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Hebrew Diachrony and Jonah: The Periodization of a Linguistically Anomalous Work

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Abstract

Despite uncertainties and disagreements, there is broad agreement on the heuristic value of recognizing chronologically distinct language varieties within Biblical Hebrew. The distinction between Classical and Late Biblical Hebrew is based on the linguistic profiles of compositions that prototypically represent their respective categories. Not all texts are prototypical, though. Some deviate from more standard profiles in anomalous ways. One such work is Jonah. Early on assigned by critics to the post-exilic period based on certain linguistic peculiarities, disagreement over Jonah's linguistic periodization persists. Many assess Jonah's language as late, whereas others attribute its departures from classical style to non-diachronic factors, including dialect, literary artifice, and early contact with cognate languages. Few biblical compositions are the subject of opinions simultaneously characterized by such divergence and confidence. The present study surveys past attempts to periodize Jonah's language, highlights methodological challenges and pitfalls in mainstream approaches, proposes a methodological refinement to distinguish between more and less probative evidence without over- or underestimating the value of the latter, and, in rigorous adherence to accepted methodology, pronounces a verdict based on a more comprehensive evidentiary basis than has hitherto been offered.

Keywords: Jonah; diachrony; linguistic periodization; dialect; register; style switching; addressee switching; Classical Biblical Hebrew; Late Biblical Hebrew; Transitional Biblical Hebrew; Aramaic; Rabbinic Hebrew; Phoenician

1. Introduction

Despite stark differences of opinion on the implications of diachronic linguistics for the absolute dating of biblical compositions, there is scholarly consensus on the basic typological distinction whereby CBH (or SBH or EBH) patterns as a developmentally earlier linguistic variety than LBH (or PBH) (Young et al. 2008, vol. 1, pp. 13–14, 48–49; Hornkohl 2013, pp. 320–22; Hurvitz 2014, pp. 3–4). The distinction is based largely on compositions that display prototypical assemblages of diagnostic features: in the case of LBH, relative accumulations of distinctively late elements; in the case of CBH, linguistic profiles free from such accumulations. Yet not all texts exhibit prototypical linguistic profiles.

Jonah is just such a work. Its compositional window begins in the 8th century BCE, with the ministry of the eponymous prophet active in the days of Amaziah king of Israel (2 Kgs 14.25), and ends in the 2nd century BCE, with Ben Sira's (49.10) presumable reference to the book as one of "the twelve prophets." Despite the late characterization of Jonah's language among early critics (e.g., Nachtigal 1799, pp. 234–35; Gesenius 1815, pp. 27–28), few biblical books' linguistic periodization elicits scholarly opinions that are simultaneously so confidently



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voiced and so diametrically opposed (cf. Ruth, Song of Songs, and Qohelet). Given that the disagreement over the diachronic typology of Jonah's language persists—is it CBH, LBH, or neither?—it is no wonder that there also persists disagreement over its date of composition (which, of course, scholars also gauge according to non-linguistic factors).

Scholarly approaches to Jonah's Hebrew roughly divide into four camps (see the helpful summary tables in [Golan Ben-Uri 2010](#), pp. 10, 16). Camp 1, including early critics and their intellectual successors, classify Jonah's Hebrew as late on account of a rather limited number of features characterized principally by late biblical distribution and Aramaic affinity. [Gesenius \(1815\)](#), pp. 27–28) is a representative example, listing *וְ* 'that, which', *בְּשַׁל* 'because of', *בְּשַׁלִּי* 'because of me', *רְבוֹ* 'myriad', *רֹב* 'chief', *צִוִּי* 'command', *הֵשֶׁמֶת אֱלֹהֵי* 'God of heaven', *מִנָּה* 'appoint', and *עֵמֶל* 'toil' (for more or less selective lists see [Nachtigal 1799](#), pp. 234–35; [Boehme 1887](#), pp. 281–84; [Driver 1898](#), p. 322; [Bewer 1912](#), p. 12; [Hurvitz 1983](#), p. 216; [Allen 1976](#), pp. 187–88; [Wolff 1986](#), pp. 76–77; [Nogalski 2023](#), pp. 309–10).

The members of Camp 2 object to the late periodization proposed by Camp 1, explaining away apparently late distributions and adducing alternative explanations for the departures from classical norms ([Pusey 1860](#), pp. 249–51; [Loretz 1961](#); [Stuart 1987](#), pp. 432–33). For example, a few scholars have suggested blanket explanations for the book's linguistic peculiarity. [Kaufmann \(1937–1956\)](#), vol. 2, p. 284, fn. 27) chalks it up to the book's alleged northern provenance. [Ben-Menaḥem \(1990\)](#), pp. 9–11) sees it as either (a) deviation under the influence of an Iron Age proto-RH vernacular or (b) a result of secondary developments due to Rabbinic-age editors.

Scholars in Camp 3, afforded access to more extensive data sets—including such extrabiblical and non-Masoretic biblical Hebrew material as the NBDSS, Ben Sira, and RH, as well as expanded corpora of cognate languages—typically adduce far longer lists of features than those amassed by members of Camps 1 and 2. Though aware of the objections and alternative explanations raised by Camp 2, most authorities in Camp 3 regard Jonah's language as late, i.e., no earlier than the 6th century BCE ([Bendavid 1967–1971](#), vol. 1, p. 61; [Brenner 1979](#); supplemented by [Qimron 1980](#); [Landes 1982, 1999](#), cf. 1992; [Almbladh 1986](#); [Rofé 1988](#); [Day 1990](#), pp. 34–36; [Zakovitch 1994](#), p. 217; [Dan 1996](#); [Simon 1999](#), pp. xxxix–xli; [Golan Ben-Uri 2010](#); [Muldoon 2010](#), pp. 48–64; [Erickson 2021](#), pp. 22–25; [Kelsey 2025](#), pp. 35–36).

Camp 3 notably includes [Landes \(1982; 1999; cf. 1992\)](#), whose skepticism regarding the diachronic significance of many of Jonah's linguistic features has been amplified by some into the agnosticism characteristic of representatives of Camp 4, who contend, for various reasons, that Jonah's language cannot be periodized ([Sasson 1990](#), pp. 22–23; [Young et al. 2008](#), vol. 2, pp. 43–45; [Graybill et al. 2023](#), p. 17).

A crucial methodological point about previous scholarship is in order. Though authorities have long been aware of the importance of applying objective criteria and standardized procedures for assigning diagnostic diachronic significance to linguistic features—see, by way of example, [Rendsburg \(2003\)](#) on Hurvitz's research, [Joosten \(2013b\)](#) on [Gesenius's \(1815\)](#), and [Hornkohl \(2026\)](#) on [Pusey's \(1860\)](#)—those treating Jonah's language have not explicitly and consistently observed protocol. This is perhaps most glaring in the treatment of Aramaisms, which have often been rather uncritically evaluated as necessary indications of late Aramaic influence, when, from a methodological standpoint, their diachronic significance must be assessed using the same repeatable procedure as any other features considered diagnostic of post-classical composition ([Hurvitz 1968, 2003](#); see below, Section 2). Exceptional in this regard is [Golan Ben-Uri's \(2010\)](#) doctoral dissertation (completed under Hurvitz's guidance), which stands as the most extensive, up-to-date, bibliographically comprehensive, and methodologically observant study. Her table of contents lists 34 items, though it is important to note that (a) her detailed discus-

sions treat only lexical items and expressions, (b) she devotes only cursory comments to selected grammatical features, and (c) her interpretations of the data are sometimes vulnerable to criticism.

In sum, notwithstanding the scholarly efforts already expended on Jonah's linguistic periodization, the persistence of divergent views reveals the need for further inquiry. The lacuna that the present study is intended to fill is that of a methodologically robust typological reassessment of the book's language based on an array of linguistic features more extensive than previously examined. The present study assesses 59 linguistic features in Jonah (Section 5) according to an accepted rules-governed method (Sections 2.1 and 2.2) combined with a classification scheme that ranks features into tiers according to probability (Section 2.3).

2. Methods

2.1. Identifying Diagnostically Late Features

The clearest articulation of a standardized method for identifying diagnostically late Hebrew features and for employing them for the periodization of ancient Hebrew texts is that championed by Avi Hurvitz. His approach (e.g., Hurvitz 2014, pp. 9–11) begins with control material of known chronological provenance, namely Iron Age II inscriptions and Second Temple biblical and extrabiblical sources. Because early extrabiblical evidence is far less plentiful than later extrabiblical material, an objective methodology is essential to avoid argumentation based primarily on perceived affinities of questionable significance. Moreover, the temporal asymmetry of the evidence means that disproportionate weight necessarily falls on the late material.

Hurvitz's procedure calls for the rules-governed assemblage of an inventory of diagnostically late linguistic features and for the broad periodization of texts relative to the concentration of such features found therein. A given linguistic element's inclusion in the inventory is predicated on its satisfying three criteria: (a) late biblical distribution, (b) classical biblical opposition, and (c) extrabiblical confirmation. Texts are subsequently periodized in accord with their (d) accumulation of late linguistic features or, as the case may be, the absence of late features.

While these criteria may be applied to features from any linguistic domain, for purposes of illustration, a lexical example is offered: consider the noun *בָּזָז* 'plunder, spoil, booty' (Hurvitz 2014, pp. 52–54).

2.1.1. Late Biblical Distribution

For purposes of the criterion of late biblical distribution, the 'core LBH' books are Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles, the contents of which date them unequivocally to the post-exilic period; their language is termed 'LBH proper'. The restriction of *בָּזָז* to acknowledged post-exilic texts (Esth. 9.10, 15, 16; Dan. 11.24, 33; Ezra 9.7; Neh. 3.36; 2 Chron. 14.13; 25.13; 28.14) is a starting point from which further assessment of the lexeme's potentially characteristic late status may proceed.

2.1.2. Classical Opposition

The frequent biblical use beyond LBH of synonyms of *בָּזָז*, e.g., *שָׁלַל* (76×), *בָּזָז* (27×), and *מָלַקוֹחַ* (7×), demonstrates that writers throughout the course of biblical literary history required terms with the relevant meaning and, thus, that the restriction of *בָּזָז* precisely to late works is no accident, but chronologically significant.

2.1.3. Extrabiblical Confirmation

The diagnostically late character of הָיָה is corroborated by its absence from early extrabiblical Hebrew and by its regular appearance in late extrabiblical Hebrew and Aramaic, including the NBDSS, the Targums, and RH.

2.2. Periodization of Texts

2.2.1. Accumulation

Despite having established the credentials of הָיָה as a diagnostically late linguistic marker, its presence alone in a text of unknown date is insufficient for late periodization. Only if found as part of an accumulation of late features within a text can that text be affirmatively periodized as late. Consider, by way of example, the intriguing case of 4QNarrative C (4Q462) (Smith 1995). Due partly to its fragmentary state, it is variously interpreted (Smith 1995, pp. 198–208; Wise et al. 1996, pp. 400–1; Dimant 2003), but nothing in its scripture-like content precludes viewing it as a copy of a truly ancient composition. Its linguistic profile, however, clarifies matters. Along with בָּוֶה (ln. 14), the manuscript's 18 lines include a concentration of at least six additional unambiguously late linguistic features: בָּכָן 'then' (ln. 4) (Talshir 1986, p. 167), זֵוִי 'splendor' (ln. 16) (Kaufman 1974, p. 113, fn. 409), חֲבִיבִי 'beloved' (ln. 11) (Smith 1995, p. 203), עִמָּהֶם 'with them' (ln. 9) (Hornkohl 2014, p. 135, fn. 88; see below, Section 5.1, no. (9)), קִבַּל 'receive' (ln. 15) (Hurvitz 2014, pp. 213–16), and קָץ 'period, era' (lns 10, 10, 13) (Ginzberg 1976, pp. 29–30, 117) (there are additional probable linguistic indicators of lateness). From the perspective of diachronic linguistics, the accumulation of late language in 4Q462 shows unambiguously that it is a Second Temple composition (or, at the very least, redaction).

2.2.2. The Linguistic Periodization of Texts with Chronologically Ambiguous Content

Via the application of the above procedures, scholars have identified a second set of LBH compositions. Unlike the core LBH books, which present both late content and late language, these compositions—e.g., Qohelet (Hurvitz 1990; Schoors 1992–2004; Seow 1996; cf. Fredericks 1988; Tyler 1988; Young 1993, pp. 151–54), Ps. 119 (Hurvitz 1972, pp. 130–52), the narrative framework of Job (Hurvitz 1974; Joosten 2013a; cf. Young 2009)—are characterized by concentrations of late linguistic features expressing chronologically ambiguous content.

2.2.3. Transitional Biblical Hebrew

As language change is usually gradual and the language of certain biblical compositions seems liminal between CBH and LBH proper, some scholars posit an intermediate chronolect abbreviated TBH, including Second Isaiah (Arentsen 2019a, 2019b), Jeremiah (Hornkohl 2014), Ezekiel (Hurvitz 1982a; Rooker 1990), Lamentations (Dobbs-Allsopp 1998), and, possibly, the narrative framework of Job (Joosten 2013a; cf. Hurvitz 1974; Young 2009). Similarly, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, though set in the post-exilic period, do not match the core LBH books in terms of frequency of late features, perhaps by dint of their poetic style (Hill 1981, 1982; Hurvitz 1983, pp. 215–16; Shin 2007, 2016; Rendsburg 2012). This 'bridging' chronolect is relevant to Jonah because (a) a few of its non-standard linguistic features, though absent from LBH proper, are shared with TBH material, e.g., (6) מִתְּקֶךָ 'distance' and (26) $\text{כְּאֲשֶׁר בָּרַצְתָּ עֲשִׂיתָ כְּפָצְתָּ}$ 'as you have desired, you have done' and (b) several scholars view Jonah's language as transitional between CBH and LBH.

2.3. Probability Tiers

Combining the results of the above procedures with attentiveness to non-diachronic factors (see below, Section 4.1), individual features of potential diachronic significance are classified according to probability.

2.3.1. Tier 1: Highly Probable and Nearly Certain Indicators of Lateness

The diagnostic lateness of features in Tier 1 should be judged in a range between highly probable and nearly certain, in that they satisfy all three of Hurvitz's criteria for consideration as features diagnostic of LBH: late biblical distribution, classical biblical opposition, and extrabiblical confirmation.

2.3.2. Tier 2: Possible Indicators of Lateness

Tier 2 includes features consistent with a late date of composition, but which, for various reasons, must be deemed of somewhat less certain late diagnostic value.

2.3.3. Tier 3: Dubious Indicators of Lateness

The features in Tier 3 have been variously identified as late indicators, but their significance is highly dubious.

2.3.4. Tier 4: Indicators Inconsistent with Late Biblical Hebrew

Jonah also presents a few features inconsistent with classification as LBH.

2.4. *Jonah as a Test Case*

As a linguistically anomalous text variously classified by scholars on the basis of its language as CBH, TBH, LBH, or simply aberrant, Jonah constitutes a useful test case to assess whether increased methodological objectivity applied to extensive data might lead to more compelling arguments and more robust conclusions than the often impressionistic and intuitive arguments based on small data sets that have hitherto been the norm.

3. Results

Of the 59 linguistic features examined below (Section 5), 42 are assessed as late indicators of somewhere between certain and possible significance: 11 Tier 1 features (Section 5.1) and 31 Tier 2 features (Section 5.2). Thus, a rather impressive array of probative Tier 1 data combines with a preponderance of circumstantial Tier 2 evidence to point to a late profile for Jonah's Hebrew. Greater precision is difficult to achieve, though it is argued that Jonah's exceptional linguistic profile—which differs from CBH, TBH, and LBH—is perhaps best explained as a unique form of LBH.

3.1. Tier 1: Highly Probable and Nearly Certain Indicators of Lateness

First, there are 11 Tier 1 late linguistic markers that 'check all the boxes': Jonah shares them with one or more of the core LBH books; they appear in late extrabiblical sources; and they are paralleled by CBH alternatives. Their number is not insignificant relative to the book's 48-verse length, with nearly all the features and tokens coming in Jonah's 40 verses of prose; exceptional are several instances of feature (11) exclusive prose use of verbal suffixes for encoding direct objects in Jonah's (poetic) prayer.

In the case of a few Tier 1 features, fulfilment of the criterion of late biblical distribution might be questioned given their sporadic appearance in possibly early Wisdom literature and/or biblical poetry: (2) גִּזְלוֹת הַפִּיל 'cast lots', (7) מָנָה 'appoint', (10) רַבּוֹ 'myriad'. However, the late penetration into prose of features once restricted chiefly to non-prose genres is a recognized phenomenon, attributable to the expanded use of existing Aramaic-like features due to late Aramaic contact: מַלְכוּת 'kingdom, reign, rule' is a parade example of the phenomenon (see, e.g., Hornkohl 2026, pp. 7–8).

3.2. Tier 2: Possible Indicators of Lateness

Though the 31 Tier 2 late linguistic indicators do not quite meet the requirements of Tier 1 status and, thus, fail to reach the same level of probability as those features, their evidence

should not be ignored; they are plausible indicators of a late chronolect. Their sub-Tier 1 classification is due to various issues. A few features fulfil all three procedural requirements, but must be considered diagnostically questionable on other grounds. In some cases, literary rather than linguistic considerations might be decisive (see below, Section 4.1.2). Doubt also attaches to the significance of Jonah's consistent use of feature (42) verbal emphasis by means of cognate/internal objects, as this involves the eschewal of a classical feature in favor of an alternative which is itself classical. Most of the remaining Tier 2 features satisfy only two of Hurvitz's criteria, the requirement unmet often being that of late biblical distribution, with the feature either unique to Jonah in the Bible or occurring elsewhere in biblical literature aside from LBH proper. Even so, some of these are arguably rather strong indicators of lateness, their exclusion from Tier 1 due to what amounts to a technicality. For example, as a *hapax legomenon*, (25) טַעַם 'decreed' is by definition disqualified. But as an indirect calque from Akkadian mediated by Aramaic, in which the specific meaning is also late, its diagnostic value is arguably strong (Dan 1996, pp. 350–51, 365). Likewise, the significance of the exclusion of (26) עָשִׂיתָ כַּאֲשֶׁר חָפְצָתָּ 'as you have desired, you have done' from LBH proper is mitigated by the fact that it occurs outside Jonah in LBH texts so classified on the basis of concentrations of late linguistic features (see above, Section 2.2.2).

3.3. Tier 3: Dubious Indicators of Lateness

The 15 Tier 3 features considered by one or more scholars to be indicative of Jonah's late chronolect are deemed here irrelevant, because they fail to satisfy two or more criteria for consideration as LBH features. In several instances, e.g., (44) דָּגָה '(individual) fish', (49) חֲרִישִׁית 'silent' or 'scorching', and (57) קִיקְיֹן 'castor-oil plant (?)', rarity in biblical and extrabiblical sources leaves the feature with no clear late distribution while ambiguous semantics leaves it without an obvious classical alternative. In other cases, the available information militates against classification as a late feature: despite some numerical fluctuation, it is not obvious that the verb (45) הָטִיל 'cast, throw' is characteristically later than הִשְׁלִיךְ in either biblical or extrabiblical Hebrew. Similarly suspect are arguments for the diagnostic lateness of the verb (51) יָרָא 'fear (with religious reverence)', (52) כִּי 'that', (55) מַלְחִים 'sailors', and (56) retention of the *nun* in מִן 'from'.

3.4. Tier 4: Indicators Inconsistent with Late Biblical Hebrew

Finally, along with the many features in Jonah common to both CBH and LBH, a few features are out of line with the linguistic profile distilled from the core LBH books.

4. Discussion

Scholars agree that Jonah's Hebrew differs from standard CBH, but not why. The book is widely held to be post-exilic, but as the detailed discussion of data below (Section 5) shows, its apparently late profile, though replete with late Aramaic and RH usages, is not quite what one would expect of LBH. Moreover, several considerations, specifically, the protagonist's historical situation in the days of the Divided Monarchy, his northern provenance, and the story's foreign settings, leave room for non-diachronic explanations for linguistic diversity involving dialectal and/or literary factors, ostensibly permitting the early periodization of the book's Hebrew.

According to the interpretation of the 59 linguistic features examined below, however, the distinction between Jonah's Hebrew and LBH proper should not be overblown.

4.1. Non-Diachronic Explanations for Jonah's Non-Standard Hebrew

Most treatments of Jonah's departures from CBH norms focus on language variation driven by temporal change. Yet, as this is not the sole factor contributing to BH diversity, sensitivity to alternative sources of variety is necessary. When it comes to

non-diachronic explanations for Jonah's non-standard Hebrew, authorities appeal primarily to regional dialect, often supported by early Phoenician, Canaanite, or Ugaritic evidence, and literary artistry. Sometimes these seem as valid as diachronic explanations, if not preferable thereto.

4.1.1. Northern Dialect

Nachtigal (1799, pp. 233–34; see also Pusey 1860, p. 250) early on appealed to dialect rather than chronology for Jonah's use of features (19) בְּשַׁל 'because of' and (40) וְשֵׁ 'that, which' (cf. Gesenius 1815, pp. 54–55, fn. 66). See also Pusey (1860, p. 250) on (10) רַבּוֹ 'myriad', Almbldh (1986) and Dan (1996) on (37) קְרִיאָה 'call', and Kaufmann (1937–1956, vol. 2, p. 284, fn. 27) for northern extraction as a comprehensive explanation. Despite acknowledgement of the preservation of regional variation in BH, the analyses below do not find much to commend dialectal arguments as they apply to Jonah's Hebrew.

4.1.2. Literary Artifice

Likewise, what might be termed the 'foreign factor' in Jonah—dealings with non-Israelites in foreign settings in Joppa, at sea, and in Nineveh—is sometimes at least as compelling an argument as a diachronic explanation for the book's non-standard linguistic features. As detailed below (Section 5), this applies with varying degrees of plausibility to features (12) הֵשֶׁמֶת אֱלֹהֵי 'God of heaven', (38) רֹב 'chief', (47) הַבַּל 'sailor', (54) וַיְגִדּוּלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ 'the king and his nobles', and (55) מַלְחִים 'sailors'. Muldoon (2010, p. 56) adds (21) הִתְעַשָּׂה and (25) טָעַם. Erickson (2021, pp. 24–25) adds (19) בְּאֶשֶׁר/בְּשַׁל 'on account of' and (41) שָׁתַק 'become calm'. Even if these latter are admitted, the total would account for only a small minority of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 features.

4.1.3. Vernacular Register

Ben-Menaḥem (1990, p. 11) has raised the possibility that Jonah's departures from CBH are only apparently late, and that they may alternatively be explicable as ancient vernacular proto-Mishnaisms. Besides its indiscriminate nature, the argument is simplistic. The view that RH evolved from an early form of vernacular Hebrew, and is not a linear descendant of BH, is compelling (see, e.g., Pérez Fernández 1997, pp. 7–9). This in no way, however, explains all RH's departures from BH. RH may well preserve truly ancient vernacular features, but in the main presents as typologically later than BH, many of its Aramaic penetrations presupposing that language's late hegemony. These are precisely the sort of RH-like features that Jonah exhibits.

4.1.4. Secondary Editorial Activity

Finally, Ben-Menaḥem (1990, p. 11) opines that Jonah's post-classical deviations might not be original to the book, but reflect secondary editorial activity. While anything is possible, this proposal rather 'comes out of left field' in the case of Jonah, as there is no textual evidence, whether in the form of DSS or MT manuscripts or the Ancient Versions, to support a claim of extensive textual development, much less a tendency for linguistic updating in the direction of Second Temple Hebrew.

4.1.5. Verdict on Non-Diachronic Explanations for Jonah's Departures from Classical Style

According to the discussions below, the above non-diachronic explanations—which, it must be emphasized, are far from certain—potentially account for only a fraction of the 42 features assessed as possibly, probably, or certainly diagnostic of lateness, leaving diachrony the factor with the greatest explanatory power by far.

4.2. The Diachronic Approach to Jonah's Hebrew

It is true that, from a strict methodological perspective, many of Jonah's apparently late features cannot be considered Late Biblical Hebrew for the simple reason that they fail to obtain in the core LBH books. Nevertheless, many of these elements are clearly diagnostic of Second Temple Hebrew more generally. Jonah may not be classifiable as LBH proper, but it certainly qualifies as broadly late. But how late? Or, how to reconcile Jonah's broadly late linguistic profile with its evident differences from LBH proper?

While the evidentiary grounds for Jonah's roughly late linguistic periodization are relatively firm, finer chronological conclusions are more difficult to draw. The book's language remains exceptional within BH. Viewed from a narrow biblical perspective, the lack of greater affinity with LBH proper seems compelling. Jonah's *categorical* liminality is sometimes interpreted as *chronological* liminality. Several scholars see its chronolect as the TBH of the 6th-century or early Persian Period. Adopting a broader outlook, however, Jonah's numerous affinities with RH and late Aramaic, many not found in LBH proper, are hard to ignore and distinguish its language from TBH. Indeed, a precise diachronic assessment of the book's language ultimately—and not unproblematically—hinges on the significance attributed to its numerous Tier 2 features. They are either diachronically meaningful isoglosses with RH and late Aramaic or represent a chance concentration of features contemporary with LBH but lacking in the core LBH books. A few of these features may be early and only accidentally absent from CBH, but in the context of Jonah's accumulation of Tier 1 features, it strains credulity to view such frequent late affinity as random and devoid of temporal significance.

As noted above, even the skeptical Landes (1982, 1999), finds sufficient evidence to date Jonah somewhere in the 6th century BCE, in near agreement with Brenner (1979, p. 405), Golan Ben-Uri (2010, p. 228), and Muldoon (2010, pp. 62–63), who accept the late diagnostic significance of a greater number of features and more precisely date the book to the second half of the 6th century/beginning of the Persian Period. Rofé (1988, p. 158) argues for a mid-5th century date on linguistic and other grounds, which is basically in line with Driver's (1898, p. 322) view. Bendavid (1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 61) likens Jonah's Hebrew to that of Esther, in no small part because each achieves linguistic variety via what he considers the artistic mixing of early and late features, situating both in the Second Temple Period. Almladh (1986, p. 46) can be no more precise than “post-exilic,” while Dan (1996, p. 367) cautiously avers that the linguistic and non-linguistic evidence tips the scales in favor of a late date.

It is difficult to be more precise than 5th–6th century BCE. Evidence arguably favoring the book's early Persian Period assignment includes (14) the mixed usage of יָרָא and יִרְאֵה ‘I’, (58) the use of נָא ‘please, now’, and (59) the absence of Persian words (see below, Section 5.4), though the probative weight of such early features is, logically, inferior to that of diagnostically late features, since there is nothing to stop a late writer from employing a few characteristically early features. A later placement, which might be more compelling, would seem commensurate with the high frequency of late features relative to book length and, especially, with the many RH affinities. From both perspectives, Jonah's linguistic profile appreciably differs from other examples of TBH. This arguably makes its chronolect a form of LBH that shares more with RH and late Aramaic than with LBH proper. Again, Jonah's unique linguistic combination of classical lexemes and grammar, and unambiguously late features, including Mishnaisms and late Aramaisms not found in LBH proper, render challenging both its typological classification and its linguistic periodization.

5. Data

The features below are listed alphabetically according to Tier. In the interests of brevity, bibliographic citations are representative rather than exhaustive, favoring recent detailed treatments.¹

5.1. Tier 1: Highly Probable and Nearly Certain Indicators of Lateness

Tier 1 includes 11 features.

(1) גורלות ‘lots’ (1.7, 7); cf. CBH גורל. Beyond Jonah the plural has late biblical (Nehemiah 2×, Chronicles 5×)² and extrabiblical (NBDSS, RH) distributions (Brenner 1979, p. 403; Rofé 1988, p. 152; Landes 1982, p. 162*; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 85–90; Muldoon 2010, p. 58). The Targums and Peshitta also sometimes render singular Hebrew forms with plural equivalents. This may reflect the broader pluralization of nouns formerly construed as singular (Bendavid 1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 70, vol. 2, pp. 450–51; Polzin 1976, p. 42).

(2) גורל ירה/ינד/השליך ‘cast lots’ (1.7, 7); cf. CBH גורל. Excluding Jonah, *hif’il* + גורל is restricted to poetic (First Isaiah; Psalms), sapiential (Proverbs), and/or late (Esther 2×; Nehemiah 2×; Chronicles 5×) biblical and extrabiblical (NBDSS 7×) compositions (Brenner 1979, p. 403; Landes 1982, p. 162*; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, p. 152; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 85–90; Muldoon 2010, p. 58). Cf. פור הפיל (Est. 3.7; 9.24) and גורל + נפל *qal* in (8), below. This possibly consists of the late prose penetration of an early non-prose feature.

(3) מן הרבה ‘more than’ (4.11); cf. CBH מן רבו/רבים. Not infrequent in BH, מן הרבה is disproportionately attested in later texts (27/49 cases outside Jonah in LBH proper and Qohelet, with another five in the TBH of Jeremiah [2×], Ezekiel, Haggai [2×]) and late extrabiblical corpora (the NBDSS, Ben Sira, RH). Beyond Jonah the specific construction מן הרבה occurs only in Chronicles and in RH. Qimron (1980, p. 181) compares it to Second Temple Hebrew מן יוֹתֵר/Aramaic מן סגִי ‘more than’ (see also Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, p. 156; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 110–13).

(4) ורחום חנון ‘merciful and gracious’ (4.2); cf. CBH ורחום חנון ‘merciful and gracious’. Hurvitz (1972, pp. 104–6) judges ורחום חנון a late inversion of the classical order (see also Brenner 1979, p. 402; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, p. 156; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 122–24; Muldoon 2010, p. 61). Beyond Jonah and LBH (Nehemiah 2×; Chronicles), ורחום חנון comes in the Bible in the conditioned context of acrostic poetry (Psalms 3×) and in material of unknown date (Joel). It also replaces ורחום חנון in the NBDSS (1QH^a 8.34) and RH. Even the sceptical Landes (1982, pp. 159*–60*) accepts this as valid indicator of Jonah’s lateness; cf. Dan (1996, pp. 359–60).

(5) גדול ועד מקטן ‘from greatest to least’ (3.5); cf. CBH גדול ועד מקטן ‘from least to greatest’. Hurvitz (1971, pp. 252–53) designates this meristic expression a case of late ‘diachronic chiasmus’, citing late Akkadian, Punic, and RH evidence (see also Brenner 1979, pp. 400–1; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, p. 156; Dan 1996, pp. 358–59, 365; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 77–84; Muldoon 2010, pp. 61–62; cf. Landes 1982, pp. 159*–60*). With just four BH occurrences, its attestations outside Jonah are demonstrably late: Esther (2×); 2 Chron. 34.30 (|| CBH גדול ועד למקטן 2 Kgs 23.2). Additional late Hebrew evidence is reconstructible from parallel copies of the Temple Scroll:

קטן] עד[ן ל]מגדו העם כול (11Q19 21.6–7)

קטן דען] מגדול העם כול (11Q20 5.10)

‘all the people, from greatest to least’.

(6) מרחק ‘distance’ (3.3, 4); cf. CBH מרחק. Outside Jonah, BH מרחק appears only in TBH and LBH (Ezekiel, Zechariah, Nehemiah). Ben Sira and RH present late extrabiblical Hebrew cases. Referring specifically to traveling distance, the occurrence in Ezek. 42.4 alone is semantically relevant. In RH and the Targums מרחק is the standard equivalent of מרחק

in this sense. Thus, despite the absence of מְהֻלָּךְ ‘distance’ from LBH proper, given the lexeme’s late appearance more generally, Jonah’s use thereof constitutes striking affinity with late Aramaic and RH against CBH (Brenner 1979, p. 400; Hurvitz 1982a, pp. 92–93; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, pp. 152–53 [wrongly under דָּרַךְ]; Dan 1996, pp. 353–54; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 153–58; Muldoon 2010, pp. 53–54; cf. Landes 1982, p. 159*).

(7) מָנָה ‘appoint’ (2.1; 4.6, 7, 8); cf. CBH הִפְקִיד, פָּקַד, שָׁם, שָׁט, נָתַן. Excluding the four occurrences in Jonah, the *pi’el/pu’al* is poetic (Psalms; Job) and/or late (Daniel 3×; Chronicles). Widely considered a late Aramaism in Hebrew (BA Daniel 3×; Ezra) (Brenner 1979, pp. 399–400; Landes 1982, pp. 149*–50*; Almbladh 1986, p. 44; Rofé 1988, pp. 153–54; Day 1990, p. 35; Dan 1996, pp. 349–50; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 167–71; Muldoon 2010, pp. 54–55), its possibly classical poetic use is no methodological obstacle to classification as a late indicator, as its expansion into prose is attributable to late Aramaic contact. TgO renders each CBH equivalent above with *pa’el* מִי יִמַּן. D-stem מִי יִמַּן persists in late extrabiblical Hebrew, e.g., QH, Ben Sira, and, especially, RH.

(8) הִגְזַרְלָהּ ‘the lot fell’ (1.7); cf. CBH הִגְזַרְלָהּ/הִגְזַרְלָהּ. Related to feature (2), above, combinations of *qal* הִגְזַרְלָהּ + נָפַל come outside Jonah only in exilic or post-exilic biblical and extrabiblical texts (Ezekiel; Chronicles; NBDSS; Ben Sira; BT). Beyond Hebrew, the Aramaic/Syriac translations have נָפַל/נָפַל not only where it occurs in Hebrew, but in the Targum to Proverbs for Hebrew הִוִּטָּל (Prov. 16.33) and the Peshitta for עָלָה twice in Lev. 16.9–10 (see Brenner 1979, p. 403; Rofé 1988, p. 152; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 85–90).

(9) עִמָּהֶם ‘with them’ (1.3); cf. CBH עִמָּהֶם. Outside Jonah, 18 of 21 cases of עִמָּהֶם come in LBH proper (Numbers; Deuteronomy; Job [narrative]; Ezra 4×; Nehemiah 2×; Chronicles 12×), while just one of 27 cases of עִמָּם is in LBH (Genesis 2×; Leviticus; Deuteronomy; Joshua 3×; Judges 3×; Samuel 8×; Kings 2×; Isaiah; Hosea; Joel; Zechariah; Psalms; Job; Nehemiah). The dominance of עִמָּהֶם is also characteristic of the NBDSS (13 of 18) and the Mishna (9 of 11). The ending with *heh* is best judged an early option on both distributional and typological grounds (Joüon and Muraoka 1996, §103i; see also Young et al. 2008, vol. 2, p. 156, fn. 78). Its late ascendancy seems related to convergence with Aramaic, where the ending with *heh* was always standard (Hurvitz 1982a, p. 25, fn. 9; Dan 1996, pp. 354–55; Hornkohl 2014, p. 135, fn. 88). Use of עִמָּם ‘with’ rather than עִמָּהֶם ‘with’ is also typical of LBH, but Jonah’s single opportunity for use is evidence too meager for drawing solid conclusions.

(10) רַבּוֹ ‘myriad’ (4.11); cf. CBH רַבָּה. Eight of nine BH cases of רַבּוֹ (א) outside Jonah appear in LBH (Daniel, Ezra 2×, Nehemiah 3×, Chronicles 2×), with the remaining case in Psalm 68 (Hos. 8.12 *ketiv* is doubtful). None of the 18 cases of classical רַבָּה come in LBH. Beyond BH, רַבּוֹ (א) comes to the exclusion of רַבָּה in the NBDSS (4×) and the Mishna (9×) and is standard in Aramaic and Syriac. Thus רַבּוֹ (א) is routinely cited as a late feature in Jonah (Brenner 1979, p. 402; Rofé 1988, pp. 154–55). Even so, given its appearance in Ugaritic and in possibly early BH poetry, this late development may plausibly be considered one of expansion beyond poetry due to Aramaic contact (Day 1990, p. 35). As in cases (2) and (7) above, classical poetic employment in no way contradicts diagnostically late prose usage (*pace* Landes 1982, p. 154*; Almbladh 1986, pp. 44–45).

(11) Exclusive prose use of verbal suffixes attached to finite verbs for encoding direct objects (1.12, 12, 15; 4.10 [poetry: 2.3, 4, 4, 6, 6]); cf. CBH אָ + pronominal suffixes. Attachment of object suffixes to finite verbs is preferred over attachment to אָ throughout BH, including CBH (1312/2224 cases [59%]) in the prose of the Torah and Former Prophets, according to Wright 2005, p. 39). This is also true of Iron Age epigraphy (23/29 [79%]). Even so, LBH prose exhibits pronounced preference for object suffixation to verbs: Job narrative (4/5 [80%]), Esther (9/10 [90%]), Daniel (49/49 [100%]), Ezra (13/14 [93%]), Nehemiah (27/32 [84%]), non-synoptic Chronicles (141/155 [91%]), LBH total 234/256 [91%]) (statistics based on Wright 2005, pp. 38–39; see also Polzin 1976, pp. 28–31; Bergéy 1983,

pp. 85–87; cf. [Young et al. 2008](#), vol. 1, pp. 261–62; [Rezetko and Young 2014](#), pp. 482–83). [Qimron \(2018\)](#), pp. 400–2) notes similar trends in QH and RH. While the poetic cases in Jonah 2 are unremarkable given BH's general avoidance of נָס in verse, Jonah's total prose eschewal of $\text{נָס} + \text{object}$ (4/4) seems diachronically significant ([Brenner 1979](#), p. 404; [Landes 1982](#), pp. 161*–62*; [Dan 1996](#), pp. 360–61; [Muldoon 2010](#), pp. 57–58).

5.2. Tier 2: Possible Indicators of Lateness

Tier 2 includes 31 features.

(12) $\text{אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה, אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה}$ 'God of Heaven' (1.9); cf. CBH אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה . Chiefly confined beyond Jonah to LBH (Genesis 2×; Ezra; Nehemiah 4×; Chronicles), late use of the title is attributed to the influence of Aramaic שְׁמִיָּא אֱלֵה (e.g., BA 8×) ([Brenner 1979](#), pp. 398–99; [Rofé 1988](#), p. 132; [Day 1990](#), p. 35; [Muldoon 2010](#), pp. 56–57; cf. [Landes 1982](#), pp. 154*–55*). While Jonah's usage may have diachronic import, the context of speech with non-Israelites (as in CBH Gen. 24.3, 7) may also be ascribed to addressee switching (on the foreignized style of the Hebrew of the Genesis passage see [Rendsburg \(2002\)](#); on addressee switching generally see [Rendsburg \(2013a\)](#)).

(13) $\text{וַיִּקְטֹל קָטֹל לְאֹמֶר צֶנֶח}$ 'X commanded and Y did' (2.11); cf., inter alia, CBH $\text{וַיִּקְטֹל קָטֹל לְאֹמֶר צֶנֶח}$ 'X commanded saying "Do!" and Y did'. [Brown et al. \(1906\)](#), p. 56b, no. 4) lists instances of אֶמַר 'command', which are disproportionately represented in LBH. This may be due to contact with Aramaic, in which 'command' is a comparatively common semantic value for אֶמַר . Cf. the noun מִצְוָה 'command' (Esther 3×) and Aramaic מִצְוָה/מִצְוָה ([Bergey 1983](#), pp. 100–1). [Eskhult \(2000\)](#), p. 86; [2005](#), pp. 359–60, n. 16) argues that the apparent semantic shift is due to the late increase in indirect speech. Indeed, examples of $\text{אֶמַר} + \text{לְקָטֹל}$ 'X commanded Y to do' are virtually confined to LBH (Samuel 2× [?]; Esther 8×; Daniel 2×; Nehemiah 3×; Chronicles 12×) and other late material (BA Daniel 7×; QH 2×; Mishna 5×). A rarer manifestation of this is $\text{אֶמַר} + \text{וַיִּקְטֹל}$ 'X commanded and Y did'. Beyond Jonah, such structures are confined to poetic and/or late contexts in the Hebrew Bible (Psalms 3×; Lamentations; Nehemiah 2×; Chronicles 3×); cf. the equivalent $\text{אֶמַר} + \text{וַיִּקְטֹל}$ syntagm in BA (Daniel 3×) and, occasionally, in RH. The usage in Jonah may well be late. [Golan Ben-Uri \(2010\)](#), pp. 66–67) is troubled by the rarity of $\text{אֶמַר} + \text{verb}$ combinations in late extrabiblical Hebrew and Aramaic. [Landes's \(1982\)](#), pp. 150*–51*) objections are relevant only to purely semantic arguments.

(14) Preference for אֶנִּי 'I' (1.9, 12; 2.5, 10; 4.11); cf. CBH preference for אֶנִּי , mixed usage, or preference for אֶנִּי without an accompanying accumulation of late features. Both forms of the 1cs independent subject pronoun are common in CBH texts, but use of אֶנִּי recedes in post-exilic biblical and extrabiblical Hebrew, where it is rare and archaizing: LBH proper has 75 cases of אֶנִּי against just three of אֶנִּי ([Wright 2005](#), pp. 79–82 [inadvertently omitting Daniel]; [Hornkohl 2014](#), pp. 108–11). QH, Ben Sira, and RH also prefer the short form ([Hornkohl 2014](#), p. 109, fn. 5), whose cognate is the sole form in Aramaic. Methodologically, preference for אֶנִּי , even its exclusive use, is diachronically significant only in the context of an accumulation of late features. Jonah's preference for אֶנִּי (5×) over אֶנִּי (2×) might have diachronic implications, especially given its numerous Tier 1 and Tier 2 indicators. Yet, its mixed usage—even within a single verse (1.9)—distinguishes it from LBH proper (see below, Section 5.4; [Muldoon 2010](#), p. 61; cf. also [Rezetko and Young 2014](#), pp. 465–66).

(15) בְּ-יֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר 'in which there are' (4.11); cf. CBH בְּ-יֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר . The syntagm בְּ-יֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר is extremely rare in Hebrew, attested here in Jonah and in 11QT^a (11Q19) 52.17. It is reminiscent of the common RH ב-יֵשׁ (also once in Murabba'at 24 fC.7) and of the cognate Aramaic/Syriac constructions ܒܝܫܐܐܝܪܐܝܬܐ . Though perhaps a late Aramaic feature shared by Jonah and RH ([Bendavid 1967–1971](#), vol. 1, p. 61), the feature's absence from LBH proper relegates it to Tier 2.

(16) בֵּין... לֵ... 'between X and Y' (4.11); cf. בֵּין... בֵּין.... Jonah's usage in בֵּין-יָמִינוּ 'between is right and his left' tallies with the late intensification of בֵּין... לֵ... at the expense of בֵּין... בֵּין.... This trend is seen clearly in comparisons of CBH (7/62) with TBH (8/15) and LBH (5/10 [5/6 if synoptic Chronicles is disregarded]), and the trend continues in QH, Ben Sira, and RH (Haneman 1975; Rooker 1990, p. 117; Wright 2005, pp. 45–48; cf. Young et al. 2008, vol. 1, pp. 123–24). Two facts impugn the diachronic significance of this feature in Jonah: (a) its infrequency and (b) its minority status as a viable CBH option (Muldoon 2010, p. 60). Even so, the feature adds to the cumulative effect of Tier 1 and 2 features.

(17) הַזֶּה הַלַּיְלָה בְּעֶצְמָם*, 'on that night'. Distinct from adnominal expressions like בְּרִשְׁנָה 'a year old', Yalon (1971, pp. 156–57) classifies Jonah's בֵּין לַיְלָה as adverbial. Unique in biblical literature, בֵּין לַיְלָה has parallels in RH and Syriac (Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 68–71). Another potentially late element shared by Jonah, RH, and Aramaic (Syriac), its absence from LBH proper disqualifies it from Tier 1 status.

(18) מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח 'flee from, before' (1.3, 10); cf. CBH מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח. Despite her critique of Boehme (1887, p. 281) on the diagnostic lateness of Jonah's מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח, Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 72–76) cautiously judges it a feature indicative of post-classical Hebrew. Her prudence is warranted. Though the synonymous מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח (1 Chron. 19.18) is found (alongside its CBH alternatives) in LBH, the two MT occurrences of מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח are restricted to Jonah. Even so, the argument for the characteristic lateness of מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח is strengthened by its three occurrences in the NBDSS, two of which involve alternation with CBH מִלִּפְנֵי בָּרַח (1Q16 f1.1 vs. MT 1 Sam. 21.11; MT Ps. 57.1; 4Q161 f8–10.9; 4Q215 f1–3.7 vs. MT Gen. 35.1, 7) and, more generally, by cases of disparity involving מִלִּפְנֵי between the MT, on the one hand, and the BDSS (4Q27 f20–22.29 || MT Num. 22.33; 4Q27 f20–22.30 || MT Num. 22.33) and the SP (Num. 22.33; Deut. 7.22), on the other.

(19) אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי. Whereas אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי (1.7, 8, 12); cf. CBH אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי. Whereas אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי below, (40), apparently has deep historical roots in Hebrew, composite אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי is a comparative innovation. Outside Jonah אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי is attested only in Qoh. 8.17, where it seems to be a calque of the common late Aramaic בְּגִלְלִי. Jonah's synonymous אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי, in which classical אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי replaces אֲדוֹתַי עָלַי, מִלִּפְנֵי, בְּגִלְלִי, is also otherwise unattested. Though the specific constructions did not proliferate in Second Temple Hebrew, their affinity to late Aramaic is significant (Brenner 1979, p. 404; Rofé 1988, p. 155; Day 1990, p. 36; cf. Landes 1982, pp. 153*–54*; Almladh 1986, p. 44). Conversely, their absence from Phoenician militates against attribution to a northern dialect.

(20) הִצִּיל לִי 'save, rescue somebody' (4.6); cf. CBH הִצִּיל לִי + אֶת (≈45×) and הִצִּיל with an object suffix (≈80×). Potentially part of the broader late phenomenon of expansion of accusative לִי (Polzin 1976, pp. 64–66; Hornkohl 2014, pp. 238–44), biblical הִצִּיל לִי appears beyond Jonah in Dan. 8.7. Brenner (1979, p. 404) opines that this late change in rection is due to contamination of the synonymous Aramaic הִצִּיל לִי (e.g., BA 2×; QA; TA), though הִצִּיל לִי apparently does not persist in late extrabiblical Hebrew (cf. also Landes 1982, pp. 157*, 168*).

(21) הִתְעַשֵּׂת 'think, purpose' (1.6); cf. CBH הִתְעַשֵּׂת, זָכַר, הִשָּׁב. Beyond Jonah biblical derivations of הִתְעַשֵּׂת are found in poetry (Ps. 146.4; Job 12.5) and in Aramaic (Dan. 6.4). Extrabiblical instances come in Ben Sira and in all strata of Aramaic. In view of this distribution, the form in Jonah is widely—and perhaps correctly—viewed as a late Aramaism (Brenner 1979, p. 405; Landes 1982, pp. 155*–56*; 1999, p. 103; Rofé 1988, p. 154; Day 1990, p. 35; cf. Almladh 1986, p. 44; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 114–16; Muldoon 2010, p. 55). Be that as it may, due to the overall rarity of Hebrew הִתְעַשֵּׂת, and especially its absence from core LBH material, it scores below Tier 1 status.

(22) רָעַף 'rage, storm' (1.15); cf. CBH רָעַף. Generally denoting negative emotion, only here in the Bible does רָעַף refer to the sea. The 'storm' meaning persists in QH and RH,

while the ‘anger/sorrow’ sense recedes. Since this semantic shift is in line with late Aramaic cognates with both emotive and meteorological associations, many interpret the usage in Jonah as a late Aramaism (Brenner 1979, p. 399; Rofé 1988, p. 153; cf. Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 119–20). Landes (1982, p. 149*), conversely, ascribes this to literary creativity, rather than linguistic development. In the context of Jonah’s many affinities with late extrabiblical Hebrew and late Aramaic, this one is difficult to ignore, but its uniqueness in BH and consequential absence from LBH proper preclude certainty.

(23) צָעַק ‘cry out’ (1.5; 3.7); cf. CBH צָעַץ. Erickson (2021, p. 23) correctly observes that Jonah’s preference for צָעַק is characteristic of “late texts beginning with Ezekiel” (see also Rooker 1990, pp. 134–38; Muldoon 2010, p. 54; cf. Rezetko and Young 2014, pp. 278–82). Late non-Masoretic biblical sources and late extrabiblical material largely confirm the late character of צָעַק (the LBH incidence of צָעַק is 12:3) (Hornkohl 2024, pp. 129–31). What keeps the feature from Tier 1 status is the fact the shift from צָעַק to צָעַץ is not limited to typologically late material, but is variously characteristic of non-Pentateuchal CBH material, too (Pentateuch 2:27, Prophets 67:34) (Hornkohl 2024, pp. 131–38).

(24) חָס ‘pity’ (4.10, 11); cf. CBH חָמַל. The verb חָס has been described as characteristic of RH, in line with Aramaic (חָס is the standard Targumic rendering of חָמַל) (Brenner 1979, p. 402; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 125–32; cf. Landes 1982, pp. 151*–52*). According to Almbladh (1986, pp. 45–46), Aramaic contact may explain the minority use of Hebrew חָס beyond the CBH idiom חָסָה עֵינָי lit. ‘(let one’s) eye pity’ ($\approx 15\times$). However, just one of the relevant eight cases is found in LBH proper. A single occurrence also crops up in the NBDSS, while elsewhere in the DSS, LBH, and Ben Sira CBH חָמַל persists. In sum, Jonah’s affinity with RH and late Aramaic is salient, whereas its affinity with LBH is questionable.

(25) טָעַם ‘decree’ (3.7); cf. CBH דָּבַר (הַפְלִיחַ), צָו. In this sense טָעַם is widely held to be a semantic calque from Akkadian via Aramaic (Kutscher 1964, p. 121, fn. 18; Brenner 1979, p. 401; Rofé 1988, p. 153; Day 1990, p. 35; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 139–46; Muldoon 2010, pp. 55–56), where the meaning ‘decree’ is also late (Dan 1996, pp. 350–51, 365). The word’s semantic value in Jonah is unique in Hebrew, but is shared with late Aramaic dialects (e.g., BA 30 $\times$, IA, QA). It is a strong contender for classification as a late Aramaism in Jonah, but its status as a semantic *hapax* in BH precludes it from Tier 1 status. While Landes (1982, pp. 156*–57*; see also Almbladh 1986, p. 44) furnishes compelling evidence for the early employment of the Akkadian cognate, its antiquity in a foreign language says nothing about its diachronic status in Hebrew.

(26) בְּעֵינֵי-הַטּוֹב עָשָׂה ‘as you have desired, you have done’ (1.14); cf. CBH הַטּוֹב עָשָׂה ‘do what is good in X’s eyes’. In BH בְּעֵינֵי הַפֶּן אָשֶׁר is found outside Jonah only in material with late linguistic profiles—Second Isaiah, Qohelet, and apparently late psalms—and persists in Hebrew until the Middle Ages (Hurvitz 1982b, pp. 356–58; Dan 1996, pp. 357–58; Muldoon 2010, p. 54). It corresponds to late Aramaic יַצְבֵּא דִּי כָּל עֵבַד, common to many dialects, whereas OA has CBH-like טַב מַה עֲבַד (Sefire). A compelling Tier 2 feature, it misses Tier 1 status only because no core LBH text attests it.

(27) לְמָחָר ‘on the following day’ (4.7); cf. CBH מָחָר. לְמָחָר is common in RH. BH לִ- + מָחָר occurs outside Jonah both in CBH (1 Sam. 30.17) and LBH (1 Chron. 29.21). Jonah’s Hebrew thus strays from the classical norm in affinity with RH and LBH (Brenner 1979, p. 402; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Rofé 1988, p. 153; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 149–52). Methodologically, despite the striking rabbinic character of לְמָחָר, its biblical incidence is too meager and not sufficiently limited to late material for consideration as a solid diachronic marker (Landes 1982, p. 161*).

(28) נִרְדַּמְתָּ/תִּרְדָּם כִּי לָךְ מָה? ‘why are you sleeping?’ (1.6); cf. CBH מָה? לָךְ. Brenner (1979, pp. 402–3; see also Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46; Muldoon 2010, p. 60) expands on Bendavid’s (1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 61) note that Jonah’s usage strays from classical norms

with the *מָה לָּךְ מָה* participial formulation, which comes in BH only here and in Ezek. 18.2. [Qimron \(1980, pp. 181–82\)](#) adds Qoh. 6.8 as an additional biblical case and, with [Rofé \(1988, p. 157\)](#), further substantiates the lateness of the syntax by adducing its use in RH. Again, the linguistic affinity between Jonah and RH is compelling, but LBH proper's omission of the syntagm disqualifies it from Tier 1 significance.

(29) *בָּרַח לָּךְ* 'arrive to, reach' (3.6); cf. CBH *הָגִיעַ*. [Golan Ben-Uri \(2010, pp. 172–76\)](#) supports [Boehme's \(1887, pp. 282–83\)](#) contention that *בָּרַח לָּךְ* 'arrive to, reach' (as opposed to 'touch') is diagnostically late. Besides Jonah, biblical cases come in Jer. 51.9 and Dan. 9.21, with a comparable case without the preposition in Ezra 3.1. Also of relevance is *אֵלַי אֵלָּךְ* (11QPs^f [11Q11] 6.8) || *יָגֵשׁ לֹא אֵלָּיִךְ* 'you it will not reach' (MT Ps. 91.7). The expression does not persist in RH, due possibly to both the overall rarity of the preposition *לָּךְ* in RH and rigid semantic differentiation between *qal* *בָּרַח* 'touch' and *hif'il* *הָגִיעַ* 'arrive, reach'. One might detect Aramaic influence, as TA renders BH *עָנַח* 'reach' with *pe'al* *מַטָּא* (including in Jonah). While the biblical distribution of *בָּרַח לָּךְ* in the relevant sense (only just) satisfies the methodological requirements adopted here and the CBH appearance of *הָגִיעַ* 'arrive to' (1 Sam. 14.9) might be considered adequate classical opposition (though it is more common in late texts: Zech. 14.5; Qoh. 8.14; Est. 4.14; Dan. 12.12), the meager extrabiblical evidence disqualifies this feature from Tier 1 consideration.

(30) *נָקִיא* 'innocent' (1.14); cf. CBH *נָקִי*. The orthography *נָקִיא* is viewed by some as evidence of Jonah's lateness ([Qimron 1980, p. 181](#)). Though lacking a clear LBH distribution according to the MT, this spelling with otiose 'alef is frequent at Qumran ([Kutscher 1974, pp. 179–82](#); [Qimron 2018, p. 84](#)) and in Samaritan manuscripts (but not RH). However, a degree of orthographic fluidity seems to attach to all biblical manuscript material, such that even CBH compositions include many secondary orthographic features, including otiose 'alef ([Simon 1999, pp. xl–xli](#); [Young et al. 2008, vol. 1, p. 127](#)).

(31) *סָפִינָה* 'vessel' (1.5); cf. CBH *סָפִינָה*, *סָפִינָה*. Widely considered a late Aramaism, the assessment of this *hapax legomenon* depends on its semantics. If it signifies the vessel's 'deck', then it is plausibly connected to apparently early nouns and verbs that share the root *סָפִי* ([Brenner 1979, p. 397](#); [Landes 1982, pp. 152*–53*](#)). Conversely, if it means 'vessel', the conspicuous affinity with Aramaic, where the lexeme is extremely common, seems diachronically significant, as the lexeme persists in post-biblical Hebrew (e.g., Bar Koseba and, especially, RH). The cumulative weight of the linguistic evidence from both within Jonah and without, though not unambiguous, arguably tips the scales in favor of a late Aramaic loan meaning 'vessel' ([Rofé 1988, p. 154](#); [Dan 1996, pp. 346–48](#); [Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 177–83](#)). Yet, even if the semantic ambiguity were overcome, the unique status of the lexeme in BH bars it from Tier 1 inclusion.

(32) *עָמַל* 'toil' (4.10); cf. CBH *עָמַל*. [Schoors \(1992–2004, vol. 2, p. 139\)](#) describes the root *עָמַל* as "characteristic vocabulary of wisdom literature (2/3 of the occurrences) and... typical of the later phase of BH." This is especially true of finite verbal forms, as in Jonah, with additional instances in Psalms (1×), Proverbs (1×), and—of particular diachronic import—Qohelet (8×). The verb is documented throughout the history of Aramaic and becomes common in late extrabiblical Hebrew, especially RH. Neither of the considerations for which [Golan Ben-Uri \(2010, p. 187\)](#) rejects its diachronic significance—that the root is attested throughout biblical literature; that the verb's suggested classical alternative, *עָמַל*, lacks a clearcut classical distribution—is decisive. Apparently early non-verbal *עָמַל* derivations do not necessarily imply the early usage of finite verbal forms. As for the distribution of *עָמַל*, [Golan Ben-Uri](#) seems disproportionately swayed by its ten instances in Second Isaiah, but the persistence there of classical features is in line with that material's typologically early TBH classification ([Arentsen 2019a, 2019b](#)). Methodologically, the fi-

nite verbal usage in Jonah is plausibly attributable to late Aramaic influence, though its absence from the core LBH books makes it ineligible for Tier 1 status.

(33) *קדמתי* (לברח) ‘arise early (to flee)’ (4.2); cf. CBH *השכים*. Though the verb is found throughout BH, this use of *pi’el* קדם is uniquely reminiscent of the standard TA and Syriac equivalents of its CBH alternant, i.e., Aramaic *af’el* אקדים and Syriac *pa’el* כ-כ, respectively. The same semantic value of ‘arise early (to act)’ may be evident in two cases in linguistically late Ps. 119 (vv. 147–148). The verb קדם in the relevant sense may thus be considered a late Aramaism (Wagner 1966, p. 100; cf. Landes 1982, p. 151*; Almbadth 1986, p. 44; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 188–91). Since, however, the relevant meaning neither appears in LBH proper nor persists in late extrabiblical Hebrew, it fails to meet the criteria of a Tier 1 feature. See also (34).

(34) *וַאֲבָרַח הַשְּׁכַמְתִּי* ‘I arose early and fled’ (4.2); cf. CBH *השכים*. Conventional syntax in the case of classical *השכים* involves coordination of verbs by means of the conjunction *waw*, e.g., *וְהָלַכְתָּם וְהִשְׁכַּמְתָּם* ‘and you will arise early and you will go’ (Gen. 19.2), which construction is most often reproduced in the Aramaic and Syriac; the use of *השכים* with a complement infinitive, conversely, is relatively rare (Judg. 19.8; 1 Sam 15.12; 29.11; 2 Kgs 6.15; cf. Ps. 127.2). Jonah’s syntax might thus be seen as in line with the late tendency of replacing *waw*-consecutive tenses with alternatives, encountered to varying degrees in Second Temple Hebrew, and culminating in their non-use in RH. While Jonah’s *וַאֲבָרַח קדמתי* tallies with the Second Temple ‘erosion’ of the classical verbal system, sporadic deviations are known from classical texts as well, making it difficult to classify this feature as an unequivocal late indicator—especially in light of Jonah’s normative employment of the classical conversive forms. Even so, the combination of non-standard vocabulary—above, (33)—and non-standard syntax might have diachronic significance.

(35) *על קרא* ‘call to’ (1.2); cf. CBH *קרא*. Assuming the synonymy of *על קרא* and *אל קרא* ‘call to’ (Jon. 3.2) (cf. Landes 1982, p. 158*), some see the former as a late example of *על/אל* conflation (Brenner 1979, pp. 400, 402). Alternatively, it has a distinct meaning, e.g., ‘denounce’ or ‘warn’. Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 194–98) extensively surveys contexts, meanings, and Targumic renderings, cautiously concluding that *על קרא* and *אל קרא* in Jonah are semantically equivalent and that the former qualifies as an indicator of late language. However, though *על/אל* interchange is characteristic of LBH (Hornkohl 2014, pp. 227–38) and the specific meaning ‘call to’ for *על קרא* persists in Aramaic (e.g., the Targums), *על קרא* ‘call to’ neither occurs in LBH nor persists in late extrabiblical Hebrew.

(36) *קרב* ‘approach’ (1.6); cf. CBH *נגש*. Bendavid (1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 61) lists *קרב* as late in Jonah, as RH employs it to the near exclusion of *נגש*, in accord with contemporary Aramaic (e.g., BA Daniel 5×) and Syriac. However, *קרב* is hardly rare in CBH (Torah 44×; Former Prophets 19×) and is exceptional in LBH (1×) (Rofé 1988, p. 158; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 199–200). In the NBDSS, too, *קרב* (32×) is only somewhat more common than *נגש* (22×). RH’s innovation, therefore, consists not in the use of *קרב*, but in the obsolescence of *נגש*. Methodologically, however, all that can be said is that Jonah’s single (!) instance of *קרב* for *נגש* agrees with the apparent culmination of a late trend seen in RH, especially in the context of the book’s many other Mishnaic- and Aramaic-like features. On its own, conversely, Jonah’s use of *קרב* has only circumstantial evidentiary value.

(37) *קריאה* (+ *קרא*) ‘(call) a calling’ (3.2); cf. CBH *דבר* (+ *קרא*) direct speech; see also below, (42). Given the word’s RH frequency as well as the *קטילה* nominal pattern’s high RH incidence, Brenner (1979, p. 400) judges this biblical *hapax* an indicator of Jonah’s lateness (see also Day 1990, p. 34). If so, Jonah’s *קריאה* joins several late *-קטילה* pattern nouns, such as *יגיעה* ‘weariness’ (Qoh. 12.12), *סליחה* ‘forgiveness’ (Ps. 130.4; Dan. 9.9; Neh. 9.17), *עליה* ‘burnt offering’ (2 Chron. 9.4), *שחיטה* ‘slaughter’ (2 Chron. 30.17), and *שתיה* ‘drinking’ (Est. 1.8). Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 201–2) rightly rejects Landes’s (1982, p. 152*) counterargu-

ment, which raises the dubious connection with the minority Hebrew passive pattern קטיל (|| Aramaic קטיל), because he overlooks the relevance of the inner-Hebrew morphological parallel in RH קטילה verbal noun forms, most commonly associated with *qal* verbs, of which קריאה is but one of many examples. Golan Ben-Uri's (ibid.) own argument against קריאה as a late diagnostic indicator, namely that the related verb's semantic value 'call in warning' is early, is arguably irrelevant. Almladh (1986, pp. 44–45) and Dan (1996, p. 363) opine that קריאה, specifically, and the קטילה pattern, more generally, might reflect a northern dialect, though it seems significant that the authority to whom Dan looks for support, Rendsburg (1992, p. 229), makes no mention of Jonah's קריאה. A stronger argument against the word's status as a late indicator is its absence from the core LBH books. Also, though קטילה-pattern verbal nouns are proportionally far more common in RH than BH, they are not especially rare or late in BH (Barth 1891, p. 136; Avineri 1976, p. 264).

(38) רב (חבל) 'chief (sailor)' (1.6); cf. CBH שר גדול. The titular use of BH רב has historically been considered a late Aramaism (Gesenius 1815, p. 29; Brown et al. 1906, p. 913b; cf. Pusey 1860, p. 375). It is true that nominal (as opposed to adjectival) usage of רב is more characteristic of Aramaic than of ancient Hebrew (excepting RH, where the usage is likely due to Aramaic contact), that most of the relevant biblical cases outside Jonah are late pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic (Kings 16×; Isaiah 8×; Jeremiah 23×; Esther; Daniel; see also BA 12×), and that it most frequently shows up, as in Jonah, in the titles of non-Israelites (Hornkohl 2014, pp. 344–47). The Phoenician titular use of רב (Tombback 1978, pp. 298–300) may justify a literary explanation involving style switching (on which phenomenon see Rendsburg 2013b), though explanatory economy warrants continued consideration of Aramaic influence.

(39) אָל רע 'displease' (4.1); cf. CBH בְּעֵינֵי רע 'evil in the eyes of'. CBH *qal* רע + ל- means 'cause harm to', whereas the sense 'displease' is found in LBH proper (Nehemiah 2×), possibly in a psalm of indeterminate date (106.32), and in RH (Brenner 1979, p. 401; Rofé 1988, p. 156; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, p. 211). Aramaic בִּאֵשׁ ל- may have been an influencing factor. Brenner (ibid.) sees Jonah's use of אָל for ל- as an indicator that its Hebrew may be transitional between CBH and LBH (see also, Landes 1982, pp. 160*–61*; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 210–12). The usage in Jonah likely has diachronic significance, though the combination of inexact resemblance to a sparse LBH feature and its appearance in BH poetry of unknown date raises some doubt.

(40) -שׁ 'which, that' (4.10); cf. CBH אֲשֶׁר. Though a component in the combinations in (19), above, the diachronic significance of the particle -שׁ must be distinguished from theirs. Often associated with LBH on account of its RH ubiquity, the particle's biblical distribution demands a nuanced explanation. First, -שׁ occurs sporadically in material generally thought to be early, where it is variously considered archaic, poetic, and/or dialectal. Second, it cannot be deemed characteristic of LBH proper, where it appears just three times (Ezra; Chronicles 2×). Of its approximately 140 biblical occurrences, about half come in linguistically late Qohelet and about 60 in diachronically questionable works, e.g., Song of Songs (≈40×) and Psalms (≈20×). Beyond BH and RH, the Copper Scroll (3Q15, ≈30×) and 4QMMT^{a-f} (4Q394–4Q399, ≈60×) account for most DSS occurrences (≈100×). Phoenician contact has been posited as a factor in the increased incidence in Second Temple Hebrew (Cohen 2020, pp. 10–15), but the view that Aramaic contact triggered expanded use of an existing feature is more parsimonious (Wagner 1966, pp. 110–11; Hornkohl 2026, pp. 9–10). Jonah uses bare -שׁ just once, classical אֲשֶׁר 11 times, with a mix of the two particles in 4.10. Though Jonah's Hebrew shares many Aramaic-like isoglosses with RH, including -שׁ, the significance of the particle's usage is not unequivocally diachronic (Landes 1982, pp. 153*–54*; pace Brenner 1979, p. 404; Day 1990, p. 36).

(41) שָׁטַח 'become calm' (1.11, 12); cf. CBH שָׁחַר 'ש', שָׁחַר 'ש', שָׁחַר 'ש'. Found in RH and with late Aramaic cognates (e.g., TA), שָׁטַח in Jonah is considered by some a late Aramaism (Brenner 1979, p. 399; Rofé 1988, p. 155; Dan 1996, pp. 351–52). Yet, biblical attestations beyond Jonah are limited to Psalms and Proverbs; שָׁטַח is absent from LBH proper and the NBDSS. Contra Landes (1982, p. 148*), the appearance in Proverbs does not disqualify the word from consideration as a late marker, since Wisdom literature, with its eastern associations, makes it a locus for Aramaisms which in other contexts might indicate late provenance (Hornkohl 2014, p. 17, fn. 46). While constituting another link between Jonah, RH, and Aramaic, the verb's omission from LBH allows it no higher than Tier 2 status.

(42) Verbal emphasis by means of cognate/internal object (1.10, 16; 3.2; 4.1, 6); cf. CBH paronomasia with a cognate infinitive absolute. Rofé (1988, p. 157) avers that Jonah's adverbial use of internal cognate objects deviates from the CBH norm of employing cognate infinitives absolute for verbal intensification, in line with the reduced use of the infinitive absolute in LBH and RH (see also Polzin 1976, p. 43; Muldoon 2010, pp. 58–59; and, with reservations, Young et al. 2008, vol. 2, pp. 132–38; cf. Rezetko and Young 2014, pp. 492–93). The problem is that the alleged late alternative has early roots (e.g., Judg. 21.2; 1 Sam. 20.17; 2 Sam. 13.15), so that Jonah's apparent departure from classical norms, while in line with Second Temple practice, involves substitution with a perfectly classical alternative. This must be considered circumstantial evidence, at best.

5.3. Tier 3: Dubious Indicators of Lateness

Tier 3 includes 15 features.

(43) אָנָּה 'please' (1.14; 4.2); cf. CBH אָנָּה. Pace Boehme (1887, p. 266), there is little distributional evidence supporting a diachronic distinction. The orthography אָנָּה is used exclusively in the MT in the Pentateuch and LBH (Daniel; Nehemiah 2×), as well as in the Mishna, whereas אָנָּה comes in the MT Prophets and non-LBH Writings. Both spellings appear in the BDSS and NBDSS, the biblical cases (including those in Jonah) matching orthographically their MT parallels.

(44) דָּגָה '(individual) fish' (2.2); cf. CBH דָּג. In CBH individual דָּג (plural דָּגִים) differs from collective דָּגָה 'fish-life'. Some consider Jonah's use of feminine דָּגָה in one of four cases a late development whereby the form has lost its collective sense (Bendavid 1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 61; Brenner 1979, p. 405; cf. Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 91–92). Even if true, however, דָּגָה in this meaning fails to meet the test criteria for diagnostic LBH features, as it is a biblical *hapax* undocumented in LBH proper or in this meaning in late extrabiblical Hebrew—in RH, דָּגָה is used with specific reference to 'little fish' or 'fish as food'.

(45) הָטִיל 'cast, throw' (1.4, 5, 12, 15); cf. CBH הָשִׁלִּיךְ. On the assumption that הָשִׁלִּיךְ is classical and הָטִיל late, Jonah's four uses of the latter ostensibly point to late composition (Brenner 1979, p. 397, supplementing Bendavid 1967–1971, vol. 1, pp. 60–61; Almbladh 1986, pp. 45–46). But this is dubious from several perspectives. The verb הָשִׁלִּיךְ is found throughout BH, including LBH and Jonah (2.4), whereas הָטִיל is absent from LBH proper. While הָטִיל persists in QH and achieves numerical superiority in RH, הָשִׁלִּיךְ is actually more frequent in the NBDSS and occurs in a significant minority of RH cases (stats in Golan Ben-Uri 2010, p. 101).

(46) מָעַל הָעֵבֶר 'remove (a garment) from upon' (3.6); cf. CBH מָעַל הָסִיר. Bendavid (1967–1971, vol. 1, pp. 61, 355) notes that RH מָעַל הָעֵבֶר often equates to BH הָסִיר. Likewise, Syriac ܠܥܒܪ is a standard rendering of BH הָסִיר. Even so, CBH attests מָעַל הָעֵבֶר in the relevant meaning, while הָסִיר persists in LBH, the NBDSS, Ben Sira, and RH. It is thus difficult to verify the claim that Jonah's מָעַל הָעֵבֶר represents diachronically meaningful RH affinity. Focusing on exact phraseology for garment removal with the preposition מָעַל הָסִיר, comes five times, with no clear diachronic tendency, whereas מָעַל הָעֵבֶר appears only in

Jonah and Zechariah. Neither expression persists in late-extrabiblical Hebrew; פָּשַׁט becomes the standard RH term. On this basis, Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 102–9) opines that מַעַל הָעֵבֶיר seems to be late, but is too sparsely documented for dating purposes.

(47) הָיָם יוֹרְדִי, גַּם יָדְעִי, אֲנִיּוֹת אֲנָשִׁי, מָלָה (chief) sailor' (1.6); cf. CBH. Given its biblical distribution—Jonah and Ezekiel (4×)—and classical alternatives, Brenner (1979, p. 398) considers הָבֵל 'sailor' diachronically significant. It is, however, absent from LBH proper and does not persist in late extrabiblical Hebrew or Aramaic. Probably referring to non-Israelites, its employment may be due to literary artistry (Landes 1982, pp. 158*–59*; Almbldh 1986, p. 44).

(48) יָד + דְּמִים/דָּם 'the violence that is in their hands' (3.8); cf. CBH. Elsewhere the components דָּם and יָד co-occur in expressions in Isa. 59.6, Job 16.17, and 1 Chron. 12.18, leading Boehme (1887, p. 282) to deem it late. Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 121–24), however, observes that the biblical distribution includes texts of unknown date, that there is no late extrabiblical continuity (indeed, the use of דָּם decreases in late material), and that Aramaic knows no cognate. Moreover, it is difficult to identify a precise classical alternative (see those in Golan Ben-Uri 2010, p. 121).

(49) תְּרִישִׁית 'silent' or 'scorching' (4.8); cf. CBH. Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 133–35) treats a handful of scholarly attempts to characterize this usage as late (e.g., Day 1990, p. 34), but on numerous grounds—its biblical uniqueness and extrabiblical infrequency, etymological uncertainty, semantic ambiguity, and, due to some of the above, lack of clear CBH opposition—rightly judges it of uncertain diachronic import.

(50) לְהַשְׁבֵּר הַשִּׁבָּה (וְהַאֲנִיָּה) 'and the vessel) threatened [i.e., was about to] break apart' (1.4); cf. CBH. Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 136–38) critically assesses arguments for the lateness of הַשִּׁבָּה with a mediopassive complement infinitive. The uniqueness of the expression within ancient Hebrew is an obstacle to its understanding. Yet based on a comparison of its rendering in TgJ, לְאִיתְבְּרָא בַּעֲיָא וְאֵלְפָא 'and the ship sought [i.e., was about] to break apart', and the apparently similar BA לְהַתְקַשְׁלָה וְחִבְרוּהִי דְנִינְיָאֵל וְדַעֲוִי lit. 'and Daniel and his friends sought [i.e., were about] to be executed' along with similar expressions in RH, e.g., לְהַתְנַמֵּן בִּישָׁשׁ 'he sought [i.e., was about] to doze off' (m. Yoma 1.7), one might reasonably associate Jonah's usage with late Aramaic and RH. Golan Ben-Uri tentatively objects, noting (a) that the data points are far too few for certainty and (b) that CBH attests similar phraseology in the case of uncontrolled events, as in לִבְכּוֹת וְיִבְקֶשׁ lit. 'and he sought [i.e., was about] to weep' (Gen. 43.30).

(51) יָרָא 'fear (with religious reverence)' (1.9); cf. CBH. For Boehme (1887, p. 281) the verb יָרָא 'fear' in Jonah's *credo* points to a late date. Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 147–48) expresses uncertainty as to the precise connotation of the verb in Jonah and, more crucially, cites numerous classical usages where the verb clearly signifies divine reverence.

(52) וְיָרְחוּם אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְּהָ (יְדַעְתִּי) 'I knew) that (you are a gracious and merciful)'; cf. ?. Bendavid (1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 61) says that כִּי 'that' here is a translation of RH-like -שֵׁ. Yet the employment of כִּי to open content clauses after verbs of speech, perception, or knowledge is standard in CBH.

(53) וְיָרְחוּם אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְּהָ (יְדַעְתִּי) 'I knew) that you are a gracious and merciful god' (4.2); cf. CBH. Qimron (1980, p. 181) argues that the syntactic/pragmatic order כִּי + subject pronoun + common noun deviates from the classical order כִּי + common noun + subject pronoun. Against this claim, the standard order persists in LBH and QH, whereas Qimron lists just one case of the deviant order in LBH (1 Chron. 29.17) and one relevant late extrabiblical case (Sir. 36.22; 1QH^a 14.15 involves a different structure). The order in Jonah may, alternatively, be ascribed to the length of the predicate. Further, special focus marking via word order is hardly obligatory, especially when a predicate is by definition rhematic.

(54) *וַיְגִדּוּלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ* ‘the king and his nobles’ (3.7); cf. CBH ?. Brenner (1979, p. 401) sees this as a loan translation of Aramaic *מַלְכָּא וְרַבְרַבְנֵיהּ* (BA Daniel 3×) (see also Rofé 1988, p. 159; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 144–46). Yet, it has no clear LBH distribution. Moreover, Landes (1982, pp. 156*–57*) marshals impressive Neo-Assyrian parallels. The cumulative evidence may make probable the hypothesis that Jonah’s expression here is influenced by Persian Period Aramaic, but this is difficult to substantiate from the narrow perspective of the feature in question. Given the Assyrian literary context, it is also a potential example of style switching (on which phenomenon see Rendsburg 2013b).

(55) *מִלְחִים* ‘sailors’ (1.5); cf. CBH *אֲנִיּוֹת אֲנָשִׁי* *יָם יָרְדִי*, *יָם יָרְדִי*. With its only biblical appearances outside Jonah in TBH Ezekiel, it is sometimes regarded as a late linguistic feature (Brenner 1979, p. 398; Golan Ben-Uri 2010, pp. 159–61; cf. Rofé 1988, pp. 157–58, fn. 53). It persists in QH, but is largely replaced by *סֵפֶן* in RH. Despite the rarity of nautical terms in biblical literature, it seems to have classical alternatives. Even so, its absence from CBH may be accidental, since it exists in Iron Age Phoenician (Tombback 1978, p. 179) and is regarded by Mankowski (2000, pp. 95, 169) as a non-trans-Aramaic Akkadian loan in Hebrew (cf. Wagner 1966, pp. 76–77, 152). The usage in Jonah may also be attributed to style switching (on which phenomenon see Rendsburg 2013b).

(56) *מִן* ‘from’ (3.8; 4.5); cf. *מִן*-. Brenner (1979, p. 404) apparently confuses a late phenomenon discussed by Polzin (1976, p. 66; cf. Rezetko 2003, pp. 230–32), namely “Non-assimilation of the nun of *מִן* before a noun without an article,” with the retention of *מִן*’s *nun* before the article. Landes (1982, pp. 162*, 169*, fn. 146) clarifies: Jonah aligns with CBH in terms of the feature Polzin discusses, whereas its use of *מִן* instead of *מִן־הַ* conforms to the dominant usage across all BH chronolects.

(57) *קִיקְיֹון* ‘castor-oil plant (?)’ (4.6, 6, 7, 9, 10); cf. ?. Loewy’s (1892, p. 39) conjecture that the term for the unidentified plant is a late linguistic feature is justly rejected by Golan Ben-Uri (2010, pp. 192–93) given the dearth of biblical and extrabiblical information, both botanical and linguistic.

5.4. Tier 4: Indicators Inconsistent with Late Biblical Hebrew

In the interest of comprehensiveness, it is worth noting features in Jonah out of line with Late Biblical Hebrew proper.

(58) *נָא* ‘please, then’ (1.8, 14; 4.3). Jonah thrice employs the particle. This distinguishes its language from LBH proper (Muldoon 2010, pp. 50–51), which accounts for just 17 of the 400+ BH occurrences. Chronicles, with eight occurrences, but only two in non-synoptic material, accounts for almost half of the LBH incidence; cf. Samuel (71×) and Kings (54×) (Bendavid 1967–1971, vol. 1, p. 67; Polzin 1976, p. 145; Sáenz-Badillos 1993, p. 117; van Peursen 2004, pp. 192–93, 199, 407; cf. Young et al. 2008, vol. 2, pp. 118–23). The particle is likewise infrequent in the NBDSS (13×, 6× citing BH) and is atypical of RH (12× in the Mishna, mainly in biblical allusions or fixed formulae). Indeed, in RH its function was sufficiently opaque as to require explanation: *בְּקֶשֶׁה לִשְׁוֹן אֵלֶּה נָא אֵין* ‘[the particle] *נָא* is but a word of entreaty’ (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma’el, ‘Amaleq [Beshallah] 2; Sifre Bemidbar 103, 134). More specifically, negative constructions including *אֵלֶּה־נָא*, as in Jonah, occur 21 times in the Bible, never in LBH.

(59) Absence of Persian words. Persian vocabulary is conventionally regarded as indicative of LBH (Hornkohl 2013, p. 322; Hurvitz 2014, pp. 5–6; cf. Young 1993, pp. 69–71) and each of the core LBH books attests acknowledged Persian loans (see the lists in Seow 1996, pp. 647–48; Eskhult 2003, pp. 12–14). Brenner (1979, p. 405) interprets Jonah’s lack of Persianisms as a sign that it must predate those books, arguing that it must stem from the beginning of the Persian Period. Against this argument from silence, it is worth noting that only some LBH books—Esther, Daniel, Ezra—show high incidence of Old Iranian

loanwords (Noonan 2019, pp. 248–53, 263–64) and that, in terms of those Persian lexemes attested in the Bible, the NBDSS exhibit fewer than LBH.

Finally, as noted above, Section 5.2, no. (14), Jonah’s mixed usage of אֲנִי and אֲנִי ’I’ (with no apparent conditioned use of the latter), is out of line with the extremely rare and conditioned use of אֲנִי in LBH proper, perhaps indicating chronolectal difference.

6. Conclusions

A minority of the 59 linguistic features examined above are plausibly explained with reference to non-diachronic considerations. The majority, however, either favor or demand a diachronic explanation, specifically one involving Jonah’s late composition. More precise periodization is difficult to prove. Differences between Jonah and the core LBH books lead several scholars to conclude that Jonah is written in a form of TBH or early LBH, while others see Jonah’s relatively frequent isoglosses with RH as evidence of composition in the late Persian or even Hellenistic Period. Though certainty remains elusive, Jonah’s sheer number of plausibly late features relative to book length is arguably most compellingly attributed to a later rather than an earlier post-exilic date of composition, in which case the language of Jonah, like that of Qohelet, Ps. 119, and the narrative framework of Job, may be considered a bona fide manifestation of LBH.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

BA	Biblical Aramaic
BDSS	Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls
BH	Biblical Hebrew
BT	Babylonian Talmud
CBH	Classical Biblical Hebrew
EBH	Early Biblical Hebrew
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
IA	Imperial Aramaic
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
MT	Masoretic Text
NBDSS	Non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls
PBH	Peripheral Biblical Hebrew
QA	Qumran Aramaic
QH	Qumran Hebrew
RH	Rabbinic Hebrew
SBH	Standard Biblical Hebrew
SH	Samaritan Hebrew
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
TA	Targumic Aramaic
TBH	Transitional Biblical Hebrew

TgO	Targum Onqelos
TgJ	Targum Jonathan

Notes

- ¹ The list here is slightly more extensive than that in [Hornkohl \(2026\)](#), which speaks only of three Tiers. An additional difference is that feature (14), יִצְחָק, is classified here as Tier 2 rather than Tier 3, and also mentioned in Tier 4. Though not unambiguously a result of late provenance, the dominant use of יִצְחָק is nevertheless in line with later diachronic trends, though the mixed usage with יִצְחָק is atypical of LBH proper.
- ² In Lev. 16.8 the plural usage is literal rather than idiomatic, as a lot is cast for each of two goats.

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