

## EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK<sup>1</sup>

NAME: \_\_George Brodie\_\_\_\_\_

PASSAGE: \_\_Jonah 1:1-3\_\_\_\_\_

“The aim of exegesis is to make as explicit as possible the precise meaning of a text. This is done when the proper connotation of the words and concepts is found and when the text

is placed in the context of the presuppositions, questions, and concerns of its author.”

--A. Malherbe

**Instructions:** Use this template for your investigation of a biblical text and answer the questions thoroughly and with supporting evidence. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps, just be satisfied that you have adequately gathered all that you can (time permitting).

This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is your *WORK PRODUCT* that lays the foundation for the final course project. It is *NOT* the project itself, but it contains everything you need to know about your passage before you decide (1) which theological connections to make in a sermon, (2) key points to explain in a bible study, emphasize in staff training, or include in support of a conference topic, and (3) what private and public attitudes/behaviors best reflect the character of Christ.

### Important Working Assumptions:

1. Always start with “what” questions before attempting to answer “why” or “how.”
2. Always do your own close reading first before referring to a commentary or secondary scholarly resource.
3. Recognize that what you think initially about a text (without prayerful critical reflection) is not the same as what the Holy Spirit intends. Let each author and each passage have its own voice within its own context before ever attempting to apply it to yourself or a ministry context.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Dr. William Barclay, Gordon Conwell  
<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/charlotte/current/documents/chareg-nt502-barclay-su12.pdf>  
Accessed Sept. 1, 2016. Also, from Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Third edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. Refer to the appropriate sections of Fee’s text for further clarifications and discussions.

4. The original audience is different from us in most every way possible except for their basic human condition and need of Christ. This includes language, culture, social values and norms, religious worldview, politics, family structure, etc. Consider this notebook as your *PASSPORT* into the foreign country of the original human author and recipients. Do not assume you will understand the language or customs of these ancient peoples without preparing for this journey.
5. The nature of inspiration is such that God used every day, flawed individuals to preserve a trustworthy/true authoritative message that is efficacious for salvation. Thus, eventually shift your attention *from* solving the identity of the original author *to* understanding the message being conveyed.
6. With every interpretive act you are creating sacred space in which to encounter a free and living God.
7. Do not assume the message will simply reaffirm cherished beliefs. Surprisingly at times, God's message is just as much a word *against* us as a word *for* us.

## STEP 1. SURVEY THE GENERAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Read the entire document through in English in one sitting (aloud), considering the specific prompt questions in the syllabus (Week 1): YES X NO    

1.1 AUTHOR. (a) **What do you observe about the identity of the author and his circumstances?** (b) **What else do you know about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing that might influence the exegesis of this text?**

No author identified by name in the text. Either written by Jonah himself or someone he narrated the details of the events to, as there an intimate knowledge of information and private prayers during the described events.

Jonah son of Amittai (Jon 1:1) is a prophet of the Lord (Jon 1:2, Jon 1:9).

God directed him to go to Israel's enemy - the Assyrians - and warn them of upcoming judgement in the city of Nineveh (Jon 1:2).

2 Kings 14:25 locates Jonah as being a prophet in the northern nation of Israel during the ring of Jeroboam sometime in first half of the 8th century.

1.2. RECIPIENTS: (a) **What are your observations about the identity of the recipients?** *Be careful to base your observations on what the text says, not what you have always heard.* (b) **Are there any hints about their ethnicity or socioeconomic and cultural contexts?** (c) **Where do the recipients live?** *Are there direct or indirect*

*hints that help you identify the geographic region?* (d) **What are their present circumstances?** (e) **What historical situation occasioned this writing?** (f) **What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?**

The text does not identify the recipients of the book. However the recipients of the oracle that Jonah was given was the Assyrian people of Nineveh. They are the enemies of Israel, a semitic people whose empire predated the Babylonian empire.

At the time of this oracle given to Jonah, the Assyrians are rising in power and influence in the region, and they will eventually invade and scatter Israel.

Jonah was sent to their capital city - Nineveh - which is massive for its time (Jon 3:3). The relationship between Jonah and the Assyrians is one of animosity.

1.3 PURPOSE: (1) **What can you discern about the author's purpose for writing?** Does the author explicitly say anything about it, or is the purpose implied (through suggestive clues)? *Be attentive here. Authors share certain preunderstandings with their audience that need not be stated (i.e., the author and recipients are privy to information well-known to each that we would have no way of knowing). Your job will be to make the implicit clear, i.e., what is implied needs to be explained carefully.* (2) **What is the overall theme or concern?** *Did you notice words or ideas that were frequently repeated? Did you notice special word choices or exhortations/ideas that fit the overall presentation? What might these repetitions, vocabulary, or ideas tell you about the purpose of the writing?* (3) **Does the argument or narrative have an easily discerned outline, or does it seem to be a loose, thematic collection of sayings or teachings** (e.g. Sermon on the Mount or James)? *You need not work out the outline here, just observe!*

The written text of the book seems to be for a wider audience - the nation of Israel itself. It is a forewarning and an appeal. God will judge wickedness, but He is willing to forgive if there is repentance.

The implication is that God will even forgive and relent from destroying the wicked Assyrians if they repent, thus Israel and their idol worshipping ways needs to likewise repent.

There is also an implied message of national arrogance of the Israelites as embodied by Jonah, and the hard lesson that Jonah (and the wider audience) needs to learn of God's omnipotence, omnipresence, judgement AND his forgiveness and mercy.

Yes - there is a deceptively simple, straightforward narrative - with a wider implication as noted above.

**STEP 2. CONFIRM THE LIMITS OF YOUR PASSAGE.**

Decide where your *pericope* [i.e., “self-contained unit”] begins and ends. *Examine whether or not the paragraphs and divisions in your bibles correctly reflect the limits of your chosen passage.*

For non-language students, it is best to compare the paragraphing of several modern translations (e.g. NRSV, TNIV, NET, AV, NASB, NKJV, etc. Fee, p. 12). Where do the translations differ as far as paragraph length and divisions? Then decide for yourself what the basic unit is. (Your conclusions should be based on your own observations from these texts). *The final decision is part of the exegetical process. Choose passages approximately 5-10 verses for a project this size.*

“The passage I intend to investigate is Jonah 1:1-6 Jonah’s decision to run from the Lord.”

### **STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH/PERICOPE (Fee, 12).**

3.1. Read the paragraph through in 5-7 translations and *note the differences* among the translations. Copy these translations and mark well these differences using colored highlights. *List the differences here.* (WHY DO THIS STEP? Without knowledge of biblical languages one can miss the different options translators have when moving from one language to another. *THERE IS NO ONE TO ONE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGES.*)

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup>“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1:1-3 NIV

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:1-3 ESV

The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a

ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:1-3 NASB

The Lord said to Jonah son of Amittai, <sup>1:2</sup>“Go immediately to Nineveh, that large capital city, and announce judgment against its people because their wickedness has come to my attention.” <sup>1:3</sup> Instead, Jonah immediately headed off to Tarshish to escape from the commission of the Lord. He traveled to Joppa and found a merchant ship heading to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went aboard it to go with them to Tarshish far away from the Lord. Jonah 1:1-3 NET

Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. <sup>3</sup>But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah. Jonah 1:1-3 ASV

The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup>“Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.” <sup>3</sup>But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish. Jonah 1:1-3 NLT

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6 NIV

<sup>4</sup> But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6 ESV

The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6 NASB

But the Lord hurled a powerful wind on the sea. Such a violent tempest arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break up! <sup>1:5</sup> The sailors were so afraid that each cried out to his own god and they flung the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold below deck, had lain down, and was sound asleep. <sup>1:6</sup> The ship's captain approached him and said, "What are you doing asleep? Get up! Cry out to your god! Perhaps your god might take notice of us so that we might not die!"

Jonah 1:4-6 NET

4 But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Jonah 1:4-6 ASV

4 But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. 5 Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. 6 So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives."

Jonah 1:4-6 NLT

**3.2 Determine which of these differences are exegetically significant** (e.g. are the differences a matter of synonyms, grammar, stylistic or theological preference, or textual criticism? Do these differences alter the meaning in any way? Does a particular translation have slightly different theological implications? Which is closer to the original author's meaning given the overall argument?)

a) Differences in what Jonah was called to actually do; "preach against", "call out against", "cry against", and "announce judgement against". Although preach/call out/cry against/announce judgement against all involve Jonah speaking out God's message - there is a strong difference between preaching, crying, calling out and announcing. Preaching = teaching, crying = bewailing, calling out = prophesying, announcing = heralding. Although all involve speaking they convey very different emotional aspects to the speaking.

b) Jonah's response - he ran away/rose to flee/immediately headed off/got up and went - some translations keep the whole arise v going down theme in the English, others ignore this for a more readable version. There is an ironic symmetry in God's task of "arise and go" but Jonah "arose and went" in the opposite direction. He did arise, but not how God wanted him to. Most translations keep the parallel irony in the wording, the NIV however does not ("go" v "ran away").

c) What/who was Jonah fleeing from - The Lord, The Lord's Commission, The Lord's presence. Quite a big difference here. Was Jonah just trying to shirk the task while keeping his relationship with the Lord intact, was he fleeing from God's power and holiness (presence), or was he abandoning the Lord himself?

d) Directions. Most translations state he went **down** to Joppa - the opposite of the Lord's command to **arise** and go to Nineveh. The NET misses this. Likewise some translations have that he went "**down**" into the ship, some translations go for a more used English phrase "aboard the ship", but again by doing so they miss the whole up/down dynamic of God's command and Jonah's response.

e) The various translations differ between God "sending" a wind and "hurling" a wind. Quite a difference in intensity between these two words. "Hurl" seems to be a more vivid and perhaps accurate translation of the Hebrew word טול - what does it say about God's character that he chose to "hurl" instead of "send"?

f) In v4 note that the ASV translates Lord as "Jehovah" - whereas the other translations take the Jewish approach of not mentioning God's name.

g) Only the ESV translates טול as "hurl" when it comes to the sailors response to the storm. I like this translation here as the whole interplay with this pericope is to compare and contrast God's actions with both Jonah's and the sailors actions. I like that טול is translated the same way in the ESV on both occasions - God hurling a storm, and the sailors hurling their possessions overboard in response.

h) Several translations have Jonah "going down" into the hold of the ship and "going down" to sleep. This is important as it shows Jonah's response of "going down" when God had called him to go "up".

i) Some translations translate אֵיךָ as a verb "how can you sleep" while others have it as an adjective "O Sleeper!" My Hebrew is not good enough to discern the better translation here.

I think that one of points of the book of Jonah is to use irony and contrast to show the difference between who God is and what He wants and Jonah's response. The use of God wanting Jonah to "arise", but instead he chooses to go "down" in chapter 1 is mirrored later in the book by God causing Jonah to go "down" in the belly of the whale and later "arise" by being vomited on to the beach. It is a perfect word choice in Hebrew, but many of the English translations fail to highlight the consistency of the word play in Hebrew. Likewise the interplay between God "hurling" a storm in their direction and the sailors "hurling" their cargo overboard in response.

Overall the ESV, NASB and the ASV capture this dynamic while the NLT somewhat captures it. The NIV and NET through inconsistent wording in English muddy this word play.

#### STEP 4: LITERARY CONTEXT

**4.1 Identify the particular literary character of the document** (i.e., narratives, psalms, law, Gospel, prophecy, epistle, apocalypse, etc.) and be alert to the fact that specific genre issues will arise.

Jonah chapter 1 verses 1 to 6 is a narrative. It covers the initial call from God to the prophet Jonah, Jonah's rejection of that call and his attempt to flee God's mission for him, and then God's initial response to Jonah's reaction.

It contains a large dose of irony as there is an interplay between God's call for Jonah to arise, which he does, but then instead of continuing "up" to Nineveh, he heads "down" to Joppa. The first chapter of Jonah ironically plays with this up/down dynamic.

**4.2 Pay detailed attention to the unique characteristics of your passage's genre** (refer to the appropriate section in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and the power point presentations throughout the course):

Jonah chapter 1 verses 1 through 6 details God's instruction to Jonah, Jonah's disobedient response and then God's response to Jonah's response. It is filled with irony and surprise - few hearing it for the first time would have expected a prophet of the Lord to try and head in exactly the opposite direction from where God has called him to. There is comedy/irony in there when God calls Jonah to "arise and go to Nineveh" but instead he "arose and fled to Tarshish".

Likewise there are additional word plays as Jonah went "down to Joppa", "down to the ship" "down" below deck. It prefigures God's response of bringing Jonah "down" to the belly of the fish and then "up" again when the fish vomits him onto the shore.

The whole dynamism of the movement recorded in the chapter 1 is ironic, funny and yet disturbing - the hearers have foreboding that it will not go well with Jonah and that he has some lessons to learn!

If these verses were removed from the larger passage much of the impact of the lessons Jonah learns in the rest of the narrative would be lost. There is a double playing out of grace happening - once from God to the people of Nineveh and again from God to Jonah.

**4.3 Give an original, detailed outline of the whole book and note the placement of your text within the outline.** *Do not use the outlines you find by scholars as they lean toward a particular theological position that may/may not reflect your own reading of the entire book. The more you struggle to do these steps yourself, the better you will get at thinking theologically and exegetically.*

Jonah - Chapter 1.

**1** Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2** "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil[a] has come up before me."

**3** But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

GB: Note - God calls him to “arise” instead Jonah goes “down”. God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh, instead Jonah flees from Gods’ presence to Tarshish via Joppa.

**4** But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. **5** Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. **6** So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

GB: Note - (a) God hurled, the sailors hurled in response. (b) Jonah went down even further to the inner chamber, but he is later called to “arise” again. You simply can’t flee from the Lord.

**7** And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” **9** And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” **10** Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

GB: Note. Jonah called by God, “feared” God, yet was fleeing from God. This was the crux of the matter. Still to be resolved “why” was he fleeing?

**11** Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. **12** He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” **13** Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. **14** Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” **15** So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. **17** [c] And the Lord appointed[d] a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

GB: Notes: (a) Still a lot of hurling going on! (b) Ironic how now these pagan sailors feared God in spite of Jonah’s disobedience. A recurring theme! God’s grace can reach people

even when His servant disobeys. (c) Jonah continues “down” - right into the belly of a great fish.

## Chapter 2

**2** Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, **2** saying,  
“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,  
and he answered me;  
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
and you heard my voice.

**3**  
For you **cast me into the deep,**  
into the heart of the seas,  
and the flood surrounded me;  
all your waves and your billows  
passed over me.

**4**  
Then I said, ‘I am driven away  
from your sight;  
yet I shall again look  
upon your holy temple.’

**5**  
The waters closed in over me to take my life;  
the deep surrounded me;  
weeds were wrapped about my head

**6**  
at the roots of the mountains.  
I went down to the land  
whose bars closed upon me forever;  
yet you brought up my life from the pit,  
O Lord my God.

**7**  
When my life was fainting away,  
I remembered the Lord,  
and my prayer came to you,  
into your holy temple.

**8**  
Those who pay regard to vain idols  
forsake their hope of steadfast love.

**9**  
But I with the voice of thanksgiving  
will sacrifice to you;  
what I have vowed I will pay.  
Salvation belongs to the Lord!”

**10** And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

## GB Notes:

- (a) Purple - God’s action in hurling/casting down continues.
- (b) Green - the fish is actually a manifestation of God’s grace.
- (c) Orange - Jonah starts to reorient Himself to trust God and obey God’s direction.

(d) Yellow - still the ironic play on the up/down nature of the narrative. God said go up, Jonah went down, God brought him all the way down, Jonah looked up, God caused the fish to vomit him up.

### Chapter 3

**3** Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, **2** “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” **3** So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,<sup>[e]</sup> three days' journey in breadth.<sup>[f]</sup> **4** Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” **5** And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

**6** The word reached<sup>[g]</sup> the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, **8** but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. **9** Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.” **10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

### GB Notes:

- (a) Yellow - resolution of the up/down dynamic. God says “arise” and this time Jonah followed the direction.
- (e) Magenta - Jonah obeyed God in his message.
- (f) Red - surprise - pagans respond with repentance and faith to God's word.
- (g) Green - God manifests his grace.

### Chapter 4

**4** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly,<sup>[h]</sup> and he was angry. **2** And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. **3** Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” **4** And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

**5** Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. **6** Now the Lord God appointed a plant<sup>[i]</sup> and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort.<sup>[j]</sup> So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. **7** But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. **8** When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” **9** But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” **10** And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. **11** And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

## GB Notes:

- (a) Yellow - here we find out why Jonah fled from God. He did not want God to show grace and mercy to the Ninevehites.
- (h) Green - the final lesson on grace given to Jonah in the form of a leaf given by God and then taken away by God. It was a lesson on obedience/disobedience and national pride and arrogance v's God's desire to show grace and mercy.

### **Outline**

Jonah 1:1-3 - God calls Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh, but he decides to flee to Tarshish via Joppa.

Jonah 1:4-6 God's response to Jonah's attempt to flee via ship was to hurl a storm at the ship!

Jonah 1:7-15 The sailors cast Jonah into the sea to prevent the storm from sinking the ship.

Jonah 1:16 The sailors express faith in and fear of the Lord.

Jonah 1:17 God sends a great fish to swallow Jonah.

Jonah 2:1-9 Jonah prays and repents while in the belly of the fish

Jonah 2:10 The fish vomits Jonah on the shore.

Jonah 3:1-4 Jonah finally obeys God, goes to Nineveh and preaches God's words to the inhabitants.

Jonah 3:5-10 The people of Nineveh respond in repentance.

Jonah 4:1-4 Jonah expresses displeasure at God showing grace to Jonah's enemies.

Jonah 4:5-9 God sends Jonah some shade and then removes it as a lesson on God's compassion.

Jonah 4:10-12 The object lesson of the book - God loves showing grace and mercy more than executing judgement.

## **STEP 5: LITERARY ANALYSIS**

### 5.1 STRUCTURE, SYNTAX, AND LOGIC OF ARGUMENT.

#### WHY DO THIS STEP?

*Every author has a structure in mind when writing a narrative or letter. Note how the author prepares the hearer-reader for what follows (Ask yourself, "What leads into my text?" and "What leads out of this text?"). There is always some logical coherence and structure in the way a letter or story is told. Our job is to figure out*

*this structure and determine how our passage functions to communicate a particular theological perspective.*

5.1.1. **Analyze the structure of your pericope.** You may use a “sentence flow” or “sentence diagram” method (cf. Fee, 41-58). *The idea is to clarify the flow of the author’s argument or story. Highlight (color code) repeated words or concepts, pay attention to syntactical relationships, look for chiasmic or any other types of organizing structures (see John 1:1-18 example above).*

*Use your own method for organizing and asking questions. Think logically and grammatically. Exegesis is about asking good questions. Questions about structure include:*

- a. **Adverbial questions** answer: *When? Why? Under what conditions/circumstances? How? Where? For what purpose? Etc.*
- b. **Adjectival questions** answer: *What kind of? Which? How many? Whose?*
- c. *Pay attention to coordinate and subordinate **conjunctions**. Coordinate conjunctions--**and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet**--are button words that hook like things together (e.g. coordinate clauses, subjects, verbs, etc.). Subordinate conjunctions—*although, as, because, if, in order that, when, after, before*--are button words that hook unlike things together (e.g. a main clause followed by a subordinate clause).*

**1 Now** the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

**WHO: GOD SPEAKS TO JONAH. SETS THE STORY IN MOTION. ESTABLISHES AUTHORITY STRUCTURE.**

**2** “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, **for** their evil has come up before me.”

**WHERE: JONAH TO GO TO NINEVEH. WHY: TO CALL OUT AGAINST IT DUE TO THEIR EVIL DEEDS.**

**3 But** Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. **So** he paid the fare and went down into it, **to go** with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

**WHERE: JONAH FLED TO JOPPA TO GO TO TARSHISH. WHY: TO FLEE THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD**

**WHAT KIND OF TRANSPORT: A SHIP. WHOSE: NOT HIS OWN - HE HAD TO PAY A FARE FOR THE PASSAGE.**

4 **But** the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, **and** there was a mighty tempest on the sea, **so that** the ship threatened to break up.

**WHO: THE LORD ACTED IN RESPONSE. WHAT: THE LORD SENT A STORM. WHY: SO THAT THE SHIP CAME CLOSE TO BREAKING POINT IN ORDER TO FORCE A RESPONSE FROM THE SAILORS AND EVENTUALLY JONAH.**

**WHAT KIND OF WIND: A GREAT WIND. HOW DID THE LORD SEND IT: HE HURLED IT. WHAT DID IT RESULT IN: A MIGHTY STORM.**

5a **Then** the mariners were afraid, **and** each cried out to his god. **And** they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea **to** lighten it for them.

**WHO: MARINERS. WHAT DID THEY DO: THEY CRIED OUT TO THEIR GOD, HURLED CARGO INTO THE SEA.**

**WHOSE: THEIR OWN COMMERCIAL CARGO. HOW: THEY HURLED.**

5b **But** Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship **and** had lain down and was fast asleep.

**WHO: JONAH. WHERE: INNER PART OF THE SHIP. WHY: TO SLEEP.**

6 **So** the captain came **and** said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! **Perhaps** the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

**WHO: THE CAPTAIN. WHAT DID HE DO: GAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO JONAH.**

**WHAT KIND OF INSTRUCTION: TO ARISE AND CALL OUT TO GOD.**

5.1.2 Write a summary here of the information you can derive from your structure above. What lexical, syntactical or other structural indicators are important and why?

The text lays out a clear authority structure of God giving Jonah a command, and the dire consequences of Jonah refusing to obey that command.

There is a direct interplay between God, Jonah and the sailors. One speaks (God), Jonah reacts (flees), God responds (storm), sailors respond (throw cargo overboard), Captain speaks to Jonah (instruction).

The format of this passage plays with the cause and effect of responding negatively to God's command (v4 but God ...).

This is reflected in the up/down dynamic. God says go UP to Nineveh, but Jonah goes down to Joppa, down to the ship and then down into the inner part of the ship.

We read of God's command, Jonah's response, God's response, the sailors response to God's response and then the captain's response to God's response.

**5.1.3 Set out briefly the logic and content of your text** (How does the author unfold each step in his argument? At what point does he reach the main thought or idea?). Show the significance of your paragraph in the overall development of the argument/exhortation/story, etc? (Fee, 19-20).

This dynamic of God's call and Jonah's response, followed by God's corresponding response is the main thrust of both this pericope and the narrative structure of the rest of the book.

It shows that God is in charge and in control of both nature and Jonah's circumstances. It also shows that it is futile to disobey God, as He can bring you to the place and task that He assigned you in the first place.

We see this demonstrated later in the book with God sending the great fish and also God sending the shady plant.

God is in charge, if he gives you a task to do, it is much easier on you if you listen and do it right away, as He has the power to subvert your attempts to subvert His will.

We see God's authority and character played out in climax of the book, where God reveals His will was to show mercy to the people in Nineveh. The inferred implication, ironically, is that God will also show mercy to Israel as well if they, like Nineveh, (and perhaps eventually like Jonah) realize and turn from their sins and proclaim the goodness and mercy of God.

**5.2 RHETORIC.** What "rhetorical features" (hyperbole, questions, commands, irony, parable, allegory, allusion, etc.) does your text display? How are they important for exegesis?

This pericope uses several rhetorical features.

- a) Commands. God gives a command in the very first verse. The rest of the narrative of the book is driven by how people respond to this command and the message it contains.
- b) Some scholars think of the entire book of Jonah as an extended parable. Although there are certainly didactic principles that can be drawn out of the narrative, particularly in the inter play between God and the various humans involved, my understanding is that it is not a parable but a historical narrative with didactic elements. I think Jonah turned his experiences into a didactic narrative story.

c) The conjunctions in my pericope play an important part in showing the call/response dynamic between humanity and God.

### 5.3 GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

**5.3.1 List any difficult or unusual grammatical features of your text addressed by the scholars** (use several critical commentaries to compare their explanations) and explain their importance for understanding this passage.

- None

**5.4 LEXICOGRAPHY.** (Note well Fee's warnings, pp.79-80. On this whole section consult closely Fee's Sect. II.4 and pay particular attention to 82-93).

**5.4.1 Identify any words which are "theologically loaded," ambiguous, repeated or emphasized by the author.**

v1 opens with the Hebrew copula vav ("and" in English), just as Ruth and 1 Samuel does. This creates a sense of dropping into an ongoing narrative. As if we are entering in on an ongoing conversation between God and Jonah.

v2 God call Jonah to "arise" - Heb לָבֹא קִמְיָי - and go to Ninvehe. Jonah does indeed "arise" but instead of going "up" to Ninvehe he heads "down" to Joppa and continues on "down" until he is in the belly of a great fish.

Note v2 opens with a double imperative - arise go - a forceful command from the Lord.

v3 Jonah rose to "flee" (Hebrew בָּרוּחַ) from God's presence- yet surely He would know as a prophet of God that is not possible? The initial readers/hearers of this book would have known this too. See Psalm 139:7-10.

Some commentators think it cannot mean that he tried to run from God's presence but from God's commission to him as a prophet or from the region where he experienced God's presence.

Either way it is an open rebellion against God's authority.

Arising to flee from God would immediately strike a discordant note with the original audience. It is setting up the narrative for an ominous response from God.

v4 The only case in the Bible where the Hebrew word חָשַׁב - think - is connected with an inanimate object. It may be down to a play on sounds of the words used - ḥiššēbāh lēḥiššābēr. It suggests in Hebrew that the ship itself was intending to break apart!

v5 Jonah was in a very deep sleep according to the Hebrew word םַדַּם - not just an ordinary sleep - see Gen 15:12, 1 Sam 26:12.

v6 Ironically the captain tells Jonah to “arise” from his sleep - the same word used in v2 that formed God’s command to Jonah. Additionally the captain tells Jonah to “Arise and call ...” - the word for call - Hebrew אָרַב - is the same word God used in his command for Jonah to “preach” against Nineveh. Arise and call. Jonah can’t escape this command.

**5.4.2. Choose one or two of these words listed in 5.4.1 and look them up in a concordance to see where they are used elsewhere in your book and how context brings out different nuances of the meaning.**

Call - Hebrew אָרַב (qā·rā‘) - used in Jonah 1:2, 6, 14. Jonah 2:2, Jonah 3:2, Jonah 3:4, Jonah 3:5, Jonah 3:8.

1:2 = Preach/declare

1:6 = Pray/call to/invoke

1:14 = Pray/call to/invoke

2:2 = Pray/call to

3:2 = Preach/declare

3:4 = Preach/declare

3:7 = Make a proclamation.

The NIV translates this word as “preach” in 1:2, “call on” in 1:6, “cried out to” in 1:14, “called to” in 2:2, “proclaim” in 3:2, “proclaiming” in 3:4, “proclamation” 3:7.

**5.4.3 Next, look up the word in one of the Hebrew or Greek lexicons provided in Accordance and notice the ranges of meanings for this word. Which best fits the context?**

The different circumstances within the context of the passages changes which shade of meaning קָרָא should take. When God calls Jonah to call against Nineveh - it clearly means preach/declare God's message. Jonah eventually does so in 3:2 and 3:4. However the same word is translated as "call upon" or pray in 1:6 and 1:14 when the sailors are faced with the storm. In 3:7 it takes on another meaning when the king of Nineveh makes a city wide royal proclamation.

## STEP 6. CULTURAL CONTEXT

**6.1 List features of your text which you suspect might be illuminated or explained by a greater knowledge of Jewish or Greco Roman history and culture.**

- a) **Relationship between Israel and Assyria at time of writing**
- b) **Information about Nineveh, capital of Assyria**
- c) **Role and expectations of a prophet in Israel**
- d) **Information about Tarshish.**

**6.2 Choose one of these ancient issues** noted in 6.1 and, using the bibliography in Fee, Sec. II.5 (and any supplementary bibliography), **(a) explore the cultural background a little further** and **(b) explain how this study may aid in an understanding of the cultural milieu of the author.**

a)

**Assyria, Assyrians.** Ancient empire considered the symbol of terror and tyranny in the Near East for more than three centuries. Assyria received its name from the tiny city-state Asshur, on the western bank of the Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). The city was the seat of worship of the sun god Asshur (also spelled Ashur). The Hebrew name occurs frequently in the Bible and is translated Assyria (Gn 2:14), Assur (Ezr 4:2; Ps 83:8), or left as Asshur (Gn 10:11 kjv). The form of the name comes originally from the Akkadian language.

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Assyria, Assyrians](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 219). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

After his death (previous king) the Assyrian power declined; Pitru (Pethor, Nu 22:5) fell into the hands of the Aramaeans and the road to the Mediterranean was blocked. A revival came under Assur-nazir-pal III (884-860 BC) who rebuilt Calah (q.v.) and established the seat of the government at Nineveh, where he erected a palace. Various campaigns were carried

on in the direction of Armenia and Comagene, the brutalities executed upon the enemy being described in detail by their conqueror. He then turned westward, and after receiving homage from the Hittite king of Carchemish, laid the Phoenicians under tribute. The road to the West was thus again secured for the merchants of Assyria.

Sayce, A. H. (1915). [Assyria](#). In J. Orr, J. L. Nuelsen, E. Y. Mullins, & M. O. Evans (Eds.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Vol. 1-5, p. 293). Chicago: The Howard-Severanc Company.

The problem between Assyria and Israel began in the mid-eighth century bc (2 Kgs 15). The biblical account records the king of Israel, Menahem (ca. 745-738 bc), paying tribute to the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 15:19-20). This tribute would have been paid to Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 bc).

Later on, however, Assyria turned on the northern tribe of Israel. This shift seems to have happened when the kingdom of Judah decided to become a vassal to Assyria in an attempt to fend off an invasion from a coalition from Damascus and northern Israel (735-733 bc). King Ahaz of Judah became a vassal to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in his effort to save his kingdom (2 Kgs 16:5-18). Judah's agreement with Assyria meant Assyria considering Israel an enemy.

Wolcott, C. S., & Barry, J. D. (2016). [Exile, Assyrian](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Given the knowledge of Jonah's general period of ministry, we can ascertain that the story occurred during a time of Assyrian weakness. In the first half of the eighth century b.c., especially between the death of Adad-nirari III (810-783 b.c.) and the crowning of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 b.c.), Assyria was fighting to defend itself against the Arameans and Urartians. The Assyrian *Eponym Chronicle* records that Assyria's troubles were aggravated by famine (in 765 and 759 b.c. and perhaps the years between) and internal revolts (763-760 and 746 b.c.), all of which explain the "increasing impotence of the Assyrian monarchs towards the middle of the eighth century BC."

According to G. Roux, "for thirty-six years (781-745 b.c.) Assyria was practically paralysed." W. W. Hallo observes that "even the central provinces maintained only a tenuous loyalty to Assyria, for the various governors ruled in virtual independence." This could explain the otherwise unknown expression "king of Nineveh" (rather than "king of Assyria" found elsewhere) in 3:6. Nineveh was at this time virtually the extent of the king's domain. It also could explain the unusual phrase in 3:7, "By the decree of the king and his nobles." As P. J. N. Lawrence has demonstrated, the precarious position of the king may have necessitated his acknowledging in his decree the power and influence of surrounding provincial governors.

The *Chronicle* also mentions that during the reign of Ashur-dan III (771–754 b.c.) there was a full eclipse of the sun (in 763 b.c.), which some have suggested would have increased Nineveh's receptivity to Jonah's preaching if it occurred not long before he arrived. The period finally culminated in a revolution that installed on the throne the famous Tiglath-Pileser III.

He reestablished Assyrian supremacy, annexing the Aramean kingdoms and subjugating Israel and Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 15–16).

Smith, B. K., & Page, F. S. (1995). *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Vol. 19B, pp. 204–205). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

### **6.3 Evaluate the significance of this background data for the understanding of your passage.**

The background data is helpful in deterring at least some of the potential reasons Jonah would not have wanted to go and preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh. (1) They were enemies in a perpetual state of conflict (2) The Assyrians were a particularly cruel people.

Additionally it helps explain that although the Assyrians were the enemy of Israel, they were at a low point in their national power during the time of Jonah, and God intended to use the window of humility for their own good. The timing could not have been better.

## **STEP 7. CANONICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS**

**7.1 How does your passage compare to other passages in Scripture** which address similar issues?

a) Within the book - Jonah's reluctance to go where God sent him is a vital part of the overall narrative. It is a surprising reaction from a prophet of God, it comes with consequences, and leads to repentance and a realization of God's sovereignty. We don't find out the exact reason of Jonah's reluctance until the last chapter of the book.

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. ESV

b) Within the Old Testament

Other leaders who were called by God were also reluctant at first to obey God, Moses in Exodus chapter 3 tells God that He has made a mistake in calling him to lead Israel, Gideon in Judges chapter 6 is at first reluctant to obey God and lays out a test for God before he will act, Isaiah the prophet

acknowledged his own uncleanness before God to be His messenger (Isa 6). However, none of these other leaders actively tried to flee from God's commission!

c) Within the Bible as a whole.

Jonah's reluctance to deliver God's message is echoed perhaps in Peter's decision to go back to fishing after he had denied the Lord (though the circumstances were different). Additionally Jesus used Jonah's time in the belly of the whale as a type of his own resurrection. Though He did not mention Jonah's initial reaction to flee (Matt 18: 38-41).

**7.2 What does your passage contribute to the overall teaching of this subject in the Bible?** What specifically would be lost or how would the message of the Bible be less complete if your passage did not exist?

Jonah's reluctance and indeed his decision to flee from God is a key part of the Bible. It shows us human frailty, that even prophets can react out of fear, national pride, a desire to see enemies punished or any other combination of toxic reasons. God's response in sending a storm to prevent Jonah from fleeing teaches us about God's sovereignty, His omnipresence, His omnipotence. Ultimately the book of Jonah teaches us about God's love and mercy even for those who are his enemies - leading us on to the fullness of this revelation in Jesus Christ.

Jonah 1:1-6 is a microcosm of human sinfulness, God's authority and ultimately God's love, all beautifully illustrated in six verses.

**7.3 What are the theological implications of your passage?**

- a) You can't run from God - omnipresent
- b) God's hand reaches us wherever we go - omnipotent
- c) God's love and mercy are his overriding character traits - even for His enemies
- d) We should learn to trust and obey God, life will go much better for us than if we disobey and flee from God's will.
- e) God's love and mercy can sometimes be expressed by a "storm" - even if at the time it does now seem like a loving act on God's part. His discipline is for our own good!

## **STEP 8. ACCUMULATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES AND READ WIDELY.**

WHY DO THIS STEP LAST? Scholars and secondary sources are your conversation partners. Learn to ask questions of their perspective, argue with them, listen attentively to their point of view, and then state why you think your perspective is just as valid or more valid, much like you would do if having this conversation at Starbucks. To start with their positions without having investigated the issues yourself is the lazy way out of doing the hard work of exegesis . . . in fact, without doing your own investigation you cannot claim to have exegeted the passage to your congregation or to your peers.

**8.1 Find at least 8 commentaries, books or journal articles which deal with your passage and read the contributions of other scholars.** List the sources here using correct Turabian style). *DO NOT USE MATTHEW HENRY OR OTHER DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARIES! These may add some additional insight, but remember, they did not have access to the most recent manuscript or archeological discoveries nor did they live in the complexity of our modern context.*

**8.2 What are some of the most significant differences** (presuppositional, theological, hermeneutical, etc.) **between your approach and that of some authors you have read?**

**8.3 State a few places where significant differences between you and some scholar(s) demand that you deal with their views in your paper and show why they are wrong** (see Fee, 33). *You need not write your full refutation here.*

YOU ARE NOW READY TO WRITE/PRODUCE YOUR PROJECT (PAPER, SERMON, ETC.)!