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Subtly, God Spoke to Jonah

By Bishop Youssef

Jonah was an eighth century BC famous prophet from Gath-helper, a small Galilean town near Nazareth. Jonah the Prophet is famous for the well-known story about him and the diverse ways in which the Lord spoke to him. Most often, Jonah was spoken to in obscurity pertinent to his needs at the very time he was spoken to. Perhaps this is similar to the way in which the Lord speaks to us all today.

God spoke to Jonah through the wildness of wind. The fierce language of the wind was equaled only to the fierceness of Jonah's desire to run away from God. The Lord had commanded Jonah, *"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me"* (Jonah 1:2). Jonah had determinedly boarded a ship heading for Tarshish with the burning desire for traveling as far as possible away from Nineveh and from God in purposeful disobedience of His command.



God spoke to Jonah through the fierce wind that tossed rocking of the ship he had escaped onto. The violent rocking motion of the ship helped Jonah to rediscover his heart. The heart he, unbeknownst to him, had left behind at the seaport of Joppa when he boarded the ship and disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh. As the ship Jonah had boarded sailed across the sea a great storm was surprisingly encountered. The raging storm threatened to break the ship apart.

God spoke to Jonah through the confrontation with the Gentile sailors of similar beliefs to those of Nineveh whom he did not want to preach unto. The seamen prayed to their own gods for salvation, yet the winds and the sea did not become calm. The captain of the ship went below to wake-up Jonah while the crew cast lots to determine who was responsible for such a storm as this. Jonah was revealed by the lots to be the guilty one accountable for the storm. It was at this time, Jonah realized the wind and waves were sent because of his disobedience. He begged to be thrown overboard and was reluctantly cast into the ocean. The storm ceased to exist.

The great fish's chasms of darkness and immeasurable depths that divinely swallowed him was the prison he had chosen for himself by his disobedience. Swallowed by the great fish, Jonah cried out to God for deliverance. Hearing the prophet's cry, the Lord *"spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land"* (Jonah 2:10).

When God had finished speaking to Jonah through the elements of His creation, Jonah thankful for His saving mercy came out of the whale exhausted, weak and unable to flee from the Lord. The Lord once again gave Jonah the same command as before to go to preach in Nineveh. This time Jonah chose to obey.

God spoke directly to Jonah's inner self. God spoke to Jonah through elements, events and with subtlety of language in a manner that Jonah needed at the time of his displacement. God helped Jonah to understand his innermost self and especially to understand and comprehend his weaknesses. In love, God revealed Jonah's weakness not to slander him but to give hope to any and all weak souls.

God helped the prophet Jonah to also understand anger and justice. On Jonah's very first day in the City of Nineveh, the king and people repented, and wore sackcloth and ashes as an outward sign of remorse. Because they were so overwhelmed with sorrow for their many sins, *"God repented of the evil which He had said He would do to them"* (Jonah 3:10). The city and the people of the city were not destroyed. Jonah became overwrought and furious that the city went unharmed.

Through the many times of God subtly speaking to Jonah, His love for Jonah as well as creation is made evident. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself also drew inferences to Jonah's days and nights inside the fish to the *"three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"* (Matthew 12:40).

May we all listen to the subtle ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to each of us as we meditate upon the story of the prophet who survived in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. May God bless and speak to us in a language which will help us to discover our inner most selves in our fervent desires to serve Him.

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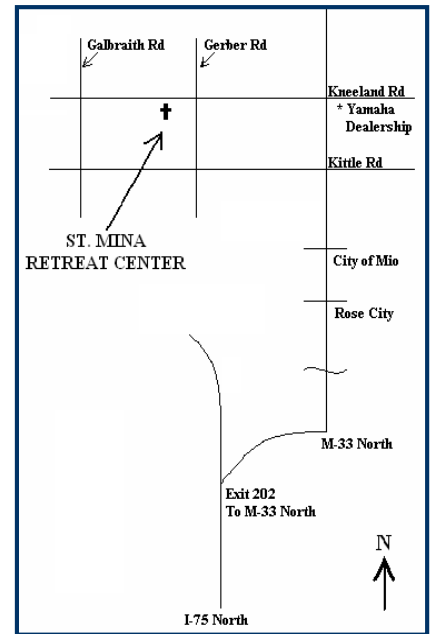
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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2015

February 16-18	Middle of Month Retreat
March 7-9	Feast of Pope Kyrillos
March 16-18	Middle of Month Retreat
April 7-8	Baskha Service
April 13-15	Middle of Month retreat

WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER...

A group of people, mainly college students, attended a retreat at St. Mina's Retreat Center during the Month of Kiahk. They enjoyed a wonderful time in fellowship, praising the Lord during such a blessed time of the year.



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