

[1-2]* and **was**, word of YHWH to **Jonah**, son of Amittai, **saying**
 [1] **rise**
 [2-4] **go** to **Nineveh**, the **city**, the **great**
 [5] and **call** upon her
 [1] that (there) **has come up**, their evil, before Me
 [6-7] and (there) **rose**, Jonah, **to flee** to Tarshish from before YHWH
 [8-9] and he **went down** to Joppa, and he **found** a ship
 [1] **going** to Tarshish
 [10] and he **gave** her fare
 [1-2] and he **went down** into her **to go** with them to Tarshish, from before YHWH
 [3-4] and YHWH **hurled** a **wind**, **great**, to the sea
 [2-3] and it **was** a **storm**, **great**, in sea
 [4-5] and the ship **thought**, **to be broken**
 [6] and (there) **feared**, the sailors
 [7] and they **cried out**, man to his god
 [8] and they **hurled** the cargo
 [9] which (**was**) in ship, into the sea
 [10] **to lighten** from upon them
 [3-4] and Jonah **had gone down** into the sides (**two**) of the ship
 [5-6] and he **lay down** and **slept soundly**
 [1] and (there) **came near** to him, chief of the pilot
 [2] and he **said** to him
 [7] what to you, **being sound asleep**?
 [8-9] **rise**, **call** to your God
 [5] perhaps (there) **will think** [*relent*], God, toward us
 [3] and we **will not perish**
 [4] and they **said**, man to his fellow
 [5-6] **let's go** and **cast lots**
 [7] and we **will know**
 [8-9] in which, to whom, the **evil**, the **this**, (**is**) to us
 [10] and they **cast** lots
 [10] and **fell**, the lot, upon Jonah
 [1] and they **said** to him
 [1] **tell**, please, to us –
 [2-3] in which, to whom, the **evil**, the **this**, (**is**) to us?
 [4-5] what (**is**) your work? and from where **do** you **come**?
 [6-7] what (**is**) your land? and where, from there, (**are**) your people?
 [8] and he **said** to them

(1:1...)

This is a translation and a study of the Book of Jonah. This work presents the possible presence of a literary numbering system in Jonah. Following the PebbleCounting hypothesis, this numbering system appears to be inherent in the Ancient Hebrew and consistently used throughout Jonah, as it is in other books of Scripture.

This study and its accompanying video are freely available at pebblecounting.com, along with studies/translations of other books of Scripture. If you haven't had a chance to watch it, the "Intro to PebbleCounting" video is a good place to begin.

English translation, font coloring, arrangement of subject columns and literary sets, literary element counts, notes and tables, and the PebbleCounting hypothesis: © Steve, 2024-2025. Update: October 4, 2025.

"to Jonah" | The name *Jonah* means "dove." It is the same Hebrew word as was used for Noah's sending a *dove* to see if the waters had dried up from the earth. The first time, Noah's dove returned empty-handed. The second time, the dove returned with a freshly-picked olive branch. She had found a momentary resting place for her feet. Noah sent the dove a third time, and she did not return. She found a more permanent resting place for her feet.

The doubled sending of *Jonah* may be a literary echo of the first and second sending/returning of the *dove* in Genesis 8. On Jonah's first venture, God's mercy overshadowed his flight to the high seas and back again. On Jonah's second venture, God's mercy found a temporary resting place in the hearts and lives of the Ninevite pagans. In the broader storyline of God's Word, is there a version 3 of a *Jonah* (dove) going to the pagan nations to bring a message of repentance and salvation, to find a more permanent resting place for God's covenant mercies among them?

[9] a Hebrew (am) I
 [1-2] and YHWH, God of the heavens –
 [10] I fear –
 [3-4] who made the sea and the dry-land!
 [2-3] and (there) feared, the men, a fear, great
 [4] and they said to him
 [1] what (is) this
 [2] you have done?
 [5] because (there) knew, the men,
 [3] that from before YHWH, he was fleeing
 [4] because He told to them
 [6] and they said to him
 [7] what shall we do to you
 [8] and (there) may be quiet, the sea, from upon us?
 [9-10] because the sea was going and was storming
 [5] and he said to them
 [1-2] take me and hurl me into the sea
 [3] and (there) will be quiet, the sea, from upon you
 [6-7] because knowing, am I, that in which (is) to me:
 [8-10] the storm, the great, the this (is) upon you
 [4-5] and (there) rowed, the men, to return to the dry-land
 [6] and they were not able
 [7-8] because the sea was going and was storming upon them
 [9-10] and they called out to YHWH and said
 [1-2] please, YHWH, not now we perish for soul of the man,
 the this!
 [5-6] and do not set upon us blood, innocent!
 [7-8] because You, YHWH –
 [9-10] as which You have delighted, You have done
 [3-4] and they took Jonah and hurled him into the sea
 [5-6] and stood, the sea, from its being enraged
 [7-8] and feared, the men, a fear, great, (of) YHWH
 [9] and they sacrificed a sacrifice to YHWH
 [10] and they vowed vows
 [1] and (there) appointed, YHWH:
 [1-2] a fish, great, to swallow Jonah
 [3-5]* and was, Jonah, in belly of the fish, three days
 [6-8] and three nights

“three days and three nights” | Moving forward, Jonah’s subject is temporarily reflected in the “sea” subject column, as he is inside the fish! This literary transition may be emphasized by the threefold reference to “belly”: twice in relation to the fish, and once in relation to Sheol (place of the dead) itself.

Jesus of Nazareth identified with Jonah’s stay in the belly of the great fish (Mt. 12:38-41). For Jesus, the stay was “in the heart of the earth.” If Jesus was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday evening, He may have been held in a below-ground pit in Caiaphas’s house Thursday night. He bore the sins of the world on Good Friday. He died, and His body was held in a tomb from Friday evening through early Sunday morning. The duration of Jesus’ being held, from pit to sacrifice to tomb, was three days and three nights: evenings Thursday, Friday, and Saturday; mornings Friday, Saturday, and early Sunday.

[9-10] and (there) **prayed**, Jonah, to YHWH his **God** from belly of the fish, and **said**

[1] I **called** out, from distress to me, to YHWH

[2] and He **answered** me

[2] from belly of *Sheol*, I **cried** for help

[3] You **heard** my voice

[4-5] and You **flung** me to the **deep**, into **heart** of the waters

[3] and a river **went around** me

[4-5] all Your **breakers** and Your **waves**, upon me, have **passed over**

[6] and I **said**

[7-8] I **am driven out** from before Your eyes (**two**)

[9] nevertheless, I **will do again**

[10]* **to look** toward temple of Your holiness

[1] (there) have **encompassed** me, waters, as far as soul [*life*]

[2-3] deep **surrounded** me, reed **binding** to my head

[4] to bases of the mountains I **have gone down**

[5] the land, her bars (**were**) behind me to forever

[6-8] and You **brought up** from pit, my life, YHWH, **God**

[6] in, **to faint**, upon me, my soul

[7] YHWH, I **remembered**

[8-9] and (there) **came** to You, my prayer – to **temple** of Your holiness

[2] (those) **keeping** vanities of falsehood

[3] their lovingkindness **forsake**

[1] and I, in voice of thanksgiving, **will sacrifice** to You

[2-3] which I **have vowed**, I **will make complete**

[9] salvation (**is**) to YHWH! (2:9)

--- minor paragraph break¹ ---

[10] and (there) **spoke**, YHWH, to fish

[10] and it **vomited** Jonah to the dry-land (2:10)

--- major paragraph break² ---

[1-2] and **was**, word of YHWH, to Jonah, a **second**, **saying** (3:1...)

[4] **rise**

[5-7] **go** to **Nineveh**, the **city**, the **great**

[8] and **call** to her the proclamation

[3] which I **spoke** to you

[9] and (there) **rose**, Jonah

[10] and he **went** to Nineveh according to word of YHWH

“to look toward temple of Your holiness” | Twice in this prayer, Jonah speaks of the Jerusalem temple. For Jonah, this temple represents everything good and sacred about the covenant relationship with YHWH. It is the antithesis of Jonah’s experience out on the pagan waters, among pagan peoples of the pagan nations. Yet what is sacred about Jerusalem, its people, its temple, and its God, may be superimposed upon the Ninevites in this book of Jonah. See below for a discussion of the number of Ninevites.

[4]* and Nineveh **was** a **city** of great to God

[5-7]* a walk of **three** of **days**

[1-2] and **began**, Jonah, **to come** in city, a walk of **day, one**

[3-4] and he **called** and **said**

[8-9]* yet **fours** [*forty*] **day** and Nineveh **will be overturned**

[10] and (there) **believed**, men of Nineveh, in God

[1] and they **called** a fast

[2-3] and they **wore** sackcloths, from **greatest** of them and unto **least** of them

[4] and (there) **reached**, the word, to king of Nineveh

[5] and he **rose** from his throne

[6] and he **passed over** his robe from upon him

[7-8] and he **covered** (in) sackcloth and **sat** upon the ashes

[9-10] and he **proclaimed** and **said** in Nineveh:

[1-2] from decision of the **king** and his **great-ones**, **saying**

[3-6] the **man** and the **beast**, the **ox** and the **sheep**, **shall not taste** anything

[7-8] they **shall not pasture**; and water, they **shall not drink**

[9-10] and they **shall cover** (in) sackcloths, the **man** and the **beast**

[1] and they **shall call** to God in strength

[2-3] and they **shall turn**, a man, from his **way**, the **evil**

[4-5] and from the violence which (**is**) in their hands (**two**)

[6] who is **knowing**

[4-5] (if there) **will turn** and **relent**, God

[6] and **turn** from fury of His nose

[7] and we **not perish**?

[7] and **saw**, God:

[8] their **works** –

[9-10] that they **turned** from their **way**, the **evil**

[8] and **relented**, God, over the evil

[9-10] which He **had spoken**, **to do** to them

[1] and He **did not do** it

[5-7] and **it was evil**, to Jonah – an **evil**, **great** –

[8] and **it burned** [*angered*] to him

[9-10] and he **prayed** to YHWH and **said**

[2] please, **YHWH**!

[1-2] (**is**) not this, my word, upon my, **to be** upon my land?

[3-4] upon thus, I **went ahead**, **to flee** to Tarshish

[5] because I **knew**

40

Forty elements = "fours [forty] day"

"and Nineveh was a city of great, to God" | It appears "to God" remains in the subject column for Nineveh and its people. They are a people whose stature has risen, as it were, up to God. For them, the significance of Israel's God will be coming into focus.

"a walk of three of days" | Three days may have been the amount of time necessary for Jonah to walk all the streets of Nineveh and be seen and heard by its inhabitants. The inversion of this format to Hebrew (**unit | quantity**) in "**day, one**" may offer an initial indication of the power of Jonah's ministry at this point. Only one day of proclamation was needed.

"yet fours [*forty*] days" | This measure is reflected in the literary count, as shown by the dashed line.

[3-5]* that You (are) a God, gracious and compassionate

[6-7] slow of nostrils (two) [anger]

[8] and great of lovingkindness

[9] and relenting over the evil

[10] and now, YHWH, take, please, my soul from me!

[6-7] because better, my death (is), than my life (is)!

(...4:3)

--- minor paragraph break³ ---

[1] and said, YHWH

(4:4...)

[8] (is) to be good –

[9] burning [angering] to you?

[10] and (there) went out, Jonah, from the city

[1] and he sat from east to city

[2] and he made to him there a booth

[3] and he sat under it, in shadow

[4] until which, he might see

[1] what would happen in city

[2-3] and appointed, YHWH God:

[2]* a plant

[3] and it went up from over, to Jonah

[4] to be shadow upon his head

[5] to deliver, to him, from his evil

[5-6] and (there) rejoiced, Jonah, over the plant, a joy, great

[4] and appointed, God:

[6]* a worm, in, to go up, the dawn, to morning

[7-8] and it struck the plant, and it withered

[9-10] and it was, as, to rise, the sun

[5] and appointed, God:

[1-2]* a wind of east, the vehement

[3] and (there) struck, the sun, upon head of Jonah

[7] and he fainted

[8-9] and he asked his soul, to die

[10] and he said

[1-2] better, my death (is), than my life (is)!

[6] and said, God, to Jonah

[3] (is) to be good –

[4] it burns to you, over the plant?

[5] and he said

[1-2]* to be good, it burns to me, unto death!

“You (are) a God” | Jonah imitates the description of YHWH’s character from Moses in Exodus 34:6. Jonah leaves out the phrase “keeping steadfast love for thousands.”

The Hebrew word *great* in “great of lovingkindness” is the root word for the Hebrew number *ten-thousand*. This number will be used in a moment to describe the population of Nineveh.

“a plant... a worm... a wind” | The plant, the worm, and the wind form a parable in the context of Jonah’s watch over Nineveh. In God’s providence, what “would happen in city” was a parable reflecting Jonah’s own heart. Judging by completeness and flow of the literary sets: the plant, the worm, and the wind are meant to be counted to Nineveh’s subject column.

[7] and (there) **said**, YHWH

[3] you **pitied** upon the plant

[4] which, you **did not labor** with it

[5] and you **did not make** it **grow**

[4] which, son of a night, **was**

[5] and, son of a night, **perished**

[8-10] and **should** I **not pity** upon **Nineveh**, the **city**, the **great** –

[1-2]* which, **there are** in her, many from [*more than*] **two-ten** [*twelve*] 10

[3]* **ten-thousand** man which **does not know** between his right-hand
to his left-hand 10000

[4-5]* and **cattle**, **many**? (...4:11)

The book of Jonah is a single literary section. All the literary subjects reach a point of convergence and completeness of literary sets at the very end.

The only Hebrew word used exactly ten times¹ in the whole book of Jonah is the verb “to be.” With conjugation, this verb may form a literary title that is aligned with YHWH: “I am.” Just as “I AM” sent Moses to Israel (Ex. 3:14), so “I AM” (YHWH) sends Jonah to Nineveh. This assessment appears to be theologically relevant in this book. The book of Jonah reaches deeply for the identity of Israel’s God. It places Jonah on par with Moses’ commissioning, by reiterating YHWH’s character using Moses’ words: YHWH is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, great in lovingkindness, and relenting (forgiving). The YHWH having sovereign purposes for ancient Israel is one and the same as the YHWH having sovereign purposes for Israel’s blatant, pagan enemies. The “salvation is to YHWH,” which Jonah covets for himself, is being applied liberally to those whom he most dislikes.

Literary Counts (Jonah)

- (55x) God
- (90x) Jonah
- (60x) Nineveh
- (80x) The Sea
- (285x) (*Subtotal*)
- (40x) “yet fours [*forty*] day”
- (10x) “from [*more than*] two-ten”
- (335x) *Total*

¹Tenfold word count is based upon the word counting capabilities of Accordance Bible Software, version 14, presented with the permission of OakTree Software, Inc.

“two-ten [*twelve*], ten-thousand man” | The Hebrew “ten-thousand” is based upon the same Hebrew root as is “great” in “great of lovingkindness” (see above). This word can mean “ten-thousand” or it can mean an indefinitely large number, a *myriad*. Rather than giving the number as Hebrew “hundred tens [*twenty*] thousand” (e.g., Judges 8:10, 1 Kings 8:63, 1 Chron. 12:37), the number is given as “twelve of myriads” or “twelve of ten-thousands.” The twelve would be a significant number for Jonah, a prophet who cherished the heritage of a unified twelve tribes gathering to a sacred temple in Jerusalem. In essence, YHWH speaks of Nineveh with a merge of sacred language: the fullness of twelve, as of the completeness of His covenant people, multiplied by the indefinite greatness of His covenant mercies.

According to Moses, YHWH reserves His mercies for “thousands” – the phrase Jonah left out from his reiteration of YHWH’s character. The literary composite stature of the Ninevites may be composed as:

$$\begin{aligned} &(\text{YHWH's people}) \times (\text{YHWH's identity}) \times (\text{YHWH's mercy upon His people}) = \\ &(12) \times (10) \times (1,000\text{-fold}) = 120,000 \text{ or } 12 \text{ myriads} \end{aligned}$$

These 12 myriads = 120,000 “man” are the Ninevites who, though spiritually blind, will receive God’s covenant mercy.

“between his right-hand to his left-hand” | The confusion between right hand and left hand may be modeled by the literary structuring of dual five-fold half-sets at the close of Nineveh’s subject column. If so, the same confusion may be reflected in Jonah’s subject column as well. Nineveh is a parable of Jonah himself: a person who needs God’s tender mercy.

“and cattle, many” | The “cattle, many” may indicate, not merely cattle or other domestic livestock, but those high-handed human beasts in Nineveh who, though acquiescing in the moment, will not become faithful YHWH-worshippers. The Hebrew noun, here translated *cattle*, includes a wider semantic range for domestic animals and beasts. These *beasts* may become the agents of evil in the coming generations of Nineveh. They are described from the same Hebrew root word “great” (“ten-thousand” and “myriad”), but they are not numbered as twelvefold for God’s covenant mercies. Nevertheless, God is showing mercy even to these beastly people among the enemies of Israel.