

# Jonah

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Chagall – The Dove of Peace

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## Revisiting Jonah

Jonah is *a tale*. It is both a funny tale and a serious tale.

Jonah is *a prophet*. He tells the truth about himself. This truth is unpleasant. He stands in the tale for those who know the merciful loving-kindness of God. This is not unpleasant. There are aspects of it that inspire fear, the sort of fear that is the beginning of wisdom. Jonah knows, but he does not want such a gift for others. In particular he does not want such a gift for his arch-enemies, the people of Nineveh.

Jonah is *a sign*. I remember the stop sign that I first was taught by my mother many years ago, in French and in English: *arrêt, stop*. Jonah is a more complex sign than this one. It is a sign with many sides. We can turn it again and again, and a new aspect will be shown to us. According to Jesus, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, it is *the only sign to be given to an evil generation* (Matthew 12:39-41, 16:4, Luke 11:29-32).

Jonah is *a work of art* originally written and performed in the Hebrew language. This work of art was designed for the people of Israel by a writer who knew the human heart and its fury against the work of creation and redemption as accomplished by יהוה, the God of Israel, who created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 2:4).

יהוה, yod-heh-vav-heh are the four Hebrew letters known as the tetragrammaton (the four letters). It was perhaps pronounced e-a-oo-ae, a sequence of vowel sounds. This name is a proper name, revealed to Moses as recorded in the story of the burning bush (Exodus 2). The name is not normally spoken. Rather, when reading, the reader will substitute HaShem (Hebrew for *the name*) or Adonai (Hebrew for my Lord or the Lord).

A serious and prophetic tale for a generation that knows fury should be told with as little comment as possible. I will tell you this tale in this little book, pointing out how carefully it is structured. In particular there are 8 words that help the story-teller remember and perform the story. I have translated the tale from the Hebrew, keeping the shape of all the repeating words in the original as closely as I dared so that you could see the deeper patterns of word roots that also help the performer to craft the story and move the listener away from the fury that is shared

by all peoples and all generations of our world. Here are the 8 words. Note that the Hebrew letters are read from right to left.

1. Descent, the verb in Hebrew is *yered* ירד (yod-resch-daleth).
2. Dice, the noun is *guralot* גורלות (gimel-vav-resch-lamed-vav-taf), a plural.
3. The Mortals, the noun is plural and definite, *ha-anashim*, האנשים (heh-aleph-nun-shin-yod-mem).

Hebrew words are like English words but all stuck together – so *ha-anash-im* is the-mortal-s. The heh represents the definite ‘the’, and the yod-mem represents the plural. Dice, also plural, has its plural represented by vav-taf, the feminine form of plural.

4. Fish, not whale, but fish, the noun is singular, *dag*, דג (daleth-gimel).
5. Day, the noun is in the plural twice and singular once, *yom*, יום (you name the letters).
6. Turn, the verb is *shuv* (sounds like v but the last letter is a beth) שוב.
7. Fury, the verb is furious, *xarah* חרה (xeth-resch-heh), x represents a deep guttural sound.
8. Tender Plant, or gourd, *qiqayon* קיקיון (qof-yod-qof-yod-vav-nun).

Jonah also is *a dove*. The end of the story should be peace rather than fury.

## The Descent

Jonah, like the dew of Hermon, and the precious oil of Psalm 133, *descends* as he attempts to escape from יהוה (shades of Psalm 139 too.) Jonah's descent is not complete till chapter 2, when he descends to the roots of the hills, but all the other occurrences of *descending* are in chapter 1:1-5.

- וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה 1.1 and the word of יהוה! happened  
אֶל יוֹנָה בֶן אַמִּיטַי to Jonah child of Amittai  
לֵאמֹר saying
- קוּם לֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֶה 1.2 Rise - walk to Nineveh  
הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה the great city  
וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ and call out against her  
כִּי עָלְתָה רָעַתְם לְפָנַי for their evil has ascended in my face
- וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה לְבָרֹחַ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה 1.3 but Jonah rose and ran away to Tarshish  
מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה! away from the face of יהוה!  
וַיֵּרַד יָפוֹ and he descended to Joppa  
וַיִּמְצָא אֲנִיָּה and found a ship  
בָּאָה תַּרְשִׁישׁ going to Tarshish  
וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ and he paid the fare  
וַיֵּרַד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם and descended into her to go with them  
תַּרְשִׁישָׁה מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה! to Tarshish away from the face of יהוה!
- וַיַּהַר יְהוָה הַטִּיל 1.4 but יהוה! hurled  
רוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה אֶל הַיָּם a great wind onto the sea  
וַיְהִי סֶעַר גְּדוֹל בַּיָּם and a great tempest happened on the sea  
וְהָאֲנִיָּה and the ship,  
חֹשְׁבָה לְהִשָּׁבֵר she was reckoning she was a wreck
- וַיִּירָאוּ הַמַּלְחִים 1.5 And the salt-sea-farers feared  
וַיִּזְעְקוּ אִישׁ אֶל אֱלֹהָיו and they cried each to his God  
וַיִּטְלוּ אֶת הַכֵּלִים and they hurled their cargo  
אֲשֶׁר בָּאֲנִיָּה אֶל הַיָּם that was in the ship onto the sea  
לְהַקֵּל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם lightening themselves of trifles  
וַיּוֹנֶה יָרַד אֶל יַרְכְּתֵי but Jonah had descended into the  
הַסְּפִינָה recesses below decks  
וַיִּשְׁכַּב יָרַד and he was laid out unconscious

These first few verses introduce the characters, Jonah, יהוה, *the ship*, (yes she's a character in the story), and *the salt-sea-farers* (a word used only once in the story, carefully separating this 'character' from *the mortals* of verses 10-16). They are the same group of people but their designation has changed. They are known as mortals rather than by their line of work. Is it because they have become aware of יהוה?

**Selected recurring words in relative order (Jonah 1:1 to 5)**

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Vs	Root
ויהי and happened	█												1	היה
יהוה יהוה		█											1	יהוה
יונה Jonah			█										1	יונה
קום rise				█									2	קום
הגדולה that great					█								2	גדל
לפני in my face						█							2	פנה
ויקם but rose							█						3	קום
יונה Jonah				█									3	יונה
תרשישה to Tarshish								█					3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of									█				3	פנה
יהוה יהוה													3	יהוה
וירד and he descended													3	ירד
אניה a ship													3	אניה
בא going to													3	בוא
תרשיש Tarshish													3	תרשש
וירד and descended													3	ירד
לבוא to go													3	בוא
תרשישה to Tarshish													3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of													3	פנה
יהוה יהוה													3	יהוה
יהוה but יהוה													4	יהוה
הטיל hurled													4	טול
גדולה great													4	גדל
ויהי and happened													4	היה
גדול great													4	גדל
בים on the sea													4	ים
והאניה and the ship													4	אניה
ויטלו and they hurled													5	טול
באניה was in the ship													5	אניה
הים the sea													5	ים
ויונה but Jonah													5	יונה
ירד had descended													5	ירד

The tables of recurring roots help see the shapes and verbal structures of the story. Note the heading of each column. *Word and gloss* tell you the Hebrew word and how it was translated. *The numbered columns* tell you how many distinct roots repeat in the section and the order in the Hebrew that they appear in. The *Vs* column is the verse. The *Root* column contains the root of the word. A Hebrew word is composed of prefixes, suffixes and a root, or it might be a combination of a

preposition and a pronoun alone.

Here are some things you can see from these tables.

1. Check to see if all verses are present. In this table, all of verses 1 to 5 are present. But see the table for The Fish where a verse is

missing. A missing verse number shows that the words of the verse occur only once in the story segment. This may be a central message or the moral of the tale.

2. Check to see what the last recurring word is in the passage. This may form a focal point for the text. Here it is under column 12, *the sea*.
3. When you see a shape like an arrowhead, it indicates that a set of words is used first in sequence then in reverse. If you drew circles or arcs joining these words to each other in the text, you would see they are concentric. If you look at what these circles surround, you may find a particular theme or focus.
4. When you see a vertical line of recurring words in the table, this indicates a word that recurs frequently. This may indicate a theme for the passage. In this table, *great* appears three times. It will show up in other tables in the story. In this particular section, 6 words are used exactly 3 times and 5 words are used exactly twice. יהוה is used 4 times.
5. When you see a shape like a parallel line, it indicates that words have been used in sequence. See the table for verse 3 below. If you drew circles joining the words in the text, they would intersect.

6. Check the opening and closing words. These may be acting as a frame for the section. We could say that *Jonah* frames this section.

Consider verse 3 alone as portrayed in the table at the right. In this verse, *Tarshish* is the middle. A pair of words in sequence, *he descended* –

*going to* – *and descended* -- *to go*, surrounds it. *Tarshish* – *away from the face of* -- *יהוה* surround the whole verse.

Word and gloss	1	2	3	4	5	Vs	Root
תרשישה to Tarshish						3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of						3	פנה
יהוה יהוה						3	יהוה
וירד and he descended						3	ירד
באה going to						3	בוא
תרשיש Tarshish						3	תרשש
וירד and descended						3	ירד
לבוא to go						3	בוא
תרשישה to Tarshish						3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of						3	פנה
יהוה יהוה						3	יהוה

Now look at verse 3 with verses 1 and 2. Then it is seen that a pair of the words in sequence that frame verse 3 *away from the face of* -- יהוה is the reverse of the same pair of words in verses 1 and 2 where the *face or presence* is concerned with the evil of Nineveh. There is acknowledgement from יהוה that Nineveh is a problem.

Word and gloss	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vs	Root
יהוה יהוה	■							1	יהוה
יונה Jonah		■						1	יונה
קום rise			■					2	קום
לפני in my face				■				2	פנה
ויקם but rose			■					3	קום
יונה Jonah		■						3	יונה
תרשישה to Tarshish				■				3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of				■				3	פנה
יהוה יהוה	■							3	יהוה
וירד and he descended						■		3	ירד
באה going to							■	3	בוא
תרשיש Tarshish				■				3	תרשש
וירד and descended						■		3	ירד
לבוא to go							■	3	בוא
תרשישה to Tarshish				■				3	תרשש
מלפני away from the face of				■				3	פנה
יהוה יהוה	■							3	יהוה

## The Dice

1.6 וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו רֵב הַחֲבֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה לְּךָ נִרְדָּם קוּם קְרָא אֶל אֱלֹהֶיךָ אולי יתעשת האלהים לנו ולא נאבד  
 1.6 so the pilot approached him and said to him what's with you - unconscious! Rise! Call out to your God maybe this God will do something for us and we will not perish

1.7 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ לֹכּוּ וְנִפְּלָה גוּרְלוֹת וְנִדְעָה בְּשִׁלְמֵי הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ גוּרְלוֹת וַיִּפֹּל הַגּוּרָל עַל יוֹנָה  
 1.7 and they said, each to his companion look here, let's let the dice fall to know from whom this evil is ours and they let the dice fall and the dice fell to Jonah



<p>וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו 1.8 הַגִּידָה נָא לָנוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר לָמִי הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ מֵה מְלֹאכְתְּךָ וּמֵאֵינן תָּבוֹא מֵה אֶרֶץ וְאֵי מִזֶּה עַם אָתָּה</p>	<p>and they said to him, make it clear to us, please, why is it that this evil is ours? what line of work are you in? and where are you from? what part of earth? and from this people - who are you?</p>
<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם 1.9 עִבְרִי אֲנִי וְאֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲנִי יָרָא אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת הַיַּבְשָׁה</p>	<p>and he said to them Hebrew I am and יהוה the God of the heavens I, I fear who made the sea and the dry land</p>

Verses 6 to 9 are a conversation between the seafarers and the prophet. It is a conversation about evil using dice as a decision making tool.

The seafarers are introduced to יהוה, recalling Psalm 107 and the five psalms of Book 5 that speak of יהוה as *the maker of heaven and earth*. In this case, יהוה is the maker of specifically *the sea*, the source of their distress, and *dry land*, the desirable refuge from the tempest.

Jonah can scarcely be justified by this unintended good side effect of his initial disobedience.

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Vs	Root
וַיֹּאמֶר and said										6	אמר
מֵה what's										6	מה
יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ your God										6	אלוה
לָנוּ for us										6	לנו
וַיֹּאמְרוּ and they said										7	אמר
הַנְפִילֵה let's throw										7	נפל
הַגּוּרִלֹת the dice										7	גורל
הָרָעָה evil										7	רע
הַזֹּאת this										7	זאת
לָנוּ is ours										7	לנו
וַיִּפְלוּ and they threw										7	נפל
הַגּוּרִלֹת the dice										7	גורל
וַיִּפֹּל and pointed										7	נפל
הַגּוּרִל the dice										7	גורל
וַיֹּאמְרוּ and they said										8	אמר
לָנוּ to us										8	לנו
בְּאֲשֶׁר that										8	אשר
הָרָעָה evil										8	רע
הַזֹּאת this										8	זאת
לָנוּ is ours										8	לנו
מֵה what										8	מה
מֵה what										8	מה
וַיֹּאמֶר and he said										9	אמר
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי the God of										9	אלוה
אֲשֶׁר who										9	אשר

## The Mortals

- 1.10 and the mortals feared, a great fear,  
and they said to him  
what is this you have done?  
for the mortals knew  
that from the face of יהוה  
he had run away  
for he had made it clear to them
- 1.11 and they said to him  
what will we do to you  
that the sea may be quieted for us  
for the sea worked up a tempest
- 1.12 and he said to them  
lift me up and hurl me onto the sea  
and the sea will be quieted for you  
for I, I know that it is from me that  
this great tempest is upon you
- 1.13 But the mortals dug hard to turn to the  
dry land  
but they could not  
for the sea worked up a tempest  
against them
- 1.14 so they called out to יהוה and said  
we beseech you יהוה!  
please, let us not perish  
in the being of this man  
and do not make us pay  
for innocent blood  
for you יהוה!  
have done according to what you  
wanted
- 1.15 and they lifted up Jonah  
and they hurled him onto the sea  
and the sea stood back from his rage

1.16 and the mortals feared  
 וַיִּירָאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
 וַיִּרְאוּ גְדוּלָה אֶת יְהוָה  
 וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח לַיהוָה  
 וַיִּדְרוּ נְדָרִים

and the mortals feared  
 יְהוָה, a great fear  
 and they offered an offering to יְהוָה  
 and they vowed vows

Word and gloss	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vs	Root
וייראו and feared	■							10	ירא
האנשים the mortals		■						10	אנוש
יראה a fear	■							10	ירא
גדולה great			■					10	גדל
כי for				■				10	כי
האנשים the mortals		■						10	אנוש
כי that				■				10	כי
יהוה יהוה					■			10	יהוה
כי for				■				10	כי
וייראו and feared	■							16	ירא
האנשים the mortals		■						16	אנוש
יראה a fear	■							16	ירא
גדולה great			■					16	גדל
יהוה יהוה					■			16	יהוה
ויזבחו and they offered						■		16	זבח
זבח an offering						■		16	זבח
יהוה to יהוה					■			16	יהוה
וידרו and they vowed							■	16	נדר
נדריים vows							■	16	נדר

There are 18 recurring roots in these 6 verses. Because prose verses are longer than poetry, the table is too big to see on one page, so I have divided it in two pieces. The overall frame for the chapter is *fear – mortals – fear – great*. The frame is strengthened by the double surrounding *fear*. Note verses 10 and 16 alone. It is therefore one section.

Word and gloss	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Vs	Root
ויאמרו and they said	■											11	אמר
נעשה will we do			■									11	עשה
וישתק that may be quieted				■								11	שתק
הים the sea					■							11	ים
כי for						■						11	כי
הים the sea					■							11	ים
הולך worked up							■					11	הלך
וסער a tempest								■				11	סער
ויאמר and he said	■											12	אמר
עשאו lift me up									■			12	נשא
והטילני and hurl me										■		12	טול
הים the sea					■							12	ים
וישתק and will be quieted				■								12	שתק
הים the sea					■							12	ים
כי for						■						12	כי
כי that						■						12	כי
והסער that tempest								■				12	סער
הזה this										■		12	זה
כי for							■					13	כי
הים the sea					■							13	ים
הולך worked up							■					13	הלך
וסער a tempest								■				13	סער
יהוה יהוה											■	14	יהוה
ויאמרו and said	■											14	אמר
יהוה יהוה											■	14	יהוה
הזה this										■		14	זה
כי for							■					14	כי
יהוה יהוה											■	14	יהוה
עשית you have done			■									14	עשה
ועשאו and they lifted up									■			15	נשא
ויטלו and they hurled him										■		15	טול
הים the sea						■						15	ים
הים the sea						■						15	ים

These five verses contain an explicit sequence: *said -- quieted-- sea -- for -- worked up -- tempest -- lift up -- hurl -- sea*. As with many instructions, when they are carried out, the text is repeated exactly so that the lesson may be reinforced.

Note the recurrence of *hurl* from section 1. יהוה had *hurled the wind*, and the seafarers had *hurled cargo*. Now Jonah is to be *hurled* onto the sea to calm the tempest. Note also the sequence of recurring roots indicating actions of the mortals.

The mortals (no longer just seafarers) take several actions, of which four are visible as recurring words that you can see in the table: they *lift up* and *hurl* Jonah into the sea as he had instructed them, then of their own accord, they *offer an offering*, and they *vow vows*.

## The Fish

Chapter 2 is a psalm. It is good to read the psalms. The word which I have glossed as *brought up* is the same word used in chapter 1 for the *ascending* of the evil of Nineveh. I am sure this is not an accident. This word is also used for *whole burnt offerings* and it has the same letters as *leaf*. The ascension is the visible manifestation of the completion of the offering. In this case יהוה is the agent who effects the completion of the offering. It occurs once in each of chapters 1 and 2 but we will see it again in this story (4:6-7).

וַיִּמַן יְהוָה דָּג גָּדוֹל לְבָלַע אֶת יוֹנָה וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמַעֵי הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלוֹת	2.1 And יהוה appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah and it happened Jonah was in the innards of the fish three days and three nights
וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל יוֹנָה אֶל יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו מִמַּעֵי הַדָּגָה	2.2 and Jonah prayed to יהוה his God from the innards of the fish <sup>1</sup>
וַיֹּאמֶר קָרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִּי אֶל יְהוָה וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל שָׁוַעַתִּי שָׁמַעַתְּ קוֹלִי	2.3 and he said I called out from my trouble to יהוה and he answered me from the belly of the grave <sup>2</sup> I cried you heard my voice

- 2.4 and you cast me from the depth  
 into the heart of the seas  
 and torrent surrounded me  
 All your breakers and your waves  
 have passed over me<sup>3</sup>
- 2.5 and I, I said  
 I am driven out from before your eyes<sup>4</sup>  
 surely I will again be attentive  
 in your holy temple
- 2.6 they enveloped me  
 waters - ever - self  
 abyss surrounding me  
 reed wrapped round my head<sup>5</sup>
- 2.7 to the roots of the hills  
 I descended  
 the earth with her bars about me  
 forever  
 but you brought up  
 my life from destruction  
 יהוה! my God
- 2.8 when I in myself was disabled  
 I remembered יהוה!  
 and my prayer came to you  
 in your holy temple
- 2.9 those who keep futile emptiness  
 abandon their kindness<sup>6</sup>
- 2.10 so I in a voice of thanksgiving will offer  
 you  
 what I have vowed to recompense  
 salvation to יהוה! belongs o
- 2.11 and יהוה! spoke to the fish  
 and it vomited Jonah onto the dry land  
 פ פ

1 Fish is both masculine and here feminine. 2 Jonah has died. 3 Psalm 42:8b. 4 As with all psalms, there is a space where the poet realizes that things have changed. In this psalm

there are two such gaps that move from death to life. 5 the keyword structure surrounds the middle of this verse. 6 No participation in the recurrence pattern of this psalm

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	Vs	Root
יהוה יהוה	■														1	יהוה
דג a fish		■													1	דג
יונה Jonah			■												1	יונה
יונה Jonah			■												1	יונה
במעיו was in the innards of				■											1	מעיה
הדג the fish		■													1	דג
שלושה three				■											1	שלוש
ושלושה and three				■											1	שלוש
ותפלל and prayed					■										2	פלל
יונה Jonah			■												2	יונה
יהוה יהוה	■														2	יהוה
אלהיו his God							■								2	אלוה
ממעיו from the innards of				■											2	מעיה
הדגה the fish		■													2	דג
ויאמר and he said								■							3	אמר
יהוה יהוה	■														3	יהוה
קולי my voice								■							3	קול
יסבבני surrounded me									■						4	סבב
ואני and I											■				5	אני
אמרתי I said								■							5	אמר
היכל temple												■			5	היכל
קדשך your holy													■		5	קדש
נפשי self														■	6	נפש
יסבבני surrounding me									■						6	סבב
יהוה יהוה	■														7	יהוה
אלהי my God							■								7	אלוה
נפשי I														■	8	נפש
יהוה יהוה	■														8	יהוה
תפלתי my prayer					■										8	פלל
היכל temple													■		8	היכל
קדשך your holy														■	8	קדש
ואני so I												■			10	אני
בקולי in a voice of								■							10	קול
ליהוה to belongs	■														10	יהוה
ויאמר and spoke								■							11	אמר
יהוה יהוה	■														11	יהוה
לדג to the fish		■													11	דג
יונה Jonah			■												11	יונה

The focus of the chapter is on Jonah's whole self, his *nephesh*. The frame for the section is threefold as can be seen in the table. One verse (see which is missing from the table) has words that do not recur. In fact four of the five words in the verse are unique in the whole book of Jonah. The fifth recurs in chapter 4, showing this story to be like Psalm 86, another meditation on Exodus 34:8.

## The Day

If you look in the table of recurring roots, you will see a name for this section that is more specific than what I had initially, 'The Call'. The first two verses recapitulate the opening of the story (with a little variation, showing that Nineveh is like the Sea-farers and has changed since chapter 1). You might say that יהוה has already prepared them for Jonah's 'call'. So you will note the recurrence of *mortal* applied to the Ninevites. If I had used *men*, you might not have noticed. But the unique word in this section is *Day*. Day should therefore be its title.

3.1	וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה אֶל יוֹנָה שֵׁנִית לְאֹמֶר	and the word of יהוה happened to Jonah again saying
3.2	קוּם לֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֶה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה	Rise, walk to Nineveh the great city
	וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ אֶת הַקְּרִיאָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי דֹבֵר אֵלֶיךָ	and call out to her the call that I was speaking to you
3.3	וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֶה כְּדַבַּר יְהוָה וַיְהִי נִינְוֶה הַיְּתֵה עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לְאֱלֹהִים מֵהֶלֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים	and Jonah rose and walked to Nineveh according to the word of יהוה! Now Nineveh happened to be a great city belonging to God a walk of three days
3.4	וַיַּחַל יוֹנָה לְבוֹא בְּעִיר מֵהֶלֶךְ יוֹם אֶחָד וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וַיִּנְוֶה נִהְפָּכֶת	and Jonah let himself come into the city one day's walk <sup>1</sup> and he called out and he said yet forty days and Nineveh will be changed
3.5	וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ אַנְשֵׁי נִינְוֶה בְּאֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרְאוּ צוּם וַיִּלְבְּשׁוּ שַׁקִּים מִגְּדוֹלָם וְעַד קְטַנָּם	and the mortals of Nineveh believed in God and they called out for a fast and they put on sackcloth from the greatest of them and to the least of them

<sup>1</sup> Jonah only gets part way into Nineveh, the great city that belongs to God. One day in was enough. Also compare psalm 34 and the frame of 'taste / madness'. Jonah 3:1-5 A three days walk. Jerusalem today is a 12 day city as a minimum, if you want to see even a small part of it. Nineveh must have been quite the tourist town of its day.

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	Vs	Root
ויהי and happened	█														1	היה
דבר the word of		█													1	דבר
יהוה יהוה			█												1	יהוה
יונה Jonah				█											1	יונה
לאמר saying					█										1	אמר
קום rise						█									2	קום
ילך walk							█								2	ילך
נינוה Nineveh								█							2	נינוה
העיר the city									█						2	עיר
הגדולה great										█					2	גדל
ווקרא and call out											█				2	קרא
הקריאה the call												█			2	קרא
דבר was speaking		█													2	דבר
ויקם and rose						█									3	קום
יונה Jonah				█											3	יונה
וילך and walked							█								3	ילך
נינוה Nineveh								█							3	נינוה
כדבר according to the word of		█													3	דבר
יהוה יהוה			█												3	יהוה
ונינוה Now Nineveh								█							3	נינוה
היתה happened to be	█														3	היה
עיר a city									█						3	עיר
גדולה great										█					3	גדל
אלהים לאלהים of the gods												█			3	אלוה
מהלך a walk of													█		3	הלך
ימים days														█	3	יום
יונה Jonah				█											4	יונה
בעיר into the city								█							4	עיר
מהלך a walk													█		4	הלך
יום day's														█	4	יום
ווקרא and he called out											█				4	קרא
ויאמר and he said					█										4	אמר
יום days														█	4	יום
ונינוה and Nineveh								█							4	נינוה
נינוה Nineveh									█						5	נינוה
באלהים in God													█		5	אלוה
ויוקרא and they called out for												█			5	קרא
מגדולם from the greatest of them										█					5	גדל



## The Turn

This section is about turning. Note how turning is not part of the language of the seafarers. It occurs for the mortals in their unsuccessful effort to turn the ship before hurling Jonah overboard (1:13). No escape that way.

- וַיִּגַע הַדְּבָר אֶל מֶלֶךְ נִינְוֵה וַיִּקָּם מִכִּסְאוֹ  
וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶדְרֹתָיו מֵעָלָיו וַיִּכֹּס שֵׁק  
וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאֵפֶר 3.6 and the word touched the king of Nineveh  
and he rose from his throne<sup>1</sup>  
and put aside his majesty from him  
and covered in sackcloth  
and sat on an ash-heap
- וַיִּזְעַק וַיֹּאמֶר 3.7 and he proclaimed and he said  
בְּנִינְוֵה מִטַּעַם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגִדְלָיו לֵאמֹר  
הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה הַבֶּקֶר וְהַצֹּאן  
אֵל יִטְעֵמוּ מֵאוֹמֶה אֵל יִרְעוּ  
וּמֵיִם אֵל יִשְׁתּוּ 3.7 and he proclaimed and he said  
in Nineveh out of the taste of the king  
and his great ones saying  
the human and the animal  
the heard and the flock  
let none taste anything whatever  
let none pasture  
and water let none drink
- וַיִּתְכַסּוּ שִׁקִּים 3.8 but let them them be covered in sackcloth  
הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל אֱלֹהִים בְּחִזְקָה  
וַיִּשְׁבוּ אִישׁ מִדְרֹכּוֹ הַרְעָה וּמִן הַחֲמָס אֲשֶׁר  
בְּכַפְיָהֶם 3.8 but let them them be covered in sackcloth  
the human and the animal  
and call out to God forcefully  
and let each turn from its evil way  
and from the violence that is  
in their palms
- מִי יוֹדֵעַ 3.9 who knows  
יִשׁוּב וְנַחַם הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשָּׁב מִחֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ  
וְלֹא נֹאבֵד 3.9 who knows  
this God may turn and sigh  
and turn from his fierce anger  
and we will not perish
- וַיִּרְא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם 3.10 and this God saw  
כִּי שָׁבוּ מִדְרֹכֵם הַרְעָה וַיִּנְחַם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַרְעָה  
אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה 3.10 and this God saw  
their deeds  
that they turned from their evil ways  
and this God sighed over the evil  
that he intended to do to them  
and he did not do it

<sup>1</sup> compare John 13:4 for the sequence of actions

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vs	Root	
הדבר the word	■																	6	דבר	
מלך the king of		■																6	מלך	
נינוה Nineveh			■															6	נינוה	
ויכס and covered in				■														6	כסה	
שק sackcloth					■													6	שק	
ויאמר and he said						■												7	אמר	
בנינוה in Nineveh			■															7	נינוה	
מטעם from the taste of							■											7	טעם	
המלך the king		■																7	מלך	
לאמר saying							■											7	אמר	
האדם the human								■										7	אדם	
והבהמה and the animal									■									7	בהם	
יטעמו let taste										■								7	טעם	
ויתכסו but let them be covered in				■														8	כסה	
שקים sackcloth					■													8	שק	
האדם the human								■										8	אדם	
והבהמה and the animal									■									8	בהם	
אלהים God										■								8	אלוה	
וישובו and let turn											■							8	שוב	
מדרך from its way												■						8	דרך	
הרעה evil													■					8	רע	
אשר that														■				8	אשר	
ישוב may turn												■						9	שוב	
ונחם and sigh															■			9	נחם	
אלהים this God										■								9	אלוה	
ושב and turn											■							9	שוב	
ולא and not																■		9	לא	
אלהים this God											■							10	אלוה	
מעשיהם their deeds																	■	10	עשה	
שבו they turned												■						10	שוב	
מדרך from their ways													■					10	דרך	
הרעה evil														■				10	רע	
וינחם and sighed															■			10	נחם	
אלהים this God												■						10	אלוה	
הרעה the evil																■		10	רע	
אשר that																	■	10	אשר	
דבר he intended		■																10	דבר	
לעשות to do																		■	10	עשה
ולא and not																	■	10	לא	
עשה he did do it																		■	10	עשה

The pattern is prepared by the action of the king. Then all turn from evil, and God sighs, breathing out the Spirit, the Comforter.

## The Fury Part One

Rather than The City, which we have already met, there is a new keyword, The Fury. It seems that when The Day is announced, and The Turn accomplished, The Fury belongs to someone other than God. So much for the *Dies Ira*. The Gospel is in the TNK.

- 4.1 and this was evil for Jonah  
 וַיִּרַע אֶל יוֹנָה וְרָעָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּחַר לוֹ  
 great evil and he was furious
- 4.2 and he prayed to יהוה and said I beseech you יהוה!  
 וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכָה יְהוָה הֲלוֹא זֶה דְבָרִי עַד הַיּוֹתִי עַל אֲדָמָתִי עַל כֵּן קִדְמָתִי לְבָרַח וַתִּרְשִׁישָׁה כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אַרְךָ אַפִּים וְרַב חַסְדִּים וְנָחָם עַל הָרָעָה  
 was this not my word even in my own humanity about what would happen? therefore I stalled and ran away to Tarshish for I told you that you are a gracious and compassionate God slow to anger and of much kindness and who sighs over evil
- 4.3 and now יהוה take please my being יהוה קח נא את נַפְשִׁי מִמֶּנִּי כִּי טוֹב מוֹתִי מִחַיִּים  
 from me for death is good compared with my life  
 O O
- 4.4 and יהוה said וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הֲהִיטֵב חָרָה לָךְ  
 is it good for you to be furious?
- 4.5 and Jonah went out from the city וַיֵּצֵא יוֹנָה מִן הָעִיר וַיֵּשֶׁב מִקְדָּם לְעִיר וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ שֹׁמֶר וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחְתֶּיהָ בַּצֵּל  
 and he sat east of the city and he made a shelter for himself there and he sat under it in the shade  
 to see what would happen in the city

I wrestle whether to allow verse 5 to stand on its own, or to include it with verses 6 to 11 or to leave it with verses 1 to 4. Compare and see. The chunk from verses 6 to 11 is too large with verse 5. Verse 5 is temporizing and has its own simple structure.

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	Vs	Root
רעה evil	■					1	רע
ויהר and he was furious		■				1	חרה
יהוה יהוה			■			2	יהוה
ויאמר and he said				■		2	אמר
יהוה יהוה			■			2	יהוה
כי for				■		2	כי
כי that				■		2	כי
הרעה evil	■					2	רע
יהוה יהוה			■			3	יהוה
כי for				■		3	כי
ויאמר and said				■		4	אמר
יהוה יהוה			■			4	יהוה
חרה to be furious		■				4	חרה

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	Vs	Root
העיר the city	■		5	עיר
וישב and he sat		■	5	ישב
לעיר of the city	■		5	עיר
וישב and he sat		■	5	ישב
בעיר in the city	■		5	עיר

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Vs	Root
יונה Jonah	■												1	יונה
רעה evil		■											1	רע
ויהר and he was furious			■										1	חרה
יהוה יהוה				■									2	יהוה
ויאמר and he said					■								2	אמר
יהוה יהוה				■									2	יהוה
עד even						■							2	עד
יהיה what would happen							■						2	היה
קדמתי I stalled								■					2	קדם
כי for									■				2	כי
כי that										■			2	כי
הרעה evil		■											2	רע
יהוה יהוה				■									3	יהוה
ממני from me										■			3	מן
כי for											■		3	כי
ויאמר and said					■								4	אמר
יהוה יהוה				■									4	יהוה
חרה to be furious			■										4	חרה
יונה Jonah	■												5	יונה
מן from											■		5	מן
העיר the city												■	5	עיר
וישב and he sat												■	5	ישב
מקדם east								■					5	קדם
לעיר of the city												■	5	עיר
וישב and he sat												■	5	ישב
עד so						■							5	עד
יהיה would happen							■						5	היה
בעיר in the city												■	5	עיר

## The Fury Part Two, aka The Tender Plant

Here is the story of the tender plant, the worm, and the sultry east wind. Each one was appointed by יהוה God, the first to deliver Jonah from his evil, so that he might be glad for himself, the next two to strike so that he might lose his fury over the comfort of others more ignorant than him.

The unique aspect of this section is clearly the tender plant and Jonah's relationship to this created other. But this section also is tied by fury to the prior section. This makes fury a central issue for the human even if such is a prophet.

The child of the night, stressing transience, closes the child frame opened in the first chapter. Jonah's patronym makes him a child of truth. The great city, Nineveh, is also a frame for the story.

So at the end of this revisitation of a delightfully serious and comical tale. The first two chapters, encompassing the city with the sea and windy (spirit) tempest and the havoc of hurling actions, are comprised of: The Descent, The Dice, The Mortals and The Fish. The Mortals anticipate Nineveh, its turning, and its belonging to God. The second two chapters are comprised of The Day, The Turn, The Fury (not God's but Jonah's), parts 1 and 2. Unlike Jonah, the king leads his people in the turning and God turns in comfort (sighing) to them. Such turning is evil for Jonah. Evil, used as a frame when the seafarers turn and again in this chapter, ties together chapters 1 and 4. Jonah succeeds in bringing evil upon others and in knowing it in himself.

<p>וַיִּמֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים קִיקְיֹון וַיַּעַל מֵעַל לְיוֹנָה לְהִיּוֹת צֶלַעַל רֹאשׁוֹ לְהַצִּיל לּוֹ מִרְעָתוֹ וַיִּשְׂמַח יוֹנָה עַל הַקִּיקְיֹון שִׂמְחָה גְדוֹלָה</p>	<p>4.6 and יהוה God appointed a tender plant and made it come up over Jonah to become shade over his head to deliver him from his evil and Jonah was glad for the tender plant he was very glad</p>
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<p>וַיִּמֶן הָאֱלֹהִים תּוֹלַעַת בְּעֹלוֹת הַשַּׁחַר לְמַחֲרָת</p>	<p>4.7 and God appointed a worm as the dawn came up in the morning</p>
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וַתֶּךְ אֶת הַקִּיקָיוֹן וַיֵּבֶשׁ	4.8	and it struck the tender plant and it dried up
וַיְהִי כִזְרוֹחַ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּמַן אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ קְדִים חַרְיִשִׁית וַתֶּךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עַל רֹאשׁ יוֹנָה	4.8	and it happened when the sun shone and God appointed a sultry east wind and the sun struck Jonah's head
וַיִּתְעַלֶּף וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוּת וַיֹּאמֶר טוֹב מוֹתִי מִחַיִּי	4.9	and he fainted and he wished his being to die and he said death is good compared with my life
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל יוֹנָה הֲהֵיטֵב חָרָה לְךָ עַל הַקִּיקָיוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הֵיטֵב חָרָה לִּי עַד מוֹת	4.9	and God said to Jonah is it good for you to be furious over the tender plant? and he said it is good for me to be furious even to death
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אַתָּה חֲסַתָּ עַל הַקִּיקָיוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָמַלְתָּ בּוֹ וְלֹא גִדַּלְתּוֹ שָׁבַן לַיְלָה הַזֶּה וּבֶן לַיְלָה אָבַד	4.10	and יְהוָה said you yourself showed pity for the tender plant that you did not toil for and did not make grow <sup>1</sup> that happened as a child of the night and as a child of the night perished
וַאֲנִי לֹא אֲחוּס עַל נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ בָּהּ הַרְבֵּה מִשָּׂתִים-שָׁרָה רַבּוֹ אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע בֵּין יְמִינוֹ לְשְׂמָאלוֹ וּבְהֵמָה רַבָּה	4.11	and I, will I not show pity to Nineveh the great city? for there are in her more than 12 ten- thousands of humans who cannot tell their right hand from their left and also many cattle
ש		ש

1 or make great.

## Jonah

## A Tale

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	20	1	2	Vs	Root	
וימן and appointed	■																							6	מנה
יהוה יהוה		■																						6	יהוה
אלהים God			■																					6	אלוה
קיקיון a tender plant				■																				6	קיקיון
ויעל and made it come up					■																			6	עלה
יונה Jonah						■																		6	יונה
להיות to become							■																	6	היה
ראשו his head								■																6	ראש
וישמח and was glad									■															6	שמח
יונה Jonah						■																		6	יונה
הקיקיון the tender plant				■																				6	קיקיון
שמחה he was glad									■															6	שמח
גדולה very										■														6	גדל
וימן and appointed		■																						7	מנה
אלהים God			■																					7	אלוה
בעלות as came up					■																			7	בעל
ותך and it struck											■													7	נכה
הקיקיון the tender plant				■																				7	קיקיון
ויהי and it happened								■																8	היה
השמש the sun													■											8	שמש
וימן and appointed		■																						8	מנה
אלהים God			■																					8	אלוה
ותך and struck												■												8	נכה
השמש the sun													■											8	שמש
ראש head									■															8	ראש
יונה Jonah's							■																	8	יונה
למות to die													■											8	מות
ויאמר and he said														■										8	אמר
מותי death is														■										8	מות
ויאמר and said															■									9	אמר
אלהים God			■																					9	אלוה
יונה Jonah							■																	9	יונה
היטיב is it good																■								9	יטב
חרה to be furious																		■						9	חרה
הקיקיון the tender plant				■																				9	קיקיון
ויאמר and he said																								9	אמר
היטיב it is good																								9	יטב
חרה to be furious																								9	חרה
מות death																								9	מות
ויאמר and said																								10	אמר

Word and gloss * first usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	20	1	2	Vs	Root	
יהוה יהוה		■																					10	יהוה	
חסת showed pity																		■						10	חוס
הקיקיון the tender plant				■																				10	קיקיון
אשר that																			■					10	אשר
לא not																				■				10	לא
ולא and not																				■				10	לא
גדלתו you did make grow										■														10	גדל
שבן as a child of																					■			10	בן
לילה the night																						■		10	לילה
היה happened								■																10	היה
ובן and as a child of																					■			10	בן
לילה the night																						■		10	לילה
לא not																				■				11	לא
אחוס will I show pity																							■	11	חוס
הגדולה great										■														11	גדל
אשר for																				■				11	אשר
הרבה more than																							■	11	רב
אשר who																				■				11	אשר
לא cannot																				■				11	לא
רבה many																							■	11	רב

You can observe that the above section divides in three. The division is noted in the text with a blank line.

If you want to construct a table for a smaller number of verses, as you read the text, for each Hebrew word in sequence, decide what the root of the word is. As soon as you see a repeating root, make a column for that root. Number the column and write the root also as column header. At the end of the section of text, you will have a table with as many columns as there are repeating roots. Then read the text again to fill in each row with the word and verse and mark the relative place in the text with an X as you fill in each column in sequence.

This petulant prophet appears to be devoid of tenderness. But at least he is forthright. He knows his fury. God's mercy lies outside the human idea of fair or due reward. Jonah does not really like the good of creation, though he is glad enough for himself. His reaction is quite different from Job's. Job is ultimately seen to be both tender and right. Job changes. We don't know about Jonah. We are left with a question



probably directed at ourselves. The inconsequential child of the night, the tender plant, is given to deliver Jonah from his evil.

Does the technique of observing the sequences and circles of repeating words help in memorizing this story? It has certainly made me read it with greater care than I did 40 odd years ago when I was asked to present this book at a conference (O how unprepared I was for that experience).

There are still many questions for me when I consider Jonah as 'the only sign to be given to this generation' (Matthew 16:4, Luke 11:29). What, for example, about the 'pilot', the chief of the encumbered band of seafarers? Why that phrase רַב הַחֲבִיל, surely an odd word for the quartermaster, or what is the significance of the one who descends paying the fare for the ship? Is it her fare? Perhaps there are mortals who could comment. Is the foot-washing modeled after the actions of the king of Nineveh?

Halleluyah from the heart of God  
And from the hand of the artist inimitable,  
And from the echo of the heavenly harp.  
In sweetness magnificent and mighty.

(From Christopher Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, Rejoice in the Lamb)