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# Jonah

## Mission of Jonah to Nineveh His Flight and Punishment Ch. 1

Jonah tries to avoid fulfilling the command of God, to preach repentance to the great city Nineveh, by a rapid flight to the sea, for the purpose of sailing to Tarshish (vv. 1-3); but a terrible storm, which threatens to destroy the ship, brings his sin to light (vv. 4-10); and when the lot singles him out as the culprit, he confesses that he is guilty; and in accordance with the sentence which he pronounces upon himself, is cast into the sea (vv. 11-16).

### Jonah 1:1-3

*Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

Verse 1-2. The narrative commences with *way<sup>a</sup>hiy* (OT:1961), as Ruth (Rth 1:1), 1 Samuel (1 Sam 1:1), and others do. This was the standing formula with which historical events were linked on to one another, inasmuch as every occurrence follows another in chronological sequence; so that the *Vav* (and) simply attaches to a series of events, which are assumed as well known, and by no means warrants the assumption that the narrative which follows is merely a fragment of a larger work (see at Josh 1:1). The word of the Lord which came to Jonah was this: "*Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach against it.*" *`al* (OT:5921) does not stand for *'el* (OT:413) (Jonah 3:2), but retains its proper meaning, *against*, indicating the threatening nature of the preaching, as the explanatory clause which follows clearly shows. The connection in Jonah 3:2 is a different one. *Nineveh*, the capital of the Assyrian kingdom, and the residence of the great kings of Assyria, which was built

by Nimrod according to Gen 10:11, and by Ninos, the mythical founder of the Assyrian empire, according to the Greek and Roman authors, is repeatedly called "the great city" in this book (Jonah 3:2-3; 4:11), and its size is given as three days' journey (Jonah 3:3).

This agrees with the statements of classical writers, according to whom *Gi'nos* , *Ninus* , as Greeks and Romans call it, was the largest city in the world at that time. According to Strabo (Rom 16:1,3), it was much larger than Babylon, and was situated in a plain, *Atouri'as* , of Assyria i.e., on the left bank of the Tigris. According to Ctesias (in Diod. ii. 3), its circumference was as much as 480 stadia, i.e., twelve geographical miles; whereas, according to Strabo, the circumference of the wall of Babylon was not more than 365 stadia. These statements have been confirmed by modern excavations upon the spot. The conclusion to which recent discoveries lead is, that the name Nineveh was used in two senses: *first* , for one particular city; and *secondly* , for a complex of four large primeval cities (including Nineveh proper), the circumvallation of which is still traceable, and a number of small dwelling-places, castles, etc., the mounds (Tell) of which cover the land.

This Nineveh, in the broader sense, is bounded on three sides by rivers-viz. on the north-west by the Khosr, on the west by the Tigris, and on the south-west by the Gazr Su and the Upper or Great Zab-and on the fourth side by mountains, which ascend from the rocky plateau; and it was fortified artificially all round on the river-sides with dams, sluices for inundating the land, and canals, and on the land side with ramparts and castles, as we may still see from the heaps of ruins. It formed a trapezium, the sharp angles of which lay towards the north and south, the long sides being formed by the Tigris and the mountains. The average length is about twenty-five English miles; the average breadth fifteen. The four large cities were situated on the edge of the trapezium, Nineveh proper (including the ruins of Kouyunjik, Nebbi Yunas, and Ninua) being at the north-western corner, by the Tigris; the

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city, which was evidently the later capital (Nimrud), and which Rawlinson, Jones, and Oppert suppose to have been *Calah*, at the south-western corner, between Tigris and Zab; a third large city, which is now without a name, and has been explored last of all, but within the circumference of which the village of Selamiyeh now stands, on the Tigris itself, from three to six English miles to the north of Nimrud; and lastly, the citadel and temple-mass, which is now named Khorsabad, and is said to be called Dur-Sargina in the inscriptions, from the palace built there by Sargon, on the Khosr, pretty near to the north-eastern corner (compare M. v. Niebuhr, *Geschichte Assurs*, p. 274ff., with the ground-plan of the city of Nineveh, p. 284).

But although we may see from this that Nineveh could very justly be called the great city, Jonah does not apply this epithet to it with the intention of pointing out to his countrymen its majestic size, but, as the expression *gedoolâh lee'loohim* in Jonah 3:3 clearly shows, and as we may see still more clearly from Jonah 4:11, with reference to the importance which Nineveh had, both in the eye of God, and with regard to the divine commission which he had received, as the capital of the Gentile world, *quae propter tot animarum multitudinem Deo curae erat* (Michaelis). Jonah was to preach against this great Gentile city, because its wickedness had come before Jehovah, i.e., because the report or the tidings of its great corruption had penetrated to God in heaven (cf. Gen 18:21; 1 Sam 5:12).

Verse 3. Jonah sets out upon his journey; not to Nineveh, however, but to flee to *Tarshish*, i.e., *Tartessus*, a Phoenician port in Spain (see at Gen 10:4 and Isa 23:1), "from the face of Jehovah," i.e., away from the presence of the Lord, out of the land of Israel, where Jehovah dwelt in the temple, and manifested His presence (cf. Gen 4:16); not to hide himself from the omnipresent God, but to withdraw from the service of Jehovah, the God-King of Israel.

(Note: Marck has already correctly observed, that "this must not be understood as flight from the being and knowledge of God, lest we should attribute to the great prophet gross ignorance of the omnipresence and omniscience of God; but as departure from the land of Canaan, the gracious seat of God, outside

which he thought, that possibly, at any rate at that time, the gift and office of a prophet would not be conferred upon him.")

The motive for this flight was not fear of the difficulty of carrying out the command of God, but, as Jonah himself says in Jonah 4:2, anxiety lest the compassion of God should spare the sinful city in the event of its repenting. He had no wish to co-operate in this; and that not merely because "he knew, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the repentance of the Gentiles would be the ruin of the Jews, and, as a lover of his country, was actuated not so much by envy of the salvation of Nineveh, as by unwillingness that his own people should perish," as Jerome supposes, but also because he really grudged salvation to the Gentiles, and feared lest their conversion to the living God should infringe upon the privileges of Israel above the Gentile world, and put an end to its election as the nation of God.

(Note: Luther has already deduced this, the only true reason, from ch. 4, in his *Commentary on the Prophet Jonah*: "Because Jonah was sorry that God was so kind, he would rather not preach, yea, would rather die, than that the grace of God, which was to be the peculiar privilege of the people of Israel, should be communicated to the Gentiles also, who had neither the word of God, nor the laws of Moses, nor the worship of God, nor prophets, nor anything else, but rather strove against God, and His word, and His people." But in order to guard against a false estimate of the prophet, on account of these "carnal, Jewish thoughts of God," Luther directs attention to the fact that "the apostles also held at first the carnal opinion that the kingdom of Christ was to be an outward one; and even afterwards, when they understood that it was to be a spiritual one, they thought that it was to embrace only the Jews, and therefore 'preached the gospel to the Jews only' (Acts 8), until God enlightened them by a vision from heaven to Peter (Acts 10), and by the public calling of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13), and by wonders and signs; and it was at last resolved by a general council (Acts 15), that God would also show mercy to the Gentiles, and that He was the God of the Gentiles also. For it was very hard for the Jews to believe that there were any other people

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outside Israel who helped to form the people of God, because the sayings of the Scripture stop there and speak of Israel and Abraham's seed; and the word of God, the worship of God, the laws and the holy prophets, were with them alone.")

He therefore betook himself to *Yaaphoo* , i.e., Joppa, the port on the Mediterranean Sea (vid., comm. on Josh 19:46), and there found a ship which was going to Tarshish; and having paid the *sekhârâh* , the hire of the ship, i.e., the fare for the passage, embarked "*to go with them* (i.e., the sailors) *to Tarshish.*"

### **Jonah 1:4-5**

***But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.***

Jonah's foolish hope of being able to escape from the Lord was disappointed. "*Jehovah threw a great wind* (i.e., a violent wind) *upon the sea.*" A mighty tempest ( *ca`ar* (OT:5591), rendered appropriately *klu'doon* (NT:2830) by the LXX) arose, so that "*the ship thought to be dashed to pieces,*" i.e., to be wrecked ( *hisheeb* used of inanimate things, equivalent to "*was very nearly*" wrecked). In this danger the seamen ( *mallâch* , a denom. of *melach* , the salt flood) cried for help, "*every one to his god.*" They were heathen, and probably for the most part Phoenicians, but from different places, and therefore worshippers of different gods. But as the storm did not abate, they also resorted to such means of safety as they had at command. They "*threw the waves in the ship into the sea, to procure relief to themselves*" ( *mee`aleeyhem* (OT:5921) *l'haaqeel* (OT:7043) as in Ex 18:22 and 1 Kings 12:10).

The suffix refers to the persons, not to the things. By throwing the goods overboard, they hoped to preserve the ship from sinking beneath the swelling waves, and thereby to *lighten* , i.e., diminish for themselves the danger of destruction which was so burdensome to them. "*But Jonah had gone down into the lower room of the ship, and*

*had there fallen fast asleep;"* not, however, just at the time of the greatest danger, but before the wind had risen into a dangerous storm. The sentence is to be rendered as a circumstantial one in the pluperfect. *Yarkethee hassephiinâh* (analogous to *harkethee habbayith* in Amos 6:10) is the innermost part of the vessel, i.e., the lower room of the ship. *Sephiinâh*, which only occurs here, and is used in the place of '*aaniyaah*' (OT:591), is the usual word for a ship in Arabic and Aramaean. *Nirdam*: used for deep sleep, as in Judg 4:21. This act of Jonah's is regarded by most commentators as a sign of an evil conscience.

Marck supposes that he had lain down to sleep, hoping the better to escape either the dangers of sea and air, or the hand of God; others, that he had thrown himself down in despair, and being utterly exhausted and giving himself up for lost, had fallen asleep; or as Theodoret expresses it, being troubled with the gnawings of conscience and overpowered with mourning, he had sought comfort in sleep and fallen into a deep sleep. Jerome, on the other hand, expresses the idea that the words indicate "security of mind" on the part of the prophet: "he is not disturbed by the storm and the surrounding dangers, but has the same composed mind in the calm, or with shipwreck at hand;" and whilst the rest are calling upon their gods, and casting their things overboard, "he is so calm, and feels so safe with his tranquil mind, that he goes down to the interior of the ship and enjoys a most placid sleep." The truth probably lies between these two views. It was not an evil conscience, or despair occasioned by the threatening danger, which induced him to lie down to sleep; nor was it his fearless composure in the midst of the dangers of the storm, but the careless self-security with which he had embarked on the ship to flee from God, without considering that the hand of God could reach him even on the sea, and punish him for his disobedience. This security is apparent in his subsequent conduct.

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**Jonah 1:6-8**

*So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*

When the danger was at its height, the *upper-steersman*, or ship's captain (*rabh hachoobbeel*, the chief of the ship's governors; *choobheel* with the article is a collective noun, and a *denom.* from *chebhel*, a ship's cable, hence the one who manages, steers, or guides the ship), wakes him with the words, "*How canst thou sleep soundly? Arise, and call upon thy God; perhaps God (hâ'eloohiim with the article, 'the true God') will think of us, that we may not perish.*" The meaning of *yit<sup>a</sup>asheet* (OT:6245) is disputed. As *aashat* (OT:6245) is used in Jer 5:28 in the sense of shining (viz., of fat), Calvin and others (last of all, Hitzig) have maintained that the *hithpael* has the meaning, shown himself shining, i.e., bright (propitious); whilst others, including Jerome, prefer the meaning *think again*, which is apparently better supported than the former, not only by the Chaldee, but also by the nouns *ash<sup>a</sup>tuwt* (OT:6248) (Job 12:5) and *esh<sup>a</sup>town* (Ps 146:4).

God's thinking of a person involves the idea of active assistance. For the thought itself, compare Ps. 40:18. The fact that Jonah obeyed this awakening call is passed over as self-evident; and in v. 7 the narrative proceeds to relate, that as the storm had not abated in the meantime, the sailors, firmly believing that some one in the ship had committed a crime which had excited the anger of God that was manifesting itself in the storm, had recourse to the lot to find out the culprit. *b<sup>a</sup>shel<sup>a</sup>miy* (OT:7945) = *l<sup>a</sup>miy* (OT:4310) *ba'asher* (OT:834) (v. 8), as *she* is the vulgar, and in conversation the usual contraction for *'asher* (OT:834): "*on account of whom*" (*ba'asher* (OT:834), in this that = because, or followed by *l<sup>a</sup>*, on account of). *haaraa'aah* (OT:7451), the misfortune (as in Amos 3:6) - namely, the storm which is threatening destruction. The lot fell upon Jonah. "The fugitive is taken by lot, not from any virtue in lots themselves, least of all the lots of heathen, but by the will of Him who governs uncertain lots" (Jerome).

When Jonah had been singled out by the lot as the culprit, the sailors called upon him to confess his guilt, asking him at the same time about his country, his occupation, and his parentage. The repetition of the question, on whose account this calamity had befallen them, which is omitted in the LXX (Vatic.), the *Socin.* prophets, and Cod. 195 of Kennicott, is found in the margin in Cod. 384, and is regarded by Grimm and Hitzig as a marginal gloss that has crept into the text. It is not superfluous, however; still less does it occasion any confusion; on the contrary, it is quite in order. The sailors wanted thereby to induce Jonah to confess with his own mouth that he was guilty, now that the lot had fallen upon him, and to disclose his crime (Ros. and others). As an indirect appeal to confess his crime, it prepares the way for the further inquiries as to his occupation, etc. They inquired about this occupation, because it might be a disreputable one, and one which excited the wrath of the gods; also about his parentage, and especially about the land and people from which he sprang, that they might be able to pronounce a safe sentence upon his crime.

### **Jonah 1:9-10**

*And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the*

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*sea and the dry land.*

Jonah begins by answering the last question, saying that he was "*a Hebrew*," - the name by which the Israelites designated themselves in contradistinction to other nations, and by which other nations designated them (see at Gen 14:13, and my *Lehrbuch der Einleitung* , §9, Anm. 2) - and that he worshipped "*the God of heaven, who created the sea and the dry*" (i.e., the land). *yaaree'* (OT:3372) has been rendered correctly by the LXX *se'bomai* (NT:4576), *colo, revereor*; and does not mean, "I am afraid of Jehovah, against whom I have sinned" (Abarbanel). By the statement, "I fear," etc., he had no intention of describing himself as a righteous or innocent man (Hitzig), but simply meant to indicate his relation to God-namely, that he adored the living God who created the whole earth and, as Creator, governed the world. For he admits directly after, that he has sinned against this God, by telling them, as we may see from v. 10, of his flight from Jehovah. He had not told them this as soon as he embarked in the ship, as Hitzig supposes, but does so now for the first time when they ask about his people, his country, etc., as we may see most unmistakably from v. 10b.

In v. 9 Jonah's statement is not given completely; but the principal fact, viz., that he was a Hebrew and worshipped Jehovah, is followed immediately by the account of the impression which this acknowledgement made upon the heathen sailors; and the confession of his sin is mentioned afterwards as a supplement, to assign the reason for the great fear which came upon the sailors in consequence. *`aasiytaa mah-zo't* , *What hast thou done!* is not a question as to the nature of his sin, but an exclamation of horror at his flight from Jehovah, the God heaven and earth, as the following explanatory clauses *wgw' yaad<sup>a</sup>uw* (OT:3045) *kiy* (OT:3588) clearly show. The great fear which came upon the heathen seamen at this confession of Jonah may be fully explained from the dangerous situation in which they found themselves, since the storm preached the omnipotence of God more powerfully than words could possibly do.

**Jonah 1:11-12**

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.*

Fearing as they did in the storm the wrath of God on account of Jonah's sin, they now asked what they should do, that the storm might abate, "*for the sea continued to rage.*" *shaataq* (OT:8367), to set itself, to come to a state of repose; or with *mee`al* (OT:5921), to desist from a person. *howleek<sup>a</sup>* (OT:1980), as in Gen 8:5, etc., expressive of the continuance of an action. With their fear of the Almighty God, whom Jonah worshipped, they did not dare to inflict a punishment upon the prophet, simply according to their own judgment. As a worshipper of Jehovah, he should pronounce his own sentence, or let it be pronounced by his God. Jonah replies in v. 12, "*Cast me into the sea; for I know that for my sake this great storm is (come) upon you.*" As Jerome says, "He does not refuse, or prevaricate, or deny; but, having made confession concerning his flight, he willingly endures the punishment, desiring to perish, and not let others perish on his account." Jonah confesses that he has deserved to die for his rebellion against God, and that the wrath of God which has manifested itself in the storm can only be appeased by his death. He pronounces this sentence, not by virtue of any prophetic inspiration, but as a believing Israelite who is well acquainted with the severity of the justice of the holy God, both from the law and from the history of his nation.

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**Jonah 1:13-14**

*Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.*

But the men (the seamen) do not venture to carry out this sentence at once. They try once more to reach the land and escape from the storm, which is threatening them with destruction, without so serious a sacrifice. *yach<sup>a</sup>ruw* (OT:2864), lit., they broke through, sc. through the waves, to bring (the ship) back to the land, i.e., they tried to reach the land by rowing and steering. *Châthar* does not mean to row, still less to twist or turn round (Hitzig), but to break through; here to break through the waves, to try to overcome them, to which the *parebia'zonto* (NT:3849) of the LXX points. As they could not accomplish this, however, because the sea continued to rage against them ( *'aleeyhem* (OT:5921) *co`eer* (OT:5590), was raging against them), they prayed thus to Jehovah: "*We beseech Thee, let us not ( 'aanaa' (OT:577) = 'al-naa' ) perish for the sake of the soul of this man ( b<sup>a</sup>nepesh (OT:5315), lit., for the soul, as in 2 Sam 14:7 after Deut 19:21), and lay not upon us innocent blood,*" - that is to say, not "do not let us destroy an innocent man in the person of this man" (Hitzig), but, according to Deut 21:8, "do not impute his death to us, if we cast him into the sea, as bloodguiltiness deserving death;" "*for Thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased Thee,*" - namely, inasmuch as, by sending the storm and determining the lot, Thou hast so ordained that we must cast him into the sea as guilty, in order to expiate Thy wrath.

They offer this prayer, not because they have no true conception of the guilt of Jonah, who is not a murderer or blasphemer, inasmuch as according to their notions, he is not a sinner deserving death (Hitzig), but because they regard Jonah as a prophet or servant of the Almighty God, upon whom, from fear of his God, they do not venture to lay their hand. "We see, therefore, that although they had never enjoyed the teaching of the law, they had been so taught by nature, that they knew very well that the blood of man was dear to God, and precious in His sight" (Calvin).

## Jonah 1:15-16

*So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.*

After they had prayed thus, they cast Jonah into the sea, and "*the sea stood still* (ceased) *from its raging.*" The sudden cessation of the storm showed that the bad weather had come entirely on Jonah's account, and that the sailors had not shed innocent blood by casting him into the sea. In this sudden change in the weather, the arm of the holy God was so suddenly manifested, that the sailors "*feared Jehovah with great fear, and offered sacrifice to Jehovah*" - not after they landed, but immediately, on board the ship - "*and vowed vows,*" i.e., vowed that they would offer Him still further sacrifices on their safe arrival at their destination.

## Jonah's Deliverance Ch. 1:17-2:10 (Heb. Ch. 2)

When Jonah had been cast into the sea by the appointment of God, he was swallowed up by a great fish (Jonah 1:17), in whose belly he spent three days and nights, and offered an earnest prayer to God (Jonah 2:1-9);

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whereupon, by command of Jehovah, the fish vomited him out upon the land (v. 10).

## Jonah 1:17

***Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.***

Verse 17. (Heb. Ch. 2:1). "**And Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.**" *minaah* (OT:4487) does not mean to create, but to determine, to appoint. The thought is this: Jehovah ordained that a great fish should swallow him. The great fish (LXX *kee'tos* (NT:2785), cf. Matt 12:40), which is not more precisely defined, was not a whale, because this is extremely rare in the Mediterranean, and has too small a throat to swallow a man, but a large shark or sea-dog, *canis carcharias*, or *squalus carcharias L.*, which is very common in the Mediterranean, and has so large a throat, that it can swallow a living man whole.

(Note: The **aqualus carcharias L.**, the true shark, *Requin*, or rather *Requiem*, reaches, according to Cuvier, the length of 25 feet, and according to Oken the length of four fathoms, and has about 400 lance-shaped teeth in its jaw, arranged in six rows, which the animal can either elevate or depress, as they are simply fixed in cells in the skin. It is common in the Mediterranean, where it generally remains in deep water, and is very voracious, swallowing everything that comes in its way—plaice, seals, and tunny-fish, with which it sometimes gets into the fishermen's net on the coast of Sardinia, and is caught. As many as a dozen undigested tunny-fish have been found in a shark weighing three or four hundredweight; in one a whole horse was found, and its weight was estimated at fifteen hundredweight. Rondelet (Oken, p. 58) says that he saw one on the western coast of France, through whose throat a fat man could very easily have passed. Oken also mentions a fact, which is more elaborately described in Müller's *Vollständiges Natur-system des Ritters Carl v. Linné* (Th. iii. p. 268), namely, that in the year 1758 a sailor fell overboard from a frigate, in very stormy weather, into the Mediterranean Sea, and was immediately taken into the jaws of a sea-dog (*carcharias*), and disappeared. The captain, however, ordered a gun, which was standing on the deck, to be discharged at the shark, and the cannon-ball struck it, so that it vomited up again the sailor that it had swallowed, who was then taken up alive, and very little hurt, into the boat that had been lowered for his rescue.)

The miracle consisted therefore, not so much in the fact that Jonah was swallowed alive, as in the fact that he was kept alive for three days in the shark's belly, and then vomited unhurt upon the land. The three days and three nights are not to be regarded as fully three times twenty hours, but are to be interpreted according to Hebrew usage, as signifying that Jonah was vomited up again on the third day after he had been swallowed (compare Est 4:16 with 5:1 and Tob. 3:12, 13, according to the Lutheran text).

## **Jonah 2:1-9**

*Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,*

**"Jonah prayed to Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly."** The prayer which follows (vv. 2-9) is not a petition for deliverance, but thanksgiving and praise for deliverance already received. It by no means follows from this, however, that Jonah did not utter this prayer till after he had been vomited upon the land, and that v. 10 ought to be inserted before v. 2; but, as the earlier commentators have shown, the fact is rather this, that when Jonah

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had been swallowed by the fish, and found that he was preserved alive in the fish's belly, he regarded this as a pledge of his deliverance, for which he praised the Lord. Luther also observes, that "he did not actually utter these very words with his mouth, and arrange them in this orderly manner, in the belly of the fish; but that he here shows what the state of his mind was, and what thoughts he had when he was engaged in this conflict with death."

The expression "his God" ( '*elohaayw* (OT:430)) must not be overlooked. He prayed not only to Jehovah, as the heathen sailors also did (Jonah 1:14), but to Jehovah as his God, from whom he had tried to escape, and whom he now addresses again as his God when in peril of death. "He shows his *faith* by adoring Him as *his* God" (Burk). The prayer consists for the most part of reminiscences of passages in the Psalms, which were so exactly suited to Jonah's circumstances, that he could not have expressed his thoughts and feelings any better in words of his own. It is by no means so "atomically compounded from passages in the Psalms" that there is any ground for pronouncing it "a later production which has been attributed to Jonah," as Knobel and De Wette do; but it is the simple and natural utterance of a man versed in the Holy Scripture and living in the word of God, and is in perfect accordance with the prophet's circumstances and the state of his mind. Commencing with the confession, that the Lord has heard his crying to Him in distress (v. 2), Jonah depicts in two strophes (vv. 3 and 4, 5-7) the distress into which he had been brought, and the deliverance out of that destruction which appeared inevitable, and closes in vv. 8, 9 with a vow of thanksgiving for the deliverance which he had received.

*2 I cried to Jehovah out of my distress, and He heard me; Out of the womb of hell I cried: Thou heardest my voice!*

Verse 2. The first clause recalls to mind Ps 18:7 and 120:1; but it also shows itself to be an original reproduction of the expression *liy* (OT:3807a ) *mitsaaraah* (OT:6869), which expresses the prophet's situation in a more pointed manner than *batsar-liy* in Ps 17 and *liy* (OT:3807a ) *batsaaraataah* (OT:6869) in Ps 120. The distress is still more

minutely defined in the second hemistich by the expression *sh'owl* (OT:7585) *mibeTen* (OT:990), "out of the womb of the nether world." As a throat or swallow is ascribed to *she'ool* in Isa 5:14, so here it is spoken of as having a *bTn* (OT:990), or belly. This is not to be taken as referring to the belly of the shark, as Jerome supposes. The expression is a poetical figure used to denote the danger of death, from which there is apparently no escape; like the encompassing with snares of death in Ps 18:5, and the bringing up of the soul out of sheol in Ps 30:3. In the last clause the words pass over very appropriately into an address to Jehovah, which is brought out into still greater prominence by the omission of the copula *Vav*.

*3 Thou castedst me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, And the stream surrounded me; All Thy billows and Thy waves went over me.*

*4 Then I said, I am thrust away from Thine eyes, Yet I will look again to Thy holy temple.*

Verse 3-4. The more minute description of the peril of death is attached by *Vav consec.*, to express not sequence in time, but sequence of thought. *Jehovah* cast him into the depth of the sea, because the seamen were merely the executors of the punishment inflicted upon him by *Jehovah*. *Metsuulâh*, the deep, is defined by "the heart of the seas" as the deepest abyss of the ocean. The plural *yammiim* (seas) is used here with distinct significance, instead of the singular, "into the heart of the *sea*" (*yâm*) in Ex 15:8, to express the idea of the boundless ocean (see Dietrich, *Abhandlung zur hebr. Grammatik*, pp. 16, 17). The next clauses are circumstantial clauses, and mean, so that the current of the sea surrounded me, and all the billows and waves of the sea, which *Jehovah* had raised into a storm, went over me. *Nâhâr*, a *river* or *stream*, is the streaming or current of the sea, as in Ps 24:2.

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The words of the second hemistich are a reminiscence of Ps 42:8. What the Korahite singer of that psalm had experienced spiritually, viz., that one wave of trouble after another swept over him, that had the prophet literally experienced. Jonah "does not say, The waves and the billows of the sea went over me; but *Thy* waves and *Thy* billows, because he felt in his conscience that the sea with its waves and billows was the servant of God and of His wrath, to punish sin" (Luther). V. 4 contains the apodosis to v. 3a: "When Thou castedst me into the deep, then I said (sc., in my heart, i.e., then I thought) that I was banished from the sphere of Thine eyes, i.e., of Thy protection and care." These words are formed from a reminiscence of Ps 31:23, *nig<sup>a</sup>rash<sup>a</sup>tiy* (OT:1644) being substituted for the *nig<sup>a</sup>raz<sup>a</sup>tiy* (OT:1629) of the psalm. The second hemistich is attached adversatively. '*ak<sup>a</sup>*' (OT:389), which there is no necessity to alter into '*EEK<sup>a</sup>*' = '*EEYK<sup>a</sup>*' (OT:349), as Hitzig supposes, introduces the antithesis in an energetic manner, like '*aakeen*' (OT:403) elsewhere, in the sense of nevertheless, as in Isa 14:15; Ps 49:16; Job 13:15 (cf. Ewald, §354, *a*). The thought that it is all over with him is met by the confidence of faith that he will still look to the holy temple of the Lord, that is to say, will once more approach the presence of the Lord, to worship before Him in His temple—an assurance which recalls Ps 5:8.

The thought that by the grace of the Lord he has been once more miraculously delivered out of the gates of death, and brought to the light of the world, is carried out still further in the following strophe, in entirely new turns of thought.

*5 Waters surrounded me even to the soul: the flood encompassed me, Sea-grass was wound round my head.*

*6 I went down to the foundations of the mountains; The earth, its bolts were behind me for ever: Then raisedst Thou my life out of the pit, O Jehovah my God.*

*7 When my soul fainted within me, I thought of Jehovah; And my prayer came to Thee into Thy holy temple.*

Verse 5-7. This strophe opens, like the last, with a description of the peril of death, to set forth still more perfectly the thought of miraculous deliverance which filled the prophet's mind. The first clause of the fifth verse recalls to mind Ps 18:5 and 69:2; the words "the waters pressed (*baa'uww* (OT:935)) even to the soul" (Ps 69:2) being simply strengthened by *'apaapuwniy* (OT:661) after Ps 18:5. The waters of the sea girt him round about, reaching even to the soul, so that it appeared to be all over with his life. *Tehoom*, the unfathomable flood of the ocean, surrounded him. *Suuph*, sedge, i.e., sea-grass, which grows at the bottom of the sea, was bound about his head; so that he had sunk to the very bottom. This thought is expressed still more distinctly in v. 6a. *haariym* (OT:2022) *qits<sup>a</sup>beey* (OT:7095), "the ends of the mountains" (from *qâtsabh*, to cut off, that which is cut off, then the place where anything is cut off), are their foundations and roots, which lie in the depths of the earth, reaching even to the foundation of the sea (cf. Ps 18:16).

When he sank into the deep, the earth shut its bolts behind him (*haa'aarets* (OT:776) is placed at the head absolutely). The figure of bolts of the earth that were shut behind Jonah, which we only meet with here (*b<sup>a</sup>ad* (OT:1157) from the phrase *b<sup>a</sup>ad* (OT:1157) *hadelet* (OT:1817) *caagar* (OT:5462), to shut the door behind a person: Gen. 7:116; 2 Kings 4:4-5,33; Isa. 26:20), has an analogy in the idea which occurs in Job 38:10, of bolts and doors of the ocean. The bolts of the sea are the walls of the sea-basin, which set bounds to the sea, that it cannot pass over. Consequently the bolts of the earth can only be such barriers as restrain the land from spreading over the sea. These barriers are the weight and force of the waves, which prevent the land from encroaching on

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the sea. This weight of the waves, or of the great masses of water, which pressed upon Jonah when he had sunk to the bottom of the sea, shut or bolted against him the way back to the earth (the land), just as the bolts that are drawn before the door of a house fasten up the entrance into it; so that the reference is neither to "the rocks jutting out above the water, which prevented any one from ascending from the sea to the land," nor "*densissima terrae compages, qua abyssus tecta Jonam in hac constitutum occludebat*" (Marck).

Out of this grave the Lord "brought up his life." *Shachath* is rendered *ftora'* (NT:5356), *corruptio*, by the early translators (LXX, Chald., Syr., Vulg.); and this rendering, which many of the more modern translators entirely reject, is unquestionably the correct one in Job 17:14, where the meaning "pit" is quite unsuitable. But it is by no means warranted in the present instance. The similarity of thought to Ps 30:4 points rather to the meaning pit = cavern or grave, as in Ps 30:10, where *shachath* is used interchangeably with *bowr* (OT:953) and *sh<sup>a</sup>owl* (OT:7585) in v. 4 as being perfectly synonymous. V. 7a is formed after Ps 142:4 or 143:4, except that *nap<sup>a</sup>shiy* (OT:5315) is used instead of *ruwchiy* (OT:7307), because Jonah is not speaking of the covering of the spirit with faintness, but of the plunging of the life into night and the darkness of death by drowning in the water. *hit<sup>a</sup>aTeep* (OT:5848), lit., to veil or cover one's self, hence to sink into night and faintness, to pine away. *aalay* (OT:5921), upon or in me, inasmuch as the *I*, as a person, embraces the soul or life (cf. Ps 42:5). When his soul was about to sink into the night of death, he thought of Jehovah in prayer, and his prayer reached to God in His holy temple, where Jehovah is enthroned as God and King of His people (Ps 18:7; 88:3).

But when prayer reaches to God, then He helps and also saves. This awakens confidence in the Lord, and impels to praise and thanksgiving. These thoughts form the last strophe, with which the Psalm of thanksgiving is appropriately closed.

*8 They who hold to false vanities Forsake their own mercy.*

*9 But I will sacrifice to Thee with the call of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is with Jehovah.*

Verse 8-9. In order to express the thought emphatically, that salvation and deliverance are only to be hoped for from Jehovah the living God, Jonah points to the idolaters, who forfeit their mercy. *hab<sup>a</sup>leey-shaaw<sup>a</sup> m<sup>a</sup>sham<sup>a</sup>riym* is a reminiscence of Ps 31:7. *hab<sup>a</sup>leey-shaaw<sup>a</sup>*, worthless vanities, are all things which man makes into idols or objects of trust. *habaaliym* (OT:1892) are, according to Deut 32:21, false gods or idols. *Shâmar*, to keep, or, when applied to false gods, to keep to them or reverence them; in Hos 4:10 it is also applied to Jehovah. *chac<sup>a</sup>daam* (OT:2617) signifies neither *pietatem suam* nor *gratiam a Deo ipsis exhibitam*, nor "all the grace and love which they might receive" (Hitzig); but refers to God Himself, as He whose government is pure grace (vid., Gen 24:27), and might become the grace even of the idolatrous. Jonah, on the contrary, like all the righteous, would sacrifice to the Lord *beqool toodâh*, "with the voice or cry, of thanksgiving," i.e., would offer his sacrifices with a prayer of sincere thanksgiving (cf. Ps 42:5), and pay the vow which he had made in his distress (cf. Ps 50:14,23). These utterances are founded upon the hope that his deliverance will be effected (Hitzig); and this hope is based upon the fact that "salvation is Jehovah's," i.e., is in His power, so that He only can grant salvation.

## **Jonah 2:10**

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*And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*

**"Then Jehovah spake to the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land."** The nature of God's speaking, or commanding, may be inferred from the words *wgw' w<sup>a</sup>yaaqee'*. Cyril explains the thought correctly thus: The whale is again impelled by a certain divine and secret power of God, being moved to that which seems good to Him." The land upon which Jonah was vomited was, of course, the coast of Palestine, probably the country near Joppa. According to v. 1, this took place on the third day after he had been swallowed by the fish. On the propheticotypical character of the miracle, see the remarks at p. 385ff.

## **Jonah's Preaching in Nineveh Ch. 3**

After Jonah had been punished for his disobedience, and miraculously delivered from death by the mercy of God, he obeyed the renewed command of Jehovah, and preached to the city of Nineveh that it would be destroyed within forty days on account of its sins (vv. 1-4). But the Ninevites believed in God, and repented in sackcloth and ashes, to avert the threatened destruction (vv. 5-9); and the Lord spared the city (v. 10).

### **Jonah 3:1-4**

*And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,*

Verse 1-4. The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, to go to Nineveh and proclaim to that city what Jehovah would say to him. *q<sup>a</sup>riy'aah* (OT:7150): that which is called out, the proclamation, *to'* (NT:3588) *kee'rugma* (NT:2782) (LXX). Jonah now obeyed the word of Jehovah. But Nineveh was *a great city to God* (*lee'loohim*), i.e., it was regarded by God as a great city. This remark points to the motive for

sparing it (cf. Jonah 4:11), in case its inhabitants hearkened to the word of God. Its greatness amounted to "a three days' walk." This is usually supposed to refer to the circumference of the city, by which the size of a city is generally determined. But the statement in v. 4, that "Jonah began to enter into the city the walk of a day," i.e., a day's journey, is apparently at variance with this. Hence Hitzig has come to the conclusion that the diameter or length of the city is intended, and that, as the walk of a day in v. 4 evidently points to the walk of three days in v. 3, the latter must also be understood as referring to the length of Nineveh. But according to Diod. ii. 3 the length of the city was 150 stadia, and Herodotus (v. 53) gives just this number of stadia as a day's journey.

Hence Jonah would not have commenced his preaching till he had reached the opposite end of the city. This line of argument, the intention of which is to prove the absurdity of the narrative, is based upon the perfectly arbitrary assumption that Jonah went through the entire length of the city in a straight line, which is neither probable in itself, nor implied in *baa`iyr* (OT:5892) *bow'* (OT:935). This simply means to enter, or go into the city, and says nothing about the direction of the course he took within the city. But in a city, the diameter of which was 150 stadia, and the circumference 480 stadia, one might easily walk for a whole day without reaching the other end, by winding about from one street into another. And Jonah would have to do this to find a suitable place for his preaching, since we are not warranted in assuming that it lay exactly in the geographical centre, or at the end of the street which led from the gate into the city.

But if Jonah wandered about in different directions, as Theodoret says, "not going straight through the city, but

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strolling through market-places, streets, etc.," the distance of a day's journey over which he travelled must not be understood as relating to the diameter or length of the city; so that the objection to the general opinion, that the three days' journey given as the size of the city refers to the circumference, entirely falls to the ground. Moreover, Hitzig has quite overlooked the word *wayaachel* (OT:2342) in his argument. The text does not affirm that Jonah went a day's journey into the city, but that he "began to go into the city a day's journey, and cried out." These words do not affirm that he did not begin to preach till after he had gone a whole day's journey, but simply that he had commenced his day's journey in the city when he found a suitable place and a fitting opportunity for his proclamation.

They leave the distance that he had really gone, when he began his preaching, quite indefinite; and by no means necessitate the assumption that he only began to preach in the evening, after his day's journey was ended. All that they distinctly affirm is, that he did not preach directly he entered the city, but only after he had commenced a day's journey, that is to say, had gone some distance into the city. And this is in perfect harmony with all that we know about the size of Nineveh at that time. The circumference of the great city Nineveh, or the length of the boundaries of the city of Nineveh in the broadest sense, was, as Niebuhr says (p. 277), "nearly ninety English miles, not reckoning the smaller windings of the boundary; and this would be just three days' travelling for a good walker on a long journey." "Jonah," he continues, "begins to go a day's journey into the city, then preaches, and the preaching reaches the ears of the king (cf. v. 6). He therefore came very near to the citadel as he went along on his first day's journey. At that time the citadel was probably in Nimrud ( *Calah* ). Jonah, who would hardly have travelled through the desert, went by what is now the ordinary caravan road past Amida, and therefore entered the city at Nineveh. And it was on the road from Nineveh to Calah, not far off the city, possibly in the city itself, that he preached. Now the distance between Calah and Nineveh (not reckoning either city), measured in a straight line upon the map, is 18 1/2 English miles."

If, then, we add to this, (1) that the road from Nineveh to Calah or Nimrud hardly ran in a perfectly straight line, and therefore would be really longer than the exact

distance between the two parts of the city according to the map, and (2) that Jonah had first of all to go through Nineveh, and possibly into Calah, he may very well have walked twenty English miles, or a short day's journey, before he preached. The main point of his preaching is all that is given, viz., the threat that Nineveh would be destroyed, which was the point of chief importance, so far as the object of the book was concerned, and which Jonah of course explained by denouncing the sins and vices of the city. The threat ran thus: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be destroyed." *neh<sup>a</sup>paak* (OT:2015), lit., overturned, i.e., destroyed from the very foundations, is the word applied to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The respite granted is fixed at forty days, according to the number which, even as early as the flood, was taken as the measure for determining the delaying of visitations of God.

(Note: The LXX, however, has *trei's* (NT:5140) *heeme'ras* (NT:2250), probably from a peculiar and arbitrary combination, and not merely from an early error of the pen. The other Greek translators (Aquil., Symm., and Theodot.) had, according to Theodoret, the number *forty*; and so also had the Syriac.)

### **Jonah 3:5-9**

*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*

The Ninevites believed in God, since they hearkened to the preaching of the prophet sent to them by God, and

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humbled themselves before God with repentance. They proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth (penitential garments: see at Joel 1:13-14; 1 Kings 21:27, etc.), "*from their great one even to their small one*," i.e., both old and young, all without exception. Even the king, when the matter ( *had-dâbhâr* ) came to his knowledge, i.e., when he was informed of Jonah's coming, and of his threatening prediction, descended from his throne, laid aside his royal robe ( *'addereth* , see at Josh 7:21), wrapt himself in a sackcloth, and sat down in ashes, as a sign of the deepest mourning (compare Job 2:8), and by a royal edict appointed a general fast for man and beast. *wayaz<sup>a</sup>eeq* (OT:2199), he caused to be proclaimed. *wayo'mer* (OT:559), *and said* , viz., through his heralds. *hm' miTa'am* (OT:2940), *ex decreto* , by command of the king and his great men, i.e., his ministers ( *Ta'am* (OT:2941) = *T<sup>a</sup>eem* (OT:2942), Dan 3:10,29, a technical term for the edicts of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings).

"Man and beast (viz., oxen and sheep) are to taste nothing; they are not to pasture (the cattle are not to be driven to the pasture), and are to drink no water." *'al* (OT:408), for which we should expect *lo'* (OT:3808), may be explained from the fact that the command is communicated directly. Moreover, man and beast are to be covered with mourning clothes, and cry to God *bechozqâh* , i.e., strongly, mightily, and to turn every one from his evil ways: so "*will God perhaps ( yowdeea` (OT:3045) miy (OT:4310)) turn and repent ( yâshuubh venicham* , as in Joel 2:14), *and desist from the fierceness of His anger* (cf. Ex 32:12), *that we perish not.*" This verse (v. 9) also belongs to the king's edict. The powerful impression made upon the Ninevites by Jonah's preaching, so that the whole city repented in sackcloth and ashes, is quite intelligible, if we simply bear in mind the great susceptibility of Oriental races to emotion, the awe of one Supreme Being which is peculiar to all the heathen religions of Asia, and the great esteem in which soothsaying and oracles were held in Assyria from the very earliest times (vid., Cicero, *de divinât.* i. 1); and if we also take into calculation the circumstance that the appearance of a foreigner, who, without any conceivable personal interest, and with the most fearless boldness, disclosed to the great royal city its godless ways, and announced its destruction within a very short period with the confidence so characteristic of the God-sent prophets, could not fail to make a powerful impression upon the minds of the people, which would be all the

stronger if the report of the miraculous working of the prophets of Israel had penetrated to Nineveh. There is just as little to surprise us in the circumstance that the signs of mourning among the Ninevites resemble in most respects the forms of penitential mourning current among the Israelites, since these outward signs of mourning are for the most part the common human expressions of deep sorrow of heart, and are found in the same or similar forms among all the nations of antiquity (see the numerous proofs of this which are collected in Winer's *Real-wörterbuch*, art. *Trauer*; and in Herzog's *Cyclopaedia* ).

Ezekiel (Ezek 26:16) depicts the mourning of the Tyrian princes over the ruin of their capital in just the same manner in which that of the king of Nineveh is described here in v. 6, except that, instead of sackcloth, he mentions trembling as that with which they wrap themselves round. The garment of haircloth ( *saq* ) worn as mourning costume reaches as far back as the patriarchal age (cf. Gen 37:34; Job 16:15). Even the one feature which is peculiar to the mourning of Nineveh-namely, that the cattle also have to take part in the mourning-is attested by Herodotus (9:24) as an Asiatic custom.

(Note: Herodotus relates that the Persians, when mourning for their general, Masistios, who had fallen in the battle at Platea, shaved off the hair from their horses, and adds, "Thus did the barbarians, *in their way*, mourn for the deceased Masistios." Plutarch relates the same thing (Aristid. 14 fin. Compare Brissonius, *de regno Pers. princip.* ii. p. 206; and Periz. *ad Aeliani Var. hist.* vii. 8). The objection made to this by Hitzig-namely, that the mourning of the cattle in our book is not analogous to the case recorded by Herodotus, because the former was an expression of repentance-has no force whatever, for the simple reason that in all nations the outward signs of penitential mourning are the same as those of mourning for the dead.)

This custom originated in the idea that there is a biotic *rapport* between man and the larger domestic animals, such as oxen, sheep, and goats, which are his living property. It is only to these animals that there is any reference here, and not to "horses, asses, and camels, which were decorated at other times with costly coverings," as

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Marck, Rosenmüller, and others erroneously assume. Moreover, this was not done "with the intention of impelling the men to shed hotter tears through the lowing and groaning of the cattle" (Theodoret); or "to set before them as in a mirror, through the sufferings of the innocent brutes, their own great guilt" (Chald.); but it was a manifestation of the thought, that just as the animals which live with man are drawn into fellowship with his sin, so their sufferings might also help to appease the wrath of God. And although this thought might not be free from superstition, there lay at the foundation of it this deep truth, that the irrational creature is made subject to vanity on account of man's sins, and sighs along with man for liberation from the bondage of corruption (Rom 8:19ff.). We cannot therefore take the words "cry mightily unto God" as referring only to the men, as many commentators have done, in opposition to the context; but must regard "man and beast" as the subject of this clause also, since the thought that even the beasts cry to or call upon God in distress has its scriptural warrant in Joel 1:20.

### **Jonah 3:10**

*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

But however deep the penitential mourning of Nineveh might be, and however sincere the repentance of the people, when they acted according to the king's command; the repentance was not a lasting one, or permanent in its effects. Nor did it evince a thorough conversion to God, but was merely a powerful incitement to conversion, a waking up out of the careless security of their life of sin, an endeavour to forsake their evil ways which did not last very long. The statement in v. 10, that "God saw their doing, that they turned from their evil ways; and He repented of the evil that He had said that He would do to them, and did it not" (cf. Ex 32:14), can be reconciled with this without difficulty. The repentance of the Ninevites, even if it did not last, showed, at any rate, a susceptibility on the part of the heathen for the word of God, and their willingness to turn and forsake their evil and ungodly ways; so that God, according to His compassion, could extend His grace to them in consequence.

God always acts in this way. He not only forgives the converted man, who lays aside his sin, and walks in newness of life; but He has mercy also upon the penitent who confesses and mourns over his sin, and is willing to amend. The Lord also directed Jonah to preach repentance to Nineveh; not that this capital of the heathen world might be converted at once to faith in the living God, and its inhabitants be received into the covenant of grace which He had made with Israel, but simply to give His people Israel a practical proof that He was the God of the heathen also, and could prepare for Himself even among them a people of His possession. Moreover, the readiness, with which the Ninevites hearkened to the word of God that was proclaimed to them and repented, showed that with all the depth to which they were sunken in idolatry and vice they were at that time not yet ripe for the judgment of extermination. The punishment was therefore deferred by the long-suffering of God, until this great heathen city, in its further development into a God-opposing imperial power, seeking to subjugate all nations, and make itself the mistress of the earth, had filled up the measure of its sins, and had become ripe for that destruction which the prophet Nahum predicted, and the Median king Cyaxares inflicted upon it in alliance with Nabopolassar of Babylonia.

## **Jonah's Discontent and Correction Ch. 4**

### **Jonah 4:1-5**

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**Jonah 4:1-5**

***But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.***

Jonah, provoked at the sparing of Nineveh, prayed in his displeasure to Jehovah to take his soul from him, as his proclamation had not been fulfilled (vv. 1-3). *y' 'el* (OT:413) *wayeera`* (OT:7489), *it was evil for Jonah*, i.e., it vexed, irritated him, not merely it displeased him, for which *b<sup>a</sup> eeynaayw* (OT:5869) *yeera`* (OT:7489) is generally used. The construction with *'el* (OT:413) resembles that with *l<sup>a</sup>* in Neh 2:10; 13:8. *g<sup>a</sup>dowlaah* (OT:1419) *raa`aah* (OT:7451), "a great evil," serves simply to strengthen the idea of *yeera`* (OT:7489). The great vexation grew even to anger (*low* (OT:3807a) *yichar* (OT:2734); cf. Gen 30:2, etc.). The fact that the predicted destruction of Nineveh had not taken place excited his discontent and wrath. And he tried to quarrel with God, by praying to Jehovah.

(Note: Calvin observes upon this: "He prayed in a tumult, as if reproving God. We must necessarily recognise a certain amount of piety in this prayer of Jonah, and at the same time many faults. There was so far piety in it, that he directed his complaints to God. For hypocrites, even when they address God, are nevertheless hostile to Him. But Jonah, when he complains, although he does not keep within proper bounds, but is carried away by a blind and vicious impulse, is nevertheless prepared to submit himself to God, as we shall presently see. This is the reason why he is said to have prayed.")

"*Alas* (*'aanaa'* (OT:577) as in Jonah 1:14), *Jehovah, was not this my word* (i.e., did I not say so to myself) *when I was still in my land* (in Palestine)?" What his word or his thought then was, he does not say; but it is evident from what follows: viz., that Jehovah would not destroy Nineveh, if its inhabitants repented. *'Al-keen*, therefore, sc. because this was my saying. *qidam<sup>a</sup>tiy* (OT:6923), *proe'fthasa* (NT:4399), *I prevented to flee to Tarshish*, i.e., I endeavoured, by a flight to Tarshish, to prevent, sc. what has now taken place, namely, that Thou dost not fulfil Thy word concerning Nineveh, *because I know that thou art a God gracious and merciful*, etc. (compare Ex 34:6 and 32:14, as in Joel 2:13).

The prayer which follows, "*Take my life from me,*" calls to mind the similar prayer of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4; but the motive assigned is a different one. Whilst Elijah adds, "for I am not better than my fathers," Jonah adds, "*for death is better to me than life.*" This difference must be distinctly noticed, as it brings out the difference in the state of mind of the two prophets. In the inward conflict that had come upon Elijah he wished for death, because he did not see the expected result of his zeal for the Lord of Sabaoth; in other words, it was from spiritual despair, caused by the apparent failure of his labours. Jonah, on the other hand, did not wish to live any longer, because God had not carried out His threat against Nineveh. His weariness of life arose, not like Elijah's from stormy zeal for the honour of God and His kingdom, but from vexation at the non-fulfilment of his prophecy.

This vexation was not occasioned, however, by offended dignity, or by anxiety or fear lest men should regard him as a liar or babbler (*pseudoepee's te kai' boomolo'chos*, Cyr. Al.; *pseu'stees* (NT:5583), Theodoret; *vanus et mendax*, Calvin and others); nor was he angry, as Calvin supposes, because he associated his office with the honour of God, and was unwilling that the name of God should be exposed to the scoffing of the heathen, *quasi de nihilo terreret*, or "because he saw that it would furnish material for impious blasphemies if God changed His purpose, or if He did not abide by His word;" but, as Luther observes (in his remarks on Jonah's flight), "he was hostile to the city of Nineveh, and still held a Jewish and carnal view of God" (for the further development of this view, see the remarks above, at p. 265). That this was really Jonah's view, is proved by Luther from the fact that God reproves his displeasure and anger in these words, "Should I not spare Nineveh?" etc. (v. 11). "He hereby implies that Jonah was displeased at the fact that God had spared the city, and was angry because He had not destroyed it as he had preached, and would gladly have seen." Offended vanity or unintelligent zeal for the honour

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of God would have been reproved by God in different terms from those in which Jonah was actually reproved, according to the next verse (v. 4), where Jehovah asks the prophet, "*Is thine anger justly kindled?*" **heeyTeeb** (OT:3190) is adverbial, as in Deut 9:21; 13:15, etc., *bene, probe, recte*, **dikai'oos** (NT:1346) (Symm.).

Then Jonah went out of Nineveh, sat down on the east of the city, where Nineveh was bounded by the mountains, from which he could overlook the city, made himself a hut there, and sat under it in the shade, till he saw what would become of the city, i.e., what fate would befall it (v. 5). This verse is regarded by many commentators as a supplementary remark, **wayeetsee'** (OT:3318), with the verbs which follow, being rendered in the pluperfect: "Jonah had gone out of the city," etc. We grant that this is grammatically admissible, but it cannot be shown to be necessary, and is indeed highly improbable. If, for instance, Jonah went out of Nineveh before the expiration of the forty days, to wait for the fulfilment of his prophecy, in a hut to the east of the city, he could not have been angry at its non-fulfilment before the time arrived, nor could God have reproved him for his anger before that time. The divine correction of the dissatisfied prophet, which is related in vv. 6-11, cannot have taken place till the forty days had expired. But this correction is so closely connected with Jonah's departure from the city and settlement to the east of it, to wait for the final decision as to its fate (v. 5), that we cannot possibly separate it, so as to take the verbs in v. 5 as pluperfects, or those in vv. 6-11 as historical imperfects. There is no valid ground for so forced an assumption as this. As the expression **yownaah** (OT:3123) **'el** (OT:413) **wayeera'** (OT:7489) in Jonah 4:1, which is appended to **aasaah** (OT:6213) **w<sup>al</sup>lo'** (OT:3808) in Jonah 3:10, shows that Jonah did not become irritated and angry till after God had failed to carry out His threat concerning Nineveh, and that it was then that he poured out his discontent in a reproachful prayer to God (v. 2), there is nothing whatever to force us to the assumption that Jonah had left Nineveh before the fortieth day.

(Note: There is no hold in the narrative for Marck's conjecture, that God had already communicated to him His resolution not to destroy Nineveh, because of the repentance of the people, and that this was the reason for his anger.)

Jonah had no reason to be afraid of perishing with the city. If he had faith, which we cannot deny, he could rely upon it that God would not order him, His own servant, to perish with the ungodly, but when the proper time arrived, would direct him to leave the city. But when forty days elapsed, and nothing occurred to indicate the immediate or speedy fall of the city, and he was reproved by God for his anger on that account in these words, "Art thou rightly or justly angry?" the answer from God determined him to leave the city and wait outside, in front of it, to see what fate would befall it. For since this answer still left it open, as a possible thing, that the judgment might burst upon the city, Jonah interpreted it in harmony with his own inclination, as signifying that the judgment was only postponed, not removed, and therefore resolved to wait in a hut outside the city, and watch for the issue of the whole affair.

(Note: Theod. Mops. correctly observes, that "when he reflected upon the greatness of the threat, he imagined that something might possibly occur after all." And Calvin better still, that "although forty days had passed, Jonah stood as if fastened to the spot, because he could not yet believe that what he had proclaimed according to the command of God would fail to be effected.... This was the cause, therefore, of his still remaining, viz., because he thought, that although the punishment from God had been suspended, yet his preaching had surely not been in vain, but the destruction of the city would take place. This was the reason for his waiting on after the time fixed, as though the result were still doubtful.")

But his hope was disappointed, and his remaining there became, quite contrary to his intention, an occasion for completing his correction.

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**Jonah 4:6-7**

***And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.***

Jehovah-God appointed a *Qiqayon*, which grew up over Jonah, to give him shade over his head, "to deliver him from his evil." The *Qiqayon*, which Luther renders gourd ( *Kürbiss* ) after the LXX, but describes in his commentary on the book of Jonah as the *vitis alba*, is, according to Jerome, the shrub called *Elkeroa* in Syriac, a very common shrub in Palestine, which grows in sandy places, having broad leaves that throw a pleasant shadow, and which shoots up to a considerable height in a very few days.

(Note: Jerome describes it thus: "A kind of bush or shrub, having broad leaves like vine leaves, casting a very dense shadow, and sustaining itself by its trunk, which grows very abundantly in Palestine, and chiefly in sandy places. If placed in sowing land, being quickly nourished, it grows up into a tree, and in a very few days what you saw as nothing but a herb you now look upon as a small tree.")

The **Elkeroa**, however, which Niebuhr also saw at Basra ( *Beschrieb. v. Arab. p. 148*) and describes in a similar manner, is the *ricinus* or *palma Christi*, the miraculous tree; and, according to Kimchi and the Talmudists, it was the *Kik* or *Kiki* of the Egyptians, from which an oil was obtained according to Herodotus (ii. 94) and Pliny ( *Hits. n. xv. 7*), as was the case according to Niebuhr with the *Elkeroa*. Its rapid growth is also mentioned by Pliny, who calls it *ricinus* (see *Ges. thes. p. 1214*). God caused this shrub to grow up with miraculous rapidity, to such a height that it cast a shade upon Jonah's head, to procure him deliverance ( *low* (OT:3807a) *l'hatsiyl* (OT:5337)) "from his evil," i.e., not from the burning heat of the sun ( *ab aestu solis* ), from which he suffered in the hut which he had run up so hastily with twigs, but from his displeasure or vexation, the evil from which he suffered according to v. 3 (Rosenmüller, Hitzig). The variation in the names of the Deity in vv. 6-9 is worthy of

notice.

The creation of the miraculous tree to give shade to Jonah is ascribed to *Jehovah-Elohim* in v. 6. This composite name, which occurs very rarely except in Gen 2 and 3 (see comm. on Gen 2:4), is chosen here to help the transition from *Jehovah* in v. 4 to *Elohim* in vv. 7, 8. *Jehovah*, who replies to the prophet concerning his discontented complaint (v. 4) as *Elohim*, i.e., as the divine creative power, causes the miraculous tree to spring up, to heal Jonah of his chagrin. And to the same end *hâ-Elohim*, i.e., the personal God, prepares the worm which punctures the miraculous tree and causes it to wither away (v. 7); and this is also helped by the east wind appointed by *Elohim*, i.e., the Deity ruling over nature (v. 8), to bring about the correction of the prophet, who was murmuring against God. Hence the different names of God are employed with thoughtful deliberation. Jonah rejoiced exceedingly at the miraculous growth of the shrub which provided for him, because he probably saw therein a sign of the goodness of God and of the divine approval of his intention to wait for the destruction of Nineveh. But this joy was not to last long.

### **Jonah 4:8-11**

*And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die*

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*than to live.*

On the rising of the dawn of the very next day, God appointed a worm, which punctured the miraculous tree so that it withered away; and when the sun arose He also appointed a sultry east wind, and the sun smote upon Jonah's head, so that he fainted away. *Chariishiith*, from *chârash*, to be silent or quiet, is to be taken when used of the wind in the sense of sultry, as in the Chaldee (LXX *sugkai'oon*). The meaning *ventus, qualis flat tempore arandi*, derived from *chârish*, the ploughing (Abulw.), or autumnal east wind (Hitzig), is far less suitable. When Jonah fainted away in consequence of the sun-stroke (for *hith'alleeph*, see at Amos 8:13), he wished himself dead, since death was better for him than life (see v. 3). *laamuwt 'et-nap<sup>a</sup>show yish<sup>a</sup>al*, as in 1 Kings 19:4, "he wished that his soul might die," a kind of accusative with the infinitive (cf. Ewald, §336, *b*).

But God answered, as in v. 4, by asking whether he was justly angry. Instead of Jehovah (v. 4) we have *Elohim* mentioned here, and *Jehovah* is not introduced as speaking till v. 9. We have here an intimation, that just as Jonah's wish to die was simply an expression of the feelings of his mind, so the admonitory word of God was simply a divine voice within him setting itself against his murmuring. It was not till he had persisted in his ill-will, even after this divine admonition within, that Jehovah pointed out to him how wrong his murmuring was. Jehovah's speaking in v. 9 is a manifestation of the divine will by supernatural inspiration. Jehovah directs Jonah's attention to the contradiction into which he has fallen, by feeling compassion for the withering of the miraculous tree, and at the same time murmuring because God has had compassion upon Nineveh with its many thousands of living beings, and has spared the city for the sake of these souls, many of whom have no idea whatever of right or wrong.

**Chastâ:** "Thou hast pitied the Qiqayon, at which thou hast not laboured, and which thou hast not caused to grow; for (*shebin* (OT:1121) = *bin* (OT:1121) *'asher* (OT:834)) *son of a night*" - i.e., in a night, or over night - "*has it grown, and*

*over night perished, and I should not pity Nineveh?" wa'anij* (OT:589) is a question; but this is only indicated by the tone. If Jonah feels pity for the withering of a small shrub, which he neither planted nor tended, nor caused to grow, shall God not have pity with much greater right upon the creatures whom He has created and has hitherto sustained, and spare the great city Nineveh, in which more than 120,000 are living, who cannot distinguish their right hand from the left, and also much cattle? Not to be able to distinguish between the right hand and the left is a sign of mental infancy. This is not to be restricted, however, to the very earliest years, say the first three, but must be extended to the age of seven years, in which children first learn to distinguish with certainty between right and left, since, according to M. v.

Niebuhr (p. 278), "the end of the seventh year is a very common division of age (it is met with, for example, even among the Persians), and we may regard it as certain that it would be adopted by the Hebrews, on account of the importance they attached to the number seven." A hundred and twenty thousand children under seven years of age would give a population of six hundred thousand, since, according to Niebuhr, the number of children of the age mentioned is one-fifth the whole population, and there is no ground for assuming that the proportion in the East would be essentially different. This population is quite in accordance with the size of the city.

(Note: "Nineveh, in the broader sense," says M. v. Niebuhr, "covers an area of about 400 English square miles. Hence there were about 40,000 persons to the square mile. Jones (in a paper on Nineveh) estimates the population of the chief city, according to the area, at 174,000 souls. So that we may reckon the population of the four larger walled cities at 350,000. There remain, therefore, for the smaller places and the level ground, 300,000 men on about sixteen square miles; that is to say, nearly 20,000 men upon the square mile." He then shows, from the agricultural conditions in the district of Elberfeld and the province of Naples, how thoroughly this population suits such a district. In the district of Elberfeld there are, in round numbers, 22,000 persons to the square mile, or, apart from the two large towns, 10,000. And if we take into account the difference in fertility, this is about the same density of population as that of Nineveh. The province of Naples bears a very great resemblance to Nineveh, not only in the kind of cultivation, but also in the fertility of the soil. And there, in round numbers, 46,000 are found to the square mile, or, exclusive of

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the capital, 22,000 souls.)

Children who cannot distinguish between right and left, cannot distinguish good from evil, and are not yet accountable. The allusion to the multitude of unaccountable children contains a fresh reason for sparing the city: God would have been obliged to destroy so many thousand innocent ones along with the guilty. Besides this, there was "much cattle" in the city. "Oxen were certainly superior to shrubs. If Jonah was right in grieving over one withered shrub, it would surely be a harder and more cruel thing for so many innocent animals to perish" (Calvin). "What could Jonah say to this? He was obliged to keep silence, defeated, as it were, by his own sentence" (Luther). The history, therefore, breaks off with these words of God, to which Jonah could make no reply, because the object of the book was now attained-namely, to give the Israelites an insight into the true nature of the compassion of the Lord, which embracers all nations with equal love. Let us, however, give heed to the sign of the prophet Jonah, and hold fast to the confession of Him who could say of Himself, "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here!"

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