4.1-8 (ET 3.1-8)*

a. *Literary Context*

If the people heed the call to repent and behave in such a way that illustrates their sorrow, as exemplified in 2.15-17, Yhwh will hear their cries and relent. 2.18-27 describes how Yhwh will bring agricultural blessings to Judah and the damage caused by the locusts will be undone. In addition, Yhwh will drive 'the northern army' (הצפוני) away and destroy it (2.20). Following this time of restoration, 3.1-5 (ET 2.28-32) describes an eschatological time in which Yhwh's spirit is freely poured out on the people. These events are part of the Day of Yhwh (3.4 [ET 2.31]) and are accompanied by changes in the cosmos. Yhwh promises deliverance to Zion and Jerusalem and to 'all who call on the name of YHWH' (3.5 [ET 2.32]). Joel 4 (ET 3) then follows with a prophecy focused against the nations, similar but not identical to the oracles against the nations found in other prophetic books (Amos 1.3-2; Isa. 12–23; Zeph. 2.4-15). This introduces the second aspect of the Day of Yhwh: the judgment of the nations and restoration of Israel. In this chapter the sins of the nations are described (4.1-8) and the nations are gathered and judged in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (4.2, 12) in another Day of Yhwh setting (4.14). The writing concludes with Yhwh's commitment to protect and forgive Zion (4.17, 20-21), the promise of agricultural blessings (4.18), and the destruction of Israel's traditional enemies, Egypt and Edom (4.19).

b. *The Use of* שׁוב *in Joel 4*

שׁוב occurs three times in vv. 1-7, twice with the same understanding. Both uses of שׁוב occur previously in Hosea (6.11b, and 4.9; 12.3, 15).

- 4.1—'For then, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes (אשׁוב את־שׁבות) of Judah and Jerusalem'
- 4.4—'And also, what are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you giving recompense to me for something? If you are giving recompense to me, swiftly, hastily, I will return your recompense on your head (אשׁיב גמלכם בראשׁכם)'.
- 4.7—'See, I am rousing them from the places you have sold them, and I will return your recompense on your head (והשבתי גמלכם בראשׁכם)'.

Joel 4 is the first passage in the Twelve to deal in depth with Yhwh's relationship with the nations, particularly his sovereignty over them. What the section reveals is that Yhwh has a plan for the nations, one that involves a reversal—Israel which currently faces judgment, will be restored and the nations which have oppressed Israel, will answer to Yhwh. Amos 1–2 illustrates that Yhwh is the vassal-lord over all the nations surrounding Israel and as vassals, these nations were not allowed to attack other vassal-nations. As their lord, Yhwh had a right to punish them for their actions.[53] This idea forms the background to Joel 4, and because Yhwh is sovereign, he has jurisdiction over all nations (e.g. Ps. 24.2 [ET 24.1]) and they will be punished. The idea of Yhwh gathering the nations together is one that is found throughout the Twelve (Mic. 4.12; Zeph. 3.8; Zech. 14.2), and always results in destruction for the nations and defence for Jerusalem. In this section, Yhwh moves from punisher of Jerusalem (2.11-12) to its defender, which in itself is a type of turning.

It is appropriate that שוב is used to begin a section that deals with both the restoration of Judah and the judgment of the nations as the two are connected. Because Yhwh controls the nations, when they fall Israel is often the beneficiary (e.g. Amos 9.12; Obad. 19-20; Mic. 5.6), and such actions are often seen as Yhwh correcting past injustices. The phrase אשוב את־שבות in 4.1, which appears in some form six times in the Twelve (Hos. 6.11; Joel 4.1; Amos 9.14; Obad. 11; Zeph. 2.7; 3.20) can mean 'I will restore the fortunes' or 'I will restore the captivity'.[54] The first reading translates שבות as a root of שוב while the second understands it as a derivative of שבה which means 'to capture'.[55] Most commentaries are content to understand this phrase as 'to restore the fortunes', but it is not unanimous. Dillard believes that the individual context of Joel 4.1 favours the 'captivity' reading, but he understands that other references in the Old Testament seem to have no connection to captivity (Job 42.10; Ezek. 16.53).[56] He is content with the summary that the phrase 'seems ambiguous in Joel 4:1'.[57] Sweeney, on the other hand, supports a captivity reading: 'The latter meaning appears to be the emphasis of the present context'.[58] The difficulty is that up to this point, exile has not been an issue in Joel. The idea is first raised in the following verse (4.2) where the nations are charged with scattering Yhwh's people. While the phrase may best be connected with the restoration of agricultural blessings (Amos 9.14),

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53.   A similar idea is found with the use of שוב in Amos 1–2 (Chapter 7, pp. 146-48).

54.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 177. See the discussion of שוב שבות in Hos. 6.11.

55.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 177. The LXX follows the captivity reading: ὅταν ἐπιστρέψω την ἀιχμαλωσιαν.

56.   Dillard, 'Joel', p. 300.

57.   Dillard, 'Joel', p. 300.

58.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 177.

Israel's/Judah's complete restoration would certainly include a return from exile, an idea that is reinforced by the Twelve's last use (Zeph. 3.20). 'The central idea is undoubtedly restoration, as in Amos 9:14, whether from captivity (Jer 29:14; Ezek 29:14; 39:25, Zeph 3:20) or from calamity (Job 42:10; Ezek 16:53; Ps 126:4; Hos 6:11).'[59] This return to restoration is part of the second aspect of the Day of Yhwh.

The central issue of the chapter revolves around Judah and Jerusalem being restored from the ravages of the nations when Yhwh enacts his justified vengeance against them. This retribution is the focus of the second and third uses of שׁוּב in this passage. Yhwh charges all nations with committing five violations against his people:

1. they scattered the people among the nations (4.2)
2. they divided the land (4.2)
3. they cast lots for the people (4.3)
4. they traded boys for prostitutes (4.3)
5. and they sold girls for wine (4.3).

Items 3-5 are essentially the same thing: they treated the people thoughtlessly, as possessions.[60] This similar charge is levelled against the invaders of Jerusalem found in Obad. 11, and against the Assyrians in Nah. 3.10. It is for these violations that the nations will be judged and Judah will be restored as part of the Day of Yhwh.

Joel 4.4-8 then moves on to mention violations committed by the more specific nations of Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. These violations are:

1. 'For you took my silver and my gold, and you carried my desirable things to your temples' (4.5).
2. 'You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their border' (4.6).

Though land, silver, and gold are involved, Yhwh's overall charges focus on the mistreatment of people—a theme that is central to other writings of the Twelve (e.g. Amos 1.6, 9; 2.6). In Joel 4.6 Yhwh seems particularly concerned about how far his people have been scattered from their homeland, perhaps because it would make a return more difficult.[61] Because of these violations, the nations are gathered together and judged on the Day of Yhwh (4.14), while the violations of Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia lead to Yhwh twice promising to return their deeds upon their heads (4.4, 7). The phrase, 'I will return on your own heads' is a judicial one that evokes the idea of *lex talionis*.[62] The punishment will fit the crime. Verse 8 shows that a complete

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59. Crenshaw, *Joel*, p. 174.
60. Crenshaw, *Joel*, p. 177.
61. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 268.
62. It appears again in Obad. 15, in a verse against another nation, Edom.

reversal of the previous situation is envisioned: not only are Yhwh's people brought back from the nations where they were sold, but Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia will be subsequently sold into slavery by Judah/Jerusalem to a nation far away. In this way, the Day of Yhwh as well as the use of שוב includes both judgment and salvation, destruction and restoration for Yhwh's people.

Once again, Joel has described the events of the Day of Yhwh, but has done so involving the idea of return. Joel 3–4 highlights the aspects of the second half of the Day, when Israel will be redeemed and the nations will be judged. Overall, Joel's pattern of the discussion of the Day, one that begins with it coming against God's own people before turning against the nations, sets the pattern for the two writings that follow. In Amos, it is Yhwh's people who face the terrible aspects of the Day of Yhwh (cf. 18–20), while in Obadiah, Yhwh promises restoration for his people as his judgment comes against the foreign nation of Edom.

4. *Conclusion*

Hosea begins the Twelve by developing the theme of return, and though there are hints of a connection between return and the Day of Yhwh (2.18, 20, 23) it is Joel that both fully introduces the Day of Yhwh and weds it to שוב. Joel outlines the connection between return and destruction in ch. 2, and shows that only by return can disaster be averted. Likewise, ch. 4 introduces the second aspect of the Day of Yhwh—the destruction of the nations and the restoration of Israel. Here in a more ironic sense Israel's fortunes are returned while the nations' deeds, primarily social justice issues, are returned on their heads—a result that was unlooked for by the nations. Joel fully mixes the two themes of שוב and the Day and shows the range of these themes: שוב as a call to return mixed with the coming destruction of the Day of Yhwh and שוב used to initiate the restoration of Israel and the destruction of the nations that will also take place on the Day of Yhwh. In this way, Joel demonstrates that turning/Day is an act of salvation for Yhwh's people driven by his desire to be restored to his people. The interconnectedness of these two ideas is not a superficial observation, but one that helps shape the organization of the writing.

> A. Day of Yhwh threatens Judah/Jerusalem with present judgment (2.1-11)
>
> B. Return brings Judah/Jerusalem escape from the present judgment and prosperity (2.12-17)
>
> C. Vision of future salvation/judgment of the Day of Yhwh (3.1-5)
>
> B[1]. Return brings the future restoration/prosperity of Judah because of the judgment against Israel's enemies (4.1-8)
>
> A[1]. Day of Yhwh threatens the nations with future judgment (4.14).

In his work Joel moves from the threatening present, to the promising future, and in between, broadens the scope of the Day of Yhwh and return to include the nations. As mentioned above, both of these nuances are developed in more detail as the reader progresses through the Twelve. Overall, it is Joel's position and chronological ambiguousness that allows it to function as a programmatic book, introducing themes that shape and unite the Book of the Twelve. By positioning an undated writing second, the editors of the Twelve allowed Joel to reach back to the return theme introduced in Hosea and combine it with the Day of Yhwh. Because the writing is chronologically flexible, the themes introduced by Joel and the applications that they spawn are not time bound. In this way, the Book of the Twelve is made relevant to its audience.

Chapter 6

JONAH

While Hosea and Joel introduce the reader to the concept of return in a didactic manner, Jonah, perhaps one of the last writings added to the Twelve, illustrates the same concern through a narrative format.

1. *Introduction*

Because the story of chs. 1–2 is often repeated to children, Jonah is probably the most well known writing in the Twelve. However, the same quality that makes Jonah famous, mainly the compelling narrative story, is the same quality that makes it unique among the prophets. Though narrative passages exist in the Twelve (notably Hos. 1–3; Amos 7; and Zech. 1–6) and other prophetic books (e.g. Isa. 6–7), Jonah is a prophetic writing that is predominantly narrative; only 2.2-9 changes form and takes the shape of a psalm.[1] While the other prophetic writings are focused almost exclusively on the proclaimed oracles of the individual prophets, Jonah's recorded prophetic message consists of five Hebrew words: 'Forty days more and Nineveh will be overturned' (עוד ארבעים יום ונינוה נהפכת) (3.4). Because of Jonah's unique narrative composition, scholarly concerns have centred on the genre and structure of the writing, particularly the issues surrounding the function and inclusion of the psalm in ch. 2.[2] At the heart of Jonah's message is the

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1. 'It is not immediately apparent that the story of Jonah should be grouped with the prophetic writings of the Old Testament… Since the Jonah material is a story *about* a prophet rather than a collection of prophetic sayings, it could have fit well in the books of Kings, where there are a number of stories about prophets' (James Limburg, *Jonah* [OTL; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993], p. 19).

2. For example, see Athalya Brenner, 'Jonah's poem out of and within its context' in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings* (ed. Philip R. Davies and David J A. Clines; JSOTSup, 144; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 183-92; Hermann J Opgen-Rhein, *Jonapsalm und Jonabuch: Sprachgestalt, Entstehungsgeschichte und Kontextbedeutung von Jona 2* (SBB; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1997); and Hugh S. Pyper, 'Swallowed by a Song: Jonah and the Jonah-Psalm through the Looking-Glass', in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical*

concern that Yhwh has for Nineveh and the actions of Yhwh's prophet. That the people in the writing are not Israelites but rather a hated enemy nation adds an important dimension to the message. Despite the change in setting from Israel to Nineveh, the use of שוב first laid out in Hosea and Joel and repeated again in Amos, is nonetheless present, appearing 5× in Jonah (1.13; 3.8, 9 [2×], 10).[3] Additionally, Yhwh's dealings with the nations, highlighted in Joel and Obadiah, also finds a new application in the writing. As with Hosea and Joel, the following section will focus on the important role that שוב plays in the relationship between Yhwh, the people, and the promised coming destruction. What will become apparent is that when Jonah's use of שוב is read within the context of the Twelve, the writing's narrative setting can be understood as a historical account in which genuine repentance and a mutual turning between Yhwh and a foreign nation occurs. Before this can be discussed, Jonah's position within the Twelve must be examined.

a. *Position in the Twelve*

Nogalski has long argued that Jonah (along with Zech. 9–14) was one of the last writings to be inserted into the Twelve. 'After the work of the Joel-related layer, two substantial text blocks entered the corpus to complete the Book of the Twelve: Jonah and Zech 9–14'.[4] This occurred when 'Editors adapted Jonah for the Book of the Twelve by incorporating an existing hymn of thanksgiving (2:3-8) with an addendum (2:9f) that anticipates Micah'.[5] Because of this, Nogalski's catchwords which connect Jonah with Micah are found in the redactionally inserted poem of ch. 2 rather than the closing

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Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld (ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim and W. Brian Aucker; VTSup, 113; Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 337-58.

3.   Jonah's first use of שוב in 1.13 is a narrative directional use that does not impact the theology of the writing. 'And the men rowed to return (להשיב) to dry land but were not able to because the sea grew more and more wild'. Instead, the focus of this section will be on the other four occurrences at the end of ch. 3 which explain the people's repentance and Yhwh's mercy.

4.   Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 278.

5.   Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 278. He argues that the writing was probably composed after Alexander's conquest in the late fourth century. 'A sizable majority of scholars date Jonah simply as late post-exilic, with more than a handful suggesting it did not reach its final form until early in the third century. None of the preceding arguments contradicts this opinion. Rather, most of the observations support the arguments of those arguing for a date after Alexander, although further precision is not possible'. For a more detailed discussion on the date of Jonah see Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah* (AB, 24B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 20-28. Nogalski's position stands opposite Schneider who argues for an early composition and insertion of Jonah. He argues that Jonah was likely composed before the fall of Jerusalem, and inserted into the Twelve prior to the end of the Exile (Schneider, *The Unity*, pp. 111-12).

dialogue of ch. 4.[6] If Nogalski is correct and Jonah is one of the last writings to enter the Twelve, then its theology may be especially significant for determining the theme of the Book according to its final redactors. Because of this, Jonah's position within the Twelve should not be seen as a matter of coincidence. The writing was chosen and inserted into the Twelve for a specific purpose. For Nogalski, this occurred for two reasons:

> First, Jonah provides a more positive orientation toward the fate of the nations in YHWH's plans than was contained in much of the corpus prior to that point. Thus, Jonah supposes deliverance for nations who recognize YHWH's sovereignty. Second, those incorporating the book understood 'Jonah' as Israel. Both the addendum in 2:9f and Mic 7:19b, which alludes backward to Jonah, interpret the fate of Jonah in light of the fate of Israel.[7]

Sweeney, who takes a thematic approach to the Twelve, shares some of Nogalski's conclusions, most notably the impact the writing has on the role of the nations. From a canonical standpoint, because Obadiah precedes Jonah in both the LXX and the MT, Sweeney argues that Jonah 'functions as a means to temper Obadiah's diatribes against Edom with a demonstration of YHWH's capacity for mercy toward the city of Nineveh'.[8] From a broader perspective, if Edom and Nineveh are understood as representing the nations as a whole, then the two writings offer different understandings of Yhwh's relationship with the nations—one of destruction and one of salvation.[9]

That the MT order separates Jonah from Nahum's destructive prophecies with the rather positive (for the nations) message of Micah (4.1-5) is telling. Because of Micah's focus on Jerusalem, Sweeney proposes that 'Jonah's articulation of YHWH's potential forgiveness for Assyria may suggest an offer of mercy to Nineveh prior to its assaults against Jerusalem and Judah during the reign of Hezekiah'.[10] This is an important step because such a reading gives Jonah a more historical context and makes the writing part of Israel's history by providing a reason for later Assyrian aggression. In other words, Jonah's position in the MT reinforces an understanding of Jonah as actual history.[11] In this way Jonah looks forward to the events of Micah. In Micah, the nations act as a tool which Yhwh uses to punish Judah and Jerusalem (e.g. Mic. 3.12) and is akin to the understanding found in Isa. 10.5-19.

6. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, pp. 35-36.

7. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 278.

8. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 303.

9. Nahum, which is also focused on Nineveh, reinforces the judgment concept. Unlike the MT, the LXX places both writings next to one another.

10. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 60.

11. This stands opposite Licht, who argues, 'Jonah has no connection with the grand sequence of sacred history' (J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978], p. 124).

Sweeney notes, 'Insofar as Jonah points to YHWH's mercy for Nineveh, it prepares for Micah's scenario of destruction and restoration for Israel and Judah'.[12] Because Yhwh had mercy on Nineveh prior to 722, the Assyrians are allowed to both destroy Samaria and punish Jerusalem and Judah in 701—which is a possible setting for Micah 1. It is only after this that the MT returns to the destruction of the nations in Jonah's companion writing, Nahum.

While the writings of the Twelve may influence Jonah's message, the meaning of Jonah, especially when read on its own, is disputed. Because Jonah introduces a complex story of prophecy and repentance set against the background of the Israelite–Assyrian conflict, and (debatably) offers no clear key of how to understand it all, the writing's application is elusive. For example, is the story about the acceptance of the gentiles or hard-heartedness of the Israelite prophet?[13] Is it about the power of universalism[14] or the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty?[15] The complexity of this issue is well illustrated by Kaiser's[16] fanciful conversation that takes place in the belly of the fish between Trible,[17] Sasson,[18] the Lacocques,[19] and Sherwood,[20] who all find different meanings in Jonah. Though the list of applications may seem endless, Cooper identifies the four traditional interpretations as 'the contrast between Israel and the gentile nations, the clash between universalism and particularism, the tension between divine justice and mercy, or the dilemma of false prophecy…'[21] Introduced into this discussion is Cooper's own well argued belief that the last verse of the writing is not a question, 'As for me, should I not have pity on Nineveh?' but rather a statement: 'As for me, I do

12. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 303.

13. 'The essential teaching is that the Gentiles *should not be grudged* God's love, care and forgiveness. It is this grudging which is so superbly rebuked throughout the Book, and most of all in the final chapter, which must rightly be considered the climax of the story' (A. Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets* [London: Soncino Press, 1994], p. 137).

14. See the discussion in R.B. Salters, *Jonah and Lamentations* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 53-60.

15. Serge Frolov, 'Returning the Ticket: God and his Prophet in the Book of Jonah', *JSOT* 86 (1999), pp. 85-105.

16. Barbara Bakke Kaiser, 'Five Scholars in the Underbelly of the Dag Gadol: An Aqua-Fantasy', *WW* 27 (2007), pp. 135-48.

17. Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

18. Sasson, *Jonah*.

19. André Lacocque and Pierre-Emmanuel Lacocque, *Jonah: A Psycho-Religious Approach to the Prophet* (SPOT; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990).

20. Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

21. Alan Cooper, 'In Praise of Divine Caprice: the Significance of the Book of Jonah', in Davies and Clines (eds.), *Among the Prophets*, pp. 144-63.

not care about Nineveh'.[22] If Cooper is correct, then Jonah is not actually about repentance, or gentile relations, or the failure of prophecy, but rather about the capriciousness of God, and how he saves and condemns those whom he chooses without apparent reason (from the human perspective).[23] In light of this evidence, it is difficult to argue that the call to return (שוב) is the driving force behind the prophecy. In fact, that שוב does not appear in the concluding chapter is evidence against this. Nonetheless, I will argue that the context of the Twelve implies a call to return that connects to the writing's concerns about repentance and the actions of Yhwh, even if these concerns are secondary to the writing's main aims.

2. שוב *in Jonah 3.8-10*

a. *Literary Context*

Jonah 3 is a type of new beginning in the writing. In 3.1 Jonah is called a second time to deliver his message to Nineveh with wording almost identical to his original call from 1.1: 'Then the word of YHWH came to Jonah' (ויהי דבר־יהוה אל־יונה). The only difference is that 3.1 adds 'a second time' (שנית) instead of 'son of Amittai' (1.1). This time, instead of fleeing in the opposite direction, Jonah fulfils his commission and delivers his message: 'Forty days more and Nineveh will be overturned' (3.4). In what must be considered an unlooked for response, the people of Nineveh believed God (3.5) and respond by declaring a fast and putting on sackcloth; the same response called for by Joel (1.13-14; 2.15). The people's actions are noticed by the king who also puts on sackcloth and sits in the dust (3.6). The king then issues a decree in which both men and animals are to fast (3.7) and put on sackcloth (3.8). In addition, everyone is to 'call mightily on God' (3.8b) and 'turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hand' (3.8c). His decree concludes with 'Who knows? God may turn (ישוב) and relent and turn (ושב) from his fierce anger so that we will not perish' (3.9). In what is probably another unexpected twist, the chapter concludes with Yhwh relenting and in compassion sparing the city (3.10). Though this would seem to bring an end

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22.   Cooper, 'Divine Caprice', p. 158. Cooper's declarative reading is supported by Ph. Guillaume, 'The End of Jonah is the Beginning of Wisdom', *Bib* 87 (2006), pp. 243-50. Guillaume argues that reading 4.11 as a statement rather than a question reaffirms God's promise to destroy Nineveh. Repentance, therefore, only brings about a temporary reprieve.

23.   'In the immediate context of Jonah, however, the point of the ambiguity is to suggest that God's treatment of Nineveh, when scrutinized, might be just as unintelligible to the human observer as his treatment of Jonah' (Cooper, 'Divine Caprice', pp. 158-59).

to the writing, the story takes another surprising turn[24] and continues on to discuss Jonah's reaction to Yhwh's grace, centred on the reinterpretation of Exod. 34.6-7 (Jon. 4.2). If understood as a question, the message that Yhwh's compassion can spread to nations beyond Israel is highlighted in the closing verse: 'As for me, should I not have compassion on Nineveh, that great city, who has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right from their left, and also many animals?' (4.11).

b. *The Use of* שׁוב *in Jonah 3.8-10*
The overall irony of the people of Nineveh heeding the words of a prophet of Yhwh and repenting should not be overlooked. This report is counter to everything that is known about the Assyrians from other biblical accounts. The historical books portray Assyria as Israel's and Judah's constant enemy, responsible for the destruction of Samaria (1 Kgs 17) and most of Judah (1 Kgs 18–19), as well as a mocker of Yhwh (2 Chron. 34.10-15). This knowledge makes Jonah's flight at the beginning of the book understandable—he wants to see Nineveh destroyed.[25] That this truly hated and vicious enemy of Israel is portrayed as humbly repenting—from the king down to the animals—must have been shocking to Jonah's early readers. Indeed, no book of the Twelve up to Jonah has given the reader any indication that the nations had the capacity to heed Yhwh's call to repentance, or that any call had ever been made. In fact, up to this point, the nations have been the subject of Yhwh's wrath and Israel's/Judah's future possession (Joel 4; Amos 1–2; 9.12; Obad. 15-21). Unlike Micah–Zechariah, no thought is given to the possibility of the nations joining Yhwh's people.

This context helps make Nineveh's repentance in Jonah so shocking. Besides outward appearances of fasting and putting on sackcloth, the king of Nineveh proclaims that the people must do two things: (1) call out to God and (2) 'turn (וישבו) from their evil ways (מדרכו הרעה) and from the violence (החמס) that is in their hands'[26] (3.8). Most commentaries identify these two phrases as communicating social/moral responsibilities. Stuart notes that 'evil

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24.   For more on the unique ending of Jonah, see Walter B. Crouch, 'To Question an End, to End a Question: Opening the Closure of the Book of Jonah', *JSOT* 62 (1994), pp. 101-12.

25.   This has been questioned by commentators. 'Was Jonah so virulently anti-Assyrian that he preferred suffering the consequences of disobedience to facilitating Assyrian repentance and forgiveness, the conventional Christian reading? Alternatively, was Jonah fearful that Yhwh's willingness to forgive would render him a virtual false prophet?' (Mark Biddle, 'Obadiah–Jonah–Micah in Canonical Context: The Nature of Prophetic Literature and Hermeneutics', *Int* 61 [2007], pp. 154-66 [160]). This second alternative is based on Frolov 'Returning the Ticket'.

26.   The NIV has omitted the phrase 'which is in their hands' (אשר בכפיהם) which is similar to the phrase ('violence in their hands') found in Isa. 59.6.

ways' is indicative of 'general immoral behavior' while חמס is tied more closely to social injustice.[27] Although 'evil ways' is rather general, חמס, 'violence' is a much more specific term, particularly as it relates to the nations and the Twelve. חמס is a recurrent charge against Israel/Judah (Amos 3.10; Mic. 6.12; Hab. 1.2, 3; Zeph. 1.9; Mal. 2.16), but is particularly notice-able when charged against foreign nations. In the context of the Twelve prior to Jonah, חמס has been used to charge Edom and Egypt (Joel 4.19) and Edom again (Obad. 10) with committing violence against Judah. Going beyond Jonah, Babylon is described as 'bent on violence' (Hab. 1.9) in the context of their army sweeping over all the earth. Within the Twelve, with the debatable exception of Hab. 2.17, Israel/Judah is never charged with committing חמס against a foreign nation; they are only the victim of such actions. Only the nations commit violence against other nations.

If Jonah is read on its own, the charge of חמס takes on the same social justice issue as it does with Israel/Judah. '*The violence that is in their hands* refers to the social oppression practised by them, cf. Am. 3.10, rather than to Nineveh's cruelty to other nations'.[28] In the context of the Twelve however, especially if it is read in connection to Nahum 3, it is possible to understand חמס as more than just violence towards those living in Nineveh. This is not to say that social justice issues within Nineveh are not part of Nineveh's sin—surely they were—only the context of the Twelve indicates that Nineveh, and the nations in general, are guilty of committing violence against surrounding nations. This is supported by Jonah's location in the Twelve, where the gentile nations have been charged with committing violence against Judah (Joel and Obadiah specifically, and Amos 1–2 in general). In addition, Israel's historical relationship with Assyria should not be overlooked.[29] It is interesting to note that in the Twelve the charges levelled against the nations are almost always in regard to their mistreatment of the people during conquest, and not for cultic reasons (cf. Joel 4; Amos 1–2; Zeph. 2.4-15). חמס is a key concern for Yhwh, whereas in the Twelve, with the possible exception of Hab. 2.18-20 the nations are never charged with idolatry.

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27. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 494. Wolff believes that דרך can be identified with 'a human being's whole behavior'. Therefore, 'to turn away from evil *ways* would at the same time be to turn away from the way of *disaster*; to establish the inner connection between evil and disaster is, after v. 10, quite deliberate on the narrator's part' (Wolff, *Obadiah–Jonah*, p. 153).

28. Hinckley G. Mitchell, John Merlin Powis Smith, and Julius A. Brewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912, repr. 1999), p. 55.

29. 'Although the tale deals with moral misbehavior in an Assyrian city, the listeners would recall that Assyria's aggressive violence toward other nations was condemned by the prophets as a national characteristic, and so by association it has special point' (Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, p. 225).

The second and third occurrences of שׁוב in Jonah appear in the closing statement of the king's decree: 'Who knows? God may turn (יָשׁוב) and relent and turn (וְשָׁב) from his fierce anger so that we will not perish'. In this verse, שׁוב is actually paired with נחם, though this is obscured by both the NIV and REB translations. The first four words of this passage (מִי־יוֹדֵעַ יָשׁוב וְנִחַם) are identical to Joel 2.14, thus further connecting the two passages and leading to questions of dependence which will not be entered into here.[30] The most common interpretation is that both Joel and Jonah emphasize Yhwh's compassion in relation to repentance. 'At any rate, Joel 2:12-14 is closely related to the Jonah story through its emphasis on the possibility of repentance on the part of a truly sinful people, if the repentance is genuine, and its portrayal of God as patient and merciful (Jon. 4:2)'.[31]

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30. Besides the commentaries cited, see also Salters, *Jonah and Lamentations*, pp. 25-26. For more on the phrase 'Who knows?' (מִי־יוֹדֵעַ) and its uses throughout the Old Testament see James L. Crenshaw, 'The Expression *MÎ YÔDEA* in the Hebrew Bible', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 274-88. He divides the different occurrences of the phrase into an 'open door' in which actions can effect change, and a 'closed door' where they cannot. He places both the Joel and Jonah passages in the 'open door' category.

31. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 494. This reading is not universally accepted. Cooper makes a compelling argument that Jonah is actually in conflict with Joel's theology, though it takes a declarative statement in 4.11 to reach such a conclusion. 'Question: Should God spare repentant Nineveh? Answer 1—the answer of Joel: *yes*, because the God who 'renounces evil' reverses his decree for the sake of those who repent. Answer 2—the answer of Jonah the prophet: *no*, because the God who 'renounces evil' is not being 'true' to his word. Answer 3—the answer of the Book of Jonah: God does as he pleases, and it is folly to try and justify or rationalize his behavior. The author of Jonah recognizes the error of Joel, who has merely substituted one mechanistic view of God for another' (Cooper, 'Divine Caprice', p. 162). While Cooper may be correct on the broader theology of the writing, this position overlooks how Jonah ch. 3 functions within the collection of the Twelve. As argued earlier, within the Twelve Jonah can be understood as a historical account. What this implies is that the actions of the people and Yhwh's response at the end of ch. 3 are historical events. The people turn, and Yhwh turned. This exchange then becomes the foundation for Israel's destruction at the hands of Assyria in 701. Yet, Cooper finds such a reading absurd. 'If we recontextualize the views of Joel and Jonah within the Assyrian crisis, we are compelled to draw two absurd conclusions: God must save the hated Ninevites because they have repented; and, he must destroy his beloved Israel because their demise has been prophesied, yet they have not repented. Absurd conclusions, obviously, are derived from false premises' (Cooper, 'Divine Caprice', p. 162). However, as argued in Hosea and Joel, such a perceived reading of the calls to return is too mechanistic. Yhwh is bound by nothing and always remains dangerous—capable of both destruction and grace. The issue here becomes a test of Yhwh's own words, whether he will do as he says, and an illustration of the extent of his compassion. Additionally, it is this very problem, the punishment of the more righteous Judah at the hands of the wicked Babylonians that is at the heart of Habakkuk's message.

Whereas in v. 8 שוב is the focus of the actions of the Ninevites, the two occurrences of שוב in v. 9 shift the attention to Yhwh and his actions.[32] In this instance, שוב is used to indicate the king's hope that Yhwh will turn away from his present course of destruction, and then have a change of mind (נחם). Therefore, 'the actions implied by the two verbs שוב and נָחַם should not [be, *sic*] construed as occurring simultaneously (i.e., the coordinate force of the *waw*), but instead should be understood as sequential'.[33] BDB defines נחם as used in Jon. 3.9 as '*be sorry, rue, suffer grief, repent*, of one's own doings'.[34] Wolff goes into more detail by defining נחם as 'regret over an act already committed or—in the vast majority of cases—disapprobation of a judgment either planned or announced'.[35] In this context Wolff defines it more distinctly as 'a revoking out of compassion'.[36]

In his statement in 3.9, in which שוב is followed by נחם which is followed by שוב again, the king's hope is that Yhwh will turn completely from his message of destruction: 'Forty days more and Nineveh will be overturned' (3.4b). In other words, if the people turn (שוב) from their violence (חמס) (3.8), perhaps Yhwh will turn (שוב) from his fierce anger (חרון אפו) (3.9). The king is clear that none of this is certain, and as with Joel 2.12-14, is based on Yhwh's grace. Sweeney notes that 3.9 recalls the characteristics of Yhwh found in Exod. 34.6-7, which is cited first in Joel 2.13 and quoted later in Jon. 4.2. 'Although the statement in Exod 34:6-7 emphasizes both YHWH's compassion and capacity for punishment or justice, the people's statement in Jon 3:9 emphasizes only YHWH's compassion and capacity to forgive'.[37] Sweeney argues that the king's improper citation, which has omitted the reference to punishment, has skewed the real meaning of the passage.

> This [the use in 3.9] is entirely in keeping with the purpose of the narrative at this point, which is to emphasize YHWH's mercy, but as the preceding material in Jonah demonstrates, YHWH's mercy must be understood in relation to YHWH's capacity for punishment. Together, both punishment and mercy define

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32. Wolff, *Obadiah–Jonah*, p. 154.

33. W. Dennis Tucker Jr, *Jonah: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (BHHB; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), p. 82. It must be mentioned that in this citation Tucker points נחם as a qal, a form that does not appear in the MT. Tucker also argues, based on the use in Joel, that ישוב should be separated from מי־יודע despite the presence of a *zaqeph qaton* above שוב (p. 81).

34. F. Brown, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Strong's, TWOT, and GK references Copyright 2000 by Logos Research Systems, Inc. [637.1]; Logos Research Systems: Oak Harbor, WA, 2000).

35. Wolff, *Obadiah–Jonah*, p. 154.

36. Wolff, *Obadiah–Jonah*, p. 154.

37. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 327.

the two components of justice. The people of Nineveh hold out the hope that
by turning from evil, justice may be served through compassion rather than
through punishment.[38]

This compassion is realized in 3.10 when 'God saw their deeds, that they had
turned (שׁוב) from their evil ways, so God relented (נחם) from the evil which
he had said he was going to do to them, and he did not do it'. This use of שׁוב
looks back to 3.8, where the king calls for them to 'turn from their evil ways'
and validates the sincerity of the people's act of turning. Since the people
turned from 'their evil ways' (מדרכם הרעה), Yhwh also turned from the
'evil' (הרעה) that he had planned for them. While Cooper is right to empha-
size that God should never be reduced to a formula,[39] nonetheless, when a
reader of the Twelve approaches Jonah as an historical account, the actions of
both the Ninevites and Yhwh confirm the promises of Joel 2.12-14, rather
than fight against it.

   The text is very descriptive of the great lengths that the people went to
show their repentance: all the people fast and put on sackcloth (3.5), the king
himself sits in the dust also wearing sackcloth (3.6), and issues a decree in
which both men and animals are to fast from both food and drink and wear
sackcloth (3.7-8). Though the image of an animal forced to abstain from food
and drink, as well as wear sackcloth may be farcical (as well as hyperbole),[40]
it emphasizes the lengths to which the people of Nineveh were willing to go
to show that their repentance was genuine. This call to genuine repentance
has been a major theme up to this point in the Twelve. Hosea's call (14.2-9)
to take words instead of sacrifices shows the prophet's concern that שׁוב be
accompanied by a genuine change in heart/mind. Yhwh's repeated calls for
Israel to 'seek him and live' (5.4-5) and 'seek good' (5.14)[41] in Amos invites
Israel to change their actions towards the poor, again with no mention of
sacrifice. Lastly, Joel 2.13, 'Rend your heart and not your garments', is
clearly concerned that the repentance of the people be genuine if Yhwh is to
relent from his coming punishment. It should be restated, however, that even
a genuine repentance does not guarantee Yhwh will relent from his

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   38.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 327.
   39.   'God cannot be constrained by a mechanistic formula, nor can he be predicated
by any set of attributes. Such formulas and attributes constitute no more than vague
guidelines, tentative gropings towards an understanding of God's character. Israel's hope,
in fact, abides in their untruth, in the extent to which God's capricious and unrequited love
will motivate his behavior (the point, after all, of Hosea)' (Cooper, 'Divine Caprice',
p. 162).
   40.   Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 493. Stuart argues that there is historical precedent for
such actions. It is interesting to note that Yhwh indicates that the animals would have
experienced his wrath as well (4.11).
   41.   In these passages, seek (דרשׁ) functions similarly to שׁוב.

prophesied destruction (Jon. 3.9). 'Men cannot twist his [God's] arm; even genuine repentance is no virtue by which to win his approval. His reaction lies hidden behind the clouds of mystery and glory that surround his throne, until it emerges into human experience'.[42] Once again the struggle for the people to turn to Yhwh and the struggle for Yhwh to turn towards his people is brought to the fore.

3. *Implications for* שׁוב *in Jonah*

Jonah's offer of grace to a pagan nation is no doubt a shocking read. This message is especially important in light of the Twelve as a whole in order to understand the role of the גוים. Most importantly, Jonah validates Yhwh's repeated calls to return to him, but ironically does so with a pagan nation instead of Israel.[43] The question 'Who knows?' from Jon. 3.9 is repeated from Joel 2.14, and also insinuated in Amos 5.15b 'It may be that YHWH, God of Hosts will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph'. In actuality, this question could be asked of all the writings up to this point: 'Would YHWH really turn from his plan of destruction?' Jonah answers this in the affirmative.

The clear calls to return in Hos. 6.1-3; 14.2-9; Joel 2.12 as well as Amos 5.4-15 in conjunction with 9.11-15 end with Yhwh not only relenting but also restoring his people. Would Yhwh really do these things? Hosea–Obadiah promise he will, but only Jonah offers a historical account in which Yhwh actually relents. The reason, genuine repentance by a foreign nation, is something that is highlighted by Jonah. There is no indication in any of the previous writings that the people of Israel/Judah heeded Yhwh's word and repented. In fact, the tone of both Hosea (13.1-16) and Amos (9.1-10) seems to prove otherwise, as well as the fact that Samaria was destroyed in 722. Joel also leaves the question open, though this changes if the writing is inter-preted in light of 586.[44] In Jonah, the people's immediate response and overzealous reaction (they go beyond Joel's prescriptions for repentance in 1.13-14; 2.13) to Jonah's message stands in stark contrast to the reception which Amos received at Bethel (Amos 7). In this way, Jonah stands as a denunciation of Yhwh's own people. However, the overall message of Jonah

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42.   Allen*, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, p. 225. Stuart adds, 'What God saw (v 10) would have to be genuine. The people could not continue in sin and expect a ritual of self-denial to exonerate them' (Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 494).

43.   'In Jonah the human endeavor to change destiny works: God is portrayed as repenting. Whereas the beloved David (and possibly the chosen people) had failed to evoke a favorable response, these despised inhabitants of Nineveh succeeded, much to the chagrin of the prophet Jonah' (Crenshaw, 'The Expression', p. 276).

44.   Obadiah does not call for repentance on the part of Edom, but still promises future restoration to Judah/Jerusalem (vv. 15-21).

validates Hosea–Obadiah's message: if Yhwh will be gracious towards a pagan nation as awful as Nineveh, then surely he would be gracious to his covenant people. The covenant of Exod. 34.6-7 is brought into the forefront and emphatically affirmed. Yes, Yhwh is compassionate and yes, Yhwh will relent and bless his people—if only they would heed his words.

The other major implication is how Jonah changes the perception and function of the nations as a whole. Prior to Jonah, the nations have had a limited purpose. Namely, they have been charged with committing atrocities, mostly against Israel/Judah (Joel 4.1-6; Amos 1.3, 6, 9, 10, 13; Obad. 11-13), for which Yhwh has promised judgment that normally results in destruction and/or Israelite occupation (Joel 4.19; Amos 9.12; Obad. 19-20). Jonah changes this. Instead of being the recipients of Yhwh's judgment and occupied by Israel, Nineveh is spared, which historically resulted in the 722 and 701 catastrophes in which Israel and Judah were occupied by Assyria.

More significantly, Jonah opens the nations to hope, which is a possibility otherwise unknown at this point in the Twelve. In Joel, Obadiah, and Amos there is little for the nations to do other than to be recipients of Yhwh's wrath. Jonah offers the nations a choice, and this choice is further expanded in the following writing. Sweeney argues that Micah 'portrays Israel's punishment as a means by which Jerusalem will be prepared for its role as the holy center, where all the nations of the earth will join Israel in acknowledging Yhwh's sovereignty'.[45] This specifically takes place in Mic. 3.12–4.5 in which 'Zion will be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem will become a heap of ruin, and the mountain of the house a wooded high place' (3.12). In this destruction, Jerusalem and the temple are cleansed and 4.1-5 describes a restored Jerusalem in which the nations flood into the city. This is the first time in all of the Twelve that the nations are allowed to join with Yhwh's people.[46] When Jonah is read in light of Mic. 4, the implication is that the possibility of salvation for the nations exists. This salvation should not be understood as a type of universalism. In fact, Mic. 5.5-15 and Nahum[47] indicate that the nations must repent (cf. Mic. 5.15). But the possibility for the nations to hear and respond to Yhwh's word and to be allowed to participate in a salvific future is a drastic change from the messages of Joel and Obadiah.

To further highlight the salvific importance of Jonah within the Twelve, Jonah is the only writing that omits any reference to the Day of Yhwh, including any 'day of' or 'in that day' references. One possibility for this omission is that Jonah is a narrative that is not concerned about foretelling future events, unlike the other eleven writings. In this way, when Jonah is

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45. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 63. What follows is a development of his suggestion.
46. This is seen again in Zech. 14.
47. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 63.

read on its own, no mention of the Day of Yhwh is needed. However, when placed within the context of the Twelve in which every other writing contains a reference to 'The Day' proper, or like Hosea, references to 'in that day', the omission becomes glaring. This leads to the second possibility for the omission of the Day of Yhwh—Nineveh's repentance. Joel 1–2 indicates that the Day of Yhwh can be averted if the people repent and turn towards Yhwh. Jonah, ironically, is the only writing in which this turning clearly takes place. As a result, it is possible to say that in Jonah, the Day of Yhwh has been averted and does not come against Nineveh because of their repentance.

Overall, Jonah is a unique writing, and not simply because it is a narrative story of a reluctant prophet that is placed in the middle of a collection of obedient prophets whose prophecies are almost completely lacking in narrative. Rather it is the main historical message of the writing that is so shocking—that an offer of salvation to a gentile nation, one of the most hated in all of Israel's history, was accepted. And yet, here the account stands—the people turned and Yhwh turned. Because of this, Jonah's position within the Twelve serves as a bridge between Obadiah and Micah–Nahum. The Twelve uses Jonah's message of grace to both validate the messages of the prophets that have come before him, and also change the direction of the overall message to the gentiles. As with all the previous writings examined so far, שוב plays a key role in that message. Simply stated, the people turned and God turned. By reading Jonah in light of the destruction of Nineveh contained in Nahum, it becomes apparent that turning is not a one-time act, but a constant struggle between Yhwh and his people. Only now, Jonah not only affirms this message to Israel, but he also extends it to the nations.

Chapter 7

AMOS, OBADIAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, AND HAGGAI

While the writings of Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Zechariah, and Malachi strongly emphasize the concept of return, this is admittedly not the case for all the writings in the Twelve. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this project, if the variant in Haggai is allowed שוב appears in every writing in the Book. While שוב may not be the central concern for these writings, the call to return is nonetheless present, carrying on the developed theme first introduced by Hosea and Joel. Because the limits of this project prevent an in-depth examination of every occurrence in the Twelve, the following section will offer a cursory look at the supporting role שוב plays in Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai.

1. *Amos*

I must begin this section, however, with an exception. Unlike Obadiah, and Micah–Haggai, שוב and the call to return is a central part of Amos's message. שוב occurs 15× in Amos, which is third among the Twelve, and is concentrated in two sections: chs. 1–2 (9×) and 4.6-11 (5×). The lone appearance of שוב outside these locations is 9.14, which is part of the critical restoration section that concludes the work.

a. שוב *in Amos 1–2*
The importance of שוב is seen almost immediately in Amos, as following the superscript (1.1) and a theophany (1.2) the writing opens with eight oracles against the nations that are all introduced by the שוב statement literally translated 'For three transgressions of (people group) and even for four I will not return it' (על־שלשה פשעי ועל־ארבעה לא אשיבנו). This phrase accounts for every occurrence of שוב in this section with one exception (1.8), and because of the debate surrounding the x/x + 1 formula, has been the focus of much discussion.[1] The phrase 'I will not turn it back' (לא אשיבנו), however,

1. Besides the commentaries, see also Robert H. O'Connell, 'Telescoping N + 1 Patterns in the Book of Amos', *VT* 46 (1996), pp. 56-73; Robert B. Chisholm, '"For Three

is difficult to understand because the meaning of 'it/him' (וּ) remains ambiguous.[2] While the suggested translations for this passage are numerous,[3] I am inclined to follow Barré's position that וּ refers back to the geographical name of the nation to which the oracle is addressed.[4] This reading yields a translation of '"I will not let him return (to me)" or "I will not take him back"',[5] and is based on the position that: (1) this is the understanding of the ancient versions;[6] and (2) the second issue involving the gender of the suffix

Sins…Even for Four": The Numerical Sayings in Amos', *BSAC* 147 (1990), pp. 188-97. For older works see M. Weiss, 'The Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Am 1–2', *JBL* 86 (1967), pp. 416-23; and B. Kingston Soper, 'For Three Transgressions and for Four', *ET* 71 (1959), pp. 86-87. 'The progressive numerical statement appears in both biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, and generally employs two or more successive numbers to enumerate examples or qualities of particular phenomenon' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 200-201). Other occurrences of this formula are: Prov. 30.15-16, 18-19; Ps. 62.12-13; Job 5.19-27; 33.14-15 (p. 201).

2.   It is possible that the ambiguity is intentional. See James R. Linville, 'What does "It" mean? Interpretation at the point of no return in Amos 1–2', *BibInt* 8 (2000), pp. 400-24. Linville offers an in-depth review of the various approaches to the passage. Paul likewise reads the 'it' as intentionally ambiguous, as it looks forward to the punishment that is about to be announced. 'Tension mounts as the forthcoming punishment is initially left ambiguously undefined, only to be explicated after the intervening description of the crime. No matter what the exact nature of the ominous punishment may be, 'it' is irrevocable' (Shalom M. Paul, *Amos* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], p. 47).

3.   For example, Wolff offers the translation 'I will not take it back', reading a connection to the 'recalling of the Word of Yahweh' (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 128 n. b). Christensen eliminates the suffix וּ from אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ and offers the translation 'I will not turn back' (D.L. Christensen, 'The Prosodic Structure of Amos 1–2', *HTR* 67 [1974], pp. 427-36). Barstad reads 'I will not be indulgent' but does not give any explanation or comment on his choice of translation (Hans Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Amos II 7b-8, IV 1-13, V 1-17, VI 4-7, VIII 14* [VTSup, 34; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984], p. 12). Both Knierim and Coote argue that 'it' refers to Yhwh's anger, which is followed by the NIV (R.P. Knierim, '"I Will Not Cause it to Return" in Amos 1 and 2', in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology* [ed. G.W. Coats and B.O. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977], pp. 163-75; Robert B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981], p. 115). Hayes, as well as Andersen and Freedman believe the 'it' refers to Yhwh's voice in 1.2 (John H. Hayes, *Amos: The Eighth Century Prophet* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988], pp. 70-71; Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos* [AB, 24A; New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1989], p. 235.

4.   Michael L. Barré, 'The Meaning of *l' 'šybnw* In Amos 1:3–2:6', *JBL* 105 (1986), pp. 611-31.

5.   Barré, 'Meaning', p. 622.

6.   Barré, 'Meaning', p. 613. 'But the Targum and Syriac, by giving a plural object of the verb, clearly understood the suffix to denote the people of the geographical area mentioned in each of the oracles. The LXX rendering points in the same direction, although it uses the plural only twice'.

(masculine) versus the gender of the offending cities/nations (feminine) can be resolved by referring to the people group instead of the city proper.[7] In this way, the prophet concludes that the nations have violated their vassal treaty with Yhwh, and Yhwh as Lord will not allow them to return to his service and will punish them for their treaty/covenant transgressions. That Judah and Israel sit at the climax of the oracle indicts them as the chief transgressors of the passage.[8] Amos's refusal to allow a return stands in tension with the calls to return given by Amos's later contemporary, Hosea. The shock of Amos's words, especially following Hosea's and Joel's calls to return, indicates the seriousness of Israel's covenant violations, and raises legitimate questions about Israel's ability to return.[9]

b. שׁוּב *in Amos 4.6-11*

Amos's second section that deals with שׁוּב is 4.6-11, where the phrase 'and you did not return to me' (ולֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדַי) occurs 5 (4.6, 8, 9, 10, 11). This section (4.4-12) sits between Yhwh's calls for destruction and exile (3.1–4.3), and his calls for repentance and the promise of life (5.4-5, 14-15). While most commentators believe that the uses of שׁוּב in 4.6-11 only culminate in a message of destruction in 4.12, Brueggemann has successfully argued that it is possible to understand 4.4-12 as both a threat of destruction and a call to covenant renewal,[10] in which case the passage serves as an appropriate bridge

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7.   'The standard biblical Hebrew grammars note that when a geographical name refers to a city or land as such, it is feminine; but when it refers to the people of that area, it is masculine. This rule is followed consistently throughout the section under discussion' (Barré, 'Meaning', p. 614).

8.   There has been much discussion over the ordering of the various nations within the oracle. For a reading that finds catchwords between the oracles see Shalom M. Paul, 'Amos 1:3–2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern', *JBL* 90 (1971), pp. 397-403. I am inclined to follow Steinmann, who finds a geographical relationship between Israel/Judah and the nations, which highlights the seriousness of their transgressions (Andrew E. Steinmann, 'The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3–2:16', *JBL* 111 [1992], pp. 683-89). See especially table 3 and following description on p. 687.

9.   It also raises conflicts within Amos. In Amos 5.4-17, the prophet tells the people to 'seek' Yhwh and live, which seems contradictory to Yhwh's refusal to allow a return. It is possible that Amos 1–2 is hyperbole to drive home the seriousness of Israel's violations and to create a shock value to Amos's message. It is also possible that turning is a complex relationship between Yhwh and his people that must be held in tension.

10.   W. Brueggemann, 'Amos IV 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship', *VT* 15 (1965), pp. 1-15. He argues that v. 12c contains two words כון and לקראת, found also in Exod. 19.15-25, that indicate that the passage is not functioning merely as a threat or warning of more curses to come, but rather shapes the entire passage into a call for covenant renewal. 'When the terms are seen together in light of the Sinai tradition, it is apparent that we are not dealing simply with a stern threat or warning nor with a call to repentance, but with *a liturgic formula of preparation for covenant-making or renewal* which includes both

between the varying messages of the surrounding chapters. At the heart of 4.4-12 is Yhwh's covenant with his people, and the application of Yhwh's covenant curses, which are supported by language parallels from Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.[11] In 4.6-11, Yhwh announces that he has sent the various covenant curses against his people (famine, drought, blight/locusts, death, and destruction) because of the cultic failures of Bethel and Gilgal (4.4-5), yet the people had refused to repent and return (שוב) to him, thus indicating a causal relationship between the punishment and the failure to return. This 'classic' understanding of the return relationship, echoed by Joel and others, indicates that covenant punishments are a result of covenant failures, and the punishment cycle would only end if the people recognized their failures and returned.[12]

c. שוב *in Amos 9.14*
Amos's last use of שוב in 9.14 occurs in the concluding restoration section of the writing (9.11-15). On the surface, the passage seems so out of place that when compared to rest of Amos, Wellhausen summarized it as, 'Rosen und Lavendel statt Blut und Eisen'.[13] Such differences, however, do not necessitate a late date for the passage,[14] and there may be more literary connections between the restoration section and the rest of the chapter.[15] In words reminiscent of the agricultural blessings and destruction of traditional enemies that conclude Joel (4.18-19), the end of Amos reemphasizes Yhwh's covenant with Israel. The destruction that has been predicted throughout the writing, particularly as it relates to agriculture (1.2; 4.7; 5.17; 7.1-2) and exile

threat and call to repentance' (p. 2). If Brueggemann's understanding of v. 12c is correct, the curses which have taken place in the past are serving as a warning to Israel that destruction is a possibility *but not an absolute*. That return was still possible is evidenced by the use of שוב after each covenant curse. Therefore, it is still possible for Israel to properly prepare itself to enter again into a covenant relationship with Yhwh. 'The plea for repentance runs throughout vv. 6-11, but the climax (12a) suggests repentance is no longer possible. But because this is traditional form, the opportunity to repent is not excluded, just as it is possible after each of the earlier curses of 6-11' (p. 7).

11.   See especially Wolff, *Joel–Amos*, p. 213. Wolff also notes parallels with 1 Kgs 8.

12.   Because of the early date of Amos, it is possible that Amos 4.6-11 is the impetus for the 'Return to me' concept found in Hosea–Joel, and Zechariah–Malachi.

13.   'Roses and lavender instead of blood and iron' (Julius Wellhausen, 'Amos', in *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* [Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1898, repr. 1963], pp. 67-96 [96]). To this Coggins replies, 'It is an interesting reflection, both upon Wellhausen himself and upon many commentators who have followed him, that blood and iron should apparently be regarded as preferable to roses and lavender' (Coggins, *Joel and Amos*, p. 155).

14.   See Stephen J. Bramer, 'The Structure of Amos 9:7-15', *BSAC* 156 (1999), pp. 272-81 (275).

15.   See Sweeney's analysis of ch. 9 (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 268-69).

(5.5, 27; 6.7; 7.17; 9.4) will be undone at this time. Amos calls for both the possession of Edom and the restoration of the Davidic line.[16] In a context that is reminiscent of the Day of Yhwh ('In that day' 9.11; 'The days are coming' 9.13), שׁוב is used for the first time in Amos to convey restoration, rather than judgment and destruction. Once again, the complex phrase שׁוב שׁבות appears,[17] with Yhwh promising to restore Israel to its past glory. The agricultural blessings promised by Yhwh become a proto-type that echoes the promises of Hos. 14.6-8 and Joel 4.18, and whose lack of appearance forms the foundation for some of the difficulties in Haggai and Malachi.

d. *Summary*

Given the sections where return occurs (chs. 1–2; 4; 9), Amos uses שׁוב in three different ways: (1) as a term used to express judgment in which Yhwh refuses to allow the nations to return to the covenant (chs. 1–2); (2) as a warning and call to covenant renewal (4.4-12); and (3) as a term of restoration in which Yhwh himself restores Israel's fortunes (9.11-15). What is interesting is that in all three of these cases Yhwh is the one either refusing (chs. 1–2) or initiating the return (4.6-11; 9.14). Within the context of the Twelve, Amos offers clearly defined uses of שׁוב that link back to Hosea–Joel, and forward to the rest of the Twelve. Amos's opening statements, in which return to Yhwh is denied, stands contrary to the receptive Yhwh described by Hosea's and Joel's imperative calls to return, and the story of Jonah. While I have suggested that Amos's words could be hyperbole for the sake of shock, his use of שׁוב does indicate the complexity of the return relationship both for the people and for Yhwh, as well as the seriousness of the people's transgression. Returning for either party is no simple matter. Additionally, the causal relationship between punishment and the failure to return (4.6-11) helps form the background for Joel's locust plague and Hosea's threat of punishment. By structuring return this way, the link between שׁוב and the covenant becomes apparent. Lastly, both Hosea and Joel share Amos's view of return as a promised agricultural renewal (Hos. 14.6-8; Joel 2.22-24; 4.18-19). That Amos is arguably the earliest prophet of the Twelve raises the possibility that his writing was the original source for these ideas, which is ironic because by the time the reader arrives at his work in the MT, the concepts are no longer new.

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16.   For the discussion on the proper understanding of 'David's fallen tent' see H. Neil Richardson, 'SKT (Amos 9:11): "Booth" or "Succoth"?', *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 375-81. Stuart agrees with Richardson that 'tent' should be translated 'Succoth', a city important to David in the Transjordan (p. 398), while Sweeney accepts the translation as 'booth' (p. 273).

17.   See the discussion of Hos. 6.11 (Chapter 4, pp. 80-81).

2. *Obadiah*

Though Obadiah is the smallest of all of the Old Testament books, consisting of a mere 21 verses, שוב plays a role in the writing's description of the destruction of Edom and the nations.[18] The Day of Yhwh helps form the background to the prophecy as day (יום) appears twelve times in the writing: vv. 8, 11 (2×), 12 (4×), 13 (3×), 14, 15. The specific phrase Day of Yhwh (יום יהוה) only appears once (v.15) but the phrase 'in that day' (ביום ההוא) also occurs in v. 8.[19] Following three writings in which שוב was central to the prophetic message, the lessened role of שוב in Obadiah is glaring. In Obadiah, return (שוב) appears only once (v. 15) and in connection with the Day of Yhwh. Despite this lone appearance, the form of the return message first introduced by Hosea and repeated by Joel, emphasizes Yhwh's determination to restore his people by bringing judgment to the nations.

Obadiah 15 sits at a critical junction dividing the two general messages of the writing: (1) vv. 1-14 describe the punishment of Edom for crimes against Judah and (2) vv. 15-21 describe a more general judgment against the nations (including Edom) and the restoration of Yhwh's people.[20] Verse 15 begins

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18. Within the context of the Twelve, it is possible to understand Edom as a symbol for all of Israel's enemies (Sweeney, 'Sequence', p. 58). See also Ben Zvi, *Obadiah* (BZAW, 242; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1996), p. 25; and R.J. Coggins, 'Obadiah', in *Israel among the Nations* (ed. R.J. Coggins and S. Paul Re'emi; ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 65-102.

19. It is interesting to note that the majority of the 'day' phrases actually refer to Israel's misfortune at the hand of Edom (vv. 12-14).

20. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, p. 118. There is a noticeable shift in tone that follows v. 15. In the fourteen preceding verses, the sins of Edom and its coming destruction are laid bare. In vv. 2-9 Edom's destruction is described and by the end of v. 9, everything that was of value in Edom—its rugged strongholds, wealth, wisdom, and warriors—has been destroyed. By v. 9, no reasons have been given for Edom's destruction. That changes, however, in vv. 10 where the charge 'Because of violence against your brother Jacob' (מחמס אחיך יעקב) is levelled against Edom. In seven 'day of' phrases which describe Judah's and Jerusalem's destruction (vv. 12-14) Edom is charged with passivity (v. 11), gloating (vv. 12-13), and taking advantage of Judah (v. 13) while enemies ransacked Jerusalem. They even go as far as to assist the enemy by killing and handing over fugitives (v. 14). With the destruction foretold (vv. 1-9) and the reasons given (vv. 10-14), the time has come for Yhwh to act (v. 15). This then leads to the warning of the coming of the Day of Yhwh, a day in which Yhwh intervenes in human affairs, normally to bring judgment against foreign nations (e.g. Joel 4.14) though Israel can also be included (Amos 5.18-20). In this section (ending in v. 18 with 'For Yhwh has spoken') Mt Zion is delivered (v. 17), which is also typical 'Day' language (cf. Joel 4.1; Zech. 14), and Edom is reduced to stubble (cf. Mal 4.1) which is consumed by the fire of Jacob (v. 18). The closing section (vv. 19-21) depicts the result of Yhwh's judgment of the nations and the destruction of Edom as Yhwh's people possess the surrounding nations, specifically Edom (vv. 19, 20, 21). All of the restoration and final possession of Edom is initiated by the coming of the Day of Yhwh.

with the announcement that the Day of Yhwh is imminent for all nations and continues with two parallel passages directed toward Edom, which indicate what will take place on that day.

(1)   'Just as you have done, it will be done to you' (כאשר עשׂית יעשׂה לך)

(2)   'your recompense will return on your head' (גמלך ישוב בראשׁך)

In these two lines is conveyed the idea of *lex talionis* or 'the punishment fitting the crime precisely'.[21] BDB defines 'deeds' (גמול) as dealing, recompense, or benefit. Raabe, however, prefers to define it as 'deliberate acts done toward another person or group, acts that ought to be repaid'.[22] In other words, these are serious, deliberate crimes that deserve punishment, and Yhwh in his role as judge, will deal out *lex talionis*, and bring about justice within the context of the Day of Yhwh. Therefore, the only 'return' that takes place in Obadiah occurs within the context of *lex talionis*, and is initiated by Yhwh against the nations as exact retribution for sins committed against Israel, and is part of Israel's renewal. This judiciary use of שוב is one that is different from Amos, but has been seen before in the Twelve (Hos. 12.15; Joel 4.4). Looking closer, it is possible to argue that the verbal connection to the *lex talionis* idea shares some similarities with the call to return. The double use of עשׂה, the qal perfect plus the niphal imperfect, corresponds in some ways to the double use of שוב found in the 'Return to me and I will return to you' statement. As with the שוב formula, the language of Obad. 15 expresses a kind of deep correspondence between the divine and human actions. In this case, Yhwh's reciprocal activities are based on Edom's violent deeds committed against Israel, rather than the nation's humble repentance. The turning, therefore, is one of violence from both parties.

It is Obadiah's connection with the Twelve, however, that reveals the depth of the שוב message. In Obad. 15, as with Amos 9.11-15, שוב and the Day of Yhwh are again linked together.[23] As in Amos 9, שוב is once more the

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21.   Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, p. 420. Raabe also notes other 'just as' (כאשר) phrases in the Old Testament (Judg. 1.7; 1 Sam. 15.33; Jer. 5.19; 50.15; Ezek. 16.59; Zech. 7.13). Most importantly, the 'just as…so' formula is found in the *lex talionis* passages of Lev. 24.19-20; Deut. 19.18-21; Exod. 21.23-25 (Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah* [AB, 24D; New York: Doubleday, 1996], p. 194).

22.   Raabe, *Obadiah*, p. 195.

23.   The parallels between Obadiah and the close of Amos have long been noted by scholars. 'It is more or less presumed that Obadiah was placed after Amos in the Masoretic canon on the basis of the prophecy of salvation in Am 9:12… Whether one can speak of direct literary dependence at this juncture remains a question' (Johan Renkema, *Obadiah* (trans. Brian Doyle; HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2003], p. 25). From a thematic standpoint, Amos concludes with an 'in that day' section in which the prophet calls for a restoration of David's fallen booth as well as the possession of the remnant of Edom (שארית אדום) and of all the nations by the restored descendants of David (9.12). Obadiah carries over these themes and can be understood as an extension of the conclusion of Amos, by giving

action of Yhwh himself; but instead of bringing back and restoring his people, Yhwh plans judicial punishment for Edom and the nations (Obad. 15-18). So a sense of irony hangs over Obadiah's use of שׁוּב: Edom (along with the nations) will experience a return like Israel, but unlike Israel it is one that is unlooked for, and undesired. Therefore, as in Amos 9.14, שׁוּב in Obad. 15 is tacitly part of the restoration of Israel in that Edom will be destroyed, which will open the way for its possession by Israel (Amos 9.12; cf. Obad. 17, 18, 19, 21).[24] So in turning against Edom, Yhwh has, in actuality, turned towards Israel. However, this picture of the total destruction of Israel's enemy looks forward to, and must be balanced by, the picture of grace offered to Israel's enemy in the following writing (Jonah). By reading Obadiah in light of Jonah, the complete destruction envisioned here is tempered by the possibility of repentance.[25]

3. *Micah*

Micah, along with Hosea and Amos, is the last of the eighth-century prophets included in the Twelve. His message is consistent with Hosea and Amos, alternating between judgment and hope while condemning Israel/Judah for idolatry and social injustice.[26] שׁוּב again plays a subdued part, appearing four times in the writing and focused on exile: 1.7; 2.8; 5.2 (ET 5.3); 7.19,[27] illustrating Yhwh's struggle within himself between the necessity for judgment (1.7), and gracious restoration (5.2; 7.19).

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more attention to the possession of Edom (18-19a, 21) and the surrounding nations (19b-20). More importantly, Obadiah provides a reason for Amos's concern with Edom. In Amos, the Edom possessed by the descendants of David has been humbly reduced to a remnant (שְׁאֵרִית), whereas the Edom in Obadiah is one of pride (vv. 3-4).

24. Following this reading, Joel outlines two aspects to the Day of Yhwh: one that takes place against Israel (Amos) and one that takes place against the nations (Obadiah).

25. Sweeney, 'Sequence', p. 58.

26. Sweeney finds that Micah's message of destruction and salvation for the nations strikes a balance between Jonah's offer of grace and Nahum's predicted destruction (Sweeney, 'Sequence', pp. 59-60).

27. Micah's use of שׁוּב in 2.8b (שׁוּבֵי מִלְחָמָה) is difficult, with many commentaries arguing that the root is not שׁוּב but rather שְׁבִי 'captivity', thus reading 'prisoners of war', a reading which makes sense in the context. See Delbert R. Hillers, *Micah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 34-35. The *BHS* suggests שֶׁבֶר, for the LXX συντριμμόν thus reading something like 'to remove hope in the conflict/ruin of war'. The NIV attempts to read the line as שׁוּב, 'like men returning from battle'. In fairness, all suggested answers to this verse are difficult. Even if שׁוּב is intended here, its contribution to the understanding of the return relationship is minimal, as the word is functioning as an adjective of direction and is used as part of a simile.

a. שׁוב *in Micah 1.7*

Micah's first use of שׁוב appears in 1.7b, 'All her idols I have marked for destruction, for from the hire of a prostitute she gathered, and to the hire of a prostitute they will return (ישׁובו)'.[28] Micah 1.7 shares vocabulary with the earlier eighth-century prophet Hosea[29] which sets up a parallel understanding of exile that permeates the verse. Of particular interest is 1.7's key word אתנן 'prostitute's hire', which is used in Hosea in a similar context of covenant violations (9.1) that results in Israel's exile to Egypt and Assyria (9.3). A comparable understanding of exile occurs here, thus bringing the role of the nations, first introduced in Mic. 1.2, back into focus. It is likely that the idols mentioned here were part of Israel's political strategy to build relationships with the surrounding nations.[30] In this way, 1.7 implies that the very nations with which the idols were used to obtain political security will become the very place(s) of exile and punishment. In other words, the image of foreign soldiers carrying off the idols (and people) to various foreign countries is

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28.　Much of the current scholarship on Micah is focused on the overall structure and organization of the writing. See Mignon R. Jacobs, 'Bridging the Times: Trends in Micah Studies since 1985', *CRBS* 4 (2006), pp. 293-337. Scholars continue to react to Willis's divisions of the writing into three sections 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, which alternate between doom and hope. See John T. Willis, 'The Structure of the Book of Micah', *SEA* (1969), pp. 5-42. Mic. 1.2–3.12 is a collection of doom oracles which most scholars date to the prophet himself, and 1.2-7 is considered the first section of the writing.

29.　פסיל 'idols'—only appears three times within the Twelve, Hos. 11.2; Mic. 1.7; 5.13. אתנן 'harlot's wages'—occurs three times in 1.7, but within the Twelve occurs elsewhere only in Hos. 9.1. עצב 'idols'—occurs in the Twelve in Mic. 1.7; 13.2; Zech. 13.2, but is well known in Hos. 4.17; 8.4; 13.2; 14.9. זונה 'prostitute/harlot'—occurs twice in Mic. 1.7. This exact form זוֹנָה appears also in Nah. 3.4; Joel 4.3, and the plural form הזנות appears in Hos. 4.14. The root זנה is one of Hosea's most used words with verb זָנָה (13×) and noun forms זנונים (6×) and זנות (2×) appearing frequently.

30.　This political idea is suggested by Mays, though not with specific nations in mind. He argues that political and economic overtones are implied by the use of אתנן in Ezek. 16.31-41. 'Perhaps what is meant in v. 7b is that the idols have been acquired and established in securing relations with other nations, and will be broken up and carried away by one' (James L. Mays, *Micah* [OTL; London: SCM Press, 1976], p. 48). It should be noted that Mays is only suggesting an interpretation. 'What v. 7b means precisely is not clear, because the reference of "harlot's fee" (*'etnan*) is obscure'. Nonetheless, Sweeney arrives at the same conclusion, arguing that it was Israel's change in foreign policy from Aram to Assyria that brought about their destruction. 'In this case, the shift in alliance from Assyria to Aram and the exchange of goods, tribute, or gifts that would take place as part of the establishment of such an alliance would provide a basis for the prophet's focus on the motif of prostitution, i.e., Israel metaphorically "changed lovers" when shifting from Assyria to Aram (cf. Hos. 1–3), and suffered the consequences when the new relationship went sour' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 352). He believes that the return statement indicates that 'the conquering Assyrians would have dedicated part or all of the spoil of the city to their own gods'.

reinforced. This understanding puts a twist on the concept of return as exile, because in Mic. 1.7 it is not the people (specifically) who are exiled/returned (though this is a safe assumption), but the idols, images, and harlot's fees themselves. Therefore these idols, which the people thought had brought them peace, instead became the cause of their exile and will suffer the same fate as the people. If the people are carried away (Hosea) then the idols will be as well (Micah). The destruction and exile of the idols and the people are therefore intertwined. In this way the ironic use of poetic justice is once again evident, as the actions of Yhwh correspond to the actions of his people. This use of שׁוב emphasizes a different aspect of the return relationship when compared with the rest of Micah which focuses on the undoing of the exile: the people hope to return to the land (Israel) (5.2 [ET 5.3]) and Yhwh will return and have compassion on his people (7.19).

b. שׁוב *in Micah 5.2*

Micah's second use of שׁוב (5.2 [ET 5.3]) is a notoriously difficult verse whose meaning has been obscured by unclear antecedents and pronouns. The verse literally reads:

לכן יתנם עד־עת	'Therefore, he will give them to a time'
יולדה ילדה	'she bringing forth, will bring forth'
ויתר אחיו ישׁובון	'and/then the remainder of his brothers will return'
על־בני ישׂראל	'to the sons of Israel'.

Unfortunately the varied responses from the commentaries allow for few certainties.[31] What is most important, however, is that Micah's connection between two key words, 'return' (ישׁובון) and 'remnant' (ויתר)[32] reveals his concern, once more, for exile. Though there is some disagreement

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31. Questions surround: (1) The identity of the main subject of the verse. Who is giving something up? Is it Yhwh or the new Davidic ruler? (2) The identity of 'them' or the one being given up. Is it the Judean clans or Israel in general? (3) The meaning of יולדה ילדה. Does this verse reflect the birth prophecies of Isa. 7.14 and 9.6 or is it language for exile? (4) The identity of 'brothers'. Again, does this refer to Israel in general or more specific clans of Judah? (5) Should the vav connected to ויתר be translated as 'and' or 'then'? In other words, is the return of the brothers a condition along with יולדה ילדה that anticipates the emergence of the new ruler, or does the coming of the new ruler facilitate the return of the brothers? The answer to this could indicate whether the return of the brothers is the action of Yhwh alone or something done with the help of the new king.

32. This is the first time that יתר appears in the Twelve as a reference to a possible remnant. יתר is used 3 times in Joel 1.4, referencing what remains after the locust plague. Overall, יתר does not appear frequently in the Twelve (Mic. 5.3; Hab. 2.8; Zeph. 2.9; Zech. 14.2). The idea of remnant, conveyed by שׁארית, is a common concept in the Twelve (Amos 1.8; 5.15; 9.12; Mic. 2.12; 4.7; 5.6, 7; 7.18; Zeph. 2.7, 9; 3.13; Hag. 1.12, 14; 2.2; Zech. 8.6, 11, 12).

surrounding the root meaning of יתר,[33] Wagenaar argues 'In Micah 5:2, where יתר אחיו is used in relation to בני ישראל, the phrase does not refer to "the rest of his brothers", but to "his remaining brothers". The exiled members of the comunity…will return to the Israelites who stayed in the country.'[34] Outside the Twelve, the use of שוב (return) in connection with exile is always the domain of Yhwh (Jer. 28.3, 4, 6; 29.10, 14; 30.3; 32.37; 34.22; Ezek. 29.14 [of the Egyptians]; 39.27). From the use of שוב and exile in these instances, it seems safe to say that if Mic. 5.2 understands the return from exile as the actions of the new king, it would be a somewhat unique occurrence. Bringing the people back is the responsibility of Yhwh. Unfortunately, because of the lack of details surrounding this passage, the implications of the return of this particular remnant must remain a mystery. However, 5.2 does provide a contrast with Micah's first appearance of שוב in 1.7. As in 1.7, שוב in 5.2 is connected with the idea of exile, but unlike 1.7 in which the idols are carried off, here that exile (of some sort) is undone either by Yhwh himself, or by a combined effort of Yhwh and the new king. This idea of returning from exile is consistent with Micah's use of restoration and once again illustrates the struggle within Yhwh between turning towards destruction and turning towards restoration.

c. שוב *in Micah 7.19*

Micah's third use of שוב occurs in 7.19, a restoration section similar to those that conclude other eighth-century writings (Hos. 14.5-9; Amos 9.11-15). Here שוב is tied closely to Yhwh's compassion and commitment to the covenant. Yhwh is the subject of the verb, the third different one in Micah ('idols' 1.7; 'his brothers'/the people 5.2). Though the NIV translates שוב as a modifier of the verb 'compassion' (ירחמנו) ('You will again have compassion on us'), the context of the passage necessitates a stronger translation.[35] Micah 7.1-6 is a lament which begins with 'Woe' (אללי) as the writer recounts the wickedness of his fellow man and the dreadful situation of a city under siege.[36] Israel is at a low point (7.8), but the writer is confident that a change in the situation will occur—one that is based not so much on the reaction of the people but in the character ('Who is a God like you?' 7.18) and covenant of Yhwh. As in many places throughout the Twelve, once the punishment has

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33.   See Jan A. Wagenaar, *Judgment and Salvation: The Composition and Redaction of Micah 2–5* (VTSup, 85; Boston: Brill, 2001), pp. 174-75.

34.   Wagenaar, *Judgment and Salvation*, p. 174.

35.   Holladay translates שוב as 'again', but with an understanding of reversal (Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 71).

36.   'Many interpreters charge the people described in this passage with greed or evil intent, but the statements of the Assyrian officials in 2 Kgs 18:27, Isa 36:12 indicate the desperate circumstances of the siege, i.e., there simply is little or no food to be had' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 407).

been fulfilled, Yhwh will again turn (change direction) and move from anger to compassion. In many ways the restoration of Micah 7 mirrors the restoration of earlier writings, particularly Hosea 14 and Amos 9.11-15, where forgiveness of sins (Mic. 7.18-19; cf. Hos. 14.3, 5), subjugation of enemy nations (Mic. 7.10, 16-17; Amos 9.12), return of exiles (Mic. 7.12-13; Amos 9.14), and an extension of boundaries (Mic. 7.11, 14; Amos 9.12) are found. Such categories are part of Yhwh's restorative plans for his people.

d. *Summary*

Overall, the picture of שׁוב in Micah is one that focuses the attention on Yhwh and his actions. It is Yhwh who will exile the idols to foreign lands (1.7), bring the people back from exile (5.2 [ET 5.3]), and once again have compassion on his people (7.19). From this it would be safe to assume that Micah understands turning to be a characteristic of Yhwh, and Yhwh alone. A closer reading of Micah, however, reveals that the people are still very much a part of the return relationship, albeit one that takes place separate from the specific mention of שׁוב. Embedded throughout Micah are the people's responses to Yhwh's judgmental/salvific actions (1.8[?]; 4.2, 5; [6.6-8]; 7.7, 8-10). Of particular interest is Mic. 4.2-5 where the people, responding to Yhwh's destruction (3.12) and restoration (4.1) of Jerusalem, stream into the city (4.2). While שׁוב appears nowhere in 4.1-5, a reversal nonetheless takes place, one predicated on Yhwh coming to Jerusalem, and the people coming to (4.2), and walking in (4.5) the name of Yhwh. This reciprocity between the human and divine relationship is similarly present in 7.7, 8-10, where Israel acknowledges her sin. Therefore, while the relation of the שׁוב texts to the reciprocal nature of the return relationship is muted, Micah nevertheless emphasizes the relationship in his own way.

4. *Nahum*

As with Mic. 5.2, the issues surrounding Nahum's sole use of שׁוב are complex. Most significantly, Nah. 2.3 (ET 2.2) initially appears out of place, a passage of restoration afloat in a sea of woe oracles.[37] The wording of Nahum's restorative use of שׁוב looks back to previous uses found in Hos. 14.7; Amos 9.14; and Mic. 7.19. Yhwh is once more the driving force behind the restoration and is the subject of שׁוב.[38] That Yhwh is the one who restores

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37. 'Neither the logical connection of this verse to the preceding one, nor the precise meaning of this verse, taken by itself, is entirely clear' (J.J.M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* [OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991], p. 64.

38. The translation of the verb is difficult. In 2.3 שׁוב appears as שָׁב a qal perfect, 3rd masculine singular. This would lead to a literal translation of כי שב יהוה את־גאון יעקב as, 'For YHWH has restored the pride of Jacob'. The NIV, however, has chosen to translate it as a future tense, reading the verb as a prophetic perfect. As Spronk notes, 'The basic

Israel also emphasizes that restoration is the domain of Yhwh, and not the people themselves.[39] Because of this, Nahum's overall message contains two parts: (1) Yhwh's necessary righteous judgment against an evil nation, and (2) Yhwh's love and restoration towards Israel that results from this destruction.

There are only three verses in Nahum which focus exclusively on Israel, and all three are positive (1.12 [probably]; 2.1 [ET 1.15]; 2.3 [ET 2.2]). In the first and last, Yhwh ceases his punishment of Israel and restores Israel/Judah to her former glory. The second (2.1 [ET 1.15]) contains a command for Israel to celebrate (חגי) their festivals again. Therefore Nahum is arguing that there is more to the destruction of Nineveh than Yhwh punishing a nation for its cruelty. Nahum 2.3, though it interrupts a message of doom, provides an

problem in the interpretation of this verse is the assumed transitive meaning of שוב qal' (Klaas Spronk, *Nahum* [HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997], p. 86). He goes on to suggest that a causative hiphil form would be more expected, but 'sometimes qal-forms appear to have the same meaning', and lists Ps. 85.5 as support. Smith argues that שוב should be understood as a qal participle: "(to express imminent action) 'Yahweh is about to restore the glory of Jacob'" (Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi* [WBC, 32; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984], p. 80). The larger issue, however, is not the form of the verb per se but the direct object גאון which is normally translated as 'pride'. The problem arises when גאון is paired with a positive understanding of שוב (in this case 'restore'), which results in Yhwh '*restoring* the *pride* of Jacob'. Eleven times גאון appears in the Twelve (Hos. 5.5; 7.10; Amos 6.8; 8.7; Mic. 5.3; Nah. 2.3 [2×]; Zeph. 2.10; Zech. 9.6; 10.11; 11.3), most notably in Hoses–Amos, where גאון is an obstacle to Israel's relationship with Yhwh. In Hos. 7.10, the only other verse in the Twelve where גאון and שוב appear together, גאון thwarts Israel from recognizing their need to return. In fact, of the 15× 'pride' is attached to a nation proper (Ps. 47.5; Isa. 13.19; 16.6: Jer. 13.9 [2×]; 48.29; Ezek. 32.12; Hos. 5.5; 7.10; Amos 6.8; 8.7; Nah. 2.3 [2×]; Zech 9.6; 10.11, not counting 'Jordan's thickets'), twelve of them connote the negative aspects of Yhwh's displeasure or promises of destruction. Only Ps. 47.5 and Nah. 2.3 appear in positive contexts. The LXX attempts to solve this problem by translating ἀπέστρεψε for שוב, which results in 'For YHWH has *turned away* the pride of Jacob'. As Roberts explains, 'Such a reading suffers the difficulty, however, that there is no clear transitive use of the qal of the root *šûb* with this negative sense' (Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, p. 64). Lastly, another possible solution is to follow the *BHS* suggestion of amending גאון to נפן 'vine' thus creating a parallel with וזמריהם 'their vines/branches'. All of these solutions, however, are lacking. Even with the tension in the text, it still seems best to follow the MT reading, as 'None of these proposed emendations and interpretations is convincing or based on sound textcritical evidence' (Spronk, *Nahum*, p. 87). Therefore, despite the rather rare use of 'restoring pride' Yhwh will do just that by bringing down Israel's enemy Assyria, and restoring his people. As with Amos 9.12 and other restoration sections in the Twelve, when the nations are brought low, Israel/Judah will benefit. In this way 'pride' is not something negative that prevents a return to Yhwh, but rather a 'sense of honor, lost in the shame of the Assyrian destruction of Israel' (Julia Myers O'Brien, *Nahum* [RNBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], p. 59).

39. See also the discussion on Mic. 5.2 (ET 5.3).

additional aim and reason for that destruction. 'Significantly, the ensuing battle is not for vindicating Judah, who was directly addressed in 2.1 (and implicitly addressed in 1.11-14), but for restoring the honor of Jacob/Israel—the northern kingdom, destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BCE'.[40] In other words, Yhwh marches to battle to bring about a return (שׁוב) and to right a situation that is currently wrong. Therefore, instead of understanding 2.3 (ET 2.2) as an inserted statement that interrupts a unified message and should possibly be deleted, it is better to understand the return (שׁוב) statement as providing additional clarification of Yhwh's actions. Yhwh marches against Nineveh to benefit Israel/Judah, and thus demonstrates the contrasting message of returning. In this instance, Yhwh's turn towards his people in restoration results in a turn of destruction toward Assyria.

From a broader context, however, Nahum needs to be understood as continuing to work out the effects of the return (שׁוב) of Jonah. Micah provided the balance: nations can be shown both grace (4.1-5) and destruction (e.g. 5.4-8 [ET 5.5-9]). Jonah is the focus of the former, while Nahum is the focus of the latter.[41] The key is whether or not the nations return by heeding Yhwh's call to repentance and maintaining that repentance. That both Jonah and Nahum deal with Nineveh, but with opposite results, further emphasizes the importance of שׁוב. That salvation comes in Jonah (where שׁוב appears in relation to Nineveh four times) while destruction comes in Nahum (where שׁוב has no direct connection to Nineveh) provides a powerful lesson on the necessity of vigilance and the constant struggle that is the return relationship. The calls to return in the Twelve enforce the truth that 'return' is not a one time act, which once fulfilled leads to lifelong grace. The experience of Nineveh in Jonah and Nahum demonstrates that once grace has been given in response to a genuine repentance, the people must continue to struggle to turn towards Yhwh. This message would have struck hard at a post-exilic audience who had already experienced a return. Behind Nahum's main concern of Yhwh's dominance over the nations is a warning to the Israelite community that just as Yhwh has had compassion on them and brought them back from exile, his displeasure could cause them to return once more.

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40. O'Brien, *Nahum*, p. 59. O'Brien introduces this statement with, 'The battle scene has just begun when it is interrupted by an aside, reminding the reader that the battle about to take place has as its goal the restitution of the "pride of Jacob", paralleled with "pride of Israel"'. By reading 'Jacob' as the northern kingdom, O'Brien has raised some serious questions about the intention of this verse. Most importantly, does Nahum, writing towards the end of the seventh century really envision the return of the northern kingdom? While it is difficult to say either way, 'Israel' and 'Jacob' are subject to reinterpretation and reassignment according to changing historical circumstances. By the time of the Book of the Twelve, the actual hope for a physical return of the northern kingdom would have surely been tempered.

41. Sweeney, 'Sequence', pp. 58-59.

5. *Habakkuk*

Like Nahum before it, Habakkuk's lone use of שׁוּב occurs in a disputed verse
(2.1) that can be divided into four sections: the first two (1a-b) deal with the
place where the prophet will await his message, and the second two (1c-d)
with the prophetic response to Yhwh's answer.

> 1a 'Upon my watch post I will stand' (עַל־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי אֶעֱמֹדָה)
> 1b 'and station myself on the rampart' (וְאֶתְיַצְּבָה עַל־מָצוֹר)
> 1c 'and I will watch to see what he will say through me'
>   (וַאֲצַפֶּה לִרְאוֹת מַה־יְדַבֶּר־בִּי)
> 1d 'And what I will answer concerning my rebuke' (וּמָה אָשִׁיב עַל־תּוֹכַחְתִּי).

Though scholars have focused on the cultic/military terminology of 1a-b,[42]
the difficulties lie in 2.1c-d, where the first person imperfect verb (אָשִׁיב) from
1c is puzzling in light of the first person possessive that ends the verse ('my
rebuke' תּוֹכַחְתִּי).[43] However, as I have noted in the footnotes below, any

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42.   For more on the issues surrounding the translation of 'watch' (מִשְׁמַרְתִּי), 'station'
(וְאֶתְיַצְּבָה), and 'ramparts' (מָצוֹר) and how they relate to military/cultic language see
Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk* (AB, 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), pp. 192-93;
compare with Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 469. Wherever the prophet is waiting (the
Temple, tabernacle, or some other sanctuary), is inconsequential to the understanding of
the chapter. What is important is that the prophet is waiting for a response from Yhwh:
'what he (YHWH) will say to me'. Haak proposes a possibility for another speaker other
than Yhwh, one whom he identifies as a type of prosecutor (Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk*
[VTSup, 44; New York: E.J. Brill, 1992], p. 54). Haak is the only commentary consulted
that raises this issue, and the named response of Yhwh in 2.2 should clarify the issue.
43.   The Syriac presupposes amending the verb to the third person imperfect (יָשִׁיב)
thus changing the line to read, 'and what *he* will answer to my argument'. This reading is
popular among the commentaries. See Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, pp. 104-105; and Roberts,
Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, p. 105. Sweeney notes a possible theological reason
behind the Syriac alteration. 'Although this passage is not listed among the *Tiqqunei
Sopherim* or 'Corrections of the Scribes', many have speculated that this is a correction
based upon the view that YHWH should be the subject of the verb in keeping with the
Syriac reading of this verse. YHWH is hardly required to answer the prophet's complaint
and therefore the statement was modified so that the prophet would have to answer to
YHWH concerning the complaint that he levelled against the Deity' (Sweeney, *Twelve
Prophets*, p. 470). Roberts follows the Syriac reading for these reasons. Nevertheless,
Sweeney concludes, 'Unfortunately, there is no secure evidence for this claim as the
Peshitta is a very late textual version' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 470). Going beyond
this, however, it seems unlikely that a scribe would intentionally create the more difficult
reading. This fact, in conjunction with the late date of the Syriac, makes this amendment
questionable at best. Haak supports the MT reading of אָשִׁיב, but translates 'my argument'
(תּוֹכַחְתִּי) as 'my prosecutor'. He believes that the broader context of Hab. 1.12 provides
support for this reading. 'The fact that in 1:12 an individual was appointed "for adjudica-
tion" might indicate that an individual is also meant here' (Haak, *Habakkuk*, p. 55).

suggested alterations lack convincing evidence, and the MT should be retained.

The use of שׁוב as the return of a spoken answer is unique within the Twelve. שׁוב appears in the context of giving answers frequently in narrative texts (e.g. 1 Chron. 21.12; 2 Chron. 10.6; 2 Sam. 24.13), and poetry (e.g. Prov. 18.13; 22.21) but it is noticeably rare in the prophetic literature (e.g. Isa. 41.28).[44] From a broader context, the use of שׁוב in Hab. 2.1 is similar to Job, another setting in which the protagonist contends with Yhwh and receives an answer (Job 31.14; 40.4). Elihu also uses שׁוב in this way three times (33.5, 32; 35.4) in order to invite a response. These appearances in Job are similar to Hab. 2.1—שׁוב is used as a way to answer a contentious conversation, one of which involves Yhwh directly. More importantly, Job 31.14, like Hab. 2.1, uses שׁוב to look past what Yhwh will initially reply to the questioner, and instead focuses on how the questioner will respond to Yhwh's rebuke.

In light of this discussion, it is fair to focus on the implications of שׁוב for Habakkuk. As the text reads now, 'And what I will answer concerning my rebuke' the prophet is forward thinking, planning what he will say next after Yhwh answers him. 'It should be noted that the reading can be construed to refer to the prophet's anticipation of another statement to YHWH after he hears YHWH speak'.[45] Though Robertson believes following the MT is difficult, he argues that to amend the text would change its overall impact. 'Admittedly, it is rather difficult to imagine the prophet actually planning in advance to answer a rebuke from the Almighty. Yet the radicalness of the problem with which Habakkuk wrestles, as well as the nature of the interchange with the Almighty up to this point, naturally leads to just such an expectation.'[46] As the book has progressed so far, Habakkuk has complained (1.1-4), Yhwh has responded (1.5-11), and the prophet has complained again

Unfortunately, his proposal has found no support in the consulted commentaries or translations who all understand תּוֹכַחְתִּי as some form of 'complaint/rebuke'. Furthermore, despite Haak's objections, of the 24× תּוֹכַחַת appears in the Old Testament, it is never translated as an individual. I have chosen to translate תּוֹכַחְתִּי as 'my rebuke'. See the discussion that follows.

44. Part of the reason for this particular use in Hab. 2.1 is that the passage possibly mixes genres in prose and poetry. 'This little transitional piece is too brief to permit significant remarks about the kind of language it uses, whether that of prose or poetry. There are no opportunities to use any of the 'prose particles', so nothing can be inferred from their absences' (Andersen, *Habakkuk*, p. 191). For more on the autobiographical nature of the passage, see Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophet*, part 2 (FOTL, 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 125-26.

45. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 470.

46. Palmer O. Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 167.

(1.12-17). By reading תוכחתי as 'my rebuke' the prophet understands that he has (perhaps) overstepped his authority by challenging Yhwh's answer. Because of this, the line should be understood as an internal dialogue that the prophet has with himself—after Yhwh answers his question (perhaps harshly), he will then understand how to respond to Yhwh's correction. Ideally, the way the prophet thinks/feels in 2.1 will change after Yhwh gives his answer. In this way, שׁוּב once again conveys the idea of reciprocity—the prophet has complained, and now Yhwh will complain/rebuke him. Therefore, this last line in 2.1 looks forward to Yhwh's answer in 2.2-4 (and the prophet's exposition in vv. 5-17), but more directly to ch. 3 (specifically 3.16-18), which is the prophet's formal response to Yhwh's words in 2.2-4. In this way, 2.1 serves as a key structural verse in the writing.

> A relationship between 3:1-19 and 2:1-20 is established by the way in which the oracular inquiry is announced in 2:1. The prophet states two reasons for undertaking the inquiry: first, to see what Yahweh will say to him (v. 1bα); and second, to see what his own reaction will be (v. 1bB). His overall objective is to see whether the 'corrective' in Yahweh's reply (*tôkahat*; RSV 'complaint') will alter the adverse attitude expressed by the prophet in the initial complaint (1:2-17). After complying with the period of critical reflection enjoined on the prophet by Yahweh's directives concerning the reception of the reply (2:2aBb), the prophet may change his mind… In any case, what follows in ch. 3 is an explicit indication of the prophet's reaction to Yahweh's reply. Judging from the confidence that it expresses in Yahweh's intention to deliver his people from Babylonian oppression, the prophet has indeed accepted Yahweh's correction.[47]

If Sweeney's overall outline and Floyd's summary of the function of 2.1 are correct, then Yhwh's response to Habakkuk's second complaint is found in 2.2-4 (particularly 2.4[48]). This means that the prophet does not speak again, on his own behalf, until ch. 3.[49] Therefore, the prophet's personal response, the one anticipated by the words of 2.1c-d is not found until ch. 3, particularly 3.16-18. There is an absence of first person verbs from 2.2-20 which changes in 3.1, where two first person verbs (שׁמעתי and יראתי) begin the prophet's response. Looking beyond 3.1 and the first person verb of 3.7

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47.   Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, p. 83. See also Andersen, *Habakkuk*, p. 191, 'It [2.1] is a soliloquy because he refers to Yahweh in the third person. The other autobiographical passage is Hab 3:17-19, the conclusion of the whole matter.'

48.   Scholars have long debated the meaning of Hab. 2.4. For a recent treatment of the verse see Aron Pinker, 'Habakkuk 2.4: An Ethical Paradigm or a Political Observation?', *JSOT* 32 (2007), pp. 91-112.

49.   Sweeney argues that Habakkuk is the speaker in 2.5-20 who expounds on Yhwh's recorded message given in 2.2-4 (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 472). Floyd, however, believes that it is Yhwh who speaks throughout the rest of the chapter (Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, p. 125).

(ראיתי), which indicates that the prophet is witnessing the theophany of 3.3-15, a cluster of first person verbs (אנילה, אעלוזה, אנוח, שׁמעתי) is found again in 3.16-18. This verb distribution, in addition to the number of first person possessives, indicates that it is not until 3.16 that the prophet begins to share his personal thoughts. In this way, the heart of the response foreshadowed by שׁוב in 2.1 is not truly realized until 3.16-19. In this way, שׁוב is linked to the penultimate statement of faith found in Habakkuk (3.16-18).

From an audience perspective, the שׁוב statement of 2.1 invites the audience into the text and places them in the position of the prophet. The tension is highest at this point where the reader is forced to anticipate Yhwh's response to the prophet's challenge. Will he be angry with his prophet's continued questions or will he graciously answer (with another shocking message) like he did in 1.5-11? The prophet is given the opportunity which all readers have longed for—to boldly ask Yhwh questions of theodicy.[50] From an audience perspective, what kind of response could be expected from Yhwh if the writing ended after 2.1? Shouldn't he further defend himself? Shouldn't he acquiesce to the prophet's reasonable questions, or at least pick a more righteous nation to carry out his judgments? But in an ironic twist, Yhwh does neither, but instead calls for faith (2.4).

Going further, knowing the history of the prophet and his boldness in questioning Yhwh, is it reasonable to expect that Yhwh's answer in 2.2-4 would satisfy him? Shouldn't the audience expect more from Habakkuk than the song of faith offered in ch. 3? When compared with 1.5-11 where Yhwh has raised up a nation to 'fix' the problem of social injustice (1.2-4), Yhwh's answer in 2.2-4 is in a way unsatisfying. He does not deviate from his plan to bring about the Babylonian destruction as might be expected (cf. Amos 7.1-6), nor does he promise overt/special protection for his people. Indeed those who 'live by faith' will survive, but they will experience the destruction of their nation nonetheless. By answering thusly, Yhwh has shifted the conversation from his own actions to those of the believer, and in a way the responsibility for the people's survival falls to the people themselves. From an application standpoint, if the audience is invited into the dialogue of Habakkuk, how should he personally respond to Yhwh's answer in 2.2-4? In this, ch. 3 should be considered a shocking and unlooked for reply because the prophet simply accepts Yhwh's answer to 'live by his faith', with faith. Instead of pressing the issue, as Habakkuk does in ch. 1, the prophet accepts Yhwh's answer and looks forward to the day of judgment that awaits the invading nation (3.16). Despite this terrible reality that results in fear (3.16), the prophet still expresses trust (3.16-17) and joy (3.18) in Yhwh.

50. For more on the issue of theodicy in the Twelve, see James L. Crenshaw, 'Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve', in Redditt and Schart (eds.), *Thematic Threads*, pp. 175-91.

From the standpoint of the audience of the Twelve, Habakkuk offers two key applications: one internal (Habakkuk), and one external (the Twelve). Internally, the writing asks whether the reader can accept by faith Yhwh's control of the Babylonians in particular, and that the destruction of 586 was the will of Yhwh. Externally, however, this question can be reapplied to Yhwh's interaction with the nations all the way back to Obadiah. Will the audience accept by faith that Yhwh is in control of the nations and will bring about their destruction (Obadiah, Nahum), or salvation/prosperity (Jonah, Micah), both aspects of which are portrayed in Habakkuk? In this way, Habakkuk acts as a referendum on what Yhwh has been doing throughout the Twelve in regards to the punishment/restoration of his own people and the nations. From the writing's perspective, the prophet looks forward to the foreign domination of the exile with trust and faith in Yhwh. He believes that Yhwh is in control. Could the Persian audience of the Twelve, one suffering under the control of Persia, respond in the same way as the prophet? Or to ask it in the words of the text, what answer will the reader return (שׁוב) to Yhwh? This is not the first time a reader of the Twelve is asked to affirm faith in Yhwh in the midst of political chaos and exile. Habakkuk's statement of faith is similar to the one found in Hos. 14.2-4, where the prophet also asks the listeners to denounce their trust in the nations, and return to Yhwh with words of faith.

6. *Zephaniah*

Zephaniah's dual message of judgment and restoration, both against Judah/ Jerusalem and the nations offers a fitting conclusion to the seventh-century block of the Twelve. Both Judah's/Jerusalem's sins and enemies are dealt with in one sweep of Yhwh's anger. Zephaniah's emphasis on judgment culminates in one of the most thorough treatments of the Day of Yhwh in all of the Old Testament. But the message does not end there. The writing concludes, in typical Book of the Twelve fashion, with a promise of restoration at the hands of the God who has just punished them. As in the writings that precede it (Micah–Habakkuk), שׁוב is not at the centre of the theological message, but rather plays a supporting role, this time emphasizing different aspects of Yhwh's promised restoration. In Zephaniah, שׁוב appears twice (2.7; 3.20) in the theologically significant phrase שׁוב שׁבות. This phrase, in addition to Zephaniah's location in the Twelve, continues the theme of שׁוב and looks forward to the return of the exiles in Haggai.

a. שׁוב *in Zephaniah 2.7*
Zephaniah's first use of שׁוב occurs in 2.7, which is part of the oracle against Philistia (2.4-7). Since שׁוב שׁבות is not a new occurrence in the Twelve,

having already been discussed in Hos. 6.11; Joel 4.1; and Amos 9.14, only a few words are needed here. As with the previous occurrences, it is best to follow Bracke who understands שׁוב שׁבות as 'a technical term referring to a model of restoration most frequently characterized by Yahweh's reversal of his judgment—*restitutio in integrum*'.[51] In the case of Zeph. 2.7, part of the restoration of Yhwh's people will involve occupying enemy territory (cf. Deut. 30.7). 'To this remnant shall be granted the full possession of the land of promise, including the territory of the Philistines. The blessing of the law book of Deuteronomy shall be renewed, for they shall dwell in houses they had not built.'[52]

Judah's restoration at the expense of Philistine sovereignty has led Roberts to question the reason behind Zephaniah's harsh words. 'The epithets heaped upon the Philistines, however, do not constitute so obvious an indictment. Why is God angry with them?'[53] Roberts goes on to suggest that both location[54] and political reasons[55] could be behind Zephaniah's words. However, when this passage is compared to other שׁוב שׁבות passages, in this case Amos 9.11-15, it becomes clear that Israel/Judah does not need a reason to occupy an enemy nation. Though Edom was technically outside the confines of the Promised Land, Amos 9.12 indicates that when Yhwh begins to 'restore the fortunes' (9.14) of his people, they will occupy this land as well. Perhaps specific eighth-century political events lie behind Amos's announcement in 9.12 (cf. Amos 1.11-12 but note that none of the other nations from chs. 1–2 are occupied in 9.11-15), but when compared with Zeph. 2.7, 9, the general indication is that part of the restoration for Israel/Judah involves the occupation of enemy lands. In other words, simply being a historical enemy of Israel/Judah is reason enough. Since all nations belong to Yhwh, he can give them to whomever he chooses as punishment/reward, as he does with Israel/Judah. Consequently, part of Yhwh's restoration of his people involves not only ending their exile, but causing exile for their enemies. Therefore, when Yhwh restores the fortunes of his people, their historical enemies will be defeated, and their lands will be occupied by Yhwh's faithful remnant (cf. Mic. 5.4-5).

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51. Bracke, '*šûb šebût*', p. 244.
52. Robertson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, p. 300.
53. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, p. 197.
54. 'The reference to them as Canaan may suggest that their principle sin was in being where they were' (Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, p. 197).
55. 'Philistia appears to have remained loyal to Assyria, at least in resisting Egyptian incursions into Palestine, even after Assyria's growing weakness had become apparent' (Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, p. 197).

b. שׁוב *in Zephaniah 3.20*

Zephaniah's second use of שׁוב appears in the writing's concluding verse (3.20), in another 'restore your fortunes' passage (בשׁובי את־שׁבותיכם) that emphasizes a different aspect of the restoration concept. In contrast to its earlier appearance (2.7) as a qal perfect 3ms (ושׁב), שׁוב in 3.20 appears as a qal infinitive construct with a first person singular suffix. This leads to a literal translation, 'in my turning back your fortunes/exile'. In 2.7 the prophet speaks of Yhwh's actions, whereas in 3.20, it is Yhwh himself who promises to do these things, as indicated by the first person verbs which appear in 3.18-20 and the 'says YHWH' (אמר יהוה) which concludes the writing. As has been the case with שׁוב throughout the Twelve, it is Yhwh alone who brings resto-ration.[56] The joyful tone of 3.14-20 stands in contrast to the way the Zephaniah begins. This dichotomy (cf. 1.2; 3.19) once more illustrates Yhwh's struggle to turn from justice to mercy. Yhwh's decision to undo the exile is at the heart of this restoration. Twice Yhwh promises to 'gather' (קבץ 3.19, 20) his people together. That Yhwh will be with them (3.15) indicates that their shame has been removed and the punishments that he himself has inflicted on them (1.13) will be undone. Though Yhwh promises to 'deal with all afflicting you' (3.19), the nations are not the subject of the people's return, as is 2.7. Instead, it is Yhwh's gathering and care for his people that is at the heart of restoration. Such language is magnified when Zephaniah is read in light of the coming exile, and the restoration that is found in Haggai.

7. *Haggai*

Haggai presents a unique problem for this project because it is the only writing of the Twelve in which שׁוב does not appear in the MT. Fortunately, for this project anyway, the textual apparatus as well as the context of 2.17 shows strong support for the idea of שׁוב, if not the word itself. As it stands in the MT, the text can be broken down into four parts:

הכיתי אתכם בשׁדפון ובירקון	('I have struck you with blight [BDB 'smut'] and with mildew')
ובברד את כל־מעשׂה ידיכם	('and with hail; all the work of your hands')
ואין־אתכם אלי	('yet there is not you to me')
נאם־יהוה	('declares YHWH').

56. That this restoration is something that Zephaniah sees as taking place in the future is evident by the three references to 'at that time' (ובעת 3.20; בעת ההיא 3.19; בעת ההיא 3.20). The last occurrence of time in 3.20 (ובעת קבצי אתכם) literally reads, 'and at the time of my gathering you'. The NIV has translated this as 'at that time I will bring you home'. The *BHS*, however, suggests emending the text to ובעת ההיא אקבץ. In either case, the text indicates that an unspecified time will come when Yhwh will end the exile of his people.

The awkwardly worded 'yet there is not you to me' presents a problem. Petersen, following Ehrlich, has called the ואין־אתכם אלי phrase, 'barbaric'.[57] In the textual apparatus, a discrepancy exists between the MT and the LXX, with the versions (Syriac, Vulgate, and Targum) following the Septuagint. The LXX offers the alternative reading, καὶ οὐκ ἐπεστρέψατε πρός με, which the *BHS* understands as ולֹא שַׁבְתֶּם, or 'but you did not return [to me]'. This reading, which is a reflection of Amos 4.9, incorporates שׁוב into the verse and eases what is a difficult line in the Hebrew. The reading is also followed by the Syriac. The Vulgate is particularly interesting as it attempts to blend both the MT and the LXX: *et non fuit in vobis qui reverteretur ad me*, 'yet there was none among you that returned to me'.[58] The Targum reads similarly: וְלֵיתֵכוֹן תָּיְבִין לְפָלְחָנִי.

At the heart of this problem is how much influence Amos has in Haggai.[59] Indeed, the context of Hag. 2.15-19 fits the context of Amos 4.6-9. In both sections, Yhwh mentions the punishment of his people, manifested by agricultural destruction, in an unsuccessful attempt to bring them back to him. The curses of Deuteronomy 28 are at the centre of both passages.[60] This parallel is further illustrated by the identical opening of Amos 4.9 and Hag. 2.17:

Amos 4.9 הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון 'I struck you with blight and mildew'.

Hag. 2.17 הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון 'I struck you with blight and mildew'.

In addition, the LXX's translation of the close of Hag. 2.17, καὶ οὐκ ἐπεστρέψατε πρός με, is identical to the conclusion of Amos 4.6, 8, while the similar phrase, καὶ οὐδ ὡς ἐπεστρέψατε πρός με, λέγει κύριος, concludes Amos 4.9, 10, 11. Despite the similarities with the LXX,

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57. David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 86.

58. Http://vulgate.org/ot/haggai_2.htm (13 June 2008). Wolff offers a similar reading: 'Aber es gab keine Rückkehr bei euch zu mir hin' (Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai* [BK; Neukirchener–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986], p. 39).

59. 'There can be no doubt about the chronological priority of the formulation in Amos 4:9 over that in Hag. 2:17. And since there appear to be influences from Amos elsewhere in the book of Haggai, in both the MT and the LXX (e.g. Hag. 2:14), it is altogether likely that in this verse the prophet Haggai (or a redactor) utilized the formulations of his prophetic predecessor for his own purposes. In so doing, the author/editor struck a blow for the importance of Haggai as a prophet standing in a line that extended back to the earlier figure, Amos' (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 92).

60. 'Once again the text moves in the same Deuteronomistic atmosphere as in 1:3-11 (cf. Deut 28:22; Amos 4:9). As was the case in Amos 4:9, which this text appears to echo, Yahweh's attempts to bring back the community to himself were unfruitful' (John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* [VTSup, 91; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2002], p. 208).

commentators have questioned the reliability of the variants.[61] However, despite the efforts of the commentaries to defend the MT, their translations all show that a verb has to be supplied in order to make sense of the verse.[62] Therefore, in light of the tension surrounding the MT, the testimony of the LXX, Targum, Syriac, and Vulgate becomes more important. Though the versions do not speak with a unified voice on the wording of the verse, they all incorporate שׁוב into their readings. From this observation, the least that can be said is that there is a very old (LXX) and broad (Vulgate, Syriac, Targum) tradition of reading this passage with שׁוב. The most that can be said is that despite the multiple emendations that would be needed to the MT (which the *BHS* suggests),[63] the text is corrupt and שׁוב should be included in

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61.   'That the opening words in v. 17 are (almost) the same as Amos 4:9 does not imply that the closing words must also be identical… The text-critical rule applies in this case also that preference must be given to the reading which is more difficult from the point of view of language and subject matter' (Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], p. 128). See also Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, p. 200 n. 20. Meyers and Meyers make a strong argument for reading the MT based on structural and emphasis concerns. See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8* (AB, 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), pp. 61-62. 'The elimination of the verb here would seem to be intentional, as the following considerations also indicate'. Furthermore, they suggest that the verb could have been the Hiphil of בוא (61). They offer the translation, 'but nothing [brought] you to me' (p. 61). See also two older works which argue for the MT: P.P. Saydon, 'Meanings and Uses of the Particle את', *VT* 14 (1964), pp. 192-210; D.J. Clark, 'Problems in Haggai 2:15-19', *BT* 34 (1983), pp. 432-39. Meadowcroft likewise follows the MT, arguing 'that its very ambivalence represents a deliberate poetic effect in the present context'. However, he is open to the impact of the LXX variant, adding, 'It may be that in hearing "yet you did not return to me", the LXX has picked up one of the intertextual echoes set off by Haggai, even if the syntax of the text allows other echoes as well' (Tim Meadowcroft, *Haggai* [RNBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006], p. 193).

62.   Verhoef offers, 'yet you did not (turn) to me'. Petersen interprets the verse, 'But you did not side with me'. Meyers and Meyers translate it as, 'but nothing [brought] you to me'. Of the commentaries consulted, Smith offers the translation closest to the MT: 'and you were nothing to me' (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 159). However, he also adds, 'This whole verse 2:17 is a paraphrase of Amos 4:9 plus a reconstruction of Amos's expression, "yet you did not return to me"'. The English translations also supply a verb. The NIV translates the section as 'yet you did not turn to me', a reading that both Verhoef and Clark believe is more in line with the MT. See Verhoef, *Haggai, Malachi*, p. 128; Clark, 'Problems in Haggai', p. 435. This reading of 'turn' is followed by NKJV, ASV, and NJB. The NASB reads, 'yet you did not come back to Me', which is similar to the NCV. Finally, the NRSV reads, 'yet you did not return to me' which is followed by the NAB, REB, and CEV. Of the English translations, what should be noted is that all of these readings supply the verb and fall within the semantic domain of שׁוב.

63.   Perhaps a reading more in line with the Vulgate, which incorporates שׁוב but also appears to retain אין, would be a more acceptable solution to the problem.

this verse. Of these two options, the latter seems more likely as the parallel with Amos 4.9a and the weight of the versions is difficult to ignore. Since almost all translations incorporate a verb of some kind, perhaps the context provided by Amos 4.9a and repeated word for word by Hag. 2.17a, should provide the solution. In either case, it seems safe to conclude that a call to return to Yhwh was either overtly intended or subtly implied by the passage's connection with Amos.

Although Zephaniah leaves the reader with a glorious image of a return from exile, the situation which opens Haggai is very different: Judah is still oppressed, though from a different Mesopotamian power, foreign nations are not streaming to Jerusalem, and the temple lies in ruins. Moreover, the promise to 'restore your fortunes' (Zeph. 3.20) has not taken place and the people are suffering economic/agricultural shortfalls because Yhwh has withheld his blessings. The return from exile should have been a type of 'fresh start' for Judah. They should have learned from their experiences and returned to the land with a new committed relationship to Yhwh, and fulfilled the glorious predictions of Amos, Zephaniah, and Second Isaiah. But this was not the case because, as Haggai says, the temple lay in ruins.

Haggai's use of שׁוב, and his connection to Amos 4.6-10, remains consistent with how Yhwh expressed his displeasure with his people in the past. What is interesting here is that Haggai compares Judah's situation after the exile and their lack of desire to rebuild the temple with a nation (Israel) that did not even worship Yhwh at Jerusalem, but instead at a (pagan) shrine in Bethel. This is a bold comparison and a strong statement on Judah's relationship with Yhwh upon its return to the land. Following the versions, Haggai's use of שׁוב at the end of the statement is consistent with other calls to repentance found in the Twelve. The real contrast between Haggai and Amos, however, is provided by the context. Whereas Amos is calling for the people to return in order to avoid further punishment, Haggai is building to a climax (2.19b) that results in blessing. Whereas Israel failed to listen to Amos, the people of Judah and Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua have responded to the words of the prophet (1.14) and now await economic restoration. In other words, Hag. 2.17 is functioning not as a threat, but as a tie to the past of how things used to be, but will be no longer. The covenantal curses will be undone.

> Past agricultural problems, as punitive measures, had not served to move the people to appropriate action (as they had not in Amos 4:6-11). Put in a slightly different way, the technique of communication used in the past did not work. It did not work in the time of Amos and it did not work immediately prior to the time of Haggai's activity; that is, it did not effect the change in people's actions. However, Haggai's discourse with the people, his questions and responses, had moved especially the leaders to action in a way that Yahweh's earlier measures had not moved them. Haggai, as his booklet reports, had been

> able to effect the rededication ceremony and, in so doing, had (to use the
> phraseology from the end of 2:17) enabled the people to side with [*or return
> to*] Yahweh.[64]

This is not to say that Yhwh regrets his past actions or that Hag. 2.17-19 is a
repudiation of his tactics. Throughout the Twelve Yhwh has threatened pun-
ishment and offered hope, just as the people have oscillated between rebel-
lion and repentance. In Haggai, something strange has happened—because of
Yhwh's grace the people have returned (from exile), and now for the first
time in the Twelve, have heeded the words of Yhwh's prophet. But where
were the accompanying blessings? To this question, Haggai urges patience,
and the struggle to return persists.

   Overall, there are two different links that join the post-exilic Haggai to the
preceding Twelve: (1) an intertextual connection to the earlier judgment
language of the prophet Amos, and (2) a connection to Zephaniah by reason
of position. Both links serve to bind the time of Haggai to the writings of the
pre-exilic prophets, and thus show the reader how Israel's past continues to
influence its present.

8. *Conclusion*

There is no question that the heart of the call to return in the Twelve is found
in the opening and closing writings of the Book. It is in Hosea, Joel, Zecha-
riah, and Malachi that the imperatives are found, that the phrase 'Return to
me and I will return to you' is developed, and that the significance of the
return relationship is incorporated into the message of the writings. This fact,
however, does not diminish the role that שוב plays throughout the rest of the
Twelve, and its appearance in each writing serves as a constant reminder to
the reader. As this section has shown, שוב may not be at the centre of these
individual writings, but it is nonetheless present, functioning within the
confines of the message of return laid out in the framework writings, and
supporting the message of the individual prophets. What is most apparent
from this section is the sense of control that Yhwh exhibits over the return
relationship. Whether his anger is addressed towards Israel (e.g. Amos 2.6) or
the nations (e.g. Obad. 15) it is Yhwh who will bring about the destruction.
Likewise, when restoration is the focus (e.g. Zeph. 3.20), it is Yhwh who is
the driving force behind the return of his people and the subjugation of the
nations. In fact, the only time in these writings that שוב implies a response
from the people is Hab. 2.1-4, where the people are asked to answer with
faith to Yhwh's judgmental actions. This being the case, however, all these
discussions of שוב take place within a broader context of the return message

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64.   Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 93. Insertion and italics mine.

that may or may not have a direct connection with שׁוב (e.g. Mic. 4.2, 5; 7.7-10). What this demonstrates is that the return relationship is complex, not just for the people, but for Yhwh as well. It is Yhwh's struggle between turning toward his people in punishment or turning toward them in mercy that illustrates the depth of both his holiness and his love. The restorative conclusions of the individual writings reveal how Yhwh's love will eventually overcome the required punishment and be restored to his people.

Chapter 8

ZECHARIAH

In the previous section I offered a cursory examination of the function of שׁוב within the writings of Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai. Because Zechariah and Malachi are the closing writings of the Book, in the section that follows I will return to the in depth approach exemplified by Hosea and Joel in order to demonstrate once more the importance of שׁוב to the overall message of the Twelve.

1. *Introduction and Position*

Unlike the writings of Micah–Haggai where it plays a lesser role, the frequent occurrence of שׁוב makes it an important part of Zechariah's overall message.[1] שׁוב appears 17× in Zechariah (1.3 [2×], 4, 6, 16; 4.1; 5.1; 6.1; 7.14; 8.3, 15; 9.8, 12 [2×]; 10.9, 10; 13.7),[2] which is only surpassed in the

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1. As Conrad notes, 'Zechariah's name, which means "the LORD has remembered", encapsulates the summons to return. Returning to the LORD implies returning both to Jerusalem where the LORD will be present and returning to the past as it is remembered—returning to the way things used to be' (Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* [RNBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 42. Conrad believes that this call to return is a continuation of Haggai's message.

2. This count does not include והושבותים in 10.6. There is a variant in 10.6 presupposed by the Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate which offers וַהֲשִׁיבוֹתִים (from the root שׁוב) for the MT וְהוֹשְׁבוֹתִים. Though most commentaries follow the variant reading, the LXX reads: καὶ κατοικιῶ αὐτούς, thus presupposing וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּים (from the root ישׁב). Since the LXX makes sense and two separate (though difficult) words appear in the text (וְהוֹשְׁבוֹתִים in 10.6 and וַהֲשִׁיבוֹתִים in 10.10), translators should resist interpreting these phrases identically. (An example of identical interpretation is seen in Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, pp. 262-63). Additionally, the Twelve often connects the concepts of 'dwell' and 'return' (see Hos. 9.3; 14.8 [ET 14.7]; Amos 9.14). Therefore, 10.6 should not be counted as a שׁוב occurrence. However, if the variant reading is followed, then the שׁוב in 10.6 would be classified as a restoration use that emphasizes returning from exile. It should be noted that both Joseph and Judah are the focus of the verse, thus continuing the emphasis on restoring the exile of the northern kingdom found in 9.12 and 10.9-10. The similarities between meanings

Twelve by Hosea (24×). As with Hosea, because of Zechariah's size and the multiple word occurrences I will examine שוב in five groups: (1) Narrative [4.1; 5.1; 6.1], (2) 'Back and Forth' [7.14; 9.8], (3) Call to repentance [1.3, 4, 6], (4) Restoration [1.16; 8.3, 15; 9.12; 10.9, 10], and (5) Judgment [13.7].[3] This chapter will focus particularly on two sections: the Call to Repentance which acts as an introduction to the writing and issues a summarizing call to return to a new Persian period generation; and Restoration, an idea that unites the two parts of Zechariah emphasizing that Yhwh has returned to Jerusalem (chs. 1–8) and will bring back the exiles (chs. 9–10).

Zechariah's position within the Twelve is important since from both a diachronic and synchronic approach, the writing (along with Haggai) begins to conclude the Twelve collection. For Sweeney, Zechariah is closely connected to Haggai and continues the themes introduced there of temple reconstruction and the rise of the Davidic ruler, though this latter theme in Zechariah is pictured as a more distant, eschatological event.[4] Thus, like Haggai, Zechariah

> employs the visions of the prophet to portray the reconstruction of the temple in cosmic terms, as a sign of Yhwh's universal sovereignty, and argues that the priests will rule until the new Davidic king and Yhwh appear. It recaps the vision, in Mic 4, of the nations streaming to Zion with Israel, and then describes the eschatological scenario whereby the new king appears, the cosmos is transformed, and the nations defeated as Yhwh establishes sovereignty at Zion.[5]

Like he does for the entire Twelve, Nogalski finds a close connection between the positions of Haggai–Zechariah and Zechariah–Malachi for diachronic reasons. In the case of Zechariah–Malachi, he has identified the following catchwords which he believes links the works together:

(שוב to return; ישב to settle) cause no misunderstandings in the verse. As Meyers and Meyers note, 'Whatever the original verb, the idea of the exiles returning to their native land is not in doubt' (Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14* [AB, 25C; New York: Doubleday, 1993], p. 209).

3. Butterworth has also recognized שוב as an important word and organized its occurrences as follows: 'שוב, in 1.3 (2×), 4, 6, and 16, is used of (re)turning to Yahweh. Zech. 4.1; 5.1, 6.1 and 8.15 do not seem to be significant (= 'again'). The usage elsewhere varies, but refers mostly to returning (physically) to Zion (Yahweh in 8.3; the people in Zech. 9.12–10.10; the MT has 'dwell' in 10.6). An interesting parallel, connecting Zech. 1–8 and 9–14, is מעבר ומשב, in 7.14 and 9.8. The meaning is 'turn (my hand against)' in 13.7' (Mike Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah* [JSOTSup, 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992], p. 241).

4. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 61.

5. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 61.

Zechariah 8.9-23	*Malachi 1.1-14*
ידיכם your hands 8.9, 13	ביד hand 1.1 מידכם your hand 1.9, 10, 13, 14
העם people 8.11, 12, עמים peoples 8.20, 22	והעם people 1.4
פריה fruit 8.12	וניבו its fruit 1.12
קללה curse 8.13	וארור cursed 1.14
בגוים among the nations 8.13, וגוים nations 8.22, הגוים nations 8.23	בגוים among the nations 1.11 (2×)
אבתיכם fathers 8.14	אב father 1.6 (2×)
שבתי returned 8.15	ונשוב return 1.4
בשעריכם gates 8.16	דלתים gates 1.10
רעה evil 8.17	רע evil 1.8 (2×)
תאהבו love 8.17, אהבו love 8.19	אהבתי loved 1.2, אהבתנו loved, 1.2
שנאתי I hate 8.17	שנאתי I hated 1.3
לחלות את־פני entreat the face 8.21, 22	חלו־נא פני face 1.8, פניך entreat the face 1.9, פנים faces 1.9[6]

Though the existence of his catchwords is debated, Nogalski's method reflects the underlying belief in the redactional development of Zechariah in particular,[7] and the Twelve in general. For Nogalski, Zechariah 9–14 is the last major piece to be added to an existing collection of the Twelve.[8] Nogalski believes that Haggai–Zechariah 1–8 circulated, for a time, as an independent collection before it was incorporated along with the Joel-layer,

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6. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, pp. 53-56. The English translations are those offered by Nogalski on these pages.

7. For an early history of research on Deutero-Zechariah see O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. Peter R. Ackroyd; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 435-40. See also R.J. Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 61-62.

8. As a result, the catchwords between the last two writings are found between Zech. 8 and Mal. 1, rather than between Zech. 14 and Mal. 1. This is partly based on the contrast in tones Nogalski found between Zech. 1–8 and Mal. 1.1-14. See Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, pp. 197ff. Against this, Schart has commented, 'Although Nogalski's interpretation of the thematic progression from Zechariah to Malachi seems well taken, this does not at all exclude the possibility that Zech. 9–14 stood between Zech. 8 and Mal. 1' (Aaron Schart, 'Putting the Eschatological Visions of Zechariah in their Place: Malachi as a Hermeneutical Guide for the Last Section of the Book of the Twelve', in *Bringing Out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14* [ed. Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd; JSOTSup, 370; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], pp. 333-43 [337]). He continues, 'Another problem is that Nogalski does not compare Zech. 14 and Mal. 1. It would be interesting to see how many allusions he would find in this case' (p. 211 n. 8).

into the Twelve.[9] Afterward, chs. 9–14 developed in two stages: 9–13 followed by ch. 14.[10]

Nogalski's position on the division within Zechariah, which is generally accepted among most commentators, highlights the major difficulty of finding a thematic current, in this case the call to return (שׁוב), in what is essentially a diachronically divided book (chs. 1–8 and 9–14). Much of the scholarship on Zechariah focuses on this division, and the reasons and details for it differ between scholars. For example, Schart and Redditt, in articles placed side by side in the same book, argue for opposite readings of Zechariah 9–14. At issue in both of these articles is not the independent existence of 9–14, but rather the interconnectedness of that unit with Malachi. Redditt believes that Zechariah 9–14 was the last section to be added to the Twelve, and was thus aware of Malachi prior to its insertion into Zechariah. 'The thesis is that a redactor, possibly the redactor of Second Zechariah, inserted those chapters between First Zechariah and Malachi, not just to explain the failure of the hopes expressed in Zech. 1–8 to materialize, but also to provide a perspective for reading Malachi.'[11] This implies that

9. E.g. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, p. 235. This is a generally accepted position. For a more updated view of the original Haggai–Zechariah collection that compares the dating of the two writings see Jakob Wöhrle, 'The Formation and Intention of the Haggai–Zechariah Corpus', *JHS* 6 article 10 (2006), http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_60.pdf (11 April 2007). For a summary of the works detailing the redactional unity of Haggai–Zech. 1–8 and the changes that have more recently taken place in the scholarship, see Mark J. Boda, 'Majoring on the Minors: Recent Research on Haggai and Zechariah', *CRBS* 2 (2003), pp. 33-68 (33-37).

10. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, pp. 278-79.

11. Paul L. Redditt, 'Zechariah 9–14: The Capstone of the Book of the Twelve', in Boda and Floyd (eds.), *Bringing out the Treasure*, pp. 305-32 (305). For more on the function of Zech. 9–14, as well as his overall understanding of the redaction of Twelve as a whole see Paul L. Redditt, 'Zechariah 9–14, Malachi, and the Redaction of the Book of the Twelve', in Watts and House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 245-68. Redditt's argument is based on the well documented belief that Malachi was originally attached to Zech. 1–8. For Nogalski's opinions see *Redactional Processes*, pp. 197ff. He notes, 'All of these studies, mine included, see Malachi as the redactional continuation of Zech 8:9ff. I differ with their conclusions in that I sense this redactional work already takes place in the Book of the Twelve, and not with the Haggai–Zechariah corpus alone… In addition, I have argued that the three superscriptions in Zech 9:1; 12:1; and Mal 1:1 do not come from the same layer, but that Zech 9:1; 12:1 immitate [*sic*] Mal 1:1. By contrast, Mal 1:1 demonstrates awareness of Haggai, Nahum, and Habakkuk. Thus, I see the composition of Malachi as a deliberately created conclusion to the larger corpus' (p. 211 n. 96). Redditt's position stands against Barry Alan Jones's argument that Jonah was the last book to be added to the Twelve. See Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve*. Jones's position should not be easily discarded as there is some textual evidence that may support his claim, though this is dismissed by Redditt. See 'Zechariah 9–14, Malachi, and The Redaction of the Book of the Twelve', pp. 249-50. Redditt's argument also goes

Zechariah 9–14 is in some ways the conclusion of the Twelve because it contains the last thoughts to be inserted into the collection. Redditt emphasizes the significance of such a discovery:

> As a consequence of capturing the end of the Book of the Twelve, the redactor articulated a reassessment of prophetic hopes in various places throughout the Twelve, and imposes upon the Twelve his sober reassessment in the process. In that sense, Zech. 9–14 not only was the last collection to enter the Twelve, but also was its capstone.[12]

Standing opposite this is Schart's argument that, 'the basic layer in Malachi was originally attached to Zechariah 14 seems to be more sound and probable than the others that have been proposed, especially since it does not exclude the possibility that the redactor who added Malachi to the pre-existing corpus also wanted to allude to Zech. 8.20-23'.[13] While I am inclined to side with Schart, from these two works along with those of Nogalski, Jones, and Schneider, it is apparent that the timing, insertion, and function of Zechariah 9–14 within the order of the Twelve are debatable.

Nevertheless, what can be deduced from this discussion is that Zechariah as a whole functions on both diachronic and canonical levels as a transition to the conclusion of the Twelve. In other words, whether one follows Schneider's more conservative position or Redditt's understanding of a later composition, both agree that Zechariah was one of the last books added to the Twelve (particularly chs. 9–14) and that from a canonical perspective, the writing connects to and prepares the reader for the concluding thoughts of Malachi. This means that Zechariah's (as well as Malachi's) composition and position has the added benefit of containing some of the Twelve's most developed thoughts. Those who completed Zechariah and Malachi and incorporated them into the collection more than likely had the majority of the Twelve before them. This allowed the editors to reflect upon and develop some of the thoughts first introduced by the early writings of the Twelve. It is because of this that Zechariah and Malachi repeat many of these early concerns, one of which is the call to return (שׁוב).

The shift towards the conclusion of the Twelve is even evident in the historical setting and diverse messages of the individual Haggai–Zechariah writings. With the move from Zephaniah to Haggai, the historical setting has transitioned from a pre-exilic Israel that was unresponsive to the prophetic calls to that of a Persian Haggai–Zechariah, in which the people have returned from exile and have begun to heed Yhwh's prophets (Hag. 1.12; Zech. 1.6).

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against conclusions drawn by Schneider, who suggests that Deutero-Zechariah was composed shortly after Zech. 1–8. See Schneider, *The Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 135.

    12.   Redditt, 'Zechariah 9–14: The Capstone', p. 305.
    13.   Aaron Schart, 'Eschatological Visions of Zechariah', p. 339.

This same Persian setting continues from Haggai through to the conclusion of the Book, though Israel's receptive attitude changes in Malachi.[14] There is no surprise that the message of Zechariah 1–8 is similar to Haggai's, since the superscripts indicate that the prophets were active at the same time (cf. Hag. 2.10; Zech. 1.1). Because of this, the hope apparent in Haggai is repeated again in Zechariah's opening chapters, and though present, however, has been changed in chs. 9–14. The eschatological message of Zechariah's later chapters focuses on Yhwh's defeat of his enemies (9.1-8; 12.1-9; 14), the problems with Israel's/Judah's rulers (10.3; 11.15-17), and the restoration of Jerusalem/Zion (14).[15] As will be mentioned below, it is possible to read chs. 9–14 as a continuation of the events of chs. 1–8, and the canonical shape of the book suggests such a strategy. Nonetheless, it is impossible, at even a cursory reading, to fail to notice the shift in hope between chs. 8 and 9. In chs. 1–8 hope is imminent: the temple is being rebuilt, Yhwh has returned to dwell in Jerusalem, and there is hope surrounding Israel/Judah's current leaders, Joshua and Zerubbabel (chs. 3–4; 6.9-15). In 9–14, however, the future is brought into focus as Israel's/Judah's leaders are corrupt (11.4-17), prophecy fails (13.1-6), and Yhwh himself must once again intervene to set things right (14.1-21).[16]

That the book ends with the picture of a magnificent future is not unusual in the Twelve. As Schart notices,

> Zech. 14 would form a glorious and satisfying end of the book. What would be more appropriate for a prophetic book, which has as one of its most central topics the coming of the Day of the Lord, than to close with a magnificent description of this event?… All the tensions within the Book of the Twelve are

14.   Malachi is often given a date around a century later than Haggai–Zechariah. See Feinberg who dates Malachi to the time of Nehemiah, near the end of the fifth century. Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), pp. 249-50. It must also be remembered that the audience of the Book of the Twelve is most likely a later Persian audience. If Schneider is followed, it was Nehemiah's men that incorporated Haggai–Zechariah–Malachi into the Twelve. See Schneider, *The Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 149-52. This is earlier than Nogalski, who believes Jonah and Zech. 9–14 did not enter the Twelve until after 332 BCE (Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, p. 280).

15.   These ideas are all introduced in Zech. 1–8, and developed in more detail in chs. 9–14.

16.   It should be noted that the eschatological ending of Zechariah is not unlike other endings found in the Twelve (cf. Hos. 14; Joel 4; Amos 9.11-14; Mic. 7.8-20; Zeph. 3.14-20). For more on the connection between 'Daughter of Zion' oracles in Zeph. 3.14-20 and Zech. 9.9-13 see Byron G. Curtis, 'The Zion-Daughter Oracles: Evidence on the Identity and Ideology of the Late Redactors of the Book of the Twelve', in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, pp. 166-84. 'The Zion-Daughter oracle of Zeph 3 has a literary connection to the Zion-Daughter oracle of Zech 9. I suggest that these two units were editorially and thematically significant for the redactors responsible for appending Haggai–Zechariah–Malachi to the trunk of the preceding books' (p. 182).

> solved, and a scenario for the end time is established which is complex enough
> to include all aspects of the future of the all the prophets within the book.[17]

So while the message of chs. 1–8 can find direct application in Zechariah's own time, the message of 9–14 is more difficult and broader in scope. This returns to a question asked earlier in this chapter: how can an understanding of שוב be placed in the context of two diverse messages? The answer is found in the thematic unity of the writing. Following the work of Rex Mason, the thematic links which connect the two halves of Zechariah leave room for hearing a unified and familiar message of return. Mason has identified five main emphases between Proto and Deutero-Zechariah: 'the prominence of the Zion tradition; the divine cleansing of the community; universalism; the appeal to the earlier prophets; and the provision of leadership as a sign of the new age'.[18] Though Mason's short article does not deal with all of the verses related to שוב, the uses of שוב in Zechariah fit closely to Mason's identified themes of the Zion tradition, the earlier prophets, and the cleansing of the community. Two uses of שוב correspond to Mason's categories, but do not appear in both sections of Zechariah: שוב as repentance in Zech. 1.1-6 fits the appeal to the earlier prophets, and the judgment use of שוב in Zech. 13.7 begins a section which results in a cleansed community (13.9).[19] While these two uses of שוב are not found in both parts of Zechariah, שוב as restoration is.

The use of שוב in connection with restoration is the most common occurrence in Zechariah. It appears in both Proto and Deutero-Zechariah and does so in close connection with Mason's identified Zion tradition. As will be discussed below, the restoration use of שוב contains two emphases that are divided between Proto and Deutero-Zechariah. In chs. 1–8, שוב is closely connected to Yhwh returning to Jerusalem/Zion and the restoration that will

17. Schart, 'The Eschatological Visions of Zechariah', p. 340. He includes his own opinion that, 'Zech. 14 is in my view written to form the end of the Joel–Obadiah corpus'. As with Zephaniah's connection to Haggai, the glorious ending of Zechariah 14 makes the opening of Malachi all the more shocking.

18. Rex Mason, 'The Relation of Zech 9–14 to Proto-Zechariah', *ZAW* 88 (1976), pp. 227-39. Mason is not the only one to focus on connections within Zechariah. See also Ronald W. Pierce, 'Literary Connectors and a Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus', *JETS* 27 (1984), pp. 277-89. Pierce, while intentionally avoiding questions of authorship, has identified three characteristics which unite Proto and Deutero-Zechariah: (1) a dependency in both sections on the pre-exilic prophets [1.4, 12; 11.13], (2) a unified message of salvation [1.12-17; 12-14], and (3) a call to covenant fidelity [1.2-6; 3.7; 5.3-4; 6.15; 7.5-7; and ch. 11] (pp. 281-82). The main focus of this, as well as his second article, Ronald W. Pierce, 'A Thematic Development of the Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus', *JETS* 27 (1984), pp. 401-11, is to develop literary connections that exist between Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

19. Mason does not identify Zech. 13.7-9 as a section that deals with the cleansed community, though it seems plain that the idea is communicated in these verses.

result from that action. In chs. 9–14, the restoration motif shifts from Yhwh returning to Jerusalem/Zion to Yhwh bringing the people, especially those of the former northern kingdom, back to Jerusalem/Zion/the land as part of his restorative actions. More importantly, Zechariah (specifically chs. 1–8), like Haggai, is structured so as to emphasize the return from exile and the reconstruction of the temple as fulfilment of Yhwh's promises to prophets in the past. In other words, the promises of the past are coming to fruition in Zechariah's time (Zech. 8). Zechariah 9–14 ends as many of the other writings of the Twelve, with promises of Yhwh's future action to rescue his people and to raise up Jerusalem/Zion as the central city of the world. Thus, Zechariah introduces the reader to some of the Twelve's concluding ideas. While Zechariah can certainly be understood as a unity, the eschatological language of chs. 9–14 shows that the restoration introduced in chs. 1–8 is not lasting and Yhwh will have to act anew in the future. Once again, at the heart of this message is the struggle of return (שׁוּב) and the necessity for Yhwh's actions. In this way, Zechariah prepares the reader to encounter the changed situation introduced in Malachi, where the people are struggling and Yhwh's blessings and actions seem far removed from the glowing words of Haggai and Zechariah 1–8.

2. *The Uses of* שׁוּב

a. שׁוּב *as Narrative*
The Narrative uses of שׁוּב revolve around Zechariah's early visions and are used to transition from one vision to another.

- 4.1—'And the angel who was speaking with me returned (וַיָּשָׁב) and woke me, like a man who is roused from his sleep'.
- 5.1—'I lifted up my eyes again (וָאָשׁוּב), and I looked, and behold, a flying scroll!'
- 6.1—'I lifted up my eyes again and I looked, and behold, four chariots are coming from between two mountains, and the mountains are mountains of bronze!'

Despite opening three consecutive chapters of Zechariah, little needs to be said about how שׁוּב appears in these three verses. As Butterworth notes, 'Zech. 4.1; 5.1, 6.1 and 8.15 do not seem to be significant (= "again")'.[20] Holladay identifies שׁוּב in 4.1 as that of cyclical motion,[21] and the occurrences in 5.1 and 6.1 as the general use of 'again'.[22] The first instance refers to movement of the messenger, while Zechariah is the subject in 5.1 and 6.1. In

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20. Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, p. 241.
21. Holladay, *ŠÛHB*, p. 66.
22. Holladay, *ŠÛHB*, p. 70.

all three instances, the purpose of שוב is to emphasize a repeated action and to connect the story with the previous section.

b. שוב *as 'Back and Forth'*

In this instance שוב is used in an idiomatic way to describe the movements of people across the land.

- 7.14—'And I hurled them among the nations, ones they did not know. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one went back and forth (מעבר ומשב). And they made the desirable land desolate'.
- 9.8—'But I will encamp at my house like a guard, so that no one will pass back and forth (מעבר ומשב). And the oppressor will never pass over them again because now I see with my eyes'.

Holladay has identified these two uses as 'A special idiom, formed with a verb of motion plus *wᵉ* plus *šûbh*, both verbs being either infinitive absolutes or participles; the expression as a whole giving the meaning 'back and forth', 'to and fro' to the first verb in the expression…'[23] The meaning and use of the phrase in the two verses differs. In 7.14, the phrase is used in a verse which recounts Yhwh's past anger against his people and the resulting punishment which culminated in a desolate land, unable to support life. In 9.8, the phrase appears in connection with Yhwh's defence against an enemy who attempted to pass across Yhwh's land. Though Holladay groups Zech. 7.14 and 9.8 with five other verses (Gen. 8.3, 7; 1 Sam. 17.15; Ezek. 1.14; 35.7), Baldwin believes that this unique phrase, appearing only in Zechariah, helps to argue for a unified reading of the writing.[24] In either case, the verb is used to highlight, alternatively, Yhwh's punishment and defence of the land.

c. שוב *as a Call to Repentance (1.1-6)*

Zechariah 1.1-6 is one of the most important return (שוב) sections in the Twelve. It, along with Hos. 14.2-3; Joel 2.12-14; and Mal. 3.7, are the core passages which form the foundation for this theme throughout the Book.

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23.   Holladay, *ŠÛHB,* p. 65.

24.   Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (TOTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1972), pp. 68-69. Baldwin notes: 'This last [7.14 and 9.8] is a telling example because… the wording is identical in the Hebrew, and the exact phrase occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament, the nearest equivalent being Ezekiel 35:7'. Baldwin is of course correct to highlight the unity between the two sections of the writing; however, caution should be used when holding up 7.14 and 9.8 as examples of that unity. Though the phrase may be identical, the context and usage in both verses are not. Speaking of 9.8 Meyers and Meyers add, 'That this phrase is the same as in Zech 7:14, where its meaning is negative and applied to the past, may be another instance in which Second Zechariah draws on an earlier passage and gives it new meaning' (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, p. 119).

Zechariah uses his position as a later prophet to reflect upon Israel's pre-exilic past and he does so with a message that centres on שׁוב. In this way, Zechariah provides a way for the audience of the Twelve to understand the Book's earlier writings within a framework of the return message. Within this section Zechariah uses שׁוב to recount Israel's failed history—how the earlier prophets issued calls to return that were ignored by the people, how Yhwh now issues that call anew, and how the fathers learned from Yhwh's covenant curses, and after suffering from these punishments, repented. Like other prophets before him, Zechariah's use of שׁוב, in the introductory section of his writing no less, emphasizes the struggle that is at the heart of the return relationship. Would this newly returned people heed the call to return?

i) *Literary Context*. Zechariah 1.1-6 serves as an introduction for the book, focusing on a message to return that is repeated throughout Zechariah. Verses 1-6 take the shape of a sermon delivered by the prophet to the people, which is different from the eight narrative vision reports that follow (1.7–6.15). The superscript (1.1) indicates that Zechariah delivered this message (eighth month of Darius's second year) in between Haggai's second (twenty-first day of the seventh month) and third (twenty-fourth day of the ninth month) prophecies. Therefore, the situation and circumstances that faced the two prophets, at least at the beginning of Zechariah's ministry (chs. 1–8), were the same: the people had returned to the land but had failed to rebuild the temple. The ministries of both prophets focus on this problem. They 'were obviously concerned with the same community and with developments in that community, although their emphases were rather different. Or perhaps it is more judicious to say that they were interested in similar issues and their individual treatments of those issues were complementary'.[25]

There is universal support among the commentaries that Zech. 1.1-6 forms a purposeful, cohesive unit. 'Despite the fact that this section shows many signs of being redactional it is intended in its present form as an introduction to the words of Zechariah, and is, in any case, too short to subdivide… The whole section seems to have been composed for its present position rather than elaborated after the book was compiled'.[26] Besides the change in genre, 1.1-6 is separated from 1.7–6.15 by another time reference, indicating Zechariah's second received message from Yhwh (1.7). This division is also reflected by an MT paragraph marker.

Despite scholarly emphasis on Zechariah's redactional history, more recent efforts have focused on the canonical unity of Zechariah which has resulted in an outline other than chs. 1–8 and 9–14. Both Conrad and Sweeney, followed by Webb, use the three date formulas (1.1, 7; 7.1) to

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25. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 90.
26. Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah,* p. 63.

organize the book. After 1.1-6 which introduces the book, Sweeney adds that 'The balance of the book then presents the visions of the prophet in Zechariah 1:7–6:15 and the oracles or pronouncements of the prophet in Zechariah 7:1–14:21, each of which is introduced once again by the narrator's statement of the dates when YHWH's word came to the prophet'.[27] This results in an outline which differs from the traditional divisions, but nonetheless still keeps 1.1-6 as an introduction to the writing as a whole. Webb's outline illustrates this:

> Part 1. Chapters 1–6
> Introduction (1:1-6)
> **Eight visions** (1:7–6:8; plus 6:9-15)
> Part 2. Chapters 7–14
> Introduction (7:1–8:23)
> **Two oracles** (chs. 9–11, and 12–14)[28]

Butterworth, who follows the more traditional divisions of the writing, offers a simplified outline of 1.1–6.15, once again keeping 1.1-6 separate from what follows:

> 1.1-6   Introduction. Historical reasons for the present disaster; assurance that the situation has changed; appeal to return to Yahweh. Report that the people did turn.
> 1.7–6.15 Series of night visions with attached oracles
> V1   Horses patrol the earth: nations at ease
> V2   Horns that scattered Jerusalem to be punished
> V3   Jerusalem inhabited without walls
> V4   Joshua the high priest reclothed
> V5   Two anointed: (Joshua) and Zerubbabel

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27.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 566. He later argues: 'The appearance of a similar date formula for the transmission of another oracle by YHWH in Zech 1:7 marks the beginning of the next major component of the book of Zechariah. Although successive date formulas appear in Zech 1:7 and 7:1, the absence of a conjunction in Zech 1:7 and the presence of one in Zech 7:1 demonstrates that Zech 1:7–6:15 and the material introduced by Zech 7:1 are to be read together as two structural components of a larger unit within the book' (p. 567). This results, then, in two main divisions: 1.1-6 and 1.7–14.21. He then subdivides 1.7–14.21 into 1.7–6.15 and 7.1–14.21.

28.   Barry Webb, *The Message of Zechariah* (BST; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 31. He further clarifies: 'I take the three chronological markers at 1:1, 7 and 7:1 as major (first order) markers, and the two occurrences of the single word *maśśā'* (an oracle) at 9:1 and 12:1 as minor (second order) markers. This means that chs. 7–8 go with what follows rather than what precedes them' (p. 31 n. 46). This is further supported by Kline who also believes that chs. 7–8 serve as introductions to what follows. He argues: 'As for the stylistic differences between chs. 7–8 and the burdens, this is akin to that between the 1:1-6 introduction and the visions' (Meredith G. Kline, 'The Structure of the Book of Zechariah', *JETS* 34 [1991], pp. 179-93 [184]).

V6	Scroll/curse going forth against thief etc.
V7	Ephah and woman: wickedness removed far way
V8	Horses and chariots patrol the earth: God's Spirit at rest[29]

These outlines illustrate that even with different understandings of the overall structure of the writing, 1.1-6 can be considered as an independent unit that functions as the introduction. That Zechariah chose to open his work with such a heavy reliance on שׁוב couches Zechariah's entire message within the framework of return, and has a significant impact on the understanding of the שׁוב theme for both Zechariah, as well as the Twelve.

Following the superscript (1.1) which introduces the message as a 'word of YHWH', Zechariah proceeds to deliver a message which recounts the fathers' slow though eventual return to Yhwh, and the justification for past sufferings. Smith divides the section into three parts: '(1) Yahweh's anger with the fathers (1:2); (2) a call for the present generation to repent (1:3-4); and (3) a statement that man is mortal but God's word is eternal (1:5-6)'.[30] While this outline is sensible, it seems to overlook one of the keys to the passage, the second half of 1.6 in which Yhwh recounts that the fathers repented. Because of this, it seems reasonable to follow Sweeney's more general outline in which 1.2-3 lays out the 'general premises and goals of the appeal', while 1.4-6 focuses on the 'specific elements of the proposed restoration of the relationship'.[31]

ii) *The Use of* שׁוב *in Zechariah 1.2-6.* The significance of שׁוב as part of the opening message of the writing cannot be overlooked as the word appears four times in the first six verses (1.3 [2×], 4, 6), urging the people to return to Yhwh. Sweeney argues that 'this concern [the call to return] underlies the entire book of Zechariah, which is designed to demonstrate the world-wide significance of YHWH's actions in reestablishing the Temple in Jerusalem for the people of Israel/Judah, the nations, and the cosmos at large'.[32] More than offering an introduction to the writing, however, Zech. 1.1-6 is able to use שׁוב to frame a conversation in which Israel's/Judah's past deeds are held up as an example to the present generation. Because of his position as a post-exilic prophet, Zechariah is able to stand on the work of previous prophets and look back over Israel's history and offer a summarizing statement that centres on return. After a hiatus in which שׁוב has played a lesser role in the message of the prophets (Micah–Haggai), the opening of Zechariah returns the word and concepts to a place of prominence and reflects its importance

29. Butterworth, *Structure and Zechariah*, p. 299.
30. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 182.
31. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 571.
32. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 567.

and covenantal usage that is found in the opening books of the Twelve, particularly Hosea–Joel.[33]

Zechariah begins his message with a summary statement which attempts to justify Yhwh's actions in the past and serves as a transition to the call to return to the present generation. His statement (1.2) is simple and clear: Yhwh was angry with the previous generation. The extent of Yhwh's anger is illustrated by the use of the verb קָצַף at the beginning of the line and the noun קֶצֶף at the end.[34] The issue faced by both Haggai and Zechariah's audience was whether this anger had ceased and a time of blessing was in store. As Sweeney notes, 'By stating this premise at the outset, the prophet would bring this fundamental concern out into the open and prepare the basis for the assertion that YHWH was ready to put anger aside if the people would return'.[35] Zechariah 1.3 contains the first two uses of שׁוב. 'And you will say to them: Thus says YHWH of Hosts, 'return to me', declares YHWH of Hosts, 'and I will return to you', says YHWH of Hosts'. Following the introductory statement to Zechariah (ואמרת אלהם), Yhwh's spoken command is centred on two, two-word phrases: שׁובו אלי 'return to me', and ואשוב אליכם 'and I will return to you', framed by three occurrences of a speaking verb (אמר twice, נאם here as a noun) and the title יהוה צבאות. Thus the verse can be divided into an A-B-A-B-A pattern:

A. כה אמר יהוה צבאות 'thus says YHWH of Hosts'

    B. שׁובו אלי 'return to me'

A1. נאם יהוה צבאות 'declares YHWH of Hosts'[36]

    B1. ואשוב אליכם 'and I will return to you'

A2. אמר יהוה צבאות 'says YHWH of Hosts'.

The reciprocal phrase 'return to me…and I will return to you' is one of the clearest covenantal uses of שׁוב found in the Twelve. It is a call later repeated by Mal. 3.7 (שׁובו אלי ואשׁובה אליכם) that echoes similar statements found in the early part of the Twelve:

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33. Holladay identifies all four occurrences of שׁוב in Zech. 1.1-6 as conveying a covenantal relationship. See Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 78-81, 185. For a specific discussion on the covenantal use of שׁוב, see pp. 116-57.

34. For more on קצף see Gale B. Struthers, 'קצף', in *NIDOTTE*, III, pp. 962-63. קצף appears later in both noun (7.12) and verb (8.14) form, again emphasizing Yhwh's anger with the fathers.

35. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 571. This issue is discussed in depth in Peter Ross Bedford, 'Discerning the Time: Haggai, Zechariah and the 'Delay' in the Rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple', in *The Pitcher Is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gosta W. Ahlström* (ed. Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy; JSOTSup, 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 71-94. For his discussion on Zechariah specifically, see pp. 80-82.

36. It should be noted that the LXX omits this phrase as well as the final צבאות. This would result in the chiastic A-B-B-A pattern with the two uses of שׁוב in the middle.

- Hosea 6.1: 'Come, let us return (ונשובה) to the YHWH. He has torn but he will heal us; he strikes, but he will bind our wounds'.
- Hosea 14.2/ET 14.1: 'Return (שובה), O Israel, to YHWH your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity'.
- Joel 2.12-13: ''And even now', declares YHWH, 'return (שבו) to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and lamentation'. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return (ושובו) to YHWH your God for gracious and compassionate is he, slow to anger and abounding in covenant loyalty, one who relents from punishment'.[37]

What makes this connection even more obvious, however, is the imperative use of שוב which opens Yhwh's message in Zechariah. Though שוב appears over 80× in the Twelve and at least once in each of its writings, the imperative occurs only in the first two (the MT Hosea–Joel) and the last two (Zechariah–Malachi) writings. Therefore, this usage in Zech. 1.3 is the first since Joel 2.13, a span of thirty-five occurrences[38] and eight writings without an imperative. Because of this, Yhwh's command to return stands out.

Despite the clear forcefulness of the call, the exact meaning of the phrase remains unclear. As with each use of the phrase, the question must be asked, how, exactly, is Israel/Judah to return to Yhwh? As Meyers and Meyers note, 'The return from exile has evidently not brought about a full return to Yahweh. The decision to rebuild the temple has already been made, and so Yahweh's 'return' to Zion would seem to have been mandated. What can be lacking?'[39] Sweeney also reflects this ambiguity but suggests an answer. 'The appeal, however, does not specify what exactly is meant by a return to YHWH, but the later references to YHWH's words and statutes suggest a general paradigm of obedience to YHWH or acceptance of YHWH as sovereign G-d'.[40] Meyers and Meyers suggest that the answers to this question are found in the immediate context of 1.4-6 but also in Zech. 7.7-14 (particularly vv. 9-12), where the prophet recounts how the fathers failed to listen to Yhwh's words. 'Both these passages deal with the failure of the community to obey God's word, presumably in the form of the covenant, a collective of proto-canonical pentateuchal law, as well as the prophetic oracles already in fixed form'.[41] Though this is indeed correct, if the Twelve constitutes a 'Book', it is also possible to understand both of these passages as reflecting the combined message of the Twelve up to Zechariah. If the Twelve is read consecutively,

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37. In addition, Israel's failure to return to Yhwh is highlighted in Amos 4.6, 8, 9, 10, 11, while Jon. 3.7-10 recounts the people turning from evil and Yhwh turning from destruction.

38. This includes the variant reading of Hag. 2.17.

39. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 93.

40. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 571.

41. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 93.

Zechariah is not alone in his call to return; rather he is echoing previous calls that have been given throughout the Twelve. Thus, the different writings with their individual messages are informing his call. Both the imperative, which looks back to Hosea–Joel, and Zechariah's reference to the past (1.4) indicates that his message is nothing new. The history of the shortcoming of the Israelites contained in the first part of the Twelve would have been available and probably well-known to the early readers of the Twelve. Zechariah needed only to make application of this message. For this reason, there is no need to find this call ambiguous, as at this point in the Twelve, the message of Israel/Judah's failure to return, and Yhwh's desire for it, has been well documented.

In order to make his case, Zechariah refers for the first time to the 'former prophets' (הנביאים הראשנים), a phrase which occurs only in Zech. 1–8 (7.7, 12).[44] This statement indicates that the exile has changed the view of prophecy and a new category of pre-exilic or 'former' prophets has emerged. These 'former prophets' function as authoritative men from the past whose work survived, either orally or in written form, and was known in Zechariah's time. Moreover, Zechariah is the first prophet of the Twelve to overtly reference the work of others. The similarities between Zechariah's call to return in 1.3 and the summary of the former prophets' pre-exilic message in 1.4, shows that Zechariah sees himself as continuing in the same prophetic tradition as those who have gone before him. He is Yhwh's spokesman, and like Hosea, is a prophet who is charged with calling the people to return. His

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42.   This is one of the clear messages of Amos 4.6-11 and Jon. 3.

43.   A parallel account of the fathers' shortcomings is also offered in Zech. 7. In this chapter, just as in ch. 1, the fathers' defiance in the face of the former prophets is given (7.5-7). And while the passage does not contain a specific use of שׁוב, the reciprocal nature of the 'return to me' concept is clearly stated (7.11-14).

44.   Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, p. 132.

Zechariah's reliance on previous prophets is manifest in 1.4: 'Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets called, saying: 'Thus says YHWH of Hosts: 'Turn, I pray, from your evil ways and your evil deeds'. But they did not listen or pay attention to me, declares YHWH'. Here the prophet again (1.3) holds up the previous generation as an example to the current one, further emphasizing the reason why the current generation needs to heed Yhwh's call to return. The forefathers' failure to turn to Yhwh culminates in 1.6a, where the prophet asks the rhetorical question, 'But my words and my statutes that I commanded my servants the prophets, have they not overtaken your fathers?' Here the exile and the sufferings of the previous generation, which was well known to Zechariah's audience, are brought into view. Yhwh indicates that the forefathers had an opportunity to avoid such punishment, if they would turn (שׁוב),[42] something they did not do.[43]

In order to make his case, Zechariah refers for the first time to the 'former prophets' (הנביאים הראשנים), a phrase which occurs only in Zech. 1–8 (7.7, 12).[44] This statement indicates that the exile has changed the view of prophecy and a new category of pre-exilic or 'former' prophets has emerged. These 'former prophets' function as authoritative men from the past whose work survived, either orally or in written form, and was known in Zechariah's time. Moreover, Zechariah is the first prophet of the Twelve to overtly reference the work of others. The similarities between Zechariah's call to return in 1.3 and the summary of the former prophets' pre-exilic message in 1.4, shows that Zechariah sees himself as continuing in the same prophetic tradition as those who have gone before him. He is Yhwh's spokesman, and like Hosea, is a prophet who is charged with calling the people to return. His

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42.   This is one of the clear messages of Amos 4.6-11 and Jon. 3.

43.   A parallel account of the fathers' shortcomings is also offered in Zech. 7. In this chapter, just as in ch. 1, the fathers' defiance in the face of the former prophets is given (7.5-7). And while the passage does not contain a specific use of שׁוב, the reciprocal nature of the 'return to me' concept is clearly stated (7.11-14).

44.   Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, p. 132.

message is bold and clear: 'Return!' But who exactly does Zechariah have in mind when he refers to the 'former prophets'? Before this can be answered, a closer reading of the verse is in order.

Zechariah 1.4 contains Zechariah's second imperative use of שׁוב, and the opening words of that message reflect the call from the previous verse (כה אמר יהוה צבאות שׁובו נא). In 1.4, the prepositional phrase 'to me' (אלי) is noticeably absent when compared to the call to return in 1.3. In 1.3, Yhwh makes a general call for the people to return to him, a statement which was argued could be interpreted in light of the rest of the Twelve. In 1.4, however, the prophet offers a more specific call, one that involves turning from something, in this case 'evil ways' (מדרכיכם הרעים) and 'evil practices' (ומעליליכם הרעים),[45] rather than towards Yhwh. These phrases, however, are also general. While דרך is a common word, appearing 706× in the Old Testament, מעלל is less frequent, appearing a mere 40×, with a concentration in the prophetic books (31×), particularly Jeremiah (17×).[46] The word is translated as 'deeds', 'actions', and 'practice' and is normally associated negatively with Israel/Judah's failure to behave in a manner pleasing to Yhwh (e.g. Judg. 2.19; Neh. 9.35). That both 'ways' and 'practices' are modified by 'evil' (הרעים) in Zech. 1.4 is thus consistent with the theological message found in deuteronomic covenantal contexts. Most commentaries see the use of these two words as the key to the identity of Zechariah's 'former prophets'. Petersen finds parallels with Jer. 18.11; 25.5 and 35.15.

- 'Turn, I pray, each from his evil ways, and reform your ways and deeds' (Jer. 18.11b).
- 'Saying, "turn, I pray, each from his evil ways and evil deeds, and you will remain in the land which YHWH gave to you and your fathers forever and ever"' (Jer. 25.5).
- 'And I continually sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying "Turn, I pray, each from his evil ways and reform your deeds".' (Jer. 35.15a).

The similarities between these verses are undeniably strong. As Petersen notes, 'Present in all of these texts is the masculine plural imperative *šûbû*, the nouns *derek* (way) and *ma'alāl* (deed), and the context of so-called Jeremianic prose'.[47] He, like Meyers and Meyers, also finds a connection with Ezek. 33.11: 'Say to them, "As I live, declares the Lord YHWH, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in the turning of the wicked from his way so he lives. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die,

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45. The *BHS* identifies this form as a haplography. Both the *BHS* and the Massora read ומעלליכם.

46. מעלל also appears in Isaiah 3×, Ezekiel 1×, Hosea 5×, Micah 3×, and Zechariah 2×.

47. Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, p. 132.

house of Israel?"'[48] Does this imply that Zechariah was looking back to Jeremiah and Ezekiel only as his inspiration for 'the former prophets?' Petersen's view is not so narrow.

> One may infer that the author of Zech. 1:4 has viewed such texts…as typical of pre—586 prophetic language and has appropriated it as the sort of things such prophets said. This activity on the part of the author of Zech. 1:4 presupposes that he had access to some form of the nascent prophetic collections, one that in the case of Jeremiah included the recently written deuteronomistic prose. Zechariah 1:4b comprises not so much a single quotation but the sort of thing people in 520 would have expected such prophets to say.[49]

It should be noted that Zechariah's summary statement of the former prophets' message, 'Turn, I pray, from your evil ways and your evil deeds', is so general it could fit the context and message of many deuteronomic texts. In fact two of Jeremiah's three citations (25.4-5; 35.15), which appear to have the strongest connections to Zechariah, are themselves summary statements of previous prophetic work. Therefore if Zechariah is referencing Jeremiah, he is also summarizing the work of other pre-exilic prophets as well.[50]

What is most important, however, is Zechariah's position and function in the Book of the Twelve. Despite its broad message, Haggai–Zechariah has been purposely positioned within a specific order of the Twelve and must therefore be understood, at least initially, within the context of the scroll of the Twelve. Because of this, it may very well be that the author/editors of Zechariah had Jeremiah's passages in mind when they composed the words of the 'former prophets', but the insertion of the Haggai–Zechariah corpus into the Twelve changes this focus. Zechariah no longer demands an independent reading, but rather is in a position in which nine prophets precede him, all with an understanding of שׁוב, particularly the imperatives of Hosea–Joel. If the Book of the Twelve is read as a whole, the reader has a clear understanding of the origin and message of Zechariah's call to return because it has been provided by the 'former writings' Hosea–Zephaniah. O'Brien

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48.   See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, p. 95. Meyers and Meyers note, 'The specific nature of those sins which led to punishment includes, according to Jeremiah, injustice, oppression of the disenfranchised, theft, murder, adultery, and idolatry. Does Zechariah wish to accuse his audience of similar offenses? Apparently not, but the idea of social order—i.e., the absence of those sins—is as important for Zechariah as is the temple project.'

49.   Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, pp. 132-33.

50.   Furthermore, two eighth-century prophets, Hosea (4.9; 7.2; 9.15; 12.3 [ET 12.2]) and Micah (3.4), show Yhwh's displeasure with Israel's/Judah's actions using מעלל, which could have influenced Jeremiah's original statement (cf. Jer. 26.18). Hos. 4.9 is particularly interesting since it also contains an occurrence of שׁוב.

argues, 'The books of the twelve that precede Zechariah in the canon so closely conform to this Persian-era understanding of prophecy that Hosea through Zephaniah can be understood as the prelude to Zechariah, the portrait of former prophecy upon which the argument of Zechariah rests'.[51] She later adds, 'In review, then, when read from a Persian-period vantage point, Hosea through Micah typify Zechariah's characterization of the "earlier prophets"'.[52] What this implies is that the 'former prophets' as well as the understanding of 'evil practices' and 'evil ways' have been defined initially by the previous writings of the Twelve. Indeed, the Twelve has denounced the deeds of Israel/Judah on numerous occasions, particularly the eighth-century prophets, for covenant violations both social (e.g. Mic. 3.9-11) and cultic (e.g. Amos 5.21-24). That Israel did not turn (שׁוב) from their past deeds (מעלל) is a message that has been proclaimed from the first book of the Twelve (Hos. 5.4). Therefore, when attempting to understand the 'former prophets', defference should be made, at least initially, to Zechariah's position within the Twelve.[53]

Lastly, the significance of the wording of this statement should not be overlooked. If it is correct to read 'Turn, I pray, from your evil ways and your evil deeds' as a summary of the message of the Twelve up to Zechariah, then the unifying nature of שׁוב within the Twelve is made obvious. As was noted in the introduction, the primary focus of scholars to the thematic unity within the Twelve has been the Day of Yhwh. Though this theme is important in the Twelve, here in Zechariah the prophet is given an opportunity to review and summarize the message of previous writings, and instead of issuing a statement centred on יום יהוה, Zechariah summarizes the call of the former prophets with 'Return!'(שׁובו). By building on what has come before, Zechariah, as a Persian period prophet, has offered a crystallized summary of the earlier writings to the audience of the Twelve, which itself is (perhaps) a Persian audience. Since the Book of the Twelve was composed to have application during the Persian period,[54] then this section (1.2-6), but particularly this verse (1.4), has offered the Twelve's audience an interpretive key to understand the preceding books of the Twelve. As O'Brien notes, 'My claim is that in the Persian period Zechariah was the lens through which the other

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51. Julia M. O'Brien, 'Nahum–Habakkuk–Zephaniah: Reading the "Former Prophets" in the Persian Period', *Int* (2007), pp. 168-83 (172).

52. O'Brien, 'Reading the "Former Prophets"', p. 175. She also takes a similar position with regards to Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. 'These books give a Persian-period reader historical precedents to accept what Zech 1 proclaims: that while YHWH was angry with the people in the past, they now await restoration. Just as in the past YHWH punished the nations that went too far in carrying out their divine-appointed duties, so too Zechariah's audience might hope that YHWH will do the same in their own time' (p. 180).

53. This same reading can be applied to Zech. 7.7-14.

54. Watts, 'A Frame for the Book of the Twelve', p. 213.

prophets were read—and perhaps the template by which they were written or edited'.[55] By issuing a similar call, Zechariah has advanced a thematic message that began in Hosea and continued through Zephaniah. That Zechariah incorporates the theme of return into the introduction of his writing places a high value on the call to return and shows that Zechariah himself understands the essence of the former prophets' message to be return (שׁוב).

The next two verses ask three rhetorical questions: (1) 'Your fathers, where are they?' (2) 'And the prophets, do they live forever?' and (3) 'But my words and my statutes that I commanded my servants the prophets, have they not overtaken your fathers?' (1.5-6a). The point of such questions is to drive home the lessons of Israel's/Judah's past. Yes, both the forefathers and the prophets were dead. And yes, Yhwh's words of destruction did come to pass in the form of conquest and exile by a foreign power. Yhwh had warned the fathers (1.4), but they had failed to listen and had suffered the consequences. 'The interpretive structure provided by the prophets assisted those who could perceive that what had happened to Israel was consistent with a fulfillment of Yahweh's words proclaimed by his prophets. Their words lived on, even though they themselves had died.'[56] That Yhwh's actions and the punishment of 586/7 were justified is evidenced by the closing phrase of the section which contains another occurrence of שׁוב: 'Then they repented (וישׁובו) and said, 'As Yhwh of Hosts determined to do, in accordance with our ways (כדרכינו) and deeds (וכמעלינו), so he has done to us' (1.6b).

The call to שׁוב in 1.4 is finally answered by the forefathers in 1.6. Not only do the fathers admit that Yhwh was justified in his actions against them, Yhwh's judgments ended with justified results—they repented. The previous generation's struggle of the שׁוב relationship has culminated in the desired result. This fact alone is remarkable because besides Haggai, Jonah is the only book of the Twelve that indicates that the prophets were successful in their calls to return, at least during the immediate time of their ministry. Most of the writings of the Twelve promise that Yhwh would be restored to his people, but those are seen often as taking place in the future (cf. Joel 4.17-19; Amos 9.11-15; Zeph. 3.8-20). From the viewpoint of the post-exilic period, Zechariah claims that the prophets were indeed successful in the efforts to bring Israel/Judah back to Yhwh, albeit not in time to avoid disaster.[57] This

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55. O'Brien, 'Reading the "Former Prophets"', p. 172.

56. Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, p. 134.

57. 'It also should be noted that besides repentance, there is an understanding of returning to the land found in this statement. "Israel rejected the prophets" words and expired. This earlier generation had, however, recognized the justice in the way in which they had been treated. They returned. This word, *šûb*, "return", has geographic as well as religious and ethical implications for Zechariah's hearers, and it is a word originally at home in oracles of salvation. This prologue to the book conveys hope. Just as the fathers

leads to one of the main thrusts of 1.2-6: the direction of Yhwh's anger against the previous generation, and the satiation of that anger.[58] In response to the rhetorical questions of v. 5, Sweeney notes, 'By directing this question to the audience, however, YHWH or the prophet will prompt their listeners or readers to conclude that the circumstances of the past are now gone as well, and the new situation presents an opportunity to restore the relationship between YHWH and the people that had been disrupted throughout the period of the Babylonian exile'.[59] The time of Yhwh's anger had passed and the opportunity for return was at hand.

Besides justifying Yhwh's actions and indicating that the time of divine wrath was over, the passage serves as a warning to Zechariah's listeners/ readers. Yes, the forefathers and the current generation ultimately returned to the land, but Zechariah has once again issued a call to return. How will the second generation react to this message? Will they respond like the fore-fathers, refusing to return until they are once again punished? Or will they heed the prophet's calls and immediately return? In one sense, this question hangs over all the post-exilic writings. Since they have been given a fresh start, will the people who have returned to the land, return to Yhwh and experience his blessings? If Malachi is any indication, the outlook is not always optimistic (cf. Mal. 3.6-7). The audience of the Twelve, who them-selves were descendants of those who had returned, face an identical decision.

Looking closer at Zechariah, it is appropriate to ask what a post-exilic return to Yhwh would entail. For Haggai, who began prophesying a few months before Zechariah, the faithful response to Yhwh involved renewing construction efforts on the temple; an issue made apparent at the opening of the writing (1.2-4). In Zechariah, however, this concern is not immediately clear. In the first six verses of Zechariah no mention is made of the temple or the need for reconstruction. By referencing the message of the 'former prophets', a group of people who ministered during the time of the first temple and from which Haggai would have been excluded, Zechariah's primary focus seems to be elsewhere. The repetition of ways (1.4, 6) and deeds (1.4, 6) indicates the prophet's concern with the actions of the fathers, thus leading to an understanding that a return to Yhwh involves a multi-faceted approach. This is the message proclaimed by the writings of the Twelve prior to Haggai–Zechariah. Zechariah is certainly concerned with rebuilding the temple (cf. 6.9-15), but this is not the initial focus of the writing. His call is to return to covenantal purity, one that incorporates all

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turned, so now the current generation may (re)turn' (Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, pp. 110-11).

58. This is seen later in Zech. 1.16, where Yhwh states that he has returned (שׁבתי) to Jerusalem.

59. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 572-73.

aspects of Israel's life—social and cultic—detailed by the other writings of the Twelve. This aspect, combined with the message that Yhwh's anger has passed, provides this new generation with a fresh start. 'The fathers had repented. The stage was set for a glorious future. Yahweh is enabled to return, if the current generation returns as well. The positive tone of this section is markedly reinforced by the origins of such language of return. Such discourse is at home not in oracles of admonition but in words of salvation'.[60]

Overall, Zechariah's initial calls to return are pleas to return to a covenantal relationship with Yhwh. Though the people had returned from exile, the prophet has issued a return statement based on the works of those who have gone before him: 'Return to me and I will return to you'. The previous generations are held up as examples of a group of people who were disobedient to the covenant, failed to heed the prophets' calls to return, and were punished by Yhwh. The focus on the ways and deeds of this punished generation are intended as calls to the current generation to examine their own actions and to bring them into conformity with Yhwh. By mentioning the 'former prophets', Zechariah has summarized and interpreted, for both his listeners as well as the audience of the Twelve, the message of the nine prophets who have preceded him as a call to return. Yes the people have returned, but the struggle of the return (שוב) relationship was not complete. Would the people of the post-exilic generation continue turning toward Yhwh or would they turn away in rebellion? If the promises of restoration outlined in Zechariah 1–8 and the response of the people in Haggai are an indication, there is an implication within the text that the people initially responded positively to the prophet's message. The message of chs. 9–14, however, indicates that the final restoration still lay in the future.

d. שוב *as Restoration*

Of the four groupings of שוב found in Zechariah, the largest is centred on restoration (1.16; 8.3, 15; 9.12; 10.9, 10). Like the book itself, the use of שוב shifts between the main sections of 1–8 and 9–14. Whereas the restoration described in Zechariah 1–8 is connected to Yhwh's present return to Zion, the restoration found in 9–14 is a distant event, placed in an eschatological and uncertain future. In Zechariah 1–8 Yhwh's turning is always listed as a past tense event—he has already returned to Jerusalem. This is different from

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60. Petersen, *Haggai–Zechariah 1–8*, p. 135. It must be remembered that the return relationship is a complex one that is wrapped around Israel's struggle with herself to return to Yhwh, and Yhwh's struggle with himself to return to Israel. Yes, Yhwh promises to return to his people if they return to him, but the fact that the people returned in the first place (1.6) must be understood as the results of Yhwh's past actions. In this instance, Yhwh has returned (1.16), and the struggle of the return relationship, which the forefathers failed, has begun anew.

Zechariah 9–14 where the focus shifts from Yhwh to the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the blessings that Jerusalem/the land will once again receive. Nonetheless, despite these differences, שוב as it relates to the message of restoration supports the Zion theme and helps unite the two parts of the writing.

i. *Restoration as Yhwh's return to Jerusalem.*

- 1.16—'Therefore, this is what YHWH says: 'I have returned (שבתי) to Jerusalem with compassion, there my house will be rebuilt. And a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem', declares YHWH of Hosts. '

Holladay classifies this use as a '*Motion back to the point of departure*' in which God is the subject.[61] Zechariah 1.16 falls within the context of Zechariah's first vision (1.7-17) that takes place some three months after Zechariah's initial proclamation (1.1). The vision is concerned with Yhwh ending his anger and restoring Jerusalem and the temple, thus building on the idea introduced in 1.1-6.[62] In the vision, the angel of Yhwh asks Yhwh, 'how long will you not show compassion to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been indignant these seventy years?'[63] (1.12). The answer given by Yhwh indicates that Yhwh's anger against Israel/Judah has ended and has instead shifted against the nations. 'I have been jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with great jealousy, and I am very angry with the nations that are at

61.   Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 59-60. This is identical to Zech. 8.3.

62.   'By stating YHWH's comfort for and choice of Jerusalem/Zion, the oracle empha-sizes that the time of punishment is ended (Isa 40:1-2), and that Jerusalem will resume its place as the site of YHWH's revelation to Israel/Judah and the world at large (cf. Isa 2:2-4)' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 581).

63.   What Lundbom says of seventy years in Jer. 25.11 applies here as well, 'The idea that Jerusalem and the Temple lay in ruins for 70 years is postexilic (Zech 1:12; 7:5; 2 Chr 36:21; Dan 9:2) and not implicit in Jeremiah's prophecies. The number 70 is stereotyped, thus no more than an approximation. If it corresponds to anything, it is the conventional description of a full life-span (Ps 90:10). Tyre is forgotten 70 years, then remembered (Isa 23:15-17)… As far as Babylon's tenure as a world power is concerned, 70 years turned out to be a good approximation. From the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) to Babylon's capture by Cyrus (539 B.C.) was 73 years; from the Battle of Carchemesh (605 B.C.—Nebuchadrezzar's first year; cf. 25:1) to Babylon's capture by Cyrus (539 B.C.) was 66 years; and from the actual end of the Assyrian Empire (609/8 B.C.) to Babylon's capture by Cyrus and the return of the exiles (539 B.C.) was almost precisely 70 years' (Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* [AB, 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004], pp. 249-50). For an older discussion on the understanding of the seventy years see C.F. Whitley, 'The Term Seventy Years Captivity', *VT* 4 (1954), pp. 60-72; Avigdor Orr, 'The Seventy Years of Babylon', *VT* 6 (1956), pp. 304-306; and E. Lipinski, 'Recherches sur le Livre de Zacharie', *VT* 20 (1970), pp. 25-55.

ease. I was a little angry, but they helped make it worse' (1.14b-15). The verbal form 'I have been jealous' (קנאתי)[64] connotes covenantal language (Deut 32.16, 21; adj. form קַנָּא Exod. 20.5; 34.14; Deut. 4.24; 5.9; 6.15) and reflects other promises of restoration that are also based on שׁוב, particularly Joel 2.18 (introduced by the call to return found in 2.12-14). That Yhwh is angry with the nations in Zechariah for the excessive punishment of Israel/Judah is not a new message (Isa. 10.5-19; but more immediately Nah. 3.19). The nations have overstepped their divine mandate as punishers, and Yhwh once again promises to restore Israel by punishing the nations (cf. Joel 4.1-2; Amos 9.11-12; Zeph. 3.19-20).

    The oracles found in 1.16-17 contain the application of the vision. In 1.16, Yhwh promises that he has returned[65] to Jerusalem with 'mercy' (ברחמים cf. תרחם 1.12)[66] and that the temple will be rebuilt. Verse 17 promises that prosperity (lit. 'my cities will overflow from good') will come again to the cities of Judah and that Yhwh will 'comfort' (ונחם) and 'choose' (ובחר) Jerusalem. By using covenantal/restoration language similar to other locations in the Twelve, Zechariah makes it clear that Yhwh's anger with Israel/Judah is over and the time to rebuild has come. Restoration begins with Yhwh's return to Jerusalem. In this way, the passage sounds similar to previous promises of restoration found in the Twelve (cf. Hos. 14.5-8; Joel 4.17-21; Amos 9.11-15; Zeph. 3.15-20) but conveys a stronger sense of immediacy since Yhwh has already returned. Because of this, Judah/Israel stands on the cusp of restoration.

    With Yhwh returning to dwell in his temple in 1.16, 'The balance between the actions of the people and the response of Yahweh has been achieved:

People return	*Yahweh* returns
1.3	1.3
1.6	1.16'[67]

The people had turned (1.6) and Yhwh had turned (1.16). But would this turning continue? Reading 1.16 in light on 1.3 shows that returning is not a one-time, completed process for either party. Indeed the fathers turned in 1.6

    64.   While the form of the verb is perfect, the NIV and other English translations read it as a present.

    65.   There are translation issues involved with all occurrences of שׁוב in 1.16 and 8.3. Though the NIV translates שבתי as a future tense (imperfect), the verb is actually a perfect. In light of the discussion that Yhwh's anger has passed and that he has chosen to return to Jerusalem (1.6), it is better to understand this verb either as a present tense (am returned) or past (have returned). More on this will be said in the following section.

    66.   רחם and רחמים have numerous connections throughout the Twelve, particularly to the early chapters of Hosea (רחם 1.6, 7; 2.3, 6, 25 [2×]; רחמים Hos. 2.21). רחם is also used in the restoration sections of 14.4; and Mic. 7.19.

    67.   Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 123.

and their descendants were brought back to the land, and indeed Yhwh returned to Jerusalem in 1.16 and brought the promise of blessing, but the importance of the call to return issued to the new generation in 1.3 remains. The people must continue turning toward him, and Yhwh would continue turning toward them. This understanding would have been evident to the audience of the Twelve who stood under both the shadow of the completed temple, which indicated Yhwh's blessing, and the shadow of the Persian Empire, which indicated Yhwh's punishment.

- 8.3—'This is what YHWH says: 'I have returned (שבתי) to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem will be called the city of Truth, and the mountain of YHWH of Hosts, the Holy Mountain'.'

Using the repeated phrase, 'This is what YHWH of Hosts says',[68] Zech. 8.1-17 is divided into seven different oracles that promise that Jerusalem will be the recipient of future blessings. Verse 3 is contained in the second oracle and follows Yhwh's proclamation that 'I have been jealous for Zion, great jealousy, and with great wrath I have been jealous for her' (8.2). That Yhwh announces his 'jealousy' (קִנֵּאתִי)[69] for Zion/Jerusalem before he declares his return reflects the similar order in Zechariah's first vision (1.14 'jealous', 1.16 'return').[70] In this passage, Yhwh announces his return and choice to dwell with his people once more. The translation of the verbs in the passage warrants mention. Including the introductory phrase, the four verbs appear as perfects (אָמַר 'he said', שַׁבְתִּי 'I have returned', וְשָׁכַנְתִּי 'and I will dwell', and וְנִקְרָאָה 'and she will be called').[71] The NIV has chosen to translate them all as prophetic perfects: the first verb (אמר) as a present, and the other three as future tense, thus indicating YHWH's return is yet to come: 'This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain"' (8.3, NIV). Of the English translations consulted, the NASB, CEV, NKJV, REB, and HCSB all read שוב and שכן as future tense verbs. Besides the older KJV, ASV, and Darby versions, which all read 'I am returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem', only two translations consulted translate שוב in the perfect tense:

- 'Thus says the LORD: "I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain"' (ESV).

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68. Zechariah 8.3 is the only oracle of the seven not to include the word Hosts (צבאות).

69. קנא appears three times in the verse, twice as a piel perfect (קִנֵּאתִי) and once as a noun (קִנְאָה).

70. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, p. 298.

71. The last two verbs are vav consecutive perfects.

- '"I've come back to Zion, I've moved back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem's new names will be Truth City, and Mountain of God-of-the-Angel-Armies, and Mount Holiness"' (The Message).

Besides being the more natural reading, these two translations better reflect the understanding of שׁוּב initially explained in both 1.1-6, and 16 in which Yhwh has stated that his anger has passed and that he has returned. As Conrad argues, 'In the word of the LORD associated with scene 1, the LORD said, "I have returned to Jerusalem" (1.6 [*sic* 1.16][72]). In the words of the LORD accompanying scene 3 the LORD said, "I am about to come and I am about to dwell in your midst" (2.9). The "about to" has become a reality'.[73] Since Yhwh has returned, blessings are soon to follow. This understanding also fits well with Haggai's context in which the people began to rebuild the temple (1.13-14) but had not yet received the blessings (2.19).

    The blessings indicated by the passage are that Jerusalem will be called the 'City of Truth' (עיר־האמת) and the mountain of Yhwh will be renamed the 'Holy Mountain' (הר הקדשׁ). Whereas most restoration passages include a change in agricultural conditions as well as other changes that affect Jerusalem/Zion/'my holy hill', the restoration that leads to a name change in 8.3 is distinctive.[74] Sweeney argues, 'The designation of Jerusalem as YHWH's "holy mountain" clearly presupposes Ezekiel's understanding of Jerusalem as the sacred site of the Temple that is purged so that YHWH's holy presence might be restored as the Temple is re-established (see esp. Ezekiel 1–11; 40–48)'.[75] It should be added that this idea is older than Ezekiel. In the view of the Twelve, it is possible to see Yhwh's return and reconstruction of Jerusalem in Zechariah as an understood reference to Micah's earlier warnings that Jerusalem was to be cleansed before Yhwh's temple could be rebuilt and Yhwh's reign would be initiated.

> Therefore on your account, Zion will be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mount of the house a wooded high place. Then it will come to pass in the last days, the mountain of YHWH's house will be established at the head of the mountains; it will be lifted up above the hills, and peoples will stream to it (Mic. 3.12–4.1; cf. Isa. 1.21, 26).

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72.   See Conrad, *Zechariah*, p. 57.

73.   Conrad, *Zechariah*, p. 143. Conrad's translation reflects the present reality of the situation, '"I have returned to Zion, and I am dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem is called the faithful city and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain"'.

74.   Speaking of the title 'the City of Truth' Meyers and Meyers add, 'This is a unique expression in the Hebrew Bible, and even in English it arrests the attention of the reader… This unusual epithet for Jerusalem *'îr hā'ĕmet*, "the City of Truth", conveys the importance of the holy city for the process of establishing justice in society' (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, p. 413).

75.   Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 647.

Therefore, it is possible that Zechariah, from his position as a post-exilic prophet, understood the happenings of his day as the fulfilment of the words of restoration spoken of by the earlier prophets, particularly Mic. 1.1-4, complete with the nations streaming to a restored Zion (cf. Mic. 1.2; Zech. 8.23). All of these blessings, however, are dependent on Yhwh continuing to turn from his anger toward Jerusalem. As Sweeney concludes, 'The oracle marks the point in the sequence in which YHWH's return to Jerusalem will initiate the process of restoration'.[76]

- 8.15—'so I turned (שׁבתי), I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Do not be afraid'.

Because some translations render שׁבתי as 'again' or 'now', it could be argued that שׁוב in 8.15 should be grouped in the narrative section. However, because 8.15 is another first person perfect use of שׁוב which relates to Yhwh's actions, and is contained in a section which announces restoration, its message better fits this category. Zechariah 8.15 is part of the seventh oracle of the chapter and acts as a conclusion for what comes before.[77] As with 1.16 and 8.3, שׁוב once again appears in the perfect, this time paired with זממתי which means 'consider', 'purpose', or 'devise'. In this instance, Holladay believes that שׁוב could mean 'again', but also offers the more probable alternate meaning of Yhwh changing his mind/plans.[78] This meaning is conveyed in the drastic shift of Yhwh's actions between 8.14 and 8.15. In 8.14, Yhwh, in a statement that summarizes his past dealings with the fathers says, '"As I purposed to bring evil upon you when your fathers made me wrathful", says YHWH of Hosts, "I did not repent"'. ולא נחמתי, which concludes the line, reinforces the fact that Yhwh did not change his mind in the past when bent on judgment and stands in contrast to the opening two words (כן שׁבתי) of 8.15. The damage of 8.14 will be undone. In 8.15, Yhwh has turned (שׁבתי); he no longer purposes evil (זממתי להרע 8.14) against his people, but instead plans to do good (זממתי בימים האלה להיטיב). Because Yhwh's anger has passed, blessing is once more at the centre of the message as Yhwh promises to do good (להיטיב) to Jerusalem. These blessings act as reassurance for the people, and because of this, they are commanded not to fear. The people are to respond to Yhwh's goodness with ethical acts of righteousness (8.16-17). So once more, Yhwh has stated that he has returned/turned, and his actions will result in renewal.

In Zechariah 1–8, the reader stands on the verge of realizing Yhwh's powerful restoration. In the first part of Zechariah, the struggle that surrounds the call to return has undergone an important development—Yhwh has

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76. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 647.
77. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 652.
78. Holladay, *The Meaning of ŠÛBH*, p. 72.

returned. Beginning in 1.16 and continuing throughout ch. 8, Zechariah, by using the perfect tense of שׁוּב, has reinforced the fact that Yhwh's return to Jerusalem has become an actuality. No longer does restoration belong to some unknown future generation—it will be experienced now. Yhwh's anger has turned, and the people, who themselves have returned, will prosper because of it. In this way, 'Return to me and I will return to you' has become a reality. As will be shown, however, the immediacy of Yhwh's restoration stands in tension to Zechariah 9–14, where restoration is, once again a future, eschatological event.

ii. *Restoration as future return from exile.* In chs. 1–8 the return from exile is a recent event that sets the context for Zechariah's continued calls to return. In Zech. 9–14, however, a future return is envisioned—one that takes place in a more uncertain eschatological future. After chs. 1–8, the object of שׁוּב in restoration settings changes from Yhwh to the people. In these chapters, Yhwh is the initiator who is concerned with ending the exile of his scattered people and bringing them back to the land. Various blessings accompany this return, but it is the return of the people themselves who are the primary blessing.[79] The situation in chs. 9–10 has changed from the previous setting (chs. 1–8). Israel/Judah faces a new enemy (יון 9.13) that has not appeared before, and Israel's new leaders face Yhwh's wrath (10.3) rather than Yhwh's blessings (3.5-7). Nonetheless, this new eschatological restoration, just as the first, is still based on Yhwh's return to Jerusalem in chs. 1–8.

- 9.12—'Return (שׁוּבוּ) to a stronghold, prisoners of hope; even today I am declaring I will return (אָשִׁיב) twice as much to you'.

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79. Persian policy may be behind some of these calls for a return to the land. As Petersen notes, 'in Judahite territory during the early Persian period, there is an unusual pattern in settlement, namely, a number of new villages. Hoglund takes this to be evidence of a conscious Persian policy, *ruralization*. Those who were returning (or being returned) from exile, were being settled in a particular nonurban mode, one which the Persians hoped would maximize the agricultural productivity of the region. Such a policy is utterly consistent with reports about a depopulated Jerusalem' (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 20). Petersen bases this statement on an unpublished paper. See K. Hoglund, 'The Establishment of a Rural Economy in the Judean Hill Country in the Late Sixth Century' (paper presented at the Southeastern Regional SBL/AAR/ASOR meetings, Charlotte, NC, 16–18 March 1989). For Hoglund's more complete thoughts on the Persian influence on post exilic Judah see K.G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Mission of Ezra and Nehemiah* (SBLDS, 125; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). For more on this issue see Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); and John Kessler, 'Reconstructing Haggai's Jerusalem: Demographic and Sociological Considerations and the Search for an Adequate Methodological Point of Departure', in *'Every City Shall Be Forsaken', Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; JSOTSup, 330; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 137-58.

Holladay identifies Yhwh's promise to 'restore twice as much to you' as a use of שוב which can mean to give or to pay back.[80] Though the English versions are practically unanimous in reading מִשְׁנֶה אָשִׁיב לָךְ as 'I will restore double to you', not all commentaries agree. Smith and Petersen both read the line as referring to Yhwh's return to Jerusalem, though they offer little support for doing so. Smith reads מִשְׁנֶה with the previous section (גַּם־הַיּוֹם מַגִּיד) 'Even today, I am declaring a second time I will return to you',[81] while Petersen understands it as an auxiliary 'I will return again to you'.[82] מִשְׁנֶה, which occurs 34-35× in the Old Testament, appears only here and Zeph. 1.10 (where it functions as a name) within the Twelve. Of those 34-35×, the NIV has translated it as second (8×), next in rank (5×), double (4×), and twice as much (4×). In connection with the latter two translations, Hess reads its appearance in Zech. 9.12 as a restorative use similar to Isa. 61.7,[83] a connection with which Sweeney is sceptical.[84] Additionally, with Zechariah's already stated belief that Yhwh has returned to Jerusalem, the call for the prisoners to return to this stronghold once again connects Yhwh's presence in Jerusalem with blessing.

The initial use of שוב in 9.12 is the first appearance of the imperative since 1.4, where Yhwh summarizes the message of the former prophets. Here, however, instead of turning from evil practices, those being called are asked to return to 'a stronghold' (לְבִצָּרוֹן),[85] which could be understood as Zion/Jerusalem. As Petersen argues, the 'MT reads *šûbû lĕbiṣṣārôn*, literally, 'return to the fortress', which provides an alliterative play on the noun Zion,

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80. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 92. Of the 7× Holladay identifies שוב as 'pay back' only here is God the subject (p. 93).

81. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 258.

82. David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), p. 54.

83. Richard S. Hess, 'מִשְׁנֶה', *NIDOTTE*, II, pp. 1138-39 (1138).

84. 'Many interpreters relate this statement to Isa 61:7, which states at the time of the release of Zion's prisoners that Zion will receive a double portion from the nations because her shame has doubled. It must be kept in mind that the repayment for a crime of theft is a double portion (Exod 22:3) and that Isa 40:2 states that Jerusalem had already paid double for her sins. From the perspective of Zech 9:12, YHWH will return the payment to Zion now that the time for restoration is at hand' (Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 665-66). It is important to note, however, that Sweeney does not doubt the restorative nature of the passage, but rather the reason for the restoration (theft as opposed to shame).

85. The modified 'your' supplied by the NIV is absent from the MT. The exact meaning of בצרון is unknown because it is a *hapax legomenon*. בִּצָּרוֹן (the stronghold), occurring only here, must refer to a secure place, as indicated by the verb בָּצַר' (Thomas McComiskey, 'Zechariah', in *The Minor Prophets*, III [ed. Thomas McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998], pp. 1003-244 [1170-71]).

ṣiyyôn, thereby indicating that the fortress is Zion'.[86] Exactly who is being called to return in this verse is a matter of debate. In 9.12, the call is addressed to the ironically named 'prisoners of hope' (אסירי התקוה), which most likely includes 'your prisoners from the waterless pit' אסיריך מבור אין מים בו) from the previous verse. That both of these terms relate to those exiled outside the land is probable,[87] but does Zechariah have something more specific in mind? Conrad, for example, has strongly argued that these prisoners are exiles from the northern kingdom. 'In the oracle the call to the northern kingdom to return (9.12) matches the earlier call for those in Judah to return (1.2)… In this passage he [YHWH] does not promise to return (he has already returned to Jerusalem) but to 'restore' or 'cause the community to return' in numbers that will be twice what they had previously been (9.12)'.[88] While Conrad may be correct, his reading should not overshadow the more important connection between the hope of the exiles (or prisoners) and their return to the land.

> 'Hope' here thus conveys more than a vague belief that the future will some how be better; it involves the specific form of release from confinement or prison: it implies return to Zion. Just as Jeremiah (29:11; 31:17) linked the future hope with the return of the exiles to their land, so Second Zechariah's use of the imagery of prison and of hope evokes the expectation of restoration.[89]

Though the historical setting and exact meaning of the verse is difficult to ascertain, some conclusions concerning שוב can be drawn from this section. That Yhwh is active and powerful in his defence of Jerusalem/Zion seems to be at the heart of the passage. In 9.10, he removes the implements of war from both Ephraim and Judah and rules over all the earth. In 9.13 Judah becomes his bow and Ephraim his arrows, and in 9.14-17 Yhwh fights on behalf of his people. Yhwh's saving activities may help explain why Zechariah uses the term 'prisoners of hope'. As Petersen argues, 'Israel's beliefs about the significance of Zion provide a hint of an answer [about why prisoners are bound to hope], namely, that those who are in fortress Zion are heir to the security offered by it, *when* Yahweh resides there'.[90]

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86.   Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 55. 'This phrase, ambiguous in Hebrew, picks up on the use of the verbal adjective *maggid*, as that term is used in Deutero-Isaiah to refer to the sort of proclamation that distinguished Yahweh from other gods (e.g., Isa. 45:19; 46:10)' (p. 62).

87.   Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, pp. 140-41, pp. 143-44.

88.   Conrad, *Zechariah*, p. 162. He states previously, 'Zechariah 9.11 represents a transition from a focus on Judah/Jerusalem to a focus on the flock of the house of Joseph'. His position is supported by the appearance of Ephraim in 9.11, 13.

89.   Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, p. 143.

90.   Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 61.

At the heart of 9.12 and the two uses of שׁוּב is the idea of restoration which is centred on Jerusalem. Like the other passages, Yhwh is announcing restoration that will affect the land. Jerusalem will be made safe, and Yhwh will fight for her. Both of these instances can be understood as a result of the repeated themes of Yhwh choosing to return and dwell in Jerusalem. Where this passage differs from the previous, however, is in the scope of the restoration. Whereas the previous passages announced blessings to Zion/ Jerusalem, in 9.12 Zion/Jerusalem will be blessed by those outside the land, particularly by those returning from exile. 'The author of Zech. 9:12 seems to have taken a formulation like that of Zech. 1:3 and made it literal. The "returns" of Zechariah 9 are palpable, involving both Yahwists' and Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem.'[91] Therefore, despite the fact that Yhwh's kindness towards the prisoners is based on the covenant (9.11) and does not mention the actions of the people, the imperative use of שׁוּב aimed at the prisoners in connection with a first person imperfect description of Yhwh's actions (I will restore) carries hints of the 'return to me and I will return to you' concept.

- Zechariah 10.9-10—'I have sown them among the peoples, but in distant lands they will remember me. They will cause their sons to live and they will return (וְשָׁבוּ). I will cause them to return (וַהֲשִׁבוֹתִים) from the land of Egypt and I will gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to the land of Gilead and Lebanon, and room will not be found for them'.

This passage, like 9.12, emphasizes the idea of return, only this time the land is the focus of the abundant homecoming, rather than Jerusalem/Zion specifically. Once again, the people will return to the land from exile. Chapter 10 opens with a command to ask Yhwh for rain. This is followed by a condemnation of the *teraphim* (הַתְּרָפִים) and diviners (וְהַקּוֹסְמִים) for false-hood (10.2). The verse ends with the summary statement, 'Thus they wander like sheep. They are afflicted for there is no shepherd'. This then leads to a statement of Yhwh's anger against shepherds/leaders of Judah and Yhwh's promise to bring about new leadership from Judah (vv. 3-5). Verse 6 begins a section of promised restoration that, like 9.12-13, incorporates both Judah and Israel (Joseph v. 6; Ephraimites v. 7). In vv. 6-8, Yhwh promises to: have compassion (רִחַמְתִּי), answer (וְאַעֲנֵם), signal (אֶשְׁרְקָה), gather (וַאֲקַבְּצֵם), and ransom (פְּדִיתִים) the Ephraimites.[92] In vv. 9-10, the focus shifts specifically to

91. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 61.

92. Speaking of Ephraim mentioned in 10.7, Meyers and Meyers say, 'Ephraim appears in this verse apart from mention of the Southern Kingdom. The focus is now, here and in the rest of this chapter, on the remnant of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom. The first part of this chapter (vv 1-2) apparently signals to the northerners. Then verses 3-5 announce the role that the Southern Kingdom will play in securing the return of the

the undoing of their exile. When v. 9 opens, Yhwh has 'sown' (וְאֶזְרָעֵם)[93] Israel among the peoples during their exile in 722. It is during this long exile, in lands far from Israel, that the people will 'remember me' (יזכרוני). It is this remembrance that prompts the people to return (ושבו) to the land. 'The notion of "remembering" is a complex one, which here involves not only remembering in some cognitive sense but also responding on the basis of certain recollected knowledge. In this instance the act of remembering is described in the very next line. The people—more particularly, the children of those who had been taken into exile—will return to the land.'[94] In 10.10, Yhwh promises to bring back (והשיבותים) and gather the exiles from the lands of captivity, both Egypt and Assyria. Noticeably, Babylon is not mentioned. The idea of returning exiles from Egypt/Assyria reflects the undoing of Yhwh's covenant curses against Israel mentioned earlier in the Twelve, particularly Hos. 7.11; 9.3; 11.5 and 12.1 where Assyria and Egypt are mentioned together. Here that exile is reversed, thus echoing Hosea's words (Hos. 11.11). The references to Gilead and Lebanon indicate that the number of exiles who will return to the land will be so great that the traditional boundaries of Israel/Judah will not be able to contain them. Once again, restoration involves an undoing of the exile, this time that of the northern kingdom, and שוב is understood as a return to the land.

Thus, restoration uses of שוב focus on Yhwh in two ways: (1) he has returned to Jerusalem/Zion [1–8] and (2) he will bring the exiles back to Zion/the land (9–10). While Yhwh's return in chs. 1–8 has already taken place, the return of the exiles in chs. 9–10 is still a part of a future restoration. Though Zechariah speaks of a return for the exiles of both Judah and Israel,

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northern exiles. Verse 6 serves as a transition, mentioning both the House of Judah and the House of Joseph. Finally, with the naming of Ephraim at the beginning of verse 7, the return of the northerners is anticipated' (Meyers and Meyers*, Zechariah 9–14*, p. 211).

93.   The tense of זרע as well as whether it should be translated as 'sow' or 'scatter' has generated much discussion among the commentaries. For opposing views, see Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 263, who translates it as 'sow' (from the root זרע as read in the MT), and Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 69, who translates it as 'scattered' (from the root זרה, an amendment suggested by the *BHS*). Meyers and Meyers argue for 'sown' specifically as it relates to Israel/Ephraim. 'The use of *zr'* thus is far more appropriate for describing the dispersion of the northerners. They were not simply scattered; they were sown, and so they grew in the places to which the Assyrians had deported them. The metaphor of planting is eminently appropriate to the prophet's awareness of the long duration—the rootedness—of Ephraim's exile' (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, p. 216). This translation seems most appropriate, as the image depicted in the following verse is that of abundance. Yhwh has sown them among the nations and reaped a harvest of people so great that they could not be contained within the confines of the traditional boundaries of Israel.

94.   Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 76.

there seems to be more concern in 9–10 with the return of the northern kingdom. While the eschatological nature of chs. 9–14 makes a realistic understanding of the return of exiles from the Northern Kingdom seem unlikely, the passage perhaps conveys a post-exilic longing for such an event. More importantly, however, Zechariah's emphasis on the Northern Kingdom balances the concerns of the early part of the Twelve (Hosea, Amos) and their own promises of restoration.

e. שׁוב *as Judgment*

The judgmental use of שׁוב in Zechariah is a minor occurrence, appearing only once in the writing to convey Yhwh's future action against the shepherd and his followers.

- Zechariah 13.7—' "Sword, awake against my shepherd, against the man who is my fellow!" Declares Yʜwʜ of Hosts. "Strike the shepherd and the flock is scattered, and I will turn (והשׁבתי) my hand against the little ones".'

The judgment use of שׁוב, here translated as 'turn', is obvious. Holladay believes שׁוב, when it appears in conjunction with על along with a person/place, means to '"put back" (one's hand against someone in punishment). The 'back' of this idiom seems to be analogous to 'pay back' (in return for an offense)'.[95] He groups this use along with Isa. 1.25; Ezek. 38.12; Amos 1.8 and Ps. 81.15 (ET 81.14) and notes that in all of these instances except Ezek. 38.12, the verse is referring to God's hand.[96] Of the commentaries consulted, only McComiskey argues that the phrase 'turn my hand against' is a positive statement.

> The expression *turn my hand to* may connote a negative reaction from God, referring to punishment, or it may indicate that he will aid the lambs of the flock. It is this latter sense that obtains here, for if Yahweh were to destroy even the little ones of the flock…there would be none left of the nation. Yet, verse 9 establishes that God will preserve a remnant to whom he gives the privilege of being his people.[97]

The use of the phrase in the other passages, however, seems to argue against McComiskey's position as Yhwh's punishment/anger is at the fore in Isa. 1.25, Amos 1.8 and Ps. 81.15 (ET 81.14). In the context of Zech. 13.7-9, Yhwh's actions against the 'little ones'[98] (הצערים) result in the death of two-thirds of the flock (13.8). Unlike a similar situation in Ezek. 5.1-4 where everyone (three-thirds) is destroyed, in Zechariah hope remains as one third

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95. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 99.
96. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 99.
97. McComiskey, 'Zechariah', p. 1224.
98. Yhwh's punishing acts against the 'little ones' are also seen in Jer. 49.20; 50.45.

survives the punishment and is remade into a new covenant people (13.9). Therefore, though שׁוב is used in a punishing sense, the purpose of Yhwh's actions in 13.7-9 is to bring about a new people of Yhwh; those who could call Yhwh their God. 'Though however dire their situation might be, the poem points to a situation in which those who call on Yahweh's name can look forward to a renewed relationship with their deity'.[99]

3. *Conclusion*

In Zechariah the message of return internally unites the writings and connects it with the works that surround it. Though the numerous occurrences make careful examination difficult, the various uses of שׁוב can be gathered into five different groups: narrative, 'back and forth', call to repentance, restoration, and judgment. While three of the groups play a minor role in the writing (narrative, 'back and forth', and judgment), שׁוב as repentance and שׁוב as restoration are some of the most important sections in all the Twelve. The most frequent use of שׁוב, that of restoration in connection with Zion, can be found in both sections of Zechariah and is essential to his overall message. Mason has argued that the Zion tradition is one of the important themes that unite Zechariah, and while שׁוב as restoration appears differently in each section, it nonetheless helps to support the Zion theme. In Zechariah 1–8 the focus of restoration is on Yhwh and his return to Zion/Jerusalem. The reconstruction of the temple and Yhwh's return brings blessings which the prophet understands as a change in relationship between Yhwh and his people. In the past, Yhwh dealt harshly with disobedient Israel but no longer. Because Yhwh has returned, restoration is at hand, and the people, fresh from their own return from exile have begun to experience that restoration. In Zechariah 9–14, it is the people rather than Yhwh, who are linked with שׁוב and will return to Zion/the land once again; only this time the return is a more distant, eschatological event. The sown people, particularly the exiles from the Northern Kingdom,[100] will be brought back to the land in greater abundance

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99.   Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 132.

100.   That the emphasis of this future return seems to be on the Northern Kingdom, reflects the concerns of the early writings of the Twelve, particularly Hosea (11.11) and Amos (9.14). It should be noted of Nogalski's 'Deuteronomistic Corp', which formed the basis for the Twelve (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah), that all four contain restoration sections that employ שׁוב in their closing oracles. Because of this, it is interesting that שׁוב is absent from such a strong, concluding restoration section as Zech. 14, especially considering the frequency with which the word appears throughout the book. The focus of the passage, the Day of Yhwh, is another major theme in the Book of the Twelve. Thus the book opens with a call to return and closes with a message about the Day of Yhwh, the two themes which also conclude the Twelve (Mal. 4.5-6). Earlier, Schart noted that Zech. 14 could have functioned as an appropriate ending for the Twelve, Schart, 'The

then when they left and will receive Yhwh's blessings. From the standpoint of the audience of the Twelve, these different views of שׁוּב further emphasize the constant vigilance and continuing effort that is required in turning toward Yhwh. The people have returned, but that does not end the call to return.

Overall, the background of Zechariah, one that frames the message of return along with the image of a freshly returned people, as well as the multiple occurrences of שׁוּב in Zech. 1.1-6, make it one of the most significant sections in the Twelve. With his imperative use of שׁוּב and the fully developed call 'Return to me and I will return to you' (1.3), Zechariah's position within the Twelve looks back to the Book's earlier writings, specifically Hos. 14.2-5, and Joel 2.12-14, crystallizes their message, and offers it anew to a post-exilic audience. That Zechariah summarizes the work of the prophets that preceded him (or 'former prophets') with a שׁוּב statement (שׁוּבוּ, 'Turn!' 1.4) further emphasizes the encompassing nature of the call and offers the keys to understanding these writings from a Persian perspective. From his position as a Persian prophet, Zechariah is able to hold up the previous generation that experienced Yhwh's wrath as an example of those who had ignored Yhwh's call to return. While Yhwh's judgments eventually led to the fathers' repentance (וַיָּשׁוּבוּ, 1.6), the following generation that experienced a return from exile, must once again struggle with a call to return. The irony—that of a newly returned nation being asked to return again—is striking. Therefore, the implications of this call to return are significant: there must be more to returning to Yhwh than a physical return to the land. The significance of this section would not be lost on the audience of the Twelve, as their own call to return, much like their political situation, would have remained the same. Would they heed Yhwh's call and experience his blessings, or would they reject it and experience his wrath?

To conclude, the perspective of Zechariah provides an important element to understanding the unity of the Twelve and how the message of שׁוּב helps make that unity possible. More importantly, however, Zechariah broadens the meaning of return more than perhaps any of the previous writings. It becomes apparent that Zechariah intentionally blurs the lines between שׁוּב as repentance and שׁוּב as a literal, physical return in time and space. Since Zechariah is placed within the historical setting of the return from Babylonian exile, and is framed as a discussion to this newly returned group, all of Zechariah's calls to return import an understanding of שׁוּב as a physical return, albeit one that has already taken place. In this sense, the people hearing Zechariah's message have experienced the foretold promises of the Twelve's previous prophets—Yhwh has turned towards his people and brought about a physical return. According to Zechariah, however, the journey is not complete and

Eschatological Visions of Zechariah', p. 340. However, the lack of a concluding message that incorporates שׁוּב, from the standpoint of the Twelve as a whole, leaves it deficient.

Zechariah presses this idea by combining their past physical return with the idea of continued repentance, and another future physical return. This mixture of meanings is deliberate and important. Indeed the people have returned, but Jerusalem is not yet the restored city of Zion (Mic. 4), and Israel is not yet the land flowing with new wine and agricultural bounty (Amos 9.13-14; Joel 4.18). By combining repentance and physical return, Zechariah implies that a true return to Yhwh, and Yhwh's true return to his people is what transforms Zion into the City of Truth (Zech. 8.3-23). In other words, return is not merely a physical relocation, i.e. from Jerusalem to Babylon; rather return is both spiritually and physically transformational, and such transformation still lies in the future. In this way, 'Return to me and I will return to you' has become a kind of paradigm for all history. It paints a vision of an active Yhwh, one who has control of history and who intervenes in it to accomplish his purposes, and yet, ultimate restoration still belongs to a time in the future (Zech. 9–14). Most importantly, however, this future is certain. Yhwh will turn towards his people (again), the people will return to the land (again), and Zion will be transformed (again).

Chapter 9

MALACHI

With Malachi, the Book of the Twelve comes to a close. Though it is
undated, its location at the end of the Twelve cannot be viewed as a
coincidence. With a returned people, a completed temple, a re-established
priesthood, and the lack of an Israelite king, the audience of Malachi and the
audience of the Twelve are for all practical purposes, the same. As will be
discussed, Malachi's position serves a dual function as both a self contained
prophecy and an integrated conclusion to the Book of the Twelve. When
Malachi is understood within its canonical context, its message can be seen
not as something new, but as drawing together the various themes of the
Twelve begun in Hosea. Malachi then reinterprets those themes for the
audience of the Twelve. As Sweeney notes,

> Finally, Malachi, in its call for the renewed observance of the covenant,
> rehearses various themes from the Twelve, such as the destruction of Edom/
> Esau, the disrupted covenant between YHWH and Israel, the polluted state of
> the temple and the priesthood, and the Day of YHWH. In projecting YHWH's
> appearance, Malachi calls for observance of Mosaic Torah, and thereby recalls
> the instruction in YHWH's Torah that will be given in Zion (Mic 4); it looks
> forward to the appearance of Elijah, who is perhaps associated with the
> allusions to Jehoshaphat in Joel and Obadiah, when Israel turns its heart back
> to YHWH. Insofar as Malachi expresses YHWH's distaste for divorce and calls
> for the return of Israel to YHWH, it rounds out the themes introduced in the
> book of Hosea.[1]

The call to return and the use of שוב plays a nuanced role in the book of
Malachi, particularly as it is connected again to the Day of YHWH and is the
concluding message of the book in the MT (3.24 [ET 4.6]). Furthermore,
Malachi's reliance on themes introduced by Hosea–Joel allows the book to
form an overall framework for the Twelve, and most importantly provides
clues to the application of the Twelve.[2] 'It is therefore evident that the frame

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1. Sweeney, 'Sequence and Interpretation', p. 62.
2. See Watts, 'Frame' pp. 209-17. As the title suggests, the focus of the article is on
the opening 3 chapters of Hosea and the parallels with Malachi. Because of its textual

places the relevance of the Twelve in the world of Malachi, not that of Hosea. The Twelve was intended to be read and applied in the fifth century, not the eighth.'[3] For this reason, Malachi's use and understanding of שׁוב is perhaps the most important in the Twelve. שׁוב appears 7× in the writing (1.4; 2.6; 3.7 [3×], 18, 24 [ET 4.6]), most notably with the fourth imperative use in the Twelve in 3.7.[4] The following section will examine these uses of שׁוב in the order that they appear.

1. שׁוב *in Malachi 1.4*

a. *Literary Context*
- 1.4—'For Edom says, "We are beaten down, but we will return (ונשוב) and rebuild the ruins". Thus says YHWH of Hosts: "They, they may build; but I, I will tear down. And men will call them the Region of Wickedness, a people YHWH has cursed forever"'.

Since Pfeiffer, the majority of scholars believe that Malachi can be organized around six oracles/disputation speeches which are reflected by O'Brien's simple outline:

1:1	Superscription
1:2-5	People and God argue about love
1:6–2:9	Priests and God argue about respect
2:10-16	People and God argue about 'profaning the covenant of the fathers'
2:17–3:5	People and God argue about God's justice
3:6-12	People and God argue about scarcity and abundance
3:13–4:3 (Heb. 3:13-21)	People and God argue about the value of serving God
4:4-6 (Heb. 3:22-24).[5]	Closing statements connecting the Law and the Prophets

limits, Watts has chosen to focus on Hosea's various words for love, most notably אהב. However, the last three verses of Malachi focus instead on torah, the Day of Yhwh, and שׁוב, only one of which (שׁוב) appears explicitly in Hos. 1–3.

3. Watts, 'Frame', p. 213.

4. The use of שׁוב in 3.18 needs only a passing reference as it does not play an important role in the message of the passage. While 3.18 takes place within a restoration section, שׁוב in this context should be understood as an auxiliary, though a possible word play on 3.7 could be intended. See Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 70-72; and Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB, 24D; New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 344.

5. Julia M. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (AOT; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), pp. 286. See E. Pfeiffer, 'Die Disputationsworte im Buche Maleachi', *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1959), pp. 546-68. Pfeiffer believes that 3.22-24 (ET 4.5-6) is a secondary addition. See also James A. Fischer, 'Notes on the Literary Form and Message of Malachi', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 315-20. For a discourse

All the commentaries consulted identify 1.[1] 2-5 as an independent unit, separate from the second oracle that begins in 1.6. Within Malachi's first oracle, the prophet introduces three ideas that have been a concern throughout the Twelve: Yhwh's love for Israel, Edom, and return from exile. In this way the writing begins to function as a comprehensive conclusion to the Twelve.

Yhwh is the first character to speak in Malachi, proclaiming his love for his people (אהבתי אתכם, 1.2). The word love (אהב) occurs three times in 1.2, which in this verse alone equals Zechariah as the most occurrences in the Twelve since Hosea.[6] The use of the word, based in Deuteronomy, conveys the idea of covenant love, as well as the overall idea of election, since Israel was chosen by Yhwh (Deut. 7.8) and Edom was not.[7] More important to the Twelve, אהב is the focus of its opening writing, appearing 17× in Hosea, with over half of those occurrences in the opening section (chs. 1–3).[8] In Hosea, the word conveys the image of unfaithful Israel, particularly ch. 2, where five times אהב is used in the context of Israel chasing other lovers. Of the seventeen occurrences in the book, Yhwh is the subject of only four (3.1; 9.15; 11.1; 14.5) and it is these four passages which help inform the background of Malachi's opening oracle. Malachi's statement concerning Yhwh's love (אהב) finds its background in Yhwh's past (Hos. 11.1), present (Hos. 3.1), and future (Hos. 14.5) statements of love in Hosea.

In Hosea, Yhwh declares his love for his people despite their unfaithfulness (3.1). Though this seems to have a temporary limit which results in destruction (9.15), future restoration is ultimately promised (14.5). Malachi's

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analysis which focuses on the hortatory structure of the book which yields an organization built around three movements, see E. Ray Clendenen, 'The Structure of Malachi: A Text-linguistic Study', *CTR* 2 (1987), pp. 3-17. This is the generally agreed outline of Malachi, though some variation among the middle verse numbers may occur. See Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 716-17. Sweeney also organizes the book around the six disputations but believes that oracle four continues through to 3.7 (thus 2.17–3.7) and oracle five begins at 3.8 (thus 3.8, 12).

6.   Overall, Malachi contains the second most occurrences of אהב as it also appears in 2.11.

7.   Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 305. He concludes, 'It is best to take Malachi's use of the terms "love" and "hate" in vv 2 and 3 as covenant language'. אהב is a key word in Deuteronomy, appearing 23× in the book (4.37; 5.10; 6.5; 7.8, 9, 13; 10.12, 15, 18, 19; 11.1, 13, 22; 13.3; 15.16; 19.9; 21.15 [2×], 16; 23.5; 30.6, 16, 20). For more on אהב and its use in Hosea and Malachi, see Watts, 'Frame', pp. 209-17. For a detailed study of אהב see P.J.J.S. Els 'אהב', *NIDOTTE*, I, pp. 277-99. For an older discussion on אהב in Deuteronomy see William L. Moran, 'The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy', *CBQ* 25 (1963), pp. 77-87; and Lawrence E. Toombs, 'Love and Justice in Deuteronomy', *Int* 19 (1965), pp. 399-411.

8.   2.7, 9, 12, 14, 15; 3.1 [4×]; 4.18 [2×]; 9.1, 15; 10.11; 11.1; 12.8; 14.5.

opponents'[9] shocking question, 'How have you loved us?' (במה אהבתנו) is therefore based in what is perceived to be unmet expectations of Yhwh's promised restoration and love, proclaimed from the opening of the Twelve. The response of Malachi's listeners indicates that they had long heard these promises of love, but had seen little evidence of it in their lives. To say it differently, Malachi's listeners, much like Haggai's, want proof of this promised love. In this way the words of Hosea, as well as the other prophets both within the Twelve and without who have promised restoration, are being questioned. This understanding helps form the background of the book, and also provides a window into a post exilic Persian setting[10] that appears angered by prophetic promises which have gone unfulfilled. 'It would appear that such questions were raised in the aftermath of the reconstruction of the Temple, when the earlier promises made by Haggai and Zechariah concerning the nations' recognition of Yhwh and the Temple and their restoration of the exiles of Israel and Judah had failed to materialize'.[11] As Sweeney notes, though the invincibility of Persian power was dealt a massive defeat by the hands of the Greeks at the battle of Marathon (490 BCE) and later Salamis (480 BCE), 'no material change in the fortunes of Judah or Jerusalem had yet taken place, and certainly there was no influx of returning exiles or wealth that would point to the reconstruction of the Temple as a symbol of Yhwh's world-wide sovereignty'.[12] What the prophet offers as evidence of Yhwh's love is the current state of Edom, which has also been a concern throughout the Twelve.

Edom holds a special place of hatred for the writers of the Twelve, occurring 9× in the Book (Joel 4.19 [ET 3.19]; Amos 1.6, 9, 11; 2.1; 9.12; Obad. 1.1, 8; Mal. 1.4). Edom is so hated, in fact, that one of the writings of the Twelve is devoted entirely to its promised demise (Obadiah), an honour given only to the more prominent Nineveh (Nahum).[13] What is perhaps most telling is that Edom finds its way into restoration-promise sections which

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9. Malachi's opponents remain a bit of a mystery. I am inclined to follow Tiemeyer who argues that the statements of Malachi's opponents are, more or less, accurate summaries of their objections rather than literary constructions. She lists Malachi's opponents as the priests (1.6-29; 2.10-16 and 2.17–3.5) and the more general 'people' (1.2; 3.7, 13-15). For her detailed discussion see Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, 'Giving a Voice to Malachi's Interlocutors', *SJOT* 19 (2005), pp. 173-92.

10. As mentioned above, it is possible that the Book of the Twelve was completed shortly after Malachi's ministry, making the audiences of both works almost identical. See Schneider.

11. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 720.

12. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 720-21.

13. It should be noted, however, that despite the well detailed descriptions of destruction found in Nahum, the book must be balanced by the offer of grace found in Jonah, an offer which is never given to Edom.

conclude two writings: Joel 4.19 and Amos 9.12. While in Amos 9.12, Yhwh promises that the remnant of Edom will be possessed by a revitalized Israel/Judah, the destruction language of Malachi is mirrored previously in Joel. In familiar restoration language ('in that day' Joel 4.18; cf. Amos 9.11), Yhwh promises that Edom, in parallel with Egypt, will be a 'deserted waste' (למדבר שממה תהיה 4.19 Joel), a promise which Malachi reads as having come to pass (ואשׂים את־הריו שממה ואת־נחלתו לתנות מדבר 1.3). What is interesting about Malachi's statement concerning the destruction of Edom is that it follows a Deutero-Zechariah statement that hints at inclusion with the surrounding nations: 'It will come to pass, all the survivors from all the nations who have come against Jerusalem, they will go up year after year to bow down before the King, YHWH of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles' (Zech. 14.6). However, the prospect of Edom surviving this destruction to return (שׁוב) and rebuild (and thus one day make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem) is taken away by the prophet in Mal. 1.4-5. Though the idea of שׁוב is on the lips of Edom's survivors (1.4), Malachi promises that this will not be successful.

b. *The Meaning of* שׁוב *in 1.4*
שׁוב as it appears in Mal. 1.4 is often overlooked, as evidenced by the NIV translation, 'Edom may say, 'Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins'.' In its translation, the NIV has opted to gloss over שׁוב, reading neither 'again' nor 'return' for the word. In this way, the NIV reads similarly to the ESV, CEV and REB which also overlook שׁוב. On the other hand, the NASB, KJV and ASV read שׁוב as 'return'. The MT כי־תאמר אדום רששׁנו ונשׁוב ונבנה חרבות is more literally translated, 'for Edom will say, 'We have been (are) beaten down but we will return/turn and we will rebuild the ruins'. Holladay translates this occurrence as 'again', grouping it with the simple narrative uses found in Zech. 5.1 and 6.1 which would produce a translation of 'we will build again', a reading followed by Hill, Petersen, and Stuart. After broaching the possibility of reading ונשׁוב as a separate verb,[14] Hill concludes, 'Given the parallel response of Yahweh using *bnh* ('let them rebuild'), it seems best to understand *šwb* as an auxiliary verb in this context'.[15] Smith takes an opposite position, choosing to read ונשׁוב as 'but we will return' and adds that 'V 4 may reflect the determination of some Edomites to return to Petra to drive out the Nabateans but that never

14. 'The verb *šwb* may be an independent verb in combination with *bnh* meaning "to return" in the physical sense of repatriation of the Edomite territory. Or *šwb* may be an auxiliary verb used with adverbial *bnh* in the sense of "build again" or "rebuild"' (Hill, *Malachi*, p. 156).
15. Hill, *Malachi*, p. 156.

happened'.[16] However, the idea of שׁוב is much broader than 'returning to the land' and can incorporate the more encompassing notion of restoration. The only other time שׁוב and בנה appear together in the Twelve is in Amos 9.14, a verse which communicates the idea of an overall restoration (returning to the land, rebuilding houses, and agricultural blessings) which has been initiated by Yhwh (cf. Mic. 7.11, 19).[17] This type of restoration seems to be the general idea behind Edom's abbreviated statement in 1.4. Because of this, perhaps it is best to follow the NASB and other translations which understand ונשׁוב as a separate 'return'.

   Regardless of the exact interpretation, the idea of שׁוב as it relates to restoration fits well the context of the verse and sets up a contrast between the return of Judah and the failure of Edom. Edom, like Israel and Judah before her, has suffered a serious defeat. Her buildings have been destroyed and she has perhaps been removed from her traditional boundaries into the Negev. Therefore parallels exist between Edom's situation in Malachi and the destruction/exilic situations faced by Israel and Judah at the various points in their history, and Edom is looking for a return (שׁוב) of her own. In this way, Judah's restoration could be behind Edom's statement of hope in 1.4—Edom could look at Judah as an example of a nation that faced defeat and returned (שׁוב) to rebuild. One of the ways שׁוב has been used throughout the Twelve is to communicate the promise of renewal (e.g. Hos. 14.8; Amos 9.14; Nah. 2.3 [ET 2.2]; Zeph. 3.20). That same hope is behind the use of שׁוב in 1.4. By negating Edom's statement of שׁוב, the prophet has created a contrast between Israel's/Judah's successful return and the failure of Edom's future attempts. All throughout the Twelve, Yhwh has been the cause of Israel's/Judah's restoration (e.g. Zeph. 3.20). Therefore, in this situation, Edom will ultimately be unsuccessful in their attempts at restoration because Yhwh will be against them: 'They, they may build; but I, I will tear down' (1.4). This is because of Yhwh's covenantal choice to love (אהב) Israel and

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16.   Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 306. Though he does not offer his own translation, a similar thought is reflected by Herbert M. Wolf: 'Edom desired to regain possession of their homeland and to rebuild the ruins, but this desire was never fulfilled' (Herbert M. Wolf, *Haggai and Malachi* [EBC; Chicago: Moody Press, 1976], p. 64). The majority of commentaries discuss possible Babylonian and Nabatean backgrounds to this passage. Clear archaeological evidence for Edom at this time seems to be lacking. For more see J. Lindsay, 'The Babylonian Kings and Edom, 609–550 B.C.E.', *PEQ* 108 (1976), pp. 23-37; and Bartlett's response in J. Bartlett, 'From Edomites to Nabataeans: A Study in Continuity', *PEQ* 111 (1979), pp. 53-66. 'It seems certain that Edom formed part of the Fifth Satrapy of the Persian Empire, but there are archaeological sites that furnish contradictory evidence… John R. Bartlett rightly insists on the continuity of settlement in the zone, albeit on a simpler level' (Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo and Eugenia Equini Schneider, *Petra* [trans. Lydia G. Cochrane; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], p. 9).

17.   This verse is preceded by the possession of Edom in Amos 9.12.

to 'hate' (שׂנא) Edom.[18] Instead of entering into a time of covenant blessings (Joel 4.17-21; cf. Deut. 30.1-10), Yhwh will place them under a curse (Mal. 1.4-5). 'The prediction of eternal disgrace for an enemy nation here ("they will be called the Wicked Country, the people Yahweh cursed in perpetuity") is an instance of the pentateuchal curse type 16, dishonor/degradation (Deut. 28:37: "you will become a thing of horror, and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations")'.[19] Because of this, the prophet indicates that Edom will not be restored to its past glories, and the restoration that either accompanied the Israelite/Judahite return or still lies in the future will not be mirrored by them. In this way, Mal. 1.4 is the only explicit use of שׂוב as restoration that is unsuccessful in the Twelve. Besides highlighting Edom's future failure, שׂוב also brings to mind Judah's past success and Yhwh's faithfulness. This specific treatment of Edom seems harsh in light of the grace extended to other nations in the Twelve (e.g. Jon. 3.10; Zech. 14), though it is consistent with Edom's treatment throughout the Book. Ultimately, Edom's demise is part of Yhwh's larger plan for Judah's prosperity.

2. שׂוב *in Malachi 2.6*

a. *Literary Context*

- 2.6—'The law of truth was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and uprightness he walked with me, and many he turned (השׁיב) from iniquity'.

Following O'Brien's outline listed above, Mal. 2.6 falls within the second oracle of 1.6–2.9 that she has titled, 'Priests and God argue about respect'.[20] Sweeney notes that the smaller units within this section are attempts to draw out the implications of the first two verses of the oracle.

> The structure of Mal 1:6–2:9 is based on the prophet's attempt to establish the failure of the priesthood to honor YHWH properly in Mal 1:6-8. This text is followed by two sections in Mal 1:9-14 and 2:1-9, each of which begins with the conjunctive particle, *wĕ'attâ*, 'and now', which respectively call upon the priests to implore YHWH's favor and to observe YHWH's commandment.[21]

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18. 'It is best to take Malachi's use of the terms "love" and "hate" in vv 2 and 3 as covenant language. When Yahweh says, "I have loved Jacob", he means, "I chose Jacob", and when he says, "I hated Esau", he means, "I did not choose Esau"' (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 305).

19. Douglas Stuart, 'Malachi', in *The Minor Prophets* (ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 1245-396 (1289). It further calls to mind the inverse of Zech. 8.3, where Zion is given a new name 'City of Truth' and 'Holy Mountain'.

20. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 286.

21. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 725.

At the centre of this oracle is Yhwh's concern with the priests and their offerings. His disdain for the priesthood is repeated throughout the section (1.6, 10; 2.1-2, 3), and his displeasure with their blemished offerings is evident in ch. 1 (1.7-8, 9-11, 12-14). In ch. 2, the cause for Yhwh's anger shifts from the specific issue of covenant sacrifice to the broader failings of the priests as keepers and instructors of the covenant (2.7-9).

b. *The Meaning of* שׁוּב *in 2.6*

שׁוּב occurs in the context of a positive contrast between the faithful levite-priests of the past and the failing actions of the present priesthood. Yhwh speaking through the prophet notes, 'The law of truth was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and uprightness he walked with me, and many he turned from iniquity' (ורבים השׁיב מעון) (2.6). Holladay identifies this hiphil use of שׁוּב as one that conveys the 'context of covenantal relationship' with a human subject that turns from evil, which in the hiphil finds a parallel only with Jer. 23.22.[22] At issue is the meaning of Malachi's phrase, 'my covenant with Levi' (בריתי את־לוי), a phrase which seems to lack a direct historical reference. 'The Bible nowhere records the establishment of this compact between Yahweh and Levi, the eponymous ancestor of the Levitical priesthood'.[23] This, of course, has led commentators to argue over the origins of Malachi's reference, ultimately proposing two pentateuchal locations and one from the prophets: Num. 25.11-13 (Glazier-McDonald); Deut. 33.8-11 (Verhoef);[24] and Jer. 33.20-21 (Mason).[25] Glazier-McDonald's

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22.   Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 102-103. He identifies Neh, 9.26, 29; 2 Chron. 19.4; 24.19 as instances where a human subject is intended, but the turn is to God or the Torah, rather than from evil. He identifies God as the subject in Jer. 15.19; Lam. 5.21.

23.   Hill, *Malachi*, p. 206.

24.   To be fair, Verhoef seems to favour Deut. 33.8-11 as the influential text, but not exclusively. 'This mention of the "covenant with the Levites" presupposes that it was established during the early history of Israel. It is true that the blessing of Moses on the tribe of Levi (Deut. 33:8-11), according to which they were commissioned for the specific task of giving guidance through the Urim and Thummim and of teaching and officiating in worship, is not explicitly called a covenant. But sometime in the past and somewhere God did enter into a covenant with Levi, most probably in connection with the historical event mentioned in Exod. 32:26-29. This explanation seems preferable to that according to which the divine promise to Levi was eventually raised out of its private and limited context to be made yet another instance of the concern of the covenant God for his whole people' (Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, p. 245). Glazier-McDonald notices the same discrepancies between the Deuteronomy and Malachi passages and notes, 'When this passage and Mal 2:4f are examined together, little is found to recommend dependence of one on the other. The only word that they have in common is בְּרִית. Moreover, while the "covenant" of Deut 33:9 is nebulous, the one in Malachi is detailed, describing the grades

examination of verbal parallels strongly suggests that Numbers 25 forms at least part of the background for Malachi's statement.[26] 'Indeed, based on the similarities of language and construction, it may be posited that Mal 2:4-5 is based on Num 25:12f. That Malachi calls this covenant Levitical rather than Aaronic (via Phinehas) stems from the aforementioned subordination of the priesthood to the house of Levi.'[27]

This connection to Numbers, however, should be expanded to encompass the broader understanding of priestly obedience which is demonstrated by the priestly duties listed in Numbers, a concern which is reflected by Malachi. 'The responsibilities of the Levites are not described specifically with the term "covenant", but the role and the responsibilities are made very clear in Numbers 3–4'.[28] Therefore, following Glazier-McDonald, the difference between a successful levite and the failing priests of Malachi's day is not different lineage or varying duties, but rather strict adherence to Yhwh's laws. 'Finally, it must be stated that a distinction between priest and Levite is apparent in this oracle unit. It is not a distinction of function but of attitude. Malachi has constructed a "*levite-cohen*" model in which the 'levite' personifies the ancient and idealized priestly class while the '*cohen*' characterizes the present degenerate clergy.'[29] Yhwh's words in Mal. 2.5 convey the respect that these levite-priests had for the covenant: 'reverence, and he revered me, and from my name he stood in awe'. More specifically, their successful actions are found in 2.6: 'The law of truth was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and uprightness he walked with me, and many he turned from iniquity.' Though up to this point, Malachi has chastised the priests for their failure in regards to sacrifices, when he describes the idealized levite-priest, the emphasis on sacrifice is subsumed into the larger role of torah instruction. Stuart notes that the verse contains

of mutual obligation and dependence between the parties involved' (Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* [SBLDS, 98; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], p. 78).

25. 'Such a covenant is not mentioned in the Old Testament although it is presupposed in Jer. 33:21' (Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* [CBC; London: Cambridge University Press, 1977], p. 147). Glazier-McDonald counters, 'This passage may perhaps be a culmination of the disillusionment with the priesthood (Zadokite?) that is reflected in the post-exilic prophets and in Chronicles, possibly from the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. If this is the case, the prophecy belongs temporally and conceptually alongside Malachi and cannot be assumed to provide the basis for 2:4-5' (Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 79).

26. See Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 79.

27. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 80.

28. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 730.

29. Glazer-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 80.

three principal elements that constitute what a priest who truly fears God is supposed to be like: (1) truthful and accurate teaching on the law and rendering of legal decisions ('true law was in his mouth and no iniquity was found on his lips'), (2) full and consistent obedience in various tasks ('perfectly and consistently he served me'), and (3) preservation of the holiness of God's people ('and turned many away from sin').[30]

This is what the present priesthood lacked and as a result faced covenant curses (2.1-3). 'As in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 the conditional formula is followed by curses in Mal 2:2-3. The priests have been unfaithful to their covenant. They are warned to obey lest the covenant curses come upon them.'[31] This disobedience and the coming covenant curses is the central concern for the passage.

What is of primary importance for this project is that this priestly faithfulness to the torah (תורת אמת), lack of falsehood (ועולה לא־נמצא בשׂפתיו), and commitment to peace (שׁלום) and uprightness (מישׁור) resulted in a successful שׁוב, in which the people turned from evil (עון) (2.6). Though the prophet is most likely speaking in general terms, as mentioned above, a difficulty arises when an effort is made to identify a historical precedent for Malachi's glowing recollection. Although worthy priests do appear throughout Israel's history (e.g. Phinehas, Jehoiada) this matter is complicated when the process is limited to the Twelve. If Malachi simply looks with fondness on anything associated with the past, and suggests that a שׁוב was generally successful, this would be a different perspective on Judah's history than the prophet that immediately precedes him (Zech. 1.2-6).[32]

Malachi's understanding of the present priestly situation much more mirrors the poor priestly circumstances of the Twelve prior to the Exile. While כהן has positive associations in Haggai–Zechariah, in Hosea–Zephaniah the word almost exclusively connotes corruption (Hos. 6.9; Mic. 3.11) or general opposition to Yhwh's ideals (Hos. 4.4; Amos 7.10; Zeph. 1.4; 3.4) and is associated with promised destruction (Hos. 4.6; 5.1).[33] Malachi's anger with the priests over their inadequate offerings is similar to Yhwh's disgust at the cultic situation reflected in Amos (4.4-5; 5.21-23). All told, Malachi's

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30.   Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1320.

31.   Steven L. McKenzie and Howard N. Wallace, 'Covenant Themes in Malachi', *CBQ* 45 (1983), pp. 549-63 (551). McKenzie and Wallace dismiss all three suggested biblical backgrounds for Malachi's 'covenant with Levi' and instead insist that Malachi's main concern is with the overall idea of covenantal blessings and curses.

32.   Malachi's terminology is much more limited in scope than Zechariah's emphasis on 'forefathers'. Whereas Zechariah speaks of the nation as a whole, Malachi's concern is with 'many' (רבים).

33.   Joel is the exception to negative use of כהן as the three occurrences of the word (1.9, 13; 2.17) give no indication that the priests are neglecting their duties, or that they have incurred the wrath of the prophet.

critique of the priesthood is a depressing development. The hope and promise of the priesthood embodied in the high priest Joshua in Haggai–Zechariah (e.g. Hag. 2.4; Zech. 6.11, 13) has come crashing down, and the people, with regards to the priesthood, find themselves in the same situation as those prior to the Exile. What is most discouraging is that the current priesthood is the antithesis of the idealized levite-priests of the past, which includes their ability to bring about שׁוב. ' "But you, you have turned aside from the way and by your teaching you have caused many to stumble; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi", says YHWH of Hosts' (2.8).[34] Because the current priesthood has failed in their teaching of the Torah, they have also failed to bring about return (שׁוב). In this way, the audience is reminded that the promising circumstances of Haggai–Zechariah have ended, and that they stand once more in a situation similar to their pre-exilic forefathers who faced Yhwh's wrath.

3. שׁוב *in Malachi 3.7*

a. *Literary Context*

- 3.7—' "Even from the days of your fathers you have turned from my statutes and have not kept them. Return (שׁובו) to me, and I will return to you", says YHWH of Hosts. "But you ask, How are we to return (נשׁוב)?" '

Following O'Brien's outline listed above, 3.7 falls within the fifth oracle (3.6-12) which she has entitled, 'People and God argue about scarcity and abundance'.[35] Most of the commentaries consulted follow this division except Wolf (3.7-12), and Sweeney, who makes 3.7 the closing verse of the fourth oracle (2.17–3.7) and believes that the fifth speech is contained in 3.8-12. Sweeney groups 3.1-7 together because it deals with the announcement of Yhwh's messenger and divides the announcement into two parts: 1-4 and 5-7.[36] The function of כי, which opens 3.6, is part of the reason for this disparity. If כי is translated as 'for' or 'because' (Glazier-McDonald, R.L. Smith, Baldwin) then it has a direct relation with the previous oracle; but if it is translated emphatically 'truly' (Verhoef), 'indeed' (Hill), or 'since' (Stuart)

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34. In this verse, a turn (סור) does take place, but instead of a positive turn away from evil (2.6), it is a turn away from the way of Yhwh. Furthermore, instead of their covenantal teachings (תורת) causing many (רבים) to turn from evil (2.6), their teachings in the torah (תורה) have caused many to stumble (כשׁל) (2.8).

35. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 286.

36. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 739. He notices that each section 'begins with the prophet's presentation of a statement by YHWH followed by his own comments'.

then the connection is less strong.[37] Though the majority of commentaries follow this second reading, this does not completely sever the association between 3.6 and the previous oracle. As Hill notes, 'In either case, some coordination with the preceding disputation must be recognized'.[38] Nevertheless, the fact that 3.5 and 3.12 conclude with 'says YHWH of Hosts' (אמר יהוה צבאות) indicates two independent oracles.[39] As Stuart concludes, 'The issues of the fifth disputation are certainly related to those of the fourth (and second and third as well), but the connection of 3:6-7 to 2:17–3:5 is a matter of topic rather than form'.[40] The topical link between the two sections is summarized by Verhoef:

> At the same time it is possible to ascertain a kind of connection between this pericope and what has gone before. In this pericope the question of 2:17 is answered in another concrete manner: the cause of Israel's present adversity and future judgment must be seen in the people's habit of turning away from the decrees of God. The link with the following pericope is especially the idea of 'testing' (*bāḥan*) the Lord (3:10, 15).[41]

b. *The Meaning of* שוב *in 3.7*
Whereas disputation four (2.17–3.5) has been concerned with Yhwh's justice and the prosperity of the wicked which concludes with Yhwh promising to destroy the evil, disputation five (3.6-12) is concerned with Yhwh's relationship with his people and the tithe, and concludes with a promise of blessing.[42] Malachi 3.6 serves as an appropriate transition verse, grounding both judgment and blessing in Yhwh's consistent character. 'For I am YHWH. I have not changed'. The word translated as 'changed' שניתי, from the root שנה, means 'to repeat' or 'to do again',[43] and in this instance is tied specifically to Yhwh's commitment to his people through the covenant. 'The prophet's

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37.   As Stuart notes, 'It has sometimes been argued that Malachi 3:6 is part of 2:17–3:5, in part because 3:6 begins with *kî*, often translated "for" or "because", and thus can be understood to relate to what precedes rather than what follows. Moreover, the first two clauses of verse 7 can also be linked with the prior disputation if one wishes to do so, since they speak of Israel's incorrigibility, a fitting theme in light of the lists of sins in 3:5. But this approach is not necessary' (Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1361).

38.   Hill, *Malachi*, p. 292.

39.   Note that אמר יהוה צבאות also appears in the middle of 3.10, though the context of the verse, followed by אם־לא, indicates that the lines are continuous.

40.   Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1361.

41.   Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, p. 299.

42.   Judgment is also the central focus of the following disputation: 3.13-21 (ET 3.13–4.3).

43.   So BDB. See also Robert B. Chisholm, 'שנה', in *NIDOTTE*, IV, pp. 190-91. It should be noted that Israel/Judah has not changed either. 'Yahweh does not change. The sons of Jacob have not changed either. They persist in their sins but they continue to exist' (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 332).

affirmation that Yahweh 'has not changed' should not be construed primarily as a metaphysical statement, a theological commentary on the nature of God's being. Rather, Malachi attests the faithfulness of Yahweh to his covenant agreement with Israel. God has not changed the terms of the pact, but has remained constant in his oath of loyalty. It is for this reason that Israel has not been destroyed'.[44]

Yhwh's patience with a covenant-faltering Israel/Judah is further demonstrated by the opening of 3.7: 'Even from the days of your fathers you have turned from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you', says YHWH of Hosts. 'But you ask, How are we to return?'' Israel/Judah is therefore guilty of covenant violations (3.7), a failure made worse by the contrast of Yhwh's previously stated covenant fidelity (3.6). Therefore this generation, like the previous, is guilty. By invoking the name of their forefathers, the prophet equates the situation of the present audience with those of their pre-exilic, unfaithful forefathers. The only way to remedy the situation is to return (שׁוב) to Yhwh, a charge now familiar to the readers of the Twelve. By using the key words 'fathers' (אבתיכם), 'statutes' (מחקי) and 'return' (שׁובו), the prophet has drawn a strong parallel with Zech. 1.2-6.[45] Particularly important are the identical calls to return:

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44. Hill, *Malachi*, p. 295. The thought that Israel/Judah has been worthy of destruction and yet survives because of Yhwh's commitment to them is similarly reflected in the opening oracle of Malachi (1.2-5). 'The first lines seem to reflect the logic and vocabulary of the first speech in the book. There too Jacob served not only as the means whereby Israel could be characterized but also as the way in which Israel could be viewed as someone whom Yahweh had favored. In that instance, Yahweh favored Jacob over Esau. Now, Yahweh avows that the people of Israel, as the children of Jacob, have not been destroyed, a clear demonstration of Yahweh's constancy toward Israel' (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 214).

45. The emphasis on the failure of the forefathers is especially noticeable in Zech. 1.2-6, as the word appears 4× in the section (1.2, 4, 5, 6; as well as similar context in 8.14). This is not to imply that Malachi presents an exact copy of Zechariah. Though the wording is different, the context surrounding the imperative use of שׁוב in Hos. 6.1, 14.2 (ET 14.1) and Joel 2.12-13 conveys mutual relationship language. Furthermore, the imperative use of שׁוב in context with Yhwh appears in other literature outside the Twelve (Jer. 3.14; 25.5-6; 2 Chron. 30.6). Petersen highlights the differences: 'Zechariah refers to the time of the fathers, whereas Malachi refers to the time from the fathers. Zechariah admonishes the people, but receives no response; whereas Malachi admonishes and then receives a question from the audience… It is not clear that "my statutes" are the same in each text—in Zechariah they seem to refer to the judgment—the covenant curses—foreseen by the prophets; whereas in Malachi they seem to be covenant stipulations. Malachi, therefore, presents no simple echo of Zech 1:2-6. The primary difference between these two pericopes is that Zechariah focuses on a moment in the past, whereas Malachi speaks of continuity with the past, Yahweh's consistency and Israel's disobedience' (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 214). Despite these differences, the

Zech. 1.3: 'Return to me', declares YHWH of Hosts, 'and I will return to you', says YHWH of Hosts.

שׁובו אלי נאם יהוה צבאות ואשׁוב אליכם אמר יהוה צואות

Mal. 3.7: 'Return to me, and I will return to you', says YHWH of Hosts.

שׁובו אלי ואשׁובה אליכם אמר יהוה צבאות

Holladay identifies the imperative in Mal. 3.7 as a covenantal use of return that often means 'repent', a parallel which appears in Zech. 1.3, 6.[46] As mentioned in the discussion on Zech. 1.2-6, the imperative call to return that opens Zechariah serves as an introduction to the whole of the writing, making what follows dependent on the audience's response to that call. It should be noted that an explicit response of Zechariah's audience is nowhere directly related, though the promise of blessings to come (Zech. 8) implies a positive answer. Nonetheless, the lack of blessing as well as the general circumstances which open Malachi allow Zechariah's call to return to be reinterpreted in light of the closing Book of the Twelve and, in short, this call has failed, for now.

With this reading, the promised blessings of Zechariah 8 have not appeared because the people have not returned to Yhwh. In Malachi, covenant failures permeate the writing. What was right in Zechariah 1–8, notably the portrayal of Joshua the high priest and the glorious temple, have become covenant violations in Malachi. 'The point of the reference is that Israel's waywardness was a pervasive theme through their entire history. They have sinned habitually and continually.'[47] For this reason, Malachi is forced to issue the call again. As Hill notes, 'The imperative form of the verb *šwb* conveys a sense of urgency, and places a demand for immediate and specific action upon the addressee'.[48] If the people desire Yhwh's blessings and want to avoid covenant curses, they must follow Yhwh's laws and must do so quickly. Therefore, the message of return (שׁוב) is connected with Torah-keeping. By reading Malachi this way, the call to return for Malachi's listeners would be another emotionally depressing experience. The message of the prophets—in this case specifically the call of the Twelve up to

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proximity of the books as well as their similar concerns with the fathers and their identical calls to return indicate that the passages should be considered in light one another.

46.   Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 78-79. It should be restated that Holladay defines a covenantal use of שׁוב as 'a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or God, each for the other' (p. 116). Note also that Malachi's second use of שׁוב, which speaks of Yhwh returning to Israel, is found in only two other places: Zech. 1.3; 2 Chron. 30.6 (p. 81). The message of 2 Chron. 30.6-9, with its use of שׁוב and warnings against the fathers, sounds similar to both Zech. 1.2-6 and Mal. 3.7.

47.   Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, p. 301.

48.   Hill, *Malachi*, p. 301.

Malachi—did not yield the desired result. Even the definitive covenantal curse of exile (Deut. 28.64-68) has ultimately failed to return the people to a proper relationship with Yhwh. For those reading the Twelve as a whole, the fact that this is the call that opened the Book (Hos. 6.1; 14.2-3) implies that nothing has changed in the eleven writings since. The people find themselves in the same situation as their failing forefathers, a parallel Malachi empha- sizes. All the hopeful language that surrounded Israel/Judah on her home- coming from Babylon, which itself is seen as a type of return (e.g. Amos 9.14), has disappeared. The people are covenant failures like their fathers and once again face covenant curses. The only reason that they have not been destroyed is because of Yhwh's faithfulness (3.6).

Of the Twelve's multiple uses of שׁוב, it is only here at the end of the Twelve, where the question is asked, ''How are we to return?'' (במה נשׁוב). From a clarifying standpoint, this is a significant question. In the other three instances, it is assumed that the people know how to return to Yhwh; and only in Malachi is a specific action given. When examined, however, this question sheds no light on the motivation of the people. As Sweeney notes, this phrase is 'enigmatic in that it could suggest the prophet's belief that the people will not accept the offer because they question the charge that they have acted immorally or it could suggest the prophet's belief in the possibil- ity that the people will accept this offer because they now ask what they must do to return to YHWH'.[49] Though most commentaries seem to side with the former, Sweeney is correct to say, 'In either case, the question prepares for the next argument, either to refute the objection of the people or to demon- strate to them what they must do'.[50] Whether the question is asked in defiance or ignorance, it shows how far removed the people are from Yhwh; prior to Malachi's words, Malachi's listeners did not know a return was necessary.

With the prophet's response, the focus changes to a charge of improper tithe (3.8-12). Yhwh challenges the hearers to test (בחן) his faithfulness by bringing the whole tithe. If they do so, he promises to initiate covenant blessings once more (3.10-12; cf. Deut. 28.12). Such a promise, in connec- tion with the 'return to me' phrase is significant. Of the imperative uses of שׁוב found in the Twelve, only here in Malachi is it specifically linked to the cult, in this case the tithe. What makes this interesting is that up to this point it appears that the Twelve has purposefully avoided linking imperative calls to return and covenantal requirements. As Hill notes, 'No magical or

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49. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 742.
50. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 742. Though Haggai–Zechariah seem to indicate that a call to return was at least initially successful, there is really nothing in the Twelve to indicate that the people actually desire return, or that a return will be successful. For this reason, it is more probable that this question is of a rebellious nature rather than repentant.

mechanistic relationship existed between Israel's habitation (and/or possession) of the land of covenant promise and the blessings of Yahweh's covenant. Yahweh's covenant still entailed a relationship between a people and their God—not a people and the land or Temple liturgy. "Return to *me*", says Yahweh through Malachi.'[51] Such an observation is certainly true, however, as I have noted in Hosea 14, one must be careful of completely dismissing the cult. For example, while it is true that Hos. 14.2-4 seems go to the great lengths to emphasize Israel's faith apart from the cult (they are to take words instead of sacrifices, and offer their lips as bulls), it is difficult to imagine such confessions taking place outside a ritual setting. While whether or not such words were to take the place of actual sacrifice in the ritual setting is a matter of discussion, it is possible to envision these confessions taking place within the sacrificial setting. Moreover, שׁוב has been linked to many different things throughout the Twelve, specifically Zion (e.g. Zech. 8.3, 15; 9.12; cf. Mic. 4), and the land (e.g. Amos 9.14-15; Zech. 10.9-10). For this reason, Malachi's connection between the call to return and the cultic tithe may be unusual, but it is not without precedent. Nevertheless, Malachi's call to return is a call to a covenantal relationship with Yhwh, one that includes all cultic aspects and Torah-keeping of his covenant.

4. שׁוב *in Malachi 3.18*

a. *Literary Context*
- 3.18—'And you will return (ושבתם) and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one serving God and the one who has not served him'.

3.18 falls within the closing dispute of the writing, which O'Brien has entitled 'People and God argue about the value of serving God' (3.13-21).[52] Of the commentaries consulted, Sweeney alone extends the oracle past 3.21 to include the final three verses of the writing (thus 3.13, 24),[53] but does so with little explanation. Following the paragraph markers in the MT, the passage divides between 3.13-18 and 19-21. At issue, once again (cf. 2.17), is the question of theodicy and the prosperity of the wicked. Malachi uses 3.13-24 to interject hope into a bleak situation—YHWH will remember those who are faithful to him.

51. Hill, *Malachi*, pp. 301-302.
52. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 286.
53. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 744-45.

b. *The Meaning of* שׁוב *in 3.18*

Holladay,[54] as well as the majority of English translations (NIV, NASB, NKJV, ESV, NRSV, JB, REB) and commentaries read שׁוב as an auxiliary 'And you will again/once more discern/see' (ושבתם וראיתם). As Stuart summarizes, 'It [שׁוב] can certainly have such a meaning [i.e. to repent/return] when occurring independently, but with the following converted perfect (וְשַׁבְתֶּם וּרְאִיתֶם) almost surely means, in spite of the versions, "and you will again see"…'[55] But is the accepted understanding the correct one? The LXX disagrees with the English translations and reads 'καὶ ἐπιστραφήσεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε' ('and you will turn and you will see'). Smith, essentially alone among the commentators, reads שׁוב as a separate verb, but is uncertain of its meaning: ' "And you shall return" is a little ambiguous. The "you" is mas. pl. and may point to the doubters, to the faithful, or to anyone or everyone. The precise meaning of "return" (שׁוב) is not clear. Does it mean "repent" as it often does?'[56] While the evidence does support an auxiliary reading of the verb, it is possible that Malachi's inclusion of שׁוב in 3.18 also looks back to the imperative command to return issued in the previous disputation (3.7).[57] All through the Twelve, a return to Yhwh has been accompanied by the promise of blessings; a situation which continues in both Mal. 3.7, and 3.18. In 3.7, the imperative call to return, connected to the cultic tithe, results in the general promise of overabundant blessings—as well as safety from pests, fruitful vineyards, and acknowledgement from the nations (3.10-12). The questions of theodicy which open the sixth dispute (3.13-14) and are akin to those that begin the fourth (2.17) result in similar, though more futuristic, promises.[58] Salvation in 3.17 takes the form of three promises by Yhwh that takes place 'on the day which I act': (1) Those who fear Yhwh [3.16] will be his; (2) They will be his סגלה; (3) He will spare them. Only then will Yhwh distinguish between those who are his servants, and those who are not, and the result will become apparent to all (3.18).[59] Therefore, by including שׁוב as an auxiliary in 3.18, Malachi offers a subtle hint for the necessity of return.

54. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, pp. 70-72. Holladay does offer a possible alternative meaning 'repent'.

55. Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1385.

56. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, pp. 338-39.

57. Hill, *Malachi*, p. 344.

58. In both disputation four and six these questions are answered by the actions of Yhwh himself, notably with day of Yhwh language (3.1-4, 17-21), which results in the punishment of the wicked (3.5, 19) and the salvation of the believers. At issue in both of these disputes is the separation and identification of the righteous and the wicked.

59. 'Scripturally, the "difference between the righteous and the wicked" is not a matter of how they appear to anyone or how they are understood by anyone, but how they are treated by God' (Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1385).

While 3.7-12 commands a return and promises more immediate blessings for doing so, 3.18 offers a future implication that only those who have returned will be counted among those faithful to Yhwh.

5. שׁוב *in Malachi 3.24 (ET 4.6)*

a. *Literary Context*

- 3.24 (ET 4.6)—'And he will turn (וְהֵשִׁיב) the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a ban'.

It has long been argued that Mal. 3.22-24 (ET 4.4-6) is the hand of a (often late) redactor, added either to bring an ending to Malachi,[60] the Twelve,[61] or the Law and the Prophets as a whole. This latter reading is followed by O'Brien's outline entitled, 'Closing Statements Connecting the Law and the Prophets'.[62] Because of this, as well as the perceived change in topic, most commentaries separate 3.22-24 from the previous oracle. Going further, 3.22 (ET 4.4) is often separated from 3.23-24 (ET 4.5-6). 'It [3.22/ET 4.4] is an

60.	Speaking of 3.23-24 (ET 4.5-6) J.M.P. Smith notes, 'These verses probably reflect the conditions of a later age when Hellenising influences had wrought profound changes throughout all Israel' (J.M.P. Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912, repr. 1999), p. 82. This is contra Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 245ff. She argues that the passages conclude Malachi, but are not later additions. 'If it can be demonstrated that Mal 3:22-24 are integrally related to the preceding six oracle units both thematically and linguistically and if familial disharmony may be viewed as a consequence of conditions in the Persian period, the probability that these final verses are the conscious literary product of Malachi himself must be seriously considered' (p. 245).

61.	Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 84; Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 233; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 340. As Smith notes, 'It [3.22-24] is unrelated to anything that has gone before. Its language is Deuteronomic and is probably an editorial addition by the redactor of the Book of the Twelve'.

62.	O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 315. 'If such an understanding of the book's compositional history is accurate, it bears great import for the history of the development of the biblical canon. It would indicate that the materials now included in the Hebrew Bible (or at least in the Torah and the Prophets) were consciously edited to be read together as part of a single, mutually supporting collection' (p. 317). She also notices, however, that these verses fit the context of Malachi as well (p. 317). For more on the issue of Deut. 34.10-12 as conclusion of the Law, and Mal. 3.22-24 as conclusion to the Prophets, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); Rolf Rendtorff, 'The Place of Prophecy in a Theology of the Old Testament', in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl; OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 57-65. For a critique of both positions see Stephen B. Chapman, 'A Canonical Approach to Old Testament Theology? Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and Malachi 3:22-24 as Programmatic Conclusions', *HBL* 25 (2003), pp. 121-45.

isolated marginal note from some later legalist, who missed any express mention of the Mosaic law in this connection and proceeded to supply the deficiency'.[63] However, many commentators have argued, regardless of composition, that the verses fit well within the Malachi context:

> Mal 3:22-24 comprises the climax of the prophecy. In them Malachi brings together elements from his preaching into a sharper focus. Indeed, all the major themes of the prophecy are found in these final verses: the stress on the law (3:22, cf. 2:6-8; 3:7), the coming prophetic figure whose task it is to prepare for Yahweh's appearance (3:23, cf. 3:1), the day of Yahweh itself (3:23, cf. 3:1f, 17-21) when Yahweh will judge and destroy the evildoers (3:24, cf. 3:5, 18-19, 21).[64]

In light of contrasting opinions, as well as a lack of clear textual evidence,[65] it seems difficult to argue with any degree of certainty that 3.22-24 was added later, though this indeed may have been the case. Furthermore, a canonical approach to the passage demands that the verses be understood as Malachi's words first, as imposing a later date context can bring a different set of interpretations.[66] If the Book of the Twelve is recognized as a book, the passage can be canonically understood as possessing a dual function—it closes both Malachi and the Twelve. Petersen, who identifies Mal. 3.22-24 as

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63. J.M.P. Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah*, p. 81.

64. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 267. She continues, 'Moreover, in these final verses Malachi sets his message in a picture which is enriched by Israel's fuller traditions. His claim that Elijah is the precursant messenger serves to equate the hearers of his prophecy with the disobedient, vacillating people of Elijah's time whose allegiance to the God of their fathers was similarly in danger of being dissolved' (pp. 267-68). See also Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1391. Glazier-McDonald believes the same hand wrote these last three verses (pp. 251, 254). She says of 3.23-24, 'Moreover, linguistically, there is nothing in either v. 23 or v. 24 that suggests lateness. If, as is likely, this verse originated with Malachi, the cause of the discord among parents and children must be rooted in the conditions of the prophet's own time' (p. 254). Petersen, however, finds connection from these verses to the rest of the book but still argues for a different author. 'First, this passage is not a summary of Malachi. It does not simply put that book in perspective, though it does diminish, as opposed to the introductory title (Mal 1:1), the sense of immediacy one finds within some of the individual diatribes. Rather, the epilogue interprets some of the language in the dialogues; it is a making specific of the general expectation in Mal 3:1. Hence, it is difficult to think that these three verses were composed by the same person who wrote the primary material in the dialogues' (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 232).

65. The LXX does invert 3.22 with 3.23-24, thus ending the book with the call to remember the Torah. Though this arrangement is curious, on its own, it is not enough evidence to demand separate authorship.

66. For example, see J.M.P. Smith's insistence that these verses refer to the Hellenistic period (J.M.P. Smith, *Smith, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah*, p. 83).

an epilogue,[67] finds a connection with another epilogue in Hos. 14.10 (ET 14.9).

> Just as Mal. 3:22-24 [4:4-6] establishes connections with the torah and the former prophets, Hos. 14:10[9] provides a linkage with the third section of the canon. The two epilogues work together to relate the book of the XII to the other sections of the canon. One may argue that these two epilogues act as a canonical envelope, which encloses the minor prophets. They not only mark off but also integrate the minor prophets with the rest of the canon.[68]

Likewise, Coggins also comes to a similar conclusion, adding succinctly, 'These verses bring the book of Malachi to an end; they also form the conclusion of the 'Book of the Twelve', the Minor Prophets'.[69] Thus Mal. 3.22-24 and how they work in conjunction with Hosea to bookend the Twelve, will be discussed in more detail below.

One does not have to argue for separate authors to make broader connections to the canon; it is possible to understand this as a natural process that developed as the canon came into completion. Chapman, speaking of Mal. 3.22-24 as a conclusion to the prophets as a whole, believes that the section was composed for its position in Malachi and then 'took on a wider canonical function only secondarily. Thus one reason why Malachi appears last within the book of the Twelve and why the book of the Twelve often occupies a place at the end of the prophetic corpus may be that Mal. 3:22-24 was thought to provide a fitting conclusion to these wider canonical units as they formed'.[70] All told, it is nearly impossible for modern scholars to arrive at any certainty with regard to the authorship of this passage. This fact, however, should not prevent scholars from discussing possible intentionality that may have arisen naturally from the canonical process. In other words, whether purposely placed by (various) editors or by the author of Malachi himself, the connections between 3.22-24 and the other parts of the Twelve strongly suggest that these verses serve a dual function, as a conclusion to both Malachi and the Twelve.

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67.   'Third, an assessment of this passage is enhanced by comparing it to the epilogues of other prophetic books. In fact, there are few epilogues in prophetic literature. I would argue that the only real candidates are Hos 14:10 [9] and Hab 3:19b. The latter is really a dedication of the sort one normally finds in the Psalms. When that is admitted, the only two epilogues in the latter prophets occur at the end of the first and last books of the twelve minor prophets' (Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 233).

68.   Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, p. 233.

69.   Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 84.

70.   Chapman, 'Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and Malachi 3:22-24', p. 139. It should be noted that Chapman does believe in separate authors for 3.22 and 3.23-24, but he believes that these authors worked to compose 'suitable endings for the book of Malachi…' and not the prophets as a whole.

b. *The Meaning of* שׁוב *in 3.23-24*

Following the introduction of Moses and the imperative (זכרו) to remember the torah (תורת משׁה, note also 'statutes' חקים, and 'judgments' משׁפטים), in 3.22, Malachi introduces the audience to the other important historical Israelite figure of Elijah. Many commentators argue that Elijah's inclusion at this point in Malachi was for the purpose of clarifying the messenger from 3.1. 'Thus, Elijah appears to be identified with "my messenger" whom YHWH is sending to prepare the way in Mal 3:1. The fact that Elijah never died would suggest that he is to be conceived as one of YHWH's angels or messengers.'[71] Smith, however, views differences between the two verses: 'Vv 23-24 (Eng. Vv 5-6) pick up the theme of a coming messenger from 3:1 but differ from that passage in that these verses name the messenger (Elijah) and assign him a different role. The messenger's role in 3:1 was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Here the role is that of turning the hearts of the fathers to children and vice versa, or perhaps turning the heart of the people to the Lord.'[72] Though these differences may be important, in both instances the messenger/prophet is sent prior to a 'day of' event: in 3.1 it is the day of Yhwh's coming (3.2) and in 3.23 it is the coming of the Day of Yhwh. Furthermore, it could be argued that just as the identity of the messenger is given in more detail in 3.23 (specifically a name) as opposed to 3.1, the role of the messenger and type of 'day' is also given in more detail. In this case, Yhwh is sending Elijah before the 'great and dreadful day of Yhwh comes' a phrase which has significance in the Twelve.

As mentioned earlier in this project, most who argue for a thematic unity to the Twelve do so based on the importance of the Day of Yhwh. That it occurs here at the end of the Twelve and in language found only in Joel (3.4 [ET 2.31], cf. 2.11), the book which first introduces the proper phrase יום יהוה in the Twelve (1.15), should not be read as a coincidence. Rendtorff has identified other connections between the day phrases in Malachi 3 and those of Joel. Most notable is the question which opens Malachi's 'day' discussion: 'But who can endure the day of his coming?' (3.2), and the parallel question from Joel 2.11: 'For great is the day of YHWH—very dreadful. Who can endure it?' Rendtorff argues, 'The term's first and last appearance seem to form a kind of *inclusio*: The question "who can endure?" is always

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71. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 749.

72. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, pp. 340-41. For more on the difficulties surrounding the identity of Elijah in Malachi, see Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, pp. 340-41. Malchow understands the messenger in 3.1 to be a source for a later understanding of a Levite-king or a royal priest. He argues the entire section 3.1-4 was added after Daniel in 165 BCE. See Bruce V. Malchow, 'The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1', *JBL* 103 (1984), pp. 252-53.

(presumed?) present when the Day of the LORD is near.'[73] Unlike other 'day' phrases which are found in the context of Israelite restoration (Joel 4.18 [ET 3.18]; Amos 9.11, 13) or various 'Day[s] of YHWH' which are to come against the nations and thus give Israel hope (Joel 4.14 [ET 3.14]; Obad. 15), the 'great and dreadful' Day of Yhwh from Mal. 3.23 seems to be centred on the Day's much more common notion of judgement (e.g. Joel 1.15; Amos 5.18-20), in this case a coming ban (חרם). Because of this, as well as the connection to the question 'who can endure?', the Day of Yhwh found in Mal. 3.23 has stronger connections to the 'great and dreadful' Day of Yhwh announced in Joel 2.11 than the one in 3.4 (ET 2.31).[74] What is most important for this project is that in both of these instances Yhwh announces a 'great and dreadful' Day of Yhwh which can be avoided if the people שׁוב (Joel 2.12-13; Mal. 3.24). Though it is difficult to know which passage was composed first,[75] from the canonical perspective of the Twelve, Malachi's passage should be understood as falling under the influence of Joel's, and thus once more repeating a message familiar to Malachi's listeners.

Unlike Mal. 3.1, where the role of the messenger is vague, in 3.23 Elijah's role is much more detailed. Malachi states that 'He will turn (והשׁיב) the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers'. Mason believes that the passage possibly refers to the Hellenistic period, when Hellenized Israelite children have rebelled against their fathers. 'The fact that fathers and sons are mentioned could reflect the conditions of the Greek period when the younger generation grasped eagerly at Greek customs and thought, to the horror of their more orthodox parents'.[76] Offering another sociological explanation, Glazier-McDonald, who rejects a late date for these verses, offers the possibility that this line reflects tension between fathers and sons in Malachi's own day and fits with concerns expressed previously in the book.

> It may be that the precariousness of the economic situation in Judah during the
> Persian period induced young men to ally themselves with rich, influential

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73. Rendtorff, 'How to Read the Book of Twelve', p. 85.

74. Though the announcement in 3.4 is described as 'great and dreadful', and includes drastic signs in the cosmos (3.4), the Day is announced in the middle of a demarcation of Yhwh's spirit to the people (3.1-3) that ultimately ends in an offer of salvation (3.5).

75. 'The passage in Joel may be later than Malachi's time, but not necessarily later than this appendix' (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, p. 341). It should be restated that both books are undated.

76. Mason, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, pp. 160-61. See also J.M.P. Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah*, p. 83. 'This statement of estrangement within families is the mark of a period of rapid transition in thought and customs. Apparently, the younger generation has taken up with some new philosophy or cult or political course and irreconcilable conflict has arisen between them and their elders. This condition best accords with the situation in Israel after the incoming of Greek thought and influence'.

families through intermarriage. This act was condemned by Malachi because it led to the turning away from Yahweh in favor of the god(s) of the foreign wife (cf. 2:10-16). Further, it is probable that the intermarriage was preceded by divorce from the Judean wife (2:14), a circumstance abhorrent to Yahweh. The young man's deceitful, treacherous behavior (2:14) may have led both to the alienation of father and son and to the creation of tension between his family and that of his former wife.[77]

Many commentators, Glazier-McDonald included, open the interpretation beyond a social setting and focus on the covenant relationship between Yhwh and his people. 'But we favor the point of view according to which the semantic domain of this *hēšîḇ*, 'turning back', is not so much the projected social order but the covenant relationship as such'.[78] In this understanding, the phrase 'hearts of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers' functions 'in a well-paralleled fashion as a merism meaning "everybody" (Jer. 6:12; 13:14; Ezek. 5:10; Joel 3:1 [2:28]; Matt. 10:21)'.[79] Glazier-McDonald comes to the same conclusion, but does so based on understanding the 'to' (על) in both sections as 'together', thus yielding a translation of ''to turn the hearts of the fathers together with that of the children' to Yahweh (implied)'.[80] She goes on to argue that 'it is likely that Malachi juxtaposed לֵב בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם and לֵב־אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים to emphasize the immensity of the task confronting Elijah (cf. 3:7a, 9). Indeed, in view of the reference to הָאָרֶץ, the land, in 3:24c, the repetition stresses that the entire population of the land, young and old alike, will be the target of the prophet's efforts.'[81] At issue then is a communal restoration which is centred on obedience to Yhwh's covenant, reemphasized by the earlier verse (3.22).

> The concluding statement that the hearts of the fathers will return to the sons and those of the sons to the fathers points to the exhortational character of the book once again, in that Malachi's rhetorical goal appears not only to be to exhort the priests and people to observe YHWH's Torah but to convince them to do so as a united community in which the strife that has divided its members over proper understanding of YHWH and observance to YHWH's Torah is overcome.[82]

This reading is further supported by Holladay, who understands this occurrence of שׁוב to mean to ' "bring back" (someone's loyalty)'.[83] In this way, Malachi's concluding use of שׁוב appears similar to the numerous covenantal/repentance uses that appear throughout the Twelve.

77. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, pp. 254-55.
78. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, p. 342.
79. Stuart, 'Malachi', p. 1395.
80. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 256.
81. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, p. 256.
82. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, pp. 749-50.
83. Holladay, *ŠÛBH*, p. 99.

That the passage concludes, in strong language, with a threat to strike the land with a ban (חרם), a word used for Joshua's destruction of Jericho (Josh. 6.17),[84] is consistent with Malachi's message. Malachi has repeatedly stressed the failure of this people, emphasizing that their faithlessness has resulted in covenant curses, and drawn parallels with the failing situations of their fathers in the past. Even with the inclusion of a repentant audience (3.16-18), the emphasis seems to be on a remnant-type following (3.16, 20) rather than the whole nation. Because of this Yhwh's wrath, as depicted in the Day of Yhwh, is still coming against this people. But like Joel 2.11-13 which forms the background for this passage, that destruction can be avoided if the people return. For this reason, the importance of the role of Elijah cannot be minimized. The charge of bringing about שׁוב and the avoidance of the ban lies with him, a messenger sent by Yhwh for this purpose. If he fails (illustrated by the conjunction פֶּן), the land will fall under the similar ban that struck Jericho. Elijah's success is therefore crucial to the survival of Israel itself. What is interesting is that the Twelve ends with such a terrifying note (the last word being חרם).

As has been consistently stated within Malachi, the call to שׁוב has not been heeded and the people, once more, face the onslaught of covenant curses. This is nothing new. Within the Twelve there has been a continual struggle for return. Yhwh, through his prophets, has issued numerous calls to return, specifically four imperatives that open and close the collection, and yet all indications are that those calls have been ignored. As Jonah illustrates, a return to Yhwh was possible, but for whatever reason, the people of Israel/ Judah have failed to follow that example. By placing Moses and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets) here at the end, the editors of the Twelve have reemphasized the call to obedience by offering a particular canonical/Torah reading of return. All of Israel's existence is placed within the context of covenant. In this way, Elijah's activity should be construed as a call to Torah-obedience. Only by obedience will the people be able to turn and avoid the coming curse.

The message of Mal. 3.23-24 works as the perfect conclusion to the Twelve. By incorporating the ideas of the Day of Yhwh and שׁוב, the last two verses serve as perfect book ends to the Twelve, reemphasizing the two foundational concerns of the Twelve first introduced by the opening writings, Hosea (שׁוב) and Joel (יום יהוה). By doing so, these two verses place the entire history of Israel recorded by the Twelve in perspective. With Malachi's emphasis that the people are committing similar covenant violations as their fathers, the people sit on the verge of continuing a process that began in Hosea and culminated with exile (Zephaniah). The hope that

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84.   For more see Jackie A. Naudé, 'חרם', in *NIDOTTE*, II, pp. 276-77.

was expressed in Haggai–Zechariah did not last, but Malachi does not believe that such a situation dictates the end of Yhwh's relationship with Israel. Rather, Malachi reinforces the idea that 'Return to me and I will return to you' is an ongoing dynamic for all time; one that has occurred throughout Israel's past and will continue into its future. Malachi's warnings of the coming of the Day of Yhwh as well as the call to return serve to emphasize that שׁוב is something that requires a constant re-evaluation by each generation concerning Yhwh's law. For this reason, the prophet issues a final warning: the Day of Yhwh is coming; will the people heed the words of the messenger and return or will the process of covenant curses (Hosea–Zephaniah) begin again? In this way, the struggle to return continues.

6. *Conclusion*

By interweaving the key themes of the Twelve together, יום יהוה and שׁוב, Malachi has brought to light an important message that looks beyond the immediate context of any of the individual, time bound, books of the Twelve. As Sweeney has noted, Malachi is an undated book, which though it is tied in a historical context, has the feel of something that looks beyond its immediate historical setting. The closing words of the writing which unite יום יהוה and שׁוב provide clues to the overall message of the Twelve. As stated in the introduction, it is reasonable to believe that the Twelve was organized and edited to provide application during Malachi's time, particularly the post-exilic Persian period. But Malachi's words end not with hope, but with a threat and a warning that the people are failing Yhwh. This threat takes the form of a key theological idea that has appeared throughout the Twelve—the Day of Yhwh is near. Scholarship of the Twelve is correct to focus on this uniting factor. The Day is both a threat and a promise that is repeated not only against Israel, but the nations as well. Malachi's message, as well as the message of many of the Twelve is centred on the imminence of the Day—it is coming, and coming soon. That the Day of Yhwh is near is a warning that hangs over the Twelve. Yhwh is coming and judgement is coming with him, but salvation is still possible in the sense of שׁוב. By opening and closing the Book with imperative calls to return (Hosea–Joel, Zechariah–Malachi), and by uniting the threat of the Day with שׁוב, the editors of the Twelve have provided the overarching thematic lesson of the Book. שׁוב, as it occurs in the other six books (Amos–Haggai), in differing and various ways, fits within the framework of this message.

By ending with Malachi and a situation which parallels Israel's failed circumstances prior to the exile, the threat of the Day looms even larger. Yhwh is coming once more in judgement against his people and the wicked will suffer (3.19), but the righteous, those who have returned (3.7), will

survive and be blessed (3.20). The Persian audience of the Twelve seeking application is left to reflect on a failing situation and the promise of a coming prophet (Elijah) who will bring about שׁוב. By closing in such a way, the book weaves the two important themes of the Day and שׁוב together, and leaves the audience with the interpretive keys to the Twelve as a whole, but also more crucially, with a significant choice—will you שׁוב? The undated nature of Malachi as well as the imperative calls to return given by four different prophets (Hosea, Joel, Zechariah, Malachi) help to make this call a timeless one and leaves open a decision that must be made by every generation and reader of the Twelve. The audience of the Twelve is therefore left with two impressions—the closeness of the Day and the option to return. The question asked in Mal. 3.7, 'How are we to return?' is no longer valid, as the Twelve has shown what it means when Yhwh promises 'Return to me and I will return to you'. Malachi calls for a return of heart (3.24) which includes a return to a relationship ('Return to *me*') that involves all aspects of Israelite society, both social and cultic. This has been the message of the Twelve. The uses of שׁוב throughout the Twelve which do not centre on calls to repentance instead focus on Yhwh's ability to bless and restore Israel, and to bring punishment against Israel's neighbours that have caused them hurt (e.g. Obadiah). Though it is always difficult (or even impossible) to argue for a 'main' thematic connection, the empirical evidence seems to be in favour of שׁוב: the pervasiveness of the word and the imperative calls to return which frame the book are difficult to ignore. Therefore, though the struggle to return and the threat of the Day of Yhwh are themes which work together within the Twelve, these are but smaller pieces of the overarching biblical ideas of Yhwh's justice (expressed in the Twelve by the Day) and grace (return, שׁוב) that is articulated in his desire for a personal relationship with his covenant people.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

This project set out to explore the nature of the Twelve and how the theme of return (שוב) functions within the Book. What the study has revealed is that the nature of the Twelve is complex—a collection of writings that show characteristics of both unity and individuality. Because of this, the reader is presented with the dilemma of how to read these works, i.e. should the writings of the Twelve be understood in light of the context of the Book of the Twelve, or should they be read more or less as a random collection of works that stand apart from those that surround it? Tradition itself is partly responsible for this confusion since the name 'The Book of the Twelve' already implies a level of unity, and is not found in the text. However, if the Book of the Twelve is a unity, what are the implications? Admittedly, the answers to this question are currently very popular, and this dissertation has arrived at what is most likely the crest of scholarly interest in the topic. As such, I have been able to base much of my work on a large collection of recent scholarship that has wrestled with the questions surrounding the nature of the Twelve. For this reason, my project has focused on the macro-level issues of theme and writing position, rather than the more detailed discussion of Book formation, individual writing redaction, and catchwords. Neverthe-less, the scope of this project, like the Book itself, has been wide ranging. The issues involved in understanding the collected prophetic words of speakers from the eighth century down to the fifth/fourth are complex. In the end, however, the opportunity to grapple with the issues raised by this section of scripture have proved rewarding.

In Chapter 1, I outlined the rationale for this project by examining the transmission history of the Twelve, and offered a review of literature that focused on the Twelve as a whole. The elements outlined here, particularly the review of transmission history, have proved invaluable to the study of the Twelve since the reasons for approaching the Book in this manner arise from the history of the interpretive community. From this it was shown that the Twelve have been read as a unit since ancient times, though the underlying application and reasons for such an approach remain a mystery. I concluded,

therefore, that in transmission history there is a tension between reading the Twelve as a unity and reading it as a collection of individual writings, and that the choice to read the Twelve as a Book is the choice of the reader, albeit one that is defended by history. For this reason, the review of scholarship and how those in the scholarly community have approached the Twelve, specifically the more recent SBL forum, have helped set the parameters for the project. In particular, Marvin Sweeney's work 'Sequence and Interpretation in the Book of the Twelve', which functioned as the primary source for my interest in the questions surrounding the unity of the Twelve, has heavily influenced the outcomes of the present study. Sweeney's discussion on how book position impacts the reading of the Twelve, specifically the location of the programmatic writings of Hosea and Joel and the message of the brokenness of the covenant and the Day of Yhwh, underlies my work.

Going further, I argued that though the Twelve can be understood as a unity, its twelve superscripts imply that it cannot be approached in the same manner as Isaiah, Jeremiah, or other prophetic books. For this reason, I raised the possibility that theme holds the key to the unity of the Twelve. Such a proposal, though never fully developed, is not new and only further clouds the issue as scholars have promoted various themes, chief among them being the Day of Yhwh. However, as Bowman illustrates, the Day of Yhwh ultimately fails to unite the Twelve because it plays such a diminished role in the Book's opening work, Hosea. Consequently, Bowman suggests that שׁוב is better fit to unite the Twelve, a theory which I have adopted and expanded.

In Chapter 2 I laid out the methodology for this project by focusing on the definition and function of theme within a work. First, I separated theme from other literary terms, ultimately defining it as, 'a recurring idea, communicated by word or phrase, which supports the main thrusts of the prophecy and gives theological shape and meaning to the work'. Based on Clines's *Theme of the Pentateuch*, I discussed the multiple functions of theme within a work, most importantly how it brings unity and gives reason for the ordering and selection of material. Following this I entered into a discussion on who controls the theme, and after examining Vanhoozer, Thiselton, and Eco, I concluded that theme is part of the embedded codes of the text, but must be discovered by the reader. I ended the section by preliminarily outlining how שׁוב and the call to return fit the definition of theme offered in this chapter. I argued that the use of שׁוב can be an abbreviation for the more comprehensive 'Return to me and I will return to you' statement, and that the use of the שׁוב imperative in the opening and closing of the Twelve provides order and structure to the Book. I concluded by offering what I believed to be the theme of the Twelve based on the understanding of שׁוב: 'As the people struggle to turn (שׁוב) from covenant failure toward YHWH in repentance and receive his blessing, YHWH struggles to turn (שׁוב) from judgment toward his people in

grace'. Such a theme has the ability to reach over the divisions of the individual works and bring unity to the Book, while at the same time allowing the individual works to adapt the theme to their own particular contexts.

As mentioned in the introduction to this project, I noted that the Twelve presents a special problem to readers because it is a Book that consists of twelve independent compositions, and is therefore unlike other prophetic works. In Chapter 3 I confronted this problem by arguing that the function of theme within the Major Prophets, particularly Isaiah, provides a parallel to understanding theme within the Twelve, and thus how twelve individual writings can be understood as a whole. What is important in this section is that theme offers a way to read the Twelve without destroying the individual nature of its writings. As I argued, it is important that the Twelve maintain its compositional distinctiveness; the editors of the Twelve purposefully left twelve individual superscripts, which is unlike Isaiah whose multiple superscripts, if they ever existed, have been lost to history. Nevertheless, the similarities between Isaiah and the Twelve are strong, and it is generally agreed that Isaiah, like the Twelve, was composed by multiple authors and underwent a post-exilic editorial process that was responsible for the final production and form of the book. For this reason, parallels between the Twelve and Isaiah remain, and are helpful in formulating a reading strategy.

Because of this, I examined the use of the Zion/Jerusalem theme in Isaiah, detailing how the theme is developed in all three parts of Isaiah and how it acts as a bridge uniting the various authorial/editorial material of the book. I then paralleled some of the similarities between Isaiah and the Twelve that focused on both books' editorial similarities, including Isaiah's/Twelve's near identical chronological outlook (including both pre and post exilic material) and content. What I discovered is that Isaiah's use of the Zion/ Jerusalem theme is similar to the Twelve's use of שוב. Like Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah, שוב is distributed throughout the Twelve and is prominently found in the opening (Hosea) and closing (Zechariah–Malachi) of the Book. Likewise, שוב unifies the Twelve's pre-exilic material (cf. Zeph. 3.20), reaching over an understood period of exilic silence (cf. Isa. 39–40) to the post exilic prophets and the restorative hopes found in those works (cf. Hag. 3.17; Zech. 1.1-6). With the security offered by the methodological parallel to Isaiah, I was then free to turn my attention toward the function of שוב in the Twelve.

While Chapters 1–3 were important in establishing the reasons and methodology behind my project, the heart of my study lies in Chapter 4 and the exegetical examination of שוב in the individual works of the Twelve. In Hosea, the Twelve's opening writing, the use of שוב and the call to return is the main thrust of the prophet's message. By incorporating שוב into the core of his prophecy, Hosea shows the full extent of the return language. The reader is introduced to the reciprocal nature of the return relationship and

how Yhwh's actions respond to those of the people. This is best illustrated by Hosea's use of שׁוב in connection with exile, where Yhwh threatens to return the people to Egypt because the people have turned from Yhwh (8.13; 9.3; 11.5). Throughout Hosea, the prophet relates a call for the people to return/ repent (6.1; 12.7; 14.2), while at the same time acknowledging the people's failure to heed this call and to turn toward Yhwh (5.4; 7.10, 16; 11.5), thus raising the question of the people's ability to hear and respond to the prophet's words. Additionally, the covenantal aspect of Yhwh's relationship with Israel is made evident in Hosea's judgmental language, where שׁוב is used to convey a message of Yhwh returning judgment upon the people (e.g. 4.9; 12.3; 15).

However, Yhwh's use of judgment is not the final word in his relationship with Israel; instead, Hosea introduces the reader to Yhwh's promise to once again restore his people (3.5; 11.9; 14.5, 8). With this tension between Yhwh's promised destruction and his promised restoration, Hosea reveals an internal struggle within Yhwh (11.8-9) between his desire for holiness that would destroy unfaithful Israel, and his desire to forgive and to be once more restored to his people. So here in the opening work of the Twelve, the tone is set for the call to return in the rest of Book, with Yhwh struggling with his holiness to return toward his people, and his people struggling with their sinful nature to turn toward Yhwh. While this message is conveyed through-out Hosea, it is in the concluding chapter where the theology of the call to return is made explicit. In chap. 14 the prophet offers two imperative calls to return (14.2, 3 [ET 14.1-2]) that deal with Israel's covenant failures of cult and misplaced military trust that have plagued the people throughout the writing. What the prophet makes clear, however, is that while the imperative calls to return are placed on the people, Yhwh himself also promises to respond to the people's return with a return of his own (14.5 [ET 14.4]), and thus is formed the foundation for the Twelve's unifying concept of 'Return to me and I will return to you'.

Joel carries on the theme introduced by Hosea, but nuances it by discuss-ing שׁוב in relationship to the Day of Yhwh. In Joel 2.12-14, the prophet sharpens Hosea's two imperative uses of שׁוב into his own twin calls to return. Most importantly, these calls to return are shown to be the only possible escape for the coming destruction of the Day of Yhwh, and in a way, control the outcomes of the Day (2.15-27). While the prophet makes no guarantees ('Who knows?' 2.14), the offer for the people to turn toward Yhwh (2.12-13) and for Yhwh to turn toward his people (2.14) and thus avoid the destruction, is present. Furthermore, in Joel 2.12 the statement 'Return to me' first appears, thus showing a type of transition between the imperative calls in Hosea 14, and the fully formed statements 'Return to me and I will return to you' (Zech. 1.3; Mal. 3.7). Additionally, Joel incorporates שׁוב with an

eschatological understanding of the Day of Yhwh (4.1, 4, 7) in which Judah's fortunes are restored by the destruction of the nations, an idea further developed throughout the Twelve (e.g. Amos 9.12; Obad. 19-20; Mic. 5.6).

By reading Jonah in light of the calls to return found in Hosea and Joel, the writing takes on a historical bent in which Yhwh affirms his promises to turn compassionately towards those who turn in repentance. The prominence of שוב in Jon. 3.8-10 emphasizes the effort that the people of Nineveh put forth in order to turn from their violent ways, an effort that is rewarded when Yhwh turns from his planned destruction. With Jonah, the Twelve incorporates a writing that deals with the repentance (and subsequent acceptance) of a hated foreign nation, and therefore shifts the theology of the Book by opening salvation to the nations. Prior to Jonah, Hosea–Obadiah has depicted the nations as an object of Yhwh's wrath (cf. Amos 1–2; Obadiah), in which Yhwh turns against the nations for the benefit of Israel (e.g. Amos 9.11-15). In Jonah, however, the reverse takes place as repentant Nineveh is spared Yhwh's destruction. (Additionally, the reader would know that this event allows Nineveh to bring about the historical destructions of 722 and 701). Furthermore, even though it is Nineveh that repents, the message of return conveyed by Jonah addresses the question 'Who knows?' which is asked by both Joel (2.14) and Jonah (3.9), and concerns the reality of Yhwh's turning. In other words, would Yhwh really turn from destruction if the people repented? In Jonah, the question is asked in an historical setting, and is answered in the affirmative—the people turned and Yhwh turned. Such an affirmation opens the door for the inclusion of the repentant nations depicted in Micah 4 and Zechariah 14, as well as the destruction of the rebellious nations in Mic. 5.4b-9 and Nahum.

Following Jonah, I attempted to examine Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai—writings of the Twelve that deal with שוב in a more cursory manner. What became apparent is that while many of these writings mention שוב only once, the writings themselves can still be understood within the confines of the overall return relationship. Like Hosea, Joel, and Jonah, the writings in this chapter offer a familiar, but nuanced reading of שוב. In their own way, these prophets deal with Yhwh as he turns toward Israel (Amos 1–2; Mic. 1.7) and the nations (Obadiah) in judgment, but also restores Israel by bringing the nations low (Amos 9.11-15; Obadiah; Mic. 7.11; Nahum; Zeph. 2–3). A shift in Yhwh's relationship with his people is evident in Haggai, where Yhwh uses שוב to indicate that the time of punishment is at an end (Hag. 2.17-19). Therefore, in these writings, Yhwh's role as the initiator of the return relationship is enforced; he is the one who will punish the nations, cause Israel to return from exile, and institute a time of blessing for his people.

The last two sections of this project dealt with the post-exilic prophets Zechariah and Malachi, whose use of שׁוב and position in the Twelve provides an understanding and application for the message of return in the Book of the Twelve. In Zechariah, the full force of the post-exilic understanding of return becomes apparent as the prophet intentionally blurs the lines between שׁוב as a physical return from exile, and שׁוב as a call to repentance. Zechariah uses his position as a post-exilic prophet to both summarize the various uses of שׁוב that have appeared prior to this point in the Twelve, and to project the significance of שׁוב into the future. In one of the Twelve's most significant passages, Zechariah's opening address begins with an imperative call to return in the now fully developed theological statement, 'Return to me and I will return to you' (1.3). The full impact of this statement becomes apparent when one realizes that the prophet is speaking to a group of people who have themselves already experienced a return. The words of the prophets who foretold a return from exile (e.g. Amos 9.11-15; Zeph. 3.20) had been fulfilled, and the people once again dwell in Jerusalem. But Zechariah indicates that the act of returning is not yet complete, and by issuing a call to return demands that the people must still turn in repentance toward Yhwh. By doing this, the prophet reinforces the fact that returning is not a one time, final act. Rather, in Zechariah שׁוב becomes a continuous action that requires constant evaluation and vigilance. Furthermore, Zechariah uses שׁוב in a number of ways to unify the various parts of the writing: it first summarizes the message of 'former prophets' who had preceded him (1.4), before bringing together Yhwh's current return to Jerusalem (1.16) with his promise to once again return the people from exile to Zion in a future, eschatological event (9.12). In this way Zechariah introduces a tension between Yhwh's past and future relationships with Israel. Therefore שׁוב has significance not only for Israel's current situation, but will continue to impact Israel's future relationship with Yhwh. For this reason, the call to return remains, and just as the people had returned from exile, another future gathering was still to come. Similarly, while Yhwh had returned to Jerusalem/Zion (Zech. 1.16), the full restorative nature of the promises of return had yet to take place and the transformation of Zion into the City of Truth, still lay in the future (8.3-23).

In Malachi, the reader is struck by the change in tone and the ever present need to return conveyed by the Twelve's closing book. Here, the application of the call to return is fully formed for the post-exilic reader. The hopeful situation of Zechariah has changed; the people are settled in the land and the temple has been rebuilt, but the promised restoration has not appeared. The lessons of Israel's past had not been heeded, and the problems which open the Twelve are again apparent: the temple and priesthood are corrupted (Mal. 1.6–2.9), divorce is rampant (2.10-16), the people have failed in their covenant obligations (3.6-12), and the nation stands on the crest of new and

threatening Day of Yhwh (3.19-24). In the midst of such a bleak situation, Malachi reiterates the now familiar 'Return to me and I will return to you' (3.7), thus calling the people back to the Torah (3.22) and overall covenant faithfulness.

It is difficult to ignore Malachi's overall impact on the understanding of שוב in the Twelve, and by placing Malachi at the end of the Book it is probable that the editors intended for this to be the case. While the quest to understand the relationship between the use of שוב and the nature of the Twelve has been a long and complicated one, in many ways even at the end of this project, Malachi's question, 'How are we to return?' remains my own. What exactly was the Twelve's ideal reader to return to? Was he to return to the land? To Zion? To the law? To social justice? Or to the cult? These are among the multitude of answers offered by the twelve individual prophets that make up the Book. However, by the time the reader reaches Malachi, it is possible to hear the Twelve answer this question with a unified voice—yes, the reader is to return to the land, Zion, the law, social justice, and the cult, but most importantly, he is to return to Yhwh! The implication of such a statement is that a return to a relationship with Yhwh encompasses all aspects of Israel's life: physical (to the land), social (to each other), and cultic (to Yhwh). It is because of this that the question asked of Malachi, 'How are we to return?' is so disheartening. The Book of the Twelve has laid out the history of Israel's relationship with Yhwh by using the call to return, and here at the end, the people remain as ignorant as they did at the beginning (Hosea). Because of this, a dark pall hangs over the Twelve as the people stand on the verge of repeating a process that began in Hosea—that of experiencing anew the covenant curses as a new and quickly approaching Day of Yhwh threatens the reader. It is as if all the words of the prophets have been for naught (cf. Amos 4.6-11). Therefore, the Twelve is not the end of Israel's history, but rather a reflection on Israel's past (and continuing) relationship with Yhwh.

How then does Sirach, one of the first to make reference to the unity of the Book, arrive at such a positive summarizing statement concerning the Twelve? 'May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the grave! For they put a new heart into Jacob, and by their confident hope delivered the people' (Sir. 49.10, REB). After all, where is the hope in Malachi's concluding threat to strike the land with a curse (3.24)? Where is the hope that a people who have failed to return will now heed the calls of the prophets and seek out Yhwh? To this speaks the Twelve's full understanding of the return relationship. While the message of 'Return to me and I will return to you' underlies the Twelve, the theme is not a formula that binds Yhwh and controls his interactions with Israel. On the contrary, a full under-standing of the call to return includes an element of the unknown ('Who

knows?' Joel 2.14; Jon. 3.9) that is based entirely on Yhwh's sovereignty. Because of this, Yhwh always remains dangerous; he is capable of ignoring his people's pleas for repentance and bringing about untold destruction, while at the same time, he is also capable of spontaneously turning towards his people, for reasons known only to him, and bring about a glorious restoration. In this way, the Twelve is ultimately about Yhwh's relationship with his people, a relationship that is constantly in motion, with both parties turning toward and away from each other. So the theme of the Twelve becomes a reality: 'As the people struggle to turn (שׁוב) from covenant failure toward Yhwh in repentance and receive his blessing, Yhwh struggles to turn (שׁוב) from judgment toward his people in grace'. It must be remembered, however, that Yhwh is not helpless in his struggle (cf. Chapter 4, pp. 108-10). The Twelve is certain that Yhwh wills to act on his compassion, and will turn toward his people in deliverance.

What I set out to prove in this project is that it is possible for a group of twelve individual writings to be understood as a book, while at the same time maintaining their own individual messages. I have argued that through word occurrence and distribution, the call to return forms a thematic thread that is introduced by the Twelve's opening writings (Hosea–Joel) and carries on to the concluding works (Zechariah–Malachi) where it is crystallized into the statement 'Return to me and I will return to you'. The existence of the theme, and (possible) corresponding editorial activity, means that the Twelve can be called a Book in the proper sense—if the reader so chooses to pursue such an approach. After all, there is no way of knowing whether or not such word distribution was part of the editorial intention. Nonetheless, the use of שׁוב and the call to return play a prominent role in the Book of the Twelve.

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Index of Authors

Goldingay, J. 41
Goulder, M. 41
Greidanus, S. 29
Guillaume, Ph. 137
Guzzo, M.G.A. 212

Haak, R.D. 160
Hamilton, V. 85
Hanson, P.D. 41
Harmon, W. 26, 28
Hartley, J.E. 70
Hayes, J.H. 72, 74, 147
Hess, R.S. 199
Hesse, F. 6
Hill, A.E. 208, 211, 214, 218-20, 222, 223
Hillers, D.R. 153
Hoglund, K. 198
Holladay, W.L. 41, 66, 71, 74, 76, 81, 83-
    85, 90, 91, 96, 120, 156, 179, 180, 184,
    193, 197, 199, 203, 208, 214, 220, 223,
    229
Holman, C.H. 26, 28
House, P.R. 1, 14, 15
Hubbard, D.A. 94, 96, 101
Huffmon, H.B. 66
Hurowitz, V.A. 119

Jacobs, M.R. 154
Jepsen, A. 6
Jeremias, J. 99, 105
Jones, B.A. 10, 11, 175

Kaiser, B.B. 136
Kaiser, O. 41
Kaiser, W.C. 79, 98
Kakkanattu, J.P. 73
Keefe, A.A. 63
Kelle, B.E. 65
Kessler, J. 167, 168, 198
Kline, M.G. 182
Knierim, R.P. 147
Kohlenberger III, J.R. 22

Lacocque, A. 136
Lacocque, P.-E. 136
Landy, F. 41, 104
Licht, J. 135
Limburg, J. 66, 133
Lindsay, J. 212
Linville, J.R. 147

Lipinski, E. 193
Lössl, J. 119
Lundbom, J.R. 73, 193

Macintosh, A.A. 69, 87, 97, 103
Malchow, B.V. 227
Marks, H. 4
Martens, E.A. 69, 80
Mason, R. 114-16, 178, 215, 228
Mays, J.L. 69, 74, 75, 77, 88, 89, 92, 94, 97,
    101, 102, 154
McComiskey, T. 67-71, 76, 80, 81, 84, 86,
    92, 98, 99, 101-103, 199, 203
McConville, J.G. 119
McEvenue, S. 41
McKeating, H. 68
McKenzie, S.L. 97, 216
Meadowcroft, T. 168
Meinhold, A. 17, 18
Melugin, R.F. 54
Meyers, C.L. 168, 173, 180, 181, 185, 188,
    194, 196, 200, 202
Meyers, E.M. 168, 173, 180, 181, 185, 188,
    194, 196, 200, 202
Miller, J.M. 72, 74
Mitchell, H.G. 139
Moran, W.L. 209
Motyer, J.A. 40, 57
Mowinckel, S. 41
Mowvley, H. 93, 94, 103
Murfin, R. 27, 28

Naudé, J.A. 230
Nicholson, E. 72
Nielsen, K. 67
Nogalski, J.D. 1, 8, 9, 17, 25, 112, 134, 135,
    174, 175, 177

O'Brien, J.M. 158, 159, 189, 190, 208, 213,
    217, 222, 224
O'Connell, R.H. 146
O'Kennedy, D.F. 93, 104
Ogden, G.S. 122
Opgen-Rhein, H.J. 133
Orr, A. 193
Oswalt, J.N. 40, 41, 57, 61

Paul, S.M. 147, 148
Petersen, D.L. 3, 16, 167, 170, 186-88, 190,
    192, 195, 198-202, 204, 219, 224-26