

Texts for Scriptural Reasoning

Jonah

The Scriptural Reasoning Society

Introduction to Jonah

This is one of the latest books of the canon. as shown by its language and by the way it refers to Ninevah. The whole book is thought to be midrash. it appears to refer to Jonah, the son of Amittai of Gath-hepher who according to II Kings xiv. 25, predicted in God's name the extent to which Jeroboam II would restore the boundaries of the Northern Kingdom,

The book is read in the afternoon service on Yom Kippur as the Haftarah.

Jonah 1:1-3

אֲנִי הֵי דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יוֹנָה בֶן־אֲמִתַּי לֵאמֹר:¹ בִּקּוּם לֵךְ אֶל־נִינְוָה² הָעִיר
הַגְּדוֹלָה וְקִרְא עָלֶיהָ כִּי־עָלְתָה רָעָתָם לִפְנֵי: גּוֹיִקָם יוֹנָה לְבָרַח תִּרְשִׁישָׁה
מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֲנִיָּה | בָּאָה תִרְשִׁישׁ וַיֵּתֶן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ לָבוֹא
עִמָּהֶם תִּרְשִׁישָׁה מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה:

The word of the Eternal came to Jonah, son of Amittai: Go at once to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim judgement upon it, for their wickedness has come before Me. Jonah started out however to flee to Tarshish from the service of the Eternal. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to sail with the others to Tarshish, away from the service of the Eternal.

The phrase in verse 3 “he paid the fare” could also be “he paid its hire” (Yalkut³ 1.c) meaning he hired the whole boat as he was in such a hurry to leave.

Jonah appears to think God's power ends at the borders of Israel, but he shown the opposite. This is probably a reminder to the people who lived among groups with specific Gods for them alone, that the one, invisible God they worshipped was not just a tribal God..

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer⁴, Chapter 10⁵

The fifth day of the week was also the day on which Jonah fled from God's presence. And why did he flee? Because the first time, He (God) sent him to

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1. This is a common opening for a prophetic narrative.
 2. Capital of Assyria, conqueror of Samaria in 722 BCE; destroyed 612.
 3. A collection of *aggadic* works on Tanach using material from the ancient and geonic epochs, but also from aggadic literature as late as the 12th century.
 4. Aggadic-midrashic work with some sections dating from as late as 8th century CE, though much of it is earlier.
 5. This translation was done by Dr. Rachel Adelman for her paper “Jonah through the Looking Glass: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer's Portrait of an Apocalyptic Prophet” for the WCJS Conference August 2009 and is based on the En866 manuscript, supplemented with reference to the printed editions and six alternative manuscripts. In the printed editions and most manuscripts, the chapter is the tenth, while in Ca2858 (Higger's), P, and W it is the ninth. For a critical Hebrew edition, see her book, *The Return of the Repressed*, Appendix I, 299-302. The midrash is copied, almost verbatim, in *Tanh?uma Vayikra* 8. In fact, the Mantova version cites PRE in the margins. It also appears as part of *Midrash Yonah* (in Jellinek's *Beit Midrash* 1939 1:96-105), and *Yalkut Shimoni* on Jonah.

restore the borders of Israel and his words were fulfilled, as it says: “It was he (Jeroboam) who restored the territory of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the promise that the Lord, the God of Israel, had made through His servant the prophet Jonah son of Amitai from Gath-hepher” (2 Kgs 14:25).

The second time, the Holy One Blessed be He sent him to Jerusalem to destroy it, {but because they repented}⁶ God took pity on them, and changed His mind about the decree of doom and did not destroy it. And the Israelites called Jonah a false prophet.

The third time, he was sent to Nineveh to destroy it. Jonah deliberated to himself, “I know that these gentiles are close to repenting. Now when they repent, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be filled with mercy towards them and transfer His fury [onto the enemies of Israel] {onto Israel}.⁷ Is it not enough that the Israelites call me a false prophet, must the nations of the earth call me a false prophet as well?

Rabbi Alex J. Goldman “The primary theme is the universality of God who loves all and rules over all people, forgiving anyone who repents and acknowledges his wrongdoing.”

Jonah 2: 1-3

אִיִּמֹן יְהוָה דָּג גָּדוֹל לִבְלֹעַ אֶת־יוֹנָה וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמַעְי הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים
וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלֹת: בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶל־יְהוָה אֶלְהֵיוּ מִמַּעַי הַדָּגָה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר קָרָאתִי
מִצָּרָה לִי אֶל־יְהוָה וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִבֶּטֶן שָׂאוֹל שְׁמַעְתִּי קוֹלִי:

Then the Eternal ordered that a huge fish swallow Jonah; and Jonah remained in the fish's belly three days and three nights. And Jonah prayed to his Eternal God from the bowels of the fish saying: In My distress I called to the Eternal, who answered me, in the belly of Sheol I cried out, and you heard my voice.

Pirge de-Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 10 cont...⁸

R. Tarfon said: the fish had been appointed to swallow Jonah since the Six Days of Creation {as it says: “And God appointed a huge fish to swallow Jonah” (Jonah 2:1)}. He entered its mouth like a man entering a great synagogue, and stood. The eyes of the fish were like shuttered windows

⁶. Added from the Ci75 and the printed editions.

⁷. The manuscript, En866, uses couched language (*lashon sagin nahor*) – “transfer His fury onto the enemies of Israel.” The literal meaning is that Israel will ‘take the brunt’ of God’s wrath when the gentiles repent. This is reflected in the printed editions and many of the manuscripts which simply read: “transfer His fury onto Israel.”⁸. This translation is based on the En866 manuscript, supplemented with reference to the printed editions and six alternative manuscripts. See footnote 7.

[אפמיות]⁹ which shone, and he could see all that was in the sea and the underworld.

R. Meir said: there was a pearl which hung from within the belly of the fish that lit up all that was in the seas and in the underworld, and of this it says, “Light is sown for the Righteous” (Ps 97: 11).¹⁰

The fish said to Jonah, “Don’t you know that my day has come to be swallowed by the jaws [lit. mouth] of the Leviathan?” Jonah said, “Take me to him and I shall save you, as well as myself, from his jaws.”

Other cultures have a similar tale. Greek myth of Heracles being swallowed by a whale near the port of Joppa and living in its belly for three days.

Some commentators (for example, Ibn Ezra, Abarbanel and Malbim) conclude that Jonah must have repented, since God ordered the fish to spew Jonah out, and Jonah subsequently went to Nineveh.

Jonah 4:1-4

א וַיֵּרַע אֶל־יוֹנָה רָעָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּחַר לוֹ: ב וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנָּה יְהוָה הֲלוֹא־אֵנִי דֹבְרִי עַד־הַיּוֹתֵל עַל־אֲדָמָתִי עַל־כֵּן קִדַּמְתִּי לְבָרֶךְ תִּרְשִׁישָׁה כִּי יִדְעֵתִי כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים וְרַחוּם אַרְךָ אַפִּים וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְנָחָם עַל־הָרָעָה:¹¹ ג וַעֲתָה יְהוָה קִח־נָא אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִמֶּנִּי כִּי טוֹב מוֹתִי מֵחַיִּי: ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הֲהִיטָב חָרָה לָךְ: ה וַיֵּצֵא יוֹנָה מִן־הָעִיר וַיֵּשֶׁב מִקְדָּם לָעִיר וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ שָׂם סֹכָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחְתֶּיהָ בַּצֹּל עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵרָאֶה מֶה־יִּהְיֶה בָּעִיר:

This [God’s renouncing of the punishment, as the people of Ninevah repented] displeased Jonah greatly and he was incensed. He prayed to the Eternal saying: Eternal One! Isn’t this just what I said when I was still in my own country? This is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, endlessly patient and, abounding in love, renouncing punishment.

Jonah skips *truth* in his rendering of the attributes of God. Does he not think God is truthful? This may be a sign of despair as Jonah seems to have known all along that God would not punish the people of Ninevah. This points out the paradoxical nature of prophecy.

From Jewish Encyclopedia article by Emil Hirsch and Karl Budde

This short story, as Wellhausen has best expressed it, is directed "against the impatience of

⁹ For a discussion of this translation see Adelman *ibid.*, 240, n. 77.

¹⁰ Following this paragraph, in the En866 and Lehman manuscripts, there is an addition which is found in *Teshuvat Yonah ha-Navi* and the *Yalkut*, but it is clearly not integral to the original midrash. Tamar Kedari cogently argued that *Midrash Teshuvat Yonah ha-Navi* (composed between the 9th and 10th century) shares no overlap with our text, though that one section (8b) has slipped into a few manuscripts probably by way of the *Yalkut Shimoni* (T. Kedari, “*Midrash Teshut Yonah Ha-Navi*,” *Kovetz ‘al Yad* 16 (2002), 67-84 (Heb.).

¹¹ This is almost a repetition of the 13 attributes of God as found in Exodus 34 except it is missing *emet*—truth.

the Jewish believers, who are fretting because, notwithstanding all predictions, the antitheocratic world-empire has not yet been destroyed;—because Yhwh is still postponing His judgment of the heathen, giving them further time for repentance. Yhwh, it is hinted, is hoping that they will turn from their sins in the eleventh hour; and He has compassion for the innocent ones, who would perish with the guilty." In agreement with this synopsis of the purpose, the book is closely akin to and emphasizes the basic passage, II Kings xiv. 26 *et seq.*, which also shows, and as it were explains, how it is possible that Yhwh can grant a prophecy of good things to come to the disloyal Northern Kingdom and to a king who, according to verse 24, persists in all the sins of all his predecessors, and can then fulfil what He has promised. This purpose harmonizes perfectly with the idealized description of the piety of the heathenmariners (ch. i.) and of the king and the inhabitants of Nineveh (ch. iii.). The book is therefore in a way the negative pole to the positive pole in the Book of Ruth. The first shows why Yhwh does not destroy the heathen; the second, why and how He can even accept them among His people and bring them to high honor. Both these tendencies became apparent in Israel after the puristic reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, which rigorously drew a sharp line between Israel and the pagan world. The opposition to this dominating doctrine was clothed in the unassuming but all the more effective garb of poetry and of story, as has happened time and again in similar cases. Cheyne rightly points to the parable of the good Samaritan in the New Testament and to the story of the three rings in Lessing's "Nathan der Weise."

Read more:

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=389&letter=J&search=jonah#ixzz11UEF0XOh>

Matthew 12:38-42^a

38 Τότε ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ τινες τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων λέγοντες Διδάσκαλε θέλομεν ἀπὸ σοῦ σημεῖον ἰδεῖν 39 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ τοῦ προφήτου 40 ὥσπερ γὰρ ἦν Ἰωνᾶς ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τοῦ κήτους τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας οὕτως ἔσται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας 41 ἄνδρες Νινευῖται ἀναστήσονται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωνᾶ ὧδε 42 βασίλισσα νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτήν ὅτι ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομῶνος καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομῶνος ὧδε

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. 41 The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here! 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!

Luke 11:29-32^a

29 Τῶν δὲ ὄχλων ἐπαθροισομένων ἤρξατο λέγειν Ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη γενεὰ πονηρὰ ἐστίν· σημεῖον ζητεῖ καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ 30 καθὼς γὰρ ἐγένετο [ὁ] Ἰωνᾶς τοῖς Νινευίταις σημεῖον οὕτως ἔσται καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ 31 βασίλισσα νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτούς ὅτι ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομῶνος καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομῶνος ὧδε 32 ἄνδρες Νινευῖται ἀναστήσονται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν· ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωνᾶ ὧδε

29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. 31 The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! 32 The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

^a Texts selected by Maggie Hindley; New Revised Standard Version

The Ranks^a

وَإِنَّ يُوسُفَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ١٣٩

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ١٤٠

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ١٤١

فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ١٤٢

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ١٤٣

لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ١٤٤

فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ١٤٥

وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ ١٤٦

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ١٤٧

فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ ١٤٨

139. So also was Jonah among those sent (by Us).

140. When he ran away (like a slave from captivity) to the ship (fully) laden,

141. He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned:

142. Then the big Fish did swallow him, and he had done acts worthy of blame.

143. Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah,

144. He would certainly have remained inside the Fish till the Day of Resurrection.

145. But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness,

146. And We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the gourd kind.

147. And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more.

148. And they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while.

^a Quran 37; Yusuf Ali Translation

Commentary of Ibn Kathir

We have already discussed the story of Yunus, peace be upon him, in Surat Al-Anbiya' (21:87-88). In the Two Sahihs it is reported that the Messenger of Allah said:

«مَا يَنْبَغِي لِعَبْدٍ أَنْ يَقُولَ: أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْ يُونُسَ بْنِ مَتَّى»

(It is not right for any person to say I am better than Yunus bin Matta.)

[إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ]

(When he ran to the laden ship.) Ibn `Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "It was filled with cargo.

[فَسَاهَمَ]

(Then he (agreed to) cast lots,) means, to draw lots."

[فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ]

(and he was among the losers.) means among those who have been overcome. This was because the ship was being pounded by the waves on all sides, and they were at risk of drowning, so they drew lots, and whoever lost would be thrown overboard so as to lighten the load. The Prophet of Allah Yunus, peace be upon him, lost the draw three times, but they did not want to throw him overboard. He took off his garment so that he could throw himself into the sea, and they tried to stop him. Then Allah commanded a large fish from the Green Sea (i.e., Mediterranean Sea) to cleave the oceans and come and swallow Yunus, peace be upon him, without cutting his flesh or breaking his bones. The fish came and Yunus, peace be upon him, threw himself overboard, and the fish swallowed him and took him away, travelling through all the seas with him. When Yunus had stayed for some time in the fish's belly, he thought that he had died; then he moved his head and legs and arms, and saw that he was alive. He prayed in the belly of the fish, and one of the things he said in his main prayer was: "O Lord, I have taken as a place of worship to You a place which no other person has reached." They differed as to how long he spent in the belly of the fish. Some said three days; this was the view of Qatadah. Some said seven days; this was the view of Ja`far As-Sadiq, may Allah be pleased with him. Some said forty days; this was the view of Abu Malik. Mujahid said, narrating from Ash-Sha`bi, "It swallowed him in the morning and cast him forth in the evening." And Allah knows best how long exactly was. Allah says,

[فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ - لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ]

(Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, He would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection.) It was said that, if he had not already done righteous deeds during his time of ease. This was the view of Ad-Dahhak bin Qays, Abu Al-`Aliyah, Wahb bin Munabbih, Qatadah and others, and it was the view favoured by Ibn Jarir. This is what is indicated in the authentic Hadith which we quote below, if Allah wills. In a Hadith narrated from Ibn `Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, he said:

«تَعَرَّفْ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي الرَّخَاءِ، يَعْرِفَكَ فِي الشَّدَّةِ»

(Remember Allah during times of ease and He will remember you during times of difficulty.) And it was said that what was meant by the Ayah:

[فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ]

(Had he not been of them who glorify Allah,) was the meaning of the following Ayat:

[فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَن لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ]

[فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ]

(But he cried through the darkness (saying): "La ilaha illa Anta, You are glorified! Truly, I have been of the wrongdoers." So We answered his call, and delivered him from the distress. And thus We do deliver the believers.) (21:87-88). This was the view of Sa'id bin Jubayr and others. Ibn Abi Hatim recorded that Anas bin Malik, may Allah be pleased with him -- and I do not know of anything narrated from Anas that he did not attribute to the Messenger of Allah :

«إِنَّ يُونُسَ النَّبِيَّ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ حِينَ بَدَأَ لَهُ أَنْ يَدْعُوَ بِهَذِهِ الْكَلِمَاتِ وَهُوَ فِي بَطْنِ الْحُوتِ فَقَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ، فَأَقْبَلَتِ الدَّعْوَةُ تَحْفُ بِالْعَرْشِ، قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ: يَا رَبِّ هَذَا صَوْتُ ضَعِيفٍ مَعْرُوفٍ مِنْ بِلَادٍ بَعِيدَةٍ غَرِيبَةٍ فَقَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: أَمَا تَعْرِفُونَ ذَلِكَ؟ قَالُوا: يَا رَبِّ وَمَنْ هُوَ؟ قَالَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: عَبْدِي يُونُسُ، قَالُوا: عَبْدُكَ يُونُسُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَزَلْ يُرْفَعُ لَهُ عَمَلٌ مُتَقَبَّلٌ وَدَعْوَةٌ مُسْتَجَابَةٌ؟ قَالُوا: يَا رَبِّ أَوَلَا تَرْحَمُ مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِي الرَّخَاءِ فَتُنَجِّيهِ فِي الْبَلَاءِ، قَالَ: بَلَى، فَأَمَرَ الْحُوتَ فَطَرَحَهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ»

(When it occurred to the Prophet Yunus, upon him be peace, to call upon Allah in these words when he was in the belly of the great fish, he said, "La ilaha illa Anta, You are glorified! Truly, I have been of the wrongdoers." This call went and hovered around the (mighty) Throne, and the angels said, "O Lord, this is the voice of one who is weak but known, in a faraway strange land. Allah, may He be exalted, said, "How do you know this" They said, "O Lord, who is he" Allah, may He be exalted, said, "My servant Yunus." They said, "Your servant Yunus, from whom there kept coming acceptable deeds and supplications which were answered!" They said, "O Lord, will You not have mercy on him for what he did during his time of ease, and save him from this trial and tribulation" He said, "Of course." So, He commanded the great fish, and it cast him forth on the naked shore.) Allah says:

[فَنَبَذْنَاهُ]

(But We cast him forth) meaning, 'We threw him out,'

[بِالْعَرَاءِ]

(on the naked shore) Ibn `Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, and others said that this refers to land in which there is no vegetation and no buildings.

[وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ]

(while he was sick,) means, when he was weak of body.

[وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ]

(And We caused a plant of gourd to grow over him.) Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, Sa'id bin Jubayr, Wahb bin Munabbih, Hilal bin Yasaf, 'Abdullah bin Tawus, As-Suddi, Qatadah, Ad-Dahhak, 'Ata' Al-Khurasani and several others, all said that gourd means squash. Some of them mentioned that the squash has a number of benefits: it grows quickly, its leaves offer shade because of their large size and smooth texture, flies do not come near it, and its fruits provide good nourishment; they may be eaten raw or cooked, and both the pulp and the peel may be eaten. It was reported that the Messenger of Allah used to like squash and would look for it wherever it was on the serving dish.

[وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ]

(And We sent him to a hundred thousand (people) or even more.) It is as if he was commanded, after he came forth from the fish, to go back to those to whom he had been sent in the first place, and they all believed in him.

[أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ]

(or even more.) Makhul said, "They numbered one hundred and ten thousand. This was reported by Ibn Abi Hatim. Ibn Jarir said, "Some of the scholars of Arabic, the people of Basrah, said that this means up to one hundred thousand or more." Ibn Jarir interpreted this Ayah as he interpreted the Ayat:

[ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً]

(Then, after that, your hearts were hardened and became as stones or even worse in hardness) (2:74).

[إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً]

(Behold! a section of them fear men as they fear Allah or even more) (4:77), and

[فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى]

(And was at a distance of two bows' length or (even) nearer) (53:9). The meaning is, not less than that, but rather more.

[فَآمَنُوا]

(And they believed;) means, these people to whom Yunus, peace be upon him, had been sent all believed.

[فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ]

(so We gave them enjoyment for a while.) means, until the time of their appointed end. This is like the Ayah,

[فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ ءَامَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا ءَامَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ]

(Was there any town (community) that believed, and its faith (at that moment) saved it -- except the people of Yunus; when they believed, We removed from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the (present) world, and permitted them to enjoy for a while.) (10:98)