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"Studies in the Book of Jonah"

Robert J. Rather, Ph.D.

The three original studies presented in this work explore distinct aspects of the book of Jonah: the text's interrelatedness to the ancient Near Eastern milieu in which it was composed, the author's rhetoric and style, and the temporal and ideational context which may have led to its composition. A unifying theme, namely the underlying pedagogical purpose of the book is revealed by means of these three explorations into Jonah.

Essay 1: "Jonah, the Runaway Servant" This study assumes that the story of Jonah is fundamentally dependent upon the notice found in II Kings 14:25: "...according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant, Jonah ben Amittai the prophet...". The author intended for the reader to see Jonah as the Lord's servant. Jonah's flight, therefore, is the flight of a servant from his master (God)--an event amply documented in the vast literature of the ancient Near East. This evidence is discussed in depth by genre. Read within this ancient Near Eastern context, the danger into which the Jonah character brings his unwitting harborers is elaborated in detail.

Essay 2: "Repetition, Rhetoric and Style in Jonah"

The writer of the book of Jonah is a master pedagogue. He shapes his small but powerful composition using several devices which enhance the didactic thrust of the work. One of these devices is the repetition of key words and phrases. The author, however, takes a further step by intentionally varying his usage in repetition. Variation in repetition is a normative feature of biblical Hebrew narrative rhetoric and style, yet the book of Jonah is remarkable in that so many examples of such variation occur in so small a corpus and in such striking forms. This essay offers a collection of the evidence of repetition in the book of Jonah, including both verbatim and varied repetition. A rhetorical analysis of these selected usages is carried out, with particular emphasis on the contribution of repetition in its various forms to the author's didactic purposes.

Essay 3: "Jonah: Toward the Reeducation of the Prophets" This essay, too, begins with the premise that the author of the book of Jonah was first and foremost a teacher. But who was the author and when did he produce this tract on prophecy and repentance? In order to answer these questions, an attempt is made to pinpoint the author's motivation for writing this book. It is argued that only through a proper understanding of this motivation can Jonah's author be identified and his cultural milieu described. The figure of Jonah himself as the reluctant prophet par excellence is key

to understanding the author's purpose. The assumptions made by the Jonah character concerning the nature of prophecy are set in stark contrast with those of God whose words in chapter 4, we assume, represent the views of our author. A careful analysis of this opposition reveals that the writer may have been a sixth century prophet who attempted to persuade his counterparts, a set of prophets, that their views concerning repentance, the prophet's role, and the nature of prophecy must be abandoned in favor of his own teaching.

The introduction and conclusion to these essays reemphasize the underlying intentional pedagogical purposes of Jonah's author as discussed in the essays themselves. The conclusion spells out some of the ramifications of Jonah's message for Jews, who hear Jonah within the liturgical context of Yom Kippur.

Studies in the Book of Jonah

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for ordination

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ANET[3]	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, third edition with supplement, edited by J. Pritchard. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969.
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
BHK	Biblia Hebraica, edited by R. Kittel (1937)
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (1967-1977)
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
EI	Eretz Yisrael
ET	Expository Times
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
NEB	New English Bible
OTL	Old Testament Library
RB	Révue biblique
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

In honor of

the blessed memory of my grandmother

Sophia Ratner

Introduction

The book of Jonah is first and foremost a didactic work. The author has as his aim to teach several fundamental ideas to his audience. He has packaged his lesson in a novel, almost fable-like form that has captured the imagination of generations of new audiences whose circumstances he never could have imagined. Nevertheless, each generation has seen itself in this little tale and has learned from it valuable religious truths.

In a certain respect, then, the author of Jonah is very much like Jonah himself: Only a few words he uttered, but their effect was manifold. Why has the book of Jonah been able to sustain the attention of generations? The answer, like the book of Jonah itself, is short, but infinitely complex: The packaging.

It is the aim of the present investigation to ask new questions of the text. In each case, the questions attempt to elicit from the evidence provided by the book of Jonah itself answers that might help us moderns to understand better the book's didactic power as it might have been felt by the audience our author intended to teach.

The following questions are addressed. First, a newly recognized feature of the story's presentation requires us to

reexamine chapter 1 of Jonah anew: The writer has portrayed his Jonah figure as a runaway servant. What might that presentation have meant to his audience? Second, regarding the packaging discussed above, what features of the author's use of language and style tend to reinforce his message for the audience he intended to hear it? And, third, who was his audience? When did he and they live? Who was the author? Finally, what message was the author of this work attempting to teach?

The questions raised here and discussed seriatum and in-depth in the following pages not only help to unlock the author's original means and ends, but they also help us to understand better the book of Jonah within its Jewish liturgical context, Yom Kippur. Since we do not wish to place the cart before the horse, we will have to wait until the concluding section to draw out the ramifications of Jonah's message for that setting.

Jonah, the Runaway Servant*

> Huck. I--I run off. ...
>
> Ole misses--dat's Miss Watson--she pecks on me all de time, en treats me poorty rough, but she awhuz said she wouldn't sell me down to Orleans. ... De widder she try to git her to say she wouldn't do it, but I never waited to hear de res'. I lit out mighty quick, I tell you. (Mark Twain, **Huckleberry Finn**, Harper and Row, New York, 1965, p. 39)

The story of Jonah's flight is the story of a runaway servant. Jonah flees from his master, God.

II Kings 14:25, the text recognized by many as the one from which the author of the book of Jonah derived his main character, presents the following notices: "He [Jeroboam II] restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Aravah, according to the word of Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by **his servant** Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gat ha-Hefer."[1]

The prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, is spoken of as the Lord's servant. It is of some interest to note that Amos, who would have been Jonah's contemporary, also spoke of the Lord's prophets as his servants: "For the Lord will do nothing unless he has revealed his plan to **his servants**, the prophets." (3:7) The Lord's servants are called upon by God to act as messengers to his people Israel in particular, and

to the people of the world in general.

We are told in II Kings 14:25 that Jonah, the son of Amittai, carried out his appointed commission to Israel faithfully. His words were true and, by extension, he himself was a success. Jonah was a true servant of the Lord. The author of the book of Jonah, who sets out to compose a tract on the prophetic vocation, carefully selects this shadowy figure of antiquity right out of the pages of Israel's own history book. Our author now portrays Jonah as one unwilling to carry out his master's commission to a foreign nation, to the people of Nineveh. In this newly created scenario, the prophet will actually attempt to flee from his master for reasons that will not become clear until the final chapter of the book.

The author establishes the conflict without delay. The Lord addresses Jonah, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ... ." Jonah arises, but flees in precisely the opposite direction. Will God allow Jonah to escape? Will He kill Jonah and commission another in his stead? In other words, if Jonah is indeed a runaway servant, what alternatives do Jonah's actions place before his master, God?

We would suggest that our author, in viewing Jonah as a runaway servant, may well have been guided in forming his

narration by his knowledge of the legal customs pertaining to runaways of the society in which he lived. What was one obliged to do if he found a runaway? What was the view of those contemporaneous cultures surrounding Israel and of Israel herself toward the slave or servant who fled his master's service?

II: The Runaway in the Ancient Near East

In the case of the cultures round about Israel, all the extant evidence points in one direction: Runaways must return or be returned to their masters. The illustrative material presented below has been selected from ancient Near Eastern legal materials, letters, treaties, and wisdom literature. These texts were written in a variety of languages and derive from various times and places. They provide us with a general picture of the runaway servant/slave's status as well as that of the one who harbors him or her.

LAW

The ancient Near Eastern legal materials are of two kinds: 1) law codes and 2) legal documents, including purchase agreements, leases, records of court proceedings, and the like.

Codes

The law "codes"[2] which treat the runaway slave and the necessity of returning him were all written immediately prior to or in the second millenium B.C.E. This fact lessens, to some extent, the importance of these documents for our understanding the legal milieu in which the writer of Jonah worked (sixth century B.C.E.).[3] Nevertheless, these codes do testify to the serious threat posed to the then extant economic system by the runaway and those who harbored, aided and abetted him.

The Code of Hammurapi (c. mid-eighteenth century B.C.E.), the classic legal formulation of the Old Babylonian period, treats the aider and harborer in paragraphs 15-16 and 19-20:

> [15] If a seignior has helped either a male slave of the state or a female slave of the state or a male slave of a private citizen or a female slave of a private citizen to escape through the city-gate, he shall be put to death.
>
> [16] If a seignior has harbored in his house either a fugitive male or female slave belonging to the state or to a private citizen and has not brought him

> forth at the summons of the police, the householder shall be put to death.
>
> 19 If he has kept the slave in his house (and) later the slave has been found in his possession, that seignior shall be put to death.
>
> 20 If the slave has escaped from the hand of his captor, that seignior shall (so) affirm by god to the owner of the slave and he shall then go free.[4]

The amount of attention paid to slaves in the Code (cf. paragraphs 15-20, 278-282) suggests that problems with them certainly must have been common in the Old Babylonian period. These problems would be persistent throughout the long history of slavery in the ancient Near East, as we will see below. Aiding a runaway, from the perspective of the Code's writer, was seen as a most heinous crime.

Earlier laws are much more lenient in cases of harboring, requiring either the replacement of the slave or the payment of fifteen or twenty-five shekels of silver.[5] The punishment in Hammurapi's code is extremely harsh for those in the upper level of society, that is, for those most responsible, from the point of view of this legislation, for the maintenance of the society. Such punishment, though

never encountered again in the legal literature of Mesopotamia, gives us ample evidence of the supreme importance of returning the runaway to his or her rightful owner. Without such cooperation among members of society, the slave system could not continue. Incentives were prescribed to nurture this cooperation. In paragraph 17, we read:

> If a seignor caught a fugitive male or female slave in the open and has taken him to his owner, the owner of the slave shall pay him two shekels of silver.[6]

The laws treated so far are well over one millenium older than the writing of the book of Jonah and are not directly helpful in giving us a picture of the legal milieu which would have affected this writing. Of greater interest are the numerous legal documents of the Neo-Babylonian (626-539 B.C.E.) and Achaemenid (539-331 B.C.E.) periods, for it is during the time of the Exile (587/6-539 B.C.E.; many of the Judean elite were taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C.E.) that the book of Jonah was written. The Exile provided the context for direct contact between Israel and Babylonia, and Babylonian culture had every opportunity to influence that of Israel.

Legal Documents

We are greatly indebted to the monumental work of M.

Dandamaev, **Slavery in Babylonia**, as well as to the scholars who have made this work available to the English speaking world. Dandamaev has collected and organized the vast Babylonian material dealing with slavery from the middle of the first millenium B.C.E. Among the issues treated is the runaway.[7]

Slave sale documents witness to the frequency that slaves must have taken flight. In earlier periods, a clause might be written into the sale agreement providing a three day escrow period during which time an inquiry might be made into the slave's background. This protected the purchaser in the event the slave was in fact a fugitive, in which case the purchaser would be guilty of harboring and might have faced harsh punishment.[8] Under such circumstances, the sale became null and void.[9] In the Neo-Babylonian period and after, the seller often included a clause guaranteeing that the slave would not run away from the purchaser for a period of one-hundred days.[10] The focus is no longer upon the harm that would be done to the purchaser, but rather upon the seller's obligation to guarantee the trustworthiness of the slave.[11]

One Bariki-ili was certainly not trustworthy, as an extant record of a court proceeding indicates. This document from the reign of Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.E; probably written in 548 B.C.E.) relates the case of Bariki-ili who ran away

several times.[12] Many years ago, it was suggested that this man was taken captive in the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E. by Nebuchadnezzer.[13] While we can never be certain of this, the man's name might betray his Judean background or it could simply be of a general West Semitic background.[14]

The document under consideration is a record of Bariki-ili's complaint to a court in Babylon. Bariki-ili claimed that he was a free man, while his owners claimed him as their own. The court ordered him to produce the document testifying to his free status. He could not because there was none. He confesses:

> I have succeeded in running away from the house of my master two times and was not discovered for many days. I was afraid and I said: "I am a free man." I have no free status. I am a slave who who was redeemed for silver belonging to Gaga. She gave me to her daughter Nupta. Nupta legally transferred me to her son Zababa-iddin and her son Iddina. After the deaths of Gaga and Nupta, I was sold to Itti-Marduk-balaṭu son of Nabu-aḫḫe-iddin descendant of Egibi. I am a slave.[15]

Bariki-ili admitted to having run away twice while under the ownership of Itti-Marduk-balaṭu (549 B.C.E.). The second

attempt brought him into the service of one Bel-rimanni. Apparently, the rightful owners claimed him to be their's while he was with Bel-rimanni. The document does not mention any action taken against Bel-rimanni. The central issue is Bariki-ili's status, and that having been determined, the slave must be returned to his rightful owner.

Some thirty years later in Babylon, we learn of the trouble a slave, Nabu-kilanni by name, caused his master, Nabu-apla-iddin, when he ran away.[16] After some time, the owner filed a complaint in court asserting that he had seen his slave in the house of a Nabu-uballiṭ. This man changed the slaves's name once he came into his possession. He called the slave Nabu-šepiš̆u-šuzziz. The slave would be all the easier to sell with the new identity afforded him by the new name and, therefore, clean past. (It must have been difficult to sell slaves with a history of flight; see below, on the wisdom literature.) But the name itself is an instant give-away of the slave's tarnished past. It means, "O **Nabu, stop his feet!**" Despite this blaring warning, the slave's new owner was able to sell him.

Now, we return to the court case brought by Nabu-apla-iddin, the original owner of the slave in question. He asked the court for permission to search the house of the one in whose possession he had seen his slave. The court granted him permission stating that if his allegation proved true he

could, "according to the law of the king", take his slave back.

Two final points may be made with regard to this document. First, it is "the law of the king" that fugitives must be returned to their rightful owners. We, unfortunately, do not know what "the law of the king" refers to in this case. Second, no penalty is imposed upon the harborer of the runaway, supporting the view that in the Neo-Babylonian--Achaemenid periods the primary interest of the owner was in getting his property back.

This leniency in the treatment of the one in whose possession the slave of another was found extended even to the abductor.[17] In a document from the same period and provenience as the former, we learn that a Labaši abducted the slave woman of a member of the Egibi family. A member of that family forced Labaši to return the slave, but no punishment whatsoever was inflicted upon the abductor.

These many documents combined with the evidence gleaned from the codes establish a single fundamental legal principle with regard to the treatment of fugitives in the ancient Near East: The runaway must be returned to his or her rightful owner. This principle will also form one of the bases of the relations of one nation with others, as we learn from the many ancient treaties that have come down into our hands.

TREATIES

Treaties between nations of the ancient Near East were were solemn oaths sworn between the signatories. Several outstanding examples of these treaties have been recovered that inform us about the kinds of stipulations the parties were obliged to carry out. This is, in effect, evidence for what we might call ancient "international law". One stipulation often encountered concerns the return of fugitive slaves.

Three documents will be cited in this regard. First, the treaty between Niqmepa of Alalaḫ and Ir-^{d}IM of Tunip (c. early fifteenth century B.C.E.):

> Seal of Ir-^{d}IM, king of Tunip.
>
> Text (of the agreement) sanctioned by an oath to the gods, between Niqmepa, king of Mukishḫe [and Alalaḫ], and Ir-^{d}IM, king of Tunip; Niqmepa and Ir-^{d}IM have now established [this agreement] between them as follows: [several stipulations]
>
> 5. If a fugitive slave, male or female, of my land flees to your land, you must seize and return him to me, (or), if

someone else seizes him and takes him to you, [you must keep him] in your prison, and whenever his owner comes forward, you must hand him over to [him]. If (the slave) is not to be found, you must give him (the owner) an escort, and he may seize him in whatever town he (the slave) is found; (in any town where) he is not found, the mayor and five elders will declare under oath: "Your slave does not live among us and we do not conceal him" --if they are unwilling to take the oath, (but) eventually return his slave, [they go free], but if they take the oath and later he discovers his slave [among them], they are considered thieves and their hands are cut off, (moreover) they will pay 6,000 (shekels) of copper to the palace.

[more stipulations, some concerning slaves]

Seal of Niqmepa, king of Alalaḫ.

Whosoever transgresses these agreements, Adad, [...] and Shamash, the lord of

> judgment, Sin, and the great gods will make him perish, [will make disappear] his name and his descendants from the lands, [...], they will make him forsake his throne and scepter [...].[18]

Fundamental to right international relations is the returning of fugitive slaves. Slaves often derived from the booty taken in wars between both neighboring and distant states. If a slave were able to flee his master, he might just head home. To guarantee that such slaves would be returned to their rightful owners, stipulations such as this were created. I. Mendelsohn suggests that just such a treaty arrangement may have existed between Solomon and Achish of Gath, thus explaining the ease with which Shimei retrieved his slaves (I Kings 2:39-40).[19] We will have more to say about this incident below.

It is of interest to note that from among the documents of Alalah we have evidence that such stipulations carried weight in the arena of international relations. An extradition receipt reads:

> ... 2 female (and) one male fugitives belonging to Pantarashshura in the presence of Niqmepa, Akiyya, the servant of Pantarashshura, of the city of Urume, has received them. Before Arnupar, the district overseer of the city of

Aleppo.[20]

These slaves fled their master, Pantarashshura, an Alalaḫian of the city of Urume, and went to the foreign city of Aleppo. There they were captured and then delivered to king Niqmepa of Alalaḫ. He returned them to Pantarashshura's agent, his slave. We suspect that this Pantarashshura was a particularly important figure at Alalaḫ, for why else would Niqmepa himself have overseen the slaves' return? Though no reward for the return of these slaves is mentioned in this document, such was stipulated in another treaty from Alalaḫ.

As we saw in the law codes, rewards were to be paid to those who returned runaways to their masters. The short treaty between Idrimi and Pilliya, again from Alalaḫ (c. early fifteenth century B.C.E.) reads:

> Tablet of agreement.
>
> When Pilliya and Idrimi took an oath by the gods and made this binding agreement between themselves: they will always return their respective fugitives ...
>
> Anyone who seizes a fugitive and returns him to his master, (the owner) will pay as prize of capture 500 (shekels of) copper if it is a man, one thousand as prize if it is a woman. ...

> From that day on it is decreed that fugitives have to be returned.[21]

The two treaties discussed so far are from the second millenium and from the West. The Sefire treaty, written in Old Aramaic in the eighth century B.C.E., is also from the West. One stipulation deals with fugitive servants of the king and the obligation to extradite them.

> If one of my officials or one of my brothers or one of my eunuchs or one of the people under my control flees from me and becomes a fugitive and goes to Aleppo, you must not pro[vide f]ood for them, and you must not say to them: Stay peacefully in your place, and you must not cause them to be distainful of me. You must placate them and return them to me. If not, they shall [remain] in your place to be quiet there until I come and placate them. If you cause them to be disdainful of me and provide food for them and say to them: Stay where you are and pay no attention to him, you will have betrayed this treaty.[22]

The language used here of the extradition of the king's servants is identical to that used of the extradition of slaves. Just as the slave's owner had complete contol over

his property, so the king had sovereign power over his servants.

In sum, the codes and the treaties (which in so many ways are interconnected with law) are agreed that slaves must be returned to their masters. The language of the Idrimi's treaty is most emphatic on this point: "From this day on it is decreed that fugitives have to be returned!" We might, however, doubt the value of this information. Codes and treaties might have very little to do with the actual day-to-day lives of real people. But the legal documents also concur. These provide a check, for it is precisely from the workaday world that they derive. The legal documents are seconded by yet another reliable source of information about the way that people actually lived, letters.

LETTERS

A model letter for the instruction of schoolboys tells of a policeman's chase after two runaway slaves. He has now lost their trail and appeals to his colleagues in the south to inform him of the status of the search. This gendarme's view is presented in the Egyptian letter, called by its modern translator, "The Pursuit of Runaway Slaves":

> The Chief of Bowmen of Tjeku, Ka-Kem-wer
> to the Chief of Bowmen, Ani and the Chief
> of Bowmen Bak-en-Ptah ... [salutations

follow]

Another matter, to wit: I was sent forth from the broad-halls of the palace--life, prosperity, health!--in the third month of the third season, day 9, at the time of evening, following after these two slaves. Now when I reached the enclosure wall of Tjeku on the third month of the third season, day 10, they told [me] they were saying to the south that they [the slaves] had passed by on the third month of the third season, day 10. Now when [I] reached the fortress, they told me that the scout (?) had come from the desert [saying that] they had passed the walled place north of the Migdol of Seti Mer-ne-Ptah--life, prosperity, health!--Beloved like Seth.

When my letter reaches you, write to me all that has happened to [them]. Who found their tracks? Which watch found their tracks? What people are after them? Write to me about all that has happened and how many people you send out after them.[23]

In an Old Babylonian letter written by Kibri-Dagan, governor of Terqa, to his lord, Zimri-Lim, king of Mari, Kibri-Dagan gives the normal salutations and then states:

> Following (the receipt of) the message of my lord, I gave strict orders to my military posts on (both) the near and far banks [of the Euphrates river] concerning the fugitive slaves belonging to Turrunu-Gamil, (namely) Etel-pi-Shamash and his cohorts. I have not been negligent concerning this matter about which my lord has written me.[24]

Here a loyal servant of the king reports that every effort is being made to pursue and capture the fugitives in question. The tone of urgency and the pressure felt by Kibri-Dagan highlight the tension raised when slaves took to foot. Unlike stray cattle which can rarely succeed in vanishing without a trace, clever humans, if not captured soon after their escape, will never be seen again. These particular fugitives were apparently very important to someone close to the king, just as we had seen in the case of Pantarashshura of Alalah, otherwise we could not explain his intervention in the matter at all.

A similar situation is found in a letter from the fifth century B.C.E., written in Aramaic from Arsham, an Egyptian high official, to Artawont, a lower official. Arsham informs

Artawont of a case of runaway brigands and instructs him what is to be done to them. The high official acts in order to help his own officer:

From Arsham to Artawont:

I send thee much greetings of peace and prosperity.

And [now];--one named Psamshek, son of Ah-Hapi [my officer] here has said thus:

When I was coming to [my lord] ..., (certain) slaves of Ah-Hapi my father [who were coming] in my train to my lord--[list of names of the slaves]-- all (told) 8 men--took my property and fled from me. Now if it be good to my lord, let (word) be sent to Artawont [that, if] I present [those men] before him, the punishment which I shall give orders (to inflict) be inflicted upon them.

Now Arsham [says thus]:

(In regard to) that Psanshek-hasi and his fellows, the slaves of Ah-Hapi whom Psamshek will present before thee there--

> do thou issue an order that that punishment, which Psamshek shall [issue] an order to inflict upon them, be inflicted upon them.[25]

The letters make it abundantly clear that slaves ran away often, forcing their masters to turn to the police and government officials to help them recapture their property.

Men such as these, who might have had substance enough to hold slaves in the ancient Near East, would have been among those targeted for instruction by the wisdom literature. The best insurance against a slave becoming a fugitive is knowing how to treat him.

WISDOM LITERATURE

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature, like its counterpart from ancient Israel, councils the student in proper behavior so that he may lead a clean, respectable, and prosperous life. One of the most famous collections of maxims, "The Words of Ahiqar", written in Aramaic in the late sixth--early fifth century B.C.E., gives advice about the imposition of firm discipline upon slaves and the foolishness of acquiring runaways.

> A blow for a bondman, a reb[uke] for a bondwoman, and for all thy slaves

> dis[cipline. One who] buys a run[away] slave [or] a thievish handmaid squanders his fortune and [disgraces] the name of his father and his offspring with the reputation of his wantonness.[26]

According to this teacher, the firm hand is the key to keeping slaves in line. A slave who runs away is no good to anybody; he who purchases him is a fool. But more foolish than he is one who abandons discretion in dealing with his chattel and gives them means to take flight.

In sum, the ancient Near Eastern evidence is unanimous in its insistence that slaves must return or be returned to their rightful owners. Any who might incite, aid or harbor a slave would, at a minimum, be betraying his role as a responsible member of a society whose economy was, in part, built upon slavery. The most intelligent stance was to give slaves no chance to get away in the first place. We, as moderns, naturally abhor the whole system of slavery, but we must recognize that it played an important role both in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel itself.

III: The Runaway in Biblical Perspective

We learn about biblical views concerning runaway slaves or servants from two kinds of sources: 1) narratives and 2) a single statement in the legal literature of Deuteronomy.

The outlook of the biblical narratives is entirely consistent with the ancient Near Eastern materials. Deuteronomy 23:16-17, however, presents a revolutionary attitude toward the treatment of runaways that would have been shocking to Israel's neighbors. Four narratives involve servants or slaves in flight from their masters.

The Hebrew word **ʿebed** merits brief discussion before we turn to the biblical narratives. In biblical Hebrew, **ʿebed** 'male servant' also means 'slave' (also true for Hebrew **ʾāmāh/šiphāh**, 'female servant'). Biblical Hebrew shares this semantic range with the languages cognate to it, including Akkadian and Aramaic.[27] Underlying both meanings is 'dependency'; the one bearing the title **ʿebed** is, to a greater or lesser degree, perceived to be dependent upon someone else. The determination of the degree of dependency, that is whether we are to render **ʿebed** as 'servant' or 'slave', rests solely upon the context in which the word appears. It is context, then, that will guide us in our discussion of the biblical narratives.

NARRATIVES

In Genesis 16, we hear Sarai tell Abram (v. 2):

> Behold now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my maid. It may be that I will obtain children by

her.

Abram does exactly as he is told. Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian slave girl, becomes pregnant and then taunts her mistress. Sarai becomes infuriated at the girl's behavior. Abram reminds Sarai that she may do to the handmaid as pleases her. Life, then, becomes unbearable for Hagar under Sarai's harsh treatment. The pregnant girl flees from Sarai and runs southward toward her home, Egypt. An angel of the Lord meets Hagar by a well. She confesses to the angel (v. 8): "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel instructs Hagar, saying (v. 9): "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel promises Hagar that the child she is bearing will be no man's slave. Hagar returns to her mistress as instructed and gives birth to Ishmael as promised.

The outstanding features of this story are two. First, slaves could be and were treated harshly by their masters. In the present case, Hagar provokes her mistress' anger by poking at Sarai's one sore spot: her infertility. But one power lost does not render the mistress powerless. Sarai makes the slave girl's life miserable; so much so, that Hagar flees. The reader wonders, "Is Hagar's affliction so great that she is justified in fleeing?" The answer to this question, provided in the text, underlines the second significant feature of this story for our investigation. Slaves must return or be returned to their masters no matter what motivated their flight. The Lord may have heard Hagar's

affliction (v. 11), but he does not vindicate her. Instead, he instructs her to return to her mistress no matter what the consequences may be.

It is these consequences that bring fear to another Egyptian slave in I Samuel 30. This slave of an Amalekite had been abandoned by his master and was found by David's troops who were about to take vengeance upon the Amalekites for the atrocity they committed at Ziklag (vv. 1-5). David asks that the slave lead him to the Amalekites. The slave adjures King David, saying (v. 15):

> Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band.

David apparently complies, is led down to the Amalekite camp, and routs them.

This Egyptian slave cleverly saves his own life twice because he can provide an essential service to his new lord, David. In the first place, he deserves to die at the hand of David for having participated in the brutal destruction of Ziklag (v. 14). Second, he knows that if David were to spare him and then capture his master in the ensuing battle, he would naturally be returned to him, even though his master had abandoned him. (In this respect, abandoned slaves were treated like runaways: They were still the chattel of their

owners.) Under those circumstances, he would be a dead man for having broken his allegiance to his master and for having collaborated with the enemy. By agreeing to the slave's proposal, David lifts two sentences of death from the Egyptian's head.

The third biblical narrative concerning runaways, I Kings 2:36-46, contains a story about runaway slaves within a story about a runaway servant. The servant is Shimei, the unrelenting adversary of King David (see II Samuel 16:5-8 and 19:16-23). The lord is David's son, King Solomon, who establishes his hold over United Israel by either eliminating his enemies or placing them in protective custody. It is into the latter condition that King Soloman places Shimei.

King Solomon summons Shimei and says to him:

> Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and do not go forth from there to any place whatever. For on the day you go forth, and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head. (vv. 36-7)

Shimei agrees to do as the king commands him:

> **What you say is good. As the king, my lord, has said, so will your servant do.** (v. 38)[28]

As we saw above in the Sefire treaty, a king's servants were of similar status to slaves. Shimei, having accepted his role as servant to his lord Solomon, obeys his king for the moment. The narrator continues (vv. 39-40):

> But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. But when it was told Shimei, "Behold, your slaves are in Gath," Shimei arose, saddled an ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his slaves. Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath.

The flight of Shimei's slaves forces him to act quickly. They must be returned to him, for he is their rightful owner! He could send agents to retrieve them, but he chooses to go after them himself. In so doing, he becomes a runaway servant from his lord Solomon. (The ease of the retrieval may be explained if Solomon in fact had an extradition treaty with Achish; see above.) Unlike the Egyptian slave who could bargain for his life by placing a king under oath, Shimei, a servant who had taken a solemn oath on his very life from a king, must now forfeit his life in silence. The king, as the Lord's servant, must execute judgment against those who break oaths taken in the Lord's name (see v. 43).

Finally, we return to the narratives concerning David. In I Samuel 25, the wealthy, but ill-natured Nabal rebuffs

David when he asks for food in return for the protection his forces have provided for Nabal. Nabal says:

> Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who are breaking away from their masters. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where? (vv. 10-11)

From Nabal's point of view, David and his men are no better that runaway slaves--clearly to be understood as the most base men in society. We recall the statement in Ahiqar, which emphasizes the corrupt reputation of the slave who habitually runs away. Wherever and whenever slavery existed, fugitives were an irritating problem and, unfortunately for their owners, a commonplace.[29] Laws were necessary to deal with this phenomenon.

LAW

Remarkably, biblical law, in contrast with its counterparts from the ancient Near East, barely treats the problem of the runaway slave. The lone law is found in Deuteronomy 23:16-17:

> You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you; he shall dwell with you in your

> midst, in the place which he shall choose within one of your towns, where it pleases him best; you shall not oppress him.

The first half of this law would appear to virtually undermine the institution of slavery! I. Mendelsohn has written:

> If this law literally applied to any slave who had run away from his master, it certainly was unrealistic, for if put to practical use, it would have resulted in the immediate abolition of slavery.[30]

The second half of the law would seem to suggest, however, that the slave was a foreigner until now. If the first half of the law is read in light of the second, the slave would be a fugitive from another country seeking asylum in the land of Israel and whose extradition is hereby prohibited. What cannot be determined with certainty is whether the slave himself is non-Israelite or Israelite.[31] If the interpretation of Deuteronomy 23:16-17 suggested here is correct, Israelite law virtually ignores the problem of the fugitive slave within Israel itself.

However this law is understood, it would have shocked and angered the members of the contemporaneous societies around Israel. As we noted already in our discussion of ancient Near Eastern treaty stipulations, signatories to such

pacts were clearly obliged to return fugitives. Such seemingly humane behavior on Israel's part would certainly have placed significant barriors to "right" international relations between Israel and her neighbors.

Finally, though the wisdom literature of the canonical Hebrew Bible per se does not treat the runaway, it is of some interest to note that the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as the Wisdom of Joshua ben Sirach, does mention him. Much of the advice given here on the treatment of slaves could just as well have been recorded in any one of the many works of wisdom from the Near East, for it would have been of value to all in possession of slaves in the ancient world. Sirach 33:24-31 reads:

> 24 Fodder and a stick and burdens for an ass; bread and discipline and work for a servant.
>
> 25 Set your slave to work, and you will find rest; **leave his hands idle, and he will seek liberty.**
>
> 26 Yoke and thong will bow the neck, and for a wicked servant there are racks and tortures.
>
> 27 Put him to work, that he may not be

idle; for idleness teaches much evil.

28 Set him to work, as is fitting for him; and if he does not obey, make his fetters heavy.

29 Do not act immoderately toward anybody; and do nothing without discretion.

30 If you have a [or 'but one'] servant, let him be as yourself, because you have bought him with blood.

31 If you have a [or 'but one'] servant, treat him as a brother, for as your own soul you will need him. If you ill-treat him, and he leaves and runs away, which way will you go to seek him?

Servants ought to be kept busy, or else they might "seek liberty". Jonah prefers idleness to effort. Only when he is called upon to work, does he flee. God will ultimately force him to return and get back to work. Finally, in chapter 4, Jonah will receive strong words of discipline from his master.

IV: Jonah as Runaway

Faced with a commission by God that he does not wish to undertake, Jonah takes flight from his master. Jonah's plan is to flee from the place over which he believes God has sovereignty. The fare paid, Jonah boards a ship bound for Tarshish. God responds to Jonah's insubordination by hurling a violent storm upon the sea. The ship threatens to break up from the force of the tempest. The vessel will remain in this precarious state throughout the action to follow. Why does God toy with the ship in this manner? Surely, if Jonah's god's anger is so intense against his rebellious servant, he could, in an instant, destroy the ship, thereby punishing Jonah for his arrogant behavior. However, the reader becomes convinced as the narrative unfolds, that more is at stake here than simply the punishment of Jonah. The sailors increasingly become the story's focus as Jonah, the scorner, refuses to learn a lesson from the hands of his master.

The storm serves two purposes simultaneously in the narrative. First, it is the means through which the sailors (and, by extension, the readers) learn profound lessons about God's power and nature. Second, the storm impedes Jonah's flight and, by means of his own words and deeds in response to the storm, Jonah will ultimately be returned to the master who pursues him so vigorously and a reward will be paid.

The mariners react to the tempest with a flurry of activity. Our author has aptly portrayed them as the superstitious lot we would expect them to be as heathen men of the sea. They cry out each man to his own god in hopes that they may be able to appease whichever god may be angry. (v. 5) They do not rely upon their prayers alone, however. They take pragmatic action too, by jetisoning whatever unnecessary ballast they can. These actions express their mild cynicism about placing full trust in often deaf and capricious gods.

The crew's concerted efforts and energetic response to impending doom find their complete contrast in the inactivity of our "hero". Jonah sleeps soundly. The captain wakes Jonah from his stuppor and commands him, saying (v. 6):

> Arise, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we do not perish.

If Jonah fled from God who gave him the command (v. 2), "Arise, go ..., and cry out ...", would he be likely to obey the mere captain of a ship to "arise, cry out to" the selfsame god for help? No, not stubborn Jonah! The text informs us in its silence that Jonah did not carry out the order of the ship's supreme commander. Jonah's deliberate inactivity only serves to highlight the crew's sincere effort to save themselves.

Lots are cast so that the identity of the man on whose account they are all suffering might be revealed. (v.7) Once again, the reader is amused to witness the seemingly empty divinitory practices of superstitious heathen mariners. But the joke is on the reader! The lots fall on the right man. Could it be that Jonah's god has actually communicated with the heathen through the delicate manipulation of the lots? If so, this god makes every effort to speak to these men in an authoritative language he knows they will understand and heed. The seamen begin to learn more than they had set out to learn; the lesson of the lots will not be lost on them. They indeed heed the lots and turn directly to Jonah.

When questioned fully about his identity, (v. 8) Jonah gives an incomplete, yet telling response: "I am a Hebrew. I worship/fear the Lord, God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." (v. 9) The reader is puzzled by several contradictions between Jonah's words and deeds. If he truly feared his Lord at first, why did he flee? If he is, at present, in awe of the Lord, why does he refuse to cry out to God in repentance? If he is not simply repeating a traditional phrase by rote, does he not understand that a god who created both sea and land can certainly control them, as well as anything that moves upon them? If he understood this, why did he attempt to flee in the first place? Jonah neither hears nor understands what his own lips utter.

The sailors, however, do. They learn only now ("For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them", v. 10b) that Jonah is fleeing from the god whom he just said he feared. This is yet a third time the reader is impressed by the author's realistic portrayal, building into his characters a knowledge of the law. They realize that **Jonah is a servant in flight from his master!** Jonah's flight has put the ship and its crew into mortal danger: **They are harboring and transporting a runaway!** The consequences could be dire, for his master is no mere mortal of flesh and blood. He is a god. Had their sin been committed in the human arena, governed by the laws of man, they might expect leniency. However, such an awesome god's vengeance might know no limitation. A deep fear grips the sailors. In a confused fury, the crew rebukes Jonah, asking (vv. 10-11): "What is this that you have done? What shall we do to you that the sea will quiet down from upon us?"

The question, "What is this that you have done?" (and its variants), has a very specific usage in the narrative literature of the Bible. It is often uttered by a hurt, damaged, or wronged party to the one who inflicted the wrong, be it legal or moral. These words serve to rebuke the wrongdoer and, in some instances, to invite confession and repentance. One example from the narrative of Genesis illustrates this usage.

In Genesis 20, Abraham passes his wife, Sarah, off to the people of Gerar as his sister. Abimelech, the king, takes Sarah into his household. That night, God appears to Abimelech in a dream, informs him of the wrong he has committed and gives him an ultimatum: Return Sarah or die! On the morrow, Abimelech makes known to his servants all that transpired. A great fear grips them. We, then, read (vv. 9-10):

> Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him: "**What have you done to us?** And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done. ... What were you thinking of that you did this thing?

Abraham explains his motives and defends himself before the king. The females of the king's household, we later learn, had been afflicted with infertility so long as Sarah resided in their midst. It is only through the agency of Abraham, the prophet, that the women are healed. Abraham is rewarded with great riches for his intervention on behalf of Abimelech and his house.

This story illustrates well the usage as we have described it above. Abimelech, feeling himself and his household to have been brought unwittingly into sin by

Abraham, rebukes Abraham and accuses him of willfully causing them to transgress. Abraham, in this case, believes that he has done nothing wrong, but does take the time to explain his actions to the king.[32]

The question, "What is this that you have done?", functions in Jonah 1:10 in a very similar way to that found in Genesis 20:9. After learning from the lots that the storm had befallen them because of Jonah (v. 7b), and then from Jonah's own mouth that he was a runaway servant from before his god (v. 10b), the sailors connect the two data. They recognize a cause and effect relationship between Jonah's flight and the storm which threatens them. They realize that Jonah has made them accessories to his crime by making them harborers of a fugitive. They cry out in rebuke: "What is this that you have done?" With these words they simultaneously accuse him of harming them unjustly and urge him to rectify their desperate situation.

The crew perceives that with each passing moment the sea's fury is becoming more intense (v. 11 b). They realize that immediate action is called for; any delay could spell certain doom. They turn to Jonah, and ask (v. 11): "What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us?" The very question itself assumes the crew's sincere belief that Jonah can and will give them sound advice built upon his longstanding intimate knowledge of his god and how that god

will behave in the face of the prescribed action. Jonah responds forthrightly to the sailors' urgent appeal for guidence. The prophet says (v. 12): "Lift me up and throw me into the sea so that the sea will quiet down from upon you, for I know that it is on my account that this storm has come upon you."

Jonah's guilt in fleeing his master jeopardizes the well-being of the entire crew, but they refuse to accept Jonah's rash solution. Why? Whereas Jonah had made the crew unwitting transporters of a runaway at first, he now asks them to actively engage in committing a heinous crime. He tells them to kill him for their own sakes. It is one thing to harbor, even aid and abet, a fugitive, but murder is murder. In taking such action, they would necessarily bring upon themselves guilt of the highest order. They decide to ignore Jonah's advice.

The sailors devise a plan of their own: they will turn the ship around and return Jonah directly home. This seems to be a rational approach. The crew has seen irrefutable empirical evidence that Jonah's flight away from his master's service has brought calamity upon them. The sailors decide to intervene to halt Jonah's forward progress. They will right Jonah's wrong for him by returning his body (with or without his consent) to his god's homeland. This god, they believe, will surely approve. The runaway will be returned,

a burden of guilt will be removed from their ship, and they will reap a significant reward: all will be as it was before they left Joppa.

But the harder they row in order to carry out their plan, the angrier the sea becomes. (v. 13) Their effort is futile. The sailors recognize that the sea's rage directly reflects that of the one in control of it. Clearly, Jonah's god and master does not desire this method of returning his servant. What method does he desire?

The crew recalls Jonah's earlier address to them (v. 12) and they will now turn to him again. Jonah, the mariners know, is the cause of their suffering. They learned this through the observation of the lots and the sea. In each case, they saw a god's hand directly in Jonah's life. Most telling from the sailors' point of view would have been the reaction of the sea to their feeble attempt to return to shore. The lots might have been wrong and, so too, Jonah might have overestimated himself, but now they had a control: everything at sea had remained unchanged, except that they had attempted to row ashore. In direct response to their action, the sea grew even more tempestuous. There could be no doubt now that Jonah had accurately described his god, the Lord, the God of Heaven as the one "who made the sea and the dry land." If the god who commissioned Jonah is powerful enough to create, control and use the mighty sea to express

his displeasure to the crew and if that god is subtle enough to communicate with the sailors by making the delicate lots fall upon Jonah, it may be that he has already communicated with them yet again, this time through the means of his prophet: "Lift me up and throw me into the sea, then the sea will quiet down for you." (v. 12) (Prophets and prophecy were known to non-Israelites, and this assumption, made by the author, again makes us appreciate his craftsmanship.) The mariners now believe that perhaps Jonah, the prophet, speaks the truth. This understanding is a gamble on their part, to be sure, for there is no reason to trust Jonah. They hope that the prophet's words will be trustworthy.

The sailors, somewhat uneasy about their understanding, hedge their bet with a prayer to the god whose words they now believe they have heard from Jonah's mouth. They pray that their understanding of god's intention is correct and, therefore, that he will not hold them accountable for what they are about to do. They round off their petition with an affirmation of the fundamental principle they have learned: **God does as he pleases.** (v. 14) The crew realizes that it is futile to flee their assigned task: This god desires that Jonah go overboard, and they are to be the god's agents in bringing this about.[33] The sailors now give no thought to their own devices and act obediently. They throw Jonah overboard. The near verbatim repetition in verse 15 of the words found in verse 12 emphasizes their complete obedience

to their new found master. How Jonah should have learned from their example!

The crew is rewarded immediately for their obedience. The sea quiets down the moment Jonah goes under. The sailors were correct in their understanding: Jonah was a true prophet who communicated his god's will directly to them. This god now appears to them to be not only powerful, but fair. He is not capricious. He makes sense and acts according to rational rules of behavior: He communicates with those whom he expects to do something, he tells them what they are supposed to do and what the reward will be for their compliance, and then fulfills his end of the bargain. This god merits fear and worship. The crew again complies.

As chapter one ends, we note Jonah's disappearance from the action. Jonah is nearly forgotten. The focal point has turned toward the sailors alone. The sailors had seen something profound in Jonah's words of advice. Yet, the reader is convinced that Jonah's intent in giving that advice had been very different. He was entirely self-centered in his desire for self-destruction. Through his own death he would achieve the ultimate flight from God, thus thwarting God's designs altogether: without anyone to warn them, the Ninevites would surely perish and Jonah, in death, would have victory over God.

But as we look back again at the words uttered by Jonah in verse 12, we note an important omission. Had Jonah actually understood that his words were intrinsically true because he was a prophet and/or had he complete control over the words he spoke, he might have said: "Lift me up, throw me overboard, **and kill me** ... ." No such words appear, though Jonah implied them. Such was not to be his fate. Like his shipmates, Jonah will live, but unlike them, he will not have the benefit of learning that, in fact, he had spoken the truth.

God now appoints a new agent, the great fish, to return Jonah's body to the land. The fish is an obedient servant of its master (unlike Jonah) in carrying out an uncomfortable task. The fish completes its mission by returning Jonah to the place desired by his lord.[34]

Now, Jonah must get back to work. God commands him again: "Arise, go Nineveh ... ." (3:2) Utterly defeated, Jonah turns and drags his body to Nineveh. Obedient like the mariners and the fish? Yes, but only under extreme duress. Has he come to understand his god better, like the sailors, and has he (re)turned in repentance to his master? No.

Jonah has much to learn.

V: Closing Remarks

The book of Jonah, as a tract on the prophetic office (see below, Chapter 3), is built upon Jonah's flight and its resolution. Jonah, we come to realize, is a negative model of prophetic behavior whom the audience is being admonished not to imitate. What Jonah is not, the reader is urged to be: a faithful, obedient servant.

God was concerned about the Ninevites. He desired to warn them of the doom that would befall them if they did not change their evil ways. He sent his servant, Jonah, the prophet to deliver His message. Jonah, however, fled his commission. His confession in 4:2 reveals the reason why he took to foot.

> I pray, O Lord, is this not what I thought when I was yet in my country? That is why I fled at first to Tarshish. For I knew/know that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and **repenting of evil.**

Jonah knows God's nature, and he doesn't like what he knows. The prophet, Jonah believes, is doomed to humiliation when God goes back on the word He had sent his servant to deliver. Jonah knew God would **inevitably** relent of punishing the Ninevites if they repented, which they would inevitably do.

So why go and be put to shame? To Jonah, such prophecy is a heavy yoke laid upon him by a cruel master. Jonah attempts to throw off this yoke and flee. He is returned against his will, watches all this happen as he thought it would, and then brings his complaint before his master. The book's author ends his work by having Jonah silenced by a God who demands that Jonah's petty, selfish, and self-centered concerns are meaningless when measured against His own.

Jonah's aiders and harborers, the sailors, had learned precisely this point through their encounter with Jonah's god. They knew they had to return Jonah in order to save their own lives, but they could not accept the solution he proposed. The sailors, in devising a plan of their own, unknowingly acted disobediently toward the god who had spoken to them through his prophet. This realized, they confess (1:14): "For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." God does as he pleases. The sailors allow their collective will to bend to that of their new master. They learn what Jonah never could and become what Jonah never was: faithful, obedient servants.

Amos, the contemporary of the Jonah ben Amittai of II Kings 14:25, called prophets servants of the Lord. (3:7) Of prophecy, he declared: "A lion has roared (cf. Amos 1:2), who can but fear; the Lord has spoken, who can but prophesy." (3:8) That gripping urgency felt by the first (and perhaps

greatest) of the writing prophets, Amos, so seizes Jonah that he sleeps soundly in flight from God and utters five whole words in fulfilling his mission to the Ninevites. Finally, then, if these, Jonah's actions, are paradigmatic and opposite of those expected of the obedient, faithful servant of the Lord, then the great prophet must ever yearn to enter God's presence and ever rush out zealously to teach, on God's behalf, of the life-giving power of sincere repentance.

Notes

* I am indebted to the remark of S. Goitein, 1937, 67: "Jonah flees as a servant from his lord", for stimulating my thinking on Jonah as a runaway servant.

This study will appear shortly in the forthcoming **Stanislaw Segert Festschrift** (edited by E. Cook, University of California Press).

1. Among those who share this view are J. Wellhausen, 1898, 221; A. Feuillet, 1947a, 167; T. Fretheim, 1978, 230; and the many critics who follow K. Budde's suggestion (1892, 40-43) that the book of Jonah is a **midrash** inspired by II Kings 14:25; cf. the partial list of these scholars given by G. Landes, 1978, 150-151, notes 1 and 2.

2. J. J. Finkelstein, 1981, 15 and n. 5 discusses the problem in using the term "code" to refer to these ancient documents. We will refer to them as codes hereafter merely for the sake of convenience. The codes that treat the runaway are Urnammu (14', 21'), Lipit Ishtar (12, 13), Laws of Eshnunna (22, 23), Hammurapi (15-20), and the Hittite Laws (22-24).

3. The dating of Jonah, in general, and our proposed dating of this work to the sixth century B.C.E., in particular, are

discussed in detail in chapter 3, below.

4. Translated by T. J. Meek, **ANET**^{3}, 166-7.

5. The Lipit Ishtar code, pars. 12 and 13, **ANET**^{3}, 160, translated by S. N. Kramer and the Laws of Eshnunna, pars. 22 and 23, **ANET**^{3}, 162, translated by A. Goetze; cf. I. Mendelsohn, 1949, 58, and note 137 on page 143.

6. This stipulation finds its parallel in Urnammu, par. 14 and in the Hittite Laws, pars. 22, 23.

7. Dandamaev (1984) treats the runaway on 220-228, 440-443, and 490-499.

8. An Old Babylonian document from the first half of the seventeenth century b.c.e. describes how a man purchased a slave girl from another man. This text ends as follows: "Three days are allowed for investigation (and) one month for epilepsy in order to clear her, in accordance with the ordinances of the king." (Translated by T. J. Meek, **ANET**^{3}, text 5, 218-9.)

There are two points of interest here. First, we have evidence for the three day waiting period. Second, this legal document would seem to be referring to the Code of Hammurapi (pars. 278 and 279). The present text demonstates

in a limited way that the code may, in fact, have been consulted or, at a minimum, that its contents were known to the scribe who took the proceedings of the court down.

9. Mendelsohn, 1949, 61.

10. Dandamaev, 1984, 220.

11. Early in the second millenium, leases of slaves for work also included punitive damages to be paid by the leasee to the owner in the event one of his slaves got loose while outside his direct control; cf. Mendelsohn, 1949, 59 ff.

12. Nbn 1113 (Strassmaier, 1889); Dandamaev, 1984, 440-443. For the name, cf. Job 32:2, 6.

13. Dandamaev, 1984, 110, note.

14. Cf. Weisberg, 1971, col. 529 for a discussion of the problems inherent in the ethnic identification of the bearers of names such as this in Neo-Babylonian documents.

15. Translated by Dandamaev, 1984, 442.

16. Darius 53 (Strassmaier, 1897); cf. Mendelsohn, 1949, 62 and Dandamaev, 1984, 223.

17. Darius 207 (Strassmaier, ibid.); Mendelsohn, 1949, 62-3 and Dandamaev, ibid.

18. Translated by E. Reiner, **ANET**^{3}, 531-2.

19. I. Mendelsohn, 1955, 65-72, esp. 70 f.

20. I. Mendelsohn, loc. cit., 69 f.

21. Translated by E. Reiner, **ANET**^{3}, 532.

22. Translated by F. Rosenthal, **ANET**^{3}, 660.

23. Translated by J. Wilson, **ANET**^{3}, 259.

24. G. Dossin, et al., 1964, text 118, lines 13-23, p. 123; my translation.

25. G. R. Driver, 1957, 24. This is Driver's translation.

26. Translated by H. L. Ginsberg, **ANET**^{3}, 428; cf. Lindenberger, 1983, 55-6.

27. Cf. the discussion of Dandamaev, 1984, 81 ff.

28. The same language has prompted C. Carmichael (1974, 186-187) to suggest that Jacob was a fugitive from his lord,

Laban. This is dubious, however, because Jacob is, in fact, a hired worker.

29. Two other texts have implications for our discussion: 1. From the point of view of Pharoah, Israel was a runaway after the tenth plague; 2. In light of Leviticus 25:55, Israel's insolent behavior toward God made her no less than a disobedient servant, but when she looked to foreign gods, it was as if she had crossed a border and become a runaway.

30. I. Mendelsohn, 1962, 389.

31. Jewish tradition recognizes both possibilities, cf. Rashi to Deuteronomy 23:16.

32. Other examples of this usage may be found in Genesis 3:13; 4:10; 12:18; 26:10; 29:25; 31:26; 44:15; Exodus 1:19; 14:11; Numbers 23:11; Joshua 7:19; Judges 2:2; 8:1; 15:11; 18:3, 18; I Samuel 13:11; 14:43; II Samuel 3:24; 12:21; I Kings 1:6.

33. Jonah recognizes this fact in his prayer, 2:4.

34. Note Rashi's comment to Jonah 1:3: "He [Jonah] thought: 'I will flee to the sea, for the divine presence is not found outside the land of Israel.' The Holy One Blessed be He said to him: 'By your life, I have agents like you to send after

you to bring you back from there.' This is analogous to the slave of a priest who fled from his master and entered a graveyard. [According to Jewish law, priests are forbidden from entering graveyards.] His master said to him: 'I have other servants just like you to send after you in order to bring you from there.'"

After this chapter was completed, Dr. D. B. Weisberg brought to my attention the fact that the Septuagint to Jonah 1:9 has Jonah proclaim to the sailors: "I am a servant of the Lord." The present writer is not inclined to believe that this phrase is original to the text of Jonah. It is of interest, however, that certain textual traditions, certainly under the influence of II Kings 14:25, desired to make explicit the relationship of Jonah's servanthood to the Lord. I am indebted to Dr. Weisberg for bringing this to my attention in an oral communication of December 6, 1987.

Repetition, Rhetoric and Style in Jonah

The book of Jonah has a way of etching itself indelibly upon the mind of its reader. Such is the force of its images and rhetoric. Who can forget Jonah's stay in the fish? Or his slumber in the hold of the tempest-tossed ship? Of the miraculous repentance of the Ninevites? Or the withering of the gourd? There is no better way of teaching an important lesson than by couching it in an unforgettable story. Skilled teachers impart such stories to their eager students. It is, however, a rare event to find a master teacher who can compose his own story that teaches just the lessons he desires. The writer of the book of Jonah is just such a teacher. In fact, if the popularity of his tale is any indication, he has proven himself to be one of the greatest teachers in history.

The writer shapes his small, but powerful composition using several literary devices (besides the images referred to above) which enhance the didactic thrust of the work. These make the language of the book equally memorable. One of these devices is the repetition of key words and phrases.[1] Repetition reinforces ideas in the mind of the reader. The author takes a further step by intentionally varying his usage in repetition. Variation in repetition is a normative feature of biblical Hebrew narrative rhetoric and style.[2] The book of Jonah is remarkable in that so many examples of

such variation occur in so small a corpus and in such striking forms. An analysis of selected narrative repetitions (including both verbatim and varied repetition) is carried out here, with special attention given to the contribution these make to the author's didactic purposes.

A brief word must be said here about the decision to treat only the narrative, apart from the poetic material of chapter 2. This has been done for two reasons. First, there has been a longstanding scholarly consensus (not without strong and often vociferous opposition, however) that the Psalm, as it is often referred to, is from another hand or other hands. The Psalm was, according to this view, either inserted here whole or was pieced together from already extant material by the author or by a later editor.[3] This consensus view, whether or not it is correct, must be recognized in scholarly treatments of Jonah. The present recognition of this consensus view should not, however, be construed necessarily as agreement with it. Rather, we wish to be as conservative and cautious as possible. The second of these reasons is that it might accrue to the longterm benefit of the debate over the original form of this book to treat the two different genres separately first. Only after this has been done, would we attempt to discern whether or not there is some genetic relationship between the language employed in them. Thus, the focus will be upon repetition in the narrative of Jonah, though the repetition in the Psalm

will be noted and its import for the aforementioned debate will be treated.

This study benefits greatly from the excellent condition of the massoretic text of the Jonah narrative. In all likelihood, we have the complete work as it was composed. There do not appear to be any lacunae; nor are there any additions or dislocations in the narrative that have been accepted by even a large minority of scholars.[4] The narrative portion is whole and can be studied as one.

Jonah, as a story about a prophet, conforms to the normative patterns of biblical Hebrew narrative style. One of these patterns, which the author has studied elsewhere, is variation in repetition.[5] More particularly, we refer to the variation of the selfsame phrase when it is repeated within a clearly defined narrative sequence. Variations include the substitution of synonymous substantives, changes in the morphology of repeated words, changes in syntax, and the like. In each case, the meaning of the phrase is in no way altered; the change often[6] serves a rhetorical function within the narrative. Several examples from other narrative materials in the Bible suffice to illustrate this usage.

We begin with pairs of synonymous variant verbal forms. The story of Elkanah's rival wives in I Samuel 1 is revealing. Peninah poked fun at Hannah's barrenness,

w^{e}kiᶜasattāh sārātāh, "and her rival used to provoke her". (v. 6) In verse 7, we read, "So she would do year after year. As often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her (**takᶜīsennāh**)." Here, the **piel** form is followed by the **hifᶜil**, with no noticeable change in meaning. Similarly, as Benjamin was about to be born (Genesis 35:16), Rachel "had difficulty (**watt^{e}qaš**) in giving birth." In verse 17, we read: "When she had difficulty (**b^{e}haqšōtāh**) in delivering, the midwife said to her ... ." The **piel** form is again followed by the **hifᶜil**. The synonymous variant forms in these two cases are found in succeeding verses.

In Genesis 15, Abram is told by God to make a sacrifice of three animals and two birds. We read in verse 10: "He took all these, cut (**way^{e}battēr**) them in two, and laid each half over against the other; but he did not cut (**bātār**) the birds in two." The writer first employs the **piel** and then the **qal** for what we, the readers, understand to be the same action. The variant forms in this case are found in the same verse.

So far, the examples have illustated changes in verbal forms. Many other morphological oppositions within the Hebrew language were also exploited. The biblical writers often juxtaposed synonymous marked (with **-ā** or **-t**) and unmarked substantives of the same root. For example, Abram and Lot came into conflict because of a dearth of pasture

lands (Genesis 13). "There was strife (rîb) between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle." (v. 7) Abram interceded and said to Lot (v. 8): "Let there be no strife (m^{e}rîbāh) between you and me ... ." Similarly, Tamar demands a pledge of her father-in-law in Genesis 38:18: "Your signet (hōtām^{e}kā), your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." In order to reveal the identity of the man by whom she was pregnant, she says (v. 25): "Mark, I pray you, to whom are the signet (haḥōtemet) and the cord and the staff." The unmarked form precedes the marked one, the two usages having the appearance of being fully synonymous. An extensive collection of morphological features of the Hebrew language that were intentionally varied by the biblical authors is presented in the writer's previous work.[7]

Similar examples of paired synonymous variants are found in the book of Jonah. These present the reader with a stylistically complex narrative, for there is much variation in the kinds of repetition employed by the author. The story is short and the language rich. Analogous narrative materials are found elsewhere in the Bible, especially in such short stories as Genesis 24,[8] the Jacob-Laban cycle,[9] the Samson cycle,[10] the Elijah cycle,[11] the prose frame of Job,[12] and Ruth.[13] Like the Elijah cycle, Jonah is yet another stylistically intricate short story about a prophet.

We begin our analysis by taking a closer look at several

selected examples of repetition within the book of Jonah, with special attention to the import of this repetition for the book's underlying didactic purposes. Chapter 1 contains a rather heavy concentration of repeated words and phrases. The book itself begins post haste with a very striking repetition, including a variation.

Jonah is commanded once to go to Nineveh to declare doom upon it. In verse 3, the narrator informs the reader three times that Jonah decided to go to Tarshish instead. The threefold repetition here underscores the servant's shocking insubordination to his master. It is as if the narrator had said: "**GOD** told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah went to Tarshish...to **Tarshish**!!...<u>to Tarshish</u>!!!" The reader is alerted to the gravity of Jonah's actions as he goes in precisely the opposite direction from that commanded by God.

The forms **taršīšāh**, **taršīš**, and **taršīšāh** are employed within verse 3. Each time the meaning is clearly 'toward Tarshish'. But the second of the three forms does not have the locative marker appended to it; only the first and third do. The pairing of identical words for destinations, one member having the locative marker and one lacking it, occurs elsewhere in biblical Hebrew narrative: for example, in Genesis 45:17 and 25; Exodus 4:19 and 21; Deuteronomy 1:37 and 38; 4:41 and 47; II Samuel 13:10; I Kings 1:23 and 31; Jeremiah 22:27; 28:3 and 4; 40:4. What is the rhetorical

meaning or intent of the variation in Jonah 1:3? J. Rosenberg's observation concerning what he calls 'nonverbatim repetition' appears to be a most appropriate tool in the interpretation of the book of Jonah. He states: "It [i.e. nonverbatim repetition] can reveal ways in which a character avoids or distorts reality."[14] Jonah's actions in fleeing from the reality of God, God's command, and his own prophetic role and sailing **taršîšāh/taršîš**, 'to Tarshish', are the classical case of avoidance in the Bible.

The alert signalled by this threefold repetition is experienced by the critical reader, as the writer introduces his writing style in the first few lines. They bristle with tension, both on the level of discourse and on the level of the images they present. The critical reader is prepared for more of the same in the lines to come. So, when Jonah finally details the reasons for his flight in 4:2, he seconds the narrator's assessment, given at the outset of 1:3, by admitting that he indeed had sought to flee from God's service by going **taršîšāh**, 'to Tarshish'. The critical reader has thus learned that he will need to be very sensitive to the subtlties of the Hebrew language employed by the writer.

Chapter 1 is packed with rhetorical subtlty. Repetitive expressions abound; variation in repetition is the rule. The changes are as simple as the substitution of synonyms

(s^{e}pīnāh [1:5b] for '^{o}niyyāh [1:3, 4, 5a]; '^{a}nī [1:9b, 12; cf. 4:11] for 'ānōḵī [1:9a; cf. 3:2]; '^{a}nāšîm [1:10, 13, 16] for mallāḥîm [1:5]; '^{aš}šer [1:8; cf. 4:11] for še- [1:7, 12; cf. 4:10]; the root qr' [1:6, 14] for z^{c}q [1:5]) and as complex as the "growing phrase", as J. Magonet calls it.[15]

The growing phrase is a dramatic rhetorical form which builds to a climax by the addition of a word or words to a phrase uttered by a character or narrated earlier. Form reflects content. The growing phrase has been studied rather thoroughly by Magonet, so we will focus exclusively upon its effectiveness as a didactic tool in the first chapter. An excellent example of the growing phrase is found in 1:5, 10, and 16.

The growing phrase in 1:5, 10, and 16 is as follows:

1:5 **wayyir^{e}'ū hammallāḥîm**

1:10 **wayyir^{e}'ū hā'^{a}nāšîm yir'āh g^{e}dōlāh**

1:16 **wayyir^{e}'ū hā'^{a}nāšîm yir'āh g^{e}dōlāh 'et yhwh**

Two words are added by the narrator in each repetition of the phrase. In 1:10, the cognate accusative **yir'āh** is added, plus the frequently used adjective **g^{e}dōlāh** (cf. 1:2, 4 [twice], 12). In addition, as we noted earlier, the common noun **'^{a}nāšîm** is substituted for the rare term **mallāḥîm**. In 1:16, the direct object clause **'et yhwh** is added to the

phrase as it is found in 1:10. The effect is clear: More is happening each time the phrase is repeated.

In response to the storm, the men naturally become fearful. Like the 'good heathen' they are they act upon their fear and turn each sailor to his own god for help. Upon learning (1:9) that they have become unwitting harborers of a man in flight from the god whom he says he fears (**'et yhwh 'elōhē haššāmayīm 'anī yārē'**) and whom he says "made the sea and the dry land" (**'ašer ʿāśāh 'et hayyām w'et hayyabbāšāh**), the men fear greatly (1:10). 1:16 brings the growing phrase to its culmination. At this climactic moment, the sailors are described as fearing the Lord in particular. They have learned important truths about this God. They had heard these truths in words from Jonah's mouth in 1:9, but could only fully comprehend them once they witnessed God's actions toward them and Jonah.

Their great fear of the Lord represents the men's newly gotten knowledge. This expression of fear of the Lord shares identical vocabulary with Jonah's utterance in 1:9. But here the resemblance ends. H. W. Wolff sums up the difference between the use of **yārē' 'et yhwh** in 1:9 (Jonah) and 1:16 (of the sailors) as follows:

> Now [1:16] it describes the sailors' new attitude. But whereas in Jonah's case it was no more than a verbal acknowledgment, here the phrase sums up the sailors' whole behavior. Where the sailors are concerned, Yahweh has achieved his good purpose. Their helpless "fear" in v. 5 because of the storm, and their "great fear" because of what they learn from Jonah in v. 10, has now turned into "great fear before Yahweh" because of the confirmation of what Jonah has said through the stilling of the storm.[16]

This growing phrase presents phases in the growth of the sailor's knowledge of the Lord.

Two further examples of the growing phrase which, we must reemphasize, is another form of variation in repetition, are found in chapter one. They are thoroughly intertwined one with the other. The first is 1:4 **way^{e}hī sa^{c}ar gādōl bayyām**; 1:11 **kī hayyām hōlēk w^{e}sō^{c}ēr**; and 1:13 **kī hayyām hōlēk w^{e}sō^{c}ēr ^{ca}lēhem**. God uses the wind to cause a storm upon the sea in order to halt Jonah's forward progress in his flight. The men recognize this and tell Jonah that the very sea itself is now becoming progressively more and more stirred up on account of Jonah's actions (1:11). He must do something or else they will all die in the storm. Finally,

by the addition of the word **ca lēhem** (1:13), the narrator lets reader know two things simultaneously (see the discussion of **nehpāḵet**, below). A cleverly exploited double meaning now comes into play. The word **ca lēhem** not only means 'upon/against them', but also 'on their account'. Thus, the sailors' attempt to row ashore causes the sea to grow even more tempestuous than before. This time the sea's actions are directed against them and not, as previously, against Jonah. (See the discussion of this material above, pp. 39-40.)

The second example is, as we have indicated, intertwined with the first. The members of this growing phrase are found in 1:7 **b^{e}šell^{e}mī hārā^{c}āh hazz'ōt lānū**; 1:8 **ba'^{a}šer l^{e}mī hārā^{c}āh hazz'ōt lānū**; and 1:12 **b^{e}šellī hassa^{c}ar haggādōl hazzeh ca lēḵem**. In an attempt to discover who brought the storm upon them, the sailors agree among themselves that they will use lots in order to provide themselves with an answer. Their words **b^{e}šell^{e}mī hārā^{c}āh hazz'ōt lānū**, spoken in a general way, hope for a specific answer (1:7). The lots fall on Jonah. This information leads them to call him **ba'^{a}šer l^{e}mī hārā^{c}āh hazz'ōt lānū**, "the one on whose account this evil has befallen us" as they further interrogate him. Finally in 1:12, he confirms their suspicions as he adds to and changes the words they had used of him. He says: **b^{e}šellī hassa^{c}ar haggādōl hazzeh ca lēḵem** "it is on my account that this storm has befallen you". His dramatic confession

forces their hand. They try to row ashore. Now, the third member of the growing phrase we just treated above (1:4, 11, 13) comes into play: Though the storm owes its existence to Jonah, its worsening is brought about by the sailors alone (1:13). Thus the pair of growing phrases work together to heighten the drama of chapter one.

One final word is in order before we leave the growing phrase. Recognition of this rhetorical form has text-critical implications. **BHK** and the more conservative **BHS**, for example, both entertain a proposal to delete the words **'et yhwh** in 1:16 (**wayyir^{e}'ū hā'^{a}nāšîm yir'āh g^{e}dōlāh 'et yhwh**). This proposal now appears to have no merit whatsoever. Such simplistic levelling of the text, that is to say the attempt to make 1:16a identical with 1:10a, betrays an insensitivity to the "otherness" of biblical Hebrew literature, of which Jonah is a part. The modern believes his own literary conventions held in the ancient milieu in which Jonah was written. And, even if they did not, he believes he knows best what the text must have been, since only his conventions are acceptable to the "cultivated ear and mind". This ethnocentric attitude has no place in so significant an enterprise as biblical exegesis. The exegete does better to study the biblical Hebrew material very carefully, with an open mind, and with an eye trained on patterns in grammar, diction, and style. By means of this study, combined with his ever deepening knowledge of the

norms of ancient Near Eastern literature generally, the exegete may come to appreciate the subtlties of the biblical writers' craft. We have learned here that the growing phrase form is a building block of chapter one's content.

In the midst of the first chapter's clamorous denouement, the reader is now taken by surprise by a verbatim repetition. There have been so many variations within repetition so far that the reader has just cause to sit up and take note. The straighter he sits up in his chair and the more attentive he becomes, the deeper into his mind wiil the words be etched. In them, the author has hidden a powerful message.

When Jonah is asked by the sailors what they should do to save themselves, he tells them: "Lift me up and throw me into the sea so that the sea will quiet down from upon you" (1:12). Once they realize that the man before them is a prophet of the god who has brought this calamity upon them (see above, pages 40-42), they are prepared to learn that these words, which they had earlier taken to be mere human advice which could be ignored, were, in fact, a direct expression of the divine will. And what had they learned about the divine will? They say (1:14): "You have done as You pleased!"

The sailors understand that God's prophet has given them

a direct divine command. They must obey. "So they lifted Jonah up and threw him into the sea." (1:15) They do exactly as they are commanded by God. They do not flee from their task as Jonah had. There is no variation, no deviation in the rhetoric, as there is none in their action. The stark contrast between the sailors' actions when faced with a divine command and those of Jonah is drawn clearly for the reader. In fact, the reader is forced to stand, on the one hand, in awe of these 'heathen' sailors and, simultaneously, in derision of Jonah. For **he** had heard the command directly from God. It is to the sailors' credit that they were able to perceive the truth, indeed the divine, in words from the mouth of a runaway! As their reward, Jonah's body hitting the water calms it. For their obedience, they get their lives. This verbatim repetition in the midst of so much variation has served the writer's purpose well. The reader, he hopes, has gotten the message: God's commands are to be obeyed!

The narrative of chapter 2 has only one variation in repetition to note: The word designating 'fish' appears as **dāg** in 2:1 (twice), in 2:2 as **dāgāh**, and in 2:11 as **dāg** once again. These words are gender marked and unmarked substantives of the same root. They appear within the same context in reference to the same being. Other examples of this phenomenon are found many times throughout the Bible.[17] The only satisfactory explanation for the presence of this

pair of synonyms is that they serve a stylistic function. Such variation brings the language of this narrative moment to an exciting level, comparable to the excitement of the image of Jonah's stay in the selfsame fish's belly.

The rabbis, too, appreciated the variation here, though there were two distinct approaches to it. One camp solved the problem by attributing the difference to a change in actors. Rashi to Jonah 2:1 reads as follows:

> It was a male fish. He [Jonah] stood [therein] with plenty of room and gave no thought to pray. The Holy One Blessed Be He gave an order to the male fish who spit him [Jonah] out into the mouth of a female fish who was pregnant. There he found himself in distressingly close quarters and there he prayed, as it is said: "And Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the belly of the fish [**dāgāh**]."

Explanations of this kind did mot meet with the approval of Ibn Ezra, who preferred a grammatical approach. He comments on 2:1:

> And there are those who say that a female fish swallowed the male fish, but there is no need [for such an explanation] because **dāgāh** and **dāg** are like **ṣedeq** and **ṣ^{e}dāqāh**.

The approach of Ibn Ezra is in accord with our own.

Though it is our stated task to study repetition in the Jonah narrative, we cannot pass over the Psalm without making a few remarks about its diction. For the Psalm shares in the stylistic feature of repetition we have illustrated in the narrative. The verbal form **y^{e}sōḇ^{e}bēnī** occurs twice (2:4, 6) as does the prepositional phrase **'el hēḵal qodšeḵā** (2:5, 8). Does this fact bear upon the age old debate over the authorship and origin of the Psalm and its relationship to the narrative portion of the book? Does our examination of style have anything to add to this discussion?

Scholars are agreed that the narrative of Jonah was written by one individual. The evidence collected in the present study lends support to this view. The use of repetition, including both verbatim and varied repetition, is consistent throughout the narrative. One might, therefore, be tempted to construct the following argument: If there is only one author of the narrative as is agreed by all, can we use this stylistic criterion to prove that the author of the narrative certainly must have written the Psalm, since he also employed repetition in this pericope as well? This argument falls short of convincing the critic. One stylistic similarity does not prove common authorship. In addition, the narrative and the Psalm are two very different genres and it is as difficult to prove as it is to disprove that one

hand produced them both. Finally, the corpus of linguistic material in the book is simply too small for any sound linguistic conclusions regarding authorship to be drawn from it. The present investigation does not have as its goal to solve this longstanding problem and we, therefore, move on to chapter 3.

Chapter 3 opens with the recommissioning of Jonah. The language employed in the second call is different from the first. In 1:2, God tells Jonah to "rise, go to Nineveh that great city, **ūqᵉrā' ᶜālehā**, and proclaim doom against it". In the second call (3:2), God employs a different preposition: **ūqᵉrā' 'ēlehā**. Is this simply an interchange of the preposition **ᶜal** for **'el**, and vice versa, found elsewhere in biblical Hebrew or is there some real difference in meaning between 1:2 and 3:2?

J. Sasson has treated this problem recently in an article entitled, "On Jonah's Two Missions."[18] He argues that while it is true that in biblical Hebrew it is possible to find instances where **ᶜal** and **'el** interchange (contrast, for instance, Ezekiel 18:6, 11 with 18:15), this interchange has not been demonstrated for Jonah. He believes that a better approach allows the linguistic context of biblical Hebrew generally and Jonah particularly (in addition to the actual usages of **qr'** plus preposition within the latter context) to determine the meaning(s) in the two verses in

question.

In biblical Hebrew, **qārā' ᶜal**, with or without a pronominal suffix, and without accusative complement, occurs again in Deuteronomy 15:9 and 24:15 and in I Kings 13:2, 4, 32. In each case the meaning is to 'condemn'. Only Jonah 1:2 attests to this usage in the book of Jonah. There is no reason to doubt that it too signifies 'condemnation' or the 'declaration of doom'.

With regard to the five uses of **qārā' 'el** in Jonah itself (1:6, 14; 2:3; 3:2, 8), it is possible to arrange them into two categories: those that have God as their indirect object (1:6, 14; 2:3; 3:8) and the one instance, 3:2, in which the direct object is the cognate accusative **haqqᵉrī'āh**, plus the relative clause. Concerning the first category, Sasson rightly notes that

> **qārā' 'el** is well known, of course, as a construction which expresses "praying, appealing" to a superior. In most cases, the appeal is directed to deities, in particular to God.[19]

The examples found in Jonah (including 2:3 which occurs in the Psalm) conform to this meaning found elsewhere in biblical Hebrew. Jonah 3:2 must be treated separately.

When Jonah is recommissioned in 3:2, God appears to have

a particular message in mind that He wishes to have given to the Ninevites. This point is made explicit by the use of the definite article with the **hapax legomenon** **q^{e}rī'āh**, plus the following relative clause. This relative clause gives more information about this 'message'. The words **'^{a}šer 'ānōḵī dōḇēr 'ēleḵā** mean "which I am about to tell you'--the form and content of the message are about to be communicated to Jonah. The command **q^{e}rā' 'ēlehā 'et haqq^{e}rī'āh 'ašer 'ānōḵī dōḇēr 'ēleḵā** must mean "declare to it [the city of Nineveh] the message I am about to tell you." Sasson summarizes his findings as follows:

> ... it is nevertheless clear that the idiom **qārā'** **'el** (better perhaps the verb **qārā'** with the **'el** here used merely to introduce the indirect object) controls the delivery of **some** message which Jonah is to convey to the Ninevites. This is not the case with 1:2 where **qārā'** **^{c}al** is abruptly stopped by use of an **'atnaḥ**, leaving the following clause only to express God's reason for arriving at such a decision. ... The Jonah of 1:2, as contrasted with the one of 3:2, ... was sent merely to announce impending disaster.[20]

According to this well-reasoned view, Jonah's flight from the first mission nullified it. His new mission's purpose is no

longer simply to declare doom as it had been in chapter 1; now he is to deliver the message God is about to declare to him--the city's fate may not be sealed afterall. Jonah departs.

At this juncture, the reader recalls how, in the first chapter, Jonah's activities were narrated using multiple variations in repetition--a device that underscores his own defiant behavior toward God. It is only at the end of the chapter that the sailors, not Jonah, display obedience to God, highlighted there by a verbatim repetition. They do exactly as they are told. Chapter 3 opens with a new command from God to Jonah. The reader asks: "Will Jonah obey this time or not?" The words in 3:1-2: **way^{e}hī d^{e}bar yhwh 'el yōnāh ... qūm lēk 'el ninwēh ...** are repeated in 3:3: **wayyāqom yōnāh wayyēlek 'el ninwēh kid^{e}bar yhwh**, albeit in chiastic fashion to fit the norms of biblical Hebrew syntax. The verbatim repetition accompanies Jonah's act of obedience, just as it had the obedient act of the sailors in chapter one.

The reader might believe that just as the sailors' actions were an outward expression of their new understanding of and relationship with God, so Jonah's actions demonstrate some new or changed attitude. Perhaps Jonah has learned something. Unfortunately, Jonah's new behavior signifies nothing other than defeat at the hands of a master more

powerful than he. He has been beaten, as it were, into submission. The servant now goes forth it is true, but it is only because his freewill has been denied him. He will, however, cling fiercely to the one piece of his freewill that God cannot take away: his own beliefs. In chapter four, these finally become explicit. It becomes clear that he, unlike the sailors and unlike the people of Nineveh, changes neither his outlook nor his beliefs in response to God. The verbatim repetition here is therefore devoid of the deeper meaning it had had earlier when the sailors obediently cast Jonah into the sea.

Cast now into the heart of Nineveh, a sea of evil, Jonah utters his message. Upon hearing the five word sentence God pronounced against Nineveh, all its inhabitants immediately 'put on sackcloth', **wayyilb^{e}šū saqqīm** (3:5). The words' effect spread like wildfire. So repentant were these heathen that the fire of repentance reached even the king. He, too, 'covered himself with sackcloth', **way^{e}kas saq** (3:6) and then made an official proclamation (3:7-9), in which he ordered: 'let both man and beast be covered in sackcloth' **w^{e}yitkassū saqqīm** (3:8). The changes in repetition may perhaps be understood as follows: What at first had been the people's spontaneous expression of repentance for their actions, now became royal deed and royal law; whereas only men had put on sackcloth previously, now beasts too were to be similarly clothed.

The repetition of the act of putting on sackcloth is varied by the author. In the first case, the verbal root **lbs** is employed. But the last two expressions share the verbal root **ksh**,[21] though they are dissimilar in the form of the verb used. The narrator states that the king **way^{e}kas saq**; the **piel** form of the verb is employed.[22] The king then makes his proclamation and uses the **hitpael w^{e}yitkassū**. The meaning remains the same. A similar change from the **piel** to the **hitpael** occurs in the story of the Golden Calf. Aaron orders the people to 'remove' **pār^{e}qū** their earrings (Exodus 32:2). In the next verse, the narrator informs us that **wayyitpār^{e}qū**, 'they removed' the earrings. Later (verse 24), when Moses questions Aaron about his behavior, Aaron retells how he got the earrings, as follows: "So I said to them: 'Whoever has gold, remove [it] (**hitpārāqū**) and give [it] to me!'" The **hitpael** is employed once again.

The similarity of Jonah 3 to Exodus 32 has yet another dimension. In both cases, the change in verbal form occurs with a change in speaker. In the case of Jonah, **way^{e}kas saq** are the narrator's words; **w^{e}yitkassū saqqīm** are the king's. In Exodus 32, Aaron at first says **pār^{e}qū**, the narrator uses the form **wayyitpār^{e}qū**, and the verb **hitpārāqū** is uttered by Aaron in recapitulation of the event to Moses. Such changes in morphology when the speaker changes have been amply documented in the writer's earlier work.[23] Two formal

stylistic features of biblical Hebrew narrative composition have been discovered within a short section of material in Jonah 3 that place Jonah's writer clearly within the mainstream of that writing tradition.

We return now to the context of the Jonah 3. The reader is struck by the sincere outpouring of devotion by the Ninevites, even by their animals. The deeds of the sailors of chapter one are immediately called to mind. The reader is convinced that these 'heathen' are no longer the models of violence and evil they had been before, but they, in fact (as Jonah unintentionally suggests in a word play in 3:4) have been transformed (**nehpāḵet**).[24] They have now become models of penitent and righteous behavior toward God. Their sackcloth, worn by all living beings of the realm, is an outer expression of the inner grief the Ninevites feel over their evil before God. The reader deposits this image in his mind. Later, in chapter 4, he will wonder why the backsliding servant Jonah fails to learn from the Ninevites to don sackcloth in humility before his Lord.

As we arrive now at chapter 4, the name used to signify God is varied by the author in a curious, yet patterned, manner. The following chart diagrams the appearance of the divine name in chapter 4, with the addition of 1) the speaker who utters the name (N = narrator; J = Jonah) and 2) the two patterns we have discerned in the uses of the divine names.

4:2aa	yhwh	N-a|	
4:2a	yhwh	J b|	
4:3	yhwh	J b|	A
4:4	yhwh	N-a|	
4:6	yhwh ʾelōhīm	N	AB
4:7	hāʾelōhīm	N	B_1
4:8	ʾelōhīm	N--|	
4:9	ʾelōhīm	N--|	B
4:10	yhwh	N	A

The patterns referred to here will be discussed below.

J. Magonet devotes a section of his study exclusively to what he calls "The Changing Names of God".[25] He suggests that there are two distinct systems in the use of the divine name: one operates in chapters 1-3 of Jonah and the second in chapter 4 (and 2:1). According to Magonet, the two systems can be characterized as follows:

> In Chapters 1-3, YHWH is the "God of the heavens," who is also the Israel's God; the sailors and Ninevites worship their own "private" Elohim; only the captain and the king recognise in these "private" gods, HaElohim, the supreme God, ultimately identified by the converting sailors as YHWH, but not so identified by

> the Ninevites. In Chapter 4, the two-fold distinction between YHWH on one side and Elohim/HaElohim on the other marks the difference between two aspects of God's aspects of mercy: YHWH whose mercy is boundless; Elohim/HaElohim who must be strict in order to teach men to understand and share in the compassion of God.[26]

Magonet's proposal concerning the first system employed in chapters 1-3 is attractive because it describes accurately the underlying intent of this part of the story. The second system (employed in chapter 4 and which is the focus of these remarks) does not persuade however. This explanation is, of course, the favored Jewish exegetical principle concerning the difference between the divine names **yhwh** and **'elōhīm**.[27] This principle does not accord with the present context because it is imprecise. The final use of the divine name **yhwh** within chapter 4 (4:10a) is demonstrative of this imprecision.

It is the divine name 'the Lord', **yhwh**, that is employed by the narrator when God's final rhetorical question is posed (4:10-11). But would not one expect to find, if one were to follow Magonet's system, the name **'elōhīm** here, for is not the point of this final statement to show God as "strict in order to teach men to understand and share in the compassion

of God"? Or, we might argue that the name **yhwh** is most appropriate here because the point of 4:10-11 is God's boundless mercy. There is even a third possibility: Since the author has combined the two names once already (cf. 4:6) and both of the points mentioned here are made in the final rhetorical question, should we not expect to find **yhwh** **'elōhîm** in 4:10? Magonet's key to understanding the varied uses of the divine names in chapter four does not work.

The proposal suggested here is less predicated upon theology and more upon literary style. It is also primarily descriptive.[28] The chart given above suggests that the author has intentionally patterned the occurance of the divine names. He has created two chiastic arrangements; the first is included within the second. The first is a chiastic pattern of speakers within a verbatim repetition. The narrator begins (4:2) and concludes (4:4) the dialogue by using the tetragrameton; Jonah uses it twice (4:2, 3) in his direct speech to the Lord in between. Hence, there is an **abba** pattern in the speakers, though the name they use is the same.

The larger pattern, into which the former falls, is also chiastic. It may be diagrammed as follows:

A				AB	B_1		B		A
4:2aa	4:2a	4:3	4:4	4:6	4:7		4:8	4:9	4:10
y	h	w	h	yhwh	hā'elōhīm	'elōhīm			yhwh
				'elōhīm					

The pattern is clearly a frame, albeit more intricate than the one described earlier. Despite Magonet's attempts to discern differences in the signification of each divine name, the names appear with reference to precisely the same being. There are no changes in that being's demeanor or attitude which can be described in this context.

Of interest, however, is the form of this chiastic pattern. There are <u>four</u> occurences of the divine name **yhwh**, then **yhwh** **'elōhīm** appears, and finally there are <u>four</u> occurances of the divine names **hā'elōhīm**, **'elōhīm** (twice), and **yhwh**. This rhetorical pattern focuses attention upon the centrally located and most weighty of these divine names **yhwh** **'elōhīm** which appears in 4:6. The reader is forced to wonder whether this is, in some sense, a pivot verse.

This usage reminds the reader instantly of the Eden story (Genesis 2:4b ff.) in which this divine name predominates throughout. There, God's relationship with His creatures is at its closest. God provides for man's every need and is near like a loving parent. He is also the

Teacher. He attempts to teach His wayward children the error of their ways. He attempts to elicit from them a confession for their sin, but they fail to admit their own culpability and never ask for forgiveness.

In Jonah 4:6, the object lesson commences. God intends to teach Jonah something. The use of **yhwh ʾelōhîm** establishes, by means of its direct association with the Eden story, the closeness of God to Jonah. It also reinforces the specific didactic thrust of the actions God carries out in order to bring Jonah to understanding. But does Jonah learn? Is he moved or is he rather like his forbear Adam? We now double back to a discussion of the repetition of God's words **hahētēḇ hārāh lāḵ** (4:4) in 4:9 in order to begin to answer this question.

God's rhetorical question in 4:4, **hahētēḇ hārāh lāḵ** "Do you do well to be so upset?", begets silence from Jonah. As if to avoid further conversation about the subject, Jonah takes leave of God's presence--a minor symbolic gesture, reminiscent in kind of his earlier defiant act of flight. The response desired by God to the rhetorical question is: "NO! You should be concerned with the Ninevites and, by extension, I as your servant should be too." Instead, Jonah turns his back on that city, marches out of it, sets up his own dwelling (as if staying in the city with those people would be beneath him), and sits down disgusted with his plight.

The words that follow in 4:5b, **ʿad ʾašer yirʾeh mah-yihyeh bāʿīr**, "until he might see what would happen in the city", suggest that Jonah expects something to happen now that he has spoken up to God. He may expect that God will do something for him, just as He had after Jonah completed his Psalm of Thanksgiving to God in chapter 2. Remember, God had the fish spit him out onto dry land. What does he expect to happen now? He expects, as the narrator's words suggest, that something will happen in the city: Perhaps God will be moved by Jonah's arguments and will destroy the city afterall. God is be moved to do something for Jonah, but it will not be the chastisement of the Ninevites. It will rather be a form of chastisement designed especially for Jonah: the object lesson.

The words in 4:5b discussed above cleverly deflect the reader's attention for a moment. The reader is somewhat surprised when the actions that follow, namely the object lesson, center on Jonah himself and not on the city at all. Whereas, in the past, others (like the sailors and the Ninevites) appeared to be the focal point of the story, now Jonah is square at the center and the city of Nineveh sits at a distance. It is a reminder to Jonah and the reader of the power of repentance. This visible symbol Jonah cannot grasp.

In this setting, the object lesson begins. After the

miraculous growth and equally sudden loss of the plant, Jonah's grief is renewed. The words he utters are a carbon copy of those he spoke (4:3b) as part of his response to a question God never asked, but had been on the minds of everyone involved with Jonah until then: Why did you flee God's mission to the Ninevites? His response is in essence: "I knew You would forgive them, so I am better off dead!" The precise import of this statement will be examined below, in Chapter 3. Now, in 4:8, he expresses the same disgust, saying: "I would be better off dead than alive!" (4:8) The verbatim repetition of 4:3b in 4:8 highlights the stubbornness of a man either unwilling or unable to learn from the miraculous events he witnesses (contrast the sailors)--he instead thinks only of himself. Is this behavior befitting a prophet?

God's verbatim repetition of verse 4 in verse 9, "Do you do well to be so upset?", presents the firm insistance of a teacher demanding a specific answer from a student who has been tested countless times and ought to know the answer by now. Earlier (4:5), Jonah's response had been to walk away. Now, in 4:9b, Jonah's retort is exasperating and, unfortunately, typical for Jonah. Using God's very own words, only twisting them by the bitter addition of ʿad māwet (9b), Jonah stubbornly adheres to his convictions. He, like his forbear Adam, is unmoved and unchanged.

God is left to get the last word. He makes the lesson explicit, where before it had been implicit: God should be concerned with and keep alive those who sin before Him and then repent wholeheartedly. This lesson is expressed in 4:10-11 in one of several biblical examples of the qal **wāḥōmer**[29] formulation, popular with the later rabbinic teachers of Tannaitic and Amoraic times. This last and, indeed, only speech by God to Jonah arises out of frustration. We, the readers, share in the Teacher's frustration, as He witnesses his student fail to comprehend the personalized object lesson he had been given. We identify with God. But just as soon as we identify with Him and His message, the rhetorical question, which renders Jonah silent again, becomes most unsettling for us, the readers. The lesson seems no longer to be directed towards Jonah at all. It rather forces itself upon us.

The culminating rhetorical question gains this power from the language used in the immediately preceding object lesson. In particular, the repetition of **wattaḳ** in 4:7 and 8 is notable. God has the worm smite, **wattaḳ**, the gourd, so that the sun might smite, **wattaḳ**, Jonah's head. Jonah gets a good beating from the hand of his Master and Teacher. The "Words of Ahiqar" ring ever true: "A blow for a bondman, a **reb[uke]** for a bondwoman, and for all thy slaves dis[cipline]." So, too, Sirach 33:26, 28 hits the mark: "for a wicked servant there are racks and tortures. ... Set

him to work, as is fitting for him; and if ye does not obey, make his fetters heavy." The now beaten inveterate runaway servant is left silent at the very end of the book. The lesson falls upon the reader's ears alone. What is the precise intent of this curious and unique ending?

We can better understand what the writer, another great master teacher, had in mind with the assistance of Proverbs 19:25. This verse reads: "Strike [takkeh] the scorner that the simple may become wise." God smote Jonah repeatedly with mighty natural forces, the raging sea, the wind, and the sun, in order to teach him. Jonah proved to be a scorner, one who was unteachable. Will the lesson, therefore, be lost? No! The audience, the simple, is to become wise vicariously. Who was this audience and what were they supposed to learn? These questions are the focus of Chapter 3.

Notes

1. Repetition in biblical Hebrew rhetoric has been discussed often in modern critical studies. The following is a selection of some of the most important works: Muilenberg, 1953, 97-111; Cassuto, 1971, 41-44; Alter, 1981, 88-113; Rottenberg, 1979, 105 ff.; Ratner, 1983, 101 ff.; Rosenberg, 1984, 31-81, esp. 47 f.; Sternberg, 1985, 365-440.

With regard to the analysis of repetition in the book of Jonah in particular, the work of Magonet, 1976 is to be recommended.

2. Cf. Ratner, 1983; Ratner, forthcoming; Sternberg, 1985, 419 ff.

3. There are clear and convenient presentations of the problem of authorship in Landes, 1967 and Magonet, 1976, 39 ff.; cf. also Wolff, 1986, 128 ff.

There is little in the language of the Psalm that can be compared directly with that of the narrative. It is, however, of interest to note how different roots are employed in each for the meaning 'to think'. In the Psalm, the writer has Jonah say 'āmartī (2:5), 'I thought'. The narrator later says (3:10) that "God changed His mind concerning the destruction 'ăšer dibbēr, which He thought to do to them, and

He did not do it." Finally, Jonah confesses in 4:2: "I pray Lord, was this not d^{e}bārī, my thought while I was still on my own soil ... ."

4. Jonah 4:5 is often claimed to be dislocated from immediately after 3:4 (cf., for instance, BHK, BHS, G. von Rad, 1962-6, vol. II, 289 note). Wolff, 1986, 169 makes a strong case for rejecting this position and maintaining 4:5 precisely where it is.

5. Ratner, 1983 and Ratner, forthcoming.

6. See the caution expressed by M. Sternberg, 1985, 439-430 over attempting to find significance in absolutely everything.

7. Ratner, forthcoming.

8. Genesis 24 is a classical example of the variety of changes that can occur in repetition. For example, we find pairs of synonyms employed (8 and 41; 14 and 43; 23b and 25; 14, 17, 43, 45), verbal forms are varied (27 and 48), the direct object marker is present (9) and absent (2), and the like.

9. Cf., for instance, in the Jacob-Laban Cycle: Genesis 29:11 wayyiššaq, 13 way^{e}našše$\check{q}$, 31:28 l^{e}našše$\check{q}$, 32:1 way^{e}našše$\check{q}$;

29:15 maśkurteḵā, 30:28 śᵉḵārᵉḵā, 30:32, 33 śᵉḵārî, 31:7, 41 maśkurtî and 8 śᵉḵāreḵā; 30:41 mᵉquššārōt and 42 qᵉšūrîm; 31:52 ᶜēd and ᶜēdāh.

10. Cf., for instance, in the Samson Cycle: Judges 13:4 tāmē', 7 tum'āh, 14 tum'āh; 15:13 bišnayîm ᶜaḇōṯîm ḥᵃḏāšîm, 14 wattihyenāh hāᶜaḇōṯîm, 16:11 baᶜaḇotim ḥᵃḏāšîm, 12 ᶜaḇōṯîm ḥᵃḏāšîm ... bāhem; 16:15 zeh šālōš pᵉcāmîm and 28 happaᶜam hazzeh; 16:25a wîśaḥeq, 25b wayᵉṣaḥēq, 27 biśḥōq.

11. Cf., for instance, in the Elijah cycle: I Kings 17:14 ṣappaḥat haššemen lō' teḥsar and 16 ṣappaḥat haššemen lō' ḥāsēr; 17:14 kad haqqemaḥ lō' tiḵlāh, 16 kad haqqemaḥ lō' kālātāh, and 18:34 'arbaᶜāh kaddîm; 18:21 pōsᵉḥîm and 26 wayᵉpassᵉḥū; 42 wayyaᶜaleh and 43 wayyaᶜal; 19:6 wayyēšt and 8 wayyišteh; II Kings 2:9 'ellāqaḥ and 10 luqqāḥ; 15 nāḥāh rūᵃḥ 'eliyyāhū and 16 nᵉśā'ō rūᵃḥ yhwh.

12. Cf., for instance, in the prose frame of Job: Job 1:2 šiḇᶜāh bānîm and 42:13 šiḇᶜānāh banim; 1:2 šālōš bānōt, 1:4 šᵉlōšet 'aḥyōṯēhem (cf. Genesis 7:13), 42:13 šālōš bānōt; 1:19 rūᵃḥ gᵉdōlāh bā'āh ... wayyiggaᶜ; 42:8 no direct object marker and 9 direct object marker present.

13. Cf., for instance, Ruth 1:1, 2, 6 śᵉḏēy and 2:6, 4:3 śᵉḏēh; 1:9 wattiśśe'nāh and 14 wattiśśenāh; 1:9 mᵉnūḥāh and 3:1 mānōᵃḥ; 2:1 mōdaᶜ and 3:2 modaᶜtānû; 2:2 wa'ᵃlaqqᵉṭāh, 3

watt^{e}laqqēṭ, 7 ʾ^{a}laqq^{e}ṭāh, 8 lilqōṭ, 15 l^{e}laqqēṭ, t^{e}laqqēṭ, 16 liqq^{e}ṭāh, the rest are piel.

14. Rosenberg, 1984, 49.

15. Magonet, 1976, 31 ff.

16. Wolff, 1986, 121.

17. Other examples of this usage include Genesis 29:15 and 30:28; 31:7 and 8; 31:52; Exodus 5:8 and 18; 12:15 and 19; 29:40; Leviticus 5:21 and 23; 18:13 and 17; Deuteronomy 21:10, 12 and 11; 31:18 and 29; Joshua 9:5, 14 and 11; Judges 9:48 and 49; 13:4 and 7, 14; I Samuel 14:1, 4, 6, 15 and 12; I Kings 10:1 and 7 (=II Chronicles 9:1 and 6); Ezekiel 18:7, 16 and 18; 18:7 and 12, 16; 25:12 and 14, 15, 17; 33:12; 45:11 (cf. Exod 5:8 and 18).

18. Sasson, 1984.

19. Op. cit., 26.

20. Op. cit., 27 f.

21. Cf. Genesis 38:14 and 18.

22. Cf. Genesis 38:14.

23. Ratner, forthcoming.

24. See the discussion of this point below in Chapter 3.

25. Magonet, 1976, 33-38; cf. note 110, on page 123 f. for other scholarly views of this usage.

26. Op. cit., 38.

27. Cf. Bereshit Rabba 33:3.

28. Compare, for instance, the occurrance of the divine names in I Samuel 4 in reference to the ark of the covenant.

29. On the **qal wāhōmer** argument in the Hebrew Bible generally, and in Jonah in particular, cf. Blank, 1955, 29 f.; Jacobs, 1972, 221-227, esp. 224; Clements, 1975, 21; Fishbane, 1985, 420.

Jonah: Toward the Reeducation of the Prophets*

The author of Jonah has God send His watchman, Jonah the prophet, to warn the people of Nineveh of their imminent destruction. Jonah flees his commission at first. Once he does carry it out, he begrudges God His right to pardon the sinful, but now repentant Ninevites. The author means, hereby, to portray Jonah as a negative model of prophetic behavior and ideology whom the focal point of the telling, the audience, is being taught not to imitate.

The writer is a master pedagogue. He weaves his tale with consummate suasive artistry that leaves the audience convinced that Jonah's reluctance and intellectual narrowness mock the grand and venerable prophetic calling.[1] Irony,[2] satire,[3] and extensive use of word play[4] serve as rhetorical means to make light of Jonah. The writer has, therewith, created a narrative sequence in which God repeatedly attempts to teach Jonah, but Jonah always fails to comprehend. The audience calls out: "Jonah, do you not hear what your own lips utter (1:9, 12; 2:10)? Jonah, do you not see the wisdom of those around you (1:6, 14; 3:9)? Jonah, if these mere 'heathen' realize that repentance is a prerequisite for salvation (1:6; 3:9), should you not, how much the more so, O prophet of Israel? Wake up, you sleeper!"

Who was the intended audience of this work? What were

the circumstances in which the members of this audience lived? In order to address these issues, we must first examine the present scholarly debate over the dating of the book of Jonah. Attempts to date the book of Jonah have relied, in the main, upon arguments concerning three kinds of evidence: language, the reference to Nineveh, and the theme of the book. We begin with a discussion of language.

E. Qimron is correct in noting that it is not possible to fix a precise date for this work, in part because it presents us with a corpus too small for linguistic evaluation.[5] Nevertheless, both A. Brenner and G. Landes have argued recently that a sixth century date is not only possible, but likely.[6] Landes, following the work of A. Hurvitz, has aptly demonstrated that earlier studies incorrectly identified several words in Jonah as Aramaisms and assumed, again incorrectly, that even if a word were an Aramaism, it must necessarily be evidence for a late dating (fifth or fourth centuries B.C.E.).[7] The case put forward by both Landes and Brenner for the sixth century is weakened when they fail to address the following general question: Do the materials we know, with some certainty, to be of that century (in this case, portions of Deutero-Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) display features of the Hebrew language that are similar to those found in the book of Jonah? This question needs to be addressed for any proposed date for this book. Unfortunately, 1) as noted above, the Jonah corpus is

entirely too small for reliable linguistic evaluation; 2) our knowledge of the history of the Hebrew language, in spite of the relatively larger corpus of material found in the Hebrew Bible, is not well defined, especially in its details; and 3) it is difficult to know when a writer intentionally employed what for him was archaic, dialectical, stylistically elevated or technical language for his own rhetorical purposes which, because of our limited knowledge, might lead us to err in our analysis of this language. For the time being, it is prudent not to rely upon linguistic arguments for the dating of Jonah.

Perhaps the reference to the Assyrian city of Nineveh is a more definitive indicator of this book's date. Nineveh, the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire fell in 612 B.C.E. It has been argued that the fabulous description of the city in Jonah 3:3 seems to indicate that the city was only a distant memory in the author's time. Those who put forth this position have no trouble in placing the composition of the book in a very late period, fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. In a different vein, it has been argued that the mention of this particular city is only effective if the writer can presume that his audience has a clear memory of the Assyrian Empire. The fanciful description in 3:3 is, therefore, only meant to enhance the miraculous nature of Nineveh's repentance and, seen in this light, makes sense in a context filled with the miraculous, to wit the story of the fish in chapter 2. Those

who support the latter position are able to date the book as early as the eighth and as late as the sixth century. What emerges from a close scrutiny is that the reference to Nineveh is not helpful in determining the date of Jonah. In particular, the reference to Nineveh often seems to be interpreted in such a manner as to conform to the modern scholar's view of when the book was written, as he has arrived at that view after having weighed the linguistic evidence. Such circular reasoning is not helpful in arriving at a firm dating of the book of Jonah. If both the linguistic arguments as well as those regarding the reference to the city of Nineveh are not helpful in dating Jonah, perhaps thematic criteria can be.

One dominant and widely held thematic argument for dating Jonah runs as follows:

> We can only say with certainty that the broad universalism and tolerant humanity which give the book its attractive tone, belong to the compiler and his time. While it is possible that such ideas were already hinted at in the material which the compiler found to hand, the belief as it is now stated, that Yahweh's mercy is not limited to Israel, but includes even quite alien people, even the inhabitants of a city hated by Israel, and also

> includes animals, certainly belongs to the compiler. In the pre-exilic period such far-reaching universalism and such unconditional tolerance are difficult to imagine. We must therefore assign the book to the post-exilic period.[8]

This argument assumes a unilinear evolution within Israelite thought, from particularism to universalism, and this book is placed nearly at the end of that development. Such evolutionary schemes in the study of human intellectual history have been shown, within the last forty years, to be wholly without support. And what if it could be demonstrated that these very themes are not present in the book of Jonah? This, of course, would not invalidate all thematic criteria as tools for dating the book of Jonah, especially since no other means of dating appears to be plausible. If another suggestion could be made that would link in a plausible fashion the ideas presumed by and expressed in the book with a particular historical setting, then such a suggestion would merit our attention. It is just such a suggestion that is entertained here: Jonah is a didactic work, intended to teach a particular audience a significant lesson about the nature of prophecy.

Jonah is drawn as a caricature of a prophet.[9] His hypocritical utterances (cf. 1:9),[10] empty and hackneyed praises lacking all sentiment of contrition (as if repentance

is simply not in Jonah's vocabulary; cf. the Psalm),[11] and uniquely selfish and self-centered concerns (he continually has changes of heart when it comes to his own welfare, but refuses to allow this in others; cf. the Psalm and chapter 4), all prove to the reader that Jonah has a great deal to learn. By the end of the book, Jonah sits silently, yet presumably unmoved by the personalized object lesson given him by the great Teacher. The rhetorical question that ends the book so abruptly forces this lesson in an unmediated form upon the audience and the audience alone.[12] As one scholar put it so well, the audience is left to ask, "Am I (or is my group) like Jonah? If so, what do I (or we) make of Yahweh's rebuke?"[13] In effect, then, the book of Jonah seeks to elicit a strong unfavorable response from its audience to the figure of Jonah, while inculcating what may be a new or, perhaps, controversial view (at the time of the writing) of the role of prophecy. God is the proponent of this view in the story.

God tells Jonah to rise and go east to Nineveh and proclaim doom upon it (qārā' ʿal, see below pages 69-72). Jonah arises, but then flees in precisely the opposite direction in an attempt to escape from the Lord. Outrageous! How can a prophet imagine that he can flee his commission? It is true that Moses begged God to send another prophet in his stead (Exodus 4:13) and Jeremiah complained that he was too young to have any credibility (Jeremiah 1:6), but never

before or after does a prophet attempt to flee his commission. The reader asks why Jonah does not sense in his own commission the urgency felt by Amos in his, when he states: "A lion has roared, who can but fear? The Lord has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8)

Could God have permitted Jonah successfully to resist and flee a divine command to pronounce doom? It is this question which we believe goes directly to the heart of one of the central problems addressed in this book. Following, to some extent, the work of both E. Bickerman and A. Feuillet,[14] we would like to suggest that the author of the book of Jonah wrote as a contemporary of or soon after Ezekiel in response to his vision of the prophet as both watchman (3; 33) and one whose singular duty it is to bring the wicked to repentance so that God might renounce His judgment of doom (18; 33). Jonah's flight is symptomatic of his deeper problem with both God and his own prophetic responsibility. God's response to Jonah's insubordination brings to the fore our author's principal understanding of prophecy.

As J. Rosenberg has noted, this is "a book about prophecy--that is, about the prophetic vocation."[15] We would like to suggest that the writer of the book of Jonah has produced a tract[16] on prophecy that stands as a defence of and expansion on the views of both Ezekiel, and his earlier

contemporary Jeremiah, against those who held a very different perspective on the role of the prophet in Israel and beyond. Clearly, this age of turmoil for Israel at large likewise presented significant challenges to the institution of prophecy itself.

The sixth century was a time of change, indeed crisis, for classical prophecy in ancient Israel.[17] The book of Jeremiah addresses this crisis directly. The once reluctant prophet now does not hesitate to condemn those of his profession whom he knows to be leading the people astray by words of peace when admonishment is called for (Jeremiah 23). True prophets, Jeremiah believes, following his great predecessors Hosea (9:8) and Isaiah (21:6 ff.), stand as watchmen to warn the guilty of impending doom (6:17). But is the prophet's role simply to declare inevitable destruction? Jeremiah's response was revolutionary. Jeremiah made it known that the people of Judah would suffer each for the sins of his own hands.[18] That being the case, the prophet must bring the people to repent wholeheartedly for their sins so that God might choose to pardon them and thus annul the punishment.

Jeremiah uses the example of other nations in his parable of the potter (18) in order to make this point to his Judean audience:

> If at any time I declare concerning a

> nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, then I will repent of the good which I intended to do to it. (18:7-10)

Jeremiah is then told to tell the people of Judah and Jerusalem:

> Thus says the Lord, Behold I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Return every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. (18:11)

Most telling is the response put in the mouths of the people by Jeremiah. We can easily see in the people's words an epitome of their thinking, as Jeremiah understood it, when they say, in effect, "What is the use?" (18:12). The people neither have it in them to repent (as if repentance is simply not in their vocabulary) nor can they accept that their repentance could possibly be effective in the face of so much past accrued wrongdoing. But Jeremiah's message is founded upon the certainty that God will reshape this people just as

he will any other people that repents sincerely (18:6). Thus, the example of God's relations with other nations is used by Jeremiah in order to convince a sceptical and stubborn Judean audience to turn from their view toward that of God as interpreted by the prophet. It was Jeremiah's misfortune that his words went unheeded in his generation.

Ezekiel, the younger comtemporary of Jeremiah, is famous for his pronouncements on precisely the theme of individual responsibility (chapters 14; 18; 33). Ezekiel likewise does not hesitate to condemn those of his contemporaries who carry out their professional obligations in a way incompatible with that of his, and thus of his God's, views (12:21-13:16). Finally, Ezekiel develops more fully the watchman metaphor in his application of the doctrine of personal responsibility to the prophetic office.[19] Our attention will focus now on the watchman passage in Ezekiel 3:16 ff.

Modern scholars have long viewed this fourth commission speech as "artificially abstracted and built up from [18 and 33] and secondarily inserted here".[20] M. Greenberg has argued persuasively that such a view misunderstands the basic intensions of both 33 and 3: the former being a public discourse, the latter a private communication.[21] The foci of chapter 3 are the role and responsibility of the prophet. Greenberg has demonstrated that the watchman passage in 3 is, in all likelihood, primary, and 33 was built from it. He

states concerning 3:16-21, "The lookout metaphor for prophets (to judge from Jeremiah, a commonplace of the times) is here adapted for the original purpose of defining for the reluctant (or dismayed) prophet a role he should be ready to undertake."[22]

Let us look at this passage more closely.

> At the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me: Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life. (3:16-21)

Before we can adduce a vital relationship between this prophetic program and that espoused by the author of Jonah, we must treat the phrase l^{e}ḥayyōtō, "in order to save his life", in 3:18. Is this merely a secondary insertion in

order to bring the message of 3 into line with that of 33, or is this phrase original to its present context? Greenberg rightly observes that this phrase is put in terms of the **prophet's responsibility** and, thus, is fit contextually.[23] If so, then the author of Jonah, we believe, may have built his story, at least in part, upon this very passage just as Ezekiel himself did in creating the oracle of chapter 33.

In Ezekiel 33, the prophet reworks 3:16-21 against the backdrop of both 14 and 18 that deal with personal responsibility within the context of the Exile.[24] This oracle is framed as a response to those around him who say: "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" (33:10) Repentance in their eyes is useless. Among Ezekiel's contemporaries are those who believe that the sins of the fathers, so numerous as they were, spell certain doom for this and all future generations (cf. Exodus 20:5). It is, as M. Fishbane has noted, Ezekiel's goal and burden to contradict the now intransigent "sour grapes" attitude of his audience (18:2 and cf. Jeremiah 31:28-9).[25] They simply cannot accept that repentance is sufficient to wipe the slate clean before the Lord and they, therefore, say: "The way of the Lord is not just!" (33:17, 20).[26] This sceptical attitude certainly finds its parallel in the actions of Jonah. We submit that the author of Jonah may well have had this precise audience in mind as he formed his misfit

prophet.

Now we return to the original watchman oracle in Ezekiel 3 (a brief treatise on prophetic responsibility) which we believe presents two ideas fundamental to the Jonah story. First, the watchman has **freewill** to decide whether or not he will deliver the threat of destruction to the sinner. This is the first time, leaving aside Jeremiah's inner struggles found in the laments (cf. 20:9), we encounter an explicit statement of the prophet's freewill. Underlying this expression is the probability that Ezekiel perceived that some of his profession had, in fact, fled from their appointed task in the past. Interestingly, the reasons why the prophet might decide to decline his commission are left unstated here even though we have already seen that his contemporaries held an attitude that simply would not allow for repentance. Ezekiel prescribes death for any prophet who should so desert the wicked who depend upon him for their very survival. This vital **dependence** is the second idea fundamental to the Jonah story. The prophet's responsibility is "to keep the sinner alive". That is, the prophet is obliged to warn the sinner so that he **might** choose to repent, whereupon God **might** relent from the intended destruction, thus saving the sinner's life. This whole potential chain reaction depends entirely upon the prophet's decisions and actions.

The author of Jonah has created a new and novel scenario that explores the obligations of the prophet by developing and challenging ideas current in his day. The author has his caricature prophet express his freewill by fleeing his divine commission to pronounce doom upon a foreign nation.[27] The reasons for the flight are left unspecified until chapter 4. No matter what the reason for the flight, the audience might be prepared to watch the prophet die. The actions of God in chapter 1 tend to reinforce this expectation (cf. 1:14) as does the constant pursuit of self-destruction undertaken by Jonah. However, this is a naive expectation. To strike Jonah mortally would be to give-in to him, to allow him to be victorious, for the Ninevites, with no one to warn them, would certainly perish. So, the author of Jonah agrees with Ezekiel (3) that the prophet has freewill, however he parts company with Ezekiel in maintaining that the utter helplessness of sinners and their complete dependence upon the prophet for their very lives necessarily limits the extent to which he can express that freewill. The reader learns that Jonah must be retained and sustained at least for the moment.

So the prophet, once commissioned, must carry out his assigned task. But we are not satisfied that this fully explains God's purpose in retaining Jonah, for were this the only reason, we would expect the story to end immediately after 3:10.[28] However, the revealing confession (4:2--For I

know that you are a compassionate and gracious God; slow to anger; abounding in kindness; renouncing punishment) and the consequential object lesson of chapter 4 suggest that a second purpose may be found to explain the retention of Jonah: the prophet must be taught something.[29] He must be made to accept a fundamental characteristic of God's relationship with man (emphasized over and over by both Jeremiah and Ezekiel), a characteristic Jonah stubbornly continues to deny.[30]

What is this basic concept that Jonah must be taught? He must learn that it is not the death of the sinner that is desired (neither that of the Ninevites nor his own), but rather sincere repentance. Jonah's belief in a direct and irreversible causal relationship between the announcement of doom by the prophet and the actualization of the sentence by God has no place in the divine perception, as interpreted by our author, of the man-God relationship. Likewise invalid from God's point of view is Jonah's idea that the sole prophetic obligation is the announcement of doom. E. Bickerman has stated, "... Jonah refused to accept the perspective of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in which the prophet is no longer God's herald, but a watchman who blows a horn to warn his people of coming danger."[31]

Jonah is to be educated in the true prophetic role, namely to bring the people to repentance. This task is to be

carried out even if the prophet's message of doom is not fulfilled. Now the prophet might construe this, incorrectly, as being false prophecy based upon the dictum of Deuteronomy 18:20-22:

> And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'--when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.[32]

But our author's view, following Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is that the prophet must be so effective in presenting his message that the word need never come to pass.[33] Whereas both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had poured out between them thousands of words and still success eluded them, Jonah was, to his dismay, wholly successful in bringing the Ninevites to repentance, though he put forth only the effort necessary to pronounce five whole words.

Jonah enters the city of Nineveh as a watchman bearing an urgent message (**qārā' 'el**)[34]: "Yet forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned". (3:4) What is most exciting about Jonah's five word utterance is its polyvalence; the message communicates both a threat and a hope simultaneously. As B. Halpern and R. Friedman have noted, **nehpāket**,

'overturned,' like Sodom and Gomorah (cf. Genesis 19:25 and Amos 4:11), Nineveh might have been, had it not been for the fact that the city was truly **nehpāket**, 'changed,' by turning in repentance.[35] The Ninevites hear the words, "Forty more days", and immediately recognize in them a divinely sanctioned waiting period during which time they have the opportunity to repent. They repent individually and collectively, and are saved. The true prophet, it turns out, always speaks the truth, for Nineveh is indeed transformed through repentance.[36] Yet, this prophet, wearied by his exertion, sits by deaf to his own words and blind to their miraculous effect.

In the end, then, not only must Jonah carry out his appointed divine mission, but every effort must be made to transform him, by whatever pedagogical means necessary, into one who is in complete agreement with the divine purpose. Unfortunately, the latter effort utterly fails. God is as unsuccessful as both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been in their attempts to bring their audiences to repentance and understanding. Jonah, the unteachable scorner, never turns. Now, he must be abandoned. The book closes with the audience alone being called upon to listen, learn, and be changed.

* * *

At this juncture, we are ready to make a few suggestions

about the authorship of Jonah and the identity of its intended audience. We have argued that the author intentionally forms the narrative in order to portray Jonah as a negative model of the prophetic vocation whom the focal point of this narration, the audience, is admonished not to imitate. The culminating rhetorical question posed by God (whose views, we suggest, reflect those of the author) puts the reader directly into Jonah's shoes and leaves him to ask, "Am I or is my group, like Jonah, perceiving God's relationship with his creatures incorrectly?"[37] As T. Fretheim has suggested, Jonah, the prophet represents the audience itself.[38] Jonah typifies the particular group of prophets targeted by our author for reproof and instruction. If so, the author intends to chastise his peers for their adamant adherance to an outmoded view of the prophetic role and to, thereby, persuade them not to act like Jonah.[39] They could learn the proper perspective vicariously by watching the fool prophet suffer for his obstinacy. The response desired of the audience by the author, therefore, is: "I will not go about my business as Jonah did!"

Now who would have been in a position to admonish other prophets? Who kept a careful watch on the prophetic profession and continually spoke out against those who erred in their understanding of it?

We would like to suggest that the author, like both his

'teachers', Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was an exilic prophet whose name has been lost to posterity.[40] He, too, ridicules his peers and gives them some constructive criticism.[41] His tract seeks to persuade a group of prophets, by means of a unique and, therefore, striking literary form, to abandon their misguided attitude, perhaps expressed in the words, "The way of the the Lord is unjust." Our author tells them to wake up and accept his idea that the prophet's obligation is to bring sinners to repentance so that God might relent.[42] These prophets perhaps believe in the Deuteronomic dictum, find themselves, therefore, in conflict with God's desire for repentance, and now have become discouraged. This prophet, like Jeremiah before him (18:7-10), refutes the Deuteronomic understanding of prophecy that causes their despondency.[43] The prophet, according to our author, must not, indeed cannot flee his responsibility, as the Lord's servant, to warn the wicked who depend upon him for their very survival. The prophet must do God's bidding to move humanity to repentance without regard to his personal reputation; and if he does so, the very words he believes may bring his own downfall, will, in actuality, demonstrate that watchman's greatness.

Notes

* This study will appear, in an abbreviated form, in a forthcoming issue of **Dor le Dor**.

1. Shazar, 1978, 6.

2. Good, 1965; Fretheim, 1977, 51-60.

3. Burrows, 1970; Warshaw, 1974, 195 ff.; Miles, 1975; Ackerman, 1981.

4. Halpern and Friedman, 1980.

5. Qimron, 1979, 182.

6. Brenner, 1979 and Landes, 1982.

7. Landes, op. cit. and Hurvitz, 1968.

8. Eissfeldt, 1965, 405.

9. Burrows, 1970, 86.

10. With Holbert, 1981, 67 and Warshaw, 1974, 196 contra Landes, 1967, 19 and Burrows, 1970, 97.

11. See the discussion of the debate over the origins of the Psalm above, 54 f. and 68 f.

12. Childs, 1979, 420; Gottwald, 1985, 560, Landes, 1978, 148.

13. Gottwald, ibid., and cf. Landes, 1978, 147.

14. Bickerman, 1967, 40 and Feuillet, 1947a.

15. Rosenberg, 1974, 23.

16. Bickerman, op. cit., 38 and cf. Shazar, op. cit., 7.

17. Cf. Goitein, 1937, 74 and Rofé, 1974, 157.

18. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:16. Fishbane (1985, 337) may be correct in his assertion that Jeremiah relies upon the innovation of Deuteronomy, however the possibility cannot be discounted that the influence went in the other direction.

19. May and Metzger (editors), 1977, 1003 n.

20. Greenberg, 1983, 90.

21. Op. cit., 91 ff.

22. Op. cit., 92.

23. Ibid.

24. Op. cit., 90 f.

25. Fishbane, 1985, 338-9.

26. Fishbane (338) suggests the translation, with the NEB: "The Lord acts without principle."

27. Jeremiah had used the example of the foreign nation in order to inculcate the value of repentance for Israel.

28. Emmerson, 1976/7, 87.

29. Cf. Bickerman's (op. cit., 13) citation of Irenaeus.

30. Cf. Gottwald, ibid.

31. Bickerman, op. cit., 40.

32. The linkage to false prophecy was already noted in the medieval period; cf. for instance, Pirkē deRabbi Eliezer 10. Many modern scholars including, for instance, Bickerman, Shazar, and Rofé have also made assertions similar to the one presented here.

33. Shazar, op. cit., 4.

34. Sasson (1984) has made a strong case that the variation in the prepositions ᶜal and 'el with the verb qārā' (1:2 and 3:2) in Jonah is significant. Each usage carries a different nuance. The first means 'declare doom upon'; the second, 'declare to'. See our discussion in Chapter 2, above, 69-72.

35. Halpern and Friedman, 1980, 87 and 89; cf. Rashi to 3:4, Warshaw, 1974, 201, and Sasson, 1984, 27.

36. Bickerman, op. cit., 33 and Ackerman, 1981, 226 f.

37. Cf. note 13.

38. Fretheim, 1978, 229 and 230, n. 9.

39. Gottwald, ibid.; Holbert, 1981, 75.

40. Cf., most notably, Brichto, 1986, 121 f. Thanks to J. Shao for this reference. The present writer came to the same conclusion independently. Note also Wright and Fuller, 1957, 168; Goitein, 1937, 74; and cf. Landes, 1978, 150.

41. Cf. the previous note and Fretheim, 1977, 52.

42. Cf. Jonah 1:6 and 3:9. The 'heathen' realize that this is a

conditional, but not a necessary, causality for God may do as He chooses (1:14). See the discussion in Fretheim, 1978.

43. Cf. Rofé, 1974, 157.

Conclusion

The book of Jonah was intended to teach a particular audience living at a point in time a significant lesson. We, unfortunately, do not know whether Jonah's author was successful in his mission. We do know, however, that he was successful in teaching generations of Christians and Jews many significant religious lessons. At this closing moment of reflection on Jonah's didactic quality, we turn to the ramifications of Jonah's message for Jews within the context of the Yom Kippur liturgy. While there may be many lessons Jonah has to offer within this context, we focus on the following one: God, who desires repentance of human beings who sin, forgives the repentant sinner unconditionally.

The ancient rabbis fixed the reading of Jonah for Yom Kippur. In this liturgical context, the book of Jonah certainly was not meant to and, indeed, does not provide some sort of comic relief or light diversion from the day's somber and reflective mood. On the contrary, read in light of the message suggested in the third of the essays presented above, the book of Jonah now teaches a profound and timeless lesson which complements the many other important lessons a Jew hears on this, the holiest, day of the Jewish year.

Jonah refused to accept the idea that God would annul the punishment against a sinful person or nation if that

person or nation repented sincerely for their misdeeds. He held God in contempt for doing this. He bore a grudge against God for being so quick to forgive those who, for so long, had chosen to be mired in sin. Jonah asks bitterly: "Does not all their incessant wrongdoing necessitate their punishment?"

God's response is clear and unequivocal: "No! I want the sinner who repents to learn and live, another day, the lesson he has learned. To err is human. To ask for forgiveness after having reflected upon one's mistakes represents learning. By learning, man improves. Man perfects himself by living what he has learned."

The congregation on Yom Kippur is filled with individuals, each of whom has erred during the past year and each of whom has acquaintance with others who themselves desire to settle their accounts with God on this day. Each recognizes his sin and asks God for forgiveness and pardon. But each Jew is a potential scorner, a potential Jonah. This Jonah might begrudge God His right to forgive unconditionally those whom our new Jonah knows deserve punishment and deletion from, not inscription in, the book of life for another year. It is never difficult to think of someone else, a most sinful man who, we Jonahs believe, deserves this fate. "But man looks at the outer appearance; the Lord sees the heart." (I Samuel 16:7) We potential Jonahs need to

learn what biblical Jonah never could: God does as He pleases in granting forgiveness and, therefore, we are obliged to hope for the sincere repentance of this most sinful man, just as our neighbor hopes for our own.

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