

## 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 The LORD said to Jonah son of Amittai,

2 “Go immediately to Nineveh, that large capital city, and announce judgment against its people because their wickedness has come to my attention.”

3 Instead, Jonah immediately headed off to Tarshish to escape from the commission of the LORD. He traveled to Joppa and found a merchant ship heading to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went aboard it to go with them to Tarshish far away from the LORD.

4 But the LORD hurled a powerful wind on the sea. Such a violent tempest arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break up!

5 The sailors were so afraid that each cried out to his own god and they flung the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter.

Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold below deck, had lain down, and was sound asleep.

6 The ship's captain approached him and said, “What are you doing asleep? Get up! Cry out to your god! Perhaps your god might take notice of us so that we might not die!”

### Jonah is Thrown into the Sea

7 The sailors said to one another, “Come on, let's cast lots to find out whose fault it is that this disaster has overtaken us. “ So they cast lots, and Jonah was singled out.

8 They said to him, “Tell us, whose fault is it that this disaster has overtaken us? What's your occupation? Where do you come from? What's your country? And who are your people?”

9 He said to them, “I am a Hebrew! And I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

10 Hearing this, the men became even more afraid and said to him, “What have you done?” (The men said this because they knew that he was trying to escape from the LORD, because he had previously told them.)

11 Because the storm was growing worse and worse, they said to him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

12 He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea to make the sea quiet down, because I know it's my fault you are in this severe storm.”

13 Instead, they tried to row back to land, but they were not able to do so because the storm kept growing worse and worse.

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 shedding innocent blood. After all, you, LORD, have done just as you pleased.”

15 So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging.

16 The men feared the LORD greatly, and earnestly vowed to offer lavish sacrifices to the Lord.

### A Great Fish Swallows Jonah

17 The LORD sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

### Jonah's Prayer

2:1 Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish

2 and said,

“I called out to the LORD from my distress,  
and he answered me;  
from the belly of Sheol I cried out for help,  
and you heard my prayer.

3 You threw me into the deep waters,  
into the middle of the sea;

the ocean current engulfed me;  
all the mighty waves you sent swept over me.

4 I thought I had been banished from your sight,  
that I would never again see your holy temple!

5 Water engulfed me up to my neck;  
the deep ocean surrounded me;

seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 I went down to the very bottoms of the mountains;  
the gates of the netherworld barred me in forever;  
but you brought me up from the Pit, O LORD, my God.

7 When my life was ebbing away, I called out to the LORD,  
and my prayer came to your holy temple.

8 Those who worship worthless idols forfeit the mercy that could be theirs.

9 But as for me, I promise to offer a sacrifice to you with a public declaration of praise;  
I will surely do what I have promised.  
Salvation belongs to the LORD!”

10 Then the LORD commanded the fish and it disgorged Jonah on dry land.

### **Jonah Goes to Nineveh**

3:1 The LORD said to Jonah a second time,

2 “Go immediately to Nineveh, that large city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”

3 So Jonah went immediately to Nineveh, as the LORD had said. (Now Nineveh was an enormous city—it required three days to walk through it!)

4 When Jonah began to enter the city one day’s walk, he announced, “At the end of forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown!”

### **The People of Nineveh Repent**

5 The people of Nineveh believed in God, and they declared a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes.

7 He issued a proclamation and said, “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.

8 Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly to God, and everyone must turn from their evil way of living and from the violence that they do.

9 Who knows? Perhaps God might be willing to change his mind and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we might not die.”

10 When God saw their actions—they turned from their evil way of living!—God relented concerning the judgment he had

threatened them with and he did not destroy them. [[Matt 12:39–41; 16:4; Luke 11:2](#)]

### **Jonah’s Anger and the LORD’s Compassion**

4:1 This displeased Jonah terribly and he became very angry.

2 He prayed to the LORD and said, “Oh, LORD, this is just what I thought would happen when I was in my own country. This is what I tried to prevent by attempting to escape to Tarshish!—because I knew that you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, and one who relents concerning threatened judgment.

3 So now, LORD, kill me instead, because I would rather die than live!”

4 The LORD said, “Are you really so very angry?”

5 Jonah left the city and sat down east of it. He made a shelter for himself there and sat down under it in the shade to see what would happen to the city.

6 The LORD God appointed a little plant and caused it to grow up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to rescue him from his misery. Now Jonah was very delighted about the little plant.

7 So God sent a worm at dawn the next day, and it attacked the little plant so that it dried up.

8 When the sun began to shine, God sent a hot east wind. So the sun beat down on Jonah’s head, and he grew faint. So he despaired of life, and said, “I would rather die than live!”

9 God said to Jonah, “Are you really so very angry about the little plant?” And he said, “I am as angry as I could possibly be!”

10 The LORD said, “You were upset about this little 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.

11 Should I not be even more concerned about Nineveh, this enormous city? There are more than one hundred twenty thousand people in it who do not know right from wrong, as well as many animals!”

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

Amos 1–2

### **Title and Theme**

1:1 The following is a record of what Amos prophesied. He was one of the herdsmen from Tekoa. These prophecies about Israel were revealed to him during the time of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2 Amos said:

“The LORD comes roaring out of Zion;  
from Jerusalem he comes bellowing!  
The shepherds’ pastures wilt;  
the summit of Carmel withers.”

**Oracle against Syria**

3 This is what the LORD says:

Because Damascus has committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my  
decree of judgment.

They ripped through Gilead like threshing sledges with iron teeth. [cf. [2 Kgs 10:32–33](#); [13:1–7](#)]

4 So I will set Hazael's house on fire;

fire will consume Ben Hadad's fortresses.

5 I will break the bar on the gate of Damascus.

I will remove the ruler from Wicked Valley,  
the one who holds the royal scepter from Beth Eden.

The people of Aram will be deported to Kir.”

The LORD has spoken!

**Oracle against Philistia**

6 This is what the LORD says:

“Because Gaza has committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.

They deported a whole community and sold them to Edom.

7 So I will set Gaza's city wall on fire;

fire will consume her fortresses.

8 I will remove the ruler from Ashdod,

the one who holds the royal scepter from Ashkelon.

I will strike Ekron with my hand;

the rest of the Philistines will also die.”

The sovereign LORD has spoken!

**Oracle against Phoenicia**

9 This is what the LORD says:

“Because Tyre has committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.

They sold a whole community to Edom;

they failed to observe a treaty of brotherhood.

10 So I will set fire to Tyre's city wall;

fire will consume her fortresses.”

**Oracle against Edom**

11 This is what the LORD says:

“Because Edom has committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.

He chased his brother with a sword;

he wiped out his allies.

In his anger he tore them apart without stopping to rest;

in his fury he relentlessly attacked them.

12 So I will set Teman on fire;

fire will consume Bozrah's fortresses.”

**Oracle against Ammon**

13 This is what the LORD says:

“Because the Ammonites have committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.

They ripped open Gilead's pregnant women

so they could expand their territory.

- 14 So I will set fire to Rabbah's city wall;  
fire will consume her fortresses.  
War cries will be heard on the day of battle;  
a strong gale will blow on the day of the windstorm.
- 15 Ammon's king will be deported;  
he and his officials will be carried off together."  
The LORD has spoken!

**Oracle against Moab**

2:1 This is what the LORD says:

- "Because Moab has committed three crimes—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.  
They burned the bones of Edom's king into lime.
- 2 So I will set Moab on fire,  
and it will consume Kerioth's fortresses.  
Moab will perish in the heat of battle  
amid war cries and the blaring of the ram's horn.
- 3 I will remove Moab's leader;  
I will kill all Moab's officials with him."  
The LORD has spoken!

**Oracle against Judah**

4 This is what the LORD says:

- "Because Judah has committed three covenant transgressions—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.  
They rejected the LORD's law;  
they did not obey his commands.  
Their false gods,  
to which their fathers were loyal,  
led them astray.
- 5 So I will set Judah on fire,  
and it will consume Jerusalem's fortresses."

**Oracle against Israel**

6 This is what the LORD says:

- "Because Israel has committed three covenant transgressions—  
make that four!—I will not revoke my decree of judgment.  
They sold the innocent for silver,  
the needy for a pair of sandals.
- 7 They trample on the dirt-covered heads of the poor;  
they push the destitute away.  
A man and his father go to the same girl;  
in this way they show disrespect for my moral purity.
- 8 They stretch out on clothing seized as collateral;  
they do so right beside every altar!  
They drink wine bought with the fines they have levied;  
they do so right in the temple of their God!
- 9 For Israel's sake I destroyed the Amorites.  
They were as tall as cedars  
and as strong as oaks,  
but I destroyed the fruit on their branches  
and their roots in the ground.
- 10 I brought you up from the land of Egypt;  
I led you through the wilderness for forty years  
so you could take the Amorites' land as your own.

- 11 I made some of your sons prophets  
and some of your young men Nazirites.  
Is this not true, you Israelites?”  
The LORD is speaking!
- 12 “But you made the Nazirites drink wine;  
you commanded the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy!’
- 13 Look! I will press you down,  
like a cart loaded down with grain presses down.
- 14 Fast runners will find no place to hide;  
strong men will have no strength left;  
warriors will not be able to save their lives.
- 15 Archers will not hold their ground;  
fast runners will not save their lives,  
nor will those who ride horses.
- 16 Bravehearted warriors will run away naked in that day.”  
The LORD is speaking!

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### **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 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.

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

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.