

Jonah

Jonah Tries to Run from the Lord

1:1 The LORD said¹ to Jonah son of Amitai,² 1:2 “Go immediately³ to Nineveh,⁴ that⁵ large capital⁶ city,⁷ and announce judgment

¹ **tn** *Heb* “The word of the LORD.” The genitive noun in the construction הַבְּרִיָּהּ (d^hvar-^ehvah, “word of the LORD”) could function as a possessive genitive (“the LORD’s word”; see *IBHS* 145 §9.5.1g), but more likely it functions as a subjective genitive (“the LORD said”; see *IBHS* 143 §9.5.1a). The Aramaic translation of Jonah 1:1 (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible are known as Targums) interprets the Hebrew as “There was a word of prophecy from the LORD” (cf. *Tg. Hos* 1:1).

² **tn** *Heb* “The word of the LORD was to Jonah...saying....” The infinitive לֵאמֹר (*le’mor*, “saying”) introduces direct discourse and is untranslated in English.

³ **tn** *Heb* “Arise, go.” The two imperatives without an intervening *vav* (וְ, *qum lekh*; “Arise, go!”), form a verbal hendiadys in which the first verb functions adverbially and the second retains its full verbal force: “Go immediately.” This construction emphasizes the urgency of the command. The translations “Go at once” (NRSV, NJPS) or simply “Go!” (NIV) are better than the traditional “Arise, go” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NASB) or “Get up and go” (NLT). For similar constructions with וְ, see *Gen* 19:14-15; *Judg* 4:14; 8:20-21; 1 *Sam* 9:3.

⁴ **sn** *Nineveh* was the last capital city of ancient Assyria. Occupying about 1800 acres, it was located on the east bank of the Tigris River across from the modern city of Mosul, Iraq. The site includes two tells, Nebi Yunus and Kouyunjik, which have been excavated on several occasions. See A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*; R. C. Thompson and R. W. Hutchinson, *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh*; G. Waterfield, *Layard of Nineveh*. Preliminary reports of limited excavations in 1987 and 1989 appear in *Mar Sipri* 1:2 (1988): 1-2; 2:2 (1989): 1-2; 4:1 (1991): 1-3. Also see D. J. Wiseman, “Jonah’s Nineveh,” *TynBul* 30 (1979): 29-51.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the.” The article draws attention to a well-known fact and may function as a demonstrative pronoun: “that great city” (see *IBHS* 242 §13.5.1e).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “great city.” The adjective גדול (*gadol*, “great”) can refer to a wide variety of qualities: (1) size: “large,” (2) height: “tall,” (3) magnitude: “great,” (4) number: “populous,” (5) power: “mighty,” (6) influence: “powerful,” (8) significance: “important,” (7) finance: “wealthy,” (8) intensity: “fierce,” (9) sound: “loud,” (10) age: “oldest,” (11) importance: “distinguished,” (12) position: “chief, leading, head” (*HALOT* 177-78 s.v. גדול; BDB 152-53 s.v. גדול). The phrase עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ (*ir-g^edolah*, “city”) may designate a city that is (1) large in size (*Josh* 10:2; *Neh* 4:7) or (2) great in power: (a) important city-state (*Gen* 10:12) or (b) prominent capital city (*Jer* 22:8). The phrase עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ (both with and without the article) is used four times in *Jonah* (1:2; 3:2, 3; 4:11). This phrase is twice qualified by a statement about its immense dimensions (3:3) or large population (4:11), so גדול might denote size. However, size is not the issue in 1:2. At this time in history, Nineveh was the most powerful city in the ancient Near East as the capital of the mighty Neo-Assyrian Empire. It is likely that עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ here is the Hebrew equivalent of the Assyrian *ālu rabu* (“the important city” = capital city of the empire), just as רֶב־רַב (*malki rav*, “great king”; *Hos* 5:13; 10:6) is the equivalent of the Assyrian *malku rabu* (“great king” = ruler of the empire; D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* [WBC], 448). Perhaps the closest West Semitic parallel to עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ is the Phoenician *h^a’ir hagg^edolah* in an Amarna letter from King Abimilki of Tyre to Amenhotep IV: “Behold, I protect Tyre, the capital city (^{su}Surri uru rabutu) for the king my lord” (EA 147:61-63). Hebrew constructions in which a determined noun is modified by the determined adjective עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ

against⁸ its people⁹ because their wickedness¹⁰ has come to my attention.”¹¹ 1:3 Instead, Jonah immediately¹² headed off to Tarshish¹³ to

(“the great...”) often denote singular, unique greatness, e.g., “the great river” (*hannahaggadol*, “the great river”) = the Euphrates (*Deut* 1:7); הַיָּם הַגְּדוֹל (*hayyam haggadol*, “the great sea”) = the Mediterranean (*Josh* 1:4); הַכֹּהֵן הַגְּדוֹל (*hakkoheh haggadol*, “the great priest”) = the chief priest (*Lev* 21:10); and לְעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָהּ (*la’ir hagg^edolah hazzo’t*, “[to] this great city”) = this capital city (*Jer* 22:8). So עִירֵי־גְדֹלָהּ may well connote “the capital city” here.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “Nineveh, the great city.” The description “the great city” stands in apposition to “Nineveh.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “cry out against it.” The basic meaning of קָרָא (*qara*) is “to call out; to cry out; to shout out,” but here it is a technical term referring to what a prophet has to say: “to announce” (e.g., 1 *Kgs* 13:32; *Isa* 40:2, 6; *Jer* 3:12; see *HALOT* 1129 s.v. קָרָא 8). When used with the preposition עַל (*al*, “against” [in a hostile sense]; 826 s.v. עַל 5.a), it refers to an oracle announcing or threatening judgment (e.g., 1 *Kgs* 13:2, 4, 32; BDB 895 s.v. עַל 3.a). This nuance is reflected in several English versions: “Announce my judgment against it” (NLT) and “proclaim judgment upon it” (JPS, NJPS). Other translations are less precise: “cry out against it” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV), “denounce it” (NEB, REB). Some are even misleading: “preach against it” (NAB, NIV) and “preach in it” (Douay). *Tg. Jonah* 1:2 nuances this interpretively as “prophecy against.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “it.” The pronoun functions as a synecdoche of container for contents, referring to the people of Nineveh.

¹⁰ **sn** The term wickedness is personified here; it is pictured as ascending heavenward into the very presence of God. This figuratively depicts how God became aware of their evil – it had ascended into heaven right into his presence.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “has come up before me.” The term לָפָנַי (*l^hfanay*, “before me”) often connotes “in the full cognitive knowledge of” or “in the full mental view” of someone (BDB 817 s.v. לָפָנַי 11.4.a.(c); e.g., *Gen* 6:13; *Isa* 65:6; *Jer* 2:22; *Lam* 1:22). The use of the verb עָלָה (*alah*, “to ascend”) complements this idea; it is sometimes used to describe actions or situations on earth that have “come up” into heaven to God’s attention, so to speak (e.g., *Exod* 2:23; 1 *Sam* 5:12; 2 *Kgs* 19:28; *Ps* 74:23; *Isa* 37:29; *Jer* 14:2; see BDB 749 s.v. עָלָה 8). The point is that God was fully aware of the evil of the Ninevites.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “he arose to flee.” The phrase וָיָקָם לָרֹחֵץ (*vayy-aqam livroakh*, “he arose to flee”) is a wordplay on the LORD’s command וָיָקָם לְרֹחֵץ (*vayy-aqam lekh*; “Arise! Go!”) in v. 2. By repeating the first verb וָיָקָם the narrator sets up the reader to expect that Jonah was intending to obey God. But Jonah did not “arise to go” to Nineveh; he “arose to flee” to Tarshish. Jonah looks as though he was about to obey, but he does not. This unexpected turn of events creates strong irony. The narrator does not reveal Jonah’s motivation to the reader at this point. He delays this revelation for rhetorical effect until 4:2-3.

¹³ **tn** The place-name תַּרְשִׁישׁ (*tarshish*, “Tarshish”) refers to a distant port city or region (*Isa* 23:6; *Jer* 10:9; *Ezek* 27:12; 38:13; 2 *Chr* 9:21; 20:36; 37) located on the coastlands in the Mediterranean west of Palestine (*Ps* 72:10; *Isa* 23:6, 10; 66:19; *Jonah* 1:3; see BDB 1076 s.v. תַּרְשִׁישׁ). *HALOT* 1798 s.v. תַּרְשִׁישׁ (E.a). Scholars have not established its actual location (*HALOT* 1797 s.v. B). It has been variously identified with Tartessos in southwest Spain (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.163; 4.152; cf. *Gen* 10:4), Carthage (LXX of *Isa* 23:1, 14 and *Ezek* 27:25), and Sardinia (F. M. Cross, “An Interpretation of the Nora Stone,” *BASOR* 208 [1972]: 13-19). The ancient versions handle it variously. The LXX identifies תַּרְשִׁישׁ with Carthage/Καρχηδών (*karchēdōn*; *Isa* 23:1, 6, 10, 14; *Ezek*

escape¹ from the commission of the LORD.² He

27:12; 38:13). The place name תַּרְשִׁישׁ is rendered "Africa" in the Targums in some passages (Tg. 1 Kgs 10:22; 22:49; Tg. Jer 10:9) and elsewhere as "sea" (Isa 2:16; 23:1, 14; 50:9; 66:19; Ezek 27:12, 25; 38:13; Jonah 4:2). The Jewish Midrash *Canticles Rabbah* 5:14.2 cites Jonah 1:3 as support for the view that Tarshish = "the Great Sea" (the Mediterranean). It is possible that תַּרְשִׁישׁ does not refer to one specific port but is a general term for the distant Mediterranean coastlands (Ps 72:10; Isa 23:6, 10; 66:19). In some cases it seems to mean simply "the open sea": (1) the Tg. Jonah 1:3 translates תַּרְשִׁישׁ as "[he arose to flee] to the sea"; (2) Jerome's commentary on Isa 2:16 states that Hebrew scholars in his age defined תַּרְשִׁישׁ as "sea"; and (3) the gem called תַּרְשִׁישׁ, "topaz" (BDB 1076 s.v.; HALOT 1798 s.v.) in Exod 28:20 and 39:13 is rendered "the color of the sea" in Tg. Onq. (see D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* [WBC], 451). The designation תַּרְשִׁישׁ (only *onyxot tarshish*, "Tarshish-ships") referred to large oceangoing vessels equipped for the high seas (2 Chr 9:21; Ps 48:8; Isa 2:16; 23:1, 14; 60:9; Ezek 27:25) or large merchant ships designed for international trade (1 Kgs 10:22; 22:49; 2 Chr 9:21; 20:36; Isa 23:10; HALOT 1798 s.v. E.b). The term תַּרְשִׁישׁ is derived from the Iberian *tart[ul]* with the Anatolian suffix -issos/essos, resulting in *Tartessos* (BRL2 332a); however, the etymological meaning of תַּרְשִׁישׁ is uncertain (see W. F. Albright, "New Light on the Early History of Phoenician Colonization," *BASOR* 83 [1941]: 21-22 and note 29; HALOT 1797 s.v. תַּרְשִׁישׁ A). The name תַּרְשִׁישׁ appears in sources outside the Hebrew Bible in Neo-Assyrian ^{KUR}*Tar-si-si* (R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons* [AfO], 86, §57 line 10) and Greek ^{TART}*ἄρταρσισσος* (*tartēssos*; HALOT 1797 s.v. C). Most English versions render תַּרְשִׁישׁ as "Tarshish" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NEB, NJB, JPS, NJPS), but TEV, CEV render it more generally as "to Spain." NLT emphasizes the rhetorical point: "in the opposite direction," though "Tarshish" is mentioned later in the verse.

1 tn Heb "Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish away from the LORD."

2 tn Heb "away from the presence of the LORD." The term מִלְּפָנֶי (millifne, "away from the presence of") is composed of the preposition לְפָנֶי (l'panay, "in front of, before the presence of") and מִן (min, "away from"). The term מִלְּפָנֶי is used with בָּרַח (barakh, "to flee") only here in biblical Hebrew so it is difficult to determine its exact meaning (HALOT 942 s.v. בָּרַח 4.h.ii; see E. Jenni, "Fliehen" im akkadischen und im hebräischen Sprachgebrauch," *Or* 47 [1978]: 357). The most likely options are: (1) Jonah simply fled from the LORD's presence manifested in the temple (for mention of the temple elsewhere in Jonah, see 2:5,8). This is reflected in Jerome's rendering *fugeret in Tharsis a facie Domini* ("he fled to Tarshish away from the face/presence of the LORD"). The term מִלְּפָנֶי is used in this sense with יָצָא (*yatsa*, "to go out") to depict someone or something physically leaving the manifested presence of the LORD (Lev 9:24; Num 17:11 HT [16:46 ET]; 17:24 [17:9 ET]; cf. Gen 4:16). This is reflected in several English versions: "from the presence of the LORD" (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, ASV, NASB) and "out of the reach of the LORD" (REB). (2) Jonah was fleeing to a distant place outside the land of Israel (D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* [WBC], 450). The term מִלְּפָנֶי is used in various constructions with מִן to describe locations outside the land of Israel where Yahweh was not worshipped (1 Sam 26:19-20; 2 Kgs 13:23; 17:20, 23; Jer 23:39). This would be the equivalent of a self-imposed exile. (3) The term מִלְּפָנֶי can mean "out of sight" (Gen 23:4,8), so perhaps Jonah was trying to escape from the LORD's active awareness – out of the LORD's sight. The idea would either be an anthropomorphism (standing for a distance out of the sight of God) or it would reflect an inadequate theology of the limited omniscience and presence of God. This is reflected in some English versions: "ran away from the Lord" (NIV), "running away from Yahweh" (NJB), "to get away from the Lord" (NLT), "to escape from the Lord" (NEB) and "to escape" (CEV). (4) The term מִלְּפָנֶי can mean "in front of someone in power" (Gen 43:33; HALOT 942 s.v. c.i) and "at the disposal of" a king (Gen 13:9; 24:51; 34:10; 2 Chr 14:6; Jer 40:4; HALOT 942 s.v. 4.f). The expression would be a metonymy: Jonah was trying to escape from his commis-

sion³ to Joppa⁴ and found a merchant ship heading⁵ to Tarshish.⁶ So he paid the fare⁷ and went aboard⁸ it to go with them⁹ to Tarshish¹⁰ far away from the LORD.¹¹ 1:4 But¹² the LORD

sion (effect) ordered by God (cause). This is reflected in several English versions: "to flee from the LORD's service" (JPS, NJPS). Jonah confesses in 4:2-3 that he fled to avoid carrying out his commission – lest God relent from judging Nineveh if its populace might repent. But it is also clear in chs. 1-2 that Jonah could not escape from the LORD himself.

sn Three times in chap. 1 (in vv. 3 and 10) Jonah's voyage is described as an attempt to escape away from the LORD – from the LORD's presence (and therefore his active awareness; compare v. 2). On one level, Jonah was attempting to avoid a disagreeable task, but the narrator's description personalizes Jonah's rejection of the task. Jonah's issue is with the LORD himself, not just his commission. The narrator's description is also highly ironic, as the rest of the book shows. Jonah tries to sail to Tarshish, in the opposite direction from Nineveh, as if by doing that he could escape from the LORD, when the LORD is the one who knows all about Nineveh's wickedness and is involved in all that happens to Jonah throughout the book. Compare Jonah's explanation when talking with the LORD (see 4:2).

3 tn Heb "he went down." The verb יָרַד (*yarad*, "to go down") can refer to a journey that is physically downhill. This suggests that Jonah had started out from Jerusalem, which is at a higher elevation. He probably received his commission in the temple (see 2:4, 7 for mention of the temple).

sn The verb יָרַד (*yarad*, "to go down") is repeated four times in chs. 1-2 for rhetorical effect (1:3a, 3b, 5; 2:7). Jonah's "downward" journey from Jerusalem down to Joppa (1:3a) down into the ship (1:3b) down into the cargo hold (1:5) and ultimately down into the bottom of the sea, pictured as down to the very gates of the netherworld (2:7), does not end until he turns back to God who brings him "up" from the brink of death (2:6-7).

4 sn Joppa was a small harbor town on the Palestinian coast known as Yepu in the Amarna Letters (14th century b.c.) and Yapu in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions (9th-8th centuries b.c.). It was a port through which imported goods could flow into the Levant (Josh 19:46; 2 Chr 2:15 [16]; Ezra 3:7). It was never annexed by Israel until the Maccabean period (ca. 148 b.c.; 1 Macc 10:76). Jonah chose a port where the people he would meet and the ships he could take were not likely to be Israelite. Once in Joppa he was already partly "away from the LORD" as he conceived it.

5 tn Heb "going to" (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV); NIV "bound for"; NLT "leaving for."

6 tn See note on the phrase "to Tarshish" at the beginning of the verse.

7 tn Heb "its fare." The 3rd person feminine singular suffix on the noun probably functions as a genitive of worth or value: "the fare due it." However, it is translated here simply as "the fare" for the sake of readability. On the other hand "bought a ticket" (CEV, NLT) is somewhat overtranslated, since the expression "paid the fare" is still understandable to most English readers.

8 tn Heb "he went down into it." The verb יָרַד (*yarad*, "to go down") is repeated for rhetorical effect in v. 3a, 3b, 5. See note on the word "traveled" in v. 3a.

9 tn "Them" refers to the other passengers and sailors in the ship.

10 tn See note on the phrase "to Tarshish" at the beginning of the verse.

11 tn Heb "away from the presence of the LORD." See note on the phrase "from the commission of the LORD" in v. 3a.

12 tn The disjunctive construction of *vav* + nonverb followed by a nonpreterite marks a strong contrast in the narrative action (יָרַח הַיָּם, *yarah heit*; "But the Lord hurled...").

hurled¹ a powerful² wind on the sea. Such a violent³ tempest arose on the sea that⁴ the ship threatened to break up!⁵ 1:5 The sailors were so afraid that each cried out⁶ to his own god⁷ and they flung⁸ the ship's cargo⁹ overboard¹⁰ to make the ship lighter.¹¹ Jonah, meanwhile,¹² had gone down¹³ into the hold¹⁴ below

deck,¹⁵ had lain down, and was sound asleep.¹⁶ 1:6 The ship's captain approached him and said, "What are you doing asleep?"¹⁷ Get up! Cry out!¹⁸ to your god! Perhaps your god¹⁹ might take notice of us²⁰ so that we might not die!" 1:7 The sailors said to one another,²¹ "Come on, let's cast lots²²

1 tn The Hiphil of הִל (tul, "to hurl") is used here and several times in this episode for rhetorical emphasis (see vv. 5 and 15).

2 tn Heb "great." Typically English versions vary the adjective here and before "tempest" to avoid redundancy: e.g., KJV, ASV, NRSV "great...mighty"; NAB "violent...furious"; NIV "great...violent"; NLT "powerful...violent."

3 tn Heb "great."

4 tn The nonconsecutive construction of *vav* + nonverb followed by nonpreterite is used to emphasize this result clause (הִתְחַבֵּר לְהִשָּׁבֵר, *v^hha'oniyah khishvah l^hhishaver*; "that the ship threatened to break up").

5 tn Heb "the ship seriously considered breaking apart." The use of חָשַׁב (khashav, "think") in the Piel ("to think about; to seriously consider") personifies the ship to emphasize the ferocity of the storm. The lexicons render the clause idiomatically: "the ship was about to be broken up" (BDB 363 s.v. חָשַׁב 2; HALOT 360 s.v. חָשַׁב).

6 tn Heb "they cried out, each one." The shift from the plural verb יָצְעָקוּ (*vayyiz'qu*, "they cried out to") to the singular subject אִישׁ אֶחָד (*ish*, "each one") is a rhetorical device used to emphasize that each one of the sailors individually cried out. In contrast, Jonah slept.

7 tn Or "gods" (CEV, NLT). The plural noun אֱלֹהִים (*'elohim*) might be functioning either as a plural of number ("gods") or a plural of majesty ("god") – the form would allow for either. As members of a polytheistic culture, each sailor might appeal to several gods. However, individuals could also look to a particular god for help in trouble. *Tg.* Jonah 1:5 interpretively renders the line, "Each man prayed to his idols, but they saw that they were useless."

8 tn Heb "hurled." The Hiphil of הִל (tul, "to hurl") is again used, repeated from v. 4.

9 tn The plural word rendered "cargo" (כֵּלִים, *kelim*) is variously translated "articles, vessels, objects, baggage, instruments" (see 1 Sam 17:22; 1 Kgs 10:21; 1 Chr 15:16; Isa 18:2; Jer 22:7). As a general term, it fits here to describe the sailors throwing overboard whatever they could. The English word "cargo" should be taken generally to include the ship's payload and whatever else could be dispensed with.

10 tn Heb "into the sea."

11 tn Heb "to lighten it from them."

12 tn Heb "but Jonah." The disjunctive construction of *vav* + nonverb followed by nonpreterite (וַיִּנְהַי יוֹנָה יָרָד, "but Jonah had gone down...") introduces a parenthetical description of Jonah's earlier actions before the onset of the storm.

13 tn Following a *vav*-disjunctive introducing parenthetical material, the suffixed-conjugation verb יָרָד (*yarad*) functions as a past perfect here: "he had gone down" (see *IBHS* 490-91 §30.5.2). This describes Jonah's previous actions before the onset of the storm.

14 tn Or "stern." There is some question whether the term יָרְכָה (*yarkah*) refers to the ship's hold below deck (R. S. Hess, *NIDOTTE* 3:282) or to the stern in the back of the ship (*HALOT* 439 s.v. יָרְכָה 2.b). This is the only use of this term in reference to a ship in biblical Hebrew. When used elsewhere, this term has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) "rear," such as rear of a building (Exod 26:22, 27; 36:27, 32; Ezek 46:19), back room of a house (1 Kgs 6:16; Ps 128:3; Amos 6:10), flank of a person's body (figurative for rear border; Gen 49:13); and (2) "far part" that is remote, such as the back of a cave (1 Sam 24:4), the bottom of a cistern (Isa 14:15), the lower recesses of Sheol (Ezek 32:23), the remotest part of a mountain range (Judg 19:1, 18; 2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 37:24), the highest summit of a mountain (Ps 48:3), and the north – viewed as the remotest part of the earth (Isa 14:13; Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2). So the term could refer to the "back" (stern) or "remote part" (lower

deck) of the ship. The related Akkadian expression *arkat eleppi*, "stern of a ship" (*HALOT* 439 s.v. 2.b) seems to suggest that יָרְכָה means "stern" (*HALOT* 439 s.v. 2.b). However, the preceding יָרָד אֵל (*yarad 'el*, "he went down into") suggests a location below deck. Also the genitive noun סִפִּינָה (*s^ffinah*) refers to a "ship" with a deck (BDB 706 s.v. סִפִּינָה; *HALOT* 764 s.v. סִפִּינָה; R. S. Hess, *NIDOTTE* 3:282).

15 tn Or "of the ship." The noun סִפִּינָה (*s^ffinah*) refers to a "ship" with a deck (*HALOT* 764 s.v. סִפִּינָה). The term is a *hapax legomenon* in Hebrew and is probably an Aramaic loanword. The term is used frequently in the related Semitic languages to refer to ships with multiple decks. Here the term probably functions as a synecdoche of whole for the part, referring to the "lower deck" rather than to the ship as a whole (R. S. Hess, *NIDOTTE* 3:282). An outdated approach related the noun to the verb סָפַן (*safan*, "to cover") and suggested that סִפִּינָה describes a ship covered with sheathing (BDB 706 s.v. סִפִּינָה).

16 tn The a-class theme vowel of וַיִּרְדָּם (*vayyeradām*) indicates that this is a stative verb, describing the resultant condition of falling asleep: "was sound asleep."

17 tn Heb "What to you sleeping!" The Niphal participle נִרְדָּם (*nirdām*) from רָדַם (*radām*, "to sleep") functions here not as a vocative use of the noun (so KJV, NKJV, ASV: "O sleeper," RSV: "you sleeper") but as a verbal use to depict uninterrupted sleep up to this point. The expression מַה-לָּכָה (*mah-l^hkha*, "what to you?") can express surprise (BDB 552 s.v. מַה 1.a; e.g., Job 9:12; 22:12; Eccl 8:4; Isa 45:9,10) or indignation and contempt (BDB 552 s.v. מַה 1.c; e.g., 1 Kgs 19:9, 13). Accordingly, the captain is either surprised that Jonah is able to sleep so soundly through the storm (NIV "How can you sleep?"; JPS, NJPS "How can you be sleeping so soundly?"; NEB, REB "What, sound asleep?") or indignant that Jonah would sleep in a life-threatening situation when he should be praying (CEV "How can you sleep at a time like this?"; NAB "What are you doing [+ sound NRSV] asleep?"; NJB: "What do you mean by sleeping?").

18 tn Heb "cry out" or "call upon." The verb קָרָא (*qara*), "to call out, to cry out" + the preposition אֵל (*el*, "to") often depicts a loud, audible cry of prayer to God for help in the midst of trouble: "to call on, to shout to" (*HALOT* 1129 s.v. קָרָא 9.b; BDB 895 s.v. קָרָא 2.a; e.g., Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 12:17, 18; 2 Sam 22:7; Hos 7:7; Pss 3:4 [5 HT]; 4:3 [4 HT]). Jonker notes: "The basic meaning of *qr*' is to draw attention to oneself by the audible use of one's voice in order to establish contact with someone else. The reaction of the called person is normally expressed by the verbs... 'answer' and... 'hear'" (L. Jonker, *NIDOTTE* 3:971).

sn The imperatives "arise!" and "cry out!" are repeated from v. 2 for ironic effect. The captain's words would have rung in Jonah's ears as a stinging reminder that the Lord had uttered them once before. Jonah was hearing them again because he had disobeyed them before.

19 tn Heb "the god." The article הַאֱלֹהִים (*ha'elohim*) denotes previous reference to אֱלֹהֵיךָ (*'eloheka*, "your god"); see *IBHS* 242-43 §13.5.1d). The captain refers here to the "god" just mentioned, that is, whatever god Jonah might pray to ("your god").

20 tn Or "give thought to us." The verb is found only here in the OT. Related nouns are in Job 12:5 and Ps 146:5. The captain hopes for some favorable attention from a god who might act on behalf of his endangered crewmen.

21 tn Heb "And they said, a man to his companion." The plural verb is individualized by "a man."

22 sn The English word *lots* is a generic term. In some cultures the procedure for "casting lots" is to "draw straws" so that the person who receives the short straw is chosen. In other situations a colored stone or a designated playing card might be picked at random. In Jonah's case, small stones

to find out¹ whose fault it is that this disaster has overtaken us.² So they cast lots, and Jonah was singled out.³ **1:8** They said to him, “Tell us, whose fault is it that this disaster has overtaken us?”⁴ What’s your occupation? Where do you come from? What’s your country? And who are your people?”⁵ **1:9** He said to them, “I am a Hebrew! And I worship⁶ the LORD,⁷ the God of heaven,⁸ who made the sea and the dry land.”

were probably used.

1 sn In the ancient Near East, casting lots was a custom used to try to receive a revelation from the gods about a particular situation. The Phoenician sailors here cried out to their gods and cast lots in the hope that one of their gods might reveal the identity of the person with whom he was angry. CEV has well captured the sentiment of v.7b: “Let’s ask our gods to show us who caused all this trouble.” It turned out to be Jonah.”

2 tn Heb “On whose account this calamity is upon us.”

3 tn Heb “the lot fell on Jonah.” From their questions posed to Jonah, it does not appear that the sailors immediately realize that Jonah was the one responsible for the storm. Instead, they seem to think that he is the one chosen by their gods to reveal to them the one responsible for their plight. It is only after he admits in vv. 9-10 that he was fleeing from the God whom he served that they realize that Jonah was in fact the cause of their trouble.

4 tn Heb “On whose account is this calamity upon us?”

5 tn Heb “And from what people are you?”

sn *Whose fault...What’s...Where...What’s...* The questions delivered in rapid succession in this verse indicate the sailors’ urgency to learn quickly the reason for the unusual storm.

6 tn Or “fear.” The verb יָרֵא (*yare’*) has a broad range of meanings, including “to fear, to worship, to revere, to respect” (BDB 431 s.v.). When God is the object, it normally means “to fear” (leading to obedience; BDB 431 s.v. 1) or “to worship” (= to stand in awe of; BDB 431 s.v. 2). Because the fear of God leads to wisdom and obedience, that is probably not the sense here. Instead Jonah professes to be a loyal Yahwist – in contrast to the pagan Phoenician sailors who worshiped false gods, he worshiped the one true God. Unfortunately his worship of the LORD lacked the necessary moral prerequisite.

7 tn Heb “The LORD, the God of heaven, I fear.” The Hebrew word order is unusual. Normally the verb appears first, but here the direct object “the LORD, the God of heaven” precedes the verb. Jonah emphasizes the object of his worship. In contrast to the Phoenician sailors who worship pagan polytheistic gods, Jonah took pride in his theological orthodoxy. Ironically, his “fear” of the LORD in this case was limited to this profession of theological orthodoxy because his actions betrayed his refusal to truly “fear” God by obeying him.

sn The word *fear* appears in v. 5, here in v. 9, and later in vv. 10 and 16. Except for this use in v. 9, every other use describes the sailors’ response (emotional fear prompting physical actions) to the storm or to the LORD. By contrast, Jonah claims to fear God but his attitude and actions do not reflect this. It is clear that Jonah does not “fear” in the same way that they do.

8 tn Heb “the God of the heavens.” The noun שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*, “heavens”) always appears in the dual form. Although the dual form sometimes refers to things that exist in pairs, the dual is often used to refer to geographical locations, e.g., יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (*y’rushalayim*, “Jerusalem”), אֶפְרַיִם (*efrayim*, “Ephraim”), and מִצְרַיִם (*mitsrayim*, “Egypt,” but see IBHS 118 §7.3d). The dual form of שָׁמַיִם does not refer to two different kinds of heavens or to two levels of heaven; it simply refers to “heaven” as a location – the dwelling place of God. Jonah’s point is that he worships the High God of heaven – the one enthroned over all creation.

1:10 Hearing this,⁹ the men became even more afraid¹⁰ and said to him, “What have you done?” (The men said this because they knew that he was trying to escape¹¹ from the LORD,¹² because he had previously told them.¹³) **1:11** Because the storm was growing worse and worse,¹⁴ they said to him, “What should we do to you to make¹⁵ the sea calm down¹⁶ for us?” **1:12** He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea to make the sea quiet down,¹⁷ because I know it’s my fault you are in this severe storm.” **1:13** Instead, they tried to row¹⁸ back to land,¹⁹ but they were not able to do so²⁰ because the storm kept growing worse and worse.²¹ **1:14** So they cried out to the LORD, “Oh, please, LORD, don’t let us die on account of this man! Don’t hold us guilty of

9 tn Heb “Then the men feared...” The *vav*-consecutive describes the consequence of Jonah’s statement. The phrase “Hearing this” does not appear in the Hebrew text but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

10 tn Heb “The men feared a great fear.” The cognate accusative construction using the verb יָרֵא (*yare’*, “to fear”) and the noun יְרֵאָה (*yir’ah*, “fear”) from the same root (יָרַע, *y’*) emphasizes the sailors’ escalating fright: “they became very afraid” (see IBHS 167 §10.2.1g).

11 tn Heb “fleeing.”

12 sn The first two times that Jonah is said to be running away from the LORD (1:3), Hebrew word order puts this phrase last. Now in the third occurrence (1:10), it comes emphatically before the verb that describes Jonah’s action. The sailors were even more afraid once they had heard who it was that Jonah had offended.

13 tn Heb “because he had told them.” The verb הִגִּיד (*higgid*, “he had told”) functions as a past perfect, referring to a previous event.

14 tn Heb “the sea was walking and storming.” The two participles הֹלֵךְ וְסוֹרֵר (*holekh v’so’er*, “walking and storming”) form an idiom that means “the storm was growing worse and worse.” When the participle הֹלֵךְ precedes another participle with *vav*, it often denotes the idea of “growing, increasing” (BDB 233 s.v. הֹלֵךְ 4d; e.g., Exod 19:19; 1 Sam 2:26; 2 Sam 3:1; 15:12; 2 Chr 17:12; Esth 9:4; Prov 4:18; Eccl 1:6). For example, “the power of David grew stronger and stronger (הֹלֵךְ וְיָזַק, *holekh v’khazeq*; “was walking and becoming strong”), while the dynasty of Saul grew weaker and weaker (הֹלֵכִים וְיָבִי, *hol’khim v’dallim*; “was walking and becoming weak”) (2 Sam 3:1; see IBHS 625-26 §37.6d).

15 tn The *vav*-consecutive prefixed to the imperfect/prefixed conjugation verb וַיִּשְׁתַּקֵּט (*v’yish’toq*, “to quiet”) denotes purpose/result (see IBHS 638-40 §38.3), translated here by the English infinitive.

16 tn Heb “become quiet for us”; NRSV “may quiet down for us.”

17 tn Heb “quiet for you”; NAB “that it may quiet down for you.”

18 sn The word translated *row* is used in Ezekiel to describe digging through a wall (Ezek 8:8; 12:5, 7, 12). Its use in Jonah pictures the sailors digging into the water with their oars as hard as they could.

19 sn The word for *land* here is associated with a Hebrew verb meaning “to be dry” and is the same noun used in v. 9 of dry ground in contrast with the sea, both made by the LORD (see also Gen 1:9-10; Exod 4:9; 14:16, 22, 29; Jonah 2:10).

20 tn Heb “but they were not able.” The phrase “to do so” does not appear in the Hebrew text but is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

21 tn Heb “the sea was walking and storming.” See the note on the same idiom in v. 11.

shedding innocent blood.¹ After all, you, LORD, have done just as you pleased.”² **1:15** So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging. **1:16** The men feared the LORD³ greatly,⁴ and earnestly vowed⁵ to offer lavish sacrifices⁶ to the LORD.⁷

Jonah Prays

1:17 (2:1)⁸ The LORD sent⁹ a huge¹⁰ fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. **2:1** Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish **2:2** and said,

“I¹¹ called out to the LORD from my distress, and he answered me;¹² from the belly of Sheol¹³ I cried out for help, and you heard my prayer.¹⁴ **2:3** You threw me¹⁵ into the deep waters,¹⁶ into the middle¹⁷ of the sea;¹⁸

¹ **tn** *Heb* “Do not put against us innocent blood,” that is, “Do not assign innocent blood to our account.” It seems that the sailors were afraid that they would die if they kept Jonah in the ship and also that they might be punished with death if they threw him overboard.

² **tn** Pss 115:3 and 135:6 likewise use these verbs (הִפִּיץ *hifits* and נָצַח, *khafets* and *’asah*; “to delight” and “to do, make”) in speaking of the LORD as characteristically doing what he wishes to do.

³ **tc** The editors of *BHS* suggest that the direct object אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (*’et-y’ehvah*, “the LORD”) might be a scribal addition, and that the original text simply read, “The men became greatly afraid...” However, there is no shred of external evidence to support this conjectural emendation. Admittedly, the apparent “conversion” of these Phoenician sailors to Yahwism is a surprising development. But two literary features support the Hebrew text as it stands. First, it is not altogether clear whether or not the sailors actually converted to faith in the LORD. They might have simply incorporated him into their polytheistic religion. Second, the narrator has taken pains to portray the pagan sailors as a literary foil to Jonah by contrasting Jonah’s hypocritical profession to fear the LORD (v. 9) with the sailors’ actions that reveal an authentic fear of God (v. 10, 14, 16).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “they feared the LORD with a great fear.” The root יָרָא (*y’r*, “fear”) is repeated in the verb and accusative noun, forming a cognate accusative construction which is used for emphasis (see *IBHS* 167 §10.2.1g). The idea is that they greatly feared the LORD or were terrified of him.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “they vowed vows.” The root נָדָה (*ndr*, “vow”) is repeated in the verb and accusative noun, forming an emphatic effected accusative construction in which the verbal action produces the object specified by the accusative (see *IBHS* 166-67 §10.2.1f). Their act of vowing produced the vows. This construction is used to emphasize their earnestness and zeal in making vows to worship the God who had just spared their lives from certain death.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “they sacrificed sacrifices.” The root זָבַח (*zbxh*, “sacrifice”) is repeated in the verb and accusative noun, forming an emphatic effected accusative construction in which the verbal action produces the object (see *IBHS* 166-67 §10.2.1f). Their act of sacrificing would produce the sacrifices. It is likely that the two sets of effected accusative constructions here (“they vowed vows and sacrificed sacrifices”) form a hendiadys; the two phrases connote one idea: “they earnestly vowed to sacrifice lavishly.” It is unlikely that they offered animal sacrifices at this exact moment on the boat – they had already thrown their cargo overboard, presumably leaving no animals to sacrifice. Instead, they probably vowed that they would sacrifice to the LORD when – and if – they reached dry ground. *Tg. Jonah* 1:16 also takes this as a vow to sacrifice but for a different reason. According to Jewish tradition, the heathen are not allowed to make sacrifice to the God of Israel outside Jerusalem, so the Targum modified the text by making it a promise to sacrifice: “they promised to offer a sacrifice before the LORD and they made vows” (see B. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Jonah*, 70; K. Cathcart and R. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* [ArBib], 14:106, n. 29).

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “The men feared the LORD [with] a great fear, they sacrificed sacrifices, and they vowed vows” (cf. v. 10). By pairing verbs with related nouns as direct objects, the account draws attention to the sailors’ response and its thoroughness.

⁸ **sn** Beginning with **1:17**, the verse numbers through **2:10** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with **1:17** ET = **2:1** HT, **2:1** ET = **2:2** HT, etc., through **2:10** ET = **2:11** HT.

⁹ **tn** Or “appointed” (NASB); NLT “had arranged for.” The Piel verb מִנָּה (*minnah*) means “to send, to appoint” (Ps 61:8; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8; Dan 1:5, 10-11; HALOT 599 s.v. מִנָּה 2; BDB 584 s.v. מִנָּה). Joyce Baldwin notes, “Here, with YHWH as the subject, the verb stresses God’s sovereign rule over events for the accomplishment of his purpose (as in 4:6-8, where the verb recurs in each verse). The ‘great fish’ is in exactly the right place at the right time by God’s command, in order to swallow Jonah and enclose him safely” (Joyce Baldwin, “Jonah,” *The Minor Prophets*, 2:566).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “great.”

¹¹ **sn** The eight verses of Jonah’s prayer in Hebrew contain twenty-seven first-person pronominal references to himself. There are fifteen second- or third-person references to the LORD.

¹² **tn** *Tg.* Jonah 2:2 renders this interpretively: “and he heard my prayer.”

sn The first verse of the prayer summarizes the whole – “I was in trouble; I called to the LORD for help; he rescued me; I will give him thanks” – before elaborating on the nature and extent of the trouble (vv. 3-7a), mentioning the cry for help and the subsequent rescue (6b-7), and promising to give thanks (8-9). These elements, as well as much vocabulary and imagery found in Jonah’s prayer, appear also in other Hebrew psalms. With Jonah 2:1 compare, for example, Pss 18:6; 22:24; 81:7; 116:1-4; 120:1; 130:1-2; Lam 3:55-56. These references and others indicate that Jonah was familiar with prayers used in worship at the temple in Jerusalem; he knew “all the right words.” Consider also Ps 107 with Jonah as a whole.

¹³ **sn** *Sheol* was a name for the place of residence of the dead, the underworld (see Job 7:9-10; Isa 38:17-18). Jonah pictures himself in the belly of Sheol, its very center – in other words he is as good as dead.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “voice” (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV); NIV “my cry.” The term קוֹל (*qol*, “voice”) functions as a metonymy for the content of what is uttered: cry for help in prayer.

¹⁵ **tn** Or “You had thrown me.” Verse 3 begins the detailed description of Jonah’s plight, which resulted from being thrown into the sea.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the deep” (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); NLT “into the ocean depths.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “heart” (so many English versions); CEV “to the (+ very TEV) bottom of the sea.”

¹⁸ **tc** The *BHS* editors suggest deleting either מְצִלָּה (*m’tsulah*, “into the deep”) or בִּלְבַב יָמִים (*bilvav yammim*, “into the heart of the sea”). They propose that one or the other is a scribal gloss on the remaining term. However, the use of an appositive phrase within a poetic colon is not unprecedented in Hebrew poetry. The MT is therefore best retained.

the ocean current¹ engulfed² me;
all the mighty waves³ you sent⁴ swept⁵
over me.⁶
2:4 I thought⁷ I had been banished from
your sight,⁸
that I would never again⁹ see your holy

temple!¹⁰
2:5 Water engulfed me up to my neck,¹¹
the deep ocean¹² surrounded me;
seaweed¹³ was wrapped around my head.
2:6 I went down¹⁴ to the very bottoms¹⁵ of

1 tn Or “the stream”; KJV, ASV, NRSV “the flood.” The Hebrew word נַהַר (*nahar*) is used in parallel with יָם (*yam*, “sea”) in Ps 24:2 (both are plural) to describe the oceans of the world and in Ps 66:6 to speak of the sea crossed by Israel in the exodus from Egypt.

2 tn Heb “surrounded” (so NRSV); NAB “enveloped.”

3 tn Heb “your breakers and your waves.” This phrase is a nominal hendiadys; the first noun functions as an attributive adjective modifying the second noun: “your breaking waves.”

4 tn Heb “your... your...” The 2nd person masculine singular suffixes on מִשְׁבַּרְיָךְ וּמַגְלֵכָה (*mishbarekha v gallekha*, “your breakers and your waves”) function as genitives of source. Just as God had hurled a violent wind upon the sea (1:4) and had sovereignly sent the large fish to swallow him (1:17 [2:1 HT]), Jonah viewed God as sovereignly responsible for afflicting him with sea waves that were crashing upon his head, threatening to drown him. Tg. Jonah 2:3 alters the 2nd person masculine singular suffixes to 3rd person masculine singular suffixes to make them refer to the sea and not to God, for the sake of smoothness: “all the gales of the sea and its billows.”

5 tn Heb “crossed”; KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV “passed.”

6 sn Verses 3 and 5 multiply terms describing Jonah’s watery plight. The images used in v. 3 appear also in 2 Sam 22:5-6; Pss 42:7; 51:11; 69:1-2, 14-15; 88:6-7; 102:10.

7 tn Heb “And I said.” The verb אָמַר (*amar*, “to say”) is sometimes used to depict inner speech and thoughts of a character (HALOT 66 s.v. אָמַר 4; BDB 56 s.v. אָמַר 2; e.g., Gen 17:17; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam 20:26; Esth 6:6). While many English versions render this “I said” (KJV, NKJV, NAB, ASV, NASB, NIV, NLT), several nuance it “I thought” (JPS, NJPS, NEB, REB, NJB, TEV, CEV).

8 tn Or “I have been expelled from your attention”; Heb “from in front of your eyes.” See also Ps 31:22; Lam 3:54-56.

9 tc Or “Yet I will look again to your holy temple” or “Surely I will look again to your holy temple.” The MT and the vast majority of ancient textual witnesses vocalize consonantal אָחַ (*kh*) as the adverb אַחַד (*akh*) which functions as an emphatic asseverative “surely” (BDB 36 s.v. אָחַ 1) or an adversative “yet, nevertheless” (BDB 36 s.v. אָחַ 2; so Tg. Jonah 2:4: “However, I shall look again upon your holy temple”). These options understand the line as an expression of hopeful piety. As a positive statement, Jonah expresses hope that he will live to return to worship in Jerusalem. It may be a way of saying, “I will pray for help, even though I have been banished” (see v. 8; cf. Dan 6:10). The sole dissenter is the Greek recension of Theodotion which reads the interrogative πῶς (*pōs*, “how?”) which reflects an alternate vocalization tradition of אֵךְ (*ekh*) – a defectively written form of אֵיךְ (*ekh*, “how?”; BDB 32 s.v. אֵיךְ 1). This would be translated, “How shall I again look at your holy temple?” (cf. NRSV). Jonah laments that he will not be able to worship at the temple in Jerusalem again – this is a metonymical statement (effect for cause) that he feels certain that he is about to die. It continues the expression of Jonah’s distress and separation from the LORD, begun in v. 2 and continued without relief in vv. 3-7a. The external evidence favors the MT; however, internal evidence seems to favor the alternate vocalization tradition reflected in Theodotion for four reasons. First, the form of the psalm is a declarative praise in which Jonah begins with a summary praise (v. 2), continues by recounting his past plight (vv. 3-6a) and the LORD’s intervention (vv. 6b-7), and concludes with a lesson (v. 8) and vow to praise (v. 9). So the statement with אָחַ in v. 4 falls within the plight – not within a declaration of confidence. Second, while the poetic parallelism of v. 4 could be antithetical (“I have been banished from your sight, yet I will again look to your holy temple”), synonymous parallelism fits the context of the lament better (“I have been banished from your sight; Will I ever again see your holy temple?”). Third, אָךְ is the more difficult vocalization

because it is a defectively written form of אֵיךְ (“how?”) and therefore easily confused with אָךְ (“surely” or “yet, nevertheless”). Fourth, nothing in the first half of the psalm reflects any inkling of confidence on the part of Jonah that he would be delivered from imminent death. In fact, Jonah states in v. 7 that he did not turn to God in prayer until some time later when he was on the very brink of death.

sn Both options for the start of the line (“how?” and “yet” or “surely”) fit the ironic portrayal of Jonah in the prayer (see also vv. 8-9). Jonah, who had been trying to escape the LORD’s attention, here appears remarkably fond of worshipping him. Is there perhaps also a hint of motivation for the LORD to rescue this eager worshiper? Confession of disobedience, on the other hand, is absent. Compare Ps 31:22, where the first half (describing the plight) is very similar to the first half of Jonah 2:3, and the second half starts with “nevertheless” (אָכֵן, *akhen*) and is a positive contrast, a report that God heard, using four words that appear in Jonah 2:2 (cf. Job 32:7-8; Ps 82:6-7; Isa 49:4; Zeph 3:7).

10 tn Heb “Will I ever see your holy temple again?” The rhetorical question expresses denial: Jonah despaired of ever seeing the temple again.

11 tn Heb “as far as the throat.” The noun נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) refers sometimes to the throat or neck (Pss 69:1[2]; 105:18; 124:4, 5; Isa 5:14; HALOT 712 s.v. נֶפֶשׁ 2). The water was up to Jonah’s neck (and beyond), so that his life was in great danger (cf. Ps 69:1).

12 tn Or “the deep; the abyss” (הַרְהוֹם, *h^hom*). The simple “ocean” is perhaps too prosaic, since this Hebrew word has primeval connections (Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; Prov 8:27-28) and speaks of the sea at its vastest (Job 38:16-18; Ps 36:6; 104:5-9).

13 tc The consonantal form סוּף (*svf*) is vocalized by the MT as סוּף (*suf*, “reed”) but the LXX’s ἐσχάτη (*eschatē*, “end”) reflects a vocalization of סוּף (*sof*, “end”). The reading in Tg. Jonah 2:5 interpreted this as a reference to the Reed Sea (also known as the Red Sea). In fact, the Jewish Midrash known as *Pirque Rabbi Eliezer* 10 states that God showed Jonah the way by which the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea. The MT vocalization tradition is preferred.

tn The noun סוּף (*suf*) normally refers to “reeds” – freshwater plants that grow in Egyptian rivers and marshes (Exod 2:3,5; Isa 10:19) – but here it refers to “seaweed” (HALOT 747 s.v. סוּף 1). Though the same freshwater plants do not grow in the Mediterranean, the name may be seen to fit similarly long plants growing in seawater.

14 tn Jonah began going “down” (יָרַד, *yarad*) in chap. 1 (vv. 3, 5; see also 1:15; 2:2-3).

15 tc The MT הַרְהוֹם לְקִצְוֵי הַרִים (*h^hom leqitsvei harim*, “to the extremities [i.e., very bottoms] of the mountains”) is a bit unusual, appearing only here in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, the BHS editors suggest a conjectural emendation of the MT’s לְקִצְוֵי (“to the extremities”) to לְקִצְוֵי הַרִים (*leqatsvei harim*, “to the ends [of the mountains]”) based on orthographic confusion between *vav* (ו) and *bet* (ב). However, the phrase קִצְוֵי הַרִים does appear in the OT Apocrypha in Sir 16:19; therefore, it is not without precedent. Since Jonah emphasizes that he descended, as it were, to the very gates of the netherworld in the second half of this verse, it would be appropriate for Jonah to say that he went down “to the extremities [i.e., very bottoms] of the mountains” (לְקִצְוֵי הַרִים). Therefore, the MT may be retained with confidence.

tn The noun קִצְוֵי (*qetsvei*) is used only three times in the Hebrew Bible, and this is the only usage in which it means “extremity; bottom” (BDB 891 s.v. קִצְוֵי 2). The exact phrase קִצְוֵי הַרִים (“the extremities [bottoms] of the mountains”) is used in the OT Apocrypha once in Sir 16:19.

the mountains;¹
 the gates² of the netherworld³ barred me
 in⁴ forever;⁵
 but you brought me⁶ up from the Pit,⁷ O
 LORD, my God.
 2:7 When my life⁸ was ebbing away,⁹ I
 called out to¹⁰ the LORD,

and my prayer came to your holy tem-
 ple.¹¹
 2:8 Those who worship¹² worthless idols¹³
 forfeit the mercy that could be theirs.¹⁴

1 tn Some English versions (e.g., NEB, NRSV) have connected the “bottoms of the mountains” with the preceding – “weeds were wrapped around my head at the bottoms of the mountains” – and connect “I went down” with “the earth.” Such a connection between “I went down” and “the earth” is difficult to accept. It would be more normal in Hebrew to express “I went down to the earth” with a directive ending (אֶרֶץ, *artsah*) or with a Hebrew preposition before “earth” or without the definite article. The Masoretic accents, in addition, connect “ends of the mountains” with the verb “I went down” and call for a break between the verb and “earth.”

2 tn Heb “As for the earth, its bars...” This phrase is a rhetorical nominative construction (also known as *casus pendens*) in which the noun הָאָרֶץ (*ha’aretz*, “the earth”) stands grammatically isolated and in an emphatic position prior to the third feminine singular suffix that picks up on it in בָּרִיקְהָה (*b’rikheha*, “its bars”; see *IBHS* 128-30 §8.3). This construction is used to emphasize the subject, in this case, the “bars of the netherworld.” The word translated “bars” appears elsewhere to speak of bars used in constructing the sides of the tabernacle and often of crossbars (made of wood or metal) associated with the gates of fortified cities (cf. Exod 36:31-34; Judg 16:3; 1 Kgs 4:13; Neh 3:3; Pss 107:16; 147:13; Isa 45:1-2).

3 tn Heb “the earth.” The noun אֶרֶץ (*eretz*) usually refers to the “earth” but here refers to the “netherworld” (e.g., Job 10:21, 22; Ps 139:15; Isa 26:19; 44:23; BDB 76 s.v. אֶרֶץ 2.g). This is parallel to the related Akkadian term *irsitu* used in the phrase “the land of no return,” that is, the netherworld. This refers to the place of the dead (along with “belly of Sheol,” v. 2, and “the grave,” v. 6), which is sometimes described as having “gates” (Job 38:17; Ps 107:18).

4 tn Heb “behind me.” The preposition בְּעַד (*ba’ad*) with a pronominal suffix and with the meaning “behind” is found also in Judg 3:23. Jonah pictures himself as closed in and so unable to escape death. Having described how far he had come (totally under water and “to the ends of mountains”), Jonah describes the way back as permanently closed against him. Just as it was impossible for a lone individual to walk through the barred gates of a walled city, so Jonah expected it was impossible for him to escape death.

5 tn Heb “As for the earth, its bars [were] against me forever.” This line is a verbless clause. The verb in the translation has been supplied for the sake of clarity and smoothness. The rhetorical nominative construction (see the note on the word “gates” earlier in this verse) has also been smoothed out in the translation.

6 tn Heb “my life.” The term חַיִּי (*khuayyay*, “my life”) functions metonymically as a first common singular pronoun (“me”).

7 sn Jonah pictures himself as being at the very gates of the netherworld (v. 6b) and now within the Pit itself (v. 6c). He is speaking rhetorically, for he had not actually died. His point is that he was as good as dead if God did not intervene immediately. See Pss 7:15; 30:3; 103:4; Ezek 19:3-4, 8.

8 tn Heb “my soul.” The term נַפְשִׁי (*nefesh*, “soul”) is often used as a metonymy for the life and the animating vitality in the body: “my life” (BDB 659 s.v. נַפְשִׁי 3.c).

9 tn Heb “fainting away from me.” The verb הִתְעַפַּף (*hit’atfef*, “to faint away”) is used elsewhere to describe (1) the onset of death when a person’s life begins to slip away (Lam 2:12), (2) the loss of one’s senses due to turmoil (Ps 107:5), and (3) the loss of all hope of surviving calamity (Pss 77:4; 142:4; 143:4; BDB 742 s.v. תִּעַפַּף). All three options are reflected in various English versions: “when my life was ebbing away” (JPS, NJPS), “when my life was slipping away” (CEV), “when I felt my life slipping away” (TEV), “as my senses failed me” (NEB), and “when I had lost all hope” (NLT).

10 tn Heb “remembered.” The verb זָכַר (*zakhar*) usually

means “to remember, to call to mind” but it can also mean “to call out” (e.g., Nah 2:6) as in the related Akkadian verb *zikaru*, “to name, to mention.” The idiom “to remember the LORD” here encompasses calling to mind his character and past actions and appealing to him for help (Deut 8:18-19; Ps 42:6-8; Isa 64:4-5; Zech 10:9). *Tg. Jonah* 2:7 glosses the verb as “I remembered the worship of the LORD,” which somewhat misses the point.

11 sn For similar ideas see 2 Chr 30:27; Pss 77:3; 142:3; 143:4-5.

12 tn Heb “those who pay regard to.” The verbal root שָׁמַר (*shamar*, “to keep, to watch”) appears in the Piel stem only here in biblical Hebrew, meaning “to pay regard to” (BDB 1037 s.v. שָׁמַר). This is metonymical for the act of worship (e.g., Qal “to observe” = to worship, Ps 31:7).

13 tn Heb “worthlessness of nothingness” or “vanities of emptiness.” The genitive construct הַבְּלִי-שָׁוְיָ (*havle-shav’el*) forms an attributive adjective expression: “empty worthlessness” or “worthless vanities.” This ironic reference to false gods is doubly insulting (e.g., Ps 31:7). The noun הֶבֶל (*hevel*, “vapor, breath”) is often used figuratively to describe what is insubstantial, empty, and futile (31 times in Ecc; see also, e.g., Pss 39:4-6, 11; 144:4; Prov 13:11; 21:6; Isa 30:7; 49:4). It often refers to idols – the epitome of emptiness, nothingness, and worthlessness (Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; Ps 31:7; Jer 8:19; 10:8, 15; 14:22; 16:19; 51:18). The noun שָׁוְיָ (“worthlessness, emptiness, nothingness”) describes what is ineffective and lacking reality (BDB 996 s.v. שָׁוְיָ; e.g., Exod 20:7; Pss 60:11; 127:1; Ezek 22:28). It is also often used to refer to idols (e.g., Ps 31:7; Jer 18:15; Hos 5:11).

14 tn Heb “abandon their mercy/loyalty.” The meaning of הִקְדַּם יְעֻבּוּ (*khasdam ya’azovu*, “forsake their mercy/loyalty”) is greatly debated. There are two exegetical issues that are mutually related. First, does the noun הִקְדַּם (*khased*) here mean (1) “mercy, kindness” that man receives from God, or (2) “loyalty, faithfulness” that man must give to God (see BDB 338-39 s.v. הִקְדַּם; HALOT 336-37 s.v. הִקְדַּם)? Second, the third masculine plural suffix on הִקְדַּם (“their loyalty/mercy”) has been taken as (1) subjective genitive, referring to the loyal allegiance they ought to display to the true God: “they abandon the loyalty they should show.” Examples of subjective genitives are: “This is *your kindness* (הִקְדַּם, *khasdek*) which you must do for me: every place to which we come, say of me, ‘He is my brother” (Gen 20:13; also cf. Gen 40:14; 1 Sam 20:14-15). Several English versions take this approach: “forsake their faithfulness” (NASB), “abandon their faithful love” (NJB), “abandon their loyalty” (NEB, REB), “forsake their true loyalty” (RSV, NRSV), “turn their backs on all God’s mercies” (NLT), “have abandoned their loyalty to you” (TEV). (2) This has also been taken as objective genitive, referring to the mercy they might have received from God: “they forfeit the mercy that could be theirs.” The ancient versions interpret הִקְדַּם in this sense: “they do not know the source of their welfare” (*Tg. Jonah* 2:8), “forsake the source of their welfare” (Vulgate), and “abandon their own mercy” (LXX). Several English versions follow this approach: “forsake their source of mercy” (NAB); “forfeit the grace that could be theirs” (NIV), “forsake their own welfare” (JPS, NJPS), “forsake their own mercy” (KJV, ASV), “forsake their own Mercy” (NKJV), “turn from the God who offers them mercy” (CEV). This is a difficult lexical/syntactical problem. On the one hand, the next line contrasts their failure with Jonah’s boast of loyalty to the true God – demonstrating that he, unlike pagan idolaters, deserves to be delivered. On the other hand, the only other use of הִקְדַּם in the book refers to “mercy” God bestows (4:2) – something that Jonah did not believe that the (repentant) pagan idolaters had a right to receive. BDB 339 s.v. הִקְדַּם II takes this approach – “He is הִקְדַּם *their goodness, favour* Jonah 2:9” – and cites other examples of הִקְדַּם with suffixes referring to God: הִקְדַּםִּי (*khasdi*) “my kindness” = he shows kindness to me (Ps 144:2); אֶלֹהֵי הִקְדַּםִּי (*elohe khasdi*) “the God of my kindness” = the God who shows kindness to me (Ps 59:18 HT [59:17 ET]).

2:9 But as for me, I promise to offer a sacrifice to you with a public declaration¹ of praise;² I will surely do³ what I have promised.⁴ Salvation⁵ belongs to the LORD!⁶

2:10 Then the LORD commanded⁷ the fish and it disgorged Jonah on dry land.

The People of Nineveh Respond to Jonah's Warning

3:1 The LORD said to Jonah⁸ a second time, 3:2 "Go immediately⁹ to Nineveh, that large city,¹⁰ and proclaim to¹¹ it the message that I tell you." 3:3 So Jonah went immediately to

Nineveh, as the LORD had said. (Now Nineveh was an enormous city¹² – it required three days to walk through it!)¹³ 3:4 When Jonah began to enter the city one day's walk, he announced, "At the end of forty days,¹⁴ Nineveh will be overthrown!"¹⁵

¹ **tn** Heb "voice" or "sound."

² **tc** The MT reads בְּקוֹל תְּהִלָּה (*bēqol tohah*, "with a voice of thanksgiving"). Some mss of Tg. Jonah read "with the sound of hymns of thanksgiving" here in 2:9 – the longer reading probably reflects an editorial gloss, explaining תְּהִלָּה ("thanksgiving") as "hymns of thanksgiving."

tn Heb "voice/sound of thanksgiving." The genitive תְּהִלָּה (*tohah*, "thanksgiving") specifies the kind of public statement that will accompany the sacrifice. The construct קוֹל תְּהִלָּה (*qol*, "voice, sound") functions as a metonymy of cause for effect, referring to the content of what the voice/sound produces: hymns of praise or declarative praise testimony.

³ **tn** The verbs translated "I will sacrifice" and "I will pay" are Hebrew cohortatives, expressing Jonah's resolve and firm intention.

⁴ **tn** Heb "what I have vowed I will pay." Jonah promises to offer a sacrifice and publicly announce why he is thankful. For similar pledges, see Pss 22:25-26; 50:14-15; 56:12; 69:29-33; 71:14-16, 22-24; 86:12-13; 116:12-19.

⁵ **tn** Or "deliverance" (NAB, NRSV).

⁶ **tn** Or "comes from the LORD." For similar uses of the preposition *lamed* (לְ, לִ) to convey a sort of ownership in which the owner does or may by right do something, see Lev 25:48; Deut 1:17; 1 Sam 17:47; Jer 32:7-8.

⁷ **tn** Heb "spoke to." The fish functions as a literary foil to highlight Jonah's hesitancy to obey God up to this point. In contrast to Jonah who immediately fled when God commanded him, the fish immediately obeyed.

⁸ **tn** Heb "The word of the LORD [was] to Jonah." See the note on 1:1.

⁹ **tn** The commands of 1:2 are repeated here. See the note there on the combination of "arise" and "go."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "Nineveh, the great city."

¹¹ **tn** The verb קָרָא (*qara*, "proclaim") is repeated from 1:2 but with a significant variation. The phrase in 1:2 was the adversative קָרָא עָל (*q'ra' 'al*, "proclaim against"), which often designates an announcement of threatened judgment (1 Kgs 13:4, 32; Jer 49:29; Lam 1:15). However, here the phrase is the more positive קָרָא לְ (*q'ra' 'el*, "proclaim to") which often designates an oracle of deliverance or a call to repentance, with an accompanying offer of deliverance that is either explicit or implied (Deut 20:10; Isa 40:2; Zech 1:4; HALOT 1129 s.v. קָרָא 8; BDB 895 s.v. קָרָא 3.a). This shift from the adversative preposition עָל ("against") to the more positive preposition לְ ("to") might signal a shift in God's intentions or perhaps it simply makes his original intention more clear. While God threatened to judge Nineveh, he was very willing to relent and forgive when the people repented from their sins (3:8-10). Jonah later complains that he knew that God was likely to relent from the threatened judgment all along (4:2).

¹² **tn** Heb "was a great city to God/gods." The greatness of Nineveh has been mentioned already in 1:2 and 3:2. What is being added now? Does the term לְאֱלֹהִים (*le'elohim*, "to God/gods") (1) refer to the LORD's personal estimate of the city, (2) does it speak of the city as "belonging to" God, (3) does it refer to Nineveh as a city with many shrines and gods, or (4) is it simply an idiomatic reinforcement of the city's size? Interpreters do not agree on the answer. To introduce the idea either of God's ownership or of dedication to idolatry (though not impossible) is unexpected here, being without parallel or follow-up elsewhere in the book. The alternatives "great/large/important in God's estimation" (consider Ps 89:41b) or the merely idiomatic "exceptionally great/large/important" could both be amplified by focus on physical size in the following phrase and are both consistent with emphases elsewhere in the book (Jonah 4:11 again puts attention on size – of population). If "great" is best understood as a reference primarily to size here, in view of the following phrase and v. 4a (Jonah went "one day's walk"), rather than to importance, this might weigh slightly in favor of an idiomatic "very great/large," though no example with "God" used idiomatically to indicate superlative (Gen 23:6; 30:8; Exod 9:28; 1 Sam 14:15; Pss 36:6; 80:10) has exactly the same construction as the wording in Jonah 3:3.

¹³ **tn** Heb "a three-day walk." The term "required" is supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness and clarity.

^{sn} *Required three days to walk through it.* Although this phrase is one of the several indications in the book of Jonah of Nineveh's impressive size, interpreters are not precisely sure what "a three-day walk" means. In light of the existing archaeological remains, the phrase does not describe the length of time it would have taken a person to walk around the walls of the city or to walk from one end of the walled city to the other. Other suggestions are that it may indicate the time required to walk from one edge of Nineveh's environs to the other (in other words, including outlying regions) or that it indicates the time required to arrive, do business, and leave. More information might also show that the phrase involved an idiomatic description (consider Gen 30:36; Exod 3:18; a three-day-journey would be different for families than for soldiers, for example), rather than a precise measurement of distance, for which terms were available (Ezek 45:1-6; 48:8-35). With twenty miles as quite a full day's walk, it seems possible and simplest, however, to take the phrase as including an outlying region associated with Nineveh, about sixty miles in length.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown!" The adverbial use of עַד (*'od*, "yet") denotes limited temporal continuation (BDB 728 s.v. עַד 1.a; Gen 29:7; Isa 10:32). Tg. Jonah 3:4 rendered it as "at the end of [forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown]."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "be overturned." The Niphal נִהְפַּקְתָּ (*nehpakhet*, "be overturned") refers to a city being overthrown and destroyed (BDB 246 s.v. הִפְךָ 2.d). The related Qal form refers to the destruction of a city by military conquest (Judg 7:3; 2 Sam 10:3; 2 Kgs 21:13; Amos 4:11) or divine intervention as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:21, 25, 29; Deut 29:22; Jer 20:16; Lam 4:6; BDB 245 s.v. 1.b). The participle form used here depicts an imminent future action (see *IBHS* 627-28 §37.6f) which is specified as only "forty days" away.

3:5 The people⁴ of Nineveh believed in God,² and they declared a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.³ 3:6 When the news⁴ reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes. 3:7 He issued a proclamation and said,⁵ “In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles: No human or animal, cattle or sheep, is to taste anything; they must not eat and they must not drink water. 3:8 Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly⁶ to God, and everyone⁷ must turn from their⁸ evil way of living⁹ and from the violence that they do.¹⁰ 3:9 Who knows?¹¹ Perhaps God might be willing to change his mind and relent¹² and turn from his

fierce anger¹³ so that we might not die.”¹⁴ 3:10 When God saw their actions – they turned¹⁵ from their evil way of living!¹⁶ – God relented concerning the judgment¹⁷ he had threatened them with¹⁸ and he did not destroy them.¹⁹

Jonah Responds to God’s Kindness

4:1 This displeased Jonah terribly²⁰ and he became very angry.²¹ 4:2 He prayed to the LORD

¹ tn Heb “men.” The term is used generically here for “people” (so KJV, ASV, and many other English versions); cf. NIV “the Ninevites.”

² sn The people of Nineveh believed in God... Verse 5 provides a summary of the response in Nineveh; the people of all ranks believed and gave evidence of contrition by fasting and wearing sackcloth (2 Sam 12:16, 19-23; 1 Kgs 21:27-29; Neh 9:1-2). Then vv. 6-9 provide specific details, focusing on the king’s reaction. The Ninevites’ response parallels the response of the pagan sailors in 1:6 and 13-16.

³ tn Heb “from the greatest of them to the least of them.”

⁴ tn Heb “word” or “matter.”

⁵ tn Contrary to many modern English versions, the present translation understands the king’s proclamation to begin after the phrase “and he said” (rather than after “in Nineveh”), as do quotations in 1:14; 2:2, 4; 4:2, 8, 9. In Jonah where the quotation does not begin immediately after “said” (אמר, ‘amar), it is only the speaker or addressee or both that come between “said” and the start of the quotation (1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 4:4, 9, 10; cf. 1:1; 3:1).

⁶ tn Heb “with strength”; KJV, NRSV “mightily”; NAB, NCV “loudly”; NIV “urgently.”

⁷ tn Heb “let them turn, a man from his evil way.” The alternation between the plural verb וישבו (yashuvu, “and let them turn”) and the singular noun איש (ish, “a man, each one”) and the singular suffix מדרךבו (middarko, “from his way”) emphasizes that each and every person in the collective unity is called to repent.

⁸ tn Heb “his.” See the preceding note on “one.”

⁹ tn Heb “evil way.” For other examples of “way” as “way of living,” see Judg 2:17; Ps 107:17-22; Prov 4:25-27; 5:21.

¹⁰ tn Heb “that is in their hands.” By speaking of the harm they did as “in their hands,” the king recognized the Ninevites’ personal awareness and immediate responsibility. The term “hands” is either a synecdoche of instrument (e.g., “Is not the hand of Joab in all this?” 2 Sam 14:19) or a synecdoche of part for the whole. The king’s descriptive figure of speech reinforces their guilt.

¹¹ sn The king expresses his uncertainty whether Jonah’s message constituted a conditional announcement or an unconditional decree. Jeremiah 18 emphasizes that God sometimes gives people an opportunity to repent when they hear an announcement of judgment. However, as Amos and Isaiah learned, if a people refused to repent over a period of time, the patience of God could be exhausted. The offer of repentance in a conditional announcement of judgment can be withdrawn and in its place an unconditional decree of judgment issued. In many cases it is difficult to determine on the front end whether or not a prophetic message of coming judgment is conditional or unconditional, thus explaining the king’s uncertainty.

¹² tn “he might turn and relent.” The two verbs ונתה וישוב (yashub v’snikham) may function independently (“turn and repent”) or form a verbal hendiadys (“be willing to turn”; see IBHS 540 §32.3b). The imperfect וישוב and the perfect with prefixed vav וישוב form a future-time narrative sequence. Both verbs function in a modal sense, denoting possibility, as the

introductory interrogative suggests (“Who knows...?”). When used in reference to past actions, שׁוּב (shub) can mean “to be sorry” or “to regret” that someone did something in the past, and when used in reference to future planned actions, it can mean “to change one’s mind” about doing something or “to relent” from sending judgment (BDB 997 s.v. שׁוּב 6). The verb נִקְחָם (nikham) can mean “to be sorry” about past actions (e.g., Gen 6:6, 7; 1 Sam 15:11, 35) and “to change one’s mind” about future actions (BDB 637 s.v. נִקְחָם 2). These two verbs are used together elsewhere in passages that consider the question of whether or not God will change his mind and relent from judgment he has threatened (e.g., Jer 4:28). The verbal root שׁוּב is used four times in vv. 8-10, twice of the Ninevites “repenting” from their moral evil and twice of God “relenting” from his threatened calamity. This repetition creates a wordplay that emphasizes the appropriateness of God’s response: if the people repent, God might relent.

¹³ tn Heb “from the burning of his nose/face.” See Exod 4:14; 22:24; 32:12; Num 25:4; 32:14; Deut 9:19.

¹⁴ tn The imperfect verb ונאמר (no’ved, “we might not die”) functions in a modal sense, denoting possibility. The king’s hope parallels that of the ship’s captain in 1:6. See also Exod 32:7-14; 2 Sam 12:14-22; 1 Kgs 8:33-43; 21:17-29; Jer 18:6-8; Joel 2:11-15.

¹⁵ tn This clause is introduced by כִּי (ki, “that”) and functions as an exegetical, explanatory clause.

¹⁶ tn Heb “from their evil way” (so KJV, ASV, NAB); NASB “wicked way.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “calamity” or “disaster.” The noun רָעָה (ra’ah, “calamity, disaster”) functions as a metonymy of result – the cause being the threatened judgment (e.g., Exod 32:12, 14; 2 Sam 24:16; Jer 18:8; 26:13, 19; 42:10; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; HALOT 1263 s.v. רָעָה 6). The root רָעָה is repeated three times in vv. 8 and 10. Twice it refers to the Ninevites’ moral “evil” (vv. 8 and 10a) and here it refers to the “calamity” or “disaster” that the LORD had threatened (v. 10b). This repetition of the root forms a polysemantic wordplay that exploits this broad range of meanings of the noun. The wordplay emphasizes that God’s response was appropriate: because the Ninevites repented from their moral “evil” God relented from the “calamity” he had threatened.

¹⁸ tn Heb “the disaster that he had spoken to do to them.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “and he did not do it.” See notes on 3:8-9.

²⁰ tn Heb “It was evil to Jonah, a great evil.” The cognate accusative construction וַיַּעַרְבֵהּ רַעְיֹנָהּ (vayyera’...ra’ah) emphasizes the great magnitude of his displeasure (e.g., Neh 2:10 for the identical construction; see IBHS 167 §10.2.1g). The verb רָעָה (ra’a) means “to be displeasing” (BDB 949 s.v. רָעָה 1; e.g., Gen 21:11, 12; 48:17; Num 11:16; 22:34; Josh 24:15; 1 Sam 8:6; 2 Sam 11:25; Neh 2:10; 13:8; Prov 24:18; Jer 40:4). The use of the verb רָעָה (“to be evil, bad”) and the noun רָעָה (“evil, bad, calamity”) here in 4:1 creates a wordplay with the use of רָעָה in 3:8-10. When God saw that the Ninevites repented from their moral evil (רָעָה), he relented from the calamity (רָעָה) that he had threatened – and this development greatly displeased (רָעָה) Jonah.

²¹ tn Heb “it burned to him.” The verb כָּרַח (kharah, “to burn”) functions figuratively here (hypocatastasis) referring to anger (BDB 354 s.v. כָּרַח). It is related to the noun כְּרוֹחַ (kharon, “heat/burning”) in the phrase “the heat of his anger” in 3:9. The repetition of the root highlights the contrast in attitudes between Jonah and God: God’s burning anger “cooled off” when the Ninevites repented, but Jonah’s anger was “kindled” when God did not destroy Nineveh.

and said, “Oh, LORD, this is just what I thought¹ would happen² when I was in my own country.³ This is what I tried to prevent⁴ by attempting to escape to Tarshish!⁵ – because I

1 tn Heb “my saying?” The first common singular suffix on דַּבָּרִי (*dʿvari*, “my saying”) functions as a subjective genitive: “I said.” The verb אָמַר (*amar*, “to say”) here refers to the inner speech and thoughts of Jonah (see HALOT 66 s.v. אָמַר 4; BDB 56 s.v. אָמַר 2; e.g., Gen 17:17; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam 20:26; Esth 6:6; Jonah 2:4). There is no hint anywhere else in the book that Jonah had argued with God when he was originally commissioned. While most English versions render it “I said” or “my saying,” a few take it as inner speech: “This is what I feared” (NEB), “It is just as I feared” (REB), “I knew from the very beginning” (CEV).

2 tn The phrase “what happen” does not appear in the Hebrew text but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness.

3 tn Heb “Is this not my saying while I was in my own country?” The rhetorical question implies a positive answer (“Yes, this was the very thing that Jonah had anticipated would happen all along!”) so it is rendered as an emphatic declaration in the translation.

4 tn Or “This is why I originally fled to Tarshish.” The verb קָדַם (*qadam*) in the Piel stem has a broad range of meanings and here could mean: (1) “to go before, be in front of” (1 Sam 20:25; Ps 68:26); (2) “to do [something] beforehand,” (Ps 119:147); or (3) “to anticipate, to do [something] early, forestall [something]” (Ps 119:148). The lexicons nuance Jonah 4:2 as “to do [something] for the first time” (HALOT 1069 s.v. קָדַם 4) or “to do [something] beforehand” (BDB 870 s.v. קָדַם 3). The phrase קָדַמְתִּי לִבְרֹחַ (*qidamti livroah*, “I did the first time to flee”) is an idiom that probably means “I originally fled” or “I fled the first time.” The infinitive construct לִבְרֹחַ (“to flee”) functions as an object complement. This phrase is translated variously by English versions, depending on the category of meaning chosen for קָדַם: (1) “to do [something] for the first time, beforehand”: “That is why I fled beforehand” (JPS, NJPS), “I fled before” (KJV), “I fled previously” (NKJV), “I fled at the beginning” (NRSV), “I first tried to flee” (NJB), “I fled at first” (NAB); (2) “to do [something] early, to hasten to do [something]”: “That is why I was so quick to flee” (NIV), “I hastened to flee” (ASV), “I made haste to flee” (RSV), “I did my best to run away” (TEV); and (3) “to anticipate, forestall [something]”: “it was to forestall this that I tried to escape to Tarshish” (REB), “to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish” (NEB), “in order to forestall this I fled” (NASB). The ancient versions also handle it variously: (1) “to do [something] early, to hasten to do [something]”: “Therefore I made haste to flee” (LXX), “That is why I hastened to run away” (Tg. Jonah 4:2); and (2) “to go before, to be in front”: “Therefore I went before to flee to Tarshish” (Vulgate). The two most likely options are (1) “to do [something] the first time” = “This is why I originally fled to Tarshish” and (2) “to anticipate, forestall [something]” = “This is what I tried to forestall [= prevent] by fleeing to Tarshish.”

5 tn See note on the phrase “to Tarshish” in 1:3.

sn The narrator skillfully withheld Jonah’s motivations from the reader up to this point for rhetorical effect – to build suspense and to create a shocking, surprising effect. Now, for the first time, the narrator reveals why Jonah fled from the commission of God in 1:3 – he had not wanted to give God the opportunity to relent from judging Nineveh! Jonah knew that if he preached in Nineveh, the people might repent and as a result, God might more than likely relent from sending judgment. Hoping to seal their fate, Jonah had originally refused to preach so that the Ninevites would not have an opportunity to repent. Apparently Jonah hoped that God would have therefore judged them without advance warning. Or perhaps he was afraid he would betray his nationalistic self-interests by functioning as the instrument through which the LORD would spare Israel’s main enemy. Jonah probably wanted God to destroy Nineveh for three reasons: (1) as a loyal nationalist, he despised non-Israelites (cf. 1:9); (2) he believed that idolaters had forfeited any opportunity to be shown mercy (cf. 2:9-10); and (3) the prophets Amos and Hosea had

knew⁶ that you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger⁷ and abounding⁸ in mercy, and one who relents concerning threatened judgment.⁹ 4:3 So now, LORD, kill me instead,¹⁰ because I would rather die than live!”¹¹ 4:4 The LORD said, “Are you really so very¹² angry?”¹³

recently announced that God would sovereignly use the Assyrians to judge unrepentant Israel (Hos 9:3; 11:5) and take them into exile (Amos 5:27). If God destroyed Nineveh, the Assyrians would not be able to destroy Israel. The better solution would have been for Jonah to work for the repentance of Nineveh and Israel.

6 tn Or “know.” What Jonah knew then he still knows about the LORD’s character, which is being demonstrated in his dealings with both Nineveh and Jonah. The Hebrew suffixed tense accommodates both times here.

7 tn Heb “long of nostrils.” Because the nose often expresses anger through flared nostrils it became the source of this idiom meaning “slow to anger” (e.g., Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jer 15:15; Nah 1:3; BDB 74 s.v. נָחַס).

8 tn Heb “great” (so KJV); ASV, NASB “abundant”; NAB “rich in clemency.”

9 tn Heb “calamity.” The noun רַעָה (*ra’ah*, “calamity, disaster”) functions as a metonymy of result – the cause being the threatened judgment (e.g., Exod 32:12, 14; 2 Sam 24:16; Jer 18:8; 26:13, 19; 42:10; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). The classic statement of God’s willingness to relent from judgment when a sinful people repents is Jer 18:1-11.

sn Jonah is precisely correct in his listing of the LORD’s attributes. See Exod 34:6-7; Num 14:18-19; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31-32; Pss 86:3-8, 15; 103:2-13; 116:5 (note the parallels to Jonah 2 in Ps 116:1-4); 145:8; Neh 9:17; Joel 2:13.

10 tn Heb “take my life from me.”

11 tn Heb “better my death than my life.”

12 tn Heb “Rightly does it burn to you?” Note this question occurs again in v. 9, there concerning the withered plant. “Does it so thoroughly burn to you?” or “Does it rightly burn to you?” or “Does it burn so thoroughly to you?” The Hiphil of יָבַט (*yabat*, “to do good”) here may have one of two meanings: (1) It may mean “to do [something] rightly” in terms of ethical right and wrong (BDB 406 s.v. יָבַט; 5.b; HALOT 408 s.v. יָבַט 3.c; e.g., Gen 4:7; Lev 5:4; Pss 36:4; 119:68; Isa 1:17; Jer 4:22; 13:23). This approach is adopted by many English versions: “Do you have any right to be angry?” (NIV); “Are you right to be angry?” (REB, NJB); “Is it right for you to be angry?” (NRSV, NLT); “Do you have good reason to be angry?” (NASB); “Do you do well to be angry?” (cf. KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV); “What right do you have to be angry?” (cf. TEV, CEV). (2) It may be used as an adverb meaning “well, utterly, thoroughly” (BDB 405 s.v. 3; HALOT 408 s.v. 5; e.g., Deut 9:21; 13:15; 17:4; 19:18; 27:8; 1 Sam 16:17; 2 Kgs 11:18; Prov 15:2; Isa 23:16; Jer 1:12; Ezek 33:32; Mic 7:3). This view is adopted by other English versions: “Are you that deeply grieved?” (JPS, NJPS); “Are you so angry?” (NEB). This is also the approach of the Tg. Jonah 4:4: “Are you that greatly angered?” Whether or not Jonah had the right to be angry about the death of the plant is a trivial issue. Instead the dialogue focuses on the depth of Jonah’s anger: he would rather be dead than alive (v. 3, 8) and he concludes by saying that he was as angry as he could possibly be (v. 9; see note on עֲדֵי-מָוֶת [*ad-mavet*, “to death”] in v. 9). The LORD then uses an *a fortiori* argument (from lesser to greater): Jonah was very upset that the plant had died (v. 10), likewise God was very concerned about averting the destruction of Nineveh (v. 11).

sn The use of the term יָבַט (*yabat*, “rightly, good”) creates a wordplay with its antonym רַעָה (*ra’ah*, “evil, wrong”) which is used in 4:1 of Jonah’s bad attitude.

13 tn Heb “Does it burn to you?” The verb כָּרַח (*kharah*, “to burn”) functions figuratively here (hypocatastasis) to refer to strong anger (BDB 354 s.v. כָּרַח). The verb is repeated from v. 1 and will be used again in v. 9.

4:5 Jonah left the city and sat down east¹ of it.² He made a shelter for himself there and sat down under it in the shade to see what would happen to the city.³ 4:6 The LORD God appointed⁴ a little plant⁵ and caused it to grow up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to rescue⁶

him from his misery.⁷ Now Jonah was very delighted⁸ about the little plant.

4:7 So God sent⁹ a worm at dawn the next day, and it attacked the little plant so that it dried up. 4:8 When the sun began to shine, God sent¹⁰ a hot¹¹ east wind. So the sun beat down¹² on Jonah's head, and he grew faint. So he despaired of life,¹³ and said, "I would rather die than live!"¹⁴ 4:9 God said to Jonah, "Are you really so very angry¹⁵ about the little plant?" And he said, "I am as angry¹⁶ as I could possibly be!"¹⁷

¹ **tn** *Heb* "from the east" or "from the front." When used to designate a location, the noun קֶדֶם (*qedem*) may mean "front" (BDB 869 s.v. קֶדֶם 1.a) or "east" (BDB 869 s.v. 1.b). The construction קֶדֶם + preposition מִן (*min*, "from") means "from the front" = "in front of" (Job 23:8; Ps 139:5; Isa 9:11) or "from the east" = "eastward, on the east side" (Gen 3:21; 12:8; Num 34:11; Josh 7:2; Ezek 11:23). Because the morning sunrise beat down upon Jonah (v. 8) and because the main city gate of Nineveh opened to the east, the term probably means "on the east side" of the city. But "in front of" the city would mean the same in this case.

² **tn** *Heb* "of the city." For stylistic reasons, to avoid redundancy, the noun "city" has been replaced here by the pronoun ("it") in the translation.

³ **sn** Apparently Jonah hoped that he might have persuaded the LORD to "change his mind" again (see 3:8-10) and to judge Nineveh after all.

⁴ **tn** The verb מָנָה (*manah*) in the Piel stem is used elsewhere in Jonah meaning "to send, to appoint" (Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8; HALOT 599 s.v. מָנָה 2; BDB 584 s.v. מָנָה).

⁵ **tn** The noun קִיקְיֹון (*qiqayon*, "plant") has the suffixed ending יוֹ which denotes a diminutive (see *IBHS* 92 §5.7b), so it can be nuanced "little plant." For the probable reason that the narrator used the diminutive form here, see the note on "little" in v. 10.

⁶ **tc** The consonantal form לְהַצִּיל is vocalized by the MT as לְהַצִּיל (*ʾhatsil*), a Hiphil infinitive construct from נָצַל (*natsal*, "to deliver, rescue"; BDB 664-65 s.v. נָצַל). However, the LXX's τοῦ σκιάσθαι (*tou skiazesthai*, "to shade") reflects an alternate vocalization tradition of לְהַצִּיל (*ʾhatsel*), a Niphal infinitive construct from יָצַל (*tsalal*, "to shade"; see BDB 853 s.v. יָצַל). The MT vocalization is preferred for several reasons. First, it is the more difficult form with the assimilated *nun*. Second, the presence of the noun צֶל (*tsel*, "shadow") just two words before helps to explain the origin of the LXX vocalization which was influenced by this noun in the immediate context. Third, God's primary motivation in giving the plant to Jonah was not simply to provide shade for him because the next day the LORD killed the plant (v. 7). God's primary motivation was to create a situation to "rescue" Jonah from his bad attitude. Nevertheless, the narrator's choice of the somewhat ambiguous consonantal form לְהַצִּיל might have been done to create a wordplay on נָצַל ("to rescue, deliver") and יָצַל ("to shade"). Jonah thought that God was providing him shade, but God was really working to deliver him from his evil attitude, as the ensuing dialogue indicates.

⁷ **tn** Or "evil attitude." The meaning of the noun רָעָה (*ra'ah*) is intentionally ambiguous; the author puns on its broad range of meanings to create a polysemantic wordplay. It has a broad range of meanings: (1) "distress, misery, discomfort" (2) "misfortune, injury," (3) "calamity, disaster," (4) "moral evil," and (5) "ill-disposed, evil attitude" (see BDB 949 s.v. רָעָה; HALOT 1262-63 s.v. רָעָה). The narrator has used several meanings of רָעָה in 3:8-4:2, namely, "moral evil" (3:8, 10) and "calamity, disaster" (3:9, 10; 4:2), as well as the related verb רָעַע (*ra'a'a*, "to be displeasing"; see 4:1). Here the narrator puns on the meaning "discomfort" created by the scorching desert heat, but God's primary motivation is to "deliver" Jonah – not from something as trivial as physical discomfort from heat – but from his sinful attitude about God's willingness to spare Nineveh. This gives the term an especially ironic twist: Jonah is only concerned about being delivered from his physical "discomfort," while God wants to deliver him from his "evil attitude."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "he rejoiced with great joy." The cognate accusative construction repeats the verb and noun of the consonantal root שָׂמַח (*smkh*, "rejoice") for emphasis; it means "he rejoiced with great joy" or "he was greatly delighted" (see *IBHS* 167 §10.2.1g). This cognate accusative construction ironically mirrors the identical syntax of v. 1, "he was angry with great anger." The narrator repeated this construction to emphasize the contrast between Jonah's anger that Nineveh was spared and his joy that his discomfort was relieved.

⁹ **tn** Or "appointed." The verb מָנָה (*manah*) in the Piel stem means "to send, to appoint" (Ps 61:8; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8; Dan 1:5, 10-11; HALOT 599 s.v. מָנָה 2; BDB 584 s.v. מָנָה).

¹⁰ **tn** Or "appointed." See preceding note on v. 7.

¹¹ **tc** The MT adjective חַרְשִׁית (*kharishit*, "autumnal") is a *hapax legomenon* with an unclear meaning (BDB 362 s.v. חַרְשִׁית); therefore, the *BHS* editors proposed a conjectural emendation to the adjective חַרְפִּית (*kharifit*, "autumnal") from the noun חֲרֵף (*khoref*, "autumn"; see BDB 358 s.v. חֲרֵף). However, this emendation would also create a *hapax legomenon* and it would be no more clear than relating the MT's חַרְשִׁית (*kharash*, "to plough" [in autumn harvest]).

tn *Heb* "autumnal" or "sultry." The adjective חַרְשִׁית is a *hapax legomenon* whose meaning is unclear; it might mean "autumnal" (from חֲרַשׁ, *kharash*; "to plough" [in the autumn harvest-time]), "silent" = "sultry" (from מִי, *mi*, "to be silent"; BDB 362 s.v. חַרְשִׁית). The form חַרְשִׁית might be an alternate spelling of חַרְשִׁית (*kharishit*) from the noun חֶרֶס (*kheres*, "sun") and so mean "hot" (BDB 362 s.v.).

¹² **tn** *Heb* "attacked" or "smote."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "he asked his soul to die."

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "better my death than my life."

sn Jonah repeats his assessment, found also in 4:3.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "Does it burn so thoroughly to you?" or "Does it burn rightly to you?" See note on this expression in v. 4.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "It thoroughly burns to me" or "It rightly burns to me."

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "unto death." The phrase עַד מָוֶת (*ad-mavet*, "unto death") is an idiomatic expression meaning "to the extreme" or simply "extremely [angry]" (HALOT 563 s.v. מָוֶת 1.c). The noun מָוֶת ("death") is often used as an absolute superlative with a negative sense, similar to the English expression "bored to death" (*IBHS* 267-69 §14.5). For example, "his soul was vexed to death" (לָמוּת, *lamut*) means that he could no longer endure it (Judg 16:16), and "love is as strong as

4:10 The LORD said, “You were upset¹ about this little² plant, something for which you have not worked nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up overnight and died the next day.³ 4:11 Should I⁴ not be even more⁵

concerned⁶ about Nineveh, this enormous city?⁷ There are more than one hundred twenty thousand people in it who do not know right from wrong,⁸ as well as many animals!”⁹

death” (בְּמִוֶּתֶר, *kammavet*) means love is irresistible or exceedingly strong (Song 8:6). Here the expression “I am angry unto death” (עַד־מָוֶת) means that Jonah could not be more angry. Unfortunately, this idiomatic expression has gone undetected by virtually every other major English version to date (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, ASV, NASB, NIV, NJB, JPS, NJPS). The only English version that comes close to representing the idiom correctly is BBE: “I have a right to be truly angry.”

1 tn *Heb* “were troubled.” The verb רוּחַ (*khus*) has a basic three-fold range of meanings: (1) “to be troubled about,” (2) “to look with compassion upon,” and (3) “to show pity, to spare [someone from death/judgment]” (*HALOT* 298 s.v. רוּחַ; BDB 299 s.v. רוּחַ). Clearly, here God is referring to Jonah’s remorse and anger when the plant died (vv. 7-9), so here it means “to be troubled about” (*HALOT* 298 s.v. 1.c) rather than “to pity” (BDB 299 s.v. c). Elsewhere רוּחַ describes emotional grief caused by the loss of property (Gen 45:20) and the death of family members (Deut 13:9 [ET 13:8]). The verb רוּחַ is derived from a common Semitic root which has a basic meaning “to pour out; to flow” which is used in reference to emotion and tears in particular. This is seen in the Hebrew expression תְּרוּסֵי עֵינַי (*takhush 'en*, “the eyes flow”) picturing tears of concern and grief (c.f., Gen 45:20; Deut 13:9 [ET 13:8]). The verb רוּחַ will be used again in v. 11 but in a different sense (see note on v. 11).

2 tn The noun קִיקָיִון (*qiqayon*, “plant”) has the suffixed ending -ן which denotes a diminutive (see *IBHS* 92 §5.7b); so it can be nuanced “little plant.” The contrast between Jonah’s concern for his “little” plant (v. 10) and God’s concern about this “enormous” city (v. 11) could not be greater! Jonah’s misplaced priorities look exceedingly foolish and self-centered in comparison to God’s global concern about the fate of 120,000 pagans.

3 tn *Heb* “which was a son of a night and perished [as] a son of a night.”

4 tn The emphatic use of the independent pronouns “you” and “I” (אַתָּה, *attah*, and אֲנִי, *ani*) in vv. 10 and 11 creates an ironic comparison and emphasizes the strong contrast between the attitudes of Jonah and the LORD.

5 tn *Heb* “You...Should I not spare...?” This is an *a fortiori* argument from lesser to greater. Since Jonah was “upset” (רוּחַ, *khus*) about such a trivial matter as the death of a little plant (the lesser), God had every right to “spare” (רוּחַ) the enormously populated city of Nineveh (the greater). The phrase “even more” does not appear in Hebrew but is implied by this *a fortiori* argument.

6 tn *Heb* “Should I not spare?”; or “Should I not show compassion?” The verb רוּחַ (*khus*) has a basic three-fold range of meanings: (1) “to be troubled about,” (2) “to look with compassion upon,” and (3) “to show pity, to spare (someone from death/judgment)” (*HALOT* 298 s.v. רוּחַ; BDB 299 s.v. רוּחַ). In v. 10 it refers to Jonah’s lament over the death of his plant, meaning “to be upset about” or “to be troubled about” (*HALOT* 298 s.v. 1.c). However, here in v. 11 it means “to show pity, spare” from judgment (BDB 298 s.v. b; *HALOT* 298 s.v. 1.a; e.g., 1 Sam 24:11; Jer 21:7; Ezek 24:14). It is often used in contexts which contemplate whether God will or will not spare a sinful people from judgment (Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10; 20:17). So this repetition of the same verb but in a different sense creates a polysemantic wordplay in vv. 10-11. However, the wordplay is obscured by the appropriate translation for each usage – “be upset about” in v. 10 and “to spare” in v. 11 – therefore, the translation above attempts to bring out the wordplay in English: “to be [even more] concerned about.”

7 tn *Heb* “the great city.”

8 tn *Heb* “their right from their left.” Interpreters wonder exactly what deficiency is meant by the phrase “do not know their right from their left.” The expression does not appear elsewhere in biblical Hebrew. It probably does not mean, as sometimes suggested, that Nineveh had 120,000 small children (the term אָדָם, *adam*, “people,” does not seem to be used of children alone). In any case, it refers to a deficiency in discernment that Jonah and the initial readers of Jonah would no doubt have considered themselves free of. For partial parallels see 2 Sam 19:35; Eccl 10:2; Ezek 22:26; 44:23.

9 tn *Heb* “and many animals.”