

Yom Kippur – 5783

Maamarei Mordechai

Yonah is sent to Ninveh to have them repent. They do and Yonah is upset.

וְעַתָּה הִ קָּח־נָא אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִמֶּנִּי כִּי טוֹב מוֹתִי מֵחַיִּי:

“And now Hashem, please take my soul from me, because my death is better than my life.” (Yonah 4:3).

What was Yonah complaining of? Did he hate Ninveh so much that it upset him to see them saved?

Midrash says, *Yonah was the son of the widow of Zerfat. Eliyahu had brought her son back to life. Yonah knew about death and found it better than his life.* (Otzar Midrashim 1:28).

Ibin Ezra says, *Yisroel did not repent. Yonah was upset for them seeing how potent teshuva is.*

Radak says, *this is like Moshe who wanted to be erased from the Torah if Klal Yisroel would be destroyed.*

This pasuk is akin to **טוֹב שֵׁם מִשְׁמָן טוֹב יוֹם הַמָּוֶת מִיּוֹם הַיּוֹלָדוֹ**: “A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death is better than the day of birth.” (Koheles 7:1). It is also similar to what the Machzor will say in the Neila service – which follows this Torah reading that is read during Mincha on Yom Kippur. “What are we, what are our lives....and the days of our lives are worthless before you, and the dominance of man over beast is nothing, because all is worthless.”

“And now.” Yonah says this now, not before. He seems to have a premonition of this earlier, before he left Eretz Yisroel. “Is this not just my words that I had before I left my land? Therefore, I fled to Tarshish.” (Yonah 4:2). Yet, Yonah did not ask for death before. Nor did he ever ask Hashem to release him from this obligation. Yonah knew the prophecy would work and that Ninveh would repent. Yet, it is only now that he wants to die. Why?

“Hashem.” The one who sent me on this mission. The Lord of Yisroel.

“Please take my soul from me.” Yonah does not ask for death. He wants Hashem to take his soul. This is like the kiss of death where Hashem takes the *neschama* painlessly. This is similar to what Eliyahu said when he was fleeing from Queen Izevel. “He asked for his soul to die. ‘It is much now, Hashem, please take my soul, because I am no better than my forefathers.’” (Melachim I 19:4). Eliyahu was fleeing from danger and he was starving and thirsting. He put his soul in Hashem’s hands. Yonah was doing the same thing. He had fulfilled the obligation and spoke to Ninveh. Now he was asking that his soul be taken for better to die in peace with the kiss of death. **אֶת־נַפְשִׁי** makes it a proper noun. “My soul” is not just Yonah’s life but the life of all prophets who would have the task to ask Yisroel to repent only to be received with scorn.

“Because better is my death than my life.” Death is better because a person can no longer sin after death. Yonah felt he fulfilled his prophetic duties. If Hashem would now send him back to Eretz Yisroel to give prophesy he would be killed or jailed or suffer in some other form. Death was quick and painless. That is why Yonah did not return to Eretz Yisroel. “Yonah left the city and settled east of the city.” (Yonah 4:5). He settled and lived there, near Ninveh. He was safe in Ninveh as he just saved the city.

Putting this together, this is the explanation of the pasuk. Yonah was frightened. Ninveh was an enemy of Yisroel, being the seat of the Assyrians. The Assyrians would later attack Eretz Yisroel a couple of times and exile ten of the tribes.

Look at this in context. This section (break to break) commences with “And the word of Hashem was to Yonah.” (Ibid 3:1). Yonah travels to Ninveh, gives over the prophecy and the city repents. After the city repents, it says, “It appeared to Yonah a great evil; and He was angry.” (Ibid 4:1). The destruction of the ten tribes by Assyria appeared to Yonah. He knew that fate was to be because the ten tribes did evil and did not repent. “And He was angry.” It was not Yonah, that was angry. It was Hashem that was angry. Hashem’s anger flared against Yisroel and he ended up exiling ten tribes at the hands of Ninveh.

Yonah then davens to Hashem. “Please Hashem! Is it not my exact words concerning my Land [Eretz Yisroel]?” (Ibid 4:2). *עַל-אֶדְמָתִי* can also mean “concerning my Land.” He continues, “that is why I fled to Tarshish.” (Ibid). He did not want to save Assyria so that Assyria—a known rival of Eretz Yisroel—could later do harm to Eretz Yisroel. “Because it is known, because You are a Lord of grace, mercy, slow to anger, and abundant kindness.” (Ibid). Yonah begs for forgiveness for Klal Yisroel just as Moshe used to daven on behalf of Bnei Yisroel. This tefillah was not for himself but to save the ten tribes from the evil he foresaw. “And to be comforted on the evil.” (Ibid). Yonah wanted to be comforted on the evil he saw.

With this context, this section ends off, “And now,” *now that I have seen an enemy repent and be saved but that Yisroel will not repent and will be exiled by this very nation, “Hashem, take my soul from me,” my spiritual power that you imbued in me is not strong enough to move Klal Yisroel to repent, so take this from me. Take away my nevuah.* “Because good is my death from my life.” *I am now dead anyway. I can no longer return to Eretz Yisroel having saved their enemy. And I can no longer live knowing that the northern Eretz Yisroel will be destroyed and exiled. My life now has no purpose.*

The next section starts with: “And Hashem said, good is your grief.” Yonah was right to grieve over the impending destruction. The final lesson that Hashem gives Yonah, however, is that he makes a kikayon tree grow to give shade to Yonah. Yonah is comforted by it. However, Hashem then destroys it and adds a harsh wind and beating sun to bring Yonah close to death. Like Eliyahu he says, *וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוּת וַיֹּאמֶר טוֹב מוֹתִי*, *וַיִּהְיֶה* “He asked for his soul to die, and said, ‘good is my death from my life.’” (Ibid 4:8). To Yonah, the kikayon was Hashem’s protection over Eretz Yisroel. It was built up and provided shade to those that live in it. However, easy come and easy go, and it left as quickly as it came. Yonah was grieved over it and he also felt his duties as a prophet beyond his reach.

Hashem departs with this: You did not work for the shade and protection of My presence. It was there before you and would be there after you. Yet, you grieve for its loss. I am the Creator of the entire world. They, too, are equally worthy of My grace, pity, and sustenance. Yisroel is not the only peoples on the earth. The entire world is under Hashem's sovereignty.

This last lesson is poignant in that it taught something that was not learned before: Hashem is ruler over the entire world. It is not just Klal Yisroel that is Hashem's nation. The entire world are His people, His creations, and His responsibility. Therefore, in order to bring about the final *geula*, it is not enough for Jews to acknowledge His kingship. The entire world must recognize it. The anointed one that will bring peace to the world will do so for all peoples. The kingship that is prayed for in the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur tefillos is not just for one nation to acknowledge His kingship. It is for His kingship to be over all of creation and for all peoples to acknowledge it. This is the ultimate hope.

May the world merit the final *geula*, the retuning of all of Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel, and peace under the full acknowledged kingship of Hashem, speedily. Gmar Chasima Tova.

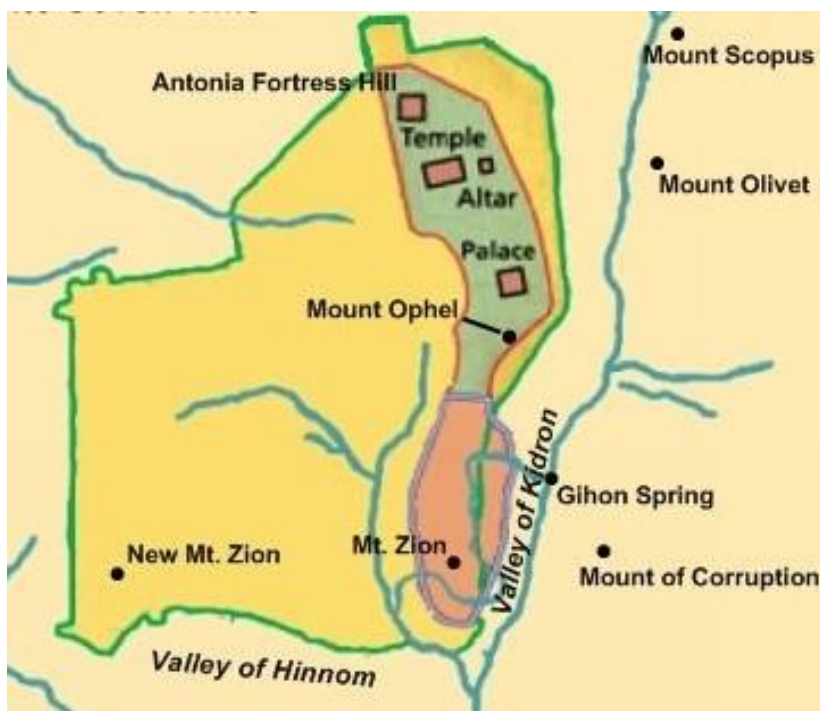
BONUS SHTIKEL

Where is Tzion? Tzion is mentioned many times. Is it synonymous with Har Hamoriah, the Temple Mount? Is it Yerushalayim?

The Amidah of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur seem to have a contradiction with the Amidah of mussaf for Shabbos and Chag. In the kingship blessings it says, “And You reign, Hashem, alone over all your works,” *בְּהָרֵי צִיּוֹן מְשֻׁכֵּן כְּבוֹדְךָ וּבִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קֹדֶשְׁךָ* “in Mount Tzion the resting place of Your honor, and in Yerushalayim Your holy city.” This makes it seem like Tzion is the Temple Mount. It continues: “Hashem will reign forever, the Lord of Tzion.” It again seems that Tzion is the Temple Mount where Hashem rules from. Further, in every Amidah it says in the thanksgiving prayer, “And may our eyes behold Your return to Tzion with mercy....Who returns His divine presence to Tzion.” This appears to be further support for Tzion being the Temple Mount. Also, in the mussaf Amidah of Rosh Hashanah it mentions the pasuk in Ovadyah, “And deliverers will go up to Mount Tzion to judge Mount Esav.” (Ovadyah 1:21).

However, in mussaf of Shabbos and Chag, the tefillah says, in *וּמִפְנֵי חַטָּאתֵינוּ* And Because of Our Sins: *וְהֵבִיאֵנוּ לְצִיּוֹן עִירְךָ וּלְיִרוּשָׁלַיִם בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ* “and bring us to Tzion, your city, and Yerushalayim, the house of Your Temple.” This sounds like the Temple Mount is in Yerushalayim and the city at large is Tzion.

To clarify this, look at other references in Tana’ch. “And Dovid captured the Tzion citadel, and it is now the City of Dovid.” (Shmuel II 5:7). When bringing up the Aron to the Temple Mount, King Shlomo was said to “bring it up from the City of Dovid.” (Melachim I 8:1). Clearly, it could not be brought up from the Temple Mount to the Temple Mount. If Dovid is the southern slope of the mountain. The citadel of Tzion was a tower on the southern slope protecting the Jebusite city of Yirushalem. Tzion and Yerushalayim are also distinguished in other pesukim. (Melachim II 19:21, 31).



To explain this further, it has to be understood that as Yerushalayim was expanded, by the Second Beis HaMikdash era, it stood on or near seven hills. King Dovid's city was on the southern slope of the mountain, and was then known as Mount Tzion. He added a name to Yerushalayim and called it City of Dovid. The Tzion citadel protected the city and the adjacent mountain, named Mount Tzion. It was called the citadel of Tzion

because it protected Tzion, the adjacent mountain that grew the important food crops. King Shlomo reused the name Yerushalayim to refer to City of Dovid and the Temple Mount (on top of the Ophel or 'hump'). The city was expanded west to the next hill, which was then also called Har Tzion. As the city expanded, the entire city continued to be named Yerushalayim, but the western portion would still be referred to as Tzion, historically referring to the mountains it sat on. Tzion was the residence of the masses.

Now the different uses are explained. Kingship and reign of Hashem are taken from the city where the palace is located. That was either the original Har Tzion below the Ophel—where Dovid and Shlomo had their palaces—or the new Har Tzion where the palace of the later kings of the second Beis HaMikdash (Chashmanoyim and Herods) stood. That is Hashem's kingship above the human sovereigns.

"In Mount Tzion the resting place of Your holy presence and in Yerushalayim Your holy city." Before the Beis HaMikdash was built on the Temple Mount, the presence settled in the City of David, on Har Tzion. When referring to kingship the point is that Hashem's presence resides above the Yisroel sovereignty and the entire Yerushalayim is Hashem's holy city. It belongs to Him.

Hashem will reign forever, the Lord of Tzion. That is, Hashem is the Lord of the people who reside in Tzion. A king need subjects. As Yerushalayim expanded from the southern slope to Har Tzion, Hashem was the Lord of these people. Further, "May our eyes behold Your return to Tzion" is the supplicant saying may he see Hashem's presence in the city again, among the people. This blessing is not connected to rebuilding Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash. It is in the thanksgiving prayer where the supplicant is seeking a connection to Hashem. The prior paragraph does talk about how the "fire offerings and service" be favorable always, but that is more about the connection between Hashem and the people more than the *location* where the fire offerings took place. For four centuries the place where fire offerings were brought and the service was done was not Yerushalayim. It was wherever the Mishkan was presently. The supplicant hopes to see His presence return to dwell with him again.

The deliverers will go up to Mount Tzion, the place of the palace and the courts, to judge the Mountain of Esav. They will do it from the city at large, not the Temple Mount.

That is why the Amida of mussaf for Shabbos and Chag says, "Tzion your city, Yerushalayim the house of Your Temple." It also says in the same tefillah, during the repetition, "return your Divine Presence to Tzion, your city, and the order of the service to Yerushalayim." Because Tzion is the city, and Yerushalayim, while the name was used for the city at large, was really the City of Dovid and the Temple Mount. That is where Hashem's Temple stood. Not on Har Tzion but on the Temple Mount in Yerushalayim. Also, throughout Yishayu and Yermiyah they use Tzion to refer to the city at large.

Indeed, Hashem's presence should return to His holy Mikdash and resting place, speedily.