

Messianic Rabbi: The Best Thing About the Story of Jonah

I am so thankful that the book of Jonah was included in our Bibles because this short book provides one of the most powerful and encouraging messages, not just in the Old Testament, but in the entire Bible.

The book begins this way:

“Now the word of Adonai came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying: ‘Rise, go to the great city Nineveh and call out to her, for their evil has risen before Me.’ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish, from the presence of Adonai. He went down to Jaffa and found a ship going to Tarshish, paid the fee and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish—away from the presence of *Adonai*” (Jon. 1:1, TLV).

I know for many, these verses, as well as the rest of the Jonah narrative, are familiar. We know that G-D spoke to Jonah and gave him a specific mission: “Go to Nineveh and call out to her, for their evil has risen before me.” We also know that instead of doing what G-D called him to, Jonah bought a ticket for the complete opposite direction. In fact, the text says Jonah was running away not just from his calling, but also trying to run away from the very presence of G-D.

We also know that as we read through the book, we find Jonah on a boat headed to Tarshish that becomes overtaken by a storm. Jonah tells the sailors to throw him overboard to save their ship and their lives.

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After Jonah is thrown overboard, he is swallowed by a great fish, and after three days and nights, the fish spits him out on shore. Jonah ends up preaching to the people of Nineveh, and the nation repents and is spared from being destroyed.

While the story of Jonah is very exciting to read and to preach about, the most exciting part of the book isn't Jonah running from G-D. It isn't the boat in the raging storm. It isn't his being swallowed by the great fish or whale. It isn't even when Jonah gets puked onto shore and preaches one of the most famous revivals in history.

The best part of the book of Jonah is that no matter what Jonah does, G-D never stops talking to him. Just think about that truth. Jonah received a message from G-D, and instead of being obedient, Jonah runs not just away from his calling, but he tries running from the presence of G-D.

After Jonah is spit out by the fish and he preaches to the Ninevites and they repent, Jonah still isn't happy. The text actually says, "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he resented it" (Jon. 4:1).

Even though Jonah ran from G-D and got angry and resentful toward G-D, G-D still continued to talk to him.

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I don't know about you, but, for me, the best thing about Jonah is that even though Jonah wanted to quit on G-D, G-D never wanted to quit on Jonah.

Jonah's rebellion, anger and resentment never stopped G-D from talking to Jonah, and Jonah's rebellion, anger and resentment didn't take away Jonah's calling to preach to the people of Nineveh.

So, the best thing about Jonah was that even though he was rebellious, angry and resentful toward G-D, G-D never stopped talking to Jonah, and because G-D never stopped talking to Jonah, Jonah never stopped listening to G-D.

Maybe you are a Jonah. Maybe you have been called by G-D to preach to your Nineveh. Maybe you tried to run away from your calling and your G-D. Maybe you've been in a storm and swallowed figuratively by a great fish. Maybe you feel like you've been spit out on the shores of your Nineveh. Maybe you've preached to your Nineveh, and they've repented. Maybe you have even become angry and resentful toward G-D.

Be of good cheer, because even if all of the above is true for you, it is also true that G-D is still talking to you. After all, He spoke to me to write this blog just so you would read it and hear Him speaking to you today.

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