

(1) The word of Hashem (ה-י-ה-ו-ה) came to Yonah ben Amittai, saying (לְאמֹר):

(2) “Arise and go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out to its inhabitants, since their wickedness has risen up before Me.”

(3) Yonah arose in order to flee to Tarshish from before Hashem; he went down to Yaffo and found a ship that was going to Tarshish. He paid its fare and went down into it in order to travel with them to Tarshish [fleeing] from before Hashem.

(4) Hashem cast a great wind upon the sea and there was a great storm in the sea and the ship threatened to break up.

UNDERSTANDING THE INNER WORKINGS OF YONAH’S MIND IN FLEEING FROM THE CALL OF HASHEM

Consider the following questions:

1. Why does the book of Yonah come right after the book of the prophet Ovadiah?¹
2. Why would God seek to send Yonah to a non-Jewish nation to warn them about their sins?²
3. Why does God say (verse 2), “since their wickedness **has risen up**,” rather than using a more conventional expression such as, “since their sin is very great”?
4. Why does verse 3 say *Yonah arose*? Since we are told that he fled and went down to Yaffo, it is obvious that he first arose in order to do so.

1. Ovadiah and Yonah are part of *Trei Asar* (the larger *sefer* of the twelve minor prophets).

2. The basis of this question appears to be that in all of Tanach we do not find another example of a Jewish prophet being sent to non-Jews to get them to repent and be saved from punishment.

- (א) וַיְהִי דְבַר־ה' אֶל־יוֹנָה בֶן־אָמֵתַי לֵאמֹר:
 (ב) קוּם לךְ אֶל־נִינְוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ כִּי־עָלְתָה רָעָתָם
 לְפָנַי:
 (ג) וַיֵּקָם יוֹנָה לְבָרַח מִתְּרִשְׁיֵשָׁה מִלְּפָנָיו ה' וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֹנִיָּה בָּאָה
 תְּרִשִׁישׁ וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תְּרִשִׁישָׁה מִלְּפָנָיו ה':
 (ד) וְהָיָה הַטִּיל רוּחַ־גְּדוֹלָה אֶל־הֵימָּו וַיְהִי סַעֲר־גְּדוֹל בַּיָּם וְהָאֹנִיָּה
 חֲשָׁבָה לְהִשָּׁבֵר:

5. How could Yonah think that he could flee from Hashem? The entire world is full of His Glory!
6. Why didn't Hashem grow angry with Yonah for trying to escape His command? In fact, we see the opposite, that He performed great miracles for him by saving him from the depths of the sea.
7. Why does it say that Yonah wanted to flee “from **before** (מִלְּפָנָיו) Hashem” rather than just saying the more straight-forward expression, “from (מִפְּנֵי) Hashem”?
8. Why are we told that Yonah paid the fare for the boat? Why is this relevant?
9. Why does it say, to travel **with them**? Obviously he would be traveling with whomever was on the ship.
10. Why does it say the words “from before Hashem” a second time at the end of verse 3?
11. Why does it say in verse 4, God **cast** (הִטִּיל) a great wind? The word cast is usually used with an object (or a person) that can be thrown or hurled, not with something like a wind.
12. Why does it say that *the ship threatened to break up*? A sea storm would more normally cause a ship to sink than to break up.