

Chapter 6

JONAH

The Word of the Lord Heals Jonah

Commentary

I. Abbreviations and Bibliography

Note: In order to conserve space and simplify reading the following abbreviations are used:

- AGL: for The Analytical Greek Lexicon, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1973: 444 pages)
- ANEP: for Pritchard, James B., *The Ancient Near East in Pictures, Relating to the Old Testament*, Second Edition with Supplement, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969: 396 pages)
- Beckwith: for Beckwith, Roger T., *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church, and its Background in Early Judaism*, (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon, 2008 reprint; SPCK, London, © 1985: 528 pages)
- Calvin: *Calvin's Commentaries, Volume XIV*, Calvin, John, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, "Commentaries on the Prophet Jonah"; translated by Owen, John, (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1979 reprint: 145 pages), in loc. cit.
- Davidson: for Davidson, Benjamin, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1972: 784 pages)
- EH: for *Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1973: 1682 pages, plus appendices)
- H&R: for Hatch, Edwin and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, (Akademische Druck- U. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria, 1954: three volumes, vol. 1 – 696

pages, vol. 2 – 1504 pages, vol. 3 is bound with vol. 2 – 272 more pages)

- Jellicoe: for Jellicoe, Sidney, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968: 424 pages)
- K&D: for Keil, Carl Friedrich (1807-1888), and F. Delitzsch (1813-1890), *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2 Volumes, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, seventh printing, 1969: volume 1 – 515 pages, volume 2 – 475 pages) “Jonah”, volume 1, pages 379-417
- Kitchen: for Kitchen, Kenneth A., *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003, paperback 2006: 662 pages)
- Lisowsky: for Lisowsky, Gerhard, *Konkordanz Zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, (Württembergische Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart, 1958: 1672 pages)
- LXX: for the Greek Septuagint manuscript family of translations of the Old Testament as it existed prior to 4 BC, more specifically as published in the Alfred Rahlfs edition, *Septuaginta*, 2 Volumes, (Württembergische Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart, © 1935, 1971: vol. 1 – 1184 pages, vol. 2 – 941 pages)
- Mandelkern: for Mandelkern, Solomon, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae Atque Chaldaicae*, (Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria, 1955: two volumes, vol. 1 – 808 pages, vol. 2 – 1532 pages, plus appendices)
- MT: for the Hebrew Masoretic Text manuscript family of the Old Testament, of which few surviving manuscripts remain, especially as it is published in the Rudolf Kittel edition, *Biblia Hebraica*, (Württembergische Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart, © 1937, 1968: 1433 pages)
- Orlinsky: Orlinsky, Harry M., “Prolegomenon” (45 pages) to Ginsburg, Christian D., *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, (KTAV, NY, 1966: 1028 pages)
- Taylor: for Taylor, Bernard A., Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Analytical Lexicon to the Septuagint: Expanded Edition*,

(Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, and Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, © 2003, third printing 2014: 591 pages)

- Thiele: for Thiele, Edwin R., *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, (Kregel, Grand Rapids, original circa 1951, Zondervan ©1983: 253 pages)

Alternatively, many computer resources are available, which are much easier to use. If you paste the link into the browser window, be sure to remove the bullet.

- <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=36>
- <http://newadvent.org/bible/jon001.htm>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201&version=NKJV;WLC;VULGATE>

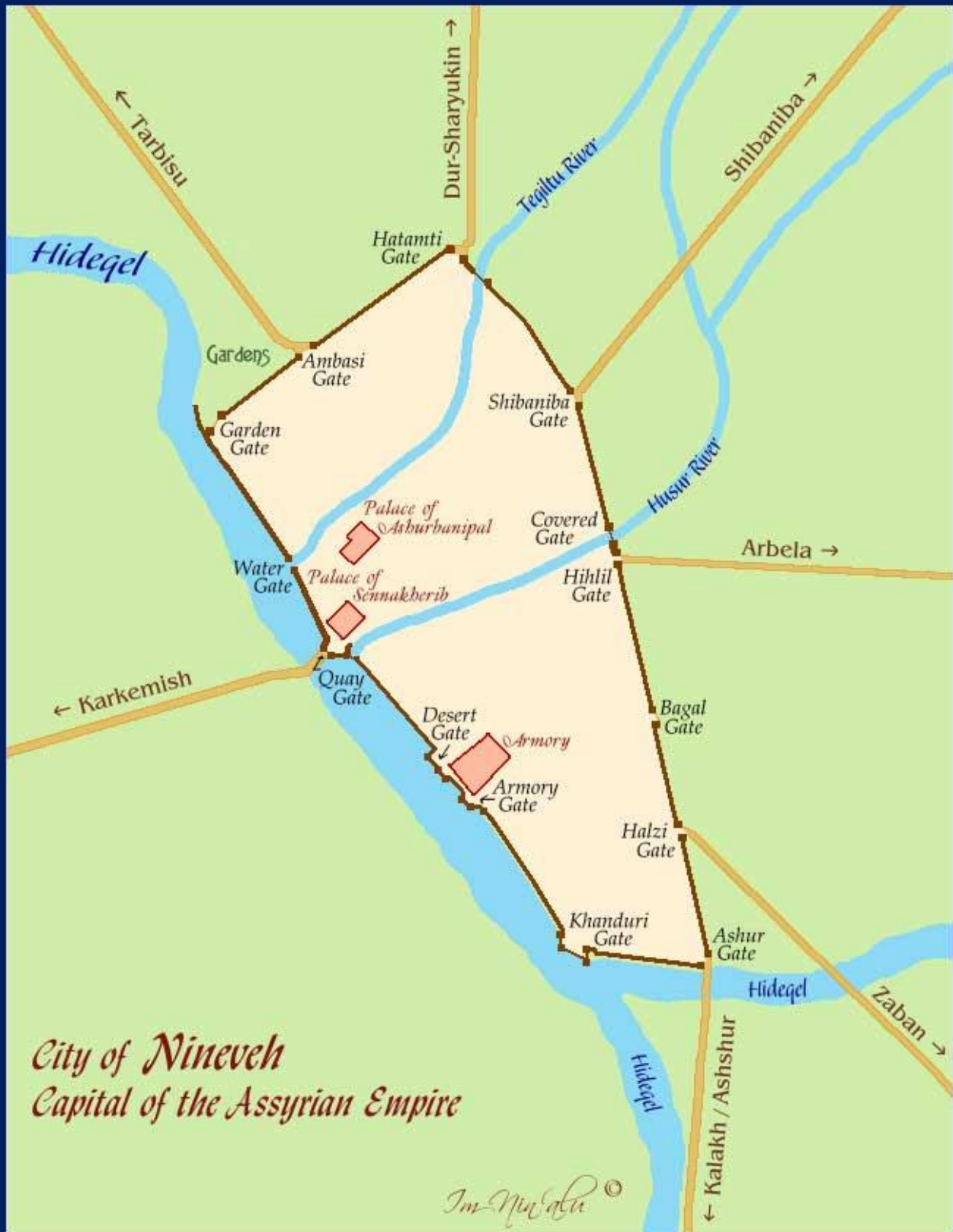
II. Maps

Maps are an indispensable part of a serious Jonah study.

A map of all Europe and Asia is necessary to grasp the scope of Jonah's world, which reaches at least as far as Portugal in the west, to China or even Japan in the east. Jonah is a cosmopolitan and sophisticated gentleman, serving at the topmost rank as an international ambassador for his nation and for his day. Additionally, Jonah is gifted with the Holy Spirit, which empowers him to be in the topmost rank intellectually as well: few of his day could come close to matching Jonah's mental prowess. Consequently, the scope of our maps must equal the scope of Jonah's mental and spiritual capabilities, as well as the scope of Jonah's cultural milieu: society itself was more sophisticated and widely developed than we commonly realize. In particular, we must develop a grasp for the breadth of Solomon's silver trade routes, and well as the precursors of what will become known as the Silk Road. The Via Maris will penetrate this complex of advanced civilizations deeply into Africa. We understand from a wide variety of Assyrian, Egyptian, and other wars, that the span of this multicultural complexity of civilizations reached far into Anatolia; it may even have reached far north of Anatolia: yet, our ignorance limits our understanding.

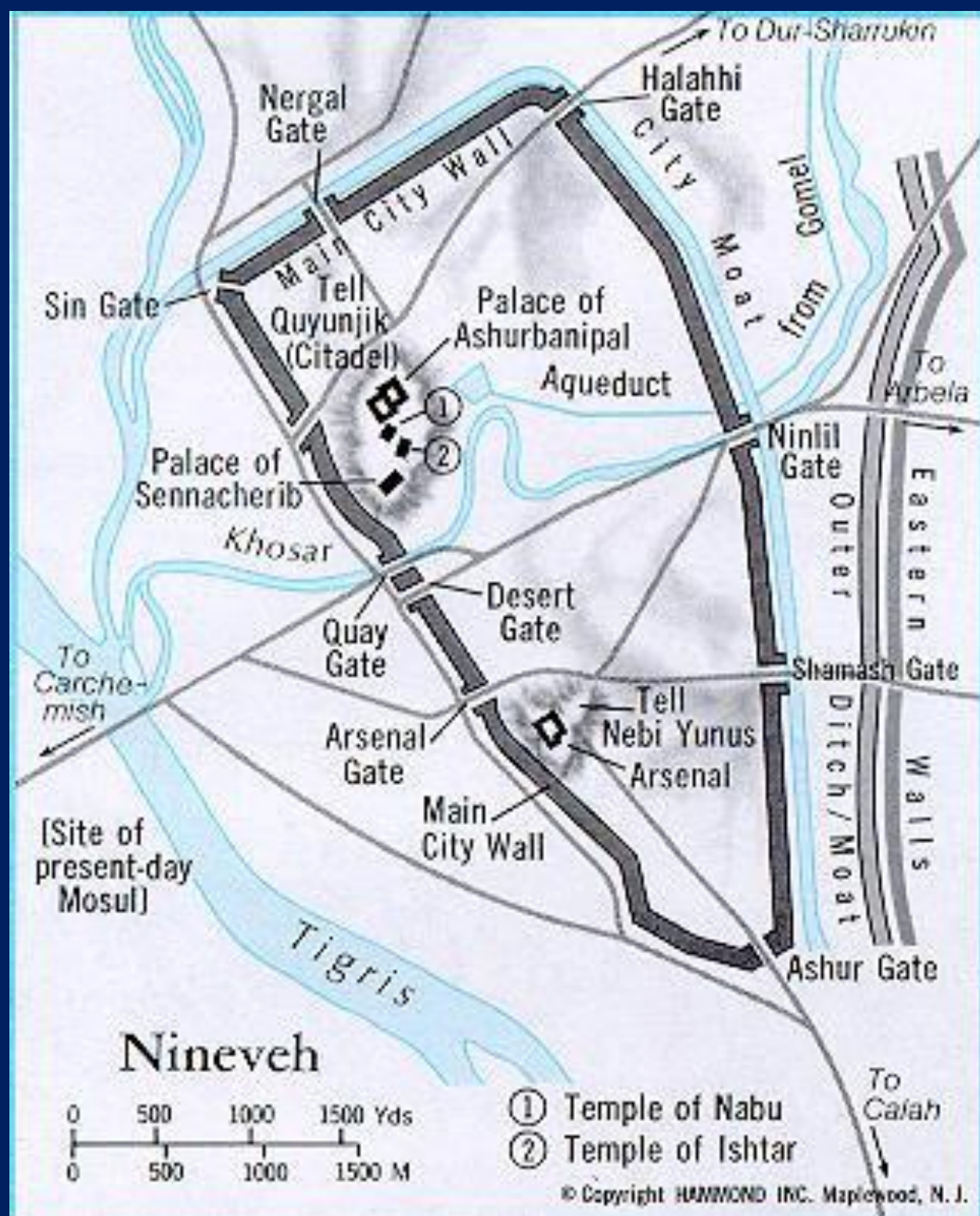
Certainly, any understanding of the ancient metroplex and/or metropolis structure of Nineveh will aid our understanding of Jonah as well. At the very least, we will grow in appreciation of the magnificence, magnitude, and sophistication of Assyrian culture. We are not visiting the middle of the nowhere desert; we stand in awe before one of the greatest cities of all of human civilization and world history: on par with Alexandria, London, New York, Paris, Rome, or Tokyo. We have collected three maps of the Nineveh metroplex, as well as some pictorial presentations: which, unfortunately, we are unable display within this article. Even these fail to tell the whole story of the surrounding suburbia associated with Nineveh, which could easily have reached 30 or more miles in diameter, crossing the Tigris River, and more.¹





*City of Nineveh
Capital of the Assyrian Empire*

Im-Ninawa ©



III. Commentary

1. Chapter 1:1-16

Chapter 1 ends at verse 16; the inclusion of verse 17 in chapter one in English texts is unfortunate.

1.1. Chapter 1:1-2.

Καὶ ἐγένετο Λόγος Κυρίου πρὸς Ἰωνᾶν τὸν τοῦ Ἀμαθὶ λέγων²,
“ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύθητι εἰς Νινευὴ τὴν πόλιν τὴν μεγάλην καὶ κήρυξον
ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅτι ἀνέβη ἡ κραυγὴ τῆς κακίας αὐτῆς πρὸς με.”

The Word of the Lord presented Himself before Jonah of Amittai, “Stand up! Be rushed to Nineveh, the great city! Cry out to her, because the clamor of her wickedness came up before me!”

Text: We attach no textual significance to the word son, present in MT, absent in LXX, and take it to be nothing more than a difference of idiomatic expression: son is most likely and rightly present in the underlying Hebrew vorlage; yet equally rightly absent in the Greek. This is unlikely to be a translation error; nor does it indicate any real textual variation. Greek adds the idea of clamor; yet, of course, God could have heard wickedness in silence; again, we see a difference that is more idiomatic than real: the rabbis making the translation thought that clamor was necessary to convey the full force of wickedness. Alternatively, the MT creators may have dropped the word; yet, that is not especially important either.

Names: We place no real significance on the meaning of names, since they seem to resemble broken crutches and shifting sand. Jonah may mean dove in Hebrew; yet, it is a straight transliteration in Greek, where it has no such meaning. Had Jonah been translated, rather than being transliterated, the Greek, *περιστέρα*, which means either dove or pigeon, may have resulted, so the meaning is attenuated. The Greek, *Ἀμαθὶ*, may mean ignorant, stubborn, or stupid, which is a long way from the Hebrew, truth. Since the LXX rabbis simply transliterated these words, without making or clarifying any point, it is dubious that any exegetical, lexical, or theological significance can be attached to these names.

Background: 2 Kings 14:25 indicates that this is not likely to be the Word of the Lord's first conversation with Jonah. Rather, we expect this to be in the context of a long and ongoing relationship in which the two know each other very well: so the Word of the Lord is not simply dropping in on Jonah to deliver the cold, bad news. We know that God has concern for all His creatures, as the rest of Scripture shows: so it is safe to say that these commands are delivered to Jonah out of the Lord's loving concern for Jonah personally: Jonah had been chosen to be a collaborator and co-laborer with God.

Theme: The real nature of such loving concern and the true significance of this paragraph is discovered from the following verse. It is evident that this conversation did not suddenly, occur out of the blue. The Lord has been working with Jonah for some time. The unfolding of this working relationship gives us the theme for the book; peeking ahead we summarize these two verses: The Word of the Lord assigns occupational therapy for Jonah.

1.2. Chapter 1:3.

καὶ ἀνέστη Ἰωνᾶς τοῦ φυγεῖν εἰς Θαρσίς ἐκ προσώπου Κυρίου καὶ κατέβη εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ εὔρε πλοῖον βαδίζον εἰς Θαρσίς καὶ ἔδωκε τὸν ναῦλον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνέβη εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦ πλεῦσαι μετ' αὐτῶν εἰς Θαρσίς ἐκ προσώπου Κυρίου.

Jonah stood up in order to disappear, to escape, to hide from the presence of the Lord, from the Sh^akinah, in Tarshish: he went down to Joppa, found a ship proceeding to Tarshish, paid his ship's fare, and boarded it to sail with them to Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord, from the Sh^akinah.

Text: No significant text variation is observed.

Translation: We have turned the simplicity of, "flee ...from the face of the Lord," into a sort of Amplified Bible, in order to emphasize the point being made. Jonah is not just "on the lam"; he is trying to obliterate the long enduring relationship between best friends: consider what it means to be a Prophet: to speak face to face with the Lord Himself. We are immediately struck with the impossibility and irrationality of such obliteration. Jonah knows better; yet, tries to do it anyway. Since it is

impossible to run from God, the inevitable outcome is self-destruction, which probably explains the development of Jonah's "death wish". Since Jonah is obliged to see the Lord's face three times a year, we wanted to include a reminder that the Lord was present in the Oracle of the temple in Jerusalem in the pillar of smoke and fire seated on the Mercy Seat. The Jewish call this presence the Sh^okinah.

Theme: Our developing theme, now takes on the clear elements of futility and irrationality. In light of these grim realities, we now understand verses 1:1-2 as the Word of the Lord reaching out to his troubled friend. The intensity of this struggle is such that we already suspect that Jonah is in great pain; we also know that extreme pain shuts down the rational thought processes, sets the brain on fire as it were, and makes rationality impossible. What does one do with such a troubled friend? One seeks to get them to do something else, which will distract them from their troubles. Hence, we understand that the Word of the Lord has led with the new assignment as a tough kind of loving occupational therapy. These first two outline points, Outline 1:1 and 1:2, form a couplet, which echo through the rest of the chapter, as well as throughout the whole book.

1.3. Chapter 1:4-15.

καὶ Κύριος ἐξήγειρε πνεῦμα μέγα εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἐγένετο κλύδων μέγας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, καὶ τὸ πλοῖον ἐκινδύνευε τοῦ συντριβῆναι. καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν οἱ ναυτικοὶ καὶ ἀνεβόησαν ἕκαστος πρὸς τὸν θεὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκβολὴν ἐποιήσαντο τῶν σκευῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τοῦ κουφισθῆναι ἀπ' αὐτῶν. Ἰωνᾶς δὲ κατέβη εἰς τὴν κοίλην τοῦ πλοίου καὶ ἐκάθευδε καὶ ἔρρεγχε. καὶ προσῆλθε πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ πρωρεὺς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, "τίσὺν ρέγχεις; ἀνάστα καὶ ἐπικαλοῦ τὸν θεὸν σου, ὅπως διασώσῃ ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπολώμεθα." καὶ εἶπεν ἕκαστος πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ, "δεῦτε βάλωμεν κλήρους καὶ ἐπιγνῶμεν, 'τίνος ἔνεκεν ἢ κακία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν;' " καὶ ἔβαλον κλήρους, καὶ ἔπεσεν ὁ κλῆρος ἐπὶ Ἰωνᾶν. καὶ εἶπον πρὸς αὐτόν, "ἀπάγγειλον ἡμῖν! τίνος ἔνεκεν ἢ κακία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν? τίς σου ἡ ἐργασία ἐστὶ? καὶ πόθεν ἔρχῃ, καὶ τοῦ πορεύῃ, καὶ ἐκ ποίας χώρας καὶ ἐκ ποίου λαοῦ εἶ σύ?" καὶ εἶπε πρὸς αὐτούς, "δοῦλος Κυρίου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ καὶ τὸν Κύριον Θεὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐγὼ σέβομαι, ὃς ἐποίησε τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν." καὶ

ἐφοβήθησαν οἱ ἄνδρες φόβον μέγαν καὶ εἶπον πρὸς αὐτόν, “τί τοῦτο ἐποίησας?” διότι ἔγνωσαν οἱ ἄνδρες, ὅτι ἐκ προσώπου Κυρίου ἦν φεύγων, ὅτι ἀπήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς. καὶ εἶπον πρὸς αὐτόν, “τί ποιήσομέν σοι καὶ κοπάσει ἡ θάλασσα ἀφ’ ἡμῶν; ὅτι ἡ θάλασσα ἐπορεύετο καὶ ἐξήγειρε μᾶλλον κλύδωνα. καὶ εἶπεν Ἰωνᾶς πρὸς αὐτούς, “ἄρατέ με καὶ ἐμβάλετέ με εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ κοπάσει ἡ θάλασσα ἀφ’ ὑμῶν, διότι ἔγνωκα ἐγὼ ὅτι δι’ ἐμὲ ὁ κλύδων ὁ μέγας οὗτος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἐστι.” καὶ παρεβιάζοντο οἱ ἄνδρες τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι πρὸς τὴν γῆν καὶ οὐκ ἠδύναντο, ὅτι ἡ θάλασσα ἐπορεύετο καὶ ἐξηγείρετο μᾶλλον ἐπ’ αὐτούς. καὶ ἀνεβόησαν πρὸς Κύριον καὶ εἶπαν, “μηδαμῶς, Κύριε, μὴ ἀπολώμεθα ἔνεκεν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου, καὶ μὴ δῶς ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς αἶμα δίκαιον, διότι σύ, Κύριε, ὄν τρόπον ἐβούλου, πεποίηκας.” καὶ ἔλαβον τὸν Ἰωνᾶν καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἔστη ἡ θάλασσα ἐκ τοῦ σάλου αὐτῆς.

The Lord stirred up a great wind in the sea. Great waves, the perfect storm appeared in the sea. The ship was at risk to be crushed. The sailors were overcome with fear, and screamed, each to his god. They made the things in the ship expendable, to be unburdened of them in the sea. Even so, Jonah went down into the belly of the ship, and falling asleep, he snored. The captain confronted him. He said to him, “Why do you snore? Get up! Call upon your own god, so that the god might spare us and we ourselves might not completely be destroyed.” Each man said to his shipmate, “Come! We should cast lots and we would find out, ‘What is the cause of this evil among us?’ ” They cast lots. The lot fell on Jonah. They said to him, “Answer us! What is the cause of this evil among us? What is your work? Where might you come from and would you be rushed to; what nationality; what race are *you*?” He said to them, “*I* am a servant of the Lord. *I* worship the Lord God of the heaven, Who created the sea and the sere.” The men were overcome with greater *fear*. They said to him, “Why did you do this? (Since the men knew that he was hiding from the presence of the Lord, from the Sh^akinah: for he told them [*as much*].) They said to him, “What will we do with you, so that the sea will be appeased for us? Because, the sea rushes. It stirs up more waves.” Jonah said to them, “Pick me up and

throw me into the sea. So the sea will be appeased for you; since *I* know that through me these great waves are upon you.” The men struggled in vain to turn toward land; yet, they were not able, because the sea rushed and was stirred up more against them. They screamed to the Lord, “Lord, let us not, who are powerless, be destroyed for the soul of this man. Do not bring righteous blood upon us, since You, Lord, have always done [*as*] You wish in every way.” They took Jonah, threw him out into the sea, and the sea stopped her raging.

Text: LXX has great waves; MT has great tempest. There is too much room here for variations of idiomatic expression, used in describing violent sea storms, to see any real significant difference here. Nor do we attach great significance to the difference in sleeping (Hebrew) and snoring (Greek). MT uses a word that suggests deep sleep, sometimes Divinely induced sleep, as was the case with Adam when the Lord created Eve from Adam. How else would one communicate depth of sleep, without overemphasizing the point, if not with snoring: the LXX rabbis evidently had a sense of humor. That Jonah is, or is not a Hebrew, appears to be a later interpolation intended to glorify the Jews:³ strictly speaking, Jonah is not a Hebrew, his tribal origin is unknown. The phrase, “who are powerless,” may have been dropped by the Masoretes, or the LXX rabbis could have added it: it’s not a big deal either way.

Overview: It seems futile to detail every couplet in this paragraph, which is why we have simply interpreted it as ongoing narrative. The potential for identifying more couplets in this section does not especially increase our understanding of its structure. The first couplet dominates the tone of the chapter: other couplets seem to be mere echoes. Our actions have consequences; frequently inexorable consequences, night will follow day, whatever we think about the matter; such consequences frequently entrap others. Jonah is looking for trouble and has found it.

The narrative is brief, direct, intense. We have tried to select words that capture the picture of futility. The ship is going down, and the sailors know it.

No one can hear in the howling winds: communication is barely possible by screaming at the top of the lungs. The sailors scream to their idols in hopes that their idols will hear above the storm. Each wave tortures the ship's beams as the strongest timbers groan under stress. Everything must go overboard: tools, equipment, extra masts and sails, personal belongings, and all the cargo. The ship is stripped to her necessary survival minimum; only enough ballast to keep her upright remains.

That Jonah is able to sleep is simply amazing: God probably put him to sleep: Jonah is comatose, or nearly so. The terrified pagan captain demands an answer: why isn't Jonah screaming to his idol like any other ordinary man. The ship is already stripped and destroyed: the captain would avoid, if he could, splintering what is left, and death. The sailors have a slightly different idea; we cannot condemn their actions as wicked pagan behavior: it is too similar to the judgment of Achan.⁴ The sailors are lacking a high priest and the necessary decision making paraphernalia; nevertheless, the Word of the Lord has put Jonah on trial, and Jonah knows it. He pronounces upon himself the verdict of the Lord.

The sailors demand answers; yet, Jonah has only one answer: he is the servant and worshiper of the Word of the Lord, God of all, creator of everything. The sailors are beginning to realize that Jonah's God is not like their idols, local deities with limited power. Their fear increases and they have more questions. Words pile on words in a crashing torrent that imitates the violence of the storm.

The sailors think that throwing Jonah overboard is cruel and inhuman, immoral, if you will; they do not yet realize that the consequences are inexorable. Achan must be stoned and Jonah must be drowned. Jonah seems to welcome his fate; his "death wish" is visible. The sailors, having met the Word of the Lord only moments before, pray to Him for the first time in their lives; realizing the hopelessness of their case, they finally execute the judgment that Jonah has called down upon himself.

Outcome: Jonah's disobedience leads to alarming and surprising consequences. The lives of innocent bystanders were put in danger. The

outcome stretches human credulity. Jonah knows nothing of onboard events after verse 15a, “They took Jonah, threw him out into the sea...”

1.4. Chapter 1:16.

... and the sea stopped her raging.

καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν οἱ ἄνδρες φόβῳ μεγάλῳ τὸν Κύριον καὶ ἔθυσαν θυσίαν τῷ Κυρίῳ καὶ ᾠξάντο τὰς εὐχάς.

The men were overcome with even greater *fear* [of] the Lord. They offered an offering to the Lord, and prayed [*their*] prayers.⁵

Text: there is no real difference between prayers (Greek) and vows (Hebrew): for in the context, they both clearly indicate all the ritual sacrifices of Leviticus.

Ending: Each chapter appears to draw to its own conclusion. The raging sea may have stopped immediately: and a good thing too, else Jonah would have certainly died. Even the aftermath of the storm is violent enough to take a mere man in its surging currents. It does appear that Jonah wished to die; yet, the Lord does not intend to kill him. Jonah knows nothing of the cessation of the storm, even the aftermath of powerful currents is too much for a mere man to fathom sensibility. Weakened as it may be, the sea is still too much for Jonah: he is being thrown around like a rag doll.

This vignette, beginning in verse 1:15b, is out of sequence with the chronological record, it shows how God changes a disaster into good. The sailors live to make their way to Jerusalem, they learn more about the Lord, and present their necessary prayers and sacrifices. Much later Jonah will learn of their sincere worship. I’m sorry, this sequence of events leaves no room for false conversion whatsoever. The sailors have sincerely persisted in worship, long enough for Jonah to find out about it. This is solid proof of Jonah’s ultimate healing, as well as the genuineness of the sailors’ repentance.

2. Chapter 1:17-2:10

Chapter 2, beginning at verse 1:17, returns to the chronological record. We now follow the LXX numbering. The fact that “The LORD commanded” is the same expression as in 4:6, 7 and 8 and indicates a continuity of God’s Fatherly efforts to correct his mad and errant child. This is no less an object lesson than the plant and the worm: it is a firm object lesson, yet still an object lesson. Up until now Jonah has mocked the specter of death. It becomes a different matter when he can no longer see the face of God. Jonah is willing to give up many things (career, profession, converts, home, property, life); but one thing remains which he cannot give up – the Living reality of God. Psalms flood from his memory. At last Jonah worships.

2.1. Chapter 2:1 LXX (1:17 MT)

Καὶ προσέταξε Κύριος κήτει μεγάλῳ καταπιεῖν τὸν Ἰωνᾶν· καὶ ἦν Ἰωνᾶς ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τοῦ κήτους τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας.

The Lord commanded great creation⁶ to drink down Jonah: now Jonah was in the belly of creation three days and three nights.

Text: No variation was observed.

Translation: Dagah does not mean fish; its denotative or explicit meaning is abundance, fertility, increase, multitude, or plenty; by way of connotation or implication it came to be applied to whatever crop meant feast-or-famine in a given culture.⁷ We have drawn this conclusion by the rigorous application of least common denominators, and from Occam's razor. Hence, it applies to grain among the Babylonians, and possibly school or shoal among the Philistines. Dagon is the god of abundance, the difference between life and death: it may, as easily, be applied to the abundant sea itself.⁸ Similarly, κήτει or κήτους, may as easily be applied to creation itself, as to the creature: the sea is the creation to which we refer.⁹

Analysis: The Lord did not throw Jonah into the sea; the sailors did so at Jonah’s command and insistence. The Lord is commanding tough love, shock therapy. Jonah wants to die, seems bent on suicide; yet, the Lord

will not let him die. Nevertheless, the Lord is willing to give Jonah a good taste of death: one should be careful for what one prays. This is not unlike shock therapy for Jonah. By the end of the chapter we will discover that the Lord commands creation in such a way as to ultimately spare Jonah's life. So, the words, "The Lord commanded great creation," can only mean that the Lord stilled the sea in such a way as to spare Jonah's life; yet, not sparing Jonah from the strong lesson in reality that he so urgently needs.

2.2. Chapter 2:2-10

a. 2:2-6.

καὶ προσηύξατο Ἰωνᾶς πρὸς Κύριον τὸν Θεὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας τοῦ κήτους, καὶ εἶπεν, "ἐβόησα ἐν θλίψει μου πρὸς Κύριον τὸν Θεόν μου, καὶ εἰσήκουσέ μου; ἐκ κοιλίας ᾄδου κραυγῆς μου ἤκουσας φωνῆς μου. ἀπέρριψάς με εἰς βάθη καρδίας θαλάσσης, καὶ ποταμοὶ ἐκύκλωσάν με· πάντες οἱ μετεωρισμοὶ σου καὶ τὰ κύματά σου ἐπ' ἐμὲ διῆλθον." καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπα, "ἀπῶσμαι ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν σου; ἄρα προσθήσω τοῦ ἐπιβλέψαι με πρὸς ναὸν τὸν ἅγιόν σου;" περιεχύθη μοι ὕδωρ ἕως ψυχῆς, ἄβυσσος ἐκύκλωσέ με ἐσχάτη, ἔδυσ ἡ κεφαλὴ μου εἰς σχισμὰς ὀρέων.

Jonah prayed in the Presence of the Lord his God, from the belly of creation, "I screamed in my suffering to the Lord my God. He heard me. From the belly of Hades You heard my clamor, my voice. You hurled me into the depths of the heart of the sea. Raging torrents covered me. All Your towering surges and Your crashing billows broke through upon me." Then *I* said, "I was shoved away from your eyes; will I ever again be privileged to look toward Your holy oracle?" Water surrounded me over [*my*] soul. Immeasurable abyss covered me. My head was plunged into mountain chasms.

Text: Instead of, "My head was plunged into mountain chasms," MT has, "Seaweed was clinging to my head,"¹⁰ which seems to be inserted before, "My head was plunged..." which is then shifted to the next verse. MT, though fanciful, makes little real impact on interpretation: it is best seen as another MT interpolation.

Analysis: Jonah prays earnestly and honestly to the Lord. Strangely enough, prayer is often cluttered with form and formality, only

becoming earnest, honest, and real when we are under extreme duress: thus, the necessity of suffering in spiritual life. Jonah screams because he seems to doubt that the Lord can hear him: Jonah may very well be delusional; he is almost certainly in physical pain. Then in a flash of realization Jonah knows that the Lord hears. The Lord did not hurl Jonah into the sea; Jonah has no one other than himself to blame for his condition; still, he blames the Lord for his own failure: nevertheless, Jonah is beginning to realize that what he himself intended for evil, is not without the Lord's hand in making into good. Jonah describes the raging of the sea in glowing, vivid detail: these descriptions are not consistent with the internal workings of organs in animals. Jonah now realizes that he has removed himself from the eyes of the Lord; it does not matter to Jonah that he is about to die; what matters is that he will never again see the Beatific Vision in the Oracle, he will never again see the Sh^akinah. Jonah really begins to understand that he is asking that he be removed from the presence of the Lord forever. Jonah is truly afraid for the first time. He resumes his graphic descriptions of the working of the sea.

b. 2:7.

κατέβην εἰς γῆν, ἧς οἱ μοχλοὶ αὐτῆς κάτοχοι αἰώνιοι καὶ ἀναβήτω ἐκ φθορᾶς ἢ ζωῆ μου, πρὸς σὲ Κύριε ὁ Θεός μου.

I went down into earth, with her timeless latch bars. He went up from corruption! My life [*is*] before You, Lord, my God.

Text: MT has, “you brought up my life from the pit,” instead of, “He went up...,” hence, my life is taken from the latter phrase, and absorbed into the previous phrase. However, the word for pit is earth, not pit at all.

Analysis: This verse was set apart to highlight its possible implications for resurrection: if we seek resurrection themes in Jonah, here is where we must find them. The term, earth, is somewhat surprising: Jonah goes down into the sea; Jesus goes down into the earth. To make the phrase read, “He [Jesus] went down into earth, we would need to change the word, κατέβην, by removing its last letter, which would make it into

κατέβη, the third person singular. We are reluctant to change the text without reason: thus we reject this idea out of hand. The phrase, “He went up from corruption!” is still enigmatic; Who is the he, she, or it? If the imperative (emphatic) verb was written for what should have been an indicative verb, the phrase could have read, “I went up from corruption!” in which case the problem disappears. Again, we refuse to tamper with the text, so the enigmatic change of person must stand. We could continue to play with other possible combinations of these ideas: what would be the point. Even so, we do not see even a hint of resurrection here. Resurrection, is a New Testament idea, as far as Jonah is concerned: at most Jonah is a type of the resurrection, which is exactly what Jesus proclaims.

c. 2:8-10.

ἐν τῷ ἐκλείπειν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τοῦ Κυρίου ἐμνήσθην, καὶ ἔλθοι πρὸς σὲ ἡ προσευχὴ μου εἰς ναὸν τὸ ἅγιόν σου. φυλασσόμενοι μάταια καὶ ψευδῆ ἔλεον αὐτῶν ἐγκατέλιπον. ἐγὼ δὲ μετὰ φωνῆς αἰνέσεως καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως θύσω σοι, ὅσα ηὐξάμην ἀποδώσω σοι εἰς σωτηρίαν μου τῷ Κυρίῳ.

As my soul [*is about*] to depart from me, I was remembered by the Lord. Would my prayer come before You in Your holy oracle. Their useless guards and false mercy abandoned... [*me*]. Yet with praise and thanksgiving (today) *I* will sacrifice to You. All which I vowed, I will repay to you, unto my salvation in the Lord.

Text: MT has, “I remembered Jehovah,” rather than, “I was remembered by the Lord.” The difference is between the active and passive voice. Greek expresses Jonah’s prayer as a slim possibility, or perhaps even a probability, not as a certainty. Though verse 9 is enigmatic, at least to me, I cannot make the expression, “vain or useless clamor, destruction, evil, or raging,” from the Hebrew into a diatribe against idolatry, which does not fit the rest of the discourse. Jonah does is not changed by idolatry, yet rather by the throes of death.

Analysis: “Would my prayer come before You in Your holy oracle.” is not interrogative, it is either optative (a possibility) or subjunctive (a

probability: thus expressing a wish. The whole section from 2:2-10 is the expression of Jonah's Todah delivered in written fact much later at Jerusalem. In parts of this prayer, Jonah seems to be lapsing in and out of consciousness. His memory of his travail is graphic, expressing great violence and attendant pain. If verse 2:7 is prophetic, it expresses mysteries that cannot be known in 800 BC. Verse 2:8a seems logically attached to 2:11; yet, good storytellers rarely express themselves in plain logical sequence. Verse 2:8b seems to express the sort of dreamlike wish that might occupy Jonah's mind after he is thrown on the beach, or riding in a fast sedan chair on his way to Nineveh: yet, it must be included here to be part of the Todah, explaining all of the Todah's aspects. Daydreamlike his thoughts break off again, as he regains the thought, "I was remembered by the Lord." Who has broken the useless guards of death and the grave, and disabused Jonah of the false illusion that death is somehow or other a merciful escape from spiritual reality and warfare: no, death just brings reality home to roost. Still, these are not ideas that Jonah is ready to grapple with yet: for he is still nursing his "death wish" in chapter 4: they are only included here to complete the Todah. Jonah finishes the Todah with assurances and commitments to praise, thanks, sacrifice, and vows, which are not things he will be willing to actually do until long after verse 4:11 has concluded. The fact that Jonah has gathered such a wide chronological scope here in one place, ranging far beyond the rest of Jonah, as was also the specific instance of verse 1:16, emphasizes for us that this is the core material of his report. In a single prayer, Jonah has taken us through the transition from his raving madness in the sea, to later musings about the Glory of God, to the final composition of his written presentation in the Oracle. Historic details will follow.

Summary: The positioning of this prayer here, rather than when it was delivered, suggests that this is the theme of the book, forming the introductory precis to what will follow. The hint of resurrection seems unlikely, if not impossible. The fact that we have a record of this prayer shows that the answer to Jonah's question is, Yes, He will again sacrifice to the Lord! This, however, will not be realized for many days. Once

again, this reality of an officially presented prayer is out of chronological sequence with the plot, proving that Jonah is ultimately healed.

2.3. Chapter 2:11

Καὶ προσέταξε Κύριος τῷ κήτει, καὶ ἐξέβαλε τὸν Ἰωνᾶν ἐπὶ τὴν ξηράν.

The Lord commanded the creation and it threw Jonah out on the sere.

Text: No variation was observed.

Analysis: Verse 2:11 completes verse 2:1; they nest the Todah between them. Verse 2:11 makes plain to us that verse 2:1 is not a statement of cruel, abusive torture. Jonah got himself into this mess; the Lord got him out of it. This shows that the Lord's intention was always to spare Jonah's life from square one. Following the magnificent expression of the Todah, the conclusion of the chapter is almost anticlimactic. The shock therapy is successful, at least in part.

3. Chapter 3:1-10

3.1. Chapter 3:1-2.

Καὶ ἐγένετο Λόγος Κυρίου πρὸς Ἰωνᾶν ἐκ δευτέρου λέγων, “ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύθητι εἰς Νινευὴ τὴν πόλιν τὴν μεγάλην καὶ κήρυξον ἐν αὐτῇ κατὰ τὸ κήρυγμα τὸ ἔμπροσθεν, ὃ ἐγὼ ἐλάλησα πρὸς σε!”

The Word of the Lord presented Himself before Jonah a second time, “Stand up! Be rushed to Nineveh, the great city! Cry out to her according to the former proclamation, which *I* spoke to you!”

Text: No variation was observed: a very literal translation.

Analysis: The Word of the Lord repeats His occupational therapy assignment for Jonah with only minor changes in detail. Nothing has changed about either reality or the will of the Lord. Note that the Word of the Lord has not coerced Jonah to this decision; He has simply revealed to Jonah the outcome of doing his own will, which is always a fatal error.

3.2. Chapter 3:3

καὶ ἀνέστη Ἰωνᾶς καὶ ἐπορεύθη εἰς Νινευή, καθὰ ἐλάλησε Κύριος; ἡ δὲ Νινευὴ ἦν πόλις μεγάλη τῷ Θεῷ¹¹ ὥσει πορείας ὁδοῦ τριῶν ἡμερῶν.

Jonah stood up and was rushed to Nineveh, just as the Lord required. Now Nineveh was a great city to God, about a three-day's run by road.

Text: MT has, “journey,” in lieu of, “run by road”: an idiomatic, not a significant difference.

Analysis: Jonah obeys his occupational therapy assignment, however grudgingly. The three days is quite possibly a motif:¹² among other things its brevity appears to accelerate the urgency of developments. On the other hand, a three-day's run could be quite a distance, as much as thirty miles or more: this would, of course, include the suburbs, outside the city gates, moats, and walls, even on the other side of the Tigris. Nineveh is thought to be more magnificent than Babylon, with more glorious hanging gardens, and great aqueducts. Jonah begrudgingly accepts his assignment. Chapter 4:1-3 will detail exactly how begrudging Jonah's acceptance is. Jonah's madness is far from being healed.

3.3. Chapter 3:4-9

καὶ ἤρξατο Ἰωνᾶς τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ὥσει πορείαν ἡμέρας μιᾶς καὶ ἐκήρυξε καὶ εἶπεν, “ἔτι τρεῖς ἡμέραι καὶ Νινευὴ καταστραφήσεται.” καὶ ἐπίστευσαν οἱ ἄνδρες Νινευὴ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐκήρυξαν νηστείαν καὶ ἐνεδύσαντο σάκκους ἀπὸ μεγάλου αὐτῶν ἕως μικροῦ αὐτῶν. καὶ ἤγγισεν ὁ λόγος πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα τῆς Νινευῆ, καὶ ἐξανέστη ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ καὶ περιεΐλετο τὴν στολὴν αὐτοῦ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ περιεβάλετο σάκκον καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ σποδοῦ. καὶ ἐκηρύχθη καὶ ἐρρέθη ἐν τῇ Νινευὴ παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ παρὰ τῶν μεγιστάνων αὐτοῦ λέγων· οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ τὰ κτήνη καὶ οἱ βόες καὶ τὰ πρόβατα μὴ γευσάσθωσαν μηδὲ νεμέσθωσαν μηδὲ ὕδωρ πιέτωσαν. καὶ περιεβάλλοντο σάκκους οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ τὰ κτήνη, καὶ ἀνεβόησαν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἐκτενῶς· καὶ ἀπέστρεψαν ἕκαστος ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ αὐτῶν τῆς πονηρᾶς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδικίας τῆς ἐν χερσὶν αὐτῶν λέγοντες, “τίς οἶδεν εἰ μετανοήσει ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἐξ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπολώμεθα;”

Jonah began to enter the city about one-day's run. He proclaimed, “Three more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The men of Nineveh believed in God. They proclaimed a fast and wore sacks, from

the large among them to the small among them. The news reached the king of Nineveh. He arose from his throne; removed his robe himself; threw a sack around himself, and sat on ashes. It was proclaimed and reported throughout Nineveh, in the presence of the king, and in the presence of the magistrates, “Men, animals, cattle, and sheep may neither eat nor graze nor drink water.” The men and the animals were being covered with sacks. They called assiduously before God, as each turned away from their wicked road, as well as from the unrighteousness of their hands, “Who knows if God will relent and turn away from His burning wrath and we ourselves might not completely be destroyed?”

Text: MT has forty days for the overthrow of Nineveh, rather than the three of LXX. This is problematic for several reasons. First of all, the text variant is a real text variant: numbers leave little wiggle room for translation error, or idiomatic differences: 40 means forty in every language; 3 always means three: well, at least most of the time. Second, it detracts from the urgency of the message: there is no urgency in Nineveh, we can always repent tomorrow. Third, this means that Jonah’s campout with the gourd in the sweltering heat lasted forty days: which seems highly improbable to anyone who has done a lot of camping: Jonah would have made better provisions than a makeshift cover, and found several ways to grow more plants. Four, it seems to be an interpolation designed to draw an association between Jonah and Moses; rather than the association between Jonah and Jesus, which is already too strong.¹³ Of course, we can never know for sure, and the difference does not alter the flow or conclusion of the story: we have no archaeological discoveries to fill in the details. The rest of the passage is without significant variation.

Analysis: One-day could mean that Jonah begins proclaiming the Lord’s message while he is still in the suburbs. Even so, a sophisticated place like Nineveh is expected to have elaborate “customs” facilities: it could have taken Jonah a day to get past various police inspections, and receive official approval. The report is unconcerned about such “trivial” details, remaining focused on the urgency of the message. It makes little difference if doom is three or forty days away; still, forty detracts from the urgency of the message, which, throughout the rest of the book is of

paramount importance. Three days is the time required for Jonah to traverse the city and set up camp in the opposite overlooking hills. If we are looking for a physical overthrow, we don't know what it is. Nineveh had many enemies, within and without: this could as easily be an internal coup d'état, a military or religious revolt seeking to overthrow the existing regime: the murder of emperors and kings was relatively common place. The narrative, "their wicked road, as well as from the unrighteousness of their hands," suggests that everything about Nineveh was internally corrupt: rotten to the core. Repentance is swift and universal.

Irony: The city is actually overthrow in exactly three days. The Word of the Lord has turned a thoroughly pagan culture and nation into His worshipers within the space of three days.¹⁴ This is far more significant than the physical overthrow that we and Jonah anticipated. We mere mortals really fail to grasp the enormity and subtlety of the love and mercy of the Lord. Nineveh is Repentant, Championed by her King. The Ninevites probably don't realize that God has been seeking their repentance all along.

3.4. Chapter 3:10.

καὶ εἶδεν ὁ Θεὸς τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἀπέστρεψαν ἀπὸ τῶν ὁδῶν αὐτῶν τῶν πονηρῶν, καὶ μετενόησεν ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ τῇ κακίᾳ, ἣ ἔλάλησε τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτοῖς, καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησε.

God saw their works, that they turned away from their wicked roads. God relented of the evil which He promised to do to them, and He did not [*do it*].

Text: No variation was observed.

Analysis: God, here, observes their works, not their faith, which is evident from their works. God is merciful in judgement.¹⁵ This verse is also out of chronological sequence; in chronological sequence, it belongs after verse 4:5. Chapter 1 closed by anticipating concluding events that could only take place at Jerusalem, near the Temple, on one of the high feast days. The Todah of Chapter 2 closes with a prayer that can only become reality at Jerusalem, near the Temple, on one of the high feast days. This absolution can only have been made complete after Jonah has assured

himself that everything went wrong from his perspective. Most appropriately, ambassadors from Nineveh would have presented official prayers and sacrifices in Jerusalem on behalf of the City: the narrative, however, does not provide any such information.

4. Chapter 4:1-11

4.1. Chapter 4:1-3.

Καὶ ἐλυπήθη Ἰωνᾶς λύπην μεγάλην καὶ συνεχύθη. καὶ προσηύξατο πρὸς Κύριον καὶ εἶπεν, “ὦ Κύριε, οὐχ οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου ἔτι ὄντος μου ἐν τῇ γῆ μου; διὰ τοῦτο προέφθασα τοῦ φυγεῖν εἰς Θαρσίς, διότι ἔγνων ὅτι σὺ ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτίρμων, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς κακίαις. καὶ νῦν, δέσποτα Κύριε, λάβε τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι καλὸν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν με μᾶλλον, ἢ ζῆν με.”

Jonah was grieved with great grief. He was shaken. He prayed in the Presence of the Lord, “Oh Lord, were these not my words, while I was yet living in my homeland? Through this I anticipated [*the need*] to disappear, to escape, to hide in Tarshish: for I knew that you [*are*] merciful, filled with pity, patient, and extremely compassionate, in relenting upon evil. Now, Master Lord, take my soul from me: for [*it is*] more beautiful for me to decay away than to live.”

Text: MT has, “Yet, it appeared to Jonah [as] a great evil, and his anger was kindled.” The introductory phrase appears to be a rabbinic interpolation, inserted to introduce the following sentences. Greek adds, “He was shaken.” All of this can be explained as the paraphrastic translation of a difficult Hebrew sentence. There is nothing else notable in this paragraph.

Analysis: This paragraph captures the grudge that Jonah has been nursing since day one. It is also out of chronological sequence, since Jonah cannot know that God has acted out of mercy until the time period for the pending downfall of Nineveh has expired: so, it comes after Jonah’s watch in verse 4:5. Still, Jonah could be anticipating what he realizes that God must surely do. If Jonah has to boil in his own juices for 40 days, this seems to amplify the problem; if only three days, the sequential action transpires in a considerable rush. Ironically, Jonah finds fault with God for being

merciful: possibly, understandable since Jonah has seen the clarity and force of God's great mercy in Aram, will see it among pagan sailors, and now sees it taking place here; yet, he has never seen it among his own Israelite people, who have never responded in such a way. So in conception, this verse belongs with 1:3; yet, with fruition, after 4:5.

Jonah is so bitter and angry or grief-stricken that he prays for death: not again, the "death wish". These words indicate a major step in the healing process.

4.2. Chapter 4:4

καὶ εἶπε Κύριος πρὸς Ἰωνᾶν, “εἰ σφόδρα λελύπησαι σύ?”

The Lord said before Jonah, “If *you* had grieved vehemently...?”

Text: MT has, “Is it good¹⁶ for your anger to be kindled?” However, this draws a wrong contrast: for God is not angry: God is saddened, so the comparative or contrasting point is not anger, but the grievousness of the situation, possibly. God is not even frustrated, so the point is not to emphasize Jonah's frustration either.

Analysis: The point that the Lord is making is that Jonah has not cried his heart out over the human race. Since frustration and grief, may often find expression in anger, the lexical difference is not that great. Nevertheless, we believe that LXX captures the mood of the passage more effectively than MT. Jonah has been captured in that trap, into which all man fall: he thinks that somehow his own grief over sinners is on scale with God's sorrow for lost mankind. We are not God, neither do we really share His grief over His children. This phrase is the overture coaxing Jonah out of his irrationality. We become sane when we realize that we are not God, stop playing God, and look to Him alone: “for in times of despair we have no other help but You.”

As the Lord begins to question the reality of the intensity of Jonah's grief or anger, evidently Jonah interrupts Him.

4.3. Chapter 4:5

καὶ ἐξῆλθεν Ἰωνᾶς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἀπέναντι τῆς πόλεως· καὶ ἐποίησεν ἑαυτῷ ἐκεῖ σκηνὴν καὶ ἐκάθητο ὑποκάτω αὐτῆς, ἕως οὗ ἀπίδη τί ἔσται τῇ πόλει.

Jonah went out of the city. He sat overlooking the city. He made a tent for himself there, and seated himself under it, where he might see clearly what would happen to the city.

Text: MT uses a word that means anticipate; it only comes to mean east by implication, since dawn anticipates day. The hills overlooking Nineveh are to the east and north. The difference is not significant. MT adds in the shade: this seems to us as if MT is struggling to explain the situation by adding descriptive words.

Analysis: Now the actual chronological events begin to take shape. Jonah preaches; Nineveh repents in sackcloth and ashes; Jonah waits to observe the outcome; time expires; Jonah realizes that God has defeated him, as well as Nineveh; Jonah's grudge breaks out; God begins to expose Jonah's irrationality, as well as the realities of spiritual warfare: the battle goes God's way, not ours.

Jonah cannot have made much of a tent, under the circumstances: a few saplings bent and lashed together, a few leaf covered branches: these will also wilt in the blistering heat and scorching wind. The structure is more like the booths that the Israelites made in remembrance of the Exodus wilderness wanderings: yet, with less time for preparation, and less quality. All so that he might see....

4.4. Chapter 4:6-8

καὶ προσέταξε Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς κολοκύνθη, καὶ ἀνέβη ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς τοῦ Ἰωνᾶ τοῦ εἶναι σκιὰν ὑπεράνω τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ τοῦ σκιάζειν αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῶν κακῶν αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐχάρη Ἰωνᾶς ἐπὶ τῇ κολοκύνθῃ χαρὰν μεγάλην. καὶ προσέταξεν ὁ Θεὸς σκώληκι ἐωθινῇ τῇ ἐπαύριον, καὶ ἐπάταξε τὴν κολοκύνθην, καὶ ἀπεξηράνθη. καὶ ἐγένετο ἅμα τῷ ἀνατεῖλαι τὸν ἥλιον καὶ προσέταξεν ὁ Θεὸς πνεύματι καύσωνι συγκαίοντι, καὶ ἐπάταξεν ὁ

ἥλιος ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ Ἰωνᾶ· καὶ ὀλιγοψύχησε καὶ ἐπελέγετο τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπε, “καλὸν μοι ἀποθανεῖν με ἢ ζῆν.”

The Lord God commanded a plant. It grew up over Jonah’s head, to be a shade above his head, to shelter him from his evils. Jonah was delighted over the plant with great delight. God commanded a worm early the next day. It attacked the plant, so that it was withered. At the same time as God presented Himself in the sunrise; He commanded a scorching hot, burning wind. The sun attacked Jonah’s head. He was discouraged. He swore on his soul, “[It is] more beautiful for me to decay away than to live.”

Text: No variation was observed.

Analysis: When words fail to penetrate, one resorts to simpler object lessons. As with the sea, where Jonah learned that to escape from God is to live in utter anguish and hopeless despair; now Jonah must learn how great he is in God’s universe. We do not know what the plant is, it is not especially important: because of the sound of the Greek name, κολοκύνθη, we offer the barest conjecture that the plant might be a member of the “cole” family, otherwise known as brassica, which would include some mustard plants.¹⁷ The narrative is straightforward: hear in a day, gone in a day, accompanied by fierce heat. The picture is one of incredible stress and torment. It only takes hours, perhaps only minutes, even seconds to bring human beings to such a breaking point: our pain tolerance is very low. The “death wish” is repeated in words nearly identical to those in verse 4:3.

4.5. Chapter 4:9a

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεὸς πρὸς Ἰωνᾶν, “εἰ σφόδρα λελύπησαι σὺ ἐπὶ τῇ κολοκύνθῃ?”

God said before Jonah, “If [*only*] *you* had grieved vehemently over the plant...?”

Text: Identical in difficulties with 4:4.

Analysis: In verse 4:4 the Lord speaks; here God speaks: indicating that the Lord and God are identical: Jonah can hardly be interested in the

minutia concerning E and J. Here also, the words of verse 4:4 are repeated in identical form: this time God gets one more phrase into the sentence before Jonah interrupts. The second object lesson, the plant is brought into play. Again, God questions the reality of the intensity of Jonah's grief or anger. Verses 4:4 and 4:9 frame Jonah's words to emphasize the point. The Lord's question and Jonah's "death wish" form a sort of fugal interplay.

4.6. Chapter 4:9b

καὶ εἶπε, “σφόδρα λελύπημαι ἐγὼ ἕως θανάτου.”

[*Jonah*] replied, *I* have grieved vehemently, to the point of death!”

Text: MT has goodness of anger, rather than vehemence of grief. Again, anger is a close emotion, missing the point: God is not angry.

Analysis: If Jonah really is angry, then God is tempering Jonah's anger to a more appropriate and reasonable emotion. Jonah has lost focus on the main point that souls are more important than anything else; he has transferred that focus to a plant. Jonah irrationally insists that his grief is sincere, and supported by earnest effort. Jonah is near the breaking point; he is at the end of his rope. He repeats the "death wish" a third time.

4.7. Chapter 4:10-11

4:10 καὶ εἶπε Κύριος, “σὺ ἐφείσω ὑπὲρ τῆς κολοκύνθης, ὑπὲρ ἧς οὐκ ἐκακοπάθησας ἐπ’ αὐτήν οὐδὲ ἐξέθρεψας αὐτήν, ἢ ἐγενήθη ὑπὸ νύκτα καὶ ὑπὸ νύκτα ἀπόλετο. ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ φείσομαι ὑπὲρ Νινευῆ τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, ἐν ἧ κατοικοῦσι πλείους ἢ δώδεκα μυριάδες ἀνθρώπων, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν δεξιὰν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀριστερὰν αὐτῶν, καὶ κτήνη πολλά.”

The Lord said, “You concerned yourself for the plant, over which you did not toil, neither nurtured, which was presented before night. Before night it was destroyed. Now, should *I* not concern Myself over Nineveh, the great city in which more than one hundred twenty thousand children dwell, none of whom know their right from their left, as well as many animals?”

Text: No variation was observed.¹⁸

Analysis: The Lord confronts Jonah with reality. Jonah's grief over the plant is not sincere; nor is it supported by earnest effort on Jonah's part. Jonah did nothing for the conversion of Nineveh: it was handed to him, just as the plant's growth was handed to him. Even his sincere and effort-filled ministry among the Israelites was really lacking in comparison to the Lord's efforts on behalf of fallen mankind. The wideness of the Lord's mercy is now seen, especially for both the Ninevites and for Jonah.

IV. Conclusions

The narrative ends abruptly, leaving us hanging in midair. Our feet are left hanging helplessly, without any support. Reality, has struck us as well. We are so like Jonah. We want to play God with plants. We are lucky to keep focus for a few minutes. Eventually, God imparts more wisdom as we are forced to search the whole record from beginning to end, again, and again, and again. We cry out for the Spirit's instruction. Eventually the warp and woof of the intricate message become clearer. God does not give up on anybody. Jonah's thank offering, interweaved together with testimonies of sailors and Ninevites forms a tight, undeniable picture that this is historic reality. The fact that this document made it into the Oracle to be archived with Torah, the Psalms, and other Prophets is certification of this vivid reality.

Let gainsayers show exactly how the plight and fidelity of the sailors came to be known: would they claim that someone just made up a fanciful story, which was added to the Oracle record with a status very similar to Torah; yet the priests and rabbis never one tested its veracity? More to the point, we are led to believe that the Sh^okinah did not incinerate false documents on the spot, putting to death also, those wicked perpetrators who would attempt such a heinous act.

Let gainsayers explain why Jonah would publicly confess such humiliating things about himself.

Let gainsayers tell us how Jonah made it through such ordeals, to make it back to Jerusalem, a changed man, in his right mind, to compose and publish such a document. There is only one explanation: it's all true....

1

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/58/Nineveh_map_city_walls_%26_gates.JPG/220px-Nineveh_map_city_walls_%26_gates.JPG

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/maps/ancientmap13.jpg>

<https://encrypted->

[tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTsoLFJ42m17GAo7m1W1j0ZDI9xN80FnigjOdF4K-VDPQ0-6znidQ](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTsoLFJ42m17GAo7m1W1j0ZDI9xN80FnigjOdF4K-VDPQ0-6znidQ)

https://www.google.com/search?q=ruins+of+Nineveh&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS691US691&espv=2&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwif1OjLwtbSAhWMU7wKHUD7CkUQsAQILg&biw=1097&bih=543

² The Greek word, λέγων, frequently introduces a direct quotation, which seems to be the case here. Since the English construct, , “, suffices, it seems redundant to translate λέγων literally in this place. The fact that God talks to the Prophets comes as no real surprise.

³ Had this only occurred in this verse, we could not make the point. Frequently in the Old Testament the MT avoids an accurate name, largely because of the disgrace and infamy of this people. In 800 they are either Israelites or Judeans, or they belong to a specific tribe. By 500, they have lost their real connection to Moses, they have become merely Jews, they scramble to recover their holy religion from the ashes of their own idolatry. This evasion of identity is frequently an indication of shame on the part of the Masorettes.

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/bible-versions-and-translations/errors-in-the-masorettes-original-hebrew-manuscripts-of-the-bible/>

⁴ Joshua 7

⁵ Each repetition has multiplied their fears exponentially. Yet now their prayers are multiplied.

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon>

⁷ Davidson, page 146. See also Dagon

⁸ Please note that the dominant illustration featured on the right side of the page is not a real artifact; it is not even a sketch of an actual artifact; rather it is a “proposed representation”: in other words, it is the mythological product of some archaeologist’s fertile imagination, who then convinced a sketch artist to make the drawing. What bas-relief? Where is it archived? This illustration could not be verified from ANEP, page 79, plate 253, or page 81, plate 262. Nor could it be found among Layard’s biographical materials. Nor is it commonly published among the British Museums ample archives.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austen_Henry_Layard

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_sculpture

The article goes on to note that this idea is the product of 19th and 20th century scholarship. A brief glance at the names of the supporters of such a hypothesis should stop us dead in our linguistic and theological tracks. We're with H. Schmökel (1928) on this one.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon#Fish-god_tradition

⁹ Taylor, pages 329, and 343. We believe that both κήτει and κήτους derive from the verb, κτίζω, the common Greek word for create. AGL, page 242. If the LXX rabbis wanted to say fish, they would have used some form of ἰχθύς; had they wanted to say animal, they would have used ζῷον.

¹⁰ It is difficult to see how seaweed survives the digestive juices of any animal?

¹¹ This expression, τῷ Θεῷ, in the dative is only found here and in 3:5.

¹² The motif consists of three days each: in the sea, across Nineveh, until destruction. If the vorlage actually reads 40, there is no motif base on three.

¹³ We need to remember that the Masoretes, in part, are struggling to stop the attrition of Jews and proselytes to Christianity. This competition was so fierce it embraced murder, evangelism battles for supremacy in whole nations, and even war.

¹⁴ Nitpickers and gainsayers will find pharisaical fault with this, because Ninevite worship is necessarily less than perfect. We do well to remember Acts 15:5-34, especially verse 29, which says, "Be made well." Gentile converts, especially, are not tied to restrictions that are not even required of Jews, or possible for them. The expression, "Be made well," can only be the benediction to the Gentiles to be at peace in their newfound freedom and in the love of God. In principle, we can only see God looking for genuine and sincere repentance; not for perfection of form in Nineveh.

¹⁵ The supposition that this contradicts Numbers 23:19, where God does not repent or change, is made by scholars with harder hearts and lesser understanding than even Jonah has. Nothing changed in God's character here. Only Satan and men are quick and harsh in judgment, always seeking to punish and destroy. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (See Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11), and even punishes in sorrow and grief. This is perfectly consistent with the message of the book. Those that suppose otherwise have missed the whole point.

¹⁶ Translators importation of ideas of justice or righteousness are lexically unwarranted.

¹⁷ Matthew 13:31; 17:20; Mark 4:31; Luke 13:19; 17:6

¹⁸ By now the reader has realized that most textual observations work equally in both directions. Additionally, there are very few differences that cannot be understood within the range of nuance in the translated words, or by the existence of idiomatic expression. To draw the points more sharply, we would need to study every Greek and Hebrew word, in order to find explicit linguistic connections: because language is so flexible by nature, we expect any such attempt to fail. We are unable to draw any other conclusion than that LXX appears to be a very literal rendering of the Hebrew vorlage. Differences we have found are relatively minor, many of them due more to our English rendering.

Our conclusion that LXX is a better expression of the underlying Hebrew vorlage rests on the fact that LXX is at least eight centuries older than MT. Moreover, the rabbis responsible for the LXX family of translated manuscripts, were better equipped linguistically to handle the subtle nuances of both Greek and Hebrew than any of the Masoretes, or any of us today: they were unentangled with the influences of modern Europe. After 200 BC, Hebrew becomes a dead language: the only ones really handling Hebrew from that point on, are the scribes of the Pharisees, and the scribes of the Sadducees. The Masoretes are struggling to patch together the little remaining manuscript evidence they have; even so, Kabbalah and other mystical influences are already being felt in Masoretic studies as these medieval scholars struggle to recover the oral Torah. Note that they were not simply concerned with finding the Old Testament autographs and exegeting them.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah>

<http://www.jewfaq.org/sages.htm>

<https://torahmitzion.org/learn/the-great-debate-between-the-rambam-and-ramban-concerning-sacrifices/>

<http://traditionarchive.org/news/originals/Volume%2033/No.%203/The%20Deeper%20Conflict.pdf>

Maimonides, the Great Eagle, or the Rambam:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maimonides>

Nachmanides, or the Ramban: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nachmanides>

¹⁹ If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use.