

# Jonah Flees from the LORD

## 1: 1-16

The first chapter of **Yonah** introduces the larger theme of life and death. It addresses the life and death of **the wicked Ninevites**, against whom **Jonah** was sent to preach, and the life and death of **the pagan sailors**, whose **ship is threatened to break up in the storm**. At its center is the life and death of **Jonah**, who is thrown into a raging **sea** and is swallowed by **a whale**. **Yonah's** struggle for life before **ADONAI** will be partially resolved in **his** prayer of thanksgiving in **chapter two**, and later, in **his** conversation with **YHVH** in **chapter four**. The resolution of **the Ninevites'** struggle is resolved by **Jonah's** preaching, **their** repentance and **God's** compassion in **chapter three**.

**Chapter one** only resolves the life and death struggle of **the sailors**. **Their** terror in the midst of **the storm** has **them** frantically searching for a way to survive. **Yonah's** reluctant confession to **them** in the midst of **their** distress and **his** willingness to be tossed overboard into **the sea** eventually result in the calming of **the storm**. **His** words also inadvertently result in **the sailors'** conversion to worship **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. Even in reluctance and in the face of **his** certain death by drowning, **Jonah** fulfills **HaShem's** call on **his** life by **his** witness to faith. **Yonah** testifies that **ADONAI** is the source of life and **he** later proclaims that being separated from **His** presence is the same as death.<sup>16</sup> So the story of a **reluctant prophet** teaches us how no one is beyond the reach of **God's** hand. Just as **Jonah's** attempt to escape the divine intervention of **ADONAI** proved unsuccessful, we, too, are incapable of eluding **His** grasp.

I am **Jonah**.

I want to serve **God** . . . as long as it's convenient.

I desire to do **His** will . . . until it's a tad uncomfortable.

I want to hear **His** Word . . . as long as its message is one I'm supposed to give to others.

I don't want to have my plans interrupted.

Oh yes. I am **Jonah**, and I suspect that in one way or another, you are too.<sup>17</sup>