

# Jonah 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

## Analysis

**But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.** The decree moves beyond external ritual to internal transformation. The Hebrew veiyikassu saqqim ha'adam vehabehemah veiyiqre'u el-'Elohim behazaqah veyashuvu ish middarko hara'ah umin-hechamas asher bekappeihem וַיַּתְפְּסֹד שָׁקִים בְּאָדָם וּבְבָהָמָה וַיַּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים בְּחִזְקָה וַיְשַׁבּוּ אִישׁ מִדְרְכָוֹתָיו וְמִנְחָתָיו) combines outward symbols with inward change.

"Cry mightily unto God" (veyiqre'u el-'Elohim behazaqah) uses hazaqah (חִזְקָה), meaning strength, force, or intensity—crying out with all one's might, desperate pleading. This isn't quiet, polite prayer but urgent, passionate intercession acknowledging life-or-death crisis.

"Let them turn every one from his evil way" (veyashuvu ish middarko hara'ah) uses shuv (שׁוּב), the primary Hebrew word for repentance meaning to turn back, return, or change direction. Genuine repentance requires turning from sin, not merely feeling sorry. The phrase "every one" (ish) individualizes responsibility—corporate repentance requires personal transformation.

"From the violence that is in their hands" (umin-hechamas asher bekappeihem) specifically identifies Nineveh's characteristic sin. The word chamas (כָּמָס) means violence, cruelty, or injustice—precisely what Assyria was notorious for. Their

empire was built on brutal conquest, systematic terror, and calculated cruelty. Archaeological evidence confirms Assyrian boasts of impalement, flaying, mass executions, and deportations. True repentance for Nineveh meant renouncing the violence that defined their national identity. This demonstrates that authentic repentance addresses specific, known sins, not vague generalities.

## Historical Context

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Assyrian military campaigns were characterized by extreme brutality designed to terrorize enemies into submission. Royal inscriptions proudly detail atrocities: 'I built a pillar over against the city gate and I flayed all the chiefs who had revolted and I covered the pillar with their skins... I cut off the limbs of the officers who had rebelled' (Ashurnasirpal II). Reliefs from Assyrian palaces graphically depict impalement, decapitation, and mass deportations. Jonah 1:2 states Nineveh's 'wickedness is come up before me'—God sees and judges violence. Nineveh's repentance required confronting this core sin. Centuries later, Nahum prophesied Nineveh's destruction (fulfilled 612 BC), indicating this repentance didn't permanently transform Assyrian character. Genuine for that generation, it didn't institutionalize lasting change.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the emphasis on turning 'from the violence that is in their hands' demonstrate that repentance must address specific sins?
2. What does crying 'mightily unto God' teach about the intensity and urgency appropriate to genuine repentance?

3. In what ways does God hold nations and cultures accountable for characteristic sins like Assyria's violence?

## Interlinear Text

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אָלָה יְמִינְתֶּךָ	אֶל	וַיַּקְרָא וְיַבְהַמְתָּה	וְיַבְהַמְתָּה	לְאָדָם	שְׁקָם יְמִינְתֶּךָ	וַיַּתְפַּט וְיַעֲמֹד
be covered	with sackcloth	But let man	and beast	and cry	unto God	
H3680	H8242	H120	H929	H7121	H413	H430
מִמְּנָא	בְּרַעַת הַמִּזְרָח	אֵישׁ בְּזַעַק הַמִּזְרָח	אֵישׁ בְּזַעַק הַמִּזְרָח	מִמְּנָא	בְּרַעַת הַמִּזְרָח	
mightily	yea let them turn	every one	way	from his evil	H4480	
H2394	H7725	H376	H1870	H7451		
וְאַשְׁר	בְּכַפְּרִים					
and from the violence	H834	that is in their hands	H3709			
H2555						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jonah 1:6** (References God): So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

**Isaiah 59:6** (Parallel theme): Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

**Acts 3:19** (Parallel theme): Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

**Jonah 1:14** (Parallel theme): Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.