



Devash Yom Kippur יום כּפּוּר

יום כּפּוּר תשפ"ו October 1-2, 2025



סֵפֶר יוֹנָה • Sefer Yonah Summary

At Minhah on Yom Kippur, we read all four chapters of the Book of Yonah:

- ◆ Yonah was a נָבִיא (navi, prophet). God told him to go to Nineveh and tell the people to stop doing evil things.
- ◆ Yonah didn't want to go, so he ran away and got on a ship.
- ◆ God sent a big storm, but Yonah just went to sleep. The sailors on Yonah's ship were scared, and Yonah admitted the storm was sent because of him. Yonah told the sailors to throw him overboard, and the storm stopped immediately.
- ◆ A big fish swallowed Yonah.

While inside, Yonah prayed to God. After three days, the fish spit him out on the land.

- ◆ God told Yonah again to go to Nineveh, and this time he listened. Yonah warned the people of Nineveh to change their ways through תְּשׁוּבָה (teshuvah, repentance), and they did! God forgave them.
- ◆ Yonah was upset about this. He didn't want God to spare them. God sent Yonah a shady plant called a קִיקָיוֹן (kikayon), and then God caused the kikayon to shrivel up. Yonah wanted to save the kikayon, and he was sad when it was gone. This taught Yonah a lesson: God cares about all people and wants to save them through teshuvah.





The people and animals in Nineveh return to God through תְּשׁוּבָה (teshuvah, repentance). God forgives them, but Yonah isn't happy about it.

Then God causes a plant called a קִיקַיּוֹן (kikayon) to grow above Yonah. Yonah appreciates its comfortable shade. When God quickly makes the kikayon shrivel up and die, Yonah misses the kikayon and becomes very upset. God explains why all this happened:

Yonah 4:10-11

God said: "You cared about the kikayon, which you did not work for and which you did not grow. It just appeared overnight and then died overnight.

So shouldn't I care about Nineveh, that great city, where there are more than 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left, and many animals as well?!"

יוֹנָה ד':י-יא

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵתָה חֲסַתָּ עַל הַקִּיקַיּוֹן
אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָמַלְתָּ בּוֹ וְלֹא גִדַּלְתָּו שֶׁבֶן
לַיְלָה הָיָה וּבֹן לַיְלָה אָבָד:

וְאַנִּי לֹא אָחוּס עַל נִינְוָה הָעִיר
הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ בָּהּ הֲרֵבָה מִשָּׁתִּים
עֶשְׂרֵה רְבֹו אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע בֵּין
יְמִינוֹ לְשְׂמָאלוֹ וּבִהְמָה רַבָּה:

How do you understand God's message in these pesukim? Why does God care so much about Nineveh, and what does God want Yonah to learn? (Think about these questions before you read on!)

Here's how Abarbanel explains it:

אברבנאל

וַאֲיֵךְ אִם כֵּן אֲנִי לֹא אָחוּס עַל נִינְוָה שֶׁהִיא עִיר גְּדוֹלָה
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי לְהַתְפָּאָר וּבִנְיָן גְּדוֹל וְעֶצוֹם לֹא כַּקִּיקַיּוֹן...
וְה' יִתְבָּרַךְ הָיָה אוֹהֵב אֶת נִינְוָה לְהִיּוֹתוֹ פְּעֻלָּתוֹ וּמַעֲשָׂיו,
הִנֵּה אִם כֵּן הָיָה הָא-ל יִתְבָּרַךְ לְנִינְוָה כְּמוֹ הָאֵב.

Abarbanel (Portugal, 550 years ago)

How could I (God) not care about Nineveh, a big city that contains the glorious work of My hands?! This makes Nineveh different from the kikayon (which was not so big, and which Yonah did NOT create)...

God loves Nineveh because it is God's action and creation, which makes God like a parent to Nineveh.



According to Abarbanel, God loves all the parts of creation like a parent loves a child, and Nineveh is no exception. By bringing the kikayon to Yonah, and then taking it away, God was teaching Yonah: "I created all the people of Nineveh. I created everything. From My perspective, every part of My creation deserves mercy."

- ♦ What does it mean to think about all things on earth being created by God, and God loving them? If you believe this is true, how should you act?



- ♦ What does it mean to think of God having mercy on all things? Can you think of surprising examples?

- ♦ How does it impact your experience of Yom Kippur to think about all people and all animals being creations and children of God?



דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

How to play:

- ♦ Here are some arguments to get you started, but come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- ♦ For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.

Debate: Animals can't do teshuvah.

Agree!

- ♦ What do animals know about right and wrong?
- ♦ I've never seen my pet do teshuvah.
- ♦ This makes it seem like the teshuvah in Nineveh was fake.



Disagree!

- ♦ Animals are part of God's world and they can serve God in their own way.



The king of Nineveh decrees that all people and animals have to fast and repent (Yonah 3:7-8).



שאלות • Scavenger Hunt

Find the answers in Sefer Yonah! There are two questions for each chapter. The answers to the last two questions are harder and can be found anywhere in Sefer Yonah.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 What three cities are mentioned in this chapter?
- 2 After discovering that the storm was Yonah's fault, what two things did the sailors do before throwing him into the sea?

CHAPTER 2

- 3 Was Yonah swallowed by a male fish or a female fish?
- 4 In Yonah's prayer, how many times does he mention God's holy Temple?

CHAPTER 3

- 5 According to the king's decree, who must fast?
- 6 In this chapter, there are a lot of verbs (action words) that come from the שׁוּשׁ (shoresh, root) ב.ו.ש, which means to turn or return. Whose turning or returning is described?

CHAPTER 4

- 7 Which pasuk reminds you of the words in the ל"ג מידות הרחמים (shelosh esrei middot ha-rahamim, 13 attributes of God's mercy), which come up a lot in Selihot prayers and on Yom Kippur?
- 8 What object reminds you of the next holiday coming up on the Jewish calendar?
- 9 What four objects does God "provide" or "invite," with the Hebrew word וַיִּמָּן (vayeman)?
- 10 What parts of Sefer Yonah remind you of Purim?

Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Nineveh, Tarshish, Yafa (1:2-3)
2. Rowed hard to try to get to shore and prayed to God (1:13-14)
3. We don't know, because it's called both דָּג (dag, male fish) and דָּגָה (dagah, female fish) (2:1, 2:2, 2:11)
4. The sukkah that Yonah makes (4:5)
5. A fish, a plant, a worm, a wind (2:1, 4:6, 4:7, 4:8)
6. Casting lots, wearing rags and ashes
7. The people of Nineveh's (3:8, 3:10)
8. Humans and animals (3:7)
9. Two (2:5, 2:8)
10. The people of Nineveh's (3:8, 3:10)
11. The people of Nineveh's (3:8, 3:10)
12. The people of Nineveh's (3:8, 3:10)
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