Two power points presented by David B Levy at LCW for LCW students in the classroom include two readings that are part of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. These ppts. Can be enjoyed on the Library guides at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114143&p=742989

The Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22) is chanted on the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah and as the PowerPoint indicates via the comments of Rav Kook this section of the Pentateuch is chosen to evokes the zekut Avot (merit of the ancestors) which we hope is particularly remembered on Yamim Noraim. Rav Kook notes that the actual chanting of “the binding of Isaac” brings down from heaven a mystical light. Rabbi Moshi Alsheck and Seforno earlier note the mystical theurgic power of this portion of the Pentateuch by remarking that the angel that prevented the sacrifice of Isaac was “Michael” who is associated with mercy, compassion, and love as opposed to the exacting angel of judgment of uncompromising truth “Gabriel” who possesses the sword which swings each way guarding the gates of Gan Eden and associated with fire. It is the angel Raphael who indeed heals Avrham from the Brit Milah at Mamre, where the announcement of Isaac’s birth is revealed and it is the truth of angel Oriel, or angel of light that Avraham revealed to the world in teaching all humanity Ethical Monotheism. (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/ethicalmonotheism ) Because of Avraham’s merit of going to what Rambam calls the limit (gevul) of emunah (faith and trust in Hashem) we receive merit (zekut) from his ultimate passing of the ultimate test. Rashi makes a particularly sensitive and acute remark that guides us to pay very close attention to Biblical grammar, syntax, and diction when Rashi notes that the word Avraham was commanded is VeAleihu (bring him (Isaac) up) and not the more harsh word “veshechatu” (sacrifice (Isaac). Rashi draws our attention to the fact that the Biblical G-d is not a pagan deity requiring human sacrifice like other hedonistic nations like the Moloch cult that actually did practice human sacrifice, but rather Hashem implemented vicarious substitution by having “just at the right time” the ram that was “created on the first days of divine Creation” to be caught in the thicket, by which Avraham substituted this animal for his only and beloved son, Isaac. This substitute sacrifice is a foreshadowing of the Temple itself as the “binding of Isaac” takes place on the same rock (Har Mariah) where the Temple would be built by King Solomon, after it was purchased a generation before by King David. For the artists among us please also enjoy the ppt. on artistic representations of the Akedat Yitzchak at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewisharts Please enjoy the interpretations besides those of Rashi, Maimonides, and Rav Kook by opening up the above linked power point.

Maftir Yona is chanted in the minchah service on Yom Kippur. The power point provides the context of biblical archeological remains of Ninevah. Maps of Ninevah and famous archeological findings from its excavation are shared in the ppt. For the artists amongst us who appreciate aesthetics the ppt. also shares: the artitistic depiction by Micrography of artist Moses Elijah Goldstein, Sefinat Yonah (The Ship of Jonah) (1897) which employs the words of the Book of Jonah to form a representation of Jonah and the whale. Also provided are the commentaries of various Rabbinic luminaries from the rishonim: ibn Caspi, Profiat Duran, Shem tov ben shemtov, Rambam, and Don Isaac Abarbanel to the astounding recent remarks of the Vilna Gaon, known as the GRA, perhaps the greatest Taludist of the modern era.
The GRA relates sefer Yonah to the allegory of the soul in the process of gilgulim (reincarnation) by noting: the text is an Allegory for the sojourn of the neshamah in olam ha-zeh. Hashem sent Yonah to rectify the moral condition of Nineveh but instead of fulfilling G-d’s will, Yonah tried to escape by boarding a ship for Tarshish. Similarly the neshamah is sent to rectify the world through Torah study and mitzvos, but instead of fulfilling its mission, it allows itself to be deceived by the body’s physical impulses and gashmius. The body’s ability to deceive the neshamah is alluded to in the name Yonah for the verbal form of Yonah is related to the noun “Honaah” (deception) see Rashi Vayikra 25:17. The GRA further draws on Sefer HaZohar to clarify: Just as Jonah initially failed to carry out his mission and consequently endangered his life, so too the neshamah initially fails in its mission to rectify the world and consequently brings great harm upon itself in the process (zohar II, 199b). And although Jonah was granted a second chance to complete his mission, he was very distressed by what he perceived as his bad fortune. The same is true of the neshamah- when the neshamah fails in its mission, it is reincarnated and given another opportunity to fulfill its mission but like Jonah it is greatly disturbed by the necessity of reincarnation. The GRA continues to reveal secrets by hinting further: The verse alludes to the physical hardships experienced by the reincarnated neshamah of someone who had sinned in a previous life. As Hazal say, “Longevity, children and parnasah do not depend on merit but mazal (Moed Katan 28a)- the reincarnated neshamah of a person who sinned in his previous life is destined to feel deprivation in these three areas even if he is completely righteous in his present life. This was Hazal’s intention when they said that Moses asked Hashem: Master of the universe! Why do some righteous individuals enjoy a good life, while other righteous individuals suffer?” G-d answered Moshe, “Moses a righteous individual who enjoys a good life is a righteous individual born to a righteous individual, while a righteous individual who suffers is a righteous individual who was born of a wicked individual” (Berachos 7a). In other words a righteous person who was righteous in a previous life will enjoy a good life, whereas a righteous person who was wicked in a previous life will suffer throughout his next gilgul. The ppt. also treats the structure, language (including perplexing Aramaic words), symbolism, and themes of this “whale of a story!”

In short the people of Ninevah do repent, which is keeping within the theme of the day of Yom Kippur which is TESHUVAH atones for sin. These ppts. are found within the larger library guide of the Jewish Holidays throughout the Jewish liturgical year, because time is a process, and according to Jewish theology Hashem wants our repentance or striving to come closer to Him throughout the Jewish Calendar.