

Notes on The Book of Jonah

Only a few words are in order because these notes follow the same pattern as others in the same series. The Book of Jonah is noteworthy by reason of consisting of four short chapters which by no means detracts from its attractive human quality. The action begins immediately and concludes with a question, hence leaving us with a situation not fully resolved. Like other books of the Old Testament, the Hebrew text elicits many opportunities for doing lectio divina. For that reason the following brief observations are not a commentary. They are expressly made for assisting the practice of lectio divina, nothing more.

In most instances I cite part of a given verse which does not preclude referring to other parts of the same verse. The English text used is The Revised Standard Version. Nouns are given in the singular form and are noted as such.

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Chapter One

Vs. 1: Word of the Lord was to Jonah.

-Word (devar), from the verbal root davar (to speak). This and similar phrases opens almost all prophetic books. It almost has an independent life, being a kind of emissary but more than that. `The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest` [Ezk 1.3].

Vs. 2: Arise and go to Nineveh.

-Arise (qum): implies going forth after having stood up. It is just as common as the divine devar applied to the prophets. `Arise and say to them everything I command` [Jer 1.17].

-That great city: a remark by God almost with a touch of scorn and contempt reminiscent of Gn 11.7, `Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language.`

-Cry against it (haleyah). Compare with a similar sound, `has come up (haltah) before me.`
`Before me` (lephanay) is commonly used and translates `to my face.`

Vs. 3: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

-Rose (qum): compare with its use in the previous verse, here connoting escape as used with barach (to flee).

-From the presence (milipney) of the Lord: compare with lephanay (before me), vs. 2.

-Tarshish: perhaps southern Spain, the extreme opposite of the Mediterranean or known world.

-Went on board: the Hebrew text lacks this phrase: `in it (the ship).`

-Away from the presence of the Lord: second use in the same verse of `presence` with the preposition min or `from` (m-), milipney. It is as though Jonah's fellow passengers are participating in his flight to Tarshish.

Vs. 4: But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea.

-This storm seems to have arisen almost as suddenly as the ship left Joppa.

-Hurled (tul): to throw down, prostrate, cast out of a country. `Therefore I will hurl you out of this land` [Jer 16.13]. The other uses of this verb are vss. 12 & 15. The next use is vs. 5 as `threw.` `Therefore I will cast you out` [Jer 13.16].

-Great wind (ruach): same word for `spirit.` `And the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night` [Ex 14.21].

-Mighty tempest (sahar): the other use of this noun in Jonah is vs. 12, `this great tempest has come upon you.` Another reference: `I would hasten to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest` [Ps 55.8]. The verbal root implies violent shaking: `Oh afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted` [Is 54.11].

-The adjective gadol is used for both `great wind` and `mighty tempest.`

-Threatened (chashav): to think, be accounted for, reckon. The verse at hand has the only use of the verb with this meaning.

-To break up (shavar). For a use applied to the human condition: `Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair` [Ps 69.20]. Note the similarity in sound between the two verbs in the verse at hand, chashvah/hishver.

Vs. 5: Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god.

-Mariners: three other references: Exk 27.9, 27 & 29. A similar word from the same verbal root means `salt.`

-Cried (zahaq): biblical references use this verb with respect to God as opposed to `god.` Although the verb is different, compare with 1 Kg 18.28, `And they cried aloud and cut themselves.`

-God (lower case): `elohym, used in the plural with two other references in Jonah, vs. 6. In the verse at hand, not the plural form of this noun with the equally plural number of mariners.

-Threw (tul): cf. vs. 4 above.

-Wares (kely, singular): often applied to containers and can apply to tools or arms. `As one who breaks a potter's vessel` [Jer 19.11].

-To lighten (haqal): qalal. Alternate meanings are to curse, belittle, despise. `To despise all the honored of the earth` [Is 23.9].

-Inner parts (yarkah, singular): the inside of anything more with respect to the back part. `Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave` [1Sam 24.4].

-Ship (sephynah): the only use of this term in the Bible; from an unused verbal root meaning to board, to floor. Compare with `onyah as in vs. 4.

-Was fast asleep (radam): to snore, suggesting heavy sleep. For a noun derived from this verbal root, cf. Gen 2.21: `The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man.` Compare Jonah's sleep with that of Jesus: `And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep` [Mt 8.24]. Jonah having gone to sleep seems the chief reason why in vs. 8 the ship's crew became suspicious of him.

Vs. 6: Arise, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we do not perish.

-Captain (rav hachovel): the only use of this phrase in the Bible which reads literally, 'great rope,' 'rope' being associated with things maritime.

-Sleeper: from the verbal root radam as noted in the previous verse.

-Will give a thought (hashat): to make shining, to fabricate. Applied to the mind, anything which it makes. The only other biblical reference is Jer 5.28, 'They have grown fat and sleek.' The Chaldean is similar: 'the king thought to set him over the whole realm' [Dn 6.3].

Vs. 7: Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.

- 'And they said to one another.' These words read literally, 'and said may to his neighbor.'

-Cast (naphal): to fall, throw oneself down. The same verb is used as 'has come upon us' and in 2.3, 'For you did cast me into the deep.' For another reference, cf. 1Sam 14.42: 'Cast te lot between me and my son, Jonathan.'

-Lot (goral, singular). 'They cast lots for her honorable men' [Nah 3.10].

Vs. 8: Tell us, on whose account this evil has come upon us?

-This verse contains five questions to Jonah by the ship's crew. The first one literally reads, 'to what this evil to us?'

Vs. 9: 'I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'

-Fear (yare'): with respect to God, such fear is one of respect: 'And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord' [Ex 14.31]. Compare this fear/reverence with Jonah having fled the Lord in vs. 3. Note that the verb yare' is similar to ra'ah (to see). That is, often the various forms of each verb are quite close, almost interchangeable, as if seeing = fearing and visa versa. Yare' occurs in the next verse with a different meaning.

-An identification of Lord/God with 'heaven' while Jonah is not simply on the earth but the sea.

-Jonah allies himself with God as creator, perhaps implying that the storm comes from him.

-Dry land (yabashah): cf. 2.10, 'and it (the fish) vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.' 'God called the dry land earth' [Gn 1.10].

Vs. 10: Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this that you have done!'

-Exceedingly afraid: literally in Hebrew, 'feared a great fear.'

-The sailors make an identification between Jonah's relationship with God and their current condition. Again, this hearkens back to Jonah having gone to sleep during the storm.

-Fleeing from the presence of the Lord: same phrase as in vs. 3. There seems no apparent connection between such fleeing and Jonah going to sleep.

- 'Because he had told them.' That is, Jonah informed the sailors of why he fled from the Lord, an account which seems strange. At first glance it seems something not to divulge.

Vs. 11: What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us?

-Quiet down (shataq): two other references in the Bible. `Then they were glad because they (waves) had quiet` [Ps 107.30]. `And where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.`

-Compare shataq with `the sea grew more and more tempestuous (sahar).` This verb means to be violently shaken or agitated. `And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing` [2Kg 6.11].

Vs. 12: Take me up and throw me into the sea.

-Throw (tul): used in vss. 4 & 5. It is as if Jonah wishes to be cast overboard as the sailors did with the cargo to lighten the ship. `Take me up` lends a dramatic air to the picture as well as making an offering.

-For you: literally, `from on you.` It is used twice in the same verse, `upon you.`

Vs. 13: Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land.

-Rowed hard (chatar): the only use of this verb with this meaning. Fundamentally chatar means to dig: `Son of man, dig in the wall` [Ezk 8.8].

-Land (yabashah): cf. vs. 9. This noun differs from `erets or `adamah in the sense that it is dry.

-Against them: as in the previous verse, `on them.`

Vs. 14: We beseech you, O Lord, let us not perish for this man`s life, and lay not on us innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

-Beseech (`anah): an interjection akin to `ah,` `I pray.` phonetically, `anah is close to `let us not` (`el-na`). The same interjection is used in 4.2. `O Lord, I beseech you, save my life` [Ps 116.4]!

-This man`s life (nephesh): literally, `soul.` The next reference is 2.5, `The waters closed in over me (i.e., my soul).`

-Lay (not): the common very `to give,` natan.

-Innocent (naqy) blood. This adjective also means `blameless, innocent.` `In hiding places he murders the innocent` [Ps 10.8].

-Has pleased you (chaphets): connotes delight, pleasure. `I delight to do your will` [Ps 40.8].

Vs. 15: And the sea ceased from its raging.

-Ceased (hamad): literally, `to stand.` The image is that suddenly the sea stopped and stood up.

-Raging (zahaph). `And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him` [2Kg 21.4].

Vs. 16: Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

-Feared (yare`): cf. vs. 9. The verse at hand reads literally, `they feared a great fear.` Compare the sailors` reverence for the Lord with vs. 5, `each man cried to his god.`

-Sacrificed (zavach). `Let us sacrifice...to the Lord our God` [Ex 5.3]. Such sacrifices involve fire or burning a victim which was impossible earlier on a storm-tossed ship.

-Made vows (nadar): literally, `vowed a vow.` The verb connotes scattering or dropping down. The other used of this word is in 2.9. The first use in the Bible is Gn 28.20, `Then Jacob made a vow.`

Chapter Two

Vs. 1: And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

-The English (RSV) text has this verse as vs. 17 of chapter one.

-Appointed (manah): also found in 4.6, 7 & 8. Fundamentally as to divide, a lot, number. For the last, cf. Num 23.10: `Who can count the dust of Jacob?`

-Great fish (dag): the common word, not necessarily pertaining to a whale, related to dugah (hook): `you shall be drawn with hooks` [Am 4.2].

-To swallow up (balah): in the sense of devouring, destroying. `Then they would have swallowed us up alive when their anger was kindled against us` [Ps 124.3].

-Belly (meheh): also as breast, heart. `I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is in within my heart.`

-Three days and three nights: `No sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth` [Mt 12.40-1]. Here ketos means a huge fish or sea monster compared with dag mentioned above. Note the difference between `belly` (koilia, similar to meheh) and kardia (usually as heart).

Vs. 2: I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you did hear my voice.

-Prayed (palal): connotes judging, interceding. `Hearken to the sound of my cry...for to you do I pray` [Ps 5.2].

-Vss. 2 through 9 or much of Chapter Two consist of Jonah's prayer. Compare with 1.5 where the sailors `cried to his god.`

-I called (qara`): compare with zahaq (cried), the verb at hand not necessarily one of distress. It was first used in 1.2. Compare its use in 3.8, where used as `cry.`

-My distress (tsarah). `In my distress I cry to the Lord` [Ps 120.1]. The verse at hand reads literally, `from distress to me.`

-Answered me (hanah): a verb with many alternate meanings such as to sing, labor, be afflicted.

-Belly (beten) of Sheol: alternately, womb. `For you did form my inward parts, you did knit me together in my mother's womb` [Ps 139.13].

-I cried (shuah): fundamentally as to be ample, broad, opulent. Compare with qara` and zahaq mentioned just above in this verse. `They cried for help, but there was none to save` [Ps 18.41]. For a reference with the alternate meaning, cf. Job 34.19: `nor regards the rich more than the poor.`

-Voice: being from inside the fish or dag, it must have been muffled, physically speaking.

Vs. 3: For you did cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood was round me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.

-Did cast (shalach): the common verb for `to send.`

-Deep (metsulah): from a verbal root `to sink.` `I will bring them back from the depths of the sea` [[Ps 68.22]. Compare with tehom in vs. 6.

-Heart (lev) of the sea: the common noun for the human heart.

-Flood (nahar): the common noun for `river` and infrequently used with the meaning at hand. `One such reference is Ezk 31.15, `I will make the deep mourn for it and restrain its rivers and many waters shall be stopped.`

-Was round about (savav): `I will rise now and go about this city` [Sg 3.2].

-Waves (misbar, singular): `For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me` [2Sam 22.5].

-Billows (gal, singular): something heaped up and apply to ruins. `All your waves and billows have gone over me` [Ps 42.7].

-Passed over (havar): the common verb.

Vs. 4: Then I said, `I am cast out from your presence; how shall I again look upon your holy temple?`

-Cast out (garash): alternately as `to plunder, `put forth fruit.` For another sense, cf. Lev 21.7: `Neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband.`

-From before your presence: literally, `from before your eyes.`

-Shall I look (navat) again: connotes contemplating, respect. `Look upon the face of your anointed [Ps 84.9!].` `Again` is the verb yasaph, `to increase.`

-Holy temple (heykal): also in vs. 7. This noun can also apply to a palace and can intimate heaven: `The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven` [Ps 11.4].

Vs. 5: The waters closed in over me, the deep was round about me; weeds were wrapped about my head

-This verse continues into the first part of vs. 6.

-Closed in (`aphaph): a poetic word more in the sense of surrounding. `The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me` [Ps 18.4].

-Me: the word for `soul` (nephesh) is used.

-Deep (tehom): compare with metsulah, vs. 3. This noun suggests both a great quantity of water as well as a waste or something formless. `The earth was without form and void` [Gen 1.2].

-Were round about me (savav): as in vs. 3.

-Weeds (suph): also as `reed` and proper name for Red (Sea). `Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea; and his picked offers are sunk in the Red Sea` [Ex 14.5].

-Were wrapped (chavash): in the sense of binding tightly, restraining. `He binds the floods from overflowing` [Job 28.11] and `he had with him a couple of saddled asses` [Jud 19.10].

Vs. 6: at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you did bring up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God.

-The first part of this verse continues from the previous verse.

-Roots (qetsev, singular): from a verbal root meaning `to cut,` `to shear sheep.` Two other uses of this noun in the Bible are 1Kg 6.25 and 7.35 (`form`), the former being `both cherubim had the same measure and the same form.`

-Land (`erets): different from water or the sea which would be `adamah. It applies to the earth or a country. I.e., for Jonah, this `erets is a kind of territory at the bottom of the sea.

-Bars (beryach, singular): often applied to a door. `For he strengthens the bars of your gates` [Ps 147.13].

-Closed in: the Hebrew text lacks a verb.

-Bring up (halah): the common verb, also as `to ascend.` It is similar in sound to `forever,` (l-)holam.

-Pit (shachat): more specifically, `corruption.` `For you did not give me up to Sheol or let your godly one see the Pit` [Ps 16.10].

-My life: compare with nephesh (`me`) in the previous verse.

Vs. 7: When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

-Fainted (hataph): fundamentally, `to cover,` `to cloth.` `Violence covers them as a garment` [Ps 73.6]. Similar to the verse at hand is Ps 77.4, `I think of God, and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints.`

-Soul (nephesh): last noted in previous verse.

-Within me: literally, `on (hal) me.`

-I remembered (zakar): from this verbal root derives the noun `male` as being the agent through whom the memory of parents is continued.

-My prayer (tephilah): in the sense of supplication, entreaty or sacred song. The last is frequently noted at the beginning of each Psalm. `Lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left` [2Kg 19.4].

-Holy temple (heykal): last noted in vs. 4. In the verse at hand, Jonah's prayer has two `ins:` `to you` and `into your holy temple.`

Vs. 8: Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their true loyalty.

-Pay regard (shamar): in the sense of observing, worshiping. This verb occurs with great frequency in Ps 119 pertaining to awareness of the divine Torah. `But now I have kept your word` [vs. 67].

-Vain idols (hevel, singular): `idols` is included in this noun, one and the same thing as `vain.` `They have provoked me with their idols` [Dt 32.21].

-Forsake (hazav): `If his children forsake my law` [Ps 89.30].

-True loyalty (chesed): here the noun (no adjective in the Hebrew) is in the plural. This word often applies to divine love. `But I through the abundance of your steadfast love will enter your

house` [Ps 5.7].

Vs. 9: But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay.

`Deliverance belongs to the Lord!`

-The conclusion of Jonah`s prayer begin in vs. 2.

-Voice of thanksgiving (todah): in the sense of making confession, acknowledgment. It can also pertain to a choir: `Then...I appointed two great companies which gave thanks and went in procession` [Neh 12.3111].

-I will sacrifice (zavach): last noted in 1.16.

-Have vowed (nadar): last noted in 1.16.

-Deliverance (yeshuhatah): the verbal root to the proper name `Jesus` which has several variations. `Deliverance belongs to the Lord` [Ps 3.8]. The preposition I (l-) is prefixed to `Lord` signifying possession. Compare with the preposition `el as in vs. 8 (my prayer came to you` and `into your holy temple`) which more signifies direction towards-which.

Vs. 10: And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

-Fish (dag) as in vs. 1. There the Lord `appointed` (manah) it whereas here he `spoke` to it.

-Vomited out (qy`): four other uses in the Bible, all from Leviticus (18.25, 28; 20.22). The first reads, `the land vomited out its inhabitants.`

-Dry land (yabashah): first noted in 1.9. The preposition `el (cf. previous verse) is used which literally reads `to the dry land.`

Chapter Three

Vs. 1: Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying,

-This verse continues into the next one.

-The first time the Lord`s word or devar was at the very beginning, 1.1. Note the physical distance between these two `words:` the first was apparently not long after the ship left Joppa and the second, most likely back at Joppa where Jonah had to walk over land to reach Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria.

Vs. 2: `Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.`

-This verse is similar to 1.2 in that it contains a second `arise` (qum), only now Jonah has been vomited out from the great fish. However, Jonah`s disposition is different from fleeing the Lord.

-Proclaim (qara`) to it: compare the preposition `to` (`el) with that of 1.2 with the same verb and the preposition hal (`on,` `upon`) which there translates `against.`

Message (qery`ah): the only use of this noun in the Bible whose verbal root is qara`.

-Tell (davar): verbal root of `word` in the pervious verse. No indication is given as to when this telling occurs, either now or later.

Vs. 3: So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord. Now Nineveh

was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth.

-Presumably Jonah's journey to Nineveh is over land, the opposite direction from Tarshish or modern Spain.

-There is a close association between this going (over land) and 'according to the devar of the Lord.'

-To God. This is found in the Hebrew text but not translated.

Compare the 'three days journey' (the verb 'to go') with the 'three days and three nights' (1.17) when Jonah was in the 'belly of the fish.' The phrase 'in breadth' is lacking in the Hebrew text.

Vs. 4: Jonah began to go into city, going a day's journey. And he cried, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'

-A day's journey: or a 'going.' Compare this going with the 'three days' journey in breadth' which here equals one third of having traversed Nineveh.

-He cried (qara'): as in 'proclaim' of vs. 2 above. This qara' parallels the first qara' of 1.2 ('cry against it').

-Forty days: symbolic of a long time, first noted in Gn 7.4, 'The Lord sent rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights.' Also, this duration is symbolic of a time to repent when confronted with God's word. 'He (Jesus) was in the wilderness forty days' [Mk 1.13].

-Shall be overthrown (haphak): alternately, 'to turn.' 'He turned the sea into dry land' [Ps 66.6]. The verse at hand is reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah: 'God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt' [Gn 19.29]. Also compare Jonah's preaching with Abraham's supplication to the Lord regarding Sodom and Gomorrah: 'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it' [Gn 18.32].

Vs. 5: And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

-Believed ('aman) God: i.e., had faith in God; again, in contrast to Sodom and Gomorrah. The Hebrew text has the preposition 'in' (b-) prefixed to God, i.e., 'in God.' Presumably the inhabitants of Nineveh were like the sailors of 1.5, 'each one cried to his god' as opposed to the single God.

-Proclaimed (qara'): as in vs. 4 above.

-Fast (tsum): 'they proclaimed a fast before the Lord' [Jer 36.9].

-Sackcloth (soq): also in vss. 6 and 8. 'In the streets they gird on sackcloth' [Is 13.3].

Vs. 6: Then tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.

-Tidings (davar): literally, 'word' as first noted in 1.1, 'word of the Lord.' Compare that davar which 'came to Jonah' with that of the king, nagah (reached), which implies touching as well as affliction. 'Plague' is a noun derived from this verbal root. 'And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him (Elijah)' [1Kg 19.7]. Such touching occurs after the 'greatest' and 'least' repented.

- The king's identity is unknown, but that is incidental to the story.
- Arose (qum) from his throne: compare this qum with that of 1.2 and 3.
- Robe (adereth): connotes glory, splendor. 'For their glory is spoiled' [Zech 11.3].
- Ashes (epher): the king does this compared with the people who only put on sackcloth. 'Gird on sackcloth and roll in ashes' [Jer 6.26].

Vs. 7: And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh, 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed or drink water,

- This verse continues into the next one which contains the king's proclamation.
- Made proclamation (zahaq): first noted in 1.5 as 'cried' and noted several times afterwards.
- Published: the common verb 'to speak' (amar).
- Through Nineveh: literally, 'in Nineveh.'
- Decree (taham): more specifically, 'taste.' For another use, cf. Ps 119.66: 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge.'
- Nobles (gadol, singular): the adjective, 'great.' 'Then he snowed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord' [Zech 3.1].
- (Not) taste (taham): the verbal root for 'decree' in the verse at hand. In Hebrew, taste, judgment and discernment are similar. 'So his taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed' [Jer 48.11].
- Let them (not) feed (raha): in the sense of pasturing. 'He feeds among the lilies' [Sg 2.16].

Vs. 8: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands.

- Sackcloth(soq): first noted in vs. 5 where the people put it on followed by the king in vs. 6. I.e., the people anticipated the decree, having listened to Jonah.
- Let them cry (qara): as in 2.2, 'I cried, and you heard my voice.' Also cf. vs. 5 above, 'proclaimed.' Qara does not necessarily imply urgency.
- Mightily (chezqah, noun): from the common adjective, 'strong.' 'Quarried stone for making repairs (chezaqh)' [2Kg 12.12]. In the verse at hand, the text reads literally, 'let them cry to God in might.'
- Turn (shuv): the common verb but here pertaining to repentance. 'All the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord' [Ps 22.27]. Cf. vs. 9, 'God...may turn from his fierce anger.'
- Violence (chamas): implies a tearing away. 'He will shake off his unripe grape like the vine' [Job 15.33]. Note that such chamas in the hands of the people compared with the (singular) 'evil way.'

Vs. 9: Who knows, God may yet repent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we perish not?

- 'Who knows:' implies uncertainty, but a favorable response is intimated by shuv (may turn from) used as 'turn' in the previous verse. In the verse at hand, shuv is used twice, the first instance not being translated in the English and sometimes employed in conjunction with

nacham (repent).

-May (yet) repent (nacham): alternately, `to lament,` `to comfort.` `The Lord has comforted his people` [Is 49.13].

-Fierce (charon) anger: a noun (wrath, ferocity) used with `aph, a noun alternately as `face` or `nostrils.` For a verse similar to the one at hand, `in the day of his fierce anger` [Is 13.13].

-Perish (`avad): alternately, `to lose oneself,` `to wander.` `I have gone astray like a lost sheep` [Ps 119.176].

Vs. 10: When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.

-Evil way: cf. vs. 8. This mass conversion is all the more remarkable given that Nineveh was `three days journey in breadth` [vs. 3].

-Evil: that is, Nineveh being overthrown (cf. vs. 4).

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Chapter Four

Vs. 1: But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.

-Displeased (raha): the fundamental meaning is to make a loud noise, to be broken. `Be broken, you peoples, and be dismayed` [Is 8.9]. Rahah is the verbal root of evil last noted in 3.10. The verse at hand has this verb with the preposition `el (to)...`it displeased to Jonah.`

-Exceedingly (gadolah): first noted in 1.10.

-Angry (charah): fundamentally as `to burn.` `But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than th words of the men of Israel` [2Sam 19.43].

Vs. 2: for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and repent of evil.

-This verse is quoted in part.

-The second instance of Jonah praying to the Lord, the first being when in the fish`s belly, 2.1. Note that while on board the ship during the storm he did not pray as with the sailors.

-Jonah`s anger seems to rest in knowing that the Lord is merciful, hence no reason for him to go to Nineveh but the opposite direction (Tarshish).

Gracious (chanon): from the verbal root meaning the same. All adjectives refer to God: `a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful` [Neh 9.17].

-Merciful (rachom): from the verbal root meaning the same and like chanon, all adjectives apply to God. Just like the Nehemiah quote, both adjectives are almost always used together.

-Slow to anger: cf. 3.9, where `anger` (`aph) is a noun alternately as `face` or `nostrils.` The adjective `erek can apply to lengthening: `I will lengthen your days` [1Kg 3.14].

-Steadfast love (chesed): first noted in 2.8 as `(true) loyalty.`

-Repent (nacham): cf. 3.9 with respect to God`s `fierce anger.` In the verse at hand, the

preposition hal (on, upon) is used: `upon the evil.`

Vs. 3: Therefore now, O Lord, take my life from me, I beseech you, for it is better for me to die than to live.`

-Conclusion of a prayer begun in the previous verse.

-My life (nepesh): as in 1.15, `soul.`

Vs. 4: `Do you do well to be angry?`

-To be angry (charah): as in vs. 1. The text reads literally, `Is it good to be anger to you?`

Vs. 5: Then Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade until he should see what would become of the city.

-Compare with 3.4 where Jonah enters Nineveh, `going a day's journey.`

-East of the city. Keep in mind that it was `three days` journey in breadth` or took three days to encompass it.

-Booth (sukah): `You shall dwell in booths seven days` [Lev 23.42]. Such a dwelling is usually temporary, usually of woven material. In the verse at hand, compare the huge size of Nineveh with the tiny sukah.

-Shade (tsel): `For they have come under the shelter of my roof` [Gen 19.8].

-This verse reveals Jonah's persistence to see the destruction of Nineveh despite God's question in the previous verse.

Vs. 6: And the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

-Appointed (manah). In the Book of Jonah, this verb occurs three other times, all with respect to divine activity: 2.1 (the great fish), 4.7 (worm) and vs. 8 (sultry east wind).

-Plant (qiqayon): the only references are in the Book of Jonah. It could mean either a cucumber plant or better, castor oil plant.

-Come up over. The text reads literally, `and come from up to Jonah.`

-Shade (tsel): as in vs. 6, the booth. I.e., the shade at hand pertains to Jonah being outside the sukah or booth.

-To save him (natsal): connotes pulling, or plucking. `I am with you to deliver you` [Jer 1.8].

-Discomfort (rahah): the common noun for `evil.` The implication is that Jonah has brought this discomfort/evil upon himself.

-Exceedingly glad (samach): implies rejoicing. Here the verb is used with the noun for emphasis (exceedingly). `The Lord shall rejoice in his works` [Ps 104.31].

Vs. 7: But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm which attacked the plant so that it withered.

-Worm (tolahath): more specifically, one which springs from putrefaction. It's color is red or

scarlet and often is a noun for this color with respect to the curtain for the holy place: `All the able men among the workmen made the tabernacle with ten curtains; they were made of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet stuff, with cherubim skillfully worked` [Ex 36.8].

-Attacked (nakah): in the sense of killing. `He has smitten, and he will bind us up` [Hos 6.1]. This verb is also used in the next verse, `beat upon.`

-Withered (yavash): `And his hand [Jeroboam] which he stretched out against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself` [1Kg 13.4].

Vs. 8: When the sun rose, God appointed a sultry east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah so that he was faint.

-Sultry (charysh): the only use of the adjective in the Bible. The verbal root means `to be silent. In the verse at hand, it is applied to the `wind` or ruach (also, spirit).

-Beat upon (nakah): last noted in the previous verse, `attacked.`

-Was faint (halaph): fundamentally as `to cover,` `to wrap.` Cf. Sg 5.14 for this meaning: `encrusted with sapphires.` `In that day the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst` [Am 8.13].

-That he might die. The Hebrew text reads literally, `that his soul be to death.`

Vs. 9: `Do you well to be angry for the plant?`

-To be angry (charah): as in vs. 1, there concerning the repentance of Nineveh.

-Angry enough to die. Literally, `unto death.` These words have a child-like quality more endearing than anything else.

Vs. 10: And the Lord said, `You pity the plant for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.

-Pity (chus): connotes sparing as well as to be grieved. `Spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love` [Neh 13.22].

-For which you did not labor (hamal): implies being troubled. `What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun` [Eccl 1.3]?

-Make it grow (gadal): the verbal root for `nobles` as in 3.7.

-Perished (`avad): last noted in 3.9.

Vs. 11: And should not I pity Nineveh...persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?

-The Book of Jonah ends with an unresolved question or one which does not record Jonah's response. We may intimate this response by the way Jonah had behaved throughout the narrative.

-Pity (chus): cf. the previous verse. Both instances have the preposition hal (on, upon).

-Know (yadah): the common verb which implies intimate knowledge. `Adam knew his wife` [Gen 4.1].

BOOKMARK