

## NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK<sup>1</sup>

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PASSAGE: \_\_\_\_\_Jonah\_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Use this template for your investigation of either Jonah or 1 Thessalonians. Work step by step and answer each question using good observational skills. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps. This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is your personal study and the work product that you will use for the final project at the end of this course.

### STEP 1. SURVEY THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN GENERAL

1.1 Read the entire document in English in one sitting: **YES** X **NO** \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1.1.1 AUTHOR.

- a) What **do you observe** about the author and his circumstances from your reading of the biblical book you are investigating? (For example, is he a skilled writer? This suggests a certain kind of education. Is he concerned with his audience? How can you tell? What does he say about himself?)

I think the author is a skilled writer because he was engaging and readers wanted to keep reading to find out what happened next. He kept the story short and interesting. This is not an ordinary story to tell and almost fictional. I wonder if Jonah actually wrote the story because he was portrayed as a prophet that was disobedient, argumentative, stubborn, and angry. Would a prophet want to document that side of himself in a story? Jonah reluctantly did what he was asked to do after all that drama, and the Ninevites listened to him and repented.

- b) What more do you learn about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing from the **secondary literature** (New Testament and Old Testament Introductions, Critical Commentaries, Critical Bible Dictionaries, etc.)?

The author might draw from two sources, either one of the sailors on the ship for that part of the story or Jonah. The author could be Jonah himself as well.

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<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, Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) and, J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001, 2020).

### 1.1.2. RECIPIENTS:

*Base your answers on what you see in the text itself. You should make educated guesses about the answers to these questions from **your observations**. Only **after you do your work** should you consult secondary literature.*

- a) What do **you observe** about the identity of the recipients?

The recipients were probably Jewish and could be in exile.

- b) What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?

The author probably had the same background as the book's recipients. Both were Jewish and could be in diaspora.

- c) Where do the recipients live?

The recipients probably lived in Israel or neighboring countries.

- d) What are their present circumstances? (For example, are they living under foreign rule? Are they struggling with specific challenges? What do you learn from reading between the lines?)

The recipients were Jewish. They could also be Jewish exiles who lived in a foreign country, among people of other nationalities. They might not understand God's heart for people who were not Israelites, they probably thought God only cared about the Israelites, since they were the chosen people by God.

- e) What historical situation occasioned this writing?

The Ninevites were a group of people who did not know right and wrong, had low moral values and sinful. Not much was known otherwise.

### 1.1.3 PURPOSE:

- a) What is the author's purpose for writing (explicit and implied. Again, you are reading between the lines if not stated outright)?

To tell people about God's heart for humanity, that even though the people were not the chosen Israelites, God still cared about them since they were his creation. God's heart for humanity is for people to repent and turn away from sin, so they could be saved.

Another message is that God has authority to extend grace to whoever he chooses to, even though Jonah, out of his self-righteousness, felt that others didn't deserve it and got angry.

- b) What is the overall theme or concern?

The overall theme is that God loves humanity, and cares for sinners, regardless of their race or nationality.

- c) Does the argument or narrative have an easily discerned outline or storyline?

Yes, the storyline in general is easily discerned. Readers can easily follow what happened and grasp the main theme from the story.

**\*You need to investigate the following from research found in commentaries, dictionaries, etc. before writing your papers and projects. Their research will help you refine the initial observations you are making:**

- Who was the author, and what was his background? (If there are different views, which is the stronger position and why?)

The author could be Jonah himself or another person who documented the story. I would think that the story was written by another person, since Jonah would probably not want to expose his shortcomings as indicated in this story- his anger, his disobedience, and his self-righteousness.

- When did he write, and what was happening at the time the book was written? (Often there are different views. Consider all the different views and ask yourself, how does my answer affect the interpretation?)

The date of the book was unknown. Commentaries suggested that it could be from 750 to 250 BC.

- What was the nature of his ministry?

Not much is known about the nature of the author's ministry. The author was probably Jewish.

- Who was the biblical audience who heard this text, and what were their circumstances?

They were Israelites, they might also be in diaspora and lived among people of other nationalities.

- What kind of relationship did the author have with the audience?

The author was probably Jewish, he might also be in exile and diaspora as the rest of the Israelites.

- Why was he writing?

He wanted to remind the Israelites that God cared about other races and nationalities as well - the non-Israelites that they lived among.

- What kind of relationship did the biblical audience have with God? With each other?

The audience were God's chosen people, who didn't really understand the heart of God for all humanity.

- Are there any other historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book?

What did the Israelites think of people of other nationalities? Did they feel more superior because they were the chosen people while others were not?

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

2.1. Decide where your self-contained passage begins and ends. Compare the paragraphing of seven modern translations (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NET, ASV, NASB, NKJV, etc. See Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 17).

- a) Where does the translation differ? They mostly differ in the use of words. The more modern versions like the NLT and MSG use words that are easier to understand.

- b) Decide for yourself what the basic unit is. Provide clear reasons based on your observations. *The final decision will be part of the whole exegetical process. Not sure what basic unit means?*
- c) **“I intend to focus on the following passage from Jonah OR 1 Thessalonians: \_\_\_\_\_Jonah 4:1-11\_\_\_\_\_.”**

### STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH.

3.1. Read the paragraph through in 5 translations (at least 2 from the more formal side of the spectrum, 2 from the middle, and 1 from the more functional side of the spectrum, see chart on p. 12).

- a) Copy these translations and mark well the differences among these translations (I like using colored highlighters). *This is a helpful step for those who do not know the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek.*

NASB:

1 But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. 2 Then he prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was this not [a]what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore in anticipation of this I fled to Tarshish, since I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, and One who relents of disaster. 3 So now, Lord, please take my [b]life from me, for death is better to me than life.” 4 But the Lord said, “Do you have a good reason to be angry?”

5 Then Jonah left the city and sat down east of [c]it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade, until he could see what would happen in the city. 6 So the Lord God designated a [d]plant, and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head, to [e]relieve him of his discomfort. And Jonah [f]was overjoyed about the plant. 7 But God designated a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered. 8 And when the sun came up God designated a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head so that he became faint, and he begged with all his soul to die, saying, “Death is better to me than life!”

9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to the point of death!” 10 Then the Lord said, “You had compassion on the plant, for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which [g]came up overnight and perished [h]overnight. 11 Should I not also have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people, who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left, as well as many animals?”

ESV:

4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly,[a] 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[b] and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort.[c] 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?"

NIV:

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant[a] and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. 7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

9 But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

10 But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

NLT:

This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. 2 So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. 3 Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen."

4 The Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

5 Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 And the Lord God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

7 But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. 8 And as the sun grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than living like this!" he exclaimed.

9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?"

"Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!"

10 Then the Lord said, “You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. 11 But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, [a] not to mention all the animals. Shouldn’t I feel sorry for such a great city?”

MSG:

1-2 *Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, “God! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That’s why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!*

3 *“So, God, if you won’t kill them, kill me! I’m better off dead!”*

4 *God said, “What do you have to be angry about?”*

5 *But Jonah just left. He went out of the city to the east and sat down in a sulk. He put together a makeshift shelter of leafy branches and sat there in the shade to see what would happen to the city.*

6 *God arranged for a broad-leafed tree to spring up. It grew over Jonah to cool him off and get him out of his angry sulk. Jonah was pleased and enjoyed the shade. Life was looking up.*

7-8 *But then God sent a worm. By dawn of the next day, the worm had bored into the shade tree and it withered away. The sun came up and God sent a hot, blistering wind from the east. The sun beat down on Jonah’s head and he started to faint. He prayed to die: “I’m better off dead!”*

9 *Then God said to Jonah, “What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?”*

*Jonah said, “Plenty of right. It’s made me angry enough to die!”*

10-11 *God said, “What’s this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can’t I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don’t yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?”*

Verses	NASB	ESV	NIV	NLT	MSG
1-2	displeased; prayed; relents of disasters	displeased; prayed; relenting from disasters	Seemed very wrong; prayed; relents from sending calamity	This change of plans upset; complained; turn back from destroying people	Lost his temper; yelled; ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!
4, 9	Have a good reason	Do well to be	Is it right	Is it right	What do you have
5-8	Shelter; designated; was overjoyed about the plant; begged with all his soul to die	booth; appointed; exceedingly glad about the plant; asked that he might die	Shelter; provided; was very happy about the plant; wanted to die	shelter; arranged; was very grateful for the plant; wide to die	Makeshift shelter; arranged; was pleased and enjoyed, life was looking up; prayed to die

Verses	NASB	ESV	NIV	NLT	MSG
10-11	Had compassions; know the difference between their right hand and their left	Pity; know their right hand from their left	concerned; cannot tell their right hand from their left	Feel sorry about; people living in spiritual darkness	Sent; changed your feelings; don't yet know right from wrong

- b) Make a list (or chart) of the differences. *This chart will help you keep organized and sharpen your observation skills.*

3.2 Determine which of these differences are exegetically significant (i.e., how do these differences affect the meaning?).

- Are the differences a matter of the translators using different words (synonyms)? Most of them are
- Are the differences a matter of grammar? Will need to do more research to find out.
- Are the differences stylistic or reflect a theological preference? In verses 2 and 10, “change of plans” were used in NLT and MSG, as opposed to God relents of disaster in other versions. This might indicate a difference in theological preference.
- Are the differences due to variations in the manuscript evidence (i.e., textual criticism)? *Pay particular attention to marginal notes since they usually refer to matters of textual criticism (differences among Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that have survived).* Will need to do more research to find out.