



Won't I pity?

A wonderful book which explains how God does not want the sinner to perish, but rather to return and live... God who, with true repentance, forgives the sins of many years and has mercy and forgiveness... And faces each one of us: Is this quality of our Lord good for you? If it means mercy to your enemy?

+ **Number of chapters:** 4 chapters.

+ **The meaning of the name:** Dove.

- Dove ... (Considering that evil people need the Holy Spirit, whose symbol is the dove, in order to call them to repentance).
- The Jewish tradition says that he is the son of the widow of Zarephath of Sidon, whom Elijah raised from the dead.

+ **Period of Prophecy:**

- From prophets before the captivity... His prophecy was during the reign of King Jeroboam II (in the kingdom of Israel).

+ **Writing conditions:**

- The truth is that Jonah wished that Nineveh would perish because they posed a real danger to Israel... And in fact Assyria (whose capital is Nineveh) captured the Kingdom of Israel and its rule was very bloody.
- Also, in the Jewish culture, our Lord is their God only... The secret of their distinction as a people from the rest of the nations... So Why is it preached to the Gentiles?
- Of course, our Lord is just... When Nineveh's evil and corruption remained without turning back or repentance, he sent Nahum the prophet who prophesied about the destruction of Assyria by the hands of Babylon.

+ **Who is this book targeting?**

- The book of Jonah is one of the strange books in the books of the prophets, because it does not consist of the prophecies of Jonah, but rather it tells the story of Jonah.
- This story and its message are directed to all mankind throughout the ages.

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+ His most important achievements:

- Jonah is one of the most bizarre characters... Many people are confused: How can a man of God be angry that our Lord wants people to repent and wants to have mercy on them?
- The truth is that Jonah wanted that these people to perish because they posed a real danger to Israel... And in fact Assyria (whose capital is Nineveh) captured the Kingdom of Israel and its rule was very bloody.

- Jonah has some achievements:

- * He was not afraid to go to Nineveh, even though it is a city whose people are very evil.
- * He preached to the sailors about our Lord (even if unintentionally) and wasn't afraid to tell them that the sea was raging because of him.
- * He prayed a wonderful prayer in the second chapter; in which hope overcomes despair.
- * He became a symbol of Jesus Christ who conquered death and promised us salvation (on condition of repentance).
- * Instead of condemning Jonah, Jonah is supposed to give each one of us a hope that our Lord can work with him in spite of his defects... Our Lord could simply send anyone else who is obedient instead of Jonah... Jonah did not make much effort to make Nineveh repent... But our Lord never abandons his children... He wanted to work with Jonah and teach him that His mercy includes all... and He does not want to perish even the worst of sinners, but rather to come to repentance.

+ The key to understanding the book:

- The book surprises us with behaviors that are contrary to all our expectations from people: the prophet disobeys the command of our Lord ... the pagan sailors believe and repent ... Nineveh, a very evil and cruel kingdom, sits in sackcloth and ashes in fasting and repentance that we celebrate every year.
- Assyria was a bloody and wicked kingdom, and it represented a great danger to the kingdom of Israel.
- Of course, this is not our topic, but scientifically it is not impossible for a person to stay alive in certain places in the whale's belly... and it happened to other people.

Father/ Dawoud Hanna

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+ The book goal:

- This book, despite its simplicity and shortness, is very deep in its meanings...it contains many lessons, the most important of which is an explanation how our Lord loves the sinners and is looking for their salvation.
- There is no one whose salvation is impossible... An entire evil city repented with a quick call from a prophet who was not convinced by a short message and had no hope... There is nothing difficult for our Lord.
- The book of contradictions that confronts each one of us: Do you agree that our Lord has mercy and forgives your enemies? And instead of talking about Jonah, and how does a man of God do this, I wish this book would be a mirror for each of us to see himself: Am I (and I am in the New Testament, the Covenant of Grace) able to love my enemy?
- It makes each one ask himself: Am I running away from our Lord? Is there anything in my life that I do not want to listen to him in? The truth is that the answer most of the time remains: Yes... But our Lord shows us that He insists use us... His amazing love is patient with us to the point where we understand... If with no words, it will be by the storm... or the sea... or people who believe in an unexpected way, or the whale, or forgiveness, or the pumpkin and consolation, or the trial...our God never despairs.
- And not only Jonah called Nineveh to repent, and also on the way the sailors believed in the boat... I mean Jonah's attempt to escape brought goodness to the sailors who knew our Lord.
- Individual (Jonah in the belly of the whale) and collective (Nineveh) repentance is a condition for salvation.



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JONAH AND THE SAILORS

- The book begins that our Lord tells Jonah to call Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) to repent because it has reached a very bad stage of evil (verse 2).
- Jonah fled from our Lord... Instead of going east, he went west (in a boat to Tarshish) (verse 3).
- And Jonah in the ship, went into deep sleep (verse 5).
- Our Lord sent a very strong storm so that Jonah might surpass (verse 4).
- And the storm was so strong and unexpected that the sailors who had experience felt that there was a strange force in the matter... and they threw the baggage and cried to their gods and woke Jonah up (verse 5).
- They asked Jonah (the stranger with them) and he confessed that he worships the god of the sea and the land (verse 9).
- And when they asked him: Well, what are we doing? Jonah replied: Throw me out of the boat! (verse 12).
- At first they tried to find any other solution, but they could not... So they had to throw him away while they were telling our Lord that He does not count Jonah's blood on them (because it is natural that he who is thrown into this storm will die) (verse 14).
- And they threw Jonah into the sea and it calmed down immediately... So they believed in our Lord (verse 16).
- And the chapter ends with a great mercy from our Lord, who prepared a whale to swallow Jonah so that he would not die (verse 17).
- And thus Jonah remained in the belly of the whale for 3 days.

+ What should we learn?

- All things work for good... Jonah's stubbornness caused the sailors to know our Lord.
- O Lord, I am confident that you are the Controller of all, and all your deeds are good...
Even if I messed things up you will also work with me for good.

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JONAH'S REPENTANCE AND PRAYERS

- In the belly of the whale... the death is transformed into life (of course, like the example of Christ in the grave).
- Jonah, while in the belly of the whale, prayed one of the most wonderful prayers in the Bible (we read it in the prophecies of the Holy Saturday).
- This prayer began with thanksgiving to our Lord that He did not leave him (verse 2).
- And it ended with a promise that he would obey our Lord (verse 9).
- Then, our Lord commanded the whale, and Jonah was thrown ashore (verse 10).

+ What should we learn?

- Jonah, although he knew that he made a disaster by disobeying our Lord, he had complete confidence in the love and mercy of our Lord upon him.

O Lord, even if I feel that I am in the depths of the abyss, give me this chance to cry out to you, trusting that you will hear me... and that I will return to see your temple.

JONAH IN NINEVEH

- Our Lord repeated his command to Jonah again as it is: Go to Nineveh and call it... A completely new opportunity, as if repentance wiped out all the old... Jonah obeyed this time (verse 2).
- Nineveh was a very big city, and it needed days for Jonah to call all of it (verse 3).
- Jonah's words were as if he did not want them to repent, but rather to perish! He did not tell them.

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WHAT IS THEIR SIN?

- Who will turn the city around? What should they do for their salvation?
- The very strange thing is that the whole city (from the king to children, and even the animals) fasted very strongly in sackcloth and ashes... Perhaps they knew that he came out of the belly of the whale (as if he had risen from the dead) (verse 5 to 9).
- Of course, for this great repentance, God had mercy on them, forgave them and lifted his wrath away from them (as we say in the division) (verse 10).
- And here is the paradox: Jonah said that the city will (overturn) ... and the word may mean destruction (like Sodom and Gomorrah) and it could mean a complete change change (and this is what really happened! Nineveh turned 180 degrees from evil, sin and corruption to Fasting, prayer, and sackcloth).. That means, Jonah's words were really fulfilled.

+ What should we learn?

- There is no such thing as that it is impossible for anyone to be saved or that there is no hope in him ... As long as a person is alive, our Lord is waiting for him to repent and searches for him in every way so that he does not perish.

Lord, let me have this hope in myself (true repentance is always accepted no matter how far I am from you)... and spread this hope to all your children who are far from you.





JONAH'S REPROACH TO GOD

- Jonah in this chapter began to reproach our Lord and said to him: That is why I fled at first...not because he was afraid of the people of Nineveh, but because he knew that our Lord could have mercy on them (verse 2).
- This was our Lord's description of himself, as he said to Moses (in Exodus 34:6): He is long-suffering and abounding in mercy... Jonah, instead of rejoicing these qualities, rebukes our Lord for them.
- And he said to him: O Lord, take my soul, I do not want to live anymore!
- Our Lord is a very good God... and because of His attributes (whom Jonah was upset with) had mercy on Jonah... Rather, he asked him: Do you think that you have a right with your anger? And we did not even hear Jonah's answer (verse 4).
- Jonah went out and made a canopy for himself outside the city, and sat watching over the city... they could return in their repentance (verse 5).
- The weather was very hot; so God prepared a gourd (an ivy tree) to give Jonah shade... who was very happy with (verse 6).
- After that, our Lord sent a worm that struck the gourd; Jonah was very distressed (verses 7,8).
- And again Jonah asked for death for himself... And again, our Lord asked him: Do you have any right with your anger? (verse 8 , 9).
- Jonah, in his last words in the book, responds to our Lord and says to him: Of course, I have the right (verse 10).
- Our Lord, in his last words in the book, explained to Jonah... The story of the pumpkin is a small example on how our Lord, is grieved for the death of sinners... And he wishes that they turn, repent and be saved (verse 11).

+ What should we learn?

- Our Lord is very kind to us... He pities us when we are so foolish... He wants us to understand his intention and thought with the utmost patience and love, like a father with his children.

Lord, I thank you for your patience and love to me; I am the one who always tires you and does not understand you... Lord, give me the enlightenment of your Holy Spirit and the love of your great heart.



VERSES SUMMARIZING THE BOOK

- + Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me (Jonah 1: 2)
- The Lord does not want the death of the sinner, no matter how brutal he is, but rather that he repents and thus lives.

- + Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (Jonah 1: 17)
- Our Lord, of course, saved Jonah from the storm, because it was not for his destruction.
- And he took an obligatory seclusion in the belly of the whale so that he could not escape...except to God by prayer.
- And he became an example of Christ who stayed in the grave for 3 days and rose.

- + Then I said: I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple (Jonah 2: 4) - Despair turns to hope.

- + And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. (Jonah 2: 10)
- Well, as long as Jonah repented, turned back and prayed, the whale did what it was supposed to do, and it was time for work again.

- + Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee (Jonah 3: 2)
- Repentance = deleting the past in which there was refusal...as if nothing had happened, and as if the book had started again.
- Our Lord is wonderful in that He uses us for the glory of His name... Each one has a mission and he must do it.
- And God saw their works, that they turned back from their evil way, and God repented of the evil, that He had said that.



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- + He would do unto them, and He did it not. (Jonah 3: 10)
- True repentance with fasting and prayer = the mercy of our Lord.

- + Then said the Lord: Doest thou well to be angry? (Jonah 4: 4)
- Our Lord is very kind to us, like a father who comforts his stubborn, sinful son... Our Lord, with infinite patience, was patient with Jonah until Jonah understood God's purpose and his thinking.

- + And Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more then sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle? (Jonah 4: 11)
- Of course, this is the motto of the book: God's mercy and compassion on all... More details in this meditation.

INTERPRETATION OF SOME VERSES

- + What meanest thou O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. (Jonah 1: 6)
- Deep sleep means complete unawareness of the situation that is happening... .

- + They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. (Jonah 2: 8)
- Lying Vanities, is anything that is not important in a person's life that keeps him away from our Lord... More details in this meditation.

- + For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he rose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. (Jonah 3: 6)
- An ancient sign of humiliation... Instead of the normal clothes, they wear very modest clothes (sackcloth) and sit on the ground.

- + So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. (Jonah 4: 5)
- In fact, the book did not mention what Jonah was exactly watching in the city, or what was his goal? But the closest thing is that he could see if the repentance will continue or not?