

The Book of Jonah, Chapter 2: A Call from the Depths

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1. Jonah 2:1

וַיִּמְן ה' דָּג גָּדוֹל לִבְלָעַ אֶת-יֹנָה וַיִּהְיֶי יוֹנָה בְּמִעֵי הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלֹת.

And the Lord appointed a big fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

2. Midrash, Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 10:7

רבי טרפון אומר: ממונה היה אותו הדג לבלוע את יונה מששת ימי בראשית, שנאמר (יונה ב, א): "וַיִּמְן ה' דָּג גָּדוֹל לִבְלָעַ אֶת יוֹנָה"

Rabbi Tarfon said: That fish was specially appointed from the six days of Creation to swallow up Jonah, as it is said, "And the Lord *had* appointed a big fish to swallow up Jonah" (*ibid.*)

3. Sod Mesharim ad loc. (chabad.org tr.)

Those sixteen days that Israel was missing the manna, since they did not eat it for a complete forty years - G-d took this manna and sustained the fish so that Jonah would not be digested in its intestines, and Jonah, too, ate within it from this manna. Therefore, it is stated, the letters sixteen [days of] manna. Similarly, and He appointed a kikayon, for he ate four omers; therefore, it says four times (4: 6 ff.). And in Greek, manna is called "kika." For that reason, it is stated: i.e, manna in Greek. -[Sod Mesharim]

4. Tosafot Yom Tov to Avot 5:6 (Sefaria tr.)

כלומר כי כל האותות לשעתה ולעתם נבראו ונעשו. ולא הושמו בטבע לשיהיו נעשים לעת ההיא ואע"פ שכבר הקיפה בזה ידיעתו יתברך כבר קדם במשנת הכל צפוי משנה י"א פ"ג שאין הידיעה מכרחת הדברים האפשריים. והנה כל הנסים תלויים ועומדים באפשרות הבחירה שביד האדם. כי כולם ר"ל הנסים בשביל בני אדם היו.

This means that all the signs were created and done at that particular moment in time, and were not implanted into nature such that they should come into existence and be done at that moment. And although His knowledge already encompassed them we have already noted above on the mishnah of "all is seen", 3:15, that His knowledge does not turn the possible into the necessary. As such, all miracles depend on what a person chooses from among the things that are possible, as they are all done for people.

5. Radak to Jonah 2:1

והא-ל ית' הזמינו לפי שעה שבשעה שהוטל יונה בים הזמין הדג שבלעו ולא טבע בים.

G-d prepared according to this time, that at the time when Jonah was thrust into the river, the fish swallowed him so that he would not drown in this river.

6. Malbim to Jonah 2:1

ה' הזמין במקום הזה דג גדול שבלעו כולו שלם ולא שבר עצמותיו.

G-d prepared in this place a big fish to swallow [Jonah] entirely whole, and not break his bones.

7. Ibn Ezra to Jonah 2:1

אין כח באדם לחיות במעי הדגה כפי שעה, ואף כי זה המספר רק במעשה נס.

One does not have the strength to survive in a fish's belly for even an hour! That [he was able to survive for three days] was only possible through a miracle.

8. Malbim to Jonah 2:1

שהאדם צריך שאיפת רוח קר מבחוץ, אולם באשר כבר נגזר עליו מיתה ונחשב כאילו נולד שנית שם לו ה' טבע העובר, הנוצר ומתקיים ט' חדשים במעי אמו מבלי שאיפת רוח.

For a person needs oxygen from outside. Since death was already decreed on him, it was as if he was born a second time like a fetus, who is former and sustained for nine months in its mother's womb, without needing oxygen.

9. Rashi to Jonah 2:1

דג גדול - זכר היה והיה עומד בריוח ולא נתן לב להתפלל רמז הקב"ה לדג והקיא לתוך פיה של נקבה שהיתה מלאה עוברי' והיה שם בדוחק ויתפלל שם שנאמר ממעי הדגה.

“A big fish [*dag*]” - It was a male, and he stood there with room, so that he did not think to pray. The Holy One, blessed he He, hinted to the fish, and it vomited him out into the mouth of a female, which was full of embryos, and it was crowded there, and he prayed there, as it is said: (verse 2) “from the belly of the fish [*dagah*].”

10. Jonah 2:2-3 (chabad.org tr.)

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל יוֹנָה אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹקָיו מִמְעֵי הַדָּגָה: וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִי אֱלֹהֵי נִינְוֵנִי מִבֶּטֶן שָׁאוּל שְׁמַעְתָּ קוֹלִי.

And Jonah prayed to the Lord his G-d, from the belly of the fish. And he said: **I called** out from my distress to the Lord, and He **answered** me; from the belly of the grave I **cried** out, You **heard** my voice.

11. Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus, *Gates of Prayer* p. 134

Keri'ah is the kind of *tefillah* where a person calls out to Hashem in clear recognition that Hashem hears him. He does so because it is clear to him that Hashem listens to his prayer and has the ability to fulfill his request. This is similar to a person who calls to his friend because he knows his friend is close by and hears his call.

Indeed, it is human nature to scream out in distress even if there is no one to hear the scream. But this is an act of *ne'akah* (groaning), not *keri'ah*. *Keri'ah* is only when a person turns primarily to someone specific and calls him. He addresses someone who actually hears his voice. He calls to him in order to make contact with him, to request something from him or to tell him something.

This is the foundation point of *tefillah* and all *avodas Hashem*: the simple perception that Hashem exists with us as a reality no less than that of any mineral, vegetable, animal or human that is standing in front of us. So is Hashem a living, true reality that is clear and straightforward. We speak to him and call to Him, and He hears us in the simplest sense that can be. The greater the simplicity with which a person grasps this point, the more Jewish he is and the more human he is and the more of an *oveid* Hashem he is.

12. Dr. Mendel Hirsch, *Commentary to Jonah 2:3*, p. 288-89

Yonah recognized that the most striking proof of the rescuing proximity of G-d was the fact that he was still alive and his mind was clear in circumstances which, without G-d's direct intervention, would inevitably have brought about his death. It was proof that G-d had forgiven him for his previous folly and would preserve him for future activity. The confinement, the lack of light and air of his prison, was no longer a source of terror for him. The narrower it was, with less air and light, the more powerfully convincing was the awareness of G-d's nearness, and the great happiness in that conviction. The darker the night which enveloped him, the brighter it became in his mind's eye. Out of the narrowness of confinement, his spirit soared upward to a sublime, broad outlook on men and their doings.

13. Jonah 2:9 (chabad.org tr.)

מְשַׁמְרִים הַבְּלִיָּשׁוֹא חֲסָדָם יַעֲזֹבוּ.

Those who keep worthless futilities abandon their kindness.

[*They carefully guard vanities that come to nothing, but that to which they should devote themselves in love, that they forsake – source 12, p. 291*]

14. Rashi to Jonah 2:9 (chabad.org tr.)

פָּרְקֵי דִר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר דְּרֵשׁוּ כָל־פִּי הַמַּלְחִים שֶׁעֲזָבוּ חֲסָדָם שֶׁהָיוּ מְטִיבִים לַעֲכוּ"ם וְנִתְגַּיְרוּ

In Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 10), they expounded this as an allusion to the sailors who abandoned their kindness that they were bestowing upon the idols and converted.

15. Ezekiel 33:11 (chabad.org tr.)

אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם חַי־אֲנִי | נָאָם | אֲד-נִי ה' אִם-אֶחָפֵּץ בְּמוֹת הַרְשָׁע פִּי אִם-בְּשׁוֹב רָשָׁע מִדְּרָכּוֹ וְחַיָּה שׁוֹב וְשׁוֹב מִדְּרָכֶיכֶם הֲרָעִים וְלָמָּה תָמוּתוּ בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Say to them: As I live, says the Lord G-d, I do not wish for the death of the wicked, but for the wicked to repent of his way so that he may live. Repent, repent of your evil ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel!

16. Jonah 2:5 (chabad.org tr.)

וְאָנֹכִי אֹמְרָתִי נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנְּגֵד עֵינַי אֶךְ אוֹסִיף לְהִבִּיט אֶל-הַיְכָל קִדְשְׁךָ.

And I said, "I have been driven away from before Your eyes," Indeed, I will continue to gaze upon Your Holy Temple.

17. Rashi to Jonah 2:5 (chabad.org tr.)

וְאֲנִי אֹמְרָתִי. כִּשְׁהַשְׁלִיכוּנִי אֶל הַיָּם הִנְנִי מֵת וְנִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנְּגֵד עֵינֶיךָ.

“and I said” - when they cast me into the sea, “Behold I am dead, and I have been driven away from before Your eyes.”

אֲךְ. רָאִיתִי שְׁקִימְתִנִּי כֹל אֵלּוּ הַיָּמִים יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אוֹסִיף לְהִבִּיט אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשְׁךָ.

“Instead” - I saw that You have kept me alive all these days. I know that I will continue to gaze upon Your Holy Temple.

18. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 7:7 (VBM tr.)

כַּמָּה מְעֻלָּה מְעֻלַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה. אֲמַשׁ הָיָה זֶה מְבַדֵּל מֵה' אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... צוֹעֵק וְאֵינוֹ נִעֲנָה... וְעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת וְטוֹרְפִין אוֹתָן בְּפָנָיו... וְהַיּוֹם הוּא מְדַבֵּק בְּשִׁכְיָנָה... צוֹעֵק וְנִעֲנָה מִיָּד...
How exalted is the level of *teshuva*! Only yesterday this sinner was separated from G-d, the Lord of Israel... He would call out [to G-d] without being answered... He would perform *mitzvot*, only to have them thrown back in his face... Today [after having repented], he clings to the Divine Presence... He calls out [to G-d] and is answered immediately.