

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 And the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 “Get up! Go to the great city Nineveh and cry out against her, because their evil has come up before me.”

3 But Jonah set out to flee toward Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. And he went down to Joppa and found a merchant ship going to Tarshish, and paid her fare, and went on board her to go with them toward Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.

4 And Yahweh hurled a great wind upon the sea, and it was a great storm on the sea, and the merchant ship was in danger of breaking up.

5 And the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they threw the contents that were in the merchant ship into the sea to lighten it for them. And *meanwhile* Jonah went down into the hold of the vessel and lay down and fell asleep.

6 And the captain of the ship approached him and said to him, “Why are you sound asleep? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps *your* god will take notice of us and we won't perish!”

Jonah is Thrown into the Sea

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots so that we may know on whose account this disaster *has come* on us!” And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

8 So they said to him, “Please tell us whoever *is responsible* that this disaster *has come* upon us! What *is* your occupation? And from where do you come? What *is* your country? And from which people *are* you?”

9 And he said to them, “I *am* a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

10 Then the men were greatly afraid, and they said to him, “What *is* this you have done?” because they knew that he *was* fleeing from the presence of Yahweh (because he had told them).

11 So they said to him, “What shall we do to you so that the sea may quiet down for us?” because the sea was growing more and more tempestuous.

12 And he said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea so that the sea may quiet down for you, because I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you all.”

13 But the men rowed *hard* to bring *the ship* back to the dry land, and they could not *do so* because the sea was growing more and more tempestuous against them.

14 So they cried out to Yahweh, and they said, “O Yahweh! Please do not let us perish because of this man's life, and do not make us guilty of innocent blood, because you, O Yahweh, did what you wanted.”

15 And they picked Jonah up and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

16 So the men feared Yahweh greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.

A Great Fish Swallows Jonah

17 And Yahweh provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah's Prayer

2:1 And Jonah prayed to Yahweh his God from the belly of the fish

2 and said,

“I called from my distress to Yahweh,
and he answered me;
from the belly of Sheol I cried for help—
you heard my voice.

3 And you threw me *into the deep*,
into the heart of *the seas*,
and *the sea* currents surrounded me;
all your breakers and your surging waves
passed over me.

4 And I said, ‘I am banished
from your sight;
how will I continue to look
on your holy temple?’

5 *The waters* encompassed me up to *my neck*;
the deep surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 I went down to the foundations of *the mountains*;
the Underworld—its bars *were* around me forever.

But you brought up my life from *the* pit,
Yahweh my God.

7 When my life was ebbing away from me,
I remembered Yahweh,
and my prayer came to you,
to your holy temple.

8 Those who worship vain idols
forsake their loyal love.

9 But I, with a voice of thanksgiving,
will sacrifice to you;
I will fulfill what I have vowed.
Deliverance *belongs* to Yahweh!”

10 And Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out on the dry land.

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

3:1 And the word of Yahweh came to Jonah a second *time*, saying,

2 “Get up! Go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the message that I *am* telling you.”

3 So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was an extraordinarily great city—a journey of three days *across*.

4 And Jonah began to go into the city a journey of one day, and he cried out and said, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be demolished!”

The People of Nineveh Repent

5 And the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least important.

6 And the news reached the king of Nineveh, and he rose from his throne and removed his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in the ashes.

7 And he had a proclamation made, and said,

“In Nineveh, by a decree of the king and his nobles:

“No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything! They must not eat, and they must not drink water!

8 And *the* human beings and *the* animals must be covered *with* sackcloth! And they must call forcefully to God, and each must turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

9 Who knows? God may relent and change his mind and turn from his blazing anger so that we will not perish.”

10 And God saw their deeds—that they turned from their evil ways—and God changed his mind about the evil that he had said *he would* bring upon them, and he did not do *it*. [[Matt 12:39–41](#); [16:4](#); [Luke 11:2](#)]

Jonah’s Anger and the LORD’s Compassion

4:1 And this was greatly displeasing to Jonah, and he became furious.

2 And he prayed to Yahweh and said, “O Yahweh, *was* this not what I said while I was in my homeland? Therefore I originally fled to Tarshish, because I knew that you *are* a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and having great steadfast love, and one who relents concerning calamity.

3 And so then, Yahweh, please take my life from me, because *for* me death *is* better than life!”

4 And Yahweh said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

5 And Jonah went out from the city and sat *down* east of the city, and he made for himself a shelter there. And he sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would happen with the city.

6 And Yahweh God appointed a plant, and he made it grow up over Jonah to be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. And Jonah was very glad about the plant.

7 So God appointed a worm at daybreak the next day, and it attacked the plant, and it withered.

8 And when the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head and he grew faint. And he asked that he could die and said, “My death *is* better than my life!”

9 So God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “It is right for me to be angry enough to die!”

10 But Yahweh said, “You are troubled about the plant, for which you did not labor nor cause it to grow. It grew up in a night and it perished in a night!

11 And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than one hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know right from left, plus many animals?”

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 shepherds from Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Jehoash, two years before the earthquake.

2 And he said, "Yahweh roars from Zion and he utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds wither and the top of Carmel dries up."

Oracle against Syria

3 Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron! [cf. [2 Kgs 10:32–33](#); [13:1–7](#)]

4 So I will send fire against Hazeal's house and it will consume the citadel fortresses of Ben-Hadad.

5 I will break the gate bars of Damascus and I will cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven and the one who takes hold of the scepter of Beth Eden, and the people of Aram will go into exile to Kir," says Yahweh.

Oracle against Philistia

6 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they exiled a whole community, handing them over to Edom!

7 So I will send a fire against the wall of Gaza and it will devour its citadel fortresses.

8 And I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod and the one who takes hold of the scepter of Ashkelon. I will also turn my hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish," says the Lord Yahweh.

Oracle against Phoenicia

9 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they delivered up a whole community to Edom and they did not remember the covenant of brotherhood!

10 So I will send a fire against the wall of Tyre and it will devour its citadel fortresses."

Oracle against Edom

11 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because he pursued his brother with the sword! He stifled his compassion and his anger tore *them* apart continually, and he kept his rage forever.

12 So I will send a fire against Teman and it will devour the citadel fortresses of Bozrah."

Oracle against Ammon

13 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Ammon and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their territory!

14 So I will kindle a fire against the wall of Rabbah and it will devour its citadel fortresses with a war cry on the day of battle, with a storm on the day of the violent tempest.

15 And their king will go into exile, he and his commanders together," says Yahweh.

Oracle against Moab

2:1 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.

2 So I will send a fire against Moab and it will devour the citadel fortresses of Kerioth, and Moab will die amid uproar, amid war cries *and* amid the sound of a horn.

3 And I will cut off *the* ruler from its midst and I will kill all of its officials with him," says Yahweh.

Oracle against Judah

4 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they have rejected the law of Yahweh and have not kept his rules, and their lies have led them astray, after which their ancestors walked!

5 So I will send a fire against Judah and it will devour the citadel fortresses of Jerusalem.

Oracle against Israel

6 Thus says Yahweh: "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke *the punishment*, because they sell the righteous for money and the poor for a pair of sandals!

7 Those who trample the heads of the powerless into the dust of the ground and turn aside the way of the destitute, a man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, so that *they* profane my holy name.

8 They stretch themselves out beside every altar on clothing taken in pledge and they drink wine, bought with fines imposed, in the house of their God.

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, who was as tall as cedars and was as strong as the oaks. I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

10 And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and I led you in the wilderness forty years to take possession of the land of the Amorite.

11 And I raised up some *of* your sons to *be* prophets and some *of* your young men to *be* Nazirites. Is it not so, O people of Israel? *This is the declaration of Yahweh!*

12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy.’

13 Look! I *am* going to press *you* down in your place just as a utility cart full of mature stalks of grain *is pressed down*.

14 Flight will perish from *the* swift and *the* strong person will not muster his strength and *the* warrior will not save his life.

15 And *the* one who takes hold of the bow will not stand and *the one who is* swift on his feet will not save himself, nor will *the* one who rides the horse save his life.

16 Even those who are strong of heart among the mighty will flee away naked from the city on that day. *This is the declaration of Yahweh!*”

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Chronological Notes

1) Jonah.¹

- 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 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.²

- 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

¹ Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 167.

² Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Amos*, 2.

struck with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16–20).³ 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.⁴ 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.

³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 9:10:4.

⁴ 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.