

Special Meeting Part 2

Jonah – The Deliverance

4th April '26

Chapters 3&4

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Brother Russel has reminded us how “The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” As a result of Jonah’s disobedience this Hebrew prophet was swallowed by a whale or a large fish after he went drastically off course from God’s will for his life. The Hebrew word for “fish” is Ichthis but the word in the text is “catos” a sea monster, such as whales. There are two kinds of whale, one has a filtering beard and can feed only on small sea creatures and the other known as Sperm Whales that eat up to two tons of food daily. A sperm whale is built for large prey. Their throats are large enough to swallow a giant squid whole and thus, a human, but their habitat is deep down to the ocean floor and isolated so the interaction would be unlikely to occur, but in this case God had prepared this great creature to swallow up Jonah alive, and he was three days and three nights in the sea creatures belly as we have heard, and then Jonah was vomited out of this creature upon the dry land. What a dreadful experience this must have been, the belly is where for many creature digestion takes place generally with the application of acids generating heat. When he escaped from that belly it must appeared parboiled, making Jonah very sore indeed.

The whole experience was designed to remind Israel of God’s power and purpose with regard to the nation of Israel. For Jonah was also a symbol of Israel. His name in Hebrew is ‘Yonah’ which means ‘a Dove’, and reminds us that when this world was punished with an overwhelming flood lasting 150 days. Noah and his family alone survived in the ark. As the waters began to assuage Noah sent

a Dove (Yonah) out of the Ark to see if the waters had abated, the first time he did this he brought the bird back into the ark. Seven days later and He sent the dove out of the window and in the evening the dove returned with an olive leaf plucked off, and Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth. We should also remember that when the Lord Jesus came to the River Jordan to be baptised by John, who said to Jesus, "I have need to be baptized of you" but Jesus replied, "Suffer it to be so now for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness" And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending **like a dove**, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Mat 3:16 -17)

So we learn how the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the second time to go to Nineveh, and this time Jonah promised obedience to go even to these cruel Gentiles. Remember how the Apostles first used the keys to the Jews, but later Peter used the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, to proclaim the truth to the Gentiles as Paul wrote later, "Through their fall, (the fall of Jewry) salvation has come to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11) It was the duty of the priests to administer this knowledge to the people (Mal. 2:7) but they neglected to do so with the result that they 'shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men'".(Matt.23:13).

Returning to Jonah, son of Amittai, he prophesied during the time of Jeroboam II (*2 Kings 14:25*), and as we have read how Yahweh had instructed him travel to Nineveh and warn them that their city was facing its impending destruction. The Ninevites evil behaviour had reached God's limit, so He instructed the Prophet Jonah to bring about their repentance by informing them of Yahweh's intent. The problem for Jonah was that Nineveh was Israel's bitter enemy, and he was hoping to see this vast city's complete destruction. He did not want to see them come to repentance and be forgiven. But Yahweh had commanded Jonah the second time to preach the preaching that Yahweh would give him. This time Jonah obeyed,

commencing his journey straight away, however Nineveh was an exceedingly great city and to proclaim God's warning would involve a three days journey that is 60 miles in circumference. **Nineveh was** the oldest and most-populous city of the ancient world. It may be that Rehoboth and Calah (Genesis 10) had been absorbed as well, thousands of men many of whom were warriors, into Nineveh. Also the city contained much cattle (4.11) indicating that it had large tracts of land for cultivation and grazing. The population also consisted of 120 thousand children that could not discern between their right hand and their left-hand. Later as Isaiah reported **Isa 37:37** So Sennacherib king of Assyria returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

Apart from the Bible, the location of Nineveh was unknown for thousands of years, its discovery in the 19th century supports the accuracy of the Bible as a source of history. Sadly, many artefacts from this vast city were lost in transportation to museums. Also in recent times THE TERRORIST **ISIS** (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) destroyed many remaining artefacts, including the **tomb of Jonah**. Not much is known of Jonah's background other than the Biblical account lived about 800 BC. There are rabbinical writings that believe that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath. If Jonah was her son, then he may be the boy whom Elijah revived from the dead, which would foreshadow a future resurrection from the dead (*1 Kings 17:21–23; Acts 2:32*). Jonah actively defied His call. But God's plan for Jonah and Nineveh could not be thwarted as Brother Russel has shown us and Jonah was forcibly taken towards Nineveh in the belly of a great fish! He was in its belly for three days and three and nights. Yeshua (Jesus) would recall this event as a foreshadowing of His own approaching resurrection from the dead. (*Matthew 12:40*)

Jonah's appearance may have been greatly altered by the gastric juices in the stomach of the great fish, thereby perhaps giving him a frightful appearance just as it was unlikely that a man could emerge from a fish alive, so it was unlikely that one would rise from the dead, especially after being dead for three days and three nights. In this,

Jonah foreshadowed Jesus the Messiah. We also see the extent that we can trust God with our lives. Even when circumstances suggest that events have gone past the point of no return, God is still able to turn things around. Jonah also foreshadowed the salvation that would be extended to all mankind from the ministry of the Lord Jesus, that is that Jonah was sent from Zion to the Gentiles of the Nineveh- Assyria people not only to warn them but to bring them to redemption. In fact Jonah is an example of a Jew fulfilling Gods purpose, to be a light to the Gentiles. This was recorded in (Deuteronomy 28 9-10) The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. (And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. Jonah is an example of such a Jew.

So Jonah began his message from Yahweh and he cried out to the people of Nineveh, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown! The fate of Nineveh was conditional and could be averted by the repentance of the people. They saw the earnestness of Jonah's appeal' at a time of political oppression throughout Assyria all the signs of a national collapse. Surprisingly for Jonah the Ninevites accepted the message, and the people and their rulers put on sackcloth. A report came to the King of Nineveh, and he heard about the preaching of Jonah and the reaction of the citizens and he arose from his throne laying aside his royal robes, clothing himself in sackcloth. He then issued a decree, giving approval to the words of Jonah and giving a mandate that the nation should humble itself before God. Incredibly, the Ninevites did not kill the messenger, but believed him and God, and they cried mightily unto God with a national day of prayer, where they vowed to turn away from their evil ways and violence and granting mercy to Jonah and to Nineveh. Jonah had hoped to see God's judgment poured out on His enemies. In his anger, Jonah essentially told God that He was being too nice! "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious

and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”

Yahweh then answers Jonah “Do you do well to be angry Jonah? Jonah thought that he did but he was not aware of the full purpose that Yahweh had in mind. So we see how Yahweh saw their works and they turned from their evil works, and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do to them; and did it not.

But Jonah sat on the east side of the city, so he must have travelled from the west side in the course of his travels as he preached and proclaimed the warning, and fulfilled his vows. As he waited for further instruction, the sun was rising higher and Jonah made himself a booth to shelter himself from, in the Hebrew it is called a Sukkah, similar to those that the Israelites erected in the Feast of Tabernacles as a temporary dwelling. But the prophet found it was inadequate under the blazing sun. Then Jonah found a gourd that had grown up very quickly to provide the prophet with adequate shelter. Thus he experienced the mercy of Yahweh, but had done nothing to deserve this, not even requested it. In that he was like the Ninevites. He was as glad of the shade of the gourd as he was of Israel’s rising power at that time. But who had advanced Israel’s power? It was not Jeroboam, who had advanced Israel it was Yahweh. It was also Yahweh who had provided the gourd followed by the worm. It is for Yahweh’s servants to recognise that it is the long suffering God that is salvation (2 Peter 3:15) and he does not do without cause, all that He does. Jonah had no counter to this.

More than 120,000 persons (Hebrew:- “ribbo” signifies myriads) and it compares with the twelve tribes of Israel. Gentiles can become members of the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11) by repentance and baptism into Christ Jesus, and the use of the words signifying twelve myriads, points to the fact that once Israel cast off God, Yahweh would turn to the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14) and that the people so selected would constitute the twelve tribes of Israel in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 2:11 & Rev. 7) This symbolic significance could well be the

reason this number was selected in accordance with the type fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. Why were children selected in the counting? Consider Deuteronomy 1:39 Moreover your little ones, which you said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. Similarly the population of Nineveh could have been around 600,000 as well as all the cattle. In the Bible Cattle are mentioned 153 times.

The remarkable experiences of Jonah were recorded and included in the Hebrew canon of Scripture to set before the people a compelling message of exhortation and warning. Rightly considered the book should have taught the people of Israel that they could not rest on the fact that they were the promised nation, for as easily as Yahweh caused the gourd to grow and then to wither, so he could and would punish his people

It also set forth in parabolic and prophetic form the mission of the coming Messiah, the ideal Israelite. The outpouring of the spirit in the form of a Dove, the declaration of the Lord that he comprised the antitypical Jonah should have directed the people of the Book to the Book of Jonah and caused the spiritually minded among them to see a little further into the Divine purpose. But they were so blind that some of their leaders and teachers declared, "Search and look: for out of Galilee arises no prophet.(John 7:52) Nevertheless Jonah was a Galilean. Perhaps they meant no Prophet in Judah, but whatever they meant, these leaders were self-deceived as to the position and mission of the Lord Jesus (John 3:2).

Led by blind leaders of the blind, the people refused to heed the Prophet Jonah, and became involved in a calamity similar to that which threatened against the Ninevites. Thus Jonah's experiences, set forward the ways of providence, with emphasis on Yahweh's long suffering in which is discovered salvation.

Jonah was so angry with the result of God's mercy that he wanted to die. Once again, God in His mercy decided to give Jonah a lesson—this time about love.

God caused a leafy plant to grow up and shade him from the hot sun while he sat waiting to see what happened to the city. This brought Jonah much joy. Then God prepared a worm that ate the plant and killed it. Once again, as the hot sun beat down on the prophet, he prayed that God would take him, saying, “It would be better for me to die than to live.” (*Jonah 4:8*) God responded saying: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

Yes, said Jonah adding, “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.” (*4:9*) To this God responded, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” (*4:10–11*)

While people often discount the Tanakh as being about bloodshed, vengeance and law, the Book of Jonah clearly demonstrates God’s love for mankind and His mercy for those who repent of their sins. He truly does not want anyone to perish, but gives them ample opportunity to call out to Him.

How often do we go down to the depths of despair, feeling discouraged and hopeless, before we relent, and remember our calling and our vows to follow the Lord Jesus that his spirit might be at one with God’s Spirit? In fact, the [Hebrew language](#) is rich in helping us see that Jonah’s attempts to flee from God actually took him down, down, down, down (יָרַד / **yarad**) into the depths of rebellion.

First, Jonah **went down** (יָרַד / **yarad**) to Joppa (*Jonah 1:3*). After obtaining passage away from Nineveh, he **went down** (יָרַד / **yarad**) to the ship (*1:3*). Once onboard, he **went down** (יָרַד / **yarad**) into the hold of the ship, falling into a deep sleep (יָרַד / **yarad**) (*1:5*). Lastly, he **went down** (יָרַד / **yarad**) to the bottom of the mountains of a violent sea (*2:7 [6]*). There, at the bottom of the sea,

Jonah gave up resisting the Lord, and sincerely repented and found the mercy of God. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God on them which fell severity, but towards us goodness if we continue in his goodness. (Romans 11:11)

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joe 2:32 KJV)

Psalms 37:4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart, commit thy way unto the LORD; trust in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass, But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Galatians 3:13, 14. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree”, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ the he might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.



Jonah stamp, c 1963

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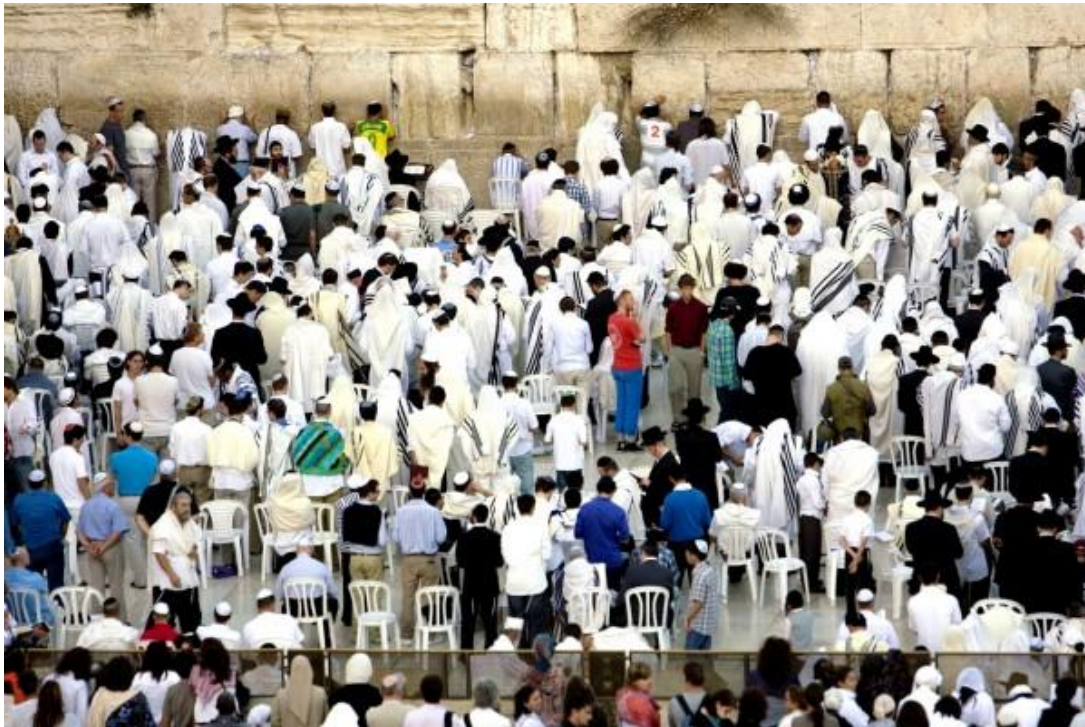
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He truly does not want anyone to perish, but gives them ample opportunity to call out to Him and change their ways.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Remembering Jonah on the Day of Atonement

Isa 37:37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.



Prayer on Yom Kippur at the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem.

Jonah's Journey Is Our Journey

Jewish mystics teach that Jonah is a metaphor for the soul and that the story of Jonah is the story of our spiritual journey here on earth.

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We are called down to earth to inhabit a finite vessel and go on a journey. On that path, we often go “away from the presence of God.” (*Chabad*)

Too often we go down to the depths of despair, discouragement and hopelessness before we relent, revere the God of Israel, rise up, and meet our spirit with God’s Spirit.

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Remembering Jonah During Sukkot

We also remember Jonah during the holiday of [Sukkot \(Booths\)](#) because it is traditionally believed that Jonah received his prophetic gifting during the water-drawing ceremony that was performed each morning of the seven-day feast. (*Chabad*)

Sukkot is meant to be a feast of great joy, as we read in Isaiah: “You shall draw water with joy from the wellsprings of salvation.” (*Isaiah 12:3*)

According to Jewish tradition, the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) only rests on one who has a joyful heart.

Jonah, however, did not have a joyful heart when the Ninevites repented. We read in the last chapter of the Book of Jonah that he went outside of the city and built for himself a sukkah or booth as a shelter from which he could watch what he hoped would be the demise of the Ninevites.

Even after he repented and fulfilled God’s calling on his life, he continued to hold onto his own desire to see Nineveh perish—not the desires of God to see them repent and saved, as another great Prophet proclaimed: (*Psalms 37:4*)

Nevertheless, God in His mercy and love responded to Jonah's distressed heart and entered into dialogue with him.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (*Joel 2:32*)

As a matter of divine law, God does not honor our desires when they conflict with His.

“Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Carrying the Light to the Nations

Although Israel is still called to be a [light to the nations](#) in the tradition of the Prophets and of Jonah, it is too often reluctant to embrace and fulfill the desires of God.

Like much of the world, here in Israel the media often blasphemes God, carrying the torch of freedom of expression—freedom to express even vile acts condemned by the Word of God, such as homosexuality, destruction of the marriage bond, and murder of unborn children.

Although not every Jewish Israeli is following this path, it is time for the Jewish People to discover [Yeshua as their Messiah](#) who is the true Light of the World, so we can carry His light to the nations.