

Jonah as a chapter of Kings

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This note argues that the book of Jonah belongs in the book of Kings where Jonah is mentioned in the narrative in 2 Kings 14:25. This location is opposite the narrative of the unnamed Judean prophet in 1 Kings 13 in a narrative structure that covers the book.

1 Two prophets

The story of THE UNNAMED JUDEAN PROPHET in 1 KI 13 recounts his journey to the breakaway northern kingdom of Israel during the days of King Jeroboam I. It is placed in the context of the long narrative of the book of 1 and 2 Kings.

The book of Jonah is a vignette that describes Jonah's journey to the hegemonic pagan empire of Assyria and its capital Nineveh. I assume that the character Jonah in the book of his name is the same Jonah who lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II. Each is described as the son of Amittai.

Both stories are approximately the same length and cover similar material. Both leave their homeland to prophesy to a king in a foreign land. This is rare and noteworthy. Both accounts describe two journeys; one of the journeys is obedient to the Word of Yahweh and one is disobedient. Jonah's first journey is disobedient, his second obedient. The order is reversed for the Judean prophet.

Animals play an important role in both stories following the disobedient journey. The Judean prophet is struck down and killed by a lion, the lion remains by the body, but does not eat the body. Jonah on the other hand is famously swallowed whole by a great fish, but the fish later vomits him up on dry land, not killing him. Like the two journeys, the stories are similar but the particulars are inverted.

The prophet finds temporary relief under a plant in both stories after confronting the foreign king. A prophet seeking relief under a tree is a motif in scripture. In 1 Ki 19 after Elijah confronts Ahab and the 450 Baal prophets, he retreats to a tree and is nourished by an angel of God. We find both Deborah and a messenger of God in Judges 4 and 6 both sitting under a tree. Jesus is ministered by angels in Gethesemane garden before his trial before Pilate. These scenes recreate a slice of Eden where humanity lived in a garden of trees in the presence of God. It is noteworthy that here the Judean prophet recalls his command to not eat and Jonah refuses solace or nourish from God, rather he wishes for his *nephesh* to die. *nephesh* is typically translated as *soul* but note that it also means *hunger*.

The word of the LORD finds Jonah initially in the cultic center city of Jerusalem or the temple. Then there are three downward movements that places Jonah in the hull of a ship where he goes

into an unresponsive sleep. The Judean prophet's story ends with him dead and unresponsive, he is lifted onto a donkey, and then buried in the city in a Samaritan grave.

1 Kings 13 ends with a promise that the Judean prophet's word against the pagan cultic high places would come to pass. The story of Jonah begins with the sins of the Ninevites coming up before God like incense from a pagan altar.

When these details are arranged one finds that their order of appearance in the narrative is a reflection of one another. The elements are arranged in Figure 1.

Table 1: Reflected structure of 1Ki13 and Jonah

A	13:1	Judean Prophet's message to rebellious Samaritan king Jeroboam
B	13:4	Samaritan King's shriveled(יבש) hand
C	13:14	Judean Prophet under tree, Repeats command 'do not eat'
D	13:15	False word from Samaritan prophet, Come home eat bread with me! Lies about God's will: 'messenger of God said to me...'
E	13:19	Judean prophet in home of Samaritan prophet, prophet eats
F	13:24, 28	Judean prophet hurled (שלך) , killed, but not swallowed by lion
G	13:29	Judean prophet's body lifted, rested on donkey , and returned to Samaria
H	13:32	Word of the LORD against Samaria's high places
\overline{H}	1:1	Word of the LORD, Ninevites evil come-up before me
\overline{G}	1:3	Jonah rose, goes down x3 from city to bowels of ship.
\overline{F}	1:15	Jonah hurled (טיל) by sailors, swallowed but not killed by fish
\overline{E}	1:17	Jonah in fish, fish vomits
\overline{D}	3:7	Ninevite king's words of true repentance 'let neither man nor beast eat or drink anything ' Does not assume God's will: who knows?
\overline{C}	4:6	Jonah sits under vine, not fed by God
\overline{B}	4:8	Jonah's shriveled (יבש) vine
\overline{A}	4:10	God's message to rebellious prophet Jonah

2 Book structure

Figure 2 arranges some details in the book of Kings. If the book of Jonah is inserted at 2 Kings 14, where the prophet Jonah son of Amittai is introduced, it would balance an elegant literary structures I don't believe this structure is comprehensive, it leaves many important details of the book out. However, it might form components of a larger more complete structure or it might piggyback another structure that details exploits of Kings.

In addition to a balanced literary structure, the book of Jonah also uses a number of themes that are picked-up in the book of Kings.

Obedience and disobedience of the prophets to the word of YHWH is a recurring theme to which the story of Jonah belongs and contributes. A number of the elements in th

Movements out of the land as a reflection of growing apostasy in the land is another common theme that Jonah also explores.

Our stories are located in the reign of the two Jeroboams in the Norther Kingdom's regal line. Further each reign of Jeroboam initiates a line of seven kings that are presented in the narrative as a set. The set of kings initiated by the first Jeroboam ends with Ahab, the worst of the kings and the focus of Elijah's ministry. The latter set encapsulates the final seven reigns before the Northern Kingdom is carted into captivity by the nation that Jonah prophesied to.

Note the recurrence of animals killing, and eating or not eating different characters. Jonah's journey in the great fish finds a natural home in this narrative. The final note about Nineveh being a home for '120,000 people... and many cattle', also finds a similar theme with concern for the animals in 1 Ki 18.

The proscription of eating and drinking plays a large role in 1 Ki 13. Less observed is that three different characters in Jonah eschew a meal. The fish vomits Jonah, the king calls a fast, and Jonah wishes for his hunger to die. This theme echoes 1 Ki 13 but also fits well into the book of Kings. The command to abstain from eating and the rejection of food compliment each other and fit nicely into a structure where the eating or fasting of kings, prophets or animals is throughout.

At the center of this structure we have a scene that gather many of the literary devices from Jonah and the book of Kings. Here the prophet is dressed like an animal. Three groups ascend to him on a mountain and two companies are wholly consumed by fire. This imagery works in the realm of Jonah where he goes down three times before being wholly consumed by an animal. The confrontation of a pagan king who consults Baal not YHWH is in view. This echoes the confrontation of Jonah and the Judean prophet who address the sins of the Ninevites and the high places of Samaria. The judgement on the king is the edenic condemnation of emphatic death, 'you shall surely die.'

3 Conclusion

The literary structure of a text points to design. The literary structure of Jonah reflects that found in 1 ki 13. The two stories form a pair, each story informs the interpretation of the other. Jeroboam's pagan altar

Table 2: Obedience of Prophets in the book of Kings

A	1Ki 3-11	Temple is built
B	1Ki 12	Jeroboam I, first of the first seven kings of Israel
C1	1Ki 13:1-10	Obedient: prophet confront heretical king Jeroboam then sits under tree , fed by <u>lying prophet</u>
C2	1Ki 11-32	Disobedient: hurled and <u>killed but not eaten by lion</u>
D	1 K17-19	Ministry of Elijah
	1 K17	Elijah fed by <u>ravens</u> ,
	1 Ki 17	Sidonian woman outside land
	1 Ki 17	Obedient Elijah
	1 Ki 18:5	concern for animals
	1 Ki 18:42	dining King Ahab
	1 Ki 18:40	slaughter of Baal prophets
	1 Ki 19:5	<u>Elijah fed under tree</u>
E	1Ki 20:36	Disobedient son of prophet killed by <u>lion</u>
\bar{F}	2 Ki 1:16	Elijah dressed like animal says to the son of King Ahab ‘you shall surely die’
\bar{E}	2Ki 2:24	42 young boys killed by <u>bears</u>
\bar{D}	2Ki 4-10	Ministry of Elisha
	2Ki 4	Elisha feeds sons of prophets
	2 Ki 8:1	Shunammite woman moves outside land
	2 Ki 9:1	Obedient unnamed prophet
	2 Ki 9:3	<u>dogs eat Jezebel</u> ,
	2 Ki 9:34	dining King Jehu
	2 Ki 10:25	slaughter of Baal prophets
$\bar{C}2$	Jonah 1-2	Disobedient - hurled into sea and <u>swallowed but then vomited by fish</u>
$\bar{C}1$	Jonah 3-4	Obedient - Israelite prophet cries-out to pagan Ninevite king, sits under vine ,
\bar{B}	2 Ki 14	Jeroboam II, first of last seven kings of Israel
\bar{A}	2 Ki 25	Temple is destroyed