

THE BOOK OF JONAH:

A (SOMEWHAT) WOODEN TRANSLATION:¹

Chapter 3:

¹ And the word of YHWH came to Jonah a second time, saying, ² “Arise! Go to Ninevah, the great city, and call out to her the proclamation which I am *about to*² speak to you. ³ And Jonah arose and he went according to the word of YHWH.

As for Ninevah, it was a great city to YHWH,³ a journey of three days.⁴ ⁴ And Jonah began to enter into the city, a journey of one day, and he called out and said, “Yet forty days, and Ninevah will be overturned!”

⁵ And the people of Ninevah believed in God, and called a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. ⁶ And the word reached the king of Ninevah, and he arose from his throne, and he removed his mantle from upon him, and he covered himself *with* sackcloth and he sat on ashes. ⁷ And he made a proclamation in Ninevah—a *proclamation* from the king and his great ones—saying, “Let neither man, nor beast, nor flock taste anything. Let them not feed, or drink. ⁸ But let man and beast be covered *with* sackcloth and let them call out to God mightily, and let *each* man turn from his evil ways, and the violence in their palms.⁵ ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent, and turn from his burning anger, and we may not perish.”

¹⁰ And God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil ways. And God relented from the disaster *of* which he had spoken to do to them, and he did not do *it*.

¹ This translation is aimed at trying to communicate as much of the Hebrew syntax as possible in the English, thus it is mostly wooden. Yet, when woodenness fails to convey Hebrew word play, and other literary devices, it will render words/phrases not so woodenly.

² Words in *italics* were supplied by the translator (like the NASB).

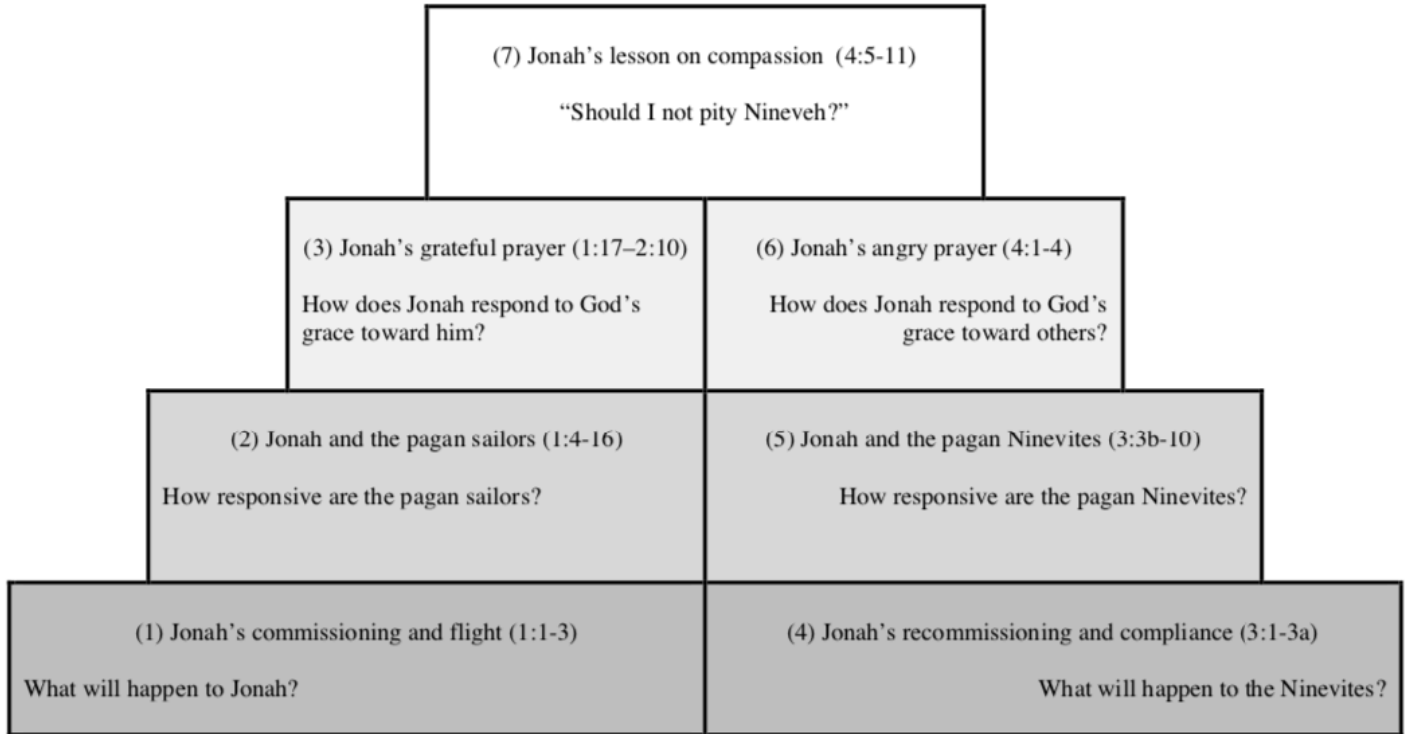
³ That is, *belonging to*. Could also be, *an exceedingly great city*.

⁴ That is, *a three-day visit (city)*.

⁵ That is, *their hands*.

THE BOOK OF JONAH:

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF JONAH:⁶



A TALE OF TWO COMMISSIONS:

Chapter 1

¹ Now the word of YHWH came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise! Go to Ninevah, the great city, and call out against her, for their evil has come up before me." ³ And Jonah arose in order to flee toward Tarshish from the presence of YHWH.

Chapter 3

¹ And the word of YHWH came to Jonah a second time, saying, ² "Arise! Go to Ninevah, the great city, and call out to her the proclamation which I am *about to* speak to you. ³ And Jonah arose and he went according to the word of YHWH.

Similarities:

Differences:

⁶ This chart was created by Dr. W. Brian Aucker for the *ESV Study Bible*, 1686.

THE BOOK OF JONAH:

OCCURENCES OF THE KEYWORD (RA'AH) “EVIL” / “DISASTER” / “DISTRESS”⁷

Jonah 1:2	YHWH confronts Jonah with the evil of the city Ninevah.
Jonah 1:7	The sailors decide to cast lots to find the source of the disaster they experience.
Jonah 1:8	The sailors confront Jonah seeking out why disaster has come upon them.
Jonah 3:8	The Ninevite king calls for the inhabitants of the city to turn from evil .
Jonah 3:10	God sees the city turn from evil and he relents from the disaster he was sending.
Jonah 4:1	God’s merciful response to Ninevah distresses Jonah a great distress .
Jonah 4:2	Jonah’s anger arises from the fact that God relents from disaster .
Jonah 4:6	YHWH appoints a plant to save Jonah from his distress (“discomfort”).

CONTINGENT PROPHECY⁸ IN JONAH:

Compare:

—Jonah 3:9-10

“Who knows? God may **turn** and **relent**, and **turn** from his burning anger, and we may not perish.” And God saw their deeds, that they **turned** from their **evil** ways. And God **relented** from the **disaster** of which he had spoken to do to them, and he did not do *it*.

—Jeremiah 18:7-10

If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, **turns** from its **evil**, I will **relent** of the **disaster** that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does **evil** in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will **relent** of the good that I had intended to do to it.

⁷ This chart comes from Dr. W. Brian Aucker, “Occurences of *Ra’ah* in Jonah” (lecture notes: Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 1/10/20). Only minor adaptations have been made for the sake of its cohering with my translation.

⁸ If you’re interested in this topic, see <https://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vs/HGP/ln/7>.

THE BOOK OF JONAH:

CONTINGENT PROPHECY ELSEWHERE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:⁹

Prediction (God Speaks Judgment)	Contingency (People Repent)	Fulfillment (God Relents)
Jonah 3:4	Jonah 3:7-9	Jonah 3:10
Judges 10:9-14	Judges 10:15-16a	Judges 10:16b; 11:32-33
1 Kings 21:17-28	1 Kings 21:29a	1 Kings 21:29b
2 Kings 20:1	2 Kings 20:2-3	2 Kings 20:20:4-6
2 Chronicles 12:5	2 Chronicles 12:6	2 Chronicles 12:7-8
Jeremiah 26:17-18	Jeremiah 26:19a	Jeremiah 29:19b

Summary:

“Is God capricious? Indecisive? Willy-nilly? Certainly not. It seems we have trouble with a passage like this because we don’t understand the nature (or at least one aspect of the nature) of biblical prophecy. God’s purpose in speaking judgment was not primarily to IN-form His people, but to RE-form them. Prophetic judgment declarations are often threats to the immediate audience to provoke repentance (though it seems that these “threats” are often...fulfilled in later unrepentant generations).”¹⁰

⁹ This chart comes from a friend and colleague, Cary Smith (ThM, Covenant Seminary, 2019), who gave me permission to use it. Cary made this chart for a handout he created when he taught a Sunday school class on Jonah several years ago.

¹⁰ The quote is also from Cary Smith from the aforementioned handout.