

# Jonah 3:1–10—Logoprosodic Analysis

## Translation and Textual Notes

### IV. The People of Nineveh Turn from Evil

### Jonah 3:1–10

#### A. Strophe 1: YHWH Renews Jonah's Commission to Go to Nineveh (3:1–2)

[5.4]

3:1	And the word of YHWH came / to Jonah \ <sup>a</sup> a second time (saying) //	10 1 _13 1_	3 3 0 4 4 0
		2:7–3:1	54 34 20
3:2	“Arise! / Go to Nineveh /  That <b>great city</b> //	_10 2_  _10 1_	4 4 0 2 2 0
		2:9–3:2a	34 25 9
		2:6–3:2b	69 46 23
	And proclaim to it / the proclamation / that I / am about to tell you” //	17 2 17 2	4 0 4 4 0 4
		2:9–3:2	44 27 17

#### B. Strophe 2: Jonah Goes to Nineveh to Proclaim a Five-Word Message (3:3–4)

[7.10]

3:3	So Jonah arose / and he went / to Nineveh / according to the word of YHWH // and Nineveh <sup>a</sup> / was a <b>great city</b> / to God /	17 3 6 1 24 3	5 5 0 2 2 0 5 0 5
		3:2–3c	26 13 13
	A journey / of three days //	_11 2_  _16 2_	3 0 3 23 7 16
		3:2b–3	
3:4	And Jonah began / by going into the city /  A journey \ <sup>a</sup> of one day //	_16 2_  _8 1_	4 4 0 3 3 0
		3:2–4a	33 17 16
		2:11–4b	51 30 21
	And he cried out \ <sup>b</sup> and he said / “There remain but / forty days / and Nineveh / shall be ‘overturned’” //	17 3 10 2	5 0 5 2 0 2
		3:1–4	50 27 23

#### C. Strophe 3: In Response to Jonah's Message, Nineveh Repents (3:5–7)

[7.(6.6).7]

3:5	And the people of Nineveh / believed / God //	_21 3_  _21 3_	4 4 0 4 4 0
		2:11–3:5a	62 34 28

	And they proclaimed a fast /	3:3-5b	<u>7</u> 1_	<u>2</u> 0 2	35 18 17
	And they put on sackcloth / from the greatest of them / to the least of them //		8 1 <u>12</u> 2	2 0 2 <u>3</u> 0 3	69 34 35
3:6	And the word reached / the king of Nineveh / and he arose \ <sup>a</sup> from his throne / And he threw off / <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">his royal robe</span> // and he donned sackcloth /		16 2 8 1 15 2 <u>4</u> 1_	5 5 0 2 2 0 3 3 0 <u>2</u> 0 2	23 14 9
	And he sat \ <sup>a</sup> in ashes //	3:5-6	<u>10</u> 1_	<u>3</u> 0 3	26 14 12
3:7	And he cried out / and he said \ <sup>a</sup> in Nineveh / from a 'judgment' of the king / and his grandees / saying //	3:6-7b	14 2 <u>17</u> 3	3 3 0 <u>4</u> 4 0	22 17 5
	'Human beings and animals / cattle and sheep /	3:6-7c	<u>22</u> 2_	<u>4</u> 0 4	26 17 9
	Let them not taste / anything / <span style="background-color: cyan;">let them not graze (be evil)</span> / and water / let them not drink //	3:6-7	10 2 4 1 <u>12</u> 2	3 0 3 2 0 2 <u>3</u> 0 3	<b>34 17 17</b>
<b>D. Strophe 4: The People Put on Sackcloth in Hopes God Will "Repent" (3:8-9) [10.7]</b>					
3:8	Let them don sackcloth / human beings / and animals / let them call out to God / mightily //	3:6-8b	21 3 <u>15</u> 2_	4 4 0 <u>4</u> 4 0	42 25 17
	Let them turn / each one / from his evil way / and from the violence / which is in their hands //	3:5-8	19 3 <u>15</u> 2_	4 0 4 <u>4</u> 0 4	61 29 32
3:9	Who knows? / <sup>a</sup>	3:7-9a	<u>7</u> 1_	<u>2</u> 2 0	37 17 20
	He may turn / indeed the God / may repent // he may turn / from his burning anger / so that we do not perish //	3:8-9	14 3 11 2 <u>7</u> 1_	3 3 0 3 0 3 <u>2</u> 0 2	<b>26 13 13</b>

E. Strophe 5: God Saw Their Repentance and Changed His Mind (3:10) [4.5]

<p>3:10 And the God saw / their deeds / that they turned / from their evil way //</p>	<p>15 2 <u>16 2</u></p>	<p>4 4 0 <u>4 4 0</u></p>	<p>3:8–10b <b>34 21 13</b></p>
<p>And the God “repented” / from the evil / that he said /<sup>a</sup> he would do to them / and he did not do it //</p>	<p>19 2 <u>18 3</u></p>	<p>4 0 4 <u>6 0 6</u></p>	<p>3:8–10 <b>44 21 23</b></p>
	<p>3:1–10</p>	<p><span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">139</span> <b>69 70</b></p>	
	<p>1:1–3:10</p>	<p><b>505 276 229</b></p>	

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (5.4).(7.10) . (7.(6.6).7) . (10.7).(4.5)  
 = (9 + 17) + 26 + (17 + 9) = **26 + 26 + 26 = 78**  
 or: **52 // 52** [with pivot counted in each half]  
 {**52 = 26 x 2**}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 139 = **69 + 1 + 69** [word count]  
 {**69 = 23 x 3**}

505 = 252 + 1 + 252 [word count—for Jonah 1:1–3:10]  
 {or: **253 // 253**} [with pivot counted in each half]  
 {**253 = 23 x 11**}

**Notes:**

- 3:1<sup>a</sup> Reading *tīp̄ḥa* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 3:3<sup>a</sup> Reading *nīnəwēh* (Nineveh, 5 morae) with many Hebrew Mss and printed editions in place of *nīnəweh* (4 morae) in BHS.
- 3:4<sup>a</sup> Reading *tīp̄ḥa* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 3:4<sup>b</sup> Reading *pašṭa* followed immediately by *zaqep̄ qaton* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 3:7<sup>a</sup> Reading *pašṭa* followed immediately by *zaqep̄ qaton* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 3:9<sup>a</sup> Reading *munaḥ* preceded immediately by *gaʿya* (= *meteḡ*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 3:10<sup>a</sup> Reading *merka* followed immediately by *gaʿya* (= *meteḡ*) in Letteris as disjunctive; BHS omits the *gaʿya* (= *meteḡ*).

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Jonah 3:1–10 has 5 strophes: 3:1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–9 and 10.

A	3:1–2	triad & dyad + pivot:	$(10 + 13 + 10) + 10 + (17 + 17)$	=	$33 + 10 + 34$	morae
B	3:3a–c	balanced dyad:	$(17 + 6) + 24$	=	$23 + 24$	morae
	3:3d–4	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(11 + 16) + 8 + ([8 + 9] + 10)$	=	$27 + 8 + 27$	morae

X	3:5	balanced dyad + pivot:	$(21 + 7 + [8 + 12])$	=	$21 + 7 + 20$	morae
	3:6–7b	2 dyads & triad in balance:	$([16 + 8] + [15 + 4]) + (10 + 14 + 17)$	=	$43 + 41$	morae
	3:7c–f	dyad & triad in balance:	$(13 + 9) + (10 + 4 + 8)$	=	$22 + 22$	morae

B	3:8	2 balanced dyads:	$(21 + 15) + (19 + 15)$	=	$36 + 34$	morae
		{verse 3:8cd functions as a “bridge” connecting these two sections and belonging to both}				
	3:8c–9	dyad & triad + pivot:	$(19 + 15) + 7 + (14 + 11 + 7)$	=	$34 + 7 + 32$	morae
A	3:10ab	balanced dyad:	$(15 + 16)$	=	$15 + 16$	morae
	3:10c–e	balanced dyad:	$(19 + 18)$	=	$19 + 18$	morae

2. The first strophe (3:1–2) is a single part, which is divided into 4 subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:1, 2a, 2b and 2cd.

- 2:7–3:1      **34** (= 17 x 2) words before *atnach*
- 2:9–3:2a      **34** (= 17 x 2) words
- 2:6–3:2a      **69 = 46 + 23** [compositional formula]

3. The second strophe (3:3–4) has two parts, which are divided into a total of 5 subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:3a–c, 3d, 4a, 4b and 4cd.

- 3:2–3b      **26 = 13 + 13** [compositional formula]
- 3:2b–3      **23** words
- 3:2–4a      **17** words before *atnach*
- 3:1–4      **23** words after *atnach*

4. The third strophe (3:5–7) has two parts, which are subdivided into a total of 8 subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:5a, 5b, 5cd, 6a–d, 6e, 7ab, 7c and 7d–f.

- 2:11–3:5a      **34** (= 17 x 2) words before *atnach*
- 3:3–5b      **17** words before *atnach*
- 3:5–6b      **23** words
- 3:5–6      **26** words
- 3:6–7c      **26** words and **17** words before *atnach*
- 3:6–7      **34 = 17 + 17** [compositional formula]

5. The fourth strophe (3:8–9) is a single part, which is divided into three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:8ab, 8cd and 9.

- 3:6–8b      **17** words after *atnach*
- 3:8–9      **26 = 13 + 13** [compositional formula]

6. The fifth strophe (3:10) has two parts: 3:10a and 10b.

- 3:8–10      **34** (= 17 x 2) words

- 3:8–10      **23** words after *atnach*
- 3:1–10      **69** (= **23** x 3) words before *atnach*
- 1:1–3:10    **276** (= **23** x 12) words before *atnach*

## Observations

1. The five strophes in Jonah 3:1–10 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 from YHWH to go to Nineveh is renewed	[5.4]	3:1–2
B	Jonah went to Nineveh and proclaimed his five-word message	[7.10]	3:3–4
X	<b>The people and king of Nineveh hear the message and repent</b>	[13.13]	3:5–7
B’	Both people and animals wear sackcloth in hopes God will “repent”	[10.7]	3:8–9
A’	God saw their repentance and turned from the “evil” he said he would do	[4.5]	3:10

At first glance, the portrayal of God’s character in anthropomorphic terms here appears to be in tension with what appears elsewhere in Scripture. Closer study, however, reveals the double nature of the message God gave Jonah. God intended the “overturning” of Nineveh in a very different way from what Jonah expected, and from what he wanted. The rest of the book concerns Gods’ struggle to convey to Jonah the meaning of the words the prophet spoke in Nineveh—after “a journey of one day” (3:4), in a second journey of three days. The true nature of this three-day journey can only be seen in retrospect, in relation to the content of chapter 4.

2. Jonah 3:1–10 has 570 letters in BHS. The structural center in terms of letter-count falls between the words **וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶדְרָתוֹ** “and he threw off his royal robe” in Jonah 3:6a, with 285 letters on either side. These two words constitute a **meaningful center** with the following *concentric compositional formula* on the basis of letter-count:

$$570 = 280 + 10 + 280 \quad \text{[letter-count]}$$

$$\text{or: } 290 // 290 \quad \text{[with pivot counted in each half]}$$

The total letter-count for Jonah 3:1–11 of 570 confirms the letter-count done by David Crookes (see Observation 8 in the file on Jonah 1:9–16).

3. In terms of the 139 words in Jonah 3:1–10, the **arithmological center** falls on the word **אֶדְרָתוֹ** (“his royal robe”) in verse 6, with 69 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$139 = 69 + 1 + 69 \quad \text{[word count—for Jonah 3:1–10]}$$

$$\{69 = 23 \times 3\}$$

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

מעליו **אדרתו** ויעבר And he threw off his royal robe from upon him.

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

$$139 = 68 + 3 + 68 \quad [\text{word count— for Jonah 3:1–10}]$$
$$\text{or: } 71 // 71 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

{71 = numerical value of “Jonah” in 400-gematria}

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

ויקם מכסאו And he arose from his throne;  
מעליו **אדרתו** ויעבר And he threw off his royal robe;  
ויכס שק And he donned sackcloth.

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

$$139 = 66 + 7 + 66 \quad [\text{word count— for Jonah 3:1–10}]$$
$$\text{or: } 73 // 73 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

The **meaningful center** may be expanded further by adding eight words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

ויגע הדבר אל מלך נינוה And the word reached the king of Nineveh;  
ויקם מכסאו And he arose from his throne;  
מעליו **אדרתו** ויעבר And he threw off his royal robe;  
ויכס שק And he donned sackcloth.  
וישב על האפר ויזעק ויאמר And he sat in ashes and he cried out saying:

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

$$139 = 61 + 17 + 61 \quad [\text{word count— for Jonah 3:1–10}]$$
$$\text{or: } 78 // 78 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

A different **meaningful center** may be found in terms of the larger context in Jonah 1:1–3:10. In this instance the **arithmological center** falls on the word **וידרו** (“and they vowed”) at the end of 1:16, and the initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$505 = 252 + 1 + 252 \quad [\text{word count—for Jonah 1:1–3:10}]$$
$$\text{or: } 253 // 253 \quad [\text{with pivot counted in each half}]$$

{253 = 23 x 11}

The **meaningful center** is found by adding one word on either side of this new **arithmological center**, as follows:

נדרים **וידרו** ליהוה To YHWH they vowed vows.

The **compositional formula** then becomes:

$$505 = 251 + 3 + 251 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } 254 // 254 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Jonah 3:1–10

$$139 = 68 + 3 + 68 \quad \text{or: } 71 // 71 \quad \{71 = \text{numerical value of “Jonah”}\}$$

$$139 = 61 + 17 + 61 \quad \text{or: } 78 // 78 \quad \{78 = 26 \times 3\}$$

{with others in between}

$$139 = 23 + 93 + 23 \quad \text{or: } 116 // 116 \quad \{116 = 58 \times 2 \text{ and } 58 = 26 + 32\}$$

$$139 = 6 + 127 + 6 \quad \text{or: } 133 // 133$$

$$78 = 26 + 26 + 26 \quad \text{or: } 52 // 52 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$\{78 = 26 \times 3 \text{ and } 52 = 26 \times 2\}$$

$$34 = 11 + 12 + 11 \quad \text{or: } 23 // 23 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Jonah 3:1–10 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 3:1–10 has **34 briques** (primary stress units), 32 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (10 times, at the end of each verse); *atnach* (9 times, in each verse except verse 1) and *zaqeph parvum* (13 times—in verses 2, 3, 4 [twice], 5, 6 [twice], 7 [twice], 8 [twice], 9 and 10). The boundaries of the remaining two **briques** are marked by *revia* (1 time, in verse 7) and *tevir* (verse 10).

6. The prosodic structure of Jonah 3:1–10, in terms of its **primary syntactic accentual stress units (briques)**, may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; ‡ represents *zaqeph qaton*; and † is any other such boundary marker]:

A <sup>1</sup> wayəhî dəḅar yhw̄h ʔel yônāh šēnîṭ lēʔmôr :

<sup>2</sup> qûm lēḳ ʔel nînəwēh hāʕîr haggəḏôlāh ^

ûqərāʔ ʔelēha ʔet haqqərîʔāh ‡ ʔāšer ʔānōkî dōḅēr ʔelēkah :

B <sup>3</sup> wayyāqom yônāh wayyēleḳ ʔel nînəwēh kiḏḅar yhw̄h ^

wənînəwēh hāyətāh ʕîr gedôlāh lēʔlōhîm ‡ mahālaḳ šəlōšet yāmîm :

<sup>4</sup> wayyāḥel yônāh lāḅôʔ ḅāʕîr ‡

mahālaḳ yôm ʔehād ^

wayyiqra<sup>7</sup> wayyō<sup>7</sup>mar<sup>7</sup>

‘ōd ‘arbā‘im yôm wənînwēh nehpa<sup>7</sup>ket :

X	<sup>5</sup>	wayya <sup>7</sup> āmînu <sup>7</sup> ‘ansê <sup>7</sup> nînwēh bē <sup>7</sup> lōhîm <sup>7</sup> ^	
		wayyiqra <sup>7</sup> ‘û <sup>7</sup> šôm <sup>7</sup> wayyilbāšû <sup>7</sup> šaqqîm <sup>7</sup> †	miggəḏôlāh <sup>7</sup> wə‘ad <sup>7</sup> qəṭannām <sup>7</sup> :
	<sup>6</sup>	wayyigga <sup>7</sup> ‘ haddābār <sup>7</sup> ‘el <sup>7</sup> meleḵ <sup>7</sup> nînwēh <sup>7</sup> †	
		wayyāqom <sup>7</sup> mikkis <sup>7</sup> ‘ô <sup>7</sup> †	wayya <sup>7</sup> ‘ābēr <sup>7</sup> ‘addartô <sup>7</sup> mē‘alāyw <sup>7</sup> ^
		wayəkās <sup>7</sup> šaq <sup>7</sup> qayyēšeh <sup>7</sup> ‘al <sup>7</sup> hā‘eḗper <sup>7</sup> :	
	<sup>7</sup>	wayyaz <sup>7</sup> ‘ēq <sup>7</sup> wayyō <sup>7</sup> mer <sup>7</sup> bə <sup>7</sup> nînwēh <sup>7</sup> †	miṭṭa‘am <sup>7</sup> hammeleḵ <sup>7</sup> ūgəḏôlāyw <sup>7</sup> lē <sup>7</sup> mōr <sup>7</sup> ^
		hā‘adām <sup>7</sup> wəhabbəhēmāh <sup>7</sup> habbāqār <sup>7</sup> wəhaššō <sup>7</sup> n <sup>7</sup> †	‘al <sup>7</sup> yiṭ‘āmû <sup>7</sup> mə‘ûmāh <sup>7</sup> †
		‘al <sup>7</sup> yir <sup>7</sup> ‘û <sup>7</sup> ūmayim <sup>7</sup> ‘al <sup>7</sup> yištû <sup>7</sup> :	

B <sup>8</sup> wəyiṭkkassô<sup>7</sup> šaqqîm<sup>7</sup> hā‘adām<sup>7</sup> wəhabbəhēmāh<sup>7</sup> † wəyiqrə<sup>7</sup>‘û<sup>7</sup> ‘el<sup>7</sup> ‘ēlōhîm<sup>7</sup> bəḥozqāh<sup>7</sup> ^

wəyāšūbû<sup>7</sup> ‘iš<sup>7</sup> middarkô<sup>7</sup> hārā‘āh<sup>7</sup> † ūmin<sup>7</sup> heḥāmās<sup>7</sup> ‘āšer<sup>7</sup> bəḵappêhem<sup>7</sup> :

<sup>9</sup> mî<sup>7</sup> yôḏēa<sup>7</sup>‘ yāšūb<sup>7</sup> † wəniḥam<sup>7</sup> hā‘ēlōhîm<sup>7</sup> ^

wəšāḥ<sup>7</sup> mēḥārôn<sup>7</sup> ‘appô<sup>7</sup> wəlō<sup>7</sup> nō<sup>7</sup>ḥēd<sup>7</sup> :

A <sup>10</sup> wayyar<sup>7</sup> hā‘ēlōhîm<sup>7</sup> ‘et<sup>7</sup> ma‘āšéhem<sup>7</sup> † kî<sup>7</sup> šābû<sup>7</sup> middarkām<sup>7</sup> hārā‘āh<sup>7</sup> ^

wayyinnāhem<sup>7</sup> hā‘ēlōhîm<sup>7</sup> ‘al<sup>7</sup> hārā‘āh<sup>7</sup> † ‘āšer<sup>7</sup> dibber<sup>7</sup> la‘āšôṭ<sup>7</sup> lāhem<sup>7</sup> wəlō<sup>7</sup> ‘āsāh<sup>7</sup> :

The **arithmological center** of Jonah 3:1–10 falls on the word [‘addartô] in verse 6, with a total of 69 words on either side. There are 78 syntactic accentual-stress units, 34 **briques** (primary accentual stress units, 11 **versets**, and 5 **strophes**. The **arithmological center** is in the middle **strophe**, the middle **verset**, the middle two **briques** (primary syntactic accentual stress units), and the middle four syntactic accentual-stress units.

According to the analysis presented here, the 34 **briques** are distributed within 5 **strophes** in Jonah 3:1–10 as follows: **34** = (4 + 7) + 12 + (7 + 4) = 11 + 12 + 11; or **23 // 23** with the central pivot included in each half.

7. Jonah 3:7–8 includes the second example of a concentric sentence (see the discussion of the other such sentence in 1:3 in Observation 3, of the file on Jonah 1:1–8). In that earlier instance we observed a rather sophisticated example of literary punning on the words *wayyered* (“he went down”) and *wayyeradam* (“he went deep into sleep”). An even more striking example of literary punning is found here in 3:7–8, in which the primary meaning of the text appears to be carried on the pun itself rather than the written text.

Human beings and animals  
 cattle and sheep  
 let them not taste anything  
**let them not graze (be evil)**  
 and water let them not drink  
 let them don sackcloth  
 Human beings and animals

At the beginning and end of this circular sentence we find total repetition of an exact phrase with allusions to the text concerning the sixth day of Creation in Genesis 1:24–31 and the creation of “animals” (*habbəhēmāh*) and human beings (*hāʾādām*). In the second frame of this sentence, the “cattle and sheep” are to “don sackcloth.” In the innermost frame they are “not to taste anything ... and water let them not drink.” It is the structural center here that presents the pun. The Hebrew text reads simply *ʿal yirʿû* (“let them not graze”). The problem is the fact that the subject here, which is repeated verbatim at the beginning and end of the sentence, is both human beings and animals; and human beings do not graze! The verb is inappropriate with such a subject. On the other hand, another closely related subject is indeed appropriate—namely the Hebrew verb *yērəʿû* (“[they shall not] be evil”). The fact that the new Hebrew root *rʿ* (“to be evil”) is intended to be heard here rather than the root *rʿh* (“to graze”) is shown by the fact that this new verb is repeated five times in the next four verses, as if to say to the reader: “Yes, you heard it correctly: do not be evil!” The **great evil** here, from which Jonah must turn, is his anger. That anger is presented in 4:1 in the Hebrew expression, Jonah “angered a **great anger**” (*wayyēraʿ ʿel yônāh rāʿāh ḡəḏôlāh* — literally “and it became evil to Jonah, [namely] a great evil”). For a more detailed discussion of what is presented here, see D. L. Christensen, “Anticipatory Paronomasia in Jonah 3:7–8 and Genesis 37:2,” *Revue Biblique* 90 (1983), pp. 261–63.

8. The motif of the “journey of three days,” which is introduced in 3:3, merits careful study. Though it is true that the reference to such a journey in ancient literature often refers to the distance (in time) that separates this world from the Netherworld, the focus here is much more immediate as a key to interpreting the second “movement” in the story itself. The first “movement” includes a journey of three days and three nights in the “House of the Fish.” The journey into Nineveh [another “house of the fish”] is announced at the outset to be also a journey of three days. But note the absence of any reference to three nights. The journey begins with the first day, in which Jonah enters Nineveh and delivers the 5-word prophecy he has received from YHWH: “There remain but 40 days and Nineveh shall be *overturned!*” The rest of the book deals in a subtle way with two very different meanings of the message Jonah has delivered. To him the wicked city of Nineveh will be “overturned” in the manner that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were overturned in Genesis 19:21, where the same verb is used. But YHWH has a different meaning in mind, namely what the Hebrew root *hpk* normally means—to be turned about, to be turned over, to be converted. Jonah still does not understand the meaning of the message he delivered as the story itself ends.

The first day of Jonah’s journey into Nineveh ends with Jonah going outside the city to await its impending destruction where he builds himself a shelter (*Sukkah*) east of the city (4:5). Meanwhile a great “conversion” unfolds inside the city, which starts with the populace as a whole and eventually reaches the king himself (3:5–6). Day two dawns with the appearance of a mysterious *qiqayon*-plant, that came up in a night and perished in a night (4:10). Day three dawns with the death of this plant. And thus the book of Jonah ends on the third and final day of this journey, but before the third night. This journey of three days into the city of Nineveh anticipates a final long dark night in which Jonah’s fate is determined.

The anticipated positive ending to the story of Jonah is supplied in traditional Jewish worship with the addition of its “true” ending in Micah 7:18–20, which is added in the reading of this text on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement):

Who is God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression  
of the remnant of your possession?

He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency.  
He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

You will show faithfulness to Jacob and unswerving covenant-love to Abraham,  
as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old.

9. The Hebrew root *gd* (“to be great”) appears four times in Jonah 3. See Observation 2 in the file on Jonah 1:1–8 for a discussion of the entire series of 12 occurrences.
10. The Hebrew root *qr* (“to proclaim”) in the book of Jonah presents an interesting word-study. Here in chapter 3, Jonah “proclaims a proclamation” (3:2) to the city of Nineveh. A bit later the “men of Nineveh” (i.e., the populace) “proclaim” a fast in Nineveh (3:5). When the king of Nineveh finally makes his “proclamation” the only ones left to address with his command to put on sackcloth and observe a fast are the animals; so, in a note of irony, the king delivers a hidden proclamation addressed to Jonah (in the form of a carefully crafted literary pun), namely to turn from his anger (3:7). The king of Nineveh then urges everyone to “call out to God mightily” (3:8). Like the captain of the sailors in 1:6, who makes use of this same Hebrew verb, the king of Nineveh takes the place of YHWH as he addresses the prophet Jonah. It is interesting to note how closely the words of the captain of the sailors in 1:6 mirror those of YHWH in his opening address to Jonah in 1:2 (using this same verb): “proclaim *against* (Nineveh).” The only difference in Hebrew is a single consonant in the two prepositions (*ʿal* as opposed to *ʿel*), which changes the meaning of the verb from “proclaim” to “pray). It is curious to note that this same difference appears in the second giving of YHWH’s command to Jonah in 3:2. At first glance, it appears to be repetition of the original command in 1:2, but it is not. Jonah is commanded here to proclaim *to* Nineveh God’s proclamation, rather than to proclaim *against* that city. But Jonah fails to take note of this subtle difference; and to the bitter end he remains convinced that God’s message to this wicked enemy should be one of judgment without mercy.
11. Note the following list of compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning of Jonah 3:1–10

Jonah 3:1–4        **23** words after *atnach*

Jonah 3:1–10     **69** (= **23** x 3) words before *atnach*

It is not possible to use one of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) at the verse boundaries until the end of verse 2, which leaves 9 boundaries to work with. In 2 out of 9 of these boundaries (or 22.2% of the time) a multiple of one of the four compositional numbers is present. This evidence DOES NOT SUGGEST the possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Jonah 3:1–10.

12. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Jonah 3 as a whole calls for input on the part of others in the Word Count Project, as we consider the rhetorical features in greater depth and further information contained in the *te’amim* of this particular text.

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