

NOVEMBER -21-27, 2022

# Jonah; Micah

“HE DELIGHTETH IN MERCY”

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**Summary:** *Jonah 1. Jonah is sent to call Nineveh to repentance—He flees on a ship, is cast into the sea, and is swallowed by a great fish.*

*Jonah 2. Jonah prays to the Lord, and the fish vomits him out on dry ground.*

*Jonah 3. Jonah prophesies the downfall of Nineveh—The people repent, and the city is saved.*

*Jonah 4. Jonah is displeased with the Lord for His mercy upon the people—The Lord rebukes him.*

*Micah 1. Micah prophesies the downfall of Samaria and Jerusalem.*

*Micah 2. The destruction of Israel is lamented—The Lord will gather the remnant of Israel.*

*Micah 3. Priests who teach for hire and prophets who divine for money bring a curse upon the people.*

*Micah 4. In the last days, the temple will be built, Israel will gather to it, the millennial era will commence, and the Lord will reign in Zion.*

*Micah 5. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem—In the last days, the remnant of Jacob will triumph gloriously over the Gentiles.*

*Micah 6. In spite of all His goodness to them, the people have not served the Lord in spirit and in truth—They must act righteously, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him.*

*Micah 7. Though the people of Israel have rebelled, yet in the last days the Lord will have mercy on them—He will have compassion and pardon their iniquities.*

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## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### What is Jonah's gift?

The story of Jonah is his own poetic way of bearing a humble testimony that he was nothing, that he sank

to the depths, and that he was to do the Lord's work instead of his own. His humility and confession may be mistaken as a “less than willing” prophet. Yet he is one of the greatest and, in fact, the most important prophet of his day. While visiting in Israel and meeting with some of the local Saints at dinner in Jerusalem, Elder James E. Faust (1920-2007) observed as the table talk included “Who is your favorite prophet? Unhesitatingly, he added, “The living one.”

### How does God honor his prophets?

God honored his prophets, assigning their names to events and covenants. Examples

include: “The Abrahamic Covenant” that existed before Abraham and the “Law of Moses.” Jonah received that honor as the only sign the Lord would give of his Messiahship. Look and see how Jonah's life represented the coming Messiah and how Jesus referred to the sign of the prophet Jonah, the only sign he would give. There are some people who don't know or believe about Jesus, and they describe Jonas and his life. From Jewish sources, the following comments are of interest: “Jonah is known for the incident involving the whale, or large fish, but that episode is secondary to the lesson the Book comes to teach. Jonah learned through bitter experience that non-Jews are also God's creatures and one must not begrudge them God's love and forgiveness. Also to be learned is the fact that true repentance is accepted by God and earns His pardon for almost any sin. Because of its theme of sin, repentance, and

forgiveness, the Book of Jonah is read every Day of Atonement at the Minhah service.” “In ancient literature there are several stories of people being rescued from inside fish (Heracles the Hesione, Perseus, and Andromeda); but only in that of Jonah was the rescue effected by prayer and not by force. The book is to be understood as a lesson in Divine forgiveness and mercy—to Jonah as well as to the people of Nineveh—and as a lesson in obedience to God’s will. As a symbol of the effectiveness of repentance it is read as the haftarah at the afternoon service of the Day of Atonement.” “Opinions as to the date of the Book of Jonah vary considerably. Some scholars date it as early as the eighth century B.C.E. and consider its hero to be Jonah the prophet who lived in the time of Jeroboam II. Others date it as late as the third century B.C.E.” “The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

### **What are the “perfect storms” in the scriptures?**

There are a several “sea and storm stories” in the scriptures. Their meanings and lessons for us, nowadays, have a common connection. Noah is saved by the Lord, Jonah is saved by the Lord, the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee are saved by the Lord. When “sinking,” we are saved by the Lord. “Though the Israelites were not really a seafaring nation, the Bible is full of references to the sea and ships, and in the Book of Jonah, one of the main parts of the story takes place at sea when the hero is thrown overboard in the hope of stopping a storm.” “During the Middle Ages Jews became less involved in the actual owning and sailing of ships but remained active as sea merchants and brokers. Jews were known for producing

nautical instruments and maps. Abraham Zacuto invented the astrolabe and drew up nautical tables that were invaluable to sailors. Christopher Columbus is thought by some to have been a *Marrano* (secret Jew) and his interpreter certainly was Jewish. In England a Marrano, Simon Fernandez, was chief pilot to Sir Walter Raleigh.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

### **How does location of Jaffa play a role in understanding the salvation for all people?**

It may be beneficial in understanding the location of Jaffa and the two powerful stories that connect in meaning and insight. Jonah learns that it is God’s will that Gentiles be saved. Peter learns the same lesson. Both prophets sank to the depths in learning that it is God’s work that “Jehovah saves.” It is a characteristic of prophets to be so tested that they “sink to new heights,” and become the special witnesses of the Savior. An ancient Seaport, Jaffa (Joppa) is an Old Testament caravan stop. In archaeological terms it is a tel, a mound of different civilizations layered one on each other after each subsequent destruction and rebuilding. This particular waystation also became a seaport, possibly the oldest dock in history. Jaffa is where the ancient prophet Jonah left for the west instead of going east to Nineveh as the Lord commanded him to do. As the Bible relates, a terrible storm arose, endangering the ship and crew. Jonah, being identified as the cause, was thrown overboard, but the Lord did not let him perish. Jonah spent three days and three nights inside the belly of a great fish. “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*) (also see chapters 1 & 2).

### **What is the lesson of Jonah’s account?**

In his own day, Jonah did not know that we, twenty-nine centuries later, would refer to his experience as a sign of the Messiah. The entire account is so symbolic that it deserves a closer look. Instead of going north and east as the Lord instructed, Jonah went south and west. Instead of going up to Nineveh, he went down into the sea. All this seems to be a short-term defiance on Jonah’s part, but the Lord Jehovah had a long-term lesson in mind. Jonah went down, personally and physically and then the Lord brought him up. Jonah was dead (three days

and three nights) and lived again. I suppose his account is one of the earliest “near death” accounts so popular today. It is certainly a lesson in “opposites.” The popular expression about Jonah’s experience is that “it’s a whale of a story.” According to Jacques-Yves Cousteau, a French naval officer, oceanographer, filmmaker and author, (1910-1997), whales are rarely found in the Mediterranean. However, there exists a grouper fish that, according to experts, can grow large enough to swallow a man. There are modern tales that refer to such occurrences as well. In studying Jonah we learn about one of God’s true names. In reading Jonah’s account, it becomes obvious that he learned a great lesson. His four chapters are an interesting study in contrasts and opposites. His own poetry and literary style are a testimony that has one purpose: It is to witness that the Lord saves. He says that clearly in chapter 2, verse 9: “*Salvation is of the Lord.*” Since the word Jehovah is unspeakable in Hebrew (it means I AM—and “I am” isn’t even conjugated in Hebrew), a shortened version of Jehovah is found in “*Jeho*,” “*Jah*” or “*Jahweh*.” Names such as “Elijah” (my God is *Jehovah*), “Jeremiah” and “Hezekiah” all refer to “*Yah*.” The word salvation is rendered with the shortened sound “*sha*” or “*shua*,” such as in “Elisha” (my God saves). However, best of all is the Lord’s name “*Jehoshua*.” This became “Joshua” and eventually that became “Jesus” in English. It means, “Jehovah saves,” or as Jonah put it, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

#### **How did Jesus use Jonah as an “only sign?”**

The Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign that he was the Messiah—the Jehovah who saves. He informed them that a wicked and adulterous nation sought for signs. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that they already had the one and only sign of the Messiah they would get, three days and three nights. Jonah was down in the sea for three days and three nights and then lived again. Jesus prophesied that He would be three days and three nights in the earth and then live again as he began the resurrection. “But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three

nights in the heart of the earth.” (**Matthew 12:39-40**) As many people listened, they may have heard his words, but many did not see the real picture. Think of it, at first Jonah may not have seen the entire picture either.

#### **How did Jaffa become the place to reveal the salvation of Gentiles, too?**

Peter’s Vision of the Sheet (Tallith): In New Testament times, the city of Jaffa was some twenty feet below today’s city level. Simon Peter was staying there at the home of Simon the Tanner when he received a remarkable vision. It was the sixth hour of the day (the sixth hour is what in modern times we call noon). Simon Peter apparently was praying (religious Jews pray three times a day, covering their heads and using a special prayer cloth, a tallith, over their shoulders). During his prayers, Peter saw a sheet with knitted or knotted corners—maybe like a *tallith* with its knotted corners—filled with all sorts of common or unclean foods. Today, this would be called unkosher. An angel commanded Peter to eat of those foods, contrary to Jewish dietary law. The vision was a conflict (or contrast) in symbolism: The used in the temple as a holy garment, its 613 knots and strings symbolizing the laws given by Moses, was now filled with foods forbidden by the Law of Moses. I hasten to point out that visions really do contain pictures and sounds that convey information.

#### **How does the vision of Cornelius fit in this lesson?**

Connecting Peter’s vision with another experience creates an even clearer picture. On the previous day, some thirty-five miles to the north at Caesarea, a Roman centurion named Cornelius received a vision at the ninth hour of the day. (Again, in modern times that is three o’clock in the afternoon). In the vision, an angel told Cornelius to send for Peter so that he could teach Cornelius the truth. Incidentally, the time to travel the distance of thirty-five miles would take the better part of two days, or at least an overnight journey. Cornelius’s invitation to Peter arrived just as Peter was contemplating the meaning of the unusual vision of “unkosher” foods he had just been commanded to eat. He lodged his Roman guests overnight, then departed with them to Caesarea, which took another night. Peter was soon to learn of the

correlation of these two heavenly manifestations. When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, again contrary to Jewish decree and custom, he related that God had updated or changed the food laws of Israel (showing Israel's singularity), and said, ". . . Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." **(Acts 10:34-35)** Not just Israelites but all peoples were able to become children of the covenant. The three nights and three days is a subtle reminder of Jehovah saving Jonah at Jaffa; later from Jaffa comes the reminder that He saves all! The scriptural report of the Peter/ Cornelius events is written as a chiasmus. First we read of Cornelius's vision, next we learn of Peter's vision. But when Peter arrives in Caesarea, the vision of Cornelius is repeated. The center point is about the Savior: "Salvation is for all people." "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." **(Isaiah 12:2)**

#### **How did Micah console troubled Israel?**

Micah is another prophet that writes little, yet his writing bears an immense impact for us in these latter-days. Two governing headquarters of the Lord's kingdom will exist. Presently, there are two dedicated centers—two "Zions" in the two "Tops of the Mountains," Jerusalem and Salt Lake City. Apostle Howard W. Hunter (1907-1995), when dedicating the Jerusalem Center used by BYU, instructed us that it would be the Headquarters of the Church and a place where the Lord will speak from, the Lord will speak from two Zions. Even the Jews seem to know; "Micah directed his prophecy against the rich

who lived in ill-gotten splendor at the expense of the poor. He warned them that God would forsake His people and that the inevitable results of the corruption of Judah would follow: the ravaging of Judah by its enemies, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and exile. Micah stated God's demands simply: justice tempered with mercy. Micah's verses of (consolation) are beautiful in their vision of the glorious future of Zion: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem . . . And they the nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid . . ." **(Micah 4:5)**. **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

#### **What do Jews quote when they "throw their sins in water?"**

On the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* (biblical New Year) (some Jews do this on the second day), Jews traditionally proceed to a body of running (living) water and symbolically cast off their sins. Many write them on slips of paper and cast them into the water. Kurdistan Jews have been known to go into the water and swim around to be cleansed of their sins. This *Tashlich* ceremony includes reading the Biblical source passage for the practice which is the last verse from the prophet Micah, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." **(Micah 7:19)** Ten days later is *Yom Kippur*, the day of atonement. It is a day of fasting that follows the ten-days of repenting including the *Tashlich*.