

JONAH AND LEVIATHAN
Inner-Biblical Allusions and the Problem with Dragons

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1. *Jonah, the Fish, and Leviathan*

The enormous creature that swallowed Jonah has long inspired the curiosity of exegetes. Jon 2:1 simply labels it a דג גדול “large fish,” but the context suggests something much larger. Efforts to view the creature as rooted in the natural world have resulted in mistranslating it as a “whale” or in explaining it as a Mediterranean “white shark” (*Carcharias vulgaris*).¹ Despite these more recent efforts in credulity, the fantastic nature of the creature has troubled interpreters since antiquity. Hence, the medieval Hebrew commentaries, which variously propose to understand Jonah’s experience as a miracle, allegory, or prophetic dream or vision.²

Of specific interest here are a number of traditions, found in Judaism and Christianity, that permit a role in Jonah’s story for Leviathan, a creature not mentioned in the biblical account. Representing Jewish tradition are *Pirke de-Rabbi Eleazer* (ch. 10), *Yalqut Shimoni*, and two smaller midrashic texts on Jonah.³ Though each contains variations and elements not found in the others, they collectively portray Leviathan as a threat to the fish that devours Jonah. As the storyline goes: Jonah vows to descend to the depths, snag Leviathan with a fishhook (an exegetical nod to Job 40:25), and bring it up as a

¹ The translation “whale” appears in William Tyndale’s Bible of 1534 in reference to the creature in Matt 12:40. However, in Jon 1:17 he renders it as “greate fyshe.” The bifurcated reading was adopted by the King James Bible (1611). E.B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets with a Commentary, Explanatory and Practical, and Introductions to the Several Books* (Oxford: J. H. and J. Parker, 1860), pp. 257-258, first proposed the “white shark,” citing a mariner’s report from 1758 in which a man was devoured whole after falling overboard, but soon rescued. See also P. Haupt, “Jonah’s Whale,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 46 (1907), pp. 151-164, who suggests a cachalot or sperm whale.

² On the various approaches among the sages, see U. Simon, *Jonah: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), pp. xv-xxi.

³ All appear in Y.D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim*, Vol. 1 (New York: Nobel Offset Printers, 1915), pp. 217-222 (in Hebrew). The midrashic text from Prague contains materials not found in *Yalqut Shimoni* including a discussion of special things that God made during creation. This section constitutes a Hebrew translation of an Aramaic portion of the *Zohar* (section ויקהל).

sacrifice and meal for the righteous who will eat it at the messianic banquet.⁴ In exchange, the fish shows Jonah the mysteries of the great deep through his eyes, which serve as illuminated windows.⁵

In Christianity, Jonah was a favorite figure for allegory. Taking their lead from Jesus' statement that Jonah was a σημεῖον "sign" (Matt 12:39-40), early theologians depicted him as prefiguring the Christ, descending into the "fish" like Jesus into Hell, and delivered from it for the salvation of gentiles.⁶ Early Greek Patristic works identify Jesus as the worm on the fishhook of Job 40:25, who lures the devil to his demise.⁷ The devil is none other than Leviathan, whom Rev 12:9, 20:2 recognizes as Satan.⁸ In Western Christianity, beginning already in the 3rd century CE, one finds paintings, sarcophagoi, and other funerary art that link Jonah to Leviathan by depicting the "fish" as a fantastic sea monster with large sharp teeth, tall ears, mammalian forearms, and a long serpentine tail (figs. 1-3).⁹

2. *The Problem with Dragons*

The Christian depictions of Jonah's "fish" as a sea monster have long posed a problem for scholars, because the aforementioned midrashic tradi-

⁴ One also finds Leviathan as the meal for the eschatological banquet in *1 Enoch* 60:7-9, 24, 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 29:4 (cfr. also 4 *Ezra* 6:49-52), though in the former, Leviathan is a female creature.

⁵ Of course, the creature's window-like eyes explain how Jonah could have seen anything from the stomach of the fish.

⁶ See, e.g., Clement, *Strom.* 5, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5.5.2, Ignatius, *Trall.* 10, Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 107, Tertullian, *De res.* 58, Athanasius, *Discourses*, and Jerome, *Commentary on Jonah*.

⁷ Based on a conflation of several texts from the LXX including also Ps 21:6 (= MT 22:6), 103:26 (= MT 104:26). See Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In illud, simile est regnum coelorum grano sinapis* (Matt 13:31) (PG 64:23), and Barsanuphius, *Epistle* 62, Macarius Magnes, *Apocriticus* 3:9, detailed by N.P. Constanas, "The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative," *Harvard Theological Review* 97 (2004), pp. 139-163 (147-149). One wonders if the "worm" here also reflects an exegetical use of the תולע "worm" of Jonah 4:7.

⁸ The passages in Revelations employ the word δράκων "dragon," a term the LXX uses to translate לִיָּוִיִּית "Leviathan," e.g., Ps 104:26, Isa 27:1, Job 40:25.

⁹ J. Boardman, "'Very Like a Whale' – Classical Sea Monsters," in A.E. Farkas - P. Harper, - E. Harrison (eds.), *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada* (Franklin Jasper Walls Lectures 10; Mainz on Rhine: P. von Zabern, 1987), pp. 73-84, pl. XXI-XVI; S.J. Davis, "Jonah in Early Christian Art: Allegorical Exegesis and the Roman Funerary Context," *Australian Religion Studies Review* 13 (2000), pp. 72-83, argues that the artistic remains expand upon the allegorical interpretation of Jonah, making him a symbol of repose in paradise and the resurrection of the body. J.D. Tabor, "A Preliminary Report of a Robotic Camera Exploration of a Sealed 1st Century Tomb in East Talpiot, Jerusalem," *Bible and Interpretation*, February 2012, asserts that Ossuary 6:3, discovered in the so-called "Patio Tomb" in Talpiot, Israel, is the earliest Jewish representation of the "fish" swallowing Jonah (1st century CE). However, the consensus of scholars since views the image as representing a glass amphora or unguentarium.

tions cannot be dated, even generously, before the 9th century CE.¹⁰ Therefore, to explain the portrayals scholars have theorized that the midrashim predate their written forms by half a millennium. Bezalel Narkiss' reasoned explanation is representative:

The appearance in artistic representations of a sea monster rather than the biblical "large fish" derived no doubt from the Septuagint translation of "large fish" as *ketos*. This translation may have originated from a midrashic interpretation of the fish which swallowed Jonah. According to the midrash, this was a special creature, made by God on the fifth day of creation, and differed from Leviathan, with which Jonah conversed. Leviathan, the king of the sea, was another of God's creatures, intended for his play (Psalm 104:26) and ultimately for feasting upon by the righteous in the messianic world to come. According to this Jewish concept, Leviathan had to be essentially a fish, with fins and scales, or else it would be an unclean water creature unfit for the Jewish righteous to eat. It was in accordance with the midrash that the Septuagint translators chose the term *ketos* to make it clear that the "large fish" is different from Leviathan.¹¹

Nevertheless, four factors render this explanation unlikely. First, the translation $\kappa\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ is completely out of step with the LXX's treatment of the term לִיָּשׁ everywhere else in the Bible.¹² This fact should force us to ask in-

¹⁰ K. William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 63; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), pp. 31-58, treats 1 Enoch 60:7-10, 60:24, 4 Ezra 6:49-52, and 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4, as early attestations of the tradition of the righteous feasting on the slain body of Leviathan in the world to come. However, while each of the passages treats Leviathan as potential food, there is no reference to a feast or to the righteous, and thus, it is possible that each merely constitutes an exegetical expansion of Ps 74:14, where Leviathan is said to be "food for the people of the desert." Moreover, Jonah is not linked to Leviathan in any of these texts. One does not find clear references to the righteous feasting on Leviathan until *b. Baba Batra* 74b-75a, but this pericope also makes no mention of Jonah. Moreover, even if we date the traditions of *b. Baba Batra* to the 6th century CE, this cannot explain the LXX's rendering of Jonah's "fish" as a $\kappa\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ or the early Christian artworks. In fact, one does not find Jonah connected with Leviathan until *Midrash Jonah*, *Yalquṭ Shimoni*, and *Pirke-de-Rabbi Eleazar* 9-10, each very late works, and these distinguish Leviathan from the fish that swallows Jonah. On the temporal organization from *Urzeit* to *Endzeit* in the Leviathan tales of *b. Baba Batra*, see Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 41-55.

¹¹ B. Narkiss, "The Sign of Jonah," *Gesta* 18 (1979), pp. 63-76 (65); adopted in part by R.M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 50.

¹² An examination of the word לִיָּשׁ "fish" in the Hebrew Bible and LXX is informative. Of its thirty-three occurrences, all but four appear in the plural, either as a feminine "collective" (דִּיָּשִׁים and its derivatives) or as דִּיָּשִׁים and its derivatives. Most of them occur in the expression $\text{דִּיָּשִׁים הַיָּם}$ "fish of the sea," an idiom that includes all sea creatures whether kosher or not (cfr. its parallel "all creeping things" in Gen 9:2, and $\epsilon\pi\tau\epsilon\tau\omega\upsilon$ "reptiles" in the LXX of 1 Kgs 4:13). In Neh 13:16, the "fish" is spelled לִיָּשִׁים , used collectively, and sold by the people of Tyre on the Sabbath. In every case except Jonah, the LXX renders the term with some form of $\iota\chi\theta\upsilon\varsigma$ "fish." The difficult use of דִּיָּשִׁים in Job 40:31, an apparent reference to a fishing spear, is a

Doubtless, as Narkiss observes, the rendering of the creature as a *κῆτειν* *μεγάλω* in Jon 1:17 played an influential role in the early Christian portrayals of the creature, since a *κῆτος* can be a “fish” or a “sea monster.”¹⁶ However, I

¹⁴ J. Boardman, "'Very Like a Whale' – Classical Sea Monsters," pp. 73-84, speculates that the LXX translators used κῆτος to invoke a host of classical Greek traditions involving sea-monsters, such as *Odyssee* 5.4-6-450 in which Odysseus fears that Poseidon sent a κῆτος against him to wreck his ship.

¹⁶ See, e.g., *Odyssey* 5.417-421, *Iliad* 13.27, 20.145-147. John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, Vol. 1 (BZAW 231; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), p. 132, notes that Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* 3.20, 521b21-25) identifies the dolphin, porpoise, and whale all as κήτη, though in modern parlance a tuna is called a cetacean. For useful discussions of this term, see J. Boardman, *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 8 Vols. (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), I 731-736, II 496-501, s.v. *ketos*; J.K. Papadopoulos - D. Ruscillo, "A Ketos in Early Athens:

submit that it is unnecessary to posit the influence of Jewish midrashic traditions on these works several centuries before they appear.¹⁷ Instead, I aver that the translators of the LXX chose the term *κῆτος* precisely because it could mean “Tannin,” a term connected to Leviathan, and that creature’s connection to Jonah derives from inner-biblical allusions present in the text of Jonah itself.¹⁸

3. Reading the *לִי* as a Sea Monster

Though Jonah refers to the creature as a *לִי* four times (1:17 [2x], 2:1, 2:10),¹⁹ the ancients were acutely aware of the term’s ambiguity.²⁰ As Jack Sasson observes:

It is a fact, moreover, that Scripture has preserved no specific names for the many types of salt- and fresh-water fish known to the eastern Mediterranean. This does not mean, of course, that the ancient Hebrews were not able to distinguish among the area’s wide varieties of fish; it simply suggests that no biblical context seems to require a specific vocabulary for fish.²¹

An Archaeology of Whales and Sea Monsters in the Greek World,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 106 (2002), pp. 187-227.

¹⁷ See also the caution advised by W. Hall Harris III, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 61, with regard to the influence of the midrashic texts: “In evaluating the significance of these accounts of Jonah and his ‘descent’ in the belly of the fish, we must remember that all of the rabbinic accounts appear to be considerably later than the first century CE. Thus their usefulness in determining how Jonah as a prophetic figure was viewed during the period when the NT documents were being composed is extremely limited.”

¹⁸ I use the term “inner-biblical allusion” rather than “intertextuality,” as it most closely matches the device examined here. I have adopted herein the methods for ascertaining the presence of inner-biblical allusions proposed by G. Miller, “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 9 (2010), pp. 283-309, and R.L. Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Biblica* 95 (2014), pp. 280-291. Also useful are B.D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988); L. Eslinger, “Inner-biblical Exegesis and Inner-biblical Allusion: The Question of Category,” *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992), pp. 47-58.

¹⁹ The change in the fish’s gender in Jon 2:1 (*לִי*) has elicited a great deal of discussion and it has given rise to midrashic musings involving Jonah’s transfer from one fish to another. See J.M. Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation* (AB, 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990), pp. 156-157.

²⁰ The ambiguity also is reflected in that some early Christian artworks depict the creature as a fish, whereas in others, it is a sea monster.

²¹ Sasson, *Jonah*, p. 149. This ambiguity toward sealife is shared by many cultures. See Aristotle, *History of Animals* 2.13, 15, who includes creatures without fins, scales, and gills in the genus “fish,” such as frogs and hammer-head sharks. O. Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, Vol. 3 (1st ed.; London: J. Nourse, 1774), p. 1, notes that prior to efforts to classify fish scientifically, the term “fish” had been used for whales, limpets, tortoises, oysters, and other creatures. As late as the *Daily Chronicle* (London), November 6, 1908, one hears of the people of the West Indies referring to the sea turtle as a “fish.” Note too the common terms “crayfish” and “shellfish” still used today.

Thus, the **לִיָּהּ** is a general term for a variety of sea creatures that may or may not be kosher.²² Indeed, the dietary foods laws do not employ the word **לִיָּהּ**, but rather simply stipulate that one may eat anything from the sea or river as long as it possesses **כַּנְפִּיר** “fins” and **קַשְׂקִשִּׁת** “scales” (Lev 11: 9-10, Deut 14:9-10). Accordingly, when referring to the **לִיָּהּ** in Jonah, I shall use the more general term “sea creature.”

In Jonah, the ambiguity of the **לִיָּהּ**, coupled with its enormous size, naturally encouraged the ancients to identify it as a type of giant sea monster known as a **תַּנִּין** “Tannin.” Thus, the authors of the LXX rendered **הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים** “the great sea monsters” in Gen 1:21 similarly: τὰ κήτη τὰ μεγάλα.²³ The term **תַּנִּין** refers generally to a type of serpentine creature of which Leviathan is one kind.²⁴ Thus, the word **תַּנִּין** takes the definite article (Gen 1:21, Isa 27:1, Jer 14:6, 51:34, Ezek 29:3, Neh 2:13), whereas **לִיָּהּ** never does.²⁵ Nevertheless, traditions concerning Leviathan are not entirely consistent.²⁶ Thus, some texts understand the creature as possessing multiple heads, others see it as having one.²⁷ Sometimes it also is equated with a lion or a sea monster with lionlike features.²⁸ Leviathan also is known by the name Rahab

²² The term **לִיָּהּ** is much like the others with which it is sometimes paired, such as a **שָׂרֵץ** “teeming-thing” and a **רֶמֶשׁ** “creeping-thing” (Lev 11:10). Each signifies a broad category for creatures that includes kosher and non-kosher species. R. Whitkettle, “Taming the Shrew, Shrike, and Shrimp: The Form and Function of Zoological Classification in Psalm 8,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125 (2006), pp. 749-795, argues that the expression **הַיָּם הַגִּי** means “small aquatic animals” as opposed to **עֹבֵר אֶרְצוֹת יַמִּים** “large aquatic animals” (Ps 8:9).

²³ Thus, in accordance with *b. Baba Batra* 74b, Rashi understands **הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים** as a reference to Leviathan and its mate.

²⁴ The term **תַּנִּין** sometimes appears to refer to an ordinary snake (e.g., Deut 32:33, Ps 91:13). However, these too might bear mythological significance. Indeed, the LXX translates **תַּנִּין** in Ps 90:13 (= MT 91:13) as δρᾶκοντα. See also G.C. Heider, “Tannin **תַּנִּין**,” in K. van der Toorn, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 834-836.

²⁵ Aquila translates it as a proper name Λευιαθαν. *11QTgJob* 40:25 renders **לִיָּהּ** and also Behemoth with **תַּנִּין**. M.G. Wechsler, “Shared Reflections of Early Jewish Exegetical/Targumic Tradition in the Peshitta Text of Job and the Targum from Qumran (11QTgJob),” *Le Museon* 115 (2002), pp. 77-128 (105).

²⁶ H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1921), pp. 86-87, already observed that in some versions of the myth Leviathan is captured, whereas in others, it is killed.

²⁷ Leviathan has multiple heads in Ps 74:13-14, though how many is not specified. However, Leviathan has a single head in Job 40:31. *CAT* 1.3 iii 42, refers to the creature as *šlyt šb t rašm* “the tyrant of seven heads.” See M.S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, Vol. 2: *Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.3-1.4* (VTSup 114; Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 248-259. The creature also appears to have two tails at Ugaritic (*CAT* 1.83). Tiamat and the biblical dragons have one (*Enūma eliš* v:59; LXX of Job 40:31; Rev 12:4).

²⁸ See S. Mowinkel, “*saḥal*,” in D.W. Thomas - W.D. McHardy (eds.), *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to G. R. Driver* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 95-103; Marvin H. Pope, *Job: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.; AB 15; New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 202; T.J. Lewis, “CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996), pp. 28-47. Note *Ahiqar* 34: **לֹא אַרְיָה לָא** “[א]י תי בימא על כן יקראון לקפא לבא” “There is no lion in the sea, therefore the sea snake is

(Isa 51:9, Job 9:13, 26:12, Ps 89:11). As Marvin Pope put it: “There were probably several versions of the major motifs of the myths and considerable freedom in their use.”²⁹ The antiquity of Leviathan and its cosmic significance is well known.³⁰ It first appears in Ugaritic texts as *ltn*, and they too identify it as a *tnn* “Tannîn” (e.g., *CAT* 1.3 iii 40, 1.5 i 1),³¹ though earlier visual representations also exists.³² A Tannîn also appears in the Aramaic *Tale of Ahiqar* from Elephantine (5th century BCE): רכִּיךְ לִשְׁן מִ[לֶךְ] וְעִלְעֵי תַנִּין “a king’s tongue is soft but it breaks the ribs of a Tannîn” (*Ahiqar* 90). The identification of Leviathan as a Tannîn continued well into Late Antiquity, as evidenced by לִיִּיתָן תַּנִּינָא “Leviathan, the Tannîn” found on several Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls and lead rolls.³³ The rabbinic tradition too generally understands לִיִּיתָן as תַּנִּין. In the light of such evidence, I think it more plausible to understand the κῆτος in the LXX of Jonah not as the translators’ attempt to distinguish the creature from Leviathan and render it kosher, but as their effort to identify the דָּג as תַּנִּין.³⁴

4. Leviathan Lurking in Jonah

Moreover, I contend that the text of Jonah contains a number of linguistic and thematic features that allude to “Tannîn traditions” as found in several other biblical texts, and that these allusions encouraged the early identifica-

called *labbu*.” On the lionide features of the κῆτος in early Greek art, see Boardman, “‘Very Like a Whale’ – Classical Sea Monsters,” pp. 80, 82.

²⁹ Pope, *Job*, p. 330.

³⁰ See already Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, first published in 1895.

³¹ Ugaritians pronounced the creature as *lītānu* and *tunnanu*, respectively. See J.A. Emer-ton, “Leviathan and *ltn*: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon,” *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982), pp. 327–331, and the polyglot vocabulary list (Obv. 1:8’) where it is appears as *tunnanu* = *MUS* = *šīru* “snake.” See J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Harvard Semitic Studies, 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 72, 185–186.

³² Conveniently gathered by Lewis, “CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” p. 29.

³³ Leviathan appears on at least five Aramaic bowls, two Mandaic bowls, and three Mandaic lead rolls, sometimes with Tannîn, sometimes without. I thank James Nathan Ford for sharing information from his database including unpublished materials. Two of the bowls were discussed already by C.H. Gordon, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Orientalia* 10 (1941), pp. 272–284; see now also D. Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantations in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), p. 100 (M145:8): קִדְחַ דִּיּוּאָ צִנְרַ תַּנִּינָא וִילִיל זִרְנִי לִילִיתָא וְאִישְׁתַּרְגַּו לִוִּיתָן כּוּרָא “the *dēv* shrieked, the Tannîn howled, the lilith Zarnai wailed, Leviathan the fish became agitated...” The 1st century CE pseudepigraphal text, *Ladder of Jacob* 6:13, records: “The Lord will pour out his wrath against Leviathan the sea dragon.” See H.G. Lunt, “Ladder of Jacob,” in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), pp. 401–411 (410).

³⁴ Cfr. *Enūma eliš* IV:137, V:59, in which Marduk severs Tiamat, the serpentine dragon of chaos *kīma nūn maštē* “like a dried fish,” and twists her tail (*zibbatu*) to tie it to the Durmāhu (great cosmic bond). The LXX translators translate both לִיִּיתָן and תַּנִּין as δράκοντα “dragon” in Isa 27:1 and Ps 73:13–14, probably because Leviathan is there specified. In Isa 51:9, the LXX makes no reference to דָּג and the תַּנִּין found in the MT.

tion of the **לִיָּאָן** as a sea monster.³⁵ Such inner-biblical allusions should not surprise us, since *Jonah* is a late book,³⁶ and since scholars already have shown it to be rich in allusions to other biblical traditions.³⁷

The first echoes of Tannîn traditions derive from the setting of the story's first chapter – in a ship (**הַיָּמָיָה**) upon a raging sea (**יָם רָעָד**). As the Psalmist records, the sea naturally elicits thoughts of Leviathan: “There go the ships (**הַיָּמָיָה**). There is Leviathan (**לִיָּאָן**), whom you formed to sport in it” (Ps 104:26).³⁸ Of course, Leviathan does not personify a calm sea, but one that roils and surges. Thus, Ps 89:10-11: “You rule the proud swelling sea. When its waves arise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like one who is slain.” Job too proclaims that Yahweh “stills the sea with his power, and with his

³⁵ The identification of Jonah's fish as a sea monster was made first by O. Gruppe, “Aithiopenmythen. 1. Der phoinikische Urtext der Kassiepeialegende. Zusammenhang derselben mit anderen Aithiopenmythen,” *Philologus* 47 (1889), pp. 92-107, based only on thematic parallels with Perseus' deliverance from Andromeda from the sea monster and that tradition's association with Jaffa. He offered no inner-biblical allusions. Gruppe's proposal was adopted by J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). K.J. Dell, “Reinventing the Wheel: The Shaping of the Book of Jonah,” in J. Barton - D.J. Reimer (eds.), *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), pp. 85-101 (p. 98, n. 53), citing Day, simply notes: “A link of the whale with the chaos monster of Canaanite mythology has been suggested. This may in turn link up with the chaos monster *Leviathan* mentioned in Job.” T. Forti, “Of Ships and Seas, and Fish and Beasts: Viewing the Concept of Universal Providence in the Book of Jonah through the Prism of Psalms,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35 (2011), pp. 359-374 (372), recently identified Jonah's fish with Leviathan, but to very different ends.

³⁶ It was composed probably between the late 6th and 4th centuries BCE. See Simon, *Jonah*, pp. xli; E. Qimron, “The Dating of the Book of Jonah,” *Bet Miqra* 81 (1980), pp. 181-182 (in Hebrew); E. Ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud* (JSOTS 367; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 7-9; C.L. Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice: An Intertextual Approach to the Book of Jonah* (CBQMS 47; Washington D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2010), pp. 42-63.

³⁷ See, e.g., J. Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (BBET 2; Berlin: Peter Lang, 1976); B. Vawter, *Job and Jonah: Questioning the Hidden God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); Sasson, *Job*, pp. 168-218; J.D. Nogalski, “Intertextuality in the Twelve,” in P.R. House - J.W. Watts (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. Watts* (JSOT Supplement Series 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 102-124; P.L. Redditt, “Zechariah 9-14, Malachi and the Redaction of the Book of the Twelve,” in House - Watts (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature*, pp. 245-268; A.A. Abela, “When the Agenda of an Artistic Composition Is Hidden: Jonah and Intertextual Dialogue with Isaiah 6, the ‘Confessions of Jeremiah’ and Other Texts,” in J.C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character, and Anonymous Artist* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 1-30; Ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah*; Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Jonah Read Intertextually,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007), pp. 497-528; D. Timmer, “The Intertextual Israelite Jonah Face à l'Empire: The Post-colonial Significance of the Book's Cotexts and Purported Neo-Assyrian Context,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2009), online; Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice*.

³⁸ Alternatively, one cannot sport with the creature. Thus, Job 40:29: “Will you play (**קִיץ**) with him as with a bird?” On the Canaanite setting of Psalm 104, see C. Uehlinger, “Leviathan und die Schiffe in Ps 104,25-26,” *Biblica* 71 (1990), pp. 499-526.

understanding he smote Rahab. With his wind, he put Sea in his net, his hand pierced the fleeing serpent” (Job 26:12-13).³⁹

The narrator’s introduction of the storm is latent with cosmological import: וַיְהִי הַטֵּיִל רֹיחַ-גְּדוֹלָה אֶל-הַיָּם וַיְהִי סַעַר-גְּדוֹל בָּיָם “And Yahweh hurled a great wind to the sea and there was a great tempest in the sea” (Jon 1:4). Of first note is the verb טוֹל “hurl.” Of the fourteen occurrences of the verb in the Bible, thirteen depict violence acts.⁴⁰ The image of hurling wind at the sea is reminiscent of Marduk using winds as weapons against Tiamat, the goddess of the primordial deep: *imḥulla šābit arkāti panūššu umdaššir... imḥulla uštēriba ana lā katām šaptēša* “he released a destructive-wind that obstructed the rear... he sent a destructive-wind (into her mouth) so she could not seal her lips” (*Enūma eliš* IV 96, 98). In fact, the expression בָּיָם in Jon 1:4 also lands the blow of Yahweh’s windy weapon not *upon* (עַל) the sea, but rather *in* (בְּ) the sea, like Marduk’s winds that penetrate Tiamat. In addition, the expression רֹיחַ-גְּדוֹלָה “great wind” only occurs twice elsewhere, both in contexts of divine violence.⁴¹ The expression סַעַר-גְּדוֹל “great tempest” (Jon 1:4, 1:12) is even rarer occurring only in Jer 25:32. In that passage Yahweh’s tempest results in the annihilation of people from one end of the earth to the other (Jer 25:33). Thus, like the verb טוֹל, the hyperbolic references to the divinely sent wind and storm emphasize the violent nature of Yahweh’s act, and lend it greater cosmological import.

Equally allusive is the figure of the רֹבֵץ הַחֵבֶל “shipmaster” in Jon 1:6, whose title literally means “chief of the ropes.”⁴² Though in charge of the boat, he is no longer in control, as the sea threatens to crash his ship. The chaos of the sea and his inability to save it recalls Yahweh’s question to Job from the tempest (סַעַר): “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook? Or snag his tongue with a rope (חֵבֶל)?” (Job 40:25)? Moreover, since רֹבֵץ also can mean “strong, mighty,” the title also suggests that even “the strongest of ropes” like the “chief of ropes” will prove insufficient to the task.⁴³

In Jon 2:13, the narrator expresses the fear of the sailors by telling us that וַיַּחְתְּרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-הַיַּבֵּשָׁה “the men rowed to return to dry land,” an action that Sasson observes, represents the worst possible maritime decision

³⁹ Reading with N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1957), pp. 383-384; Pope, *Job*, pp. 185-186. Tur-Sinai recognized here the parallel to *Enūma eliš* IV: 95: *ušparrirma bēlum šaparrašu ušalmēši* “Bel spread out his net and ensnared her,” and parsed שָׁפַרְחָ שֵׁם יָם שָׁפַרְחָ as בְּרוּחוֹ שָׁפַרְחָ שֵׁם יָם שָׁפַרְחָ. Here שָׁפַרְחָ is cognate with *saparru*.

⁴⁰ The exception is Prov 16:33, where it is used in reference to lots. More on this below.

⁴¹ In 1 Kgs 19:11, Yahweh sends a “great wind” that rent the mountains before Elijah. In Job 1:19, a “great wind” comes from the wilderness and crushes Job’s house, killing the young men. A variant on this expression occurs in 1 Kgs 18:45, where a “wind and great rain” signals the conclusion of Yahweh’s victory over Baal.

⁴² Likely in reference to the men who handle the ship’s ropes.

⁴³ In Isa 53:12, רֹבֵץ parallels the root עָצַם “strong” (cf. Isa 63:1). The meaning “strongest of ropes” implicit in the title is just one of many hyperbolic elements in the book.

during a storm.⁴⁴ Of particular interest here is the verb הָתַר “row.” It is an uncommon word appearing only eight times in the Bible. With one exception, it always refers to digging through walls (Ezek 8:8 [2x], 12:5, 12:7, 12:12, Job 24:16 [or dirt floor?] of a house). The exception, Amos 9:2, refers to Sheol. Thus, its use in Jonah for rowing in water is unique. Moreover, since Jonah refers to the sea that covers him as בֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל “the womb of Sheol” (Jon 2:3), the sailor’s rowing invites us to recall its usage in Amos, in a prophecy also shaped by Tannîn traditions. Thus, Amos’ prophecy begins by Yahweh threatening to cut open the enemy and strike him upon the head with a sword while allowing none to flee. Amos describes the enemy’s frantic attempt to dig into Sheol as an impossible attempt to escape Yahweh: “And though they be hid from my sight on the floor of the sea (הַיָּם), then I will command the serpent (הַנָּחָשׁ) and he will bite them” (Amos 9:3). That Leviathan is intended here is shown not just by the context, but by the LXX’s rendering of נָחָשׁ with δράκοντι.⁴⁵ The passage also shares in common with Jonah a context of fleeing before Yahweh.

Allusions to Tannîn traditions next appear in Jonah’s prayer, in which he cries וַתִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִצִּוְלָה בַלְבָּב יָמַיִם וְיָהָר יִסְבְּבֵנִי “you cast me into the deep, in the heart of the seas, your flood surrounded me” (Jon 2:4). Of initial interest is the word מִצִּוְלָה “deep,” which is connected with Leviathan in Yahweh’s speech from the tempest: “He makes the deep (מִצִּוְלָה) boil like a pot, he makes sea a seething mixture” (Job 41:23). The term מִצִּוְלָה appears only twelve other times in the Bible, mostly in ways that evoke Leviathan traditions (Job 41:31, Ps 107:24), or in reference to the crossing through the Reed Sea, itself a literary refraction of the *Chaoskampf* motif (Exod 15:5, Zech 10:11, Neh 9:11).⁴⁶ In Ps 68:22 it evokes both traditions.⁴⁷ Abetting the allusion is the curious fact that Jonah is cast into the sea, but lands in the mouth of the לֶךְ; and yet he describes his descent as an act of drowning. The incongruity has troubled readers, but suffice it to note here that it results in identifying the לֶךְ, like Leviathan, with the sea.⁴⁸ Lending to the equation is the author’s use of לֶבָב rather than לֵב for “heart.” As Sasson observes, its

⁴⁴ Sasson, *Jonah*, p. 142.

⁴⁵ Sh.M. Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia; A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 278-279. Interestingly, Paul (n. 53) references Jon 2:1, 2:11 when describing Leviathan as Yahweh’s subdominant servant, but he does not elaborate.

⁴⁶ U. Cassuto, *Studies on the Bible and Ancient Orient: Vol. 1. Biblical and Canaanite Literatures* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1972), pp. 62-90 (in Hebrew); F. Moore Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 112-144, especially p. 117, n. 18; Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, pp. 96-101; W. Witfall, “The Sea of Reeds as Sheol,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980), pp. 325-332.

⁴⁷ It also appears in Mic 7:19, Ps 69:15, 88:6 as a poetic description for personal deliverance. Both Mic 7:19 and the Psalms have been compared to Jonah.

⁴⁸ On the various proposals for understanding the impasse, see D. Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (BJS 301; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 112.

appearance here for waters is unique as the form typically is used of living beings.⁴⁹ Thus, לָכֶם encourages us to personify the sea.⁵⁰

Note also Jonah's use of the term נָהָר. Though I have rendered it *ad sensum* above as "flood," the term most often refers generally to a "river," "stream," or "canal," or to a specific river, such as the Nile or Euphrates (Gen 15:18). However, when used synonymously with the deep (Isa 44:27, Ezek 31:4, 31:15, 32:2) and the sea (Isa 50:2, Nah 1:4, Hab 3:8, Ps 24:2, 74:15), it refers to the cosmological waters that Yahweh rebukes and/or cleaves.⁵¹ Even when used figuratively, נָהָר does not mean "flood," but rather "stream" (Job 20:17). Thus, its appearance immediately after the word יַמִּים "seas" emits cosmological reverberations, and recalls the age-old identification of the river with Leviathan, as attested in Ugaritic texts in the creature's other name *nhr* "River" (*CAT* 1.2 iv 20; 1.3 iii 39).⁵²

In addition, Jonah describes the נָהָר as סֹבְבֵנִי "surrounding me." Implicit in the verb סֹבֵב is a twisting, undulating, or encircling motion. When describing a river it means "flow circuitously." Thus, both the Pishon and Gihon tributaries סֹבֵב "flow circuitously" as רִאשֵׁים "heads" from Eden's river, the former through the land of Havilah, the latter through Cush (Gen 2:10-13).⁵³ The serpentine motion of a river is encapsulated well in the very

⁴⁹ Sasson, *Jonah*, p. 175.

⁵⁰ Note that the LXX reads "sea" rather than "waters." The device constitutes another example of prosopopeia in the book. Compare Jon 1:4: וְהַאֲנִיָּה חֲשָׁבָה לְהִשָּׁבֵר "and the ship considered breaking up." See Sasson, *Jonah*, pp. 96-97. The use of סֹבֵב also permits the author to create a cluster of geminating consonants as found in Jon 2:6. See S.B. Noegel, "Geminate Ballast and Clustering: An Unrecognized Literary Feature in Ancient Semitic Poetry," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004), 1-18 (3); Id., "More Geminate Ballast and Clustering in Biblical Hebrew," in I. Wilson - D. Edelman (eds.), *History, Memory, and Hebrew Scriptures: Studies in Honor of Ehud Ben Zvi on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), pp. 417-432.

⁵¹ The Akkadian cognate has similar semantic parameters, though it can be divinized. It also appears in reference to the sea monster Labbu. See *CAD* N/1 372, s.v. *nāru*.

⁵² Cfr. the epithet *ṭṭṭ nhr* "Judge River" (*CAT* 1.2 i 7, 17), discussed by Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts* (transl. J.N. Ford; Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section I, Near and Middle East 93; Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 311-315; W.T. Pitard, "The Binding of Yamm: A New Edition of Ugaritic Text KTU 1.83," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57 (1998), pp. 261-280. Though נָהָר does not appear in the Bible in reference to Leviathan, some texts are suggestive. For example, Hab 3:8 reads: "Is it kindled, O Yahweh, against the rivers? Is your anger against the rivers? Is your wrath against the sea?" In Ps 74:14-15, Yahweh's crushing of Leviathan's heads parallels the cleaving of fountains and streams, and the drying of the mighty rivers (נְהָרוֹת). Ezek 32:2 likens Pharaoh to the תַּנִּין in the seas, who gushes forth from the rivers (נְהָרוֹת). See also Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, pp. 35-38, who sees נְהָרוֹת in Ps 24:2, 93:2-3 as recalling the epithet "Judge River." Also insightful is H.G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbim* 'Many Waters,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955), pp. 9-21. Moreover, some traditions concerning Leviathan in Ugaritic texts appear in rabbinic literature, but not in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrating that they must have existed in the biblical period. See I. Jacobs, "Elements of Near-Eastern Mythology in Rabbinic Aggadah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1975), pp. 1-11.

⁵³ In Ps 114:3, 114:5, סֹבֵב occurs in reference to the Jordan "turning back." In Ps 88:17, the body of water is not specified. Cfr. the protasis of the following Akkadian omen: *šumma Sin*

name לִיָּתָן “Leviathan,” which derives from the root לָוָה “twist, bend, be crooked,” and in its epithet נָחָשׁ עֲקֹלֶתָן “crooked serpent” (Isa 27:1).⁵⁴

The verb סָבַב occurs again in Jon 2:6, this time with תְּהוֹם the “Deep”: אֶפְכָּנִי מִיָּם עַד-נֶפֶשׁ תְּהוֹם יְסָבֵבִי “waters engulfed me, even to (my) throat, Deep surrounding me.” As is well known, תְּהוֹם is another name for the Tannîn (Isa 51:9-10, cfr. Job 41:24, Ps 148:7), and it is the Hebrew refraction of Tiamat.⁵⁵ In addition, the expression עַד-נֶפֶשׁ is polysemous.⁵⁶ It can mean “even to (my) throat” or “even to (the) breath.”⁵⁷ See, for example, the description of Leviathan in Job 41:13: “His breath (נֶפֶשׁ) kindles coals.”⁵⁸ However, עַד-נֶפֶשׁ also can mean “like a hunger” and refer to the appetite of the Deep.⁵⁹ Support for this reading comes from Jonah’s previous description of the deep as בֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל “the womb (lit. stomach) of Sheol” (Jon 2:3), and from references elsewhere to Sheol’s insatiable נֶפֶשׁ “hunger, appetite” (Isa 5:14, Hab 2:5). I shall return to the water’s appetite below.

Jonah then cries: סוּף חֲבוּשׁ לְרָאשִׁי “a reed was wrapped about my head” (Jon 2:6). The reference to סוּף “reed,” is especially evocative as it recalls the events at the יַם-סוּף “Reed Sea,” again, a story similarly informed by dragon-slaying traditions. Indeed, the term סוּף occurs twenty-eight times in the Bible and only four of them are not used of the “Reed Sea” (Exod 2:3, 2:5, Isa 19:6, Jon 2:6). Of these, only the Jonah passage is not set in Egypt. Thus, the term סוּף is especially charged to recall the splitting of Sea.⁶⁰ In fact, the word’s connection with the Reed Sea informs the translations of סוּף

nāru (ĪD) *lami* “if the moon is surrounded by a ‘river’ (i.e., halo); *nāru* is cognate with נָהָר, and *lamū* with לָוָה. Cited in CAD N/1 376, s.v. *nāru*.

⁵⁴ Saadia renders לִיָּתָן in Job 40:25 as אֶלְמִלְתָּי “coiled creature.” See Saadia ben Joseph al-Fayyūmī, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Comentary on the Book of Job*. L.E. Goodman, trans. (Yale Judaica Series, 25; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 405-406, n. 9; Wechsler, “Shared Reflections of Early Jewish Exegetical/Targumic Tradition in the Peshitta Text of Job and the Targum from Qumran (11QTgJob),” p. 105, renders “the sinuous one,” and notes (n. 141): “According to Ibn Janāh (‘Uṣūl, cols. 348-49), לִיָּתָן is the same as that which is called الجوزهر, a Persian term which he explains as ‘the intersection of coils which resemble a sea dragon by reason of its sinuousness and swirling.’”

⁵⁵ The Targum translates מִבֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל in Jon 2:3 as מֵאֶרְעֵית תְּהוֹמָא “from the bottom of the Deep.”

⁵⁶ The expression appears in Jer 4:10, Ps 69:2-3. Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 164, renders it “my neck.” Jonah exploits the ambiguity inherent in נֶפֶשׁ by employing it throughout the text antaenaclastically. Thus, it also means “being” (Jon 1:14), “self” (Jon 2:8), and “life” (Jon 4:3, 4:8).

⁵⁷ Cfr. the flood waters that rise עַד-צְוֹאֵר “up to the neck” in Isa 8:8. The Akkadian and Ugaritic cognates for נֶפֶשׁ share the semantic range. See CAD N/1 228, s.v. *napāšu* A; 296 s.v. *napištu*; 318, s.v. *napšu*; DULAT 636-637, s.v. *npš*.

⁵⁸ Noted by J. Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), p. 69.

⁵⁹ Cfr. the use of עַד in 1 Sam 2:5, Nah 1:10.

⁶⁰ On the cosmic import of יַם-סוּף in biblical texts, see B. Batto, “The Reed Sea: *Requiescat in Pace*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983), pp. 27-35; N. Wyatt, *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature* (London: Equinox, 2005), pp. 197-204.

found in several of the textual witnesses: Aquila and Targum ("Red Sea"), and Theodotion and Vulgate ("ocean").⁶¹ Moreover, as Bernard Batto has shown, the use of סוּף here cannot refer to a deep-sea plant, and so the context of Jonah 2 must be a primordial sea:

All other images concern the realm of the primeval chaos: Sheol, the Pit, and the Underworld (*ʿereš*) as the abode of Death; the Sea-dragon under its twin names of Sea and River; the primeval Abyss (*tēhōm*) and associated terms, "the deep," "breakers," "billows," "waters": the foundations of the mountains in the underworld. Clearly, the context requires *sûp* to have something to do with a cosmic battled against chaos.⁶²

Thus, Batto argues that סוּף means "end" and serves as a euphemism for death. In support, he draws our attention to its use with חָבַשׁ "bind" and cites Ps 18:5-6: "The cords of Death encompassed me (אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבָלֵי מָוֶת)... the cords of Death encircled me (חֲבָלֵי שְׂאוֹל סָבְבוּנִי)."⁶³

Observe too that the verb טָוַל "hurl," discussed above, occurs four times as a key word in the first chapter.⁶⁴ We first hear it in v. 4 for the "great wind" that Yahweh sent into the sea. In the next verse, the sailors then וַיִּטְלוּ "hurled" their vessels into the sea to lighten the ship (Jon 1:5). Jonah then pleads with the sailors: "lift me up and hurl (וַיִּטְלֵנִי) me into the sea and calm the sea" (Jon 1:12).⁶⁵ When the sailors oblige, we hear it again: וַיַּעֲמֵד וַיִּטְלֵהוּ אֶל-הַיָּם וַיִּעָמֵד "and they hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging" (Jon 1:15).⁶⁶ Given the four-fold use of the verb in conjunction with a raging sea, it is difficult not to recall Yahweh's rhetorical query concerning Leviathan from the tempest: הֲגַם אֶל-מְרַאֲיוֹ יָטֹל "Shall not one be hurled

⁶¹ Discussed by Sasson, *Jonah*, p. 185.

⁶² Batto, "The Reed Sea," pp. 32-35.

⁶³ Batto, "The Reed Sea," p. 34. He also cites Job 40:13. However, Batto does not discuss the poem as allusions to Tannîn traditions.

⁶⁴ Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, pp. 16-19; B. Halpern - R.E. Friedman, "Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah," *Harvard Annual Review* 4 (1980), pp. 79-92 (81); Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 149-150.

⁶⁵ Even though the verb נָפַל appears three times for the casting of lots in Jon 1:7, the act of cleromancy requires the same hurling action. In fact, the verb טָוַל occurs for casting lots in Prov 16:33. I suggest that the four-fold use of טָוַל in Jonah 1 and the three-fold use of נָפַל in Jon 1:7 are mutually reinforcing key words. Both emphasize the downward motion that characterizes Jonah's experience. This motion is registered from the start. Though Yahweh commands Jonah to "arise and go" to Nineveh, because a great evil has "come up" upon the land, he "went down" to Jaffa and "went down" into a boat (Jon 1:1). During the storm, Jonah also "went down" into the boat's hull (1:5). His descent into the belly of the fish serves as the climactic point of this movement. Ph. Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), p. 158-159, observes that the phrase "stomach of the fish" occurs at the center of the chiasmic structure of chapter 2. On ascent (וַיַּעֲלֵה) and descent (וַיִּרְדֵּ) as keywords in Jonah, see Halpern - Friedman, "Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah," pp. 80-81.

⁶⁶ E.M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981), p. 45, sees this as contributing to the irony in the story.

down in the sight of him?” (Job 41:1). Ezekiel too uses this verb when likening Pharaoh to a Tannin: “I will fling you to the ground, and hurl (אָטִילָךְ) you upon the open field” (Ezek 32:4). Moreover, the use of the root נָעַר “rage” in Jon 1:15 is unique. It is reserved elsewhere only for humans. Thus, its use here constitutes another case of prosopopoeia in Jonah, one that prompts us to personify the sea as Sea.⁶⁷

Allusions to Tannin traditions appear also in Jonah’s testimony: לְקַצְרֵי הָרִים יִרְדְּתִי הָאָרֶץ בְּרַחֲתָהּ בַּעֲדִי לְעוֹלָם “to the bottoms of mountains I descended, the underworld with its latch closed upon me forever” (Jon 2:7). The image here is that of death latching its gate upon entering (cfr. Isa 38:10).⁶⁸ The mention of earth’s בְּרִיחַ “latch” paronomastically reminds us of Jon 1:3: וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה לְבָרֶךְ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה “and he (Jonah) got up and fled to Tarshish” (Jon 1:3). In Jon 1:10, the narrator adds that the sailors were exceedingly afraid when they learned that Jonah was בָּרַח “fleeing” from Yahweh. Later, when angered by Yahweh’s kindness towards the Ninevites, we hear it again as he explains why he was had לְבָרֶךְ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה “to flee to Tarshish” (Jon 4:2). The antanaclastic repetition of the root בָּרַח, once for the “latch” and three times for “fleeing” recalls the well-known tradition of לִוְיָתָן נִתְּשׁ בָּרַח “Leviathan the fleeing serpent” (Isa 27:1), also attested in Ugaritic as *ltn bṭn brh* “Leviathan the fleeing serpent” (*CAT* 1.5 i 1).⁶⁹ Indeed, the tradition likely also informs Yahweh’s description of Leviathan in Job 41:20: כֹּה־קִשָּׁת לֹא־יִבְרִיחֵנּוּ “a (mere) arrow does not make him flee.”⁷⁰ The allusion in Jonah persuades us to parallel Jonah and Leviathan, since both flee God. In this light, the “fear” of God that Jonah registers in 1:10 becomes more terror than reverence.⁷¹ Like Leviathan, Jonah too is identified as the cause of הָרָעָה “the evil” (Jon 1:8). That he should be devoured by a Tannin while fleeing God is ironic and perhaps offers a lesson in *lex talionis*.⁷²

⁶⁷ As Job 7:12 illustrates, the definite article does not discourage the identification: “Am I the Sea (הַיָּם) or a Tannin (תַּנִּינִי) that you set a guard over me”? Cfr. Ps 77:17, where the sea and deep fear and tremble before Yahweh.

⁶⁸ See Sasson, *Job*, pp. 188-190. Jonah himself refers to his location as מִבְּטֶן שְׁאוֹל “from the womb of Sheol” (Jon 1:3). This suggests that we should read הָאָרֶץ בְּרַחֲתָהּ in 1:7 as “the underworld and its latch.” For ancient Near Eastern parallels, see Sh.M. Paul, “Jonah 2:7: The Descent to the Netherworld,” in M.J. Lundberg, Steven Fine, and Wayne T. Pitard (eds.), *Puzzling Out the Past: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Bruce Zuckerman* (Leiden: Brill 2012), pp. 131-134.

⁶⁹ Despite some recent efforts to date Isaiah 24-27 in the post-exilic period, the linguistic evidence argues against this. See S.B. Noegel, “Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24-27,” *Aula Orientalis* 12 (1994), pp. 177-192, and more recently, Ch.B. Hays, “The Date and Message of Isaiah 24-27 in Light of Hebrew Diachrony,” in J. Todd Hibbard - Paul Kim (eds.), *Intertextuality and Formation of Isaiah 24-27* (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 17; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), pp. 7-24, who suggests a date in the 7th century BCE.

⁷⁰ The LXX to Job 26:13 appears to presuppose בְּרִיחֵי שָׁמַיִם “latches of heaven” instead of בְּרוּחוֹ שָׁמַיִם “with his wind, the heavens...” since it reads: λαεῖθρα δὲ οὐρανοῦ δεδούλασιν αὐτόν “latches of heaven fear him.”

⁷¹ Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 141, notes the ambiguity of Jonah’s “fear,” and the appearance of the same verb to expresses the sailors’ “terror” (Jon 1:5) and “worship” (Jon 1:16).

⁷² Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 58, similarly records the irony that just as Jonah fled to

The appearance of the root בָּרַח, both in Jonah and in two different Israelite traditions concerning Leviathan, was not lost on R. Eleazer Hyrcanus in the 9th century, who linked them in his aggadic work, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* (ch. 9). In particular, he viewed the root בָּרַח in Jonah as alluding to Leviathan holding the הַבְּרִיחַ הַתִּכּוֹן “foundation latch” of the universe. The midrash also states that when Jonah confronted Leviathan, he revealed his “covenant” to him (i.e., his circumcised phallus), and the creature וּבְרַח מִלִּפְנֵי יוֹנָה “fled from Jonah” a distance of two days.⁷³

The Book of Jonah also evokes Tannîn traditions in its bookend descriptions of the creature swallowing and vomiting.⁷⁴ In Jon 2:1, Yahweh appoints it לִבְלָעַ “to swallow” Jonah, and in Jon 2:11: וַיִּקָּא אֶת־יֹנָה אֶל־הַיָּבֵשָׁה “it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” The description of the creature swallowing Jonah whole fits with what we know about Tannîn’s voracious appetite.⁷⁵ Indeed, we find its ravenousness already in Exod 7:12, when the rod that Aaron cast down to become a Tannîn swallowed the Tannîns that the Egyptian priests had created: וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ אִישׁ מִטָּהוּ וַיְהִיוּ לְתַנִּינִים וַיִּבְלַע מִטָּה־אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־מִטָּתָם “And each cast down his rod, and they became Tannîns, and Aaron’s rod swallowed their rods.”⁷⁶ Moreover, like the Tannîn in Exodus, Jonah too is cast down (וַתִּשְׁלַכְנִי) and swallowed by the creature (Jon 2:3).⁷⁷

the sea, so also does Yahweh respond to his actions by way of the sea. Here too, I suggest, there is an element of *lex talionis*.

⁷³ See R. Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 245, who adds that the elusive serpent “serves as a mirror of Jonah himself.”

⁷⁴ On the chiasm of Jon 2:1 and 2:12, see Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 157-160.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., the LXX to Job 38:39, which records Yahweh’s whirlwind query: θηρεύσεις δὲ λέουσιν βορᾶν, ψυχὰς δὲ δρακόντων ἐμπλήσεις “Will you hunt prey for the lions, and satisfy the appetite of dragons?” On the identification of כְּפִיָּרִים “young lions” as δρακόντων here and Job 4:10, see Lewis, “CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” p. 38, n. 70. In *IQH* xiii 11-12, כְּפִיָּרִים also parallels תַּנִּינִין. See H. Stegemann - E.M. Schuller - C.A. Newsom, *IQHodayot^a: With Incorporation of IQHodayot^b and 4QHodayot^{c-f}* (DJD 40; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p. 167. A reference to Leviathan’s appetite might also exist in the Ugaritic corpus. In *CAT* i 14-15, Death describes his insatiable hunger: npš lbim thw hm brlt anhr b ym hm brky tkšd rumm ‘n “My appetite is the appetite of a lion in the wasteland, the craving of a whale in the sea, a wild-bull searching for a spring.” If N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: Ilmilku and His Colleagues* (The Biblical Seminar 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 116, n. 11, is correct in seeing thw as an error for thm, then Death compares his appetite to a lbim th(w)m “lion of the deep.” The Ugaritic term anhr translated “whale” above is probably cognate with Akkadian naḥīru, which itself is often rendered “whale.” However, the Akkadian term must refer to sealife that not only appears to spout, but has tusk(s). It also is called a sīsā tāmti “horse of the sea,” suggesting that a “whale” is too large. See *CAD* N/1 137, s.v. naḥīru. I propose that this animal may have been a narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*), since the species has been known to wander into the eastern Mediterranean from its Arctic habitat.

⁷⁶ Note similarly Zophar’s description of the wicked person who swallowed (בָּלַע) and vomited (וַיִּקָּא) his wealth, because Yahweh disgorged him (Job 20:15). We are told that “he will suck the poison of asps (פְּתָנִים), the viper’s tongue will slay him” (20:16). The LXX translates פְּתָנִים here as δρακόντων.

⁷⁷ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 158, n. 4, notes that “swallowing” in the Bible is excusi-

The swallowing, vomiting, and dry land in Jonah also recall Jeremiah's comparison of Nebuchadnezzar to a תנין (נִינְיָן) who swallowed Zion and filled its stomach with her delicacies (Jer 51:34).⁷⁸ As punishment, Yahweh threatens to dry up the sea and force the creature to vomit:

And I will make her sea (יָמָהּ) dry, and dry up (וְהִבֵּשְׁתִּי) her fountain... I will punish (וּפָקַדְתִּי) Bel in Babylon, and I will disgorge from his mouth that which he swallowed (בִּלְעוֹ). And the nations will no longer stream (יִנְהָרוּ) to him (Jer 51:36, 51:44).⁷⁹

Note how Jeremiah cleverly employs the root נהר in reference to the “rivers” of nations and adds: עָלָה עַל-בָּבֶל הַיָּם בְּהִמּוֹן גָּלְיוֹ נִכְסָתָהּ “The sea has risen over Babylon, in the tumult of its waves, she is covered” (Jer 51:42). A similar conjunction of Tannin traditions occurs in the words of Zechariah: וְעָבַר בַּיָּם צָרָה וְהִפָּה בַּיָּם גָּלִים וְהִבִּישׁוּ כָּל מְצוּלוֹת יָאֵר וְהוֹרֵד גָּאֹן אֲשׁוּר וְעָבַר בַּיָּם מִצָּרִים יָסוּר “And through the sea of affliction, and the waves will be struck in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile will dry up, and the pride of Assyria will be brought down, and the staff of Egypt will depart” (Zech 10:11).⁸⁰ Jonah recalls these traditions when he cries: כָּל-מִשְׁבְּרֵיהֶּ וּגְלִיָּה עָלַי “all your breakers and your waves have passed over me” (Jon 2:4).⁸¹ However, instead of passing *through* the sea, the sea waters here pass *over* Jonah. The Mesopotamian setting of Jonah and of Jeremiah and Zechariah's prophecies assist in making the connection. Note also that, like the passage in Jeremiah, the mention of waves flooding over the victim in Jonah is starkly incongruous; the former, because of Yahweh's repeated threat to dry the waters, and the latter, because Jonah describes his experience in the creature as a drowning.⁸²

In Jon 2:5, Jonah then laments: וְאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ “And I said, I was cast out from before your eyes.” This verse adopts the language

vely a negative verb. She also observes (p. 160) that the use of the verb שָׁלַךְ “cast down” instead of טָלַח has been used to argue that Jonah's prayer was not original to the text. The allusions examined here offer additional evidence in favor of seeing the prayer as integral.

⁷⁸ Jeremiah's use of the *hapax legomenon* כֶּרֶשׁ “stomach” is cognate with Akkadian *karšu* used in reference to Tiamat's “stomach,” which Marduk pierced with an arrow after distending it by hurling winds into her mouth (*Enūma eliš* IV:101). Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, p. 110, rejects the parallel to Jeremiah, because he does not see Jonah as an allegory for the restoration of the exiles.

⁷⁹ The verb פָּקַד “punish” also appears in Isaiah's description of Yahweh's slaying of Leviathan (Isa 27:1).

⁸⁰ Since שָׁבַט and מִטָּה are synonyms, the passage also recalls Aaron's defeat of the Egyptian priests in Exod 7:12.

⁸¹ The passage also quotes Ps 42:8, which also personifies Sea: תִּהְיוּם-אֶל-תִּהְיוּם קוֹרָא “Deep calls to Deep at the sound of your spouts.”

⁸² Rashi explains the incongruity in Jeremiah by viewing the flood as a metaphor: חֵיל “by ‘the sea’ is meant ‘a great army.’” *Mešudat David*, commenting on the expression בְּהִמּוֹן נִכְסָתָהּ renders similarly: בְּמַרְבִּית הַגְּבוּרִים נִכְסָתָהּ “by means of the greatness of the warriors it will be destroyed.” I discuss the incongruity in Jonah above.

of Ps 31:21, but replaces נִגְרָזְתִּי “cut off” with נִגְרָשְׁתִּי “cast off.” As Shalom Paul has shown, the change is meaningful, because גָּרַשׁ appears elsewhere with sea and river water.⁸³ In Isa 57:20, we read: “But the wicked are like the sea cast up (פִּיִּם נִגְרָשׁ), for it cannot quiet, and its waters (מֵיִמִּי) cast up (וַיִּגְרָשׁוּ) mire and dirt.”⁸⁴ See also Amos 8:8: “Yea, it shall rise up, all of it, like the river, and it shall be cast out (וַיִּגְרָשָׁה) and drown, like the river of Egypt.” The verb also occurs in the scrolls from Qumran: ותאוכל עד תהום: “It consumes as far as the deep. And the torrents of Belial cleave Abaddon, and the structures of the deep roar at the tumult of those who cast up mire” (*IQHod* xi 33).⁸⁵ Though Paul did not observe the larger pattern of allusions to Tannîn traditions in Jonah, they place his keen observation into a larger context and show how the author employed a twist of phrase to identify Jonah with the flood waters of the sea that Yahweh stirs up.⁸⁶

Another reflection of Tannîn traditions occurs near the story’s end where we hear:

וַיִּמְן הָאֱלֹהִים תּוֹלַעַת בַּעֲלֹזֹת הַשָּׁחַר לִמְחַרֵּת וַתֵּךְ אֶת־הַקִּיקְיוֹן וַיִּיבֹשׁ׃
וַיְהִי אֶפְרָח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּמְן אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ קָדִים חָרִישִׁית וַתֵּךְ הַשָּׁמֶשׁ עַל־רֹאשׁ
יֹנָה וַיִּתְעַלֵּף

And the God appointed a worm when the morning rose the next day, and the worm struck the gourd and it dried up. And God appointed a cutting east wind, and the sun struck Jonah on the head, and he fainted (Jon 4:7-8).

Both verses begin with the verb מִנָּה “appoint,” a key word first encountered when Yahweh appoints the לֵךְ to swallow Jonah (Jon 2:1).⁸⁷ Its final appearance here, in conjunction with a number of other linguistic and structural parallels to the first two chapters, forces us to compare the events.⁸⁸ Immediately apparent is that all three result in Jonah’s temporary suffering. In addition, each verse draws upon Tannîn traditions. Above I discussed the cosmological import of the great wind that Yahweh hurled into the sea (Jon

⁸³ Sh.M. Paul, “An Overlooked Double Entendre in Jonah 2:5,” in W. Dow Edgerton (ed.), *The Honeycomb of the Word: Interpreting the Primary Testament with André LaCoque* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2001), pp. 155-157. The Arabic cognate سجر also means “spout water.” See already, W.F. Albright, “The Hebrew Stems *dlk*, *grš*, *škḥ*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 39 (1920), pp. 167-168; J. Blau, “Über Homonyme und angeblich homonyme Wurzeln,” *Vetus Testamentum* 6 (1956), pp. 242-248 (245-246).

⁸⁴ In *IQIs^a*, the verb appears as וַתִּגְרָשׁוּ.

⁸⁵ In Stegemann - Schuller - Newsom, *IQHodayot^a*, pp. 155-156. See also *IQHod* xvi 16: כִּי גִרְשׁוּ עָלַי רַפְשִׁים “for they cast up their mud upon me,” said in reference to flood waters (p. 224).

⁸⁶ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 160, notes that some have used the appearance of the verb גָּרַשׁ here to argue that Jonah’s prayer was not original to the text.

⁸⁷ Yahweh also “appointed” the gourd (Jon 4:6). See Halpern - Friedman, “Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah,” p. 82.

⁸⁸ Sasson, *Job*, pp. 148-149, 300-301; Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 110-120.

1:4). As Jonathan Magonet notes, the east wind recalls the ships of Tarshish in Ezek 27:26: “Into great waters your rowers brought you, the east wind broke you in the heart of the seas.”⁸⁹ Though ostensibly about ships, the passage is rich with cosmological overtones.⁹⁰ Moreover, the appointment of the east wind in Jonah is again reminiscent of Marduk’s weapon against Tiamat and recalls Isaiah’s description of the day Yahweh will slay Leviathan: הַיָּמָּה בְּרוּחוֹ הַקָּשָׁה בְּיָמֵי קָדִים “He has removed it with his harsh blast on the day of the east wind” (Isa 27:8).⁹¹ Of course, in Jonah there is irony. Earlier it was Jonah who fled God in a way reminiscent of Leviathan. Yet now, instead of Yahweh smiting Leviathan on its heads, it is Jonah who is struck on the head; this also in contrast with the gourd that Yahweh had appointed as צֶלַע־לְרֹאשׁוֹ “shade over his head” (Jon 4:6).

Bolstering the allusion is the repeated use of the verb נָכָה “strike” for the worm and the sun.⁹² The verb appears in several *Chaoskampf* traditions. In Exod 17:5, Yahweh commands Moses to take the rod with which “you struck (הִכִּיתָ) the Nile.”⁹³ Elijah too “struck” (וַיִּכֶּה) the water with his mantle and divided it (2 Kgs 2:8). Isaiah also uses the verb when drawing on Tannîn traditions: וְהַחֲרִים יְהוָה אֶת לִשׁוֹן יַם־מִצְרַיִם וְהִגִּיף יָדוֹ עַל־הַנָּהָר בַּעֲמֵם רִיחוֹ וְהַחֲרִים יְהוָה אֶת לִשׁוֹן יַם־מִצְרַיִם וְהִגִּיף יָדוֹ עַל־הַנָּהָר בַּעֲמֵם רִיחוֹ “And Yahweh will destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt, and with his scorching wind will shake his hand over the river (Euphrates), and he will smite it into seven streams, and cause (them) to march dry-shod.” See similarly Zech 10:11: “And through the sea of affliction, and the waves will be struck (וְהִכָּה) in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile will dry up (וְהִבְיִשׁוּ כָּל מַצְלוֹת).” Though the verb נָכָה is quite common, its use in conjunction with other lexemes drawn from Tannîn traditions, lends it greater allusive power. Moreover, when used of the sun, it refers to an evil punishment brought about by the removal of Yahweh’s protection (Isa 49:10, Ps 121:6-7).⁹⁴

Additional support for the allusion to Tannîn traditions in Jon 4:7-8 is the withering of the gourd, for the verb יָבֵשׁ also appears, as I have detailed

⁸⁹ Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 80.

⁹⁰ May, “Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbîm* ‘Many Waters,’” p. 18.

⁹¹ The term הַיָּמָּה used of the east wind in Jon 4:8 that I have translated “cutting,” is polysemous. It also can mean “quiet” and “plowing.” The later is especially interesting in the light of the discussion found in *b. Gittin* 31b: “What is the meaning of חֲרִשִּׁית? Rab Judah said, ‘when it blows it makes furrows in the sea (תַּלְמִים תַּלְמִים בַּיָּם).’” The creation of furrows in the sea is identified with Leviathan in *b. Baba Batra* 75a וּבִשְׁעָה שֶׁצִּמָּא עוֹשֶׂה תַּלְמִים תַּלְמִים “When he thirsts he makes many furrows in the sea.” Cited there in support is Job 41:24: “He (Leviathan) makes a path to shine behind him, so that one would think Deep to be gray-haired.” Cfr. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.706-708, who describes the wake of the *ketos aithiopijs*: “As a great galley with steady prow speeds on; pushed forward by the sweating arms of youth it plows the deep; so, breasting the great waves, the monster moved.”

⁹² Of course, the worm smites by eating. Thus, Sasson, *Job*, p. 301, sees it “as a voracious consumer of human remains (Isa 14:11, 66:24).”

⁹³ Moses also “smites” the Nile to turn it into blood (Exod 7:17).

⁹⁴ The sun smiting Jonah on the head is yet another example of prosopopoeia in the text.

above, in reference to Yahweh's "drying" of the sea and rivers.⁹⁵ Consider also Ps 74:13-16, which also evokes the sun:⁹⁶

You shattered Sea (יָם) with your strength,
 You the broke the heads of the Tannînim (רָאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים) upon the waters (הַמַּיִם),
 You crushed the heads of Leviathan (לְוִיָּתָן),
 You gave him as food for the people of the desert.
 You cleaved fountain and wadi,
 Your dried up mighty rivers (הַוַּבְשֶׁת נְהָרוֹת אֵיתָן).
 Yours is the day, yours also the night,
 You have established a luminary and a sun (שָׁמַשׁ).

Note similarly the account of Moses cleaving the Reed Sea:⁹⁷

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea (הַיָּם); and Yahweh caused the sea (הַיָּם) to go back by a strong east wind (בְּרוּחַ קְדִים) all the night, and made the sea (הַיָּם) dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground (בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה) (Exod 14:21-22).

⁹⁵ Sasson, *Jonah*, p. 301, notes the echo of Jonah's "dry ground" in passing. See also Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice*, pp. 126-127; Ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah*, pp. 108-109, n. 31.

⁹⁶ The sun's role here also might constitute an allusion to Tannîn traditions. E. Qimron, "The sun's role here also might constitute an allusion to Tannîn traditions. E. Qimron, "תהיתו חדודי הרש" (Job 41:22), *Leshonenu* 37 (1973), pp. 96-98 (in Hebrew); "The Biblical Lexicon in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2 (1995), pp. 295-329 (302-307), has shown that that the difficult phrase תַּהֲתִי חֲדוּדֵי הָרֶשׁ in Job 41:22 usually translated as "his (Leviathan's) undersides are (like) sharp potsherds," refers to the "rays of the sun" (cfr. "sun" in Judg 14:18, Job 9:7, and חֲדוּדֵי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ "rays of the sun" in *IQ19*fr. 3, 4-5). See also Rashi on Job 41:22: שֶׁמֶשׁ כִּי סַנְפִּירִים שֶׁלּוֹ אֲשֶׁר "In his resting place there are the rays of the sun, for his fins, which are beneath him on his stomach, give light and shine like the sun." A *piyyut* by Eliezer ha-Qalir (6th century CE) similarly says of Leviathan: תַּחְתִּי חֲדוּדֵי הָרֶשׁ סַנְפִּירֵי "beneath him are rays of the sun. His fins dim the disk of the sun." See J. Schirmann, "The Battle between Behemoth and Leviathan according to an Ancient Hebrew *Piyyut*," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities* 4 (1970), pp. 350-359 (353). The second stich in Job 41:22 is equally difficult: וְרָפַד הָרֶוֶן עֲלֵי־טִיט, and is typically rendered "he spreads (like) a threshing-sledge upon the mud." However, Rashi reads הָרֶוֶן as "gold" (as does LXX, Targum, and *Tanhuma*, *Nišabim* 4) and sees it as referring to "rays of the sun." Nevertheless, *b. Hullin* 67b understands the passage differently in order to make Leviathan kosher: אֵלּוּ קַשְׁקִשִּׁים שֶׁבּוֹ תַּחְתִּי חֲדוּדֵי חֶרֶשׁ אֵלּוּ סַנְפִּירֵין שְׁפוּרָה בָּהֶן "These are the scales that cover him. 'Sharpest potsherds are under him.' These are the fins with which he swims." One wonders whether the destination of Tarshish in Jonah also was informed by traditions concerning Leviathan's shining body, since תַּרְשִׁישׁ can mean "beryl." Indeed, the *Midrash Alpha Betot* quotes Dan 10:6 in describing Leviathan: "its body was like Tarshish," i.e., its body shines like "beryl" (תַּרְשִׁישׁ), or its body is big as the "sea of Tarshish" (תַּרְשִׁישׁ). Nevertheless, the midrash is very late (9th-10th centuries CE). See S.A. Wertheimer, *Bate Midrashot* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Ktav Wasepher, 1968), pp. 437-438 (in Hebrew).

⁹⁷ Espied by Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 103.

In fact, the root *יָבַשׁ* appears three other times in Jonah.⁹⁸ We first hear it when Jonah is ferreted out as the cause of the storm, and tells the sailors: *עָבְרִי אִנִּי וְאַתִּי הָיָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲנִי יְרֵא אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה* “A Hebrew am I, and Yahweh, the God of Heaven, I fear, who made the sea and dry land” (Jon 1:9). Next, we learn that the sailors became so afraid that they tried to row back to *הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה* “the dry land” (Jon 1:13). Then, in 2:11, the creature vomits Jonah onto *הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה* “the dry land.” While the distinction between the sea and dry land certainly reflects a mariner’s perspective, its appearance in Jonah’s description stands out, especially given his later self-identification with “his own land” (Jon 4:2). Indeed, the merism “heaven and earth” occurs far more frequently in the Bible than “heaven and dry land.” I opine that the repeated references to *הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה* “the dry land” and the gourd that “dried up” recall the cosmological distinction between the waters and dry land in Gen 1:9,⁹⁹ and thus the account of creation in which one first finds the great Tannînim, whose seas and rivers Yahweh will “dry up” in the future.

Of final interest is the verb *עָלָה* “faint” in Jon 4:8. It occurs only four other times in the Bible, but only twice for feeling faint (Isa 51:20, Amos 8:13).¹⁰⁰ The passage in Isa 51:20 is especially relevant as it follows upon Yahweh’s slaying of the Tannîn (vv. 9-10) and refers to those who deserve God’s fury as having “fainted” (*עָלָה*).

5. *Why Allude to Tannîn Traditions?*

The evidence collected above illustrates that the author of Jonah drew upon a number of Tannîn traditions. The constellation of allusions in such a high density shows that they are neither random nor incidental, but deliberate and central to the text. When considered in conjunction with the other

⁹⁸ Observed by Sasson, *Job*, p. 301.

⁹⁹ Contra Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 66, who concludes: “Yet the significance cannot lie in any mythological struggle between God and the waters, because we are explicitly told that God was responsible for the storm...” Kim, “Jonah Read Intertextually,” p. 501, points out that Jonah shares with the Noah story a distinction between “sea” (*יָם*) and “dry land” (*יַבֶּשֶׁה*). To Kim’s collection of parallels I add the appearance in both pericopes of hendiadyses to express the movement of water: *הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ* (Gen 6:4), *הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ* (Gen 8:3), and *הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ* (Jon 1:11, 1:13). Nevertheless, since the distinction heaven/dry land appears already in the creation account (Gen 1:9-10), I submit that we should see Jonah’s inner-biblical allusions as extending to the entire primordial cycle. Indeed, numerous thematic and linguistic parallels already encourage readers of the flood episode to recall the creation account. Thus, Genesis portrays Noah’s flood as a collapse of God’s creation in which he split the waters. See Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), pp. 7-27. In addition, implicit in the flood story is the survival of all the sea life that God created, including the *הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ* “the great sea monsters” (Gen 1:21). Thus, God promises to destroy everything “that stands (*הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ*) on the face of the soil (*הַיָּבֵשׁ*)” (Gen 7:4), and the list of casualties in Gen 7:23 includes humans, animals, creeping things, and birds. No mention is made of sea life, nor does Noah attempt to bring any sea life on board to save it.

¹⁰⁰ Not germane are the meanings “wrap oneself” (Gen 38:14) and “inlay,” said of sapphires (Song 5:14).

death, the drying of his waters, and the fainting of the unrighteous. Jonah's results in the drying of the gourd, feeling faint, and a desire to die. Buttressing these parallels are key words that echo the primary features of the Tannîn traditions and hyperbolic descriptions of the great wind and great tempest that cast the punishment as cosmological and divinely ordained.

If, as many argue, the book was composed in the Persian period, then we may ponder what purpose such literary parallels might have served to an audience at this time.¹⁰⁶ As Lyle Eslinger rightly observes, "Many instances of literary interconnection in the Bible do not go beyond the playfulness of simply touching on a literary antecedent..."¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the seriousness of prophetic texts generally, even if one permits them elements of irony and satire, makes it unlikely that the allusions are mere ornamentation.¹⁰⁸

Ehud Ben Zvi argues that Jerusalem's literati were responsible for the book, and that their negative depiction of Jonah represents a form of critical self-reflection concerning their roles as transmitters and interpreters of the divine word.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Jonah is cast as a sage who can quote authoritative written traditions and interpret them in the light of other scriptural references. I find this context meaningful for explaining the integration of the Tannîn traditions. In essence, the allusions amplify the critique of Jonah and thus serve as a commentary on the limitations of the literati as an institution.

As twin embodiments of the Tannîn, Jonah and the creature mirror each other. However, the reflection is ironic. Whereas the narrative registers Jonah's disobedience from the start of the story until its very end, the creature is nothing but duteous. When Yahweh appoints the creature to swallow Jonah, we are not even told its reaction. Instead, we immediately find Jonah in its entrails: *וַיִּמָּן יְהוָה דָּג גָּדוֹל לְבָלֵעַ אֶת־יוֹנָה וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמֶעֱי הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וְשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלֹת* "And Yahweh appointed the great דָּג to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the innards of the דָּג three days and three nights" (Jon 2:1). Similarly, we later hear: *וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְדָג וַיִּקְא אֶת־יוֹנָה אֶל־הַיַּבָּשָׁה* "and Yahweh spoke to the דָּג, and it vomited Jonah onto dry ground" (Jon 2:11). Therefore, what we have in Jonah is a prophet out of control, more chaotic and disobedient than a Tannîn. This makes Jonah a dangerous man, and even more dangerous prophet, one who never truly appears to have learned his

destroy Judge River." However, the reading has not been widely adopted. Thus, *DULAT* 721, s.v. *ql*.

¹⁰⁶ We also can avoid the problem of textual precedence, discussed by Eslinger, "Inner-biblical Exegesis and Inner-biblical Allusion." R.J. Bautch, "Intertextuality in the Persian Period," in J.L. Berquist (ed.), *Approaching Yehud: Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (Semeia Studies 50; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), pp. 25-35, offers a useful survey of various approaches to "intertextuality," primarily with respect to the prophetic corpus, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicler.

¹⁰⁷ Eslinger, "Inner-biblical Exegesis and Inner-biblical Allusion," p. 48, n. 2.

¹⁰⁸ See Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*; Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah*, p. 112. On Jonah as an atypical prophetic book, see Ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah*, pp. 80-98.

¹⁰⁹ Ben Zvi, *Signs of Jonah*, pp. 105-107.

lesson from holy writ, despite being swallowed by a creature that most mirrors himself.

Yet, there is another function that the parallels serve.¹¹⁰ By this period, the Tannîn had become a symbol, not just of the *Urzeit*, but of the *Endzeit*. The embodiment of evil and disobedience, and of future enemies, his defeat at the hands of Yahweh would usher in a new epoch of salvation. He is vital to Yahweh's plan for the eschaton. In Jonah, the creature's role is central to the prophet's experience, and thus, it is vital to Yahweh's plans for the prophet and for the Ninevites. Without the creature, salvation would not have come to the Ninevites. Moreover, the prophet too, as a literary embodiment of the Tannîn, finds defeat at the hands of Yahweh, and ushers in a new time in which Yahweh grants salvation to non-Jews.¹¹¹ He too, despite himself and his disobedience, is central to Yahweh's plan.

6. Conclusion

The presence of allusions to Tannîn traditions in Jonah offers a more plausible explanation than hitherto offered both for the distinctive use of κῆτος to render לָיָה, and for the creature's depictions in early Christian art as a hybrid sea monster. Rather than serving to distinguish the creature from Leviathan, the term κῆτος added to the text's abundant allusions linking the creature to the sea-monster of chaos.

¹¹⁰ If one accepts the allegorical reading of Jonah advanced by Sasson, *Jonah*, pp. 338-340, as a "Ship of State" tale, then the allusions render both the state and the prophetic institution as out of control.

¹¹¹ Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, pp. 232-233, observes that the text only uses the generic term God, rather than Yahweh, in reference to the Ninevites, and she rightly challenges the assumption that they became Yahweh worshipers. Nevertheless, inherent in Yahweh's acceptance of the Ninevites' repentance is a universalistic conception of Yahweh as a god who cares for lives of foreigners. Moreover, though the actual Ninevites were polytheists, in Jonah they refer to God only in the singular (Jon 4:9). That Yahweh repents of his intentions to destroy the city (Jon 3:10), also places his act of salvation on a par with his conditional relationships with Hezekiah (Jer 29:16), Israel (Amos 7:3, 7:6), and Judah (Zech 8:14). Thus I concur with Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice*, p. 150, who concludes that "Jonah's characterization of the nations belongs more properly to the category of 'cultic imperialism,' which insists on Yhwh's sovereignty, and consequently, on the need for Yhwh to provide justice." On the universalist perspective in Jonah, see also Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, pp. 99-101. Forti, "Of Ships and Seas, and Fish and Beasts," p. 370, sees Jonah's portrait of the universal God like that found in wisdom literature.



Figure 1. Sarcophagus, Church of Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, ca. 270 CE.



Figure 2. Statue, marble. Jonah Cast Up, Cleveland Museum of Art, ca. 280-290 CE.



Figure 3. Catacomb of Ss. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome, 4th c. CE.

ABSTRACT

Early Christian depictions of Jonah's "fish" as a sea dragon have long posed a problem for scholars. Some have explained it by pointing to the Septuagint's rendering of Jonah's "fish" as a $\chi\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ "sea creature." Yet this translation is itself problematic since it is completely out of step with treatments of the term $\lambda\acute{\iota}\chi$ "fish" elsewhere in the Bible. Others have opined the influence of Jewish midrashic traditions in which Leviathan plays a role in the Jonah story. However, said traditions cannot be dated before the 9th century CE – more than half a millennium after the artistic evidence. A new explanation offered here is that the Hebrew text of Jonah contains a number of linguistic and thematic features that allude to "Leviathan traditions" as found in several other biblical texts, and that these allusions encouraged the early identification of the $\lambda\acute{\iota}\chi$ as a sea monster. Thus, the article contributes additional evidence for the allusive sophistication of Jonah. It concludes by positing literary and theological reasons for the allusions.