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# Jonah Goes to Nineveh
# 3: 1-3a

**Jonah goes to Nineveh DIG: What is the difference between mercy and grace? How did Ha'Shem show Yonah mercy? How did He show him grace? What evidence do you see here that ADONAI is the God of second chances? What are some examples of second chances in the Bible? In response to the LORD's word, what does Yonah do? What does scene four as a whole say about God?**

**REFLECT: When has ADONAI given you "two chances" to be, or do, His will? To witnesses to someone? As best as you can determine, to what divine interruption has God called you to surrender right now? Do you struggle with feeling that you have wasted too much time to have another opportunity with ADONAI? If so, how does this mind-set affect your current actions?**

**Jonah's story illustrates how God treats His repentant children.**
**The prodigal son came home.**

**Short description of scene four:** Since **Yonah** has promised to offer sacrifices and fulfill vows **(2:9)**, we might expect the narrative to continue with an account of a visit to the Temple in Jerusalem where those vows are to be carried out. This **scene**, however, brings a surprise. We are suddenly taken back to the beginning of the story. Again, **the LORD** initiates the action by giving **Jonah his** original assignment once more. But this time **Yonah** begins to carry it out. One of the greatest revivals in history occurred because one man responded in obedience.[76] **ADONAI** still wanted to use **Jonah**, and **He** still wants to use you.

**Commentary on scene four:** Poor **Yonah** barely has time to dry **himself** out before a disturbing **word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time (3:1).** The words are identical to **1:1** except the editorial comment: **for a second time**, which takes the place of **son of Amittai.** This formula introducing **a second word from the LORD** also occurs in **Jeremiah 1:13** and **13:3** in first-person form. **Then the**

**word of ADONAI came to me a second time, saying . . .** In case of **Jeremiah**, however, **the second time** means an entirely new question **(Jeremiah 1:13)**, command **(Jeremiah 13:3)**, or promise **(Jer 33:1)**. The **second time** here is a repetition of **the word** that came the first time. Only **Jonah** among the biblical prophets has to have **his** assignment given to **him twice**.

A disobedient prophet like **Jonah** could meet with immediate calamity, as seen in the account of the prophet who disobeyed **ADONAI's** word and was killed by a lion **(First Kings 13:20-32).** But here, in a picture of what **Yonah himself** will declare **(4:2)**, **God's** mercy and grace allows **Jonah** a second chance. Mercy is not getting what we deserve, and **Jonah** could have met the fate of a false prophet; grace is getting what we don't deserve, and **Yonah** got **a second** chance. Although this is a book that teaches, **the LORD** does not use this as a teachable moment, saying, "See **Yonah** you can't run away from Me!" Nor does **God** comment on **Jonah's** foolishness or disobedience. **He** simply repeats the original assignment.[77]

This is not something unusual that **God** did just in **Jonah's** case. **He** is not making an exception with **Yonah**. **Aaron** was known as Moshe's **brother**, serving as his mouthpiece when he went to stand before Pharaoh. After the Passover, **ADONAI** set **Aaron** aside to officiate in the Tabernacle. As **the high priest**, **he** served as the mediator between **God** and **His** chosen people. **Aaron** had the privilege of entering the Most Holy Place and experiencing the delight of **the LORD's** presence in a way that few ever would. But while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments things began to unravel. **All the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf (Exodus 32:3-4).** Can you imagine Moshe's disbelief at his **brother's** actions when he came down from the mountain? While Moses might have been shocked, **God** wasn't. Even while **HaShem** was giving Moshe the tablets of stone, **God** was fully aware of **Aaron's** willful disobedience. Yet **Aaron** was given a second chance and was allowed to continue to serve as Israel's **first high priest**.

**Sarah** was **Abraham's wife**. **God** gave **her** a promise that **she** would have a son and become **the mother** of an entire nation. But ten years later **she** was still barren. **So Sarai took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife (Genesis 16:3).** Sarah's choice and Abraham's compliance resulted in a child named Ishmael. Both Abraham and **God** loved the boy as he grew up, but he was not the son of promise through which the chosen nation would come. While Abraham begged **ADONAI** to use Ishmael, **the LORD**

held **His** ground and told the father of many nations that although **He** would bless Ishmael and give him many descendants, **Sarah** would get a second chance. **She** would still bear a child and he would become the son of promise **(Genesis 17:17-21)**.

**Jacob was a righteous man** (see my commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Gn – Then Jacob Gave Esau Some Lentil Stew and Esau Despised His Birthright**), but because of Isaac's disobedience **he** didn't receive the patriarchal blessing in the proper way. Therefore, **he** wanted and needed a second chance. **The LORD** gave **him** that opportunity when Ya'akov wrestled with **God** at Peniel all night (see my commentary on **Genesis Hw – Jacob Wrestles with God**) and was renamed Isra'el.

**Joseph's** ten **brothers** appear in the book of **Genesis** as a jealous and conniving brood who were out to seek revenge on **their** youngest **brother**. **They** were tired of living in the shadow of **the son** born to **their father's** favorite wife Rachel. Being rather full of himself, **Yosef** seemed to enjoy a preferential status highlighted by a brilliant robe of many colors. Envy roared out of control and burst into flames of violence. **They** plotted to kill **their brother**, but **their** plans changed when some passing merchants agreed to buy **Joseph** as a slave, and **they** took the **young man of seventeen** down to Egypt. Can you imagine the despondency and heartache that must have ripped through **his** young heart every night? Yet **the LORD was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2)**, and through the providence of **God he** miraculously rose to become Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. When famine struck, **Yosef** personally administered the grain for Egypt and the whole world. This famine served as the catalyst to bring **his brothers** face to face with **him**. While **he** was completely aware of **their** identity, **they** didn't know **him** until **he** chose to reveal **himself**. **Joseph** could have had **his brothers** killed or imprisoned for the injustice done to **him**. But in an astonishing display of mercy, **he kissed all his brothers and wept over them (Genesis 45:15a). Yosef** refrained from anger, abstained from vengeance, and offered **his brothers** a second chance at a relationship with **him** that they really didn't deserve.

When **Rahab** first appears in the biblical account **she** is one of the most unsavory characters imaginable. In fact, **she** is introduced as a prostitute **(Joshua 2:1)**. If you met her before the great turning point in her life, you would have written her off as being completely hopeless. She was an immoral woman living in a pagan culture that was fanatically devoted to everything **God** hates. But **her** whole life and future would be changed by **her** surprise encounter with two Israelite spies. By **God's**

sovereign design, **Rahab's** house was perfect for the spies to escape. **Her** knowledge of **YHVH** was meager, but when **she** hid the Jewish spies and them let them down by a single scarlet cord, it demonstrated **her** faith **(Josh 2:17-18)**. Given a second chance, **she** led a completely different life. **Her** name appears in the hall of faith **(Heb 11:31)** and in **Matthew's** genealogy.

**David was a man after God's own heart**, but **he** sinned against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah **(Second Samuel 11:1-26)**. But after **he** repented **(Psalm 51)** he got a second chance and we see **him** in **the far eschatological future** with the dual titles of king and prince during the Millennial Kingdom (see my commentary on **Revelation Fi – The Government of the Messianic Kingdom**).

The Pharisees brought **Yeshua** a **woman caught in adultery**. They wanted to see if the **Lord** would agree to have **her** stoned. **She** was caught in the very act and **they** intended that **she** be punished to the fullest extent that there could be no second chance, no chance for redemption. But **Jesus** is **the Lord** of the second chances. After **He** pointed out that the Torah said **her** accusers could not be guilty of sin, they all left. Then **He asked her: Woman,** look up, **where are they? Has no one condemned you (John 8:10)?** Maybe **she** expected **Him** to scold **her**. Perhaps **she** expected **Him** to walk away in disgust. I'm not sure, but I know this: What **she** got, **she** never could have imagined. **She** got compassion and a commission. **"No one, sir," she said.** The compassion was: **Then neither do I condemn you, Jesus declared.** The commission was: **Go, and sin no more (John 8:11).**

**Mary Magdalene** had started on the wrong side of the spiritual war. **She** was an **enemy** stronghold, providing food and shelter for **the devils troops** – seven in all, because **she** was **a woman from whom seven demons had come out (Luke 8:2).** The Bible gives us no hint as to how **Mary** became **demon** possessed, how long **she** lived in that desperate state, or the circumstances surrounding **her** encounter with **Yeshua** that led to **her** deliverance. From what we know of other demoniacs in the Scriptures we can safely assume that until **she** met **the Messiah**, **she** lived a deranged existence that pushed **her** to the fringes of society. But **Miryam's** descent into hell ended that day **she** met **the King of kings**. **He** brought a sudden end to **her** savage bondage, restored **her** to **her** right mind, and freed **her** to follow **Him**. Given a second chance, **Mary** followed **her Master** and had the privilege of being the first person **He** saw after **His** resurrection.

**Simon Peter** also stumbled and fell. **He** denied **Christ** and ran away from **Him**.

After such a fall it seemed that **Peter's** calling as **an apostle** was over. What employer would ever keep a staff member who was disloyal and untrustworthy – much less offer him a promotion within the organization? Certainly he'd not be allowed to have a close and intimate relationship with the One he'd just so vehemently denied. But after our **Lord** had risen, **He** went back and gave **Kefa** a second chance (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Mn – Jesus Reinstates Peter**), saying: **Feed My sheep**.

**Jonah's** story illustrates how **God** treats **His** repentant children (see my **c**ommentary on **The Life of Christ Hu – The Parable of the Lost Son and His Jealous Brother**). **The prodigal son** came home. When **he** got there **he** didn't get a beating, **he** got a banquet. **He** didn't get kicked around, **he** got kisses. Instead of being rejected, **the father** loved **him** and took **him** back. What a wonderful **heavenly Father** we have!

**Aaron, Sarah, Jacob, Joseph's brothers, Rahab, David, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter** and **Jonah** were all given a gift that is still available to you and me as well. Have you fallen out of fellowship with **ADONAI**? Have you made decisions that have taken you further down the path of rebellion than you ever thought possible? Well, you need to know that you can't outrun the grasp of **His** grace or overstep the boundaries of **His** mercy. It is still available to you – to me – right here, right now. Thank **God** for a second chance![78]



**Yonah's** second commissioning becomes more specific than the first, in that he is now given the very words to speak: **Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you (3:2).** The command to **go with two** is expressed in the Hebrew with two verbs **(rising** and **go).** Together they mean "**Go** now." Or "**Go** immediately." **Nineveh** – the name is always a powerful symbol of a

worldly **city**. Just as the B'rit Chadashah links Bethlehem and Herod the Great, Golgotha with Pontius Pilate, Paul with Rome, **Yeshua** and all the kingdoms of the world, so **Jonah** is linked with **Nineveh**. **It** is once again identified as **a great city.** This time nothing is said about **the city's** wickedness. **The phrase the great city, is literally *great to God*; great, not only from mankind's thinking, but to God's.** The Hebrew word **proclaim** occurs only here in the TaNaKh. The parallel is in **Jeremiah 19:2** . . . **and proclaim there the words that I tell you**. The Septuagint translates it *kerygma*, the word used for the apostolic preaching in the New Covenant **(Romans 16:25; First Corinthians 1:21, 15:14; Titus 1:3). Jonah**, as the author of **his** book, does not indicate the content of the message until **3:4.**

As one reflects on this short passage **the LORD's** patience immediately comes to mind. Without exhortations, without carping or harping, **God** reissues the charge that was given to **Jonah** in the first place **(4:2)**. But behind this reassignment is **HaShem's** urgent concern for *the goyim*, the Gentile world. In this case the people of **Nineveh**. The repeating of this commission, unique among the prophets, reminded **Yonah** of Isra'el's bottom line blessing. **I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed by you (Genesis 12:3)**. **God** cares about **the peoples of the earth**, be they Ethiopians, Philistines, Egyptians – or **Assyrians** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Mo – The Great Commission**).

So . . . **Yonah** went **to Nineveh**. But *how* did **he go**? With what *attitude* did **he go**? Can we outwardly obey **God** with our actions while our heart isn't along for the ride? Centuries later, this was the work of the Pharisees. **Yeshua** said they were like whitewashed tombs. Nice and clean on the outside but full of dead men's bones on the inside (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Jd – Seven Woes on the Torah-Teachers and the Pharisees**)! What kind of a man was **Jonah**? **The reluctant prophet** knew that **God's** commission included mercy and grace. Nevertheless, **he** went. **His** relationship was restored with **ADONAI**, but not **the Assyrians**. In short, **Yonah** is in our image. **He** is not perfect. **He** is capable of anger, self-justification and despair. Although **he** is one of the righteous of the TaNaKh, **he** still has a sin nature. So **Jonah** has a half-hearted departure. **He** doesn't know what **he's** going to say until **he** gets there – but he goes. So **Yonah's** feet are moving, but **his** heart isn't in it.

**Reflection on what scene four as a whole says about ADONAI: Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD.** In **1:1-2 Jonah** rose to run away, but here **he** has

been reconciled to **God's** call. The mission to **Nineveh** had begun again because **ADONAI** had called **him** again. **God** is patient and kind, full of mercy and grace **toward His** children. Here was **Jonah** . . . clothes wasting away because of the acid from the whale's stomach . . . seaweed around **his** head . . . smelling like whale barf . . . **and he went to Nineveh (3:3a).**

**Yonah's** answers to **the sailors'** question in **1:12** and **his** subsequent actions give us a foreshadowing of **four significant principles** in the B'rit Chadashah for reconciling with **ADONAI**. **The fourth significant principle: We need to act on God's direction by faith. The runaway prophet** knew **he** had died, and knew **he** had been resurrected (see **At – Jonah's Prayer**). You would think that dramatic event would change **his** attitude toward **the Ninevites**. But it didn't. **He** didn't feel like going . . . but **he** went anyway because that's what **God** commanded **him** to do. In other words, **His** feelings didn't prevent **him** from agreeing with **God**. **He** finally understood, and we need to understand, that our feelings are not the engine that drives our decisions; our feelings are the caboose. We act in **faith**, and the feelings will come later. **Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Heb 11:1-2** and **6).** By **faith Yonah** went **to Nineveh.**

*Dear Heavenly Father, Praise **You** that **You** are the **God** of second chances – as long as the person is alive. **Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (Hebrews 9:27 NIV).** May you open the eyes of the hearts of my family and friends who have not yet turned to **You** for a second chance. Please help them to understand that there will be great peace and joy in heaven, only for those who willingly love and follow **You** on earth. May they focus not on earthly pleasures that are over so soon, but on eternal life with **You** in heaven. **For our trouble, light and momentary, is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, as we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal (Second Corinthians 4:17-18).** We love **You** and look forward to living in heaven with **You**, praising **Your** great and holy name throughout all eternity! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*