–Save This Page as a PDF–

But the LORD Sent a Great Wind on the Sea, So Violent that the Ship Threatened to Break Up 1: 4-6

But the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, so violent that the ship threatened to break up DIG: What effect did God sending a storm so great that the ship was in danger of falling apart? In what sense were they saved (compare **verses 5** and **16**)**? Likewise, how was the prophet saved? How could Jonah sleep through the storm? Was he in denial? Was he depressed? How was Jonah a type of Christ? What irony do you see in the exchange between the captain and Yonah? Between the sailors and the prophet?**

REFLECT: Can you recall the last time one bad decision led you on a downward spiral of rebellion and more bad decisions? How futile is it when we try to solve our problems by human reasoning? Could God intervene in a miraculous way more often? Why doesn't He? What kind of believers would that create? Have you ever been surprised by how the LORD allowed good to come out of a time of rebellion in your life? What did ADONAI accomplish? What decisions are you making today that will impact your future?

The storm was God's tool to bring Jonah to his senses.

Short description of scene two: But the LORD . . . Here is the second **but** as already observed **(1:3, 1:4, 1:17, 4:1, 4:7)**. There is great power in the equivalent words **but God**, frequently used in the B'rit Chadashah when an unsolvable or difficult problem has been posed. There is no answer until **but God,** and therein is the whole answer – the Person and nature, power and purpose of **ADONAI**. Despite **Yonah's** illusion that **He** can merely flee from the presence of **the LORD**, it is now made perfectly clear that **God** is there **on the sea**, and able to control it, whatever **Jonah** may think. **The son of Amittai** is like a young child covering his eyes and thinking that **he** cannot be seen. **But the LORD** was there after all. There in the calling, there in the flight, there **on the sea**, there in **the storm**, and there in **the**

throwing of lots (1:7). In short, **God** is **with us** no matter what our circumstance. After all, **God with us** is the heart of our faith and a central message of this book. **The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means: God with us (Mattityahu 1:23).** It is just that **Yonah**, in **his** passion for Isra'el, had hoped it meant: **God is with *us*** (and not the Ninevites)!

*Dear Heavenly **Fathe**r, How wonderful **You** are! Praise **You** for **Your** great love for all the world, **so they may know, from the rising to the setting of the sun, that there is no one besides Me. I am ADONAI – there is no other (Isaiah 45:6). You** are an awesome **father**! **For you are all sons of God through trusting in Messiah Yeshua. For all of you who were immersed in Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua (Galatians 3:26-28).** We desire to please **You** by our loving obedience. Even when it would be easier to ignore **You**, we willing will follow all **You** ask of us, for we know that **You** love us and want what is best for us. **You** have given **Yeshua's** righteousness **(Second Corinthians 5:21)** to all who love **You**. We look forward to praising **Your** great name in heaven for all eternity. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Like King David's one bad decision (see my commentary on **the Life of David, to see link click Dc – David and Bathsheba**), **Jonah's** life started to slide out of control. We see another illustration of a bad choice running rampant in a person's life in the story of the prodigal son (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Hu – The Lost Son and His Jealous Brother**). Like **the disobedient prophet**, **he** set **his** sights on a **distant country** and lived rebelliously. It was not until **his** downward tumble gained steam that **he** found **himself** in the pigpen that it dawned on **him** how far **he** had fallen.

The LORD, who had made the first move by addressing **Jonah**, now takes the initiative again. As **the Master** of **wind** and waves **He hurled a great wind on the sea** as easily as one **hurls** a stone. But this is no mere display of power. **The great wind** is intended to stop **Yonah** dead in **his** tracks by preventing **the ship** from making any headway. Nevertheless, the verb **hurl** does imply vigorous exertion. It is used of Saul when he hurls his javelin at David with the intention of killing him **(First Samuel 18:11** and **20:33)**.

Commentary on scene two . . . sent out a great wind on the sea, which made the sea so stormy that the ship was in danger of breaking apart (1:4). You can almost hear the creaking timbers as the stress of the pounding on the hull increases. The Hebrew word translated **sent out** is a strong word, meaning *to hurl*. **ADONAI** *hurled* **the storm at the sea.** To the people of the ancient world, **the sea** was like the kingdom of death. For them, to be sailing on **the ocean** was risky enough, to be *hurled* around worse, and to feel the **ship breaking apart** worse still. Their little bottle of security was **breaking apart** and the dread of being swallowed by **the ocean** was growing by the minute. It is this almost primal **fear** of being swallowed by **the sea** that aroused such empathy for the victims of the 2004 Asian tsunami, or the obsessive retelling of the story of the Titanic. Despite our technology and our statistics of safety, it doesn't take much to rock our boat of confidence.[36]

Even though **they** were **all** very experienced, **the sailors were afraid . . .** So severe was the storm at **sea** that even **the** hardened **sailors** thought **they** were going to die. The extreme danger reminded **them** of **their** frailty. As stated earlier, these **sailors** were most likely Phoenicians who were responsible for most of the sea traffic in the Mediterranean during the first half of the first millennium BC. It was **they** who pioneered the exploration and trade by **the sea**.[37] **They** were **pagans** who came from a polytheistic culture and therefore worshiped numerous **gods**. Each **god** governed a different part of nature and was easily offended. Elemental fear directed **their** thoughts to the supernatural realm. So when **they** became **afraid** by the storm **each man cried out to his own god (1:5a). The rabbis teach the men of seventy languages were there on the ship, and each had his own god in his hand.**

It is highly ironic that **Yonah**, the one with faith in **ADONAI**, is mingled with **the crew**, quite literally “in the same boat” as everyone else, subject to the same forces of nature, hopes and fears. Why was this happening? For believers, it’s common to blame unbelievers for the way the world is going. But here, **Jonah**, as the author of the book, turns this on its head; **the ship** is sinking because of the faithlessness of the true believer, not because of the sins of **the pagans** on board.

Loss of **cargo** was preferable to the loss of **their** lives **so they began throwing the cargo into the sea to make the ship lighter (1:5b).** The Hebrew word used here for **throwing** is the same word used for **the LORD sending out the storm in verse 4.** Just as **God** *hurled* **the storm** against **them**, that is how **they** *hurled* **the cargo into the sea.** So **the sailors** responded by praying to **their own gods** in **fear** and did the sensible thing, **they** worked desperately to try and save **the ship**. This turned out to be totally futile. They had neglected to go to the source of all wisdom.

But Jonah had gone down far inside the farthest corner of the **lower deck to lie down, and he fell fast asleep (1:5c). Type 1. Both Jesus and Jonah were found asleep on board while their shipmates tried to keep the vessel afloat after a sudden storm arose** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Fp – Jesus Walks on the Water**)**. In both instances, the storm was calmed and the shipmates’ faith in God increased.**

Humanly speaking, **the** pagan **sailors** were doing what **they** could. In stark contrast, **Jonah** was doing nothing. **He** was **asleep**. This same vocabulary is used for an anesthetized-like **sleep**: **So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh (Genesis 2:21).** It is the same kind of **exhaustive sleep** that caused **Sisera** not to hear **Jael** sneaking up on **him** to

drive a peg through his head, killing **him (Judges 4:21)**. In the same way, **the reluctant prophet** was **sleeping** so soundly that **he** was not aware of **the storm,** the activity on deck, or **the captain** of **the ship** as **he** made **his** way **down into the lower deck**. This is the third **going down** of **Yonah**. Just as **the ship** heading west moved **him** across the horizon in the direction of **his** rebellion, so **his** descent continues, moving **him** in a vertical direction farther and farther away from **ADONAI**.[38] If you run from **God** long enough, you can be in the clutches of mortal danger and never know it. You can reach a point where you cannot even hear **His** voice **(Romans 1:24-25)**.

In **his** stupor **he** probably recalled when **he** first heard **the word of YHVH (1:1). Yonah** was ambivalent about the world and about **God**. **He** was **lukewarm** and, like the church at Laodicea, **Yeshua** said to **the reluctant prophet**, **"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).** Unable to choose either option, **God's servant** becomes hopelessly useless. **He** neither **prays** nor offers any practical help; **his** sleeping shows **his** withdrawal from the reality around **him**. So **Jonah**, our anti-hero in **his** spiritual cocoon, is oblivious to the frantic activities of **the sailors** above deck. But **he** is interrupted again. This time, however, not directly by **God** but by the rough and urgent voice of **the captain of the ship**.[39]

The captain of the ship went to him and said: **Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray to your god! The rabbis note the irony. The pagan captain calls upon the Hebrew prophet to pray, his** words mirror **Yonah's** initial call from **God**. Each word mocks **him**. **Maybe He will pay attention to us, and we won't die (1:6). The captain acknowledges the possibility that Yonah's God, the God of the Hebrews, is the one true God. The use of God as a generic term is remarkable in the mouth of a pagan, who had just prayed to his own national deity. It suggests that, with their worship of idols, some of the pagans had a vague apprehension of one supreme God; and in a moment of great danger, such a One would come to mind.**

Eventually everyone in this book calls on **ADONAI**: **the sailors**, **Jonah**, and **the Ninevites**. The Hebrew word *qara* is translated as both to **call** and to **cry out**:

The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe He will take notice of us, and we won't die (1:6).

Then the sailors cried out to ADONAI, “Please ADONAI, Please! Don’t let us die for taking this man’s life” (1:14a).

Jonah said: **In my distress I called to YHVH, and He answered me (2:1-2a).**

The king said: **Let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence (3:8).**[40]

The storm, then, is **God’s** tool to bring **Jonah** to **his** senses. Thus far it has not succeeded in breaking through **his** defenses. But **Yonah** will be allowed to propel himself deeper into trouble before **God** can rescue, and ultimately persuade **him** to see things **His** way. **Jonah** comes back up on deck and sees **the** great **storm** that is threatening to send **him**, **the captain** and **his** crew, to the bottom of the ocean. The rough and tumble **sailors** conclude that there must be **someone** on board who was guilty of some great crime, and **they** quickly decided to **throw lots** in order to find out who the guilty person was.[41]