

Introduction

1. Midrash Tanchuma, Leviticus 8

Rabbi Tarfon said: The fish was appointed from the six days of Creation to swallow Jonah, as it is written, "And Gd appointed a great fish."

2. Kings II 14:24-25

And [the king] did that which was wicked in Gd's eyes. He did not veer from any of the sins of Yeravam son of Nevat, who caused Israel to sin. He restored the boundary of Israel, from nearing Chamat to the Sea of the Aravah, as the Gd of Israel had declared via His servant, Jonah son of Amitai the prophet, from Gat haChefer.

Flight and Return

3. Jonah 1:1-3

And the word of Gd came to Jonah son of Amitai, to say: Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and call to her, for their evil has risen before Me. And Jonah rose to flee to Tarsus, from before Gd. And he descended to Jaffa, and he found a boat going to Tarsus, and he paid for it, and he descended into it to go with them to Tarsus from before Gd.

4. Jonah 1:9-12

And he told them: I am a Hebrew, and I fear Hashem, Gd of Heaven, who made the sea and the land. And the men feared greatly, and they said to him, "What have you done?" The men knew he was fleeing Gd, because he had told them. And they said to him, "What should we do to you, and the sea will be quiet from upon us," for the sea continued to storm. And he told them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea, and the sea will be quiet from upon you. I know that this storm has come upon you because of me."

5. Jonah 2:2-3

And Jonah prayed to Hashem, his Gd, from within the innards of the fish. And he said, "I called to Gd in my trouble, and He answered me. From the belly of the depths I cried out, and You heard my voice."

6. Jonah 3:1-3

And the word of Gd came to Jonah a second time, saying: Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and call to her the call I am telling to you. And Jonah arose and he went to Nineveh, according to Gd's word...

7. Jonah 3:4-5

...And he called and said, "In another forty days, Nineveh will be overturned." And the people of Nineveh believed in Gd, and they called a fast and wore sackcloth, from their greatest to their smallest.

8. Jonah 4:1-3

And this was very bad to Jonah, and it angered him. And he prayed to Gd and said, "Please, Gd, has this not been my word, since I was on my land? This is why I fled to Tarsus first, for I knew that you are gracious and merciful, patient and very generous, and you repent of causing harm."

9. Rabbi David Kimchi (12th-13th century France), Commentary to Jonah 4:2

Jonah prayed, "Please take my life," and he began with, "Please, Gd."

10. Midrash, Pirkei d'R' Eliezer 9

Jonah judged for himself, saying, "I know that the nations are close to repentance. Now they will repent, and Gd will send His anger against Israel. Further, it is enough that Israel calls me a false prophet; now, the nations will, too!"

11. Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th century Spain, Portugal, Italy) to Jonah 1:1

He decided not to go to Nineveh, so that the people of Assyria would not be saved from destruction by his hand. How could his going cause the Assyrians to be saved, and to destroy the children of Israel?... If Gd wishes to save them Himself, let Him do as He wishes – but not via Jonah and by his hand.

12. Kings I 19:10

And [Elijah] said, "I have been zealous for Gd, Master of multitudes, for the children of Israel have left Your covenant, they have ruined Your altars, they have killed Your prophets, and only I remain, and they seek to take my life."

Gd's Response

13. Jonah 4:4-11

And Gd said, "Are you very upset?"

And Jonah left the city, and he settled east of the city. And he made a hut for himself and he sat beneath it in the shade, to see what would occur in the city.

And Gd appointed a *kikayon* and it grew over Jonah as shade over his head, saving him from harm, and Jonah was very happy.

And Gd appointed a worm at the next dawn, and it struck the *kikayon*, which dried up. And when the sun shone, Gd appointed a mighty east wind, and the sun struck Jonah and he became weak. He asked to die, saying, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

And Gd said to Jonah, "Are you very upset over the *kikayon*?" And he said, "I am very upset, to death." And Gd said to him, "You would have mercy for the *kikayon*, for which you did not work and which you did not cultivate, which came in a night and was lost in a night. Shall I not have mercy upon Nineveh, the great city, which includes more than 120,000 people who do not know right from left, and many beasts?"