

Pearl Seeking

TREASURING HIS WORD

In this lesson, we will focus on the book of Yonah, which is traditionally read in the synagogues during the afternoon service (known as the minchah service) on this feast day. The story of Yonah (Jonah) was chosen to be read during this festival because it tells the story of repentance (teshuvah) and forgiveness. Now, let's read the book of Yonah.

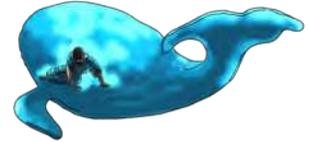
PARSHA POINTS

Chapter 1

- The word of Yahweh came to Yonah son of Amittai, telling him to go to Nineweh, the great (**gadol**) city (**iyer**), and cry out against it, for their evils had come up before Him - 1:1-2
- But instead of heading for Nineweh, Yonah decided to flee from the presence of Yahweh and went down to Yapho, where he found a ship going to Tarshish instead - 1:3
- Yahweh sent out a great wind and storm on the sea (**yam**), so that the ship seemed to be breaking up - 1:4
- Even the seamen became afraid, and each one cried out to his mighty one. To lighten the load, they threw the ship's cargo into the sea - 1:5
- However, while this was going on, Yonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, and fell fast asleep - 1:5
- The captain woke up Yonah, and asked him to cry out to his Elohim so that perhaps they would not perish - 1:6
- They decided to cast lots, so that they may know for whose sake this evil had come upon them; and the lot fell on Yonah - 1:7
- They then asked Yonah a multitude of questions about himself - 1:8
- Yonah told them that he was a Hebrew who feared Yahweh, the Elohim of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land (**yabashah**) - 1:9
- Upon hearing this, the crewmen were frightened, and questioned why he would flee from the presence of Yahweh - 1:10
- Meanwhile, the sea was growing even stormier, so they asked Yonah what they should do to make the sea calm for them - 1:11
- Yonah acknowledged that the storm was on account of him and suggested that they throw him into the sea, so that the sea would become calm for them - 1:12
- The men didn't want to have to throw Yonah overboard, so they rowed hard to bring the ship to land. But the sea continued to grow stormier against them - 1:13
- Recognizing that they would actually have to throw Yonah out of the ship, and that Yahweh did cause or allow all this, they asked Yahweh not to let Yonah's blood be upon them - 1:14



- Then they took Yonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging - 1:15
- After this event, the men feared Yahweh exceedingly, and brought an offering to Yahweh and made vows - 1:16
- Yahweh then sent a great fish (**dag**) to swallow Yonah; and he was in the stomach of the fish 3 (**shalosh**) days and 3 nights - 1:17



Chapter 2

- After this, Yonah prayed to Yahweh his Elohim from the stomach of the fish, acknowledging that deliverance is of Yahweh; and Yahweh answered him - 2:1-9
- Then Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited Yonah on the dry land - 2:10

Chapter 3

- Yahweh then spoke to Yonah the second time, telling him to go to Nineweh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that He would speak to Yonah - 3:1-2
- Yonah arose and went to Nineweh, according to the word of Yahweh - 3:3
- Nineweh was such big city that it took 3 days to go through it, and on the first day's walk, he began warning the inhabitants that in 40 (**arbaim**) days Nineweh would be overthrown - 3:4



- Upon hearing Yonah's words, the men of Nineweh (3:5):
 - believed in Elohim
 - proclaimed a fast
 - put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them
- Upon hearing Yonah's words, the sovereign of Nineweh (3:6):
 - arose from his throne
 - took off his robe
 - covered himself with sackcloth
 - sat in ashes
- He proclaimed a fast from food or water for all these (3:7):
 - man
 - beast
 - herd
 - flock
- He wanted man and beast to (3:8):
 - be covered with sackcloth
 - call mightily to Elohim
 - let each one turn from their evil way
 - turn from the violence that was in their hands



- He thought that perhaps Elohim would turn and relent, from the heat of His displeasure, so that they would not perish - 3:9
- Elohim saw their works, that they turned from their evil way and He relented from the evil which He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it - 3:10

Chapter 4

- Yonah was greatly displeased and grieved over Yahweh's decision to spare Nineweh - 4:1
- He prayed to Yahweh, and justified his fleeing to Tarshish on the basis of Yahweh's attributes, because he knew that Yahweh was (4:2; Exodus 34:6-7):
 - an El showing favor
 - compassionate
 - patient
 - of great kindness (loving-commitment)
 - relenting from doing evil
- He asked Yahweh to please take his life from him, for it would be better for him to die than to live - 4:3
- Yahweh did not feel Yonah had the right to be displeased with His decision - 4:4
- Then Yonah went out to the east side of the city under a shelter, to see what would become of the city - 4:5
- In the heat of the day, Yahweh Elohim caused a plant (**qiqayon**) to come up over Yonah, as a shade for his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Yonah greatly rejoiced over the plant - 4:6
- However, as morning dawned the next day, Elohim caused a worm to attack the plant so that it withered - 4:7
- When the sun came up, it beat down on Yonah's head, and Elohim sent a scorching east wind - 4:8
- Yonah grew faint, and asked that Elohim let him die, saying, "It is better for me to die than to live." - 4:8
- Elohim told Yonah that he did not have the right to become displeased over the plant; but Yonah argued that he did have the right to become displeased, even to death - 4:9
- Yahweh then made His point to Yonah (4:10):
 - You felt sorry for a plant for which you have not labored
 - You did not make this plant grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night
 - Should I not pardon Nineweh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 beings who have not known their right hand (**yamim**) from their left (**semol**), and much cattle?



DIGGING DEEPER

Parents/Teachers may choose to use these prompts for further discussion of the lesson.

- Where was Nineweh located? What pagan symbol depicted this city? Who was known to be buried there? What famous Biblical ruler did this city have? (2 Kings 19:36-37)
- Turn to Matthew 12:38-41 and Luke 11:29-30 and discuss Yeshua's comments in relation to Nineweh. What do Yonah and Yeshua have in common?
- Why do you think this book is read on Yom Kippur? What does atonement mean? What does deliverance mean (2:9)?
- Yonah was called by Yahweh to do a work. Notice that when he went against Yahweh's will or rebelled, only cursings came upon him. Discuss them. Notice the key words 'down' and 'into' that come up over and over (1:3, 5, 12, 15, 17). Once Yonah refused to do Yahweh's work his journey only went downward.
- In what way is this story similar to the Prodigal son? Do you think Yonah was jealous of Yahweh's love and concern for non-Israelites? Do you think Yonah had pride? Did Yonah value his relationship and specially chosen mission by Yahweh?
- Even though the people were not promised any hope of deliverance, discuss the actions of the people and the sovereign vs. the actions of Yonah, and even Yehudah and Yisra'el.
- What does 'teshuvah' mean? Who in this story demonstrated this? Do you think Yonah repented after this episode ended?
- Discuss the attributes of Yahweh in this story (4:2). Even though Yonah said He was a Hebrew and that he feared Elohim, why do you think he kept doing the opposite of what Yahweh told him, and at times was even displeased with Yahweh's decisions?
- There are several passages in Chapter 2 where the words of Yonah are similar to those of King David. Discuss their heartfelt prayers and find similar passages in the Psalms.
- In Chapter 3:5 it says that the people of Nineweh 'believed in Elohim'. They then did many actions to show that they did. How can and should we demonstrate belief?

