

22.1b Jonah and the Gourd (Jonah 3; 4)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud, and they show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- (optional) CEF’s “Don’t You Care Jonah?” flashcard story
- A gourd plant (optional) or a picture of one (found at the end of this lesson). If possible, have two gourd vines—a withered one and a fresh one.
- A piece of burlap to show “sackcloth”

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *capital city*: the main city of a country, usually where the king lives and government work is conducted
- *enemy*: people or a country that hates and wants to hurt and/or take over another country
- *sackcloth*: rough fabric like burlap, that is irritating to skin and is usually used for lowly service like sacks to hold produce
- *to fast*: to go without food, sometimes because a person wants to pray to God for an urgent need
- *ashes*: the dust left after something has been burned
- *repent/relent*: to change one’s course of action and attitude about something

Scripture: (ESV)

Jonah 3:1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” 4 And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made

it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” 9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” 10 And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

Introduction/Review:

Israel had many enemies. The main enemy during Jonah’s lifetime was Assyria. It was the largest¹ and strongest nation in the world at that time. Violent Assyrian soldiers would torture their captives and carry them off to other cities. Oh, Assyria was a dreadful enemy.

We learned in our last lesson about how Jonah had to be persuaded to go preach to Nineveh. What did God use to get him to do God’s will? [A great fish/whale.] This is a subject for great faith, but if God said it, we can believe it. Jesus said He believed the story when He used Jonah as an illustration of His own death and resurrection: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). If we had no scientific evidence that a man could be swallowed by a whale, we would believe it happened because God said it did. However, there is scientific evidence that this is possible, and stories exist to tell about its actual happening.

Dr. Henry Morris, a scientist and president of Creation Research Institute, wrote, “[T]here are several species of whale and of sharks alive today with gullets large enough to swallow a man whole. Among extinct animals like the plesiosaurs, the same could be said, and perhaps this was a heretofore unknown fish of large size. The point is, the story is not impossible. . . . Clearly this event was miraculous and not a naturalistic phenomenon. Thus we don’t have to give it an explanation limited by modern experience or knowledge” (www.icr.org/articles/view/1124/303).

Story:

Jonah’s message

Now that Jonah was delivered out of the great fish, the word of the Lord came to him a second time: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” Would Jonah obey God? Yes, he would, but reluctantly. He had plenty of time to think about God’s intention, for ✓he probably walked the 500 miles or so (like from Lamar to west Denver and back) from Israel to Nineveh. When he arrived, he wasted no time in proclaiming with a loud voice (five words in the Hebrew language), “In forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Imagine the sight Jonah made, shouting doom to this huge, prosperous city. “In forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown!” “In forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Over and over he repeated God’s message.

Nineveh’s repentance

And guess what! The people believed Jonah! The Bible says, “The people of Nineveh believed *God*.” They said, “We are not going to eat. We are concerned. We will wear sackcloth.” The most important people of the city fasted and dressed in sackcloth. The poorest people of the city fasted and dressed in sackcloth.

The king of Assyria heard about God’s message, got off his royal throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He made a royal proclamation and sent it throughout Nineveh saying, “Let neither man nor beast taste anything; do not let them eat or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil. Who can tell if God will relent and turn away from His fierce anger so that we may not perish?”

This king was serious! Even the animals had to fast in order to show God the people meant business. They

all, from least to greatest, believed God.

God's change of mind

When God saw the works of the people of Nineveh and that they turned from their evil ways, He, too, turned from His intention to destroy the city. Isn't that just like our wonderful God? He does destroy the wicked, but He also takes pity on those who fear Him. Those hundreds of thousands of people were spared!

Jonah's moodiness

But Jonah was not happy. Indeed, he was "exceedingly displeased" and "angry." ✓He wanted these people dead and out of the way so that they wouldn't come against Israel. He prayed to the Lord: "Ah, Lord. You did just what I said You would do. When I was still in my country, I knew You would save these people. That's why I ran away to Tarshish."

Then Jonah gave us some wonderful words to describe our great God. If you want to know about God, you would do well to memorize the words of Jonah 4:2. "You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm."

Although Jonah knew this fact about God, he was angry because God *had* shown mercy to Israel's *enemy*! Jonah was so upset, he prayed to God, "Please take my life from me; it is better for me to die than to live!"

God was kind to Jonah when he ✓quietly asked, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah didn't answer, but he went outside the city toward the east. He made himself a shelter and sat under it, getting a little bit of shade from the hot sun. He could sit here and wait to see what would become of the city. Maybe God would destroy it after all. Then Jonah would be pleased.

God's "provision"

Our gracious God prepared a vine like this [Teacher, show gourd plant or picture of it] with large leaves and made it come up over Jonah's shelter. Oh, that vine gave much better shade than just the shelter! It was so hot and he was so miserable that this shade for his head really helped him to feel a bit better. Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered; it dried up. No longer did the large leaves give shade. Jonah was miserable again. He was hot and disgruntled. God added to his misery by preparing a strong, hot, east wind. The sun beat on Jonah's head so much that he almost fainted. He wanted to die again. "It is better for me to die than to live," he whined. ✓"I am so angry that my gourd plant had to die!!"

Then the Lord spoke to Jonah: "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

He answered, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

God's pity

But the LORD said, "You felt bad and were angry that the plant for which you did not work, which you did not make to grow, and which came up in one night, died in one night. Shouldn't I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons² who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

The story of Jonah ends right there. We don't know what happened to Jonah afterwards. ✓He probably went back home to Israel. I hope his heart was changed—that he cared for the souls of all people, not just his own people and friends.

¹A great difference of opinion exists about the size of Nineveh. The Bible indicates a huge city. "Jonah (Jonah 3:3) describes it as an 'exceeding great city of three days' journey' round (i.e. 60 miles, at 20 miles per day) with 120,000 children "who knew not their right hand from their left" (Jonah 4:11), which would make a

population in all of 600,000 or even one million” (*Fausset’s Bible Dictionary*; [Ancient Nineveh - Background Bible Study \(Bible History Online\) - Bible History \(bible-history.com\)](#)).

Other sources, including the one that made the map found below, say the city was much smaller. “The size of ancient Nineveh can be clearly determined today because the city wall ruins still stand. Their combined length is about 7½ mi. (c. 12 km.) [making a square city only 3.5 square miles]. The area of 1,640 acres (663.7 hectares) presents on the map the appearance of an irregular and elongated triangle” ([How big was Nineveh at the time of Jonah? - BibleAsk](#)). This size is hardly large enough for 120,000 to say nothing of 1 million people.

Looking more closely at the biblical account, we see some commentaries on Jonah 3:3 read “three days’ journey *round*,” as in Fausset’s quote above, or three days’ journey “*in compass*,” as one of John Gill’s sources records ([Jonah 3:3 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)). The words, *round* and *in compass* indicate the perimeter of the city— three days’ journey of 20 miles per day or a total of 60 miles’ perimeter. This explanation seems to fit best with Jonah 3:3 and 4:11.

If Nineveh was square-shaped, which it wasn’t, it would have been 225 square miles, about the size of Chicago, Illinois, which is 227.10 square miles ([225 square miles | The Measure of Things](#)).

²Most Bible scholars believe these 120,000 persons to be children.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jonah said, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Nineveh was delivered from destruction by God. Paul said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).
- What about you? Do you care about the many people who do not know about Jesus? Would you be willing to leave your town and country when you grow up in order to tell other people, even your enemies, about the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save them from their sins? If God calls you to do that, I hope you will be willing to go right away and not try to hide from God or be angry with God.
- Who in this story willingly did God’s will? [The idol-worshiping sailors and the wicked people of Nineveh.] Who did not serve God willingly? [Jonah.] Did prophets in the Bible and do pastors today sometimes not trust God? [Yes.] Pray for your pastor.

Activities:

- Play dough: fish (whale); vine with large leaves; leaf from cookie cutter; worm from the Fun Factory[®] machine that comes with Play-Doh[®]
- Snack: tuna fish sandwiches
- Obedience Tag: “It” and students sing a Jonah song found in last week’s lesson or “Row Your Boat.” “It” unexpectedly says, “Obey God.” That is the signal for students to run to the “safe” circles, outlined by rope, string, or chalk on the floor. A person tagged before entering the circle is “It.”
- Tell about Nineveh’s city walls: Each wall was really five walls, and one was so wide that three or four chariots could ride side by side on top of it. It would have been a scary ride on top of that wall, though, for it was between 20 and 33 feet (some say 100 feet) high. That would compare to the height of a three- to seven-story building. In between those walls were two or three moats—canals of water (some information is taken from [Nineveh - Wikipedia](#)).
- Watch a 7:44-minute YouTube video of a young girl telling the story. Students should be aware of extra-biblical content (<https://www.facebook.com/todd.hernandez1/videos/1605448749869/>).
- Review questions: (Game: Print the 40-day calendar found below. Each student who answers a question correctly may cross out a week, or the last partial week, until all 40 days are crossed out.)

1. What was Jonah’s message to Nineveh? [“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”]
2. How did the people demonstrate they believed God? [Put on sackcloth and fasted.]
3. What did the king do? [Arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He issued a proclamation that all men and beasts could not eat or drink water. Also, they should be covered with sackcloth and turn from their evil ways.]
4. How do we know Nineveh’s repentance pleased God? [He relented and didn’t destroy Nineveh.]
5. How did Jonah feel about God’s change of plan? [Very angry; he even wished to die.]
6. What did Jonah pity more than he pitied the people of Nineveh? [The gourd plant.]

Memory Verse Verses:

- Psalm 139:1–18, 23, 24 (NKJV)

(A very nice song book with black-and-white visuals [I water colored mine] and a CD is available as a learning tool at [Psalm 139 - NKJV \(thywordcreations.com\)](http://thywordcreations.com). Learning this psalm may take six months or more. Some teachers think saying/singing the whole psalm every week is a good way to learn it. However, this Psalm 139 song book breaks the passage after verse 13; therefore, a suggestion is to work on verses 1–13 for thirteen weeks and then the rest of the psalm for an additional eight weeks or more. Take one or two lessons to say/sing the whole psalm.)

¹O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.

²You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

³You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

⁵You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶*Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot *attain* it.

⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

⁹*If* I take the wings of the morning, *And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹If I say, “Surely the darkness shall fall on me,” Even the night shall be light about me;

¹²Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.

¹³For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.

¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸*If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. . . .

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

²⁴And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

- Alternative verse: You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm (Jonah 4:2).

Handwork:

- Color the picture found at the end of this lesson. Put green flocking or sand, if available, on the leaves by putting glue on the leaves and shaking the flocking/sand over the picture.

capital city

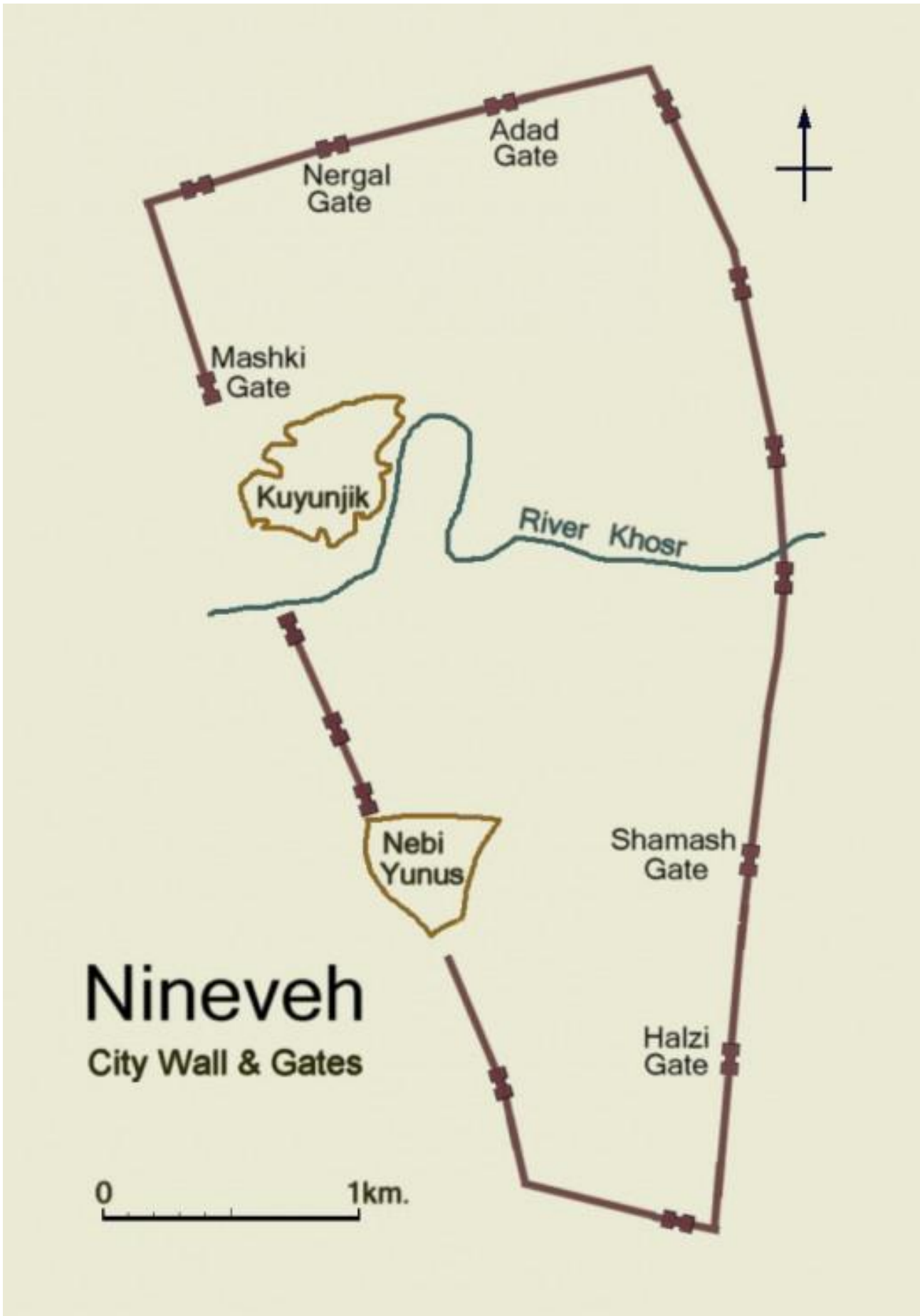
enemy

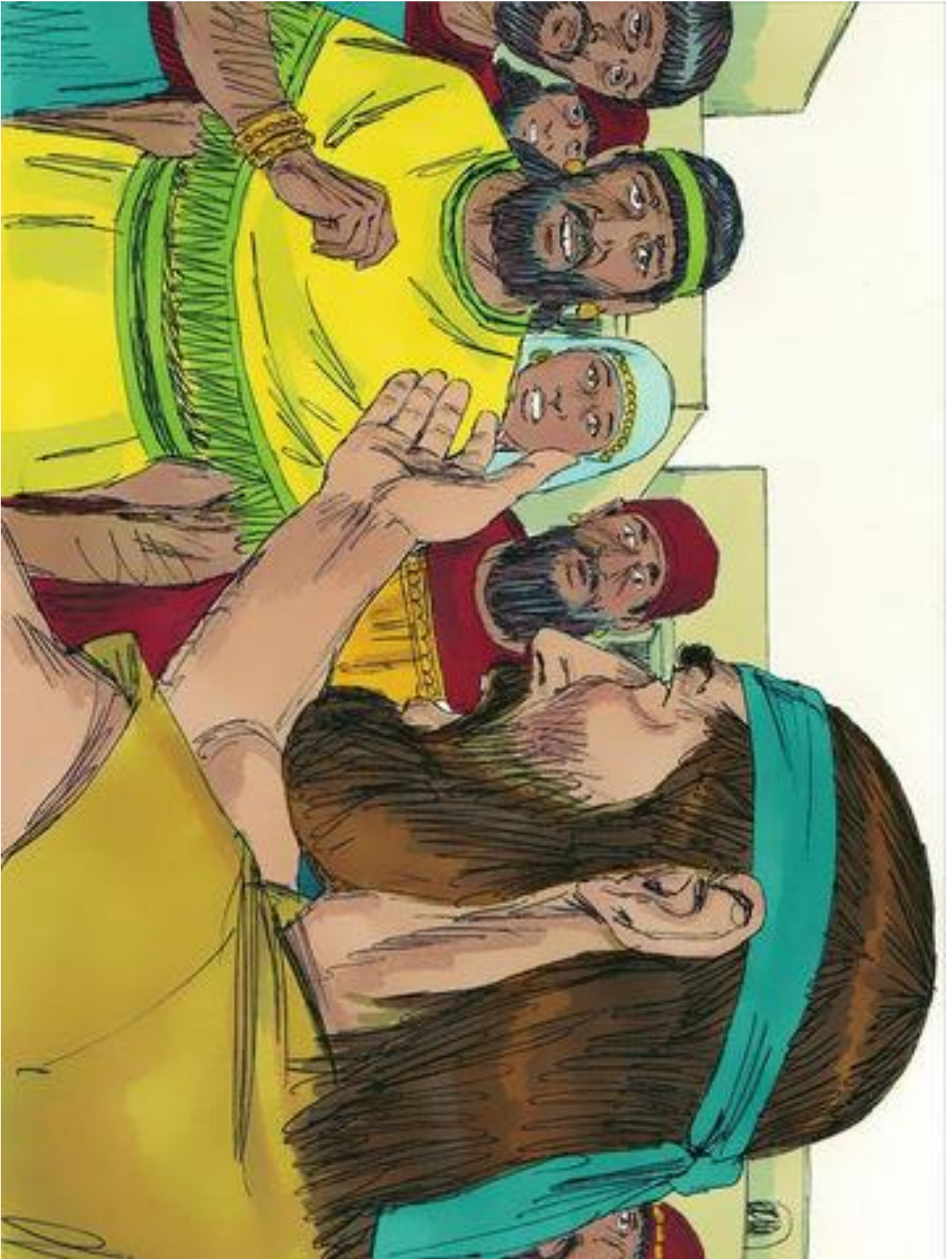
sackcloth

fasting

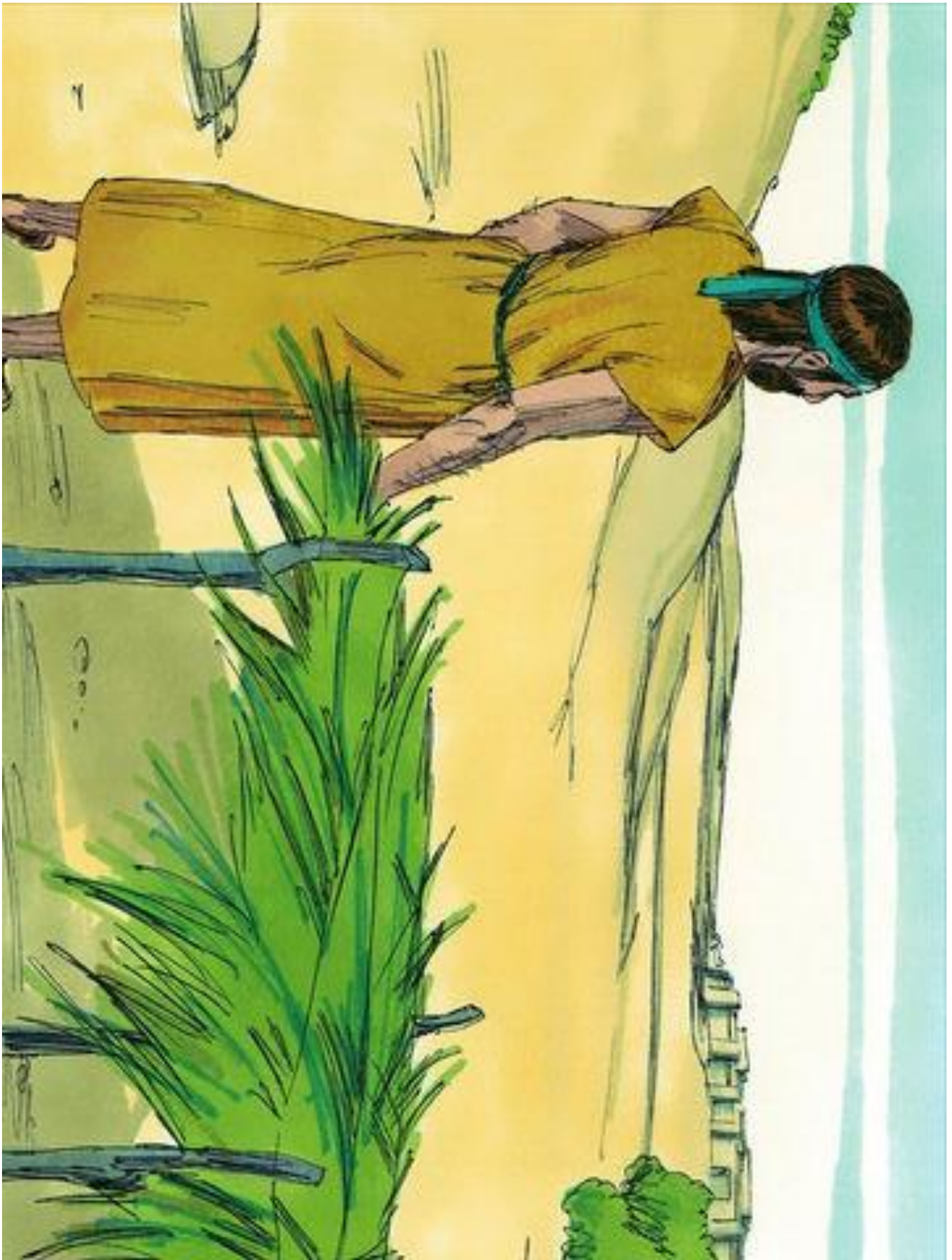
ashes

repent/relent





[FreeBibleimages :: God sends Jonah to Nineveh :: Jonah runs away and is rescued before he is willing to take God's message to Nineveh \(Jonah\)](#)



[FreeBibleimages](#) :: God sends Jonah to Nineveh :: Jonah runs away and is rescued before he is willing to take God's message to Nineveh (Jonah)



http://guideimg.alibaba.com/images/shop/80/10/09/0/free-shipping-the-original-flowers-seeds-vine-gourd-seed_2186200.jpg



[FreeBibleimages](#) :: God sends Jonah to Nineveh :: Jonah runs away and is rescued before he is willing to take God's message to Nineveh (Jonah)



[FreeBibleimages :: God sends Jonah to Nineveh :: Jonah runs away and is rescued before he is willing to take God's message to Nineveh \(Jonah\)](#)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
15	16	17	18	19	20	21

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	32	33	34	35

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
36	37	38	39	40

