

Jonah 1:1–8—Logoprosodic Analysis

Translation and Textual Notes

I. Jonah’s Flight as a Descent—“He went down”

Jonah 1:1–8

A. Strophe 1: Jonah’s Commission to Go to Nineveh & “Proclaim against It” (1:1–2) [5.5]

1:1	And it was (that) / the word of YHWH came / to Jonah ben-Amittai / saying //	10 2 _13 2_	3 3 0 5 5 0
1:2	Arise / Go to Nineveh / that great city / And proclaim against it // for their evil has come up / before me //	_2 1_ _18 2_ 9 2 18 2	1 1 0 1 1 0 2 2 0 4 0 4
		Obad 19–Jonah 1:2	66 52 14

B. Strophe 2: Jonah’s Flight from YHWH—a Journey Down to the Depths (1:3) [5.8]

1:3	But Jonah arose / to flee to Tarshish / away from / YHWH // and he went down to Joppa /	25 4 _8 1_	6 6 0 2 0 2
		Obad 19–Jonah 1:3c	74 58 16
	And he found a ship / going to (and from) Tarshish /	_17 2_	4 0 4
		1:1–3c	32 22 10
	And he paid the passage money / and he went down in it / to go with them / to Tarshish / away from / YHWH //	15 2 20 4	4 0 4 5 0 5
		Obad 20–Jonah 1:3c	69 43 26

C. Strophe 3: YHWH’s “Perfect Storm” Elicits Fear on the part of the Sailors (1:4–5b) [7.4]

1:4	And YHWH / hurled a great wind / toward the sea /	_20 3_	6 6 0
		1:2–4a	39 20 19
	And there was a great tempest ^a on the sea //	_13 1_	4 4 0
		1:1–3c	51 32 19
	And the ship / had a mind / to break up //	18 3	3 0 3
		1:3–4	34 16 18
1:5	And the sailors / ^a were afraid / and they cried out / each to his own god /	12 2 13 2	2 2 0 4 4 0
		Obad 19–Jonah 1:5	106 74 32

D. Strophe 4: The Sailors Lighten the Ship and Jonah Goes Deep in Sleep (1:5c–g) [5.5]

And they hurled the cargo /	13	1	3	3	0
that was in the ship / into the sea /	_13	2_	4	4	0
	1:4–5d		26	23	3

To lighten / its load //	_11	2_	2	2	0
	1:1–5d		69	47	22

But Jonah / went down / into the farthest reaches of the vessel /	19	3	5	0	5
and he lay down / and he went deep into sleep //	_9	2_	2	0	2
	1:2–5		68	39	29

E. Strophe 5: The Captain of the Sailors Asks Jonah to Pray in Their Behalf (1:6) [4.7]

1:6	So the captain of the sailors / came to him /	13	2	4	4	0
	and he said to him / “What is this, O sleeper? ” //	_13	2_	5	5	0
		1:4–6b	44	34	10	

Arise / call out to your God /	_13	2_	4	0	4
	1:4–6c		48	34	14

Perhaps / the God will give a thought / to us /	18	3	4	0	4
so that we do not perish //	_7	2_	2	0	2
	1:5–6		41	24	17

F. Strophe 6: Lots are Cast & Jonah Is Found to be the Source of Their Plight (1:7) [8.5]

1:7	And they said / each one to his companions / “Come /	18	3	5	5	0
	let us cast lots / that we may know /	18	2	3	3	0
	on whose account / this evil / has come upon us” //	_18	3_	4	4	0
		1:6a–d	47	30	17	

So they cast / lots /	12	2	2	0	2
and the lot / ^a fell / on Jonah //	_14	3_	4	0	4
	1:1–7		113	68	45

G. Strophe 7: The Sailor Seek Information from Jonah (1:8) [5.5]

1:8	And they said to him / “Tell us now /	21	2	5	5	0
	on whose / account has this evil / come upon us? //	_19	3_	5	5	0
		1:5–8b	69	46	23	

What is your profession / and where do you come from? /	16	2	4	0	4
What is your country / and of what people / are you? //	_16	3_	6	0	6
	1:6–8		57	31	26

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (5.5).(5.8) . (7.4).(5.5).(4.7) . (8.5).(5.5)
 = (10 + 12) + (11 + 10 + 11) + (12 + 10)
 = **23 + 32 + 23 = 78**
 or: **55 // 55** {with pivot counted in each half}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 133 = 66 + 1 + 66 [word count]
 or: 67 // 67 [with pivot counted in each half]

Notes:

- 1:3^a Reading *deḥi* in BHS as conjunctive.
 1:5^a Reading *munah* preceded immediately by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
 1:7^a Reading *mērəkā* here in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Jonah 1:1–8 has 7 strophes: 1:1–2, 3, 4–5a, 5bc, 6, 7 and 8.

A	1:1–2	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(10 + [13 + 2]) + 18 + (9 + 18)	= 25 + 18 + 27	morae
B	1:3	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(17 + [8 + 8]) + 17 + (15 + 20)	= 35 + 17 + 35	morae
C	1:4	balanced dyad + pivot:	(20 + 13 + 18)	= 20 + 13 + 18	morae
	1:5a	balanced dyad:	(12 + 13)	= 12 + 13	morae
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	1:5bc	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(13 + 13) + 11 + (19 + 9)	= 26 + 12 + 28	morae
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C	1:6	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(13 + 13) + 13 + (18 + 7)	= 26 + 13 + 25	morae
B	1:7a	balanced triad:	(18 + 18 + 18)	= 18 + 18 + 18	morae
	1:7bc	balanced dyad:	(12 + 14)	= 12 + 14	morae
A	1:8a	balanced dyad:	(21 + 19)	= 21 + 19	morae
	1:8b	balanced dyad:	(16 + 16)	= 16 + 16	morae

2. The first strophe (1:1–2) is a single part.
- Ob 19–Jn 1:2 **52** (= **26 x 2**) words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (1:3) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count.
- 1:1–3a **26** words
 - Ob 19–Jn 1:3c **58** (= **26 + 32**) words before *atnach*
 - 1:1–3c **32** (= **2x2x2x2x2**) words
 - Ob 20–Jn 1:3c **69** = **43 + 26** [compositional formula]
4. The third strophe (1:4–5b) has two parts: 1:4 and 5ab.
- 1:3–4 **34** (= **2x17**) words

- 1:1–4 **32** words before *atnach*
 - Ob 19–Jn 1:5b **32** words after *atnach*
5. The fourth strophe (1:5c–g) is a single part.
- 1:4–5d **26** words and **23** words before *atnach*
 - 1:1–5e **69** (= **23** x 3) words
 - 1:2–5 **68** (= **17** x 4) words
6. The fifth strophe (1:6) is a single part.
- 1:4–6 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 1:6a–d **17** words
 - 1:5–6 **17** words after *atnach*
7. The sixth strophe (1:7) has two parts.
- 1:1–7 **68** (= **17** x 4) words before *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (1:8) has two parts: 1:8ab and 8cd.
- 1:6–8 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 1:5–8b **69** = **46** + **23** [compositional formula]
 - 1:1–8 **78** (= **26** x 3) words before *atnach*

Observations

1. The five strophes in Jonah 1:1–8 may be outlined in a concentric pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds in terms of the inverse concentric arrangement of syntactic accentual-stress units, rather than content as such—though repetition of themes underscores the concentric structure found in the prosodic analysis to some degree.

A	Jonah’s commission to “proclaim against” the city of Nineveh	[5.5]	1:1–2
B	Jonah’s flight from Yhwh—a journey <i>down</i> to the depths	[5.8]	1:3
C	Yhwh’s “perfect storm” elicits fear on the part of the sailors	[7.4]	1:4–5b
X	As the sailors lighten the ship, Jonah goes deep in sleep	[5.5]	1:5c–g
C’	The captain of the sailors asks Jonah to pray in their behalf	[4.7]	1:6
B’	They cast lots to determine the source of their plight / Jonah found out	[8.5]	1:7
A’	The sailors seek information from Jonah: “Who are you?”	[5.5]	1:8

2. An important structural feature of the book of Jonah is the distribution of the adjective “great,” particularly within the first “movement” of the work. Though the Hebrew root *gdל* (“to be great”) appears fifteen times in the book (in a total of 688 words; or 2.2% of the actual words in the book), twelve of these occurrences are in the form of the adjective, which appears to be distributed for rhetorical effect [I have bolded these occurrences in the English translation]. The phrase **great city** appears four times, framing each of the two “movements” of the musical composition as a whole. Eight occurrences of “great” appear in the first “movement” and four in the second, distributed as follows:

1:2	Great City
1:4	Great Wind
1:4–9	Great Storm—Great Fear
1:12–16	Great Storm—Great Fear
2:1	Great Fish
3:2	Great City
3:3	Great City
4:1	Great Evil [Jonah’s anger]
4:6	Great Joy [over the <i>qiqayon</i> -plant]
4:11	Great City

3. The Hebrew word יָרַד (“to go down”) is of primary importance in the structure of the book of Jonah. As numerous commentators have noted, the book as a whole can be diagrammed as a huge letter “U”—with Jonah making his journey down in the first half of the book, and then upward in the second. As we will see, this motif is carried over into the level of careful literary punning on both verbs—“to go down” and “to go up.” And both of these verbs appear in a carefully structured 3 + 1 pattern.

A	Jonah’s flight as a descent (<i>yrd</i> , “to go down”)	1:1–8
B	The men try to return (<i>šwb</i>) to dry land	1:10–16
X	Turning point: Jonah’s final descent and “resurrection”	2:1–10
B’	The people of Nineveh turn (<i>šwb</i>) from evil	3:1–10
A’	Jonah’s plight portrayed as a possible ascent (<i>‘lh</i> , “to go up”)	4:1–11

The first three occurrences of the verb *yrd* (“to go down”) are in 1:3 (twice) and 1:5, with the climax in 2:7 when Jonah makes his final plunge into the far reaches of the Netherworld. At the same time, the poet plays with the sounds of this key word in an artful manner:

<i>wayyēred</i>	and he went down to Joppa
<i>wayyēred</i>	and he went down in it (the ship)
<i>yārad</i>	he went down (into the farthest reaches of the vessel)
<i>wayyērādam</i>	and he went deep into sleep

The pun is echoed further as the captain of the sailors addresses Jonah, “O sleeper (*nirdām*).” But the fourth and final occurrence of the key verb in question comes later when Jonah goes down (*yāradtī*, “I went down”) to the roots of the mountains at the structural center of the book of Jonah as a whole in 2:7. The words *wayyērādam* and *nirdām* come from an entirely different root—that of *rdm*, “fall into heavy sleep,” like that of Abraham (Jonah 15:12), when he received YHWH’s revelation about the 400 years his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt. This same word *tardēmāh* is used to describe the deep sleep of Adam when Eve was removed from his body (Jonah 2:21)

The principle of 3 + 1 structuring is well known in depth psychology. Carl Jung explores this matter using the Four Gospels as an example, where he shows the chiasmic relationship between the four—with Matthew (the Gospel to the Jews) and John (the Gospel to the “Greeks”) as a structural pair, and Mark [the Gospel of Peter] and Luke [the Gospel of Paul] sharing other features that tie them closely together as a second pair. At the same time, we

have three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) set over against the Gospel of John (which Jung describes as the Gnostic Gospel). The same principle is perhaps more readily seen in the last four books of the Torah:

Exodus	Leviticus
Numbers	Deuteronomy

The close tie between Exodus and Deuteronomy is felt by anyone who has the task of writing a commentary on either of these books—for both record the giving of the Ten Commandments, both contain a “Song of Moses” (Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32), both contain extensive “Law Codes,” etc. And the “wilderness” books of Leviticus and Numbers make them an obvious structural pair as well. At the same time, Deuteronomy has qualities that set it apart as quite different from the other three “wilderness” books. This same structuring feature is prominent in the book of Jonah.

- Another literary phenomenon of note in the book of Jonah is the presence of two circular sentences, both of which include, or are closely associated with, sophisticated literary punning—here in 1:3 and subsequently in 3:7–8. The concentric literary structure of 1:3 may be displayed as follows:

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish, away from YHWH;
 And he went down to Joppa,
 And he found a ship
 Plying the Tarshish route
 And he paid the passage money;
 And he went down in it—
 To go with them to Tarshish away from YHWH.

- Jonah 1:1–8 has 521 letters in BHS. The structural center in terms of letter-count falls between the first and second letters of the word הַיָּם “the sea” in Jonah 1:5a, with 260 letters on either side. The initial *concentric compositional formula* on the basis of letter-count is:

$$521 = 260 + 1 + 260 \quad \text{[letter-count]}$$

or: 261 // 261

A possible **meaningful center** is found in the following 23-letter statement:

אשר באניה אל הים which are in the ship into the sea
 להקל מעליהם to lighten its load

The initial *concentric compositional formula* on the basis of letter-count is:

$$521 = 249 + 23 + 249 \quad \text{[letter-count]}$$

or: **272 // 272** [with pivot counted in each half]

{272 = 17 x 2⁴}

6. In terms of the 133 words in Jonah 1:1–8, the **arithmological center** falls on the word הים (“the sea”) in Jonah 1:5a, with 66 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** on the basis of word-count is:

$$133 = 66 + 1 + 66 \quad \text{[word count]}$$

$$\text{or: } 67 // 67 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

One candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by adding two words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

להקל מעליהם הים באניה אל In the ship into the sea to lighten its load.

In this instance, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$133 = 64 + 5 + 64 \quad \text{[word count]}$$

$$\text{or: } 69 // 69 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

This statement, however, is not a full sentence. A more convincing **meaningful center** is found by adding six words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

ויטלו את הכלים אשר באניה And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship,
 אל הים להקל מעליהם Into the sea to lighten its load.
 ויונה ירד אל ירכתי And Jonah went down into the farthest reaches.

In this instance, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$133 = 60 + 13 + 60 \quad \text{[word count]}$$

$$\text{or: } 73 // 73 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

If the eight words in the “heading” of the book of Jonah are removed, the **arithmological center** of Jonah 1:2–8, shifts to the word ירד (“he went down”), with 62 words on either side, which constitutes an impressive **meaningful center** (see Observation 3 above).

$$125 = 62 + 1 + 62 \quad \text{[word count]}$$

$$\text{or: } 63 // 63 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

7. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Jonah 1:1–8

$$133 = 64 + 5 + 64 \quad \text{or: } 69 // 69$$

$$133 = 60 + 13 + 60 \quad \text{or: } 73 // 73$$

{with others in between}

$$133 = 20 + 93 + 20 \quad \text{or: } 113 // 113$$

$$133 = 10 + 113 + 10 \quad \text{or: } 123 // 123$$

$$78 = 23 + 32 + 23 \quad \text{or: } 55 // 55 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$\{78 = 26 \times 3 \text{ and } 55 = 23 + 32\}$$

$$32 = 9 + 14 + 9 \quad \text{or: } 23 // 23 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

8. In the prosodic structure of Jonah 1:1–8 as a whole, the basic building blocks (**briques**) in each poetic **verset** are the **primary syntactic accentual stress units**. These sub-units are delineated by the Masoretes, who marked the boundaries with one of the following:

- **Soph Pasuq** A large colon following a word signifies the end of a verse, which does not always coincide with the end of a sentence.
- **Atnach** A small caret-like mark (like ^) beneath the consonantal text, pointing upward, is used to divide most verses. Its primary importance for our purposes concerns its use in the matter of numerical composition—i.e., the total word-count in each line is divided into the number of words before and after *atnach*.

In the prosodic analysis presented with the translation (above), the presence of these two primary disjunctive markers is indicated with a double slash (/). Jonah 1:1–8 has 32 **briques** (primary stress units), 26 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (8 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (7 times, in each verse, except verse 1), and *zaqeph qaton* (11 times, in verses 1, 4, 5 [twice], 6 [twice], 7 [twice], and 8 [3 times]). The boundaries of the six remaining **briques** are marked by *revia* (3 times, in verses 3, 5 and 7), *tiḥa* (2 times, in verses 2 and 6) and *geres* (1 time, in verse 3).

9. The prosodic structure of Jonah 1:1–8, in terms of its **primary syntactic accentual stress units (briques)**, may be displayed as follows [^ is *atnach*; : is *soph pasuq*; † is *zaqeph qaton*; and † is any other such boundary marker]:

A ¹ wayəhî dəḅar **yhwh** † ʔel yônāh ben ʔāmittay lēʔmôr :

² qûm lēk ʔel nînəwēh hāʕîr haggəḏôlāh † ûqrāʔ ʕālêha ^
kî ʕāləṭāh rāʕāṭām ləpānāy :

B ³ wayyāqām yônāh liḅrōaḥ taršîšah milliḵnê **yhwh** ^
wayyēred yāpô wayyimšāʔ ʔonîyāh bāʔāh taršîš † wayyittēn šəḵārāh †
wayyēred bāh lāḅôʔ ʕimmāhem taršîšah milliḵnê **yhwh** :

C ⁴ wa-**yhwh** hēṭîl rūaḥ gəḏôlāh ʔel hayyām † wayəhî saʕar gāḏôl bayyām ^
wəhāʔonîyāh ḥiššəḅāh ləhiššəḅēr :

⁵ wayyîrəʔû hammallāḥîm † wayyizʕāqû ʔîš ʔel ʔəlōhāyw †

X	wayyāṭîlû ʔel hakkēlîm ʔāšer bāʔonîyāh ʔel hayyām † ləhāqəl mēʕālêhem ^ wəyônāh yārad ʔel yarkəṭê hassəḵîmāh † wayyišḵaḅ wayyērāḏam :
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C' ⁶ wayyiqraḅ ʔəlāyw raḅ haḥōḅēl † wayyōʔmer lô mah ləḵa **nirdām** ^
qûm qərāʔ ʔel ʔəlōhēḵa † ʔûlay yîṭʕāššēt hāʔəlōhîm lānû † wəlōʔ nōʔḅēḏ :

B' ⁷ wayyōʔmərû ʔîš ʔel rēʕhû † ləḵû wənappîlāh gōrālôt †
wənēḏəʕāh bəšelləmi hārāʕāh hazzōʔ lānû ^
wayyappîlû gōrālôt wayyipḏol ʕal lānû :

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