

SUMMARIES

THE BOOK OF JONAH: A SURVEY OF RECENT RESEARCH

Klaas Spronk

This survey covers primarily the history of the research on the book of Jonah since 1990. Among the topics discussed are the origin, the structure (with special emphasis on the many literary studies), and the place of the book within the book of the Twelve Prophets.

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BETWEEN STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY

A Textual Analysis of Jonah 1-4

Eep Talstra

How much in a text is to be accounted for by the language system and how much by the art of composition? Computer-assisted textual analysis assumes as point of departure that the language system accounts for much of the composition, but this must be continuously challenged by that which is unusual, that which is poetic in the composition of the text. This contribution is an attempt to make the boundary between the two visible by means of a text-grammatical analysis of the four chapters of Jonah.

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‘A KIKAJON-BUSH TO SAVE JONAH ...’ (JONAH 4:6)

Composition and Structure of the Book of Jonah

Jopie Siebert – Hommes

The book of Jonah presents itself as a coherent entity with a clear and well-organized composition. The beginning and the end are closely connected, both in regard to the content and to the literary structure. The story opens with the word of YHWH that instructs Jonah to admonish Nineve and ends with the question whether YHWH is right in having compassion on the inhabitants of the city. Within this outer framework Jonah runs away from his mission and ends up in the belly of the fish. After that he goes to Nineve and announces its downfall; the inhabitants repent whereupon God decides to spare the city. In response to the final question, asked by God, Jonah keeps silent.

The construction of the book is harmonious: the two main parts are nearly equal, they show a strong parallelism just like the individual sequences of each part. Besides a literary analysis, this article also asks the question as to what extent these literary structures can be useful to the interpretation of the text. Could the rhythmic construction of the various components shed new light on the central theme of the story? The answer is surprising.

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JONAH AND THE TRANSLATION OF WORD REPETITION.

Tineke Drieënhuizen

The first publication of parts of the New Dutch Bible Translation in 1998 evoked many – more or less critical – reactions. Some of the critical reactions were focussed on the translation of word repetition in the book of Jonah. Therefore it is interesting to find out how the translation method pays attention to lexical concordance and how the translation reflects the method on this point. The New Dutch Bible Translation distinguishes between the characteristics of the language and the characteristics of the text. It is necessary to recognize the latter in the translation, because the author of the book used them to give a special effect to the text. Those repetitions of words that belong to the characteristics of the text are adopted in the translation. This shows how the New Dutch Bible Translation wants to be faithful to the source text. However, at the same time it wants to translate the bible in natural Dutch. This means that repetition, which is much less common in Dutch as it is in Hebrew, is to be translated with a variety of words of the same semantic field: the so called ‘restricted lexical concordance’. The examples given in this article show that the translators tried hard to translate the features of the Hebrew text into natural Dutch. Because of the critical reactions mentioned above, the translation method was reconsidered particularly in regard to the ‘restricted lexical concordance’: the use of a variety of words for the translation of repetition became less common.

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SOME REMARKS ON THE TRANSLATION OF JONAH 1:1

Jaap van Dorp

The book of Jonah is a subtle narrative composition with many characteristics of literary style. It is the Bible translator's task to incorporate in some fashion or another the elements of style of the original in the text in a target language. The translation committee of the New Dutch Bible Translation (2004) paid much attention to the literary features of the source texts. As a result the translation of Jonah 1:1 opens with a clear narrative sign. At the same time the traditional 'Wortereignisformel' is rendered in such a way that Jonah 1:1 explicitly introduces YHWH as the protagonist in this prophetic story.

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SINGING WITH JONAH
Piet van Midden

Many Old Testament scholars consider the Psalm of Jonah as a later interpolation with a positive ring: it does not harmonize with the context. The Jonah of Chapters 1, 3-4 and the Jonah of Chapter 2 are different. Von Rad and Wolff are representative of this point of view. It is obvious that Jonah tries to run away from his assignment. He considers his deliverance from the fish not as a rescue in order to fulfil his commission, but as an opportunity to orientate himself towards the temple in Jerusalem. In Jewish traditions Jonah is viewed much more positively than he is in church traditions. Moreover, in Psalm 139 we find a scene comparable to that in Jonah: the prayer is for escape from the Lord, who is to be found even in the Sheol. Jonah also prays that the Lord slay his adversaries. Reasoning from the content of this Psalm it would be incomprehensible that after his deliverance Jonah were to carry out the commission of the Lord. gratefully

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HOW JONAH LEFT THE FISH: Jonah 2:11 in Art
Klaas Spronk

A number of drawings and paintings from the Middle Ages to modern art are discussed, in particular illustrations of the moment in which Jonah was spit out by the fish. There appear to be very different views of the fish (did it look like a dangerous monster?) and the prophet (was he terrified or did he leave the fish calmly in solemn prayer?). These representations can be of help in the interpretation of the text and in applying the text to the situation of the reader. Special emphasis is given to the drawings in de *Biblia Pauperum* (15th century) and to a painting of Eugene Abeshaus, 'Jonah in Haifa Port' (1979).

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MAN AND BEAST IN SACKCLOTH AND ASHES
Secondary characters in the Book of Jonah
Klaas A.D. Smelik

In the Book of Jonah there are two main characters: YHWH and Jonah. Apart from them only animals and heathen appear in the book – a strange combination. In this article, possible reasons for this extraordinary choice of the biblical author are put forward. Most likely the author wanted to stress in this way the peculiar behaviour of the prophet by contrasting it with the obedience of the animals to God's command and with the faith in the God of Israel shown by the heathen sailors and the inhabitants of Nineveh, the capital of Israel's archenemy Assur. The choice of animals and heathen is therefore not coincidental: to the first readers of the narrative, foreigners and animals were in many respects comparable.

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THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE
Consequences of a dynamic image of God in Jona 3:10
Albert Kamp

The textual meaning of a word is not confined to the description in dictionaries alone. Rather the final meanings a reader attaches to textual components are founded upon the conceptual structure of the text as a whole. Using a cognitive semantic approach, this study focusses on the reversal of God in Jona 3:10. Comprehensive research into the different textual elements that constitute the meaning of the Hebrew verb { ξv } results in a dynamic and compassionate image of God.

While Jonah glorifies God's compassion in a static formula, he is appreciative of his own situation in the heat outside of Nineveh. Jonah has a limited point of view. He only shows concern for his immediate surroundings, visualized by the plant that grows above his head. God's point of view is completely different. He perceives from the inside, he is full of concern and compassion. As such, he has a different attitude and relation to man and beast. Because this divine perspective is so different from that of humans, it is difficult to guess how God will act or react. This transcendent perspective of a gracious God emphasizes the relativity of the limited human point of view.

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‘WAS THIS NOT WHAT I SAID ...’ (Jonah 4:2)

Karel A. Deurloo

Is the suspense created by the lack of a reason given for Jonah’s flight (Jonah 1:3) resolved in Jonah’s second prayer: ‘Was this not what I said when I was yet in my country?’ (Jonah 4:2). At this point again the author does not make explicit what this ‘saying’ or ‘word’ is which is implemented to counter the word of YHWH (Jonah 1:1). The reader is left guessing as to what this could be, just as he is left guessing as to what Jonah’s reply could be to YHWH’s final question (Jonah 4:11). There is no basis for taking the narrative statement ‘Jonah went out of the city’ as a flashback. Jonah utters his prayer in the city with the repentance of Nineveh before him. He distantiates himself from the city by going outside of it and sitting there to ‘see what would become of the city’ (cf. Amos 2:6). Jonah’s ‘word’ – his reason for dodging his commission – can therefore be supplied from Jeremiah 26:3: ‘Perhaps they will listen and turn from their evil way Then I (YHWH) will repent’ Jonah did not want *that* to happen as a result of his prophetic ministry.

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WHEN GOD ASKS TWICE
Thoughts on Jonah 4:4-11
Janet W. Dyk

Questions are used to challenge another about her or his attitude or actions, or to help one come to think differently about an issue. This article discusses the cases in Scripture where God asks exactly the same question twice and receives in both cases an unaltered response. A pattern appears to be repeated in these cases. After a negative response to God’s initial questions put to Elijah, the Satan, and Jonah, in each case a number of things happen before the identical question is posed a second time. That which had taken place in the meantime could have brought about a change in the addressee. The question is then repeated using the same wording. In these three cases no change is apparent in the response. Thereafter the question is not repeated: Elijah is commissioned to anoint his own successor, there is no further dialogue with the Satan, and the story of Jonah ends after God’s response to Jonah’s second – unaltered – response. The curtain falls.

In a fourth instance in Scripture – the story of Jesus’ questions to Peter after the resurrection – this pattern is broken. Peter’s unaltered response to Jesus’ repeated question is not motivated by disappointment or rebelliousness, as with Elijah and Jonah, nor by opposition, as with the Satan, but by a new found modesty in his evaluation of his own faithfulness to Jesus. In this last case, there is a third question posed, worded in such a way that the questioner shifts closer to the one questioned.

The third time, Jesus only asks Peter what he himself had indicated as his estimation of his love for his master. The curtain does not fall. Peter's story is continued in the service of his Lord: 'Feed my sheep' (John 21:17).

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JONAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte

The prophet Jonah is mentioned but a few times in the New Testament. The most interesting reference to Jonah is found in Matthew 12:38-42. This text offers a reworking of material taken from Q. In comparison to the reconstructed text of Q, the accent in Matthew is not as much on the preaching and message of Jonah. Rather, Matthew focusses on the account of Jonah in the fish as a typological prefiguration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This article shows how this interpretation of Jonah was one of several alternatives in early Christianity. In a number of patristic interpretations of Jonah was not only understood as a prefiguration of Christ, but also as a prophet whose example had set the tone. A number of Jewish traditions are discussed that are relevant to the rise of the typological interpretation found in Matthew 12. The conclusion is are this typology should be read against the background of LXX Jonah 2:3, a text that connects Jonah's stay in the fish to a visit to Hades.

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READING WITH JONAH

The Book of Jonah from an intercultural point of view

Hans de Wit

In this contribution Jonah is approached from a reception-critical and intercultural point of view. Particularly because of the interminable list of dominant and peripheral, reproductive and bizarre interpretations of this book, it has been already frequently said that Jonah is a splendid case for reader-response criticism. For the most diverse cultural situations, and ecclesiastical and dogmatic interests, the story seems to have something in stock. But what happens if the dominant and more marginal readings are confronted with one another? Will a new reading perspective be born out of this? This contribution looks at some instances of the reception history of Jonah. First some mainstream interpretation traditions are analysed, then a number of non-Western readings. The article closes with the question about which new reading perspectives this confrontation could produce.

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