



“And God Hurlled A Great Storm” by J. K. Phillips. 2011.

Introduction

The book of Jonah is composed of 4 chapters containing both prose and poetry.¹ This essay will concentrate on a literary analysis of Jonah 1:4-16 recognizing its place in the bigger picture of the whole book.² It will consider the use of repetition, and the impact the literary devices have, particularly in this section, in communicating the central messages.³

Historical background, date setting and genre

The book of Jonah does not “locate itself in a particular historical setting” and there are many possible reasons for this.⁴ Different dates have been proposed for the different elements and

¹ Appendix 2 contains a summary of the other chapters.

² Exegesis attempts to understand a text and communicate it to an audience as closely as possible to the authors original understand (Merilyn Clark, "Thl241 Hebrew 2 Faculty of Arts Study Guide 201130 " (Charles Sturt University, 2011), 34.). People, wearing the glasses of a particular world view or experience, will interpret the text differently because words are limited symbols, anchored in time and culture. Therefore unpacking the text with a detailed analysis is required. This includes looking at the cultural and historical setting as well as word usage in the time period it was written, because “words change in meaning” and function (Sandra Schneider, "New Testament as Word of God," in *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 28.) Not only do words change but many other things about the text may change, such as sentence structure, colloquialisms and norms and expectations for the particular genre.

³ Repetition will be considered because it is prominent in many of the literary devices.

⁴ Leander E Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 12 vols., vol. V11, Introduction to Apocalypti Literature Daniel. The Twelve Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon Press,1996), 465. Perhaps because when it was first spoken, written or collated Jonah was well known and/or dating the episode was not a significant detail because the message was more important than its historicity..... or perhaps it was a “didactic story

the entire book. Because of place names and other references to Jonah and his message, a date between 786 and the second century B.C. has been suggested.⁵

The book of Jonah doesn't fit neatly into any one genre based on the understandings we have today.⁶ It is also difficult to place it in any one genre of the past, because many of the variety of possible "traditions" are lost to us.⁷

Literary form

The book of Jonah is a unique literary narrative containing two broad types of literary form: prose and poetry.⁸ Chapter 1:4-16 is narrated like a story.⁹ It also contains a number of words that are unique in the Old Testament and words that are used in significantly unusual ways.¹⁰ The word for "dig" is one such word.¹¹ The use of this word is an example of intertextual repetition, and may have been deliberately used synergistically.¹²

designed to be heard" and didn't place it in the era of a particular king as other writings tended to do as not to lose the audience with what may have less interesting information.... Or perhaps those details were lost or removed...or perhaps it was originally part of 2 Kings 17:1-6 (Limburg, James. *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.).

⁵ There is a reference in chapter 1:1, to Jonah, one of the main characters, being the son of Amittai which suggest a real person. Some believe Jonah could be the same prophet who is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as a servant of יהוה from Gath-hepher near the "sea of Galilee (Josh. 19:13)" and living during the reign of Joash king of Judah, about 786-746 BC. We are not told where Jonah was when God called him but in the text we are told he set off for תַּרְשִׁישׁ "Tarshish" and then Nineveh. Tarshish may have been a city in Spain. The location is uncertain but it is mentioned in literature where it is associated with "sea traffic" and idealized as a place rich in gold and possibly in the opposite direction of where he had been called to go (Ibid., 466.).

Historically Nineveh was known as one of three "great" cities in Assyria in the time of Jeroboam 11 (786-746). It became the capital later.⁵ The adjective גְּדוֹלָה "great" is used to describe the city in God's call to Jonah, so it is conjectured that the narrative occurred before 612 BC. when the city "fell".⁵ The book of Jonah, it is believed, was one of the twelve books of the prophets mentioned in the Ben Sira bible, so somewhere between 786 and the second century BC it was written. Excavations indicate that Nineveh was in the eighth century BC a walled city whose perimeter was about seven and a half miles (James Limburg, *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 78.).

During the reign of King Shalmaneser, Tobit writes about Nineveh before the city was destroyed (Tobit: 1:1 and chapter 14 [NJB, p.639-640]).

Ecclesiasticus 49:10 (Henry Wansbrough, ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1985), 1150-51.).

⁶ See Appendix 3 for a discussion of genre.

⁷ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 465.

Chapter 1 may fit best in the genre of "Miraculous tales"

It contains a section that fits the genre of disputation (Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 215.).

⁸ It is disputed as to whether the different "heterogeneous elements" were part of the original narrative but they still form a "coherent narrative" (Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 463.).

⁹ Ibid., 466.

It is also unique in that it doesn't contain oracles like those we have by other Biblical prophets.

¹⁰ Ibid., 477.

For instance Jonah 1:6 uses the word הַחֹבֵל portraying the captain as a handler of ropes. Jonah 1:13 uses the word הַחֲבִירִי describing the sailors rowing as "digging". In Jonah 1:4 הַשִּׁפָּחָה is used creating a personification, where thought is attributed to the ship and in Jonah 1:15 the sea stops "his" storming. These personifications are significant because it means everyone and everything up to this point is showing emotion except Jonah (R. Reed Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 115.).

¹¹ Jonah 1:6

Literary features

Although chapter one is part of the prose section, it contains rhyme, rhythm and repetition which are also common in poetry and not uncommon in other Hebrew narratives.¹³

Repetition adds cohesion and emphasis to words giving some “key word” status.¹⁴ For instance the word “*fear*” is repeated throughout the book. The sailors “*fear*” then Jonah tells us he “*fears*” but he uses it in an ambiguous way in relation to his God, which adds humour, intrigue and perhaps another irony among the many in the text.¹⁵ The sailors then “*fear a great fear*”.¹⁶ In chapter one the word “*sea*” is repeated eleven times, which is one less than “*YHWH*” and plays a prominent role in the plot adding tension and drama.¹⁷ Its “*stormy*” behavior under *YHWH*’s hand contrasts sharply with Jonah’s outward “*motionless*” behavior, but in the end the “*stormy*” nature of Jonah’s inner anger surfaces, revealed in his conversation with *YHWH*.¹⁸ Ironically even the sea obeys *YHWH* and is instrumental in motivating Jonah into the obedience of “*going*” and openly confessing his God to non Hebrews.¹⁹ The verb roots for “*Hurl*”, “*great*” and “*evil*” are also

The same word stem is used in Amos 9:2 to speak about a similar unpleasant place. יִהְיֶה “*Though they dig into the nether-world*” (Amos 9:2).

¹² Job 24:16 uses the same word stem too in הָחָר which has been used when referring to adulterers and is translated by a number of different bible, including the King James Bible, as: “*In the dark they dig through houses*”. The writer of Job may or may not have been aware of the other scripture references.

Jonah 1:11-12 is another example of intertextuality. Here the word יִשְׁתַּכּ “*quiet*” is used in relation to the sea in a similar way to that in Psalm 107:30.

Intertextuality is a form of repetition because known words from specific contexts are repeated in order to add something of the meaning it held the audience in that context.

The narrator may have used this word to form an association with these texts suggesting that the sea is like the nether world, and / or the heathen sailors are like “adulterers”. If so it is an example of irony because Jonah himself was seeking “dark” places, trying to get away from *YHWH*, where as the sailors were valuing life, wanting to know how to please the Hebrew God, *YHWH*. They did what they believed *YHWH*. They did what Jonah said even though it meant throwing him overboard and in doing so they may have thought they were doing what *YHWH* required. They wanted to please *YHWH* and spoke to him and “*sacrificed a sacrifice*”, while Jonah at this point did not want to please God by doing what he knew *YHWH* required.

¹³ Tribble, divides these verses into two episodes, Jonah 1:4 to Jonah 1:6 and Jonah 1:7 to Jonah 1:16 (Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 238.).

Merilyn E. K. Clark, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope” (Charles Sturt University 2004), 4.

In Jonah 1:10 and 1:16, יָרָא has a paragogic suffix and this lengthening gives emphasis to the word, which also makes it rhyme with “*great*”.

¹⁴ For a list of words that are repeated and key words see appendix 13

¹⁵ Repeating words may also have been done as a memory aid (Merilyn E. K. Clark, 28.4.11 2011.).

Tribble suggests there are in Jonah, ironies of “genre, setting, content and structure” such as “conventional speech in an unconventional situation” (Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 141.).

One of the ironies in Jonah claiming to “*fear*” the Hebrew God, comes from the ambiguity in the word “*fear*”, which has the dual meaning of reverence or worship and of being afraid. This begs the question, “How does Jonah “*fear*” God?” Does he “*fear*” like the sailors fear death at sea and that is why he is fleeing or is he saying he “*worships*” God, which would be ironical because he is running as far away from where God spoke to him as he can?

¹⁶ Jonah 1:10

¹⁷ Clark, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope”, 187.

¹⁸ Clark notes the contrast between the sea and Jonah (Ibid., 188.).

¹⁹ Ibid., 190.

YHWH’s original message to Jonah was that the evil of the great city of Nineveh had risen up “before his face”, so it is possible that this was what *YHWH* wanted Jonah to proclaim to them. In doing so Jonah would be acknowledging the

among those repeated throughout the whole narrative, where as the noun “sea” is prominent only in Jonah 1:4-16.²⁰ “YHWH” also is fittingly prominent throughout.²¹ Groups of words are also repeated forming verbal parallels, which give the narrative continuity and help in establishing the scenes.²² There are also twelve pronominal objects that are repeated to produce a “rhythm in Hebrew sounds”.²³ Three cognate accusatives in this section add a poetic flavor to the words and add emphasis through repetition as well.²⁴

Emphasis is also given through chiasmic structures.²⁵ Jonah 1:4-6 forms one chiasm whose turning point is when Jonah speaks for the first time. This gives his speaking the significance of a key message, which could be that of dialogue, in this case with others and later with God. The “gapping” of what Jonah said prior to this also adds significance to what Jonah says at this point. He confesses to *non Hebrews*, that his God, “the Lord God of the heavens” made the “dry” and the “sea” and this is instrumental in their believing and “salvation”, pointing to the extensive love of YHWH.²⁶

Another structural repetition pointing to the importance of dialogue is the amazing matching word count between YHWH and Jonah in the last chapter.²⁷ This repetition in word count creates a balanced structure where the message of mutual dialogue is also cleverly seen in the “medium”.²⁸ The “extension or diminution of phrases” is also a structural form of repetition that enables the speaker to effectively convey either growing intensity or winding down of for instance, the storm.²⁹

“upward” or high position YHWH held. Instead of prayers which would be the normal thing to rise up to a god, it was their “evil” that did. Perhaps this is why there is a directional play on words using “up” and “down”.

²⁰ This emphasis and Jonah’s confession suggest that this is a key message. YHWH is Lord also of the sea as the psalmist also says. “Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”. See Appendix 13b.

²¹ See appendix 13.

“Fittingly” because he is “the Lord God of the heavens who made the sea and the dry land” and can thus be given an emphasised position in the narrative as well.

²² The words in Jonah 1:1 are repeated in 3:1 forming “verbal parallels (Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 111.).

²³ Eg. אֱלֹהֵי in Jonah 1:10 (Ibid., 145.).

²⁴ “feared a great fear” and “sacrificed a sacrifice”. The first cognate accusative is also used in Jonah 1:6, but with a different nuance of “worshipping” rather than “fearing”. This repetition “brackets” the events in between (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 110.).

²⁵ See Appendix 6.

²⁶ Love that goes beyond borders.

See Appendix 6.

I assume the sailors are non Hebrews because Hebrews were known as “land lovers” and Kings like Solomon used “Hiram’s sailors” (Paul J. Achtemeier, “The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary,” ed. Michael Fishbane Roger S. Boraas, Pheme Perkins, William O. Walker Jr. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 149.).

This passage ends with the sailors “fearing”, “vowing” and “sacrificing” to YHWH after YHWH’s demonstration of control of the wind and sea.

²⁷ See Appendix 13b.

²⁸ It may also point to Jonah’s desire for control especially as he emphasizes “his word” that he spoke (Jonah 4:2).

²⁹ As the sailors fear increases, so do the phrases describing it and as the storm decreases the phrases describing it diminish (Limburg, *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*, 27.).

The hendiadys rhetorical device uses repetition and is another way of emphasizing words. In Jonah 1:11 and 1:13 the two words “going” and “storming” are joined by the *vav* conjunction creating an hendiadys, which emphasizes the increasing intensity of the situation for the sailors.³⁰

Repetition is also seen in what the characters do such as asking questions.³¹ The sailor’s questions in Jonah 1:8 also add a poetic touch.³² The particle *mah* and the *m* sound are repeated, alternating through the four questions.³³ This gives a ‘staccato effect that adds a sense of urgency and panic to the sailor’s questions.’³⁴ The conjunction **וְ** is repeated throughout Jonah but in some places it is used prominently to form a pattern in the structure, such as in Jonah 1:10 to 1:13, where it is alternatively used deictically and emphatically with mostly regular syntax.³⁵

In Jonah 1:10 the normal syntax or word order is inverted when Jonah uses the pronoun “I”, which “calls attention to Jonah’s taking the blame for the evil” that came upon the sailors.³⁶ This is one of a number of word inversions that are used to add emphasis similarly to repetition.³⁷

Repetition can produce a rhyming sound and also a rhythmic emphasis.³⁸ The pronominal objects such as **אֵלָיו** are used rhythmically in chapter one, as is the addition of a paragogic suffix to the word “fear” in Jonah 1:10.³⁹ This lengthens the word adding emphasis and a rhyme with “great”.

Many other literary devices including merisms, personification and onomatopoeia are used effectively throughout the prose and poetry.⁴⁰

³⁰ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 143.

³¹ See Appendix 13c

³² Another poetic device, alliteration is also used to convey the sound of the ship’s cracking boards in Jonah 1:4.

³³ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 477.

Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 140.

³⁴ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 140.

Asyndeton is used in Jonah 1:2 that also gives a “hurried rhythm” (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 66.).

³⁵ See appendix 13.

Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 142 - 43.

³⁶ Ibid., 144.

³⁷ There are many instances where the normal word order is inverted such as in Jonah 1:5 where Jonah and Yahweh have the word order reversal which contrasts with the sailors who don’t (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 103.). It also contrasts with the men of Nineveh and the King who have the normal word order.

³⁸ It is used in Jonah 4:2-3 with the “i” sound in “*ki yada ti*” Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 200.

³⁹ There are 12 in chapter 1 (Ibid., 145.).

⁴⁰ Merisms are used throughout the book and in Jonah 1:9 this device is used possibly to emphasize not only all that YHWH has created, but ironically for Jonah, YHWH’s power over the situation at hand (Ibid., 141.). It is ironic because Jonah was attempting to flee from YHWH.

The patterned structuring of sentences and the changing of the normal word order to show emphasis and add meaning are among other literary devices used in the book of Jonah. The Hyperbatum is used in Jonah 1:12. (———, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 141.). Personification is used in regards to the ship thinking in Jonah 1:4 and the “womb” of the ship in Jonah 1:5. Another literary device that is used in poetry and prose is Onomatopoeia. The Hebrew word for “storm” is an onomatopoeic word which sounds like the wind as it “comes forth from the lips”. It is used in Jonah 1:11, 1:12 and 1:13 as a noun and a verb and both forms have the onomatopoeic characteristic (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 100.).

Characters

Characters appear with a leader at the beginning of each scene with the two main characters, being *YHWH* the “leader”, and Jonah, “son of Amittai”, who are the only ones whose personal names are given.⁴¹ The text invites comparisons between Jonah and all the other characters because his actions and words are ironically contrasted.⁴² He is the one whom one would expect as a prophet of *YHWH*, to believe, obey, sacrifice and repent, but we are surprised instead that it is the other characters who do these things.⁴³ Even *YHWH* “repents” which may be a key theological thought as it develops as the narrative progresses.⁴⁴

Composition and outline

The first chapter begins with the Hebrew God, *YHWH* and the first recipient of *YHWH*’s attention, Jonah, thus introducing the reader to the main characters, in a narrative about a Hebrew, Jonah who receives a traditional prophet’s call to “*arise*”, to “*go*”, and to “*proclaim*” to a “*great*” but “*evil*” city.⁴⁵ The narrative continues, without dialogue between Jonah and *YHWH*, with Jonah

Known words are used to trigger associations and these are particularly evident in Jonah’s Psalm/prayer in chapter 2. This intertextuality is another form of repetition.

⁴¹ The majority of ancient Israelite names had a readily understandable meaning (Achtemeier, p.733). “Great significance was attached to them” because they revealed character, identity and signified existence (Achtemeier, p.736). *YHWH* was the personal name of the Hebrew God may have signified *YHWH*’s presence (Achtemeier, p.736). Jonah meant “dove” and he is introduced in Jonah 1:1 as “son of Amittai”. “Amittai” has been translated as “True, faithful, believe, trust”. So it could be a patronymic word play suggesting the irony of Jonah as a true or “flighty” son of Israel or son of faithfulness especially as the root is used in Jonah 3:5 when the people of Nineveh believe in God (Limburg, *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*, 300.).

Naming characters enables the audience to identify more with them and remember them. This significance and the number of times their names are used in the text, can be used to argue for *YHWH* and Jonah being the main characters. Clark, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope”, 180.

Eugene F. Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Ruth, Jonah, Esther* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2002), 104.

Jonah 1:1

⁴² Contrasts are not only seen in the characters but also in actions such as *crying* and *calling*, *fearing* and *believing*, *obeying* and *disobeying*.

⁴³ Clark, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope”, 181.

Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Ruth, Jonah, Esther*.

Although the narrator does not tell us Jonah is a prophet, the phrase “the word of the Lord came unto” was used in the O.T. when referring to God’s word being communicated to a prophet. Because chapter one begins with the words “And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah” but don’t mention the circumstances or context like other OT. writings, it suggest that the audience has some prior knowledge of Jonah as a prophet (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 64.).

⁴⁴ In Jonah 1:6 the shipmaster declares, “*perhaps God will think about us*”? In Jonah 1:14 those on the ship cry, “*you O Lord, have done as you pleased*”. In Jonah 3:9 the King of Nineveh questions, “*Perhaps God will change his mind*”. In Jonah 3:10 God changes his mind and in Jonah 4:2 the gapped information is given and we discover that Jonah knew God changes his mind. This presents the audience with a development of theological thought about the possibilities of true communion with God involving mutual listening and “*repenting*”.

⁴⁵ The narrator uses language that lets the audience know that Jonah is a prophet (Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Ruth, Jonah, Esther*, 106.). It is interesting structurally that the book begins and ends with *YHWH* and Nineveh rather than *YHWH* and Jonah. It suggests how important this “*great*” foreign city is to *YHWH*. Jonah is named unlike those in Nineveh so he is still the main character and the narration and prayer follows more of his journey than any other character. The prophet Elijah was also sent to a foreign land but he was sent to a welcoming widow (1 Kings 17:3). The Assyrians were known for their cruelty so leaving Israel to go to Nineveh was like going to speak to

arising, but *fleeing*. He pays to go “down” to Tarshish by ship and verse 4-16 contains a narrative of what happens on board.⁴⁶ It has been called a “self-contained” episode climaxing in the deliverance of sailors from a storm, but it is only “self-contained” if the story was about the deliverance of the sailors from a storm as it leaves Jonah in the sea without a ship rather than the sailors.⁴⁷ Chapter 1:4 begins with *YHWH* hurling a great storm and ends with *YHWH* as the object of the sailors belief and worship. After *YHWH* we are introduced to the first group of people and their leader – sailors and captain, who cry out to their god/s, hurl the cargo overboard to lighten the ship, dialogue with each other and seek to find the culprit for the “evil” that has come upon them.⁴⁸ By lot they discover it is Jonah, who astonishingly has gone into the “womb” of the ship and lies “motionless”, in a deep sleep.⁴⁹ They question him and discover he is a Hebrew “fearing” *YHWH*, the God of the heavens who made the “dry”(land) and the “sea”, yet fleeing from his God, and they “fear the Lord - a great fear”.⁵⁰ They attempt to “dig” their way back to land, to no avail and at Jonah’s request, after prayer to *YHWH*, they throw him overboard and the storm is “quiet” leaving the sailors “sacrificing a sacrifice” to the Hebrew God, whom they now believe, because God has demonstrated power over the sea and they are saved.⁵¹

ones enemies (C. Forbes, *Documents of the Assyrian Empire (1115 B.C. - 612 B.C.)* (Victoria: Reade Offset Press Pty LTD, 1986), 131-32.).

⁴⁶ Tarshish is in the opposite direction to Nineveh.

⁴⁷ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 463.

⁴⁸ The narrator does not use יהוה - *YHWH* but אֱלֹהִים God/s which is the same root that the captain uses when directing Jonah to pray (Jonah 1:5-6) and the same root that the narrator uses when the people of Nineveh believe in God. However when the captain and his men sacrifice, they do it יְהוָה. This suggest to me that those on the ship had entered into the kind of relationship with *YHWH* that the Hebrews and Jonah was supposed to have, while the people of Nineveh had not reached that point.

⁴⁹ There is a word play involving repetition of the idea of “womb” or “belly” in the book. In 1 Samuel 24:4 it is written that David and his men hid in the “inmost parts of a cave” and in Jeremiah 25:31 it is written that God will gather his people from “the farthest parts of the earth”, so Jonah went down as low as he could go in the ship (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 104.). This action emphasizes Jonah’s avoidance behavior and maybe suggests the possibility of a new beginning, a birth into death.

⁵⁰ “fear the Lord - a great fear” is one of a number of cognate accusatives in the book (Ibid., 115.).

It is significant that his God created the “sea” because in other Old Testament writings, *YHWH* is normally the God who created the “heavens and the earth” (Clark. 28.4.11).

⁵¹ The word “dig” in this context meaning “row hard” can be used literally (Ezekiel 8:8) or figuratively (Amos 9:2) (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 112.). Amos 9:2 uses the word stem in דָּקְרוּ to speak about a similar unpleasant place: “Though they dig into the nether-world, from there my hand will seize them.” Job 24:16 uses the same word stem in דָּקַר translated as: “In the dark they dig through houses” when referring to adulterers. Jonah may be suggesting the sea is like the nether world, and / or the heathen sailors as “adulterers”. If so it is an example of irony because Jonah himself was seeking “dark” places, trying to get away from God and the sailors, valuing life, wanted to please God.

Another cognate accusative communicating the actions of presumably non Hebrews, who now believe in the Hebrew God because the word יְהוָה “*YHWH*” is used, where as the word אֱלֹהִים is used earlier when each of them called to his god/s in Jonah 1:5. They pray that they will not perish on account of Jonah nor will his blood be on their hands (Jonah 1:14).

The sailors have now seen that Jonah’s God is indeed the Lord God who created the sea as Jonah had said because the sea stopped “storming” when they threw Jonah in after praying (Clark.28.4.11).

It could be said that the climax of this passage is the salvation of the captain, his men and the ship (———, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope”, 184.).

When Jesus told a storm on the sea to be “quiet” the disciples may have thought back to this story and used the same word intertextually (Mark 4:39).

The central message

The structure of Jonah 1:4-1:16, begins and ends with the Hebrew God (יהוה) suggesting it is about the encompassing power of God, who has control over the sea and the wind, who saves and is worshipped or “feared” by Jonah and by non Hebrews beyond Israel.⁵² The literary form and features, suggest other key points such as the importance of “speaking”.⁵³

Jonah 1:4-1:16 reveals part of the bigger picture of the whole book, where believing and knowing/fearing God⁵⁴ is shown as only a small piece of what is possible in a relationship with YHWH. Speaking, questioning, mutual listening and “repenting” is also part of that possibility, which is where the narrative leaves Jonah in the end and where towards the end we discover this narrative may really have began.⁵⁵ The whole book begins by mentioning YHWH and Jonah and ends with YHWH and Nineveh, which hints at the importance of obediently confessing YHWH to all races because of the inclusivity of YHWH’s love and this we see Jonah do inadvertently in verses 1-16.⁵⁶

Through the placement of ideas, a developing theology can be seen, from wondering if God even thinks about a person to knowing that the mind of the all powerful God can be changed by his creatures whatever their country, religion or status, whether a leader or the smallest one, because YHWH is loving and kind, slow to anger and merciful.⁵⁷ And this is what YHWH wants every

⁵² Like the shipmaster and his men on board the ship (Jonah 1:16).

⁵³ Speaking is important for the speaker (God and Jonah) and hearers (sailors and people of Nineveh). What is said or not said can have eternal consequences. It can lead to salvation or death.

Some words are given syntactical significance and others structural significance. For example inverting the word order of verb followed by subject, adds significance to the subject. See Appendix 6 for the structural significance in the Chiasm whose turning point and therefore key message is Jonah speaking.

⁵⁴ The sailors came to know YHWH and the people of Nineveh believed the prophecy and even while Jonah was disobedient he “knew” a lot about YHWH. He knew about YHWH’s love as is seen in his confession in chapter four and creative power as seen in his confession in chapter 1.

⁵⁵ The “end” being chapter 4.

The technique of delayed information emphasises the importance of speaking too. Because the information that Jonah spoke earlier is placed structurally near the end it creates a development of speaking in the narrative, starting with Jonah’s silence. We discover this episode really began with God calling Jonah and Jonah speaking his own word. Jonah prayed, “I pray Lord, was this not **my word** while I was in my country? That’s why previously I came to flee towards Tarshish because I know that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and full of kindness and repenting of the evil.” (Jonah 4:2). Jonah did speak to God then and also in his “Psalm” in chapter 2, but the narration does not reveal if it was mutual dialogue with God, which involves a two way conversation of speaking and listening, questioning and answering. The equality of words spoken by God and Jonah in chapter four suggest the kind of mutual dialogue God wants in a relationship.

Questioning is a characteristic of an effective leader and in the New Testament Jesus is presented as asking many.

⁵⁶ This could suggest that the repentant Nineveh was at that point, closer to God than Jonah was in his anger and self centeredness. His self centeredness can be seen in the prominence of words that relate to self such as the personal pronoun “I” which is given emphasis because of the inverted order of the normal syntax.

Jonah said he knew God was loving and kind. The narrative shows that YHWH’s love extends beyond the borders of one country and in particular Jonah’s country.

⁵⁷ He is “long of two nostrils” which is an idiomatic form translated “slow to anger” (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 354.).

The merism in Jonah 3:5 from the “greatest to the smallest” represents the whole population and is also a pleonasm because it uses more words than necessary to add “excessive” emphasize thus highlighting the importance of everyone from leaders to babies, which is themed throughout the narrative (Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 181.).

race to know *and*so YHWH sent Jonah *and*YHWH still sends people today saying, “Arise! Go! And proclaim!”⁵⁸

The conclusion

This episode in the book of Jonah is typical of the “highly crafted” nature of the whole book.⁵⁹ It demonstrates amazing symmetries of structure and many different kinds of repetition that not only help the audience to add meaning to the words but to “hang on the words” and remember them as the drama unfolds. The different forms of repetition also add humor and poetry to the prose and didactically inspire us to believe that YHWH is not only all powerful, but humbly open to dialogue, in order to be in close relationship with the world he created and loves.

⁵⁸ Jonah 1:2

Jesus said a similar thing to the disciples. He said, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (English Standard Version).

⁵⁹ Clark, “Israel Remembers: Waters of Chaos, Wakes of Hope”, 141.

Appendix

1. My Translation

1:4 And the Lord caused a great wind to be hurled upon the sea and a great storm came on the sea and the ship thought to break up.

1:5 And the sailors feared and they cried together, each man unto his god/s, and they hurled the cargo, which was in the ship, into the sea to make them light, and Jonah went down into the womb of the ship and lay down, and he was deeply asleep.

1:6 And the master of the ship approached him and he said, “Arise! Call unto your God! Perhaps God will give a thought to us and we will not perish.”

1:7 And they said, each man unto his companion, “Come! and let us cast lots and we will know on account of whom this evil is upon us” And they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah.

1:8 And they said unto him, “Pray tell to us, on account of whom this evil is upon us? What is your occupation and from where do you come? What is your country and from which people are you?”

1:9 and he said unto them, “I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of the heavens who made the sea and the dry (land).”

1:10 And the men feared a great fear and they said unto him, “What have you done!”, because the men knew that from before the Lord he was fleeing, because he had made it known to them.

1:11 and they said unto him, “What is to be done (should we do) to you so that the sea may cease from upon us, because the sea is going on and storming?”

1:12 And he said unto them, “Lift me up and hurl me unto the sea so that the sea may cease from upon you, for I know that on account of me this great storm is upon you”

1:13 And the men dug down to get back to the dry land but they didn’t prevail because the sea was going on and storming (worsening) upon them.

1:14 And they called unto the Lord and they said, “We pray Lord, do not let us perish for the life of this man and may you not place upon us innocent blood, for you are the Lord, you have taken pleasure in that which you have done (you do whatever you want).”

1:15 And they lifted Jonah and they hurled him into the sea and the sea stopped from his (its) storming.⁶⁰

1:16 And the men feared the Lord - a great fear and they sacrificed a sacrifice to the Lord and they vowed vows.

2. Overview of other Chapters

The second chapter continues the story containing another miraculous deliverance – Jonah’s deliverance from the sea, suggesting to some that it belongs to a genre of “miraculous tales”.⁶¹ This chapter also contains a poetic psalm that Jonah prays, which lead some critics to believe that it was not part of the original work, nor written by the same person, however having written stories that move in and out of poetry myself as a teenager, without any prior experience of this kind of writing, it seems entirely fitting to me.⁶²

Chapter 3 continues the narrative with Jonah delivering God’s message and to the second group of people and their leader, the King and the people of Nineveh, who believe and repent.

Chapter 4 concludes the story with a dialogue between God and Jonah that suggests to some that it is part of a different tradition of writing, that of tales of “holy men brought to accountability” like that in 1 Kings 19:1 -18.⁶³

⁶⁰ Was this meant to be a personification like the ship thinking or ambiguously so?

⁶¹ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*.

⁶² Ibid., 464.

⁶³ Ibid., 463.

3. Genre

It has been written that the book of Jonah is composed of a variety of “different traditions” many lost to us, so it is difficult to place it in any one genre of the past, such as “Miraculous Tales”.⁶⁴ One of the reasons it doesn’t fit neatly into any one genre based on the understandings we have today is because although it abounds in motifs that can be seen in Folkloristic literature, Jonah includes references to God, which they don’t and they tend not to use historically identifiable characters like Jonah.⁶⁵ The use of the *vav consecutive* in וַיְהִי suggests that it is a narrative like other Biblical narratives which doesn’t mean that it was a fairy tale because Jonah was an historical figure and Nineveh an historical place.⁶⁶ In Jonah 1:9 he answers the last question first, which is also indicative of Hebrew narrative.⁶⁷ Compared with known biblical parables, the book of Jonah is much longer and doesn’t offer an ending explanation as they do.⁶⁸ The text doesn’t mention that it is a Midrash and holds more than a commentary making one particular text “meaningful and relevant”.⁶⁹ It has elements of disputation genre but more irony, however satire usually has a different intent and not a message that is worth passing on for thousands of years, like the book of Jonah. One thing that can be said is that it is a unique book. Perhaps it is best labeled a literary narrative even if its “coherence” is debated.⁷⁰

4. Irony:

Non Hebrew’s believing and urging a believer who is a prophet, to pray. Prophets are expected to intercede like Moses but Jonah doesn’t (Jonah 1:6).⁷¹

The ship master calls on Jonah to pray and all the people throughout the book pray so that their lives may not perish, except Jonah who prays to his life to die.⁷²

Both the Captain and the King of Nineveh are concerned not only for their own lives, but for those under their care, while Jonah cares for neither.⁷³

A prophet not fearing God enough to do what he wants while the heathen want to please God and make vows and sacrifice.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 465.

It also contains a section that fits the genre of disputation (Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 215.).

⁶⁵ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 468.

The folktales we read today may even have been inspired by the biblical narrative e.g. the similarities in the story of “Pinocchio”.

⁶⁶ וַיְהִי is used in Jonah 1:1, 1:4, 2:1, 3:1 and 4:8. The book of Jonah is the only one among the Prophetic books to open with this word. This word suggests a continuation from another work. (Ibid., 492-3.).

Hebrew historical narratives typically use this verb similarly “Once there was...” (Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 64.).

This word is typically used to introduce a Biblical narrative (Limburg, *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*, 37.).

⁶⁷ Clark, "Thl241 Hebrew 2 Faculty of Arts Study Guide 201130 ", 26.

⁶⁸ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 469.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 472.

Like that of 2 Kings 14:15

⁷⁰ For some it is a coherent narrative but it is disputed as to whether the different “heterogeneous elements” were part of the original narrative (Ibid., 463.). Delayed information adds to it’s coherence. It adds drama and speculation, opening the door to many “surprises”. A prophet giving God’s message to his enemy is not part of the “gapping” of information but may still have been a surprise for those in the pre-Christian era, because as far as we know, few prophets were called to take God’s word to “foreigners”. However Hebrew slaves would have been living among these “pagans”. There were Hebrews in Nineveh such as Tobit, who was exiled there during the reign of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser (Wansbrough, ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 625.). Tobit leaves a warning to his son to leave Nineveh on account of prophecies against her, which may have included Jonah’s words (———, ed. *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 640.).

⁷¹ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 24 & 122.

⁷² Ibid., 123, Kenneth M. Craig, *A Poetics of Jonah : Art in the Service of Ideology* 2nd Edition ed. (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1999).

⁷³ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 123.

A prophet trying not to do missionary work ends up doing it in spite of his avoidance efforts by speaking to the men on the ship.⁷⁴

A prophet fleeing from his God yet confesses that he is reverencing or fearing his God.⁷⁵

The pagans try hard to save Jonah's life and Jonah does not want God to save the life of the other pagans in Nineveh (Jonah 1:13).⁷⁶

5. Structure - Lohfink's parallel themes (Trible, p.153).

A	A'
Beginning of the storm	end of the storm
Storm hurled to the sea	Jonah hurled to the sea
Sailors crying to God	sailors crying to Yhwh
Sailors in fear	Sailors in fear of Yhwh

6. Structure - Chiasm (Limburg. *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*. 47).

A The Lord hurls a storm (1:4)	
B Sailors pray, act (1:5ab)	
C Jonah acts (lies down sleeps 1:5c)	
D Captain, sailors, question Jonah (1:6-8)	
E Jonah speaks (1:9)	← turning point
D' Sailors question Jonah (1:10-11)	
C' Jonah speaks ("hurl me"; 1:12)	
B' Sailors act, pray (1:13-14)	
A' Sailors hurl Jonah, storm ends (1:15)	
Conclusion (1:16)	

The turning point here is when Jonah speaks, pointing to one of the key messages in the narrative ie speaking. The significance of what Jonah said at this turning, points to another important message because Jonah spoke after this and we find out that he had spoken before this too (but that information is significantly gapped).⁷⁷ What Jonah says here is a confession that acknowledges some aspects of the character of YHWH that may have been a new idea for that time period. ie. YHWH is not just God of the "heavens and the land" as some Old Testament texts portray YHWH, but of the sea as well, as the Psalmist also points out.⁷⁸ The sailors certainly changed their idea about who was God of the sea. It was not the ones they had prayed to in Jonah 1:5. The significance of what Jonah said can also be seen if we consider what might have happened if Jonah had continued to be silent at this point. The ship master and his men may have "perished" in the sea not knowing YHWH and if Jonah had not spoken to the inhabitants of Nineveh, how would they have come to "believe" YHWH's word? This points intertextually to Romans 10:14, "*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*" (NIV)

⁷⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁷ Clark.28.4.11

⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 4:39 "know this day, and lay it to thy heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath".

"Happy is he whose hope is in the LORD his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Psalm 146:6).

Ezra 5:11 "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth". – "Earth" as in land or ground.

7. Structure

Yahweh speaks.
Jonah flees.
Yahweh speaks.
Jonah goes down.

8. Personification

The ship has a “womb” like a female (Jonah 1:5).
The ship thinks to break up (Jonah 1:4).
The sea stops from his storming (Jonah 1:15).

9. Movement of theological understandings from

“perhaps God will think about us” Jonah 1:6
“you O Lord, have done as you pleased” Jonah 1:14
“Perhaps God will change his mind” Jonah 3:9
“God changed his mind.” Jonah 3:10
“I know you change your mind” Jonah 4:2.
This presents the audience with a development of theological thought and possibly a question. Did Jonah think God would change his mind about sending him if he ran away... he discovered that there are some things God doesn’t change his mind about...the call.

10. Parallelism: Jonah 1:4-16 with Jonah 3:3b-10.⁷⁹

11. Cognate accusatives

Three cognate accusatives in this section:
and the men feared with great fear.
And they sacrificed a sacrifice to the Lord.
And they vowed vowels.⁸⁰

12. Questions

Questions are typical of Wisdom literature.⁸¹ Because of the number of questions in the text it is suggested that it could be classified as a “didactic story”.⁸²
Ten of the twelve questions in this narrative are directed towards Jonah and according to Lessing, are designed to precipitate repentance.⁸³

A Jonah 1:6: the shipmaster

AB Jonah 1:8, 1:10, 1:11 - the sailors and shipmaster

A Jonah 3:9 - the king of Nineveh

B Jonah 4:2 - Jonah

A Jonah 4:4, 4:9, 4:11 - The Lord

13. Repetition of significant words that appear in chapter one

Wind is repeated in Jonah 1:4 and 4:8.

⁷⁹ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 30.

⁸⁰ Limburg, *Jonah a Commentary by James Limburg*, 57.

⁸¹ Ibid., 26.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 124-25.

פִּי is repeated in Jonah 1:2, 1:10, 1:11, 1:12, 1:13, 1:14, 3:10, 4:2, 4:3.

Indeed (*kî*) the-sea (was) going and-storming upon-them. (1:13)

14 of 20

13b. Repetition of word count

In chapter 4, Jonah's words and Yahweh's words are split with mathematical precision.⁸⁷ They get absolutely equal "air time" since each utters a total of forty-seven Hebrew words. Even the lengths of their statements correspond exactly. This symmetry of words is too precise to be accidental:

- A Jonah speaks thirty-nine Hebrew words to Yahweh in 4:2–3.
- B Yahweh speaks three Hebrew words in 4:4.
- B' Jonah speaks three Hebrew words in 4:8.
- C God speaks five Hebrew words in 4:9a.
- C' Jonah speaks five Hebrew words in 4:9b.
- A' Yahweh speaks thirty-nine Hebrew words in 4:10–11.⁸⁸

13c. Repetition of the ideas and actions

Deliverance from evil: The men on the ship from death at sea and unbelief in YHWH, the inhabitants of Nineveh possibly from their evil ways but from the evil Jonah prophesied, Jonah from the fish, and Jonah from the sun.

People praying: this adds to its significance (Jonah 1:6).⁸⁷

Jonah exhibits a repetitive pattern of avoidance behavior - avoiding conversation or dialogue and relationship.

God tells him to do something - Jonah flees

The captain asks Jonah a question - Jonah seeks to be removed from the place where the question is asked.

God asks Jonah a question - Jonah walks away not seeking God as his shelter.

God asks a question - Jonah seeks to be removed from his life.

14. Intertextuality

These are some of the more significant words that have been used in other Old Testament books.

Jonah 1:4 - A "great wind" is only mentioned in 1 Kings 19:11 and Job 1:19. They both refer to "an extraordinary phenomenon".⁸⁸

Jonah 1:5 is similar to Psalm 104:23-32:

"For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away". They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress" (New International Version)

Jonah and Yahweh have the word order reversal which contrasts with the sailors who don't.⁸⁹ It also contrasts with the men of Nineveh and the King who have the normal word order.

In 1 Samuel 24:4 it is written that David and his men hid in the "inmost parts of a cave" and in Jeremiah 25:31 it is written that God will gather his people from "the farthest parts of the earth", and Jonah went down as low as he could go in the ship.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Craig, *A Poetics of Jonah : Art in the Service of Ideology* 107.

⁸⁸ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 99.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 103.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 104.

The root of נִרְדָּם is used in the sleep Adam had when God took his rib to make Eve (Genesis 2:21) and when Elijah lay down and slept after fleeing from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4).⁹¹

Jonah 1:6

The captain's words to the sleeping Jonah are similar to those spoken by God to Elijah when he fled and slept (1 Kings 19:5 & 19:9).⁹² Lessing suggests that the purpose of this contrast is to "drive" the audience to repent of similar behavior.⁹³

Jonah 1:9

הַשָּׂמִים אֱלֹהֵי is similar to the Aramaic phrase in a number of OT. books including Ezra 5:11.⁹⁴

The word הַיָּבֵשָׁה is a rare word that is also used in the "creation" and "flood" story and in the Psalms.⁹⁵

Jonah 1:12

The stem in נִשְׁתַּק is used in Psalm 107:29-30 in relation to the sea: "He made the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof were still. Then were they glad because they were quiet". Jeremiah 4:9 also uses the root in regard to the sea.

Jonah 1:14

The sailor's prayer is typical of Hebrew prose prayer containing:

Invocation - "*We pray Lord*"

Petition - "*do not let us perish for the life of this man and may you not place upon us innocent blood*"

motivation - "*for you are the Lord, just as you please, you do*".⁹⁶

15. Delayed information – "gapping" of information

In Jonah 1:10 we discover that Jonah had conversed with the sailors about fleeing from God. This strategy of "delayed information" is used adding suspense, questioning and surprise for the audience.⁹⁷ It also adds significance to other things that are not gapped, such as what Jonah said when he first spoke.⁹⁸

16. Inverted word order

Jonah 1:4 places the noun "Lord", as the subject first emphasizing the Lord who is doing the "hurling".⁹⁹ The inversion shifts the focus from the action to the owner

And-they-said to-him,

- A** "Tell, please, to-us
on-whose account the-evil the-this (is) to-us?
B What (is) your-occupation
and-from-where have-you-come?
What (is) your-land
and-where from-this people (are) you?"

And-he-said to-them,

- B'** "A-Hebrew (am) I.
A' And-Yhwh, God-of the-heavens,
I (am) fearing
who made the-sea and-the-dry-land. (1:8-9)"

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 50 & 123.

⁹³ Ibid., 123.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 109.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁹⁷ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 478.

⁹⁸ Clark.28.4.11

⁹⁹ Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, 495.

doing it. Inverted word order may also contrast YHWH's actions with Jonah's.¹⁰⁰
Emphasis is given to the ship due to the inverted word order of the noun placed before the verb.¹⁰¹

In Jonah 1:9 the personal pronoun "I" is placed before the verb and the last question is answered first. These inversions trap Jonah "*within the evil he has wrought and the god he fears*".¹⁰²

17. Other possible messages from the text

Each reading of Jonah may produce a new slant on the central message. I have changed it a number of times. I think God reveals what is important at the time and that is not the same each time. Every time I meditate upon the words, I see something I had not seen before. The following was my first response:

In the book of Jonah we glimpse God's almighty power and inclusive compassion for all creation, for people and animals, for those who claim him as their God and for those who don't, for the knowingly disobedient and the ignorant whose actions are evil. We see the control God has over the natural world, the seas, the wind, plants, insects and fish. We see that God does not always call his people to an easy life living among loved ones, but calls some to love their worst enemies in unconventional ways that may be quite contrary to the prevailing cultural expectations and norms. We don't always get to see the impact of words we share or things we do but sometimes like Jonah we do. We, knowing Jesus' parable of what has been called "the prodigal son" may see the "older brother" syndrome in Jonah's anger towards the repentant, which contrasts markedly to God's encompassing mercy even towards his peoples enemies, if they repent (Did Jonah?). From this story we can understand that there is no place where God cannot be reached. He was not confined to the land or the temple where his people lived and worshiped as they sometimes thought. He could be praised and sought anywhere, in the depth of the sea and despair, in enemy territory and in disobedience. The story promotes hope. Hope that God has good plans for us and is capable of fulfilling those things he has ordained concerning us even if we try and run away from His good plans. He knows how to get us where he wants us.

¹⁰⁰ Lessing, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture: Jonah*, 98-99.

¹⁰¹ Clark, "Thl241 Hebrew 2 Faculty of Arts Study Guide 201130 ", 10.

¹⁰² Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method and the Book of Jonah*, 139.

18. Poetic response a partial poetic exegesis

A Whale of a Truth

There once was a prophet named Jonah
Who hired a ship from '*her*' owner
Was thrown overboard
Of his own accord
And sank down to Sheol quite a loner.

A fish of the sea was so '*great*'
Swallowing Jonah as thou he was bait
God's word she did heed
And with vomit and reed
She delivered the prophet his fate.

Now Nineveh too was so great
In size and in '*evil*' and '*weight*'
so the call came again
and come hail or rain
Jonah prophesied Nineveh's fate.

How well Jonah knew God, he said
And this was the reason he '*fled*'
The people repented
And so God relented
So what made him wish he was dead?

Well to Jonah it was a '*great evil*'
a plant being killed by a weevil
angry enough to cry
he told his soul to die
yet he wished for a city's upheaval!

There once was a rhyme to discern
A time to take heed and not spurn
The whale of a truth
In a wail from a booth
A time when a moral was learned.

So what are you meant to see?
The man you think Jonah should be?
Well the chiasms point the way
Confess to *all* they say
that God made the heavens the land and the sea

And....(vaw consecutive)
converse
thou you'd rather flee.

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