

Jonah's Prayer

2: 2-9

DIG: What do you make of the fact that Yonah prays from the belly of the whale and uses verbs that are past tense, as though ADONAI had already answered his prayer? While Jonah may be safe for the moment, how is he still in "deep trouble?" **What are the two ways that Yonah is a type of Christ?** Where does he show assurance of deliverance in spite of appearances to the contrary? Compare 2:3 with 1:15. How does Jonah view his circumstances? How does Yonah view God's sovereignty? How does Yonah view God's purposes?

REFLECT: When have you felt like Jonah - far from God, trapped in a situation beyond your control? How then was your life brought up from the pit? Where in your life are you desperate enough to pray with hope, as Yonah does? Have you turned your back on God so many times that you wonder if there are any more chances left?

Commentary on scene three: This song of **thanksgiving** is built on a pattern of individual **thanksgiving** and is best understood in the context of **psalms** of this type. These **psalms** express a grateful response to God for a specific act of deliverance, such as healing from illness (**Psalms 30, 41, 103, 147**), deliverance from enemies (**Psalms 18, 92, 118, 132**), or simply rescue from trouble (**Psalm 66:14**). They assume the presence of a congregation gathered for worship. **Jonah's** prayer here is to a great degree made up of phrases from **the psalms**. Wording duplicated by in **the Psalter** is underlined and then quoted.⁶⁵

This was actually **Jonah's third prayer** in which he made reference to his two previous prayers. He said: In my distress I called to ADONAI, and He answered me (**Psalm 120:1**). From the belly of Sh'ol I called to You for help (**Psalm 30:2**). The Hebrew word for belly in **verse 2** is *not* the same word used in **verse 1**. Here in **verse 2:2**, the Hebrew word used for belly in reference to **Sh'ol** is the word that normally means *belly of* or *midst of*. The fact that there are two different Hebrew words used in these two verses points out that the author is talking about two different places: *in the abdomen* of **the great whale** in **verse 1** and *in the midst of* **Sh'ol** in **verse 2**. All through the Scriptures, **Sh'ol** is located in the center of the earth and is a place for both the righteous of the TaNaKh and the departed unrighteous (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Hx - The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus**). **So Jonah was in Sh'ol, and while he was there, he prayed the second prayer out of the belly of Sh'ol.**

Maybe you have tried to hide from God, or maybe you think even He can't see you. Please know this: If ADONAI can see and hear the prayer of a rebellious prophet from the belly of a whale, then He can see and hear you wherever you are, or whatever you've done. But that's nothing to be afraid of. He's always there, and He cares!⁶⁶

The content of **Jonah's second prayer** was to be delivered out of the state of disobedience in which he died. But He asked for another chance to fulfill his *commission*. And because Yonah was one of the righteous of the TaNaKh, he was not in the **agony and fire** portion of Sh'ol; rather, he was at **Abraham's side**, or **Paradise**, in the place of blessing (Luke 16:22a). While he was there, God heard his voice (Psalm 31:22). **The real miracle of Jonah was his resurrection from the dead in the midst of Sh'ol (2:2c CJB).**

Yonah was thrown into the ocean. For You hurled me (Psalm 102:10) into the deep (Psalm 69:2 and 15) into the very heart of the seas (2:3a). Actually, it was the sailors who hurled Jonah into the sea, but the Galilean prophet recognized God's hand in it. At that point Yonah describes what he experienced while he was in the water. He is pictured as bobbing up and down on the surface of the ocean as the waves crashed over his head. He said: **And the currents swirled about me; all Your waves and breakers swept over me** (Psalm 42:7 and Jonah 2:3b). Consequently, it is among the sickening waves of fear and dread that it is possible to be in touch with God. Jesus also experienced the same sense of lonely dread in the garden of Gethsemane. **My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.** Going a little further, His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground and He prayed: **Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what you will** (Mark 14:34-36; Luke 22:44).

Yonah's first prayer was prayed while he was still alive floating in the water. I thought to myself, **"I have been banished from your sight"** (Psalm 31:22). He recognized that it was ADONAI who hurled him into the ocean, and he realized he was about to die. When Yonah began to experience the pain of separation from God that he so much wanted, his thoughts turned back to God: **Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple (2:4).** He knew He would once again be in *the presence* of the Shechinah glory in the Temple.

The description of Yonah's drowning is then given. The waters of the Mediterranean Sea closed in over me. He began to sink below the surface of the water to the point of death (Psalm 69:1; Jeremiah 4:10). The great deep (Psalm 69:1) engulfed me (Psalm 18:4, 116:3), sinking even deeper, and seaweed was wrapped around my head (2:5 NASB). He finally sank down to the ocean floor where the seaweed can be found. This is a picture of a drowning man. Herein lies the ultimate terror. Returning to Gethsemane: the Lord said: **My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death** (Mark 14:34a).

Then Jonah's death is described. I sank down to the roots of the mountains that went deep beneath the earth to its foundations, to a land whose bars would close me in forever. The word bars means *the bars or gates of sh'ol*. The expression: would close me in forever pictures physical death (Job 38:17; Isaiah 38:10; Psalm 9:13, 107:18). If there has been any doubt in the reader's mind up to this point that Jonah was dead, then this verse should dissolve every dubious thought. This language can only be explained on the basis of death. While his body floated down to the bottom of the sea, his soul went into Sh'ol (2:6a). **Type 5. Jonah is a type of Messiah because both Yeshua and His servant died** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Lv - Jesus's Second Three Hours on the Cross: the Wrath of God**).

In both a spiritual and physical sense, Yonah has hit **bedrock**. But there is a unique mercy to be found down there. The moment of entrapment is the beginning of freedom. This is the sort of relief we find when we finally admit that we have no power of our own to save ourselves, and are forced to trust someone else. Like the moment of surrender when being put under before open-heart surgery. **The bedrock is Christ Himself. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27a). The very rock which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Iy - By What Authority Are You Doing These Things**).

Next Yonah's resurrection is described: But you, ADONAI my God, brought me up alive from the pit (Psalm 103:4 and Jonah 2:6b). **Type 6. Yonah is a type of Christ because both the son of Amnatti and the Son of Man were resurrected to life** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Mc - The Resurrection of Jesus: The Second Sign of Jonah**). The Hebrew word for the pit is synonymous with Sh'ol. And the phrase brought me up alive from the pit is a Jewish idiom for *the grave and death*. Therefore, **the sign of Jonah** is the sign of death and resurrection. This is the same expression used prophetically of the Meshiach in Psalm 16:10, where Christ's body was not to suffer corruption because He would be raised from the pit. Just as Psalm 16:10 points to the resurrection of Christ, so this verse should be taken in the same way, referring to the resurrection of Yonah. So the great whale picked up Jonah's body while his soul went down to Sh'ol. The separation of the body from the soul is another indication of physical death. Then Jonah prayed for a second chance, and that prayer was answered. God's servant was resurrected while his body was still in the great whale.

Then Jonah's resurrection is summarized. When my life was slipping away (Psalm 142:3-4), I remembered you (Psalm 143:5), Lord. The phrase when my life was ebbing away is a figure of speech for the departure of the soul. Yonah then remembered ADONAI

and prayed his **second prayer** mentioned in **verse 2:2c** from the belly of Sh'ol. His **second prayer** was answered and **Jonah** was resurrected while he was still in the belly of the **great whale**. Then **Yonah** prayed his **third prayer** and mentioned the two previous prayers. And his prayer rose to **God**, and to **His holy Temple** (Psalm 5:7, 138:2 and Jonah 2:7).

After it is recognized that **Jonah** was actually resurrected, it is easy to understand why **Yeshua** made reference to His own resurrection as being **a sign of Jonah**. After Isra'el rejected His messianic claims (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Ek - It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, that This Fellow Drives Out Demons**), Jesus said He would give no more signs except **the sign of Jonah**, the sign of resurrection (**Mattityahu 12:39-40** and **16:1-4**). **Just as Yonah died and rose again, Christ would die and rise again. It is no accident that the expression used of the resurrection of the prophet in Jonah 2:6 is also used of the Messiah in Psalm 16:10.**

The prayer of **Yonah** ended with his recommitment. Those who worship worthless idols (Psalm 31:6) turn away from **God's love for them (2:8)**. Those who worship false gods are said to forfeit any mercy that they might have obtained from **ADONAI**. This was the condition of **Nineveh**, a city that was totally given over to idolatry.

Then **Yonah** made his vow. **But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice (Psalm 116:17) to you. What I have vowed I will fulfill (Psalm 22:25 and 116:18)**. His vow was to go to **Nineveh** and fulfill his commission. So looking ahead to that second chance He said, when I get there, I will say: **Salvation comes from ADONAI (Psalm 3:8, Jonah 2:9).**⁶⁷ In most cases, the Hebrew word **vow** implies a promised gift, not merely a course of action as implied by the English word. In other words, **Jonah** was not simply agreeing to go to **Nineveh**, he was also agreeing to return to Yerushalayim to offer **the LORD** the proper ritual sacrifice in the Temple. He was specifically referring to the peace offering (see my commentary on **Exodus Fg - The Peace Offering**). True sacrificial obedience would cost **Yonah** something more than just a one-time decision to go to **Nineveh**. Likewise, we must be willing to obey the small details along the path to obedience to **the Lord** as well.⁶⁸

The final words of this song of **thanksgiving** captures the essence of what the chapter teaches in the form of a motto: **Salvation comes from ADONAI**. The Hebrew word for **salvation** here is *yeshuatah*, from *yeshuah*. When the angel **Gabriel** announced to **Mary** that she would give birth to a **Son** and she was to give Him the name **Yeshua** (Hebrew: *yeshuah*), for **He will save His people from their sins (Luke 1:31 and Matthew 1:21b)**. The believer who hears this conclusion to **Yonah's** song of **thanksgiving** in its original language cannot miss the word that sounds so much like His actual name . . . *Yeshuah* . . . which has meant **salvation** for the peoples of the world (**Yochanan 3:16**).⁶⁹

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 YHVH. **The third significant principle: We need to ask God for forgiveness.** One word summarizes the essence of this step - repentance. Repentance has two aspects: confession, which means *agreeing with God about any sin or rebellion in our lives and asking Him to rid us of that for which we have no more use;* and change, which means *changing our mind, attitude and actions.* **If we [agree with God about] our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9).**

Jonah had come to the point of agreeing with **God** about **his** sin. Clearly **Yonah** was one of the righteous of the TaNaKh . . . that wasn't the concern. Previously, however, **the disobedient prophet** had a problem agreeing with **God** and changing **his** mind, attitude and actions to comply with **the Grandmaster.** **His** heart was out of alignment with the heart of **God.** **Jesus** addressed this issue with the Pharisees (**John 5:39-40**). Yet after **his** resurrection, **Jonah's** words not only reveal an agreement with **God** but also a willingness to act differently. True repentance requires a change in direction.⁷⁰