

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

This book, in the Hebrew copies, is called “Sepher Jonah”, the Book of Jonah; by the Vulgate Latin version “the Prophecy of Jonah”: and in the Syriac version “the Prophecy of the Prophet Jonah”. His name signifies a dove, derived from a root which signifies to oppress; because it is a creature liable to oppression, and to become the prey of others. Hillerus^{f1} derives the word from a root which signifies to be “fair” and “beautiful”, as this creature is. This name is very suitable to a prophet and minister of the Lord, who ought to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; and who mourn over their own sins, and the sins of others. Jonah did not always in his conduct answer to his name, particularly when he was so angry at the Lord’s sparing the Ninevites, and so impatient for the loss of his gourd. His father’s name was Amittai, as in (^{<3100>}Jonah 1:1) and in (^{<1245>}2 Kings 14:25); from whence it also appears that he was of Gathhepher, a town in the tribe of Zebulun, (^{<6913>}Joshua 19:13); and was a part of Galilee, (^{<2301>}Isaiah 9:1); and so R. Jochanan, in Abendana, affirms, that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and of Gathhepher, which was in that tribe; which confutes that notion of the Pharisees in the times of Christ, that no prophet came out of Galilee, (^{<4052>}John 7:52). The Jews^{f2} have a tradition that his mother was the widow of Sarepta, whose son Elijah raised from the dead, which was this prophet; and who is said to be the son of Amittai, that is, “truth”: because his mother thereby knew and believed that the word of the Lord in the mouth of Elijah was truth, (^{<1173>}1 Kings 17:23,24); but his being a Hebrew contradicts him, (^{<3100>}Jonah 1:9); for Sarepta was a city of Sidon, and he must have been a Sidonian if born of her, and not a Hebrew: but, be this as it will, it is certain he was a prophet of the Lord; and this book, which bears his name, and very probably was written by him, its divine authority is confirmed by the testimony Christ, of whom Jonah was a type; (see ^{<4129>}Matthew 12:39-41); and indeed the principal design of this book is to set forth in himself the type of the death and resurrection of Christ, by his being three days in the whale’s belly, and then delivered from it; and to declare the grace and mercy of God to repenting sinners, and to signify the calling of the Gentiles after the death and resurrection of Christ; and is a very profitable book to instruct us about the power and goodness of God; the nature of repentance, and the effects of it; the imperfection and infirmities of the best of men in this life;

and the call and mission of the ministers of the word, and the necessity of their conformity and attendance to it. Cyprian the martyr was converted from idolatry by hearing this prophecy read and explained by Caecilius. If this prophet was the son of the widow of Sarepta, or the person Elisha sent to anoint Jehu, according to the tradition of the Jews^{f3} he was born in the times of Ahab, and lived in the reigns of Joram and Jehu; and, according to Bishop Lloyd^{f4} he prophesied in the latter end, of Jehu's reign; where Mr. Whiston^{f5} also places him, about 860 B.C.; or in the beginning of the reign of Jehoahaz, when Israel was greatly oppressed by Hazael king of Syria, (^{<12132>}2 Kings 13:22); at which time he might prophesy of the victories and success of Jeroboam the second, and grandson of Jehoahaz, (^{<12125>}2 Kings 14:25); and, if so, he is more ancient than Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Joel, and Micah, whose contemporary he is generally thought to be Pseudo-Epiphanius^{f6}, as he gives a wrong account of the place of the birth of this prophet, so of the place of his burial; which he makes to be in the land of Saar, and in the cave of Kenan, the father of Caleb and Othniel; but it is more likely that he died and was buried at Geth, where he was born; and where Jerom^{f7} says his grave was, shown in his time, about two miles from Zippore, in the way to Tiberias; with which account Isidore^{f8} agrees; and so Benjamin Tudelensis^{f9} says, his sepulchre was on a hill near Zippore. Monsieur Thevenot^{f10} says, not far from Nazareth the tomb of Jonah is now to be seen, to which the Turks bear a great respect.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH 1

This chapter gives an account of the call and mission of Jonah to go to Nineveh, and prophesy there, and the reason of it, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:1,2); his disobedience to it, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:3). God's resentment of it, by sending a storm into the sea, where he was, which terrified the mariners, and put the ship in danger of being lost, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:4,5); The discovery of Jonah and his disobedience as the cause of the tempest, and how it was made, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:6-10); The casting of him into the sea at his own motion, and with his own consent, though with great reluctance in the mariners, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:11-16). The preparation of a fish for him, which swallowed him up, and in which he lived three days and three nights, (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:17).

Ver. 1. *Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai,* etc.] Or, “and the word of the Lord was”^{f11}; not that this is to be considered as connected with something the prophet had on his mind and in his thoughts when he began to write this book; or as a part detached from a prophecy not now extant; for it is no unusual thing with the Hebrews to begin books after this manner, especially historical ones, of which kind this chiefly is, as the books of Ruth, First and Second Samuel, and Esther; besides, the w, “vau”, is here not copulative, but conversive; doing its office by changing the future tense into the past; which otherwise must have been rendered, “the word of the Lord shall be”, or “shall come”; which would not only give another, but a wrong sense. “The word of the Lord” often signifies a prophecy from the Lord; and so the Targum, renders it,

“the word of prophecy from the Lord;”

and it may be so interpreted, since Jonah, under a spirit of prophecy, foretold that Nineveh should be destroyed within forty days; though the phrase here rather signifies the order and command of the Lord to the prophet to do as is expressed in (^{<3000>}Jonah 1:2); whose name was Jonah “the son of Amittai”; of whom see the introduction to this book. Who his father Amittai was is not known: if the rule of the Jews would hold good,

that when a prophet mentions his own name, and the name of his father, he is a prophet, the son of a prophet, then Amittai was one; but this is not to be depended on. The Syriac version calls him the son of Mathai, or Matthew; though the Arabians have a notion that Mathai is his mother's name; and observe that none are called after their mothers but Jonas and Jesus Christ: but the right name is Amittai, and signifies "my truth"; and to be sons of truth is an agreeable character of the prophets and ministers of the word, who should be given to truth, possessed of it, and publish it:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 2. *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city*, etc.] That is, arise from the place where he was, and leave the business he was about, and prepare for a long journey to the place mentioned, and be as expeditious in it as possible. Nineveh was the metropolis of the Assyrian empire at this time; it was an ancient city built by Ashur, not by Nimrod; though he by some is said to go into Ashur or Assyria, and build it, (^(~~ORIG~~)Genesis 10:11); and called it after the name of his son Ninus; for it signifies the mansion or palace of Ninus; and by most profane writers is called Ninus; according to Diodorus Siculus^{f12}, and Strabo^{f13}, it was built by Ninus himself in Assyria, in that part of it called by him Adiabena. It is said to be a great city, as it must, to be three days' journey in compass, and to have in it six score thousand infants, besides men and women, (^(~~ORIG~~)Jonah 3:3 4:11). It is allowed by Strabo^{f14} to be larger than Babylon. Diodorus^{f15} says that it was in compass of sixty miles; and had a wall a hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots or carriages might go abreast upon it; and it had, fifteen hundred towers, two hundred feet high. Aben Ezra calls it the royal city of Assyria, which is at this day destroyed; and the wise men of Israel, in the country of Greece, say it is called Urtia; but, whether so or not, he knew not:

and cry against it; or prophesy against it, as the Targum; he was to lift up his voice, and cry aloud, as he passed along in it, that the inhabitants might hear him; and the more to affect them, and to show that he was in earnest, and what he delivered was interesting to them, and of the greatest moment and importance: what he was to cry, preach, or publish, (see Jon 3:2,4);

for their wickedness is come up before me; it was come to a very great height; it reached to the heavens; it was not only seen and known by the Lord, as all things are; but the cry of it was come up to him; it called aloud for vengeance, for immediate vengeance; the measure of it being filled up, and the inhabitants ripe for destruction; it was committed openly and

boldly, with much impudence, in the sight of the Lord, as well as against him; and was no more to be suffered and connived at: it intends and includes their idolatry, bloodshed, oppression, rapine, fraud, and lying; (see Jon 3:8 Na 3:1).

Ver. 3. *But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord,* etc.] He was not obedient to the heavenly vision; he rose up, but not to go to Nineveh, but to Tarshish, the reverse of it; to the sea, as the Targum, the Mediterranean sea, which lay west, as Nineveh was to the east. Tarshish sometimes is used for the sea; (see ^{<42B>}Psalm 48:7); he determined to go to sea; he did not care where, or to what place he might find a ship bound; or to Tarsus in Cilicia, the birthplace of the Apostle Paul, (^{<42B>}Acts 22:3); so Josephus^{f16} and Saadiah Gaon; or to Tunis in Africa, as R. Melasser in Aben Ezra; or to Carthage, as Theodoret, and others; or Tartessus in Spain, as others. Among this difference of interpreters, it is hard to say what place it was: it seems best to understand it of Tarsus. The prophet had better knowledge of God, and of the perfections of his nature, than to imagine he could flee from his general presence, which is everywhere, and from which there is no fleeing, (^{<42B>}Psalm 139:7); but his view was to flee out of that land where he granted his special presence to his people; and from that place where were the symbols of his presence, the ark, the mercy seat, and cherubim, and in which he stood, and ministered before the Lord; but now upon this order left his post, and deserted his station. The reasons given of his conduct are various. The Jewish writers suppose that he concerned more for the glory of Israel than the glory of God; that he was fearful, should he do as he was bid, the word of the Lord would be carried from Judea into the Gentile world, and there remain; that he was of opinion that the Heathens would repent of their sins at his preaching, though Israel did not, which would turn to the reproach and condemnation of the latter; (see ^{<42B>}Matthew 12:41); and that he knew that the spirit of prophecy did not dwell upon any out of the land of Israel, and therefore got as fast as he could out of it, that he might not be further urged with such a message; which notion is confuted by the instances of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; to this, sense the Targum inclines, which adds,

“lest he should prophesy in the name of the Lord:”

but there is no need to seek for reasons, and which are given by others; such as going out of his own country into a foreign one; the length of the

journey; the opposition and difficulties he might expect to meet with; and the risk he should run of his life, by prophesying in and against the metropolis of the Assyrian empire, where the king's court and palace were; and he not only a Heathen, but a sovereign and arbitrary prince; when the true reasons are suggested by the prophet himself; as that he supposed the people would repent; he knew that God was gracious and merciful, and upon their repentance would not inflict the punishment pronounced; and he should be reckoned a false prophet, (^{<3042>}Jonah 4:2);

and went down to Joppa; a seaport town in the tribe of Dan, upon the Mediterranean sea, where was a haven of ships, formerly called Japho, (^{<4096>}Joshua 19:16); at this time Joppa, as it was in the times of the apostles: here Peter raised Dorcas to life, and from hence he was sent for by Cornelius, (^{<4096>}Acts 9:36 10:5); it is now called Jaffa; of which Monsieur Thevenot^{f17} says,

“it is a town built upon the top of a rock, whereof there remains no more at present but some towers; and the port of it was at the foot of the said rock.--It is at present a place of few inhabitants; and all that is to be seen of it is a little castle with two towers, one round, and another square; and a great tower separate from it on one side. There are no houses by the seaside, but five grottos cut in the rock, of which the fourth is in a place of retreat for Christians.--There is a harbour still in the same place where it was formerly; but there is so little water in it, that none but small barks can enter.”

It was a very ancient city, said^{f18} to be older than the flood; and built on a hill so high, that Strabo says^{f19} Jerusalem might be seen from thence, which was forty miles from it. It had its name from Jope the daughter of Aeolus, the wife of Cepheus, the founder of it^{f20}. Jonah went thither, either from Jerusalem, or from Gathhepher, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe: if from the former, it was forty miles to Joppa, as Jerom says; and if from the latter, it is supposed to be about fifty: a journey of this length must be some time in performing, which shows with what deliberation and resolution he sinned in disobeying the divine command:

and he found a ship going to Tarshish; just ready to put to sea, and bound for this place: Providence seemed to favour him, and answer to his wishes; from whence it may be observed, that the goodness of an action, and its acceptableness to God, are not to be concluded from its wished for success:

so he paid the fare thereof; the freight of the ship; the whole of it, according to Jarchi; that haste and a quicker dispatch might be made, and no stay for passengers or goods; but that it might be put under, sail directly, and he be the sooner out of the land; which, if true, would show him to be a man of substance; and agrees with a notion of the Jews, and serves to illustrate and confirm it, that the spirit of prophecy does not dwell upon any but a rich man; for which reason the above interpreter catches at it; but Aben Ezra more truly observes, that he paid his part, what came to his share, what was usual to be paid for a passage to such a place: and whereas it might be usual then, as now, not to pay till they were arrived at port, and went out of the ship; he paid his fare at entrance, to secure his passage, lest through any pretence he should not be took in upon sailing; so determined was he to fly from God, and disobey his orders:

and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord; having paid his fare, he entered the ship directly, lest he should be left behind; and went down into the cabin perhaps, to go along with the mariners and merchants, all Heathens to Tarshish, whither they were bound, in order to be clear of any fresh order from the Lord, to go and prophesy against Nineveh: here again the Targum adds,

“lest he should prophesy in the name of the Lord.”

Ver. 4. *But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea*, etc.] He took a wind out of his treasures, and hurled it, as the word^{f21} signifies, into the sea: “into that sea”^{f22}; that part of it where the ship was Jonah was in. Winds are at the command of God, which he raises at his pleasure, and fulfil his will, and are servants of his that obey his orders: this here was sent in pursuit of Jonah, to stop him in his voyage, when he thought he had got clear off, and was safe enough. The Jews say^{f23} this was done when he had been one day’s voyage:

and there was a great tempest in the sea; which caused the waves to rise and roar, and become very tumultuous: this wind was an extraordinary one, like that “laelaps” or storm of wind which came down into the sea when the disciples of Christ were on it in a ship; or like the “Euroclydon”, in which the Apostle Paul was, (^{<4274>}Acts 27:14);

so that the ship was like to be broken; it was in danger of it; it seemed as if it would, the waves of the sea were so strong, and beat so hard upon it. It is in the original text, “the ship thought [it should be] broken”^{f24}; that is,

the men in it; they that had the management of it thought nothing less but that it would be dashed to pieces, and all their goods and lives lost; so great was the hurricane occasioned by the wind the Lord sent. It may be rendered, “that ship^{f25} was like”, etc. The Jews^{f26} have a notion that other ships passed to and fro in great tranquillity, and this only was in distress.

Ver. 5. *Then the mariners were afraid*, etc.] Perceiving that the storm was not an ordinary, but a supernatural one; and that the ship and all in it were in extreme danger, and no probability of being saved. This shows that the storm must be very violent, to frighten such men who were used to the sea, and to storms, and were naturally bold and intrepid. The word used signifies “salters”, so called from the salt sea they used, as they are by us “mariners”, from “mare”, the “sea”; though R. Japhet in Aben Ezra thinks the commodity they carried in their vessel was salt:

and cried every man to his god: to help them, and save them out of their distress. In the ship it seems were men of different nations, and who worshipped different gods. It was a notion of the Jews, and which Jarchi mentions as his own, that there were men of the seventy nations of the earth in it; and as each of them had a different god, they separately called upon them. The polytheism of the Pagans is to be condemned, and shows the great uncertainty of their religion; yet this appears to be agreeable to the light of nature that there is a God, and that God is to be prayed unto, and called upon, especially in time of trouble:

and cast forth the wares that [were] in the ship into the sea, to lighten [it] of them; or, “the vessels”^{f27}, a word the Hebrews use for all sorts of goods, utensils, etc. it includes, with others, their military weapons they had to defend themselves, their provisions, the ship’s stores or goods it was freighted with; finding their prayers to their gods were ineffectual, they betook themselves to this prudential method to lighten the ship, that they might be able to keep its head above water. So the Targum,

“when they saw there was no profit in them;”

that is in the gods they called upon, then they did this; the other was a matter of religion this a point of prudence; such a step the mariners took that belonged to the ship in which the Apostle Paul was, (~~42718~~ Acts 27:18,19,38);

but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; into one of its sides, into a cabin there; the lowest side, as the Targum:

and he lay, and was fast asleep; even snored, as some versions have it: it may seem strange he should when the wind was so strong and boisterous; the sea roaring; the waves beating; the ship rolling about; the mariners hurrying from place to place, and calling to each other to do their duty; and the passengers crying; and, above all, that he should fall into so sound a sleep, and continue in it, when he had such a guilty conscience. This shows that he was asleep in a spiritual as well as in a corporeal sense.

Ver. 6. *So the shipmaster came to him*, etc.] The master of the vessel, who had the command of it; or the governor of it, as Jarchi; though Josephus^{f28} distinguishes between the governor and the shipmaster: “the master of the ropers”^{f29}, as it may be rendered; of the sailors, whose business it was to draw the ropes, to loose or gather the sails, at his command: missing him, very probably, he sought after him, and found him in the hold, in the bottom of the ship, on one side of it, fast asleep:

and said unto him, what meanest thou, O sleeper? this is not a time to sleep, when the ship is like to be broke to pieces, all lives lost, and thine own too: thus the prophet, who was sent to rebuke the greatest monarch in the world, is himself rebuked by a shipmaster, and a Heathen man. Such an expostulation as this is proper enough to be used with professors of religion that are gotten in a spiritual sense into a sleepy and drowsy frame of spirit; it being an aggravation of it, especially when the nation they are of, the church of Christ they belong to, and their own persons also, are in danger; (see ^{<6131>}Romans 13:11) (^{<4064>}Ephesians 5:14);

arise, call upon thy God; the gods of this shipmaster and his men were insufficient to help them; they had ears, but they heard not; nor could they answer them, or relieve them; he is therefore desirous the prophet would pray to his God, though he was unknown to him; or at least it suggests that it would better come him to awake, and be up, and praying to his God, than to lie sleeping there; and the manner in which the words are expressed, without a copulative, show the hurry of his spirit, the ardour of his mind, and the haste he was in to have that done he advises to: every good man has a God to pray unto, a covenant God and Father, and who is a prayer hearing God; is able to help in time of need, and willing to do it; and it is the duty and interest of such to call upon him in a time of trouble; yea, they should arise and stir up themselves to this service; and it may be observed, that the best of men may sometimes be in such a condition and

circumstances as to need to be stirred up to it by others; (see ^{<2246>}Luke 22:46);

if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not; the supreme God; for the gods they had prayed to they looked upon as mediators with the true God they knew not. The shipmaster saw, that, to all human probability, they were all lost men, just ready to perish; that if they were saved, (as who knew but they might, upon Jonah's praying to his God?) it must be owing to the kind thoughts of God towards them; to the serenity of his countenance, and gracious acceptance of prayer, and his being propitious and merciful through that means; all which seems to be the import of the word used: so the saving of sinners in a lost and perishing condition, in which all men are, though all are not sensible of it, is owing to God's thoughts of peace, to his good will, free favour, and rich grace in Christ Jesus, and through him, as the propitiatory sacrifice. The Targum is,

“if so be mercy may be granted from the Lord, and we perish not.”

Ver. 7. *And they said everyone to his fellow*, etc.] That Jonah awoke and rose up, upon the shipmaster's calling to him, is certain; but whether or no he called upon his God is not; perhaps he did: and when his prayer was over, and the storm still continuing, the sailors said one to another,

come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil [is] upon us; for, Observing something very uncommon and extraordinary in the tempest, and all means, both natural and religious, failing to help them; and though they might know that they were each one of them sinners, yet they supposed there must be some one notorious sinner among them, that had committed some very enormous crime, which had drawn the divine resentment upon them to such a degree; and therefore they proposed to cast a lot, which was an appeal to the divine Being, in order to find out the guilty person. That the Heathens used the lot upon occasion is not only manifest from profane writers, but from the sacred Scriptures; as Haman, and other enemies of God's people; and the soldiers that attended the cross of Christ, (^{<1024>}Esther 9:24 ^{<908>}Joel 3:3 ^{<1011>}Obidiah 1:11) (Na 3:10 ^{<1075>}Matthew 27:35). Drusius reports, from Xavierus, of some Heathens sailing to Japan, and other places in the East Indies, that they used to carry an idol with them, and by lots inquire of it whither they should go; and whether they should have prosperous winds, etc.

so they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah; through the overruling providence and disposing hand of God, which attended this affair; for, not to inquire whether the use of the lot was lawful or not, or whether performed in that serious and solemn manner as it should be, if used at all; it pleased God to interfere in this matter, to direct it to fall on Jonah, with whom he had a particular concern, being a prophet of his, and having disobeyed his will; (see ⁴¹⁶³Proverbs 16:33). The Syriac version renders it, “the lot of Jonah came up”; that is, the piece of paper, or whatever it was, on which his name was written, was taken up first out of the vessel in which the lots were put.

Ver. 8. *Then they said unto him, tell us, we pray thee*, etc.] They did not fall upon him at once in an outrageous manner, and throw him overboard; as it might be thought such men would have done, considering what they had suffered and lost by means of him; but they use him with great respect, tenderness, and lenity: and entreat him to tell them

for whose cause this evil [was] upon them: or rather, as the Targum,

“for what this evil is upon us;”

and so Noldius^{f30} renders the words; for their inquiry was not about the person for whose cause it was; that was determined by the lot; but on what account it was; what sin it was he had been guilty of, which was the cause of it; for they supposed some great sin must be committed, that had brought down the vengeance of God in such a manner:

what [is] thine occupation? trade or business? this question they put, to know whether he had any, or was an idle man; or rather, whether it was an honest and lawful employment; whether it was by fraud or violence, by thieving and stealing, he got his livelihood; or by conjuring, and using the magic art: or else the inquiry was about his present business, what he was going about; what he was to do at Tarshish when he came there; whether he was not upon some ill design, and sent on an unlawful errand, and going to do some ill thing, for which vengeance pursued him, and stopped him:

and whence comest thou? what [is] thy country? and of what people [art] thou? which questions seem to relate to the same thing, what nation he was of; and put by different persons, who were eager to learn what countryman he was, that they might know who was the God he worshipped, and guess at the crime he had been guilty of.

Ver. 9. *And he said unto them, I [am] an Hebrew,* etc.] He does not say a Jew, as the Targum wrongly renders it; for that would have been false, since he was of the tribe of Zebulun, which was in the kingdom of Israel, and not of Judah; nor does he say an Israelite, lest he should be thought to be in the idolatry of that people; but a Hebrew, which was common to both; and, besides, it not only declared what nation he was of, but what religion he professed, and who was his God:

and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry [land]; this answers to the other question, what was his occupation or business? he was one that feared the Lord, that served and worshipped him; a prophet of the great God, as Josephus^{f31} expresses and so Kimchi; the mighty Jehovah, that made the “heavens”, and dwells in them; and from whence that storm of wind came, which had so much distressed the ship, and still continued: and who made the “sea”, which was now so boisterous and raging, and threatened them with ruin; and “the dry land”, where they would be glad to have been at that instant. By this description of God, as the prophet designed to set him forth in his nature and works, so to distinguish him from the gods of Heathens, who had only particular parts of the universe assigned to them, when his Jehovah was Lord of all; but where was the prophet’s fear and reverence of God when he fled from him, and disobeyed him? it was not lost, though not in exercise.

Ver. 10. *Then were the men exceedingly afraid,* etc.] When they found he was a Hebrew, and that it was the God of the Hebrews that was angry; of whom they had heard much, and what great and wonderful things had been done by him, and now had an experience of his power and providence, and that it was for fleeing from his presence that all this was; and therefore, since they had been guilty of greater sins than this, as they might imagine, what would be done to them? and particularly it might fill them with dread and terror, when they heard of the destruction of Nineveh, the prophet was sent to denounce; of which no doubt he had told them, and they might from hence conclude it would certainly be:

and said unto him, why hast thou done this? they wonder he should act such a foolish part as to flee from such a God he had described to them, who was Lord of heaven, earth, and sea; and therefore could meet with him, and seize him, be he where he would; and they reprove him for it, and the rather as it had involved them in so much distress and danger:

for the men knew that he had fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them; not when he first entered into the ship, but now, though not before mentioned; for no doubt Jonah told the whole story at length, though the whole is not recorded; how that he was sent by the Lord with a message to Nineveh, to denounce destruction to it; and that he refused to go, and fled from his face; and this was the true reason of the storm.

Ver. 11. *Then said they unto him, what shall we do unto thee*, etc.]

Though, both by the lot and his own confession, they knew he was the guilty person; for whose sake this storm was; yet were unwilling to do anything to him without his will and consent, his counsel and advice; perceiving that he was a prophet of the God of the Hebrews, whom he had offended, and knew the mind and will of his God, and the nature of his offence against him, and what only would appease him they desire him to tell what they ought to do; fearing that, though they had found out the man, they should make a mistake in their manner of dealing with him, and so continue the distress they were in, or increase it; their great concern being to be rid of the storm:

that the sea may be calm unto us? or “silent”^{f32}? for the waves thereof made a hideous roaring, and lifted up themselves so high, as was terrible to behold; and dashed with such vehemence against the ship, as threatened it every moment with destruction:

(for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous); or, “it went and swelled”^{f33}; it was agitated to and fro, and was in a great ferment, and grew ore and more stormy and tempestuous. Jonah’s confession of his sin, and true repentance for it, were not sufficient; more must be one to appease an angry God; and what that was the sailors desired to know. These words are inserted in a parenthesis with us, as if put by the writer of the book, pointing out the reason of the men’s request; but, according to Kimchi: they are their own words, giving a reason why they were so pressing upon him to know what they should do with him, “seeing the sea was going and stormy”^{f34}; or more and more stormy; which seems right.

Ver. 12. *And he said unto them, take me up, and cast me forth into the sea*, etc.] This he said not as choosing rather to die than to go to Nineveh; or as having overheard the men say that they would cast him into the sea, as Aben Ezra suggests, greatly to the prejudice of the prophet’s character; but as being truly sensible of his sin, and that he righteously deserved to die such a death; and in love to the lives of innocent men, that they might be

saved, and not perish, through his default; and as a prophet, knowing this to be the mind and will of God, he cheerfully and in faith submits to it, with a presence of mind and courage suitable to his character. It was not fit he should leap into the sea and destroy himself; but that he should die by the hand of justice, of which the shipmaster and the ship's crew were the proper executioners:

so shall the sea be calm unto you; or "silent", as before; it will cease from its roaring, and do no further hurt and damage:

for I know that for my sake this great tempest [is] upon you; for the sin he had committed in fleeing from God, this storm was raised and continued; nor could it go off till they had done what he had directed them to; there was no other way of being clear of it. In this Jonah was a type of Christ, who willingly gave himself to suffer and die, that he might appease divine wrath, satisfy justice, and save men; only with this difference, Jonah suffered for his own sins, Christ for the sins of others; Jonah to endure a storm he himself had raised by his sins, Christ to endure a storm others had raised by their sins.

Ver. 13. *Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring [it] to the land, but they could not*, etc.] Or, "they digged"^{f35}; that is, the waters of the sea with their oars; not by casting anchor, as Abendana; they used all their skill and exerted all their strength; they laboured with all their might and main, as a man digs in a pit; they ploughed the ocean, and furrowed the sea, as the Latins speak, but all in vain; they rowed against wind and tide; God, his purposes and providence, were against them; and it was not possible for them to make land, and get the ship ashore, which they were desirous of, to save the life of Jonah, as well as their own; for, seeing him penitent, they had compassion on him; his character and profession as a prophet, the gravity of the man, the sedateness of his countenance, his openness of mind, and his willingness to die, wrought greatly upon the men, that they would fain have saved him if they could; and perhaps being Heathens, and not knowing thoroughly the nature of his offence, might think he did not deserve to die; but all their endeavours to save him were to no purpose:

for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them; it grew more and more so; the storm beat right against them, and drove them back faster than they came; so that it was impossible to stand against it.

Ver. 14. *Wherefore they cried unto the Lord,* etc.] Not unto their gods, but unto the true Jehovah, the God of Jonah, and of the Hebrews; whom they now, by this providence, and Jonah's discourse, had some convictions and knowledge of as the true God; and therefore direct their prayer to him, before they cast the prophet into the sea:

and said, we beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee; which repetition shows the ardent, vehemence, and earnestness of their minds in prayer:

let us not perish for this man's life; they were in the utmost perplexity of mind, not knowing well what to do; they saw they must perish by the storm, if they saved his life; and they were afraid they should perish, if they took it away; and which yet they were obliged to do; and therefore had no other way left but to pray to the Lord they might not perish for it; or it be reckoned as their crime, and imputed to them, as follows:

and lay not upon us innocent blood; for so it was to them; he had done no hurt to them since he had been with them, except in being the cause of the storm, whereby they had suffered the loss of their goods; however, had not been guilty of anything worthy of death, as they could observe; and as for his offence against God, they were not sufficient judges of, and must leave it with him: the light of nature teaches men to be tender of the lives of fellow creatures, and to avoid shedding of innocent blood:

for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee; it appeared to them to be the will of God that he should be cast into the sea; from the storm that was raised on his account; from the determination of the lot; from the confession of Jonah, and his declaration of the will of God in this matter, as a prophet of his: they did not pretend to account for it; it was a secret to them why it should be; but it was no other than what he would have done; and therefore they hoped no blame would be laid on them.

Ver. 15. *So they took up, Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea,* etc.] They took him out of the hold or cabin where he was, and brought him upon deck; they took him, not against his will, but with his full consent, and according to the direction and advice he gave them: "they", for there were more than one employed in this affair; one or more very probably took him by the legs, and others put their hands under his arm holes, and so threw him into the sea:

and the sea ceased from her raging; immediately, and became a calm; and the wind also ceased from blowing, which is supposed; the end being

answered by the storm, and the person found and obtained, what was sought after by it, it was still and quiet. The story the Jews^{f36} tell of his being let down into the sea to his knees, upon which the sea was calm, but became raging again upon his being taken up; and so, at the second time, to his navel; and the third time to his neck; is all fabulous; but he being wholly thrown in, it raged no more.

Ver. 16. *Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly*, etc.] This was not a natural fear, as before, but a religious one; and not a servile fear, or a fear of punishment, but a reverential godly fear; for they feared him, not only because they saw his power in raising and stilling the tempest, but his goodness to them in saving them:

and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord; a spiritual sacrifice; the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for a safe deliverance from the storm; for other sort of sacrifice they seemed not to have materials for; since they had thrown overboard what they had in the ship to lighten it, unless there might be anything left fit for this purpose; but rather, if it is to be understood of a ceremonial sacrifice, it was offered when they went out of the ship, according to the gloss of Aben Ezra; or they solemnly declared they would, as soon as they came to land; to which sense is the Targum,

“and they said, they would offer a sacrifice:”

and agreeably to this the words may be rendered, with what follows, thus, “and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord”, that is,

and made vows; they vowed that they would offer a sacrifice^{f37} when arrived in their own country, or should return to Judea, and come to Jerusalem. So the Hebrew **ו**, “vau”, is often used^{f38}, as exegetical and explanative; though many interpreters understand the vows as distinct from the sacrifice; and that they vowed that the God of the Hebrews should be their God, and that they would for the future serve and worship him only; that they would become proselytes, as Jarchi; or give alms to the poor, as Kimchi; as an evidence of their sense of gratitude to God, the author of their mercies. If these men were truly converted, as it seems as if they were, they were great gainers by this providence; for though they lost their worldly goods, they found what was infinitely better, God to be their God and portion, and all spiritual good thing a with him; and it may be observed of the wise and wonderful providence of God, that though Jonah refused to

go and preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh, for which he was corrected; yet God made this dispensation a means of converting other Gentiles.

Ver. 17. *Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah,* etc.] Not from the creation of the world, as say the Jews^{f39}; for this is to be understood, not of the formation or making of it; but of the ordering and disposition of it by the providence of God to be near the ship, and its mouth open to receive Jonah, as soon as he was cast forth from thence: and a great one it must be, to take him at once into its mouth, and swallow him down its throat, and retain him whole in its belly; and such great fishes there are in the sea, particularly the “carcharias”, or dog fish; the same with Triton’s dog, said to swallow Hercules, in which he was three days; and which fable perhaps took its rise from hence. In (⁴¹²⁰Matthew 12:40), it is said to be a “whale”; but then that must be understood, not as the proper name of a fish, but as common to all great fishes; otherwise the whale, properly so called, it is said, has not a swallow large enough to take down a man; though some deny this, and assert they are capable of it. Of the “balaena”, which is one kind of whale, it is reported^{f40}, that when it apprehends its young ones in danger, will take them, and hide them within itself; and then afterwards throw them out again; and certain it is that the whale is a very great fish, if not the greatest. Pliny^{f41} speaks of whales six hundred feet long, and three hundred and sixty broad; and of the bones of a fish, which were brought to Rome from Joppa, and there shown as a miracle, which were forty feet long; and said to be the bones of the monstrous fish to which Andromede at Joppa was exposed^{f42}; which story seems to be hammered out of this history of Jonah; and the same is reported by Solinus^{f43}; however, it is out of doubt that there are fishes capable of swallowing a man. Nierembergius^{f44} speaks of a fish taken near Valencia in Spain, so large that a man on horseback could stand in its mouth; the cavity of the, brain held seven men; its jaw bones, which were kept in the Escorial, were seventeen feet long; and two carcasses were found in its stomach: he says it was called “piscis mularis”; but some learned men took it to be the dog fish before mentioned; and such a large devouring creature is the shark, of which the present bishop of Bergen^{f45}, and others, interpret this fish here; in which sometimes has been found the body of a man, and even of a man in armour, as many writers^{f46} have observed. Some^{f47} think it was a crocodile, which, though a river fish, yet, for the most part, is at the entrance of rivers, and sometimes goes into the sea many miles, and is capable of swallowing a man; some are above thirty

feet long; and in the belly of one of them, in the Indies, was found a woman with all her clothes on^{f48}:

and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights: that is, one whole natural day, consisting of twenty four hours, and part of two others; the Jews having no other way of expressing a natural day but by day and night; and to this the antitype answers; namely, our Lord's being so long in the grave; of whose death, burial, and resurrection, this was a type, as appears from (^{<0120>}Matthew 12:40); for which reason Jonah was so miraculously preserved; and a miracle it was that he should not in this time be digested in the stomach of the creature; that he was not suffocated in it, but breathed and lived; and that he was able to bear the stench of the creature's maw; and that he should have his senses, and be in such a frame of mind as both to pray and praise; but what is it that the power of God cannot do? Here some begin the second chapter, and not amiss.