

fundamentals

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IS OF

YHWH.

a biblical study on the book of the prophet Jonah.
professor's guide

What is **fundamentals?**

As a pastor's kid, it is easy to take the greatness of the gospel for granted. The fact that the Master of the universe became man and died for me somehow becomes normal. Crazy stories such as of a little boy defeating a giant, and a man opening a sea with a stick become a fairy tale. When you're used to reading Scripture, it becomes easy not to pay attention to the fascinating teachings, mysteries, and revelations of a God who loves His creation.

The Bible is full of treasures that we skip over because we think we already know the story. Because we read the story of Jacob fighting God in Genesis 32 over and over again we think there's nothing more to learn there.

Because we heard the narrative of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3 sixty-seven times as a kid, we think there's no need to go back to read it and see if there is any new detail we can find there.

Fundamentals started as an initiative of 2 or more Church to provide a biblical study on books and themes of the Bible. The name is founded on our desire for Christians to have a solid foundation on core beliefs (fundamentals) of the Christian faith.

In the same way that you can never overdo the fundamentals of a sport, you can never overdo or overstudy the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Our goal is not to "reinvent the wheel" and bring some new revelation that was never seen before in Church History. No. The goal is to go to the text and just search for the revelations that are *in* the Text. In doing so, we pray that your desire, hunger, and curiosity to know more about the God who has revealed Himself in His Word may grow.

The goal of Fundamentals is to bring back that child-like spirit of excitement and wonder of when you first heard the story of Elijah going up to heaven in a chariot of fire, or Jesus multiplying the five loaves of bread and two fish. And being, once again, struck by these narratives to honor Christ with your daily living.

The Bible is filled with way too many good stories for us to take for granted.

Blessings,
Abner.

Professor's Guide

This professor's guide contains extra information. Any text **in this color** is additional, and there are also extra tables and boards in some sections of the book. At the bottom of each page, you will find footnotes indicating where the information for the text given was retrieved.

If you go through the book, you will realize that there's a blank spot for each lesson's "take away." I believe that leaving it blank gives some cool opportunities to whoever is studying the material. Let me give you two examples:

1. If you are using the material for your devotional, after going through the text and the notes you can put into your own words what you believe is the teaching of the chapter;
2. if you're teaching a class, you can either come up with your own take away and then share it with your students or you can come to a take away working *with* your students.

In any case, my main goal is that you wrestle with the text and rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance in interpreting the passage.

As you study it or teach others, feel free to read and evaluate for yourself whether the information given is worth sharing. Also, I encourage you to search for more information and add it to your study/class.

Intro.

Basic Info

Date of writing: between the eighth and the fourth centuries B.C.

Although the dating of the book is not easy due to its genre, its use of prophetic figures from Israel's narrative, its theological agenda, and the several ways that it draws upon other texts, a fairly broad consensus has developed that Jonah represents a literary work that likely stems from the late Persian or early Hellenistic period. This consensus has arisen due to Jonah's complexity as a theological narrative that displays a sophisticated knowledge of a web of other biblical texts. Jonah deals with a prophet from the reign of a king from the eighth century BCE, which would place Jonah as a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Most scholars believe this prophet was selected from among the prophetic figures recounted in the book of Kings in order to poke fun at a certain theological perspective, not because Jonah was composed during the eighth century by someone who knew him personally. Implicitly, this selection probably means Jonah came into being after the composition of the book of Kings in the late-seventh to mid-sixth century BCE.¹

Author: unknown.

Main Characters: YHWH, Jonah, sailors, big fish (or whale if you will), Ninevites.

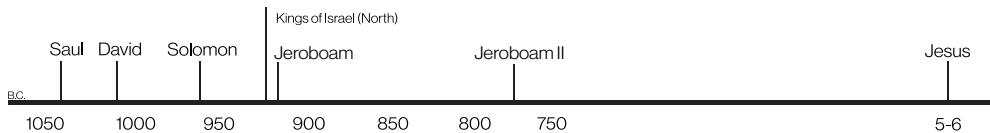
Historical Context

Israel

To set the historical context, remember that the kingdom of Israel split in the time of Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Rehoboam remained king of what was called the Southern Kingdom, or Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as well as the Levites. Jeroboam I became king of what would become the Northern Kingdom, or Israel, consisting of the other ten tribes. Jonah lived among the people of the Northern Kingdom.

Jonah was a prophet to the king of Israel (Northern Kingdom), Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25). Historians place Jeroboam II as king near 750 BC. During Jonah's years as a prophet, Israel stood tall among the nations, though in a political rather than a spiritual sense. The reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 BC), who was an evil king before the Lord, saw Israel's borders expand to their greatest extent since the time of Solomon.

Jonah is unique among the books of the prophets, which are typically collections of God's words spoken through a prophet. This book doesn't really focus on the words of a prophet; rather, it's a subversive story about a prophet who resents his God for loving his enemies.



Assyria/Nineveh

The Assyrian empire was built by military action. While initially Assyria had actually to achieve her conquests, she soon discovered the usefulness of intimidation to achieve the same ends. The success of this intimidation depended upon Assyria's feared reputation as a brutal and merciless military opponent, and by the ninth century, when it was perfected by Ashur-nasir-apli (883–859), it was often successful in convincing states to assume vassal status.²

As a prominent Neo-Assyrian city, Nineveh was closely associated with the empire's military activity throughout the first millennium BC, and this meant that it surely conjured up very negative images in the minds of Israelites for several good reasons.³ Nineveh was a prominent city in an empire built upon violence and God-defying self-aggrandization. In the eighth century, Nineveh was one of three royal cities in the Assyrian empire, the two others being Calah and Ashur.

¹ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 503). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Kindle Edition.

² Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 63–64). InterVarsity Press.

³ Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 63). InterVarsity Press.

Purpose/Interpretations of Jonah

The Sovereignty of God and a Moral Tale: John Calvin and Disney's Pinocchio

This tradition of interpretation presents Jonah as a negative example. Calvin suggests that Jonah wrote this account in order to teach us the futility of fleeing from God. Jonah is severely chastised by Calvin for his

"disgraceful obstinacy" in fleeing his duty for the pleasures of Tarshish. In a secular twist on this view, Walt Disney's movie Pinocchio (which rewrote the original book with Jonah-like themes) portrays a rebellious puppet who is swallowed by a whale. The moral fairy tale of "the sufferings of the disobedient" plays out a warning similar to Calvin's reading of Jonah. The characters of both Jonah and Pinocchio are portrayed as negative moral examples, whose behavior and attitudes we are to avoid in order to thwart suffering. The purpose of Jonah is to make us obedient through the fear of YHWH.⁴



Repentance and Forgiveness of the Ninevites

The amazingly swift repentance and deliverance of the Ninevites is a strong message in Jonah 3. The miracle of their repentance from evil is in many ways as astounding as the big fish that swallows Jonah. If the Ninevites can repent, anyone can. Their model of repentance has been presented as the main theme of Jonah in the history of interpretation by both Christian and Jewish commentators. Jonah is an antihero in this tradition of interpretation. He is opposed to the repentance (and even the survival!) of Israel's violent enemy, the Ninevites. According to this view, the purpose of Jonah is, therefore, to demonstrate the love of God for all people and to bring us to repentance before a gracious and merciful God. This God will not condemn anyone who seeks him. The limitation of this theme is its relative absence in chapters 1, 2, and 4.⁵

Jonah and Typologies: Like a Reluctant Israel or Like Christ?

In this interpretation, Jonah has been reshaped as a type or example of a prideful and haughty Jew (or Israel). Especially at the end of the Middle Ages in Europe, this anti-Semitic typology began to take hold in sermons and commentary. Jonah becomes a stingy prophet who refuses to share the word of YHWH with the non-Jew. This view urges believers not to be narrow-minded in relation to God's forgiveness and grace. One of the greatest dangers of this interpretation method is that it often succumbs to the implication "narrow-minded, like the Jews" and leads to human judgment and disdain (anti-Semitism), the inversion of the forgiveness and grace of God. Such a typology with its inherent anti-Semitism deconstructs its own purpose and ought to be avoided.⁶

Another typology has its origin in the New Testament. Jesus compared himself to Jonah in a positive light. The early church fathers followed this interpretation of Jonah as a sign (or type) of Jesus' own ministry, death, and resurrection (Matt. 12:39–41; Luke 11:29–32). Jonah—in the ship, in the water, in the fish, and back on dry land (Jonah 1 and 2)—is compared to Jesus' incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection. Jonah's success in his preaching in Nineveh and its people, resulting in salvation through repentance (chs. 3 and 4), is compared to Jesus' success in preaching and saving humanity. The limitations of any typology apply to this reading as well. If Jonah is read Christologically, it is no longer read as Jonah. Yet, Jesus has pointed out a positive lens through which the prophet ought to be (but almost never is) viewed.⁷

What sets Jonah apart:

Jonah is unique among the books of the prophets, which are typically collections of God's words spoken through a prophet. This book doesn't really focus on the words of a prophet; rather, it's a subversive story about a prophet who resents his God for loving his enemies.

⁴ Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (pp. 19–20). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (p. 20). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (p. 22). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (pp. 22–23). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

Chapter 1.

From this book, we learn how graciously the LORD deals with fools such as us.¹

1 The word of the YHWH came to Jonah son of Amitai, (CSB)

- YHWH is, in Jewish reckoning, the name, ha-shem, the sacred name that is too holy to be spoken. When Jewish readers come upon the written name while reading Scripture aloud (for instance, in synagogue), they do not speak it but instead say Adonai, the Hebrew word for "Lord." This custom is reflected in older English translations of the Bible, where "Lord" stands for Adonai and "LORD" for YHWH. For English speakers to call God "the LORD" is thus to follow this Jewish practice of calling upon the name of the God of Israel without actually uttering it.²
- Although we know that the word of YHWH came to Jonah, we don't know how it did...
- The prophet Jonah, son of Amitai, is one of the few canonical prophets mentioned in an Old Testament book other than the one attributed to that prophet. In 2 Kgs 14:25 he is portrayed as a prophet who worked for the king in the court of Jeroboam II (786–746 BCE), a king of the Northern Kingdom.³

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." (NASB)

- YHWH's interest in Nineveh is so great that He sends a prophet to a non-Israelite city (something quite rare in the OT). Yet Jonah not only disobeys that commission but when in the company of other Gentiles remains completely withdrawn from them.⁴ Note Elisha's trip to Damascus (2 Kings 8:7-15).
- It is unlikely that Nineveh would have been called a large city in the time of Jeroboam II. This anachronism represents one of several places in Jonah in which hyperbole surrounding Nineveh demonstrates the author is less interested in recounting a historical portrait of the city than in characterizing Nineveh as a type, the capital of a powerful foreign empire par excellence.⁵

How bad were the Ninevites?

Ashur-nasir-apli II's (883-859), royal inscriptions also illustrate the religious element that, together with the financial benefits which attended conquest, motivated Assyria's imperialism. One such inscription opens in typical fashion by describing him as 'king of the universe, unrivaled king, king of all the four quarters, sun(god) of the people, chosen of the gods Enlil and Ninurta, beloved of the gods An and Dagan, destructive weapon of the great gods'. The inscription emphasizes his obedience to the gods and seems to relish the brutal tactics that eventually made Assyrian intimidation successful:

"[...] I flayed many right through my land (and) draped their skins over the walls. I slashed the flesh of the eunuchs (and) of the royal eunuchs who were guilty. I brought Ahi-yababa [the ruler of Suru] to Nineveh, flayed him, (and) draped his skin over the wall of Nineveh."

3 Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from YHWH's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from YHWH's presence. (CSB)

- The phrase, "Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish," provides the first humorous clue that this story about a prophet will not be as

¹ Cary, Phillip. *Jonah* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p.29). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² Cary, Phillip. *Jonah* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p.29). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p.527). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition..

⁴ Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p.69). InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p.529). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

somber as most prophetic writings.⁶

- Modern historians guess it is the Phoenician port in Spain known to the Greeks as Tartessos, which would be far away indeed. But the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, writing in Greek (Jewish Antiquities 1.6.1 §127), makes a different proposal and identifies Tarshish with the city of Tarsus, which is not far from Antioch on the eastern side of the Mediterranean, north of Israel.⁷ Although it's uncertain, other scholars assume that in the narrative, Tarshish represents heaven once, according to early traditions, the city was very rich and had the fullness of every good.

- Joppa was a coastal town that was never under Israelite control, meaning that Jonah goes to a town that he knows is full of foreigners.⁸

⁴ But YHWH threw [hurled] a great wind onto the sea, and such a great storm arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break apart. (CSB)

- The God who usually defeats chaos, is now He who creates chaos on the sea. The image of YHWH hurling the wind into the sea reflects a dramatic scene, but one that runs counter to how one typically imagines the God of creation behaving.⁹

⁵ The sailors were afraid [feared], and each cried out to his god. They threw the ship's cargo into the sea to lighten the load. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down to the lowest part of the vessel and had stretched out and fallen into a deep sleep. (CSB)

- While the sailors are doing everything they can to stabilize the boat, and they have prayed to their own gods; Jonah's response, by contrast, again appears comical, to the point of satirizing the prophet: he keeps on descending (vv. 3,5).¹⁰

- After the instinctive prayer, the sailors act pragmatically by throwing cargo overboard. They hope to lighten their load and prevent the boat from sinking. The sailors have done everything they can do to stabilize the boat, and they have prayed to their own gods. Meanwhile, the boat continues to be battered and could fall apart at any moment.¹¹

⁶ The captain approached him and said, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up! Call to your god. Maybe this god will consider us, and we won't perish." ⁷ "Come on!" the sailors said to each other. "Let's cast lots. Then we'll know who is to blame for this trouble we're in." So they cast lots, and the lot singled out Jonah. (CSB)

- In the ancient world, there are many ways of casting lots. In Jonah's narrative, the lots probably consist of some kind of marked stones that could be thrown or rolled like dice in order to indicate who is chosen and who is not. The rulers of ancient Israel used lots that functioned this way to inquire of the LORD about who was guilty (1 Sam. 14:40–42) or who was to be king (10:19–21). They also used the casting of lots to choose who would replace Judas (Acts 1:26). Like many other ancient cultures, Israel thus considers what looks like a game of chance to be a form of divination, understanding the outcome to be under divine control. In desperation, they can do no better than try something that will take the next move out of their own hands. After doing everything that human intelligence and courage can do, the sailors give up their own efforts and seek the unknown god who threatens them. They try to put themselves at his disposal by using the most religiously neutral (and therefore least idolatrous) form of divination possible—one that, unknown to them, is remarkably similar to the kind of divination used by the chosen people themselves. Here a practice that in other contexts could easily become superstition is the deepest form of religion available. What is more: the unknown God who threatens them is full of mercy—despite all appearances—and he mercifully answers their desperate inquiries.¹²

⁸ Then they said to him, "Tell us who is to blame for this trouble we're in. What is your business, and

⁶ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 531). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition

⁷ Cary, Phillip. Jonah (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 41). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁸ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 531). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 538). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition

¹⁰ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 540). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition

¹¹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 539). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition

¹² Cary, Phillip. Jonah (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 55). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

where are you from? What is your country, and what people are you from?" (CSB)

- Although the lot falls upon Jonah, which implicates Jonah as guilty, the sailors do not rush to harm him.¹³

⁹ He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear YHWH, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." (NASB)

- Out of the three affirmations it seems like only two are true. He is indeed a Hebrew, and YHWH is the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land, but does he actually fear this God? It's important to note that the word fear used with a deity as an object means to recognize the deity's power and to respond submissively to that power.¹⁴ Another observation interesting to note is that out of the five questions asked by the sailors, Jonah initially answers only the last one by responding "I am a Hebrew." Answering the first question only on verse 12.¹⁵

¹⁰ Then the men were seized by a great fear and said to him, "What is this you've done?" The men knew he was fleeing from YHWH's presence because he had told them. (CSB)

- Jonah boasted about his Yahwistic heritage to the foreigners, yet they were the ones who confronted him about his disobedience.¹⁶

- Several scholars have suggested that the end of the verse represents a later reader's comment in the form of an explanatory gloss by attempting to make explicit what is implicit in the context. Such may well be the case, but if so, it would be a very early insertion since both the LXX and early manuscripts from the Judean desert reflect this reading. This parenthetical explanatory comment could as well be a stylistic device from the primary author of the Jonah narrative. In any case, the explanatory comment functions as the narrator's statement to the reader to emphasize and to justify the accusatory tone of the sailors' question.¹⁷

¹¹ So they said to him, "What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?" For the sea was getting worse and worse. (CSB)

- Ironically, the sailors turn to Jonah (the cause of their problems) and consult him on what to do, requesting him to fulfill his role as a prophet by seeking direction from his deity.¹⁸

- A fascinating detail on this verse is found in the way the storm is described. The narrator personifies the story. Literally, 1:11b says that the sea was walking and storming, creating the image of a person stomping around in anger.¹⁹

¹² He answered them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea so that it will calm down for you, for I know that I'm to blame for this great storm that is against you." (CSB)

- Jonah has no reason at this point to think that YHWH will deliver him once he is thrown into the sea. At best, Jonah concedes the futility of escape from YHWH. Important to note that he does not intercede on behalf of the sailors or on his own behalf.²⁰

¹³ However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. (NASB)

¹³ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 543). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 545). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 544). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 546). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁷ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 546). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 546). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 547). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

²⁰ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 548). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

- The particular idiom used to explain the sailors' attempts to return to dry land without throwing Jonah overboard conveys a sense of great energy on their part. In doing so, they demonstrate more concern for his life than he shows for his own (or theirs).²¹
- For the second time, the narrator personifies the powerful storm as churning and storming (see v. 11). This second reference also accentuates the danger they face by personalizing the sea's fury because the narrator specifies that the sea's activity was focused upon them.²²

14 So they called out to YHWH: "Please, YHWH, don't let us perish because of this man's life, and don't charge us with innocent blood! For you, YHWH, have done just as you pleased." (CSB)

- In another irony, besides using the term "innocent blood" when referring to Jonah's life (once Jonah is in one sense far from innocent since it was his flight from YHWH that has put them in danger according to the logic of the narrative), the sailors behave in ways that are above reproach.²³

15 Then they picked up Jonah and threw [hurled] him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging." (CSB)

- Just as YHWH had hurled the storm into the sea, the sailors hurl Jonah into the sea.²⁴

16 Then the men feared YHWH greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to YHWH and made vows." (NASB)

- Nowhere else in the Old Testament does the phrase, "they offered a sacrifice" appear as a reference to foreigners sacrificing to YHWH. The phrase is used overwhelmingly in positive contexts—that is, in reference to an individual or group sacrificing properly to Yahweh. Only twice (Hos 8:13; Ezek 20:28) does the phrase appear in the context of illicit sacrifice, and in both instances it refers to Israel's improper sacrifice to other deities.²⁵ The phrase, "made vows" only once (Isa 19:21) refers to the solemn promises of foreigners.

Did the sailors actually turn to worship YHWH?

The sailors' reverence for YHWH is expressed in precisely the same terms that described their fear of the storm: "the men feared YHWH greatly" (Jon. 1:16). This can hardly be something less than whole-hearted conversion to YHWH. The phrase 'to fear/revere God' in the OT consistently describes those who have and maintain a healthy relationship with Yahweh. The sailors' sacrifices and vows in the same verse confirm this since such actions habitually prove a permanent commitment to a deity.

Take away:

21 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 548-549). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

22 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 549). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

23 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 549-550). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

24 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 550). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

25 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 553). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

Chapter 2.

The Bible version used for this chapter was the CSB.

1⁷ YHWH appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- Although most Bibles include this verse as part of the first chapter, for our study we'll consider it part of chapter 2. Once we're looking at the book as a storytelling, I believe that adding 1:7 to Jonah 2 will better show some interesting aspects of the narrative.

- While other ancient Near East religions portrayed the "monster of the watery chaos" as one of the greatest enemies of the gods (according to these stories, a god had to fight the sea monster to set the world "in order"), here the sea monster is a mere puppy used by YHWH in His merciful act toward Jonah. YHWH does not first slay the monster of the deep in order to make the world inhabited. He first orders the world in peace, then creates great and marvelous things even in the deep.¹

- The expression "three days and three nights" stands for the longest period of time one can reasonably be expected to survive such a situation.² There is only one reference elsewhere in the OT that uses "three days and three nights." In 1 Samuel 30:12-13, a sick Egyptian, left for dead by his Amalekite master after having raided Ziklag, is too weak to speak after being without food and water for three days and three nights.³

2¹ Jonah prayed to YHWH his God from the belly of the fish:

- The use of "pray" also adds to the ironic portrayal of Jonah. Besides praying only after the sailors, the prophet chooses only to intercede on his own behalf. The fact that the foreign sailors have already prayed to their gods (1:5) when Jonah did not do so (1:6), casts Jonah in a negative light since he only prays on his own behalf and never intercedes on behalf of others.⁴

Outline of Jonah's prayer:⁵

Jonah's surprised (and possibly breathless) song of praise is a typical psalm of thanksgiving, with:

- Introduction (v.2);
- Recounting of his crisis and deliverance (vv.3-7);
- Vow to worship YHWH for the deliverance (vv.8-9).

2¹ I called to YHWH in my distress, and he answered me. I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol; you heard my voice.

- The term Sheol refers to the abode of the dead. The phrase womb of Sheol heightens the threat since it implies the psalmist has gone deep into the recesses of the place of the dead.⁶ To be in Sheol is simply to be dead, beyond all help unless God can give life to what is dead.⁷

- Throughout the prayer, Jonah presents himself in language drawn from biblical Psalms. This in itself is not terribly significant, but when one compares the beliefs and behaviors that led to Jonah's present situation, the fact that he is careful to describe his experience in terms used by those who suffer unjustly at the hands of the wicked shows that his understanding of himself and of his circumstances is terribly contorted.⁸

- A fascinating observation of this verse is that, due to his circumstances, Jonah must be praying in silence, as voiceless as the

¹ Cary, Phillip. *Jonah* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 75). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 80). InterVarsity Press.

³ Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 78). InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 567). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 81). InterVarsity Press

⁶ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 571). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Cary, Phillip. *Jonah* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 85). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition

⁸ Baker, D. W., Baker, D. W., Alexander, T. D., & Waltke, B. K. *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 26) (p. 69). Inter-Varsity Press.

dead. It is perhaps the only silent prayer in the whole Bible. Yet it comes before the God of heaven, who not only beholds the depths but hears the voice of the voiceless.⁹

3 When you threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas, the current overcame me. All your breakers and your billows swept over me.

- Was it really YHWH who threw him into the depths?
- Verse 3 adds to the Jonah narrative, the water imagery does create the effect of demonstrating the fear faced by the character of Jonah. Along with verse 5, this verse also probably represents the content of the existing psalm that drew the author's attention and caused that writer to incorporate the poem into the narrative.¹⁰

4 And I said, “I have been banished from your sight, yet I will look once more toward your holy temple.”

- This verse represents the verse that is most disconnected from the narrative for two primary reasons. First, and foremost, while the verse appears as part of the description of the threat from which the singer has already been delivered, it presumes that the threat has caused the singer to be banned or to be unable to attend temple services. Of course, this kind of situation has nothing to do with the narrative of Jonah that surrounds the poem. Second, and nearly as important, we know that Jonah was from the Northern Kingdom. In the Old Testament, anyone who comes across the phrase “your holy temple” would, of course, associate the phrase with the temple at Jerusalem, but this would be completely out of place for a prophet of the Northern Kingdom whose sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel are never called holy temples.¹¹

5 The water engulfed me up to the neck; the watery depths overcame me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. 6 I descended to the foundations of the mountains, the earth’s gates shut behind me forever! Then you raised my life from the Pit, YHWH my God!

- Jonah keeps on descending... (1.3;1.4;1.5;2.6) When one interprets the singer of the psalm as Jonah after it has been inserted in the narrative context, the verb “descend” represents the fourth and final time Jonah has “descended” in chapters 1–2: He has descended to Joppa from the hill country (1.3); he has descended onto the ship (1.4); and he has descended into the inner recesses of the vessel, which already puts him below the water (1.5). When the singer in 2:6 descends to the base of the mountains, there is nowhere left to go. He has literally hit rock bottom. What this means is that with each successive occurrence of the verb “descend,” Jonah sinks a little lower.¹²
- Yet as powerful and true as the short proclamation of 6b is, it is the shortest section of the psalm, and Jonah’s attention returns to his own activity for the rest of the psalm.¹³

7 As my life was fading away, I remembered YHWH, and my prayer came to you, to your holy temple.

- Remembering YHWH implies he utters a prayer. The fact that the prayer reaches YHWH in the temple not only implies that the psalmist utters the prayer, but that YHWH acted positively on it.¹⁴
- Let’s suppose that this psalm was indeed added to the narrative. Why would a scribe/redactor have done so? Several reasons can be suggested, but they are not all mutually exclusive. In the late Persian and Hellenistic periods, evidence suggests that several narratives received poetic insertions where scribes considered them appropriate, especially at the point of the character’s

⁹ Cary, Phillip. Jonah (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 86). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 572-573). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp.573-574). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹² Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 574-575). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹³ Baker, D. W., Baker, D. W., Alexander, T. D., & Waltke, B. K. Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 26) (p. 71). Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁴ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p.575). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

submission to YHWH. In addition, many of the biographical superscriptions of psalms that refer to events in the life of David were added around this same time, often taking pains to provide pious prayers for stories where such responses were lacking. Also, the implicit accusation of the psalmist condemning those who forsake their *hesed* suggests that someone who added the psalm may have interpreted Jonah as an allegory for Israel itself. The presence of the psalm softens the character of Jonah, even if only briefly, by introducing a grateful Jonah whose reconnection with the temple, with YHWH's presence, causes him to recognize how close he came to losing his life and causes him to articulate the conviction born of experience that deliverance comes from YHWH.¹⁵

⁸ Those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love,⁹ but as for me, I will sacrifice to you with a voice of thanksgiving. I will fulfill what I have vowed. Salvation [Deiverance] belongs to YHWH.

- Who are "those?" Jonah most likely has in mind the sailors, perhaps because he is unaware that the sea calmed once he was thrown overboard. But whether they, the Ninevites, or non-Israelites, in general, are in view, the contrast clearly presumes that Jonah, because he has been delivered, is the polar opposite of such people and has himself experienced God's faithful love (*hesed*).¹⁶

- The phrase "cherish worthless idols" also evokes the worship of insubstantial things. It can also imply the uttering of false oaths or vows, whether those oaths are made to false deities or uttered to YHWH but not fulfilled!¹⁷

- Jonah says he would do what the sailors had already done! While Jonah promises that he will sacrifice to YHWH with a thankful voice and pay his vows, the very same two actions had already been demonstrated in the sailors' reverence for YHWH in 1:16¹⁸

The Hebrew word *hesed* has a wide range of meanings such as, kindness, loving-kindness, faithfulness, or covenant loyalty, but it essentially refers to the keeping of covenant stipulations agreed to by parties who have made an agreement.

The first occurrence of the word in the Hebrew Bible is found in Gen. 19:19.

¹⁰ Then YHWH commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

- Verse 10 recounts YHWH's reaction to the prayer. Yet, given the likelihood that a version of the narrative existed without the prayer, one should consider this verse from both perspectives: without the prayer the narrative lacked any reason why YHWH would return Jonah to the land, thereby accentuating the prophet's pomposity; with the prayer, Jonah briefly becomes a sympathetic character. In Jonah 2:10, the hyperbolic tone persists as God speaks to the fish, resulting in the creature unceremoniously expelling Jonah onto dry land.

The word for the fish's act means "to vomit." Being provocative and onomatopoeic, it connotes an action that evokes a certain level of disgust.

In this respect, the word is quite appropriate for the narrative that portrays Jonah more harshly than the psalm. After such a beautiful and pious prayer, the image of him being regurgitated seems severe. If the poem was inserted into this narrative context, 2:10 would have originally followed 1:17. From this perspective, the vomiting of Jonah would have created an effective narrative image as punishment for Jonah's recalcitrance.¹⁹

The lack of remorse in this version of the narrative may be the reason why a later editor decided to incorporate the prayer (2:2–9), as well as the report of the prayer (2:1). Otherwise, Jonah's change of heart regarding the fulfillment of his commission, lacks a clear rationale.²⁰ Another take on this tension is to regard Jonah's piety as an "inflated" expression of a "deflated" character, or even "grotesque" in relation to his actual actions. The story can only move on by means of a vomiting (nauseated) fish and by starting

15 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 577). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

16 Baker, D. W., Baker, D. W., Alexander, T. D., & Waltke, B. K. *Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 26) (p. 71). Inter-Varsity Press.

17 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 578-579). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

18 Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 88). InterVarsity Press.

19 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 580-581). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

20 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 582). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

over with YWYHW's second call (3:1).²¹

How did Jonah get to Nineveh?

We have no idea to know exactly how Jonah got to Nineveh. And since every guess would be straight speculation, here are two assumptions from the Rabbinic tradition that I found quite interesting (and even funny).

Some texts report the fish takes Jonah on a tour of the oceans underneath the dry ground, which would have presumably allowed Jonah to be deposited much closer to Nineveh.

Another text has the fish spit Jonah through the air nearly one thousand miles.

Observations:

- Jonah makes no mention of his own role in the events that brought him to the current situation, concluding that his brush with drowning is a consequence of God's actions.²²
- Jonah has assumed that his relationship with God is healthy while that of the (idol-worshipping) sailors is non-existent, while the narrator has shown that the truth is almost the opposite.²³
- While Jonah uses a flourish of words for his own deliverance, he has only a few reticent words for the Ninevites and sailors.²⁴

Take away:

²¹Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (p. 81). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

²²Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (pp. 84-85). InterVarsity Press.

²³Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 88). InterVarsity Press.

²⁴Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The NIV Application Commentary) (p. 81). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

Chapter 3.

¹ And the word of YHWH came to Jonah a second time saying, ² “Rise. Go to Nineveh, the grand city, and call out to her the message that I am speaking to you.” (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- The content of the word of YHWH in 3:2 begins identically to 1:2 but differs noticeably from the message that Jonah received the first time. Jonah 1:2 indicated that the reason for the prophet's mission was the wickedness of its people while Jonah 3:2 does not mention the wickedness.¹ The preposition changes from one that clearly conveys a negative statement in 1:2 (cry out against her) to one that is ambiguous in 3:2 (call out to her). [Therefore] In verse 2, the narrator prepares the reader for a surprise to come, the repentance of the Ninevites, by reintroducing the city and its inhabitants in a less hostile manner.²

³ Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to YHWH's command. Now Nineveh was an extremely great city [to God, or to the gods], a three-day walk. (CSB)

- Maybe the phrase could be translated as “a grand city belonging to God.”
- The second half of 3:3 poses difficulties for translation, interpretation, and geography. This first difficulty concerns the phrase that portrays Nineveh as a grand city to God. Perhaps, the best solution is to understand the phrase as meaning “a grand city belonging to God.” In this sense, the phrase fits with the broader aims of the Jonah narrative, which highlights God's providence and God's compassion on all creation.³

⁴ Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown [or overturned].” (NASB)

- Jonah's sermon represents the briefest biblical sermon on record, consisting of merely five words: תְּפִלָּב הָנִינָּו סֹוי מִעַבְרָא דְּעַז. ⁴ Some scholars would argue that when one reads this sermon within the broader context of Jonah's flight (ch. 1) and his annoyance at YHWH's mercy (ch. 4), especially in light of the statement indicating that YHWH's mercy was the reason Jonah fled in the first place (4:2), it becomes painfully obvious that Jonah's lucid brevity should not be interpreted positively. Jonah is not acting out of a sense of conviction that the delivery of the message will cause the Ninevites to change their ways. Rather, Jonah's actions should be understood as those of a child forced to do something the child does not want to do. Jonah does just enough to fulfill his commission.⁵

- Recent commentators argue that the Hebrew verb that stands for “overturned, overthrown,” can mean “to be overthrown” (and hence destroyed) or it can mean “to be changed or altered” (e.g., a change of heart in Exod 14:5; Hos 11:8). This potential double entendre can thus function as both a threat and a prediction since Nineveh's rapid response completely alters its relationship to God.⁶

⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least. (CSB)

- The phrase, “then the people of Nineveh believed God” implies, at its core, the idea of trust. In Jonah, it thus not only conveys a sense of foreigners recognizing the power of God over their lives, it also displays a subtle contrast between the foreigners (the sailors and the Ninevites) who believe in God and Jonah who struggles to understand YHWH's proclivity toward compassion to all.⁷

¹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 593). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

² Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 594). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

³ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 596-597). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 595). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition

⁵ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 599-601). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 599-601). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 602). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

- Ancient Near Eastern people would offer sacrifices and confess when confronted with suffering or threats of punishment, but their polytheism and a lack of revelation made it challenging to pinpoint the offended god and the nature of the transgression. Apart from these details, it was typical in the ancient Near East to interpret suffering as a necessary consequence of wrongdoing, whether for kings, nations, or individuals.⁸

And, maybe, that's why the people of Nineveh reacted to Jonah's sermon in the way they did. The people of Nineveh hear from an Israelite prophet that the city will be destroyed in forty days, and they immediately demonstrate contrition and prepare for acts of intercession. No one tells them to do these things. Jonah offers no call to repent, and makes no attempt to get them to change. Without further prompting, the people of Nineveh simply know that they must change.⁹

6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. 7 He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8 But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn [šûb] from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." (NASB)

- "Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, so you can offer a grain offering and a drink offering to the Lord your God." (Joel 2:14 CSB)

- The formulation in Jonah 3:9 has a close parallel in Joel 2:14. That text plays a pivotal role in the structure of Joel. Following the warning of an impending attack (Joel 2:1-11), the prophet calls upon YHWH's people to tear their garments (2:13) in hopes that YHWH will respond favorably using nearly the same wording as here: "Who knows whether he will not turn and relent?" In Jonah 3:9, the king of Nineveh articulates the same idea to the people of Nineveh in a nearly verbatim manner. Jonah 3:9 merely adds the subject, God: Who knows? God may turn and relent.¹⁰

- Since the motif of fasting incorporated the animals in Jonah 3:7, it is not surprising, but it is comical, that the king's decree (3:8) demands that the beasts wear sackcloth as well. This humor, however, also serves a serious purpose: to underscore a theological point and anticipate what happens at the end of the book with the same theological conviction that YHWH's judgment is tempered by his compassion for his entire creation.¹¹

- The Hebrew term that describes their reaction is *sûb*, the most common term for "repentance." When this phrase occurs elsewhere in the OT, it describes the kind of repentance God called for.¹²

- Another Assyrian text, closer to the decree of Jonah 3 in terms of genre and content, is a royal call to repentance issued in 793 BC by an unnamed Assyrian king (most likely Adad-Nirari III, who ruled 810-783) and addressed to Mannu-ki-Assur, the governor of Guzana/Gozan province who, according to the Assyrian Chronicle, led a military excursion in 794. It reads:

*"Decree of the king. You and all the people, your land, your meadows will mourn and pray for three days before the god Adad and repent. You will perform the purification rites so that there may be rest."*¹³

Who was the king of Nineveh?

The king of Nineveh has no name, which is not at all unusual for a book that names only Jonah; later traditions nevertheless try to fix the problem. A midrash picks for him the name Osnappar (Assurbanipal?), obviously from Ezra 4:10; another tradition identifies him with the Pharaoh of the Exodus who, having learned his lesson at first hand, readily believes in God and in his latest prophet. (Never mind the chronological difference.) Ibn Ezra equates him with Sennacherib, who likewise had firsthand knowledge

of God's power (2 Kgs 19:36-37). (See Zlotowitz 1980: 124.) Church fathers argued whether the king was Satan (or his avatar, Nebuchadnezzar!), whose conversion foreshadows the final days; but Jerome was particularly displeased with this interpretation.¹⁴

⁸ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 106-107). InterVarsity Press

⁹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 603-604). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 607-608). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 606). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹² Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 102). InterVarsity Press.

¹³ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 106). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁴ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p. 249). Doubleday.

10 And God saw their deeds, how they repented [šûb] from their evil way. And then God relented concerning the evil that he had said he would do to them, but did not do. (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- In Jonah, the foreigners become the model of repentance while Jonah (who wants to see the foreigners punished) challenges YHWH for being too compassionate (4:2). Among other prophetic texts, Jonah stands out for its unique portrayal of foreign nations truly repenting and transforming their relationship with YHWH. The fact that these people represent the people of Assyria, the country that destroyed Samaria in 722 BCE, only serves to heighten the theological message of the narrator, which insists that all humanity can come to God for deliverance.¹⁵

Observations:

- God relents, but the Ninevites' prior sins remain unpunished.¹⁶ God does not give Nineveh a clear pass in Jonah 3, and he relents for no other reason than his own mercy and patience. God, no less than Jonah, would say that 'an evil deed must, by necessity, be punished' (Levine 2002: 182). What distinguishes Jonah from God in that regard is God's willingness to await repentance and to delay judgment.¹⁷

- Nineveh believed in God, and turned from her sin in some degree, but did not fully turn to God. The reform of the Ninevites makes no mention of putting away their other gods. While we might be tempted to dismiss this as an argument from silence, we have already seen in the examples of Ruth and Naaman just this element when they explicitly abandon their gods and attach themselves to YHWH (Ruth 1:16; 2 Kgs 5:17).¹⁸ The city believed God's word through Jonah, and abandoned their violence and wickedness in the hope that God would spare them. This is a striking moral reform, but there is nothing in Jonah 3 that requires us to say it was more than that. While one cannot deny the importance of proper works as a major step in repentance, this is not the terminology that would be expected of a full conversion to YHWH.¹⁹

Concluding, it appears that the author of Jonah recognized that Nineveh's repentance did not signify the conversion of the whole city to YHWH, but still chose to portray their response to the threat of divine judgment in the strongest possible terms in order to press his critique of Israel's unwillingness to repent in even a comparable way.²⁰

- The sailors and Nineveh's experience: though the word "repent" is not employed in Jonah 1, the sailors' actions clearly show a reorientation of heart and life in the context of a monotheistic relationship with YHWH.²¹

Does God change His mind?

- "YHWH's sovereignty is not exercised arbitrarily, but responsibly and responsively, interacting with the moral, or immoral, actions of human beings." R. W. L. Moberly

- "Belief in God's immutability does not negate the importance of historical contingencies or especially the importance of human choices. Under the sovereign control of God, the choices people make determine the directions history will take." Richard Pratt Jr.

Take away:

¹⁵ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 609). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 103). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁷ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 114). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁸ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 103). InterVarsity Press.

¹⁹ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 103). InterVarsity Press.

²⁰ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 104). InterVarsity Press.

²¹ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 115). InterVarsity Press.

Chapter 4.

1 And it was displeasing to Jonah, a great calamity [evil], and he seethed [was filled with intense unexpressed anger]. (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- The first phrase of 4:1 sheds a good deal of light on his reaction with its mention of 'evil,' since that reminds us of God's description of the city's wickedness (1:3; 3:8,10). This verse, however, is the only time in the book of Jonah that the adjective 'very/great' is used in conjunction with the moral term 'evil'. Speaking tongue in cheek, it seems Jonah is more upset with Nineveh's deliverance than was YHWH with its sin!¹

- The Hebrew verbal expression that stands for "seethed" indicates that Jonah burned (with anger). The verb escalates Jonah's anger by continuation. It is one thing to consider an action wrong, but the verbal form in Hebrew means that not only did Jonah believe YHWH's action to be completely wrong, but the prophet let that belief grow into seething anger. He is stewing in his own juices.²

2 And he prayed to YHWH and said: "Alas, YHWH, is this not what I said when I was in my own land? That's why I first went to flee toward Tarshish, because I knew that you are a God who is gracious and compassionate, who is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and who relents concerning evil. (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- Did Jonah really know that? That the YHWH would protect Israel by destroying the Ninevites was certainly a hope Jonah could have harbored in his heart, but that YHWH instead would protect Israel by converting the Ninevites is a stupendous miracle, astonishing and unprecedented, for which nothing could have prepared him. Perhaps, to suppose that from the very beginning, Jonah understood the ways of YHWH so deeply is to give him too much credit. His hatred is believable but not his claim to wisdom. One of the ways one can interpret Jonah's story about his own motivations, his self-interpretation, is to call it a lie.³

- Cooper (1993: 154) thinks that the omission of 'and truth' in Jon. 4:2 shows that the prophet considers God untrue to his threat (i.e. Jonah understood his message as an unconditional divine promise).⁴

- Jonah only uses the people's repentance to accuse YHWH of being too soft, too compassionate on these foreigners. Jonah wants punishment and judgment, not grace and compassion for the people of Nineveh.⁵

EXODUS 34:6-7	JOEL 2:13	JONAH 4:2
[...]The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and <i>truth</i> ; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."	[...] For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil.	[...] You are a God who is gracious and compassionate, who is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and who relents concerning evil.

1 Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 118). InterVarsity Press.

2 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 618-619). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

3 Cary, Phillip. Jonah (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible) (p. 130). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

4 Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 121). InterVarsity Press.

5 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 601). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

Jonah 4:2 & Exodus 34:6-7

- If the echo of Exodus 32 - 34 were not sufficient to show the centrality of mercy, grace, patience, and faithfulness in God's character, Jonah adds (drawing on what has just unfolded before his eyes) that YHWH 'relented concerning the threat' he had made. This summary of Nineveh's deliverance, though remarkable in itself, gains further significance in the light of the context's relation to Exodus 32 - 34. The author of Jonah seems to want us to make this connection to Exodus 32, and so to see that God's compassion to Israel then is no different from his compassion to Nineveh now, for he has cast his description of God's reaction in Jonah 3:10 in the same words as God's decision to spare Israel in Exodus 32:14. One notable difference exists, however, between those two situations: Israel in Exodus 32 had not yet even repented (though Nineveh had) - Israel was spared only because of God's gracious response to Moses' intercession.⁶

- Some have interpreted Jonah's response to YHWH's change of heart as reflecting the prophet's fear that people will challenge Jonah's integrity over the issue of the punishment of the wicked. Jonah had stated Nineveh would be overthrown, but YHWH's decision to show mercy means that Jonah's pronouncement will not come to pass and that people might consider him a false prophet.⁷ With God relenting from His Word, without giving His prophet a role to play in the reversal, how could that prophet trust in his own calling? How will Jonah know that he remains God's prophet?⁸

³ So, YHWH, take my life from me because my death is better than my life." (New International Commentary on the Old Testament).

- "Because Your lovingkindness [hesed] is better than life, My lips shall praise You." (Psalm 63:3 NKJV). While YHWH's hesed was better than life to David, YHWH's hesed was worse than death to Jonah...

- Does Jonah really expect God to bring him death when the Ninevites, wickedest of men, have just experienced divine mercy? Has Jonah so easily forgotten what it was like to taste death when the sailors fulfilled his wish for it (1:12)?⁹

- It's interesting to note that, in Hebrew, Jonah introduces his request with 'atta, an adverb that, when succeeded by an imperative, implies that the time to discuss a matter is over and there is not much to do now but to fulfill what is being asked. The motivation is given immediately after the request.¹⁰

⁴ But YHWH said, "Is it good for you to seethe [be angry]?" (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- Some scholars interpret YHWH's words as "You really are angry!" conveying a type of "teasing" on the part of God.¹¹ Sasson, on the other hand, concludes that at this point there is the feeling that God sympathizes with Jonah's despair, perhaps even wishes to relieve his pain.¹² In any case, YHWH's question confronts the prophet's petulance and implies Jonah has no right to be angry. Yet, the form of a question does invite a response. It provides Jonah with an opening to confront YHWH more expansively.¹³

⁵ And then Jonah went forth from the city, and he sat down east of the city. And, there, he made a booth [sukâ] for himself. And he sat down under it until he could see what would happen in the city. (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- The word booth (sukâ) refers to a temporary structure made of interwoven tree branches that would provide shade from the heat

⁶ Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p.123). InterVarsity Press.

⁷ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 620-621). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁸ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p.297). Doubleday.

⁹ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p. 283). Doubleday.

¹⁰ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p.283). Doubleday.

¹¹ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p.286). Doubleday.

¹² Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p.287). Doubleday.

¹³ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p.627). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

of the sun.¹⁴

- YHWH's rhetorical question in the previous verse essentially stakes out YHWH's position. YHWH does not think Jonah is correct, so how does Jonah respond? Jonah responds poorly. Instead of taking the question as an opening to present his case, Jonah sulks and walks away in silence. Instead of engaging YHWH in debate, which Jonah knows he will lose, Jonah offers no response, no rebuttal, and no change of heart regarding his own actions. Jonah merely absents himself from the city and waits to see what happens.¹⁵

- This is a rather overdramatized verse: Jonah exits, sits, builds, sits, then stares at the city. The effect is once more of movements as if Jonah is taking his time or is not sure how best to proceed.¹⁶

Why would Jonah wait to see what will happen in the city when he already knows that YHWH has shown compassion to Nineveh?

The confusion is not just a modern problem since some manuscripts move this verse so that it appears immediately after Jonah delivers his sermon in 3:4.¹⁷ H. Winckler (1900) championed a medieval proposal whereby 4:5 is inserted right after 3:4. This transposition gives Jonah a presence in the Nineveh episode, as he observes the spiritual upheaval within the town; Trible, who partially follows Winckler, lamely suggests that the scribe moved 4:5 to its present position in response to God's query of 4:4. Such an approach, however, leaves chapter 4 without much tension and leaves us to wonder how and why an ancient scribe could commit such a lapse in transmitting the text.¹⁸

Other scholars, assuming that the verse is in its proper place, believe that Jonah expected Nineveh's repentance not to last long, and therefore just awaits its inhabitants' turnabout, which is sure to come and which, just as surely, will prompt God into retaliation.¹⁹

6 So YHWH ēlōhîm appointed a plant [qîqâyôن] and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. (NASB)

- The title *YHWH ēlōhîm* is unique in the prophetic corpus. In *Jonah*, *ēlōhîm* tends to appear more commonly in contexts where the nations appear, while *YHWH* appears in places that involve Jonah. Perhaps the combined term *YHWH ēlōhîm* functions here as an echo of the creation account of Gen 2–3. This echo of *YHWH*'s role as creator of all living things would be appropriate here since *YHWH*'s subsequent actions again demonstrate his power over the created world. When Jonah fled, *YHWH* hurled a great storm at the boat he had rented (1:4). In 4:6, for the second time in the book, *YHWH* appoints something from creation to perform an unusual task related to Jonah. In 2:1, *YHWH* appointed a large fish to swallow Jonah. Here, *YHWH* appoints a plant to provide shade for the prophet, but *YHWH*'s special assignments are not complete. As part of Jonah's education, *YHWH* will also appoint a worm and a hot wind (vv. 7, 8).²⁰

- Some scholars would argue that the use of the compound divine name serves to signal to the reader that Jonah is being treated like Nineveh. Moving from the most (*YHWH*) to the least ('elohim) personal of God's names, verse 6 contains a syncretism that serves as a transition.²¹

- The name of the plant, *qîqâyôن*, is unique to Jonah. Scholars generally interpret the term as a reference to a plant that produces castor beans. Certain modern varieties of this plant can grow to be nearly forty feet tall. It has leaves that are six to eight inches long so it would have been quite capable of providing shade from the hot sun.²² But why would *YHWH* need to raise a plant over Jonah's head if the *sukâ* functioned properly? And why would Jonah lament the desiccation of the plant when there was a *sukâ* to shield him from the hot sun?²³

14 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))* (p. 630). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

15 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))* (pp. 627-628). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

16 Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (p. 287). Doubleday.

17 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))* (pp. 630-631). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

18 Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (p. 288). Doubleday.

19 Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (p. 289). Doubleday.

20 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))* (pp. 632-633). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

21 Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (p. 291). Doubleday.

22 Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))* (pp. 632-633). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

23 Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (p. 290). Doubleday.

7 When dawn came the next day, ēlōhîm appointed a worm that attacked the plant, and it withered. (CSB)

- The picture created by the worm's action also serves the comedic interest of the narrator in that a tiny worm no bigger than the size of a fingernail destroys the large, leafy plant that had alleviated Jonah's distress and elated him.²⁴
- Perhaps, the author connects Jonah with ēlōhîm instead of YHWH to show that the God who has shown mercy and compassion toward the Gentiles is the same God Jonah knows, the same God Israel has known from her very beginning.²⁵

8 When the sun came up ēlōhîm appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." (NASB)

- The construction of the phrase "God directed a fierce east wind" in Hebrew (*rûah qâdîm hâriš*), has only one other equivalent phrase in Scripture, at Exod 14:21, "The Lord pushed the sea with a powerful east wind."²⁶
- But if Jonah had the booth, wouldn't he still be protected from the sun even without the plant? Well, a solution to this puzzle may be found in an eleventh-century rabbinic tradition. The tradition says that the wind would have demolished the booth, leaving Jonah more exposed than before the arrival of the qîqâyôn plant, with nothing to protect him from the sun. In fact, the narrator assumes a lack of protection was created by the wind. The references to the time when the dawn rose in 4:7, and when the sun rose in verse 8 accentuate the sun. YHWH's actions take place when the sun rose, but the narrator also explicitly states that the sun struck the head of Jonah. The sequence of these events in verse 8 may well support this rabbinic tradition. When the sun rose, God appointed the wind. The next clause states that the sun struck Jonah on his head.²⁷
- The Hebrew noun *nepēš*, normally translated as 'life, soul, being.'²⁸ [Therefore] While in verse 3, Jonah asks YHWH directly to take his life, in verse 8, Jonah literally asks his soul to die.²⁹

9 Then ēlōhîm asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "Yes, it's right!" he replied. "I'm angry enough to die!" (CSB)

- The way the author accentuates the question implies that YHWH signals that Jonah's reaction should be viewed as improper. In doing so, God expects Jonah to infer a negative response, "No, it is not good," but Jonah ignores the clue and escalates his own resistance. Not only does Jonah claim the right to be angry, but Jonah claims that right extends even to the point of his death. Jonah shows no remorse, no hesitation, and no reflection in challenging God. His speech represents the last words in the book that Jonah speaks, but they instigate a response from God that is both didactic and engaging. Jonah once again exhibits a stubborn propensity to take a stand that is based upon arrogance and bias. Once more, Jonah is given the chance to reflect upon his own selfish behavior and change. Sadly, the lack of response from the prophet implies he does not change. He would rather die as a result of his own arrogant belief that he should school God on how to be God.³⁰

Jonah's last words leave him wallowing in self-pity as he proclaims he remains angry enough to die. Jonah accepts deliverance from YHWH when it benefits him, but he cannot bring himself to see that the same compassionate character that provoked YHWH to deliver Jonah means that YHWH must act gracefully to all the people of the world who repent to him. Jonah knows that he serves the God of Heaven who created the cosmos, but Jonah wants to claim YHWH's compassion as his own property. Jonah does not believe that compassion should be extended to the people of Nineveh, presumably because they were not Israelites.³¹

24 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 633). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

25 Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 128-129). InterVarsity Press.

26 Sasson, Jack M. Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p. 303). Doubleday.

27 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 634). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

28 Timmer, Daniel C. A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah (p. 129). InterVarsity Press.

29 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 635). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

30 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 635-636). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

31 Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 585). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ And then YHWH said, “You had pity [ḥûs] over the plant over which you did not toil and which you did not raise. It came into existence one night and perished the next. ¹¹ So, should I not have pity [ḥûs] over Nineveh, the great city that has 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left hand, and many cattle as well?” (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

- The verb pity (ḥûs) describes an emotional reaction when someone sees suffering that moves the person to act to stop the suffering. And its use by YHWH at the beginning of His response highlights some interesting points.

The first one is that its use highlights the irony of the book. YHWH knows that Jonah welcomes death, not out of passion for the plant's demise but because of his own suffering.³² The second one is that Jonah doesn't do anything in response to the plant dying, except to express his own desire to die (4:8–9).³³

- In the second part of v10, YHWH makes it clear to Jonah that he had no part in helping the plant grow. He played no role as a parent or as a caretaker. The verb that stands for “toil” ('āmal) refers to the work one would expect from a gardener who is tending to a plant by weeding and watering its surroundings so that the plant can grow and thrive. And “raise” (gādal) appears regularly to refer to raising a child (Isa 1:2; 23:4; 49:21; 51:18; Hos 9:12; Job 7:17; 1 Kgs 11:20; 2 Kgs 10:6).³⁴

The end of v. 10 also highlights what YHWH is about to pronounce on v11. Jonah did not toil or raised the plant; however, as the Creator of all (including the Ninevites), YHWH toiled and raised the people and the animals found in Nineveh.

- In what is perhaps the most supreme irony of the book, Jonah prayed to YHWH when his own life was fainting away (2:7), but when the plant dies, Jonah wants his own life to die as well (4:8). Jonah does not merely express regret about the passing of the plant, Jonah states his death would be better than his life. In chapter 2, Jonah could not escape from the watery disaster without YHWH's help, but in chapter 4, Jonah created the scenario by himself. He only had to return to Nineveh to find shelter from the sun.³⁵

vv.2-3	Jonah's monologue	39 words
v.4	YHWH'S question	3 words
v.8	Jonah's question	3 words
v.9	dialogue: YHWH	5 words
	dialogue: Jonah	5 words
vv.10-11	YHWH's monologue	39 words

- This symmetry in apportioning words is much too developed and obvious to be accidental. Because it can be appreciated best by the reading eye rather than the hearing ear, we may regard this accord as a studied maneuver on the part of a writer (rather than a teller). The goal or purpose of such an elaborate enterprise, however, is open to speculation. It can be suggested that this balance and harmony are intended to keep us aware that God's responses are countermoves to Jonah's utterances.³⁶

Observations:

- The book begins with YHWH having the first words and ends with YHWH having the last say.

- Jonah has no trouble accepting divine compassion when it is directed his way, but he burns with anger in response to YHWH's compassion upon a group Jonah deems unworthy. In theological terms, this response represents the very definition of bias in that it privileges one group over another out of a sense of superiority or exclusiveness. Such attitudes are hardly unique to Jonah. Jesus warned his followers against such myopic hypocrisy (Matt 7:1–5), attitudes that sadly still form part of the human condition. Our need to cry out for divine punishment frequently out-distances our willingness to wish for divine mercy upon others. In Jonah's case, this bias left him so angry he preferred to die rather than live in a world that did not conform to his own sense of justice.³⁷ If we are willing to accept God's grace for ourselves as sinners, we must learn to rejoice over the grace God extends to other

³² Sasson, Jack M. Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p. 309). Doubleday

³³ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 636–637). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

³⁴ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 636–637). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

³⁵ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 637–638). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

³⁶ Sasson, Jack M. Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations (p. 317–318). Doubleday

³⁷ Nogalski, James D. The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 640). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

sinners, specifically those who differ from us. We are not called to be the distributors of divine justice, but we are called the vehicles of grace.³⁸

- According to the theology of Jonah's narrator, God should, can, and does show compassion on all humanity as God sees fit. A prophetic pronouncement of judgment always carries with it an implicit call to repentance. YHWH's compassion in Jonah is motivated by the repentance of the Ninevites. If YHWH can change YHWH's mind about Nineveh, then YHWH can change any prophetic judgment. What motivates YHWH's actions is compassion, not wrath.³⁹

- The contrast between Jonah and his God is complete when we compare this prayer with his prayer in the fish. In Jonah 2 when Jonah himself was saved from drowning, he produced a prayer that extolled God as the source of deliverance. In Jonah 4, however, when Jonah's enemies are saved from destruction, Jonah's next prayer sees him begging for death, from which God has so recently delivered him.⁴⁰

- Maybe, Jonah's response to YHWH's compassion on the people of Nineveh derived from his belief in the validity of the pronouncement of judgment against a wicked people (1:2), applied to foreigners, and in Jonah's knowledge of YHWH's character as a God of compassion (4:2), which Jonah does not wish to see applied to those same foreigners.⁴¹

Take away:

³⁸ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 640). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

³⁹ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (p. 624). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁰ Timmer, Daniel C. *A gracious and compassionate God: mission, salvation, and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (p. 124). InterVarsity Press.

⁴¹ Nogalski, James D. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)) (pp. 639-640). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

Conclusion.

Jeremiah sought the honor of [God] and the honor of [Israel]...

Elijah sought the honor of [God] and not the honor of [Israel]...

Jonah sought the honor of [Israel] and not the honor of [God].

Adapted from Mekilta, Pisha; cited from Halperin 1980: 90

The alternative to Jonah's absurdity is the absurdity of God.

Good 1981: 55

The fundamental purpose of the book of Jonah is not found in its missionary or universalistic teaching. It is rather to show that Jonah being cast in the depths of Sheol and yet brought out alive is an illustration of the death of the Messiah for sins not His own and of the Messiah's resurrection.

E. J. Young 1960: 263

The Book of Jonah is an expression of what may be called "*la condition prophétique*." The prophet cannot escape his mission and is bound to suffer when he attempts to fulfill it.

Berlin 1976: 234-35

The story of Jonah is not only a religious manifesto but also a psychological tableau of the human condition. Jonah is not just a Jew from Palestine called out of anonymity by a commissioning voice from without. He is a human being, every person. . . . He is also a paradigm of our resistance to election by God, for nothing is more repulsive to us than to be so designated (elected, chosen) by the Outer Voice for a self-transcending task when we would rather follow our inner voice and our biological dictates ("what feels good") for our self-satisfaction and our self-aggrandizement.

Lacocque and Lacocque 1981: 126-27

Beginning as a punitive affair between God and Nineveh, temporarily interrupted by the go-between's recalcitrance, Jonah evolves before our eyes into a story of a prophet's education.

Sternberg 1987: 320

Jonah's example shows that those who have a close external connection to God (Jonah was born among God's chosen people and served as a prophet among them), know the Scriptures well and firmly believe that God exists, can still persevere in calm, reasoned rebellion against that same God.

Timer 2011: 145

Key verses:

1¹⁴ So they called out to YHWH: "Please, YHWH, don't let us perish because of this man's life, and don't charge us with innocent blood! **For you, YHWH, have done just as you pleased. (CSB)**

2⁹ but as for me, I will sacrifice to you with a voice of thanksgiving. I will fulfill what I have vowed. **Salvation [Deiverance] belongs to YHWH. (CSB)**

3⁹ "Who knows? God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." **(NASB)**

4¹¹ "So, should I not have pity over Nineveh, the great city that has 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left hand, and many cattle as well?" **(New International Commentary on the Old Testament)**