



JONAH

LIFE AS A RUNAWAY

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Jonah 1

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Three Questions:

1. Is this story real?
2. Why did Jonah run away?
3. What's all this got to do with me?




The First Question

Let's begin with verse 1: "The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.' But Jonah ran away from the Lord..."



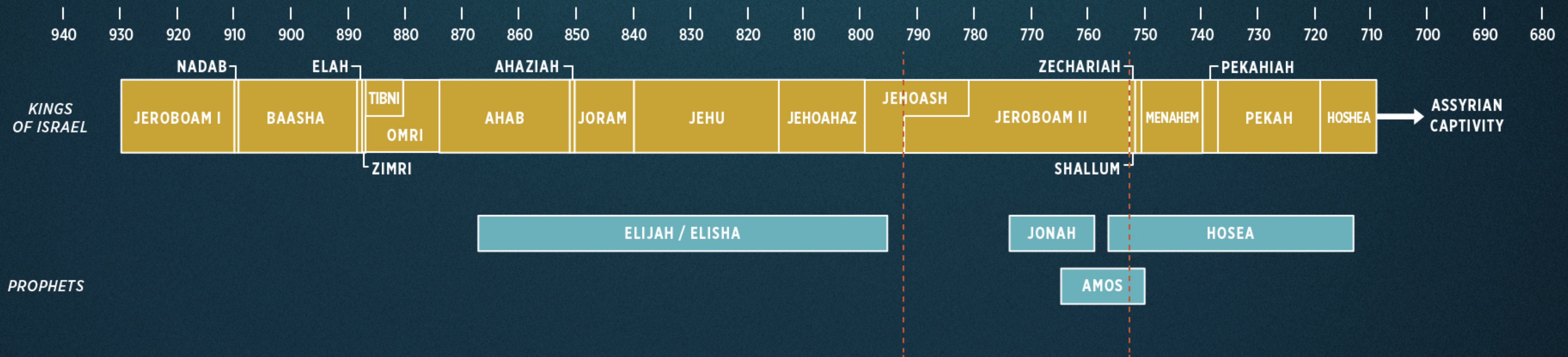
2 Kings 14




“In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit.”

2 Kings 14:23-24

THE KINGS AND PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH






“He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.”

2 Kings 14:25





“All evidence suggests that Israel enjoyed a booming economy under Jeroboam II, fueled largely by good harvests, full storehouses and well-oiled administrative machinery—precisely the conditions that also bred complacency and, eventually, exploitation of the poorest strata of society. The cries of injustice that echoed in the streets and marketplaces of Israel were ignored by the elitist upper crust, which was otherwise preoccupied with maintaining its own interests.”

[Wright, P. H. (2012). Rose Then and Now (pp. 87–88)].




First, verse 25 shows that Jonah was a historical figure.

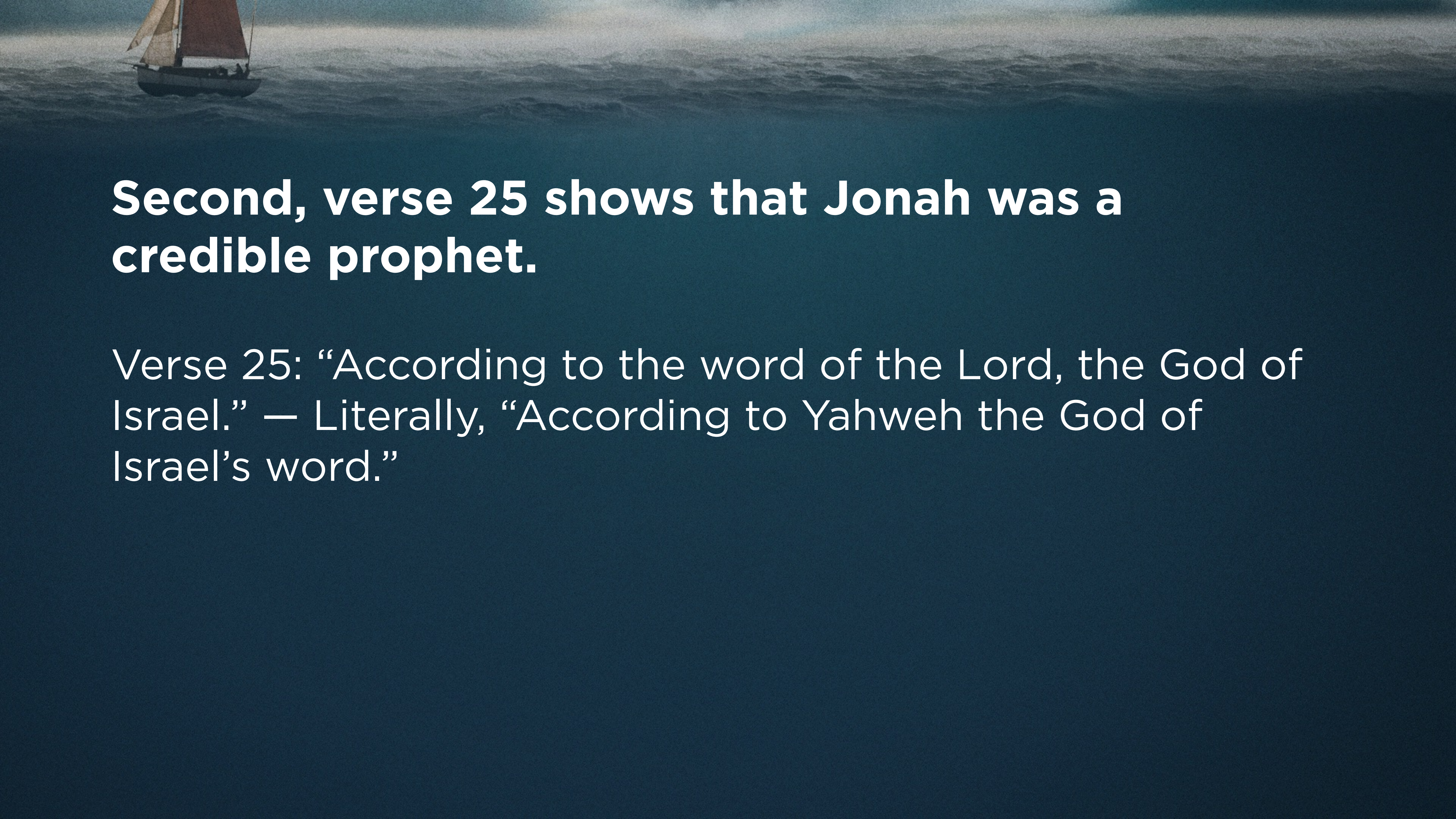


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Nowhere in the Old Testament do we encounter two different people who possess the same forename and father's name—both of whom hold the prophetic office, move in the same social circles and live in the same period of history!

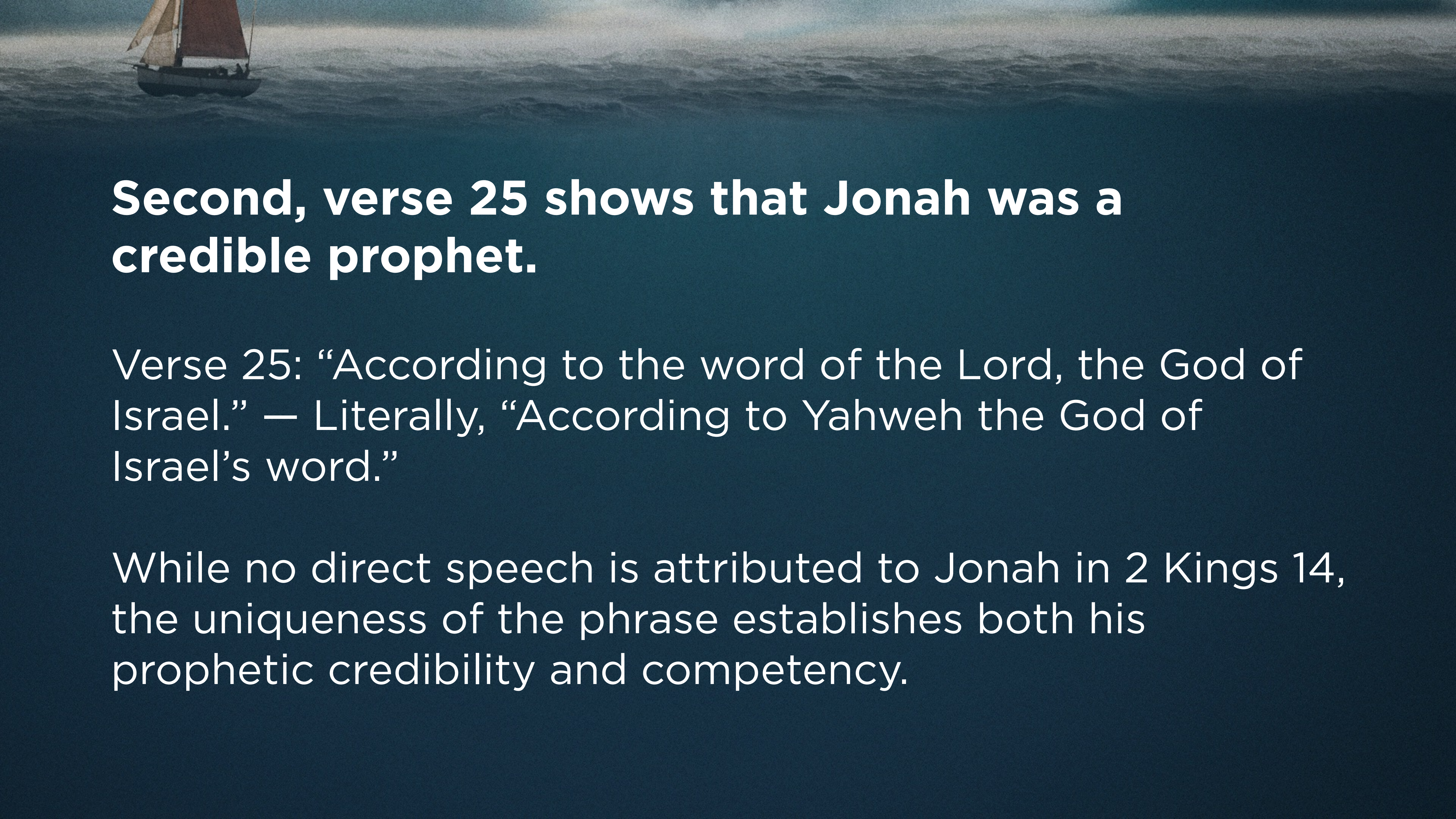
A small sailboat with a red sail is visible in the upper left corner of the image, sailing on a dark blue sea. The rest of the image is a solid dark blue background.

Second, verse 25 shows that Jonah was a credible prophet.

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While no direct speech is attributed to Jonah in 2 Kings 14, the uniqueness of the phrase establishes both his prophetic credibility and competency.


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Verses 26 and 27: “The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. The Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash.”

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Jonah is a real person dealing with a real issue. The book is historical but, while laced with humor, it isn't hysterical because delayed judgment was no laughing matter for faithful people experiencing the prosperity of the wicked.

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Jonah 4:2-3: “He prayed to the Lord, ‘Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.’”




Common to 2 Kings 14 and Jonah is the theme of “sinner king and divine blessing.” A prophet is tired of seeing idolatry thrive, injustice expand and wickedness prosper. **When will God bring judgement?** For the earliest readers, those familiar with the setting within the early years of Jeroboam II’s reign, the central issue is NOT with a prophet’s reluctance to obey but with God’s reluctance to act. The issue is God’s sovereign will and purpose.



Less than fifty years after Jonah left the stage, the ones to whom God showed His mercy, Assyria, became the hands through which God's loving discipline would be experienced by Israel. Jonah's mission to Nineveh served to establish Assyria's credibility as a tool in the hands of God.

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James 2:13 says, “Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

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Throughout the book Jonah is seen to moan, lack understanding of God's character, run away, is powerless before a mighty and merciful God... and yet he's so loved by God that he's chosen to be an agent of salvation, a calling that demands a sacrificial commitment.




Question: How does one overcome a flighty, fearful and moaning spirit?




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Answer: By remembering whose son or daughter you are.



In Hebrew the patronym is important. A patronym is a component of a personal name based on the given name of one's father.



Amittai from root-verb אמן (*'aman*), meaning to confirm or support.

It conveys trustworthiness, faithfulness or steadfastness of a person (1 Samuel 2:35, Isaiah 8:2).