

## Jonah's Mission to the Assyrian City of Nineveh (c. 760 BC)

Jonah 1–4

### Jonah Flees from the Presence of the LORD

1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,  
 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.  
 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.  
 4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.  
 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.  
 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

### Jonah is Thrown into the Sea

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.  
 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou?  
 9 And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*.  
 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.  
 11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.  
 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you.  
 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.  
 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.  
 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.  
 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

### A Great Fish Swallows Jonah

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

### Jonah's Prayer

2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,  
 2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.  
 3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.  
 4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.  
 5 The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.  
 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.  
 7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.  
 8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.  
 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.  
 10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

### Jonah Goes to Nineveh

3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,  
 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.  
 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.  
 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

### The People of Nineveh Repent

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of

them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not. [[Matt 12:39–41](#); [16:4](#); [Luke 11:2](#)]

### Jonah's Anger and the LORD's Compassion

4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is* better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death.

10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

## Amos' Prophecy to Israel – Part 1 (c. 760 BC)

Amos 1–2

### Title and Theme

1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2 And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

### Oracle against Syria

3 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: [cf. [2 Kgs 10:32–33](#); [13:1–7](#)]

4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeal, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

### Oracle against Philistia

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom:

7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

### Oracle against Phoenicia

9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

**Oracle against Edom**

11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:  
 12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

**Oracle against Ammon**

13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:  
 14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:  
 15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

**Oracle against Moab**

2:1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:  
 2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, *and* with the sound of the trumpet:  
 3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

**Oracle against Judah**

4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:  
 5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

**Oracle against Israel**

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;  
 7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid, to profane my holy name:  
 8 And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god.  
 9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height *was* like the height of the cedars, and he *was* strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.  
 10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.  
 11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. *Is it* not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD.  
 12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.  
 13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed *that is* full of sheaves.  
 14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:  
 15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and *he that is* swift of foot shall not deliver *himself*: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.  
 16 And *he that is* courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

*Scripture quotations are from The King James Version (KJV). The KJV is in the public domain.*

**Chronological Notes**

1) Jonah.<sup>1</sup>

- A) Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as having prophesied the restoration of the “border of Israel from Lebo Hamath in the north to the sea of Arabah in the south.” This took place during the reign of Jeroboam II (793n–753n BC).
- B) A few years after the death of Jeroboam II, Menahem became tributary to the Assyrian King Pul (2 Kings 15:19). Thus we can assume that in the time of Jeroboam II, the Assyrians were no strangers to Israel. Assyria had frequent contacts with Palestine. Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) had extended the conquests of Assyria westward toward the Mediterranean Sea. In

<sup>1</sup> Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 167.

853 BC at Karkar, Shalmaneser II fought a confederation of kings including Ahab of Israel; later Jehu (841n–814n) was compelled to pay tribute to Assyria.

- C) Nineveh was the last capital of the Assyrian Empire located on the east bank of the Tigris River, and was destroyed in 612 BC through a military alliance of Medes, Babylonians and Scythians. Nimrod had been its founder (Gen 10:9–11), and the city is mentioned in early Babylonian cuneiform tablets. By “Nineveh the great city” the Hebrews designated both the city itself and its neighboring communities (Gen 10:11ff.). The description of the size and importance of the city in Jonah harmonizes with secular and archaeological records.
- D) Several Assyrian kings reigned in Nineveh during the time of Jonah’s ministry as a prophet:
- (1) Adad-nirari III (810–783)
  - (2) Shalmaneser IV (782–773)
  - (3) Ashur-dan III (772–755)
  - (4) Ashur-nirari V (754–745)
  - (5) Tiglath-pileser III (744–727)
- E) If Jonah appeared in Nineveh during the reign of Ashur-dan III, then the plagues recorded in Assyrian history in 765 and 759, and the total eclipse of 763, could have been regarded as portents of divine wrath which prepared the city for Jonah’s message. Thus a date of c. 760 for the story is probably near the mark.

## 2) Amos.<sup>2</sup>

- A) Amos ministered during the reigns of King Jeroboam II of Israel (793n–753n BC) and King Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah (791t–740t BC), specifically two years before “the earthquake” (Amos 1:1). Zechariah also referred to a notable earthquake during the reign of Uzziah (Zech 14:5). Josephus wrote that an earthquake occurred when Uzziah entered the temple and was struck with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16–20).<sup>3</sup> However this may be simply Jewish tradition. Archaeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria point to evidence of a violent earthquake in Israel about 760 BC.<sup>4</sup> So perhaps Amos ministered about 760 BC. This date may account for the omission of the name of King Jotham who ruled as coregent with Uzziah from 750–740 BC. Thus Amos was a contemporary of the other eighth-century prophets: Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Amos*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 9:10:4.

<sup>4</sup> Y. Yadin, et al., *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956*, pp. 24, 26, 36–37; and Philip J. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah—An Archaeological Commentary*, p. 21.