

Chapter 4:

¹ But it was evil to Jonah—a great evil¹—and it burned for him.² ² And he prayed to YHWH, and said, “O YHWH, was this not my word while I was in my land? Therefore I forestalled³ by fleeing toward Tarshish for I knew that you are a God *who is*⁴ gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. ³ And now, YHWH, please take my soul from me because my death is better than my life.” ⁴ And YHWH said, “Do you rightly burn with anger?”⁵

⁵ And Jonah went out from the city and sat east of the city, and he made for himself there a hut, and he sat under it in the shade, until he might see what would happen in the city. ⁶ And YHWH God⁶ appointed a little plant and made it come up over Jonah in order to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his evil.⁷ ⁷ And Jonah rejoiced over the little plant a great rejoicing. And God appointed a worm at the coming of dawn, the next day, and it smote the little plant and it withered.

⁸ And it came to pass, at the rising of the sun, *that* God appointed a hot east wind. And the sun smote *down* upon Jonah’s head so that he swooned away. And he asked with *all his* soul to die. And he said, “My death is better than my life.” ⁹ And God said to Jonah, “Do you rightly burn with anger over the little plant?” And he said, “I do rightly burn with anger, even unto death.”

¹⁰ And YHWH said, “You *yourself* pity the little plant, on which you did not labor, neither did you cause it to grow, which came into being *in* a night and perished *in* a night. ¹¹ And I, should I not pity Ninevah, the great city in which is more than 120,000 people who do not know *their* right hand from *their* left hand, and much livestock?”

Notes:

¹ Or, *it displeased Jonah exceedingly*.

² Or, *he burned with anger* (so with vv. 4, 9).

³ Definition: Attempting to prevent or hinder an outcome by acting in advance.

⁴ Words in italics have been supplied by the translator for readability in English (like the NASB).

⁵ Literally, *Does it rightly burn for you?*—the subject (“it”; v. 1), YHWH’s relenting from disaster, is the same.

⁶ *YHWH Elohim* (ESV: “The LORD God”).

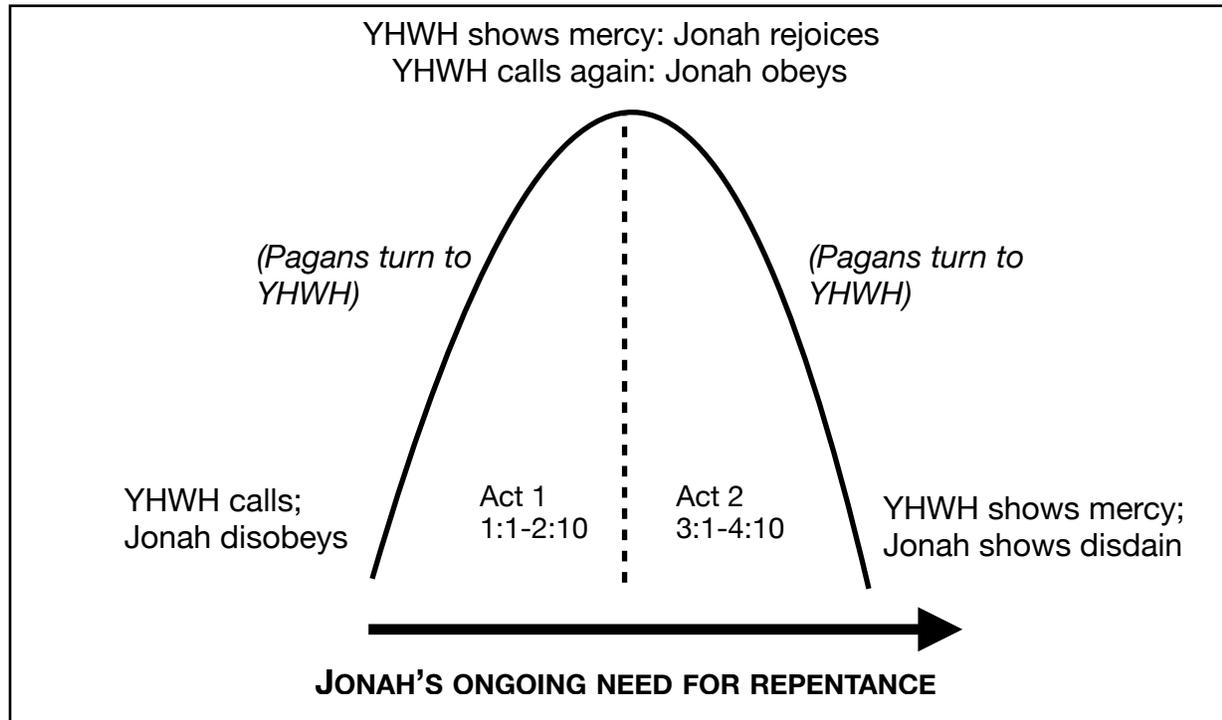
⁷ Or, *his distress*; that is, the discomfort caused him by the sun.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

OCCURENCES OF THE KEYWORD (*RA'AH*) “EVIL” / “DISASTER” / “DISTRESS”⁸

Jonah 1:2	YHWH confronts Jonah with the <i>evil</i> of the city Ninevah.
Jonah 1:7	The sailors decide to cast lots to find the source of the <i>disaster</i> they experience.
Jonah 1:8	The sailors confront Jonah seeking out why <i>disaster</i> has come upon them.
Jonah 3:8	The Ninevite king calls for the inhabitants of the city to turn from <i>evil</i> .
Jonah 3:10	God sees the city turn from <i>evil</i> and he relents from the <i>disaster</i> he was sending.
Jonah 4:1	God’s merciful response to Ninevah was <i>evil</i> to Jonah—a great <i>evil</i> (or “Jonah was distressed exceedingly”).
Jonah 4:2	Jonah’s anger arises from the fact that God relents from <i>disaster</i> .
Jonah 4:6	YHWH appoints a plant to save Jonah from his <i>evil</i> / <i>distress</i> (double meaning: “badness” and/or “discomfort”).

⁸ This chart comes from Dr. W. Brian Aucker, “Occurences of *Ra’ah* in Jonah” (lecture notes: Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 1/10/20). Only minor adaptations have been made for the sake of its cohering with my translation.



THE CENTRALITY OF REPENTANCE IN JONAH

- *Relatively speaking*, Jonah's rejoicing in YHWH's mercy and obeying YHWH's call (2:2-3:3) serve as the "high point" of Jonah's dealings with YHWH.
 - But, even at Jonah's "high point," he's fundamentally off-track, hence the ongoing **need for repentance**.
 - It is the "high point" of Jonah's apparent obedience and supposed love of YHWH's character (i.e. he delights in God being merciful, insofar as this is expressed toward him).
- But, in Act 2, we see that his eventual obedience and supposed love for YHWH's character is **partial**.
 - That is, we see that there is an ongoing **disconnection** between YHWH and Jonah.
 - Only at Jonah's "high point" does it SEEM to be moving in a somewhat good direction
 - (although we are rightly suspicious of his lack of repentance).
 - In Act 2, we realize that there is still **disconnection** between YHWH and Jonah that is deeper than just obedience or disobedience: Jonah **disdains** YHWH's character.
- **The Crucial Question: What will bridge the gap of disconnection?**
 - Jonah must follow the example of the sailors and the Ninevites: he must **repent**. He must cast himself upon the mercy and grace of his God.
 - YHWH has already shown himself to be gracious and merciful (scandalously so, and towards every other character in the story, including Jonah). Will Jonah swallow his burning anger, his pride? Will he return to his God, who stands inviting him with open arms?