

Jonah 4:1–11—Logoprosodic Analysis

Translation and Textual Notes

V. Jonah's Plight Portrayed as a Possible Ascent

Jonah 4:1–11

A. Strophe 1: Jonah's Anger Becomes a Great Evil—He Complains to YHWH (4:1–2d) [7.4]

4:1	But evil came upon Jonah / a great evil //	18 2	5 5 0
	and he / became angry //	<u>5 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		3:9–4:1	35 18 17
4:2	And he prayed to YHWH / and he said /	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		3:10–4:2a	29 17 12
	O YHWH /	<u>7 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		3:8–4:2b	57 32 25
	Is this not what I said / when I was still ^a in my own country? /	21 2	7 7 0
	that is why I made haste / to flee to Tarshish //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>5 5 0</u>
		4:1–2a	25 23 2

B. Strophe 2: In Despair, Jonah Says He is Better Off Dead than Alive (4:2e–4) [8.7]

	For I knew / that you are /	12 2	4 0 4
	a God who is gracious ^b and merciful /	<u>9 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		4:1–2f	32 23 9
	(You are) full of patience / and abounding in covenant-love /	9 2	4 0 4
	who repents / from evil" //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		4:1–2	39 23 16
4:3	So now YHWH / take my life ^a from me //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>7 7 0</u>
		4:1–3a	46 30 16
	For / I am better off dead / than alive" //	<u>13 3</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		3:10–4:3	68 38 30
4:4	And YHWH said / "Do you do well to be angry?" //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>5 5 0</u>
		3:1–4:4	194 104 90

C. Strophe 3: Jonah Builds a Booth East of Nineveh to Wait for God to Act (4:5) [6.5]

4:5	And Jonah went out / from the city /	14 2	4 4 0
	and he sat down / east of the city //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		4:3–5b	23 19 4

And he built for himself there / a *Sukkah* (booth) / _10 2_ 4 0 4
3:10–4:5c 84 50 34

And he sat down beneath it / in its shade / 11 2 3 0 3
 until / he should see / what would become of the city // _15 3_ 6 0 6
4:3–5 36 19 17

D. Strophe 4: Riddle of the Qiqayon—Provided by God to Deliver Jonah (4:6–7) [6.5.6]

4:6 And YHWH-God appointed / a *qiqayon*-plant / 18 2 4 4 0
 and it grew up / over Jonah / to be a shade / over his head / 21 4_ 7 7 0
4:4–6b 36 23 13

(Its purpose was) to deliver him / from his evil // 14 2 3 3 0
 and Jonah rejoiced / over the *qiqayon*-plant / a **great joy** // _23 3_ 6 0 6
4:3–6 56 33 23

4:7 And the God appointed / a worm / 14 2 3 3 0
 as dawn came up / the next morning // 12 2 3 3 0
 and it smote the *qiqayon*-plant / so that it withered // _16 2_ 4 0 4
4:5–7 50 27 23

E. Strophe 5: In the Sun’s Heat, Jonah Says He is Better Off Dead than Alive (4:8) [5.6]

4:8 And then ^a as the sun arose / 11 1 3 3 0
 God appointed / a “burning” ^b east wind / _20 2_ 5 5 0
4:5–8b 58 35 23

And the sun smote / on Jonah’s head / _12 2_ 5 5 0
4:7–8c 23 19 4

And he grew faint // 5 1 1 1 0
 and he asked / that he might die / 11 2 4 0 4
 and he said / “I am better off dead / than alive” // _15 3_ 4 0 4
4:7–8 32 20 12

F. Strophe 6: God Reasons with Jonah about His Anger over the Qiqayon (4:9–10) [7.8]

4:9 And God said to / Jonah / “Do you do well to be angry / 25 3 7 7 0
 because of the *qiqayon*-plant?” // 8 1 2 2 0
 and he said / “I do well to be angry / unto death” // _18 3_ 6 0 6
4:8–9 37 23 14

4:10 And YHWH said / 8 1 2 2 0
 “You have compassion / for the *qiqayon*-plant / _14 2_ 4 4 0
4:3–10b 109 68 41

For which / you did not labor /	<u>10</u> <u>2</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
	4:8-10c	102 65 37
And you did not cause it to grow //	7 1	2 2 0
because it came up in a night / and in a night it perished //	<u>17</u> <u>2</u>	<u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u>
	4:6-10	85 55 30

G. Strophe 7: YHWH's Concluding Question: "Should I Not have Compassion?" (4:11) [4.7]

4:11 And as for me / should I not have compassion / on Nineveh /	16 3	5 5 0
that great city //	<u>10</u> <u>1</u>	<u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	4:8-11b	92 62 30
Which has in it / more than 120,000 / persons /	<u>21</u> <u>3</u>	<u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u>
	4:7-11c	80 48 32
Who cannot discern / between their right hand and their left /	18 2	6 0 6
and many / animals?" //	<u>10</u> <u>2</u>	<u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u>
	4:11	23 7 16
	4:1-11	183 104 79
	1:1-4:11	688 385 303

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (7.4).(8.7) . (6.5) . (6.5.6) . (5.6) . (7.8).(4.7)

$$= (11 + 15) + (11 + 17 + 11) + (15 + 11) = \mathbf{26} + 39 + \mathbf{26} = 91$$

or: 65 // 65 [with pivot counted in each half]
 {65 = 13 x 5}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 183 = 91 + 1 + 91 [word count—for Jonah 4:1-11]
 or: **92 // 92** [with pivot counted in each half]
 {**92 = 23 x 4**}

$$688 = 344 + 0 + 344 \text{ [word count—for Jonah 1:1-4:11]}$$

{688 = 43 x 2^4 and 43 = **17 + 26**}

Notes:

- 4:2^a Reading *pašta* followed by *zaqep qaton* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 4:2^b Reading *munaḥ* preceded immediately by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 4:3^a Reading *tipḥā* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 4:8^a Reading *laḡarmēh* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 4:8^b Reading *pašta* followed immediately by *zaqep qaton* in BHS as conjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Jonah 4:1–11 has 7 strophes: 4:1–2d, 2e–4, 5, 6–7, 8, 9–10 and 11.

A	4:1–2d	triad & dyad + pivot:	$(18 + 5 + 14) + 7 + (21 + 15)$	=	$37 + 7 + 36$	morae
B	4:2e	2 balanced dyads:	$(12 + 9) + (9 + 11)$	=	$21 + 20$	morae
	4:3–4	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(18 + 13 + 18)$	=	$18 + 13 + 18$	morae
C	4:5	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(14 + 11) + 10 + (11 + 15)$	=	$25 + 10 + 26$	morae
X	4:6	2 balanced dyads:	$(18 + 21) + (14 + 23)$	=	$39 + 37$	morae
	4:7	balanced dyad + pivot:	$(14 + 12 + 16)$	=	$14 + 12 + 16$	morae
C'	4:8	dyad & triad + pivot:	$(11 + 20) + 12 + (5 + 11 + 15)$	=	$31 + 12 + 31$	morae
B'	4:9	balanced dyad:	$(25 + [8 + 18])$	=	$25 + 26$	morae
	4:10	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$([8 + 14] + 10 + [7 + 17])$	=	$22 + 10 + 24$	morae
A'	4:11	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(16 + 10) + 21 + (18 + 10)$	=	$26 + 21 + 28$	morae

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

- 3:9–4:1 **17** words after *atnach*
- 3:10–4:2a **17** words before *atnach*
- 3:8–4:2b **32** words before *atnach*
- 4:1–2a **23** words before *atnach*

3. The second strophe (4:2e–4) has two parts arranged in 5 subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 4:2ef, 2gh, 3a, 3b and 4.

- 4:1–2b **32** words and **23** words before *atnach*
- 4:1–2 **23** words before *atnach*
- 4:1–3a **46** (= **23** x 2) words
- 3:10–4:3 **68** (= **17** x 4) words
- 3:1–4:4 **104** (= **26** x 4) words before *atnach*

4. The third strophe (4:5) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 4ab, 5c and 5de.

- 4:3–5b **23** words
- 3:10–4:5c **34** (= **17** x 2) words after *atnach*
- 4:3–5 **17** words after *atnach*

5. The fourth strophe (4:6–7) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 4:6ab, 6cd and 7.

- 4:4–6b **23** words before *atnach*
- 4:3–6 **23** words after *atnach*
- 4:5–7 **23** words after *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (4:8) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 4:8ab 8c and 8d–f.
 - 4:5–8b **23** words after *atnach*
 - 4:7–8c **23** words
 - 4:7–8 **32** words
7. The sixth strophe (4:9–10) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 4:9, 10ab and 10cd.
 - 4:8–9 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 4:3–10b **68** (= 17 x 4) words before *atnach*
 - 4:8–10c **102** (= 17 x 6) words
8. The seventh strophe (4:11) is a single part.
 - 4:8–11b **92** (= 23 x 4) words
 - 4:7–11c **32** words after *atnach*
 - 4:11 **23** words
 - 4:1–11 **104** (= 26 x 4) words before *atnach*
 - 1:1–4:11 **688** (= 43 x 2⁴) words

Observations

1. The seven strophes in Jonah 4:1–11 may be outlined in a menorah 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 anger becomes a great evil as he complains to YHWH	[5.5] 4:1–2d
B	In despair, Jonah insists that he is better off dead than alive	[5.8] 4:2e–4
C	Jonah builds a <i>Sukkah</i> east of Nineveh and waits for God to act	[7.4] 4:5
X	Riddle of the <i>qiqayon</i>—provided by YHWH-God to deliver Jonah	[5.5] 4:6–7
C’	In the heat of the sun, Jonah insists he is better of dead than alive	[4.7] 4:8
B’	God reasons with Jonah about his anger because of the <i>qiqayon</i> -plant	[8.5] 4:9–10
A’	YHWH’s concluding question: “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh?”	[5.5] 4:11

2. The mysterious *qiqayon*-plant is the focus of attention in the concentric literary structure of Jonah 4. Baruch Halpern and Richard Friedman suggest that this term is a pun containing the name of Jonah (“Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah,” *HAR* 4 [1980], pp. 79–92). There are other levels of meaning as well. The familiar “kiki,” or castor oil plant, captures one such meaning—but what an unusual plant we find here, unlike any other instance of the species *recinus communis* before or since. The *qiqayon* appears to be an example of a **riddle in the middle**. The meaning of the *qiqayon* in Jonah 4 is found in relation to the first “movement” of the story of Jonah, especially chapter one. The prayer of the sailors before they hurled Jonah overboard in 1:14 ends with these words: “Do not put to our account ‘innocent blood’ (*dām nāqî?*).” The misspelling of the term *nāqî?* is usually explained as an Aramaism, since the expression would normally be rendered *dām nāqî* (without the *aleph*). It seems more likely that the presence of the *aleph* is to call attention to

the term *wayyāqēʿ* (“and it vomited”) in 2:11 [Eng. 2:10], where the **great fish** vomited out Jonah on dry land. The *qiqayon* is a poetic term coined for this particular narrative poem, perhaps as follows: *qīʿ + niqqāyôn = qīqāyôn*, with the *nun* assimilating according to normal phonetic rules. The term *qīʿ* means “to vomit or spew out,” whereas the term *niqqāyôn* carries the meaning “probationary exemption from punishment due” (cf. Hosea 8:5). The riddle may thus point to a specific moment when Israel was enjoying the “booth” (*sukkah*) she had built (i.e., the Temple in Jerusalem) from which she was looking for the imminent judgment of God on wicked Nineveh. God raised up a “protective plant” of his own, perhaps in the person of Hezekiah (*hizqīyâ*, cf. 2 Kings 18:1), who was a source of great joy in the land of Judah for a brief respite. But what God raised up as a “son of the night” perished in a night, and the probationary period came to an abrupt end.

An alternate possibility to explain the “riddle of the *qiqayon*” was presented in private conversation some years ago by Ronald Youngblood—namely, that of an “atbash,” a Hebrew cryptographic device in which the letters of the alphabet are substituted for each other in reverse order. There are three demonstrable instances of this phenomenon in Jeremiah: in 51:1 where *lb qmy* (“the heart of those who rise up against me”) is substituted for *kśdym* (“Chaldeans”), and in 25:26 and 51:41 where *ššk* (is substituted for *bb* (“Babylon”). The athbash of *dm* (“blood”) is *qy*. The term *dm nqy* (“innocent blood”) could then have produced *qiqayon* as follows by means of an atbash coupled with a simple transposition: *dm + nqy > qy + nqy > qyqyn*. Whatever its precise poetic meaning may be, the *qiqayon*-plant is of primary importance in the literary structure of Jonah 4.

3. The theme of Jonah’s possible ascent in the second half of the second movement (i.e., chapter 4) is carried on a pun in 4:8. When the sun “smote” Jonah, as the worm “smote” the *qiqayon*-plant in the previous verse [it is the same verbal form in both instances], Jonah “grew faint” (*wayyitʿallāp*). Here we find a carefully chosen word that says much more than the simple fact that Jonah is falling flat on his face, for in this word we also hear the sound of the key verb *ʿālāh* (“to go up”). The situation is much the same as the similar pun in 1:5 on the verb *yārad* (“to go down”) with another verbal root *rdm* (“to go deep in sleep”). The verbal root *ʿlh* (“to go up”) is used four times in the book of Jonah, followed by this fifth occurrence in the peculiar sound of the word *wayyitʿallāp* (“and he grew faint”).

1:2	<i>ʿālāh</i>	Nineveh’s evil has come up before YHWH
2:7	<i>wattaʿal</i>	YHWH brought Jonah up from the Pit alive
4:6	<i>wayyaʿal</i>	the <i>qiqayon</i> -plant came up over Jonah as a shade over his head
4:8	<i>baʿālôt</i>	when the sun came up and “smote” on Jonah’s head
4:8	<i>wayyitʿallāp</i>	Jonah grew faint [with the sound: “ he went up ”]

Jonah’s journey upward began at the lowest point in the story, when Jonah reached the depths of the Netherworld itself in his final descent into the depths of the sea (2:7). At that point YHWH himself raised Jonah up from the Pit. The story ends with only the suggestion of Jonah’s continued ascent; for it all depends on how he chooses to answer YHWH’s concluding question: “should I not have compassion on Nineveh, that **great city**” (4:11a).

4. Jonah 4:1–11 has 675 letters in BHS. The structural center in terms of letter-count falls on the first letter of the word גדולה “great” in Jonah 4:7b, with 337 letters on either side. The initial *concentric compositional formula* on the basis of letter-count is:

or: **338 // 338** [with pivot counted in each half]
{675 = 3x3x3x5x5 and **338 = 26 x 13**}

The total letter-count for Jonah 4:1–11 of 675 confirms the letter-count done by David Crookes (see Observation 8 in the file on Jonah 1:9–16).

The **arithmological center** of Jonah 4:1-11, on the basis of letter-count, falls on the middle letter in the following 9-letter phrase in 4:6b:

שְׂמַחַת גְּדוּלָה great joy.

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

675 = 333 + 9 + 333 [word count— for Jonah 4:1–11]
or: 342 // 342 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

5. In terms of the 183 words in Jonah 4:1–11, the **arithmological center** falls on the word עַל (“over”) in the second half of verse 6, with 91 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

183 = 91 + 1 + 91 [word count—for Jonah 4:1–11]
{**92 = 23 x 4**}

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

וַיִּשְׂמַח יוֹנָה עַל הַקִּיקְיֹן שְׂמַחַת And Jonah rejoiced over the *qiqayon* (a great) joy.

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

183 = 89 + 5 + 89 [word count— for Jonah 4:1–11]
or: 94 // 94 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

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

קִיקְיֹן (There was) a *qiqayon*-plant—
וַיַּעַל מֵעַל לְיוֹנָה And it came up over Jonah,
לְהִיּוֹת צֶלַעַל רֹאשׁוֹ To be a shade over his head,
לְהַצִּיל לוֹ מִרַעְתּוֹ To deliver him from his evil.
וַיִּשְׂמַח יוֹנָה עַל הַקִּיקְיֹן And Jonah rejoiced over the *qiqayon*-plant
שְׂמַחַת גְּדוּלָה A great joy;
וַיִּמְן אֱלֹהִים תּוֹלַעַת So the God appointed a worm,
בַּעֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר לְמַחֲרַת As dawn came up the next morning,
וַתִּבֶּן אֶת הַקִּיקְיֹן וַיִּבֶשׂ And it smote the *qiqayon*-plant so that it withered.

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

$$183 = 78 + 27 + 78 \quad [\text{word count— for Jonah 4:1–11}]$$
$$\text{or: } 105 // 105 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$
$$\{78 = 26 \times 3 \text{ and } 105 = 3 \times 5 \times 7\}$$

A different **meaningful center** may be found in terms of the book of Jonah as a whole. In this instance the **arithmological center** falls between the words **משמרים הבלי** (“those who cling to vain emptiness”) at the beginning of 2:9 [Eng. 2:8], and the initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$688 = 344 + 0 + 344 \quad [\text{word count—for Jonah 1:1–4:10}]$$
$$\{688 = 43 \times 2^4 \text{ and } 344 = 43 \times 2^3\}$$

The **meaningful center** of the book of Jonah as a whole may be expanded by including seven words on either side of this new **arithmological center**, as follows:

ותבוא אליך תפלת	My prayer came to you,
אל היכל קדשך	To your holy temple.
שוא משמרים הבלי	Those who cling to empty nothings,
חסדם יעזבו	Their covenant-love they have abandoned;
ואני בקול תודה	But I (come) with the voice of thanksgiving,

The **compositional formula** then becomes:

$$688 = 337 + 14 + 337 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$
$$\text{or: } 351 // 351 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$
$$\{351 = 3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 13\}$$

It is interesting to note the fact that this structural center of the book of Jonah focuses on an enigmatic phrase at the beginning of a puzzling verse, which in fact may be a proverbial statement. In his translation of this text, Jack Sasson separates this verse from the rest of Jonah’s “Canticle from the Depths” (2:3b–10) by large dashes, as a parenthetical remark of some sort. He translates the verse as follows [*Jonah*, Anchor Bible 24B (1990), p. 160]:

—They who hold to empty faiths, give up their hope for mercy.—

The commentaries and translations I checked resort to paraphrasing the passage by way of interpretation, rather than to literal translation. The old Roman Catholic revision of the Challoner-Rheims Bible comes perhaps the closest to a literal reading of the text:

They that vainly observe vanities, forsake their own mercy.

If the **meaningful center** presented above is shortened a bit so as to include the five words of 2:9 [Eng. 2:8], we must include the final three words of 2:8 as well—as we add four words on either side of the **arithmological center** of the book of Jonah, as follows

אל היכל קדשך In regard to your holy temple—
 משמרים הבלי Those who cling to (such) vaporous nothing,
 חסדם יעזבו Their covenant-love they have abandoned.

On the translation of the preposition אל here as “in regard to,” cf. Gen 3:16, 4:7 and other passages cited in BDB (p. 40). The fact that the first three words in this statement, which are taken from the conclusion of the previous verse, take on a different meaning when lifted out of context in this manner illustrates another aspect of the **riddle in the middle**. The hidden message appears to be that God’s holy temple is the “vaporous nothing” to which the prophet is referring, and those who cling to that memory actually forsake their relationship of covenant-love with YHWH himself. On another occasion when the physical location of YHWH’s worship was at issue, Yeshua said: “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain [Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem. ... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him” (John 4:21–23).

The **compositional formula** then becomes:

$$688 = 340 + 8 + 340 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } 348 // 348 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

$$\{688 = 43 \times 16 \text{ and } 340 = 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 5 \times 17 = 17 \times 40\}$$

Note that there are exactly **340** (= **17** x 40) words on either side of this **meaningful** center which has the appearance of a **riddle in the middle** of the book of Jonah.

6. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae for Jonah 4:1–11

$$183 = 89 + 5 + 89 \quad \text{or: } 94 // 94$$

$$183 = 78 + 27 + 78 \quad \text{or: } 105 // 105 \quad \{78 = 26 \times 3\}$$

{with others in between}

$$183 = 39 + 105 + 39 \quad \text{or: } 144 // 144 \quad \{144 = 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 3\}$$

$$183 = 16 + 151 + 16 \quad \text{or: } 167 // 167$$

$$91 = 26 + 39 + 26 \quad \text{or: } 65 // 65 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$\{91 = 13 \times 7; 65 = 13 \times 5; 39 = 13 \times 3 \text{ and } 26 = 13 \times 2\}$$

$$39 = 12 + 17 + 12 \quad \text{or: } 29 // 29 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

7. In the prosodic structure of Jonah 4:1–11 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 4:1–11 has 29 **briques** (primary stress units), 21 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (11 times, at the end of each verse) and *atnach* (10 times, in each verse except verse 4). The boundaries of the remaining eight **briques** are marked by *zaqeph parvum* (6 times—in verses 2, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11) and *revia* (2 times—in verses 2 and 11).

8. The prosodic structure of Jonah 4:1–11, in terms of its **primary syntactic accentual stress units (briques)**, may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; and † is any other such boundary marker]:

- I A ¹ wayyēra^c ʿel yōnāh rāʿāh gəḏōlāh ^ wayyiḥar lô :
² wayyitpallēl ʿel yhw h wayyōʾmer ʾonnāh yhw hălōʾ zeh dəḇārî †
 ʿaḏ hēyōtî ʿal ʾaḏmāṭî ʿal kēn qiddamtî liḇrōaḥ taršîšāh ^
- B kî ʾattāh ʾel ḥannûn wəraḥûm ʾereḵ ʾappayim wəraḇ ḥesed †
 wəniḥām ʿal hārāʿāh :
³ wəʿattāh yhw h qaḥ nāʾ ʾeṭ napšî mimmennî ^ kî tōḇ mōtî mēḥayyāy :
⁴ wayyōʾmer yhw hahêṭēḇ ḥārāh lāk :
- II C ⁵ wayyēšēʾ yōnāh min hāʿîr wayyēšēḇ miqqeḏem lāʿîr ^
 wayyaʿas lô šām sukkāh wayyēšēḇ taḥṭēha baššēl †
 ʿaḏ ʾāšer yirʾeh mah yihyeh bāʿîr :

X	⁶ wayəman yhw h ʾēlōhîm qîqāyôn wayyaʿal mēʿal ləyōnāh lihyōṭ ṣēl ʿal rōʾšō † ləḥaššîl lô mērāʿātō ^ wayyiśmaḥ yōnāh [ʿal] haqqîqāyôn śimḥāh gəḏōlāh : ⁷ wayəman hāʾēlōhîm tōlaʿaṭ baʿālōṭ haššaḥar lammoḥōrāt ^ wattaḵ ʾeṭ haqqîqāyôn wayyibāš :
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- C ⁸ wayəhî kizrōaḥ haššemesʾ wayəman ʾēlōhîm rūaḥ qāḏîm ḥārîšîṭ †
 wattaḵ haššemesʾ ʿal rōʾš yōnāh wayyitʿallāp ^
 wayyiśʾal ʾeṭ napšō lāmût wayyōʾmer tōḇ mōtî mēḥayyāy :
- III B ⁹ wayyōʾmer ʾēlōhîm ʾel yōnāh hahêṭēḇ ḥārāh ləḵa ʿal haqqîqāyôn ^
 wayyōʾmer hêṭēḇ ḥārāh lî ʿaḏ māweṭ :
¹⁰ wayyōʾmer yhw h ʾattāh ḥasta ʿal haqqîqāyôn †
 ʾāšer lôʾ ʿamalṭa bō wəlōʾ giddaltō ^ šēḇin laylāh ḥāyāh ûḇin laylāh ʾāḇāḏ :

A ¹¹ *waʾānī lōʾ ʾāḥūs* *ʿal nīnawēh hāʿīr haggəḏôlāh* ^
ʾāšer yeš bāh harbēh mištēm ʿesrēh ribbō ʾāḏām †
ʾāšer lōʾ yāḏaʿ bēn yəminô lišmōʾlô † *ûbəhēmāh rabbāh :*

The **arithmological center** of Jonah 4:1–11 falls on the word al in 4:6b, with a total of 91 words on either side. Jonah 4:1–11 has 93 syntactic accentual-stress units, 39 **briques** (primary accentual stress units, 13 **versets**, and 7 **strophes**. The **arithmological center** is in the middle **strophe**, the middle **verset**, the middle three **briques** (primary syntactic accentual stress unit), and the middle syntactic accentual-stress unit.

According to the analysis presented here, the 39 **briques** are distributed within 5 **strophes** in Jonah 4:1–11 as follows: 39 = (6 + 6) + (5 + 7 + 5) + (6 + 5) = 12 + **17** + 12; or 29 // 29 with the central pivot included in each half.

9. Outside the Torah (Pentateuch), the fourth chapter of Jonah is the only place in the entire Tanakh where we find the curious mixture in the usage of divine names: YHWH, Elohim and YHWH-Elohim. I may take the time a bit later to share the experience I had more than 30 years ago when I played the usual “game” among graduate students in resorting to what my colleagues in academia call “source criticism” to this simple observation, which took place in the Old Testament seminar of my doctoral studies at Harvard University. I was not the first to perform such “radical surgery” on this short text of only 48 verses (and 688 words). Such scholarly games lead to stimulating discussion and speculation that often lead down unproductive paths.

Within **The Book of the Twelve** (Minor Prophets), the books of Jonah and Nahum must be studied together. Both books have the city of Nineveh as their subject—one prophesying the destruction of that city (Nahum) and the other its salvation (Jonah). These two books are the only two books in the entire Bible that end in a question, and both are closely connected structurally with what follows them: Jonah with Micah, and Nahum with Habakkuk. The books of Jonah and Nahum may be read as midrashic reflection on the so-called “attribute formula” in Exodus 34:6–7, with Jonah focusing on God’s compassion and Nahum on God’s wrath. Jonah presents God as “compassionate, gracious ... abounding in steadfast love” (Exod 34:6–7a), whereas Nahum presents God as the “one who punishes sons and grandsons to the third and fourth generation for the iniquity of their fathers” (Exod 34:7b). In short, Nahum focuses on what some might call the “dark side” of God, while Jonah portrays God’s mercy and compassion toward the same wicked city of Nineveh. Both aspects are essential for an understanding of the divine nature—namely, mercy and justice.

10. The book of Jonah must also be read in relation to the stories of the prophet Elijah. At the outset, the prophet Elijah receives three commands directly from God, each of which is introduced with the imperative *lēk* “to go”—the same word that is addressed to Jonah. Moreover, in 2 Kings 17:3, the phrase *lēk leḳah* (“go”) appears in a manner reminiscent of the same phrase in Genesis 12:1 and 22:2, at the beginning and end of the Abraham narrative cycle as a frame around the stories of Abra(ha)m. In 2 Kings 17:9, the word *lēk* appears again in the phrase *qûm lēk* (“arise, go!”)—which appears only eight times in the Tanakh (including Deut 10:11, addressed to Moses; and twice in Jonah (1:2 and 3:2).

On his way to Mount Horeb in his flight from the threats of Queen Jezebel, Elijah “went a journey of one day” into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree” (1 Kings 19:4). Though this “broom tree” is not called a *qiqayon*, we find continued parallels between these two stories. Elijah, like Jonah, “asked that he might die” as he insists that he would be better off dead than alive. Elijah “lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep” (cf. Jonah, who is addressed by the captain of the sailors in Jonah 1:6 as “sleeper” because he is deep in sleep on the ship at sea).

God also gives a three-fold command to Elijah on the holy mountain in 1 Kings 19:15–16, to anoint Hazael to be king in Aram, Jehu to be king in Israel, and the prophet Elisha as his successor. In the stories that follow, however, it is curious to note the fact that Elijah does not fulfill any of those commands he received on Mount Horeb—or does he? Elijah does not die; and his ministry continues in the line of his successors. It is Elisha who anoints Hazael to be king of Aram, not Elijah. And it is the unnamed servant of Elisha, who is identified in Jewish legend as the prophet Jonah, who anoints Jehu to be king in Israel. Jonah is the bridge that connects the Former Prophets to the Latter Prophet. He is the great reversal of “the prophet like Moses,” in the sense that he demonstrates by his actions that he does not in fact fear YHWH, as he claims (1:9). Like the beginning of the story of Jonah, God addressed Moses with the words: “Arise, go (*qûm lēk*) on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give them” (Deut 10:11). At that point, God added these words (Deut 10:12–13):

And now, Israel [or Jonah, if you wish],
what does YHWH your God require of you,
but to fear YHWH your God, to walk in all his ways,
to love him,
to serve YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
and to keep the commandments and statutes of YHWH,
which I command you this day?

These same words are on the lips of each one of those whose preaching and teaching is assembled in what we call the Latter Prophets.

The prophet Jonah must also be studied in conjunction with both the prophet Elisha and the story of the unnamed prophet from Judah who prophesied in Bethel and was subsequently killed by the “lion of Judah” on his return home (1 Kings 13). The prophet Elijah is the key that ties all these stories together.

Elisha is the first of the line of successors to the prophet Elijah, who are divided into two groups: the Former and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets are those persons who were chosen to be included in the pages of the narrative history that extends from the book of Joshua through 2 Kings. The Latter Prophets are those selected for another purpose: to examine their words in relation to the building, the destruction, and the future rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, which houses the glory of YHWH in our midst. Jonah is the “connecting bridge” between these two groups.

11. Jewish legend presents a rich and complex figure of Jonah, beginning with his identification as the most prominent of the 60,000 disciples whom Elisha gathered about him in his 60 years of activity. It is there that we learn that Jonah has already gained the reputation for being “the false prophet” because he proclaimed their destruction to the inhabitants of

Jerusalem. But they repented, like the people of Nineveh in the book of Jonah, and their doom did not come to pass. The subject of true and false prophecy is an important concept in the prophetic literature of both Testaments. Perhaps the most difficult task of all is to discern who is a “true prophet” and who is a “false prophet.” The story of Jonah shows us how delicate the line is between these two. For Jonah to be YHWH’s “true prophet” in delivering his message of judgment and destruction, he must also experience the danger of being a “false prophet” in the sense that his words may not come to pass—at least in the manner he intends them. And the fate of the false prophet is sealed: “If a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that YHWH has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it” (Deut 18:22). Moreover, YHWH himself said that the one “who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die” (Deut 18:20).

12. We must wait for Ernest McClain’s reading of the book of Jonah in light of biblical harmonics to understand the final verse in Jonah 4:11 and its reference to “more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and many animals.”

13. Note the following list of compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning of Jonah 4:1–11

Jonah 4:1–2	23	words before <i>atnach</i>
Jonah 4:1–4	55	(= 23 + 32) words
Jonah 4:1–7	43	(= 17 + 26) words after <i>atnach</i>
Jonah 4:1–8	51	(= 17 x 3) words after <i>atnach</i>
Jonah 4:1–9	85	(= 17 x 5) words before <i>atnach</i>
Jonah 4:1–10	160	(= 17 + 23) x 4 words
Jonah 4:1–11	104	(= 26 x 4) words before <i>atnach</i>

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 10 boundaries to work with. In 4 out of 10 of these boundaries (or 40% of the time) a multiple of one of the four compositional numbers is present. If the numbers 40, 43 and 55 are added, the percentage increases to 70% (7 out of 10). This evidence suggests a possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Jonah 4:1–11.

14. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Jonah 4 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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