

Book of Jonah

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Entry tags: Religious Group, Abrahamic, Prophecy, Text, Scripture, Canonical texts, Biblical Prophets, Early Jewish Literature, Judeans and Israelites

The Book of Jonah is a text within the Hebrew Bible, specifically within the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets, describing the prophet Jonah ben Amittai's journey to and experience in Nineveh. The text is preserved in Hebrew and in Greek, with some small differences between the texts. Major themes within the text include prophetic disobedience, true and false prophecy, Gentile piety, repentance, and divine freedom. The content of the text consists of God commanding Jonah to go to Nineveh because the city's wickedness has come up before God. Jonah attempts to flee God's commission by taking a boat. God sends a storm upon the sea, and the sailors realise that Jonah is the cause. They eventually throw Jonah overboard, he is swallowed by a fish, and he prays to God. The fish vomits Jonah onto dry land and he goes to Nineveh and very briefly proclaims its overthrow. The people of Nineveh repent, and God spares the city. Jonah seems displeased that they are spared and has a conversation with God about the justification for his anger. The text is set in the pre-exilic period when Israel survived as a state. However, it is most likely written considerably later in a post-exilic climate.



Date Range: 800 BCE - 200 BCE

Region: Ancient Israel/Yehud/Judea/Palestine

Region tags: Levant, Palestine, Israel

The Book of Jonah was most likely written in Persian-period Yehud or Hellenistic-period Judea

Status of Readership:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists

Sources and Corpora

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. The Anchor Bible 24B. London: Doubleday, 1990.
- Source 2: Ben Zvi, Ehud. *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*. JSOT Supplement Series 367. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Source 3: Bolin, Thomas M. *Freedom Beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=OHB|reference=Jonah.1&options=NUVHG>

General Variables

Materiality

Methods of Composition

– Written

↳ Inked
– with Ink

Medium upon which the text is written/incised

– Paper

↳ Specify type of paper
– Specify: Parchment
Notes: Fragments discovered at Qumran

Was the material modified before the writing or incising process?

– Other [specify]: Unknown/variable

Was the text modified before the writing or incising process?

– Other [specify]: Unknown/variable

Location

Is the text stored in a specific location?

[Note at which point in time, for reference, if known; select all that apply]

– No

Is the location where the text stored accompanied by iconography or images?

– No

Is the area where the text is stored accompanied by an-iconic images?

– No

Production & Intended Audience

Production

Is the production of the text funded by the polity?

– Field doesn't know

Is the text considered official religious scripture?

– Yes

↳ Is there a culture of oral recitation?

– No

↳ Is there a story associated with the origins of scripture?

– No

↳ Are the scriptures alterable?

– Yes

↳ Do the practitioners generally consider the scripture open to alteration?

– No

↳ Are there formal institutions (i.e. institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders) for interpreting scriptures?

– Yes

↳ Can interpretation also take place outside these institutions?

– Yes

↳ Interpretation is only allowed by official sanctioned figures?

– No

↳ Are there common disagreements? (such as two or more different schools of interpretation?)

– Yes

↳ Are there methods of permanently tabling or resolving debates amongst groups of interpreters?

– No

↳ Is there a select group of people trained in transmitting the scriptures?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there a codified canon of scriptures?

– Yes

↳ Can the canon be altered or added to?

– Yes

Notes: At the time of writing the text no group was known to have a fixed canon

↳ Are additional commentaries part of the canon as it is currently understood?

– No

Written in distinctly religious/sacred language?

– No

Intended Audience

What is the estimated number of people considered to be the audience of the text

This should be the total number of people who would serve as the intended audience for the text.

– Field doesn't know

Does the Religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members?

– No

Are there clear reformist movements?

(Reformism, as in not proselytizing to potential new conservative, but "conversion" - or rather, reform - to the "correct interpretation"?)

– Field doesn't know

Is the text in question employed in ritual practice?

– Field doesn't know

Is there material significance to the text?

– Field doesn't know

Context and Content of the Text (Beliefs and Practices)

Context

Is the text itself accompanied by art?

– No

Are there multiple versions of the text?

– Yes

↳ Are multiple versions viewed as proper?

– Yes

↳ If multiple versions are proper, is there a differentiation among versions by any means?

– Yes

↳ Age of extant version of text?

– Yes

↳ Content of text?

– Yes

↳ Ritual purpose of text?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there debate about which version is proper?

– No

Is the text part of a collection of texts?

– Yes

↳ Is there a sense of canonization?

– Yes

↳ How is the authority established?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Debated

↳ Can the canon be altered or added to?
– No

↳ Have major debates shifted the sense of the place of the text with respect to the larger canon?
– No

↳ Is the text part of a series of volumes?
– No

If the text is not explicitly scripture, is it part of another important literary tradition?
– No

Content

Is the text - or does the text include - a ritual list, manual, bibliography, index, or vocabulary?
(Select all that apply)

– Other [specify]: Narrative

Are there lineages or a single lineage established by the text?
– No

Does the text express a formal legal code?
– No

Formulating a specifically religious calendar?
– No

Beliefs

Is a spirit-body distinction present in the text?
– No

Is belief in an afterlife indicated in the text?
– No

Is belief in reincarnation in this world specified in the text?

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses dicated in the text?

– No

Does the text indicate if co-sacrifices should be present in burials?

– No

Does the text specify grave goods for burial?

– No

Are formal burials present in the text?

– No

Are there practices that have funerary associations presented in the text?

– No

Are supernatural beings present in the text?

– Yes

↳ A supreme high-god is present

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic or described in anthropomorphic terms

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld)

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarh (king=high god)

– No

- ↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good
 - Yes
- ↳ Other features of the supreme high god
 - Specify: Moral authority over own and foreign peoples
- ↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world
 - Yes
 - ↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs
 - No
 - ↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region
 - No
 - ↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region
 - Yes
 - ↳ Knowledge is unrestrict outside of sample region
 - Yes
 - ↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)
 - Yes
 - ↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)
 - Yes

- ↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)
 - Yes
- ↳ Knows basic character (personal essence)
 - Yes
- ↳ Knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)
 - No
- ↳ Has other knowledge of this world
 - Yes
- ↳ Has deliberate causal efficacy in the world
 - Yes
- ↳ Can reward
 - Yes
- ↳ Can punish
 - Yes
- ↳ Indirect causal efficacy in the world
 - No
- ↳ Exhibits positive emotion
 - Yes
- ↳ Exhibits negative emotion
 - Yes
- ↳ Possesses Hunger?
 - No
- ↳ Can be hurt?
 - No

- ↳ Can be tricked?
 - No

- ↳ Can be imprisoned?
 - No

- ↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural being other than the high god?
 - Field doesn't know
 - Notes: Unclear what expectations are of foreigners

- ↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature
 - Specify: Moral authority

- ↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living
 - Yes
 - ↳ In waking, everyday life
 - Yes
 - ↳ In dreams
 - Yes
 - ↳ In trance possession
 - Yes
 - ↳ Through divination practices
 - Yes
 - ↳ Only through religious specialists
 - No
 - ↳ Only through monarch
 - No
 - ↳ Other form of communication with living
 - Yes

↳ Does the text make communication with supreme high-god possible?
– No

Previously human spirits are present
– No

Non-human supernatural beings are present
– No

Does the text attest to a pantheon of supernatural beings?
– No

Are mixed human-divine beings present according to the text?
– No

Is there a supernatural being that is physically present in the/as a result of the text?
– No

Are other categories of beings present?
– Other [specify]: Not in this text, but in related texts

Does the text guide divination practices?
– No

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present in the text?
– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular
– Yes

↳ Do expectations of ritual offerings play a role in supernatural monitoring?
– Yes

↳ Libations?

– Yes

↳ Food?

– Yes

↳ Animal sacrifice?

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifice?

– No

↳ Sacred objects?

– No

↳ Daily life objects?

– No

↳ Other?

– Specify: no

↳ Supernatural being care about taboos

– Yes

↳ Food

– Yes

↳ Sacred space(s)

– Yes

↳ Sacred object(s)

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about other

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Disputed

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about lying

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect the maintenance of the place?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Supernatural beings care about other

– Specify: Violence

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment in the text?

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known?

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god

– Yes

↳ Done by many supernatural beings

– No

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle

– No

↳ Done by other entities or through other means

– Yes

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known?

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence?

– Yes

Notes: Done to enforce obedience

↳ Done to enforce group norms?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Done randomly

– No

↳ Other

– Yes

Notes: Done to teach a lesson, the content of which is debated

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife?

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime?

– Yes

↳ Highly emphasized by the religious group?

– Yes

↳ Consists of bad luck?

– No

↳ Political failure?

– Yes

↳ Defeat in battle?

– Yes

↳ Crop failure or bad weather?

– Yes

↳ Disaster on journeys?

– Yes

↳ Mild sensory displeasure?

– Yes

↳ Extreme sensory displeasure?

– Yes

↳ Sickness or illness?

– Yes

↳ Impaired reproduction?

– Yes

↳ Back luck visited on descendants?

– Yes

↳ Other?

–Specify: Threatened punishment is destruction of city and inhabitants

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards in the text?

– Yes

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known?

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god

– Yes

↳ Done by many supernatural beings

– No

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle

– No

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Disputed

↳ Done to enforce group norms?

– No

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness?

– No

↳ Done randomly

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife?

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime?

– Yes

↳ Highly emphasized?

– Yes

↳ Consists of good luck?

– No

↳ Consists of political success or power?

– No

↳ Consists of success in battle?

– No

↳ Consists of peace or social stability?

– Yes

↳ Consists of healthy crops or good weather?

– No

↳ Consists of success on journeys?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health?

– Yes

Notes: Enhanced health, in the sense of survival

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success?

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants?

– No

↳ Other?

–Specify: Survival of threatened destruction

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present in the text?

– No

Is an eschatology present in the text?

– No

Norms & Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the text?

– Yes

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious text?

– No

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the text?

– Yes

↳ Honesty/trustworthiness/integrity

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Courage (in battle)

– No

↳ Courage (generic)

– No

↳ Compassion/empathy/kindness/benevolence

– Yes

- ↳ Mercy/forgiveness/tolerance
 - Field doesn't know
 - Notes: Unclear
- ↳ Generosity/charity
 - No
- ↳ Selflessness/selfless giving
 - No
- ↳ Righteousness/moral rectitude
 - Yes
- ↳ Ritual purity/ritual adherence/abstention from sources of impurity
 - No
- ↳ Respectfulness/courtesy
 - No
- ↳ Familial obedience/filial piety
 - No
- ↳ Fidelity/loyalty
 - Yes
- ↳ Cooperation
 - No
- ↳ Independence/creativity/freedom
 - No
- ↳ Moderation/frugality
 - No
- ↳ Forbearance/fortitude/patience
 - No

- ↳ Diligence/self-discipline/excellence
 - No
- ↳ Assertiveness/decisiveness/confidence/initiative
 - No
- ↳ Strength (physical)
 - No
- ↳ Power/status/nobility
 - No
- ↳ Humility/modesty
 - No
- ↳ Contentment/serenity/equanimity
 - No
- ↳ Joyfulness/enthusiasm/cheerfulness
 - No
- ↳ Optimism/hope
 - No
- ↳ Gratitude/thankfulness
 - No
- ↳ Reverence/awe/wonder
 - Yes
- ↳ Faith/belief/trust/devotion
 - Yes
- ↳ Wisdom/understanding
 - No

↳ Discernment/intelligence

– No

↳ Beauty/attractiveness

– No

↳ Cleanliness (physical)/orderliness

– No

↳ Other important virtues

– No

Advocacy of Practices

Does the text require celibacy (full sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require castration?

– No

Does the text require fasting?

– No

Does the text require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods)?

– No

Does the text require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations?

– No

Does the text require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of adults?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of children?

– No

Does the text require self-sacrifice (suicide)?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of property/valuable items?

– No

Does the text require sacrifice of time (e.g. attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.)?

– No

Does the text require physical risk taking?

– No

Does the text require accepting ethical precepts?

– Yes

Does the text require marginalization by out-group members?

– No

Does the text require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household)?

– No

Does the text require participation in large-scale rituals?

– No

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present as indicated in the text?

– No

Does the text employ fictive kinship terminology?

– No

Does the text include elements that are intended to be entertaining?

– Yes

↳ Drama?

– Yes

↳ Comedy?

– Yes

↳ Tragedy?

– No

↳ Epic entertainment?

– No

Does the text specify sacrifices, offerings, and maintenance of a sacred space?

– Yes

↳ Are sacrifices specified by the text?

– Yes

↳ Animal sacrifice?

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifice?

– No

↳ Are there self-sacrifices specified by the text?

– No

↳ Are there material offerings present?

– No

↳ Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

↳ Is the maintenance of the place regulated by the text?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unclear

Institutions & Production Environment of Text

Society & Institutions

Society of religious group that produced the text is best characterized as:

– A Faith Elect

Are there specific elements of society that have controlled the reproduction of the text?

– Other

Are there specific elements of society involved with the destruction of the text?

– Other

Welfare

Does the text specify institutionalized famine relief?

– No

Does the text specify institutionalized poverty relief?

– No

Does the text specify institutionalized care for elderly & infirm?

– No

Other forms of welfare?

– No

Education

Are there formal educational institutions available for teaching the text?

– No

Are there formal educational institutions specified according to the text?

– No

Does the text make provisions for non-religious education?

– No

Does the text restrict education to religious professionals?

– No

Does the text restrict education among religious professionals?

– No

Is education gendered according to the text?

– No

Is education gendered with respect to this text and larger textual tradition?

– Field doesn't know

Does the text specify teaching relationships or ratios? (i.e.: 1:20; 1:1)

– No

Are there specific relationships to teachers that are advocated by the text?

– No

Are there worldly rewards/benefits to education according to the text specified by the text itself?

– No

Bureaucracy

Is bureaucracy regulated by this text?

– No

Public Works

Does the text detail interaction with public works?

– No

Taxation

Does the text specify forms of taxation?

– No

Warfare

Does the text mention warfare?

– No

Food Production

Does the text mentioned food production/disbursement?

– No

Bibliography

General References

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