

Then They Took Jonah and Threw Him Overboard, and the Raging Sea Grew Calm

1: 11-16

DIG: Would the sailors have been converted if Jonah had not fled from the LORD? Would Yonah have begun to realize the extent of ADONAI's far-reaching love and providence? In this file, **what are the two ways that Yonah is a type of Christ?** In this file, **what are two significant principles** that are listed for reconciling with ADONAI? How is irony used in the book? What does **scene two as a whole say about God?**

REFLECT: Has an unbeliever ever done something that shamed you because it was more Christlike than what you'd done? What effect did this have on you? What spiritual signs do you think you can look for that reveal you are headed in the wrong direction? Is the Lord allowing divine discipline in your life right now? If so, are you yielding to it or fighting against it?

Commentary on scene two: The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us" (1:11)? With this last question from the Phoenician sailors, the interrogation was complete. The culprit was then forced to disclose his guilt. By this time, Jonah was surely sorry that he had tried to run away from ADONAI. Not only was he about to die, but so were all the sailors on board. If all this had not generated true repentance, it is hard to imagine what would.

"Pick me up and hurl me into the sea," Yonah replied . . . Note that he did not throw himself into the sea, for there is a vast difference between an awakened conscience and a despairing conscience. **Type 2. Yeshua and Yonah both went willingly to their deaths. Jesus said, "The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord" (John 10:17-18). And Jonah was not to kill himself, but to be killed.**

. . . **and it will become calm."** Once Jonah is dead the storm will end because it will have fulfilled its purpose. The disagreeable prophet will be dead and the sailors will be able to go on their way in peace. **Type 3. Both Jesus and Jonah were willing to die to save others. Here, Yonah knew that if he were thrown into the vast ocean it meant certain death, but that the sailors would be saved. Likewise Yochanan said, "We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us" (First John 3:16a NLT).**

But how did he know? There is an implication that **Jonah** had heard from **God**. Now **Yonah** had first heard **the word of YHVH** when told: **Get up, go to the great city of Nineveh, and preach against it (1:1-2a)**. So if **the LORD** were going to speak to **him** again, this would probably be the time to do it. How **God** spoke to **him** is not disclosed, but somehow **He** spoke to **Jonah** and this time, **the servant of ADONAI** followed orders.

Yonah's answers to **the sailors'** questions and **his** subsequent actions give us a foreshadowing of **four significant principles** in the B'rit Chadashah for reconciling with **the LORD**. **The first significant principle: We need to acknowledge our sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth of His Word is not in us; in addition, we make God out to be a liar (First Yochanan 1:8-10).**

Thus **Yonah** confessed: **I know it is my fault [Aramaic: *beselli*] that this great storm has come upon you" (1:12)**. **Jonah** confesses **he** was worthy of death and was willing to endure the punishment. This is the principle of substitution: **Jonah's** life in place of **theirs**. How like **Jesus** this is (although **Christ** did not bring about the calamity as **Yonah** did by **his** disobedience). But if **Yonah's** words were noble, the acts of **the sailors** were noble also.⁵¹

These were decent **men** and **they** respected human life. So **instead of hurling Jonah** overboard, **the sailors** did **their best** to row back to dry land. Just as **Yonah** thought he could run from the conflict at **Nineveh**, **the sailors** think **they** can row out of the storm. **Ships in those days normally sailed close to the coast, and were at most times within sight of the land. The rabbis teach that having inferred that Jonah had sinned by fleeing from the land of Isra'el, the sailors exerted themselves to take him back there and put him ashore in the hope that this would meet God's demand. But despite their best efforts they could not get back to shore. The lesson is subtle. ADONAI is the Grandmaster of both the sea and the dry land. The graphic language now heightens the tension: For the sea grew even wilder than before (1:13). But God will not allow an easy ending here. Each time His storm is mentioned, the sailors move closer to the truth.**⁵²

ADONAI had told **Yonah** to preach against **Nineveh (1:2)** but **the reluctant prophet** chose not to. The captain asked **Jonah** to call upon **his God** in prayer (1:6), and again, **Jonah** does not do so. **Finally, they** realized that **they** would have to follow **Yonah's** suggestion. But before **they** hurled **Yonah** into the sea, **they** prayed for forgiveness. **The sailors** turned to the very **God** who was responsible for **the storm** and **cried out to ADONAI** (the only such prayer in the Bible), **"Please ADONAI, Please! Don't let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you LORD, have done as You**

pleased (Psalm 115:2-3; Jonah 1:14) as evidenced by the lot which fell on Jonah" (1:7). Not that they regarded Jonah as innocent, but they prayed that their action should not be accounted as willful murder. Earlier, they had been worshiping their own gods, but now they worshipped the only true God, the God of the Jewish prophet, the God of Isra'el.

The book is full of ironies. Here is a true prophet who refuses to prophecy, yet the sailors turn to the One true God. He runs from the God of the sea on a ship. He hates the Ninevites and only prophecies reluctantly, yet they all turn to YHVH. The LORD saves all the sailors and all Nineveh from certain death, yet Jonah dies. All this irony has a purpose for the reader. Things are not as simple as they seem. Yonah's protest and dialogue with ADONAI raises complex questions about God's relationship to the wicked of the world. Yonah's ironic responses make us take a second look at the prophet who says more by his objections and conversations with YHVH than by the few words of his formal prophecy in 3:4. Jonah reveals God's identity and way in the world through his conversations and arguments. He's not a typical prophet, but he's true to his calling, even in protest.⁵³

Jonah's answers to the sailors' question in 1:12 and his subsequent actions give us a foreshadowing of four significant principles in the Renewed Covenant for reconciling with ADONAI. The second significant principle: We need to accept God's discipline. Then they took Yonah and hurled him overboard. By the time the sailors got around to tossing Jonah overboard, they'd become pretty used to hurling items into the sea. They'd most likely already thrown precious metals, horses and mules, ivory, and various other products into the Mediterranean. As soon as they did the raging sea grew calm (1:15). There is no evidence of a struggle, and it appears that he did not fight God's discipline. My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when He corrects you, for the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child (Hebrews 12:6 NLT).

This is the fourth use of *tul* (to hurl), which echoes throughout the chapter, and draws attention to the violent act made necessary because of the disobedient prophet. This is only one of the words that keep recurring, not because Jonah has a limited vocabulary, but because he is literary master. The pattern underlying 1:3 is discernible on a larger scale in 1:4-16 (see AI - Jonah and the Violent Storm), and one of the characteristics of a chiasmic form is the recurring word, phrase of ideas.⁵⁴

The sailors' use of YHVH's name throughout the latter part of chapter one shows the awe with which they revered this God from whom the wayward prophet had the nerve to rebel. Can you imagine how their wonder intensified when, after throwing Jonah overboard, the

raging sea grew calm? HaShamayim had proven Himself to be a God of wonders who deserved to be worshiped and obeyed. In fact, they were so stunned by this awesome God that they begged Him to have mercy on them for throwing the rebellious prophet overboard when all their other options for saving themselves had been exhausted. Again, those pagan sailors had more regard for human life when Yonah, the believer, had no regard for the lives of the Ninevites.⁵⁵

Reflection on what scene two as a whole says about ADONAI: Seized with great fear of ADONAI, they offered a sacrifice and made vows to Him (1:16). He had done what their gods could not do. The sudden calm answered the sailors' prayers. The calm also revealed that the storm had resulted from Jonah's disobedience and that an innocent life had not been snuffed out by throwing Yonah overboard. They offered a sacrifice immediately on the ship. The words here refer to the offering of animal sacrifices (Exodus 24:5; Leviticus 22:29; Deuteronomy 18:3). And made vows of further sacrifices when they returned to land. The nature of this kind of vow probably meant that they knew ADONAI was the only God, and would worship Him alone. The rabbis teach that the Gentile sailors came to believe in the God Abraham, Isaac and Jacob despite Jonah's bad testimony before them.⁵⁶ All this happened as a result of Yonah's disobedience. God continues to be the Grandmaster in the story, causing the storm, and through it, bringing glory to His name.

The story, like the sea about which it reports, has now come to a place of resting and calm. But what about Jonah? The reader or hearer of the story cannot help but wonder what has happened to him. Yonah has disappeared into the sea, but this is a sea made by Jonah's God (1:9) who does as He pleases (1:15). The story is clearly one that is "to be continued."

Do you think a season of your life was wasted with no redeeming qualities? The LORD can use anything. He's the Master of taking the bits and pieces of our leftovers and making something amazing out of it. He gives beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair (Isaiah 61:3). Have you, like the runaway prophet, mishandled the divine interruptions that have come your way? God can use anything, even the leftovers, for His glory.⁵⁷