



Chapter 3: The Repentance of Nineveh

1. Jonah 3:3-10 (adapted from JPS 1985, from sefaria.org)

Jonah went at once to Nineveh in accordance with Gd's command. Nineveh was an enormously large city a three days' walk across. Jonah started out and made his way into the city the distance of one day's walk, and proclaimed: "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The people of Nineveh believed Gd. They proclaimed a fast, and great and small alike put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he had the word cried through Nineveh: "By decree of the king and his nobles: No man or beast—of flock or herd—shall taste anything! They shall not graze, and they shall not drink water! They shall be covered with sackcloth—man and beast—and shall cry mightily to Gd. Let everyone turn back from his evil ways and from the injustice of which he is guilty. Who knows but that Gd may turn and relent? He may turn back from His wrath, so that we do not perish."

Gd saw what they did, how they were turning back from their evil ways. And Gd renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon them, and did not carry it out.

2. Talmud, Taanit 16a

What did they do? They bound the animals in one area and the young in another area, and declared, "Master of the Universe! If You do not have mercy upon us, then we will not have mercy upon these!"

3. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 45:1

They declared: Master of the Universe! Beasts know nothing, and You find merit for them. View us, too, as beasts...

4. Talmud, Taanit 16a

Our brothers! Sackcloth and fasting do not cause [Divine favour], only repentance and good deeds cause it! For so we found regarding the people of Nineveh, that it does not say, "And Gd saw their sackcloth and fasting," but, "And Gd saw their deeds, that they had returned from their evil ways."

5. Nachum 3:1 (JPS 1985, from sefaria.org)

Ah, city of crime, Utterly treacherous, Full of violence, Where killing never stops!

6. Ibn Ezra to Jonah 3:10

The Torah spoke in human vernacular.

Chapter 4: Wrath and Rebuke

7. 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. And now, Gd, take my life from me, for my death would be better than my life."

8. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) to Jonah 4:2

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

9. Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra to Jonah 4:3

Because he saw that Israel had not repented, he feared that evil would befall them. Therefore he prayed, "Please take my life," like, "Please erase me," and as Elisha did when he anointed Chazael.

10. Jonah 4:4-8

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."

11. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) to Jonah 4:6

This is a grass which grows in long blades, which grow tall and create shade.

We find in the Mishnah, 'And not with oil of *Kik*,' and they explain, 'What is *Kik*? Reish Lakish said: The *Kikayon* of Jonah. Rabbah bar bar Chanah said: I saw the *Kikayon* of Jonah, and it looked like a *Tzloliva*, and it grew among ponds of water, and they suspend it over the entrances of stores for shade, and they make oil from its seeds.'

Rabbeinu Shmuel bar Chofni explained that this is a grass which is called, in Arabic, *Al Beroa*.

I have found in the responsa of the Gaonim: '*Tzloliva* is a tree which does not bear fruit. We have many of them here, and they produce seeds from which we make oil. Anyone who has a lot of colds drinks this oil. In Arabic it is called *Al Keroa*.'

12. Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra to Jonah 4:6

The Sephardic sages say it is a gourd or pumpkin. There is no need to know what it is.

13. Jonah 4:8-11

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?"

14. Rabbi David Kimchi to Jonah 4:10

That which a person works on, he is more upset when it is destroyed. Even though Gd did not work on creating His creations, the Torah used human expressions so that listeners would understand.

Even though he wished to spare the *kikayon* only due to his own pain, so Gd wished to spare Nineveh for His honour, for all that is created is His honour, as it says, "The entire universe is His honour," and certainly human beings...

15. Rashi to Jonah 4:11

These are adult human beings, whose minds are yet animalistic; they do not realize who created them.

Surprise!

16. Talmud, Yevamot 98a

"And Gd spoke to Jonah a second time, saying" – The Shechinah spoke to him a second time [within the book of Jonah], but the Shechinah did not speak to him a third time.

17. Nachum 1:3 (adapted from JPS 1985 edition, from sefaria.org)

Gd is slow to anger and of great forbearance, But Gd does not cleanse of all punishment. He travels in whirlwind and storm, And clouds are the dust on His feet.