

אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם
the heavenly fire

Yonah
יוֹנָה



David Colo

אש מן־השמים

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אש מן-השמים
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אש מן השמים

ר' יהודה אומר המתרגם פסוק כצורתו הרי זה בדאי
והמוסיף עליו הרי זה מחרף ומגדף

Rabbi Judah says: “The one who translates a verse equivalent to its form—
that person is a liar. But the one who adds to it—
that person is a reviler and defiler.”

—*b. Kiddushin 49a*



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Sigla and Abbreviations

GENERAL

√	Verbal root
Ⲛ	Jacob ben Ḥayyim's printed compilation (Second Rabbinic Bible, 1524)
Ⲓ	Septuagint: Old Greek
Ⲓ ^N	Septuagint: Codex Sinaiticus
Ⲓ ^A	Septuagint: Codex Alexandrinus
Ⲓ ^B	Septuagint: Codex Vaticanus
ⲙ ^{BP}	Masoretic Text: Babylonicus Petropolitanus Codex (AD 916)
ⲙ ^L	Masoretic Text: Leningrad Codex (AD 1008)
ⲙ ^P	Masoretic Text: Cairo Codex of the Prophets (AD 896)
Ⲥ	Syriac Peshitta
Ⲛ	Targum of the Twelve
Ⲛ	Vulgate (Stuttgart)
α'	Aquila
σ'	Symmachus
θ'	Theodotion
3FS	third-person feminine singular
4QXII ^a	Minor Prophets Scroll from the Dead Sea (2 nd century BC)
4QXII ^g	Minor Prophets Scroll from the Dead Sea (1 st century BC)
8HevXII gr	Greek Minor Prophets Scroll, Nahal Ḥever (50 BC–AD 50)
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud tractate
BH	Biblical Hebrew
DSS	Dead Sea Scroll(s)
HB	Hebrew Bible
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah tractate
<i>Mek.</i>	<i>Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael</i>
MS A	Hebrew Manuscript of Ben Sira "A," Cairo Genizah (10 th century AD)
MurXII	Hebrew Minor Prophets Scroll, Wadi Murabba'at (AD 75–100)
S-V-O	Subject-Verb-Object
V-S-O	Verb-Subject-Object

REFERENCE

AYB	The Anchor Yale Bible
AYBD	The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary
<i>BHQ</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i>
<i>BHS</i>	K. Elliger and W. Rudolph's <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CAD	Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CAL	Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon project
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, original 40-volume publication series for the Dead Sea Scrolls
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> (28 th Edition)
HALOT	Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner's <i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
IBHS	Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor's <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JM	Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka's <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i>
<i>KAI</i>	<i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i>
<i>KTU</i>	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: einschließlich der keilalphabetischen Texte außerhalb Ugarits. Teil 1, Transkription</i>
<i>LVT</i>	Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner's <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
Soncino	Soncino translation of the Babylonian Talmud
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

TRANSLATIONS

AAT	J. M. Powis Smith's <i>The Old Testament: An American Translation</i> (1927)
Alter	Robert Alter's <i>The Hebrew Bible</i> (2019)
ASV	American Standard Version
Bishops'	Bishops' Bible (1568)
CEV	Contemporary English Version
ESV	English Standard Version
Fenton	Ferrar Fenton's <i>The Holy Bible In Modern English</i>
Geneva	Geneva Bible (1560)
GNB	Good News Bible
Goldingay	John Goldingay's <i>The First Testament</i> (2018)
GW	GOD'S WORD translation
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917)
KJV	King James Version
LEB	Lexham English Bible
Leeser	Isaac Leeser's translation of the Hebrew Bible (1853)
Moffatt	<i>The Bible: James Moffatt Translation</i>
NAB	New American Bible (3 rd Edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1997)
NET	New English Translation (NET Bible), 1 st Edition
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPST	New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
Rotherham	Rotherham's <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> (1902)
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SET	Stone Edition Tanach
Wycliffe ²	Wycliffe Bible, Revised Translation
YLT	Young's Literal Translation

Preface

Call me David. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my wallet, but a great interest in the tale of Yonah, I thought I would dive into the Hebrew text and see what sights it showed me. What I discovered was astonishing: a personified sea that some call “Leviathan,” a deity whose own mercy brings him distress, a prophecy with double meanings, a bush that, by its very name, identifies with Yonah, a rebellious prophet who never accepts responsibility for his behavior, and humor—what wondrous humor!—wrought with satiric puns, ambiguous expressions, and clever word-play. Yet when I turned to an English translation, all such sights vanished. How then is this? What exactly is so elusive? Tell me, is there any virtue in the pens of the translators in the hundreds of English translations now available? But behind the Hebrew text is an artist! He desires to paint you the wildest, absurdist, and most engaging bit of subversive parable you ever heard. So I took it into my head to right that wrong. With other men, perhaps, there would have been no inducement; but as for me, I am tormented with an everlasting itch to see biblical texts speak on their own terms. And what of it, if some old traditionalists and King James devotees assign me to perdition? What does that indignity amount to? The impetus behind this was without doubt part of the grand program of Providence drawn up long ago. Therefore, I submit these, my endeavors, to you my reader: a brand-new English translation, which conveys aspects of the Hebrew text that have been overlooked, ignored, or misunderstood by translations both ancient and modern, and Translation Notes that bring out the text’s semantic nuances, reveal interpretive cruxes, and explain the choices of other English versions. Throughout the process, I hope not only to confront longstanding prejudices, but offer alternative possibilities to capture, in unprecedented fidelity, both the form and content of the tale they call Yonah.¹

¹ Many phrases and sentences in this paragraph were lifted from the first chapter of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*.

Introduction

A translation is just that. We do not presume to replace the original text with our own. Yet we do not believe the original so lofty or sacrosanct that it cannot be represented vividly and accurately in another language. If the biblical texts are to be believed, YHWH both *spoke* and *wrote*—the purpose of which must surely be *understanding*. The Rabbis, without anticipating its greater application, left us a saying that illustrates this well: דְּבַרְהָ תוֹרָה כְּלָשׁוֹן בְּנֵי אָדָם, “Scripture speaks in human language.” What follows, therefore, is a discussion of human language and its comprehension. We begin with a look at the various names and terms that are most pertinent.

(A) Names and Terminology

1. Of the Translation

אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם (*’ēš min-haššāmayim*) means “the fire from heaven,” or, more simply, *the heavenly fire* (THF). Such language is drawn from theophanic imagery, which likens the presence of YHWH to various manifestations of fire, and from an ancient Jewish conception of YHWH’s word as fire. Early Rabbinic tradition equated the fire that fell from heaven on Sinai with scripture itself. This can be seen, for instance, in the following midrash, which uses word-play to phonetically link “Torah” (תּוֹרָה) with “its flame” (אֵשׁ): “Because YHWH descended upon it in fire (Exod 19:18). This shows that the Torah [is] fire, was given from fire, and is comparable to fire. . . . One can do nothing but warm himself [with] its flame” (*Mek. Bahodesh* 4).

2. Of the Israelite Deity

By way of piety and tradition, the scribes who placed vowel points in the Hebrew manuscripts obscured the name of God by placing under its consonants the vowels of words like Elohim (God), Adonai (My Sovereign/Lord), and Ha-Shem (The Name). Some translations create the hybrid “Jehovah” out of this heterogeneous mix, while others translate the vowels. Still others trace the name back to a hypothetical form of the verb “to be” (Yahweh). Like translations of other religious texts, THF replicates the deity’s name when that name is used. Since, however, its pronunciation was lost, we render the name as we have it and how scribes have written it for the last three millennia: **YHWH**. Much like how ancient Jews might use the paleo-Hebrew script to indicate the name’s sacred status, we use a font quite different than the rest of the text. So too we use “**Elohim**,” “**El**,” and “**Eloah**” instead of “God,” but “**The One God**” when a definite article precedes it. Where the text intends to communicate something other than the deity’s name or title, we follow intently.

3. Within Yonah

A number of specialized words, phrases, or literary devices occur in Yonah, which warrant initial comment. They are provided below with their English rendering as used herein and a discussion of their respective meanings.

TERMS	DESCRIPTION
יונה	Yonah — THF will occasionally veer away from traditional English renderings of Hebrew personal names when the more original name is easily recognizable (as in this case). Place-names, however (like Jaffa and Nineveh), follow traditional renderings.
רעה√	to be wicked — The problem of translation, as described by Magonet, is that רעה “has a number of different meanings throughout the book – yet remains recognisably [sic] the same word. That is to say that although the author could have chosen a different word each time to express different shades of meaning, by retaining this one, he allows each usage to interact with the other, multiplying the levels of correspondence and contrast between the respective subjects or contexts related to the word.” ² In 1:2, for example, רעה refers to Nineveh’s moral evil. In 1:7, however, רעה is a cross between the natural evil of a horrendous sea-storm and the supernatural evil it represents (the rise of Leviathan). In 4:1, Yonah “fumes” about what he considers to be רעה. No single English word will adequately capture the nuance of רעה in all those places (NASB, for example, rendered them as “wickedness,” “calamity,” and “displeased,” respectively). To translate the same term differently in each case would lose the force of the text’s correspondences and contrasts and create a translation that moves away from the style chosen by the oral composer or scribal artisan. Therefore, we render all words based on רעה√ with the same basic sense: “wicked.” See to be great and to fear below.
גדל√	to be great — Many words are repeated in Yonah with different semantic nuances. When גדולה is used to describe Nineveh in 1:2, it probably means “populous/multitudinous,” whereas גדולה probably means “fierce/powerful” when it describes the wind and storm in 1:4 or “huge/gargantuan” when it describes the fish in 2:1. The oral composer or scribal artisan used repetition of the same root to create correspondences and contrasts throughout the tale. Therefore, we render all words based on גדל√ with the same basic sense: “great.” See to be wicked above and to fear below.
ירא√	to fear — Many words are repeated in Yonah with different semantic nuances. When the verb ירא is used to describe the sailors in 1:5, it refers to being in “terror” or “dread,” whereas Yonah’s use of the verb in 1:9 means “to revere/venerate.” The oral composer or scribal artisan used repetition of the same root to create correspondences and contrasts throughout the tale. Therefore, we render all words based on ירא√ with the same basic sense: “fear.” See to be wicked and to be great above.

DEVICES

pun	Some of Yonah’s humor is created by the use of puns . In order to clue the reader into the use of a pun, we put the particular word or phrase between asterisks. Although each pun is explained in the Translation Notes, we provide a list here for easy reference:
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² Jonathan D. Magonet, *Form and Meaning. Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah*. BLS 8. Ed. David M. Gunn. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983, p. 22.

1:8	<i>*profit*</i>	sounds like	prophet
3:7-8	<i>*wicked* away</i> (as in “drunk up” or “absorbed”)	sounds like	wicked way
4:6-10	<i>*expeliona*</i> (fake Latin species designation)	sounds like	expel Yonah

Extended Word-plays

Yonah makes use of numerous word-plays. Usually, such word-plays are located within the same verse or verses. In a few instances, however, a word-play may span a whole chapter (or several chapters). In that case, the word-play may be missed even when it is carefully represented in English. To make those word-plays evident at a glance, we place the specific words in *italics* and list them here for easy reference:

ברח	+	בריחם	
to escape/flee		literally “bolts/barriers,” but rendered “escapes”	
קיא	+	נקיא	
to expel/vomit		looks like “innocent,” but rendered “expelled”	
	+	קיקיון	
		<i>Qiqayon</i> , rendered “ <i>expeliona</i> ” (expel Yonah)	
קדם	+	מקדם	
to counteract/prevent		literally “eastward,” but rendered “counter to”	
	+	רוח קדים	
		literally “east wind,” but rendered “counterwind”	

Word-plays not represented:

חבל	+	הבל	=	too difficult to capture
rope/crew		illusion		
אמתי	+	אמן	=	questionable/unintentional
Amittai		to rely/depend		

Numerical Symbolism

The composer of Yonah is prone to using **numerical symbolism** for dramatic effect. For example, Yonah’s prophetic declaration provides a *40-day* period for Nineveh’s “turning,” the name of Nineveh is mentioned *seven times* in the scene that takes place in that city, and the population of Nineveh is described as greater than *twelve myriads* (120,000). The most common numerical symbolism, however, revolves around the number *three*, which is symbolic for totality and/or finality (three instances of a thing indicates that such a thing is complete or conclusive). If terms are not represented the same way by translators when they are repeated in the text, that numerical symbolism will be lost. The following list shows how that symbolism is utilized throughout Yonah:

- God’s instruction to Yonah, which opens both halves of the text (1:2; 3:2) makes use of three imperatives (get up, go, call out) in order to communicate the *full import* of Yonah’s mission. Therefore, when Yonah does otherwise, we are hit with the *full magnitude* of his disobedience.
- When the “head of the crew” reuses two of the same imperatives (get up, call out) in 1:6, the “second” time that God instructs Yonah with those imperatives becomes a third iteration of the idea, which makes it the *final word* to Yonah and Yonah’s *last chance* to obey. So, of course, he does.
- The verb נפל is used three times for the lot-casting that singles out Yonah (1:7), which means that there is no doubt about the outcome (it is *final*).
- The statement that “the sailors feared” or “the men feared” occurs three times in the first chapter (1:5, 10, 16), which signifies a *comprehensive* or *total fear*. There is nothing left for them to do than acknowledge the greatness of YHWH.
- The first chapter says three times that Yonah fled from YHWH (twice in 1:3, once in 1:10) to indicate that Yonah has *fully turned away* from YHWH.
- Verbs and nouns with the same root occur three times in 1:16 to show the extent to which the sailors acknowledge the greatness of YHWH (a symbolic conversion).
- The journey to the Underworld and back takes three days and three nights (2:1), which means Yonah went *as far as he can go* to escape from YHWH and return.
- The journey to Nineveh takes three days (3:3), which indicates that it was the *fullest extent* necessary to obey the directive “Go to Nineveh.”
- Just as God’s instruction to Yonah included three imperatives (get up, go, call out), so Yonah “gets up,” “goes,” and “calls out” (3:3-4). The repetition of the three verbs in that instance indicates the *full extent* of Yonah’s obedience.
- The Ninevites and their king mention donning “rags” (traditionally “sackcloth”) three times (3:5, 6, 8), which indicates the *full extent* of their humility/repentance.
- The very end of the episode concerning Yonah’s pronouncement against Nineveh (3:10) contains three iterations of עשה√ (to do/act), which shows that the people have *fully turned away* from their wickedness and YHWH has *fully turned aside* from inflicting upon them what they think is wicked.
- In 4:5, “the city” is mentioned three times to indicate that Yonah’s attention is *fully directed* toward Nineveh.
- Three things are appointed by YHWH (bush, worm, and wind) to rouse Yonah’s conscience and teach him a lesson (4:6-8). Therefore, the lesson is *fully learned*.
- In the final chapter, YHWH asks Yonah three rhetorical questions (vv. 4, 9, and 11).³ The first is short, but the point is not yet learned. The second is longer, but

3 Although virtually all scholars agree that YHWH speaks in rhetorical questions to Yonah, there are a few who disagree. Guillaume argued that recently in “The End of Jonah is the Beginning of Wisdom.” We believe that Ben Zvi adequately addressed his primary concerns in “Jonah 4:11 and the Metaphorical Character of the Book of Jonah.” Therefore, we have no reservations siding with the majority opinion.

Yonah is still defiant. The third rhetorical question, therefore, spells the message out to its *fullest* and, therefore, leaves no doubt about its answer.⁴

- The verb יָדַע (to know) appears three times in the first section (1:7, 10, 12) and three times in the second (3:9; 4:2, 11). The first occurrence in each section is a statement of uncertainty (what is not known). The second occurrence in each section is a statement of certainty (what is known). The third occurrence in each section *completes* the reader's or hearer's knowledge about the situation and *finalizes* the outcome. Since the sea "knows" about Yonah (1:12), it is inevitable that he be engulfed by it. Since the Ninevites do not "know" how to behave (4:11), it is inevitable that YHWH shows them mercy.

(B) Format

1. Lineation

Lineation is the arrangement of the lines of a text according to content and/or strophes. Although many poetic texts were written in a special format by the time of the Masoretes, it was not so in antiquity. The lineation herein is an interpretative measure meant to differentiate poetry from prose and to better elucidate textual content. It often follows the accentual divisions used by the medieval synagogues and documented by the Masoretes. When it does not (the accents were placed in the texts to aid in oral recitation, not to demarcate distinct units of poetry or narrative), the reason(s) for that deviation may be indicated in the Translation Notes.

2. Separation

Ancient scribes divided their texts into smaller sections called *parashot*. One was referred to as "open" due to the fact that either a large space was left open at the end of one section while a new section began on a different line or an entire blank line was left open between the end of one section and the start of the next. The other was referred to as "closed" because one section ended and another began on the same line with only a small, enclosed space between them. The open section differentiated between larger literary units (what we might call "pericopes") and the closed section differentiated between smaller ones (what we might call "paragraphs"). Separating portions of text from each other by the use of *parashot* goes all the way back to the DSS. However, since open and closed sections are few and far between in the Hebrew manuscripts of Yonah, we have separated the text into paragraphs based on our sense of content. We have also placed open spaces around portions of text that stand out prominently (as in the transition between narrative and psalm in ch. 2 or the quotation of a royal proclamation in ch. 3).

3. Versification

Versification refers to the division of the text into verses. That division is ancient, but it was oral long before it was written. The earliest Rabbinic literature utilized verse division. By the time of the Masoretes, verse divisions were already standardized. Copiers counted the verses within a text in order to

4 Some scholars insist that the end of the text leaves the debate between God and Yonah unresolved. However, it is clear that YHWH's word ends the story and drives all events thereafter towards its acceptance just as YHWH's word began the story and drove all events in the story towards its acceptance. The numerical symbolism makes that even more evident.

guarantee that the text was copied precisely. THF follows the verse division as documented in the Hebrew manuscripts. Most English translations follow the verse divisions created by Christians for the Vulgate half a millennium (or more) later.

4. Italics

Italics are used primarily to identify and separate **superscriptions** from the body of a text. They are used secondarily to indicate **quotations** within a text (see, for example, 2:4). Thirdly, they may be used in rare instances to highlight words or phrases with special significance (see Translation Notes).

5. Brackets

Square brackets indicate words that are not present in the Hebrew text itself, but which, nevertheless, are represented by the tone or context of the language, are required by English, or are included for reasons of style. Curly brackets are used in places where there is high probability that a scribe accidentally duplicated part of the text—a common transmission error known as **dittography** (see 1:3).

6. Forward Slashes

In extremely rare circumstances, where there is very good reason to believe that the Hebrew text has been corrupted, yet the non-corrupted text we propose has no manuscript or version support, we place the word between **/forward slashes/** to reveal that we have altered the text from something that exists to something that does not. This is only done in rare circumstances because we recognize a tendency among previous generations of scholars to dissect, alter, and jettison large portions of biblical texts that they deemed unsuitable or unoriginal when, in fact, it was their own biases, prejudices, and assumptions that were problematic. The integrity of the consonantal text in the Masoretic tradition has proven itself reliable with time and textual discovery. Most alterations and emendations proposed by scholars before the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, were proven wrong when those scrolls either agreed with or showed the text in the Masoretic tradition to be even more ancient. At the same time, however, purposeful alteration is done by translators all the time. Sometimes that alteration is indicated by the use of footnotes or marginal notes. Most of the time, however, the reader of the English translation has no idea when the text is being intentionally manipulated. Since we do not wish to mislead our readers, we make such manipulations, however rare, very conspicuous.

7. Masoretic Notes

At the end of every text or scroll, the Masoretes kept notes of things such as the total number of verses, the number of sections according to the triennial reading cycle, or the number and types of paragraphs. Since each manuscript differs in the way it records that information, THF reproduces the notes at the end of every biblical text according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. For more on Masoretic notes, see Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford's *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*.

Background

God Delights in Deliverance and Distresses in Death

Yonah is a story about deliverance. When Yonah was hurled to Leviathan, YHWH delivered him from death by appointing a fish to protect him. In like manner, YHWH appointed a plant or bush that delivered Yonah from being struck down by the sun. Yonah did nothing to deserve those things, yet he rejoiced in his deliverance. Since YHWH is a god who dispenses deliverance instead of death, and Yonah responded so favorably to his own deliverance, he should delight in Nineveh's! Life and death battle it out in Yonah, but when YHWH gets involved, life wins because YHWH is extravagantly merciful—even to the wicked and undeserving.

The Historical Prophet, the Anti-Prophet, and the Prophetic Composer

Since “we cannot detect any biographical or historical interest in Jonah as a person, or in the era in which he lived”⁵ in the prophetic text of Yonah, our knowledge of the real-life person, Yonah son of Amittai, is limited to a brief mention in 2 Kgs 14:25. That text describes him as a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel, whose prophecy about the restoration of that kingdom was fulfilled during the reign of Yeroboam II (8th century BC) when Nimrud was the capital of Assyria. We do not know whether Yonah lived then or uttered his prophecy before Yeroboam II came to power. Apart from his hometown, nothing else is known about him.

Although the character in this text shares his name with the historical person, that is where the similarities end. First, this Yonah is an anti-prophet. A prophet stands “before YHWH,” but Yonah flees from him. A prophet is compelled to deliver God's message, but Yonah does everything to avoid it. Yonah is disobedient, hypocritical, self-concerned, and unrepentant. Second, this Yonah is a caricature of a real person. He is the son of Amittai (reliability), yet utterly unreliable. Yonah professes all the right doctrines—that YHWH is the supreme god over all creation (1:9) and that he is long-suffering and abounding in mercy (4:2)—yet fails to obey him. Rather than wanting to “rise up” and seek life, Yonah only wishes to “go down” and seek death! Third, this Yonah lived in a completely different century than the historical prophet (Nineveh only became a “great city” and seat of Assyria's king in the 7th century BC).

5 Hans W. Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary*. Trans. Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986, p. 81.

Why then does the prophetic character share a name with a real-life prophet? Some are certain that “there must be some definite reason.”⁶ However, *any name would have sufficed*. The composer needed a name from the past that would be recognized as truly prophetic in order to create its antithesis. Beyond that, it is curious that the prophet’s name is identical to the feminine participle “oppressor.” In a text strewn with word-play, it may be more than coincidence that the attitudes and actions of “Yonah” (יוֹנָה), a caricature of Israel, should explain the continued presence of Israel’s “oppressor” (יוֹנָה).

The most important prophet is the composer of the text. Imagine that you read one of Yeshua’s parables written on a scroll with other prophetic texts except that Yeshua was not mentioned and the parable was never explained. The prophet would be anonymous. Only by reading the parable would you have a clue about him. In many of Yeshua’s parables, for instance, he talks about “the kingdom of Heaven/God.” One could conclude, therefore, that he wished to bring about that kingdom through his words and by influencing his audience’s behavior. In the same way, the composer of Yonah is anonymous, but his story tells us about him. Yonah is a prophet of the north (Israel), but the psalm in ch. 2 seems to mention the Jerusalem temple. Scholars often view that as evidence that the psalm was not originally part of the text. Instead, it may tell us the origin of the composer: a prophet of the south. The notion in ch. 1 that the presence of God is more manifest in a particular locale (one can go “away from” it) probably reflects the view of a composer who identified Jerusalem as a place more special than others (where God “dwells”). If we are correct that this is a parable about the Babylonian exile and God’s mercy toward pagan peoples, then the prophet probably told this story to give a reason for the exile (disobedience/rebellion) and to influence change (repentance).

Form & Genre

Yonah is composed of two sections (chs. 1-2 and 3-4)—each mirroring the other. Chapter 1 starts with YHWH’s word commanding Yonah to go to Nineveh. Chapter 3 begins the same. In ch. 1, pagans turn to YHWH after meeting Yonah. The same happens in ch. 3. Chapter 2 is a psalm of thanksgiving in which Yonah communes with God. Chapter 4 is a narrative of lament in which Yonah communes with God. Surrounding the whole is YHWH’s word, which begins the text and ends it. Repetition is used as a structural device to provide movement within the chapters and to link the sections together. Although quite unexpected in such a short narrative, word-play and sound-play are ubiquitous. Numerical symbolism occurs

6 Gerhard C. Aalders, *The Problem of the Book of Jonah*. TOTL. London: Tyndale Press, 1948, p. 25.

continuously (particularly in the use of three iterations). Humor is woven throughout by means of irony or expectation reversal (such as a Hebrew who tries everything to avoid saving pagans, yet brings all the pagans around him to repentance anyway), punning, absurdity (like a plant growing up in a single night or an entire city and its animals repenting), and the use of the same verbs or expressions in contrasting situations to throw Yonah's words and actions into jarring discord with both God and man.

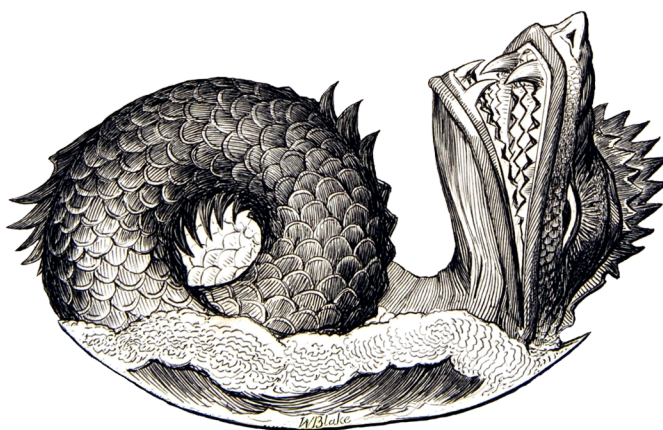
Scholars often wonder why Yonah is part of the Minor Prophets since it contains no oracles and is unlike all the other prophetic texts. Determining its genre has also proved problematic. Typical classifications range from a short story or fable to a parody or satire. Some have even argued that Yonah resists any genre classification at all. Bolin, for instance, called the attempt "insoluble."⁷ We propose, however, that Yonah is a *parabolic writing*. Much like the prophet Nathan's parable about the poor man's ewe (2 Sam 12:1-4), the point is to present a story that engages its audience and then challenges them by flipping its criticisms back upon them. Wendland put it this way: "The original author . . . used the art and skill of literary composition in the service of theological persuasion. His goal was to convince his hearers . . . to adopt a particular moral and religious position in relation to their current thought and behavior."⁸ In this case, however, Yonah is not a story about how someone in the story tells a parable to another person in the story—the parable is the written text itself. The prophetic composer would then explain its meaning.⁹ The fact that Yonah makes greater use of symbolism than any other biblical text of comparable size shows that it was meant to be a symbolic story. "All the events in the story are 'larger than life' and suggest that for the author and initial audience this was perceived as a sort of parable. . . . It clearly addresses the issue of the relationship of Israel to the outside world."¹⁰ Yonah represents a type of Israel often portrayed by the prophets: a people who had a close relationship with YHWH, yet rejected him. For that reason, Yonah (Israel) was expelled from the land into the sea/Leviathan,

- 7 Thomas M. Bolin, *Freedom Beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-examined*. JSOTSS 236. CIS 3. Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997, p. 53. Bolin's well-articulated and rightly discerned criticisms of assumptions and methods in biblical scholarship have, unfortunately, resulted in a hyper-critical position that is no more methodologically sound than those he criticizes: he requires "conclusive support," (something no one can give him), "consensus" (as if consensus could substantiate or invalidate anything), and dismisses "art" and "genre" as avenues of investigation (even though both are products of human creativity throughout the habitable world).
- 8 Ernst R. Wendland, "Five Key Aspects of Style in Jonah and (Possibly) how to Translate Them." *BT* 48.3 (1997): pp. 308-9.
- 9 Therefore, we can agree with Aalders' criticisms of the claim that Jonah is a parable while, at the same time, affirming its genre as a parabolic writing (no other text in the HB is a parable in and of itself—rather, they are other kinds of literature with parables *in* them).
- 10 Jonathan D. Magonet. "Jonah, Book of," *AYBD* 3:936-42.

which represents Babylon (see Jer 51:34-6). Yet YHWH sheltered Israel in the midst of exile (represented by the fish that swallows Yonah). The first section ends with Yonah being spit out on land (either the return from exile or the hope of a revived life in exile). In the second section, Yonah represents Israel watching to see if God will punish pagan peoples for their wickedness. Because they repent, God spares them. Yonah, however, does not repent and must be corrected. For an audience that identifies with Yonah, the message would be subtle and subversive: perhaps the one with the greatest need for change is *you*. During times of fasting, when Israelites asked God for rain, *m. Taanith* 2:1 records how an elder would quote from Yonah as an object lesson for the people: “Brethren, it is not written of the men of Nineveh that ‘God saw their sackcloth and their fasting,’ but *And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way.*”¹¹ Therefore, Yonah fits perfectly among the Minor Prophets as a prophetic challenge to attitude and behavior.

11 Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah. Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*. Oxford: University Press, 1933, p. 195. Quotation from Yon 3:10.

Yonah



Chapter 1

8

¹ YHWH's oracle came to Yonah, son of Amittai, as follows: ² "Get up. Go to that great city, Nineveh, and call out over it that their wickedness has come [right] up into my face."

³ Yonah got up, however, to *escape* toward Tarshish—away from the face of YHWH! He went down [to] Jaffa, found a ship arriving [from] Tarshish, [and] hired it. He went down inside it to go with them [back] toward Tarshish{—away from the face of YHWH}.

⁴ But YHWH—he hurled [such] a great wind to the sea [that] a great storm came on it. And the ship—it reckoned a wrecking! ⁵ The sailors were [so] fearful, they cried out—each [one] to his gods—[and] hurled the objects that [were] on the ship into the sea to bring appeasement by them. But Yonah—he went down to the recesses of the boat, laid back, [and] went down to sleep.

⁶ The head of the crew headed to him and said to him, "What do you benefit [by] sleeping? Get up! Call out to your god! Perhaps that god will show concern for us so that we do not perish!"

⁷ They said—[each] one to his peer, "Let's go throw down lots so that we may learn on whose account we have incurred this wickedness." So they threw down lots [and] the lot was thrown down on Yonah.

⁸ They said to him, "Please explain to us for what reason we have incurred this wickedness! What [is] your *profit* [in this] and where are you coming from? What [is] your homeland and what ethnicity [are] you?"

⁹ "Israeli I [be]," he said to them. "And [of] YHWH, the Overarching God, [am] I fearful—[he] who made the wet and the dry [extents]."

¹⁰ The men then feared [with] great fear. "What a thing you have done!" they said to him, because the men learned, as he had explained to them, that away from the face of YHWH he was *escaping*.

¹¹ They said to him, "What should we do with you so that the sea may be quelled by us since the sea is storming incessantly?"

¹² "Lift me up and hurl me into the sea," he said to them, "then the sea will be quelled by you since it knows of me—that this great storm [is] over you on my account."

¹³ The men, however, tunneled [ahead] to drive back to the dry land, but could not since the sea was storming incessantly over them. ¹⁴ So they called out to YHWH [and] said, "Please, YHWH—please don't let us perish with the life of this man nor repay us [for] *expelled* blood! Because just as you, YHWH, intended, [so] have you done!"

¹⁵ They lifted Yonah up, hurled him into the sea, [and] the sea stabilized from its raging. ¹⁶ Then [so] great [was] the fear the men feared of YHWH, they sacrificed a sacrifice [and] pledged pledges to YHWH.

Chapter 2

9

¹ YHWH, however, appointed a great fish to swallow up Yonah. Yonah was in the guts of the fish three days and three nights.

² Yonah prayed to YHWH his god from the guts of the fish. ³ He said,

"I call out from my calamity
to YHWH—he answers me!

I cry out from Sheol's belly.
My shout comes to thee!

⁴ You tossed me deep in the well of [the] seas
so that River swelled around me.
*All your breakers and your waves—
over me, they passed.*

⁵ Then I, myself, thought I was pitched out
from the sight of your eyes,
/never/ again to peer
toward your hallowed hall.

⁶ Waters submerged me up to [the] throat.
Abyss swelled around me.
Finality was fastened to my head.

⁷ In the chasms of the mountains,
I went down.

The earth with its *escapes* [were] beyond me
in Nevermore.

But you made my life come up from the Pit,
YHWH my god!

⁸ As it faded from me—my breath,
YHWH did I recall.

It came to you—my prayer,
into your hallowed hall.

⁹ Defenders of hollow illusions—
their commitment will they renounce.

¹⁰ But I, with shout of appreciation,
an immolation will hereby bring you.

That [which] I pledged
I will hereby bring to completion.
Salvation belongs to YHWH!”

¹¹ YHWH then spoke to the fish so that it
expelled Yonah to the dry land.

Chapter 3 :

¹ YHWH’s oracle then came to Yonah a second
[time] as follows: ² “Get up. Go to that great city,
Nineveh, and call out to it the [very] call-out that I
convey to you.”

³ So Yonah got up [and] marched toward
Nineveh according to YHWH’s oracle even though
Nineveh was a great city of [other] gods [and] a
three-day march [besides].

⁴ Yonah then began to enter into the city.
Marching around a single day, he called out [and]
said,

“At most forty days
till Nineveh is turned!”

⁵ The people of Nineveh relied on Elohim. They
called out [for] a fast [and] dressed [in] rags—from
the greatest of them even to the least of them.

⁶ Since what was spoken was a blow to
Nineveh’s king, he got up from his throne [and],
having thrown [on] a rag [and] settled in the dirt,
made his majesty pass away from him. ⁷ Then he
made a cry [go] out in Nineveh, which, [arising]
from what was sensible to the king and his great

ones, said the following:

“Whether human or whether beast,
whether herd or whether flock,
let their senses not be indulged at all.

Let no feeding be done,
nor water *wicked* away.

⁸ Let them cover themselves [with] rags instead,
whether human or whether beast,
and call out to Elohim in force.

Let them turn back as well—
each from his wicked way

and from the violence that they carry out.

⁹ Who knows?

He may turn aside [and] relent—
the One God.

He may turn aside from his fuming rage
so that we do not perish!”

¹⁰ The One God saw their acts—how they
turned away from their wicked way. Then the One
God relented from the wickedness that he had
spoke of enacting against them and did not act.

Chapter 4 7

¹ But that was wicked to Yonah—[so] great a
wickedness that it fumed in him! ² He prayed to
YHWH [and] said, “Please, YHWH! This is
exactly what I thought while I was on my [own]
soil, which is why I *counteracted* by *escaping*
toward Tarshish! I knew for true about you: a god
merciful and mothering, long-suffering and
superbly faithful—one even who relents from that
which is wicked! ³ So now, YHWH, please take
my breath from me, since better [is] my death than
my life!”

⁴ “Is it enough [that] it fumes in you?” said
YHWH.

⁵ Yonah set out from the city [and] settled
counter to the city. He made a [stick] hut for
himself there [and] settled in the shelter under it so
that he could see what would appear in the city.

⁶ The god YHWH then appointed an
expeliona [bush] to grow to the top of Yonah to
appear [as] a shelter above his head—to bring him

shelter from what to him was wicked. Yonah delighted [with] great delight because of the *expeliona*.

⁷ The One God then appointed a grub at the growing of the next day's dawn. It struck the *expeliona* so that it was desiccated ⁸ as the rising sun appeared.

Elohim then appointed a blistering *counterwind* [while] the sun struck above Yonah's head so that he collapsed [and] longed [for] his breath to expire. "Better [is] my death than my life!" he said.

⁹ Elohim said to Yonah, "Is it enough [that] it fumes in you because of the *expeliona*?"

"Yes," he replied. "Till death [at least]."

¹⁰ YHWH said, "You, yourself, are distressed over the *expeliona* when you did not toil for it nor make it great—when a one-night-old [bush] appeared and a one-night-old [bush] perished.

¹¹ Should I, myself, then not be distressed over that great city, Nineveh, when there are many more than twelve myriad people in it who do not know how to walk a straight line and beasts abundant?"

The total number of
verses [is]
48.



Notes



- 1:1 We typically italicize and separate the first verse of a prophetic text from the oracles that follow. We have not done so here because, as McKenzie rightly observed (in *How to Read the Bible*), “The opening sentence is not like those found at the beginnings of most prophetic writings. It does not say ‘the word of Yahweh *that* came to Jonah.’ Rather, it launches right into the story. . . . This beginning . . . signals something unusual about the book of Jonah: it is a narrative, a story about the prophet rather than a collection of his sayings” (no italics added). The first verse of Yonah is an incipit rather than a superscription. Superscriptions stand apart from a text and are usually added at a later time, whereas an incipit is grammatically and syntactically bound to the text it introduces (i.e., it appears to be part of the story).

YHWH’s oracle came — **וַיְהִי** has a wide semantic range that is often covered by generic renderings like “word,” “thing,” or “matter.” Sometimes, however, context provides a more specific nuance. In law codes, for instance, it refers to an imperative utterance or “commandment.” In prophetic texts, it becomes a technical term for a prophetic utterance or “oracle.” Therefore, **וַיְהִי** rendered it here as “the word of prophecy.” We do similarly (the English term “oracle” is closer to the Hebrew than one might think since it comes from the Latin verb *orāre*, meaning “to speak,” and the root of **וַיְהִי** means “to speak/say”). Note that **וַיְהִי** is an inverted imperfect (*wayyiqtol*). The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. The *waw*-copulative form (the form with the conjunction “and”) is **וַיְהִי**. Some old translations (and a few modern ones) start the text with “and” based on an outdated assumption that the inverted verbal form always indicates succession (thus the name “*waw*-consecutive”). Note, for example, how Bewer (ICC) described it: “The tale begins with *And* . . . as if it were a continuation, or as if it had been originally one of a cycle of stories” (no italics added). We now know that view to be mistaken. Inverted verbs may, for instance, begin texts (as in this case) and, therefore, cannot possibly indicate succession. Blau (*Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew*) laid it out clearly: “We reject the pretentious name ‘consecutive *waw*’ because it simply is not true that the action is represented as a consequence of a preceding action.” The impulse of some translators to render every *waw* as “and” betrays a fundamental linguistic misunderstanding. When the *waw* is bonded to a verb, it ceases to have its normal semantic meaning and becomes grammaticalized. An example of can be seen in the word “less.” Used on its own, “less” signifies that something is small in quality, quantity, or degree. When suffixed to a word, however, it ceases to have that meaning and serves a purely grammatical function: it indicates a lack or absence. Therefore, “honorless” does not mean that there is less honor; it means there is no honor. To treat the word “honorless” like it was a combination of “less” and “honor” is to do linguistic violence. Although verbs in BH are primarily aspectual, the *wayyiqtol* is used almost exclusively in narrative texts to indicate past tense (technically speaking, *wayyiqtol* preserves the archaic use of *yiqtol* as a preterit). In other words, the *waw* in **וַיְהִי** indicates nothing more than past tense: “it happened” or “it came about.” It has no semantic value of its own. The word **וַיְהִי**, however, often functions as a scene-setter (it introduces a new or different event in a narrative). In English, that is communicated by line indentation (indicating the start of a new paragraph). One could insert a temporal expression if there were a need to distinguish a new narrative event from a preceding one (as in 3:1) or if the text used **וַיְהִי** to open a temporal expression. Since there is no preceding event at the start of the text and no temporal expression follows, the use of an expression like “now” (KJV, RSV, ESV, etc.) or “so then” (Wilt) seems superfluous.

- 1:2 **call out over it that** — The first issue here is how to render קרא. Its primary meaning is “to call” or “proclaim.” The verb occurs eight times (one nominal form appears as well), making it one of Yonah’s most thematic verbs. In fact, much of the movement of the story through its various plot-points is structured on a repetition of this verb. To show those correspondences, we believe that each instance of the verb should be rendered similarly even though its precise nuance is never the same (in this verse, for instance, it refers to a prophetic announcement, whereas 1:6 uses it to describe a cry for help). Therefore, we render it in all places as “to call” (see **to be wicked** in section A3). Older translations preferred “to cry [out].” We reserve that for קרא in 1:5 and 3:7. Others translations prefer “preach.” Since there was no church or preacher in Yonah’s day, we find that rendering anachronistic. The next issue is how to interpret על. The preposition has an enormous semantic range. Most translators believe that it functions as an indicator of negative action or disadvantage (call out *against*). From a larger biblical standpoint, we know that Assyria in general and Nineveh in particular received prophetic denunciations—that is, prophecies directed *against* it. So interpreting על as a marker of disadvantage fits well in Israel’s prophetic schema. It is important to note, however, that when an Israelite prophesied against a foreign nation, he or she was declaring God’s *judgment* on it. Some translations make that explicit. Note, for example, NET (announce judgment against), NJPST (proclaim judgment upon), and Sasson, AYB (declare doom upon). But was Yonah actually proclaiming God’s judgment on Nineveh? When we look at what came of his actions, we find that judgment did not come on Nineveh and that Yonah seemed to have known that would be the case from the start. In fact, Yonah appears to be sent to Nineveh not to call down judgment, but to bring about repentance. Therefore, there are serious reasons to reject the interpretation of על as indicating a proclamation “against” Nineveh. Those who look for an actual prophecy of judgment are limited to a phrase in 3:4 typically translated “Nineveh will be overthrown.” However, the same text can be read “Nineveh will be transformed” (see notes there), which is precisely what occurs. So the overall story argues more for על as an indicator of advantage (call out *for its sake/benefit*) than of disadvantage. εἰς (ev) and ἐν (in) show that ancient audiences interpreted the preposition in a terminal, spatial, and/or locational sense (to call out to/on/at/upon/over/in). Support for that comes from 3:2, which quotes most of this verse verbatim, but features אליה instead of עליה (in other words, על may function as אל). Therefore, Tribble rendered it “call to her.” Wellhausen (*Die kleinen Propheten*) did likewise: *predige ihr* (preach to her). Since, however, the manuscript tradition consistently preserves על in this verse, it is likely that there is a semantic difference between them. Perhaps על functions as a marker of topic or circumstance (call out *concerning/regarding*) as seen in the rendering by Everett Fox (“The Book of Jonah”). Ultimately, we are under the impression that the text has been crafted both here and in 3:4 with an ambiguous message. It is clear that Assyria behaved wickedly. It is also clear that Yonah was sent to warn her about that behavior. It is not clear whether the warning was meant to call down judgment or simply to announce Assyria’s status before the deity in the hopes that she might listen and change course. Therefore, we prefer a more neutral rendering: call out “over/upon.” The final issue is how to interpret כי. Translators typically treat it as causal (because/for). That reading is certainly possible. If true, however, it leaves one to ponder: why would YHWH need to explain himself—especially if the reason

is one that both Yonah and the audience would have known? Such a curious and unnecessary statement seems out-of-place for our purposeful and proficient story-teller. Sasson seemed to agree: “God is not consulting his prophet; nor is this prophet advised of God’s reasoning.” We think it makes more sense to interpret the preposition as a helping particle of the verb קרא. Prepositional כִּי often follows verbs of speech as a complementizer. Note the following:

- וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יִשְׁבֹּן מֵאֵין (Job 36:10)
“He demands that they turn away from iniquity.”
- מִי הֵגִיד לְךָ כִּי עִירָם אַתָּה (Gen 3:11)
“Who told you that nude you [were]?”
- אֶעֱנֶךָ כִּי־יִרְבֶּה אֱלֹהִים מֵאֲנוּשׁ (Job 33:12)
“I must counter that Eloah is greater than men.”
- הִזְכִּירוּ כִּי נִשְׁגֵּב שְׁמוֹ (Isa 12:4)
“Make [it] known how eminent is his name.”
- בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה כִּי (Jer 22:5)
“By myself I swear—prophecy of YHWH—that . . .”

In all those places, כִּי follows a different verb of speech in order to introduce the point or content of that speech. We believe the same situation occurs here. Yonah is told both to call out and *what* to call out: “their wickedness has come [right] up into my face.” Although קרא is not elsewhere paired with כִּי, such a pairing follows the pattern established by all other verbs of speech and, therefore, is entirely justified as normal Hebrew syntax. Ewald (unto her that) agreed with our interpretation of עַל and כִּי. So did NJB (to them that) and Rotherham (unto it that). Wellhausen (*dass*) agreed with our interpretation of כִּי. Compare with 3:10.

- 1:3 **arriving [from] Tarshish** — בוא belongs to the scribal artisan’s repertoire of motion verbs (קום, עלה, ירד, הלך, שוב, יצא, among others), which provide flow and structure to the overall narrative. בוא conveys a sense of motion *to*, *toward*, or *into* something. The antonym of בוא is יצא, which relates to motion *out of* or *away from* something (see 4:5). Here we find באה, which could be read either as a participle (implied by the Masoretic accentuation on the ultima) or a perfect (if accented on the penult). The vital question, however, is how the verb relates to Tarshish. Virtually all translators view Tarshish as the locale *to* or *toward* which בוא refers. Therefore, they read באה as a participle and render the phrase “going to Tarshish.” There are, however, several problems with that interpretation. First, as one can see both at the beginning (תַּרְשִׁישָׁה) and end (תַּרְשִׁישָׁה) of the verse, as well as in 4:2 (תַּרְשִׁישָׁה), when the narrator wanted to indicate motion *toward* Tarshish, a directional *heh* was suffixed to it, but זו^{L} , זו^{P} , and זו^{BP} do not have a directional *heh* in this place (neither does ב). If directional *heh* was so easy to produce in all other occurrences of the word, and the sense is the same here, why omit it? We have no reason to believe that the *heh* was dropped due to haplography and every reason to think that scribes would want to add it in order to harmonize this word with all the others. So why is there no directional *heh*? Its absence seems intentional. If so, this would imply that Tarshish is not the locale *to* or *toward* which בוא refers. Instead, it must be Jaffa to

or toward which the boat had come and Tarshish *is the port of departure*. Reading the text that way brings interpretative clarity. For one thing, none of the crew know anything about Yonah. How is it that he knows all about where their ship is going? If, however, Yonah knew the place from which it had come, it is easy to surmise that it might return there. Also, if the text at this point says “he found a ship going to Tarshish,” why then include the statement at the end: “to go with them toward Tarshish”? The second statement would add nothing to the story. If, however, Tarshish is mentioned here to tell us the port of departure, then “to go with them toward Tarshish” tells us something more: the destination that Yonah hopes to reach. Therefore, we render the phrase “arriving [from] Tarshish.” Alter and Tucker (*Jonah: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*) did likewise: “coming from Tarshish.” Sasson (AYB) preferred the perfect: “had just come from Tarshish.”

hired it — Literally, “paid its payment/wage.” Translations typically render שכר as “fare” (the price for a person to become a passenger). The problem, as commentators admit, is that there is a feminine pronominal suffix attached to the word, which must refer to *the boat*. Therefore, this is not “his fare” (NRSV, NJB, Moffatt, etc.) or “the fare” (KJV, NIV, NASB, etc.); rather, this is “her fare” or “its fare”—that is, *the price of the boat*. In other words, Yonah pays for the ship to leave, he does not buy a ticket for passage. A survey of the story shows that this makes more sense than the usual interpretation. The boat is full of crew and cargo, not passengers, which means that this is a merchant vessel, not a passenger ship. When the ship becomes distressed, the crew throw all their vessels/objects overboard to lighten the ship, which means that the ship must have had a great deal of stuff—not people—onboard. At one point, the “head of the crew” goes into the hold to locate Yonah. Why would *he* do such a thing? And why would the crew try so hard to get back to shore instead of throwing Yonah overboard when he tells them to do so? Those are the actions of people who have been paid a great deal to render a specific service (to take Yonah across the sea) and, therefore, are willing to unload their whole ship and include him in their deliberations. Reading the text that way also agrees with long-standing Rabbinic tradition. Note, for example, what was said in *b. Nedarim* 38a: יונה דכתיב ויתן שכרה וירד בה ואמר ר' יוחנן שנתן שכרה של ספינה כולה (Yonah, as it is written, *paid its wage [and] went down in it*). Now, Rabbi Yohannan says that “‘he paid its wage’ refers to the vessel—all of it.”). Other translations that reflect that sense include LEB, YLT, and Alter.

{—away from the face of YHWH} — The phrase מלפני יהוה repeats in this verse. Despite the unanimous support of the Masoretic tradition (as well as 4QXII^s and MurXII), we believe that the second instance probably represents a very ancient scribal error. The phrase adds nothing to what was already said and doesn’t quite fit the context (it is only Yonah who was trying to get away from YHWH, whereas having this phrase alongside “with them” makes it seem as if the sailors were trying to do so as well). Add to that the fact that the phrase occurs at the very end of the verse, which is the position most likely to feature an accidental duplication (see, for example, “my very own” at the end of Ruth 2:20), and it becomes difficult to escape the conclusion that an error has crept into the text (see section B5). Originally, the verse would have ended “toward Tarshish.” Since that phrase was previously followed by מלפני יהוה, a reader or copier, having מלפני יהוה already in mind, could have mechanically reproduced it when they came to a second occurrence of “toward Tarshish.”

1:4 **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** — BH is a V-S-O language. Three times in this chapter, however (twice in this verse and once again in the next), normative syntactic relationships are subverted by placing the subject before the verb. Bewer (ICC) mentioned the first occurrence: “Note the emphatic position of **וַיְהוָה**, *but Yahweh on his part*” (no italics added). Limburg (OTL) mentioned the second occurrence: “The Masoretic punctuation also emphasizes the word, marking a pause after ‘ship’; thus a literal reading, ‘and as for the ship—it had a mind to break up.’” Tribble noted the structural parallelism between both: “As the subject ‘Yhwh’ precedes the verb ‘hurled,’ so the subject ‘ship’ precedes the verb ‘thought.’ The beginning accents Yhwh; the end accents the ship.” Moshavi (“The Discourse Functions of Object/Adverbial-Fronting in Biblical Hebrew”) described the syntactic situation this way: “There is widespread, though not universal, agreement that verb-first (VX) is the *basic*, or *unmarked* word order in the verbal clause, and verb-second (XV) the *marked* order. On the basis of this view, the preverbal clausal element in an XV clause is said to be *fronted* from its normal position, or *preposed*. . . . The unmarked order is *pragmatically neutral*, having no particular discourse function, while the marked order is used to achieve a specific discourse function or functions” (no italics added). The rhetorical purpose is to bring dramatic emphasis to the fronted subject or object. Therefore, the first inversion, as noted by Bolin, “emphasized that the storm comes from Yahweh, a fact that will be further developed as it becomes clear that, in spite of the best efforts of the sailors, only appeasement of this particular god can save their lives.” English, however, is an S-V-O language; there is nothing out-of-the-ordinary about placing the subject before the verb. Something else must be done if a translation is to remain faithful to the emphatic nature of the Hebrew. Robert Alter dedicated half a chapter in *The Art of Bible Translation* to the importance of syntactic inversion and its neglect by English translators. He said that in the prophetic texts, “There is a good deal of fronting of nouns . . . for the sake of emphasis. . . . The many English versions that regularize the word order lose this force of emphasis.” Therefore, we agree with Alter that when “the order of terms . . . has been carefully arranged by the writer, it behooves the translator to reproduce that order scrupulously.” We do that by isolating the subject with an em dash and then restating it.

reckoned a wrecking — **חשבה להשבר** consists of a 3FS perfect of the verb **חשב** (to think/consider) in the more intensive Piel stem (something like “to plan/prepare” would capture the sense better) and a Niphal participle of **שבר**, meaning “to be broken.” The result is “she prepared to be broken.” She is *the ship*. This is an example of metonymy (when something is named due to its association with something else); “the ship” actually refers to its crew. In like manner, we might say, “the car won’t start.” But, of course, cars don’t refuse to do anything. What we mean is that *we* could not start the car. Scholars have noted that use of language for a long time. Although most commentaries make their audience aware of the verb’s general meaning, few stand-alone translations do so. Exceptions include Rotherham (the ship thought to be broken), YLT (the ship hath reckoned to be broken), and Moffatt (the ship thought she would be broken). The closest equivalent would be the idiomatic rendering suggested by Wellhausen: *das Schiff zu scheitern drohte* (the ship *threatened* to founder). The RSV utilized that turn of phrase and many modern translations do likewise. The unfortunate consequence, however, is the loss of the passive sense of the infinitive. To get around the problem, some repoint **חשבה** as a Hophal with an impersonal subject (it). Note, for example, AAT (*it was thought* that the ship would be broken up) and Henderson (*it was apprehended* the ship would

be wrecked). Since, however, an impersonal subject would most likely be masculine, we find that interpretation unlikely. **ט** used the verb **בעי**, meaning “to ask/seek” (CAL): “the ship *sought* to be broken.” That rendering, however, is a clear departure from the Hebrew. **ס** used **κινδυνεύω** (to be in danger/run the risk of). Some translations follow **ס**. Freedman (“Jonah 1:4b”) believed that **ס** was based on a Hebrew manuscript different from the traditional text. He proposed that the text had a form of the verb **חוב** instead of **חשב**. The verb **חוב** occurs once in the HB (Dan 1:10). Interpreters usually suggest that it means “to endanger/imperil.” Therefore, Freedman explained the traditional text as either a correction or corruption of **חבה**, meaning “she was endangered.” He translated it this way: “the boat *was in jeopardy* of breaking up.” Milder versions based on the Greek include “was about to break up” (NASB), “was on the point of breaking up” (NAB), and “was like to be broken” (KJV). We, however, find the appeal to a hypothetically different Hebrew text, which had a hypothetically different verb, which hypothetically had a particular meaning, which was hypothetically altered in the traditional Hebrew text, to be a voyage almost as perilous as the one on which Yonah set sail. Since the traditional Hebrew text makes sense as it stands and has very ancient attestation in MurXII, we follow it. There is one other vital aspect of the text that we have not yet touched on: the phrase *ḥiššebāh leḥiššābēr* was intentionally crafted by the oral or scribal artisan to ring with phonetic assonance (repetition of the consonants *shin*, *bet*, and *heh* with many possible vowel repetitions depending on its early pronunciation). The result is a short string of words that sound extremely similar. Alter dedicated a full chapter in *The Art of Bible Translation* to the importance of sound-play and word-play and their neglect by English translators. He noted, for instance, how “Many of the biblical writers are virtuosos of word play, and this is especially striking in the Prophets.” Nevertheless, “Sound play and word play . . . are a feature of the Hebrew that has been almost entirely ignored in existing English versions.” Since form and content work together to provide meaning, we agree with Alter: “A conscientious translator should strive to fashion as many English approximations as may be feasible of the purposeful artistry through sound of the Hebrew.” The translation of Fox (the ship was on the brink of breaking up) mimicked the assonance of the phrase (repetition of [b], [r], and [k]), but followed the Greek. The only English translation we could find besides THF that followed the Hebrew while mimicking its literary assonance was that of Mathews (“Jonah as a Performance”): “the ship truly thought itself to be bashed to bits.”

1:5 **the objects** — Most translations render this as “cargo” or “wares.” Hebrew has more specific terms for merchandise, goods, cargo, or wares. None of those are used here, which lead Bewer (ICC) to think, “They threw overboard the tackle and utensils, whether also the cargo is not altogether certain.” Since the text uses a generic term that could refer to almost anything (including cargo), we do likewise. So do LEB (the contents), AAT (the stuff), Goldingay (the things), and Tucker (the vessels).

to bring appeasement by them — The phrase **להקל מעליהם** is difficult to interpret. It is easy enough to understand the pieces (a Hiphil infinitive construct of the verb **קלל**, meaning “to make less/light” followed by **מעל**, which usually means “above” or “from,” to which is suffixed the masculine plural suffix “them”). If strung together, the words look like this: “in order to lighten from them.” But what does that mean? What is the relationship between the parts? How do they fit within the larger context? There are four ways to understand the text. One is to take “the sea” as the object of **קלל** and the pronominal suffix as a reference to the

sailors. In that case, one could translate it “to make [it] recede from them.” That interpretation is based on the use of **מַעַל** + **קָלַל** as a reference to the withdrawal or abatement of the water or sea. Note, for example, Gen 8:8: **לִרְאוֹת הַקֶּלַּן הַמַּיִם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ** (to see if the waters had receded from the earth’s surface). Tribble supported that reading: “The nearest antecedent is not ‘ship,’ but ‘sea.’ . . . Thus syntax implies that the sailors try to appease the sea (a deity?) by sacrificing their wares.” Wilt agreed: “they hurled cargo into Chaos’ sea to keep it from dragging them under.” That interpretation reflects the worldviews and practices of Yonah’s time. Ancient sailors would have considered the sea to be controlled by divine (chaotic) forces and would have offered sacrifices or offerings to calm it. Such actions would also coincide with them crying out to their gods. While we like that interpretation, it suffers from a convenient oversight: *the infinitive has no object*. To get closer to the text, one could read **קָלַל** intransitively (“to reduce in intensity” or “to ease”) and take the pronominal suffix as a reference to “the objects.” In that case, the text would mean “to bring down in intensity by means of the discarded objects” or, more simply, “to bring appeasement by them.” An example of **מַעַל** + **קָלַל** + pronominal suffix meaning “to reduce the severity of” or “to ease” occurs in 1 Sam 6:5: **אֵלֵי יִקַּל אֶת־יָדוֹ מֵעַלֵיכֶם** (perhaps he will ease his grip on you). Another comes from Exod 18:22: **וְהִקַּל מֵעַלֶיךָ** (and make [it] easier for you). That option stays very close to the text, agrees with the usage of **מַעַל** + **קָלַל** elsewhere, and reflects the ancient context. Therefore, we follow it. Note also that this interpretation of **מַעַל** + **קָלַל** + pronominal suffix, meaning “to reduce the severity of” or “to ease,” mirrors the same construction and nuance of the verb **שָׁתַק** + **מַעַל** + pronominal suffix in vv. 11 and 12, thereby confirming our interpretation. A third option is to take “the ship” as the object of **קָלַל** and the pronominal suffix as a reference to the sailors. In that case, one could translate it “to lighten [it] for them.” That is the most popular interpretation. A fourth, less popular option, is to take “the ship” as the object of **קָלַל** and the pronominal suffix as a reference to “the objects.” Examples of that include HCSB (to lighten the load), KJV (to lighten it of them), and Fox (to be lightened from them). Unfortunately, the last two options depend on a usage of the verb **קָלַל** that does not occur elsewhere in the HB. All occurrences of **קָלַל** (disregarding those that refer to cursing, demeaning, or belittling) refer to the insignificance, swiftness, ease, or reduction in severity of something. The verb occurs nowhere in the context of a thing’s real physical weight (although 1 Kgs 12—repeated in 2 Chr 10—speaks of the weight of a yoke being lessened, that is metaphoric language about reducing the severity of forced labor; there was no actual “heavy yoke”). Both of those interpretations also ignore the ancient context and either overlook the intransitive nature of the infinitive or alter its stem. Therefore, we reject both. Some people alter the suffix from a masculine plural to a feminine singular, which would refer specifically to the ship. Note, for example, NET (to make *the ship* lighter), NIV (to lighten *the ship*), and Fenton (to lighten *her*). Since MurXII supports the text as we have it and the proposed emendation would be no improvement on the last two options, we disregard that option.

But Yonah—he — “Once again the narrator emphasizes the subject of a sentence by pulling it around in front of the verb” (Limburg, OTL). To show that emphasis, we separate the subject from the verb with an em dash and then restate it (compare with 1:4).

went down to sleep — ירד simply means “to sleep/slumber.” Commentators often make a big deal about the intensity of that sleep. They say, for instance, that the verb “signifies not simply sound sleep but a special state of depressed or hypnotic sleep” (Stuart, WBC), that it expresses “the profound stupor into which Jonah had sunk” (Henderson), or that it “means to sleep soundly or deeply” (McKenzie). Some translations even reflect those ideas. In *A Poetics of Jonah*, for example, Kenneth M. Craig Jr. translates the phrase “had fallen into a trance.” In reality, however, it is not the text’s *content* that creates a sense of “deepness” in this verb, but its *form*. If the composer or scribal artisan wanted to use a verb meaning “to sleep/slumber,” he or she could have used ישן or נום just as easily, both of which, like שכב and ירד, are euphemisms for death (see Noegel’s “Euphemism in the Hebrew Bible”). As noted, however, by Halpern and Friedman (“Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah”), “Since Jonah’s slumber serves no noticeable purpose in the plot, it is altogether fitting to wonder whether the very action has not been introduced as a device to express again the notion of descent . . . and as an excuse to play on the key-word *yrd*.” In fact, “Jonah 1:5 presents the only instance of the verb with a *y-* prefix.” In other words, by pairing ירד with וירד, a virtually identical sound is created between them. Therefore, “sleep” takes on the connotation of “descent” *phonetically*. To capture the sound-play, we translate ירד as “to go down” and וירד as “to go down to sleep” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

- 1:6 **The head of the crew headed to** — Two things are important to point out here. First, the composer or scribal artisan specifically chose the noun “chief/master” (רב) and the verb “to approach/draw near” (קרב) to create assonance. To mimic that assonance, we render רב as “the head of” and קרב as “to head to” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Second, commentators usually trace חבל to חָבַל, meaning “rope.” Therefore, רב החבל could mean “head of the ropes.” In this case, however, חבל is pointed like a participle (*qōṭēl*), a form which often indicates an occupation or social role (note, for instance, כֹּהֵן, “priest,” and גֹּאֵל, “restorer”). Therefore, חבל is probably a collective singular referring to those who handle or work the ropes—i.e., the “ropemen” or, more simply, the “crew.” That interpretation can be seen in Wolff’s English commentary (*Obadiah and Jonah*), where he explains רב החבל as “the captain of the crew.” Mathews preferred “riggers.” Another option, which we have not seen elsewhere, is to take חבל from a different חָבַל, meaning “band/troop/company.” In that case, רב החבל would literally mean “the crew.” Whichever word we take it from, it is certain that the sailors themselves are referenced by the term. Josephus seems to have understood חבל as “steersman” or “pilot.” In fact, he split the whole phrase in two (a “master” of the whole ship, רב, and “the steersmen,” רב החבל). Therefore, he says “the sailors, the pilots, and even the ship owner made vows of thank-offerings, should they escape the sea” (*Ant.* 9.10.209, Whiston).

What do you benefit [by] sleeping? — Many translations render מַה-לָּךְ as “What are you doing?” (NRSV, NET, NAB, etc.). That phrase, however, is מַה אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה (as in Ezek 12:9).

The plural version (what are you all doing?) is **מה אתם עשים** (as in Judg 18:18). Since the composer or scribal artisan specifically avoided that phraseology here, so do we. In other parts of the HB, translators render **מה־לך** as “What is the matter with you?” (see JM §161i). We avoid that expression because it suggests a negative judgment on the part of the speaker, which is hard to substantiate in any text. In **מה־לך**, the *lamed* functions as one of interest or advantage: “What do you want/intend/mean?” Therefore, we render it “What do you benefit?” Since the expression seems to function as both an interrogative and an exclamation, we end it with an interrobang. **מה־לך** is often a self-contained statement. One could add **פה** (What’s your purpose *here*?) or a personal name (What’s up with you, *Hagar*?). If more is needed, a preposition can carry the question further. Note the *lamed* in Ps 50:16 (**מה־לך לספר חקי**), “What reason have you to recount my decrees?”) or the **כי** in Ps 114:5 (**מה־לך הים בִּי תנוס**), “What is your reason, sea, that you would recede?”). If the participle in this verse is interpreted as a dative (by sleeping) or a vocative (O sleeper), no preposition is needed. The Geneva, Bishops’, and KJV bibles preferred the vocative reading. If there were a definite article prefixed to the participle, we would feel confident in that interpretation (note the use of a definite article for the vocative in Ps 114:5 above). Since there is none, we prefer the dative reading. Previously, we translated **ירד** as “to go down to sleep.” We did so because of the way the narrator paired it with **ירד**. Here, however, the head of the crew does not mean to make a sound-play. Therefore, we render it more simply (see v. 5 above).

show concern for us — The Hebrew verb **עשת** occurs only here in the HB (in the Hithpael stem). Based on the nominal forms, which appear in Job 12:5, Ps 146:4, and the Hebrew version of Sir 3:24 with a meaning like “thought,” “plan,” or “conceit,” most translators believe the verb means “to think of,” “consider,” or “take notice.” A similar nuance occurs in the verb’s Aramaic cognate as seen in Dan 6:4 (to plan/determine). Examples of that interpretation include Alter’s “give some thought to us,” NRSV’s “spare us a thought,” and KJV’s “think upon us.” Such renderings are supported by **׀**: *recogitet* (consider/reflect). Our sense of the verb’s usage, however, is not that Yonah’s appeal will cause the deity *to think about them*, but that it may influence the deity *to respond favorably*. Therefore, we render the verb “to show concern for.” **ט** supports our conclusion: “to show mercy” (CAL). Smith (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*) preferred that sense: “will be gracious to us.” Tribble did as well: “will favor.” **ס** takes the idea even further with the verb **δυνασσω** (to save/rescue/deliver). Translations like Fenton (will save us) and Wilt (let us survive) follow **ס**. Sasson, AYB (will intercede on our behalf) presumed that the sailors wanted Yonah’s god to argue their case in the divine assembly. The rendering in the Bishops’ bible (to shine) is based on the noun **עשת** in Song 5:14, which refers to a (presumably shiny) bar of ivory or gold. Translators have rightly abandoned that sense here.

1:7 **They said—[each] one to his peer** — Note the similarities between the phrase here and in v. 5:

ויאמרו איש אל־רעהו (v. 7)

ויזעקו איש אל־אלהיו (v. 5)

Both phrases begin, in typical syntactic fashion, with a verb. The verbs themselves are different (“to say” versus “to cry out”), but both take the form of a masculine plural inverted imperfect (they did X). Following the plural verb is a singular subject—a distributive **איש**, meaning

“each” or “every” (see JM §147d) followed by the preposition **אל** and the person(s) “to” or “toward” which the action is directed (“his peer,” “his gods”). We agree with Sasson (AYB) that such pattern repetition (as well as the sudden shift from plural to singular subjects) “recalls and reinforces the pandemonium that broke out all over the ship.” Therefore, we feel obliged to faithfully represent all those aspects in our translation.

Let us throw down . . . they threw down . . . it was thrown down — The verb **נפל** is related semantically to several other verbs in Yonah (**טול**, “to hurl,” **שלך**, “to toss,” and **גרש**, “to cast out”). We agree with Noegel (“Jonah and Leviathan”), however, when he said, “The four-fold use of **טיל** in Jonah 1 and the three-fold use of **נפל** in Jon 1:7 are mutually reinforcing key words. Both emphasize the downward motion that characterizes Jonah’s experience.” Therefore, we continue the sense of downward motion woven through the narrative by rendering this verb “to throw *down*,” but render each instance according to its particular form (an active modal for the Hiphil cohortative, an active preterit for the Hiphil inverted imperfect, and a passive preterit for the Niphal inverted imperfect).

we have incurred — Or “[is] our own.” This interpretation takes the *lamed* in **לנו** as one of possession/ownership. In the ancient world—particularly in the HB—there was more of a group mentality than a sense of individualism. Even if only one of the ship’s crew had done something to offend the gods, the crew would probably perceive of punishment or calamity as being meted out on all of them. Therefore, they identify the wickedness as “their own” and they work together to address it. Sasson provided the same sense: “this calamity *of ours*.” So did Ewald: “we *have* this evil.” Alternatively, one could read the *lamed* as one of disadvantage: “[is] against us.”

1:8 **for what reason?** — Verse 7 features a compact phrase (**בשלמי**) that literally means “on account of whom.” A phrase that looks very similar occurs here: **באשר למי**. For that reason, most translators consider them synonymous and render them the same way. In fact, 4QXII^a has **בשלמי** instead of **באשר למי**, which could indicate (if not an instance of harmonization) that the phrases are semantically identical. Some have even argued that the shift from **ש** to **אשר** is simply stylistic—perhaps a case of diglossia (see Muraoka’s “A Case of Diglossia in the Book of Jonah?”). If such suggestions are true, this verse would read “Please explain to us on whose account we have incurred this wickedness.” But such an expression doesn’t seem plausible. Why go through all the trouble of throwing lots if they didn’t believe the lots would provide an answer? Why go specifically to Yonah and ask him to explain himself if they did not think that he was the one implicated? With a great storm storming around them and their ship ready to shatter, it is difficult to believe that the sailors would play games with Yonah by asking if he knows who is to blame for their predicament instead of being direct with him (it would also be pointless to try to get some kind of confession out of him since, in this particular situation, they have all fallen under judgment anyway). If Muraoka is right that “They wanted the prophet himself to face the music,” then the best way to do so would be to confront him directly. To propose that the sailors wanted to use “more elegant language in Jonah’s presence” (Ewald) while their very lives hung in the balance is preposterous. Bewer (ICC) agreed with our assessments: “When the lot fell upon Jonah there was no doubt in the minds of the men that he was the cause of the deity’s anger, and they would, of course, not ask him after the decision to tell them *for whose sake this disaster had come upon them*” (no italics added). Therefore,

we are left with two options: either the phrase has not been adequately understood or it is an intrusion—perhaps an accidental addition that was not present in the earliest form of the text. Some opt for the second option and, therefore, drop **בְּאֲשֶׁר לְמִי־הִרְעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ** from their translation (NJB, NAB, Wellhausen, etc.). Support for that could come from **5^A** and **5^B**, both of which are missing that line (although it is easier to explain its absence as an instance of haplography: the scribe’s eye skipped from the **לָנוּ** that ended the previous statement to the **לָנוּ** that ends this one). Since 4QXII^a and MurXII include the phrase, and other Septuagintal manuscripts (like **5^A** and the Washington Papyrus, which is earlier than all the uncials), contain the statement, we stick with the text preserved by the Masoretes. In that case, we are left with the first option (the phrase has not been adequately understood). How then can we make sense of it? One way is to keep the traditional interpretation, but turn it from a question to a statement of blame. Examples of that can be seen in Alter’s translation (you on whose account this evil is upon us), NJPST (you who have brought this misfortune upon us), and Leeser’s translation (thou for whose cause this evil has happened unto us). While that makes far more sense, it results from a kind of textual twisting to produce a meaning that is not readily apparent. It also overlooks what **בְּאֲשֶׁר** means elsewhere in the HB (usually “since/because” or “where/wherever”). Therefore, Sasson (AYB) said, “It may be best . . . to understand the phrase’s intent as ‘because it is you who.’” Barthélemy (*Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*) came to a similar conclusion (*à cause de qui*, “because of whom”) as did SET. Both, however, continue to interpret the text as a question. To get around the conundrum, some translations treat **בְּאֲשֶׁר לְמִי** as **לְמָה** (why). Note, for example, NRSV (why this calamity has come upon us) and ISV (why has this trouble come upon us). Such renderings are clearly paraphrastic, but point in the right direction: a reexamination of **מִי**. As Henderson noted, “We should rather have expected **בְּאֲשֶׁר לְמָה**, ‘on account of *what*,’ but **מִי** may be taken in a neuter sense” (that is, *what* instead of *who*). Henderson pointed to 1 Sam 18:18 (**מִי אֲנֹכִי וּמִי חַיִּי**, “Who [am] I and *what* [is] my life?”) and Mik 1:5 (**מִי־פֶשַׁע יַעֲקֹב . . . וּמִי בְּמֹת יְהוּדָה**, “*what* [is] Jacob’s transgression . . . and *what* [is] Judah’s sacrilegious site?”) as places where **מִי** functions as **מָה**. To those, others may be added (like Deut 3:24: **מִי־אֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ**, “*what* god in the earth or in the sky”). Therefore, the sense of **בְּאֲשֶׁר לְמִי** is probably “because of what” or “for what reason.” In other words, the text progresses from a question about *who is responsible* to a question about *what that person has done*. The change in grammar indicates a change in inquiry. Our interpretation is supported by **5**, which, according to the text in the Second Rabbinic Bible, is **מָה** (what). Cathcart and Gordon (*The Targum of the Minor Prophets*) translated the Aramaic as “for what reason?” Fenton (on account of what) seems to be the only other English translation that interpreted **מִי** as “what.”

profit — Most translations render **מְלָאכָה** as “business” or “occupation,” both of which are fine translations—generally speaking. In this situation, however, the humor in Yonah is displayed by means of a pun on the Proto-Semitic root **לָאךְ** (to send). Yonah is a **מְלָאךְ**, meaning “one sent for a task” (or, more simply, “messenger”). Therefore, the sailors ask “one sent for a task” what his **מְלָאכָה** (sending task) is. Unfortunately, we cannot represent that

same pun in English, so we have gone with “profit,” which sounds virtually identical to “prophet.” For the sailors to ask what “profit” there is in what he is doing is like asking what “prophet” there is in what he is doing. The answer for both is the same: Yonah is neither “profiting” nor “propheting.” That pun was noticed by Halpern and Friedman: “Jonah is also unresponsive to the irony of the sailors’ first question, ‘What is your vocation (*ml’ktk* from *ml’kh*)?’ (1:8). Jonah’s vocation? He is a *ml’k*—a prophet, a messenger of YHWH.” Sherwood (*A Biblical Text and its Afterlives*) remarked on it as well: “When the sailors ask Jonah’s occupation . . . the question . . . is there because it hides a joke and because Jonah’s profession as prophet/messenger . . . is riddlingly half-concealed.” Unfortunately, this pun is also concealed by virtually all other English translations! For our use of asterisks, see section A3. For more puns, see 3:7-8 and 4:6-10.

are you coming — Virtually all English translations render this “where do you come from?” That statement reflects a complete aspect, which is indicated, in Hebrew, by the perfect (or suffix) conjugation. Here, however, we find the imperfect (or prefix) conjugation, which indicates an incomplete aspect. To faithfully represent the aspect of the Hebrew verb, we translate it “coming.” Sasson (where are you coming from?) did likewise.

1:9 **Israeli I [be]** — Literally, “Hebrew [am] I.” The first thing to note here is the inverted word-order: predicate before subject (“Hebrew [am] I,” not “I [am] Hebrew”). The subversion of normal word-order is meant to produce emphasis. We mimic that emphasis in our translation (see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking syntactic inversion in the HB). The second thing to note is the pleasing rhythm and end-rhyme contained in Yonah’s statement **עברי אנכי** (*‘ibrî ‘anōkî*). In order to capture that sound-play, we shift “Hebrew” to “Israeli” (since Yonah is from the northern kingdom of Israel, he is “Israeli”), which ends in a long-e sound, and end the statement with “be,” which also ends with a long-e sound (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). **Θ**’s δούλος κυρίου (a slave of the Lord) may be misreading **עברי** (a Hebrew) as **עבר** (a slave of Y[ah]) or reproducing the phrase “my servant” that occurs in 2 Kgs 14:25 in reference to Yonah. In either case, we follow the Hebrew, which is supported by Josephus: “He said that he was a Hebrew by race” (*Ant.* 9.10.211, Whiston).

the Overarching God — More literally, “the god of the sky/heavens.” In this case, however, we don’t think that the point of calling YHWH such a thing is to indicate that he is a sky-god. Rather, Yonah is declaring him to be the Uppermost or the Supreme God—the god who is over all others just as the heavens/sky arch(es) over all things. Therefore, we translate this “the Overarching God.” Josephus seems to have come to the same conclusion (*Ant.* 9.10.211): προφητης του μεγιστου θεου (a prophet of the greatest God).

the wet and the dry [extents] — Usually, this phrase is translated “the sea and the dry land.” In our opinion, however, the phrase functions as a merism—it links together two opposites which, together, encompass a totality. In other words, the sea (the wet place) and the dry land (the non-wet place) equate with the whole world. Limburg (OTL) agreed: “The totality is indicated by naming the extremes.” We show this by referencing “the sea” as “the wet extent” and “the dry land” as “the dry extend.” NJPST, NIV, and GW went the other direction—rendering it the “sea” and the “land” (dropping “dry” entirely). The composer or scribal artisan, however, used **יבשה** (dry land) instead of **ארץ** (earth/land) in order to create an extended

word-play with other words from **יִבְשׁוּ** throughout the narrative (1:13; 2:11; 4:7). To use a word in this verse that shares nothing with the words in the other verses would be to abandon fidelity to the composer's purposeful composition and to destroy part of the text's coherence.

- 1:10 **What a thing you have done!** — More literally, “What [is] this you have done?” In this case, however, the question is rhetorical. The point is not to ask what he has done (the text tells us that they already know that), but to declare that he has made a fatal mistake. Bolin agreed: “The sailors’ exclamation . . . is a stock biblical formula used when one accuses another of wrongdoing (e.g., Gen 20.9).” Add to that the fact that it is a statement made out of “great fear” and the text is better represented as an exclamation, not a question. The semantic nuance of **זֶה** is not limited to “this” or “that,” but conveys neuter notions like “it,” “that,” or “some-such thing” (see JM §143g). NAB presented **זֶה** similarly (How could you do such a thing!).

away from the face of YHWH he was escaping — Note the inverted word-order: predicate before subject (“away from the face of YHWH he was escaping,” not “he was escaping away from the face of YHWH”). The subversion of normal word-order is meant to produce emphasis. We mimic that emphasis in our translation (see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking syntactic inversion in the HB). As noted by Bewer (ICC), the participle **בֹּרֵחַ** “denotes present continuance of the action.” Therefore, we render it as “escaping.” For our use of italics, see section A3.

- 1:11 **so that it may be quelled by us** — As in 1:5, we find the pattern verb + **מַעַל** + pronominal suffix. The verb in this case is **שָׁתַק**. Outside of Yonah, it occurs twice (Ps 107:30 and Prov 26:20). In Proverbs, it relates to quarreling and is parallel to the verb **כָּבַה** (to quench/extinguish/die down). Therefore, **שָׁתַק** would seem to refer to calming/settling down. In other words, it parallels the use of **קָלַל** in 1:5 as a verb referring to a reduction or ease in the severity of something. In Ps 107:29-30, the verb occurs specifically in the (metaphorical) context of a sea-storm: **יָקַם סַעֲרָה לְדַמְמָה וַיַּחֲשׂוּ גִלְיָהֶם וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ כִּי־יִשְׁתַּקֵּן** (He set [the] storm to a whisper. He silenced its waves. They rejoiced as they were quelled). Considering the context in Ps 107 and here in Yonah, **שָׁתַק** would seem to be a maritime term (the “quarrel” in Proverbs would be likened to a “choppy sea”). It may be derived from **שָׁקַט** (to quiet down/be at peace) by means of metathesis in the last two consonants. Considering the rarity of this verb, we felt it necessary to use an equally rare English term for it (to quell/be quelled). The conjunction is used at this point in the interrogative to indicate purpose: “so that” (see JM §161m). The imperfect verb then carries a jussive sense: “it may” (see JM §116e). Our use of “by us” for **מַעַל** + pronominal suffix mimics the use of **מַעַל** + pronominal suffix in 1:5 and, therefore, continues the sense of a sea that is actively rising up against them.

since the sea is storming incessantly? — The first issue here is how to render **הוֹלֵךְ וְסֹעֵר**. Although it literally means “going and storming,” it is probably an example of hendiadys (placing two words side-by-side, often with a conjunction between, in order to create a more emphatic idea). In that construction, one of the words functions adverbially or adjectivally to emphasize the other. In this case, that word is **הוֹלֵךְ**, which provides **סֹעֵר** with a sense of

continuance. Therefore, JM §123s renders the phrase “went on growing agitated.” Limburg (OTL) preferred “kept on storming.” The second participle (סַעַר) is virtually identical to the noun “storm” (סַעַר). By using two words that sound virtually identical, the composer created a kind of sound-play called “root-play” (the repetition of a root in different forms). We mimic that sound-play by rendering them “storm” and “to storm” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). The second issue is how to understand the relationship between the first half of the verse (according to Masoretic accentuation) and the second. Do the sailors speak until the *soph pasuq* or does the narrator step in after the *athnach* to explain their motivation? As Sasson (AYB) said, “The decision is purely interpretive.” Most translators end the sailors’ dialogue at the *athnach*. Like Sasson and Ewald, however, we think the last clause is part of their speech. We see a parallel between the phrase **כִּי הַיָּם הוֹלֵךְ וְסַעַר** in this verse and **כִּי יוֹדַע אֲנִי** in the next. Both begin with a causal **כִּי** (there is virtually universal agreement on that interpretation) followed by a participle (even though, in the second instance, one would expect **יֹדַעְתִּי**) and both take place after virtually identical expressions (**וַיִּשְׁתַּק הַיָּם מֵעַלֵּינִי** and **וַיִּשְׁתַּק הַיָּם מֵעַלֵּיכֶם**). Therefore, since **כִּי יוֹדַע אֲנִי** is part of Yonah’s speech to the sailors, it seems that **כִּי הַיָּם הוֹלֵךְ וְסַעַר** should be part of the sailors’ speech to Yonah. SET and Fenton agreed (although Fenton’s choice of “gallop” is astonishing).

- 1:12 **since it knows of me** — As mentioned in the previous note, we see a parallel between this phrase (**כִּי יוֹדַע אֲנִי**) and **כִּי הַיָּם הוֹלֵךְ וְסַעַר** in the previous verse; both begin with a causal **כִּי** followed by a participle, both take place after virtually identical expressions, and both seem to be part of the characters’ dialogue. In this case, **כִּי יוֹדַע אֲנִי** poses significant problems. The first problem is interpretative. If there is a reason for the syntax in this phrase, it must be emphatic. Tribble’s explanation is characteristic: “The alternate [syntax] calls attention to Jonah’s taking the blame for the evil inflicted upon the sailors.” Yet Stuart (WBC) was right when he said, “It is hard to imagine, however, that the gist of his words, as summarized in v 10b, ‘Indeed the men knew that he was fleeing from Yahweh, because he had told them,’ had not already made this clear to the crew.” For Yonah himself, we have no reason to believe that he repented of his actions and every reason to believe that he is still seeking to go “down” from the deity (being thrown into the sea is just another way for him to escape/flee). If Yonah really was owning up to his actions and knew that his presence was threatening the whole crew, *all he had to do was step off the deck*. He didn’t need the sailors to throw him overboard. Neither did he need to explain to them how to do so: “Lift me up.” Therefore, we think Sasson (AYB) is right when he said, “Jonah is not making it easy on his shipmates! He is not about to throw himself into the sea Rather, he wants the sailors to bear full responsibility.” In fact, even when Yonah admits that he is the cause of their situation, he does not say with the sailors that “this wickedness” is on account of him, but that “this great storm” is on account of him. By refusing to use the term “wickedness,” Yonah cleverly sidesteps his culpability. An emphatic admission of guilt simply doesn’t fit Yonah’s character or the words he uses. And to suggest, as do some commentators, that the sailors are going to hold court and try to get Yonah to admit his guilt under some unstated law while their very lives hang in the balance is preposterous. The second problem is grammatical. Instead of **כִּי יוֹדַע אֲנִי**, we expect **יֹדַעְתִּי** (I know) or one of its more

emphatic constructions: **אני ידעתי** (as in Exod 3:19, 1 Sam 17:28, etc.) or **אנכי ידעתי** (as in Gen 20:6, Deut 31:27, etc.). So rare is the form of the phrase in Yonah that it only occurs one other time in the HB (Qoh 8:12) and in that place, such a construction follows the text's own peculiar style. Looking even closer at usage, we find that any time **יודע** is followed by a subject, it indicates a habit or state of character. When Ps 1:6 says **כי־יודע יהוה דרך צדיקים** (because YHWH knows the way of the righteous), it is describing something that *YHWH always knows*. When Ps 37:18 says **יודע יהוה ימי תמימים** (YHWH knows the days of the blameless), it is describing something that *YHWH always knows*. When Prov 12:10 says **יודע צדיק נפש בהמתו** (the righteous [one] knows the bellow of his beast), it is describing something that the righteous [one] *always knows*. When Qoh 9:1 says **גם־אהבה גם־שנאה אין יודע האדם** (whether love, whether hate, there is no person who knows), it is describing something that no person *ever knows*. Yet such a nuance can't possibly apply to Yonah (he has always known that he is the cause of the storm?). Why should the use of the grammatical forms in Yonah contrast so sharply with those same forms elsewhere? The sum of those inconsistencies and their inability to explain the text is proof enough that the traditional interpretation is wrong. We are not the only ones who think so. Horwitz ("Another Interpretation of Jonah 1:12") argued that we should read **אני** not as a personal pronoun, but as the masculine singular version of **אניה** (ship). In other words, the text may be personifying the ship: "since *the ship knows* that this great storm [is] over you on my account." While that avoids all of the previous entanglements (and requires only a slight vowel modification), it introduces some of its own conundrums. First, it is perplexing that the ship should be personified. Horwitz pointed to v. 4 as an example of just such a thing, yet that is a misunderstanding of the language. There isn't any personification in v. 4; rather, v. 4 uses a figure of speech called metonymy to speak about *the crew* of the ship (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4). Furthermore, the term for "ship" throughout Yonah is **אניה**, not **אני**. Why make a switch in usage only here? We suggest instead that just like in the parallel expression (**כי הים הולך וסער**), "the sea" remains the subject with the participle expanding on "its" activity. The pronoun would then function as the object: "then the sea will be quelled by you since *it knows of me*." Commentators like to say that Yonah imitates the speech of the sailors. If that is true, then our proposal is even more likely since he imitates not just their phrases, but their usage of those phrases. The sailors regard the sea as some kind of entity. They try to "appease" it. They try to "quell" it. The sea is likened to a monster rising up against them until it stands still from its "rage" (v. 15). What is personified in Yonah is not the ship, but *the sea*. Therefore, it makes sense that Yonah would say that the sea knows about him. It has been stirred up by *YHWH* because of him! So we get the first sense, right here in ch. 1, that *Leviathan* has entered the story. Wilt went so far to show that personification that he eventually ended up rendering every mention of "the sea" as either "Chaos' sea" or simply "Chaos." His translation of Yonah's first words in this verse, for example, were "Pick me up and hurl me into Chaos." While we appreciate Wilt's willingness to make the personification more evident, he has done something that we are not yet ready to do: explicitly name an entity that has not yet been named (for that, see 2:4). Instead of admitting *guilt*, Yonah is admitting *defeat*. He tried to flee and he could not.

He tried to hide and he could not. Both YHWH and the sea know he is there and now the sailors do as well. Instead of giving himself to God, Yonah dares the sailors to give him to Leviathan.

- 1:13 **tunneled [ahead]** — Or “plowed [headlong].” The appearance of the verb חתר is a well-known crux. As with “to plan/reckon” (חשב) in 1:4, even though most commentaries make their audience aware of the verb’s general meaning, few stand-alone translations do so. Typically, they render it “to row.” Scholars are well aware, however, that the verb actually means “to dig,” “burrow,” or “tunnel.” The verb implies forceful and determined action, which is why many expand their rendering to include words like “hard” or “desperately.” Yet the verb also implies breaking through a wall or barrier of some kind. With one exception, where חתר refers to breaking from the world above to the world below (Amos 9:2), the verb always refers to tunneling or digging through a *vertical* barrier. Therefore, the idea is not that the crew are digging their oars into the water like a shovel, but that they are forcing the ship to plunge headlong, like a spear or battering ram, into waves that pile up in front of it in the hopes that they can *tunnel* or *plow* through walls of water. Wolff agreed: “Here it is the walls of the waves that have to be bored through.” Therefore, we are in full agreement with the superb analysis and trenchant arguments provided by Meredith in “The Conundrum of חתר in Jonah 1:13” and refer readers to that article for more on חתר in Yonah.

to drive back to dry land — The short phrase להשיב אל-היבשה contains a fantastic case of alliteration in which every single consonant is repeated except one. We mimic that sound-play with “to drive back to dry land,” which repeats the use of t, d, r, and the sound of long-i and long-o (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). The rhetorical point of the alliteration, as pointed out by Tribble, is to “stress the goal of the sailors to seek refuge from the tempestuous sea” as well as to send “thematic signals into the larger story” since the root of both the infinitive and the noun appear several more times throughout the narrative.

- 1:14 **expelled blood** — At this point, we find a fascinating word-play. The word for “innocent” is נקי. It occurs in the longer phrase “innocent blood” multiple times in the HB (see, for instance, Deut 19:10; 21:8; 27:25; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4). Here, however, we find נקיא, which contains an extra consonant (*aleph*). In and of itself, such an addition would be somewhat trivial; *aleph* is sometimes added to words and/or used as a vowel letter. In fact, we find the same spelling in Yoel 4:19 (Eng 3:19). Such spelling is, however, quite unexpected. In מ^{BP}, for example, the scribe wrote the word as נקי and had to go back, strike out the כי that follows, and write an *aleph* in the margin above to show the error: נקיא. 6’s δικαιον represents צדיק (righteous), a word that is often paired with “innocent.” 8HevXII gr follows the Hebrew more closely with αθων (innocent). The intent of the phrase, therefore, is quite clear. In this case, however, “innocent” spelled with an extra *aleph* results in what looks like a word-play with the verb “to vomit/expel” in 2:11. Halpern and Friedman explained it this way: “The adjective *nāqī* ‘innocent’ has been transmitted textually as *nāqī* ‘let us vomit,’ or (as *nip‘al* participle) ‘vomited.’ Whether the orthographic foreshadowing to 2:11 . . . is scribal . . . or authorial, the phonetic play remains.” Strawn (“On Vomiting: Leviticus, Jonah, Ea(a)rth”) noted that as well: “In isolation, נקיא would appear to derive from קיא, with the meaning ‘let us vomit

blood,' 'we vomited blood,' or even just 'vomited blood.'" Even though Strawn thought that "in context, . . . such translations are impossible," he concedes Halpern and Friedman's point: "The phonetic play is evident regardless of the intentionality of the author or scribe." We believe the case is much stronger. First, there is no reason to believe that the sailors considered Yonah innocent and every reason to believe otherwise. The sailors single Yonah out as the one responsible for the great "wickedness" that has risen against them and determine that something must be done to him in retribution. Then Yonah tells them that if they give him to the sea, all will be well. They clearly believe him. They plead with Yonah's deity not to take their lives along with his. Therefore, to throw Yonah to the sea could not, by their own knowledge things, constitute the shedding of "innocent" blood. Why then were the sailors hesitant to throw Yonah overboard? One can only speculate. Perhaps they hoped to deliver Yonah back to the god from whom he was fleeing. Perhaps they were convinced of the might of Yonah's deity, but thought some other god could aid them. Perhaps they were trying to help Yonah obey the deity by putting him back on the right path (to Nineveh). Maybe they were still unsure about the goodness of Yonah's deity or, as Sasson (AYB) put it, "What if throwing him into the sea merely prompted that god to reckon yet another crime against them?" Maybe they felt an obligation to try, until the very last moment, to fulfill their duty to the stranger who had hired their whole ship for no other reason than safe passage. Josephus seems to have come to that conclusion: "At first, they did not dare [to do this], judging it an impiety for them to cast out to certain loss a man who was a stranger and who had entrusted his life to them" (*Ant.* 9.10.212, Whiston). Oancea ("Imagery and Religious Conversion. The Symbolic Function of Jonah 1:13") thought that this verse symbolically and metaphorically prepares the reader/hearer for the "conversion" of the sailors by using the term "to return/go back," which often functions as a metaphor for the transformation of individuals (the verb is used elsewhere in Yonah to refer to the repenting of the Ninevites). Therefore, the sailors' attempt to "go back" contrasts with Yonah's attempt to flee "away from." Whatever the case, *perishing could not be an appropriate consequence for an innocent person*. Second, the term "vomit" is sometimes used in the HB to refer to the forceful expulsion of human life due to disobedience or lack of faithfulness toward the word of the Israelite deity. Note Lev 20:22: ושמרתם את-כל-חקתי (You must safeguard all my statutes and all my decrees [and] thereby implement them so that the land will not vomit you [out]). A forceful expulsion of human life is precisely what the sailors intend to do with Yonah since he failed to implement what the deity said. Note also how "vomiting" is directly tied to being on or in *the land*. It is precisely the land toward which Yonah was headed and toward which the sailors were trying to return. In no way, however, could the land be reached. Only the sea would take Yonah. Therefore, the notion of land rejection (more specifically, *exile*), which is part of the use of "vomit" in Leviticus, is operative here as well. Smith believed that we should read Yonah not as a story about an individual, but as a story about a nation:

"It is Israel's ill-will to the heathen, Israel's refusal of her mission, Israel's embarkation on the stormy sea of the world's politics, which we have had described as Jonah's. Upon her flight from God's will, there followed her Exile, and from her Exile, which was for a set period, she came back to her own land . . . How was the author to express this national death and resurrection? In conformity with the popular language of his time, he had described Israel's turning from God's will by her embarkation on a stormy sea, always a symbol of the prophets for the tossing heathen world that was ready to engulf her; and now

to express her exile and return he sought metaphors in the same rich poetry of the popular imagination.”

If Smith was right to say that this story uses symbols and metaphors to express the notion of an *exiled Israel*, then the use of “vomit” as a reference to Yonah’s expulsion must certainly evoke the Levitical notion of a vomited or exiled nation (one should not, by any means, read into it that there was some kind of problem with Jewish religion or that Jews were somehow worse than gentiles). Third, the use of “vomit” elsewhere in Yonah both in a “medical” sense (2:11) and as a word-play (4:6, 7, 9, 10), despite the fact that the term is so rare elsewhere in the HB, makes it highly likely that the phonetic reality present in this verse is more than a mere accident of orthography. The opposite would be the case with the spelling of “innocent” in Yoel, which does not otherwise feature the term “vomit” and is best explained as an influence or borrowing from Yonah (Yoel quotes or borrows from half of all the Minor Prophets; Yonah does not). Finally, the end of Yonah features several actions that, in the HB, often have a priestly or cultic sense: sacrificing sacrifices and vowing vows. The expelling of blood would fit neatly into those actions. Therefore, the first chapter ends with a scene of sacred significance: blood is metaphorically spilled, a sacrifice is literally offered, and pledges are apparently declared. For all those reasons, we think that “expelled blood” is not only a fitting translation, but more faithfully represents the narrative than the traditional rendering. Wilt (don’t hold us accountable for his death) sidestepped the issue by condensing the phrase to nothing more than a reference to Yonah’s death. Moffatt (punish us not for a murder) did that as well. Instead of reading this verse in the context of ideas present in Leviticus, Bolin thought that “the sailors’ plea for mercy includes an allusion to the apotropaic rite of Deuteronomy 21 that is directed against a divine wrath which does not discriminate between the guilty and the innocent.” There are numerous problems with that interpretation. First, it cannot be the case that the God of Israel in Deut 21:1-9 “does not discriminate between the guilty and the innocent.” It is clear from the context that a murder has taken place and that the deity is expected to respond with punishment. A deity who seeks out justice when a horrendous crime occurs is certainly not being arbitrary! The fact that the punishment might be meted out on a group instead of on an individual is a belief reflected in many Old Testament texts—none of which view collective punishment as a lack of discrimination between the guilty and the innocent. Second, Deut 21 speaks about the murder of a person by unknown people (or, at least, by people who will not identify themselves as the perpetrators of such injustice). That situation cannot be applied to Yonah since the people who are going to throw him overboard are fully known, the person they are throwing overboard is not innocent, and the wrath of God is already being meted out against everyone. For them to throw Yonah overboard may actually be a participation in divine justice. Third, the fact that the sea calms and the sailors are saved after they throw Yonah overboard shows that the deity *does* discriminate between the guilty (Yonah) and the innocent (sailors). What is extraordinary is that YHWH sends a fish to save someone who is *still* rebellious and defiant! For our use of italics, see section A3.

- 1:15 **stabilized** — Or “stood [still].” The verb עמד in the Qal stem literally means “to stand,” “stay,” or “be positioned.” When paired with privative *mem*, it refers to being in a new position that is now free from something. Therefore, when Gen 30:9 says עמדה מלדת, “she stood without bearing,” it means that she was then in the position or took on the new status of having no children (i.e., “she remained childless”). Here in Yonah, most translations render the verb “to stop” or “cease,” which better represents verbs like חדל or שבת and actually misses the

point; it is not that the sea simply stopped doing something, but that it became something else. It took on a new position or status (stillness or stability). For good reason, therefore, ט represented עָמַד with נָח (to rest/become quiet/become still). NIV rendered the verb as “to grow calm.” Smith preferred “stilled.”

1:16 **pledged pledges** — Or “promised promises.” יִדְּרוּ נִדְרִים consists of two words with the same root. Although such pairings are not uncommon, their use here has an important rhetorical effect. Perhaps Oancea said it best when he noted that the seriousness of the sailor’s situation “is stylistically suggested in Hebrew by the threefold use of verbs followed by nouns with common roots, putting strong emphasis on their actions: *yr’ yir’āh* (fear) / *zḇḥ zebah* (sacrifice) / *ndr neder* (vow).” To capture that rhetorical effect and mimic that phonetic sound-play, we render the verb and noun similarly in each case (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). However, since few people today “vow,” we use “pledge.”

2:1 **appointed** — How should one render the verb מָנַח in Yonah? Some translations prefer “provide” (as in NRSV), which makes it seem as if something both beneficial and lacking was being presented. While that nuance works well in this verse and in 4:6, it doesn’t work well in 4:7 or 8. Others prefer “prepare” (as in KJV), “ordain” (as in REB), or “make ready” (as in Leeser), which indicates that YHWH acted in advance. That rendering is supported by ו. As Bewer (ICC) noted, “The later Jews believed that God created this fish on the day of creation and held it in readiness for Jonah.” There is nothing in the text, however, to suggest that the fish or any of the other objects of מָנַח were prearranged or predetermined. ש rendered the verb with προστάσσω (to command/order), which was followed by GNB (At the LORD’s command) and Moffatt (the Eternal ordered). ט rendered it “to invite” or “summon” (CAL), which is closer to the Hebrew. However, both ש and ט seem to be harmonizing the verb in this verse (and in ch. 4) with אָמַר (to speak/say) in 2:11. There is no indication at the start of the chapter that YHWH *spoke* to the fish, nor any indication of YHWH speaking to the other objects of מָנַח in ch. 4. NET, CEV, and GW rendered the verb “to send.” Sasson, AYB (direct) and Alter (set out) chose similar renderings. We decided that all those renderings failed to convey the sense of the verb in Yonah: “to select for a specific duty or purpose” or, more simply, “to designate/appoint/assign.” Wolff agreed: “Yahweh ‘*appoints*’ the fish, as human beings employ servants . . . or ‘allot’ food” (no italics added).

guts — Or “bowels/innards/entrails.” מֵעָה refers to the fleshy insides of a person or thing. Sasson (AYB) said it well: “Hebrew employs this word loosely, referring to any internal . . . organ, be it of digestion or procreation.” Most translators render it “stomach” or “belly.” The term for that, however, is בֶּטֶן (as in 2:3). Since the composer or scribal artisan chose a less precise term—one that lacks biological or anatomical precision, we did so as well. YLT (bowels), Fox (body), SET (innards), and Goldingay (insides) did likewise. Strangely, HCSB, NIV, and CEV ignore the word entirely. Fenton interpreted “great fish” as the name of a seafaring vessel that rescued Yonah. Therefore, he rendered מֵעָה as “the hold.” Such a rendering shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of this text, which is summarized well by Scott (“The Sign of Jonah: An Interpretation”): “The episode of the ‘great fish’ is only one of a whole series of wonders narrated in the book—the miraculous cessation of the storm when Jonah is thrown

into the sea as a peace offering; the immediate and universal repentance of a heathen city in response to a single sermon by a Hebrew prophet; the plant which grew large enough in one night to provide shade, had it lasted, for a man from the next day's sun. Any unprejudiced reader can see that these are all of a piece."

- 2:2 **Yonah prayed** — וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל is an inverted imperfect (*wayyiqtol*). Some translations place "and" at the start of the verse under the mistaken idea that the *waw* in the inverted verb is a conjunction. The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. Inverted verbs have a multiplicity of semantic functions. Context, therefore, is the best indicator of meaning. In this case, many translations take the verb in a successive sense (Then Yonah prayed). In other words, Yonah began to pray *after* he was in the guts of the fish three days and three nights (on the fourth day). We believe that they are taking the phrase "three days and three nights" too literally. The number three is symbolic of totality and/or finality (see section A3). Therefore, the use of "three" in 2:1 does not mean to tell us precisely how long Yonah was in the fish; it tells us that he was in there long enough to go *the full extent* from the land of the living to the land of the dead (and back). We agree with Landes ("The 'Three Days and Three Nights' Motif in Jonah 2:1") that the phrase "would stress the distance and separation of the upper from the nether realms." Verse 1 gives us an overview of what happened when Yonah was hurled into the sea and v. 2 tells us something specific about what Yonah did during that time. For that reason, the successive rendering should be rejected. If the inverted verb has a special syntactic sense, it would be resultative/consequential (So Yonah prayed) as reflected by Stuart (WBC) or contrastive (But Yonah prayed) as reflected by Ewald. For more on inverted verbal forms, particularly the *wayyiqtol*, see **YHWH's oracle came** in 1:1.

- 2:3 The first half of this verse has virtually the same words, grammar, and syntax as Ps 120:1. Due to such sustained similarities, it seems likely that content has been shared between them—either because one text borrowed from the other or because both are making use of a common literary repertoire. Here they are for comparison:

(Ps 120:1) אֶל־יְהוָה בַּצָּרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי

(Yon 2:3) קָרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִי אֶל־יְהוָה וַיַּעֲנֵנִי

The differences are slight, but meaningful. First, Psalm 120 fronts the object before the verb in order to emphasize the recipient (To YHWH . . . I call out), whereas Yonah adheres to typical V-S-O syntax (I call out . . . to YHWH) in order to use קָרָא as an obvious and immediate link between Yonah's psalm and the surrounding narrative. Ackerman ("Jonah") also noted how that furthers the characterization of Yonah: "The prayer begins 'I cried'—precisely the same action that Jonah had been commanded, by both YHWH and the captain, to carry out against Nineveh and in behalf of the ship. Having refused to cry out to save the others, he changes his tune when he himself faces the prospect of violent death." THF is one of the only English translations to show the syntactic differences between Psalm 120:1 and Yonah 2:3. Second, the preposition before "calamity" is *bet* in Psalm 120 versus *min* in Yonah. *Bet* is more natural in Psalm 120 because the psalmist is speaking about a dire situation that the speaker is currently *in*. In Yonah's psalm, however, *min* is more natural because the prophetic composer is speaking about deliverance *from/out of* a dire situation (2:7). Furthermore, the use of *min* in the first half of 2:3 creates a tight structural parallelism with *min* in the second half of the verse while tying the psalm neatly back into the narrative. Magonet (*Form and Meaning*) explained it

this way: “The use of מִן . . . in place of ב . . . fits in with the three-fold usage of the former preposition which strongly affirms that this was indeed the prayer he recited from the belly of the fish: מִבֶּטֶן שָׂאוֹל - מִצָּרָה לִי - מִמַּעַי הִרְגָה (no underlining added). English translations typically don’t recognize those prepositional distinctions. KJV created a new distinction without ties to anything in Yonah 2 or Psalm 120 by rendering the first *min* as one of cause or means (by reason of). Virtually every translation since has rightly abandoned that rendering—although why so many treat it as *bet* is puzzling (perhaps they are following Ⲭ’s εἰν). Ⲛ follows the Hebrew. So does Ⲫ: *de tribulatione mea* (from/out of my tribulation).

calamity . . . me . . . belly . . . thee — Both the opening and closing verses of this psalm have been specifically composed to ring with repetitive end-rhymes. Here we find קִרְאֲתִי (-ti), לִי (-li), וִיעֲנֵנִי (-ni), שׁוּעָתִי (-ti), and קוֹלִי (-li). Those rhymes begin with the very first word and then repeat at the end of each colon. We mimic both the end-rhymes and structure by using words that end with the same sound and, in some cases, rearranging words so that the one with the end-rhyme appears at the end of each colon. The only end-rhyme we were not able to capture comes from the first verb. Since קִרָּא is used by the composer or scribal artisan to provide movement within the text and to link different sections together, we decided that it would be more important to show that by rendering the verb the same way in each instance. THF is one of the only English translations that attempts to capture the sound-play in the verse (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

call . . . calamity . . . cry . . . comes / out . . . out . . . shout — Besides the repetitive, structural end-rhymes noted above, this verse also features several instances of alliteration and assonance. Walsh (“Jonah 2:3-10”) noted them well: “Most noticeable are the fourfold *ā* in v. 3aα and the threefold initial *š* in v. 3b. Worthy of particular admiration is the sequence *šiwwa’û šāma’îā*, preceded and followed immediately by the syllable *-ôl*.” Our fourfold repetition of word-initial [k] in “call,” “calamity,” “cry,” and “comes” and our threefold use of words with “out” mimics those qualities of the original while sacrificing almost nothing of the text’s meaning (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Additionally, because the word קוֹל at the conclusion of the psalm (v. 10) parallels the use of קוֹל here, we render it the same in both places.

2:4 The second half of this verse is identical to the second half of Ps 42:8:

(Ps 42:8) כָּל־מִשְׁבְּרִיךְ וְגִלִּיךְ עָלַי עֲבֹר׃

(Yon 2:4) כָּל־מִשְׁבְּרִיךְ וְגִלִּיךְ עָלַי עֲבֹר׃

As in the previous verse, it is obvious that content has been shared between them. We believe that the psalm here is quoting Ps 42 directly. To indicate a scriptural quotation, we place the whole phrase in italics. There is, however, one slight difference: Yonah’s psalm views the speaker’s situation as past or complete, whereas Ps 42 views the speaker’s situation as current or continual. For that reason, we render עֲבֹר in the past tense here and in the present tense there. To emphasize that different subjects are now in view, those subjects have been fronted before the verb. Since there is nothing unusual or emphatic in English when a subject is placed before its respective verb, we show the inversion of typical word-order by restating the subject with the verb at the end (see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4 for the

importance of mimicking syntactic inversion in the HB). Haupt (“Jonah’s Whale”) and Mathews did likewise.


well . . . swelled — Or “center/core . . . surrounded/encircled.” The first thing to note about the noun **לֵב** and the verb **סָבַב** is how the same consonant (*bet*) is doubled in both. The noun could have been **לֵב**. Instead, the oral composer or scribal artisan used a form of the noun in the first colon that would create a phonetic connection with the verb in the second colon. That stylistic device in ancient Semitic poetry was described well by Noegel (“Geminate Ballast and Clustering”): “The device has as its primary characteristic the clustering of geminate forms in close proximity, often, but not strictly in parallelism. . . . Unlike word-pairs which are employed as parallels of sense or meaning, geminate clusters belong generally to the realm of sound devices, and serve to balance one stich’s use of gemination with gemination in another.” In order to mimic that stylistic and phonetic balance in our translation, we used a word for the noun and a word for the verb that each feature a doubling of the same consonant and ring with the same sounds: “well” for **לֵב** and “to swell” for **סָבַב** (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). The second thing to note is the form of **יִסְבְּבִי** (imperfect or *yiqtol*). Imperfects are distinguished from perfects in terms of their aspect and sometimes indicate modality. Therefore, Tucker rendered it “began surrounding” and Sasson (AYB) rendered it “while engulfs.” Another characteristic of ancient Semitic poetry, however, is grammatical alternation—where the gender, number, person, or aspect of a verb shifts between parallel cola. In this case, the shift is from a perfect in the first colon to an imperfect in the second. Tatu (“The Rhetorical Interpretation of the *yiqtol* // *qatal* (*qatal* // *yiqtol*) Verbal Sequence”) pointed out that “The *qatal* // *yiqtol* (*yiqtol* // *qatal*) verbal sequence in Ugaritic and HPy (Hebrew poetry) is neither a mere accident nor a poetic incident. It is rather a poetic device well known to the original authors” (final parenthetical added). Such shifts do not have semantic significance; their purpose is to produce dramatic effect. Therefore, what looks here like an imperfect is actually a preterit—an archaic use of the *yiqtol* that usually shows up in poetry. For that reason, we render it as a perfect. Cross (“Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse”) noted that as well: “The prefix conjugation (without *waw*), used in the past narrative sense, is found in v. 4 (*ysbbny* parallel to *brw*) and v. 6 (*ysbbny* parallel to *ppwny*).” The question, however, remains: what is the semantic nuance of the verb in this verse? Sasson, for instance, said, “Scriptural attestations indicate that this verbal conjugation (the Poel) conveys a protective rather than a threatening act. . . . We may dare imagine, therefore, that even as Jonah drowns, God is warding death away from him” (parenthetical added). Noegel (“Jonah and Leviathan”), however, said, “Implicit in the verb **סָבַב** is a twisting, undulating, or encircling motion” like the twisting, serpentine motion of a river. It is, in fact, “river” (**נָהָר**) that creates the motion here in Yonah. The very word “river” has associations with Leviathan, the twisting/bending sea serpent (see note below). The phrase “River swelled around me” (**נָהָר יִסְבְּבִי**) is paralleled by v. 6: “Abyss swelled around me” (**תְּהוֹם יִסְבְּבִי**). The word *tehôm* (abyss) is associated with primordial sea serpents like Leviathan (see Isa 51:9-10). If the use of **סָבַב** with *tehôm* in v. 6 has associations with mythic sea monsters, it is likely that the use of **סָבַב** with “river” in this verse does so as well. Furthermore, when we look at how the poem progresses, there is a sense in which peril increases. The first colon of v. 4 mentions how the speaker was thrown in,

the second notes that the speaker was surrounded, and the final colon makes it clear that the speaker was submerged (*over me* they passed). Likewise, v. 6 starts with the idea that the speaker's head is above water (he is in "up to the throat"), the second repeats the idea from this verse that the speaker is surrounded, and the final colon makes it clear that the speaker is submerged (finality was fastened to *my head*). Contrary, therefore, to Sasson, סבב is clearly used in this psalm to paint a picture of the sea rising up to drown the speaker.

River — In this particular case, we believe that נהר functions as far more than a typical poetic word-pair with "seas"; it actually represents the title of the mythic sea creature "Leviathan" (known also as "Yamm," Canaanite god of the sea). Noegel ("Jonah and Leviathan") explained it this way: "Its appearance . . . emits cosmological reverberations, and recalls the age-old identification of the river with Leviathan, as attested in Ugaritic texts in the creature's other name *nhr* 'River.'" That "River" was a title for Yamm can be seen, for example, in *KTU* 1.83: *pl tbtñ yymm hmlt ht ynhr* (Then, indeed, will they be scattered, O Yamm, the multitude of Hatti, O River). In the Baal Cycle, we find the epithet "Judge River" applied to the mythic sea creature. Note, for example, *KTU* 1.2.i.11: *mlakm ylak ym t'dt tpt nhr* (two messengers did Yam send, a delegation [did] Judge River). Therefore, we capitalize "river." Many things bring us to our conclusion. First, the verb used to describe what is done to Yonah by the sailors (טול) is the same verb used in Job 41:1 to describe what happens to someone in the presence of Leviathan: אל-מראי יטל (at the [mere] sight of it, one is hurled [down]). According to Job 41:23, the "depth" (מצולה)—the same region into which Yonah is thrown in this verse—is the realm of Leviathan. Job 41:24 also mentions *tehôm* as the part of the sea ruled by Leviathan—the very place into which Yonah descends in 2:6. The word *tehôm*, in fact, is probably derived from "Tiamat," the great sea serpent in Babylonian mythology (see HALOT). Therefore, the parallel phrase in 2:6 recalls the same idea: being enclosed by a mythic sea creature. Amos 9:3 says that if someone were to hide at the bottom of the sea—the very place toward which Yonah is descending in our psalm—YHWH would send "the serpent" (that is, Leviathan) to get him. When you add all that to the surrounding narrative, where "the sea" is personified as a raging creature, it becomes difficult to escape the conclusion that Leviathan is in view. Fox, for example, rendered this part of the verse "The River surrounded me" and Christensen ("The Song of Jonah") translated it "where River swirled about me." Although Sasson did not capitalize "river," he did capitalize "sea," which shows that he read the text in a similar manner. Cross capitalized both because he acknowledged that "the attack of Sea or River" is part of "the rich poetic language used in speaking of the life and death of man, or of the manifestation of death or danger in life" to which ancient Semites had recourse within their cosmogonic myths.

2:5 **pitched out** — גרש has numerous nuances. First, it participates in the narrative's thematic use of verbs describing throwing or casting. We can see in that verbal usage a connection to the idea that Yonah was thrown overboard (the psalm has been incorporated well into the story). Second, it moves beyond outside connections and into its own specific, contextual usage by means of its primary sense, which is "to drive out/evict/expel"—an act that usually involves opposition and/or rejection. Therefore, the verb communicates that the speaker believes himself to be rejected by God. Third, the verb has associations with *national exile*. Hosea 9:15, for example, uses the verb to state that God will "expel" Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Israel) because of its evil deeds. Through the use of this term, therefore, the psalm participates

in the underlying imagery of the parable: the people/nation's state of exile (see Background). Fourth, גרש describes water that is churned, disturbed, or pitched about. Amos 8:8, for instance, says that the whole land “will pitch and subside like Egypt's river.” Isaiah 57:20 uses the verb twice, but each time with a different sense (an example of the poetic device “antanaclasis”): והרשעים כים נגרש . . . ויגרשן מימיו רפש וטיט (But the wicked [are] like the pitching sea . . . its waters pitch out refuse and mud). Considering the psalm's thematic use of water imagery, it is no coincidence that its composer should choose גרש here. Through conceptual blending (see Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think*), the state of the man “pitched out” (thrown overboard by men/expelled by God) merges with the chaotic state of “pitching” water so that we perceive the speaker to be admitting both separation from God and union with the turbulent waters of the abyss. Those two meanings of גרש were also noticed by Shalom Paul (“An Overlooked *Double Entendre* in Jonah 2:5”), who called its use in this verse a “play on words” and “*double entendre*,” which “adds a poignant descriptive dimension” to Yonah's cry. Our use of “pitch” not only works with all those nuances (more typical renderings like “banish” or “drive away” don't apply to water), but reflects the fact that the poetry involves more unusual lexical choices than the narrative.

/never/ again — As numerous articles and commentaries reveal, the appearance of אַךְ (however/ yet) is one of Yonah's most difficult interpretive cruxes. As the Masoretic text now stands (supported by MurXII), the speaker seems to say “yet I will again peer toward your palace” or “yet I will keep peering toward your palace.” In the first instance, Yonah would be speaking with confidence about his situation (everything will turn out okay). Considering everything else he says in the immediately surrounding verse, that can't be right (Yonah clearly believes that death is imminent). In the second instance, Yonah would be speaking out of some kind of desperate hope (if he just keeps looking towards God's palace, maybe God will have pity on him) or his words could reflect a defiant attitude (I'm going to glare back at you, God, because you are responsible for my demise). The notions of thanksgiving in the psalm rule out the latter of those two options. As a stand-alone psalm, the “desperate hope” option is possible. Within the larger context of the story, however, Yonah has done nothing to indicate penitence; he would rather descend toward Sheol than turn back towards YHWH! Therefore, it makes no sense to say that he is now looking with hope toward the God from whom he is purposely fleeing. Some propose reading אַךְ as an asseverative (yes/indeed/certainly). We agree with Bewer (ICC) that such a reading is “manifestly premature” and “out of keeping with the context.” All four options, therefore, are problematic. Such problems were recognized by early Greek translators. θ', for example, reinterpreted אַךְ as a defective form of אֵיךְ (how?). 6 treated it the same way by using αἴα, which often functions as an interrogative when it begins a clause. Some English translation follow 6 and θ' (NRSV, NJPST, NJB, etc.). Symmachus used ὥς, which better represents אִולי (perhaps/maybe). 4QXII^g clearly has a medial *kaf* followed by some other letter, only the tip of which is visible: . The editors of DJD thought that the original was אִכָּה, a shortened version of אִיכָּה, meaning “how.” There are, however, several problems with that reconstruction. First, there is no evidence that אִיכָּה was ever spelled אִכָּה in the HB. Second, since the stroke of a *heh* would not extend so far down as the one on the fragment from 4QXII^g, it is evident that the third consonant is

something else—probably a final *nun* (אֵן, “nevertheless/yet/surely”)—a synonym of אֵךְ. In fact, Ps 31:23 has an expression very similar to what we find in Yonah:

(Ps 31:23) נִגְרַזְתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ אֵן

(Yon 2:5) נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ אֵךְ

Due to such similarities, Barthélemy argued that the particle in Yonah was influenced by the particle in Psalm 31. Therefore, the committee rendered it *pourtant* (yet/however). While that is a good *textual* suggestion, it fails to explain how “yet/however” makes sense *contextually*. Sasson (AYB) also accepted אֵךְ as “yet,” but read the imperfect form of אִסַּף as a modal question: “may I yet continue?” He rendered it that way because he believed that Yonah had a “fear of being distanced from God” and had “resolve to remain near his presence.” While such things could be said of the speaker of this psalm if it existed in isolation, they cannot be said of Yonah! Since the psalm exists—and was made to exist—in a narrative context, we find Sasson’s explanation implausible. To better understand what is going on at this point in the verse, one needs to look at how the form of אִסַּף that appears here is used elsewhere. Here we find אוֹסִיף (first-person Hiphil imperfect) followed by an infinitive with prefixed prepositional *lamed*. When we look at all the other places in the HB where the first-person Hiphil imperfect of אִסַּף is followed by an infinitive, we see that *a negative particle always comes before it*:

(Gen 8:21) לֹא-אִסַּף לִקְלֹל

(Gen 8:21) לֹא-אִסַּף עוֹד לִהְיוֹת

(Exod 10:29) לֹא-אִסַּף עוֹד רֵאוֹת

(Deut 18:16) לֹא אִסַּף לִשְׁמַע

(Josh 7:12) לֹא אוֹסִיף לִהְיוֹת

(Judg 2:21) לֹא אוֹסִיף לְהוֹרִישׁ

(Judg 10:13) לֹא-אוֹסִיף לְהוֹשִׁיעַ

(2 Kgs 21:8) לֹא אִסַּף לְהַנִּיד

(2 Chr 33:8) לֹא אוֹסִיף לְהַסִּיר

(Amos 7:8) לֹא-אוֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר

(Amos 8:2) לֹא-אוֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר

There is some variety there. עוֹד, for instance, may be added after אוֹסִיף for extra emphasis or the infinitive may lack a prefixed *lamed*. Overall, however, the repeated usage of those specific grammatical forms with no deviation is evidence of a fixed expression. Therefore, when we see אוֹסִיף לְהִבִּיט in Yonah, we know what should come before (לֹא). Some might argue against that because poets are less bound to traditional forms and expressions. Nevertheless, they must still work within the confines of their language. It is possible that the composer of the psalm in Yonah broke with convention by using אֵל instead of לֹא. The result of either would be something that makes far more sense than either the current Hebrew or Greek. Considering himself doomed by the deity and hurled toward the realm of the dead, the speaker believes he will *never* again see the deity’s abode (whether heavenly or earthly). Wellhausen agreed with our analysis: *nie würde ich wieder* (*never* would I again). So did REB (should *never* again) and

Moffatt (*never* to see again). Note that our proposed particle אֵל contains exactly the same number of consonants as אֵל—one of which is identical and exists in the same, word-initial position. It is not difficult to imagine that, very early on, the top of the *lamed* was smudged out, leaving what looked like a final *kaf*. In such a way, אֵל could be misread as אֵל. Of course, all of that is entirely hypothetical. For that reason, we surround our rendering with forward slashes (see section B7).

hallowed hall — More literally, “the palace/abode/sanctuary of your holiness.” We have taken some artistic license by making a phrase that rings pleasantly and alliteratively in English, but does not do so in the Hebrew. The term הֵיכָל is not limited to a description of an earthly “temple,” but can also describe God’s heavenly throne room. Our use of “hall” captures that ambiguity nicely. Fox translated the phrase similarly: “the Hall of your Holy-Place.”

- 2:6 **Waters submerged** — The precise meaning of אָפַף is difficult to ascertain. It occurs only four other times in the HB (2 Sam 22:5; Ps 18:5, 40:13, 116:3) and two of those instances are a doublet (2 Sam and Ps 18). Although the verb also occurs in 1QH, the “Thanksgiving Hymns” scroll from Qumran, that text is clearly drawing directly from these verses in the HB. The subjects of אָפַף include “the cords of Death,” “the breakers of Death,” “evils/troubles,” and “waters.” In the doublet, the verb parallel to אָפַף is בָּעַת (to be terrified). If we were to follow that sense, we might render אָפַף as “to overwhelm” or “harrow.” In Ps 40, the parallel verb is נִשַּׁג (to reach/catch up with/overtake). In Ps 116, the parallel verb is מָצָא (usually “to find/discover,” but in that case, “get hold of/reach/grasp”). If we were to follow the shared sense of those verbs, we might render אָפַף as “to subdue” or “overtake.” In Yonah, there is a question as to whether the parallel verb is סָבַב (to surround) or חָבַשׁ (to bind/tie up). If the former, one might render אָפַף as “to compass” (KJV), “encompass” (NASB), go “round” (NJB), “swirl around” (NAB), or “encircle.” That is a popular interpretative choice among English translators and even has support from אֶ, which renders the verb as נִקְףָּ, meaning “to encircle/surround” (CAL). The problem with inferring the meaning of אָפַף on the basis of סָבַב, however, is that such meanings have virtually nothing in common with the parallel verbs in all the other cases of אָפַף. Furthermore, it is clear that the middle colon of this verse (Abyss swelled around me) was fashioned as a parallel to the second colon of v. 4 (River swelled around me). Therefore, while the gemination in סָבַב probably influenced the use of אָפַף in the first colon of this verse (like לָבַב instead of לָב in v. 4), the meaning of אָפַף has no more in common with סָבַב than the meaning of לָבַב. It is worth quoting Noegel again (see notes on v. 4): “Unlike word-pairs which are employed as parallels of sense or meaning, geminate clusters belong generally to the realm of sound devices.” Therefore, the parallel verb must be חָבַשׁ. In that case, we might render אָפַף as “to engulf” (HCSB), “close in” (NRSV), “enwrap” (Smith), “envelop” (Sasson, AYB), “press around” (Henderson), or “enclose” (Trible). In the doublet, the parallel line refers to “streams/torrents,” which is synonymous with “waters” as the subject in Yonah and “breakers” as the subject in one of the doublets. That makes it likely that אָפַף is primarily an aquatic term—something we would expect from other word-choices in the

psalm. That would also explain why **6** renders it in Yonah with a verb that relates to liquids: περιχέω (to overflow/fill up/pour around). So we propose an aquatic term similar in meaning to being “closed in” or “enveloped” and synonymous with “to subdue,” “overtake,” or “overwhelm”: “submerge.” Fenton (sucked down) and NLT (sank beneath) came to similar conclusions. Alter preferred a less threatening term: “lapped about.” Wellhausen probably agreed with the sense we propose, but lacked any reference to water: *ging* (went down). Renderings based on Semitic cognates are far less reliable. HALOT, for example, says that the verb means “encompass” based on the Akkadian *apāpu*. CAD, however, lists only one definite occurrence of the verb and notes that its meaning is “uncertain” and “based on the Hebrew”! Dependence on Arabic is unlikely since that is a different branch of Semitic (Arabian) than Hebrew (Northwest). Fox (raged about) interpreted the verb as a denominative of the noun **אף**, which means “nose/face/countenance” and, sometimes, “anger” (for denominative verbs, see GKC §38c). While an intriguing proposal, that meaning has no similarity with **חבש** or the parallel verbs in Ps 40 and 116. Finally, we should mention the grammatical number of the subject. **מים** can refer either to a singular or dual-plural subject. The number is based on the verbal form. In the Masoretic tradition (supported by MurXII and 8HevXII gr), the verb is plural: **אִפְּפוּי**. In 4QXII^e, however, the number appears to be singular: **אִפְּפִי**. That could find support from **6**, which features a singular verb and subject. Since, however, all other subjects are plural, it is quite likely that the form in 4QXII^e is simply a defective plural as seen in 2 Sam 22:5: **אִפְּפוּי**. Contrary, therefore, to NASB, NET, and GW, we render it “waters.”

Finality — As vocalized by the Masoretes, **סוף** should be read as the collective singular “reeds” or “rushes” (**סוּף**). Where the term appears on its own (as it does here in Yonah) instead of as a reference to “the Sea of Reeds,” it always applies to freshwater plants that grow in the shallows of rivers or marshes (Exod 2:3, 5; Isa 19:6). To talk about that plant wrapping around the head of someone cast into the sea makes little sense. Tucker said it well: “The choice of **סוף** in this context appears somewhat strange given the rather narrow semantic range of the word.” For that reason, translators who want to follow the Masoretic vocalization hardly ever render the text the way it is. Instead, translators usually insert “sea.” **7**, for example, altered it from “reeds” to “the Sea of Reeds.” Modern translators insert “sea” by rendering the word as “seaweed” (or, more simply, “weed”). **8** got rid of “reeds/rushes” completely and rendered it *pelagus* (the sea). Haupt came up with the curious and questionable rendering “Tangle.” Instead of altering the text, inserting words that aren’t there, or giving **סוף** a sense it does not have elsewhere, we propose that **סוף** be read as **סוּף**, meaning “end,” “conclusion,” or “finality” (in other words, *death*). By using that term in the last colon, the psalm moves us away from the struggle for survival and prepares us for the descent into the Underworld (v. 7). Although we found only one English translator who rendered the text that way (Barré in “Jonah 2:9 and the Structure of Jonah’s Prayer” preferred “Perdition” or “Destruction”), many of the ancient versions agree with our interpretation. **6**, for example, used *εσχάτη*, meaning “last” or “final.” Symmachus had *απεραντος* (boundless/countless), which seems to represent **אין סוף** (without end). The Syriac version took it as a reference to the “bottom” of the sea (CAL). None of those renderings make sense of **סוף** (for other instances of **סוף**, see Qoh 3:11, 7:2, 12:13; Yoel 2:20;

2 Chr 20:16). In a textual note, Stuart (WBC) said that reading סוף in such a way was “an illogical reading in the context.” We find that statement baffling considering that Abyss (*tehôm*) is equatable with the realm of the dead (see, for example, Ezek 31:15), that the verb אפף applies directly to the realm of the dead in other places (“the cords of Death” and “the breakers of Death”), ער interprets “up to [the] throat” (ער-נפש) as “until death” (ער מותא), the verb חבש is used in Job 40:13 to describe the proud or wicked being concealed in the dust or hidden place (references to death), and Stuart’s own comments on the verse say “This is a vivid, powerful metaphor for the sensation of dying.” Therefore, taking סוף as a reference to the “end” that is death is logical and expected.

- 2:7 **In the chasms . . . in Nevermore** — The first thing to notice about the first half of this verse is its structural parallelism. It begins and ends with two constructions that have syntactic and semantic similarity: two *lameds*, each functioning in a spatial or locational sense (at/in), affixed to indicators of extreme extent—one of perpetual depth, the other of perpetual state. We mimic that structure by beginning and ending the first half of the verse with the same markers: “in X.” Many translations render קצב as “root.” That is supported by ע, which has עקר, meaning “root” (CAL). The Hebrew word for “root,” however (שרש), does not appear here. When it does, it refers to the roots of “the sea,” not of the mountains (see Job 36:30). Others prefer “base,” “foundation,” or “bottom.” Support for that can be found in Sir 16:19 (MS A), where the phrase קצבי הרים is paired with יסודי תבל (the foundations of the world). While those renderings adequately convey the sense of a deep extent, they fail to mimic the uniqueness of the term. קצב comes from √קצב, meaning “to cut/cleave/trim.” The verbal form appears in 2 Kgs 6:6 (ויקצב-עץ, “he cut off a stick”) and Song 4:2 (כעדר הקצובות, “like a flock [finely] trimmed”). Therefore, the plural noun would seem to refer to regions that have been “cut out” of the mountains—i.e., “clefs/fissures” or, more simply, “chasms.” Support for that comes from ש, which rendered it as σχισμας (cracks/fissures). YLT (to the cuttings of the mountains) drew from the correct root, but failed to make good sense of it. BHS suggested that קצבי went back to קצוי, the construct plural of קצה (edge/end/extremity). Wellhausen interpreted it that way: *zu den Enden* (to the ends). As noted in the critical apparatus of BHQ, however, “There is no evidence in the ancient versions for a different Hebrew *Vorlage*.” Shalom Paul (“Jonah 2:7”) called קצבי a bi-form of קצוי. A survey of singular and plural usages, however, shows only one reference to a mountain (Josh 18:16) and at no point does קצה refer to the underworld. Therefore, we find it unlikely that קצבי and קצוי are interchangeable. Note that the phrase קצבי הרים has been fronted before the verb (“to the chasms of the mountains, I went down,” not “I went down to the chasms of the mountains”) to emphasize the depth of Yonah’s descent as well as the extent to which YHWH rescued him. Translations that mimic that emphasis include NIV, NJB, and Rotherham. For more on fronting, see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4. Other translations, following ש, tack קצבי הרים to the end of the previous verse (NRSV, ESV, REB, etc.). We agree with Sasson (AYB), however, when he said, “Such a reading is no improvement on the Masoretic accentuation” because the resulting text (Finality was fastened to my head in the

chasms of the mountains) would not be an improvement on the traditional reading and because the following phrase, ירדתי הארץ (I went down [to] the earth), would not be good Hebrew (either ארץ would not have the definite article or it would end with a locative *heh*). Finally, we should note that עולם sometimes functions as a term for *the grave* or *realm of the dead*. For example, a Phoenician sarcophagus inscription (*KAI* §1) says ארן ז פעל [א]תבעל בן, “The sarcophagus that Ottbaal, son of Ahirom, Gubl’s king, made for his father Ahirom when he placed him in Nevermore” (i.e., buried him). Sasson also noted that semantic nuance: “In some scriptural passages one of the noun’s basic meanings, ‘eternity,’ can be metonymous for the netherworld.” To communicate that this is in reference to an eternal, infernal realm, we render it “Nevermore.”

escapes — More literally, “bolts” or “barriers.” The idea is that the portals back into the land of the living are barricaded shut. In this case, however, the oral composer or scribal artisan used two words from the same root to create a fantastic word-play: just as Yonah sought to בָּרַח from YHWH (1:3, 10), so the בָּרִיָּהם closed behind him. To mimic that word-play, we render the verb as “to escape” and the plural noun as “escapes” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). For our use of italics, see section A3.

you made come up — The verb עלה (to go up/ascend) was previously used (1:2) to describe the wickedness that had “come up” into YHWH’s face. Now it describes YHWH causing (by use of the Hiphil stem) Yonah’s life to “come up” from the Underworld. Later, a bush will “come up” over Yonah (4:6) only to die the next day when the daylight “comes up” (4:7). That verbal repetition, so characteristic of Yonah, gives motion to and provides connectivity between parts of the narrative. We feel obligated, therefore, to represent it by rendering each instance the same way. Translations that render the verb differently in each case not only obscure the repetitions, but treat the purposeful textual architecture with disregard (some will say “brought up” or “raised” here, but use “came up” in 1:2, “grew up” in 4:6, and ignore the verb in 4:7). Note also how יתעל is an inverted imperfect. The bonded *waw* inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. ו, however, took the text as a *waw*-copulative (a simple imperfect with prefixed conjunction) by rendering the text with a future indicative active: *sublevabis* (you will raise up). By rendering the verb as an aorist imperative passive (let it be raised), ו also viewed the text as an imperfect. Although most English translations follow the Hebrew, a few have been influenced by the Greek and Latin. Note, for example, Henderson: “thou *wilt* bring up.”

2:8 **faded from** — The basic meaning of עָטַף is “to lack vigor.” When applied to one’s “resolve/will” (לֵב), one can say it “fails.” When applied to the human body, one can say it “loses consciousness” (Stuart, WBC) or “faints.” When applied to one’s “spirit” (רוּחַ) or “breath” (נֶפֶשׁ), one can say it “slips away” (Limburg, OTL), “ebbs away” (Sasson, AYB), or “fades.” As seen in Ps 142:4 and 143:4, the verb may also use prepositional על to indicate separation (from/out of/away from)—a function of the preposition that can be found in other Semitic languages. For example, a Phoenician sarcophagus inscription (*KAI* §1) says ונחת תברח על, “and may tranquility flee from Gubl.” The famous Moabite inscription (*KAI* §181) also

used **על** in that manner: **וַיֹּאמֶר לִי כִמֹּשׁ לֶךְ אַחֲזָה אֶת גִּבְעָה עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל**, “Kemosh said to me, ‘Go seize Gibeah from Israel.’” That function of **על** was chosen by Goldingay and LEB. Most English translators interpret the preposition in a reflexive sense by rendering it “within” or “upon/unto.” Since, however, BH poetry tends to eliminate extraneous prepositions and particles and a reflexive sense is already communicated by the Hithpael stem of the verb, there must be some other purpose for the preposition. In Ps 77:4, for example, a reflexive sense was created for **עֲטָף** through the Hithpael stem alone (no **על** was necessary).

from me—my breath . . . to you—my prayer — This verse features a spectacular poetic structure that syntactically links and semantically contrasts the two halves of the verse: the use of graphically similar, but semantically opposite prepositions (**על**, “from,” versus **אל**, “toward”) with pronominal suffixes that refer to different entities (“me,” the speaker, versus “you,” God), followed by the subject of the verb, which refers to different emissions from one’s mouth (“breath” versus “prayer”), to which is suffixed the same first-person pronoun. In each case, the subject has been thrown to the end of the statement in order to isolate it and, thereby, draw our attention to it (see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4 for more on Hebrew word-order). A stark contrast is structurally presented, therefore, between the breath that departs from Yonah in the depths of death and the prayer that rises from Yonah to the heights of God’s dwelling. Because form and content work together, we mimic both the structure and content closely. Older translations rendered **נֶפֶשׁ** as “soul.” Although that captures the ethereal nature of the term, it brings to mind Platonic ideas about the eternal essence of one’s being that were not intended by the word in ancient Semitic usage. In v. 6, **נֶפֶשׁ** referred very concretely to the speaker’s “neck/throat.” The term has a different sense here: that which comes out of it (breath) and, by extension, one’s very life or self, which is animated by it. Therefore, many modern translations prefer “life.” Like us, Fenton preferred “breath.” Alter (life-breath) captured both ideas.

- 2:9 **Defenders . . . renounce** — This verse is problematic for many interpreters and translators. Barré (“Jonah 2:9 and the Structure of Jonah’s Prayer”) thought that the problems came from failing to take into account the verse’s structure. By looking at the second half of v. 9, Barre concluded that “It is possible to construe the participle and verb in Jonah 2:9 as being in ‘synonymous’ parallelism.” He pointed to several places in the HB where **שָׁמַר** (to keep) and **עָזַב** (to abandon) are structurally arranged as contrasting parallels. His conclusion is astute and commendable and shows that in whatever way we render **מִשְׁמְרִים**, it must be informed by **יַעֲזֹבוּ**. The problem with **מִשְׁמְרִים**, however, is that the Masoretic text (to quote Barré), “points *mšmrym* as a piel participle. But *šmr* does not occur elsewhere in biblical or Qumranic Hebrew in the piel.” As validation of that problem, Barré and others note that Ps 31:7 contains a phrase that is virtually identical to the one at the start of this verse (**הַשְׁמְרִים הַבְּלִי-שׁוֹא**), but the participle there is in the Qal stem. That problem, however, is more theoretical than actual since **שָׁמַר** does occur in the Piel stem in Rabbinic Hebrew. Furthermore, one of the primary functions of the Piel stem is to provide a more intensive form for verbs in the Qal. Therefore, any verb in the Qal could potentially be crafted in the Piel in order to further intensify it. Let’s suppose, however, that the prefixed *mem* does not indicate a Piel participle.

If intentional, the *mem* could only then be explained as a prefixed prepositional מִן, which would mean that מַשְׁמְרִים is a continuation of the previous verse. That reading has ancient attestation in α', which added απο (from) before the participle. Barré preferred that reading and translated the second half of v. 8 through the first half of v. 9 as “And my prayer came to you, to your holy temple, from (among) those who hold to faithless practices.” In doing so, he split v. 8 in half—ending one stanza with the first half and beginning a different stanza with the second half. Ironically, our problem with Barré’s structural reading is entirely structural. If v. 9 is joined to the second half of v. 8, we suddenly have a verse that ties perfectly into everything that comes after it, but has no parallel with anything that comes before it. That alone would make Barré’s reading suspect. For all his care with the parallels in v. 9, Barré neglected the parallels in v. 8: בַּהֲתַעֲטַף עָלַי נַפְשִׁי (As it faded from me—my breath) is parallel to וַתָּבוֹא אֵלַי תְּפִלָּתִי (It came to you—my prayer) and אֶת־יְהוָה זָכַרְתִּי (YHWH did I recall) is parallel to אֶל־הַיִּכְל קָדְשְׁךָ (into your hallowed hall). The second set of parallels, in fact, replicate the parallelism at the very start of the poem (v. 3), where “to YHWH—he answers me” is parallel to “My shout comes to thee”: both shift focus from the speaker to the deity and both involve a shift in person from “YHWH” to “you.” In other words, each part of v. 8 structurally compliments the other. To sever v. 8 in half so that the first part ends a previous stanza and the second half begins a new one, and then fuse v. 9 onto the end of v. 8, is to utterly destroy the structural parallelisms in v. 8 and to create connections between vv. 8 and 9 with no parallels between them. Tribble also noted that to tack v. 9 onto v. 8 is to “lose the parallelism between the phrases ‘to the-temple-of-your-holiness’ as the conclusions of stanzas.” We do not support Barré’s restructuring. How then do we make sense of the Piel participle? We view it as a more intensive form of the Qal! Instead of “keepers” or “guardians,” therefore, we render it “defenders.” We then translate עֹזֵב in a way that contrasts with the meaning we gave to מַשְׁמְרִים: “to renounce” or “deny.” Those who interpret הַבְּלִי-שׁוֹא as a reference to “idols” often translate שָׁמַר as “to worship” (NRSV, NET, NAB, etc.). If we are correct that הַבְּלִי-שׁוֹא doesn’t refer to idols (see below), such renderings of שָׁמַר must be rejected.

hollow illusions — Although the form looks like “illusions of hollowness,” this is an example of “a genitival group of two substantives, which are synonyms or have closely related meanings,” that are used to “express a superlative statement” (JM §142m). For examples, see **a great city of [other] gods** in 3:3. הַבְּלִי refers to a “vapor,” “mist,” or “breath” (a puff of air that quickly dissipates). Due to its fleeting and insubstantial nature, the term may also apply to something that is “worthless,” “immaterial,” or “transient.” Therefore, we render it “illusions.” Contrary to Cross, who said, “oral formulae do not appear” in the final verses of this chapter, an artful case of alliteration was clearly created between הַיִּכְל at the end of the previous verse and הַבְּלִי at the start of this one (repetition of *heh*, *lamed*, and the diphthong *tsere yod*). To mimic that alliteration, we render שׁוֹא as “hollow,” which alliterates with both “hallowed” and “hall” in the previous verse. ו represents הַבְּלִי with *vanitas*, which refers to something empty of virtue or lacking in substance. That rendering was followed by the KJV and other early English translations. In current usage, however, “vanity” refers to moral failings like pride, conceit,

or superficiality, none of which relate to **הבל**. Therefore, that rendering should be rejected. Those that represent the term better include NJPST (folly), AAT (futilities), Alter (vaporous), Stuart, WBC (nothings), Fox (mists), Goldingay (hollow [things]), and Love (breaths). Virtually all other translations interpret **הבל** as a reference to an idol or (false) god. The impetus to interpret **הבל** that way is based on other texts where **הבל** and/or **שוא** are thought to refer to idols. As noted, however, by Love (“Translating Jonah 2:9”), “There are 469 occurrences of the verb **שמר** in the MT. There is no text in which ‘false gods’ or any word for ‘idols’ is found as an object of the verb **שמר**.” Barré had already noted that incongruity: “In no case is the object of *šmr* a deity,” which “makes it quite unlikely that *hablē-šāw*’ means ‘idols.’” Contextually, there is also nothing in Yonah that makes idols a subject or object of discussion. Those who view the text that way are, therefore, faced with a serious interpretative hurdle. Magonet (*Form and Meaning*), concluded that “Nothing in the context so far has led us to expect this statement. . . . The sentence surprises us by its sudden appearance, and puzzles us by having no obvious relationship to the experience described in the ‘psalm.’” McKenzie rightly noted just how badly such a statement would fit in the story: “The condemnation of idol worshipers as forsaking their loyalty fits ill with the story in Jonah, since the foreigners, who presumably worship idols, are more faithful and obedient to Yahweh than Jonah.” In fact, the very thing the speaker does, which is supposed to contrast sharply with those who defend **הבלי-שוא**, is also what the sailors did: “They have become Yhwh worshipers, sacrificing a sacrifice and vowing vows” (Trible). For those who interpret **הבלי-שוא** as “idols,” the only reasonable explanation for this verse is to view it as an editorial insertion: “The final editor of the story may have inserted an editorial comment at the centre [sic] of the story” (Ferreira, “A Note on Jonah 2:8: Idolatry and Inhumanity in Israel”). Sasson (AYB) placed em dashes around the verse to separate it from the rest of the psalm and to show that it didn’t belong. Instead of viewing this verse as the imposition of a foreign idea (or viewing the verse itself as foreign to the psalm), we suggest that the verse has been misunderstood. To what then would “hollow illusions” refer? In the context of the psalm, we believe that it refers to any thought or perspective that seeks out people or things other than **YHWH** for deliverance from the forces of death and destruction. While such thoughts or perspectives could certainly involve foreign and/or false deities (and, by extension, their idols), they are by no means limited to them. Such “illusions” could include theological errors like supposing that the Israelite deity does not know or care about one’s plight or that he is too far away (or too holy and pure) to save. Within the context of the narrative, “hollow illusions” refers to Yonah’s belief that he can escape from **YHWH** or avoid his ordained duty—in other words, those thoughts or beliefs that drive him to disobedience. Instead of standing out as an intrusion on the elements in chs. 1-2, this verse stands out as a subversive, concluding remark for the whole section (just like the final verses of ch. 4) in that it compels the hearer/reader to reassess their thoughts and beliefs in light of Yonah’s. Therefore, the presence of this verse—particularly at the end of the first section—is powerful evidence that this text is a “parabolic writing.”

2:10 The final phrase in this psalm is extremely similar to one that concludes Ps 3:

(Yon 2:10) **ישועתה ליהוה**

(Ps 3:9) **ליהוה הישועה**

Both verses contain the expressions לִיהוָה (belonging to YHWH) and יְשׁוּעָה (deliverance). There are, however, some differences. The first is word-order. In Psalm 3, the speaker notes how his enemies mock him by saying God has no יְשׁוּעָה for him (v. 3). It then ends with a triumphant declaration: “To YHWH belongs הַיְשׁוּעָה.” By placing the divine name at the front of the declaration, the psalmist affirms what his enemies had denied—that YHWH has what he needs. In other words, the word-order in Ps 3 places emphasis on *the deity*. In Yonah, however, יְשׁוּעָתָה has been placed before the name of the deity because the point is that when the speaker descended into the place from which there is no deliverance (Sheol), deliverance still came to him through YHWH. In other words, the word-order in Yonah places emphasis on *the speaker’s deliverance*. Second, whereas Psalm 3 ends with the usual orthographic spelling (יְשׁוּעָה), the psalm in Yonah ends with יְשׁוּעָתָה. As noted by Blau, the terminative *heh* in יְשׁוּעָתָה is a preservation of the archaic, accusative case-ending. Analysis of Semitic languages predating BH (like Akkadian and Ugaritic) shows that Proto-Semitic originally had three case-endings: -u (marking the nominative), -i (marking the genitive), and -a (marking the accusative). Although those case-endings were elided early on in Hebrew, they sometimes show up in poetry. Here in Yonah, the archaic spelling was probably utilized to provide a sense of finality to the end-rhymes woven throughout the passage (see note below). Finally, יְשׁוּעָה has a different nuance in the two texts. In Ps 3, it has the sense of success in combat. In Yonah, it has the sense of rescue from oblivion. To show those differences, we render it “victory” in Ps 3, but “salvation” in Yon 2.

appreciation . . . immolation . . . completion . . . salvation — More literally, “thanksgiving . . . sacrifice . . . fulfill . . . deliverance.” Contrary to Cross, who said, “oral formulae do not appear” in the final verses, the closing verse of the psalm has been specifically composed to ring with repetitive end-rhymes. Here we find תּוֹדָה (-dah), אֲזַבְחָהּ (-ḥah), אֲשַׁלְּמָהּ (-mah), and a double whammy: יְשׁוּעָתָה (-athah). The intention to create end-rhymes in this verse is evident not just by the parallel use of end-rhymes at the start of the psalm (v. 3), but in the orthography. One would expect to find imperfections (I will do) rather than cohortatives (I hereby/determine/wish to do). Cohortatives are used nowhere else in the psalm. By using them here, however, the terminative -ah in תּוֹדָה and יְשׁוּעָתָה is multiplied. Furthermore, the composer could have used יְשׁוּעָה instead of יְשׁוּעָתָה (as in Ps 3:9). By using a more archaic form, the /ah/ sound is doubled at the very point where the repetitive end-rhymes conclude, which brings the oral performance to a more vivid and climatic resolution. Even though 4QXII^e has an imperfect form of שָׁלַם, Armin Lange noted (in “4QXII^e (4Q82) as an Editorial Text”) that the meaning of that variant is unclear because “comparative evidence is missing as to whether the 4QXII^e-text had a tendency to eliminate cohortative or jussive forms or not.” It is preferable, therefore, to presume the authenticity of the form in the Masoretic tradition. The cohortative forms may also function as speech acts (words that accomplish something as opposed to simply conveying information). By uttering the words in this verse, one may actually create a socially binding obligation to act in the vocally specified ways (see Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* and Searle’s *Speech Acts*). We mimic both the end-rhymes and structure by using words that end with the same sound and by arranging the words in such a way that the end-rhyme

appears in the same space as in the Hebrew text. THF is one of the few translations that reflect the cohortative sense of those verbs. The only others we could find are NET (“I promise to offer” and “I will surely do”), Alter and Christensen (“let me sacrifice” and “let me pay”), and Mathews, who only treated the first verb as a cohortative. THF is also one of the only translations that mimics the sound-play in the verse (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

- 2:11 **so that** — וַיִּקֶּא is an inverted imperfect (*wayyiqtol*). The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. Inverted verbs have many semantic functions. Context, therefore, is the best indicator of meaning. In this case, many translations take the verb in a coordinative sense (and). We believe, however, that it functions in a resultative or consequential sense: YHWH spoke to the fish *with the result that* it expelled/vomited Yonah. Stuart (WBC) came to the same conclusion. Since Sasson (AYB) read the verb as a Hiphil instead of a Qal, he was able to interpret YHWH as the subject (instead of the fish): “and made it vomit.”

3:1 See the notes on 1:1.

- 3:2 **call out . . . the [very] call-out** — Here we find a repetition of קראַ in the form of an imperative (קִרְא) and noun (קִרְיָא). We mimic that root-play by rendering them “to call out” and “the call-out” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Even though virtually all English translations overlook or ignore sound-plays in the HB, the Geneva, Bishops’, and KJV bibles set a precedent in this case with their rendering “preach . . . the preaching,” which has been followed by many translators ever since. Other renderings include “proclaim . . . the proclamation” (as in NASB), “cry . . . the cry” (as in Rotherham), “call . . . the call” (as in Fox), and “speak . . . the speech” (as in Stuart, WBC). See 1:2 for further discussion.

that I convey — Or “that I am conveying/about to convey.” Our rendering follows the Masoretic vocalization, which consists of a relative particle, a first-person pronoun, and רבר pointed as a participle. The translators of 6 interpreted the phrase as referring to a message that was already delivered: κατα το κηρυγμα το εμπροσθεν ο εγω ελαλησα (according to the former message that I spoke). Since it is possible to read רבר as a perfect instead of a participle, that interpretation is certainly possible. 6’s use of κατα also has attestation in 4QXII^a: כְּזוֹת אֲשֶׁר, “like that which” (the scribe elided the *aleph* so that we see זֹת instead of זֹאת).

- 3:3 **even though** — Virtually all English translations interpret the *waw* preceding “Nineveh” as either introductory (as if the text is shifting away from what it just finished saying and is “now” proceeding down a new narrative pathway) or as the marker of a side comment (as if the narrative is being interrupted to give us background information that exists outside of the story-line). We do not think that either of those interpretations are correct. Instead, we think that, after the *athnach*, the text goes on to communicate something that is directly applicable to the story-line: whereas Yonah previously did everything possible to disobey YHWH, now he chooses to go to Nineveh *no matter how far or how idolatrous the city*. The *waw* helps to communicate that idea by creating a concessive clause (even though/although) for the exceptional circumstances that follow.

a great city of [other] gods — Since עִיר־גְּדוֹלָה לְאֱלֹהִים is ambiguous, it requires a good deal of interpretation. Two things need to be clarified: (1) the relationship between “Elohim” (with

prefixed *lamed*) and “great city” and (2) the relationship between the phrase as a whole and the rest of the verse. Scholars and translators interpret לאלהים in three basic ways. Some believe that it indicates what God *thinks about* or how he *views* Nineveh (taking the *lamed* as estimative). Examples include Rotherham (before God), Tribble (to God), and Limburg, OTL (in God’s sight). That interpretation is supported by קדם יי: (before YHWH). Others think that it indicates something about Nineveh’s relationship to God (using a *lamed* of specification or possession). Examples of that can be found in the renderings of Wolff (for God) and Tucker (belonging to God). Third, the phrase may be interpreted as a superlative (taking the *lamed* as a marker of manner). While that interpretation enjoys majority opinion, there is no agreement on its nuance. Some think that it relates to the *size* of the city. Note, for example, NRSV (exceedingly), NJPST (enormously), and LEB (extraordinarily). Others believe that it indicates the city’s *significance* or *value*. Examples of that interpretation include NIV (very important), NJB (beyond compare), and Geneva (excellent). Finally, there are a few who think that the phrase indicates something of God’s power, majesty, or favor. Examples can be found in the renderings of Wellhausen (*göttlich*) and Ewald (divinely). We believe that the superlative interpretation is least likely because it is based on a faulty interpretation of the phrase “a walk/journey/march of three days” (more on that below), the versions do not reflect that understanding, the use of “great” would be redundant, and because such a statement would diverge from its typical construction. Sasson (AYB) explained the last point well: “If this is indeed the meaning of the construction in Jonah, it would be unique to Scripture, for such superlatives have a noun in construct with *’elōhîm/’ēl*. We should, therefore, expect to have **’îr ’elōhîm* or even **’îr-’elōhîm gedôlâ* if we retain the superfluous *gedôlâ*.” In other words, in no other place is there a prefixed *lamed* or additional qualifying adjective in the construction of a “superlative לאלהים.” Note, for example, the following:

(Gen 23:6) נשיא אלהים (a divine prince)

(Ps 36:7) הררי־אל (titanic mountains)

(Ps 80:11) ארזי־אל (colossal cedars)

Such an interpretation, therefore, should be rejected. While interpreting the phrase in terms of God’s estimation of or relationship to Nineveh makes sense (see 4:11), there is a fourth option that makes even more sense: אלהים as the plural “gods.” In other words, Nineveh is described as *idolatrous*. Wiseman (“Jonah’s Nineveh”) said, “It is not impossible that here the author is stressing the polytheism of Nineveh with its worship of many gods, borne out by the presence of temples dedicated to the gods Nabu, Aššur, Adad and Ninurta in addition to Ishtar of Nineveh and others throughout its history.” That interpretation is significant because it tells us something about the place to which Yonah is going: it listens to and obeys false gods. How likely would it be for such a people to listen to and obey the true god? Next, there is a question about how this phrase fits into the larger narrative. If the point of the phrase was to say that Nineveh “was a great city of/to God,” we are unsure what the narrator would be trying to communicate. God had already called Nineveh a great city twice (1:2 and 3:2) and would do so again (4:11). Was it so hard for Yonah’s audience to believe that God thought of Nineveh as a “great city” that a superlative statement was necessary? Probably not. Instead, we propose that the point is to create an unlikely situation at the beginning of the chapter that will make the aftermath all the more incredible (such a people did what?).

[and] a three-day march [besides] — Literally, **מהלך שלשת ימים** is “a journey/walk/march of three days.” But to what does that refer? Virtually all English translators interpret it as the diameter or circumference of Nineveh. Note, for example, NASB (a three days’ walk *across*), NET (three days to walk *through it*), and NJB (*to cross it took three days*). Note how the text is only able to convey the translators’ interpretation by inserting words that don’t exist in the Hebrew. One has to wonder what the point is of telling us how many days it took to cross Nineveh. Such information neither advances the plot nor heightens the miraculous nature of the tale. Such readings, in fact, evince a fundamental misunderstanding of the text; our storyteller has no interest in geography, cartography, or the lengths and breadths of cities. We suddenly find ourselves sympathizing with Smith’s lament: “How long, O Lord, must Thy poetry suffer?” What all such readings fail to appreciate is the fact that “three days” is a *symbolic number*. Such a statement is not meant to communicate an actual distance; rather, it indicates a totality or finality of extent (see section A3). In this case, the phrase “a three-day walk/journey/march” has to do with *the full extent Yonah must travel to obey*, which is equal to the extent he went in his disobedience. That larger narrative connection and textual contrast is superior in every way to the one frequently proposed: the “‘three-day walk’ sets up an obvious contrast with the ‘one-day walk’ of the next [verse]” (Sasson). It also explains why the location at which Yonah was vomited by the fish is of no concern; the point is that Yonah had to make up for the depth of his disobedience. So it doesn’t matter where he started the journey. Syntactically, **היתה** would govern both phrases: “Nineveh was a great city of gods—[it was] a three-day march” (or, more simply, “Nineveh was a great city of gods [and] a three-day march”). **ו** supports that reading. Instead of using a word that would indicate the size or extent of a city, it inserted a word that made the phrase about the length of “road”: **ὅσει πορείας ὁδοῦ ἡμερῶν τριῶν** (about a three-day road trip). Typically, the verb **הלך** means “to go,” “walk,” or “journey.” Therefore, we could have followed other translations in rendering **מהלך** as a “walk” or “journey.” Sometimes, however, it also has *military* nuances. Ferguson (“Who was the ‘King of Nineveh’ in Jonah 3:6?”) noted that “while the expression ‘walk of three days’ (*mahālāk šēlōšet yāmīm*) could be a straight linear distance, it does not have to be. Its Assyrian counterpart (*mālaku*) was often used of a circuitous route followed on a military campaign.” CAD refers to *mālaku* as the “march,” “advance,” “route,” or “campaign” of Assyrian troops or armies. As Wiseman noted, “The immediate response (to Yonah’s prophecy) shows clearly that the message was taken as affecting not only the city of Nineveh, as was obvious from the statement, but also the king and his position. The only situations which fulfil [sic] these criteria in Assyrian omens are invasion of the land by an enemy, divine wrath attested by a major, i.e. total, solar eclipse, famine accompanied by an epidemic, and flood” (parenthetical added). Furthermore, “There is only one other instance in the Old Testament of a call to mass fasting and repentance as in Jonah 3:7. Prior to the reading of Baruch’s scroll in Jerusalem in the ninth month of Jehoiakim’s fifth year the call went out to all the people of Jerusalem and to all who had come into it from the villages of Judah to take such action (Jer 36:9). The precise date (604 B.C.) associates this with *the Babylonian advance* of that year recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle” (italics added). In other words, Yonah is **marching out** or **advancing** on Nineveh to reverse its wickedness and turn the authority of its gods upside-down by the power and message of YHWH. In the immediate context, therefore, we render **הלך** as “to march” and **מהלך** as a “march.” See the next note for more.

3:4 **Marching around** — We argued in the previous verse that מַהֲלֵךְ doesn't refer to the distance across Nineveh; rather, it symbolically represented how far Yonah had to journey to fulfill his duty (an extent equal to how far he journeyed away from his duty). But if the term wasn't first used to describe an actual distance, it probably doesn't function that way here either. It is possible, therefore, that the same word is used here to indicate a length of *time* (as in Neh 2:6): Yonah spent "all day" delivering his message. In that case, the repeated use of מַהֲלֵךְ with different nuances would reflect the literary device called "antanaclasis." While that is certainly possible, we think it makes better sense to revocalize the word as a Piel participle (מַהֲלֵךְ), which would give the term a more intensive (to march around) or iterative (to march back and forth) nuance. Therefore, the point is that Yonah delivered his message in an ostentatious display, which both caught the attention of the Ninevites and fulfilled his prophetic duty. שׁ also seems to reflect two meanings of מַהֲלֵךְ. In the previous verse, it used οδοs to indicate a length of "road," whereas, in this verse, οδοs is absent. Finally, we should note that מַהֲלֵךְ participates in the repeated use of words with the same root both inside and outside this chapter. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to give every instance of words with the same root the same rendering. We have tried to do so in the immediate context by using the same word each time (see the previous note for more).

is turned — It is evident from the reaction of Nineveh's king and kingdom that Yonah's message was interpreted in a very negative sense. In fact, the king explicitly links Yonah's prophetic announcement with perishing (v. 9). By rendering the verb as "to overthrow" (KJV), "overturn" (NIV), "destroy" (NAB), "demolish" (LEB), or "fall" (Moffatt), translators interpret it the same way. The actual pronouncement, however, is anything but explicit. The god from whom the message originates is not identified, no wrongdoing is mentioned, and as interpreters have long noted, the verb הִפֵּךְ has contrasting nuances. Halpern and Friedman said this about it: "Apart from meaning 'physical overthrow,' the verb *hpk* denotes a change of character (1 Sam 10:6.9; cf. Exod 14:5; Hos 11:8; Lam 1:20; and the nuance of transformation in Deut 23:6; Jer 31:13; Amos 5:7; Ps 30:12; Neh 13:2, e.g.)." Bolin added, "In the *niphal* (which appears in our verse), הִפֵּךְ can mean, 'to change oneself,' and is used to denote any radical change from one extreme to the other, including that of the heart or mind" (parenthetical added). Wiseman noted that the verbal equivalent in Assyrian (*abāku*) had the same two meanings: "'overturn' and 'change of heart.'" We believe, therefore, that Lubeck ("Prophetic Sabotage: A Look at Jonah 3:2-4") was right to say, "This carefully nuanced double meaning was in the mind of our narrator, who employed the unequivocal אָבַד elsewhere in the narrative to designate destruction" (but did not do so here). In fact, we believe הִפֵּךְ was specifically chosen to play off the verb שׁוּב (to turn back/around/aside), which occurs throughout the chapter. Therefore, we use the same basic rendering in all those instances: "to turn." Tribble agreed: "The verb 'turn' (*šûb*) calls for repentance. Its imagery plays on the verb 'overturn' (*hpk*, 3:4). On the one hand, the turning of the Ninevites may counter the overturning of them. It may counter destruction. On the other, the turning of the Ninevites may correspond to the overturning of them. It may correspond to deliverance." Sasson (AYB) thought that Yonah took his own words in a very negative sense: "God, Jonah feels, is entrusting him with a *declaration of doom*" (no italics added). Ancient Jewish tradition, as reflected in *b. Sanhedrin* 89b, disagreed: "Jonah was originally told that Nineveh would be turned, but did not know whether for good or for evil" (Soncino). Lubeck

thought that “Jonah’s message reflects his own selfish intentions—at best a half-truth intended to deceive through prophet ‘disinformation.’” The fact of the matter, however, is that the text tells us nothing about how Yonah felt about or interpreted his own prophetic announcement. What we can say for certain is that the expression itself is ambiguous. That ambiguity is reflected in the Talmudic quotation. Our translation tries to capture the ambiguity: “At most forty days till Nineveh *is turned*” (either to its benefit or to its detriment). In either case (so long as a change actually occurs), Yonah’s prophecy is validated and any charge of false prophecy is nullified. Those who also attempt an ambiguous rendering include Bolin (turns over), Wilt (will no longer be what it used to be), Mathews (upturned), Coote in *Amos Among the Prophets* (will be turned), and Wycliffe² (turned upside-down).

- 3:5 **relied on** — The phrase here consists of the verb אָמַן (to be firm/reliable/steadfast) in the Hiphil stem with helping particle *bet*. Most translations render the two as “believe in.” The sense of the verb, however, has less to do with “belief” and more to do with “dependence,” “reliance,” or “trust”; the people didn’t mentally assent to the validity of a prophetic announcement—they actively sought to show the deity that they were interested in changing their ways. In other words, “The general meaning of this word in the Bible . . . suggests an act of trust, not belief” (Alter). Additionally, to say that one believes “in” God is to make a statement of religious affiliation. For example, if a person says that they “believe in” Jesus, they are asserting that they are a *follower* of Jesus (i.e., a Christian). In contradistinction to the sailors in ch. 1, there is nothing in this chapter that indicates conversion. “The lexical evidence cannot be demonstrated to imply conversion on the part of the Ninevites. . . . We have no indication that Jonah preached of Yahweh, Torah or monotheism. Nor is any hope or avenue of escape offered. . . . The reform of the Ninevites makes no mention of putting away their other gods or in any way fearing, honoring, worshiping or even recognizing Yahweh” (Walton, “The Object Lesson of Jonah 4:5-7”). Therefore, we avoid the rendering “believe in” and render this “rely on.” Tribble claimed that “this verb puns on the name of Jonah’s father, Amittai. . . . The unstable ‘calling’ of the son of Belief (Amittai) elicits belief in God.” While it is certainly not impossible that the composer or scribal artisan chose this verb (instead of בָּטַח) in order to pun with Yonah’s patronym, it seems to us that if it is a word-play, it is unintentional. Therefore, we do not create a pun here.

rags — Traditionally translated “sackcloth.” That word, however, is merely a transliteration of the Hebrew word שָׂק (saq). The Greek rendering σακκος (*sakkos*) is *also* a transliteration. So what is a *saq*? It does not refer to a “sack” as the word is normally understood in English (people are not wearing “sacks”). Rather, it refers to a rough and shabby form of clothing that represents the (supposedly) ragged, humiliated, and/or penitential state of the individual wearing it. Therefore, we provide what few seem willing to provide—a *translation*: “rags.” Limburg (mourning garments) and Wilt (clothes to show that they were in mourning) did likewise. Sasson (AYB) used “sackcloth” in his translation, but admitted in his commentary that “rags, tatters” would be closer to the meaning. Note that the form here is plural (שָׂקִים). We represent it, therefore, as a plural. In those places where it is singular, we use a singular rendering.

- 3:6 **what was spoken** — As mentioned in 1:1, דְּבַר has a wide semantic range that is often covered by generic renderings like “word,” “thing,” or “matter.” Sometimes, however, context provides a more specific nuance. In this case, the precise meaning is nebulous. דְּבַר הַדְּבַר could refer to

“the news” (NIV), “the tidings” (ASV), or “word” (KJV) that a potentially deadly prophetic utterance had been announced in the city. It could refer to “the word” of prophecy (NASB)—i.e., “the saying” (Wolff) or “the message” (ISV) itself. It could refer to “the matter” (Leeser), “the subject” (Henderson), or “the thing” (AAT) of which the prophecy speaks. Whatever the nuance, it probably means the same thing that the verb conveys in 3:10: אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַר. Many translations render the verb in that verse as “to threaten,” “declare that he would,” or “say that he would.” But we do not know if YHWH was saying or declaring *he would* do something. And to say that he *threatened* to do something is an interpretation that skews sharply in one particularly negative direction. He could, for example, be “warning” them of the possibilities or “informing” them of the consequences (two interpretations that do not require malevolence or animosity). It is only the king of Nineveh and his great ones who speak of YHWH fuming with rage. Neither the narrator nor YHWH say such a thing. Based on the prophetic utterance itself, all we know is that a “change/turning” is going to happen in the near future. For those reasons, our rendering in this verse (what was spoken), as well as in v. 10 (that he had spoke) reflects the ambiguous nature of the vocabulary.

his throne . . . having thrown [on] — Literally, “his throne . . . he covered up [with].” Since, however, the Piel verb כָּסָה (*kissāh*) is used to create a word-play with כִּסָּה (*kissēh*), we mimic that word-play by rendering the noun as “throne” and the verb as “having thrown on” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Wolff did similarly: “he had risen from his *throne*, *thrown aside* his robe.”

his majesty — אֲדָרַת comes from אָדַר, meaning “to be glorious/splendid/majestic/dignified.”

English translators usually render אֲדָרַת as “robes” (or “royal robes”) in this verse. Although אֲדָרַת can describe a “mantle” (Alter, Craig, and Wellhausen preferred that rendering), that nuance is almost always limited to prophets (see, for instance, 1 Kgs 19:13; 2 Kgs 2:8; Zech 13:4). Neither rulers nor their associates were known to wear one. Instead, the HB uses מַעֲיֵל to describe robes of royalty. But if אֲדָרַת is neither a royal robe nor a mantle, what is it? We think it functions as a general reference to a person or thing’s glory/splendor/majesty as seen, for example, in Ezek 17:8 and Zech 11:3, 13 (since Mik 2:8 is plagued by uncertainties, it is not included in this analysis). Perhaps S was right to call it a “crown” (CAL). The point, therefore, is not that the king traded one kind of clothing for another, but that he traded his glory or splendor for humility or repentance.

3:7 **what was sensible . . . their senses not be indulged** — טַעַם occurs twice in this verse. Both instances are vocalized as the Hebrew term טַעַם. Because of that vocalization, the text features a fantastic word-play. טַעַם refers primarily to one’s “taste” or “senses.” The king would, therefore, be telling his subjects that they must not “taste” anything. Metaphorically, however, טַעַם can also refer to what is “sensible” (based on good judgment). The metaphoric sense would then be used to describe what the king and his great ones tell their people. Tribble put it this way: “The taste (judgment) of the king and his great ones is that the people not taste.” Virtually all English translations, however, render the first instance of טַעַם as “decree” on the assumption that it represents the Biblical Aramaic term טַעַם, which occurs throughout Ezra and Daniel. There are numerous problems with that reading. First, the term in Biblical

Aramaic doesn't refer to a public proclamation or decree; it refers to the "authority" of someone, the "report" of an official, or the issuance of an "order/command." Second, as Sasson (AYB) noted, "We know that a proclamation is being broadcast throughout Nineveh not because of *ta'am*, but because of the verbal form *wayyaz'eq*." So having טעם as "decree" or "proclamation" would add nothing to the story. Third, a different word is used in the Hebrew portions of scripture to refer to a public order given by the king to his subjects. In 2 Chr 30:6, for instance, we find מצוה המלך with prefixed *kaf* instead of טעם with prefixed *min*: כמצוה המלך (by order of the king). If the same meaning was meant here, one has to wonder why the composer or scribal artisan would dip into a different language instead of using a standard Hebrew formulation. Fourth, even though both ט and ש indicate the issuance of an order or command, the ancient tradition of recitation did not. One would have to presume that the ancient reading tradition was wrong or that the Masoretes did not faithfully represent it. Many of those conclusions are difficult to accept. Their combined weight makes it likely that טעם, not טעם, is correct. We think Bolin was right: "Use of מטעם in the introduction of the royal order is not an Aramaic term denoting 'decree', but rather carries the standard Hebrew meaning of 'taste'. It therefore forms a pun with the command that the people not eat." To mimic that word-play, we render the two instances as "what is sensible" and "to indulge [ones] senses" (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

Let no feeding be done, nor water *wicked* away. — Literally, "Let them not feed, and water, let them not drink." The first verb is רעה, from רעה, meaning "to feed/graze." By using רעה in this context, however, the oral composer or scribal artisan created a fantastic pun. Christensen ("Anticipatory Paronomasia in Jonah 3:7-8") described it as a case of polysemy (where the same word takes on different meanings). The primary meaning would be conveyed by the verb's initial use, but as the text moved forward with repeated uses of the term "wickedness" (רעה), it would make the verb seem, in hindsight, as if it were רעה, from רעה, meaning "to be wicked." The result would be a pun in which the animals were prohibited from both feeding and being wicked. "Such puns are notoriously difficult to translate into another language and thus it is not surprising that translations of this text have uniformly missed the deeper level of meaning in the literary pun of the Hebrew text" (Christensen). In order to recreate the pun, we took the next verb (to drink) and rendered it as "to wick" (that is, "to absorb," "drink up," or "convey away" a liquid). By rendering the second half of the prohibition as "nor water wicked away," we enable the verb to double as the noun "wicked," which appears in the next verse. THF is one of the only translations that attempts to mimic the pun (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). To point out the presence of a pun, we surround the word with asterisks (see section A3). Note that we have also reproduced the fronting of the object for emphasis (for more on fronting, see **But YHWH—he . . . And the ship—it** in 1:4).

3:8 **that they carry out** — Literally, "that [is] in their palms." The phrase functions as an idiom for "what they do." We try to convey that sense using a term that also has tactile connotations: "to carry." Note that the grammatical number shifts in the last phrases of this verse from distributive and singular subjects ("each" and "his") to a plural (their). Tribble noted that "Translations often miss or dismiss this nuance," which is used to "fix responsibility

individually and corporately.” NASB, ESV, and NKJV, for instance, end the verse with “in *his* hands.” By rendering the phrase here with “they,” we follow the shift in number closely. Stuart (WBC) suggested that the final phrase of the verse was “connoting regularity or frequency” and rendered it “frequently.” ISV preferred “tendency.” Although Stuart is certainly correct about these terms referring to habitual behavior, his translation destroys the merism between the actions of one’s *feet* and the actions of one’s *hands*: “‘Their evil ways’ refers to paths that are traveled by the feet; the king also asks that the people turn away from the ‘violence’ that their hands do” (Limburg, OTL). In other words, the idiom is used to help describe the *totality* of one’s actions, not just the frequency or tendency of them.

3:9 **Who knows? He may turn aside [and] relent** — As accented by the Masoretes, this verse reads “Who knows if he will turn aside, if he will relent.” In English, however, “who knows” is often a standalone statement. Therefore, we shift the disjunctive accent from **יָשׁוּב** to **יִרְדֵּעַ**. Additionally, we interpret **יָשׁוּב וְנָחַם** as a unified phrase. Therefore, we shift the conjunctive accent from **יִרְדֵּעַ** to **יָשׁוּב** and alter it from *munach* to *mer’ka*, resulting in “turn aside [and] relent.” Most English translations treat the text similarly. Note, however, that **וְנָחַם** is an inverted perfect. The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. Since we interpret the second verb as sequential, we insert a conjunction. Note also that the verb **שׁוּב** occurs twice in the Hebrew. **וְ**, however, reflects only one instance (in the second half of the verse). Some translations follow **וְ**. Others render the two verbs differently. NRSV, for example, rendered the first **שׁוּב** as “relent” and the second as “turn.” NASB rendered the first as “turn” and the second as “withdraw.” We try to use the same rendering when the same verb is used unless the sense is different. Typically, **שׁוּב** means “to turn back” or “return.” In the previous verse, it meant “to turn away” from doing something. The idea is that the people would *stop* doing the wicked things they were already doing. In the final verses of this chapter, it has another sense: “to turn aside” from doing something. The idea is that God may *deviate* from a future action. Some translators render **נָחַם** as “to repent” (as in KJV) or “forgive” (as in NAB). Although one may repent for wanting to do something, the term is more often used to speak of things that have already been done. Therefore, we avoid that rendering here. More typical verbs for “forgive” are **סָלַח** or **נָשָׂא**. Since neither of those appear in Yonah, we avoid that rendering as well. Some translations of **נָחַם** reflect a more emotional sense like “be sorry” (Fox), “grieve” (Rotherham), “pity” (Fenton), or “regret” (Redelinghuys in “Negotiating an Eco-conscious Translation”). **עַל** supports that nuance: “we will be pitied before the Lord” (Cathcart and Gordon). Although such emotional meanings are valid (the sense may also be positive: “to console” or “comfort”), we believe that the verb here means “to relent.” That sense is usually communicated by **נָחַם + עַל**. In Exod 32:12, for instance, the people plead with God by saying **שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ וְהִנָּחֵם עַל־הָרָעָה** (Turn aside from your fuming rage and relent from this wickedness). The same expression appears in Yon 3:9: **יִנָּחֵם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־הָרָעָה** (the One God relented from the wickedness). It occurs again in Yon 4:2: **נָחַם עַל־הָרָעָה** (one who relents from that which is wicked). In this verse, therefore, we believe that the preposition has been elided. Some translations render **נָחַם** as “to change one’s mind.” That rendering is based on **נָחַם**, which uses the verb μετανοέω—a combination of μετα

(a prefix indicating change) and νοέω (“to perceive,” from νοῦς, meaning “mind”). Therefore, the Greek means “to change mind/perspective.” There is nothing in this text, however, that indicates YHWH changed his mind about how he was going to act. The word of prophecy uttered by Yonah allowed for either a good or a bad outcome. If the people of Nineveh had not turned away from their wickedness, there is every reason to believe that YHWH would have brought “wickedness” upon them. If the people did turn away from their wickedness, we have every reason to believe that YHWH would not allow wickedness to occur (as Yonah says in 4:2). In either situation, YHWH would have followed through faithfully with this message. Therefore, we regard the rendering “change of mind” as a woefully bad reading of the text.

3:10 **how** — Or “that.” כִּי is a complementizer for the verb that comes before it (to see *that/how*) just as כִּי was a complementizer for the verb that came before it in 1:2 (to call out *that*). That use of כִּי is common in scripture—especially when the preposition follows sensory verbs (like seeing, hearing, or saying) or verbs referring to mental processes (like thinking, knowing, or remembering). Therefore, כִּי should not be interpreted in this instance as causal (because/for).

acts . . . enacting . . . act — This verse features a noun in the first half (מַעֲשֵׂה), an infinitive in the second (עֲשׂוֹת), and a finite verb at the very end (עָשָׂה) that all share the same root and, therefore, form a nice word-play: the people stopped their wicked *acts*, so God decided not to *act* against them with the wicked *act* of which he had spoken. By using words with the same root three times, the composer or scribal artisan symbolically communicated to the reader or hearer that the acts of both the Ninevites and YHWH are complete (see section A3). The use of root-play at the end of the scene also parallels the use of root-play at the start of the scene, forming a framework within which the drama between Yonah and Nineveh take place (this technique coincides with the use of sound-play at the start and end of the psalm in ch. 2, which makes it likely that the composer of the psalm and the composer of ch. 3 are the same). Tribble was right to say, “Repeated vocabulary builds emphasis, contrast, and coherence.” To capture that emphasis, contrast, and coherence, we mimic the word-play by using the same basic rendering: “act” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB and see **call out . . . the [very] call-out** in 3:2 for the use of root-play at the start of this scene). The only other English translations we could find that tried to repeat the same term in all three instances were those of Ewald and Orelli. Note that there is no object for the final verb. In contradistinction, therefore, to virtually all English translations, we follow the Hebrew closely by not inserting one.

4:1 **But that was wicked** — More idiomatically, “But that was wrong.” Three issues emerge here: the subject of וַיֵּרָע, its meaning, and how it relates to the larger structure. Some translations favor Yonah as the subject (CEV, HCSB, GW, etc.). However, Davies pointed out that “The subject of the verb . . . cannot be Jonah himself, because he is introduced into the sentence in a different way (*’el yônâ*), and he has not been mentioned since 3:4” (“The Uses of *R*” Qal and the Meaning of Jonah 4:1”). Therefore, the subject is probably impersonal: “It is quite common for *R*” Qal to be used without an explicit subject . . . in such cases the subject is generally a pronoun ‘it.’” That subject could be God’s act of relenting, Nineveh’s acts of repentance, Yonah’s mission, or something else. Since the subject is not specified by the text, it should be left unspecified in the translation. As for the meaning of the verb, most translations render it

here as “to be displeased.” That rendering is supported by the versions. **6**, for example, represented it with λυπεω (to be grieved/distressed/sorrowful). **9** rendered it *afflictus* (afflicted/crushed/thrown down). However, the verb רעע does not specify what *emotion* Yonah is feeling. Rather, it indicates a *negative assessment*. Something like “it seemed bad” (Goldingay), “it seemed wrong” (Orelli, notes only), or “it/this/the thing was evil” (Trible, Fox, Alter, etc.) is closer to the sense. Since the repetition of words from the same root is characteristic of the text, whatever rendering is used here should repeat the kind of rendering used elsewhere. In other words, we agree with Alter: “The repetition of the term *ra’ah*, ‘evil,’ is important for the writer’s purpose” (see **to be wicked** in section A3). Note that ירע is an inverted imperfect. The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. Inverted verbs can, however, convey different senses. In this case, we believe that it brings a contrastive sense to the new scene. For that reason, we insert “but.” Numerous translations do likewise.

that it fumed in him — As with the previous verb, חרה (to burn/fume/inflame) is probably impersonal (see IBHS §22.7b). Since, however, the difference between “it fumed in him” and “he fumed about it” is negligible, Yonah could be made the subject of the verb without distorting the meaning. Most translators interpret the fuming as anger. That interpretation was established early on. Note for example, Wycliffe² (was wroth), Bishops’ (was angry [within himself]), and KJV (was very angry). However, חרה can also refer to emotions like distress or despair. In other words, Yonah may not be “angry”; he could be “dejected” (Sasson), “grieved” (NJPST), “despairing,” or “depressed.” In fact, as Bolin pointed out, “The only ancient version to read Jonah’s reaction as anger is Jerome’s Vulgate.” **6** rendered חרה as συγχεω (to be confused/confounded). **7** used תקן, “to upset,” “have a severe effect on,” or “seize” (CAL). We believe that Bolin is right, therefore, that the popularity of the “anger” interpretation among translators “owes more to Julius Wellhausen and the Law-Gospel bias of Christian exegetes than to historical study.” As with the previous verb, it is best to not over-interpret. Since the repetition of words from the same root is characteristic of the text, each instantiation should be rendered the same basic way. Since we rendered חרון in 3:9 as “fuming,” we render the verb here as “to fume.” Translators that do likewise include Wilt, Trible, and Fox. Note that יחר is an inverted imperfect. The bonded *waw* is not a conjunction; it inverts the aspect or tense of the verb. Inverted verbs can, however, convey different senses. Most translators believe that it has a coordinative sense here. Therefore, they insert “and.” We think, however, that it indicates result or consequence (so that/with the result that). Therefore, we insert “that.”

4:2 **This is exactly** — A question is presented at this point using an interrogative *heh* and the negative particle לא (literally, “is this not?” or “wasn’t this?”). But is it a genuine question or does it have a rhetorical function? Hebrew interrogatives sometimes function as statements of affirmation (it is so) or assurance (surely/of truth/rightly). For multiple examples, see GKC §150e. Since we have no reason to believe that Yonah is asking God if he knows what Yonah thought or said, we believe that this is an example of a rhetorical statement (this is exactly/precisely). Sasson (AYB) and Stuart (WBC) agreed.

on my [own] soil — Most translations render this as “in my (own) country.” That rendering, however, furthers the idea that Yonah was a nationalistic prophet. Such interpretations are usually tied to anti-Semitic views about the nature of Judaism (that it was a religion corrupted

by narrow-minded exclusivity), of which Yonah is a representative. In his commentary on the first couple verses of the chapter, for example, Henderson noted a “strong tincture of national prejudice.” There is nothing, however, either in 2 Kings or in this text, that identifies the historical prophet or the parabolic anti-prophet as a “nationalist.” Such portrayals are indicative of the prejudices of scholars and interpreters rather than the facts “on the ground.” In order to show that Yonah’s focus is less about nationalism and more about chronology (Yonah thought this before he fled “from YHWH’s presence”), we avoid references to “my country.” Note also that a different word is used here than in 1:8 to describe Yonah’s “land.” Although such terms are often interchangeable, it is possible that the shift in terminology actually reflects a shift in nuance. To reflect that shift, we render this phrase “on my [own] soil.”

counteracted — Or “countered.” The verb קדם has several nuances: “to precede” (in time or space), “to act contrary to,” and “to confront/advance toward/welcome.” In this verse, most translations focus on the first nuance. Examples include NJB (I first tried), NRSV (at the beginning), KJV (before), NIV (I was so quick), and ESV (I made haste). A few try to capture the second nuance. Examples include NASB (in order to forestall), Fox (I wanted to forestall), and NET (I tried to prevent). However, the composer or scribal artisan didn’t need to use this verb at all. As Sasson noted, “The narrator could easily have had Jonah tell God, *’*al-ken barahtî taršîšā*” (that is why I escaped toward Tarshish). It seems evident that the reason for using the verb here is to create a clever word-play with terms from the same root that are used elsewhere: מִקֵּדָם (eastward) in 4:5 and רוּחַ קָדִים (east wind) in 4:8. Halpern and Friedman noted that as well: “Chapter 4 is oriented about the root *qdm*: Jonah ‘fled preemptively’ . . . ; he seats himself east . . . ; and, for his carping, he suffers the heat of a blistering easterly wind.” To mimic that word-play, we render the three terms as “to counteract,” to be “counter” to, and a “counter” wind (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

I knew for true about you: — Or “I knew for sure that you [are].” Some translations ignore the initial כִּי in the phrase כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי (HCSB, NIV, NAB, etc.). Those that represent it almost always interpret it as causal (because/for/since). We believe that the particle adds an emphatic function to the verb. We are not alone in thinking that way. Tribble, for instance, said, “The sequence *kî yāda’î kî* produces rhythmic emphasis” and serves a “deictic function in calling attention to climactic utterances; e.g., Gen 22:12b; Exod 18:11; 1 Kings 17:24.” Obviously, it is the striking sound-play (thrice-fold repetition of long-i at the end of successive words) that results in the phrase’s rhythmic emphasis. But what makes this phrase deictic? As Muilenburg noted (“The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כִּי in the Old Testament”), the particle כִּי has a “demonstrative character,” meaning that it is “designed to give emphasis, to give force to a statement,” but it is also “deictic” because it signals to a reader or hearer that something significant is about to be stated. Since the second כִּי is simply a complementizer for the verb יָדַע (to know *that*), it must be the initial כִּי that gives the phrase its deictic quality. Therefore, כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי means something like “I knew for sure” or “I knew all along.” Wilt (without a doubt) also captured the sense well. In order to mimic the sound-play, we change “sure” to “true” and then use the “you” that follows כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי to replicate the threefold repetition of word-final sounds: knew, true, you (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). By creating an emphatic,

deictic phrase like this, the composer or scribal artisan furthers the rhetorical force of Yonah's statement, which first began with הָלֹא (see **This is exactly** above).

merciful and mothering — The terms חֲנוּן and רַחוּם form a word-pair that is repeated many times in the HB. Due to their similar length, the occurrence of similar sounds in each word, and their use in an early creedal statement (Exod 34:6-7), the words became cemented in popular usage solely as a description of the Israelite deity. Of particular interest is רַחוּם, which shares its root with רֶחֶם, meaning “womb,” and, therefore, functions as a maternal metaphor. Limburg (OTL) said it “has something of the sense of ‘motherly love.’” Tribble devoted numerous pages to this and related terms in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. She showed how words from רֶחֶם are used in the HB to invest narrative and poetic texts with feminine imagery and how רַחוּם, in particular, depicts God in maternal terms as a lover and creator. Wolff agreed: “רַחוּם means the kindly, solicitous providence, that protects and sustains endangered life like a mother.” In order to capture that sense, we render the word as “mothering.” Smith used “tender.” Miles (“Laughing at the Bible”) preferred “tender-hearted.” As noted above, חֲנוּן and רַחוּם continued to be used together due to their shared length and sounds. In order to mimic that sound-play, we render the two as “merciful” and “mothering,” which features a repetition of [m] and [r] (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Note that the word-order is חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם. Therefore, this should be rendered “merciful and mothering,” not “mothering and merciful.” The opposite word-order occurs in Exod 34:6, Ps 86:15, and Ps 103:8.

long-suffering — אַרְךְ אַפִּים is typically translated “slow to anger.” The phrase literally means “long/extended of nostrils.” “Nostrils” (the dual form of אֵף) is a metonym that refers to the air passing through the nostrils. Therefore, the term actually refers to “deepness of inhaling” or “long of breath.” But what does *that* mean? Like one who “takes long breaths,” it means that YHWH is “long-suffering” and/or “imperturbable” (neither impulsive nor temperamental). Someone with that quality would certainly be “slow to anger,” but they would also be “slow to irritation,” “slow to distress,” “slow to offense,” “slow to worry,” or “slow to judgment.” There is simply no reason to limit the description to “anger.” The same expression occurs in Prov 16:32: טוֹב אַרְךְ אַפִּים מִגִּבּוֹר וּמִשָּׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מִלִּכְד עִיר (Better [is] forbearance than a warrior or mastering one's impulse than capturing a city). While controlling one's anger would certainly qualify as “mastering one's impulse” or learning “forbearance,” that emotion is neither a necessary nor even a principal aspect of the statement. The inability of interpreters to conceive of YHWH's אֵף (or אַפִּים) as indicating anything other than anger is far more reflective of their prejudices than the meaning of the text.

4:3 **breath** — Most translations render נֶפֶשׁ as “life.” It certainly has that sense (see 1:14). In this case, however, the composer or scribal artisan clearly chose חַיִּים as a reference to “life” (חַיִּים, not נֶפֶשׁ, is contrasted with “death”). Therefore, we render נֶפֶשׁ with one of its other primary nuances: “breath.” For נֶפֶשׁ as a reference to one's “neck/throat,” see 2:6. For the reason why we don't render it “soul,” see the notes in 2:8.

4:4 **Is it enough [that] it fumes in you?** — Or “Isn’t it better [that] it fumes in you?” One of the biggest interpretive cruxes in this chapter is YHWH’s question **לֹךְ הֵיטֵב חָרָה**. How one interprets that question relates to how one understands the function of **הֵיטֵב** (alternately, **הֵיטִיב**), an infinitive absolute of **יָטַב** in the Hiphil stem. Yoo-ki Kim (“The Function of **הֵיטֵב** in Jonah 4 and Its Translation”) showed that **הֵיטֵב** is usually interpreted here in one of three ways: as a subject of the verb **חָרָה**, as the predicate of the sentence, and as an adverb that specifies the degree or extent of the action. YLT (Is doing good displeasing to thee?) is one of the only examples where **הֵיטֵב** is interpreted as the subject of **חָרָה**. In that case, “Yahweh is asking if his benevolent act of sparing Nineveh disturbs the prophet” (Kim). Since, however, there is no textual precedent for **הֵיטֵב** functioning as the subject of another verb, that interpretation should be rejected (for examples where it modifies a finite verb of the same root, see Gen 32:13 and Jer 7:5). Examples of **הֵיטֵב** as a predicate include KJV (Doest thou well to be angry?), NRSV (Is it right for you to be angry?), and NASB (Do you have good reason to be angry?). Included in that group are interpretations of **הֵיטֵב** as an adverb, but not of degree or extent, because “Are you rightly angry?” and “Are you right to be angry?” are virtually identical expressions (both question the appropriateness of Yonah’s attitude). Those interpretations are supported by **ב** (*bene*), **α’** and **θ’** (*καλως*), and **σ’** (*δικαιως*). Examples of **הֵיטֵב** as an adverb of degree or extent include JPS (Art thou greatly angry?), NJPST (are you so deeply grieved?), Smith (Art thou very angry?), and Alter (Are you good and angry?). In that case, “Yahweh is not indifferent to Jonah’s emotions [or] ruthlessly imposing his own agenda on his servant. On the contrary, Yahweh understands Jonah’s feelings and cares about his distress” (Kim). That interpretation is supported by **σ** (*σφοδρα*) and **ט** (*לחורא*). Although Joüon preferred that interpretation, he thought that the interrogative *heh* functioned as an exclamative: “You are really angry!” (JM §161b). We know that this is a question, however, because v. 9 repeats it and it must be a question there. As noted in GKC §113k, when **הֵיטֵב** is used as an adverb of degree or extent, it actually means something like “thoroughly” or “sufficiently.” 2 Kings 11:18, for example, says “They demolished his alters and his figurines, they shattered completely (**הֵיטֵב**). Deuteronomy 19:18 says “the Judges must investigate [the matter] thoroughly (**הֵיטֵב**). See also Deut 9:21; 13:15; 17:4; 27:8. In all those places, **הֵיטֵב** is grammaticalized so that it no longer carries the sense of being “good,” “well,” or “right”—it simply indicates the degree or extent of the action (for more on grammaticalization, see **YHWH’s oracle came** in 1:1). If that is the case here, YHWH’s question would be whether Yonah fumed “utterly” (Sasson, AYB), “thoroughly,” or “sufficiently.” There is also a fourth option not considered by interpreters: the infinitive absolute could function as a finite verb (as in Jer 10:5) with **לֹךְ חָרָה** as a headless relative clause that modifies **הֵיטֵב**: “Is it enough [that] it fumes in you?” (not to be confused with “Is the fuming in you enough?”, which would be another instance of **הֵיטֵב** as a predicate). Translators and commentators presume that YHWH’s question has to do with Yonah’s fuming. They are then puzzled when Yonah doesn’t answer (or answers with silence). Our proposal is that YHWH’s question is in response

to Yonah's request (Please take my breath from me). Yonah tried to die without fulfilling his prophetic duty and found that YHWH would not allow it. Now that he has fulfilled his duty, he seems to think that things can be different. But YHWH answers by saying, "Isn't it better if you live to fume about it?" YHWH is not telling Yonah he is wrong for being distressed over Nineveh. Neither is YHWH trying to understand the degree or extent of Yonah's distress. Instead, YHWH is challenging Yonah's death wish. Yonah doesn't respond after that because there is nothing left to say; YHWH is no more willing to take Yonah's life after he obeyed than after he disobeyed. Because YHWH doesn't address Yonah's thoughts about Nineveh at this point in the narrative, the audience is left hanging. To remedy that, the narrative goes on to provide an object lesson in which that issue may be addressed as well. Those who interpret this verse as a sincere question about the extent of Yonah's distress end up with two beings who speak completely past each other (the deity doesn't address Yonah's request and the prophet doesn't address the deity's question).

4:5 **counter** — More literally, "eastward." But the same term also means "opposite" or "in front of." Therefore, Smith rendered it "before." Note that **מִקְדָּם** forms a clever word-play with **קִדְמָתִי** in 4:2 and **רוּחַ קְדִימִים** in 4:8. To mimic that word-play, we render the three terms "to counteract," to be "counter" to, and a "counter" wind (see **counteracted** in 4:2 for more on this word-play and see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

shelter — More literally, "shade" or "shadow." **צֶל**, however, forms a clever word-play with **צֶלַח** and **הַצִּיל** in 4:6. To mimic that word-play, we render the terms "shelter" and "to shelter" (see **a shelter . . . to bring him shelter** in 4:6 for more on this word-play and see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

what would appear — Or "what would happen/take place/transpire." Some translators interpret the *yiqtol* as an archaic preterit. Limburg (OTL), for example, rendered this "what happened" and Orelli rendered it "what became." Since *yiqtol* preterits tend to show up only in poetry (see "swelled" in 2:4, 6), we treat the verb as a modal imperfect. In order to create a sense of correspondence and contrast between what Yonah wants to happen (to Nineveh) and what YHWH makes happen (to Yonah), the composer or scribal artisan used words from the same root four times in the final section of Yonah (**יְהִי**, **לְהִיּוֹת**, **וְיִהְיֶה**, and **הָיָה**, respectively), each time in a different conjugation (imperfect, infinitive, inverted imperfect, and perfect, respectively). To capture those correspondences and contrasts, we use the same underlying English word in every case: "appear."

4:6 ***expeliona* [bush]** — The **קִיקְיֹן** appears only in Yonah. Scholars and commentators often like to connect the name "*Qiqayon*" with other plant names in the ancient world. It is sometimes identified, for example, with a plant called *kukkānītu* in Akkadian. Any correspondence between the two, however, is entirely conjectural (and our understanding of the *kukkānītu* entirely uncertain). Those who think the *Qiqayon* is the *Ricinus communis* or castor oil plant (see, for example, NJB, Fox, and NJPST) may say that the name derives from Egyptian, where it was known as the "kiki" plant. As noted, however, by Burton (*Diodorus Siculus. Book 1: A Commentary*), the ancient Egyptian name for the castor oil plant was *dgm* and later *tkm*,

not “kiki.” So that identification is unlikely. **6** rendered *Qiqayon* into the similar-sounding *κολοκυνθα* (colocynth), which includes many types of Mediterranean plants that bear gourds, cucumbers, or melon-like fruit. Janick and Paris (“Jonah and the ‘Gourd’ at Nineveh”) noted that “The translation of the Hebrew Bible into Latin was originally by way of the Septuagint. The Greek *kolokynthi* was translated with the similar-sounding *cucurbita* (gourd).” In other words, from the Old Latin rendering of the Greek came “gourd,” which has since been followed by many English translations. α' and θ' transliterated the Hebrew: *κικεωνα*. Some English translations do likewise (Goldingay, Craig, SET, etc.). Jerome translated *Qiqayon* as *hedera* (ivy), which agrees with the rendering of σ' (*κισσος*) and was followed by Wycliffe². Since the attempt to identify Yonah’s plant has proved elusive, most translators now render it as “bush,” “plant,” or “vine.” The desire to identify the קִיקַיִן with a real-life plant ultimately arises out of a mistaken notion of the text. One is not meant to identify the type of plant or bush any more than one is meant to identify the type of fish that swallowed Yonah (even though many have tried to do that as well). This is a story that uses impossible circumstances, imaginary plants and animals, and caricatured people to challenge the perspectives of its listeners/readers with a parabolic message. The *Qiqayon* doesn’t just grow up faster than other plants; it grows up *overnight* (v. 11). The fish doesn’t just swallow a man whole without harming him, it takes him into the realm of the dead and back. As Coote said, “The story of Jonah is an uninterrupted chain of absurdities, one after another, from beginning to end.” What the interpreter has to figure out, therefore, is not what real-life plant is represented by the *Qiqayon*, but why the composer or scribal artisan said that a *Qiqayon* grew up over Yonah. In other words, what literary point does a *Qiqayon* serve? We believe that Halpern and Friedman were correct: “It has cropped up here because of its phonetic resemblance to the verb *qy* ‘vomit.’ In fact, the name . . . resembles nothing so much as the sounds of the words, ‘the vomiting of Jonah.’” Strawn agreed: “The name of the plant Yhwh uses to show Jonah the nature of divine mercy . . . evokes the very vomiting that got him to Nineveh in the first place.” Sherwood took those observations even further: “The *qiqayon* plant . . . can weave its tendrils back to the verb קיא . . . in Jonah 2 . . . and can also resonate with the phrase ‘innocent blood.’” In other words, *this is a pun!* The pun takes the form of “a common syntactical construction in Hebrew that is typically used for emphasis—namely, the use of the infinitive absolute of a particular verb followed by a finite form of the same verb. The last item in the sequence would presumably be the subject of the verb or . . . the object . . . if the verb is understood impersonally” (Strawn). When we separate קִיקַיִן into its component parts (קִי-קַיִן), we see that it is composed of an infinitive absolute קיא (vomiting), a third-person perfect קא (he/it vomited) and Yonah’s name יוֹנָה—all with word-final gutturals elided. Strawn noted that “In each case of abbreviation, the dropped consonant is either *aleph* or *he*, . . . each of which was used as a vowel letter and often dropped in final position in later periods.” Therefore, קִיקַיִן spells out either “Yonah-was-verily-vomited” (if Yonah is the subject) or “that-which-verily-vomited-Yonah” (if Yonah is the object and the subject is impersonal). To represent both the phrase and its abbreviation in English would look like “veryvomityon.” Since no sense can be made of that, we created a *faux* Latin name that phonetically sounds like “expel” + “Yonah”: *expeliona*. By using “expel,” we also mimic the fantastic word-play woven across chapters in the name of this plant/bush and in the phrases “*expelled* blood” in 1:14 and “so that it *expelled*” in 2:11 (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking

word-play or sound-play in the HB). THF is one of the only English translations that recreates this pun (and does so exactly the same way the Hebrew does it). The only other we found was in *Amos Among the Prophets*: “a vomit-plant.” For other puns in Yonah, see 1:8 and 3:7-8. For our use of italics, see section A3.

to grow — Two things need to be noted about **וַיַּעַל**. First, **עלה** means “to go up/ascend/rise.” When used with plants, it also means “to grow.” The composer or scribal artisan, however, chose to use the same term in the next verse to describe the rising of dawn. By using the same verb in both places, correspondences and contrasts are created between the verses. Halpern and Friedman explained it this way: “The gourd goes up over Jonah . . . and dies in turn at the ‘going up’ of the dawn.” Rendering the verb differently would darken those correspondences and contrasts. Therefore, whatever wording is used in this verse should be repeated in the next. Second, some translations treat the verb as a Hiphil (causative). Examples include NRSV (made it come up) and NET (caused it to grow up). However, as Sasson (AYB) noted, “It cannot be correct to treat the verbal form as an H stem. . . . Were God the subject . . . , *qîqāyôn* or its equivalent would need to be inserted in it: *wayya’al (*’et*)-*haqqîqāyôn mē’al yônâ*.” Furthermore, all the versions interpret the plant as the subject. Therefore, we stick with the Qal.

a shelter . . . to bring him shelter — Or “shade . . . to rescue him.” Here we find a clever word-play with the words **צל** and **הציל**. The first refers to “shade” or “shadow.” The second is vocalized by the Masoretes as a Hiphil infinitive construct of the verb **נצל** (to rescue/deliver). If understood that way, the text would be saying that YHWH appointed the bush to give Yonah “shade” and “to rescue” him. But, as noted by Davies, “There is the textual problem, arising from the unparalleled use of *l* with an object of *hiššil*.” If we presume that the *lamed* prefixed to Yonah’s name is not an error of dittography, such a construction is quite unusual (objects of **נצל** don’t take a *lamed* in the HB). **ס**, however, interpreted the verb as a Hiphil infinitive construct of **צלל** (to shade): **αααααααααα** (to shelter/overshadow him). **Σ** read it that way as well; it used **גנן**, meaning “to protect/shelter” (CAL). Instead of **הציל**, 4QXII^e shows **הצל**. As noted in the critical apparatus of *BHQ*, “While the reading of 4QXII^e could be regarded as a merely orthographic variant . . . , it is more natural to read it as derived from **צלל**.” Whatever the first form of the text may have been, it is clear that the verb was specifically chosen to play off of **צל** (shade/shadow) both in this and the previous verses. Therefore, whatever rendering is used should reflect that word-play. Mathews explained it this way: “More care can be taken in translation to emulate the recurrence of consonants and vowels in Hebrew words that are associated, such as the interplay between *šēl* (**צל**, shade) and *nāṣal* (**נצל**, to deliver) in Jonah 4:6.” Craig and Ewald did that by rendering **צל** as “shade” and **הציל** as “to shade.” We prefer “shelter” and “to shelter” (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

above his head . . . what to him was wicked — We interpret **רעתו** (his wickedness) not as evil actions or attitudes, but something that would be considered bad (like being oppressed or harmed by the heat). Davies understood it similarly: “There can be no doubt that *mērā’ātô* refers to the discomfort caused by direct exposure to the sun.” Therefore, we render **רעתו** as

“what was wicked to him.” As noted by Tribble, however, the oral composer or scribal artisan created a parallel between the infinitive clauses by terminating each one with a clever end-rhyme: “The vowel sound ‘o’ binds these clauses through rhyme artfully placed at the end of each: to-be a-shade upon his-head (*rōšô*), to-deliver to-him (*lô*) from-his-evil (*mērā’ātô*).” Since end-rhymes are quite rare in Hebrew, they stand out in these clauses. Any attempt to follow the Hebrew closely must try to replicate them. Fortunately, “head” and “wicked” share the same sound at the end. Therefore, we shift the phrase “what was wicked to him” to “what to him was wicked” and, thereby, terminate both clauses the same way: “head . . . wicked.” For more examples of end-rhyme in Yonah, see 1:9, 2:3, and 2:10.

4:7 **a grub at the growing** — Note how the phrase **תולעת בעלות** rings with assonance (each word repeats the same consonants and vowels except for *bet*). We attempt to mimic that with “a grub at the growing,” which has a repetition of g and r (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB). Instead of *bet*, the infinitive in 4QXII^e has a prefixed *kaf*. Since MurXII supports **מל**^L and **מל**^{BP}, we follow the Masoretic tradition and view the *kaf* as an accidental *bet-kaf* interchange. For **עלה** as “to grow,” see 4:6.

the next day’s dawn — Note how the phrase **השחר למחרת** rings with assonance (both words repeat the consonants *het* and *resh*). The phrase also repeats the consonants that appear in the verb **חרה** (to fume/burn/inflame). Since we are unable to mimic the sound-plays both within this phrase and between this phrase and **חרה**, we chose to mimic the one in this phrase alone. “Next day’s dawn” contains a close repetition of d and a (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

struck — Unlike 2:1 and 4:6, in which **מנה** (to appoint) is followed by an infinitive, this verse follows **מנה** with an inverted imperfect. The change in verbal form is important because “When God commissions operations that would hurt Jonah (at 4:7 and 8) rather than activities helpful to him (at 2:1 and 4:6), God no longer *directly* moves them into action” (Sasson, AYB). Tribble agreed: “It shields the deity from directly perpetrating death.” Therefore, if one wanted to stick closely to the text, translations like NJB (God ordained that a worm should attack), Stuart, WBC (God designated a worm to attack), and AAT (Then God ordered a worm . . . to smite the gourd) should be avoided. The second thing to note is that the composer or scribal artisan used the same term in the next verse to describe what the sun does to Yonah. By using the same verb in both places, correspondences and contrasts are created between the verses. Most translations, however, render **נכה** as “to attack” in this verse and “to beat” in the next one. Rendering the verb differently obscures those correspondences and contrasts and ignores the text’s purposeful construction. Whatever wording is used in this verse should be repeated in the next. Since we render the verb here as “to strike,” we do so again in v. 8.

so that it was desiccated as the rising sun appeared. — The Masoretes divided the verse this way: “so it was desiccated. This happened as the sun was rising.” We, however, perceive several structural parallelisms at play. First, in the larger narrative, there are three repetitions of the phrase “Divinity appointed X”:

—4:6: **וימן יהוה-אלהים קיקין** (the God YHWH then appointed an **expeliona**)

—4:7: **וימן האלהים תולעת** (the One God then appointed a grub)

—4:8: **וימן אלהים רוח קדים חרישית** (Elohim then appointed a blistering *counterwind*)

All three begin new “events” that change Yonah’s situation. Two in particular (the grub and the bush) begin new verses. It makes sense, therefore, that the third event (the blistering counterwind), which results in a final, deleterious effect on Yonah (losing all shelter and being struck by the heat so intensely that he faints or collapses), should also begin a new verse. Second, the phrases **בעלות השחר למחרת** (at the going up of the sun on the next day) and **ויהי כזרח השמש** (as the rising sun appeared) communicate the same information in the same way: an infinitive construct with prefixed preposition describing the manifestation of daylight. Both make use of words indicating time: the first uses a term that speaks of the future (the next day), the second uses a verb that indicates a completed present (it took place). If one discounted the definite direct object marker or joined it with the object as indicated by the *maqgef*, both phrases would also contain the same number of words (six). The only real difference is that the One God is the actor in first part, whereas the grub is the actor in the second. It makes sense, therefore, to interpret the two phrases as parallel:

וימן האלהים תולעת בעלות השחר למחרת

The One God appointed a grub at the growing of next day’s dawn

ותך את־הקיקיון ויבש ויהי כזרח השמש

It struck the *expeliona* so that it was desiccated as the rising sun appeared.

One advantage of that division is that it explains why the bush “was desiccated” as opposed to simply dying (because the sun appeared and struck it in the same way the sun would strike Yonah). In other words, the grub didn’t cause the plant to become desiccated, but cut it off from a source of water and left it vulnerable. Therefore, we move the *soph pasuq* from **ויבש** to **השמש** and begin the next sentence with **וימן**. Some may object that, since **ויהי** is used more often to introduce new paragraphs or scenes, it should be retained at the start of v. 8. Tucker, for example, said, “The verb functions as a transition marker, indicating a new scene or episode.” That is certainly the case in 1:1 and 3:1 (parallel statements). In 1:4 and 2:1, however, **ויהי** occurs in the middle of a sentence, which shows that the composer didn’t feel bound to begin new scenes, episodes, or sentences with **ויהי** (whereas all other instances of **וימן** are at the start of a new sentence).

4:8 For our redivision of this verse, see the previous note.

blistering — **חרישית** is unique to Yonah. As such, its precise nuance is difficult to determine.

Some take it from **חַרַשׁ**, meaning “to plow/furrow/engrave,” and give it a meaning like “cutting” (Fox, Craig, and YLT) or “slashing” (Alter). That meaning was proposed by Rab Judah in *b. Gittin* 31b: “What is the meaning of harishith? — Rab Judah said: When it blows it makes furrows in the sea” (Soncino). Others take it from **חִרְשׁ**, meaning “to be silent,” and give it a meaning like “silencing” or “deafening.” That meaning was proposed by Rabbah in *b. Gittin* 31b: “No, said Rabbah; [what it means is that] when it blows it stills all other winds” (Soncino). That interpretation is supported by **שְׁתִּיק**, which represented **חרישית** with **חִרְשׁ**, meaning “silent” (CAL). A third option is to connect it with **חֶרֶשׁ**, which refers to pottery (clay that has been fired/heated in a kiln). Therefore, the word could refer to the process of “baking,” “scorching,” or being “heated.” Related to that is a fourth option: **חרישית** represents **חרישית** (a by-form of **חריסית**), derived from **חָרַס** (a word for “sun” in Job 9:7 and Judg 14:18 and

possibly a reference to “blisters” caused by the sun in Deut 28:27). If that were the case, we would have three different references to the sun (שחר, שמש, and חרס) in the second half of this chapter, which would fit nicely into the characteristic use of numerical symbolism in the rest of the text (see section A3). The third and fourth options make better sense in the context of Yonah and find support from ש’s use of στυγαιω (burning/blazing). Our rendering, like most translations, reflects the last two options. Halpern and Friedman rendered the term the same way.

counterwind — More literally, “east wind.” The term רוח קרים, however, forms a clever word-play with קרמתי in 4:2 and מקרם in 4:5. To mimic that word-play, we render the three terms “to counteract,” to be “counter” to, and a “counter” wind (see *counteracted* in 4:2 for more on this word-play and see *reckoned a wrecking* in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

4:9 **Yes** — Literally, “It is enough [that] it fumes in me.” Since the typical way to answer “yes” to a question in BH is to restate the words of that question positively, we render the type of communication those words represent in the way that makes the most sense in English. Curiously, many translations repeat the entire content of the answer and add “yes” as well.

Till death [at least] — Translators read עד-מות in two different ways: literally (until death) or as a superlative (enough to die). If the statement is interpreted as a superlative, it is the only instance of such a superlative in the HB. The closest equivalent would come from the NT (Mark 14:34): Περίλυτός ἐστίν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου (my life is distressed to the point of death). While עד-מות could have taken on a superlative status in New Testament times, we are skeptical that it was used that way in Yonah. Instead, we think Bolin was right: “The literal reading ought perhaps to be favored, given the fact that Jonah twice longs for death in ch. 4.” If an intensifying statement were needed, the composer or scribal artisan could have used עד-מאד (very much). עד-מאד and עד-מות are quite similar. It is not hard to imagine that a text with עד-מאד was corrupted to עד-מות. If so, however, we have no evidence of it. Until new evidence shows otherwise, we treat עד-מות as original. In this case, therefore, it seems that Yonah is content to “fume” until he expires/dies.

4:10 **distressed** — Much of our understanding of the final verse of Yonah hinges on our interpretation of חוס both in this verse and the next. An analysis of חוס throughout the HB reveals four different syntactic usages: חוס may be used alone, with על as a helping particle, with “eye” (עין) as its subject, or with both על and עין. The verb also has four semantic nuances. Due to the frequent association between חוס and the “eye,” it is evident that חוס relates to a physiological condition. HALOT and LVT suggest that it refers to the “flowing” or “pouring” of one’s eye. Its basic sense, therefore, would be “to tear up.” Since the eye is understood as the origin of the tearing, the word “eye” may be elided without losing the basic sense of the verb (although it is possible that a more emphatic expression is created by its inclusion). However, one may “tear up” for positive or negative reasons. By pairing חוס with רחם, חמל, or both, חוס can refer to positive feelings like “mercy” or “pity” (see, for example, Deut 7:16, Isa 13:18; Jer 13:14; Ezek 7:9). In Neh 13:22, Nehemiah asks that God remember him and all his good deeds. When he asks God to חוס toward himself, there is no indication that he fears

some terrible consequence for trying to realign his people with the proper religious observances; rather, he views his request as a natural effect of God's abundant faithfulness. He may even be appealing for the blessings that come from keeping the covenant. In that case, God "tearing up" toward him must refer to "looking favorably upon," "being overjoyed with," or "showering with blessing" (see also Yoel 2:17, where "tearing up" could refer symbolically to the falling rain that brings God's blessing to land and people). In one case (Gen 45:20), the object of חוס is non-human; Pharaoh tells Yoseph and his family to leave all their "vessels/items" in Canaan and not to על + חוס them because all the best things in Egypt will be theirs. As noted by Sasson (AYB), "The Hebrews cannot be harboring compassion or pity regarding their baggage." Neither does it make sense to say that they should "look favorably" or "shower blessing" on what they leave behind. In that case, חוס must refer to negative feelings: "to be worried," "alarmed," or "distressed" over the fate of their stuff. Finally, when חוס is used with verbs like ישע (to save), נצל (to rescue), עזר (to help), נחם (to relent), or פרע (to refrain), it seems to refer to the "sparing" of people from harm or punishment (see, for example, Ezek 20:17 and 24:14). The question then is which of nuance applies to Yonah 4:10. Translators usually interpret חוס with the first nuance: "to pity" (KJV), "care about" (HCSB), "be concerned about" (NRSV), or "have compassion on" (NASB). In other words, Yonah cared for the plant/bush and pitied it when it died. It should be evident, however, that Yonah cared nothing for the plant/bush itself. He was greatly pleased/delighted by it only because it brought him shade/shelter. Therefore, that nuance should be rejected. ש used φειδομαι (to spare) for חוס in vv. 10 and 11. In all other instances of "spare," however, על marks the verbal object. In 1 Sam 24:11, for instance, ותחס עליך means "I spared you." In Ps 72:13, יחס על-דל ואביון means "He will spare [the] poor and powerless." But in Yonah 4:10, חסת על-הקיקיון cannot mean "you spared the *expeliona*" (he had nothing to do with it either "appearing" or "perishing"). Therefore, that nuance should also be rejected. Leeson and Rotherham got around the problem by altering the verb from a perfect (חסת) to a modal imperfect (תחס): "thou wouldst have spared." We would only alter the text if no sense could be made of it otherwise. Only two options remain for the unaltered text: either Yonah "teared up" because he "looked favorably upon" or "was overjoyed with" the bush/plant or because he was "worried," "alarmed," or "distressed" when it died. The reference to Yonah "delighting" with "great delight" might lend weight to the first option. The fact that the *expeliona* is non-human and provides him with something he needs or wants (like the vessels in Gen 45:20) lends weight to the second. Translators unanimously favor the second of those two options. Note, for example, NET (upset), LEB (troubled), Sasson (fretting), Wellhausen (*jammert*, "whine/wail/lament"), Guillaume (grieved), and Butterworth in "You Pity the Plant: A Misunderstanding" (sorry to lose). Even Wolff admitted, "We might assume the meaning 'to be sad,' 'to suffer.'" That option makes a lot of sense and is supported by ש: *doles* (pained/grieved). The plant/bush delivered Yonah from what he thought was wicked. When YHWH allowed it to perish, Yonah was struck by the heat and was so distressed that he wanted to die. YHWH is, therefore, appealing to Yonah's distress. As we saw in 4:1, חרה can indicate "distress," "depression," or "grief." Therefore, it makes perfect sense to have YHWH

respond to Yonah's חרה by mentioning Yonah's חוס (both “fuming” and “tearing up” are expressions of distress). The next question, therefore, is how the use of חוס in this verse relates to the use of חוס in the next one (see below for more).

make great — The verb גדל means “to be great.” In the Piel stem, it often refers to growing, raising, or rearing. Many translators, therefore, render it that way here. The use of this verb, however, creates a word-play with the term גדולה woven throughout Yonah (see section A3). In particular, it creates a connection between what happens to the plant and what happens to Nineveh (the “great” city). To render גדל in a different sense than גדולה would be to lose that word-play and destroy those connections. Therefore, we use the same basic rendering in both cases. Translators that do likewise include Tribble, Tucker, and Wilt (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

a one-night-old [bush] — Literally, בן-לילה is “a spawn/offspring/child of a night.” Some translators render it that way (see, for example, Craig, Tribble, and Fox). Usually, however, the phrase is condensed to “in a night” or “overnight” (see, for example, KJV, NIV, and NAB). We should point out, however, that the typical way to indicate the age of a masculine-gendered thing is by using the expression “a son of X,” where X equals a measure of time. Therefore, when the HB describes wants to describe a “one-year-old” lamb, it says the lamb is בן-שנה (a spawn/offspring/child of a year). In this case, therefore, the expression בן-לילה probably indicates that the plant/bush is “one night old.”

4:11 **distressed** — As we saw in v. 10, when it comes to Yonah and the bush/plant, חוס probably means “to be distressed” or “to grieve.” When it comes to YHWH and Nineveh in this verse, however, חוס could mean “to be distressed/grieve,” “have mercy/take pity on,” or “spare.” The question, therefore, is whether the meaning of חוס shifts between verses. Some translations presume that it does. KJV rendered חוס first as “pity” and then as “spare.” NET began with “upset” and ended with “concerned.” Sasson (AYB) started with “fretting” and concluded with “to have compassion.” Since the oral composer or scribal artisan could have used different terms in each verse to communicate different nuances, but did not do so, we have reason to believe that the same meaning applies and are compelled to represent that repetition in English translation. But could this be an exception? Considering Yonah’s frequent use of word-play, could this be a case of antanaclasis (where the same word is used for the express purpose of bringing out a different nuance)? Many scholars and commentators have noticed that the last two verses of Yonah appear to present one of the classic forms of Rabbinic argument known as *qal wa-homer* (the argument from the lighter to the heavier). The basic argument runs like this: if X applies to something less significant, then it must also apply to something more significant. The entire thrust of the argument depends on the lighter and the heavier parts corresponding to each other. Bolin was correct, therefore, when he said, “To understand the pivotal concept of this type of argument in two different ways shatters the correspondence upon which this reasoning is founded and from which it derives its validity.” Or, as Tribble put it, “shifting meaning hardly convinces.” Therefore, חוס probably conveys the same meaning in both verses and should be translated the same way. As Ben Zvi pointed out, the two parts do correspond well. When YHWH emphatically states that Yonah suffered nothing for the plant/bush nor

caused it to be great, “the statement evokes an implied characterization of Nineveh as a city for which YHWH did labor and caused it” to be great. Furthermore, when the text stresses how quickly the plant/bush came and went, that would “evoke an implied characterization of Nineveh as a city that neither came into being nor will perish in a day.” The point, therefore, is that if Yonah should be distressed because something so insignificant perished, he should be even more distressed over the perishing of something much more significant—an abundance of people and animals. Blank (“Doest Thou Well to be Angry?: A Study in Self-Pity”) captured the other side of the coin well: “Jonah here is not the only one subject to disappointment and distress. . . . God, too, knows pain.” In other words, YHWH distresses over the perishing of the Ninevites far more than Yonah distresses over the perishing of the *expeliona*. Butterworth was right: “What we have here *primarily* is not the pity of God but the pain of God” (no italics added).

how to walk a straight line — Literally, “their right from their left.” But what does it mean to not know (or distinguish) one’s right from one’s left? The expression is unique to scripture and has continually stumped interpreters. Despite the difficulty, it clearly does not mean that the Ninevites are incapable of making a correct decision—they do so in this very story! Wiseman noted that “The expression ‘right hand’ and ‘left hand’ in both Hebrew and Akkadian, apart from its use literally or geographically . . . , occurs figuratively . . . and always of not deviating to the right or left” (see, for instance, Deut 5:32, 17:11, and Josh 1:7). To that usage, one may add others, like Gen 24:49, where facing “to the right or to the left” means to go “one way or the other” (i.e., to decide what to do next). When not used literally or geographically, not deviating to the right or to the left is an idiom that means someone behaves properly (they abide by the law, moral standards, divine instructions, social obligations, or some combination thereof) and, therefore, refers idiomatically to “walking a straight line.” Lacking the ability to know right from left, therefore, would probably mean that one is unable to “walk a straight line” (they do not know how to behave properly). Since the Hebrew idiom is almost impenetrable on its own, we represent it with an English one that captures the sense as best as we understand it.

beasts abundant — **בהמה רבה** is highly alliterative. In fact, it ends a string of alliterative words in the final verse of Yonah: **בה** (in it), **הרבה** (many), **רבו** (myriad/ten thousand), **בהמה** (beasts), and **רבה** (great/numerous). With the pronunciation of each word, the sound swirls more and more, building in intensity, until the final two words ring out together with concluding impact. Ending Yonah that way serves an oral and rhetorical point just as important as its theological and/or humanitarian one. Unfortunately, we are unable to mimic that alliteration with every word. We can, however, mimic the phonetically emphatic end as it exists in the Hebrew. “Beasts abundant” not only mimics the alliteration by a repetition of the consonants b and t, which start and end both words, but stands out emphatically from the rest of the text by using a marked word-order: noun followed by adjective (typical of Hebrew) instead of adjective followed by noun (typical of English). THF is one of the only English translations that tries to replicate what makes the conclusion so emphatic (see **reckoned a wrecking** in 1:4 for the importance of mimicking word-play or sound-play in the HB).

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