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Jonah Had Gone Out and Sat Down at a Place East of the City
4: 4-11

Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city DIG: What is the most important question in the book? Why does God pose questions like this? Humanly speaking, why did Yonah have every right to be angry? Why should we be pleased that God is slow to anger? Why did Jonah sit outside the city? What was his hope? What kind of shelter did he build? What did this have to do with Israel's history? What three things does God provide Yonah? Why? What do the vine, worm and hot sun reveal about the LORD? About Jonah? How does the worm in this seventh scene point to Jonah as a type of Christ? Compare Elijah's encounter with Baal-worship in First Kings 18:20-40 with Jonah's relation to these pagans. What peak religious experiences, depressions, and rebuke from God do they have in common with each other? With you? What does this scene tell us about God? How would you end this dangling story? What do you think the disgruntled prophet did with his second chance? What does scene seven as a whole say about God?

REFLECT: Do you have a pouting-place? Are you disappointed or upset with God right now? How so? What is the importance of God's question in 4:4 to you personally? As a result of your divine intervention, has God revealed to you a distance between His heart and yours? How so? Are there any misplaced priorities that have taken place in your life lately? What made this disparity clear to you? How do you feel about the idea that God may allow hardship to relay spiritual instruction? Why do you think the Enemy of souls may want to disguise difficulty used by YHVH as punishment sent by God? If you've had a string of your own difficulties, have you attributed them to ADONAI or to the Adversary? How have these instances made you feel? Have they drawn you closer to the Lord, or driven you away? Why? When have you tried limiting the Lord's mercy to others? To yourself? To whom does ADONAI want you to show mercy to

this week?

Like the eye of the storm, peace prevails in the presence of ADONAI, even when chaos arises all around.

Short description of scene seven: **ADONAI** initiates the action in this final scene, this time with a question directed to **the disgruntled prophet**. **But the LORD** wanted **Jonah** to continue **his** prophetic ministry, so in a mild and loving rebuke, **He** simply asked **him**: **Have you any right to be angry** in light of the mercy **I** have shown you by bringing you back to life so you could fulfill **My** commission **(4:4)?** Surely **God's servant** could trust **the Judge of all the earth to do right (Genesis 18:25). Jonah,** however, was in no mood to respond. **He** refused to recognize any suggestion that **he** might be in the wrong, and **he** persisted in justifying **himself**.[97]



He took up a new position **east of the city** where **he** built **a booth** to provide some shade. Again, **the LORD God** takes the initiative by **providing a plant**, **a worm**, and **a wind**; **Jonah** reacts with another **death** wish **(4:6-8)**. The story concludes with a question-and-answer exchange between **God** and **Jonah (4:9)** and then with a thirty-nine-word speech by **YHVH (4:10-11)**, balancing **Jonah's** thirty-nine-word speech in **4:2**. The end of the story links with the beginning, picking up the theme: **Nineveh, the great city**. The closing question invites **Jonah**, and each of us, to become involved by responding with an answer.[98]

Commentary on scene seven: After hearing **Jonah's** whiny tirade, there was dead silence – a pause just long enough to wonder what was going to happen next.

But now, the short pause has ended and the silence is broken with a word from **the LORD**. For the first time we listen in on a conversation between **God** and **Yonah**. **His** question: **Have you any right to be angry (4:4)?** is the most important question in the book. **YHVH** wants to know if **Jonah's anger** *results in any good.* **Divine** inquiries are never for **God's** benefit. **He** knows the answer to every question **(Genesis 3:6-11; 4:3-10; John 6:5-6)**. **He** poses questions that we may realize and agree on the truth of the answer. Answering **God's** questions requires a soul search that may unearth heart issues we did not formerly recognize, thereby helping us to see in ourselves what **God** seeks to uncover. The question **God** asked **Jonah** is the same **Spirit** that whispers to us as we teeter on the verge of falling headlong into a mound of **anger**. After all the moping and fury, we face this same simple question.[99]

*Dear Just and Righteous Heavenly **Father,** Praise **You** that **You** are always perfect in **Your** balanced of anger and love. **You** do get angry **(John 3:36).** Anger in, **Your** children are allowed when it is a righteous **anger** at sin**, "Be angry, yet do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26a)**; not a selfish **anger** of not getting what someone wants. **Get rid of all bitterness and rage and anger and quarreling and slander, along with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31).***

*Praise **You** that **You** open the door of salvation and entrance to heaven to all who choose to love and to follow **You, Yeshua, God. Therefore the Torah became our guardian to lead us to Messiah, so that we might be made right based on trusting. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 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 3:24-28).** Praise **Yeshua** for **His**wonderful gift of righteousness that **He** gives to all who love **Him** and accept **His** sacrifice as **the Lamb of God**for our sins**. He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (Second Corinthians 5:21).** We love **You** and look forward to living with **You** in heaven, praising **Your** great and holy name forever! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Humanly speaking, **Yonah** did have a reason to be **angry**. After all, **Assyria** was Israel's archenemy, and preaching to **them** could possibly keep **them** from being

destroyed if **they** repented. In 722 BC, about thirty-eight years after **Jonah** preached to **Nineveh**, the army of **Assyria** pillaged the northern kingdom of Isra'el, and laid siege to **Samaria**. **The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cutah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in place of the Israelites in the cities of Samaria. They took over Samaria and lived in her towns (Second Kings 17:24). The Assyrians** treated **their** conquered **peoples** differently than the Babylonians would later in history. Whereas the Babylonians took the best and the brightest back to Babylon and killed the rest, **the Assyrians** brought their own citizens to the conquered area, intermarried with them and therefore assimilated them into **Assyrian** culture. This is, of course, what **Yonah** had feared would happen. Eventually the Jews in the southern kingdom of Judah viewed their northern brethren as inferior half-breeds, despised them, and wanted nothing to do with them (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Gw – The Parable of the Good Samaritan**).

As previously mentioned (**Az – Jonah's Anger and the LORD's Mercy**), **Yonah** said **God** was **slow to anger**. Aren't we glad that's the case? If **He** were inclined to **angry** outbursts, all of us would be suffering every moment of the day. Every form of solace shows us that **ADONAI** has a tendency to bestow kindness. Knowing that the holy, all-powerful **God** could be **angry** and yet is slow to yield to it should make us reconsider any **anger** we feel when betrayed, belittled, or just ignored. This should cause us to think about two things: First, it should cause us to question any **anger** we feel toward **God**. Knowing **He** could and should be **angry** with us, and yet, chooses not to be, should challenge us to rethink our position. Secondly, when we realize the gap between **ADONAI's** character and ours, we should consider our great need for **God's** assistance in molding us **into His image (Romans 8:29; First Corinthians 15:49** and **Colossians 3:10).**

Since, from a human perspective, we may feel justified in our **anger** towards another or even toward **HaShem**, the only way we can ever be **slow to anger** is if **the Ruach haKodesh** compels us in that direction. **The LORD** gave us **His Spirit** for many reasons – companionship, comfort, fellowship, guidance, and counsel to name a few. But **He** also gave us **His Ruach** for empowerment. As believers, we should be empowered to live beyond our normal human capabilities. While we will never achieve perfection in any of **God's** attributes, we can experience the work of **the Holy Spirit** in ever increasing measure. In other words, we can be sanctified. We can and should expect to see the fruit of **God's** work in our lives as **He** changes us daily **(Galatians 5:16-23)**.

But instead of answering **ADONAI**, **Yonah** went **out and sat down at a place east of the city (4:5a). God** tried to engage **His prophet** in **his** distress, but **Jonah** wasn't ready to talk (**He** does answer the question when it is asked again in **4:9**). Cain was asked the same question in **Genesis 4:6**. He didn't answer either, but instead went out and killed his brother Abel (see my commentary on **Genesis Bj – Your Brother's Blood Cries Out to Me from the Ground**). **Jonah** was at a similar point of moral decision in **his** relationship with **God**.

Yonah hoped that **the LORD** would still destroy **the city** in spite of **the Ninevites'** repentance. So just in case that happened, **the reluctant prophet** did not want to be in **the city**, of course, so **he** went to a hill on **the east**, outside **of the cit**y, to wait out **the forty days (3:4). He** waited to see if **the Ninevites** repentance and **God's mercy** would endure. **There he made himself a shelter** (Hebrew: *sukkah*) to protect **his** bleached skin, which was no doubt painfully sensitive to **the sun**. This **shelter** was reminiscent of **the shelter** built in the desert by the Israelites as they wandered for forty years. **ADONAI** commanded that these **shelters** be built every year as a remembrance (the feast of **Booths** or *sukkoth*) of **God's** provision for **His** people during those years of wilderness wandering **(Ex 23:16; Deut 16:13-16).** So **Jonah sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city** from a distance **(4:5b).** When **he** thought that **God** might destroy **the** wicked **Ninevites** it probably brought a smile to **his** face. Yes, there was still a chance that strict justice would be inflicted.

A picture lesson: Then ADONAI God provided an object lesson in order to demonstrate **His mercy** and **compassion**. Notice that at each of the crucial junctures in the book, the expanded title **ADONAI God** is used **(1:9, 2:1, 2:6** and here**)**. Perched there like a vulture on the edge of **the city** awaiting its destruction, **the sun** beat down mercilessly on **the disgruntled prophet**. Sitting in **his booth**, the roof probably **provided** little protection. **He** must have been miserable baking under **the sun's** glaring rays. So **ADONAI God provided a leafy plant (4:6a).** It is interesting that, in this very short book, the word **provided** is used four times to tell us about special acts of **God**. First **God provided a whale**, then **He provided a plant**, then **He provided a worm**, and finally **ADONAI provided a scorching east wind (Jonah 1:17, 4:6, 7-8)**, all for special purposes related to **Jonah's** calling and ministry.[100]

God provided a leafy plant (4:6b). The plant (Hebrew: *qiyqalown*) is apparently hard to identify, but the Hebrew name is similar to an Egyptian name for the castor-oil plant, known for its rapid growth, tall height, and large leaves. **God provided a**

leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah in one night **to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort** of **the suns'** rays. Whether it would grow this rapidly in one night, however, is very doubtful. More likely, it was a miracle plant **and Jonah was extremely happy about the plant (4:6c). Yonah**, incidentally, used the same word when **he** described **himself** as **extremely unhappy** (which I translated: **furious**), at **God's** decision to spare **Nineveh (4:1)**. In fact, the same Hebrew word *gadol*, is also used to describe **Nineveh** as **a great city**, **the storm** as **a great storm**, and **the whale** as **a great whale (Jonah 1:2, 1:12** and **1:17). Jonah** apparently liked to use it. For that matter, all **his** experiences were so out of the ordinary as to require superlatives to describe them. **He** was **furious** about the divine protection given to others but excited and thrilled to receive a bit of **his** own divine protection.

*Now I admit I'm not the one to judge **Jonah**. I'm keenly aware of how a change in temperature can put a smile back on my face. I can't stand being cold, and when I'm warm, I suppose I can be just as happy as **Yonah** was with **his plant**. So I can relate with such a simple change causing me to compare it with my lack of concern about things of more significance. Divine interruptions have a way of making me more aware of my inconsistent heart. When I'm excited about my own needs being met but not nearly so anxious to see **God's** purposes served, it's apparent I've got some work to do. Divine interruptions often expose my lack of sensitivity to **His** purposes and absorption with myself. When the insignificant makes my heart pound while the truly significant gets a shrug, it's clear that I've got a long way to go.*

The phrase **to ease his discomfort** literally means *to deliver him from his calamity*. The Hebrew language here invites a three-way comparison between **Jonah's** first calamity in the storm, **Nineveh's** pending calamity, and **Yonah's discomfort** with **the sun**. **He** was **extremely happy** and grateful about **his** resurrection from the dead. **He** was also **extremely happy** about **his** deliverance from **the discomfort** of **the sun**. Now you would think that it would have softened **Jonah's** heart toward **the Ninevites**. Once again **ADONAI** showed divine favor to **Yonah**, and yet **he** was hesitant to extend mercy to others. **YHVH** uses this contrast in **His** final question to **His chosen prophet**.

*Are we willing to extend grace and mercy to others as **the LORD** has extended it to us? When **God** graciously takes care of our needs, when **ADONAI** is there through our discomfort, or calms our anxieties, our first inclination should be to extend grace and mercy to others. **His** grace should make us more gracious to others, and **His** mercy should likewise make us more merciful. How often do you see this*

*displayed inside or outside the congregations of **God**?*

But the LORD . . . Here is another **But**, and it's now **YHVH's** move. **God** is sovereign and **He** saw to it that **Jonah's extreme happiness** about the shade lasted for only one **day**. **At dawn the next day Elohim sent a worm to attack the plant so that it withered (4:7).** The castor oil plant is said to both grow quickly and deteriorate quickly, but again this seems to have been a miraculous **worm** to destroy it that fast. The emphasis here is not on **God's** love and mercy but on **His** disciplining activity. **God** had a special lesson for **His prophet**.

Type 7. The worm was distinctive in another sense as well, although this could hardly have been obvious to Jonah himself at that time. It was known as "the scarlet worm" (Hebrew: *towla*), as being the source of the red fluid used in those days to produce beautiful crimson and scarlet cloth. In fact, the same word was actually translated "crimson" in Isaiah 1:18, speaking of the sins being "red like crimson." The strikingly significant thing about this word is that it is used prophetically as applied to Christ on the cross in the marvelous 22nd Psalm. There He says, "But I am a worm" (Psalm 22:6). Not just any worm, but the scarlet worm, whose blood-red fluid emerging from the body of the female worm as she dies in giving birth to her young, points eloquently to the shed blood of Yeshua Messiah as He died to bring us life (Romans 5:8).[101]

With the shade from **the leaves** of **the plant** suddenly gone, **Jonah** was again subjected to the searing heat of the Assyrian desert. **When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Yonah** is now completely worn out – **he** was absurdly joyful over the provision of **the plant**, and now too, like all **his** religious aspiration, had **withered**. **The LORD** had given and now **the LORD** had taken away **(Job 1:21)**.[102] **Jonah** almost had sunstroke and was extremely **"faint"**. **He** used the same root word as in **verse 7** for how **the worm "attacked" the plant** to indicate **the blazing** of **the "scorching" east wind. Yonah** felt **he** might **wither** under **the hot sun** just as **the plant** had **withered** because of the **worm**. Not only had **he** been sent on a mission **he** didn't want, and was disgusted at the outcome, but **he** couldn't even find a comfortable place to recuperate.

Yonah was not only emotionally spent **he** was also physically tormented. Nothing seemed to be going **his** way. **He** was so distraught that for a second time **(4:3) he** considered **death** to be more suitable **than life,**[103] and said: **It would be better**

for me to die than to live (4:8). The encounters with **the plant**, **the worm** and **the wind** had not taught **him** anything, and **He** has not moved beyond **his** wish **to die.** In three verses **Yonah** moved from **anger** to **happiness**, and then back to **depression**. By then **he** was ready to listen to **God** again.

A verbal lesson: The book concludes with a question for **Jonah** about **God's** motivation. **YHVH** came to **Jonah** and asked: **Is it right for you to be angry about the plant (4:9)?** The terse inquiry, like the pricking of conscience, meets with self-justification: "I *am* right to be angry!" **Yeshua** depicted the same attitude in **the elder son** of the parable, who resented the joyous reception given to **his** wayward brother, **"Look! All these years I've been slaving away for you," he said to his father, "and never disobeyed your orders" (Luke 15:28-30).** The last remark was not true of **Yonah**, but both men were preoccupied with vindicating themselves. They were unshakably convinced of their own grounds for doubt. But **Jonah's** last words were quite literally death: **It would be better for me to die than to live (4:8).** In questioning and quarreling with **ADONAI he** loses sight of all that makes life worth living.[104]

And then with a thirty-nine-word speech (in Hebrew) that balanced **Yonah's** thirty-nine-word speech (in Hebrew) in **4:2**, **ADONAI** ends the book by teaching **Jonah** the essential lesson **he** had been missing all along. **He** was not only a **God** of absolute holiness and perfect justice who **does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7b)**, but also **One** who was **maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin (Exodus 34:7a)**. **He** declared: **But you have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight (4:10).** Like Abraham, Moses and **Jeremiah**, **the disgruntled prophet** protested to **ADONAI. His** complaint came in **4:1** when **the Ninevites** repented **(3:10)**. It's as if **the Lord** said, "Let's analyze this **anger** of **yours**, **Jonah** . . . It represents **your** concern over **the plant** that **you** loved so much – but what did **it** really mean to **you**? **Your** attachment to **it** couldn't have been very deep, for **it** was here one day and gone the next. **Your** concern was dictated by self-interest, not by genuine love. **You** never had the devotion of a gardener. If **you** feel as bad as **you** say **you** do, what would **you** expect the *real* **Gardner** to feel like, who tended **the plant** and watched **it** grow only to see **it wither** and **die**? This is how **I** feel about **Nineveh**, only much more so. All those **people**, all those **animals** . . . **I** made them. **I** have cherished **them** all these years. **Nineveh** has cost **Me** no end of effort, and **it** means the world to **Me**. **Your** pain is nothing compared to **Mine** when **I** think about

their destruction."[105]

Reflection on what scene seven as a whole says about ADONAI: The last verse offers us a peek into the heart of **God** when **He** said: **And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left – and also many animals' (4:11)?** For the second time **God** asked **Yonah** a question. Is **the Creator** obliged to ask **Jonah's** permission in order to exercise **His** mercy? The ironic question is intended to bring **Yonah** to repentance. Does **Jonah** really want to find fault with **his God** for being too gracious and loving?[106]

If this is a reference to children who are too young to know **the right hand from their left hand**, and therefore innocent of sin and undeserving of death, then the total population of **the Assyrian** triangle (made up of **Nineveh** and **her** satellite **cities** of **Rehoboth Ir, Calah** and **Resen**) would have been around 600,000 **people**. **ADONAI's** concern was for all **the people** for whom both **God** and **Jonah** ministered. **God** labored through **His** grace and **Jonah** labored through **his** experiences. To the first question, **Yonah** walked off in a huff and refused to answer **(4:4-5)**. This time the lack of an immediate response leaves us dangling.

Jonah refrains from adding anything that might detract from the force of the question with which God concludes the book. Whether or not Yonah was convinced, and what happened to him afterwards, are unimportant matters compared with the lesson that is so convincingly taught. But if **the rebel prophet** had not come around, such a book would never have been written! **Jonah** had no right to **God's** favor, so who was **he** to deny it to anyone else? The answer to **the LORD's** question in **4:11** undoubtedly ended up being, "Yes," and that "yes" expresses a unique emphasis in the book of **Jonah**. The entire Bible tells the story of **God's** love for the insiders, the righteous of the TaNaKh and the New Covenant saints. But the book of **Jonah** has a special concern for **ADONAI's** love for the outsiders, **the people** of the world – and even for **their animals**.[107]

When you face trying circumstances please know you can run to a secret place: **He hides me in the shelter of His presence when there is trouble; He will keep me safe from those who conspire against me. He keeps me hidden in His tent far from accusing tongues. He sets me high on a rock (Psalm 27:5** and **31:20 NLT).** Like the eye of the storm, peace prevails in the presence of **ADONAI**, even when chaos arises all around. **God** has a sacred place of immunity from

anything outside **His** will for us. **He** will meet you there, offering you the best of **Himself** and **His** purposes. Consider your life circumstances as divine lessons. Ask **the Lord** to open your eyes to see what **He** may be teaching you. Then open your heart to receive and retain those lessons.[108]