

# Jonah 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

## Analysis

**So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.** Despite God's question (4:4), Jonah doesn't answer but acts—he exits Nineveh, builds a shelter, and waits. The Hebrew *vayetse Yonah min-ha'ir vayyeshev miqqedem la-'ir vaya'as lo sham sukkah* (וַיֵּצֵא יוֹנָה מִן־הָעִיר וַיָּשֶׁב מִקְדָּם) describes stubborn surveillance—Jonah still hopes God will destroy the city.

"On the east side" (*miqqedem*) may be significant—east often represents separation from God's presence (Genesis 3:24, 4:16). "Made him a booth" (*sukkah*, סֻכָּה) refers to temporary shelter from branches and vegetation, like those Israel dwelt in during wilderness wandering (commemorated in Feast of Tabernacles). The irony: Jonah constructs physical shelter while remaining spiritually exposed. He sits "in the shadow" (*batsel*, בַּצֵּל) seeking physical comfort while rejecting God's spiritual instruction.

"Till he might see what would become of the city" reveals Jonah's lingering hope for judgment. The forty days (3:4) apparently haven't fully elapsed, or Jonah doubts God's relenting is final. This stubborn expectation of destruction despite clear evidence of God's mercy shows how deeply prejudice and self-righteousness can blind us. Jonah prefers vindication—his prophecy fulfilled—over the salvation

of 120,000 people (4:11). This exposes the perverse pride that cares more about being "right" than seeing sinners saved.

## Historical Context

---

Sitting east of Nineveh, Jonah would have a vantage point to watch the city. Ancient Near Eastern prophets sometimes performed symbolic actions or maintained surveillance to verify prophecies (Jeremiah 32:6-15). Jonah's booth-building suggests he expected to wait days or weeks watching for destruction. The temporary shelter was common in agricultural work (guarding fields during harvest) and military campaigns (surveillance posts). Jonah's vigil represents the last gasp of his rebellion—hoping God will yet conform to his desires rather than submitting to God's revealed character.

## Related Passages

---

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

---

1. In what ways do we sometimes stubbornly cling to our expectations or desires even after God has clearly revealed His different purposes?
2. How does Jonah's preference for vindication over salvation expose the dangers of religious pride?
3. What does it mean to seek spiritual shade (God's presence) rather than merely physical comfort while remaining spiritually opposed to God's will?

## Interlinear Text

---

וַיֵּצֵא אֵלָיונָה מִן הַבְּעִיר: מִקַּדְם וַיֵּשֶׁב  
went out So Jonah H4480 of the city and sat on the east side of the city  
H3318 H3124 H5892 H3427 H6924 H5892

וַיַּעַשׂ לֹו שָׁם סֹכָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחְתֵּי יָהּ  
and there made H0 H8033 him a booth and sat H8478  
H6213 H5521 H3427

בַּצֵּל לְאֶשֶׁר עַד יִרְאֶה מָה יִהְיֶה הַבְּעִיר:  
under it in the shadow H5704 H834 till he might see H4100 H1961 of the city  
H6738 H7200 H5892

## Additional Cross-References

---

**1 Kings 19:9** (Parallel theme): And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

**1 Kings 19:13** (Parallel theme): And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?