

Jonah

This book tells us about God ruling over all people. It also tells us that God loves people and he is kind to them. Even though his people hate other people, God still loves them. He does not want to punish them and kill them. He wants to forgive them.

About Jonah disobeying the Lord

¹ Jonah was Amittai's son. Yahweh spoke to Jonah, ² and said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city. Give the people there this message from me. Say to those people, 'Yahweh is really angry with you all because he knows that you are very bad.' "

³ But Jonah did not listen to Yahweh. He didn't go east to Nineveh, he turned around and went the other way, because he wanted to run away from Yahweh. So he went down to a beach called Joppa. He went on and on until he arrived at the beach. He looked around and saw a ship anchored there ready to go west to Spain. So Jonah went and asked the captain if he could go on the ship to Spain and he paid him the money. He was running away from Yahweh. Then he and the sailors went on board and they sailed away. ⁴⁻⁵ And Jonah went down inside the ship and went to sleep. The ship went on and on, out into the middle of the sea. But Yahweh knew that Jonah had gone on board, and so he sent a very strong wind. A big storm hit the ship and a very

big sea rose and nearly broke it up. The sailors were very frightened, and they each spoke to their gods, so that they would help them and save them. But the wind kept blowing stronger and stronger and the sea kept on rising and became rougher and rougher. So they took a lot of big boxes and food and other things and threw them overboard and made the ship lighter.

⁶ The captain went down inside and found Jonah asleep. He said, "Get up! What are you doing here asleep? Get up! You too must pray to your god. Maybe he will feel sorry for us. Maybe he won't make us die but he will let us live." Then they both went outside to the other men. ⁷ The sailors said, "Let's play a game so that we will know which man has done something wrong. Who can it be? It must be because of him that this storm has hit us." And so they played the game and they found Jonah's name.

⁸ Then they said to Jonah, "Now then, tell us! You are the one who has done wrong, are you? What are you doing here on this ship? Which is your country? Where have you come from?"

⁹ Jonah said, "I am a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh God, the one who lives in heaven. He made this sea and all the dry land. ¹⁰ But I have run away from him, and so we are caught in this storm." When they heard this the sailors were very frightened and said to him, "That was a dreadful thing to do." ¹¹ The wind and the sea kept on rising higher and higher and getting rougher. Then the men said to Jonah, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?"

¹² Jonah said, "Throw me into the sea, and then this wind and sea will calm down. I know it is because I disobeyed God that we are in this storm."

¹³ But the sailors didn't take any notice of what Jonah said. They kept on trying to row towards dry land, but it was impossible. They didn't get anywhere. The wind blew stronger and stronger and the sea became rougher.

¹⁴ Then the sailors called out to Yahweh and said, "Yahweh! If we kill this man, don't make us die. We know you must have sent the storm."

¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and lifted him up and threw him into the sea. At the same time the wind dropped. It didn't blow any more. The sea became still and calm. It didn't rise again. It was calm now.

¹⁶ When the sailors saw the sea had become calm, they were so afraid of Yahweh that they took a sheep and killed it for him. They said to him, "We know you are very strong, Yahweh. So when we reach land again we will kill another sheep and we will worship you all the time, because now we know that you are very powerful."

¹⁷ There was a very big fish right there in the sea. And Yahweh spoke to it and said, "Go and swallow that man." And the fish went and swallowed Jonah right down into its stomach. And Jonah stayed there in the fish's stomach three days and three nights.

2

About Jonah praying to Yahweh

¹ Jonah prayed to Yahweh his Lord from inside the fish. He said,

² "I was upset because I thought I would drown, and so I called to you to help me. And you heard me. When I was deep down in the sea in the place of dead people, I called to you and you heard me.

³ You threw me into the deep sea, right down to the bottom. The sea covered me and the waves were far above me.

⁴ I thought that you had driven me away forever and that I would never see your holy temple again.

⁵ The sea covered me, it took my breath away, I couldn't breathe. And seaweed wrapped around my head.

⁶ I went on, the sea took me down, down into the deep. I kept on going down into the sea. I kept on and on until I was sitting down on the bottom of the sea. That place belongs to the dead. None of the dead can ever return from there. But you, Yahweh my Lord, brought me back alive from deep down in the sea.

⁷ I felt that I was dying, but I called to you. And you listened to me from your holy temple.

⁸ Those who are always thinking about useless idols don't worship you.

⁹ But I will sing songs to you and I will praise you. I said I would kill a sheep for you, so I will kill it so that you will know that I am always going to obey you. You alone, Yahweh, can save us."

¹⁰ Then Yahweh spoke to the fish and said, “Now go and take Jonah to the edge of the sea and spew him out there.” So the fish went away. It went on and on until it arrived at the edge of the sea where it spewed Jonah out. Then Jonah got up and went ashore on to dry land.

3

About Jonah going to Nineveh

¹ Once again Yahweh spoke to Jonah. ² He said, “Go to Nineveh, that great city, and tell the people there the message that I told you before.” ³ Then Jonah obeyed Yahweh and went to Nineveh. He went on and on until he arrived there. Nineveh was a very big city. There were many people and many buildings. When anyone went there and walked right through it, they had to keep going along the road for three days. ⁴ Jonah started walking along a road in the city. He went on and on until the sun went down. Then he called out so that many people would hear him. Jonah said to them, “Everyone listen to this message. All of you must listen. In forty days God will come down to this city and he will kill you and destroy these houses of yours. So listen to me today.”

⁵ The people in the city heard God's message and they knew that Jonah was speaking the truth. So they decided that everyone there would go without food. Then all the people took off their clothes and put on rough clothes made from goat hair. That is what they did in that country, so that God would know they had stopped doing wrong and were obeying God now. So everyone

from the most important to the least important put on rough clothes.

⁶ The king of Nineveh also heard God's message. He got up from his seat and took off the good clothes he was wearing, and put on rough clothes. And he went outside and sat down on the ground in some ashes.

⁷ The king sent word to all the people of Nineveh. He said, "This word is from me, the great king of Nineveh, and from my officers. Not even one of you people in this city is to eat any food or drink any water. And the cattle and sheep also must not eat any food or drink any water. ⁸ Everyone must put on rough clothes, and the cattle must too. And you must all pray to God and stop doing the wrong things you have been doing. ⁹ Maybe God will change his mind and not be angry with us any more, so we will not die."

¹⁰ God looked down from above and saw that the people had stopped doing wrong things now and they were obeying him. So he changed his mind and didn't kill the people of Nineveh, even though he had said he would kill them.

4

About Jonah being angry and God having pity on people

¹ Jonah was upset and became angry because Yahweh didn't kill the people of Nineveh as he had said he would. ² Jonah said to Yahweh, "I knew while I was still at home, when you first told me, I knew what you would do. If people

stop doing wrong things I know you will forgive them. That is why I wanted to run away to Spain. I knew that you are full of love and pity. And you don't get angry quickly, you are kind. And you are always ready to change your mind and not punish people. ³ I want to die now and not live any longer. So let me die.”

⁴ Yahweh said to Jonah, “Why are you angry? You shouldn't be angry.”

⁵ Jonah went out of the city to the east and sat down. He made a little shelter there and sat in its shade. He waited and waited to see if Yahweh would destroy the city. ⁶ Yahweh God made a plant grow in the night so Jonah could sit in its shade. Jonah was pleased, and he was comfortable. He stayed there until the sun went down. Then at night he slept. ⁷ At dawn the next day God sent a caterpillar and it ate the plant he had grown for shade for Jonah. And the plant died.

⁸ The sun came up and kept on climbing higher. And God sent a hot wind from the east. After a while the sun burnt Jonah's head, and he became dizzy. So he said, “Now I want to die and not live any longer.”

⁹ But God said to him, “Why are you angry about that plant? You shouldn't be angry about that!” Jonah answered, “Yes, I will be angry about it. I am very angry and I wish I could die!”

¹⁰ Yahweh said to Jonah, “One night that plant grew and the next night it died. You didn't make it grow and yet you felt sorry for it, didn't you!

¹¹ I should feel very sorry for those people of

Nineveh. Many people live in that city. There are many children too, and they don't know anything about doing wrong. Many bullocks and other animals also live there. So that is why I didn't kill those people.”

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