



# The Jonah Project

Overcoming the Fear of Greatness through Jewish Wisdom & Visual Midrash

A Methodology for the Evasion of Growth

# The Jonah Complex

Abraham Maslow identified the biblical Jonah as the archetype for the “evasion of growth.” The Complex is not a fear of failure, but a fear of success—a refusal to accept the destiny suggested by nature, fate, or accident. We run because the responsibility of our own uniqueness is terrifying.

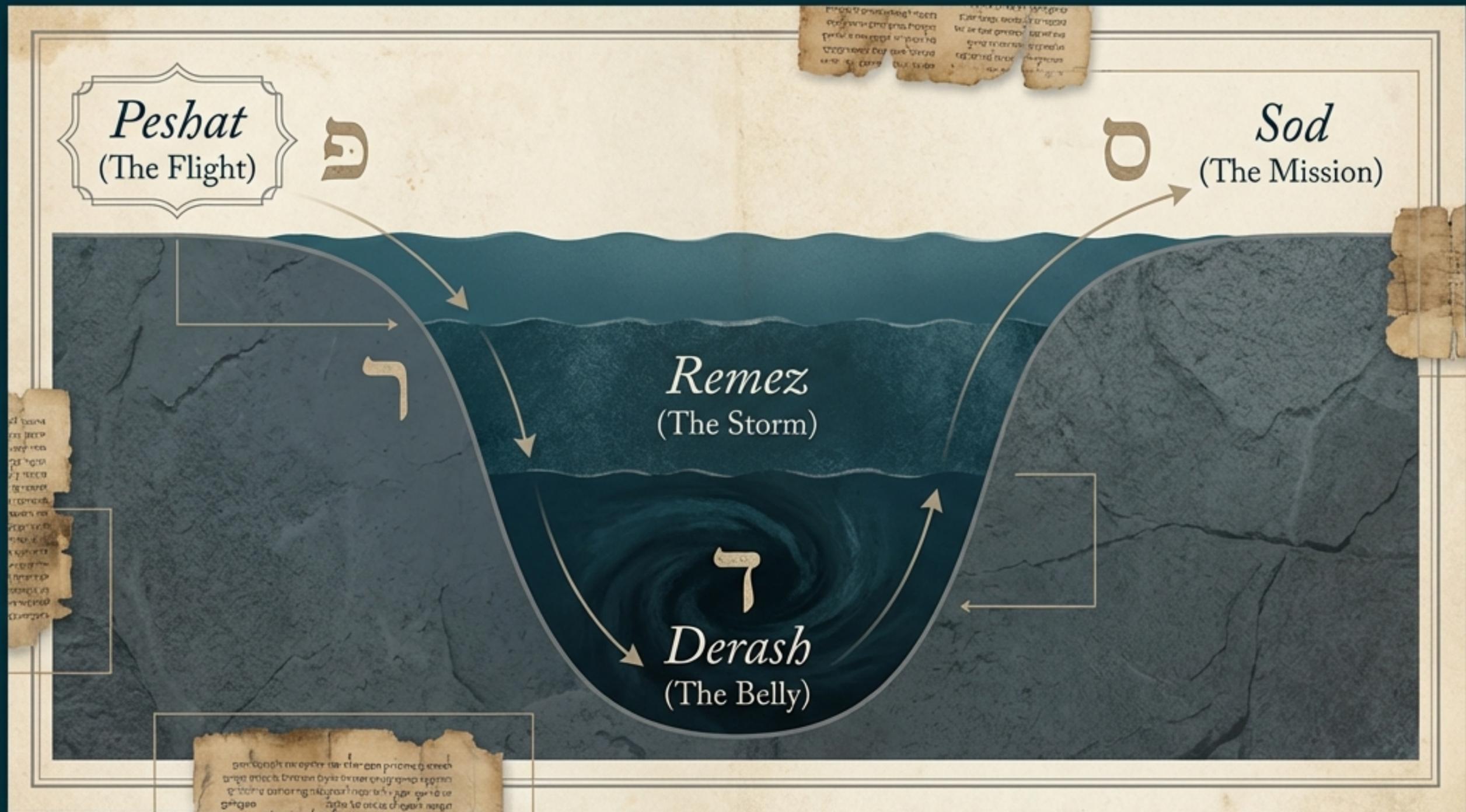
## The Jonah Complex

“We are generally afraid to become that which we can glimpse in our most perfect moments, under the most perfect conditions, under conditions of greatest courage. We enjoy and even thrill to the godlike possibilities we see in ourselves in such peak moments. And yet we simultaneously shiver with weakness, awe, and fear before these very same possibilities.”

—Abraham Maslow

# The Map of the Soul: PaRDeS

Navigating the Complex through the Four Levels of Exegesis



# Level 1: Peshat (The Flight)

The Surface Meaning. Jonah buys a ticket to Tarshish.  
Psychological Reality:  
Avoidance disguised as  
"normal life." We use rational  
excuses, busyness, and  
professional detours to drown  
out the call.



# Level 2: Remez (The Storm)

The Hints. The storm at sea is not random weather; it is a signal.

Psychological Reality: Turbulence, emotional storms, and synchronicities are the soul whispering, "You are not where you are meant to be."

Life begins to push back.



# Level 3: *Derash* (The Belly)



The Interpretation. The 'womb/tomb' space of shadow confrontation.

**Psychological Reality:** Here we ask, 'Who am I avoiding?' We stop running and start rewriting the inner narrative. We admit that we are not incapable, but afraid.

# Level 4: Sod (The Mission)

The Secret. Jonah walks into Nineveh. He is not glowing or triumphant; he is simply aligned.  
Psychological Reality: Surrender to purpose. The greatness you fear is the greatness you were built for. This is 'mystical embodiment'—where inner potential finally becomes outer action.



# Tool 1: The Jonah File

## From Original Sin to Original Uniqueness

To survive the belly of the fish, you need a dossier of your true self. The Reb Zusya Paradox: Heaven will not ask, "Why were you not Moses?" but "Why were you not Zusya?" The Jonah File is a collection of your "God-given credentials," aptitudes, and the possibilities you usually ignore.



# Inventory: Building Your File

## Accomplishments

When have you surprised yourself with how well you handled a situation?



## Instinct

What problems do you instinctively try to solve?



## Ease

What comes easily to you that others find challenging?



## Values

If you had unlimited resources, what would you dedicate yourself to creating?



Goal: To create a Project Charter for your life based on data, not fear.

# Tool 2: Visual Midrash



*“Is not my word like a hammer that splits the rock into pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)*

**SplitRock Thinking:** Just as a rock splits into many splinters, a single image can convey multiple meanings.

**The Practice:** Using the lens to filter reality through wonder, finding the “miraculous in the mundane.”

# Case Study: The Archer & The Horseman



**Surface:** The rider misses the ring. Failure.

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**Midrash:** “Al Cheyt”—The Hebrew word for sin literally means “Missing the Mark”.

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**Reframe:** Which is worse—missing the mark, or refusing to ride at all?

# Tool 3: Ethnotherapy



A physician treats the bruised knee; a community treats the bruised spirit.

We must move from “presenting” Judaism to “representing” ourselves within it.

The synagogue is not just for ritual, but a therapeutic institution for existential aloneness and trauma recovery.

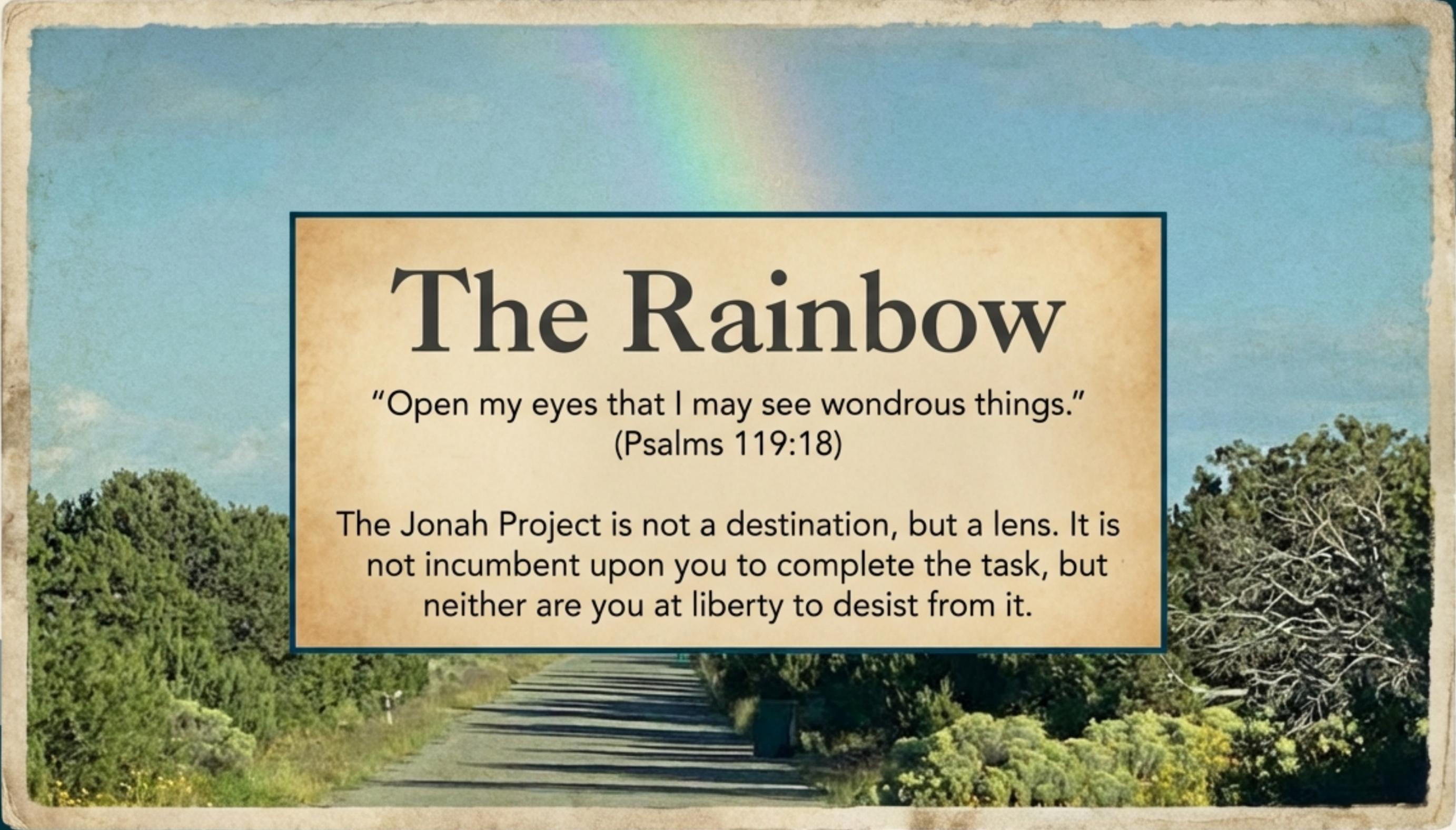
# The Output: Your Jonah Project



## **From the 'Belly' to 'Nineveh.'**

When the Israelites were trapped at the sea, Nachshon jumped in before the waters parted.

Your Project is a transition from the 'enclaves of the past' to the 'enclaves of the future.' It is the moment you stop running to Tarshish and start working in Nineveh.



# The Rainbow

“Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things.”  
(Psalms 119:18)

The Jonah Project is not a destination, but a lens. It is not incumbent upon you to complete the task, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.

# Credits & Inspiration

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Based on the writings, photography, and workshops of Rabbi Nicolas L. Behrmann.

- The Jonah Project
- The Jewish Photographer
- What's in Your Jonah File?

