



Yonah Introduction

Yonah ben Amitai is the fifth navi of the Trey Asar prophets and is only four perakim long. Yona is probably the most famous of the Trey Asar prophets, as we read the story of Yona every Yom Kippur. I'd like to point out that much ink has been spilled on the story of Yonah. NachDaily tries to capture each perek and glean lessons from the navi. It's beyond the scope of NachDaily to delve into all of the subtleties and details that need to be understood in their proper light.

History

Yonah's father came from the tribe of Zevulun and his mother from the tribe of Asher.

Yonah prophesied during the reign of Yeravam ben Yoash. Yonah was a student of Elisha Hanavi. Most meforshim learn that Yonah was the navi sent by Elisha to annoint Yehu as the king over the ten tribes of Yisrael, as brought in **Melachim II Perek 9**.

Yonah was a contemporary of Eliyahu, Micha and Ovadiah. In fact, the **Pirkey D'Rabbe Eliezer** learns that Yonah was the boy on whom Eliyahu had done techiyas hamaisim – resurrection of the dead. In the story, Eliyahu Hanavi brought the widow's child back to life when he stopped breathing. Eliyahu laid on Yonah's body and blew life back into him, as described in **Melachim II Perek 14**.

Abarbanel brings that Yonah lived more than 120 years. **Eruvin 94A**: Yonah would regularly go up to the Beis Hamikdash three times a year with his wife. **Yerushalmi in Sukka 5:1**: Yonah received prophecy at the Simchas Beis Hasho'aiva in the Beis Hamikdash on Sukkos. According to **Medrash Socher Tov**, Yonah was a complete tzaddik. **Nedarim 38A** learns that Yonah was rich, because he paid for the boat.

Overview

Hashem commanded Yonah to go to the city of Ninveh, which was the capital of Ashur. Yonah tried to run away from Hashem by leaving Eretz Yisrael, since one cannot receive prophesy outside of Eretz Yisrael. (However, we learn from Yechezkel that if one starts receiving prophesy in Eretz Yisrael, he can continue receiving the prophesy outside of Eretz Yisrael.) While Yonah was running away, a storm came and nearly capsized his boat. After casting lotteries, the gentiles on the boat positively identified Yonah as the cause of the storm, and they threw him into the water. Yonah was swallowed by a fish, was miraculously kept alive by Hashem, and his life was spared. Yonah reached Ninveh, prophesied that the city would be overturned if the people did not do teshuvah. The inhabitants of Ninveh did do teshuvah, and the Heavenly judgment on Ninveh was revoked. Yonah was deeply bothered by Hashem's compassion for the gentile town of Ninveh. God then explains His reasoning to Yonah.

Why was Yonah included in a book of Tanach if the entire prophesy was about Ninveh, a gentile nation?

The Radak on pasuk aleph gives three answers: 1) To give mussar to Yisrael. A gentile nation did teshuvah immediately, the first time they were rebuked, in contrast to Yisrael, who received many warnings from all of the prophets, but did not do teshuvah. 2) To teach the amazing miracle of Hashem keeping Yonah alive for three days and three nights in the stomach of the fish. 3) To teach that Hashem has compassion on anyone or any nation who chooses to do teshuvah and accepts God as the true God.

The **Chidah in Sefer Chomos Anach** explains that Yonah was included in Tanach because the entire story is a metaphor for the relationship between the body and the soul. Indeed, the **Vilna Gaon's** entire commentary on Yonah explains how each pasuk teaches about the body and soul. Our soul descends into this world, into our body, which is like a boat that traverses the stormy weather of this world.

Yonah's Message

The story of Yonah is a story of teshuvah. Perhaps one of the reasons that we read the story of Yonah on Yom Kippur is to learn how big and great God is. Yonah tried to escape God, and didn't want the gentile nation of Ninveh to do teshuva, which would put the Jewish nation in a negative light, by comparison. But God showed Yonah: "You think in your small mind that you can figure things out. You think you can determine who is guilty and who is innocent, who is righteous and who is evil. Only I, God, can know that.

"You think in your small mind that you messed up or caused damage and therefore you can't do teshuvah. The truth is that you are mistaken. You are, in a sense, making God small. But in reality God is huge! You can do teshuvah and come close to Hashem no matter what you have done in your life! No matter how things may appear, it is never too late!"

The **Ramad Walli** calls his commentary on Yonah *Sefer Hashgacha – the Book of Providence*, because everything in one's life is completely hand-tailored by God, even one's avairos! We learn from the story of Yonah that one can always pick oneself up and start over again. Never give up! And that is likely why we read *Sefer Yonah* on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar.

We will be starting perek 1 in the next shiur.

Thank you for listening.