

## **Prophet Yunus (Jonah) [PBUH] Description of Jonah's People**

Prophet Jonah (Yunus) also known as Dhan-Nun. About his people Almighty Allah said: Was there any town (community) that believed (after seeing the punishment), and its Faith (at that moment) saved it (from the punishment)? (The answer is none,) - except the people of Jonah; when they believed, We removed from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the (present) world, and permitted them to enjoy for a while. Surah 10: 98

The inhabitants of the town of Nineveh were idolators who lived a shameless life. Prophet Jonah was sent to teach them the worship of Allah. The people disliked his interference in their way of worship, so they argued: "We and our forefathers have worshipped these gods for many years and no harm has come to us."

### **Jonah Leaves His People**

Try as he might to convince them of the foolishness of idolatry and of the goodness of Allah's laws, they ignored him. He warned them that if they kept on with their foolishness, Allah's punishment would soon follow. Instead of fearing Allah, they told Jonah that they were not afraid of his threats. "Let it happen," they told him. Jonah was disheartened. "In that case I will leave you to your misery!" So saying, he left Nineveh, fearing that Allah's anger would soon follow. And (remember) Dhan-Nun (Jonah), when he went off in anger, and imagined that We shall not punish him (i.e., the calamities which had befallen him)! Surah 21:87

### **he People are Forgiven**

Hardly had he left the city when the skies began to change color and looked as if they were on fire. The people were filled with fear by this sight. They recalled the destruction of the people of 'Ad, Thamud and Noah. Was theirs to be a similar fate? Slowly faith penetrated their hearts. They all gathered on the mountain and started to beseech Allah for His mercy and forgiveness. The mountains echoed with their cries. It was a momentous hour, filled with sincere repentance.

Allah removed His wrath and showered His blessings upon them once again. When the threatening storm was lifted, they prayed for the return of Jonah so that he could guide them.

### **The Storm at Sea**

Meanwhile, Jonah had boarded a small ship in the company of other passengers. It sailed all day in calm waters with a good wind blowing at the sails. When night came, the sea suddenly changed. A horrible storm blew as if it were going to split the ship into pieces. The waves looked wild. They rose up as high as mountains then plunged down like valleys, tossing the ship and sweeping over the deck.

Behind the ship, a large whale was splitting the water and opening its mouth. A command had been issued from Almighty Allah to one of the greatest whales of the sea to surface. It obeyed. The whale hurried to the surface of the sea and followed the ship as it had been commanded. The tempest continued and the chief crewman asked the crew to lighten the ship's heavy load. They threw their baggage overboard, but this was not enough. Their safety lay in reducing the weight further, so they decided among themselves to lighten their load by removing at least one person.

### **Jonah Jumps into the Sea**

The captain directed: "We will make lots with all the travelers' names. The one whose name is drawn will be thrown into the sea." Jonah knew this was one of the seamen's traditions when facing a tempest. It was a strange polytheistic tradition, but it was practiced at that time. Jonah's affliction and crisis began.

Here was the prophet, subjected to polytheistic rules that considered the sea and the wind to have gods that riot. The captain had to please these gods. Jonah reluctantly participated in the lot, and his name was added to the other travelers' names. The lot was drawn and "Jonah" appeared.

Since they knew him to be the most honorable among them, they did not wish to throw him into the angry sea. Therefore, they decided to draw a second lot. Again Jonah's name was drawn. They gave him a final chance and drew a third lot. Unfortunately for Jonah, his name came up again.

Jonah realized that Allah's hand was in all this, for he had abandoned his mission without Allah's consent. The matter was over, and it was decided that Jonah should throw himself into the water. Jonah stood at the edge of the ship, looking at the furious sea. It was night and there was no moon. The stars were hidden behind a black fog. But before he could be thrown overboard, Jonah kept mentioning Allah's name as he jumped into the raging sea and disappeared beneath the huge waves.

### **The Whale Swallows Jonah**

The whale found Jonah floating on the waves before it. It swallowed Jonah into its furious stomach and shut its ivory teeth on him as if they were white bolts locking the door of his prison. The whale dived to the bottom of the sea, the sea that runs in the abyss of darkness.

Three layers of darkness enveloped him, one above the other: the darkness of the whale's stomach, the darkness of the bottom of the sea, the darkness of the night. Jonah imagined himself to be dead, but his senses became alert when he found he could move. He knew that he was alive and imprisoned in the midst of three layers of darkness. His heart was moved by remembering Allah. His tongue was released soon after saying: "La ilaha illa Anta (none has the right to be worshipped but You (O, Allah), Glorified (and Exalted) be You above all that (evil) they associate with You. Truly, I have been of the wrong-doers." Surah 21:87

Jonah continued praying to Allah, repeating this invocation. Fishes, whales, sea-weeds, and all the creatures that lived in the sea heard the voice of Jonah praying, heard the celebration of Allah's praises issuing from the whale's stomach. All these creatures gathered around the whale and began to celebrate the praises of Allah in their turn, each in its own way and in its own language.

The whale also participated in celebrating the praises of Allah and understood that it had swallowed a prophet. Therefore it felt afraid; however, it said to itself: "Why should I be afraid? Allah commanded me to swallow him."

### **Allah Forgives Jonah**

Allah Almighty saw the sincere repentance of Jonah and heard his invocation in the whale's stomach. Allah commanded the whale to surface and eject Jonah onto an island. The whale obeyed and swam to the farthest side of the ocean. Allah commanded it to rise towards the warm, refreshing sun and the pleasant earth.

The whale ejected Jonah onto a remote island. His body was inflamed because of the acids inside the whale's stomach. He was ill, and when the sun rose, its rays burned his inflamed body so that he was on the verge of screaming for the pain. However, he endured the pain and continued to repeat his invocation to Allah.

Almighty Allah caused a vine to grow to considerable length over him for protection. Then Allah Exalted caused Jonah to recover and forgave him. Allah told Jonah that if it had not been for his praying to Him, he would have stayed in the whale's stomach till the Day of Judgment.

### **Summary of Jonah's Story**

Almighty Allah recounted: And, verily, Jonah was one of the Messengers. When he ran to the laden ship, he (agreed to) cast lots, and he was among the losers, - Then a (big) fish swallowed him and he had done an act worthy of blame. Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, he would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection. But We cast him forth on the naked shore while he was sick, and We caused a plant of gourd to grow over him. And We sent him to a hundred thousand (people) or even more. And they believed; so We gave them enjoyment for a while. Surah 37: 139-148

### **Jonah's People - Changed**

Gradually he regained his strength and found his way to his hometown, Nineveh. He was pleasantly surprised to notice the change that had taken place there. The entire population turned out to welcome him. They informed him that they had turned to believe in Allah. Together they led a prayer of thanksgiving to their Merciful Lord.

### **Prophet Muhammad's Saying About Jonah (PBUT)**

Ibn 'Abbas narrated: "The prophet Muhammad said: 'One should not say that I am better than Jonah Ibn Matta.'"