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The Problem of Repentance and Relapse as a Unifying Theme in the Book of the Twelve

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Abstract: This article builds on earlier studies highlighting repentance and return as unifying themes in the Book of the Twelve by developing a pattern of repentance and relapse that emerges from a reading of the Twelve. The recurring pattern of failed repentance explains why exile was necessary and why even the postexilic return to the land did not bring about Israel's restoration. The hope that emerges in the Twelve is that Yahweh would act at a more distant time in the future to produce the repentance and spiritual transformation in his people that would bring about the blessings of repentance and full restoration.

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1. Introduction

For more than two decades, studies have devoted significant attention to the Book of the Twelve as an edited literary unity.[1] James D. Nogalski writes, "Long-standing traditions in ancient Jewish and Christian sources provide incontrovertible evidence that the twelve Minor Prophets were

[1] Representative studies include: Jason T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, HBM 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012); Rainer Albertz, James Nogalski, Jakob Wöhrle, eds., *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 433 (New York: de Gruyter, 2012); Aaron Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölf–propetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftenübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse*, BZAW 260 (New York: de Gruyter, 1998); B. A. Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Study in Text and Canon*, SBLDS 149 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995); Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, eds., *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 325 (New York: de Gruyter, 2003); James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, eds., *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, SBL Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (New York: de Gruyter, 1993; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 218; New York: de Gruyter, 1993); Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, JSOTSup 97 (Sheffield: Almond, 1990); and D. A. Schneider, "The Unity of the Book of the Twelve" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University Press, 1979).

transmitted on a single scroll and considered as a single book."[2] In a 2013 monograph, Jason T. LeCureux argued that the themes of repentance and return were central to the thematic unity of the Twelve as a corpus.[3] The Hebrew word שׁוּב ("repent/return) appears 83 (or 84) times in the Book of the Twelve, and LeCureux suggests the central message of the Twelve to be: "As the people struggle to turn [*shuv*] from covenant failure toward YHWH in repentance and receive his blessing, YHWH struggles to turn [*shuv*] from judgment toward his people in grace." [4]Craig Bowman also observes that the motif of the reciprocal return of Yahweh and Israel to each other appears throughout the collection of the Twelve from the repeated calls for the people to "return" to Yahweh in Hosea at the beginning to Yahweh's promise, "Return to me, and I will return to you" in Zechariah (1:3) and Malachi (3:7).[5]

The purpose of this study is to further explore repentance and return in the Book of the Twelve and to develop a pattern of repentance and relapse that emerges from reading the Twelve as a literary unity. After the book of Hosea introduces the theme of failed repentance with a series of calls to return to Yahweh that the people of Israel refuse to heed, this cycle of repentance and relapse repeats itself three times in the Book of the Twelve: 1) repentance (Joel) and relapse (Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah); 2) repentance (Jonah) and relapse (Nahum); and 3) repentance (Haggai, Zechariah) and relapse (Malachi).[6] The Book of the Twelve attests to more than three centuries or prophetic activity in ancient Israel and Judah, and the recurring pattern of failed repentance helps to explain why the judgment of exile was necessary and why even the postexilic return to the land did not bring about the restoration of Israel envisioned by the earlier prophets. The hope that emerges in the Twelve is that Yahweh would act at a more distant time in the future to produce the repentance and spiritual transformation in his people that would bring about the blessings of repentance and full restoration.

2. Israel's Refusal and Inability to "Return" to the Lord in Hosea

The problem of Israel's failure to repent in response to the prophetic word surfaces as a prominent motif in the opening Book of the Twelve, Hosea, which employs some form of the Hebrew שׁוּב 24 times. Bowman argues that chapters 1–3 provide not only an introduction to Hosea but also "a guide for

[2] Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, 2. It should be noted that the overarching literary unity of the Twelve does not remove the particularity of each book's author, historical setting, and message, and these individual features remain primary for the interpretation of this material. This study does not attempt, like Nogalski and others, to use literary connections in the Twelve as a means of reconstructing the redactional history of these books but merely to develop major theological themes and motifs that link these books together.

[3] LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*. For a brief overview of the theme of repentance in the Twelve, see also Mark J. Boda, *'Return to Me': A Biblical Theology of Repentance*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 35 (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2015), 95–107.

[4] LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, 39.

[5] Craig Bowman, "Reading the Twelve as One: Hosea 1–3 as an Introduction to Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets)," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 9 (2006): 41–59.

[6] The formative work of House in 1990 (*The Unity of the Twelve*) argued that the Twelve as a whole reflected a pattern of sin (Hosea-Micah), punishment (Nahum-Zephaniah), and restoration (Haggai-Malachi). The movement from judgment to salvation is a common pattern in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible in general. Recognizing a complementary pattern highlighting the inadequacy of Israel's repentance helps to explain why Israel's restoration remains incomplete.

reading all twelve books of the Minor Prophets together."[7] In the first section of the book where Hosea's marriage to Gomer serves as an allegory for the marriage of Yahweh and unfaithful Israel, Yahweh pleads with Israel to repent (2:2–4), but Israel instead expresses its love and devotion for idols (2:5). Their refusal to repent would bring judgment from Yahweh, but this divine discipline and punishment is also what would cause Israel to "return" (2:9) [2:7, EV] and to repudiate her loyalty to Baal so that her relationship to Yahweh as her husband might be restored (2:14–23).[8] The ultimate outcome of the judgment was that Israel would "return" (שׁוב) and "seek" (בקשׁ) the Lord (3:5).

In the oracles of Hosea 4–14, calls to repentance appear in 6:1–3; 12:6; 14:1–3, and each of them specifically implores Israel to "return" (שׁוב) to Yahweh (6:1; 12:6; 14:1), but the reality is that Israel's sinfulness makes it impossible for them to "return" (5:4) (שׁוב). The call to repent in 6:1–3 is followed by an indictment of Israel's lack of covenant fidelity toward Yahweh and the people's violence and injustice toward each other (6:3–11). The people's arrogance prevents them from "returning to" (שׁוב) or "seeking" (בקשׁ) Yahweh (7:10). The time has come for the people to practice righteousness and "seek" (דרשׁ) the Lord (10:12), but the people instead cling to "turning away" (משׁובה) because of their devotion to Baal (11:7). In spite of their sinfulness, Yahweh loves his people and cannot give them up (11:8–9). He will ultimately cause the people to "return" (Hiphil of שׁוב) to him so that they might obey him (11:10–12).

Response to the call to repent in 12:6 is not forthcoming, but instead only the charge that the people's idolatry causes them to sin "more and more" (13:2). Because there is once again no change of heart, Yahweh repeats his threat to tear his people like a lion, a leopard, and a bear (13:7–8). With one final call for his people to "return" (שׁוב), Yahweh stipulates that this return would involve confession of their sin and repudiation of their trust in Assyria and their idols (14:1–3). The hope of restoration is again put on Yahweh as he will be the one who would heal Israel's "turning away" (14:4) (משׁובה). Yahweh would enable Israel to "return" (שׁוב) to him and to the land where they would enjoy blessing and abundance (14:7).

3. The Pattern of Repentance and Relapse in the Book of the Twelve

The theme of Israel's refusal to repent carries over into Joel-Malachi. Beginning with the book of Joel, a pattern emerges that is repeated three times in the Book of the Twelve. An episode of repentance is followed by a relapse into sin. In the first instance, Israel's repentance in Joel 2:12–27 is followed by a relapse into sin that leads to the judgment of exile for Israel (Amos) and for Judah (Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah). The book of Jonah tells the story of Nineveh's repentance, but the announcement in Nahum is that Yahweh is prepared to destroy Nineveh for its violence and bloodshed. In the postexilic period, the books of Haggai and Zechariah document the repentance of the people in response to the prophets' calls to rebuild the temple and return to the Lord, but the message of Malachi indicates another relapse into disobedience and rebellion. This pattern that emerges in the Twelve reflects Israel's persistent disobedience and refusal to return to Yahweh. The postexilic community is as guilty of unfaithfulness toward Yahweh as Israel and Judah before the exile. The inclusion of the Nineveh narrative in this

[7] Bowman, "Reading the Twelve as One," 44.

[8] Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 296.

pattern reflects that the story of the nations is essentially the same as that of Israel in terms of their persistent rebellion against Yahweh as the one true God.

The Pattern of Repentance and Relapse		
Narrative of Repentance: Joel 2:12–27—Israel repents and God spares from judgment	**Narrative of Repentance: Jonah 3—the people and king of Nineveh repent and God spares from judgment**	**Narrative of Repentance: Postexilic Israel "obeys" calls to rebuild temple and "returns to the Lord (Hagg 1; Zech 1)**
Relapse and warning of judgment of exile for Israel (Amos) and Judah (Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah)	Relapse and warning of judgment and destruction for Nineveh (Nahum)	Relapse and warning of further judgment for post-exilic community (Malachi)
		Narrative of partial repentance in Mal 3:16–18 with a warning of final judgment for the wicked

3.1. First Example of Repentance and Relapse: Israel and Judah Leading to Exile

The six books in the Twelve with historical superscriptions provide an overall chronological sequence that begins with the Assyrian period, moves to the Babylonian crisis, and concludes with the postexilic era.[9] The other six books are given their location by the chronological period in which the prophet ministered and/or by catchword and thematic connections to the books they precede and/or follow.[10] The books of Hosea-Micah generally cover the Assyrian period, Nahum-Zephaniah the Babylonian, and Haggai-Zechariah the postexilic.

Scholarship generally recognizes the book of Joel as a postexilic prophecy,[11] and thus the literary location of the book within the Twelve removes Joel from its chronological setting so that it might introduce themes and motifs that run throughout the Book of the Twelve. Nogalski argues that Joel provides a "literary anchor" for the Twelve and introduces a "transcendent historical paradigm" of God's

[9] Rolf Rendtorff states that "the superscriptions give the Book of the Twelve an explicit chronological framework" ("How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SBL Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 76). The order of the six books with superscriptions (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah) is the same in both the MT and LXX relative to each other. The last six books in the Twelve are also in the same order in the MT and LXX, and Nahum-Malachi reflect a chronological arrangement. The differences between the MT and LXX order have to do with how the books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah are interspersed among the eighth-century prophets in the first half. The MT reflects an order of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah. The LXX order is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah. For further discussion of these two different arrangements of the book of the Twelve, see note 17 below.

[10] For specific examples of catchwords and how they are used to link together the individual books in the Twelve, see Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, 20–57.

[11] See Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 2 vols., Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000) 1:149–50 for a brief discussion of the basic arguments for this dating of the book.

work of judgment and salvation that unfolds in the books that follow.[12] Joel provides the first explicit references to the "day of Yahweh" (1:5; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14), and this concept becomes a dominant theme in the Twelve.[13] The prophets portray various events throughout the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian periods as "days" of the Lord as Yahweh intervenes to bring both judgment and salvation. The book of Joel also influences the overall direction of the Twelve in the specific way that it connects warnings of the coming day of Yahweh with calls for repentance, expressing the hope that confession of sin and a genuine turning from evil may result in divine relenting from judgment.[14] Jeremias notes that the book of Joel is "the only book in the Old Testament daring to speak of the survival of a whole generation in Israel in the context of the Day of the Lord."[15] Thus, Joel tempers passages on the day of the Lord that follow in subsequent books in the Twelve that seem to present death and destruction as the only possible outcome of the coming "day" (cf. Amos 5:18–20; Zeph 1:14–16).[16]

In its present literary position, Joel 2:12–27 recounts an episode of repentance that literarily (though not chronologically) precedes the warnings of the judgment of exile for Israel in Amos and for Judah in the books of Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.[17] Thus, the first example of repentance followed by relapse in the Twelve relates to Israel and Judah before the judgment of exile. In Joel 2:12–17, the prophet calls for repentance in the context of a locust plague that has brought devastation and destruction on the land. The prophet calls for an internal change that goes beyond the external signs of contrition, and

[12] James D. Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor" for the Book of the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SBL Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 91–109. For a similar perspective on Joel's key role in the Twelve, see also Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve," *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 133–54. Nogalski (p. 106) and Sweeney (pp. 143–49) note an extensive number of intertextual parallels between Joel and other books in the Twelve that reflect Joel's overall literary significance to the whole of this composition.

[13] Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 104–5. For further discussion of the theological significance of the day of Yahweh as a theological theme in the Book of the Twelve, see also Paul R. House, "Endings as New Beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, and Renewal in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 312–38; Nogalski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, 192–213; Jörg Jeremias, "The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Rainer Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 (New York: de Gruyter, 2012), 78–81; and Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve," 78–87.

[14] Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 107–8.

[15] Jeremias, "The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve," 78.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Nogalski, ("Joel as 'Literary Anchor,'" 107) explains that the placement of Joel in its present location in the MT version of the Twelve "does not ignore the chronological context," but rather "transcends it." In reading the Twelve sequentially, it is significant that this episode of repentance occurs near the beginning of the story, even if chronologically this event did not actually occur until the post-exilic period. The chronological fluidity of Joel is reflected by its different locations in the MT and LXX versions of the Twelve. The scholarly consensus is that the Masoretic order is most likely the original and that the LXX simply placed Amos and Micah after Hosea because their superscriptions placed them in the same basic time period and then retained the order found in the MT for the other books. Of the eight partial manuscripts from Qumran all but one has confirmed the order of the MT for the Twelve, though none contain the entire corpus. For the one exception, the most plausible reconstruction of 4Q12[a] is that Jonah follows Malachi at the end of the Twelve. See Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, 2.

he exhorts the people and leaders of Israel to pray that Yahweh spare them from judgment. The need for repentance is so urgent that it must include all segments of the population, from the eldest down to nursing infants. The national emergency was so severe so that even the newly married, who were exempt from military duty (cf. Deut 20:7) needed to present themselves before Yahweh.[18]

This passage is important for what follows in the Twelve in that it becomes the first of four passages that reference the confession concerning Yahweh's character in Exodus 34:6–7 (cf. Jonah 4:2; Mic 7:16–18; Nah 1:3).[19] Joel quotes Exodus 34:6 in noting that Yahweh is "gracious, and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" as the motivation for the people to repent. Likely through the influence of Exodus 32:12–14, the prophet also proclaims that Yahweh is a God who "relents" (נחם) from sending calamity when people repent.[20] The prophet Joel anticipates that Yahweh would show mercy to the people of his generation in the same way that he had in the early days of Israel's history at Mount Sinai when the people had worshipped the golden calf. Another detail reflecting the influence of Exodus 32–34 is that the reason for the plea for divine mercy in Joel 2:17 is God's reputation among the nations, whose people would say, "Where is God?" if he allowed Israel to be destroyed (cf. Exod 32:12–14). The priests who pray this prayer in Joel have taken over the role of Moses as intercessors for the people.[21]

As the question, "Who knows?" (מי יודע) in 2:14 reflects, repentance does not guarantee divine favor and blessing, but there is always the possibility that God would "relent" and send blessing in the place of judgment. As Chisholm notes, Joel 2, Exodus 32–34, and a number of other texts in the Hebrew Bible relate this inclination of God to relent from sending judgment "as one of his foundational attributes."[22] This specific attribute of Yahweh clearly influences the way in which he works out his decrees of judgment and salvation in the Book of the Twelve.

The text does not explicitly state how the people responded to Joel's call for repentance, but what follows in 2:18–20 indicates that they followed through on what the prophet had commanded. Allen comments, "We are intended to assume that Joel's appeals . . . were successful. Evidently the people did gather to a national service of fasting and lamentation, and the priests duly offered prayers on behalf of a genuinely repentant community."[23] Yahweh's response to the people's repentance in verses 18–19 is expressed by the use of a series of four *wayyiqtol* verbs (ויקנא, ויחמל, ויען, ויאמר). Yahweh showed

[18] Ronald L. Troxel, "The Problem of Time in Joel," *JBL* 132 (2013): 94.

[19] For the use and importance of Exodus 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve, see Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 307; Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John C. Gammie*, ed. L. G. Perdue, B. B. Scott, and W. J. Wiseman (Philadephia: Westminister John Knox, 1993), 31–49; and Richard L. Schultz, "The Ties that Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels, and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 37–40. Outside of the Twelve, the confessional statement of Exod 34:6–7 is also found in Num 14:18; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8.

[20] Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 307.

[21] Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy," 40.

[22] Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 372. Cf. Num 14; Jer 18:7–10; Mic 3:9–12 with Jer 26:17–19; Amos 7:1–3; Jer 26:3–7; 36:3–7. On the conditionality of prophetic warnings and promises that are not based on sworn oaths or that do not express the ultimate fulfillment of outcomes guaranteed by Yahweh's covenant promises, see also Richard L. Pratt "Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions," in *Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce Waltke*, ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 180–203.

[23] Leslie C Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 86.

compassion to the people and began to reverse the effects of the locust plague that had afflicted the nation. As a result, Joel 2:18 serves as "the pivot point of a story that offers a model for later generations seeking to escape the Day of the Lord."[24] While the prevailing view is that these verbs should be read like prophetic perfects, stressing the certainty of the promises that Yahweh is making (cf. KJV, NIV, NASB), the *wayyiqtol* is primarily used as a preterite to indicate past time events in narratives (cf. ESV, NET).[25] The narrative use seems more likely here, and the verbs relate how Yahweh responded to the people's repentance. Troxel explains that the preterite verbs in 2:18–19 resume the narrative storyline from 1:1–3 that presents the ministry of Joel and the deliverance of the people as a story to be told to successive generations.[26] Troxel comments, "Just as 1:2–3 viewed these events as past, so 2:28 presupposes that the promises of salvation announced for the future in vv. 19–20 and 25–27 have already been fulfilled."[27]

In light of the paradigmatic example of repentance and divine favor in the book of Joel, it is both ironic and tragic that repentance is not forthcoming for Israel (Amos) or Judah (Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) in these books that warn of the coming exile.[28] Intertextual links particularly highlight how the response to prophetic appeals in these books is the exact opposite of what is portrayed in Joel 2. The locust plague in Joel leads to the people's repentance, but in Amos, Yahweh has sent a locust plague (and other covenant curses), but the people "have not returned (שׁוב) to him" (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11).[29] Jeremias states that the reference to the locust plague in Amos 4:9 "sounds nearly like a citation of Joel, but this time with a negative result."[30] Because of their failure to repent, the prophet warns them to prepare to "meet" their God in judgment (4:12). Nevertheless, before sending judgment, Yahweh still provides an opportunity for the people to return to him. The prophet calls on the people to "seek" (דרשׁ) Yahweh (5:4–6, 14) so that they might live and so that Yahweh not break out like a fire against them. The possibility (אולי) of the Lord showing grace in response to repentance recalls the מי יודע

[24] Troxel, "The Problem of Time in Joel," 81.

[25] For the view that the *wayyiqtol* verbs here should be viewed as prophetic perfects, see, for example James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea-Jonah*, SHBC (Macon: Smith & Helwys, 2011), 234–37; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 257–59; and Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 1:69. For the view that the *wayyiqtol* verbs should be taken as preterites, see Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, 86–88; Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 308n42; Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets,* 373; Troxel, "The Problem of Time in Joel," 78–83; and Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 57–60.

[26] Troxel, "The Problem of Time in Joel," 81.

[27] Ibid.

[28] The recurring calls to "hear" the word of Yahweh in Amos (3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4) and Micah (3:1, 9; 6:2) emphasize the necessity of proper response to the prophetic word.

[29] Roman Vielhauer notes that outside of Joel 2:12 and these five uses in Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11, the exact collocation of שׁוב + עדappears only one other time in the Book of the Twelve—in Hos 14:2, a passage that seems to connect the books of Hosea and Joel ("Hosea and the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Rainer Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 [New York: de Gruyter, 2012], 65).

[30] Jeremias, "The Function of the Book of Joel for the Reading of the Twelve," 84. Two key intertextual links to Amos at the end of Joel signal that the books are to be read in light of each other: (1) Yahweh roars from Zion (Joel 4:16 [3:16 EV]; Amos 1:2; (2) the mountains shall drip sweet wine (Joel 4:18 [3:18 EV]; Amos 9:13).

doing the same in Joel 2:14.[31] Like Joel, the call to repentance in Amos is linked to a warning of the impending day of Yahweh that would be a day of disaster for Israel in contrast to Israel's expectations of blessing and deliverance (5:18–20).

A further parallel to Joel is that the book of Amos also includes a documented response to the prophet's teaching, but the parallel is again one of contrast. The context of Amos 7 focuses on Yahweh's willingness to show compassion and spare his people from judgment (7:1–6). As in Joel, this judgment involves both locust plague and "fire" (cf. Joel 1:19, 20; 2:3, 5). In spite of the people's sin, Yahweh still deals with Israel as he did when Moses prayed for the people after their worship of the golden calf (Exod 32:11–14). The Lord responds to Amos's intercession for Israel and "relents" (נחם) from sending the judgment he had threatened to bring (Amos 7:3, 6). Yahweh's mercy, however, is met with Israel's resistance to the prophetic word preached by Amos, and the priest Amaziah orders him to stop preaching and to return to Judah (7:10–17). Because of this rejection of Amos and Yahweh's spokesman and the refusal to repent, the judgment that Yahweh had relented from because of the prophet's intercession would now come in full force (8:1–9:10). There would be no "turning" on the part of the people or Yahweh until the eschatological future when Yahweh would "restore the fortunes" (שׁוב שׁבות) of Israel (9:11–15).

As in the ministry of Amos to Israel, there is no positive response to the preaching of Micah in Judah like that recorded in the book of Joel. In the place of repentance, there is direct resistance to the prophetic word in Micah 2:6–11.[32] The leaders that Micah indicts for their injustices in the preceding verses command Micah to "not preach" (אל + נטף) and argue that one should not "preach" (נטף) harsh words of judgment like those proclaimed by Micah (2:6). The verb נטף means "to drip," and may suggest the idea that the prophet is speaking "drivel" or "foaming at the mouth."[33] Micah turns the insult back on his opponents, characterizing their speech by the same verb in verse 6. Micah further labels the speaking of the false prophets who utter lies as נטף in 2:11. This rare term for prophetic proclamation also appears in Amos 7:16 when the priest Amaziah orders Amos "not to preach," thus reflecting that the response to the preaching of Micah in Judah is exactly the same as that to the preaching of Amos in Israel.[34]

Micah's opponents have a defective view of the covenant that instills the presumptuous confidence that "no disaster will overtake" Judah (2:6). The people's question, "Has the patience of the Lord run short?" in 2:7 reflects that they likely view Micah's message as suspect because he inverts the attribute of Yahweh as "slow to anger" that is celebrated in Exodus 34:6.[35] The people have taken the assurance

[31] Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," 81.

[32] Ironically, Jer 26:17–19 preserves the memory of Micah's preaching led Hezekiah to repent and then Yahweh relented from destroying Jerusalem; however, the book of Micah itself includes no indication of a positive response.

[33] See *HALOT* 1:694–95, s. v. "נטף." The verb refers to the seductive speech of the adulteress in Proverbs 5:3, and the NET Bible offers an idiomatic translation for נטף here in verse 6 that has Micah's prophetic opponents saying to him, "Don't preach with such impassioned rhetoric." They view Micah's message of judgment as empty ranting.

[34] Ezekiel 21:2, 7 is the only other passage where נטף refers to prophetic activity, and it seems to be a synonym for the standard verb "to prophesy" (נבא). The verb נטף is parallel to נבא in Amos 7:16, but the LXX translates נטף with ὀχλαγωγέω, which means "to attract or stir up a crowd." See Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 111.

[35] Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy," 46.

of Yahweh's compassion and mercy in the wrong way, as an absolute guarantee of divine grace rather than a motivation for repentance. The unqualified promises offered by the false prophets, rather than Micah's message reminding them of their covenant responsibilities, were precisely the words that the people wanted to hear (2:11).

The fact that Micah receives the same response to his preaching in Judah that Amos had received in the apostate Northern Kingdom explains why Yahweh is now prepared to destroy the sanctuary on Zion like he did the one in Samaria (3:9–12; cf. Amos 9:1). The diminishing calls to repentance moving from Hosea to Micah in this section on the Assyrian crisis in the Twelve seems to reflect a missed opportunity to repent and avert judgment. The only thing closely resembling a formal call to repentance in Micah is found in the covenant lawsuit/trial speech in 6:1–8, in which the prophet directs the people of Judah to the way in which they can restore their relationship with Yahweh. The solution is not cultic ritual and sacrifice, but rather the practice of justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Like Joel and Jonah, Micah 7 demonstrates an intertextual connection to Exodus 34, but this passage does not record a sparing from judgment when God "relents" as in the two previous instances. The prophet himself provides the only recognition of Judah's sinfulness with his confession that the nation is thoroughly corrupt in 7:1–6. The only thing that the people "do well" is practice "evil" (7:3) (רעה). House observes, "Micah 6–7 offers a new twist on return and renewal by using first-person confession as a means of expressing change."[36] The prophet's only hope in the light of such pervasive national wickedness is "to look" and "to wait" for Yahweh to hear his prayers and to bring deliverance after the judgment is complete.[37]

The future remnant would join the prophet in confessing their sin and expressing their confidence that Yahweh would turn their darkness into light by saving them (7:8–10). In Joel 2:17, the people had prayed for God to save them from judgment so that the nations would not say, "Where is their God?" (איה אלהיהם), but the people here in Micah look forward to a time in the future when the enemy would no longer be able to say "Where is the Lord your God?" (איה יהוה אלהיך). The judgment would not be avoided in this instance, but when Israel is finally saved, the nations themselves will also turn to Yahweh in fear and in reverence (7:12–17).

In Micah 7:16–20, the remnant celebrates what the Lord would do for them by quoting from the Exodus 34 confession. The way in which Yahweh would "forgive sin" and "pardon iniquity" would demonstrate his "compassion" (רחם) and that he does not stay "angry" (אף) but delights instead to show "steadfast love" (חסד).[38] Because of his covenant commitments to Israel, Yahweh would wage war on Israel's sin and cast those sins into the sea. Unlike what occurred in Joel 2, there is no immediate confession of sin and repentance on the part of the people. The nation here must first experience devastating judgment until the time that a remnant enjoys pardon and forgiveness. The fact that the Assyrian section of the Book of the Twelve concludes with the use of Exodus 34:6 as a closing doxology reflects the hope that Yahweh's mercy would ultimately triumph over his judgment.[39]

The emphasis on judgment leading to exile carries over into the Babylonian section (Nahum-Zephaniah) of the Book of the Twelve. The judgment of the nations and of Judah blends together in this

[36] House, "Endings as New Beginnings," 329.

[37] Ibid., 330.

[38] Schultz, "The Tie that Binds," 39.

[39] Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy," 47.

section. The day of Yahweh against Nineveh in the book of Nahum becomes the day of Yahweh against Judah in Zephaniah. The book of Habakkuk reflects on how Yahweh will use Babylon to judge Judah and then turn that judgment on the Babylonians. In Zephaniah, the destruction of Judah is like the reversal of creation in Genesis 1, and divine judgment would extend to the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Cushites, and Assyrians. The theme of repentance is muted in this section, and the last intertextual connection to Exodus 34:6–7 in the Twelve occurs in Nahum 1:3, reflecting that Judah like Israel had forfeited its opportunity to turn from sin and experience Yahweh's mercy instead of wrath.

In Habakkuk, the people of Judah are characterized by "violence" (חמס) and "iniquity" (עון) (1:2–3). Their practice of "violence" (חמס) makes them indistinguishable from the Babylonians who would also face divine judgment (cf. 1:9; 2:8, 17). Standing between Nahum and Zephaniah, the book of Habakkuk reflects on the tumultuous time between the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586.[40] There is no offer or hope that repentance would forestall judgment, but only the confident prayer that Yahweh would ultimately act on behalf of his people after bringing them through this time of judgment (ch. 3). Like Micah, Habakkuk confidently "waits" for Yahweh to deliver his people and to bring judgment on their enemies (3:16–18; cf. Mic 7:7).[41]

The only call to repentance found in the three Babylonian crisis books appears in Zephaniah 2:1–3. The hope of repentance that might lead God to avert the coming judgment is minimized but still present. The prophet urges the people to repent before the decree of judgment takes effect and he calls upon them to "seek" Yahweh (בקשׁ) by also "seeking" (בקשׁ) righteousness and humility (2:1–3). Just as in the calls for repentance in Joel 2:12–14; Amos 5:15; and Jonah 3:9, the motivation for the appeal is the possibility (אולי) that they might be spared from judgment (3:3).[42] House notes that there is one notable difference between the call for repentance in Zephaniah and these earlier texts. The seeking of Yahweh that Zephaniah exhorts "will not forestall the day of the Lord, as was true earlier in the Twelve. Now such seeking will merely hide the persons who seek the Lord in the midst of the inevitable day of the Lord."[43] The time for a seeking and finding of the Lord by all the people "has passed."[44] Judgment would come for the nation, but "the humble (ענוים) of the land" would become the remnant of blessing when Yahweh "restored their fortunes" (2:3, 7) (שׁוב שׁבות). This promise offered hope to the righteous who endued the calamity of the Babylonian exile.

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[40] See A. Joseph Everson, "The Canonical Location of Habakkuk," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 165–74.

[41] The two passages use synonyms for "wait"—יחל in Habakkuk 3:16 and נוח in Micah 7:7. Both Habakkuk and Micah anticipate that Yahweh will engage in war on Israel's behalf when the judgment is over. Habakkuk focuses on how Yahweh will destroy the wicked and "trample the sea" (Hab 3:13–15); Micah stresses how Yahweh will humiliate the nations (Mic 7:10, 15–17) and then trample on Israel's sins before casting them "into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:18–19).

[42] Rendtorff ("How to Read the Book of the Twelve," 84–85) notes that Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah "are very close to each other in relating the Day of the Lord to the call to repent or to 'seek,' and in expressing a reticent and even fearful hope that God might listen and react to a change in the behavior of the people." He further suggests that this thread is important for the overall message of the Twelve, because these three books (with the exception of Malachi) "represent the span within which the topic of the Day of the Lord appears."

[43] House, "Endings as New Beginnings," 332.

[44] Ibid.

3.2. Second Example of Repentance and Relapse: The People of Nineveh

The second example of repentance and relapse in the Twelve comes from an unexpected source, the Ninevites of Assyria. This picture emerges from a reading of Jonah and Nahum in connection with each other. Jonah appears in the Assyrian section of the Twelve, and Nahum introduces the Babylonian section. In the books leading up to Jonah in the Twelve, the judgment of the nations is a prominent theme. There is judgment for the nations (Joel 3:1–15) and salvation for Jerusalem and the people of God (Joel 3:16–21). The Lord will "restore the fortunes" of Israel so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and the other nations (Amos 9:11–15). In Obadiah, there will be survivors of the judgment from among the people of Israel but no survivors for Edom (Obad 16–21). One could easily infer from these passages that there is a future salvation for Israel and no salvation for the nations, but the story of Jonah offers a balancing perspective.[45]

The passage depicting the repentance of the Ninevites in Jonah 3:4–10 provides the closest intertext in the Book of the Twelve to the paradigmatic repentance text in Joel 2:12–14. The specific connections to the Joel text include the use of the verbs שׁוב and נחם in (3:8–10) with reference to human repentance and divine relenting from judgment and the use of the question 3:9) מי יודע) to raise the possibility that God might show mercy in response to repentance (cf. Joel 2:14). The king of Nineveh calls for his people to "turn" (שׁוב) from their "evil" (רעה) way, and this repentance is motivated by the possibility that God may "turn" (שׁוב) and "relent" (נחם) from the "calamity" (רעה) he has planned against Nineveh. As in Joel 2, repentance takes the form of a fast, a time of mourning, and a turning from evil. When God sees that the Ninevites have "turned" (שׁוב) from their "evil" (רעה), he does "relent" (נחם) from sending "calamity" (רעה) upon them.[46] Another link to Joel 2:12–14 is the quotation of Exodus 34:6 in Jonah 4:2, regarding Yahweh's gracious and compassionate nature that leads him to relent from sending judgment.[47] Ironically, however, Jonah had rejected his prophetic commission in a futile attempt to sabotage Yahweh showing mercy to the Ninevites. The parallels between Jonah 3–4 and Joel 2:12–14 within the Twelve demonstrate that Yahweh extends mercy to the nations in response to their repentance in the same way that he does toward Israel.[48]

The repentance of Nineveh in Jonah 3 is noteworthy for several reasons. They respond to a warning of judgment from the prophet of a foreign deity with whom they have no prior experience on the first day of Jonah's preaching mission. As Fretheim notes, the Ninevites repent in spite of the fact that "Jonah makes his message as vague and as blunt and as offensive as he possibly can" and that "would make it almost impossible for the people to respond positively."[49] The repentance of the Ninevites extends to

[45] Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," 80–83. For development of the idea that the conversion of the sailors in Jonah 1 and the Ninevites in Jonah 3 anticipates the eschatological salvation of the nations, see Gregory Coswell, "Jonah Among the Twelve Prophets," *JBL* 135 (2016): 283–99.

[46] Not surprisingly, one specific difference between Joel 2:12–14 and Jonah 3:9–10 is that the first text uses the name Yahweh and the second the name Elohim.

[47] Van Leeuwen ("Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy," 44) even suggests that the genre of the book of Jonah as a whole "is perhaps best taken as an early midrashic homily on Exodus 34:6."

[48] The hope of the Ninevites that Yahweh would "turn" (ישׁב) and "relent" (נחם) from the "calamity" (רעה) he planned to send against them also reflects the cry of Moses in Exodus 32:12 as he intercedes for divine mercy for Israel after the people have worshipped the golden calf. See Boda, *"Return to Me,"* 99.

[49] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 107–8.

their king, even though the Assyrian rulers are portrayed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as arrogant and blasphemous (Isa 10:5–34; 37–37; 2 Kgs 18–19).[50] The king's edict calling for fasting and the wearing of sackcloth extends even to the animals. In the larger context of the Twelve, this radical repentance on the part of the Ninevites serves as a rebuke to Israel's lack of repentance. As Nogalski states, "Jonah has the people of Nineveh doing what the people of YHWH have been unable or unwilling to do: turn from evil and violence."[51]

The repentance of Nineveh in Jonah unfortunately becomes a relapse into violence and wickedness in Nahum. The message of doom against Nineveh in Nahum reverses Yahweh's gracious relenting from the destruction of the city in Jonah. Nahum also overturns the emphasis in Joel, Jonah, and Micah from Exodus 34:6 on the mercy of God and instead focuses on the negative aspect of God exacting vengeance on sinners in Exodus 34:7.[52] Yahweh's dealings with Nineveh have demonstrated that he is "slow to anger" (Nah 1:3), but Nineveh has exhausted Yahweh's mercy and must now face judgment. In Jonah 3:10, God spares Nineveh because they "turned" (שׁוב) from "evil" (רעה), but Jonah's initial warning that Nineveh would be overturned is reinstated when they return to their "evil" (רעה) ways (Nah 1:11; 3:19). Fire, locusts, and lions have served as previous images of judgment in the Twelve, and Nahum warns that all of these horrific judgments would now fall on Nineveh (3:15–17). There is no turning to Yahweh in Nahum, and no hope for Assyria's restoration is offered in the book. In the larger Book of the Twelve, Assyria becomes representative of the wicked nations judged by Yahweh (Mic 5:5–6; Zeph 2:13–15; Zech 10:11).

3.3. Third Example of Repentance and Relapse: The Postexilic Community

The third example of repentance and relapse occurs in the postexilic section of the Book of the Twelve. When Haggai and Zechariah call for the people to renew their efforts to rebuild the Temple in 520 B.C., their preaching is met with immediate and enthusiastic response. Haggai is the one book in the Twelve in which the word שׁוב does not appear, but the book depicts a genuine repentance in which the people "obeyed" (שׁמע) the prophetic words, "feared" (יראׄ) the Lord, and began the work of rebuilding in the same month in which Haggai commenced his ministry (Hag 1:12–14). The promises announced by the prophet in the remainder of the book—the surpassing glory of the new temple (Hag 2:7–9), agricultural and economic prosperity (Hag 2:17–18), and the exalted status of Zerubbabel as the Lord's representative (Hag 2:23)—are the blessings that Yahweh would pour out on the people in response to their obedience.

The book of Zechariah also records the positive response to the prophet's call for action. When Yahweh says, "Return (שׁוב) to me and I will return (שׁוב) to you," the people "return" (שׁוב) and acknowledge that Yahweh has dealt with them according to their sinful ways in the judgment of the exile (Zech 1:3, 6). Nevertheless, there are also indicators that this repentance and return is inadequate

[50] Ibid., 1:326.

[51] Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea-Jonah*, 441.

[52] Exodus 34:6–7 also provides a direct link between Nahum and the preceding book of Micah (cf. Mic 7:18–20). Schultz ("The Ties that Bind," 39) notes that when Nahum mentions that Yahweh is "slow to anger," it appears that he will focus on the pardoning of sin in the same manner as Micah does, but he turns instead to how Yahweh would punish the guilty. Boda (*A Severe Mercy*, 307) notes that Nahum 1:3 is the only passage outside the Pentateuch which mentions the negative side of Yahweh disciplining sin when referencing the confession in Exodus 34:6–7.

in many ways.[53] The vision of the flying scroll in 5:1–4 portrays a people still characterized by covenant infidelity, and the vision of the woman in the basket that follows in 5:5–11 warns of a further exile to Babylon for those who continue in their wicked ways. In Zechariah 7:8–14, the prophet rehearses Israel's miserable history of response to the preaching of the prophets that led to the judgment of exile in the first place. Zechariah also called for the present generation to practice justice and to cease from evil so that the blessings of restoration promised to Israel, including the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem, might become a reality (8:16–23). The fact that the postexilic community never fully returned to Yahweh meant that these blessings would not occur until the eschatological era portrayed in Zechariah 9–14 when Yahweh would completely purge evil from his people.

The message of Malachi at the end of the Twelve demonstrates how the postexilic community eventually relapsed into evil. Their estrangement from Yahweh is reflected in how they question God's love at the very beginning of the book (1:2–5). They offer polluted offerings (1:6–14), have priests that fail to honor Yahweh and lead the people astray (2:1–9), violate their marriage commitments (2:10–16), and rob God by not paying their tithes (3:6–14). Malachi's message takes the form of a dispute, as the people not only refuse to listen to the Lord's commands, but arrogantly dispute the charges brought against them. In 3:7, the prophet delivers the same "Return to me and I will turn to you" message found in Zechariah 1:3, but there is no community-wide response as there was to Zechariah's preaching.[54] The people have "wearied the Lord" with their words as much as with their actions, and instead of confessing and turning from their wrongdoing, they disparage God's justice and question whether there is even any benefit in serving him (2:17; 3:13–15).

Malachi 3:16 provides the only narrative material in the book.[55] Coming at the end of a long cycle of dispute between Yahweh and Israel and following the specific argument of the people in 3:13–15 that serving the Lord is futile, one expects an announcement of judgment. Instead, the verse recounts the final example of positive response to the prophetic word in the Twelve. Unlike the negative speech (דבר in verse 13) of the people against Yahweh in the preceding verses, a group of God-fearers "speak to each other" (Niphal of דבר). Their speech is not recorded, but their words expressed in some way their reverence and honor for Yahweh. As in previous instances of repentance in the Twelve, Yahweh takes note of this positive response. Unlike the episodes of community-wide repentance in Joel, Jonah, and Haggai, and Zechariah, the positive response here only involves a minority of the prophet's audience. There is a division in Malachi 3:13–16 between those who speak arrogantly and those who truly fear God. There is no relenting from judgment or promised national blessings in this instance. Instead, Yahweh hears the words of those who fear him and records their names in "a book of remembrance" so that they might be spared from the coming future judgment.[56] The people would see from the distinction

[53] Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 337–38.

[54] Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25D (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 407.

[55] Note the perfect verb נדברו (describing the action of the men—"they spoke to each other") followed by a series of *wayyiqtol* verbs describing what was done as a consequence of their action (ויקשׁב, וישׁמע, ויכתב) ("Yahweh drew near . . . and heard . . . and a book of remembrance was written before him"). See Hill, *Malachi*, 337.

[56] An alternate understanding is that the latter part of verse 16 records the actual speech of the God-fearers ("Yahweh has paid attention to us and has heard us"), countering the claim that serving Yahweh is futile, but there is nothing that specifically marks this part of the verse as reported speech, and the verb sequence favors reading the verse as a narrative report. See ibid.

in what happened to the righteous versus the wicked that there was value in serving Yahweh. Because of this limited positive response to the prophet's preaching, there would still be a need for future judgment. As Watts notes, "The post-exilic situation is not the perfect end time. It is filled with sin and needs the continual cleansing and judgment of God."[57]

4. Significance of the Repentance/Relapse Pattern

This study has suggested that recognition of the pattern of repentance and relapse provides a helpful reading strategy for understanding the Book of the Twelve as a literary entity. The significance of this literary pattern is seen in three specific ways. First, the pattern of repentance and relapse reflects the pervasiveness of Israel's unbelief and attributes the "day of the Lord" judgments associated with exile in large part to improper response to the prophetic word. In the three centuries of prophetic activity reflected in the Twelve, there are only limited examples of turning to Yahweh, and one of those examples comes from the pagan Ninevites. The Book of the Twelve offers a story of Israel's engagement with Yahweh's prophets that confirms the assessment of Zechariah 1:4 that previous generations had not "listened or paid attention" to Yahweh's words.[58]

Second, the problems of partial repentance or repentance and then relapse also explain why the conditions of exile and alienation from Yahweh persist for Israel even after the return from exile.[59] The people would only fully enjoy the blessings of return when they had truly turned back to Yahweh. Geographical return to the land without a spiritual turning back to Yahweh was inadequate. Thus, the calls for repentance in the Book of the Twelve and especially in the postexilic prophets serve as a call for successive generations reading these books to always be returning to the Lord. LeCureux comments that "the Twelve raise a warning that the return (שׁוּב) relationship is one that will never cease, and in fact, requires constant vigilance. The struggle with Israel between turning toward Yahweh and turning toward rebellion must be confronted continually." [60]In this way, the Book of the Twelve helps prepare the way for the call of John and Jesus in the New Testament to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2; 4:17) or for Peter's exhortation for Israel to "repent" so that "the times of refreshing" might come (Acts 3:19–20).

Finally, in light of Israel's persistent inability to return to Yahweh, the Book of the Twelve reflects the reality that the only hope for Israel's future lies in Yahweh's work of sovereign grace that would internally transform the people so that they would be able to faithfully follow and obey him. At some unspecified time in the future, Yahweh would heal Israel's apostasy (Hos 14:2). Yahweh would "pour out" his Spirit on his people so that they would call on him and be saved (Joel 3:1–5) [2:28–32, EV]. Yahweh would provide transformative forgiveness for his people by casting their sins into the sea (Mic

[57] John D. W. Watts, "A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SBL Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 212.

[58] For similar statements concerning Israel's resistance to the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, cf. 2 Kings 17:13–14; Isaiah 6:9–10; Jeremiah 7:25–26; 25:3–7; 26:4–6; 35:15; 37:1–2; Ezekiel 2:3–4; 3:7–9.

[59] A canonical reading of Jeremiah and Daniel reflects that the "70 years" of exile in Babylon (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10) was just the beginning of the ultimate restoration of Israel that would require "seventy weeks of seven" (Dan 9:24–27).

[60] LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, 109.

7:18–20). He would "pour out a spirit of grace and prayer" that would finally produce the repentance and return he had desired from his people all along (Zech 12:10–14). The concluding promise in the Twelve in Malachi 3:24 (4:6, EV) is that Yahweh's eschatological prophet "will turn" (Hiphil of שׁוּב) the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to the fathers, indicating that Israel's spiritual transformation would also bring restoration of family relationships at the human level. These promises in the Book of the Twelve align with the promises of new covenant and new heart and the consequent spiritual transformation in Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (cf. Deut 30:6; Isa 59:20–21; Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:24–30). These promises of spiritual transformation for Israel in the Twelve apply to all who belong to the new covenant community, both Jew and Gentile, with Romans 9–11 (esp. 11:23–27) also indicating a future eschatological salvation of ethnic Israel (cf. Luke 22:30; Acts 3:19–20; 26:6–7). Brueggemann has noted the interplay between "Deuteronomic" and "Prophetic" models in the Hebrew Bible, the former stressing "an eschatological pardon that is conditioned on Israel's repentance," and the latter a "full and unilateral pardon without reference to repentance" (cf. 1 Kgs 8:46–51; 2 Chron 7:13–14).[61] The Book of the Twelve certainly emphasizes divine initiative as the ultimate cause of Israel's final salvation, but without completely removing the tensions between these two models. The timing and manner of Israel's restoration in some sense remains contingent on human response to the divine initiatives, and this interplay between divine initiative and human response is central to the ongoing drama of salvation history.

[61] Walter Brueggemann, "The Travail of Pardon: Reflections on *slḥ*," in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brett Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 283–97.