From Jonah to Jesus and back: three Ways of Characterization and their Reverse Application

Abstract
The resemblance between the Gospel story about Jesus stilling a storm in the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 8:18, 23-27, Mk. 4:35-41, Lk. 8:22-25) and the Jonah story (Jon. 1:1-16) has been long acknowledged by scholars. This article contends that since the relations between the two stories are those of polar opposition, it should be possible, by way of reversal, to reconstruct from the three Synoptic versions of the storm-stilling story another three underlying profiles of Jonah, in addition to the multiply and often contradictory images of this unusual figure, current in the Second Temple literature. Aside from it, the comparison to other storm-stilling stories and a brief discussion of the "Sign of Jonah" pericope yield some additional methodological insights.

Keywords: Characterization, Restoration, Synoptic Gospels, Jonah, Second Temple Literature

I. Preface
The story about Jesus stilling a storm in the Sea of Galilee appears in all of the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 8:18, 23-27, Mk. 4:35-41, Lk. 8:22-25), sharing the following outline: Jesus commands his disciples to cross the sea, and when underway, he falls asleep. Next a great storm arises, imperiling the boat and its crew, and after the frightened disciples wake their teacher, he reproaches the wind and the waves calming them down and rebukes his disciples for their lack of faith. Amazed, they wonder who this man is, towards whom even the forces of nature show obedience.

The resemblance between this synoptic account and the Jonah story (Jon. 1:1-16) has long been recognized. The links between them are fairly obvious: in both cases the main character sets off in a boat together with others, a storm arises when he is asleep and his shipmates wake him up, hoping that he will help to save them. Both stories present a miraculous stilling of the storm, astonishment on the part of the sailors, and, no less important, interest expressed in the identity of the main characters.

Nevertheless, it seems that scholars have not yet recognised that the relations between the stories are those of polar opposition: having been ordered to set off in one direction, Jonah disobeys, whereas Jesus,

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1 I am very indebted to Prof. Donna Shalev for improving the English of this paper and for her useful suggestions. Needless to say that whatever mistakes may occur in the text, they are mine and mine alone. Also I wish to thank Prof. Maren Niehoff, for whose seminar “Journeys in Body and Soul” this paper has been originally conceived and whose comments on it have been of great help.

1 Some scholars refer to all the synoptic versions, whereas others discuss the version of one particular Gospel. Nevertheless, since none of the versions is so different from the others as to lose its resemblance to Jon. 1, it seems that by determining the relation between Jon. 1 and any one of the versions, the same relation is determined for all of them.

Welhausen 1903:39 maintains that the only feature common to Jesus in Mark and Jonah is their sleeping when their boat is about to sink, and that indication of any other parallel is a mere attempt to make the traditions about Jesus fit the Jewish ideas as to the Messiah. Similarly, Weiss 1903:182 contends that the resemblance between Jesus as portrayed in Mark and Jonah is merely a verbal one, whereas in what pertains to the story's essence (the power which Jesus exercises over the elements) there is nothing in common. According to Bultmann 1963:34-35 these two stories are two appearances of one “wandering” plot, where a Jew travels in one boat with gentiles (which are replaced in Mark by the disciples) and saves them from jeopardy with his prayer, the next appearance of the same “wandering” plot being the story in jBerachot 9a. Léon-Dufour 1965:175-177 admits some degree of influence, literary in nature, but argues that since there are multiple points of difference between the stories, one must agree that the literary influence does not exclude historicity. Kertelge 1970:96 contends that the story in Mark is “etwas grundsätzlich Verschiedenes” from the story in Jon. 1, since Jesus, unlike Jonah, appears as the Lord and the salvation is brought about by epiphany and not by prayer (a feature common, according to Kertelge, to Jon. 1 and jBerachot 9a – for which reason he disagrees with Bultmann; see more about this below [2.1]). Boismard 1972:196-198 admits that the Jonah story lent the Gospel story its literary form, claiming that in Mark the similarity is least felt and suggesting that Matthew's version is to be read in the light of the pericope about the “Sign of
having ordered others to set off, is impeccably obeyed; Jonah proves to be the cause of the storm (which calms down immediately as he is thrown overboard), whereas Jesus, being by no means responsible for the storm arising, becomes the cause of its cessation; Jonah’s identity garners interest qua the origin of common distress, whereas Jesus’ identity is wondered about qua the origin of salvation.

Thus, as one may see, Jesus is put here in opposition to Jonah. Nevertheless, since Jonah’s image had been variously represented in different sources, and in those contemporary with the Gospels in particular, one may reasonably ask: to what ‘Jonah’ is Jesus opposed in each of the synoptic versions?

In order to provide an answer to this question, I would like to examine in this paper a certain interpretative implication of the polar opposition between the characters of Jesus and Jonah. Having determined that the Gospel accounts contrast Jesus with Jonah, we have, in effect, postulated the action of a reversing mechanism in them: one cannot say that “in such-and-such circumstances Jesus is the direct opposite of Jonah” without simultaneously admitting the converse, namely that Jonah is, in the same circumstances, the direct opposite of Jesus. These being the relations between them, it is not implausible to characterize Jonah (whose exact characteristics are the desideratum) by reverse application of the characteristics of Jesus. Moreover, if Jesus is diversely represented, one can consequently postulate, by inference, a corresponding diverse representation of Jonah. Therefore, if one carefully determines the diverse characterization of Jesus in each of the Gospel accounts, one may infer, by its reverse application, the characteristics of ‘Jonah’ to which Jesus is opposed in each particular account.

Three remarks concerning methodology:

1) The basic datum I am referring to is the synoptic versions of the Gospel story in their completed form. I regard this synchronic state of the text as a given condition, deserving attention in its own right: although its origination is undoubtedly dependent on diachronic processes of editing as well as on extra-textual factors, e.g. the agenda and the audience of each of the evangelists, nevertheless, they by no means represent a unique perspective on the text’s analysis. Synchronically, details of context, order, plot and language differ from one version to another; they recall *Jon. I* in different and unique ways and contribute to diverse characterizations of Jesus (and therefore of Jonah as well) in each version.

2) Since the synchronic state of the text is the outcome of diachronic processes and historical circumstances, one cannot, on the one hand, postulate in the synchronically given text features excluded by the probabilities of its diachronic origination, and on the other hand, one cannot ignore whatever the diachrony enables the text in its given state to imply. Therefore the readings I shall suggest on the one hand

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1. *Mt. 12:38-42*, i.e. interpreting it in terms of death and resurrection (on which see below[2.1]). Isolating six contact points between the synoptic account and *Jon. I*, Cope 1976:96-98 claims that the Gospel story was undoubtedly structured, pre-synoptically, in the pattern of the Jonah story; he leaves the resemblances between the Gospel versions and *Jon. I* unexplained, concluding only that whatever they could mean, Matthew clearly used a pre-structured story for his kerygmatic purposes and did not refer to Jonah with any special purpose in mind. Similarly, van Jersel & Limmans 1978:20-21 assume a pre-synoptic (anonymous) story, which they reconstruct on the basis of Mark’s version; they admit connection to *Jon. I* because of the similar details as well as because of the common basic situation: a prophet sleeping in a boat which is about to sink, save that Jonah is a disobedient prophet who saves the ship by being thrown away, whereas the hero of the pre-synoptic anonymous miracle story is an obedient one, who saves the ship by reproaching the stormy sea. They also suggest that the story served as a narrative expansion of the statement *καὶ ἵδον πλῆθον Ιωνᾶ ὀμο οπαί ἐν Μωι 12:41 and Lk. 11:32*. Finally, Feiler 1983:404-406 suggests that since there are numerous parallels between Matthew’s account and *Jon. I*, one should apply here the ‘positive’ rabbinic image of Jonah as one who “gave himself for Israel”, which would support, in his opinion, the christological interpretation of the story (Jesus as one who saves from distress those who follow him) and not the kerygmatic one (the danger and glory of discipleship), suggested by Bornkamm 1953:52-57.

2. Note, for example, the following two diametrically opposed evaluations of his figure: in Midrash Tehillim 26:7 Jonah is given a highly laudatory characteristic as “a completely righteous man (יִשְׂרָאת רַי), who was purified by a fish who swallowed him and by deep waters, but did not die <…> ascending to Paradise alive with honor”, whereas Ṣanhedrin 89a mentions Jonah as an example for “a man who holds back his prophecy”, who is said by the Mishna to deserve to be put to death by Heaven.
will be bound to be in congruence with the christologies of the respective Gospels, and on the other hand they may and should correspond in one way or another (consent, polemic or different use of same traditions) with interpretations of the figure of Jonah contemporary with the Synoptic Gospels (ca. I CE).

3) Before I suggest the analyses of the texts and their interpretative implications themselves, I need to establish the probability of such interpretation and clarify the factors which lend it plausibility. Therefore it seems necessary first of all to elaborate on the relations between the story in the Gospels and the Jonah story, showing precisely why it cannot be either of similarity or of mere dissimilarity but must be one of polar opposition. Then it needs to be proved that the interpretative move hereby suggested cannot be automatically applied to each and every story recalling that of Jonah, in which case it would become no more than a futile intellectual game. To this end I have chosen to examine the tale about the Jewish boy stilling a storm in the Mediterranean in jBerakhoto n9a: its analysis, as well as that of two other stories, will help us clarify some additional criteria for the suggested interpretation (namely, those of message, technique and typology) which are satisfied nowhere but in the Gospel story. Only having done that, will I proceed to analyse the Gospel accounts themselves and to draw the due conclusions.

2. The nature of the relation between the stories
2.1 Evaluation of the scholarly opinions

Three tendencies in description of the relation between the Gospel account and Jon. I may be identified: some scholars describe the relation between them as one of plain similarity, and bring to the forefront features common to them both; others contend that the relation should be one of dissimilarity, putting in relief features peculiar to each story; others still maintain that the Gospel story does not relate to Jon. I at all, and consequently they endeavour to dismiss any commonness between them.

One can hardly agree with those who do not accept any relation whatsoever: even from the few parallels cited above (1.) it is manifest that the sleep of the main characters cannot be considered, in accordance with Wellhausen's claim, to be the only parallel between the stories. Moreover, it will be shown below (2.2) that the resemblance between the Gospel story and Jon. I is not, as Weiss writes, merely verbal. Similarly, Kertelge's objection that the Gospel account is "something fundamentally different" from the Jonah story can hardly be maintained: it is based on the claim that the stories differ from each other in message, but since message is, by nature, open to interpretative decisions more than structure is, it would seem implausible to discount quite numerous structural parallels on the basis of difference in message (on which see more below [3.1]).

To Bultmann's observation (see n. 1) that it is a "wandering" literary motif (of a Jew saving a shipful of Gentiles with his prayer) which reappears in the stories in question and in jBerakhoto n9a, the objection may be offered that besides the discrepancy acknowledged by Bultmann himself between the Gentiles who should man Jesus' boat and the perfectly Jewish ancestry of his shipmates, there is another one: neither Jonah nor Jesus pray (on which see more below [3.4]). Therefore one should seek another way to explain the relation between the stories.

According to Boismard (see n. 1) the story in Matthew should be read in the light of the Logion on "the Sign of Jonah", wherefore Jesus' sleep and waking up cannot fail to symbolize, in the eyes of "a Christian reader", his death and resurrection. However, confusingly enough, Jesus' death is said to be symbolized also

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3 A preliminary reservation should be made: each scholar exploited the relation he found between the stories for his particular purpose (detection of literary motifs, redactional key or the essence of the story, confirmation of its historicity etc.); no attempt to question any particular course of study was intended; my only purpose here is to discuss the relation between the stories as they are, in isolation from any specific agenda.

4 This tendency is represented by Bultmann, Boismard, Cope and Feiler (see n. 1).

5 Represented by Léon-Dufour and, prima facie, by van Iersel & Linmans (see below in this section).

6 Namely Wellhausen, Weiss and Kertelge.
by Jonah being thrown into the sea (since in both of them one may discern self-sacrifice) – even though Jesus’ sleep is well paralleled by Jonah’s sleep and not by his being thrown into the sea. Thus we have two different features symbolizing death but only one symbolizing resurrection, for in spite of the direct relation of plain parallelism between the stories assumed by Boismard, no feature in the Gospel story recalls Jonah’s being thrown into the sea in this specific sense of self-sacrifice. Therefore Boismard is bound to adduce as a parallel Jesus’ crucifixion, whose connection to our story is more than associative.

Feiler, in his direct comparison of the stories, also seems to be misled by the notion of self-sacrifice that he attributes to the figure of Jonah, referring to his rabbinical image as one who “gave himself for Israel” (see n. 1). First of all, in this particular expression “Israel” is meant in its proper sense (as opposed to the Ninevites), and it seems that broadening this notion, as Feiler does, would be far-fetched. Secondly, as I have already said, there is no detail or tendency in the Gospel account that would plausibly correspond to any detail or tendency in Jon. 1 which might be interpreted as self-sacrifice. Finally, it seems that Feiler himself realizes this, for his christological conclusion (p. 406): “Jesus is the Deliverer who saves those overwhelmed by the chaos and affliction of life” does not directly reflect virtually anything from that Jonah who “gives himself for Israel”, the image he adduced in the first place. As one can see, here too the direct relation of plain similarity assumed between the stories prevents a persuasive explanation of the connection between them.

The main champion of dissimilarity between the stories was Léon-Dufour (see n. 1), who indicated four points in which the Gospel account differs from Jon. 1: (1) Unlike the storm in the Jonah story, where “les éléments répercutent, en preuve acablante, l’infidélité de Jonas, à la Parole qui l’a envoyé”, the storm in the Gospels is unexpected and perhaps even of a demonic origin. (2) Jonah’s sleep is “un sommeil coupable”, whereas Jesus’ sleep is suggestive of high self-confidence. (3) Jonah descends to the depths and speaks only in order to impetrate rescue, whereas Jesus arises and silences the storm with his authoritative order. (4) Jon. 1 ends up with amazement at the God of the man, whereas the synoptic account finishes with amazement at the Man of God.

One can easily notice that the last point does not present a mere difference, but a precise polar opposition. As to the other points, there too, if one emends what requires emendation, pairs of opposites will be obtained: 1) Careful attention to the presentation of events in the book of Jonah itself would render the metaphorical interpretation unnecessary: the storm in Jon. 1:4 is said to be “hurled” onto the see by God, i.e. from above, whereas the storm in the Gospel account comes from below. 2) This point too depends rather on interpretation than on the text itself, since neither Jonah’s motivation for falling asleep nor that of Jesus is explicitly stated. What can be explicitly found as to Jonah’s and Jesus’ sleep is something else – namely, the temporal relation between the character’s falling asleep and the beginning of the storm: Jonah goes to the innermost parts of the ship and falls asleep when the storm has already begun,

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7 Alternatively, if one postulates Jesus’ polar opposition to Jonah, this particular detail of stilling the sea by being thrown in it is plausibly paralleled by its stilling through rebuke in the Gospel account. It is especially evident in Mark: in 4:39 Jesus uses two imperatives (στοιχεῖα, περιμένω), unparallelled in Matthew and Luke, which perfectly correspond to the two imperatives in Jon. 1:12 - ἁρπαξάτε με καὶ ἐμβάλατε με ἐκ τῆς θάλασσας. This detail, as well as others in Mark’s account, make Boismard’s claim, that in Mark the parallels are most feeble, quite hard to agree with.

8 Also Davies & Allison 1991 and Hagner 1993 on Matthew ad loc. point out that the expressions used there (as well as in the synoptical parallels) for Jesus’ reproach to the sea are strongly reminiscent of xorcistic miracles.

9 This trait is especially evident in Matthew: he describes the storm (v. 24) as σεισμός μεγάς, i.e. coming from below like an earthquake, which poses Jesus, by contrast, in a high place and correlates with his characterization in Matthew’s version. Luke, on the contrary, does not activate this opposition (καὶ κατέβης κάταλαγν άνέμου ἐς τὴν λήμνην, v. 23), because of his “horizontal” characterization of Jesus as one who would rather share the condition of his fellow human beings, which is, in a sense, perpendicular to that of Matthew (on which see at length below[5.2.3]). However, since this feature has no direct influence on Jesus’ characterization, I did not include it in my analysis below (5.1).
whereas Jesus is already sleeping when the storm begins.\textsuperscript{10} 3) Jonah’s descent to the depths does not correspond to Jesus’ arising, and his prayer in the belly of the fish does not correspond to Jesus’ reproach to the sea. Moreover, this feature is out of the range referred to in the Gospel account (\textit{Jon. I:1-16}). Jesus’ arising does not parallel any particular event in \textit{Jon. I} – immediately after the reproach of the shipmaster in v. 6 comes the casting of the lots in v. 7. The feature to which Jesus’ reproach to the sea corresponds is Jonah’s suggestion to throw him into the sea, both of them being speech acts on the part of the main character, intended to bring about the cessation of the storm (see n. 7).

Also Kertelge and van Iersel & Linmans mention the manner in which the storm becomes silenced in each story. On Kertelge see above. Van Iersel & Linmans are the only two scholars of all those mentioned above who seem to acknowledge (see n. 1) some polarity between Jesus and Jonah, although they do not deal with any other pair of opposites, nor do they say explicitly that the relation between Jesus and Jonah here is one of polar opposition. Although their wording (“the stilling of the storm ... is related to the prophet, although in \textit{differing ways}”\textsuperscript{11}) could suggest that they assume relation of mere dissimilarity between the stories, nonetheless, their whole saying implies some opposition whose implications are other than those of mere dissimilarity.

\section*{2.2 Correlations and oppositions}
Cope, Léon-Dufour and Feiler each provides his own list of correlations between the Gospel story and \textit{Jon. I}. Cope formulates these correlations in his own words, whereas Feiler and Léon-Dufour quote verses which correlate with \textit{Jon. I:3}, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, the former from Matthew’s version and the latter from a combination made up from all three versions.\textsuperscript{12} No essential difference may be found between Léon-Dufour and Feiler,\textsuperscript{13} but Cope slightly differs from them on two points. Here is the summary of their lists (numerated according to Cope):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cope</th>
<th>Feiler and Léon-Dufour</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Departure by boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A violent storm at sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A sleeping main character</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Badly frightened sailors\textsuperscript{15}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A miraculous stilling related to the main character\textsuperscript{16}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{10} Matthew marginalizes this opposition – see below (5.1.4).
\textsuperscript{11} Italics are mine.
\textsuperscript{12} This technique of mixed quotation serves Léon-Dufour’s purpose to show that correlation is possible only with a version which is fuller than each of the synoptic parallels by itself. However, the fact that Feiler succeeds in adding parallels from Matthew alone weakens the point of Léon-Dufour’s mixed quotation, or even diminishes the force of his whole argument.
\textsuperscript{13} The motifs they aim at are marked either by italicized words or by selective quotation.
\textsuperscript{14} The slight differences are due to Léon-Dufour’s mixed quotation.
\textsuperscript{15} If what Cope meant by “badly frightened sailors” was the outcome of their fright, i. e. approaching and addressing J, so be it. However, if he meant it literally, as it appears in \textit{Jon. I:5} (καὶ ἐθοβήθησαν οἱ μαθηταῖοι τῶν ἀπέραντα ἀπόλαυσις in MT), only a secondary parallel to this feature can be found in the Gospel account, namely Jesus’ accusing the disciples of cowardice (\textit{Mr. 8:26}, \textit{Mk. 4:40}, absent in Luke). Be that as it may, the feature cited by Léon-Dufour and Feiler in this paragraph is much more instructive, consisting of a complex sequence of speech and act, as compared to the plain and quite trivial emotional response mentioned by Cope.
\textsuperscript{16} It seems that Cope’s use of his own wording rather than direct quotation enables him to capture a feature which is in no way
Apart from the features cited in this table, there are two more which have not been mentioned by the scholars: the command to set off before the departure, and the interest of J’s shipmates in his identity. The Gospel account being shorter than Jon. 1 and more concise, some details in it may correspond with more than one verse in the biblical text. The interest which J’s shipmates express in his identity is the most important of those details. It is true that the amazement of the disciples in the Gospel account corresponds with the sailors’ awe in Jon. 1:16, but it seems that in fact this feature simultaneously reflects two different features in the Jonah story: the interest in his identity (vv. 7-8) and the amazement at the one who has effected the stilling of the storm (v. 16). By merging the interest expressed in J’s identity with the amazement at the miracle, the former is placed at the climactic ending of the Gospel account and thrown into stark relief.

Therefore I would suggest a fuller list of correspondences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. A command to set off</th>
<th>6./9. Expression of interest in J’s identity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Boarding a boat (not in Mark)</td>
<td>7. Miraculous stilling of the storm, connected with J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Departure</td>
<td>8. Amazement of J’s shipmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Storm and risk of drowning</td>
<td>8.1. Their awe (not in Mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. J’s sleep</td>
<td>9./6. Expression of interest in J’s identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. J’s shipmates’ address to him</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1. Their approach (not in Mark)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2. Their mention of their imminent destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3. Their request to help them survive (explicitly only in Matthew)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is easy to see that a pair of opposites underlies each of the above listed points: (1) Jonah is commanded to set off; Jesus commands to set off → an opposition of active and passive. (2) Jonah boards the ship in order to run away from his master; Jesus boards the boat together with his subordinates → an opposition of unity and separation. (2.1) Departing, Jonah disobeys the command he was given; when they depart, the disciples obey Jesus’ command → an opposition of obedience and disobedience. (3) The storm is “hurled into” the sea due to Jonah’s fault; the storm erupts spontaneously → oppositions of arranged and spontaneous, guilt and guiltlessness. (4) Jonah falls asleep when the storm is already raging; Jesus falls asleep before its eruption → a prima fácie formal opposition of temporal relations, which has, nevertheless, an essential aspect pertaining to J’s treatment of his shipmates (see below [5.1.4]), (5) (5.1) The shipmaster approaches a traveler who sleeps in his ship during a storm and scolds him; in the course of a storm, disciples wake their master → a hierarchic opposition of a man of authority to one who lacks it and vice versa. (5.2) The imminent destruction is due to Jonah’s fault; the imminent destruction has nothing to do

represented by Léon-Dufour and Feiler, namely the close relation between the stilling of the storm and the main character.

In the latter feature the correspondence is not a detailed one but that of parallel events order: amazement preceded by a miracle reflects amazement preceded by a miracle. However, in the former one the correspondence consists in more specific details: J’s shipmates address each other and wonder who he is.

The hero of the pre-synoptic miracle story reconstructed by van Iersel & Linmans (see n. 1) is characterized by them as an “obedient prophet”, whereas Jonah is dubbed a “disobedient prophet”. This can be done because the story they reconstruct is an anonymous one, and the detail of the command, as present in the synoptic parallels, is not retained in it. However, the opposition between Jesus of the synoptic accounts and Jonah is more complex: Jonah is commanded but disobeys, whereas Jesus commands and meets an obedient response.
with Jesus → an opposition of guilt and guiltlessness, identical with that in 3. (5.3) The motivation is a hope, whose irony is apparent to the reader, that the man who caused the storm will successfully pray for its cessation; the motivation is a hope, which appears to be fairly reasonable, that the only man who can save the boat will do it. The irony is manifest to the reader alone, whereas the emotional implication of applying to Jesus in distress is shared by the disciples as well, which renders this opposition asymmetrical. Nevertheless, another underlying opposition, that of cause of distress vs. cause of salvation, seems to be symmetrical enough. This opposition is thrown in sharp relief in (6/9): in Jon. 1 J’s shipmates wonder who is the man who caused the distress to which they are subjected, whereas in the Gospel account they wonder about the man who became their saviour.¹⁹ Jonah stills the waters in a passive manner, by sinking into them; Jesus stills them actively, by reproaching them → oppositions of active and passive²⁰ and of control and submission.²¹ The opposition which underlies (8), (8.1) has been worded with great accuracy (although not qua opposition) by Léon-Dufour: “... ’les hommes’ admirent dans un cas le Dieu de Jonas, dans l’autre l’homme de Dieu”. This formulation can even be slightly emended for our purposes, with no harm to its meaning: “les hommes’ admirent dans un cas le Dieu de l’homme, dans l’autre l’homme de Dieu”.

Another three oppositions are to be added: in order to sleep, Jonah goes away to the innermost parts of the ship; Jesus falls asleep just where he is → an opposition of resting in one’s place and displacement.²² Jonah’s self-presentation (in the LXX) is as follows: δοῦλος κυρίου ἐγώ εἰμι ... ὡς ἐποίησεν τὴν θάλασσαν κτλ – “I am the servant of the Lord ... who created the sea” etc.; the wonder about Jesus’ identity results from the fact that he commands the wind and the water, and they obey him → a hierarchic opposition of authority and subervience (cf. 5., 5.1, 7.). Jonah is reproached by his shipmates (“what is this that thou hast done?”, v. 10); Jesus reproaches his shipmates → an opposition of active and passive, a hierarchic opposition (cf. similar oppositions above).

Thus, at least at the level of its building blocks, the Gospel account seems to present a Jesus whose characterization is diametrically opposed to that of Jonah in Jon. 1. Two oppositions recur time and again: the hierarchic opposition and that of active and passive. Therefore it can be said that the basic opposition, common to all three synoptic versions, is that of Jesus as one who possesses agency and authority, as opposed to Jonah, who lacks them both. However, just as the nuances of Jesus’ characterization differ from one version to another, so too Jonah is diversely characterized by the reverse application of Jesus’ characteristics in every version of the story. On this see at length below (5.2).

Now that we established the polar opposition between Jesus and Jonah at the level of the building blocks of the story, we shall proceed and establish it at the levels of message, technique and typology. This will be done by a comparative discussion of another story based on Jon. 1, namely the story of the Jewish boy in jBerakhor 9a, and two other stories.

3. Additional criteria: the Gospel story as compared to other storm-stilling stories

¹⁹ Van Iersel & Linmans (p. 18) remark that this pericope is the only one in the synoptic Gospels that relates about Jesus saving his own disciples from distress.

²⁰ Unlike the opposition of guilt and guiltlessness in 3. and 5.2, which underly the same feature, (J’s responsibility for the storm), the oppositions of active and passive here and in 1. underly two different features (the command to set off in 1. and the stilling of the storm here), thus seemingly creating a pattern.

²¹ Similarly, the opposition of exercising and accepting authority in 5., 5.1 and that of control and submission here create a pattern. See also the next one.

²² This opposition does not consist in features of plot but in the difference between the mise-en-scènes (a fishing boat vs. a merchant ship). Nevertheless, since Jonah’s manner of action is not inevitably predicted by the mise-en-scène, this opposition can still be retained as a secondary one.
In *jBerakhot* 9a r. Tanchuma relates a story, whose reference to the Jonah story is fairly obvious: a Jewish boy travels in the Mediterranean on a ship full of Gentiles. When the ship becomes endangered by a “great storm in the sea” (*Jon. 1:6*), the passengers apply each to his gods, but to no effect. Then the shipmaster addresses the boy: “My son, arise and call upon your God (*Jon. 1:6*), since we have heard that He responds when you cry out to him and that he is mighty”. The boy prays and the sea becomes calm. Having disembarked, the passengers wonder why the boy does not buy anything, and to his reply “What do you want of me? I am just a poor traveler” they wonderfully respond: “You are the poor traveler? Those men (i.e. the speakers) are the poor travelers! Some are here, but their revered ones (i.e. their deities) are in Babylon, some are here, but their revered ones are in Rome and yet others are here and have their revered ones with them, but they are of no use to them. But you – wherever you go, your God is with you.”

So, should one force on this story a reversing interpretation? Indeed the correspondences, and therefore the possible oppositions, are less numerous than in the Gospel story. Nevertheless, one might contend that unlike Jonah, the Jewish boy does not escape from a mission that was imposed on him, his presence does not cause the storm, he does not separate himself from his shipmates falling asleep, having accepted the shipmaster’s request he prays, and thus he even becomes the savior of the ship. If so, should one conclude that since the characterization of the Jewish boy is opposed to that of Jonah in quite a few features, and since having admitted that he is the opposite of Jonah one must admit that Jonah is his opposite as well, it is possible to plausibly deduce by inversion a characterization of Jonah from the characterization of the Jewish boy?

I would like to show that for several reasons one cannot claim this: (1) The story has a fairly obvious main point, which cannot, when applied in reverse, affect Jonah’s characterization in *Jon. 1*. (2) The use of the biblical intertext in this story is not one of inversion, but rather a careful drawing out of the suitable threads of the plot. (3) The main character of this story has no significant characterization which would reflect a somewhat developed reverse characterization of Jonah. (4) The plot model of this story is unmarked, whereas the Gospel story and the Jonah story are diversely marked. Thus, in the course of our discussion another four criteria for the validity of the application of the reverse interpretation to the Gospel story will be clarified. After dwelling upon these criteria with reference to the story in *jBerakhot* 9a, I will apply my conclusions to two further stories.

### 3.1 Main point of the story

Since *Jon. 1* is the object of interpretation, we shall not determine in advance what its main point is, but we need to understand what the main points of the story of the Jewish boy and the Gospel story are respectively, and then we need to read them back into the Jonah story. Both of these stories have a structural feature which may be of help in determining their main points, namely the crescendo with which each of them ends. I shall show how this feature indicates what the main point of each story is and how each of the main points behaves when reversely applied to the Jonah story.

As I have shown above (2.2), the interest in the identity of the main character and the amazement at the miracle, two separate features in the Jonah story, merged in the Gospels and were placed at the climactic

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23 Unless otherwise stated, all translations and paraphrases from Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, here and below, are mine.
24 Thus Tzvee Zahavy *ad loc.* renders the phrase נא קרא นาย הנע של העבד (J. Neusner (ed.), *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, vol. 1, 1989).
25 Of course, most of the oppositions listed here are feeble, since none of them presents a true pair of opposites (±n), but rather the presence and absence of the same characteristic (*m*±*n*); although this consideration weakens the validity of the reverse interpretation in this story, nevertheless, it does not utterly revoke it. On the last opposition, see at length below.
26 The notion of markedness, coined by the Prague School structuralists, is originally applied in linguistics and cultural studies to denote oppositions of uncommon (marked) vs. common (unmarked) features. Here it is applied to plot models, the common model being referred to as unmarked, whereas deviations from it are referred to as marked.
ending of the story, thus serving as its punchline. But even with no reference to the Jonah story, one can easily recognize in the Gospel account its christological orientation or, to put it in more general terms, its preoccupation with highlighting some particular aspects in its main character’s figure. The ending of the story is of great importance since it indicates which of the details of the story functions as a central feature, on which the whole story focuses.28

Conversely applied, a story thematically concerned with the significance of its main character can be meaningfully and variously applied in the interpretation of Jonah’s figure in Jon. 1: he is the man who, having boarded the ship, almost caused its destruction, who did virtually nothing to save it until the lot fell to him, who evoked interest as the cause of distress and whose being thrown overboard was required in order to render the sea calm again.29

Now, what are the building blocks of the story in ḥerakahṭ 9a and what features are put into relief in its climactic ending? One can find here a Jew among Gentiles, travelling by sea, a storm, an ineffective supplication of the Gentiles to their gods, a shipmaster bidding the Jew to pray, an effective prayer of the latter to his God, then his self-diminishing which, finally, arouses a response of wonder on the part of the Gentiles. This response is, in effect, the crescendo of the story: the Gentiles, whose gods have proven to be remote and unresponsive, are compared with the Jew, whose God has proven to be both close and responsive. Thus one may reasonably conclude that the main point of this story is the closeness and responsiveness of the God of Israel to his people, as opposed to the deafness and remoteness of the gods of the Gentiles. Significantly, the ending of the story is accompanied by a quotation from Deut. 4:7: “this is

27 Thus, beyond dispute, in Mark and Luke. As to Matthew’s account, although it is hard to discount Bornkamm’s suggestion as to its kerygmatic orientation, all the same it does not seem to be true to the exclusion of the christological reading. A very strong argument for the kerygmatic reading has been adduced by van Iersel & Limmans (p. 25f): only thus, they say, can one explain the incorporation of the two brief dialogues in vv. 19-22, absent from Mark (and located by Luke elsewhere), into the story. This argument is acceptable indeed, but it seems that some others cannot be maintained: they claim (p. 40f, with Bornkamm, p. 56) that ὁ άντιροποι who marvel at the miracle in v. 27 are not the disciples, who have already acknowledged Jesus’ authority by addressing him as κύριοι (v. 38), but a third group (according to Bornkamm, they are those who heard about the miraculous deed afterwards). Moreover, since Jesus was already addressed κύριοι, Matthew was bound to substitute the wondering τίς (Mk. 4:41, Lk. 8:25) with a milder πονηρός (v. 27). Now the introduction of a new group of agents into the story near its end seems to be far-fetched and it is unparalleled elsewhere. Matthew’s peculiar usage can rather be understood as implying that Jesus is more than a mere human (Gundry ap. Davies & Allison ad loc.) or explained by the fact that the disciples were not “the twelve” by that time (Hagner ad loc.). Again, πονηρός is not necessarily a “milder” variant of τίς since the disciples already know who Jesus is (as manifest from their form of address), they, as expected, do not wonder about it, but rather ask what kind of man he is. Hagner ad loc. even suggests that πονηρός should make the christological implication of their exclamation more pronounced. But still another two objections can be made: (1) If Matthew gave this exclamation to a third group, why should he tone it down? And vice versa, if he toned it down, why should he introduce a third group? (2) Be the percise difference between τίς and πονηρός as it may, it does not affect the basic fact that this exclamation expresses wonder about Jesus’ figure, located at the climactic ending of the story; were it so inconsistent with Matthew’s purpose in using this story, he could utterly omit it. Therefore I would suggest that though the motif of following Jesus is undoubtedly cardinal to Matthew’s version of the story (on which see at length below [5.2.1]), it only lends it a colouring, but by no means excludes its main, christological, point.

28 As far as structure alone is concerned, there is a multiple choice among details which might be reiterated at the ending: obedience to the teacher, departure, the teacher’s sleep, storm, the disciples’ fright, stilling of the storm, the teacher’s reproach to the disciples. The story could, with equal plausibility, end with, say, a remark that the disciples did not travel by sea ever since, with their reaction to Jesus’ reproach (regret and the like), with Jesus falling asleep again and so on. Therefore this specific ending, not being necessarily required structurally and therefore retaining its full denotative force, becomes a powerful suggestion as to the main point of the story.

29 Even if one adopts Bornkamm’s reading, the series of hierarchical oppositions, especially prominent in Matthew (e. g. δοῦλος→κύριος) enables one to meaningfully apply this reading to Jonah’s figure: if Matthew’s account focuses on the danger and glory in following Jesus, Jon. 1 can be read as a story about the danger and disgrace of running away from God. Although such a reading is less oriented towards Jonah’s figure per se, still, it is he who escapes God, experiencing all the dangers and disgrace of it, and therefore his figure is fairly central to such an interpretation.
what has been said ‘... like Lord, our God, whenever we call upon him’”. Taken with the omitted opening part of the verse – “For who is the great nation who has its gods close at hand” – it leaves no room for doubt as to the point intended to be made.

Conversely applied, such thematic concern may yield a reading of Jon. I which focuses on the greatness of Jonah’s God as compared to the impotence of the gods of the sailors: the sailors cry out each to his god to no effect, then they find out that the storm is caused by the presence of a man who runs away from “Lord, God of heaven ... who created the sea and the land”, they acknowledge his power, implore him not to charge them with the blood of the runaway if they throw him overboard and finally, marveling at the miraculous stilling of the storm, they sacrifice and make vows to Him. The only relevant feature in Jonah’s characterization remains his connection with the God of Israel, whereas the other complexities of his figure become of no importance, and therefore remain unaffected by interpretative implications. Therefore unlike the Gospel story, the story of the Jewish boy is unable, when conversely applied, to affect Jonah’s characterization.

3.2 Use of the biblical intertext

Having concluded that the Gospel story focuses on the figure of its enigmatic main character who exercises power even upon the forces of nature, one may easily detect the way this story uses its biblical intertext, whose main character controls neither nature nor his own destiny and whose figure evokes a kind of interest diametrically opposed to that evoked by the figure of Jesus. Using the Jonah story by inversion, the Gospel story is certainly able to apply these inverted relations back to its biblical intertext.

The story in jBerakhot 9a refers to Jon. I by using two explicit quotations. It is revealing how these two quotations function in the development of the plot. Prior to the first one – “a great storm at sea” – the information supplied to the reader is as follows: a ship is sailing in the Mediterranean, whose passengers are all Gentiles except for one Jewish boy. These details by no means suffice to refer the reader to the Jonah story to the exclusion of other stories, or even to signal that it is the topos of storm stilling that is about to be used. Such an opening could similarly introduce a story dealing with other aspects of the relations between Jews and Gentiles, such as captivity or the like (cf. the story in bGittin 57b about the four hundred boys and girls); even if one supposed at this point that the Jewish boy must have functioned as the saviour of the ship, other biblical intertexts are available, such as the story about Joseph in Egypt or the “poor and wise man” who “saved the city by his wisdom” in Ecc1. 9:15. Therefore this first quotation is the one detail which links the plot of this story textually, but also thematically, with the Jonah story to the exception of other possibilities. The reason why this rather than another verse was used for this purpose appears to be quite simple: these are the first words in Jon. I which would link our story to it without introducing unrelated features, such as mission, running away or initiated storm aimed at hindering the runaway. The same applies to the second quotation: “arise and cry out to your God” are the first words in Jon. I to introduce the theme with which our story is concerned, namely the uniqueness of the power exercised by the God of Israel, compared to the deities of Gentiles. All previous occurrences of the name of God appear in other contexts, and only here, after the prayers of the sailors proved to be ineffective, does the shipmaster, waking Jonah in hope that his God will be of help to the ship, mention Him in this particular sense. Before and after this quotation, the plot of the story in jBerakhot 9a picks up from the plot of Jon. I only what is relevant to its main point: the cry of the sailors to their gods, the request of the shipmaster that the Jew pray to his God, the stilling of the storm (by prayer, not by throwing the Jew overboard) and the sailors’ response of wonder.

Therefore one is bound to conclude that such a direct, though accurate and selective, manner of reference to the biblical intertext supplies no basis for reverse application; rather it picks up the ends of the relevant threads in the plot of the biblical story, so that the educated reader can easily proceed along them.
3.3 Significance and elaboration of the main character

In order to enable a reverse application of its characterization to the figure of Jonah, the main character of a story based upon Jon. I must be adequately elaborated, otherwise the reverse application of its features will not yield any significant characterization of Jonah. So far, enough has been said on the significance of the figure of Jesus to the plot of the Gospel story. Now what do we find in Berakhot 9a? Boring, Berger & Colpe (1995) ad loc., quoting the story of the Jewish boy, remark:

In the New Testament, the story is christological. In the talmudic story the miracle is no less spectacular, but has a different point. The little Jewish boy has no religious status confirmed by the miracle, but the role of Israel in the world among the idolatrous nations is illustrated. Though the miracle itself is similar to that of the Gospels, its function is closer to that of Jonah 1:1-16 than to the Gospel story.

Although the functional affinity of the miracle in the Talmudic story to that of Jon. I can only barely be maintained (since in the Jonah story it is a cessation of a storm which is no longer necessary rather than a genuine storm-stilling miracle), as to the significance of the Jewish boy the point has been made by Boring et al. with great accuracy, for the following reasons.

Three factors lessen the significance of the character of the Jewish boy: (1) The very fact that the main opposition to which the story points is one between Israel and the nations. In this respect the only important feature of his character is his being a Jew, the other features being absent or of little importance. (2) In order to highlight this cardinal opposition, the Jew is characterized here as a self-deprecating little child, with the aim of showing how even the worthless ones of Israel are attended by their God, whereas respected Gentiles are forsaken by their deities. This functionally understandable diminishing of the boy’s figure renders him, however, less elaborated and less interesting as a character. (3) As I have already mentioned, not all of the features of the Jonah story are reflected in the story in question; if one examines the omitted features, one discovers that these are all features which could lend the main character some interest: the Jewish boy does not run away, does not cause the storm, does not fall asleep when the storm erupts, he prays immediately when he is requested to do so and does not garner any interest even when the storm calms down as a result of his prayer, until he provokes his shipmates’ response by self-deprecation. Therefore one is to conclude that the figure of the Jewish child does not have a minimum of elaboration which would enable it, when reversely applied, to reflect any significant characterization of the figure of Jonah.

3.4 Plot model

Boring et al. ad loc., quoting two stories from Lucian, where the storm is stilled by the Dioscuri, suggest to divide the storm-stilling stories in two types: those in which the storm is stilled by a deity and those in which it is a human miracle worker who calms the storm down. The Jonah story, they say, represents a middle model, since on the one hand God is the one who stills the storm, but on the other hand it is Jonah’s prayer that brings the miracle about. Two problems prevent us from accepting this division. The first is that the references to storm-stilling θεῖος ἀνήρ, as adduced by them (other than from the NT) are no more than mere mentions of the matter, and none of them is a real narration. The second is that Jonah does not pray. Let us elaborate on this at some length.

Bultmann (p. 237f) quotes a series of Hellenistic stories about storm-stilling miracles performed by deities, remarking: “I do not know of any miracle story where the stilling of a storm has been ascribed to a θεῖος ἀνθρωπος, a saviour”. As exceptions he cites Porphyry, De vita Pythagorae 29 and Iamblichus, De vita Pythagorae 135, which are adduced by Boring et al. as well. However, as I have said, these are no more than statements about some faculty that Pythagoras had, but by no means narratives elaborated to any extent. Also Léon-Dufour (p. 155) writes that dans le folklore grec, l’apaisement de la tempête est un
It appears from the data cited above that in almost all storm-stilling stories, Jewish and Hellenistic, in which any of the travellers (as opposed to external forces, like deities) is endowed with any amount of agency, it consists in the ability to successfully pray to a deity or to placate it in some other way. Therefore I suggest identifying this type of plot (Departure → Storm → Prayer → Stilling of the Storm) as belonging to the middle, i.e. unmarked, model. It is according to this middle model that the story in *j*Berakhot 9a is structured.

As to Jonah’s prayer: anyone who will somewhat accurately examine *Jon. I*, will find no mention, either explicit or implicit, of any prayer on the part of Jonah. He is requested to pray, but he does not do so—perhaps because he knows that as long as he is on his way to Tharsis, no prayer will help whatsoever. Therefore it is somewhat perplexing not only that Boring et al. refer to Jonah’s prayer, but also that Bultmann (see n. 1) ascribes the Jonah story to the pattern of “a Jew asleep in a heathen ship during a storm, who then brings the storm to an end by calling on his God”. Moreover, Kertelge (p. 96) who rejects the ascription of the Gospel story to this pattern, since it deals with epiphany, contrasts it with *Jon. I* and *j*Berakhot 9a, where “um eine Gebetshörung ... geht” — which also can hardly be maintained. In *Jon. I* Jonah does not pray. He prays later, in the belly of the fish – which has, however, nothing to do with storm stilling, Jonah’s tactic for appeasing the storm is to suggest that the sailors throw him overboard and becoming thrown overboard in practice. Therefore the plot of the Jonah story deviates from the middle model and becomes negatively marked: the possibility of a prayer is voiced (“arise and cry out to thy God”), but remains unrealized, since Jonah knows that he is unable to stop the storm even by his prayer.

Now, what is the model of the Gospel story? Guelich (1989) on Mark ad loc. suggests that a cry for help underlies the impatient address of the disciples διώκαστα, ού μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ πολλύμεθα, or even a demand that Jesus pray for them. But be that as it may, he adds, the awe with which they react to the miracle and their amazed question in v. 41 unequivocally indicate that Jesus acted against their expectations. However, one should note that Mark’s account is not the only one in which the awe and the amazed question occur – both these moves constitute the ending of each of the synoptic parallels and indicate that in whatever manner the disciples expected Jesus to act in each of the accounts, it was not the stilling of the storm by an authoritative command. It would be reasonable to assume that the disciples, being experienced fishermen and having sailed under various weather conditions, before waking their teacher, did whatever could be normally and naturally done, and by the time they woke him, they were expecting a supernormal succour. Having accepted that they were not, however, expecting Jesus to still the storm on his own, one must agree that this supernormal succour could be nothing but a successful prayer. But, as is well known, Jesus does not pray — prayer is of no necessity to him, since he is able to still the waters without it as well. Therefore the Gospel story too deviates from the middle model at the point where prayer is expected, and becomes marked in a positive manner.

It becomes clear that the story in *j*Berakhot 9a represents the unmarked middle model, whereas the Jonah story and the Gospel story deviate from it in two opposite directions; thus another aspect of the polar opposition between them becomes manifest:

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30 Italics are mine.
31 I find it rather strange, since this story is neither a storm-stilling story nor does it belong to the Jewish tradition.
32 Italics are mine.
33 Italics are mine. One cannot contend that Kertelge meant the prayer of the sailors in v. 14, since they do not pray for storm stilling, but for their absolution from the sin of drowning Jonah.
If the argument so far is right, the criterion of the plot model seems to be closely connected with the criterion dealt with in 3.3, namely the significance and elaboration of the main character. A main character who acts in an expected way fits into the unmarked model and therefore does not draw, at least at this point, any special attention. But if at the point when the main character is expected to pray he does not do so, this choice lends him interest and focuses the reader’s attention on him. Therefore the prayer of the variously flattened and diminished Jewish child does not render him any more significant – quite the contrary. And vice versa, the figures of Jonah and Jesus, who do not pray when they are expected to, are thus strongly highlighted, one for the better and the other for the worse.

### 3.5 Other stories

Two other stories, one Jewish and one Greek are added to the general discussion: a Jewish story about stilling the storm by Rabban Gamaliel, and a Greek story from the Aesopian corpus (Perry 78) which nicely demonstrates how a story belonging to the unmarked model may completely lack any main character whatsoever.

The story in bBaba Metzia 59b runs as follows:

Also, Rabban Gamaliel was sailing in a ship, when a billow arose against him and threatened to drown him. He said: ‘It seems to me that it is because of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hycanus’. Then, having stood up, he said: ‘Master of the Universe! It is well known to you that I have done it neither for my own honour, nor for the honor of my dynasty, but for your honor – lest controversies multiply in Israel’. Then the sea desisted from its rage.

The schematic nature of the story’s structure is obvious, therefore its ability to make a meaningful reference to the Jonah story is limited. Its only textual reference to it – the words “the sea ... from its rage” – hardly “imports” from Jon. I any distinctive meaning. However, let us explore what the main point of the story is and what role its main character is given. This story is set within a sequence of stories dealing with the controversy between Rabbi Eliezer and Sages concerning the oven of Akhnai; Rabbi Eliezer becomes excommunicated by Rabban Gamaliel because of his steady rejection of the opinion of his colleagues and because of his attempts to show that the law should be set according to his opinion by adducing evidence of supernatural character. The main opposition in this series of stories is that of Rabbi Eliezer’s supernatural power on the one hand, and the authority of the Sages to set the law in accordance with the accepted procedure of following the majority on the other hand. The same tension underlies our story: the hurt felt by Rabbi Eliezer “materializes” in a billow which threatens the nasi, i.e. the highest authority among the Sages. In his prayer, Rabban Gamaliel unequivocally declares that as a counterbalance to Rabbi Eliezer’s immense power he does not set his own personal or dynastic honour, but the implementation of the Sages’ authority by an accepted procedure, intended to serve the public good – a declaration which finally causes the cessation of the storm. Thus one is able to conclude that the main

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34 It is more manifest in the Hebrew original, whose style is coarsely paratactic and asyndetic – features which I have slightly “softened” in my translation.

35 In the next story of the sequence the prayer of the insulted Rabbi Eliezer when prostrated during the takhanun proves to be powerful enough to cause Rabban Gamaliel’s death.
point of this brief story is favouring the authority of the Sages even when a power hostile to it endangers their chief. Now, ground common to this story and to that of the Jewish boy can be discerned: in *jBerakhot* 9a the superiority of group A (Israel) to group B (Nations) was demonstrated *a fortiori* by the establishing of the superiority of a junior individual of A to non-junior individuals of B; in our story, the superiority of group A (Sages) is established by the preference of its authority to the personal and dynastic dignity, declared by its senior individual. In both cases the words, the acts and the status of the individual are only exploited to demonstrate the supremacy of the collective to which he belongs. This specific usage of whatever could characterize the main figure, deprives it of its significance as a character in and of itself – be it the figure’s seniority or inferiority which is utilized for this purpose. As to the plot model of the story, it obviously belongs to the middle model.

The Aesopic fable is much more similar to the Jonah story than the story in *bBaba Metzia* 59b. The precise historical relations between them (influence by one another, common origin, a wandering plot or none of these) await to be determined. It runs as follows:

Some people boarded a boat and were sailing along. When they reached the open sea, it happened that a violent storm began and the ship was about to sink. Then one of the passengers (*τὸν δὲ παλαίντοις ἔτερον*) tore his garments and cried out to his paternal gods with groaning and wailing, promising to repay [them] thank-offerings if they (the travelers) survive. Having the storm calmed and the stillness recovered, they became cheerful and were leaping and dancing, since they had truly been saved from an unexpected [disaster]. But the skipper, being a stiff fellow, said to them: “Friends, you should rejoice just as if the storm will, possibly, recur”. The story teaches us not to become overly excited by our good luck, considering the fortune’s impermanence.

This story exhibits all the basic features – departure, storm, prayer and storm stilling – and besides some other features present in the Jonah story as well, like the danger of sinking and the skipper’s reproach. Its plot model, as can easily be seen, is the middle model. The main point too does not require scrutiny, being explicitly pronounced at the moral with which the fable ends. What is of interest is the virtual absence of a main character. The only substance that “one of the passengers” has is that of a placeholder to which the story is the virtual absence of a main character. The only substance that “one of the passengers” has is that of a placeholder to which the story is ascribed. No one is impressed by the efficacy of his prayer or by the responsiveness of his “paternal gods”. The cardinal tension, that between the gay passengers and the tough skipper, is not about the prayer or its impact, but about the attitude towards what comes hereafter, namely the stillness of the sea. The praying passenger himself, having done what had to be done, disappears from the story immediately afterwards. This story is an extreme case which nicely demonstrates what has been asserted above (3.4): there is a direct proportion between the unmarked model of a storm stilling story and the marginalization of its main character; and *vice versa*, a deviation from this model draws attention to the main character and contributes to its elaboration.

4. Contemporary images of Jonah

Before analysing the Gospel accounts in the hope of eliciting from them some images of Jonah, we are to set before us, as a background, the inventory of Jonah’s characteristics available in the contemporary literature. In 3 Maccabees 6:8, Jonah is mentioned as a family man. Eleazar, in his prayer upon an anti-Jewish decree issued by Ptolemy IV, says *i.a.*: “Again, having looked at Jonah, when he was languishing in the belly

36 His only occurrence in the singular is accompanied by a *genitivus partitivus*, and already in the conditional clause, dependent on the only sentence he “inhabits”, the plural is used again.

37 The inventory of contemporary interpretations of Jonah’s image suggested here draws upon Chow 1995:25-42

38 A Greek work, apparently composed in Alexandria in the 1st century BC.
of a sea monster living in the depths, you presented him safe and sound back to his family members, Father.”

So also in Vitae Prophetarum one finds a mention of Jonah’s family: Jonah’s mother is a widow, and having returned from Nineveh he takes her with him and flees to Tyre, in order to avoid being scorned as a false prophet. There he dies, but Elijah resurrects him, “because he wanted to show him that he cannot escape God”. When his mother dies, he returns to Eretz Israel, and before his death he gives a “sign on Jerusalem”: when a stone cries out, the end will be close at hand; when all the nations are seen in her, the city will be destroyed to the ground.

However, three additional aspects of Jonah’s figure emerge from this account:

1. One who is characterized by displacement in his words and deeds: not fulfilled, his prophecy “missed the target”, and therefore he himself was removed from his place and went to live in exile immediately upon his return home.
2. A recalcitrant pupil, who needs to be taught time and again: He learned naught from his failure in fleeing to Tharsis, and therefore he was to be taught again by his resurrection from the dead.
3. A “recidivist” apocalypse prophet, who repeatedly prophesies destruction of cities.

Also in the Homily on Jonah (De Jona) he appears as a reluctant and slow-witted pupil: the intention of the merciful God was to cure the Ninevites’ diseases, teaching them a good way of life, but first he had to remove the twisted nature of Jonah’s heart: the storm and the big fish are presented not as punitive devices, but as educational tools, whose aim was to make Jonah to acknowledge the truth. But when the Ninevites repent, Jonah resents their rescue from destruction. God teaches him again, explaining that neither he nor Jonah lied: the destruction which he has been told to prophesy was that of the Ninevites’ vice. Jonah is not satisfied with this explanation and God needs to teach him again a lesson in mercy and lenience by the growing and the withering of the gourd.

39 Similarly, in M. Taanit 2:4 Jonah is presented in a liturgical context as one whose prayer was accepted. Chow (pp. 41f) cites Correns, who considers this tradition to be an early one, since the wording of the blessing explicitly mentions the name of God.

40 An apocryphal book dealing with the lives and the passing away of the biblical prophets. Here I have consulted the text of T. Schermann, Prophetarum vitae fabulosae, Leipzig, 1907, who uses the Recensio anonyma (X CE), known for its relatively few corruptions. There is no consensus as to the origin and the original language of this work. This disagreement is dependent on the question of dating. Of course, Jewish origin and early dating do not automatically exclude an original written in Greek. So holds A. M. Schwenmer; according to her, the book was originally written in Greek by a Jew, ca. I CE in Palestine, but later on Christian interpolations were made in it. On the other hand, D. Satran contends that it was written much later, namely IV CE, not in Palestine but in Byzantium. What Schwenmer considers to be late interpolations are, in Satran’s opinion, much more coherent tendencies than could be ascribed to merely casual additions. Be that as it may, the question of dating has not been conclusively answered yet. Among other considerations adduced for early dating can be mentioned the fact that the book contains no hint of the destruction of the second Temple, as well as its reference to the Spring of Siloam as located outside the wall of Jerusalem (between 41-44 Herod Agrippa replaced the wall to the south of the Spring, including it in the town). For other considerations and details see Enns, P., s.v. „Lives of the Prophets’” in The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism, ebd. J. J. Collins & C. C. Harlow, Michigan – Cambridge 2010

41 This tradition about Jonah as the son of the widow from Zarephath (1 Kings 17) is cited in other sources as well, for example in Middath Tehillim 267.

An entirely different image of Jonah is presented by Josephus in *Antiquitates Judaicae* 9.205-214: Jonah prophesies to Jeroboam that he is to attack the Syrians so he can expand his kingdom, and the prophecy comes true when Jeroboam succeeds in his conquests.\(^4\) Then he is bid to prophesy to Ninos’ kingdom (i.e. to Nineveh) that it will lose its dominion, but he becomes scared and flees to Tarsos of Cilicia (i.e. Tharsis). When a storm begins and his shipmates vow thank-offerings (ἐὐχὰς ἐποιοῦντο χαριστηρίους) to their gods if they are saved, Jonah hides and prostrates himself (συγκαλύπτας αὐτὸν ἐβέβλητο), refraining from imitating his shipmates’ actions.\(^4\) The sailors, suspecting that one of the passengers is responsible to the storm, cast a lot, which falls on Jonah. Having been asked about his identity, he professes to be “a Hebrew by nation and a prophet of the greatest God”. Then he advices them to throw him overboard, but they are reluctant to do so, since it is an abomination (ἀσέβημα) for one to throw overboard a man who entrusted one his life. However, pressed hard by the misfortune and encouraged by Jonah himself, they finally do so. The fish spits Jonah out safe and sound, he asks forgiveness for his sin, goes to the city of Ninos and having situated himself in a place where his voice could be heard (σταθεὶς εἰς ἐπίκουον) he proclaims that they will lose their dominion over Asia very soon.\(^5\) Having accomplished this, he returns back home.

Here we find a Jonah, whose prophecies are not exclusively apocalyptic; moreover, all of them come true. He proves to be a man who would not selfishly fall asleep when a storm is raging; it is true, his devotion to Judaism does not allow him to imitate his shipmates’ prayers, but he altruistically insists they save themselves by casting him overboard. His loyalty to his nation and his God find further expression in his self-definition; though by giving Jonah the words “a Hebrew by nation” Josephus only follows the MT (“I am a Hebrew”, *Jon. 1:9*), the detail of his being “the prophet of the greatest God” is peculiar to Josephus’ account and cannot be found elsewhere. It seems that Jonah’s being first and foremost a Prophet is the central feature in Josephus’ characterization. And vice versa, Josephus omits every detail in the biblical account which could humiliate Jonah in some way: he does not fall asleep, no one wakes him up with a reproach, his very briefly mentioned stay in the belly of the fish is referred to as a hearsay (τὸν δὲ λόγον ὑπὸ τοῦ κῆπους καταποθέντα κτλ), whereas his emergence safe and sound is brought to the forefront. His prophecy comes true, and the whole part dealing with his staying out of Nineveh (*Jon. 4*) is omitted.

Let us then sum up the inventory of Jonah’s characteristics that can be expected in the background of his reversed characterizations in the Gospels: In *3Maccabees* as well as in *Vitae Prophetarum* there is a reference to Jonah’s family. Also, in *3Maccabees* and in *M. Taanit* Jonah appears as one whose prayer has been accepted. In *De Jona*, and also in *Vitae Prophetarum*, Jonah is depicted as an unworthy pupil. Another traits that emerge from the account in *Vitae Prophetarum* are displacement in word and deed, propensity for apocalypse prophecies and uttering of prophecies which do not eventually become fulfilled. Quite the opposite portrait of Jonah is offered by Josephus: his prophecies are not only apocalyptic and eventually come true (the latter can be noted in *De Jona* as well); moreover, although not displaying alienation towards his shipmates, he remains a faithful Jew. With this inventory in mind, let us approach the analysis of the Gospel accounts.

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\(^{4}\) In accordance with 2 *Kings* 12:25

\(^{4}\) I.e. from vowing to their gods – so Feldman 1998:407

\(^{5}\) Feldman, p. 402 n. 15, cites Begg who suggests that Josephus brings (9.239-242) Nahum’s prophecy on Nineveh in order to reinforce Jonah’s prophecy and to show that it eventually came true. Also, writes Feldman (p. 401f), Josephus intentionally omits the scene of the Ninevites’ repentence, in order to avoid the contradiction between God’s mercy upon their city and its eventual destruction.
5. Jesus’ characterizations in the Gospel accounts and Jonah’s images reflected by them

5.1 Comparative examination of the synoptic parallels

In this chapter I would like to offer a comparative examination of seven key points in the three synoptic versions of the Gospel story. The unique choices of each evangelist in these seven points supply a cumulative evidence to a distinct tendency in Jesus’ characterization. Having compared the versions in these seven points, I will draw conclusions as to Jesus’ characterization in each of them and, consequently, as to the underlying images of Jonah.

The seven points are (1) Jesus’ actions immediately before the departure; (2) Jesus’ command to cross the Sea of Galilee; (3) Boarding; (4) Jesus’ sleep; (5) The disciples’ address to Jesus; (6) Jesus’ response; (7) The disciples’ response.

5.1.1 Jesus’ actions before the departure

In Matthew, on the evening of departure Jesus heals a large number of demoniacs (8:15-16). After he bids his disciples to depart, two men approach him: some scribe (εἰς γραμματεύς, v. 19) and one of his disciples (ἔτερος τῶν μαθητῶν, v. 21). The former declares that he will follow Jesus wherever he goes, but Jesus replies (v. 20): “foxes have lairs and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man does not have where to lay down his head”. The disciple asks permission to bury his father before he joins Jesus, but he replies (v. 22): “follow me and let the dead bury their own dead”. This episode is unparalleled in Mark, and Luke has it elsewhere (9:57-62).

In Mark the story happens at evening, after a day during which Jesus taught the crowd using parables (4:2, 33). He begins to teach standing on the shore, but because of the multitude of listeners, he withdraws to a boat, where he sits down and keeps teaching the people on the shore (4:1). In the synoptic parallels Jesus does not enter the boat until he intends to depart.

Luke has the same parables as Mark (8:4-18), but between them and our story an episode intervenes, paralleled in both Matthew and Mark elsewhere (Mt. 12:46-50, Mk. 3:31-35): Jesus’ mother and brothers want to see him, but cannot enter the house because of the multitude of people; when Jesus becomes informed about their coming, he responds: “my mother and brethren are these men, who listen to the word of God and do it”. It is true that this does not happen immediately before the departure, the description of which starts with Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν μηδὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν; however, the unparalleled proximity of the two pericopes is significant.

5.1.2 Jesus’ command to cross the sea

In Matthew, Jesus, seeing the multitude around him, gives an order to sail to the other shore (ἐκέλευσεν ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν). His words are reported indirectly, unlike the direct speech in the parallels, and depend on ἐκέλευσεν, paralleled by λέγει in Mark and εἶπεν in Luke.

As one remembers, in Mark Jesus already sits inside the boat when he says to his disciples διελθῶμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν – “let us cross to the other shore”. When this is said, the disciples have not boarded yet – they do so only after dismissing the crowd (v. 36).

Unlike Matthew and Mark, in Luke Jesus says to the disciples διελθῶμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς λίμνης – “let us cross to the other shore of the lake” only after both he and they have boarded the boat.

5.1.3 Boarding the boat

In Matthew, Jesus himself (αὐτῷ) boards the boat first, and the disciples follow him (ἦκολούθησαν αὐτῷ).

40 After this pericope all three Gospels have the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac.
In Mark, having dismissed the crowd, the disciples take Jesus “as he was” (ὡς ἦν) in the boat, accompanied by several other boats. However, these other boats are not told to depart with those who rowed the boat, but “with him”, μετ’ αὐτῶν, i.e. with Jesus. Let us note that the prepositional phrase μετ’ αὐτώ- appears also in the description of Jonah’s boarding (in LXX, v. 3): καὶ εὗρεν πλοῖον ... καὶ ἐνέβη εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πλεῦσαι μετ’ αὐτῶν εἰς Θαρσίς, but there it is Jonah who sails with them and not they who sail with him.

Unlike the hierarchical relations emphasized in Matthew’s account, Luke preserves the basic priority of Jesus, but presents much more horizontal relations: “It happened one day that both he himself and his disciples embarked on a boat” (καὶ αὐτὸς ἐνέβη εἰς πλοῖον καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ). Only when both he and his disciples have boarded, does he bid (or rather suggest?) to cross the lake, and they depart.

5.1.4 Jesus’ sleep
To begin with, let us examine the verses in Jon. I which describe Jonah’s sleep. In v. 4 God hurls a great wind onto the sea, it causes a violent storm which, in turn, imperils the ship in which Jonah and the sailors are traveling. V. 5 describes their response to the current situation: Jonah’s shipmates cry out each to his god and jettison some vessels in order to lighten the ship. Jonah, unlike them (Ἰωνᾶς δὲ) descends to the innermost parts of the ship and there falls asleep. Note that he was not just there – he left and descended there unlike the sailors who tried to save the ship. Thus one can infer that (1) Jonah undoubtedly fell asleep after the beginning of the storm;⁴⁷ (2) This behaviour constituted an offence against his shipmates (which is fairly manifest from the shipmaster’s reproach); (3) In order to do so, Jonah was to leave somewhere.

With this in mind, let us examine the representation of Jesus’ sleep in the Gospels. I would like to argue that Matthew’s wording is quite equivocal as to the temporal relations between Jesus’ falling asleep and the beginning of the storm. In v. 24 we read that “a great agitation” (σεισμὸς μέγας) began at sea, so violent as to cover the boat with waves, but he himself (Jesus) slept (αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκάθευδεν). Firstly note the parallel wording, αὐτὸς δὲ ↔ Ἰωνᾶς δὲ, unique to Matthew. But how should one translate the verbal form ἐκάθευδεν? Should it be rendered “was asleep” or perhaps “fell asleep”? LSJ s.v. point out that the sigmatic aorist is non-Attic. A search in TLG shows that the sigmatic aorist of καθεύδω in secondary tenses is exceedingly rare. Moreover, it is not attested in IV BC and reappears only in III CE attestations. BDAG s.v. says nothing about the possible aspectual ambiguity of the imperfect form, but his rendering of the verb in its primary sense exhibits some aspectual vagueness: “to cease being awake, to sleep”⁴⁸ – ingressive (cease being awake, i.e. start sleeping) and continuous (sleep) actions co-exist is this definition side by side. However, since there is no particular form in the NT⁴⁹ for the aorist sense of καθεύδω in secondary tense, one should not automatically render ἐκάθευδεν as “was asleep”. As to Matthew’s use of this verb: unfortunately, there is only one case, apart from here, in which Matthew uses καθεύδω in a secondary tense; however, this single case appears to be fairly indicative of its aspectual range. At the beginning of ch. 25 one finds the Parable of the Ten Maidens waiting for their bridegroom. Seeing that he tarries, they “ἐνύπταξαν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθευδον”. Now the conjunctive relations with the perfectly aoristic ἐνύπταξαν as well as the general meaning of the sentence (“started dozing and fell asleep”, but by no means “#started dozing and were sleeping”) indicate that an imperfect form of καθεύδω definitely may (and in Mt. 25:5 even must) have an aorist sense. Therefore, though I could not find any translation which would render it in our pericope “fell asleep” and not “was asleep”, it clearly cannot be excluded altogether.

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⁴⁷ Pace Léon-Dufour (p. 155); “... la tempête s’élève tandis que le prophète dort tranquillement” (italics are mine).
⁴⁸ Italics in original.
⁴⁹ This is also the case in the LXX.
As compared to Matthew’s equivocality at this point, Mark’s wording leaves no room for doubt as to the temporal relations between Jesus’ falling asleep and the beginning of the storm. V. 37 describes the eruption of the storm and the jeopardy in which the boat was thrown. Then, in v. 38, Jesus is said to “be asleep” (ἠν καθεύδων) by that time on a cushion in the stern of the boat. But another point of the three mentioned above is made clear by such wording: just in the way that Jesus did not need to embark, already sitting in the boat, so he did not need to move to the stern of the boat in order to sleep – he already was there.

Greater still is the clarity with which these time relations are represented in Luke. Not only is Jesus’ falling asleep described by a verb whose sigmatic aorist is perfectly clear (ἀφύπνοσε), but what is more significant, it is referred to before the sea is said to become stormy (unlike the parallels); in v. 23 one reads: “when they were sailing, ‘he fell asleep; then a hurricane came down upon the lake’.” But it seems that Luke endeavours to make indistinct even the sheer fact of sleeping, using a rare verb (only 5 appearances before Luke’s time according to TLG), whose meaning is ambivalent, since it has also the meaning of “awake from sleep” (LSJ s.v. I).

5.1.5. The disciples’ address to Jesus
In Matthew, the disciples approach Jesus and call out to him: “Master (κύριε), save [us], we are perishing!”. Compare this characterization of Jesus as κύριος to Jonah’s self-characterization (in LXX, v. 9): δούλος κυρίου ἐγώ εἰμι.

In Mark the disciples wake Jesus with the words “Teacher (διδάσκαλε), do you not mind that we are perishing?”.

In Luke, the disciples approach Jesus, wake him up and cry out: “Rabbi, Rabbi (ἐπιστάτη, ἐπιστάτα), we are perishing!” Now, can this form of address, originally derived from ἵστημι, be compared to the shipmaster’s address to Jonah (v. 6), ἀνάστα! Though its etymology should theoretically not be relevant, since it is a standard form of address in Luke, meaning “Rabbi” (LSJ s.v. ἐπιστάτης II 2), I would contend that its reduplication here is not trivial. As a cry of help it is used, apart from here, only once in Luke (17:13), but there it is spoken by non-disciples. If we ignore for a moment the reduplication of ἐπιστάτη on one single occasion here, the disciples address Jesus in Luke by κύριε twice as often as by ἐπιστάτη (8:4). Therefore a de-trivializing interpretation of the unparalleled reduplication of ἐπιστάτη by the disciples seems to be quite plausible. Now one can definitely suggest that ἐπιστάτη (“one who stands over [others]”) can be compared with the shipmaster’s command to Jonah ἀνάστα (“stand up!”). 52

5.1.6 Jesus’ response
In all three Gospels Jesus’ response consists of a reproach to the elements and a reproach to his disciples. In Matthew, unlike the parallels, Jesus reproaches the disciples first, saying to them “You men of little faith

50 It is important to note that putting the event of falling asleep before the beginning of the storm does not render the use of a sigmatic aorist completely unnecessary, since ἐκάθευδον used by Matthew may have a conative sense as well, which could make the sense here much less clear-cut.

51 The usage of these forms of address is especially interesting in Lk 5, where the story about Peter’s becoming Jesus’ disciple is related: at first, when he has not accepted Jesus as his teacher yet, he replies to his instruction to sail and spread the nets by ἐπιστάτη, δι’ ὅλης νύκτος κτλ (v. 5); after the miracle happens and Peter accepts Jesus’ authority, he adresses him by κύριε (v. 8).

52 On lexical (or referential) vs. address (or vocative) usage of words see Eleanor Dickey, Greek Forms of Address, Oxford 1996, pp. 9-12, where mutual influences between these usages are also treated. However, the possibility discussed here does not pertain to the disciples’ usage, but to Lukes usage of this vocative, given to the disciples, on a higher level, namely that of intertextual allusion.
(οὐδεμίστοι), why are you cowards?”. Then he reproaches the winds and the sea and there prevails great stillness (γαλάξανη μεγάλη).

In Mark Jesus reproaches the wind by two direct commands, unparalleled in Matthew and Luke: “Be silent, shut up” (σιώπα, περίφυμοσ) – cf. Jon. 1:12: ύπατε με και ἐμβάλετε με κτλ. Then, when the wind calms down and stillness arrives, he says to the disciples: “Why are you cowards? Do you have still no faith?” (ὦς εἴχετε πίστιν:).

In Luke, after Jesus reproaches the winds and the billows and stillness comes down, he addresses his disciples, but unlike the parallel accounts, he does not call them “cowards” (δείλοι), but only asks them πώς ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν; – “where is your faith?”.

5.1.7 The disciples’ response
In Matthew the disciples,53 filled with marvel, exclaim: “What kind of man (ποιμανος) is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him??”.

In Mark, filled with great awe, the disciples address each other with the words “Who then is this man, (τίς ἄρα οὐτός ἐστίν) that even the wind and the sea obey him??”.

In Luke, filled with both marvel and awe (φοβηθέντες δὲ ἔθαψαν), they address each other by the words “Who then is this man who commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him??”.

5.2 Jesus and Jonah in the Gospel accounts
5.2.1 In Matthew
One of the aspects of Matthew’s christology is Jesus’ image as a teacher and the emphasis in right teacher-disciple relations entailed by this image. Close to the end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:21-27) Jesus proclaims that not everyone who calls him “Master, Master” (κύριε, κύριε, just as the disciples address him in our story) will enter the Kingdom of the Heaven; many will call him so, but he will reply that he never knew them, because what is important is not merely accepting him as a master but obeying his teachings. Him who obeys his words Jesus compares to a wise man who builds his house on a rock, whereas him who disobey Jesus compares to a silly man who builds it on the sand. Note that neither in the Sermon on the Mount nor in our story does Jesus deny his status as a κύριος – in both passages this is a self-evident feature. In 23:8 Jesus says to his disciples (with no parallels in Mark and Luke): “And you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’, for your teacher is one, and you all are brothers”. In vv. 10-11 he proceeds: “Also, do not be called ‘guides’ (καθηγηται), for your guide is one – the Messiah; the most senior of you shall be your servant” etc. Here the hierarchical aspect of the teacher-disciple relations is highlighted: So in the very last verses of the Gospel (28:18-20): “I was given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go then and teach (μαθητεύσατε) all the nations ... and instruct them observe everything I bid you” etc.

It seems that in our story Jesus is characterized in the same vein: he is a teacher who is to be wholeheartedly followed and a master of supreme authority. He does not use the hortative first person plural “διελθόμην” of the parallels, but commands his disciples to depart (ἐκέλευσεν ἀπελθεῖν) to the opposite shore. To a man who assumes that the immediate commitment to follow him would not arouse any exceptional difficulties, he points out the total self-sacrifice that it demands, but to him who thinks that it could be slightly postponed he makes it clear that nothing can be preferred to it. Embarking the boat he is not “taken” by the disciples as Mark has it, nor does he board the boat together with the disciples as he does in Luke, but he is boarding first, and the disciples “follow him” (ἐκαλούθησαν αὐτῷ). In the description of his sleep there is no explicit avoidance of depicting his falling asleep as temporarily preceding the beginning of the storm, a feature which in the Jonah story indicates, as I have

53 For the identification of ἀνθρωποι see n. 27.
claimed above, an improper treatment of one’s shipmates: Jesus’ relations with his disciples are not horizontal, i.e. those of one with one’s peers, but vertical – those of a master-teacher with his subjects-disciples. Addressing him, the disciples acknowledge his authority as well as his ability to save them. However, just as he did with the two men who came to him before the departure, so also here, rebuking them, he shows them that following him entails more than they thought: calling them “men of little faith” (cf. “Do you have still no faith?” in Mark), he acknowledges the amount of faith expressed by them when they called him κύριε, but contends that it is not enough. Unlike the order in the parallels, this rebuke comes before the stilling of the storm: first he acts as a teacher, correcting his disciples, then as a master, calming down the storm (cf. his above-mentioned saying from the Sermon on the Mount). Finally, although the disciples already know who he is (a master who can save them; cf. ποταπός here to τίς in the parallels), for which reason they do not fear, as they do in the parallels, nevertheless, his figure evokes in them amazement (ἐθαύμασαν), and they learn, as they did at the beginning of the story and at its middle, that the man before them is greater than they thought.

What then is Jonah’s image, to which Matthew’s Jesus is opposed in this story? As I have shown, the strong hierarchical emphasis in Matthew’s version is evident both in the story itself and in its comparison to the Jonah story, when Jesus’ characterization as a κύριος becomes highlighted by contrast with Jonah’s self-identification as a δούλος. Such hierarchical emphasis requires a reverse application of Jesus’ characterization which would be reversed first and foremost vertically: Jesus the master and the teacher is opposed to Jonah the slave and the pupil. Jesus, who shows time and again what the proper teacher-disciple relations are, is opposed to Jonah, who shows time and again by his actions what the improper teacher-disciple relations are. Unlike Jesus, who commands and meets obedience, Jonah does not command but is commanded – and disobeys. Unlike Jesus, who is obeyed and followed on embarking, Jonah, embarking the ship, disobeys his master and instead of following him, flees from him. Unlike Jesus, who is addressed in a form of supplication54 and whose ability to bring about rescue is acknowledged, Jonah is addressed by a reproach implying his inability to save: he is bidden to “call upon his God”.55 Unlike Jesus, who makes clear to his shipmates, when the storm is raging, what high degree of faith in the teacher a disciple should reach, Jona “told them” (v. 10) during the storm that he is, actually, disobeying his “teacher”, running away from the mission he has been given by him. When they wonder about Jonah’s identity, his shipmates, unlike those of Jesus, learn that the man before them is more inferior than they previously thought, since first they have been told that τὸν κύριον θεόν ... ἐγὼ σέβομαι (v. 9), but now they came to know that ἐκ προσώπου κύριου ἦν φεύγων (v. 10). Therefore they respond not with amazement, but, as expected, with horror (ibid.).

Thus Jonah’s image as an unworthy slave is to a recognizable degree evident from these two verses in the LXX. As an unworthy pupil Jonah appears in De Jona. However, there it is the didactic, and not the hierarchical aspect of the teacher-disciple relations that is emphasized. This image of Jonah is also hinted at in Vitae Prophetarum, in the tradition cited there about Jonah’s resurrection from the dead by Elijah, in order to “show him that he cannot escape God” – as if he initially intended to do so again. Although this tradition too has a didactic emphasis to it, nevertheless, it also has a hierarchical dimension, since Jonah is also shown thereby the greatness of God as opposed to his own insignificance.

5.2.2 In Mark
Throughout the entire Gospel of Mark there is a tension between Jesus and his surroundings: many of those who meet him are shocked and annoyed by his words and actions, as if they (the words and the

54 Davies & Allison ad loc. point out its resemblance to Jon 1:14, κύριε, μὴ ἀπολλάμεθα, which refers to God himself.
55 In the MT the expectation from this “calling upon” is even humbler: “maybe the God will come to our aid” (יָתַע התשׁ) and not “so he come” (דְּנֵו שלשׁות) as the LXX has it.
actions) went astray from what is appropriate; but in fact Jesus always has full authority in whatever he does or says, and both he and his actions fit their mode and place perfectly. This tension is expressed, in a nutshell, by the verse from Psalms 118:22 cited by Jesus close to the end of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (12:1-11): “The stone that was spurned by masons, became cornerstone”. Elsewhere (2:16) the Pharisees wonder how he can dine together with the sinners and the tax collectors – as if his place among them would not fit him. But he replies (v. 17) that there is no fault in his doing so, since it is the sick men that the physician comes to visit. Another expression for this tension can be found in 6:1-5: Jesus preaches in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath day, and his listeners wonder: “How did this man come to be familiar with these matters? (πόθεν τούτο ταῦτα;) And what is the wisdom he was given? ... Is it not the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of Jacob and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are his sisters not here among us?” – as if not the lectern from which he is preaching, but the workshop was the fit place for him, and the proper position for him was not as a teacher, at the head of a group of disciples, but among the regular people, as a layman. Jesus then answers that “a prophet never lacks respect, except in his birthplace” etc. 56 Even when he himself does not row the boat, he is depicted as the center of the little “fleet” which departs “with him” – he is the “cornerstone” indeed. There is no mention of his transition to the stern, which would correspond to Jonah’s descending to the innermost parts of the ship – Jesus just was (ἦν, here as above) sleeping there: since he did not fall asleep in the middle of the disaster, there was no fault in his actions that would force him to go outside his place. Since he did not go anywhere, the disciples do not approach him, as they do in the parallels and as the shipmaster does in Jon. 1:6. The way in which they address Jesus is characteristic of the lack of understanding from which to some extent everyone who surrounds Jesus in Mark suffers: they mistake his sleep for indifference on his part towards their misfortune. If we are now to compare the pair of imperatives used by Jesus to calm the sea with those used by Jonah, (see above [5.1.6]), we will notice that unlike Jonah, who makes the storm calm down by being taken and thrown into the sea, i.e. by his own displacement, Jesus does it from his own place, using an authoritative command. But just as the sailors in Jon. 1:16 experience “great fear” when the calming of the sea, effected by “Lord, God of heaven” proves that they were deluded, when they cried out each to his god (v. 5), thus even the disciples “fear greatly” (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, v. 41), having been shown their mistake in assuming that their teacher was indifferent to their destiny. 57 However, they still cannot realize who the man before them is, and they wonder about his figure.

Reversely applied, such characterization of Jesus highlights the displacement and the lack of authority characteristic of Jonah: he enters a vessel where he should not be, proves to be unable to still the raging

56 Interestingly, Jonah does not lack respect in his birthplace, since his prophecy to Jeroboam comes true, but outside of his birthplace, namely on the ship, in Nineveh and out of her wall, he becomes humiliated time and again.

57 Let us remember that it is in the point of characterization of their main figures that the two stories are in polar opposition to each other; the other details may and must, for this purpose, be in direct correspondence.
storm, becomes thrown out of the ship, sits three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish (almost a grotesque realization of the notion of staying out of one’s place), his prophecy on Nineveh does not become fulfilled and he sits out of her wall only to eventually be proven that all his words and expectations were far “off-target”. In our story, unlike Jesus, who in the boat fulfills his mission as a teacher, Jonah runs away from his mission by being on the ship; therefore Jesus remains to sit in the boat, it being his proper place, whereas Jonah eventually becomes cast out of the ship, since it was an improper place for him. Unlike Jesus, who does not need to go elsewhere to sleep, since there is no fault in what he does, Jonah, intending to desert his shipmates in disaster, needs to go away in order to fall asleep. Both Jesus and Jonah are addressed when they are asleep; however, unlike Jesus’ disciples, who become proven to have been deluded in their impatient address to Jesus, the shipmaster was perfectly right to demand that Jonah do something – but the latter is unable to help the situation. Unlike Jesus, who authoritatively calms the storm down by mere utterance, Jonah has no authority to still the storm (moreover, it is his faulty actions that caused it), and therefore he needs to be displaced again – this time from aboard of the ship into the stormy sea. Also, when Jonah’s shipmates wonder about his identity, they do not find out that they were wrong, as the disciples do in the parallel scene in the Gospel story, but on the contrary, they rebuke Jonah for his wrongdoing (“what have you done?!”, v. 10).

As has been indicated above (4.), Jonah’s image, as a permanently displaced man and a prophet whose predications miss the mark, is especially prominent in Vitae Prophetarum: his prophecy on Nineveh does not come true, and he voluntarily goes to live in exile, in order not to be sneered at in his hometown. Moreover, when he dies, Elijah comes and brings him back, is if he were in the wrong place even among the dead. It seems that Josephus, endeavouring to lend authority to Jonah’s words (see n. 45), diminishing his wrongdoings and evading the motif of displacement in the story engages in polemics with precisely this image of Jonah, trying to “reduce its edge”.

5.2.3 In Luke

Unlike Matthew, who emphasizes Jesus’ vertical relations, Luke brings to the forefront his horizontal relations, namely his compassion to his fellow human beings, his fair treatment of them and perhaps even some sense of shared destiny that he experiences towards them. This aspect is expressed in the description of his treatment of underprivileged and foreign persons — his compassion to them is depicted in quite a few healing and resurrection stories, typical of Luke. We find him associating with the sinners and the tax collectors (see, for example, the entire ch. 15 with its Parables of the Lost Sheep and of the Lost Coin, and also the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector in 19:1-10). This affinity to other human beings is also suggested by the way he speaks publicly: unlike the Sermon on the Mount in Mt. 5:3ff, which opens with a series of sentences spoken in the third person (“Blessed are those poor of spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them” etc.), Luke’s Sermon on the Plain uses the second person: “Blessed are the poor ones, for the Kingdom of God belongs to you” etc. (6:20ff). In Luke’s version of the story of the sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:14-30), Jesus cites Isaiah 61:1-2 not to the, but only until “... to proclaim a year of acceptance by Lord”, without proceeding to “... and a day of revenge by our God” etc. Also to his disciples he shows a degree of intimacy which is hardly paralleled in Mark and Matthew. Only

58 Jonah does not separate himself from his shipmates without serious justification and asks forgiveness for escaping his mission.
59 Jonah’s abiding in the belly of the fish is nothing but a tale; he prophesies on Nineveh having located himself in a suitable place and eventually he returns to his homeland.
60 The story of the widow of Nain (7:11-17), the story of the crippled woman (13:10-17), the story of the man with ascertes (14:1-6), the story of the nine Jews and one Samaritan with leprosy (17:11-19) and other similar stories.
61 The spatial symbolism is, perhaps, indicative of Jesus’ attitude towards his listeners: mount (verticality, high→low) in Matthew vs. plain (horizontality, companionship) in Luke.
in Luke does Jesus say to them at the Last Supper: “Strong has been my desire (ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα) to eat this Passover sacrifice with you before I suffer” (22:15). “But you are those who were persistent, remaining (οἱ διαμεμενηκότες) with me in my trials” (v. 28). “Simon, Simon, behold, the Satan asked you for himself so he can winnow you like corn. But I have prayed for you that your faith not cease. And you too, whenever you return, support your brothers” (vv. 31-32). In Gethsemane, unlike the parallel accounts, Jesus does not wake his disciples three times and does not reprimand Peter, as he does in Mt. 26:40 and Mk. 14:37. Comparing Jesus’ conversations with the disciples upon his resurrection in Mt. 28:18-20, Mk. 15:14 and Lk. 24:36-51, one notes that unlike the brief and matter-of-fact address in Matthew or the reproach in Mark, Luke depicts their meeting as a moving reunion, which is in many aspects human, despite Jesus’ extraordinary status; one finds there a greeting (v. 36), a mutual meal (vv. 41-43), explanation of the prophecies that have been fulfilled (vv. 44-47), words of encouragement (vv. 48-49), a blessing (v. 50) and bidding farewell (v. 51). However, Jesus’ closeness to his disciples is spiritual in nature, and it becomes opposed to the carnal bonds such as those of blood ties, which are to be abandoned. This motif is manifest in such passages as the pericope immediately adjacent to our story (see above [5.1.1]), as well as in 14:26: “If someone comes to me but does not abhor his own father and mother ... and even his own self (τὴν γυνὴν ἐαυτοῦ), he cannot be my disciple”⁶² (cf. Mt. 10:37: “He who loves his father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me”).

In our story Jesus is characterized in the same vein, i.e. as one who treats his fellow men with compassion and out of a sense of common destiny. Immediately before the beginning of the story there is an episode in which he expresses his disdain for his mother and brothers, but that is not all: he proceeds to call “my mother and brothers” to “these (οὗτοι) who listen to the word of God and do it”. The proximal demonstrative pronoun suggests that its referents are none other than Jesus’ disciples. On embarkation, they do not follow Jesus’ command, as they do in the parallels; Jesus enters the boat together with them, and only then he says (suggesting, rather than commanding): “let us cross to the other shore of the lake”. Sleeping during a storm has been shown above to be morally problematic. Therefore Luke endeavours to neutralize everything that could appear to be morally difficult (see above [5.1.4]). Another detail which deserves examination is the description of the jeopardy. In the parallels, it is the boat that is about to sink (as in Jon. 1:4: καὶ τὸ πλοῖον ἐκινδύνεων συντριβῆναι), whereas Luke, although making a verbal reference to this verse in the Jonah story, changes its subject, having here καὶ συνεπέλεροῦσαν καὶ ἐκινδύνεων. Nolland 1989 ad loc. explains the personal συνεπέλεροῦσα as a colloquial way of expression. Be that as it may, ἐκινδύνεων, with its personal subject, hardly requires explanation, being quite easy to comprehend: those in the boat, i.e. Jesus and his disciples, have been jeopardized. This non-metonymical, straightforward and personal way of describing the jeopardy hints, perhaps, at some sense of common destiny shared by Jesus and his disciples. Giving the disciples the exclamation ἐπιστάται, ἐπιστάται is, as I have suggested above (5.1.4), a way for the narrator to put the sleeping Jesus in counterpoint to the sleeping Jonah, marginalizing thereby the fact of his sleep; for the collective character of the disciples, however, it is a way to express their appreciation for their teacher, implying that “even when sleeping, you are in fact standing over us to guide us and to share our distress”. After the stilling of the storm, Jesus does not reproach the disciples for their lack of faith, as he does in the parallels, asking only “Where is your faith?”. As for the disciples’ response, I have already suggested that Luke’s Jesus is characterized here “perpendicularly” to Matthew’s; therefore if in Matthew the disciples’ response is relatively mild (see above [5.2.1]), as they already had by that time an idea about Jesus as a Master, in Luke the disciples, being used to other aspects of his figure, are amazed by the display of his authority beyond measure, expressing fear, as they do in Mark, and astonishment, as they do in Matthew. Moreover, it is the

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⁶² Interestingly, the story of his associating with the tax collectors and the Parable of the Prodigal Son are almost immediately adjacent to this saying.
single passage in Luke, where the formula τις οὐτός ἐστίν, with reference to Jesus’ identity, is pronounced by his disciples.\(^{63}\)

Reversely applying such characterization to Jonah, we obtain a man who lacks compassion and a sense of shared destiny towards his fellow men, even those who “listen to the word of God and do it”. The sailors, as well as the Ninevites, are depicted in the book of Jonah in a positive light: the former acknowledge God’s dominion immediately as they are given proof of his power, and the latter completely repent after Jonah had passed only one third of their city. Nevertheless, Jonah, boarding the ship, jeopardizes the sailors, but when the storm erupts he does not take responsibility, going away and falling asleep.\(^{64}\) His prophecy to the Ninevites contains no conditional clause (“if you stick with your robbery” or the like), and when they repent and are absolved, he becomes filled with deadly dismay. But when he completes his mission, he returns, according to extra-biblical traditions (3Maccabees, Vitae Prophetarum, Josephus), to his place and his family, unlike Jesus, who broke off his connections in his hometown at the beginning of his ministry (4:14-30). Unlike Jesus, he has not the slightest connection, let alone spiritual affinity, to his shipmates; on the contrary, he joins them only so he can escape from “doing the word of God”. Unlike Jesus, whose shipmates wake him respectfully, Jonah is addressed with reproach: τί σὺ πέγγει; (v. 6). Unlike Jesus, he does not ask his shipmates about their fault – on the contrary, they ask him about his fault (τί τούτο ἐποίησας, v. 10). Unlike Jesus’ disciples, who become struck when they discover that Jesus is more than they thought (not only a caring teacher, but also a master of the forces of nature), Jonah’s shipmates express horror upon discovering that the man is worse than he was supposed to be (even though he is the servant of the Lord of Heaven, he dares to flee from him).

These aspects of Jonah’s figure seem to be exactly those which Josephus endeavours to cover up: his prophecies deal not only with destruction and he does not separate himself from the collective without justification. Interestingly, the distinction between those who “listen to the word of God and do it” and those who do not, is apparently designed to fit this Jonah-image: the sailors do not make vows nor do they sacrifice and the Ninevites do not repent; the notion of piety is strongly connected with one’s ethnic origin. Therefore Josephus’ Jonah, having completed his mission, returns to his homeland. The tradition about Jonah’s family can be found, as has been mentioned above, in Vitae Prophetarum. However, Luke could not use the same tradition, since the widow of Zarephath, who in Vitae Prophetarum is said to be Jonah’s mother, is referred to in Lk. 4:26 as a Gentile. Nevertheless, we have seen that this is not the only source for this tradition, which appears also in 3Maccabees, an even more ancient source.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to elicit from the diverse characterizations of Jesus in the three synoptic versions of the story of Jesus’ stilling the storm three diverse characterizations of Jonah, to which I claimed that Jesus is opposed in all three versions. This interpretative move draws its legitimacy from the bidirectional nature of the polar opposition. For this purpose I undertook to prove (1) that the relations between the Gospel story and the Jonah story are those of polar opposition; (2) that the interpretative move hereby suggested cannot be applied without due caution to each and every story that has the Jonah story in its background. I have subsequently shown that the Gospel story, with all its versions, and the Jonah story are directly opposed at the level of their building blocks. Then I have shown that this opposition can be successfully utilized for the set purpose when criteria of topic, use of the biblical context, significance of the main character and plot model are applied – which has proven not to be the case in any other story.

\(^{63}\) This formula is uttered twice resentfully by Pharisees (5:21, 7:49) and once curiously and, maybe, somewhat malevolently, by Herod (9:9).

\(^{64}\) Even though he knew that his prayer will be by no means accepted, as has been claimed above (3.4), he could suggest to his shipmates to throw him overboard (as he eventually did) already when the storm began.
Thus from Matthews “vertical” characterization of Jesus as a teacher and a master who is to be followed, I have suggested deducing Jonah’s characterization as a pupil and a slave who fails to follow; from Marks characterization of Jesus as a man who fits his place, whose deeds are appropriate and whose words are endowed with authority – a characterization of Jonah as a man permanently displaced, whose deeds are not appropriate and whose words lack authority; from Luke’s “horizontal” characterization of Jesus as a man who is spiritually close to his fellow men, treating them with kindness and compassion, but does not ascribe importance to blood ties – Jonah’s characterization as one whose only affinities are carnal but who has no compassion to others, even those who are God-fearing. All of Jesus’ characteristics have been shown to plausibly fit the christologies of the respective Gospels, whereas the images of Jonah deduced have been shown to fit within the set of Jonah-images in the literature contemporary to the Gospels.

Yet, one objection could be raised: how can the postulated polar opposition of Jesus to Jonah, fit with the pericopae of the Sign of Jonah (τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ) in Mt. 18:38-42 and Lk. 11:29-32? Should one try to apply there anything from what has been claimed above about the opposed characterizations of Jesus and Jonah in the storm-stilling story? Moreover, do relations of polar opposition make any sense there? And if they do, should one transport them to Solomon as well, to whom the same formula of comparison to Jesus has been applied (“greater than so-and-so is here”)?

I would claim that the polar opposition should by no means be applied here, nor should the relation between Jesus and Jonah, implied in these pericopae, be transported to the story that had been dealt with above. The reason is that two figures may be set in more than one type of relations within the boundaries of one book (all the more so if this book is a product of editorial work as the Gospels are) to serve in every given context the desired effect – as long as it does not lead to explicit contradictions. In both cases Jonah is presented as Jesus’ inferior, but this basic relation between them can comprise several specific relations. Now, given that the focus of the storm-stilling story, as has been shown, is its main character, his characterization is most effectively availed of using the characteristics of his inferior by way of argumentum ab opposito. However, in the Sign of Jonah pericopae neither Jesus nor Jonah are characterized, nor are they treated at all as characters, i.e. subjects with some specific personality, conduct or destiny; both of them are dealt with as signs, i.e. objects, rather than subjects. If anybody at all is treated here as subject, it is the γενεὰ πονηρὰ; and if anyone, it is the γενεὰ who is actually characterized here. Therefore if the basic relation between Jesus and Jonah as his inferior is to be used here in order to show how inferior this generation is, daring to demand signs, it is best exploited by way of an argumentum a fortiori: if even Jonah and what he proclaimed were sufficient for the Ninevites, all the more so are Jesus and his preaching to suffice his own generation; now that they demand a sign besides, they will for sure be condemned.

I am not the alone in thinking that the Sign of Jonah and the story of Jesus stilling the storm are to be treated discretely: in the index locorum of Chow’s The Sign of Jonah Reconsidered, which exhaustively deals with the meaning and history of the Sign of Jonah, there is no single reference to any of the stories dealt with in the present paper.

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65 In these parallel pericopae Jesus replies to those who demand a sign from him, saying that to an inferior generation (γενεὰ πονηρὰ) no sign will be given except for that of Jonah. Matthew has here a comparison of the Son of Man’s staying underground three nights and three days to Jonah’s analogous remaining in the belly of the fish, whereas Luke has a statement that the Son of Man will be a sign to his generation just as Jonah was to the Ninevites. Then each evangelist has in a different order the statements about the Ninevites, who, having repented at Jonah’s preaching, will condemn this generation which has not repented though greater than Jonah is here, and about the Queen of the South who, having come from the remote parts of the Earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, will condemn this generation, since greater than Solomon is here. The meaning of the Sign of Jonah has been a subject of a long discussion; a summary of the scholarly opinions can be found in Chow, pp. 15-18 and his own conclusions summarized in pp. 211-13. For our purpose, however, what is essential is not the precise meaning of the Sign, but the shear nature of the relation between the figures of Jesus and Jonah.
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