JONAH 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (MT Versing)
	Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance	Jonah Is Miraculously Saved		
Jonah's Prayer	1:17-2:9	1:17-2:10	Jonah's Prayer	Jonah is Saved
2:1-9			2:1-9	2:1-11
(2-9)		(2:1-9)	(2:1-9)	
	(2:2a)			
	(2:2b-6)			
				(3-5)
				(6-7a)
	(2:7-9)			(7b-8)
				(9-10)
2:10	2:10	2:10		
	(10)		(10)	
				(11)

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. This prayer (Jon. 2:1-9) is beautiful theological poetry. It looks like a refined literary work, not an emotional extemporaneous cry to God. However, it contains so many words about "water" (cf. Jon. 2:3,5) that it truly reflects Jonah's experience.

B. This prayer has many similarities with the thanksgiving Psalms. Jonah was well acquainted with temple liturgy.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JONAH 2:1-9
1Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,
2and he said,
"I called out of my distress to the LORD,
And He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;
You heard my voice.
3For You had cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
And the current engulfed me.
All Your breakers and billows passed over me.
4So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.'
5Water encompassed me to the point of death.
The great deep engulfed me,
Weeds were wrapped around my head.
6I descended to the roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars was around me forever,
But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.
7While I was fainting away,
I remembered the LORD,
And my prayer came to You,
Into Your holy temple.
8Those who regard vain idols
Forsake their faithfulness,
9But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving.
That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the LORD."

2:1 God had purposely allowed and even structured the predicament in which Jonah found himself (cf. Jon. 1:4, 17; 2:3).

▣ **"to the LORD his God"** These are the two most common names for Israel's deity, YHWH and *Elohim*.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, C. and D.

2:2 "I called out" This VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) is used often in Jonah (8 times) and in two senses:
1. to proclaim, Jon. 1:2; 3:2,4,5
2. to pray, Jon. 1:6,14; 2:2; 3:8

It is parallel to "I cried" (BDB 1002, KB 1443, *Piel* PERFECT) for help (e.g., Ps. 30:2-3; 119:146; Isa. 58:9).

▣

NASB, NKJV, NJB, Peshitta	**"out of my distress"**
NKJV, LXX	**"because of my affliction"**
TEV, REB	**"in my distress"**
JPSOA	**"in my trouble"**

This NOUN (BDB 865) comes from the concept of "narrow or restricted," meaning to apply pressure (i.e., crushing grapes with ones' feet, e.g., Ps.18:4-6; 22:11; 25:17; 118:5,12D:1).

▣ **"depth of Sheol"** There may be a play on the term "depth," which is literally "belly" (BDB 105) and Jonah's physical location "inside the great fish" (BDB 588). The term *Sheol* refers to the holding place of the conscious dead (parallel to "pit," cf. Ps. 30:3). As the grave is the resting place of our physical body at death, so *Sheol* is the place of our personhood. The OT does not provide much information about life after death. From what little is provided we learn
1. there is a conscious life after physical death
2. the dead are with family
3. there is no fellowship or joy
4. both good and evil people are there
5. God is present there, but not worshiped (cf. Ps. 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; 139:8)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?, I, B.

▣ **"You heard my voice"** This is a Hebraic idiom for God's hearing and responding to His covenant people's prayers (see Targums).

2:3 There are many terms in Jon. 2:3 and 5 that relate to the sea. This may be an allusion to the chaotic waters of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1). As God brought order in creation from chaos, so too, in Jonah's life. The waters have separated Jonah from God (cf. Jon. 2:4; Ps. 69:1,2,14,15; 88:6,7,17), but in reality they (i.e., the fish) become his transport to do God's will.
There are several sets of parallels.
1. the deep, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 846)
2. the great deep, Jon. 2:5 (BDB 1062)
3. engulfed, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT)
4. encompassed, Jon. 2:5 (BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT)
5. engulfed, Jon. 2:5 (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT)
6. the current, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 625)
7. breakers, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 991)
8. billows, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 164)
9. the waters, Jon. 2:3 (BDB 565)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WATERS

▣ **"You had cast me into the deep"** This VERB (BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) shows that Jonah recognized his well-deserved fate and that it was God who used the storm (cf. Jon. 1:4) and the sailors (cf. Jon. 1:15) to execute His judgment.

2:4

NASB	**"I have been expelled"**
NKJV	**"I have been cast out"**
NRSV	**"I am driven away"**
TEV	**"I had been banished"**
NJB, REB	**"I am banished"**
JPSOA, LXX	**"I was driven away"**

This VERB (BDB 176, KB 204, *Niphal* PERFECT) means driven away by force. It is found only here in the OT. In Aramaic it was used of divorce (BDB 176). Jonah knew this was a consequence of his sin and rebellion at rejecting God's commission. At this point he did not know the fish was a means of his deliverance (cf. Ps. 31:22)!
Jonah (or a sage) may have chosen this word because it can also mean the tossing of the sea (i.e., another sea word, e.g., Amos 8:8; Isa. 57:20).

▣

NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB	**"from Your sight"**
NKJV	**"of Your sight"**
TEV	**"from your presence"**
JPSOA, Peshitta	**"Out of your sight"**
LXX	**"from your eyes"**

The connotation of this phrase is "from your presence in the temple" (cf. parallel in the next line).

▣

NASB	**"Nevertheless"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"Yet"**
NRSV, NJB	**"how"**
TEV	**"and"**

The question is, "Does this line of poetry assert that Jonah believes he will see the temple again (NASB, NKJV) or that he will not (NRSV, TEV, NJB)?" Is the word an ADVERBIAL INTERROGATIVE, "how" (BDB 32) or an ADVERSATIVE, "surely" (BDB 36)? Does this line follow Jonah's sense of impending death (ADVERB) or Jonah's sense that God will deliver (ADVERSATIVE)? Because Jonah's plight is described in Jon. 2:3-6 and God's help is described in Jon. 2:7-9, it seems that Jon. 2:4, in context, should be translated "how" (ADVERB, BDB 32). However, there seems to be a note of hope in Jon. 2:6c, why not in Jon. 2:4b?

▣ **"Your holy temple"** The temple in Jerusalem housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Jews believed that God dwelt between the wings of the cherubim over the Ark (e.g., Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; Ps. 80:1; 99:1). This was the place where heaven and earth, the spiritual and physical met! Jonah believed he would worship God again in Jerusalem (cf. Jon. 2:9).

2:5

NASB	**"Water encompassed me to the point of death"**
NKJV	**"the water encompassed me *even* to my soul"**
NRSV, JPSOA	**"the waters closed in over me"**
TEV	**"the water came over me and choked me"**
NJB, REB	**"the waters round me rose to my neck"**
LXX	**"water poured over me as far as my life"**
Peshitta	**"The water engulfed me, even to my soul"**

The VERB (BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT) is often used in the Psalms for a life threatening time of intense suffering from which YHWH delivers (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:5; Ps. 18:4; 116:3).
The word translated "me," "my soul," "my neck" (BDB 723) is the term *nephesh*, which denotes "breath" or "life" (e.g., Gen. 2:7). Here and in Ps. 69:1; 105:18; and Isa. 5:14 it has the connotation of a throat (or neck) about to be choked with water (i.e., death of a person). See full note online at Lev. 17:11 and Gen. 35:18.

▣ **"Weeds"** This word (BDB 693, KB 747) can mean salt water, seaweeds, or fresh water reeds. Here it is obviously salt water (KB 747). The sense here is that Jonah is being drowned, choked by water and seaweeds. He is descending into the realm of the dead.

2:6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains" The OT uses the physical direction "down" to describe *Sheol* (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15; Isa. 5:14; 14:19). The term *Sheol* and "pit" (BDB 1001) are parallel (cf. Ps. 30:3). It is this metaphorical expression of Jonah's sense of approaching the underworld that makes his experience the object of Jesus' comment (cf. Matt. 12:40-41; Luke 11:30). Jonah believed he was going to die, but God had mercy on him! God's judgment was not His last word. There was purpose in the punishment.

▣

NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB	**"the roots of the mountains"**
NKJV	**"the moorings of the mountains"**
JPSOA	**"the base of the mountains"**
LXX	**"the crevice of the mountains"**
Peshitta	**"to the bottom of the mountains"**

The term (BDB 891) normally means to "cut off" or "shape," but it cannot mean that in this context. In *Ecclesiasticus* 16:19 (written about 180 B.C.) it means "the foundations of the world." The BDB offers "extremity" as a translation. Possibly the ancient Jews believed the gate to *Sheol* was at the bottom of the sea, even below the mountains. Jonah was expecting death and entrance into *Sheol*, the pit. This term is meant to be a poetic parallel to "bars" and "the pit."

▣ **"The earth with its bars"** The term "bars" (BDB 138) usually refers to gate bars. This is a metaphor for *Sheol* as a prison holding the dead, which once entered, could not be exited (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:23; Job 7:9-10; 10:21).

▣ **"You have brought up my life"** This VERB (BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*) is exactly opposite of "descended" (or "to bring down").

2:7

NASB	**"I was fainting away"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"my soul fainted within me"**
NRSV, JPSOA	**"my life was ebbing away"**
TEV	**"I felt my life slipping away"**
NJB	**"my soul was growing ever weaker"**
REB	**"as my senses failed"**
LXX	**"as my life was failing me"**

The VERB (BDB 742, KB 814, Owen's *Analytical Key* identifies it as a *Hithpael* PERFECT, but *OT Parsing Guide* identifies it as a *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT; and the NIV Interlinear by Kohlenberger also identifies it as an INFINITIVE).
The term itself means to grow weak or faint, here in the sense of death (e.g., Isa. 57:16).

▣ **"I remembered the LORD"** In the OT, humans are reminded again and again to remember (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT) the Lord and His goodness (e.g., Deut. 8:11-20; Ps. 77:11-12). God, on the other hand, is called on to forget mankind's sin and rebellion (notice all the metaphors for forgetfulness, cf. Ps. 103:3,11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). See notes at Hosea 7:2 and 8:13.

2:8 This verse seems out of context. It may be an allusion to Ps. 31:6. It may be a reference to Nineveh's idolatry. Jonah may be trying to explain why he did not want to preach to the Assyrian capital.

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"idols"**
NKJV, TEV	**"worthless idols"**
NJB, REB	**"false gods"**
JPSOA	**"empty folly"**
LXX	**"false things"**
Peshitta	**"false idols"**

There are two terms in this phrase with closely related meanings, which intensify the thought.
1. "vain" (BDB 996) means that which is "empty," "nothing," or "vanity" (e.g., Ps. 31:6; Jer. 18:15)
2. "idols" (BDB 210) means "vapor," "breath," which is a metaphor for "vanity" (e.g., Deut. 32:21; 1 Kgs. 16:13,26; Ps. 31:6; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 8:19; 10:8,14-15; 14:22; 51:17-18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EMPTY, VAIN, FALSE, NOTHINGNESS

▣

NASB	**"Forsake their faithfulness"**
NKJV	**"forsake their own Mercy"**
NRSV	**"forsake their true loyalty"**
TEV	**"abandoned their loyalty to you"**
NJB	**"abandon their faithful love"**
REB	**"may abandon their loyalty"**
JPSOA	**"forsake their own welfare"**
LXX	**"have forsaken their mercy"**
Peshitta	**"forsake your mercy"**

The VERB (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means "leave" (e.g., Gen. 2:24), "forsake" (e.g., Deut. 28:20; 31:16; Jdg. 10:10; Isa. 55:7; Jer. 1:16), "lose."
The contextual question is, "Does this phrase refer to
1. lovingkindness humans receive from their God (i.e., context of the book, cf. Jon. 4:2; see SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVING(KINDNESS).
2. the faithfulness humans should show to their God (i.e., the immediate context, cf. Jon. 2:7,9; see SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OT).

2:9 "I will sacrifice to You,
With the voice of thanksgiving" This implies that Jonah's sacrifice may be verbal, not animal. See note as Hosea 14:3.
This VERB (BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) and "I will pay" (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* COHORTATIVE), are both strong promises of what Jonah will do when he gets back to the temple in Jerusalem (BDB 623, i.e., offer a thank offering), what the sailors had done to YHWH in Jon. 1:16.

▣ **"Salvation is from the LORD"** The Hebrew term "salvation" (BDB 447) means deliverance.
1. Jonah wanted out of the fish!
2. YHWH wanted the Ninevites to know Him (NT sense)

Jonah knew the right theology, he mouthed the right words, but he refused to act on them!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JONAH 2:10
10Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

2:10 "the LORD commanded the fish" In Jonah YHWH commands and uses
1. a wind and storm
2. a great fish
3. a plant
4. a worm
5. a desert wind

These are used to show God's
1. sovereignty
2. love for Gentiles
3. His anger against Jewish exclusivism

▣ **"vomited"** This is a very strong negative term in Hebrew (BDB 883, KB 1096, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*, cf. Isa. 19:14; 28:8). This may have been YHWH's reaction to the flowery prayer of Jonah!

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