

Jonah

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Chagall – The Dove of Peace

The Descent

- וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה 1.1 and the word of יהוה happened
אֶל יוֹנָה בֶן אַמִּיטַי to Jonah¹ child of Amittai
לֵאמֹר saying
- קוּם לֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֶה 1.2 Rise - walk to Nineveh²
הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה the great city
וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ and call out against her
כִּי עֲלָתָהּ רָעָתָם לִפְנֵי for their evil has come up in my face
- וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה לְכַרֵּם תַּרְשִׁישׁ 1.3 but Jonah rose and ran away to Tarshish
מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה away from the face of יהוה
וַיֵּרָד יָפוֹ and he descended to Joppa
וַיִּמְצָא אֶנְיָה בָּאָה תַרְשִׁישׁ and found a ship going to Tarshish
וַיִּתֵּן שֹׁכֶרֶת and he paid the fare
וַיֵּרָד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תַּרְשִׁישׁ and descended into her to go with them to Tarshish
מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה away from the face of יהוה
- וַיַּהַרְגֵם הַטַּיִל רֹחַ גְּדוֹלָה אֶל הַיָּם 1.4 but יהוה hurled a great wind onto the sea
וַיְהִי סַעַר גְּדוֹל בַּיָּם and a great tempest happened on the sea
וַהֲאֵנְיָה חֹשֶׁבֶת לְהִשָּׁבֵר and the ship, she was reckoning she was a wreck
- וַיִּירָאוּ הַמַּלְחִים 1.5 And the salt-sea-farers feared
וַיִּזְעֻקוּ אִישׁ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי הָיָם and they cried each to his God
וַיִּטְלוּ אֶת הַכֶּלִּים and they hurled their cargo
אֲשֶׁר בָּאֵנְיָה אֶל הַיָּם that was in the ship onto the sea
לְהַקֵּל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם lightening themselves of trifles
וַיּוֹנֶה יוֹנָה אֶל יַרְכְּתֵי הַסְּפִינָה but Jonah had descended into the recesses below decks
וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּרְדָּם and he was laid out unconscious³
- וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו רֵב הַחֵבֶל 1.6 so the pilot approached him
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ and said to him
מַה לָּךְ נִרְדָּם what's with you - unconscious!
קוּם קְרָא אֶל אֱלֹהֶיךָ Rise! Call out to your God
אולי יַתְעַשֶׂת הָאֱלֹהִים לָנוּ maybe this God will do something for us
וְלֹא נִאֲבָד and we will not perish
- וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ 1.7 and they said, each to his companion
לִכְוּ וְנַפִּילָה גּוּרְלוֹת look here, let's throw the dice
וְנִדְעָה בְּשִׁלְמֵי הַרְעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ to know from whom this evil is ours
וַיִּפְּלוּ גּוּרְלוֹת and they threw the dice
וַיִּפֹּל הַגּוּרְלָל עַל יוֹנָה and the dice pointed to Jonah
- וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הַגִּידָה נָא לָנוּ 1.8 and they said to him, make it clear to us, please
בְּאֲשֶׁר לָמִי הַרְעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ why is it that this evil is ours?
מַה מְלֶאכְתְּךָ what is your business?
וּמֵאַיִן תָּבוֹא and where have you come from?
מַה אֶרְצְךָ what part of earth?
וְאִי מִזֶּה עִם אָתָּה and from this people - who are you?
- וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֵיהֶם 1.9 and he said to them
עִבְרִי אֲנִי כִי Hebrew I am
וְאֵת יְהוָה אֵל הַיְשָׁמַיִם אֲנִי יָרֵא and I, I fear יהוה the God of the heavens
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת הַיַּבְשָׁה who made the sea and the dry land

1 Jonah = Dove

2 Nineveh = נִינְוֶה (N is a symbol for fish) + the letters of Jonah יוֹנָה with one reversal.

3 Shares two letters with descend and three in some forms of the conjugation (stem is רדם).

The Sea⁴

- 1.10 and the mortals feared, a great fear, and they said to him
 what is this you have done?
 for the mortals knew that from the face of יהוה he had run away
 for he had made it clear to them
- 1.11 and they said to him
 what will we do to you that the sea may be quieted for us
 for the sea worked up a tempest
- 1.12 and he said to them
 lift me up and hurl me onto the sea
 and the sea will be quieted for you
 for I, I know
 that it is from me that this great tempest is upon you
- 1.13 But the mortals dug hard to turn to the dry land
 but they could not
 for the sea worked up a tempest against them
- 1.14 so they called out to יהוה and said
 we beseech you יהוה
 please, let us not perish
 in the life of this man
 and do not make us pay for innocent blood
 for you יהוה have done according to what you wanted
- 1.15 and they lifted up Jonah
 and they hurled him onto the sea
 and the sea stood back from his rage
- 1.16 and the mortals feared יהוה, a great fear
 and they offered an offering to יהוה
 and they vowed vows

The Fish

- 2.1⁵ And יהוה appointed a great fish
 to swallow up Jonah
 and it happened
 Jonah was in the innards of the fish
 three days and three nights
- 2.2 and Jonah prayed to יהוה his God
 from the innards of the fish⁶
- 2.3 and he said
 I called out from my trouble to יהוה
 and he answered me
 from the belly of the grave⁷ I cried
 you heard my voice
- 2.4 and you cast me from the depth

⁴ This chapter section 1:10-16 could be named for the mortals.

⁵ This chapter 2 of Jonah is a psalm. The other chapters are narrative.

⁶ Fish is both masculine and here feminine.

⁷ Jonah has died.

- בְּלִבְבֵי יָמַי
 וְנָהָר יָם בְּבִנְי
 כָּל מְשַׁבְּרֶיךָ וְגַלְיֶיךָ
 עָלַי עָבְרוּ
 וְאָנִי אָמַרְתִּי 2.5 and I, I said
 נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ
 אֲךָ אוֹסִירָה לְהִבִּיט
 אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ
 אֶפְפוּנִי 2.6 they enveloped me
 מִיָּם עַד נֶפֶשׁ
 תְּהוֹם יָם בְּבִנְי
 סוּף חִבּוּשׁ לִרְאִשִׁי
 לְקַצְבֵי הָרִים 2.7 of the roots of the hills
 יִרְדָּתִי
 הָאָרֶץ בְּרַחֲמֶיהָ בְּעַדֵי לְעוֹלָם
 וַתַּעַל מִשְׁחַת חַיִּי
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
 בְּהִתְעַשֵּׂף עָלַי נִפְשִׁי 2.8 when I in myself was disabled
 אֶת יְהוָה זָכַרְתִּי
 וַתָּבוֹא אֵלַי תְּפִלָּתִי
 אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ
 מְשַׁמְרִים הַבְּלִי שֵׁנָה חֲסָדָם יַעֲזֹבוּ 2.9 those who keep futile emptiness abandon their kindness¹¹
 וְאָנִי בְּקוֹל תוֹדָה אֲזַבְּחָה לָּךְ 2.10 so I in a voice of thanksgiving will offer you
 אֲשֶׁר נִדְרָתִי אֲשַׁלְּמָה
 יִשׁוּעָתָה לַיהוָה הַ
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְדָג 2.11 and יְהוָה spoke to the fish
 וַיִּקְא אֶת יוֹנָה אֶל הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת פ

The Call

- וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה אֶל יוֹנָה שֵׁנִית לְאָמֹר 3.1 and the word of יְהוָה happened to Jonah again saying
 קוּם לֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה 3.2 Rise, walk to Nineveh the great city
 וּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ אֶת הַקְּרִיאָה
 אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי דֹבֵר אֵלַיךְ
 וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל נִינְוֵה 3.3 and Jonah rose and walked to Nineveh
 כַּדְבַר יְהוָה
 וְנִינְוֵה הִיא עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לְאֵלֵי הַיָּם
 מִהֵלֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
 וַיִּהְיֶה יוֹנָה לְבוֹא בְּעִיר 3.4 and Jonah let himself come into the city
 מִהֵלֶךְ יוֹם אֶחָד
 וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר
 עוֹד אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם
 וְנִינְוֵה תִּהְיֶה נִהְפָּכֶת

8 =Psalm 42:8b.

9 As with all psalms, there are spaces where the poet realizes that things have changed.

10 The keyword structure surrounds the middle of this verse.

11 The words of this verse are not repeated in any other part of this psalm.

12 One day into the great city that belongs to God was enough.

- 3.5 and the mortals of Nineveh believed in God
 and they called out for a fast
 and they put on sackcloth
 from the greatest of them and to the least of them
- וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ אַנְשֵׁי נִינְוָה בְּאֵלֵי הָיָם
 וַיִּקְרְאוּ צוֹם
 וַיִּלְבְּשׁוּ שַׂקִּים
 מִגְדוֹלָם וְעַד קְטַנָּם

The Turn

- 3.6 and the word touched the king of Nineveh
 and he rose from his throne¹³
 and put aside his majesty from him
 and covered in sackcloth
 and sat on an ash-heap
- 3.7 and he proclaimed, and he said,
 in Nineveh out of the taste¹⁴ of the king and his great ones, saying
 the human and the animal,
 the herd and the flock,
 let none taste anything whatever
 let none pasture,
 and water, let none drink
- 3.8 but let them them be covered in sackcloth
 the human and the animal,
 and call out to God forcefully
 and let each turn from its evil way
 and from the violence that is in their palms
- 3.9 who knows
 this God may turn and sigh
 and turn from his fierce anger
 and we will not perish
- 3.10 and this God saw their deeds
 that they turned from their evil ways
 and this God sighed over the evil
 that he intended to do to them
 and he did not do it
- וַיִּגַע הַדְּבָר אֶל מֶלֶךְ נִינְוָה
 וַיִּקָּם מִכִּסְאוֹ
 וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶדְרָתוֹ מֵעָלָיו
 וַיִּכְסֵׁ שַׂק
 וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאֵפֶר
 וַיִּזְעַק וַיֹּאמֶר
 בְּנִינְוָה מִטַּעַם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַדְלָיו לֵאמֹר
 הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה
 הַבְּקָר וְהַצֹּאֵן
 אַל יִטְעֲמוּ מֵאוֹמָה
 אֶל יִרְעוּ
 וּמַיִם אֶל יִשְׁתּוּ
 וַיִּתְכַּסּוּ שַׂקִּים
 הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה
 וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל אֵלֵי הַיָּם בְּחִזְקָה
 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִישׁ מִדְּרָכּוֹ הַרְעָה
 וּמִן הַחֲמָס אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפְיָהֶם
 מִי יוֹדֵעַ
 יִשׁוּב וְנָחַם הָאֵל הַיָּם
 וַיִּשָּׁב מִחֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ
 וְלֹא נִאֲבָד
 וַיִּרְא הָאֵל הַיָּם אֵת מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם
 כִּי שָׁבוּ מִדְּרָכָם הַרְעָה
 וַיִּנָּחַם הָאֵל הַיָּם עַל הַרְעָה
 אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם
 וְלֹא עָשָׂה

The City

- 4.1 and this was evil for Jonah
 great evil
 and he was furious
- 4.2 and he prayed to יהוה and said
 I beseech you יהוה
 was this not my word
 even in my own humanity about what would happen?
 therefore I stalled
 and ran away to Tarshish
 for I told you that you are a gracious and compassionate God
 slow to anger and of much kindness
- וַיִּרַע אֶל יוֹנָה
 רָעָה גְדוֹלָה
 וַיִּחַר לוֹ
 וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֲנִי יְהוָה
 הֲלוֹא זֶה דְבָרִי
 עַד הָיִיתִי עַל אֲדָמָתִי
 עַל כֵּן קָדַמְתִּי
 לָבֶרֶחַ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה
 כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אַתָּה אֵל חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם
 אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חַסְדִּים

13 Compare John 13:4 for the sequence of actions.

14 Compare Psalm 34 and the frame of 'taste / madness'.

- ונחם על הרעה
 ועתה יהנה קח נא את נפשי ממני
 כי טוב מותי מחייתו
- 4.3 and who sighs over evil
 and now please my being from me
 for death is good compared with my life
- ויאמר יהנה
 ההיטב חרה לך
- 4.4 and Jonah said
 is it good for you to be furious?
- ויצא יונה מן העיר
 וישב מקדם לעיר
 ויעש לו שם סכה
 וישב תחתיה בצל
 עד אשר יראה מה יהיה בעיר
- 4.5 and Jonah went out from the city
 and he sat east of the city
 and he made a shelter for himself there
 and he sat under it in the shade
 to see what would happen in the city

The Tender Plant

- וימן יהנה אל הים הקיזון
 ויעל מעל ליונה
 להיות צל על ראשו
 להציל לו מרעתו
 וישמח יונה על הקיזון
 שמחה גדולה
- 4.6 and God appointed a tender plant
 and made it come up over Jonah
 to become shade over his head
 to deliver him from his evil
 and Jonah was glad for the tender plant
 he was very glad
- וימן האל הים תולעת
 בעלות השחר למחרת
 ותך את הקיזון וייבש
- 4.7 and God appointed a worm
 as the dawn came up in the morning
 and it struck the tender plant and it dried up
- ויהי כזרח השמש
 וימן אל הים רוח קדים חרישית
 ותך השמש על ראש יונה
 ויתעלף
 וישאל את נפשו למות
 ויאמר
 טוב מותי מחייתו
- 4.8 and it happened when the sun shone
 and God appointed a sultry east wind
 and the sun struck Jonah's head
 and he fainted
 and he wished his being to die
 and he said
 death is good compared with my life
- ויאמר אל הים אל יונה
 ההיטב חרה לך על הקיזון
 ויאמר
 היטב חרה לי
 עד מות
- 4.9 and God said to Jonah
 is it good for you to be furious over the tender plant?
 and he said
 it is good for me to be furious
 even to death
- ויאמר יהנה
 אתה חספת על הקיזון
 אשר לא עמלת בו
 ולא גדלתו
 שכן לילה היה
 וכן לילה אבד
- 4.10 and Jonah said
 you yourself showed pity for the tender plant
 that you did not toil for
 and did not make grow¹⁵
 that happened as a child of the night
 and as a child of the night perished
- ואני לא אחוס על נינה
 העיר הגדולה
 אשר יש בה הרבה משתים-שורה רבוא אדם
 אשר לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו
 ובהמה רבה ש
- 4.11 and I, will I not show pity to Nineveh
 the great city?
 for there are in her more than 12 ten-thousands of humans
 who cannot tell their right hand from their left
 and also many cattle

15 or make great