

FROM WHERE DOES MY HOPE COME? THEODICY AND THE CHARACTER OF YHWH IN ALLUSIONS TO EXODUS 34:6–7 IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

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Abstract: *This article explores how allusions to the character credo of Exodus 34:6–7 address the question of theodicy in the Book of the Twelve. The credo's affirmation of YHWH's essential character addresses situations where some aspect of the relationship between YHWH and his people is under threat. This article navigates recent discussions of terminology and criteria for allusions to identify the relevant passages. It then uncovers how these passages use the characteristics of the YHWH's self-proclaimed nature to address their situations. Joel appeals for his audience to trust in YHWH's grace and compassion, even as they face the threats from the imminent day of YHWH and surrounding nations. Jonah reveals that YHWH's grace and compassion extends beyond Israel. Micah provides the prospect of hope after judgment and exile, rooted in the essence of YHWH's nature, while Nabum revels in deliverance from an oppressor because YHWH judges the wicked. The variety of situations addressed in these texts indicates that the character credo is a touchstone for addressing theodicy. Recalling YHWH's essential character provides hope that YHWH remains gracious, compassionate, and just, even when lived experience calls these qualities into question.*

Key words: *Book of the Twelve, theodicy, hope, inner-biblical allusion, character of YHWH*

Questions about God's character inevitably arise in moments of crisis. The experience of pain and the perseverance of evil naturally threaten simplistic assertions of divine sovereignty and benevolence. The tension between the world as it is and affirmations of divine goodness is the purview of theodicy, which seeks resolutions that preserve faith while grappling honestly with evidence of suffering and turmoil. In the introduction to their extensive survey, Laato and de Moor identify four fundamental premises of theodicy in the biblical world: (1) there is one God; (2) this God is the source of goodness and justice; (3) this God has authority in the world; and (4) evil and suffering exist.¹ The core of theodicy occurs as the biblical writers wrestle with the reality of the fourth premise, while striving to maintain the first three. In the same volume, Crenshaw defines theodicy as “an *articulate* response to the *anomie* of existence, one that goes beyond silence, submission, and rebellion to thoughtful justification of the deity in the face of apparently contradictory evi-

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¹ Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor, “Introduction,” in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor; Leiden: Brill, 2003), xx.

dence.”² Theodicy thus encompasses the responses of biblical writers to situations that challenge the idealized nature of both God’s character and God’s authority in view of the crises faced by God’s people.³

The OT provides ample opportunity for exploring theodicy since the crises faced by ancient Israel often prompted reflection on the relationship between YHWH and his people. This concern permeates prophetic literature since the prophet, as an intermediary, has the freedom to explore the state of this relationship. Theodicy includes prophets who express grief and anger at what their calling requires (Jer 15:18; 20:7–14), wrestle with issues of divine justice (Ezek 18:25–29; Zeph 3:1–5; Mal 3:13–15), explain the divine perspective behind apparent natural disasters (Amos 4:6–12), and seek to understand the unfolding of history when great foreign empires overrun Israel (Hab 1:2–17).⁴ These prophets bring the crises and chaos of existence into conversation with assertions of divine justice and authority. The result is a richer understanding of both YHWH and the world over which he is sovereign.

This study focuses on one theme within the broad scope of theodicy in prophetic literature: the essential character of YHWH.⁵ This itself is a vast topic, but the approach taken here is to focus on a crucial expression of the divine character within a specific prophetic corpus. Biblical authors refer to the credo of Exod 34:6–7 throughout the OT, making it a suitable focus for studying the divine character. Significantly, several of these referrals occur within the Minor Prophets, which in contemporary scholarly parlance is called the Book of the Twelve. The references to Exod 34:6–7 occur in response to moments of crisis that prompt the prophets to address questions of theodicy and offer the possibility of hope. Commenting on the varied circumstances that refer back to this text, Lane notes that “the theological tension between YHWH’s mercy and wrath evident in the credo provided a semantic field that was capable of supporting each of the different responses to the issue of theodicy in the Twelve.”⁶

Before considering how the Book of the Twelve reuses the divine character credo, it is helpful to recall its original context. Exodus 34:6–7 declares YHWH’s nature as part of the covenant renewal after the golden calf episode. In the aftermath of Israel’s great transgression, YHWH reveals the essence of his character to Moses. The text is given in full here since identifying the repetition of its lexemes features prominently in this study:

² James L. Crenshaw, “Theodicy and Prophetic Literature,” in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, 236 (emphasis original).

³ James L. Crenshaw, “Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 176.

⁴ These examples are drawn from Crenshaw, “Theodicy and Prophetic Literature,” 244–46, and idem, “Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,” 183–91.

⁵ Crenshaw, “Theodicy and Prophetic Literature,” 244–46. Crenshaw identifies five subtypes of theodicy in prophetic literature: (1) personal affront; (2) the divine character; (3) interpretation of history; (4) liturgical readings of historical events; and (5) the natural order of things.

⁶ Nathan C. Lane, *The Compassionate but Punishing God: A Canonical Analysis of Exodus 34:6–7* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 75.

וַיַּעֲבֵר יְהוָה עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶץ אֲפִים וְרַב־חֶסֶד
וְאֵמֶת:

נֶצַח חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים נָשָׂא עֹון וּפָשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עֹון אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים
וְעַל־בָּנֵי בָנִים עַל־שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל־רִבְעִים:

(“YHWH passed before his face and he declared⁷ ‘YHWH YHWH, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and great in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, transgression, and sin, but will certainly not leave [the guilty] unpunished, visiting the sin of the fathers onto the sons and upon the sons of the sons to the third and fourth generation.”)

Elements of this declaration occur throughout the OT in literary contexts ranging from narrative (Num 14:17–19), sermon (Deut 5:9–10; 7:9–13), psalm (Ps 86:5, 15; 103:8–12; 145:8–9), prophecy (Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 3:10–4:4; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2–3), and corporate confession (Neh 9:17–19, 31–32).⁸ Commenting on its importance, Boda highlights the repetition of the divine name and asserts that Exod 34:6–7 “is clearly a moment of divine self-disclosure on a level that transcends any revelation that the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob experienced.”⁹ Given its significance, this study will discuss the signals of allusion to this text in the Book of the Twelve and how they address issues of theodicy.

I. CURRENT DISCUSSION OF EXODUS 34:6–7 IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

A renewed study of allusions to Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve is also appropriate because of the place that this passage holds in discussions concerning the development of the corpus. Spieckermann refers to it as the *Gnadenformel* (“grace formula”), a title that captures the essence of YHWH’s action in the aftermath of the golden calf episode.¹⁰ From that starting point, several argue that the reuse of this passage provides evidence of sapiential influence on the final form of the Book of Twelve, with Dentan arguing that it reflects a universalizing vision of who can receive God’s grace, while van Leeuwen claims that it provides an expla-

⁷ The identity of the speaker is ambiguous since either Moses and YHWH could be the subject of this verb. When this formula appears in Num 14:17, Moses attributes it to YHWH, seeking to remind YHWH of his self-declaration. Fishbane notes this is not conclusive evidence since Numbers could be modifying the tradition it has received. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Clarendon, 1985), 335. However, I accept the presentation in Numbers and view this expression as divine self-declaration. Regardless of the speaker, these verses clearly intend to provide a normative description of the character of YHWH.

⁸ For the distribution of terms from Exod 34:6–7 throughout the OT, see Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Heshed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 157; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 247–52. For the significance of this credo in the theology of the OT, see Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 27–52.

⁹ Boda, *Heartbeat*, 35.

¹⁰ Hans Spieckermann, “Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr ...,” *ZAW* 102 (1990): 3.

nation for the experience of exile and offering hope for the future.¹¹ These proposals suggest a coherent purpose to the appearance of the divine character credo throughout the corpus.

More recently, Wöhrle has argued that there is a distinct layer of redactional activity oriented around the reuse of Exod 34:6–7 in five passages that span the range of the Book of the Twelve (Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 3:9, 4:2; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2b–3a; Mal 1:9a).¹² He argues that the distribution of these apparent references indicates a deliberate redactional strategy of evoking descriptions of YHWH's character throughout the entire corpus. He finds further evidence of this strategy in the different manners in which these texts invoke YHWH's character. Joel and Jonah cite a significant portion of Exod 34:6–7a, omitting the statement concerning YHWH's judgment (and inserting a phrase from Exod 32:12–14 to conclude the citation), while the other three examples have more limited connections.¹³ Wöhrle then argues that Micah, Nahum, and Malachi each employ different elements of the "Grace-Formula." Micah 7:18–20 contains the key words "steadfast love" (חֶסֶד) and a verbal form of the word for "compassion" (יִרְחֲמֵנִי), while Nahum uses the phrase "slow to anger" (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם), and Malachi refers to God's graciousness (יִרְחֲמֵנִי). He contends that this is an intentional dispersion of the credo's vocabulary that reflects a strategy to weave this passage throughout the latter half of the Book of the Twelve.¹⁴

The idea of an intentional "grace layer" affecting the composition of the Book of Twelve has also received a significant measure of warranted criticism. Spronk notes the frequent appearance of Exod 34:6–7 in the Hebrew Bible, arguing that it is equally possible that the authors of each book referred to the tradition independently.¹⁵ This approach also preserves the voice of the titular prophet in each book. Further, Boda suggests that the allusions to Exod 34:6–7 are "far too general" to bear the weight of an intentional redactional layer, suggesting instead that the allusions in Joel and Jonah are part of the broader orientation of the Book of the Twelve towards penitence.¹⁶ Scharf adopts a different critique, noting varia-

¹¹ Robert C. Dentan, "The Literary Affinities of Exodus 34:6f," *VT* 13 (1963): 48–49; Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 32–33, 49.

¹² Jakob Wöhrle, "A Prophetic Reflection on Divine Forgiveness: The Integration of the Book of Jonah into the Book of the Twelve," *JHS* 9 (2009): 2–17. He reproduces essentially the same analysis in Jakob Wöhrle, "So Many Cross-References! Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Intertextual Relationships and Their Significance for Redaction Critical Analysis," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 3–20.

¹³ I address Joel and Jonah's inclusion of Exod 32:12–14 in their allusions to 34:6–7 in greater detail below.

¹⁴ Wöhrle, "Cross-References," 14–15. See especially his chart on p. 14.

¹⁵ Klaas Spronk, "Jonah, Nahum, and the Book of the Twelve: A Response to Jakob Wöhrle," *JHS* 9 (2009): 2–9.

¹⁶ Mark J. Boda, "Penitential Innovations with the Twelve," in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies* (ed. James K. Aitken, Katherine J. Dell, and Brian A. Mastin; BZAW 420; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 403–4.

tions in the form of the shared vocabulary. Exodus 34:6–7 uses the adjectives “gracious and compassionate” (רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן), while Mic 7:19 (יִרְחֶמֶנּוּ) and Mal 1:9 (וְיִחַנֶּנּוּ) use verbal forms of these roots. He then points out numerous passages within the Book of the Twelve that use these roots, weakening the uniqueness of the connection to Exod 34:6–7 (cf. Hos 12:5; Amos 5:15 for חָן, and Hos 1:6, 7; 2:3, 6, 25; 9:14; 14:4; Hab 3:2; Zech 1:12; 10:6 for רַחֵם).¹⁷ These critiques pose serious difficulties for the theory of an intentional redactional layer, but the existence of allusions to Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve remains worthy of comment. Consequently, it is appropriate to consider these allusions within their literary contexts. This provides the interpreter with the opportunity to discuss theodicy in the Book of the Twelve.

II. THE STUDY OF INNER-BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS

It is important to clarify the criteria and terminology used to establish the presence of allusions in biblical texts. This is a contentious subject, so it is worth providing some brief background and defining the terms that this study employs for its discussion of allusions to Exod 34:6–7. A foundational contribution is Fishbane’s work on “inner-biblical exegesis.” He argues that the reuse of the biblical text reveals the concerns of the later interpreters who shape the text to meet their situations. He states, “For there is no doubt that the technical competence involved in copyist activities made biblical scribes—individually and as members of schools—more than mere passive tradents. They were, in fact, both students of and even believers in the materials which they transmitted, and so were far from simply bystanders in matters relating to their clarity, implication, or application.”¹⁸ Fishbane even discusses the reuse of Exod 34:6–7 throughout the OT, including its occurrences in the Book of the Twelve, commenting on how these books could use the same text to describe both divine mercy and judgment.¹⁹ Meek summarizes this approach, noting that “inner-biblical exegesis seeks to isolate texts and examine texts that have in some way revised previous texts.”²⁰

In the time after Fishbane’s work, the study of interrelationships between biblical texts has proceeded apace and a distinction has emerged between his “inner-biblical exegesis” and a related approach called “inner-biblical allusion.” The point of departure is whether the receptor text, through its allusion, seeks to affect the meaning of the source text. Meek highlights this, noting, “The primary difference between these two methodologies is that inner-biblical exegesis argues that the receptor text has in some way modified the source text, whereas inner-biblical allusion argues that the receptor text alludes to the source text with no attempt at mod-

¹⁷ Aaron Schart, “The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, 120–21.

¹⁸ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 345–47.

²⁰ Russell Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Bib* 95 (2014): 285.

ification.”²¹ Both of these approaches are diachronic in that they posit that the source text antedates the receptor text.²² This differentiates them from the method called “intertextuality” which discusses connections between texts in a purely synchronic manner.²³ This process certainly has value in exploring the ways in which readers and interpreters experience texts and identify shared themes, vocabulary, and ideas, but eliminating diachronic concerns is a difficult step for those who are committed to the text as a historical witness to the relationship between YHWH and his covenant community.²⁴

From this brief survey of approaches, this study adopts the method of inner-biblical allusion to examine the use of Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve.²⁵ In this approach, interpreters search for signals of allusion to the source text that can be traced to the intention of the author of the receptor text. This means that allusions should be understood as an essential part of the receptor text’s rhetorical strategy. Consequently, it is important to discuss the process of identifying allusions and their rhetorical functions in receptor texts. Literary theorist Ziva Ben-Porat articulates four stages by which a reader engages in this process.²⁶ In the first stage, the reader notes a *marker* or signal that the allusion is occurring. This could be a citation of a selection of the source text, a word play based on this text, borrowing one of its motifs, grammatical patterns, or poetic structure. This leads to the *identification* of the source text in the second stage. This stage acknowledges the reality that one can recognize that an allusion is occurring, but not immediately recognize its origin. The third stage occurs when the reader considers the ways in which the source text influences the interpretation of the receptor text, drawing upon the

²¹ Meek, “Intertextuality,” 290.

²² This definition of inner-biblical allusion in particular required some debate. Some have used it to refer to an ahistorical study of textual connections and casted doubts on the project of determining the order of precedence of biblical texts. See Lyle M. Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category,” *VT* 42 (1992): 47–58. Others preserve the diachronic element, suggesting that it is possible to determine which text is the source of subsequent allusions. Leonard notes that direct citations in the biblical text necessitate some examination of the diachronic element. See Jeffery M. Leonard, “Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 257; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger,” *VT* 46 (1996): 479–89.

²³ For a survey of intertextuality, see Geoffrey D. Miller, “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research,” *CurrBR* 9 (2011): 283–309. Miller also helpfully notes the confusion of definitions for intertextuality since biblical scholars have used it as a catchall term for any kind of literary connection between texts. He suggests that this failure to define the term stems from “the author’s reluctance to expose him or herself to the harsh critiques levied against those who have articulated principles of intertextual reading” (*ibid.*, 291).

²⁴ Leonard, “Identifying,” 272. Leonard refers to a purely synchronic approach as a “last refuge of sorts for the study of textual connections.”

²⁵ For a more explicitly intertextual study of Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve, see Ruth Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn: Die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre Intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (Herders Biblische Studien 33; Freiburg: Herder, 2002). Scoralick identifies the same key passages that I will discuss as the most striking examples of references to Exod 34:6–7, but she greatly expands the pool of references by including passages that may share only a single word in common, or may address similar themes and motifs. See esp. pp. 142–43.

²⁶ Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL* 1 (1976): 110–11.

meaning of the source text in order to shape the understanding of the receptor text. This is the key stage for identifying literary allusion. Interpreters go beyond identifying shared language or other markers and consider how the source text affects the way in which the receptor text is read.²⁷ The fourth stage, which is not present in all literary allusions, permits the reader to cast a broader net and find further connections between the texts that are not explicitly marked, but may be activated now that there is an evident link.²⁸

Ben-Porat also succinctly defines literary allusion as “a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts.”²⁹ This is somewhat limiting since it is possible for a text to allude to more than one other text, even within the same reference. For example, it would be limiting to say that that Jonah 4:2–4 alludes *only* to Exod 34:6–7 without acknowledging its relationship with Joel 2:12–14. Nogalski defines allusion as a device “whose appearance intends to elicit the reader’s recollection of another text (or texts) *for a specific purpose*.”³⁰ The idea that there is a purpose behind allusion is significant, indicating that knowledge of the source text provides useful information for understanding the receptor text. This also requires establishing a degree of intentionality behind the allusion that pushes beyond coincidental reuse of lexemes or simply discussing a shared theme.

III. THEODICY IN ALLUSIONS TO EXODUS 34:6–7 IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Based on the above considerations, this paper focuses those passages within the Book of the Twelve that can be identified as inner-biblical allusions to Exod 34:6–7 and considers how they use the character credo to address questions of theodicy.³¹ This involves ascertaining which passages have significant markers of their allusion to the source text, such as the reuse of vocabulary and theme. To borrow Ben-Porat’s terminology, this paper looks for signals in the texts that activate the context of Exod 34:6–7 and considers how these texts adapt it for their own purposes. Sommer suggests that the argument for an inner-biblical allusion is cumulative: criteria including overlap in vocabulary and literary style, the ability to identify a purpose for the apparent borrowing, and the probability that a text would allude to the alleged source-text can combine to indicate the presence of an allu-

²⁷ Joseph Ryan Kelly, “Identifying Literary Allusions: Theory and the Criterion of Shared Language,” in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Ziony Zevit; Sheffield: Equinox, 2017), 28–29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ Ben-Porat, “Poetics,” 107.

³⁰ James Nogalski, “Intertextuality and the Twelve,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 109 (emphasis original).

³¹ I am following the overwhelming majority of scholarship here that posits that Exod 34:6–7 was available to be used in the Book of the Twelve. See, e.g., James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea—Jonah* (SHBC; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 209–11; Crenshaw, *Joel*, 136–37; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 49; van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom,” 49; Thomas B. Dozeman, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh’s Gracious and Compassionate Character,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 209.

sion.³² Leonard offers similar criteria, focusing on the presence of shared lexemes and phrases, especially if they accumulate or if the shared language is relatively rare.³³ While such verbal correspondence is not a guarantor of inner-biblical allusion, it certainly signals that a passage warrants closer examination.

A useful point of departure is the selection of five passages that Wöhrle identifies for his proposed redactional layer. There is relative consensus that Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 4:1–4; Mic 7:18–20; and Nah 1:2–3 meet the standard for inner-biblical allusion, which Lane confirms by stating that “readers find four major parallels to Exod 34:6–7 in the Twelve.”³⁴ However, the relationship with Mal 1:9 is tenuous. Wöhrle identifies two points of contact: the use of אֱל for God, and appearance of the root חנן (used as an adjective in Exod 34:6, and as a verb in Mal 1:9).³⁵ The chief difficulty here is that both חנן and אֱל are common lexemes, which means the connection between Exod 34:6 and Mal 1:9 could be what Kelly calls “non-referential shared language.”³⁶ Further, the immediate context of Malachi is improper animals being offered for sacrifice, which does not resonate strongly with Exod 34:6–7. Absent a complicated redactional theory that others do not support, it is difficult to identify an intentional allusion in Mal 1:9.³⁷

A similar critique is applicable to arguments for an allusion in Hos 1:6 from Bosman and van Leeuwen.³⁸ This verse contains the name לֹא רְחֻמָּה and the verb אָרַחם, which both come from the same root as the adjective רַחוּם in Exod 34:6. Hosea 1:6 also employs the verbal phrase נִשָּׂא אֶשָּׂא, which uses the same root as the participle נֹשֵׂא in Exod 34:7. As with Mal 1:9, the relative frequency of these lexemes and the fact that commonalities between these passages consist only of shared roots rather than exact words or phrases render the possibility of an intentional allusion less plausible. The literary context also does not suggest an intentional linkage since the prophetic sign-act of naming one of Hosea’s children does not contain any further explicit cues that activate the context of the divine character credo.

³² Sommer, “Exegesis,” 485.

³³ Leonard, “Identifying,” 246. His discussion of shared language in allusions is based upon the following claims: (1) shared language as the most important factor; (2) shared language overriding the presence of non-shared language; (3) the significance of shared rare or distinctive language; (4) shared phrases being stronger than shared individual words; (5) accumulation of shared language strengthening the case for a connection; (6) similar contexts strengthening the value of shared language; (7) shared language not being dependent on shared ideology; and (8) shared language is not required to have exactly the same form to count as “shared.”

³⁴ Lane, *Compassionate*, 68.

³⁵ Wöhrle, “Cross-References,” 13.

³⁶ Kelly, “Identifying,” 34.

³⁷ See Sommer, “Exegesis,” 484. Interestingly, better textual connections for Mal 1:9 are found in Gen 32:31 and 33:10, where Jacob entreating and finding favor with his brother Esau is reflected in Malachi’s call for the priests to entreat and find favor with YHWH. See Karl William Weyde, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation: Methodological Reflections on the Relationship between Texts in the Hebrew Bible,” *SEÁ* 70 (2005): 293.

³⁸ J. P. Bosman, “The Paradoxical Presence of Exodus 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve,” *Scriptura* 87 (2004): 239. Also van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom,” 34–35.

After ruling out intentional allusions to Hos 1:6 and Mal 1:9, the list of remaining passages is Joel 2:12–17; Jonah 4:1–4; Mic 7:18–20, and Nah 1:2–8. Joel 4:19–21 can also be added for reasons discussed below. These selections are broader than the specific verse that contains the allusion in order to include some context for the appeals to the divine character and what they reveal about theodicy in the Book of the Twelve. This study addresses these passages in their canonical order for two reasons. First, while it is true that the Twelve is best described as a “thematized anthology” of individual prophetic books with their own signs of aperture and closure, literary approaches typically read the collection from beginning to end.³⁹ Secondly, Joel and Jonah contain the strongest literary connections to Exod 34:6–7, which makes it reasonable to begin the discussion there.

1. *Joel 2:12–17 and 4:19–21.* Evidence for inner-biblical allusion in Joel 2:12–17 is quite strong. Joel 2:12 summons Judah to return to YHWH through fasting, weeping, and mourning, while 2:13 supplies the rationale by invoking Exod 34:6. Judah should follow this command because “gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (בִּי־חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם הוּא אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד). This part of Joel 2:13 is almost identical to a portion of Exod 34:6, although Joel inverts the adjectives חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם, while inserting an introductory כִּי and the personal pronoun הוּא. He also omits the noun אֶמֶת which follows חַסֵּד.⁴⁰ This almost a verbatim citation strongly suggests an intentional allusion.⁴¹ These passages also share a thematic concern where they consider the character of YHWH and whether he is present with his people in the midst of crisis.

Joel’s allusion to the character credo is deeply rooted in questions of theodicy. Just prior to this allusion, 2:1–11 portrays an invading army rampaging through Zion, the sanctuary whose security should be guaranteed by YHWH’s presence. However, the situation is even worse than divine absence. Joel 2:10–11 announces that YHWH himself is at the head of this invading army and that the day of YHWH is about to be unleashed against the Judahite community. This revelation calls into question the foundational premise of YHWH as the source of goodness and justice, especially in light of Joel’s silence regarding the specific sins for which YHWH is punishing Judah. Will a gracious and compassionate God truly indict the innocent? However, it is also possible to suggest that guilt is present in Joel 2:12–17 since the situation facing Joel’s audience (locusts, droughts, and invasion) looks like the activation of covenant curses (Deut 28:32, 42). In particular, Solomon’s dedicatory prayer in 1 Kgs 8:37–39 calls upon Israel to use these calamities as reasons to

³⁹ One the Twelve as an anthology, see David L. Petersen, “A Book of the Twelve?,” in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney; SBLSS 15; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000), 10. For a defense of reading each book within the collection as its own discrete unit, see Ehud Ben Zvi, “The Prophetic Books or ‘The Twelve’: A Few Preliminary Considerations,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 125–57; Ehud Ben Zvi, “The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 276–97.

⁴⁰ This omission is also found in Jonah 4:1–4. I will explore it further there.

⁴¹ Leonard, “Identifying,” 246.

reflect on their potential misdeeds and to return to YHWH.⁴² Further, Israel's guilt certainly infuses the literary context of Exod 34:6–7. Whether or not that guilt ought to inform Joel's allusion is a question without a simple resolution, but at the very least, activating a source text associated with the golden calf is suggestive of how readers should experience the receptor text.

The ambiguity of Judah's guilt places Joel's allusion to Exod 34:6 into even sharper relief. Essentially, Joel sidesteps the question of whether Judah could be suffering unjustly, but rather puts forward a response rooted in the positive elements of YHWH's character. Even without an explicit announcement of Judah's guilt, the prophet's answer to crisis is to focus on the gracious and merciful God who has placed these characteristics at the core of his self-identification. Joel's instruction to the community in 2:12 is for them to turn to YHWH with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Significantly, Joel emphasizes that this cannot be an outward show; rather the audience ought to "rend your hearts, not your garments" (2:13a). Whether or not these actions confirm Judah's guilt is unknown, but they place the focus back on YHWH. If the Judahite audience turns back to YHWH in the midst of these calamities, will YHWH turn back to them? If YHWH is the source of goodness and justice in the world, will he act in the midst of a crisis threatening his people?

In response to these questions, the inner-biblical allusion to the divine character credo inspires hope. Notably, Joel does not directly address the threat of YHWH leading an army against Zion, but rather shifts the focus to YHWH's compassion and mercy, suggesting that it is possible to activate those elements of the divine character, even as the possibility of YHWH's judgment unfolds around them. This should encourage confidence in Joel's call to turn.⁴³ Even though there is potential ambiguity in the divine character, Joel urges his audience to act as though they trust in YHWH's ability and desire to restore them. This may also explain why Joel does not complete the citation by mentioning the punishment that YHWH visits upon the wicked. Instead, Joel seeks to communicate that YHWH, who is the agent of destruction in 2:1–11, remains the only possible agent of deliverance.

Following his activation of part of the divine character credo, the prophet tries to strengthen the case for appealing to the positive elements of YHWH's character through a further allusion. The final clause of Joel 2:13 reads, "He relents over disaster" (וְנָחָם עַל-הָרָעָה), which is not part of Exod 34:6–7. Instead, this phrase most likely draws from Moses's interactions with YHWH in Exodus 32, where Moses implores YHWH to relent in v. 12 (וַיִּנָּחֵם) and v. 14 then declares

⁴² John Strazichich, *Joel's Use of Scripture and Scripture's Use of Joel: Appropriation and Resignification in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (BINS 82; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 150. A summary of the ways in which scholars suggest Judah's guilt here can be found in Joel Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel* (Siphut 11; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 56–57.

⁴³ Jason T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Twelve* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012), 125.

that YHWH did relent (וַיִּנָּחֵם).⁴⁴ Moses successfully mediates between YHWH and Israel on the basis of YHWH's reputation among the nations (Exod 32:12), which prefigures Joel's upcoming rhetorical strategy (Joel 2:17). Consequently, Joel's announcement that YHWH relents from sending disaster recalls a pivotal moment in Israel's history while buttressing his claims that YHWH's mercy and compassion can be activated.

Joel 2:14 moves on from these allusions and asks "who knows?" (מִי יוֹדֵעַ) whether YHWH will turn from judgment and instead bring restoration in the form of grain and drink offerings. Asking "who knows?" grapples with the freedom inherent in the character of YHWH, opening the door to a potential positive response without guaranteeing it (2 Sam 12:22; Jonah 3:9; Ps 90:11; Esth 4:14).⁴⁵ The reality of divine freedom in response to this question is evident when YHWH does not heed David's request in 2 Sam 12:22 to save the child born out of adultery. In the case of Joel, the specificity of the blessing and the fact YHWH's prophet is the one posing the question does suggest that YHWH's turn toward mercy is likely, if the audience heeds Joel's call.⁴⁶ YHWH's response to Jonah's use of this same question will provide another layer of insight into the divine character since it is put in the voice of Nineveh's ruler.

Joel's call to return, rooted in his portrayal of the character of God is then put to the test in his call to action in 2:15–17. Joel calls his audience to assemble and cry out to YHWH, reminding him that they are his people and that his reputation is at stake if it appears that he cannot preserve them. Joel's proposed appeal ends with yet another rhetorical question, calling upon YHWH to preclude the nations from asking "where is their God?" Essentially, this question assumes the description of YHWH's goodness and justice brought in through the allusion to Exod 34:6, while now shifting the grounds to YHWH's ability to put the divine character into action. Joel urges his audience to ask for evidence of YHWH's character. In the middle of their suffering, which Joel earlier attributes to YHWH, the prophet finds hope in the positive elements of YHWH's character which he suggests can be activated if the audience turns back to their God.

Interestingly, Joel 2:18–4:21 strongly suggests a positive response to this crisis of theodicy, indicating that the appeal to YHWH's character is effective and that the threat of the day of YHWH will be replaced with assertions of divine presence.

⁴⁴ Boda, "Penitential Innovations," 395–96. See also the chart in Joseph Ryan Kelly, "Joel, Jonah, and the YHWH Creed," *JBL* 132 (2013): 826.

⁴⁵ James L. Crenshaw, "The Expression מִי יוֹדֵעַ in the Hebrew Bible," *VT* 36 (1986): 274–77. Crenshaw also notes that this question occurs in Prov 24:22; Eccl 2:19; 3:21; 6:12; 8:1, where the response to "Who knows?" is a denial that it is possible to know. In contrast, Jeremias see this question as a "sign of firm personal conviction" (italics his) that YHWH will act salvifically. See Jörg Jeremias, "The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, 82. While Jeremias's interpretation matches the cues that YHWH will respond positively, the other examples of this question suggest that it focuses on divine freedom,

⁴⁶ James L. Crenshaw, "Who Knows What YHWH Will Do? The Character of God in the Book of Joel," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Astrid A. Beck et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 194.

Nogalski includes Joel 4:19–21 in his list of passages alluding to Exod 34:6–7, on the basis of a double occurrence of the verb נָקָה in both Exod 34:7 and Joel 4:21. He also notes Joel's promise that Jerusalem will be inhabited for generations, which may correspond to the idea of YHWH's punishment of sin that has implications for three and four generations. He views these as indicators that Joel "draws subtly, but unmistakably, upon Exod 34:7."⁴⁷ The evidence for an intentional allusion here is minimal, based on the single shared lexeme נָקָה and the concept of multigenerational ramifications.⁴⁸ Nogalski acknowledges that this potential allusion would not be apparent without the clear allusion in Joel 2:13.⁴⁹ The idea that subsequent allusions require fewer connections with the source text merits consideration. It fits with what Hays calls "recurrence," where established evidence of connections between a source text and a receptor text gives greater weight to more speculative connections.⁵⁰ Consequently, it is possible that Joel concludes by rounding out the inner-biblical allusion introduced in 2:12–17, his turning point from despair to hope, by reminding his audience that part of YHWH's essential character is that he judges the nations that harm his people.

In summary, Joel addresses the crises faced by the audience by focusing on YHWH's gracious and compassionate nature. This is a hopeful stance in the face of contravening evidence since prior to 2:12–17, YHWH had not displayed these characteristics, but rather threatened to unleash the day of YHWH. Joel's use of the divine character credo is part of a plan that calls upon the audience to cry out to YHWH in the hope of activating his grace and compassion. Joel's response to crisis, even a crisis he attributes to divine agency, is to affirm that YHWH is the source of compassion and justice who responds to the suffering of his people. A potential secondary allusion in Joel 4:19–21 invokes judgment on hostile nations and promises YHWH's presence. The prophet's cry of "Who knows?" and the appeals to Exod 34:6–7 reflect the questions of theodicy since they bring together YHWH's compassionate nature, the current suffering of his people, and the fate of hostile nations.

2. *Jonah 4:1–4*. While Joel looks to the character credo to find hope that YHWH remains gracious and compassionate, Jonah takes the exploration of theodicy in a direction that questions divine justice. In this case, it is the *absence* of calamity that prompts Jonah to question YHWH. In the flow of the narrative, Jonah's prophecy of judgment leads to the shockingly swift repentance of Nineveh, averting YHWH's punishment (Jonah 3:4–5). This prompts Jonah to question YHWH and wrestle with what it means when YHWH refrains from enacting divine judg-

⁴⁷ Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve: Hosea—Jonah*, 250.

⁴⁸ Kelly, "Joel," 818. Kelly states that there is "no unambiguous evidence" for this allusion.

⁴⁹ Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve: Hosea—Jonah*, 250.

⁵⁰ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 30. See also Jeffery M. Leonard, "Identifying Subtle Allusions: The Promise of Narrative Tracking," in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, 98. Leonard makes this claim on the basis of "narrative tracking," which takes place when a receptor text copies the narrative structure of its source text. That is not happening in Joel, but it again suggests that a previously activated source text requires fewer signals to be reactivated in the same receptor text.

ment which is seemingly merited. Joel and Jonah are closely linked since both Joel 2:13 and Jonah 4:2 cite the same form of Exod 34:6 and include the additional statement that YHWH relents from sending disaster (עֲלֵהֶם עַל־הָרָעָה). The reason for this addition is even more evident in Jonah since it follows the narrator's declaration in Jonah 3:10 that YHWH did relent from bringing punishment on Nineveh (וַיִּנָּחֵם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־הָרָעָה). Much ink has been spilled attempting to identify the direction of dependence between Joel and Jonah, with little resolution given the intractable issues surrounding their dates of composition.⁵¹ Consequently, this study does not seek to resolve that question, but focuses on the challenges that Joel and Jonah pose for divine compassion and justice in light of their use of Exod 34:6–7.

The core question of theodicy found in Jonah is the prophet's challenge to the second fundamental premise listed in the introduction: YHWH as the source of goodness and justice. Crenshaw asks, "Where is the justice in letting guilty people escape the recompense due them? Who wants to live in a world devoid of justice, one in which evildoers can sin with impunity?"⁵² The failure to enact judgment on Nineveh also invites a further comparison with Joel, who promises divine retribution against the nations who have harmed the people of God (Joel 4:1–21), possibly culminating with the weaker allusion to Exod 34:7 in Joel 4:19–21. It is discordant to read YHWH's announcements of judgment against comparatively lesser foes such as Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom, while also seeing judgment averted for the nation that would carry Israel into exile. The evil and suffering caused by Nineveh in a world which is supposedly subject to divine sovereignty suggests that it should face divine judgment. YHWH's deviation from that standard prompts understandable reflection on what it means for him to act justly.

Jonah's theodicy results from his challenge to YHWH for an explanation of YHWH's failure to judge Nineveh. It is the singular occasion in which the character credo of Exod 34:6–7 is reused in the context of a complaint. This heightens its dramatic value since it requires the reader to envision divine compassion and mercy

⁵¹ A thorough survey of research can be found in Kelly, "YHWH Creed," 805–26. Kelly's work reveals that more scholars assume the priority of Joel. However, he argues for the priority of Jonah on the basis of its more precise citation of the lexemes in Exod 34:6 and Jonah's broader resonances with Exodus. He also makes note of the absence of the final word from Exod 34:6 in both Joel and Jonah (נָחַם) and suggests that this is used in Jonah as a deliberate play on his patronymic (בְּנֵי־נָחֻם). Another who holds to priority of Jonah is Jonathan Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Technique in the Book of Jonah* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1976), 78–79. Magonet examines the shared question "who know?" in Jonah 3:9 and Joel 2:13. He points to the captain of Jonah's boat using the same question in Jonah 1:6, suggesting that the theme of pagans appealing to the unknowability of YHWH's action as a recurring theme in Jonah while it is less natural in Joel. See also Thomas W. Bolin, *Freedom beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined* (JSOTSup 236; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 164–72. For the priority of Joel, see Schart, "Jonah-Narrative," 112–15. He sees Jonah as a satirical reuse of Joel. See also Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 49; Lane, *Compassionate*, 85–86. Dozeman splits the difference and offers a reading of Joel as an allusion to Jonah and Jonah as an allusion to Joel. See Dozeman, "Inner-Biblical," 207–23. Leonard notes that Dozeman's readings are not equally compelling since he provides better arguments for Jonah reinterpreting Joel's use of Exod 34:6–7. See Leonard, "Identifying," 262.

⁵² Crenshaw, "Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," 188.

in a negative light.⁵³ Jonah's commission begins in 1:2 with YHWH's command to go speak against Nineveh on account of its evil, which unambiguously establishes the audience's expectation of divine judgment. However, within the narrative there are warning signals that challenge this mechanistic construction. First, Jonah's response to the commission introduces a level of uncertainty left unresolved until his dialogue with YHWH in chapter 4.⁵⁴ Second, there are three occasions in which human speakers acknowledge YHWH's freedom to respond without constraints (Jonah 1:6, 14; 3:9).⁵⁵ On all three occasions, the speakers are non-Israelites. In Jonah 1:6, the captain employs the adverb אולי ("perhaps"), while the sailors in 1:14 refers to YHWH doing what pleases him (כַּאֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתָ עִשִׂיתָ). Nineveh's ruler then uses the question "who knows?" (מִי יוֹדֵעַ) in Jonah 3:9, which mirrors its use in Joel 2:14 as a question that legitimately opens up the possibility of a positive response.⁵⁶ In all three cases, the non-Israelite speaker leaves open YHWH's freedom to act, which creates a stark contrast to Jonah's announcement of judgment without the possibility of reprieve (Jonah 3:4).

The focus on divine freedom prevents YHWH's responses from being reduced to a formula where the repentance of Nineveh necessitates forgiveness. However, YHWH's freedom to judge or relent also provides the grounds for Jonah to challenge him. What is most difficult for Jonah to accept is the application of YHWH's self-declared qualities when dealing with foreigners.⁵⁷ Neither Exod 34:6–7 nor the passages that cite it expressly limit its application to Israelites, but its motivating context is a breach of the covenant between YHWH and Israel. Consequently, Jonah's application of the divine character to a city of foreigners is an innovation.⁵⁸ Even though Jonah is speaking directly to YHWH, in the context of the book he gives voice to the objections of the Israelite audience to this revelation of YHWH's character. Jonah's protestations concerning YHWH's compassion reveal an unsettling element to the idea of divine sovereignty: YHWH's own determination of when the time for judgment has come may not agree with that of his people, who then have to deal with consequences of YHWH's deferred judgment.

In summary, the juxtaposition of Joel and Jonah reveals how the same aspects of the divine character can evoke very different responses, both of which highlight elements of theodicy. In Joel, YHWH's grace and compassion provide hope for a Judahite audience facing the wrath of the day of YHWH. In Jonah, these same characteristics also provide a more universalizing hope where YHWH demonstrates his sovereignty over the world in a manner that causes consternation among his people. Jonah, as the representative of the people of YHWH, must grapple with

⁵³ Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah* (AB 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 283.

⁵⁴ Ernst R. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric: Case Studies in Text Analysis and Translation* (2nd ed.; Dallas: SIL, 2009), 303.

⁵⁵ Terence E. Fretheim, "Jonah and Theodicy," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 231–32.

⁵⁶ Crenshaw, "MĪ YŌDĒA," 276.

⁵⁷ Catherine L. Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice: An Intertextual Approach to the Book of Jonah* (CBQMS 47; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2010), 105.

⁵⁸ Daniel C. Timmer, *A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, Salvation, and Spirituality in the Book of Jonah* (NSBT 26; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 120–22.

the nature of divine sovereignty that does not follow his desired pattern. Essentially, the book of Jonah broadens the implications of YHWH's character and forces its audience to consider the possibility that YHWH's fundamental attributes may apply to other nations. This book pushes its audience to broaden its perspective on just who can find hope through their response to YHWH. It delays the prospect of retribution, revealing that the scope of YHWH's compassion is wider than its audience could imagine. Jonah's juxtaposition of divine justice and Nineveh's acknowledged evil reveals that YHWH alone can determine which elements of the divine character to invoke.

3. *Micah* 7:18–20. The inner-biblical allusion to Exod 34:6–7 in the book of Micah is signaled differently than those in Joel and Jonah. Micah does not maintain a similar structure and phrasing to Exod 34:6–7, but rather borrows a significant number of key words and lexemes throughout these three verses. It is worth seeing the Hebrew text of this selection in full to show the frequency of the lexical overlap. I italicize the lexemes shared with Exod 34:6–7:

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹד נִשְׂא עֹן וְעָבַר עַל־פֶּשַׁע לִשְׂאֵרִית נִחַלְתּוֹ
 לֹא־הֶחְזִיק לְעַד אָפּוֹ בִּי־חַפֵּץ חֶסֶד הוּא:
 יָשׁוּב יִרְחָמֵנוּ יִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ
 וְתִשְׁלֹךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאוֹתָם:
 תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם
 אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּנוּ מִימֵי קֹדֶם:

To summarize the shared lexemes, Micah celebrates that YHWH is one who pardons iniquity (נִשְׂא עֹן), passes over transgression (פֶּשַׁע), while not retaining his anger (אָפּוֹ) because of his delight in his steadfast love (חֶסֶד). Further, YHWH will have compassion (יִרְחָמֵנוּ), which is demonstrated when he treads down iniquities (עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ) and casts sins (חַטָּאוֹתָם) into the sea. All of this reveals YHWH's enduring faithfulness (אֶמֶת) and steadfast love (חֶסֶד) that has been true since the time of the patriarchs. Bosman provides a detailed chart on the re-use of Exod 34:6–7 and notes that Mic 7:18–20 uses five out the six lexemes of Exod 34:6–7 that point to YHWH's mercy and forgiveness, while using three of the three lexemes for sin.⁵⁹ This lexical borrowing covers seven clauses that focus on YHWH's commitment to forgive iniquity and put aside anger.⁶⁰ The degree of lexical overlap is unlikely to be coincidental and provides a governing structure to a series of verses that oscillates between second and third person addresses to YHWH. This suggests that Micah uses these lexemes to signal an inner-biblical allusion to the divine character credo.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Bosman, "Paradoxical," 238.

⁶⁰ Philip Peter Jensen, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary* (LHBOTS 496; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 187.

⁶¹ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 349. Fishbane writes, "There can be little doubt that in vv. 18–19 the prophet Micah has readapted the language of Exod. 34:6–7 into a catena of hope and thanksgiving."

Micah's allusion to Exod 34:6–7 is somewhat surprising in the context of a prophecy that has been highly critical of Israel and Judah, culminating in YHWH's lawsuit against Israel (6:1–8) and the announcement of judgment and exile (6:9–16). This external punishment is mirrored by a sense of futility in Mic 7:1–6 as the speaker catalogues a societal downward spiral that sees the flourishing of bloodshed, injustice, and familial discord. However, the prophet then turns to a confession of trust in 7:7, which then looks forward to a future restoration that will remove the threats of the nations and restore the relationship with YHWH in 7:8–20. Sweeney sees in these verses the fulfillment of “the rhetorical goal of the book in that the punishment that the people currently suffer will turn to forgiveness and restoration in the future.”⁶² Even though Israel's guilt may justify their suffering, Micah invokes YHWH's character to offer assurance that the situation is not hopeless. The connection between Mic 7:18–20 and theodicy comes from the interplay of the fundamental premises listed above. Micah depends on YHWH as the source of goodness and justice, while attributing Israel's suffering to the unfolding of YHWH's judgment upon their sins. However, by appealing to the character credo, the prophet reveals that YHWH's nature does not demand that punishment has the final word. At the end, Micah celebrates YHWH's willingness to put compassion over judgment as a unique divine attribute.⁶³ This offers a positive appropriation of Jonah's difficulty in grappling with YHWH's compassion. The same divine commitment to compassion and mercy that caused YHWH to be concerned for the great city of Nineveh applies to YHWH's own people, who can look forward to a hopeful future, guaranteed by YHWH's faithfulness that Micah traces all the way back to Abraham. The combination of allusion to the golden calf experience and to the patriarchs demonstrates YHWH's commitment to his covenant throughout Israel's history in spite of its failures to uphold covenant ideals.⁶⁴

4. *Nahum* 1:2–8. In the Masoretic order of the Book of the Twelve, Nahum's allusion to Exod 34:6–7 immediately follows its use at the very end of Micah. This proximity may provide an additional marker of its presence. Nahum's use of Exod 34:6–7 provides a sharp contrast since Micah focuses on the compassionate elements of YHWH's character, while Nahum emphasizes YHWH's wrath and judgment while announcing Nineveh's downfall. This inner-biblical allusion occurs within a theophanic introduction covering Nah 1:2–8. These verses reflect the reverberations of the natural world in response to YHWH's judgment of a hostile nation. It begins with a threefold use of the verb “avenge” (נָקַם) in 1:2b with YHWH as its subject on each occasion. The allusion in Nah 1:3a is activated by the citation of the phrases “slow to anger” (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם) and “he will not leave [the guilty] unpunished” (וְיִנְקָה לֹא יִנְקָה), which derive directly from Exod 34:7. This fits with Leonard's criterion that shared phrases are stronger signs of intentional allusions

⁶² Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets: Volume Two* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 413.

⁶³ Crenshaw, “Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,” 190.

⁶⁴ James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah—Malachi* (SHBC; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 591.

than shared individual lexemes.⁶⁵ The remaining verses then celebrate YHWH's ability to avenge and judge through the control YHWH exerts over the natural world.⁶⁶

Nahum reflects a unique use of Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve. Whereas the other examples mostly focus on the ramifications of YHWH's compassion, Nahum considers the ramifications of YHWH's judgment and punishment.⁶⁷ Nahum's minor modification of Exod 34:7 confirms this perspective. The phrases of Exod 34:7 that Nahum borrows are separated by the expression "great in power" (גָּדֹל-בָּזֶק), which may reflect an intentional reworking of "great in steadfast love" (גָּדֹל-חֶסֶד) which follows אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם in Exod 34:6–7. The change from "steadfast love" to "power" takes on threatening overtones in this context since anger deferred is not the same as anger averted.⁶⁸ Nahum's adaptation of Exod 34:7 thus builds on the foundation of the source text and suggests even more strongly that the judgment of YHWH is unstoppable. Nahum's audience now realizes that the time has come for YHWH's wrath to be unleashed.

The perspective on theodicy and hope in Nahum's allusion to the character credo complements Jonah's view of the character of YHWH. Nahum provides hope for the people of YHWH that there will be a divine response to the existence of evil. While Jonah explores what it means for YHWH to be willing to extend forgiveness to foreigners who repent, Nahum exults in God's eventual judgment of Nineveh. At the heart of both Jonah and Nahum is the acknowledgement that the decision to judge rests with YHWH alone.⁶⁹ This causes tremendous consternation for Jonah but is essential to Nahum's exultation. Nahum uses the judicial nature of YHWH as a sign for hope for his audience. Rhetorically, the direct referents in Nahum oscillate between Judah (1:12–13, 15) and Nineveh (1:9–11, 14; 2:1, 13; 3:5–19) but the intended audience of Nahum's whole proclamation is the people of YHWH who hear it signal their vindication. Consequently, Nahum's announcement of divine judgment against an oppressor begins to resolve the dilemma found in Jonah.

Nahum further resembles Jonah since it takes a declaration of YHWH's character meant for Israel alone and extends it to cover the relationship between

⁶⁵ Leonard, "Intertextuality," 246.

⁶⁶ Nogalski suggests that the allusion to Exod 34:7 reflects a redactional insertion into a partial acrostic in Nah 1:2–8 (*aleph-kaph*), but the existence of this acrostic continues to be debated. See Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve: Micah: Malachi*, 610–11; Tremper Longman III, "Nahum," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (ed. Thomas E. McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 773–75. Nogalski assumes the existence of the acrostic, while Longman helpfully points out features like missing *dalet* and *zayin* lines that make the identification of an acrostic more challenging. Spronk suggests the possibility of a different kind of acrostic based on the first letters of v. 1b, 2a, and 2b, and the last letters of v. 1a, 1b, 2a, 1b. This spells אֱנִי יְהוָה which would put the focus on the divine author of judgment against Nineveh. See Klaas Spronk, "The Line Acrostic in Nahum 1: New Evidence from Ancient Greek Manuscripts and from the Literary Analysis of the Hebrew Text," in *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis* (ed. M. C. A. Korpel et al.; Pericope 7; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 229–30.

⁶⁷ Crenshaw, "Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," 190.

⁶⁸ Clark, *Word Hesed*, 252.

⁶⁹ Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 158.

YHWH, Israel, and foreign nations.⁷⁰ The addition of the nations to this formula again raises questions of theodicy since YHWH's claim of authority over the nations can be juxtaposed with the way these nations treat YHWH's people. If YHWH has the capability to judge the nations and to take vengeance on those who afflict his people, then why do Israel and Judah suffer at their hands? Nahum provides no explicit answer in his allusion to Exod 34:7, but YHWH's declarations in Nah 1:12–13 provide a clue. Nahum 1:12 poses significant translation problems, but the final clause is "I will not afflict you again" (לֹא אֶעֱנֶךָ עוֹד) which most likely refers to Lady Zion.⁷¹ In Nah 1:13, YHWH declares his intention to break Zion's yoke, which suggests that YHWH's changed perspective brings an end to foreign oppression. Consequently, just as Israel's affliction can be attributed to YHWH, so can its hope for deliverance. YHWH's authority is maintained since YHWH alone determines the timing of this answer to the evils of Nineveh. While this may not completely answer questions of theodicy raised by the use of Assyria as an agent of divine judgment, Nahum does reveal that inherent in the character of YHWH is the capacity to judge the nations that afflict his people.

IV. CONCLUSION

The reuse of Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve provides an opportunity to explore the character of YHWH against the backdrop of theodicy and hope. These passages wrestle with the reality of YHWH's grace, compassion, and judgment in circumstances unique to each prophetic book. These selections reveal the creativity of allusions in prophetic literature since the same source text is used to serve different functions in its receptor texts. Bosman aptly notes that the variety of uses of Exod 34:6–7 in the Book of the Twelve points to its ambiguity and theological multivalence.⁷² These allusions share a foundational commitment to YHWH's character and authority in a world where his people face numerous persistent threats. They call their audience to remember the essential character of their God whether faced with the repercussions of their own actions or considering the nature of divine authority over all nations. Facing the terrifying day of YHWH, Joel calls his audience to turn back to their God and trust in his grace and compassion,

⁷⁰ Bosman, "Paradoxical," 242.

⁷¹ Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve Micah: Malachi*, 615. Nogalski has an extended discussion on this issue that grapples with the apparent contradictions in Nah 1:12b, which reads עוֹד אֶעֱנֶךָ לֹא (lit. "I have afflicted you. I will not afflict you again:"). Most English translations and commentators insert a word like "although" in front of this half-verse, which is not present in the text in order to suggest that YHWH is turning from affliction to restoration for Zion. See Sweeney, *Twelve: Vol. 2*, 432; Longman, "Nahum," 794–98. Nogalski favors having different antecedents for the 2fs pronominal suffixes, suggesting that the first refers to Lady Nineveh while the second refers to Lady Zion. Consequently, Nah 1:12b makes a transition in referents that continues through the following verse, when YHWH provides hope for Lady Zion. This reading makes it less obvious that YHWH is responsible for his people's afflictions, but the promise "I will not afflict you [Lady Zion] again" in the broader context of a theophany where YHWH judges the nations still preserves the idea that YHWH has permitted the affliction that he is now removing.

⁷² Bosman, "Paradoxical," 242.

even while he preserves YHWH's freedom to act. He then looks to a time when YHWH will judge nations. Jonah offers a nuanced expansion of the character credo, revealing that YHWH is free to show compassion to foreign nations. Micah uses Exod 34:6–7 to conclude with a hopeful claim of restoration for the people of YHWH, in spite of earlier rhetoric focusing on sin, judgment, and the prospect of exile. Nahum envisions a time when foreign oppressors will face the wrath of YHWH, which counterbalances the presentation in Jonah. These allusions help shape the approach of the Book of the Twelve to questions of theodicy and hope. They leverage both divine compassion and divine justice to better understand the world that YHWH governs. Reflecting on the character credo, Fretheim states, "God is faithful, loving, and righteous; hence, there is hope."⁷³ In these texts, theodicy eventually meets hope rooted in the essence of the divine character.

⁷³ Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 28.