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Jonah’s Good News

The prophetic good news of **Jonah** is found in learning how **God** thinks. **ADONAI** reveals how **He** thinks about the ignorant wicked, repentance as a means of salvation, and the discomfort of **His disagreeable** chosen **prophet**. Interpreters have divided opinions about **Jonah’s** theological contribution. Is the Good News of **Jonah** only found in **God’s** viewpoint (everyone gets second chances, the repentant wicked are forgiven, and **God** is patiently logical with **His disgruntled prophet**)? Is **Yonah** only a flat figure who is disgruntled, disobedient and angry? Some see him as a comic figure, who, among other things, thinks he can successfully run away from **HaShem**. In this view, **he** is not a proper prophet who speaks on behalf of **the Almighty** because most of **his** words and actions are rebellious.

Nevertheless, **Jonah** is a mouthpiece for **God’s** word in the midst of his dispute with **God**. **He** is disobedient, runs away from **ADONAI**, and is angry about **God’s** clemency for the violent Ninevites. But **his** rebellion is grounded in **God’s** Word as **he** has learned it and as it is proclaimed in the Bible. The wicked will perish. High-handed rebellion will not be pardoned, even in repentance **(Numbers 15:27-31).** **Jonah’s** opinion concerning Nineveh, far from being rebellious, represents a major opinion that is a necessary part of any dialogue with **God** about wickedness in the world. Until **Jonah’s** dialogue with **God**, the prophet’s opinion about the wicked was known as **God’s** way in the world.

Jonah is a true prophet voicing a true theology. In this sense **he** is not rebellious.

Jonah is being faithful to what **he** knows to be **God’s** word of strict justice when **the LORD** asked **him** to disregard that word with a new word. **God’s** new word is a controversial word even among believers today. **Jonah’s** questions and actions in reaction to this new word are faithful to the word from **YHVH** that he previously received. **Jonah the prophet** and **Jonah** the book faithfully struggle with this difficult question: “What should be done about the violently wicked who repent?” This is an even more difficult question than the early church’s struggle to understand how righteous Gentiles, like Cornelius in **Acts 10**, could receive **the LORD’s** grace and **Holy Spirit**.

Jonah is a faithful prophet because **he** is true to speaking **God’s** word of justice as **he** had known it, even to **God Himself**. When **he** is convinced by **his** resurrection from the dead that **God** was determined to extend **His** forgiveness to the previously unforgivable, **he** goes and preaches the word to Nineveh. Although reluctantly . . . **he** finished his commission. Like Abraham, Moses and Jeremiah, **he** protested to **ADONAI** in **chapter 4** when the Ninevites repented. **Yonah** demonstrated **his** integrity in representing traditional justice, and by preaching to Nineveh. **Jonah’s** protest provides an occasion for **God’s** revelation of a better justice **(4:10-11)** in the context of the life of a true and honest man. The Good News is that **Jonah’s** struggle is accepted by **God** as a legitimate human struggle to understand the continuance of wickedness in the world.[15]