

# The Testament Spectator

SPECIAL JONAHIC EDITION

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## Jonah unwilling to evangelize Ninevites; Flees from the Lord on Joppa ship

### Attempt to sail toward Tarshish thwarted by storm, drowning and 'great fish'

In an act of disobedience a Hebrew Prophet, commanded by God to proceed to the Assyrian Empire capital and evangelize the people there, ran away from his commission.

"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before Me," the word of the Lord came to Prophet Jonah one day.

But rather than obey the Lord, Jonah boarded a Joppa ship. He sailed on the Mediterranean Sea toward Tarshish, a 1,200-mile voyage from Nineveh and totally the opposite direction of the great city where the Lord commanded him to go.

Shortly after Joppa Port was no longer visible by the ships' lookout, a great sea wind began to blow and a violent storm erupted. The tempest was so strong it caused even the seasoned sailors on board to fear and cry out to his own god for deliverance.

But Jonah, asleep beneath the deck of the storm-tossed ship, was unconcerned about the tempest. Captain of the Tarshish-bound craft reported in his nautical logbook.

"How can you sleep," the Captain asked Jonah after going below deck to inquire why the closed-mouth passenger wasn't petitioning his God for deliverance like his sailors were praying to their gods.

"Get up and call on your God

immediately," the Captain urged Jonah. "Maybe He will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

The sailors suspected that the great sea wind and violent storm could be linked to someone aboard ship.

"Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity," they said to one another.

They cast lots and strangely, the lot fell on Jonah.

"Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us," they asked him, suspecting that Jonah was

*'I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you' — Jonah, son of Prophet Amittai of Gath Hepher*

some sort of a holy man.

"What is your profession," asked one sailor.

"Where do you come from," inquired another.

"What is your country," demanded a third.

"From what people are you," another seaman asked.

"I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land," said Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai whose hometown Gath Hepher is located in the territory where Israel's Zebulun Tribe inhabits.

Aware of the reputation of the Hebrews' God, the sailors became mortified. They thought they were

certainly doomed.

"What have you done," they still asked after Jonah explained that he was running away from the Lord.

At the same time Jonah was revealing to the crew that the storm was his fault, the sea became even more tumultuous, which seemed to accentuate the Prophet's point.

"What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us," the sailors yelled to Jonah over the loud wind.

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea," Jonah shouted back, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

The seamen didn't want to throw their passenger overboard as he insisted. But according to the Captain, they tried their best to row back to port. But the sea, preventing them from doing so, grew even wilder than before.

While the boat was being buffeted more violently, the sailors cried unto the Lord again.

"Oh Lord, please do not let us die for taking this man's life," they pleaded. "Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Oh Lord, have done as you pleased."

As soon as the men threw Jonah overboard, the raging sea grew calm. Jonah sank beneath the water — never to be seen again, that is until 72 hours later.

The seamen greatly feared the Lord, and with a spirit of thanksgiving, they offered a sacrifice to God and made vows to Him.

## Hebrew holy man thrown overboard; Saves crew and ship

### Violent storm linked to Prophet Jonah

A Hebrew holy man who boarded a Tarshish-bound ship at Joppa Port requested to be thrown overboard by its sailors, the Captain recorded in his nautical logbook.

"The only way to quell a tumultuous storm threatening to sink the ship and drown everyone was to cast this Israelite Prophet in the raging sea," the Captain penciled in his logbook.

"The 1,200-mile Mediterranean Sea journey to Tarshish started off to be a pretty uneventful voyage," the Captain further wrote.

But shortly after they set sail and Joppa City disappeared from the horizon, an unexpected storm hit them.

The tempest threatened to capsize the vessel so the crew were ordered to throw cargo into the sea so the ship could remain buoyant.

Even that maneuver didn't help. The ship was still taking on too much water and began to list terribly, causing even the most seasoned seamen on-board to fearfully pray to their own gods for deliverance.

But the holy man, registered on the passenger manifest as Jonah, was unconcerned about the calamity which had enveloped them, according to the Captain after finding the prophet asleep below deck when he went searching for him.

Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai of Gath Hepher — a town located in the territory where Israel's Zebulun Tribe inhabits — revealed he was to blame for the calamity.

"I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you," Jonah was recorded to have said to the crew, confessing that he was running away from God's command to proceed to Nineveh and proselytize the people there.

The Captain and his crew reluctantly did what Jonah requested.

"As soon as the seamen cast the self-sacrificing holy man in the raging Mediterranean Sea, the great sea wind ceased blowing and the violent storm dissipated," the Captain wrote, an account corroborated by the ships' entire crew.

watch God rain down brimstone and fire on Nineveh's citizens — incinerating them all like He did to the sinners of Sodom, Gomorrah, plus the entire region centuries earlier.

"No, I refuse to evangelize the wicked, hated and feared people of Nineveh," the Lord heard my heart say with disobedience and stubbornness.

"Instead of obeying the Lord God of my fathers, I boarded a ship at Joppa Port on the Mediterranean Sea and fled toward Tarshish, 1,200-miles in the opposite direction of the great city Nineveh where He commanded me to

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## Reason for disobeying God, astounding 'great fish' tale, shared by Prophet Jonah

*"It was I, Jonah, who after sinking in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea, was swallowed whole by that great fish which my Lord God Almighty prepared for this Prophet.*

*"There I laid dead, in the dark cavernous stomach of that great fish, created by the Lord God for the specific purpose of entombing me for three days and nights.*

*"Not only did my Lord protect me from any number of carnivorous sea creatures which could have nibbled away at my carcass, but He also preserved my dead body from decomposing while the waters engulfed me.*

*"In my dead, subconscious, semiconscious then gradually conscious state, my spirit always seemed to be aware of the Lord, His presence, and of course, my predicament.*

*"How did it get to this, you who read my personal account of this unbelievable tale will certainly ask, that I was so spared from certain death, only to be revived in the stomach of a great fish?*

*"It was my disobedience and stubbornness, human traits that are an*

*affront to God, which for a time banished me from the Lord's sight, yet not His memory.*

*"I knew for certain that it was the word of the Lord who initially told me to 'preach against it [Nineveh], because its wickedness has come up before Me.'*

*"But I chose not to do God's will.*

*"Anyone could figure out why I, a prophet — yes indeed, the son of a prophet, fled my Lord when He told me to go to Nineveh and preach against the capital of the evil Assyrian Empire.*

*"The brutal reputation of the Assyrians was known by all, like their horrendous inhumane, military policy of terrorizing and demoralizing inhabitants of a town they planned conquering.*

*"The Assyrian Army would gather the decapitated heads of a defeated enemy, stack them hideously in the shape of an Egyptian pyramid right front of the gates of the next city they targeted overthrowing. And then after*

*Victory, they viciously dismembered with sword their vanquished foes (committing all kinds of unimaginable atrocities) and repeat this horrible military tactic at the next town.*

*"Since my people have been victimized by such Assyrian cruelty, why would I, or any other nationalistic and patriotic-believing Israelite, want to proselytize, lead or facilitate in the moral and spiritual revival of the Ninevites?"*

*"Why should the wicked Assyrians, who by their very nature are unable, unaccustomed and probably even unwilling to show mercy to their victims, be spared from Godly judgment?"*

*"Not only did I want my Lord to destroy Nineveh, but I relished being the prophet to bring them the bad news. Then I would have gleefully watched — that's if they wouldn't have killed me — from afar when destruction came.*

*"Oh the retribution I would feel to*

*Editor's note: In this fictitious narrative, Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai of Gath Hepher, attempts to justify why the Ninevites are undeserving of God's mercy. He also shares with The Testament Spectator readers his death, resurrection and entombment in the stomach of a great fish. (see Jonah's Prayer on Page 2)*

## In Jonah's words...

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*'Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.'*

*"My Lord did not allow me to go my way very far, though, because that evening He sent a great wind, which made the sea quite violent.*

*"Yet I was still unconcerned, resigned to getting some shut-eye below deck. I was frantically awoken from my deep sleep by the Captain, who asked why wasn't I petitioning my God for deliverance like his sailors were praying to their gods.*

*"They decided to cast lots to determine who among us was to blame for this evil, embodied in a Mediterranean Sea storm, which had unexpectedly befallen this Tarshish-bound ship. I was not surprised when the lot fell on me.*

*"I explained to them that I was a Hebrew and where I was from. I also told them that I am God's Prophet and that it was I, and no one else, who was the one responsible for this Godly-induced storm.*

*"I fled from the Lord, 'the God of heaven, which made the sea and the dry land,' I acknowledged to them.*

*"They asked what should they do to me. I told them to throw me overboard.*

*"To their humane credit, the Captain and his sailors didn't want to do so. Instead, the mariners tried their*

## Jonah's 'great fish' prayer

*"In my distress I called to the Lord God Almighty, and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and You listened to my cry.*

*"You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept, over me.*

*"I said, 'I have been banished from your sight,' yet I will look again toward Your Holy Temple.*

*"The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.*

*best to row back to land, but the sea became more tumultuous.*

*"Finally, they did what I recommended. Several strong mariners reluctantly hoisted me up, carried me to the side of the ship and tossed me overboard.*

*"When I splashed into the tumultuous sea, it immediately became placid, I now recall while sinking under its swirling waves.*

*"Unlike the cargo which the sailors had already thrown overboard to lighten the ship, I did not float, but sank to the bottom of the sea.*

*"Instantly my mind replayed my life before me, particularly the*

*"To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever, but You brought my life up from the pit, Oh Lord my God.*

*"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to You, to Your Holy Temple.*

*"Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.*

*"But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you.*

*"What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord."*

*disobedience and stubbornness I recently exhibited when the word of the Lord initially told me to go to Nineveh.*

*"As I was descending toward the depths of the sea, I cried unto the Lord. I lost consciousness and died. (I would not know that He rescued me, until after I was revived.)*

*"My spirit saw a very large fish suddenly appear in the murky darkness, and swallow me whole. This great fish kept my body prisoner (safe if you will) from the ocean's perils.*

*"I don't know at what point-of-time I became physically conscious again.*

*"For three days and three nights, I was a passenger interned in this*

*strange, damp and yes swimming tomb.*

*"The sounds of the sea were quite audible as that great fish swam in the dark depths of the Mediterranean. I can now recall feeling nauseated at its every movement.*

*"My ears kept popping from the air pressure. Amazingly, there was plenty of oxygen for me to breathe. Warmth and humidity insulated me from the cold temperature of the sea.*

*"The gastric juices of this great fish — although very smelly and quite irritating — may have bleached my skin white, but as consumed aquatic prey, the sea creature never digested me.*

*"I, who thought of nothing else but the Lord, prayed incessantly. Who wouldn't?"*

*"Then after three days and three nights, the Lord heard my prayers and the great fish finally vomited me from the depths of its stomach unto dry land.*

*"I had long resigned to do God's will by then, which the Lord said was now to 'go to the great city Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.'*

*"Unbelievable tale as this is, I Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai of Gath Hopher, attest that I was indeed entombed in this great fish, which the Lord God Almighty mercifully prepared for me."*

## Ninevites heed Jonah's warning; Mass repentance moves God

A Hebrew Prophet predicted the destruction of Nineveh, reported many who heard his ominous prophecy by firsthand account or from word-of-mouth.

"In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed," the Hebrew Prophet, who received a word of the Lord to make this bold prediction, cried to the people of Nineveh upon entering their great city.

Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire, was so large that a visit required three days.

Yet each step the Hebrew Prophet traversed through the great city, his direct message, like a penetrating clarion to the ears of a morally-bankrupt people, was convicting all.

"In 40 days, Nineveh will be overthrown," declared the man named Jonah, recently tossed overboard by sailors of a Tarshish-bound ship to quell a violent storm, swallowed by a Godly-prepared great fish, entombed for three days and nights in the sea creature's stomach and then vomited on the shore.

The people of Nineveh, whose hearts were ready for spiritual revival, believed God and in the salvation message preached by Hebrew Prophet Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai whose hometown Gath Hopher is located in the Assyrian Empire's occupied territory where Israel's Zebulun Tribe inhabits.

In an act intended to underscore their repentance, the Ninevites — from the greatest noble to the least slave — proclaimed a fast and donned themselves in sackcloth, a black coarse fabric made from goats or camels hair.

Upon hearing the word of the Lord as spoken through Jonah, the King of the Assyrian Empire too responded.

In his act of true penitence, the Assyrian Monarch rose from his throne, disrobed, sackclothed himself and sat in ashes.

"Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything. Do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth," the King and

his nobles decreed, emphasizing it was very crucial that every Ninevite citizen remain in a prolonged state of sincere and honest contrition.

"Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion, turn from

His fierce anger so that we will not perish," the Nineveh King said hopefully.

When the Lord saw that the people confessed their sins, turned from their wickedness and renounced their evil ways, He too repented from destroying Nineveh, the great Assyrian city.

## Prophet Jonah displeased with revival outcome; Asks God 'to die'

The Hebrew Prophet who initially fled from the Lord rather than go to the Assyrian Empire's capital and preach revival there, became displeased that 120,000 Ninevites repented from their evil ways.

It took drowning from a violent storm, 72 hours entombment inside the stomach of a great fish — which then vomited him on dry land — before Hebrew Prophet Jonah agreed to obey God, go to Nineveh and preach God's message to people living at that great city.

But even after all that plus learning that the Assyrian King proclaimed a citywide prayer/fast, decreed his subjects to sackcloth themselves then sat in sackcloth and ashes himself, the revival at Nineveh wasn't what Prophet Jonah wanted.

"Oh Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home," Jonah bemoaned to the Lord God Almighty, who had already repented of the evil He threatened to do to the Ninevites in 40 days because their wickedness offended Him.

"That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish," said Jonah, the son of Prophet Amittai of Gath Hopher, a town situated in the area where Israel's Zebulun Tribe inhabits.

Jonah knew that the Lord would not

damn a repentant people because He is a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, One who relents from sending calamity.

Since the Lord allowed him to die once already — only to be revived inside the very stomach of a great fish which God sent to swallow and sustain him — Jonah asked that his life be taken. The Lord must be receptive to his request, Jonah reasoned.

"It is better for me to die than to live," he said with self-pity.

"Have you any right to be angry," the Lord asked His Prophet.

Jonah didn't answer, still miffed that the Ninevites repented, from the greatest noble to the least slave.

Throughout Nineveh, Jonah heard the prayers and cries of the people, beseeching God to spare them.

But Prophet Jonah, successful for bringing revival to the Ninevites yet still unmoved by the prayerful posture of a penitent people, went east of the city. Making himself a shelter, he sat down in the shade and waited to see what would happen to the mighty capital of the Assyrian Empire.

Because of the hot afternoon, the Lord wanted to ease Jonah's discomfort. He provided the Prophet a vine, hastened its

growth and caused it to extend over Jonah. This gave him the much needed shade over his head.

Prophet Jonah, displeased about how things turned out, was very happy about the vine.

But then at dawn of the next day, God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so much that it withered. When the sun arose and the day got hot, God provided a scorching east wind. As a result, the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint.

Again, Jonah pleaded to the Lord that he wanted to die.

"It would be better for me to die than to live," the Hebrew Prophet insisted.

"Do you have a right to be angry about the vine," the Lord asked him.

"I do," Jonah said. "I am angry enough to die."

"You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight," the Lord said to Jonah, chiding him for his pious and judgemental arrogance.

"But Nineveh has more than a 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well," the Lord said. "Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Editor's Note: The Testament Spectator, a newspaper which reports in a contemporary manner the characters, events and issues appearing in The Holy Bible, is to entertain, inform, educate and edify its readers. The events reported and sources quoted in this Special Jonahic Edition of The Testament Spectator are either scriptural passages or notes taken from Dake's Annotated Reference King James Bible or scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission by Zondervan Bible Publishers. This edition, which contains events from the book of Jonah, has been journalistically paraphrased to achieve contemporary readability and clarity. In some cases, the Editor/Publisher has fictionalized some events, sources and their quotes to enhance stories covered in The Testament Spectator. For further information, contact Ronald Owens Jr., Editor/Publisher, The Testament Spectator, P.O. Box 2102, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741, at (916) 366-9576. Send e-mail queries to rotestspec@aol.com