# Jonah

Jonah is a story about a prophet of the same name, who reluctantly delivered a message to the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh.

Although the the story is set sometime in the mid-8th Century BCE, it’s a third-person account, and its Hebrew text shows influence from Aramaic – so it may have been written by someone else after the Babylonian exile, possibly Ezra.

Is it an historical account, or was it just a popular story to teach a moral lesson?

Well, archaeologists have not (yet) found evidence outside of the Bible for these events. However, Jesus spoke about the trials of Jonah at Matthew 12:39-41; therefore, many conclude that it’s a real story. Yet we must remember that Jesus also used fictional stories (parables) to teach – so modern Bible scholars are divided on the matter.

The traditional Jewish view is that the events were real, and the early Christians shared this view. Muslims also view the book as reporting real events.

*Large parts of this book are poetry*

Something that only a Bible translator would notice is when words are in the form of Hebrew poetry. There’s a definite cadence that can be seen in the original language. These portions are written in the style of poetic verses.

*Why use poetry?*

Poetry must conform to a certain rhythm and style. These act as memory aids, helping you to recall the words, making it easier for messages to be spread via the most common communication method of the time: song.

### Jonah

## Chapter 1

1The Word of Jehovah came to Jonah (son of AmaThi), and said:

 2*‘Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh and make this proclamation against it; for, cries of their evil have reached up to Me.’*

3However, Jonah got up and decided to flee from the face of Jehovah [all the way] to Tharsis! For he went down to JopPa and there he found a boat that was sailing to Tharsis, then he paid his fare, boarded, and preceded to sail away from the face of Jehovah.

4But then Jehovah raised a wind over the sea that created huge swells, and [soon] the boat was in danger of breaking up. 5Of course, this made the sailors so frightened that they each started yelling out to their own gods, and they started throwing things into the sea to lighten the load.

Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down into the ship’s hold and fallen asleep, and then he started snoring. 6So the ship’s captain went down to him and said:

 ‘Why are you [just lying there] snoring? Get up and call to your God so He will save us and we won’t be destroyed!’

7Well at that, each man started saying to his companion:

 ‘Come, let’s throw lots to find out why this evil has fallen on us!’

So they threw lots, and the lot fell to Jonah. 8And they asked him if he knew the reason why this evil had come down upon them. They also asked what he did for a living and where he came from (what kind of place and what kind of people).

9Then he told them:

 ‘I’m a servant of Jehovah, the God of the heavens… I worship the One who made the seas and the dry land.’

10Well at that, the men became very frightened and they asked him what he’d done, because they realized that he was running away. So he explained [to them all that had happened].

11Then they asked him:

 ‘So, what must we do to you in order to calm the sea?’

And just as they asked this, the sea rose in a great swell.

12So Jonah told them:

 ‘Just pick me up and throw me into the sea… Then it’ll become calm for you. I know that that these great swells have come upon you because of me.’

13Nevertheless, the men pressed on and they tried to reach land… But they couldn’t – the sea [kept pushing] against them.

14So they called out to Jehovah and said:

 ‘Please don’t destroy us over the life of this man, because we don’t want the blood of the righteous held against us! But for You, O Lord, we’ll do whatever You want.’

15So then they took Jonah and threw him into the sea… And suddenly the sea became still and stopped tossing about! 16As a result, the men became very frightened of Jehovah, and they made vows to Him and offered sacrifices to Him.

17Then Jehovah ordered a great sea creature to swallow Jonah, and he stayed in its belly for three days and three nights.

### Jonah

## Chapter 2

1Well, from from the belly of the sea creature, Jonah prayed to Jehovah his God, 2saying this:

 ‘In my affliction, I called out to You,
 O Jehovah, my God,
 And You paid attention to me.
 I’ve called from the belly of the place of the dead,
 And from there, You listened to my voice!

 3‘You threw me into the heart of the sea…
 Into the depths of its waters,
 And by the sea, I was covered.

 ‘Then I asked, as their waves and crests poured upon me:

 4*‘Have I been pushed away from Your eyes…*
 *Won’t I see Your Holy Temple again?*

 5‘But the waters were rolling around me,
 And then, they entered my soul…
 By the deep, I was encircled,
 And my head went under the water.

 6‘I went down between mountain fissures…
 Through the earth and its bars of the ages.
 And I said:

 *‘O Jehovah, my God;*
 *Let my soul rise above this corruption!’*

 7‘Then, as my life was reaching [its end],
 You noticed [my bad situation];
 For my prayers had ascended to You…
 Yes, to You in Your Holy Temple!

 8‘Some pay attention to things that are foolish,
 While others will listen to lies…
 For they’ve given up on Your mercy.
 9But, with my voice, I’ll praise You,
 And I’m offering [this song] as my sacrifice.
 For I’ll do everything that I’ve promised
 If you’ll just save me, Jehovah!’

10And at that, the Lord gave orders to the large sea creature, and it vomited Jonah out on dry land.

### Jonah

## Chapter 3

1Well thereafter, The Word of Jehovah came to Jonah a second time and said:

 2*‘Now, you must get up and travel to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim My words over it, just as I told you before!’*

3So Jonah got up, and for the next three days he traveled to Nineveh, just as the Lord had told him (for God considered Nineveh to be a great city).

4Then when Jonah arrived at the city, he spent [a full] day traveling through it proclaiming:

 ‘In just three days, Nineveh will be wiped away!’

5Well, because the men of Nineveh believed in God, they called for a fast and for everyone (from the least to the greatest) to wear sackcloth. 6And when [Jonah’s] words reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, removed all of his clothes and put on sackcloth, and then he sat in ashes. 7

The king and his great men also sent a proclamation throughout Nineveh, that said:

 ‘The people may not eat anything, [nor may they feed] their cattle, oxen, or sheep… They may not eat or drink anything at all!

 8‘They must each wrap themselves and their cattle in sackcloth as they all fervently call out to God! Also, every man must turn from his wicked ways and from the sins of his hands and say:

 9*‘Who knows if God will change His mind and turn from the anger of His rage, so that we’ll not perish?’*

10Well, when God saw what they were doing and that they’d turned from their wicked ways, He changed His mind over the evil things that He said He’d do to them, and He didn’t do anything.

### Jonah

## Chapter 4

1However, Jonah was very upset and confused by this...

2So he prayed to Jehovah and said:

 ‘O Lord,

 ‘Wasn’t this what I said [would happen] when I was back in my own land?

 ‘It was because of something like this that I thought about fleeing to Tharsis! For I knew that because You’re kind, sympathetic, lenient, and full of mercy, You’d change Your mind about doing such evil!

 3‘So now, O Master and Lord, please kill me… For it’d be better for me to die than to go on living!’

4And the Lord asked:

 *‘Has this [really] grieved you that much?’*

5Well thereafter, Jonah left the city and sat down in front of it… He built a shelter and just sat there, staring at it.

6Then Jehovah God provided a gourd [plant] that grew up over Jonah’s head to shade him during this bad [time]. And Jonah became very happy and joyful over the gourd [plant].

7But then, early the next morning, God sent a worm which killed the [plant] and dried it up. 8And just as the sun was rising, God also sent a burning wind, which (along with the sun) burned Jonah’s head. So he became discouraged to the point where he wanted to just resign from life.

For he said:

 ‘It’s better for me to die than to live!’

9Then God asked Jonah:

 *‘Are you [really] that grieved over the gourd [plant]?’*

And he replied:

 ‘Yes, I’m grieved to the point of death!’

10And the Lord said:

 *‘You treated that plant so tenderly… You nourished it and worked hard over it, even though it grew up in a single night and was gone before the next evening! 11So, shouldn’t I spare this great city where 120,000 people now live who don’t know their right hands from their left… Along with all of their cattle?’*