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Salvation is a Journey

The Story of Jonah

Jonah 1:1-3

The book of Jonah begins with Jonah fleeing from the presence of Yahuweh, thinking that by his actions he can escape the assignment given to him. We read this and it appears ridiculous because in our own righteous minds, we judge the ludicrously of trying to escape the hand of Yahuweh. But how often do we do the exact thing that Jonah did because we knew that if we followed Yahuweh's leading, we would not get our own way in the end?

This was the case of Jonah as we shall see...

Jonah 1:4-10

In his fleeing, Jonah boarded a ship to Tarshish (heading in the opposite direction of where he was called to go). As this passage states, the men on the ship knew nothing about Jonah except the fact that he was fleeing from his Elohim. Jonah had evidently made a passing statement to the crew members while on his way down to the quarters to sleep away the voyage.

As the story goes, Yahuweh sent a powerful storm, so much so that the crew was crying out, each to their own gods, willing to sacrifice the entire cargo just to save their lives. All the while, Jonah is sound asleep in the bottom of the ship.

Here is the lie – as we think we can outwit the plans of Yahuweh for our lives, we are inadvertently causing those around us to suffer as we “sleep” away His calling. How many times have we watched people around us, including those in close relationships, try to fight to stay alive, leaning on their own methods of salvation – crying out to worthless idols?

Ignoring the evident can be damnation for others.

How can we sleep knowing we have the message to save the lives of others with the life boat of the Gospel? How can we drift along in our dream worlds of safety while those around us have been subjected to danger, fighting for their lives, because of our own worthless decisions?

It is when we try to escape the will and plans of Abba, that we not only place ourselves in danger, but those who trusted us to be faithful to our word...and to His.

Jonah 1:11-15

After being awoken by the Captain, and being drilled as to why he put him and his crew in such danger, Jonah made a suggestion to have himself thrown overboard, as sort of an appeasing sacrifice to the Elohim of the storm. Jonah finally realized that by his own hand he had caused the whole disastrous situation. Though the crew members fought harder to save the ship, as to not to have to resort to such drastic measures, they finally cried out to Jonah’s Elohim for mercy and threw Jonah into the sea.

Sometimes it takes jumping into the middle of a chaotic situation to bring about the calm.

Jonah 1:16

“...and the men feared Yahuweh exceedingly...”

As Jonah was sinking deeper and deeper into the sea, the raging waters became calm once again. The crew members feared Yahuweh,

brought an offering and made vows. Had Jonah not been on board that day, the crew members probably would have continued to serve and worship their idols. Jonah's disobedience was used to turn others to Yahuweh.

Note – this is no excuse to be disobedient to Yahuweh (smile)

It is in the kindness of Yahuweh, and His great compassion that He can use our mistakes, our defiance, to rescue others, causing them to return to Himself. Remember, if Judas had not betrayed our Master, where would we be today? Elohim uses ALL things for His good pleasure and purpose. Who are we to question Him?

Jonah 1:17

“But Yahuweh appointed a fish to swallow Jonah...”

Like pride, humility has great power. It was Jonah's humility that caused the sea to become calm again. When was the last time we put ourselves in a situation that would cost us our reputation, little lone our very lives, for the sake of doing what was right? That is our humility meter. Are we willing to sacrifice what is most precious to us for the sake of someone else? In Jonah's case, his exercise of humility was to take full blame and allow himself to perish in order to save the lives of many. Hmm, Who does that sound like? Yahushua our Savior! Praise His ever Living Name!

Though taking the blame will often cause us to sink to the bottom of the sea, it is only then, can He and will He rescue us.

Jonah 2:1-10 (keying on verse 8)

“They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” – KJV

“Those observing false worthlessness's forsake their own kindness.” – ISR

This passage, specifically verse 8, in my opinion, is one of the most powerful statements ever made in the Bible. It was the summation of Jonah's heart cries, through agonizing realization that it was his own

hand that drove himself from the presence of Yahuweh. “When my life fainted within...”, Jonah breathed with honesty, “...I remembered Yahuweh.”

How many times have we tried to escape His ever searching gaze?

Some believe that Jonah had really drowned and that His prayer was from the depths of Sheol. I choose to believe that Abba did not let him drown but to experience the realization of being in the depths of “Sheol” by sitting in the creature’s stomach, with three days and three nights to ponder his actions.

As I studied out the Hebrew more closely, and the actual meaning of verse 8, I began to realize this was not only a message to myself, but to so many of us who rely upon our own understanding to deliver us.

It is by our own hand that we depart from our own mercy – forsaking His sweetness and loyalty to show us kindnesses that lead to life. The blame is never on another, never on Him, but only upon ourselves. It is by our own decisions to trust in worthless things which do not profit, that we find our lives in misery.

The understanding behind verse 8 is this - Those who deceive themselves into thinking they are able to grasp the fleeting vapors of self-dependence, cut themselves off from the only Reliant source of sustainment – the One who has proven Himself over and over that He is well able to take care of our needs if we only stop relying upon empty fantasies that cry out – **‘my own hand has provided for me’**.

The moment we become “independent” of Elohim, we have forfeited our own mercy, exchanging His faithfulness for the “*never faltering assurance*” of self-dependability amounting to nothing more than a puff of smoke.

Jonah 3:1-10

It makes you wonder how drastically different Jonah’s voyage was to Nineveh compared to that of Tarshish. Yahuweh had again said, “Arise, go to Nineveh...” Jonah arose and went to Nineveh. This time

it wasn't his disobedience that brought others to salvation (the crew members), but Jonah's obedience, through a second opportunity to obey the voice of Yahuweh, that brought salvation to the city.

Obedience does not count on a second chance, but considers the first opportunity provided...as the last.

Obedience does not gamble on the favor (grace) of Yahuweh.

When Jonah first boarded the ship to flee from the presence of Yahuweh, all of his grumbling (disobedience in action) could not stop the master plan of Yahuweh. This is clearly something that we must understand and be soberly aware of.

The action of grumbling and complaining about what path He is leading us on is a disobedient action of the heart that refuses to listen and acknowledge the sovereignty of Elohim in our lives. In short, our grumbling can cost us our salvation...but more gravely, the salvation of others.

Jonah 4:1-3

The turning of the city of Nineveh to Yahuweh brought vexation to Jonah's spirit. He finally admitted to Yahuweh why he did not want to go to Nineveh. "Oh that it is better to die than to live," Jonah said. Jonah knew that by his message, the people would repent and the people would "get off easy".

He had the same attitude of the disciples who said to Yahushua, "should we call down fire upon these people?" We want to play "God" don't we? It is a good and gracious thing that humans are not in control, or else who would be left standing?

Jonah thought Nineveh would not get what they deserved, because he knew the nature of Elohim. How quickly we forget the kindnesses shown to us by His outstretched hand. Too often they are thrown down in an instant to justify our failure to show compassion on others. As we have been forgiven much, so should we forgive others much.

Sad to say though, if it were up to us, we would provide instant judgment and wipe out entire peoples. We do not know the end from the beginning nor can we know a person's heart. Had Nineveh repented solely on the cause of saving themselves from the destruction, Elohim would probably not have saved them nor had turned from His wrath. But could Jonah know that?

Sometimes we are unable to decipher true repentance in others because we are so clouded in hurt and misunderstanding, that we quickly pass sentence on their sincerity, using our own standards of mercy, leaving them destined to carry a burden of guilt, possibly ending with the total devastation of their soul.

Jonah 4:4-11

Jonah sat in waiting to see what would become of the city. He was waiting to find out whether he would be justified in how he felt, for Yahuweh asked him if he was righteous in his displeasure. While this is going on, Yahuweh uses a plant to show him he was in error regarding his displeasure over Nineveh. Oh, how often we sit and test Elohim by our obstinacy, becoming angry because He chose to show mercy. 'That's not how I would have handled the situation,' we so often say!

Yahuweh had caused the plant to grow up and provide Jonah with some relief from the burning sun. However, in one short instance, the plant was taken away from Jonah and he began to cry out in displeasure, even unto death.

Yahuweh causes things like this to happen to show us ourselves and the selfishness of our heart – selfishness that we could feel such great compassion over something so insignificant because it is providing us a service or some benefit. "I'll show mercy as long as there is something in it for me!"

Thus there is the comparison between the Creator and mankind.

That Elohim would choose to show compassion and mercy on an entire city AND the livestock (dumb animals), simply because they had not provided Him with anything but sorrow and repentance for

their evil ways, had surpassed the critical and judgmental thinking of Jonah.

It is the same thinking that many had of King David and his “unjustified mercy” for his enemies. For you see, Nineveh became broken and sat in piles of contrite ashes. This is viewed in man’s eyes as weakness, but to Yahuweh, it is seen as strength – strength in the willingness to return based upon a message given by a man who had fled from the presence of Yahuweh.

It would do us well to reverse the roles in Psalm 51:16,17. Do we require sacrifices, and the full extent of the “law” applied because we have been wronged by someone?

Do we refuse someone who seeks our forgiveness, despising their broken and contrite spirit because their sorrow becomes **the ‘vacuum’ which sucks out all of our justified anger of being wronged and the power within us to condemn?**

Are we more sorrowful over the loss of meaningless things in our lives, because they are unable to ‘serve’ us any longer, than we are for our neighbor’s salvation? Are we so selfish, that we cannot see what is precious in the sight of Yahuweh because we are too blinded by our hate and contempt towards others who are not as “righteous” as we?

The book of Jonah is not about how one man’s message brought salvation to an evil city that “God” was about to destroy, but is a dialogue of how Elohim’s mercy and loving-kindness is interwoven all throughout our salvation journey through this life.

How many times a day do we forsake the gift of His mercy by our own ‘righteousness’ – believing in vanities concocted by our own imaginations that offer us the chance to play “God” in someone else’s life?

If we forsake giving mercy, we will be forsaken in receiving mercy.

However, in all of Jonah’s displeasures, he had received exactly the same experience and favor as those dwellers of Nineveh did. For they had received back their life by the pardoning of their death sentence

through Yahuweh's mercy and forgiveness, while Jonah received back his life by a demonstration of Yahuweh's longsuffering and great faithfulness.

It is through this understanding of the distribution of the favor of Yahuweh, that we begin to realize that we have all equally come short of His Esteem, one way or the other – whether we are the messenger or the recipient.

Thank Yahuweh today for the little 'plants' He causes to grow up in our lives, for without them, the love of His discipline would wither away because we have rejected the small things He uses to test us to see if we are worthy enough to become Sons of Elohim.

Yahuweh loved Jonah – not because he always obeyed and had the right attitudes, but because he was **real...**

And sometimes it takes sitting alone, wearing a head wrap of seaweed, to find out that no one else is to blame for our problems but the *one who smells like a fish*.

*“And you have forgotten the appeal which speaks to you as to sons,
My son, do not despise the discipline of Yahuweh, nor faint when
you are reprov'd by Him, for whom Yahuweh loves, He disciplines,
and flogs every son whom He receives.”*

Hebrews 12:5,6

May the love of Elohim guard you in His perfect desire, knowing that to offer thanksgiving, regardless of the situation, and acknowledging our own hand's involvement in the messes we find ourselves in, is the key to deliverance. For deliverance is of Yahuweh. (Jonah 1:9,10)

Shalom,

Derek

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